Matthew Arnold: The Early Years

by

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Matthew Arnold: The Early Years

Introduction

It is the general purpose of this essay to attempt a survey of the world that Matthew Arnold knew during his boyhood and early manhood. It is hoped in its more detailed passages to show how certain influences determined the attitude of the young poet. This essay will not follow the career of Arnold beyond 1849. I have selected this year as a suitable stopping point, because it is by reference to the poems printed at that time that I hope to establish ultimately the validity of any argument I may advance.

It is necessary to emphasize the paucity of materials relating to the youth of Arnold. Few of the published letters are dated prior to 1849. Arnold's own reminiscences are rare and incidental. His ban on a biography has effectually prevented any one connected with the family from casting light on the poet's formative years.

The general conspiracy to present Arnold to even the world of critical scholarship as a male Minerva, springing full-fledged into the world, complete with a first publication, wife, and post in the Education Office, has been doubly unfortunate. Either it has left the study of Arnold's youth to such an imaginative literary free-lance as Hugh Kingsmill,
or it has resulted in cursory treatment, by such an orthodox biographer as Lionel Trilling. It is a fortunate chance that Professor Lowry, of Yale, has in recent years, by his study of the correspondence with Clough, added a good amount to our knowledge of Matt, the undergraduate, and the secretary to Lansdowne.

It is the prime purpose of this essay, however, to penetrate into a field which, though an obvious one, has not yet been made the subject of any serious study, - the influence upon Matthew Arnold of his father, the famous and redoubtable Dr. Arnold of Rugby.

One acknowledgment must be made, and that a very sincere one, to Dr. G. G. Sedgwick, Head of the Department of English, the University of British Columbia, under whose surveillance this essay was written. He has shown rare understanding and patience over a rather protracted period of time, and if the essay itself remains still inadequate, the fault is assuredly the author's own.
Chapter One

The Character of Dr. Arnold

"He was naturally in extremes. Whatever it was on which he was engaged, he threw himself headlong into it, almost bodily, as into a volcano; from whose depths forth he came again - argument and sentiment, emotion and burning words - rolling and thundering, and fused together like lava down a mountain side."

- Edinburgh Review

Dr. Arnold was born in 1795 and died in 1842. His father was a customs collector on the Isle of Wight, and it was there that Thomas Arnold spent his boyhood, except when he was attending school, first at Warminster, later at Winchester. At Winchester he acquired facility in the classical languages, and his son, Matthew, was later to say that his Latin verse was sound, and his Greek prose the equal of Thucydides.

At the age of sixteen, Thomas Arnold began attending Corpus Christi College, Oxford. His political sympathies at Winchester had been radical, but here, under the influence of J. D. Coleridge, he returned to the conservative tradition of his parents, and "spoke strong Toryism in the old Attic

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Society."³ This, however, proved to be only a passing phase, and after his election as a Fellow of Oriel College, he adopted the prevailing Liberalism of his associates, Copleston, Whately, and Hampden. It is significant, in connection with this Oriel fellowship, that a crudity of style made Arnold's papers inferior to those of certain other competitors; but an underlying energy, taken for capability of growth, secured his election.

In 1820, Arnold married Mary Penrose. In the course of his wooing he presented her with Herbert's Divine Songs, and John Keble, long a personal friend, celebrated the marriage by the writing and dedication of a poem. In the following years, Arnold was to become the father of four sons and five daughters. Subsequent to this marriage, Arnold retired to the little Thames village of Laleham, and undertook the light duties of private tuition.

From this early retirement Arnold was summoned, in 1827, to become head-master of Rugby. He was at that time an unknown man, but the school itself lacked status and was in decline. Arnold's appointment was probably due to the prophecy of Dr. Hawkins, Provost of Oriel, who said, "if Mr. Arnold were elected to the headmastership of Rugby, he would change the face of education all through the public schools of England."⁴ In 1828, Arnold was ordained by the

⁴ Ibid., Vol. I, p.49.
Bishop of London, given the degrees of B.D. and D.D., and installed in his headmastership.

At Rugby, Arnold introduced certain reforms. He was at first unpopular with his boys, and was viciously attacked by Theodore Hook, editor of *John Bull*. This attack, however, was almost certainly inspired by political motives. Such retaliations were to be expected from Dr. Arnold's busy activity in the world of ecclesiastical and political controversy.

It is necessary to appreciate, from the outset of any study of Dr. Arnold, that his activities were never exclusively pedagogic. His participation in church affairs alone was so notable that, after the Reform Government of 1832 took power, many people expected that Arnold would be given a bishopric, and indeed Lord Melbourne did actually consider giving him one. Dr. Arnold's interests extended far beyond Rugby. As Lionel Trilling has said,

"Rugby was only the scene and Rugby College was only the detail - even though the most loved and intimate detail - of Arnold's far broader activity. Throughout the Rugby years, Thomas Arnold was a leader in the religious and political conflict of England...."

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   Hook saw Rugby as "the cradle of Radical reform". *John Bull*, Feb. 1, 1835.
Dr. Arnold chiefly expressed his opinions through the media of sermons, pamphlets, and magazine articles. His first collection of sermons was published in 1829, and other selections were printed in 1831, 1834, 1838, 1841, and 1845. Pamphlets were published in favour of Roman Catholic Emancipation, Church Reform, and National Education. Besides these works, Arnold published in the years 1830-1841 his edition of Thucydides, and, commencing in 1838, he published some volumes of a history of Rome.

In 1841, Arnold was called to Oxford as Regius Professor of Modern History. He gave his inaugural lecture in the same year, but before he could really make his influence felt against the new Toryism of Newman, he died.

On his death-bed he said to his son, "Thank God, Tom, for giving me this pain; I have suffered so little pain in my life, that I feel it is very good for me; now God has given it to me, and I do so thank Him for it."

In the preceding section, there has been given in barest outline the biography of Dr. Arnold. Now let us try to get back of these conventional statements of the commonplace happenings and particular accidents of human life, to the individual character of Arnold.

Our first record of him, as a schoolboy, is completely unexceptional. The Dictionary of National Biography, paraphrasing Stanley's biography, speaks of him as being "a shy and retiring boy, somewhat stiff and angular in character and manners." Matthew Arnold, reading in later in life one of his father's schoolboy letters, found it "prim, if not priggish". Our most important description of Thomas at Oxford comes from J. D. Coleridge, and appears to foreshadow the mature Arnold, "... a casual or unkind observer might have pronounced him somewhat too pugnacious in conversation and too positive."

Now for Arnold in his prime. There is abundant evidence of the impression he made upon his contemporaries. The picture that we get from them is of a tremendously vital, forceful personality, of "one wholly absorbed or rather inspired by the ideas of duty, labour, earnestness, and self-devotion." The man is a whirlwind of energy, caught up first in one issue, then in another. In everything he does there is to be seen "an intense earnestness in life", an earnestness that springs really from a controlled but tremendously

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fervent emotionality. "He loved and hated well", said the Quarterly, making what was really a wonder of understatement.

Lytton Strachey, although in many ways unjust to Arnold, has left a word picture of him, based upon the Phillip's portrait, which does agree with what his contemporaries appear to have seen.

"His outward appearance was the index of his inward character; everything about him denoted energy, earnestness, and the best intentions. His legs perhaps were shorter than they should have been; but the sturdy athletic frame, especially when it was swathed (as it usually was) in the flowing robes of a Doctor of Divinity, was full of vigour; and his head, set decisively upon the collar, stock, and bands of ecclesiastical tradition, clearly belonged to a person of eminence." 18

To the early Victorians, this ardent proponent of Christianity and the active life had a status that put him among the leaders of national life and thought. The Edinburgh Review saw him as "our modern Wycliffe"; while The Quarterly thought of him as "a very Luther in his zeal and vehemence". 20

Even when it disagreed with him, the former journal paid him the most elaborate homage.

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16 The Quarterly Review, Vol. 70, p. 492.

17 An instance is his comment upon Dr. Arnold's Italian tours. Letters printed in Stanley's Life give abundant proof that Arnold was moved by the beauty of the country, yet Strachey cannot resist making a gibe and says that the landscape of Italy only served to remind him of moral evil. Eminent Victorians, Garden City Publishing Co., no date, p. 233.

18 ibid., p 210.


20 Quarterly Review, Vol. 74, p. 481.
"We may differ with Arnold in the view he took of this or that subject from the height to which he soared. But the height itself appears to us to be the most perfect point to which mortal man can safely venture to aspire." 21

This is, of course, the bloated language of mid-century journalist rhetoric; but substantially it was the view taken by most of the reviewers of his biography. Blackwood's paid tribute to his nature - "so sensitive and enthusiastic a disposition" 22 and, since it could not endorse his politics, contented itself with calling him "one of the brightest jewels from the literary crown of England." 23

It is not suggested, in quoting this panegyric, that the Victorians, even after his death, saw Arnold as faultless. One defect, at least, in Arnold's nature was noted by his fellows. It was this: all his life, Arnold was an individualist, taking an isolated in almost every controversy. He himself readily admitted this, sadly noting that the Chevalier Bunsen alone seemed to share his attitudes. The reason for Arnold's failure to work with other men is not hard to find. He was so carried away by his own feelings and impulses that he could not be troubled to modify them or constrain them so that he might become a member of any group. Hugh Kingsmill has made a very just statement about Dr. Arnold.

"He was interested...neither in men nor in institutions for their own sakes, but only as material to be

23 ibid., p. 786.
reshaped according to his private ideas of what was required." It was this weakness that the Quarterly recognized when it spoke, unequivocably, of Arnold's "very scanty knowledge of mankind." 25

There was another serious flaw in Arnold. Even in journals of Liberal inclination there was a readiness to admit that a super-abundant energy occasionally usurped the place of reason. The Quarterly Review gives the most delicate possible statement of this deficiency, when it says,

"Dr. Arnold is, in our view an original rather than a profound thinker - with a vigorous and clear, rather than a subtle or comprehensive mind."  26

Bradby has recently given very effective statement of this aspect of Arnold's character, saying that "though his attempts to rationalize his intuitive convictions were not always very happy, he was a dynamic spiritual force of immense power."  27

The thing, indeed, that most impressed contemporaries about Dr. Arnold was his energy. To-day we do not necessarily think of energy as a virtue in itself. The Victorians were inclined to see it in that light. In point of fact, only from one small, dissident, but very persistent voice, does there come any very different account of the virility of Dr. Arnold.

Samuel Butler provides us, in The Way of All Flesh

24 Kingsmill, Hugh, Matthew Arnold, New York, Lincoln MacVeagh, The Dial Press, 1928, p. 34.
26 ibid., Vol. 74, p. 488.
with a remarkable portrayal of this Victorian hero, under the
guise of "the great Dr. Skinner of Roughborough - the histor-
ian of Athens, and editor of Demosthenes". To Butler's hero,
Ernest Pontifex, life in Dr. Skinner's form seemed "like living
on the crater of Vesuvius". The doctor himself is presented
to us as "a passionate half turkey-cook, half gander of a man."
How just these phrases are, it is impossible to tell. One
recalls, however, that even in Tom Brown's School-Days, the
Doctor in the class-room is, on certain occasions, a terrifying
spectacle.

"Tom couldn't hear a word which passed, and never
lifted his eyes from his book; but he knew by a sort of
magnetic instinct that the Doctor's underlip was coming
out, and his eye beginning to burn, and his gown getting
gathered up more and more tightly in his left hand. The
suspense was agonizing, and Tom knew that he was sure
on such occasions to make an example of the school-house
boys. 'If he would only begin,' thought Tom, 'I shouldn't
mind.'" 31

Even the devoted Stanley speaks of "that awful frown"32 and
an "extreme severity in his voice and countenance beyond
anything he was himself at all aware of."

Besides the evidence of contemporaries and the

28 Butler, Samuel, The Way of All Flesh, New York, Grosset
and Dunlop, (no date), pp. 135-136.
29 ibid., p. 153.
30 ibid., p. 138.
31 Hughes, op.cit., p 188.
opinions of later biographers, there is a third and a fourth source from which we may secure light on the character of Dr. Arnold. The first of these latter is the testimony of his son Matthew, and the second is Dr. Arnold's own comments upon himself and his work.

Matthew was, no doubt, unfortunate in being dogged all his life by the shadow of his father. Proof of the continuous presence of that illustrious phantom is abundant. When Matthew became an inspector of schools, he was greeted everywhere as the son of Dr. Arnold. It was the same when he went on circuit with Lord Wightman, his father-in-law. At intervals he was pestered by requests for his father's autograph. When he visited France, proud parents told him how their child had been christened "Arnold" for the great schoolmaster. When he published Culture and Anarchy, Stanley's way of showing his delight with the preface was to say how fully Dr. Arnold would have agreed with it. When, late in life, Matthew Arnold visited America, it was to find New England, especially Boston, still faithful to the worship of his papa, now forty years dead.

In the light of all this, it is perhaps understandable that Matthew's own references to his father are rather rare. When, in the Letters, they do occur, they appear to be

38 ibid., Vol. II, p. 3.  
35 ibid., Vol. I, p. 139.  
given a little under constraint - chiefly to please his mother or sister. In 1865, for instance, being on the Continent, he writes to his mother dutifully noting that he had stayed at the same inn at Fontainebleau, with dear papa, nearly twenty-four years previously. On the same trip, he writes from Rome, hoping the letter will arrive just around "dearest papa's birthday".

Most of Matthew Arnold's references to his father have a curious current of qualification running through them. Writing in 1861, for example, he says,

"I find the memory and mention of dear papa everywhere - far oftener than I tell you - among the variety of people I see. This variety is nowhere greater than on circuit. I find people beginning to know something about me myself, but I am still far oftener an object of interest as his son than on my own account."  

This passage may help to account for the almost perfunctory references to "dear papa" in the letters. One seems to detect a little bitterness against the man whose fame so long eclipsed the son. In one of his letters, to his sister Fan, Arnold confesses, while reporting on his inaugural Oxford lecture on poetry, "I should not have liked papa to hear me lecture."  

The attitude is a little strange. Again one suspects that he was a little uncomfortable in the presence of this imposing father.

Nowhere in Matthew Arnold's published works do we

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42 ibid., Vol. I, p. 139.
come across any glowing personal love for his father. The man who, in his essays, gave life to little-known French mystics and poets, withheld that gift from his father. Everything is decorous and restrained. Matthew, speaking of his father, has a little of the air of a well-bred agnostic joining in the creed. The greatest tribute that he pays him is the following oratorical analogue to Rugby Chapel, given in a letter to his mother.

"...this is just what makes him great - that he was not only a good man saving his own soul by righteousness, but that he carried so many others with him in his hand and saved them, if they would let him, along with himself."

As a source of information, then, about the type of man Dr. Arnold really was, Matthew is negligible. There are dutiful expressions of admiration to be found, but very little else.

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The last quarter to which one can look for information about Dr. Arnold, is the biography written by one of his early pupils, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley. The Victorians, possibly because they preferred to suppress the more intimate phases of a man's life, did not produce many great biographies; but Stanley's Life of Arnold must be included in any count of the best half dozen biographies of its age. From our point of view, especially, the book is valuable. Since Stanley followed the sensible plan of allowing Dr. Arnold,

through his letters, to speak for himself, and since Arnold left the imprint of his very potent personality on everything that he wrote, a good deal may be learned from these letters.

The man who emerges for us, as we read, is a person of tremendous sincerity and purpose, if small sense of humour. He has it is true an annoying habit of making a major issue of even the smallest point that can be made to relate to his central Christian belief. His dogmatism is at times a little wearing; the manliness a little too akin to an exultant Tarzanism. The effect of the biography is, however, powerful and cumulative. Even through the medium of the book, Arnold's personality makes itself felt. A modern reader may want to cry out, at times, at the seeming crassness of some of the attitudes, but he finds it hard to bring any very grave charge against the man himself. His sincerity and power are patent. Indeed, Arnold so comes to dominate the reader that one leaves the book with the conviction that, despite his obstinacy, intellectual muddiness, and conventionality of outlook, this really was a great man.

In his letters, Thomas Arnold is completely candid about his attitudes and motives, probably because in his own eyes, they were never wrong. This is not to say that another would always have approved of them.

Consider the matter of ambition. Traditionally this has been rather a questionable trait in a churchman. Arnold, however, frankly avowed himself one of the most ambitious of men. Writing in the days of his early retire-
ment at Laleham, he said, "I have always thought ... that I should like to be aut Caesar aut nullus, and as it is pretty well settled for me I shall not be Caesar, I am quite content to live in peace as nullus." When Arnold was called to be a petty Caesar at Rugby, this impulse to direct, to use others, became apparent. He himself wrote,

"The work here is more and more engrossing continually; but I like it better and better; it has all the interest of a great game of chess, with living creatures for pawns and pieces." 46

Such statements as these begin to bear out Kingsmill's accusation, that Arnold was chiefly interested in others as things upon which to exert his own tremendous energies in order to direct them to ends which he considered good. Arnold himself said, apparently without any misgivings, "My love for any place, or person, or institution is exactly the measure of my desire to reform them." 47 This really provides us with the key to Arnold's character. He was troubled by a constant pedagogic itch. Equipped with a pattern for what he considered ideal conduct, and provided with infinite energy for imposing it upon others, he proceeded about his work of convoying the community to Heaven.

Of Arnold's pupils at Rugby, some - the Stanleys and the Lakes, accepted the Doctor's pattern, and allowed themselves to be moulded by it. Clough spent his whole life being of two minds - at once finding faults in the pattern

and longing to be in conformity with it. Lastly, there was Matthew Arnold. In the coming chapters, we shall study the form of the pattern according to which his father was inspired to reform places, persons, and institutions; and we shall see to what degree, by the end of his youth, Matthew had come to accept it.
Chapter Two

Rugby

"What a sight it is," broke in the master, "the Doctor as ruler. Perhaps ours is the only little corner of the British Empire which is thoroughly, wisely, and strongly ruled just now."

- Tom Brown's School-Days

Matthew Arnold's earliest education was received at Laleham, where his uncle, the Rev. John Buckland, continued the cramming-school in which Thomas Arnold was originally his partner. It is impossible to say how much the young boy learned from this uncle, whose chief pursuit was preparing young men for university matriculation. At any event, in October, 1833, a cousin of Southey's, Herbert Hill, was engaged to prepare Matthew and his brother Tom for entrance to Winchester. Three years later, at the age of fourteen, Matthew was finally sent there, but for some unexplained reason he was withdrawn at the end of a single year, and enrolled in the fifth form at Rugby. His next four years were spend at his father's school.


2 The appointment was apparently a happy one. Matthew Arnold said later, "Hill's criticism is always delicate and good - and his style in prose has something of the beauty of his father-in-law's."

The English public schools were so far in decline, when Arnold came to Rugby, that respectable middle-class opinion had turned against them, and force of tradition alone gave the nobility any reason for continuing their patronage of them. "If schools are what they were in my time," said Tom Brown's father, in sending his boy to Rugby, "you'll see a great many cruel, blackguard things done, and hear a deal of foul bad talk." He had reason for these gloomy predictions. For over a century the public schools had been, for the most part, ill-managed bear-gardens, where packs of callow youths were given a taste for gaming, drinking, and the practice of sadistic tendencies. Discipline had long been a matter of corporal punishment, and at times student insurrection got out of control.

"Eton and Westminster were notorious in this respect; open rebellion occurred at Eton in the years 1728, 1743, 1678, 1783, 1810, 1832. The Riot Act was read at Winchester in 1770; and the same school "rebelled" in 1774, 1793, 1818. Similar disorders took place at Harrow in 1771 and 1818, and at Rugby in 1797 and 1822.4

School management had been little improved by the third decade of the 19th Century. Eton was foremost in maintaining the old tradition. Despite Dr. Keate's herculean

3 Hughes, op.cit., p. 90.

achievements in flogging, that college maintained a remarkable standard of drinking, fighting and betting. In 1825 the school received a good deal of attention, when one of the boys was killed in a fist fight.

"The young men continued fighting from four till nearly six o'clock, and when they were in a state of exhaustion, they were plied between the rounds with brandy. They fought about sixty rounds; and at the end of the last round, Mr. Cooper fell heavily upon his head, and never spoke afterwards." ⁶

Mr. Cooper was fourteen years old, and his opponent, Mr. Wood, sixteen.

The schools being so conducted, it was little wonder that the standard of education was low. The Eton text-books were standard, as might be expected from the status of that school, but the Edinburgh Review, admittedly hyper-critical of so Tory an establishment, did not hesitate to proclaim, in 1830, that these books contained almost every possible flaw. ⁷

Indeed, speaking in general of Eton, the Review stated:

"...when an Etonian goes either to Cambridge or Oxford, and is questioned as to the extent of his studies, he can only answer, that besides Horace, and part of Virgil and the Iliad, he has read nothing .... he is utterly ignorant of mathematical or physical science, and even of arithmetic; - the very names of logical, moral and political science are unknown to him." ⁸

Eton provides an extravagant example of the current abuses, but they were so widespread as to be almost

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⁵ Whitridge, Dr. Arnold of Rugby, p. 64.
⁸ ibid., Vol. LI, p. 73.
universal. The narrowness of the curriculum was so much a matter of custom as seldom to call for active criticism. The viciousness of student life was also general. Dr. Arnold took for the text of one of his school sermons, a statement from the Remains of Mr. John Bowdler, "Public Schools are the very seats and nurseries of vice. It may be avoidable or it may not; but the fact is indisputable." Even at Arnold's Rugby, Old Brooke found it necessary to caution Tom Brown.

