

**UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA
BARBOUR-PAGE FOUNDATION.
THE EARLY LITERARY CAREER OF
ROBERT BROWNING: FOUR
LECTURES**

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THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY

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Barbour-Page Foundation

**THE EARLY LITERARY CAREER
OF ROBERT BROWNING**

FOUR LECTURES

BY

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PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF ENGLISH IN YALE UNIVERSITY

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*Let
Mrs. Harlow Hatfield
12-17-67
a dated copy*

THE BARBOUR-PAGE LECTURE FOUNDATION

The University of Virginia is indebted for the establishment of the Barbour-Page Foundation to the wisdom and generosity of Mrs. Thomas Nelson Page, of Washington, D. C. In 1907, Mrs. Page donated to the University the sum of \$22,000, the annual income of which is to be used in securing each session the delivery before the University of a series of not less than three lectures by some distinguished man of letters or of science. The conditions of the Foundation require that the Barbour-Page lectures for each session be not less than three in number; that they be delivered by a specialist in some branch of literature, science, or art; that the lecturer present

in the series of lectures some fresh aspect or aspects of the department of thought in which he is a specialist; and that the entire series delivered each session, taken together, shall possess such unity that they may be published by the Foundation in book form.

I

“PAULINE” AND “PARACELSUS”

I purpose in the present course of lectures to give an account of the literary career of Robert Browning from the publication of his first poem in 1833 to his marriage and departure for Italy in 1846. The story of the works he produced during this period demands, of course, recital; but the principal aim which I have had in view is to bring out distinctly how he struck his contemporaries; to make clear the causes that transformed the cordial welcome he received during the fourth decade of the last century into the indifference and neglect which waited upon him during the decades immediately following; and, finally, to make manifest the nature of the agencies which brought about the remarkable and peculiar revival of his reputation during the closing years of his life. Accordingly, it is his literary career that comes almost exclusively under consideration. Only so far as it bears upon the

comprehension of that are any records given of his personal life. Most even of this little will be found comprised in the opening lecture.

Criticism of the work he produced during this period is necessarily involved in any discussion of his career. But there has been no intention to go into it largely, far less exhaustively. About the value or correctness of what of it is here given there will assuredly be difference of opinion. The inferences drawn, the views expressed, are likely to encounter the dissent of many of you, perhaps even of most of you. At all events, I have not needed to come to this university to find those who deem them wrong and some who call them abominable. The justice of critical conclusions must be left to time to determine, when the likes and dislikes of the present, its fancies and its fashions, have passed out of recognition and almost out of remembrance.

But though the future can test most satisfactorily the truth of opinion, it is usually at a disadvantage in testing the truth of fact. It is for the present to detect and expose falsity of statement, before frequency of repetition has hardened the general mind into settled beliefs which, through laziness or indifference, men re-