

The Irish Theosophist.

“THE BHAGAVAD GITA” IN PRACTICAL LIFE.

(Continued from p. 123.)

WE have seen that pain and pleasure are reactions, one of another, and we now find Krishna emphasizing that fact in this sentence:

“Be free from the pairs of opposites.”

It is advice greatly needed by every student of life. Not one in a thousand is able to tread a middle path. We fly from pole to pole; extremists for the most part, we hate or love; we desire or repel; we act or react. There is all too little of sitting calmly by; too little moderation of mind; too rarely do we attain an attitude of suspended judgment; we are all too prone to crystallize. With us, brotherhood degenerates into sentimentality; avoidance of condemnation into direct encouragement to the evil-doer; our hope is so impetuous that it becomes a fear; our calm degenerates into indifference, our unselfishness into a blatant and self-advertised charity. We are not “constant in the quality of Sattva”; we are not content with knowing the truth.

How, then, shall we avoid these extremes, which we are led into by the very nature of mind itself? For the human mind has that tangential quality which only the “quality of Sattva,” the knowledge of the True, can control.

The answer is given in a few brief words of a potency so marvellous, so wide-reaching, that could we at once attain to their full meaning and realization, we should transcend the higher heavens and stand, godlike, above.

“Let, then, the motive for action be in the action itself, and not in the event. Do not be incited to actions by the hope of their reward, nor let thy life be spent in inaction. Firmly persisting in Yoga perform thy duty, oh, despiser of wealth, and laying aside all desire for

any benefit to thyself from inaction, make the event equal to thee, whether it be success or failure. Equal-mindedness is called Yoga."

Here is the final recipe for wisdom and happiness. Do we even approach to the faintest realization of its meaning? Have we any conception of what it would be, to-day, in the very marrow of practical life, to ask ourselves, before every action, before every thought, even: "Is it my duty thus to act? Is it my duty thus to think?" Can we imagine what it would be to put every deed, every idea, to this touchstone, and never to let the image of possible *result* enter the mind at all? What a blessed relief even an hour of such living and thinking would be! How life would be simplified, the congested mind relieved, the engorged faculties released and intuition set free. He who is thus "mentally devoted dismisses alike successful and unsuccessful results, being beyond them." He is out of the region in which Karma operates, and is one with the vast sweep of Nature's laws. Action and reaction have no bonds for him who never acts for self; he goes to that "eternal blissful abode which is free from all disease and untouched by troubles;" that abode which is the peace that passes all understanding. He is indifferent there to doctrines, past or to come; he contemplates all, desiring none, appropriating naught. The endless panorama of life defiles before his gaze: he sees life soundly for he sees it whole: he is at rest.

The tendency of the mind to crystallize, to attach itself to forms and formulæ, is the source of most of our woes. We begin a work, for example, something praiseworthy in itself. Little by little we identify ourselves with the work; the next step is soon taken and we identify the work with ourselves. Our methods, our department, our plans, soon become of paramount importance; we manifest zeal, competition, rivalry; we struggle to make our department the best, or to carry out our own methods; or we dread the rivalry of someone else; or we shrink from new methods, from change, from taking up some new detail, place or plan. We have gradually—and in most instances unconsciously—formulated a creed in regard to our work, and we are happy in proportion as we lose ourselves in that work, its excitement, its absorption of our minds. Take the work away. Deprived of that, are we still contented, happy? We are not. We long to do, to do, and it becomes clear to the candid mind that what we loved most about our work was that it deadened self-consciousness. It narcotised for a time that terrible and unsettled mental condition, that pressure of a dual consciousness which drives many to drink or to narcotics. It was not our duty that we loved in our work, nor the work for its own sake, but

only the relief from our own mental hells, the one-pointedness which this work afforded to our restless brains. Why, then, should we not seek this one-pointedness in all things and for its own sake, and by seeing the Self in all things and all as the Self and offering up all results to the Lord of Life, escape from the eternal unrest of our present mental conditions? Even the wise man can be carried away, we are told, by the forces of personal desire when these invade his heart. By remaining in the fixed attitude of mental devotion to the true Self we attain to the possession of spiritual knowledge. We then find a statement which compels attention :

“He who attendeth to the inclination of the senses, in them hath a concern ; from this concern is created passion, from passion anger, from anger is produced delusion, from delusion a loss of the memory, from the loss of memory loss of discrimination, and from loss of discrimination loss of all !”

That is where we stand to-day. We have lost all.

