A CRITICAL SURVEY OF THE POETRY OF
THOMAS EDWARD BROWN (1830-1897)

DISSERTATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I: Introductory......................................... 1-46
  A. Brown the Man........................................ 1-24
  B. Brown the Letter-Writer............................ 25-32
  C. Brown the Critic.................................... 33-46

PART II: The Narratives.................................... 47-179
  Chapter 1. Introductory................................. 48-39
    2. "Betsy Lee".................................. 90-114
    3. "Christmas Rose"................................ 115-129
    4. "The Doctor".................................. 130-147
    5. "The Manx Witch"............................... 143-161
    6. Other Narratives: Microcosm and Miniature. . 162-168
    7. Manx Microcosm: Brown's Achievement in Narrative........................................ 169-179

PART III: The Lyrics...................................... 180-324
  Chapter 1. Introductory................................. 181-192
    2. Men and Women.................................. 193-217
    3. Aspects of Nature................................ 218-244
    4. Love and Society................................ 245-255
    5. Literature and Art................................ 256-268
    6. Elegy and Epitaph................................ 269-280
    7. Philosophy and Religion........................... 281-317
    8. Summary and Conclusion............................313-324

Selected Bibliography...................................... 325-333

Appendix I: A Brown Chronology............................ 333-336

Appendix II: List of Poems by Title, showing dates of composition and Publication 336-349
PART I: Introductory

A. Brown the Man.

B. Brown the Letter-Writer.

C. Brown the Critic.
A. Brown the Man.

No single factor had greater influence on the literary career of Thomas Edward Brown than the circumstance of his being born in the Isle of Man. His father, the Rev. Robert Brown, was at that time rector of St. Matthew's in Douglas. It seems unlikely that his annual income could have been much in excess of £100. His church, described as "the church of the poor," was located amid the boisterous squalor of the waterfront market-place. In the nearby Old Grammar Schoolhouse in New Bond Street, the future poet was born on May 5, 1830, the sixth child and fifth son of Parson Brown and his wife Dorothy.

The family into which he was born contained a medley of racial strains, with a preponderance of Scotch blood, and a strong admixture of Irish. The Browns had lived in Man long enough to acquire many characteristics of the native Manx. Brown made the most of whatever Celtic blood was in him, and liked to think of himself as thoroughly Manx, and this he was—if not by inheritance, at least by sympathy and choice.

Two years after Thomas Edward was born, the family moved a short distance outside Douglas to Kirk Braddan, where Robert Brown had been appointed vicar. It was a fortunate move. If the annual income did not increase greatly, there was at least space for a large garden, plenty of fresh air and sunshine. It was naturally this Braddan vicarage that provided the earliest impressions within the memory of young Thomas, and they are predominantly pleasant impressions. That strong love of the sea, the hills, the streams, the flowers—for all the outward mani—
festations of nature—which is evident throughout his work, has its origin in the memories of these early years at Braddan.

Both the father and mother had a strong influence on the boy's development. The father was notably "a man of good report." In addition to his main task of ministering to the spiritual needs of his parishioners, he had a strong taste for scholarship, a slight gift of poetry, and some musical talent. He composed two rather well-known hymn tunes, "Hatford" and "Braddan," and four years before his son Thomas was born he had published a small book of poems. These the son characterized as being, with a few exceptions, on a "dead level of evangelical mediocrity." It was not in his rôle as would-be poet that the elder Brown's influence was most lasting. Rather it was as a practising exponent of fair dealing, sincerity, broad-mindedness, and high moral standards. It would seem that he gave free rein to his emotion only in the pulpit; in his home life he was restrained and undemonstrative, with not a little of almost puritanical sternness.

The poet's most recent biographer has noted another aspect of paternal influence. Robert Brown, he says, "had a marked vein of humanity, which expressed itself in a peculiar sympathy for the weak and the weak-minded of his fellow beings. This characteristic was inherited to an extraordinary degree by T. E. Brown—it explained his being a 'born sobber,' for like his father he had a way of taking for granted, not only the innate virtues of these outcasts, but their unquestioned respectability." Brown defined the quality as stemming from a deep sense of respect for all human beings. In concluding a description of his father, he said: "He was a hot hater, though, I can tell you...."
many people would have thought him stern. Among those who sometimes thought him stern and overly demanding we must include the son. Brown's own nature was always warmly affectionate. He did not share his father's reserve. Although he had always the highest respect and admiration for the vicar, he never had for him that depth of love and personal affection which he gave his mother.

Until he was fifteen, the future poet's education was carried on in the home under his father's direction. From him he learned the elements of Latin and English and history. Because the vicar was nearly blind, one or another of his sons read to him hour after hour from the classics, the master poets, and the theological writers. It is fair to say that the poet's early education, while not formal nor systematic, was broader and more thorough than he could possibly have secured in the public schools, and gave him a head start over his classmates when he entered college. The literary tastes developed through his involuntary and sometimes enforced readings for the taciturn parent remained largely unchanged, and the obvious distaste with which he viewed most theological treatises can doubtless be traced to the hours he had been forced to spend reading aloud from some dull and heavy commentary while his brothers and friends played outdoors. Even as a boy, his greater catholicity of taste led him to find pleasure in many authors ignored or dismissed as unworthy by his father. On one occasion he was sent to the bookseller for a copy of Childe Harold, and returned with Don Juan instead. During the day he read most of it with great relish, but at the evening reading session, he had read only a few pages aloud when the vicar interrupted with: "That will do. That will do, sir. That's
doggerel." The father's independence of mind, illustrated by his refusal to employ the Athanasian Creed in his services, or to observe Lent, was also inherited by the son.

The influence of Brown's Scotch mother is more difficult to appraise, for it is more subtle and indirect. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has characterized her as "witty and sensible." Brown himself refers to her as "a great woman," and speaks admiringly of her courage, her humor, and her vast fund of Scotch folklore and tradition. She provided a bit of welcome cheer and vitality in a family environment which one student has effectively and accurately described as one of "apostolic poverty." This same writer sums up the family heritage by saying: "The courage and abounding buoyancy which mark all of Mr. Brown's verse, he inherited from his mother. . . . His literary talent and . . . powers of effective rhetoric from his father."

Of the other members of the family, Brown's closest ties were with his brother Hugh and his sister Margaret. After Hugh's death in February, 1886, Brown wrote: "My brother has ringed me round all my life with moral strength and abettance; I hardly know how much."

There is abundant evidence, in both the number and tone of the letters he wrote to his sister Margaret, that she held a very special place in his affections. With one of his godfathers, the Rev. Thomas Howard, Brown had very strong ties. Until he was twenty-one, the young man visited the old rector in his home at regular intervals, where they prayed, and sang a hymn together, and exchanged confidences. Another companion and confidante of his early years was "Old John," the family servant, who furthered the boy's education in nature lore and practical affairs.

It was inevitable, living as they did within sound of the sea which
provided a livelihood for many people on the Island, that Brown and his brothers would be drawn to it. They made friends with many of the young sailors and fishermen and spent many happy hours sailing in their boats and assisting with the catch. These experiences lasted until Brown left the Island, and were renewed at every opportunity when he returned to it. Listening for hours to the endless yarns of the old salts on the docks, sharing in the excitement and hard work of the fishing fleet, the young poet stored up a wealth of information concerning the ways of ships and the men who sailed them that was to serve him well in later years.

When Brown was fifteen, his parents decided that he should enter King William's College, an institution near Castletown, in the southeast corner of the Island, which has played a large part in the educational and cultural life of the Manx. In the summer of 1846, Brown entered the college as a "day boy," and as a clergyman's son he was fortunately entitled to free tuition. During the rest of that year, tragedy struck hard and often at the Brown family. In October, Tom's eldest brother died in the Bahamas. Early in November, another brother, Harry, died at home. Before the end of the month, the father had died. The family was left in desperate financial straits.

It was therefore under difficulties that Tom continued his studies at King William's. Largely on his behalf, and in the interests of economy, Mrs. Brown moved the family to Castletown early in 1847. He could now live at home, and walk back and forth to classes. We know comparatively little about his activity during the three years he studied here. He won second prize for a poem, and other prizes in
theology and Hebrew, but as might have been expected, his finest achievement was in the classics. We have one illuminating first-hand reminiscence of Brown as a student by Canon J. M. Wilson: "He was said 'to know more than any master' and 'to have written the best Latin prose the University examiners had ever seen'! . . . Wherever he was, there was life at its fullest. Of course he never saw or spoke to a younger like me." He distinguished himself in verse composition in Greek, Latin and English, and generally showed himself a scholar of brilliant promise. It seems undeniable that his position was that of a large frog in a small puddle. His tutors and advisors began talking in terms of a University degree and a literary career. It would have been surprising if the shy and sensitive younger had not gained in self-esteem on this heady diet of adulation, but his hopes for the future were clouded by financial worries. In a letter to his friend Archdeacon Joseph C. Moore in November, 1848, he writes:

I cannot long remain dependent upon her his mother, and if I cannot procure . . . maintenance at the University, I must enter upon some other employment less congenial to my tastes, but more satisfactory to my finances than literature. My hopes may be, and indeed I fear are, too sanguine, but they can never be realized as a matter of course without making a trial . . .

Brown left school in March, 1849, and read by himself at home, the prospect of a university career still much in doubt. He had gained the Barrow Exhibition from King William's, but this was not enough to see him through. Eventually, through the continued efforts of Archdeacon Moore and others, he was admitted by Dean Gaisford as a servitor at Christ Church, Oxford.

Thus in October, 1849, the proud and ambitious young scholar left
his home for the first time and went up to Oxford, where he was to experience the greatest triumph and undergo the greatest unhappiness of his academic career. It is one of the tragedies of Brown’s life that he should have been forced by circumstances to attend Oxford as a "servitor." These students were no longer required, as they once were, to perform menial services or act as servants, but they were still regarded as "inferiors," with severely restricted privileges and lowered social standing. What this meant to Brown has been thus described by Samuel Norris, his biographer:

The experiences of his servitor days...burned deeply into his sensitive insular soul. I do not think we can measure the full effect of what he then went through—the shy, reserved and inward-communing Kelt...he felt acutely the humiliations... These class distinctions caused within him indignation, smouldering disgust and hatred. This is not too strong. He was at this time strongly, perhaps unduly, sensitive, self-conscious, idealistic. The tremendous adjustment made necessary by the sudden shift from being an admired "head boy" at King William's to being a despised "nobody" at Oxford put him under a constant strain. The shock and bitterness thus generated lasted for 10 years. I agree with F. S. Boas that this episode "strengthened in him the ingrained Keltic antipathy to the conventional rule of life of the English governing class to which his poems often bear witness," and feel that the frequent indications of class consciousness expressed by his alter ego Tom Baynes have their origin in the rankling memory of this experience. It was not overt acts of hostility, but the "absolute unconsciousness" of his existence that galled him most. His intellectual equals, with whom he longed to exchange ideas, were in another world, to which he was denied access. He explains the snobbishness of
the young English gentlemen by saying that they were "bound by the iron links of tradition."

Conscious of his own superiority to the small group in which he was perforce restricted, unable to establish contact with the brighter intellects in other groups, he was driven in upon himself with diverse and lasting consequences. He took the one way open to him to gain recognition—scholarship. In November of his first year he was elected to a Boulter Scholarship, which provided some needed financial assistance. In the fall of 1850 he wrote his mother: "I continue to be tortured by the higher branches of mathematics, into which a wily tutor hath seduced me, and I am enjoying as heartily as ever man did the fun and frolic of Aristophanes." He was at the head of the list in the College examinations that year, and in 1851 he gained a further Exhibition. The lonely hours of study began to bear fruit. In 1852 he took a Second Class in "Moderns," but 1853 was a year of triumph. As a result of examinations in April, he won a First in "Greats." In the Autumn term he won another First in "Law and History." It was a remarkable achievement. With pardonable pride he wrote to his mother in December:

I am the only First; and thus am entitled to the honour of being the first Double First, as I was among the Firsts under the new system. . . Am I justified in recognizing the guidance of Providence in these successes? This last one absolutely places me in the advance of the whole University; for the tutors themselves have said that I occupy the same place relatively to the new system that Sir Robert Peel did to the old. 19

It was a degree of almost unrivalled brilliance. Thus at the end of his four years' existence as a "scrib" he was nominated by the Students and tutors for a Fellowship. Dean Gaisford refused the appointment on the grounds that no servitor had ever been elected a
Fellow, and none ever should be. Rather than a time of rejoicing, Brown has described the night following the announcement of his high honors as "the most miserable I was ever called upon to endure." He said later that the Dean's action showed "how the unceasing persistence in a purely conservative policy may lead a really good man into flagrant injustice and folly."

After this blow, it seemed to Brown that nothing less than the highest honor Oxford had to bestow could make up for his disappointment. He set himself for the competitive examinations for an Oriel Fellowship, "the blue ribbon of Oxford." Let us hear the results in Brown's letter to his mother, dated April 23, 1854:

I am delighted to announce the fact of my success at Oriel. On Friday, I was elected Fellow along with a man of the name of Pearson. The glory of the thing is that to gain a Fellowship at Oriel is considered the summit of an Oxford man's ambition. The Fellows of Oriel are the picked men of the University; and this year there happened to be an unusually large number of very distinguished men in. This is none of your empty honors. It gives me an income of about £300 per ann., as long as I choose to reside at Oxford, and about £220 in cash if I reside elsewhere. In addition to this it puts me in a highly commanding position for pupils, so that on the whole I have every reason to expect that (except perhaps the first year) I shall make between £500 and £600 altogether per ann. So you see, my dear mother, that your prayers have not been unanswered, and that God will bless the generation of those who humbly strive to serve Him. You are now (it is unnecessary to say), if my life is spared, put out of reach of all want, and, I hope, henceforth need never again give yourself a single anxious thought or care about money matters. And what comfort this is, I'm sure I know from my own experience. I have now gained the very summit of my hopes at Oxford; and hope that I may be able to make good use of my position with a view to my future life. But my first thought was and is of you, and the pride which...you may reasonably take in my success...I hope you will accept the Oriel Fellowship as a proof that your son has not as yet lived quite in vain...I have not omitted to remark that the election took place on April 21, the anniversary of your birth and marriage.

The character evidenced by this letter requires no comment. The note of unaffected piety is characteristic of the all-too-few items of personal
correspondence from his early years which remain.

With the major struggle behind him, with a brilliant record and a chance to enjoy the fruits of his labor in comparative ease, Brown might have been expected to remain at Oxford indefinitely. Some students of Brown have regarded his departure after only one year as something of a mystery. Actually, I believe the explanation is quite simple. First, and most obviously, Oxford held too many painful memories. Second, he felt that he owed a debt to his native island. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, he was in love and wanted to get married. Leaving Oxford meant a considerable decrease in his stipend; getting married would mean losing it entirely. Even before winning his Fellowship he had been thinking of returning to the Island. In the spring of 1853 he had written his favorite sister Margaret that he expected to be ordained to some place in the Isle of Man about the following Christmas, and would probably need her as a housekeeper. She seems to have replied that some other girl would probably be willing to undertake those duties. By the spring of 1855 it was an open secret between them that there was another girl, who was occupying his thoughts increasingly—his cousin Amelia Stowell of Ramsey. He was clearly swept off his feet, and wrote to Margaret the most glowing descriptions of his bride-to-be, commenting on her shyness, her gentleness, and her goodness.

Sometime in 1855 Brown was ordained a deacon by Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford. After a few terms of private pupils, he applied for and obtained a position as Vice-Principal of King William's College. He took up bachelor quarters at Derby Haven and pitched into his new job with great enthusiasm. There is some evidence that the young educator had rather
grandiose plans for his old alma mater, hoping to make of her an educational and cultural center that would exert influence throughout the British Isles. The College had given him his start; he would repay her by making her great. Unfortunately, the enthusiastic young reformer encountered that potent and formidable obstacle which faces most innovators—apathy. In 1857 he married Miss Stowell in the little church of Kirk Maughold, the ceremony being performed by his friend W. Warde Fowler, who came to the Island for the occasion. From every indication, the two were perfectly suited to each other, and their marriage was successful by any standard.

Our information concerning the remainder of his stay at King William’s is meager. There are practically no letters between 1855 and 1873. Brown once said to a friend, "For many years... I gave myself up to domestic life and read and wrote practically nothing." The plans for revamping the college seem slowly to have been abandoned. He left the Island in 1861 to become Headmaster of the Crypt School, Gloucester. It was an unfortunate move. Possibly it had become apparent to him that the old position was not commensurate with his abilities, but the new one was not suited to his temperament or his ambitions, and despite the promotion in rank, the undertaking was a failure. Conflicts with the school governors and with parents over matters of school policy and practise made the position unbearable. It is not to our purpose to go into details as to who was right and who was wrong in what Brown referred to with great distaste as "the Gloucester episode." It may be that Brown was simply not suited to serve as administrative head. The single circumstance of interest to us is that he had as a pupil there William
Ernest Henley, who later became one of his editors and most outspoken admirers, and presented many of his former teacher's poems to the public in the pages of the New Review. He has recorded that Brown as master "had a gift of exciting and a gift of teaching." Henley's estimate of his own debt to his former teacher is worth noting:

...he was T.E.B., the man of genius—the first I'd ever seen; and... he took hold upon me with a grip he never knew, and led me out into the nearer distances...to a point I might never have reached without him. What he did for me, practically, was to suggest such possibilities in life and character as I had never dreamed of.

With the year 1863 we have reached a turning-point in Brown's life. Here was a brilliant young man who had made two false starts in his career. He was not getting ahead as he had hoped. He now had a wife and child to support. His last teaching venture was an almost total failure. One more false move might be disastrous. Fortunately, the next move was right in every sense. It took him to Clifton College in the autumn of 1863 in the capacity of second master, Head of the Modern Side, and Housemaster. Clifton had been opened only the previous year, with Dr. Percival, then Bishop of Hereford, as Headmaster. He chanced to ask John Wilson, Brown's lifelong friend, whether he knew of anyone to take the Modern Side. Wilson immediately named Brown, who came over to Rugby for the interview. Wilson's account of this interview is noteworthy.

I warned Brown that he must be on his good behaviour. He did not take my advice. Never was Brown so great. I still remember the Manx songs with their odd discordant pianoforte accompaniment and final shriek; the paradoxes; the torrent of fun and talk; and the stories... Percival, I think, was the first to leave, his usual gravity having been completely shattered. Next morning I asked him, not without anxiety, what he thought of Brown. "Oh, hell do" said Percival. And so he came to Clifton.
There was, however, a second interview. Percival went to Oxford to see him again. "I met him," says Percival, "standing at the corner of St. Mary's Entry, in a somewhat Johnsonian attitude, four-square, his hands keep in his pockets to keep himself still, and looking decidedly volcanic." The two came to terms, and Percival left with Brown's promise to come to Clifton as his colleague at the start of the following term. Thus did Brown's professional career as a teacher really begin, and it ended only with his retirement to Ramsey in his native Island in July, 1892. These were his golden years. It was during this period that he made his real contribution as a teacher, and more significantly for literary students, it was in these years too that he wrote all but a handful of his poetry.

Much of the comment on the poet's Clifton period centers on the rebellious verses entitled "Clifton."

I'm here at Clifton, grinding at the mill
My feet for thrice nine barren years have trod;
But there are rocks and waves at Scarlett still,
And gorse runs riot in Glen Chase—thank God!

(C.P., 78)

Taken as a whole, the poem leaves the impression of a man embroiled in duties which he hated, amid unpleasant surroundings and uncongenial colleagues. J. C. Tarver, a close friend and Clifton colleague, scours the notion that Brown was frustrated and unhappy in his work there:

...half a dozen stanzas written in a fit of ill humor caused by the worry and pressure at the end of term have led people to believe that he was unhappy. ...and found his colleagues uncongenial. This was by no means the case. Like all open-air men he at times was irked by class rooms and routine, nor was he a man with a passion for teaching; he taught, because he thereby earned a living, and accepted the conditions loyally and cheerfully. I do not ever remember hearing him grouse or grumble; he was more apt to me something humorous in a pass-
ing annoyance, than to turn restive; while as to his colleagues he
could not have been better situated."

Doubtless he sometimes felt that impatience of routine and circum-
spect behavior which every schoolmaster has sometimes felt, but to say
that he was actively embittered throughout the years at Clifton is to
give his expression of a momentary mood of annoyance and nostalgia for
his native island greater weight than it deserves. The poem does himself
and his Clifton friends something of an injustice. The earliest MS. is
dated 1869, and in that the second line runs: "My feet for six long
barren years have trod." Yet the poem was published for the first time
in 1893 with "thrice nine" substituted for the original "six," thus
creating the false impression of a final considered appraisal. We can
get a truer picture of his verdict from two remarks made late in life.
The first is recorded in his Diary in 1891: "Clifton, after all, holds
what has been most precious to me in my life, to Clifton then let me de-
vote what remains." The second is in an 1894 letter to S. J. Irwin:
"About Clifton and my attitude toward it— it shifts coquettishly from
time to time, but the direction is polar and ultimately inevitable."

With certain reservations, it may be said that Brown was essentially
happy at Clifton. He meant it, no doubt, when he spoke of "pragmatic
fibs," and complained of "the measured phrase, that asks the assenting
nod." It is probably true, also, that he did sometimes "say the bitter
thing." That part of his nature which was most at home climbing his
native mountains or in watching the sea batter at the cliffs, that
independent and freedom-loving instinct in him must often have rebelled
at the petty detail and the routine in the class-room. His naturalness
and informality, his tendency toward intractability, must frequently have found cause for annoyance in the pattern of formalized conventionality and sober authority which he was called upon to fill. Not often could he freely give vent to his emotions, not often "let himself go" in extolling some current enthusiasm or in denouncing some current grievance. Loving scholarship, a loyal champion of the classics, who defended the study of Greek in almost fanatic terms, he was nevertheless head of the "Modern" side. He complained about "the twaddle of these English scholars" and sometimes flew into a temper at some minor annoyance. Normally, however, he gave an impression of strength and geniality, of untapped energy and breezy vigor. As a poet, he sometimes found it difficult to descend from the stimulation of creative composition to the routine of the daily assignment.

On the other hand, he was playing a part in an activity which he respected. It is hardly credible that he could have formed abiding friendships with his colleagues and inspired enthusiastic admiration in many youngsters, had his customary attitude been one of annoyance or martyrdom. If he had moods when Clifton seemed a prison, he had other moods when the irksome details faded into the background and the essential satisfactions of his position were clearer. No doubt he felt something of the impatience which all creative men are likely to feel with the purely practical concerns of life. He was impatient for freedom. But he was far too sincere and honest to give less than his best to the job which supplied his livelihood. He discharged his duties as housemaster efficiently, tempering sternness with sympathy and understanding. He taught his classes more by the spirit than the letter. He
delivered sermons and lectures at frequent intervals, sometimes creating
a mild sensation by reason of his faculty for saying the unexpected.

His friends were loyal and admiring almost to the point of idolatry,
but they were comparatively few in number. In these years Brown was
neither a "mixer" nor a "joiner" in the usual sense, but was completely
absorbed by his duties, his poetry, and above all, his wife and child-
ren. Wilson indicates the extent of this domestic preoccupation:

Far above all other calls of the social life came his wife and family.
To them he was devoted in affection; exclusive to a remarkable degree
both in term time and holidays. He kept aloof from Bristol and Clifton
society. He did not entertain. He scarcely looked at newspapers. He
took no part in "movements," educational or other, in the city. He
never preached except to the school. He was practically unknown,
merely a unit in a large staff. But in the school society he was the
very reverse.24

I believe we can best round out this picture of Brown at Clifton
through excerpts from his own letters. In the first he is writing to an
old Cliftonian who wishes to become a writer, and has asked for his ad-
vice about the desirability of teaching simultaneously. Brown answers
in this way:

"You don't care for school work"—but I fear there is no choice. I
demur to your statement that when you take up schoolmastering your
leisure for this kind of thing [creative writing] will be practically
gone. Not at all. If you have the root of the matter in you... the
school work will insist upon this kind of thing as a relief. My plan
always was to recognize two lives as necessary—the one the outer
kapelistic life of drudgery, the other the inner and cherished life of
the spirit. It is true that the one has a tendency to kill the other,
but it must not, and you must see that it does not.

It's an awfully large order, but we really need three lives—the
life of pedagogic activity, as strenuous as you like; the social life
nicely arranged, and kept in hand, but never regarded as serious; and
the intellectual and spiritual life.

The pedagogic is needful for bread and butter, also for a certain
form of joy; of the inner life you know what I think; the social life
is required of us and must be managed. You had better act on the
supposition that you are never to make your bread and butter by any-
thing but schoolmastering. That supposition, amounting to a con-
viction, will keep you hard at it. Make quite sure of that depart-
ment. Your inner work had better be kept as a solace.

One thing that I always felt about my own verses, if I may refer to
myself, was the hope that some day my friends . . . might accept them as
human pledges, and, by a certain retrospective sympathy, bear me upon
their hearts. This has largely happened to me, and is now the source
of my greatest happiness. When the time comes for publication . . .
nothing will have happened to your verses to make them fail of their
full effect . . . As regards publication, now or hereafter, there is but
one way open—the work must be sent to a publisher, who, or his read-
er, will treat you with the utmost indifference, except in so far as
they judge the work good. The first encounter with them is horrible:
the coldest sensation, the feeling of utter friendlessness; very like
what death must be, that final sensation in which we are destined to
be absolutely alone . . . man can't live by "sonnets" alone, and no
publisher will look at you on the other side of the street till he is
quite satisfied there "is money" in you. That is their hideous
phrase.  

This is wise counsel, and represents the genuine considered judg-
ment of the man more accurately than some other statements which he
blurted out in moments of annoyance. As examples of the latter (in
addition to the "Clifton" verses, which we shall consider later): "It
was no mood that season takes away or brings. My whole life is in Clif-
ton, a life steadfastly or normally rebellious against the calling to
which circumstances had compelled me." Or consider this complaint
written late in life, with tongue only partly in cheek:

"God only knows the depths of my ignorance. You see the life of a
schoolmaster is a perfect death unto learning. It develops certain
muscles, unduly perhaps—physical and mental. But the intellect—and
the heart perish. Look at a dried-up smuffy toadstool! That is the
"schoolmaster of many years' standing." What will you do with it?
Well, the fact is you unconsciously . . . kick it, and the fungus
powder goes near to blinding you.

Not many people at Clifton were aware that Brown was working away
at his poems throughout his years there. On rare occasions he read
excerpts from one of the yarns to the boys in his "House" without
indicating their authorship. Only a few intimates realized the extent
of his poetic productivity. His first major effort, "Betsy Lee," had been published in an expurgated form by Macmillan's as early as 1873, but it was anonymous, and his authorship was not generally known.

In April, 1876, occurred an event which nearly overwhelmed Brown in personal grief—the death of his beloved son Braddan. His extremely close, almost exclusive concern with his wife and children increased the severity of the blow. Wilson describes the wife as being "both gifted and charming, but incurably shy and retiring from society. During my time at Clifton they and their children formed a very happy but somewhat self-sufficing family. The death...from neglected scarlet fever, of his youngest son, seven years old, a boy of remarkable charm and promise, cast on Brown a deep and permanent shadow." The depth of that shadow may best be seen in the heart-broken stanzas of "Aber Stations."

Slowly he recovered an outward composure, and continued with his school duties and the growing collection of Yarns. In 1879, Percival was succeeded as Headmaster at Clifton by James Maurice Wilson. Brown was passed over in the appointment, and, in my opinion, it was by his own wish. He showed not the slightest trace of jealousy or resentment. He knew something of the annoyances that a headship could bring, and he jealously guarded his few spare moments for his family and composition. During the Christmas holidays of 1879-80, he took that trip to Rome which resulted in the fine series of character studies entitled "Roman Women."

In 1881, Macmillan's published an anonymous volume containing four long narrative poems in the Anglo-Manx dialect under the title Fo'c's'le Yarns. These yarns were received quite favorably, and there was some
speculation about their authorship, but Brown remained hidden. The labor of getting this sizable body of poems through the press, in addition to his regular duties, resulted in physical exhaustion. He went to Seaton, in South Devon, and thence to Switzerland on a three-month leave of absence. In the following winter he was again bereaved by the death of his younger brother Alfred. In May of 1883 he went to Lugano, and then after a rare visit to Oriel, spent his summer vacation with the Wilsons in Cumberland. During these years he was beginning to indulge the taste for travel which he had formerly suppressed. Another three-month holiday in 1884 he divided between the Isle of Man and the Lake District, where he went with Dakyns. The following year is chiefly remarkable for the fact that after so many years' delay, he was ordained as priest. He re-visited Italy and spent some time in the Isle of Wight and at Keswick. In February of 1886 he felt a severe sense of loss at the death of his brother Hugh in Liverpool. He went to Penmaenmawr in Wales and tramped alone for days in the Carneddus, seeking for that sense of relief and consolation which the mountains always seemed to give him in times of stress.

In 1887 his longest and probably his best narrative poem, The Doctor, was published by Sonnenschein. Of greater concern to the poet was the fact that his wife's health, which had never been robust, began visibly to fail, precipitating the greatest spiritual struggle of his life. In May of 1888 he wrote to Margaret:

Amelia's illness has taken a very dangerous turn. . . The disease is peritonitis supervening upon, possibly caused by, the intestinal disease from which she has now so long been suffering. . .

* * * * * * *

How hard it all seems! Yet out of the bitter comes the sweet. Thank
God, never in all my life did I feel more closely the certainty that all is well. The scales of a materialism, never native to my constitution, seem to fall from my eyes, and I see, dimly enough it is true, but irrefragably, the things unseen. It is only a question of degree; one day it will all go, and oh, the waking! There is no doubt about this in my mind. Death is merely the instrument of transition; nay, it is hardly even a transition.

It is not to be supposed that the tone of acceptance and resignation evident in this letter was achieved quickly or easily; too many of the lyrics contain evidence to the contrary.

His wife died on July 3, 1888, and after the funeral Brown went off alone to Ullswater, in the Cumberland Mountains, where he climbed Helvellyn and mourned her loss: "I almost felt the cairn could breathe some answer to me. There was not a soul near, unless, indeed, [Amelia] was herself there: and I often feel as if she was, and was smiling very sweetly, not without a tinge of humour at all my poor weary longings."

This feeling of the mystical presence of the departed came to him at intervals during the remainder of his life. As late as 1892 he records a walk over the mountains to visit Hall Caine: "...on the hill I had the vision so dear to me, and Amelia came to me and streamed into my heart..."

Back at Clifton, with painful recollections of Braddan and Amelia on every hand, he returned to teaching and writing. In 1889 a second edition of Fo'c's'le Yarns appeared, along with a new collection of narratives, The Manx Witch and Other Poems. That summer he visited the Island again, and climbed Braddan with the children. The old longing to return to the Island permanently came back stronger than ever. During the summer of 1891 his last surviving brother died. He became increasingly conscious of approaching old age. In January of 1892 he suffered
a hard attack of influenza which shattered his nervous system, and from
which he recovered but slowly, and on July 2 of this year he closed his
long career at Clifton.

He returned to the Isle of Man to take up residence in his last home
at No. 10 Windsor Mount, Ramsey. For a time he was completely content,
enjoying the luxury of having nothing to do. He took interminable
rambles all over the island, renewing old acquaintances and making new
ones. In the comfort of his study, with a pipe and whisky beside him,
he read voraciously. "This reading," said Brown, "is Iddesleian: ne
method, very delightful." Considerable time was devoted to what he
called "repetition," that is, committing vast passages of favorite poems
to memory: "Idleness and emptiness are banished, and it is with a good
packet of sound and wholesome stuff that I hope to stagger up at last to
33 St. Peter's wicket."

Brown's energy was now devoted almost exclusively to the task of
making himself an authority on all things Manx. He read and wrote about
it; he gave lectures in the principal cities of the Island; he wrote
articles for the newspapers. It was an attempt to set down in factual
prose the vast wealth of information which had gone into the Fo'c'sle
Yarns. There is something slightly ludicrous and at the same time a
little sad in considering this classical scholar and poet devoting
himself so wholeheartedly to the minutiae of local history and folklore.

As time went by, Brown began to express in his letters a sense of
isolation, of being cut off from intellectual companionship. The next
year after his retirement he wrote to Irwin: "This life is a producer
and conserver of egotism. Hang it all! if schoolmastering is but a sorry
business, at any rate it mixes you up with your contemporaries and
compels you to take account of them." The truth is that Brown had at
last returned home only to find that something in himself had changed,
and the expected joy was tinged with sadness. The island was much the
same; the change was in the man. The change from the ways and habits of
English life brought first rejoicing, then a sense of lack. "Man cannot
live by garrulity alone," he confessed. "The truth dawns upon me that
my Oxford and Clifton life has wrought something in me that is neither
Manx nor Metropolitan, and that I am not as self-sufficing as I had
35
imagined." Is not this the expression of an essentially lonely man?
How few were the people with whom he could converse on equal terms!
I would not suggest for a moment that his love for the Island grew less.
It always had the strongest claim to his affection. But he began more
and more to see the reality instead of the dream. In a sense he "out-
grew" the Island and could view it with objectivity.

Only a comparatively small number of poems were written during his
retirement. The major publication of these years was Old John and Other
Poems in 1893, the volume which contained the bulk of his hitherto un-
published lyrics. During these years also he preached occasionally,
usually as a favor for some brother clergyman. His relationship with the
Church had never been very close. It is true that after his ordination
as Priest by the Bishop of Gloucester in 1884, he had been licensed to
the curacy of St. Barnabas in Bristol, and held the position for three
years. In 1886 he had been nominated for the Archdeaconry, but refused
the post. In 1894 the Archdeaconry of Man was again offered to him by Mr.
Asquith. Many of his friends urged him to accept, but again he declined.

To his friend A. W. Moore he states his reasons for refusing.

I seek no preferment anywhere, certainly not in the Isle of Man. At some cost I have purchased my freedom, and will not lightly part with it. It is a case of "From Egypt’s bondage came." A few years will have finished the business, and I must be free—free to do what I like, say what I like, write what I like, within the limitations prescribed by me by my own sense of what is seemly and fitting. Literature is my calling, and that in the most liberal interpretation, ranging from Die hohe Kritik to such lucubrations as "The Gel of Bal-lasallaw". . . . To hold up the mirror to my fellow-countrymen comes natural to me; and in the more open field of invention I am not without hope of giving them pleasure. Every man should follow the bent of his own nature in art and letters, always provided that he does not offend against the rules of morality and good taste. But an archdeacon must submit to other and more cramping restraints. Good taste alone would cancel half my writings as the production of an ecclesiastical dignitary. The great Archdeacon of Oxford is no model for a divine of the nineteenth century.

Not often did he leave the Island. In 1894 he went to Bayreuth for the music festival, and visited Wagner’s home and the graves of Liszt and Richter. He spent some time in Switzerland and England before returning home. In 1896 he was in England again to visit his friends. On October 1, 1897, he left the Island for the last time. For a week he visited with Wollaston and others at Clifton, spent another week with his sister Margaret and her husband, the Rev. John Williamson, in Cardiff, and then came back to Clifton on the 25th. On the 27th he attended a concert, and on the 29th, while giving an informal address to the boys at Clifton, he was suddenly stricken and died with two hours. On November 1 he was buried beside his wife in the Churchyard of Redland Chapel, Bristol.

A flood of eulogy, marked by a deep and sincere note of personal loss, followed his passing. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch’s sentiments were echoed by many others: "A week ago. . . . the Rev. T. E. Brown died.
suddenly from the bursting of a blood-vessel in the brain; and so at a stroke a great hear ceased to beat; a well of poetry which, without gushing, had run clear and undefiled, was dry. . . . I propose, by-and-by, to give one or two reasons why we admired his poetry; but undoubtedly the first and chief reason was that we admired and loved the man." The circumstance has colored their criticism, and has perhaps affected the reputation of the poems about which they wrote.

Through his poems, his letters, his reported conversations with friends, one can come to know Brown intimately. Yet no two people ever saw exactly the same qualities in him, nor interpreted his character in quite the same way. Quiller-Couch has attempted to define "the Brownian spirit": "Humour was of it; burly intolerance of sham and meanness was of it; religion, too, with more than a touch of salutary contempt for religiosity; and humanity was of it; and a noble ferocity of affection for noble things." Henley has summed up his impressions in the oft-quoted sonnet entitled simply "T.E.B."

He looked half-parson and half-skipper; a quaint,
Beautiful blend, with blue eyes good to see
And old-world whiskers. You found him cynic, saint,
Salt, humorist, Christian, poet; with a free
Far-glancing luminous utterance; and a heart
Large as St. Francis's; withal a brain
Stored with experience, letters, fancy, art,
And scored with runes of human job and pain.
B. Brown the Letter-Writer.

Brown's letters are of interest and value to any student of his life or his poetry. They provide a wealth of information, not only concerning his daily comings and goings, but about the workings of his mind and the adventures of his spirit. He was not given to euphemism or subterfuge, and his comments on people, books, ideas, or movements are brisk and outspoken, fresh and original. Something of the complexity of his personality shows through the shifting variety of style—now abrupt and caustic, now melancholy, now whimsical or bubbling with boyish fun. He mixes non-pedantic but rather formal English with a liberal sprinkling of Latin, Greek, or any of a half dozen modern languages. He loved to crown a Homeric simile with a vigorous slang phrase or a Manx colloquialism. Whatever his subject, he is never dull.

Brown's correspondence was voluminous. The exact number of letters still extant is unknown. S. T. Irwin has some 296 letters in whole or part in his collection, plus some undated fragments; the Memorial Volume has 34 more hitherto unpublished, and Norris in his biography adds nine more. Cubbon's bibliography lists some 85 other unpublished letters. These last are now in the Manx Museum and Library. Another small group of letters are in the Manchester Reference Library, and many others are known to exist. According to Cubbon, Hall Caine was said to have in his possession more than the total in the Museum, about 250. These have never been published. The more than 400 letters already in print tell us much about the man, but not so much about the poet as we might hope or expect; references to his own poems, to his plans for composition or
publication, to his methods, at cetera, are remarkably few in number.

All but a very of these letters, which extend from his undergraduate days in 1851 to a few days before his death in 1897, were written during the last third of his life. Except for four short notes, there is a gap from 1854 to 1874. After the latter date he wrote letters with increasing frequency, as is indicated by the fact that the entire second volume of his Letters was written during the last four years of his life. Sidney Irwin begins the "Introductory Memoir" which prefaces his two-volume edition of the letters by saying:

...of the most characteristic of these letters it may be said that they do not resemble any others to be found in literature. This does not of necessity imply an attempt to place the writer in the highest class of letter-writers, or indeed to place him at all. ...It is enough to claim...what cannot be claimed for the letters of every man of genius, that their individuality and variety are a perpetual surprise...even to those who knew the writer best.

William Ernest Henley, who can always be relied upon to employ superlatives when speaking of Brown's poetry, is no less enthusiastic about the letters: "The T.E.B. of these Letters is, despite his immense humanity and his admirable alertness, his immitigable felicity of phrase, a master apart; a writer...who is looking, not so much for a public here and now, as for the high place which must be his in the shining and immortal hierarchy of English Literature."

It should perhaps be noted that many letters which have only limited interest for the casual reader who perhaps knows nothing of Brown, must have been much richer in meaning for Henley and other intimate friends. "Victorian" reticence affected Brown hardly at all—and because it did not, his friends were troubled and hesitant about publishing the letters. His frankness, his "penetrating vigor," as Irwin calls it, his habit of speak-
ing his mind openly, must have been a sore trial to his editor as he
tried to represent the essential Brown and still remain strictly within
the limits of a rather restricted sense of propriety and avoid offence
to all. He is perhaps to be commended for venturing to publish them
even in an expurgated form. Many contemporary readers insisted that
they were too intimate and confidential to permit of reproduction.

The present-day reader is likely to be annoyed more than once in the
course of reading these volumes, and his annoyance will be directed, not
at the author, but at the editor. He will discover many letters in which
the editor has ruthlessly chopped out what is obviously the most interesting
or revealing passages. He will find a superabundance of M____s and
E____s and other alphabetical ghosts. With these names supplied, the remarks may have considerable interest; without them, they are often quite
meaningless. They miss fire simply because we need those few words of
explanation which the editor failed to supply. What we have lost in wit
and humor through the exercise of "scrupulous delicacy" on the part of the
editor, we can only conjecture. The lack of a table of contents and an
adequate index need not be exasperating to the general reader. There are
many things in these letters which can be relished without regard to identifications and such "scholarly" concerns. It is to these we must turn if
we are to catch that special flavor which is their trade-mark.

What is this quality in his work which we recognize as being person-
ally and uniquely Brown's? It is singularly difficult to describe. In
speaking of the letters of Fitzgerald, Brown once said: "He takes you
with him, exactly accommodating his pace to yours, walks through meadows
so tranquil, and yet abounding in the most delicate surprises. And these
surprises seem so familiar, just as if they had originated with your-
self. What delicious blending! What a perfect interweft of thought and
diction! What a sweet companion! " These lines are accurately descrip-
tive of Brown's own letters. His life, certainly, was as "isolated" and
unspoiled as Fitzgerald's. One is tempted to make more sweeping compari-
sions between the two men: in intellectual power, in temperament, in love
of music and books, in linguistic facility, in shyness, scholarliness,
fondness for rural life and many other characteristics they shared
common ground. But while their letters are comparable in their charm,
their intimacy, their whimsicality, I seem to find in Brown's a somewhat
more tempestuous, more "volcanic" personality. There is in the Manxman
more homely humor, more flashes of wit, and a stronger addiction to
pathos.

Perhaps the most characteristic element of the letters is what one
might call "unpredictability." Just when you think you have him tagged,
he is up and away in a new direction, with a corresponding change in mood
and diction. At one moment he lapses into dialect to recount a humorous
anecdote; the next moment he is the pastor, uttering words of consolation
to a grieving friend; the next he is the scholar, commenting on a passage
in Ariosto or advancing a novel interpretation of the Odyssey. He describes
a walk in the marshes with as much gusto as he does the attack of a party
of American tourists. To the reader unfamiliar with Brown, nothing can
take the place of a first-hand view of the letters themselves. Here, for
example, is Brown in a jovial mood of elaborate exaggeration:

The Island swarms with Yankees. I had four of them last Monday, two
yesterday. Mother and daughter had a car ready at the door. Bore me
away swiftly inevitable [sic] to Maughold. The rape of Proserpine was:
a fool to it. I was Ceres' daughter, rapta Diti, gathering some silly violets or candida lilia in my study. I was surprised. Help, help, O heaven! Raptor agit currus. I had to go. . . . I was a "gone coon." I had to show them Kirk Maughold, its runes, its well. . . . The younger woman was an authoress ("This is the authoress"—so her mother introduced La belle dame sans merci.) The authoress was as sharp as a needle. . . . Alas! alas! This ravishing had circumstances of great cruelty, had it not? I struggled; I put up silent vows. . . . I hesitate, I boggle. In vain I pointed to the innocent runes, in vain I sought to divert their fury by indicating Barrule. Barrule was clear, pitilessly clear, and smiled upon my undoing. Americanae, Americanae! spare me, daughters of Atlas! 43

In a tone of droll sarcasm, he advises a friend who has shown some indications of laziness:

That's right! Take care of yourself. Reduce yourself as far as may be to the life of a zoöphyte. Do absolutely nothing. There are a thousand tricks by which you can affect to be doing something. . . . But in reality do nothing. That's your tip. If we were together I could show you exactly how it is done. . . . It is pleasant to me to think how useful I can be to a young friend. Sir, I shall not have lived in vain. 44

In very different moods, we have his description of the Eternal City or his discussion of a current project for reforming popular musical taste in the Island. In one letter devoted to this latter project he says: "It needs only a very slight hint to set me off on the road to sheer and untamable and dissolute heathendom. Bedad, sorr, it's niver very far from me at the best of times—just a bit of a wall to jump over, and there you are, free and happy, and most vulgarly unconditioned." 45

As a single example of his vivid observations of people, consider this picture of two girls he met in Switzerland:

A girl on the Como boat. . . . was a marvel of physical beauty. With her was her lover, not handsome, and a goose. But who would not have been a goose for such a face? Still, of tenderness not one suggestion—all fire, and not celestial fire either. Ah, goose! goose! poor singed goose! onion-stuffed perchance! what fate will be his with that splendid siamander? An awful climate, isn't it? A terrible soil that seems to throw out these human pomegranate blooms in a moment. She looked as if she had just been born—bless her—and her goose! nay, a goose must take care of himself. Very different from this fire-angel, flame-winged, liter—
ally burning coal of beauty, with her pretensions, her mantilla, her ready, prompt meeting of all eyes, was an absolutely celestial creature, that I met the other day, bearing her big basket, containing manure (I think). This girl smiled at me, a distinct good sweet smile—now is not that marvellous? At me. Just like a flower—she saw me before her, no other man—and it was necessary to smile. Derision? Good God! no: like the flowers, Duft, pollen—you know about those things. . . .The eyes were of a colour which I cannot determine, and I like such eyes; the fact is, they look at you, they melt down through the whole gamut of colour and leave off with a tongue of softer fire. . . .As I have not yet come upon any gentians, I accept this girl in lieu of all gentians and other Alpine glories.

No selection of passages from the letters can fail to give at least one sample of the innumerable bits of nature description. I have chosen this excerpt from a letter written from the Swiss Alps:

Mürren faces the Jungfrau. . . .It seems so near that you fancy a stone might be thrown across to it. . . .So the Jungfrau vis-à-vis-ès you frankly through the bright sweet intervening air. And then she has such moods; such unutterable smiles, such inscrutable sulks, such growls of rage suppressed, such thunder of avalanches, such crowns of stars. One evening our sunset was the real rose-pink. . . .It fades. . . .into a deathlike chalk-white. That is the most awful thing. A sort of spasm seems to come over her face, and in an instant she is a corpse, rigid, and oh so cold! Well, so she died, and you felt as if a great soul had ebbed away into the Heaven of Heavens. . . .

Then, later in the evening, his wife calls him to the window to look again:

What a Resurrection—so gentle, so tender—like that sonnet of Milton's about his dead wife returning in a vision! The moon had risen; and there was the Jungfrau—oh chaste, oh blessed saint in glory everlasting! Then all the elemental spirits that haunt crevasses, and hover around peaks, all the patient powers that bear up the rock buttresses, and labour to sustain great slopes, all streams, and drifts, and there, unheard perhaps, unheard, I will not deny it; but there, nevertheless. . . .The abyss below was a pot of boiling blackness, and on to this, and down into this, and all over this, the moonlight fell as meal falls to porridge from nimbly sifting fingers. Moon-meal! That was it.

Out of sunset and moonlight and a mountain peak does he thus fashion a drama.

At another time, and in a very different frame of mind, he wrote:
Politics move me not. There is nothing architectonic in this science, from my point of view. I couldn't help laughing at a passage in Sismondi I happened to be reading... "Man is the product of laws and institutions," and so forth. What absolute rot! The political function does not require genius, or any brilliancy even; nay, it is better to have it entirely dissociated from all such lure. Derby and Carnarvon would steer us through this strait infinitely better if that old virtuoso [Disraeli] were not upon the bridge—blow him! We only want a certain material fence drawn round the garden of our life. We can't waste anything very precious or beautiful upon such a wallum. Pitch honest stakes, and let stout ditchers delve. The genius is wanted for other purposes.

Rightly or wrongly, he gives little evidence of any widespread interest in the major currents of political or social happenings, preferring to focus his attention upon the life immediately around him. I am not sure how much irony may lurk in such a remark as this, for example:

You might call this a quiet place, but I find it full of all the sins and all the frailties. I look for them, you know, turn over every stone, and expose the grubs and beetles—they are awfully interesting, the only entomology I care for.

If you are well-to-do, and tolerably stupid, nicely married, and all that, you might lie on the burning lake and tuck the blankets around you. Is there not asbestos? and why make yourself miserable?

Another change of pace, and we find him in raptures over the beauty of Lynton and a morning plunge in the bay, or attempting to explain why he has not been a "man of affairs." Once begun, the temptation is great to go on and on, citing passage after passage in an attempt to convey something of the freshness, the charm, the variety of these letters. From a strictly literary standpoint, they must remain secondary to the poems; but because they are a part of the total picture of Brown as a literary figure, and because they make a significant contribution to our appreciation and understanding of the poems and the man behind them, they must retain an essential place in the Brown canon. In addition to their interest as letters, and as an indirect light on the man and his poetry,
these letters have a rather specialized interest in that they contain the bulk of Brown's critical pronouncements on the literature of both past and present. It is to Brown as a critic that we must now briefly turn our attention.
Brown never pretended to be, and indeed was not, a methodical or systematic critic. But he certainly had a strong addiction to the printed page, and spent a large part of his time either reading books or talking about them. That talk is always interesting, and frequently discerning and incisive. Certainly he had the scholarly background requisite to informed criticism. In a mood of temporary annoyance with the tyranny of books Brown once said, "I am beginning to think it would have been much better for the world if no books had ever been written—scrawling scribbles on the walls of the eternal silence—ah, blast them! What sap of life have they not wrung and baked and cheese-pressed out of me!" There is no trace of the pedant in him, but so extensive and so frequent exposure to the scholarly virus inevitably left traces in his work, and his writings occasionally presuppose a degree of scholarship in both reader and writer well above the average. He concealed his learning so remarkably in the narratives that he became confused in the popular mind with his uneducated narrator Tom Baynes. After the publication of Old John and Other Poems in 1893, Brown wrote in a tone of amused consternation:

...how funny it is that so many people are surprised that I can write decent English verse! They have focussed me as a dialectic poet, a man of the people, imperfectly educated, and so forth; and they seem rather impatient at my venturing in a new and more cultivated field. What ought I to do? Shall I put on my next title-page—"Late Fellow of Oriel," &c.? Or am I always to abide under this ironic cloak of rusticity?

The cloak was ironic, but he had woven it himself with deliberate and
loving care.

