On the Art of WRITING

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch

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by

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Contents

Preface

By recasting these lectures I might with pains have turned them into a smooth treatise. But I prefer to leave them (bating a very few corrections and additions) as they were delivered. If, as the reader will all too easily detect, they abound no less in repetitions than in arguments dropped and left at loose ends—the whole bewraying a man called unexpectedly to a post where in the act of adapting himself, of learning that he might teach, he had often to adjourn his main purpose and skirmish with difficulties—they will be the truer to life; and so may experimentally enforce their preaching, that the Art of Writing is a living business.

Bearing this in mind, the reader will perhaps excuse certain small vivacities, sallies that meet fools with their folly, masking the main attack. *That*, we will see, is serious enough; and others will carry it on, though my effort come to naught.

It amounts to this—Literature is not a mere Science, to be studied; but an Art, to be practised. Great as is our own literature, we must consider it as a legacy to be improved. Any nation that potters with any glory of its past, as a thing dead and done for, is to that extent renegade. If that be granted, not all our pride in a Shakespeare can excuse the relaxation of an effort—however vain and hopeless—to better him, or some part of him. If, with all our native exemplars to give us courage, we persist in striving to write well, we can easily resign to other nations all the secondary fame to be picked up by commentators.

Recent history has strengthened, with passion and scorn, the faith in which I wrote the following pages.

Arthur Quiller-Couch

November 1915

LECTURE I

Inaugural

Wednesday, January 29, 1913

In all the long quarrel set between philosophy and poetry I know of nothing finer, as of nothing more pathetically hopeless, than Plato's return upon himself in his last dialogue "The Laws." There are who find that dialogue (left unrevised) insufferably dull, as no doubt it is without form and garrulous. But I think they will read it with a new tolerance, maybe even with a touch of feeling, if upon second thoughts they recognise in its twisting and turnings, its prolixities and repetitions, the scruples of an old man who, knowing that his time in this world is short, would not go out of it pretending to know more than he does, and even in matters concerning which he was once very sure has come to divine that, after all, as Renan says, "*La Verité consiste dans les nuances.*" Certainly "the mind's dark cottage battered and decayed" does in that last dialogue admit some wonderful flashes,

> From Heaven descended to the low-roofed house
> Of Socrates,

or rather to that noble "banquet-hall deserted" which aforetime had entertained Socrates.

Suffer me, Mr. Vice-Chancellor and Gentlemen, before reaching my text, to remind you of the characteristically beautiful setting. The place is Crete, and the three interlocutors—

Cleinias a Cretan, Megillus a Lacedaemonian, and an Athenian stranger—have joined company on a pilgrimage to the cave and shrine of Zeus, from whom Minos, first lawgiver of the island, had reputedly derived not only his parentage but much parental instruction. Now the day being hot, even scorching, and the road from Knossos to the Sacred Cave a long one, our three pilgrims, who have foregathered as elderly men, take it at their leisure, and propose to beguile it with talk upon Minos and his laws. "Yes, and on the way," promises the Cretan, "we shall come to cypress-groves exceedingly tall and fair, and to green meadows, where we may repose ourselves and converse." "Good," assents the Athenian. "Ay, very good indeed, and better still when we arrive at them. Let us push on."

So they proceed. I have said that all three are elderly men; that is, men who have had their opportunities, earned their wages, and so nearly earned their discharge that now, looking back on life, they can afford to see Man for what he really is—at his best a noble plaything for the gods. Yet they look forward, too, a little wistfully. They are of the world, after all, and nowise so tired of it, albeit disillusioned, as to have lost interest in the game or in the young who will carry it on. So Minos and his laws soon get left behind, and the talk (as so often befalls with Plato) is of the perfect citizen and how to train him—of education, in short; and so, as ever with Plato, we are back at length upon the old question which he could never get out of his way—What to do with the poets?

It scarcely needs to be said that the Athenian has taken hold of the conversation, and that the others are as wax in his hands. "O Athenian stranger," Cleinias addresses him—"inhabitant of Attica I will not call you, for you seem to deserve rather the name of Athene herself, because you go back to first principles."

Thus complimented, the stranger lets himself go. Yet somehow he would seem to have lost speculative nerve.