Many students ask why we do not remember our past incarnations. The answer is here. We have desired to hear, to see, to touch, to taste, on all the planes, until deprivation of any of our objects has at first concerned, then tried, annoyed, determined us, and the fancy has become a passion ; we have conjured up Will, the great motor, and now the fancy is a passion, a bent of the mind and nature, the will to attain, to possess. Great Nature thwarts this will at some point where it crosses her larger purposes, and anger results. We do not necessarily fly into a rage. By “anger” it appears that the obstinate determination to carry our personal point is meant, as well as the interior irritation which opposition perforce engenders. For if one will be crossed by another current of will, friction must result. This friction, this struggle of force against force, produces a harsh, strident, disruptive vibration which corresponds, on the plane of force, to that explosive action upon the mental plane which is known as anger. Such a force rends the mental atmosphere of man ; it confuses, irritates, congests and confounds ; the soul no longer looks upon a clear and mirror-like mind, but that mind reflects distorted images ; shapes of bewilderment and folly flit across the magic glass ; delusion results, false mental concepts, false memories, false recollections, and now we no longer remember our high origin, our diviner life ; and now we judge falsely because we remember wrongly ; the faculty of discrimination has no longer an abode with us, and all, all is lost of our diviner heritage. Repeat this process from life to life, and the wonder is that we aspire and yearn at all. If anyone doubts the reality of this process, he has but to watch

the natural growth and progress of any desire in himself, and, provided it be thwarted persistently, he will see in little that which, on a larger scale, has robbed and orphaned the race.

“He who sees Krishna everywhere equally dwelling, he seeth.” How calmly fall these words upon the fevered brain! How gracious their benediction! We thirst for peace. It is here, within our reach, knocking at the door of the heart, pleading to enter. Only live the life; only say “thy will be done”; only resist not the Law but be reconciled with thy brother-man and lay thy gift upon the altar; only take duty for thy guiding-star and heed not any result—*is it too hard for thee?* It is without doubt too hard for *thee*, but THOU ART THAT. It is ever there, conscious and wise; calm, patient and compassionate. Oh, believe that thou art indeed and in very truth that eternal boundless One—and what is too hard for thee? On Krishna call, and fight on, fight out the field! There is not an hour, not an act of daily life, to which this counsel does not apply.

JULIA W. L. KEIGHTLEY.

(*To be continued.*)

IN DANANN DAYS.

THOUSANDS of years before great Finn and his band of chivalrous followers warred with the oppressor and roamed and hunted through the land; long before the hero Cuculain, strengthened by the invisible Danann race, fought his magical wars, this story was lived. More beautiful was Banba in that long-gone past, wiser her people than to-day.

Wonderfully beautiful is this place. The honey-sweet heather-bells swing on their slender stems, and over the golden gorse-bushes many-coloured butterflies hover. I stand on the plain and wait for one who is coming, and waiting I watch the mountains ablaze in the setting sun. Soon they will wear their misty grey robe of evening, and then the dim purple of the starlit night.

“Our oldest and wisest men say that the beauty of Banba is passing away; that even the last of the gods remaining here will soon don the veil of invisibility, and pass into the underways of the mountains where their brethren dwell. This I have heard, but I will question the Druid Roewen, who knows more than the wise men of my father’s tribe. Is it true that to-night I see Roewen for the last time? My father says I have learned from the Druids more than he thought they

had power to impart. I have learned that sorrow and love go hand-in-hand; that keenest joy is keenest pain; that from these the heart knows no forgetfulness or cessation when love has chosen it for a dwelling-place."

Half-idly, half-sorrowfully I was thinking when suddenly my heart leaped tumultuously for joy, the heather-bells rang their faery chimes and I knew that Roewen was nigh. I looked and saw him coming lightly and swiftly from the shore, and because of his presence the sun seemed brighter in its setting than in its rising, the sea a deeper blue and the mountains more radiant in their misty purple and grey. Scarcely his feet pressed the quivering green grass-spears as he came towards me, his dark face glowing and his eyes bright with a light I knew right well.

"My princess, I hastened, but these are troublous times. The war-demons move among us again, and the touch of their red-stained hands has filled the people with a rage which only the clash of the war-chariots and the shouts of the meeting hosts will extinguish. Your father is haughty and proud of spirit, and would have all the tribes submit to his will; but they have bound themselves together in rebellion, and are preparing to fight your father's people. Do not fear for him; he will receive no hurt, though he will be vanquished, for last night the gods came from their mountains and foretold the issue of the battle. What would you say, princess?"

"O Roewen, you speak of those dread gods who at one time dwelt visibly in the land. Wise men say that a few still linger, but that they also will withdraw, and only mortals remain. They say, too, that the earth will grow grey and bare in the distant years, and men—except at rare times—be incapable of high deeds. And this will be because the people of those future days will not even remember or believe that once the Danann races walked among the children of earth. Tell me yet again, Roewen, of the time when the mightiest race of all lived in Banba."