The scholarship which began in youth, as he read interminably (and sometimes under protest) from a variety of authors ancient and modern, gradually produced in him that faculty of objective observation so essential to the writer who would portray the life of a society realistically, or interpret its literature fairly. His approach to the classics was often as original as his approach to more recent literature. Once he was asked to translate at sight a dialogue between two non-Athenians in one of the plays of Aristophanes. He translated one of the two into an Irish brogue and the other into a broad Scotch. Such playfulness did not prevent serious appreciation. "Ah, sir, that Greek stuff penetrates!" Brown once said to a friend. Certainly it "penetrated" him, and his admiration for the great literary landmarks, his sense of their supreme importance to the well-being of civilization, never left him: "There is nothing which I should dread more for England and for the world, than that we should cut ourselves off from great books." It seems clear that if Brown were living today, he would be among the staunchest supporters of the "Great Books" program. He would be aghast that our students are forced to make the acquaintance of his revered classics, if at all, through the medium of translation. He was once asked what he thought of the proposal to set up an English Literature school at Oxford, and his answer left little doubt that his thinking on this subject ran counter to contemporary trends. Anything that would draw good men away from the classics was to be deprecated. Besides, "the twaddle of these English scholars is endless... Once let them in and won't they go it?"

Likewise, when asked his opinion of
making Greek an elective at Clifton, he guessed that such an action would fill the school to overflowing, "But it would be detestable treachery to the cause of education, of humanity." His stand of these questions never wavered.

Virgil and Horace were among his special favorites. This enthusiastic comment on the *Ars Poetica* is typical:

I would steep every one, I would steep myself in that supreme bath of criticism. I hardly think of it and its early impression on me without tears... More than criticism—life, energy, sincerity... I feel that I had known Horace in the flesh, had been his pupil—no plagiarus Orbilius he, but an old friend, wise and kind and interested in me. Oh, if I had had such a one.

In another place he avows that he could live on the Island forever with a Horace. To Anne K. Tuell, this contention suggests "the special compound of learning and power of unlearning which was one secret of Brown's difference from others." But the Horace was a necessity. It is not to be supposed that he gave all his reading time to the classics. He roamed far and wide. A simple listing of the books he marked out for special study would require several pages. In his study of the works of the past he tried to gain what he called "retrospective vision," to put himself into a frame of mind appropriate to the milieu of the work, to read it as nearly as possible the way a contemporary would have read it. This meant, in part, reading it in the original language—he proposed learning Russian just so he could read *Anna Karenina* properly; the French translation did not satisfy him. In general, however, his scholarship was no more systematic than his criticism. In either case he followed the "soaking"method. This meant just the opposite of imposing a preconceived set of principles or even of his own will. He
employs the terms "surrender" and "submission" in describing his approach to the great landmarks of literature, but with contemporary literature he could be both curt and business-like. He was never swayed in his judgment of the merit of a given work by either public acclaim or public antipathy toward it.

It is doubtful that Brown ever thought of himself as a critic in the professional sense. He published little criticism. For the most part, his appraisals are informal, impressionistic, sprightly bits imbedded in letters to friends. These provide some valuable insights into his sense of literary values, his likes and dislikes. They show also his sense of humor, his moral outlook, his penchant for the witty or whimsical phrase. On occasion he could be caustic or biting, but rarely is he consciously cruel; he would much rather praise than blame. Perhaps the most discerning brief statement about Brown's criticism was made by Quiller-Couch when he said, "To scholarship. . . . imposed upon and penetrating a taste naturally catholic, we owe the rare flavour of the many literary judgments scattered about his letters. They have a taste of native earth, beautifully rarefied: to change the metaphor, they illuminate the page with a kind of lambent common sense." It is a fortunate phrase, this "lambent common sense." It characterizes Brown, not only in his critical judgments, but in his total approach to life. Add to this that he wrote with enthusiasm, and that his taste was keen. He did not have the edge of his taste dulled by the necessity of writing on order. He wrote only on what interested him, and he was free to write as little or as much as he liked, how and when he liked. The result is a spontaneous and impulsive style, and impressions caught
fresh in the first glow of discovery.

Sometimes it is the seemingly impertinent off-hand remark which probes to the heart of the matter at hand; his concluding query, for example, in an article on the author of The Complete Angler: "Could you have trusted him with a baby, if some one had told him that a bit of baby was excellent fish-bait?" Or consider his appreciation of Swift's Tale of a Tub: "The hearty cursing goes straight to my midriff—so satisfying, the best of tonics." Or his judgment on the Review of Reviews: "In a dreadful ancillary, i.e. scullery, back-kitcheny way, it ministers miscellaneous pabulum, on which it is not impossible to feed."

One characteristic quality of his criticism is that of mingling words of praise even with his harshest attacks, as when he writes in a state of great excitement about Cowper, who had shocked him by his callous theology. He was a great admirer of Carlyle, and was deeply moved by his death in 1881, but could not state in so many words what that fiery critic of his age had meant to him—"one mumbles something between one's teeth. . .something about a 'Baptism of fire'." "I think Dante is monotonous," he confides, "but what a monotone! He drowns you in a dream, and you never want to wake." He preferred Ariosto to Spenser: "the hard enamel of this Italian reprobate pleases me better than Spenser with his soft velvet carpet, on which you walk ankle-deep in the moss of yielding allegory." Byron, "with all his gin-sling and democratic bosh," he found worthy of high praise. His love for Flaubert was deeper and longer lasting, and the short stories of Alphonse Daudet made him long to write one perfect short story. (He never succeeded.) He admired Burns for his lyric freshness, his essential honesty, his
humor, and above all, his pathos—"Hardly any man shakes my very guts like him."

At the core of his criteria as he approached a literary work was a demand that it be true to life, that the characters act like living human beings. If these requirements were not met, he rated the work as inferior, whatever values of other kinds it might possess. He did not insist that the life presented be genteel, or edifying, or "pretty"—with mere "prettiness," in fact, he had little to do. But at the same time he was a strenuous optimist, and literature dominated by a philosophy of defeatism or hopelessness was more likely to awaken in him a feeling of pity for the author than praise for the presentation.

A broad and deep sense of humor colors much of his criticism. Broad earthy humor was as acceptable as refined wit, provided always that it did not indulge in nastiness for its own sake. His general reactions, it must be confessed, are more likely to be emotional than intellectual. If this trait prevented his becoming a methodical and analytical critic, it contributed much to his equipment as a lyric poet. Courage, boldness, manliness, vigor—these are qualities he singles out for special praise time and again, even when they are combined with sentiments he does not personally approve. With some exceptions and qualifications, Brown tended to be troubled by works dominated by satire and cynicism. When he himself thought or wrote of human beings, it was always in terms of "we"—never of "they." Whenever he sensed that an author was setting himself apart from his characters, regarding them as cardboard figures to be mocked or sneered at, we can feel Brown recoil automatically. Cold-blooded meant inhuman, and above all things else, Brown was profound—
ly human. In view of his membership in the intellectual aristocracy, it is rather surprising to find in his work the unspoken assumption that a certain non-scholarly "amateurishness" of approach was essential to the creation of deep, genuine, and universal literature. Following a comparison of Tennyson and Burns he said: "By becoming scholars we have gained something; but we have lost—I had almost said—everything."

Aside from the "incidental" criticism which appears in the letters, Brown wrote several articles for publication which present his considered judgments on individual authors. He calls these "causeries," and the term is appropriate to their informal, chatty style. They are not written for the specialist, but seem designed to encourage other readers to discover for themselves the pleasure which the author has obviously found in his subject. One of his favorite methods in these pieces is to set up comparisons, and play one author off against another: Sidney and Petrarch, Spenser and Ariosto, Robert Burton and Sir Thomas Browne, Jonson and Shakespeare. He applies his common sense to the most involved literary problems. Speaking of Spenser's aversion to the noise and animal spirits of the Renaissance stage, dominated, as he thought, by a gang of illiterate brawlers, Brown sighs sympathetically: "Ah, Edmund Spenser, what world are you thinking of?" If he smiled at pastoralism as hopelessly artificial and decadent, he tended to consider satire the result of gastric disturbances. "All satire," he says somewhere, "is bile."

He considered it essential for an author to get "inside" his work and live through the experiences along with his characters. The author
must know his subject inside out, or he will be guilty of false notes. Clearly, in Brown's opinion, the naturalist who selected from life only the ugly, the brutal, the gross, was just as much guilty of distortion as the sentimentalist who selected only the picturesque and charming. Cynicism is "the universal tar-brush." His was the middle way. Realism to him meant "life as it is"—and that, to be worthwhile, must include large quantities of love. The author may move through quagmires of foulness, but if he is protected by a strong inoculation of love for his fellows, he will never succumb to the disease of impurity. He may be as passionate as he likes, and love will protect him from coarseness. Those readers who are unduly alarmed by any portrayal of passion in literature are "troglobytes." "Let them suspect themselves and the coarseness of the extremely rudimentary ethical sense which is the source of their perplexity." Thus spoke the Victorian parson-poet.

One reviewer has said of the freshness and originality of his criticism: "He approaches a volume as if he were the first man to open the covers." A fine comment, that, as is the remark with which the same writer closed his review: "He never yawned." By the same token, the reader of his criticism will often be introduced to a familiar book as if for the first time—and he will seldom yawn. He may curse or applaud, but he will not go to sleep.

Insofar as Brown can be said to have had a critical "creed," he is in general agreement with the dominant tone of criticism and poetic theory as advocated and practised during his creative period. His emphasis, like that of other contemporary critics, was on content rather than on form. With regard to the nature of the poetic impulse,
he largely discounted the imitative element and stressed the imaginative. He adhered to the theory that poetry was fundamentally an emotional experience, for both poet and reader. His judgments are based upon an enlightened common sense, aided by keen insight and sensitivity. He believed wholeheartedly that the poet must "keep his eye on the object." He placed character portrayal above description or style as an indication of an author's worth. If the characterization was "fuzzy," inconsistent, or untrue to human nature, nothing could redeem the work. With the concept of organic form he was in basic agreement. No limitations were to be imposed on the poet's choice of topic except that it must be true to nature, and conform to certain liberal standards of decency and good taste. The attitude of the poet frequently influenced his evaluation of the poem. The slightest evidence of insincerity, morbidity, insolence, or condescension was enough to insure condemnation.

While Brown as a critic was thus in broad general agreement with the prevailing critical temper, he frequently shifted the point of emphasis or modified a given principle to suit himself. He almost never mentions the leading critics of his day. He does mention, and praise highly, three critical treatises: Aristotle's Poetics, Horace's Ars Poetica, and Sidney's Apologie for Poetry. Saintsbury, for example, gets no mention beyond the remark that Sidney is his equal in modernity; Ruskin is brought in only long enough to recommend Sidney's sonnets. The truth is, I suspect, that Brown was not too concerned about anyone else's criticism. He would read the literature with as much intelligence and sensitivity as he could muster, and he would
deliver an opinion. If that opinion happened to agree with generally accepted current opinion, all well and good; if it did not—no one was obliged to accept it. By comparison with the work of "recognized" critics of the century, Brown's criticism is impulsive, wayward, unsystematic. This does not detract from its charm, may even heighten it. For us the criticism is chiefly valuable in providing a little better understanding of the man and the poet. He belonged to no "school"—unless it be that of admiration for the classics—and adhered to no cult. "There are people," he once said, "who would unscrew the tension of any cultus." T. E. Brown was one of them.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTORY

NOTES


3 Norris, p. 87.


5 Letters, I, 118.

6 See Norris, pp. 98-99.

7 Letters, I, 21.

8 Page 23.

9 Norris, p. 102.

10 For a full account of these experiences, and his reactions to them, see "Beta," "Christ Church Servitors in 1852: by One of Them," Macmillan's Magazine, XIX (Nov., 1868), 49-54.


14 Brown, "Christ Church Servitors," p. 54.


16 Memorial Volume, pp. 178-79.

17 Page 180.

18 Letters, I, 69.


22 Boas, *The Eighteen-Eighties*, pp. 49-50. Boas received the Diary extract from the poet's daughter, Miss Ethel Brown.

23 *Letters*, II, 43. See also I, 99; I, 188; Norris, p. 120; Dakyns, *Notes to GTS*, p. 278.


26 I, 202.

27 *Memorial Volume*, p. 194.


29 *Memorial Volume*, p. 186.

30 *Letters*, I, 130.

31 *Memorial Volume*, p. 191.


33 Page 163.

34 Page 228.

35 II, 19-20.

36 II, 68.


38 *Loc. cit.*

40 Letters, I, 9. There was a second edition of the letters also in 1900, and a third a few years later. The fourth edition has just been published (1952) by the Liverpool University Press. Both Radcliffe and Cubbon, in their bibliographies, state that the index was not added until the third edition. My personal copy is a second edition, yet it is indexed. The "Introductory Memoir" by S. T. Irwin covers pages 9-56 of Vol. I.

41 Henley, Works, IV, 213.

42 Letters, II, 129.

43 Pages 111-12.

44 Page 89.

45 Memorial Volume, pp. 183-84.

46 Letters, II, 35-36.

47 II, 14-15.

48 I, 102-3.

49 See especially Letters, I, 80, 84, 85-6, 92.

50 I, 74-76.

51 Page 81.

52 Page 174.

53 Pages 134-35.

54 Pages 164-65.


57 I, 224.

58 II, 237-38.

59 II, 102.

60 Tusell, "T.E.B.," The Bookman, LXXI (June, 1930), 291.


62 Letters, I, 177.

63 II, 109-10.

64 I, 226, 227.

65 I, 104.

66 See Bibliography.

PART II: THE NARRATIVES
Chapter 1. Introduction to the Narratives.

Any attempt to assess Brown's contributions to the poetry of the later nineteenth century must take into account both the quantity and quality of his narrative verse. Strictly speaking, we cannot fully savor the complex qualities of the later lyrics until we have familiarized ourselves with that unique body of dialect narratives known collectively as the Fo'c's'le Yarns. I have used the term "unique" advisedly. There is nothing quite like them in all of English poetry.

Their singularity derives from three primary factors: the intent and purpose of the poet, the nature of the material, and the style and manner in which the poet has treated this material. We may well add a fourth factor—the constant interplay and mutual modification among these component elements. For while the poet's aim remains essentially the same throughout, it is subjected to the modifying influences of a subject matter with which he is emotionally involved; the inevitable selection from that matter, the choice and arrangement, is determined largely by his aim; his method is shaped both by his aim and his material. Our study will attempt to define these factors, describe their function, and evaluate their effectiveness.

Brown's narrative "Yarns" are seldom read these days. The superficial reasons are not far to seek. With two exceptions, they are written in the Anglo-Manx dialect. Reasonably or not, many readers shy away from dialect poetry, fearing that the introduction of unfamiliar patterns of speech will increase the difficulties of comprehension disproportionately to the amount of pleasure provided by the
poetry. With Brown, this fear is largely groundless, but the prejudice has undoubtedly contributed to the neglect of his work. Secondly, the yarns deal so exclusively with Manx personages and Manx themes and settings, that "outsiders" cannot hope to read them with the complete understanding of a native Manxman except with great difficulties, if at all. Finally, many of the yarns are formidable in sheer length—The Doctor, for example, has over 4300 lines. They move along at a leisurely pace, never in a hurry to reach the climax, interrupting the narrative thread at the slightest provocation to admit digressions of the most diverse sort. The poet makes no concession to the modern passion for directness and conciseness. Taken together, these three characteristics go far toward explaining why these yarns remain largely unknown to the present generation of readers.

Since some variation in classification is possible, it is perhaps advisable to make clear at the outset which poems are included under the heading of Narrative. In the order of their appearance in Collected Poems, the list includes twelve major poems: "Betsy Lee," "Christmas Rose," "Captain Tom and Captain Hugh," "Tommy Big-Eyes," "The Doctor," "Kitty of the Sherragh Vane," "The Schoolmasters," "The Manx Witch," Job the White," "The Indiaman," "Mary Quayle," and "Bella Gorry." I have also included here three much shorter poems from the section labelled "Aspects and Characters" by the editors of the Collected Poems. These are "In the Coach," "The Christening," and "Peggy's Wedding." Because of their close connection with this group, I shall also consider here the lyrics "Prologue: Spes Altera," "Dear Countryman, Whate'er is Left to Us," and "First Comes Tom Baynes among these Sorted
Quills," and "Go Back!" along with the various series of yarns to which they were affixed as prologue or envoy.

What was Brown trying to do in writing these "stories in verse"?

The best answer to this question comes from Brown himself. In one of his letters, he describes a walk in and around Douglas. "It is my old parish; every knoll and nook haunted by a thousand memories. And indeed I felt rather sad. The thought that troubled me was this— who is to perpetuate the traditions?" All of this "most precious deposit," he felt, must go with him. Family traditions, tribal traditions, the customs and folklore of the Island—all this would vanish, was already vanishing, under the impact of influences from without. "We live vigorously in the living present," he continues, "and extract the gold from the current years, being amply satisfied with contemporary relations. I alone have tried to build a cairn of memories in my books."

There is a partial answer to our question, in a phrase which we will do well to keep in mind: his yarns are "a cairn of memories." There was in his make-up a considerable portion of what he aptly called "retrospective adhesive-ness." He wished to present, not a superficial picture of the Manx, but to impregnate his poems through and through with the influences of the Island: "Manx soil down to the Manx rock." He followed the advice he gave another writer: "Dig deep."

In another letter, Brown voiced his notion that a greater Manx poet was yet to come.

Your idea of forcing, of fostering, the sale of my little books is most amusing, But... do you know? I have a perfectly serene confidence in their future. How it will come to pass I am not prepared to say, nor does it much matter. A child, perhaps yet unborn, will do it. A great poet is yet to be, a Manx poet, transcending all
our "small doin'." He will be called Kewish, Shimmin, Quayle, Cottier—All right! He will stumble across my old ditties, he will love them, he will wonder, he will muse; the fire will be kindled, and at last he will speak with his tongue. And he will say—"This man was my brother, my father, my own real self." Through Kewish I shall find utterance...under the sweet Manx sod we knew and cherished we shall sleep the last sleep. And Kewish will be...the poet of the twentieth century. How he will yearn toward us! He will handle loftier themes, and broader branches will issue from his stem; but his roots will be in our ashes, in the bed of dialectic homeliness which we have laid.

And I shall be perfectly satisfied, feeding the young native genius with racy sap, sending up the blossoms to blow in Manx air, and make all Manx men and Manx women happy. Kewish will, I doubt not, give readings of our booklets, just to give the people a notion of what this stuff was like. Kewish will shed the tear of sympathetic divination. Leave it to Kewish! "A gran' chap—KEWISH!"

In the prologue to the first series of *Foil'sile Yarns*, entitled "Spes Altera" and sub-titled "To the Future Manx Poet," Brown puts this same notion into verse. In eight stanzas he invokes the poet yet to be born, advising him how he should go about his work.

Nor lacking you of scholarship
To guide the subtle harmonies soft-flowing
From rugged outward-seeming lip,
By vulgar minds not relished, all unknowing
Of gentle arts. Trench deep within the soil
That bore you fateful; toil, and toil, and toil!
'Tis deep as Death; dig, till the rock
Clangs hard against the spade, and yields the central shock.

No mincing this. Be nervous, soaked
In dialect colloquial, retaining
The native accent pure, unchoked
With cockney balderdash. Old Manx is waning,
She's dying in the tholthan*. Lift the latch, (ruined cottage)
Enter, and kneel beside the bed, and catch
The sweet long sighs, to which the clew Trembles, and asks their one interpreter in you.

Then shut the tholthan. Strike the lyre,
Toward that proud shore your face reluctant turning;
With Keltic force, with Keltic fire,
With Keltic tears, let every string be burning.
And use the instrument that we have wrought,
Hammered on Saxon stithies, to our thought
Alien, unapt, but capable of modes
Wherein the soul its treasured wealth unloads.
And finally, he urges the future Manx poet not to delay his appearance:

But come, come soon, or else we slide
To lawlessness, or deep-sea English soundings,
Absorbent, final, in the tide
Of Empire lost, from homely old surroundings,
Familiar, swept.4

Brown's concern over the Island's absorption by the "tide of empire" and the loss of its individual identity and character was genuine and deep. His intention of using his poems as a repository for the valuable elements of the Manx past is made even more explicit in a letter to Egbert Rydings of Laxey, who managed St. George's Mill for Ruskin:

I have an idea that...we have arrived at the last squeak of the Manx language proper. So I think we have now to make a new start, making Anglo-Manx dialect the basis. In its turn this will probably become obsolete, but meanwhile the catastrophe will be deferred by your stories, and, perhaps I may add, mine.

Let us then make all we write very good and sound—Manx timber, Manx calking, Manx bolting, Manx everything. Manifestly we shall not appeal to strangers...Never hesitate to put in an expression or phrase which you know to be in use, or to have been in use within your memory.

We must make a long arm, and stretch back and grip the receding past. Don't care a scrap whether we thereby run the risk of being unintelligible to the rising generation. That is of no consequence. You and I are a Court of Record; let us execute our office faithfully and lovingly...In short, we must be both modest and daring...In all this there is no money—of that I am sure. But there is the joy of self utterance, of sympathy elicited, of vital union with a people whom we love, and who deserve our love, of a precious future treasury, the old possessions of the race, wondering, perhaps, how they should have come to lose so much, thankful for what has been saved from the shipwreck.5

It is evident from this that Brown recognized and accepted the probable consequences of pursuing a policy which conceived his function as a narrative poet to be that of a Manx Court of Record preserving "the old possessions of the race." He will make no money, he will sacrifice much of the appeal to "strangers" (by which he means non-Manxmen), he will even risk becoming unintelligible to future Manxmen—and this he will do gladly, joyfully, secure in the belief that he is creating "a future precious
"There can be no doubt whatever that this was his aim. "Suffer no chasm to interrupt this glorious tradition" he said in one of his sermons to the boys at Clifton. He wished to create an awareness of continuous life, "to feel the pulses of hearts that are now dust." As a humanist endowed with fiery admiration for the values of the past, he fought a continuous battle against change and decay: "I postulate the continuity."

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has commented on this aspect of Brown's nature:

I believe it to have been this passion for continuity that bound and kept him so absolute a Manxman, drawing his heart so consistently back to the island. . . . I believe this same passion drew him—master as he was of varied and vocal English—to clothe the bulk of his poetry in the Manx dialect, and thereby to miss his mark with the public. . . . But Brown's was no merely selfish craving for continuity—to be remembered. By a fallacy of thought, perhaps, but by a very noble one, he transferred the ambition to those for whom he laboured. His own terror that Time might obliterate the moment. . . . became for his countrymen a very spring of helpfulness. He would do that which they, in poverty and the stress of earning daily bread, were careless to do; would explore for them the ancient springs of faith and custom. . . . and "Secure an anchor for their Keltic souls."

The poet's "Dedication" to the Fo'c's'le Yarns of 1881 is a clear and effective statement of his purpose as he conceived it at that time:

To sing a song shall please my countrymen;
To unlock the treasures of the Island heart;
With loving feet to trace each hill and glen, And find the ore that is not for the mart
Of commerce; this is all I ask.
No task,
But joy, God wot!
Wherewith "the stranger" intermeddles not—

Who, if perchance
He lend his ear,
As caught by mere romance
Of nature, traversing
On viewless wing
All parallels of sect
And race and dialect,
Then shall he be to me most dear.
Natheless, for mine own people do I sing,  
And use the old familiar speech:  
Happy if I shall reach 
Their immost consciousness. (C.P., 107)

By 1887, when he published the second series of yarns under the title The Doctor and Other Poems, his prefatory "Dedication" reflects a slight change in emphasis. Still desiring to please his contemporaries, he is increasingly aware of changes being wrought in their way of life by an encroaching British Empire, and therefore stresses the function of his verse as a repository for the use of future generations.

Dear Countrymen, whatever is left to us  
Of ancient heritage—  
Of manners, speech, of humours, polity  
The limited horizon of our stage—  
Old love, hope, fear,  
All this I fain would fix upon the page... (C.P., 328)

The "ancient heritage" in its manifold aspects provides the basic subject matter of the yarns. Obviously there was danger that in carrying out the aims and purposes outlined above, Brown would produce simply accumulations of heterogeneous materials salvaged from a disappearing civilization, with all the unity of a museum, and of interest only to social historians and folklorists. His characters were likely to become cardboard figures created solely to act out the various local customs and exemplify local types. In short, it was possible that the nature of his aims and purposes would conflict with purely literary demands and prevent the achievement of artistic balance and unity. While such conflict does appear, Brown demonstrates convincingly that the literary artist in him usually held the whip hand over the folklorist, the social historian, the patriot.
Having examined his purpose in the narratives in some detail, we may proceed to an investigation of his subject matter. To say that it is Manx is to state the obvious. Nevertheless, it would be hard to overestimate the effect of the Island upon him or make too much of its contribution to the narratives. In a letter to H. G. Dakyns in 1886, written just after a visit to the Island, he says:

Of poems, or for poems, protoplasm enough, I dare say... I was rather startled to find that the Island is one moving ant-hill of story. I believe if I were living there permanently, I should get whole "cart-loads" of this lore... I had no idea that such a number of silkworms were there spinning their quaint cocoons night and day. The Island seems, indeed, to do hardly anything else. The brains are always going, I almost heard them at it... The Manx life (that is unrelated to England) I find to be deeper, stronger, and richer than I had thought—driven in upon itself, and curiously coloured by that fact.

And in a letter to A. M. Worthington the same year:

It seemed as if the whole Island were quivering and trembling all over with stories—they are like leaves on a tree. The people are always telling them to one another, and any morning or evening you hear... innumerable anecdotes, sayings, tragedies, comedies—I wonder whether they lie fearfully. They are a marvellously narrational community. And you’ve not been there a day before all this closes round you with a quiet familiarity of "use and custom" which is most fascinating. Nothing else in the universe seems of any consequence... A week more and I should have become reabsorbed into this medium past recovery and past recognition.

These quotations indicate his susceptibility to that peculiar atmosphere which he found on the Island and nowhere else. Later, when he had retired there to live permanently, he reached the conclusion that often they did "lie fearfully," and promised himself that he would read a few propositions of Euclid every morning just to retain his contact with fact. This propensity for spinning yarns fitted in nicely with his own temperament. He was "reabsorbed" by the Island—up to a point. He was fascinated by its natural scenery, its wealth of "characters,"
its "Keltic" fire and pathos and imaginativeness. He re-worked and re-told its anecdotes and legends, re-enacted its comedies and tragedies, but there was always a part of him that never quite succumbed. It was this reserved area of thought and feeling in the inner man which eventually demanded expression which the narratives could not provide, and resulted in his lyrics.

One phrase in the letter quoted above is disturbing: "Nothing else in the universe seems of any consequence..." It is particularly so when considered in connection with his reference to the island as "driven in upon itself." Does this mean, for the purposes of his poems, that those tremendous problems in the realms of science, religion, politics, economics—in almost every area of life—with which the greatest minds of his day were struggling, are to find no reflection in his narratives? It means almost precisely that. Politics interested him not at all. There is little evidence of any serious interest in science, as such. His notions on economy in its technical sense are rudimentary. On the other hand, his concern with moral and spiritual values was vital and functional. Almost everything he wrote is touched in some way by his religious beliefs and attitudes; not, it should be understood, with the denominational or sectarian squabbles of his time, but with the universal and timeless question of man's relationship to his creator.

We should bear in mind that most of the great struggles we associate with the Victorian Age are fundamentally British. And Brown was not a Briton! Students of literature, understandably, have been so preoccupied with British movements and ideas during the nineteenth century that it is with difficulty that they remember any other. It
is hard for us to think of these momentous problems as being "foreign."
Itam almost certain they seemed so to Brown. It is curious, consider­
ing his long residence in England, but he never became Anglicized.
The passing events which produced headlines in the London papers
seemed almost as remote as though they had occurred in Brisbane or
Calcutta. "Hang on to the Britannic mammae, O Dakyne," he says
in a letter written long before his retirement from Clifton, "but I
must go my own way, and my mother has not yet forgotten me." First,
last, and always he was a Manxman. He gloried in the distinction.
Throughout the many years in England he was a "Manxman in exile."
That intimate knowledge of and identification with the life of a par­
ticular group which is generally recognized as a requirement for the
poet, was his in abundant measure. Few if any poets have had more
thorough and detailed knowledge of a people than Brown had of the
Manx. Anything they did or thought or said was of interest to him.
He knew them better than they knew themselves. It was largely his
intensive cultivation of this small plot of ground, his insistence
that everything in his stories be thoroughly Manx, the exactitude
with which he reproduced the Manx character, to which any claim for
their permanent value must ultimately refer. They are original and
they are fresh, but would this have been so had he consciously written
for a wider audience, rather than "to please my countrymen"? He wrote
of Manx life, not as a spectator only, but as a participant, and so
achieves a quality of immediacy and genuineness which give these yarns
the stamp of authenticity. He is forever illustrating human nature—
not necessarily as he would have it be, or as he might imagine it to
be in some remote place or time—but as it existed around him on his beloved Island. The specific elements of that life which he embodied in his narratives we will see in our examination of the individual poems. It remains here only to say something of his method and techniques, with especial reference to his use of dialect.

There is plenty of "fire" in the yarns, and there is also novelty and originality. The portraits are individualized. He is breaking new ground, painting a region hitherto unknown to literature, showing us men and women whom we have not met before. He had no important predecessors as poets of the Isle of Man. In 1853, one T. J. Ouseley had written a poem in six cantos entitled Mona's Isle, but this was chiefly in prose. There were no other precedents worth mentioning, and Brown had little to learn and nothing to fear from these. He plunged into the task of recording and interpreting the Manx character with vivacity, intent upon honesty and accuracy of portrayal. To a large extent he succeeds in the more difficult artistic task of making them live before us; it never occurs to us to question their reality. To Brown, with his strong predilection for pathos, making his people live meant not only reaching his reader's mind, but arousing his active sympathy, touching his heart. There are times when he plucks on the heart strings rather too energetically, lingers a little too fondly by the death-bed of Little Nell. He enjoyed a good cry as well as a hearty laugh. I have intimated that the yearns are based primarily upon the ancient Manx legends, and so they are; but inextricably mixed with these are the fruits of his own personal observations, and both are given the coloring of his personal feelings. It is extremely
doubtful whether anyone could go through the narratives and separate the fact from the fiction or the legend from the first-hand report of the poet. It does not matter. The factual has been so modified in its passage from the note-books to the printed page that it is now fiction; the fiction has so taken on the garments of actuality that it passes for fact. This is all that really counts.

He obtains his illusion of reality, that "willing suspension of disbelief," in many ways. He has a knack of stripping away the non-essentials and limning a character in a few well-chosen strokes. His eye for detail is keen, and from that detail he selects only those items which distinguish this sailor or this farmer from all others. He makes effective use of sensory images, both in setting the scene and creating the proper atmosphere. He conjures up the scent of the salt breeze off the Atlantic, the fragrance of heather and gorse, the varied and unmistakable odors of farmyard and sea-shore. Sounds are everywhere in the background. Even as his characters speak we hear the howling of the wind, the whistling of the curlews, the splash of oars in the surf, the lapping and gurgling of the water along the shore. Nor does he neglect tactual imagery, sometimes of a very subtle kind—the clinging cobweb across the face; the smarting palm, blistered from long pulling at the oars; the caress of wind and rain; the sting of a birch rod. His visual imagery we need not discuss here, beyond noting that it is employed constantly, and is drawn largely from nature, especially flowers, birds, water, and fire.

He gains in verisimilitude also through his method of presentation. He places his principal narrator on the fo'c's'le, gathers a group
of fellow-sailors about him, and turns him loose to spin his yarn in his own way. The personality of this narrator, Tom Baynes, determines both the choice of subject and the manner of telling. As he progresses from one story to another, we get to know this old salt intimately. He is not a static figure, but vital and subject to change and development. His limitations, his prejudices, his burly good humor and soft-heartedness, his proclivity to digression and laconic comment—these are the very bone and sinew of the yarns. For these are dramatic monologues, in which the narrator is at least as important as the story itself. Until this fact is recognized, the yarns cannot be read intelligently. Gradually it becomes apparent also that Tom Baynes is much more than a mere narrator; he is the typical representative of the Manx people, the incarnation of the Manx genius.

First comes Tom Baynes among these sorted quills,
In asynartete octosyllables.
Methinks you see the "fo'c's'le" squat, the squirt Nicotian, various interval of shirt,
Enlarged, contract—keen swordsman, cut-and-thrust:
Old salt, old rip, old friend, Tom Baynes comes first.  (C.P. 510)

It will not do to take too seriously Brown's self-identification with the rough-and-ready Baynes: In a letter to J. R. Mozley, Nov. 4, 1882, he said:

You are quite right about these stories. Keltic, that is it; the Kelt emerging if you will, but the Kelt, if I may say so, a good deal hardened and corrupted by the Saxon. That is Tom Baynes; that is myself, in fact. I never stopped for a moment to think what Tom Baynes should be like; he simply is I, just such a crabbed text, blurred with scholia "in the margent," as is your humble servant. So when I am alone, I think and speak to myself always as he does.

This statement has to be qualified somewhat. Certainly there was a Celtic strain in Brown, but he constantly magnified it. He liked
to think of himself as wholly and typically Manx—as Tom Baynes was—but the fact (which he himself did not recognize until long after he had written these words) is that he became too complex, in intellect and interests, to play the part of a typical Manxman convincingly. He was everything that Tom Baynes was, but he was much more besides. Several pages would be required to explain precisely and completely why Tom Brown and Tom Baynes are not the same person, but we might put it briefly like this: Had the two been identical, we would have had the Fo'c'sile Yarns, much as we have them now; Brown went on to write the lyrics.

Baynes emerges as a partial embodiment of the poet as he saw himself, as a representative of the Manx temperament, but more importantly, he emerges as an individual. There is nothing lacking in the realization of Tom Baynes; he is complete. He stands erect, full-blooded and confident, striding through Brown's pages, dominating his environment. His reality is as little in question as that of Jorrocks, or Sam Weller, or Henry Esmond, or Michael Henchard. There are many other memorable characters in these stories—notably "Pazon" Gale, Doctor Bell, Cain—but Baynes towers above them all. Between them, Baynes and the Pazon take a leading part in nearly every yarn. Were they well chosen to serve as spokesmen for their countrymen?

Hall Caine ways in his Little Manx Nation:

... amid many half-types of dubious quality... there are at least two types of Manx character entirely charming and delightful. The one is the best type of Manx seaman, a true son of the sea, full of wise saws and proverbs, full of long yarns and wondrous adventures, up to anything, down to anything, pragmatical, a mighty moralist in his way, but none the less equal to a round ringing oath; a sapient adviser putting on the airs of a philosopher, but
as simple as the baby of a girl—in a word, dear old Tom Baynes. . .
The other type is that of the Manx parish patriarch. This good soul it would be hard to beat among all the peoples of earth. He unites the best qualities of both sexes; he is as soft and gentle as a dear old woman, and as firm of purpose as a strong man. Garrulous, full of platitudes, easily moved to tears by a story of sorrow and as easily taken in, but beloved and trusted and revered by all the little world about him.

Caine identifies his first character sketch as that of Tom Baynes; the second is a good likeness of Pazon Gale. Caine was probably as well equipped as anyone (always excepting Brown) to speak on the subject of Manx character types. That he has chosen these two as outstanding is a gratifying recommendation of their fitness to serve as narrators and representatives.

Of the poetry of the narratives as poetry, there is much to be said, but technical analysis will be most profitably employed in our discussion of individual poems. A few general statements here will give some notion of what to expect by way of poetic technique. First of all, Brown has a flair for picturesque verbal arrangements. The unexpected word or phrase, sharp contrasts in diction, he employs constantly. These verbal acrobatics are normally refreshing and acceptable, but now and again we sense a straining after the unusual. Bold similes occur side by side with the homeliest metaphors. We must be prepared for sudden shifts of tone; from pathos or sentimental reverie he can swing off in a single line and bring us to laughter.

We have quoted Brown's verse description of Baynes and his "asyn-artete octosyllables." It is basically a very simple metrical form, the rhyming couplet with four beats, which he uses throughout the Fo'c's'le Yarns. (In Greek and Latin prosody, "asynartete" is used
with reference to a verse of two rhythmical series, either to denote use of a different rhythm in the two members, or to indicate that the two members are quasi-independent.) The unpretentious diction mostly hides the art with which Brown has varied the rhythm of these couplets. Seldom do they break down into a monotonous jog-trot. The variation is such that the octosyllables seem almost structureless at times. Indeed, as Lascelles Abercrombie has pointed out, we are safer to call them simply four-foot verses, for the poet has taken every possible liberty with the number of syllables. This was an extremely flexible and adaptable verse form in Brown's hands. With seemingly no effort he could accommodate it to the purposes of straight narration, to character portrayal, to description, or to dialogue. Frederick S. Boas comments admiringly on the subtle skill with which Brown bends his form to his purposes without jolt or jar, and then adds: "That is the hallmark of the born story-teller in verse from the time of Chaucer downward."

Lascelles Abercrombie has some discerning remarks on Brown's purpose in using this form:

It is the same as the purpose in his use of dialect. . . .it enables Brown . . .to bring his poetry into contact with actuality—the racy, careless actuality of the language of everyday life. Just so the elastic metre of his four-foot lines is pulled out, compressed, twisted this way and that, in order to make the rhythm of the verse represent as closely as possible the very tones and accents of living speech. It is not only Tom's mind we are to understand, but equally his voice we are to hear.

It is certainly true that the looseness of the rhythm, especially in the dialogue (reported), gives a reader a sense of hearing the words actually spoken. The attempt to reproduce speech accents in verse introduced special problems for the poet in his handling of meter and diction. To remain true to his realistic ideal, he had to accommodate the artistic
demands of his medium to the capabilities and personalities of his characters. When a simple and unlettered fisherman was speaking, for example, he had to respect the limits of the speaker's vocabulary, refrain from allusions to materials outside his experience, and avoid the expression of subtle or abstract thoughts remote from his habitual mode of thinking. So too in the technique of the line itself. If there was hesitation, roughness, repetition, abruptness, or similar qualities in the speaker, then the poet had to carry these qualities over into the verse. He need not always do it directly, by writing abrupt, staccato lines, for instance, or drawling, labored, hesitant lines. But he must somehow suggest these identifying speech characteristics, in addition to meeting the constant necessity of conveying the attitude of the speaker. These self-imposed requirements sometimes succeed only in part; that is, some lines and passages accurately convey oral quality at the expense of poetic smoothness and regularity. There are plenty of lines in these yarns that cannot be made to fit recognized patterns without the exercise of much ingenuity. Part of the difficulty of scansion can be traced to Brown's frequent and effective use of pauses for dramatic effect. The irregularities are increased by his fondness for exclamatory words and phrases. Sometimes, indeed, it seems that the exclamation point was his favorite mark of punctuation—an effect induced by the dominance of emotion over thought. Another contributing factor is the high proportion of short lines. It may be said in a general way that Brown was more interested in the matter itself than in following any given set of rules.

Some readers in his own day were offended by his rather cavalier attitude toward meter. Others found his irregularities refreshing. One
critic speaks of the "finesse" of Brown's workmanship, and defines his asynartete octosyllables as "couplets that are alternately iambic and trochaic." This pattern is followed in a general way, with free substitution of anapaests, dactyls, and spondees in either half of the couplet. A random sample from "The Manx Witch" goes like this:

The Pazon that overtook her there,  
Comin' home from Hollantide Fair.

In many couplets, however, the alternation of iambic and trochaic is reversed:  
Shallow water? go to pot!  
There's shallow water, and there's water that's not.

This example from the same poem also illustrates another major characteristic—unlimited variation of the number of unstressed syllables within the fairly constant structure of a line with four principal stresses.

A special word of caution is needed on Brown's use of italics. Sometimes, it is true, he employs this rather weak device to shift the stress to a syllable that would normally be slurred over; he also uses it on occasion to portray the peculiar accents of a given speech pattern. But by far the greater portion of the italicized words and phrases indicate simply that the narrator is repeating a remark addressed to him by his hearers. He uses italics where modern usage would normally call for quotation marks.

Brown's irregularities of meter are not the result of ignorance, and only rarely are they due to carelessness. He seldom talked about these technical matters, but now and again, as in his article on Spenser, he makes his position clear. He considered it of vital importance that Spenser had been from the beginning accustomed to the
most exacting scrutiny of meter. "The father of metrical English," as Brown calls him, burst the "pedantic trammels" to find freer expression in his own chosen meter, but this greater freedom was firmly based upon a thorough understanding of the classical models.

In his rhyming, Brown is essentially conservative, although he is not averse to an occasional slant rhyme or double rhyme, or—usually with humorous intent—the rhyming of a polysyllabic term with a phrase. Perhaps a number of the rhymes which strike the ear as doubtful equivalents are to be explained by reference to the peculiarities of dialectal pronunciation. He could be a purist in this matter when he chose. He mentions somewhere "a heresy of Egehot's" which consisted of maintaining the fitness of the rhyme "dawn" and "morn." Unless my ears deceive me, this is a fairly widespread heresy, attributable to that same variety of local perversion which insists upon "beer" as a perfect rhyme for "idea." My own reaction to the latter is much like Brown's to the former: "I shudder when I think of this." He had an excellent ear, and even his most dubious rhymes are the result of dialect or attempted humor rather than tone-deafness.

There is considerable use of repetition as a device, as in these lines from "Christmas Rose":

And the light on the wall and the light on the chair,  
And the light on her all dancin' lak,  
And the tippin' her head and the tippin' her neck,  
And the tippin' behind and the tippin' before:

Alliteration, also, is frequently employed, as in the line "And he hitched and he hunched, and he cribbed and he crunched," from "Peggy's Wedding," or "And slicked his lips like slickin' a label,/ And cocked himself on the communion table," from "Tommy Big-Eyes." Both of these
examples are taken from satiric portrait sketches, and I am inclined to think that he used alliteration for this purpose more frequently than for any other. But it is also used, and to good effect, in strongly emotional passages, or in lines of marked musicality, as in this couplet from "Christmas Rose":

And sighin' and sobbin' and slakin' her drouth
With the thunder-poison from his mouth.

Of greater value than these techniques in giving the yarns their real flavor is the Anglo-Manx dialect in which they are set, for Brown was, as he advised the future Manx poet to be, "soaked in dialect colloquial, retaining the native accent pure." His chosen medium is "the old familiar speech"—not of England, but of Man. This dialect may easily be mastered without any exceptional linguistic aptitude. It is simply a combination of words and phrases derived from the original Manx and homely, vernacular, colloquial English. Such a combination obviously will not be acceptable to everyone. George Saintsbury, who said some very flattering things about Brown in other respects, was repelled by it. He declared that "the lingo itself is not a real dialect, but an ugly and bastard patois or, rather, jargon of broken-down Celtic and the vulgarest English." Aside from an abundance of what semanticists call "loaded" terms, this is not a bad description. But even those readers whose allergy to English "as she is spoke" by the people is less violent than Saintsbury's may agree that this dialect is not a choice instrument of the Muses. It does not, to cite an example within the Celtic family, have anything like the grace and charm of the Anglo-Irish of Yeats, who was also beginning to write in the 'eighties. There is considerable truth in the observation by Professor Boas that it is to
Brown's great credit as a poetic craftsman "that from what on other lips might have been a 'scrannel pipe' he drew such authentic and such varied harmonies." More than this, it is appropriate to the nature of his material. Part of the character of a people resides in their modes of expression, and to portray that character fully he adopted both by preference and from a sense of duty the native accent and idiom of the Manx people.

In an informative article in *Englische Studien*, Lionel Strachan reminds us that this is the speech of a Celtic people with Scandinavian admixture who learned English as a foreign tongue in comparatively recent times. Phonetically, it is somewhat similar to the Lancashire dialect. Certain other features, such as the pronunciation of words containing "tr" combinations by inserting an "h" between the letters, as in thrue, misthress, and so on, recall the Irish brogue. One syntactical peculiarity is the frequent employment of the past progressive tenses of the verb where standard English would employ the simple past: "He was sayin'"; "They were callin' him Tom"; "He was givin' ye a rap." The orthography is more consistent than we might expect, for Brown did not believe that dialectal pronunciation could be adequately conveyed by phonetic spelling. Now and then we are struck by an inconsistency, as when he renders "cheese" as *chase* in the singular, but *cheeses* in the plural.

If the dialect yarns are to be fully accepted, the dialect should be demonstrably indispensable. Burns had succeeded in making his dialect seem inevitable, but many had failed. Lancashire and Dorset writers like Edwin Waugh and William Barnes have only local readers.
In America, Lowell came close to winning a national audience through local dialect, but even his permanent reputation is far from assured. Are Brown’s dialect poems of that select group which have won their way despite the handicap of a localized speech? Writing in the year of Brown’s death, one critic sought to define the conditions under which the use of dialect is justifiable:

A poet writes best in the tongue in which he was born and bred and in which he thinks, and he is almost certain to be happiest and most free when he uses it. . . The real problem arises when we come to writers like Mr. Brown, who, although he lived as a boy and again in old age among the sailor-folk of the Isle of Man, could not be said to speak ordinary English as an acquired tongue and the Manx dialect by nature. It cannot be said, except very paradoxically, that the Manx dialect was the tongue which came naturally to him. He may have schooled himself into preferring it. . . and he may indeed have come to think in it, but primarily it was to him an exotic form of speech, just as ordinary English was an exotic in the case of Burns. 15

He is asking: “How can Brown be justified in deliberately choosing to write in a language which was in reality artificial to him?” Brown has stated that he wrote and thought naturally in Anglo-Manx, and certainly his letters are liberally sprinkled with it. But can a classical scholar and linguist familiar with half a dozen tongues, both ancient and modern, be said to have done his thinking within the limited confines of a Manx sailor’s vocabulary? For certain it is we think in words, and the number and quality and flexibility of the words at our disposal will largely determine the nature and quality of our thoughts. Brown’s mind knew no such limitations. He could think in Manx, and while writing his yarns he no doubt did, but he could shift gears automatically, so to speak, whenever his subject made greater demands than the dialect could supply. The problem should perhaps be restated: Assuming that Anglo-Manx was his natural tongue only
with stringent qualifications, how was he able to use it so effectively? At least a part of the answer lies in the fact that he used it almost exclusively to represent the speech of his characters. When Brown himself is speaking, as in the lyrics, he discards the dialect for standard English. This dramatic use contributes to the realism, and avoids the suggestion of affectation which would certainly have resulted from employing the dialect personally.

In the final analysis the dialect is only a tool, a means to an end—realistic character portrayal. Undue emphasis upon the dialect would be equivalent to elaborate analysis of a sculptor's use of the mallet. Brown considered the dialect necessary to create in Baynes and the others realistic embodiments of typical Manxmen, but when he turned to the lyric, he was not creating character but expressing his own. The dialect, therefore, loses its raison d'être and is dropped. This rough and colorful speech was not a padded suit to give a scrawny poetic body the appearance of strength and virility. It was not a crutch supporting a poetry constitutionally feeble. When Barnes discards the dialect, his poetry collapses; when Brown casts it aside, his poetry soars. The proof is in the performance.

Brown's contemporaries were in something less than complete agreement about the merits of his use of dialect. One of them snarls over these "uncouth, unfamiliar words, slung into uncouth and unfamiliar rhythms," which affect him with a sense of "difficult ugliness." He admits, however, that under the "superficial ugliness of form and expression" it is not impossible to find "a certain strange, homely beauty." "The dialect," he says, "never ceases to be repulsive, and the.
liberties which Mr. Brown takes with language and metre inexcusable; but, in spite of all, it is impossible not to see a real poetic force, creating after its own way;...for the sake of that, we can pardon nearly everything." The rather snobbish use of "uncouth" (Just what, I wonder, is an "uncouth rhythm"?) does not invalidate this as a striking statement of one point of view. Yet despite his objections, he can call Brown "a genuine poet."

Some remarks of Brown interestingly reveal his attitude toward all spurious or affected dialects, and, by inference, the genuine quality of his own. The passage occurs in his article on Spenser, whose use of archaisms and "sporadic patois" he heartily disapproved. "Even in our day," he writes, "there is a remnant left which fancies that it can write Dialectic poems without any language to go by, Dialectic stories guaranteed by no accredited limitations of phraseology, even Dialectic dialogues, which the very natives of the districts speaking the supposed dialects fail to make anything of." His own dialect is not something "tacked on" to his stories in a mistaken search for "quaintness," but an integral part of his material. That it was also a significant part may be seen in this comment by Hall Caine on the rapidly-disappearing language:

When it is dead more than half of all that makes us Manxmen will be gone. Our individuality will be lost, the greater barrier that separates us from other peoples will be broken down. Perhaps this may have its advantages, but surely it is not altogether a base desire not to be submerged into all the races of the earth.

The Manx dialect is primarily Celtic, and bears a marked similarity to the ancient Scottish Gaelic. Although there is a strong admixture of the Norse in the race, the language reflects the Norse element
mainly in family and place-names. There are many "dales," "fells," "garths," and "ghylls." One student of the language comments:

An examination of Dr. Wright's English Dialect Dictionary plainly shows that the Anglo-Manx dialect has very close affinity with the dialect of South-West Lancashire. The inhabitants of the Isle of Man must have learnt their English from natives of that district, and they have retained many Lancashire peculiarities of word-form and word-usage...the old Manx-Gaelic language has had a strong influence in modifying the pronunciation of the English...This Gaelic influence is still more apparent in the word-order of the sentences and the form of the idioms...But it is in the matter of voice-inflexion that the old Celtic Manx language has left its deepest and most permanent impression.20

Some of the more common features of the dialect, which occur repeatedly in the narratives, should perhaps be mentioned in advance. One peculiarity has to do with names. You will find examples such as "Nicky-Nick-Nick" or "Billy-Bill-Illiam." The repetition denotes parentage, as in the last-mentioned name, which means "Billy, the son of Bill, the son of William." A more likely source of confusion is the use of prepositions, especially "in." Not only does this mean "in" or "into" (the latter form is never used), but "in existence," or "here" or "there." For example, "They're sayin' there's no fairies in," i.e. "They deny the existence of fairies." A phrase with even more common and varied usage is "You'll get lave." It is a literal translation of the Gaelic You kied (Thou wilt get leave). It has many shades of meaning, depending upon the context. Often it is an equivalent of "Say what you will," but it may be colored to mean something closer to "You'll get what's coming to you" or, in an argument, "I don't agree with you." Another favorite expression is "lek," meaning "like," "likely," "as if," or "such." Sometimes several words are run together, as in "Arrinaw," which means "I do not know."
One of the most distinctive usages involves the preposition "at."
Sometimes this word is a direct translation of the Gaelic ec, which,
together with the verb "to be," denotes possession. Thus the sentence
"There's a house at the man" means simply "The man has a house." "At"
has a variety of other meanings: "among," "by," "on the part of,"

Some of the spellings are much less puzzling if we are aware of a
few simple rules. For example, final "t" is often replaced by "r" when
the next word begins with a vowel or with "h" — as in "aburrim" (about
him) and "aburrit" (about it). The final "t" of let may follow this
rule — "lerrim," "lerrer," "lerrit" and so on — or the "t" may simply
be dropped. Medial "d" has become "dh," as in "childher" and "yandhar."
Sometimes initial "q" is replaced with "wh," thus giving "whestions" for
"questions." Moreover, the process may be reversed, giving "quistle"
for "whistle" and "quat" for "what." "R" is often dropped before "s" and
we get "hoss," "buss," and other such common variations. Initial
"s" becomes "sh" before long "u" as in "shuit" for "suit." "S" or
"ss" sometimes replaces final "th" as in "mous" for "mouth."

