

sons,—for the poet of *In Memoriam* and the *Idyls* cannot commit suicide,—and Brownings.

It is unnecessary—indeed, it would not be possible—to make copious quotations, in a single article, to prove that the poets are veritable helpers, and that the greatest of them, in our own day and in previous days, battle firmly and constantly on the side of truth, righteousness, and noble living. An atheistic, materialistic, or pessimistic poet is seldom found near the top of Parnassus, though he may grovel and whine at the foot. We may hardly agree with the once popular Philip James Bailey that

Poets are all who love, who feel great truths,
And tell them; and the truth of truths is love,

but the converse is certainly true: that none can be a great poet who does not feel the greatness of truth, and the truth of eternal love, and who does not desire to tell the world what he himself feels.

Instead of multiplying examples, let us take but one, Robert Browning, who is at the present time the most studied of contemporary poets. There are Browning clubs in many cities of England and the United States, and half a dozen books have been published within a twelvemonth, devoted to the elucidation of his writings. Browning is not studied faithfully and almost reverentially by his admirers merely because he is possessed of the lyrical faculty, is master of a quaint descriptive power, and is a dramatist of an original order. Of much of his work could it be said in truth: "The play, I remember, pleased not the million; 'twas caviare to the general." There is a pleasure in cracking a hard nut, in reading and praising a poet so far from ordinary poets that he seems to confer a sort of distinction on the members of his cult. Among the

followers of Browning, of Emerson, are some silly, attitudinizing pretenders, who are hunting after eccentricity more than after strength. But the widespread study of Browning is chiefly due to the fact that he is a manly, helpful force, who has studied the world and its future, and has something to say to its toilers. His most characteristic short poem, "Rabbi ben Ezra," is simply a lofty statement of the trustful philosophy of a noble soul:

Our times are in His hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half: trust God: see all,
nor be afraid!
Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never
grudge the throe!
For thence—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail.
"I, who saw power, see now love perfect
too:
Perfect I call Thy plan:
Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, remake, complete—I trust what
Thou shalt do!"
Let us cry "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now,
than flesh helps soul!"
Thou waitedst age; wait death nor be
afraid!
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stands
sure.
So take and use Thy work,
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past
the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death com-
plete the same.

This great poem of trust and manly spiritual bravery suffers by such sampling as this; it must be read as a whole; but even these scattered lines show its character and power. This is the poet who, instead of saying with Swinburne, "What love was ever so deep as a grave?" tells