

Matthew Arnold: "The Dandy Isaiah"

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Arnold, in some ways the most interesting of the Victorians, held by ancient loyalties despite his liberal associations.

IT WAS A Tuesday evening in May, 1848, and the young man in the library of Lansdowne House took note that it was a quarter past six. Lord Lansdowne had not yet returned from his Parliamentary duties as Lord President of the Council, but he had told his private secretary not to wait for him. So another fifteen minutes and the dour-faced young dandy would be off. At twenty-five, with the equipment of Rugby and Oxford behind him, life had much to offer, and he had already learnt to savour it without wasting time. He had poetry in him, and spring was once more visiting the earth: happy the man who could observe it from the well-bred quiet of a great house. In such a mood, resting a book on his knee, he took a sheet of paper and captured the moment by penning a letter to his sister Jane. "It is beginning to grow dusk," he wrote, "but it has been a sweet day, with sun and a playing wind and a softly broken sky. The crocuses, which have long starred the lawn in front of the windows, growing like daisies out of the turf, have nearly vanished, but the lilacs that border the court are thrusting their leaves out to make amends.

*"The clouds of sickness cast no stain
upon*

*Her valleys and blue hills:
The Doubt, that assails all things,
never won*

This faithful impulse of unfaithful wills.

"It gets more and more gray and indistinct, and the musical clock behind me is quickening its pace in preparation for its half-hour peal; I shut this up and go¹."

What are we to think of such a vignette of the setting in which Matthew Arnold found himself during that revolutionary year? Lansdowne House obviously had an atmosphere which appealed to him; for he described it, with its great windows looking out on to the lawn and these same crocuses, in another letter addressed to his brother Tom in February. The musical clock ticking away behind him is particularly mentioned in both letters. Perhaps the pulse of current life is most felt in a dreamy building of an earlier age. It was here, in this "backstanding, lordly mansion," that the sounds of London reached him—deferentially almost—bringing from the square and the neighbouring streets hot rumours of the menacing political world.

The voice of a newsboy reminded him that the '48 revolution was seething in France. He passed the porter, pacing civilly to and fro in the hall, as he went out to buy a paper and see for himself the latest report from Paris . . .

The sister who received the letter—a fine character, herself an accomplished scholar and a little older than Matt—had her suspicions that the dear boy might not altogether be benefiting from the society of the great. For the daughters of Dr. Arnold continued (as Mrs. Humphry Ward has told us) to move within that severer orbit of the Westmorland household at Fox How—with “its strong religious atmosphere, its daily psalms and lessons”—where their widowed mother presided over the family destinies of the four of them, as well as her five sons, in a sweet vein of old-fashioned tact and tenderness which never lost its touch². Matthew, so far, had remained loyal to the Christian claims of that home tradition. But was there not in him, as in none of the others, a worldly streak that might respond unpredictably to the hazards and complications of a more polished sphere? This very letter has, in truth, an enigmatic ring about it. Along with its spontaneous delight in spring flowers and skies does there not go a certain suggestion of pose, as though our promising young secretary were desirous to impress? And what particularly does he mean by bringing in those lines about “the Doubt that assails all things?”

In the light of that volume of verses with which in the following year he first came before the world seriously as a poet, the conscience of the family might well smite them, as it then did, for entertaining such ungenerous forebodings³. Nor need posterity ever question the fundamental goodness of Matthew Arnold's heart. We may safely say—with the evidence of *Rugby Chapel*, and much more in the letters, to go upon—that there was about him from the start a large fund of moral seriousness, bound up with reverent admiration for the

Headmaster who was his father, and that this would always be likely to save him from the pitfalls of literary ambition and early success. The way he emerges in the *Letters* as a devoted husband and father is quite delightful. One year, in the midst of his school inspecting, they are all at Ramsgate “with pails and spades at work on the sand, picking shells, gathering daisies . . . in the fields at the top of the cliff, riding on donkeys, or going in a boat in the harbour and just outside⁴.” Another time it is August, and he is having his photograph taken with the family at Llandudno (where “they charge extra for children of that age”)⁵. Again, on a visit to Oxford, before dressing to dine at the high table at Balliol, we find him amusing his boys on the river, pulling little Tom along in a boat while Dicky paddled himself in a canoe⁶.