A few other unusual word usages may cause momentary confusion to the
unwary reader. Such a simple thing as reversal of expected word order
can lead to mistakes. "Putty uncommon" does not mean "Quite unusual,"
as we might expect, but "Unusually pretty." So with "Putty amazin'."
"As" very commonly replaces "so": "Some as hard you couldn't break them."
"For" may mean many things: "towards," "to," "at the period of," "where-
fore," "the reason why," "in order to." "For all" may mean: "notwith-
standing," "nevertheless," "indeed," "truly." "Do" may be used as a
noun: "The do that was in!" meaning "What a flurry of activity!"
"Put" may be used both regularly and in a special sense: "Put a
sight on me soon" means "Come to see me soon." Both "amazin'" and
"shockin'" are frequently used as a substitute for "extremely":
"Quiet shockin'"(extremely quiet) also illustrates the reversal we
have noted earlier. "Who" and "which" as relative pronouns are
normally replaced by "that," while "that" as a relative pronoun is
often omitted. One especially interesting usage is the article
"the" used before an adjective to give special stress. "The wise:
he was!" is equivalent to "How very wise he was!" The distinction
between nominative "they" and accusative "them" is not observed.
"To" plus infinitive often replaces "at" plus present participle:
"She is clever to sing" rather than "at singing." Most of the other
usages will be readily understood by the reader as he encounters
t.

Space prevents my giving any but the sketchiest notion of the
vocabulary itself. It will not take long to learn that in Man as
in Yorkshire, a "local" is a Methodist lay preacher; that "base" is
"beast," "Chalse" is "Charles," and "deemster" is "judge." "Crosh"
is the Anglo-Manx word for "cross," while their "cross" means "market-
place." "Chut" is "tut" and a "cooish" is a "chat." "Dooney" is
"man," "bogh" is "poor," "Baarl" is "the English language," and "Ellan
Vannin" is the Isle of Man. There is little danger that the reader will
go astray through misinterpretation of individual words, for all those
that differ even slightly from standard English are glossed.

I cannot refrain from commenting briefly on the glossing in the
Collected Poems of 1900. How much of it is attributable to Brown, and how much to his editors, I do not know. It seems probable that the latter are mainly responsible. But from whatever source, the glosses might easily produce an exaggerated notion of the difficulty of the dialect. A great number of the glossed words are instantly recognizable, and the bulk of those that remain come clear after a moment's consideration. Turning the pages at random, we find on page 436 that "azackly" must be explained as "exactly" and "everin" as "evening." On page 347, "rally" is glossed as "really." On 278 we learn that to "keep quite" means "to keep quiet." Other expressions that have long since passed into common idiom are painstakingly footnoted, as with "carryin' on" for "making a fuss" on page 265. We are not overly surprised to learn in a note on 229 that the line "There wasn' no houldin' them chaps" is to be translated "They couldn't be held, or restrained." On page 159 we are informed that "for sure" means "really." Such examples of needless glossing may be found throughout the volume. We may conservatively estimate that forty per cent of these explanations are unnecessary.

I mention this instance of over-zealousness because I believe it has played a small but appreciable part in creating and sustaining the impression that Brown's dialect was so troublesome that it alone must bear the blame for his failure to capture a wide audience. Heavily footnoted editions of poets do not deter scholars or enthusiasts, but to the undecided buyer or reader, idly leafing through the text, they do not strike an assuring or captivating note. They dimly presage difficulties and obstructions. The editor who hopes to secure a wide
public for his author would do well not to foster the impression that the reader's task is more difficult than it actually is.

Brown approached his own task with no illusions about its difficulty. "Of all the people in the world," he once said, "the Manx are the most impossible to assimilate; they are Protean, elusive. You cannot even imitate the accent; it is hopeless." A writer, he thought, must be either extremely sanguine or extremely immodest who presents his puppets as adequate representatives of a race, or even a class, which is not his own. Some "types" of character pass muster, but the "Manx Rustic" is not among them. To present them adequately you must live among them and love them; "and the love must be native, sweet, racy of the soil." In the same article, he suggests a further characteristic of his people which added to the problems of the literary artist, particularly in his own day: "...the native aspiration is not towards an apex of Grundyism, but rather toward something very different. Passion is the very essence of the Manx nature, passion often chastened into the most exquisite forms, but capable of infinite dash and impetus. And passion-based characters are the rule, not the exception. To steer them straight is no light task." These characters give vent to their passion in terms neither mincing nor euphemistic. Brown chuckled heartily over the exclamation of a visiting preacher: "Ah, the fearful nouns, the appalling adjectives, the tremendous verbs one hears down at the harbour!" Life here was vital and full-blooded. His championship of this life in his yarns implies a criticism of his own age, too often characterized, as he thought, by irresolution, evasion, and artificiality.
In one yarn or another, Brown has presented vignettes of all the
major Manx traits, and almost of minor ones. He could not trust to
luck that characters would appear at the appropriate time, exemplify-
ing one or another of these traits. He did not believe in "embodied
master passions." The difficulty is surmounted by creating a character
of major stature who includes in his generous proportions a cross-
section of the Manx character, and surrounding him with lesser figures
to round out the picture. In his rôle of homely philosopher, Tom
Baynes can further explore the ways of the Manx by commenting on his
compatriots.

Henley's appreciations convey some notion of the wealth of detail
with which Brown's narratives are crowded.

Open the Yarns where you will. . .you are ever assured of some match-
less expression of something—a bee in a flower, an easy pipe, a
night in the cells, a sailor's home, a fugue of Bach's, a man in
drink, a woman in love, white witchcraft and black, the pool at
Bethesda, a storm at sea, a carted harlot, a summer dawn, a milk-
ing, a perfect priest—que says le? The Yarns are rich as life
itself in character, emotion, experience, tragedy, farce, comedy,
fact; and there is none of their innumerable details but is presented
with an assurance, an understanding of essentials, a mastery of means
that stamp its presentation as literature. As for poetry, what is
poetry? "The only words in the only order"? So be it! Apply
the test. . .and you will find at once that, given the dialect, they
are also poetry, and poetry of the most authentic strain.

Henley says somewhere else that Tom Baynes "is the most of what was
written on the heart of T.E.B." and considered the Yarns "the best
of all the Browns we have." Lescelles Abercrombie, also, has said that
if Brown is ever to be reckoned a major poet, it will be as the creator
of Tom Baynes and his world. I shall reserve my own opinion on this,
but it would seem certain that this is the work he himself would have
chosen to be judged by. We should not be much influenced by this fact. Many poets have chosen as their best a work which represents some special interest, and which the reading public chooses to pass over in preference for another. Brown was too deeply and personally involved with these yarns to judge objectively of their relative worth. Of one thing I am convinced: no hurried, piece-meal, perfunctory reading of these poems will suffice. A fair verdict demands careful reading beyond that first impression—which is likely to be unfavorable. There are faults, and they are of a kind to impress the casual reader, and turn him away before he has discovered the virtues. I have already indicated that "telling the story" was not Brown's primary purpose, but merely a vehicle. Whether or not a reader is aware of this, he will attend first to the story, and in most of these yarns he will be put off endlessly, the major crises of action delayed time after time. The loquacious Tom Baynes has some other idiosyncrasies which are not calculated to produce fast-paced and smooth-flowing narrative. He interrupts himself with exclamations. Indeed, his sentences are peppered with exclamation marks. He has a tiresome habit of repeating, not only others' remarks, but his own. Once he gets his teeth into a good phrase, he worries it like a terrier with a juicy bone. Had Brown been willing to alter his pattern of monologue enough to allow limited dialogue, part of this irritating repetition could have been avoided.

Lascelles Abercrombie, who has written by all odds the most accurate and penetrating description of Tom Baynes and his function in the narratives, calls our attention to the old sailor's amazing capacity
for experience. It is not simply that a great many things have happened to him, but that he has somehow stored them all up and found relationships among them. He is prodigal in his vivid and energetic pouring out of this rich and varied experience, and as he does so you perceive that it is finely and closely organized in his personality. You will also see how the absurd and the tragic illuminate each other in his mind, how his knowledge of men and women, his moods and reflections and prejudices and eccentricities are all of a pattern. Brown has made all these things seem essential to Tom's character, and the final result is a complete man, a full-scale biography, of a rich personality unlike any we have met before.

Because Brown knew his characters completely and loved them deeply, he could criticize them and laugh at them freely, finding even in their failures and weaknesses an added proof of their genuine humanity. He took them as they came, none wholly good nor wholly bad, and so he presents them to others. His boyish appreciation of fun, his healthy good spirits, maintained to the end his keen taste for the unending comedy of life. True, there are moments when he plunges heart-first into the deeps of poignant emotion and "wallows naked in the pathetic," but these are passing moods, and not a dominating philosophy. This may be as good a place as any to say that if any single adjective can be used to describe the total effect of the narratives, that word is healthy. They have the freshness of a cool salt breeze. There is no trace of morbidity, no fevered search for the unknowable, no agonized self-pity. That fin de siècle weariness of body and spirit which gives to the work of so many of his contemporaries its character-
istic note is almost wholly absent. In its place we find an abiding belief that life is good, that humanity is deserving of our faith, that God can be trusted. There is joy in the love of womanly and the comradeship of manly men. It is good to read, to ponder, but it is also good to climb a mountain, to sail on the sea, to swim in the rivers, fight for a cause. All our energy is required to savor life to the full; there is no time left for morbid introspection. People themselves are endlessly fascinating and infinitely complex; they present an author with a never-ending supply of raw material. To fashion this material into art, to transmit this Protean organism to the printed page so that it remains a sentient being and not a corpse—this was his aim. It could not be accomplished by the intellect alone: "The human heart is the center of everything." Nature and man, romantically and humorously considered, are his theme. But the realist and the romanticist are not completely fused, and sometimes work at cross-purposes. Now and again the objectivity and selectivity of the artist are engulfed by the sympathy and inclusiveness of the man.

It is in his handling of characterization that Brown has most in common with Browning. I do not hesitate to link the two names. If Browning has a character more completely developed, more richly complex than Baynes, I have not yet made the discovery. Only in those magnificent portraits in The Ring and the Book does Browning produce figures of comparable stature. Tennyson is simply not in the same class with either, so far as character portrayal is concerned. Where
Browning does excel is in his ability to round out a personality in a few deft strokes. Brown never quite equals such vivid and searching biographies in miniature as we find in "My Last Duchess," "The Bishop Orders His Tomb," and a dozen other masterful studies, but who would have expected that he could even come close? No poet of his century could equal Browning's total achievement in psychological portraiture or in masterful handling of the dramatic monologue. Brown could have learned much from Browning about brevity and condensation in the monologue, but he could not have practised it without a regrettable loss of individuality. Both poets obtain their best effects by allowing their characters to reveal their own personalities. Unconsciously they give themselves away, laying bare the secrets of their nature even in the most trivial act. This kind of portraiture, based upon psychological insight and strengthened by a profound knowledge of human nature, seems deceptively easy in the hands of a master. These two were masters, and closer than we might suppose. If it seems strange that Brown should have written so many stories with story-telling as a secondary aim, remember that the story itself plays a subordinate rôle in Browning's masterpiece, also. It might be said further that while Browning's characters as a group are intellectualized, Brown's are more frequently emotionalized; Browning tends to specialize in odious people, while Brown's men and women are usually likable.

The events portrayed in the yarns are those most likely to catch the eye of a confirmed regionalist: the fairs, the harvest home, the shipwreck, rivalries of town and mine, the horrors of a cholera epidemic, the excitement of religious conversion, the betrayal of a Char-
tist refugee. There is beauty and poetry in the lives of these people, but these must take their chances along with drunkenness, hypocrisy, stupidity, superstition, and dirt. It is extremely difficult to convey any satisfactory impression of the variety and flavor of these yarns. Without quotation, description tends to become a bald inventory of qualities. There is nothing for it but to read them. We can speak of a pervading sense of a divine purpose at the heart of things, we can say that Brown has made everything secondary to the human interest, we may mention the innumerable quotations and paraphrases from the Bible—we can say all this and much more, and the yarns remain essentially unknown to the reader.

It should be mentioned that Brown seldom fails in the art of concealing his art. He has concealed it so well that a superficial view might be unaware of its existence. It is rare indeed that one detects the classical scholar of Oxford hiding in the garb of the sailor. This point has been made convincingly by Francis Thompson, a contemporary of Brown, and a critic as well as a poet.

To turn to the Yarns is to step into another world. The subjective poet of the lyrics becomes an objective poet of a power unmatched—nay, unapproached in these self-conscious days. Brown has the gift of narrative in his bones, and therewith a vigour, an abounding vitality, that banish the thought of art and make the whole appear as unforced and natural as the tale of an old seaman. Yet the art is there, though it may be that best art which is spontaneous and from within....Like Chaucer, Brown blends the skill of narration with that of dramatic characterization—indeed, if they suggest any poet, it is the author of The Canterbury Tales. But the observant humour lacks Chaucer's sly demureness; it is more gustful, racy, generous, and highly vitalised. ...The descriptive touches achieve the difficult art of being poetic, yet consonant with the mind and vocabulary of a Manx seaman—or give the illusion of being so. For a like feat one must turn to Mr. Kipling and Tommy Adkins.
Thompson has also commended Brown for his power of dramatic emotion and his emphasis upon "elemental nature and humanity" in a day of "ultra-subtilisation." Not all critics were so favorably impressed.

E. J. Martin writes:

Brown bespeaks our sympathy but gets only our impatience, as his fatal sentimentalism drives his crossed lovers to drink or the grave. We feel more like kicking them than pitying them. [Incidentally, this is a rector speaking] Crabbe's characters are life-like because his prosaic mind only photographs them. Brown and Masefield, both with a truer imagination, show us characters cast in a mould formed by their creator. But Masefield's mould attracts, while Brown's does not. . . . Masefield by giving his people a colour and a vitality makes them greater than life; Brown with his affection for the mawkish makes them feebler even than they are.

He recognizes that Masefield's characters are not as picturesque as they seem, but he likes "the tint that Masefield has given to their dirt." The coloring of Brown's characters he finds too crude to be attractive; there is too much pathos and passion. I confess I do not know exactly what he means by the "mould" which Brown forms for his characters, for his "mould" was the Isle of Man. It is meaningless to imply that these characters do not have color and vitality; it is true that he does not attempt to make them bigger than life or better or cleaner. He takes them as they come. As for pathos, sentimentalism, and mawkishness, we must consider these charges separately. The pathos we can agree upon immediately; it is there in abundance. Sentimentality? It depends upon our definition. If it means, as it does to me, that he wrings more emotion out of a given situation than is warranted, then the illness is certainly not severe enough to be considered "fatal." It is true enough that when Baynes is in a highly-wrought state, as he is more than once, something less than a national catastrophe is required
to bring on the tears. But we must be careful not to confuse sentimentality with sentiment. Sentiment is a perfectly legitimate expression of emotion (except to those care-hardened sophisticates to whom any expression of emotion is taboo), and is naturally found in abundance among the simple, earthy people who crowd Brown's pages. Mawkishness? Does he mean anemic, effeminate, languishing, insipid, wishy-washy? I reject the charge unreservedly. De gustibus non est disputandum.

The body of criticism relating to these narratives may be summarized by isolating those reactions which are shared in common by several critics, both for and against. We find that those who dislike the yarns tend to concentrate their attack on a few major issues. They are perhaps most disturbed by the dilatory method in which the plots are unfolded, but dislike of the dialect as such is a close second. Many are irritated by the sheer length of the narratives, or by what they consider the unnecessary wordiness of selected passages. Others complain that his poetic method is incompatible with his poetic purpose. Baynes' fondness for repetition is a common source of annoyance. A few are bothered by the fact that most of the yarns end happily, feeling that coincidence is overworked to bring this about. Still others are displeased by the touches of bathos and sentimentality. Some just don't like narrative poetry.

Those who write in favor of the narratives are clearly in the majority, and they find a greater variety of qualities to praise. Saintsbury, writing on Brown in The Cambridge History of English Literature (XIII, 216) find "a quite uncommon tone frequently, some-
times, a suggestion of something more behind which might become not merely uncommon but supreme.” Nearly all of them praise his originality, both in subject matter and treatment. They make much of his vision and insight, the tremendous variety, the humor, the rugged tenderness. They are impressed by the scope of his character portrayal, by his broad human sympathy and humanity. Many comment at great length on his wide knowledge of and delight in Nature. He is, they feel, genuinely healthy and refreshing in his freedom from morbidity and pessimism. He retains a joyful spirit of youthfulness, mixed with a Celtic melancholy. There is a freshness, a raciness, both in his matter and his style. Many praise him in glowing terms for dealing with the common people, with elemental and essential things. He is not a mere photographer, but an Interpreter. His works have touches of the stark primeval quality of the Icelandic sagas, yet they are shot through with a simple natural piety. They are manly, vital, rugged, yet they end on a note of forgiveness, reconciliation, and hope. Above all, they touch the heart. Almost to a man his friendly critics are agreed that he has not yet found his true place, his rightful place, which eventually he must and shall reach.

Many of Brown's commentators have been undiscriminating in their appreciation of his achievement. Their exaggerated or misdirected praise, and especially their often unwarranted devaluation of other authors as they boost their idol into the ranks of the immortals, has been of doubtful effectiveness in winning new readers for Brown or reaching an impartial verdict on his work. Henley was perhaps the greatest sinner in this respect, but he is pushed hard by Mr. Simpson, author
of the only published full-length study of Brown. I quite understand
what has led them to this sycophantic mood, but the total effect must
nevertheless be deplored. Their sweeping claims have quite proba-
been productive of as much antagonism as of agreement.

One group of qualities of characteristics have been the distinct-
ion of sharing almost equal attention among those who praise and those
who blame. High on this list would stand his ruggedness in diction,
his use of colloquialism, and his daring irregularities of rhythm.
A proof of originality and a special charm to one group, they are
anathema to the other. His simplicity and innocence, also are adduced
both as a sign of true greatness, and of puerility. The optimism
which permeates his pages is either an indication of high-mindedness
or of shallow thinking, depending which side of the fence the critic
happens to be on. The recurrent theme of star-crossed love seems to
charm about as many people as it irritates. What some interpret as
rudeness is only commendable vigor to others, but the chasm between
those who view his treatment of common themes and common people in
common language as his greatest contribution, and those who view the
same phenomena with disgust as a "vulgar" obsession with "vulgar"
people portrayed in a "vulgar" language, is permanently unbridgeable.
There are those who cheer his lack of "prettiness," and others who
deplore its absence. Whatever the reaction, on these or a multitude
of minor points, it is seldom one of neutrality. Much more frequently
it is violently positive or violently negative. As we go on to examine
some of these poems in more detail, we shall try to steer a middle
course. Whatever may be our ultimate conclusion regarding the perma-
ment values in his work, we can see what lies behind it even now.

As one critic has aptly put it, "All his work is vitalised by the sense of the joy of being. If you must have a moral or a theory of life, here is his: that to live is good, and to love, and to live again in fair, strong children, and to play oneself out to the uttermost; and, when the right time comes, it is good also to die."

The character of Brown himself so shines through these Fo'c's'le Yarns, they are so dominated by the personality and spirit of his alter ego Tom Baynes, that I can think of no fitter motto, either for this chapter or for the narratives as a whole, than the words of Whitman:

Camerado, this is no book;
Who touches this touches a man.
"So Long!" Complete Writings (1902), II, 289.
NOTES

1 Letters, I, 223.

2 I, 224.

3 II, 175-76.


5 Letters, II, 83-84.


7 Letters, I, 121-22.

8 I, 123.

9 I, 100.


19 Little Manx Nation, p. 125.

20 Edmund Goodwin's "Introduction to the Phonetics" in Arthur William Moore, A Vocabulary of the Anglo-Manx Dialect (London and New York, Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. x-xi. This work, compiled by Moore, with the cooperation of Sophia Morrison and Edmund Goodwin, has been my prime source of information regarding the technical aspects of the dialect, and provided the material for my summary of dialectal peculiarities. Most of its illustrations of usage are taken from Brown's works. For a brief but interesting unscientific discussion of the language, see Hall Caine's chapter "The Manx Language" in his Little Manx Nation (London, 1891).


22 Works, IV, 229-30.


Chapter 2. "Betsy Lee."

"Betsy Lee" was neither the first poem Brown wrote, nor the first to be published, but as the earliest of the Manx tales in verse and the first published work to gain widespread attention, it may reasonably be taken as a starting point. It would appear that the poem was originally put into type in a 49 page octavo pamphlet, printed by I. Evening at Cockermouth, Cumberland, sometime in 1872. This was one of Brown's favorite holiday places, and his bibliographer surmises that on one of his visits he arranged with the local printer to run off a few copies for private circulation among his friends. This would have been approximately nine years after he went to Clifton. He was, then, forty-two when he had the satisfaction of seeing a major poetic effort in print for the first time. In 1873, the poem appeared simultaneously in Macmillan's Magazine (XXVII, April, 441-57; XXVIII, May, 1-18) and the Isle of Man Times (5 April through 26 July) and was then published in book form by Macmillan in an abridged, 110 page, anonymous edition in green cloth covers under the title Betsy Lee: A Fo'c's'le Yarn. The tentative issue of the poem in the magazine seems to have attracted considerable attention, and convinced the publishers that (to use what Brown called "that hideous phrase") there was money in it. The poem established what must have been something of a record in prompt reviews, the first one appearing in the Isle of Man Times on June 7, while serial publication was still under way. Two months later, Brown gave what was probably the first public reading of the poem in the Finch Hill Congregational Church, where his brother-in-law John Williamson was pastor. The book edition sold well, but did little to promote his recognition
as a poet immediately, for only a few people knew who the author was.

James Maurice Wilson, at various times Headmaster of Clifton College, Archdeacon of Manchester, and Canon of Worcester, and perhaps Brown's closest life-long friend, has three points of connection with this poem. First, he is the sole authority for the authenticity of the original 1872 issue. Second, he seems also to be the sole authority for the statement that George Eliot wrote enthusiastically to Macmillan when the poem appeared as a serial. Third, Wilson attended a Brown Centenary celebration of the London Manx Society in May, 1930, and quoted the poem from memory for half an hour—at the age of 94. In his remarks at this same meeting, he said that Brown had given him a copy of the poem in the 'sixties. If Wilson's memory may be trusted, Brown must have been working on the poem for several years prior to its publication, perhaps even a decade before. In any event, the multiple publication within a short space of time gives some basis for the distinction of "poem of the year" which one critic conferred upon it.

This story concerns the frustrated love of the youthful Tom Baynes and Betsy Lee, who gives her name to the poem. The two grow up as playmates, the children of fishermen who live in adjoining cottages. Their idyllic love affair is first threatened when the girl's father inherits a sizable fortune and quits the sea to become a substantial landowner and farmer. Tom's immediate forebodings of interference are allayed by Betsy, and their courting goes on much as before except that the young sailor is increasingly jealous of Taylor, the young lawyer's clerk who is smitten by the beauty and the financial prospects of Betsy. She is enough of a coquette to fan the flames by openly accepting his
gallantries, and the feud is further embittered by Taylor's high-handed and disdainful attitude toward Tom. Not given to subtlety or restraint, Tom challenges his rival to a fight, and when he declines, throws him off the place and warns him not to come back. Taylor swears revenge. His revenge is slow to appear, and Tom has almost forgotten the threat, when a report reaches Betsy's father accusing Tom of fathering the illegitimate child of a certain Jenny Magee. He believes Taylor's well-planned libel, and forbids his daughter to see Tom again. Tom seeks frantically to establish his innocence, but it is his word against that of Taylor and the girl, who swears he is guilty. Unable to clear his name, Tom ships on an extended foreign voyage. In his absence, Taylor tries every means of persuading Betsy to marry him. He enlists her parents to plead in his behalf, but she will hear no word against Tom and clings to the hope that he will return to her. In a final effort to win her, Taylor circulates the report that Tom has been drowned in a shipwreck. The tale is generally believed, but instead of turning to him as he had hoped, Betsy is now more determined than ever to remain true to her old lover. Under the strain of constant pressure from her father and Taylor, her health breaks and she goes into a fatal decline. When Tom returns and hears of her death, he immediately sails again, and attempts to forget his sense of defeat and loss in a wild and reckless existence. After one drunken spree in Liverpool, he chances upon Jenny Magee. On her deathbed she confesses her part in the plot against him, and extracts from Tom a promise that he will care for her child. He returns to the Island with the baby, and confides it to his mother's care. In the evening he goes to the churchyard to mourn over Betsy's grave, and there
he encounters Taylor. His first thought is to avenge at once the villainy which has resulted in the death of his sweetheart and changed the course of his own life, but suddenly he is struck by the thought that Taylor loved her too. He abandons his revenge, and the two rivals are reconciled over Betsy's grave.

This story was long a favorite with Brown's readers, and it is not too difficult to see why. Less strongly Manx in its idiom than some of the later work, it tells a rather simple love story with considerable vigor and deals almost entirely with the elemental human passions. It has been called the "most poetical" of his yarns by several people, including Selwyn Simpson, author of the only full-length study of Brown. Simpson closes his summary of the poem with what he intended as a rhetorical question: "Could a more noble ending be imagined?" Unless we are willing to accept the dubious proposition that "noble" means the same as applied either to a human action or to the artistic representation of that action, we must answer in the affirmative. Artistically, the ending is weak rather than noble.

The dramatic situation in this yarn differs slightly from most of the others, in that Baynes is both narrator and hero. It is a good introduction to the narratives because it has a fair representation of both their vices and virtues. Here Brown introduces his distinctive medium and opens that extensive portrait gallery which contributes so much to later poems. Two major weaknesses in plot are almost certain to influence present-day readers to prefer charges of melodrama, and affect their estimate of the poem unduly. We have a genuine and realistic conflict developed, but the resolution of that conflict smacks of forced
manipulation by the poet. Given the situation and the characters involved, the "dying from a broken heart" routine is a terrible falling-off. Touching and pathetic it may be, but it is not good drama. In actual fact, Betsy would doubtless have been forced to marry Taylor. Would not this have been more genuinely tragic? As it is, Brown adopts the stock solution, and the story never recovers. Our credulity may be somewhat strained by the coincidental meeting between Baynes and the dying Jenny, but not until we reach the final resolution is it strained to the breaking-point. We have simply not been prepared for the abrupt shift from murderous hate to Christian forgiveness. That all Tom's grievances could be swallowed up in an instant by a rush of emotion as he stands over his sweetheart's grave is perhaps possible, but so improbable as to be unconvincing. I believe Brown meant this poem to have certain qualities of the exemplum. The ending would seem to illustrate his belief that real love has inherent claims which cannot be annulled or denied, and that it possesses tremendous reconciling power, regardless of the extent to which it may have gone astray. The principal objection to this interpretation is that we are never fully convinced that Taylor's love is genuine.

There are many effective character portraits. The dapper lawyer's clerk as presented by Brown bears a marked resemblance to the "city slicker" of melodrama:

You've seen mayhap that sort of spark?  
As neat and as pert and as sharp as a pin,  
With a mossel of hair on the tip of his chin;  
With his face so fine, and his tongue so glib,  
And a saucy cock in the set of his jib;  
With his rings and his studs and all the rest,  
And half a chain cable paid out on his breast. (C.P., 108)

Brown's description of the transient innocence and joy of childhood
on the Island succeeds in catching the essential meaning of childhood everywhere:

Now the beauty of the thing when children plays is
The terrible wonderful length the day is.
Up you jumps, and out in the sun,
And you fancy the day will never be done;
And you're chasin' the bumbees hummin' so cross
Ind' the hot sweet air among the goss,*
Or gath'rin' blue-bells, or lookin' for eggs,
Or pikit' in the ducks with their yalla legs,
Or a climbin' and nearly breakin' your skulls,
Or a shoutin' for divilment after the gulls,
Or a thinkin' of nothin', but down at the tide
Singin' out for the happy you feel inside.
That's the way with the kids, you know,
And the years do come and the years do go,
And when you look back it's all like a puff;
Happy and over and short enough. (C.P., 110-11)

Equally effective in its simplicity is Baynes' recollection of that magic moment when he first became aware that Betsy was no longer a child. They are playing together on the beach when one of the other boys begins to torment her.

And he worried the wench till her shoulders were bare,
And he slipped the knot of her beautiful hair,
And down it came, as you may say,
Just like a shower of golden spray,
Blown this way and that by a gamesome breeze,
And a rip-rip-riplin' down to her knees.
I looked at Betsy—aw dear! how she stood!
A quiv'rin' all over, and her face like blood!
And her eyes, all wet with tears, like fire,
And her breast a swellin' higher and higher!

And a cloud seemed to pass from my eyes, and a glory
Like them you'll see painted sometimes in a story,
Breathed out from her skin; and I saw her no more
The child I had always thought her before,
But wrapped in the glory, and wrapped in the hair,
Every inch of a woman stood pantin' there. (C.P., 111)

In a very different mood he portrays a minor character named Tommy
Tight he was by name and by nathur,
A dirty ould herpocrate of a craythur,
With a mouth that shut with a snick and a snap—
Tight, for sure, like the Divil's own trap;
And his hair brushed up behind and before—
Straight like the bristles that's on a boar.
Well, that man was thin! I never saw thinner,
A lean, ould, hungry, mangy sinner!
And he'd sit and he'd talk! well, the way he'd talk!
And he'd groan in his innards, but an eye like a hawk—
And cunning written all over his face— (C.P., 118)

We are also introduced for the first time to "Paxon" Gale, who
plays a conspicuous part in later stories, both as actor and narrator.
Brown draws him strongly and expressively. It is to Paxon Gale that
Baynes turns automatically for help and advice when he is in trouble.
"A man and a friend first," as one writer describes him, "and a
'pazon' afterwards, a mixture of strength and tenderness, he comes
before you as one winning the love and respect of his Island parish­
ioners. . .Here is no 'blameless prig,' no 'stainless knight and per­
fect gentleman' for young ladies to smirk and simper over in their
5
daydreams."

And only a little man, but staunch,
With a main big heart aback of his paunch!
Just a little round man—but you should ha' seen him agate
Of a good-sized conger or a skate:
His arms as stiff, and his eye afire,
And every muscle of him like wire!

But Paxon Gale—now I'll give you his size,
He was a simple pazon, and lovin' and wise.
That's what he was, and quiet uncommon,
And never said much to man nor woman;
Only the little he said was meat
For a hungry heart, and soft and sweet,
The way he said it: and often talkin'
To hissef, and lookin' down, and walkin'.
Quiet he was, but you couldn't doubt
The Pazon was knowin what he was about. (C.P., 128-29)

But with Paxon Gale, as with most of the other characters, it is through
his own words and actions that we come to know him best, rather than through these thumbnail sketches. His easy-going tolerance is nowhere better seen than in his treatment of his sons as they absorb a liberal education in the fine points of drinking and swearing under the adept tutelage of Tom Baynes. Brown was not totally dependent upon his imagination for the broad outlines of Pazon Gale's character. It is generally agreed that he is drawn principally from a Mr. Corrin, one-time Vicar of Kirk Christ, Rushen, and from the poet's father, the Rev. Robert Brown. The poet somewhere speaks of Rev. Corrin, whom he had often visited, as "quite the dearest and noblest old man I ever met." And certainly Gale has in him something of the shrewdness, the forgiving nature, the generosity and love of learning which characterized Brown's father. F. S. Boas has said of the Pazon: "He is one of that noble company of the cloth, Chaucer's 'povere persoun,' Fielding's Parson Adams, Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield, who are in the world yet are unspotted by it."

Perhaps enough has been said elsewhere of Tom Baynes as a dramatic projection of his creator, but I believe this relationship is closer in "Betsy Lee" than in later poems, when the personality of the old salt is so firmly established that he is less dependent upon derivative traits. If he outgrew his status as a "projection" of Brown in many respects (just as Brown outgrew him in others), he never lost the sense of humor, the essential sanity of outlook and breadth of sympathy with which the poet originally endowed him. As Boas rightly says, when Baynes cries out against the routine and the restrictions of an Old Sailor's Home, we can almost hear the voice of Brown himself.
A motley crowd of individualized figures surround the sailor and the clergyman, and almost without exception they are drawn from the middle class of Island society. This is partly to be explained by the fact that Brown was a member of this class, and knew it as he knew no other. His friend J. C. Tarver has observed that he put into practice the advice which Flaubert once gave to a young man: "Dream like a demi-god and live like a middle-class person." In the black frock coat and soft hat which he habitually wore, he might easily have been mistaken for a sea-captain—and nothing would have pleased him more. He could and did at times portray "the quality" and the dregs of society, but by instinct and preference he gave his major attention to the middle class.

To my mind, one of the most interesting character portraits in the poem is that of Baynes' old mother. Here we see her through Tom's eyes:

Aw, the woman was hard.
Hard she was, and lusty, and strong—
I've heard them say, when she was young
She could lift a hundred-weight and more,
And there wasn't a man in the parish could throw her.

But yandhar woman—asleep or awake—
Was a clane culd carythur and no mistake.
But hard—aw, hard! for the culd man died
And she looked, and she looked, but she never cried
And him laid out, as sweet as bran,
And everything white,—like a gentleman.
And brass nails—bless ye! and none of your 'sterrits';
(hysterics)
But proud in herself, and sarvin' the sperrits.

Aw, the woman was hard!
But if you could have prised the hatches
Of that strong soul, you would have seen the catches
She made at her heart, choked up to the brim,
And you'd ha' knew she was as dead as him.
But mind me! from that very day
The juice of her life, as you may say,
Was clean dried out of her, and she got
As tough and as dry, and as hard as a knot. (C.P., 132-33.)

There you have a typical example of Baynes' method of drawing a character—first the external view, with a few pertinent details and emphasis upon a single action, and then the inner view, the interpretation. If we consider this poem as an entity in itself, we shall be forced to conclude that Brown has not in every case developed his characters in strict conformity with their respective importance to the plot. Old Mrs. Baynes, for example, receives considerable attention. We do not resent it, for she is a genuinely interesting person, but after all, her rôle is relatively slight. Taylor, on the other hand, is not developed as fully as his position as villain of the piece would seem to warrant. If we consider the poem as a unit in the series of Fo'c's'le Yarns, these discrepancies are understandable, even though they may not be justified. Those characters who will play a part or exert an influence on later stories are more fully developed than those whose function is confined to "Betsy Lee." The poem is tied into the series chiefly by the repetition of key figures, notably Baynes and Pason Gale, but some minor characters are also first introduced here who will reappear in other yarns. Peggy the servant becomes the title character of "Peggy's Wedding"; Simmy, the illegitimate son of Jenny Magee, is adopted by Baynes and reappears with him on other occasions. Dr. Bell later stars in The Doctor.

In some respects, one of the weakest characters in the entire poem is Betsy Lee herself. This weakness is not apparent at first glance,
because Tom does considerable talking about his sweetheart. He tells us in generæal way what she looked like, reports what she said on various occasions, and describes what happened to her. But with all the talk about Betsy, what do we really know about her? She is young and innocent and lovely. It is not enough. The principal difficulty lies in the fact that she is almost entirely passive. She is loved and kissed and desired and fought over and plotted against. But what does she do? She allows herself to be kissed, she milks the cow, and when circumstances build up against her, she lies down and dies. A little more struggle, a little less acquiescence, would have made her more believable, and more in keeping with what Brown has told us elsewhere of the character of Manx women.

Several basic traits of Manx character do appear. The tendency toward digression and exaggeration are clearly represented by Baynes. The bringing in of odd extraneous bits of "local color" stems from Brown's purpose and his own proclivities. In one of his letters there is a passage which goes far to explain this aspect of his method, both in this poem and in the yarns as a whole.

A true Philologist, a true Ethnologist, Folklorist, scorns nothing; because he can never tell where his honest gleanings may not come in, what lacuna they may not supply, what literary tendency they may not illustrate, what parable they may not suggest. He feels that there is danger in letting any fragment go by; nay, something almost like literary treason in consulting his own case, taste, or prepossession, anything but the simple bits of what, to others, may appear rubbish, and even to himself, at times, superfluous. Who has not felt this—this responsibility—on the Palatine Mount or at Pompeii?

Or, we might add, at Castletown or Douglas, in Sulby Glen or on Mount Barrule? Brown was not speaking of himself directly here, and he never
considered himself a "Folklorist" in any technical sense, but the attitude expressed here explains the presence of those "bits" which now and again do appear to be superfluous, if not exactly "rubbish."

Manx superstitions' credulity is represented by Baynes' mother, who is firmly convinced that he is a ghost when he reappears suddenly after having been reported drowned. More pervading in its influence is the essentially religious bent of the Manx character, not theological at all, but "religious with the emotional intensity of a last-century revivalist." All the yarns are permeated with this belief in religion as a living reality. They could not grow out of an irreligious atmosphere, nor can they be read sympathetically without taking their religious undertone into consideration. In "Betsy Lee" this element is most fully illustrated in the character of Pazon Gale, but it has other outlets as well. Tom's monologues are liberally sprinkled with Biblical quotations. There must be above a score in the 1,594 lines of the poem, some of them rather lengthy. Many of Baynes' remarks, and especially his final forgiveness of the man who had wronged him, are simply meaningless unless we interpret them in the light of his simple but fervent religious faith, and his attempt to live according to its precepts.

Humor is not absent from "Betsy Lee," but is more restrained and less apparent than in many other yarns, principally, I believe, because the narrator is here recounting an unhappy episode in his own life, and is not in a joking mood. Brown praised humor as a high gift, and distinguished two methods of incorporating it in a work of literature.
But humour is not necessarily light and buoyant; it can be sad. The first kind is often laid on, or brought in as a relief. The gray and the gay interchange. The reader is supposed to be getting too serious—turn on the humour! This mechanical succession or interposition is not the divinest purpose to which humour can be applied. . .there is a humour which streams with melancholy sweetness over the surface of things sad, or rather perhaps, is in the things themselves, or in our way of looking at them. Sunt lacrymae rerum, but, by an inscrutably delicate concatenation, there is also a risus rerum which haunts the lips of sadness.

It is the latter type which provokes a frequent smile in this poem, and little of it can be conveyed by quotation. There is humor of a broadly farcical kind in the passage describing how Baynes, exasperated beyond control as Betsy, "all of a twitter lek," passes pleasant words with the stylish Mr. Taylor. Tom has taken over her chore of milking the cow, and at last finds an effective means of breaking up the tête-a-tête.

Goodness! how that girl's tongue ran! 
Like the tick of a watch, or the buzz of a reel, 
And hoity-toity! and quite genteel—
Rittle-rattle—the talk it came,
And as grand as grand, the two of them!
Aw, I might have been a thousand miles away—
Of course! of course! I know what you'll say—
But I couldn't stand it—so I watched my chance,
And I turned the tit, and I gave it him once,
A right good akute betwix' the eyes—
Aw, murder! murder! what a rise!
With the milk all streamin' down his breast,
And his shirt and his pins and all the rest,
And a bran new waistcoat spoiled, and him splutt'rin',
And a wipin' his face, and mutt'rin—mutt'rin
And at last he says, "I shall go" says he,
"And kermoonicate this to Misther Lee."
"Aw, Tom!" says Betsy; "Aw, Betsy!" says I;
Whatever!" says she, and she begun to cry.
"Well," I says, "it's no wonder o' me,
With your ransy-tansy-tissimitee." (C.P., 121)

It will be noticed that a good part of the humor here depends, not on the slapstick action itself, but on the reaction of the partic-
pants. Betsy's use of the term "Whatever!" is a perfect choice. It communicates perfectly her mingled feelings of embarrassment, annoyance, and amusement. Tom's reply, incorporating the line from a children's jingle, is best translated "With your carrying on."

This fragment of conversation also illustrates another frequent source of humor—mimicry. The narrator very often repeats another's remarks with the studied carelessness of the accomplished mimic. Brown was himself a master of the art; it became habitual and almost unconscious. Some of his victims took offense at his exact reproductions of their manner and tone, but at least one of them gave him the highest praise a mimic can receive. When Brown's imitation was relayed to him he responded: "Well, I didn't say quite that, but I would have if I had thought of it."

The style of the poem is fairly typical of the yarns in its opening, proceeding from the particular to the general. Even in this early yarn, Brown had found the distinctive literary style which characterizes all the dialect narratives. It can best be described as a free, swinging treatment of the line of four accents. In a random passage of 100 lines, or fifty complete, about thirty-five are partially or completely end-stopped. This count is slightly misleading, however, because I have considered lines ending in a dash or a question mark as end-stopped, and often in actual reading they are not. He manages considerable variation in rate within the couplet pattern by varying the number of syllables in the line, and by the introduction of short exclamatory elements within the line. It can rattle along rapidly and impetuously, or move slowly and deliberately,
depending upon the mood of the speaker. He uses pauses with considerable frequency, sometimes for effect, sometimes to reproduce a speaker's manner of delivery, and sometimes simply to allow the yarn-spinner to catch his breath. It is easy to forget that he is following a metrical pattern. One critic says: "The seeming artlessness of this free style is a happy deception; but examination will show that Brown's ear never loses the beat of his iambic pattern, and his stresses fall precisely where he intends." Compare the relatively slow movement of this couplet

\[\text{It's a terrible thing is love—did you say?} \]
\[\text{Well, Edward, my lad, I'll not say nay—} \]

with the rapidity of the predominantly anapaestic couplet that follows it:

\[\text{But you don't think of that when the young heart blows} \]
\[\text{Leaf by leaf, comin' out like a rose. (C.P., 111)} \]

One trick of style which we find frequently is that of antithetical repetition. In one such passage, he describes different varieties of feet:

\[\text{For there's feet that houlds on like a cat on a roof,} \]
\[\text{And there's feet that thumps like an elephant's hoof;} \]
\[\text{There's feet that goes trundlin' on like a barra,} \]
\[\text{And some that's crooky, some as straight as an arra; (C.P., 113)} \]

He continues this particular series for another half dozen lines. In another series of couplets, he sets in opposition various types of "pazon":

\[\text{For there's pazon's now that's mortal proud,} \]
\[\text{And some middlin' humble, that's allowed.} \]
\[\text{And there's pazon's partikler about their clothes,} \]
\[\text{And rings on their fingers, and bells on their toes: (C.P., 128)} \]

The pauses and stresses of conversational speech are indicated by italics, quotation marks, dashes, exclamation points, question marks:
A son of ould Dan's! — aye, just that way—
A son of ould Dan's! — eh? Billy! eh? (O.P., 142)

It must be admitted that he is remarkably successful in making his readers hear, not only the rise and fall, the rate and tempo of the voice, but the very tone, the voice quality. Among modern poets, I know only one — Robert Frost — who excels him in this.

Brown manages to keep the basic story-telling situation before the reader without allowing it to intrude unduly. We are never allowed to forget for long that Baynes is telling the story to a group of sailors on the fo'c's'le. From the opening lines—

I said I would? Well, I hardly know,
But a yarn's a yarn; so here we go —

until the final

"Watch below! turn up!" "Aye, aye, sir!"

we are kept in touch with the total environment, of which the yarn itself is only a part. Sometimes it is merely by answering a question put by a member of his audience that the narrator recalls their existence. He may leave his subject to speak of another matter, and his listeners object:

"Go on! go on!" Is that your shout?
Well, what is this I was thinkin' about?
I'm in for it now, and it's no use bilkin'!—
O, aye! the milkin'!

But scarcely is the story under way again when he is reminded of something else, and after a lengthy digression is once more recalled to his announced topic. This time he comes as close as he ever gets to an apology:

"But about the milkin'?" All right! all right!
I'm nearly as bad as ould Tommy Tite!
Spinnin' round and round and round,
And never a knowin' where am I bound.

On still another occasion he is temporarily interrupted by some inexpert
Well! well! well! well! — What ails the ship?
Hold on! hold on! I've got a grip.
Who's at the helm? . . .

Then one of the sailors offers him a pipe, after which he inquires in
detail about the welfare of the donor's family before continuing his tale.
"Aw, Eddart and me is well acquaint," he explains. These constant di-
gressions and interruptions are a distinguishing trait of his narrative
style. Once we learn to think of them as integral parts of the poem,
rather than mere impediments to the unfolding of the plot, they cease to
be annoying and become interesting in themselves.

While the presentation of characters, the development of plot, the
creation of atmosphere and the like tell us much about the man ( and all
of these are literary tasks which the narrative poet shares with the
prose writer), it is, I think, especially in his handling of imagery
that we judge the poet as poet. The imagery of "Betsy Lee" shows a
poetic imagination of a high order, which turns most naturally to humble
things for its comparisons. To the religious-minded Baynes, God forms

A simple wench to be true and free,
And to move like a piece of poetry. (C.P.,113)

When he first learns of Ould Anthony Lee's inherited fortune, Tom walks
alone by the shore.

And a knife inside me seemed to cut
My heart from its moorin's, and heaven shut,
And locked, and barred, like the door of a dungeon,
And me in the trough of the sea a plungin',
With the only land that I knew behind me,
And a driftin' where God himself couldn'  find me.  (C.P., 114)

The metaphor of the drifting ship is the inevitable analogy for the
young sailor lad who sees himself cut off from the way of life he has
known, denied cherished contacts in an obscure future. Reassured of
Betsy's devotion, he hears the brook speaking to him, "with the ringin' laugh of its silvery flow." He is aware of her presence everywhere, like any young man hopelessly in love:

And I've felt her spirit draw nigher and nigher, 
Till it shivered into my veins like fire, 
And every ripple and every rock 
Seemed swep' with the hem of Betsy's frock. (C.P., 116)

This identification of fire with passion recurs frequently. He describes the little boys in "Them pict'hrs the Romans has got in their chapels" as "pert and bould as goats." The morning dew is "The sweetest brew of God's own wind!"

Here is an example of his use of onomatopoeia, as he speaks of Betsy singing as she milked:

For when she was milkin', she was always singin'; 
I don't know what was it—maybe the ringin' 
Of the milk comin' tearin' into the can, 
With a swish and a swelsh and a tāntārān, 
A makin' what the Lawyer gent 
Was callin' a sort of accomplishment. (C.P., 119)

Baynes' rival is one who plots in secret,

For he's one of them chaps that works in the dark, 
And creeps and crawls—is a Lawyer's clerk; 
And digs and digs, and gives no sign, 
Spreadin' sods and flowers at the mouth of his mine; 
And he'll lay his train, and he'll hold his match, 
Till the minute comes, and before you sneezes 
You're up to heaven in a hundred pieces. (C.P., 122)

He seeks to explain further the nature of this insidious plotting and slander by changing his metaphor:

Aw, it's a bitter poison—that black art, 
The lie that eats into your heart; 
A thing gath'rin' round you like a seine 
Round the fish, and them never feelin' the strain; 
A squall comin' tippytoe off the land, 
And houldin' its breath till it's close at hand,
And whisp'rin' to the winds to keep still
Till all is ready—and then with a will,
With a rush and a roar that sweeps your deck,
And there you lies a shiv'rin'wreck. (C.P., 123)

Here again, the imagery is effective because he describes the abstract in terms of the simple realities he knows intimately: the miner's train, the fisherman's seine, the sudden squall. And he is aware of the sea, even in that moment of agony when he realizes that Betsy is lost to him forever:

And I heard the moan of the long dead seas
Far away rollin' in on the shore... (C.P., 126)

He describes constraint in the presence of great anxiety in terms familiar to his sailor audience, and striking in their emotional intensity:

...So up I got,
And out at the door, and I put a knot
On my heart, like one of you, when he takes
A turn and belays, and houlds on till it breaks. (C.P., 131)

Part of the intensity of this derives from his use of two levels of meaning in that "breaks." Superficially, it refers to the rope; on another level it refers back to Tom's heart.

When Baynes' mother flies into a tantrum, she is "lithe as an eel," and when she stands in the darkened cabin before the flickering glow of the fireplace she appears

...like the shadda of death.
Never a breath—for maybe a minute,
Just like a cloud with the thunder in it:
Dark and still, till its powder-bags
Burst—and the world is blown to rags. (C.P., 133)

But when her passion burns itself out, and she stands shaking in tears:

And I looked in her face, and the shape and the strent'
And the very face itself had went
All into one, like a sudden thaw,
Slished and slushed, "or the way you've saw
The water bubblin' and swirlin' around
The place where a strong man have gone down. (C.P., 134)

When Tom himself learns the full extent of Taylor's villainy, he jumps
like a creature stung by an adder:

And I couldn' see nothing! but fire and blood,
And I-reeled like a bullock that's got the thud
Of the slaughterer's hammer betwixt his burns,
And claps of light and dark by turns,
Fire and blood! fire and blood!
And round and round, till the blindin' scud
Got thinner and thinner. . . . (C.P., 140)

The Pazon tries to comfort him:

"The lad is drunk with grief," he said,
And he come and put his hand on my head;
And the poor old fingers as dry as chips!
And the pity a tricklin' off their tips— (C.P., 141)

No amount of quotation can convey the total impression of the
poem, but these scattered excerpts illustrate the general tone and
method. It becomes apparent that the descriptive detail, the diction,
the imagery, the objects and actions and settings which go to make
up the whole are drawn almost exclusively from the commonest walks
of common life. The comparisons are these familiar to the experience
of a Manx sailor. Yet it becomes equally apparent that this is no
ordinary sailor; he has the imagination of a poet. A star in the sky
is not just a star, it is "a swan on a lake, White and lonely." The
common everyday elements of his world are transformed by what we may
call poetic passion. We may deplore the lack of intellectual content,
the open portrayal of intimate emotions, the uninhibited religious
attitude of the narrator, the unhurried and digressive method in which
he spins his yarn. We may not even much like the yarn itself. But we can hardly deny that in many a line we are given a flash of insight, a sudden awareness of a relationship, a glimpse of strength and beauty which only true poetry can provide. It is warm, it is living, it is genuine.