It was all very well in the *Republic*, the ideal State, to be bold and declare for banishing poetry altogether. But elderly men have given up pursuing ideals; they have "seen too many leaders of revolt." Our Athenian is driving now at practice (as we say), at a well-governed State realisable on earth; and after all it is hard to chase out the poets, especially if you yourself happen to be something of a poet at heart. Hear, then, the terms on which, after allowing that comedies may be performed, but only by slaves and hirelings, he proceeds to allow serious poetry.

> And if any of the serious poets, as they are termed, who write tragedy, come to us and say—"O strangers, may we go to your city and country, or may we not, and shall we bring with us our poetry? What is your will about these matters?"—how shall we answer the divine men? I think that our answer should be as follows:—
>
> "Best of strangers," we will say to them, "we also, according to our ability, are tragic poets, and our tragedy is the best and noblest: for our whole state is an imitation of the best and noblest life... You are poets and we are poets, both makers of the same strains, rivals and antagonists in the noblest of dramas, which true law alone can perfect, as our hope is. Do not then suppose that we shall all in a moment allow you to erect your stage in the Agora, and introduce the fair voices of your actors, speaking above our own, and permit you to harangue our women and children and the common people in language other than our own, and very often the opposite of our own. For a State would be mad which gave you this license, until the magistrates had determined whether your poetry might be recited and was fit for publication or not. Wherefore, O ye sons and scions of the softer Muses! first of all show your songs to the Magistrates and let them compare them with our own,

> and if they are the same or better, we will give you a chorus; but if not, then, my friends, we cannot."

Lame conclusion! Impotent compromise! How little applicable, at all events, to our Commonwealth! though, to be sure (you may say) we possess a relic of it in His Majesty's Licenser of Plays. As you know, there has been so much heated talk of late over the composition of the County Magistracy; yet I give you a countryman's word, Sir, that I have heard many names proposed for the Commission of the Peace, and on many grounds, but never one on the ground that its owner had a conservative taste in verse!

Nevertheless, as Plato saw, we must deal with these poets somehow. It is possible (though not, I think, likely) that in the ideal State there would be no Literature, as it is certain there would be no professors of it; but since its invention men have never been able to rid themselves of it for any length of time. *Tamen usque recurrit.* They may forbid Apollo, but still he comes leading his choir, the Nine:—

> Ἄχλητος μὲν ἔγωγε μένοιμί χεν' ἐς δὲ χαλευ'ντων
> Θαρσήσας Μοίσαιοι σὺν ἀμετέραισιν ἰχοίμαν.

And he may challenge us English boldly! For since Chaucer, at any rate, he and his train have never been ἄχλητοι to us—least of all here in Cambridge.

Nay, we know that he should be welcome. Cardinal Newman, proposing the idea of a University to the Roman Catholics of Dublin, lamented that the English language had not, like the Greek, "some definite words to express, simply and generally, intellectual proficiency or perfection, such as 'health,' as used with reference to the animal frame, and 'virtue,' with reference to our moral nature." Well, it is a reproach to us that we do not possess the term: and perhaps again a reproach to us that our

attempts at it—the word "culture" for instance—have been apt to take on some soil of controversy, some connotative damage from over-preaching on the one hand and impatience on the other. But we do earnestly desire the thing. We do prize that grace of intellect which sets So-and-so in our view as "a scholar and a gentleman." We do wish as many sons of this University as may be to carry forth that lifelong stamp from her precincts; and—this is my point—from our notion of such a man the touch of literary grace cannot be excluded. I put to you for a test Lucian's description of his friend Demonax—

> His way was like other people's; he mounted no high horse; he was just a man and a citizen. He indulged in no Socratic irony. But his discourse was full of Attic grace; those who heard it went away neither disgusted by servility, nor repelled by ill-tempered censure, but on the contrary lifted out of themselves by charity, and encouraged to more orderly, contented, hopeful lives.

I put it to you, Sir, that Lucian needs not to say another word, but we know that Demonax had loved letters, and partly by aid of them had arrived at being such a man. No; by consent of all, Literature is a nurse of noble natures, and right reading makes a full man in a sense even better than Bacon's; not replete, but complete rather, to the pattern for which Heaven designed him. In this conviction, in this hope, public spirited men endow Chairs in our Universities, sure that Literature is a good thing if only we can bring it to operate on young minds.

