

"I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,
Yet art Thou oft with me,
And earth hath ne'er so dear a spot
As when I meet with Thee."

Let the opponents of Christianity explain—if they can—how this Man can win the passionate love and devotion of thousands of hearts in every age and every country. It is unique in the world's history. No dead man could win hearts in this marvellous fashion; and a King who can rule so supremely by love, really satisfying the soul-hunger of all who yield their lives unreservedly to His absolute control, must certainly be Divine. If you have not learned by personal experience that the service of Christ is a glory beyond anything that the world can give, at least you have the witness of a multitude which no man can number, who throw down their lives at His feet as a proof that they mean what they say. Look in their faces, if you doubt the power of their Royal Master to give Joy and Peace. He is your rightful King too.

"Thou shalt know Him, when He comes,
Not by any din of drums,
Nor the vantage of His airs;
Neither by His crown,
Nor His gown,
Nor by anything He wears:
He shall only well-known be
By the holy harmony
That His coming makes in thee."

We must never rest satisfied with our progress. If we have not gone ahead, then we have been allowing ourselves to fail. Which of us has not heard the children at examination time eagerly hoping that they will "pass." They are not satisfied to be no farther ahead than they were last term. They consider it a distinct failure to be doing the old work as imperfectly as in the past. Their best is always in front of them. Gannett, in "Blessed be Drudgery"—a little book that was recently given to me by our friend "H. A. B."—says:

"Daniel Morell, once President of the Cambria Rail Works, in Pittsburg, which employed seven thousand men, was an artist, and trained artists. 'What is the secret of such a development of business as this?' asked the visitor. 'We have no secret,' was the answer; 'we always try to beat our last batch of rails.

That's all the secret we have, and we don't care who knows it.'"

If we always make to-day more perfect than yesterday, and press forward in the determination to make to-morrow still better, we may be like the professor who said he had "no time to make money"; but at least we shall make a grand success of life here and be ready to press on to life hereafter.

"If my hand slacked,
I should rob God."

DORA FAIRCOMB.

The New Book.

In "The Vision of His Face," the author of "Hope's Quiet Hour" has given us a rare and beautiful book that will find its place in countless homes and hearts, along with the devotional classics of J. R. Miller, F. B. Meyer, John MacNeill, Andrew Murray, and Hannah W. Smith. It appeals to the best that is in us, and does so without strained notes. When the book is read the wholesome tone of it abides and the pages invite to re-study. It withdraws from the lowering and deadening tendencies of a mere naturalism, investing the things of one's spiritual life with their true reality. Familiarity with these themes is combined with a delicacy of touch and discernment that give peculiar charm to "The Vision of His Face," which came out of the author's life, written, as she naively says, because she "could not help it."

READER.

The Roundabout Club

Robert Browning.

Robert Browning, recognized as one of the three truly great poets of the Victorian era, was born at Camberwell, then a country suburb of London, on May 7th, 1812. It is probably true that there is no law by which genius arises; so long as examples such as Abraham Lincoln may be pointed to, it must be acknowledged that no stock, no matter how prosaic, how illiterate even, may despair of producing the man or woman destined to shine among the brightest stars of the galaxy by which history is illuminated. But it is also true that characteristics

are, in by far the greater number of cases, transmitted from ancestor to progeny, from parent to child, so that it is not at all surprising to find that genius may point to some strain of blood more or less remote, as the source of its distinction, the spark which needed just a little development to become the illuminating power.

Robert Browning's father and grandfather were both clerks in the Bank of England. The father, in particular, was noted for a remarkable combination of characteristics which afterwards reappeared strikingly in the son—a genius for versifying, a remarkable simplicity, unworldliness and sweetness of nature, extraordinary intellectual and artistic gifts, and a detective faculty in criminal cases which is said to have been strangely intuitive—the faculty which stood Robert Browning in good stead when he wrote his great detective poem, "The Ring and the Book." Mrs. Browning, the poet's mother, is also said to have been a woman of unusual intellectual vigor, a woman in every way worthy of her husband, and the home was literally an atmosphere of books. To history in particular was attention devoted, and to this fact may be attributed some of the obscurity with which Browning has been charged. When, for instance, he came to write "Sordello," he took it for granted that everyone should know all about the history of Italy in the Medieval Ages, and plunged at once into a discussion of conditions without giving an adequate description of the conditions themselves.

