

**LAST AND FIRST, BEING
TWO ESSAYS:
THE NEW SPIRIT AND
ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH**

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Last and First, Being Two Essays: The New Spirit and Arthur Hugh Clough by John Addington Symonds

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INTRODUCTION

The two essays in this volume represent, respectively, the first and the last most important contributions to literary criticism by John Addington Symonds. They are now published for the first time.

The essay on Arthur Hugh Clough appeared in the Fortnightly Review for December, 1868, four years before Symonds's first book, THE STUDY OF DANTE, was published. Symonds relates in his autobiography that he first heard of Clough from Professor Jowett. The famous scholar was so shocked by the news of Clough's death that he could not hear Symonds's essay that evening. Jowett added — "He (Clough) was the only man of genius, whom I knew to be a man of genius, that I

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have seen among the younger set at Balliol." This was in 1861.

Symonds was attracted to Clough by the poet's scepticism and sympathized with his views. The essay reveals the liberal side of Symonds's mind more clearly than many of his later works do. In 1869 Symonds helped the poet's widow to edit and arrange the prose remains of her husband, and she made a most grateful acknowledgment to Symonds in the Introduction for his part. Symonds never reprinted his essay on the poet, who is as famous for being the subject of Matthew Arnold's great elegy *Thyrsis*, as for his own great poems. For intellectual vigor, and purity of style, and as a penetrating critical study, the essay ranks high.

The address on *The New Spirit* was published in the *Fortnightly Review* for March, 1893, a month before Symonds died. It represents his final impression of the Renaissance. He shows the similarity of the modern spirit in art and science to the spirit that prevailed in the 16th century. The last of his seven volumes

on the Renaissance had appeared in 1886. The great Humanist Movement was the theme of his prize essay at Oxford. And now towards the close of his life, he summed up his more mature views on a subject which had occupied him so many years. The essay now appears in its entirety.

Symonds was, with Pater and Arnold, one of the great Victorian creative critics. He was probably superior intellectually to Matthew Arnold, more reliable in his literary judgments and as a stylist he was more charming. He suffered from a spirit of self-depreciation; it was only too prevalent throughout his autobiography, and people took him at his own estimation. Even so fine a critic as Arthur Symonds has left an unworthy and unjust estimate of him.

Symonds will live in English literature. His studies of the Greek Poets, of the Renaissance, his monographs on Dante, Boccaccio, Whitman, his critical essays and travels, are among the finest things in our language. His poems also, which are so little known, are of

great merit. And his autobiography and letters, edited by Mr. Horatio F. Brown, form one of the most poignant and artistic documents in any literature.

—ALBERT MORDELL.

PHILADELPHIA,