MATTHEW ARNOLD AS A SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS REFORMER, AND HIS INFLUENCE AS REFLECTED MAINLY IN PERIODICAL LITERATURE

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p. 18. For "siécle" read "siècle".

p. 34. For "nonconformists" and "materialists" read "nonconformist" and "materialist".

p. 60. For "insight of" read "insight into".

p. 67. For "affections" read "affection".

p. 78. For "uncomprising" read "uncompromising".

p. 108. For "their minds" read "its mind".
INTRODUCTION

The word Victorian, as an adjective applied to poetry, religion and morals, is beginning to lose the potent aroma of scorn attached to it by an exuberant pre-war generation, indulging in a few cautious and deliciously wicked experiments with the new freedom, and a disillusioned post-war generation which professes to find lace and lavender rather nauseating. The reasons for both the attitude and the change are not difficult to seek. There was, after all, to the twentieth century spirits, something a little unreal in the apparently unbroken prosperity and domestic felicity of Victorian England. The nineteenth century, for most of us, has been synonymous with industrial expansion on the one hand, from "Spinning Jenny" to "Puffing Billy", and on the other an emotional serenity which interpreted passion in terms of slippers, a hearth, and a family of ten. Such have been, broadly speaking, the connotations of the word Victorian to the present generation, a legacy from the questing souls who were hurled into the Great War before they had time to establish the lives of their fathers in a true perspective.

We are beginning, I think, to take a more impersonal
and objective attitude to the nineteenth century, and to our
surprise we find ordinary spectacles to be distinctly superior
to opera glasses. It comes as something of a shock to appreci­
ate the fact that our grandfathers were human - that men and
women in Victoria's day were troubled by fears, doubts and un­
certainities, and were susceptible to the griefs and ecstasies
which move us. This reaction towards an attitude of sympathy
and understanding is explained by Mr. Hugh Kingsmill. No one,
he declares, could be as witty at the expense of the Victorians
as Lytton Strachey, - hence it becomes necessary to adopt a
different point of view.

While this can hardly be considered a cogent reason, I
agree with Mr. Kingsmill that the nineteenth century gains im­
measurably in interest and significance when we destroy the
barriers erected by convention, and try to achieve an under­
standing of the Victorians reduced to truly human proportions.
Such criticism as is contained in Mr. Kingsmill's treatment of
Matthew Arnold, where a truthful interpretation is repeatedly
sacriliced in the interest of the 'bon mot' and the humorous
paradox, can never be adequate. But there is available a
wealth of biographical and critical material, both impartial
and prejudiced, and the idea of Victorian remoteness, embalmed
in its own sanctimony and self-sufficiency, appears a super­
ficial judgment in the light of a little attentive study. The
ideas and ideals of the age are revealed in the work of its
men of letters - the critical reactions to these works furnish
grounds for estimate and comparison. Such an estimate, in
what I must confess at the outset to be a scanty and imperfect fashion, I propose now to attempt in the case of Matthew Arnold.

The variation from time to time, both in quantity and intensity, of the critical commentaries upon Arnold's work, supplies us with an excellent yardstick with which to measure the degree of his popularity and influence at any particular period. A lover of statistics could compute the fluctuations of public interest in Arnold on the basis of a really intriguing curve. His early years, when most of his poetry and literary criticism was produced, were years spent in near-obscurity. By 1869, however, people were becoming aware of his existence, owing chiefly to his social and political essays, and the publication of Culture and Anarchy in that year brought him into prominence.

The gospel of culture excited a good deal of comment, favourable and otherwise, but a veritable storm of controversy arose with the publication, in 1873, of Literature and Dogma. In fact, Arnold's sallies into the religious field, strange as it may seem to us, really brought him into the limelight of contemporary notice, and the articles of reviewers ranged in tone all the way from bitter invective to open admiration. Around the turn of the century, however, his relation to the epoch as a poet and a man of letters was more truly understood, and we find the reviews, particularly after the publication of Arnold's letters in 1895, revealing a serious attempt at sane and balanced appreciation. Then followed the period of react-
tion when Arnold, in common with more popular writers, suffered years of comparative neglect. Since 1922, the centenary of his birth, there has been a steady revival of interest, particularly in his poetry. It would seem to indicate that among the appreciative few, for Arnold will never be favoured of the majority, he is at last taking his true place in the realm of English letters.

An examination of Arnold's social and religious ideas and the degree to which they were implicit in his earlier work, together with the critical reactions to his writings, is the purpose of the present essay. His recently-published correspondence with Clough has not been made use of, although Russell's edition of Arnold's letters, supplemented by the valuable links contained in Whitridge's contribution, has been referred to liberally. Then too, the number of periodicals at my disposal has been limited. Yet the extracts from the articles of reviewers, together with the few quotations from more complete works will, I hope, supply us with a cross-section of critical opinion adequate for my purpose. And in this regard I feel impelled to make an observation. To even a casual reader of the numerous commentaries upon Matthew Arnold and his writings, one fact must appear as significant. The articles may range from utter hostility to blind adulation, some of his critics may applaud and others may sneer - but few are indifferent.
In an essay purporting to deal with Matthew Arnold's social and religious doctrines, and with the reactions thereto, it would obviously be futile and misleading to indulge in a lengthy discussion of his merits as a poet. His fame as a poet and as a literary critic is secure, and an adequate treatment of Arnold in either capacity would require a volume in itself. In devoting this first chapter to a study of Arnold's earlier work, then, my purpose is to trace the embryonic reformer in the poet, rather than to approach the poet and literary critic from the aesthetic angle. Such a study should serve admirably as a background to aid our understanding of his more ephemeral and controversial literature, discussed in the two succeeding chapters. If in the course of this study we find latent evidence of the critical and reforming tendencies dominating Arnold's later work, we shall at least have a coherent and unified picture of his mental development.

So frequently have Arnold's readers sighed their regret over his pre-occupation with social and religious reform, so united has been the critical chorus in favour of his purely literary work as against his polemical essays, that an investi-
gation into the causes of the Arnoldian transition should be profitable. That it was a regrettable change is the consensus of opinion, and the opposite view would be, I feel, neither sincere nor capable of defense. But while the transition from poet to reformer was doubtless unfortunate, it was, under the combined forces of Arnold's character, upbringing and circumstances, an inevitable one. We know his upbringing - he was the son of a man who was both a schoolmaster and a zealous reformer. We know his circumstances - he was for thirty years an Inspector of Schools, able to devote to his beloved books only the odd hours remaining from the conscientious fulfilment of an arduous and exacting task. There is little point in comparing Arnold's literary output with that of other major Victorian poets, to the detriment of the former. They had not, for the most part, his distractions, nor were they under the necessity of earning their daily bread in a monotonous occupation. There is much more point in the observation that the change in the sphere of Arnold's activity, whether owing to his temperament or to the pressure of circumstances, was inevitable.

We must remember that Arnold never was a popular poet, in the sense that Tennyson and Browning were or became popular. His first two volumes of verse, published in 1849 and 1852, were practically ignored, and since then, in spite of the praises of critics and fellow-writers, he has remained the poet of the Appreciative Few. His fame in his own day rested rather upon his social and religious essays than upon the more permanent part of his writing. As Traill observed in 1888, "the
poet was unknown to all but a very small fraction of those who were familiar enough with the literary critic, the essayist —, and above all, the amateur theologian.\textsuperscript{1} An American critic, ten years earlier, had testified in similar vein to his influence abroad. "Matthew Arnold is more widely known in this country as the critic and the liberal thinker than as the poet; yet," he continued, "to our mind his poetry is more valuable than his prose, and it is to him and Clough that the men of the future will come who desire to find the clearest poetic expression of the thoughtful men of our generation."\textsuperscript{2} The truth of the prophecy is obvious; it is Arnold's application of the critical spirit to modern life, based as it is upon a reverence for and understanding of the past, that gives his poetry, not a greater popularity, but a greater significance than much of the work of his contemporaries.

Most lovers of poetry will agree with W. C. Brownell that English letters suffered a real loss when Arnold devoted himself to the cause of transforming British Philistinism, and that "however delightful and instructive it may be, it has at least one serious defect — it takes the place of something else, something, upon the whole, better."\textsuperscript{3} But regrets are useless. The importance of the problems upon which Arnold was to expend his mature powers must have constituted a perpetual

\begin{enumerate}
\item Nation, Vol. 27. P. 274.
\item Ibid, Vol. 29. P. 276.
\end{enumerate}
challenge to a man of a reforming turn of mind. He did not
give in without a struggle, however. His letters testify in a
dozen places, sometimes rather wistfully, to the fact that he
found purely literary endeavour decidedly more congenial than
controversy. Even at the age of thirty-nine, when his part-
time position as Professor of Poetry at Oxford saw him involved
in the Homer controversy, he gave voice to his fear that the
critical bent was robbing him of the finer fruit. "I must
finish off for the present my critical writings between this
and forty, and give the next ten years earnestly to poetry. It
is my last chance. It is not a bad ten years of one's life for
poetry if one resolutely uses it, but it is a time in which, if
one does not use it, one dries up and becomes prosaic alto-
gether."¹ Again, in the following year, after commenting on
the opposition and contradiction he had encountered, he says,
"I mean to leave this region altogether and to devote myself
to what is positive and happy, not negative and contentious, in
literature."² But the nature of his official duties, and his
eagerness to lighten the fog of middle-class ignorance and
banality, proved too much for him. Parallel with the slow
hardening of the poetic arteries we find the quickening beat of
the critical pulse. Again and again he tells his mother or sis-
ter that he must use his pen to prod the lethargic Englishman
into a sense of shame at his own shortcomings. Yet the actual

² Ibid, P. 158.
transition, as I have said, was gradual. In 1864 he wrote, "One is from time to time seized and irresistibly carried along by a temptation to treat political, or religious, or social matters directly; but after yielding to such a temptation I always feel myself recoiling again, and disposed to touch them only so far as they can be touched through poetry." There we have it - the temptation was irresistible, and the recoil became less and less with the years. Even his trips abroad, instead of stimulating the poetic vein, furnished him with ammunition for attacking the insularity of his countrymen. By the time he was forty, retreat was too difficult. The receding pipes of Pan were powerless to compete with the loud and compelling chords of the reformer's harp.

If Arnold's upbringing and the circumstances of his mature years had been the only factors responsible for diverting his pen, there would be some point in the general regret. But his temperament, perhaps by inheritance, and certainly shaped by environment, was naturally of a reforming and critical cast. Just as the social and religious essayist was foreshadowed in the literary critic, so the literary critic was foreshadowed in the poet. As early as 1849 he voiced his dissatisfaction with what he considered the prevailing tendency in poetry. "More and more I feel bent against the modern English habit (too much encouraged by Wordsworth) of using poetry as a channel for thinking aloud, instead of making anything."²

Arnold had no patience with the idea that a poem is its own justification, that true beauty and perfection can exist independent of content. Perhaps the Art for Art's Sake school of thought was a direct reaction to the moral basis implicit in Arnold's canons of criticism, rather than, as T.S. Eliot suggests, the offspring of Arnold's culture.¹ At all events, from his conception of a broad moral, rather than a purely aesthetic basis for poetry, arose Arnold's definition of poetry as 'a criticism of life.' A detailed examination of this much-debated doctrine should furnish us with some understanding of Arnold's attitude to life and literature.

It is imperative first of all to realize the depth and significance, to Arnold, of the word "moral," and its relation to poetic greatness. "A great poet" he declared in his essay on Wordsworth, "receives his distinctive character of superiority from his application, under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth, from his application, I say, to his subject, whatever it may be, of the ideas

'On man, on nature, and on human life,'

which he has acquired for himself."² To apply ideas on these subjects to life, in other words, is to criticize life. But the range of these ideas is not unlimited, if true poetic greatness is to be achieved. Quoting Voltaire with approval,

Arnold continues; "no nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation." And he adds: "There, it seems to me, is the great merit of the English poets." We might well look dubious at this, bearing in mind the weighty didacticism and philosophy in verse now gathering dust on library shelves. But "moral," to Arnold, does not signify didacticism, nor is it even synonymous with ethics. When Wordsworth's verse, as it so often does, becomes merely a vehicle for his philosophy, Arnold unhesitatingly condemns it as a 'tissue of verbiage'. Wherein, then, does Wordsworth's poetical superiority consist? Arnold answers his own question by a quotation from Wordsworth, showing us in concise form the "moral ideas" implicit in great poetry, the application of which constitutes a 'criticism of life.' The poet's song, says Matthew, must consist

'Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope.
And melancholy fear subdued by faith,
Of blessed consolations in distress,
Of moral strength and intellectual power,
Of joy in widest commonalty spread'

To deal powerfully with such ideas, said Arnold, is to deal with life in conformance with the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth.

The scope given by Arnold to the word "moral" is more readily understood when we examine his quotations. He gives us Keats'

'Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair,' ---

and Shakespeare's

'We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.'

Now here we have an aesthetic conception of the permanence of beauty, and a whole philosophy of life distilled from three immortal lines, yet to Arnold both are moral ideas. Clearly, before judgment can be passed upon Arnold's critical dicta, the reader must abandon certain definitions and prepossessions. The term "moral" must be stretched until it becomes synonymous with life, as we see from the following lengthy but comprehensive statement of the Arnoldian creed. "It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life, - to the question: How to live. Morals are often treated in a narrow and false fashion; they are bound up with systems of thought and belief which have had their day; they are fallen into the hands of pedants and professional dealers; they grow tiresome to some of us. We find attraction, at times, even in a poetry of revolt against them.... Or we find attractions in a poetry indifferent to them; in a poetry where the contents may be what they will, but where the form is studied and exquisite. We delude ourselves in either case; and the best cure for our delusion is to let our minds rest upon that great and inexhaustible word life, until we learn to enter into its meaning. A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against life; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry
of indifference towards life."¹

Such an emphasis upon moral ideas, even when we realize the peculiar significance, to Arnold, of the term "moral", would seem to indicate an overwhelming importance attached to content in poetry. The values implicit in his phrase, 'a criticism of life', are however more fully developed in another passage. "Truth and seriousness of substance and matter, felicity and perfection of diction and manner, as these are exhibited in the best poets, are what constitute a criticism of life made in conformity with the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty; and it is by knowing and feeling the work of those poets, that we learn to recognize the fulfilment and non-fulfilment of such conditions."² This is Arnold's criterion of true excellence, this perfect and consummate blend of matter and manner. "The moment, however, that we leave the small band of the very best poets, the true classics, and deal with poets of the next rank, we shall find that perfect truth and seriousness of matter, in close alliance with perfect truth and felicity of manner, is the rule no longer."³ Those who were not capable of achieving this perfect unity might write poetry, and beautiful poetry, but it would not be poetry of the highest order.

On the bases of these criteria Arnold made his judg-

2. Ibid. P. 187.
3. Ibid.
ments, using as models the great writers whose 'criticism of life' he felt to be adequate. Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton – these were men who had displayed in their poetry the perfect fusion of high seriousness and felicitous diction and style. Consequently their poems are moral and artistic wholes (using moral in Arnold's broad sense) and the weaknesses of poets whose work is less 'adequate' become apparent by comparison. This is Arnold's 'touchstone' system, where he offers powerful lines from the great poets as beacons to guide the searcher after poetic truth and poetic beauty.

Yet however happy his examples may be, and they are happy, there are weaknesses. Anyone can select an effective and beautiful passage from Shakespeare, put it beside a piece of rhetorical verbiage from Byron, and feel that the first selection is infinitely superior as 'a criticism of life'. Anyone, that is, who has a certain amount of taste and erudition. But what does that prove? Single lines and passages can be chosen from Byron, as Arnold himself shows in one place, which for power of thought and beauty of diction cannot be surpassed. The superiority of the greater poet over the lesser can only be understood by comprehending their achievements as artistic wholes, and while Arnold's synthetic rather than analytic criticism recognizes this truth, his 'touchstones' are apt to be misleading. It should be profitable, at this point, to discuss some of Arnold's verdicts, with the reasons he submits for his classifications.

