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The significance of Mathew Arnold's critical theory

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MATHEW ARNOLD'S CRITICAL THEORY.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College of the State University of Iowa in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

-by-

William G. Crane,
Iowa City, Iowa.
June, 1920.
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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MATHEW ARNOLD'S CRITICAL THEORY.

"Judging is often spoken of as the critic's one business, and so in some sense it is; but the judgment which almost insensibly forms itself in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge, is the valuable one; and thus knowledge, and ever fresh knowledge, must be the critic's great concern for himself; and it is by communicating fresh knowledge, and letting his own judgment pass along with it,—but insensibly, and in the second place, not the first, a sort of companion and clue, not as an abstract law-giver,—that he will generally do most good to his readers." —

Function of Criticism.

SECTION I.

ARNOLD'S PRINCIPLES OF LITERARY CRITICISM.

Mathew Arnold's theory of literary criticism is founded primarily on study of the Greek classics. This clue, if it is followed intelligently, aids more than anything else does in obtaining a clear understanding of his critical precepts. Unfortunately, whereas there is much in his teachings that needs explication, many who have professed to interpret and expound them, instead of making a sincere endeavor to do this, have
concerned themselves mainly with contradictory or entirely irrelevant contentions. But one may gain a just and cogent appreciation of the inherent truth in his doctrines by carefully studying his own statements of them. In every case it proves that the more firmly and completely their significance is grasped the more evident their permanent soundness becomes. Here, as in all investigations of Arnold's criticism, nothing helps so much to exhibit things in their proper light as to keep continually in mind the superior rank he ever insisted upon for the products of Greek culture.

Arnold's close association in his early life with the works of the ancient Grecian and Roman writers accounts to a large extent for the consistency of his views in regard to literature. At the beginning of his career as a critic he set forth with considerable fullness a creed which is amplified and expanded but never seriously contradicted by his later criticism. He was but thirty years old in 1853, when he issued what amounts to a grand declaration of his critical principles, a preface to the volume of poems published in that year. Its two main points, stated summarily in the advertisement printed with the second edition of this collection, are the all-importance of the subject in a poetic representation and the lack of sanity and proportion in English literature. In conclusion he recommends intensive study of the classics for guidance in both of these matters.
Importance of the Choice of Subject.

In the "Preface" to the volume of 1853 Arnold makes the exclusion of Empedocles from the collection a pretext for attacking those critics who insist that poetry should deal only with modern themes. He holds, along with the ancients, on the contrary, that the date of an action is of no consequence; but that the plot itself, its selection and construction, is what is all-important. This he maintains as one of the strongholds of his criticism, repeating, again and again, that everything is dependent upon the situation, nothing upon the time and place. The poet must first of all select an action from those that are most excellent. Arnold leaves no doubt in regard to what ones he considers are the best. "Those, certainly, which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections; to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time. These feelings are permanent and the same; that which interests them is permanent and the same." As usual, he recurs to the Greeks to prove his point. The success of the classic poets is due principally to the fact that they were careful to choose novel themes. "Their theory and practice alike, the admirable treat-

1. Preface to Poems, p. 489. (The pagination is that of the Eversley series of Arnold's work and the supplementary volume of essays collected by E. T. O'Brien.)
ise of Aristotle, and the unrivalled works of their poets, ex-
claim with a thousand tongues—'all depends upon the subject,
choose a fitting action, penetrate yourself with the feeling
of its situations: this done, everything else will follow.'"  

What Arnold means by the word "action" is not at first
entirely clear. If we turn back, however, to his avowed mas-
ters, the Greeks, we are aided again; for we find, upon com-
parison, that in the sense in which he uses this word, it agrees
almost exactly with the Greek equivalent πρᾶξις. A sure
guide is furnished to us by his reference to Aristotle, who
declared that action (πρᾶξις) is the most important of all the
constituent parts of a poem. But he included much within this
term that we now consider under the head of "character" where-
as "nature" of the Poetics, usually so translated into
English, means disposition or general moral bent. Aristotle
himself defined it in his treatise as the fixed and individual
bent of a man's nature, as, for example, the extravagant pro-
pensity of a miser, of a pessimist, of a braggart, of a prodi-
gal; "action" (πρᾶξις) he used for denoting all change that
affects the movement of the plot. This is evidently the in-
terpretation that best fits Arnold's application of it.

Along with his insistence upon the all-importance of the action Arnold demands that a poem be so constructed as to produce, above all else, a total-impression. Success in this depends largely upon proper subordination of expression to the subject matter. "The Greeks," he says, "understood this far more clearly than we do. The radical difference between their poetical theory and ours consists, as it appears to me, in this: that, with them, the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of the action. They regarded the whole; we regard the parts. With them, the action predominated over the expression of it; with us, the expression predominates over the action." But no amount of brilliant handling can ever make up for deficiencies in the story itself or the manner in which it is conceived. To support his contention Arnold might have quoted Aristotle: "Just as in painting, the most brilliant colors, spread at random and without design, will give far less pleasure than the simplest outline of a figure." Instead, he arrives at the same end by interpreting Goethe's application of this idea. "What

4. Poetics, VI, 15.
distinguishes the artist from the mere amateur, says Goethe, is Architectonic in the highest sense; that power of execution which creates, forms, and constitutes: not the profundeness of single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration." Shakespeare is the great poet he is on account of two of the qualities for which Arnold argues, skill in choosing an action and power in constructing it; but he is not a good model for young writers to imitate, because his expression is so rich, so ornate, that it leads them astray. The only sure guidance, the only sure footing, Arnold can see, is among the ancients. They were rigidly exacting, he declares, in regard to the adaptability of the subject to the kind of poetry selected and the careful construction of the poem. From them may be learned, not only the all-importance of the theme and the indespensability of accurate construction, but also what is one of the prime means of attaining this last, subordination of expression to the subject.

Desirability

In his discussion of his reasons for the exclusion of Empedocles from the volume of 1853 Arnold lays down the significant critical maxim that a representation of life to be poetical, not only must interest, but also must inspirit and rejoice the reader. He enforces his point by quoting from Hesiod and

5. Preface to Poems, p. 496.
and from Schiller: "For the Muses, as Hesiod says, were born
that they might be 'a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from
cares.': and it is not enough that the Poet should add to the
knowledge of men, it is required of him also that he should add
to their happiness. 'All Art,' says Schiller, 'is dedicated
to Joy, and there is no higher and more serious problem, than
to make men happy. The right Art is that alone which creates
the enjoyment.'" He has no objection to tragedy; on the
contrary, such a situation is often the source of the greatest
pleasure: "The more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes
the enjoyment; and the situation is more tragic in proportion
as it becomes more terrible". In this, it may be noted in
passing, the direct influence of Aristotle is plain. But there
is a class of situations, Arnold insists, from which no poetic
enjoyment can be derived, and which are not suitable subjects
for poetry. "They are those in which the suffering finds no
vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress
is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope or resistance; in
which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done.
In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the
descriptions of them something monotonous. When they occur in
actual life, they are painful, not tragic; the representation

of them in poetry is painful also."

After sharply upbraiding the critics of his day because they have no regard for choice of subject and propriety of treatment, he finds another fault in them: they counsel the poet to present everything from a subjective viewpoint. This he brands as an absolutely false practice, and he ridicules it fiercely. "'A true allegory of the state of one's mind in a representative history,' the Poet is told, 'is perhaps the highest thing that one can attempt in the way of poetry.'---And accordingly he attempts it. An allegory of the state of one's mind, the highest problem of an art which imitates actions! No assuredly, it is not, it can never be so: no great poetical work has ever been produced with such an aim." Then, as if to fly boldly in the face of the opposition, he takes Faust as a case in point, and specifies wherein it is defective on account of its subjective content. If by so doing he does not materially strengthen his case, he, at least, gives strong proof of his sincerity by it.

In the closing paragraph of the Preface of 1853 Arnold flatly declares himself in favor of form as the first essential in poetry. He presents the two kinds of dilettanti described by Goethe: "he who neglects the indispensable mecha-

ical part, and thinks he has done enough if he shows spirituality and feeling; and he who seeks to arrive at poetry merely by mechanism, in which he can acquire an artisan's readiness, and without soul and matter." He heartily agrees with the observation which Goethe makes in regard to these two—"that the first does most harm to Art, and the last to himself." In closing, he firmly states his preference for the latter.

"If we must be dilettanti: if it is impossible for us, under the circumstances amidst which we live, to think clearly, to feel nobly, and to delineate firmly: if we cannot attain to the mastery of the artists—let us, at least, have so much respect for our Art as to prefer it to ourselves; let us not bewilder our successors; let us transmit to them the practice of Poetry, with its boundaries and wholesome regulative laws, under which excellent works may again, perhaps, at some future time, be produced, not yet fallen into oblivion through our neglect, not yet condemned and cancelled by the influence of their eternal enemy, Caprice."

The Greeks, Arnold points out, gave the greatest care to their manner of expression,—in fact, are its highest models, are the unapproached masters of the grand style. This term, which has been the subject of a large amount of discussion

11. Ibid.
Certain essentials of the grand style Arnold sets forth very definitely. The first time he uses the term— in the Preface of 1853—he makes the point that it stands for that manner of expression which is adapted perfectly to the matter which it conveys. Doubtless he had the Greeks in mind when he wrote this; but, later, in a comparison of the diction of Homer with that of Milton, he strengthens this assertion, and fixes it as a general characteristic of the grand style. "In each case," he declares, "the movement, the metrical cast, corresponds with the mode of evolution of the thought, with the syntactical cast, and is indeed determined by it." He expounds the grand style further by showing that it does not rise and sink with its subject; but that, on the contrary, it invests the substance, whatever it may be, with nobleness. What he meant by "nobleness" he never tried to explain much further than to say it was the result of a noble nature. There is something intangible and spiritual about it, too, he admits. In his third lecture on the translation of Homer he disposes of it with these words: "I do not attempt to lay down any rules for obtaining this effect of nobleness,— the effect, too, of all others the most impalpable, the most irreducible to rule, and which most depends on the individual personality of the artist."


