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Wordsworth and Arnold

A comparison which seeks to discover the  
extent of the influence exerted by William  
Wordsworth upon Matthew Arnold.

By

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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH and MATTHEW ARNOLD

A comparison

INTRODUCTION.

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#### INTRODUCTION.

## INTRODUCTION

Each generation, with its multiform achievements of spiritual progress, of intellectual exploration, of sturdy endeavor in every department of human activity, bears, in the very character of those achievements, the life-work of some seer, some prophet, some saviour. Such a seer was William Wordsworth. Such a prophet was Matthew Arnold. It is the purpose of this essay to discover, through an earnest attention to their respective works, the extent and the character of the relationship between these two great leaders of a generation.

In any approach to the understanding of a man's work, there must first be, if that approach prove comprehensive, a knowledge of the man himself and of those forces of influence and environment which surrounded him. This first chapter, therefore, shall be given to a brief resumé of the childhood, boyhood, and youth of Mr. Wordsworth and Mr. Arnold, with reference to the effect of these formative years upon their subsequent development.

That Providence which, Wordsworth believed, touched him in every common contact of every common day, must have indeed been mindful of this child who was, later, to speak to the hearts of men; for his boyhood was an idyll, and his early youth to the period of college days a perfect time of developing powers and growing eagernesses,- a time the memory of which remained upon his life "a joy forever". William Wordsworth was born April 7, 1770, in a stately, ivy-clad home in Cockermouth, where the grassy terrace ran down to the

1. *Op. cit. Book II p. 88 pp 270-85*
2. *The Prelude Book I & 290*
3. *Op. cit. p. 200*

shone on his head and sang in his blood from early morning till, in  
 unity. He that as it may, the child grew in happiness. The sun  
 avastance of indignation from sandy righteous members of the com-  
 more than once, without calling down upon his mother's head an  
 that William did not "sport a naked savage in the timber shower"  
 3  
 Nevertheless opinion was equally discarded; for we may rest assured  
 Mrs. Worsworth did not consider tea-meetings of major importance.  
 pleasure in presenting to an afternoon tea-meeting. But apparently  
 William was not the sort of little boy whom a mother would find any  
 long bathing of a summer's day" and having "scoured the sandy fields"  
 2  
 stashed pinches and parlor tricks. No doubt, having made, "one  
 Georgetown. Her young son was permitted to grow unimpeded by  
 Mrs. Worsworth was not, fortunately, the conventional mother of

more than its timely produce";  
 Nor with impatience from the season asked  
 Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,  
 was not puffed up by false maternal hopes,

Both also for our nobler part provide  
 who fills the mother's breast with innocent milk,  
 Our nature, but had eternal faith that he  
 "Nor did the habit of her thoughts misshape  
 have been an exceedingly wise woman, for of her he writes:-  
 man, Sir John Lowther, afterwards Lord Lowdale. His mother must  
 John Worsworth, was an attorney, legal agent for a county gentle-  
 Berwent, and the song of the sea was ever in his ears. His father,

moulded herself into his being until he blossomed forth in sincerity  
 good ripened into boyhood in the atmosphere of love, and nature  
 burgeoning life of spring-time drew him to happiness. This child-  
 his message. The woods held out their loveliness to him and the  
 his childhood was a pleasant one. The winds of the field brought  
 and after bread and milk he went to bed, not rabbit hunting. Yet  
 it was not to be thought of. Each day brought its quota of lessons,  
 mingles at will, and as for sporting marked in the thunder shower,  
 him wading in the stream all day, not scrambling over warm grass  
 somewhat heavily at times upon the child, Matthew. He do not see  
 here, genuine though it was, in the utter adherence to duty, full  
 meant much, for it softened the austerity of a father, whose good-  
 love and a discipline tempered by understanding. That understanding  
 character and fact, who excelled in the training of her son a wise  
 his mother, Miss Mrs. Wordsworth, was a woman of  
 Rugby where he remained until entering Oxford in 1841.  
 education, so, in 1837, Matthew returned to the school-house at  
 finally, his father determined to personally supervise his son's  
 to the Reverend John Blackland, and then to Winchester for a year.  
 with his parents to Rugby and two years later was sent as a pupil  
 up with the sound of the waves. At the age of five Matthew removed  
 the country of Middlesex, Christmas Eve, 1822. The Wordsworths, then  
 Matthew Arnold, born at Laleham, on the Thames, in  
 the evening, he felt the hush of his mother's arms.