Of all the poets who contributed to the glorious re-
vival of the early nineteenth century, Arnold ranked Byron and Wordsworth highest, and of these two, he considered Wordsworth the one who really could claim to approach the true classics. This elevation of Wordsworth, in spite of his 'poetic baggage', was owing to Arnold's feeling for subtle degrees of excellence in poetry - not to a feeling that the contemporaries of Wordsworth were anything but genuine poets of a very high order. Keats, with all his splendid poetical gift, died too soon to produce really mature work, while Shelley, in Arnold's opinion, was too often 'pinnacled dim in the intense inane'. After commenting on the charm and loveliness of Shelley's poetry, Arnold observed: "But all the personal charm of Shelley cannot hinder us from at last discovering in his poetry the incurable want, in general, of a sound subject matter, and the incurable fault, in consequence, of unsubstantiality." He felt that Shelley's essays and letters would appeal more to posterity than his poems, a verdict rather at odds with Arnold's usual soundness. But then he appeared to have little sympathy with Shelley in any case. Byron, in spite of his slovenliness and carelessness of workmanship, and his frequent abuse of taste, Arnold considered to possess the sincerity and strength necessary to give his best work a permanent significance. His 'criticism of life', in other words, Arnold found to be more adequate - where Shelley lost himself in a vague idealism, and Keats worshipped at the shrine of sensuous beauty, Byron ap-

plied his ideas to the main stream of modern life. Yet Wordsworth was superior to all the others in one important thing; he did sometimes achieve the perfect fusion of noble content and felicitous diction characteristic of the truly great. "Whenever we meet with the successful balance, in Wordsworth, of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution, he is unique." In such poems as "The Highland Reaper" and "Michael", such a balance had been achieved, said Arnold, consequently the criticism of life submitted was profoundly true, and entitled the poet to a place more exalted than that occupied by his less perfect fellows. I have said that Arnold found Byron's power to consist in his application of ideas to the main stream of modern life. Without this vital participation in the problems that confront mankind, no poet is really satisfying the high office to which destiny has called him. To speak of modern life, however, was not with Arnold to mean contemporary tendencies. The ancients were great because they were modern. An ardent classicist, by training and environment, Arnold was never more at home than in the company of Pindar and Sophocles, but it was the 'modern element' in classical work that constituted its real greatness. Ancient Athens, he maintained, was incomparably closer to us than medieval Christendom, simply because they applied ideas powerfully and effectively to life. Even Elizabethan England he considered more remote from us than Periclean Greece, since,

while the 'national glow of life' produced a vigorous and glorious literature, the philosophy and general mental outlook of the Greeks was more truly modern than that of the Elizabethans. "Modern", then, consisted in an attitude of mind, rather than a chronological division. Hence poetry which is remote from life, no matter how beautiful, how consummately poetical it may be, could never, in Arnold's estimation, contain an adequate criticism of life, and hence could never achieve true poetic greatness. Yet to apply ideas is not in itself sufficient either - such a philosophy of life as we find in the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam, no matter how exquisitely dressed, Arnold condemned on the grounds that it constituted a revolt against the moral ideas which are implicit in life.

Arnold's high conception of the function of poetry, and its relation to life, is most emphatically stated in his essay, The Study of Poetry. "We should conceive of poetry worthily, and more highly than it has been the custom to conceive of it. We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto. More and more mankind will have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us." Here is the value and significance of poetry as a criticism of life. "But," Arnold goes on, "the consolation and stay will be of power in proportion to the

power of the criticism of life. And the criticism of life will be of power in proportion as the poetry conveying it is excellent rather than inferior, sound rather than unsound or half-sound, true rather than untrue or half-true."¹ Again we see Arnold calling for the exercise of discrimination and taste; for the recognition of degrees of excellence, of moral soundness, in short, of the adequacy of the poet's application of ideas to life. This is the instinct, for such criticism as Arnold's obviously works by intuition rather than by scientific deduction, that leads Arnold to place Burns' "Tam Glen" above Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound"; and that leads him to consider Chaucer, in spite of the latter's benignity and largeness of view, as something inferior to Homer and Dante through his lack of a consistent high seriousness. To attain any force, intuitive criticism such as this must necessarily be delivered ex cathedra, and the validity of many of Arnold's judgments can be, and frequently has been, questioned. The personal element, which he himself deprecated, must have been operating strongly when he ranked Maurice de Guerin with Keats, to take only one instance. Yet so many of his studies embody such profound truths, and such illuminating half-truths, that they cannot help but throw a fresh and instructive, if sometimes provocative light upon any subject he touched.

To return to Arnold's conception of the high destiny of poets and their poetry, which makes him set such lofty and

'moral' standards of excellence, we might well ask the question, - what, actually, does this high destiny involve? Everything, Arnold would reply, which commands the best and most profound thoughts of mankind, - religion, philosophy, science. "There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry." Here, almost fully-developed, is the theme Arnold was to expand in his religious essays, in Literature and Dogma, where a literary interpretation of the Bible is seen as the only salvation of a faith brought into discredit by the hair-splitting metaphysics of theologians. "Without poetry," Arnold continues, "our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry." The prophecy has not been fulfilled - philosophy, and in some ways religion, still engage the thoughts of men as abstract subjects of debate, while science seems to have achieved her miraculous growth without the inspiration or aid of poetry.

2. Ibid. P. 2.
But there is a growing feeling that we have pushed our worship of scientific deduction too far, that there is an emotional and spiritual side of us which cannot be interpreted in factual terms. And Shakespeare, in three unforgettable lines, can give a happier and more consummate expression to our sense of life's ultimate mystery than can be found in pages of philosophical or theological disquisition.

Arnold's ideal of poetry and its higher destinies as a criticism of life, - interpreting life for us, consoling us, sustaining us, naturally implied a corresponding power in the poet as a critic of life. If he is a true poet, he must employ his genius in a contemplation of life, in interpreting the most profound moral and intellectual truths for his fellow-men. He is the high priest of Nature, and he betrays his trust if he does not aid man in the search for his own soul, the slow and painful struggle towards perfection. Arnold came to feel that 'the proper study of mankind is man', and whether grave or gay, despairing or satirical, this is the feeling that is paramount in all his work. Nature is rather an accessory, in his poetry, than a theme in herself. His idea of the poet's high function is expressed in his poem, "Resignation".

"The Poet, to whose mighty heart
Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,
Subdues that energy to scan
Not his own course, but that of Man."

Arnold's sense of the poetic power and vision, and the inevitable melancholy they must bring, gave rise to some of his finest lines.
"Lean'd on his gate, he gazes; tears
Are in his eyes, and in his ears
The murmur of a thousand years:
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;
That Life, whose dumb wish is not miss'd
If birth proceeds, if things subsist;
The Life of plants, and stones, and rain:
The Life he craves; if not in vain
Fate gave, what Chance shall not controul,
His sad lucidity of soul."

When we turn to a consideration of Arnold's own poetry, we must admit that he frequently falls short of his own critical dicta. He is sometimes guilty of jarring dissonances; in places his conscious striving for form makes it obtrusive; and in other verses his own criticism and philosophy so weight down the form that it becomes little more than heightened prose. Seldom do the critic and the man blend perfectly into the poet, although when they do the result is exquisite. But I am not concerned here with a critical estimate of Arnold as an artist. It is rather my purpose to see wherein Arnold's poetry is a 'criticism of life', and here it must be confessed that he practised what he preached. His poems are full of ideas, and, save in the purely narrative pieces, the reflections are on the mental and spiritual problems, both ephemeral and eternal, confronting mankind. A criticism of life his poetry certainly is, but a criticism on the whole negative and pessimistic. While his delight in the company of the ancients impelled him to retire to Attica for his themes, and while he did in a few poems, as in "The Strayed Reveller", attain to an almost classical objectivity, Arnold could not put away the world. He was by no
means immune to the 'mal de siècle' afflicting the young men of the period, and his poetic moods are almost invariably those of regret and yearning, deepening at times into bitterness and pessimism. The 'moderate and sustained optimism' of his later years is seldom found in his verse. His tragedy, as the letters revealed a few pages earlier, is that with one side of his mind he longs for the cool shade of the Parthenon, while the other is repelled yet fascinated by the heat and hunger of modern life.

"Two desires toss about
The poet's feverish blood,
Ones drives him to the world without
And one to solitude."

The desire for solitude is powerless to cope with the other, and so he turns reluctant eyes upon

"--- this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads c'ertax'd, its palsied hearts."

What chance is there in all this dust and distraction for soul-restoring thought, for the calm and profound reflections which alone can save man from himself?

We "see all sights from Pole to Pole,
And glance, and nod, and bustle by,
And never once possess our soul
Before we die."

We move in ruts, and those few of us who dare to leave the herd to breathe a finer, rarer atmosphere pay the penalty. In "A Summer Night" Arnold shows us the individualist who has left the "brazen prison" of his fellows, finally driven mad by misunderstanding and ignorant persecution. He cries bitterly,

"Is there no life, but these alone?
Madman or slave, must man be one?"
Even Nature has no power to soothe him, for

"Through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain bee,
There sobs I know not what ground tone
Of human agony."

Cynically Arnold asks of a preacher friend, - "In harmony with Nature? Restless fool!" It is impossible.

"Nature and man can never be fast friends.
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!"

Well, the reader may remonstrate, what if this life is futile, and Nature remote and unsympathetic. Have we not still our faith in God, our hope of a better life?

"Fools! that in man's brief term
He cannot all things view,
Affords no grounds to affirm
That there are Gods who do:
Nor does being weary prove that he has where to rest."

This is, of course, the attitude of the young intellectual who has lost faith in a personal Deity, and in Nature as a manifestation of that Deity, and the last quotation, coming from the cynical and world-weary Empedocles, may be a little dubious as Arnold's own philosophy. But the idea occurs too frequently in Arnold's early and more pessimistic verse to make us doubt its sincerity. The new scientific learning has destroyed the old faith, and has as yet offered no substitute.

The human race is left

"Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born."

There is a greater Power than man, declared Arnold, but how can we postulate humanity, much less a beneficent interest, in that Power? Is it not rather a blind, impartial Force?
"We, in some unknown Power's employ,
Move on a rigorous line:
Can neither, when we will, enjoy;
Nor, when we will, resign."

Thus far Arnold's attitude to life seems to be one of unrelieved gloom. But the gentle note of regret creeps into his contemplation of human life and its instability, and his sense of loss at the decay of the old beliefs is poignantly phrased in "Dover Beach".

"The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world,"

The strain is still mournful, but one line, incongruous with the rest of the poem, introduces a note of hope.

"Ah, love, let us be true
To one another!"

Here, then, is a note of comfort and strength, and the criticism of life assumes a more positive and happy aspect. The poet has realized that his spiritual roots, to obtain nourishment, must strike deep into the soil of common humanity and human affection. The 'stupefying power' of life's monotonous and trivial routine numbs our soul, he mourns in "The Buried Life". But "a beloved hand is laid in ours", and by the caressing tones of a dear voice,

"A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again:
A man becomes aware of his life's flow
And hears its winding murmur, and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze."
And personal affections of an intimate kind are not the only saviours. Courage, a larger faith in humanity as a whole, a faith in the noble spirits which have aided mankind to progress - let these be our props.

"Yet now, when boldest wills give place,
When Fate and Circumstance are strong,
And in their rush the human race
Are swept, like huddling sheep, along:

Those sterner spirits let me prize,
Who, through the tendenee of the whole
They less than us might recognize,
Kept, more than us, their strength of soul."

Here is the germ of the cultural crusade Arnold was later to conduct - his advice to men to study the 'best that has been thought and said in the world' and so fortify themselves to withstand the bewildering shocks of civilization and progress. True progress is impossible without the universal culture and mental serenity that comes from a widespread familiarity with the work of the noblest minds - this is the thesis later embodied in his "gospel of culture". In "Dover Beach" we have seen Arnold turn to human love as a spiritual anchor - later he tries to establish religion on such a verifiable experience of humanity, rather than upon an archaic system of dogmatic speculation. From the rather Byronic pessimism of the young intellectual, Arnold's criticism of life gradually changes, as we shall see, to the intelligent and moderate, though at times heart-weary optimism of the reformer.

Before leaving Arnold's poetry, it might be significant to observe his peculiar felicity in elegaic verse. It has been said of Arnold that he was only sincere in the minor
moods of regret and yearning, and that he seemed happiest when standing by an open grave. Both criticisms contain a large measure of truth - the real Matthew Arnold is most discernible, and withal most delightful, in his elegiac verse. His longing for the old spiritual quiet, his distaste for modern life, and the happy manner in which he can weave Nature into the pattern of his poetry, as a background for his reflections on life, - all these traits achieve more perfect expression in his elegies than in any other section of his verse. Particularly is this true of "The Scholar-Gipsy" and "Thyrsis". And in one of his elegies at least, "Rugby Chapel", we catch a glimpse of the mature Arnold. Musing upon his father's strong character and zeal for reform, he feels impelled to express his admiration for the great souls who have devoted themselves to aiding struggling humanity, although he does not add the rather bitter truth that later took some of the joy out of his own crusading, the discouraging fact that the most of humanity, with obstinate stupidity, seem to prefer struggling to being aided. Instead, he pictures mankind, "a feeble, wavering line," marching on to its goal through barren wastes. A few win through, scarred and storm-beaten, but the weaker vessels perish. In every age, however, there are strong souls like Dr. Arnold, who refuse to win through alone, who burn to help the weak and dispirited.

"Then, in such hour of need
Of your fainting, dispirited race,
Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardour divine!
Beacons of hope, ye appear!"
Written in 1857, when Arnold's creative vein was being submerged by the critical, the poem would seem to promise at least the potential reformer, latent in Matthew's strong sense of kinship with and reverence for Dr. Arnold.

Turning to the reviewers, we find little attempt to analyze the definition of poetry as 'a criticism of life'. To all who consider that art and morals should be divorced the definition is of course abhorrent, as Leslie Stephen remarked in 1893.¹ To most other critics, the idea must have been disarming in its very simplicity. Capable of many interpretations, it has yet, when viewed from one angle, all the homely truth of a near-platitude. But the fact that his criticism is synthetic rather than analytic, intuitive rather than a matter of reasoning, gave real opportunities to more logical-minded critics. Stephen finds him too inclined to treat his intuitions as being "equivalent to scientific and measurable statements."¹

Another critic writing in the Edinburgh Review of 1869 allows Arnold to be "a consummate master of literary criticism,"² but complains that he is lacking in system, and, in spite of his cleverness and originality, oblivious to some of the plainest inferences. The same critic is quite exasperated with some of Arnold's pet phrases, and finds that his indolence in failing properly to explain such terms as 'the grand style' constitutes a failing that mars even his most perfect essays. This ten-

dency to regard his intuitions as exact literary measurements, with a consequent number of arbitrary and unsupported statements, is the weakness in Arnold the critic upon which his reviewers fastened. It has its roots, I think, in two aspects of Arnold's critical thought - he is a poet turned critic, or, if one likes, a poet-critic; and secondly, in the words of Alfred Austin, "he began to criticize life before he had lived." Yet all of his reviewers, while disagreeing with many of his intuitive findings, unite in awarding him critical eminence. Stephen is constrained to admit that "he excels in the art of giving delicate portraits of literary leaders", while a writer in the Westminster Review of 1863 finds Arnold to be "the very best critic we possess." The uniqueness of his position as a critic is pointed out by J.J. Reilly as late as 1925. "Where Carlyle and Ruskin had been a moral stimulus, Matthew Arnold was an intellectual one, but with moral implications as decisive as theirs." This is treating criticism in its large sense, of course, but the peculiar combination of intellectual and moral teaching implicit in Arnold's work may be what T.S. Eliot has in mind when he finds Arnold to be a more sympathetic writer to this generation than either Carlyle or Ruskin. At all events, the general concensus of opinion seems to substantiate

Morley's fine tribute: "As critic in an epoch that stood in need of criticism in its largest sense, Arnold may be called incomparable among Englishmen of his day."

The 'criticism of life' in Arnold's own poetry, however, met with harsher and more decided rebuke from some of his reviewers. Taken as a whole, says a reviewer in the *Edinburgh Review* of 1888, Arnold's poems "appear a sandheap of shifting judgments, of trembling opinions, of crumbling creeds." His attitude of despairing indifference lends monotony to his early work, and "the irresolution and infirmity of the teaching would alone explain the chilling reception of the first two volumes." In moral questions he neglects the heart to pamper the intellect, save in such poems as "Dover Beach", and the very catholicity of outlook which enables him to appreciate a Heine and a de Guerin robs him of force. "The strength and weakness of his intellect thus combined to deny him the glow of conviction. He was the martyr of his own candour." Yet these very weaknesses and irresolutions mirror the mind of the times, as the critic admits, and comprise in a sense a criticism of life. "It is as the representative of the highest type of agnosticism, as an embodiment of the honesty, narrowness and discontent of modern doubt, that Arnold's mind and character arrest attention."

The positive side of Arnold's poetry as a criticism of

life is, however, adduced by the genial critic - Augustine Birrell, who describes Arnold as the most useful poet of the age, full of thought and consolation. The very predominance of thought over form gives him this power. Leslie Stephen pays Arnold a similar tribute when he says that Arnold may be inferior to Tennyson and Browning, but that "his poetry has, in an eminent degree, the quality - if not inevitableness - of adhesiveness." Arnold himself felt that he had something to offer the reader who sought an interpretation of life in poetry - something that the other poets, with all their gifts, did not convey. "It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning; yet, because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn, as they have had theirs." This is, I feel, the soundest judgment made by Arnold on his own poetry. His readers may never have been as numerous or as voluble as the admirers of the other two poets, but they have been faithful. The casual reader will find his poetry cold, but the Arnoldian will agree with Traill that Arnold's poetry "is not cold to the cultivated taste any more than the marbles

of Phidias are cold."

Both his defects and his high conception of the purpose of poetry militated against popularity. He lacks in passion, his ear for music and his dramatic sense are imperfect, and hence he can never appeal to the average reader, to the man who would rather feel than think. Poetry was to Arnold a genuine medium for the interpretation of life itself - the beauty of the thought conveyed mattered more than the beauty of rhyme or the beauty of word-pictures. He dwelt, as Frederic Harrison said, in a "higher philosophic aether" than his contemporaries. In this connection Harrison uttered a comment which I feel to be singularly apt. After comparing Arnold with Theognis, a comparison of which Arnold himself had felt the force, Harrison observed: "As a poet, Arnold belongs to an order very rare with us, in which Greece was singularly rich, the order of gnomic poets, who condensed in metrical aphorisms their thoughts on human destiny and the moral problems of life." This is the type of poet in whom we are most likely to find the incipient critic and reformer.

