

A Lesson From the Optimism of Browning.

MARY R. CRANDALL.

"A man's reach should exceed his grasp
Or what's a Heaven for?"

Thus sings Browning whose strong, broad, bracing views of life, invigorate one like a breath from the mighty free Atlantic.

The subject of the poem, Andrea del Sarto, "the faultless painter" has failed to achieve in his own work the success that crowns the work of others less gifted than himself in his chosen art. He knows his abilities but realizes his limitations;

"But all the play, the insight and the stretch,—
Out of me! Out of me!"—

is the pathetic plaint of his soul. Still he takes the long view, and hopes for "more chances perhaps" in the larger life beyond.

In this matchless monologue, Browning has given us the portrait of many a human life, and the thought expressed in our first quotation is a truth that the discouraged of earth would do well to grasp and hold to the heart. Well is it that ambition exceeds achievement in this world. Man, with his finite limitations, needs to realize that beyond any success or any failure, are possibilities of still greater achievement, for it may safely be said that no man could bear continued and complete success, and still go on to nobler effort.

Unalloyed satisfaction must, in the nature of things, bring surfeit, and man so surfeited would cease to aspire and strive, and become a mere clog upon the wheels of human endeavor. So there come to the world's workers times of discouragement, that we with our short vision call failure.

"But what is our failure here, but a triumph's evidence,
For the fulness of the days?"

A great poem, work of art, or scientific discovery is given to the world, but the world is not prepared for it, and the men who have poured out their great talents for the blessing of their fellow-men, see their work neglected or scorned by an unthinking or ungrateful public. But their failure is but the prelude to the success of later days, and were they gifted with prophetic vision, they would not "wither and agonize," seeing that in future years great multitudes should feel the beneficent and uplifting influence of their gifts to humanity.

Browning himself was an illustration of this truth. For years his work was practically unrecognized; still he wrote on, producing year after year his "Pomegranates," awaiting with cheerful optimism the time when "the heart within blood-tinctured of a veined humanity," should be discovered.

Today he is recognized as a great Christian poet, whose influence tends to lead men away from low, sordid, narrow views of life to the larger view which regards the "here" but as the portal to the hereafter, and man's efforts and achievements, his failures and successes, as alike part of the great whole, which includes Eternity as well as Time.

To the view of his contemporaries, was there ever a more conspicuous failure than the life and mission of the Christ? "He came to His own and His own received Him not." With all His omnipotent power, with the evidences of His Divine origin upon Him, He was still hindered and thwarted "because of their unbelief."

Despised, outcast, betrayed, crucified,—who at the close of the earthly career of Christ, would have ventured to predict that to-day millions of men and women should find in His name, all their inspiration to noble living and self-sacrificing effort for the amelioration of earth's woes, and that the great of earth—monarchs, rulers, ambassadors, princes,—would bow the head, and humble the heart, at that Name once rejected.

It is true that defeat is often but the prelude to glorious victory, so with our Poet, speaking in the person of Rabbi Ben Ezra, we say:

"Then welcome each rebuff,
That turns earth's sweetness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit, nor stand, but go!
Be our joy three-parts pain,
Strive and hold cheap the strain
Learn, nor account the pang,
Dare, never grudge the throe!"

"For thence a paradox
That comforts while it mocks,
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail."

To look at one's life and work from the personal viewpoint merely, which is not necessarily a selfish one, but narrow, is as though one should be content with standing in the valley, shut in by hills to a limited view of the beauties of nature, while from the mountain-top may be obtained the grand, broad outlook upon plain, river, forest, and ocean, receding farther and farther in the distance, until vision is lost in the boundless horizon.

The broad impersonal view of life will enable the man to regard himself as working in conjunction with forces outside and beyond himself, and to realize that his work, great and noble though it be, is but one part in the accomplishment of God's plan. "The one great, Divine event, toward which the whole creation moves"—the final triumph of good over evil, and the elimination from the universe of all that is opposed to God's will.

Another cause of discouragement is the failure of men

and women to realize their own ideals. Having set before them the Christ-type, they have strenuously striven to live nobly, lives of high mental and spiritual achievement. But the conditions of their environment, or some inherited tendency in their own temperament, make the strife an unequal one, and daily conflict brings daily a sense of defeat or only partial victory, and with Paul they cry from the depths of a soul crushed with unfulfilled desire and thwarted ambition toward all that is noble and beautiful in human character. "To will is ever present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not; for the good I would that I do not, and the evil I would not, that I do."

To souls so burdened Browning has his invigorating words of hope and cheer, bidding them remember that man's estimate is a low one, taken only from "Things done that took the eye, and had the price;" while God takes into account.

"All that the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account:
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount."

"Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act
Fancies that brake through language and escaped:
All I could never be,
All men ignored in me,
This was I worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

Still others lack opportunity for the fullest development of these powers, and chafe and fret, because of their narrow and uncongenial environment. Fitted by nature and training for large activities, and to adorn any circle, they are placed in circumstances to human vision wholly unsuited to them. With every pulse of their nature keyed and responsive for the harmonies of life, to the refined and beautiful, they pass their lives amid cordial surroundings in some obscure village, on the farm, or engaged in uncongenial occupation; and the slow years pass, leaving them with the heart-sickness of hope deferred and desires ungratified. In view of such lives we say with the disciples of old, "why this waste?" But the Master permitted the costly ointment to be as the disciples thought, squandered, and Mary's act has come down to us sanctified by the approval of Him who sees "the end from the beginning," and we must believe it is by His permission and to work out His own purpose of good, that the thing that seems so dark with mystery exists.

"He fixed thee midst this dance
Of plastic circumstance
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst vainly arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent
Try thee, and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed."

