

**MATTHEW
ARNOLD**

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Matthew Arnold by George Saintsbury

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GEORGE SAINTSBURY

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ARNOLD**

MODERN ENGLISH WRITERS

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MATTHEW ARNOLD.

BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

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PREFACE.

MR MATTHEW ARNOLD, like other good men of our times, disliked the idea of being made the subject of a regular biography; and the only official and authoritative sources of information as to the details of his life are the *Letters* published by his family, under the editorship of Mr G. W. E. Russell (2 vols., London, 1895).¹ To these, therefore, it seems to be a duty to confine oneself, as far as such details are concerned, save as regards a very few additional facts which are public property. But very few more facts can really be wanted except by curiosity; for in the life of no recent person of distinction did things literary play so large a part as in Mr Arnold's: of no one could it

¹ Mr Arthur Galton's *Matthew Arnold* (London, 1897) adds a few pleasant notes, chiefly about dachshunds.

be said with so much truth that, family affections and necessary avocations apart, he was *totus in illis*. And these things we have in abundance.¹ If the following pages seem to discuss them too minutely, it can only be pleaded that those to whom it seems so are hardly in sympathy with Matthew Arnold himself. And if the discussion seems to any one too often to take the form of a critical examination, let him remember Mr Arnold's own words in comparing the treatment of Milton by Macaulay and by M. Scherer:—

“Whoever comes to the *Essay on Milton* with the desire to get at the real truth about Milton, whether as a man or a poet, will feel that the essay in nowise helps him. A reader who only wants rhetoric, a reader who wants a panegyric on Milton, a panegyric on the Puritans, will find what he wants. A reader who wants criticism will be disappointed.”

I have endeavoured, in dealing with the master of all English critics in the latter half of the nineteenth century, to “help the reader who wants criticism.”

¹ It is impossible, in dealing with them, to be too grateful to Mr T. B. Smart's *Bibliography of Matthew Arnold* (London, 1892), a most craftsmanlike piece of work.

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