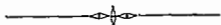


second, for both forbid sins in *word*; and the tenth is parallel to the second, for both forbid sins in thought, imagination, and device.

Thus the analysis of parallelism lends its aid to the solution of the problems that have been submitted to our examination. The arrangement by which the Ten Commandments are divided into two groups of five each, and a distinction is made between the first and the second, and the inviolate integrity of the tenth is preserved, has both external and internal evidence in its favour, it claims the superior antiquity and the best tradition, and is more in accord with the peculiar laws which regulate the language in which the Decalogue was revealed and registered. We may, therefore, safely infer that this was the original and true distribution of the Decalogue; and that all other modes of division, whether Jewish or Roman or Protestant, rest on insufficient grounds.

F. TILNEY BASSETT.

Dulverton Vicarage,  
Dec. 31, 1838.



#### ART. V.—MATTHEW ARNOLD'S EARLY POEMS.

*Poems.* By MATTHEW ARNOLD. 1854 and 1855.

RAPIDLY as the stream of time (especially in these latter days) sweeps away in its current the *memory of*, or at least the *interest in*, past events, and the regrets for public losses occasioned by the death of eminent men, the general sorrow which was felt at the decease of Mr. Arnold is still fresh. It disposes us to speak tenderly of him, even when pointing out the dangerous tendencies of many of his publications; the more so, because his talents were so brilliant, and on some subjects so well and usefully employed, and his private character so gentle and amiable. My critiques, however, must necessarily be of a very limited character, for they will be confined to the two volumes indicated at the head of this paper, which contain his earlier poems, though not in the order in which they were originally published. His prose works it is not my intention to touch upon; and, indeed, the theological part of them I have carefully avoided reading, as a task that would have been painful to me. However, in spite of this drawback, I think I am sufficiently acquainted with the general tenour of his views on these subjects, to speak of them in connection with his earlier poems. It has been for many years a task of melancholy interest to me to trace the workings of his mind in

these effusions in connection with his character as I knew it from personal observation, and the remarks which he occasionally made to me; for in the days of our youth we were very intimate, though for the last thirty or forty years we have drifted apart, and during that period have met but once. I will therefore only venture to speak positively on the state of his mind, feelings, and opinions as they exhibited themselves to me when he was a young man. The gap between that time and his death I leave others to fill up. And as there are many who have criticised his poems, regarding them from a secular point of view, I shall speak of them merely as far as they bear, directly or indirectly, upon religious truth.

At the time I knew him, religion certainly had an attraction for him, as, indeed, it always had, even when he rejected those truths which are the ground-work and foundation of the Christian faith, and I believe he would have been glad if the religious world had consented to hold out to him the right hand of fellowship; but this they could not do, for the price was too heavy; it was like the price of the covenant which Nahash the Ammonite offered to make with the children of Israel—*i.e.*, that they should thrust out their right eye. I recollect, however, that at the time, or near the time, of the publication of his first volume of poems, Arnold expressly told me that he believed all the doctrines of the Christian religion, and on another occasion, a few years later, he remarked that he could be very happy in a country curacy, and should like the work of administering consolation to others. "But," he added, "I do not like *subscribing* to articles." However, I have no reason to suppose that his opinions then were what they afterwards became. His state of mind at this time may probably have been one of comparative indifference as regards the *doctrines* of Scripture. He did not *deny* them, but he did not practically believe them. They lay on his mind like lumps of marl on a field; and at last, finding them an incumbrance, he no doubt desired to get rid of them. He set himself to disprove some of the most important truths on which Christianity rests, by arguments which *he* may have considered satisfactory (for with all his genius, his penetration, and his powers of intuition he was a bad reasoner), but which were rather *assumptions* than *arguments*. Yet, in relinquishing the doctrines of Christianity, he could not bring himself altogether to turn his back upon its spirit. Of *him*, as of some others, it may be said, with reference to revelation,

You may break, you may ruin the vase, if you will,  
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.

He therefore wished to retain the *spirit* of Christianity, though

he rejected the *body*—*i. e.*, the doctrines and the facts on which it rests. These he regarded as the letter—not, perhaps, the letter that killeth, but as that which, to those who could rise above it, imbibing its disembodied spirit, was only an incumbrance. Now, in one of his earlier poems, we may see what is at least the germ of this view, though whether it had *then* taken form and limb, it is difficult to tell. Speaking of the German poet Obermann, he says :

For thou art gone away from earth,  
And place with those dost claim  
The children of the *second birth*,  
Whom the world could not tame.