Life saw him, when he was an established author, much lionized in circles which he first entered in a junior capacity in connexion with Lord Lansdowne at Bowood, and later became familiar with under the more personal patronage of the Rothschilds. From Aston Clinton he moved about as the honoured guest of Lord Lytton at Knebworth, Lady Meyer at Hampden, Lord Derby at Knowsley, and so forth. But though it flattered him to be held in sophisticated conversation by Disraeli, or entertained by the Lovelaces and Aberdares, there can be little doubt that he meant it when he called country-house visiting the parent of idleness. Whatever his vanity—and no-one more loved to win literary praise—this son of the great Dr. Arnold never allowed social considerations to come between him and his life's work. Thus, on one particular occasion, after a splendid dinner with dancing, he stayed conversing with Lady de Rothschild; but he breakfasted next morning in his own room, was off in her Viennese carriage to the station at a quarter past eight, and arrived for work in a school at Covent Garden by ten. “These occasional appear-

ances in the world I like—no, I do not like them, but they do one good, and one learns something from them; but, as a general rule, I agree with all the men of soul from Pythagoras to Byron in thinking that this type of society is the most drying, wasting, depressing and fatal thing possible.”⁷

None can question that, morally, Matthew Arnold always kept his head. But is it not conceivable that he retained in fact a certain element of the poseur, innocent enough to begin with, which landed him psychologically in a loss of integrity different in kind from that which his sisters had feared? He had a strange flair for pursuing a number of unexpected if not incompatible lines at once. As we have just seen, it pleased him to combine the prosaic routine of his job with a gratifying suggestion of sparkle from the *beau monde*. Certainly he kept his ear all the while, literally and metaphorically, upon the quick pace of the musical clock behind him. But the fact remains that, while never deviating from the path of duty, he liked to feel socially mobile. Nor was this a passing trait of his early period. Even when he had achieved a secure place as the most decorous of Victorian prophets, he liked to display a dash of the improbable in the cut of his dress and style of hair. Meredith dubbed him shrewdly, the “Dandy Isaiah.” No doubt there is a thrill in being able to drive a six-in-hand through life and always run to schedule. But there are graver risks when, to the desire of feeling socially versatile, there is added the taste for being morally the dutiful son and intellectually the man about town. Matthew Arnold arrived at maturity with spectacular achievements to shew in several quite exacting fields. It is a nice question whether he did not, with all his greatness, suffer from the effects of mental flirtatiousness and so come to be more misunderstood than he need have been.

Does his biography, considered in rapid outline, bear out this suggestion? At home

and at school, as is well-known, Providence had placed him all the time under the benevolent but overpowering lordship of an admirable father. A first taste of gaiety awaited him, however, at Oxford. In the liberating company of a band of youthful “exquisites,” whose modes of dress and discussion might have pained Dr. Arnold somewhat, Matthew breathed—as only a poet can breathe—the revolutionary tang that was in the air. From France came the challenge of Lamennais and George Sand, with the German figure of Goethe looming historically behind as the recognized mountain peak from which advanced thought in Europe had somehow to get its bearings. In England, here at hand, was Newman serving to provide a romantic stimulus even for those who did not succumb to his Tractarian appeal. The bitter-sweet experience of religious doubt was something Matthew Arnold fed upon in company with his fellow-poet, Clough, who resigned an Oriel fellowship a little later because of it. Such minds were not satisfied with what the ecclesiastics in England had to say about religion or with what English thought generally had then to shew. In May, 1848, Clough was in Paris to see the pocket revolution at first hand, and Arnold’s poem *To a Republican Friend* appeared the same year. But it is significant that Dr. Arnold’s son, for all his Liberal sympathies, never toyed—as Clough of the *Dipsychus* had the instinct to toy—with outright paganism. He could consort with the academic vanguard of emancipated ideals and wear voguish clothes, but not for an instant must his moral outlook give way to the least mood of unguarded fun. He was soon to be teaching classics to the fifth form back at his father’s old school. And if that did not last long, neither did his three or four years in London—tantalizing as *the prospects may have appeared*—lift him for more than an interval out of the didactic path.

