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AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
MEMORIES AND  
EXPERIENCES OF  
MONCURE CONNELLY

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**MONCURE DANIEL CONWAY**



AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES  
OF  
MONCURE DANIEL CONWAY  
WITH TWO PORTRAITS

VOLUME II.

CASSELL AND COMPANY, LIMITED  
LONDON, PARIS, NEW YORK AND MELBOURNE. MCMIV

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*Aug. 11, 1942*

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF  
MONCURE D. CONWAY.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

Discussions in London Concerning Slavery and the Negro—My “Testimonies Concerning Slavery”—A Disclosure about the Confederacy—Commemoration of John Brown—Thackeray—George Cruikshank—Charles Dickens—My Journalistic Work—The Shakespeare Tercentenary at Stratford-on-Avon—Howard Staunton—Mrs. Shakespeare’s Second Marriage—Illness and Death of our Child Emerson—Excursion on the Continent—A Visit to Dr. Strauss—Gervinus—A Week at Ostend—Residence at Notting Hill—Professor Cairnes—J. S. Mill—Helen Taylor.

THE paradoxical ideas of Carlyle on slavery, impressive by reason of his absolute veracity and remoteness from the partisan arena, were quoted by men not free from partisanship. One Sunday evening I was taken by Tom Hughes to a room where the elder Macmillan received his friends. Conversation began on the American situation, and some participant spoke to me sharply. Thereupon Hughes broke out on my assailant with a severity from which the company could not recover. Herbert Spencer said to me in a low voice, “A good many intelligent people do not hold the same views of the negro and his position as those of the abolitionists.”

I was invited to join the newly-formed Anthropological Society, and did so, but found that it was led by a few ingenious gentlemen whose chief interest was to foster contempt of the negro. One of these, Dr. James Hunt, published a pamphlet entitled “The Negro’s Place in Nature.” Huxley pointed out to me privately the fallacies of Hunt, and I made speeches in

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the Anthropological Society, but it became plain to me that anti-slavery sentiment in England was by no means so deep as I had supposed. I felt certain that I could name half a dozen great English writers, read and honoured throughout America, who by a public declaration could have shamed our government out of its pretexts for not dealing genuinely with its only real enemy—slavery. With the hope of effecting something in this direction, I wrote the book printed at the end of 1863, “Testimonies Concerning Slavery.”

From this work, never published in America, and long out of print, I quote a paragraph from the Introduction :—

I have long believed that the friends of liberty can help America much more by rekindling their old watchfires, which sadly need fuel, than by advocating this or that measure or man that may be for the time associated with the struggle. What America needs now is not a sultry indulgence but a bracing criticism, always supposing that criticism to be made in the interest of liberty and not of slavery. It is related that, at the Federal repulse at Charleston, a negro who bore the flag crawled a long distance amid a storm of shot and shell, dragging his wounded body, but still holding up the flag. When he regained his companions, his only words were, “I did not let it (the flag) touch the ground once.” Let the voices of all true men keep it ever before the rulers of America, that her banner is far nobler so long as a negro holds it up with devotion, as too pure to touch the ground, than if it should wave over every fort and city of the South tainted with compromise or soiled with slavery.

I had privately told this story of the negro and the flag to Browning, and he told me he had repeated it in several companies. I afterwards regretted having printed it, for Browning would probably have made it into a lyric.

John Bright was pleased with my “Testimonies” and did much to promote its circulation; indeed, all of my personal friends were satisfied with it. It was the best I could do at such a distance from America, and under circumstances that rendered it impossible to correspond with my friends in Virginia; but I do not now read the book with satisfaction. It contains a chapter on the negro which I sometimes think of reprinting, but so far as the war is concerned, the book by no means represents the conclusions reached by studying facts afterwards revealed.

While writing my "Testimonies," I received the following :—

SIR,—I have not the honour of your acquaintance, and therefore my signature would be of no value. The substance of this note, however, may be important to you.

A short time since the representative of the Southern States in Europe submitted to the governments of France and England propositions for the practical abolition of slavery, on condition of recognition and material assistance, viz. : that the children of slaves born after a given period should *be free*. This, which is the only possible way of abolition, may now be withdrawn, but the information may be useful to you and I therefore enclose it.—Yours truly,

LIBERTAS

I paid little attention to this anonymous note, but it was recently recalled to me by a manuscript in possession of the Du Bellet family, Paris. Mr. Du Bellet, whose widow (*née* Moncure) is my relative, was a native of New Orleans and a barrister. He happened to be in France in 1861, and though holding no commission from the Confederacy devoted himself to its interests in Europe, his command of French enabling him to assist the Confederate agents. Mr. Du Bellet left a narrative of negotiations in Paris at that time, shown me by his family. Of Mr. Du Bellet I never heard until thirty years after the war, but he records that he urged upon Slidell in Paris and on other foreign agents of the Confederacy the necessity of immediate emancipation. He also wrote to the Confederate government in Richmond declaring that as the war would certainly end slavery, even were the South victorious, they should at once utilise emancipation.\*

\* I reported the existence of this Du Bellet MS. to our national librarian, and a type-written copy is now in the library at Washington.

My cousin, the late P. V. Daniel, Jr., an eminent railway president in Richmond during the war, was in constant communication with Jefferson Davis. I am informed by his daughter, Mrs. Cautley, that when President Lincoln's proclamation was read by her father he informed his family that President Davis had some time before tried to bring the Confederacy to a policy of emancipation. She remembers her father saying that Mr. Davis told his Cabinet that France could not recognise the Confederacy without England, and England would not recognise a slave-holding nation. The proposal was successfully opposed by A. H. Stephens and Robert Toombs, who thenceforth were hostile to Davis. Cousin P. V. Daniel, Jr., agreed with Davis, but his relative, John M. Daniel, editor of the *Examiner*, while suppressing the proposal, bitterly attacked Davis. In

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On December 2, 1863, a public meeting convened by the Emancipation Society was held in the Whittington Club Hall to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the execution of John Brown. The chair was taken by William Malleson, who in his opening speech related the mythical story that on his way to the scaffold Brown stopped and gave a kiss to a little negro girl. The meeting had been convened to listen to an address from myself, and this was published by the society. In it I said, "Brown's plan was the best his eye could scan ; but it would only have done in Virginia what he had already done in Kansas—free a few slaves. But God's plan was a different one from that. It included the placing of the angel Justice side by side with the fiend Oppression, that the world should see them ere the foot of the one was planted on the neck of the other."

I am now certain that no god had anything to do with the affair except the phantasmal god of war worshipped by Brown, and that the biblical captain who revived that deified wrath transmitted sequels of slavery worse than the disease.

Bayard Taylor told me that he once visited the studio of Baron Marochetti with Thackeray, who pointed to a sculpture of St. George and the Dragon, and said, "Every man has his dragon ; mine is dining out ; what's yours ?" "The same," replied Taylor.

