

THE WOUNDS OF A FRIEND.

Now that the effervescence caused by Mr. Matthew Arnold's article on "Civilization in the United States" has greatly subsided, it may be worth while to make an attempt to estimate the value of his criticisms and suggestions. And this is important not only because everything which concerns our great neighbours can be of scarcely secondary interest to ourselves; but also because a great deal of what Mr Arnold says has no less bearing upon Canada than upon the United States.

"To see ourselves as others see us," if only for a moment, is an inestimable benefit for a man or for a community, if only they are at all willing to profit by the knowledge thus attained; and it is the business of those who contribute to the guidance of public opinion and action to draw attention to whatever may be wrong or defective in our civilization, in our method of education, in our manner of life—in all which goes to the making up of national character and national life.

It is the misery of democracies that they are ever exposed to the self-interested adulation of demagogues. We fancy that, with our improved methods of government, we are pretty sure of getting at the truth about ourselves, and being delivered from the blindness which has always characterised despotisms and autocracies; we could hardly commit a greater mistake. King Mob no more likes the truth than any other sovereign. It is at their peril that his servants tell him the truth; for in doing so they will meet with very much the same treatment as a candid courtier would have received from an autocrat surrounded by flatterers.

Let us dwell on this for a moment. It is said, over and over again, that we are to a great extent governed by humbug. Carlyle spent a great deal of that speech which he declared to be "silvern," in testifying that we were being humbugged by ourselves and others, and that we were so, because we wanted to be so. Lord Tennyson, although in a gentler manner, has told us very much the same thing. Three and thirty years ago he told us, in "Maud," what he thought of much of the political life of his age, and of the tricks to which a candidate for a seat in Parliament resorted.

"That so, when the rotten hustings shake
In another month to his brazen lies,
A wretched vote may be gained."

It is true, the hustings have now passed away, and stringent measures have been taken against bribery; and there has been a considerable extension of the suffrage since the outbreak of the Crimean war. But the dangers of which we are speaking have not diminished. It is far more difficult to speak the truth to-day than it was three and thirty years ago; and it is more difficult to speak the truth in America than it is in England. As a consequence, our public men are in great danger of becoming mere echoes of the popular sentiment, followers and flatterers of those whom they ought to guide.

Who is to help us in our need? The need is sore. Humanity has always needed prophets of righteousness—a voice crying in the wilderness, or wisdom uttering her voice in the streets—and, unless such voices are given to us now, if we are to be left to the humbug and flattery of place-seekers, time-servers, and popularity-hunters, then our case is grave indeed, even if we "love to have it so."

It is easy to speak contemptuously of the "Jeremiads" of Carlyle, it is easy to say that Tennyson's new "Locksley Hall" shows the pessimistic despondency of old age. Our great poet was in the prime of life when he wrote the lines which we have quoted, and when he broke out:

"Oh God, for a man with heart, head, hand,
Like some of the simple great ones gone,
For ever and ever by,
One still strong man in a blatant land,
Whatever they call him, what care I,
Aristocrat, democrat, autocrat—one
Who can rule and dare not lie."

Unfortunately, we are getting into the stage, the worst of all, in which men lie without knowing it. Mr. Carlyle has somewhere spoken of Disraeli as a conscious juggler, whereas those who were opposed to him were unconscious impostors. No doubt, conscious juggling is a worse act than unconscious; but the unconscious impostor is really the worse and the more dangerous man. The man who is so saturated with the "Spirit of this world," that he has no thought of any higher guide, but simply gives the world what it expects and desires, is far more near to perdition, in any sense of that word, than the man who still has a conscience, even if he disobeys it. It is a worse state that the light should be turned into darkness than that we should not always walk in the light. And certainly the element in which we are now living is not unclouded light.

