

notably the *Christian Morals* and *Antiquities of Norwich*, were prepared for publication, and appeared after his death. In 1671 he received the honour of knighthood from Charles II. on his visit to Norwich; and in 1682 he died on his seventy-seventh birthday.

Browne is in every way a remarkable and peculiar writer. His writings are among the few specimens of purely literary work produced during a period of great political excitement and discord. England was passing through its greatest convulsion; events of mighty moment were being transacted round him, and he remained placidly indifferent. While the grandest minds of his country were busied with the important affairs of state, he was revising his *Religio Medici*, and his book was published in the very year in which the civil war broke out. While England was torn with civil discord, and the liberty of her children was being bought with their blood, Browne serenely pursued his studies at Norwich, to all appearance as indifferent to contemporary events as if he had belonged to another planet. Just when there came a lull in the conflict, when the royal power was broken, and the air was filled with doubts, anxieties, and negotiations, Browne published his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. The death of the king, the expulsion of the parliament, the establishment of the protectorate, passed by him like a breath which he heeded not. But the unearthing of some sepulchral urns at once roused his attention, and furnished occasion for a train of most magnificent and majestic reflections on the short space of human life, on the signs and symbols of mortality. A mind like this is a psychological curiosity, and its peculiarities are faithfully reflected in the form and matter of his works. In some respects, of course, he resembles his contemporaries; in his, as in all other writings of the 17th century, there is a plentiful display of erudition, copious citation of authorities, and lavish quotation from older writers. Some part also of the peculiarity of his style may be ascribed to the general tendency of the language at that period. It was a time of unusual richness of diction; great writers did not hesitate to coin words and phrases as occasion required them, and ample raw material was supplied by the great mass of literature, which had been but recently opened up, and which was then being assimilated. But Browne stands apart from his contemporaries by reason of the peculiar and unique cast of his mind. Deeply speculative, imbued with the Platonic mysticism which taught him to look upon this world as only the image, the shadow of an invisible system, he regarded the whole of experience but as food for contemplation. Nothing is too great or too small, too far removed or too near at hand for him; all finds a place in the universe of being, which he seems to regard almost from the position of an outsider. His general mood may be characterized as the metaphysical; not that he speculated systematically on the problems of existence, but because he dwells repeatedly, and with evident delight, upon what transcends the little sphere of our life, and, like Shakespeare, is fond of meditating on the outward and visible signs of mortality, and on what lies beyond the grave.

Of Browne, however, as of our greatest writers, it is true that the style is the man. The form of his thought is as peculiar and remarkable as the matter; the two, indeed, react upon one another. It is a style altogether unique, rich, with a lavish use of metaphor and analogy—majestic and swelling; and with a fine antique flavour about it. Much of its quaintness, no doubt, depends on the excessive employment of Latinized words, great part of which have never succeeded in making their way into the standard language; but the peculiarities of the vocabulary do not entirely exhaust those of the style. Of his four masterpieces the *Religio Medici* is that in which we are most in

contact with the writer himself. The book was a puzzle to contemporaries, and is still hard to understand. It is the confession of faith of a mind keen and sceptical in some aspects, but on the whole deeply imbued with the sense of the mysteriousness of true religion, and willing to yield itself up without reserve to the requirements of faith. "I love," he says, "to lose myself in a mystery, to pursue my reason to an *O, Altitudo!*" The *Vulgar Errors* is a wonderful storehouse of out-of-the-way facts and scraps of erudition, exhibiting a singular mixture of credulity and shrewdness. The style is more direct and simple than in the other works. The *Garden of Cyrus* is a continued illustration of one quaint conceit. The whole universe is ransacked for examples of the *Quincunx*, and he discovers, as Coleridge says, "quincunxes in heaven above, quincunxes in earth below, quincunxes in the mind of man, quincunxes in tones, in optic nerves, in roots of trees, in leaves, in everything!" But the whole strength of his genius and the wonderful charm of his style are to be sought in the *Urburial*, the concluding chapter of which, for richness of imagery and majestic pomp of diction, can hardly be paralleled in the English language. For anything at all resembling it we must turn to the finest passages of Jeremy Taylor or of Milton's prose writings.