Carlyle, who had known Thackeray from his youth, told me that at times he (Thackeray), having some urgent work on hand, escaped from invitations, callers, and letters, and went off from his house without leaving any address. One night a messenger came to him (Carlyle) from a public-house near by with a request from Thackeray for the loan of a Bible. I sometimes saw Thack-

November, 1864, Davis proposed to his Congress that 40,000 slaves should be employed on fortifications, etc., and rewarded with freedom at the end of the war. The *Examiner* approved the negroes' employment, but declared the offer of freedom as a "reward" a surrender of the Southern position, which was "that while living with the white in the relation of slave he is in a state superior and better for him than that of freedom." However, the demand of Davis was conceded. In giving freedom to slaves that rendered it service the Confederacy curiously coincided with the policy which for a year prevailed in the United States : any slave escaping into the Union lines was free, provided he could show that he had helped the enemy ; if he had befriended us he was assumed to belong to a loyal man, and must be returned to bondage !

eray ; his hair was so white that I supposed him old until it was announced at his death that he was only fifty-two.

The death of Thackeray, December 24, 1863, caused universal distress. The day of his burial at Kensal Green cemetery (December 30) was beautiful, and a large throng surrounded his grave. Starting out on foot for the cemetery, I overtook George Cruikshank, whom I well knew, and we walked together. He was much shocked at the death of his friend. For there had been no premonitions : Thackeray had cheerfully bid his family good-night ; in the early morning his servant entered as usual and placed beside him the usual cup of coffee ; entering later he noticed the coffee untouched. Thackeray died of an effusion on a brain that weighed 58½ ounces—the average weight of the masculine brain being less than four pounds.

George Cruikshank received my compliments for his vigour at seventy-two with his usual discourse on the advantages of teetotalism. He was a small, thick-set man, with a pale face so singular that it might have been strikingly homely if it had not been intellectual and benevolent. "I am getting to know this road well—very well," he said. "Many a fine fellow has been buried at Kensal Green, but never a finer or a truer than Makepeace Thackeray. How little did they know the man who thought him a hard, cold, and cutting blade. He was much more like a sensitive, loving little girl." I never was more impressed than at this moment with Cruikshank's genius for seeing ; his phrase interpreted certain lines under Thackeray's eyes, lines of wondrous tenderness, as if their light were flowing out to all on whom he looked. "Here is one picture I have in my mind of him," said Cruikshank ; "he was coming from Ireland across the Channel, with his wife and children, one an infant. There was a fearful storm all night, and the Channel horribly rough, and Mrs. Thackeray was seized with brain-fever. And through all that terrible night, from shore to shore, sat Thackeray, motionless, bearing the infant in one arm, sustaining the wife with the other, utterly unconscious of the prevailing terror—for there was danger. His poor wife never recovered from brain-fever, and was worse than lost to him for ever." Cruikshank had been Thackeray's teacher when the author aspired to be an artist ; "but," he said, "he had not the patience to be an artist with pencil or brush. I

used to tell him that to be an artist was to burrow along like a mole, heaving up a little mound here and there for a long distance. He said he thought he would presently break out into another element and stay there."

Cruikshank spoke of his venture in 1841, *The Omnibus*, of which Laman Blanchard was editor and Thackeray the chief contributor. "It would be more pleasing to think of Thackeray as resting by the side of Douglas Jerrold, but Jerrold was not buried at Kensal Green. I remember well the day when we were standing beside the grave of the poor suicide Laman Blanchard at Clapham Way, and Jerrold said he wished to be buried at a spot hard by, which he pointed out ; and there he was buried. Poor Blanchard ! "

Cruikshank did not go on with his memory of Laman Blanchard, who, unable to recover from the shock of his wife's death, killed himself two months after it, February 15, 1845. For at this time the hearse passed us, and my companion's lip quivered and his eye grew moist. John Leech came up. The two artists looked into one another's eyes and shook hands, but no word passed.

Nearly every literary man in London was present. I particularly remarked the emotion of Charles Dickens.

After the funeral I walked away with Robert Browning, and we were presently joined by Dickens, to whom the poet introduced me. Dickens warmly admired Browning, and I was told he once said to a friend that he would rather have written "Colombe's Birthday" than any of his novels. As my road lay in another direction, I mounted an omnibus and sat beside the driver, who inquired if Charles Dickens had been at the funeral, adding, "I would just like to see that man." When I told him Dickens had passed on ahead he lashed his horses, but Dickens had disappeared, and Browning was with Tom Taylor. But the driver was partly consoled by seeing the author of his favourite play, *The Ticket-of-Leave Man*.

Dickens was a wonder. The more I saw of London the more I loved and honoured the London Dante who had invested it with romance, and peopled its streets and alleys with spirits, so that the huge city could never more be seen without his types and shadows. He had his limitations, no doubt ; had he been

born in France, where genius is free to deal with every side of human life, Dickens might have been greater. To me he remained the chief marvel of his time. I felt some satisfaction in telling him that Oliver Twist, Little Nell, and other children of his had been far back in the forties our beloved friends in a Virginian village of which he had never heard ; that I had myself lost my position as a model schoolboy and been flogged for jumping out of the school window and playing truant in order to see him alight from the stage-coach in Fredericksburg ; and that his description of the fearful roads by which he journeyed thither hastened the building of a railway.

Of Dickens's readings no description can convey any adequate impression. He was in himself a whole stock company. He seemed to be physically transformed as he passed from one character to another ; he had as many distinct voices as his books had characters ; he held at command the fountains of laughter and tears. Dickens's voice in its every disguise was of such quality that it reached all of those thousands in St. James's Hall, and he stood before us a magician. When he sat down it was not mere applause that followed, but a passionate outburst of love for the man. Dickens was a unique man. He had graduated from Grub Street to the palace, and his writings insinuated themselves equally into the hearts of rich and poor, learned and illiterate.

The year 1864 had opened happily for wife and myself. The Mason incident had cleared away, and letters came from America full of the old friendship. My "Testimonies Concerning Slavery" was circulating largely, and also my article on "Benjamin Banneker, the Negro Astronomer," reprinted from the *Atlantic Monthly* by the "Ladies' Emancipation Society" ; my congregation was rapidly growing, our means increasing. We found our best amusement in strolling along the quaint shops and through the Zoological Gardens with our two children. My journalistic work was not under orders, but selected by myself. My duties were thus always congenial, and at times delightful.

For one week in the April of 1864 I moved in an enchanted land. It was at Stratford-on-Avon, during the celebration of the tercentenary of Shakespeare. That poet, with all his miracles, hardly imagined more beautiful masques than those amid which

we moved during those fair days. A grand pavilion for theatrical performances had been raised, vast tents for concerts, and a gallery containing all the great Shakespearian subjects ever painted, with the thirty famous portraits of the poet—all these were open for the throng of pilgrims from every part of Europe who day by day, nay hour by hour, were charmed away from the hard contemporary world as Ferdinand and Miranda by the pageants of Prospero. Now we were listening to the songs of Shakespeare set to music of the early English composers, then to Mendelssohn's "Sommernachtstraum"; one night we laughed at Buckstone's Andrew Aguecheek, on another saw beautiful Stella Colas shine on Juliet's balcony like a star, and every night some exquisite play. The grand old Mayor Flower at "The Hill," his son Charles at "Avonbank" near the church, and his son Edgar in the village, kept open house; there were daily banquets; pretty barges, laden with pretty ladies, floated along with the swans on the Avon; excursions were made to Ann Hathaway's cottage and to Charlecote Hall, scene of the legendary deer-stalking incident. There was a grand dinner, with a Shakespeare text for every dish, and wine and toast; there were five discourses about Shakespeare in the old church by Bishops Trench and Wordsworth; and, finally, there was as magnificent a fancy dress ball as was ever known—every one being in a Shakespearian character. The gentry from all Warwickshire and from other counties, and many from London, France, Germany, were present, and the dance went on till dawn.

