

my writing in the main has been too hard for many I should have been pleased to communicate with ; but I never designedly tried to puzzle people as some of my critics have supposed. On the other hand, I never pretended to offer such literature as would be a substitute for a cigar or a game of dominoes to an idle man. So, perhaps, on the whole, I get my deserts, and something over—not a crowd, but a few I value more."

A friend and admirer said to him on one occasion : "I have studied long upon this passage in your poem and am unable to comprehend it. Pray, tell me what is the idea embodied in it?" Mr. Browning read the passage over, and replied : "Really, I cannot tell ; but I believe it will be worth your while to keep on studying it."

Thus far only the more displeasing phases of Browning's genius have been brought under consideration—the mists that so long have hidden from many the true grandeur, wealth and beauty of his poetic soul.

Professor Carson says that Browning "has the very highest faculty of word and verse music, and it can be shown he always exercises the faculty whenever there is a real artistic occasion for it, not otherwise. Verse music is never with him a mere literary indulgence. . . . In the general tenor of his poetry he is above the Singer—he is the Seer and Revealer, who sees great truths beyond the bounds of the territory of general knowledge, instead of working over truths within that territory, and no seer of modern times has had his eyes more clearly purged with euphrasy and rue."

It must not be thought that Browning's poems are in any instance mere continuations of unintelligible mystery and weariness. "Single verses and groups of verses shine and blossom, very jewels in a heap of sand, lovely roses 'amongst the wicked weeds.'" Could anything be more splendid than this one line?

"On earth the broken arcs : in the heavens a perfect round."

Among Browning's shorter productions

those that claim for him the highest distinction as a poet are probably "Childe Roland," akin in atmosphere to the "Ancient Mariner," and "Andrea del Sarto," which proves, beyond dispute, that its author can be simple, tender and delightful. Next to these, "Fra Lippo" and "My Last Duchess" may perhaps be mentioned.

Among his longer poems, "Pippa Passes" seems to have gained for itself the most general admiration. Surely, nothing in the pastoral kind was ever more finely or delightfully written? Edmund Gosse in speaking of it, writes as follows : "The figure of Pippa herself, the unconscious messenger of good spiritual tidings to so many souls in dark places, is one of the most beautiful that Mr. Browning has produced. And in at least one of the more serious scenes—that between Sibald and Ottina—he reaches a tragic height that places him on a level with the greatest modern dramatists. Of the lyrical interludes and seed pearls of song scattered through the scenes, it is commonplace to say that nothing more exquisite was ever written, or rather warbled."

It was, however, neither to his poetry as poetry, to his intellectual vigor, to his dramatic power, nor to his learning that Browning owed his power. It was his own strong and lofty spirit, his wholesomeness, his completeness of ideal, his prophetic view of things, and his energizing touch which drew to him so many devoted admirers. His truest-hearted followers are willing to acknowledge his frequent obscurity, his defective metre, his intolerable choice of subjects and his barbaric use of his vast store of knowledge, but they find in him a great teacher, a deep and tender human spirit which sees farther than they.

To such followers one of his first qualities was his wholesomeness. He was a thorough optimist. According to his theory the world is not for despair, time is to be used, joy is to be tasted, friends are to be believed, hope is to be entertained, sorrow is to be met with manli-