The best edition of Sir T. Browne is that by Simon Wilkin, 4 vols., 1836,—3 vols. (Bohn), 1851, where full biographical and bibliographical information will be found. Prefixed to it is Johnson's celebrated *Life*.

BROWNE, WILLIAM, an English poet, descended of a good family, was born at Tavistock in Devonshire, in 1590. Having passed through the grammar school of his native place, he was sent to Exeter College, Oxford, and became tutor to Robert Dormer, afterwards earl of Carnarvon. After having received in 1624 the honorary degree of M.A., he was taken into the family of William, earl of Pembroke, and improved his fortune so much that he is said to have purchased an estate. Nothing seems to be known of his after life, and no date has ever been given for his death. All his work was done in his youth, the first part of *Britannia's Pastorals* having been published in 1613, *The Shepherd's Pipe* in 1614, and the second part of the *Pastorals* in 1616. He belongs to the school of Spenser, and his merits may be summed up briefly as extreme sweetness of verse, idyllic nature-painting, and richness of descriptive faculty. The *Pastorals* are about the finest specimens we have in earlier literature of luxuriant sensuous description of ordinary country life. They were highly popular in their time. (See Wood, *Athen. Oxon.*)

BROWNE, WILLIAM GEORGE, an eminent traveller, was born at Great-Tower-Hill, London, July 25, 1768. At seventeen he was sent to Oriel College, Oxford. Having had a moderate competence left him by his father, on leaving the university he applied himself entirely to literary pursuits. But the fame of Bruce's travels, and of the first discoveries made by the African Association, determined him to become an explorer of Central Africa. Accordingly, he left England at the close of 1791 and arrived at Alexandria in January 1792. He spent a few months in visiting Siwah, the supposed site of the temple of Jupiter Ammon, and employed the remainder of the year in examining the whole of Egypt. In the spring of 1793 he visited Suez and Sinai, and in May set out for Darfūr. This was his most important journey, in which he acquired a great variety of original information. He endured much hardship, and was unable to effect his purpose of returning by Abyssinia. He did not reach Egypt till 1796; after this he spent a year in Syria, and did not arrive in London till September 1798. In 1800 he published his travels in Africa, Egypt, and Syria, from the year 1792 to 1798, in one volume 4to. The work was highly esteemed, and is classed by Major Rennell

among the first performances of the kind; but, from the abruptness and dryness of the style, it never became very popular. In 1800 Browne again left England, and spent three years in visiting Greece, some parts of Asia Minor, and Sicily. In 1812 he set out on a more extensive journey, proposing to penetrate to Samarkand, and survey the most interesting regions of Central Asia. He spent the winter in Smyrna, and in the spring of 1813 proceeded through Asia Minor and Armenia, made a short stay at Erzeroum, and arrived on the 1st of June at Tabriz, where he met Sir Gore Ouseley. About the end of the summer of 1813 he left Tabriz for Teheran, intending to proceed thence into Tartary; but unhappily he never reached that destination. Near the banks of the Kizil-Ouzen his party were attacked by banditti, and, according to the report of the survivors, Browne was plundered and murdered. Suspicion attached to his companions, and even to the Persian Government, but nothing occurred to confirm these surmises. Some bones, believed to be his, were afterwards found and interred near the grave of Thevenot, the celebrated French traveller. His volume of travels in Africa has already been mentioned. Robert Walpole published in the second volume of his *Memoirs* relating to European and Asiatic Turkey (4to, 1820), from papers left by Browne, the account of his journey in 1802 through Asia Minor to Antioch and Cyprus; also "Remarks written at Constantinople."