During all this festival I sat in the ancient Red Lion Inn for a large part of each night—save when on duty as Malvolio at the Ball—surrounded by the relics of Washington Irving, writing my description of the wondrous affair for *Harper's Monthly*. A daily letter was due to the *Morning Star* in London, one or two to the *Commonwealth* in Boston; but I found writing a joy, and grudged every moment that sleep claimed from my real dream-land.

I made during the *fête* the acquaintance of Howard Staunton, the acute editor of Shakespeare, and almost the only unbiased critical investigator into the personal life of the poet. Staunton was then about fifty, with a ruddy English colour and clear-cut features. His step was elastic, his movement quick, and, being

myself a good walker, we enjoyed rambles together. I told him how much I had valued his standard work on Chess, but he had long given up the game. "It not only took up too much time," he said, "but I found that it demoralised players. Men have hated me and said mean things about me merely because I beat them at chess." Staunton had long before reached the conclusion that I had just come to that Shakespeare's widow had married Richard James, but I warned him that if he touched the romantic sentiment investing Ann Hathaway he might suffer as much as if he had beaten the accepted writers at chess. We examined the register of burials in the church, and felt certain that the carefully bracketed names were those of one and the same person.

Aug. 8 { Mrs. Shakespeare  
          { Ann, uxor Ricardi James

The register, it is said, is not the original one, but this only makes it more certain that the copy is exact, for at a later time no one would have ventured to bracket the wife of Shakespeare with another Ann ; and certainly no clergyman or clerk would have omitted to add "uxor Gulielmi Shakespeare" to his widow's name, while being so particular about the wife of one Richard James. Staunton had made a search in the old town records after the James family, and found that it was a well-known name, but belonged to people of much lower position than the Shakespeares. He had found one item which suggested to him that the Richard James whom Shakespeare's widow married was a Stratford shoemaker and a pious ranter. Staunton invited me to visit him at his house in London, where he would show me the notes he had made on the matter ; but I was prevented from doing this, and he died not long after. But knowing well the exactness of Staunton, I have adhered to his theory—of which, indeed, I find some confirmation in Shakespeare's dislike of Puritanism, and still more in the epitaph of his daughter, Mrs. Hall. No such words would have been inscribed on her grave had she not been among pharisaic people.

Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,  
Wise to salvation was good Mistris Hall ;  
Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this  
Wholly of Him with whom she's now in bliss.

My return from the fairyland beside the Avon was into a cloud. I found my wife sitting with anxiety beside our little Emerson. Knowing how important was the fulfilment of my contract as commissioner of the *Morning Star* at Stratford, she had not telegraphed me of the child's illness—the sequel of measles—not immediately dangerous. My wife was a believer in homœopathy, and our invalid was attended by Dr. James John Garth Wilkinson, well known in our Concord circle by his book, "The Human Body and its Connection with Man." He was a grand sort of man, with a powerful will, and his devotion to the child gained our gratitude. It was a long illness, but some improvement came in May, and our doctor advised us to go into the country.

We went to Wimbledon, where our friends Mr. and Mrs. Henry Whitehead took us as lodgers in their charming home-stead, Warren Farm. Here Emerson steadily improved, and we had fair prospect that he would recover. But where is there any escape from man's supplement to nature's destructiveness? Near the middle of July the military review and rifle practice began at Wimbledon, and the cottagers were given notice to leave. We concluded to try Brighton, but the change was fatal.

Oh, how we nursed that child! My wife was nearly worn out. Night after night I paced the room with my sweet child in my arms. As the homœopathic doctor in Brighton had been a personal friend of the Rev. F. W. Robertson I supposed him competent, but what was my horror at his intimation that he had consulted the "spirits" about the remedies! Here were we, Ellen and I, haters of war, who could not be left in our quiet Wimbledon Vale by the infernal bullets; and with all our dislike of "spiritualism" had fallen into the hands of a spiritualist physician!

In the evening before the morning of burial my wife desired some flowers, and I went out to buy them. It was late, and I could find no florist shop open, but there was one grand establishment where I supposed I could find residents who would promise to let me have the flowers very early in the morning. The large glass conservatory was lighted, and I hurried to the door and knocked—knocked again, and louder. There was no answer, and straining my eyes against the glass of doors and windows I

found that the seeming illumination was all from the street lamps outside. Within was silence and emptiness. A dread came upon me. Was I looking into little Emerson's grave and finding that all the bright hopes, all the visions of immortal life, were but projections from earthly lamps on emptiness? Somehow I felt that in the illusion under which I had fairly battered at the door there was a sort of mockery.

In the early morning, between seven and eight o'clock, I went out and managed to get the white flowers. I find a note by my wife: "Saturday, 6th of August, we placed his body in the ground near F. W. Robertson, on a high hill overlooking the sea, and a little stone cross above, twined with ivy." So even then we were trying to cling to the cross.

Ralph Waldo Emerson had once called on us, after we had a house in Concord, and seeing my two sons, he said of his namesake, "Little Emerson is beautiful and winning, but I think you will get more satisfaction out of the elder boy (Eustace)." So it proved.

The words of Shylock are far-reaching: "The curse never fell upon our race till now; I never felt it till now." I had caught a glimpse of sullen spite in nature glaring through her veil of violets and tinted skies. It was not merely the child's premature death that was unpardonable, but the prolonged cruel incidents of it. The sweet little one—he was nearly three years of age—did not indeed suffer much physical pain from the hydrocephalus that caused his death, but during the four months preceding death (August 4) he was so sadly puzzled by his inability to walk, the cessation of our merry strolls. I hear now his little voice saying, "I wish I could get well," or, seeing our distress, "Kiss me, kiss me again, mamma." Day by day, hour by hour, the child was more and more deeply entwined with our heart-strings. And poor little Eustace, in his sixth year, who had so petted Emerson, wandered about helplessly.

My vacation began with August, and we started off with our one child for a tour. We went to Paris, and tried to forget our grief amid the manifold beauties of the city. We passed over to Germany and Switzerland. The thin and worn condition of my wife, which had been giving me anxiety, began to disappear, but we really found no consolation for our hearts. We could

only weep silently together. I received a letter from Browning in which he said : " If I, who cannot restore your child, *would*, He who can, *will*." It made us both love the poet more, but our visions of immortality must have unconsciously grown dim.

I had with me a letter from Dr. Brabant of Bath to Strauss, and to meet him we visited Heilbrönn. I was welcomed by Strauss and his attractive daughter—he had for some time been separated from his wife, a brilliant but incompatible actress. We went on a long walk beside the Neckar, and he inquired about Parker, Emerson, and the English liberals. I asked him whether he knew of any work worth reading concerning immortality. He said after some reflection, " No. It appears to me a purely anthropological problem." And on that point no more was said.

