

Chapter III

- * Brings out the distinction and difference among the Barbarians, the Philistines and the Populace.

Introduction:-

Three great classes of England are the aristocrats, the middle class and the working class. Arnold advises the virtuous mean and would like to point out the excesses and the defect of all these three classes of English people.

One great defect Arnold finds among the aristocrats is that very often their spirit lacks enough courage for resistance. Helpless inaptitude is the besetting sin of the middle class while the working class lacks ready power of action and genial powers of sympathy.

The Aristocrats:-

The Aristocratic class Arnold calls the Barbarians. They are champions of personal liberty and often anarchical in their tendencies: yet they have their own individualism, field sports and manly exercises are a fashion with them. The sense of chivalry of the Barbarians makes the aristocrats practise politeness in action and manners. All these outward qualities such as politeness and grace in manners come directly inculcated by the Aristocrats from the Barbarians. Even the culture of the aristocrats is skin-deep, external, lacking in inward virtues.

The Middle Class:-

The Philistines are the middle class, according to Arnold. By Philistine, in its original German sense, is meant the uncultured people like most of the shopkeepers. The Philistines are worldly-wise men, captains of industry busy in trade and commerce. As a nation of shopkeepers, Philistines have brought all economic prosperity and progress in the country. They have built cities, they have made railroads, and lastly they have produced the greatest mercantile navy the world has ever seen. Thus they are the Empire builders in colonies and so long as the working class would join forces with them, they would bring to the land all material prosperity.

The Working Class:-

The working class who help the Empire builders are the Populace in Arnold's parlance. Poverty and squalor have dogged the footsteps of the Populace wherever they are engaged in running the wheels of Industry. They are raw and half-developed. They are being exploited by the Philistines and the Barbarians so long. Now there is a stir and an awakening among the Populace. Democratic awakening has dawned upon their poverty and squalor. The people of this class are becoming politically conscious and are coming out from the obscurities to assert "an Englishman's heaven-born privilege of doing as he likes, meeting where he likes, bawling what he likes, braking what he likes."

dirt, poverty, ~~and~~
filth

shout or weep noisily

Thus Arnold finds a sort of caste-system in England consisting of the Barbarians, the Philistines and the Populace.

Yet there is something of a common denominator in all the three classes-a common basis of human nature. From that above the basis of culture must be founded-a sweetness and a light.

value factor

Arnold himself belongs to the Philistines. He is rising above his own circumstance of birth and social status in his pursuit of perfection, of sweetness and of light and culture.

Now Barbarians like honours and consideration, field sports and pleasure. Philistines like money-making and comforts and tea-meetings. The populace like bombing, hustling and smashing and beer!

No Rigid Division in Society:-

There is no rigid division in society-these classes come up or go down the social ladder as individuals strive to attain perfection, ~~or perdition~~. These sections striving for perfection in any of these three freak divisions of society also aspire for culture, with a desire to know about their best self to see things as they are, to disentangle themselves from

machinery, to pursue reason, to make the will of good prevail. So culture is no monopoly of any privileged section of the society. The sure way of the attainment of culture is initially to believe in paramount authority of right reason, to recognise the best self and to rise above the nation of "an ordinary base self."

Politicians and Poets sing of praises of the Barbarians, the Philistines and the Populace. Shrewd Politicians ~~particularly~~ ~~curry~~ favour with the populace by singing the praise of the working class and telling them "theirs are the brightest powers of sympathy, and the readiest power of action. In spite of all the praises showered over the different classes-whether it be of the slave of their ordinary self; they would be denied the blessings of culture, and anarchy will prevail in the land when all the three classes would want to do what they like to do.

Conclusion:-

Form every walk of life some chosen people must dedicate themselves to the pursuit of perfection. The doors of perfection and culture are wide open to any really dedicated soul from any of three great divisions which Arnold finds proper to sort out the people of England.

But then it is essential that man must strive to seek human perfection to establish his best self; and culture would, in the end, find its public recognition.⁵