

Browning. His Relation to the Spirit of his Age,
and the Diverse Thinkers, exemplified by Tennyson, Arthur
Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold.

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INTRODUCTION

In thinking of the nineteenth century, which has been and still is the greatest and noblest age in the history of the British Empire, how many of us seriously keep in mind, that it is not the nineteenth century, but nineteen centuries, which we have to take into consideration, and even nineteen centuries is only a moderate assertion, for I would include the almost six thousand years, since the creation of our Universe. Adam and Eve are still alive to our mind, the garden of Eden, the snake, the apple and Eve's temptation still influence and play upon the imagination of many beings. Nay more, similar reminiscences of the past, even control the religious lives of thousands, - and on religion the formation of many characters depended and still largely depend.

History has shown us, that the broader, the deeper religious views are, the subtler and richer is our life, our conception of humanity and our understanding of the Infinite commonly termed God. Yet the value of broad-mindedness has had a rather slow development, intellectual progress was disliked by many, for it involved the reasoning, speculation and doubt, a thing greatly feared by those whose narrow religious and intellectual horizon controlled and dominated their whole superficial, self-sufficing and complacent outlook of life. These people strove, with might and main to close the door of inquiry, which humanity has for centuries been struggling to open, and the leader of humanity in its almost super-human task, is to be seen in the noblest and truest effort of Robert Browning.

Is it inevitable that every step conducive to the freedom of mind, profitable for human welfare and human development, must be gained through continual strife and even bloodshed. How long shall it last ? Or is it meant to be eternal ? Doubt which must at times inevitably be the business of our lives if we are earnestly and sincerely interested in arriving at truth was thought to be inimical to the early Christian world, which wrapped itself complacently in the veil of superstitious habits and customs, forgetting in the meantime the principal aims and teachings of the One whose name they proudly bore, considering themselves His true followers.

People were in fear and consternation of any change, which might strike the final blow to their narrow sphere of thought, and disturb their ex^{is}tance, and also their narrow ethical outlook. They fully utilized their power and authority to prevent any discrepancies which might enter into their religious life, for the experience of individuals has taught humanity that as soon as one has torn asunder the spider web, which the early Church wove around his mind, he becomes a rabid propagandist against his former thoughts, habits, customs, and even ideals; then he inevitably endeavors to spread his newly-born convictions among mankind.

Any religion which finds its happiness in taking all things of creation for granted is loath to accept truth which has proved of sound validity for its basis. Intellect and intuition, - attributes of each same being - stood hostile to one another, and the task was left to Robert Browning to reconcile the two.

Sometimes even the heathen were ahead of the early Christians, the pagan Hindus, for instance, through their intuitive and introspective observations arrived at conclusions which Christianity reached only

in the eighteenth century through considerable research. Wherein the Hindu was ahead lies in the fact, that he had no suspicion whatever that such truth which is known to us as science was in antagonistic relation to religion, provided it is supported and sustained by true intuition. The Hindu nobly thought that through scientific discoveries, religion can be ennobled and beautified, but by no means hindered as millions of Christians thought. Do the Hindus not deserve our admiration and respect, for their primitive broad mindedness ?

The question seriously confronts us, why should Christianity the most advanced of religions, a religion to which civilization is largely due, and which was the basis for ennobling so many, create and sustain for so long a gulf, unfortunately not yet completely bridged, between religion and science. Most peculiar is the fact that this most advanced of religions in its earliest stages embraced many pagan superstitions, such as belief in witchcraft, myths, wonders while it rejected a great principle which was later recognized and which the pagan recognized as the principle of research.

What do we see when we look into our own time ? Do we not realize, that each century is inextricably interwoven with the others, that each century is inevitably and indispensably the sum total of the centuries gone by, that each century ought to be greater than its preceding one, for it has the advantage of imbibing the spirit, the struggles - which gives strength and nobility of character, - the adventures, the ideals of all centuries gone by, in addition to the advantages each century may claim as its own, resulting in social, political, religious, intellectual and psychological problems arising from the times.

Each century has its peculiar ideals, and so far as we can see in its life of literature, - which is to a large extent the product of life, - each century has not been able to grasp the ideals propounded by individuals who, through the peculiar gift of the Unknown power, were endowed with the foresight of seers, and strove to impart to humanity that which filled their innermost soul. The idealists in their efforts to realize and embody their ideals have often, alas, too often lost their lives. But as time advances humanity finally reaches the stage ripe for the ideals long ago propounded by the martyr-seers, then we are too ready to extol, to idealize our darling prophet, we erect monuments, we visit the grave with sacred reverence of the one who during his lifetime, if he was not considered insane, was treated with indifference if not with contempt, for was he not the disturber of our peace, complacency and narrow ethical views?

Humanity has always proved to be too conservative toward new ideals. In spite of this fact, we have often seen, that for the welfare of mankind, a single individual in strife not with the whole world, at least with the major part. Think of Christianity as a powerful illustration of my statement, Luther was a propounder of an ideal, ^{as were} Copernicus, Spinoza, Tolstoy and hundreds of others. Our minds filled with the old, are not readily receptive of the new; hence the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of human intentions. But the strife and struggle of each age is a stimulus for strengthening and developing the characters of its own period as well as being conducive to the broad mindedness of ~~pre-~~ posterity.

Thus we see that the nineteenth century is a thread woven from all other centuries. It is difficult some times to mark the termina-

tion of one century and the commencement of another. The Victorian Era would have been such an age, had not most of the poets of the Romantic School met with a premature death. Shelley, Byron and Keats, the representatives of Romanticism filled the atmosphere with their ideals and gave way to another age, which in spite of the great difference in its aims, thoughts and ideals is essentially the continuation of the Romantic School. Browning shows the romantic touch through his unbounded love for Shelley, who was the source of inspiration of his youthful period, and his admiration for Byron portrayed in his earliest works. Matthew Arnold shows their relation of the two stages in the development of mankind through Byron and Goethe.

The Romantic movement as a whole shows great interest in nature, in the mysterious elements, the unknown, the hazy, the past; they were also interested in art, but they neglected what was most essential to the Victorian writers, namely, reality, life, men and women of flesh and blood, with their struggles, interests, ideals, hopes and fears. The Victorian poets lavished that imagination which the Romanticists spent on the abstract and distant, on the sorrows and joys of mankind. Life and its manifold complexities, social and spiritual was the watchword of the poets of this era, and out of the various struggles of the individual characters they built up a tower of literature.

Browning is the true realist of his age, but his realism is vastly different from the realism of Zola and Ibsen, who have striven to show us the moral evil, the diseases of the world, and life in its darkest phase. Browning, on the other hand, held up before us a mirror of hope and health for humanity. He too deals with evil in this universe of ours, yet he gives us a solution which has helped many to face unflinchingly life's trials in the hope of participating of a

of a fuller and completer life. He is also the unique poet not only of his time, but of the whole British history. Shall I say he represented the spirit of his age? which he has done in some respects, but I would much rather say that he has built up a spirit in an atmosphere of controversy, - a spirit, which if his own age failed to fully appreciate, the generations to come will give the place of refuge and support to his teachings, which he duly deserves.

Like all true seers, Browning in the name of his own true vision, boldly opposed the prevailing spirit of his time, and like a true poet, he disregarded his unpopularity and lack of appreciation, pouring forth incessantly that what filled his innermost soul. He wrote because he could not do otherwise if he were to be true to his own nature, and his productions bring hope, faith, love, life and joy to many oppressed, disheartened, faithless and hopeless, ministering true consolation, - the source of which lay in the deep unfaltering conviction of his own faith and belief in the power of love, which with him was the synonymous with God, and immortality of our future life, which he explains on sound reasonable basis.

We would do a great injustice to Browning were we to deal with him without giving a survey of that phase of his age, which is essential for his teachings. Had Browning lived in a religious age, we could expect without wonder a great spiritual teacher, but in an atmosphere of scepticism, and age of scientific zeal and zest when men wanted and scientific and reasonable basis for all they saw and did, - an age which could not reconcile ^{science} and religion, an age at the beginning of which intuition was scorned and disregarded, Browning poured his message in opposition to the prevailing tendencies of his time. Therein lies much of the poet's greatness.

The remarkable succession of scientific inventions revolutionized the outer life and not less the inner. The evolutionary movement which ^{had} filled the air since Goethe's time, found full expression in Darwin, who with the power of a thunderbolt affected and modified men's views of nature, life, but above all it was a paralyzing shock to religion, - the vehicle of men's hope. Exact knowledge, accurate minuteness was the watchword of the time, science gave a man a sort of confidence which previous ages have not experienced. Men had without the slightest hesitation as much, if not more, room for doubt as for faith.

"There lives more faith in honest doubt
Believe me, than in half the creeds." (a)

said Tennyson, who was by no means the embodiment of the scepticism of his time, yet he too realized a great value in doubt. Man was beginning to think for himself. Another element which can by no means be ignored in connection with the nineteenth century, especially with regard to Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough is the Oxford Movement of which I will speak later.

Out of religious struggles new questions arose, which enticed the intellect, spirit and passion of man, also problems related to human life, its origin, its purpose, its end, and finally Life's relation to God, and God's relation to the Universe. Such questions as "Are we free or are we bound to fate and the Infinite ?" "Was life an illusion or was it actually a reality ?" resounded far and wide. Such questions were bound to bring storm into the otherwise peaceful and complacent life. The sacred Book, which was for centuries the source of hope, peace and consolation, was subjected to severe historical criticism and its validity was seriously questioned.

(a) In Men, x c v i stanza (iii)

The home of doubt was Germany, but the contagion spread with the speed of an avalanche far and wide. Such change in life has left an imprint, which can by no means be ignored.

The heart of the Victorian Age is the spirit of exact and accurate minuteness, truth of observation and increasing interest in social life and its progress. Not Browning but Tennyson is the true representative of this age; he was and still is the essential element of his time. yet the interest in Tennyson must inevitably decrease as soon as social problems of which he has written are solved and substituted by new ones. Much of his works have by no means laid that foundation, touched the deepest emotions of the human heart which belong to all ages and which make an author an immortal star in the memory of humanity. They lack that Catholic spirit which characterizes Browning's works.

The nineteenthth century is a period of profound social unrest, of unprecedented religious toleration, an age of democracy, of great scientific discovery, at the same time it must not be overlooked that it was an age of pessimism, religious inquiry and doubt. The last phase may be due to religious tolerance. It is indeed characteristic of mankind to invade the realms of the Unknown, the moment spiritual freedom is granted to us, then men's soul could no longer endure the food of narrow spiritual life, and could no longer find peace and consolation in the narrow creed of their spiritual teachers.

