

his Pegasus, and his lines ceased to seem rough to me. Sometimes I wished he would use oftener that power he possessed in an unrivalled degree, to draw out a line and leave it white-hot with feeling, or resonant with music, or to throw about some rare passage a charm as indescribable as that of an August night by our northern sea.

But Browning soon teaches his disciple to understand his master idea,—to make art serve thought, thought with a purpose:—to flash the word God gave him back to man. The forceful, thought-laden line, beset with quick suggestion of vital truth, best-conveyed so; with flashes of profound meaning or keen insight, as sudden and startling, often as enlightening as fire from heaven, is the fit instrument of a soul, true artist, yet more true poet, most of all a seer with a message to deliver. His style and form are, it seems to me fitted with artistic mastery to his purpose, to flash new light on the sublime things of time and eternity, and arouse his hearer to keener sense of reality rather than to soothe his ear with lulling strains.

He has lavished his best on us with a liberal hand in *The Ring and the Book*. Nowhere else is the commanding power of his genius more apparent. The style of the poem calls for the reader's close attention and alertness, but it is not obscure. Where beauty of language is appropriate the verse is beautiful, at times it has an almost unearthly splendour; the thought is subtle, sublime, profound. The college student in his fourth year should be able to read it with intelligence, profit and deep delight. Browning has done a very daring thing in his handling of this Roman tale; he has not hesitated to

“chalk broadly on each vesture's hem,

The wearer's quality”—

and then with all the mere story-lover's interest cut off he has nine different characters narrate the same incidents. Yet the charm never fails; the reader gathers up with care the last fragmentary reports at the end. I wish we could have had Pompilia's story told once more—this time by old Pietro. I would willingly part with all my interest in *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*, to have had the simple old man spared and set to tell us how it all seemed in his world.

Browning's poems are sometimes obscure, but he has given us many that are clear as daylight. It is better to rejoice in these than to complain of the others,—especially as it is so easy a thing to let them alone. It is much to be assured that the obscurity is not intentional, more to find how much of it disappears as we advance. The far suggestiveness of some lines may incline us to believe that most of the obscurity that remains may be due to the reader's lack of anything to match the author's mental experience. The last line of *Porphyria's Lover* is composed of very simple words, it is a clear and direct statement, no fault can be found with its syntactical arrangement;—Macaulay's school-boy would parse it off-hand. Yet if one were asked to put what it means into exact form