BROWNING, ELIZABETH BARRETT, the most distinguished poet of her sex that England has produced, was born in London in the year 1809. She was the daughter of Mr Barrett, an English country gentleman. From a very early age, almost before the years of childhood had passed, she exhibited a remarkable preference for the arts, but especially that of the poetic. Previous to attaining her fifteenth year she had written verse upon which was the stamp of true genius—poems eminently worthy of preservation. Whatever she wrote, however, was sacred to all eyes save those of her father, to whom she refers in the first collected edition of her poems as "my public and my critic." Her physical constitution was most fragile and delicate, but nature seemed to have supplemented her deficiency in this respect by bestowing upon her an unusually sensitive mental and spiritual organization. One who knew her intimately, Miss Mitford, has described her as a "slight delicate figure, with a shower of dark curls falling on each side of a most expressive face, large tender eyes, richly fringed by dark eye-lashes, and a smile like a sunbeam." All descriptions of Miss Barrett concur in this, that she possessed a grace and a delicacy which defied representation by the artist. Her studies were early directed to the poets of antiquity, and, under the guidance of her blind tutor, Boyd, whose name she always warmly cherished, she mastered the rich treasures of Æschylus. The sublime Grecian possessed for her a charm which was only equalled by the fascination held over her wondering spirit by our own Shakespeare. Her knowledge of Greek literature was most profound; she was intimately familiar with all the Attic writers in tragedy and comedy. Yet this did not prevent her from drinking at the wells of English undefiled. Her correspondence with eminent contemporaries of both sexes proves her to have been thoroughly acquainted with English literature in its progress from Chaucer downwards. The circumstances of her own life, and her lack of robust health, conspired to make her seek, even more than she might have otherwise done, the communion of the great departed in arts and letters. Not being able to pass from place to place without fatigue and danger, the solitude she was compelled to maintain probably threw her still more ardently into those pursuits which, while dear to the mind, were probably injurious to the body. Most frail from her birth, as we have already seen, it was her misfor-

tune further to have her existence endangered in 1837 by the bursting of a blood-vessel in the lungs. By the exercise of extreme care her life was preserved, but the incident was succeeded by a long period of weakness and suffering. Some two years after this first severe shock to her system, and before she had quite recovered from its effects, she was again assailed by misfortune, experiencing the keenest anguish on witnessing the death of her favourite brother, who was drowned at Torquay. As might have been expected from one of her clinging and affectionate disposition, a long period of danger followed this catastrophe, and when at length she was able to be removed to her father's house, it was only to become an invalid, with the prospect of a life couch-ridden to its close. This period of seclusion lasted for seven long years; and the interval was employed by Miss Barrett in eagerly devouring all the books which could be brought within her reach. At this time also she was sedulously cultivating the art that was afterwards to ensure for her immortality. When she was in her thirty-seventh year, that is, in 1846, she was married to Mr Browning, and the union was singularly felicitous. More cannot be said, as the author of *The Ring and the Book* still lives. Mr Browning bore his wife to Italy, and for some years the sunny skies of the south were instrumental in giving to Mrs Barrett Browning that health which had so long forsaken her in her native land. The villa of the Brownings in Florence was the resort of many noble spirits, eminent either for patriotism or in the arts. Mrs Browning died at Florence in the year 1861, after testifying in many ways her singular devotion to the country of her adoption.

The poetry of this writer is distinguished for its emotional spirit; had her imagination equalled her capacity for feeling she might have taken rank with the highest of our poets. Sensibility and intuition, those endowments of supreme importance to writers of genius, whose greatness is to grow in proportion to their understanding and interpretation of human life, were in her united in a degree seldom witnessed. The aspirations she indulged, and the character she doubtless wished to be impressed upon her own works, were well set forth when she observed on one occasion, "we want the touch of Christ's hand upon our literature as it touched other dead things; we want the sense of the saturation of Christ's blood upon the souls of our poets, that it may cry through them in answer to the ceaseless wail of the sphinx of our humanity, expounding agony into renovation. Something of this has been perceived in art when its glory was at the fullest. Something of a yearning after this may be seen among the Greek Christian poets, something which would have been much with a stronger faculty." Imbued fully with this idea of the sacredness of poetry, Mrs Browning went to the deepest fount of all inspiration—the human heart—and endeavoured to read clearly its intimate relations with God. A peculiar tenderness breathes through her writings, whether of the humblest or the most ambitious description. Almost her first work bore upon it the traces of her Greek studies, being an excellent translation of the *Prometheus*. Another very early production, *The Drama of Exile*, is unquestionably marked by great sublimity of thought, though the conception may lack the mighty outlines of the majestic Milton. Eloquent and sustained, however, the poem made manifest a pure and original writer. Mrs Browning's genius had two sides—the lyric and the dramatic. Her lyrical capabilities were of the highest order; she was greater probably in this particular than either Campbell or Tennyson, though on several occasions Campbell touched the loftiest point such a writer can attain. The heart, which has always given our lyric poets their greatest power, was the strength of Mrs Browning; her song was a living

