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Some aspects of

ROBERT BROWNING'S PHILOSOPHY OF LOVE.

with special regard to

his THEORY of the RELATION between LOVE and KNOWLEDGE

as revealed

in

MEN AND WOMEN (1855)

by

JESSIE G. CARSON.

BIRMINGHAM.

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FOREWORD

.....

No attempt is made in the following pages to give anything like an adequate account of the whole of Browning's philosophy of love, or of its relation to knowledge.

Very little reference has been made to the work of the poet's later years, in spite of the fact that much of it nearly concerns this particular subject. For such poems as Elfine at the Fair and A Pillar at Sebzevar, though they ~~may~~ seek to prove by logical argument the triumph of love over knowledge, are by very reason of their philosophical and argumentative character, somewhat unpoetical in quality.

The writer has endeavoured to set forth to some extent how Browning, as a poet, treated a subject which he later discusses as a logician; and therefore, with the exception ~~of~~ two preliminary chapters, and for purposes of further illustration, has confined her attention

solely to those years of Browning's life, which seemed to her, to have borne the richest poetical fruits,- and in particular, to the Men and Women Volumes of 1855.

Men and Women, as it originally appeared, consisted of fifty poems, with an epilogue dedicating them all to his wife. In these volumes "Browning reached the summit of his genius; for readily as it may be admitted that some of the poems in Dramatis Personæ and some of the books of The Ring and the Book, rank with the best of them, yet they do not surpass them. There are some twelve or fifteen masterpieces with all Browning's characteristic excellences, and few or none of his characteristic defects; and the remaining poems form a worthy accompaniment to them. Almost all those to which a definite date of composition can be assigned, belong to the years 1850-1855; they are the fruit of his marriage and of Italy. "

(1)

(1) Kenyon, G.F..Intro: to Centen: Ed: of Bg's Poems.

They are dramatic pictures of life, illustrating continually, and with extraordinary variety, the part played in our lives by love and knowledge.

Of the fifty-one poems which constitute these volumes twenty-six bear almost entirely on the main theme of this essay; while thirteen more, in varying degrees, contribute to it either directly or indirectly.

The remaining twelve poems are mostly very short; some are just charming trifles,- the only one of any considerable length or importance being Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came.

Of the second of these three groups - those having partial reference to the subject of this essay- mention has been made only of those poems, or parts of poems, which have a really vital connection with the subject. The bearing of such poems, for instance, as A Pretty Woman or A Serenade at the Villa, seems so trifling as scarcely to warrant a reference.

CHAPTER 1.

Browning's unity of thought - his optimistic view of life contrasted with the comparatively pessimistic outlook of Carlyle, M. Arnold, and Tennyson.

It is no exaggeration to say that of all our great English poets, Robert Browning has the greatest claim to the title of philosopher as well as poet. It is true that most of our poets have tried in some degree to solve the many problems of existence. Some have held such a solution as the goal of their life's work. But not one of them has achieved so great a unity of thought as Browning.

He indeed, on occasion, appeared before the world as philosopher, armed with proofs against any assault which might be made on his theories of life - ready to argue with logical precision on their behalf. Many of his later poems are merely philosophical disquisitions in verse, and much of Paracelsus and Sordello is vitiated by the same argumentative tendency.

During the middle period of his career, however, he was very rarely merely a philosopher. In the Men and Women volumes of 1855 though he arrived at the same conclusions as in his earlier and later work, he reached them by a different road - if indeed he can be said to have reached them by a road at all. For in these poems, more than in his earlier or later work, he seems to have been granted an immediate vision of those truths which elsewhere he sought to attain by process of hard thinking.

Whether the result was achieved by poetic inspiration or logical investigation, the important thing to realise is, that it is the same in either case. The truths which at one time he saw as poet, were the same as those which on other occasions he was prepared to test as philosopher and thinker.

This great unity of thought was at the same time consistent with, and perhaps dependent on, a variety almost as remarkable. For Browning, having arrived at certain theories, proceeded forthwith to test their truth. He was enough of a philosopher to see clearly, that if, throughout

the whole range of experience he could find one fact ultimately irreconcilable with his hypothesis, that hypothesis had failed.

Thus it happens that the bulk of his poetic output can be considered as an investigation of life undertaken in order to prove the validity of a philosophical theory. When the poet seems most concerned with individuals he is in reality most universal. He must search all kinds of experience in his quest for truth.

Interested in men of all ages, of all opinions and nationalities, versed in most sciences and arts, he could not but cover in his writings a vast field of human experience. Culling examples from Ancient Greece, Palestine just after the time of Christ, Italy in the middle ages, Italy and England of today, he wrote with equal zest of painting and music, of spiritualism and Biblical history,

of criminals and dignitaries of the church, and above all of the ordinary men and women he met in the streets of London and Paris, or in the quiet country lanes.

In his very first work, published at the age of twenty, appeared, somewhat incoherently expressed, that theory of life which was to be his constant theme until he died, an old man of nearly eighty years. Unlike most youthful poets, Browning, even at that early age, was not tossed about by every wave of spiritual influence which broke upon him. He seems when he wrote Pauline to have made serious and thoughtful investigation of the problems of existence, and to have arrived at certain conclusions which seemed to him satisfactory. By these he chose to stand, though by no means in quiescent acceptance, for the remainder of his long life, untroubled, or at least unshaken, by those storms of controversy which raged about his head, and which reduced other poets and thinkers with ideals perhaps as high as his

own to doubt and even to confusion.

Three great writers contemporary with Browning differ from him in varying degrees in respect to their attitude towards the problems of life.

Carlyle with his watchword " Truth ! though
 (1)
 the Heavens crush me for following her " reflects in his books the social, spiritual and intellectual confusion of his age. He was imbued with the conviction that man was a spiritual being, consumed with an ineffectual but unconquerable desire for the infinite, and burdened with responsibilities towards his fellows. But he was unable to realise, that this desire for infinity and this sense of responsibility are in truth man's noblest possessions, the very Godhead revealed in him.

He firmly believed that Right is right, and that Good ultimately must prevail; but he felt that God Himself had veiled His Face, and that man was destined to

(1)
 page 131 vol .1. Carlyle.

work for ever towards a goal set by another Will

than his own. He was obsessed by his own

insignificance. In Sartor Resartus he says

"We are- we know what; - light- sparkles floating in
(1)

the aether of Deity! "

" Thousands of human generations, all as noisy as

our own, have been swallowed up by Time, and there

remains no wreck of them any more;Pshaw!

what is this paltry little hog- cage of an Earth;...."(2

But he is not always so gloomy as this.

Breaking in on all his pessimism, comes the thought

that this Nature, and this Man are perhaps the very

" living visible Garment of God: " (3) and that

"the Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a

charnel-house with spectres; but Godlike, and my

(4)
Father's ".

(1) Page 43 Vol.1. Carlyle. (3) Page 43 Vol.1. Carlyle

(2) Pp. 145-6 Vol.1. " (4) " 150 " " "

Following on so comforting a thought, his soul sees humanity in a truer light. It is an object now for an infinite pity. Man is his suffering brother. Thus is established an indissoluble bond and each man becomes his brother's keeper. No longer must we selfishly seek our own happiness. "On the roaring billows of Time, thou art not engulfed, but borne aloft into the azure of Eternity. Love not pleasure, love God.

Here Carlyle has stumbled on at least part of the truth which upheld Browning himself. But he does not, having found it, keep steady hold. Continually he reverts to his former cry of despair, and often his consciousness of the brotherhood of man merely awakes in him a deeper despair. Though at one time he can write of "this fair universe" as "indeed the star-dor'd City of God" through every living soul of which beams "the glory of a present God", at others even the love of God is for him little more than a blind force fighting a battle for good of which the result is

preordained; while mankind are then regarded as
 " a thousand million ghosts walking the Earth at
 noontide; " and the Earth itself becomes but " a film;
 it cracks in twain, and warrior and war-horse sink
 beyond plummet's sounding

..... a little while ago, they were not; a little while,
 and they are not, their very ashes are not; " (1)

The poetry of Matthew Arnold echoes the cry of
 despair which wails through Sartar Resartus. He too
 despised " the barren optimistic sophistries of comfortable
 moles. " (2) He had little of Carlyle's mysticism. To him
 it was difficult to imagine time and space as mere illusions;
 and the man as a shadow in a shadow-system.

" This strange disease of modern life
 With its sick hurry, its divided aims, " (3)
 enveloped him and often threatened to stifle his soul.

(1) Page 21. Vol. 1. Carlyle.

(2) To a Republican Friend. (Sonnet)

(3) The scholar-Gipsy. Stanza xxi.

He loved to picture life as a voyage over "an unrecognisable sea", over which we sail by night encompassed in a darkness so thick that each of us stands utterly alone. We know nothing of the inner life of others. Scarcely do we know our own.

Like Carlyle, M. Arnold recognised the desire for infinity which leads man to become little more than "an aimless unallay'd Desire." Thoughts light his spirit only to hurry by, powers stir within him only to disappear. He wanders on earth groping for he knows not what.

But like Carlyle, he too failed to see that the very sense of the inadequacy of human life is the most hopeful thing about it; that "the shreds of gifts" granted us imply that they are part of a whole which exists somewhere; that man's very feeling that within him there is some inner life which rarely, if ever, reaches the surface, is the guarantee that this life

on earth has its complete fulfilment in another
existence.

" Thus " his sad lucidity of soul " only
served to make him feel life.

" With large results so little rife
Though bearable, seem hardly worth
This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth." (1)

Nature with its solemn hills, its incessantly falling
streams, its lonely sky, has beauty; but its loveliness
is cold; the Heavens roll on calm and unpassionate
in their steady performance of duty. The utmost he asks
for man is that he too may attain to the same calm
endurance.

M. Arnold, as he himself wrote of Sophocles,
(2)
would "see life steadily, and see it whole", but
though he saw it steadily he did not succeed in seeing
it whole. He sat apart in gloom, having insight only
into the evil of the time.

(1) Resignation lines 261- 3

(2) "To a Friend" (Sonnet).

Evil undoubtedly was there to be seen, but good was also present in still greater degree. It was a time of unrest and stress, when unseen forces were working confusedly together. What the final result of it would be, it was not given to M. Arnold to know- nor indeed to any one else; for life in the last half of the nineteenth century, chaotic though it seemed to men of thought, presented few problems compared with those which the twentieth asks us to solve and we are still in the full force of the hurly-burly which has grown steadily more violent with the years.

Like Carlyle, and Browning himself M. Arnold was a fighter. But while Carlyle in his gloomiest moments was upheld by a firm belief in the ultimate triumph of Good, though it was not given to him to see it, Arnold's battle was fought with an utter absence of joy, and the courage only of despair.

Turning for a moment to Tennyson we find that his position stands midway between the pessimism of Carlyle and Arnold and the joyous optimism of Brown-ing.

Living in close relation with the other three men, the same problems presented themselves; and he met them with equal determination to reach the truth.

The new movements of science and criticism which so deeply disturbed men such as Arnold and Clough, beset ^{him} ~~them~~ too; but whereas they could see no way out,

Tennyson impatiently thrust his way through at each onset, sometimes with shut eyes as if he dared not look facts fairly in the face. He seems to have been afraid to doubt, - to have clung desperately to the belief that "somehow good will be the final goal of ill", and in his old age he achieved if not the joy of complete victory, at least its peace.

Browning, the least subjective of poets, who could forget his own personality in love and sympathy with his fellows, formed a truer opinion of life than any of the above-mentioned. He looked out on the world of men, and like M. Arnold, he saw that evil was rife everywhere; he did more, for he went down and confronted evil in its own den, daring it to show itself in all its hatefulness: and he came back, not with a tale of woe, and a sorrowful face, but with a glad laugh of conquest and a promise of good hope, boldly asserting that evil is nought and that all is well with the world.

" He could see the reflection of the sun in every
 (1)
 foul puddle". "This world's no blot for us" he pro-
 -claims in Fra Lippo Lippi,--

" It means intensely and means good", while in the words of the mother of Saul he says -

"I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a life time,
 and all was for the best "

Browning, unlike Arnold and Tennyson, loved the
 strife and the bustle, and refused to flee from it;
 for he believed that the strife is the thing which
 matters most. We must

4 welcome each rebuff

That turns earth's smoothness rough,
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!