"Then there's fuddling about in the public-house, and drinking bad spirits, and punch, and such rot-gut stuff. That won't make good drop-kicks or chargers of you, take my word for it." 11

Rugby, although in eclipse when Dr. Arnold came into the headmastership, had a long and fairly honourable descent. It had been founded in 1567, under the terms of the will of a London merchant, who had required that it should always bear the title of "The Free School of Lawrence Sheriffe of London, Grocer". A major re-organization occurred in 1777 and for some period subsequently, under Dr. Thomas James, the school had enjoyed a first-class reputation. In 1797, Rugby had its "Great Rebellion"; at that time a soldier with a drawn bayonet had stood guard over the headmaster's study. 12

Arnold came to the school conditions were still unsatisfactory. A high standard of scholarship was maintained in a small group of senior students, but the enrollment of the school was down to 123.13

The new head had special qualifications as a teacher. We have seen that his whole outlook upon life was pedagogic. He saw this world as "a school for heaven".14 In addition to his extraordinary energy, he had a positive love for instructing others. Stanley reports that "he declared sometimes that he could hardly live without such employment."15 Arnold had a definite power of insight into boy nature. He recognized, for instance, the proper source of motivation.

"Generally speaking, we can understand and do well what we are fond of; however dull we may be about things that we dislike. You know how common it is to see a boy very dull about his lessons, yet very quick and active in other things. Now he is dull about his lessons, because he does not like them; because his mind is, as it were, asleep to them, and wakes for things which he likes better."16

When it came to the administration of a school, rather than the work of instruction, Arnold again had a gift of perception.

"... at no place, or time of life, are people so much the slaves of custom, as boys at school. If a thing has been an old practice, be it ever so unworthy, it is continued without scruple; if a thing is new, be it ever so useful and ever so excellent, it is apt to be regarded as a grievance."17

Unfortunately there were other aspects to the new

headmaster's thought. At times his dogmas and beliefs got the better of his sound common-sense. Despite his own excellent comment upon the necessity of pupils being interested in what they are doing, Arnold could, in speaking of young boys, make such strange statements as the following.

"It is a great mistake to think they should understand all they learn; for God has ordered that in youth the memory should act vigorously, independently of the understanding." 18

Temperamentally, Dr. Arnold was not altogether suited for the trade to which he was so anxious to devote himself. The manner in which he expressed himself when impatient, or angered, appears to have been devastating. In Tom Brown's School-Days we are told of a boy sent falling backwards with a box on the ear, for mistranslating. 19 Whitridge, drawing upon an uncited source, says of Dr. Arnold,

"Apparently he had a trick of thrusting out his lip and tossing his head, whenever a boy made a mistake, quite as if he was suffering pain. It must have been agony for a nervous boy to recite to him." 20

Arnold himself confessed, "I have seen great boys, six feet high, shed tears when I have sent for them up into my room and spoken to them quietly, for not knowing their lesson." 21

A graver fault than this excessive severity of outward manner was the positive morbidity with which Dr.

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19 Hughes, op.cit., p. 189. But note, "never again while Tom was at school did the doctor strike a boy in lesson." ibid., p. 189.
20 Whitridge, op.cit., p. 96.
Arnold viewed the imperfections of his boys. Arnold bound every detail of education to Christianity. His fanaticism on this point was unfortunate. He could not bear to see boys idle, for instance. "At the very sight of vicious or careless boys gathered together round the great schoolhouse fire, 'It makes me think,' he would say, 'that I see the Devil in the midst of them.'" In any consideration of Rugby, it is necessary to remember this severity and morbidity of Dr. Arnold. There were other traits which allowed him to become, for the Victorians, "the prince of schoolmasters", but his early unpopularity is quite understandable. Tom Brown found that when Arnold first came to Rugby, "... he was looked upon with great fear and dislike by the great majority even of his own house."

Dr. Arnold came to Rugby with a very definite philosophy of education. He was determined to reform the old abuses and secure a respectable name for his school. He was


23 Reference must be made to the tenderness which Arnold displayed to the younger boys (Stanley, Vol.I, p.157); to his habit of treating the boys as gentlemen (ibid.,Vol.I, p.100); his encouragement of good work (ibid.,Vol.I,p.125); his personal interest in older pupils and his readiness to assist them after leaving school (ibid.,Vol.I,pp.160-161); and generally to what Stanley called His "youthfulness of temperament" (ibid., Vol.I, p.162).


25 Hughes, op. cit., p.149.
bound, above all else, to endeavour to bring his boys up as Christian gentlemen. The old squire sent Tom Brown to Rugby, hoping he would become "a brave, helpfull (sic), truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman, and a Christian." Dr. Arnold would not have amended that as a statement of his own ideal. In order to secure the reform that he desired, the new head­master had to take energetic measures. Parents were asked to withdraw boys whom Arnold found an obstacle to his program. He issued an ultimatum. "It is not necessary that this should be a school of three, or of one hundred, or of fifty boys; but it is necessary that it should be a school of Christian gentlemen."

Having set his school in order, Arnold never relinquished his policy of putting prime emphasis upon the progress his pupils made in the application of Christian principles.

"...he held that his work as a schoolmaster was first and foremost a religious work, the cure of souls, not merely or chiefly the giving of instruction in the subjects necessary to what is termed a liberal education." 29

It is because Arnold saw things thus, that, soon after his appointment, he took upon himself the functions of school chaplain. Every Sunday afternoon during the school year, a

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26 Hughes, op.cit., p. 91.
27 Whitridge, op.cit., p. 139.
brief but forceful sermon was delivered to pews of silent school-boys. This weekly homily by their headmaster bulked large in the minds of the boys. The smaller fry of the school probably sat bewildered and frightened, cowed by the dreary somberness of the chapel interior, not comprehending the rolling syllables which descended from the black robed figure in the pulpit. The older boys, however, were affected by the torrential energy and the immense conviction of the speaker. Week after week, they went, to be chastised, encouraged, reprobated, bribed with promises of everlasting bliss, and threatened with the actual flames of an actual hell. Dr. Arnold was in his element. No one could oppose or criticize – no one could escape him as he preached the way to salvation, set his pattern of life before his charges. And the result of this constant pressure was what was to have been expected.

"He moulded their minds after the model of his own, and stamped an impression upon them which was indelible in after life; whatever else a Roughborough man might be he was sure to make everyone feel that he was a God-fearing earnest Christian, and a Liberal, if not a Radical, in politics."

What did Arnold's pupils actually hear on these occasions, when brought most directly under their master's influence? Volumes of published sermons preserve the message for us – and at times it is sufficiently bizarre. There were occasions when Arnold dwelt upon the fearfulness of physical

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31 Hughes, op.cit., pp.164-165.
32 Sermons, Series I, p.91.
33 Butler, Samuel, op.cit., p. 134.
decay and death, on others he reminded them of their immortal souls, and called them to the life hereafter, "to the marriage supper of the Lamb, to the rest reserved for the people of God." And there were times when the boys had to be cautioned that they had not fully embraced the offer of salvation through Christ, and that accordingly "the threatenings addressed to the unconverted sinner, are at present all in their full force addressed to you."

Of course, the headmaster did not allow himself always to be given to such gloomy pronouncements. The arrival of the Christmas holidays offered some ray of hope.

"Would that you would use the precious interval that is now granted to you! Would that some of you, whose principles have been somewhat stained and their practice corrupted during the last five months, may purify yourselves from these soils; may refresh and strengthen your fainting spirits with a new draught of the well of everlasting life." 37

It is hoped that the boys had a merry Christmas.

One of Dr. Arnold's more curious pieces of Biblical exegesis was devoted to the trouble caused to the prophet Elisha by some unruly boys. The subject, indeed, was one well calculated to warm the heart of a school-master.

"It was Elisha's baldness which they laughed at, in the very spirit of idle boys, at all times, and in all countries. They laughed at him too as a prophet; just in the way that congregations of Methodists, for example, have been sometimes laughed at and disturbed among us, and their singing and preaching made a jest of.

34 See Appendix I.
35 Sermons, Series I, p. 140.
36 ibid., p. 37.
37 ibid., Series II, pp.112-113.
But for this offence, we are told that the prophet cursed them in the name of the Lord, and that 'there came forth two bears out of the wood and tare forty and two children of them.' The point for you to observe is, that God is angry with the faults of young persons as with those of grown-up men, and that he punishes them as heavily." 38

In justice to Dr. Arnold, it is necessary to point out that in contrast to these so direful passages are other, equally effective ones setting before his boys ideals of life and future blessedness, which captivated the attention of certain of his youthful hearers — and made of them precocious committed spirits. To these, Arnold spoke differently, portraying "...God opening his arms to receive us, forgiving all our sins, and calling us no longer servants but children, — heirs of his own kingdom, of his own immortality, of his own holiness." Rugby was one of the few schools where a boy, newly entrusted with the editorship of the school paper, could feel moved by that responsibility to write a prayer.

People usually think of Dr. Arnold as a great educational reformer, and they tend to class him with Comenius, Herbart, Pestalozzi, and Thring. Such a classification,

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38 Sermons, Series II, pp.44-45.
This sort of thing was in no way uncommon at the time.

Of Isaac Watts, Divine and Moral Songs for Children.
"God quickly stopped their wicked breath;
And sent two raging bears,
That tore them limb from limb to death
With blood and groans and tears."

39 Sermons, Series I, p. 111.

40 Lowry, op.cit., p.12.
however, is unjustified. Arnold was not a reformer in the sense of being an innovator, or the propounder of a new philosophy. He launched no movements. He accepted the English public school as he found it; only by his sincere and forceful action he re-animated the old ideals which had become deadened. He introduced little that was new. This latter fact is obvious to us when we study the Rugby curriculum, a document almost completely orthodox. Speaking of the traditional nature of the course of studies at Rugby, Lytton Strachey made a valid criticism.

"Under him, the public school remained, in essentials, a conventual establishment, devoted to the teaching of Greek and Latin grammar. Had he set on foot reforms in these directions, it seems probable he might have succeeded in carrying the parents of England with him. The moment was ripe; there was a general desire for educational changes; and Dr. Arnold's great reputation could hardly have been resisted. As it was, he threw the whole of his influence into the opposite scale, and the ancient system became more firmly established than ever." 42

A study of the actual Rugby schedules bears out this criticism. There is no provision for the study of chemistry, physics, or any of the other sciences. There is no instruction in art, music or any of the manual arts. No time is given, directly for the study of English.

The normal week at Rugby provided for twenty hours of instruction, - sixteen of these being given to the classical division of Latin, Greek, Scriptural instruction, and History. Two hours a week were available for mathematics, and two hours for French. Some credit has been claimed for Arnold

41 See Appendix II. 42 Strachey, op.cit., p.240. 43 Whitridge, op.cit., p. 118.
because he placed French on the official curriculum. The language had long been an "extra" in almost every school, however, and its inclusion in the school's own program was a minor reform. Other extras were not incorporated. But if there was this one step taken forward, another was taken in retreat. The new headmaster introduced the moribund form of daily exercise in Latin prosody, traditional at Winchester, known as the "vulgus".

It will be seen that the picture, dear to unscholarly professors of education, of Dr. Arnold as a great Victorian reformer of pedagogy fades into nothing, when one studies the facts. The curriculum at Rugby was substantially that which had been used for the past century. This, of course, is not to say that Dr. Arnold did not have his individual achievement within the limited field that he accepted. His own experience as an historian, and his profound interest in the moral lessons which he believed could be deduced from history, no doubt enlivened his presentation of that subject.

44 An example is art. This subject was taught, before Arnold's time, by an art specialist, though it is extremely unlikely he was a member of the school's own staff.


45 "A subject being given out, and a fixed number of eight or ten lines being required to be produced and recited in class next morning." Sir Joshua Fitch, Thomas and Matthew Arnold, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899, p. 41.

46 Dr. Arnold, as we shall have occasion to see, had a philosophy of Providence in history.
His practical bent of mind showed itself, moreover, in the inclusion of a small amount of modern history. A certain liveliness was undoubtedly contributed to his treatment of Roman history, by his first-hand knowledge of the topography of Italy. Indeed, he laid continual stress upon the necessity of seeing history against a clearly perceived geographical background.

In his presentation of the classics, Dr. Arnold's richness of imagination apparently had a vivifying effect. Mr. Whitridge, rather audaciously, speaks of him "inoculating them with old conception of humanism", and then, moving to safer ground, extols him as:

"... the first great Englishman of his time to comprehend that the classics were the gateway to all ethical, philosophical, and political problems, and to teach them as such."  

Now, having shown Dr. Arnold's real policy in framing the school curriculum, one may well consider for a moment another commonly misunderstood matter. The English cult of officially inspired school athleticism has commonly been attributed to Dr. Arnold. Now Dr. Arnold was a healthy, virile male - even if a doctor of divinity. He had a physical need of activity, and accordingly we find him running up the spiral stairs to his class-room, hurling the javelin, going

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47 See Appendix II. The Sixth Form did parts of Russell's Modern Europe. This stopped with the Battle of Waterloo.
49 Whitridge, op.cit., p. 71.
hiking - "skirmishing", he called it - and taking afternoon swims with elder pupils. But there is no real evidence that he ever sought to make physical exercise or organized games a part of the regimen of the school. Strachey makes a point in this connection: "The modern reader of Tom Brown's School-Days searches in vain for any reference to compulsory games, house colours, or cricket averages." Sports had, of course, always had a place in English school life. Before Arnold ever came to Rugby, the battle of Waterloo had been won on the playing fields of Eton.

Dr. Arnold would have been bitterly opposed to the "school colours" deification of physical prowess. It is ironic that his name should have come to be associated at all with it. The general error on this point appears to spring from misimpressions gained from the reading of Tom Brown, and that these are misimpressions, we have the word of Matthew Arnold.

The one great innovation Dr. Arnold made at Rugby was the creation of a system of delegated authority, which employed the senior boys as agents of law. We have seen how Arnold yearned to be a Caesar, and have seen how he created

53 Strachey, op.cit., p. 291.
54 "But as Matthew Arnold once said to me, it (Tom Brown's School-Days) has been praised quite enough, for it gives only one side and that not the best side, of Rugby school life, or of Arnold's character. It leaves out of view, almost wholly, the intellectual purpose of a school. Fitch, op.cit., p. 105."
for himself an autocracy at Rugby School. But no Caesar is complete without his consuls and pro-consuls through whom the governed may be minutely supervised. Accordingly, to supplement his house-masters, Arnold appointed monitors, or, as he called them, "praepostors". A certain enthusiasm for martial discipline animated the headmaster when he appointed these deputies. They were entrusted with considerable powers, including that of flogging. Only the Fifth Form was exempt from their jurisdiction. On the other hand, their own subordination to him was absolute. Tom Hughes, a school hero, an outstanding athlete, and already a contributor to Bentley's Magazine, was expelled for failure to report an offender.

Strachey, speaking of Dr. Arnold and his inception of the prefectorial system, likened the head to Jehovah, and sniggered that "there were to be judges in Israel". Sir Michael

55 It is interesting to note that one of his prefects, installed to tame a rowdy "house" was a certain William Hodson, destined to become a famous figure in the Indian Mutiny. It is interesting, also, to note the reference to Hodson's schooling, given in a memoir by a friend.

"Of course he was in the Sixth, where it became an honour to have studied under Arnold. Willie Hodson used to refer to his pupilage with pride. But he was never really an Arnold man - (I mean as was Stanley (Dean of Westminster), Tom Hughes, or Seton-Karr."


56 Whitridge, op. cit., p.144. The Northampton Herald, January 2, 1856, attacked the brutality of the praepostors. Whitridge makes the point that no boy was bound to accept punishment from a praepostor, and could appeal to the headmaster. It would be a brave boy, however, who would dare to invoke this privilege. (perfectly true, unfortunately.)

57 ibid., p. 138. Subsequently Hughes was invited to Fox How, and went snipe-hunting with Matt. (p.139)

58 Strachey, op. cit., p. 214.
Sadler has observed, "He turned the Sixth form into a corps of young commissioned officers for a campaign against offences in the school."

This rather detailed study of Rugby may properly conclude with a comment upon the type of graduate the school produced during Arnold's time. The accounts we receive vary with the prejudices of the reporters. We have already noted that offered by the acidulated Mr. Butler. Hughes, briefly summing up the comments of the reviewers of Tom Brown upon Rugby men, declared:

"They have stated that the Rugby undergraduates they remember at the universities were 'a solemn array', 'boys turned into men before their time', 'a semi-political, semi-sacerdotal fraternity', etc., giving the idea that Arnold turned out a set of young square-toes, who wore long-fingered black gloves, and, talked with a snuffle." Against this we may set what is probably a far fairer statement, that of John Henry Newman.

"The (Liberal) party grew, all the time that I was in Oxford, even in numbers, certainly in breadth and definiteness of doctrine, and in power. And, what was a far higher consideration, by the accession of Dr. Arnold's pupils, it was invested with an elevation of character which claimed the respect even of its opponents."

Newman, leader of what Arnold termed "the Oxford Malignants", had no cause to love the man who sent his pupils to Oxford forewarned against him. A good deal of weight must be attached to such a tribute, paid under such circumstances.

59 Sadler, introduction to Whitridge's Dr. Arnold of Rugby, p. xxii.
60 Hughes, op. cit., p. 10.
It should not, now, be very difficult to get some sort of a picture of Matthew Arnold's school-days. As the son of the headmaster, he held, no doubt, a slightly isolated position, which was probably the more marked because of his late entry into the school. He lived in a highly domesticized setting, his father being constantly present, for he preferred to pursue his studies in the midst of the bustle of family activity. Perhaps the contact with his father in his informal moments led to an occasional lack of respect, though this is indeed hard to imagine. There is, however, an apocryphal story of Matthew standing behind his father, pulling faces at the Sixth Form. It is, of course, possible that continual submission and deference to Dr. Arnold induced a wild desire to rebel, and that it was a desperate impulse to assert himself that led to this performance. Actually, it is impossible to say what Matthew Arnold's feelings were towards his father during his school-days. Stanley spoke of the "almost awful happiness" of Dr. Arnold's family life. Hughes saw it as warm and vitalizing - but nobody can bear witness to Matthew's real feelings - whether joyful, oppressed, or resigned.

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Matthew Arnold’s studies were not especially calculated to fit him for life in the Nineteenth Century. He was saturated with classics — but given only a small dose of the modern languages. He was brought up without any scientific background in linguistics, anthropology, comparative religion, or the physical sciences. His schooling had been received in an establishment where a premium was placed upon discipline, and that discipline was imposed from above. He had, moreover, been brought up in a school which had a certain fundamental snobbishness — the superiority of the good Christian over any one else, the pre-eminence of the "Arnold man" over the rest of the school.
Chapter Three

Dr. Arnold and the Populace

"Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in two different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by different breeding, are fed by different food, are ordered by different manners; and are not governed by the same laws."

"You speak of---" said Egremont hesitatingly.
"The Rich and the Poor."

- Disraeli (Sybil)

Matthew Arnold came close to witnessing an English Revolution. The spectre of revolution was constantly lurking in the minds of his contemporaries. The first quarter century of his life was spent in a world where people, of his class, regarded the proletariat with something of the trepidation with which a soldier regards a shell that may, after all, be only a "dud", but likewise may, at the slightest touch, blow him into nothingness. In order to understand Matthew Arnold's attitude to the great masses of common people, one must realize the foreboding atmosphere of English industrial relations all through his youth.

The trouble began in 1816, when not prosperity, but depression followed the Battle of Waterloo and the second

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Peace of Paris. Agricultural prices collapsed, banks were ruined; the heavy industries, losing their wartime markets, laid off scores of thousands of workers. The situation became desperate. The following years saw little improvement. The working classes grew increasingly famished, truculent, and disrespectful. Illegal combinations were formed, ricks were burned, local magnates were mobbed, republicanism was preached, and assassination advocated. In 1819 there were serious demonstrations at Birmingham and Manchester, the one at the latter resulting in the "massacre" of Peterloo when the hussars charged the rioters. The number of lives lost was small. Certain happenings, however, have a psychological importance far transcending their physical magnitude; and the shadow of Peterloo lies athwart the social life of early Nineteenth Century England. Blood had been shed; undeclared war had begun between Disraeli's two nations.

The post-war depression had ended by 1822, but the prosperity that followed quickly developed into an unwarranted boom, which collapsed on December 5, 1825, when Pole's Bank went into bankruptcy.

"As they kept the accounts of forty-four county banks the shock thus given to credit was tremendous. In the next few weeks seventy-eight banks, including five great London houses, closed their doors." 3

The resulting crisis saw the Bank of England itself on the verge of failure. 1826 and 1827 were poor years with both agricultural and industrial distress and unrest. In a single

3 Ibid., p. 76.
week more than 1000 power-looms were smashed in the neighbour-
4
hood of Blackburn. Improvement set in late in 1827, and 1828
proved to be a highly prosperous year. This, however, was not
the beginning of the long looked for era of peace and plenty.
In 1829, the Annual Register comments upon "depression in
every branch of trade", and notes the prevalence of rick
burning. As for the wrecking of machinery, the Register
observed "The mischief done had not been equalled for sixty
years."