That he has in him some power to guide such operation a man must believe before accepting such a Chair as this. And now, Sir, the terrible moment is come when your ζένος must render some account—I will not say of himself, for that cannot be attempted—but of his business here. Well, first let me plead that while you have been infinitely kind to the stranger,

feasting him and casting a gown over him, one thing not all your kindness has been able to do. With precedents, with traditions such as other professors enjoy, you could not furnish him. The Chair is a new one, or almost new, and for the present would seem to float in the void, like Muhammad's coffin. Wherefore, being one who (in my Lord Chief Justice Crewe's phrase) would "take hold of a twig or twine-thread to uphold it"; being also prone (with Bacon) to believe that "the counsels to which Time hath not been called, Time will not ratify"; I do assure you that, had any legacy of guidance been discovered among the papers left by my predecessor, it would have been eagerly welcomed and as piously honoured. O, trust me, Sir!—if any design for this Chair of English Literature had been left by Dr. Verrall, it is not I who would be setting up any new stage in your agora! But in his papers—most kindly searched for me by Mrs. Verrall—no such design can be found. He was, in truth, a stricken man when he came to the Chair, and of what he would have built we can only be sure that, had it been this or had it been that, it would infallibly have borne the impress of one of the most beautiful minds of our generation. The gods saw otherwise; and for me, following him, I came to a trench and stretched my hands to a shade.

For me, then, if you put questions concerning the work of this Chair, I must take example from the artist in Don Quixote, who being asked what he was painting, answered modestly, "That is as it may turn out." The course is uncharted, and for sailing directions I have but these words of your Ordinance:

> It shall be the duty of the professor to deliver courses of lectures on English Literature from the age of Chaucer onwards, and otherwise to promote, so far as may be in his power, the study in the University of the subject of English Literature.

And I never even knew that English Literature had a "subject"; or, rather, supposed it to have several! To resume:

> The professor shall treat this subject on literary and critical rather than on philological and linguistic lines:

—a proviso which at any rate cuts off a cantle, large in itself, if not comparatively, of the new Professor's ignorance. But I ask you to note the phrase "to promote, so far as may be in his power, the study,"—not, you will observe, "to teach"; for this absolves me from raising at the start a question of some delicacy for me, as Green launched his *Prolegomena to Ethics* upon the remark that "an author who seeks to gain general confidence scarcely goes the right way to work when he begins with asking whether there really is such a subject as that of which he proposes to treat." In spite of—mark, pray, that I say *in spite of*—the activity of many learned Professors, some doubt does lurk in the public mind if, after all, English Literature can, in any ordinary sense, be taught, and if the attempts to teach it do not, after all, justify (as Wisdom is so often justified of her grandparents) the silence sapience of those old benefactors who abstained from endowing any such Chairs.

But that the study of English Literature can be promoted in young minds by an elder one, that their zeal may be encouraged, their tastes directed, their vision cleared, quickened, enlarged—this, I take it, no man of experience will deny. Nay, since our two oldest Universities have a habit of marking one another with interest—an interest, indeed, sometimes heightened by nervousness—I may point out that all this has been done of late years, and eminently done, by a Cambridge man you gave to Oxford. This, then, Mr. Vice-Chancellor—this or something like this, Gentlemen—is to be my task if I have the good fortune to win your confidence.

Let me, then, lay down two or three principles by which I propose to be guided. (1) For the first principle of all I put to you that in studying any work of genius we should begin by taking it *absolutely*; that is to say, with minds intent on discovering just what the author's mind intended; this being at once the obvious approach to its meaning (its τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, the "thing it was to be"), and the merest duty of politeness we owe to the great man addressing us. We should lay our minds open to what he wishes to tell, and if what he has to tell be noble and high and beautiful, we should surrender and let soak our minds in it.

Pray understand that in claiming, even insisting upon, the first place for this *absolute* study of a great work I use no disrespect towards those learned scholars whose labours will help you, Gentlemen, to enjoy it afterwards in other ways and from other aspects; since I hold there is no surer sign of intellectual ill-breeding than to speak, even to feel, slightingly of any knowledge oneself does not happen to possess. Still less do I aim to persuade you that anyone should be able to earn a Cambridge degree by the process (to borrow Macaulay's phrase) of reading our great authors "with his feet on the hob," a posture I have not even tried, to recommend it for a contemplative man's recreation. These editors not only set us the priceless example of learning for learning's sake: but even in practice they clear our texts for us, and afterwards—when we go more minutely into our author's acquaintance, wishing to learn all we can about him—by increasing our knowledge of detail they enchance our delight. Nay, with certain early writers—say Chaucer or Dunbar, as with certain highly allusive ones—Bacon, or Milton, or Sir Thomas Browne—some apparatus must be supplied from the start. But on the whole I think it a fair contention that such helps to studying an author are

secondary and subsidiary; that, for example, with any author who by consent is less of his age than for all time, to study the relation he bore to his age may be important indeed, and even highly important, yet must in the nature of things be of secondary importance, not of the first.

