

any subject; or better still he will be led to discoveries of the utilization of similarly well-founded conclusions of modern psychology in devising new tests. Here is a great unexplored field.

4. Finally, let not the teacher think that on the whole these or any other new ventures in the form of examinations are going to relieve him of the necessity of work. The greatest care needs to be taken in framing the statements in the true-false examinations and in making certain that in the completion-test examinations the blank calls for one thought and preferably one phrasing of that thought. Ease and satisfaction in grading the results, a check upon one's work and upon the efficiency of one's teaching, and the lessening of drudgery—these, together with other advantages noted above, outweigh the slight additional time that needs to be taken to prepare proper educative stimuli or situations in the form of examination questions.

W. J. GIFFORD

II

BROWNING THE TRUTH-TELLER

"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

While the Pilates who would shirk responsibility are fumbling with the question "What is truth?" and are producing the impression that it is, maybe, nothing in particular, Browning's clear voice rings out in tones that "give the world assurance of a man."

He stands firm upon the fact that, whatever mists we may have permitted to obscure it, *something* is the truth, and that the essential truth to live by is not far from any of us. He says many wholesome things about getting at the truth; and he puts it squarely up to us to tell it straight when we have got at it.

Although truth itself is far from being a frame of mind, our mental attitude has much to do with our reaching it or missing it. Why do we so often get things wrong? What stands in our way when we seek the truth even about any given event in our

midst? Browning says the trouble is apt to be some cherished theory, prepossession, prejudice.—Something happens—drops suddenly into the pool of our community life. With an outcry we crowd the bank

"Around the rush and ripple of any fact  
Fallen stonewise, plumb on the smooth face  
of things,"

and try to guess by the splash what it really was. We even investigate a little—reach down into the muddy water to find the thing itself. We do not succeed in this our "feel" after the vanished truth, though it is

"Honest enough, as the way is: all the same,  
Harboring in the center of its sense  
A hidden germ of failure, . . .  
To neutralize that honesty and leave  
That feel for truth at fault, as the way is too;  
Some prepossession such as starts amiss,  
By but a hair's breadth at the shoulder-blade,  
The arm o' the feeler, dip he ne'er so bold,  
So leads arm waveringly, lets fall wide  
O' the mark its finger, sent to find and fix  
Truth at the bottom. . . 'Tis there—  
The instinctive theorizing whence a fact  
Looks to the eye as the eye likes the look."

If we have leaned too far in one direction, we are pretty sure to have a neighbor whose prejudices incline him to the other side. He comes to try it with

"the opposite feel  
For truth, with a like swerve, like unsuccess."

Sometimes the difficulty is intellectual pride, as in the Greek Cleon. Sometimes it is mere sentimentality. One man likes "pink"—and for no better reason renders some weighty decision. In *A Woman's Last Word*, the wife consciously barter truth under threat of losing her husband's love:

"What so false as truth is,  
False to thee?  
\* \* \* \* \*  
I will speak thy speech, Love,  
Think thy thought."

But most often our failure to reach fact is due to a sort of liking for the warm, soft haze of self-deception and a fearing to face the bare truth lest it prove stern and cold. In Browning's belief the primal curse is that now, as in the beginning, Satan

"Bids man love, as well as make, a lie."

The familiar short poem first named *France* and later entitled *Count Gismond*

must have been written with the purpose of shocking us into the realization that we do not hate falsehood so much as we think we do, but perhaps regard it as a rather agreeable thing when kept within bounds. The poet works us up to the highest point of indignation against the malicious lie that sought publicly to blast the fair name of a young girl. But the avenger was at hand. The girl herself, years later, tells the story:

"Out strode Gismond; then I knew  
That I was saved. I never met  
His face before, but at first view  
I felt quite sure that God had set  
Himself to Satan: who would spend  
A minute's mistrust on the end?"

"He strode to Gauthier, in his throat  
Gave him the lie, then struck his  
mouth  
With one back-handed blow that wrote  
In blood men's verdict there. North,  
south,  
East, west, I looked. The lie was dead,  
And damned, and truth stood up  
instead.

\* \* \* \* \*

"And e'en before the trumpet's sound  
Was finished, prone lay the false  
knight,  
Prone as his lie, upon the ground;  
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight  
O' the sword, but open-breasted drove  
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

"Which done, he dragged him to my feet  
And said, 'Here die, but end thy  
breath  
In full confession, lest thou fleet  
From my first to God's second  
death!  
Say, hast thou lied?' And, 'I have lied  
To God and her,' he said, and died."

As she ends the tale, leaving our hearts aflame for truth, she is surprised to see her hero-husband close at hand; and presumably for no greater reason than to save him from a moment's embarrassment at having been talked about, she greets him with the flabbiest and the most superfluous of fibs:

"Gismond here?  
And have you brought my tercel back?  
I was just telling Adela  
How many birds it struck since May."