Be our joys three-parts pain!

Strive, and hold cheap the strain; (4)

Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

Yet Browning was very far from loving evil for
 its own sake.

" Why rushed the discords in but that the harmony (1)
 should be prized?"

.... " On the earth the broken arc; in the heavens
 a perfect round. " (2)

" The moral life of man, as he sees it, is a struggle
 with evil, a movement through error towards a highest
 good" (3)

.....

- (1) Abt Vogler. Stanza xi. (4.) Rabbi Ben Ezra: vi.
 (2) Abt Vogler " ix
 (3) Browning as a Phil: and Relig: Teacher (Page 155) - Jot

CHAPTER 2.

Source of Browning's optimism- Significance of love- theory of supremacy of love over knowledge- relation of love to knowledge worked out in Paracelsus -brief survey of the theory, in subsequent works until 1855.

.....

The secret of Browning's indomitable optimism, his solution of all the difficulties and anomalies of life, can be summed up in one word- love.

The well-~~known~~ adage- often applied so frivolously- that it is love which makes the world go round, acquires a deeper and more spiritual meaning to the thoughtful reader of Browning's poetry.

Through his long life he consistently endeavoured to pierce through external phenomena and reach some abiding reality- some unifying and spiritual principle which must underlie the flux of circumstances; if life is to be anything more than a chaos of unmeaning sensations.

Early in life he decided what he conceived that universal

principle to be. Love alone, he thought, solves that
 apparent contradiction between morality and religion,
 which for ages has embarrassed the world . It is both
 the substance of life, and its end; it is the divine spark
 which proves a man "a god though in the germ".⁽¹⁾ Browning
 goes farther than this; he dares to say that

" The loving worm beneath its clod
 Is diviner than a loveless God."⁽²⁾

Since God is identified with love, man in
 so far as he loves is more divine than the Deity itself.
 But God is Love , and on that foundation he built his
 hope. God's revelation of Himself through the incarnation
 and atoning self-sacrifice of His Son, became in
 consequence the essence of his religious faith.

So many philosophers, poets, and preachers,
 from the time of Plato to the present day, have tried to
 define love in so many various ways, that to add in this
 little essay another to the already too numerous definitions

(1) Rabbi Ben Ezra. Stanza xiii.

(2) Christmas Eve. " v.

would be both superfluous and presumptuous. Yet, since love holds so vital a place in Browning's philosophy of life, it is essential to realise at the outset the exact significance he himself attached to a word which is used in ordinary conversation nowadays with half a dozen differing shades of meaning.

Whatever it may be to the ordinary man in the street, to Browning it was the permanent unity underlying the manifold changing variety of circumstance. To him it was not a mere emotion, but the bond of union between man and his Maker. It is God working in the world; a Creator manifesting itself through the medium of Power and Knowledge in successive forms of Joy, Beauty, and Goodness.

The very universe itself, Browning believed to be but the gigantic offspring of the infinite love of God. He created the world in the joy of love, and he created it on a rational plan. Man builds up a moral world to

lead him back to God's love; and he too builds on a reasonable basis. Thus love and reason are both primal powers reciprocally adding to each other's strength. Together they are lifting man out of the isolation and chaos of his own individual instincts and egoism to membership of a great spiritual Kingdom of which God is the Head.

The untutored savage has but a dim conception of love. The nearest he approaches to it is in sex attraction and the fierce protective instinct of the barbarian mother for her child. As his mental outlook is enlarged, so his conception of love begins to include such emotions as friendship, loyalty and self-sacrifice. So knowledge also, beginning with concrete experiences, and devoted to purely selfish ends, passes through stage after stage, from mere isolated facts to the fundamental truths which govern them.

From the beginning, love and knowledge have gone hand in hand. The wider a man's mental horizon

the greater becomes his capacity for love. This is true for the race however it may seem to be belied in individual cases. The idea of a world united in a universal brotherhood is the product of twenty centuries of continuous intellectual enlightenment, as well as of Christ's doctrine of love.

But Browning did not conceive of their continuing all the way together. There comes a time when love shoots on ahead leaving knowledge far behind. Intellectual knowledge can only be partial because our mind is an instrument and can give us information merely about things which can be divided and analysed. Knowledge is finite, and at best only relative. But love can reach out beyond the finite to the infinite. It can penetrate behind the material world to the beneficent purpose of God. It alone is wisdom. Not until knowledge has merged itself in love can it too transcend the limits of the finite world and behold in all its beauty the Beatific Vision of God Himself revealed as Love incarnate.

That the significance of love became ever more apparent to Browning is manifest in his poems, from Paracelsus, where the doctrine is first clearly outlined, through all his work, to the last group of poems, which tend at times to become more philosophical disquisitions on this very subject.

Though Browning, at the time when he wrote Paracelsus, fully realised that love was the most significant thing in life, it did not yet dwarf for him, as it did in his later years, the value of knowledge. In this early poem, though ultimately the victory lies with love, it is obvious that the poet has hearty sympathy with Paracelsus throughout the whole of his vain quest for knowledge.

From childhood Paracelsus has been possessed
by a fire

" to comprehend the works of God,
And God himself, and all God's intercourse
With the human mind;" (1)

From the outset, however, it is Festus,
the humble friend, who loves much, who is nearer the
truth.

"Were I elect like you," he says.—

"I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows; it should seem
Impossible for me to fail, so watched
By gentle friends who made my cause their own", (1) ~~(2)~~

But Paracelsus, with sublime self-confidence,
thinks he is all sufficient in himself, and sets
off alone on his quest.

After the lapse of a considerable number
of years, left an old, grey haired man from whom all
the vigour and joy of youth has fled, he begins for
the first time to wonder if he has "mistaken the wild
nursling" (2) of his breast and to regret the time

(1) Page 25 Vol 1 Browning's Poems.

(2) " 30 " 1 " "

" When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge
 Set not remorselessly love's claim aside" (1)

In the midst of this despondency there enters Aprile
 " who would love infinitely and be loved" (2)

Paracelsus, in whose mind the necessity of love is only
 just beginning to dawn, exults over this " poor slave"
 for setting such store on what he himself has deliberate-
 -ly shut out from life. His triumph, however, is short-
 -lived; for Aprile, after recounting the aspiration which
 he has ever held before his eyes, concludes by telling
 how he has prayed God " to make more loveliness" for him
 " and for mankind", or to take him to Himself,
 "Eternal, infinite love". Then turning abruptly to

Paracelsus he says

" If thou hast ever
 Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,
 thou art
 No king of mine." (3)

(1) Page 29. Vol 1.
 (2) " 32. Vol 1.
 (3) " 34. Vol 1.

Somewhere in the breast of Paracelsus a bolt is shot back, and weeping, he cries aloud-

" Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
To love; and merciful God, forgive us both!
We wake at length from weary dreams; but both
Have slept in fairy- land.....

I too, have sought to know as thou to love- (1)
Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge." (2)

Then with renewed hope, turning to the
dying Aprile, he rallies him thus,

"Die not, Aprile, we must never part.
Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
Whom this strange chance unites once more?

Part? never!

Till thou, the lover, know; and I the knower,
Love- until both are saved."(2)

(1) Page 36, Vol .1.

(2) " 36 " .1.

But salvation is not yet. Aprile dies, and Paracelsus is left to continue his quest alone. The sudden revelation, though it is not without its effect, does not transform Paracelsus into an Aprile. He realises now that he will never attain his end unless he calls love to his assistance, but he is not the man to feed on love and beauty for their own sake; they are still merely means to an end— and that end is still knowledge.

In consequence, the rest of his life consists of a constant series of disillusionments and a steady deterioration of his high aim. Not till he lies on his deathbed, is the reason of his failure revealed in full to his spirit. Then, at length, all is made clear, and in his last wonderful speech— wherein it seems apparent that Browning himself is surely speaking within him,— he confesses —

" One Sin —

Had spotted my career from its uprise,

I saw Aprile.....

I learned my own deep error; love's undoing

Taught me the work of love in man's estate,

And what proportion love should hold with power

In his right constitution; love preceding

Power, and with much power, always much more love;..

Regard me, and the poet dead long ago

Who once loved rashly; and shape forth a third,

And better-tempered spirit, warned by both: " (1)

God's power manifested in love and

knowledge is set forth in plain terms as the

principle which makes for unity in the world.

It would seem from the closing lines of Paracelsus

that love and knowledge were two equally valuable

halves in one complete whole. But though this is

undoubtedly what the poet meant to teach here, that

he does not, in his heart, really believe them to

be quite of equal value, is hinted from time to time

(1) Pages 71- 72 Vol. 1.

in the poem itself, in such lines as -

..... .. all love renders wise
 In its degree; " (1) or again,
 " God! Thou art Love! I build my faith on that!" (2)

In thus identifying God with Love rather than with Knowledge, and intimating that Love carries Knowledge along with it, Browning was taking the first step towards the development in his later years, of an agnosticism which made his very optimism self-^{oxy.}-contradictory. For the theory of the failure of knowledge, which he came afterwards to adopt- perhaps too easily following popular thought- was fundamentally inconsistent with his strong conviction that " all's right with the world" and that mankind is progressing through ever higher moral planes.

In Paracelsus the poet is thus nearer to the expression of a consistent philosophy than in the work of his latest years.

(1) Page 48 Vol .1.
 (2) " 61 " .1.

Sordello. published five years later, may be regarded from the aspect of philosophy as more or less a replica of the earlier poem; though already a tendency is shown to attach supreme value to love and consequently to give knowledge a second place at best.

Pippa Passes. Browning's next considerable poem might be described as a dramatic representation of the various emotions to which the word 'love' is loosely applied - from the hectic passion of Ottima, through the patriotism of Luigi to Pippa's love of humanity and finally of God.

Pippa would be each of the lovers in turn - "the happiest four in Asolo." First she would be Ottima; but turns from the dishonesty of the latter's love to the supposed maiden purity of Phene. Then remembering that earthly love is transient, she would fain be Luigi, "safe as in a chain" in his mother's protective tenderness. But even that is not perfect.

There is a "best love of all"- the love of God.
 "So she will be Monsignor" that holy and beloved
 priest".

The four detached scenes with their disclosures
 of the wrong and evil lurking within these fair-seeming
 shows, clearly prove Pippa in her pure love of God and
 Humanity infinitely far above the others in spite of
 her ignorance and simplicity.

The dramas of the next few years continue the same
 theme. Such a creation as Guendolen in the Blot on the
'Scoutcheon' is "the incarnation of high-hearted feminine
 commonsense, of clear insight into the truth of things,
 born of the power of love in her." (1) while Colombe's
Birthday is just another story of the supremacy of
 love; Colombe herself trusting in love as the one worthy
 thing in the world to bring her out of the whirlpool
 of affairs and love unshipwrecked and unstained.

In Christmas - Eve and Easter Day. published

(1)

Browning. Stopford Brooke. Page 333.

in 1850, Browning returns once more to the abstract discussion of the theory of the supremacy of love over knowledge. It is too long and abstract a poem to discuss here in any detail; but since its subject bears closely on the main theme of this essay it must not be passed over entirely without comment.

In Christmas Eve two types of Christianity differing widely from each other are set forth. First, there is the sordid vulgarity of Zion Chapel, with its atmosphere of wet umbrellas, poverty and stupidity. Then the scene is changed to St. Peter's Rome, where worship is ~~eased~~ clothed in sensuous beauty.

These two types, so different in outward form are both satisfactory in so far as they show forth love and faith. Neither type sets out to satisfy the intellect; that is done in the lecture room of a rationalistic German professor, who sets forth a

Christianity bereft of faith and devoid of love but eminently reasonable and logical.

The dissenter poisons the atmosphere of religion with vulgarity, the Papist with ceremony and ~~incense~~ incense. But the Rationalist simply exhausts its atmosphere, leaving no air for poison or anything else.

He denies the divinity of Christ, yet acknowledges that He possessed a marvellous power over the world. What then constituted that power? Was it his intellect? No! for he only repeated what others had already taught. Was it its goodness? Surely not! for how can the mere possession of goodness warrant a claim to world-dominion?

What distinguished Christ was that he could furnish a motive for practising what was already known. This was the God-function in him. He did not say "Believe in Justice, Truth etc:- but "Believe in Me" and men did believe in Him.

