



The New York Public Library  
Billy Rose Theatre Division

Guide to the

**Letters to E. Lawrence Dudley**

1917-1927

\*T-Mss 1975-005

## Summary

**Creator:** Arliss, George, 1868-1946

**Title:** Letters to E. Lawrence Dudley

**Date:** 1917-1927

**Size:** 25 letters (1 portfolio)

**Abstract:** George Arliss (1868-1946), English stage and screen actor, was best known for portraying historical figures such as British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, Alexander Hamilton, Cardinal Richelieu, and French author Voltaire. Following Arliss' success with the stage version of Louis Napoleon Parker's *DISRAELI* (1911), authors E. Lawrence Dudley and George Gibbs attempted to fashion a similar vehicle based on the life of Voltaire, but the project ran into difficulties, eventually causing a rift between the collaborators, and the play was never staged. More than a decade later, after Arliss won a Best Actor Oscar for the film version of *DISRAELI* (1929), Dudley and Gibbs contributed to the screenplay of the Warner Brothers' film version of *VOLTAIRE* (1933). Consists of 23 handwritten letters from George Arliss to E. Lawrence Dudley, 1 note from Arliss to George Gibbs, and 1 undated Christmas card from Mr. and Mrs. Arliss. Arliss' unhappiness with Dudley and Gibbs' work on their script for the play *VOLTAIRE* becomes clear in the course of the correspondence, and the primary reasons for his eventual break with his collaborators is laid out in a long and heated letter of Oct. 22, 1920.

**Preferred citation:** Letters to E. Lawrence Dudley, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library

## Creator History

George Arliss (1868-1946), English stage and screen actor, was best known for portraying historical figures such as British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, Alexander Hamilton, Cardinal Richelieu, and French author Voltaire. Following Arliss' success with the stage version of Louis Napoleon Parker's *DISRAELI* (1911), authors E. Lawrence Dudley and George Gibbs attempted to fashion a similar vehicle based on the life of Voltaire, but the project ran into difficulties, eventually causing a rift between the collaborators, and the play was never staged. More than a decade later, after Arliss won a Best Actor Oscar for the film version of *DISRAELI* (1929), Dudley and Gibbs contributed to the screenplay of the Warner Brothers' film version of *VOLTAIRE* (1933).

## **Scope and Content Note**

Consists of 23 handwritten letters from George Arliss to E. Lawrence Dudley, 1 note from Arliss to George Gibbs, and 1 undated Christmas card from Mr. and Mrs. Arliss. Arliss' unhappiness with Dudley and Gibbs' work on their script for the play VOLTAIRE becomes clear in the course of the correspondence, and the primary reasons for his eventual break with his collaborators is laid out in a long and heated letter of Oct. 22, 1920.

## **Key Terms**

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Correspondence

### **Subjects**

Theater -- New York (State) -- New York

### **Names**

Arliss, George, 1868-1946

Dudley, E. Lawrence (Edward Lawrence), 1879-

Gibbs, George, 1870-1942