Enough has been said, I think, to show the definitely critical bent that coloured all of Arnold's thought, and to establish the fact that the social and religious essayist was a natural development from the poet and literary critic. The natural, inevitable stifling of the poetic impulse by the critical it is vain to regret - Arnold was merely following the

dictates of his nature. Actually his attitude to life and to literature underwent little change. In the poet, the social critic, the amateur theologian, we hearken to the same Matthew Arnold, though the tone of voice and the manner of address may frequently alter. This basic lack of change is attested by H.G. Hewlett. "The ironic humour that therein (i.e. in Arnold's prose) enlivens his gravest mood, and by which he has achieved the well-nigh impossible feat of making theology an entertaining study, is the only mental trait conspicuously absent from his poetry."¹

His 'criticism of life' theory is implicit in his social and religious studies, and while we may sometimes feel that Arnold regarded life too much as something to be criticized, and too little as something to be lived, we must allow him honesty and consistency in his efforts to re-make his fellow-men. His effect is cumulative, in the opinion of John Burroughs, "he stands for a definite and well-grounded idea or principle, an idea which gives a certain unity and simplicity to his entire work."² The criticism is just. Mistaken as he may have been at times, Arnold was entirely sincere in his effort to 'see life steadily, and see it whole.'

CHAPTER 2
CULTURE AND THE STATE

Any man who sets pen to paper runs the risk of being misunderstood and misinterpreted, if his writing contains even a modicum of thought. In the case of an author whose work is predominantly critical, the risk is, of course, greatly amplified, and when the author deliberately assumes the mantle of the teacher and prophet in matters social and religious, he finds the pack of reviewers on his trail in full throat. Such was Matthew Arnold's experience over a period of some forty years, including the time from the date of his death, 1888, till the turn of the century. Within that period there were years of maximum critical activity. In the year 1888, for instance, it is almost impossible to pick up a number of any periodical without coming across an article proving that Arnold's poetry would be the only permanent part of his work, or a weighty dictum that his poetry was practically negligible, but that his essays contained some sound ideas. The reviews themselves expressed every conceivable shade of hostility or of approbation, - the reviewers ranged from professors and scholars of recognized critical status to men who had little to air but a grievance. Even Americans disagreed as to his merits, a phenomenon which would have caused Arnold, who regarded Ameri-
ca as the home of almost unrelieved Philistinism, no little astonishment. During the later years of his life and in the years immediately following his death the harsh and abusive element gradually disappeared from the notices of reviewers, while even his severest critics admitted his purity of motive. The great body of able critical opinion, too, concurred in crediting Arnold with a salutary and far-reaching influence, particularly in the field of education. Yet the lack of agreement persisted. Fitch, writing in the Church Quarterly of 1899, said of Arnold, - "He could not speak to the emotions, he could only arouse the intellect."¹ Five years later, the author of a penetrating study in the Edinburgh Review declared that "Arnold was eminently a man of ideals. He was in less degree ....... a man of ideas."²

Such estimates as contained in the foregoing quotations have the flavour of personal reminiscence, and variations in personal appraisals of any man's work are natural - nay, desirable. But for years, as I have stated, the reactions to his ideas included every phase of violent disagreement and remonstrance, and the reason for such bewildering diversity of opinion is I think two-fold. In the first place, Arnold's sallies into the arena of social and religious controversy were calculated to arouse the average man as well as the scholar, and every man who has even a smattering of liberal education feels qualified to air his views on matters of politics and religion.

Moreover, all of Arnold's readers, save the few who could achieve a calm and detached outlook, found something personally annoying in his work. Under all his surface raillery of manner and vivacity of style "he was, even in the age of Carlyle and Ruskin, perhaps the most serious man alive"; and he possessed to an exceptional degree the power of acting as an intellectual irritant. He employed this gift with deftness and zest, and sent his barbs continually into the tough hide of a rather exasperated John Bull. That the barbs frequently found their mark is evident from the replies, some appreciative, some sarcastic and some downright angry, evoked by his criticisms.

The publication of Arnold's last lecture from the Chair of Poetry at Oxford, under the title of "Culture and Its Enemies", impressed scholars and reviewers with the fact that here was a poet turned reformer, a critic who was dissatisfied with the existing order of things and who felt that radical changes were necessary. True, Arnold had made excursions into this field before, but the tone of Friendship's Garland was almost uniformly one of airy banter, and the serious warnings in his School Reports were wasted on Headquarters. Consequently, when Culture and Anarchy appeared as a single volume in 1869 the growing body of his readers realized, in some cases with a sensation akin to shock, that Matthew Arnold was seriously advocating "culture" as a sovereign remedy for the ills afflicting

English society. Many of his readers declared, angrily or placidly according to their natures, that Mr. Arnold was talking through his professorial hat. What could be wrong with England, a country which led the world in trade and industrial expansion? Such was the attitude of the Philistine, the man whom Arnold was determined to educate to a sense of his own shortcomings. Most of his abler critics felt, with varying degrees of intensity, that Arnold's "Culture cure" was impractical or inadequate, or both.

The state of society in mid-Victorian England is too well known to need discussion here, but a few words, placing Arnold in relation to his environment, would not be amiss. The rapid development of industry and trade in the nineteenth century, with the spectacular growth of machinery, had not only added to Britain's already impressive stature in the congress of nations, but had created vast new sums of domestic wealth. The distribution, however, was more uneven than ever. The new wealth was practically all in the hands of an enterprising and energetic middle-class, the entrepreneur and the manufacturer. Below this class were the workers whose condition, if we are to believe historians and novelists, was virtually one of slavery. The mill-worker and the mine-worker had more freedom to come and go than had the yeoman of the eighteenth century, but exploited as they were by greedy and unscrupulous employers, the freedom was more theoretical than real. Meanwhile the aristocracy, practically shorn of its power as a class by the Reform Bill of 1832 and subsequent measures, had retired in upon it-
self. The ambitious minority supplied the country with party
leaders - the remainder rode to hounds. The real control of
English affairs was in the hands of the affluent middle classes.

When Matthew Arnold came to intellectual and critical
maturity, this was substantially the state of English society,
although the aristocrats were beginning to mingle with the up­
per middle class a little more freely; and the lower classes,
following the series of riots and petitions in the forties and
fifties, were raising collective and individual voices in a dis­
turbing demand for social and political rights. To us in the
New World class distinctions, theoretically at least, are non­
existent, but in the England of Arnold's day they were real and
vital. The lines of demarcation were softening a little, but
Arnold still had reason for his arbitrary division of English
society into the Barbarians, the Philistines, and the Populace.
The Populace, as a name describing the vast residuum of the
laboring class, is admittedly weak, but the other two lasted
for many years. The aristocracy Arnold regarded as being in­
erently inaccessible to ideas, splendid ornaments of essential
refinement in manners but just a little obtuse in matters of
intellectual progress and activity. This, coupled with their
fondness for field sports and martial pastimes, induced him to
fasten on them the name of Barbarians.

With the middle-class, the Philistines, we come to the
field of Arnold's unceasing effort. As the dominant class in
England, the representative class, their flaws and faults were
to Arnold the chief evils in the corporate and individual Eng-
lish character. The name Philistine, as his letters tell us, he obtained from Heine, who used it in his bitter attacks on German middle-class stupidity and banality. Arnold took the name to signify 'the enemies of the children of light', and its connotations of spiritual blindness and materialistic grossness owed half their pungency to his ironical pen. The distressing thing about the middle-class character, to Arnold, was its almost total lack of what he called 'sweetness and light', or beauty and intelligence. Nonconformists in religion, materialists in education, occupied mainly with the acquisition of wealth and commercial prestige, the Philistine had no time for soul-restoring thought, no opportunity to establish his own life in a true perspective by correlating it to the inspiring truths of literature and the thoughts of great men, and to the beauty of the world about him. Furthermore, and this is what Arnold really found alarming, he showed no inclination to achieve this balanced and harmonious growth, nor even a suspicion that anything was wrong with him. Flattered by politicians and orators seeking their own ends, lauded to the skies by brother-Philistines in the newspapers, the great middle-class had come to regard itself as well-nigh perfect. Achievement was translated in terms of factories and mines, population and wealth, while the efforts of educational and social idealists to rouse them to a contemplation of the so-called finer things of life were regarded with a placid disapproval touched with contempt. Arnold understood his victim well, particularly after his long and tedious years spent in inspecting the schools of Dissenters,
and the style he employed, with its combination of direct attack and ironical suggestion, was best calculated to set up an acidie reaction in the middle-class armour-plating of conceited self-esteem.

One of Arnold's most irritating and therefore most telling mannerisms was his constant reiteration of favourite catchwords and phrases. It would not have been successful in his literary criticism, as he no doubt realized, and consequently is little more than an idiosyncrasy of style in his purely literary work. But to make an impression on the mind of the British Philistine was a task calling at times for cruder methods, and so he employed the hammer-strokes of repetition. A succinct statement of the shortcomings and needs of the British Philistine appeared in an article entitled "A Word About America", when for the hundredth time he defined the mental and spiritual status of the middle-class personality. "The English middle class presents us at this day, for our actual needs, and for the purposes of national civilization, with a defective type of religion, a narrow range of intellect and knowledge, a stunted sense of beauty, a low standard of manners. For the building up of human life, as men are now beginning to see, there are needed not only the powers of industry and conduct, but the power, also, of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, the power of social life and manners. And that type of life of which our middle class in England are in possession is one by which neither the claims of intellect and knowledge are satisfied, nor the claim of beauty, nor the claims of social life
To correct this raw and unlovely set of conditions, Arnold submitted that the one thing needful was the pursuit of culture, the absorption, through study and contemplation, of the best that has been thought and said in the world. Culture he defined as the study of perfection, and "perfection, - as culture from a thorough disinterested study of human nature and human experience learns to conceive it, - is a harmonious expansion of all the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature, and is not consistent with the development of any one power at the expense of the rest. Here culture goes beyond religion, as religion is generally conceived by us."  

Let us consider this definition, particularly the latter part of it. Arnold had not yet entered the field of religious controversy, though Culture and Anarchy contains prophetic passages, nor had he laid down his famous dictum that conduct is three-fourths of life. He had not yet reached the stage of making arbitrary arithmetical and philological classifications, and indeed seemed to have a clearer perception of life as a harmonious whole than he was to exhibit five years later. At all events, he described life as composed of two elements, Hebraism and Hellenism. The former, religion, supplied the fire and strength necessary to insure firmness of character and integrity.

of soul. The latter element, as represented by culture, supplied the beauty and intelligence, the 'sweetness and light' needed in rounding out our life to a harmonious perfection. The Philistine, rooted in the beliefs and fanatical zeal of the early Puritans, had an abundance of the Hebraistic element, but had sacrificed the claims of true intelligence and beauty. This narrowness had given him concentration and energy, but had deprived him of a broad and intelligent understanding of life and humanity, and from this lopsidedness arose the evils that spurred Arnold to his cultural crusade.

The worst of the evils arising from this imperfect mental and spiritual development was to Arnold the Englishman's proneness to worship machinery. In his zeal for industry and wealth, his satisfaction with material possessions, the British Philistine had come to mistake the means for the end, to bestow on coal-mines, on factories, on muscular strength, or on population the pride, the energy and devotion which might better be reserved for finer and more ultimate things. Even his religion had come to be mere machinery, a mass of form and dogmas devoid of any real spiritual significance. This was the natural outcome of a single-minded pursuit of material things, and Arnold's irony is cuttingly employed in discussing "that beautiful sentence Sir Daniel Gooch quoted to the Swindon workman, and which I treasure as Mrs. Gooch's Golden Rule, or the Divine Injunction 'Be ye Perfect' done into British, - the sentence Sir Daniel Gooch's mother repeated to him every morning when he was a boy going to work: 'Ever remember, my dear Dan, that you should
look forward to being some day manager of that concern!"  

This, then, was the deepest flaw in the make-up of the British Philistine, - the fierce concentration on material achievement to the exclusion of humanizing mental influences, the mistaking of means for ends, the tendency to regard the mere machinery of life as a beautiful and ultimate goal. Even liberty, said Arnold, had been over-emphasized. The Englishman's jealous and fanatical assertion of personal privilege, sacred under the British constitution, had degraded liberty into a mere piece of machinery, and had opened the door to rowdyism and rash action. What was the use of freedom of thought and speech, demanded Arnold, if that thought and speech were not to be governed by calm reason? "All the liberty in the world" he declared "will not ensure these two things: a high reason and a fine culture."  

These were the goals towards which man should strive, and if the cultural elements in his nature are unduly subordinated, then they must be developed at the expense of the other elements until a balance is attained. In the same essay, he outlined his creed in a pregnant sentence which refuted the charge frequently made against him of minimizing the importance of character, of the elements of fire and strength. "Culture without character is, no doubt, something frivolous, vain, and weak; but character without culture is, on

the other hand, something raw, blind, and dangerous."\(^1\)

Arnold was frequently accused of lauding the French at the expense of the English, but according to him the French were noticeably deficient in the Hebraistic, or character element, while the English were under-developed on the Hellenistic, or cultural side. Ancient Athens he considered to have achieved the nearest approach to harmonious perfection, the most perfect fusion of the factors necessary for 'the culture of a people.' "That is why the spectacle of ancient Athens has such profound interest for a rational man."\(^2\) The point for the Englishman to consider was not wherein he was superior, to the Frenchman for instance, but wherein he was inferior, and to profit accordingly. Arnold vehemently denounced the tendency of politicians to praise the middle-class energy, industry, and accumulation of wealth. These virtues they had in abundance, and so far as the leaders emphasized these attributes at the expense of the essential elements that were lacking, so much more remote became the chance of attaining a balanced mental and spiritual growth. Arnold was quite aware of the strength and solidity of the middle classes, as is evident throughout his letters but he insisted that they could only be transformed into something less raw and unlovely by a constant analysis of their faults. To harp on their material achieve-

2. Ibid.
ments and their pet fetishes was merely to embalm them further in the oil of their own bovine self-approval.

The gospel of culture was certainly not starved for lack of notice. Most of the critics, when Arnold first advanced his doctrines in a lengthy and definite form, were inclined to regard him as a fastidious and supercilious professor of belles-lettres, holding a scented handkerchief between his delicate nostrils and the strong odours of Philistine vulgarity. His counsel was compared to an application of parmaceti, or some such scented salve, and the whole 'religion of culture' was freely described as so much 'moonshine'. Frederic Harrison, rather to Arnold's amusement, attempted a reply in the ironical vein of "Friendship's Garland", but finally could not restrain his indignation at the sight of a man of culture holding out his pouncet-box in the midst of death, degradation and misery.

Serious attention, however, was paid to Arnold's ideas by many able critics, and perhaps the most trenchant criticisms were advanced by Professor Henry Sidgwick, essayist and lecturer of repute. In his article, "The Prophet of Culture", he deprecates Arnold's remoteness from life and actuality, his tendency to treat "the most profound and difficult problems of individual life with an airy dogmatism that ignores their depth and difficulty." In his scorn of Nonconformist sects, complains Sidgwick, "he does not care to penetrate the secret of their fire and strength." These two elements, in Sidgwick's opinion, were more needed at the time than sweetness and light. Arnold's culture, with its emphasis on contemplation, was only
"a languid form of the passion for doing good." It was all very well for Arnold to condemn action without knowledge as being rash and dangerous, but "this is the eternal excuse of indolence - insufficient knowledge."¹

These comments, while merit ing thoughtful consideration, betray a rather imperfect understanding of Arnold's real position. A more careful scrutiny would have revealed the fact that his definition of culture was not so one-sided as might appear to a hasty reviewer. He distinctly says of culture: "It moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good." Hence true culture embodies a profound conception of religion, but differs from popular religions in that "it demands worthy notions of reason and the will of God, and does not readily suffer its own crude conceptions to substitute themselves for them."² The charge of indolence, of course, is always brought against a man who advocates profound thought as a pre-requisite to action. In the case of Matthew Arnold, one passage from his letters is so reassuring that I cannot refrain from quoting it in full. While on the first of his continental tours of inspection for the Department of Education, he expressed in a letter to his sister his disgust with Italian inefficiency and laziness. "The whole lump want back-bone, serious energy, and power of honest work

to a degree that makes one impatient. I am tempted to take the professors I see in the schools by the collar, and hold them down to their work for five or six hours a day - so angry do I get at their shirking and inefficiency. They have all a certain refinement which they call civilization, but a nation is really civilized by acquiring the qualities it by nature is wanting in; and the Italians are no more civilized by virtue of their refinement alone than we are civilized by virtue of our energy alone. ¹ Civilization to Arnold, as we shall see later in this chapter, was synonymous with culture, and his sense of a people's need is nowhere better stated than in this letter.

Writing in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1869, a reviewer named Kirkus declared that Arnold's doctrines were fundamental truths. Conveyed in his incisive and satirical style, they supplied a distinct need in English society. Action was everywhere in advance of knowledge. But to wait until 'perfection is attained' is anarchic - Arnold, said Kirkus, had got ready the tools and wagon and was waiting for someone to build the road. His culture was "little better than the mocking prophet of an impossible perfection." ² The criticism as a whole annuls itself by its own contradictions, but it is typical of the misunderstanding to which Arnold was frequently subjected. "Mr. Arnold is himself an exquisite result of infinite mistakes,

and looks down with a half-divine contempt upon the very elements of which he himself is constructed."¹ What the first part of this comment signifies is, I confess, rather obscure - I strongly suspect Mr. Kirkus of being willingly seduced by the alluring mirage of a well-turned phrase. The definite charge in the second part is best answered in Arnold's own words. A passage taken from the end of the essay on "Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism" shows Arnold addressing the middle class in a mood of unusual earnestness. "The Puritan middle class, with all its faults, is still the best stuff in this nation. Some have hated and persecuted it, many have flattered and derided it, flattered it that while they derided it they may use it; I have believed in it. It is the best stuff in this nation, and in its success is our best hope for the future. But to succeed it must be transformed."²

Transforming the middle class - this was the task to which Matthew Arnold devoted the full vigour of his matured mental powers and literary style. The tendency was doubtless hereditary, Thomas Arnold was saturated with an unbridled passion to reform, and Matthew must have caught something of his reforming zeal. Then too, both men were born educationists. Dr. Arnold of Rugby needs no introduction; and Matthew, as Inspector of Schools for some thirty years, had ample opportunity to observe the shortcomings of England's educational system.