Thus the lecturer's position is absurd.

He disrobes Christ of all that constitutes His title to reverence and admiration, and then bids us prefer him to all other teachers.

The secret presence of Christ's love is however manifested even here.

"If love's dead there, it has left a ghost."

" For when ^{the} Pearl of Price, at reason's test,
Lay dust and ashes levigable
On the professor's lecture table-
He bids us when we least expect it
Take back our faith, if it be not just whole,
Yet a pearl indeed.....
Go home and venerate the Myth.....
This Man continue to adore him"

Stanza 18.

Only the latter half of Easter Day has any considerable bearing on the question of love and its supremacy. The speaker has a vision of the Judgment. He has already made his choice of what he regards as the best thing in life. He has chosen the world, because it

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Only the latter half of Easter Day has any considerable bearing on the question of love and its supremacy. The speaker has a vision of the Judgment. He has already made his choice of what he regards as the best thing in life. He has chosen the world, because it

is so beautiful, so near, that he feels he simply cannot renounce it.

Christ appearing to him in a vision replies-

" This finite life, thou hast preferred,
In disbelief of God's own word,
To Heaven and to Infinity.

..... Thou art shut
Out of ^{the} Heaven of spirit; glut
Thy sense upon the world: 'tis thine
For ever - take it! "

Stanza xv

But earth is the mere antichamber to God's palace beyond. That there are some deficiencies in Nature is plain. So the man will turn to Art, which is the perfecter of Nature - only to find that Art is nothing but an imperfect attempt to express something plainly inexpressible - the shadow of a reality beyond.

Unsatisfied again he grasps Mind - " Mind is best " but once again " The goal's a ruin like the rest! "

Stanza xxviii

Then in despair he cries-

" I let the world go, and take love!"

Stanza xxix

" Love is the best? " says the Form with
menacing gesture,"→You would have what has always
been above, beside, and around you!- What has been
waiting to bless you, but what you have been persistently
rejecting or ignoring! Stand by your choice and
take the show of love for its reality- Reject Christ-
- the very soul of love, for its mere shows! "

Cowering in utter humility, the man breathes
his last prayer-

"Thou Love of God !

Be all the earth a wilderness

Only let me go on, go on,

Still hoping ever and anon

To reach one eve the Better Land!"



Stanza xxxi

.....

*
N.B.

For the above analysis of Christmas-Eve and Easter Day I am
considerably indebted to the marginal notes made by the late
Professor Churton Collins in the copy of Bg's Poems now in the
University Library, Edmund St., B'ham.

CHAPTER III

Importance of love proclaimed in first and last poems
of Men and Women- tragic results of disregarding love-
 previously treated in Dramatic Lyrics- subsequently
 in Dramatis Personae - Statue and Bust - superiority
 of love to mere respectability (Respectability- A Light
 Woman .)

The opening poem of the Men and Women Volumes
of 1855 strikes unmistakably the note of the absolute
 supremacy of love over everything else in life, including
 knowledge.

A great city with its temples and colonnades, its
 "causeways, bridges, aqueducts" - all monuments of the
 intellect of men of a former age- has given place to a
 solitary pasture. Over the grandeur of a by-gone age is
 spread a carpet of grass where the sheep "tinkle homeward
 in the twilight." " A tower which in ancient days
 sprang sublime" has left but a single little turret to
 witness its former magnificance; and even that is

" By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored."

Moreover,- and it is this which emphasises the contrast -
- in that very turret,

" whence the charioters caught soul

For the goal, "

"a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair" is waiting
for the lover who in a moment will greet her. As they embrace
the centuries with their " folly, noise and sin" become
as if they had never been. The only reality of life
is love; and "Love is best!"

Though it must be conceded that Browning is not in
this poem speaking in the first person, there can be little
doubt that he is heartily in sympathy with the sentiment
here expressed. For at the time of the composition of
Men and Women the poet's private life was an acted
sermon on the doctrine here set forth.

It would be irrelevant to describe here the life
of the Brownings in Italy, familiar as the tale of it is
to us all. It is sufficient, merely to suggest that their

almost perfect union, in its subordination of everything to love, amply proves that the philosophical doctrine set forth so frequently and convincingly in his poems, had its root in the deepest springs of the poets own personal experience.

Browning, as no reader of 'House' could doubt, was of all poets most averse from proclaiming on the house-tops the inner secrets of his private life. A man, he believed,

"Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with

One to show a woman when he loves her" (1)

Nevertheless, though we must look in vain for numerous references in his poems to his own personal love, the few which we do meet, burn with so ardent and pure a flame of spiritual passion, as to shed on his dramatic love poems a reflected glow of their own warm sincerity.

It is surely no mere coincidence that the volume which begins with "Love among the Ruins" concludes with One Word More.

(1) One Word More.

In this [^]l^um^br^ou^s and elephantine ^{n(t)} yet wonder-
 -fully tender poem Browning dedicates the work of his
 brain - his " Fifty men and Women" to the love of his
 heart. Boldly too, he proclaims, that to the feet of the
 woman he loves a man must bring the noblest understand-
 -ing. Knowledge and art wait upon love. Every artist
 longs " to find his love a language

Fit and fair and simple and sufficient-

Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,-

Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,

Put to proof art alien to the artists,

Once, and only once, and for One only."

But it has not been granted to Browning himself in
 this one short life to excel in more than one branch of
 art: he can only offer her the gift of poetry.

In other lives he may perhaps attain to other heights. But
 whatever he achieves now or hereafter, he would lay at
 the feet of his wife: they are hers by virtue of his
 love for her.

(1) C. Collins. Browning's Poems Vol.v. (Marginal note)

Thus Men and Women begins and ends with the thought that love is supreme in this life, and that the best gifts of knowledge are of use only in so far as they are capable of being put to her service. A life spent in the pursuit of knowledge, art, or power, for their own sake is a life wasted.

This thought was already a favourite one of Browning. It had formed the theme of several of the Dramatic Romances and Lyrics of 1850.

The lover of Cristina knows that

"There are flashes--~~of~~ struck from midnights.
 There are fire--flames noondays kindle,
 Whereby piled-up honours perish,
 Whereby sworn ambitions dwindle,
 While just this or that poor impulse,
 Which for once had play unstified,
 Seems the sole work of a life-time
 That away the rest have trifled." (1)

Of all these "poor impulses" the supreme is the one which urges a man or woman to make life just a "love-way" (2)

(1) Dramatic Romances and Lyrics- Cristina.
 (2) Ibid.

This impulse had come to Cristina and she had thrust it aside:

"..... next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever: " (1)

In "The Flight of the Duchess" , Browning had shown the other side of the picture.

The little Duchess, aflame with youthful fire of spirit, stifled in an atmosphere of wealth and display, suddenly realises, on the advent of the gipsy, that she is wasting the precious years of life; that love is the only good thing in the world; and that she will never have power to stir the Duke and his dry old mother to either love or life.

So, gladly she takes the step from which Cristina drew back in fear - that step which shall lead her to these things; and her whole nature suddenly blossoms into beauty and joy.

(2)
The Lost Leader may also be regarded as a variation of the same theme.

One of the great souls of the world, whose life might have been "a treading of the love way" in a still wider and nobler sense, has bartered his soul for "a handful of silver" and "a riband to stick in his coat".

The pity of such wasted lives seems to have been a constant source of sorrow to Browning; and pervades his poetry, like the haunting theme of one of Wagner's great operas. Not only is it conspicuous in the 1850 Volume⁹ and the chief theme of Men and Women, but it reappears again and again in Dramatic Personae and still later works.

(1)

For what is Youth and Art but the tale of another pair of lives spoiled for just the same reason?

"It might have been, once only!"

(1) Dramatic Personae.

Two young souls had their chance of love and refused it. They were both too busy growing famous and rich. What is the result ? The girl speaks -

" I've married a rich old lord,
And you're dubbed knight and R.A. "

Each life unfulfilled you see;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired, - been happy.

And nobody calls you a dunce
And people suppose me clever:
This could but have happened once
And we missed it, lost it for ever."

(1)
In "Dis Aliter Visum" also, the theme is treated with slight variations. Once again the speaker is a woman; once again the person addressed is an old lover; once again they have both gone their several ways and attained at least worldly comfort.

(1) Dramatis Personae.

The pair have met once more after ten years.

Ten years ago she had been " a poor pretty thoughtful thing," with faculties all alive, eager for everything good and beautiful.* He had at that time been a man ripe in experience, great in achievement, but with youth past; already on the downhill of life. As they had strolled along by the shore the thought had crossed his mind,

"...Let me get

Her for myself and what's the earth
With all its art, verse, music, worth-
Compared with love, found, gained, and kept? "

But worldly prudence had intervened, and he had foreseen the probable consequences of such a reckless act. May and September would never be able to agree. Then he had imagined her probable disillusionment and his own. So, bringing the conversation into ^{the} safer channels of the view and the weather, he had bidden her 'goodbye'.

As the woman looked back over the years she saw that the man for all his worldly prudence had been but a fool. Love had called, and he had closed his eyes to her voice. Doubtless if they had married, their happiness would have only been partial; but they would have at least begun on earth a thing which they might have completed in Heaven. As it was, the Devil must be gloating; for her old lover had cast aside her love, to marry a dancer whom now he regarded with contemptuous indifference; and as for herself—youthful ideals were just being crushed out of a life joined in marriage with a commonplace husband, whose idea of enjoyment was confined to such stolid pleasures as a rubber at whist.

But let us return to Men and Women. In the Statue and the Bust the story is told of a bride who falls in love, on the very day of her wedding, with a man other than her husband.

" He looked at her as a lover can;

She looked at him as one who awakes,—

The past was asleep and her life began."

Or rather, it might have begun! For, instead of flying with each other," Next day passed and next day yet," and neither took any steps towards the fruition of the desire born at that moment.

"Weeks grew months, years- gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from youth and love"

Until death came and found them still apart: and after death the poet conceives their souls as being denied entrance into the presence of God, in punishment for their sin.

..... " But delay was best,
For their end was a crime!.....

So Browning forestalled what he knew the readers of his day would cry, in tones of reproachful expostulation.

Then he straightway proceeded to shock their sensibilities still more violently, by explaining why the conduct of these two was sinful.

" Let a man contend to the uttermost

For his life's set prize, be what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost

As surely as if it were lawful coin:

And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Was the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,

Though the end in sight was a crime, I say."

Many very worthy people have taken up the cudgels on the poet's behalf, striving to justify these last words. They all strongly emphasise, that it was only the delay that he blamed; and they apparently consider that he made the end in sight a crime merely to emphasise the fact that procrastination cannot be justified even in circumstances such as these.

It is perfectly true that to a man of Browning's robust energy and will-power, procrastination was peculiarly distasteful: but in this particular case I cannot but feel that he considered the fault was intensified into an actual crime because it was love that was being played with.

That Browning was, in general, a strong upholder of the marriage laws, cannot be doubted, but that he thought they must admit of no relaxation in any circumstances is perhaps open to question.

It is, notable that he does not say on his own behalf that in this case the end was a crime. What he says is that his readers will think so, and that supposing it is a crime, the fault was not alleviated in the least. That is to say, ~~he~~ deliberately avoids the expression of his own opinion as to the morality of their action. There is too, something very suggestive of contempt in the phrase "you of the virtue" with which he apostrophises his imagined critics.

Perhaps had he been writing in the opening years of the xxth century instead of the middle of the xixth, he might have been still more outspoken. He was ahead of his age in so many respects, that it would not be in the least astonishing to imagine his partaking of the independence of thought of a Wells or Galsworthy.

The juxtaposition of The Statue and the Bust to Respectability and a Light Woman is significant.

The three poems form a closely knit trio, with a thought common to ^{all} each. Together they claim that even the love

arising from mere sex attraction, although illegal and unsanctioned by conventional society, has a definite positive value and must not lightly be set aside or scorned.

In Respectability we have two points of view put forward. On the one side there is the formalism of the Philistine world, the plighted troth, the long weary waiting— and symbolical of it all the glove, and the frigid greeting of two eminent statesmen. On the other hand are two human beings united by no bond but that of mutual attraction; pulsating with the joy of youth and love; eager for the warmth of Parisian Bohemian life and contemptuous of the restrictions of mere respectability.