The Victorian Era is also a period of comparative peace from war of aggrandisement. It was the desire of man to develop the moral standard of life. England began to realize the futility and emptiness of the false glitter and pomp of war, while at the samest time she became conscious of the great injustice done to the masses,

the poor who are forced to bear the burden of humanity, while the privileged few, the so-called upper strata of society, have the advantage in the social, political and financial world.

We see that most of the novelists of the nineteenth century have made it their supreme purpose "to sweep away error and reveal the underlying truth of human life". Men have begun to realize that the education and housing of the masses is essential to the welfare of mankind.

Such was the time during which Browning, Tennyson, Matthew Arnold and Hugh Clough entered upon the literary arena and through their lives and works we see the diverse impressions each one received from the same century, giving full expression to their poetry wherein their struggles, hopes, cares, regrets, pessimism or optimism as the case might be, are portrayed.

ROBERT BROWNING.

1. His life, character and his relations to Elizabeth Barrett.

Robert ~~in~~ Browning was born in Camberwell in 1812.

Much has been asserted concerning his geneology, but ^{what} we do know, is that his father was a descendant of the Wessex Squires, and his mother was the daughter of a German ship-owner of Celtic blood who was a prominent draughtsman and musician. In spite of the fact that Brownings mother did not herself ^{possess} enjoy the accomplishments of her Father, it ^{is} was most probable that she ~~has~~ transmitted them to her son.

Critics have invariably asserted that Browning's gift for metaphysics is an inheritance from his Scottish and German ancestry. He was the son of broad and liberal-minded parents, filled with the cosmopolitan spirit and the spirit of tolerance, of which Robert fully and

advantageously participated. Even in his early boyhood he had at his disposal in his father's library the atheistical works of Shelley, the spirit of which he undoubtedly imbibed, and to ^{this} which fact may be attributed his dislike for certain conventionalities which narrow and hinder our full and true developement. Yet Browning never became an atheist himself. His youth was not spent in an atmosphere of social or political enthusiasm, the lack of which we can fully observe, both in the life and work of the great genius. Nor was his imagination kindled or disturbed by any sense of nationality or citizenship. As a result of this, we see everywhere in his productions a wide cosmopolitan outlook of life, a ^catholic and all-embracing view of religion.

Byron must have had a significant influence on Browning during his earlier period, as we can observe from his letters to Elizabeth Barrett, who later became ^{his} the wife (of Mr. Browning). "I would at any time" he writes "have gone to Finchley to see a curl of his hair or one of his gloves, I am sure, - while Heaven knows I could not get up enthusiasm enough to cross the room if at the other end of it all Wordsworth, Coleridge, ^{and} Southey were condensed in a China bottle yonder." However, we see no distinct traces of Byron's influence upon the poet since his early works which might have portrayed such were lost, and in his later works, we see no trace of the tumultuous and tempestuous spirit of the typical Romanticists. From some of his letters to Mrs. Browning, we can also infer that Ossian, the essential pillar in the revival of the Folksong had favorably impressed Browning.

Unlike most of our greatest poets, Browning ^{was} is neither a Cambridge nor an Oxford man. Italy ^{was} is his true University.

"Open my heart and you will see
Grave/inside of it, Italy;
Such lovers old am I and she." (*In Rusticus II*)

Browning was a voracious reader and his own conscience was his ^{own} true guide, wherein lies his great advantage over University students, for he was never hampered by the choice of any one in his studies. In his early days, he attended public school, otherwise his instructions were largely directed by private tutors and his father who was himself a man of literary and artistic temperament. The instructions Robert received were neither too pedantic, nor one-sided; he was tutored in Greek ^{and} French as well as boxing, riding and dancing.

Much of his early time was spent in the society of his only sister Sariana, and she was also destined to spend with him the last days of his life.

Browning was on the whole " the strongest, sanest, healthiest in body and spirit of all the great men of literary genius of his time, and the manliest, lifefullest, the deepest, the thoughtfullest of living poets". Such a combination of adjectives, so adequately chosen with regard to Browning, give us a deep insight into his character and personality. He was the representative of the optimism of his time and this element shines forth incessantly in all his works. Strange to say that his first work "Pauline" should be characterized by a touch of almost morbidity, "a sort of intellectual measles" as a biographer termed it.

Contrary to his worthy contemporary Tennyson, Browning was preeminently fond of society, loved mankind and was among it as much as Tennyson was out of it. He was by no means a man of rustic temperament. Not only while young, but even during his later years he showed by his own example that "man is a social animal" and should by no means be a recluse and shun the world, wherein he was born to live, to work, to strive.

Browning is the very embodiment of originality. He read Pope, loved Byron, admired Shelley and Keats, yet he was too great a personality to imitate any of them. He is original not only in the choice of subjects, - for we look to Browning's personality for the sources of his material, - but also in the choice of characters. His Catholic mind shines forth everywhere. The poet wrote of the ideal search for knowledge, of ideal love, of music, philosophy, religion, morals, yet he wrote nothing of the great representatives of music, philosophy and religion. In Browning, we hear nothing of Beethoven nor of Luther or Socrates, but we do hear of a Paracelsus, of a Rabbi Ben Ezra, of a Fra Lippe Lippe and Andrea del Sarto or others. The great genius always brought to light obscure personalities who were neglected and overlooked in their own age, unappreciated or forgotten by posterity. Such were the characters whom the poet extolled, and through his treatment of them, made some of them immortal.

When Browning treats of a perfect soul of music he puts his thoughts in the mouth of an Abt Vogler, the noble musician who saw in the art of music the highest power which can be attributed to man.

^{it}
"I know not, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound
but a star"
(Abt Vogler stanza VII)

In treating of the subtlest type of religion, morals and faith, Browning does not choose a prominent and well-known spiritual ^{teacher} feature, fully appreciated and extolled by his generation, but he found an obscure Hebrew Rabbi, and through him the poet breathes forth the deep and firm conviction, the sincerest inspiration of his innermost soul.

Browning, like most human beings, was not infallible, but his merits and good qualities outweigh his defects to such an extent that we seem to overlook them. Among his faults, however, was a sort of uncontrollable impetuosity of speech and gesticulation when he was greatly aroused or provoked and this characteristic stubbornly and tenaciously clung to him even during the last days of his life. But on the whole he was an honest, sincere, truthful and trustworthy ^{man}, always worthy of ^{the} love ^{and} affection bestowed upon him. There is a sort of reality about Browning's personality which is worthy of mention. He is loving in his simplicity and has an unbounded heartfelt affection for mankind. He was not in the least envious of the literary popularity of the literary contemporaries, and was always willing to participate in their recognition and appreciation. This is especially true with regard to Tennyson. Browning was full of ^a magnanimity, and through his unselfishness and his interest in the triumphs of the literary men and women, he was destined to meet Elizabeth Barrett, the most eminent and popular poetess of her time; ^{indeed} ~~and~~ at one time in her career she was considered even greater than Tennyson, the most popular of the Victorian poets.

Browning knew Miss Barrett through correspondence long before they met, and he was full of appreciation and admiration of her poetry. Mr. John Kenyan, a friend of the Brownings and cousin to Elizabeth had made them familiar with each other through his conversations. Finally he suggested that Robert Browning should write to Miss Barrett and a long and intensely interesting correspondence commenced. At first it was based on merely intellectual grounds, and was somewhat stiff to be sure, but gradually the personal note gained ground and the correspondence became quite stimulating. Finally the poet suggested to meet Miss Barrett, but she warned him with sincere and sad humility that he would derive "no least straw of pleasure". "There is nothing to see in me nor to hear in me", that her poetry is the very blossom of her and has all her prime and beauty of life, the rest is nothing but a root, fit for the ground and the dark. There is indeed a touch of great pathos to be conscious to such an extent of one's own inability and physical uselessness. She was constitutionally delicate and subjected to all sorts of ailments. The first illness was caused by falling from a saddle when she was fifteen years of age. At that time she injured her spine, but it was only a temporary suffering. Her real and lasting illness resulted from breaking a blood vessel in 1839. She went to Torquay in search of health, accompanied by her brother, Edward, who was her study companion. Her nerves were shattered and her health further undermined through the sudden death of her brother who was drowned at Torquay. The consciousness of her guilt haunted her day and night, for she felt that she was the cause of his premature death, since she induced him to stay with her. Her grief was indeed great, for no one can think of greater torments

than those of a guilty conscience, even though the guilt is self inflicted. Death is often preferable.

Not till 1841 was she sufficiently recovered to return to London. There she threw herself heart and soul into the work which sheltered her from overwhelming distress. The home of her father was a gloomy abode, her room was a place where "flowers pined and withered for want of air and light", a place for slow but sure death. Yet even under such unfavorable circumstances, Elizabeth produced her noblest works.

Such was Miss Barrett's conditions when Browning wished to marry her. She refused on ^{an} unselfish and reasonable basis. She was an invalid and hardly expected to fully recover; it would be a great injustice to Robert Browning, she said, were she to join her miserable ^e existence with the life of a robust, healthy and vigorous man, before whom there was such a wide and beautiful prospect, with such wonderful expectations. He, on the other hand, pressed his suit passionately on the ground of his spiritual affection and divine love^x for her; her soul shines forth more dazzlingly because of its frail body; she is the only source of joy for his happiness, and to possess her was to gain Heaven itself.

A great stumbling block lay in the path ^{to} of their happiness and this stumbling block was Elizabeth's old father, an eccentric old tyrant and despot. His position toward his children said E.L. Cary "Was similar to the position of the Father of Russia toward his faithful people." Mr. Barrett considered it an unpardonable insult to himself that his children should act contrary to a fixed idea of his, that they must forever remain with him.

Elizabeth well remembered the scene which took place when her sister pleaded father's consent to her engagement, she still bore in mind the hysterics of her sister and her own fit of unconsciousness. Therefore, she insisted that her father should know nothing of her engagement and her ensuing marriage. Quietly, accompanied by an old servant, she left her paternal home, her gloomy and life-destroying chamber, to be joined for her happiness to Robert Browning. After the marriage ceremony she returned home as quietly as she left it and not till several days after did she leave her home and relatives, never to see her father again.

It is said that Robert Browning did not enter Barrett's house after he was married, for his manly pride did not allow him to call for Miss Barrett when she was Mrs. Browning, and of course he would not dare to divulge the secret since it was the wish of his wife. Soon after, however, the newly-married couple clandestinely left for Italy, their truly and happy promised land. ~~Previ~~ Previous to her union with Browning, Elizabeth had led a life of uneventful misery, henceforth, it becomes a life of uneventful but continued happiness.

