

The birds who were "ever in motion, ever at rest," got tired of this dark repose in the lonely corners. They soon burst into boundless evening-free. But alas! the boats below were no more to pursue them. They dived deep into the river long ago to escape the cruel hands of the storm. Nor even there were the packs of ginned cotton to track them in the blue. Still more to the surprise of all, even from the far away sky, Apollo with his ever-hot ball vanished. But happily Diana appeared on the scene with her stained silver-plate. Her magic charm dispelled the gloom of the sky but the world was left to darkness to mourn over the losses in silence.

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MRS. BROWNING IN MY HUMBLE VISION.

Of all the Victorian poets, if not of all the English poets, I like Mrs. Browning most. Her great passion, her soft tenderness, her sensitive and loyal heart, her rosy girl-hood, her invalid womanhood, her solitary sofa, her beautiful story, her womanly love and magnificent husband, her devotion and her immortal "Sonnets from the Portugese";—all these things together have awarded her a very lofty position in my heart. She has a world of her own. It is always full of faith, love truth and affection. Her strong humanity as well as the artistic way in which she puts it in her poetry, I read, hear, follow and am charmed away with at last. Forgive me, my reader, if I am unable to see her with a critic's eye. Whatever her position in literature may be, she has a life indeed and this burning life of her weak heart never allowed her to completely give

way even in the most critical situation of her lovely existence. By this glow of life she won a life at last. Her sincere and beautiful heart she leaves with us long, long after it has ceased to feel and sing in this world and takes us unawares into some unknown solitary land of mystic charm where she and she alone could reach above all.

Almost all of her contemporaries had their doubts, cares and anxieties in life, and with their proud and ambitious philosophy stirred the world with all the restlessness of their age. Their burning thoughts they expressed on and on. They had a tendency towards achieving something too great, too high and too noble. The vanity of their man-hood very strongly flowed through their vein and this they have showed too often to the world. And with all their greatness was unconsciously mingled some distaste, distrust and disgust of human feeling which very often tires us in the midst of their poetic raptures. Of the three eminent women poets of the victorian period, the ascetic life of Christina Rossetti does not please me much. I do not quite understand with what logic or magic she sacrificed her power of enjoyment in this world to devote herself to God and thus ignored her poetic genius. Her divine spirit seems to me too pure for us. I am not yet in a position to fully appreciate the inconsistency between enjoyment and devotion, between humanity and divinity as well. Emily Bronte's position is also very much like the same. Her Stoic philosophy is still a paradox to me. Her 'chainless soul' I can not catch, nor can, enter into her 'Prisoner's door' very well. And when with her strong emotion and uncommon genius, she cries out,—

“Still, let my tyrants know, I am not doomed to wear,
Year after year, in gloom and desolate despair ;
A messenger of Hope comes every night to me,
And offers for short life, eternal liberty”,—

I always hear Elizabeth Barrett, with her throbbing heart, whispering into my ears,—

“I saw, in gradual vision through my tears, “
 The sweet, sad years, the meloncholy years, “
 Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
 A shadow across me. Straightway I was' ware
 So weeping, how a mystic shape did move
 Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair
 And a voice said in mastery while I strove
 “Guess now who holds thee ?”—“Death” I said, But
there,
 The silver answer rang, “Not Death but Love”.
 And the time Miss Bronte addresses her “Radiant Angel”,

“So, with a ready heart I swore
 To seek their altar-stone no more ;
 And gave my spirit to adore
 Thee, ever-present phantom thing—
 My slave, my comrade and my king,”—

I like to hear Miss Barrett sing with the trembling voice of her high ecstasy in her solitary chamber,—

“Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,
 And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—
 And that I love (O soul, I must be meek !)
 Is by thee only whom I love alone.”

Emily Bronte's mind was, to some extent, too high for human conception Her spirit was too strong to keep itself in a woman's lovely heart. It is good but does not seem beautiful. It is not really bright but dazzling—to be admired and

partially appreciated, not to be fully enjoyed. But Mrs. Browning proved herself fully justified in the world and was, like Wordsworth's 'Phantom of delight',

"A creature, not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food,
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame love, kisses, tears and smiles."

Once, in some wintry evening, when, with an eager heart, I talked of her and her activities to a friend of mine in his own chamber, he with a bit of coldness on his face, said in reply, "She was praised too much because she was a woman." And I, with my beloved friend, repeat his words "Yes, my friend, she is praised because she is a woman." It is really so. You can never praise her without the single thought that she was a woman. With all her scholarship and uncommon genius she never forgot in her life that she was a woman with distinct qualities and duties of her own. Throughout her life, in action as well as in writing, she proved herself to be a woman—the woman with her great simplicity, child-like devotion, passionate love, strong emotion, together with her blind faith, shy timidity and little womanly faults; a woman of feelings. She is the single instance perhaps, in the whole range of English literature where a woman with her strength and weaknesses, sincerely strives in her painful pleasure to express herself to the world and has been successful in showing a woman's heart to all. It is not a description but an emotion. It can not be seen but can only be felt. Whenever we happen to forget her in her works, she, at regular intervals, reminds us of her womanly existence in them. And if she was often unnecessarily lengthy in her sayings, that was not her fault. It was rather the fault of the fair sex to which she belonged. A woman's heart cannot but falter, nor can it unnecessarily delay when she tries to express her innermost feelings to the world. She is sweet in her bashfulness, in her

