

**TWO ESSAYS UPON
MATTHEW ARNOLD WITH
SOME OF HIS LETTERS TO
THE AUTHOR; PP. 1-120**

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Two Essays upon Matthew Arnold with Some of His Letters to the Author; pp. 1-120 by Arthur Galton

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ARTHUR GALTON

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MATTHEW ARNOLD WITH
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THE AUTHOR; PP. 1-120**

5-6-30. 1411.

TO
MRS. ARNOLD

NIL SINE TE MBI PROSUNT LABORES.

Ὅντοι ἀπόβλητ' ἐστὶ θεῶν
ἔρικυδέα δῶρα.

English
M. Arnold
2-21-30
21301

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 sor-
row, 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 Gold-
smith'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.”

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Wordsworth's message to us from Nature is, that it is a sympathetic, a companionable thing; he says, for instance, in his *Tables Turned* :

"Books ! 'tis a dull and endless strife :

Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music ! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.

"And hark ! how blithe the throstle sings !

He, too, is no mean preacher :
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.

"She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

"One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can."

And this impression of the joy that is to be found in Nature, of her living sympathy and companionship, is almost everywhere present in Wordsworth; it is the prevailing impression, that he leaves with us.