Strauss was in his fifty-sixth year. There was as yet no grey in his dark hair ; his features were fine, his mouth especially delicate, as if related to his sweet voice ; his dark eyes candid and tender. He pointed out to me near an ancient church traces of the holy fountain which gave Heilbrönn its name. He said, with his gentle smile : " The theory of the priests is that the fountain ceased to flow when I came here to reside."

After my memorable day and evening with Strauss, we travelled to Heidelberg to visit Gervinus, whose English was fluent enough to enable me to enjoy his conversation at the breakfast to which he invited me. We reached Frankfort on Goethe's birthday, and found the city decorated. We explored the Goethe Birth-house (a museum), and tried to forget our pain amid the festivities. We enjoyed our sail on the Rhine, under a beautiful sky ; we visited grand cathedrals and art galleries in Germany and Belgium ; and on the last day of August (1864) arrived at Ostend.

Finding our London friends, Mr. and Mrs. William Neill, and their little son Harold for our child to play with, we remained a week at Ostend. I there wrote a sermon for the formidable day when I must again stand before my sympathising congregation. I also wrote down some notes concerning persons met on my little tour. I find it written concerning the conversation of Strauss :—

He felt oppressed at seeing nearly every nation in Europe chained by an allied despotism of prince and priest. He studied long the

nature of this oppression, and came to the conclusion that the chain was rather inward than outward, and without the inward thraldom the outward would soon rust away. The inward chain was superstition, and the form in which it bound the people of Europe was Christian supernaturalism. So long as men accept religious control not based on reason, they will accept political control not based on reason. The man who gives up the whole of his moral nature to an unquestioned authority suffers a paralysis of his mind, and all the changes of outward circumstances in the world cannot make him a free man. For this reason our European revolutions have been, even when successful, mere transfers from one tyranny to another. He believed when writing the "Leben Jesu" that in striking at supernaturalism he was striking at the root of the whole tree of political and social degradation. Renan had done for France what he had thought to do for Germany. Renan had written a book which the common people read ; the influence of the "Leben Jesu" had been confined to scholars more than he liked, and he meant to put it into a more popular shape. Germany must be made to realise that the decay of Christianity means the growth of national life, and also of general humanity.

As Strauss could speak little English, and my German was not equal to profound themes, we now and then resorted to Latin words. What I have just written was gathered from our conversation, and must not be taken literally. But what he said to me about immortality—that it was a purely anthropological problem—is exact, for on that I had meditated every day since I left him, and again as I looked out from Ostend over the shoreless sea.

It was at Ostend, strolling amid the happy promenaders on the Digue, bathing in the translucent waves, observing the happy peasantry, above all the crowds of merry children on the beach, that our spirits found some relief and repose. The old Belgian town took hold of our affection ; we made some acquaintance with the market women and tradespeople ; we found the seaside luxuries wholesome and cheap ; and in after years, being not permitted to bathe together on English beaches, we found happy vacations in dear old Ostend.

*From my wife's diary* : "Sept. 11. Monc preached for the first time since our loss, and broke down completely. . . . Sept. 21. My darling's birthday (Emerson), a regular cloud and sunshine day. Eustace says he guesses God got the rainbow for Emerson."

Returned to London, we found pleasant lodgings at 28, Notting Hill Square. The house was kept by a childless couple (Hepple), who were not only kind but amusing. The husband passed all his time in genealogical investigations, and we had not been in the house a month before he had traced us both back to royal families. Our new residence had been selected in that region in order to be near our friends of Aubrey House. To our delight our friends Professor Cairnes and his wife took the only other apartment to let in the house. This admirable man was thoroughly instructed in American affairs. He knew our constitutional history, and the causes of the anomalies and compromises which had led to the war. He was well acquainted with all the legal, economic, and international questions involved, and being withal a man of sweetness as well as light, I could consult him about all my articles written for either country. Professor Cairnes was a tall, handsome man, younger than his published works had led me to suppose. Though sadly afflicted with rheumatism, his countenance was always beaming with humour. His lovely wife was gracious, witty, always cheerful, and my wife found her friendship a great resource. The intimate friends of Cairnes were his confrères in economic studies—John Stuart Mill and Professor Fawcett. Now and then we all went to dine with Mill and his stepdaughter, Helen Taylor, who lived in a pretty house at Cray.

In personal appearance John Stuart Mill resembled Edgar A. Poe. His delicate mouth, almost feminine—which twitched nervously at times—and the small chin, were in contrast with the breadth and height of his brow.

Although Mill was more eager to listen than to talk, we managed to throw the burden of conversation upon him, and never failed to go away enriched by his ample knowledge and ideas. Many a new view in philosophy, religion, and sociology grew in me from his casual suggestions made without the slightest doctrinaire spirit. When led to speak of eminent contemporaries from whom he differed, he did so with a look of deference. There was pathos in his expression when he spoke of Carlyle, and said, “Then Carlyle turned against all his friends.” \* Emerson he

\* Carlyle told me of the burning of the MS. of his first volume of the “French Revolution,” which he had submitted to Mill for criticism. Mill

had met in 1848, and though he had no liking for any transcendentalism, held him in great esteem.

On the evening of our first visit to Mill, Professor Cairnes and the ladies drove to the station, and our host walked with me. He turned the conversation on Emerson, and I told him how when I was a youth in Virginia sharing the conventional notions of those around me, a sentence quoted from Emerson in a magazine had awakened in me a new thought and aim which ultimately revolutionised my life. Mill paused on the road and said, "That is something that should be engraved on a man's tomb." Although in his countenance there was a tinge of melancholy, it was serene; and there was some twinkle in his eyes when he uttered an epigrammatic criticism on one or another politician who had acquired popularity or power. He was a man of delicate sentiment, elegant manners, and affectionate nature. By the personal care he had given to the culture of his stepdaughter, a care maternal as well as paternal, she was able to appreciate his philosophy, learning, and his unique personality.

Some of my most instructive conversations with Mill and Helen Taylor related to their observations of the French people and their religion in the provinces. They felt that the central figure of the Madonna was more elevating in their humble homes than any form Protestantism could offer. Helen Taylor told me that once when they were in Scotland she called on a poor woman who had lost her little son. The mother was inconsolable, and said, "What troubles me is, they be all men folk up there, and won't know how to do for him."

I had heard that when Mill and Helen Taylor visited the Parthenon, where there was some discussion as to the spot on which the statue of Athene had stood, the young lady moved to a certain point and said, "I believe it stood here." Curtius and his party heard of it, and reached the same conclusion. I asked her about it, and she said her reason was that if it had been a Catholic church the Virgin would have stood at that spot.

submitted it to Mrs. Taylor, whose maid used the pages to light the fire. "The beautiful young man rushed in on us deathly pale, almost speechless with horror, and we had to give our attention to his condition before we could consider my own."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

My Reviews of Browning—The Wrapper of his Poems—Carlyle's Account of the Marriage of the Brownings—Browning's Father—"Mr. Sludge the Medium"—Margaret Fuller Ossoli—The Sisters Eliza and Sarah Flower, Browning and W. J. Fox—A Visit to Tennyson at Farringford—Mrs. Cameron—A Romance at Freshwater—"The Promise of May"—Tennyson's Dread of both Agnosticism and Orthodoxy.

