

he would probably ask for time,—not so much for study as for thought. It is not that the thought is so remote; a child will sometimes come full upon the surprise of the “terrible composure.” It is old enough to be familiar. It fills the silences about the bound Promethens; it echoes in the “how long” of the grandest of psalms; in the plaint of the greatest of the Prophets. Tennyson approaches it from the other side in the passage that seems to have haunted him—

“God made Himself an awful rose of dawn,
Unheeded,”—

and in the lover’s midnight soliloquy in *Maud*. Browning has touched upon it in both *Before* and *After*, and later in *Fears and Scruples*. Here he makes it split the darkness like a streak of lighting.

“And yet God has not said a word !”

That Browning’s poems are useless to the time-killer does not constitute a grievance. They require strenuous intellectual effort on the part of the reader, and a sympathy answering to the abounding sympathy of the poet. For this we owe him praise only. It argues a defect in our education that so many will blush to own that they have not read all the popular book of the season, so few to admit that they do not know even one book well.

The qualities that most endear Browning to me are his strength, his wholeness as a man, his clear insight into realities. Grand and massive, subtle and psychological, or refined and tender, he is always strong. In his supremest effort he shows no strain. You feel that his vision is clear and healthy even when he names a star beyond your range. The music of his most beautiful lines is spontaneous and without hint of artifice.

In Browning’s creed man is a soul; soul is alone great on earth as God is alone great in heaven. To awaken soul to a fitting sense of God is his mission. Yet he is a man who both lives and likes life’s way. No one sings of the joy of mere living in more hearty strains than he, witness *Saul*. The personality he exhibits has a healthy, robust, almost jolly vitality of the flesh. To him the world of sights and sounds is no vain show, it means intensely and means good. Flesh too has a part to perform, not to weight man down, but to help him rise.

The significance of such a man is only understood in the setting of his times. It is an age at once of great intellectual activity and of material advancement. On the one side we see pure intellect almost deified; on the other, eager competition multiplies the conveniences of life, until they almost threaten to crowd life to discomfort. It looks longingly forward to a millenium in which man’s only occupation shall be to operate machines.

Here is a man,—of all men a poet, the most philosophic since Shakespeare; whole in body, brain and heart; fully equipped, intellect keen, sympathies universal, purpose unswerving,—coming for-