Indeed, from a literary point of view, the die seemed to be cast rather awkwardly

for Matthew Arnold. In 1851, when Palmerston fell, his secretaryship came to an end and Lord Lansdowne appointed him to an inspectorship of schools. Anything less bohemian, or less conducive to poetry, can scarcely be imagined. Yet, was the move essentially out of character with the man? In accepting a post which entailed thirty years' exacting toil, often of a routine and desiccating kind, he shouldered a duty imposed upon him by the Arnold tradition. The educational mission of the father was continued, by conviction, in the life-work of his son. Could not the Liberal, no less than the Christian, take satisfaction in the fact that, whereas Thomas Arnold's vocation was with scions of the governing class, Matthew laboured to bring an emancipating purpose to bear upon the masses whose fate was to attend elementary schools? But the friend of Clough had in him a spirit which was to make much more of the work than a sort of altruistic exercise in slumming. It is evidence of genius allied with character that the burdens of officialdom never depressed Matthew Arnold from his high standard as a man of letters. His direct aspiration, however—once he knew the facts—was to be not an official cypher but the architect of a new national system of education. There was an indirect literary result because his determination involved him in what can only be regarded as a bold and brilliant subversive campaign of writing. While working as the subordinate of Robert Lowe, he made it his business by means of lectures and articles to overthrow that Minister's policy of providing the nation's schools with a cheap scheme of instruction in lieu of any genuine attempt at education.

The legislative result which was ultimately achieved is rightly acclaimed as the victory of vision and morality over the forces of political cynicism. But, apart from this practical outcome, the expression of Matthew Arnold's mind in the course of the struggle is worth noticing. Despite that urbanity of style which he maintained in

the controversy, he seems to have been stung into taking the line he did. Obtuseness of the national outlook, by rousing him to militant effort on behalf of a cause which he felt strongly at heart, has had the result of letting posterity see the prowess of his pen in a new medium. In 1865, two years before his poetic powers were still able to produce *Thyrsis*, he sounded the note of a new and peculiar sort of prophecy in his essay, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." So the gage was thrown down. Having entered the arena of general controversy, he was soon drawn into a full-scale battle with "Philistinism": to meet the volleys of retort which were directed upon him he shewed the calibre of his guns in *Culture and Anarchy* and enunciated therein the famous doctrine of "sweetness and light." Matters were henceforth set for a course of expository development which gradually unfolded as a pattern of personal declaration. It began as a protest of temperament. The harshness and smugness of British Nonconformity, which Arnold met on school committees everywhere he travelled, was something abhorrent to a cultivated Anglican of the Oxford tradition. The much-quoted passage, which describes that venerable city as "spreading her gardens in the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age⁸," is patently a tribute to the sort of spiritual allegiance which Newman—speaking as a clergyman in a still clerically-minded university—was able to evoke in minds which had already declared for rationalism. Dissenters had not always realized the sacredness of some of those things which may be too lightly dismissed as "lost causes." As the argument developed, however, Arnold's strictures were seen to be aimed not only at chapel stewards but also against the educated Englishman who felt himself capable of giving a not unworthy account of his nation's greatness. What, he seemed to say in *Essays in Criticism*, what was British literature compared with the world of letters?

Instead of being so smug and provincial, take a look at some of these foreigners you have scarcely heard of—Maurice and Eugénie de Guérin, Heine and Joubert. In fact, why not forget the Christian achievement for a while and see what the orientals and the old pagans can teach? This was not merely a sort of literary eclecticism. Behind the idea was a view of life: everything must be judged by the standards of those cultivated persons who are qualified to assess "the best that is known and thought in the world." Here was something calculated to clash not only with crude patriotism but also with the claims which theology had always made to stand supreme in the rôle of passing judgment. So the prophet of culture, having begun to preach a sort of literary cosmopolitanism, found himself in the end enunciating principles which cut violently across the accepted religious beliefs of his countrymen in general. The appearance of *Literature and Dogma* in 1873 marked the stage when most educated members of the Church of England, no less than his original victims, had come to resent the sterilized suavity of a critic so exclusively and devastatingly moral. What shall we say then? Was it that Arnold, true to the principles he had imbibed from Continental rationalism, stood finally revealed as merely the latest Victorian exponent of the anti-Christian movement? Another Voltaire?