The tours on the continent, for the express purpose of reporting to the Department on the advantages or disadvantages of continental school systems, gave Arnold keen satisfaction. He was particularly impressed with the uniform and centralized system of France, controlled by the State. The efficacy of the State as a controlling power in such properly communal matters as education and religion really forms the basis of Arnold's critical and polemical attempts at reform. Already imbued with his father's high conception of the function of the State, he was confirmed in his opinions by the efficiency and cheapness of the French schools, as contrasted with the haphazard and expensive methods, or lack of method, prevailing in England. To save the British Philistine from himself culture and refinement were necessary, and Arnold could visualize only one means of achieving this - State control of Secondary Education for the middle classes. Here was the Holy Grail of his reforming crusade, the unshakable conviction that developed by repetition into a formula.

The criticism might well be advanced - why this preoccupation with secondary education and the middle classes? It seems to indicate a lack of sympathy with other stages in the learning process and other classes of life. Arnold, however, was fully aware of their existence and importance. In a letter of 1865, written from the continent, he says: "I find, after all, the education of the middle and upper classes a less important and interesting affair than popular education, as a matter of public institution I mean. So many other influences
tell upon those classes that the influence of a public system of education has not the same relative importance in their case as in that of the common people, on whom it is almost the only great civilizing agency directly at work." Popular elementary instruction, however, had made distinct advances; the government was becoming interested in supplying the people with at least the rudiments of education. As for the aristocracy and the wealthier middle class, the great public schools of England and the Universities functioned for them. It was the great body of the middle class with whom Arnold was concerned,—the shopkeepers, farmers, and citizens of moderate means, who could not afford to send their sons to Eton and Harrow, and who were consequently at the mercy of the spasmodic private enterprises of irresponsible quacks. The middle classes were assuming the dominant position in England—hence, said Arnold, their education was a matter of primary importance. In Sadler's opinion, "he misread England. He conceived English society to be divided into three distinct classes and had in mind a system of education in three corresponding layers." But this stricture is disproved by Arnold's praise for the French schools, a system of education integrated from kindergarten to university. The pages of *A French Eton* show us that he found need for reform in practically every phase of English school life, but that the most crying need was a better system


of secondary education for the middle classes.

Arnold's definition of the State as a 'national best self', a beneficent power which could be directed so as to produce, with a maximum of efficiency and a minimum of expense, the greatest happiness for everyone, did not appeal to his contemporaries. In fact, Englishmen regarded the State as a meddling nuisance, a power which must be rigidly curbed and confined if the sacred rights and privileges of the Englishman were to maintain their hard-won prestige. The attitude, as Arnold pointed out, was the result of confusing the State as an entity with the governing class. The State, he declared, is only ourselves, our collective or national self, and will be obedient or tyrannical according to the way in which it is conceived. The rugged individualism of which the English were prone to boast had given rise to most of the social and economic ills afflicting the country. In a letter to a French friend in 1878, Arnold reiterated his theory that any people must cultivate the qualities in which it is deficient. "I suppose your thoughts, in France, must turn a good deal upon the over-meddling of the State, and the need of developing more the action of individuals. With us the mischief has, I am convinced, been the other way. The State has not shown enough a spirit of initiative, and individuals have too much thought that it sufficed if they acted with entire liberty and if nobody had any business to control them."¹

For over twenty years Arnold dinned into the ears of

the British public the doctrine of State-supported secondary schools. Whether he addressed merchants or working-men, whether he wrote on Irish politics or English religion, he endeavoured to bring his readers to an appreciation of the truth and significance in Burke's definition of the State: 'the nation in its collective and corporate character'. And he explains his concentration upon middle-class education. "It is only a few years since one might hear State-aided elementary schools described as schools with the State-taint upon them. However, the expediency and necessity of making popular education a public service grew to appear so manifest, that the repugnance was overcome."¹ Now that State-aided elementary education was a reality, a similar boon to secondary education should be the aim of all thinking men, irrespective of class. The middle class, Arnold felt, were in a position to profit most at the time by such a reform. It was high time that Salem House and such institutions were abolished, and British secondary education roused from a condition which Arnold considered a disgrace to any civilized European nation.

These were strong words, and some of Arnold's readers must have squirmed. But beyond scoffing at him for continually riding the State hobby-horse, his critics made little attempt to refute the charges in his educational writings. After all, Arnold knew what he was talking about there. He had the facts, gathered during active service as an Inspector at home and on

¹. Irish Essays, 1891. P. 70.
the continent, and most of his recommendations have since been incorporated in school policy. In a book like A French Eton, too, we do not find the raillery and the over-emphasis for effect characteristic of his other work in this field. There is a sobriety of tone and a lucidity of argument that is almost irrefutable, backed as it is by observation and knowledge.

Arnold's ability to see both sides of a question, a power with which he was seldom credited, is to me fairly obvious in a selection from the same book. "Our middle class has secured for itself that centre of character and that moral force which ar, I have said, the indispensable basis upon which perfection is to be founded. To securing them, its vigour in resisting the State, when the State tried to tyrannise over it, has contributed not a little."¹ But now that freedom was secure, and the State subordinated, the power of the State to enlarge and expand the middle-class character, and help it to achieve perfection (i.e. through education), should be utilized. "State-action is not in itself unfavourable to the individual's perfection, to his attaining his fullest development. So far from it, it is in ancient Greece, where State-action was omnipresent, that we see the individual at his very highest pitch of free and fair activity."¹ It was only when the State operated as an alien power that trouble and oppression resulted the vigour and sturdiness of the British people would contend against that. Through these very national characteristics,

¹. A French Eton, 1892. P. 108.
said Arnold, "I believe we, more than any modern people, have the power of renewing, in our national life, the example of Greece." Signs were not lacking that a strong intellectual ferment was at work in the middle classes, a mental ardour that augured well for the future if properly directed, a vital curiosity concerning the new science and the disturbing changes taking place generally in the world of thought. "Will this movement," asked Arnold, "go on and become fruitful: will it conduct the middle class to a high and commanding pitch of culture and intelligence?" To attain this goal the middle class must be transformed, and so we return again to the core and centre of Arnold's teaching. In the simple exposition of his reports, as in the irony of his critical attacks, he found England's most pressing need to be improved secondary education for the middle classes. "Public schools for the middle classes", he admitted elsewhere, "are not a panacea for our ills. No, but they are the indispensable preliminary to our real improvement on almost all the lines where as a nation we now move with embarrassment."

Probably the only sphere in which Arnold had any direct influence was in that of education, and here the results were not really manifest until after his death. Fitch, Sadler and Archer all pay tribute to the value of his contributions, and

1. French Eton. P. 109
2. Ibid. P. 114.
particularly to the wealth of suggestions contained in his re-
ports. The Schools Inquiry Commission in 1868 marked a turn-
ing-point, although its recommendations for a measure of State
control and public supply in secondary education were not car-
rried through till 1902. They were in advance of public opin-
ion, as Arnold was, though the concessions that were granted
owed not a little to his energetic pen. Endowments, which Ar-
nold had denounced as a mere stop-gap, were freely employed.
As for the suggestion that anything more than a degree was
needed for teaching, the general reaction was one of amused
horror. Arnold's dream of special training for teachers, cor-
responding to the French Normal Schools, was also to wait some
thirty years for fulfillment. The main thing to recognize is
the fact that inadequate and incompetent instruction, 'payment
by results', lack of a uniform standard,—all these evils so
earnestly condemned by Arnold were being investigated by in-
telligent and capable men. His ideal of State control of edu-
cation, of the people and for the people, was not realised be-
fore his death, but there were unmistakable signs of progress.
His advice on educational matters was candidly sought by high
officials, as his letters tell us, and his services to educa-
tion and literature were awarded by a pension in the closing
years of his life.

To define Arnold's social beliefs and place him in some
doctrinal category would be impossible. With his emphasis on
State control, his idea of a government having its source in
the will of the people and functioning for the people, we might
consider him a bit of a socialist, or at least an ardent democrat. Apparently no such suspicion crossed the minds of his contemporaries, even when they decried his advocacy of State rule, and resented his definition of English society as 'an upper class materialized, a middle class vulgarised, and a lower class brutalised'. This very definition, of course, placed Arnold in rather a unique position. He held no brief for any group. The bourgeois and the proletariat were alike imperfect, and the aristocracy as such were rapidly becoming unnecessary. It marked him out as an idealist, rather than a practical reformer, and there is some justice in the remark that "Arnold's message was one for individuals, and not, as he insisted, for communities". This does not detract from the value of his message, nor does it prove that the limitation was on the side of Arnold rather than of society. Arnold, himself an individualist, had no wish to see Englishmen lose their strongly-developed individualism - he only desired them to remove the blind spots by a recognition of the function and true value of the State, in the dual and indistinguishable role of servant and governor to the people.

That Arnold's doctrines placed him apart, and perhaps aloof, from other social reformers, is evident when we come to examine his true aims. He had no particular wish to see society socialized, or even democratized, - he did wish to see it civilized. It was not so much a matter of who should be in

control,—what made Arnold groan was the spectacle of control being in the hands of any but those intellectually and culturally qualified to wield it. Of course no control would be necessary in a Utopia where humanity at large had achieved a genuine culture, because no striking superiority would be manifest; and insofar as he entertained this dream of ultimate perfection, Arnold may be considered a rather etherealized kind of Socialist. No compromise should be allowed in the fight for cultural achievement. "Socialistic and communistic schemes have generally, however, a fatal defect; they are content with too low and material a standard of well-being. That instinct of perfection, which is the master-power in humanity, always rebels at this, and frustrates the work. Many are to be made partakers of well-being, true: but the idea of well-being is not to be on that account lowered and coarsened."¹ This high conception of the civilizing or humanizing destiny of man explains Arnold's distaste for many of the political planks and footling social measures so ardently supported by other men. There is no doubt that his attitude blinded him to much that was effective in temporary legislation, but he persisted in the larger function of reminding men that progress was not confined to winning such issues as the right to marry one's deceased wife's sister. It should be worthwhile, at this point, to find out what "civilized", as an adjective worthy a nation's coveting, signified to Arnold.

¹ Mixed Essays. P. 70.
"Man is civilized", said Arnold, "when the whole body of society comes to live with a life worthy to be called human, and corresponding to man's true aspirations and powers."\(^1\)

Having stated his general thesis, he went on to enunciate two indispensable features of a civilized people - the feeling for expansion and the feeling for equality. Among the English the first had been manifested as an intense love of liberty, a love which unfortunately had degenerated into a fetish. But to Arnold the love of liberty was one of the 'vital instincts' of man - no matter how benevolent or rational absolutism might be, it would inevitably break down because it thwarted this vital instinct. The feeling for equality, on the other hand, though possessed by the French, was definitely thwarted in England. In France a peasant might converse with a gentleman and establish certain mutual bonds of understanding - in England, where gross inequality existed, no such common understanding was possible. The rising tide of restlessness among the labouring classes was to Arnold the instinct for equality asserting itself, and hence the increasing need for a true appreciation of the nature and importance of civilizing aims and influences. Becoming more explicit, Arnold enumerated the factors which make for a real civilization. "They are the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, the power of social life and manners. Expansion, science, conduct, beauty, manners, - here are the conditions of

\(^1\) Mixed Essays. Preface. P. VI.
civilization, the claims which man must satisfy before he can be humanised."

It will readily be seen that Arnold's mental outlook had little in common with the usual type of social reformer. Programmes and platforms did not interest him, nor the elevation of any particular class. The imperfections peculiar to each class must be eradicated by educative influences, and the State rendered synonymous with the highest cultural achievement of its people. This, of course, establishes Arnold as an advocate of democracy, but a democracy with State-organization as its vital force, which would certainly seem to indicate a high order of socialism. An examination of his essay on "Democracy" should prove of interest. "The growing power in Europe", he wrote, "is democracy; and France has organized democracy with a certain indisputable grandeur and success." This success, of course, was the result of State-action, and Arnold proceeded to analyze the English distaste for State-action of any sort. It was natural that the aristocracy should condemn it, for it meant the loss of class power. But the decline of aristocracy was inevitable, anyway. "At epochs when new ideas are powerfully fermenting in a society, and profoundly changing its spirit, aristocracies, as they are in general not long suffered to guide it without question, so they are by nature not well fitted to guide it intelligently." Aristocracies,

2. Ibid. P. 14.
3. Ibid. P. 17.
Arnold maintained, were by nature inaccessible to ideas, and their decline in interest and effectiveness was accompanied by a corresponding decline in the reverence and respect offered them by the other classes of society.

There was no justification, however, for the abhorrence in which the middle and lower classes held the State principle. It was the result of confusing cause and effect. The petty tyranny in such things as the Five-Mile Act and the Act of Uniformity had attached a stigma to the name of State-action which had prejudiced the Puritan middle class for two hundred years. Conditions had now changed, and the State could be made to serve useful ends. "It is not State-action in itself which the middle and lower classes of a nation ought to deprecate; it is State-action exercised by a hostile class, and for their oppression."¹ So too, when scornful reviewers pointed out the weaknesses in the French and American systems, and asked with rhetorical shudders whether Arnold wished his own country to exhibit such gross failings, he merely desired them to compare the circumstances and characters of the nations in question. His old preference for corrective criticism, his impatience with the flattery which seeks to conceal blind spots, is revealed in the following description of England's need for State-action. "That which operates noxiously in one, may operate wholesomely in the other; because the unsound part of one's

¹ Mixed Essays. P. 36.
character may be yet further inflamed and enlarged by it, the unsound part of the other's may find in it a corrective and an abatement."

I have spoken at greater length than I had intended upon Arnold's analysis of England's need for State-action, but this conception is an integral feature of his attitude to reform. The class system existing in England he considered to be antiquated, and utterly unfit to serve as a model in a progressive society. "We are trying to live on with a social organization of which the day is over." No progress is possible when "Liberals tend to accept the middle class as it is, and to praise the nonconformists; while Conservatives tend to accept the upper class as it is, and to praise the aristocracy." Arnold's belief in the fundamental instinct for equality was no mere 'mouth-honour' to the worker; it was a genuine conviction. He had no patience with Rousseau's theory of abstract natural rights. "Peasants and workmen" he said "have no natural rights, not one. Only we ought instantly to add, that kings and nobles have none either." His ideal of culture was a goal towards which all should strive, and however impractical he may have been, the accusations of selfishness and supercilious indolence pale before the sincerity of a passage such as this. "An individual or a class, concentrating their efforts

2. Ibid. P. 95.
3. Ibid. P. 61.
upon their own well-being exclusively, do but beget troubles both for others and for themselves also. No individual life can be truly prosperous, passed, as Obermann says, in the midst of men who suffer.\textsuperscript{1} In \textit{Culture and Anarchy} Arnold had expressed the same ideal. A people must cultivate 'a national glow of life', a \textit{real} sweetness and a \textit{real} light must spread their beneficent rays over the complicated structure of society, until the mental and spiritual pulse of the individual should beat in harmony with the corporate culture of an awakened world. "This is the social \textit{idea}; and the men of culture are the true apostles of equality."\textsuperscript{2}

No one can be blamed who smiles at this beatific vision and murmurs "Idealist!", at the same time wondering how to reconcile it with a man who spent thirty years of his life inspecting schools. It is a tribute to Arnold's force of character, in my estimation, though I can imagine Mr. Kingsmill, with some pity but more satisfaction, picturing poor Matthew as he shrinks fastidiously from a rude world into the cool remoteness of his study, there to embrace with a chaste idealism the visionary mistress of an impossible culture. Some of his contemporaries, while of course not so clever as Mr. Kingsmill, were even more severe against the utterly impractical and idealistic gospel he preached for the salvation of society. Sidgwick described it as "a fair-weather thing, not itself a spring and source of faith and ardour", and went on to say that

\textsuperscript{1} Mixed Essays. P. 70.
\textsuperscript{2} Culture and Anarchy. P. 31.
"Culture inevitably takes one course. It recognizes with a sigh the limits of self-development, and its first enthusiasm becomes 'tempered by renouncement'.\textsuperscript{1} This is not the place to start a discussion as to the practical or impractical nature of culture. But I do propose to show, in Arnold's own words, that he did not consider himself a second Messiah indicating with a nonchalant hand the way to a New Jerusalem. He offered no cure-all, but a fresh and valuable stimulus in the direction of a complete life. His goal might never be attained, but the value of his teaching lay in the richness it would lend to 'human nature's daily food'. "Perfection will never be reached; but to recognize a period of transformation when it comes, and to adapt themselves honestly and rationally to its laws, is perhaps the nearest approach to perfection of which men and nations are capable. No habits or attachments should prevent their trying to do this; nor indeed, in the long run, can they. Human thought, which made all institutions, inevitably saps them, resting only in that which is absolute and eternal."\textsuperscript{2}

It is scarcely to be expected that a man with so large, and to many so impractical an outlook upon life should be particularly happy in his expressions of opinion on questions of immediate interest. In his attempts to trace the devious currents of political thought and action Arnold was more often wrong than right, and Frederic Harrison was moved to remark that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Macmillan's Magazine. Vol. 16. P. 271.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Mixed Essays. P. 47.
\end{itemize}
'the man of culture is in politics the poorest mortal alive'. This of course leaves unanswered the question as to which is at fault, the man of culture or politics. A Liberal in the broad and true sense of the word, Arnold, disgusted though he was with political catch-words and procrastination, strove continually to bring that party to an understanding of its responsibilities. He was, as we have seen, no revolutionary - rather than destroy existing institutions he preferred to work from within, to purge away the faults and to mold and transform the obsolete into something of use to the present. Social structures and political machinery only justified themselves when they were pliant and adaptable in the face of changing conditions.