The cause of this turmoil was not only unemployment,
6
but the heinously low rate of wages. The Annual Register
quotes the report of an unspecified "committee of masters"
as saying that, in the neighbourhood of Huddersfield, "there
are 13,000 individuals, who have not more than 2½d. per day
to live upon and find wear and tear for looms &c." Disraeli
has given a realistic picture of the living quarters of people
existing under such a wage scheme. The town he describes is
a small one, "a metropolis of agricultural labour." Rugby
was just such a town.

"The situation of the rural town of Marney was one
of the most delightful easily to be imagined. In a
spreading dale, contiguous to the margin of a clear and

4 Marriott, op. cit., p. 77.
5 Annual Register for 1830, London, Baldwin and Cradock, J.G.
and F. Rivington, 1831, pp.149-150.
6 Annual Register for 1829, p. 131.
7 ibid., p. 131.
8 ibid., p. 133.
9 Disraeli, op. cit., p. 73.
lively stream, surrounded by meadows and gardens, and backed by lofty hills, undulating and richly wooded, the traveller on the opposite heights of the dale would often stop to admire the merry prospect that recalled to him the traditional epithet of his country.

"Beautiful illusion! For behind that laughing landscape, penury and disease fed upon the vitals of a miserable population.

"The contrast between the interior of the town and its external aspect was as striking as it was full of pain. With the exception of the dull high street, which had the usual characteristics of a small agricultural market town, some sombre mansions, a dingy inn, and a petty bourse, Marney mainly consisted of a variety of narrow and crowded lanes formed by cottages built of rubble, or unhewn stones without cement, and, from age or badness of the material, looking as if they could scarcely hold together. The gaping chinks admitted every blast; the leaning chimneys had lost half their original height; the rotten rafters were evidently misplaced; while in many instances the thatch, yawning in some parts to admit the wind and wet, and in all utterly unfit for its original purpose of giving protection from the weather, looked more like the top of a dunghill than a cottage. Before the doors of these dwellings, and often surrounding them, ran open drains full of animal and vegetable refuse, decomposing into disease, or sometimes in their imperfect course filling foul pits or spreading into stagnant pools, while a concentrated solution of every species of dissolving filth was allowed to soak through, and thoroughly impregnate, the walls and ground adjoining.

"These wretched tenements seldom consisted of more than two rooms, in one of which the whole family, however numerous, were obliged to sleep, without distinction of age, or sex, or suffering. With the water streaming down the walls, the light distinguished through the roof, with no hearth even in winter, the virtuous mother in the sacred pangs of childbirth gives forth another victim to our thoughtless civilization; surrounded by three generations whose inevitable presence is more painful than her sufferings in that hour of travail; while the father of her coming child, in another corner of the sordid chamber, lies stricken by that typhus which his contaminating dwelling has breathed into his veins, and for whose next prey is perhaps destined his new-born child. These swarming chambers have neither windows nor doors sufficient to keep out the weather, or admit the sun, or supply the means of ventilation; the humid and putrid roof of thatch exhaling malaria like all other decaying vegetable matter. The dwelling-rooms were neither boarded nor paved; and, whether it
were that some were situate in low and damp places, occasionally flooded by the river; and usually much below the level of the road; or that the springs, as was often the case, would burst through the mud floor, the ground was at no time better than so much clay, while sometimes you might see little channels cut from the centre under the doorways to carry off the water, the door itself removed from its hinges; a resting-place for infancy in its deluged home. These hovels were in many instances not provided with the commonest conveniences of the rudest police; contiguous to every door might be observed the dung-heap on which every kind of filth was accumulated, for the purpose of being disposed of for manure, so that, when the poor man opened his narrow habitation in the hope of refreshing it with the breeze of summer, he was met with a mixture of gases from reeking dunghills." 10

The people's attention was distracted from the misery of their existence, during the continued depression of 1830, 1831, and 1832, by the struggle for electoral reform. Reform was declared, by its middle-class proponents, to hold the key to all social and economic improvement. The proletariat, taking these leaders at their word, showed disquieting enthusiasm for the cause of Reform, sacking Nottingham castle, breaking the windows of Aspley House; and finally, in open insurrection in Bristol, freeing the prisoners, burning the jails, episcopal palace, mansion house, customs and excise buildings. Both Whigs and Tories deprecated the violence, but in 1832 the Reform Bill was passed.

10 Disraeli, op. cit., pp. 73-75.
11 Annual Register for 1831, p. 152.
12 ibid., p. 281.
14 Annual Register for 1832, p. 294.
15 ibid., p. 295.
The Reform Bill of 1832 was a victory for the middle-class, and a disaster for the Tory aristocracy and land-holding gentry, who from that time have fought successive rearguard actions. To the masses, illiterate, unprivileged, and exploited, it gave nothing. The consequences of this inadequacy were not immediately apparent. Commerce and trade happened to improve, and agriculture flourished during the years immediately following the election of the Reform Parliament. The proletariat, having its belly full, was relatively well behaved. The cotton industry which, in 1832, had consumed 257,985,000 pounds of raw cotton, used 330,750,000 pounds in 1835. Moreover, there was a buoyancy springing from the boom in railway construction. The rulers of England with unusual prescience seized upon this interlude of prosperity to pass a new Poor Law. This measure was extremely harsh. The underlying principle was that the receipt of relief was to be so unpleasant as to give every possible incentive to the able-bodied to seek employment even at the lowest wage. Under the provisions of this act, England was dotted with poorhouses, where the unemployed or aged were to be segregated as if they were social lepers.

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17 "In 1837 there were nearly 400 miles of railway in actual use and nearly 450 under construction, and the list of new companies sanctioned every year by special acts of Parliament filled the bill sheet."

ibid., p.280.
When the short span of good times ended in 1838, after two successive bad harvests and hard winters, the new Poor Law was at once singled out for attack. The poorhouses were labelled "Bastilles". Mobs wrecked them, and hooted their administrators.

"The local authorities requested that the discontent of the lower classes should be met by a return to the practice of outdoor relief. The Poor Law Commissioners returned a categorical refusal to their request. If the crisis could not be surmounted without violating the fundamental principle of the Poor Law their work was a complete failure. But this refusal was the signal for the storm which had been gathering for the past two years to break in full fury over their heads. Nothing short of an insurrection was organized against the three 'tyrants', the three 'Pashas'.

Parliamentary reform was supposed to have brought in a golden era. The proletariat, confronted by the depression of 1838, began to suspect the Reform Act had not gone far enough. But, when the masses began to chafe at the new dispensation, it became apparent that the middle-class Whigs were not prepared to see the act tampered with. Power now resided where it best suited them, with themselves. The middle class had not evicted aristocrats from the seat of government to hand it over to the rabble. In 1837, Lord John Russell, former idol of the working masses, told them they must regard the Reform Act as a final settlement.

The middle classes had at hand a new nostrum for curing the economic woes of England, — repeal of the Corn Laws. It was the fond hope of Cobden, and his fellow manufacturers,

18 Halévy, op.cit., p. 127.
19 Marriott, op.cit., p. 137.
that by supplying cheap food to the workers they could reconcile them to small wages. Surprisingly enough, the workers showed no great enthusiasm for this enlightened scheme. Partly, no doubt, there was a perception that the measure would only mean a slight amelioration of conditions for the industrial worker, at the expense of the agricultural labourer. Also, the unenfranchised classes were now suspicious of the Whigs, feeling themselves duped by the Reform Bill. Accordingly the proletariat took the righting of its wrongs into its own hands, and we have the rise of Chartism. The People's Charter was drawn up on May 8, 1838.

"It was a long and detailed Reform Bill drawn up by Lovett, revised and corrected by Francis Place and approved by Roebeck. It demanded six alterations to the existing system - Manhood Suffrage - the Ballot - Payment of Members of Parliament - Abolition of property qualification for members - Equal constituencies - Annual elections."

It does not concern us here to trace the vicissitudes of the Chartists, their schisms and reconciliations, the prevalence of "moral force" or "physical force" factions. Neither need we follow the adventures of the enormous national petition from its inception to its third and final rejection by the House of Commons in 1848. What we must have is a feeling of the bitterness and the desperation of spirit that animates the early Victorian artisans and farm labourers. We must realize that at Rugby the Arnolds, father and son, must often have seen the night sky reddened with the glare of burning ricks. In their newspapers they read of such things


21 Halévy, op.cit., p. 302.
as the Birmingham Convention, which intended to march on London with half a million armed men. Birmingham is only thirty-five miles from Rugby. Other disturbing reports were abroad during this same year, 1839.

"At Norwich pikes were being distributed. At Middleton in Lancashire, shots were fired every night by way of demonstration. At Rochdale the Radical Association had decided to furnish its members with pikes, guns, powder and bullets. There were, it was reported, 4,000 armed men at Rochdale, 6,000 at Oldham, 30,000 in the four towns of Hyde, Ashton, Newton Moore and Stalybridge. Henry Vincent toured the south-west, urging the revolutionary labourers to march to London en masse. In the mining districts of Wales his visit produced a disquieting state of unrest. On May 3 the news reached London that the small Welsh town of Llanidloes had been occupied by armed revolutionaries." 23

The next instance of open rebellion was the attempt of the miners to take over the town of Newport, where Vincent, "the Chartist Demosthenes", had been imprisoned. This time, however, the military were prepared and the miners were driven back after thirty of them had been killed. 24 This signal defeat of the "physical force" Chartists was fortunately followed by an improvement in trade, and there was, in consequence, a general calming down of public feeling. Attention began to move to a quarter more acceptable to the manufacturing moguls - repeal of the Corn Laws.

It is impossible to gauge how close England came to revolution in 1819, 1829, 1839; on the last of these occasions, at least, it was, in the Duke's phrase after Waterloo, "a

22 Halévy, op.cit. , p. 326.
23 ibid., pp.319-320.
24 Marriott, op.cit., p.137.
damned near thing". Each of these crises found the gentry and manufacturers panicky, barricading their houses, calling out hussars and dragoons to enforce their supremacy and protect their wealth. Even in the good years there were occasional flare-ups and riots. The peasants, under an exterior of sullen respect, hated the land-owners. The clergy were regarded, rightly, as toadies to the class in power.

Matthew Arnold's contemporaries, prior to 1850 when the great period of English industrial expansion began, lived in a world like that of the Russian land-owners of three decades ago, or that of the French aristocrats of the Eighteenth Century. There was a tenseness and a suspicion between the "two nations", the rich and the poor. What effect did this atmosphere have on Dr. Arnold? Did it affect his son Matthew?

Dr. Arnold did not come into close or frequent contact with the lower classes. He never was a parish priest, and his labours as a teacher left him little time in which to cultivate the acquaintanceship of the proletariat. Of course,

25 Wingfield-Stratford has pointed out that though the exports of the United Kingdom in the year of Waterloo were worth £51,500,000, in 1842 they were still below the 1816 figures, being worth only £47,000,000. He states, "The enormous, the sensational advance, when figures doubled and quadrupled, and attained to such fantastic proportions that John Bull was able to proclaim himself the world's shopkeeper, banker and paragon of success - these were to come in the generation following the repeal of the Corn Laws."

it was part of the duty of a Christian to care for the poor, and Dr. Arnold, realizing this, made a point of seeking out a few old cottagers, and occasionally going to the Rugby almshouses. His pupils were reminded of their duty to the poor, though here the headmaster's experience with boys suggested a qualification.

"We must, if we could keep ourselves unspotted from the world, acquaint ourselves with the dwellings of the poor. I do not say that all of us, and especially the very young, are to go to them always with spiritual addresses." 27

It is significant that Arnold's ministrations were limited to "the good poor", those presumably who were pleased to serve God in that station to which He had called them. Strachey was quite right when he said of Arnold, "he clearly perceived that the lower orders fell into two classes, and that it was necessary to distinguish between them. There were the "good poor" - and there were the others."

The poor were, apparently, appreciative in certain instances of these attentions. Stanley tells us of one old crone, who died a little while after Arnold, "up to the last moments of consciousness never ceasing to think of his visits to her." On the other hand, the biographer has to admit that even the "good poor" must have occasionally bamboozled

27 Arnold, Sermons, Series II, p.185.
29 Strachey, op.cit., p. 223.
the reverend gentleman. "It is said," he reports, "that he was liable to be imposed upon by them, and greatly to overrate their proficiency in moral and religious excellence."

Some of the poor, moreover, did not appreciate being visited, and we are told that the Rugby boys, with the usual gift of youth for ascribing bad motives for what they do not understand, regarded with suspicion their headmaster's overtures to the poor.

In a life as busy as Dr. Arnold's, direct ministration to the poor was no doubt very limited. His persistence in seeking them out, in the face of difficulties, reflects credit upon the conscientious manner in which he sought to discharge his Christian responsibilities - but his visitings must have had a little of the ritualism and infrequency of the Popes' washing of the feet of beggars. Arnold never became in any sense an apostle to the poor. He never found himself able to discuss religious matters with them with any ease.

The diffidence with which Dr. Arnold approached the lower orders sprang, in part, from a realization of the gulf that separated him from them. It also sprang from his own feelings of uncertainty concerning them. Dr. Arnold could sympathize to an extent with the lower classes, but he never felt very happy about them. He had no real belief in them; no belief, that is, such as a Lincoln or a Sandburg has, in the goodness of the common people. Instead, Dr. Arnold

was possessed by a feeling of distrust, and that feeling, we shall see, was shared by his son Matthew.

Many of Arnold's contemporaries regarded him as a Radical. They spread rumours about him assigning revolutionary themes to his pupils, and suspected him of Jacobinism. Yet, Arnold himself implicitly denied the title of "Radical". He was anti-aristocratic, criticizing the English peerage for its conservatism, much as Matthew Arnold criticized it for being "inaccessible to ideas", but he was not pro-democratic. There can be no doubt on this point, we have his own word for it.

"Nor do I feel that I am in any ... danger of becoming Radical, if by that term he meant one who follows popular principles, as opposed to or distinct from liberal ones." 36

Dr. Arnold regarded "democracy" with the same degree of enthusiasm that a Catholic prelate shows today for Communism.

The anti-democratic spirit in Arnold is easily detected. It is true, of course, that he realized as Disraeli did, as every thinking man did, that the rich and poor had become alienated, that the position of the proletariat was desperate. As early as 1825, he stated, "I have long had a suspicion that Cobbett's complaints of the degradation and sufferings of the poor in England contain much truth,..." 37

35 Arnold, M., Culture and Anarchy, an essay in political and social criticism, London, Thomas Nelson and Sons, No date, p.149.
37 ibid., Vol.I, p. 68.
And he continues with saying, "I am sure that we have too much of the oligarchical spirit in England." His conclusion, however, is instructive, "Toutefois, there is much good in the oligarchical spirit as it exists in England."

Dr. Arnold's position, in respect to the masses, was really that of an orthodox Nineteenth Century Liberal. He was suspicious of aristocracy, and for that reason heartily endorsed the July Revolution.

"I do admire the Revolution in France - admire it as heartily and entirely as any event recorded in history." 38

He did not deceive himself about the state of affairs in England.

"It seems to me that people are not enough aware of the monstrous state of society, absolutely without a parallel in the history of the world, - with a population, poor, miserable, and degraded in body and mind as if they were slaves, and yet called freemen, and have a power as such ofconcerting and combining plans of risings, which makes them ten times more dangerous than slaves." 39

He knew that revolution might be expected as the consequence of the conditions that rulers of England had allowed. This idea, however, appalled him, and he supported the Reform Bill partly because it would help thwart the "democratical spirit".

It is to Dr. Arnold's credit that, though he was fearful of revolution and what it would mean to his own family, he refused to use Christianity as a bulwark for the

38 ibid., Vol.I, p.239.
41 "It is really too great a folly to be talked of as a revolutionist, with a family of seven young children,
existing order. His attitude to those who would do so is set forth in one of his letters.

"One good man, who sent a letter to The Times the other day, recommends that the clergy should preach subordination and obedience. I seriously say, God forbid that they should; for if any earthly thing could ruin Christianity in England, it would be this."  

Dr. Arnold's behaviour during the crises of 1829-30 and 1839-40 is interesting, because a distinct change occurs during the decade interval. In 1829, Arnold was chiefly concerned with the lower classes. He recognized the justice of their cause, but felt the inadequacy of their leaders. Accordingly, he felt impelled to instruct them in their proper course. It was this motive that led him to undertake the publication of a journal, "The Englishman's Register". "There are," said Arnold, "publications enough to excite the people to political reform, my object is moral and intellectual reform." Earlier, Arnold had intended "circulating small tracts à la Cobbett in point of style to show the people the real state of things and their causes." Apparently this project was laid aside in favour of the Register. This paper, intended to be a Christian counterpart to the Penny Magazine, brought out several numbers, "those articles on the labourers being read with great interest by the mechanics and people of

and a house and income that I should be rather puzzled to match in America, if I were obliged to change my quarters."  


that class." However, after a few months the Register ceased publication, Dr. Arnold having to pay for a £200 deficit.

All things considered, Dr. Arnold deserves a good deal of credit for his attitude during the Reform crisis. With his usual sense of the necessity of practical action, he tried, sincerely, to give the oppressed classes what help and guidance he could. The references we have noted to Cobbett are interesting. It is a pity that Arnold never met Cobbett, for temperamentally he was nearer to him than to almost any other of his English contemporaries. If they had met, the results would no doubt have been far-reaching. It is interesting to speculate what would have happened if, in 1830, Dr. Arnold had become a "popular" leader.

The prosperity of the middle 1830's, as we have seen, brought a lull in England's industrial and agrarian strife, and Dr. Arnold's letters for these years contain no references to the problems of the working classes. However, "... in 1839-40, his attention was again called to the social evils of the country, as betraying themselves in the disturbances of Chartist, and the alarm which had possessed him in 1831-32 returned, though in a more chastened form, never to leave him." In this second crisis, Dr. Arnold's attitude was quite different from what it had been only ten years before. Then his interest had been primarily in the people. True, he had not considered them fitted to rule themselves, but he knew they

had been misgoverned and had wanted to help them secure better government. In 1839, there was no thought of reviving the Register, or undertaking anything similar to it. Dr. Arnold's views had been modified. He brought forward only one constructive idea. Now his appeal was no longer to the lower classes, it was to those in power to recognize the magnitude of the danger they faced. He was heartened by repressive measures such as the trial for high treason of the Newport rioters. This strain of harshness is hardly proper in a clergyman, but it was present in Arnold, and was reflected, about this same time, in Arnold's comment upon New Zealand, a possible haven during the revolution which he considered to be inevitable.

"I have actually 200 acres in New Zealand, and I confess that my thoughts often turn thitherwards but that vile population of runaway convicts and others who infest the country, deter me as the days of the Roman Proconsuls are over, who knew so well how to clear a country of such nuisances." 49

It is a platitude in psychology that fear is the cause of cruelty. This is certainly the case with Dr. Arnold.

47 Namely the founding of a sort of Social Service Research Bureau. In a letter to Carlyle, at this time, he said, "I have been trying, hitherto with no success, to form a Society, the object of which should be to collect information as to every point in the condition of the poor throughout the kingdom, and to call public attention to it by every possible means, whether by press or by yearly or quarterly meetings."

ibid., Vol.II, p. 159.


The thought of the social instability of England so affected him that he sought to avoid it whenever he could.

"I feel the state of public affairs so deeply, that I cannot bear either to read, or hear, or speak, or write about them. Only I would commend them to God's care and deliverance, if the judgment is not now as surely fixed as that of Babylon." 50

With his strong sense of history, he saw how his England tallied with Arthur Young's description of pre-revolutionary France. It seemed to him things had gone too far for cure. He endeavoured to reconcile himself to the worst. Even in 1832 he was making such foreboding statements as this, written to a certain rural dean.

"Would that we might ever meet, before perhaps we meet in America or at sea after the Revolution." 52

Matthew Arnold, then, grew to mankind in a home where the sufferings of the lower classes were recognized and an attitude of Christian charity required towards the "good poor". He lived in a home where the feeling towards the great masses of the people, aloof, distant, sullen, and little known, was one of hopeless foreboding. The Arnolds grimly awaited an inevitable Revolution. Matthew grew up in a household which was, if anything, re-actionary; where the father spoke of Chartism as a "deadly ulcer".

Matthew Arnold's god-father, John Keble, at one time

proudly took for himself the name of Misoneologus, "Hater of New Ideas". But though Matthew was brought into the Christian communion under so dire a sponsor, he was not fated to show any antipathy to new ideas himself and, rather, made "inaccessibility to ideas" a charge against others. In his attitude to the masses, for example, Matthew Arnold showed a Liberalism in advance of that of most of his contemporaries. When English Liberals and English Conservatives both found the ideal of social equality abhorrent, Arnold boldly championed it. His reason was clear to him, though his father would almost certainly have challenged its validity.

"...in France, that very equality, which is by us so impetuously decried, while it has by no means improved (it is said) the upper classes of French society, has undoubtedly given to the lower classes, to the body of the common people, a self-respect, an enlargement of spirit, a consciousness of counting for something in their country's action, which has raised them in the scale of humanity."

