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Mrs. Matthew Arnold: Some Considerations and Some Letters

Patrick J. McCarthy

THE marriage of Matthew Arnold has commonly been regarded as a kind of falling off, the troubled lover of Marguerite sinking into the respectable husband of Frances Lucy Wightman. Thirty-seven years of marriage, six children, and a set of relatives cannot compete for romantic interest with a Gallic, blue-eyed beauty more than half-hidden from our eyes. A Marguerite might have made Arnold a loving and loyal wife, as Miss Wightman did; and their marriage, just possibly, might have been a happy one, as his marriage proved to be. But Miss Wightman — or Flu, as he called her — did for Arnold what a Marguerite certainly could not do: she gave him the kind of stable family life he was used to and without which his busy, well-ordered, and productive career would not have been possible. Or rather, to be entirely fair to Marguerite, we should say that since his marriage to Flu took an assured position within the accepted Victorian social scheme, it gave him a consequent sense of strength and of belonging.

Such unions may be relatively safe and predictable, but they are not therefore always dreary and unromantic, and Arnold's marriage was neither. After all, it partook so much of the same emotional fire as his love for Marguerite that scholars have difficulty deciding whether the French or the English girl is the subject of certain poems. If we have to search his letters for scattered references to his love for Flu, it is only because she modestly edited out many personal references. In his unpublished diaries he refers to her always as "dear" or "dearest" Flu, and his devotion to her was such as to make G. W. E. Russell, who knew both, refer to the marriage as a long honeymoon.¹ When we also remember that his niece, Mrs. Humphry Ward, spoke of the sunshine of his married home, and when we assess even what

¹ G. W. E. Russell, *Matthew Arnold* (New York, 1904), p. viii.

the heavily-edited published correspondence reveals, it becomes clear that Arnold loved his wife, enjoyed her company, and missed her when they were apart.²

We have more than a little general testimony about the kind of woman she was. Blanche Smith, Arthur Clough's fiancée, met her in 1853 and found her "a bit Belgravian," which I suppose means that she was conscious of her position somewhere in the upper middle class and even insistent on it. But Miss Smith also said that she was "nice," a conclusion Clough himself came to when he agreed with Arnold's description of her as "a charming companion."³ Arnold was pleased with how readily his family took to her and she to them, and Stanley noted that marriage had toned down Arnold's lesser faults. Mrs. Humphry Ward, who knew her over many years, referred to her as "a dear and gracious lady."⁴ Longfellow told Mrs. Fields in 1871 how much he liked Mrs. Arnold, "a most lovely person."⁵ Ten years later, Charles Eliot Norton noted how entirely Mrs. Arnold won the hearts of his girls, and in the next decade it was Sarah Orne Jewett who described her as "just as dear as ever."⁶

More precise evidence of the kind of woman she was is harder to come by. Arnold himself tells us that Elu was not a literary person nor an intellectual — "entirely free from the taint of letters," was his way of putting it. Unlike her husband, she had always attended church regularly, but their difference in views seemed not essential to her: "Matt is a good Christian at bottom" was her way of putting it.⁷ It is also clear from what Arnold says that his wife was something of a worrier, worried about the reception of his writings, worried about sea travel, and of course worried about their eldest son, Tom, who was never quite well. She seems also to have been efficient, at least to the extent of managing the details of her household through dozens of moves from house to house, from Fox How in the holidays, to London for the season, to their suburban houses at other times, and

² For a summary of this evidence see E. K. Chambers, *Matthew Arnold* (Oxford, 1947), pp. 12-14, 123-124.

³ A. H. Clough, *Correspondence* (Oxford, 1957), I, 291; II, 425 note.

⁴ Mrs. Humphry Ward, *A Writer's Recollections* (London, 1918), p. 52.

⁵ Annie Fields, *Authors and Friends* (Boston and New York, 1924), p. 55.

⁶ Charles Eliot Norton, *Letters* (Boston and New York, 1913), II, 166-167; Sarah Orne Jewett, *Letters* (Boston and New York, 1911), p. 96.

⁷ Alan Harris, "Matthew Arnold, the 'Unknown Years,'" *Nineteenth Century*, CXIII (1933), 509; Chambers, *Matthew Arnold*, p. 104.

in and out of the residences of her parents in London and Teddington. But of course she had the help of servants, and Arnold was the master of the affairs of the family, the manager of all money matters, the maker of family decisions, and its contact with the great world.

What we have lacked thus far is the kind of insight into Frances Lucy Wightman that personal letters can give. Small caches of her letters are held by four American libraries; reading them not only confirms the general estimates expressed by contemporaries about her, but also brings her more vividly present to us than has been possible before.⁸ There is nothing sensational or even very striking in what she has to say, and she writes in the unselfconscious, careless way of confident, non-introspective people. But her kindness, interest in others, and eagerness to win them to her are clear, and the letters have an attractive warmth and charm. In addition, her letters, in their easy, chatty way, are full of circumstantial detail which students of Arnold biography will find interesting.

The first letters, those to Frances Power Cobbe, show her cordiality to someone her husband had pinked deftly but tellingly on more than one occasion.⁹ Miss Cobbe had tried to make of her "Theism" a philosophy and religion of the future, and in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Arnold had dealt with the attempt by linking it with James Morrison's monument to vegetable pills, The British College of Health. Both qualified as examples of the grand name without the grand thing. Later on, Miss Cobbe consoled herself for his "dreadfully derisive" remarks by noting that his own religious notions had something of an "upstart character," but by then he had also refused her request that he sign a memorial to the R.S.P.C.A. in support of legislation against vivisection.¹⁰ Arnold explained that he disliked private societies organized to effect public ends, but Mrs. Arnold, less critical, approved of Miss Cobbe's work and in 1881 sent

⁸ With the kind permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California, and the Harvard College Library, and the gracious concurrence of Mr. Arnold Whitridge, the most interesting of the letters are reproduced here. Letters to Mr. Arthur Galton and one letter to Mrs. Blanche Clough at Yale University Library are of lesser interest, as are letters to W. A. Knight at the Morgan Library, New York. Six letters written by Mrs. Arnold on her wedding trip are in private hands; I have read them since this article was written, and find that they confirm what is said here about her other letters.