To think so would be to do him an injustice and to overlook some significant facts revealed in his letters. In the absence of an adequate biography, this correspondence deserves, indeed, more careful analysis than it has yet received. There are two matters at least in which Matthew Arnold has been misunderstood; and in one of them, as it seems, he misunderstood himself. He is thought to have been a typical Liberal, and he went amongst men as a "good European." But there was something in the roots of his being which makes a travesty of both those positions. And that something was a kind of Virgilian

piety. That he was essentially filial is well-known. But, besides being sustained in his educational mission by the impressions he received from his father at Laleham and Rugby, he carried with him an almost religious devotion to the continuing influence of home, principally symbolized at Fox How. His life was strung, more than ordinarily, upon the thread of family correspondence. Friends had a place in that chain of personal reports, but it was a minor place compared with mother and wife and sisters and children. The aura of devotion spreads beyond kith and kin to domestic servants and pets in a way which renders Matthew Arnold specially attractive to the modern reader. When he was abroad, there came before him an image of the gamekeeper up in Rydal Head or by the Rotha—"dear old Banks . . . with his brown velveteen coat and fishing-rod and fine sagacious face⁹." He shewed a fascinated affection for his dog Max and for Toss, the Persian cat that used to look for him in bed¹⁰. The whole of a most touching letter to his wife is concerned with the tender burial of an aged pony, Lola, for whom he—away in Munich at the time—was forced to tears¹¹. Through all vicissitudes, however, the one letter which he never omitted any week in his life was that to his mother, till her death in 1873. Never was such a bond of family; but it is Mrs. Arnold, spending her long widowhood in the old home in Westmorland, who is the sacred symbol and centre of it.

The Virgilian cast of heart, to which we have referred, is specially seen in Matthew Arnold's intense love of the English landscape. Evidence of this is by no means confined to what *The Scholar-Gipsy* has fixed for us in poetic form. In May, 1861, a characteristic letter discovers him in Berkshire, taking a train at half-past seven in the morning to enjoy a walk through the White Horse Vale, with the line of the downs duly noted and the villages clustered with elms. "Presently I am going to my old haunts in the Cumner hills," he writes from

Oxford, "and shall come back with plenty of orchises and blue-bells. I left Wantage at half-past twelve, and am back here by two, having had a biscuit and some mulled claret at Didcot¹²." His botanical passion for flowers and trees had no national bounds, as can be seen in the rapturous accounts of what they shewed him during his second American tour¹³. But running streams were an English feature so dear to him that—apart from Scotland and its wild mountain rivers—no other country could ever provide scenery to satisfy him for long. He could exult in the country views of Italy with cypresses on every height and its pell-mell of olive, vine, fig and mulberry on a journey to Florence; but the dry water-courses of the Apennines were a positive pain to him in the end, and he longed for the rivers and brooks of his own land¹⁴.

If he had desired any compensation for becoming an inspector of schools, it was suitably bestowed in the opportunities which the work gave him of coming across places and various sorts of people he might not have seen. He would travel mostly by train, but sometimes he had to walk the final part of a journey or get a lift by wagonette¹⁵. Once, on the borders of Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Essex, he writes—"could get nothing but a taxed cart and pony and a half-drunk cripple to drive—six miles by cross-country roads to Boxford¹⁶." Another time he spent an October day in Shropshire with only a bun for luncheon after a cold wet ride on the top of a horse omnibus¹⁷. At Evesham he sat in the class-room of a girls' school and, while the pupils and teacher were at work, wrote to his mother: "I wish you could look out of the window with me and see our dear old friend, the Avon, here a large river, and the Cotswolds bounding the plain, and the plain itself one garden¹⁸ . . ." Arnold's scope for such observations was increased in another way. By marrying the daughter of a judge he was enabled to act as marshal to his father-in-law and ride with him

on circuit¹⁹. So for twelve years—till Sir William Wightman died suddenly in the midst of his judicial duties at York—Arnold found hospitality in the customary style which county towns provided, and still provide, so colourfully for Her Majesty's justices of assize. Thus he came to be perched in the court at Maidstone, writing home to tell of the lovely surrounding country and the Medway in flood²⁰. Again it is Hertford, and they are lodged in the Castle; but, despite the activity of inspecting schools in the district and rushing back to see the Grand Jury sworn, there is (as always) time to put pen to paper and report about violets in the lanes. "Tomorrow I shall return to London, whether the Judge has finished here or not, but in the morning before I start I shall try hard to get into the copses towards Panshanger along the side of the river Mimram²¹." A December visit to Durham for the winter assizes there gave him great satisfaction, for he found the little city, looking from the Castle down its steep hill, "very grand and Edinburghesque." After crossing the Wear by Prebends Bridge and climbing through the wooded banks, he got a glimpse of the Cathedral, such that "even Oxford has no view to compare with it." His only disappointment was that the Dean, celebrated for princely hospitality but having been kept waiting by two judges on a previous occasion, did not invite them to dinner²². But the favourite region for Matthew Arnold was East Anglia, and he rated Norwich—where he attended the Cathedral three times in three days to enjoy the music of the service—the finest of those old cities which retain the air of a provincial capital . . .²³. Such topographical accounts may not equal Cobbett's *Rural Rides* for vigour of comment, but they remind us very convincingly that here, besides a school inspector and a critic, we have a man who really knew and loved England.