"I will. But rest yourself, princess, while I speak." He lightly placed his arm upon my shoulder as we walked to the great rock in the centre of the plain. Then he began:

"Time has gone by on hurrying feet since our isle was filled with a mighty people that came from the land of the setting sun, so the traditions tell. Great gods they were, wise with a wisdom that knew almost all things, even from the beginning of time to its end. They warred not as we war; in their battles with the invisible beings that endeavoured to pass the fiery rampart ever flaming round our island

they needed neither weapons of bronze nor stone. The burning darts of their will subdued the murky hosts, rendering them unwilling servants. Year succeeded year, until innumerable centuries were added to that past over which the shroud of forgetfulness was descending. Then a smaller race grew up in Banba, and the undying gods said: 'These we will teach to be great even as we are, and they shall teach their children after them, so that in Banba the light shall be inextinguishable, and she shall endure while other countries rise from the waters only to be engulfed in their depths again.' So they taught this lesser race great magical secrets; unremembered now save by a few whose incessant wondering and pondering over all things has taken them to the secret places where the Tuatha de Dananns dwell away from the darkening world. But I think the divine and immortal spirits of the Dananns hover round us continually; that oftentimes they may be seen by men."

The exultant light in his eyes and the flickering flame round his brow imposed silence upon me. Dimly I knew he was communing with divinities visible to him alone, and in that moment the realization of the utter futility of my love for him rushed upon me in all its completeness and with overwhelming force. I was a woman, and loved with a woman's heart. I would have given up my princess-state, the power it conferred, and all else dear to me in the world, if such had been his desire. I knew that he loved me, but the druidical mysteries interposed between us, raising an unsurmountable barrier. Then I too began to dream as the sunset paled over the distant mountains, and I felt the cool breath of the oncoming dusky night on my lips and eyes. I knew that at the hour of twilight the Sidhe came up from the lakes and rivers and from their cavern-homes in the hills, and wandered among mortals, for the hour of twilight is their hour of power. If sorrow or woe be upon you in that hour, to call upon the Sidhe will bring them to your side, and ever afterwards they watch over those who have invoked them. I dreamed and half-wished that I could become as the passionless Sidhe, and Roewen be to me nothing more than Druid, teacher and bard; dear indeed, but not loved with a love that burned as fire in my heart, dwarfing all else into insignificance and weariness. Often I thought that Roewen was only a Druid; human hopes and desires could not touch him, and I was only someone to be instructed out of his plentiful store of knowledge. Then in a very gentle and sorrowful voice Roewen spoke, and surely he had divined my thoughts:

"Princess Meave, you who are more to me than pupil, should

think differently. Of all who have received instruction from me you alone I love, knowing full well how fruitless that love is, for the druidical vows must remain inviolate. I do not need you to tell me this is the last time we shall see each other as we are now, but as the Dananns meet so can we, and their way I will show you. Trust yourself utterly to me, my Meave."

For a moment he stood before me, holding my hands and looking into my eyes, meanwhile slowly saying some words in a monotone. I remember being gently laid back on the stone, and then—it was not a stone, but a sea of fire I was quietly standing on, and all around the white fire-spray was falling. Then, as one in an unfamiliar land would stand bewildered, knowing not whither to go, so I stood for a time, until I observed one, radiant in purple and violet and gold, waiting by my side, and I knew it was Roewen. He smiled, and it was as the sound of faery music there. He directed my gaze to something in the distance, and that which before I had thought to be a mountain I now saw was a fountain of fire, jetting innumerable streams of light over a marvellous country. As I looked I saw pale and shadowy forms appearing in these streams, and I gave greater attention still, until they had definitely shaped themselves into the most wondrous and beautiful beings. They came from the Corrig Sidhe in the east, where as flames they flit over the mountains; from the hills of the south and the far north they hastened. Once again I looked, and saw a long line of white-robed Druids—some with the weight of many years upon them, others young with a youth more than human—drawing nigh. As they breathed the fire-breath from the fountain they too changed: half they were of the divine Danann race that shall never die, half they were of perishable mortals, but wholly beautiful and full of an antique wisdom. They thought, and their thoughts were as stars; they wished, and their wishes were as meteors flaming to their fulfilment.

In this world of light the heart was untroubled by fear or desire. I was conscious of an unspeakable love for Roewen, which was born before time and would continue when time was ended, though countless lives and age after age pile up their many sorrows upon the human heart, submerging it with seas of untold agony and woe; yet here I knew that deeper than sorrow or joy are the invisible golden cords woven by love, uniting heart to heart, soul to soul, though space intervene its distances on earth. As I thought this I again saw the mountain, and the stars were beginning to glimmer forth in the deep blue of the night. Roewen, with a grave, sweet look, was bending over me, saying:

“ My princess, you have seen and heeded. Yet sometimes you will grieve at my absence, and rebel at the destiny dividing us. Nor shall I be free from such grief and rebellion, for the human heart is often passionate, and hopes and fears and desires sweep through it and rend it again and again in defiance of the calm and peace it apparently possessed. To-morrow I go to the Druids in the south of Banba; to-night I remember only that I am your lover, and know this is the last time I shall look in your eyes or hold you in my arms, shall tell you how dear you are to me, how dear you always will be. My sweet, it is bitter to part from you here even though in the homes of the Sidhe we meet. Oh, hush, my child, your tears burn and sear my heart, and make this hard task more difficult still.”