It is true that the poem is dramatic in form. But its very existence proves that Browning was ready to admit that such outsiders have a right to their point of view; and the gusto with which the lines are written hints at a certain sympathy in the heart of the poet himself, if not with their independence of action, at least with their 'joie- de- vivre,' of the lovers.

The central poem of this little trio treats of love, not necessarily lawless in itself, but springing in the heart of a woman outside the pale of respectability. The speaker of the poem has used his powers of attraction to divert the attention of this woman, from his friend who was wrapped in her toils, towards himself. The consequences have been unexpected and disconcerting; for his friend, so far from being duly grateful for his interference, now looks at him askance as a treacherous interloper; while the feeling which he has aroused in the woman is far deeper and purer than he had anticipated.

As he surveys his handiwork he begins to wish that he had not so lightheartedly interfered, and to realise that -

" 'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls"

He does not want the woman's love, but since he has deliberately aroused it for his own purposes, he cannot blind himself to his responsibility; and he asks himself uneasily whether he dare cast it aside.

At this point Browning leaves the story; and as we

read his final words we are forced to wonder what we ourselves would do if placed in the same circumstances; and if we are honest with ourselves we must see that the responsibility here is no light one, and that love- even such love as this- is in its very essence a vital force bearing with it untold consequences.

The dramatic nature of these three poems prohibits our regarding them, with any/certainty, as expressions of the poet's own point of view. But we may at least be permitted to draw from them one or two general conclusions, (already suggested);- that love in any form, and derived from any source, is a fundamental and vital force which is apt to overleap the bounds of convention simply because it is too big to be held therein; and that the human being in whose heart it springs, or who arouses it in the heart of another, has a grave responsibility to bear.

.....

CHAPTER iv

Supreme importance of love - testimony of Browning himself ("By the fire side" and "One Word More") - love stronger than death (Evelyn Hope "Love in a Life" "Life in a love" "In a Balcony"; A last Ride together") - essential characteristics of true love (Misconceptions. One way of Love.)

It is essential to realise that Browning at this period of his career, great as were his intellectual and poetical powers, preferred to consider himself a lover in the first place.

In By the Fireside, using words which from their context can be addressed to nobody but his wife, he says

" So grew my own small life complete
 As nature obtained her best of me-
 One born to love you, sweet!
 So the earth has gained by one man more,
 And the gain of earth must be Heaven's gain too."

It is manhood earned not by poetic achievement, nor by intellectual progress, but by the mere fact of love. It is love, as he says here, which kindles the divine spark—the soul—in man. If therefore that soul is immortal, the purpose of its immortality must be for higher and ever higher heights of love. All other powers are to be subordinated to this one great ambition. Browning as he says in One Word More hopes to widen his intellectual powers in other lives; but only so that he may offer the fruits on the altar of love.

This idea is set forth in dramatic form in Evelyn Hope. Death has snatched Evelyn Hope from all possibility of earthly love. But the man who loves her has no thought of despair. Evidently his love was not perfect enough. The remainder of his life must be spent in rendering it more spiritual— "Much is to learn and much to forget." He cheerfully faces the possibility of a long-continued process of probation and purgation, until at length purified

from all taint~~of~~ the flesh, his love shall immerge
perfect and he shall attain his desire.

Here, again , Browning hints at the relative
insufficiency of knowledge. In his future lives
the lover may have " ransacked the ages, spoiled
the climes," but still his soul will remain unsatis-
-fied. Only with the attainment of a perfect love,
will knowledge also be completed. Then, and only
then, he will know things at which he can now but
dimly guess.

" But the time will come, - at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I shall say,
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was of amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red -
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead."

In several of the "Men and Women" poems Browning gives
us a lover whose love is his whole life; while in one,
at least, there is depicted a man who wearies in the

quest.

In 'Love in a life' a lover is seeking his mistress through the rooms of the house they both inhabit.

From time to time, he catches the flutter of her dress, as her retreating form vanishes through the doorway. All day he has been seeking her, and now twilight is approaching, and his search is not yet done: there are still many more hiding places to explore.

His courage fails with the failing light. Tired and dispirited, he is beginning to doubt if the effort is worth while, and if success will ever crown his labour.

The lover of Evelyn Hope would have much more excuse for despair than his faint - hearted brother, but despair is the last thing to enter his mind. Although Evelyn Hope lies dead, - although in this life he has been almost a stranger to her; yet he trusts that " God made the love to reward the love." He can therefore wait serenely for their ultimate union, however distant it may be.

The word 'Despair' is not to be found in the dictionary of true love. So Browning, as his life's romance suggests, strongly believed. Such too is the opinion of the lover in Life in a Love. He knows that he is destined to spend his whole life in the quest. He realises too, that the end, on earth, will in all probability be failure. But what does that matter?

"It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
 To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
 And baffled, get up to begin again, -
 So the chase takes up one's life, that's all."

"That's all." In these words lies the key to the whole meaning of the poem. That the whole of one's life be spent in the chase is but a small matter. The ultimate union of two souls is very well worth living and dying for.

Standing side by side as they do, these two little poems form a sort of allegory.

The many - roomed house may be likened to the world with its numerous and varying scenes. In all the manifold circumstances of this life we seek for that soul - union which is called love. Sometimes we think we have caught it. - but as we try to grasp it, it is gone. Some of us at last grow weary. We have reached out our hand to grasp it so many times, and every time we have been tricked - until in the end we despair; and in our old age, grown bitter, we say to ourselves that there is no such thing as love in the world. But there are a few who would rather die than confess even in the depths of their own spirit that love is non-existent. Such as these go on to the last minute of life, undismayed by failure trusting in spite of all to the ultimate success of their quest. For them, however love hides her face, she is there and must be sought. Such exuberant hopefulness is eminently

characteristic of the poet's own brave, indomitable spirit.

One feels that such a man as he, who is depicted in

Life in a Love, was very dear to Browning's soul.

Equally strongly must have appealed to him, the type of man who is the hero of that poem of joyous anticipation "In three days." To him the sight of his mistress is worth all the rest of heaven and earth; while the prospect of their re - union is a charm to cast out fear.

....." If a fear be born

This minute, it dies out in scorn"

Nowhere in this volume is the supremacy of love set forth so vividly, as in that tantalising ~~one-~~ act drama In a Balcony. The three actors of the scene are all witnesses of its conquering power. Norbert, in the opening lines, would throw prudence to the winds.-

"A man can have but one life and one death,
One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate- "

Let Constance grant him now the heaven he seeks,

- to prove her his ~~as~~ just for one moment,

he proclaims,

....." then die away,

If God please, with completion in" his " soul "

The words forcibly remind us of that earlier dramatic

fragment - In the Gondola, in which the lover, stabbed

in the back as he clasps his mistress to his heart, rises

gloriously superior to the mere fact of death. His only

care is lest the blood, oozing from his deadly wound, may

soil the flowing hair of the woman bending above him in

horrified pity. To the death fast coming upon him, he

is infinitely indifferent. What matters death if one has

really lived, - even for a moment! The "Three" who

have plotted and encompassed his murder he pities, - "because

they never lived " - but he has lived indeed, and so can

also die.

So Norbert too finds in love his life's chief

good. When he first saw the face of Constance a year ago,

he decided that there was

"....." no use in life
But just to obtain her."

He would become a Ferdinand willing to do menial
offices to win his Miranda, - a Jacob to serve seven
years for his Rachel - nay more, with reckless hyper-
-bole, he swears that he could bear all earth's woes
heaped together or

- " make a pile of all earth's joys
And spurn them, as they help or help not this;
Only, obtain her! "

Surely, therefore, a year's service to the Queen, her
cousin, was a mere trifle if it carried with it the
hope of fruition in the end. Work done, as it usually
is, for the sake of fame or power or expediency, is
successful in its degree. But the noblest work of
life is performed at the instigation of love. Has he
himself done worthy work during that year of probation?

" - be love's the praise! "

Now, he would proclaim himself to the Queen as the lover of Constance, and then let the world see the work that should spring from such a motive. Now he would blazon forth his love to the world and boast himself proudly, as Browning himself did, a lover above all things.

But Constance will not have it so. Such a declaration would be fatal to their hopes. So, instructed by her, he gives the queen a garbled account of his feelings, protesting that he wishes to marry Constance merely because she is the "reflex" of the Queen (who herself is already wedded).

The middle-aged Queen, whose starved heart has been brought to sudden life by Norbert's tale, bears as noble a witness to the power of love in a woman's heart, as he has of its power in that of a man. Love has awakened her; "a smile of God" has

changed the world, and in her own new womanhood she utters words which echo continually through Browning's poetry.

" There is no good of life but love - but love! What else looks good, is some shade flung from love-

Love gilds it, gives it worth?"

(374- 6)

As she has borne witness to the value of love, so also she echoes Norbert's reflection on the quality of work performed under its sway-

"..... 'Oh, never work

like his was done for work's ignoble sake-

It must have finer aims to spur it on!

I felt, I saw, he loved - loved somebody!"

(435- 7)

Like Norbert too, she is prepared to sacrifice every-

-thing to love. Believing herself to have won his

affection, she advised Constance, with unconscious

irony, to act as she is doing.

" Love him, like me! give all away to him;

Think never of yourself; throw by your pride,

Hopes fear, - your own good as you saw it once,

And love him simply for his very self.

Remember, I (and what am I to you!)

Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,

Do all but just unlove him! he loves me "

(574 - 580)

Nor are her words unavailing. The power which has urged her to utter them has been working also in the breast of Constance. She, too, can sacrifice herself; and swiftly determining that the poor loveless woman, to whom she owes so much, shall not be disillusioned, she replies to the Queen's last words, " He shall; " and from this moment she faithfully tries to make good her words. *

* N. B.

With considerable hesitation, I have ventured to disagree on this point with so distinguished a critic as Stopford Brooke, who regards jealousy as the root of the subsequent action of Constance, while at the same time finding even that, a scarcely adequate explanation of her conduct. He seems to me to have rejected the obvious motive with insufficient reason, for one which does not satisfy even himself.

(Vide page 341 - 2 S. Brooke.)

The Queen goes out, and Norbert enters. But little time is granted to Constance to mature her plan; for just at the moment when she and Norbert are mingled in what the girl at least intends as a last kiss of renunciation, her mistress returns. Her *Constance's* hurried explanation of the caress, as a kiss bestowed upon a confidant who has proved useful, in recompense for past services, is met by the outraged Queen with stern silence, and by the mystified Norbert with incredulous astonishment. His simple integrity is incapable of following the subtle workings of Constance's mind .

As she ~~continues~~ hurriedly and almost incoherent-ly she continues ^{to} explaining her action, his bewildered brain finally decides that she is jesting; and feeling that the jest is not in the best of taste, he turns to the Queen and demands his reward. The poor woman, misunderstanding his meaning, declares her love for him; but Norbert calmly puts it aside and declares

his passion for her cousin.

Constance sees in his bold words the wreckage of her plans and stammers that it is she herself who set the test. Whereupon Norbert in hurt and astonished indignation, blushing red at the implied insult, replies in words which reveal Browning's mastery of a dramatic situation - words tingling with pain and bitterness. But, because his love is strong enough to bear any insult she may heap upon him, he finally flings himself and his love at her feet. At the last moment, the "horror that grows palpable" in the strained face and rigid figure of the Queen, suddenly reveals to him that here is no jest - and with a flash of insight looking from one to the other he cries,

"Constance - the world fades; only you stand there!
 You did not, in tonight's wild whirl of things,
 Sell me - your soul of souls, for any price?
 No - no - 'tis easy to believe in you!

Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop
 Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still -
 Though I should curse, I love you, I am love
 And cannot change! love's self is at your feet!"

(896 - 903)

As the Queen, almost un-noticed, steals out of the room
 the lovers re-embrace. There is no need for explanation

The music outside ceases; but the ensuing silence is
 broken by the sound of heavy footsteps which halt at
 the threshold of the door.

Norbert. " 'tis the guard comes."

Constance " kiss! "

The exact significance of the guard's approach
 has aroused considerable discussion, but all doubt is
 set at rest by the words of Browning himself, quoted
 by Mrs Bronson (Cornhill Magazine 1902, page 15.),
 and mentioned by Sir F. G. Kenyon in his introduction
 to the Centenary Edition of the poet's works. (1)

(1)

* One who sat near him said it was a natural sequence that the step of the guard should be heard coming to take Norbert to his doom, as with a nature like the Queen's who had known only one hour of joy in her sterile life, vengeance swift and terrible would follow on the sudden destruction of her happiness."