Whence then came the reputation that he was a despiser of his own country and countrymen? It derived, without doubt,

from his anxiety to be always lecturing them. He became, in the course of his cultural campaigning, eaten up with that jealousy for his pupils' success which is a mark of the schoolmaster. In this case, of course, it was his nation which constituted the pupils. He feared lest those upon whom so much had been bestowed should fall behind other nations. "I have a conviction," he wrote in 1865, "that there is a real, an almost imminent danger of England losing immeasurably in all ways, declining into a sort of greater Holland, for want of what I still call ideas. . . . This conviction haunts me, and at times even overwhelms me with depression; I would rather not live to see the change come to pass, for we shall all deteriorate under it. While there is time I will do all I can, and in every way, to prevent its coming to pass²⁴." It was a noble concern; but it is not surprising that, as the chief purveyor of home truths to Englishmen, he drew upon himself Herbert Spencer's charge of having an "anti-patriotic bias." He was, in fact, in somewhat the same ironical position as the leaders of the Oxford Movement had been when their very zeal for the Church which they loved caused them to be regarded as its enemies. The censorious spirit so evident in Matthew Arnold was due to his patriotism. It was for that reason that he assumed the office—as Richard Garnett put it—of "detector-general of the intellectual failings of his own nation."

The Tractarians, who were so self-consciously English, actually represented a religious force which was anything but nationalistic in essence. It was the reverse with the author of *Culture and Anarchy*. We find him, indeed, reading Coleridge's *Life of Keble* and thanking God for "papa's immense superiority to all the set" in the Oxford Movement because he was above their narrow concern for a domestic issue²⁵. And if Dr. Arnold was a man of European outlook, how much more so must his enlightened son have been, nurtured upon George Sand and Goethe and all that

those two beacons of the wider culture had led him to?

Never, probably, did he feel so sure of this as in the spring of 1865, when he was commissioned by the government to make an eight months' tour of the Continent in order to study the educational systems of other States. The prospect for him was certainly congenial, for there still lurked the dandy within the educationist. He left the shores of England conscious of being very much a citizen of the world. To trace his reactions from country to country is, however, most revealing. The letters start, of course, from France, where he notes after pacing the Tuileries that, as Europe gets richer and richer, so Paris will be seen more and more as the capital of Europe²⁶. But soon the itch to measure and compare all men in the Arnoldine scale is at work, and the much-bruited deficiencies of the British character begin to fade, ever so slightly, as the critic sees Frenchmen at close quarters. "Heaven forbid that the English nation should become like this nation; but Heaven forbid also that it should remain as it is. If it does, it will be beaten by America on its own line, and by the Continental nations on the European line²⁷." France, he comes to fear, is as much without the grand air as England; but he looks for better things in Italy and Germany . . . Once over the Alps, he is enraptured—as who is not?—by all the sights and associations of glory. But then it comes once more to be an assessing of peoples. The Italians are distinguished amongst all Europeans by their scientific intellect on 24 May, but on 21 June he had come round regretfully to "papa's feeling about the Italians, and I cannot but think this a fair-weather kingdom²⁸." Send in 80,000 French, English or Germans, and they would overrun the land in three months without opposition! Refinement, it appears, is not everything. "My opinion of the Italians," concludes our European traveller the following day, "from all I have seen of them, is very unfavourable²⁹."

Next come Lake Como and the magnificent Alpine valleys; but the Swiss, alas, are the "most bourgeois of nations³⁰." (His poor opinion of Holland had been registered on a previous tour, and as for the Belgians, they were "on the whole, the most contemptible people in Europe"³¹). Need we ask about Germany? Visiting there is a waste of time, "partly because the Germans, with their hideousness and commonness, are no relief to one's spirit but rather depress it³²." So the apostle of culture, beginning his grand tour with high hopes of the European mind, shrinks progressively down to the everyday stature of an incurable Anglo-Saxon. "All I see abroad makes me fonder of England, and yet more and more convinced of the general truth³³ . . ." etc.