Long we stood by the rock in silence. The cool dewy night and the starlight wrapped us round with a vast peace and tenderness. The gorse shone palely through the half-dusk of the summer night, and long since had the gay-winged butterflies flown to their resting-place. The mountains rose purple and blue and shadowy shapes rested broodingly over them. And I—I was growing content with a deeper contentment than had ever approached me before. Time nor space can destroy love if its cords are woven in the Danann world.

In the west of Banba a mountain stands like a sentinel guarding the western seas. Some there are who say it is a fountain of fire pouring its streams through the land and showering its spray afar on every side. Mountain or fountain—and truly I think it is both—nonetheless I am assured that there dwell the great gods of the Danann Sidhe.

LAON.

PRIEST OR HERO?

(Concluded from p. 131.)

THE choice here lies between Priest and Hero as ideal, and I say that whatever is not heroic is not Irish, has not been nourished at the true fountain wherefrom our race and isle derive their mystic fame. There is a life behind the veil, another Eri which the bards knew, singing it as the Land of Immortal Youth. It is not hidden from us, though we have hidden ourselves from it, so that it has become only a fading memory in our hearts and a faery fable upon our lips. Yet there are still places in this isle, remote from the crowded cities where men and women eat and drink and wear out their lives and are lost in the

lust for gold, where the shy peasant sees the enchanted lights in mountain and woody dell, and hears the faery bells pealing away, away, into that wondrous underland whither, as legends relate, the Danann gods withdrew. These things are not to be heard for the asking; but some, more reverent than the rest, more intuitive, who understand that the pure eyes of a peasant may see the things kings and princes, aye, and priests, have desired to see and have not seen; that for him may have been somewhat lifted the veil which hides from men the starry spheres where the Eternal Beauty abides in the shining—these have heard and have been filled with the hope that, if ever the mystic truths of life could be spoken here, there would be enough of the old Celtic fire remaining to bring back the magic into the isle. That direct relation, that vision, comes fully with spiritual freedom, when men no longer peer through another's eyes into the mysteries, when they will not endure that the light shall be darkened by transmission, but spirit speaks with spirit, drawing light from the boundless Light alone.

Leaving aside the question of interference with national movements, another charge, one of the weightiest which can be brought against the priestly influence in this island, is that it has hampered the expression of native genius in literature and thought. Now the country is alive with genius, flashing out everywhere, in the conversation even of the lowest; but we cannot point to imaginative work of any importance produced in Ireland which has owed its inspiration to the priestly teaching. The genius of the Gael could not find itself in their doctrines; though above all things mystical it could not pierce its way into the departments of super-nature where their theology pigeon-holes the souls of the damned and the blessed. It knew of the Eri behind the veil which I spoke of, the Tir-na-noge which as a lamp lights up our grassy plains, our haunted hills and valleys. The faery tales have ever lain nearer to the hearts of the people, and whatever there is of worth in song or story has woven into it the imagery handed down from the dim druidic ages. This is more especially true to-day, when our literature is beginning to manifest preëminent qualities of imagination, not the grey pieties of the cloister, but natural magic, beauty, and heroism. Our poets sing of Ossian wandering in the land of the immortals; or we read in vivid romance of the giant chivalry of the Ultonians, their untamable manhood, the exploits of Cuculain and the children of Rury, more admirable as types, more noble and inspiring than the hierarchy of little saints who came later on and cursed their memories.

The genius of the Gael is awakening after a night of troubled

dreams. It returns instinctively to the beliefs of its former day and finds again the old inspiration. It seeks the gods on the mountains, still enfolded by their mantle of multitudinous traditions, or sees them flash by in the sunlit diamond airs. How strange, but how natural is all this! It seems as if Ossian's was a premature return. To-day he might find comrades come back from Tir-na-noge for the uplifting of their race. Perhaps to many a young spirit starting up among us Caoite might speak as to Mongan, saying: "I was with thee, with Finn." Hence, it may be, the delight with which we hear Standish O'Grady declaring that the bardic divinities still remain: "Nor, after centuries of obscurity, is their power to quicken, purify, and exalt, yet dead. Still they live and reign, and shall reign." After long centuries—the voice of pagan Ireland! But that does not declare it: it is more: it is the voice of a spirit ever youthful, yet older than all the gods, who with its breath of sunrise-coloured flame jewels with richest lights the visions of earth's dreamy-hearted children. Once more out of the Heart of the Mystery is heard the call of "Come away," and after that no other voice has power to lure: there remain only the long heroic labours which end in companionship with the gods.

