

this may possibly be explained by want of leisure. Fine scholar as he was, he was a schoolmaster before everything else: he threw himself heart and soul into the life of the school, and this, as he conceived and made it, was many-sided enough to engross his energies.

He did not read a large number of books with his Sixth Form, but what he did, he read with minute care. He never ceased to insist upon the necessity of private reading, and frequently quoted in that behalf the precepts and example of his own Headmaster. The Sixth Form of Dr. Kennedy at Shrewsbury was his ideal of what, for scholarly feeling, a Sixth Form should be. He never wearied of impressing upon his own pupils the industry which had been required of himself while a Sixth Form boy. For this purpose he would recall, often with a very happy representation of his voice and manner, how after finishing a book of Thucydides Dr. Kennedy would quietly say, 'You can read the other seven books in your studies.'

Apart from his power of teaching Dr. Potts had great gifts as a Headmaster. He was a man whose commendation could not but be prized, and whose censure no one could affect to receive without concern. No man knew better than he what to pass over and what to notice. Always open and trustful, he was, even when finding fault, courteous, considerate and moderate. Hence his great and lasting power. There was no reaction from his influence. His pupils

never outgrew his teaching. And he commanded respect by showing it.

No account of Dr. Potts, however brief, would be complete without some reference to his character as a preacher. The religious situation of Fettes College rendered the superintendence of the chapel service a matter of the greatest delicacy. It was a lay service designed to disarm the jealousy of rival denominations. Nothing could have been happier than the way in which the exigences of the case were met both in the pulpit and in the reading-desk. Dr. Potts was a preacher of great power and occasionally of true eloquence, and a reader of more than usual dignity and impressiveness. The chapel at Fettes College became popular with parents, and it is perhaps not too much to say that it was there that much of the prejudice which the school had to fight against was removed.

To conclude this notice of a really gifted teacher it only remains to say that his interests and sympathies were universal. As he was broad and general in his teaching, so he was widely appreciative of merit. He took pride in the success of his pupils in whatever career it was attained. Good work was to him good work on whatever expended. He would mention the name of a pupil who in a house of business had gained the confidence and esteem of his employers as proudly as that of a University prizeman. And he was held in honour as much by the one character as by the other.

BROWNING AS A CLASSICAL SCHOLAR.

No great poet has ever made himself interesting to so many kinds of students, on their purely technical and professional ground, as Mr. Browning. Philosophers, painters, musicians, Italian historians, German historians, ecclesiastical historians, Hebraists, all have a large part in him, and certainly not the smallest share in the inheritance belongs to the student of Greek (scarcely perhaps of Latin) antiquity. In general, it may be observed, as an interesting comment on the supposed 'decline of Greek,' that the half-dozen great indisputable poets of our time, all till yesterday writing together, have been passionate Hellenists, and not least popular when they were most Hellenic. In this respect, if in no other, Mr. Browning stood in a line with the authors of *Tithonus* and *Jason*, *Atalanta in Calydon* and the *Strayed Reveller*.

In his writings there are two separate strata of classical learning, sharply separated from each other—the original store of memories that he retained from his early reading, and the special studies of the period that began with *Balaustion's Adventure* (1871) and ended with the translation of the *Agamemnon* (1877); but the after-effects of this second period re-appeared at intervals for the rest of his life. In both these strata antiquity is treated in a way peculiar to Mr. Browning. No great poet ever absorbed so much with so little effect on himself. His classical learning, whether of his youth or of his declining manhood, had no more power than the Italian learning of his prime or the Rabbinical learning of his old age to make the least change in the ideals of his imagination or in his way of looking at life, nay, not even in his literary form, whether of

composition or of style. Such as he came forth full-grown in *Paracelsus*, such he remained in *Asolando*, progressing royally through innumerable worlds of imagination, but in all of them not a colonist but a conqueror, taking no impress from any, but bending them all to the purposes of his imperial will. In other words, we must go to him, not to know what antiquity was like, but what kind of thoughts it inspired in him.