In this stanza Browning carries out the metaphor of the Potter's wheel, which he has with such wonderful effect, introduced into the poem. In the next he bids us look up and forward to the time, when the Potter having had his way with us, the cup finished and perfect shall be fit for use at the "festal board" of the Master.

"Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash, and trumpets peal.
The new wine's foaming flow,
The master's lips aglow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup what needst thou with earth's wheel?"

One more note of triumphant faith from our poet, as expressed through the great musician, Abt Vogler.

Then let the beauty and significance of life bare its way with us, calling us from our mean and narrow conceptions, to the broader, fuller vision that may be ours from the "mount of God's love."

"There shall never be one lost good! what was shall live as before,
The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with for evil so much good more,
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round."

"All we have willed or hoped, or dreamed of good shall exist;
Not its semblance but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist,
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard,
Enough that we heard it once, we shall hear it by and by."

Spelman Seminary.

BY MABEL H. PARSONS.

Georgia, named in honor of George II., was one of the thirteen original colonies; the youngest of the sisterhood. It is the largest of the United States east of the Mississippi, having nearly half the area of the British Islands. The State contains 59,000 square miles being more than three times larger than Nova Scotia. It lies between the 30th and 35th parallels of north latitude.

Topographically, every variety of landscape is found from salt marsh and glittering sand dune to rugged mountain peaks. Between these extremes are many varieties in climate and much wealth of the vegetable and mineral kingdoms. If Georgia were entirely cut off from the rest of the world, her people would not suffer want. In the Sixties, when her broad acres so bountifully supplied the southern armies, Georgia was known as "the granary of the Confederacy."

Atlanta is the capital with a population of 125,000 about half of whom belong to the Negro race. During the Civil War, the city was burned. Sherman's famous march to the sea began here. Rising from her ashes and adopting the phoenix as her emblem, Atlanta has an interesting history of rapid growth and development. In Greek mythology, Atlanta was a great huntress, skilled with the bow, a noted wrestler and a swift runner. The admirers of this "imperial city of the South" claim that she too is swift and though in the intellectual and commercial struggle, she neglects no opportunity to pluck the golden apple, her pace increases with her age. There are nine colleges here belonging to the State and various religious denominations. In the many contests with friendly rivals, she is never beaten. Men now living recount the delights of the hunting parties headed by Chief Neck-a-Jack and his Braves, when the deer and bear were tracked on the hills now crowned by this city. A glance at the map shows that Atlanta lies at the foot of the Alleghany Range some three hundred miles from Savannah and the Sea. Looking west and north, the bold outlines of historic Kennesaw and other mountain tops are visible. Situated 1,100 feet above sea level, the climate of Atlanta is most desirable, malaria and yellow fever being virtually unknown. Roses bloom all the year, only occasionally is snow a visitor. The Chattahoochee River, which flows south to the Gulf of Mexico two hundred miles away, supplies the city with water. It passes eight miles east and can be visited by a trolley line.

Atlanta is called the "Gate City" because eleven lines of railroad meet in its one "carshed," as the depot is termed down south. A magnificent capital graces the center of this town-giving name to the finest avenue. There are also many notable public buildings, churches, schools and colleges, hotels and theatres. A Carnegie Library, now in course of construction, promises to be an imposing edifice. Handsome residences, on broad avenues, shaded by stately trees, flower gardens, beautiful and fragrant with the luxuriance of southern foliage and blossom, add to the beauty of the place. The wife of a physician, who entertains the Spelman teachers, has in her spacious, old time garden, a mile of violets, besides a profusion of other flowers. The drawing room in her ante bellum mansion was used during the sad war, as a blacksmith's forge. Traces of that strife are still evident in many hearts and homes.

Westward, on high land and two miles from the Post Office is the campus of Spelman Seminary, a school for colored girls and women, the largest and finest of its kind in the world. Two lines of electric cars passing our gates go to the business portion of the city and to all the Parks and suburbs. Within a neat iron fence are enclosed twenty acres of ground well laid out with walks and driveways of crushed stone. We have thirty varieties of trees among which are the fig, magnolia, osage orange, persimmon, sweet gum and Georgia pine. Cotton is grown for the delectation of teachers, pupils and northern visitors. Flower beds, blossoming shrubs and rose trellises make beautiful the place of our abiding.

Owing to the princely generosity of Mr. Rockefeller we have nine magnificent edifices. The four latest are the President's Residence, Dining Hall, Hospital and an extensive Dormitory. Packard, Giles and Rockefeller Halls, fine large brick buildings, have been in use some years. The Laundry is a good sized house containing a washing room, with eighty-six set porcelain tubs, also drying and ironing rooms. The Steam Plant furnishes heat, electric light and hot water night and day to all those within our gates. Our artesian well supplies water so that the Seminary is fairly well contained. Mr. Rockefeller, Jr., while our guest last spring inspected the buildings and grounds and was as pleased therewith as with the bright pupils and numerous classes.

Our school is large this year with 678 pupils varying in age from four to seventy-four representing eighteen different states, South America and Africa. Names of scholars are often fantastic; some are geographically inclined and are called Georgia, or Florida, Arizona, Virginia, Texas, Tennessee, Nevada, Missouri. A meek little maid mildly gave her cognomen as, "Ophelia Evelina Savannah Fort Sumpter Smith. When asked her choice of these as an every day name, she preferred the last so was known as Fort Sumpter. The fitness of things is not closely observed; Lillie White is a very dusky damsel.

(To be Continued.)

Beloved, let us love so well,
Our work shall still be better for our love,
And still our love be sweeter for our work!
And both commended for the sake of each
By all true workers and true lovers born.

—Mrs. Browning.