15. On Translating Homer, p. 225.
since Arnold gave it prominence in literature, is one that demands careful examination and considerable explanation. Arnold himself admits that it stands for something hardly tangible, something incapable of being expressed in words, that can only be discerned spiritually. "Alas," he says, in Last Words on Translating Homer, "the grand style is the last matter in the world for verbal definition to deal with adequately. One may say of it as is said of faith: 'One must feel it in order to know what it is.' But, as of faith, so too one may say of nobleness, of the grand style: 'Woe to those who know it not!' Yet this expression, though indefinable, has a charm; one is the better for considering it; bonum est, nos hic esse; nay, one loves to try to explain it, though one knows that one must speak imperfectly." Yet he attempts to convey its meaning to us the best he can by presenting it from many different angles. He states its main characteristics; he limits it; he lays down the conditions under which it occurs; he exemplifies it; he even seeks, though perhaps not to the extent that he might have done with profit both to his readers and to himself, to suggest what it is by analogy. But, as he knew perfectly well himself, all this is of little use unless they have the power to conceive what it is for themselves.

Yet, from the fact that he uses this word repeatedly referring to that free and easy manner of expression which carries over the low, prosaic passages in the subject matter and gives dignity to the poem as a whole, it is possible to form an idea of what it is. A subject may rise and fall, may have its elevated and level regions, he admits: yet he denies that the style into which it has been cast can be said to vary when it has been adequately and perfectly done; for then, certainly, it has been executed with nobleness.

A style which is noble and in the grand manner, Arnold declares, must be continuous and not a flash of eloquence here and there, with flat, unworthy passages between. It must always be in keeping with the matter which it conveys; and any meanness, any attempt to give artificial grandeur to the commonplace, any affectation, at once precludes the possibility of it. He has Shakespeare in mind when he says, "One poet has had the gifts of nature and faculty in unequalled fulness, without the circumstances and training which make this sustained perfection of style possible. Of other poets, " he continues, "some have caught this perfect strain now and then, in short pieces or in single lines, but have not been able to maintain it through considerable works; others have composed all their productions in a style which, by comparison with the best, one must call secondary." This precept, that the grand

16. Last Words on Translating Homer, p. 266.
style is not a quality of particular lines or phrases regarded singly but of the poetical composition considered as a whole is presented again in the second of the lectures dealing with translation of Homer:—"I cannot imagine several poets, or one poet, joined with Dante in the composition of the Inferno, though many poets have taken for their subject a descent into Hell....So the insurmountable obstacle to believing the Iliad a consolidated work of several poets is this: that the work of great masters is unique; and the Iliad has a great master's genuine stamp, and that stamp is the grand style."

In one of his late papers—The Study of Poetry—Arnold suggests what at first appears to be two other distinguishing traits of the grand style, poetic truth and high seriousness. It is part of his point that these are interdependent with corresponding properties of the subject matter. "The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner. The two superiorities are closely related, and are in steadfast proportion one to the other. So far as high poetic truth and seriousness are wanting to a poet's matter and substance, so far also, we

17. On Translating Homer, p. 182.
may be sure, will a high poetic stamp of diction and movement be wanting to his style and manner. In proportion as this high stamp of diction and movement, again, is absent from a poet's style and manner, we shall find, also, that high poetic truth are absent from his substance and matter."

But this mutual dependence of style and content, Arnold has shown, is a principle also underlying both nobleness and the subordination of form to substance; and it is found by comparing his statements that these expressions denominate the same qualities of the grand style as do seriousness and poetic truth. A general term inclusive of these particularized characteristics of the grand manner is that by which we denote the governing law of Greek culture, artistic propriety.

Only a very few of the greatest figures in all literature, Arnold holds, are undisputed masters of the grand style. Among the ancients he allows its possession to Virgil and the most eminent of the Greek poets, Homer, Sophocles, Pindar, and possibly, Aeschylus; among the moderns, however, he denies it to all except Dante and Milton. This list probably includes all of the great literary artists of Greece and Rome who wrote in the grand manner; but its number among the later poets can hardly be said to be complete. Arnold insists, however, that in English Milton alone has that unfailing level of style, that

perfect sureness of hand, which treats plain matters as well as elevated ones with propriety and nobleness. "Alone of English poets, alone in English art," he says, "Milton has it; he is our great artist in style, our first-rate master in the grand style. He is as truly a master in this as the great Greeks are, or Virgil, or Dante." Moreover, he is very insistent that, aside from Dante's work, Milton's blank verse is the only example we have in modern literature of the grand manner. "To this metre, as used in Paradise Lost, he states, "our country owes the glory of having produced one of the only two poetical works in the grand style which are found in modern languages; the Divine Comedy of Dante is the other. England and Italy here stand alone; Spain, France, and Germany, have produced great poets, but neither Calderon, nor Corneille, nor Schiller, nor even Goethe, has produced a body of poetry in the true grand style, in the sense in which the style of the body of Homer's poetry, or Pindar's, or Sophocles, is grand." Shakespeare, though undoubtedly the supreme poetical power in our literature, does not possess it on account of his affectation and lack of restraint. "Not a tragedy of Shakespeare but contains passages in the worst of all styles, the affected style; and the grand style, although it may be harsh, or obscure, or cumbrous, or over-laboured, is never affected."

20. On Translating Homer, p. 205.
21. Ibid.
Hence there can be no doubt that Arnold intends to exclude from the possession of the grand style all those whose work is not characterized by adaption of form to substance and sustained high seriousness.

In answer to the critics who asked him what he meant by the grand style, Arnold, in Last Words on Translating Homer, merely laid down in an evasive and guarded way the conditions under which he believed it would occur. "I think it will be found that the grand style arises in poetry, when a noble nature, poetically gifted treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject. I think this definition will be found to cover all instances of the grand style in poetry which present themselves. I think it will be found to exclude all poetry which is not in the grand style. And I think it contains no terms which are obscure, which themselves need defining. Even those who do not understand what is meant by calling poetry noble, will understand, I imagine, what is meant by speaking of a noble nature in a man." What especially contributes to this quality in Homer is his soundness, which makes it possible for him to handle with propriety all subjects from the highest to the lowest." Homer can in no sense be said to sink with his subject, because his soundness has something more than literal naturalness about it; because his soundness is the soundness of Homer, of a great epic poet; because in fact, he is in the

22. Last Words on Translating Homer, p. 265.
the grand style. So he sheds over the simplest matter he
touches the charm of his grand manner; he makes everything
23. noble." What makes for nobleness in Milton's nature is his
absolute sincerity, which enables him to treat all matters in an
'elevated strain of moral pureness'. In Homer, Arnold says, the
result is the grand style simple,--in Milton, it is the grand
style severe. "Both of these styles, the simple and the severe," he
continues, "are truly grand; the severe seems, perhaps, the
grandest, so long as we attend most to the great personality, to
the noble nature, in the poet its author; the simple seems the
grandest when we attend most to the exquisite faculty, to the
poetical gift." But, in addition to a noble nature there must
be the poetical gift, the "divine faculty", also. "And besides
all this," Arnold says, "the subject must be a serious one(for
it is only by a kind of licence that we can speak of the grand
style in comedy); and it must be treated with simplicity or
severity. Here is the difficulty," he remarks in conclusion,
"the poets of the world have been many; there has been wanting
neither abundance of poetical gift nor abundance of noble na-
tures; but a poetical gift so happy, in a noble nature so cir-
cumscribed and trained, that the result is a continuous style,
perfect in simplicity or perfect in severity, has been extreme-
ly rare."

23. Last Words on Translating Homer, p. 264.
24. Last Words on Translating Homer, p. 266.
25. Last Words on Translating Homer, p. 266.
Undoubtedly Arnold considered examples the best means of conveying an idea of what the grand style really is. On account of its intangible nature all other ways of attempting to describe it must prove inadequate. But almost anywhere in Homer, in Virgil, in Dante, or in Milton one can pick out passages that exhibit its most significant attributes. As general specimens of poetry written in this style he gives from Homer:

"\( \alpha \lambda \lambda \, \phi \iota \lambda \sigma, \theta \alpha \nu \varepsilon \kappa \alpha \iota \varepsilon ' \tau \iota \iota \iota \, \iota \lambda \nu \psi \rho \varepsilon \iota \alpha \iota \varepsilon \tau \omega \varsigma, \)

\( \kappa \alpha \iota \theta \alpha \nu \varepsilon \kappa \alpha \iota \, \Pi \alpha \tau \rho \kappa \lambda \sigma, \varepsilon \pi \varepsilon \rho \, \sigma \varepsilon \omega \, \pi \omega \lambda \lambda \, \lambda \mu \epsilon \iota \omega \gamma, '\)

from Virgil:

"Disce, puer, vivitutem ex me verumque laborem,
Fortunam ex aliis, "

from Dante:

"Lascio lo fele, et vo pei dolci pomi
Promessi a me per lo verace Ruca;
Ma fino al centro pria convien ch'io tomi."

and from Milton:

"His form had yet not lost
All her original brightness, or appeared
Less than archangel ruined, and the excess, 26.
Of glory obscured."