And here the poem ends. So smooth and gracious-seeming is the falsehood—a mere brush of courtesy's "silken sleeve"—that we

almost fail to perceive it or are tempted to ignore it. Is this not a kindly trap set by the poet to catch us and thus prove to us that, while we had thought we hated a lie, we really had hated only the malice in it? And did he name the poem *France* because, along with her quick intuition of honor and her glorious chivalry, that nation has sometimes rather hospitably entertained polite prevarication—her very name for a lie having a sort of pleasant sound, *mensonge*, "a dream of the mind"?

Again and again Browning's poetry rings with his own conviction that there is no compromise to be made with untruth. Even if folly means no harm when she calls black white, she does harm just the same. In his great work, *The Ring and the Book*, he shows a kind-hearted poor old soul who told a falsehood in the motherly act of adopting a little girl, thus doing the deed

"Part God's way, part the other way than  
God's."

And all the cruel tragedy came out of this—"simply this"—the untruth that was meant to be so kind.

"She thought . . . real lies were lies told  
For harm's sake; whereas this had good at  
heart,  
Good for my mother, good for me, and good  
For Pietro. . . .  
Wrong, wrong, and always wrong! how plain-  
ly wrong!  
For see, this fault kept pricking, as faults do,  
All the same at her heart: this falsehood  
hatched,  
She could not let it go nor keep it fast."

But to many in Browning's day truth and poetry seemed to clash with each other at every turn, as irreconcilable foes. Some of the contemporary men-of-fact—to whom poets were, at best, only "virtuous liars"—would have said that he must choose the one and leave the other. Very comforting, then, must have been the comprehensive appreciation which he found at home, for it had been "at poetry's divine first finger-touch" that Mrs. Browning's own spiritual awakening came, that her soul

"Let go conventions, and sprang up  
surprised,  
Convicted of the great eternities  
Between two worlds."

Therefore, although she is not quite fair

to other modes of work in comparison, we can understand why she should feel that in her generation the poets are

"The only truth-tellers now left to God  
The only speakers of essential truth,  
Opposed to relative, comparative,  
And temporal truths; the only holders by  
His sunskirts through conventional  
gray glooms;  
The only teachers who instruct mankind  
From just a shadow on a charnel wall  
To find man's veritable stature out  
Erect, sublime."

If, then, poetry is a part of the gravest work of the world, it is worth noticing how Browning set about making himself a "true" poet after once the call had come to him. The very next morning he entered upon the task of mastering the words of the English language that they might always ring true, like the keys of a fine instrument, in response to his touch. And though we may often be irritated because of the words omitted—the relative pronouns "understood" or misunderstood—when his giant mind goes striding on beyond us, we never find him guilty of using a word without a determinate meaning.

As to the content of his work, Browning's method is as old as art. Is he "true to life"? Where does he get his characters? He certainly does not 'invent' them, except in the original sense of that word. He 'comes upon' them in sympathetically reading the lives of men and women of the past. He 'comes upon' them in sympathetically watching the lives of men and women about him. Even society functions inexpressibly boring he endures because he is afraid to let slip any opportunity to know human life. *Men and Women* is no mere title of his book. That is what one finds within the book—men and women, whose pulses beat with the red blood of humanity. His poetic creed is: No poet or any other man can really create. Only God does that. And yet there is the unceasing call to *try* to create, so insistent that there is no growth possible to him who disobeys it. To seek with one's best endeavor to re-create some man who once lived and to make him live again upon the page—that is the poet's business; and it is well worth while.

"Creates? No; but resuscitates, perhaps.  
. . . Although nothing which had never life  
Shall get life from him—be, not having been—  
Yet something dead may get to live again."

Browning's healthy mind in its eager zest to learn how truth may be found goes joyfully on to guess—realizing that it is but a guess—how the highest truths may have come to the inspired Bible writers. If Jehovah did not speak face to face with David, for instance, as with Moses, Browning wonders how the revelation came to Israel's poet-king. He knows it came in some way: there always has to be a way. The poem *Saul* is Browning's "feel" after this truth. Was it, maybe, that David, exercising his own human sympathy for Saul and the deep wish to help him, was thus able to reach upwards and get hold of the truth of truths that One should some day come who has not only the yearning wish, but with it the divine power, to bring all the help Saul needs—all that the rest of us need?

"Would I suffer for him that I love? So  
wouldst Thou—so wilt Thou!  
. . . O Saul, it shall be  
A Face like my face that receives thee; a  
Man like to me  
Thou shalt love and be loved by forever: a  
Hand like this hand  
Shall throw open the gates of new life to  
thee! See the Christ stand!"

ELIZABETH P. CLEVELAND

#### IMPART JOY AND BE SUCCESSFUL

President Eliot once said that he had often reflected on the problem of why one person is a successful teacher, while another of equal knowledge, talent and character fails. As a result of much observation he had concluded that what makes a teacher successful is the power to impart joy. The end of a teacher's work should be to inspire in the pupil joy in learning, joy in the possession of truth. This is not a lower aim than some conceivable one, but the highest of all, for joy is the highest end of the universe, the final purpose of God himself.—Frank C. Porter.

Education is an investment; Kentucky's greatest tax is ignorance.—Governor Edwin P. Morrow.