

"PRIMROSES—A PENNY A BUNCH."

BY MORLEY.

A knot of flowers faint and sweet
In grimy hand uplifted,
And, lo, a spell falls on the street,
The city's scene is shifted!
Instead—green meadows, azure sky,
A brooklet's silver flowing;
Spring sun and shadow flitting by,
And primrose buds a-blowing!

Those fair pale stars! How they recall
The streamlet's shining shadow,
Its brown bulrushes straight and tall,
Its birdocks and its mallows;
The fallen tree that checked its flood,
Its dripping fringe of cresses,
And those sweet primrose clumps that stood
Niche'd in its green recesses!

Across my forehead, as I stand,
Light airs are coming, going—
A breath of April over the land,
From breezy uplands blowing;
They carry scent of gorse and broom,
Round rugged hill-sides wreathing,
Of lilac-bushes thick with bloom,
Of cowslips honey-breathing.

The roar of wheels has died away—
The city's strife and bustle;
I hear the field-lark's lay,
I hear the young leaves rustle,
The sunny drip of April rain,
I hear the young leaves rustle,
The sunny drip of April rain,
I hear the young leaves rustle,

Hope breathes about me as I pass,
New life, new joy expressing;
The daisy blushes through the grass,
About my foot-steps pressing,
A passing shower dew the leaves,
A sunburst follows after—
With diamonds gems the cottage eaves,
And lights the brook with laughter.

It bubbles, bubbles, as it goes
Above the hill-side sliding,
By rocky nooklets, as it flows,
And flows by covert gliding,
About the chestnut's garlanded root,
In silver lake it glides,
Where, climbing round the giant's foot,
Shine out the pale primroses.

O April day, O voice of Spring,
O daffodil and shadow,
O piping swallow on the wing,
Young green of leaf and meadow,
The living Present slips away,
The sealed Past unfolds,
When in a city street to-day
I see the first primroses!

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S INFLUENCE.

Criticism to the popular mind often appears rather an idle and unprofitable task, insignificant in its results and the sphere of minds wanting in originality. It seems easy to praise and still easier to blame the works of other men which may be quite beyond the critic's own powers of performance. To some people, a critic is merely a person who is paid to find out whether a book is readable, or a picture admirable, or music worth hearing, and whose general business is to save people the trouble of reading or thinking for themselves. But a critic's true function is somewhat higher than this; he can stimulate men to think, as well as think for them; he may be the interpreter that brings a great mind within reach of less ones, and enables untalented men to understand and use their great teachers, by making them sensible to influences unknown before. The true critic does not say: "Read this and admire that; accept this author or artist on my authority;" but he reveals to the careless or ignorant world the secret of the author's or artist's power or greatness, the source of his charm, the strength, or beauty, or grace, of his work; he illuminates for his reader what he ignored or was only vaguely conscious of before, and enables him by awakened perceptions and quickened sensibilities to discover for himself beauty and power, wherever it may be found. This is what Mr. Arnold has done in the sphere of literary criticism, and no one has done it more admirably and more delightfully. No critic has more eminently the quality of illuminating his subject and giving it significance; no critic has a more delicate gift for discerning fine and exquisite minds and making the public feel their charm; no critic has a more unerring faculty for perceiving subtle and refined shades of beauty and perfection, and making them living and tangible.

Mr. Arnold's poetic gifts, giving him sensibility and some imagination, his complete training and his wide knowledge of literature, make his equipment for this department of criticism almost ideally perfect. The "Essays in Criticism" are unquestionably his book, if an author is to live by one book. In this little volume there is a scarcely a line that is not valuable and delightful. It is criticism at once penetrating and sympathetic, where satire and praise are carefully modulated and tempered to exquisite delicacy; the very essence of the matter is distilled in a style of great perfection and charm in which the grave defects of Mr. Arnold's later and more controversial manner are only sometimes lightly shadowed forth. It is a very happy touch when he says of the faculty of naturalistic interpretation in Keats and Maurice de Guérin: "The natural magic is perfect; when they speak of the world, they speak like Adam naming by divine inspiration the creatures." The closing lines on Eugénie de Guérin show as well as any other passage an instinctive mental fastidiousness: "She was very different from her brother; but she, too, like him, had that which preserves a reputation. Her soul had the same characteristic quality as his talent,—distinction."