This broadly social, rather than narrowly political outlook, a sympathetic grasp of basic needs resulting from a true liberality of mind, is nowhere better illustrated than in Arnold's treatment of the Irish problem, one of the greatest political dilemmas of the nineteenth century and of our own. He refused to admit that virtual separation was unavoidable - Gladstone's Home Rule Bill he deemed the height of insanity. But, he did recognize the necessity of making full and generous concession in the spirit of good-will. Always an admirer of Burke, he felt that the great statesman had shown more than usual acumen in his warnings regarding Ireland. Burke had declared that tardy concessions, or concessions granted to stave off uprisings, could never improve the situation. Arnold seized upon this profound truth to illustrate the course of
events since Burke's death in 1797. Since the Union, he pointed out, Catholic disabilities had been removed, tithes had been abolished, the Irish Church had finally been disestablished, and certain reforms had been effected by the Land Act of 1870. Yet every one of these had been a grudging last-minute concession, and as a consequence the Irish, far from being reconciled to British Rule, were more bitter and unfortunate than ever. Conquered in a savage and ruthless manner, with centuries of misery and misrule to inflame them, the Irish were not likely to be content with half-way measures. The granting of a Catholic system of education and full correction of the evils of absentee landlordism Arnold considered to be absolutely necessary; and the fanatical Liberal opposition to religious endowments was to him the chief stumbling-block in the way of a reconciliation.

In his essay, "The Incompatibles", Arnold went back to his cultural and educational doctrines for an explanation of the entire lack of sympathy and understanding existing between the English and the Irish. Born of a Cornish mother, Matthew felt a keen interest in and at times showed considerable insight of the Celtic mind. The real tragedy behind England's failure to assimilate the Irish lay in an incompatibility of temperament. How could anyone expect such an assimilation, asked Arnold, when the Irish had only come in contact with the English Philistine at his worst? To the sensitive and imaginative Celt, with his keen sense of the ridiculous, with his religion breathing poetry and his literature steeped in fairy-
tale and legend, the hard and unimaginative middle-class Englishman, with his material conception of life and his narrow, fanatical Puritanism could only be repulsive. When an Irishman thought of England such was the race he pictured, a people with 'a defective type of religion, a narrow range of intellect and knowledge, a stunted sense of beauty, a low standard of manners'. What a model! Yet, said Arnold, the Englishman in his arrogant righteousness expected the Irishman to forget the centuries of ill-usage and chicanery, and to form himself submissively on the lines of this same Philistine model, in return for a tardy and reluctant recognition of simple rights.

Arnold, at the risk of extreme unpopularity, was never afraid to quote foreign critics of English life. In fact, he honestly felt that such strictures should be a most valuable stimulus to self-correction, and that instead of producing an irritated or superior state of mind, they should make the subject of the remarks analyze himself carefully. The provincial English middle-class contempt for outside influences appalled Arnold, who quoted Goethe to prove the Englishman a pedant, and a French critic who described the English as just, but not amiable. It did no good to turn around and sneeringly point out the flaws in the French or German make-up - that did not correct the faults in the English character. And these two faults, pedantry and lack of amiability, were amply demonstrated in the English treatment of Ireland. It was easy to condemn the Irish as slovenly and shiftless, but what incentive
had they to admire or to imitate the middle-class Englishman, lacking as the latter was in courtesy and tact, and a slave to political catch-words? Neither side of the Philistine temperament had any attraction to the Irish mind, declared Arnold, the dour, hard, material business man nor the jovial, back-slapping, beer-drinking purveyor of elephantine fun. Murdstone and Quinion alike repelled the Celtic imagination.

This blind egotism and self-satisfaction of the Philistine, his inability to view life with any but his ownopic vision, is the subject of one of the finest passages of sustained irony in Arnold's critical essays. I cannot refrain from quoting the paragraph in full, with the added comment that any Englishman who didn't squirm when he read it was below the level of anything but the daily paper. In the second chapter of *Culture and Anarchy*, entitled "Doing As One Likes", Arnold has just commented on the harsh treatment of Fenianism, as opposed to the lenient handling of English rioters. "In the first place, it never was any part of our creed that the great right and blessedness of an Irishman, or, indeed, of anybody on earth, except an Englishman, is to do as he likes; and we can have no scruple at all about abridging, if necessary, a non-Englishman's assertion of personal liberty. The British Constitution, its checks, and its prime virtues, are for Englishmen. We may extend them to others out of love and kindness; but we find no real Divine law written on our hearts constraining us so to extend them. And then the difference between an Irish Fenian and an English rough is so immense, and the case,
in dealing with the Fenian, so much more clear! He is so evi-
dently desperate and dangerous, a man of a conquered race, a
Papist, with centuries of ill-usage to inflame him against us,
with an alien religion established in his country by us at his
expense, with no admiration for our institutions, no love of
our virtues, no talents for our business, no turn for our com-
fort! Show him our symbolical Truss Manufactory on the finest
site in Europe, and tell him that British industrialism and in-
dividualism can bring a man to that, and he remains cold! Evi-
dently, if we deal tenderly with a sentimentalist like this, it
is out of pure philanthropy!"  

The Irishman, then, could never be assimilated unless
a more attractive type of civilization were offered him, and
so we come again to the mainspring of Arnold's teaching. Only
an improved type of education could effect that desired change
in civilization, and since the Irish were in contact mostly
with the middle classes, the important thing was middle-class
secondary education. Here was the forming-ground for the mind
of youth - its pitiful inadequacy was amply attested by the pro-
duct. In "An Unregarded Irish Grievance" Arnold examined the
report of Professor Mahaffy, an Irish educationist, and de-
scribed the same haphazard methods and incompetence as prevail-
ing in Ireland, with the added handicaps of filth, squalor and
misery. A multiplicity of subjects, none of which were learned
well, an unhealthy concentration on the few brilliant pupils
by the headmaster, and a total ignorance of the basic princi-

pies of education - such was Professor Mahaffy's estimate of Irish secondary education. Outside of the few great schools, declared Arnold, conditions in England were substantially the same, and he again fervently maintained that a public system of secondary education was the only solution. It had worked in the case of elementary schools, but most of the middle-class population desired more advanced training, and until State control should place such education on a plane of uniform excellence, a sympathetic and homogeneous culture among the British people and their auxiliaries was impossible.

With Arnold's belief in an ultimate democracy and equality, it was natural that he should watch America and Americans with interest. It was also natural that he should be disappointed, when measuring American achievements by his own standards. Not that he was ill-disposed towards them. He was just as pleased when his work met with a favourable reception in the United States as if it had been his own country, and he thoroughly enjoyed his lecture tour in the winter of 1883-84. He appreciated their good qualities, their open-heartedness and zest for living, and in one of his letters home while on tour, he paid tribute to the virtues of American society as exemplified in the family of his host. "The whole family have, compared with our middle class at home, that buoyancy, enjoyment, and freedom from constraint which are everywhere in America, and which confirmed me in all I have said about the way in which the aristocratic class acts as an incubus upon our
Arnold felt, however, that America was all middle class - in obtaining this freedom Americans had levelled out into a uniform monotony and had lost all claim to distinction. Democracy must aim at a uniform excellence, not sink to a uniform Philistinism. There were cultured people among them, but the mental gawkiness and rawness, the almost belligerent assertion of equality with each other and superiority to the rest of the world - these unmistakable marks of the Philistine aroused all the old dissatisfaction in Arnold. An American lady wrote to him in praise of a number of poems she had read, and upon Arnold's demurring at the indiscriminate homage, good-naturedly replied that he was probably right, but that she liked to think of excellence as being so abundant. This of course was sheer heresy to Arnold, who was never tired of saying that excellence dwells among high rocks, and that 'a man must wear his heart out to get at her'.

Nevertheless, he was extremely anxious that the American mind should remain open to cultural influences, and not be submerged in intellectual mediocrity by the weight of wealth and numbers. In 1865 he observed, "There is an immense public there, and this alone makes them of importance; but besides that, I have been struck with what I saw of them on the continent in the last few months, both with their intellectual liveliness and ardour, ---- and also with the good effect their

wonderful success has produced on them in giving them something really considerable to rest upon, and freeing them from the necessity of being always standing upon their toes, crowing."¹

In spite of these virtues, the rawness and boisterousness of the New World were extremely distasteful to Arnold, and the press he considered an appalling symptom. The soul of the real Matthew illumines a sentence in one of his last letters from the States:—"I would sooner be a poor priest in Quebec than a rich hog-merchant in Chicago."²

His usual air of kindly tolerance proved exasperating enough to American critics, and Arnold came in for his full share of scathing rebukes. In an article called "Matthew Arnold's Discomfort", the writer reproached Arnold with making an entirely superficial and inadequate criticism of American civilization, based on his own physical and mental discomfort while visiting there.³ Such was hardly the type of thing expected from a critic of Matthew Arnold's calibre. J.B. Fry became quite bitter over Arnold's shallow and unjust criticism of American life and landscapes, and suggested sarcastically that the noticeable scarcity of medieval relics was responsible for Arnold's hostility. No doubt a natural lack of sympathy with conditions in the New World did colour Arnold's judgment to some extent. Another American, however, John Burroughs,

made what I feel to be a sound and significant comment upon Arnold's work. He described the impression one gets of Arnold as a scorner, from a desultory reading. But this impression, he added, wears away "as one grows familiar with the main current of his teachings."¹ No truer observation upon Arnold has been uttered.

One of the things which made Arnold most effective as a mental stimulant was his own cosmopolitan mind. He could claim, with perfect truth and equanimity, to be cultured, if to be familiar with the best that has been thought and said in five languages is to be cultured. The Englishman was quite capable of returning sneer for sneer with his foreign critics. But here was a critic, himself an Englishman, who held up to the stolid Philistine gaze the beautiful and edifying examples of Plato and Marcus Aurelius, while he playfully jabbed his victim in the flank with the caustic barbs of Goethe and Sainte-Beuve. If the victim showed signs of fight, the candid words - "What we Englishmen lack" - accompanied by a smile that was almost a pat on the head, reduced him to a state of muttering impotence. This urbanity and tolerant good temper in the midst of controversial heat must have annoyed Arnold's contemporaries exceedingly. If he had denied his birthright they might have turned and rended him, but in spite of all his affections for continental writers and scenery, 'he remained an Englishman'. He exemplified his own doctrines that a man, while preserving

his national pride and integrity, should profit by the wisdom and example of other peoples, and a critic who both preaches and practises such an attitude is not the easiest mark in the world for reviewers. One thing Arnold's attackers never attempted to impeach was his honesty, whether in motive or method.

This fundamental love of country is most evident in his letters. "I will only say that all I see abroad makes me fonder of England, and yet more and more convinced of the general truth of the ideas about England and her progress, and what is needful for her, which have come to me almost by instinct, and yet which all I see keeps constantly confirming." \(^1\) Again, in 1866, when two inspectorial tours on the continent had ripened his powers of observation, he voiced his understanding of the national need. "I should be sorry to be a Frenchman, German, or American, or anything but an Englishman; but I know that this native instinct which other nations, too, have does not prove one's superiority, but that one has to achieve this by undeniable excellent performance." \(^2\) Part of Arnold's constant badgering of the Philistine was owing to the real distress he felt at the thought of Englishmen putting up a less creditable showing than the other civilized peoples of Europe. This thought occurs frequently in his correspondence, and that he regarded his attacks partly in the nature of a


\(^2\) Ibid. P. 320.
duty to his countrymen is plain from the relief with which he
turned to his study of Celtic literature in March, 1866. "I am
glad to deal in sheer disquisition sometimes," he wrote, "and
to leave irony and the Philistines." 1

When the first part of Culture and Anarchy appeared in
the Cornhill of 1867, Henry Sidgwick uttered what impressed me
as being two significant comments. They were general observa-
tions rather than direct criticisms of Arnold. "If any cul-
ture really has what Mr. Arnold in his finest mood call its
noblest element, the passion for propagating itself, then let it learn to call nothing common or unclean." 2 Later
in the same article, after a pessimistic survey of the contem-
porary state of mind, Sidgwick gloomily gave it as his opinion
that the culture held out by Arnold as a guiding lamp of know-
ledge would most likely slip into dilettantism. In the con-
cluding pages of this essay, a hasty glance over subsequent
developments should prove interesting, bearing in mind Sidg-
wick's remarks. At present a brief chat with the reviewers
will show us the increased respect accorded the 'prophet of
culture' with the passing years.

As early as 1882, an article in the Athenaeum denounced
the age as 'swaggering and noisy' and added: "Mr. Arnold's
function is to protest against its improprieties by his intel-
lectual practice, and now and then to take his contemporaries

to task and to call them to order." After a description of his cosmopolitan and diverse brilliance, the writer concluded, "We have every reason to be proud of him." This was the growing attitude in the closing years of his life and in the last decade of the century. In the year 1888, of course, there was a veritable wave of critical comment, but the impression derived by the reader is for the most part one of intellectual honesty. Adulation there is in abundance, but there is no hesitation in pointing out the weaknesses. One critic found him frequently tiresome, declared his definition of culture to be a half-truth, and stated that much of his work was written for immediate effect. (It was, admittedly.) Arnold is found wanting by his own standards. He has supplied the foolish and idle with smart catch-words, "but that he has supplied one reasonable being, capable of thinking for himself, with a substitute for the system he wished to abandon, it is impossible seriously to suppose." Yet even this writer acclaimed Arnold's purity of motive, and added of his literary criticism: "On the broad general lines he never went wrong."  

Such adverse criticism was, however, the exception. With his power of social analysis and his practical culture, declared another critic in speaking of Arnold's civilization, "We felt, when he was talking about it, that it was something

real and definite that he was discussing, and not the vague ab-
stractions of the sophist. 1 And again:—"Because he was one of
them, the Philistines, i.e., Nonconformists and Low Churchmen,
listened to him, with the result that Low Church is no more,
and Nonconformity is Broad Church." 1 Between these extremes
of detraction and enthusiasm lies a great body of sane and
balanced criticism, predominantly respectful in tone. The
striking thing is that the 'parmaceti and moonshine' gibes
have disappeared. "Everyone nowadays", said W.C. Brownell in
1901, "is theoretically a friend of culture - even the strenu-
ous." 2 As early as 1879, Brownell had spoken of "a general
recognition on the part of 'my countrymen'" that the 'sweetness
and light' position was a tenable one. "But", he added, "few
of Mr. Arnold's sincerest admirers, we imagine, are reconciled
to the exclusiveness with which of late years he has devoted
himself to his missionary work. It is possible to go along
with him completely and still regret this." 3

This opinion of the eminent American critic was hearti-
ly echoed in London by many who felt that, valuable and in-
structive as his polemical and controversial work may have been,
it caused the loss of something better. Yet opinion varied as
to his most effective contribution in spheres of practical ac-
tivity. A writer in the London Times of 1888, after commenting

on Arnold's pre-occupation with middle-class secondary education, declared:—"One of Mr. Arnold's chief titles to the regard of his countrymen is that he continued to press this ideal with all the power at his command."\(^1\) Sadler described this as "the chief political work of Matthew Arnold's life."\(^2\) Fitch found a higher cultural tone prevailing and ascribed it to Arnold. But whether he was regarded as a social critic or an educational prophet, the majority of his reviewers were agreed that he was an essayist of vision and ability, that he detected real flaws in English society and worked with unselfish zeal and genuine insight for their correction, and that his work had made anundoubted impact upon the thinking Englishman.

Recent criticism has been little concerned with the phase of Arnold's work dealt with in this chapter, or with his religious opinions, and for a very good reason. What was purely ephemeral or of temporary interest in his writing died with the author, while some of the more profound and significant speculations, in some cases so disturbing to his contemporaries, have been incorporated into the fabric of society. Many of his boldest ideas are now commonplace, and we accept them without question. In a flash of prophetic clarity, one of his critics wrote:—"His books and he have done their work so well that they can never appeal to any later age with so much force as they have to this."\(^3\) Yet through this very appeal, "they must

live as typical of our age and representative of it."
CHAPTER 3

RELIGION.

