

chosen to write about her own age, for she says :

"Nay, if there's room for poets in this world
A little overgrown, (I think there is).
Their sole work is to represent the age,
Their age, not Charlemagnes, this live, throbbing age,
That brawls, cheats, maddens, calculates, aspires,
And spends more passion, more heroic heat,
Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-rooms,
Than Roland with his Knights at Roncesvalles."

Mark the closing, sentiment and listen again,

"All actual heroes are essential men.
And all men possible heroes ; every age
Heroic in proportion, double-faced,
Looks backward and before, expects a morn
And claims an epos.

So she has striven to make us feel the heroism that abounds in our own times, the heroism which consists in doing good to our fellow-men, and enabling them to rise higher in the scale of human life. But the poem is not a great one as a whole, for the plot is awkward and improbable, and we cannot help feeling it is only an ill arranged background for the writer's impressions of the social life of the day. But the poem is full of genius and power, and many of its passages are in themselves great. It is one of the few works that can be made interesting and profitable when read by detached passages, rather than as a single work of art. She tells us art is "higher life," the reaching out of man's nature after the highest and best, of books she says :

It is rather when
We gloriously forget ourselves and plunge
Soul-forward, headlong, into books profound—
Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth—
'Tis then we get the right good from a book."

And of poets whom she calls the links between the finite and the infinite,

The only truth-tellers, next left to God,
The only speakers of essential truth,
Opposed to relative, comparative,
And temporal truths, the only holders by
His sun-skirts, through conventional grey glooms ;

and when she tells us that

"Life means be sure,
Both heart and head—both active, both complete,
And both in earnest,"

and

"I count that heaven itself is only work
To a surer issue."

we feel that she has arrived through much experience and thought at the true estimate of that which occupies all life, work. And what inspires hope when life seems all a failure, and useless as regards self, is found in these lines,

"Be sure no earnest work
Of any honest creature, how be it weak
Imperfect, ill-adapted, fails so much,
It is not gathered as a grain of sand
To enlarge the sum of human action used
For carrying out God's end."

Although so much has been quoted we cannot close without these two pen-pictures of evening,

"The heavens were making room to hold the night,
The seven-fold heavens unfolding all their gates
To let the stars out slowly."
"Above where all the stars were out,
As if an urgent heat had started there
A secret writing from a sombre page,
A blank last moment, crowded suddenly
With hurrying splendors."

Mrs. Browning's sympathies with all efforts to elevate mankind, and her love of liberty, led her to think and write deeply and earnestly in the interests of America and Italy. Indeed the latter country soon became her adopted land, and naturally when we think of her, we connect with the thought the remembrance of her devotion to the people of Italy and their cause. This feeling glows like fire through all her later poems, and finds its first expression in "Cesa Guide Wisdom," a story of the personal impressions of the writer upon events and scenes in Tuscany, and widening as it proceeds, embraces all Italy. She calls for some deliverer to break the bonds of priestly power and Austrian tyranny, and pleads for the liberty of her beloved Italy. Then she appeals to all European nations for the sympathy which they owe to the country that has endowed them with so much of literature and art. She calls their aid

"To this great cause of southern men, who strive
In God's name for man's rights and shall not fail."

The second part of the poem abounds in the despairing and disappointed utterances of the defeated patriots. Then she accuses the nations of heartlessness and insensibility