

**DISCUSSIONS OF THE
DRAMA IV: LETTERS OF
AN OLD PLAYGOER**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649330744

Discussions of the Drama IV: Letters of an Old Playgoer by Matthew Arnold & Brander Matthews

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

MATTHEW ARNOLD & BRANDER MATTHEWS

**DISCUSSIONS OF THE
DRAMA IV: LETTERS OF
AN OLD PLAYGOER**

PUBLICATIONS
of the
Dramatic Museum
OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Fourth Series

Discussions of the Drama:

- I 'GOETHE ON THE THEATER,' selections from the conversations with Eckermann; translated by John Oxenford. With an introduction by William Witherle Lawrence.
- II 'GOLDONI ON PLAYWRITING'; translated and compiled by F. C. L. Van Steenderen. With an introduction by H. C. Chatfield-Taylor.
- III 'PROSPERO'S ISLAND,' by Edward Everett Hale. With an introduction by Henry Cabot Lodge.
- IV 'LETTERS OF AN OLD PLAYGOER' by Matthew Arnold. With an introduction by Brander Matthews.

W

DISCUSSIONS OF THE DRAMA

IV

Letters of an Old Playgoer

BY

MATTHEW ARNOLD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

BRANDER MATTHEWS



Printed for the

Dramatic Museum of Columbia University
in the City of New York

MCMXIX

English
Direct
4-25-27
1918

C O N T E N T S

Introduction by Brander Matthews.....	1
Letters of an Old Playgoer by Matthew Arnold..	21
Notes by B. M.....	55

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Those of us who are now sexagenarians and who had the good fortune to make acquaintance with 'Essays in Criticism' in our undergraduate days and to read the successive collections of Matthew Arnold's later criticisms as they appeared one by one, in the score of years that followed, can never forget the debt we owe to the critic who opened our eyes to the value of culture, to the purpose of criticism and to the duty of "seeing the thing as it is." We felt an increasing stimulus as we came to know Arnold's writing more intimately, as we absorbed it, as we made its ideas our own, as we sought to apply its principles and to borrow its methods. The influence of his work upon the generation born at the middle of the nineteenth century was immediate and it has been enduring.

"Without in the least overrating himself," so Mr. Brownell has finely phrased it, Arnold "took himself with absolute seriousness, and his work from first to last is in-

formed with the high sincerity of a consistent purpose—the purpose of being nobly useful to his time and country by preaching to men precisely the gospel he conceived they most vitally needed. For the consideration of his public and his era he deemed energy less important than light, earnestness less needful than sweetness, genius less beneficent than reasonableness, erudition less called for than culture." He preacht always persuasively, making his points sharply and often tipping them with wit that they might penetrate the more swiftly. He knew so certainly what he wanted to prove that it was easy for him always to be clear. His style, one of the most delightful in the whole range of English literature, is ever limpid, pellucid, transparent.

As he was directly addressing the public of his own era, he constantly dealt with the themes of immediate interest to his contemporaries in his own country. So it is that a large proportion of his writing, always indisputably literary in its treatment, is now discovered to be sometimes journalistic in its theme. Whatever interest his discussion of the Burials Bill, of the Deceased Wife's

Sister's Bill, and of the law of bequest and entail, may have had when they were being hotly debated in the House of Commons, has evaporated now that the passage of years has deprived them of their pertinency. Moreover, even in writing his essays on questions of permanent importance, the question of secondary education, for example, and the question of the classics against the sciences, Arnold was so eager to catch the attention of his contemporaries that he never hesitated to make use of illustrations from the happenings of the moment, likely to be a little unintelligible to readers of a later generation.

To say this is to suggest that he yielded a little too much and a little too often to the temptation of an instantaneous and fleeting effect, and that there are passages in his writings, and not a few of them, which will be obscure to readers of the twentieth century without an annotation almost as abundant as that which does not prevent Pope's 'Dunciad' from being unreadable. The fact is that Arnold, altho essentially a man of letters, had a hankering after the newspaper, after the direct and evanescent impression