

**ENGLISH MEN OF
LETTERS.
MATTHEW ARNOLD**

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English Men of Letters. Matthew Arnold by Herbert W. Paul

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HERBERT W. PAUL

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BY

HERBERT W. PAUL

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NINETEEN HUNDRED AND TWO

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE only authority for the events of Matthew Arnold's life, besides Mr. Richard Garnett's excellent article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, is the collection of his letters in two volumes, edited by Mr. George Russell (Macmillan, 1895). Sir Joshua Fitch's account of Mr. Arnold's public services as Inspector of Schools in the seventh volume of *Great Educators* (Heinemann) is admirably clear, and Mr. Burnett Smart's *Bibliography* (The Dryden Press, 1892) cannot be overpraised. Professor Saintsbury's lively and learned study in Messrs. Blackwood's *Modern English Writers* (1899) is rather unsympathetic on the theological and political side, but full of interest and suggestion. I have sometimes owed most to Mr. Saintsbury when I have been least able to agree with him.

H. W. P.

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MATTHEW ARNOLD.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE fourteen years which have elapsed since Matthew Arnold's death have added greatly to the number of his readers, especially the readers of his poems. No poet of modern times, perhaps no English poet of any time, appeals so directly and so exclusively to the cultivated taste of the educated classes. To say that a classical education was necessary for understanding him would perhaps be to go too far. But a capacity for appreciating form and style, the charm of rhythm and the beauty of words, is undoubtedly essential. It may be said of Mr. Arnold with truth, and it is his chief praise, that the more widely mental culture spreads, the higher his fame will be. [He was not, indeed, a profound thinker.] He did not illuminate, like Wordsworth, with a single flash, the abysses of man's nature, and the inmost recesses of the human soul. He was not, as Plato was, a spectator of all time and all existence. His aim was, as he said of Sophocles, to see life steadily, and see it whole. But he saw it as a scholar and a man of letters. He interpreted greater minds than his own. He almost