These voices do not stand for themselves alone. They are heralds before a host. No man has ever spoken with potent utterance who did not feel the secret urging of dumb, longing multitudes, whose aspirations and wishes converge on and pour themselves into a fearless heart. The thunder of the wave is deeper because the tide is rising. Those who are behind do not come only with song and tale, but with stern hearts bent on great issues, among which, not least, is the intellectual liberation of Ireland. That is an aim at which some of our rulers may well grow uneasy. Soon shall young men, fiery-hearted, children of Eri, a new race, roll out their thoughts on the hillsides, before your very doors, O priests, calling your flocks from your dark chapels and twilight sanctuaries to a temple not built with hands, sunlit, starlit, sweet with the odour and incense of earth, from your altars call them to the altars of the hills, soon to be lit up as of old, soon to be the blazing torches of God over the land. These heroes I see emerging. Have they not come forth in every land and race when there was need? Here, too, they will arise. Ah, my darlings, you will have to fight and suffer: you must endure loneliness, the coldness of friends, the alienation of love: warmed only by the bright interior hope of a future you must toil for but may never see, letting the deed be its own reward: laying in dark places the foundations of that high and holy Eri of prophecy, the isle of enchantment, burning with druidic splendours,

bright with immortal presences, with the face of the everlasting Beauty looking in upon all its ways, divine with terrestrial mingling till God and the world are one.

There waits brooding in this isle a great destiny, and to accomplish it we must have freedom of thought. That is the greatest of our needs, for thought is the lightning-conductor between the heaven-world and earth. We want fearless advocates who will not be turned aside from their course by laughter or by threats. Why is it that the spirit of daring, imaginative enquiry is so dead here? An incubus of spiritual fear seems to beset men and women so that they think, if they turn from the beaten track seeking the true, they shall meet, not the divine with outstretched hands, but a demon; that the reward for their search will not be joy or power but enduring pain. How the old bard swept away such fears! "If thy God were good," said Ossian, "he would call Finn into his dun." Yes, the heroic heart is dear to the heroic heart. I would back the intuition of an honest soul for truth against piled-up centuries of theology. But this high spirit is stifled everywhere by a dull infallibility which is yet unsuccessful, on its own part, in awakening inspiration; and, in the absence of original thought, we pick over the bones of dead movements, we discuss the personalities of the past, but no one asks the secrets of life or of death. There are despotic hands in politics, in religion, in education, strangling any attempt at freedom. Of the one institution which might naturally be supposed to be the home of great ideas we can only say, reversing the famous eulogy on Oxford, it has never given itself to any national hero or cause, but always to the Philistine.

With the young men who throng the literary societies the intellectual future of Ireland rests. In them are our future leaders. Out of these as from a fountain will spring—what? Will we have another generation of Irishmen at the same level as to-day, with everything in a state of childhood, boyish patriotism, boyish ideals, boyish humour? Or will they assimilate the aged thought of the world and apply it to the needs of their own land? I remember reading somewhere a description by Turgenieff of his contemporaries as a young man: how they sat in garrets, drinking execrably bad coffee or tea. But what thoughts! They talked of God, of humanity, of Holy Russia; and out of such groups of young men, out of their discussions, emanated that vast unrest which has troubled Europe and will trouble it still more. Here no questions are asked and no answers are received. There is a pitiful, blind struggle for a nationality whose ideals are not definitely conceived. What is the ideal of Ireland as a nation? It drifts

from mind to mind, a phantom thought lacking a spirit, but a spirit which will surely incarnate. Perhaps some of our old heroes may return. Already it seems as if one had been here; a sombre Titan earlier awakened than the rest who passed before us, and sounded the rallying note of our race before he staggered to his tragic close. Others of brighter thought will follow to awaken the fires which Brigid in her vision saw gleaming beyond dark centuries of night, and confessed between hope and tears to Patrick. Meanwhile we must fight for intellectual freedom; we must strive to formulate to ourselves what it is we really wish for here, until at last the ideal becomes no more phantasmal but living; until our voices in aspiration are heard in every land, and the nations become aware of a new presence amid their councils, a last and most beautiful figure, as one after the cross of pain, after the shadowy terrors, with thorn-marks on the brow from a crown flung aside, but now radiant, ennobled after suffering, Eri, the love of so many dreamers, priestess of the mysteries, with the chant of beauty on her lips and the heart of nature beating in her heart.

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ROBERT BROWNING.

II.—HIS INWARDNESS.

IT is not the aim of these notes upon the influence and tendency of Browning to reconstruct from his poetry a detailed and coherent philosophy. I have claimed for him a higher place in the realm of real life than the word thinker indicates, and I am well content to let his claims to systematic thinking be considered slight, though I do not share this opinion myself. It is with thought as an energy, not as a series of syllogisms, that poetry must always deal, and I had rather think of Browning as an energiser of men than as a philosopher. But if we would learn something of the secret of his gifts to us, and realize in any fitting measure what these gifts are, we must summon together as best we may the faculties and qualities in which his genius consists.

First, then, to him as to all true poets—for I claim that at last every real poet is a mystic—there was imparted the fine and fragrant quality of "inwardness," to borrow Matthew Arnold's term for the more precious and subtle aspects of subjective ideality. To Browning as a poet there was one supreme duty and interest in life—to justify the ways of man to men. He who has done this has "vindicated the eternal Providence" as no other can. His self-assigned task, then, was to sing the soul, and it is when so engaged that we find his power of inwardness raying out upon the creations of his thought. And as

he sings of man to men we catch with joy the cadenced music of his song :

“ I send my heart to thee, all my heart,
In this my singing.”