⁹ Arnold, *Prose Works* (Ann Arbor, 1960-), III, 278-280; V, 83, 197; *Letters* (London and New York, 1895), II, 190.

¹⁰ F. P. Cobbe, *Life . . . by Herself* (Boston and New York, 1894), II, 427-430.

her an offprint of "Geist's Grave," Arnold's elegy to his dachshund. Soon Miss Cobbe was sending Mrs. Arnold copies of certain of her anti-vivisection writings, and her closest friend, whom she identifies only as "Miss Lloyd of Hengwrt," was calling at Pains Hill. After Arnold's death, Miss Cobbe reprinted "Kaiser Dead" and "Geist's Grave" in *The Friend of Man; and His Friends, — The Poets* (London, 1889) and sent a copy to Mrs. Arnold.

Pains Hill Cottage / Cobham, Surrey / January 6th. 1881

My dear Miss Cobbe¹¹

I was in London all yesterday or I should not have put off thanking you for your letter until today. I am delighted you and Miss Lloyd like the verses. I thought you would be touched by the way in which every line shows how Matt really loved dear little Geist — still I cannot tell how much I liked to hear this from yourself.

I think you know how entirely I sympathize with you in your great and good work and how ardently I wish you all success. Your pathetic story, even if it stood alone instead of being one among the many, ought to be enough to convert anyone. It makes one sick and ill to think of such things, and I wonder how they *can* be tolerated.

I was very sorry to miss seeing Miss Lloyd when she called today. Always dear Miss Cobbe

Sincerely yours
Frances L. Arnold

If Mrs. Flower should be with you will you thank [her] for her pleasant remembrance of us! ¹²

Pains Hill Cottage / Cobham, Surrey / Octre. 18th. 1889

My dear Miss Cobbe¹³

It was most kind of you to send me your book and your doing so, and the words written in the title page touched me deeply. I have read it with the greatest interest. It ought to be the means of doing great good and I hope it will. The paragraph about my dear Matt, and then quoting the whole of his Geist and Kaiser poems would have pleased and gratified and touched him as it did me. Thank you again. I like to feel that you *knew* him and his love for his four-footed friends.

Believe me, dear Miss Cobbe

Very sincerely and gratefully yours
Frances L. Arnold

¹¹ HM CB 7.

¹² Possibly Celina, wife of Edward Fordham Flower (1805-1883), who was also a pamphleteer in behalf of better treatment for animals

¹³ HM CB 8.

During her husband's American lecture tour, Mrs. Arnold found, in Mrs. Annie Fields, Miss Sarah Orne Jewett, and Charles Eliot Norton, friends whose understanding and sympathy she could rely upon, and she fell easily into writing long, chatty letters to them. They lived, of course, in a social world not unlike her own, they admired her husband, and each of them felt a special regard for the Arnolds.

Mrs. Fields, herself a member of a distinguished Boston family, had married James T. Fields, editor and publisher, who had a talent for making friends of those he published. Lively and intelligent, she was not the less attractive for being both pretty and serious, and she did some writing herself. She established a kind of salon at their house, 148 Charles Street, and won the affectionate regard of Lowell, Whittier, Longfellow, and Holmes. To Charles Street also, during their successful reading tours, Dickens and Thackeray had come, both of them to be charmed and won by their hostess. By 1883 James Fields was dead, and by then, too, an intimate friendship had sprung up between the Boston lady and Sarah Orne Jewett. Charles Street had become Miss Jewett's Boston residence, and a tone of cozy, feminine, and literary high-mindedness prevailed there.

Mrs. Fields wrote to Arnold before he left England for his American lecture tour and entertained him for the first time at lunch on Saturday, 17 November 1883. He may have spent the weekend at Charles Street, but it is certain that he was there on the weekend of the 24th, that Flu joined him a few days later, and that they spent Thanksgiving there. The visit was a fine success. ("I am sure," wrote Whittier, "your guest found the 'Sweetness and Light' he has long been seeking.") Echoing Longfellow's judgment of Flu, Arnold wrote that Mrs. Fields is "a lovely woman, as they say here — which means not a sweetly beautiful woman, but what we call a 'very nice' woman." He lunched with Whittier and, with Flu, dined with Holmes, a near neighbor. By the hearth fire one evening he gave a memorable reading of "The Scholar Gypsy," probably at the request of Miss Jewett, whose father loved the poem. "I have found them delightful guests," Mrs. Fields wrote on 6 December, and the Arnolds agreed to stay with her again from the 10th to the 13th.¹⁴ Mrs. Arnold's thank-you note came after some delay:

¹⁴ Arnold, unpublished diary, 6 August 1883; HM FI 4758, 4683; Arnold, *Letters*, II, 233; F. O. Matthiessen, *Sarah Orne Jewett* (Boston and New York, 1929), p. 71.