Notwithstanding this statement, Matthew Arnold's attitude towards the masses was not entirely one of sympathy. There was also an element of antipathy, and in either emotion we may see the effects of his father's teachings.

The masses during the greater part of Matthew Arnold's life, were of little interest to him. He probably saw sufficient of them during his inspections of schools. Moreover, the masses did not appear significant to him. He was

55 Ibid., p. 13.
aware of "that fixed resolve of the working class to count for something and live", but he was also aware that the hour of proletarian freedom was still remote, that it was the middle-class which during his time would set the ideals for society. Accordingly, he chiefly addressed himself to this latter class, and references to the masses, in his books on social ethics, are almost entirely incidental or secondary.

Only at one time, during 1848, when it appeared that the lower classes might seize power prematurely, did Arnold interest himself directly in them. At that time he attended the Chartists' demonstration in Trafalgar Square, and even went to one of their meetings. He wrote to his sister:

"I was at the Chartist convention the other night, and was much struck with the ability of the speakers. However, I should be sorry to live under their government - nor do I intend to - though Nemesis would rejoice at their triumph. The ridiculous terror of people here is beyond belief; and yet is not likely, I fear, to lead to any good results."

Now this quotation is interesting for several reasons. First, it shows how Matthew differed from his father in his cool self-possession of manner. Remembering Dr. Arnold's obsession with revolution and his comment on the "ulcer of Chartism", one feels that the father, had he been living, would have been among those moved by terror at the demonstrations of the Chartists. This coolness with which Matthew Arnold appears to contemplate the approaching end of the existing order may, of course, be only a superficial appear-

ance, resulting from an inner determination not to give way to conscious feelings of panic. On the other hand, it seems far more likely that this coolness sprang from that personal dissociation of himself from any class which was already becoming evident. Echoes of Dr. Arnold are to be heard, however, in this account of the visit to the Chartist meeting, both in the suggestion that there is a measure of justice on the side of the people, and that the triumph of their cause would be a just punishment upon the classes that have misgoverned them.

We have seen how Dr. Arnold, filled with fear of revolution, in his later years tended to become more reactionary, but he never denied that the lower classes had a measure of justification for seeking to throw off the rule of the classes that had misgoverned them. Matthew Arnold agreed with his father on this last point, and he further agreed with him that what was wrong was not the basic cause of the people, but the crassness of their ideals and the lack of moral standards in their leadership. Accordingly, Matthew was not against the Chartists because they were breaking any law or committing any injustice, but simply because he did not consider them yet fitted to govern any nation.

"...I have, for the most part, broken with the ideas and the tea-meetings of my class, yet I have not, on that account, been brought much nearer to the ideas and works of the Barbarians or of the Populace."

"... such is the state of our masses that their movements now can only be brutal blundering and destroying. And if they wait, there is no one, as far as one sees, to train them to conquer by their attitude and superior conviction." 59

This last statement does not mean Arnold believed the masses had no future fitness to govern. Quite to the contrary, he was a keen enough political observer to see how the masses are swept by ideas, and it was this accessibility to ideas that seemed, to Arnold, to be the hope of the lower classes. He admired France because it was in that country that the masses were most open to ideas, and hence exerted the most power.

"You must by this time begin to see what people mean by placing France politically in the van of Europe: it is the intelligence of their idea-moved masses which makes them, politically, as far superior to the insensible masses of England as to the Russian serfs." 60

This emphasis on the importance of ideas upon the masses may not be an original thought with Matthew Arnold, but it has no parallel in the thinking of his father. With sentiments such as these, Arnold, one might expect, would have felt that if the masses were exposed to education, if reason and the will of God were allowed to prevail, the lower orders would soon order the world aright. But Arnold did not so pursue the line his argument logically suggested.

It has, of course, long been a standing quarrel between Arnold and his critics that he will not always follow

60 ibid., pp. 5-6.
out the implications of his own premises. Here we have an example of this failing. No sooner in his writings does Matthew Arnold pat the masses upon their collective back, for their accessibility to ideas, than he hastens to assert that certain ideas are best withheld from them. It is this attitude that Arnold took, for instance, in his writings upon Colenso. He does not deny the validity of the Bishop's Biblical criticism; but he quarrels with him for making his findings public, because these ideas will disturb the masses.

"He had said that democracy is moved by ideas, now he says that the vast majority of the members of a democracy must be protected from a certain set of ideas, those about religion." 61

Arnold has no real reason why the masses should not be allowed to be disturbed by these ideas. He quotes the precedent afforded by Spinoza who kept his corrosive ideas from the masses; but to quote precedent is not to give a reason. On the basis of a general reading of Arnold, one may, however, assign a probable cause for this attitude. It is this: the masses are not to be exposed to certain ideas because the masses cannot be trusted. Arnold, beneath his show of philosophical detachment, had it would seem a deep, personal feeling of uncertainty about the masses. The masses might be allowed to come into power - eventually, not now - but they were not to be allowed to choose their own time and place. Arnold, as we know, had a rooted aversion to the labouring Englishman doing as he liked. He must learn to conform to


62 See the chapter in *Culture and Anarchy* entitled "On Doing as One Pleases".
the ethical social pattern set by Matthew Arnold, and only then could he undertake his own self-government.

This feeling of social instability which, when we come to examine it, is found to lie, together with a kindred feeling of religious instability, at the base of much of Arnold's writing, we may attribute to the suspicion and uneasiness with which the lower classes were regarded by his class and family during his boyhood. He, like Lord Beaconsfield and his own father, grew up with an awareness that he was living in a country of two nations.

"But you know how often it happens in England that a cultivated person...talking to one of the lower class, feels, and cannot but feel, that there is somehow a wall of partition between himself and the other, that they seem to belong to two different worlds. Thought, feelings, everything is different." 63

Chapter Four

Dr. Arnold and the State

"Society is indeed a contract. Subordinate contracts for objects of mere occasional interest may be dissolved at pleasure - but the state ought not to be considered nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico or tobacco, or some such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and be dissolved by the fancy of the parties. It is to be looked on with other reverence, because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science, a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection."

- Burke

Dr. Arnold lived in an age before British Israelism had been born at home, or supercilious Americans, abroad, had taken to uttering, with unpleasant inflection, the phrase "God's own Englishman". But he himself felt a certain holy joy in the contemplation of the Englishman, for to Thomas Arnold he seemed somehow the latest and best of God's creations.

"... he never modified or deviated from his persuasion that England had been divinely chosen to show the rest of the world how to behave." 2


2 Campbell, op.cit., p.30.
He himself had no hesitation about proclaiming that the English were not as other men. In 1829, while touring in Switzerland and Italy, Dr. Arnold sagely observed in his diary,

"England has other destinies than these countries,- I use the word in no foolish or unchristian sense, - but she has other destinies, her people have more required of them; with her full intelligence, her restless activity, her enormous means, and enormous difficulties; her pure religion and unchecked freedom; the form of society, with so much of evil, yet so much of good in it, and such immense power conferred by it;...."3

This exalted concept of England and the task confronting Englishmen gave, for Dr. Arnold, a special importance to the political constitution of the English nation. Now, what is the essential nature of a nation? Is it a handy organization for providing public utilities? The Liberals of Dr. Arnold's own day felt that it was just that. Is it something more than its constituents, a mystic entity with a soul and destiny of its own? The worship of the state, which Nietzsche foresaw would follow the decay of the worship of God, had not yet come during Dr. Arnold's time. His attitude, in point of fact, lay mid-way between these two extremes. His view reflects the influence of the classical theory of the state. He felt that the state was an instrument for the making of man's perfection. What is man's perfection? For Arnold there could be only one answer, - the leading of a completely Christian life. But is it not the function of the Christian church thus to educate and influence man? Indeed it is, Arnold would reply, and he loved to dwell upon what he

called "...the true and grand idea of a Church, that is a society for the purpose of making man like Christ,- earth like heaven,- the kingdoms of the world the kingdom of Christ."

The necessary outcome of these premises is that since the Church and the State serve the same purpose, they are essentially the same. This conclusion Dr. Arnold gladly accepted, and all his life he preached the identity of the perfect Church and perfect State.

Mr. Arnold Whitridge, for reasons best known to himself, has labelled this philosophy as a "strange doctrine", and suggests it was an eccentricity in Arnold that he should have accepted it. Actually, of course, there is nothing eccentric or strange about this doctrine, untimely though it may have been. It is the doctrine upon which the Church of England was founded. Stanley noticed that Arnold had a particular weakness for Hooker. That is not hard to account for, because the last books of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* were written to maintain the very thesis that Arnold championed.

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5 Note Arnold's comments upon a certain German Erastian. "Connected with this is Rothe's book, which I have read with great interest. His first position,- that the State and not the Church (in the common and corrupt sense of the term), is the perfect form under which Christianity is to be developed - entirely agrees with my notions." Stanley, *op.cit.* Vol.II, p.92.
6 Whiteidge, *op.cit.* p.175.
Besides the authority of the great Elizabethan and Caroline divines, the fathers of his church, Dr. Arnold could find other support for his doctrine. It had the assent of Burke. It had, as the *Quarterly Review* noted, the sanction of Grotius.

With such an attitude as this, Arnold might have been expected to join in politics with the high Tories. Certainly his philosophy effectively kept him from joining the Liberals whose whole policy was to discount the State as being only a necessary nuisance. But Arnold could not join with the Tories, for he saw that, regardless of what philosophy they might profess to have inherited from Clarendon, Bolingbroke, or Burke, they were concerned really with only one thing, maintaining the existing order, so that they might preserve their privileges and prerogatives, and their power to exploit the other classes. This conservative element in the Tories, this opposition to change as such, gained Arnold's hate. In all history he saw this anti-progressive spirit at work, and in all its manifestations he hated it profoundly as being "the greatest source of evil throughout the world, because it has been the most universal and the most enduring."

It should now be clear how Arnold came to find himself isolated from both the political parties of his day. He himself, indeed, liked to think that he was a Whig, but he can hardly be taken to have been one in the ordinary sense of the word. Arthur Stanley realized this when he came to write in Arnold's biography.

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"Politically, indeed, he held himself to be a strong Whig: but as a matter of fact, he found that in cases of practical co-operation with that party, he differed almost as much from them as from their opponents, and would often confess with sorrow, that there were none among them who realized what seemed to him their true principles." 10

The Edinburgh Review likewise recognised that Arnold was isolated from his contemporaries in his political thinking; it said, "Dr. Arnold belonged to no party in Church or State." 11

In concluding this very brief survey of Dr. Arnold's political philosophy, one cannot do better than to quote what has been said by one of his more recent biographers.

"His concept of politics was that of Aristotle and the Greece of the golden age, suffused with the ethics of Christianity; but modern industrialism has brought into existence a world which neither Greek sages nor the men who wrote the New Testament had any conception of. The utmost that can be said of Arnold's brave and unselfish attempt to apply the "idea" of a Christianized Greek city-state to nineteenth-century English industrial life is that it emphasized a constituent without which no sound and healthy social system can ever be developed." 12

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"In my notions about the State I am quite Papa's son and his continuator." Matthew Arnold never spoke truer words than these. His father, we have seen, thought of the State as "the perfect form under which Christianity is to be developed." Matthew Arnold, living in a different age, one that was becoming increasingly agnostic and critical, could no

longer call man's perfected state Christianity, but he did call it culture. If we allow for this single but all-important progression of view, we may say that Matthew Arnold's attitude was that of his father. He might well have defined the state as "the perfect form under which Culture is to be developed." As it was, he spoke of "the State or organ of our collective best self, of our national right reason." Matthew's message of the state as the embodiment of man's best self was to remain as far from practical acceptance as had his father's teachings of three decades earlier. If Dr. Arnold's politics were to appear "strange" to Mr. Whitridge, who seems to have preserved intact the mentality of the last mid-century, Matthew Arnold's politics were "rather fantastic" to his biographer, Russell.

In the world of practical politics, Matthew's attitude was just what might have been expected. Like his father, he opposed the Tories, and for exactly the same reason, their fixed antipathy to any measure for change.

Arnold, M., Culture and Anarchy, p. 175.
It may be well to note here that Matthew Arnold, like his father, is going down a trail already blazed in advance by Burke. Compare this foregoing quotation with this from Burke:
"Society requires not only that the passions of individuals should be subjected, but that even in the mass and body as well as in individuals the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection. This can only be done by a power out of themselves: and not, in the exercise of its function, subject to that will and to those passions which it is its office to bridle and subdue."
(The italics are Burke's own.)

Russell, op.cit., p.11.
"The Liberal party, it seemed to me, had no body of just, clear, well-ordered thought upon politics, and were only superior to the Conservative in not having for their rule of conduct merely the negative instinct against change." 16

He, then, preserved untarnished the Arnold tradition against Toryism. He did become a friend of the Rothschilds, but to the last he said, "...I should never myself vote for a Tory." 17

As far as the Whigs were concerned, Matthew Arnold, like his father professed to be one of them.

"At the General Election of 1868 he urbanely informed a Tory Committee which asked for the advantage of his name, that he was 'an old Whig', nurtured in the tradition of Lansdowne House." 18

Like his father again, Matthew had a philosophy different from that of the Liberal party. When he analyzed Liberalism he found many things in it repugnant to him, "...unrestricted competition, and the making of large industrial fortunes; in the religious sphere, the Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion." Thus it was that Matthew Arnold came to say, "I am a Liberal, yet I am a Liberal tempered by experience, reflexion and renouncement, and I am, above all, a believer in culture." 20

19 Arnold, M., *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 111.
20 ibid., p. 73.
Chapter Five

Dr. Arnold and the Christian Faith

"Reason can, and it ought to judge, not only of the meaning, but also of the morality and the evidence of revelation."

- Bishop Butler

The roots of a man's religious belief are often hard to find, and frequently the individual himself would be amazed to know into what strange provinces they may extend. It is instructive to know that, as a boy, Newman wished for belief in the "Arabian Nights", but who shall trace to its origin the faith of a Tolstoi, an Augustine, or a Fox? Fortunately no groping intuitions into the hinterland of the mind are necessary in order to find the foundations of the belief of Dr. Arnold. He was aware of the grounds for his faith, as he was aware of grounds for everything else in his life. He did not show any reticence in expounding his reasons for belief - he believed they were the only reasonable causes why any man should take a religious attitude.

Dr. Arnold's view was this. We look about us in the world and become aware of certain things which would seem to indicate the existence of a god, would seem, indeed,

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particularly to guarantee the truth of the Christian religion. On the other hand, there are other elements which, intellectually, cannot be reconciled with any religious theory of the universe. Dr. Arnold never sought to deny the existence of those evidences that are irreconcilable with religious belief. Next, having admitted the existence of these two bodies of evidence, Dr. Arnold proceeds to weigh them, and finds they establish a general balance. There is no decisive evidence to justify either atheism or conversion. This, however, does not mean that one should then withdraw from the issue, retreating into agnosticism. One cannot remain indifferent to the truth or falsity of religion. "But how foolish," he exclaims, "on every calculation, is such indecisive behaviour as this?" A choice must be made; but - on what grounds? Dr. Arnold had a solution - since intellectually we are free to make either choice, we must then base our decision upon its own consequences. The one choice affords us a world moral, meaningful, assessable; the other gives us a chaos in which to flounder for an indeterminate span of years. Faced with such alternatives, we accept the original hypothesis of a meaningful universe, make the act of faith, and receive at once the comforts of the Christian faith.

"For faith does no violence to our understanding; but the intellectual difficulties being balanced, and it being necessary to act on the one side for the other, faith determines a man to embrace that side which leads to moral and practical perfection; and unbelief leads him to embrace the opposite, or what I may call the

2 Sermons, Series I, p.159.
Devil's religion, which is, after all, quite as much beset with intellectual difficulties as God's religion is, and morally is nothing but one mass of difficulties and monstrosities."

This last quotation is one that should hold our attention; for not only is it a fair statement of Arnold's position, it is an instance of two serious flaws in his thinking. The first of these flaws is what we have already found a contemporary reviewer so accurately analysing as Dr. Arnold's habit of assuming just that point that he ought to prove. The morality of the choice is made the sanction for deciding that this is a moral universe. The other flaw is what we may call retro-activism of choice. Once a person has chosen the Christian religion, the original choice is viewed in terms of Christianity, and the contrary choice becomes, at once, not an equally reputable intellectual alternative but "the Devil's religion". Wheels within wheels! Philosophically the original argument is demolished, and the whole specious exposition assumes the significance of a kitten chasing its tail.

Dr. Arnold's religious position may now be summed up in a phrase. It was a combination of rationalism and inherent ethical prejudice. Dr. Arnold himself was aware of only the rational element. He seems to have been quite

Note that Arnold is not quite certain about the equilibrium of the rational evidence. He proceeds to add, "we only contend that even intellectually unbelief is the more unreasonable of the two."

unaware of his own native bias. One thing is certain, - he had no feeling for mysticism or religious experience.

"He was not afraid of the name of rationalist. He would trust no man who had turned fanatic. He forcibly reproved the tyranny of opposing faith to reason." "

He was, of course, aware of the difficulties attendant on the purely rational attitude. Early in his career, he found it necessary to affirm, "We must brace our minds to the full extent of that great truth - that 'no man hath seen God at any time'."

It is worth one's while to trace back to its source this Arnoldian method of dealing with the problem of ontology. In point of fact, Dr. Arnold was a disciple of Bishop Butler, a curious creation of the Eighteenth Century, who set himself, in his Analogy, the typically Eighteenth Century task of reducing religion to a matter of reason. In his work this worthy bishop endeavoured to deduce, from the available science of his day, evidence to support the Christian faith. The emergence of a butterfly from a chrysalis, for example, was taken to lend probability to the emergence of an immortal soul from the human body. Thoroughly rationalist by temperament, the bishop proceeded to affirm that, in the event of a conflict between faith and reason, reason must be accorded

Such an attitude as this of course, is anathema to the religious mystic, and would never be tolerated in any church making a dogma of revelation. Small wonder that Newman, considering in his mind the catholicity of the Church of England found "the mere production of a man like Butler, a pregnant fact much to be meditated on." And it becomes clearer why Newman, speaking of Arnold, the chief proponent in his day of the Butlerian thesis, should ask "But is he a Christian?"

It is not to be thought that Thomas Arnold was unusual in his admiration of Butler. That divine enjoyed a certain revival of fame during the early Nineteenth Century. He was highly regarded at Oriel, where Arnold in his youth held a fellowship. The Quarterly Review noting, in 1828, a new edition of the Analogy, affirmed

"...we look upon the Analogy of Bishop Butler as the work above all others on which the mind can repose with the most entire satisfaction, and faith found itself as on a rock."  

6 "...suppose two standing precepts enjoined by the same authority, that, in certain conjunctures, it is impossible to obey both; that the former is moral, i.e., a precept of which we see the reasons, and that they hold in the particular case before us; but that the latter is positive, i.e. a precept of which we do not see the reasons; it is indisputable that our obligations are to obey the former, because there is an apparent reason for this preference, and none against it."

Butler, op.cit., p. 132.


8 Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua, p.34.

The influence of Butler upon Dr. Arnold and directly upon Matthew Arnold, witness the sonnet *Written in Butler's Sermons*, is significant in the history of thought. Through it we may link the rationalism of the early Eighteenth Century with the agnosticism of the late Nineteenth.

Dr. Arnold's faith having now been traced to its immediate source, we may proceed to a study of its qualities and aspects. We have already noted a rational element, curiously at odds with his fervent emotionalism, and suffering some abuse from it. It is necessary for us to keep this constantly in mind. Arnold, through his association with Whately, Copplestone, Hawkins, and the other Oriel Noetics, was attached to the extreme rationalist wing of the broad-fronted Anglican communion, men who pushed the claims of reason against revelation so far as to make many dubious of their orthodoxy, and finally to provoke a furious controversy when one of their number was appointed Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford. The unqualified rationalism of the Noetics impressed their contemporaries. Newman was associated with them after he took over Arnold's fellowship at Oriel. Like Arnold, he came under the influence of Whately, the leader of the group, and was set to reading Bishop Butler. Newman was only voicing the general estimate when he said these men

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"called everything into question".

Having decided that he had reasonable grounds for belief, Dr. Arnold proceeded to embrace the orthodox fundamentalist Christianity of his day. The possibility that any religion other than the Christian might appeal to a gentleman who reaches faith through reason never occurred to him.

The simple fundamentalism and literalism of Dr. Arnold's faith is clearly shown in his sermons. He accepted Archbishop Ussher's chronology, and accordingly, preaching on the text "And God saw every thing that he had made; and, behold it was very good," he proceeded to expound:

"Let us go on about sixteen hundred years from the time when all had been declared thus good and happy. ... we shall find the world in ruin, the sun hidden by perpetual clouds, the sea burst from its limits, and covering the whole face of the land, plants and trees destroyed, living creatures overwhelmed in the waters, or leading an unnatural life in the close prison of the ark." 13

Besides his stalwart faith in the reality of Noah and the flood, Dr. Arnold had the other concomitants of Anglican theological orthodoxy. A second coming was to be expected in the not too distant future, and during the

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12 Note, however, that he was unable to accept the Thirty-Nine Articles, when at Oxford (Stanley, Vol.I, p.18), apparently having some scruples about the Trinity, and that throughout his life he had a warm feeling for the Apostle Thomas (ibid., VolI, p.27).

