

modesty on my part let it be said, if ever any of my friends hear it alleged to my detriment that I am over-fond of expressing myself, they may readily know how to take the animadversion, by setting it aside as mere surface-thinking. They may take it as probably coming from some one who has, on some occasion or other, failed to combat my conclusions, and who, like the lawyer of proverbial fame, having nothing to advance in favor of a prejudice, has taken refuge in abuse.

Very many years ago—more than it is necessary for me to state at present—I came in course of my reading to see the full meaning of Bacon's famous adage—"Reading maketh a full man, talking a ready man, and writing a correct man." Indeed, it is hardly necessary for me to say that these words have had a great influence on my life—so much so that I have sometimes been accused of following Bacon's advice over closely in my reading as well as in my inclination to talk, as has already been mentioned. What my readers, or at least some of them, may say of me, when I have fulfilled my promise of writing my experiences, will probably show how far I have outrun the limits of the adage in every respect. I can hardly hope to escape adverse criticism. I have no doubt I shall escape my enemies, for at the present moment I cannot really think of one who has survived me. But my friends will not only be ready to criticise me, but to carry to me in time the tidings of their mutual conferrings over my work, so that, probably even while I am in the midst of my literary labours, I may be told that so-and-so, in speaking of *THE OLD SCHOOLMASTER*, has sought to develop Bacon's wise saw into something like this: "Reading hath made him a dull man, talking a mere pedant, and writing a very foolish old fellow indeed."

Be this as it may, I am not to be deterred from my purpose. I have not entered upon this enterprise of authorship altogether of my own free will. A certain editor, who for the time being shall be nameless, was the first to lead me to think of putting my pen to paper in this way. I have likewise taken council with two or three of my staunchest friends, and they have made no effort to dissuade me from appearing in print; and it is now needless to say that, strengthened further by my own inclination, I have confidence enough to dismiss at the threshold of my enterprise all forebodings of evil-mindedness on the part of any of my readers—God bless them!