

DISCOURSES IN AMERICA

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Discourses in America by Matthew Arnold

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MATTHEW ARNOLD

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IN AMERICA**



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BY
MATTHEW ARNOLD

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PREFACE.

OF the three discourses in this volume, the second was originally given as the Rede Lecture at Cambridge, was recast for delivery in America, and is reprinted here as so recast. The first discourse, that on 'Numbers,' was originally given in New York. It was afterwards published in the *Nineteenth Century*, and I have to thank Mr. Knowles for kindly permitting me to reprint it now. The third discourse, that on

'Emerson,' was originally given in Emerson's 'own delightful town,' Boston.

I am glad of every opportunity of thanking my American audiences for the unfailing attention and kindness with which they listened to a speaker who did not flatter them, who would have flattered them ill, but who yet felt, and in fact expressed, more esteem and admiration than his words were sometimes, at a hasty first hearing, supposed to convey. I cannot think that what I have said of Emerson will finally be accounted scant praise, although praise universal and unmixed it certainly is not. What high esteem I feel for the suitableness and easy play of American institutions I have

had occasion, since my return home, to say publicly and emphatically. But nothing in the discourse on 'Numbers' was at variance with this high esteem, although a caution, certainly, was suggested. But then some caution or other, to be drawn from the inexhaustibly fruitful truth that moral causes govern the standing and the falling of States, who is there that can be said not to need ?

All need it, we in this country need it, as indeed in the discourse on 'Numbers' I have by an express instance shown. Yet as regards us in this country at the present moment, I am tempted, I confess, to resort to the great truth in question, not for caution so much as for consolation. Our

politics are 'battles of the kites and the crows,' of the Barbarians and the Philistines; each combatant striving to affirm himself still, while all the vital needs and instincts of our national growth demand, not that either of the combatants should be enabled to affirm himself, but that each should be transformed. Our aristocratical class, the Barbarians, have no perception of the real wants of the community at home. Our middle classes, the great Philistine power, have no perception of our real relations to the world abroad, no clue, apparently, for guidance, wherever that attractive and ever-victorious rhetorician, who is the Minister of their choice, may take them, except the formula of that submissive animal which