During his long and productive academic life, Professor George Remington Havens has been blessed with many close friends, devoted colleagues, and faithful students, many of whom would have been better qualified than I am to present this volume and the man it is meant to honor. For although it has been my pleasure to become acquainted with George Havens on the occasion of those meetings at which lovers of the French eighteenth century are fond of gathering, in the Statlers and Hiltons that are our substitutes for La Briche, La Chevrette, La Grandval, or Les Délices of yore, he is really known to me almost exclusively through his publications, letters, and his reputation.

It seems safe to conjecture, therefore, that the editor of this volume has wished on the one hand, to assign the task of writing the foreword to one of the many in the world who have been the so-to-speak anonymous beneficiaries of Professor Havens’s good works; and on the other hand, that he has probably also intended to make sure that the impeccable standards of historical objectivity for which Professor Havens is so justly famous not be distorted on this occasion by close personal bonds of affection, or adumbrated by excessive sentimentality.

Be that as it may, the following remarks result perforce not from subjective experience but from a dispassionate examination of the record. To put it another way, their author was left with no choice but simply to try to behave like a historian
when writing about a man who is himself one. In this sense at least, “tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes possibles.”

Nor ought this aphorism be thought to be the sign of an altogether ironical, let alone cynical, attitude. The faith in progress, which is related to Panglossian caricatural optimism, was shared by many of the writers whom Mr. Havens has spent his life studying. Yet it has, as we know, fallen into disrepute since. No doubt it was excessive in its heyday; but so is today the discredit it suffers. Friends and admirers of Professor Havens can fortunately find evidence for reborn faith by simply observing the progress achieved during his lifetime by the two causes to which he has most contributed in person: the university that he has served and the field of scholarship that he has cultivated.

In grateful recognition of his leading role in making his academic home one of the great universities of this country, and its Department of Romance Languages one of the truly distinguished ones, the Ohio State University awarded him in 1965 the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, with a citation from which the following excerpt speaks to the first consideration above:

A stalwart champion of higher education and academic excellence, he has made many contributions as scholar, teacher, director, counselor, and animator of productive research. He has provided sound judgment, resourcefulness, and unflagging energy as a leader at the departmental, college, and university levels. The Graduate School, the University Library, and the University Press are greatly indebted to him for his ceaseless, ardent, and cogent efforts in their behalf.

In more than one way, Professor Havens has carried his service to the Ohio State University beyond the call of duty. During the years following his retirement in 1961, he accepted, for instance, to write a chronicle of his own department from the early days of the university to its centenary in
1970. The seventy-two-page mimeographed History of the Department of Romance Languages at the Ohio State University that resulted from his archival work is incidentally a far more readable and arresting piece of writing than one would be led to assume from its title alone or from its private printing.

A few years before Ohio State conferred upon him the Doctorate of Humane Letters, in 1959 the University of Michigan had already selected Mr. Havens for the same high academic honor, thus testifying that his beneficial influence had been felt beyond the confines of his own campus. Nor should it be assumed that this gesture was merely the effect of some sort of good-neighbor policy between adjoining states, for there is nothing regional, let alone parochial, about Professor Havens's reputation. Indeed, regardless of his unswerving loyalty to the university on whose faculty he has served for forty-two years, he has also taught at no fewer than eight other institutions.

At the time of his initial appointment at Ohio State, in 1919, as a young graduate from Amherst College (Class of 1913), he had already taught at the Riverview Military Academy of Poughkeepsie, at the Mt. Vernon Collegiate Institute of Baltimore, and at Indiana University. He had also found time to do war service at Plattsburg and Camp Taylor, and to work in France after the Armistice with the Foyer du Soldat at Poitiers, Angoulême, and Ham. And no sooner had he settled in Columbus than Princeton tried—unsuccessfully—to lure him away. Moreover, during his career at Ohio State, he has served as visiting professor for the summer on the faculties of Johns Hopkins, Columbia, Chicago, the University of California, and the University of Pennsylvania.

Once we add to this record his long and active involvement in the affairs of the Modern Language Association—to limit this selective inventory to his strictly professional activities—we marvel all the more at the volume, variety, and sustained quality of his scholarly publications, for a complete
list of which the reader is referred to pages 387–98 of this book. For if those of us who tend nowadays to be skeptical about progress in general can at least take heart in observing the continuous advance, during the last half-century, of American scholarship dealing with the French Enlightenment, this comforting phenomenon is in no small measure directly attributable to George R. Havens.

When he received in 1917 the Ph.D. degree from the Johns Hopkins University for his thesis *The Abbé Prévost and English Literature*, he had almost no predecessor on this continent for this kind of scholarship in which he was going to excel. Thus his life corresponds precisely to a period of unprecedented development and prosperity for the very studies to which he has devoted himself. He belongs to the generation of the pioneers; and the reason our field of scholarship so thrives nowadays is because theirs was also a generation of giants.

Two of them, above all others, although slightly younger than Professor Havens, must be mentioned here. They have been closely associated with him in their work, and remain indissolubly linked with him in the idyllic and exalting dream-world that we of the later generations conjure in our imagination of the nascent state of eighteenth-century French studies in the United States at the time of World War I and shortly thereafter. Also they were kind and charitable enough to come to the rescue of this hapless chronicler. Realizing that he had been asked to practice the most treacherous genre after that of introducing the president of the United States, that of the foreword, and so under unusually adverse conditions, since he could not leaven his remarks, according to the strict ritual that governs the genre, with personal anecdotes, these two other members of the generation of giants have shared with him some of their memories, and thus provided him with the most precious documents in his research.

