

"What living man will bring a gift  
Of his own heart, and help to lift  
The tune? The race is to the swift.

"So asked the angel."

And they came, and are pictured  
in their different attitudes, then to  
the angel their spokesman said:

"Thus

O angel, who hast called for us,  
We bring thee service emulous—

"Fit service from sufficient soul;  
Hand service, to receive world's  
dole;  
Lip service, in world's ear to roll  
Adjusted concords.

"And if we labour, it shall be  
As suiteth best with our degree  
In after-dinner reverie."

But when they saw the faces of the  
true, dead poets, they shrank and  
paled away, and the erstwhile dis-  
satisfied poet, to whom, and for  
whose benefit, all this is shown, is  
satisfied, and he says:

"I only would have leave to lose  
(In tears and blood, if so He choose)  
Mine inward music out to use."

The whole poem is a study, finely  
executed, of the patience which the  
poet must have, and of the ends for  
which he must toil.

This is also dwelt upon in another  
touching bit of work, "A Lay of the  
Early Rose." A little rose thinks  
what a great thing it would be to  
ante-date its companion flowers and  
get a start of them, then all, it  
thinks, will do homage to it.

"For I would lonely stand,  
Uplifting my right hand  
On a mission, on a mission,  
To declare the coming vision.

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"Upon which lifted sign,  
What worship would be mine!  
What addressing, what caressing,  
And what thanks and praise and  
blessing!"

And the little flower gets its wish  
and gets a start, but alas! what a  
fate! It is overlooked, and the earth  
saw this lonely little thing and  
thought it was snow caught by a  
bush.

"Halla, thou world-wide snow!  
And art thou wasted so?  
With a little bough to catch thee  
And a little bee to watch thee?"

And the poet who looked at the pre-  
mature rose's fate moralizes thus:

"Verily and thus  
It chanceth eke with us  
Poets singing sweetest snatches,  
While that deaf men keep the  
watches.

"Vaunting to come before  
Our own age evermore,  
In a liveness, in a liveness,  
And the nobler for that oneness.

"Holy in voice and heart—  
To high ends set apart!  
All unmated, all unmated,  
Because so consecrated."

This poem was written before she  
married Robert Browning, but it  
would suit him. He did not feel wor-  
ried even if people did not read him.  
One thinks of that wonderful sen-  
tence in one of A. B. Davidson's  
sermons: "It is the greatest of all  
powers to be independent of outward  
recognition." The Aberdeen granite  
is in that sentence!

Thirdly, Mrs. Browning gives us  
the poet's dynamic. What will keep  
a man working at his art? What  
keeps the bird singing? The people