I am certain that a poem like this can or ought to be set alongside another work for purposes of establishing relative superiority. Selwyn Simpson, in his study of Brown, devoted considerable space to the drawing of what Quiller-Couch has called "deadly parallels" between "Betsy Lee" and Tennyson's "Enoch Arden." There is little doubt that the latter has had more readers; there is considerable doubt that it is a better poem. Space forbids quotation of all the parallel passages, but for the convenience of readers who wish to make the comparison in detail, I have included in the notes a complete set of references to the quotations given by Simpson. One or two brief excerpts must serve our purpose here. I have already quoted (page 95 above) Brown's description of children playing. Let us place alongside it a similar scene from "Enoch Arden":

A narrow cave ran in beneath the cliff;  
In this the children played at keeping house  
Enoch was host one day, Philip the next,  
While Annie still was mistress; but at times  
Enoch would hold possession for a week:  
"This is my house and this my little wife."  
"Mine too" said Philip "turn and turn about!"  
When, if they quarrel'd, Enoch stronger-made  
Was master; then would Philip, his blue eyes  
All flooded with the helpless wrath of tears,  
Shriek out "I hate you, Enoch," and at this  
The little wife would weep for company,  
And pray them not to quarrel for her sake,  
And say she would be little wife to both. (Lines 23-36)
We have also seen Brown's description of the first realization of love.

(Page 95 above) Here is the parallel passage as Tennyson states it:

But when the dawn of rosy childhood past,
And the new warmth of life's ascending sun
Was felt by either, either fixt his heart
On that one girl; and Enoch spoke his love,
But Philip loved in silence; and the girl
Seem'd kinder unto Philip than to him;
But she loved Enoch; tho' she knew it not,
And would if ask'd deny it. (Lines 37-44)

We might, as Simpson has done, pile up these comparisons, but it would be unkind to the Laureate, and it would not materially modify the inescapable conclusion that Brown did this particular thing infinitely better than Tennyson—better, I think, because more naturally. Tennyson tells his story from the outside, Brown from the inside; Tennyson's figures remain finely formed and polished figures; Brown's figures are cruder, rougher, but they are alive. In the final analysis, what does such comparison prove? Both of these poems make their primary appeal to a taste which has today largely disappeared. While each was a favorite among its author's steady readers at one time, the present partisan of Brown would no more select "Betsy Lee" as the cornerstone of his claim to fame than the champion of Tennyson would exalt the virtues of "Enoch Arden." Both, let it be confessed, sound decidedly "dated" to the present-day reader. Simpson's penultimate paragraph, in which he bestows particular praise on the graveyard forgiveness scene of "Betsy Lee," is a striking example of the change in critical temper. Far from regarding this scene as a clinching demonstration of Brown's superiority, I am inclined to regard it as the major flaw of the entire poem. Brown's superiority
here must rest upon his truth to reality, his fuller realization of character, his greater genuineness and lack of artificiality, and this final scene does not demonstrate any of these qualities. It is, in fact, shockingly bad melodrama, with all the standard ingredients: a rough-and-ready sailor hell-bent for revenge, a graveyard at midnight, a haunted face, a sob, then a handshake and forgiveness. It will not do. Nor will it do to allow this sudden plunge into bathos and unreality, which found great favor with his contemporary readers, to blind us to the virtues which the poem has in good measure.

Technically, the poem shows great skill. Brown would have made his task less difficult (and avoided some rather cumbersome transitions) if he had employed dialogue. He handles alliteration effectively. By calling up the sights and sounds and smells of the Island he enhances the reality of his story. The dialect heightens the realistic tone. The free-flowing meter is admirably adapted to the telling of the story. Quiller-Couch has somewhere described the apparent ease and freedom of the verse by saying that the tale simply "runs on," just "telling itself." This is high praise. "Betsy Lee" is not one of the great poems of the century, it is not Brown's best work, but is a good introduction to this narrative poems, and still well worth the reading.
NOTES

1. The date of original issue in book form is usually given as 1873. William Cubbon, in his Thomas Edward Brown, The Manx Poet: A Bibliography (Douglas, 1934), pp. 11-12, favors the earlier date, largely on the authority of Canon J. M. Wilson, Brown's intimate friend, who owned a copy of the Cockermouth issue. This issue is in binder's watered cover paper; it is undated, anonymous, and has no lettering on the cover. Apparently only a few copies were printed for private circulation, and it is now extremely rare. I am indebted to Cubbon for the details of this and later publications.

2. Simpson, in Appendix II of his T. E. Brown, the Manx Poet: An Appreciation, p. 232, says that it was also published the same year in Every Saturday, XIV, 527, 559-85; William Redcliffe, in his Bibliography in Thomas Edward Brown: A Memorial Volume (Cambridge, 1930), p. 219, repeats this. Cubbon reports that the British Museum cannot trace any periodical or newspaper with that title. It was published in Boston, 1866-74, at which time it merged with Littell's Living Age; Series 3, I-IV of 1872-73. There is no XIV.

3. Reported in London Times, May 5, 1930, p. 16b. It might be mentioned that Sidney T. Irwin in the "Introductory Memoir" which prefaces his edition of Brown's Letters (Westminster, 1900), I, 33, notes that the poem drew "a notable tribute" from George Eliot, but I assume that he is also following Wilson. Selwyn Simpson repeats the assertion, adding that Tennyson sent his congratulations to the author. I have been unable to verify the claim.


6. See for Brown's description of Rev. Corrin his article "Manx Celebrities," Ramsey Courier, Jan 28, 1893. The poet's sister, Mrs. Williamson, elsewhere verifies the identification of the two Manx clergymen as prototypes of Pzon Gale; see Simpson, op. cit., p. 94.

7. The Eighteen -Eighties, p. 56

8. Nineteenth Century, LXXXVIII (Dec., 1920), 1020


Chapter 3. "Christmas Rose."

A few copies of this poem, intended for private circulation, were first printed at Cockermouth in 1873 by the same man who first published "Betsy Lee." Like that poem, it was anonymous, and reappeared in the Po'c's'le Yarns of 1881. Despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that "Christmas Rose" is more thoroughly Manx, in mood, in material, and in method, than most of the other yarns, it is likely to prove enjoyable to a greater number and variety of readers than the others. It has stood the test of time much better, in my opinion, than the more widely circulated "Betsy Lee."

One major contributing factor to its lasting appeal is the story itself. In the hands of a Brontë it might well have become another Jane Eyre or Wuthering Heights, for like those two comets in the literary skies, it is a tale of love and passion with a psychological twist, and a generous dash of adventure for good measure. Unlike them, it has moments of hearty good fun and humor. Our old friend Tom Baynes is again the principal actor as well as narrator. During most of the period covered by his story (which begins, he tells us, in 1839) Baynes is considerably younger than he appears to be in "Betsy Lee." It will be understood that he tells all of these stories as a man well past his prime, recalling the adventures of various periods of his life. There is no attempt to arrange the yarns chronologically, and the action of this one quite evidently took place prior to that of his first yarn. Here he briefly mentions his courtship of Betsy, but she plays no significant part, and there is no hint of the events which he describes in "Betsy Lee."

The story opens during a Christmas storm, in which a sailing ship is
dashed to pieces on the off-shore rocks. The sole survivor is a baby
girl, whose identity is never known. The negro who barely reaches the
beach by swimming on his back and holding her in his teeth, dies of exhaus tion without regaining consciousness. The orphan is adopted by
Pazon Gale and his wife, and is reared with their two sons. As she matures, Rose becomes increasingly beautiful, proud, and mysterious.
Both of the Pazon's sons fall in love with her, and the class-conscious
Baynes worships her from a distance as his queen. The four young people are together constantly, fishing, swimming, and rowing on the bay. During one of these boat trips, the party is overtaken by a sudden storm.
Baynes knows that they should turn back, but fears to appear cowardly before Rose, who exults in the fury of the elements and urges them on into the teeth of the gale. Finally, with a superhuman effort, the boys manage to maneuver the craft into the shelter of some rocks, but the struggle was too great for the younger brother. He collapses, goes into convulsions, and then develops a partial paralysis from which he never recovers. Later he proposes to Rose and is rejected. The older brother, who has long tried to hide his feeling for Rose out of sympathy for his crippled brother, feels free to speak to her after his fraternal rival dies, but he too is rejected. Heart-broken, he accuses Tom of trying to win Rose for himself. Tom admits his love, but scoffs at the suggestion that his love should be returned.

At this point in the story, Mrs. Gale begins to play a prominent part. With one son dead, another trying to escape his obsession in a life of dissipation, and her husband, the innocent old Pazon, seemingly infatuated, Mrs. Gale vents her jealous fury on the lonely and unhappy
Rose. She takes the gossipy Mrs. Lee (Betsy's mother) into her confidence, and together they confront the girl, charging her with leading on the three men deliberately, with no love for any of them, and with plotting to break up the Pazon's home. She denies the charge, but has no adequate defense. George and Tom, returning from a fishing trip, find her emotionally exhausted and half-drowned on the rocks along the coast, and take her home. In an atmosphere of mounting tension and unrelieved conflicts, Rose becomes increasingly frustrated and—symbolically—increasingly fascinated by the elemental forces of the storm. After one particularly sudden and ferocious thunderstorm, she is found dead on a headland overlooking the sea, struck by lightning, her breast bared to the storm.

There is a gripping intensity in this yarn blurted out by the grief-stricken sailor, often struggling to keep back the tears. In Christmas Rose Brown has created one of his most memorable characters. He is reaching for something here which just barely eludes his grasp, but the failure, if failure be not too misleading a term for a poem with so many virtues, is a noble one. He is working here in the tangled and pitfall-laden field of abnormal psychology. She carries with her an aura of some mysterious secret, some intangible power which sets her apart from other people. Neither Brown nor Baynes is often at a loss in understanding and portraying the motives and actions of human beings, no matter how complex or involved they may appear on the surface. But here the poet is seeking to fathom a character who defies his usual methods of analysis. Christmas attracts men as a magnet attracts steel filings. Like all beautiful and mysterious women, she is thoroughly disliked by other
women. Rose longs for love, she is starving for affection, but because of some unfathomable emotional block, she cannot accept love when it is offered. It is not a case of simple frigidity (if frigidity can ever be called simple), in which the normal sexual impulse is blocked by fear or inhibition or a feeling of inadequacy. Rather, the very intensity of her need for love leads her to reject all lovers. Her fatal fascination for men is not deliberate, but completely unconscious. It makes her life miserable, for she can have no friendships with men; they are not willing to settle for friendship. To the women, she is a menace. She never flaunts her sex, and her attraction, the subtle and potent influence which emanates from her is not completely, perhaps not even primarily, sexual. Baynes, true to his Betsy in thought and deed, acknowledges himself Rose's slave, and worships her as a queen; yet he has not the remotest thought of possessing her, or even of declaring his love. There are undoubtedly sexual connotations in her passion for the storm, yet I would hesitate to push this interpretation too far. A careful analysis, using the Freudian techniques and terminology, would shed considerable light on the complex personality of Christmas Rose, but I doubt that it is essential to our appreciation of the poem as a poem.

It may be pertinent to an understanding of Rose that the one "bad fairy" among the Manx folk is the embodied spirit of a beautiful woman. Extreme personal beauty is taken as symptomatic of questionable character in many Manx proverbs and ballads. A ravishingly beautiful woman is suspected of being a witch. One legend has it that such a witch once put a spell upon all the men on the island. Like a female Pied Piper, she led them at will, and they were powerless to resist her. Eventually she led
them into the sea, and they were all drowned. To escape the women who came to punish her, this Manx siren assumed the form of a wren and flew away—thus it is that the custom arose of hunting and killing the wren on St. Patrick's Day. Brown once wrote a poem on this custom.

When Baynes is asked to describe Rose, he feels totally incompetent. It is clear that his worship of the girl has a strong admixture of religious awe:

Wasn' there fire come out of her body—
Aye all over her a blaze
That beat you back, like the Bible says
The sword of fire afore now at the door
Of the garden of Eden though to be sure—
And burnin' and burnin'
And turnin' and turnin'
Every art*, that no base of a divil *(direction)
With his cuts and his capers, no matter how swivel**
And dirt in his heart, and mowin' and mockin'
Could enter the place where God was walkin'!

*(active, agile) (C.P., 160)

Here we get a preview of two techniques Brown uses frequently in this poem: breaking the four-beat line in half to form two short lines; linking words in series. Usually, the linked pairs alliterate, as with "cuts—capers" and "mowin' and mockin'" above. He is so fond of this figure that he is seldom content to use it but once. In the quotation above, there are four of these linked pairs of words within five lines. Often they are poetically effective, as in "And the sand and the spray, and the scud and the stars." (C.P., 151) Sometimes they are used with humorous intent, as in his description of the aged sailor sniffing the storm for signs of a wreck, who goes "sniffin' and snuffin'" along the beach. Humor is also the primary intent in this series used during a lecture on wind-instruments, although it may be this is also intended
onomatopoetically:

... you've heard tramhurns,
And clarinets, and their twisses and turns,—
And curlin' and purlin', and pippin' and poppin',
And booin' and cooin', and stippin' and stoppin'—

(G.P., 165)

Here the device gets rather out of hand. It was easier to put it in than to leave it out. A little more restraint in such small matters would improve the over-all quality of the poem. Anybody can write like that, and seeing the device used excessively—alongside some really brilliant passages—makes one regret that the poet did not control his impulses more effectively. We can see what he was capable of in the use of alliteration and striking word choice as he pictures the approach of an evening storm with the lightning flashing,

Like it would slick up the sea with its red-hot tongue,
And a little dead dirt of daylight left
In the west...

Anyone who can write like that ought not to succumb to the easy cleverness of the preceding passage.

To return to Baynes' description of Rose, we find him a bit later trying to describe her hair, reluctantly and uncertainly:

Some witch or another
Must have spun that stuff; neither father nor mother
Done that, my lads! It was black as mubs* *(coals)
But streaks of red, like you'll see in the dubs
Where they're cuttin' the turf; or down in the river,
Where it's deeper and darker and redder than ever
And all like a cloud around her scutched** *(caught)
Aw, she must have been wutched*** #(bewitched)

Here is an example of Baynes' habit of falling back on superstition to explain matters which he cannot understand. It is a Manx trade-mark. More than once Tom toys with the notion that Rose is living under the influence of some charm. In a storm, she seems a wild creature akin to
the elements,

And the lightnin' lookin' all mixed with her hair,
Like flowers of fire! (C.P., 169)

Her voice, too, has a compelling quality:

Sweet! aw, the sweet! astonishin'!
If she'd cussed ye, it'd ha' been the same—
Aw, hard as steel and soft as crame;
Something betwix' a hawk and a linnet—
Aw, the music of her soul was in it.

Clear as a bell; but it's sharp it could be,
Sharp as a knife, and stingin', stingin'—
But bless ye! the angels isn' allis singin'—
But a hailin' the divils; and "Enter not!"
They're shoutin', and givin' as good as they got,
Lookin' over the wall; for they leaves their hymns,
And fights like Turks—them cherubims— (C.P.,165)

Reading a passage such as this, one is subjected to alternating sensations of annoyance and delight—not an uncommon predicament for the sensitive reader of Brown's narratives. Just while we are feeling indignant over that crowded hodge-podge of hackneyed similes—"Hard as steel," "sharp as a knife," "clear as a bell" — he suddenly charms us with that literalness of all simple, unsophisticated religious people, decidedly reminiscent of Green Pastures, as he pictures the little cherubim dropping their hymn books to vault over the retaining wall of Heaven and slug it out with the little "divils." After chuckling over that for a moment, we are willing to forgive the clichés, reluctantly admitting that the man who could so often find the perfect phrase, was too often willing to accept the easy one.

One of the most vivid and revealing glimpses we get of Rose is her behavior at the height of the storm:

But she danced with her eyes—dear heart! the light
That come into them! and the stretched and the tight—
Till they looked to be snappin' fire in your face;
For the storm was in her—aw, that's the place
That was the storm; aye, aye, man! aye!
All out o' the sea, and out o' the sky,
Catching it with her mouth like suck,
Drawing the strength of its heart till she shuck
And shivered again—and when a big cloud
Come up with the lightnin', she gripped a shroud,
And she sprang to meet it like a bird to its nest,
Or a child to hang on its mamy's breast—
Or was it her sweetheart the cloud was lek,
And her a leatin' on to his neck,
And sighin' and sobbin' and slakin' her drouth
With the thunder-poison from his mouth? (C.P., 168)

The imagery here has the boldness and sensuousness best described as
one of experienced innocence. It never occurred to Brown, as it did
to some of his more squeamish contemporaries, to clothe his sensory
impressions in euphemisms. There is plenty of anatomical detail in
his poems, and some rather strenuous love-making, but never once does
he become vulgar, never sensationalises. But love, in its multitudi-
nous forms, is his most constant theme. The "kelson of creation,"
he calls it somewhere, and he never tired of discussing it, some-
times with a touch of humor:

Aw, people in love is ticklesome craft:
For it's laughin' and cryin' and folin' and fightin',
And cussin' and kissin' and lovin' and bitin'
All in the one—crabs and crame!
And the very birds is just the same— (C.P., 182)

Love is everywhere, in Nature as in man, but it remains essentially
a mystery:

Where does it come from? where? where? where?
Is it in the ground? is it in the air?
Is it sucked with your milk? is it mixed with your flesh?
Does it float about everywhere like a mesh
So fine you can't see't? is it blast? is it blight?
Is it fire? is it fever? is it wrong? is it right?
Where is it? what is it? The Lord above—
He only knows the strenth of love:
He only knows, and He only can,
The root of love that's in a man. (C.P., 180)
Baynes is thoroughly familiar with the kind of love that goes with courtship and marriage, but he senses a finer love, of the kind he has for Rose, which he might have called Platonic had the term only been in his vocabulary:

... why can't there be
No love without wivin' and all that spree?
Couldn' ye love, and never make to her
No love nor nothing, nor never spake to her?
Couldn' ye look to her like a star
Up in the heavens quite regular,
Shinin' down on all the same,
And maybe not even knowin' your name?
Couldn' ye love her up that high? (C.P., 185)

His fellow sailors are rather skeptical of this ethereal love-making, and try to laugh him out of the idea. Then he tries to explain his meaning, in what I think is one of the finest passages of the poem:

It's like lovin' God: for it's seemin' to me,
When you're lovin' the loveliest things you see,
It's lovin' God that made the things—
That made them—eh? and the birds they sings,
They does, and it's God that gives the notes,
Stretchin' the bags of their little throats:
And the sun is bright, and the sky is blue;
And a man is strong, and a horse is too,
And God's in all—But I'll tell ye the when
And can see His face, if you ever can—
It's when He lights a sweet holy fire
In the eye of a woman; and lifts her higher
Than all your thoughts, a woman true
But not for you man, not for you. (C.P., 186)

As an example of this kind of woman, he calls up his memory of the Italian Madonnas, "them pictures the Romans has got," as he calls them (Barnes is a red-hot Protestant—"Avast all Popery, says I"):

Women, aye! with the blood in their veins,
And life and love, and the way they strains
Their eyes to a height that's far above them—
Who can look on them, and not love them?

Whoever thought that a woman could look
Like that—he knew the Holy Book;
He knew the mind of God; he knew
What a woman could be, and he drew and he drew
Till he got the touch: and I'm a fool
That was almost walloped out o' the school,
I was that stupid, but I'll tell ye! I've got
A soul in my inside, whether or not,
And I know the way the chap was feelin'
When he made them pitthers; he must ha' been kneelin'
All the time I think, and prayin'
To God for to help him... (C.P., 187)

The poet has so genuinely assumed the cloak of the old salt, that you constantly forget that somewhere in the background there is a conscious artist by the name of Brown who puts these words into Baynes' mouth. He does it so artfully, with such seeming carelessness and ease, that we are likely to underestimate the technical skill required. All good writers must be good actors, in the sense that they must be able to step out of their own personality and assume for the moment that personality of their characters. Any actor worth his salt will attest to the tremendous difficulty of this exchange of personalities. It means, in part, that you must somehow suppress your ego completely and learn to act, to think, feel, talk, believe as he does, see things through his eyes, hear as he hears, interpret experience with just so much intelligence and feeling and imagination as he has, no more and no less. Consider what Brown has accomplished in this respect. Through thousands of lines, written over at least a quarter of a century, he exchanged places convincingly, not only with Tom Baynes, but with a host of minor figures. The easy rebuttal is, "But he was Tom Baynes. He said so." Nonsense. No one who has read his biography, his letters, or his lyrics, would maintain for a moment that Tom Baynes and Tom Brown were identical. They had, of course, many
points in common as a part of their Manx heritage, but to deflate or balittle the artistry in realistic portraiture exhibited in the yarns by contending that the Oxford Fellow, the classical scholar, the inquiring intelligence of the lyric poet, is one with that of a rough, uneducated, Manx sailor is unmitigated buncombe. "Iddikilis," as Baynes would say. Now having said what is nearly always the fact, that we are unconscious of Brown as we listen to Baynes, I may be allowed to suggest that in the last two or three passages quoted, we catch a glimpse of the cultured scholar peering over the shoulder of the old salt. I would not wish to state flatly that Tom is completely incapable of thinking and speaking in just this way, but as a matter of record he normally does not. There is another reason for suspecting the presence of the poet. The ideas expressed are almost precisely those which Brown has elsewhere presented as his own. "And God's in all—" We will find exactly this note in "Disguises" and a number of other lyrics.

The verisimilitude and variety of the yarn reflects Brown's many-sidedness. He can enter into the spirit of any situation with equal gusto. Whether it be Baynes, frustrated and angry, "swearin' the skin off your face," or confessing a secret passion, "to the very keel of my heart," Brown can capture and transmit the feeling of the moment. It would be difficult to find a more intimate picture of perplexed spiritual loneliness than he has given us of Christmas Rose:

There's ones comes into the world like that,
Even among their own people—what?
Haven't ye seen them? lonely things
They haven't got crowns and they haven't got wings—
They're not angels azackly nor divils ether,
And us and thee will grow up together:
But their roots isn't twisted someway with ours;
And the flowers that's at them is other flowers;
And they're waitin', I'm thinkin', to be transplanted
To the place where the lek o' them is wanted:
And our love isn't their love, and they cannot slake it:
There's no food in us for them to feed on . . . (C.P., 189-90)

But he can turn instantly from this to a piece of broad comic protrait-
ure in his amused recollection of the visiting Pazon who arrived to
assist Pazon Gale at a funeral:

. . . well, he was a beauty!
Well, the purtiest little bit of a man
That ever I saw—and the little hand
And the little foot, and the little squeak
Of his little vice; and the little cheek
So rosy and round; and the legs—my gough!
And the little hem! and the little cough!
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Well, he was the natest little sweep!
You might have put the little dandy
In your mouth, and sucked him for sugar-candy.
And he ups to the Pazon, and bless us! the sollum!
And the head goin' like what-d'ye-call—tum!
And "A great affliction"—and—tiggle—taggle—
And the Lord was great— wiggle—waggle;
And the Pazon never lookin' at him,
But cut to the round of the blue sea-rim . . . (C.P., 191)

I have said before that Baynes is deeply religious, but that does
not prevent his poking fun at a strange parson, or at the boisterous
praying of the Primitive Methodists:

. . . tearin
And shoutin' up to the rafters, like yandhar
Præmmitives, that calls like a gandhar
Before his gesslins . . . (C.P., 172)

But even Baynes has moments of doubt, and "if it wasn't for what the
Bible is sayin'":

I'd think some black ould witch was stuck
And the wheel of the world, and spinnin' our luck,
And runnin' the threads through her skinny fingers
Till our time was up, and then by jingers,
It's whinkum-whankum, thrummity-thrum,
And she cuts you short with a snick o' her thumb.
But of course it isn't, all the same. (C.P., 166)

His insight into the foibles and follies of human nature enables him to probe the subconscious with a deftness and accuracy which a modern psychiatrist would applaud. You can almost hear the lecture of an expert marriage counselor in his remarks on Mrs. Gale:

And was the Pazon's wife really jealous?
Yes! and a woman should allis tell us
If so be we're not lovin' enough—
In our ways, I mean; for we're apt to be rough,
Menhymenysyou know; and not thinkin' about it—
But the women, you see, can't do without it.
They like to be loved, and the love to be showed
Middlin' plain—aye that's the road!
And there's odds of women and odds of men;
And this Misthress Gale she wouldn't pretend
She cared, and dying all her life
Because she wasn' a happy wife—
And the Pazon not knowin', the aisy he was,
The fire that was undher all that frost. (C.P., 205)

Equally incisive is his plea for tact and patience on the part of lovers:

But still for all, if you want to catch
Young love asleep, you must lift the latch
Middlin' aisy, I tell ye, for sure,
And not go kickin' at the door:
And if you want to take a bird, my son,
Alive for its beauty, no call for a gun;
And snowdrops isn' op' nin' with puttin'
A candle to them, nor neither shuttin';
And the brightest brass is the better for ilin',
And never no egg wasn' hatched with bilin." (C.P., 198-99)

This last line, borrowed from a folk-saying, might well have been Brown's slogan when it came to telling a yarn through the medium of Tom Baynes. You must accommodate your pace to his, and not be impatient to hear "how it comes out." The uninitiated may wonder whether, with all the digression, there is realness in method and variety
in content, the poem has not been stripped of its unity, whether it
does not break down into a series of more or less isolated passages
without ever becoming one thing. It does not, and the reason it does
not is to be found in the unifying influence of Tom Baynes himself.
Not everything in the 2,273 lines of this year is related to the story
of Christmas Rose, but everything is related, directly or indirectly,
to the complex personality that is Tom Baynes. This is one more chapter
in his life story. It tells us a great deal more about him: his philo­
sophy of love, his prejudice against Catholicism, his suspicious and
self-conscious attitude toward "the quality," his views on the raising
of children, his superstition, his concept of jealousy.

A poem such as this does not lend itself easily to the usual
methods of analysis. It is not dense in texture, requiring the kind
of detailed explication we give to Browning. It is not primarily
remarkable for intricate and various verse-forms, as with Tennyson
or Swinburne. It cannot sustain lengthy analysis as a presentation
of philosophical or critical creeds, in the way that a poem by Arnold
or Wordsworth often will. This is not to say that it is devoid of thought,
or that it has no technical excellence, no philosophical concepts.
It is rather to say that these are not its essential qualities. I
have tried to show, through extensive quotation and comment, what its
real virtues are. It may be pertinent to say that this poem which can
be read and enjoyed by the person who normally does not much care for
"poetry," as non-readers of poetry understand the term. It is a safe
prediction that anyone who reads it will not soon forget Christmas Rose,
and Tom Baynes' homely and pungent remarks will linger in his mind
long after more pretentious and polished phrases have gone glimmering to limbo.

NOTES

1 Cubbon, op. cit., p. 12. Radcliffe, in his Bibliography in the Memorial Volume, p. 219, lists the poem in the Isle of Man Times, but Cubbon states specifically that it did not appear serially in the local papers before publication. The original issue, in an unlettered paper binding of 72 pages, is now extremely rare. A copy inscribed to Canon John Wilson is in the Manx Museum, Douglas.
Chapter 4. "The Doctor."

On March 26, 1876, Brown wrote from Clifton to his friend J. R. Mozley, "The Doctor' is still in the long-clothes of MS., and most likely will never be short-coated. It is enough: he has been born: the gossips have come and looked at him and said—What a remarkable child! how like his father! What more would you have?" This latest brain-child, the first and greatest of the Second Series of Fo'c's'le Yarns, was "short-coated" sooner than he expected. Like so many of the others, it first appeared in the Isle of Man Times, running serially between October 28 and December 23, 1876. The story of its subsequent appearances in print is rather involved.

There seems to have been some confusion about who would publish the poem. Quiller-Couch, in his "Memoir" of Brown, mentions quite incidentally that in the autumn of 1886 Brown was working on "The Manx Witch" and "Macmillan's were planning to publish The Doctor." In a rather perplexing letter written in October of that year, Brown confided that "certain publishers" (as the editor substitutes in a footnote for the name of the firm which he had deleted for some unfathomable reason) "are sounding me about 'The Doctor'; . . . [an editorial elision] by Irwin they would try to make it a popular book. The others tried to make it a drawing-room book, with the result that the few purchasers thereof hid it somewhere behind their bookshelves, and even there trembled for the morals of the housemaids." If Macmillans were planning to publish the poem in 1886, something must have happened to halt the project. My conjecture is, that they insisted upon expurgating the poem to a degree Brown would not permit. It is certain that they
wielded the censorial scissors vigorously on "Betsy Lee" and "Tommy Big-Eyes," much to his disgust, and he may have decided not to permit a similar butchery upon "The Doctor." "Every man should follow the bent of his nature in art and letters," he wrote, "always provided that he does not offend against the rules of morality and good taste." And he added: "I have an idea that my judgment within this area is infallible." With public taste, as such, he had little or no concern. I should say, rather, that he had no intention of catering to it, or being guided by it. He speaks with thinly veiled contempt of a certain literary man who is "advisedly pedestrian. He does not dream of guiding the public, elevating the public, or anything but following the crassa multitudo." His comment on the proposed publication of "The Doctor" would indicate that the attempt to "make it a popular book" was to take the form of excising everything that could possibly prove offensive to Mrs. Grundy and her ilk, a breed for whom Brown had nothing but scorn. In any event, Macmillans did not publish the book.

This poem has found special favor with many critics, and is generally regarded as his masterpiece among the yarns. Canon J.M. Wilson has recorded that "Max Müller, to whom with others, when staying at the Maloja Hotel in 1885 I read The Doctor, put it in his list of the hundred best books in the world. He borrowed my copy, and read it to Browning at Venice, and afterwards to the Empress Frederick at Berlin; and he told me of their delight in it..." Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has a slightly different version:

I observe that the Times mentions George Eliot and Browning as admirers of Brown's verse, and adds that Professor Max Müller once named The Doctor as "if not one of the best books in the world, yet as one in
which the vividness of imagination, and of language, and of sympathy, most surprised him." But I seem to remember that...it was Sir Monier Williams who considered The Doctor one of the best books in the world...it seems to me that a poem which struck each of these eminent and different persons as one of the hundred best books in the world must have merits which only need to be known to be appreciated by a fairly large audience...it would be in the highest degree foolish to spread the impression that he is the poet of a select few, of a clique. I believe that Brown is a poet for as many people as can be persuaded to read him.9

As might have been expected, Brown was not much impressed when Irwin brought these notices to his attention. "I know nothing of Monier Williams and his appreciation of my 'Doctor,'" he said. "I do remember some laudatory reference in the same direction by Max Müller. But the 'hundred best books' (!) — what rot! It was a craze, I think, and a very vulgar illiterate one, some ten or twelve years ago...But surely these dashes at twopenny-halfpenny divinations were intended for third-rate ladies' maids." I think he would have been pleased more by an anecdote of Wilson's, as recounted by Simpson:

The Canon, when a master at Rugby, was dining with the then Mayor of Halifax, when a telegram arrived to say that the lecturer who was announced to give a lecture on Duplex Telegraphy that evening was unable to come. The Mayor asked his friend if he could give a lecture on any subject he liked. Canon Wilson agreed to do so, and held a vast audience throughout the evening by reciting long passages from "The Doctor." After his "causerie" the Town Clerk came to him, and promised him an audience of 3000 persons if he would repeat his lecture on the following evening.10

This is a long poem—one wonders whether it is not too long. There are 4,312 lines, almost as many, as Abercrombie points out, as in half the Aeneid, or the first five books of Paradise Lost. "Just think," Abercrombie goes on, "what Virgil and Milton managed to say in such a space;"

The comparison is very unfair, of course; I only wish to emphasize by it the scale on which Brown sinned against the art of narrative. For it takes 30 of the 115 pages of The Doctor for the first incident of
the story to occur; and when it does occur it is quite a simple incident. . . When. . . the action of the story emerges, this incident is seen to be the beginning of a terribly subtle and complicated tragedy. But what a prodigious faith Brown call for in his readers, so mercilessly, page after page, putting their natural interest off! 12

It must be admitted that although the story itself is merely the vehicle for his central purpose, Brown's lack of concern for the feelings of a reader intent only upon the story has cost him something in popularity. What he actually wrote here was a verse novel packed with adventure and incident and swarming with individual characters, and we may get a truer perspective of the length if we remember another verse novel of some twenty years earlier—Mrs. Browning's Aurora Leigh—which manages to say far less, and requires almost three times as many lines as The Doctor. By and large, concision and directness were not considered essential, or even necessarily desirable, by Victorian narrative writers, whether in verse or prose.

Baynes begins this story almost with a shrug of the shoulders. With tongue in cheek, he laughs at his own propensity for spinning yarns:

Stories! stories! nothin' but stories!
Spinnin' away to the height of your glories!
And if I must, I suppose I must,
And you suspectin', I wouldn' trust,
And sittin' there all the time, and thinkin'—
Is it true he's tellin'? and nudgin' and winkin'.
Now bless my soul! what for would I go
To tell you lies? You're foolish though!
And there's odds of lies, for the matter of that.

(G.P., 329)

This train of thought inevitably leads him into one of his series of antithetical comparisons of every kind of lie imaginable. Baynes is himself no novice at lying, but he takes pride in doing the job well:

For it isn' every fool that's fit
To make a reel good lie, that'll sit
On her keel, and answer her helm. . .
But this particular story is no lie: "Lies! what lies? the things I'm tellin'/ Is the abslit truth." It is the story of Dr. Bell, and how he lost himself, and after many years found himself again. All that Brown knew of the human mind and spirit went into its making, and his biographer is right in saying that of all the yarns, this is "the fullest of his knowledge of human nature."

He begins what we might call Dr. Bell's spiritual biography some two-thirds of the way through his life, and after describing what he was like at this low point in his career, Baynes begins a flash-back designed to trace the degeneration of the brilliant young doctor from the days of his internship in London to his present low state as a slovenly alcoholic. As a clever and charming young man, Dr. Bell had been introduced into the household of a wealthy baronet by his colleague, a fashionable and dandified older man who had long served as the baronet's personal physician. In time he completely supplanted the older doctor in Sir John's favor, and became intimate with the family socially as well as professionally. Sir John's daughter Harriet fell in love with him, and they secretly planned to marry. But they were spied upon by the jealous rival, and their courtship revealed to the baronet. Enraged, that worthy denied the young doctor access to his home, and banished his daughter to the Continent to get over this impossible passion for a man so far beneath her. Dr. Bell discovered that she had been sent away, and followed. He spent months wandering over Europe in a futile attempt to find her. Bitter, broken in body and spirit, he could not return to his fashionable medical practise, and became a virtual exile and recluse on the Isle of Man. There he found a real need for his services during an out-
break of cholera, and regained a measure of spirit and self-esteem in constant attendance upon the victims of the epidemic. At last he too was stricken by the disease and was nursed back to life by the daughter of the "Local"-farmer with whom he lived. She fell in love with him, and when he attempted to avoid her, managed to compromise him in such a way that he married her, partly out of gratitude for her nursing, and partly to avoid a scandal. The event marked a turning point in his life. He gave up all hope of finding Harriet, and settled down with a wife he did not love to raise a family and make his life as useful as he could.

His three children, all excellently portrayed, provide a study in contrasts. The two older children are wild and unmanageable, pampered and spoiled by their mother. They take care to conceal their escapades from the doctor, a task rendered easier by his frequent absence from home. The third child, Kitty, assumes considerable importance in the later episodes of the poem. She was a nursing babe when a letter arrived, too late, from the Lady Harriet. One of the most poignant scenes describes the anguish of the doctor when he learns that the Baronet is dead, his sweetheart still unmarried, still true to him.

Coming home late one night, nearly dead with fatigue, he found the letter, opened, upon the table. His shrewish and slovenly wife Marianne had not only opened the letter, but had read it to the servant. Locked in his room, Dr. Bell wrestled with himself until dawn, seeking for the magnanimity to forgive his wife, and in vain. For the letter puts a final and unbridgeable gap between the unhappy and mismated pair. Through a strange mental quirk, the wife fastens upon the infant Kitty as a symbol
of all her unhappiness, venting all her bitterness and jealousy upon her, refusing to nurse her, and hating her from that moment on.

Scorned and disregarded by the mother, tormented and plotted against by her brother and sister, Kitty grows into girlhood beautiful in body and spirit, and the sole benignant influence in the life of her father. Bowed by domestic unhappiness, he seeks escape in drink. We have now returned to approximately the point at which Brown began the story.

Kitty (or Katie, or Kattie—the spelling varies) tries hard to rescue her father from the influence of his tavern companions, who cultivate him for his wit and skill, but she can do little until after the death of her narrow-minded and embittered mother. The shock of this unhappy event is followed soon after by another. Willy and Mary, the two older children fall into public disgrace and are drummed off the island as undesirables. The Doctor's love, deepened by a series of sorrows and misfortunes, turns more and more to Kitty. For her sake he reforms his habits and becomes a decent and respected citizen.

One day a yacht anchors in the harbor and a boat is sent ashore to inquire for a doctor. A lady on board is lying dangerously ill, and Baynes rows Dr. Bell out to the ship. The lady is, of course, the Lady Harriet, now married, and the mother of a grown son. Her husband, Lord Brockley, knew the whole story of her ill-fated love for Edward Bell before he married her, and welcomes the doctor as a friend. His ministrations prove to no avail, however, and Harriet does. The story ends with the marriage of her son and Kitty. The
story-teller, in keeping with his custom, brings the audience and himself back to reality with a thud:

So that's The Doctor. And now, my men,
I think it's time to be turnin' in.
Good night! It's feelin' to be rough,
You liked little Katty? Well, that's enough. (C.F., 444)

With no other yarn of Brown's does the writer feel so strongly that a summary of the plot has conveyed so little of the real meaning and value as with this poem. Its conception is, I think, deeper and broader than that of the other yarns. Brown probes deeply into the problems of human motivation and development, and the findings of modern psychology have not made obsolete either his methods of analysis or his conclusions. A note of sadness hovers over the poem, not a cheaply sentimental sorrow, but the sadness which accompanies a broad and experienced outlook upon life. We are aware that the poet is a larger man than the poet who wrote "Betsy Lee." Experience has tempered him, made him more realistic, more philosophical. The belief in the power of love, the insistence upon the long-term superiority of heart to brain is still here, but the optimism takes more fully into account the powerful influences of circumstance and environment in shaping a man's career.

Parental pride and tyranny play a significant rôle here, just as they do in "Betsy Lee" and "Captain Tom and Captain Hugh," and we see them in operation on different social levels. Brown seldom attempted to picture aristocratic society, but the earlier sequences of this poem are concerned with the life of the fashionable doctor, the baronet, and their social equals. The account of this society is strongly
biased, not only because of Dr. Bell's embittered memories of it, but
because Baynes automatically regards moneyed society as basically
parasitic. His radically democratic nature rebels at what he considers
to be the unwarranted and unjustified prerogatives and power of "higher"
society. The yarn is full of his resentful awareness of special privi-
lege, but perhaps it is best illustrated by his soliloquy on the theme
of justice as he recalls how the doctor as a young man was fined and
bound over to keep the peace for attempting to see his sweetheart
again after the baronet had denied him access to the house:

That's what they're callin' justice, by jing!
Justice! There isn' no such thing!
Not for the poor man! no there isn'!
Down with the dibs, or go to prison!
That's the justice! Aw, the beauties!
A executin' of their duties!
"Empty puss—nothin' does!
Full bags—nice nags—
Money is honey—my little sonny!
And a rich man's jokes is allis funny!"
Eh? That's it—"I'm not able to pay't,"
Says you. "You scandalous runnagate!"
Says he; "you notorious vagabone!
You thief! aye, murderer! There's no knowin'!
You desperate ruffian," he says, "how dare ye?"
You're a case for pity—are ye?
Remove him, jailer! " he says, and screws
His mouth like a vice; but what's the use?
Jingle the shiners—"Stop! stop! stop!
Jailer! I think we may adop'!
A differin' course. I think we can,
Jailer," he says, "with this gentlemen."
Pay them! Pay the very last fardin'!
And, "Raelly, sir!" and "I ask your pardon!"

Justice! Is it justice! Blow them!
Justice! Aw, by gough! I know them—

(C.P., 357-58)

Or we might notice his comment on the demands made upon the doctor's
time to treat the largely imaginary illnesses of the rich. The Doctor
took his own good time in responding to a call from "the quality," but when the poor called him, he was "Out on the door, and off like a shot!" Baynes finds the aristocracy largely incomprehensible:

"they're very strange is the quality!" but he will argue convincingly that "blood" will tell. A "gentleman's" blood is not the same as that of "a common pessin," and it is foolish and ignorant to hold up our common descent from "that ould scamp" Adam as proof that it is. The chap "we got all the woe by" is a sorry example, and "not much of a man to go by." The "quality" for which Baynes (and Brown) had such respect was not dependent upon wealth or lineage for their superiority, but stood out from the common run by virtue of superior morals, manners, and intelligence. Brown's experience at Oxford left its mark upon his social outlook.

There are other prejudices apparent in the poem, and it is not always easy to determine whether they should be attributed to Brown or to Baynes. Take as an example this view of "Anglan":

For what is there there but wranglin' and janglin',
And hurry and scurry, and never allowed
To take your time. And all the crowd,
And--go it, cripples!-- and the people hard,
And--out of my road! and doesn' regard
If you're limpin' or laughin'! Aw, very rough,
And savage though; eye, savage enough--
And uplifted scandalous, and settin' their face
Like a flint. Aw, bless ye! It isn' a place
At all! I wouldn' give it the name
Of a Christian country. (C.P., 360)

The warm and open-hearted Manxman interprets the British tendency toward aloofness and reserve as hard-hearted savagery and a self-centeredness that takes no account of the troubles of others. But who is really speaking here? Baynes, who is always ready to drop a sympathetic
tear and "takes an interes'" in everyone, or the poet, who spent the
greater part of his life in England, and longed for his native Mona
every day of it?

And while Baynes is openly hostile toward the Methodist "locals"—
"Catch a preacher! Catch a louse!"—and can be bitterly sarcastic con­
cerning the methods by which one of them "hooked" the doctor as a son-in­
law, he is wary of throwing stones. "You see," he once says in explain­
ing his reluctance to pass judgment,

I'm allis thinkin' of the fellow once—
In the Bible, you know—that said to his brother,
"Pull out the mote!" "Indeed!" says the other;
"Is it motes?" he says; "and talkin' to me!
Come out o' that with that beam!" says he. (C.P., 382)

When someone suggests that the doctor is at fault for agreeing to wed
Marianne instead of remaining true to Harriet, no matter how long it
took to find her, Baynes will only remark philosophically that "Some
people's stickier till others." In the matter of religion, however,
he will brook no skepticism. To one rash passenger on the coach who
disturbs his fellow-travellers by telling them their religion is a delu­
sion, Baynes gives the retort direct by saying, "Here's a little delu­
sion of mine!" and tossing him bodily off the coach.

Real wisdom, Baynes declares, is based upon a heart-felt interest
in your fellow man; or, as he puts it, "Lovin' is understandin'." This
wisdom takes into account the passions and weaknesses of men. Both the
Pazon and the Doctor have this wisdom, but many do not:

...you know there's people goin' that good
They haven't a smell for the steam of the blood
That's in a man; or, if they have,
They houlds their noses, and makes belave
They hav'n'.

(C.P., 335)
He returns time and again to this theme:

. . . heart's blood, heart's blood!
That's the stuff, I tell ye then,
That'll search the souls of the sons of men;
More preciosoer till any pearl,
Or ruby—the very juice of the world,
That keeps its veins from runnin' dry,
And tickles its ould ribs with joy. . . (C.P., 404)

Some of the most powerful passages in the poem occur in that epi­sode dealing with the cholera epidemic, and the effect of fear, with
"everybody waitin' their turn / Who'd be next." When the men came in
from the fishing grounds, often to find their children dead, there might
be a mingled wail, part curse, part prayer, "Or never no words at all,/
But the dry eye starin' against the wall." Some of the men are over­
come by the fear, and forsake their families to wander in the hills,
with the Pazon after them to coax them back. Others fall back upon
superstition, begging a reputed witch for a charm to save them. When
she confesses herself powerless to halt the creeping death, they do not
believe her, but attack her savagely.

And then the lot of them cried out
With a bitter cry, and sent the shout
Right up to heaven, and all the then,
And all the shore, and all the glen
Was just one cry—"Oh, save us Lord!" (C.P., 367)

The doctor shows his fighting spirit when he puts to ignominious flight
a group of Ranters who came to hold a camp-meeting down by the shore at
the height of the epidemic. One of the preachers expostulated with him,
maintaining that he was one of "the elect." "Indeed," says the doctor,
"I think I know the breed! And who's electin' ye?"

When Baynes gives a detailed description of some scene he obviously
has not witnessed, one of his auditors challenges him. "How does he know"
that's the way it was? He explains the function of imagination:
Knowin' is knowin'; and I'll tell ye how
The way's with me. I'll tell ye, now.
There's plenty of things I never seen,
Nor couldn', and still they must have been;
And when I get thinkin' of them, it'll be drawin'
The head uncommon strong, and showin'
The very picture of them, it will;

I wouldn' know anything if I didn' know it that way—
Seein' it in my head. That's it!
Chut! I wouldn' give a spit
For a story when it wasn' puttin'
Every hair and every button
The way it was, or was bound to be. \(\text{C.P., 375}\)

That is, he will fill in the unknown to conform with the known and give
it verisimilitude by using imaginary detail deduced from observed reality.
Brown's treatment of his material, whether real or imagined, is trans-
parently honest throughout. He does not feel obliged to represent
"every hair and every button," as Baynes' exaggerated comment would seem
to indicate, but he does make certain that the carefully selected detail
he does present is in keeping with both character and situation.

While Brown provides a focus for the attention by keeping his prin-
cipal characters in the forefront of the action, he has not slighted the
minor figures. Many of these are made memorable. Mrs. Bell, for example,
whose sour and obstinate disposition is admirably caught in the phrase
"Treacle turned to vinegar," and whose empty-headed meanness leads Baynes
to remark that "The stupidest people'll be the cruelest." Then there is
the "little faery" Miss Katie, with golden hair,

Aw, the Lord's own gool in the very warp of her,
Like strings, lok He'd tuk and made a harp of her
For the play up yandher... \(\text{C.P., 397}\)

Katie is one of that company of women in the yarns who illustrate Brown's
thesis that there is a kind of goodness and innocence impervious to evil,
and against which all evil influences are powerless.
To me, the hoydenish Mary Bell, Dr. Bell's other daughter, is the most successful creation among the minor characters. It may or may not be true that sin is inherently more interesting than virtue, but with two or three outstanding exceptions, Brown's most vital and fascinating creatures are those who stray frequently and far from the straight and narrow way. Baynes is more than a little afraid of Mary, for she had a wanton beauty that even he found hard to resist:

For she'd keep the eyes upon you, ye know,
And the deep light gatherin' there as slow,
Like tricklin' into a bowl, till she'd fill it
Full to the brim, and then she'd spill it
Right in your face. Aw, ye'd need to be stones
For she'd melt the marrow in your bones --
The divil! Aw, many's the time she's made me
Trimble all over—lek she'd flayed me
With the fire of her look. . .

(G.P., 419)

There is considerable humor in the scene describing how Baynes goes to give Miss Mary a lecture concerning her suspected intimacies with a young man then a guest in the doctor's home during his absence. Mary completely discomfits him by pretending to believe that he has come to make love to her, and chides him for being inconstant to Betsy Lee. There is humor also in many of Baynes' asides to his fo'c's'le audience. Sometimes he is annoyed by their skeptical interrogations and cuts them off sharply—"Interruptin'! Idikkilis!" At other times he brings himself up sharply from his musings with "Bless me! where am I now? A calm?/And driftin'! 'Deed, I think I am." There is no humor, however, in a later passage in which a posse of grim-faced Islanders take Mary by cart to the Douglas docks for deportation as a practising prostitute, with the Pazon riding solemnly beside her, and a saintly old patriarch trudging alongside chanting a hymn—"For all the world like a buryin'."
The constant emphasis upon love notwithstanding, there is nothing in the poem (according to modern standards, at least) that would seem to justify Victorian readers in hiding the book or trembling "for the morals of the housemaids," as Brown indicates they did. There is nothing erotic or salacious in Brown's treatment of sexual passion. It is presented simply as an inevitable, powerful, and basically wholesome aspect of the human scene. It is only when love-making is divorced from love that he condemns it, when it serves some ulterior motive, when it appears in forms ultimately destructive of the individual or society. He lingers fondly over the fervent embraces of the young doctor and Marianne; he nods understandingly, and with tacit approval, when young Harriet slips away to the hay-loft and offers herself freely to the man she loves. But when Mary Bell submits herself to the lustful embrace of her brother's friend, and when she embarks upon a life of prostitution to secure the luxuries she craved, he condemns her, but it is condemnation mixed with pity, and with genuine insight and understanding of why her life developed as it did. He assigns the blame, not to her alone, but to the parents who neglected her, and the unprincipled men who surrounded her with temptation. The pity and understanding for the "fallen woman" which is evident in many of the yarns may have been misinterpreted by some of his contemporaries as condoning immorality. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I have attempted through summary and quotation, to give some fair notion of the depth and variety of Brown's material in this poem, but I have said comparatively little about his handling of it. Actually, the two cannot be divorced. As Canon Wilson has aptly said, the dialect is
as important to these poems as suitable costuming is to the stage: "Tom Baynes in Tennysonian English would be like Julius Caesar in a dress coat." The language of these poems is even more intimately related to their matter than this simile would imply. After all, Caesar has appeared on the boards in modern dress; it is inconceivable that these yarns should make their appearance in standard English. Without the dialect, a major part of the original charm and vitality would be lost. Without Tom's vivid and colorful images, also, drawn from the sea he knew so well, the poems would lose much of their flavor. What could be more natural than his simile for Katie's softly musical voice:

And the sweet talk runnin' off her lips
Like water off an oar on the feather... .

or of Mary's provocative glance, with "just the tail of a laugh/ Left curled on her mouth," or of the aged baronet, "chewin' the cud" of his past wickedness?