78 Park Avenue ¹⁶ / New Year's Day 1884My dear Mrs. Fields ¹⁶

I have been intending to write to you every day for the last fortnight, but have never been able to manage it, and indeed just lately I have thought I would reserve myself for Today so as to send you our best & most affec. wishes for the New Year. Since we parted on the 13th. of last month, we have been doing a good deal; as for Mr. Arnold he has been to Washington, Richmond, Baltimore, back again to Washington, and then to Philadelphia. The result of all this travelling in such weather as we have had, has been a very bad cold from which he has not yet recovered — & several times it has seemed doubtful how he would get through his lectures — however he has continued to get through them very well & to have been quite audible notwithstanding his cold. Lucy & I joined him at Washington some days before Christmas and we spent Christmas Day there. Our visit was ill timed on account of the holidays & everyone having their own home engagements. The weather too was deplorable, & our impressions of Washington as a City, are not so favourable as they might have been; but we saw a good many people whom we liked & were glad to meet & see, including the President of the United States! Our time in Philadelphia was a great success, & we liked the city & people there extremely; but there again our visit was ill-timed, and the first lecture was not so full as it would have been a week or so later — but each time the audience, (and it was a good one the second time) was most appreciative and sympathetic. We left Philadelphia on Saturday & are here for the next few days. Mr. Arnold leaves us on the 7th. & then Lucy & I hope to join him on the 10th. at Utica & from there go West. I hope if you have not already received the Birthday Book you may soon do so, as Nelly tells me she had sent it off.¹⁷ I fear however it will not have arrived by Christmas Day as I had intended it should.

Dear Mrs. Fields how *can* I ever thank you enough or as I wish to do, for all you have done for & been to us! You made our time in Boston such a pleasant one that we should both like to come back & see you again. I don't like to think ever that I may have said goodbye to you — but whatever happens I shall never forget your kindness or cease to be grateful to you for yr. real true friendship. Let me hear from you sometimes, it would be such a pleasure. You don't know how often I think of you & see you and dear Miss Jewett sitting in your pretty drawing room & looking out over the beautiful Bay. Will you tell Miss Jewett, her book goes everywhere with me & I could not say how much I liked it.¹⁸ There are such sweet & pretty touches in it,

¹⁶ The New York residence of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Butler.

¹⁷ HM FI 113.

¹⁷ *The Matthew Arnold Birthday Book*, Arranged by his Daughter, Eleanor Arnold (London, 1883).

¹⁸ *The Mate of the Daylight and Friends Ashore* appeared late in 1883.

and the language so simple & yet telling. Best love from us all to you both with renewed good wishes. I am dear Mrs. Fields

Affectionately yrs.
Frances L. Arnold

I am sure you will have understood that my silence was owing to want of time & not to want of will—I could not tell you how difficult it is for me to find a leisure moment. If you see Mrs. Whitman will you tell her how sorry we were to miss her in Philadelphia.¹⁹ I am going to send you some photographs when I get more printed. I am writing this in great haste, & almost in the dark so forgive its being so illegible.

Woodhouse Hall / October 24th. 1884

My dear Mrs. Fields²⁰

I hardly know how to begin my letter I feel so ashamed & sorry at not having long before this written to thank you for yr. most delightful & welcome letter received by me in London. I think, however, you will understand how much I have had on my hands this summer. For one thing we have been almost constantly on the move since we returned from America & this in addition to Lucys engagement has very much filled up my time.²¹ At first too I found it difficult to write about Lucy's prospect. I know dear Mrs. Fields, you will feel for me in it all, & understand that it has been hard for me to get reconciled to the idea of the separation. The 3,000 miles of the Atlantic is such a barrier . . . at the same time I quite admit that this is the only real drawback & I do find immense comfort in the thought that she is not going as a stranger to her new & distant home & country, but on the contrary she is going to warm & true friends who will one & all welcome her return amongst them & please God all goes well with with [*sic*] us we shall hope before very long to go over & see her . . . but still our little home in England can never be quite the same when she is gone. All we know & hear of Mr. Whitridge gives us confidence for her future happiness, & she herself is in such good spirits I suppose I ought to be the same. I don't often say so much about this engagement, but I cannot help doing so to you as I am so absolutely sure of your sympathy & that you will feel for me & understand what this thought of such a separation must be. It is exactly a year ago since we landed in New York, & soon it will be a year since we had the great pleasure of first seeing you.²² *How* kind you were to us! I don't think you can ever quite know how much we liked being with you. I always look upon my time with you as a very bright spot in my American journey. We so often talk of your charming house with its books & pictures & lovely view over the river, but above all of how *you* made every thing seem bright & pleasant. I hope you have had some little change since you wrote, for though I can quite believe you would not mind a summer spent in Boston, I

¹⁹ Mrs. Sarah Wyman Whitman, painter. See Jewett, *Letters*, p. 96.

²⁰ HM FI 115.

²¹ To Frederick Wallingford Whitridge of New York.

²² Not quite. The Arnolds landed on 22 October 1883.

know your being there means really nothing but work, work, work & I can almost hear Miss Jewett saying you *ought* to get away!