And with that small transfigured band  
Whom many a different way  
Conducted to their common land,  
Thou learn'st to think as they ;

Christian and Pagan, king and slave,  
Soldier and anchorite,  
Distinctions we esteem so grave  
Are nothing in their sight.

I cannot recollect whether the poem from which these verses are taken was among those first published, but I remember an observation which he made on the occasion of a letter received from an old friend (a near relation of my own) criticising the first volume. I called his attention to one remark which the writer of the letter had made, respecting the entire absence in this book of any allusion to Christian doctrines or motives. He replied, "No doubt she was right, for all her observations were so wise ; but if I did not feel these sentiments, it was better that I should not express them." This looks as if his mind was, on this point, in a sort of embryo, undeveloped state. But, however that may be, this omission of what really solves the problem of life, and throws light and hope on the darkest parts of it, is, I think, an *artistic* as well as a *moral* defect. Poetry, as well as painting, requires *light* and *shade*, and it is *partly* owing to the want of the former ingredient that the *popularity* of Arnold's poems is not equal to their merit. He has himself partly accounted for this fact, in the poem on Obermann, where he evidently is thinking of himself, when he speaks of the unpopularity of that poet :

Though here a mountain murmur swells  
Of many a dark-boughed pine—  
Though, as you read, you hear the bells  
Of the high-pasturing kine,

Yet through the hum of torrent lone,  
And brooding mountain bee,  
There sobs, I know not what ground tone  
Of human agony.

Is it for this, because the sound  
 Is fraught too deep with pain,  
 That, Obermann! the world around  
 So little loves thy strain?

Some secrets may the poet tell,  
 For the world loves new ways;  
 To tell too deep ones is not well,  
 It knows not what he says.

This last line does not, I think, explain fully the reason for the dislike which the world feels at the disclosure of these deep secrets. It is because they are *not* altogether secrets to them, but *facts*, of the reality of which they have an inner consciousness, and which they *see* by occasional glimpses, especially when they are suffering from depression of spirits, or lying awake "in the dead, unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof."

I think that Arnold was mistaken if he thought that these deep secrets were only known to himself and Obermann, and that chosen band "whom the world could not tame," whom *he* calls "the children of a second birth"; though, indeed, it requires no second birth to see them. The only difference is that some see them *habitually*, others by fits and starts. Possibly there may be a *few* who never see them at all, but these are exceptional persons. Arnold himself seems in another poem, called "The Gipsy Child by the Seashore," to admit that these truths were, if not acknowledged, at least partially felt by mankind in general; for he says:

Ah, not the nectarous poppy lovers use—  
 Not daily labour's dull Lethean spring,  
 Oblivion in lost angels can infuse  
 Of the soil'd glory, and the trailing wing.

But it surely cannot be a matter of surprise that those who have no hopes on the other side of the grave should shrink from being reminded that sorrow lies at the bottom of every cup of earthly pleasure; "since ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." And certainly Matthew Arnold does not enlighten his poetical effusions with any solid or substantial comfort. It is true, indeed, that men like tragedy, and in former days Byron's poems were very popular; many loved the wail of despair and misanthropy with which they rang. But this was because its spirit was embodied in heroes who shone with a false glitter, and who seemed to be strong and noble because their passions were violent, and because they defied the world, defied fate and defied suffering, and also because they were *unreal* beings, the creations of a morbid fancy. But to be told calmly that all is vanity and vexation of spirit is not what most men relish, when this truth is stripped of all martyr-like pride.

In spite of this, however, Arnold's poems have had for me a mournful attraction, owing to their exceeding beauty, though they always excited in me a longing for some occasional gleams of real sunshine, which in most of them is signally wanting. His descriptions of outward nature are, indeed, almost unrivalled in beauty. Yet, though he fixes on the salient points of every picture which he draws, and throws a halo over even commonplace scenery, such as that of Oxfordshire (see "The Scholar Gipsy"), over them all broods a spirit of deep sadness, which mars our pleasure in what would otherwise be a source of unmixed delight. In the piece addressed to Fausta, which was originally published in his first volume, and which was, I know, once his favourite, he endeavours to build upon the ruins of all human hopes and aspirations a temple to resignation, in accordance with the name of the poem. But it might be more fitly termed a temple to despair, as may be seen from the following lines :

Enough we live, and if a life  
 With large events so little rife,  
 Though bearable, seem hardly worth  
 This pomp of worlds, this toil of birth ;  
 Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,  
 The stream which falls incessantly,  
 The strange scrawled rocks, the lonely sky,  
 If I might lend their life a voice,  
 Seem to bear rather than rejoice.  
 And even could the intemperate prayer  
 Man iterates, though these forbear  
 For movement, for an ampler sphere,  
 Pierce fate's impenetrable ear.  
 Not milder is the general lot  
 Because our spirits have forgot,  
 In action's dizzying eddies hurled,  
 The something that infects the world.