MEETING with Robert Browning was like a fine morning. His whole handsome countenance smiled, not his mouth merely or even chiefly, and his greeting was to tell something pleasant. For some years I lived in Delamere Terrace, near his house in Warwick Crescent, and sometimes joined his walks. He had been friendly with me from the first, having read an article I had written in America about his poetry. The large three-volume edition of his poems had just appeared when I arrived (1863), and I wrote two extended reviews of it, one in the *Westminster Review*, the other in the *Englishwoman's Journal*. He recognised the papers as indicating loving study of his writings. I was able also to do him some practical service. Finding that he had no adequate arrangement in America for the publication of his works or those of Mrs. Browning, I offered to undertake that matter for him, and succeeded. He showed his gratitude by presenting me with a copy of the original edition of his first poem, "Pauline," which many years later I found was one of the five or six copies discoverable.

Browning was much interested in America. Mrs. Conway, who had been requested to act in London in the interest of the Concord Bazaar for the benefit of the "freedmen," hinted to Browning that an autograph of his would be valuable. Thereupon he took out a large bundle of papers—manuscripts of his early poems ("Sordello" was in a separate wrapper); he removed the parchment wrapper of the poems, and showed us the sentences—Greek

Latin, English—with which it was covered. This parchment wrapper was duly forwarded to Mrs. Horace Mann, but who was the purchaser I know not. It would be a relic of interest to the Browning Society in London. Before sending it to America I made a copy, which I conclude to insert here. The figures affixed to each quotation refer to the translations that will follow :—

'Αλλὰ πᾶν τοματῶν (καὶ) πένητα . . . . (1)  
'Ενικήσαμεν ὡς ἐβουλόμεθα (2)

To-day
Venezia, June 2
1838.

Saturday, May 27, 1837.  
Tuesday, June 18, 1837, July 30, 1837, Aug. 7.  
Jan. 5, 1838, March 6, 27.  
Feb. 23, 1840. ΘΔΕΑ·

"Ἐξ ὥραι μόχθοις ἵκανάταται· αἱ μετ' αὐτὰς  
γράμμασι δεικνύμεναι ΖΕΘΙ λέγουσι βροτοῖς (3)  
"Ηβῶις, φίλε θυμέ· τᾶχ' ἀν τινες ἄλλοι ξσονται  
ἀνδρες, ἔγω δε θανῶν γαῖα μέλαιν' ξσομα. (4)  
Τεθηκώς, Ζωώ φθειγγόμενος στοματι. (5)  
"Ω κα . . . . οὐποτε σεῖο  
λῆσομαι ἀρχόμενος οὐδ' ἀποκαύμενος,  
ἄλλ· αἰεὶ πρῶτον σὲ καὶ ὑστατον ἐν τε μέσοισιν  
δεῖσον· σὸν δὲ μοι κλύθι καὶ εὐθλα δίδουν. (6)  
Tu fulminibus frange trisulcis. (7)  
Πάντη δ' ἀθανάτων ἀφανῆς νόος ἀνθρώποισιν. (8)  
Χ' οὕτως ἀν δοκέοιμι μετ' ἀνθρώπων θέος . . . . (9)

Ego quid ater  
Hadriæ novi sinus et quid albus  
Peccet Iapyx. (10)

Then I said, I will not make mention of Him nor speak any more in his name; but his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay.

[Here in the Greek 1 Corinthians xiv. 8, 9.]

'Ως παρδέσοντος χαίροντες ιδεῖν πον δδοῦ  
καὶ οἱ θαλλαττεύοντες ιδεῖν λιμένα  
οὗτος οὖ γράφοντες βιβλίου τέλος. (11)

To-morrow, and To-morrow and To-morrow.

On Browning's parchment the sentences were irregular, some of them curving about to find room; one passage was all in capitals and run together like a single long word; the accents were hardly decipherable; no translations nor references to sources were given. The difficulties of presenting the document in any useful way were so great that I had nearly concluded not to attempt it, but a friend submitted it to a scholar not to be

baffled by difficulties—namely, to Professor W. K. Prentice of Princeton. This ingenious and learned gentleman sent light through the whole thing, as my reader will find by bringing together the figures I have above appended to Browning's lines with those that number Professor Prentice's notes here subjoined :—

1. This is translated by Wharton (*Sappho*, Ode ii., 17) : “But I must dare all, since one so poor . . . ,” and this is probably what the line meant to Browning. But it is quite uncertain whether these are the words of Sappho herself or of Longinus, who quotes the ode, or partly of one and partly of the other. Consequently it is uncertain what the words really mean, and they are omitted from most editions of *Sappho*. Longinus (“On the Sublime,” chap. 10) is the only source for this ode.
2. “We conquered as we wished.”
3. “Six hours are quite enough for toil: those thereafter, expressed in writing, say **LIVE!** to mortals.”—*Anthologia Palatina*, x. 43 (anonym.).
4. “Rejoice thou in thy youth, dear heart! Soon there will be others; but I, dying, shall be black earth.”—*Theognis*, 877 f.
5. “[For now the corse from out the sea hath called me home,]  
Dead, (yet) speaking with a living tongue.”

*Theognis*, 1230.

But this distich was written originally, as *Athenaeus* (x. 427 b) says, of a conch-shell, which was used as a horn to call the poet home, perhaps to his dinner.

6. “O Lord, [thou son of Leto, child of Zeus], thee never  
Will I forget, beginning nor when I make an end;  
But even thee first, last, and midmost  
Will I sing: then hear me thou, and grant me good.”
- 
- 
- 
- 
7. “Shatter thou with three-cleft thunderbolts!”
8. “But the thought of the immortals is altogether secret unto men.”—*Solon*, frag. 17.
9. “And thus would I appear a god among men . . . ”
10. “I know what Hadria's gulf is when it darkens, and what mischief bright Iapyx doth make.”—*Horace*, Caron. 27, 18–20.
11. “As travellers rejoice to see [how far they have come ?],

and mariners to see the port, so scribes to see the end of the book."

In 1863, and for a number of years after, Robert Browning was by no means the famous man he afterwards became. Complaints of obscurity in his writings were still heard among literary men. Tennyson, to whom Browning introduced me, told me he thought his poems powerful, but too "rough." Anthony Froude had a similar feeling. Browning had then more admirers in Boston than in London. William Henry Channing and I had an enthusiasm then shared only by Dante Rossetti. Channing told me that the obscurity of "Sordello" lay in the fact that in the original edition there was no punctuation at all; he had taken his pencil and punctuated the book, and it was comprehensible enough. A Browning Club was suggested in my article (1864) in the *Englishwoman's Journal*.

When "Dramatis Personæ" appeared, the first review of it was written by myself, from the proofs Browning gave me, for the *Morning Star*. I found fault with the closing verse of "Gold Hair" for its apparent sanction of a dogma (Human Depravity), and he thought I had missed his meaning. A review which I thought grossly unjust appeared in one of the quarterlies, and I wondered who could have written it. "A man who sometimes invites me to dinner," said Browning.

Carlyle objected to all rhymed and measured poetry, but he must have made some reservation in favour of Browning. The men did not meet often, but were always cordial. I never heard Browning speak of Carlyle but with homage, except on the appearance of his "Shooting Niagara."