13 _Sermons_, Series II, p. 248.

14 ibid., Series I, p. 190.
interim good Christians were to be "closely knit together, and to direct their joint efforts towards the overthrow of the power of Satan over mankind."

This fundamentalism is a little strange when we remember that this was the period when the Germans were first revealing the anomalies in Biblical history. Apparently Thomas Arnold did not feel concerned with the researches of these scholars - it is doubtful whether in his busy life he ever took thought of the real implications of their findings.

"...he was comparatively untouched by any critical theories as to the historicity of the New Testament portraiture of the personality and work of Christ. Strauss made no impression upon him except that of repulsion; any suggestion towards impairing the authority and sufficiency of the gospel accounts of the sayings and doings of the divine founder and object of the Christian faith he felt to be incompatible with his spiritual experience." 16

What led Arnold to ignore Strauss was, actually, not a belief in religious experience, but his own prejudice against him which he chose to disguise under a few euphemisms. This prejudice was obvious to W. G. Ward, who turned against Arnold after he had discovered that he was criticizing Strauss without having even read him.

The fundamentalist Christian finds himself faced by a moral problem in the reported savagery of some of Jehovah's dealings. One possible solution to this problem

15 Sermons, Series I, p.190.
16 Campbell, Thomas Arnold, pp.32-33.
Note, however, that Campbell is unwarranted in his use of the phrase "spiritual experience". Dr. Arnold never laid claim to this.
17 Strachey, op.cit., p. 229.
is that of Euripides, to say that God is not God if he behaves in such a manner. Dr. Arnold was not forced to any such extremity, neatly extricating himself from this dilemma by a doctrine of "accommodation". This teaching was a favourite one with Dr. Arnold, but it was Stanley who gave it its aptest statement:

"... he (Dr. Arnold) vindicated God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son, and to the Jews to exterminate the nations of Canaan, by explaining the principles on which these commands were given and their reference to the moral state of those to whom they were addressed." 18

It is important to note this philosophy of accommodation for it is one which must have been frequently and forcibly presented to Matthew Arnold, and later it was to re-emerge in his own writings - not as a principle in theology, but one upon which could be raised a philosophy of poetic criticism. The poet is concerned with providing a people with a criticism of life - and his work is to be judged, not by literary absolutes, but by the needs and limitations of his public. Matthew's ideal man of letters, like Dr. Arnold's God, accommodated himself to the spiritual darkness of his age.

Despite the body of Old and New Testament theology


19 Credit for establishing this point must be given to Mr. Lionel Trilling. It is he who first showed that Dr. Arnold's "accommodation" was "...in essence the historical relativism which was to play so important a part in Matthew Arnold's criticism of literature, politics and religion."

Matthew Arnold, p. 42.
which Dr. Arnold inherited and without reservation accepted, he showed a singular tolerance, urging that dogma was secondary and instrumental. He was prepared to have the Church of England find a common ground for union with the Non-conformists, though he could not bring himself to make terms with the Unitarians. The doctrine of the Trinity, after all, pertained to the very nature of the godhead and, besides, was a subject "full of the deepest practical benefit". But in other matters, Thomas Arnold allowed considerable latitude.

"Christians, he said, became more Christian in proportion as they were less theological; the revelation of God in Christ should ever be sufficient, not merely as a statement of belief, but still more as a guiding principle in conduct."  

Matthew Arnold was only giving a wider application to this same general temper of mind, when he stated "All forms of religion are but approximations to the truth." Religions had the same meaning for Matthew that sects had for his father, both men were impatient of distinctions of form. The progression in point of view is immense, but a continuity has been preserved.

There was one notable exception to Dr. Arnold's tolerance of sects of Christians - his violent hostility to the Anglo-Catholics and, to a lesser degree, the Catholics. In part this sprang simply from a Protestant, anti-Roman prejudice, and found expression in the hyperbolical language

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20 Sermons, Series II, p. 74.
21 Campbell, op.cit., p. 132.
of emotionalism upon such occasions as that when he spoke of "the carnal and lying sacrifice of the Mass". In part also it sprang from a rationalist's contempt for anything smacking of the esoteric or mystic. And in part it was derived from hostility to a cult which put emphasis upon such secondary things as rites and ceremonies, dogma and sacraments, things which, in the eyes of a Protestant, put the soul one remove from thoughts of God, while providing a breeding-ground for schism and dissension.

There is no need to trace in this essay the course of Arnold's campaignings against the Newmanites, from the time of his publication of the broadside on "The Oxford Malignants" to that of his own arrival at the university, as Regius Professor of History, to rally the forces of Puritan and Rational religion against the subtle incumbent of St. Mary's. One quotation, from the famous article just referred to, may well be given to show how Dr. Arnold, in the fourteenth year of his eldest son's life, regarded Newman and the High Church party.

"A dress, a ritual, a name, a ceremony; a technical phraseology; the superstition of a priesthood, without its power; the form of Episcopal government, without the substance; a system imperfect and paralysed, not independent, not sovereign, afraid to cast off the subjection against which it is perpetually murmuring. Such are the objects of High Church fanaticism - objects so pitiful that, if gained ever so completely, they would make no man the wiser or the better, - they would lead to no good, intellectual, moral or spiritual - to no effect, social or religious, except to the changing of sense into silliness, and holiness of heart and life into formality and hypocrisy." 23

Now that a little has been said on the quality of Dr. Arnold's belief, it is possible to begin to study the growth of Matthew's attitude towards religion.

In his sermons, Dr. Arnold set forth a number of ideas on religious education which, synthesized, give an intelligible system or sequence. First, the child is taught to desire the approval of his parents. Second, he is taught to desire the approval of Christ. Third, he reaches a period of mature thought which marks the end of childish faith. Fourth, he comes to a recognition of the equal intellectual arguments for and against faith. Fifth, he realizes that faith is the more fruitful alternative. Sixth, he accepts the national church, and becomes a faithful Christian.

We have no reason to suspect Matthew Arnold of a precocious agnosticism - a disinclination in childhood to believe that God sees the little sparrow fall. Of the six stages Dr. Arnold found in the growth of mature belief, it was undoubtedly in the fourth that his eldest son came to grief. When he came to look upon the world, he could not find the same neat balance of evidences that his father, and Bishop Butler, had found. This is not entirely surprising. Matthew Arnold, to state a truism, lived in a world that was different from that his father had known in his youth. Matthew's formative years witnessed the coming-in of a period of scientific advancement, in which many of the trusted old
proofs of teleology were to become disproven. Consider, for instance, geology. Bishop Butler had found Eighteenth Century geologists quite prepared to support belief in Noah's flood. And as for Dr. Arnold, he was himself a student of geology, finding it a sturdy prop for faith.

"When Professor Buckland, then one of our Fellows, began his career in that science, to the advancement of which he has contributed so much, Arnold became one of his most earnest and intelligent pupils, and you know how familiarly and practically he applied geological facts in all his later years."

It was in 1823 that Dr. Buckland published his magnum opus. He entitled it, encouragingly, "Reliquiae Diluvianae: or Observations on the Organic Remains contained in caves, Fissures, and Diluvial Gravel, and on other Geological Phenomena, attesting the Action of an Universal Deluge". Buckland wrote with all the authority attached to the professorship of geology at Oxford. In 1830, however, a pupil of Buckland, Charles Lyell, began publication of his Principles of Geology, a book which, wiping out the old comfortable Biblical chronology, set in its stead vistas of hundreds of thousands, nay millions, of years of geological development. It is difficult to assess the consequences to the Christian Faith of Lyell's geological text-book. It was destined to make the old faith of Archbishop Ussher and Dr. Arnold one that would be smiled out of existence in any educated gathering. It was one of those things that threw hopelessly out of balance the scales wherein Dr. Arnold had weighed the evid-

ences for and against Christian belief.

In the face of the discoveries of Nineteenth Century Science, discoveries which, though still partial, held obvious materialist implications, unbelief was bound to increase among gentlemen of the Butlerian temper. Whitridge, indeed, has maintained that even the principles of the Noetics, if pushed to their logical conclusions, would have resulted in scepticism. Reason, then, having resulted in a bedevilling of the old balance of evidences, the only sure road left for religion was to repudiate reason and found its pretensions upon direct experience. Though few of Newman's adherents would have openly admitted as much, it was probably a general intuition of the new intellectual insecurity of religion that led them to turn to the mysticism of High Church Anglicanism. Newman himself was highly aware of how, in his day, the current of scientific thought carried the intellectual towards scepticism.

"'I thank God," he wrote to Dr. Pusey in 1845, 'that He has shielded me morally from what intellectually might easily come to me - general scepticism!"  

Newman was giving his famous sermons when Matthew Arnold first came to Oxford, and the young man went to hear him. In later life he wrote to the cardinal, recalling the impression he had then made upon him.

"I cannot forbear adding, what I have often wished to tell you, that no words can be too strong to express the interest with which I used to hear you at Oxford,

26 Ward, op.cit., p. 31.
and the pleasure with which I continue to read your writings now." 27

Matthew would probably have been glad if he could have found a solution for his own gathering doubts in conversion to Catholicism, but for the son of Dr. Arnold there could be no such easy escape. The voice of his upbringing was still strong in his ears. The rationalist Dr. Arnold had taught him that he must trust to his reason:

"It is vain for such a man to envy the peace of ignorance; God calls him to the painful pursuit of knowledge, and he must not disobey the call. Nor may he, as some do, strive to do violence to his understanding, and to the very nature of things, by trying to combine knowledge with an undisturbed tranquillity of belief, to enjoy the pleasures of a clear and active mind, without being subject to its pains." 28

If Matthew were to remain true to his father's teachings he could not join with Newman. Newman did not regard reason with the feeling Dr. Arnold did. Newman spoke with abhorrence of Liberalism, as a "false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters, in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue, and therefore is out of place." 29

Dr. Arnold, the champion of Liberalism in theology had bet everything on reason.

"The first rule with him was, to follow the truth at all hazards - regardless in what apparent difficulties it may involve us - regardless in what bad company it may lead us. The absolute right and duty of the mind to judge for itself, the total negation of any

28 Sermons, Series I, p.xxii.
human authority binding in matters of faith—these are the points on which he insisted in season and out of season...."

At Oxford, Matthew Arnold probably reached the first cross-roads in his life. He became really aware of the intellectual problems attached to belief (as his father had intended). He rejected Newmanism and mysticism (as his father had intended). He took the road that led to agnosticism (as his father had most emphatically not intended). The moral would seem to be that a once-tried method cannot be trusted to secure the same results as before when applied in a new mental milieu.

5

The sequel to the disastrous employment of the Butlerian method in the Nineteenth Century is interesting. Certain of the young men Thomas Arnold had trained in its application were left in a sad way. Their master, never doubting that reason led to faith, had exhorted them to trust to thought. At the same time, he had labelled the rational choice of scepticism "the Devil's religion". What were Rugby men to do when reason appeared to lead away from faith? True, Dr. Arnold had said certain words of comfort:

"I will ... say that many who have doubted the fact (of the Resurrection) even in the very moment of their doubting, have shown more of Christian faith than many who never doubted it at all." 31

But he had more often spoken in a very different vein:

"... neither has it entered the heart of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for them that love him; nor yet, I may add, the wrath which he has prepared for those who do not love him." 32

As the young disciples of Dr. Arnold felt themselves being borne off by currents of scepticism, they could not help shivering with a feeling of sin. Dr. Arnold had always said they would be damned if they did not believe in God and love him. And yet he had said that they must follow their reason at all costs.

Caught in this dilemma, Matthew Arnold oscillated for a decade and a half between a tentative acceptance of God, and a despairing feeling that there was none. "God bless you," he wrote to Clough in 1848, "there is a God, but he is not well-conceived by all." But in In Utrumque Paratus, published in the following year, he looks upon the earth undecided whether God created it or

"...the wild unfather'd mass no birth
In divine seats hath known." 34

During this period of irresolution he fastened his hopes upon that reason which his father had so extolled. In 1850 he wrote, "I go to read Locke on the Conduct of the Understanding: my respect for reason as the rock of refuge to this poor exaggerated surexcited humanity increases and increases." 35

32 Sermons, Series II, p.5.
In Utrumque Paratus is a perfect statement for a balanced agnosticism - but agnosticism, as Julian Huxley has recently pointed out, is "an intellectual tight-rope which most people cannot tread for long." Matthew Arnold, for one, found that he could not indefinitely continue his balancing act, and by 1863 he had turned towards religion, repudiating at last the rule of reason:

"Still the religious life maintains its indefeasible claims, and in its own sphere inexorably refuses to be satisfied with the new thought, to admit it to be of any truth or significance, until it has imparted to it its own divine power of refreshing souls."

The statement is an admission of the validity of the central thesis of Newman and the Oxford Movement, but though Matthew Arnold could by 1863 finally deny the sovereignty of the reason, his whole temper of mind had become so rational that he could not hope to accept the old Christian dogmas which were obviously at odds with the new science. Instead, he started to erect his own new religion which, while non-rational, would nowhere take issue with the rationalist. We say that Matthew's cult of the "power not ourselves" was non-rational, for the final ground Arnold advanced for belief in it was not reason but experience. There was always a slight vein of mysticism in him. Finally it emerged, weak, anaemic, diluted,


38 Note that Thomas Arnold, the younger, ultimately entered the Roman Catholic Church.
but recognizable:

"... if on the other hand, they ask: 'How are we to verify that there rules an enduring Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness?' - we may answer at once: 'How? why as verify that fire burns - by experience!'" 39

The answer is the stock one of all religionists. Even the choice of analogy is revealing; Catholic mystics have long spoken of Christ as the "burning babe".

It is interesting to notice the fate of another of Dr. Arnold's pupils, Arthur Hugh Clough. At Rugby, Clough's nervous and emotional character proved very ductile in the hands of the resolute headmaster, and "Yankee" Clough became fervently pious. He, too, followed the path of reason, and by 1841 - Dr. Arnold was still alive, and Clough just turned twenty-one - was writing such sad verses at these, from a poem he entitled Blank Misgivings of a Creature moving in Worlds not realized.

Arnold, M., Literature and Dogma, p. 304.

In one of Clough's Rugby journals is to be found a prayer, written when he was entrusted with the editorship of the school paper.

"O all-wise God whose Providence has ordained this undertaking, and laid its weight on me, grant that it be not a snare unto me. Let it not interfere with those more especial duties which I am placed here to perform - with my efforts to improve myself in knowledge and intellectual power so as to be better fit for the duties of my future life, - far less with those I should ever be making for my own spiritual improvement, and that of my companions."

Lowry, op.cit., p. 12.
"Here am I yet, another twelvemonth spent,
One-third departed of the mortal span,
Carrying on the child into the man,
Nothing into reality. Sails rent,
And rudder broken, - reason impotent, -
Affections all unfixed; so forth I fare
On the mid seas unheedingly." 41

We have seen Matthew Arnold writing to Clough, saying in the manner of one whistling to keep his courage up, "There is a God, but he is not well-conceived by all."

Clough adopted an equally lugubrious tone, and addressed himself to this unsatisfactory deity in the following vein:

"I will not prate of 'thus' and 'so'  
And be profane with 'yes' and 'no',
Enough that in our soul and heart  
Thou, whatsoever Thou may'st be, art." 42

In point of conviction, the prayer is little better than that of Voltaire's soldier, "My God, if there is a God, save my soul, if I have a soul."

Finally poor Clough could not keep his troubles to himself any longer. In 1846 his doubts led him to resign his Oriel fellowship. All his emotions and upbringing shrank from scepticism - but the voice of reason was calling, and he must not close his ears to it. At last he summoned his full powers of resolution, made his decision, and shouted it hysterically, "Christ is not risen!" and he repeated it with half sob in Dipsychus - "Christ has not risen!"

42 ibid., p. 87.
43 ibid., p. 100 (Easter Day, Naples 1849)
44 ibid., p. 109.
Chapter Six

"I cannot," he said, "enter fully into those lines of Wordsworth -
'To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.'
There is to me something in them of a morbid feeling -
life is not long enough to take such an intense interest
in objects themselves so little."

- Dr. Arnold

Arthur Stanley said of Dr. Arnold that "in works of art he took little interest", and this is true as a general statement. Although he did have a feeling for Gothic cathedrals, admiring Sens and Chartres, there was only one art in which Dr. Arnold had any intense interest, that of historiography. Stanley probably was not thinking of the writing of history as an art when he made the statement just given, but G. M. Trevelyan has reminded us that Clio is a Muse, and there is no real reason why one should not discuss Thomas Arnold, in his role of historian, in a chapter devoted to his relationship to the arts. Certainly, if power of fascination and the presentation of a problem in communication are the marks of an art, historiography was an art to

4 ibid., Vol.II, p.344.
Dr. Arnold. Only hear the language in which he described it.

"There floats before me an image of power and beauty in History, which I cannot in any way realize, and which often tempts me to throw all that I have written clean into the fire." 5

We are told that, as a boy, Thomas Arnold was a fervent reader of the historians, Gibbon and Burke, Mitford, Russell, and Priestly, and Livy, Herodotus and Xenophon. In mature life, his idol was Barthold Niebuhr, a contemporary German, who had begun writing in 1812 his Romische Geschichte, a work which marks a new era in historical studies, being the first to make critical use of literary sources. Dr. Arnold with his customary zest and enthusiasm, was whole-hearted in his reverence of Niebuhr. He extolled him as greater than Scaliger, and referred to his history as "... that immortal work of Niebuhr, which has left other writers nothing to do, except either to copy or abridge it." Guided by these beliefs, Dr. Arnold set himself in his own History of Rome to provide an English counterpart for Niebuhr's history, something other than a straight translation.

Although Niebuhr occupies a respectable place in the history of history, he does not stand with the first-raters, Xenophon, Tacitus, Vico, Gibbon, Von Ranke. The

praises which Dr. Arnold heaped upon him were inordinate.
They made their impression upon the young Matthew, however,
and we find him, in 1853, speaking of Niebuhr as the man of
"widest culture" produced by the age, and he links him with
Goethe. Today, Niebuhr is not considered the best even of
the historians of his own day. He attached, for instance,
too much credence to Livy, whereas Ferguson, with whom Arnold
and his master were in disagreement, has been vindicated in
his suspicions of this source. Arnold, following Niebuhr,
was betrayed into whatever inaccuracies of fact were to be
found in the latter. Dr. Arnold was, in fact, a literary or
interpretative historian rather than a scientific, research
worker. This admission he himself was prepared to make,
openly confessing that he had "but little acquaintance with
manuscripts."

In later years Matthew Arnold was to some degree
to follow in his father's foot-steps, like him venturing into
a field where scientific workers were to eye askance his
lightly deduced findings. Only to a complete unawareness
of the scope and validity of scientific study of philology and
Biblical history, can we attribute Matthew Arnold's "romantic
reconstructions of imaginary Jewish history and religion."

Let us consider a single instance of this amiable foible
in Matthew Arnold. It was in 1875 that he published Literature and Dogma in which he boldly affirmed that the worship

11 Saintsbury, George, Matthew Arnold, Edinburgh, William
Blackwood and Sons, 1902, p. 139.
of Jehovah in the Old Testament was a poetical concept, equivalent to what he himself calls "delight in the Eternal", meaning thereby "the happiness we all feel to spring from conduct". Now all this was in 1875, even though as early as 1862, Ghillany had linked Jehovah with Yahweh, tribal god of the Kenites, and originally a sandstorm god in Arabia, — a theory still accepted today. Matthew Arnold obviously had no business placing any private interpretation upon the meaning and significance of the term "Jehovah", without first sifting the scientific philological and theological writings. Such a cavalier disregard for the scientific works is understandable in the son of a historian who rarely consulted manuscripts.

The chief reason for Dr. Arnold’s devotion to history was his belief in a divine Providence guiding mankind, a Providence whose workings could be distinguished by the devout historian. Vico, in his Scienza Nuova, had been the first to set forth the study of Providence through history, with Vico, "the study of human history ... becomes a means to the understanding of God." It was with this devout purpose that Thomas Arnold worked in his historical writings. It is true there were a few anomalies to be encountered, and he, with his usual honesty, admitted their existence.

14 Trilling, Matthew Arnold, p. 51.
"If we were to judge of God's moral government exclusively from the various earthly fortune of good and bad men, there would be few instances of success which would more disturb our faith than that of the long and peaceful reign of Augustus Caesar." 15

In the main, however, Dr. Arnold felt quite happy about this theory of history. For one thing, it was so tidy and thoughtful of the Almighty to have decided upon "communicating all religious knowledge to mankind through the Jewish people, and all intellectual civilization through the Greeks", and so Dr. Arnold went happily ahead, showing why Sparta fell for being sterile and finding no place in God's Providence, and why Rome had to be allowed to overcome Carthage in order to become a universal empire and so a distributing system for Christianity.