But let us examine this principle a little more attentively—for it is the palmary one. As I conceive it, that understanding of literature which we desire in our Euphues, our gracefully-minded youth, will include knowledge in varying degree, yet is itself something distinct from knowledge. Let us illustrate this upon Poetry, which the most of us will allow to be the highest form of literary expression, if not of all artistic expression. Of all the testimony paid to Poetry, none commands better witness than this—that, as Johnson said of Gray's "Elegy" "it abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every heart returns an echo." When George Eliot said, "I never before met with so many of my own feelings expressed just as I should like them," she but repeated of Wordsworth (in homelier, more familiar fashion) what Johnson said of Gray; and the same testimony lies implicit in Emerson's fine remark that "Universal history, the poets, the romancers"—all good writers, in short—"do not anywhere make us feel that we intrude, that this is for our betters. Rather it is true that, in their greatest strokes, there we feel most at home." The mass of evidence, of which these are samples, may be summarised thus:—As we dwell here between two mysteries, of a soul within and an ordered Universe without, so among us are granted to dwell certain men of more delicate intellectual fibre than their fellows—men whose minds have, as it were, filaments to intercept, apprehend, conduct, translate home to us stray messages between these two mysteries,

as modern telegraphy has learnt to search out, snatch, gather home human messages astray over waste waters of the ocean.

If, then, the ordinary man be done this service by the poet, that (as Dr. Johnson defines it) "he feels what he remembers to have felt before, but he feels it *with a great increase of sensibility*"; or even if, though the message be unfamiliar, it suggests to us, in Wordsworth's phrase, to "feel that we are greater than we know," I submit that we respond to it less by anything that usually passes for knowledge, than by an improvement of sensibility, a tuning up of the mind to the poet's pitch; so that the man we are proud to send forth from our Schools will be remarkable less for something he can take out of his wallet and exhibit for knowledge, than for *being* something, and that "something," a man of unmistakable intellectual breeding, whose trained judgment we can trust to choose the better and reject the worse.

But since this refining of the critical judgment happens to be less easy of practice than the memorising of much that passes for knowledge—of what happened to Harriet or what Blake said to the soldier—and far less easy to examine on, the pedagogic mind (which I implore you not to suppose me confusing with the scholarly) for avoidance of trouble tends all the while to dodge or obfuscate what is essential, piling up accidents and irrelevancies before it until its very face is hidden. And we should be the more watchful not to confuse the pedagogic mind with the scholarly since it is from the scholar that the pedagogue pretends to derive his sanction; ransacking the great genuine commentators—be it a Skeat or a Masson or (may I add for old reverence' sake?) an Aldis Wright—fetching home bits of erudition, *non sua poma*, and announcing "This *must* be the true Zion, for we found it in a wood."

Hence a swarm of little school books pullulates annually,

all upside down and wrong from beginning to end; and hence a worse evil afflicts us, that the English schoolboy starts with a false perspective of any given masterpiece, his pedagogue urging, obtruding lesser things upon his vision until what is really important, the poem or the play itself, is seen in distorted glimpses, if not quite blocked out of view.

This same temptation—to remove a work of art from the category for which the author designed it into another where it can be more conveniently studied—reaches even above the schoolmaster to assail some very eminent critics. I cite an example from a book of which I shall hereafter have to speak with gratitude as I shall always name it with respect—*The History of English Poetry*, by Dr. Courthope, sometime Professor of Poetry at Oxford. In his fourth volume, and in his estimate of Fletcher as a dramatist, I find this passage:—

> But the crucial test of a play's quality is only applied when it is read. So long as the illusion of the stage gives credit to the action, and the words and gestures of the actor impose themselves on the imagination of the spectator, the latter will pass over a thousand imperfections, which reveal themselves to the reader, who, as he has to satisfy himself with the drama of silent images, will not be content if this or that in any way fall short of his conception of truth and nature,