voice, eloquent with passion. In one of her lyrics she uttered her conclusion upon the human mystery, "knowledge by suffering entereth, and life is perfected by death." The spirituality of her "Vision of Poets" is a noticeable quality, and it is in a loftier strain than that of "The Two Voices," though cast in the same mould. Wandering amongst the minor poems of Mrs Browning, such for instance as "The Romaunt of Margret," "Isobel's Child," "Bertha in the Lane," and "the Swan's Nest among the Reeds," is like standing in the forest alone, with the wailing wind and the flying rain as the only assurances of an existence sublimer than our own. Yet she has thereby reached the profoundest depths of the human heart. But even when most depressed she does not lose faith—confidence in the triumph of the good and the right. To her it was not always necessary to understand the wrong which she beheld; she saw it and hated it, and she has helped men by her writings to do something towards making an end of it. "The Cry of the Children" is a striking illustration of her keen feeling and eloquent power as a philanthropist. She felt for all who are in any way crushed or bruised by the pressure of society, and of social distinctions, or of social misfortunes. Her poetry bears the impress of tender and profound sympathy with human suffering in every form.

The range of this author's powers was wide, as may be gathered by a comparison between such poems as "A Child's Thought of God" and "Casa Guidi Windows." In the latter she attained her ripest growth and greatest intellectual strength. The poem is as sustained as anything which she ever wrote, and more perfect than the remaining lengthy poems. The "Casa Guidi Windows" had the advantage of a direct and powerful inspiration. From her windows at Florence Mrs Browning looked out upon the Italian people struggling for freedom, and her enthusiasm was enkindled. Her utterances were therefore in accordance with the fulness of her heart, lavish and unrestrained. The extraordinary wealth and strength of imagery which the poem contains must have been noticed by every reader, and it includes doubtless much of her finest writing. In the inditing of the sonnet, always conceded to be a most difficult task, Mrs Browning was very successful. She is the equal of Wordsworth in this respect, and her "Sonnets from the Portuguese" (but thinly disguised, and giving really the history of her own feelings) are a compact and remarkable series of verses. They present us with a complete study of a human heart as it is affected by the passion of love. First, there is the soul expecting death, when suddenly life is revived by love; then the grave, which had seemed inevitable, is put behind the soul; and finally comes the sequel, the marriage of those whose history has been traced in the Sonnets. The unity and psychological interest of this series of poems are their most prominent features.

Mrs Browning's fame chiefly rests upon *Aurora Leigh*, except with diligent and reverent students of her other works. The longest poem, nevertheless, which came from her hand is the one, to quote her own words, into which her "highest convictions upon life and art have entered." Yet it has had the result of causing a wide diversity of opinion upon its merits. Extravagant encomiums or unjust aspersions are generally awarded to it. For a poem of such magnitude unity is essential, and this we find to be lacking. It has not the one purpose—never ignored and never forgotten—which runs through *In Memoriam*. One of its great charms, however, viz., its intense subjectivity, will prevent *Aurora Leigh* from falling into desuetude. The writer unfolds with great beauty of expression the truth that that is real art which assists in any degree to lead back the soul to contemplate God, the supreme artist of the universe. But notwithstanding its philosophy, as a solution for many

of the problems of our social existence, the poem must be pronounced a failure. It is charged with passages of lofty poetry, though occasionally it falls into mediocrity. It is to be regarded rather as an autobiography (which indeed it claims to be) than as a poem characterized by fine conception or perfect execution. The position of Mrs Browning as a poet is now yielded. Her genius was perhaps as great as that of any poet of our generation, but circumstances retarded its highest possible development. In certain intellectual qualities she was inferior to Tennyson and the author of *Sordello*, but in others she was their superior. Be her exact niche, however, what it may, she occupies a favoured place in English literature, and is undoubtedly one of the few leading poets of the 19th century. Her poetry is that which refines, chastens, and elevates. Much of it is imperishable, and although she did not reach the height of the few mighty singers of all time, she has shown us the possibility of the highest forms of the poetic art being within the scope of woman's genius. (G. B. S.)