Of course the same thing is true of all great imaginative artists; their imaginative re-constructions of the past are not to be read as works of instruction for the sake of information about the past. But Mr. Browning seemed to be bent on throwing away the poet's privilege, and presenting his research to be judged on its own prosaic and scientific merits. And so we are continually distracted. The poet who stands the most remote from the Greeks in his essential character gives us the most of the Greeks in outward detail. Any mind less comprehensive than his own must be content with realizing alternately what he realized all at once, on the one side the 'then' and 'there' of Athenian civilization, drawn out into its transitory and trivial particulars, (on the other side the essential spiritual issues, which to us are not truly spiritual or essential until they are made freely and frankly modern.

In the first period (*i.e.* before 1871) it is easy to search out all his ancient references, for they are all definitely recognizable. He adds a proper name or a description of an incident; it is the very rarest thing with him to absorb an ancient phrase into the current of his language without giving notice of it, in the manner of Milton and Tennyson. Attentive reading may discover other instances; the only one that I have observed in this period is in *Paracelsus* (p. 83. ed. 1872), 'Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind,' which I imagine to be a reminiscence of *ventis ludibrium datur* and *αἰθέριον κίννυμα*. And the list of his references is certainly equivalent to a statement of the things which interested him in the classics. Throughout his life, everything is explicit with him; he talks about everything that he cares for. If we listened to his earliest declaration in *Pauline*, we should think that he loved all the Greek poets alike; there we have the 'high-crested chief, Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos,' and 'the king, Treading the purple calmly to his death,' and 'how she, The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave, With power

to love and to be loved and live,' and the hero even professes to have 'lived with Plato' and to 'have the key to life.' But in all the subsequent works, up to 1871, the one ancient whom Mr. Browning really loves is Aeschylus; 'the thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown Up out of memories of Marathon,' 'You, who, Plataea and Salamis being scant, Put up with Aetna for a stimulant,' 'the halt and maimed Iketides,' 'who made his Titan's arch-device The giving men blind hopes to spice The meal of life with,' even St. John in the *Death in the Desert* must refer to 'that fable of Prometheus and his theft,' and yet further to 'those satyrs of his play, Who touched it in gay wonder at the thing.' There is nothing like the same wealth of reference to any other author. Homer is mentioned a few times with great but rather conventional reverence (one quotation in *Pippa Passes*); the future destiny of Euripides is scarcely foreshadowed in *Artemis Prologizes* (1842), and in the lovely passage in *Waring* (1842) which summarizes the history of Iphigenia. Sophocles, as we have seen, had his place in *Pauline*, but he never appears again in all this period. Plato, with whom Pauline's lover had 'lived,' only appears once: 'I would fain...in all God's acts (as Plato cries He doth) He should geometrize' (*Christmas Eve* and *Easter-Day*).

Besides direct reference to authors, there are references to historical and mythical story, but these generally look as if they came from common knowledge rather than from actual classical reading. One group of such references is specially important, those which rest not on literature at all but on works of art. Even in *Pauline* the long description of Andromeda, and the adjective in the 'naked Swift-footed,' already show that to the poet's mind the ancient world is embodied in statues not less than in poems. After *Pauline*, his long years in Italy deepened and deepened his pre-occupation with art; all his conception of some important Greek figures, Apollo, Herakles, Niobe, seems to be derived from art, not from literature at all.

It may be noticed also that not only antiquity itself but the modern re-discovery of antiquity had at one time a strong fascination for him. We cannot now recover the amount of study which he had given to the more northern and mediæval side of the Renaissance, because it was very soon absorbed by the overmastering attraction of the same movement in Italy; but it is embodied beyond all possibility of under-estimate in *Paracelsus* and the *Grammarian's Funeral*.

Paracelsus could only despise 'the meanest plodder Trithemius quotes a marvel,' but that was not the judgment of Paracelsus's creator. Perhaps the philologist who magnifies his vocation the most can scarcely take to himself the lines that tell of one who 'knew the signal, and stepped on with pride Over men's pity,' who 'throws himself on God, and unperplexed Seeking shall find Him,' whose place was 'where meteors shoot, clouds form, Lightnings are loosened, Stars come and go.' But there the lines remain, a trumpet-call to the greatest of us and a consolation to the meanest, the everlasting charter of the scholar.