"Now I don't quite think that," answered Browning, as if he were following out the play as a spectator:"

"The Queen had a large and passionate temperament which had only once been touched and brought into intense life. She would have died, as by a knife in her heart. The guard would have come to carry away her dead body."

The non-committal - attitude of the poet himself, together with the variety of his readers' interpretations, suggests that even at the time of writing Browning had not decided the ultimate fate of Constance and Norbert; one would suggest that it also implies that he did not think that it really mattered

very much. They have fulfilled their life, and even if death comes upon them, it is of small consequence. They "are past harm now." Of one thing the present writer feels convinced,—that Browning had no intention of writing a tragedy here. The death of the lovers would not be tragic. Neither would that of the Queen herself (as the poet himself suggested) be a matter calling for either pity or terror. She too, has for one brief moment loved. That she should die in consequence, matters little. Even though her love is not returned, she too has fulfilled her being, and so "can afford to die".

Thus we have here set forth in dramatic form the constantly recurring theme of love as the only ideal worth living for. Such a life, lived for love alone, is worth infinitely more than that of the artist and painter, noble as the work of these may be.

In the words of Norbert, ---

" We live, and they experiment on life
 Those poets, painters , all who stand aloof
 To overlook the farther. Let us be
 The thing they look at!"
 (664-7)

A picture which offers many points of comparison with

the above is presented in " A Last Ride Together "

The love in this case is experienced only by the man;

but he, like Norbert and Constance, is granted a moment's

consummate happiness - one last ride with his mistress -

before what to him is a doom as heavy as the one they

may have to suffer . For one day he is to be "deified"

by being permitted to ride side by side with the women

he loves. As they wasted not a moment with idle

explanations, so he puts aside past hopes and does not

linger " to strive with a life awry," but instead immerses

his whole being in the present joy of intimate

communion.

Failure, he argues, is the common fate of all

morality. No human hope is entirely fulfilled in this world. If it were, what need of a heaven beyond? Moreover his lot even in its disappointed hopes is far preferable to that of the onlookers of life, the poets, painters, sculptors, and musicians. He lives, while they only experiment on life.

Only by quoting the lines in full can it be realised fully how exactly the thought suggested by

Norbert ⁽¹⁾ is reproduced and amplified here.

"What does it all mean, poet? well,
Your brains beat into rhythm - you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best, -

And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much - but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you - poor, sick, old ere your time -
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride. "

"And, you, great sculptor - so you gave
A score of years to art, her slave,
And that's your Venus - whence we turn

To yonder girl that fords the burn!

You acquiesce and shall I repine?

What, man of music, you, grown grey

With notes and nothing else to say,

Is this your sole praise from a friend,

"Greatly his opera's strains intend,

"But in music we know how fashions end!"

I gave my youth - but we ride, in fine."

The Last Ride Together.

Stanzas vii-viii.

In the above lines Browning once more voices his profound conviction that love is infinitely superior to knowledge. The artist may write or paint of the love and joy of life but the man who feels the blood racing in his veins, who is permeated through and through with the joy of life and love, has the advantage in everyway.

The unsuccessful suitor in A Last Ride Together

has two companions in failure in the same volume; one -

'the heart the Queen leant on,

thrilled in a minute erratic

Ere the true bosom she bent on "

(1)

(2)

and the other, that lover of Pauline whose whole life had been

one long training in love, and who, when the great moment

(1) Misconception

(2) One way of love

arrived for him to speak his passion was able, though rejection meant Hell to himself, to bow in meek humility and rejoice in the happiness of another.

These men are imbued with the same spirit as that which actuates the speaker in "The Lost Mistress" who, though his whole world has been turned to bitterness can say.

" For each glance of that eye so bright and black,
 Though I keep with heart's endeavour,-
 Your voice, when you wish the snow-drops back,
 Though it stay in my heart for ever! -

- Yet I will but say what mere friends say,

Or only a thought stronger;

I will hold your hand but as long as all may,

Or so very little longer! "

In each of the above characters there are two qualities which stand out strongly,- humility, and its complement, patience. They each have to content themselves with the mere crumbs of affection. But they do not complain. Instead, they rejoice in the fragments which fall to their lot, without an atom of envy towards the more fortunate man who shall succeed where

they have failed.

Such love as this is akin to the divine in its spirit of cheerful self-sacrifice and patient humility. It is love freed almost entirely from the physical element. The spiritualising and ennobling power of love is exhibited in almost countless ways by Browning. He regards true love as an infinite giving which holds nothing back. It was for him " the quintessence of all goodness, the motive and inspir-
-ing cause of every act in the world that is completely right." (1)

In all the succession of nameless lovers, which has passed before our eyes, can be seen dimly revealed the spirit which manifested itself in the Incarnation and Crucifixion of God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

.....

(1) Browning as a Philosophical Poet- Jones, page. 78.

CHAPTER v.

Failures in love (Andrea del Sarto - Two in the Campagna -
Any Wife to any Husband - In a year - The Patriot-)

In the same volume, side by side with these numerous examples of the ennobling power of true love, we have presented to us one or two examples of that worst perversion of the best - lust - which instead of seeking satisfaction in spending itself on another's good, desires only to make use of others to satisfy its own worst purposes, - which, instead of enriching its object, degrades and ruins it.

A man under the sway of lust will not be content, as Evelyn Hope's lover, to wait patiently for the consummation of his hopes in another world; he will not be ready, as the lover of Pauline, to give up his share to another more worthy; he will not rest content in the decision of his mistress if it be adverse to him; he will not, as Norbert, meet death as a friend. On the contrary, he will clutch feverishly at those scraps of earthly

Happiness which may fall to his share; he will snatch greedily at that which belongs to another; and above all, with all his being, he will fear death, as shutting him off for ever from the joys and pleasures of this life..

Such a man is represented to us in that beautiful but tragic poem "Andrea del Sarto." "The faultless Painter" } Andrea, whose great gifts might have won for him an immortality of fame, no longer paints for art's sake only, but chiefly, so that he may earn enough gold whereby he may retain, if not the love of his wife Lucrezia, at least her continued presence in the house.

He cannot blind himself to the fact that she is a woman utterly unworthy of the love of any man; he is quite aware that she is heartless, mercenary, and even unfaithful. Yet so intoxicated have his senses become by her physical beauty, that he wilfully shuts his eyes to these patent facts, and is ready to degrade even his noble art to her service - to paint pictures by the dozen, just to win her tolerance by placing the proceeds of their sale in her hands, that she may spend the money in her own infamous pleasures.

As "a common greyness silvers everything," and
 "night lets down her veil this autumn evening" he
 reviews his wasted powers and sinful life. Youth,
 hope, and art, that once were so bright, are "all toned
 down," and all that he "was born to be and do,"
 become "a twilight piece." The full, rich
 blossoms on his tree of life have borne but poor
 and bitter fruit.

Nor is he ignorant of ^{the cause of} this sad blight.

It is Lucrezia, his wife. She has "created around
 her an atmosphere in which no high aspirations, no
 unselfish strivings could live so his moral
 energies have gradually slackened, and he has lost
 grip on life and art. It was not the absence of
 incentive, it was the active deadening influence of
 (1)
 her companionship."

Looking into the future, he can see
 nothing but failure. Even after death, in the next
 world, though he may be given a chance to retrieve
 his lost ideals, he knows that the result will be

still the same.

"Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
 Meted on each side by the Angel's reed,
 For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me
 To cover - the three first without a wife,
 While I have mine! So - still they overcome
 Because there's still Lucrezia, - as I choose."

"As I choose." These significant words explain the whole situation. Andrea has become a slave to his senses. He knows and bewails the fact that his passion for Lucrezia has ennobled neither his life nor his art. Instead of becoming, as all true love does, a motive force to lift him ever nearer to God, his passion has acted as an opiate to the moral and artistic sense. He has lost strength for that self-sacrifice so essential to real love. If his passion had deserved the name of love, it would not have spent itself on an object so unworthy. Or, at least, finding her so faulty, had he really loved her - soul as well as body - he would have made unceasing efforts to raise

her from the depths of spiritual degradation into which she had fallen. As it was, he had been steadily helping her down the descent to Avernus, by pandering to her greed and selfishness.

Three lines of the poem may be singled out, as bearing a curious significance.

"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that -
The Roman's is the better when you pray,
But still the other's Virgin was his wife."

The earthly human passion has blotted out for Andrea the heavenly vision which Rafael is permitted to see. In the Madonnas of the greater painter is reflected the beatific vision of Love itself, while Andrea's Virgins reflect only the voluptuous and soulless perfection of Lucrezia's face and form.

But Andrea del Sarto's failure was not due to the fact that he had a wife. Nor was Rafael's

success the result of his unmarried state - as Andrea would like to believe. The human love of Dante did not detract one iota from his greatness as a poet. It rather may be said to have been a great part of his inspiration. So also Robert Browning himself had a wife, whom he loved passionately and tenderly. - and his art so far from suffering from this fact received help and support instead.

The difference between such men as these, and Andrea del Sarto, lay entirely in the quality of that which each called his "love." With Dante and Browning it was an aspiration towards the infinite, as all true love must be; whereas Andrea was bound hand and foot to this world and its desires.

So Rafael in the aspiration of his art looked ever upwards to the divine love and beauty of the Godhead while Andrea's soul and art contented themselves with "its poor earthly imitation."

Andrea is truly very far from the kingdom of heaven, as Browning imagines it. Fra Lippo Lippi, sensualist as he confesses himself to be, is far nearer than he. For Lippo Lippi has faith in the ideal, though he knows no way of reaching it save through the real: while Andrea has ceased to seek for the ideal—contenting himself with his faultless technique and perfect workmanship.

Andrea del Sarto stands quite alone in the Man and Women volumes illustrating a state of mind not repeated in any other poem in this edition. It strikes a note of deeper pessimism than any other of the poems dealing with the failures of love. These all tell of love, which in varying degrees falls short of its ideal in this life on earth. But in all except Andrea, implied or expressed, is at least the suggestion of another life than this, in which

the ideal may be reached.

In "Two in the Campagna," it must be conceded, the suggestion is merely implied. The prevailing tone of this poem is not, as in Andrea, hopelessness, but a lively dissatisfaction with things as they are. The lover, whose passion is of a very different nature from Andrea's, is frankly discontented with the mere physical intercourse which seemed to satisfy the "Faultless Painter." He desires that deeper spiritual communion which is the mark of all real love. Nor is he entirely unsuccessful. There are supreme moments when the soul of the woman he loves seems to come out to meet his. But this soul-communion is but a will o' the wisp, no sooner caught than lost. The good minute goes." His spirit is like a thistle-ball blown onward with each lightest breath of breeze.

Nevertheless there is a ray of hope shining through the prevailing gloom. The will o' the

wisp which so constantly evades his sight is ever present to his mind. The ideal of which he falls so lamentably short, is always present with him. Earthly love may fail, but he knows what love really is.

" I would that you were all to me,
 You that are just so much, no more—
 Nor yours, nor mine, — nor slave nor free!
 I would I could adopt your will,
 See with your eyes, and set my heart
 Beating by yours, and drink my fill
 At your soul's springs, — your part, my part
 In life, for good and ill. "

Such clear-sighted vision would be impossible to Andrea, whose conception of love is distorted, and dim.

Yet in some respects the speaker in Two in the

(Compagna) Campagna has as short-sighted

spiritual vision as Andrea himself. Though he has seen what love really is, he cannot tell whence it comes. Both of these men are too pre-occupied with

this mortal life to perceive that even at its highest, earthly love is only in the germ, and that we cannot hope to see it here in all its fullness of perfection. Its obvious deficiencies are to them things to be regretted, instead of affording promise for higher developments hereafter. To the lover in Two in the Campagna, the imperfection on earth could never be an inspiring motive to encourage the soul to rise to higher things. He is at best a "poor soul lost in the dark," able only vaguely to discern,

" Infinite passion and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn"

Elizabeth Barrett Browning in a little poem called "A Woman's shortcomings" contrasts the light fancies of the heart-free maiden with the strong and stable reality of love. In the last verse she writes -

" Unless you can muse in a crowd all day,
 On the absent face that fixed you;
 Unless you can love, as the angels may,
 With the breadth of heaven betwixt you;
 Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,
 Through behoving and unbehoving;
 Unless you can die when the dream is past -
 Oh, never call it loving! "

Any Wife to any Husband might be regarded as her husband's corroborative comment on these words, from the point of view of the man instead of the woman. We read in this poem of a married pair whose affection is real and strong. The feeling of the wife, however, is far from nearer to ideal love, as defined by Mrs Barrett Browning. Her affection, stronger than death, has much of that wisdom which, as Browning himself declares, is an integral part of love.