timid eagerness for expressing her passion as well as in her vain efforts to conceal her heart from all. A true woman's heart must not be laid bare in this world; it must peep out through her lovely expressions from some lovely corner of her mind. And Mrs. Browning, as a woman, cannot but escape from this, else she would have been less beautiful than she is now. Even her political poems are not devoid of this womanly instinct. Her faith and softness stick to them. Her great husband had no influence upon her in that respect. Their mutual love—the happiest love in literature, had no effect upon her distinct and individual mind. In her rosy girl-hood as well as in her sorrowful woman-hood, in her dark solitary chamber as well as by the side of her well-beloved husband, and in England as well as in Italy she remained the same woman—the most loving and affectionate woman of her age. Her maternal spirit too adds to her beautiful woman-hood, the first streak of which flushed forth in her "Cry of the Children" when she with her motherly affection and bitter agony cried out,

"Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years ?

They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And that can not stop their tears."

"It is loud as well as strong and even shrill perhaps", and also a touching illustration of her sensitive emotion and fine tenderness. "And this quality of tenderness is perceptible and quick in all she has written about children, happy and unhappy, living and dead".

The two great prides of her early life were her utmost devotion to her father and the sweet affection for her younger brother. How she loved her dear father but for whom she

would not have been such a great poet to this day, is best expressed when she addresses him on his birthday,

“My father ! rose my early lays !
 And when the lyre was scarce awake
 I loved its strings for thy loved sake ;
 Wooed the kind Muses but the while
 Thought only how to win thy smile—
 My proudest fame—my dearest pride,
 More dear than all the world beside.”

In another poem she has spoken of her ‘beloved and best’ brother,

“Together have we past our infant hours,
 Together sported childhood’s spring away,
 Together culled young hope’s fast budding flowers,
 To wreath the forehead of each coming day”.

These are no less testimonies to her soft and affectionate heart. But by the side of this tender most softness, she had a calm and womanly power of suffering. The brightest and the most beautiful years of life she passed in utter darkness and gloomy despair, on her invalid bed, with all sorts of sufferings, physical and mental. During one of these sufferings she lost her dear brother who was drowned at sea while taking a voyage by boat with some of his friends. Her affectionate father’s love too she could not carry far ; he, being extremely angry with her for her elopement and marriage with Robert Browning, never spoke of her in after-life and did not even mention her in his will at his death. These she had the strong mind to bear with patience.

But those sufferings of her life did not go in vain. During these critical situations of her life when she was breathing ‘with life and death in the balance’ with the dark coldness around her, she saw the streak of light passing through her soul. It is in her dark solitary chamber, she heard, “the silver

answer rung, 'Not Death, but Love'. The first thought of her conviction of love she expressed perhaps when she said,

But love strikes one hour— —Love.

Those never loved

Who dream that they loved once.

But the full bloom of her love we could not realise until she sang in excitement and intense feeling to her dear beloved,

"Nor hands, nor cheeks can separate

When soul is joined to soul."

In those dreary hours of her life she "first heard the footsteps of the soul" of her love and the poet for whom she lived through her years. Her angel of love she dreamt, saw and clasped in her hands in the very darkness of her surroundings. She spoke to him with all the beauty of her love; and thus amidst sorrows and sufferings began the most beautiful period of her life. She saw thrill and enjoyment even in 'her silence and sofa' of her room. This she has expressed many times in her love-sonnets as well as in other poems that she wrote of her love. By this influence of love she shook off her fatal disease, got up vigorously from her bed, came out of her dark solitary chamber with surprise and joy, stood by the side of her husband in the open world, with a smile on her lips and lived for fifteen long years of her married life in perfect happiness to love and to die as a woman after all.

Her 'Sonnets from the Portugese' was undoubtedly the best thing that she did in her life. Here, in these lovely sonnets, she paints the psychology of her own mind the time she begins to love—the burning unconscious psychology of a passionately loving woman who "at once humbled and exalted by love" dedicates her life and love to her lover. "The face of the world is changed" to her. What a glorious submission it was! No amount of praise can be too much for these little immortal poems of hers. Each one of them is a

gem in itself— a commonplace natural thought of a loving woman decorated with her genuine heart, utmost passion and simplicity and the most deep artistic beauty and dignity of fine literature. What a great insurmountable height Love attained when it expressed in slow whispers,

"O Beloved, it is plain

I am not of thy worth nor for thy place :
 And yet because I love thee I obtain
 From that same love this vindicating grace,
 To live on still in love and yet in vain.....
 To bless thee yet renounce thee to thy face."