Of this quality the world is impatient; it chafes against it, rails at it, insults it, hates it; it ends by receiving its influence, by undergoing its law. This quality at last corrects the world's blunders and fixes the world's ideals. It procures that the popular poet shall not finally pass for a Pindar, nor the popular historian for a Tacitus, nor the popular preacher for a Bossuet. To the circle of spirits marked by this rare quality, Maurice and Eugénie de Guérin belong; they will take their place in the sky which these inhabit, and shine close to one another, *lucida sidera*.

In passages like this the volume abounds, and the essays on the Guérins, Heine, Joubert, Marcus Aurelius, and that on "Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment," are masterpieces; the essays, "On Translating Homer," contain some of Mr. Arnold's most valuable poetical criticism.

To the young student of letters, this little volume may be almost a *revelation*, not only from the value of the individual judgments and criticisms, but because its effect on the young mind is most stimulating and fascinating. The young reader often wanders in some perplexity through the wide field of literature, told that this or that author belongs to the first, or second, or third, rank, charmed by this writer or repelled by that one without knowing why, feeling bewildered in the presence of the great accumulation of human knowledge and the endless records of the human mind, without even experience of life to serve as a practical test of their value. To such young readers, criticism like these essays, so little arbitrary, so little technical,—criticism that penetrates the spirit as well as the letter, and shows a fastidious sense of the value of ideas as well as words,—seems a key that will open many a door that had before remained shut.

As a writer on political and religious topics, Mr. Arnold's services have been less substantial, and in controversy he is not a genial adversary. He writes with more authority on Homer and his translators than on Mr. Bright and his Free Trade policy,—with more weight on the influence of academies than on the question of "marriage with a deceased wife's sister." In this last he sees "the Philistine passion for forbidden fruit and legality," as the dissenters urge in favor of the measure the sanction of the Book of Leviticus, and "instead of permitting their mind and consciousness to play freely around the stock notions on the subject they allow their relations in love and marriage in the nineteenth century to be settled for them by an Oriental and polygamous people whose king had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines." We cannot help feeling that literary fastidiousness may obscure liberal and wise judgment when a man gravely declares that "God is deserved and displaced by doggerel hymns, in singing which a man disobeys the law of his being;" or describes Christianity as "the most delicate of literary problems," and orthodox divinity as "an immense literary misapprehension." When Mr. Arnold writes that "the blunders of the Puritans and Jews had the same cause,—a want of tact to perceive what is most really wanted for the advancement of their own professed ideal,—the reign of righteousness," we recall La Rochefoucauld's saying that the fault of very clever people does not consist in not being fine enough, but in being too fine.

Mr. Arnold's later manner has not the charm of his earlier prose writings. He has become almost as fond of formulae as his adversaries, the positivists, themselves, and his frequent use and occasional abuse of personalities to point his moral, together with his constant attitude of lofty disdain for the modern British public and its cherished ideals, have made him a far from popular teacher.

Of Mr. Arnold's poetic gifts, there is no space to speak. It is enough to say that "The Flaying of Marsyas," "The Forsaken Merman," "Thyrsis," and one or two other exquisite poems, show far more than the mere cultivated taste of the man of letters and the practised hand of the "made" poet. Although the intellectual element in Mr. Arnold's poetry is certainly more prominent than the creative or imaginative, yet from its sensibility, its refinement, and a certain sympathetic, melancholy grace, and a most delicate appreciation of the value of words, it has a greater charm than the verse of some more highly gifted poets, and has had a strong fascination for at least this generation, whose longings, and dissatisfactions, and perplexities, it reflects and perhaps fosters to an unfortunate degree.

Mr. Arnold will doubtless find in America much that will offend his taste,—much worship of the Philistine gods, material prosperity, progress and success, and the ends that men call "practical." Of "light" we may have something, though in "sweetness" it is to be feared we are sadly wanting. But Mr. Arnold will also find in America many warm admirers who will acknowledge with enthusiasm their debt of gratitude for his influence and teaching, even if they do not quite accept his "gospel of culture" as the salvation of the race, but believe that sometimes "knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers."

MATTHEW ARNOLD IN AMERICA.

