

THE BURIAL OF ROBERT BROWNING.*

I have just witnessed the impressive ceremonial of the closing scene connected with the funeral of Robert Browning, in that august temple of English heroism and genius, Westminster Abbey. From the day when the news of his death was flashed from Venice, there was a complete consensus of public opinion that the author of *The Ring and the Book* should be interred at Westminster.

It is the closing day of eighteen hundred and eighty-nine. The atmosphere is chill, grey, and filled with great puffs of yellow fog, which, as they rise and fall over the city, bring alternate light and darkness. By ten o'clock visitors holding tickets for reserved places began to assemble in crowds in the dim cloisters. The roof is but dimly discernible, for the fog is wreathing itself in opaque masses in the vast spaces of the groined ceiling, rendering them still vaster to the eye, and casting a wierd and shadowy appearance over all. The tickets issued were confined to the transept and choir, a few seats being reserved in the nave near the choir for persons desirous of having a close view of the procession within the Abbey. It was my good fortune to secure one of these latter seats, nearly opposite the Jerusalem chamber. There was a great gathering of guests, principally ladies, in the clerestories over-looking the Poet's Corner. Through the kindness of a gentleman beside me, I was able to recognize many notable persons admitted by the West Cloister door. Among these were Mr. and Mrs. Mundella, Lord Roseberry, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the tall Earl of Pembroke, Sir Lyon Playfair, Mr. Lecky, Sir Arthur Sullivan, Mr. Froude, Mr. Frederick Harrison, and Mr. Goschen. Meanwhile the great Abbey became filled with a vast and varied congregation representative of art, science, literature, religion and politics,—intellectual England in miniature.

As the hour of noon neared its fulness the sun broke in through the great rose window and struggled with the fog-wreaths almost as ineffectually as the flickering scar-like gas jets that studded the choir. The nave and transept were long ave-

*A letter written on the evening of the burial, December 31, 1889.