Her father remained unrelentless^{ing} to his very death, not even the restoration of his daughter's health or the birth of her son moved in the least the selfish man.

The relation of Browning and Elizabeth Barrett is as unique as the poet's personality. It is the most beautiful, the most ideal and charming union in the history of our literature. It reads like a fairy tale. The unbounded affection of a strong healthy, jovial and highly intellectual man, for an invalid, a

woman of forty, and six years his senior, fully convinces us that it was first and foremost a spiritual union. Her purity, sublimity and nobility of soul threw a veil over all her deficiency of body. Browning fell in love with her soul and their matrimonial life was rewarded with sixteen years of ideal happiness. Nothing can be more inspiring than the record of their married life, the source for the mutual inspiration of two strong and mentally independent personalities; nor can there be anything more appealing than the biographer's pages relating of how the two climbed the Italian hills, and visited the peasants partaking of their milk, butter, eggs, berries as well as enjoying to the full the balmy air of the Italian highlands. To Browning and to him alone is Elizabeth's convalescence due. He was conscious of the fact and was justly proud to be the restorer of his wife's health.

Most peculiar is the fact that Elizabeth Barrett, like Robert Browning is said to be partly of West Indian descent. Her own reference to "blood of the slave" is rather misleading to many. This reference is not to be taken too literally, it most probably means the blood on the heads of her forefathers, for they possessed slaves in Jamaica. Mr. Browning explains the illusion in a letter to Ruskin. "I belong to a family of West Indian slave-holders, and if I believed in curses I should be afraid. I can at least thank God that I am not an American. How you look serenely at slavery, I cannot understand and I distrust your power to explain."

The love story began so ideally, grew in its happiness with their very growth, to the last, and accompanied Mrs. Browning to her grave. Their life is a picture of intense and unbounded devotion

on both sides. He lavished tender and gentle care in an unprecedented and unexampled manner; she was most grateful for that love which so magically transfigured her life. Though different were their interests in life, yet their relations were characterized by great respect for the personality and interests of each other. For them to be happy was not in the least necessary that they should view life from the same standpoint. The fact that Mrs. Browning took intense interest in the political struggles of the Italians, in the social welfare of the mass of men, while her husband was absorbed in music and art, but above all in the spiritual evolution of the human soul, did not materially affect their lives. Even Elizabeth's great admiration for spiritualism, a thing for which Browning had the utmost contempt failed to disturb happiness their mutual happiness Mrs. Browning's letters are sufficient proof for my statements. Of course being human, they were not entirely exempt from occasional differences; it seems rather tedious to constantly nod in approval one's head to what the other says. Discussion is very interesting and uplifting, and since their interests were diverse, it was almost inevitable.

The political disturbances of 1859-1860 overtaxed the sensitive nature of Mrs. Browning. It was too great a strain for her delicate health to overcome. She died on the 29th of June, 1861, on the arms of her husband. Browning remained as faithful to her in death as he proved to be in life. She still continued to be the great source of inspiration to him, a thing we can witness from his poems to her after her death.

"A lyric love, half angel and half bird
And all a wonder and a wild desire-
Beldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,
Took sanctuary within the holier blue.
And sang a kindred soul out to his face,-
Yet human at the red ripe of the heart,-
When first summons from the darkling earth.
Reached the amid thy chambers, blanched their blue,
And bared them of the glory - to drop down,
To toil for man, to suffer and to die,-
This is the same voice, can thy soul know change ?
Hail then and hearken from the realms of help !
Never may I commence my song, my due
To God who best taught song by gift of Thee
Except with bent head and beseeching hand -
That still, thdespite the distance and the dark,
What was, again may be; some interchange
Of grace, some splendour, once thy very thought,
Some benediction anciently thy smile;
- Never conclude, but raising hand and head
Thither where eyes, were that cannot reach yet yearn
For all hope, all sustainment, all reward,
Their utmost up and on -, so blessing back
In those thy realms of help, that heaven thy home,
Some whiteness, which, I judge, thy face makes proud,
Some wanness where, I think, thy foot may fall ! "

(Ring and the Book. Bk.1, l.1391)

What Mrs. Browning meant to the poet can also be most
effectively expressed in his own words, too well known to the lovers
of Browning.

"All that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angel's spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dary of blue;
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that darts the red and the blue !
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs
furl'd:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above
it."

What matter to me if their star is a world ?
Mine has opened its soul to me ; therefore I love
it."

(My Star)

Browning's love for his consort was a spiritual attachment at first, but it was human too. For the poet could never think that body and soul are different entities, to him one implied the other. Mrs. Browning, on the other hand, understood and appreciated her husband's love for her and fully responded to the affection of her life's companion .

"How do I love thee ? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal grace
I love thee to the level of every days
Most quiet need, by sun and candle light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise;
I love thee with the passion put to use.
In my old griefs, and with my childhood faith;
I love thee, a love I seemed to lose
With my last ~~gains~~, - I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life ! - and if God choose
I shall but love thee better after death."

(a)

Browning enjoyed life to the full and through his own example he unconsciously showed us that life is largely what we make it, that to a considerable extent we are responsible for our doings. Our inner life creates our own heaven or vice-versa. The poet created Elizabeth's Heaven out of her father's hell, and in spite of the fact that he broke social convention by clandestinely marrying Miss Barrett he was rewarded with many years of unclouded happiness. Though the poet adhered to some conventionalities, yet he recognized their futility and realized that many of them hamper true and complete development of human nature,

"How much of priceless life were spent
With man that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex -
Societies true ornament
Ere we dared wander nights like this
Through winds and rain and watch the Seine,

(a) *Sanctified from the Portuguese*
Stanza XLII

And felt the Boulevard break again -
To warmth and light and bliss ? "

The poet thought that if society sanctioned their union or any other union, the married people would through the recognition become indebted to society and as a compensation for such favor they would have to do away with many dictates of their own conscience, in order to conform to the laws made by society, yet by no means suitable to their peculiar temperament. The shackled bondage of conventionality prevents true developement of genius, and put men under restraint. Being recognized by society we, through our obligation to them ignore or become ignorant of their weak points. It is almost fruitless to strive against the fetters of convention. Once under its control, once its obedient slave, it requires many years of almost futile toil to do away with self inflicted bondage of humanity.

Human love is a possible idea, realized and put into practice by Robert Browning. His conception of our union on earth is well characterized by the beautiful poem "By The Fire Side".

"Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see for your part,
New depths of the divine!"

(By The Fire Side
Stanza XXVIII)

Yet in spite of his own happiness which made such a conception of marriage possible, Browning fully sympathises with poor Pompilia's failure on earth and justifies her anticipation for perfect union in Heaven.

"Marriage on earth seems such a counterfeit,
Mere imitation of the inimitable;
In heaven we have the real and true and sure,
'Tis there they neither marry nor are given
In marriage, but are as angels; right,
Oh how right that is, how like Jesus Christ
To say that! Marriage making for the earth,
With gold so much, - birth, power, repute so much,
Or beauty, youth so much, in lack of these!
Be as the angels rather, who apart,
Know themselves into one, are found at length
Married, but marry never, knew, no, nor give
In marriage; they are man and wife at once
When the true time is: here we have to wait
Not so long either! Could we by a wish
Have what we will and get the future now,
Would we wish ought done undone in the past?
So, let him wait God's instant men call years;
Meantime hold hard by truth and his great soul,
Do out the duty! Through such souls alone
God stooping shows sufficient of his light
To us i' the dark to rise by. And I rise."

(Ring and the Book
Bk. VII, l. 1826)

We should not infer that convention is unnecessary or superfluous, on the contrary we all recognize its validity, and the well do we realize the chaos had not this restraint been put upon society. However, there are great intellects, who can be masters of their own actions, they have outgrown the school of convention and its laws, they are perhaps above the men who introduced the lawd. These geni^{ses} abide by their self-made rules, and are bound by no laws save those of nature and their own conscience. To adhere to conventions is too often a hindrance for great personalities and they frequently break them for their own ultimate good and perhaps for the good of humanity.

After the death of Mrs. Browning, the star of his happiness the true source of his inspiration, the poet fled from Italy together

with his only son, the fruition of their blissful and peaceful life, and spent the remainder of his life in England and different parts of Italy, not in hopeless pessimism, but in healthful and hopeful activity, looking forward to that day when death would reunite him with his beloved companion in a life which according to our prophet is our true, real, complete and perfect abode.

2. Browning's obscurity.

Browning unfortunately had not enjoyed the popularity of which Tennyson too fully participated. He is obscure and difficult to understand, it is true, his expressions are wayward because he thought quickly, the subjects he treated are mostly of the inner life and require deep contemplation to be understood. His interest is concentrated on the inner spiritual life, he is the interpreter of human life in its relation to life beyond, the "subtlest ^{assertor} searcher of the soul in song; in the evolution of the human soul, not the evolution of outward life absorbed Browning and claimed his full attention. This constitutes the main theme of his poetry and, therefore, we cannot expect to understand him too easily. Mrs. Orr's remark on the poet's obscurity is peculiar, yet noteworthy. She said that if Browning had been subjected to a severe scholastic discipline he would not have been so obscure. Personally I am inclined to think that the lack of popular appreciation attributed much to the fact that he unconsciously disregarded the popular need and became his own critic, and of course to him his poetry was always intelligible. He could easily understand his abrupt way of thinking.

We cannot read Browning when we look for amusement or recreation, but we can profitably read and enjoy him when we are eager to obtain spiritual and intellectual food. He never disappoints us

provided we are intelligently willing to pay the price for what we get through careful and contemplative study. "Lefty mountains and enshroud their heads in clouds" says Berdoe. "Precious stones do want digging up". Gold in nature is not exposed on the very surface of the mountains, but is hidden here and there perhaps in the very depth of nature; yet humanity has never become tired of the task of hunting for it. If material things deserve such careful consideration, so much toil, surely we must give at least as much consideration as much perseverance in striving to obtain spiritual things for our inner life.

Browning has never been the poet of the average man, nor will he become such for some time to come. His peculiar trend of thought is not easily grasped by every one. He was ahead of his time in his philosophy and conception of life, and if we shall add the ruggedness of his verse we find a full explanation of his unpopularity. We must also bear in mind that his poetry has little to do with the popular topics of his day. He was undisturbed by the political, social, and scientific turmoil of his age and such themes never found access to his poetry, for Browning is preeminently a poet of man and of man alone.