It may be noted in this connection that Arnold at times declares phrases and lines to be "in the grand style" which are from

works of authors of which he has specifically denied this high faculty of expression. What he probably means is that these quotations satisfy the conditions for this style as far as passages of such length can do; but that, because their works as a whole do not sustain the excellencies exhibited in these detached portions, these poets cannot be said to write in the grand manner. To illustrate particular types and qualities of the grand style Arnold selects Milton's work as the best example of it developed with severity and Homer's as the best model of it exhibited in simplicity. The first is accounted for mainly by Milton's nobleness, his ability to give elevation to all that he handles; in the latter it arises, for the most part, from Homer's soundness, his propriety in suiting form to substance. From Paradise Lost this specimen is given:

"Standing on earth, not wrapt above the pole,
More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged
To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days,
On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues...."

There," says Arnold, "is the grand style in perfection; and anyone who has a sense for it, will feel it a thousand times better from repeating those lines than from hearing anything I can say about it." But, after all, he prefers the grand style simple of Homer. "It is the more magical: in the other there is something intellectual, something which gives scope

27. Last Words on Translating Homer, p. 265.
for a play of thought which may exist where the poetical gift is either wanting or present in only inferior degree: the severe is much more imitable, and this a little spoils its charm."

As a proof that it is inimitable when developed in simplicity he quotes this passage from Homer:

\[ \text{"\text{"ἀλὶ\ι \ωι θι \να ο\κα Λβο\ι} \text{"} \]

\[ \text{ο\ι\υχ \ε\γε\ν\τ \ο\υτ \ Α\ι\ακ\ι\δα \πα\ρα \ Πη\λει} \]

\[ \text{ο\υ\τε \πα\ρι \\α\ν\τι\θε\ψ \ Κ\α\δ\ω\ψ \ Γ\ε\γ\ο\ν\ται \\mu\α\ν \\β\ρ\σ\τ\ι\ν} \]

\[ \text{ο\λ\θ\ο\ν \\υ\π\ε\ρ\τ\α\το\ν \\o\i \ \s\χ\e\ι\ν, \o\i \ \t\e \ \κ\\ρ\u\s\a\m\p\u\k\i\ν\w\n\m\e\l\p\o\m\e\n\a\n\v\e\n \e\v \ \o\e\r\e \ \M\o\u\s\a\n\v} \]

\[ \text{κα\i \ \e\n \ \e\p\t\\t\a\p\u\l\o\i} \]

\[ \text{\a\i\o\n \ \O\n\a\i\a\i} \]

28. Last Words on Translating Homer, p. 268.

29. Ibid.

But Dante affords examples of both styles, the severe and the simple. A stanze from the twenty third canto of the Purgatory illustrates the severity which results when the poet's mind is so charged with details and allusions that he is unable to treat anything explicitly:

"Indi m'han tratto su gli suoi conforti,
Salendo e rigirando la Montagna
Che drizza voi che il mondo face torti."

In the very next stanza, however, is an example of the grand style simple:

"Tanto dice di farmi sa compagna
Ch'io saro la dove fia Batrice;
Ouivi convien che senza lui rimagna."

30. Last Words on Translating Homer, p. 267.

31. Ibid.
It is from specimens such as these which Arnold has given, especially when they are found in their original context, that an understanding of the grand style may be obtained, if it can be discerned through any external means whatever. This, certainly, cannot be denied, that it is impossible to form a concept of what it is unless one is familiar in entire with at least some of its great examples.

Before Arnold's day, Sir Joshua Reynolds in his discussions of painting had given currency to the expression "the grand style". Thence Arnold introduced it boldly into literary criticism with only slight reference to its source. At least twice, however, he points out the analogy existing between what it stands for in literature and what it represents in art, taking the word in its limited sense. "The ballad style," he says, "offers to an epic, quite unable to fill the canvas of Homer, or Dante, or Milton, a canvas which he is capable of filling." It is possible to project the figure further. No amount of delicate treatment, no amount of purple patches, will compensate for the inequalities that mar the work of all but greatest in both fields. In literature, as in painting, the compositions of the masters are characterized by unfailing soundness and nobleness in every detail. Part of

32. On Translating Homer, p. 183.
this Arnold suggests in his *Last Words on Translating Homer*.

"But the supreme poet is he who is thoroughly sound and poetical, alike when his subject is grand, and when it is plain: with him the subject may sink, but never the poet. But a Dutch painter does not rise and sink with his subject, in so far as an artist cannot be said to sink who is sound in his treatment of his subject, because though sound in their treatment of it, they are not poetical, poetical in the true, not the false sense of the word; because, in fact, they are not in the grand style." In architecture, too, there is something which corresponds to the grand style in poetry. The acme of the Greek architecture, the Parthenon, with its majestic simplicity, its pureness, and its soundness, is as much in the grand style as is the *Iliad*; and what is likewise significant, it exhibits the same particular excellencies and represents the same type of the finest expression that Homer's work does. *Paradise Lost*, with its elevation, its elaborate structure, and its abundance of detail, compares in a like manner with the Gothic cathedrals of Chartres and Amiens. Fittingly, the palaces of the period of the Italian Renaissance combine these two widely separated types, the simple and the severe, just as Dante's

33. *Last Words on Translating Homer*, p. 263.
Divine Comedy does. Yet, there is one thing common to all the
greatest works of architecture, literature, and art; that is
their artistic propriety, which combines subordination of part
to whole with nobleness of treatment;—in short, that is the
grand style.

Something of Arnold's method in criticism has been demon-
strated by his treatment of the grand style. But in one of his
later essays, The Study of Poetry, written as an introduction
to Ward's English Poets, he definitely states his preference
for literary judgment based upon actual comparison of examples
over that founded upon historical or personal grounds. He at-
tacks estimates formed in the latter two ways and brands them as
largely false. "The course of development of a nation's lang-

uage, thought, and poetry, is profoundly interesting; and by
regarding a poet's work as a stage in this course of develop-
ment we may bring ourselves to make it of more importance as
poetry than in itself it really is, we may come to use a lan-
guage of quite exaggerated praise in criticising it; in short,
to over-rate it. So arises in our poetic judgments the fallacy
caused by the estimate which we may call historic. Then, again,
a poet or a poem may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves.
Our personal affinities, likings, and circumstances have great
power to sway our estimate of this or that poet's work, and to
make us attach more importance to it as poetry than in itself it
really possesses, because to us it is, or has been, of high im-
portance. Here also we over-rate the object of our interest,
and apply to it a language of praise which is quite exaggerated.
And thus we get the source of a second fallacy in our poetic judgments—the fallacy caused by an estimate which we may call personal." Such appraisals are not in themselves of much harm, but they do lead to a dangerous abuse of language. They depend largely upon things other than the merits of work itself.

"The historic estimate is likely in especial to affect our judgment and our language when we are dealing with ancient poets; the personal estimate when we are dealing with poets our contemporaries, or at any rate modern." Arnold’s particular way of determining what is best is to become thoroughly familiar with the best expressions and passages of the greatest masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to the works of other writers. As a concrete example of such a criterion he quotes in the introduction to Ward’s English Poets a half dozen lines from Homer, several passages from Shakespeare, three bits from Dante, and as many from Milton. "These few lines," he says, "if we have tact and can use them, are enough of themselves to keep sound our judgments of poetry, to save us from fallacious estimates of it, to conduct us to a real estimate."

Arnold also sought to determine the purpose of criticism. "It is," he says, in one of his most memorable passages, "simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making that known, to create a current of

34. The Study of Poetry, p. 6.
true and fresh ideas." Again, he declares, "The business of the critical power is to see the object as in itself it really is." He then proceeds to show how this works out in practice: "Thus it tends, at last, to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself. It tends to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison with that which it displaces; to make the best ideas prevail. Presently these new ideas reach society, the touch of truth is the touch of life, and there is a stir and growth everywhere; out of this stir and growth come the creative epochs of literature." From the foregoing statements it is evident that the first of the definitions given here for the function of criticism is derived directly from the latter. Indeed, though Arnold uses the word "criticism" broadly and in a great many varied connections, it always denotes something that has for its purpose "to see the thing as in itself it really is"; and in every case there is implied the exercise of that faculty he so admired, which was most prevalent among the ancient Greeks, the ability "to see life steadily and see it whole."

In every definition of the critical power's proper function which Arnold has presented one requisite is either implied or directly expressed:—that is disinterestedness. In this single word he sums up the governing law of criticism. But long before he had formulated his ideas upon this matter into a definite rule, he had stressed the importance of self-effacement. To its lack, he argued in the Preface of 1853, was due the inability of critics in his day to distinguish the themes suitable for poetry. Only he who is free from the ulterior aims of the practical spirit may attain intellectual deliverance and see things in their true light. This he learned partly from St. Beuve, who laid it down as a law at the beginning of his essay on Mlle. de l'Espinasse:

"Le critique ne doit point avoir de partialité et n'est d'aucune coterie. Il n'épouse les gens que par un temps, et ne fait que traverser les groupes divers e'y enchaîner jamais. Il passe résolument d'un camp d'autre; et de ce qu'il à rendu justice d'un côté ce ne lui est jamais une raison de la refuser à ce qui est vis à vis. Ainsi, tour à tour, il est à Rome ou à Carthage, tantôt pour Argos et tantôt pour Ilion."—"The critic ought not to be partial, and has no set. He takes up people only for a time, and does no more than pass through different groups without ever chaining himself down. He passes firmly from one camp to the other; and never, because he has done justice to one side, refuses the same to the opposite party. Thus, turn by turn, he is at Rome and at
Carthage, sometimes at Argos, and sometimes at Troy."