The soul of poetry is inwardness—the faculty through which we discern, in Socrates' grand phrase, “ how things stand in God ” ; and the soul of inwardness is love, the power through which we penetrate to some of the meanings of deity itself. Men cannot by thinking find out God, whose “ possible ”—for us—“ is taught by his world's loving.”* The assuredness of this latter truth forms, I think, the grand secret of Browning's insight, and the charge of intellectualism which we bring against him is, to most of us, the measure of our own ineptitude. It is because his sympathies are so wide that his comprehension is so swift, and it is this alertness of glance that baffles us of the slower seeing and duller sympathy, and makes us dismiss him in our lordly self-applauding way as “ too intellectual.”

Perhaps the surest test in literature of the possession of that true vision which sees men to their heart's core, and out of its seeing teaches us the central meanings of life—its hope, its faith, its doubt, its pity, its sin—is the treatment by the artist of that branch of his work which we may term characterization in verse-fiction, a mode of which Browning is a perfect master. I cannot feel with Mr. Furnivall that his “ Sarto,” “ Lippi,” and the rest, are intrusive figures interposed between the poet and his readers. It is indeed a pleasure to turn from these to “ One Word More,” in which he pours forth for his beloved—and through her for us—the treasures of his personal affections ; but if we had not first seen the man through the medium of his “ Fifty Men and Women,” how had we known of the breadth of his love ? We would surely have felt a limitation in a passion that spends itself wholly upon one object and does not shoot out its fervent sympathy to the sorrowing, the foiled, and the vicious. From such reproach Browning stands entirely free. Nor is this all that his clear and vivid characterization has done. His glance is a search-light into human nature, and he sees with an acuteness which I do not find elsewhere amongst our poets, where it is that the warp enters into natures not at heart ignoble, and wherein it is that the stronger ones, the Straffords and Lurias, are strong. And in this analysis of motive he gives us new cause for hope, for his handling of his People of Importance and other *dramatis personæ* does more than reveal the breadth of the poet's insight and the

* These, it will be remembered, are Elizabeth Barrett Browning's words, not Robert's.

intensity of his love. It reveals to us also vast tracts of soul of whose existence, close to the common by-ways of our life, many of us had else been unaware. Piercing down to the roots of life he finds there wiser purposes governing the actions and guiding the desires of men than they themselves know, and tracing evil to its source he finds behind the illusions of sin a spark of spiritual fire. To prize the doubts which are impossible to men of apathetic nature, to infuse hope into defeat, into error, into wrong; to see in voluptuousness simply a mis-interpretation of the eternal appeal of beauty which still haunts the hearts of men, and to recognize amid their fierce passion-throes the justice of their plea for freedom to live out their own ideal of good; to feel unconquerably sure that this good of theirs will grow better continually until the day of divine perfection dawns for them, this is, I think, to recognize the true purpose of life and the mode whereby divinity becomes realized in man. It is in his hold on this doctrine—that the divine in man works its way out gradually through evil by the slow, sure processes of cyclic law—that Browning shows us most clearly the unswerving nature of his trust in soul:

“My own hope is, a sun shall pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched,
That after Last returns the First
Though a wide compass round be fetched;
That what began best can't end worst,
Nor what God blest once prove accurst.”

But his trust is not the blind, perfervid zeal of one whose ignorance of the darker aspects of things produces an incomplete conception of life. He sees the pain and error which are the birth-pangs of the divine and accepts them. He knows well, too, the weariness and dangers of that quest in which the nobler souls among men are engaged, but he sees in them the means of

“Making those who catch God's secret, just so much more prize
their capture!”

It is in his clear seeing of what is permanent and real that we have the clue to his joy in life, his trust in the “shining intuitions,” his acceptance of and trust in the unseen, his belief that a light shines from behind the life of man. It is a baffled lover who exclaims:

“Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows! but not quite so sunk
that moments,

Sure tho' seldom, are denied us, when the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones, and apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way, to its triumph or undoing.

“There are flashes struck from midnights, there are fire-flames
noondays kindle.

Whereby piled-up honours perish, whereby swollen ambitions
dwindle,

While just this or that poor impulse, which for once had play
unstified,

Seems the sole work of a life-time that away the rest have trifled.”

But inwardness is something more than love of humanity and trust in the ultimate purpose of life. Its concern is also with the perfecting of the individual characters of men, and it is in tracing out the evolution of spiritual nobility that Browning's mastery of psychological analysis is used to best effect. He has well said :

“A people is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one,
And those who live as models for the mass
Are singly of more value than they all.
Keep but the model safe, new men will rise
To take its mould.”