The first of these gentlemen, Ira O. Wade, Emeritus Professor of French at Princeton, whose tribute and contribution
appears in this volume, recalls that “among my academic friends George is my oldest and for my money my most reasonable one.” And Mr. Wade goes on reminiscing thus:

He was completing his graduate work in Hopkins when I arrived in 1914 as a Freshman. We lived in the same rooming house, ate in the same student pension, went for walks almost daily into Druid Hill Park as we exchanged a very artificial conversation in order to keep our French fluid. These were the mechanics of student life however. George, who was a little older and very sensible, was invaluable in keeping me a little steady. I have always been thankful for those days with him and more than grateful for his company.

As for the other member of this noble trio, Emeritus Professor Norman L. Torrey of Columbia University, rather than add his own scholarly study to our collective endeavor, chose to couch his contribution in the more personal genre, eminently congenial to all faithful dix-huitiémistes, of the familiar letter:

I first met George at a MLA meeting at Harvard in 1925, when I gave a paper on Voltaire and the English Deists. I announced my hope of going to Russia to check, under the auspices of a newly established cultural relations exchange. George said he had had the same idea, so we labored together among Voltaire’s books in Leningrad in the summer of 1926. The next year we gave a joint report on Voltaire’s library at the MLA meeting and then published our joint endeavors in PMLA and the Fortnightly Review.

When I told George that my work schedule at Yale was so heavy that I couldn’t write up any more articles, he came down on me hard, saying that I had to write if I hoped to have a career. I followed his advice. Ever since, he has been my mentor, my judicious and friendly critic.

Among other ties, we both owed a great debt to Gustave Lanson. He published George’s early articles on Rousseau in RHL and encouraged him in many ways. I visited Lanson at the École Normale and told him of my idea of working on Voltaire and the English Deists. He not only was enthusiastic but gave me many helpful hints for procedure. George was
Lanson's foremost ardent supporter and defender this side of the Atlantic.

My friendship with George Havens over a span of nearly fifty years has been a treasured memory. The thoroughness and high standards of his scholarship and his complete honesty are matched only by his ingrained modesty.

Testimonies by eyewitnesses are of singularly high value, as Voltaire discovered when working on his *Siècle de Louis XIV*, even when they cannot help but be also testimonials. From the firsthand experience of these two lifelong friends and confreres of George Havens, we could sketch a portrait of the man we are honoring; and we could also understand how the features that would appear in this portrait—modesty, honesty, seriousness, hard work, sound judgment—qualified him so well for his pioneering role.

Now, should there be among scholars and critics of the later generations some who, considering themselves—even with some justice—to be pioneers in their own right, should be skeptical about the claims to this status of a scholar whose methods of research, inspired by Lanson, they would consider old-fashioned, their skepticism ought to be easily dispelled by the following two considerations, one quite concrete, the other more theoretical.

The first simply has to do with Professor Havens's scholarly writings. Let us take a few examples from a long list.

To publish in 1921 a thesis entitled *The Abbé Prévost and English Literature* was bold to the point of temerity, both because it illustrated the still very new methods of what was then becoming known as comparative literature, and because Prévost's stature in those days did not begin to compare to that to which it has now been raised.

To travel in 1926 from Columbus to Leningrad in order to take a look at Voltaire's library was not only a remarkably imaginative venture, but must also have been especially at that date a real adventure, not unworthy perhaps of comparison with Diderot's long ride to the same city a century and a half earlier.
To publish in 1946 the first critical edition of Rousseau’s first major work was not only an innovative and courageous undertaking but one of lasting influence. When the same text was edited again in 1964 in the Pléiade Œuvres complètes series, the editors of the volume in which it appeared felt it necessary to refer no fewer than fifty-three times to George Havens in their notes.

To edit in 1951 the first critical bibliography of French eighteenth-century literature, jointly with Donald F. Bond, was again an unprecedented accomplishment, which to this date has not been superseded.

And so it goes. Examples of this kind seem to indicate that the originality and value of scholarship do not necessarily have to rest on the invention of new methods of approach, but can result from a diligent and intelligent application of tried-and-true methods to new objects of inquiry, provided these are chosen with good taste and good judgment.

In the new Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes that has in the last few years divided and stimulated practitioners of literary history and criticism, as in the older one, the winners tend to be those whose intellectual powers prevail, regardless of the side they have chosen.

But one should not succumb to the temptation of pedantry, especially when writing about a man so free himself of this vice of our profession. It is, however, admittedly harder to avoid all pomposity when reviewing the career of a man whose renown is greater than one’s own, and especially when one is charged with the responsibility of spokemanship for so broad, distinguished, and ardent a group of admirers and friends.

And since we, somewhat belatedly, are trying to apply the brakes on rhetoric and platitudes, let us also try to resist another temptation. As we look back in nostalgia at the golden age when the young Amherst graduate was one of the earliest American scholars to break into print in those seemingly impregnable bastions of French academic life the Revue
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_d'histoire littéraire de la France_ and the _Revue de littérature comparée_, let us not sigh tearfully about "the good old days," and philosophize on the irreversibility of time. Not only because many of us were not there to bear witness to the legendary goodness of those bygone days, but more importantly because this is not a story of rise and decline or of lost paradises. The line linking students and teachers is an uninterrupted one in which we play both roles in succession as in that of the generations. The advance of scholarship is a sinuous but a continuous one.

Not all of us, bound together in this volume as we are in honoring a great teacher and a great scholar, are addicted to the same methodological predilections or to the same literary tastes. Nor have we all taken Professor Havens’s courses, or written dissertations under his guidance. But we have all been his readers, and have benefited in the process; and all of us, students and teachers of literature and history in the Age of Ideas, are in his debt.

This book perhaps has no other unity, but none other would be more fitting.

Georges May