Knowing herself about to die, she muses regretfully, though tenderly, on the flaw in the character of her husband, which will drive him in the

dusk of life that's left " a tired traveller " bereft
of the sun of his life, to seek consolation in the
"firefly" that "glimpses past" him. She knows well
enough that when they meet again in heaven, he will
be hers once more, that he "must come back to the
heart's place here" which she keeps for him. But
she who has knowledge of the immortality of love
cries out in her pain,

"Only, why should it be with stain at all?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of Coronat,
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow? "

This is not jealousy, but sorrow, akin to the divine,
experienced by one who knows how radiantly beautiful
Love is, when she sees ^{her} with her wings stained and soiled
by the mire of earthly sin. It is the cry of sorrow
for an evil which has not yet come to pass, but which
inevitably will, just because love cannot come to
perfection in the frail and finite heart of man while
on earth. It is once more the story of

" Infinite passion and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn."

^{Page} The partial character of the husband's love in this poem contrasts strongly with the complete surrender of the wife in A * Woman's last word.

Husband and wife have been on the verge of a quarrel. We can only guess at the cause of the dispute.

(1)
Professor Alexander suggests that the husband has been seeking to probe some love - affair of his wife's earlier life. Such an explanation seems somewhat forced: but what is quite manifest is that the pair have come to a crisis in their lives. Either they are to live in a constant state of contention, or else one of them must give in. The woman resolves to merge her individuality in that of her husband and to bind her intellect in the chains of her heart. She lays flesh, and spirit and independence of intellect

at the feet of the man she loves, and all the price she asks for such utter surrender is the privilege of a few tears.

In a year, a pitiful little tragedy of a woman's broken heart, is but another aspect of the same sad picture. Until just before the close, the prevailing tone of the poem is one of hopeless pessimism--

"Never any more
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
as before.
Once his love grown chill,
mine may strive--
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still."

Then there ensues a retrospect of the year which has passed - months of intense, delirious happiness on both sides - the man's sudden declaration of his passion - the girl's joyous surrender of herself. Beauty, wealth, youth, - all these, with a very

"a rage of giving", she has flung into his hands.

In return for the wonderful gift of his love, she has felt nothing she has will suffice to pay - not even life itself,- though willingly she would lay down that for his sake.

And now all is over. The emotion which the man had mistaken for love, has proved but transient passion, and he has gone carelessly on his way.

Abruptly she turns and regards the affair from his point of view. With ruthless frankness she sees herself as he must have seen her.

If she had given him everything - even life itself - what would he have thought of it all, as soon as his passion had cooled ?

"What - she felt the while,

Must I think?

Love's so different with us men,"

He should smile.

"Dying for my sake -

White and pink!

Can't we touch these bubbles then

But they break? "

In the unutterable bitterness of her soul she sees now that the heart of the man she had worshipped was just a "cold clay clod". Love for her has meant an infinite giving; to him it has meant an appetite, a desire, an infinite taking; and at last a weariness and satiety and a longing for "fresh fields and pastures new."

A common and sordid story indeed! Hardly consistent with the conception of Love as an all conquering power, drawing souls upward to Heaven! But the tale is not yet complete . There is one more verse -

" Well, this cold clay clod.

Was man's heart.

Crumble it - and what comes next?

Is it God? "

The man's emotion has passed away, for it was only passion and lust masquerading in Love's garments. But that of the woman, in so far as it partakes of the

spirit of infinite giving, cannot fail. It may seem hopeless; but God "creates the love to reward the love;" what if, when the earthly passion has crumbled to atoms, it may be found to have been hiding behind it the very love of God Himself! Perhaps He has sent the trial just to show her the inadequacy of human love, and to reveal to her in its place that higher and ideal love which she has been blindly seeking.

Her unsatisfied and disappointed love has brought her by the rugged path of grief to the same ~~path~~ point of vantage as that which the hero of The Patriot has reached. He, fired with as glowing a passion for his country as this girl has felt for her faithless lover, has spent himself with as prodigal a lavishness as she: and her reward of ingratitude and scorn has been his also.

But the resemblance does not end here. In

their bitter disillusionment both are strengthened by the same inspiring vision . From the wrecked hopes which lie all about them, and from the earthly love which has proved so miserable a failure, they turn their eyes upward to where God's love and mercy are waiting to encircle them.

CHAPTER VI.

Browning's optimism consistent with failure and
 imperfection (Master Hugues of Saxe - Gotha
Old Pictures in Florence) - Love man's most divine
 quality- revelation of Truth granted only to those who
 love (By the Fireside etc.) -love omnipresent in
 all Good- Browning's solution of the problem of
 evil- necessity of only partial vision of Truth on
 this earth (Epistle of Karshish)

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There is no poet with whose name the word optimism
 is associated with more frequently than that of Robert
 Browning. Nearly every critic and commentator who
 has written anything at all about him has laid consider-
 -able emphasis upon this quality.

Yet at first sight it is somewhat difficult to
 reconcile with an optimistic view of life the subject
 matter of the poems dealt with in the preceding chapter.

It is not easy to see the light of God's love shining in the darkness of such souls as are there depicted.

In the same volume Browning unfolds before our eyes the worldly selfish irreligious soul of Bishop Blougram; the frankly carnal heart of Fra Lippo Lippi with his intense love of this world, and his corresponding indifference to the next; the soulless pleasure-seeking life of Venice in the days of her glory; and the utterly un-christian attitude of the professed followers of Christ to the unbelieving Jews. The world as Browning saw it, was not a place where love held undisputed sway. It had its Pompilias and its Pippas but it also contained such men as Guido Franceschini, Sludge, and Prince Hohentiel - Schwangau. The poet knew well that within the very walls of the church there lurked hate and lust and treachery. Few men, and almost no poets have so deliberately set themselves the tasks of investigating

the miry ways of humanity.

His was not the easy optimism of an Emerson which is the result of deliberately closing one's eyes to all the evil rampant in the world. It would be nearer to the truth to assert that he was an optimist just because he knew how wicked mankind is, and how sad and disappointed are the lives of the majority. It would be a part of the truth - but it would not be the whole of it.

Each of our lives falls short in greater or less degree of the ideal existent in our souls.

As G. K. Chesterton characteristically expresses it,

the world " is a cosmos where incompleteness implies completeness."⁽¹⁾ One of Browning's reasons for

optimism was the theory he held " of the hope which lies

in the imperfection of man. In so far as man is a

one-legged or one-eyed creature there is something

(1) Page. 178 Browning (Chesterton)

about his appearance which indicates that he should have another leg or eye. (1.)

This is certainly a very favourite thought of Browning, occurring constantly in his poetry; and since it has considerable bearing on the subject of his philosophy of love, it is not irrelevant at this point to examine the two poems in the 1855 edition which contribute in any way to the theory.

The first of these, Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha, grotesque and half-humorous as it is, has a very serious meaning underlying its absurdities and eccentricities. The organist, who has been playing one of Master Hugues' "mountainous fugues" with considerable technical skill, is nevertheless dissatisfied with his performance. He realises that music is much more than mere notes- that could he only discover it there a soul lurking somewhere amid the myriad intricacies of chords and

arpeggios. But that soul is difficult to discern-

"What with affirming, denying,
 Holding, risposting, subjoining,
 All's like ... it's like"

He hesitates for a simile. Then as he looks up at the vaulted roof, it occurs to him that the soul of the music, elusive, seen for a moment, then lost as swiftly, is just like that great roof above his head, with its gold moulding gleaming here and there through the cobwebs and dust which overlay it.

He proceeds to apply this simile to life itself-

"Such a web, simple and subtle,
 Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,"

that though over our heads are Truth and Nature, "our life's zigzags and dodges" effectually conceal them.

Master Hugues represents "the soul seeking to interpret the perplexed music of earth, arguing, disputing, contending in the faith that there is a meaning in it all, though the final answer is delayed.---

And the same thought of the perplexities of life
 is repeated to the sight in the intricate mouldings
 of the roof.--The dim light grows dimmer, the golden
 cherubs hidden by cobwebs The answer does not
 come, the meaning cannot be evolved, the vision of
 glory is only dimly seen." (1) Yet -

" Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse it--
 Nature, thro' dust-clouds we fling her"

The other poem which helps to account for Browning's
 optimism is Old Pictures in Florence. One morning,
 the poet from an eminence which overlooks Florence,
 gazed on that great City as it "lay out on the mountain
 -side;" and of all its innumerable beauties the one
 which most strongly arrested his attention " was the
 startling bell-tower Giotto raised:" This, in its
 unfinished loveliness, symbolised for him the whole art
 of the Early Italian School. The perfection of form
 peculiarly characteristic of Greek art had been lost,

(1) The Rel: Teaching of Bg. (D. Beale- Bg.Soc. Papers)
 Bg. Studies p. 88.

and men for several centuries had contented themselves with faulty imitations; until there had come a time when they began to realise that in the very imperfection of their work they were greater than the Greeks.

For in that faultiness lay possibility and promise of progress towards something greater than the Greeks themselves had achieved. Therefore in the strength of this new thought,

"To cries of " Greek Art and what
more wish you--"

they had replied,

'....."Become now self-acquainters,
And paint man, man, - whatever the issue!
Make the hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters.
So bring the invisible full into play, "

Browning's sympathy with such an attitude is manifest in his comment -

"Give these, I say, full honour and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it"

They had striven to paint the soul instead of the body;

and if in their first enthusiasm for the spirit,
 the body had been neglected, surely mere technique was
 comparatively insignificant beside the soul which
 shone through even the most faulty work of that period.

As the soul of Master Hugues' fugue was
 just ~~see~~ discernible through the intricacies of its
 form, so the spirit shone through the incorrect
 perspective of these Early Masters.

In the very imperfection of our work lies the
 hope that -

" When a soul has seen
 By the means of Evil that Good is best,
 And through earth and its noise, what is
 heaven's serene,-
 When its faith in the same has stood the test-
 Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
 The uses of labour are surely done
 There remaineth a rest for the people of God."

Now we must apply this theory. No artist can ever
 hope to fulfil his ideal on earth; nor would it be
 well for him if it were possible. It suffices that

he should ceaselessly strive to encompass his end.

In the same way it is not to be hoped or desired that man should in this life attain perfection. The starfish is complete and perfect in every way. But man is not for that reason a creature inferior to the starfish. The latter has attained its limited perfection, while man is "a God though in the germ,"⁽¹⁾ still in process of development.

This innate divinity of man, in Browning's opinion, is due entirely to his power of loving. His love may, and indeed always does, fall in some degree short of ultimate perfection; but the fact that he loves at all suffices to cut him off once and for all from mere brute creation. Thus every impulse towards love, every action inspired by it is a step further in the attainment of ideal perfection.

(1) Rabbi Ben Ezra. Stanza xiii.

The same incompleteness is characteristic of our knowledge. Man is not only a loving animal. The passion for the attainment of knowledge is an integral part of man's true purpose. But as in this life we can never love perfectly, neither can we know all.

We are only granted just enough light to point us on our upward path. Our knowledge, however, at its highest is bounded by sense, and leaves us very far from God. It is by love that we come nearest to Him. It was not Christ's omniscience but his self-sacrificing life of love, which founded Christianity.

Man's love, imperfect as it is, is the basis on which Browning rests his belief in the ultimate "rightness" of the world. There are moments, known only to the lover, when man seems to bridge the gulf between the finite and the infinite. God's gold for a brief moment is seen in all its radiance; and then the vision fades, shut out by the world.

Such an experience is recalled by the elderly scholar and dreamer who speaks in By the Fireside.