The fact is that Matthew Arnold over the course of his busy life travelled a good deal on the Continent and was far better qualified than most to absorb the significance of much that he saw. His official journeys in 1859 and 1865, when he was compiling data about schools, bore fruit in reports which must always do him credit in the cause which he served so well. But the incidental reactions, which we have noted, go to endorse a suspicion that he approached his cultural mission in general with the sort of outlook we should expect in a young military attaché. Leaving aside, in his case, brute survival as a motive, it always seemed to be implied that there was a competition in progress with a sort of international prize-giving arranged to take place at the end of time. A single but revealing remark must suffice to illustrate what we mean. He would be sorry, he says in a letter to old Mrs. Arnold, to be anything but an Englishman; "but I know that this native instinct which other nations, too, have does not prove one's superiority, but that one has to achieve this by undeniable excellent performance³⁴." The inference here that some nation is going to dominate—and that if he can have his way it shall be England—seems to have

been a pre-occupying motive in Matthew Arnold's life, and one which it never occurred to him to question.

Now if his cosmopolitanism was more apparent than fundamental and if, as we have suggested, it disguised a special form of patriotic anxiety, there is equal reason to question another aspect of him which would be puzzling if we accepted it at its face value. To be precise, the Liberalism with which Arnold is associated needs some scrutiny. Politically, we know, his affection for the party of that name was not great. "Neither Liberal nor Conservative Governments," he wrote in 1866, "will do for the nation what it most wants; but perhaps a Liberal Government flatters and foments most of its worst faults³⁵"; and eight years later he reminded Lady de Rothschild that Liberalism did not seem to him "quite the beautiful and admirable thing" which the party in general supposed it³⁶. In the wider sense, too, he could not help detesting that "middle-class Liberalism"—part political, part commercial, part sectarian, but in every aspect quantitative and vulgar—which had been the basic enemy when Newman came to bring light into the world. In the same breath that he declares this, however, he mentions that "other and more intelligent forces" were opposed to that famous revival of religious devotion and doctrine³⁷. Whatever his sentiment for the tone of the Oxford Movement, Arnold had certainly ranged himself with those intellectual forces which went about to supersede it. If he himself is called a Liberal, therefore, he deserves the label not for political reasons but because it was in theology rather than anything else that he took up a position which Newman—and many who did not go with Newman to Rome—would have abhorred.

Yet his alignment with Stanley against dogmatic Christianity raises another problem. Since he was not by nature impious, what was his motive in striving so earnestly to dilute the Faith almost to the point of abolishing it altogether? Not philosophical

Liberalism, but simply this: he wanted to save Christian morality and with it, as a natural inheritance, those cultural institutions of Christianity which had become part of civilized life. In his view it would still be a public advantage to have "a Church which is historical as the State itself is historical, and whose order, ceremonies, and monuments reach, like those of the State, far beyond any fancies and devisings of ours³⁸." His position was avowedly that of the outwardly Anglican man, in favour of continuing the Establishment, but for whom rationalism had destroyed any belief in the supernatural. Creeds and formularies were henceforth, he would say, an anachronism which—with the spread of education—could only serve to alienate people from that core of moral teaching which was the abiding element in the Gospel, and which would remain a natural and vital need for the human race³⁹. Putting it another way, because the essentials were social and humane, not metaphysical, the practical thing was to preserve men's respect for Christian principles of conduct, and also keep them embraced, for the community's sake, within the national Church. For there lay, embodied in the Anglican settlement, rich and tolerant traditions too precious to be dissipated in the course of a merely theological crisis. Understood in these terms, Matthew Arnold's mission—in the field of ideas as in the field of administrative education—was to refine in order to preserve. It was the grand purpose of his father more fully deployed. For the Liberalism of the Arnolds can be taken to be always a means to an end; and for that reason it may be doubted whether they were true Liberals at all. Theirs ultimately was not a doctrine of individualism, looking towards the removal of all arbitrary restraints; rather it was the vision of a readjusted community, strongly but sweetly held together by perpetuating in itself the essential features of a Christian civilization.

