

**AMERICANISMS AND
BRITICISMS: WITH OTHER
ESSAYS ON OTHER ISMS**

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Americanisms and Briticisms: With Other Essays on Other Isms by Brander Matthews

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BRANDER MATTHEWS

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AND BRITICISMS
*WITH OTHER ESSAYS
ON OTHER ISMS*

BY
BRANDER MATTHEWS



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TO

THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY

YALE UNIVERSITY

My dear Lounsbury, — In reading over the proof-sheets of these pages, I have happened on your name more often than I thought I had written it, and yet not so often by once as I wish to write it. So I set it here, in the fore-front of this little book, to bear witness that much of what may be good in these essaylets of mine is due to help given by you, either directly by word of mouth or indirectly by the printed page. And that is why I take pleasure now in subscribing myself as

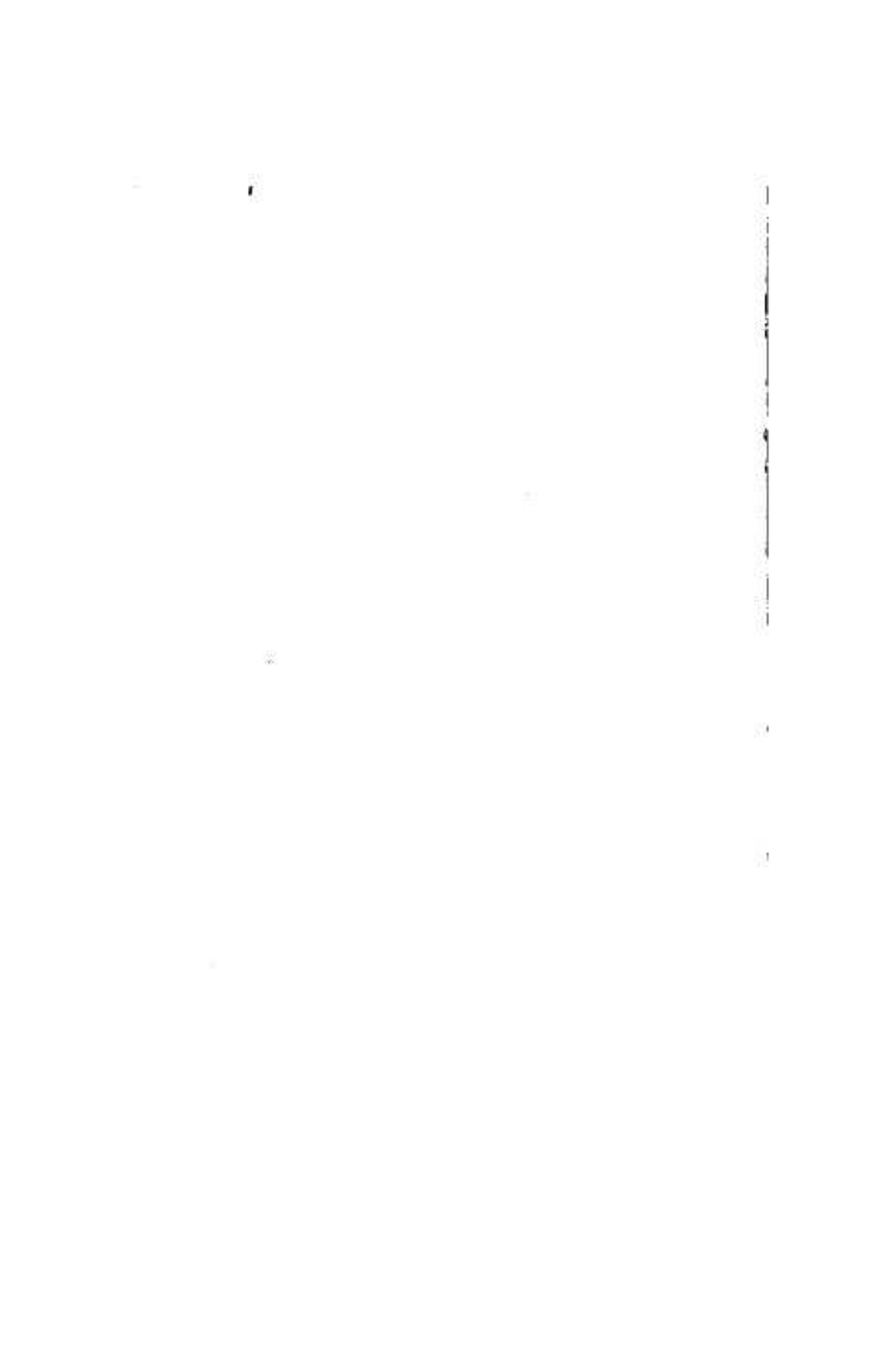
Yours gratefully,

BRANDEN MATTHEWS


Columbia College
September, 1892

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AMERICANISMS AND BRITICISMS

N a novel written in the last decade but one of the nineteenth century by an Australian lady in collaboration with a member of Parliament, one of the characters stops another "to ask for the explanation of this or that Australian phrase," wondering whether "it would be better to give the English meaning of each word after the word itself, and to keep on repeating it all through, or would it do to put a footnote once for all, or how would it do to have a little glossary at the end?" As it happens, oddly enough, the authors of *The Ladies' Gallery* have not themselves done any one of these things; and therefore, if we chance to read their fiction, we are left to grope for ourselves when in the first two chapters we are told of "the wild howling of the *dingoes* in the

scrub," and when we learn that the hero had "eaten his evening meal—*damp*er and a hard junk of *wallabi* flesh"—while his "*billy* of tea was warming." Then we are informed that "he had arranged a bed with his blankets, his *swag* for a pillow," and that he wished for a good mate to share his watch, or even "a black *tracker* upon whom he could depend as a scout." We are told also that this hero, who "was not intended to *grub* along," hears a call in the night, and he reflects "that a black fellow would not *cou-ee* in that way." Later he cuts up "a *fig* of tobacco;" he says "we can *yarn* now;" he speaks of living on wild plums and *bandicoot*;" and he makes mention of "a certain *newchum*." From the context we may fairly infer that this last term is the Australian equivalent of the Western *tenderfoot*; but who shall explain the meaning of *damp*er and *dingoes*, *cou-ee* and *bandicoot*? And why have *scrub* and *billy*, *grub* and *fig*, taken on new meanings, as though they had suffered a sea-change in the long voyage around the Cape or through the canal?

As yet, so far as I know, no British critic has raised a cry of alarm against