BROWNISTS, a religious sect, which sprang up towards the close of the 16th century, and which received its name from the first promulgator of the doctrines, Robert Brown. Their numbers increased rapidly, and Sir Walter Raleigh, in a speech in 1592, estimated them at no less than twenty thousand. The harsh measures that were taken against them, and the disgust generally excited by the tone of their attacks upon the Established church, for a time stamped out the sect in England. But the remnant found a refuge in Holland, and the church established there between 1593 and 1608 included many eminent men, such as Ainsworth, Johnson, Smyth, Jacob, Clifton, and Robinson, and gradually increased in numbers. Soon, however, differences of opinion began to arise; some, with Smyth, carried out the principles of Brownism to their full extent, and became absolute Separatists; others, with Robinson, adopted a milder form of opposition to the church, which ultimately resulted in Independency. The stronger stream of tendency set in towards this latter form of doctrine, and the Brownists soon faded out of view and gave place to the Independents. The occasion of the Brownists' separation was not any fault they found with the faith, but only with the discipline and form of government of the other churches in England. They charged corruption equally on the Episcopal form and on that of the Presbyterians by consistories, classes, and synods; nor would they join with any other Reformed church, because they were not assured of the sanctity and regeneration of the members who composed it, on account of the toleration of sinners, with whom they maintained it an impiety to communicate. They condemned the solemn celebration of marriages in the church, maintaining that, as matrimony was a political contract, the confirmation of it ought to come from the civil magistrate. They would not administer baptism to the children of such as were not members of the church, or of such as did not take sufficient care of their children already baptized. They rejected all forms of prayer, and held that the Lord's Prayer was not to be recited as a prayer, having been given only for a rule or model whereon all our prayers are to be formed. The form of church government which they established was democratical. When a church was to be gathered, such as desired to be members of it made a confession and signed a covenant, by which they obliged themselves to walk together in the order of the gospel. The whole power of admitting and excluding members, with the decision of all controversies, was lodged in the brotherhood. The church officers were chosen from among themselves, for preaching the word and taking care of the poor, and were separated to their several offices by fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands by some of the brethren. But they did not erect the priesthood into a

distinct order. As the vote of the brotherhood made a man a minister, and gave him authority to preach the word and administer the sacraments among them, so the same power could discharge him from his office, and reduce him to the condition of a mere layman again. And as they maintained that the bounds of a church were defined by the number of those who could meet together in one place, and join in one communion, so the power of these officers was confined within the same limits. The minister or pastor of one church could not administer the Lord's Supper to another, nor baptize the children of any but those of his own society. Any lay brother was allowed the liberty of prophesying, or of giving a word of exhortation to the people; and it was usual for some of them, after sermon, to ask questions, and reason upon the doctrines which had been preached. In a word, every church on the Brownists' model is a body corporate, having full power to do everything which the good of the society requires, without being accountable to any presbytery; synod, assembly, convocation, or other jurisdiction whatever. (See Fuller, Neal, Fletcher, Hanbury, and Masson, *Life of Milton*, vol. ii. pp. 534, seq.)

BRUCE, JAMES, a celebrated African traveller, was born at Kinnaird House, Stirlingshire, on the 14th December 1730. He was educated at Harrow, and at first turned his attention to the bar. After his marriage, however, he entered into business as a wine-merchant, but soon gave up any active share in the concern. His wife had died within a year of their marriage, and Bruce, after acquiring a knowledge of the Spanish and Portuguese languages, travelled on the Continent for some time, returning to England in 1758. He then made a proposal to the English Government that they should make a descent upon Spain at Ferrol, assuring them from his own observation that the coast was without defence at that place. His suggestions were not adopted; but Lord Halifax, to whom he had been introduced, and who had consulted him about the exploration of the Nile, appointed him soon afterwards to the consulship at Algiers. He arrived at that place in March 1762, and after spending a year in the study of Arabic and other Oriental languages, set out through Tunis, Tripoli, and the North of Africa. He then visited Rhodes and Cyprus, and explored great part of Syria and Palestine, making very careful drawings of Palmyra and Baalbec. These drawings were afterwards presented to the king and placed in the royal library at Kew. It was not till June 1768 that Bruce arrived at Alexandria, and prepared to start on his great exploring expedition. From Cairo he sailed up the river as far as Syene; he then struck across the desert to Kosseir, and reached Jidda in May 1769. He remained for some time in Arabia, set sail from Loheia on the 3d September, and on the 19th arrived at Massowah. There he was detained for some time; but at last, on the 15th February 1770, he made his way to Gondar, the capital of Abyssinia. He gained great favour with the Abyssinian king, and remained with him till October, when he set off up the Bahr-el-Azrek, which he looked upon as the main branch of the Nile. On the 14th November he reached the sources of the Bahr-el-Azrek, and proudly imagined himself to have solved the great geographical problem. Slowly and with great difficulty he made his way back through the deserts of Nubia. On the 29th November 1772 he reached Assouan on the Nile. Thence he returned into the heart of the desert to recover his baggage, which had been abandoned in consequence of the death of all his camels. In January 1773 he arrived at Cairo. On his way home to England he spent some time at Paris, where he was warmly received by Buffon and other eminent men of science. The celebrated *Travels* did not appear till 1790, when they were published in five large quarto volumes,