"The sad lucidity of soul," which Arnold speaks of in this same poem, as characteristic of the poet, and which *he* possessed in an uncommon degree, is an expression which deserves some explanation. I take it to mean the eye of the soul, and the voice of the inner man, speaking the dictates, not of reason, experience, or calculation, but of an instinct which sees truths by an instantaneous flash, sees them as a *whole*, not *piecemeal*, *feels* them rather than *thinks* them. And this sort of perception is sometimes stronger in youth than it is in after-life, which may account for the fact, if fact it be, which Bishop Temple remarks on, *i.e.*, that young preachers preach about, and young poets sing about, the sorrows of life more frequently than older ones ; long contact with the world is apt to dim the inner eye and to silence the inner voice. But amidst all their brilliant anticipations a

mournful voice, prophetic of woe, ever and anon sounds in the youthful ear, like the hollow blast which heralds the approach of a tempest, when, as Thomson beautifully expresses it, "sighs the sad genius of the coming storm."

Such a voice echoes through Arnold's earlier poems, though I have heard that in after-days he took, in conversation at least, the most cheerful views of life. But there is one lesson which we may learn from him, both from what he sees and what he does not see, and that is, what are those peculiar wants in human nature which revelation tells us that Jesus Christ, the Life of the world, undertakes to supply. This mode of filling up the gap is what Arnold does not recognise, and yet his earlier poems are a sort of commentary, all the more striking and forcible, because it is an unintentional commentary; on truths which are repeatedly announced in Scripture. His views of life and of human nature resemble those outlines which we sometimes see on ancient rocks, and which form a complete sketch of fossil vegetables or shells, which have once been embedded in them, but which have long since mouldered away or have been removed by the hand of man, but which have left behind them these memorials of their existence.

In the lines which I have last quoted, from "Fausta," he speaks of "the something which infects the world," but he does not see the cause, *i.e.*, the curse, entailed upon the world by sin, nor the remedy, *i.e.*, the advent of Him who is the true Life of the world. He sees also, in a sort of hazy manner, the necessity of dying to self, though how this may be effected he does not even suggest. His words are, "He only lives in the world's life, Who has renounced his own." St. Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Again, in a poem entitled "The Summer Night," he describes with a most painful fidelity the two sorts of life which, I suppose, all men who do not live by faith *must* lead, more or less:

For most men in a brazen prison live,  
 Where, in the sun's hot eye,  
 With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly  
 Their lives to some unmeaning task-work give,  
 Dreaming of nought beyond their prison wall.  
 And as year after year,  
 Fresh products of their barren labour fall  
 From their tired hands, and rest  
 Never yet comes more near,  
 Gloom settles slowly down over their breast;  
 And while they try to stem  
 The waves of mournful thought by which they are prest,  
 Death in their prison reaches them  
 Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

And the rest, a few,  
 Escape their prison and depart  
 On the wide ocean of life anew.  
 There the freed prisoner, where'er his heart  
 Listeth, will sail ;  
 Nor does he know how there prevail,  
 Despotic on life's sea,  
 Trade-winds which cross it from eternity.  
 Awhile he holds some false way, unbarred  
 By thwarting signs, and braves  
 The freshing wind and blackening waves.  
 And then the tempest strikes him, and between  
 The lightning burst is seen  
 Only a driving wreck.

And sterner comes the roar  
 Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom,  
 Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,  
 And he, too, disappears, and comes no more.

Is there no life but these alone ?  
 Madman or slave, must man be one ?

It is not fair to stop here, for it is but justice to Mr. Arnold to mention that he does not close this poem without speaking of a third kind of life which he believes to be attainable, though it is evident that when he wrote it he had not *himself* realized it. He describes it thus :

Plainness and clearness without shadow of stain,  
 Ye heavens, whose pure dark regions have no sign  
 Of languor, though so calm, and though so great,  
 Are yet untroubled and unpassionate ;  
 Who, though so noble, share in the world's toil,  
 And though so tasked, keep free from dust and soil ;

A world above man's head to let him see  
 How boundless might his soul's horizon be,  
 How vast, yet of what clear transparency,  
 How it were good to sink there and breathe free—  
 How fair a lot to fill  
 Is left to each man still.