At this moment Matt & I are staying with one of his sisters Mrs. Hayes, at her very pretty place in Leicestershire.²³ Last night America was much recalled to me as Matt gave his Literature & Science Lecture at the Loughborough Institute. The audience was a very good one & as attentive I think as in America. His manner has certainly greatly improved & I am sure he was well heard, & for this he is indebted to America. I often think of his *practising* in Boston (with the help of Professor Churchill)²⁴ the art of reading audibly to a large audience! He is going on Today to Manchester where he will stay with Dick & his wife & then go on to Scotland to Dundee for a night or two where he has promised to give them a Lecture.²⁵ I am hoping to go for a few days to my sister in law Mrs. Forster in Yorkshire & then hurry home.²⁶ The time for Lucy's marriage is getting very near now & there is much to be done in the mean time. The 9th. of December will, we think, be the day as Mr. Whitridge will only have a very short time here, as he must be back in New York by the middle of January! He hopes to leave for England on the 26th. November. Dear Nelly is very well.²⁷ I should like you to see & know her & hope you will do so. Is there any chance of your coming over before long? It would be *most* delightful to welcome you & dear Miss Jewett in our little cottage — but if this cannot be we shall look forward to meeting once more in Boston. I seem to have written all about ourselves & our doings and yet to have numbers of questions I could ask you & many friends I should like to hear about. In the first place I hope you will show you have forgiven my long silence by writing & telling me about yourself & dear Miss Jewett. How are Mrs. Whitman — & the Howells²⁸ — & Miss Thaxter²⁹ etc? & then too I should like to hear of your household Maria & Katie & Bridget? I hope all are well. Good bye dear Mrs. Fields. Give my very best love to Miss Jewett & remember us to your maids. If all is well & we come again to America I shall indeed enjoy being once more with you if you will have me, & I am sure Matt would like to come too!

Ever your affectionate
Frances L. Arnold

²³ His younger sister Mary. Following the death of her second husband, Rev. J. S. Hiley of Woodhouse, Loughborough, she married Rev. Robert Hayes. Hayes, pre-deceased Matthew Arnold by a few days, and Arnold attended the funeral on 12 April 1888.

²⁴ Professor John Wesley Churchill. See Harriet R. Holman, "Matthew Arnold's Elocution Lessons," *New England Quarterly*, XVIII (1945), 485.

²⁵ Dick, the Arnolds' only surviving son, married Ella Ford in Melbourne, returned to England, and became a factory inspector.

²⁶ Jane, Arnold's older sister, married to William E. Forster.

²⁷ The Arnolds' younger daughter, Eleanor.

²⁸ Mr. and Mrs. William Dean Howells.

²⁹ The poet, Celia Loughton Thaxter.

I wonder if you will have seen any thing of the Nortons. We saw Mr. Norton when he was in London & also Sally N.³⁰

Cobham / January 31st. 1885

My dear Miss Jewett³¹

. . . I think you know my affection & admiration for Boston & for the home and friends we found at 148 Charles St.! I need hardly say we are looking forward to being there once more, if, all being well, we are able to pay America another visit. It was so kind of you to give me those details of Mr. Whitridge's family. They were very interesting to us, as everything connected with him must now be, and as we knew little or nothing about his family we were very glad to hear all you could tell us. Lucy has been gone a month & I think, if possible, I miss her more & more as time goes on. I don't feel as if I should ever be reconciled to the great separation though as far as she is concerned I think it will not be her husband's fault if she is not happy — & I am sure he will try to soften the pain of separation as much as possible by bringing her over as often as he can. They had a very bad voyage and she, poor girl, was ill the whole time & since her arrival she caught cold so that she has not been very well so far, but I *think* the cold was owing to a *gale* a night or two after her arrival! She has taken over our maid who had been with us 18 years, & this has been a great comfort to me, as I know Eliza will take every care of Lucy & help her in her household cares. I am telling you a great [deal] about Lucy but you & dear Mrs. Fields were so sweetly good & kind to her & I am sure to me also I cannot help writing more fully about her to you than I do to most people. I am longing for you to know Eleanor, or Nelly as I hope you will call, her. I think you will like her & I am *sure* she will love you & Mrs. Fields & would indeed enjoy being at Manchester³² & so should I — but I fear there is not much chance of that as I think Mrs. Fields does not stay there later than October?

By this time I feel almost sure you must be in Boston so I shall direct my letter there. We are going to London for a few weeks & hope to leave here on the 5th. February. We have taken a small house in Manchester Square (7a is the number,) until Easter. Mr. Arnold feels having to go up and down from here in the winter & he will be very glad to be on the spot for his schools which are all in London. We were all much excited by the fresh Dynamite affair last week & much pleased at the way yr. papers have taken up the matter.³³ Senator Hawley, (whom we knew last year,) seems to have made a very good speech in the Senate.³⁴ What with Dynamite, & the war in Egypt &

³⁰ Charles Eliot Norton's eldest daughter.

³¹ Houghton, b MS Am 1743 (9).

³² Mrs. Fields's summer home at Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts.

³³ On 24 January dynamite explosions in Westminster Hall, the House of Commons, and the Tower of London were set off almost at the same time.

³⁴ Joseph Roswell Hawley (1826–1905), Senator from Connecticut. His speech on the explosions was reported in the *Times* of 27 January 1885.

affairs at the Cape & S. Africa generally — England has much on her hands at present. The news of Genl. Stewarts brave little force being in safety as well as so successful in all they had done was a great relief.³⁵ The beginning of this week there was the greatest anxiety about their fate & now one hopes this costly & trying war very soon [will] be at an end. . . .