3. Browning's treatment of Nature.

Browning never lived much in spiritual communion with Nature, and we see little of nature in his poetical works. The inner continuity of nature did not fascinate him as it did Goethe or Wordsworth, but the outward abruptness of it appealed to the poet. What did strike him was the fact that a bud turning into a flower becomes something vastly different from what it was before, but he was not greatly interested in the fact that the flower is implicit in the leaf. Not

the gradual growth in nature, but the flashing and striking changes attracted his attention.

"Fold on fold all at once in crowds thunderously down
to his feet."

He notices the changes between day and night, only when the daylight is completely succeeded by darkness. Browning can by no means be guilty of that minute observation of nature which is the supreme characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry. As I have already said, Browning is interested in man and the evolution of his soul. Neither nature nor the movements of the day absorbed his attention. He was fully conscious of the outward ^{movements} of his time, lived in the very midst of political and social troubles; yet in spite of it all Browning lent a deaf ear to all things.

Let us now review Browning's attitude to the different phases of life and religion, and see wherein lies the great difference between himself and his contemporaries Tennyson, Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold.

4. Browning's Christianity.

Robert Browning was an unfaltering Christian in the true sense of its meaning and no Church with its dogmas could blame him as her own, for the spirit of Christ, his Personality and not the veil wrapped about the essence was valid for him. No other poet has shown us to the extent which Browning did that the personality of Christ is the "impregnable fortress of Christianity". Browning firmly believed, that the kingdom of God must be within us, and what is potential in our own nature, will be of value to us in knowing the nature of God. To understand Browning's catholic view of Christianity, we must study carefully his three most beautiful

poems on this subject, "Christmas Eve and Easter Day", "An Epistle of Karshish " and "A Death in the Desert".

"The acknowledgement of God in Christ
Acknowledged by the reason solves for Thee
All questions on the earth and out of it". (*A Death in the Desert*)
2474

Mrs. Orr tells us that Christ for Browning is "a manifestation of divine love by human form, accessible to human love; but not the Redeemer of the Orthodox creed. It must not be forgotten that Mrs. Orr was ^{an} agnostic and tried to explain all Browning's teachings in the same light; yet, however, anyone who is at all familiar with Browning's broad outlook of life as well as of religious matters, will never think of him as an Orthodox in the strict sense of the word its meaning. His poetry is undoubtedly free from the Orthodox view.

The conflict between science and religion did not shatter his faith nor his great belief in Christianity; nay more, it even failed to affect his views. Therein lies one of the great differences between Browning, Tennyson, Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold. While Browning's faith was based on firm conviction.

"I know not, but I am sure."

Tennyson had only faith.

"We have but faith we ^cannot know,
For knowledge is of things we see" (a)

Matthew Arnold and Clough even failed to cling to faith. Doubt best characterizes the two, they only hear

"The melancholy, long withdrawing roar" (b)

of that faith which was once their own.

Browning found food for hope and faith where his contemporaries found food for hopelessness and despair. Because of the ineffi-

(a) (*In Memoriam* stanza 111)
Stanza 111

(b) *Dover Beach* l 25)

ciency of the creed he did not cast away his faith and belief. He is the believing poet amidst a generation of doubt. The poet had full courage to resist the agnostic tendencies of his time. He gained in thought more than he lost in melody.

Browning's faith was based on intuition and reason, and to him faith must stare unflinchingly in the face of all the adversaries, all grimness, all sordidness, all disillusionment, and through all these grow stronger. True faith is not and must not be the result of smiling fortune, for then it will see that faith is the compensation which we bestow upon God for granting us all our wishes. Browning was well conscious of all the difficulties which make faith hard to hold. His faith does not depend upon compensation, with him it is spontaneous. It is the search ^{for} of God and the greater its difficulties, its struggles, and doubts the pleasanter does it become. It is our belief in the Unknown, the Infinite, the thing a finite mind cannot fully grasp or comprehend.

"Faith" says Paul "is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen."

Faith is life's purpose, the thing by which men live; it is a most wonderful help in carrying the burdens when we are cast into the floods of the sea of life; with faith and hope one marches on undauntedly to the goal of life and our promised land.

Unbelief is barren of hope, let alone faith. It leads to disinterestedness in life and to pessimism. The whys and wherefores find no answer; and oh, how wretched a purposeless life must be; surely a thing hardly worth bothering with. A faithless being, ^{is living} to

use Emerson's words "to wear out his boots". Such an existence is usually accompanied by inactivity. In faith we find the very assurance of the existence of God, the very interest and energy of life. But belief, Robert Browning tells us, requires both deep thinking and a trust in something unknown except by our heart and intuition. Thus we see that Browning reconciles reason and intuition, the two necessary attributes for our faith.

Many and varied are the ways in which faith comes to us.

Faith may dawn upon us through an insignificant incident, and we retain it for ever and ever.

"I was a friend in darkness chained forever
Within some Ocean cave; and ages rolled
Till through the cleft rock, like a moonbeam came
A white swan to remain with me: and ages
Rolled, yet I tired not of my first free joy.
In gazing on the peace of each pure joy."

Sometimes even a dream may be our agent for belief, and confirm our faith in God.

"One dream came to a pale poet
And he said: I am sleep, singled out by God;
None seem- No sin must touch me."

Pompilia is the source of pure faith for Caponsacchi, formerly a "carelessness and hard-hearted man."

"You know (he cries) this is not love sir,- it is faith,
-The feeling that there's God, he reigns and rules."
Out of this low world."

(Ring and the Book
Bk. VI l.1194.)

Browning pities all those who ~~left~~ opportunities to find God irremittably escape them, by not doing the work they are called upon to do in this world of ours. The Pope in the Ring and the Book passes his death sentence upon Guido, who was born "to live out his own hate", in order that he may see the truth and find his

faith in death. This is indeed a most peculiar trend of thought, yet it is not surprising when we realize that it is Browning's conception, the genuine poet who had such a lofty view of death, and who applauds all plunging into the unknown and the effort to penetrate all the mysteries which separate us from God.

5. The Poet's View of Life and Immortality.

Our life here is considered by Browning as a training school, wherein we train and educate our soul. Man is the only being incomplete. We are here to grow enough to be able to participate in another fuller life. We are surrounded by limitations which baffle and retard our growth. We become discontent with our conditions here and we aspire to something higher, and we become filled with divine discontent. While being amidst our surroundings, we must always be able to look beyond them. This life is a stepping stone, a threshold by means of which we are to attain infinite happiness, perfect knowledge. To forget our true purpose for the sake of finite life is to miss the infinite. To Browning a man is "a God though in a germ", yet he is fully convinced that the time will come when the whole of mankind will become perfect, then we shall need no Milton, nor Shakespeare or Socrates or any other heroes to show us that humanity is capable of growing perfect. Man craves for permanence and perfection, hence the necessity of a future life to fulfil man's craving. For the sake of ~~our~~ attaining perfection we endure pain, sufferings, evils all sorts of struggles and storms, adversities of circumstances, nay even death itself, in order that we may disclose the mysteries of nature, and of ourselves.

"My time be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth; and
death complete the same."

(Rabbi bend Ezra Stanza
XXXII)

Our desire to do great things in this Universe exceeds greatly the
space of time we are given on earth, we must be given an opportunity
to give a full chance for our capabilities. This is the foundation
upon which Browning explains the absolute necessity for personal
immortality.

"Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee the
ineffable name?
Builder and ^{Maker} of houses not made with hands.
What have fear of change Thee from Thee who art
ever the same?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy
power expands?
There shall never be one lost good !
What was shall leave as before."

(Abt Vogler Stanza IX)

Browning firmly believed in a personal God, but the word
personal as we understand it is vastly different from the poet's
use of Personal. His personal God is a glorious Being whom we can
at all events be more than glad to worship, who is vastly different
"from the diabolical God or the Divine Devil" whom many are still
thought to praise and pray to. By a personal God, Browning under-
stands a ruler of the human soul, yet he rules not by moral law,
according to right and wrong of this Universe of ours, but by reward
and punishment, both of conscience and through the development of
the different stages in our respective lives. For that very reason
it is man's business to realize here and now his vital function on

earth, and learn the extent of his soul's power and its manifestations and make a most strenuous effort to perfect it for the life hereafter.

"Do something" says Carlyle. "Be no longer a chaos, but a world, or even a world-kin. Produce ! Produce! Were it but a pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a product, produce it in God's name."

b. Browning's view of Love.

Browning's God is identical with Love. Love is the very fibre of God's Being, who is the combination of justice, mercy, and truth. God manifested himself through love of physical beauty, bodily, spiritual and intellectual strength. Such a conviction enabled ^{the} poet to step forth fearlessly, and boldly assert in the midst of scepticism and doubt, that God's love is the only stimulus which keeps our straying intellect from insanity, since the imperfection of heart hampers and hinders the perfection of mind. Browning cannot think of a loveless God.

"For the loving worm without its clod were diviner
than a loveless God."

Such sound basis has appealed to many intellects who have forsaken the churches with their creeds yet ~~the~~ fully realized the indetructible need for religion.

"God is the perfect Poet, who in his person acts his
own creation."

(Paracelsus Part II)

In the many poems treating of love we have a perfect insight of the relation ~~that-whe~~ between human and divine love. Such a conception is the outcome of the dictates of a strong male spirit which is always master of his own passion never its slave,

never in its bondage. Browning never fears to speak manfully and freely in a healthy spirit of all things, which since they exist in the Universe and have entered for the good or evil into our lives must be divulged for the welfare of society. He wrote of "life in its shame as well as in its splendour, life into its baseness its distorted aims, its tragic failures, its limitless follies". Yet to his Catholic sympathy it is still life, therefore, worthy of compassionate scrutiny. He attempts to solve the highest problems and to reconcile himself with all the mysteries penetrating a human life.

Things when nobly portrayed in literature give us an opportunity to study the good and evil factors of life, and evil deeds portrayed must inevitably shame humanity into better and nobler life, and thus induce humanity to make a strong effort to avoid and shun the evil phase of life, ^{and alone.} as much as possible.

How shall those who are shielded from evil influences know of the great sorrows and sufferings of others, if such things were not portrayed in Literature? A question may arise, is it inevitable for one to be familiar with evil? Will such knowledge contribute to peace and happiness? If it fails to contribute to their happiness, it will undoubtedly contribute to their safety. For life's path is not seen as through a glass.

"For now we see through a glass darkly, but then
face to face."