We smile today at philosophies of history, but there is one contribution Dr. Arnold made, one of minor detail, but one for which we should be grateful: he was the first historian to do justice to Hannibal instead of accepting the slanders of the Roman annalists. 17

Samuel Butler, it will be recalled, caricatured Dr. Arnold as Dr. Skinner of Roughborough, the historian of Athens and editor of Demosthenes. Dr. Arnold was the

17 See the introduction by Archdeacon Hare to the third volume of the History of Rome, p. vii.
historian of Rome and editor of Thucydides. In his task of editorship he showed more of the scientific spirit than was manifested in his historical labours. He spent considerable labour in research on Thucydides, and passed an entire summer at Venice, to collate a new manuscript, found in the library of St. Mark.

As we have previously noted, Dr. Arnold had a constant interest in the classics, an interest which he carried to the length of translating Herodotus, orally, for the comfort of an invalid sister, Susannah. This devotion to the classics may appear to have been strange in one whose interests were so much in the present; but it was precisely because he was so interested in the present that Dr. Arnold turned to the great writers of the past. From them he learned principles which he believed to be universally applicable, as helpful in his own day as in their own. Indeed, he believed there was a particular parallel between the situation of certain of the great Roman and Athenian writers and that of his own contemporaries:

"Thucydides and Xenophon, the orators of Athens, and the philosophers, speak a wisdom more applicable to us politically than the wisdom of even our own


countrymen who lived in the middle ages; and their position, both intellectual and political, more nearly resembled our own." 20

In this quotation we have, in essence, the statement so often made by Matthew Arnold that certain of the great Greeks were, in reality, moderns. Matthew, in writing of Empedocles, gave for his justification the seeming modernity of Empedocles' times.

"Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider exclusively modern; how much the fragments of Empedocles himself which remain to us are sufficient at least to indicate. What those who are familiar only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics have disappeared; the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared: the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust." 21

A curious consequence of this view, that the writers of certain classical periods were correspondent to contemporary thinkers, was Dr. Arnold's theory that translations of earlier classical authors were to be made in an archaic English which would strike the ear of a subject of Victoria somewhat as the original would have come to that of a subject of Caesar. In teaching translation at Rugby, Arnold followed this theory, somewhat to the amusement of the Quarterly's reviewers:

"... there is something ludicrously whimsical in supposing that boys could be taught to translate Homer in words exclusively Saxon; the tragedians, in words principally Saxon, but mixed with many of French or foreign origin, like the language of Shakespeare; Herodotus in the style and language of the chroniclers;"

Thucydides in that of Bacon and Hooker; while Demosthenes, Cicero, Caesar and Tacitus require a style completely modern." Surely this is a pedantic dream." 22

This theory of translation was employed by Francis Newman when he made the version of Homer which so provoked Matthew Arnold. Yet Arnold's anger was not at the basic intention, but the means by which it had been carried out. He, like Newman, agreed that Homer should be presented to the Victorians in English which would have the same effects of antiquity that the Greek of Homer had for Athenians of the Fifth Century B.C. In matters of translation, he stood firmly by what he had learned at Rugby.

3

There is no particular reason why a man's literary style should resemble that of his father - unless, of course, his father chanced to be his school-master also. It may be worth one's effort to see if Matthew Arnold owed anything in this respect to his father.

Dr. Arnold's prose style, though rather rough at times, was a good serviceable instrument. Arnold was himself aware of the slight unevenness of the style he used, and in rather a Carlylean mood exploded with masculine violence against "elegance":

"... I do not care one farthing if the readers think me the most uncivilized writer in the English language. It will only remove me to a greater distance

22 The Quarterly Review, Vol. LII, p.165 (n)
from the men of elegant minds with whom I shall most loathe to be associated."  

While reading this too emphatic avowal, one seems to hear a light voice whispering "Sour grapes!! There can be no doubt that Dr. Arnold was rather painfully aware of his deficiencies in style. In introducing his first series of published sermons, he felt moved to say,

"In point of style they are wholly devoid of pretention: for my main object was to write intelligibly, and if I have succeeded in this, I must be content to be censured for much homeliness, and perhaps awkwardness of expression, which I had not the skill to avoid."  

Actually, Dr. Arnold had little cause for apology. His main end was right - "to write intelligibly" - and he realized this purpose. His style was like himself - energetic, emphatic, just a little uncouth or embarrassed at times, but always quite clear in meaning. From his father, Matthew Arnold may well have learned clearness and simplicity of utterance. From some other source, possibly Herbert Hill, he learned to write smoothly.

In his youth, Dr. Arnold experienced some flutterings of poetic impulse. At Winchester he wrote enough to be labelled "poet Arnold", and at Corpus Christi "he continued the practice 'on principle', he thought it a useful and humanizing exercise". The best that even the devoted Stanley

24 Sermons, Series I, p.iii.
could say of these early efforts was: "They are remarkable rather as proofs of industry than of power." Matthew Arnold later, when referred to for an opinion, could only sadly shake his head and sigh, "Ah, my poor father! he had many excellencies but he was not a poet."

One of the things which must have cramped the development of poetic feeling in Dr. Arnold was his intense morality. Before he could allow himself to enter into the spirit of a poem, he had to be satisfied that it was wholeheartedly moral and ethical:

"... he was quite incapable of enjoying any book or poem if he disapproved of the author's principles or even if he thought that the author was half-hearted in his support of righteousness. Molière gave him no pleasure and he was troubled by Shakespeare's apparent inability to create good men." 29

When Thomas Arnold encountered a good passage, by an author whose principles were not suspect, he was able to find pure literary pleasure in the words. Both Matthew Arnold and Arthur Stanley have left tributes to Dr. Arnold's power to kindle enthusiasm by his teaching of literature. Matthew speaks to his mother of his father's "profound literary sense", and Stanley affirms that,


28 Whitridge, op.cit., p. 15.

29 ibid., p. 42. Dr. Arnold regarded Dickens only as a writer of "exciting books of amusement" (Stanley, Vol.II, p.137) and it was not until 1880 that Matthew Arnold read David Copperfield (Letters, Vol.II, p. 184).

"In poetry it was almost impossible not to catch something of the delight, almost fervour, with which, as he came to any striking passage, he would hang over it, reading it over and over again, and dwelling upon it for the mere pleasure which every word seemed to give him." 31

So much for Dr. Arnold's feeling for literature. There were other arts to which he was apparently quite unresponsive. In his letters we find not a single reference to any musical composer or work, and only one or two to the pictorial arts. When we sum all the available evidence up, the only statements that we can make are very general ones indeed. Matthew Arnold grew up in a home where literature was highly regarded. If we except the inherited love of the classics, we cannot find in Dr. Arnold any notable influence upon Matthew's literary style or interests. The senior Arnold's preference was early given to Sir Walter Scott and Ballad verse; the only literary criticism contained in the school text-books was uncorrupted admiration for Pope and the Neo-classicists.

32 ibid., Vol. I, p. 3.
33 See appendix III.
Chapter Seven

Matthew Arnold Leaves Home

"The more I see of the world the more I feel thankful for the bringing up we had, so unworldly, so sound and so pure."

- Matthew Arnold

One day, when Dr. Arnold was taking a class in Rhetoric, he suddenly realized what a loss it would be to Matthew if he were to send him to Cambridge where Aristotle and Thucydides were deprived of the just honours paid them at Oxford. Accordingly, thoughts of Cambridge were laid aside for once and all, and the boy was groomed for a career at Oxford. On November 28, 1840, he was matriculated at Balliol. Oxford, dear home of lost causes, had won her first great poet. The Cumner Range had found its laureate.

The feeling of venturing forth on strange seas alone which is the normal accompaniment of entry into university life, was probably intensified for Matthew Arnold. Unlike most of his contemporaries, he had not lived away from home when attending school - that is, if we except the brief period at Winchester. Moreover, the Arnolds were a particularly

clannish family, one which had seldom suffered separation since that day when a whole coach had been booked to bring them, fourteen souls, to Rugby. The Arnold children, too, had been carefully taught to regard the family as the central institution in human life. Even in his sermons, Dr. Arnold had driven home this point that the centre of human affections must be the home.

"Your fault then is by so much the greater if you make yourselves strangers to domestic feelings and affections, through your own fault; if you think you have any dearer friendships, or any that can better become either youth or manhood, than those which God himself has marked out for you in your own homes." 3

It would be useless to surmise the degree of feeling Matthew Arnold felt when he left home, saying farewell to the warm, noisy, vitalizing circle Hughes presents to us in Tom Brown, the home to which Stanley, Clough and Lake had so valued their privilege of admission. In his first days at Oxford, the great vacuum in his life must, of course, have been the absence of his loud, impetuous, domineering father. Others would be missed also, his mother for one. Mary Arnold had a character less tremendous than that of her husband, but in its own quiet way it too was insistent, sure, and capable. Mrs. Arnold was no cipher. During her husband's lifetime she played the role expected of her, providing his home, supervising the household economy of the school, play-

3 Sermons, Series II, p. 64.
4 Guedalla, Bonnet and Shawl, London, Hodder and Stoughton, (1930) p. 82.
ing the occasional part of Lady Bountiful to frightened or tearful new boys. After her husband died, she withdrew to Fox How, the "mountain nest" between Ambleside and Rydal which they had purchased in 1832. But even at Fox How she continued to hold together her Rugby circle.

"Advancing years increased her charm and activity and when her husband died their home was scarcely less the intellectual centre it had been during the Doctor's life. Whately and Julius Hare continued to visit Mrs. Arnold; the young men of the Church were devoted to her...." 6

Matthew Arnold had an abundant swarm of brothers and sisters provided for him by his parents. Of these the one whom he probably missed most, when he left home, was his sister "K", the Jane Arnold who later married Forster, the famous Victorian Minister of Education. Matthew Arnold has told us that his sisters were among his first literary admirers, but his "darling K" always stood closest in his sympathies. Of his brothers, the nearest in age to him was Tom, but there was no intense love between them, though they contrived a sufficiently pleasant friendship. Tom, for one thing, had a little too much of his father's impetuosity; it did not take the maturing Matthew long to discover that his brother lacked the "still, considerate mind".

6 Trilling, op.cit., p. 44.
8 ibid., Vol. I, p. 156.
9 Lowry, op.cit., p. 110.
At Oxford, Matthew Arnold proceeded to make an instant impression by inveighing against the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Athanasian Creed, while waiting in the Vice-Chancellor's anteroom to be formally admitted to the university. Apparently the young matriculant was already taking a slightly recusant attitude, not of course that his father had ever been particularly enamoured by either the Articles or the Athanasian Creed. These objections - startling enough to a fellow freshman - had long had the sanction of Thomas Arnold.

Once safely admitted to the University, Matthew proceeded to fit snugly into a congenial little crowd who labelled themselves "The Decade".

"The two brothers (Matthew and Tom) together with Clough and Theodore Walrond proceeded to form 'a little interior company'. They go skiffing up the Cherwell and in the little network of streams that lace the meadows by Iffley and Sandford. Finally it is arranged that the four shall breakfast each Sunday morning in Clough's rooms. There they talk of Sir Robert Peel, Carlyle and Emerson; they grow heated about the Irish problem; and hold long discussions over the leading articles in the Spectator. George Sand seems, in her novels, the incarnation of the new spirit of revolt and renovation; and in addition there is the subtle pleasure of feeling just a trifle wicked in reading her. The Decade, a small society that meets in the members' rooms to debate all things past and new, takes also a large share of their time. Gradually in the evening discussions of this little group Clough begins to reveal the power that his contemporaries were to remember for the rest of their lives."

This is the picture Professor Lowry has drawn of Matthew Arnold's early days at Oxford, and it would be an impertinence to recast the description given by a man who has studied this period so meticulously. Perhaps, indeed, Matthew felt something more than a trifle wicked when he commenced reading George Sand. He might be sure his father would never approve the study of what the Quarterly unblushingly labelled the "semivir obscenus of France". Perhaps it was this very fact that had something to do with the gusto with which he applied himself to the study of George Sand's frail and unhappy women, the struggle of the heart against the trammels of convention. Matthew Arnold developed the trick of reeling off whole pages of "Indiana" from memory. The young man had apparently found an antidote to Dr. Arnold and Rugby. There were, indeed, many ways in which Oxford was in contrast to his old school. In point of morals alone, there were more serious things than the romanticizings of the tender-hearted George Sand. The police seized half a ton of pornographic pictures in a single raid on an enterprising merchant of Oxford.

Matthew apparently escaped the worst temptations of Oxford, conversion to Aphrodite or Newman, and contented himself with keeping his thoughts largely to himself and acquiring an outward sophistication of manner. There was considerable writing of verse both on the part of Arnold and

Clough, but Matthew confined himself to nonsense ditties and the admiration of his fellow undergraduates was directed to Clough, who was felt to be profound. The nonsense verse was only one symptom of a general ebullience in Matthew's nature, a gaiety understandable in a young soul liberated from the omnipresence of the great Dr. Arnold. After years of conscious morality, frivolity had its charm. The youthful Arnold blossomed forth in vivid, breath-taking waistcoats, and the Fox How Magazine, the family journal, took cognizance of a new elegance of manner and an incipient superciliousness towards the rest of his clan. There is a remarkable little sketch that Arthur Clough has left us of Matthew Arnold at the height of his glory at Oxford.

"Matt is full of Parisianism: Theatres in general, and Rachel in special; he enters the room with a chanson of Beranger's on his lips - for the sake of French words almost conscious of tune: his carriage shows him in fancy parading the Rue de Rivoli; and his hair is guiltless of English scissors: he breakfasts at 12, and never dines in Hall, and in the week or 8 days rather (for 2 Sundays must be included) he has been to Chapel once."

In 1843, the young man condescended to apply his versifying talents to serious matter, and took the Newdigate Prize with his "Cromwell". The poem itself is unexceptional, written in rhymed couplets. In its general movement it has affinity with Pope's Essay on Man and Wordsworth's Prelude - chiefly with Wordsworth. In content, the poem begins with echoes of the Wordsworthian sonnet "Two voices are there",

16 Trilling, op.cit., p. 18. 17 Lowry, op.cit., p. 25.
and ends with reminiscences of the *Morte d'Arthur*. At way points one is reminded of Sir Walter Scott and Lord Macaulay. The *Lays of Ancient Rome* had been published the previous year.

In spite of the flash of glory of having taken the Newdigate, Matthew's scholastic position was precarious. In 1844 he decided upon a reading period in the north with Clough. Nemesis, however, was close upon the heels of the young dandy. Tom Arnold had taken his "first" and, a little later, Walrond took his, but in the interval Matthew Arnold came out with only a "second". The word was flashed round to a dismayed circle. Up at Fox How, Mrs. Arnold took the news without too much anguish, and the aged Wordsworth extended his sympathy. Friends were approached and, despite his "disaster of November", Matthew, somewhat sobered by his experience, was given a probationary fellowship at Oriel. While the Oriel appointment was being engineered, he was taken on at Rugby to teach classics and help the new head, Tait, with the fifth form. Matthew, with a certain ingenuousness, seized the opportunity to exhibit himself in his new character of man of the world. Apparently he found the Rugby atmosphere a trifle oppressive, and took a malicious delight in disconcerting worthy souls who approached the son of Dr. Arnold with hero-worship chastely sparkling in their eyes.

In the summer of 1846 Matthew Arnold was touring

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in Europe, and made his famous visit to George Sand, who later confided to Renan, that the impression he had made was that of "un Milton jeune et voyageant".

The Oriel fellowship proved of as brief a tenure as the Rugby mastership, being relinquished for a more congenial post in 1847, when Matthew became secretary to the great Whig potentate, Lord Lansdowne. In this position, Arnold found himself in the world of modish elegance, culture and wit for which he was all his life to cherish a hankering.

In 1848 our hero was once more touring on the Continent, this time confiding to Clough:

"Tomorrow I repass the Gemini and get to Thun; linger one day at the Hotel Bellevue for the sake of the blue eyes of one of its inmates; and then proceed by slow stages down the Rhine...." 21

Matthew had met Marguerite. The stage was set for the young man's first publication of poetry.

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21 Lowry, op.cit., p. 91.
Chapter Eight

"The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems"

"It is one of the heaviest indictments against the criticism of the mid-nineteenth century that this remarkable book - the most remarkable first book of verse that appeared between Tennyson's and Browning's in the early thirties and The Defence of Guenévere in 1858 - seems to have attracted next to no attention at all."

- George Saintsbury

In 1849, Matthew Arnold made a tentative bid for poetic honours by publishing his first collection of verse, The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems. Impelled by misgivings or modesty, he withheld his name from his child, and the general public if it was aware of the volume at all, knew only that its author was a certain "A". The poems were not received with any enthusiasm and after a couple of years Arnold withdrew them, together with a subsequent publication, from publication.

In point of technical excellence, the 1849 poems need not have caused their author any qualms. Certain of the pieces were, no doubt, jejune, forced, self-conscious, but they were compensated for by such undoubted masterpieces as the Shakespeare sonnet and The Forsaken Merman. In matter of

1 Saintsbury, G., Matthew Arnold, Edinburgh, William Blackwood and Sons, 1902, pp. 21-22.
content, the poems were far from deficient. "Mycerinus", the Fragment of An 'Antigone', Resignation grappled with real problems. True, the manner of the treatment may not always have been in harmony with the ideals of Dr. Arnold and Rugby College, but they could not on that account be considered negligible.

Writing to Clough, in the year when he published this first collection of poems, Matthew Arnold said,

"...there are two offices of Poetry - one to add to one's store of thoughts and feeling - another to compose and elevate the mind by a sustained tone, numerous allusions, and a grand style." 2

Judged by these criteria, the poems of 1849 rank high; indeed few first publications of verse will be found to surpass them. This is not to claim for them any uniform excellence. Indeed, a certain unevenness of tone is to be noted in the poems we have here under study, and probably their greatest defect is an occasional break in the "sustained tone", and an occasional falling-away from the "grand style" which Arnold had already begun to eulogize. This is not surprising, for a constant feeling for what is right in tone is probably the hardest requirement that can be made of a young poet. Energy, feeling, and power of expression he may have in abundance, but only experience will keep him from slipping into the occasional contorted line or slick, colloquial phrase. Certainly this statement appears to be true of Matthew Arnold. Consider, for instance, the roughness, sufficient to set one's teeth of edge, of the opening line

2 Lowry, op.cit., p. 100.
of the famous Sophocles sonnet, -

"Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?"

Examine the unlicked shape of the whole of that muscle-bound creation To the Duke of Wellington, on Hearing Him Misprised. Consider the melodramatic violence of the sonnet To An Independent Preacher. Note the clumsy repetitions in the first sonnet To A Republican Friend:

"God knows it, I am with you, if to prize Those virtues, priz'd and practis'd by too few, But priz'd, but lov'd, but eminent in you...." 4

Consider, in this same sonnet, the let-down from the grand style of the sophomoric phrase,

"The barren optimistic sophistries Of comfortable moles." 5

Consider also the terrible anti-climax of the genteel suburban "Oh! your pardon" that starts off the second section of The New Sirens, and the sad taint given to Desire, a noble and highly conceived poem, by the passage,

"Changing the pure emotion Of her high devotion To a skin-deep sense Of her own eloquence:" 7

But enough of such fault-picking. All that is intended is to establish the fact that though Arnold in his early poems often does achieve the grand style, giving us noble and memorable lines, he is still not entirely capable of the "Sustained tone" he himself desired.

4 ibid., p.61. 5 ibid., p. 61.
6 ibid., p. 67. 7 ibid., p. 76.
It is one of the glories of being a young poet that one is mightily impressed by one's own contemporaries and the great men of the preceding age who have not yet been toppled from their pedestals by the subtle saboteurs of a new school of criticism. It is one of the misfortunes that, in one's admiration for them, their work, incompletely assimilated, re-appears disconcertingly in one's own writings. It is a truism that it is in a man's early works that one most clearly distinguishes the influence of other writers. All this holds true in the case of Matthew Arnold. No great literary perspicacity is required to detect traces of the work of at least three other poets in the pieces of the '49 volume. First there is Wordsworth, of whom we have abundant evidence; in the worship of nature as a teacher, in the opening sonnet; in the condemnation of Reason for unravelling "God's harmonious whole" (Written in Butler's Sermons); in the echoes of parts of The Prelude in The Hayswater Boat; in the exaltation of childhood and the studied simplicity of diction in To A Gipsy Child.

The Gipsy Child was, of course, an early poem; Arnold himself labelled it "a very youthful production". Accordingly, though by 1849 he had turned against Byron, calling him "that furiously glaring bethiefed rushlight, the vulgar Byron", we can in this poem at least find traces

8 Compare with Wordsworth's famous attack on "the false secondary sense by which we multiply distinctions."

9 Lowry, op.cit., p. 92.
of the manner of his earlier hero. What could be more Byronic than such lines as,

"Thy sorrow and thy calmness are thine own: 10
Glooms that enhance and glorify this earth."

Other influences show themselves in other poems. That of Tennyson, the early Keatsian Tennyson, the Tennyson of Recollections of the Arabian Nights, is found in Mycerinus, especially in the description of the feast.