Go to any public meeting held for political, educational, social, even religious purposes, and what an amount of reality, mutual admiration, half-veiled ostentation comes out in the oratory! How seldom is there

seen any clear evidence of an earnest intention to discover and remedy crying evils, unless indeed it be evils which all are agreed to condemn, the denunciation of which evokes applause which costs very little to its object. There is hardly anything more important than our educational system, and nearly every teacher knows that it is full of grievous faults; and yet how few dare to say out what they think. On the other hand, hardly a day passes without some speech, or letter, or article eulogising our wonderful method of education—very wonderful indeed, since, according to many persons, it does not even teach our children decently good manners!

Mr. Matthew Arnold has gone beyond the reach of praise and censure, and besides, as we have said, the emotion caused by his article has subsided. The emotion, indeed, was caused a great deal more by the summary of his article, telegraphed to New York, and published in the American papers, than by the article itself. If his critics had waited for the complete essay, they would have expressed themselves differently.

After a repeated perusal of the article, we have no hesitation in saying first, that its tone is most generous towards American civilization, and secondly, that his criticisms are generally well-founded and not even exaggerated. We will endeavour, hereafter, to justify these statements. In this paper we can do no more than offer some general remarks on Mr. Arnold's position.

In comparing the new world with the old, Mr. Arnold freely admits that, in some respects, great progress has been made. Various problems he thinks, have received an adequate solution on this side of the Atlantic; but he maintains that, in certain respects, the older civilization is more "interesting" than the new; and he laments, not so much that this should be the case, for he holds it to be inevitable; but that the public opinion of Americans should fail to recognize the fact. And this failure, Mr. Arnold holds exaggerates the evil which he indicates.

Without, at present, going further into this question, we wish to point out that we in Canada have a deeper interest in the subject even than those who were immediately contemplated in the essay. Powerfully as Canadians are influenced by the intellectual and social life of the great republic, we still have a strain of English thought and sentiment, by which we are, to some extent, differentiated from our neighbours. Americans themselves are the first to note the difference. Now, there are among us a considerable number of persons who are eager for the elimination of everything which is distinctively English in our modes of thought. According to these persons, American civilization has not merely added elements of real value to the thought and life of our race, but all which has been added is good, and all that has been lost is either inferior or so unimportant that it can be dispensed with and no harm done.

It is really of some importance to look a little deeper into this. Mr. Matthew Arnold is clearly of the opinion that something has been lost from American civilization which helps to beautify that of the Old World. He does not blame Americans for this, as he thinks the change quite natural, perhaps inevitable. But he is sorry that they do not recognize their loss; and he thinks this blindness tends to magnify the evil. Upon the whole, we incline to Mr. Arnold's opinion, and we hope to make our meaning more clear in a second paper.

THE FIRST LAND EXPEDITION INTO CANADA.*

It is indicative of the still incomplete state of historical studies in Canada that so important an event as the first land invasion should be overlooked by several good, recent historians, including Mr. Bryce; as in fact it has, I think, by all those following the French authorities alone. The first expedition of the sort was a spur of a larger one which collapsed, and it took place in 1690, under command of Captain, afterwards Colonel, Johannes Schuyler of Albany. At that period North America was, of course, the typical savage wilderness. French Canada consisted of a line of scattered tiny settlements among the forests along the St Lawrence between the then villages of Montreal and Quebec; the New England colonists, though far more numerous and prosperous than the French, still confined their rising settlements to no great distance from their coast; Pennsylvania and Virginia were much in the same condition; and the other leading separate colony, the recently acquired Dutch Province of New York, consisted of a scanty chain of little places up the Hudson, like those of the French in Canada, practically ending at Albany, which flourished like Montreal as the headquarters of a large Indian trade, and was one of the half-dozen towns of the continent which, from strategic position, have moulded its history. Indeed, Albany has no small claim to having been the strategic key of both the long contests between France and England, but also, later, of the War of the American Revolution.

* Enquiries elicited by the verses on "The Battle of Laprairie" lately published in this journal appear to justify the publication of the present prose notes on the expedition which preceded it, in 1690.