Nor are we sure what life has in store for us. Fortune is so fickle, rich become poor and vice-versa. Therefore, let us be

prepared to face unflinchingly all forms of life, whose victims we too often are. Woe to any one who having been complacently accustomed to one particular phase of life, ignorant of its manifold complexities, is cast by fate, through some misfortune,- for alas they are many and varied - upon the tempestuous waves and struggles of life, of which that particular being was absolutely ignorant. Where would such a human being land? We must all be aware of the fact, that our lives in this Universe are often all at the mercy of that Unknown and mysterious Power, which rules and controls the world.

In his poetry Browning treats of selfish love with no consideration of the life beyond. The second type of love refers to higher intellect and nobility of character, and the love attributed to them goes a long way beyond the mere selfish enjoyment of it. The lovers constantly search for the cause and effect which may contribute to their knowledge of the actual good found in love. We find an illustration of such love in the poem "By The Fire Side" .

"My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart my own, oh eyes mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor?"

(By The Fire Side.
Stanza XXI)

It shows the great and benevolent value of successful love. Beside the great spiritual significance, it is of immense practical value. The calm, the optimism, the hope of such affection is beautiful and ennobling beyond expression. The "Last Ride Together" is another example of spiritual love, in spite of the fact that it proves to

be a failure. The spiritual affection of the lover for his beloved shines forth too conspicuously to be overlooked. The lover in this poem realizes what no man whose love is prompted by selfish and sensuous motives can ever hope to realize, namely, would the lover look forward with such intense and passionate longing toward Heaven had he been successful in his love here? As it is his failure has given him a vision of heaven, whither he hopefully looks forward to be united with his beloved in perfect bliss.

"And Heaven just prove that I and she -
Ride, Ride, together forefer ride ? "

(The Last Ride Together
Stanza X)

"Andrea del Sarto", "My Last Duchess" are illustrations of selfish and sensuous love with no spiritual suggestiveness, they are not compensated with that vision of Heaven which is their reward of divine affection only.

Browning thinks that man and woman are born to love some other man or woman. If this is not carried out here it cannot be gratified in the life to come. If we fail here, we may hope for a re-union in Heaven, provided one of the lovers was sincere in his or her affection. A different tune does the poet pipe in "Any Wife to Any Husband". The love affair portrayed in this poem was perfect while it lasted, but while the wife is on her death bed, she is quite conscious of her husband's weakness, which will fully assert itself after she is gone. Here we find the constancy of woman in sharp contrast with the weakness of man. There is a great truth in the bitter reproach of the wife which mankind at the present stage of affairs cannot refuse^t. The faithful but dying wife speaks

of her husband's faithfulness while she lives. She idealizes all his wishes and desires, and she would still idealize him were he to die first. Even then he would be her only ideal, the only outstanding light in her life. Why should it be different in the case of her companion? She worries over the fact that very few men have the will power to be satisfied with the idealized image of a dead wife. She hopes for a re-union in Heaven when the time shall come, but why should their re-union not be spotless? Why should her temporary absence bring impurity into her husband's life?

It is indeed a fine tribute to women. Browning held that "purity and constancy are inevitable before humanity asserts supremacy over nature". Pure and unmolested love is the poet's embodiment of perfect faith, which man has not yet attained in spite of his striving. The womanly purity and unselfishness awaken in man the consciousness of wider and nobler love than the affection which is to satisfy his desire. Pure love was to Browning not the "foe of intellect, but a more gifted comrade who does the same work more effectively, who dives deeper, sears higher, welds more potently into more enduring unities, and flings upon dry hearts with a mere infallible magic the seed of more marvelous new births." To love was "some sum of all morality, root of all goodness".

"For love is life, and they who do not love
are not alive.
But they who love, live in the heart of God
and hear Him speak."

Browning always laid stress on reason and knowledge, but he could conceive neither as divorced from Love. "Paracelsus" in quest of ideal knowledge is a brilliant illustration of this branch of the poet's philosophy. Paracelsus thoroughly absorbed in attaining perfect knowledge, has forgotten or entirely neglected Love, as a result of this he fails in his effort. On his death bed he realizes the cause of his failure, the futility of knowledge without love, the need of the latter in all human endeavors. When the searcher of knowledge meets the searcher of love Paracelsus says:

"We must not part
Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
Whom this strange child invites once more?
Part ? Never.
Till thou, the lover, know, and I, the knower
Love - until both are saved."

Finally when he fully realizes what he has missed in life and the boundless value of love Paracelsus exclaims:

"God thou art Love ! I build my faith
on Thee."
that (Paracelsus).

"Knowledge means
Ever renewed assurance by defeat
That Victory is somehow still to reach;
But love is victory with prize itself."
the (Perish the Fancies)

Yet Browning's love resembles "the joyous self-expansion of the Greek, rather than humility and self-abnegation abnegation of the Christian love." Not the piety and goodness of a saint, nor the doer of benevolent deeds, but the artist and the lover dominated the prophet when he wrote of love.

7 Browning's Conception of Evil.

Not the least noble, hopeful and inspiring is Browning's conception and treatment of evil. We too well know that the poet was destined to live in an age when people no longer accepted on faith or took for granted the theory that evil in this world has in its final analysis a purpose which tends to the melioration of humanity and the development of society. The struggle against evil, says Browning is a good in itself. Evil exists only for its good purpose, in spite of the fact that our finite minds cannot grasp it.

"For mankind spring
Salvation by each hindrance interposed,
they climb."

(Sordello)

We can realize the true value of things only through the power of contrasting them with their opposites. How were we to appreciate good were it not for evil? Our purity of soul is a treasure to us when we have striven to snatch it out of the very clutches of evil? Would we ever be fully conscious of the boundless goodness of God, his justice, mercy, and love, if we had nothing to contrast them with? Evil is necessary for the real development of mankind.

"Put pain from out the world, what room were left
For thanks to God, for love to Man? why then
Except for some escape whate'er the style
From pain that might be, name it as thou mayest?"

(Jerishas)
(Jancies)

Browning admits that much of the evil of this world is the result of the violation of moral law; yet even if we let evil or sin enter our lives, it is not necessary that we must go on sinking into that sinful element. On the contrary, the poet is fully con-

vinced that we can overcome it, though with difficulty. Pompilia the true heroine of the Ring and the Book has attained perfection through suffering and conflict with evil. She had neither education nor home advantages, nor congenial surroundings during her wedded life. Only through conflict with evil ~~that~~^{her} true instructor-emerged the perfection of all beauty, all grace, the very embodiment of dignified and sublime maidenhood. She truly sees great good in suffering; she is the only character of the Ring and the Book who has a clear vision and grasps the relation of evil and good. Having attained so much good from evil, she wishes none of it undone and sees nothing but good in evil.

"Bear! not stand by, bear to see that angels bear"

At another time she says :

"In His face is light, but in his shadow
healing to."

(Ring in the Book
Bk.VII, l.1720)

Abt Vogler voices Browning's conception of evil very effectively:

"The Evil is null is nought, is silence
 implying sound
What was good shall be good, with, for evil
 so much good more ;
Therefore, on earth the broken Arcs, in heaven
 the perfect round."

(Abt Vogler Stanz IX,
l. 5)

8. Browning's Optimism.

Browning is the ^{an} healthful and hopeful optimist, which quality shines forth in his life as well as in his work. His conception of evil is above all a sufficient confirmation of this statement. Wherein lies the secret of such unbounded optimistic views? We are all aware of the fact, that no one can be talked into optimism, as no one can be coaxed into happiness. The soil to become a recipient of either must be deep within ourselves :

"I myself am Heaven an Hell" (*Paradise Lost Bk III 158*)

We can justify this statement when we shall carefully analyze the poem of the perfect painter "Andrea del Sarto". Browning's optimism is storm-proof and weather-proof, it is unshakable, it has its root deep in the innermost soul of the man. From it came the passionate love for existence. He is a happy being which surpasses optimism.

"How good is man's life, the mere living ! how fit
to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever
enjoy !
I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and
all for best."

(Saul 1. 79 -)

Browning's physical constitution must have undoubtedly contributed to his happiness and optimistic outlook of life; he accepted the Universe with joyful alacrity, always shedding the radiant beams of peace around him. His optimism shines forth in his conception of death; to him it is a "victory of soul over matter, and of hope beyond.

The poet loved life and considered it fully worth while, ~~leav~~ living exactly as he preached. Life to him is not "A walking shadow, a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying ~~ne~~ nothing." Nor did Browning ever share in a pessimistic saying "The longer life the greater choice of Evil". How far was the genius from such conceptions of life. "The mere joy of living" ~~en-~~ ~~ticed~~ and charmed him.

In "Fra Lippe Lippi" he tells us :-

"This world is no blot for us
No blank, it remains intensely and means
good." (Page 129)

Intending to make life perfect every little thing is significant.

"Oh the little more and how much it is ?
And the little less and what worlds away ? (By The Fireside.
Stanislaus XXIX)

Thus we approach the end of the survey of Browning's conception of life in its various forms. His two great and most outstanding theories are : First, the hope arising from the imperfection of man; this idea he fully expounded in the "Old Pictures of Florence", where hope may be placed on deficiency itself. The natural outcome of this is his conception of Immortality. The second theory "If sorrow and self denial is a burden, it is also a privilege." This statement may be illustrated by the fact, that the ~~Gruesome~~ Crucifixion of Christ has undoubtedly attributed much to His subsequent greatness.

To know life in all its manifestations, that of the soul above all, was his supreme purpose. To Browning "little else was worth studying". Life in its ~~serene~~ loneliness, and in its mean-

ness, its heroes as well as its villains, its successes and its failures, all with relation to the soul and the Infinite.

"T'was ⁱⁿ my plan to look on real life
The life all new to one; my theories
My-theories Were farm, so then left I
to look and learn .
Mankind, its cares, hopes, fears, its
woes and joys
And as I pondered on their ways, I sought
Comprising every joy I deeply mused."

(Pauline P 8. 119)

Is this not an illustration of his cosmopolitan mind? He lived and moved in a great mental world. He was not satisfied to see man at a distance. Browning loved and admired humanity not for what they are but for what they might become, and is the greatest hopeful exponent of faith, love and progress which the nineteenth century produced, yet his message is for all ages, so long as mankind will strive to attain purity, harmony, perfect, upright honesty Browning will live; for his is a message of the soul, a thing which always has and always will be of great interest to humanity, in the study of which mankind never grows tired.

For Browning, Life, Religion, Love and God are synonymous, and we do not find them divorced. Character is only a test of the religious principles in man. A bad or indifferent religion results in an indifferent, carelessness character. Progress with Browning was more "an instinct than a principle". "Spirit was to the poet the ultimate fact of existence, the soul and God were indissoluble realities.