"Here came the king, holding high feast, at morn,
Rose-crown'd; and ever, when the sun went down,
A hundred lamps beam'd in the tranquil gloom,
From tree to tree, all through the twinkling grove,
Revealing all the tumult of the feast,
Flush'd guests, and golden goblets, foam'd with wine;
While the deep-burnish'd foliage overhead
Splinter'd the silver arrows of the moon." 11

Pure echoes of Keats are to be found in the classical sensuousness of The Strayed Reveller itself, and Saintsbury maintained he found the influence of Shelley in The Voice, To Fausta, and Desire. Perhaps most interesting of all, in any selection of Arnold's derived lines, would be a certain excerpt from one of the sonnets. Here we have pure Pope, an echo of the literary style admired by the dominies of Matthew's childhood.

"France, famed in all great arts, in none supreme." 12

It is possible now to enter upon the penultimate stage of this essay, to study the themes of Arnold's 1849

10 Poems, p. 77.
poems and his treatment of them, having in mind the nature of his upbringing, and the thoughts his father had sought to indoctrinate in him.

It is difficult to find any very rigid basis of arrangement of the '49 poems, as they are presented to us. An opening sonnet is followed by the more ambitious poems; then follows a solid sequence of rather second-rate sonnets. The second half of the volume consists of poems in a diversity of forms which, with several exceptions, are devoted to the theme of passionate but frustrated love, and the feelings of general disillusion which result from the lover's failure.

Departing from Arnold's own arrangement of his poems, though not to the degree of completely reshuffling them, one may divide them into five categories, according to subject matter.

(i) Religious poems
(ii) Philosophical poems
(iii) Poems treating of love
(iv) Poems of political or social implication
(v) Poems treating of the poetic function.

Let us now consider the poems according to this somewhat draconic imposing of categories. Let us regard them not from any aesthetic viewpoint, but from that of interest in the ideas they express, for this essay has from the beginning been chiefly devoted to the study of ideas, particularly in their transmission from father to son.
The religious poems to which we now refer are not to be understood as "religious" in the sense of being mystic or metaphysical. The term is applied merely to those poems which contain definite comment upon the existence or the nature of a god. When we bring together these poems, a wide fluctuation of view becomes apparent. Matthew Arnold at one time observed to one of his sisters that he was "all pieces". Certainly this estimate is borne out by any analytical study of the conflicting attitudes and opinions of his early poems. In his opening sonnet, for instance, he prays that he may learn from Nature a course of calm though industrious life. In a later one, To An Independent Preacher, he says with some vehemence,

"Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;"

But to return to our theme, we have here, first, examples of completely orthodox Christian belief. This we find particularly in the sonnets - which appear, on the whole, to be early work. In the sonnet To George Cruikshank Esq., for example, we have a distinction made between man's will or intention and his Soul, which significantly is capitalized and thought of as a pure absolute.

14 Poems, p. 61.

This particular instance of self-contradiction has been well presented by Mr. Lionel Trilling. Vide Matthew Arnold, p. 89.
"The Soul
Breasts her own griefs: and, urg'd too fiercely, says:
'Why tremble? True, the nobleness of man
May be by man effac'd: man can control
To pain, to death, the bent of his own days. 15
Know thou the worst. So much, not more, he can.'"

 Completely orthodox, likewise, is the sonnet Written
In Butler's Sermons with its unqualified acceptance of the
basis of the celebrated "Analogy"—belief in "God's harmonious
whole". The interesting point in this poem is the repudia-
tion of reason as a guide to understanding of the universe.
The poem may well be an early one, in which event the influence
of Newman may account for this non-Arnoldian streak in a still
unbroken faith; or, as has already been suggested, the poem
may represent a mutilated piece of Wordsworthianism. The
sonnet, To An Independent Preacher, to which we have already
made passing reference, is orthodox in its regard of man as
being in some sense a special creation. The statement that,

"Nature is stubborn; man would fain adore" 18

would seem to imply that man is innately religious. The
force of this sonnet lies, of course, in the strength of its

15 Poems, p. 61.
16 Poems, p. 59. Arnold, like his father, had a great respect
for Bishop Butler; in addition to the evidence of this
sonnet is the incidental tribute, paid much later, when he
spoke of "a weighty and noble simplicity worthy of Butler". Literature and Poems, p. 334.
17 Poems, p. 60.
18 Proof that Arnold held this attitude at some time during
his composition of the 1849 poems is to be found in a frag-
mentary entry in the Yale Manuscript Book, which dates
back to Arnold's college days. Here the outline for a
projected poem concludes "... the religious longing never
quenched." Tinker and Lowry, The Poetry of Matthew Arnold,
attack on natural religion, a thing repugnant to Dr. Arnold, whose prejudices in all their vigour are transmitted in this poem.

"For the Gospel is always thoroughly hated by everyone that is evil, because it is truth and righteousness, and reproves the deeds of the wicked; nor is there any better proof that what is called natural religion is of an infinitely lower kind, than the pretended respect shown for it by those who cannot bear the perfect purity of the law of God." 19

The implications of The Forsaken Merman are many, but not the least of them is this: Margaret leaves her husband because of the Church. The Church is, then, for the merman, a frustrating power. If we take the merman's Margaret to be Matthew's Marguerite - the woman he loved in Switzerland, but did not marry - and realize that there is a good chance that the Church of England attitude of his own family was the probable reason for his decision to leave her, we can see how, by an indirect method, Matthew Arnold may be shifting to God the onus for the failure of his love affair. Certainly, in his second collection of poems, the Empedocles volume of 1852, he develops the theme of a God hostile to love,

"A God, a God their severance rul'd
And bade between their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea." 20

Last of the "religious" poems is In Utrumque Paratus. This single poem, unrelated to any other in the volume, foreshadows the Dover Beach of later years. Matthew Arnold weighs

19 Arnold, T., Sermons, Series I, p. 155.
the evidence for and against a divine scheme for the world, and finds that men may well be born in a world, itself the creation of accident, where he himself is without meaning. Indecision is here the note, even as in the sonnet *Written In Emerson's Essays*. There he sets forth with the optimistic cry:

"The seeds of godlike power are in us still: Gods are we, Bards, Saints, Heroes, if we will."

But then comes the misgiving - a question:

"Dumb judges, answer, truth or mockery?"

To sum up, we may say the '49 poems reveal three discrete views of religion - one of orthodox Christianity, belief in the power and goodness of God - one a belief in a strange, unreasonable, frustrating Fate - and one a simple agnosticism.

The second division we have made for the 1849 poems is that devoted to those of philosophical content. Into this we place those poems which deal with the problem of conduct during life. The first poem here to be considered is *Mycerinus*. Mycerinus, a young and idealistic king, learns that for no fault of his own, but by the "stern sentence of the Powers of Destiny", he is allowed only six more years of life. His father, by contrast, had "lov'd injustice and liv'd long".

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21 Poems, p. 70.

22 Poems, p. 37. The problem is one which has confronted all religions. Dr. Arnold took cognisance of its existence when he observed that nothing was more calculated to under-
Seeing, then, that there is no justice to be shown him, the king abandons his people and plunges into a life of revelry.

"And one loud cry of grief and of amaze
Broke from his sorrowing people; so he spake:
And turning, left them there; and with brief pause,
Girt with a throng of revellers, bent his way
To the cool region of the groves he lov'd.
There by the river banks he wander'd on,
From palm-grove on to palm-grove, happy trees,
Their smooth tops shining sunwards, and beneath
Burying their unsunn'd stems in grass and flowers:
Where in one dream the feverish time of Youth
Might fade in slumber, and the feet of Joy
Might wander all day long and never tire:"

The pleasures of sensualism are sought not for their own sake so much as for a distraction from the contemplation of the injustice of the world. Arnold suggests, however, that this distraction may not be so easily secured:

"It may be that sometimes his wondering soul
From the loud joyful laughter of his lips
Might shrink half startled, like a guilty man
Who wrestles with his dream;..."

But there is one sure source of comfort, and Arnold suggests that the young king may have been fortunate enough to find it:

"It may be that on that joyless feast his eye
Dwelt with mere outward seeming; he, within,
Took measure of his soul, and knew its strength,
And by that silent knowledge, day by day
Was calmed, ennobled, comforted, sustain'd."25

In any event, the king spends the rest of his days in revelry and mirth.

Mycerinus is an interesting poem. The solution put mine faith than the spectacle of the long and glorious reign of Augustus Caesar.


23 Poems., p. 39.
24 ibid., p. 39. 25 ibid., p.39.
to the distracted king is a life of activity - not useful activity but pleasant, self indulgent activity. The point to be grasped, however, is that the cure proposed for the mental anguish at the injustice of his lot is loss of consciousness of his problem through plunging into activity. This, of course, was the cure Keble proposed for Dr. Arnold when he was afflicted by doubts, and it was probably the cure Dr. Arnold himself advised for his young men. It would be interesting to have seen Dr. Arnold's response to the intriguing thesis that a life of debauchery affords the necessary activity to be a refuge from the problem of inexplicable injustice. Matthew Arnold, however, even in *Mycerinus* suggests that the life of revelry does not have the effect sought, that there is a hunger of the soul which cannot be ignored. In a later poem, *The New Sirens*, he resumes the problem of *Mycerinus*, this time presenting a definite thesis that sensual joys do not bring essential happiness. This poem Arnold himself was prepared to label "a mumble" but, in spite of its general obscurity, several points do emerge. Moreover, with the help of Arnold's own prose interpretation of the poem, it is not difficult to come to certain conclusions. The Sirens are exponents of a sensualist philosophy -

"Only, what we feel, we know."  

28 Poems, p. 68.
The speaker realizes that these "pale maidens" find no real content in such joys as they offer, having been at one time, like himself, filled with idealism,

"Watchers for a purer fire
But you droop'd in expectation
And you wearied in desire." 29

It was this disappointment that led them to snatch "an earthly inspiration". The real point of the poem lies in the close, in the forthright statement that happiness cannot be found in "earthbound devotion". The sensuous life is repudiated as consisting only of

"Linking in a mad succession
Fits of joy and fits of pain." 31

The poem closes in an atmosphere of weariness, taint, and disillusion. The speaker's attitude throughout is, in Arnold's own words "conscientious regrets after the spiritual life." 32

Confronted with inexplicable problems, man, says Matthew Arnold - by implication, in Mycerinus, by direct statement in The New Sirens - finds no rest or comfort in sensuous pleasure. There is a thwarted desire for something higher. The conditionings of Matthew Arnold's youth still have their effect, he retains an ethical bias. It is this still persistent belief in man's higher aspirations that lies back of the poem variously entitled Stagyrus or Desire. This poem in its declaration of the hollowness of worldly delights, in its desperate desire to reach something beyond, might be the work of a Catholic mystic, the meditations of a Newman.

29 Poems, p. 70.
30 ibid., p. 70.
31 ibid., p. 71.
32 Tinker and Lowry, op. cit., p. 48.
The form of the poem, the steady, chant-like rhythm, the insistent repetitions, make it essentially a prayer.

"Oh, set us free.
O let the false dream fly
Where our sick souls do lie
Tossing continually.
O where thy voice doth come
Let all doubts be dumb:
Let all words be mild:
All strifes be reconcil'd:
All pains beguil'd."

Yet though the poem appears a desperate affirmation of the existence of a God, we cannot help feeling that the poet, in his own heart's core, more than half suspects there is none—

"When the Soul, growing clearer,
Sees God no nearer:
When the Soul, mounting higher,
To God comes no nigher...."

There is no reason, then, to believe that Arnold found any religious explanation for the strange workings of the world. His problem remains unchanged. He only knows that he cannot find relief in the life of the senses - it is incredible that any son of Dr. Arnold ever should. What solution remains? There is always that of activity that is beneficient. Accordingly, we have the energist philosophy which inspires Arnold to praise the Duke of Wellington, eulogizing him as one who has

"....labour'd with the foremost, hast become Laborious, persevering, serious, firm." 35

But, if only by the accident of his constitution, Matthew Arnold himself was unable to take the energetic attitude

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33 Poems, p. 76
34 ibid., p. 75.
35 ibid., p. 59.
which had stood his father in such good stead, and which
he himself admired in Wellington. "Do not let us forsake
one another," he wrote to Clough, in 1848, "we have the
common quality, now rare, of being unambitious, I think,
Some must be contented not to be at the top." 36

We find Matthew Arnold, at last, unable to deny the
presence of a problem of evil, and unable to disregard it
through emersion in activity, selfish or beneficent, finally
tending to a passive dispassionate attitude towards life, -
accepting the present status of things, and seeking to excuse
his own ineffectuality by the development of a theory of Fate.
With this mention of "Fate", we come to consideration of the
predominant philosophical note of the 1849 poems, praise of
the man who sees things as they are, and finds his strength
in carefully founded calmness of soul. This note is sounded
at the very first, in the opening sonnet. Here the poet
37
37
disparages "Man's senseless uproar", and "our vain turmoil",
and extols the life of "toil unsever'd from Tranquillity".
One feels that, of the two, Arnold already values Tranquillity
above Toil. Mycerinus is given the highest praise if he
can isolate himself completely from his world, and rest in
contemplation of his strength of soul. Sophocles is praised
as an "even-balanc'd soul" beyond the influence of external
39
things. The Fragment of An Antigone although it gives praise
to the man who has strength to hew his own way through life,

36 Lowry, op.cit., p. 76.
37 Poems, p. 36. 38 ibid, p. 36 39 ibid., p. 40.
also praises the man who submits to Fate, seeking what comfort he can from institutional life and obedience to "primal law". The Sick King of Bokhara deals with the folly of seeking satisfaction of earthly desire when an overruling Law keeps even kings from complete happiness. Shakespeare is praised for his self-sufficiency. The key-note of the Emerson sonnet is "Strong is the Soul, and wise and beautiful." The sonnet To An Independent Preacher presents man as "sick of blood", desiring mildness and "safe conscience". Religious Isolation preaches again the virtues of self-dependence - "Live by thy light, and Earth will live by hers."

To Fausta regrets the departing of "the tranquil strength of men", finds little good in the world, and affirms "Our vaunted life is one long funeral." In The World and the Quietist, an important poem, there is praise for the man that keeps aloof from the world and "its credulous zeal". Somewhat superciliously, the poet smiles upon the labourer's false sense of omnipotence as he works his material. The Quietist is presented as a momento mori.

The powerful language here employed to state the sacred nature of family ties conforms with the Greek concept of family loyalties. It also echoes Dr. Arnold's teaching that our first earthly responsibility is to members of our own family. The Arnolds, as has been suggested earlier in this essay, were intensely clannish.

Poems, p. 60.
ibid., p. 62.
ibid., p. 75.
ibid., p. 84.
Resignation, the last poem in the 1849 volume, gives final and best expression to the Arnoldian philosophy. Here the poet is presented as isolating himself, though not self-consciously, from life, seeing it in broad perspective:

"Before him he sees Life unroll,
A placid and continuous whole:
That general life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace;" 45

Fausta is asked to admire her brother on the remarkable ground that he is divorced from such unmeaning things as love and life. Such is the only deduction that can be made from the account of the poet -

"Whose natural insight can discern
What through experience others learn.
Who needs not love and power to know
Love transient, power an unreal show." 46

At the age, then, of twenty-seven, when his first poems appeared, Matthew Arnold had taken an attitude very different from what might have been expected from one who was still a young man. The existing order of things had been accepted and been given the sanction of a tremendous Fate. Love, power, the things men value and strive for, were repudiated, and the sole good found in an inner integrity of soul. If the outside world, hostile and overwhelming, had become deified into a hostile Fate, the inner world of self had been given equally divine status as Soul. What had happened to turn the young man to so dismal and so bitter a philosophy? Why had he, like his own Zeus, ended by preferring "Fate to his strong desire"?

45 Poems, p. 91.
46 ibid., p. 92.
47 ibid., p. 92.
48 ibid., p. 51.
For the answer to the question which has now been raised, we turn to a consideration of the third category of poems in the 1849 volume, those dealing with the love theme. It is now generally accepted that these poems are, for the most part, founded upon actual experience, though to just what degree, it is impossible to say. The frequent reference to "Marguerite", the definite characterization of the lady, the specific allusions to Swiss topography, do allow us to identify Marguerite with the blue-eyed charmer who, so Matthew Arnold told Clough in 1847, drew him to the Hotel Bellevue at Thun. Various hypotheses exist concerning the identity of Marguerite, the most sprightly and detailed being that of Hugh Kingsmill, who deduces, upon somewhat slender premises, that she was a governess or companion, of some experience of the world, whose social position caused Matthew a certain unhappiness. Such hypotheses are interesting; but, now that it is known that the Thun hotel-registers have been destroyed, it appears that we can hope for little reliable material concerning the identity or station of Marguerite. Let us then limit ourselves to what we can deduce from the poems in the 1849 volume.

Probably the most revealing single poem is that

49 Lowry, op. cit., p. 91.
50 Kingsmill, op. cit., p. 75.
entitled To My Friends. Here we are given a picture of Marguerite which bears every sign of having been drawn from life:

"Paint that lilac kerchief, bound
Her soft face, her hair around:
Tied under the archedest chin
Mockery ever ambush'd in.
Let the fluttering fringes streak
All her pale, sweet-rounded cheek.
Ere the parting hour go by,
Quick, thy tablets, Memory!" 51

Various details are added to the picture, including - most significant -

"...those eyes, so blue, so kind,
Eager tell-tales of her mind." 52

The background of the poem is curiously obscured. Apparently the speaker is recalling his recent youth, his love for Marguerite, and her feeling for him. For some reason, never divulged, he feels bound to leave her, obviously knowing he would never return. Marguerite almost won him from this intention, but in the end the parting was made:

"Paint that figure's pliant grace
As she towards me lean'd her face,
Half refus'd and half resign'd,
Murmuring, 'Art thou still unkind?'
Many a broken promise then
Was new made - to break again." 53

As one reads, the question must rise "Why this parting?" And one cannot help recalling the epigram of a certain other young Englishman, Gibbon, who went wooing in Switzerland, and who summed up his parting, saying "I wept as a lover, but obeyed as a son."

It may very well be that Arnold did surrender to

51 Poems, p. 64. 52 ibid., p. 64. 53 ibid., p. 64.
family prejudices, and leave his love because of her unsuitability for the circle his father had created at Fox How.

That, at any rate, is the hypothesis of Mr. Kingsmill:

"His spring of emotion, as I have shown was clogged at its source; and his love for Marguerite was not strong enough to force a passage for it through the rubble of his father's moral and religious training. Hence the peculiar note of his melancholy, as of an exile tamed by his captor, remembering with regret but without rebellion the land to which he once belonged."  

The note of the love poems is, indeed, one of frustration rather than passion. Only one set of verses, A Modern Sappho, a curious female counterpart to Locksley Hall, possesses this last quality. Even here there is obvious frustration - the woman has lost her lover. The Forsaken Merman is, of course, the Marguerite story in reverse, the woman leaving the man because of the sanctions of the church in which she was bred. The theme of the poem is, in consequence, the nullification of love:

"And alone dwell forever  
The kings of the sea."  

The Voice is a fine poem, whose mood is well summed up in Kingsmill's phrase of "regret...without rebellion". The emptiness of life without love is described, with con-

54 Kingsmill, op.cit., p. 105.  
Mr. Kingsmill's work is one of the most carefree adventures in criticism of recent years. A good deal of careful research is vitiated by the impulse to say anything that is clever or sensational. Mr. Kingsmill admits (p.70) that his deductions about Marguerite are based entirely on the internal evidence of his poems. On such scanty evidence he comes to the conclusion "she may have been a teacher of French living in apartments." p.74.

55 Poems, p. 83.
siderable pathos, and consolation is found in knowledge
of endurance and inner integrity, which we have already found
to be Arnold's refuge:

"Those lute-like tones which in long distant years
Did steal into mine ears:
Blew such a thrilling summons to my will
Yet could not shake it:
Drain'd all the life my full heart had to spill:
Yet could not break it." 56

The poem is curious. There is apparent regret, self-pity,
yet also an obvious self congratulation upon his powers of
endurance and suffering. Arnold would appear to be approach­
ing the unhealthy state of valuing renunciation for its own
sake.

Other poems reveal a new progression in thought or
rather in rationalization. Since love has been denied in the
interests of something else - something presumably external -
Arnold attempts to disparage love as something in itself
uncertain, transitory, illusionary. Thus we find pessimism
such as that expressed in To Fausta:

"Love lends life a little grace,
A few sad smiles; and then
Both are laid in one cold place,
In the grave." 57

So we come to the ultimate phase, in which the world is viewed
as hostile, over-powering, treacherous because it has brought
frustration to Arnold's love. Love itself remains deprecated,
belittled, and deliberately spurned as a thing of small
account. We come again to Desire with its intense bitterness,
the feeling, as we have noted, of the medieval Catholic who

56 Poems, p. 73.  57 ibid., p. 74.
sees the world as evil.

"From doubt, where all is double:
Where wise men are not strong:
Where comfort turns to trouble:
Where just men suffer wrong:
Where sorrow treads on joy:
Where sweet things soonest cloy:
Where love is half mistrust,
Hungry, and 
Oh, set us free."

Two categories still await our examination - the poems of political or social implication, and those treating of the function of the poet. Our treatment of these may be more cursory than that given to the other poems, for these are few in number, and their themes, at this time, obviously held a secondary interest for Arnold.