Yet there is a notable difference between

father and son. Thomas Arnold was a religious man who thought it necessary to loosen up the parts in order to retain the whole. Matthew Arnold felt that there was much more to jettison than his father's generation had been prepared to forgo⁴⁰. For he was no longer religious in the orthodox sense but a man in whose sensitive heart the natural pieties had to supply the place of religion. On the basis of accepting and championing—and in his own life seeking honourably to fulfil—the moral teachings of Jesus, he paid the homage which his filial nature owed to the home and the Church which had given him the dearest things on earth. The obligations of a religious upbringing, which are so touchingly evident in Carlyle's letters to his Presbyterian mother in Scotland, operated upon this son of an English parsonage in a much more subtle way. The reader will look in vain for any trace of interior struggle in the letters which he wrote to his family. The bonds of affection were maintained, and every bit of progress towards the attainment of his practical ideals was duly reported. But no questions were asked—on either side, it seems—about religious sanctions and motives. At some unrecorded moment, faith had apparently been exchanged for a sunny form of rationalism without a pang⁴¹. Skepticism left, perhaps, no sense of emptiness in a life where the traditions of domestic love and the interests of the high Arnoldine vocation were so warm and active.

Religion had gone; but obligation remained. It is significant that Matthew Arnold tolerated but never quite approved of Harriet Martineau. In him the rejection of orthodoxy was not allowed to upset the life of balanced decorum. The reasons which, as we have seen, gave conformity a respectable place within his proclaimed version of nineteenth-century Christianity, tallied with the personal factors which made him in private life so amiable a conformist. As a pro-Christian he went on studying the Bible with profound and scholarly atten-

tion. As a pro-Anglican he continued quite sincerely to go to church and be, in his own quiet way, a champion of the clergy. May it not be that his very Liberalism was always pro-Conservative in intention because—like the rest of his intellectual position—it was psychologically contained within the framework of certain old and simple loyalties?

1. *Letters of Matthew Arnold* [ed. G. W. E. Russell (1901) 2 vols.] I, 9.
2. Mrs. Humphrey Ward, *A Writer's Recollections* (1918) 37 ff.
3. *Ibid.* 42.
4. *Letters* I 220.
5. *Letters* I 275.
6. *Letters* I 424.
7. *Letters* I 262.
8. Preface to *Essays in Criticism*.
9. *Letters* I 343.
10. *Letters* II 31, 74, 376 etc.
11. *Letters* II 371.
12. *Letters* I 156.
13. *Letters* II 387, 389, 396-8.
14. *Letters* I 323.
15. *Letters* I 267.

16. *Letters* I 268.
17. *Letters* I 43.
18. *Letters* I 49.
19. *Letters* I 52, 154, 427.
20. *Letters* I 189-190.
21. *Letters* I 214-215.
22. *Letters* I 179.
23. *Letters* I 163.
24. *Letters* I 360.
25. *Letters* II 5.
26. *Letters* I 296.
27. *Letters* I 305.
28. *Letters* I 313, 325.
29. *Letters* I 329.
30. *Letters* I 335.
31. *Letters* I 108.
32. *Letters* I 349.
33. *Letters* I 340.
34. *Letters* I 372.
35. *Letters* I 388.
36. *Letters* II 131.
37. *Culture and Anarchy* [ed. J. Dover Wilson (1950)] p. 62.
38. *Culture and Anarchy* 15 (cf. *Letters* II 151).
39. *Literature and Dogma* (1886 edn.) Preface and Ch. XII.
40. *Letters* II 23-24, 147.
41. For the nearest approach to a recorded confession of his position, see *Letters* II, 139.

Alien in the Rye

ALBERT FOWLER

The modern American disciples of Rousseau in fiction adhere to the delusion that man is naturally good and society naturally evil.

J. D. SALINGER'S PICTURE of man sickened by society reflects the idea propounded by Rousseau and the disciples of naturalism of the individual born good and corrupted by his institutions. Both in the novel *The Catcher in the Rye* and in the stories like *For Esme—with Love and Squalor* he shows an adolescent trailing clouds of childhood and very much at odds with the world. The argument that Salinger has inherited from a long tradition of writers is that nature is norm and ideal, civilization the alien and

warping form imposed against the grain. Many have been the voices raised in support of this theme, and none more significant for the present century than that of Sigmund Freud who said: "My secret conclusion was: since we can only regard the highest civilization of the present as disfigured by a gigantic hypocrisy it follows that we are organically unfit for it."

The cause of the alienation is placed at the doors of schools, churches, business houses, government bureaus. They are charged with thwarting human aspira-