The varied length of line, the rhymes, the shifting accents and rhythms on a dominantly iambic base—these techniques are just as we have described them in earlier poems. The real value of the poem lies in the interest of the story itself, in the variety and vitality with which it is told, in the extensive gallery of living portraits, in the humor, the pathos, the homely wisdom, the passion and prejudice, the wealth of incident and realistic scene-setting. When you reach the end, you are forced to say of the poet, "Here is a man who knew life." And if you will hold in check your preconceived value-judgments until after you have studied his methods and techniques, you will add, I think, "Here is a poet who knew how to present life."
NOTES

1 Letters, I, 79.

2 According to Cubbon, pages 15-16, the original issue took the form of a 108 page booklet published by James Brown and Son of Douglas in the same year, and using the newspaper type. This issue survives in a single known copy. The next appearance seems to have been in The Doctor and Other Poems, published by Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey and Co., in 1887, which included also the short introductory poem "Dear Countrymen" and two brief yarns, "Kitty of the Sherragh Vane" and "The Schoolmasters." This is the first publication of Brown's to carry the author's name: "By T. E. Brown, M. A., Late Fellow of Oriel College," etc. The reference to Oriel was an obvious bid to counteract the charge of rusticity. Also in 1887, the poem appeared in the American periodical The Living Age, whether to his financial advantage or not I have been unable to determine. Apparently the 1887 edition by Sonnenschein sold well, for it was reprinted in 1891, minus the other poems, and with the subtitle "A Manx Poem." Needless to say, it also appeared in Macmillan's edition of Collected Poems in 1900. Dakyns, in the "Advertisement" to the Golden Treasury Series edition of selections provides a similar account of the publication. Simpson's note in his Appreciation, p. 232, stating that the poem appeared in Isle of Man Times in 1885-86, would seem to be in error.

3 Memorial Volume, p. 46.

4 Letters, I, 124.

5 II, 68.

6 II, 71.

7 II, 65.

8 Memorial Volume, p. 80.

9 The Speaker, Nov. 6, 1897, p. 512. Simpson, p. 159, also quotes Müller's comment, which appeared in Pall Mall Gazette, "Extra" No. 24, 1886—one of the earliest references to Brown by a leading critic.

10 Letters, II, 176. See also II, 160, for Brown's judgment of Müller.

11 Simpson, pp. 159-60.

13 Norris, p. 269.

14 Memorial Volume, p. 82.
Chapter 5. "The Manx Witch"

This poem gave its name to the 1889 collection in which it originally appeared, and is the longest of this third and final series of fo'c's'le yarns. It is sub-titled "A Story of the Laxdale Mines."
The Laxey lead mines, in the vicinity of which the story is set, are located on the east coast of the Island, about midway between Douglas and Ramsey. This setting enables Brown to further his central purpose by depicting the life and customs of the miners, an occupational group not hitherto represented in the yarns. The poem gives special attention to superstition and to the peculiarities of Manx folkways, with particular reference to methods of courting.

In a letter dated October, 1886, the poet wrote to a Clifton colleague: "I have been musing a good deal over my 'Dooiney Molla'; he is now taking shape, and looms rather large. I believe you will like him, and his fiery little groom. These good souls do well to visit my dreams: they are such a comfort: and do you know they positively do 'go on' in my dreams. . . . There will be a very good witch in this poem, I promise you: look out!" Between them, the witch and the Dooney Molla pretty well dominate the story in which two rough miners are rivals for the hand of a beautiful and coquettish farmer's daughter.

There are four principal characters: Jack Pentreath and Harry Creer, the miners; Nessy Brew, the girl they both love; and Manx Witch herself, "Misthri's" Banks, an aunt of Nessy's.

The story opens at Pazon Gale overtakes Nessy walking alone on a lonely country road late at night. She tells him how she had left the fair at Douglas accompanied by Jack and Harry, and how the two
men, both "tossicated" and "usin' language," had quarreled over her and started a fight. The Pazon offers to drive her home, but when he gets out to lead the horse over a rough stretch of road, she slips away to find Jack again and make certain that he reaches home. When the Pazon discovers her absence, he retraces his way, and spends most of the night searching for her. Toward morning he gives up and goes to notify her father of her absence, only to discover that she is safely home in bed. At her father's summons she appears at her bedroom window and looks out with

   a face as fresh as a rose,
   And just the smallest taste of clothes,
   And the sun all dabblin' her like fire,
   And looks at the Pazon as modest—"Retire, Retire," says the Pazon; "that'll do, that'll do."

   (O.P., 516)

This little episode eventually involves Baynes, who is called upon to arbitrate a dispute between Nessy and her aunt as to whether Pazon Gale was drunk on the night of the fair. Aunt Sally, whom Baynes called Sally Behind ("for the way she was fallin'/Abaft of her midships"), and who was drunk and picked up by the police, insists that the Pazon was in the same condition. Nessy, who knows otherwise, insists that he was sober, but she cannot explain how she knows without revealing her own escapade. Baynes naturally upholds the Pazon's innocence in heated terms, with a side remark that Aunt Sally might well be looking to herself a bit, "both before and behind her"—a bit of sarcasm that makes it necessary for him to duck rapidly out of range of the flying crockery.

   Thus, after about two hundred lines which are superficially quite
incidental to the story at hand, Brown is ready to begin his central plot. Actually, this introductory episode serves several useful technical functions: it introduces all of the major figures, gives some important clues to their personality, and presents the basic elements out of which the more serious conflict will emerge. After elaborating at some length upon the characteristics of the two principal suitors, which he depicts through his favorite method of contrast, Brown turns to a description of the workings of a club formed by the clannish miners for the purpose of discouraging anyone who was not a member of the club from courting Nessy, the "rose that had grew at the mouth of the mine." So far as I can determine, the idea of such a unique organization was original with Brown. It is mildly reminiscent of the relations among the wooers of Scarlett O'Hara, in Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind. Nessy herself has much in common with that passionate southern belle who left a trail of broken hearts in her wake. She is, apparently, the object of every Laxey miner's desire, and the only way to keep the cut-throat competition from precipitating a series of bloody brawls is to organize. It is understood that any non-member or any member who refuses to abide by the strict rules laid down for their mutual protection, is fair game. Any mark of favor shown by Nessy to any of them, earns the recipiend so many points, determined according to an elaborate scale—a nod, one point; a smile, two points, and so on. Any member who took advantage of his membership, or broke the rules, faced the wrath of his brothers. It was a deadly serious game, and Nessy was the prize. Whether she was aware of this highly efficient cartel, the sole purpose
of which was to make her a miner's wife, is not revealed. When Harry remains silent at one meeting while the others make their progress report, Jack (who wins no points for having been called an idiot) invites him outside to explain his suspicious silence. Harry reluctantly admits, after Jack stops choking him, that on his last visit, Nessy called him a sot and slammed the window in his face. Jack is temporarily appeased, but insists that Harry change to his shift so that both will be above ground at the same time and can keep an eye on one another.

Finally, it is agreed by the club that only these two have any reasonable chance of winning Nessy, and that the others must stay away from the Ballaquine. Under this agreement, the fiery little Jack and the big and easy-going Harry press their respective claims without competition. For a time they are equally favored by Nessy, but when she begins to show a decided preference for Jack, Harry decides to drop out of the race and become the "doinny-molla" for his friend. Still they take turns at Nessy's window, but Harry, who was "lowanced of brain," could think of nothing to say but "Aye, woman? aye?" Nessy soon tires of this, remarking briskly "It's no use o' churnin' away like this,/And navar no butter," Then she asks Harry's opinion of Jack being careful to speak loudly enough so that Jack could overhear: "Was he right in his mind, did he think?" and wasn't he "rather a flight/ Of a craythur?" and so on, until Jack was ready to burst with vexation. These "scoreyn!" sequences are delightful, and draw such an alluring profile of Nessy that one suspects the author was an enamoured as his miners of the Minx minx. There is little serious conflict in these early sequences. The touch is light for
almost all the first half of the poem, and then the tone suddenly shifts from one of friendly rivalry, mischievous flirting and like, to one of dark passions, bitter enmity, and savage fury. The catalyst is superstition.

Before summarizing the final half of the story, which relies heavily upon black magic for its effect, let us hear what one of Brown's illustrious compatriots had to say about superstition in the Island.

The speaker is Hall Caine:

When the Manx tongue is dead there will remain. . . Just one badge of our race—our superstition. I am proud to tell you that we are the most superstitious people now left among the civilized nations of the world. This is a distinction in these days when that poetry of life, as Goethe names it, is all but gone from the face of the earth. Manxmen have not yet taken the poetry out of the moon and the stars and the mist of the mountains and the wail of the sea. Of course we are ashamed of the survival of our old beliefs and try to hide them, but let nobody say that as a people we believe no longer in charms, and the evil eye, and good spirits and bad. I know we do.

Brown's letters contain frequent references to that love of the marvellous which, culminating in superstition, is a marked trait of his people. "They hunger and thirst for miracle," he once wrote, delighting in anything that sets at defiance the ordinary routine of natural experience: "Quite at home in the primordial embrace, they smuggle to it, and are happy!" With this evidence at hand, we are better prepared to understand Baynes' contention that Misthress Banks "should be tuk and burnt" as the blackest "witch" on the Island.

We are also more likely to accept the seriousness of the situation when Nessy falls under the domination of her aunt:

... such a force
She done of charms there, early and late,
That she put the comedher on Nessy compleat, 
Clane comedher, harpooned, and haulin' it. . . (C.P., 553)
The spell imposed on the girl holds her in subjugation to the will of 
Mistress Banks, and assures belief in her claim to have complete 
power over Nessy's lover. She can turn his body black. She can make 
him Nessy's slave, or make him hate her, simply by invoking a charm. 
Playing upon Nessy's simple and loving nature, and her unquestioning 
belief in the supernatural, the crafty and scheming older woman gets 
complete control of the girl, for her own selfish purposes. Brown 
strongly suggests that aside from the girl's essential superstition, 
the "charm" is a compound of hypnotic suggestion and homosexual stimu-
lation. He does not insist upon this last, but his description of 
how the aunt coaxed and petted Nessy, and how "she'd kiss and she'd 
cuddle, 'Till Nessy's head'd be all in a muddle," makes the inference 
unmistakable. Analysis of Nessy's reaction supports this interpre-
tation. Terrified that her lover may be doomed, she succeeds in brib-
ing the "witch" not to harm him, at the cost of her mother's wedding-
ring and most of her personal belongings. She is reluctant to part 
with these, and breaks into tears, whereupon the older woman takes 
her on her lap and caresses her—

and all the strain of her arms, 
And the warmth, and the squeeze, and the curl, and the ply 
Of all her body. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . (C.P., 558)

With Nessy in a receptive condition, she then suggests that the ring 
might be retained if the girl will bring the key to her father's chest 
instead. This she refuses to do, and after extracting a promise that 
Jack will not be harmed, walks homeward sobbing quietly: "This is love...
"and the nice it'd be/ If it wasn' for the misery!"

Mistress Banks then invites Harry to visit her. He accepts, "in
ter'ble fear," but his hostess is at her most charming, and quickly
allays his fears. It is not difficult for her to convince the not-too-
brilliant Harry that he has been blind. Nessy is really desperately in
love with him, she confides, and pretends to favor Jack just to make him
jealous. Harry determines to abandon his role as doiney-molla and take
his proper place as Nessy's lover. Jack is furious at this treacherous
behavior, and challenges Harry to a fight to the death. Their weapons
are bare fists, and their duelling ground the mouth of an abandoned mine,
into whose yawning shaft the loser will be thrown. Before such a tragedy
can take place, Baynes discovers the exhausted gladiators and drags them
apart. When Jack learns that the "wutch" is responsible for Harry's
actions, he determines to destroy her. Baynes suggests that the only
sure method is to shoot her with a silver bullet, but this plan fails.

Then Jack goes to the lawyer Kinley for advice:

Says Kinley—"Do you think I'm a d...d fool?"
Says Jack, "Well, no, sir, not of a rule—
But isn' it law for a wutch to be rowlin'
Down a brew in a barrel, and bumpin' and bowlin'
Over the rocks, and nails that teases
And rags and cuts her all to pieces--
Pintin' innards? Lek they done at Slieu Whallion
Afore now. Well, we've got an ould rapscallion
At Laxdale..." But Kinley was despard impatien'—
"Well then, would it be suffayshin'
To burn her?" says Jack. (C.P., 576)

The lawyer has the bloodthirsty "bumpkin" thrown out of the office, while
Jack mumbles that he has apparently got "a 'pinion gratis." Baynes then
belatedly advises that they go to the Pazon for counsel. After the men
have listened somewhat dubiously to the Pazon's argument that they have
given the "witch" the only power she had by their belief in her spells and curses, they ask him to go and attempt to comfort Nessy. The girl in turn persuades him to visit her aunt and obtain a promise that she will no longer interfere. The Pazon makes several attempts to do this, but can never find her at home. In fact, the "witch" has suddenly disappeared, and for two years nothing is heard of her. During this time Jack does his utmost to persuade Nessy to marry him but she refuses to give him an answer until she is certain that her aunt will not reappear and come between them.

The situation is resolved when the mining company decides to reopen the abandoned shaft. Jack, Harry, and some other miners, with Mistress Banks' moron son Job as tool-bearer, assemble at the mine head. Job is lowered to the first level to set candles and prepare for the descent of the others. He is heard to cry out suddenly, and Jack is lowered to find out what is wrong. On a gravel shelf half way down the shaft, he finds the skeleton of Job's mother, with an herb growing through her hand and pinning it to the ground. Job is lying unconscious beside her. The remains are recovered and given Christian burial. With the last obstacle removed, Nessy agrees to marry Jack without further delay:

And me to church with them, it's aisy to see.
And nice she looked, and nice she was—
And summer for winter, and heat for frost;
And the doiney-molla all in his glory;
And the club bruk up, and the end of the story—
Jack Pentreath—you'll remember him—
And Nessy Brew—Just douse that glim! (G.P., 592)

Manx legend and folklore provide Brown with a considerable portion of his material here, as they do in most of the yarns, with the emphasis
on superstition. Nowhere else does it so permeate the atmosphere, dominate the characters, and provide the motivation. Jack's account of the accused witch being rolled down a hill in a spiked barrel comes directly from Island legend. So does Baynes' references to the fabulous black dog, the "modda-doo" (mentioned also in Scott's *Peveril of the Peak*, which is set in the Isle of Man); the terrifying water-bull, or "tarroo-ntshtey"; the equally fabulous river-pig, or "Muckawin." He comments at some length on the traditional Ballawhane, an herbalist who specialized in white magic. These folk-lore materials are woven so adroitly into the fabric of the yarn that it is almost impossible for an "outsider" to determine accurately where legend leaves off and original elements introduced by the poet begin. It is perhaps enough to say that while much of Brown's matter is not "original" in the sense that he created it solely from his own imagination, it is original in his mastery and treatment and interpretation of it. He gathered the mass of local color material available to all, and gave it form and meaning. Thus is the task of a true "maker."

Five years before the poet's death, one critic wrote:

Take the courting in *The Manx Witch*: it is a representation of passion in act that (save for the author's inability to be Shakespeare) reminds you of *Romeo and Juliet*; yet what impression would it make, were the tale of a couple of lovers who had no count to take of the quaint customs of Manx courtship? But Mr. Brown's truth to the minor fact is as nothing compared to his truth to the facts of character and emotion. This it is that these tales, which had fallen to similar issues in almost any quarter of the world peopled by a rough breed of folk, belong to the Isle of Man as naturally as the blossom to the tree.

Many of the 3,117 lines of this poem are not dependent for their interest upon local color. Baynes' humble philosophizing has uni-
versal application, for it normally deals with elemental emotions and human relationships. "Love," he muses, "is just simplicity" --- it is simple, he adds, in the same sense that fire, or air, or water are simple. Elsewhere he reaffirms his belief in the unique value of love:

It's the only thing, just the one bright flash
That quivers through this world of trash
And make-believe. . . . . . . . . . . . . (C.P., 531)

That is the poet speaking, not Baynes. It is the poet, too, who goes on to say that this complete love is a powerful and short-lived emotion that a man can feel but once:

One wave flung in upon the shore,
That bursts and breaks for evermore.

As a firm believer in emotionality, he praises the natural and unashamed way in which children give expression to their feelings:

It's because they're turnin' inside out
Easier till grown-up people, being pliable. . . (C.P., 532)

It is this complete lack of self-consciousness in making his emotional life an open book that sometimes disturbs us. We stir uneasily at confidences and self-revelations which we, with our increased sophistication, would scarcely admit even to ourselves. We need to remember, however, that to both Brown and Baynes there was something cold and inhuman in too much restraint and reserve. It is worth noting also that without this trait, we would never have come to know Baynes and his friends as intimately and completely as we do.

There are countless passages of description and characterization in the poem which show once more Brown's genuine insight and broad
understanding. There are powerful scenes of action, notably the death-struggle at the mine; there are passages of whimsical humor, as in Baynes' treatment of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and his sarcastic summary of the result of their folly—"*Loss* the place!"; there are examples of a simple and charming lyricism, as in "Tommy Big-eyeses" poem, "Apple-tree, apple-tree." These the interested reader must discover for himself. In the line which summarizes his sermon on the sacredness of love, and the omnipresence of the deity in the natural world—"God's walkin' in the garden yet!"—we have the germ of his best-known lyric, "My Garden."

It is in the treatment of superstition and its effects, however, that the peculiar interest of this poem resides. Even Baynes, who is more a man of the world than most of his friends, forgets all the kindness and leniency he ever knew under the stress of fear and hatred. Like most simple and uneducated folk, he is basically reactionary in his beliefs, despite his thinly-veiled contempt for the rich and privileged classes. There is real power in the gradually unfolding account of what unthinking superstition can do to otherwise happy, decent, sympathetic people. The Manx Witch herself is one of Brown's best full-length character studies. It is a tribute to his skill that we are able to understand her, even though we see her almost exclusively through the eyes of those who feared and hated her. She is clearly a tragic figure, as lonely in her way as Christmas Rose or Cain of Renshent. She uses her reputation as a sorceress to gain her ends among the local rustics. There may be moments when she succeeds in
befooling even herself, but even in her cups, she seldom forgets that
she is playing an expected rôle. This is not to say that she is a
sweet, lovable old lady. Far from it. But we have not understood
her until we see that much of her wickedness and cruelty is a kind
of revenge for the excommunication which the ignorance and prejudice
and superstition of the Islanders have imposed upon her. Brown was
daring for his time in making even indirect and veiled references to
the homosexual element in her relationship with Nessy. Baynes knows
he is on dangerous ground here, and will not spell out his suspicions
beyond remarking that she knew "haps of sin" and fascinated her
niece with "muck, goin' mixed with spice." He answers a questioner
who wants to know why Nessy becomes so cold toward her lover and longs
for her aunt, despite the cruel treatment she has received from her
by saying," But maybe there's curiouser wrinkles/ Till wutching even

It would seem that none of the contemporary reviewers per­
ceived that Brown had introduced into his dark talk of superstition
an element which, if it had been seen, would have caused the book to
be hidden even more carefully from the eyes of innocent housemaids
than was The Doctor—a frank and innocent tale of passion with no
hint of perversion.

"The Manx Witch" is certainly not devoid of humor, especially
in the first half. It may take the form of a mock-serious reading of
the constitution of the "Nessy Club," or a description of Harry's
virtuosity in the fine art of spitting (he practises his marksmanship
even in church, to the consternation of the wardens), or a picture-
of the Locals in full cry from the pulpit. In common with the other yarns, it is the sudden intrusion of the unexpected that prevents any suspicion of monotony. Brown delights in chance reference to such diverse subjects as the boyhood of the Biblical David, a description of England as that "despard country," an account of Jehu and Jezebel, of Ashtaroth and Libyc Ammon, or "a blind ould party/ By the name ò' Milton." The variety of these poems is a constant source of amaze­ment.

In technique, the poem adheres closely to the familiar pattern and employs the usual devices. It is uneven in value, and overlong. Taken as a whole, it is perhaps more thoroughly Manx in theme or spirit than any other yarn, and deserves to rank among his best three or four efforts in narrative. With some vigorous pruning, it would have been a more readable poem, but it would have been less typical, and less comprehensive in its portrayal of the life of Man.
1. The Manx Witch and Other Poems, by T. E. Brown, author of "Betsy Lee," "Fo'c's'le Yarns," etc. (London and New York, Macmillan, 1889). In addition to the title poem, the volume contained: a prefatory poem, "First Comes Tom Baynes"; a brief Manx yarn, "The Indiaman"; two shorter dialect poems—"The Christening" and "Peggy's Wedding"; and two non-dialect Manx yarns, "Mary Quayle" and "Bella Gorry."

2. Letters, I, 123-24. Irwin's editorial gloss for "Dockey Molla": "man-praiser—the man who backs the suitor." He serves as a campaign manager and one-man cheering section for the would-be husband.

3. "Balla" is Manx for "farm"; thus "Ballaquine"="The Quine farm." Many Manx place-names have this prefix.

4. The Little Manx Nation, pp. 130-31


6. The "modda-doo," or "Mautha Doog," a huge black spaniel which used to haunt Peel Castle, is treated at some length in Waldron's Description of the Isle of Man (1713), p. 104; Ballawhane, the herb doctor, is described by the Manx historian Train in his History of the Isle of Man, ii, 161. Simpson quotes from both on pages 105 ff.

Chapter 6. Other Narratives: Microcosm and Miniature.

We have now examined in some detail four representative yarns which illustrate the methods and materials Brown employed in the working out of his purpose. In the eight major yarns and numerous shorter poems remaining in the narrative group the reader will find similar methods and techniques applied to a variety of themes in a variegated assortment of moods and involving a colorful collection of Manx personalities and customs. In "Captain Tom and Captain Hugh" he traces the rivalry of two Castletown skippers and draws one of his most appealing character sketches in Uncle Ned Ballachrink, whose consuming love for children and insatiable fondness for "whusk" dominate the story. Here we have what Boas referred to as "an inverted Romeo and Juliet conclusion," with the lovers reunited over the bodies of their parents.

"Tommy Big-Eyes" was Brown's own avowed favorite among the yarns, and is notable for two remarkable studies in personality: the morbidly shy and introspective title character, and the lustful and hypocritical "Local" Archie Cain, the sole villain to be found in Brown's poems. There is considerable talk about music in this yarn, reflecting a lifetime interest of the author. Baynes' playful description of a Bach fugue is a delightful bit of fancy. "Kitty of the Sherragh Vane" deals with a "hen-pecked" mountain farmer, the romance of his beautiful daughter with a refugee Chartist, and the tragic jealousy of brother for sister. In this poem Brown experiments with an extremely short line, and varies the couplet pattern more extensively than in any previous yarn. "The Schoolmasters," a burlesque account
of old-time elementary education and educators on the Island, is easily one of the most humorous of the narratives. The scene in which Mrs. Baynes invades the school-room and leaves the petty tyrant Danny Bewildher prostrate amid the shambles of his domain is hilarious. The reader who makes Baynes' acquaintance amid these surroundings will be tempted to follow him into the deeper waters and more serious themes of other yarns. "Job the White," written only three years before the poet's death, is a sequel to "The Manx Witch" and has a more pronounced philosophical and religious note than any previous narrative. Baynes' dissertations on the qualities of women and on capital punishment are interesting, but the principal concern is with Job, a saintly man who is brutally murdered. "The Indiaman," the last of the dialect yarns, seems clearly to have been written "just for fun." Baynes attempts to chaperone two young lovers aboard his ship, and meets total defeat for perhaps the first time in his life.

Two full-length narratives, "Mary Quayle" and "Bella Gorry" stand apart from the rest of the poems of Manx life. Brown's own introduction to the first of these appears in the "Prelude" which opened the third and final series of Fo'c's'le Yarns in 1889:

Succeeds our Curate, innocent and good,
The growth of Oxford in her sanest mood;
Dame Nature's child, though bred among the Stoics,
And, if he gush, he gushes in heroics,
Forgive the youth if sometimes he relax
In extra gush of pseudo-dochmiacs. (C.P., 510)

The reader who comes to this poem directly from a reading of the Manx yarns will be forcibly struck by two major changes in technique: the Anglo-Manx dialect has given way to standard English, and Tom Baynes...
"asynartete octosyllables" are replaced by the "pseudo-dochmiacs" of the more cultured Curate. Brown's description of his meter, as given above, reflects his training in classical prosody, in which the dochmius is a foot of five syllables, with the first and fourth typically short, and the rest long (-'/-'). In the early stanzas the poet uses a line of three iambic feet followed by a two foot line in which a spondee or a trochee (and occasionally a less common measure) is freely substituted for the iamb. Often these are simply pentameter lines, broken into two units. Mixed with this fairly regular alternation of two and three foot lines we find a number of unbroken pentameter lines, and even some four and six foot lines. There is in the general pattern a similarity to the dochmiac, but Brown was certainly correct in adding that qualifying "pseudo-" to his description. The rhyme scheme is basically the couplet, but in the first five verse-paragraphs, all varying in length, only about half the lines rhyme regularly as couplets. The rest appear as quatrains (which themselves rhyme variously) or as triplets. Brown was using the unlimited substitution rule in prosody long before the football coaches ever heard of it.

These "pseudo-dochmiacs" are dominant in only a fraction of the total stanzas—at the beginning of the poem, and at scattered moments of high emotion during the course of it. In the bulk of the poem, he has relied upon "heroics," not of the classical variety, but the modern adaptation—that is, iambic pentameter lines rhyming in couplets. He varies this by substitution of other measures for the iamb, particularly by the use of initial trochee. These variations are
generally admitted as acceptable in the heroic couplet, but his infrequent feminine endings would not be sanctioned by most prosodists. On the whole, Brown has given a good demonstration here of his versatility in the use of meter. Here as elsewhere, he sacrificed regularity to variety, seeking to fit the line to the mood and meaning of the content or to the quantity and quality of the speaker's voice rather than force these into a rigid metrical mould.

As to the content, we may say briefly that no other poem of Brown's has suffered more from changing tastes and standards of value. The story of "Mary Quayle" is one of misplaced confidence, of seduction, desertion, thwarted hopes, and self-abnegation. It might have been a powerful and moving tale, but it is neither. It "gushes" almost indecently. The self-pitying young hero, rather smug, rather self-righteous, unburdens his quivering soul in a torrent of bathetic sentimentalism and fatuous rant that conjures up visions of the worst actor in the worse scenes of the worst melodrama that ever toured the provinces. As such, it has a sort of horrible fascination and evokes more guffaws than some of Brown's deliberately humorous pieces. The didactic tone, the stilted and pedestrian phrasing, are quite remote from his usual style and tone, and lead me to suspect that the whole thing may be an elaborate joke, a burlesque of the cheaply sentimental romance of his day.

"Bella Gorry," also in standard English, is the last of the long narratives, and the only one to be told in blank verse. In the final stanza of the "Prelude" quoted earlier, Brown allows the Pazon to criticize the style of the two stories which preceded his in the 1889 volume,
"The Manx Witch" and "Mary Quayle":

Leást hear our Pazon, reverend and meek;
In unadorned verse I make him speak,
As is most fit. To him Tom Baynes' rude style
Were "simply barbarous"— I see him smile
Hie smile—"Poor Tom has thoughts beyond his station,
But language! sir—unfit for publication."
The Curate's rhymes he haply thinks audacious,
Emphatic, overwrought. "But 'twere ungracious
Of me to criticise a gentleman
That is so kind and clever." There again
You have our Pazon. So he says his say,
And all my dreams of Mansland fade away. (C.P., 510)

The blank verse is perfectly regular, with just enough substitution
to keep it from becoming monotonous. The kindly old clergyman who
tells the story does not indulge in the liberties so natural to his
friend Baynes, but imposes a tone which is dignified without being
stilted. The poem has appropriately been called "the incarnation of
mother love" and "maternity made flesh." The passion of motherhood
has seldom been more profoundly conceived. The simplicity of the final
scene, in which he described Bella caressing her naked daughter in
selfless adoration, might have been envied by more famous poets. The
phrases used to describe that scene—"This Sybil clinging to this
Venus" and "Nursing the baby"—could hardly have been improved;
the one reflects the perception of the classical scholar, the other
conveys the fundamental simplicity of the country parson. Brown
was too modest in his evaluation of this poem as "rather good." It
is a moving tale admirably told. Easily the best of his narratives
in English, it is to my mind less representative and less vigorous
than the best of the Anglo-Manx pieces.

It remains to say a word about three shorter pieces which are
closely related to the long narratives by their use of dialect, their subject matter, and their general tone. These are "In the Coach," "The Christening," and "Peggy's Wedding." The first title applies, not to a single poem, but to a sequence of six brief episodes, each of which portrays some aspect of Manx character. The first, for example, is called "Jus' the Shy," and illustrates the almost morbid shyness of a group of Manx sailors. In a very different mood and style Brown satirizes an avaricious, class-conscious hypocrite in "Conjugal Rights" and a hypocritical turncoat in "The Pazons." The other units of the sequence lean heavily toward pathos.

"The Christening" is a humorous study of the pride of fatherhood. A young sailor, home from the sea, talks lengthily and somewhat irrationally about his first-born son, oblivious to everyone and everything except the overwhelming fact that he is now a father. "Peggy's Wedding," a longer and more coherent poem, gives us Brown's humor at its most robust. It is the only narrative in which a woman serves as narrator—but then this particular story could be told only by a woman. The value of this poem resides principally in the vivid characterization of the disillusioned and infuriated Peggy and her miserly scarecrow of a husband.

With this rapid survey I have attempted to sketch in the outlines of Brown's work in the field of narrative poetry. Obviously, these poems are not all of equal value. Some of them merit the neglect which has overtaken them. Others are deserving of careful study and detailed analysis beyond the scope of the present study. It is my hope that the reader will be tempted to turn directly to the poems,
and allow Tom Brown to plead his own case. But before leaving the narratives completely, it will be well to draw together the various pieces of evidence at our disposal, and attempt to summarize and evaluate his achievement in this area. That will be our aim in the chapter which follows.
In point of sheer volume, Brown's narrative verse is easily his major contribution to English literature, filling more than 500 pages in his Collected Poems—well over three-fourths of his total poetic output. We know what he was trying to accomplish in these poems. We have seen what manner of man he was. We are familiar with his subject matter, his methods and techniques. We have attempted to bring into focus his major strengths and weaknesses, and evaluate the effectiveness of several individual poems. It should now be possible to classify and evaluate his total achievement in narrative.

As to classification, the problem is relatively simple. First, Brown is a dialect poet. As a practitioner of the Anglo-Manx dialect, his supremacy is unchallenged. Second, he is a local-color poet. As an encyclopaedic collection of Manxiana, an artistic presentation of a hitherto untapped reservoir of poetic materials, the Fo'c's'le Yarns are unique. After a century, no poet has appeared to challenge his position as the Laureate of Manxland. Third, he was a realist. He wrote of what he knew, he kept his eye on his object, he refused to falsify or distort his material even to please the countrymen he most wished to please. Numerous other labels might be applied with equal justice, but contrary to popular opinion, the affixing of labels is not in itself a substitute for understanding. Let us therefore turn to an evaluation based on the evidence, examining the fundamental qualities which give these yarns their flavor and establish their identity.

Gradually Brown evolved the structural framework into which the individual yarns might be fitted. He would create a figure capable of
combining in his complex personality the outstanding traits of his people. This man, who must be at the same time an individual and a representative, would serve as narrator. By characterizing such a man at various periods of his life, and by involving him in a variety of situations, he could create a pivotal figure who was dynamic rather than static, and give unity to a series of actions isolated in time and space. Thus did the poet construct Tom Baynes out of his own imagination and his experience, endowing him with many of his own qualities and characteristics, but respecting the rights and privileges of this sailor as a personality in his own right. Once created, Baynes grew and developed, ultimately assuming such proportions that his own creator could not always control him. Much has already been said, and much more remains to be said, about Tom Baynes. Most of it can be summarized in a few brief statements. He is a unique fictional personality of major stature, deserving to rank high among the character creations in the poetic literature of the century. The intricate and perplexing relationship which exists between Baynes and Brown is the major unsolved problem of these narratives. Put in its simplest form, the question is this: When was Baynes speaking for himself, and when is he simply a spokesman for Brown? The problem is not made easier by the fact that the poet himself was confused about it. His statement that Baynes and Brown are identical cannot be taken at face value.

Surrounding Tom Baynes are a multitude of lesser figures, some of them sketched in a few lines, some of them developed with painstaking thoroughness. When Brown portrays his men and women, you feel instinctively that he speaks as one of them. Wordsworth, a greater poet in
many respects, does not have this common touch in a comparable degree; he is remote from the people. Tennyson, with a less gargantuan ego, also fails to portray his characters from the inside. He is his own principal narrator, and the view is an exterior view. Browning, of course, gets inside his people. That is why he is the greatest portrait artist in nineteenth century poetry; and for the same reason, Brown must eventually take his place close to Browning as a creator of character. Rough-hewn and careless in technique as Brown's narratives sometimes are, in this one significant respect, at least, they excel the productions of many more illustrious men. He succeeded to a remarkable degree in penetrating and portraying feminâne psychology. The characterization of young women, however, are an exception to the general rule. They clouded his vision with their beauty and innocence; he obviously falls in love with most of them, and suffers the temporary blindness of any man in love. But with older women his glance is sufficiently penetrating, particularly when they are sour, embittered, jealous, or frustrated, and he does not wear kid gloves in his treatment of them. His gallery of memorable people, full-blooded, opinionated, complex—this surely is one of his major claims to fame.

It should be said that the characteristic effect of all his really successful yarns is cumulative——it builds up, like a mosaic, line by line and page by page. In this building process, even the digressions and seeming irrelevancies have their part to play. This method leads to dilution of the plot; it invites expansiveness. One result is that nearly all of these poems are too long. Another result is that their flavor and total impact can rarely be conveyed adequately through
summary and quotation. His material did not lend itself to concentra-
tion, and his narrator, as a representative of a loquacious and expan-
sive race, was not given to succinct expression. An unwillingness to
relax the monologue structure also results in repetition.

The yarns normally open on a subdued and unpretentious note, and
after the emotional crisis of the story is passed, the return to the
calm, matter-of-fact world of the present is often abrupt. This same
rapid descent occurs frequently following minor crises within the
story, as the narrator brings himself and his audience back to earth
with a thud. Brown makes elaborate use of pauses to indicate how
the line should be read, and these pauses are an essential part of the
verse pattern. Sometimes when he is returning to ground-level after
a flight in fancy, we get an awkward shift in meter and tempo:

And tears is tears, no matter the from;
But he was a fuss-rate husband was Captain Tom.

Another structural flaw lies in the overworking of coincidence in the
resolution of the plot. Baynes' omniscience sometimes strains the
reader's credulity. He can usually explain how certain facts came to
his knowledge by quoting one of his small army of carefully placed in-
formers, but when, as in "Kitty of the Sherragh Vane," he must rely
upon his ingenuity to make credible his personal appearance in every
important scene, verisimilitude suffers. Brown seldom permitted him
to discuss historical events; his carelessness of fact and tendency to
exaggerate as illustrated by his summary of Chartism in this same tale
would indicate why. Too often the plot hinges upon a chance meeting
or an accidental event. Both "Job the White" and "Captain Tom and
Captain Hugh" fall short of tragedy because the deaths involved are
strictly accidental. In connection with this disposition of charac-
ters, it must be said that Brown seemed incapable of wrenching him-
self free from the stultifying demands of convention under certain
conditions. A woman who lost her lover, no matter how, was supposed
to die of heartbreak, and in these yarns did she must. Sometimes,
as in "Betsy Lee," he lingers fondly by the death-bed; elsewhere,
as in "The Schoolmasters," he finishes her off mercifully in less
than a dozen lines.

The "asynartete octosyllables" of most of the yarns are ad-
mirably suited to his matter, and are varied and modified with
considerable skill. The couplet is his basic rhyme pattern, but
he departs from it or varies it almost at will. While some of the
effects he obtains by this freedom and irregularity are interest-
ing and sometimes quite striking, I am inclined to believe that
what Brown needed in his narratives was not greater freedom but
a form with stricter demands and more stringent limitations. He
succumbs too easily to the word or phrase ready at hand, the easy
rhyme, the unmotivated switch in meter or line length. Greater
regularity in structure would have worked to the disadvantage of
his spontaneity and naturalness, but it would also have made it more
difficult for him to give way to random impulses, and forced him
to pay closer attention to phrasing and to tighten up some of the
sprawling sentence patterns. The extremely short lines used in
some poems make possible the expression of abrupt, staccato phrases
which effectively reproduce the tension and excitement of the speaker.
Throughout, the representation of oral speech patterns is a basic concern of his technique, and one of his most effective contributions to the art of narrative.

No evaluation of these yarns can ignore the extent to which they are colored by the pervading sense of humor. Sometimes it is broad farce, but more often it is an inward smile, a twinkle in the eye. Frequently it cannot be pinned down to any given line or group of lines; out of context it loses its appeal. This happens because much of the humor is what the comedians call "situation comedy," of the variety used with notable success by such past masters of the art as Charlie Chaplin. It provokes laughter by virtue of certain relationships and personalities and situations built up over a long period of time; consequently, much of it cannot be fully appreciated until this background is familiar. When Brown attempts to evoke humor by mimicking a strange dialect, as in "Kitty," the result is flat failure. There is a very thin line that separates whimsy from absurdity, and Brown did not always know which side of the line he was on. His best humor, as in "The Schoolmasters," is based upon a mental picture, liberally embellished with exaggeration, and ending with a dry "punch line" delivered with mock-seriousness. Unusual spellings or word coinages are another favorite humorous device, and some of them, such as "lemon-choly" or "slant-indicular," are clever enough to be amusing. More often they are tedious.

Poetically, the strongest feature of these narratives is the imagery. In "Peggy's Wedding," for example, it is drawn from the
humblest domestic surroundings: the master snores "like a mill"; Peggy's husband has shoulder blades like "the backbone of a carp"; his sneaky and twisty behavior is "like a conger just." At other times, as in "Tommy Big-Eyes," the imagery is chiefly that of a rough, common-sense, observant outdoorsman with a vein of poetry in him, a soft heart, and a lively imagination. The unctuous hypocrite Cain "flattens his hand like a dab of mortar" on Tommy's shoulder; before the elders to explain his attempts to seduce his servant Nelly, he "smiled like butter a shillin' a pound." Because the narrator is a sailor, much of the imagery is appropriately nautical. The jealous and suspicious brother Sal in "Kitty" is pictured as "Boxin' the compass of doubt in his brain." In the same poem, the domineering Mrs. Tear has a smile that is "half a smile and half a blister"; she is so tense, so much "on the hair-trigger," that her husband likens sleeping with her to having "a barrel of powder in the bed with ye theer." As even these few examples indicate, his imagery is not restricted to visual or auditory comparisons, but branches out to include kinaesthetic sensations and other subtle impressions. His nature imagery is so constantly employed as to leave the (else) impression that he used no other kind.

Brown's stories often treat of subjects generally considered daring at the time he wrote—seduction, betrayal, drunkenness, prostitution, jealousy of brother for sister. He even ventured upon such ticklish subjects as frigidity, abnormal desire, and homo-
sexuality in women. It is not too much to say that sexual love, in some form or another, enters into almost every story. Whether it be the unholy lust of the hypocritical "Local" Cain for his servant Nelly Quine, or the unsatisfied desire of the Pazon's wife, or the powerful mutual longing of Tom Baynes' young charges aboard the Indiaman, sexual love is treated freely and openly, with no trace of either blush or leer. If there is no prudery and no false modesty in Brown's treatment of the relations between the sexes, there is also no sensationalism, no license, no licentiousness. His attitude throughout is frank, open, and healthy. There are no fleurs du mal in Brown's garden.

In point of diction, these stories are much of a piece, typically colloquial and innocent of grammatical niceties, vigorous and earthy, with generous dashes of slang and mild euphemistic oaths and exclamations, but no profanity. Occasionally one finds both archaisms and neologisms, the former appearing most often in connection with the narrator's paraphrase of some Biblical quotation, and the latter more commonly in humorous passages. In moments of moral earnestness, Brown not infrequently adopts a manner reminiscent of Biblical language, and draws freely upon the Bible as a source of imagery throughout. In the non-dialect poems, of course, the traits of style associated with Baynes, notably his digressiveness and exaggeration, do not appear. But his fondness for pathos and sentiment is shared by the Curate and the Pazon.

In general it may be said that Brown succeeded in his purpose
of presenting a detailed living picture of Manxmen and Manxland. The "stranger" can learn more about that tiny island by reading these yarns than in any other way. He succeeded, too, in making his people thoroughly believable (with the single exception of "Mary Quayle"), and of suffusing his stories with human warmth, an atmosphere of health and vigor, an almost boyish sense of fun, and a conviction that life is good. The fin de siècle mood of weariness and despair is not reflected in these lively stories of humble life. Normally sympathetic and generous to all, Brown could lash out in bitter satire against the hypocrite, the pharisee.

Someone has said that all the yarns give the impression of having been written out of doors. It is a discerning (and deserved) comment. There is a tang of the sea breeze here. Brown knew the seashore, the mountains, the curraghs of his native land as intimately as he knew its people.

Brown's friends have told us that he could invent stories almost indefinitely, filling in plot and setting as he went along, and imitating in turn the voice and gestures of the various characters. He acknowledges that this process even went on in his dreams. Such remarkable facility is almost certain to result in carelessness unless it is constantly subjected to the checks and curbs of artistic judgment. Brown was sometimes guilty of holding the reins too loosely.

Aside from these faults of construction, some readers will be troubled by his failure to concern himself with the great questions and issues of his day. While most contemporary writers were
throwing themselves into the current controversies in the realms of science, religion, politics, sociology, and economics, Brown remained aloof from the struggle and wrote of a Manxland that was fading away even as he wrote. Was he therefore an escapist? Was his concern with the life of the past simply a means of avoiding the bitter and painful struggles of the present? There is no categorical answer. His belief in the hiding values of the past was genuine beyond question. Politics, on a local or yearly basis, simply held no interest for him. Today's purportedly vital issues, he felt, would be simply a forgotten footnote in tomorrow's history books. Most legislation and attempted reform works itself out attacking the symptoms and ignoring the cause. He was not blind to social inequalities and injustices, but he was convinced that you cannot legislate people into decency and fairness and tolerance. You must reform the individual, and society will pretty well take care of itself. Fundamentally, the problems that beset society are moral and ethical in their nature. Therefore, he will devote himself to the truly basic problems: the relationship of man to man, and of man to God. In the narratives, these larger concerns are largely implicit rather than explicit. In the lyrics, they often find direct expression. Brown did not set himself up as a swer or a leader, yet he was not unaware of his intellectual stature and his potential capacity for leadership. When a friend asked why he had not utilized these gifts more effectively in active participation in the affairs of his time, he had no ready answer. Nor have I.
To Manxmen especially, and to many non-Manxmen, these yarns of the fo'c's'le are and will remain his greatest work, and his surest claim to fame. Admitting their many virtues, however, and realizing full well that no just estimate of his position can be made which fails to take them into account, I must nevertheless conclude that the case for Brown's literary merit must rest in future, not on the narratives, but on the lyrics to which we must now turn our attention.
PART III: THE LYRICS
Chapter 1. Introduction to the Lyrics.

The final quarter of the nineteenth century, during which Brown did nearly all of his literary work, was a period of crisis in English poetry. This was not an isolated phenomenon, but an integral part of that moral-social-intellectual crisis which had its roots as far back as the seventeenth century and which has not yet been resolved. The ambitious commercialization of the new industrial society supplanted the artistic demands of Christian humanism with the more "practical" demand that poetry be either didactic or amusing. The ugly, noisy, industrialized England of the 'eighties, as described by George Gissing and others, was not an environment in which imaginative and individual poetry was likely to flourish. Such conditions set the stage for the gradual standardization of human personality. Vivian de Sola Pinto said of this trend:

Standardization and uniformity have been noted by Arnold Toynbee as marks of the period of "the schism of the soul" which heralds the decay of civilization. Late nineteenth century critics often expressed surprise that no "great" new poet appeared as a successor to Tennyson and Browning. If by a "great" poet was meant a poet whose work represented the equilibrium of a society that had achieved some degree of integration, it was impossible for Tennyson to have a successor of this kind, as such an equilibrium no longer existed after about 1880. If poetry was to be kept alive, it was useless to try to repeat the success of Tennyson or any other Victorian poet. A new kind of poetry was needed to express that schism of the soul which is the most significant fact in the modern world and at the same time to attempt the supremely difficult task of overcoming it and creating a new spiritual integration, thus defying, at any rate on the imaginative plane, the process of standardization which was proceeding rapidly in an industrialized society.

In some respects Brown was well situated to defy the process of standardization and create a new poetry which would both express
the "schism of the soul" and achieve a new "spiritual integration."
As a college master, who found his greatest satisfaction in private
musings or in the intimate circle of his family and colleagues, he
was effectively screened from the standardizing effects of commer­
cial and industrial life. As a classical scholar, he was familiar
with the values of the polite learning and belles lettres of the past,
and was ever ready to apply them as an antidote to the cheapening
influences of the present. As a non-Englishman, he was able to
observe the current scene somewhat more objectively and in fuller
perspective than those who were personally involved in it by race
and tradition. Finally, as a devoutly religious man largely un­
moved by partisanship theology or denominational concerns, he was able
to turn his brilliant mind to a study of spiritual values in broad
human terms. Always a humanitarian and an individualist, he felt
that the ultimate answer to man's problems would be found in those
realms of faith and intuitive perception which were the natural home
of both religion and poetry, and into which science and logic could
never penetrate. His lyrical poetry provided an outlet for those
probings of his inmost self and those questionings of the universal
Will which had no place in the action and description of the narra­
tives.

Moving from Brown's yarns to his lyric verse is like turning
from one poet to another. The rather shocked surprise felt by
many of his contemporaries upon learning that the creator of
"The Schooner" or "Disguises" and the creator of "Betsy Lee" were
one and the same, is readily understandable. Without implying any essential relationship, as we might liken the change to that which the reader experiences in turning from Lowell's *Biglow Papers* to Hopkins' "Windhover." Once the almost incredible disparity between the two types is understood, and the breadth and versatility of the talent which conceived them are accepted, we may cast about for a meaningful explanation. It is fair to say that the lyrics differ so markedly from the narratives in technique and effect largely because of a corresponding divergence in purpose and motivation. They proceed from a different region of the mind, and they employ a different avenue of approach. The Brown who wrote the lyrics was, generally speaking, an older man than the poet who spun the Manx yarns. Passing this departure from the norm of developing poetic creativity for the moment, let us explore somewhat more fully this dichotomy in Brown's work.

The gulf between his best and worst is both wide and deep. The lyrics have more of his best and less of his worst than the narratives. Representative of Island life as the yarns might be, inclusive as they undoubtedly were, still they were not and could not be representative of every aspect of human experience. The sensibilities and insights of these people, though wide, left depths unplumbed and heights unscaled. Baynes, the poet's principal spokesman, is frequently aware of this inability to grasp or express a particularly subtle thought or an especially precise shade of meaning. Time and again he fumbles to express these subtleties, and then gives them up as beyond him. This distinction between
the artistic reach, descriptive ability, and depth of insight of Tom Baynes the sailor and Tom Brown the poet is a partial measure of the difference between the lyrics and the yarns. Brown could see distinctions which the old salt could not, feel subtle and deep-lying emotions and intuitions which were beyond the Pazon and his friends. But he could give expression to these in the narratives in only two ways: first, by shoving his characters aside and speaking in his own person as poet; second, by falsifying his characters and endowing them with insights they did not possess. The first alternative he never employed, the second only rarely.

How then to express the doubts, the hopes, the fears, the questionings, the joys that were not Manx merely, but simultaneously personal and universal? The lyrics provided the answer. In these we have the expression, not of a different Brown, but of another facet of his many-sided personality; the voice of the poet transcending the voice of the Manxman. I fancy it was only slowly and by degrees that he himself became fully aware that he could never say all that he wished to say, could never find complete self-expression, could never fully voice his most personal ideas and emotions through the narratives alone. He was Manx, to be sure; he had absorbed all that Manx life and character could offer. It was not enough. To recognize that there were elements in him which were not representatively Manx is no slur on that admirable Island. It is only to become aware that poetic genius is never typical or representative. Insofar as it is original and genuine, it is individual—and unique, and while it may be influenced by many outward
circumstances—nationality, education, financial standing, physical health—it transcends all these. Thus it is, that although Brown was consciously and determinedly a Manxman, although he was a classical scholar, a folklorist, a preacher, a teacher, an amateur naturalist, he was always something more—a poet. The lyrics gave him a means of expressing those unique elements which made him a poet and not simply a Manx patriot or an English schoolmaster.

Most of the lyrics were first published in Old John and Other Poems of 1893. Another substantial group appeared variously in The New Review, The National Observer, Plain Talk, The Church Monthly, Isle of Man Times, Isle of Man Examiner, and perhaps a few other periodicals. The editors of Collected Poems (1900) selected some twenty-seven previously unprinted poems from the mass of unpublished material in Brown's notebooks. A few more were printed by Simpson in his 1907 study of Brown, and by the editors of the Golden Treasury Series volume of selections in 1908. An undetermined number remain unpublished. Thus after twenty years of writing dialect yarns, did Brown turn to the "new and more cultivated field" of the lyric. In a letter of 1894, he announces his intention of giving up his lectures to take up poetry again.