—which seems equivalent to saying that the crucial test of the frieze of the Parthenon is its adaptability to an apartment in Bloomsbury. So long as the illusion of the Acropolis gave credit to Pheidias' design, and the sunlight of Attica imposed its delicate intended shadows edging the reliefs, the countrymen of Pericles might be tricked; but the visitor to the British Museum, as he has to satisfy himself with what happens indoors in the atmosphere of the West Central Postal Division of London, will not be content if Pheidias in any way fall short

of *his* conception of truth and nature. Yet Fletcher (I take it) constructed his plays as plays; the illusion of the stage, the persuasiveness of the actor's voice, were conditions for which he wrought, and on which he had a right to rely; and, in short, any critic behaves uncritically who, distrusting his imagination to recreate the play as a play, elects to consider it in the category of something else.

In sum, if the great authors never oppress us with airs of condescension, but, like the great lords they are, put the meanest of us at our ease in their presence, I see no reason why we should pay to any commentator a servility not demanded by his master.

My next two principles may be more briefly stated.

(2) I propose next, then, that since our investigations will deal largely with style, that curiously personal thing; and since (as I have said) they cannot in their nature be readily brought to rule-of-thumb tests, and may therefore so easily be suspected of evading all tests, of being mere dilettantism; I propose (I say) that my pupils and I rebuke this suspicion by constantly aiming at the concrete, at the study of such definite beauties as we can see presented in print under our eyes; always seeking the author's intention, but eschewing, for the present at any rate, all general definitions and theories, through the sieve of which the particular achievement of genius is so apt to slip. And having excluded them at first in prudence, I make little doubt we shall go on to exclude them in pride. Definitions, formulæ (some would add, creeds) have their use in any society in that they restrain the ordinary unintellectual man from making himself a public nuisance with his private opinions. But they go a very little way in helping the man who has a real sense of prose or verse. In other words, they are good discipline for some thyrsus-bearers, but the initiated have little use for

them. As Thomas à Kempis "would rather feel compunction than understand the definition thereof," so the initiated man will say of the "Grand Style," for example—"Why define it for me?" When Viola says simply:

> I am all the daughters of my father's house,
> And all the brothers too,

or Macbeth demands of the Doctor

> Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow ...?

or Hamlet greets Ophelia, reading her Book of Hours, with

> Nymph, in thy orisons
> Be all my sins remembered!

or when Milton tells of his dead friend how

> Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
> Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
> We drove afield,

or describes the battalions of Heaven

> On they move
> Indissolubly firm: nor obvious hill,
> Nor strait'ning vale, nor wood, nor stream divide
> Their perfect ranks,

or when Gray exalts the great commonplace

> The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
> And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
> Awaits alike th' inevitable hour;
> The paths of glory lead but to the grave,

or when Keats casually drops us such a line as

> The journey homeward to habitual self,

or, to come down to our own times and to a living poet, when I open on a page of William Watson and read

> O ancient streams, O far descended woods,
> Full of the fluttering of melodious souls! …

"why then (will say the initiated one), why worry me with any definition of the Grand Style in English, when here, and here, and again here—in all these lines, simple or intense or exquisite or solemn—I recognise and feel the *thing*?"

Indeed, Sir, the long and the short of the argument lie just here. Literature is not an abstract Science, to which exact definitions can be applied. It is an Art rather, the success of which depends on personal persuasiveness, on the author's skill to give as on ours to receive.

(3) For our third principle I will ask you to go back with me to Plato's wayfarers, whom we have left so long under the cypresses; and loth as we must be to lay hands on our father Parmenides, I feel we must treat the gifted Athenian stranger to a little manhandling. For did you not observe—though Greek was a living language and to his metropolitan mind the only language—how envious he showed himself to seal up the well, or allow it to trickle only under permit of a public analyst: to treat all innovation as suspect, even as, a hundred odd years ago, the *Lyrical Ballads* were suspect?