A really able study of Matthew Arnold in the Fortnightly Review of 1888, by a reviewer named F. W. Myers, described him as filling the four-fold office of Inspector of Schools, Essayist, religious reformer, and poet, - an accomplished specialist in the first capacity, most brilliant in the second, most anxious and devoted in the third, and longest to be remembered in the fourth. Since the present chapter is concerned with the third of these capacities, we may note with some interest the emphatic statement made by Myers that Arnold was best known by his graver writings. In that same year, 1888, "a kind of plebiscite recently taken by a democratic newspaper brought out 'Literature and Dogma' as his most valued work."¹

To a 'modern' in the twentieth century, such a general opinion is at first incomprehensible. The spring freshets of new thought which rushed impudently, and in some cases with a little temerity, between the frowning rock walls of tradition have now fused and broadened into a wide stream of scientific speculation, along the surface of which we are borne, uncertain

of the depth, currents, or destination, but silently accepting the inevitability of the stream's existence. We still wrestle with the eternal problem of the meaning of life, but to most of us life itself is something of immediate interest and significance, and not merely a period of preparation for the possible delights and probable agonies of a life to come. Certain scientific and speculative heresies of a century ago have become an integral part of our thinking, and the rational, educated mind no longer finds a standard form of religion indispensable. The church, as an organ for collective worship, exists among us rather in the role of a tolerated poor relation of threadbare gentility, ornamental if not useful, while a young man entering the ministry, once the refuge of the finest intellects, today merely confirms the previous suspicions of his friends that he has neither the brains nor energy to be a bond salesman. The faith of our fathers, as definite as day and night, has faded into a twilight of speculative uncertainties, a source neither of agony nor of ecstasy. The Everlasting Yea and the Everlasting Nay, have dissolved into the Everlasting Maybe!

With such an attitude of mind the modern is not likely to be discouraged by the corrosion and crumbling of the rocks of tradition. But how different was it with the Victorian! The old implicit belief in Biblical Christianity, and in its literal application to life, was rudely shattered by new scientific interpretations of life from without the pale of the Church, and by dissention and differing from within. No
wonder the Victorians were so intensely interested in religious controversy and in interpretations of theological dogma. The very foundations of life itself were shifting, and the old guard of the Church were making a determined stand, vain as it was to prove, against the rising tide of science. We consider the Victorians to have been a singularly placid and self-satisfied mortal, but those of our fathers who were prone to indulge in plain and fancy thinking must have lived in a state of considerable mental stress. Their belief in the fundamentals of traditional Christianity, as expounded by the Church, formed the very roots of their spiritual being, and yet science was offering them apparently profound truths, the evidence of which they could not refuse. Most of them, honest souls that they were, were thoroughly bewildered and not a little dismayed in trying to reconcile the new ideas which they could not but accept with the old faith they could not bear to relinquish. The old faith, as a unifying force, has since disappeared, while the reconciliation seems to be as far off as ever.

It was for the benefit of these restless and harried souls, trying desperately to gather loose threads of thought into a harmonious pattern of life, that Matthew Arnold wrote his essays on religion, chief among which is his Literature and Dogma, an Essay towards a Better Apprehension of the Bible. He was one of them; their difficulties and needs were his. His own competence as a theologian was frequently and sometimes angrily questioned, and indeed it would be difficult to defend his sallies into the field of Biblical interpretation on the
grounds of fitness. But that he understood the needs and difficulties of the people, independent of his success in finding a solution for them, is obvious when we learn that *Literature and Dogme* ran to four editions in the year it was published. To most of us it is the deadest part of Arnold's work - to his contemporaries it was fruitful and exciting. Violent was the disagreement over his attempt to make Christianity rational - some regarded him as an atheist, and some as a new Messiah. He was rather, as someone said, the product and best expression of the intellectual ferment of his age. In the following examination, I do not propose to follow him into the intricate and moss-grown labyrinth of dogmatic theology, a task for which I have neither the time nor the ability, nor, it must be confessed, the inclination. Without doing that it is possible, and much more interesting to discuss, if I may be permitted a mathematical figure, the Christianity plus poetry minus theology that Arnold tried to expound.

With the die-hard fundamentalist and the out-and-out atheist Arnold was not concerned. The great army of dissatisfied intellects were those in need of a cheering and stabilizing message. It was useless, thought Matthew, to deplore the passing of the old order, or the influx of the new. Both were symptoms of a great and permanent change, and the thing to do was to make the change as painless and as productive of good as possible. In a letter from Matthew to his sister in 1874, we get a vivid glimpse of the prevailing state of mind, and a simple and courageous statement of Arnold's faith in humanity.
"When I see the conviction of the ablest and most serious men around me that a change must come, a great plunge must be taken, I think it well, I must say, instead of simply dilating, as both the religious and the anti-religious are fond of doing, on the plunge's utterness, tremendousness, and awfulness, to show mankind that it need not be in despair and terror, that everything essential to its progress stands firm and unchanged."

This, then, was the aim of Literature and Dogma, an aim of which his father would have approved just as heartily as he would have disapproved of the method. But Matthew had progressed far from the uncompromising Hebraism of Dr. Arnold, and was ready and willing to meet the new gods of Science half-way.

The really disturbing feature of the new skepticism was to Arnold its growing power over the lower classes. In every age there had been sophisticated and brilliant wits, and even groups, who had found the Bible and established religion to be objects of ridicule rather than reverence. The masses, however, had stood with bowed head before the revealed word of God. But with changing social conditions, with education to stimulate what Arnold optimistically considered man's natural proclivity to reason, this blind acceptance of the priestly interpretation of life's greatest mysteries was vanishing.

"This is what everyone sees to constitute the special moral feature of our times: the masses are losing the Bible and its

religion." 1 And the reason for this, Arnold maintained, was not hard to understand. Science, with its emphasis on factual evidence, was offering ample proof to support its contentions. When the experimental yardstick was applied to religion, however, the masses made the amazing discovery that the core of Christianity must be sought behind an imposing but arbitrary superstructure of theological dogma. Ecclesiastical dicta which had been regarded in the light of divinely-inspired authority were now found to be capable of examination and criticism, and even the very sentences of the Bible could be interpreted in various ways. Ceremonies and formulas which had been revered as the essentials of faith were discovered to be non-essentials.

Who could blame the masses, asked Arnold, for rejecting Church doctrines when these doctrines, long taken to be the infallible revelation of Eternal wisdom, were found to be based only on the abstract speculations of theologians? To recognize the fallibility of Church doctrine and to reject it was inevitable, and desirable,—but to cast aside Christianity and the Bible as exploded superstitions impressed Arnold as a form of spiritual suicide. From this conviction arose his central thesis,—that the fundamental truths of the old Hebrew religion and of the teachings of Jesus, freed of the trappings of theological dogma, would restore to "the people" a faith, the profound beauty and truth of which they could not help but realize. "He perceived", as Myers said, "the absolute moral

1. Literature and Dogma. P. 311.
need that their religion should be transformed and not destr
1

troyed."

To effect this transformation three things were necessary. First, religion must be shown to have a basis of verifiable proof, easily substantiated by common experience. Second, the language of the Bible must be shown to be "fluid, passing, and literary, not rigid, fixed, and scientific." The proof of the first idea would of course depend upon an understanding of the second. Third, (and here Arnold returns to his basic teaching), a background of wide and cultured reading is necessary in order that the Bible and other religious literature may be read with discrimination and true discernment. We might briefly examine each of these predications in turn, bearing in mind that the first two are interdependent.

Going right to the heart of the matter, Arnold declared that the conception of God as 'a Personal First Cause, the Moral and Intelligent Governor of the Universe', was absolutely unverifiable. With their traditional penchant for dialectics, churchmen had misconstrued the simple poetry of Israel, and had steeped it in the false light of their own metaphysical abstractions. "Our mechanical and materialising theology, with its insane licence of affirmation about God, its insane licence of affirmation about a future state, is really the result of the poverty and inanition of our minds. It is because

2. Literature and Dogma. P. xv.
we cannot trace God in history that we stay the cravings of our minds with a fancy-account of him, made up by putting scattered expressions of the Bible together, and taking them literally.\textsuperscript{1}

Hence the mental picture of God as a beneficent and ethereal old gentleman, well-disposed towards the human race, but with stern and sometimes inconvenient ideas on justice. This was the result of taking Israel's words in an exact and scientific sense, and building upon that fallacious assumption. "According to this scientific sense of theology, God is a person, the great first cause, the moral and intelligent governor of the universe; Jesus Christ consubstantial with him; and the Holy Ghost a person proceeding from the other two."\textsuperscript{2}

This conception of the Trinity was very impressive as a metaphysical exercise, remarked Arnold, but one question regarding the proof for the first assumption, and the whole structure would collapse like a house of cards. As he submitted in his extended and rather impious analogy of the three Lord Shaftesburys, the chief difficulty lay with the elder Lord Shaftesbury.

In order to understand Arnold's attitude, we must glance at his basic definitions. Ethics, conduct, morality—these Arnold considered to be expressions of the same idea, a practical idea. It is an idea familiar to all of us, the regulation of life according to certain laws, the observance of which supplies a norm for the operations of human society.

1. Literature and Dogma. P. xiv.

2. Ibid. P. 13.
The tremendous importance of conduct to Arnold is shown by his estimation that it comprises three-fourths of human life, at the very least. He even submitted seriously that the proportion might be estimated at four-fifths or five-sixths, an arithmetical quibble illustrative of the latent absurdity in such arbitrary attempts at rigid classification. Now religion, Arnold maintained, is also practical, is also conduct or morality. But is is morality heightened, trying to pass into another sphere. It is, as he defined it, 'morality touched with emotion'. Wherever this heightening occurs we have religion, and Arnold gave numerous examples illustrating the difference.

"'Hold off from sensuality,' says Cicero; 'for, if you have given yourself up to it, you will find yourself unable to think of anything else'. That is morality. 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' says Jesus Christ; 'for they shall see God'. That is religion. 'Live as you were meant to live!' is morality. 'Lay hold on eternal life!' is religion." Excellent as these examples may be, they are of course subject to the same criticism as the 'touchstone' system employed by Arnold in his "Study of Poetry". They presuppose a division of the spiritual life into distinct strata, properly indicated and controlled by a niceness of literary taste and a true cultural background. Even if the idea were proved valid, it could scarcely be attractive to the majority of people, to whom the intuitive, emotional, and practical elements in any religious experience or

1. Literature and Dogma. P. 23.
spiritual conviction are hardly of a nature to bear classifying or dissecting. Arnold, however, found religion to exist in a higher sphere than conduct, the sphere of righteousness. Yet the transition could never be effected without a regard for the profound importance of conduct. The ancient Hebrews, with their emphasis on morality, or conduct, found the transition inevitable. Religion came, and with it the conception of an Eternal Power.

It was at this point, said Arnold, that the theologians went wrong, putting a theoretical construction on a practical idea. The name Israel used for this Power was not conveyed "by Jehovah, which gives us the notion of a mere mythological deity, or by a wrong translation, Lord, which gives us the notion of a magnified and non-natural man. The name they used was: The Eternal."¹ Here Arnold is putting his own philological fancy in place of the interpretation he condemns, a weakness of which Francis Newman made capital in his scathing review of Literature and Dogma. The Eternal, then, was the God of the Hebrews, a conception embodied in a word "by no means a term of science or exact knowledge, but a term of poetry and eloquence, a term thrown out, so to speak, at a not fully grasped object of the speaker's consciousness, - a literary term, in short."² Did Israel address this unseen Power as Father? Naturally, said Arnold, being a man he projected his

2. Ibid. P. 12.
humanity into the mighty influence that governed his life. But still this Power remained the 'not ourselves, which makes for righteousness', or as Arnold elsewhere describes it, 'the stream or tendency by which we fulfill the law of our being'. Israel did not reason things out - he felt and experienced. Consequently his language was literary and approximate, not scientific and exact. But theological gentlemen, such as the unfortunate bishops of Winchester and Gloucester, must develop their talents for speculative reasoning and metaphysical abstractions, and so upon a few simple moral truths, clothed in the language of poetic eloquence, was reared the whole fantastic pseudo-science of dogmatic theology. "Religion has been made to stand on its apex instead of its base; righteousness is supported on ecclesiastical dogma, instead of ecclesiastical dogma being supported on righteousness."

The time had come to speak out, in Arnold's opinion, and to correct these evils. People had lost faith in miracles and prophecy, as expounded by the Church, and bickerings over the meaning of such terms as justification, election and atonement were rapidly losing their significance. And rightly too, declared Arnold, for the emphasis all along, particularly in the Protestant Church, had been on the method of Christianity, rather than the secret. The 'method' was useful, since it emphasized repentance and conversion, but the 'secret', the idea of peace and joy, was the very heart of Christ's teaching.

1. Literature and Dogma. P. 291.
The Catholic Church, with all its blind reverence for authority, had realized this great truth, and so had preserved its unity, and its hold over the mind of the masses. The Protestant Church may have had more light, but the Catholic religion had more beauty. The wonderful secret and success of Jesus lay in the 'mildness and sweet reasonableness' of his teachings, not in a narrow-minded zeal over the defense of some misinterpreted phrase. "When one thinks of the bitter and contentious temper of Puritanism,—temper being, nevertheless, such a vast part of conduct,—and then thinks of St. Theresa and her sweetness, her never-sleeping hatred of 'detraction', one is tempted almost to say that there was more of Jesus in St. Theresa's little finger than in John Knox's whole body." Temper here obviously signifies earnestness and zeal, the qualities which Arnold the social critic had found the British Philistine to possess in abundance. The inability of the narrow-minded and fanatical Puritan to realize when he was making himself ridiculous inspired a cutting and rather pointed comment on the futility of most missionary work. "For any one who weighs the matter well, the missionary in clerical coat and gaiters, whom one sees in wood-cuts preaching to a group of picturesque Orientals, is, from the inadequacy of his criticism both of his hearers' religion and of his own, and his signal misunderstanding of the very Volume he holds in his hand, a hardly less

1. Literature and Dogma. P. 294.
grotesque object in his intellectual equipment than in his outward attire."

Arnold was particularly severe upon all forms of religious dissent, Nonconformity being to him the religious side of Philistinism. He went to great pains to show that the whole Puritan movement was based upon a complete misunderstanding of the Pauline doctrines of predestination and justification. In substance, Arnold stated that the dissenting sects should return to the fold of the Church, and enable that body to be an organ of national collective worship. Christ's message was one for individuals, but the beauty and truth of that message were best felt through the common humanity of man. If there were evils within the Church, the thing to do was to work for correction from within, and not to break away over some point of scriptural interpretation. In effect, Arnold said to the Dissenters:—"The Church cannot help existing; you can." The Evangelicals he did not blame so severely,—even if they did base their differences upon matters of Biblical interpretation, they did not actually break with the Mother Church. But the Dissenters, with their 'spirit of watchful jealousy', with their entire absence of the lovable virtues of joy, kindness, patience, and mildness,—these fanatics were bringing discredit and sure disintegration upon the faith as a whole. "The Puritans", said Arnold in his article on "Modern Dissent", "say they love righteousness, and they are offended with me for rejoining

1. Literature and Dogma. P. 326.
that the righteousness of which they boast is the righteousness of the earlier Jews in the Old Testament, which consisted mainly in smiting the Lord's enemies and their own under the fifth rib."¹ Christian righteousness, Arnold submitted, is something entirely different from this.

The most distressing feature of the whole business was to Arnold the failure of Churchmen in general to place the faith upon a basis of deep yet understandable truth, purged of useless and unconvincing creeds and dogma. The theological athletes continued to wrestle, though the arena was fast emptying. The Zeit-Geist had breathed upon the old theology and metaphysics, and something fresher and simpler and verifiable must take their place. The masses need proof, declared Matthew, they want a faith with a basis in common experience, else they will 'pitch the Bible to the four winds'. "Let us go to the masses with what Israel really did say, instead of what our popular and our learned religion may choose to make him say."²

In other words, instead of the metaphysical speculations about the personal First Cause, and the Trinity, and other theological abstractions, give the masses the true revelation of 'the enduring Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness'. This is a matter easily verifiable, according to Arnold, a matter of common experience. Try it! he commanded, try it and convince yourselves. His method of procedure, however, is not

². Literature and Dogma. P. 323.
only somewhat illogical, but could not have appealed to many of his readers as a potent means of strengthening a waning faith. "Having convinced yourself that there is an enduring Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness, set yourself next to try to learn more about this, and to feel an enthusiasm for this. And to this end, take a course of the Bible first, and then a course of Benjamin Franklin, Horace Greeley, Jeremy Bentham and Mr. Herbert Spencer; see which has most effect, which satisfies you most, which gives you most power." Only in this way, said Arnold, could a man prove, voluntarily and through his own experience, that the Bible is the greatest teacher of righteousness, the only sufficient soil for nourishing three-fourths of human life. Add to this the gentle truth and sweet reasonableness of Christ's teachings, and the masses would have a faith, the enduring power and beauty of which they would realize and revere. Such a religion would be its own justification. "The great thing, as we believe, in favour of such a construction as we put upon the Bible is, that experience, as it increases, constantly confirms it; and that, though it cannot command assent, it will be found to win assent more and more." Experience to Arnold clearly connotates external experience rather than an intangible inner conviction, a loophole of which his critics were not slow to take advantage.

1. Literature and Dogma. P. 324.
2. Ibid. P. 337.
Only through this proper approach to the Bible, and to Christianity as there revealed, could the masses ever attain to the method and secret of Jesus, and to the realization of the necessity of righteousness. This approach depends upon the ability to read the Bible with discrimination and discernment, and this ability, in turn, necessitates the harmonious development of that fourth of our natures devoted to culture, to art and science. Without this cultural background, we should be led astray in our judgment. Here Arnold seems to lay emphasis upon an interdependence of the elements of culture and conduct, of Hellinism and Hebraism. Some men, he declared, have considered conduct to be the whole of life, and the resulting distortion of the neglected fourth has produced such things as "our hymns and our dogmatic theology. What is our dogmatic theology except the mis-attribution to the Bible, the Book of conduct, of a science and an abstruse metaphysics which is not there, because our theologians have in themselves a faculty for science?" In order that conduct should not be impaired, then, the importance of culture must be realized, and so Arnold propounded his fullest definition of God as "the Eternal Power, not ourselves, by which all things fulfill the law of their being."  