First let us consider the poems of political implication. In effect, this means only the two sonnets addressed "To A Republican Friend" - 1848. The date is significant. It is the time of the continental upheavals and the spread of Chartism. These were the days when Moncton Milnes was expected to become president. These two sonnets were written during a period of acute political disturbance. When we consider that they are the work of a poet in his twenties, it is hard to keep from impatience with the lassitude they reveal. The first sonnet is an elaborate announcement of sympathy with the republican friend's ideals; it pays a Rousseauitic-Wordsworthian regard to man's "fundamental life". The second poem is a sad disclaimer of the possibility of speedy reform. The reason for refusing here to undertake any
task is the same as inspired him to renounce effort in love -
the presence of a hostile Fate:

"Seeing this Vale, this Earth, whereon we dream,
Is on all sides o'ershadow'd by the high
Uno'erleaped Mountains of Necessity,
Sparing us narrower margin than we deem."  59

Matthew Arnold's dissociation of himself from
ergetic reform sprang from an inherent pessimism. The world
of men, to him, does resemble an idiot's tale, "full of sound
and fury, signifying nothing". The post he reserves for
himself, at last, is that of a social critic who will inter­
vene at times to point out to the labourer, caught up in his
activity, that the world is not as sure or certain a place as
he would have it. This is the theme of The World and the
Quietist - and here again Arnold declines to come to grips
with the Fate he believes to be arraigned against him:

"Critias, long since, I know
(For Fate decreed it so,)
Long since the World hath set its heart to live,
Long since with credulous zeal
It turns Life's mighty wheel;
Still doth for labourers send,
Who still their labour give;
And still expects an end."  60

These lines might better have been written by a son of
Schopenhauer than by a son of Dr. Arnold.

A poet, in publishing his first collection of verses,
is somewhat like a young journeyman-worker producing his
"masterpiece", seeking admission to a guild,- in the poet's
case the select Parnassian guild of Poetry. In his first
work he does, in some sense, produce his credentials. Perhaps

59 Poems, p. 62.  60 ibid., p. 84.
it is because our poets have felt this to be the case, that
they have not infrequently felt called upon to devote a set
of verses or so declaring their own concept of the poetic
function. A classic example is Tennyson, with his lines "The
poet in a golden clime was born".

In his 1849 collection, Matthew Arnold devoted two
poems to developing his theory of what the poet should do and
be. The first of these was the poem from which the volume
took its name, "The Strayed Reveller". Here the young poet,
Ampelus, the reveller who has wandered to the palace of Circe,
expounds the thesis that the poet must experience, vicariously,
every sight that is to supply him with the substance of poetry.
In fine passages, Ampelus tells how the "wise bards" see all
that the Gods see - the Centaurs and the Lapithae, the
Indian on the mountain lake, the Scythians on the steppes, the
caravan risking the Oxus crossing, the labours of the Argonauts
or of the Ithicans who sailed with Ulysses. But a price must
be paid for this breadth of vision.

"But oh, what labour!
O Prince, what pain!" 61

The reason for this pain, of course, is the complete identity
of feeling which the poet must have with the persons and
objects which are being described.

"...such a price
The Gods exact for song;
To become what we sing." 62

Shades of Dr. Arnold and the morbid sensitivity he found in

61 Poems, p. 46.
62 ibid., p. 47.
the closing lines of the Ode on Intimations of Immortality!

In Resignation, the last poem in the '49 volume, Arnold elaborated upon the views he had set forth in the earlier poem. The poet still retains a partial identity with those he describes, but now remains all the while at a remove from them:

"He sees in some great-historied land,
A ruler of the people stand,
Sees his strong thought in fiery flood
Roll through the heaving multitude;
Exults; yet for no moment's space
Envies the all regarded place." 63

The particular power of the poet lies, indeed, in his constantly felt, but never acknowledged, detachment. This power gives him a breadth of vision that others, caught up in the business of life, cannot have.

"Before him he sees Life unroll,
A placid and continuous whole;
That general Life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace." 64

In the interval preceding Resignation, Arnold had entered into life, suffered failure as a student and as a lover, and swung into an attitude of isolationism. Resignation is at once a fine poem and a remarkable piece of rationalizing. Back of it lies the eastern fatalism of the Bhagavad Gita which at this time had become so congenial to Arnold. Here the poet's retreat from the world that has beaten him is made the sign of his superiority, - he need not be in the

63 Poems, p. 90  
64 ibid., p. 91.  
65 Tinker and Lowry, op.cit., p. 65.
world to judge of its futility.

"Blame thou not therefore him, who dares
Judge vain beforehand human cares.
Whose natural insight can discern
What through experience others learn.
Who needs not love and power to know
Love transient, power an unreal show." 66

66 Poems, p. 92.
Chapter Nine

Dr. Arnold and "The Strayed Reveller"

"There seems to me to be a sort of atmosphere of unrest and paradox hanging around many of our ablest young men of the present day, which makes me very uneasy."

- Dr. Arnold

Rugby Chapel,
November, 1849.

My dear Matt,

I know no very simple terms with which to begin this letter. The thought of persons actually returning from the grave is one that mankind has often entertained, but before the awful reality of which even the most pious may well be affrighted. Let me say then only, my dear son, that through the agency of a Power infinitely wiser than our poor worldly, or stellar, conceiving can imagine, I have been enabled in some sense to visit again the scenes of my earthly labours. I have again been charged with the very serious responsibilities of a father, responsibilities which, as you know, I have always regarded as among the most onerous a wise Deity could well entrust to our mortal strength.

I am grievously at the failure of your academic labours. Yet, since progress in the Christian Life, and a cheerful

acceptance of the tasks which God has set us within the scope of our natural powers, are of far more account than any mere achievements of the intellect, I would wish that your non-success in the latter may count as nothing when compared with your resolve to succeed in the former. I do not think you were well advised to take up teaching at Rugby. Possibly a desire to follow in the path of your father inspired you, a desire, in itself commendable, to become a worker in the vineyard. I cannot too strongly represent to you, however, the sheer folly and even wickedness of choosing one's field of endeavour by acquiescence with custom, rather than the positive promptings of one's own soul. Moreover, Matthew, the vocation of schoolmaster calls for a liveliness of temperament which I cannot but be sensible you lack.

I wish now to speak of your literary endeavours. Your verses at Rugby appeared to me to an energetic rather than a poetic mind, and I will not conceal my surprise that you have persevered in an activity which for most is not more than an exercise and a pleasing discipline during periods of youthful enthusiasm. Before you again venture to print your verses, I think you would do well to put to yourself, very seriously, this question. "What good do I intend? What good can eventuate from the steps I now propose for myself?"
Surely of all people the man of letters is he who must most often so question himself. To what end would he ask his neighbour's attention and his time? If he cannot surely answer that it is for the furtherance of his moral excellence,
for the more speedy accomplishing of the Kingdom, for which we know by the amplest warrant all our labours must be ever directed, if he cannot affirm that he does seek these ends, then he must surely admit himself culpable of the most grievous offenses. For not only is he frittering away his own life, but he is guilty of the even graver charge of causing the waste of his neighbour's time, even if he has not turned him into ways positively dangerous.

When I think on all this, Matthew, and look upon your book, the direst apprehensions come upon me. To what good end can it be said to operate? For here are doubts, and wild sayings, and Heaven knows what foolishness, though mingled, I must say, with passages that tend to compose and elevate the mind. Do not think, my son, that I am unmindful of that which is good. Your poem *Desire* possesses a fervour and intensity that do tribute to your parents and your upbringing. I only wish that I might speak with equal approbation of the entire collection.

I wish to speak directly of the poems, because certain of them appear to me to reveal an attitude which I find most disturbing, and others appear so devoid of coherent meaning, or any reasonable indication of meaning, that I am at utter loss to account for them.

The first poem in the book may possess technical excellencies - of these I pretend to no qualification to judge. Many will not doubt agree heartily in your assessing of the confusion which attends our poor human endeavours, but
what shall be said of the last line, that Nature's "labourers shall not fail, when man is gone"? On almost any basis this sentiment must be reprehensible - there is here no proper feeling for the dignity of Man, a thing of far greater account than the endurance of lesser forms of creation. The poem Mycerinus, to which I next allude, is one that can have singularly little point for us today. For the heathen Herodatus, there was a pathos in man abandoned by those false gods, the wilful creation of his heart. But what purpose could inspire you to present this theme to the men of a Christian country, who have mastered the stern but profound truth that whom the Lord loves he chastises? I read this poem with a terrible feeling of apprehension - it seems as if you positively sympathized with the sentiments of the lost pagan rather than pitied him for his ignorance.

To what friend, may I ask, do you address your sonnet To A Friend? To what creature must you make the infinitely degrading confession that it is to the unenlightened writers of a heathen age you turn for the support your mind craves? A true Christian, Matt, needs only one support, and in that he never finds any strength wanting. I know you will not be so sunk in folly that I will need to name to you who He was that left It to us.

From the circumstance that you lend its title to the entire book, I assume you to attach a special importance to The Strayed Reveller. Why you should do this, I cannot imagine. The poem is without point or significance. We look
to it in vain for any message, or incitement to further exertion for goodness. Such poems as these are trifles, and I find a morbidity in the contemplation of physical delights. God forbid that ever I should be father to a sensualist!

Your Fragment of an Antigone is a tribute to your skill in using the Grecian forms. Yet how much nobler, instead of infusing into it the spirit of ancient superstition, to have sought to inform the dull and complacent of our own age with tidings of the Christian method. Why, Matt, this continual bowing before the great names of Greece, who, though they may inspire our wonder and interest, can never serve us as patterns for conduct? Not once in your poems do I find the name of Christ - what poems, Matthew, are these? Let me commend to you the verses of that great and good man - unhappily long divorced from me in thought but not in feeling - John Keble. Think of the great good that such a volume as The Christian Year does in a single generation. Ask how much your own can attain to in a hundred generations.

The Sick King of Bokhara impresses me as a singularly vapid and purposeless set of verses, and positively harmful in that, in a person of weak conscience, it might even inspire doubts concerning the goodness of God's Providence. Your tribute to Shakespeare evokes my admiration - though, as you know, I have always a little mistrusted him. In all his plays he does not present a single character wholly good. He does not show us a single saint. Your sonnet To The Duke of Wellington is a strange mixture of sense and folly.
How fully one must concur with your reprobation of the "feeble sons of pleasure". Yet, when one recalls how I have in the past, not once but repeatedly, shown you that behind every happening in man's history, however seemingly insignificant, lies the Providence of God, informing and guiding it; when one remembers this, what shall be said of a man who, so instructed, can see only

"the fretful foam
Of vehement actions without scope or term,
Called History,"

I think you are incredibly wilful to write thus.

The poem Written in Butler's Sermons allows me to believe that you have not entirely forgotten the precepts by which you were brought up. That, Matt, is a fine poem. Would that all your writings were even as it! What joy then to a father to perceive his son continually teaching the greatness and glory of the Christian Universe. Your three following poems, on Emerson, to an "Independent Preacher", and to Cruikshanks, appear to me to show a feeling of pessimism which it is your duty to fight against. Your pride in strength of will is manly, yet may lead you far from that humility which has been enjoined upon us. Let me warn you against the sin of pride, by which fell Lucifer, and the awful effects of which are so clear to us today in the injustices the proud and wealthy of our own country impose upon those artisans and navigators God has suffered to be under them. Your sonnets to a Republican friend are wise and considered, though betraying what I can only call a timidity of spirit. Beware of
conservatism, which ever resists change through purely negative hate of change, and sinks into the repressions of chivalry.

I am glad to be able to approve of your design in writing "Religious Isolation", but could wish you had considered it well before writing the first poem in your book. *To My Friends* shows a manly spirit in not being ashamed of a tender leave-taking when the heart was sincerely engaged. We must never let the thought of others misunderstanding us keep us from the proper expression of those feelings we know to be right and honest. I cannot say, Matthew, how much it is a source of regret to me that I could not live to give you the advantages of my counsel when you came to the most important decisions a man is ever called upon to make. You may, however, consult with your dear mother, knowing well that one acceptable to her would never lack my approbation.

The Greeks I have always felt to be very wise in keeping from presentation, on the stage of women in love; and your lines *A Modern Sappho* I find morbid, vulgar, and revealing a sensuality which I must regard with loathing. I was afraid something of this sort would happen when you began reading G. Sand. *The New Sirens* is stranger gibberish. After the years I have spent in teaching the necessity, in all writing, of being understood, I am at complete loss to explain what made you produce this mass of incomprehensibilities. You appear, however, to condemn the Sirens, and of this I approve.

I read with great concern your lines *The Voice* and
To Fausta. Surely one of the greatest sorrows that a man can well endure is frustration of the tender passion of the heart. And yet how fond a thing it is, by any account, to dwell upon thoughts of what is lost irrevocably! And how wicked to make any human being, to whatever degree beloved, the centre of one's interest and feeling, devoting to a mortal being like ourselves those thoughts and emotions which properly can be turned only toward our Creator. I feel that you are grievously at fault here, Matthew, and you have suffered the punishment always exacted in such cases; for, forgetting God in the abandon of your feelings, you see the world forlorn and ugly, as it must always appear to those who for any reason turn from Him.

Your lines To A Gypsy Child I read with the greatest apprehension. They are so completely unchristian - their author seems to have no notion at all of the comforts of faith. I have been aware that certain bad men of great talents have, in the past, whipped themselves into a frenzy at the unredeemed wrong their own badness makes them see in the world; but, Matthew, this is the Devil's gospel that you are preaching and it alone undoes any good that other portions of your book might have accomplished. "The Hayswater Boat" I pass by as a slight thing, not meriting comment - though I wish you had learned Wordsworth's wisdom as well as his manner. The Forsaken Merman is a pleasing and pathetic story, but even here I find you persisting in placing your sympathy with a person who, however he may evoke our regrets at a union
essentially unnatural, still lies outside the pale of human relationship. You would have done well to dwell rather upon the goodness and unselfishness of the woman who, at what cost to herself, returned to her duty of praising and magnifying God.

The World and the Quietist represents an attitude I find hard to understand. If you have intended to represent all our human labours as futile, I can only hope that God in His wisdom will take pity upon you, for once admit that and Life itself becomes a thing of no account at all, not more than a child's plaything. The mere animal joys of exertion can never survive when once that feeling has entered the heart to paralyze the will.

In Utrumque Paratus I have read with close attention. It seems to me to reveal the real fault in your character. In spite of some wild things you say in various poems, I do not, Matt, think you are a bad man or even a wilful man, but I do believe you have a flaw which has already been the cause of your straying far from the goal all Christian men must set for themselves. I refer to your indecision, a trait which I found in you as a boy, but which I had trusted would disappear in the strength of manhood. In this poem you affirm that either God created the world or He did not - but you proceed to no decision. How foolish must this appear to any considerate person! What life could pass without decision on this matter, the most fundamental, nay the only truly fundamental one in all our lives. Think of the listlessness, the sorrow, the unending
questionings of a life so spent! No, choose one must. Only a character entirely devoid of courage and energy could fail to do so. Look at your book again, Matthew. On every page I find written, "This man cannot decide!" Is that a book which it is well to put in the hands of your fellow men?

Your last poem you entitle Resignation. How dismal a word that sounds! In that word you give the best the unreligious man can look for. Need I say that this poem, too, fills me with misgivings which reach to the depths of my being. Some lines are - I tremble to use the word - blasphemous: the heathen crouchings before a ruling Fate, the servile thought that death "wipes out man" instead of translating him to fields of greater glory. Here, again, I find the sin of pride, against which I have already warned you. Your praises of the poet are inordinate, ill-considered, showing a pride in wrong-headedness which I will never condone. You praise the poet for his being apart from his fellows. How far astray you go there, in the blindness of your pride! What reproaches may we not fittingly employ against the man who sets himself aside from his fellow-men, beings of the same forms, visions, hopes and fears as himself, with whom the Almighty has intended he should labour to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth? What shall we say of the man of natural parts, he who of all others is called to be leader, but refuses the responsibilities that God has set him? Of such a man, may we not properly say, "Let him perish in his pride! Let his name be blotted out from the rolls of the living! Let his very
place of habitation melt from the face of the world he
rejected."

Matt, you have strayed far, along ways that are
dangerous to the spirit. Learn humility and seek thy God.
Write no more poems until you have approved yourself worthy
to be a teacher. You need not mention this letter to your
mother, it would only cause her needless agitation.

Your loving father,

Thomas Arnold.
Appendix I

Dr. Arnold preaches on Death

Let us then place before our minds for a little while a picture of that state to which we must all come, and from which we know not how short a time may yet separate us. Probably some of those who now hear me have never seen any one after death, nor ever witnessed the changes which take place before it. These last, indeed, must in many respects be often very different; yet there are some circumstances sufficiently common to be considered as part of that state which we must all one day experience. We must expect to find our minds greatly altered; sometimes, indeed, by absolute delirium, but oftener by the weakness and restlessness attendant on disease. The mere confinement to a sick-room, and the sights of gloom and grief by which we are surrounded when our condition becomes hopeless, are enough, when acting upon a weakened body, to unfit the mind for the calm and free exercise of its faculties. Repentance under such circumstances is almost impossible; we may be frightened, confused, overpowered, with a multitude of various feelings, but we are not enough masters of ourselves to gain then a true hatred of sin, or to be able to form deliberate resolutions of turning to God in sincerity and earnestness. Our prayers are the mere prayers of fear, and are therefore of no value; as the time is past when fear might have been the beginning
of wisdom. Many times also we are altogether insensible before our death, or sensible only to the gradual sinking of the powers of life within us. What is felt in the very last struggle indeed, we cannot know till we feel it; but, if any consciousness still remains in us, it must then demand all the faith of the firmest Christian not to shrink at the thought of being torn for ever from all that he has seen or known; and entering at once upon a new world of which no human experience can tell him anything. His body he knows will be put into the ground, and changed into dust; and he cannot fancy any life without the body.

Sermons, Series I, pp. 92-93.
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<th>Language Time</th>
<th>CLASSICAL DIVISION</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scripture Instruction, etc.</td>
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<td>St. John in Greek Testament</td>
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<td>Deuteronomy and Epistle of St. Peter</td>
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<td>Selections from the Psalms.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Parts of Horace, Odes I, II, III, Parts of Cicero's Epistles</td>
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<tr>
<th>FIFTH</th>
<th>Aeschyl. Sept contra Thebas.</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Sophocles' Philoct.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>St. John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epistles to Timothy and Titus</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bible History from I Kings to Nehemiah, inclusive</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower REMOVE</th>
<th>Homer's Iliad III, IV, Virgil's Aen.VI, VII</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extracts from Cicero's Epistles, Parts of Horace</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIFTH</th>
<th>Aeschyl. Agamemnon</th>
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<td>Homer's Iliad V, VI</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Epistles to the Corinthians</td>
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<td>Paley's Horae Paulinae</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Some one or more of the Septuagint Version</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greek tragedies, One or more of the private Orations of Demosthenes.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cicero in Verrem.</td>
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<tr>
<th>FORM</th>
<th>One of the Prophets in the Septuagint Version, Different parts of the New Testament, Cicero against Verres, Part of Aristotelis Ethics.</th>
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**This table taken from Dr. Arnold's article "Rugby School" - Quarterly Journal of Education (vol.vii, 1854) - as reprinted in Wheridge as an insert between pp.112-113.**

**Appendix II.**

<table>
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<th>History Time</th>
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<tr>
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<table>
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<table>
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<th>FORM</th>
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<tr>
<th>FORM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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Appendix III

Literary Criticism in a Rugby Text-Book

(a) "No poet of our time can justly be pronounced equal to Pope. The critic who undervalued that admired author was himself a writer of pleasing verse, but did not ascend the heights of Parnassus: I mean Dr. Joseph Warton. His brother, the historian of poetry, was a respectable and laureated bard. Cowper's Task displays an interesting simplicity, not always destitute of strength. His biographer Hayley has produced both vapid verse and vigorous poetry. The effusions of Burns are natural and impressive, and make their way to the heart. Bloomfield, the untaught bard, treads firmly in the steps of Goldsmith. Southey's Joan of Arc reflects credit on his genius; and the veteran Cumberland has not disgraced himself or the nation by the sacred poem of Calvary." 1

(b) "The novelists who succeeded Richardson produced few works of merit, before Miss Burney (now madame d'Arblay) arose, whose novels, without the coarseness of Fielding or the circumstantiality of the author of Grandison, are both amusing and interesting. Charlotte Smith wrote with elegance and feeling. The productions of Mrs. Radcliffe are romantic without extravagance, and display an elevation of character and sentiment. Human nature is well depicted by Dr. Moore, whose novels of Zeluco and Edward may be read with interest, while his views of society and manners in different countries amuse and instruct by a display of real life. The progress and agitations of love are not ill represented by Miss Lee and her sister; and Mrs. West combines sound morality with pleasing narration." 2


2 ibid., Vol.VI, p. 594.
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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
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<td>Butler, Samuel</td>
<td>The Way of All Flesh</td>
<td>New York, Grosset &amp; Dunlap (no date).</td>
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<td>Guedalla, Philip</td>
<td>Bonnet and Shawl</td>
<td>London, Hodder and Stoughton (1930).</td>
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</table>
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