

of his desires, lit intermittently by the distant light of some faint hope, to him pathos is very real and well understood, and the credentials of the ambassador of the pathetic are incontestable. So in his poet's *role* we love and trust Matthew Arnold. We love him; for our hearts beat in unison with his own; and we trust him, as we must trust all who, fallible and at times fainting themselves, confess to their fallibility embodying with an instinctive genius and unshaken trust, in the same passage a doubt and its dispelling, the tear and smile of a fearing yet hoping humanity.

Perhaps the distinguishing characteristics of Mr. Arnold's prose are lucidity and truth. With the vexed question of tact we have nothing to do. A man with a mission has to fulfil that mission earnestly, truthfully, usefully, without a thought of tact or consequence, short of downright arrogant or intolerant dogma. We suspect the old martyrs were not men of much tact, neither is Calvary a synonym for self-interest. If our friend talks through the nose, why should we flatter him into the belief that he discourses in "flute-like accords?" If we are to be of use to him we must plainly name his defect and cast about for a remedy. It is an infallible sign of weakness for a man or a people to be pleased with flattery, I do not say praise, a just meed if deserved, but flattery, which is the grossest insult that man can offer to man. To take corrections kindly is a sign of greatness in the individual as it is in the nation: a body social or politic that is always picking up stones to throw at the watch-dogs of morals and manners, is spending three-fourths of its time out of its normal position. It is in an intermittent state of all-fours, and the little energy left is lost in recovering its balance. The man of tact is always more or less of a diplomatist, a very weather-cock for public

opinion to blow this way or that. What is tact but the faculty of avoiding the disagreeableness of life? Yet we may rest assured that he that meets with no disagreeableness in life has but half lived, or at least has not lived to the purpose. When the surgeon is called in to operate upon a dangerous tumour, he does not attempt to conjure it by soft words or platitudes, or half-veiled sophistries, he uses his knife.

The lucidity of Mr. Arnold's prose is astonishing. There are few writers whose meaning is plainer. His text is a transparency through which may be viewed not only men and things and actions as they really are, but ideas so pertinent and all-convincing that they seem to the general reader to be his own thoughts transferred to the printed page. Of course the thoughts are not his own, may never have been his own. It is Mr. Arnold's skill that is responsible for the pleasing hallucination. Without being ornate, Mr. Arnold's style is easy and graceful, the outflow of a cultured man in earnest. And he is truth itself, hence his closeness to his subject. Again, to quote Mr. Henry James, not a bad guide in matters realistic: "Mr. Arnold touches M. Renan on one side as he touches Sainte-Beuve on the other." And Sainte-Beuve's great quality is "closeness of contact to his subject," as Renan is the exponent of "religious sentiment," which has rendered "the service of opening the mind to human life at large;" that is, both Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold have treated religion as "they might have treated one of the fine arts," especially has the latter "gore into the application of religion to questions of life." And it is owing to this union of lucidity and truth that Mr. Arnold was not only "one of the two or three best English prose-writers of one's day;" but certainly one of the first critics of his own or any day. With great