One evening when I was with the Carlysles the talk fell on the Brownings; and the same night I wrote down my recollections :—

*Carlyle.* I remember Browning as a fine young man, living in the neighbourhood of Croydon. I liked him better than any young man about here. He had simple speech and manners and ideas of his own. A good talk I recall with him, when I walked with him to the top of a hill, which had a fine prospect. When he published "Paracelsus" I did not make much out of it: it seemed to me to have something "sensational," as they say, about it; but that and his other works proved a strong man.

Miss Barrett sent me some of her first verses in manuscript. I wrote back that I thought she could do better than write verses : I saw little usefulness in them. She wrote me then saying, "What else can I do ? Here I am held hopelessly on a sofa by spinal disease." I wrote taking back all I had said. Her father was a doctor late from India—harsh and impracticable ; his lightest utterances must stand out hard as the laws of the Medes and Persians. He saw her a moment every day as a physician ; then she was left alone. Then she read some compliments of Browning's to her poetry.

*Mrs. Carlyle.* (interposing). Oh no, Mr. Browning never wrote a word about her.

*Carlyle.* Ah well, you shall tell it all revised and corrected when I get through.—Then she wrote something about him, comparing him to a nectarine.

*Mrs. Carlyle.* Oh !

*Mr. Ballantyne.* A pomegranate.

*M. D. C.*

" And from Browning some pomegranate which if cut deep down the middle, Shows a heart within blood-tinctured of a veined humanity."

*Carlyle.* I stand corrected. Well : Browning becomes interested in that and other poems, and resolves to find her out. He has no clue to her except an acquaintance with her wealthy uncle, John Kenyon. He writes to John Kenyon asking for an introduction. How was it then, madam ?

*Mrs. Carlyle.* Mr. Kenyon was absent. As soon as he returned he wrote a note to Mr. Browning saying that his niece was a confirmed invalid—never saw anyone, nor left her couch—and that an introduction was impossible.

*Carlyle.* Ah yes—meanwhile Browning, hearing nothing from Kenyon, determined not to stop on ceremony, and went to Dr. Barrett's house. The servant man had been taking too much beer ; thought Browning a doctor, and admitted him. He went into the study where Miss Elizabeth was reclining. They had a conversation ; liked each other ; and she made arrangements for him to call again. He did so, and the spinal disease passed away ; the spell-bound princess was reached by her knight ; took up her bed and walked ; one day went all the way to Marylebone Church, where they were married. Then they could not face the angry father, and went to Italy. Kenyon supplied the money ; and when he died left them more. She was never suffered by her father to see him again—not even when he was dying. She caught sight of him through an open door. Now, madam, you may give the history in chronological order.

Upon which Mrs. Carlyle dressed up a few points in his narrative. In our talk Mrs. Carlyle said she had tried to read "Sordello," but could not tell whether Sordello was "a book, a city, or a man."

The house of the Brownings in Warwick Crescent was of rather dark interior, and the mixture of old Italian tapestries and furniture with modern things was not attractive. The family consisted of Robert Browning, his father, his sister Miss Browning, and his son Barrett, whom they called "Pinna." This youth petted a white owl, which indeed had a high place in the affections of the whole family. Old Mr. Browning was extremely interesting. Dante Rossetti contended that there was something Semitic in Robert Browning's countenance, and although there was less suggestion of that origin in his father's look, plausibility was lent to the supposition by the fact that he had been a clerk of the Rothschilds, and also by his Hebrew learning. The original name, Browning told me, had been De Bruni. I was told by an old friend of the elder Browning that he was a good deal of a humourist; he was clever in drawing pleasant sketches and caricatures of his friends, and writing amusing verses beneath them. I found his conversation particularly instructive in folklore. The old gentleman's brain was a storehouse of literary and philosophical antiquities. He seemed to have known Paracelsus, Faustus, and even Talmudic personages personally. He was modest with his learning, a perfect gentleman.

Miss Browning was in every way attractive, and with a wit and tact that appeared more French than English.

Browning was a cautious believer in "clairvoyance." There was a famous "medium" in London, Mrs. Marshall, whose performances puzzled me. Browning attributed them to "clairvoyance"; he had no faith in the theory of spirits, and disliked spiritualists in general, and Hume in particular. Hume I had met at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Spencer Hall—where he recited a comic piece in verse—and could appreciate the portraiture of "Mr. Sludge, the Medium."

After Browning had enraged the spiritualists by that poem, I mentioned to him in a note a story which had been put into circulation in America, and which I wished to stigmatise in one of my letters to the *Cincinnati Commercial*. It was that at some

*séance in Italy* where Hume was present, the spirits had placed a wreath on the head of his wife instead of on himself, which made him jealous and angry. He wrote me : “ What you call the ‘ ridiculous story ’ of Hume’s spirits passing me by to crown my wife and so gaining him my enmity, was told by Hume in a spiritualistic journal—and I remember that the article containing the story invited me to say what I pleased in reply. Had I condescended to reply it would have been simply to the effect that I could desire no better evidence of Hume’s nature and practices than this lie, which no doubt seemed to him exactly the thing to believe.”

Browning said to Mrs. Conway that when people talked about his wife he had a sort of “ jealousy ” of her being spoken of by persons who knew little or nothing of the kind of woman she was. One day when I was in his library Browning took down his wife’s Bible—Hebrew, Greek, and English—and pointed to her notes (on the wide margins), which were numerous and critical, including a number of more exact renderings. “ What is that for learning ? ” he said.

When Queen Victoria desired to meet Carlyle, and the Dean and Lady Augusta Stanley arranged the matter (March 4, 1869), Robert Browning, Sir Charles and Lady Lyell, and Mr. and Mrs. Grote were also invited. In a letter to his sister—too intimate to be copied here in full—Carlyle remarks with some humour that the Queen said to Browning, “ Are you writing anything ? ” Browning had just been publishing the longest poem ever written. (After the publication of “ The Ring and the Book,” Browning told Carlyle that if he had now reached the public it was by telling his story over ten times. “ It was like bawling into the ear of a deaf man.”)

After that introduction to the Queen, Browning was courted by the aristocracy. He was above all an artist, and knew well the philosophy of Emerson’s quatrain :—

Quit the hut, frequent the palace—  
Reck not what the people say ;  
For still where’er the trees grow biggest  
Huntsmen find the easiest way.

But I always felt that his serious friendships, since those of his youth, had mainly been with Americans. He spoke with

much feeling of Margaret Fuller. "From her plague-stricken ship poor Margaret wrote my wife a letter. After a long time it reached us, but so blurred that we could make out very little, the paper so foul that we burnt it." He loved to talk of the Hawthornes, who had lived near him in Florence, and of the Motleys, and the Storys. Americans with good introduction were received with open arms. He came in one day and found my wife sitting with his sister, and said to her with a glow of satisfaction that he had just black-balled an editor who had tried to stir ill-feeling between America and England. He enjoyed some of our American writers, admired our women, and liked our sparkling Catawba, to which I had the pleasure of introducing him in the days when old Longworth made wine fit for any poet.