As we have seen, a new period begins in 1871, the period of minute study of Euripides and Aristophanes. It might be suggested that he had studied them before, but I must repeat the remark that he would have mentioned them if he had. We must take his new departure in writing as a new departure in reading. It can be no secret how *Balaustion's Adventure* came to be written. After Mrs. Browning's death he never shrinks from acknowledging her inspiring presence in all his work, and in this case he takes pains to make the connexion clear by the prefixed motto. But in truth the motto was not wanted. In the epilogue, where Balaustion lets her fancy play round the story of Alcestis, the poet is revealing the story of his own life. Alcestis must be sent back to the earth because when she left Admetus the powers of her soul were added to his, and he became strong beyond human due. 'Two souls in one were formidable odds. Admetos must not be himself and thou.' Under that figure he has shown us his own soul, passing through those twenty-eight lonely years strengthened with the strength of the Alcestis who did not return.

Coming to the study of Euripides in this way, as a sacred legacy from Mrs. Browning, he could not fail to see in him higher things than the mass of critics have seen. Where Euripides gave a comic turn to the traditional mythology, it was to bring the underlying solemnity into sharper prominence; where he marshalled the opposing arguments with wire-drawn volubility, it was to follow up the self-deceiving soul into its remotest hiding-place. Let us not say that this was wrong. A poet who is also a philosopher and a prophet has a right to see philosophy and religion that we cannot see in the works of another poet. In Mr. Browning's case the vision was helped by a theory which he seems to have held with ever-strengthening

conviction, that a poet who could move him to admiration must be fundamentally the same kind of poet as himself. However this may have been, he was inevitably led from Euripides to his contemporary critic; and so he gave two or three years to that exhaustive reading of Greek comedy, with all its scholia, fragments, and commentaries, which is turned out pell-mell in the pages of *Aristophanes's Apology*. Within its own field, the poem is the most astounding monument of erudition. Who was Saperdion? Where in Greek literature does *νεβλαπέται* occur as an exclamation? (Mr. Browning once answered this question by referring a correspondent to a fragment of Alexis, before the word had made its way into Liddell and Scott.) The erudition is astounding, certainly. But is the main contention tenable? Can we imagine Aristophanes defending his artistic method as he does here? Nay, can we imagine him defending it at all? Mr. Browning errs in good company, with Heine and Mr. Symonds and Mr. Swinburne, but the truth is that the *Weltvernichtungsidee* is a mare's nest. All these learned and ingenious critics have gone astray because they could not bring themselves to realize that the 'secret of Aristophanes' is a secret of pure and simple frivolity. To go back to a former remark, Mr. Browning has drawn out the spiritual issues which were involved in the contest between comedy and philosophic tragedy; but as to understanding the personality of Aristophanes, that would be better done by Mr. Burnand.

It is right also, and surely not irreverent even at this moment, to point out that Mr. Browning's Greek learning is as narrow as it is wonderful. We might have thought that Aristophanes and Euripides would have led to some of their great contemporaries. But no. Aeschylus Mr. Browning knew already. Sophocles of course has to be brought in, but only with the indispensable minimum of reference; Plato is mentioned half-a-dozen times (always as 'Aristullos') but only in connexions which suggest books on Aristophanes rather than his own writings; where Socrates is mentioned, no saying recorded by Plato or Xenophon is ever quoted; the one mention of Thucydides ('Thoukudides invent his epitaph') is obscurely worded, but I cannot help suspecting that Mr. Browning had forgotten his exile.

In short, Mr. Browning's knowledge of Greek literature was narrow. But that was his way with his knowledge of everything. Most of us know first the highways, and

then a few of the by-ways. Mr. Browning used to know every inch of one highway with all its associated by-ways, and never set his foot on any other highway in the same region. If he had been a zoologist, he would have known all about lions and nothing about tigers. Of course, this is no disparagement to his greatness. His true field was not learning but life. Only, why could he not have read some Plato? Our wistful fancy cannot help framing some shadow of the transformed *Republic* and interpreted *Phaedrus*, for which we could have spared, perhaps, the refutation of Bubb Dodington and the divagations of the Famille Miranda.