As he sits to all appearance "deep in Greek" his thoughts go back to an evening many years ago when he had wandered side by side with the girl he loved through a lonely and beautiful tract of Alpine country. As they had paused for a moment to gaze at the fading light in the western sky, he had trembled to speak those words which, though they might break down the barrier between their souls, might on the other hand widen the distance between them. But at the very first word he had uttered she had filled his heart with a love infinitely larger than he had dared to hope for-

"A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast.
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life; we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen. "

Since then, they had had but one soul between them,

"each is sucked
 Into each now; on, the new stream rolls
 Whatever rocks obstruct. "

That day had led

"To an age so blest that by its side
 Youth seems the waste instead. "

That so perfect a moment of revelation, followed by such utter soul-union, does not often fall to the lot of the average man, Browning himself confesses in this very poem, in the words -

"But who could have expected this,
 When we two drew together first
 Just for the obvious human bliss,
 To satisfy life's daily thirst
 With a thing men seldom miss? "

But that it is invariably to the lover rather than to the seeker after knowledge that such a revelation comes, if it comes at all, - seems to have been one of his strongest convictions. Paracelsus wastes the whole of his life seeking for an immediate vision of truth,

while to dozens of the poet's nameless lovers it is revealed. To take two or three examples of this almost at random -

"Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe -

all were for me

In the kiss of one girl,"

he says in Summum Bonum: and again, in A Pearl, A Girl.

"..... I am wrapt in blaze
 Creation's Lord, of heaven and earth
 Lord whole and sole - by a minute's birth
 Through the love in a girl! "

It would be easy to multiply such instances, but one would seek in vain in his poetry for such a revelation granted to a searcher after knowledge.

Browning believed that Truth abides in the soul itself, but he was ever more strongly convinced as the years went by that the intellect, unless it is quickened by love, will never reach it.

No, it is love which is the "logos" that makes all things plain. Browning regarded the world as working steadily upwards towards "one far-off divine event"- a final and complete assurance. But as years went by he grew more and more convinced that this assurance will never come to pass through the agency of knowledge- that it will be the result of love.

For love, whether its object be a cat, a dog, a human being, a country, a cause, or God Himself is a divine light leading towards the final revelation of God's truth. Moreover, it is everywhere present. All the good in the world is but a manifestation of it. When Fra Lippo Lippi says-

"Or say there's beauty with no soul at all,
 (I never saw it- put the case the same-)
 You get about the best thing God invents,-
 That's somewhat. And you will find the soul you
 ~~have~~ missed,
 Within yourself when you return Him thanks! "

he means that beauty is always an apparition of love. " And

if anyone though loving the beauty fail to detect
 a latent soul, yet the effect it works on his own soul
 proves the secret presence of love." (1)

But it may be objected at this point that
 the world as Browning saw it was not composed only
 of Good but of Evil also.

There is not space here to discuss fully how
 his hypothesis of universal love was made compatible
 with the existence of evil. It is sufficient merely to
 suggest the main line of his argument. He regarded
 life as a progress from the finite to the infinite—
 from evil to good. If Truth existed alone there would
 be no progress, and therefore no meaning to the word
 Truth. It is no which gives significance to the word
yes. Thus it is the conflict of good with evil which
 constitutes the world as a probation place.

At the same time, Browning in later years,
 was careful to reduce evil to mere phenomena — an

illusion begotten by the mind of man. As he states in

(1) Bury J. (Bg Soc. Papers) Bg's Philosophy Pt III.

Bg. Slides Page 33.

Abt Vogler - "The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound."

The evil is ultimately reduced to the limbo of sense. It is just part of the machinery which goes to the making of a man - necessary indeed but of no importance except in its relation to the Good.

The poems which have been examined in this and the preceding chapters, "are dramatic pictures of life drawn in such a way as to let us detect love as the permanent spiritual unity underlying the manifold changing variety of circumstances." (1) To fight his way with ceaseless and untiring zeal through earth's chances and changes to this goal is man's purpose in life.

God reveals himself as Love through the medium of Power and Knowledge. But the revelation in this life is necessarily incomplete. Bishop Blougram is voicing the poet's own conviction when he says

(1) Bury J. (Bg Soc. Papers) Browning's Philosophy

"It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare
 Some think, Creations meant to show him forth:
 I say, its meant to hide him all it can,
 And that's what all the blessed Evil's for."

To most men

"..... faith means perpetual unbelief
 Kept quiet like the snake'neath Michael's foot
 Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe."⁽¹⁾

It is only

"When the fight begins within himself,
 A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head
 Satan looks up between his feet - both tug -
 He's left, himself, in the middle: the soul wakes
 And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!
 Never leave growing till the life to come."⁽²⁾

Here we have the whole process in a few lines. The goal is there, truly, but the value of the struggle is chiefly in the process.

The revelation of Love in all its beauty can come to

(1) Bishop Blougram's Apology

(2) Ibid.

no man without rendering him "useless for this world's

(1) purposes" Browning gives us a curiously interesting example of such a case in the Epistle of Karshish the Physician.

Writing to his master Abib, Karshish relates his experiences while travelling in Palestine. A physician himself he is naturally strongly interested in strange medical cases. One very curious case he has encountered in his travels, so strange and unaccountable that it has arrested his attention to such an extent that he is compelled to unburden his mind to Abib. So he tells him how a man suffering from a kind of trance had, several years before been suddenly brought to life through the agency of some drug, or spell or art unknown (and which Karshish feels it would be profitable to discover).

The patient, Lazarus by name, had been restored to perfect physical health but ever since that time had suffered from a strange hallucination, that he had been

(1) An Epistle (Karshish)

"He holds on firmly to some thread of life.....

Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet-

The spiritual life around the earthly life!

The law of that is known to him as this-

His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here

So is the man perplexed with impulses

Sudden to start off crosswise.- "

(178-187)

In this way Lazarus becomes

"Professedly the faultier that he knows

God's secret, while he holds the thread of life."

(200-201)

The moral which Browning seems to convey throughout his whole poetry is that though life should be a hunger for the infinite, yet it is essential to recognise our limitations and to work within them, while at the same time never permitting ourselves to be content with them. Death therefore instead of being the last resort of the tired soul from which all hope has fled becomes a clarion call to a new world - the infinite - whither the man who has striven on earth shall pass, there to be completed.

Man must give himself in love and service to humanity

but "if on earth the goal could be reached where then
 (1)
 were Heaven?"

Passionately as Browning loved the world and everything in it, he could face death not merely with calm stoicism but with actual joy; for it meant to him just a "black minute" and afterwards a glorious reunion with "the soul of" his "soul"- the wife who had gone before.

(1) C. Collins. Browning's Poems. Vol. iv (Marginal Note)

 CHAPTER VII

Result of setting knowledge as the goal of life

(German Cultur; Richard III) - Grammarian's

Funeral not a eulogy of knowledge - the dissatisfact-
-ion resulting from setting knowledge as our aim(Cleon)

.....

Numerous examples have been cited in the preceding chapters, illustrating Browning's conception of the superiority of Love to Knowledge as a motive force on earth to raise mankind to God; while from time to time as occasion demanded, it has been suggested on what grounds he bases that assumption.

We have confined our attention up to the present, to the considering of the positive value of love as a unifying principle of life. It remains, therefore, to investigate the result of putting knowledge in its place.

Browning conceived of intellectual gain apart from love, as at best useless, and at worst positively harm-

-ful to the individual and the race. Paracelsus at the end of his career was made to realise at least part of this truth. Had Browning been alive during the last few years of disaster and upheaval, he would have had even further and convincing proof of the unhappy results of the cultivation of the intellect at the expense of the soul, in the atrocities committed in the recent war, resultant from what is notoriously styled "German Cultur "

A great race, capable as we well know of high achievements in the realms of music, painting, and poetry, has for a generation or two set itself to acquire knowledge. Education, invention and research, encouraged and aided by the State to the exclusion of all else, have resulted in the turning out of millions of finely-organised intellectual machines: and the bitter fruit of such an ideal has been seen only too

plainly in the vandalism, treachery, and cruelty perpetrated by these intellectual machines in the five years of horror which have just passed over us. Nor is the effect discernible in the character of the German people only but, in the disregard and contempt of religion and morality, which during the last decade has spread all over Europe and America like a devastating disease.

Shakespeare in his conception of the character of Richard III shows us better than anyone else - even Browning himself - what happens when a man sets intellect above all else.

As Richard stabs King Henry VI he reveals the ideal he has before him.

"Down, down to hell; and say I sent thee thither
 I that have neither pity, love, nor fear.....⁽¹⁾
 I have no brother, I am like no brother,
 And this word "love", which grey beards call divine
 Be resident in men like one another
 And not in me; I am myself alone."⁽²⁾

(1) lines 67-8 Act v. Sc.vi. Henry vi. Part iii.
 (2) " 89-82 " " " " " " " "

The world is just a place for him "to bustle in" and its inhabitants merely obstructions to be removed. He stands intellectually head and shoulders above his fellows, and he uses his keen and biting wit solely to "clothe" his "naked villany," and to plot murder upon murder until he forces a blood-stained passage to the throne.

Such a monstrosity as Shakespeare with his marvellous psychological insight here reveals to us, is the result of setting intelligence rather than love as the goal of one's existence.

There is only one poem in the 1855 edition in which the desire of knowledge is depicted as an eminently desirable object in life. The Grammarian's Funeral, read cursorily and without insight, might seem to contradict all that has been stated in this essay, concerning Browning's theory of the relative inferiority of knowledge to love.

The Grammarian, followed to his last rest by a reverent band of loving, faithful followers, is indeed a noble figure. As we leave him "loftily lying" it might seem that in this one poem at least Browning meant to give knowledge its due; that here he wished to show that the mere piling up of facts, the very "grinding at grammar" are ends noble and sufficient in themselves.

But a closer reading of the poem reveals that such was not his intention in the least. It was not because he aspired to know, but because he aspired at all, that Browning gives him such enthusiastic praise. His nobility of soul lay in the fact that, though he realised that the task to which he had set his whole energies, could by its very nature, never be fulfilled in this life, yet he still aspired. He was great because he saw this life in its true proportion - a mere drop, though an essential one - in the great ocean of the infinite; that he estimated physical beauty and the joys and sorrows of this world as

insignificant; that he preferred heaven's success to that of earth, - casting himself, and all his unfulfilled aspirations on the mercy and love of God.

The whole significance of the poem is concentrated in the inspiring lines -

"That low man seeks a little thing to do,

Sees it and does it:

This high man, aiming at a million,

Misses a unit.

That, has the world here - should he need the next ^t

Let the world mind him!

This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed

Seeking shall find him."

(113- 124)

So far from finding his greatness to consist in the object of his aspiration, one might say instead, that he was great in spite of that object. To put it so strongly would be perhaps overshooting the mark; but it is certainly true, that had the object of his passion been the acquisition of love, instead of knowledge, he would

in Browning's eyes, have become an even more noble figure.

The mere piling up of facts is at best a very dull business, and it is noteworthy that the Grammarian, throughout his whole life of struggle, looked ever to something beyond. He was well aware that real life lay out beyond the mastery "of learning's crabbed text" and "comment". This was merely a preparation for the actual glorious and full life which was to follow in its wake, whether on this earth, or another, it was immaterial. Of this rich and perfect life to come, though "dead from the waist down" he never for a moment lost hope. Instead, he threw on God,

God's task to make the heavenly period

Perfect the earthen."

while in the meantime he bent his tired head over his books, and struggled on with his dreary task.

The Grammarian did not, as Paracelsus, make the fatal mistake of trying to grasp knowledge once and for all in its entirety, but realised instead that each

truth obtained, was a mere stepping-stone to another higher than itself; nor did he seek as Paracelsus did to enjoy in this life as well as to know; but serenely trusting in his soul's immortality he was content to wait for joy until the world to come.

In this poem, brief as it is, Browning was working out the same thought which prevails in Paracelsus, namely, that the best of life is to be obtained by those who can grasp the true meaning of our limitations on this earth, and who do not try to force into this world the developments which are only possible elsewhere.

