

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 existance, 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 propogandist 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 be 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 cult, 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.

That 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 ^d 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) (L n 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 same^{time}, 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 Brown-
ing's 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 cosmo-
politan 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." (*De 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 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^r 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. ~~Peri~~ 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 these 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 angled, 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
furléd:
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)

(a) *Journal of Browning*

"How much of priceless life were spent
With man that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex -
Society's true ornament
We dared wanderlights like this
Through winds and rain and watch the Seine,

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 regarded with many years of unclouded happiness. Though the
poet adhered to some conventionalities, yet he recognized their futi-
lity and realized that many of them hamper true and complete develop-
ment of human nature,

(a)
"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 day
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 breath, - I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! - and if God choose
I shall but love thee better after death."

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 appreciat-
ed her husband's love for her and fully responded to the affection
of her life's companion.

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 development 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
Ek. 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 gentises 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 Mem ~~or~~ stanza 1*
Stanza III)

(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 stranger. 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;
Nemesis- 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 sirs,- 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 irremotably 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 they fully realized the indestructible 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-~~wh~~e 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 above} 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 Sarte", "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 "fee 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 (Verishta's Lances)

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?"

(Jerishtas
Yancies)

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 same 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 and 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, never 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 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" enthralled 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.
Stanzas XXXIX)

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 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.

"Grew 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)