Criticism by remaining aloof from considerations of the moment achieves its "best spiritual work", which is "to keep man from self-satisfaction which is self-retarding and vulgarizing, to lead him towards perfection by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and the absolute beauty and fitness of things." In the "Preface" to the First Series of Essays he again emphasized the need for humility in dealing with matters of thought and knowledge: "To try and approach truth on one side after another, not to strive or cry, nor to persist in pressing forward, on any one side, with violence or self-will,—it is only thus that mortals may hope to gain any vision of the mysterious Goddess, whom we shall never see except in outline, but only thus even in outline. He who will do nothing but fight impetuously towards her on his own, one, favorite, particular line, is inevitably destined to run his head into the folds of the black robe in which she is wrapped." In the first essay he explains further how criticism may manifest disinterestedness: "By keeping aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things'; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches; by steadily refusing to lend itself to any ulterior, politi-

40. Function of Criticism, p. 20.
41. Essays in Criticism; First Series, p. V.
The Need of A Cosmopolitan Attitude in Criticism.

In order to determine the best that is known and thought in the world, the critic must have wide knowledge; and this he cannot be said to have, unless he "possesses one great literature, at least, besides his own." For, as Arnold says, "By the very nature of things, as England is not all the world, much of the best that is known and thought in the world cannot be of English growth, must be foreign; by the very nature of things, again, it is just this that we are least likely to know, while English thought is streaming in upon us from all sides, and takes excellent care that we shall not be ignorant of its existence. The English critic of literature, therefore, must dwell much on foreign thought, and with particular heed on any part of it, which, while significant and fruitful in itself, is for any reason specially likely to escape him." Again, he writes in a letter to his mother: I hate all over-preponderance of single elements, and all my efforts are directed to enlarge and complete us by bringing in as much as possible of Greek, Latin, and Celtic authors." For this doctrine he

42. The Study of Poetry, p. 18.
43. Function of Criticism, p. 37.
44. Jan. 21, 1865.
was greatly indebted to the French critics Sainte-Beuve, Sherer, and Renan. His interest in Celtic literature was due especially to the later, who had included in his *Essais de Morale et de Critique*, published in 1859, an essay "Sur la poesie des races celiques." In the *Essay on Wordsworth*, he laid down the ideal conditions for the practice of criticism. "Let us conceive," he writes, "of the whole group of civilized nations as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working towards a common result; a confederation whose members have a due knowledge both of the past, out of which they all proceed, and of one another. This was the ideal of Goethe, and it is an ideal which will impose itself upon the thoughts of our modern societies more and more." In the *Function of Criticism at The Present Time*, after advising that "every critic should try and possess one great literature, at least, besides his own," Arnold uses almost the same words as he did in the *Essay on Wordsworth* to describe the conditions under which true criticism may take place, except that in place of "a due knowledge of the past, out of which they proceed," he has stated more explicitly "a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity." At the beginning of his inaugural address at Oxford he emphasized, in

in discussing the point of view upon which "intellectual deliverance" depended, the fact that "no single event, no single literature, is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures." The main point of the lecture, however, is that of all literatures, ancient and modern, the most adequate, the soundest, the most worthy of imitation, is that of Greece. In it, he believes, can be found more of "the best that is known and thought in the world" than in the writings of any other language.

English criticism's attachment to practical affairs and its narrow range of vision prevent it from exercising "a conscience in intellectual matters", such as is furthered by the Academy in France. To this deficiency is mainly due the "note of provinciality" in it and its inferiority to "prose of centre." "In France," Arnold quotes from Sainte-Beuve, "the first consideration for us is not whether we are amused and pleased by a work of art or mind, nor is it whether we are touched by it. What we seek above all to learn is, whether we were right in being amused with it, and applauding it, and being moved by it." The French people are especially endowed with "openness of mind" and "flexibility of intelligence" whereas the English have in place of these characteristics, "energy and honesty". The latter combination of traits is especially favorable for the production of poetry, that of the former for prose. "Our literature, in spite of the genius

46. The Modern Element, p. 40.
47. Literary Influence of Academies, p. 48.
manifested in it, may fall short in form, method, precision, proportions, arrangement,—all of them things where intelligence proper comes in. It may be comparatively weak in prose, that branch of literature where intelligence is, so to speak, all in all." Unwillingness to deal impartially with all things and to recognize a standard of excellence in intellectual matters higher than that which is convenient is immediately responsible for the unclassical tone of English criticism. "The less a literature has felt the influence of a supposed centre of correct information, correct judgment, correct taste, the more we shall find this note of provinciality." In France the Academy has eliminated want of restraint, which is the besetting sin of English intellect. It has raised French prose to a plane that is classical. There, no, "note of provinciality" mars it; there, it is "prose of centre". It has the "needful qualities for a fit prose, regularity, uniformity, precision, balance." But the genius of our race is such that we do not respond readily to the same influences that the French do. Hence Arnold does not recommend the institution of a British Academy. The greatest corrective force for English thought, he believes, is the study of the classics. "They can help to cure us of what is the great vice of our intellect, manifesting itself in our incredible vagaries in literature, in art, in religion, in

49. Literary Influence of Academies, p. 61.
The end and aim of all literature, Arnold says, is, in truth, nothing but a criticism of life. It follows, then, by reason of his definition of the critical power's function, that the essential object of literature is to see things as they really are. "The criticism which the men of genius, such as Shakespeare, pass upon human life is permanently acceptable to mankind;......its acceptableness depends upon its inherent truth." Poetry, in especial, criticizes life by a noble and profound application of ideas to it. "A great poet 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 to his subject, whatever it may be, of the ideas

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

which he has acquired for himself.....It is important, therefore, to hold 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." But such an application depends upon the ability of the poet to discern truth. At the beginning of his essay on Maurice de Guérin Arnold states, "The grand power of poetry is its interpretive power, by which I mean, not a power of drawing out in black
and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe, but the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them and of our relations with them. When this sense is awakened in us, as to objects without us, we feel ourselves to be incontact with the essential nature of those objects, to be no longer bewildered and oppressed by them, but to have their secret, and to be in harmony with them; and this feeling calms and satisfies us as no other can."

To see life steadily and see it whole, that, Arnold says, in the Introduction to Ward's English Poets, is the principle which underlies a criticism of life. After quoting four of Burn's best lines, —

"To make a happy fireside clime
To weans and wife,
That's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life."—

he proceeds to discuss their place in high poetry. "There is criticism of life for you, the admirers of Burns will say to us; there is the application of ideas to life! There is, undoubtedly, The doctrine of the last quoted lines coincides almost exactly with what was the aim and end, Xenophon tells us, of all the teaching of Socrates. And the application is a powerful one; made by a man of vigorous understanding, and (need I say?) a master of language."

53. Maurice de Guérin, p. 81.
54. The Study of Poetry, p. 47.
More is required of poetry that it should be simply a criticism of life; it must also conform to the conditions fixed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. These are the requisites which, in The Study Of Poetry, and which at the beginning of the essay he designates as truth and seriousness. The first of these qualities, he says, is exhibited in Chaucer's matter and diction: his poetry is a criticism of life. "It is by a large, free, sound representation of things, that poetry, this high criticism of life, has truth of substance; and Chaucer's poetry has truth of substance." But his work fails to satisfy in an eminent degree the conditions determined by the laws of poetic truth and beauty; it has not high seriousness. Burn's criticism of life has the same defect. "For supreme poetical success more is required than the powerful application of ideas to life; it must be an application under the conditions fixed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. Those laws fix as an essential condition in the poet's treatment of such matters as are here in question, high seriousness; the high seriousness which comes from absolute sincerity. The accent of high seriousness,

55. The Study of Poetry, p. 28.
born of absolute sincerity, is what gives to such verse as

'In la sua volonta e nostra pace....'

to such criticism of life as Dante's, its power. Is this accent felt in the passages which I have quoted from Burns? Surely not. No, Burns, like Chaucer, comes short of the high seriousness of the great classics, and the virtue of matter and manner which goes with that high seriousness is wanting to his work."

This alone is enough to convince a sincere reader that Arnold in no way confuses "a criticism of life" with "the conditions fixed by the laws of poetic truth and beauty". These express invariable conceptions entirely separate from one another. Once their true meanings are comprehended, they are applicable in every connection where Arnold uses them. But the significance of each, especially of the expression "a criticism of life" is very broad and general, and must not be considered apart from any qualifications which Arnold attaches to it.

In his essay on Byron he took the opportunity to remove some of the incorrect interpretations which careless and insincere critics had given to his statements. "I have seen it said that I allege poetry to have for its characteristic this: that it is a characteristic of life; and that I make it to be thereby distinguished from prose, which is something else. So far from it, that when I first used the expression, a criticism of life, now

many years ago, it was to literature in general that I applied it, and not to poetry in especial. 'The end and aim of all literature,' I said, 'is, if one considers it attentively, nothing but that: a criticism of life.' And so it surely is; the main end and aim of all utterance, whether in prose or in verse, is surely a criticism of life. We are not brought much on our way, I admit, towards an adequate definition of poetry as distinguished from prose by that truth; still a truth it is, and poetry can never prosper if it is forgotten. In poetry, however, the criticism of life has to be made conformably to the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. Truth and seriousness of substance and matter, felicity and perfection of diction and manner, as these are exhibited in the best poets, are what constitutes 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 fulfillment and non-fulfillment of such conditions."