"It would be more serious than most of what I have hitherto written. I have three poems 'smouldering within me... Don't you think it is well to let those things simmer behind the oven for a good long while?" He speaks also of "the inner core of gestation" where the poems come into being. The prose, whether oral or written, serves as a relief, and allows the creative process to go on all the better,
"partly released from the strain of excessive tension, partly re-
cruited from the outer world of converse and experience." A year
later, Brown writes again of his composition, giving what I believe
to be an indication that if he had his life to live over, he would
probably not have devoted so many years to the Manx yarns: "Plans
open out ad infinitum—but—the tremendous but; well, no, not
tremendous, but not the less a fact. Woe is me for the wasted
years! ...May you never give up, as I did, quite twenty years of
your life to mere idling. It was delightful, but not profitable.
And I am even now inclined to say 'D...n the profitable!' Only it
would be so naughty, and probably but a blasphemous and ineffectual
ignoratio elenchi."

All of this would seem to indicate that Brown took his lyrics
quite seriously, yet it is typical of his modesty that after *Old
John* had appeared, he made no claims of special merit. "It is
a sort of 'lucky bag'" he wrote "and people take what pleases them.
These who kindly disposed are content to do this, and 'chuck the
balance.'" He then adds a remark which I can only interpret, as an
indication of momentary disillusionment concerning his ability or
the future of his work, "I fancy it is my last. What's the good
of gleaning in such a field." Most reviewers of the volume agreed
that it showed remarkable and unsuspected *gifts*, and presented "a
much less difficult task to the reader"—an extremely doubtful
premise—but lost in the process "something of his peculiar savour";
that is, these were obviously not fo'c's'le yarns. Simpson has
said that "in the sonnets and lyrics we have an insight into his
inner self; the self inaccessible to his acquaintances, undisturbed by outside shocks; the self that explains the seeming inconsistencies of his character; the self that made it possible for one of his friends to say, 'There is no getting to the end of Brown.'

In searching for a workable classification for Brown's most typical lyrics, I happened upon two statements which seemed to offer a reasonably accurate description. The first is in Poe's "The Poetic Principle" (1844): "The struggle to apprehend the supernatural loveliness... has given the world all... it has ever been enabled at once to understand and to feel as poetic." The second is Robert Browning's description of the subjective poet, found in his "On the Poet, Objective and Subjective" (1851):

He, gifted like the objective poet with the fuller perception of nature and man, is impelled to embody the thing he perceives, not so much with reference to the many below, as to the One above him, the supreme Intelligence which comprehends all things in their absolute truth—an ultimate view ever aspired to, if but partially attained, by the poet's own soul... it is toward these that he struggles, not with the combination of humanity in action, but with the primal elements of humanity he has to do; and he digs where he stands—preferring to seek them in his own soul as the nearest reflex of that absolute mind, according to the intuitions of which he desires to perceive and speak. Such a poet... is rather a seer, accordingly, than a fashioner, and what he produces will be less a work than an effluence.

There is a link between what Poe and Browning were trying to get at here. Poe feels that it is only in proportion as poetry succeeds in reaching "the beauty above," however fleetingly and imperfectly, that it is perceived as poetry. Browning describes the subjective poet as struggling to see "What God sees." Making due allowance for temporary moods and for variations resulting from his reaction to personal crises, we may suggest that Brown the author of Fo'c's'le...
Yarns and the Manx dramatic monologues was the fashioner, the objective poet; Brown the "mystic," the author of the religious and metaphysical lyric, was the seer, the subjective poet. The lyric impulse, reaching beyond the transitory and the material toward the eternal and immaterial, created a poetry that was more personal, and more universal. In the yarns he built "a cairn of memories"; in his lyrics he threw out filaments from his innermost being.

Thomas Sharpe has argued convincingly that the individuality of Brown's attitude, coupled with the fact that he made no claim to have a specific message for his time, has prevented his wider acceptance: "He was apart from the main trend of thought and the chief literary currents of his generation." Sharpe discerns two main tendencies of Victorian poetry, a current and an undercurrent. The first, represented by Tennyson, Browning, Arnold and Clough, reflects the levelling of classes, growing influence of scientific thought, and the conflict of the new thought with traditional forms of religious faith. The undercurrent, principally represented by Rossetti, Morris, Swinburne, Patmore, and Francis Thompson, was one of reaction and escape. Brown, Sharpe concludes, belong to neither of these groups.

...for him the problem was not of prime importance. To him scientific thought was no fetish, and for industrial and political progress he had little enthusiasm. His interests were deeply rooted in the past. ... The result was that the matter of his long poems was not of special interest to his generation, and the same may be said of his English lyrics. The latter are the fruit of his long rambles and solitary musings, and are too personal to make a wide appeal to the public. It is a good thing to be in touch with the spirit of the age, but it is better to be in touch with the spirit of the ages. Brown had no special solvent for the problems of his time, and his popularity was diminished.
in consequence; but when present-day problems have vanished, Brown's voice may receive more attention than many voices now more clearly heard. Indeed, it is questionable whether some of Browning's most famous poems...will retain their full appeal to succeeding generation; and the time may come when "In Memoriam" is read rather for its incidental beauties than for its main argument.

I may misread the signs, but I believe the time prophesied by this critic in 1914 has now arrived. Many of the once-revered poems of Brown's contemporaries, owing their popularity and influence to their treatment of current issues, are now read mainly from a sense of duty. Will the same forces, working in reverse, bring a fuller measure of recognition to the writings of Brown, less strongly a product of their time? So far they have not.

It is, of course, easy to exaggerate the contribution of racial or national origin to a poet's equipment. This is particularly true of Brown, who consistently overemphasized his Celtic inheritance. Many critics have followed his lead in assigning many qualities in his personality and his work to this Celtic strain which traditionally produces a poetry noted for its dreamy quality, its preponderance of fairies and leprechauns, its shifting gaieties and melancholies. One such racial-minded critic, in reviewing Brown's work, concludes that in modern literature, "Brown stands for the human, as Mr. Yeats does for the dreamy side of this poetry." The Manx poems, near as they were to Brown's heart, and interesting as they are in their own right, do not sum up his accomplishment.

He was not a Burns of Ayrshire, a Barnes of Dorset—one of those essentially dialectic poets who...fall into the arms of the obvious and the outworn directly the prop of native speech is removed. On the contrary, his more personal and essential utterance is in English. These English poems have a wide range of
manner. There are swallow-winged lyrics, and there are elegiac pieces in elaborate and stately stanza forms. But Brown's genius is most at its ease in untrammelled measures. For here, too, the Iberian characteristic of direct speech, responding immediately and precisely to the stimulus of emotion, is his. Inart, as in life, he is impatient of conventions that lay fetters on the free movement of the spirit. He will speak out... and he will not hesitate to speak of what is nearest him.

The lyrics are permeated with sympathy for man, love for nature, and a spiritual struggle to achieve a complete faith in Divine Love, with a freshness and sparkle which is a constant surprise, Brown ranges over a wide variety of subjects and moods. There is depth and fervor in the religious poems, mystic exaltation, subtle phrasing. There is bold speculation, exquisite nature description, penetrating observation of character, and all of this in a free-ranging verse which often has the verve and raciness of idiomatic speech. His diction may be severe, concise, epigrammatic, or it may be subtly elaborate and delicate. His craftsmanship is extremely skillful and his versatility amazing. Whether marked by masculine vigor, extreme pathos, or what H. F. Brown called "frozen passion," these lyrics move with a disarming apparent freedom. They are, as Saintsbury said, "singularly free from monotony."

They may be classified by subject matter into the following principal groups: Character Studies, Aspects of Nature, Social Relationships, Literature and Art, Elegy and Epitaph, Philosophy and Religion. These groups are by no means equal in either bulk or importance—the number of poems treating of nature or religion, for example, exceeds that in all the other groups combined. Several poems might with equal justice be assigned to more than one of these
classes, just as a few poems in each group have a distinctly auto-
biographical tone, and might have been considered separately under
that heading. Any method of arrangement must seem more or less
arbitrary. I hold no special brief for my classification except
that it provides a workable basis for examining the poems in re-
lated groups rather than individually, and thus eliminates a degree
of repetition and confusion.

I shall quote from the lyrics freely and frequently. I do this
advisedly, not only because of the general unfamiliarity with these
poems, and their limited accessibility, but because they are frequ-
etly their own best commentary. In them one can discover a genuine
poetic voice of the nineteenth century which has been almost for-
gotten in the twentieth. It is often a strong voice, sometimes a
thrilling voice, always an honest voice. Brown does not hesitate
to lay bare his deepest emotions or his most sacred thoughts.
And in every poem, whether it be the wail of a bereaved mother, a
bitter reproach to the Almighty, a whimsical picture of a stream
or a blackbird, a tribute to Boccaccio—you can discern the spiri-
tual biography of a sensitive, intelligent, living man.
NOTES

1 Crisis in English Poetry: 1880-1940 (London, Hutchinson's University Library, 1951), pp. 11-12.

2 Letters, II, 7-8.

3 Loc. cit.

4 II, 88-89.

5 I, 203.

6 Athenaeum, CII (Sept. 16, 1893), 381

7 Simpson, pp. 189-90.


Chapter 2. Men and Women.

In view of Brown's lifelong fascination with the actors in the human comedy, it is appropriate that we open this survey of his English poems with an examination of his character studies, beginning with a group of Manx portraits which supplement the yarns. The first of these, called "Old John," is an appreciative recollection of his father's old servant and the debt he owes him: "what of strength, of truth, or tender grace/I owe, 'twas you that taught me"; and he adds, "I have no doubt that could have taught the leech/That taught old Chiron." This is an echo of Brown's classical training, and spoken even in jest, it is high praise for the old man to compare him with the wisest of the Centaurs, who was himself the pupil of Apollo and Diana.

In this poem Brown employs a consciously "poetic" language and style which is absent from his best work, but there is evidence of considerable technical skill. Consider the studied piling-up for effect in such a line as: "No wind uproots, drought quells, frost nips, blight sears/The well-fed sapling." It flashes out into an occasional high-flown apostrophe: "Veil your crests, ye powers of evil!" There are frequent unwarranted inversions, and sometimes archaism such as "methinks," "'twas," "climb," and "leal." But despite all shortcomings, the poem is an experience and not simply a literary exercise. This is due to the indefinable but unmistakable feeling of sincerity which derives in part from his device of addressing the subject of the poem directly throughout,
from the recollection by the poet of simple shared experience, from the blending of serious and comic, religious and secular, jovial and sad.

Not a little of the poem's value lies in its humor, a humor of a quiet, genial, and kindly sort, based on broad sympathy and understanding. Here is a sample, a reported prayer of Old John's as overheard by Brown as a youngster. The old servant prays for his "maister," the vicar,

\begin{verbatim}
that on rock
of sure foundation he might keep the post,
And (By a change of metaphor) might stock
God's heritage with vines to endure the shock
Of time and sense, being planted with his planting;
That so (another trope) of all the flock
Not one be wanting. (C.P., 8)
\end{verbatim}

Old John was a Dissenter, and after attending the regular services, stuffed his waistcoat pocket with snuff and trudged off to his own little chapel, where he "could get 'the rael stuff'" and solved from grammar. Brown's approving comment indicates his own sympathy with religious nonconformity:

\begin{verbatim}
And who shall blame you, John? Our prayers are good—
Compact of precious fragments, passion-clips
Of many souls, cemented with the blood
Of suffering. So we kiss them with the lips
Of awful love; but when the irregular grips
Of zeal constrain the cleric breast or laic,
Into a thousand fiery shreds it rips
Our old mosaic. (C.P., 11)
\end{verbatim}

There were some differences of religious opinion between Old John and his youthful admirer, but usually they agreed, as the poet writes with tongue in cheek,

\begin{verbatim}
Although we served in different battalions—
Your folks were Presbyterians, mine were lewd
\end{verbatim}
As we learn elsewhere, one of the poet's assigned tasks during the harvest season was to aid the servant and his brother in collecting the tithe, that tenth part of the parishioner's crops which made up the bulk of his father's income. Frequently these contributions were not made with perfect grace and charity. Such an occasion he describes in these lines:

But when the corn was ripe, and truculent churls
Forbade us, as we culled the *cushaged stock*;
Your eye flashed fire, your voice
Was loosed in *skirls*.

Of rage. Old Covenanter, how could you look
The very genius of the pastoral crook—
Tythe-twined, established, dominant?...

*(shocks marked for the tithe with a weed)*

Here are ink-horn terms (e.g., "truculent churls"); localisms (e.g., "cushaged stock"), but these are more than offset by that perfect choice of "skirls" to describe John's wrathful voice, and the double pun in "pastoral crook." There are many passages equally good, often indicative of the poet's ability to smile and be reverent simultaneously, as when he again speaks of the old man in prayer,

> your groans and sighs
> And gasps I heard by listening at the gable,
> Inside of which you knelt, and shook the skies—
> But first the stable.

> It was a mighty "wrestling" with the Lord:
> And hot June air was feverish with the heat
> And agony of that great monochord;

There are incidental bits of description with a beautiful simplicity: "Night came sparkling/ With all her gems, and devious to Tromode/ The stream ran darkling." His basis social philosophy appears in the determination "To look beyond convention's flimsy
trammel, / And see the native tints. . . / Of God's enamel." In a
final salute to the humble manliness of the old servant, Brown says,

Your comely portance, filled my soul with pride
To think how human dignity surpasses
The estimate of those who "can't abide
The lower classes." (C.P., 12)

Evidently he was taken to task by a friend for some of the lines
in this poem, and answers the objections by letter, one of the few
instances of interpretive comment on his own poems:

I stick to "but first the stable," but not to "that can't abide
the lower classes." Throughout the poems it seems evident
to me that the wicked way of looking at the Puritanical dodges
is supposed to be repressed with difficulty. The sincerest love
and respect for my old friend will not make this otherwise. It
will not. You plunge into all the hot steaming medium of the
old man's excursions: you sympathize, you embrace, but you
really must laugh. . . . I am no Puritan, and, by the process
of the poem, am not supposed to be. The objection to "that
can't abide" is that, though it enters as a quotation from a
snobbish idiot supposed, still it is not likely that any snob
or any idiot would say anything so inept. I am not sure, though!

"Old John" McCulloch loomed large in the poet's boyhood memories.

"Chaise A Killeys To Chaise in Heaven" is also partly auto-
biographical, for it is a sketch of a village "character," a weak-
minded religious fanatic who used to roam the Island. Brown was
well acquainted with Chaise, who sometimes abused the hospitality
traditionally shown to such "innocents." The subtitle of the poem
indicates the circumstances; after a confused and erratic career
on earth, the religious vagabond is now rescued from his bewilderment,
and the crushing burden of his self-appointed task of combatting
Popery single-handed.

And now it's all so plain, dear Chaise!
So plain—
The wildered brain,
The joy, the pain—
The phantom shapes that haunted,
The half-born thoughts that daunted— (C.P., 13)

As in "Old John," Brown gains in verisimilitude and sincerity by speaking directly to the character whom he is describing. The tone is one of sympathetic reminiscence tinged with amusement. He gives himself great freedom, employing lines and stanzas which vary considerably in length, and shifting from the dominant couplet pattern to introduce triplets and even alternating rhymes whenever he feels so inclined. Not the least effective of the technical features is the refrain "Chaise, poor Chaise" which follows most of the stanzas.

One of Chaise's notable idiosyncrasies was a compulsion to sing, regardless of his surroundings, in a voice which can better be imagined than described:

Such music as you made, dear Chaise!
With that crazed instrument
That God had given you here to use—

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

But when such music ceases,
'Tis God that takes to pieces
The inveterate complication,
And makes a restoration
Most subtle in its sweetness,
Most strong in its completeness,
Most constant in its meetness;
And gives the absolute tone... (C.P., 14)

The religious conviction of these lines underlies the poem as a whole, and colors much of the imagery, as in this passage with its echo of Henley's lines in the "Invictus"— "Out of the night that covers me, / Black as the Pit from pole to pole" (1875):

. . . and while your soul,
Dear Chaise, was dark
As an o'erwaned moon from pole to pole,
Yet had you still an arc
Forlorn, a silvery rim
Of the same light wherein the cherubim
Bathe their glad brows, and veer
On circling wings above the starry sphere— (C.P., 15)

Again as with Old John, Brown brings Chaise to life by recalling typical actual incidents in their relationship, such as that in which a group of youngsters persuaded Chaise to hold a missionary meeting for them, or another in which the poet and two painters formed the congregation while Chaise mounted the chapel pulpit and waved an empty bottle while warning the nation of drunkenness. This is not one of Brown's best poems, but it fulfills its function of memorializing a colorful character, and in the process discloses another facet of the poet's width of sympathy and his ability to convey a feeling of warmth and sincerity.

"Mater Dolorosa," the next exhibit in this Manx portrait gallery, is shorter than the first two, but demands somewhat fuller treatment, if only for the high praise which has been lavished upon it. A. J. Costain has said:

Brown has pierced to the very heart of this stricken woman. He sees her smiling through her tears, comforting herself and her man with brave words, and then sinking to the very depths of grief as the sense of her loss comes flooding over her again. She struggles bravely, but she is in deep waters. How deep they were, the man who wrote "Aber Statins" knew full well. The poignant of the closing lines is almost intolerable.

Something close to this is the most common reaction to the poem. We might call it the "uncritical" reaction, for it does not depend upon critical principles and is not controlled by intellectual or aesthetic demands. It recognizes, and responds to, a deeply human
cry of anguish. The appeal is from our suffering human being to another. Brown does not intervene, nor does he comment; he simply provided the means whereby one heart might make direct contact with another, bypassing the head. To the reader suspicious of or hostile to feelings as such, this method of direct emotional appeal may arouse resentment. In his "Memoir" of Brown, Quiller-Couch attempts to demonstrate that the pathos is an inevitable concomitant of the poet's sense of humor. He admits that Brown has here pushed pathos to an extreme.

And yet... can we separate an indulgence in pathos from that gift of humour which we prize as something rather particular in our literature? Chaucer was not afraid of pathos in combination with humor, nor even Shakespeare in ending Falstaff; nor Swift in his Letters, nor Sterne, certainly; nor Goldsmith, nor Cowper, not Scott—and, above all for confident use of it, not Dickens. Now these were all great men... Without any comparison of size, Brown was of these men's breed and quality—of their "stuff". Burns, for all the multitude of his idolaters, has probably never struck a chord more accurately responsive in epoch than he struck into the vitals of Brown: and Burns, Heaven knows, can be pathetic until the kye come hame.

Is this a sufficient answer to the devil's advocate? I fear not. Quiller-Couch bases his defense on the frequent (he would imply, necessary) connection between humor and pathos. "If you delight in Dickens' humor," this line of reasoning suggests, "you must be willing to accept his pathos; you cannot chortle over Danny Bewilder without a sympathetic sob for this bereaved mother. The streams of humor and pathos have a common source." We all recognize that the line between laughter and tears is frequently so nebulous as to become invisible. "But," says the dissatisfied critic, here there is no humor. This is unrelieved pathos, frontal assault
on my emotions. It is an unfair attack, a cheaply-won victory. If I remain untouched you will put me down as cold and unfeeling; if I am constrained to tears, what then? Do I have any increased insight into life and its problems? No. Tears are the only expected end product of the poem, and for this reason I must dismiss it as unworthy of serious consideration." This reaction, based on intellectual artistic demands, and that of a reader who finds in a poet's ability to perceive and recreate and transmit the basic human emotions and highest functions of the poet's art, are both widespread, and both have weaknesses. The one elevates poetic feeling at the expense of poetic thought; the other erects a system of aesthetic in which emotion is relegated to an inferior position. This question of pathos and sentiment, and the reaction to it, is of central importance in a consideration of Brown's work.

Horatio F. Brown, a friend, pupil, and editor but not a relative of the poet, speaks of his "wild spirits, his loud peals of laughter, his merry wit, his boisterous, almost schoolboy, fun. But beneath this bubbling fountain of mirth, which was only intermittent, lay a deep tenderness nigh to tears." Norris, Brown's biographer, makes clear that we should get a very mistaken notion of Brown if we conceived him as weakly sentimental.

He had as great a contempt for the namby-pamby parson as he had for hypocrisy. He used language when roused, which was described as full-flavoured and Rabelaisian. . . . He would stop at a wayside inn and drink a tankard of ale and have a cooish with mine host, and he did not think he was thereby less qualified to teach the acceptable word of God. . . . If the deep roots of the spiritual life were strong and healthy, he believed nothing could go wrong with the moral or the intellectual being.

It is the "deep tenderness" which overflows in "Mater Dolorosa."
He cuts straight to the heart by emphasizing those simple and homely details which we instinctively feel to be genuine. He is almost pain­fully direct. He preaches no sweetly sentimental sermon here, and we should perhaps interpose a distinction, lest we fall into an easy error. The poem is unmistakably one of sentiment, but it is sentiment which inheres in the situation itself, not sentimentality foisted upon it from without. It would have been easy to interject sympathetic comment, but the poet has sufficient restraint to show us a few sparsely sketched details—the father's curses, the mother's aching breasts, her brave attempts to reassure herself and her husband, and the final agonized cry. It is enough. He gives us forty-four lines, and leaves little more to be said on the subject of bereaved motherhood. Those who belittle Brown's powers of compression and condensation (and the Yarns give them plenty of ammunition), would do well to consider this poem with that factor in mind.

In "Catherine Kinrade" Brown goes back into the Manx records of the early eighteenth century for his material. The poem is prefaced by a lengthy quotation from the orders of the Bishop's Court, of which the following excerpts are most pertinent:

Kath. Kinred of Kirk Christ, a notorious strumpet, who had brought forth three illegitimate children, and still continues to... lead a most vicious and scandalous life on other accounts...is... hereby ordered...dragged after a boat in the sea at Peel... This was in 1713. It seems the punishment was ineffectual, for five years later another entry records that Katherine,

having had a fourth bastard child, and after imprisonment, penance, dragging in the sea, continuing still remorseless, and not withstanding her defect of understanding...is again ordered to be twenty-one days closely imprisoned, and dragged in the sea again after a boat, and also perform public penance in all the churches of this island.
Brown's treatment of this sordid episode in Manx history is not precisely what we might have expected. Hawthorne would have found such a theme irresistible. His subtle analysis of the dark patterns of sin, and the apportionment of guilt between torturers and victim might have produced a masterpiece as absorbing as *The Scarlet Letter*. Brown is also concerned with this latter aspect of the case, but instead of examining his characters in their living environment, he projects them into the future. Bishop Wilson enters into Heaven and is received in total silence. The stern churchman is stricken with fear and awe, but gradually he becomes aware

> How on the emerald stair  
> A woman sat, divinely clothed in white,  
> And at her knee four cherubs bright  
> That laid  
> Their hands within her lap. Then, trembling, he essayed  
> To speak:—"Christ's mother, pity me!"  
> Then answered she:  
> "Sir, I am Catherine Kinrade."  

(C.P., 48)

Brown does not attempt to express the feelings of the Bishop when he realizes that the celestial being he has mistaken for the Virgin is in reality the metamorphosed version of the weak-minded strumpet whom he had hounded and tortured on earth. The poet dwells instead on how the transformation came to be, and in the end, the Bishop is forgiven. Brown engages in no theological disputation here, nor does he draw any extended moral lesson. Nevertheless, the moral is clear, and the poet's religious views are evident. Both accuser and accused erred in ignorance, and there is room in Heaven for both. When the positions of the principal actors are reversed, the innate drama of the situation creates an element of suspense which is resolved by the humbling of the proud, and the forgiveness of the downtrodden.
Judged strictly on its technical merits, the poem leaves something to be desired, not because what the poet has given us is bad, but because he might have given us so much more. Many modern poets, notably Eliot and Pound, have been censured on the grounds that their poems are not always self-contained, that they are dependent for their full meaning and effect upon secondary materials exterior to the poem itself. Without seeming to prejudge the problems underlying such censure, we may point out that the reader of this poem would be at a decided disadvantage if the documentary materials were withdrawn. The poem would, in fact, lose a significant portion of its effectiveness, for that effect is highly dependent upon our knowing the antecedent circumstances. By relying upon the accompanying documentation, Brown has relieved himself of the necessity, or the opportunity, of presenting the episode in its entirety.

This poem has sometimes been described as "mystical," but it is so only by virtue of the fact that the scene is laid in Heaven. He has projected an earthly relationship into a future state whose features are in all essential respects those of the traditional orthodox Christian Heaven. Brown's description of the transformation of Catherine reminds us of the similar renovation of Chalse a Killey:

> ...some vital spring adjusted,
> Some faculty that rusted
> Cleansed to legitimate use—
> Some undeveloped action stirred, some juice
> Of God's distilling dropt into the core
> Of all her life...  

(0.P., 48-49)

We are not overly distressed by his mixture of mechanical and botanical imagery, nor by the arbitrary lengthening and shortening of lines in the poem as a whole, but we retain a vague feeling of dissatisfaction, an
impression that Brown has been prodigal with his material, and has not
made of it what he might.

In "Octaves," we have an opportunity to see what use Brown some-
times made of the images and phrases that went into the letters in
translating an impressionistic sketch from prose into poetry. In a
letter to his friend A.M. Worthington on March 25, 1896, Brown wrote:

Since you were here and went to Ballaglass, a great human interest
has sprung up for me there—a weaver and his wife. They have been
there of course ages ago; but we didn't happen upon them till 1894.
And he is fair, and she is dark; and he is placid, gentle, sweet-
eyed, very handsome, and she is——good heavens! a network of fire!
a scoria? no, not that; the fire is in her eyes, but it is in her
heart, and it flames out upon you, and wraps you round, and every
wrinkle of her face is furrowed with it. But it is not a red face,
just a deep chestnut, or the varnish of an old Stradivarius. That's
a woman—burning, not burnt out, nor likely to be. And she burns,
and she flames, and she flames and she burns—the divinest old bush,
and is not consumed in this Sinaic glow. . . .Yes, and the fire
is divine. It is in the intensity of her nature, pure elemental
fire, and to be received as such. Woe to the scoffer! woe to the
blasphemer! woe—yes, woe to the aesthete! . . .Misinterpret this
fire of loveliest old age because it is so volcanic? Look to the
Cumaean Sibyl—that's it.12

The poem, in four octaves, embodies the conceits of "volcanic fire,"
the "Stradivarius" complexion, and the "Cumaean Sibyl," but it falls
disappointingly short of the vigorous portrait anticipated by the
letter. Simpson speaks of the poem as a good example of Brown's
being driven to verse description by his feelings for some scene that
has struck him with particular force. He quotes a part of the letter
and adds: "The last verse of the poem finishes the picture and ex-
plains the reason that forced Brown to depict it." The final stanza
concerns itself with "The ties no fateful force can sunder," but lacks
point and direction. Most readers will probably prefer the prose version.

"Roman Women," Brown's finest achievement in character portrayal
among the lyrics, bears a superficial resemblance to "In the Coach" in that the two are of approximately equal length, and each contains a series of studies. In this poem he turns his searching gaze upon the women of Rome in much the same way that he did upon the assorted travellers in the Manx coach. Beyond this, there is little in common between the two series, except that each resulted from first-hand observation. "Roman Women" is the major literary result of Brown's visit to Rome during the Christmas holidays of 1879/80. He seems to have worked on the poem at intervals between this time and the summer of 1895. Probably the press of college duties prevented him from giving the material final shape until after his retirement. The first poem in the series, entitled "Nel Corso," appeared in the National Observer on June 10, 1893. For some unaccountable reason, it was not mentioned or included when the rest of the series appeared in Henley's New Review in August of 1895, nor does it appear in Collected Poems. The editors of the Golden Treasury Series volume of selections print it in the Notes, apart from the others. It may be that the omission of this poem was simply an oversight by both poet and editors, or they may have suffered a momentary attack of qualms lest the poem be given a "frivolous" interpretation unbecoming to a schoolmaster and parson. I shall quote it here in full, partly because it is less readily available than the other parts of the sequence, and partly because it provides a fine introduction:

Two waftures of great eyes—
A second's thousandth part—
One sucked me down the Mœlstrom of the heart,
The other ebbed me forth to lonely skies.
Scorn? No! why should she scorn?
Coquettish play of fence?
Not so, but glorious might of innocence—
Of such large blood are Roman women born.

She knows what joy I caught
That moment, how I rushed
Right to the centre of her life, yet blushed
She not at all, nor showed a treacherous thought.

Is this not good above
Most goods for which we sigh?
To pick this obvious love as we pass by,
And pass, and pick another obvious love. 16

The sea-imagery of the first stanza, and the reference to the "glorious might of innocence" in the second are both recurrent notes with Brown. He responded warmly to the open sensual appeal of Italian women, and was stimulated to write some of his most vital and vigorous lines in their praise. It is difficult to remember that these youthful verses were penned by a sixty-five year old clergyman. In his "Memoir" of Brown, Quiller-Couch prefaces his remarks on this poem with a significant observation:

Circumstances, and the urge to study much...repressed the poet in him during his youth. His poetical faculty developed late...his lyrical faculty...later yet. What priceless passionate songs have we not lost through that accident of fate...who can read "Roman Women"...without speculating on the maturity of Brown's flowering time (in itself a miracle); without asking himself "If such a thing could be done of the dry wood, what might not have come of the green?" 17

To the reader whose sole previous encounter with Brown occurred in the decorous confines of "My Garden," "Nel Corso" may have come as something of a surprise, and prepared him for the first major portrait in the Roman gallery.

Close by the Mamertine
Her eyes swooped into mine.
O Jove supreme!
What gleam
Of sovereignty! what hate--
Large, disproportionate!
What lust
August!
Imperial state
Of full-orbed throbblings solved
In vast and dissolute content—
Love-gluts revolved
In lazy rumination, rent,
As then, by urgence of the immediate sting!
The tiger spring
Is there; the naked strife
Of sinewy gladiators, knife
Slant-urged, Locusta drugs,
Suburran rangings, Messalina hugs;
Neronic crapula-pangs
I' the dizzy mornings; gangs
Of captives: "Pretty men enough,
Eh, Livia?" Puff
Of lecherous torches; ooze
Of gutter-creeping gore; the booze
Gnathic, Trimalchian; hot hiss
Of leno in the lobby—This,
And more. No wonder if her brow
Is arched to empire even now!
No wonder
If bated thunder
Sleeps in her silken lashes!
If flashes
Of awful splendour light the purple mud
That clogs the sphered depths palatial!
No wonder if a blotch of blood
Lies murd'rous in the centre of the ball. (C.P., 59-60)

It has been suggested that Brown was following Swinburne here. Although there are obvious superficial similarities, I am convinced that the indebtedness is more apparent than real. Both Poems and Ballads and "Roman Women" are rejections of the conventional British Victorian mores; in both there is an abundance of sensuality; in both there are passages of complex alliteration. Putting aside as irrelevant the gulf that separated the two poets in the conduct of their private life, we must differentiate these poems in terms of the spirit behind them. Swinburne's sensuality is presented as a desirable good in itself; Brown's vivid picture of lust and depravity in the section
just quoted does not imply advocacy of such a life. Brown is not condoning licentiousness; he is saying that passion is a vital human element which cannot be ignored. To recognize and respond to it is a normal function of the adventurous spirit, especially of the "pagan" spirit which now and again he manifests in kind, not in degree, with Swinburne. There is warmth and vigor and color in both poets; but where in Brown's work is the medievalism, the violent republicanism, the attitude of impiety that found in God "the supreme evil," the metrical virtuosity for its own sake, that marks the representative work of Swinburne? They are not to be found. Someone has said that Swinburne's readers remember words; Brown's readers may also remember words, but primarily they remember pictures, objects, places, people. Brown's "sensuousness" is a healthy masculinity luxuriating in an unaccustomed freedom in an unaccustomed climate; Swinburne's, to me, smacks of sickness and perversion. Swinburne's lush creatures, such as Faustine, are removed from his immediate experience, and derive largely from his erotic imagination; Brown's women are the women of flesh and blood who passed before him on the streets of nineteenth-century Rome. There is room for honest difference of opinion here. I have no wish to belittle Swinburne's poetic accomplishment, or to deny the apparent similarities to be found in Brown's lyrics. I merely insist that these similarities be seen in perspective, and not be taken as conclusive evidence that Brown was following a model.

It is worth noting how effectively Brown has made use of his knowledge of Roman history in the passage above. It is seldom that he goes to such lengths in allusiveness as here, and sends his reader-
scurrying for the reference books. And if, as the adherents of Eliot and Pound have urged with considerable success, the concentration which such allusiveness makes possible is a poetic virtue, then Brown must be credited with command of a significant modern poetic technique. This passage, expanding from a few key words—"sovereignty," "imperial," "empire"—builds its picture of violent passion and unbounded sensuality by calling up some of the most notorious names of ancient Rome: Locusta, the professional poisoner; Messalina, the nymphomaniac wife of Emperor Claudius, executed by his order; Nero, the sadistic, perverted aesthete; Trimalchio, a low-brow millionaire who promoted colossal orgies in first century Rome. He heightens the drama by introducing a mass of appropriate detail: the gladiators, the knife, the trickle of blood, the slaves, the drugs, the flickering glare of torches. It is a picture of naked lust, depravity, and brutality, all of which is suggested to him by the Roman street-walker to which he returns in the final lines. Even here he carries over the image of a dissolute court: her brow is "arched to empire"; the "sphered depths palatial" of her eye is clogged with "purple mud"; the murderous "blotch of blood" disfigures the ball, just as the wholesale spilling of blood marked the social "ball" of the decadent empire.

What we have said earlier about his flair for the striking and pungent phrase receives manifold confirmation here: consider the doubly alliterative expressiveness of "Love-gluts revolved/ In lazy rumination"; the startling and many-levelled image of "lecherous torches"; the visual and kinesthetic imagery in "ooze of gutter-creeping gore." Few naturalistic poets can outdo the Victorian parson in
revealing the dark and unlovely facets of experience when he wished to do so. Yet it is, I think, his ability to catch the essential character of a passing figure in a few deft strokes, setting it forth in crisp and colorful phrases, that is one of the surest marks of the true artist, and one of Brown's justest claims to literary recognition. Here is another brief portrait from the gallery:

V
Pomegranate, orange, rose,
Chewed to a paste
(Her flesh);
A miscellaneous nose,
No waist;
Mouth ript and ragg'd,
Ears nipt and jagg'd,
As fresh
From bull-dog grappleings; tongue
Beet-root, crisp, strong,
Now curled against the teeth,
Lip-cleaving now, like flower from sheath.
Now fixt, now vibrant, blowing spray
Of spittle on the King's highway. (C.P., 61)

In this, as in many of his sketches, it is the unexpected word or phrase that provides the special flavor, the original note. The initial description of the texture and color of the girl's skin in terms of fruits and flowers is not unusual; but "chewed to a paste"? He delights in settling upon some single feature as the outstanding characteristic. In describing the mouth and ears, he makes effective use of a recurrent device, pairs of terms rhyming both internally and finally. But it is the tongue that fascinates him. Mobile and expressive, it sums up the total impression of her frank sensuality; it is typical that he should describe her tongue as issuing from parted lips "like flower from sheath," for the flower image in his description of women commonly has sexual overtones. And that final " spray
of spittle," while altogether in keeping with his subject, comes as a 
surprise. It is a partial measure of the gulf that separates these 
realistic, impressionistic sketches of Roman women from the romantic 
and sentimentalized portraits of Manx girls.

In a later passage, he seeks to draw some general conclusions 
from the mass of individual figures and impressions:

These women seem to live suspended life.  
As lakes, dark-gleaming till the night is done,  
Expect the sun,  
So these,  
That wont to hold Jove's offspring on their knees,  
Take current odds,  
Accept life's lees,  
And wait returning Gods.  

(C.P., 62)

In Section IX we find the poet and scholar beset by conflicting 
attractions, in one of the most humorous passages in the sequence. He 
is doing his best to study the ancient ruins as a dutiful pilgrim 
should. Guide-book in hand, he stops to admire:

This is the Forum of Augustus—see  
The continuity  
Of all these Forums, and the size—  
(By Jove, those eyes!)

Momentarily distracted, he returns to his study:

Bädeker tells how many feet we stand  
Above old Rome. He's grand!  
He is so plain, is Bädeker—  
(Again she's there.)

And finally, after a manly struggle to retain his scholarly aloofness:

You don't seem quite to—(What a heavenly bodice!) [sic]
You don't—(A perfect goddess!)  
I mean, you seem a bit distrair—  
(0, blue! 0, green! C—blazes—Fire away!)  

(C.P., 63-64)

Here as elsewhere in the poem, Brown is aware of a strong mutual 
attraction between himself and the women he meets. This puzzles him,
and he seeks an explanation. In an earlier section, one of the women has described him as a "merman from the Northern sea."

Why does she stare at you like that? The glow
Flew sheeted
As from the furnace seven times heated
For Shadrach, Meshech, Abednego.
Is it immediate sense
Of difference?
Of complement? And so--
While we want sun and grapes,
This burning creature gapes
For ice and snow! (C.P., 65)

But while all that is masculine in him reaches out in automatic response to the vibrant warmth of these women of Rome, he finds no comparable appeal in the formal dignity of the sight-seeing Englishwoman. He devotes the final (and considerably the longest) section of the poem to this foreign lady. I can quote only briefly from this spirited tirade, which is clearly not calculated to arouse any love for the poet in the hearts of conservative English readers:

O Englishwoman on the Pincian,
I love you not, nor ever can--
Astounding woman on the Pincian!
I know your mechanism well-adjusted,
I see your mind and body have been trusted
To all the proper people;
I see you straight as is the steeple;
I see you are not old;
I see you are a rich man's daughter;
I see you know the use of gold,
But also know the use of soap-and-water;
But yet I love you not, nor ever can--
Distinguished woman on the Pincian!

You have no doubt of your preeminence,
Nor do I make pretense
To challenge it for my poor little slattern,
Whose costume dates from Saturn--
My wall-flower with the long, love-draggled fringes
But then the controversy hinges
On higher forms; and you must bear
Comparisons more noble. Stare, yes, stare--
I love you not, nor ever can,
You peerless woman on the Pincian.
Later, we get a further revealing glimpse of the source of the dislike which shows through these lines so clearly:

But morals—beautiful serenity
Of social life, the sugar and the tea,
The flannels and the soup, the coals,
And other things; the chill dead sneer
Conventional, the abject fear
Of form-transgressing freedom... (O.P., 67)

In a final stanza he reconsiders, and grants the values of this "alarming" woman without retreating an inch from his original position:

And yet—
Remarkable woman on the Pincian!—
We owe a sort of debt
To you, as having gone with us of old
To those bleak islands, cold
And desolate and grim,
Upon the ocean's rim,
And shared their horrors with us—not that then
Our poor bewildered ken
Could catch the further issues, knowing only
That we were very lonely!
Ah well, you did us service in your station;
And how the progress of our civilisation
Has made you quite so terrible
It boots not ask; for still
You gave us stalwart scions,
Suckled the young sea-lions,
And smiled infrequent, glacial smiles
Upon the sulky isles—
For this and all His mercies ——stay at home!
Here are the passion-flowers!
Here are the sunny hours!
O Pincian woman, do not come to Rome! (O.P., 68)

There is throughout these poems a note which was struck but seldom by Brown's major British contemporaries. One reviewer turns, I think rightly, to America for a comparable voice, finding here "more than a hint of Whitman: of Whitman confined within limits, of Whitman concentrated." This comparison with Whitman is undeniably sound. When the Brooklyn carpenter says "I Sing the Body Electric," he provides us with an accurately descriptive subtitle for "Roman Women." In their
passion for freedom, their love of country, their belief in nature, their faith in immortality, their dislike of convention and restraint, their mingling of romantic idealism and realism, their rejection of rigid poetic form — in these and other respects, Whitman and Brown are in essential agreement. The awareness of self in relation to other selves, the susceptibility to sentiment, the innocent and healthy sensuousness of poetic expression — in these attributes of a many-sided personality, shared in common by the two poets, we have the source of many other qualities, and the factor which helps to weld the varied and seemingly contradictory elements of their respective poetic production into a consistent whole.

F.S. Boas speaks of the contrast between Brown's tenderness toward Roman womanhood and his "caustic exhortations" to the Englishwoman on Pincian Hill, the embodiment of all the conventions:

We almost seem to hear an echo of the voice of Byron, the exile in Italy, arraigning the fossilized religiosity of English society under the Regency. The Pincian woman is to Brown the type of the formalism which was in his eyes the antithesis to, the negation of, what was truly spiritual. It was not by precept and rule, it was not even through the workings of the intellect, that the ideal was reached.20

We remember that Brown once said, "It seems probable that the greatest genius in the Universe is the Devil." We catch, too, an expression of his attitude toward mechanization and standardization in his attribution of the unloved Englishwoman's cold formality to "the progress of our civilization." There is much more that might be said of this brilliant series of portraits, but it must suffice to say that they represent his highest achievement in this genre, and in themselves would justify his claim to our attention.
The group of poems classified as "Character Studies" reveals Brown's capacity for sympathetic understanding of a great variety of personality types, and his ability to convey the distinguishing qualities of those personalities in a great variety of technical forms, and in a wide range of tone and mood. The sorrowing mother of "Mater Dolorosa" is far removed from the wanton street-urchin of "Roman Women"; the transfigured Catherine Kinrade has little in common with the milk-maid of "Lynton Verses"; the placid innocence of "May Margery" is poles apart from the frigid hauteur of the Englishwoman on the Pincian, or the bold sensuality of her Roman counterpart. The knowledge of human nature displayed here is but a small part of that which runs throughout Brown's poems, but it is a significant part. Not often does he surpass the vividness, the originality, the vigor, which makes of "Roman Women" a remarkable example of youthful enthusiasm and youthful passion expressed by a poet old in years, but young in heart.
PART III: Chapter 2

NOTES

1 An original MS. of the poem is dated Clifton, Dec. 29, 1880. Dakyns in Notes to GTS, p. 267, claims that it appeared first in an Isle of Man newspaper, but Cubbon in his Bibliography of Brown, p. 18, lists as the original issue an undated 14 page pamphlet by J. Brown and Sons of Douglas, c. 1881. It was not published in England until 1893, in Old John and Other Poems.

2 Letters, I, 196.

3 Much information is available concerning the real John McCulloch which throws light on the poem, and indicates how closely Brown adhered to actual facts in his poetic tribute. See Ina Marx White, "A Celtic Poet," The Scots Magazine, n.s. XXIII (May, 1899), 435, and for biographical notes on the subject of the poem William Radcliffe in Memorial Volume, p. 215; Letters, I, 142; Ramsey Church Magazine, II (Jan., 1897), pp. unknown; Norris, Two Men of Manxland, pp. 89-93.

4 The poem was written in 1875, printed in the Isle of Man Times and in fly-sheet form, and later appeared in the Old John volume. The details of the portrait correspond closely to that given by Hall Caine in The Little Manx Nation (1891), pp. 142-46. It is not surprising that the two Manxmen chose to describe the same characteristics of Chaise, but it is doubtful that coincidence can account for their use of identical terms. For additional information of the real Chaise, whose English name was Charles Gill, see Norris, pp. 93-95. Other pertinent material may be found in Dakyns, GTS, pp. 267-68; Radcliffe in Memorial Volume, p. 215; William Storr, "T.E. Brown," New Review, XVII (Dec., 1897), 641.

5 Memorial Volume, pp. 161-62.

6 Pages 61-63.

7 Quoted in Norris, pp. 117-19.

8 Loc. cit.

9 For additional comment on this poem, see especially Henley, Works, IV, 224-26; Tuell, Victorian at Bay, pp. 32 ff.; Spender, Contemporary Review, March 1925, pp. 363-64; J.C. Tarver, "Thomas Edward Brown," Macmillan's Magazine, LXXIII (Oct., 1900), 407; Quiller-Couch, Speaker, Nov. 6, 1897; Dakyns, GTS, p. 284. According to Dakyns, and Radcliffe in Memorial Volume, p. 215, this is No. VII of a series entitled "Etymologiae," the first six of which remain unpublished. I have been unable to discover what the other six poems were. Date of composition is unknown.
10 The poem was written June 8, 1878, and first published in the Isle of Man Times, Nov., 15, 1879. For the Court Records, see Manx Society's Publications, IX, 98-99; quoted in C.P., pp. 47-48. Court R

11 For an account of the origin of the poem, see account by P. W. Caine in Isle of Man Examiner, Jan. 29, 1922. Some letters of Brown to John Macneilin in 1879, dealing with the poem, are preserved in the Manx Museum Library, Douglas.


13 Simpson, p. 85.

14 It is not certain which is the earlier version. Radcliffe may be correct in citing 1895 as the composition date for the poem, but it was not published until July, 1896, in the New Review. I prefer to assume that Brown followed his frequent method of drawing upon a prose version in writing the poem.

15 See the prose account in Memorial Volume, pp. 183-84.

16 Simpson, Appendis II, p. 233. An identical version was reprinted from the National Observer in an anonymous article in Academy, LII (Nov. 13, 1897), p. 404. It is also printed in Notes to GTS, pp. 269-70.

17 Memorial Volume, p. 69.

18 The individual sections of the sequence are identified only by number. To avoid confusion, I have retained the numbering of Collected Poems, although "Nel Corte" should really be labelled "I." There are several MS. copies of the sequence in varying degrees of completeness, and with some variations in text and order of arrangement.

There is one serious misreading in the text in XIII, st. 3, l. 10; for "all," as in C.P., read "ought."

19 Academy, LII (1897), 404.

20 The Eighteen-Eighties, pp. 63-64.
Chapter 3. Aspects of Nature.

From one point of view, almost all of Brown's poems are influenced in some way by his knowledge, or his attitude toward, nature. It is possible, however, to consider under the heading suggested above a large and diversified group of poems which are primarily devoted to some aspect of nature or natural phenomena. These nature poems may be further divided according to the specific manifestation of nature which gives rise to them: streams, mountains and cliffs, the sea, flowers; a fairly large sub-group are devoted to nature as a whole, or to the expression of a philosophy of nature.

Many of Brown's poems are the result of long, early morning walks through the countryside. Quiller-Couch recalls how he once accompanied the Clifton master on one of these pre-breakfast rambles on Durham Downs. As they walked along, "Brown swung round upon me with 'I come here every morning before breakfast. Why, d'ye think? You're taking me for a high and dry old scholar, I suppose? But I come out here to make poetry'; adding very shyly and whimsically. . .'yes, yes, to make poetry—or try—if you'll believe it.'" Make poetry he did, poetry filled with the images and impressions gleaned from innumerable excursions in the countryside, in the hills, and along the coast, in England, in his native island, or in more remote localities visited for the purpose.

He had a special affection for tiny streams, and nearly always personified them, as he did most things that he liked. A typical
example of this group is "A Dialogue beteen Hom-Veg and Ballure's River." I believe I have found the germ of this poem in a letter from Lake View, Keswick, September 14, 1881. He mentions a visit to Grasmere, where he rowed on the lake and noticed the little stream near the church: "That church beck! the little scamp—how does it contrive to check its pace, and hush its prattle, and lean its little elbow against the wall, and creep beneath the bridge, and then hurry-scurry away for the lake?" The poem, of course, concerns a different stream, but the conception is strikingly similar. As to the title, I believe "Hom-Veg" means "Little Man"; Ballure, or Ballure Glen, lies at the foot of a high hill immediately south of Ramsey, on the Northeast coast of the island, where Brown lived in retirement. This poem was one of a comparatively few written after he returned to the island.

As the title indicates, the poem is in the form of a dialogue in which the man does most of the talking. It would be a mistake to take the poem very seriously, for the poet is in a frolicksome mood here. Nevertheless, under the banter and fun, there is an unmistakable championship of adventure and freedom and individuality and lively spirits as against conventions, restrictions, caution, and the like. At Ballure, the little stream has been confined between walls to stop its depredations. Brown reduces the charge of property destruction brought against the stream to absurdity:

Mather D., that have built them, because he's intarmint To bring you to raison, you bothersome varmint!
In a million of years you've stole a good fut
From the bank, yes you have. . . . . . . . (C.P., 49)

It will be seen that Brown has reverted to the use of dialect here, as he rarely does in the lyrics. Its principal purpose is to contribute to the humor. The little man's tirade against the stream continues in a playful rush of jogging rhythm marked by double and internal rhyme:

Such ramblin' and amblin'
Such bustlin' and scramblin',
Such booin' and sthooin'
And hullabalooin'!

The river speaks with equal vigor, but without the dialect:

Only to go,
To flow,
To fling my spray in the sunhy glow,
To splash,
To dash,
Heels over head with a crazy crash. (C.P., 50-51)

Here the poet tries to reproduce the irregular rush of the stream by a combination of extremely short lines with longer ones, by a shifting meter, and an involved alliterative structure. The stream bids farewell to "old stick-in-the-mud" with a final exultation:

0 the strong! o the free!
0 the space, and the strength of the sea!

Admittedly the poem is not among the poet's best efforts, but its use of dialect for humorous effect, its musical jingling, its whimsy, its light treatment of theme with undertones of seriousness, is not without a certain charm. It serves to introduce a series of poems dealing with streams, of which the next bears the curious title of "Gob-ny-Ushtey," with the sub-title "Water's Mouth."

"Gob-ny-Ushtey" takes its name from a little waterfall in the
Southwest of the Isle of Man, between Easy Cushlin and Creggan Mooar. In the opening lines, the poet pictures a stream which springs over the rock into the sea almost as soon as it arises. The fancy of the later lines is worth quoting:

And the Tritons to mock—
Old dissolute Tritons—"Hurroo!"
They said, "We'll teach him a thing or two,
This upland babe." And I've no doubt they did.
But, as he lightly fell, midway
His robe of bright spray
He flung in my face,
Then down to the soles and the cods
With his sweet young grace,
Ah, what will the stripling learn,
From those rude mates—that mountain burn,
What manners of the extremely early gods? (C.P., 53)

What remains to be said of a delightful bit of fancy such as this, beyond noting, perhaps, that the classical scholar was not above putting his scholarship to work in the service of a whimsical conjecture concerning a mountain burn? That half-line, "And I've no doubt they did" taken with that splendid final line, provides all the defense necessary against any reckless charge of "gush" or any incidental quibbling about "pathetic fallacies."

In "Failand," the poet selects a brook near Clifton (Bristol) as his subject, addressing it in a mischievous tone of mock raillery.

"Ha, little one! " he begins,

Would'st like a torrent run
That spurns the mountain steep,
And falls in thunder? O, brave leap! brave leap!
'Twas excellently done.

