

# Highland Park News.

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## ROBERT BROWNING

It was long ago discovered that the world is made up of two sorts of people, those who appreciate Robert Browning's poetry, and those who do not. All men profess an unbounded admiration for Shakespeare, though comparatively few have ever read two of his plays, and fewer yet one of his sonnets; but if any man has, as George the Third had, the courage or the dulness to pronounce Shakespeare's dramas "sad stuff," "sad stuff!" the multitude forthwith cries "Off with his head."

There are those who call Brownings' poems "sad stuff," but they are in no peril of death from the mob, although it is hard for the Browningsites and the Anti-Browningsites to live in unity together.

To profess an inability to read Shakespeare is to argue one's self lacking in the very rudiments of literary taste; but the detractors of Browning still form a large and respectable party in the world of letters, though it is safe to say that they are losing ground and that they have suffered many defections of late years the writer, by the way, modestly admits that he is a somewhat recent convert.

Among the Browningsites none is more enthusiastic in his devotion to the Master than Dr. Jenkin Lloyd Jones, who on last Thursday evening lectured to an audience that crowded the hall of the Highland Park Club. Dr. Jones eloquently pointed out the vast range of the poet's genius, and quoted stirring passages from ballads, lyrics and dramas to show the wide scope of the poetic field to which he invited us to follow him.

He asserted that Browning

has created not merely a body of verse of most diversified orders, but a whole literature, that his is not a corner of the world of letters, but a whole continent, reaching from pole to pole; that the appreciation of his writings is not the pastime of a day, but a serious study, richly repaying the student and leading him through many quaint and curious ways to the perfect Palace of Art.

Dr. Jones recited several of the shorter lyrics, lyrics so full of fire that beside them all others seem tame and commonplace. He quoted from "The Grammarian's Funeral" which a great critic has called the greatest ode in our language and the noblest tribute ever paid to a man, and from "The Flight of the Duchess," "That Miracle of beauty and art," in which Browning, according to the same critic, extemporized a whole civilization as a setting for the soul of the little duchess; and from "Saul," the greatest of modern religious poems; and from "Pippa Passes," in which the poet reaches the highest pinnacle of dramatic art. All who heard him were fascinated by the earnestness of the lecturer and the skill with which he analyzed the poems of which he spoke. It is not necessary that one should appreciate everything Browning has written, it is not all equally good, and if one takes what he likes and leaves the rest he will still have in finite riches.

Such enthusiasm as Dr. Jones' is contagious, and we predict that many even of the scorners will dip into Browning to see if perchance they can find there what the lecturer told of, and many who have hitherto been indifferent will be roused to a new effort to master at least some of these great poems.

To all such we commend the new Camberwell edition of Browning's complete writings, published with notes, in twelve dainty volumes, any one of which may be had separately at a small price.

## CHARMING AFFAIR AT THE CLUB.

One of the most interesting events of the winter, and in all respects a delightful affair, was the fancy dress party given by Catherine Cushing, little daughter of Mrs. C. W. Cushing, in honor of her ninth birthday. Fully fifty children in fancy dress were present at the Highland Park Club House, which had been specially decorated and arranged for the occasion.

Many of the parents accompanied their children, and acquaintances interrupted by the absence abroad of Mrs. Cushing and her two daughters were renewed under the most happy circumstances. Great efforts had been put forth by the parents of the little guests to the end that the costumes and characters assumed by the children would be particularly attractive and interesting. There were several little Colonial dames, fairies, peasants, princesses and flower girls. A demure Miss Columbia appeared to advantage, as did also a "little Buttercup." The boys typified volunteers, rough riders, cowboys, "Teddy Roosevelts," and other original individualities.

A young Chicago lady directed the German and figure dances and led the fairy stories and other pretty games. A dainty repast was served, the table decorations including carnations and favors. At an early hour the little people returned to their homes charmed and pleased in a manner certainly gratifying to Mrs. Cushing and Miss Catherine.

Lieut. Dickman, post quartermaster, was called to St Paul to act as recording officer on the retiring board now in session. He left on Wednesday.