Arnold conceives highly of the ends which poetry is destined to accomplish. For him, it is the reality, philosophy is the illusion. In the essay on Heine he defines it as "the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things." It is man's most perfect speech, through which he utters, if not the absolute truth, the nearest approach to it

57. Byron, p. 186.
that is possible in this world. "The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worth its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. 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." Indeed, the basis of true religion is found to be in poetry. "Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed 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 to-day is its unconscious poetry." The truest criticism of life, the most certain presentation of things as they really are, the surest answer to the question "how to live," are found in our best poetry. "More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us....In poetry as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find, as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay.

60. Ibid.
61. The Study of Poetry, pp. 2 and 5.
The success that poetry has in realizing these high aims depends, of course, upon its degree of excellence, upon its soundness and truth. "But the consolation and stay will be 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.----The best poetry is what we want; the best poetry will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can:" Arnold leaves no doubt in regard to what he considers the best. The poetry which most clearly interprets life, which is the best consolation and stay to thinking minds, is the work of the poets in the days of Pericles. That was one of the culminating ages, one of the flowering periods of the human race. "There was the utmost energy of life there, public and private; the most entire freedom, the most unprejudiced and intelligent observation of human affairs." The literature of that day was entirely commensurate with the life of the times; in fact, its peculiar characteristic is its "consummate, its unrivalled adequacy." "If in the body of Athenians of that time," Arnold declares, "there was the utmost energy of mature manhood, public and private; the most entire freedom, the most unprejudiced---

62. The Study of Poetry, p. 5.
63. The Modern Element, p. 47.
ed and intelligent observation of human affairs—in Sophocles there is the same maturity, the same freedom, the same intelligent observation; but all these idealized and glorified by the grace and light shed over them from the noblest poetical feeling. Here in the work of this period is the standard by which Arnold measured all literature significant enough to compare with it in any degree. He was no doubt a master in the application of this criterion, and he is to be excused if he cared not to concern himself with estimating lesser values than it admits. The destinies which he conceived for literature were of the highest; its end and aim, he held, should be, as it was in the time of Sophocles, "to see life steadily and see it whole."

64. *The Modern Element*, p. 60.
SECTION II.

THE APPLICATION OF HIS THEORIES IN HIS POETRY.

The first volume of Arnold's verse, which he published in 1849 under the title The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems stands in much the same relation to the body of his poetical work as the Preface to Poems of 1853 does to the whole of his literary criticism. This earliest collection of his poetry, some of which is hardly surpassed by anything that he wrote later, at once reveals all the prominent characteristics of his verse; it presents at the beginning of his career a cross section of his thought and genius, in which all the factors that operate in his work of the following years are easily discerned. Only the elegiac strain is not definitely represented. But there is a distinct suggestion of even this, diffused throughout these early poems, whereas the relation of his theory to his practice as well as the principle sources of his poetical inspiration are very readily perceived in them.

Arnold's indebtedness to the Greeks in his poetry, as in his criticism, is at once evident from the volume of 1849. More than half of the contents is Greek either in subject, or in inspiration, or in manner of treatment. In the title poem, The Strayed Reveller, and in A Fragment of an "Antigone" he handles Greek material in irregular and rhymeless meter with the intention of creating in English the effects of the choruses in Attic tragedy. No doubt, the austere simplicity and the adequateness of expression which Arnold so greatly admired
in the works of the ancient masters and which he argued for in his criticism characterize, in a large measure, the style of the New Sirens; nowhere is there a word too much, nor is there any place which needs amplification. The same purity and restraint mark the diction of Mycerinus and The Sick King in Bokhara: the expression throughout each is adapted strictly to the matter which it conveys; it is uniformly even from beginning to end and contains no brilliant phrases or rough spots; everything is subordinated to the end of obtaining a total impression. 'The action, too, in these poems, as well as in the Strayed Reveller, is handled after the Greek manner. In each case it is taken up very near the end, and what has gone before is presented by means of retrospective narration. It is significant, also, that whereas Arnold says very little about the classical unities, whenever circumstances admit he observes them. Whether the action itself in these early narrative poems is considered to be "noble" or not depends greatly upon the light in which it is viewed. Certainly, a more favorable decision will be reached, if the Greek models which Arnold evidently was following are kept in mind. /In a large part, both his excellencies and his limitations are the result of his close adherence to classic ideals. To his familiarity with the ancient master in his boyhood is also due the early maturity of his powers and the absence of a period of poetical apprenticeship such as Tennyson and Browning passed through. He, himself, declares in a familiar sonnet that those who consoled and sustained his mind in the restless period of his youth were Homer,
Epicurus, and, above all, Sophocles,——

"Whose even balanced soul,

…………………………………………………………

Business could not make dull, nor passions wild:

Who saw life steadily and saw it whole."

In consequence of this early training, he suppressed his emotions to a degree that some critics deplore. But more than counter-balancing this is the fact that through its influence he became our unexcelled master of lucid, precise expression, and has produced a body of work unsurpassed in our language for uniform excellence of style.

The influence upon Arnold of Goethe and Wordsworth, to whom he was attracted in the main by their Greek qualities, was not inconsiderable; and it is quite as evident in the first volume of his poems as in anything he wrote later. In his prose, in his verse, and in his letters he praises the German poet often, always with stress upon his keen analysis of human life, his "wide and luminous view", and upon his aloofness from what is merely modern and transitory, "was uns alle bandigt, das Gemeine." From him he learned in part the lesson of Resignation.

65. To A Friend, p. 2. (The pagination of the references to Arnold's poetry is that of the one volume edition of his Poetical Works, Macmillian and Co., London, 1890.)
which is echoed in so many of the poems of this volume of 1849. A special case in point is the sonnet of *Quiet Work*, thought by Herbert Paul to have been suggested by *Ohne Hast, Ohne Rast*. Arnold was always free to acknowledge his debt to this poet. At the close of *A French Critic on Goethe* he dismisses him with these words:—"There rises to the mind this sentence: 'Die Gestalt dieser Welt vergeht; und ich mochte mich nur mit dem beschaftigen, was bleibende Verhaltnisse sind.' 'The passion of this world passeth away; and I would fain occupy myself with with the abiding.' There is the true Goethe, and with that Goethe we would end!"

Whereas Goethe was a source of power to Arnold in his attempt to reconcile his critical temperament to life, Wordsworth appealed directly to his poetical sensibilities. The classic purity of the latter's style at once found favor with Arnold. Among the poems of his first volume Wordsworthian echoes are immediately recognized in *To A Gipsy Child*, *Myosotis*, and *Resignation*. Perhaps no one has appreciated this poet more justly than Arnold in these words: "Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which he feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary

power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it." Yet this disciple could not find for himself in Nature any of the rapture or enjoyment that his master did; for him, at her best, she was but a source of fitful rest and a reminder of life's cold duty. She never flashed her pictures upon his "inward eye" nor played a melody upon his heart strings; she is always something without him, stern and commanding, rather than inviting and sympathetic. His temperament was far too critical and intellectual to accept the unsubstantiated theories of the mystics; and, in spite of what he says against it, he bases his poetry very largely upon fact. From Wordsworth he turned to Goethe, Sensancour, and the writers of Greece and Rome to satisfy the need that he felt in his youth for philosophical guidance; but, certainly, Wordsworth had, after the Greeks, the most vital influence upon him as a true poet.

The volume of 1849 leaves no doubt in regard to Arnold's natural ability as a poet. The lyrical verse in it, though small in amount, is sufficient to prove that he lacked neither ear for music, nor descriptive power, nor imagination. The Forsaken Merman is worthy to stand with the best of its kind in the language. A strong indication of Shelley's influence is felt in it and in the shorter pieces Stagirius, A Question, and The Voice. These poems belong to a class which Arnold always disparaged in his criticism, and were probably written before

he had definitely formulated his principles of poetic composition. But their presence in this early volume and occasional cropping out of the same strain later refute the charge that he developed his critical theory in agreement with his abilities, and make his general adherence to opposing ideals more significant.

As a criticism of life The Sick King in Bokhara and Mycerinus can hardly be ranked high. They fail on the same score that Empedocles does, —they are not poetical in the true sense of the word; and most of what Arnold says of the latter piece is true of them also. He explains in the Preface to Poems of 1853 that, if a selection is to be poetical, "it is demanded, not only that it shall interest, but also that it shall inspirit and rejoice the reader: that it shall convey a charm, and infuse delight." The situations in these poems are exactly of the class he condemns. "They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which everything is to be endured, nothing to be done." The Sick King, in particular, is painful in tone rather than tragic; and Mycerinus, though perhaps less open to this charge, fails more signally upon another, that it lacks seriousness.

In Utrumque Partus sets forth the main trend of Arnold's

68. Preface to Poems, p. 487.
69. Preface to Poems, p. 488.
philosophy of life. No matter what we are, where we came from, or what becomes of us, we should look upon this existence calmly, and regulate our days according to the best knowledge we can obtain. Arnold also reveals in this poem what is unusual with him, a quiet confidence in man's superior destiny. But the main lesson which he teaches is that contained in those lines from Milton which he was fond of quoting:

"Nor love thy life, nor hate, but, what thou liv'st,
Live well; how long or short, permit to heaven."

The note of resignation pervades all of Arnold's poetry, especially his elegiac verse. Yet he did not intend it to be taken as an end in itself; its main worth lies in the power that it gives man to see clearly and think rightly. This is the basic idea of Hellenism, which Arnold advocated in all his prose and poetry: man must first find out what his duty is, execution will naturally follow after that.