Or again,

Pooh! 'tis a very Nile! there, there! that's right!
Flash out again into the light.
Have at the biggest stone—0, nobly meant!
I swear it was magnificent! (C.P., 53)

This chaffing of the stream is delightful, but the poet relents, considering that

He never dreamt of fountains
Rock-scooped in mighty mountains;

Rather, he goes his simple and innocent way. To sneer at him for not being grander "were well-nigh diabolic." To poke boyish fun at personified streams in this way requires no great poetic gift.

It does require a degree of playfulness, a refreshing innocence, and a keen observation of and sympathy with nature in a combination which is extremely rare. This point is worth remembering in connection with all of Brown's nature verse. His love of nature, and his knowledge of it, were probably as great as Wordsworth's. But Brown can and does combine this love with an elfin sense of humor which the great poet did not possess and would not have understood.

And would it be heretical to suggest that because this is so, some of Brown's nature poems have an immediacy of appeal which the technically superior verses of Wordsworth sometimes lack?

In "Portbury" he speaks to another English stream, late descended from the mountains and now flowing quiedy. Compare the boisterousness of his description of the stream as it rushes down out of the hills—

Such flowers to kiss, such pebbles to chide,
Such crabbed old carls of roots to deride,
Flouting them with your saucy riot! —

with the somnolent quality of the quiet stream under the water lily:

Coax it with curling of your liquid limbs!
And, as it delicately swims,
Let nothing but its shadow cumber
The lightness of your slumber. (C.P., 54)

Did he know how to bend meter to his purpose? Here is proof.

In that "Coax it with curling of your liquid limbs," he has made the most of alliteration and word choice to produce a languorous line that matches the mood of "The Lotos-Eaters." He should have stopped here, but he went on to write seven more lines that echo the fancy of "Gob-ny-Ushtey" referring to the embrace of the extremely early gods." This was too good to give up with only a single use, apparently, so he repeats it. The major objection here, however, is that he has pushed the fancy too far, and has not provided images which are transferable into concrete pictures. It is effective to represent the sea's encirclement of the little stream with a picture of manifold encircling arms, but the "blushing" of the stream has no counterpart in nature. We have another example of uncontrolled fancy in "The Dhoon," written about a tiny waterfall in the Dhoon glen between Laxey and Ramsey. In this, both the sea and the stream are personified. In the first stanza, the sea speaks as a yearning mother to her child: "Leap from the crags, brave boy!" But at the conclusion, she

smiled to see him as he slept,
Wrapt in that dear embrace:
And with the brooding of her tepid breast
Cherished his mountain chilliness—
0! then—what rest!
0, everywhere what stillness! (C.P., 55)

I quote this primarily to show that Brown's images sometimes fall apart under analysis. We can reconstruct the working of Brown's
fancy in building a poem like this: "Here is a noisy stream. He shall be the son. What more natural than that the sea should be his mother. She wraps him in her warm embrace. All is calm."

Now in terms of mother-son imagery, this is a true picture; in terms of sea-water all, it is not. There is no calm, for the fall of water, and with it the noise, continues. This may be quibbling, but a conceit, to be successful, must not contain obviously uncoordinated elements which distract the reader. Somehow, when Brown discards the humor in nature poems of this particular port, he slips into a sentimentalized prettiness that has all the power and intellectual content of a lacy valentine.

"St. Bee's Head" has the more descriptive MS. title of "Cliff Studies," and was the first of a series of poems written in August, 1868. It is composed of eight quatrains in which he reviews the characteristics of various types of cliffs. They may be disdainful, full of pity, joyous, indignant, sleepy. St. Bee's is like none of these:

> Straight-levelled as the bayonet's dread array,
> His shelves abide the charge. Come one, come all!
> The blustering surges at his feet shall fall,
> And writhe and sob their puny lives away!  
> (C.P., 75)

As he finds in the various aspects of cliffs a reflection of human attitudes, so in "Reconciliation," he draws from his contemplation of "a place where He hath split the hills" a lesson and a hope for disunited mankind:

> So severed are our hearts, so rent our wills;
> And yet the old correlatives remain—
> Few of the poems dealing with the sea are primarily intended
as simple description. Rather the sea is used as a backdrop for action, an atmospheric setting for a mood, or as an objective correlative for an abstract philosophic or religious idea. In "Star-Steering," for example, the poet expresses some of his deepest longings, using the image of the open sea as a symbol of freedom for the adventurous spirit, especially the spirit caught in the bonds of personal grief:

O, will it ever come again
That I upon the boundless main
Shall steer me by the light of stars?
Now, locked with sandy bars,
Life's narrowing channel bids me mark
Each serviceable spark
That Holm or Lundy flings upon the dark.
Thus man is more to me—
But O, the gladness of the outer sea!
O Venus! Mars!
When shall I steer by you again, 0 stars? ("Clevedon Verses-V.
C.P. 660)

Simpson's comment on this poem makes a worthwhile point: "His wish for the 'outer sea' is typical of his poetry. ...Great forces attracted him. The illimitable sea, the generating sun, forgiveness and love." His religion and philosophy are alike dominated by a preference for the individual contact with the universal over all man-made instruments of guidance, but he was also aware that complete dependence upon heavenly direction called for a courage and a faith which the impediments of "Life' narrowing channel" made ever more difficult.

One of his finest impressionistic pictures is that of "The Bristol Channel," No. VIII of the "Clevedon Verses":

The sulky old gray brute!
But when the sunset strokes' him,
Or twilight shadows coax him,
He gets so silver-milky,
He turns so soft and silky,
He'd make a water-spaniel for King Knut.

II.

This sea, was Lazarus, all day
At Dives' gate he lay,
And lapped the crumbs.
Night comes;
The beggar dies—
Forthwith the Channel, coast to coast,
Is Abraham's bosom; and the beggar lies
A lovely ghost. (O.P., 662)

There is considerable compression and originality in this vision of
the channel by day and by night, as the tide ebbs and flows. The
word choice is particularly effective, and the imagery is concrete
and appropriate. Throughout the first section, the channel sea is
described in terms of a dog: the rhyming penultimate words in the
second and third lines apply equally to either side of the compari-
son—the sunset "strokes," the shadows "coax." Then the specific
identification as a "water-spaniel for King Knut," emphasizes the
docility and tractability of the sea by associating it with the mon-
arch who commanded the waves to stand still. In the second section
the poet shifts his metaphor from the dog to the beggar, and his
choice of "lapped" in line three is appropriately descriptive of each
element in the sea-dog-beggar complex. In this second impression, he
depends heavily upon familiarity with the Biblical references to the
story of Dives and Lazarus, and the connotations of "Abraham's bosom."
We are entitled to suspect a moral implication in the fact that the
sea, like Lazarus, finds refuge and transfiguration only in death. The
whole poem is a model of concision; every line is essential to the conception.

"The Voices of Nature" deals only with the voice of the sea, presented onomatopoetically as the poet reflects upon the probable response of various historical and legendary figures, in regretful contrast to "the sad speech / It speaks to me." The sound of the sea is conveyed in a series of phrases: "This cluck of water in the tangles"; "This wave sip-sopping round the salt sea-roots"; "the plash of water upon stones"; "this gurgling on the dulse." What did it say to the Jutes and Angles, he wonders? "With what association did it hit on / The tympanum of a Damnonian Briton? / To tender Guinevere, to Britomart?" He thinks it must have been a more acceptable message than reaches him:

Encountering in their ears the tones
Of dominant passions masterful,
Made but a bourdon for the chord
Of a great key's that rested lord
Of all the music, straining not the bones
Of Merlin's skull;
And in the ears of Vivian its frets
Were silver castanets
That tinkled 'mong the vanities, and quickened
The free, full-blooded pulse,
Nor sickened
Her soul, nor stabbed her to the heart. (C.P., 663)

To the poet, shaken and bewildered by grief at the loss of his son, nature has for the time being no healing touch, no word of consolation. Rather it suggests deep misgivings, inspires "A question that has no reply." In "Dartmoor" and elsewhere, he was to ask that question, and suggest an answer. There is a noticeable decline in poetic level between the speculative opening of the poem and the concluding lines, in which the objective artist gives way to the bereaved father, whose
faith is severely shaken. The tone and substance of the final verses remind us inevitably of Clough.

The full meaning of another sea piece, "The Schooner," does not give itself up so easily, and complete mastery of it must wait upon a more exhaustive explication than we can attempt here. Let us begin by quoting Brown's naturalistic profile of the schooner as she lay "hoggish at the quay":

And, rotten from the gunwale to the keel,
Rat-riddled, bilge-bestank,
Slime-slobbered, horrible, I saw her reel,
And drag her oozy flank,
And sprawl among the deft young waves, that laughed,
And leapt, and turned in many a sportive wheel,
As she thumped onward with her lumbering draught. (C.P., 697)

That is about as unlovely a picture as you are likely to encounter in Victorian poetry, and it precedes by only a few lines one of the loveliest, as the same ship sleeps, "a shadow of repose/ Upon a line of gray. . .that transverse cuts the evening rose," and with an angel pilot, "'Neath the broad benediction of the West. . .at the entrance of Heaven's dockyard waits." Obviously we are not dealing here with a description of the schooner for its own sake, although Brown makes good use of his nautical knowledge in creating it. When he speaks of the sailor who sprawled on the bowsprit and "cursed the Harbour-master by his gods," we may rest assured that he has not used that capital accidentally, for this is the owner of "that strong hand within" Heaven's dockyard which "unbars the gates" of morning. It is, then, a religious poem, and the schooner only a symbol. Of what? Fully aware that I am dealing in unqualified and inexact generalization, my reply is that the schooner represents Brown's version at the moment of the course of
human life. The cursing, shoving sailors on a rotten ship, riddled with rats and beslimed with bilge, are following false gods. It is the ship and her crew that are ugly and revolting; nature is joyful, innocent, serence. But in the course of the poem, the schooner is transformed and transfigured by the same agency which released Chalse a Killey and Catherine Kinrade from error and turmoil.

She sleeps, and dreams away,
Soft-blended in a unity of rest
All jars, and strife obscene, and turbulent throes

Sleeps; and methinks she changes as she sleeps,
And dies, and is a spirit pure.
Lo! on her deck an angel pilot keeps
His lonely watch secure. . .

(C.P., 697)

This is not an optimistic or happy view of life which sees purity and peace and rest obtainable only in death, nor is it the view natural or customary with Brown, but I am unable to find another interpretation which seems to fit. I would far rather explain the schooner's translation from an object of disgust to a thing of beauty in terms of simple perspective, with a word about "distance lending enchantment," but I fear it will not suffice. The religious element is too pronounced, despite the loophole offered by the term "methinks" which precedes the vision of death. One reviewer, in discussing the impressionism of this poem, likens it to Rimbaud's "Bateau ivre."

The allegorical poem "Euroclydon," which takes its name from a violent northeast wind of the Mediterranean, turns to the Bible for inspiration. It is the story of Paul's journey by ship to Rome, of how the storm arose and the ship was forced to take shelter in the lee of an island, and how Christ walked on the water. How closely Brown has followed the Biblical account, and at the same time introduced dramatic detail and given the whole an allegorical meaning,
can be seen in this quotation:

Scarce loosed from Crete—
    Then, borne on wings of flame
And sleet,
    The Euroclydon came.

Strained yard, bent mast,
    With fury of his mouth
The blast
    Compels us to the South

Canst see, for spume
    And mist, and withen air,
A loom
    Of Clauda anywhere?

Balked hopes, fooled wit!
    Ah soul, to gain this loss,
Didst quit
    The shelter of His cross?

Dear Lord, if Thou
    Would walk upon the sea,
My prow
    Unblenched should turn to Thee.

Wind roars, wave yelps—
    To Thy blest side I'd slip,
Use helps,
    And undergird the ship.

Here, in typically mystical-metaphysical terms (notice especially the paradox of "to gain this loss"), is the cry of a wandering and storm-tossed soul, repenting its prodigal state, and seeking once again "The shelter of His cross," as the foundering ship seeks refuge from the storm in the lee of the island. It is presented in an unusual stanza form, consisting basically of: 1) a two foot line in spondees; 2) a trimeter in iambics; 3) a monometer, either iambic or spondaic; 4) another iambic trimeter. This stanza pattern probably contributes to the dramatic vigor of the whole.

"Triton Esuriens," a much longer but less effective poem, finds
in the coldness of the sea, and its apparent hunger for the land
a symbol of the poet's own yearnings and inveterate desires,

The restlessness and instability of the sea seek rest in the constancy of the land, but she remains mute to his pleading; with this rather forced and not completely convincing conceit serving as his point of departure, the poet draws an analogy to his own rejected state.

Full strange it seems that that cold heart should sway
With passionate fires!
But ah! my soul can say
How vain it is when she requires
The coast, so near, yet on whose absolute spires
Looms the sad frown of an eternal "Nay." (C.P., 728)

Brown is not speaking here of physical passion of desire, but of that spiritual hunger, the desire for union with the Eternal, which marks the poetry of the religious mystics. It is a note we hear elsewhere in Brown. If this poem as a whole rose to the level of that final line, it would be a much better poem than it is. But his images are too imperfectly conceived, his inversions and archaisms and interjections too stylized, to carry conviction of genuine inner struggle. The tone of manufactured emotion is fatal to his poetic purpose.

Turning from these sea poems with a strong religious flavor, we must consider briefly two poems of a very different nature, in which the sea functions primarily as the scene of action. The first of these is a rousing and much-praised memorial to a gallant rescue party, "The Peel Life-Boat." Brown tells us in an amusing letter to Dakyns on May 8, 1891 how it came to be written:
Henley is bringing out a book of verse to be called "On the Heights. [Lyra Heroica (1892)] It tends to Jingo, and consists of poems by the great men who have celebrated "the glories of our birth and state"—Milton, Tennyson, and so forth. Among these tremendous poems he wants to pitchfork himself and me!! I am bothered: . . . he persists; and, I suggesting, or, at least, dimly hinting at, adumbrating the idea of a great lifeboat service, as being on the heights of action, he catches at it; and I have tried to put into verse that astounding Peel Lifeboat business, the account of which in the Manx papers I read to the School two years ago. So that is my "pome," . . . fancy its lying alongside of "The Revenge.""

Brown did not witness the rescue described in the poem. The Norwegian ship St. George piled up on the rocks at Peel in October of 1889, after Brown had returned to his duties at Clifton. The poem was written on his birthday two years later. We have a few factual background details in Radcliffe's bibliographical notes to the Memorial Volume. Aside from Henley's urgings, Brown wrote the piece to commemorate the heroid rescue. The spirit of excitement and immediacy which pervades the poem would seem less remarkable had the account been written in the first flush of local pride and the immediate thrill of a successful struggle against the sea. Actually, the poet must recreate that original excitement after a delay of two years, and he must do it on the basis of second—
and third-hand reports. He unifies the various elements by centering attention on Charley Cain, the cox'un. Let us catch the flavor of the piece by recalling the first stanza:

Of Charley Cain, the cox
And the thunder of the rocks,
And the ship St. George—
How she balked the sea-wolf's gorge
Of its prey—
Southward bound from Norraway;
And the fury and the din,
And the horror and the roar,
Rolling in, rolling in,
Rolling in upon the dead lee-shore! (C.P., 44-45)

This beginning sets the tone for the whole. There is something in this of the effect and flavor one experiences in reading Longfellow's "Skeleton in Armor." It comes in part from the short lines, with their abrupt and variable rhythms; partly it is produced by his use of such images as "sea-wife's gorge" and his retention of the more poetic spelling in "Norraway." The couplets of the first six lines of each stanza are open, without really seeming to be so. The refrain shifts to an abab rhyme. This change focuses attention on the very effective refrain, with its picture of a relentless and angry sea heightened by the thrice-repeated "Rolling in."

Brown's knowledge of the sea and ships is again in evidence, although this is a far cry from the naturalistic description we get in such a poem as "The Schooner." Here everything is heightened and intensified by the sense of urgency and turmoil. Matter-of-fact observation—"Now the hauser's fast and steady;/ And the traveller rigged and ready"—is mixed with more fanciful description—"the black storm robe was rent"; "Sing ho! the seething foam!"; and the hulk left helpless to its fate, "Like a giant stunned and blind." It is worth noticing, and I think unfortunate, that Brown was not content with having recounted an exciting sea-rescue.

He must find a meaning in the event, must draw a parallel between lives saved from the physical storm and souls finding refuge from the emotional tempest:
With Thee,
O Lord of all that be,
We have peace amid the din,
And the horror and the roar,
Rolling in, rolling in,
Rolling in upon the dead lee-shore.  

(C.P., 47)

Simpson suggests that this fine poem has a special significance for
Brown's countrymen because the early kings of Man were Norwegian,
and may have landed at Peal.  George Saintsbury unaccountably
finds the poem "strangely destitute of sheer clarity" and suggests
that Henley rejected it for this reason.  Brown's letter (page 232
above) suggests to me the more probably explanation that he decided
against permitting its inclusion.

The second poem in this sub-group may best be introduced by
a passage in a letter of June 27, 1893: "This dreeful Victoria
business gives us pause. . . .Fancy in a quarter of an hour that
'turning turtle.'  One big coffin! It makes one shudder!" The
poem, "On the Sinking of the Victoria," had already been written
on April 13.  O July 18, the poet wrote to Irwin, sending "the
copy of verses which I write in response to your appeal. It appears
in the National Observer of July 15. . . .There is a direful mis-
prising ["land-clap" for"hand-clap" in the third line]. Independent-
ly of this nuisance, I think the verses have some power both of
style and idea, though they supply no adequate káéapal. Where can you
get it?" The poem does have power, and because of its brevity, I
shall quote it in full:

"Has Nelson heard?"
Death's angel spake what time the sea was rent
With that big plunge. Far hand-clap, and the word—
"Content."
Content; even so,
Great sailor, let the immortal signal fly—
Enough! we know our duty, and we know
To die.

To die, No loud
Thunder of battle shakes the furious scene;
And, if we die in silence, are you proud,
O Queen?

O Queen, 'tis thus
For you we die, no matter where or when
Or how we die, the while you say of us—
"O, nobly died! O glorious Englishmen!" (C.P., 100)

Brown sets up a contrast here between the heroic death of Nelson at
Trafalgar, and the less spectacular accidental demise of those who
went down with the Victoria. He asks the queen whether she makes
distinctions in her pride according to the circumstances of death.
He implies that giving one's life for the queen is an accepted
duty, made glorious by her proud accolade: "O, nobly died!" There
are several points of interest, not the least of which is his view
of the terrifying abruptness and unconcern of fate—"Far hand-
clap, and the word—'Content,'"—and hundreds of lives are snuffed
out on the instant. In technique, the poem is interesting for his
use of the device whereby the final phrase in each stanza is carried
over and repeated as the opening phrase of the next. But of greater
interest to me is the ambiguity of the poet's attitude. He does
not betray himself, but I doubt that this is the straightforward
endorsement of patriotic duty and submission to royalty which it
purports to be. I suspect an element of irony.

Although Brown had a wide familiarity with flowers, and men-
tions them frequently in his work, only a few poems are dedicated
to specific flowers. Among them are the slight but delicately verses addressed to the "White Foxglove," personified as a shy "wall-flower" who trembles at a kiss from the breeze, a philanderer reproached by the poet for his boldness. The pastoral innocence and charming fancy of this piece are continued in a children's poem entitled "A Fable," written for the small son of a friend, in which he tells how the harebell lost its chimes. Better than either of these is a little gem of fancy called "I Bended unto Me a Bough of May," written May 6, 1878:

I bended unto me a bough of May,
That I might see and smell:
It bore it in a sort of way,
It bore it very well.
But, when I let it backward sway,
Then it were hard to tell
With what a toss, with what a swing,
The dainty thing
Resumed its proper level,
And sent me to the devil.
I know it did— you doubt it?
I turned, and saw them whispering about it. (C.P., 689)

Sometimes these little brushes with the innumerable personalities of field and stream which kept Brown's long daily rambles from ever being lonely gave him the opportunity to say something extremely simple and convey thereby some discerning observation of human nature. A perfect example is the deservedly popular "Waspers," which has that boyish humor characteristic of his best nature poems, and embodies the unobtrusive variation on the theme that "a man's reach should exceed his grasp."

O Blackbird, what a boy you are!
How you do go it!
Blowing your bugle to that one sweet star--
How you do blow it!
And does she hear you, blackbird boy, so far?
Or is it wasted breath?
"Good Lord! she is so bright
Tonight!" 16
The blackbird saith. (C.P., 689)

It remains to consider a group of poems dealing with nature at
large, or with some aspect of his philosophy of nature. In one
of these, written in the summer of 1868, he inserts a serious note
in an otherwise lazy, unpretentious, idyllic picture of "Our Lily-
Pool"—"Our own bright, innocent, stupid lily-pool!" He envies their
"mailie" cow with the large violet eyes, enjoying the coolness of
the water, seeing herself reflected in the "green and liquid slab
of light," and taking the reflection for granted, "With the sweet
natural logic of her kind."

So may I look upon the lily-pool,
Nor ever in the slightest care
Why I am there;
Why upon land and sea
Is ever stamped the inevitable me;
But rather say with that most gentle fool:
"How pleasant is this lily-pool!
... this most sufficient, absolute lily-pool!" (C.P., 80)

It is an understandable wish, this longing of the self-conscious
spirit, the sensitive and inquiring spirit, to find an escape from
the universal image of the ego, the constant projection of the self,
in a peaceful, unreflective, accepting stupidity. Somewhere Brown
speaks of that "idiot cheer of self!" which limits our spiritual
horizon; his own horizons were frequently pushed back by the abili-
ty to lose consciousness of self, if only momentarily, in an aware-
ness of the eternal. Had it been otherwise, much of his religious
verse could not have been written.

"Metabon" is the poetic statement of his belief that while change is dear to man, it is not so to nature, despite Aristotle's statement that "Change of all things that be is sweetest."

...since Leda's egg swans strive
To innovate no curvature on that,
And gannets dive as Noah saw them dive
O'er sunken Ararat. (C.P., 91)

I do not propose to argue the concept, but we may observe that this expression of it makes no provision for a theory of evolution.

In No. VII of "Clevedon Verses," the poet wanders with his daughter Dora on her birthday through "Norton Wood" (the sub-title), greeting the various denizens of the forest familiarly: "What sayest, master finch?" and listening with delight to the shout of the season's first cuckoo. "Lynton Verses IV," sub-titled "Lynton to Porlock (Exmoor)," was inspired by the journey back to Bristol from Lynton in the summer of 1877. It demonstrates that his love of coastal scenery was not confined to the Isle of Man:

O, it is great,
That strip of Channel sea,
Backed with the prime of English Arcady!
It is not that the heather rushes
In mad tumultuous flushes
(Trickling's the word I'd use);
But O, the greens and blues
And browns whereon the crimson dwells;
The buds, the bells;
The drop from arch to arch
Of pine and larch;
And scented glooms where soft sun-fainting culvers
Elude the eye,
And fox-gloves, like innumerable-scaled revolvers
Shoot honey-tongued quintessence of July! (C.P., 666)

In a letter to Irwin, Brown comments on his friend's kind review in the Cliftonian:
You pick out "the honey-tongued quintessence of July." I am so glad; that was the poem I had the row about. I still think that the phrase would redeem a worse copy, and evidently you agree with me. After all, what is much of our verse-making but the hunt for phrases? I don't mind owning that I have many a time constructed a whole system of little more than bosh to enshrine a locution! Faith! one might do worse."

There is Brown's "unprofessional" attitude toward his art in its most extreme form. The serious professional poet is not given to such confessions, even though he may follow similar practises at times. We ought to point out that while Brown is far from being completely serious here, there are undoubtedly passages in his verse accurately described by his self-indictment.

His strong love of nature, is admirably expressed in "Lynton Verses V":

0 blessed mother, lead me
Unsevered from thy girdle—lead me! feed me!
I have no will but thine;
I need not but the juice
Of elemental wine— (C.P., 666)

A major element in this dependence and devotion is his feeling of relationship, of kinship with every manifestation of nature. In earlier lines of the poem he has mentioned a number of such aspects, and in the conclusion, he recapitulates them to emphasize his central point—that he and they are the common children of a common parentage:

This, this is all—do ye not understand
How the great Mother mixes all our bloods?
0 breeze! 0 swaying buds!
0 lambs, 0 primroses, 0 floods! (C.P., 666)

There is Brown the natural mystic, the pantheist. Much the same feeling and idea dominates the longer poem "Alma Mater," originally
called "Mother Earth." He invokes the common mother not to permit
his being parted from her, but to allow him to "cling to thee for
ever."

And be carried with thy motions,
As the rivers and the ocean,
As the great rocks and the trees are,
And all the things one sees are—
O mother, this were glorious life,
This were not to be dead. (C.P., 727)

The recollection of Wordsworth's Lucy,

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees

is inevitable. But Wordsworth's little poem is a classic, and this
is a failure. Why? Because Brown tried to weld completely incom-
patible elements into a unified and coherent statement. Natural
mysticism is an acceptable subject for poetic treatment. A rejec-
tion of science and materialism is equally acceptable. These two
are related, and might well be treated in the same poem, provided
always that the treatment is serious. Mysticism of any kind simply,
will not mix with levity or jocularity. Although Brown had a genuine
instinct for natural mysticism, he had too irrepresrible a sense
of humor, too much capacity for fun, to maintain for long the ser-
ious mood essential to his announced subject in this poem. We have
already noted one of the several passages in which he seriously de-
clares his devotion to, and his desire for union with, the common
mother. Mixed with this, we get anti-scientific pronouncements in
a totally different key:

I can't fix my affections
On a state of conic sections
And I don't care how old Daedalus
May try to coax and wheedle us
With wings he manufactures,
Sure to end in compound fractures,
Or in headers at right-angles to the brine— (C.P., 726)

Now, apart from the fact that this was bad prophecy, it was antithetical in tone to the material which precedes and follows it.

Take another example;

...I can't say "man and brother"
To a shadowy abstraction,
To an uncomfortable fraction,
To the skeletons of quiddities,
And similar stupidities. (C.P., 726)

Separated from the context, and presented honestly as light verse, these passages are not at all bad; in fact, they are quite good.

In the context of the poem, they are intolerable. It is such lapses in his artistic sense of fitness that keep him among the minor poets.

When he keeps this feeling toward nature free from jocularity, as he does in "An Autumn Trinket," the result is quite different:

Why does she burn
These colours on my soul—wher'er I turn,
Splashes of flame and pyramids of fire
That fill me with insatiate desire,
Making me yeann
For that which, with its own intensity
Death-poisoned, hastens not to be? (O.P., 693)

He answers his own question: "the brightest and the dearest go," as "our great Mother" with commendable thrift calls back her forces for the accustomed show of Spring. But the answers of imagination do not satisfy the grieving heart:

Not less to us the things that most we cherish
Fade from our eyes, and perish, perish, perish!

It is clear that Brown's practical knowledge, as well as the intui-
tive perceptions of nature and natural objects, had a tremendous influence on these verses. As a portrayer of landscape, he is frequently fine. His descriptions of streams, birds, flowers, and other natural phenomena are marked by a sensitive charm, delicate imagery, and frequently by a Puckish humor. Personification is a constant device in these poems, and this is related to the unmistakable pantheism of many of them. Nature served him well in poems of diverse types, as an endless source of imagery. Here, as elsewhere in Brown's work, the reader will perhaps be most impressed by the truly astounding variety and diversity—in subject matter, in diction, in imagery, in mood, in technique, in quality. Positive identification of an unsigned Brown lyric is extremely difficult. There are so many Browns. This diversity is almost certainly his greatest strength; paradoxically, it may also be his greatest weakness.
PART III--Chapter 3

NOTES


2 Letters, I, 97.

3 It is interesting that the editors of the GTS volume of selections offer as the basis for their rejection of this poem that it "never had the poet's imprimatur." (H.F. Brown, in Introduction, p. XXXIX) Surely this is in error, for the poem appeared in the Isle of Man Times on Dec. 15, 1894, presumably with Brown's full knowledge and approval.

4 The MS. bears date of July 16, 1875.


6 Written Oct. 5, 1868[67]. The poem appeared in Old John (1893); Radcliffe erroneously indicates that it was first printed in Collected Poems.

7 Anon., Athenaeum, CII (Sept. 16, 1893), 381

8 Dakyns, note to the poem in GTS, p. 277, reads in part: "For the imagery...see The Acts xxvii.14(A.V.); St. Matthew xiv. 23; St. John vi. 16. For Euroclydon...the R. V. has Euraqualoides. For Claudia...which has been corrupted by Italian mariners into Gozzo (Mod. Greek Gavdos)—the small island off Candia (Crete) S.W." According to Cubbon, p. 14, the poem first appeared unsigned in a monthly journal called Plain Talk, issued in Liverpool by the poet's brother, Hugh Stowell Brown, in December 1875. The MS. is dated June 15 of the same year.

9 The MS. is dated Aug. 13, 1868; apparently first printed in 1893.

10 Dakyns, GTS, p. 268. The earliest MS. is dated May 5, 1891.

11 Page 316.

12 Simpson, pp. 79-80. He cites Caine's Little Man Island, p. 38, as his source.

13 CHEL, XIII, 217.

14 Letters, I, 199.
Robert Farren, [pseud. Roibeard O'Farochain], in his *How to Enjoy Poetry* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1948), p. 43, gives some amusing directions on how the poem should be read. I regretfully pass over the controversy which once flared in the staid pages of the *Athenaeum* over the weighty question of whether Brown had been guilty of ornithological inaccuracy, and expressing grave suspicion that his "blackbird" was a common thrush, or, more probably, a missel-thrush. See F. W. Bourdillon, Nov. 17, 1900, p. 647; W. Warde Fowler, "Blackbird or Thrush?" Nov. 24, 1900, p. 685.
Chapter 4. Love and Society.

Under the above heading, I shall consider two small groups of poems: those which we may call love poems; those which treat of social relations and social problems. These seemingly disparate groups are closer than we might imagine. In the first place, Brown's love poems frequently have a way of going beyond a simple declaration of devotion. He speaks somewhere of love as "the keelson of creation." Love is spiritual. Love is the supreme reality. He never denies the vital significance of physical attraction, but at the same time he rejects the notion of physical love as an end in itself. This means that he treats conjugal love as a joyous participation in the divine plan of creation; conversely he treats illicit love as a moral problem, a desecration of an impulse which is spiritually beautiful. As an all-powerful spiritual force, love is the vital ingredient in all human relations, the most searching specific for the ills of society. There is more than a touch of the Platonic doctrine in his vision of love in all its earthly manifestations as a prelude and a preparation for man's love of his Creator, and as a basis for understanding and accepting His love for mankind. When we speak of Brown's "pantheism," we must remember always what his particular kind of pantheism was not pagan. Tom Baynes once remarked that loving beautiful things is like loving God that made them, and to Brown, believing implicitly in the immanence of God, a love of nature and natural beauties was simply a worship of the Divinity in His infinitude of forms.
Remembering the pervading influence of love in the narratives, we might have expected a larger number of love lyrics, but his concepts of love are influential in the nature poems, the religious lyrics, the verses dealing with social problems, and others. One of the simplest and most charming of the love poems is entitled "An Oxford Idyll," and it would seem to have some autobiographical basis. Sir Herbert Warren, in his contribution to the Memorial Volume, give us the background.

After he had left Clifton he appeared in Oxford; and came to see me and proposed that we should stroll to Addison's Walk. When we came to just where that walk begins, opposite the Holywell-Ford Mill, Brown stopped and looked at the mill for some time, and then told me that he had a special association with it dating from his undergraduate days. What it was he did not reveal. When, after his death, his poems were published and I came on the charming little piece headed "An Oxford Idyll" and subscribe 'Magdalen Walk,' I understood at once. The shy; struggling, studious, poetic servitor at Christ Church shortly to take his Double Fist had known and poetised like other his "Miller's Daughter." [Internal evidence] would make the date 1852-3. The poem itself, however, would appear to have been written on May the 24th, 1875, and prefaced by a note "All that I got at Oxford"!

The poem begins:

Ah little mill, you're rumbling still,
   Ah sunset flecked with gold!
Ah deepening tinge, ah purple fringe
   Of lilac as of old!
Ah hawthorne hedge, ah light-won pledge
   Of kisses warm and plenty,
When she was true, and twenty-two,
   And I was two-and twenty.

And it ends:

But there's a place you cannot trace,
   So spare the fond endeavour—
A cloudless sky, where Kate and I
   Are twenty-two for ever. (C.P., 75)

The lightning musicality of the iambics, alternately trimeter and
tetrameter, with the persistent internal rhyme, and the feminine ending of several even-numbered lines, give this poem the effect of singing itself, and refutes the charge that Brown could not be "sweetly musical" when he wanted to be. In stanza, in rhythm, and in content, the poem is strikingly similar to A. E. Housman's familiar "When I was one-and twenty" from A Shropshire Lad (1896). H. F. Brown sent the poet a copy of Housman's poems shortly after they appeared, and he was delighted with them, but makes no comment on the resemblance of this poem to his own production of twenty years before.

How closely the intimacies of love and religious thought were associated in Brown's mind is apparent in "Jessie":

When Jessie comes with her soft breast,
    And yields the golden keys,
Then is it as if God caressed
Twin babes upon his knees
    Twin babes that, each to other pressed,
Just feel the Father's arms, wherewith they both are blessed.
But when I think if we must part,
    And all this personal dream be fled—where God?
O, then my heart! O, then my useless heart!
Would God that thou wert dead—
A clod insensible to joys or ills—
A stone remote in some bleak gully of the hills! (C.P., 91-92)

When Jessie submits herself, and returns his caresses, it is as though God were caressing his children through the power of love. The six lines in which this rather startling simile appears are held together closely by rhyming four of them. The last six lines shows the poet anticipating a possible separation from his beloved, much as another poet was struck with sudden apprehension as he rode toward the cottage of his Lucy. The fervor of present joy is measured
by his wish that in the dreaded event of separation, his heart, thus rendered useless, might also be rendered insensible and immune to pain: "A stone remote in some bleak gully of the hills!"

"Veris et Favoni" is perhaps most interesting for its stanza pattern:

Sigh, Zephyr, sigh!
Give passion to the sky!
The tawny south
Has no such odorous mouth—
Sigh, Zephyr, sigh!  \( (C.P., 673) \)

This invocation to the breeze continues through four stanzas, in each of which some new directive is given, and in the final stanza, all are brought together:

Seek, Zephyr, seek!
The vermilion of my lady's cheek!
So seeking, slipping, suing, sighing, singing,
While old Time his flight is winging,
Tell her to be
Most kind to me. \( (C.P., 674) \)

Here is a courtly song by the Victorian clergyman which would not be out of place among the love ballads of the Cavalier poets. How different from another brief lyric, each quatrain of which ends with the plaintive inquiry, "Is it amavi or is it amo?"

How different also from the boldly original imagery of "When Love Meets Love," with its mingling of the physical and spiritual:

When love meets love, breast urged to breast,
God interposes,
An unacknowledged guest,
And leaves a little child among our roses. \( (C.P., 691) \)

A close parallel occurs in "Between Our Folding Lips":

Between our folding lips
God slips
An embryonic life, and goes;
And this becomes your rose.
We love, God makes: in our sweet mirth
God spies occasion for a birth.
Then is it His, or is it ours?
I know not—He is fond of flowers. (C.P., 691)

"A Morning Walk" gives no hint by its title of the mystical-visionary content. The poet prepares for a morning stroll, commanding his Sorrow to remain behind. But his personified grief accompanies him as "an aged man," heedless of nature's beauty, and carrying with him a sense of "charnal glooms and emptiness of death."

Then suddenly the cheerful song of a bird lifts the poet's spirit:

Jet after jet tumultuous music burst
Fount-like, and filled the expanding sphere;

and when the song was concluded, Sorrow had vanished:

Where he had been an awful glory burned.

It was as though the mouth of God had kissed
And purpled into amethyst
Wan lips, as though red-quickenning ichor rills
Had flushed his heart: 'twas he no more, no more!
'Twas she, my soul's evangelist,
My rose, my love, and lovelier than before,
Dew-nurtured on the far Celestial hills. (C.P., 713)

Aside from the familiar illustration of God's immanence, this poem is chiefly interesting for its treatment of his vision of a dead sweetheart. There is strong temptation to read autobiographical meanings into these lines, for we know that Brown loved his wife Amelia almost to the point of worship, and we have his own confession that she appeared to him in visions after her death. It is not surprising, therefore, that Selwyn Simpson considers the poem as being "probably the outcome of his grief" at losing her. This thoroughly reasonable supposition, unfortunately, is rendered un-
The sad protest of "Hotwells" has a firmer basis in reality. Hotwells was a squalid section of Bristol, not noted for its morality or sobriety, in which Brown once took clerical duty for a time. It is here that the "dull stony eyes" of the prostitute look into his. Beyond this, the poem is imaginative, for the speaker is stricken by a realization that this woman of the street is the blushing sweetheart of a former day:

A hollow thing carved rigid on the shell
Of her that was my love!

In "Lime Street," he treats the same subject with greater restraint, and with equal tact. As in the former poem, the locale is real, Lime Street being a Liverpool thoroughfare through which the poet walked when visiting his brother Hugh. Since this is our first opportunity to illustrate Brown's handling of the sonnet, I should like to preface it with his remarks on that form:

A shapely sonnet ought, I fancy, to pile up the octave as a stem, avoiding rhythmic changes; then the sestet should blossom out in rhyme like a rich corolla. I prefer the excess of rhyme in the flower part of your plant... In the form, I advocate restraint, chastity, conformity to the purest Italian models. It is a plant of Italian growth, and we Englishmen, so naturally disposed to be irregular, had best hold ourselves in. It is a question, essentially, and in every sense of measure. Let us be measured, especially within so small a plot of ground as the Sonnet. Elsewhere we can and do pan out enormously—plenty of verge and com-
The form is Italian, as all Brown's sonnets are; his rhyme pattern in the sestet varies—here it is cde dce. There is no serious fault to find, either with the meter or the rhyme. It is clear, coherent, in good taste—it would, in fact, be difficult to find a more eminently respectable treatment of prostitution, but it does not add up to a good sonnet. The first quatrain is very weak, in spite of its impeccable doctrine; "lovely as the dawn" in the first line, if not exactly original, is pleasant enough. The second quatrain is vastly better because less stilted and commonplace, and he is careful to observe a full step at the end of the octave. The sestet turns to the immediate situation, but has nothing very original to say about it, and with the final line, the expected summary or evaluation or resolution is replaced by a simple outcry of emotion, and the sonnet collapses into mediocrity. The impression produced is that of a poet who has searched in vain for the appropriate words, and who simply throws up his hands in despair and finishes in an outburst of helpless emotion. There is nothing inherently
wrong in saying "O God! the pain! the horror of it all!" but it is
the poet's function to arouse this feeling in the reader by his
interpretation of the experience, not to use it himself as a sub-
stitute for creative thought.

One of the most puzzling problems which the student of Brown
encounters is the poet's relations with, and attitude toward, soc-
iety as a whole. Here was an essentially lonely man who loved peo-
ple; here was a naturally gregarious man who found a large degree
of solitude and privacy essential to his inner well-being. De-
siring friendliness with all, he had few intimate friends, and
most of these never felt that they knew him completely. Brown
knew his own problem, and he has perhaps stated it better in the
poem called "Social Science" than anywhere else. There is more
than a little humor in it, more than a little satire, but above
all, there is penetrating self-analysis. In the early stanzas
he sings the praises of conformity, standardization, and mob
psychology:

O happy souls, that mingle with your kind,
That laugh with laughers, weep with weepers,
Whom use gregarious to your like can bind,
Who sow with sowers, reap with reapers!
To me it is not known,
The gentle art to moan
With moaners, wake with wakers, sleep with sleepers.

It must be good to think the common thought,
To learn with learners, teach with teachers;
To hold the adjusted soul till it is brought
To pray with prayers, preach with preachers.
But I can never catch
The dominant mode, nor match
The tone, and whine with whiners, screech with screechers.

In the three following stanzas he continues this satiric cata-
logue of social groupings, always emphasizing his own unwillingness or inability to join them. He finds some satisfaction in retaining his own integrity and individuality:

At any rate the struggle
My truer self to juggle,
And force my mind to fit
The standard all of wit
Shall never dwarf nor cramp me... 

But after his tirade, he confesses that this is not his present attitude: "Thus spake I once, with fierce self-gratulation." The pride and self-satisfaction of his independence is unable to make up for the loneliness and unhappiness of his isolation, and he longs for the handclasp of his fellow men:

Wherefore, albeit I know it is not great,
Mobbing with mobs, believing with believers,
Yet for the most it is a snugger state
To gain with gainers, grieve with grievers,
Than, desolate on a peak,
To what one's lonely beak,
And watch the beaver huddling with the beavers.

But though this boon denied, my soul, love thou
The lover, gibe not with the giber!

But I am proud thou dost retain
Some tinct of that imperial murex grain
No carrack ever bore to Thames or Tiber. (C.P., 734-35)

A more strongly autobiographical poem relating to another aspect of this problem is "Bradden Vicarage," which takes its title from the poet's earliest remembered home. Thirteen of the sixteen stanzas contain the musing phrase: "I wonder if..." The reminiscential element involves his conjectures as to whether in Man today "Some child is growing now, like me/ When I was child." He describes his early years in terms of a Wordsworth-like conception
of the healing power of nature: "care-pricked, yet healed the while/ With balm of rock and sea." Most of the poem is devoted to recalling the most lasting impressions of the Island. But perhaps of greater interest are the final stanzas in which he traces the Manxman's changing view of England. There is something of awe and humble admiration in his original impression of the English:

A higher type beyond his reach,
Imperial blood, by Heaven ordained with pen
And sword the populous world to teach...

Somewhat later in life (At a time corresponding to the Oxford period?), this reverential feeling gives way to a proud and independent suspicion and scorn, in which he

. . . suspects a braggart race,
Ignores phlegmatic claim
Of privileged assumption, holding base
Their technic skill and aim,
And all the pious fraud that binds their social frame.(C.P., 5)

But in the final stanza, looking back from his vantage point of experience, he rebukes this attitude and substitutes a larger view:

Ah! crude, undisciplined, when thou shalt know
What good is in this England, still of joys
The chiepest count it thou was nurtured so
That thou may'st keep the larger equipoise,
And stand outside these nations and their noise. (C.P., 5)

Acknowledging the good that is in England, he values most that part of his insular heritage which makes it possible for him to remain aloof from "these nations and their noise." Such a statement is easily misinterpreted to his disadvantage. Brown recognized that many of the problems and struggles which engaged men's minds and directed their actions were of transitory importance. Some part of his time, his energy, his intellect, must be reserved for
larger things. If Brown never "mobbed with mobs," after half a century of doubting and questioning he came to "believe with believers," and he had never ceased to love with lovers. The poet of the narratives is the gregarious man, sharing in the common life of his people; in the lyrics, we hear more frequently the voice of the uncommon man, "desolate on a peak," aspiring, lonely, proud.

PART III--Chapter 4

NOTES

1. Pages 105-6.

2 See Letters, II, 183.

3 An Appreciation, p. 50.

4 He participated in conducting the Clifton Mission in Bristol, and later took the evening service as voluntary curate of St. Barnabas. In a letter accompanying the poem, Brown said, "The lines were suggested by a woman I saw in the Hotwells this morning." See Norris, 131; Dakyns' note in GTS, p. 271.

5 Letters, II, 81-82.
Chapter 5. Literature and Art.

A small but significant group of lyrics are concerned with various aspects of the creative function of the artist, literary or otherwise. In these we find an exposition of principles and a reflection of attitudes which supplement the letters in helping us to understand how Brown thought and felt, not only with respect to art and literature in general, but also about his own practice. In "Poets and Poets," he distinguishes two major types of poet: the fishermen and the hunters. He clearly indicates that he does not consider technique to be the core of the matter. His symbolism centers on the "sea of life" into which the poet must cast his net or drop his line if he is to avoid shallowness and triviality:

He fishes in the night of deep sea pools:
For him the nets hang long and low,
Cork-buoyed and strong; the silver-gleaming schools
Come with the ebb and flow
Of universal tides, and all the channels glow.

He seldom handled symbolic imagery more effectively than he does here. It is consistent, accurate, and appropriate. The poet must get below the surface of life, must search the dark depths; his nets must be strong and firmly anchored if they are to withstand the surge of "universal tides" and hold the rich treasure which swarms into them. The matter gleaned here will "glow" with phosphorescence in the perpetual "night" of the great deeps. Another poet will drop his line among the less profound, but shifting and treacherous currents:

Or, holding with his hand the weighted line,
He sounds the languor of the neaps,
Or feels what current of the springing brine
The cord divergent sweeps,
The throb of what great heart bestirs the middle deeps.

Both of these successful fisher-poets, who deal in fundamental and
universal human passions and experiences, are contrasted with the
hunter-poet who remains on dry land and has little to show for his
efforts:

Thou also weavest meshes, fine and thin,
And leaguer'st all the forest ways;
But of that sea and the great heart therein
Thou knowest nought: whole days
Thou toil'st, and hast thy end—good store of pies and jays. (C.P., 38)

Was Brown evaluating his own poetic accomplishment in this final
stanza? We might be tempted to think of it as the product of a
dark hour of discouragement and doubt were we not aware that it was
written at Clifton in the spring of 1869, with the great bulk of
his poetry yet to be written.

Brown often stressed the necessity for a writer to have "illu­
sions." He once advised a would-be author: "To imagine is your
function. . . . Reject the bribe of the actual, still more the ob­
viousness of the factual, and dig deep." He did not mean that either
fact or actuality was to be ignored. He did mean that the Ideal
is at least as vital and essential as the actual; that the immater­
ial has as great demands upon us as the material. The "facts"
may be obvious, but their meaning is complex and hidden; record­
ing the obvious externals is not the poet's function. The "Bribe
of the actual" refers to the implication that the actual is all—an
implication he firmly rejected. To approach truth, the poet must
dig down to the inner reality, which he will discover to be spiri-
tual.

For a clearly self-directed examination of the poet at work, we must turn to a poem of some six months earlier, entitled "Opi-

dex." Behind a thin veil of allegory, he shows the poet ("I") being interrupted in his labors by one who callenges his credent-

As I was carving images from clouds, 
And tinting them with soft ethereal dyes 
Pressed from the pulp of dreams, one comes, and cries: 
"Forbear!" and all my heaven with gloom unshrouds.

"Forbear! Thou hast no tools wherewith to essay 
The delicate waves of that elusive grain: 
Wouldst have due recompense of vulgar pain? 
The potter's wheel for thee, and some coarse clay!

"So work, if work thou must, O humbly skilled! 
Thou hast not known the Master; in thy soul 
His spirit moves not with a sweet control; 
Thou art outside, and art not of the guild."

The poet turns angrily from his challenger and appeals directly to God, who sustains the challenger: "He spake the truth." Never-

theless, the poet is informed that "the springs are set/ That move thy life," and may not be changed nor obstructed, "else, living, thou wert dead."

"This is thy life: indulge its natural flow, 
And carve these forms. They may yet find a place 
On shelves for them reserved. In any case, 
I bid thee carve them, knowing what I know." (C.P., 88-89)

The description of his work given in the first stanza may not seem to fit any large portion of the poems we have thus far examined.

It is a delicate and suggestive bit of description—images carved
from clouds, tinted with dyes "pressed from the pulp of dreams"—
and I take it to mean poetry which is subtly imaginative, mystical,
visionary, perhaps even metaphysical or transcendental. He is
directed to devote his humble skill, his coarse tools, to some simple,
homely, less demanding material better suited to his limitations.
If we were to be somewhat more precise than the evidence of the
poem strictly sanctions, we might interpret the advice of his critic
as a recommendation to restrict his poetic activities to the writ­
ing of humorous verses and Po'c's'le Yarns, and leave the lyric
to those better qualified. It is interesting that one of the cri­
tics principal objections is that the poet is "not of the guild."
The "guild" in question would seem to be those who have unreserved­ly
and unquestioningly accepted the tenets of the Christian reli­
gion, and whose inner being functions in complete harmony with the
will of God; it is equally interesting that he does not deny being
an "outsider" in this special sense, but puts his reliance in
love. When we recall that his own work is described as "carving
images," the reference to the critic as an "iconoclast," an image­
breaker, is seen to have multiple connotations. Finally, he notes
that under heavenly sanction he continues this work which "yet may
find a place." In later years, he felt even more confident in
the eventual acceptance of his work.

In several short poems, he gave expression to some of his liter­
ary enthusiasms, as in "A Wish":

Of two things one: with Chaucer let me ride,
And hear the Pilgrims' tales; or, that denied,
Let me with Petrarch in a dew-sprent grove
Ring endless changes on the bells of love. (C.P., 92)

Or in "Dante and Ariosto":

If Danče breathes on me his awful breath,
I rise and go; but I am sad as death—
I go; but, turning, who is that I see?
I whisper; "Ariosto, wait for me!" (C.P., 92)

To Boccaccio, who "laughed all laughs that are," he appropriately inscribes a fine Italian sonnet in which he links the robust author of The Decameron with two other favorites, Lucretius and Thucydides.

Those who have read the light-hearted description of a Bach fugue in "Tommy Big-Eyes" will enjoy the quite different musical appreciation of Bach's "Love Melody," (or, as Brown called it, the miraculous Haupt"—No. 27, volume 5, Organ Works) written as he listened to his friend E. M. Oakeley's rendition. It is perhaps preferable to identify this poem by its first line, "Chance-child of some lone sorrow on the hills," rather than by its title of "To E.M.O." because Brown has a short humorous poem which bears the same title. Some of his own songs are rather charming in their simplicity, typified by these two quatrains:

"Song"

Look at me, sun, ere thou set
In the far sea;
From the gold and the rose and the jet
Look full at me!

Leave on my brow a trace
Of tenderest light;
Kiss me upon the face,
Kiss for tonight. (C.P., 69)

In "Carol," he employs a formally archaic diction in his account
of the visit of the three kings of the Orient to Bethlehem. Each stanza ends with the refrain:

"Oh Star," they cried, "by all confest
Withouten dreed, the loveliest!" (C.P., 69)

The archaic or Biblical diction which now and again strikes us as affected, is here used to create and sustain the atmosphere of the piece, and contributes to the production of a very satisfactory carol. Another song, "Weary wind of the West," has been set to music.

