

He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
 Over men's pity;
 Left play for work, and grappled with the world
 Bent on escaping;
 "What's on the scroll" quoth he, thou keepest furled,
 "Show me their shaping,
 "Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage,
 Give!" So he gowned him,
 Straight got by heart that book to its last page;
 Learned we found him,
 Yea, but we found him bald, too, eyes like lead,
 Accents uncertain;
 "Time to taste life" another would have said,
 Up with the curtain!"
 This man said rather, "actual life comes next,
 Patience a moment!
 "Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
 Still there's the comment.

But the individual life is so apt to be incomplete at its best, one-sided on its higher levels, and low-toned if it is fully rounded.

A few years more and it is evident that for him the time is pretty well past for living in that other sense at all. No matter. Surely the issues of man's life are not completed here in this world; surely the significance of his life is not so ephemeral as that. So he goes on. The body grown decrepit, the external senses dulled, but the keen soul eager as ever. And so the disciple chants the lesson of his life for us:

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
 (Hearten our chorus)
 That before living he'd learn how to live—
 No end to learning;
 Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
 Use for our earning.
 Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes;
 Live now or never!"
 He said: "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
 Man has Forever."
 Back to his book then, deeper drooped his head;
 Calculus racked him;
 Leaden before his eyes grew dross of lead;
 Tussis attacked him.

Here the disciple moralizes upon this life from a point of view which is a fundamental one with Browning, viz., that the very incompleteness of such a noble life here is a kind of proof that its issues shall be rounded and made complete in another existence.

Was it not great? did he not throw on God
 (He loves the burthen)
 God's task to make the heavenly period
 Perfect the earthen?
 He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
 Found, or earth's failure;
 "Wilt thou trust death or not?" he answered "Yes."
 Hence with life's pale lure!
 That low man seeks a little thing to do
 Sees it and does it;
 This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
 Dies ere he knows it.
 That low man goes on adding one to one,
 His hundreds soon hit;
 This high man, aiming at a million
 Misses a unit.
 That, has the world here—should he need the next,
 Let the world mind him!
 This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
 Seeking shall find him.

Having thus shown us the ideal element in this scholarly life and won our sympathy for it, Browning loses nothing, but on the contrary gains much by touching with almost grotesque realism on the trivial aspect of the dead grammarian's labours.

So with the throttling hands of death at strife
 Ground he at grammar;
 Still thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife:
 While he could stammer.
 He settled *Hotis* business—let it be!—
 Properly based *Oun*;
 Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*
 Dead from the waist down.

Here the procession arrives at its destination, the burial place on the mountain top, and the disciple concludes his chant in the strain in which he began it, defiant of the world and its commonplace, high and exultant even over death.

Here's the top-peak; the multitude below
 Live, for they can, there;
 This man decided not to live but know—
 Bury this man here!
 Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
 Lightnings are loosened,
 Stars come and go! Let joy break with the storm,
 Peace let the dew send!
 Lofty designs must close in like effects;
 Loftily lying.
 Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,
 Living and dying.

There is a great and original art in the construction of this poem. With what fine instinct has Browning chosen the time and the scene. The impressive moment of the dead man's funeral, when his life may be surveyed as a whole and its significance fitly and solemnly summed up. Then the scene; that gradual ascent winding up the mountain side to the city's highest place, the village below lying still half-hidden in the morning vapours, the lights of the citadel still sparkling on the summit; the whole march a kind of symbol of the life that has just closed, a life of toilsome ascent from the plain to the everlasting peaks and to find its fruition only in the dawn of a new day.

"He's for the morning."

Masterly, too, is the manner in which the poet has brought together in this poem the characteristically great and the characteristically petty elements in man's life. Here is a human life shrunken and defeatured on one side, the side of our common humanity, of society and the affections, a life limited and narrow even in its intellectual interests, spent in researches on the enclitic *De* and the functions of *Hoti* and *Oun*.

Yet Browning has been perfectly successful in making us feel the greatness of this life, a greatness due rather to its spirit than to its actual achievements, though Browning, as I have said, subtly enhances the value of these latter by making them those of a grammarian of the Renaissance. What a solid comprehensive sense of life there is throughout the poem; some passages have an epical completeness in their survey of life which though very different in its kind can only be compared to that which we find in the great monologues of Shakespeare.