Your affectionate friend
Frances L. Arnold

The Arnolds returned to America in 1886 to see their new grandchild and to visit the Whitridges at their summer place in Stockbridge. They paid a few extra-familial visits including one at Charles Street for three days in June, and Mrs. Fields visited them at Stockbridge before they returned to England. In the following year Arnold gave a friend a letter of introduction to her, to "the most amiable and sweetest woman in Boston — a personage who, as everyone except herself must know, lives at No. 148 Charles Street."³⁶ When news of Arnold's sudden death came the next spring, Whittier wrote to Mrs. Fields to express the great loss English literature had suffered and to say that he knew how much Mrs. Fields, a friend of the Arnolds, must feel the shock.³⁷ We have Mrs. Arnold's reply to her letter of condolence:

Fox How / Ambleside / June 21st. 1888

Dearest Mrs. Fields³⁸

I know you will have forgiven me for not having thanked you for your dear letter before this. I have often thought of you & felt *certain* I had your real *understanding* sympathy — the sympathy of your own most sad experience, as well as deep sorrow for him who has been so suddenly called away. I know you had a true affection for my beloved husband, & no one appreciated more entirely than you did, his great intellectual gifts, his high aims & the genial lovable nature which gave him such a charm as a companion & friend. Of myself it is hard to write — *you* can feel I am sure all that must have gone out of my life with him who was the joy & light & centre of his home. I pray for Faith & strength, & to feel in all its entirety that God's will must be best; Best for my beloved, & so best for me & I pray too that He will keep me from a "rebellious spirit." My children are an unspeakable comfort, they are so good and so devoted — but even their love & devotion cannot keep away a sense of loneliness, though the thought of them & interest in & love for them

³⁵ General Sir Herbert Stewart (1843–1885), commanding an expedition for the relief of Khartoum, was attacked by an Arab force near Abu Klea. The enemy was driven off, but on 19 January Stewart himself was mortally wounded.

³⁶ Houghton, F Ms Eng 945 (45).

³⁷ HM Fl 4652.

³⁸ Fl 117.

are the same as ever. I ought, perhaps to have been more prepared for the sudden blow, but I was *not* —, & so the shock has been beyond words to express it. I am thankful he was spared suffering, & the pain of parting from those he so truly loved, and that death came as he had wished — in a moment! There *is*, too, abiding comfort in the thought that he is free from the anguish I endure. Dearest Mrs. Fields I know you understand what the depth of my sorrow must be & that often my heart seems dead within me but your words of hope & comfort are helpful to me & I must strive with God's help to look, *onward* [?] onward to the Light" — My beloved Matt was always so earnest about the use of time, & the duty of *all* to be up & doing, that I try to keep up old occupations & interests but it is very hard sometimes when every thought is absorbed by an ever present sorrow. Nelly & I have come here for a little change. Every nook & corner in this lovely place, (his old home), is associated with him, and this I like, it is soothing. But our visit must be a short one, as we have to go for a little while to Dick & his dear wife before returning to Cobham. Lucy has been so brave & good & bore the awful shock, which met her on landing, better than could have been expected. She expects her confinement early in August but she will go to London for it, all being well, in the middle of July. The darling baby, to whose coming *he* had been so looking forward, is the sweetest little thing, but when I see her trotting about the lawn at Cobham, my heart aches, he had talked so much and with such delight of seeing her running about the garden & being out with him! ⁸⁹ Dearest Mrs. Fields, how much I have written & yet not said a word of *you* & of how earnestly I hope you have come home quite restored to health & strength? I was so *truly* grieved to hear of yr. illness; & dear Miss Jewett too, how is she? My beloved Matt & I have *often* talked of you both. I am sure you know how much we loved being with you & how much he felt for you. That day at Stockbridge comes back so vividly before me — & the little bottle you gave my beloved & which stands in his little room at Cobham. It is something to have delightful memories to look back upon, & our times with you are certainly amongst them. Thank you dear Mrs. Fields for all yr. very many kindnesses to us both & to my girls & for the affection and admiration you had for him who has been called away. Love to Miss Jewett.

Ever yr. sorrowing
but affectionate

Frances L. Arnold

Nelly's dear love. I cannot tell you as I should like, how deeply I have felt the sympathy and sorrow not only here but I am sure in America also. My beloved Matt would have been so touched & gratified by all that has been said & felt about him in the States. Remember me to Katie & Patrick if still with you — we hope Roger is well. I wonder if there is any chance of yr. coming to England. I should love to have you at Cobham & to show you his little home.

⁸⁹ Lucy's eldest child, Eleanor, was born on 17 April 1886.

Charles Eliot Norton had known the Matthew Arnolds since the fall of 1856, when he accepted the invitation of Mrs. Mary Arnold, Dr. Arnold's widow, to stop in and see them when they were all together at Ambleside. The invitation was relayed through Arthur Clough, who had met Norton in Boston four years earlier and struck up a warm friendship. Norton had seen Arnold in London in 1872 and was invited to supper by Mrs. Arnold during his 1884 visit.⁴⁰ But it was the Arnolds' stay at Shady Hill in December, 1883, and the two visits to Ashfield in 1886 that drew them together. Norton's love of quiet and privacy, so unlike the bustling and publicity-seeking of other Americans, won Arnold's approval. And Norton found Arnold pleasanter and simpler than he had seemed in London and noted that "Mrs. Arnold quite won the hearts of my girls." The news of Arnold's death made him feel that he had "lost a true and dear friend," and on Mrs. Arnold devolved the responsibility of keeping up the friendship:⁴¹

Poynter's / Cobham / Surrey / July 7th. 1888

My dear Mr. Norton⁴²

I need hardly say I should have written long before this had I been able. I thank you now for your letter with my whole heart. I am sure out of my own family no one's sympathy has been more certain or more understanding than yours, & I value every word of your letter more than I can say. 'Tis true, that I ought to have been more prepared, but I was not, in fact the blow came with a suddenness, & in a way I had never dreamed of! I am thankful he was spared pain and the parting from those he so truly loved: but dear Mr. Norton, you who know what sorrow is, can understand all I have passed through, all I am still passing through.⁴³ My children are all that are loving & beloved & my greatest comfort; still the sense of loneliness, of all that has gone from my life with my beloved husband, seems to deepen & increase as time goes on: but I pray for strength to bear the weight of sorrow which presses on me so heavily. I like to think how well you appreciated him & felt all that was so loveable, as well as so great, in him, & I am sure his memory will live with you & yours. I have been deeply touched & gratified by the almost universal feeling shown for him & I treasure every word. This letter would have come to you before this, but fresh cares & sorrows have pressed upon me lately. My poor dear Lucy whilst on a visit here of a few days during my absence in the north, was

⁴⁰ Charles Eliot Norton, *Letters* (Boston and New York, 1913), I, 148, 443; Houghton, b Ms Am 1088 (268).