The eminent English poet, critic and essay writer, who is at present our visitor, will be the object of unusual attention from people of thought and culture during his sojourn in the country. He is a sound scholar, an advanced thinker, a keen satirist, and withal a severe

censor, whether he may deal with literature, theology, or politics. "Lucidity" is the word which symbolizes his exalted conception of the critic's duty—that clearness of mental vision which in all branches of knowledge shall see the object as in itself it really is. The practice of Mr. Arnold has been in accordance with this theory of the critical function, and he has become a power for enlightenment and morality. Certain spurious "apostles" have unconsciously testified to his widely felt influence by appropriating various tag-ends of his salient thoughts and expressions, and mauling them in their own silly and perverted fashion. It is well that we should learn better to know him and his works.

Matthew Arnold is the eldest son of Dr. Thomas Arnold, the famous Rugby schoolmaster, and is now in his sixty-second year. He was educated at Rugby and Oxford, and published his first volume, "The Strayed Reveller, and other poems," in 1848. "Empedocles on Etna" followed in 1853, and "Merops," a classical tragedy, in 1855. "New Poems" were published in 1866, a "Study in Celtic Literature," and "Culture and Anarchy" in 1867, "St. Paul and Protestantism" in 1870; "Literature and Dogma" in 1873; "God and the Bible" in 1873; and "Last Essays on the Church and Religion" in 1877. A collection of "Mixed Essays" has been brought out but recently.

Mr. Arnold occupied the chair of Professor of Poetry at Oxford for ten years. His own poems are chaste in form and finely classical in feeling. While their high intellectual qualities do not appeal as strongly to the popular feeling as the verses of some other modern English poets, there is a steady demand for them in this country, as well as for his critical and miscellaneous writings, a new and complete edition of which is in preparation. Mr. Arnold is also an authority on educational matters, and at present holds an important position as Government Inspector of Schools. He has been a very frequent contributor to the heavier periodical publications of Great Britain, devoting a great deal of attention to political matters. "Politicians," he has said, "we all of us here in England are and must be, and I, too, cannot help being a politician; but a politician of that commonwealth of which the pattern, as the philosopher says, exists, perhaps, somewhere in heaven, but certainly is at present found nowhere on earth—a liberal, as I have said, of the future."

During his four months' stay in the United States, Mr. Arnold proposes to lecture on various politico-social, literary and educational subjects, and also on "Emerson." If this design be carried out, an intellectual treat of no common order is in store for us. The reflections of this poet-critic upon the spiritual-minded poet-philosopher ought especially to charm and instruct, even though they might not conform to our own opinions and point of view. Hitherto, what Mr. Arnold has had to say on America and American civilization has been entirely from an *à priori* stand point, and it is not unlikely, as he himself says, that actual observation may modify his views. The time is past when Americans were abnormally sensitive to foreign criticism. Mr. Arnold is admired here for his learning, his moral courage, and his clear outlook upon society and the domain of thought; and, should his impressions take the form of side-topics in his lectures, or a new series of essays, his hints and criticisms, marked as they certainly will be by absolute independence and a high-minded impartiality, will attract wide and well-merited attention.

REV. GEORGE A. SHAW, OF MADAGASCAR.

Mr. Shaw, whose arrest and imprisonment at Tamatave, Madagascar, by the French naval and military forces now invading that country, has provoked a lively diplomatic correspondence between the British and French Governments, is not a regularly ordained clergyman, although an ardent and hard-working missionary and agent of the London Missionary Society. He has been in the service of this society for some fifteen years, and is highly appreciated by it for his zeal and intelligence.

Mr. Shaw, who is about forty-five years of age, is a man of firm and most decided character and convictions. He received a secular training at the Normal College of the British and Foreign School Society, and, having passed successfully at the Science and Art Classes, South Kensington, he accepted the mastership of a school at Wilmslow, Cheshire. But desiring employment in the Missionary field, he undertook an educational appointment at Samoa, in 1868, under the auspices of the London Missionary Society. Discovering, however, in 1871, that a professional schoolmaster could not be supported there, the Society requested Mr. Shaw to become Superintendent of Education in the Betsileo Province, South Central Madagascar. In 1878 he visited England on a brief holiday, and on returning to Madagascar, in 1880, accepted an earnest invitation to remove to the difficult and unhealthy station of Tamatave.