Somewhere away back in the Browning blood, it is said, occurred a Jewish strain, and to it has been attributed by many biographers the very evident interest which Browning always evinced in the Jews. His grandmother was a Creole, and here again heredity has been supposed to speak. To her has been traced the passion for color which may be found everywhere in Browning's work. Some of his poems, in fact, almost flame with color. Read this for an example of brilliant sky description:

"Day"
Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last;
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's
brim,
Where spurning and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray

Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another
curled.

Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then
overflowed the world."

And, again, to grasp his appreciation of the quiet tints and tones of nature:

"Where the quiet-colored end of evening
smiles,
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep,
Half-asleep,
Tinkle homeward through the twilight."

Outside of the facts noted above, Browning's ancestry seems lost in some obscurity. Some contend that his forbears were prominent in feudal times; Furnivall claims to have traced his descent to a footman in the service of a country magnate. Neither this nor that matters. We have Browning, with his faults and excellences, Browning the brilliant, the pure-minded, the sincere, the enthusiastic, at all times the wholesome Englishman who never grew old, and who has managed, perhaps more than any other poet, to inspire other men with hope and courage. He believed, with all the strength of his peculiarly virile nature, that all will be well.

"God's in His Heaven,
All's well with the world."

and the very strength of his belief has impressed the conviction on others. Tennyson had his doubts (as has had many another strong man); Swinburne's song, beautifully sung, has the wail of despair in it; Browning throughout is staunchly and happily optimistic, and wholesomely practical. As Chesterton in his brilliant essay remarks, "He met George Sand and her poetical circle, and hated it with all the hatred of an old city merchant for the irresponsible life. He met the Spiritualists and hated them. . . . His intellect went upon bewildering voyages, but his soul walked in a straight road."

As a boy, coming out of a home "crammed with knowledge, Browning was, as might be expected, very precocious at school. Possessed of great physical charm, and filled with the joy of living, he was everywhere a favorite. He enjoyed the companionship of others, and found equal pleasure in strolling about crowded market places, or pawn-shops,—anywhere where unconventional man might be seen—in following gipsy caravans, and in striding alone over breezy commons. To these propensities is probably due the fact that when he came to write serious poetry humanity appears everywhere in his work. In the first of the "Ring and the Book" actually occurs a description of a pawnshop, a subject which any other poet would have passed by.

"Picture frames

White through the worn gilt, mirror-
scences chipped,
Bronze angel-heads once knobs attached
to chests,
(Handled when ancient dames chose forth
brocade),
Modern chalk drawings, studies from the
nude," etc.

While Browning loved nature, he recognized man as nature's highest and most interesting triumph. In this respect he took a step further than Wordsworth and his devotees. Indeed, among all the poetry that he wrote that one delightful fragment, "To be in England, now that April's there," is about the only one that can be pointed to as an example of pure nature poetry.

He attended University College, and when there, in 1833, wrote "Pauline." In 1835 "Paracelsus" appeared. But neither of these attracted attention. Had he written of the men and events of his time he could probably have been recognized sooner, but he was more given to poking about in the "holes and corners" of history. He wrote of great principles, and today it is being recognized that these principles are of no age but of all. At the time the principles were lost sight of. It took many, many years for England to feel that anything was to be gained by taking interest in such unpoetical and unheard-of historical talk as King Avarice of Sardania, the musician,



Lift your leafy roof for me,
Part your yielding walls,
Let me wander lingeringly
Through your scented halls.

Ope your doors and take me in,
Spirit of the wood;
Take me—make me next of kin
To your leafy brood.

—A. L. Wetherald