⁴¹ Arnold, *Letters*, II, 229; Norton, *Letters*, II, 166-167, 190.

⁴² Houghton, b Ms Am 1088 (269).

⁴³ Norton's wife, Susan, had died in February 1872 shortly after the birth of her third son, Richard.

suddenly taken ill, & confined prematurely of a boy, who only lived 24 hours after his birth. I was telegraphed for & arrived here in time. It is supposed the poor little thing suffered from the shock his mother received in April last & his *heart* was affected! He is laid by his beloved grandfather at Laleham. Lucy & her husband felt deeply the loss of their baby, but had he been spared to them he would have been fearfully delicate & hardly likely to have grown up. I am thankful to say Lucy herself has done well & today was moved on the sofa — but alas! the loss of the dear little grandson has not been all — and now we are mourning for a dear sister of my dearest Matt's, who also died most suddenly of *Angina pectoris!*⁴⁴ In her case it was even more unexpected as no one knew she had any tendency to heart disease and the end was almost as sudden as her beloved brothers. Her husband died three months ago and my dearest Matt went to his funeral only two days before we went down to Liverpool! I am thankful he has been spared the shock.

Will you thank dear Lily for the letter. Nelly I think has written to her. Give my most affte. love to Sally Lily & Margt. and to the boys also with special love to Dick. I think it must now be nearly two years since our visit to Ashfield. My dearest Matt was very ill there, but later on he was so much better, my fears grew less & less as hope became stronger. I am sure if you come to England you will let me know. You & yours may be sure of a warm welcome at Cobham, though all that gave the charm & brightness to the little house is gone. I think you would like to see the little room where he worked & which to me seems always filled with his beloved presence. His note books would interest you. I hope I may hear from one of the girls. I trust Lily has had a good summer & that all are well God bless you all Thank you again & again for your letter always dear Mr. Norton gratefully & affectionately yours

Frances L. Arnold

My love to dear Miss Sedgwick & Miss Norton your dear sister.⁴⁵

Mrs. Forster is much cheered & gratified by the notices of her husband's life.⁴⁶

Cobham / December 29th. 1888

My dear Mr. Norton⁴⁷

I have been long meaning to write to you, but somehow or another time has always failed & Christmas Day has come & gone without you & yours having the good wishes I give you from my heart. I hope you may have heard of us, through the new volume of *Essays in Criticism*? I begged Messrs. Macmillan to send it to you, immediately on its publication. You may perhaps have

⁴⁴ Mary, Arnold's younger sister, died on 4 July 1888, aged sixty-three. The infant son of the Whitridges, John, died on the same day.

⁴⁵ Mrs. Norton's youngest sister, Theodora, and Miss Grace Norton.

⁴⁶ T. Wemyss Reid, *The Life of the Right Hon. William Edward Forster*, 2 vols. (London, 1888).

⁴⁷ Houghton, b MS Am 1088 (270).

read some of the articles before, particularly the later ones, but I wished you to have a copy from me at once, & in remembrance of him whom I know you so valued both as a friend and writer. I feel sure too you will have thought of us at this time & that *you really* understand all it must be to us in our changed life, without him who was our centre & joy. This season used to be specially joyous, as Christmas Eve was my beloved Matt's birthday, and Christmas Day is Lucy's. It is heartbreaking to think of all that has been, & can never be again. I am sure the sense of loss, increases if possible, more & more as time goes on — & the sorrow seems as if it were greater than could be borne but I know I ought to feel how much I have to be thankful for, and I trust & pray I am thankful. My dear children are an immense comfort & are everything to me — & then too, I am able to keep on this dear little home where every corner is associated with my dearest Matt. How much I hope you will some day come & see us here.

I had a great intention in writing to you some weeks ago, and now I fear my news may have been forestalled (how I do not know.) by the newspapers. It is, Nelly's engagement to Armine Wodehouse the younger son of Lord Kimberley. We have not spoken of it but you will understand the conflict of feeling there has been in it all, but I am sure you will be glad to know how much I like Armine, and above all you will be glad to know that dearest Matt knew of his attachment to Nelly & wished for the engagement. This is an unspeakable comfort to me. Our great sorrow came before anything was settled & then of course there was a long pause — & even now the time for the wedding is quite undecided, except that it is not to be for many months yet. Mr. Wodehouse has I am sorry to say, nothing in the way of a profession. He was one of his father's secretaries when Lord Kimberley was in office, both at the Colonial — & again at the India Office, the two covering nearly five years, & during the last year or so, he rose to being 1st. Secretary. I think he would like to be in Parliament, but as it would be on the side of Home Rule in Ireland, I don't know that I feel so very keen about his success in getting in! At present he is chiefly employed in looking after the Kimberley estate, shooting farms, etc. I believe he & Nelly think of living in London. This of course I shall be glad of, as it will take her such a short distance from me. I have told you all about the engagement or rather about Armine, as I know you will be kindly interested in my dear Nelly's future; and anyhow, I think it may interest my dear Sally & Lily & Margaret.⁴⁸

I am much wanting to hear of you all. I often think of the days I spent at Shady Hill & of all the true kindness I received — & of my reluctance to leave you & go to the Page's in Boston!⁴⁹ Then again I think of Ashfield — a delightful visit though not untinged with anxiety — I think now what you felt then, it was doubtful if you would ever see yr. old friend again? & alas! alas! your forebodings were realised if it is true, that you had them. It was wonderful

⁴⁸ Mrs. Arnold has remembered the relative ages of Norton's daughters, Sara, Elizabeth, and Margaret.