Of such models all his dramatic work is full. Take Sordello's discovery that, in dreaming of personal spiritual development for himself, he is traitor to his race through that very elevation and segregation which at first had seemed his special strength. Or take the expansion of the great heart of Luria amid the distrust and perfidy of those Florentines to whose cause he had devoted all the powers of his soul ; or the whole drama of “Paracelsus,” with its quest stopping at the point where external failure is merged into absolute success. It is in these ripenings of his heroes' hearts that Browning shows us how rich and full is the matured fruitage of his own, and how deep is the homage which we owe him.

OMAR.

(To be continued.)

AT LEAGUE WITH THE STONES OF THE FIELD.

[WE think this psychometrical reading of a fragment of the stone, selected at Killarney for the School at San Diego, may interest our readers. It has been sent to us from America, and we are assured that the psychometrist was quite unaware of the nature of the stone given to her.]

“THIS is from an ancient and mystic land—a land where the White Kings once walked freely and peace reigned, the home of the great Lodges—famous in legend, song and story for its gods, heroes, bards and faery-folk in general. I think the stone of which this is a part

was found by a lake, as blue as the sky, surrounded with hills and mountains—a marvellously beautiful spot. It is early morning and I see the heavy dew glistening in the morning light. Near by there was, and is still, perhaps, the ruin of an old tower, once a sacred place. An old rune or altar, where sacred ceremonies were once performed, is also near. I feel that this land is as one awaking from a long and deep sleep. Dreams of beautiful shapes arise; the heroes stir in their slumbers, the gods awaken. A great and beautiful light seems dawning, as when the first rays of the sun appear. Mystic sights and sounds fill the air. It seems a spot where powerful forces are at work, and great memories cluster.”

INWARD VOICES.

THE SOUL'S QUESTIONING.

THE dark night lies around me vast and still,
I, sleepless watcher, count the beat
Of her huge pulse, unknowing if I will
The morning sunshine greet.

Now all is peace and quiet, lulled repose,
Save where in one poor human brain
The secret of the ages deeper grows—
The old Wherefore again.

The wood-worm yet will overthrow the beech,
The patient mole the hill will shake;
And this one thought, if I could give it speech,
Might bid the vastness quake.

THE SOUL'S REPLY.

Let what will come! Old faiths be overthrown
And new beliefs give old beliefs the lie:
One thing I hold mid crash of creed and throne—
For ever I am I.

Before time was, or thought of day or night,
Before God woke the silence with His voice,
I, hidden in the Being Infinite,
In silence did rejoice.

And I, the pilgrim of eternity,
Can laugh to see eternities roll on;
For though God say, "There shall be nought but Me,"
Yet He and I are one.

PAUL GREGAN.

THE AMERICAN CONVENTION.

[THE editor, who left Dublin to attend the American Convention, gave strict injunctions before leaving that we were to wait for his report of Convention. We have waited, but the report is still invisible. We have seen tantalizing references to it in letters from him. "The report," he says, "though short, will give you a fair idea of the Convention." We hope the editor will see this note before he reaches Dublin, so that he may not be quite unprepared to meet the sub-editor, who awaits him with a shillelagh.

We have received the following letter from Brother Crump, which we insert in lieu of the wandering report.]

NEW YORK, *April 27th, 1807.*

CONVENTION is over and we are all more or less done up with the work connected with it. It has been highly successful in every way, and just as the previous Convention was one of development, so this one was one of consolidation. It began on Sunday morning with a declaration of the position of the T. S. A., especially with regard to the so-called "split," and an excellent speech was made thereon by Mr. Temple, an old member. After that things went exceedingly well. Mr. Hargrove was in the chair and Mrs. Tingley was present as guiding spirit of all the proceedings, and many a time her quick insight and wise counsel would give exactly the right turn to events. The Convention itself was a closed one, in order to bring the members more closely in touch for future work, and in the evening a public meeting was held, when Mrs. Tingley, Mrs. Cleather, Mr. Hargrove, Dr. Hartmann, Dr. Keightley, Rev. W. Williams, and others spoke. I never heard Mrs. Tingley speak so splendidly as she did on this occasion. She rose to a magnificent height of eloquence and fairly carried the meeting by storm. She has changed greatly since we saw her in England and has become quite a remarkable speaker, and her administrative powers and grasp of details are greater than ever. Truly she is a wonderful leader in every sense of the word, and those who remain loyal to her will have opportunities of work in the future hitherto undreamt of. Music was provided at these meetings by a string quartette, two of whom were members, assisted by Mrs. Cleather and myself.

The following is the opinion of one of our English delegates about the workers here :

“What strikes me about the members here may interest you. I never before met such a body of men in middle life with strong determined characters (women too), able to express their thoughts in straight, stern, forceful language, and to *impress the age*, as these comrades here can do. You know what Brother Thurston is—think of a hundred or more men like him as delegates here, and you will have my idea, and every one of them true and loyal in every way to the backbone. No wonder that Boston Convention, rallying around W. Q. J., had an effect on the world. Every man has the cut of a soldier, the quick, firm tread, the eye that shows a man is alive, and a dignity of manner before the world that we do not know in the movement in England. They speak in staccato notes, not quickly, but as convinced definitely of the truth of their utterance, and the whole business goes on like a well-oiled machine. It has been a splendid display of real force.” This opinion I can thoroughly endorse.

