

**TWO ESSAYS UPON  
MATTHEW ARNOLD  
WITH SOME OF HIS  
LETTERS TO THE AUTHOR**

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Two Essays Upon Matthew Arnold with Some of His Letters to the Author by Arthur Galton

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**ARTHUR GALTON**

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Two Essays upon  
**Matthew Arnold**  
with some of His Letters  
to the Author

By  
ARTHUR GALTON

LONDON: ELKIN MATHEWS  
IN VIGO STREET  
MDCCCXCVII


TO  
MRS. ARNOLD

**NIL SINE TE MEI PROSUNT LABORES.**

“Ουτοι ἀπόβλητ’ ἐστὶ θεῶν  
ἱερικυδέα δῶρα.

MATTHEW ARNOLD: HIS  
PRACTICE, TEACHING, AND  
EXAMPLE. A PROSE ESSAY  
ON CRITICISM

*Nullum fere scribendi genus non tetigit;  
Nullum, quod tetigit, non ornavit.*

 MATTHEW ARNOLD has gone away suddenly from us; and his departure is making us realize, with bitter sorrow, all that we have lost. If it were possible, in a single phrase, to define the work of a great author, that phrase, which I have chosen, out of Goldsmith's epitaph, might define the work of Matthew Arnold: "He laboured in almost every field of literature, and every-



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thing, which he handled, became fascinating and beautiful." Definitions, however, cannot be more than weak efforts reaching towards the truth; they are all bound to fall short, to press unduly upon a single aspect of it, to define it partially; though, in this case, the first half of Johnson's epigram is, perhaps, entirely true: Matthew Arnold was a labourer "in almost every field of literature;" it is this width of range, this universality of his, which gives him an unique position among contemporary men of letters: He "saw life steadily, and saw it whole."

But, though his touch has always the gifts of beauty, and has always fascination, he can endue things with even higher qualities than these. "Poetry," he says himself, "interprets by expressing with magical felicity the physiognomy and movement of the outer world, and it interprets by expressing, with inspired conviction, the ideas and laws of the inward world of man's moral and spiritual nature:" it interprets by having

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“natural magic” and “moral profundity.”  
If Matthew Arnold’s poetry be looked  
at as a whole, it will not, I think, be  
found wanting in “moral profundity;”

“Tears  
Are in his eyes, and in his ears  
The murmur of a thousand years.”

His verse is penetrated with a grave and  
a serious morality; and, because he is  
haunted by “the something that infects  
the world,” his verse, when he is de-  
scribing the outward aspects of Nature,  
is “drenched,” as he would say, “with  
natural magic:”

“Not by those hoary Indian hills,  
Not by this gracious Midland sea  
Whose floor to-night sweet moonshine fills,  
Should our graves be.

“So sang I; but the midnight breeze,  
Down to the brimm’d, moon-charmed main,  
Comes softly through the olive trees  
And checks my strain.”

But, in addition to the quality of “natural  
magic,” and to the expression of the  
beauty and fascination of the outer world,

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there is in his verse an ever present sense of the largeness and of the austerity of Nature :

“Thin, thin, the pleasant human noises grow,  
And faint the city gleams ;  
Rare the lone pastoral huts—marvel not thou !  
The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,  
But to the stars and the cold lunar beams ;  
Alone the sun arises, and alone  
Spring the great streams.”

It is this sense of austerity and of largeness, which gives him his finest inspiration ; and I should point to his expression of that sense, and to his application of it to “the ideas and laws of man’s moral and spiritual nature,” if I were asked to name his most individual and distinguishing quality. The following verse is an example of what I mean, and it will serve to mark the difference between Matthew Arnold and Wordsworth, in their treatment of Nature :

“They  
Which touch thee are unmating things—  
Ocean and clouds and night and day ;  
Lorn autumns and triumphant springs.”