# LOG OF A SPIRITUAL VOYAGE

*By Joseph Wood Krutch*

LEAVING Oxford was the most nearly dramatic thing that Arthur Hugh Clough ever did. This fact explains, perhaps, why he has, up to the present, lacked a biographer. But he has a story—the story of a soul perplexed in the extreme but faithful to the end. His spirit was a spirit which, if it did not like Newton's voyage through strange seas of thought alone, at least groped its way through the fog banks which lay between Arnold's two worlds—the one dead, the other powerless to be born. The log of this voyage, which ended in no happy harbor, has been written lucidly and interestingly by J. I. Osborne in "Arthur Hugh Clough". He traces the spiritual progress of the pilgrim through the early insipidity of his Wordsworthianism, and through the disillusion of "Dipsychus", to the sterility of his last years and writes with a touch of that Olympian aloofness which has made Lytton Strachey famous.

From Rugby, Clough once wrote home: "There is a deal of evil springing up in the school, and it is to be feared that the tares will choke much

of the wheat." Such a boy was surely in danger of becoming a prig. Indeed, he did become one, for he was nourished in an atmosphere where priggism was the ideal and was taught both through precept and example by the great Dr. Arnold, who called it Christian Character. But Clough recovered. For he who could so far give the devil his due as to allow the doubtful spirit of "Dipsychus' 'to sing persuasively:

> How pleasant it is to have money, Heigh-Ho
> How pleasant it is to have money,—

who could see that Duty, which he wished to follow, was often but an easy assumption of convention, and who could write a new decalogue beginning:

> Thou shalt have one God only, who
> Would be at the expense of two?
> No graven images shall be
> Worshipped except the currency,—

was no prig. There is a sting in Clough's religious verse that saves it from the namby-pamby, and it was the tragedy of his life that while he wished to pray with the faithful, his keen intelligence forced him to scoff with the scornful.

The theme of Mr. Osborne's book is this escape from priggism, and if he fails at all, it is in neglecting to present adequately the tragic as well as the comic side of Clough's perplexity. He was one of that unhappy band which the nineteenth century swept into unwilling rationalism. His was a spirit which longed for the certitude of faith, but his was also the spirit that must give the honest No. He wished to listen to the church chimes with honest rapture, but they only donged into his ears:

> Ting, ting. There is no God, ting, ting,
> Dong, there is no God; ding.
> There is no God; dong, dong.

We of this later age, born to the fruits of a struggle, often fail to realize what they cost. To us, it seems ridiculous that our forefathers should have been troubled because they felt a growing conviction that, say, all our difficulties had not been due to Adam's prank in robbing an orchard, but their heritage of faith was more inclusive than our heritage of doubt. All that men lived by, all that gave meaning to a perplexing world, was gone. In those trying times, when some who chose, first of all, the pleasure of certitude, drifted into Newmanism, others rejoiced in a new-found freedom; but Clough was one of the unhappy ones to whom the abolition of dogmatism brought no joy of freedom and left only the austere comfort of a resolution to follow the white star of truth and say:

> It fortifies my soul to know
> That, though I perish, Truth is so.

For him there was no way out. He was too pure in heart to accept the world's compromise and he was too little a pagan to be satisfied to be a mere poet, for only exceptional circumstances can make a moralist satisfied to be a verse writer. Milton wrote because he was past more active service, Wordsworth only because an enormous conceit convinced him of the unparalleled importance of his writings. With a bit less of vanity, his moral obsession would have driven him to the ministry at least. To Clough the obstinate questionings of his minor Faust, "Dipsychus", and the sad resolution to difference in "Qua Cursum Ventus", seemed only a prelude to a life work. Yet they are nearly first-rate poems, and the poems that are nearly first-rate are few. Modern taste looks askance at poetry on God and Duty and (vide the Hymnal) not without reason, but Clough's are good because they have passion. He loved

God with an intensity which neither the atheist nor the cheap religionist to whom God is a sort of familiar relative can understand. He loved him with the torturing ardor of one who half believes that his mistress is false. But the fame of a minor place in anthologies would seem to him no excuse for a life. *Qui laborat orat,* was his creed. Yet he found no work to do. In the end he relapsed into errand running for Florence Nightingale. Probably he did not do it well. With more or less faith he would have been saved—in this world at least—but his was the damnation of the doubter.

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Arthur Hugh Clough. By J. I. Osborne. Houghton Mifflin Co.