Besides interpreting Greek tragedy, he translated it. The translations of the *Alcestis* (in *Balaustion*) and the *Hercules Furens* (in *Aristophanes's Apology*) and the *Agamemnon* are interesting, because they show us what works he loved and what his theory of translation was. It is doubtful whether it would have been a safe theory for any translator; certainly it was not a safe theory for Mr. Browning. To translate word for word and yet into beautiful verse, a translator must have an ear filled and a mind pre-occupied with minute effects and delicate experiments in language; in short, he must be something that Mr. Browning never was. Moreover, he cared for the main matter too much to satisfy this fastidious generation in respect of 'settling *hoti's* business' and 'properly basing *own*.' In short, these translations represent his play, not his work.

After the *Agamemnon* (1877) he did not write on the Greek drama again. But the impulse of his great Greek period remained. His later volumes are full of both Greek subjects and Greek references. One thing that he has learned, from his own interpreting of Euripides, is a new interest in mythology. ('A myth may teach. Only, who better would expound it thus Must be Euripides, not Aeschylus.' *Parleyings, Mandeville*.) Besides smaller references, there are the prologue to the *Parleyings*, with its rehand-

ling of Admetus's story, and *Ixion* (*Jocoseria*), with its conversion of the transgressor into a newer and more human Prometheus. But also there is a word in *Gerard de Loirese* (*Parleyings*) for those who might think that we must go back to myths for all our poetry. Outlying stories that he found in his great researches are worked up in *Echetlos* and *Pheidippides*. He is still constant to the Aeschylus of his youth, and especially to the *Prometheus*, and to these he adds Pindar and Homer, quoting all three in Roman letters in the midst of his verse. From Homer he is led to consider the 'Homeric question,' and uses it characteristically to show forth in allegory the religious education of mankind (*Asolando, Developments*). In this period, for the first time in his life, he begins to add Latin to Greek. He expands three playful lines of Virgil into the weird and pathetic mystery of *Pan and Luna* (*Dramatic Idylls, II*). He refers three times to Juvenal (once in *Pacchiorotto*, twice in *Pietro of Abano*), (if I am right in so interpreting 'Sylla cuts a figure, leaving off dictating,' and 'while the half-mooned boot we boast'). But his pre-eminent Latin poet is Horace. Time after time he quotes him, and incorporates his Latin into the verse ('You've wine, manhood's master! Well, *rectius si quid Novistis impertite!*' Wait the event,' where I cannot free my mind from a gruesome suspicion of *impertite*). The final fruit of his Latin reading is *Imperante Augusto* (*Asolando*), of which nothing less can be said than that it might stand in *Men and Women*. Whether the subject-citizens of Augustus spoke exactly like this is as indifferent as the question whether Cardinal Wiseman defended himself like Bishop Blougram, or Andrea del Sarto felt himself dragged back from immortality by his wife. We may not have the situation as the Romans conceived it, but we have it as they would have conceived it, if they had had a poet great enough to show them how.

T. C. SNOW.

To the EDITOR of the CLASSICAL REVIEW.

DEAR SIR,

The enclosed lines, addressed to Mr. Robert Browning, and accompanying a little volume of Greek verse, were very graciously received by him last summer, and may on that account have some interest for your readers at the present time.

LEWIS CAMPBELL.

ὦ μακάρι, ὅστις παντὸς ἀνθρώπου μαθὼν
ψυχὴν τε καὶ φρόνημα καὶ γνῶμην, λόγοις
ἐν ποικίλοις τε καὶ καλοῖς ἐφημίσω,
ὄσαις θ' ὁ χρηστὸς φροντίσιν μάτην πονεῖ,
ὁ τ' αὖ πανοῦργος ἀθλίως θυμοφθορεῖ,

χὼ μικτὸς ἀμφοῖν οἶον ἐξαντλεῖ βίον
γραφαῖς ἀριστ' ἔδωκας ἐξηκασμένον,
—ἀρ' ἂν δέχοιο καινὰ δὴ μμημῆματα
ἔργων παλαιῶν γνωρίμων τέ σοι τάδε,
μμημῆ' ἔμοιγε φιλάτης ὀμιλίας;