The friendships of his youth were sacred to Browning, and they were chiefly with those who had built up the peculiar character of my South Place chapel. The first review ever written of him was by my predecessor, W. J. Fox, M.P. To Eliza Flower he wrote shortly before her early death in 1846: "I never had another feeling than entire admiration for your music—entire admiration. I put it apart from all other English music I know, and fully believe in it as the music we all waited for. Of your health I shall not trust myself to speak; you must know what is unspoken." I always believe she was Browning's first love.

I believe that the advanced rationalism for which our chapel became distinguished in Mr. Fox's time was primarily due to Robert Browning. In his early youth he was precociously sceptical, and undermined the faith of Eliza Flower's sister, Sarah, now known to the world as Sarah Flower Adams, author of "*Nearer, my God, to Thee!*" From their home at Harlow Sarah wrote, November 23, 1827, a strange letter to Mr. Fox, whose daughter, Mrs. Bridell-Fox, gave me the subjoined copy:—

You did not ask me to write, and perhaps will be little thankful for what you are like to receive, a regular confession of faith, or rather the want of it, from one whom you little suspect guilty of the heinous sin of disbelief. It reads like half jest: never was I more serious. My mind has been wandering a long time, and now it seems to have lost sight of that only invulnerable hold against the assaults of this warring world, a firm belief in the genuineness of the Scriptures.

No, not the only one. I do believe in the existence of an All-wise

and Omnipotent Being—and that, involving as it does the conviction that everything is working together for good, brings with it comfort I would not resign for worlds. Still, I would fain go to my Bible as I used to, but I cannot. The cloud has come over me gradually, and I did not discover the darkness in which my soul was shrouded until, in seeking to give light to others, my own gloomy state became too settled to admit of doubt. It was in answering Robert Browning that my mind refused to bring forward argument, turned recreant, and sided with the enemy. And when I went to Norwich musical festival, oh, how much I lost ! In all the choruses of praise to the Almighty my heart joined, and seemed to lift itself above the world to celebrate the praises of Him to whom I owed the bliss of these feelings ; but the rest of the " *Messiah* " dwindled to a mere musical enjoyment ; and the consciousness of what it might once have been to me brought the bitterest sensations of sadness, almost remorse.

And now, as I sit and look up to the room in which I first had existence, and think of the mother who gave it, and watch the window of the chamber in which she yielded hers, in death as in life a fervent Christian, that thought links itself with another—how much rather would she I had never been, than to be what I now am.

I have a firm belief in a resurrection—at least I think I have—but my mind is in a sad state ; and before that goes, I must endeavour to build up my decaying faith. How is it to be done ? I want to read a good ecclesiastical history. I dare not apply to papa. I dare not let him have a glimpse at the infatuation that possesses me. Had he been less rigid in his ideas of all kinds of unbelief, it would have been better for me. But I have had no one either to remove or confirm my doubts, and heaven alone knows what uneasiness they have given me. I would give worlds to be a sincere believer ; to go to my Bible as to a friend in the hour of trial, feeling that whatever might befall, *that* would never desert me, and defying the world to rob me of its consolations.

My life has been like a set of gems on a string of gold—a succession of bright and beautiful things, without a dark thread to dim their lustre. But it will not be always thus. It is not thus now, and some resources I must have against the evil time which is beginning to set in. The very study will be a delight, even if it has not the desired result. The consciousness that I have not examined as far as in me lies, weighs heavily upon me, and to you I now look to direct my inquiries. 'Tis a bold step, and I wonder how I could bring myself to it. I have often longed to speak to you, but *that* I could not do. And now it seems as if I could not bear to speak to anyone, but I

want quietly to read in my own room. What? Why, any books that you would deem suitable.

I shall soon be at home (London), and if you will lend them, and let me read them, my mind will, at all events, be relieved from whatever portion of guilt may mingle in its present uneasiness.

I hope this will not worry you. I would not be one to add to the annoyances that visit you; but that you have a sincere regard for me I now believe, and how it is returned let this confidence which you possess, unshared by anyone beside, bear testimony.

I long to come home. Harlow is not what it once was, and it has added to the feeling of loneliness which has been coming on. Though I may often be mirthful, I am not always happy. But I am in a sad mood this morning, and to-morrow may be brighter in the heavens and in the heart. So I will not write any more than one thing, and that you know already, that I am yours affectionately,

SALLY.

Burn, and forget—not me and those books, but the letter and low spirits.

Mr. Fox had been up to that time a liberal Unitarian, but his opinions had by no means reached the phase indicated in the above letter. His rationalism, however, took a new departure a year or two later, and after a careful study of his works and those of Sarah Flower Adams, I am convinced that her doubts, or perhaps his efforts to remove them, did away with his faith in a biblical revelation. Thus Robert Browning, as I believe, had something to do with the preparation of my chapel for the free-thought which now characterises it.

I believe the sisters Flower inspired both "Pauline" and "Pippa Passes." Long before I knew the relations between Browning and those ladies, I had felt that Pippa's voice told the secret of the poet's experiences. At a meeting of the London Browning Society (May 23, 1884) I said: "My first meeting with Pippa stands apart in memory, unique, indescribable—like falling in love." But deep answers only to deep. Seven years later I learned how the singing of Eliza had enchanted his heart; and that before he was sixteen his unconscious influence, like that of Pippa, had wrought far-reaching effects on and through Sarah, whose genius was just flowering.

In my memorial discourse on the death of W. J. Fox (June

12, 1864) I alluded to a favourite anthem of his, from Browning's "Paracelsus," and it was sung by the choir.

I stoop  
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud.  
It is but for a time : I press God's lamp  
Close to my breast : its splendours soon or late  
Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge some day.

I afterwards heard that Browning was present. It was Sarah Flower Adams who, with the assistance of Mr. Fox, compiled and largely composed the "South Place Hymn-Book" (published in 1841), and set in it those lines from Browning. I also find some record of experience in the quotation from Jeremiah on the old parchment cover of his poems (*supra*). In her heart, too, the old fire burned, after its light had sunk, and along with the lines from "Paracelsus" appeared, for the first time (1841), her famous hymn, "Nearer, my God, to Thee!" She pressed the lamp close to her breast, but its splendours could not disperse the gloom of the agonies of the world. For in the same year that her famous hymn was written she wrote also her wonderful poem, "Vivia Perpetua," in which Vivia says :—

There are some mysteries ; I scarce begin  
To thread them, but from out them up springs love,  
Flies through them like a bird along a grove,  
And sings them to forgetfulness, in joy.  
But one e'en now doth come to hold her mute :  
Oppression yet doth crush with iron foot. . . .  
Our power is so much weaker than our will,—  
But Love omnipotent !

In these lines Sarah Flower Adams laid her finger on the defect of all theological theism. Robert Browning, no doubt, tried to limit the scepticism he had awakened, but his familiar argument, that good comes out of evil, did not reach the theistic dilemma ; infliction of pain for good purposes may be the necessity of limited power, but how is it pardonable in unlimited power ? Sarah Flower Adams aspired to her God, not everybody's God ; but everybody is now singing the hymn so many years heard only in our chapel. And perhaps not one who sings it realises that it was written by a disbeliever in Christianity.