In the combat between heart and head, heart always was champion in Browning's case, yet intellect was used most vigorously and effectively in every argument of his. In considering the highest principles, he always takes the two extreme views on the subject,

and then through reason and adequate argument, as well as intuition, the Good always triumphs. "Caliban upon Setebos", and "An Epistle of Karshish" show Browning's broad-mindedness and tolerance in treating religious matters.

Browning as I have already mentioned did not fear death, but he disliked the continual harping on the subject, To attain perfect fruition and realization of life, it is a necessary experience, and is to the prophet and seer completely barren of horror; it is the reunion with God, and the eternal, - the only purpose of the reward of his being here. "

"If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast; its splendour soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom; I shall emerge one day."

(Paracelsus Last Scene)

His is the life giving, life sustaining philosophy, no cloud hovers over his view of death, a thing which is to many of us a dark nebula full of uncertainty, to others it is a reality sustained by hope. We want immortality because the human heart is craving for it, because we are afraid of annihilation, - a horrifying sensation, - and because belief in a future life makes this life a happier abode. The thought of extinction would poison the life here for many. To most of us intuition is the only dictator of a fuller life beyond. Browning is convinced of this life and convinces others. His conviction has had its true reward of unmolested and unclouded happiness here.

Life and death are the correlatives on which the poet's optimism and unbounded assurance of the life beyond rests.

"Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be
The last of life for which the first was made:
Our times are in His Hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned ;
Youth shows but half: trust God, see
all, nor be afraid. "

(Rabbi Ben Ezra l. I -)

Browning "Never doubted clouds would break
Never dreamed though right were
worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, ^{are} our baffled to
fight better ,
Sleep to rise."

(Epilogue to Asolando
Cast Stunza)

T E N N Y S O N and B R O W N I N G .

It has been said that Tennyson is the only poet of the nineteenth century who had much in common with Browning. It is true that they resemble each other in many respects when we take a sweeping glance. But upon closer consideration we find that they differ greatly in their philosophy, conception of religion, view of immortality, and in their attitude toward nature and man.

Both poets lived a praiseworthy^{life}, characterized by purity, morality and sincerity of intention; both made a great effort to find the Unknown, and our relations to God, nature and man. Both are intensely religious poets with a great enthusiasm for the Bible, and unbounded admiration for the miraculous personality of Christ. Neither of them has much of the spirit of Clough and Matthew Arnold, this is especially true in the case of Robert Browning. Both were blessed with a long and productive life. Both cherished the conception that art is for man's sake and for man's sake alone only. Both laid great stress on the value of Love, both realized the value of knowledge, yet each one subordinated it to love and reverence.

"Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well
May make one music as before."

(In Mem. 1.25)

Or

" 'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all."

both were deeply occupied with the problems of the soul. Finally both were poets and nothing but poets. Here it seems to me the resemblance of the two practically terminates and the gulf begins to widen between them.

The first great difference of the two ~~lives~~ lies in the fact that Browning had conviction in the existence of God and future life, while Tennyson had only faith, and even faith with him was not completely free from doubt.

"We have but faith we do not know
For knowledge is of things we see."

(In Mem. 1. 21)

Browning tells us with assured conviction :

"Thus I believe, thus I affirm,
Thus I am certain that it is from
This life I shall pass to another
Better, there where that lady
Lives in whom my soul was enamored."

Tennyson's faith was too often disturbed by the prevailing scepticism and doubt of his time, and the numerous scientific investigations, while Browning remained as a rock as undisturbed in his belief. Nay more, the struggle and doubt contributed to the strength of his faith. Only through a long process of spiritual struggles, doubt and often despair did Tennyson reach the assurance of immortality through his personal love for Arthur Hallam. Tennyson did not always completely overcome his doubt, sometimes it mastered him, at others he lulled into quietude.

"If e'er, when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice: Believe no more;
And heard an ever - breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;
"A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered 'I have felt' "

(In Mem.CXXIV)

The poet's vision did not come through intuition or a higher type of reasoning, but through psychic power of self-hypnotism, as he himself tells us in "The Ancient Sage". Browning's belief, on the other hand, comes from intuition and reason, but never through trance experiences.

The failures of this life fill Tennyson with despair. They often overwhelm his conception of God and Immortality. He tries to overcome his doubt, and thus he argues with himself:

"My own dim life should teach me this;
That life shall live forever more
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is.

What then were God to such as I ?
'Twere hardly worth my while to choose
Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die;

'Twere best at once to sink in peace
Like birds the charming serpent draws
To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease."

(In Mem. XXXIV)

But he finally triumphs over his doubt. To Browning failure is a source of strengthening our faith in a fuller life, a perfect abode.

"Why comes temptation but for man to meet
And master and make crouch beneath his foot
And so be pedestalled in triumph?"

(Ring and the Book
Bk. X, l. 1183)

Tennyson is distinctly a poet of his time and for fifty years he revelled in unprecedented popularity, in the full recognition of his productions, and was crowned with as much worldly success as man could possibly wish. It was not Browning's privilege to enjoy the popularity of his people. He wrote because he could no more help doing so than he could help breathing. Tennyson was a poet of man and nature. He treated of the Romantic, ancient and domestic life of the world, history, theology, art, science, problems which were mostly of a social and political character. Yet we see that the social mind which makes a poet a voice of an organized community was entirely lacking in Browning; he was not interested in the outward problems of life, but he was fascinated with the evolution of the soul, the relation of the mind and spirit. In writing to Ruskin, Browning tells us that "All poetry is the problem of putting the Infinite into the finite".

The nineteenth century with its problems is manifested in Tennyson's poetry. ^{Therein} They-read but not in the catholic depth of thought lies its significance. To the great diversity of his gift could undoubtedly be attributed his popularity. He appealed to the different types of mind. Some of his work~~s~~ are philosophical, some merely fanciful. Browning is the deeper, the more thoughtful of the two.

The great drama of human life in its diversity absorbed Tennyson. He is passionately interested in the progress of society, in the theological controversies of the time to which can be attributed his doubt, yet he never became a real agnostic, although he was often on the point of yielding. In the great scientific movement the poet became "a clog in the machine ". He had the quick eye of a scientific observer, but little of the true seer or the prophetic vision, a quality which can be duly attributed to Browning.

Tennyson is intensely interested in nature. He is the most artistic painter of nature . Here again we see the scientist but not the seer. He described nature with loyalty to actual and scientific facts, with perfect minuteness. With a book in his hand he studied nature; but to him she is not a living presence nor a voice of God; nor has nature for Tennyson that divine message of which Wordsworth speaks. To him it is a law full of scientific spirit of the time. Nature is "Red in tooth and claw with rapine "

(a)

His is the evolutionist's view of nature; he sees in her process the divine spirit which is favorable toward man.

"One God, one law, one element
And one far off divine event
To which all creation moves."

(b)

He speaks of the outer world and he brings us no new message.

(a) In ~~man~~LVI, l. 17.

(b) In ~~man~~Last Stanza .

Browning is an impressionist, while Tennyson is not, and therein lies the difference in their conception of nature. Tennyson approached nature, not with the hot and hasty zeal of the impressionist, but with the cool eye of a consummate artist; and every sketch of Nature which he has given, whether of the commonplace or the extraordinary is finished with admirable skill and has the crowning merit of absolute fidelity, accuracy, and truth.

Tennyson's conception of women is a revelation of his character and the key to his mind and type of genius. To whom ^{him} a woman is the divinely purifying element of human life, an idea which cannot, but stand out in sharp contrast to the nineteenth century Nietzsche. Tennyson propounds no daring theory of free love, as we see in Shelley, nor is his love characterized by that touch of sensuousness fully displayed in Byron's works. The baser side of life is repulsive to Tennyson; his is the love of knighthood, of a chivalrous age, full of reverence and passion. He treats of the spiritual value of love first and foremost, not the love of flesh. To Browning spirit and flesh are correlative and he does not think of them as separate entities.

If ever Tennyson treats of human passion with unchased^{te} desire, we are sure to hear a thunderstorm of denunciation, and he points out the evil following it; and the destructive result not only to those concerned, but to society at large. The poet has portrayed the purest, highest and noblest type of womankind as well as the lowest and most destructive. Elaine and Enid in his "Idylls of the King" are the very embodiment of the highest type of womanhood. Guinevere, the queen, represents the baser element of human

love. The unlawful desire causes of Guinevere causes finally the destruction of the ideal Empire of King Arthur's untiring perseverance and efforts. No sin is as destructive as the violation of pure love. Throughout the ~~Idylls~~ Idylls the poet proceeds to show that the ^{sin} scene of one being ultimately brings about the ruin and destruction of God's Kingdom on Earth, the purpose and heart of which was :

"To break the heathen and uphold the Christ.
To ride abroad redressing human wrong
Live pure, speak true, right wrong,
follow the King "

(a.)

To quench the noble spirit of womanhood is to extinguish the divine light of God, which was intended to be guide and illumination of the world. Tennyson tells us that woman inspires man and may lead him, but is by no means intellectually his equal. She could be a divine influence through divine purity and nobility of soul. In ~~the~~ "Princess" we see Tennyson's idea of women entering the intellectual arena of man. Needless to say that his Princess meets with disappointment and utter failure. Tennyson did not approve of woman wasting her energy and vitality in the common strife of every day life. Woman's power is to "mould and shape the moral side of man's nature", but not to compete with him for intellectual and social superiority .

"Woman is too rare, too subtle, too ethereal"

Tennyson idealizes home, to him it is the subtlest expression of life.

(a) (Idylls of the King)
Guinevere P. 454

"Woman is not undeveloped man
But diverse: Could we make her as the man
Sweet love were slain: his dearest bond is this
Not like to like, but like to difference."

(a)

Nowhere in Browning do we find him speak of the emancipation of woman. He seems to take it for granted that woman is intellectually a strong being. Otherwise would he endow Pompilia with such wealth of intellect, such lofty and noble ideals? The most interesting part of it is, that Browning's noblest woman, perhaps the noblest in our literature, is absolutely illiterate, she could neither read nor write. That convinces us that Browning did not set too much store on the value of theoretical knowledge. It is true that Browning tells us that he portrayed Pompilia as he found her. But it is also true that he endowed her with the noble characteristics of his "half-angel and half-bird".⁽¹⁾ He convinces us through Pompilia and Pippa, the poor beggar girl, that a soul ^{can} could be noble without any education.