Arnold's conception of nature has an intimate connection with the criticism of life in his poetry. His ideas correspond closely with those held by the greatest thinkers and scientists of the nineteenth century. Nature is concerned with the perfection of the species at the expense of the individual, and towards any particular man, or generation, or age she is entirely neutral. The world "is but a quiet watershed, whence equally the Seas of Life and Death are fed." This disinterested attitude

70. Resignation, p. 60.
of the material universe Arnold brings out again and again in poetry. Often he draws the lesson of patience from it. Only in *Words to A Preacher* does he complain against it. But this sonnet is in almost every way a violation of his theory. In it is found neither calm restraint, nor self-effacement, nor true criticism of life. The fact that it is one of his earliest pieces is not an adequate explanation of it; for work done as early as it was shows that the principles which he later expressed in his criticism had already begun to operate. The circumstances are simply these: Bored by an unusually tiresome sermon, Arnold voiced his disgust in this sonnet. Hence it is not to be taken as representative of his poetry, and the part which he assigns to nature in it, since it is inconsistent with the notion that he expresses elsewhere, may be disregarded. The attitude presented in *Youth of Nature* and *Youth of Man* is also plainly not his own, but Wordsworth's. For him, Nature is not an inspirer of man's thoughts, but a stern reminder to him to seek inspiration only within himself.

In *Resignation*, which is largely a poem of nature, Arnold has departed to a considerable extent from his theory by reading his own thoughts into material things. The poem also fails to show the restraint and proportion characteristic of most of his work. But of greatest importance is the lesson which it teaches, its criticism of life. As in much of Arnold's poetry, the conception of nature and of human destiny which it exhibits is rather austere and not greatly inspiring. But, at bottom,
poetic truth and high seriousness are not found wanting. Arnold, it must be remembered, was, above all, a man of intellect, a seeker after truth; and it was only along with this and for the sake of it that he expected and hoped to attain calm. If there is a deficiency of imagination in some of his poetry, this is compensated for by his "wide and luminous view of life," unhindered by fantasies and delusions,—in short, by his ability "to see life steadily and see it whole." He beholds the world in a far away perspective, where the ambitions and struggles of individual men count for but little or nothing. The progress of the universe follows the course fixed by fate, and man can neither hinder nor aid it. There is here the same thought that Teufelsdröckh expounds as he looks down from his high tower upon the sleeping city far below: "Thousands of human generations, all as noisy as our own, have been swallowed up of Time, and there remains no wreck of them any more; and Arcturus and Orion and Sirius and the Peliades are still shining in their courses, clear and young, as when the Shepherd first noted them in the plain of Shinar. Pshaw! What is all this paltry little Dog-cage of an earth; what art thou that sittest whining there?" We are all subject to the decrees of fate, against which it is useless to strive. Hence Arnold advised a policy of resignation. This is the lesson he derived from the Gypsies:

"...they rubb'd through yesterday
In their hereditary way:"
And they will rub through, if they can,  
Tomorrow on the self-same plan."

Something about this migratory race of people always appealed to Arnold, and he has made the meeting of one of their number by the seashore the occasion of one of the best presentations of his ascetic philosophy. Certainly, he desired that he might give an affirmative answer from himself to the question which he proposes to the Gypsy child:—

"Is the calm thine of stoic souls, who weigh
Life well, and find it wanting, nor deplore:
But in disdainful silence turn away,
Stand mute, self-centered, stern, and dream no more:"

But the value of the quiet thus gained, as he suggests here and brings out more clearly in some other of his poems, especially in Quiet Work, is not in itself; it is in the "sad lucidity of soul" which it enables man to attain, the power which it gives him to think clearly and see his duty rightly.

An examination of Arnold's poems reveals surprisingly few indications of chronological development. This is explained in part by his early training and in part by his extremely critical temperament. The fact that he gave up poetry after a scant eighteen years is not so significant as a similar circumstance would have been in case of Browning or Tennyson, whose powers

71. Resignation, p. 57.
72. To A Gypsy Child, p. 42.
were far from being as fully developed when they began to write as Arnold's were at the start of his poetical career. None of the three volumes containing collections of new poems which he published after 1849 shows any great improvement in manner or spirit over its predecessors. More conscious attention is given to elegiac subject matter in his later verse, but no new theme or tone is introduced. In some cases, no doubt, he succeeds more completely at carrying certain of his critical principles into practice than he did in the poems of 1849, in others he fails more conspicuously; but, considering the body of his poetry in a general way, this first volume is representative of the whole both in form and in substance.

Dissatisfaction with the unsound criticism of life in the title piece, *Empedocles*, was the main reason for Arnold's withdrawal of his second volume of verse before fifty copies had been sold. In the *Preface to Poems* of 1853 he pointed out the defects of this poem with unexcelled critical ability. It fails as a poetic representation, he maintains, because the situation is painful rather than tragic and "is prolonged, unrelied by incident, hope, or resistance." It is hardly possible to criticize it more justly and aptly than he has done; and the fact that in so doing he laid bare his primary defect as a poet did not deter him. All that he has said of it is true; and to find proof of the validity of his arguments, those critics who would discount his judgment here in order to reflect
greater credit upon his poetical ability have only to turn to such poems as *Self-Dependence*, *Palladium*, and *Religious Isolation*, where the theme of self-sufficiency is treated at no more than proper length, where the effect is, not to pain the reader, but to rejoice and inspire him. It is the most puzzling thing about Arnold's poetical career that, though he realized clearly his most striking fault, he allowed himself to be drawn into it so often. His ideas, no doubt, were always high; but he seems to have lacked resolution to carry them out. He even faltered in regard to *Empedocles*, and reprinted it in 1867 at the request of Robert Browning. This much is certain: his frequent pessimism was not due to a defect in his critical insight; but, probably, the true cause was a moral weakness in him. He saw plainly what the best poetry should be in the way of a criticism of life and in what respects his own work fell short of that; but either because he was unable or because he found it took too great an effort, he failed often to observe his own precepts.

Another maxim stated in the *Preface to Poems*, of 1853 which Arnold failed to observe in *Empedocles* was that a poetic representation should be entirely objective. This rule is generally held to be especially true with regard to dramatic subjects; there more than in any other form of literature a writer is expected to completely efface himself. But it is in his treatment of just this sort of situation that Arnold errs most conspicuously. The undercurrent of thought in *Empedocles* is so
plainly his own that the piece may be described by that very phrase which he uses in the Preface to characterize what he considered to be a low order of poetry, "a true allegory of the state of the writer's own mind." He was drawn to Empedocles, as he was to Senancour and Amiel, by a feeling of kinship with him in his distress. To what extent he was conscious of his disposition to indulge in subjective reflection cannot be definitely determined. In one of his letters he objects against those critics who treated his ideas expressed in Empedocles and Obermann as if they were his thoughts upon somewhat similar questions of the day. If he meant to deny the propriety of the application of what he had written in these poems to modern themes, he may have been justified in his objection. But the fact remains unimpeachable that the thought expressed in them is his own reaction to the circumstances presented, not that of the characters named; and this is nothing more nor less than what he brands in the Preface as a "false practice."

In the composition of his other closet drama, Merope, Arnold evidently was more concerned with form than with content. He set himself deliberately at work to reproduce in English the effects of Greek tragedy. As he explains in a letter to his sister, his method of work was slow and laborious. "I am well in the middle of my Merope, and please myself well, though be-

73. To his mother, Nov. 16, 1867.
74. Preface to Poems, p. 495.
between indolence and nervousness I am a bad worker. What I learn in studying Sophocles for my present purpose is, or seems to me, wonderful; so far exceeding all that one would learn in years' reading of him without such purpose." Doubtless, in a great many particulars of structure and style it suggests its Greek models; but it possesses little of their original vigor, and fails to impress its situations vividly upon a reader's mind as *Samson Agonistes* and *Atalanta in Calydon* do. Considered as a whole, it is a remarkable feat of precise and sustained style; and perhaps one deeply interested in the sort of thing it attempts can detect in it that quality of solidity which Arnold believed it possessed. Certainly, his judgment in regard to the choruses is impartial. "The chorus rhythms are unsatisfactory, I admit, but I do not feel that rhyme would do."

In a letter to Madame du Quaire he also discloses the fact that he was in no wise deluded in regard to the final effect which the poem leaves. He writes there concerning it, "it is calculated rather to inaugurate my Professorship with dignity than to move deeply the present race of humans." In that statement more truth is revealed than a much greater amount of direct criticism could have disclosed.