If then, The Grammarian's Funeral is not, as it might seem to be at first glance, a eulogy of the mere desire to acquire knowledge for its own sake, in Cleon we have embodied the theory that knowledge without love can only end in bitterness of spirit. "Cleon" says Professor Alexander "who is to typify the highest development of which the individual man is

capable in this world, is the consummate flower of the most perfect, if not the highest civilisation, which the world has seen. He is a Greek of the beginning of our era, the complex product of that many-sided culture which belongs to the last phase of the intellectual life of Greece. As poet, artist, philosopher, he united in himself all the intellectual aptitudes of man " (1)

Side by side with Cleon himself Browning with subtle art has set the companion picture of Protus "in his Tyranny" his life " complete and whole now in its power and joy." Between these two men it would seem that all the possibilities of human life have been exhausted. Yet both of these highly-organised intellectual products of a great age are unhappy discontented men. The both see " the wider, but to sigh the more" Protus "the fortunate of men " must die sometime and leave behind him - nothing - unless, perchance, a brazen

(1) Alexander W.J. Page. 33.4

statue to overlook his grave. Nor is Cleon the poet more blessed. In spite of his wonderful achievements, his capacity for actual living is now far less than that of many a far simpler soul. Sadly he confesses,

" Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
 How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:
 But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.
 You row with the moulded muscles there
 Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
 I can write love-odes, - thy fair slave's an ode.
 I get to sing of love, when grown to grey
 For being beloved: - she turns to that young man,
 The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
 I know the joy of Kingship: well - thou art king! "

(291 - 300)

Here we have yet once again reiterated, the thought which Browning put also into the mouths of Norbert and that nameless lover of a Last Ride Together: - the emptiness of the existence of the poet or painter in comparison with the richer life of those who experience the beauty and

(1) Vide ante- page.68.

joy, of which these looker^s-on of life only write
or paint.

As the days glide by, and he realises that his
youth is gone for ever, it is a poor consolation to
Cleon,* to know that though he is soon to die his
works may achieve immortality. The time is fast approach-
-ing he complains-

" When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy-
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
Alive still, in the phrase or such as thou,
I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over much,
Shall sleep in my urn"

(317 - 323)

A gloomy prospect indeed! The only thing which could
afford any comfort to a spirit possessed of so insatiable
a thirst for life would be the hope of a future state

*Unlimited in capability

For joy, as this is my desire for joy!

(326- 327)

But to Cleon the secret of God's love, and its corollary, immortality, has not been revealed; and he breaks off abruptly from his dream of another world with a sigh -

" But, no!

Zeus has not revealed it; and alas!

He must have done so - were it possible! "

(333 - 335)

Then with tragic and unconscious irony, he proceeds to mention with the contempt of a highly - educated Greek for " a mere barbarian Jew " , Paulus, the one man who might have given form and assurance to his dim longings; and to set down his doctrine - of which he knows nothing - as one which " could be held by no sane man".

Cleon has indeed achieved great things, but his outlook on life is at root a purely selfish one. He is filled with a great joy-hunger-

" For joy spread round about us, meant for us,
Inviting us; and still the soul craves all! - "

(240 - 1)

He has proved that human life is inadequate, that there is a sad disproportion between the desire of the soul and the capacity for fulfilling it, - and he despairs. Thus, though he has drunk deeply of life's cup of joyful experience, and though he has drained the horn of knowledge to what he believes are its very dregs, he presents an infinitely sadder picture than the poor Grammarian who died before he had ever tasted life, and who knew from the beginning that the horn of knowledge to which he eagerly put his lips was just like ^{that} of which Thor drank in the land of the Giants, of so infinite a capacity, that the deepest draught would make no appreciable difference to his fulness. For the Grammarian had learnt the secret of God's love, the knowledge of which was denied to Cleon.

The probable attitude of men of intellect and learning towards Christ and his immediate followers, seems to

have arrested Browning's imagination. With marvellous power of detachment, and unerring psychological insight, he has represented to us in Cleon the indifferent contempt with which many a highly-cultured gentile must have listened to the rumours of the Nazarene Teacher and Miracle-Worker.

In An Epistle of Karshish we have set forth with even more subtle dramatic power, the attitude adopted by an Arabian physician who has unwillingly stumbled upon one of the results of Christ's presence on this earth. Lazarus and his story, are at first to him just another medical case- a strange one indeed, but yet only one of many. In Karshish there takes place that struggle between the intellect and heart which Browning so often depicts. His critical and scientific mind immediately sets to work analysing facts to find some rationalistic theory which shall explain the circumstance. We see his attempts to shake off the impression which Lazarus has made on him. He finally decides that this man, so different from his

fellows, is just a madman, and his convictions of the Divinity of his healer, merely one of the hallucinations common to certain types of mental disease.

Satisfied for the moment, he changes the subject, asking pardon of his Master for attaching so undue importance to so trivial a matter, when there so many other significant things calling for remark.

But, at the close of the letter, in the very postscript, he reverts yet once more to the fascinating subject. This time, he does not attempt to cloak the matter with an atmosphere of learned scientific investigation, but bursts out with strong and genuine feeling - almost as though the truth were being forced from him by some unseen force within his soul,- What if the physician who healed Lazarus was actually Almighty God!

Such a revelation, he is well aware would open an entirely new world of possibilities, throwing all his scientific research into oblivion, by its startling significance. God, he has worshipped as a Being All

occasion of a wrath so terrible that it reduced the whole race of man to helpless awe. Is it possible, he wonders, that God unites Power with Love - and a Love so infinitely tender that he has been willing to come down on earth - a man among men - to serve and help his creatures? Is it possible too, that his love reaching out to all mortals impels them to love him in return?

Strangely stirred by this arresting thought, and by the vision of immortal life, which it brings along in its train, he cries out with uncontrollable emotion.-

"The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
 So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too-
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice
 Saying "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
 "Face, my hands fashioned, see it in Myself.
 "Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of Mine
 "But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
 "And thou must love me who have died for thee! "
 The madman saith He said so: it is strange."

(304, 312)

.....

CHAPTER VIII

Immortality the corollary of God's love
 (Saul) - - three stages in evolution of man's
 conception of God (Caliban upon Setebos; Cleon;
Saul and Kerahish) - conclusion.

The phrase " God's love and its corollary,
 immortality " perhaps requires some justification.
 Does the love of God towards mankind necessarily imply
 that He has destined him to receive the gift of Eternal
 life?

This question in the abstract does not concern
 us here. What must be considered in these pages is
 Browning's personal attitude towards immortality. This
 is set forth unmistakably in Saul.

The youthful David, his whole soul filled
 to overflowing with wondering admiration for Saal's

beauty and strength, is moved to intense pity as he sees his hero agonising in the gloom, in helpless impotence. Untwining the lilies from his harp, the lad straightway sets about his task of love - to bring Saul back from this living death to the fulness and joy of life. One after another, he sings the songs which would be familiar to the King - from the shepherd's folding tune to that great

"..... Chorus intoned

As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.

A groan in the darkness, signifying that life is stirring once more in Saul, spurs him to further effort, and he sings rapturously of -

".... the wild joys of living! the leaping from
rock up to rock - "

until, with heart almost bursting with love and pity, he proclaims in song, Saul's great glory and power.

At length, with a long shudder, the King wakes from his trance; but still his body remains inert, and his eye vacantly lethargic. So David bends once more to his task of healing.

After some time has elapsed, he is rewarded by seeing Saul assume a more normal attitude. Taking his little minstrel between his huge knees, the King lays his hand gently on the boy's head, and looks at him earnestly. As David returns his steady gaze, he yearns for still greater power to invent even more happiness for the master he loves. If he only knew how, he would heap never ending joys upon Saul; he would give him -

"..... new life altogether, as good,

ages hence,

As this moment, - had love but the warrant,

love's heart to dispense! "

(Stanza 15.)

The soul of the young ~~man~~ **Prophet**, reaching out to Saul with that love which desires to spend itself eternally,

is suddenly filled with a longing to bestow upon him
the gift of immortality. Surely, he thinks, "if he
would at any pains give it, God would give it too, for
otherwise human love would outstrip the divine- which
cannot be- which shall not be. The wish, the cry shall
be answered - and the answer is the Advent of Christ." (1)

For this very love felt by David, is itself but
a gift of God. He questions his heart -

"Do I find love so full in my nature, God's
ultimate gift,

That I doubt his own love can compete with it?

here, the parts shift?

Here, the creature surpass the Greater, the end,
what began? -

Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for
this man,

And dare doubt He alone shall not help him,

who yet alone can?

(Stanza 17)

(1) C. Collins Browning's Poems Marginal Note

It is unthinkable! The very generous emotion which is ever now stirring his heart is but a gift which has its origin in the love of God. He sees his love as it is,- a mere impulse which has not the power to realise itself. He would suffer for Saul even to death. But even if the sacrifice were accomplished it would be of no avail. So from "man's nothing perfect" he is impelled to turn for help to "God's All-Complete"; and there he finds, in the person of Christ, Love manifesting itself through Power, infinite Love and infinite Power, - of which the highest man can attain is but a shadow - expressing itself in infinite self-sacrifice.

As David stumbles home to his sheep in the dawn, all Nature, seems with him, to be awaiting the coming of the Messiah. The forest trembles with awe, as the breeze comes and goes through its leaves; there is a startled dread in the eyes of the very beasts; even the

upturned faces of the flowers tell the same tale; while every tiny streamlet, as it trickles over the ~~se~~ stones, murmuring, whispers,

" E'en so! it is so! "

Browning gives us in three separate poems, three definite stages in the evolution of man's conception of God.

(1)

The untutored savage represented by Caliban sees in his God the attribute of irresponsible power exercised in a manner wholly capricious. Setebos has made the world. But he could not make a second self, and he would not make a creature repugnant to him; so the work of his hands has become a being as like himself as possible though built on a smaller scale.

Thus Caliban sees in Setebos only himself highly magnified, and clothes him with all his own characteristics. His God is a Being terrible and capriciously

(1) Caliban upon Setebos.

cruel, dealing with the world he has made, as Caliban himself does with the objects in his power - sparing some, slaying others, as suits his convenience or caprice. Above him sits the Quiet, a Being still more powerful, who has made Setebos himself.

About the Quiet, Caliban does not concern himself. It suffices that he confines his attention to Setebos, respecting and fearing him just so long as he thinks himself watched. The obvious thing to do is to make oneself as inconspicuous as possible, - and above all, to avoid appearing too happy. For just as Caliban is moved to destroy two flies basking in the sunshine, while he spares two beetles in less fortunate circumstances, so Setebos, in jealous anger, will wreak vengeance on a creature who flaunts his happiness, and probably will leave unmolested his more humble and

insignificant brother.

Caliban's Setebos is manifestly neither omnipotent nor omniscient, nor yet all-loving. He has indeed a great deal of power, and a certain degree of knowledge; but love is left entirely out of his composition.

The Zeus worshipped by Cleon, though far-removed from the primitive Setebos, nevertheless falls very far short of the Christian ideal. He is almighty and omniscient, exercising his power in a well-regulated manner which makes for the progress of the race. There is in him no malice or caprice. Yet Cleon is plainly not satisfied either with Zeus, or the world he conceived to have been created by him. Does he care for mankind? That is the question Cleon asks himself, and to which he can find no satisfactory reply. If Zeus is a God of Love, how does it happen that "life's inadequate to joy?" If he cares for us individually, why is there so grievous a disproportion between our aspiration and our grasp? If he loves us, why must we grow old and

die?

To such questions as these, there is no answer, - except in the doctrines taught by a Barbarian Jew, whom Cleon, in the pride of his race and culture, regards with infinite contempt and indifference.

Zeus indeed is ultimately not very much more satisfactory as a God than the degraded Setebos. His infinite Power and Knowledge afford neither compensation to man for the misery he suffers on earth, nor any hope of the continuing and perfecting, in another world, of such joys as may in this life chance to fall to his lot.

But the God who manifested Himself to David in his vision of the Messiah, and whose reflected glory, shining in the face of the raised Lazarus, struck the Arab Karshish with a strange wonder, together with all the attributes of Zeus, has yet one other attribute which in itself includes them all, and that is Love.

(The) worth of Christianity, as Browning sees it,

is that it reveals God as a God of Love; and the grasping of this great fact is for each soul the highest aim in life.

Love not only constitutes the very nature of God, but it is also the moral ideal of man, and the purpose and essence of all created beings, both animate and inanimate.

" O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty."

(The Guardian-Angel)

FINIS.

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APPENDIX A

The following texts have been taken as standards.

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