Browning is a man of liberal views as we can well surmise from his poem "The Lost Leader". Tennyson is more conservative. His conservatism asserted itself ^{after} since fortune began to smile so lavishly upon him. His earlier poetry has a democratic note in it, but it vanishes in his later works. Some critics have asserted that Tennyson believes that the people should have power, therefore, he is democratically inclined. But this is not sufficient proof. Much more valid argument can be given to refute this statement. He remained indifferent to the revolutionary upheaval of his time. He was delighted with the splendor and pomp of the aristocrats.

(a) The Princess, p. 420, l. 32.

(1) Ring and the Book. Br. I l. 1391.

His heart is with the ancient aristocratic order of things. He is not a people's poet. His characters are all highly aristocratic families, Princes, Lords, and Knights. Of those who suffer, struggle, fight the battles, and bear the burden of humanity, we hear very little in his poetry, nor does he know too much about them. "A true poet is he" said Dawson, "who seeks to probe the heart of the world's sorrow, and ^{we} return to him to know what verdict he can give, and whether there is any hope."

Take Browning's little beggar girl in "Pippa Passes" and see the purity and nobility of her soul. She is the harbinger of love and consolation to so many faithless, hopeless and oppressed. She tells us :

"God's in Heaven
All's right with the world." *Pippa Passes*

How beautifully she utilizes her single day's holiday. Where in Browning all Tennyson's works do we find a correlative to Pippa? He does not choose a poor beggar girl to endow her with such noble qualities. When Tennyson attempts to make any concessions to the poor, what do we hear him say ?

"Why should not these great sirs
Give up their park some dozen times a year
To let the people grieve breathe ? "

Tennyson's ignorance of the poor people's conditions is portrayed in these lines. The poet of democracy would never recognize the privilege of the lower classes enjoying the park "a few dozen times a year ". He would demand it as the common right of all. No poet portraying social conditions can afford to overlook the mass of men, the poorer classes, for a good many of the social problems are the results of poverty, injustice and oppression of the ~~last~~ ^{less}

fortunate. To such conditions Tennyson turns a deaf ear, or else he did not understand them. He stands aloof in the company of lords and ladies, the highly educated and the intellectual, far away from the tragedies and every day strife of life. The famous, the well known, such as the Duke of Wellington and others are portrayed in Tennyson's poetry; the obscure, the forgotten find the foremost place in Browning's poems. Tennyson upheld the theory of the survival of the fittest, and as such we can hardly expect him to sympathise with the poor, disabled and oppressed. Yet here and there, we find in Tennyson noble democratic outbursts. "In"Locksley Hall", for instance, the poet anticipates the idea of a closer unity of all mankind in the Parliament of Nations".

No matter how noble a failure may be, Tennyson has little sympathy, Bre for it. Browning judges not by the success of any undertaking, but by the nobility of impulse which prompted it, by the amount of ^{true} ~~two~~ efforts. His sympathy with failure inspires the weak and oppressed with hope and consolation. Browning prefers failure in big things to success in little petty affairs.

"That low man seeks a little thing to do,
This high man with a great thing to pursue
Dies ere he knows it."

(A Grammarian's Funeral
1. 113)

Browning is intensely dramatic, Tennyson is a descriptive poet. His works are a source for enjoyment and inspiration, not for deep instruction. He is for the youthful mind. Browning is the poet for mature intellect.

Tennyson is the national poet, a patriot. He admires everything British, but failed to see all the good in other peoples, especially of the French nation, as it might be seen in the "Ode to the Duke of Wellington". He sympathises little with other national struggles (with other national struggles). Browning's patriotism is that of a cosmopolitan mind. As far as love of country is concerned he loved Italy almost more than England. He sympathises with other nations, and could see the good in them. His subjects are not always English, "Strafford" is the only play of his nine dramas, which was written on an English subject.

Browning's interest in other people and other lands could not be attributed to lack of love for his mother-land, but rather to the fact that he was a great artist and was attracted equally by the beauties of other lands as well as of his native country. His poetry is international and that is what the best poetry, music and painting should be; it must appeal to the human heart and soul but not to the small portion of mankind. We must love an artist for what is in his innermost soul, but not because he flatters us. Tennyson, it is true was sincere in his lavish praise for England, but such praise could not fail to attribute to his popularity. His "Ode to the Duke of Wellington," a most noble and beautiful patriotic poem must have gained for him many an English heart.

Tennyson's poetry is very appealing to the imagination. Browning's is slow in appealing to reason, but once it ^{has} gained ground, its hold on our mind is firm. Our interest in Browning increases gradually but surely. The more we study him the more we love him and our love for him is lasting.

With regard to future generations, we can safely and surely say that, what was of peculiar interest to the tendencies of the time of the two respective poets will undoubtedly disappear and much of Tennyson's works reflected the peculiar problems of his age. Posterity will judge the two by the lasting and immortal element in their poetry. I do not like to prophesy, but from the present interest in the two poets, we can all realize that the interest in Browning is constantly increasing, yet I doubt whether Tennyson's popularity is holding the same pedestal, the same pinnacle, which it did during his lifetime. There is little doubt that humanity will for a long time to come, if not always, find pleasure in that portion of Tennyson's poetry which is universal in the human heart, in its simple, loving, and noble forms; Browning will hold his place, through the vast fathomless variety within the human soul which is so nobly represented.

On the other hand let us contrast the philosophy and religious views of Browning with those of his contemporaries Matthew Arnold and Hugh Clough.

What strikes me most in considering the diverse representatives of the Victorian Era is the fact, that human beings, subject to the same laws of God and nature can, ^{while} breathing the same atmosphere, through the psychological differences of their respective natures, imbibe different elements and thus form most distinct individuals.

When we consider Browning with Clough and Matthew Arnold, from the world's point of view, from the impression their works leave with us, we shall find no difficulty in justly saying that an unbridged gulf differentiates them. Then it will almost be im-

possible for us to find any points of similarity between them and Browning. But the more one considers the question, the more one realizes, that in reality Matthew Arnold and Hugh Clough^{ugh} are true religious poets; when we take religion in its nakedness, bare of all its vestments, and truth-disguising veils, we shall discover that in the final analysis of things, their religion is not so very different from Browning's, although their methods defy comparison.

The outward life of Clough and Arnold was very different yet they do not differ much in their innermost mode of it. Somehow I can never think of one or read his poetry without having in mind the other, and feeling that the teachings of the one are fully applicable to the other. "The Better Part" is one of Arnold's poems which gives one the above-stated impression. The two have much in common, they were such great friends, and were exposed to similar sufferings and doubts, that we cannot help thinking of the two as one.

Before I shall proceed to speak of Clough and Arnold, a question confronts me. Wherein lies the cause of such doubt, such religious despair as we find in Clough and Arnold? They were both brought up at Rugby under the supervision of Dr. Arnold, a very fine man and intensely religious. Both have imbibed to the full the religious spirit prevailing at Rugby. Why then such a change, such a calamity in their religious lives? The root of this mystery lies in the prevailing tendencies of the time, the clash between Rugby influences and Oxford Movement, can by no means be overlooked, since it played such an important part in the lives of the two men.

Religious questions have always occupied and still occupies a prominent place in British social life. The Evangelical movement under the leadership of John Venn, Wilberforce and others by means of their pen rejuvenated the old Puritanical strictness, and displayed their unbounded zeal and energy in every undertaking serving their purpose, disregarding at the same time the exclusive claims of the Episcopacy.

The Oxford movement on the other hand laid great stress upon the orders of Bishops, Priests and so forth, who according to their views received authority by succession from apostolic times. It showed great aversion towards Protestantism because during the reformation it discarded traditions. In many points it approached the Roman Catholic Church, only denying the supremacy of the Pope.

Newman is the outstanding figure in this movement, and he dominated Oxford with pen and voice, leading an indelible imprint on the mind and life of Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough. ©

Newman issued Tract Ninety to reconcile the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England with the decrees of the Council of Trent to which Oxford gave strenuous opposition. For a time nothing was of great importance but this movement; it invaded all other fields, and gave its peculiar coloring to the whole life of those concerned.

The sympathetic and persuasive personality of Newman, and his intense sincerity gained for him the hearts of many.

There was no intellectual arrogance displayed in the propounding of his doctrines, and he spoke with modesty of his knowledge of the Infinite. "I do verily believe" he said "a spirit is abroad and we are but blind tools, not knowing whither we are going."

The influence which the two poets received at Rugby were frustrated by Newman's power of conviction. Clough felt like a "straw drawn up in the draught of a chimney". Newman benumbed and silenced all other influences for the two poets, who like sticks in a whirlpool were cast in the midst of "thoughts, hopes, passions, social, political, ideal, democratic, religious and theological problems of the time .

Both poets came to Oxford about the same time, the belief of both was pathetically undermined by the Oxford movement. Neither could completely extricate himself from the religious attitude of the strictly puritanical home training. Doubt characterizes the two. They both expressed a craving for that simple faith which was the source for their peace and happiness; and the minds of both prevented them from finding refuge in faith. Reason and not intuition had for a long time full control over the two poets.

That religious strife which overpowered Clough and Arnold did not affect either Browning or Tennyson; these two sat above this controversy which enslaved their two contemporaries.

Matthew Arnold was a prominent critic and teacher of his time. Unlike Browning, his life was characterized by manifold and varied activities and was rich in events. He was brought up in a intensely religious puritanical home; but all the religious elements which were firmly instilled within him at Rugby were shattered and upset through the doubt, scepticism, theological controversies and scientific investigations of his time, yet all these elements so destructive in many respects failed to extinguish entirely the faith which was so firmly implanted in his youthful period. As a result of this we behold a deep inner struggle, the intensity of which is known only to those who have experienced it. To be cast on the waves of almost perpetual disturbing doubt is a hard lot indeed, yet bet the twin-poets have had the full experience of it. Arnold's wavering between doubt and belief finds full expression in his poetry from which an intensely religious feeling as well as the inability to believe constantly breathe forth.

"The sea of faith
Was once, too, at full, and drowned earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled,
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar."

(a)

He lacks utterly the unfaltering conviction of Browning. Doubt characterizes Arnold; faith and love are the outstanding characteristics of Browning. Death to Arnold is not the fruition and completion of life, it is a thing of uncertainty. Yet he tells us that since we are not sure of the life beyond, we should try

(a) Dover Beach l. 20.

(2)

The battle of his heart and mind is too conspicuous to be overlooked; the one pathetically longed for the faith of his home, while his mind could accept nothing on faith, but wanted for its proof minute scientific exactness. Such discord must inevitably disturb one's peace of mind. Arnold sought tranquility, which was practically his life's quest. He was often filled with pessimism, usually the accompaniment of hopeless doubt.