Of all Arnold's poetry, the narrative poems, *Tristram and Iseult*, *Sorab and Rustum*, and *Balder Read*, offered him the best opportunities for the application of the theories expounded in


76. To John Conington, Professor of Latin at Oxford, May 17, 1865.
The Preface of 1853. Yet he handled the first, a romantic love story, with but slight success. The action, though it contains excellent possibilities, has not been conceived by him with vigor, and it proceeds in a peculiarly halting manner to a feeble close. Moreover, the method of treatment fails to conform with his injunctions, in that it is not entirely objective, but is colored throughout by a deep infusion of his own struggle with intellect against passion. The diction, too, is patchy and does not even remotely suggest the qualities of the grand style. In Sorab and Rustum, however, Arnold has come much nearer to a practical illustration of his critical maxims. The situation is not one belonging to any particular day and age, and it is based soundly upon "the great primary human affections." It is also presented objectively, in simple, elevated, and sustained blank verse, suggestive of both Milton and Homer. As an example of the "grand style simple," nothing in English verse surpasses it. The verse of Balder Read, likewise, is highly admired for its adequacy and perfection. The subject matter of the piece, however, does not appeal to the elementary emotions so strongly as that of Sorab and Rustum does. In regard to choice of situation, method of treatment, and style Arnold has realized to a remarkable extent in these two poems the rules laid down in the Preface. But it is hard to see how either in them or in Tristram and Issuln he has accomplished much in the way

77. Ibid.
78. To Madame du Quaire, Feb. 9, 1858.
of criticism of life.

A large part of Arnold's readers do not find so much to interest them in his more pretentious poems, like Sorab and Rustum and Merope, as in his subjective poetry, which is divorced farthest from his theories both in substance and form. As long as he continued to write verse, he was inclined at times to indulge in the same melancholy and fatalistic attitude towards life as is revealed in his early work. Scattered throughout the later volumes are such poems as Youth's Agitations, World's Triumphs, Destiny, Responsiblity, and Dover Beach, in which he gave way completely to his dejection. As an anodyne for this he continually besought calm, partly in nature, but more often within the self. Such is the lesson of the Buried Life, Worldly Place, and Self Dependence:

"The aids to noble life are all within."

In The Last Word and The Better Part he takes a more manly and courageous attitude towards human existence. The first admonishes the champion of light to persist in his efforts in spite of all discouragements. In the second the thought of Utrumque Paratus is closely paralleled:

"Hath man no second life? Pitch this one high!
Sits there no judge in heaven, our sin to see?
More strictly, the, the inward judge obey!"

80. The Better Part, p. 182.
but there is some of Arnold's poetry that has a genuinely bracing tone. For once, in *A Summer Night* he draws a positive lesson from nature:

"How high a lot to fill,
Is left to each man still."

In *Youth and Calm* he admits, "Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well.", and *Morality*, which is directly reminiscent of *In Harmony with Nature*, he reaches the conclusion that man's striving is a far higher thing than nature's immutable tranquility. At this extreme of his subjective poetry we have an excellent criticism of life, at the other, an almost absolute lack of it. The point at which it begins must always be so entirely a matter of personal judgment that it is useless to consider it here. But the center which all his tendencies surely converge toward or diverge from, is unmistakable,—without doubt, that is quiet resignation.

At first it is somewhat surprising to find Arnold at his best in elegiac verse, exactly where a melancholy temperament is most easily led astray. Nevertheless, no other English writer has produced a body of work in this strain so uniformly excellent as that represented by *The Scholar Gipsy*, *Thyrsis*, *Memorial Verses*, *Stanzas from the Grand Night*, *Heine's Grave*, *Stanzas From the Grand Chartreuse*, the "Obermann" poems, *Westminster Abbey*, and *Rugby Chapel*. Throughout all of these poems a high level of restrained and polished style is preserved. In *Heine's Grave* and *Rugby Chapel* he has succeeded

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well in handling what is perhaps the most difficult of verse forms, irregular and rhymeless meter. The companion pieces \textit{The Scholar Gipsy} and \textit{Thyrsis} mark the high tide of his powers. In them his diction and rhythm are perfectly adapted to the charming serenity of thought and mood. Familiarity with the traditional forms upon which they are based serves only to bring out their beauties more clearly and to convince those who imagined they could detect flaws before that the only thing at fault was their own tastes. \textit{Thyrsis}, though it ranks below \textit{Lycidas} and the pastoral elegies of Theocritus, Moschus, and Bion, holds a firm place in the same class with them. In the "Obermann" poems, the least satisfactory of his elegiac verses, and \textit{Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse} Arnold gives free rein to his personal meditations. To most readers the length to which he indulges his melancholy brooding in the selections commemorating Senancour is wearisome. \textit{The Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse}, however, are more representative of the true Arnold, who could lay aside the strife and uncertainty of the material world and find consolation within himself. \textit{Stanzas from Carnac} and \textit{A Summer Night} were written in memory of his brother. The latter in depth of feeling and beauty of verse is not inferior to any other of his elegiac poetry. But, here, where expression of personal feeling is most excusable, he turns as quickly as possible from contemplation of his particular sorrow to consideration of the problems of human destiny at large.
It is significant that he has showed his greatest strength in effacing himself under the very conditions that make this the most difficult, such as are found in this poem and in Westminster Abbey, and Rugby Chapel. Some of his best criticism of life, too, appears in his elegiac poetry. He fixes his attention, not on death, not on what is lost, not on what can no longer be of good; but on life itself, on the influence that the departed still have upon the living, on the lessons man should draw from witnessing the phenomenon of death. This, certainly, is poetry that is worthy of the high destinies that Arnold has conceived of it; this surely is a profound and noble application of ideas to life; this is poetry which interprets life for us and consoles us, which, "as time goes on, will furnish the race an ever surer and surer stay."

82. The Study of Poetry, p. 5.
SECTION III.

THE APPLICATION OF HIS THEORIES IN HIS PROSE.

During the last twenty years of his life Arnold occupied himself almost exclusively with prose. Yet most of his best work in this line of literary endeavor was done during the same fifteen years in which he produced his finest poetry. His reason for giving up the latter probably was that he felt he was not accomplishing in it what he should in the way of criticism of life. Such poems as Austerity of Poetry, Growing Old, Progress of Poesy, and A Caution To Poets are of aid in answering this question. From his letters, too, it is evident that he always wrote poetry with great effort and that he came to realize he never would have much effect through it upon the mass of humanity. In his prose, however, are found greater range, greater vivacity, greater ease in the application of ideas to life. Hence some critics believe that it will outlast his poetry; others see what they think is of more enduring interest in the record of the fierce struggle of his spirit left in his verse. There is, however, in Arnold's case such a close association between these two branches of literature, that his work in one will probably last as long as it will in the other, and when one is discarded, if that ever happens, the other will go with it.
Arnold's literary criticism, without doubt, is one of the most enduring parts of his prose. Though he may go wrong in matters of detail or even be entirely mistaken in his conclusions, he never fails to impart a lively intellectual stimulus to his readers. The fact that he deduced his critical principles directly from the greatest examples of literature, with which he was thoroughly familiar, prevented him from going far astray. The method which he generally followed in judging a writer's work is also soundly based. It is essentially that which he expounds in *The Study of Poetry*, establishment of the intrinsic worth of a selection by actual comparison with the highest standards. He had, too, the tact which is necessary in the application of this. Occasionally, however, being human, he allowed himself to express an opinion regarding the rank of an author's work founded upon historic or personal grounds. But the greater part of his judgments are unassailable. *On Translating Homer*, *Celtic literature*, the *Preface to Ward's Wordsworth*, *The Function of Criticism*, and *Literary Influence of the Academies*,—all these illustrate his ability to apply the comparative method with excellent results. In the essay on Gray, for once, he gives an estimate that is from the historic viewpoint. Considerable explanation, also, is given to the effect of Philistinism upon Heine and Byron; but, in the end, each of these men is ranked according to his absolute worth in letters. As far as the personal estimate is concerned, Arnold never allowed
himself to over-praise his English contemporaries, as an amusing collection of opinions from his letters made by Professor Dowden shows. Yet his friendship with Sainte Beuve, Renan, and Sherer led him into the expression of some exaggerated and false evaluations. His abortive reviews of Sherer's articles on Milton and Goethe cause one to liken him in his treatment of them to blind Samson, betrayed and shorn of his strength. With Maurice and Eugenie de Guerin, Joubert, Amiel, and Senancour he was frankly pleased; and he neglected to ask himself, as he advised his British contemporary critics to do, whether he had as sufficient reason to be as pleased as he was with them. In regard to Keats and Shelley his taste seems to have been defective; he was equipped with no critical apparatus.

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83. "Tennyson is 'not a great and powerful spirit in any line; with all his 'temperament and artistic skill' he is deficient in intellectual power.' Mrs. Browning is 'hopelessly confirmed in her aberration from health, nature, beauty and truth.' Thackeray is 'not, to my thinking, a great writer.' The mind of Charlotte Bronte 'contains nothing but hunger, rebellion, and rage.' Froude is 'an ardent, learned, and honest man, but he is a ferocious pedant.' Stubbs 'is not ferocious, but not without a dash of pedantry.' Mr. Hutton, of the Spectator, has 'the fault of seeing very far into a millstone.' Bishop Wilberforce has a 'truly emotional spirit', but 'no real power of mind.' Carlyle 'I never liked much. He seemed to me to be carrying coals to Newcastle, as our proverb says; preaching earnestness to a nation that had plenty of it by nature.' Henry Taylor is 'not very interesting; he talks too slow, and is a little pompous.' Victor Hugo is not to be taken 'so prodigiously au serieux' as Renan seems to take him. Swinburne is 'a sort of pseudo-Shelley', with a 'fatal habit of using a hundred words where one would suffice.' Seely is
which could deal adequately with them. It must be remembered, however, concerning the article on Shelley, that in it he was speaking "of his life, not his poetry", and that he promised to treat the latter subject at some other time. Scanning his literary criticism as a whole, this fact can hardly escape notice: when he is dealing with matter closely allied to the classics, he is splendidly equipped for his business as a critic and his judgments are particularly sound and enlightening; but the farther away that the material he handles is from this class of subjects the less able he is to cope with it adequately and the more vulnerable are his opinions.

