

of the ideas ; namely, in the lifelike fashion in which Karshish is made, through his letter, to reveal his own character ; and in the reluctant yet forcible fashion in which he betrays, notwithstanding his prejudices as a man of learning, the profound impression that his acquaintance with Christianity has made upon him.

The concrete picture is as usual to be gathered from the whole monologue ; and monologue this is, though it happens to be a written not a spoken one. Karshish is represented as a learned physician travelling to gratify his scientific curiosity and increase his professional knowledge. Of his acquisitions he gives from time to time accounts (see l. 20) to his old teacher, supposedly a great master of the learning of the time. On his travels he comes to Bethany in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem, meets with Lazarus and learns his story. Lazarus must now be an old man, for reference is made to the attack of Jerusalem by Titus, which ended in the destruction of the city, A.D. 70.

"There are few more lifelike and subtly natural narratives in Mr. Browning's poetry, few more absolutely penetrated by the finest imaginative sympathy. The scientific caution and technicality of the Arab physician, his careful attempt at a statement of the case from a purely medical point of view, his self-reproachful uncasiness at the strange interest which the man's story has caused in him—the strange credulity which he cannot keep from encroaching on his mind: all this is rendered with a matchless delicacy and accuracy of touch and interpretation. Nor can anything be finer than the representation of Lazarus after his resurrection—a representation which has significance beyond its literal sense, and points a moral often enforced by the poet,—that doubt and mystery, so frequently complained of in life and religion, are necessary concomitants of both, without which, indeed, neither religion nor life would be possible." (Symond's *Introduction to Browning*).

1. The Epistle opens in the form customary at the time ; compare openings of the Epistles in the New Testament.

3-14. These lines let us understand the point of view of Karshish ; he is not a polytheist or a materialist ; he believes in one God and in the spiritual nature of man. The special idea as to the relation between body and soul is merely such a theory as might be entertained by such a man at such a time, and the chief purpose of its introduction is to make us understand that the writer believes in the spiritual origin of man.

17-20. Notwithstanding his learning Karshish is not free from the superstitions of his time, and believes in charms, e.g., the power of stones to absorb the poison of snake-bites.