(2)

Yet he differs from an ordinary pessimist, since he was a firm believer in intellectual and spiritual progress. He is a stoic through and through and regrets the fact that he was born and destined to live in a period of such scepticism, which robbed him

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completely of his peace of mind. He longed for an age in which unquestionable belief reigned supreme.

"Oh! had I lived in that great day,
How had its glory new
Filled the earth and heaven
and out away
My ravished spirit too."

He is the spirit "loosened upon the sunless seas of doubt, and ever wearily scanning the grey horizon for a desire, but undiscovered haven". Arnold is "wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born. Pathetic sadness permeates his works, distress fills his pages, known only to the faithless who have themselves experienced the intense tragedy of an inner religious struggle. He is too sadly philosophical and introspective, too reticent to speak much of the enchanting exaltation of love. Yet even his intellectual doubt he found no conclusion, no peace, in his atmosphere of pessimism.

Having found himself too weak to either believe or fully disbelieve, he utters in despair.

"Let the long contention cease!
Geese are swans and swans are geese.
Let them have it how they will
Thou art tired best be still."

Where in the whole range of Browning's poetry can we find such calm despair, such scepticism, such doubt ?

Matthew Arnold will appeal to those whom popular theology failed to satisfy, and for those he wrote, not to rob them of their faith or self-complacency, but to dissuade those who could not believe in miraculous performances, from becoming materialists.

In spite of his inner struggles, he was a polished man of the world, by no means of a retiring disposition. He had respect for the old and the young, for the rich and the poor; always amusing, always entertaining. Like Browning he lived as he preached. He was undoubtedly a man of righteousness, justice and integrity of character. Though he was not religious in the common sense of the word, he sought with might and main to make the world better.

Clough's quest was Truth, as Matthew Arnold's was tranquility. The former had one clear aim in view, and that was to get out of the storm of his inner conflict, if it could be done truthfully; he does not want tranquility of soul unless it is gained through Truth, which for him was God. He clings to Truth when everything else fails to him.

"It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, Truth is so;
That howsoever I stray and range,
Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change
I steadier step when I recall
That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall."

(With Whom is no Variableness, neither
Shadow of Turning)

Neither Clough nor Matthew Arnold are sceptics in the deep significance of its meaning, but they were agnostics, wherein they greatly differ from Browning in whose life agnosticism never entered.

Clough's reason and conscience were his dictators, and he truly obeyed them. Through them he was well aware, that somewhere and that sometime there would be a solution for all his troubles, and the solution must be found in Truth, if it is to be found at all. Could such a spirit be considered irreligious? The Poet lived and moved amidst the disorganized bundle of his thoughts, seeking incessantly for a solution of it all. He lived for a long time in the midst of trouble, doubt and hopelessness to finally master them. He is far from certain whether our life is immortal, and the questions whether the world is the end of life or not?

"To spend uncounted years of pain,
Again, again, and yet again
In working out in heart and brain
the problem of our being here;
To gather facts from far and near
Upon the mind to hold them free
And knowing more may yet appear;
Unto one's latest breath to fear.
Is this the object end, and law
The purpose of our being here?" (a)

Faith and love are with him a passing phase, but knowledge and truth abide forever. He had little belief in fate, and thought that to a large extent we are responsible for our failures.

(a) (Why Does he Think. Through Thinking One Grows old)

Clough was of a retiring nature; he did not mingle much in society and was somewhat out of tune with the world. He was tired of his inner strife - which is the intensest tragedy of human nature, not even the tragedy of a battlefield can surpass it. There man's senses are benumbed, the music, the noise, the intensity of the situation causes man to forget himself and face the tragedy of death unflinchingly. But the inner struggles of a man, seated by himself in the perfect silence of his room, with nothing to distress^{act}, the mind is clear, with no interruption whatsoever, free to brood over the end and purpose of it all, such a tragedy is intense beyond expression, - and such a tragedy Clough had to face. He longed for any change which might check his inner unrest, which could only be appeased by Truth itself. He left Oxford and went to America, but in vain. His longing for peace and faith was not appeased.

Too early had Clough been troubled with problems suitable for a mature man. Religion is a dangerous thing for a speculative juvenile mind, for the scope of religion is far beyond our understanding. With his intense intellectual curiosity and uncertainty, he could not help being moulded by Newman while at Oxford. This influence, however, failed to give him peace.

There can absolutely be no doubt that Truth was Clough's faith, which was his constant guide throughout his life. He was perfectly sincere and was not surpassed in this quality even by Browning. One illustration from Clough's own life will justify this statement. He was a holder of an Oriel-fellowship, which he resigned

merely because his conscience would not allow him to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church. He felt uneasy to subscribe to it, and no recognition could tempt him to do it. Such a fact speaks loudly for his honor and sense of righteousness. Froude said with regard to this sacrifice. "He gave up a distinguished position and brilliant prospect to gather in London a living as he could from under the hoofs of the horses in the street."

Free and unbridled action was the first necessity for Clough's happiness, being like his worthy contemporaries Browning and Arnold, in advance of his time it was hard for him to conform to the narrow standard of his age. He soon wearied of everything and being in doubt of his faith, life was at times even meaningless.

"Eat, drink and die, for we are souls bereaved
Of all creatures under Heaven's wide cope
We are most hopeless who had once most hope,
And most beliefless, that had most believed."

Yet as Hugh Clough advanced in life, his tempestuous struggles abated, his soul gained comparative peace, and hope of a future world entered his mind; and even Clough said :

"And not by Eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly
But westward look, the land is bright."

ℓ/

Clough was beloved by his contemporaries. His work is to a large extent a self-revelation of the man. Yet critics assest

(ℓ) (Say not the struggle naught availeth)
C 13.

that he was much greater in his life than he was in his productions. We are all aware that the stern Carlyle was not too lavish of praise unless it was well deserved, yet even he praised Clough greatly.

"A mind more vivid, more inegnuous, more veracious, mildly radiant, I have seldom met with, and a character so honest, so modest, so kindly".

Now let us for a while turn away from the wide gulf criticism had justly created between the religious attitude of Robert Browning and his two contemporaries Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough. Each one of us perusing the productions of the respective poets will at once realize that Browning is the incarnation of hope, love, faith and belief; he walks forward to the inevitable goal undaunted and fearlessly, while Clough and Arnold are the very embodiment of doubt, and hopelessly look forward toward a desire but unattained harbor.

In spite of the general impression their poetry leaves upon us, in spite of the clamour of criticism, there is a profound ^{between} similarity of their religion with that of Robert Browning. To me Clough's passionate search for truth fully deserves the name religion. Did he not cling to it with the sincerity of a profoundly true Christian? And is he not sincere in his quest? Clough is imbued with the sincerity of purpose which characterizes Carlyle's true Heroes. Is he not striving with utmost intensity to find peace in Truth? And is love of truth not one of the most important elements of truly religious natures? As for the doubt of Clough and Arnold, one can say that not each one of us is endowed with such great moral strength as Browning was, and not everyone of us

can stand like a rock in the midst of all doubt and theological controversy.

Personally I do think that agnosticism (in the sense I do not know) is not such a great insult to the Infinite. The ~~Super~~ Supreme Power well knows, that with the exception of a few we obtain our knowledge of Him through our heart and intuition, which is neither perfect nor infallible. And it is hardly fair to censure severely anyone, who having through his intuition obtained a glimpse of the Infinite is modest in asserting his knowledge of God.

Browning is one of the few great spiritual leaders who had a clear prophetic vision of the Infinite, for that reason we cannot judge humanity by the standard of Browning's intuitive power. Were we all Browning's, hope, faith, and love would reign supreme? Unfortunately this is not so, not every being can mould circumstances, alas, too many are moulded by them, and this was the lot of Clough and Arnold.

Each human being sees the Unknown according to his own intuitional faculty and power of reasoning. Each thinking being has a conception of God which is the outgrowth of that peculiar nature, his developement and conception of life. I do not infer that there is a God for each one of us, but what I do assert is, that each one forms a different conception of the Infinite. Since ^{every} one of us is differently impressed by visible things, how can we expect mankind to have the same conception of the Invisible One?

Humanity in this respect can well be compared with the six blind men who examined the same elephant and carried with them such different impressions of the animal.

God does not change, any more than the animal was changed while the blind men examined him. But we change and our conception of God changes with us, we grow and our God grows with us, we sink and our conception of God often sinks with us. Can we justly deny that many of us are groping in the dark in the search of the Unknown, guided by intuition and reason? Can Matthew Arnold and Hugh Clough who were not endowed with the prophetic vision of Browning, be censured, since they were perfectly sincere in their quest for God? Can we accuse the two poets of want of effort? Have they not struggled to ~~ibet~~ obtain knowledge of God? Have they not craved for faith or have they not regretted the fact that they were born in a sceptic age which robbed them of that faith which was once their own, and which brought them peace and consolation?² Can we blame them because the spirit of the time was stronger than themselves.²

Both Clough and Arnold led lives which are in accord with the Christian spirit, in spite of the fact that they did not firmly believe in the divinity of Christ. As we can see from their works, neither acted right for the sake of any compensation beyond, but for righteousness sake. The life of each was characterized by purity and nobility of purpose. Not everyone who considers himself a true Christian has lived as stainless a life as the two poets whom the world has censured as unbelievers.

Is Arnold's poem "The Better Part", of which I have already quoted, not sufficient proof of their truly religious views of life. And life is after all the essential thing in judging man. It is a matter of little importance to what creed one belongs, or what his religious convictions are, if his views are not supported by a pure, sincere and stainless life. To love righteousness for righteousness sake is true greatness.

We cannot but sympathise with and admire our twin-poets, when we realize that so many who, when stripped of faith and belief in immortality, gave rein to their unbridled passions to enjoy this life to the full. Can we accuse Clig Clough and Arnold of similar conceptions? In Tennyson's "Vision of Sin" we see a faithless man, who having lost belief in a future life pitches this existence of peace to the very height of immorality. While Arnold in doubting the future strives to pitch this life to perfection. That in itself is a true religious spirit.

Most thinking beings have a destructive as well as constructive period in their lives, and most of us are subject to doubt at some stage in our existence. Yet some of us shake it off easily and resume our healthy, normal course of life. We are all liable to fall in the clutches of doubt when we are young, when our views are not settled, but as we advance in life and become older we cling to our faith again.

We see that even Matthew Arnold has greatly modified his conception as Clough also has done, and slowly but surely found his way to faith.

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