

**ARTHUR
HUGH CLOUGH**

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Arthur Hugh Clough by James Insley Osborne

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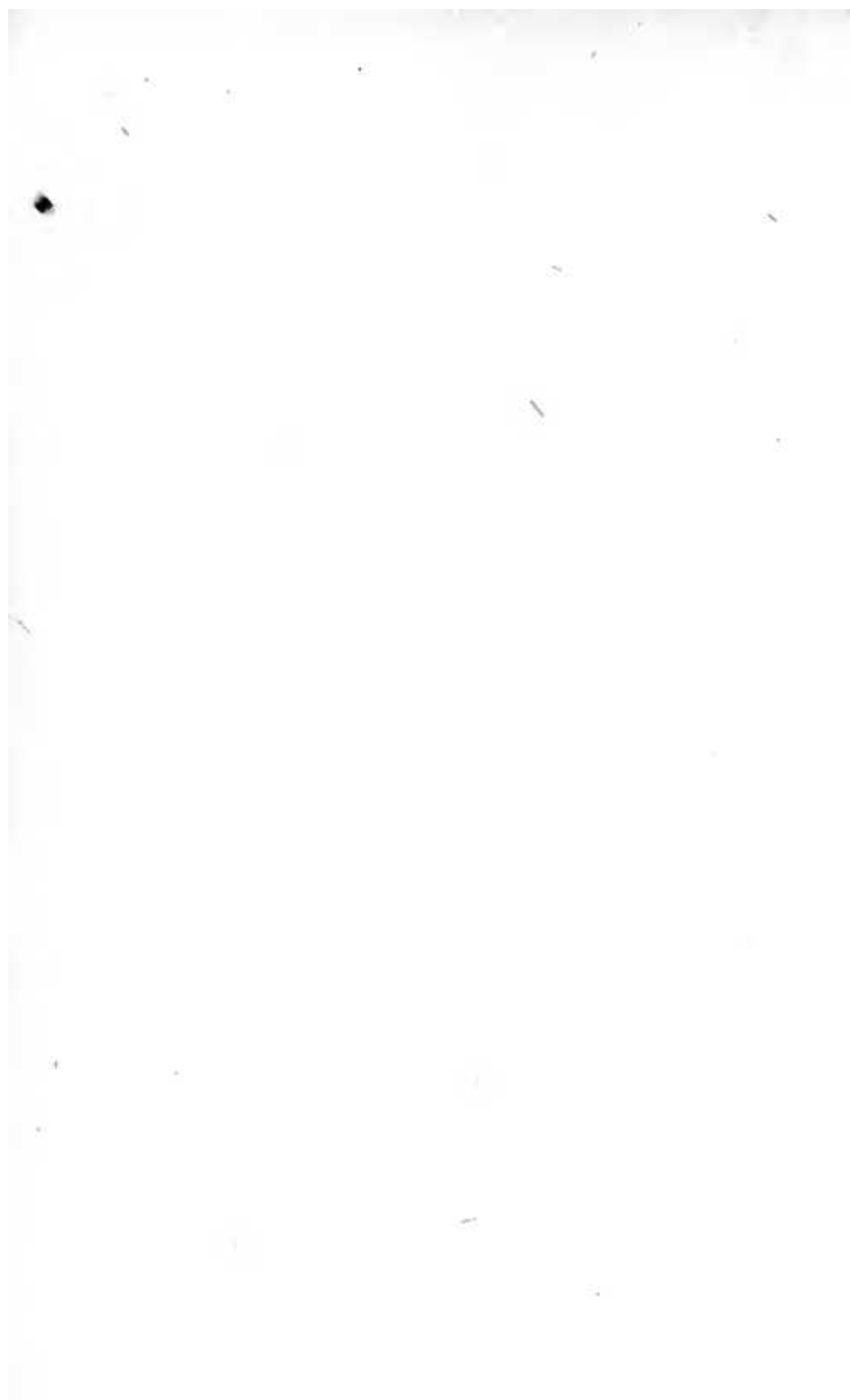
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CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH was born in Liverpool on January 1, 1819. His father, James Butler Clough, was a cotton merchant, belonging to an old and respectable Welsh family. His mother's maiden name was Anne Perfect. She was the daughter of a banker living at Pontefract in Yorkshire.

There is little or nothing in the poet's ancestry to point to as indicative of forthcoming genius. From the days of Henry VIII the Cloughs had lived in the country, raised large families, and kept their annals brief. There was, indeed, an eighteenth-century Hugh Clough, friend of Cowper and Fellow of King's College, who got himself known as a poet; but his example was hardly powerful enough to influence his younger kinsman. Were it not so remote, a reported relationship with John Calvin might furnish more interesting ground for speculation than this poetical connection.

The home county of the Cloughs was Denbighshire, in North Wales. There the foundations of a considerable family fortune had been laid by a sixteenth-century Sir Richard Clough, who invested in lands

and buildings in his native county the money he made in Antwerp as the agent of Sir Thomas Gresham, and in Hamburg as court master of the Fellowship of Merchant Adventurers. His descendants enjoyed considerable prosperity and respect throughout the following two centuries without finding it necessary to bestir themselves particularly. But one Roger Clough of the late eighteenth century, a clergyman and the grandfather of Arthur Hugh, lost in a bank failure the greater part both of his own fortune and the fortune he had married, and left his ten children comparatively impoverished. James Butler was the third child. He left Wales to go into business in Liverpool, married there in 1816, and had four children—Charles Butler, born 1817; Arthur Hugh, 1819; Anne Jemima, 1820; and George Augustus, 1821.

Arthur Clough and his sister both mention their mother's family, the Perfects, only in connection with a specific family imperfection. Arthur alludes to it in a letter he writes from Rugby to his younger brother: "Only remember, don't be indolent, George; you recollect what I told you about that family failing. Idle, I do not think you will be; but take care you never say, 'It is too much trouble,' 'I can't be bothered,' which are tolerably old favourites of yours, and indeed of all who have any Perfect blood in them." Whatever trouble it may have given his brother, the family failing did not prevent Arthur Hugh's life

from becoming a record of close application to duty. Or it affected him perhaps, from this point of view, in the manner of an inoculation, somewhat as the shiftlessness of the elder Dickens was a principal cause of the amazing industry of his son. But it is possible to view the poet's life in another light, in which his freedom from Perfect indolence is not so certain. Perhaps he seemed busier than, in a narrower sense, he really was. After all, he regarded writing as his work, and yet wrote little. His other activities, so vigorously pursued, would appear in this light as evasions rather than efforts, as devices for distracting the attention from the one point to which a more genuine industry would have kept it turned.

This appearance of a certain mental laziness in Clough's adult life has been connected, very much less reasonably, with another circumstance—the fact that as a child he lived in a warm climate. Late in the year 1823 the Cloughs removed from Liverpool to Charleston, South Carolina, which was their home for some thirteen years. Arthur returned to England in 1828 to enter school. He was in Charleston therefore from his fourth to his tenth year. The summers during this period were spent by the Cloughs either in the North, or, very pleasantly, we are told, on Sullivan's Island out in the bay. Under these conditions the Charleston climate would have to be very hot indeed to explain much in the poet's matured character.