⁴⁹ Friends of the Wordsworths. See Arnold, *Letters*, II, 236.

though, how he seemed to rally from those attacks, & really all this last winter & when Lily was here he seemed on the whole wonderfully well. Dear Mr. Norton I hope you have borne your work well this term but I dare say you are glad to have the respite Christmas brings? I think of you as all together just now. I dare say Dick is grown almost beyond my knowledge by this time. Give him & his dear sisters & brothers my very best love & good wishes & with the same to yourself I am always dear Mr. Norton

Affectionately yours
Frances L. Arnold

Will you give my love to yr. sister & to Theodora Sedgwick. I was very sorry to hear of Mrs. A. Sedgwick's⁵⁰ illness from Lucy. I hope your Aunts are well.

Cobham / Surrey / May 18th. 1889

My dear Mr. Norton⁵¹

I am grieved & troubled that your most kind remembrance of me should have remained so long unacknowledged. I am sure however you will not feel that I did not value the books or your kindness in sending them. They are *delightful* reading, & seem to make one feel so differently about Carlyle [sic], & to wipe out the unpleasant impression left by Mr. Froude.⁵² I need hardly say how much I thought of my beloved Matt, & of his reading your books, & then of his writing to you. I wish you could have had his words about the good you have done! I wonder if you have seen the Life of W. E. Forster? I should like to send it to you if you do not already possess it. I am sure you will be interested in it, & find so much to like & admire in it. I need hardly say it has been a trying winter & spring, with all its many memories — & now 13 months have passed since that terrible 15th. April & all things look the same, but yet *how* different! I don't think *time* can do anything for a sorrow which must be life long. I cannot help saying this to you, as I know I have your *understanding* sympathy. The time for my dear Nelly's marriage is drawing very near & we are very busy. We have just come back from a visit to the Coleridges⁵³ of some days. They most kindly took us in, so that the shopping might be more easily managed than it could be by going up & down to London from here. The wedding is to be from my brother in law Genl. Benson's.⁵⁴ He has taken 88 Eaton Sq. for the season, & the Church therefore will be S. Peter's. Nelly felt she could hardly stand being married *here* with all its associations & with the remembrance of Lucy's wedding so fresh in our minds. I dare say Sally & Lily may like these details & to know that the day is Thursday June 6th. I

⁵⁰ Mrs. Norton's sister-in-law, Mrs. Arthur Sedgwick.

⁵¹ Houghton, b MS Am 1088 (271).

⁵² Norton edited seven volumes of Carlyle material from 1886 to 1888, the last being *Letters, 1826-1836*, 2 vols.

⁵³ Like her husband, Mrs. Arnold had known John Duke Coleridge, now Lord Coleridge, almost all her life.

⁵⁴ Henry Roxby Benson (1818-1892), married to Mrs. Arnold's sister Mary.

like Armine Wodchouse extremely & I have the great comfort of knowing that my dear Matt approved. My son, (Dick,) & his wife, come the end of this month and will stay with me when Nelly has gone so I shall not be alone, & they I hope will be succeeded by Lucy, & her husband. Their little girl is coming over in time to represent them at the wedding.

I wonder if there is any chance of your being in England this summer? I am sure if there is you will let me know. I *should* be so glad to see you here, and I think you would be interested in seeing the little home Matt so loved & where everything in his room remains as he left it. It seems a long time since you were on this side, so I am not without hope of seeing you. By the end of Term you must be getting very tired and overworked. I hope all with you are well & Lily really stronger. As for Dick he must be fast approaching the young man stage, & grown almost beyond knowledge. I was so sorry to hear that Sally had not been as well as she ought, but trust she is all right again by now. My dear love to them all also to Theodora Sedgwick & yr. sister. Always dear Mr. Norton

Very affectionately yours
Frances L. Arnold

Tell Lily how much her pretty present to Nelly is admired. It is quite beautiful & delights Nelly.

Like Norton, Arthur Galton also remembered the anniversary of Arnold's death by writing to his widow; in fact he did so every year. Mrs. Arnold responded warmly to such thoughtfulness; loyalty to her husband's memory and devotion to his and her families were now the central occupations of her life. The several extant letters she wrote in those years invariably reflect these concerns. To Mrs. Fields and Mr. Norton she sent notes recommending Mr. A. Bruce Joy, who was doing "the bust of my dear Matt for Westminster Abbey."⁵⁵ She dispatched a flurry of requests for copies of her husband's letters when George W. E. Russell undertook to prepare an edition. She fretted that they might be thought "too domestic," and was delighted to hear Norton's praise of them and, surprisingly, how much Rudyard Kipling liked them.⁵⁶ She sent the new one-volume edition of Arnold's poems to Norton and another copy to his son Dick as a wedding present and then had bound for Mrs. Fields a copy of Bishop Wilson's *Sacra Privata*, in the same edition as her husband's. Though Galton wooed her good will, she refused to give him permission to publish passages

⁵⁵HM FI 111; Houghton, f MS Am 1193.3 (f. 69).