Arnold's primary aim in all his prose is "to see the object as in itself it really is." His opening procedure in the treatment of a subject is always to strip it entirely of ulterior considerations. What a man does in one line of endeavor, he held, should not be counted for or against him in another. His manner of handling Wordsworth is typical. Everything that might lead to a biased estimate is thrown aside, all of Wordsworth's main defects are pointed out; then his real excellencies are discussed and he is assigned his true rank among English

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lacking in lucidity. Disraeli's speeches are 'heavy pompous pounding', and Gladstone's are 'emotional verbiage'. Lord Salisbury is a 'dangerous man, chiefly from want of any fine sense and experience of literature and its beneficient functions.'"

84. Letters: To Lady de Rothschild, Jan. 4, 1888.
men of letters, which no amount of exaggerated praise could have obtained for him, of which no amount of unjust ridicule can deprive him. In spite of its obvious defects, no one can but admire the "sweet reasonableness" of The Study of Celtic Literature. Though there was much to antagonize him in Byron, he does not fail to appreciate properly that poet's vigor; though there was a great deal that drew him towards the Guérins, Joubert, Amiel, Senancour, and Heine, he does not hesitate to discuss their limitations fairly. His main effort in criticism has been "to know the best that is known and thought in the world", and his success in handling this may be judged from the volume of "the current of true and fresh ideas" which he has created.

The first requisite of a critic who wishes to judge soundly, Arnold often repeated, is disinterestedness. In the practice of this dictum he far surpasses all his English contemporaries; but he falls a little short of the complete detachment of his master in this, Sainte-Beuve. No doubt, anyone acquainted with Arnold's works can point out passages where he asserts rather than effaces himself; but nowhere can they find an English critic who can boast of as much that is of intrinsic worth as is found in On Translating Homer, Celtic Literature, and the first and second series of essays. From his letters it is evident that he was making a sincere effort to "get himself out of the way and let humanity judge." No better nor truer criti-

86. Letters: To his mother, May 24, 1865.
cism has ever been written of his essays on Joubert and the French Eton than this: "I was sure you would be pleased with Joubert, and you say just what I like when you speak of 'handing on the lamp of life' for him. That is just what I wish to do, and it is by doing that that one does good. I can truly say, not that I would rather have the article not mentioned at all than called a brilliant one, but that I would far rather have it said how delightful and interesting a man was Joubert than how brilliant my article is. In the long run one makes enemies by having one's brilliancy and ability praised; one can get oneself really accepted by men by making oneself forgotten in the people and doctrines one recommends. I have had this much before my mind in doing the second part of my French Eton. I really want to persuade on this subject, and I have felt how necessary it was to keep down many and many sharp and telling things that rise to one's lips, and which one would gladly utter if one's object was to show one's abilities."

It must be remembered, too, that Arnold deliberately conceived himself to be a corrective to the English people. He was intensely interested in producing an effect upon them, in rousing them out of their "smug mediocrity" into a more enlightened intellectual atmosphere. He was obliged in his later social and religious criticism to press forward with undue force in the direction towards which he was working, because no other

86. Letters: To his mother, Jan. 22, 1864.
kind of appeal moves to action the class of people at which he was aiming. Though he was greatly concerned with the effect of his writing, he rarely perverted facts in making out his case. He had certain ends in mind which he desired very much to reach, but in his criticism he trusted implicitly to the truth to lead him to them.

Arnold's Cosmopolitan Attitude In Criticism. Arnold enforced no part of his critical theory more firmly by illustrating its practice than his advice to English critics that they should consider other literatures than their own. English criticism, he pointed out, was in his day narrow, "provincial", self-centered. It was largely in an attempt to counteract this that he covered such a wide field of subjects and so many periods of time. He wrote in a letter shortly after publishing the first series of "Essays" in book form: "I hate all over-preponderance of single elements, and all my efforts are directed to enlarge and complete us by bringing in as much as possible of Greek, Latin, and Celtic authors." An attempt to present the range of his material would be little less than a catalogue of all his critical writings. He leads us towards the Greeks in The Modern Element in Literature, On Translating Homer, and A Speech At Eton; towards the Persians in A Persian Passion Play; towards the Romans in Marcus Aurelius; towards the Italians in Dante and

87. Letters: To his mother, Jan. 21, 1865.
Beatrice and On Translating Homer; towards the Jews in Springs and The Bible; towards the Celts in Celtic Literature; towards the Russians in Tolstoi; towards the Germans in Heine and A French Critic on Goethe; towards the French in Maurice de Guérin, Eugénie de Guérin, Joubert, Amiel, Obermann, George Sand, Sherer's essays on Milton and Goethe, and Sainte-Beuve; and towards the Americans by Emerson. This list is not intended to be complete; but it is sufficient proof of the success of a determined endeavor to find out and present "the best that is known and thought in the world."

Arnold's prose at its best combines clearness and force as subtly as any writing in English; but it can hardly be said to fulfill the conditions which he lays down for "prose of centre", "regularity, uniformity, precision, balance." Obvious mannerisms and affectations mar a great deal of it. His occasionally flippant tone and his propensity towards the repetition of words and phrases have always drawn the fire of critics. Some excuse for the latter trick may be found in the fact that he was consciously trying to fix certain expressions in his readers' mind and to give them currency in speech. In a letter to his mother he has this to say of his style: "My sinuous, easy, unpolemical mode of proceeding has been adopted by me first because I really think it is the best way of proceeding if one wants to get at, and keep with, truth; secondly, because I am convinced only by a literary form of this kind being given to them can ideas
such as mine ever gain any access in a country such as ours."

But when he allows himself to repeat "in as much as" four times within the extent of six lines, he convicts himself of an undeniable fault. Some of his own writing, too, especially where he is handling social and religious matters, has "a distinct note of provinciality." Not only, as he says, his Spinoza essay, but also considerable more of his work "has too much of the brassiness and smartness of a Times article in it." There are, however, qualities in Arnold's style which more than compensate for its shortcomings as "prose of centre". In The Study of Celtic Literature he has given a definition of style which admirably describes his own, "a peculiar recasting and heightening, under a certain condition of spiritual excitement, of what a man has to say, in such a manner as to add dignity and distinction to it." Many writers in English have attained greater "regularity, uniformity, precision, balance" in their prose than Arnold has, but few have stated their ideas in a way that has appealed more strongly to their readers.

The main value of Arnold's prose arises from its ennobling criticism of life. This is the quality that makes it possible for the layman unable to make out a single sentence of Greek to read the lectures on the translation of Homer with

89. Letters: To his mother, Nov. 19, 1863.
90. The Study of Celtic Literature, p. 106.
both pleasure and profit. It is this that gives the abiding charm to the greater part of his essays. Every one at once recognizes in them the force of a noble and profound application of ideas to life, especially in such pieces as Marcus Aurelius, Pagan And Mediaeval, Religious Sentiment, Literature and Science, and The Function of Criticism. It's a keen intellect found its best medium in prose; there it was not fettered by his melancholy temperament, which affects much of his poetry. To compose in verse was nerve-racking drudgery for him and a task that he had to force upon himself, but the writing of his essays always proved to be "a labor of love". As a result, the latter exhibit greater spontaneity and vigor and appeal more to readers in their commoner moods. They set forth things in a clear, undazzling light, whereas his poetry illuminates the darkness like a single bright shaft. If he does not see life as steadily and intently in his prose, he certainly sees it more wholly there.
Among English critics Arnold stands without a rival. Coleridge alone can match him in genius and equipment; none can boast of a body of critical doctrine of greater individuality. His criticism is not, like Lamb's and Hazlitt's, based upon personal taste; it is not, like Addison's, founded upon classical precepts. He follows Aristotle's method of deducing rules from the observation of examples, yet he reaches conclusions entirely his own. The precision and exactness of a scientifically constructed system are not distinguishing traits of his work, but beneath its surface a framework of sound principles is discernible. The Westminster Review for October 1863 pleased him greatly by making this comment upon his critical ability: "Professor Arnold is confident without being self-willed, and bold without being paradoxical." To-day, after more than fifty years, the truth of that statement is unimpeachable. Coupled with the general soundness of his ideas it goes a long way towards explaining his preeminence among English critics.

Arnold is one of the few men who have succeeded both as a critic and a poet. His criticism, however, unlike that of many who have claimed this twofold distinction, is not a mere apology for his creative work. (He deduced his principles from
the best examples of literature at hand; and in much of his practice, if he was not trying to follow these rules directly, he was, at least, seeking to emulate the models from which they were derived. Yet it cannot be said a great part of his work measures up to his own standards. In some cases, especially in regard to his poetry, he set his aims too high and argued for those qualities which only a very few in the entire field of literature have succeeded in giving to their writings; at other times, being human, he wrote what was opposed to his ideals. There is much, however, in what he produced that agrees with the precepts which he laid down in his critical writings. His poetry probably accords with them more in the matter of style, his prose in the matter of content. But his place in English letters is due in the main to his creative ability both as a poet and as a prose writer, and he would have been a commanding figure in either field, had he never penned a single axion of literary criticism. Yet the fact that he attempted to follow certain definite ideals in his practice gives his work an atmosphere of derived earnestness, and makes it of especial interest to all who are concerned with literature for its own sake.

Arnold's most vital effect upon English letters is the guidance and stimulus which he has given to later writers. Hardly a poet, hardly a prose writer, certainly no critic, of today, but owes him something. He felt it his duty, partly by
The virtue of his Professorship of Poetry at Oxford, to instruct the entire English speaking people in literary matters. So well did he accomplish his purpose that the force of his teaching has increased rather than abated since his death. The breadth of his literary acquaintance, his keen appreciation of the materials he handled, the high tone of his ideas, and the sustained excellence of all his work are among the foremost factors that contribute to his influence. But the most significant force which he exerts upon English thought and literature is the intellectual stimulus which he affords in both his prose and his poetry.
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