

Yet, in spite of all, when he died, a wave of sorrow, a sense of personal bereavement, passed over city and country wherever English poetry is loved. The fact needs explaining : I am confident an explanation awaits anyone who wisely tastes the quality of this man's brew.

My acquaintance with Browning began under the most favorable circumstances. I happened upon *Men and Women* without introduction, knowing nothing of the writer except that he was the least popular of poets. After some blundering I found the place to begin. I have a fancy for reading the last poem first in a volume like this, and certainly *One Word More* fully repays any care needed for its intelligent perusal. *Cleon* and *Karshish* attracted me with their new and powerful setting forth of their great themes—the hope of immortality, and the certainty of God's love. Their character sketches like *Lippo* and *Andrea* prompted a call for more.

His rare ability to lay bare the deeps of personality, to pierce through material conditions to the soul of things, to discern the high purpose, needs, and divine calling of soul-life—all the while recognizing the fitness of our earthly surrounding—assured me that here was a new voice worth heeding ; that once again our age had gotten a man from the Lord.

Sometimes happy circumstance has helped me to the mood necessary for understanding a passage which might otherwise have seemed obscure. One beautiful September morning, during a stay at Blomidon with a party of friends, we were sitting on the shore among the rocks,—the great cliffs behind, and in front the slow streaming of the ebb tide. One of the idlers took up a book, brought for rainy days, or rest spells, looked at the title *Dramatis Personæ*, opened it and read

AMONG THE ROCKS.

Oh, good, gigantic smile of the brown old earth,
This autumn morning ! How he sets his bones
To bask in the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet
For the ripple to run over in its mirth :

Listening the while, where on the heap of stones
The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true ;

Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.

If you loved only what were worth your love,

Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you :

Make the low nature better by your throes !

Give earth yourself, go up for gain above !

It is perhaps, in part, because the elements were so kindly mixed that the beauty and strength of the poem made so powerful an impression. Ever since I have been inclined to direct the enquirer to this extract, and to warn him that if he does not find in it poetic form and matter he should abandon forever the study of Browning—and poetry.

I soon became accustomed to certain peculiarities in the gait of