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**Pascal**

**Cyres Stafford Harry**

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1900  
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Emery Walker Ph. sc

*Blaise Pascal*

*From a portrait in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris*



# PASCAL

BY

VISCOUNT ST. CYRES

FORMERLY SENIOR STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH  
AUTHOR OF 'FRANÇOIS DE FÉNELON'

WITH A PORTRAIT



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## PREFACE

A FEW years ago I had the good fortune to be introduced to a lady, who told me she heard that I was very clever, and wrote books. I pleaded guilty to the second half of her indictment. She asked what kind of books I wrote. I answered that I was thinking of writing something on Pascal. She inquired what that was. I explained that it was a man. She asked if he was alive now. I told her that he was an eminent Frenchman, who had been dead about two hundred and fifty years. A look of sudden interest came into her face, and she begged me to tell her how on earth I ever came to hear of him. This book is an attempt to answer her question. I have tried to bring together all such facts in Pascal's life as are likely to be of interest to an English reader. I have, indeed, skated lightly over his geometrical performances, for reasons of which my own mathematical incompetence is only one; and I have cut as short as possible the technical detail of his quarrels with the Church of Rome. On the other hand, I have described at some length the more dramatic sides of his scientific career; and I have given a good deal of space to the so-called 'worldly period,' when he consorted with



*précieuses* and free-thinkers in the drawing-rooms of Paris. Neither the 'Great Experiment of the Puy-de-Dôme' nor the friendship with the Chevalier de Méré were mere episodes in his career; the 'Provincial Letters' and the 'Pensées' could only have been written by a scientific man who had also had considerable experience of the world of fashion. Lastly, I have done my best to profit by the wisdom of Professors William James and Leuba, and to deal with Pascal's conversion and its consequences as a 'variety of religious experience.' Some small portion of my debt to earlier writers I have endeavoured to discharge by giving a classified list of the books I have found most useful; and I have added a short chronological table of the chief events of Pascal's life, viewed in relation to the general history of his time.

ST. CYRES.

October 1909.