⁵⁶Yale University Library, Letter to Galton, 18 September 1895; Houghton, b MS Am 1088 (276).

from Arnold's diaries and even tried to edit them herself with the aid of a "Professoress of Greek" from Newnham.⁵⁷

Always too in her letters there is talk of family: of Lucy and Fred coming over from America, of visits with Dick and Ella and visits by Nelly and Arminc Woodhouse. She visits Arnold's sisters, Mrs. Cropper at Malvern, Mrs. Forster at Wharfside, and Fan at Fox How. And she travels, to Cannes with her niece Alice Benson for the winters of 1896, 1897, 1898, and 1900 and, again surprisingly, to America in 1898. She is disappointed then to learn that she will miss Mrs. Fields and Miss Jewett who are on their way to Europe. In 1892 she had entertained the two women at Cobham and showed them the yet untouched room where her husband worked. "Dear Mrs. Arnold . . .," wrote Miss Jewett, "would touch you with her changed looks. She has grown so much older. . . ." ⁵⁸ But Norton, faithful Norton, is at home and receives her again at Shady Hill and gives her a copy of his controversial address attacking the Spanish-American war. She approves of his statement, not knowing that in two years she will herself have three grand-nephews under arms in Africa and that one of them will die there. He responds by sending her a farewell telegram as she embarks for England.⁵⁹ In a final letter, written six months before her death, the distinctive personal voice remains unchanged; it is the voice, as Mr. Arnold Whitridge remembers her, of "a kind and gentle grandmother."⁶⁰

Pains Hill Cottage / Cobham / Surrey / January 5th. 1901

My dear Mr. Norton,⁶¹

It was most kind of you to write to me, & your letter gave me real pleasure. Since then I have had your beautiful gift of roses & violets. They were the greatest ornament of this little drawing room, I never looked at them without thinking of my dear kind friend at Shady Hill, and his never failing remembrance of past days & old friendships. Your visit to England was too short,⁶² but I was so glad you made acquaintance with my Nelly, & she was more than delighted to see you of whom she had heard so much. It was such a pleasure to me to secure that little visit from Miss Sedgwick & to hear of you and yours from her, but except for that brief two days we have not again met, & I fear

⁵⁷ Letter to Galton, 7 December 1894.

⁵⁸ Jewett, *Letters*, p. 96.

⁵⁹ Houghton, b MS 1088 (278-283).

⁶⁰ Private letter to present author.

⁶¹ Houghton, b MS Am 1088 (284).

⁶² His duties as one of Ruskin's literary executors took Norton to England the previous June.

now we shall not have a chance before she goes to Paris where I know she was to meet Rupert.⁶³ I was so glad to hear that you were all well. Your Christmas Eve party I am sure must have been delightful & given such pleasure to all those who were far from home and friends.

I had my son Dick & his wife with me just for a few days at Christmas, & now I have the Wodchouses with me & I hope to keep them for some time. Armine Wodchouse is now a Member of Parliament & as the House does not meet till the middle of February, I hope to keep them till then. It certainly has not been a very bright or cheerful Christmas & all you say of the contrast between the sentiment and suggestion of the times and the actual condition of things in the world, is most true, & strike one most forcibly and one longs to hear that things were tending to peace, real peace.

I don't know if you ever met Tom Arnold? He was next in age to dearest Matt, & a very cultivated man. He became a Roman Catholic & was latterly Professor of Literature in Dublin. He was the last surviving of the five sons of Dr. Arnold, but died a few weeks ago of bronchitis.⁶⁴ His death came as a great shock & now only two daughters are left of the family of nine.⁶⁵ His daughter is Mrs. Humphry Ward whom I think you may know. I am obliged to hurry my letter as the post I find is going, & I don't want to lose another mail, in thanking you for your letter & thought of me. Thank you again & again & with my dear love to Sally Lily & Marg. & with every good wish for 1901.

Always yr. very affectionate
Frances L. Arnold

Nelly would like to send you her afftc. love

Mrs. Arnold could have been the wife of many kinds of men; we may think of her as having no special gifts to be the wife of a great man of letters. But love and loyalty, stability, gentleness, and unforced sweetness, are qualities no marriage can fail to benefit from. Eliot has remarked that Arnold "perhaps, looking inward and finding how little he had to support him, looking outward on the state of society and its tendencies, . . . was somewhat disturbed."⁶⁶ We feel the force of Eliot's words, but perhaps we have been overlooking one of the main props, in his late days, not of Arnold's mind, but of his whole affective life. We may detect a note of desperation in the way he wrote the phrase "*Nur heute!*" over and over again in his notebooks, but in fact he did go on, happily, working vigorously to the

⁶³ Norton's second son.

⁶⁴ On 12 November 1900.

⁶⁵ Susanna (Mrs. John W. Cropper) and Frances.

⁶⁶ T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London, 1964), p. 119.

end. And Mrs. Arnold should have some of the credit. "He was so happy himself," wrote Nelly a few months after his death, "it was impossible not to be happy with him, & even now we can *think* happily of him. Mama is wonderful & he would be proud of her."⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Houghton, MS Eng 876 (8).

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MAX ABRAMOVITZ for many years has been a partner in the firm of Harrison and Abramovitz, architects of a long list of distinguished buildings that include the Dag Hammarskjold Library at the United Nations, Amsterdam Plaza and the Law School at Columbia University, Lincoln Center, and many of the buildings at Brandeis University.

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CORRIGENDA

Vol. XVII, No. 3 (July 1969)

On page 302, line 15, "Thomas Bowlder" should be Thomas Bowdler.

On page 343, the note on Dr. Shipton's retirement should have stated that he was Director of the American Antiquarian Society from 1959 to 1967, when he was succeeded by Marcus A. McCorison.