I do not think that Browning continued his old relations

with W. J. Fox, M.P., whom he described to me as "a man of genius apt to put out his talent to work for him." He may have shared the feeling of some that Eliza Flower really died like Ottilia in Goethe's "Elective Affinities," of a struggle between her moral sentiment and her passion for W. J. Fox (long separated from his wife). The affection of the minister for Eliza Flower had given rise to much gossip, and after entering Parliament her friends thought him more distant. Browning never spoke a word against Fox, but said little about him, and I now believe that this silence was due to the painful memories with which the orator was associated.

In our walks Browning generally broached the religious topic. As the minister of South Place I may have been unconsciously a sort of ghost from his past. I do not remember that he ever referred to the Bible as an authority, but he had read it critically. In one of his later poems I noted that he quotes, "In *a* beginning God made heaven and earth." In the original Hebrew there is no article before "beginning," and "*In the* beginning" is misleading. Browning followed the Talmud, according to which there were several beginnings which were disapproved by the deity, but at length "*a* beginning" which he pronounced "exceeding good," *i.e.* exceeding the previous ones. My own belief is that the meaning can only be preserved by reading "*In* beginning."

Browning was not conventionally orthodox, but it was a necessity of his genius to project a divine drama into the universe. He hated to give up anything scenic, even a day of judgment. In one of our talks he said, "If a man can summon his workmen and tenants at the end of the week or the year, and settle with them, why should not God so summon mankind at the end of life?" So hard did he try to believe. I once asked him how anybody was suffered to doubt about a truth of such stupendous importance as immortality. "Because," he said, "such certainty would not be consistent with the discipline of life. Were there no doubt, faith would not be faith." Yet he never explained why omnipotence could not effect all the discipline without the ignorance, and without evil. But I doubt if Browning conceived of any omnipotent being. He was only clear in criticising my sceptical positions, and I could never get him to define

his own positions. There was no mysticism about him, no accent of the pietist nor of the moralist, and it appeared to me curious that this man of the world should make more of theology than of ethics. To my expression of that surprise, Browning answered, " Moral character and action depend so much on circumstances that it is almost impossible for men to judge each other fairly." He was, of course, equally tolerant in religious matters, but so animated in discussing them that I have known him stop on the pavement to impress his point. This interest in speculative religion may have been to some extent an inheritance, but not from his father, who appeared to have little interest in theology. The family had belonged to the Congregationalist (or Independent) denomination, and Browning sometimes went to the little chapel of Mr. Foster in Camden Town. One evening, this minister, very liberal, preached on nature, and Browning meeting him at the door said, " It was interesting, but I should have preferred that instead of describing nature you had told us the impression made by nature on you."

But it was only in private that I recall any sign in Browning of interest in religious subjects. In society he was always the man of the world, and he frequented society. A young American admirer told us she had found him " dinner-ed to death." Another tale went that on being verbally invited to dinner, he made a note of the date, and then said, " Of course, you mean next year ? " There never was a more delightful table-talker. But with all this he never appeared to me really English. He had not the ruddy complexion due to his large and fair face ; he was so cosmopolitan, he had such taste for beauty in woman (often undraped in his poems), and such passion for the Greek language, that I suspect there may have been some Brunidean clan in ancient Hellas. Browning was a fair amateur sculptor ; when I first called on him, with my letter from Curtis, he was modelling a fine head of Keats.

Browning had few intimate literary friendships. He liked to talk with George Eliot and Lewes, but was rarely at the Priory on their Sunday evenings, when others were usually present. He had more friends among the London artists. He cared little, I think, for English politics, and his interest in the affairs of France and Italy appeared to me rather that of a

spectator looking down on the arena. I could never discover whether he sympathised with Mrs. Browning's admiration for Napoleon III., but once at my table when Mazzini was mentioned he said with genuine feeling, "Poor Mazzini!" William Malleson, an intimate friend of Mazzini and enthusiast for his cause, was troubled by the exclamation. But I had often reason to recall it with sympathy, and its indication of the remoteness of Browning from the rush and roar of European politics. His interest was in individual minds and characters, and not in people herded together either in political or sectarian masses. Above all, he appreciated and loved the "Eternal Feminine," and merited the warm friendship he enjoyed of ladies.

My first experience of an old-fashioned English inn was in Tennyson's country. It was at Freshwater, and from my tidy room in the "Albion" I had a beautiful outlook over the bay. On my way, travelling on an old stage-coach, I heard a good deal said about a romance of the neighbourhood. A young officer of high family had formed an engagement of marriage with a pretty "servant girl." The match was opposed by his family, but he persisted. No clergyman in the island could be found to perform the marriage service, and one had to be imported for the purpose. There were circumstances in the life of the "servant girl" which led the neighbours to take deep interest in her. She was refined and educated, and the Tennysons regarded her as a friend, and were present at the wedding.

On arrival I sent from the inn my letter from Browning, and received an invitation from Mrs. Tennyson to dine at Farringford at eight. I thus had a good afternoon for strolling on the cliffs, though such is the perversity of my own nature that I soon get tired of external nature, unless I meet her in the excursions of Wordsworth or some other poet. So the best part of my afternoon was passed at the house of Mrs. Cameron, already well known to me by her artistic photographs. She was the first person in England to make the large portraits and copies of pictures, and was a much valued friend of the Rossettis. Mrs. Cameron was the widow of a distinguished officer in India, where she was much admired in society, being not only handsome, but of fine intelligence. She had at that time been an amateur in photography, and after her husband's death concluded to

increase her means by the improvements she had discovered. When I visited her, and had admired her portraits of Tennyson and Sir Henry Taylor, she spoke of Tennyson as her best friend, and alluded to the great service he had recently rendered to her. I then learned that the romance I had heard about on the coach had occurred in her house. The "servant girl," so called, whom the officer had just married, had been an inmate of her own family ; and she related to me the brief story, which, she declared, she had no objection should be made public. She was once walking in the streets of Cork, when a lovely child offered to sell her flowers. Struck by its appearance, she made some inquiries, and finding that the child was an orphan and without relatives to object, she took her into her own family and had her carefully educated. She turned out to be in every respect a lovely girl, worthy of any position. Mrs. Cameron presented me with a picture of the bride, who was certainly refined and beautiful enough to be set in the poetry of Tennyson, where I think I have met her. She was finely educated, and was accomplished in music. All of this went on while the Camerons were in affluence. When Mrs. Cameron, who had no children of her own, became a widow in reduced circumstances, the grateful adopted daughter insisted on doing the work of a housemaid. The Freshwater legend was that the young officer had seen her sweeping the steps in front of Mrs. Cameron's pretty cottage. In fact, however, the young man, who had acquired some distinction by a philosophical essay, had visited the Tennysons, and on his way back called to get Mrs. Cameron's portrait of the poet. The graceful young girl met him at the door, and being a man of some genius as well as taste, he asked Mrs. Cameron about her. Mrs. Cameron told him that she was taking care of the house because she was grateful, was a real lady ; she regarded her with as much honour and affection as if she were her daughter. The Tennysons were greatly pleased by the betrothal, and when, on account of the objections of the officer's aristocratic relatives, the village clergyman refused to perform the ceremony, Tennyson brought one from a distance, and I think the wedding festival was at his house, Farringford. The Tennysons withdrew from the village church, and the clergyman was becoming unpopular.

Some of these details I may have gathered on one of my