I cannot forego the pleasure, at this point, of refuting Mr. Kingsmill who, in common with a good many critics, ac-

1. Literature and Dogma. P. 383.
2. Ibid. P. 385.
cuses Arnold of forsaking the cultural standard for the religious, of losing his Hellenistic balance and plunging headlong into the sea of Hebraism. The closing pages of Literature and Dogma would hardly indicate such a right-about-face. In the definition quoted above, Arnold postulated the importance of the Hellenistic side, the virtual synonymity of culture and conduct in any truly harmonious spiritual growth.

"As man makes progress", he said later in a prophetic passage, "we shall surely come to this; for, the clearer our conceptions in science and art become, the more will they assimilate themselves to the conceptions of duty in conduct, will become practically stringent like rules of conduct, and will invite the same sort of language in dealing with them." The love of science was already distinguished by the same energy and honesty characteristic of the old zeal for conduct. "To treat science with the same kind of seriousness as conduct does seem, therefore, to be a not impossible thing for the Aryan genius to come to." But", added Matthew, "for all this man is hardly yet ripe." That was the point,—the masses were still preeminently concerned with conduct, and the God of the Bible was still 'the Eternal who makes for righteousness'. And yet "even for apprehending this God of the Bible rightly and not wrongly, letters, which so many people disparage, and what we call, in general, culture, seem to be necessary."

1. Literature and Dogma. P. 386.

2. Ibid.
While the tone of reviews ran the gamut from horror to enthusiasm, the widespread interest aroused by Arnold's attitude to religion is indicated by the simple fact, already noted, that four editions of *Literature and Dogma* were called for before the end of 1873. In a letter to a French friend in March of that year, Arnold commented on his sudden popularity, and added a reason: "Il n'y a qu'un mois qu'il est publié, (i.e. Literature and Dogma) et déjà il en est à sa troisième édition. C'est grâce à son sujet et à l'intérêt que le public y prend; car, en général, tout ce qui vient de moi s'écoule très lentement." In America, particularly in the New England states, the book had a tremendous vogue, and Arnold was frequently told on his lecture tour that *Literature and Dogma* had been helpful as well as interesting. The book was also translated into French, though Arnold makes no comment on its sale.

More articulate than this popular interest, though possibly less significant, were the pens of critics. The Established Churchmen seemed to regard him in a friendly manner, although it must have been rather trying to smile at a champion who was at the same time seeking to demolish the age-old labours of theologians. But the Dissenting sects had not even this ambiguous support to comfort them, and the Don Quixotes of Non-conformity tilted their theological lances joyfully. Arnold's attempt to establish a definite theory of Bible-study must have seemed a Heaven-sent opportunity to the victims of his...

habitual irony.

In 1871, when *Literature and Dogma* first appeared in article form in the *Cornhill*, a review in the *Spectator* considered Arnold's paper to be mere quibbling. How, asked the writer irritably, are we to separate the 'stream or tendency making for righteousness' from any other stream or tendency? This definition was a continual source of amusement or exasperation to Arnold's reviewers. A scathing commentary in *Blackwood's* of 1873 declared his work to be typical of "the half-informed and superficial minds which an 'age of progress' never fails to produce in multitudes." The book showed less intelligence and earnestness than Arnold's usual work, while his faults appeared in their most aggravated form. Yet what could one expect, when "theology nowadays is considered to be an open pasture-ground on which literary adventurers may dissipate themselves, and whet their appetite for speculation and culture." Arnold's definitions, the writer insisted, were as dogmatic as the doctrines he decried, and two weaknesses were apparent in his reasoning. First, religious truth needs no verification - it is an internal experience. God is within. Secondly, conduct or righteousness is a matter of inward faith, the enduring Power is not outwardly verifiable. The article concluded with a rebuke for the audacity of 'literary critics' who dabble in a scientific field, and a loyal assertion that "the labours of dogmatic theologians have sought to

organize the highest ideas of the Church from age to age." 1
Arnold would have smiled tolerantly at that statement, and re­
marked that the unsystematic searchings of a literary man were
necessary in destroying the pseudo-scientific fabrications of
dogmatists.

Francis Newman, still smarting from Arnold's treatment
of him in the Homer controversy, became exceedingly caustic
over the latter's attempts to expound Biblical lore. 2  Trying
to verify the external and Eternal Power by personal experi­
ence Newman branded as the act of a fool. Arnold's theories
were wholly Pantheistic, and his blindness to the value of in­
tuition, as opposed to external experience, opened the way to
irreligion. He was blind to history in trying to yoke the
Church with the State. His flippancy and acerbity were dis­
agreeable, and he arbitrarily made his selections from the
Bible on the basis of an allegedly superior cultural perception.
This, declared Newman, would seem "to pass a sentence of moral
death on the vast majority of mankind, and leave them no course
but to make the few 'men of culture' mediators, who will give
them sure information what words have the certain stamp of
Jesus." 2  Arnold's religion was one for the few, the rich.
This criticism pales before Arnold's evident desire that the
Bible should be made accessible to the 'lapsed masses', though
it is excusable enough when we realize how dictatorial and

supercilious his manner must have seemed to many of his readers. Indeed, Newman's strictures thus far have much in common with the general critical reaction, taking advantage as they do of the numerous openings which Arnold wittingly or unwittingly offered his enemies. Finally, Newman made the curious statement that *Literature and Dogma* was virtually an apology to Bishop Colenso. An examination of Arnold's article on the worthy Bishop shows us that he was as little likely to condone the exegetical trifling of Colenso as he was to admire the metaphysical acrobatics of Winchester and Gloucester. The admiration he displayed for Spinoza, and his sense of the latter's strength as opposed to Colenso's febrility, would hardly indicate a possible compromise with Churchmen. "If the English clergy must err", remarked Arnold of Colenso's attempts at Biblical interpretation, "let them learn from this outcast of Israel (i.e. Spinoza) to err nobly."¹

To pass at one bound from the unfavourable reviews just quoted to the other extreme, I shall glance at an article in the *Contemporary Review* of 1872, by Llewelyn Davies. Arnold's creed may be regarded as "one of the three or four leading 'Gospels' of this speculative age. Another standard has been raised for dissatisfied intellects to follow; and there are characteristics of Mr. Arnold's creed which are likely to make it, to a large section of Englishmen, more attractive than any rival."² Arnold is no trifler - in

spite of his raillery he is engaged in a sincere defence of the Bible. Davies, with more perspicuity than Newman, does seize on one of Arnold's main points,—that Jesus came to 'restore the intuition', and that His greatness lay in His immense superiority as a man. The followers of Christ had been responsible for the theological doctrines, the 'Aberglaube'. The only fault Davies has to find is with the impersonal, abstract nature of a 'stream' or 'tendency', which could never, he feels, arouse reverence in the hearts of the masses. The idea of Love is wanting in Arnold's God and Christ, yet Davies condones even this blemish by suggesting that it is Arnold's reaction to the over-emphasis of the age on brotherhood and humanity. All in all, he decides, Arnold has made a very real and laudable contribution to the study of the Bible.

In order properly to estimate the importance of this most controversial section of Arnold's writing, however, we must take the opinions of prominent essayists, critics and men of letters over a period of time—such men as Leslie Stephen, R. H. Hutton, H. D. Traill, F. H. Bradley, Professor Saintsbury and Herbert Paul. Of this representative group, to all of whom Arnold was a living personality, and most of whom are living personalities to the literary world of today, only two were decidedly hostile to Matthew's theological work. Bradley, in 1876, declared emphatically that "the ideal of personal morality is not enough for religion",¹ and condemned

the 'Eternal, not ourselves' as so much literary clap-trap. People, Bradley submitted, needed something more to worship than Arnold's 'copy-book heading God'. His definitions were hopeless, so many thin abstractions with a literary varnish. Bradley condemned Arnold's 'culture' on the grounds that it could not see a third sphere beyond the thin abstractions and the coarse, 'verifiable' facts, though just what his conception of this third sphere was Bradley did not bother to explain. Professor Saintsbury, too, in his excellent but arbitrary summation of Arnold's good and bad points, becomes positively annoyed over the spectacle of Matthew obstinately wandering in a theological wilderness, searching for 'Dead Sea fruit'. There was an excuse, apparently, for Culture and Anarchy, but the good Professor finds Arnold a total misfit in theological circles, and unhesitatingly dubs Literature and Dogma 'his worst book'.

More temperate and considered are the arraignments by Stephen, Traill and Hutton. Stephen, in defending the Dissenters, pointed out that a stiff-necked and unmanageable hierarchy had occasioned the Wesleyan revolt in the first place. A re-union was perhaps desirable, but the Church of England itself had become but another sect in the popular mind. Stephen had no sympathy with Arnold's State project, arguing that the State necessarily works by compulsion, and while he agreed with Arnold as to the evils of the present chaotic

1. Matthew Arnold. 1902.
secular system, he felt that it was better than a religious order which should rest upon positive legislation, and not upon satisfaction to the religious instincts. Such a unity, too, would depend upon the dropping of certain doctrinal differences; and how, asked Stephen, was Arnold or anyone else to differentiate between the 'essential doctrines' and the 'accidental accretions'? After all, what Arnold considered to be accretions were to the majority of people essential if any faith was to be sustained at all.¹

In his article on "Neo-Christianity and Mr. Matthew Arnold", written in 1884, H. D. Traill displayed an equal sympathy with Arnold's aim, and a similar certainty that the aim could never be realized by an interpretation of the Bible as all vague and poetic eloquence. Such a doctrine could never appeal to the masses. Arnold, said Traill, took a good dual basis - righteousness, with Christ as the model - but this he regarded as a slight spiritual framework around which to construct a whole modernized Christianity. "The superiority of the new deal must be an intellectual superiority; for the difficulty of the doubters is an intellectual one."² Arnold was fully aware of this, admitted Traill, but the substitute offered was no more verifiable than the system to be replaced. He admired Arnold's ingenuity in using a

stumbling-block for a stepping-stone, describing him as "the first teacher who has insisted with equal force on a religion which men have begun to question, and upon the documents which led them to question." Such teaching, however, was superfluous, because those in agreement could devise their own accommodation; and futile, since it was assured of rejection by both atheist and fundamentalist. Yet Traill concluded his review with this fine tribute to Arnold's power: "More of us have been compelled by him than by any other writer of our age and country to review and revise our judgments upon most subjects of human interest." Which remark, may I submit in passing, is hardly the sort of comment one would expect on a writer whose work is at all superfluous or futile.

Comparing Cardinal Newman (the past) with Matthew Arnold (the Zeit-Geist), R.H. Hutton found the extremes to which each man went a sign of the utter instability, in that day and age, of the most serious convictions. Arnold was bewailing the loss of that very faith he was helping to destroy, and leaving himself, in the words of his own poem,

'Standing between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.'

Hutton apparently did not share Arnold's belief that he was not assisting at the death of an old Christianity, but at the

2. Ibid. Vol. 49. P. 327.
re-birth of a new. Like Stephen and Traill, he was convinced that something more anthropomorphic than a stream or tendency was necessary, if religion was to be preserved for the masses. "The emotion which Mr. Arnold insists on becomes a very mild and aesthetic emotion indeed."\(^1\) Arnold valued Christ's teaching, not as a disclosure of faith, but "because it discloses the true secret of life." His writings tended to prove, said Hutton, that "we can get all the advantages of theology without the theology." Probably T. S. Eliot had this idea in mind when he recently remarked, in more modern terminology, that Arnold's counsel was "to get all the emotional kick out of Christianity one can, without the bother of believing it."\(^2\)

If we were concerned with the validity or futility of Arnold's religious tenets, there are various criticisms here with which we could profitably take issue. We might disagree with Stephen when he described Arnold's vision of a unified Church as impossible, with Traill when he calls Arnold's teaching superfluous, or with Hutton when he sighs at the spectacle of a man tearing down the very faith that he wishes to preserve. But my purpose is rather to estimate in some degree the influence of Matthew Arnold's essays, and enough has been demonstrated, I think, to prove that even his 'Dead Sea fruit' found a market. The interest was broad and genuine, as the reception accorded to Literature and Dogma shows, and

\(^1\) Contemporary Review. Vol. 49. P. 327
critical opinion fluctuated over a period of some thirty
years. The comparative neglect since the turn of the century
is due, as I have indicated, to two very good reasons. Much
that was startling or shocking to his contemporaries is now
commonplace; and, secondly, theological controversy is as
dead, to all general interest, as Balaam's ass. That
Arnold's aim was largely misunderstood by the majority of his
critics is very evident, and there is a glimpse of the truth
in the following statement by Myers. "He has been treated as
a flippant and illusory Christian, instead of a specially
devout and conservative Agnostic."¹ A more cogent criticism,
however, is contained in these words. "His own attachment to
Christianity was undoubtedly such that he could not part with
it; and therein lies his weakness."²

Writing in 1902, Herbert Paul takes a more lenient
view of Matthew's theological sallies than does Saintsbury,
and finds them to contain matters of interest and profit.
But the discussion must be gently handled, for he knows "the
treacherous fires which are still banked beneath those
ashes."³ The ashes have since cooled, but in the decade or
so following Arnold's death they were continually stirred by

1. Living Age. Vol. 177. P. 545
3. Matthew Arnold. 1902
a thoughtful, and on the whole favourable critical breeze. It is true that Gladstone spoke of Arnold as 'patronizing a Christ of his own creation', but Arnold's lifelong opposition to the great statesman may have had something to do with the pungency of that sally. The Christ may have been of Arnold's own creation, but we have a writer in the Nation of 1888 vouching for the fact that Arnold had provided younger people with a plausible creed at a time when Mill, Huxley and others had destroyed their interest in theology.¹ W. C. Brownell,² John Burroughs³ and Augustine Birrell⁴ all testify to a revival of interest in Bible study, owing chiefly to the influence of Matthew Arnold. This critical chorus is rather weighty evidence, backed as it is by the actual popularity of *Literature and Dogma*.

Passing back to England, we find Arnold described as "a great sedative force in a disturbed intellectual system."⁵ Of a piece with this tribute is a comment by one D. F. Hanigan in 1896,- "He is rather the interpreter of the spirit of the age than a prophet or leader."⁶ This was the attitude adopted

in later years by the more judicious critics. The last-named writer amplified his remark with a singularly fine line of praise. "He taught his fellow-countrymen to associate happiness, and not misery, with righteousness."\(^1\) What a salutary lesson! And the tribute would seem to be substantiated by the following quotation. "In an era of religious pessimism he sustained a moderate and intelligent optimism. He found theology a science and left it an art. If theology can never be again quite the unlovely thing it once was, that is due in large measure to the influence of Matthew Arnold."\(^2\) Whether overly-enthusiastic or not, the writer has certainly understood Arnold's aims, and I can conceive of few compliments which would have given him more satisfaction.

Brownell testified in a similar vein to the nature of Arnold's religious influence, an influence imperfectly perceived. His gospel was so simple as to be startling - no one, for a time, knew what he meant. And here, in a sentence from Brownell's article of 1901, we have what I feel to be the crux of the matter, the point which I have tried to emphasize. "The whole thinking world has practically, if insensibly, come to adopt his view that the sanction of religion is its natural truth."\(^3\) Insensibly we have come to adopt his view, and in the meantime Matthew Arnold's anxiety and genuine concern for

that view are forgotten. But it proves, what few of his critics would allow, that he worked for a suffering present and not a Utopian future. He who wanted to conduct his fellows into the cool lanes of straight and clear thinking, the supercilious and fastidious professor of belles-lettres, was not as aloof from the 'heat and burden of the day' as his declaimers maintained. He may have failed signally in much that he set out to do, but he will have glorious company. His work may not always have been happy in conception or fortunate in result, but I can think of no more felicitous epitaph for Arnold the social critic and religious reformer than this statement in the year of his death. "He has done well for his day and generation, in helping to keep alive the faith of the race in the nobler possibilities of human existence."¹

CONCLUSION.

It has been my aim in this essay to present Matthew Arnold in the role of a religious reformer and a social and political critic, at the same time estimating his influence by an examination and discussion of critical and popular reactions. His poetry and literary criticism I have endeavoured to deal with only insofar as it throws light on this particular study, and supplies us with an understanding of Arnold's mental growth and spiritual transitions. The task of unification has not been thoroughly done, and I am sorrowfully aware of the numerous flaws in the portrait. But if the portrait, with the troubled and dreamy eyes of the idealist gazing from beneath a brow of intellectual power, is at all visible through the intervening shadows of my inadequacies, then the study is justified.