But the very hope of this Chair, Sir (as I conceive it), relies on the courage of the young. As Literature is an Art and therefore not to be pondered only, but practised, so ours is a living language and therefore to be kept alive, supple, active in all honourable use. The orator can yet sway men, the poet ravish them, the dramatist fill their lungs with salutary laughter or purge their emotions by pity or terror. The historian "super-

induces upon events the charm of order." The novelist—well, even the novelist has his uses; and I would warn you against despising any form of art which is alive and pliant in the hands of men. For my part, I believe, bearing in mind Mr. Barrie's *Peter Pan* and the old bottles he renovated to hold that joyous wine, that even Musical Comedy, in the hands of a master, might become a thing of beauty. Of the Novel, at any rate—whether we like it or not—we have to admit that it does hold a commanding position in the literature of our times, and to consider how far Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie was right the other day when he claimed, on the first page of his brilliant study of Thomas Hardy, that "the right to such a position is not to be disputed; for here, as elsewhere, the right to a position is no more than the power to maintain it." You may agree with that or you may not; you may or may not deplore the forms that literature is choosing nowadays; but there is no gainsaying that it is still very much alive. And I would say to you, Gentlemen, "Believe, and be glad that Literature and the English tongue are both alive." Carlyle, in his explosive way, once demanded of his countrymen, "Shakespeare or India? If you had to surrender one to retain the other, which would you choose?" Well, our Indian Empire is yet in the making, while the works of Shakespeare are complete and purchasable in whole calf; so the alternatives are scarcely *in pari materia*; and moreover let us not be in a hurry to meet trouble halfway. But in English Literature, which, like India, is still in the making, you have at once an Empire and an Emprise. In that alone you have inherited something greater than Sparta. Let us strive, each in his little way, to adorn it.

But here at the close of my hour, the double argument, that Literature is an Art and English a living tongue, has led me right up to a fourth principle, the plunge into which (though

I foresaw it from the first) all the coward in me rejoices at having to defer to another lecture. I conclude then, Gentlemen, by answering two suspicions, which very likely have been shaping themselves in your minds. In the first place, you will say, "It is all very well for this man to talk about 'cultivating an increased sensibility,' and the like; but we know what that leads to—to quackery, to aesthetic chatter: 'Isn't this pretty? Don't you admire that?' " Well, I am not greatly frightened. To begin with, when we come to particular criticism I shall endeavour to exchange it with you in plain terms; a manner which (to quote Mr. Robert Bridges' "Essay on Keats") "I prefer, because by obliging the lecturer to say definitely what he means, it makes his mistakes easy to point out, and in this way the true business of criticism is advanced." But I have a second safeguard, more to be trusted: that here in Cambridge, with all her traditions of austere scholarship, anyone who indulges in loose distinct talk will be quickly recalled to his tether. Though at the time Athene be not kind enough to descend from heaven and pluck him backward by the hair, yet the very *genius loci* will walk home with him from the lecture room, whispering monitions, cruel to be kind.

"But," you will say alternatively, "if we avoid loose talk on these matters we are embarking on a mighty difficult business." Why, to be sure we are; and that, I hope, will be half the enjoyment. After all, we have a number of critics among whose methods we may search for help—from the Persian monarch who, having to adjudicate upon two poems, caused the one to be read to him, and at once, without ado, awarded the prize to the other, up to the great Frenchman whom I shall finally invoke to sustain my hope of building something; that is if you, Gentlemen, will be content to accept me less as a professor than as an elder brother.

The Frenchman is Sainte-Beuve, and I pay a debt, perhaps appropriately here, by quoting him as translated by the friend of mine, now dead, who first invited me to Cambridge and taught me to admire her—one Arthur John Butler, sometime a Fellow of Trinity, and later a great pioneer among Englishmen in the study of Dante. Thus while you listen to the appeal of Sainte-Beuve, I can hear beneath it a more intimate voice, not for the first time, encouraging me.

Sainte-Beuve then—*si magna licet componere parvis*—is delivering an Inaugural Lecture in the École Normale, the date being April 12th, 1858. "Gentlemen," he begins, "I have written a good deal in the last thirty years; that is, I have scattered myself a good deal; so that I need to gather myself together, in order that my words may come before you with all the more freedom and confidence." That is his opening; and he ends:—

> As time goes on, you will make me believe that I can for my part be of some good to you: and with the generosity of your age you will repay me, in this feeling alone, far more than I shall be able to give you in intellectual freedom, in literary thought. If in one sense I bestow on you some of my experience, you will requite me, and in a more profitable manner, by the sight of your ardour for what is noble: you will accustom me to turn oftener and more willingly towards the future in your company. You will teach me again to hope.