

NOTE

Bicentenary of Browning

Sisir K Majumdar writes :

ROBERT BROWNING WAS born in London on May 7, 1812 and died in Venice, Italy on December 12, 1889. He was buried in Westminster Abbey along with Isaac Newton (1642-1727), Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1882) and other celebrities of Great Britain. The son of a clerk in the Bank of England in London, Browning received only a slight formal education, although his father gave him a grounding in Greek and Latin. Both Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Robert Browning (1812-1889) disliked conventional School and College education. Both were taught at home by their respective fathers. Browning attended classes in the University College, London in 1828 but left after half a session; Rabindranath took admission in the University College, London in 1878 but returned home after a year and a half without completing the course. Of course, the similarity pleasant on this aspect between the two great poets of the then British Empire did not proceed any further.

Browning was a major English poet of the Victorian era (1837-1901 : 64 years) during the reign of Queen Victoria (1819-1901). He was noted for his mastery of dramatic monologue and psychological portraiture. His most seminal work—‘The Ring and The Book’ (1868-69)—the story of a Roman murder trial in 12 volumes was based on the proceedings in a murder trial in Rome in 1698. Because of its unique plan and execution, it was at once received with enthusiasm, and Browning was established as one of the most important literary figures of the day.

His other works are the following:

1. Pauline : A Fragment of a Confession (1833-anonymous)—First published work.
2. Paracelsus (1835)
3. Sordello (1840)
4. Strafford (1837)
5. Bells and Pomegranates (1841-1846)
6. Pippa Passes (1841)
7. A Blot in the Scutcheon (1843)
8. Luria (1846)
9. Christmas—Eve and Easter Day (1850)
10. Men and Women (1855)
11. Dramatis Personae (1864)
12. Prince Hohenstiel—Schwangau (1871)
13. Fifine at the Fair (1872)
14. Red Cotton Night—Cap Country (1873)
15. The Inn Album (1875)
16. Dramatic Idyls (1879, 1880)
17. Balavstion’s Adventure (1871)
18. Apology (1875)
19. Pacchiarotto and How He Worked in Distemper (1876)
20. Jocoseria (1883)

21. Ferishtah's Fancies (1884)
22. Asolando : Francies and Facts (1889)

Browning published toward the end of his life two books of unusually personal origin (a) 'La Saisiaz' (1878) on meditation and morality, (b) 'Parleyings with certain People of Importance in Their Day' (1887), in which he discussed books and ideas that have influenced him since his youth.

Browning influenced many modern poets, such as Robert Lee Frost (1874-1963) and Ezra Loomis Pound (1885-1972), partly through his development of the dramatic monologue, with its emphasis on the psychology of the individual and his stream of consciousness, but even more through his success in writing about the variety of modern life in language that owed nothing to convention. Technical accomplishment, richness of texture, sustained imaginative power, and a warm interest in humanity are counted virtues in his poetic works. □□□

[Robert Browning will be remembered as one of the great poets of England.]