Before leaving him, however, it should be interesting to discuss the 'gospel of culture' in the light of subsequent developments. And before glancing at present-day conditions, beside which the Philistinism of Arnold's day loses some of its potency, we might try to ascertain the position of 'sweetness and light' in the years immediately following his death. Bearing Arnold's teachings in mind, let us turn to an article of 1892, entitled, significantly enough, "Culture and Anarchy". It is an exceedingly caustic review of three contemporary
novelists - Thomas Hardy, J.H. Shorthouse, and Mrs. Humphrey Ward. The merits of the article as a review of these writers do not concern us - suffice it to say that the critic finds Hardy coarse, disagreeable and rather grotesque; Shorthouse is a sickly example of super-refined semi-culture; and Mrs. Ward is tiresome and obvious. That the writers have done good work and have genuine ability, at least in the case of the two men, the critic admits. What is more important for our purpose is the reviewer's lengthy and bitter declamation against the spiritual vulgarity and amazing lack of taste prevalent in English society and English literature. The three novels he has just reviewed he finds to be prime examples, and the whole regrettable business is the result of the distortion of the meaning of culture. The nation has 'got culture', as the Americans would say. How has this spasm of pseudo-intellectuality come about? The writer answers his own question. "We fear that Matthew Arnold has something to answer for; but in saying this we must emphatically protest against being thought to cast any reproach on that distinguished man, or to refuse to recognize the humanizing influence that in many ways he has exercised on his generation."¹ Yet in the novels of such writers as Shorthouse and Mrs. Ward, says our reviewer, the 'sweetness' has become saccharine, and the 'light' is worse than dim. "The history of all reformations shows that the work of their leaders will almost inevit-

ably for a time be hindered and discredited by the violence, the folly, and the extravagance of a few disciples. A revolutionary age will always breed imposters, and the first instinct of the imposter will always be to advertisement."\(^1\)

The very thing that Arnold foresaw so clearly, and fought against so strenuously has come about, and by the irony of Fate his own doctrines, through the misinterpretation of fools, have been responsible. "Intellectual Democracy has triumphed", cries the reviewer bitterly, "our struggle after culture has developed into anarchy."\(^2\) The remedy Arnold advocated was improved higher and secondary education, which would filter down and gradually emancipate the human mind. But neither in England nor America "was the serious higher instruction strong enough to give the tone to the popular instruction; the element of culture was not sufficient to leaven the whole mass. Instead of proving the master, therefore, it has been made the slave; and now bound to the car of Demos is led in the popular triumph, a spectacle and a show."\(^3\) Evidences of this were only too plentiful, and none of the phases of the new enlightenment were promising. Of Shorthouse the writer remarked,- "The sentimentality, the puling melancholy, the assumption of learning, of grace and refinement - in a word all the 'sweetness' of the New Culture - are paramount in his last work."\(^4\)

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. P. 344.
Not only in literature had Arnold's ideals suffered maltreatment. The faith and ardour he longed for had been applied to the ends he most detested - to a blind worship of social and political fetishes. "The demand for more education," our exasperated reviewer continues, "and especially for what is ludicrously miscalled the higher education among women, itself a part of the foolish misconception of woman's true place in the world which goes by the name of Woman's Rights, the general array for party purposes of the Masses against the Classes, - all these things, aided by the extraordinary increase of cheap literature, and especially by the translations, hand-books, primers, and other multifarious short-cuts to learning, have combined to defeat Mr. Arnold's plan, and to turn the real sweetness and real light which he advocated into what he most dreaded, - into sweetness which is mere vulgar affectation, and into light which is blank darkness."¹ Undoubtedly this tirade has the stamp of a die-hard Tory of the old school, but it is equally obvious that the writer has analyzed the situation with a real understanding of Arnold's distrust of temporary ends, and his dislike for superficiality. "Much of the mischief, we verily believe, came from Mr. Arnold's tantalizing use of the word Philistine."² In their anxiety to escape the odious classification, everybody had become advocates of culture, without understanding that the acquisition of culture, as Arnold visualized it, is a slow and thorough process.

Instead of giving their minds to a study of 'the best that has been thought and said in the world', and applying this accumulated wisdom to life, society had mistaken intention for accomplishment, and by a simple right-about-face considered itself on the high-road to the cultural Utopia. This attitude was responsible for the literary froth, and the half-informed, superficial teachers of culture. "Having read that true culture will not be content with the mere enjoyment of sweetness and light, but will endeavour to make the passion for them prevail, they assume the office of teacher, and endeavour to make their notions of sweetness and light prevail."

My copious quotations from this fire-breathing critic could only be excused on the dual grounds of truth and applicability. That there is a large amount of truth in the article I am confident, and that it applies to us 'moderns' as fully, if not in the same way, as it did to the misguided contemporaries of the critic, I am equally sure. Many, of this generation at least, would glance at the article, and with a tolerant smile for the Yellow Nineties and a sneer for the comparative sterility of the Edwardian period would murmur, "How true!" But what is our own position? Let us have one more statement from the bitter gentleman in the Quarterly of forty years ago. "All the trivialities of our literature (nor of our literature only, but it is with this that we are at present concerned) its affectations, its shallowness, vulgarities, im-

pudence, are attributed to the fact that another century of the world's course is nearing its end."¹ After the turn of the century, in the opinion of many, an equilibrium would be established, and society would take a step towards the ultimate perfection. A sketch of our present cultural environment may show us how some of Arnold's ideals have fared, and whether the strictures of our reviewer have lost their pungency.

In education his dream of State control has largely come true, particularly on this continent, the America for which at times he expressed such high hopes. But instead of the general standard being commensurate with his vision, the bursting of the dikes has spread a thin layer of educational fluid over the public mind. Concentration has given way to diffusion, and painstaking care has gone to providing the moron with the same opportunities as the potential genius, with the general result that the moron is discontented and the genius is cramped. If a certain curriculum is not congenial the pupil is fed some more digestible pap, and his passage through the Halls of Learning made easier, until, with a bewildering variety of 'courses' behind him, and a naive faith in the additional commercial value of education, he thrills in his thousands to the sonorous benediction of the 'Admitto Te'. With the educational factories of America in full operation, the only degree that represents achievement nowadays in academic eyes is the doctorate, which will probably have to be

superseded ere long by some more potent combination of letters.

Since writing the above I have been fortunate enough to come across a copy of Our Business Civilization, by James Truslow Adams, and my own random remarks have been amply substantiated by what I have read therein. After describing the impregnation of the academic field by modern "power and service" aims, and his dissatisfaction with the mechanical and futile nature of his own 'pre-war' education, Mr. Adams makes the following comment. "If it be objected that things are different today, I may add that I see no evidence of it; instead I see an even greater confusion of aim and method. Not long ago I asked a well-known professor at one of the largest and best-known universities in the East what, in his candid opinion, his university did for the many thousands of students who annually attended it. After a moment's thought he said that as far as he could see, the university turned out a standardized, low-grade mental product, much like an intellectual Ford factory."¹ This ascendancy of the materialist and the wholesaler has naturally hastened the growing tendency, noticeable, as we have seen, even in Arnold's day, to emphasize the commercial rather than the cultural value of education. "I think that America is the only civilized country in the world where what a man does counts for so much more than what he is, and where the general public, having no cultural standard by which to judge what a man is, takes as the basis of

¹. Our Business Civilization. P. 150.
appraisal solely the visible signs of what presumably he has 'done'.


2. Ibid. P. 169.
able definitions, but we may quote one of Matthew Arnold's as being as suggestive as any for our purpose. He speaks of culture as 'a harmonious expansion of all the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature.' This is far removed from giving the degree of Bachelor of Arts to a student who has learned how to truss and dress poultry or has compassed the mysteries of how to sell real estate and run an apartment house.1

To avoid being branded as an utter reactionary, I must confess that the preceding paragraphs present only one side of the case. Broad and progressive educational facilities are not only desirable, but inevitable, if we are ever to shake off the fetters of ignorance and prejudice. But we have sunk to a deadly level of mediocrity, the very thing that Arnold most dreaded. The half-humorous prophecy he made of an age where 'everyone has some culture, and superiorities are discountenanced' has been fulfilled only too painfully. People have been taught to read, but not to think. An enormously widened reading public, primarily desirous of amusement and entertainment, has resulted in a corresponding deluge of effervescent and trivial literature. The critical standards Arnold tried to affirm have fallen before the onslaughts of 'democracy', and the reading public docilely accepts the hysterical superlatives of half-fledged reviewers. A rotten fabric of sexual monstrosities, held together by the mere suspicion of a plot, must not be condemned if you would

avoid being called Victorian. And if a mass of ill-assorted and trivial thought, dressed in bad spelling and no punctuation, fails to impress you as a masterpiece inaugurating a new era, you are contemptuously consigned to the limbo of intellectual Babbitry.

There are reasons for this laxness, of course. The novel, less of a demand on the intellect than poetry, has become the form of literature, the outcome of a natural, steady growth since the days of Fielding. With the excellent and artistic examples that are a part of our inheritance, including such modern and congenial writers as Hardy, Conrad and Stevenson, to mention only a few, one might expect some discrimination on the part of the general reader. Such writers as these, after all, are included in our educational curricula. But either because they are inadequately taught, or because the average mind is incapable (0 blasphemy against Demos!) of differentiating between good and bad, the great majority who 'go through college without having college go through them' seem to fall a victim to every literary charlatan who can persuade a publisher to forget his waste-basket. It would be idle to pretend that splendid books have not been written in recent years, books whose very proximity prevents an estimate of their permanence. From Hamsun's Growth of the Soil to Allen's Anthony Adverse, novels have been produced whose qualities might well breed optimism in the prophet. A large number of novelists, however, would do well to ponder Arnold's reply to an admirer who asked why he had not written
a novel. His answer was to the effect that the genius of the Arnolds did not lie in that direction, or he would have written one long before.

The decided tone of disapproval in some of my remarks may convey the impression that I regard contemporary trends in literature as essentially unsound. Far from that, I believe that experiments in both form and content are not only natural but commendable, if literature is to interpret life faithfully. But the tendency to regard any theme, no matter how trivial or disagreeable, as being its own justification militates, I am sure, against truth and permanence in literature. The Art for Art's Sake theory has been responsible for some degenerate and distorted views among writers, and while I do not maintain that a novel or a poem should contain a 'message', I feel that Arnold's broad application of the word 'moral' embodies a truth the profundity of which is not fully appreciated. In support of this idea, I shall quote from E. J. O'Brien's introduction to his latest collection of short stories. After discussing Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway as the most promising creators of the American short story he says: "It is the artist's function to illuminate to the best of his ability all the dark places and to help us to live in the light of our new day. He may also assist us to select what is valuable in the materials with which we have to work, and insofar as he succeeds in this attempt his work will be a valuable criticism of life in Matthew Arnold's sense of the word."

Focussing our attention upon the last decade, we might adduce an added reason for the failure of the novel to find its artistic feet. Although an obstacle operative only within recent years it has been, I feel, an important one. The novel has been regarded as a form of entertainment, a mental anodyne, forced to compete with the movies, the radio, and the popular magazine for a place in the fickle regard of the public. Critical standards have become sympathetically lax, and the result has been that writers of some genius, with a genuine experience and a sensitive imagination, have often been compelled to watch their brain-children grow up in the comparative isolation of popular neglect. The weakness for superficialities is apparent in the abuse of the word 'clever'. Everything in print, if it is readable, is clever. The reading public has caught the word from the reviewers, and is slow to let it go. University graduates, supposedly gifted with at least a vocabulary, use the word to describe everything from Precious Bane to The Brave New World, and from Galsworthy's Caravan to the latest short story in Liberty. Much of it is merely clever, and some of it does not deserve even that superficial praise, but by all means let us discriminate, and try to give praise where praise is due. This monotonous, if kindly, lack of discrimination was a bête-noir to Arnold, who would probably have ceased critical work altogether had he visualized its twentieth century development.

Having painted a canvas of almost uniform gloom, it is high time that I put forward the possibility of a note of hope.
Not in the spirit of the Dawnist - for I should then suffer the humiliating experience of being classed with Arnold by Mr. Hugh Kingsmill - but in a spirit of sincere conviction that a slight change for the better is coming about. The conditions I have been describing are the result, to some extent, of the era of inflated prosperity which followed the war and culminated four years ago. I do not propose to discuss economic theories - it merely seems to me that we have been victims, even more than were Arnold's fellow-Victorians, of the tendency to worship machinery. And by machinery I mean two things - wealth and speed. Four years ago everyone had a job; everyone had money; everyone had a car and a radio, and could afford the necessities which had formerly been luxuries. Consequently the sole criterion of success was wealth, no matter how acquired, and the tempo of life was regulated by the dollar sign. Home became a place to snatch a few hours' sleep between the night club, show, or bridge game of the evening before, and the morning trek to an eight-hour grind on the tread-mill. Speed became the craving; to live meant to cram every conceivable form of activity, except thinking, into twenty-four hours. There was no time to read, and besides, the newspaper and radio kept us up to date, while the cinema supplied the cultural influences. Shakespeare could not compete with the Saturday Evening Post; the thought formerly given to the century was now given to the minute; the power of contemplation was lost in the longing for a thrill. What a contrast to Arnold's prescription on - How to live!
My use of the past tense in the last few sentences does not mean that I consider all this to be over. By no means. But with the deepening intensity of the depression period there has been a growing feeling during the last two or three years that our recent 'prosperity and speed' philosophy was in some way defective. When widespread poverty settles on a people, when they are forced to sit at home because the decreased income barely affords the necessities of life, then brains which have long been drugged with the opiate of hectic and allegedly pleasurable activity begin again to function. The process is often difficult; and then, too, it is annoying and sometimes incredible that our idols should be found to possess feet of clay. Yet the enforced leisure, combined with a feeling that a radical change in our attitude to life is necessary, has brought many people to a realization that the so-called post-war zest for living has been perilously akin to madness. We are discovering that periodicals are not the only sources for knowledge and general culture, and there is other music than that of the dance orchestra, and that human relations can mean something subtler and more profound than the social amenities of a bridge game. Circumstances have forced us to gaze into the mirror of thought, and the reflection is far from flattering. A passage from Arnold's preface to Literature and Dogma is singularly appropriate at this juncture. "The plea, that this or that man has no time for culture, will vanish as soon as we desire culture so much that we begin to examine seriously our present use of our time. It has often
been said, and cannot be said too often: Give to any man the
time that he now wastes, not only on his vices (when he has
them), but on useless business, wearisome or deteriorating
amusements, trivial letter-writing, random reading, and he
will have plenty of time for culture. 'Die Zeit ist unendlich
lang', says Goethe; and so it really is. Some of us waste all
of it, most of us waste much; but all of us waste some.\[1\]

What a pregnant criticism of our present-day civilization, and
how desirable that it should be taken to heart by all of us!
It is, I feel, giving pause to many, particularly to those of
the younger generation who have the intelligence to profit by
the spectacle of the last ten years or more.

These concluding remarks, let me hasten to say, make
no pretence of being supported either by critical authority or
statistical data. They are rather the fruit of random observa­
tions culled by, in Arnold's words, an 'unsystematic person'.
But let me offer one illustration of the change in outlook I
have mentioned. The formation of study groups, for the avowed
purpose of intelligent enlightenment by means of reading and
discussion, has become in the last two or three years a wide­
spread movement. One such group, the birth of which I had the
privilege of attending, has for its aims the study of social
and economic conditions, based upon the works of the most reli­
able writers of past and present. In this way the members
hope to obtain a broad and intelligent perspective of the basic

1. Literature and Dogma. P.xxxiv.
operations controlling the function and development of society, and to apply these ideas in a constructive way to present conditions. They have no particular creed, no political prejudice - they merely wish to educate themselves to a saner and more trustworthy citizenship than has been demonstrated by preceding generations, and to aid in placing society upon a sound and enlightened foundation. Is this not in keeping with Arnold's exhortation to 'see things as they really are', to study 'the best that has been thought and said in the world', and to proceed sanely, without blind devotion to machinery? The movement may come to naught, but it is growing apace at the time of writing, and the leaders hope to establish a unity with similar groups in England. Such movements may accomplish much, for the individual if not directly for society, and deserve praise as a valiant effort to break the self-imposed chains of a complacent and subservient mediocrity.

These indications of an intellectual awakening I choose to regard as at least a hopeful sign. In the spiritual sphere, the religious disintegration that Arnold sought to prevent has, and perhaps inevitably, grown apace with the years. The multiplicity of sects, and the dissension within bodies like the Church of England seem to discourage all idea of a unified faith, no matter how liberal in creed. But it should be thought-provoking, if not convincing, to hear what a popular magazine has to say on the subject, as a result of a religious survey conducted in eight countries during the last year by a group of prominent authors and journalists including
Arnold Toynbee, Andre Maurois, and F. Yeats-Brown. Their general conclusion is that religion, since the debacle of a few years ago, has strengthened its hold, and that many people are leaning towards an institutional religion of an international character. In France, indeed, Maurois declares that even in the decade from 1920 to 1930 religion regained much of the ground lost from 1880 on, while a comment in Toynbee's article on England may strike the reader as significant. "There is now a great cause which religion does stand for in a growing number of English minds. This cause is the salvation of society - which neither business nor government seems able to save - by touching, once more, the deeper springs in human nature and making them work in accord towards a spiritual and therefore genuine solution of our besetting political and economic problems."¹ A spiritual and therefore genuine solution, - this has a familiar ring, and we turn the pages of Arnold's poetry to find the 'prophet of culture' visualizing -

"One mighty wave of thought and joy,
Lifting mankind again."

This theme could be developed indefinitely, but enough has been said, I think, to show how remote is society from the universal culture envisaged by Arnold. His vision was no doubt hopelessly Utopian - in fact, he must have realized quite well that he was advising us to hitch our wagons to a star. But some can achieve his culture; all could benefit

by a consideration of it; and aiming at a star we may at least have the satisfaction of arriving at a planet. "God", said Matthew Arnold, "keeps tossing back to the human race its failures, and commanding it to try again." We have failed dismally enough; perhaps from now on we will gradually endeavour to 'see things as they really are', and perhaps the modern spirit, after sufficient chastening, will humbly acknowledge the wisdom of seeking to know 'the best that has been thought and said in the world'. 
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