

utterly I had abdicated myself and thought it not worth while to put out my finger to touch my share of life. Even my poetry, which suddenly grew an interest, was a thing on the outside of me, a thing to be done, and then done ! What people said of it did not touch me. A thoroughly morbid and desolate state it was, which I look back now to with the sort of horror with which one would look to one's graveclothes, if one had been clothed in them by mistake during a trance."

A voice said in a mastery while I strove . . .

"Guess now who holds thee?"

"Death," I said. But, there,
The silver answer rang, "Not Death, but Love."

Elizabeth Barrett was thirty-seven. John Kenyon had turned well into sixty, but he carried his years in a jaunty way. The physicians allowed Mr. Kenyon to visit the Darkened Room whenever he chose, for he never stayed so very long, neither was he ever the bearer of bad news.

Did the greatest poetess of the age know one Browning—Robert Browning, a writer of verse? Why, no; she had never met him, but of course she knew of him, and had read everything he had written. He had sent her one of his books once. She had referred to it in one of her own. He surely was a man of brilliant parts—so strong and far-seeing! Mr. Browning had expressed a wish to see her. Mr. Kenyon would fetch him—doctors or no doctors.

Now Robert Browning was not at all of the typical poet type. In stature he was rather short; his frame was compact and muscular. His features were inclined to be heavy; in repose his face was dull, and there was no fire in his glance. He wore loose-fitting, plain grey clothes, a slouch hat, and thick-soled shoes. At first look you would have said he was a well-fed, well-to-do country squire. But did you come to know him you would see that beneath that seemingly phlegmatic outside

there was a spiritual nature so sensitive and tender that it responded to all the finer thrills that play across the souls of men. Yet if ever there was a man who did not wear his heart upon his sleeve, it was Robert Browning. He was clean, wholesome, manly, healthy inside and out.

The love of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett was a resemblance of the Divine Passion. Take off thy shoes, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground! This man and woman had gotten well beyond the first flush of youth; there was a joining of intellect and soul which approaches the ideal. They met, looked into each other's eyes, and each there read his fate; no coyness, no affectation, no fencing—they loved. Each at once felt a heart-rest in the other. Each had at last found the other self.

That exquisite series of poems, "Sonnets from the Portuguese,"—which are rather confessions from her own heart—the purest, the tenderest confessions of love ever written—were all told to him over and over by the look from her eyes, the pressure of her hands, and in gentle words (or silence) that knew neither shame nor embarrassment.

"If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
'I love her for her smile . . . her
look . . . her way

Of speaking gently . . . for a trick of
thought

That falls in well with mine, and certes
brought

A sense of pleasant ease on such a day—
For these things in themselves, beloved,
may

Be changed or change for thee,—and love,
so wrought,

May be unwrought so. Neither love
me for

Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks
dry,—

A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love
thereby!

But love me for love's sake, that, ever-
more