What an anxious as well as faithful heart of a woman we see when we hear,

"If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
 And be all to me?"

And what a sincere and beautiful soul we find when she sings,

"If thou must love me let it be for naught
 Except for love's sake only."

This is not all. Every expression in them is worthy of our memory and is composed of the lovely lyric art which does never stop to be divided from the substance, as well as of sensitive emotion— "an emotion always vibrating from the intellect" of her mind. Yet she had always the spiritual fire of her womanhood and the humble pride of her love flowing steadily through her veins ; and the silvery utterances like

"Yet love, mere love is beautiful indeed
 And worthy of acceptance,"

and

"And therefore if to love can be desert
 I am not at all unworthy;"

lead us to think that none of the great hidden forces of womanly love were ever wanting in her magnificent life. And

all these little songs clearly tell us "how Love called Love" when two illustrious poets of the age met, felt and sang to each other in perfect surrender and passion. The exquisite beauty of her heart can not but amaze anybody and everybody in this world. And her soft and excited sayings, lasting through eternal futurity, will ever charm men as long as they will live and love and wish to hear the secret whisperings of the woman's soul, as well as surprise the lovely creatures of her own sex when they will find their own heart painted on the white paper before their eager, tender and curious looks of bright and beautiful eyes.

The best period of her womanhood was certainly the last fifteen years of her life during which she, with her beloved husband, received emotions from all kinds of matters of the society and the world. Not only as a wife but also as a mother she quite fulfilled the ideal of her life and work. Within three years of her marriage, while they were living in Italy, was born her

"Blue-eyed prophet ; thou to whom
The earliest world day-light that ever flowed
Through Casa-Guidi windows, chanced to come"

This was the only child born to her. And this young boy, whom she calls her "own young Florentine", she loved with all the maternal love and affection that can be stored in a woman's heart. During this period she finished her political poem "Casa Guidi Windows" as well as her famous 'Aurora Leigh'—the former deals with her political views and is always marked with her faith and enthusiasm, while the latter is a description of her own feelings under the imaginary character of a girl or a woman and is written with all the graceful qualities of a womanly heart. She had a great love for Italy and "took a keen interest in the struggle for Italian liberty upto the end of her life. She was very much excited". She had a good faith in Emperor Napoleon III. But 'at the

sudden and maddening treaty of Peace' she felt a terrible shock in her heart when, in utter grief, she addressed her little child,

"My little son, my Florentine,
 Sit down beside my knee,
 And I will tell you why the sign
 Of joy which flushed our Italy
 Has faded since but yesternight,
 And why your Florence of delight
 Is mourning as you see."

Notwithstanding this treaty, she did not give up her faith in Napoleon III. She would not change her faith. "She saw a great work being worked around her and instinctively she believed that in the workers also there must be something great and god-like;" and she was a woman.

The last few hours of this great woman's life were equally interesting and beautiful as her love, marriage, elopement and her married life. Even in the last evening she could not realise her end. She was a bit well. And even her 'own bright boy' she dispersed saying "I am better, dear, much better." "One only watched her breathing through the night, he who for fifteen years had ministered her with all the tenderness of a woman. It was a night devoid of suffering to her." And on the approach of the morning, she, under the arms of her dearest poet, having poured all her words of holy love to him, passed away with her last and most exquisite words on her lips, "It is beautiful."

Thus her soul, the soul of a poet and a woman, left the world, leaving behind her a great and beloved husband as well as a loving and affectionate child to mourn and to realise her loss. And we, too, after so long a period of her death and from such a great distance of her earthly home, fully realise that and cherish in our memory with great regard and divine

reverence of our heart. To explain the innermost expression of the soul of such a complete woman, a woman of women in His creation, is an utter impossibility which only "fools rush in" to achieve with great wonder. The soul she had is gone for ever and the soul, she loved, too has met her in their heavenly bower but the distant whisper of her tone still lingers in our ears,

'I shall but love thee better after death.'

She has done all she got to do in this world but we still falter to say about her and, with our half-expressions, can only repeat the words—"the conviction of her fresh immortality" of the immortal poet she married, "Her glories shall never fade."

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JATINDRANATH DAS MEMORIAL MEETING

A general meeting of the students of the Bangabasi College and School and of the Professors was held in the open courtyard of the College with Principal G. C. Bose in the chair. Amongst those present were Profs. L. K. Banerjee, N. C. Banerjee, J. N. Chakraborty, D. R. Banerjee, K. P. Banerjee, Pandit J. N. Bhattacharyya, A. C. Mukhopadhyay, P. Bhattacharyya, M. Bhattacharyya, D. Mukherjee, S. Roy, M. Mukherjee P. Bose, S. Chakravorty and the Headmaster of the School.

The President spoke highly of Jatindra Nath Das whose father was also a student of this College. He asked the students to raise a large sum of money. "This money" he said "shall be spent for perpetuating the sainted memory of Jatindra Nath Das in proper form to be devised afterwards."