But it must be felt, I think, by all true Christians, and perhaps even by some who have not yet had any experience of the Christian life, that while the state of fallen, unrenewed and unforgiven human nature is most accurately described, and the dark shadow or outline of the Almighty is sketched with a fearful reality, yet when the poet attempts to fill up this dreary outline, to throw light and colouring over this dark shadow, he signally fails. His light is dim and misty, his colouring pale and cold, his consolations weak and unsubstantial. He would probably have said the same of the writer and of all those who hold by the facts, doctrines, and promises which are set forth in Scripture. For I know he used to say that the language of the religious world was—what unfortunately it *is*,

in the mouths of many, and what it *would* have been in *his* mouth—*unreal*; and like many others, he measured things by the limits of his own mind, not, indeed, that he claimed the power of seeing anything more than *fragments* of the truth; but he could not believe that some men see things in heaven and earth which he had not eyes to behold. He defined religion to be morality set on fire by emotion. This is at best an inadequate definition, even if we take the *human* side of the subject, for it leaves out faith, and it leaves out also that inner consciousness of religious truths which is granted to every Christian after he has believed and is sealed with the spirit of promise. That lucidity of soul which Arnold himself recognises, and which I have endeavoured in this paper, as far as possible, to define, when *unenlightened* by the Divine Spirit, can only bear testimony to earthly things; but why believe its testimony on these matters, and yet resist the same testimony on Divine matters? In the case of those with whom the Spirit of God bears witness with their spirit that they are the children of God, pardoned, washed, and sanctified, is all a delusion—a mere matter of emotion? Arnold, in his poem on the "Gipsy Child on the Seashore," conjectures from a melancholy look he caught in the eye of a child, that he saw, by one of those intuitive flashes which I have just endeavoured to describe, the hollowness of that world which offers such brilliant promises to its votaries, and the sure pain which, he says, "gray-haired scholars hardly learn," which the natural life of man carries with it. Well, this same clear seeing is vouchsafed to the Christian, when once he has really accepted Christ as his Saviour and Substitute; he then sees, at an instantaneous glance, a life which has already begun in him, and which, though while he is on earth may be clouded and obscured by sorrow, nevertheless results in joy, for its *essence* is joy, and it stretches out in a long vista of light through all eternity. This is what the inner eye, when anointed by heavenly eye-salve, sees at a glance, and it is an evidence something analogous to that consciousness which convinces us of our identity. It is given, not as a substitute for the faith which we must walk and live by, but as an occasional help to it. Now Arnold's sad lucidity of soul did not—at least, when he wrote the poem I am alluding to—enable him to see this; it only showed him the dark side of man's destiny, and though at this period he had a sort of vague idea that we should in some mysterious way become part of the Deity when we put off the body, yet this prospect sheds no ray of light over the dark picture which he draws of human life in those beautiful lines. And when elsewhere he speaks of a life in God, he does not show us how that life may be attained. I



know that in his prose works, in common with others of the same school, he speaks very much of culture; but we cannot cultivate ourselves into *life*, nor can we wash out past sins by culture.

I may refer the reader to one poem, called "Desire," which is a prayer in poetry, and a prayer earnest and healthy in its tone. The opening and closing portion may be given here as follows :

THOU, who dost dwell alone—  
 Thou, who dost know Thine own—  
 Thou, to whom all are known  
 From the cradle to the grave—  
     Save, oh, save.  
 From the world's temptations,  
     From tribulations ;  
 From that fierce anguish  
 Wherein we languish ;  
 From that torpor deep  
 Wherein we lie asleep,  
 Heavy as death, cold as the grave ;  
     Save, oh, save.

From doubt, where all is double :  
 Where wise men are not strong :  
 Where comfort turns to trouble :  
 Where just men suffer wrong.  
 Where sorrow treads on joy :  
 Where sweet things soonest cloy :  
 Where faiths are built on dust :  
 Where love is half mistrust,  
 Hungry, and barren, and sharp as the sea ;  
     Oh, set us free.  
 Oh, let the false dream fly  
 Where our sick souls do lie,  
     Tossing continually.  
 Oh, where Thy voice doth come  
 Let all doubts be dumb :  
 Let all words be mild :  
 All strifes be reconcil'd :  
 All pains beguil'd,  
 Light bring no blindness ;  
 Love no unkindness ;  
 Knowledge no ruin ;  
 Fear no undoing.  
 From the cradle to the grave,  
     Save, oh, save.

EDWARD WHATELY.

