

the poem. I have casually noticed such rhymes as "Refute you—You brute, you:" "Not my fault—E in alt;" "Shake the head—A to Z;" "Spoke to—Yoke to." Even his titles are often grotesque, as "Red cotton night-cap country."

It is said he is obscure. Well, we grant that parts of his great psychological epic, "Sordello" and "Prince Hohensteil Schwangau"—in which he flays with keenest sarcasm Louis Napoleon—and parts of "Fifine at the Fair," are obscure. But so are parts of "Paradise Lost," in its wealth of allusion; and in its subtle metaphysic, parts of "In Memoriam." But take his longest poem, the longest in the language—perhaps in any language—"The Ring and the Book." It contains over 21,000 lines, nearly twice as much as "Paradise Lost," and it contains fewer lines that need to be read twice than that poem. As for sustained interest, "Paradise Lost" will not compare with it. Here is a proof of his consummate genius. It is the same story told ten times over. We read it with the keenest interest twenty years ago, and its spell of power is on us yet. A wicked old count in Rome murders his young wife through causeless jealousy. There is given in the poem, the opinion of one-half of Rome, of the other half of Rome, a *tertium quid* or a middle opinion, the poor wife's *ante mortem* statement, the murderer's defence, the accused young priest's story, the argument of the lawyer on one side, of the lawyer on the other side, the judge's decision, opinion of the Pope, to whom the case has been appealed, and so on ten times over. As a *tour de force* the thing is unparalleled in literature. It is astonishing the manner in which Browning differentiates the several characters, and preserves their individuality. Take also his "Caliban upon Setebos." The poet actually gets into the brain of the half human monster, thinks his thoughts, and discusses God and nature from his bestial point of view.

The way in which Browning makes his verses echo the sense is really

marvellous. In "As I ride," as I ride," with its iteration of the rhyme fifty times over, one can hear the clank of the scabbard against the flank of the Arab steed. In "The Grammarian's Funeral," with its alternate long and short lines, the lines of the poem seem to move to the steady climbing feet of the disciples bearing their dead Master to his grave on the mountain top. In "Ivan Ivanovitch," wolves are chasing a sleigh across a bleak Russian landscape, and the change from slow iambs to the short quick anapests, gives the very effect of "The regular pad of the wolves in pursuit of the lives in the sleigh."

No poet is so full of sympathy with art and music, or so interprets the inner meaning of both, as in the noble poems, "Pictor Ignotus," "Fra Lippo Lippi," "Andrea del Sarto," and in his "Abt Vogler," which, says Mr. Symonds, "exceeds every attempt which has been made in verse, to set forth the secret of the most sacred and illusive of arts."

Few poets can touch the fount of tears as can Browning in some of his more tender poems, as "Evelyn Hope," "Count Gismond," "Gold hair," and "Too late." Many of his noblest themes are taken from Scripture, as the long poem on "Saul;" the "Epistle" of Karshish the Arab Physician on the resurrection of Lazarus, a wonderful psychological study; "Cleon," and "A Death in the Desert." His irony and sarcasm when he pillories wrong and flays wrong-doers are—well, we can find nothing to describe them but the word "ferocious"—as in "Holy Cross Day," the monologue of a Jew goaded at the spear point to church on Good Friday; the "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," and "The Heretic's Tragedy." While an impassioned lover of liberty everywhere and a keen sympathizer of all down-trodden peoples, he keeps his most ardent devotion for his native land—"Here and there did England help me, how can I help England, say?"

We can only notice the grand optimism, the nobility and purity of of his poems. His is no poisoned verse about "The lilies and lan-