profusely illustrated. The work was received with favour on account of its freshness and interest, but with almost universal incredulity. The *Travels* were looked upon as veritable travellers' tales, not entitled to any respect as authentic narrative. Succeeding investigations, however, have thoroughly dispelled these suspicions, and reinstated the book in popular estimation. Bruce died in 1794, in consequence of a fall down the staircase of his own house. A second edition of his work, on which he was engaged at the time of his death, was published in 1804.

BRUCE, MICHAEL, a minor Scottish poet, was born at Kinnesswood, Kinross-shire, 27th March 1746, and was the son of a weaver. He was early sent to school, but his attendance was often interrupted. He had frequently to herd cattle on the hills in summer, and this early companionship with nature greatly influenced his mind and awoke the latent poetry of his genius. Delicate from birth he grew up contemplative, devotional, and humorous, the pet of his family and his friends. His parents gave him an education superior to their position; at fifteen, when his school education was completed, his father was enabled to send Michael to Edinburgh University, which he attended during the four winter sessions 1762-5. In 1765 he got employment as a teacher during the summer months at Gairney Bridge, receiving about £11 a year in fees. He became a divinity student of a dissenting Scottish sect known as the Burghers, and in the first summer of his divinity course accepted the charge of a new school at Forrest Mill, where "he led a melancholy kind of life." Poverty, disease, and want of companions depressed his spirits, but in that solitariness he wrote "Lochleven," a poem inspired by the memories of his childhood. In consequence of advanced consumption he had to give up the school, and returned to his father's house, where he wrote his last and finest poem, "Elegy written in Spring," and died on 5th July 1767, aged twenty-one years and three months. As a poet his reputation has been increased, first, through sympathy for his early death, and secondly, from the alleged theft by Logan of several of his poems. The Rev. John Logan, minister of Leith, a fellow-student of Bruce, edited in 1770 the *Poems on several occasions, by Michael Bruce*, in which the "Ode to the Cuckoo" appeared. In the preface he stated, "To make up a miscellany, some poems written by different authors are inserted." In a collection of his own poems in 1781, Logan printed the "Ode to the Cuckoo" as his own; of this the friends of Bruce were aware, but did not challenge it. Dr M'Kelvie, in his *Life and Works of Bruce* (1837), was the first to claim for him the authorship of the Ode, and of other verses of which Logan had hitherto been the reputed author. This claim rests on the oral tradition of his birthplace and the evidence of a few of his friends; it was made nearly fifty years after Logan's death, and no explanation can be given of this great lapse of time. Of direct testimony there is none, and irrelevant matter is brought in affecting Logan's character, while Logan's authorship rests on such ground as publication under his own name, and his reputation as author during his lifetime. By reiteration of Bruce's claims in many forms popular opinion has been gained for him, though Isaac D'Israeli, Thomas Campbell, Robert Chambers, and David Laing have strenuously supported Logan. The dispute cannot now, perhaps, be satisfactorily settled, owing to the conflict of evidence and lapse of time; but on the whole it may be doubted whether M'Kelvie has proved his case. All Bruce's poems breathe the thoughts of a shepherd lad, as Bloomfield's retained the fresh observations of a farmer's boy. With two exceptions they are immature and lack strength; his imagery is in great measure borrowed; his rhymes evince a paucity of poetical skill. His early attempts are weak imitations of Milton, Thomson, and Young, his