On Monday morning the business part of the Convention was concluded, and in the evening the charming Childrens' Crusade Play, of which I wrote in a previous letter, was again performed, and after that Dr. Buck, Brother Dunlop, who had arrived on Saturday evening just in time for Convention, and several others spoke, and the whole proceedings came to a harmonious conclusion about 10.30 with some remarks from President Hargrove.

To-day is the day of the Grant celebration here, and the American eagle is screaming loudly and the streets are alive with people, troops and bunting. The procession is visible from the windows of headquarters, and the whole face of the house is gaily decorated with the stars and stripes.

I wish I had time to write more, but I shall be home in a fortnight and can then, with Mrs. Cleather's assistance, tell you all by word of mouth. We go to Boston in a few days to give a public lecture on Theosophy and Wagner, by Mrs. Tingley's request, and sail on the 5th in the *St. Paul*.—Fraternally yours,

BASIL CRUMP.

REVIEW.

THE TREASURE OF THE HUMBLE. By Maurice Maeterlinck. [London: George Allen.]

I CONFESS that Maeterlinck as dramatist does not attract me. He is always an artist, but an artist concerned too much with the morbid and gruesome to have any very pleasurable hold on the mind. The works which we return to are those which radiate sunlight. These twilight emotions and pathetic privacies, which are so frequently the subject of M. Maeterlinck's art, leave an after-sensation of sickliness, and to get rid of the unpleasant memory we carefully put the books out of sight. In *The Treasure of the Humble* the author reverts more to himself, and his faculty of delicate perception which, when concerned with tragic action, seems to be led by its own sensitiveness into a region of overwrought emotions where the heart is perpetually strained, here is more beautifully revealed in divining the laws and principles of the invisible spiritual spheres which environ us. The tremulous sensitiveness which enables M. Maeterlinck to sense so many hidden influences, to be in a way a revealer of the unseen, is, I think, also the cause of his main drawbacks as a teacher. "No sooner do we speak than something warns us that the divine gates are closing," he says in the essay on "Silence." That surely is the extreme statement of the visionary whose joy is mainly in perception. Others no less mystic have spoken, feeling the doors were open behind them and that celestial powers went forth charioted on the voice. Silence is no nearer than sound to that which moves through all. M. Maeterlinck is a little too much enamoured of the charms of the negative; he signs too much for us to withdraw. Yet, having made Silence his theme, what he says is lit up by true intuitions; the noiseless revelations taking place in the soul have hardly in modern literature a more subtle recorder. "'We do not know each other yet,'" some one writes to him, "'we have not yet dared to be silent together.'" He comments as follows:

"And it was true: already did we love each other so deeply that we shrank from the superhuman ordeal. And each time that silence fell upon us—the angel of the supreme truth, the messenger that brings to the heart the tidings of the unknown—each time did we feel that our souls were craving mercy on their knees, were begging for a few hours more of innocent falsehood, a few hours of ignorance, a few hours of childhood. . . ."

Again he says, and with what profound truth :

“ It is an entire destiny that will be governed by the *quality* of this first silence which is descending upon two souls. They blend : we know not where, for the reservoirs of silence lie far above the reservoirs of thought, and the strange resultant brew is either sinisterly bitter or profoundly sweet. Two souls, admirable both and of equal power, may yet give birth to a hostile silence, and wage pitiless war against each other in the darkness : while it may be that the soul of a convict shall go forth and commune in divine silence with the soul of a virgin.”

These essays, variously titled, have all for their theme the mid-world between soul and spirit, a region of strange perceptions, which, as M. Maeterlinck points out, is becoming more irradiated year by year for men. What he has to say is told with unfailing charm and dignity. Even if we do not agree with him in his attitude, and that is but seldom, we feel that he is always dealing with realities. It is a book of beautiful starlight perceptions—most beautiful. It is a curious thing that M. Maeterlinck seems to have gone far into the mystic worlds without any vivid sense of the preëminence of human consciousness over all it surveys, a sense which most mystics attain. The spirit has never spoken to him as to Blake :

“ If thou humblest thyself thou humblest me :
Thou also dwellest in eternity.”

There are no lightning flashes, no sudden lustres from the light beyond the darkness, but all is calm, serene and noble, a nature still and perceptive of the tide of light rounding the dark shoulder of the world.

THE T. S. IN EUROPE (IRELAND).

13, EUSTACE STREET, DUBLIN.

THE public meetings for the past month have been well attended, and animated discussions have followed the opening speeches. During the months of June, July and August public meetings will not be held, but September will doubtless see them in full swing again, and the members eager as heretofore to lecture as often as required.

Brother Dunlop attended the Convention of the T. S. A. as delegate from the Dublin Lodge.

The session closes with the following lecture : May 27th, *Irish Faeries*, Paul Gregan.

ROBT. E. COATES, *Hon. Sec.*