

judges until he has taught us to be ashamed of our first cowardly wish—that he would plead for his life? Have we not listened to Plato, and watched and wondered to see him rear his gorgeous thought palaces? And more, so many more, with new ones coming with the newer generations,—all friends and helpers.

It is in counting up this list we may safely indulge in a chuckle at our gain over the men of the good old times, even over those whose lives were limited to the earlier part of our own century. Let us prolong this nineteenth century as long as we may; it has brought us many noble souls inspired to stir us up to brave endeavor. Write the list of them out for yourself—it is your list then, and it will do you good to see how many they are, and what varied gifts they have brought us, and to set down each name with a “thank God for him,”—writer, poet, thinker, teacher. I am not going to impose my list on you, for I am chatting about things that are, not dogmatizing about opinions, but I must tell you that at the head of the list for this century stand the names of Tennyson and Browning, poets both; poets first always.

“The poet in a golden clime was born”—

“Ah, that brave

Bounty of poets, the only royal race

That ever was or will be in this world!”

There is a story told of an old German scholar whose foible was ‘presentation copies’ of works by distinguished writers. The old man delighted to take down, one after another, those treasured volumes, and point out to his visitor the genial way in which the author of each had inscribed it with his own hand “to his dear friend A—— B——.”

At last two of his acquaintances, who thought this had gone far enough, conspired to check the old man’s ardor and sent him a copy of the Pentateuch on the flyleaf of which was written

“To A—— B——,

From his Old Friend Moses.”

A good joke? Not bad, as jokes go;—but as a piece of serious earnest it is perfectly magnificent.

Your copy of Shakespeare’s Works only became yours after a commercial transaction in which your part was to hand over certain dollars and cents. These went to the paper maker, the printer, the book-binder, the publisher—but only to pay for paper-making, printing, and the rest. What have you ever paid for *Lear*, or *Hamlet*, or *Midsummer Night’s Dream*? Not a cent. Then when you write your name in the volumes containing them should you not add

“From his old Friend

Shakespeare.”

Now and forever after let us have the grace to do this, at least mentally—and heartily. It will help us to accomplish the one thing needful before we can understand any great writer, to bring ourselves heart to heart with him as well as brain to brain.