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## Mallock and Clough: A Correction

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A modern novelist could only—or would only—give us the physical facts: the physical facts would *be* the relationship; no one can now escape the influence of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. At all events, to set this piece of *Middlemarch* (imperfections and all—George Eliot too had a price to pay) against an average modern novel like *An American Dream*, say, is to wonder whether the price we pay for outspokenness hasn't become cripplingly high.

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#### MALLOCK AND CLOUGH: A CORRECTION

Some years ago, Carl Woodring suggested in the pages of *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* that when W. H. Mallock made his hero Otho Laurence, in *The New Republic*, quote from Arthur Hugh Clough, Mallock himself had invented the quotation.<sup>1</sup> Otho, classing himself with those who had lost their faith, is talking to Miss Merton, and says:

. . . we—we can only remember that for us, too, things had a meaning once; but they have it no longer. Life stares at us now, all blank and expressionless, like the eyes of a lost friend, who is not dead, but who has turned to an idiot. Perhaps you never read Clough's Poems, did you? Scarcely a day passes in which I do not echo to myself his words:

Ah well-a-day, for we are souls bereaved!  
Of all the creatures under heaven's wide cope,  
We are most hopeless who had once most hope,  
And most beliefless who had most believed.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Woodring commented on this passage:

If a fool may rush in, from internal evidence and the external evidence of not having found the lines elsewhere, I judge the quatrain to be Mallock's own . . . Clough is made to summarize in a semi-parody, without the check of irony, Mallock's own view of the deceased Clough and the living Arnold. Clough as well as Arnold had sighed excessive *Ah's* . . . Mallock himself gazed with unsure repulsion into the abyss of skepticism.

<sup>1</sup> "Notes on Mallock's 'The New Republic,'" *NCF*, 6 (1951), 71-74.

<sup>2</sup> Mallock, *The New Republic*, ed. J. Max Patrick (Gainesville, 1950), pp. 52-53 (Bk. 1, ch. 4).

Woodring was right to pick out the "Ah" for his evidence, as "Ah well-a-day" were the only words that Mallock had contributed to the quatrain. The fact is that the lines quoted were, with that slight alteration to fit the context, not Mallock's parody, but Clough's own composition. They come from his classic poem of disbelief, "Easter Day. Naples, 1849," and Mallock would have known them in a form where the first line read "Eat, drink, and die, for we are souls bereaved," with the other lines as Otho quotes them.<sup>3</sup> The correction is worth making, not to pillory Woodring, but because it alters one's view of Otho Laurence and so of Mallock's religious beliefs. (It is easy to see how the mistake first arose, for the poem was not printed in any American edition of Clough's work, except for one 1911 reprint of the 1869 London edition, and Woodring was writing too early to make use of the standard *Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough*, which did not appear until late in 1951.)<sup>4</sup> Since the quotation is genuine, instead of giving a semi-ironic parody of unbelief, Laurence is speaking and quoting sincerely. The passage prepares the reader for the climax of the symposium in Ruskin-Herbert's great address, which we are also to take as the sincere message of the book:

Once I could pray every morning, and go forth to my day's labour stayed and comforted. But now I can pray no longer. You have taken my God away from me, and I know not where you have laid Him. My only consolation in my misery is that at least I am inconsolable for Him. Yes . . . though, I am not yet content with my misery.<sup>5</sup>

Mallock is not identifying Clough with the kind of hollow unbelief he saw in Arnold. In the novel, Laurence, Herbert, and Clough are allowed to speak straightforwardly: it is the word-spinners, like Jowett and Arnold, who do not realize that in reinterpreting their faith they have lost its substance, who come in for Mallock's sharpest satire, and who are presented in critical parody.

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<sup>3</sup> *Letters and Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough* (London, privately printed, 1865), p. 149; or *Poems and Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough*, edited by his wife (London, 1869), 2:104. Now in the standard *Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough*, ed. H. F. Lowry, A. L. P. Norrington, and F. L. Mulhauser (Oxford, 1951), p. 56 (ll. 72-75). This edition gives a slightly different version of the quatrain on p. 57 (ll. 86-89).

<sup>4</sup> Both English and American editions, with a list of their contents, are given in R. M. Gollin, W. E. Houghton, and M. Timko, *Arthur Hugh Clough, A Descriptive Catalogue* (New York, 1968), pp. 35-41.

<sup>5</sup> *New Republic*, pp. 221-22 (Bk. 5, ch. 1).