At Tamatave he became a "man of all work," superintending every department of mission labor, schools, churches and religious services, with untiring fervor and industry. Very naturally, upon the appearance of the French he manifested his sympathy with the people among whom he lived, and the demonstration of his feelings being characteristically vigorous and hostile, he was arrested upon the pretext that he was harboring spies in the persons of his servants, and kept in confinement for near two

months on board a French man-of-war. Upon his release he notified the French Government of his intention to bring suit against it for \$50,000 damages for his imprisonment and harsh treatment, and upon this demand a correspondence ensued between Great Britain and France, in which the former plainly intimated its disapproval of the latter's proceedings in Madagascar. It is now said that the French Cabinet will grant an indemnity, not exceeding, however, the sum of \$5,000, and will besides officially express suitable regrets at the occurrence. This paltry sum will scarcely prove satisfactory, but it is probably the maximum which the French sense of justice will allow. The British public very generally sympathize with the demand for indemnification and apology, and the incident has very sensibly deepened the irritation which French foreign methods, in previous instances, had already produced.

ENGLISH PROGRESS IN ART.

It is a popular fiction that English progress is exceptionally slow, more especially when compared with forward movements in the United States. This view is perhaps even more prevalent in England than in America. In certain things appertaining to the saving of labor, in the encouragement and adoption of new inventions for lubricating the wheels of trade, in the application of the laws of hygiene to hotel management, and in the construction of theatres, the Americans, indeed, advance by bounds, while the English move with tardy step and slow. But there must be taken into account the fact that the mother country has a habit of repose which more or less disguises the rapidity with which some of her changes and improvements march onward. Her greatest social, artistic, and material reforms have been accomplished with the least noise and the smallest amount of friction. It may take her a long time to make up her mind as to the adoption of some new idea, but when she has decided she is neither slow nor uncertain in her action. In this way she possibly makes fewer experiments than her neighbors, though now and then she must be credited with changes which, accepted as advances in the path of progress, have unfortunately proved to be steps backward. The reign of stucco in English, more particularly in London, architecture—a tyranny of ugliness only just now being dethroned—marks a period which might well be designated as that of the "mud-pie" order of architecture. The name of Nash will go down to posterity as the interpreter of a spirit of vulgar economy and sham, which found London a city of brick, and left it a city of stucco.

It is in the discovery of errors that England is apt to be tardy; but mistakes or abuses once exposed, we have now and then a habit of vigor which surprises ourselves almost as much as our foreign critics. In nothing have we been more energetic of late years than in the hearty recognition of the errors of our ways in regard to architecture and decoration, or rather in our admission that since stucco came in there has been an interregnum of taste. The art preachers and teachers having fairly demonstrated the fact that we were groaning under a despotism of ugliness, we began to set about dethroning the tyrant, and though as late as a dozen of years ago he still clung to possession inside and outside our houses, he is to-day tottering to his fall. Tributes to the new power are set up all over the land, and it is proper that London, which accepted the stucco king, should be most active in its allegiance to the restoration of brick and stone, and most earnest in promoting the new alliance of beauty and utility. It does not come within the compass of this article to tell the story of the revival of artistic taste, but rather to illustrate its very notable existence. One might date its prominent beginning to the Exhibition year of 1851, since which time South Kensington has passed on the torch of knowledge from town to town. Art schools have sprung up all over the land; Lambeth has competed with Worcester, and both with the great potteries of the Continent; Durham and Kidderminster have vied with the carpet looms of Brussels, and the hand-weavers of Persia and Turkey; Birmingham and Sheffield have sought to perpetuate classic models in their metal wares; Manchester, Bradford, and Belfast have consulted the best schools of design and color for their textile fabrics; the illustrated newspapers have given the cottage and the nursery artistic substitutes for poor German prints; famous draughtsmen have adorned the fairy tales and tables of youthful literature with characteristic forms of beauty; the painter has left his garret among the London chimney-pots; and once more English architects and builders are erecting English houses in which all that was useful and picturesque in the "Old Kensington" and "Queen Anne" styles is restored and adapted to our greater knowledge and better sanitary skill, and more or less idealized through the impulse of the reaction that has set in against whitewashing churchwardens and the other Goths and Vandals of the interregnum now happily at an end.—JOSEPH HATTON, in *Harper's*.

It is said that the peculiar and startling juxtaposition of the planets and the terrific convulsion of fiery elements in the sun are the cause of all the cause of the disasters on sea and land this year. Indeed, we saw the manuscript of a long and remarkably ingenious article on this subject the other day. It was so learned and at the same time so interesting that the breath had to be held for over two minutes. It is the work of a very beautiful woman.