In an 1889 letter to J. R. Mozley, Brown provides us with a glimpse of the direction of his curiosity as the classical scholar looked at the Greeks. "I want to know," he said, "what the Greek religion did for a man in the exigencies of life and death. . . . You know my conviction that Greek life was not so far removed from our life, that all human life is homogeneous, and that the Einkleidung is of much the same texture, however the color and other accidents may differ. A dear, good old Greek dying, 'In sure and certain hope' of something; I believe in that Greek profoundly."

With such an interest, it is natural that he should have contrasted the spiritual contributions of the great systems which Matthew Arnold called "Hebraism and Hellenism." Brown called his poetic study "Israel and Hellas." As a man who read the classics as naturally as we read the daily papers, and who thought of their authors as old friends, who wrote long scholarly articles on "Hebrews" and "Hoses" and "Canticles" for a Dictionary of the Bible, Brown was well qualified to undertake a comparison of the two civilizations.
He begins by wondering whether our view of the great Greeks has not been oversimplified and distorted. Were their thoughts always great thoughts? Were they consistently as wise, as high-strung, as unwavering in their devotion to a single aim as "the sedulous scribe" has presented them?

Did no kind god distil a wholesome ease?
Laughed no fair child for good Herodotus?
Looked there no maiden of the midland seas
Into thy clear gray eyes, Thucydides?

One life, one work—was this to them the all—
God's purpose marked, and followed fair and true?
Or were they slaves like us, whom doubts enthrall—
A hesitant, futile crew,
Who knows not what our Lord would have us do? (C.P., 729)

The unfavorable comment on the contemporary scene of confusion and doubt reflects a common attitude of the time, and may be thought of as a simple statement of fact. But in another stanza, there is sharp and unmistakable satire:

Or were they happier, breathing social free,
No smug respectability to pat
And soothe with pledges of equality,
Ironical, whereat
The goodman glows through all his realms of fat?
(C.P., 730)

He then asks whether it was possible for them to hold an "elastic" creed, "And let sweet fables droop in flexile fold" about their bare shoulders without constriction or restraint—"jewel-clasped with fancies rare?" After this series of seemingly rhetorical questions concerning the welfare and happiness of the Greeks, we get in the ninth stanza his first mention of Israel:

For not as yet intense across the sea
Came the swart Hebrew with a fiery haste;
In long brown arms entwined Euphrosyne,
And round her snowy waist
Fast bound the Nessus-robe, that may not be displaced.
A fiery zeal, intensity, a complete lack of sympathy with "elastic" creeds, with fables and with fancies—this was the truth about Israel, but it was not the whole truth. She might bind the Graces in the fatal robe that signified misfortune, but she had something of greater value to offer the world:

Through purple partings of her golden door
Came gleams upon the wave,
Long shafts that search the souls of men who crave;

And probings of the heart, and spirit-balm,
And to deep questionings the deep replies
That echo in the everlasting calm—
All this from forth those skies,
Beside Gehenna fire and worm that never dies. (C.P., 730)

In summarizing, he examines the contrast, not primarily between Israel and Hellas, but between the Greeks and ourselves, as the heirs of both, but under the special domination of Hebraism:

Yet, if the Greek went straighter to his aim,
If, knowing wholly what he meant to do,
He did it, given circumstance the same,
Or near the same, then must I hold it true
That from his different creed the vantage came,
Who, seizing one world where we balance two,
From its great secular heart the readier current drew. (C.P., 730)

We cannot ignore the implied half-doubt that Hellas was always consistent in aim and action, a doubt expressed by the "I sometimes wonder" of the first stanza and the "if" of the last. Aside from this, the contrast between Israel and Hellas is essentially similar in its conclusions to that of Matthew Arnold. If the Greeks "saw life steadily, and saw it whole," as Arnold would have it, then Brown would agree that they had a valuable advantage. He would also have agreed with Arnold's phrase in "Obermann" which points the contrast with the present: "The hopeless tangle of our age." If the Greek's view of life
was clearer than ours, it was because his creed made it possible for
him to seize "one world where we balance two." This is Brown's ver-
sion of Arnold's famous lines in "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse":

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.

A careful side by side comparison of Arnold and Brown would, I am cer-
tain, disclose marked parallels of mood, of opinion, and even of ex-
pression. This is not to imply any "borrowing," but merely to recog-
nize that the two Victorians and classicists held many views in
common. "Mat," as Brown called him, described with considerable
accuracy the conflicting impulses of the Manx poet when he wrote in
"Obermann"

Ah! Two desires toss about
The poet's feverish blood.
One drives him to the world without,
The one to solitude.

"Israel and Hellas" must be considered a successful poetic accomp-
lishment. In the profundity of its theme, the vigor of its pictor-
ial imagery, the technical proficiency of its stanzaic pattern, the
striking diction, this poem deserves to rank among his best.

The final poem to be considered in this group is also by far
the longest. Brown obviously had trouble in deciding upon a suitable
title. Cubbon refers to the poem by its first line—"I once loved
Nature." A photostatic copy of the MS. in my possession has the title
"Nature and Human Nature" crossed out, and "Development" substituted.
The final choice, in the Old John volume of 1893, was "Nature and Art,"
and this title was retained in Collected Poems. Part I, consisting
of nineteen stanzas in iambics, presents a logical and coherent re-
view of his gradual cooling toward Nature. He begins:
I once loved Nature so that man was nought,
And nought the works of man:

He suspects that this may have resulted accidentally from the circumstances of his early environment. In any case, nature became his first love. He never questioned whether her spirit was "homogeneous" with his own, but accepted her simply as a soothing influence and a guide, while he revelled in the lyric exuberance and wholehearted abandonment of a mood guided solely by instinct. Now he sees that it is not by such uncontrolled outpourings of an "indiscriminate mind" exulting in "exquisite solitude" and "nobly prone to err" that lasting art is produced:

Not thus, but hesitant long,
That sculptor won the marble to be kind;
Thus rather, right or wrong
Untaught, Ixion strong
Held Nephele in arms a god might not unbind.

His early abandonment and inexperienced devotion to nature is now modified by the complex influences and demands and pressures of social contact, and he now sets forth the reasons for his diminished trust. Nature is unmoved by the fate of humanity, is devoid of feeling: "the hush/ Is thine of ordered change, fixed and emotionless." She can apprehend only the simplest needs of man, because her knowledge is limited to deeds "Where link to link succeeds, / And no irrational gaps the golden sequence rend." Man's deepest problems are not thus regularly ordered and logical. Nature has no skill to discern the motivation of his diverse and errant ways. Moreover, the accumulation of the thoughts and actions and aspirations of men "Have made another light beneath the sun,/ Another darkness shed." The notes of nature are primal, but fixed in pitch and range. She will not recognize how
complex the game of life has become since man's life began on earth:
"We are no babes astride upon Eve's awful thighs." Thus he concludes in the final stanza of this first section that because of these shortcomings in nature, he returns after many years to look once more upon the face of this "foster-sister," only to find that "Her eyes were meaningless" and the intimacy of their relationship departed.

Having states the case for the devil's advocate, Brown turns enthusiastically to the defense of nature, holding up these various charges to scorn and presenting an impassioned rebuttal. The proposition that life is a "complex game," produces an explosion of purple rhetoric in lieu of argument:

What fell Locusta stewed
That damned fucus? Spread'st thou
The stuff upon thee? wed'st thou
That specious harlotry from Hell's black bosom spewed?

He derides the previous speaker's implication that his own "Quintessenced self" is above nature. As for the notion that our requirements are different in kind and degree from those of original man,

Eve, Adam! Yes, and all that Eden sap--
Is it impossible?
'Twould do thee good to lie in her great lap,
To have thy utmost will,
To fill thy utmost fill,
Creamed from the copious duct of that primeval sap.

The complaint that nature's music is monotonous reveals a deficiency in the hearer; his ear is deaf to her subtle harmonies and "ineffable spirit-tunes." After expounding at some length upon the multitude and variety of her sounds, he attacks again with heavy sarcasm:

But thou'rt a being manifold—alack!
And tak'st the simple sense
Into thy crucible, and giv'st it back
Brain-filtered and intense,
And Nature is too dense,
Forsooth! to hit thy scope, and imitate the knack!

Nay, what is this thou of thyself hast made?
Is this development?

It is not essential development, he avers, but the accidental result of social contact. Despite some misgivings, "I must know my brother" and "take my commons with the mess," but this is accident, casual relation. It is the main purport of our earthly life that we should "list/
To Nature's voice alone" and "permeate/ One soul with fullest freight/
Of constant natural forms, not factual complication." This does not mean that our contact with the press and crowd of "bipes implume" can or should be avoided:

Of course, the absolutest slave that crawls
Is social: so am I:
I have a place, I live within four walls —
Even horse to horse will try
Some manner of reply,
And hear his neighbour munch, and whinny o'er the stalls.

Even so, our interest and effort must not be given wholly to the transitory, the inconstant, the superficial aspects of social life:

Else were our life both frivolous and final,
A mere skiomachy,
Not succulent of growth, not officinal
To what shall after be,
But Fortune's devilry
Of Harlequin with smirk theatro-columbinal—

Much of our sophistication is but a "base veneer," and he who fails to catch the fundamental messages of nature is "fact-poisoned" and blurs her great thoughts "With mediate glare of self."

Having stated these two opposing positions by the fair method of adopting in turn the attitudes and arguments of each, Brown concludes by stating his own position:
Both wrong, both right. 'Tis God appoints our state—
Nature and Art are one—
True art, true nature, never separate
In things beneath the sun.
So is His pleasure done,
Who moulds the wills of men, and grasps the bars of fate.

It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that Brown's theories, of both
nature and art, were influenced by, and in a sense a part of, his
religious faith. The will of man, the artistic perceptions and ex-
pressions of man, are as much an expression of Divine Intelligence as
are the laws of nature. Nature, properly understood, is the great
source and inspiration of art; art, properly understood, is the inter-
preter and reflection of nature and human nature. Beauty, whether
natural or man-made, is the gift of God. Such concepts lie at the
base of all his criticism.

NOTES

1 See Oakeley's reminiscences of Brown in Letters, I, 46-47; re-
printed with slight variations in Memorial Volume, pp. 96-97.
2 Letters, I, 135.
3 For further comment, see Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Romantic
Tradition, p. 462; Wilson in London Times, May 5, 1930, p.16a; William
Morton Payne, "Some Recent Books of Poetry," The Dial (Chicago), XV(July
16, 1893),41; Dakyns, GTS, p. 281.
4 Dakyns' note in GTS, pp. 278-30 on this allusion: "See Pind. Pyth. ii.
36 ff. . . 'For glorying by dear deceit beguiled,
A phantom—forged of the mist
In image of the solemn sovereign child
Of Kronos old—he clasped to him and kissed
The dreadful lovely lips that Jove's own hand had curved
Like to hers.' W.R.Paton's rendering.
And see for a humorous treatment of the story, Lucian, Deor. Dial. vi."
Dakyns also gives variant MS. readings for several lines and phrases.
Chapter 6. Elegy and Epitaph.

It is not surprising that a man who confessed to being "a born sobber," who felt deeply, and gave free rein to his feelings in the company of close and understanding friends, should have turned naturally to elegiac verse. Brown was a passionate man, and under the impact of personal loss his self-discipline gave way and he poured out the bitterness of his anguish in verse. Easily moved by even the temporary misfortunes and sorrows of those whom he loved, he was prostrated by the awful reality of death. I do not believe it is possible to read his elegiac verse with sympathetic understanding without knowing something of his attitude toward death and immortality. His personal elegies are not the artificial tears of the professional mourner, nor the pretty mechanical conceits of the pastoral elegist, but the intimate and genuine outcries of a heartbroken man. We need not argue the involved question of whether the deepest grief, the extremes of bereavement, can or should be deliberately committed to verse. It will be more useful and relevant to look briefly at some statements from Brown's letters which reveal the state of mind and feeling behind these poems.

One of Brown's friends has made the statement that until he was fifty years of age, the poet had no true and certain faith. I have little doubt that this is true, and would add that for a consider-ably longer period he had moments when fear and doubt were banished only after a struggle. We can see the result of this perplexity in the face of death in a letter to his sister Margaret in 1878. He relates how one of the boys at the college has just died:
I tell you plainly, Margaret, I don't know what to do or think. These things will not lose their terror for me; and in the presence of them my soul is a chaos. It is not that I fear; it is merely that I am dead, and inconceivably miserable. ... I can organize no defence; the next shot will find me just the same; a poor battered target on Death's Rifle Range—and oh that awful marker who crawls from his hut and squints at me and scores!

This is the way I go on from year to year. I know these things must come at all but regular intervals, and during these intervals I am fain to get what happiness I can. But how undertain it all is! 1

One year later, in a letter of condolence he felt moved to write to a lady personally unknown to him, he says:

... how hard it is to say anything that will comfort you! I can only stand by your side, and speechlessly pray for you, and sympathize with you. It is dark indeed! oh for light! for the light. Dear friend, how I have prayed for this in my own case. 2

Death came close to him many times in the course of his life, as one after another his parents and brothers passed away. But the first loss in his immediate family was the death of his seven year old son Braddan in April, 1876. We are told that he was a healthy boy of exceptional promise, but he contracted fever and died in hospital shortly after Brown had carried him there to avoid any risk of contagion for the other boys in the house. The father's grief was insconsolable. Two years later he wrote the "Clevedon Verses" which are dominated by his unabated sorrow. In the second of these verses, which takes its name from his six year old daughter Dora, he recalls a true incident in which the little girl knelt and laid her ear against the turf of her brother's grave: "To hark if still in that dark place he played." When she heard nothing—"Death's silence was profound"—the child burst into tears. That Brown was not yet prepared to accept the loss is patent in his bitter remark:

If this is as it ought to be,
My God, I leave it unto Thee.
In "Secuturus" (Clevedon III) he recalls a nightly vision:

His little coffin grows upon mine eye,
And I would gladly die.

In neither of these poems is his sorrow metamorphosed into poetry, but in "Cui Bono?" the direct and simple prose statement of actuality is replaced by figurative language which, by virtue of the magic of poetry, conveys a more lasting impression of reality:

What comes
Of all my grief? The Arabian grove
Is cut that costly gums
May float into the nostrils of great Jove.
My heart resembles more a desert land:
Why cuts it cuts but rock, or digs the sapless sand. (C.P., 660)

At Clevedon is the family church of the Hallam family, and it is in contemplation of the church, with its pastoral surroundings, that Brown is inspired to write the sonnet entitled "Hallam's Church, Clevedon," No. 1 of "Clevedon Verses." In the sestet of this sonnet, his mind turns to Tennyson's famed elegy:

Blest mourner, in whose soul the grief grew song,
Not now, methinks, awakes the slumbering pain,
While Joy, with busy fingers, weaves the woof
Of Spring. But when the Winter nights are long,
Thy spirit comes with sobbing of the rain,
And spreads itself, and moans upon the roof. (C.P., 659)

Also related to the eelogiac mood is the final section of "Lynton Verses" subtitled "Symphony." Here, in an only partially successful attempt to reproduce poetically the movements of music which reminds us of similar (but more extensive) attempts by Sidney Lanier, Brown presents a group of related poems with accompanying musical directions. The "symphony" begins with an Adagio—"We saw her die, and she is dead"—followed by an Andante con moto, a brisk Scherzo, a charming Trio, and a summarizing Finale.
In April, 1879, Brown went again to Llanvairvechan, in North Wales, where Braddan had accompanied him on holiday four years earlier. Out of the poignant memories evoked by this pilgrimage came "Aber Stations," his most personal and best-known elegy. He enclosed this note to a friend with a copy of the poem dated May 11, 1879: "I send you this poem. You will readily see how it is indeed 'pars mei.' I cannot doubt but that it will be, in almost as close and immediate a sense, 'pars tui.' The poem falls into seven major divisions, each of which represents a station of the Cross; they are labelled Statio Prima, Statio Secunda, and so on to Statio Septima. The first section, irregular in meter, line length, and rhyme, is essentially an expository answer to the question, "Why do I make so much of Aber Fall?" We can perhaps best preview the incidents referred to in the poem, and summarize the background for it by quoting from another Brown letter:

Aber is a station on the Chester and Holyhead line, just beyond Llanvairvechan. A stream issues from a mountain valley close by the station, passing under the railway. You follow this stream about three quarters of a mile, and come upon a waterfall. This is my waterfall. The cliffs are high and steep, great mountain buttresses.

The humble basis of facts was just as you have it in the poem. Braddan, the third of my four boys, was quite the little enthusiast to fasten with avidity upon the kind of reputation that had grown up around his father in the Isle of Man as crag and mountain climber. So one day, at the foot of Aber Fall, the moment he arrived he set his little sturdy limbs against a wholly impossible monster of a rock, and seemed to take it quite for granted that it would yield to him without an effort.

No lamb lay crushed that time. But when Braddan died, I went to Llanvairvechan in the spring of 1877. The Fall... was then a heavenly solitude. I was absolutely alone; the lamb was dead upon the cruel stones: the shepherd called his dog. The "Stations" are the "Stations of the Cross," the "fittes" or throbs of a great anguish. My interlocutor was my other self, always ready to take up the cudgels for conventional pain-killers.
I think I killed him or in some dim way he disappeared...

In Static Secunda, the poet retraces the way to Aber Fall which he and his son had traversed together. A blackbird sang ecstatically in the Spring sunshine:

He is so absolutely glad,
I fear he will go mad.

Against this musical background, Brown suddenly realizes that "this very grit/ I crush beneath my boot" was trodden by Braddon's tiny foot. "What is it now?" he asks;

...a fascicle
Of crumbling bones
Jammed in with earth and stones.
You say that this is old,
A tale twice-told—
Say what you will:
Old, new, I swear
That it is horrible—
Horrible blackbird, howse'rr
The Spring rejoice you with its budding bloom—(C.P., 703)

In Static Tertia, the sudden dart of a swallow across the stream sends a shiver to his heart, for at that instant "I felt as if a soft hand slip/ Its fingers into mine." But however these first three sections may convey the sincerity of his grief, they can hardly be called effective poetry. Not until the fourth "Station" does he find an appropriate vehicle for the emotion: it takes the form of a symbolic vision, and occurs in the midst of his reply to the purveyor of "conventional pain-killers," who has cautioned that the soul troubled by earthly sorrow must look beyond the present and the individual event—"The whole is one great scheme/ Of compensation."

I saw Lord Love upon his galley pass
Westward from Cyprus;

So begins the vision. It continues with a description of how Love (i.e., God) as the boatswain stood in the stern, chanting to give the stroke to the rowers:

...but, ever and anon,
As worked upon
By some familiar Fury, grasping a scourge (An amethyst
Fastened it to his wrist. . . Love's wrist!)
He ran along the trenstra,* and did urge (Benches on which the rowers sat)
The rowers, and striped
Their backs with blood; whereat they leapt
Like maddened hounds, and swept
The sea until it hissed.
Then I:
"Lord Love, what means this cruelty?"
But he to me
Deign'd no reply:
Only I saw his face was wet with tears,
And he did look "beyond, and yet beyond."
And those men, fond
And fatuous, never turned
Their eyes from his, but yearned
With an insensate yearning, having confidence
That so it must be; but on what pretence
I know not—Ah, most cruel lord!
Ah, knotted cord!
Dull flash
Of livid tissues! flash
Of pārs that smote the water to a hum. . . (C.P., 706)

At Statio Quânta, the episode begins with a shepherd calling his dog, and as the sound echoes from the mountain wall, his "other self" proposes the argument that "As man behaves, So God apportions. . . ."

This is rejected as not touching the central point, lacking the reality of personal acquaintance:

Sir, know you Death? Permit me introduce. . .
... . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
You have but scant respect
For Death. Why, sir, he made a feint
That very minute at you—quaint!
The way he grins and skips—
Whips! whips!  
Down! down! good dog! good Death!  
To heel, you rogue!  

The sixth station is Aber Falls itself, and in this longest of the interludes Brown stands before the cliff his son had attempted to climb and gives way to a paroxysm of despair and longing for converse with the departed. He feels that it might be possible to re-establish contact, for surely "The barrier's but a film"; but we have lost the secret. We are "cumbered with our egotisms," and poetry is of doubtful effectiveness:

A thousand prisms,  
Hung round our souls, refract the single ray,  
That else would show us instantly the way.  
So even now, when my sad heart aspires  
To height of paramount desires,  
These verses mock it  
With their rhyme-jangles, frustrate as a rocket  
That mounts, and breaks, and falls in coloured fires.  
A curse  
Upon the impotent verse!  
Yet, no!  
Not so—  
It may be that in those  
The soul shall yet win something more than ease;  
For song is of the essence, and who sings  
Touches the central springs—  
Ah, vain imaginings!  
Let be! let be!  

In the final section, the lamb which he has seen high upon the crags in the preceding stanzas is found dead at the foot of the cliff where he has fallen. This lamb, whose youth and innocence are intended to parallel Braddan's, he now sees in vision as led by some celestial stream, with his son as the shepherd boy—a notion suggested to him by his recollection of Murillo's painting of John the Baptist and the lamb. In this parable he finds some comfort, and in the end resigns himself to God's will:
It gives me strength to climb the hill,  
And humbly so return—
God bless the merry burn!  
I have no will
But Thine, O God! I know that Thou art true—(C.P., 712)

It would be incorrect to assume from these closing lines that his resignation is the result of a complete and settled certainty of immortality, or that he has found lasting reprieve from grief. In the autumn of 1880, more than a year after these lines were written, he confided in a letter to J.R. Mozley:

To say I recognize the wisdom of God, and His goodness in all, is to say what may be said, but it seems useless to say it. I simply know nothing: I submit, I acquiesce even; but that is all. That we cannot have pleasure without pain, for instance, is, in a rueful sort of way, true enough; but is it not an unhappy arrangement? And is it to go on after death? Or is that supreme pain to be final. . . but I don't mean these for arguments—no—no. I lie down on my child's grave and fill my mouth with the clay, and say nothing. . . . He is gone: I have no certain ground whatever for expecting that that relation can be renewed.6

The misery of these years of doubt are to be set beside the comparative peace of later periods of his life, after he had achieved an unshakable faith. The death of his wife Amelia in 1888 would have been an even more crushing blow than it was, had he not been able then to say "One thing emerges—my absolute belief in immortality..." 7

Death is the key to another room, and it is the very next room"; or again, "...why this sinking of the heart, this fainting, sorrowing of the spirit? There is no separation: life is continuous." 8

Many writers have praised his accomplishment in "Aber Stations." Of these we will recall only William Canton's verdict that the poem "needs only to be known to make his name dear throughout the length and breadth of England. No one who has experienced sorrow and loss can read 'Aber Stations' without feeling a knot in his throat and the tears
on his cheeks; to most it will bring a message of solace and recon-
cilement." The poem is, in some degree at least, all of the things
these men have said it was, but I am forced unwillingly to conclude:
that with the exception of Static Quarta, and scattered lines else­
where, its interest is primarily biographical rather than literary.
It is more true of this poem than of his other sequences that no
single section can stand alone; passages pulled out of context sudden­
ly lose a significant portion of their meaning and vigor. As the ex­
pression of one of the great emotional crises of Brown's life, as a
reflection of the disordered and capricious state of his feelings, his
sudden flights of fancy, his visionary tendency, the sequence has
merit. But artistically, he is faced with the problem of reflecting
incoherent grief, and remaining coherent; of relating broken and il­
logical speech understandably; of conveying the sudden stops and shifts
and turns which beset the troubled mind without losing his reader. He
must make an extremely personal experience interesting and meaningful
to others. He must embody this in a verse form and meter in keeping
with the content, and pleasurable in itself. He must do these things,
that is, if the poem is intended primarily as a contribution to lit­
erature, and not as a kind of emotional therapy designed to provide
an outlet for his grief and alleviate his suffering. It is my belief
that this latter function was uppermost in his mind. The poem is in
part obscure because of missing organizational links, and partly be­
cause we are sometimes led to expect logical connections which do not
exist. In Static Quinta, for example, the parallel to be drawn between
the shepherd's dog and death is by no means clear. At many points
the emotion, unquestionably genuine, is too direct, too baldly stated. There was sufficient emotional force here to have vitalized a more powerful poem, had not too much of it been dissipated in exposition or in outbursts which have not been cut and polished to a perfect brilliance. A diamond in the rough it may be; it is not a finished gem.

Some of Brown's memorial verses to friends and acquaintances show skillful handling of a wide variety of stanzic forms and meters. One of the most unusual is his "In Memoriam: Paul Bridson," with its regularly diminishing lines:

O countrymen, believe me! here is laid
A Manxman's heart the simplest and the truest:
O Spring, when thou renewest
Thy sunny hours
Bring flowers--
Flowers!
And bring them of thy sweetest
And bring them of thy meetest
And, till God's trumpet wake him,
Take him, O Braddan, take him!       (C.P., 84)

Perhaps because of his own experience, the death of children often moved him to write brief elegies or epitaphs, nearly all of them undistinguished. A typical example is "M.T.W.," a well-constructed but uninspired Italian sonnet commemorating the death of Maurice Temple Wilson, son of the Principal of Clifton College, who died in 1886 at the age of ten. "In Memoriam: John Macmeikin" is another Italian sonnet, addressed to a Castletown banker with whom Brown had corresponded regarding Chaise a Killey and Catherine Kinrade. The poem praises the deceased as an "Excellent Manxman," although he was not a native-born Islander, and concludes:

Friend of all things weak,
Go down to that sweet soil you held so dear!
Go up to God, and joys unspeakable!

The reader can hardly avoid noting the sharp contrast between the sure and certain faith of nearly all these memorial verses, and the bitter uncertainties of "Aber Stations" and "Clevedon Verses."

"To W.E.Henley" was inspired by the death of Henley's little girl. The octave of this memorial sonnet is well done, and prepares the way for these lines:

God opes a perspective to see
The chambers of the ivory palaces.
And who is that within its encircling rose?
Is it my Love that fondles some one? Yes!
Some one! O, yes! Your darling? Is it she? (C.P., 690)

Brown purports to see in the sunset glow a vision of his deceased wife fondling the baby daughter of his friend. The poetic concept is better than the structurally awkward lines in which it is set.

To the poem written by Brown as a setting for the story of a dying child, his editors have given the title "Ex Ore Infantis." He addressed the lines to his friend and informant, a Miss Graves of Peel, with the remark that he "liked setting these little jewels." Remembering another remark, that he had at times constructed a system "of little more than bosh to enshrine a locution," I would take this poem as a case in point, except that I cannot find the locution.

Taken as a group, these memorial verses are unlikely to win any new devotees for Brown. The poems which derive from his personal bereavement do not seem so impressive to strangers as they did to his friends. Their form is too erratic and their brilliances separated by too many pedestrian passages to sustain for them a very high place. The memorial sonnets, particularly, contain the usual sentiments, the
appropriate condolences. Their form can best be described as "adequate." There is nothing very remarkable about them; they are neither very good nor very bad. In the worst of the lot, there is an unfortunate tendency to gush. In short, with the exception of some fine lines in "Aber Stations" and "Clevedon Verses," there is nothing here that any third-rate dabbler in verses could not have produced by the ream—except that the sentiment back of them is genuine—a fact which unfortunately does not always succeed in making itself apparent through the undistinguished manner of presentation.

NOTES

1 Memorial Volume, p. 182.
2 Letters, I, 86-87.
3 Brown had revisited the spot in the spring of 1877, one year after Bradden's death.
4 Dakyns, GTS, p. 277.
6 Letters, I, 89-90.
7 I, 129.
8 I, 132-33. This and the letter above are the fullest and best statements of his settled views on immortality. See also I, 100.
9 Canton, in Good Words, p. 191. See also Radcliffe, Memorial Volume, p. 222.
10 Letters, II, 74.
Despite Brown's unwillingness to devote himself to the social and political problems in which his contemporaries were embroiled, he was still a man of his period. As a scholar, an intellectual, an individualist, it would have been strange indeed had he remained untouched by the intellectual doubts and religious questionings of his time. The large number of lyrics treating of philosophical and religious subjects clearly demonstrates that in this area the unrest of these years touched him most deeply.

His inclination toward pantheism and natural mysticism stemmed from his conception of a God who was not static, but progressive and subject to change and growth; not necessarily omniscient and omnipotent, but undeniably omnipresent. It seems certain that he came into closer contact with this immanent Presence, understood it better, in the manifestations of nature than in the confines of the Church. In the sea, in the fields, in the streams, there was a God more approachable, more real, than he could find in creeds and doctrines. Filial ties bound him to at least a tacit approval of the Anglican Church, but he showed little concern for theological systems and took little part in doctrinal or denominational disputes. His disputes went directly to the source. His love of Nature did not prevent his asking questions. If no answer was forthcoming, he did not hesitate to attack; he often cries out against the apathy and apparent cruelty of Nature, and many of the poems of inquiry are bristling with reproach. Not until late in life did he surrender himself wholly to the traditional faith, and even then he reserved the right of free inquiry and
individual decision. I do not wish to imply that he was a rebel, or militantly antagonistic toward orthodoxy, or derisive of those who accepted the traditional faith unhesitatingly. It was simply that he must go his own way, find his own answers, resolve his own doubts. And if in the end he discards revolt in favor of a patience and a quiet faith which he had slowly and painfully evolved, and accepts a position closely approximating that of traditional, orthodox Christianity, it is not because of any capitulation to social pressures, nor through any surrender of principles or integrity, but because he has fought through to a hardly-won faith which is his own, and which parallels the "received" faith almost by accident.

The lyrics in which he examines these spiritual, religious, philosophical, metaphysical, mystical problems are, to my mind, his very finest work, with the possible exception of "Roman Women." We may recognize a number of sub-classifications within the larger group: poems in which he looks closely at death; poems dealing with the future life, with immortality, with his visions of heaven; poems concerned with the nature and qualities and manifestations of God; poems of spiritual struggle, of revolt versus faith, of questionings, of the nature of man and his relation to his Creator; poems setting forth general ethical, moral, and philosophical concepts. We shall not attempt to discuss here all of the forty or more poems in this group, but must rather select those most likely to give a fair impression of the whole.

We have already seen something of Brown's views of death, as expressed in the letters, the elegies, the nature poems, and elsewhere,
but a few others deserve at least passing mention here. In "Fives'-
Court" he muses as he stands within the court where he has played by
day, conscious of the lingering illusion of activity, and thinking of
the agile athletes now sleeping. It concludes on a note sounded per-
sistently by A.E.Housman:

But how of those who play'd with me langsyne,
And sleep for evermore? (C.P., 79)

"Obviam" is noteworthy for its unusual rhyme scheme (abcaacbaacbb)
and its suggestion of the Janus-mask of the inevitable face of death:

Earthward a mask of jet,
Heavenward a coronet
Sun-flushed with roseate gleams—In any case
It hardly can be called a mortal pain
To meet whom met I ne'er shall meet again. (C.P., 733)

Brown makes frequent use of Biblical quotation and imagery in
both the narratives and the lyrics. In several poems he employs what
might be called "apocalyptic" imagery—that is, he sets the scene in
Heaven. Among the Manx poems, the best example of this device is
"Catherine Kinrade"; among the lyrics, it invests "The Organist in
Heaven" with nobility. His subject is Samuel Sebastian Wesley, com-
poser and celebrated organist of Gloucester Cathedral. When the poem
was first published in Old John, it bore the title "Wesley in Heaven."
The poet explains that amid the confusion attending the musician's
entry into Paradise, the warders forgot to shut the gate, thus per-
mitting him to slip in unnoticed and view the scene. Wesley chooses
as his boon the creation of a celestial organ, whereof the manuals
are four rivers of lightning, and the thunder his bass. After the
instrument is completed the fugue begins, but the poet is discovered
and ejected:
...and, as I downward clomb,
I heard the might bars
Of thunder-gusts, that shook heaven's dome,
And moved the balanced stars. (C.P., 96)

"Exile" moves on a higher plane of spiritual sensibility. It depicts
the soul, "abject, cold, and numb," waiting patiently and hopefully
for those "Who minister to Thee and Thine" to come and clothe it in
immortal robes:

In sorrow and in nakedness of soul
I look into the street,
If haply there mine eye may meet,
As up and down it ranges,
The servants of my Father bearing changes
Of raiment sweet—
Seven changes sweet with violet and moly,
Seven changes pure and holy.

His choice of a number is significant. Seven has been a sacred and
mystic number since time immemorial among many religions, but espe-
cially among the Hebrews. In this particular poem, the poet would
seem to be referring most directly to the seven gifts of the spirit:
Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Power or Fortitude, Knowledge, Right-
eousness, and Godly Fear. It is only from the dedicated hands of
God's servants that such apparel can be obtained. Here, "Only the
fretful merchants stand and cry: 'Come buy!'" Their wares are luxur-
ious: rich furs, robes dyed with the royal purple—but these trappings
of earthly pomp and magnificence cannot warm his shivering soul. Soon
the servants will come,

And I will rise, and wash, and they will dress me
As Thou wouldst have me dressed;
And I shall stand confest
Thy son; and men shall falter:
"Behold the ephod of the unseen altar!
O God-possessed!" . . . (C.P., 675)

Although Brown is writing here in the direct tradition of the religious
mystic, the burden of his poem comes clearly through the unfamiliar imagery. In "Climbing" we have another parable of the aspiration of the soul, leaving the "hum of vulgar life" to enjoy the "perilous delight" of the great peaks. One after another, those who seek "the rapture of the height" abandon the effort, and he goes on alone.

F.S. Boas has said: "The interdependence of man and nature, the all-embracing and redemptive power of love--these are the bases of Brown's conception of life and the world. . . . It is the exaltation, the vision, of the true mystic that thrills through those lyrics, unique of their kind, in which Brown lays the scene in Heaven. . . . It is he who

Was in Heaven one day when all the prayers
Came in, and angels bore them up the stairs,

and saw the 'great sorter' set apart for the Master a hedgeling rose,

'the first prayer of a little child.' " The poem referred to here is entitled simply "The Prayers." In most of these, the mystic "exaltation" mentioned by Boas must be understood in the special sense of spiritual sensitivity and a mood of receptivity toward intuitive truth, but not necessarily, or even usually, a glad or joyous tone. How far removed it sometimes was from this may be seen in "Sad! sad!"

whose doleful title reappears as a refrain in each stanza. He is perplexed by this mood, so out of keeping with the mood of Spring, and asks:

. . . is it joy diviner,
Joy echoing in a minor,
Joy vibrant to its pole,
That seems but sad?

And then come two stanzas that in themselves would prove that we are dealing with a poet, and not simply a maker of verses:
Is it the ebbing ghost
Of God that leave me dry
Upon a weary coast,
Beneath a burning sky?
Is it His voice afar
That booms upon the bar,
And makes me sigh,
And makes me sad?
Sad! sad!

Or does the old travail-pain
Resume the mother-geist?
In some far orb again
Is boothless ransom priced
For others than for us?
In Mars, or Uranus,
They crucify the Christ?

(C.P., 694-95)

Here Brown is expressing that "infinite and sorrowful mystery of human life," as Bishop Bilson put it, one more in that infinitude of moods of which his poems are the reflection. Readers of his "Land, Ho!" have not always understood that it functions on at least two levels. One editor, who read it simply as the joyful cry of a long-wandering exile as the shores of his native isle loomed out of the mist, included it in a volume of patriotic songs; he was soundly rebuked by another reader, who saw in it only a parable in which the soul of man first catches a glimpse of the heavenly shore. In my opinion, both were right. If the mystical note is stronger, it is closely paralleled by and probably suggested by the enthusiasm with which Brown always greeted the first sight of his beloved Mona:

It's clad in purple mist, my land,
In regal robe it is apparelled,
A crown is set upon its head,
And on its breast a golden band—
Land, ho! land.

Dost wonder that I long for land?
My land is not a land as others are—
Upon its crest there beams a star,
And lilies grow upon the strand—
Land, hol' land.  (C.P., 700)

There is no sure and certain proof of either interpretation. This very ambiguity provides an added source of pleasure to an already interesting poem.

The divinity whom Brown worshiped was not always sober and severe. In a sonnet entitled "The Laugh," the poet describes how he heard a girl’s merry laughter, "Shivering the twilight with its lance of mirth. And music of her laughter goes up to God, he muses,

Who has within Himself the secret springs
Of all the lovely, ceaseless, unclaimed things. . . (C.P., 71)

He pursues this notion more fully in the long (85 line) poem with the appropriate title "Risus Dei." It begins:

Methinks in Him there dwells alway
A sea of laughter very deep,
Where the leviathans leap,
And little children play. . .

Later in the poem, he claims a very high place for this "Godlike function" of laughter:

Mirth comes to thee unsought;
Mirth sweeps before it like a flood the mill
Of languaged logic; thought
Hath not its source so high;
The will
Must let it by;

In other verses he analyzes various types of laughter: the laughter of the fool, the empty laugh, the evil laugh. Of this latter, unless it be aimed "At any good thing" he counsels forbearance:

"Grudge not the dreadful jest." Even the empty laugh has divine origin: "God doth dwell/ Behind the feigned gladness, Inhabit-
ing a sacred core of sadness." Laughter was only one element in Brown's concept of God, and it has a connection with this semi-serious view of heaven: "It is not a very rash speculation that gives us after death abundance of what we most loved on earth, and full capacity of enjoying that abundance. Per contra, hell may be the same abundance without the capacity. So heaven and hell might be not only under the same management, but positively one ... Surely Elysium will not be a poor-house? Fancy having one's portions dealt out by some celestial Bumble!" To Brown, love and laughter were closely associated. He often said that he was entitled to laugh at the Manx because he loved them so much. It seems that he carried over this concept to other areas, and assumed that a God of love must also be a God of laughter.

"Ibant Obscurae" illustrates his ability to cast an atmosphere of mystery over a simple event, and give it symbolic overtones:

Tonight I saw three maidens on the beach,
Dark-robed descending to the sea,
So slow, so silent of all speech,
And visible to me
Only by that strange drift-light, dim, forlorn,
Of the sun's wreck and clashing surges born.

Each after other went,
And they were gathered to his breast—
It seemed to me a sacrament
Of some stern creed unblest:
As when to rocks, that cheerless girt the bay,
They bound thy hold limbs, Andromeda. (C.P., 73-74)

By a careful selection of detail and diction, he has given to the three dark-robed figures something of the mystery of figures in an allegory; but actually there is no allegory. I suspect that
the allusion to the Andromeda myth may lead some readers to seek
for a closer parallel than exists between the three girls being
swallowed up (from his sight) as they enter the sea, and the be
autiful Andromeda chained to the rock at the insistence of the
oracle, as a sacrifice to the sea-monster. The poem offers an
informative glimpse of the gulf which the poetic imagination brings
into being between the original stimulus and the end response. Reduc­
ced to its simplest common-sense form, the factual core of this poem
would read something like this: "The poet saw three girls going
swimming in the sea at twilight." Passed through the transforming
medium of the poet's mind, this simple observation becomes a work
of art. I mention this elementary principle prefatory to remarking
that Brown was not always able to bring about this transformation.
In such pieces as "Not Willing to Stay," "In a Fair Garden," "God is
Love," "The Intercepted Salute," and a few others, the material comes
out of the process very much as it went in. Nothing happened; there
was no metamorphosis; there is no work of art. There is only platitu­
dinous observation. When the poetic process was working effectively,
he could get worthwhile products from even the slenderest of mater­
ials; when it was not, he could turn firmer and more promising matter
into something I am tempted to call drivel—or perhaps I should say
rather that he does not always fully realize his intention. Brown
knew this full well. It is the central idea of "Scarlett Rocks":

I thought of life, the outer and the inner,
As I was walking by the sea:
How vague, unshapen this, and that, though thinner,
Yet hard and clear in its rigidity.
Then took I up the fragment of a shell,
   And saw its accurate loveliness,
And searched its filmy lines, its pearly cell,
   And all that keen contention to express
A finite thought. And then I recognized
   God's working in the shell from root to rim;
And said: "He works till He has realised—
   O Heaven! if I could only work like Him!" (C.P., 76)

His own work, poetic and otherwise, is here contrasted with God's
handiwork. The philosophy behind the poem is simple enough: natural
forms are the embodiment and expression of the thought of God; there
are "sermons in stones"—and in sea shells. But God's struggle to
"express a finite thought" through natural forms continues until it
is realized—a note precursive of the second part of "Dartmoor." The
poet does not always persist so long nor with equal success.

"To K.H." also bears a reference to the "grand simplicity/ Of
natural forms," and in it he contrasts most strikingly the great cath­
edral, where

   . . . down the tunnelled nave the organ, pealing,
Blows music-storm, and with far-floating blisses
Gives tremor to the bells, and shakes the dead men's crypt
and "the obvious scene" of home and tribe,

   . . . and for a temple that old sky,
Where to the sea intones the polyglot
Of water-pipes antiphonal, and the dome,
Round-arched, goes up to God in lapis lazuli. (C.P., 78)

The use of a final Alexandrine is uncommon in Brown's poetry, and he
seldom exceeded the magic of that last one. It will be seen that
Brown does not restrict himself to puny conceits: in "The Organist in
Heaven" he harnesses the thunder and lightning to serve as an organ;
here the surging tides of the sea become his instrument. With greater
simplicity he embodies in "Per Omnia Deus" a contrast between the
monotony and conventionality and materialism of the daily activities
of men, and the excitement and vitality of a nature teeming with the manifestations of God:

What moves at Cardiff, how a man
At Newport ends the day as he began,
At Weston what adventure may befall,
What Bristol dreams, or if she dream at all,
Upon the pier, with step sedate,
I meditate—
Poor souls! whose God is Mammon—
Meanwhile, from Ocean's gate,
Keen for the foaming spate,
The true God rushes in the salmon. (C.P., 661; "Clevedon VI")

There seems to be little doubt that Brown felt himself to be on friendly terms with that God—on closer terms than the preacher in the pulpit who called him to "Come unto God!" for God said to him:

"Mind not at all
Such accidents as he—
Mechanical alarum, sightless seer,
Who bids thee come, and knows not thou art here."
(C.P., 674; "In Gremio")

A very similar idea, but with reference to someone other than himself, is the theme of "Specula," which begins "When He appoints to meet thee, go thou forth" and concludes:

But, if he come not, neither do thou go
Till Vesper chime.
Belike thou then shalt know
He hath been with thee all the time. (C.P., 733)

It appears again in "Praesto":

Expecting Him, my door was open wide:
Then I looked round
If any lack of service might be found,
And saw Him at my side:
How entered, by what secret stair,
I know not, knowing only He was there. (C.P., 701)

A more famous poem, with the descriptive title of "Disguises," was "assembled" in an interesting fashion which I believe no commentator has noticed. The poem as given in Collected Poems consists of
three stanzas of unequal length. The first two are connected by a common reference to a ship in distress, but the third has little or no similarity to the others except that its theme is the same: God appears in various disguises, and is always present. As originally published, this was not one poem, but three. What is now the third stanza appeared in Plain Talk in September, 1876, under the title "Nobiscum"; the other two appeared in the same publication in August, 1877, the first stanza under the title "Reefing," and the second under title "The Rocket." The common theme seems to have convinced Brown that the three short poems should be joined, and the result is happier than we might have expected. The final stanza departs from the nautical imagery of the first two and is not perfectly assimilated, but it states the theme effectively:

I have an arbour wherein came a toad
Most hideous to see—
Immediate, seizing staff or goad,
I smote it cruelly.
Then all the place with subtle radiance glowed—
I looked, and it was He! (L.P., 699)

William Canton has called this poem "a fitting sequel" to Statio Tertia of "Aber Stations" and concludes: "This assuredly is one of the poems that we may add to the anthology of Christian verse which has rooted itself in the heart of the English race."

With all the fine lyrics I have quoted (and many I have not) to choose from, the anthologists have slavishly followed each other in selecting "My Garden" as the one poem best suited to represent Brown in the poetry-reading world. I am sure this misguided publicity has had an undesirable effect upon his later reputation. Because this poem has been reprinted oftener than any other, and because it has
stimulated so much misguided comment, both pro and con, I feel obliged to quote both the poem and some of the representative criticisms of it. It goes like this:

A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Ferned grot—
The veriest school
Of peace; and yet the fool
Contends that God is not—
Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign;
'Tis very sure God walks in mine. (G.F., 699)

The most devastating attack is that of Earl Daniels in his The Art of Reading Poetry. Daniels prints the poem immediately following Andrew Marvell's formally artificial "The Garden." Then he says:

Let it be uncompromisingly stated at the start that Marvell's poem is so much superior as to make serious comparison almost out of the question. . . for some reason hard for judgment to understand, "My Garden" is included in the Oxford Book of English Verse. But Elizabeth Drew is not less than accurate in describing it. . . as "that popular piece of inanity." In making comparison with Marvell's poem she goes on to say, "the one all exquisite precision in thought, emotion, and expression; the other, pretentious, foolish, and empty, appealing to nothing but shallow thinking and feeling."

To examine Brown's composition is to find three distinct things said about the garden: it is "lovesome"; it is a "school of peace"; and it is a sign of God. These ideas have little connection, and they are something of a burden for ten short lines to carry, especially since none is developed, unless the attempt at description in lines 2-4 be taken as evidence of "lovesomeness"; they are left as naked, unsupported statements, and consequently, as poetry, they say nothing. Whatever imagery there is is vague enough to fit almost any garden, anywhere, at any time. . . . the words. . . are the overwrought language of sentimental prettiness. . . . in obvious appeal to the shallow thinking Miss Drew is talking about. . . God is dragged into the final four lines, without preparation, but with a kind of smug satisfaction which fairly oozes from the words. What, in previous lines, prepares for this sudden shift from simple, if vague, description to such an assertion of the truth of religion? By what means does the poet reach his conclusion that God is in gardens? . . . No, this will not do, as thought, as imagery, language, or anything else very pertinent to poetry.

Without taking up the cudgels too eagerly in defense of a poem
which I do not regard with any overwhelming admiration, I must nevertheless deplore the attitude of outraged superiority in Mr. Daniels' virulent broadside. It might be pointed out that his inability to see any connection between the garden being a "school of peace" and a sign of God (incidentally, Brown does not say that the garden is a sign of God) reflects, among other things, a complete lack of understanding of Brown's beliefs. His argument clearly implies that "unsupported statements" are incompatible with poetry—surely a debatable proposition. Had he only read "Disguises" he would have understood that from Brown's point of view, the charge that God is "dragged in" is simply absurd. That final series of questions directed toward Brown's assertion of the truth of religion, and the means by which he reached his conclusion "that God is in gardens" cannot, truthfully, be answered within the context of this poem alone, and there is the crux of the whole matter. Daniels is demanding that Brown support the assertion that God walks in his garden, and do it in ten lines. It never occurred to Brown that such an assertion needed proof, and if you insisted that it did, he would have replied that it couldn't be proved to anyone who chose not to believe it. The presence of God was something he took for granted, like the sea or the atmosphere, and "My Garden" is only one of a long series of poems in which he asserted this belief in a variety of ways. His lyrics are, in fact, one long assertion of it. The fact is that this poem is not self-contained. This is perhaps its greatest weakness, and to the so-called "New" critic, a fatal weakness. If we read it in the context of the other religious lyrics, it takes its place as a tiny segment in the mosaic, and there is no problem of
interpretation. Isolated from that context, removed from its supporting frame, the lyric cannot stand up under close textual analysis. The anthologists are to blame for creating the erroneous impression that: 1) It adequately represents Brown's capacity for lyric utterance; 2) It is capable of standing alone.

Another critic, B. Roland Lewis, approaches the poem from an entirely different angle, and with a very different result. In discussing "Organic Rhythm" he praises "My Garden" as "a gem of rhythmic utterance... The artificially printed line-length as it appears on a modern printed page is not organic, and really creative poetic functioning will not be hemmed in by any such prescription." He goes on to say that "the important distinguishing characteristic of free verse is that it prints the 'minor rhythms'—the very short impulse or the individual phrase (speech unit)—in the form of very short line-lengths... Such a poem as "My Garden" is printed essentially in cadenced free verse form." What Lewis says regarding rhythm and "free verse" applies with equal justice to many of Brown's lyrics, but it may be questioned whether they can really be called "free" in the technical sense. A basic pattern of stanza form, rhyme, and meter can usually be discerned; with few exceptions, they have what someone has called "structural backbone."

William Hall, in discussing this poem as a factor in Brown's continued lack of general recognition, quotes with approval Edith Sitwell's verdict of "appalling" and her remark: "The poem leaves me with the feeling of having been hit over the ear, with no excuse and without provocation." Hall continues: "That Brown should be best, or most
commonly, known by "My Garden" is for unqualified regret, particularly when it is considered that through the concentrated regard for this small poem, his better work in the short lyric has been neglected, and the appraisement of the work on which he asked for, and patiently waited for, judgment has so far been made only by his most prejudiced friends, who have seen the work through the man, rather than the man through the work. . ." He is right on both counts.

Most of the lyrics thus far examined stress the poet's awareness and acceptance of God. There is another large group, however, which indicate spiritual struggle, rumblings of revolt, questionings of Providence. One of these, entitled "Wastwater to Scawfell," is one of the longer and better of many poems dealing with water. He casts the sea in the role of a passionate and long-suffering lover of the mighty cliff. In distinction to some minor "water poems," this is in serious mood, and shows the marks of careful craftsmanship. In a passage marked by intricate figures, internal rhyme, and rapid movement, the sea dreams of a union with the beloved in an outburst of remarkable sensuosity:

But O, if thou couldst glide
Into my arms, how I would pour
Around thee sleeping, side, and breast, and brow—
Storm-furrowed brow, and breast, and side!

What would I do,
O God! if that were true!
With wreaths of diamond spray
I would bind thee every way—
O! I'd crown thee, and I'd drown thee,
And I'd bathe thee, and I'd swathe thee
With the swirling and the curling,
And the splashing and the flashing
Of my arms;
And I'd float to thee in bubbles,
And I'd woo thee in sweet troubles
Of a gurgling soft and reedy,
Of a rippling foamed and beady,
Till with a refluent sliding,
Till with a hushed subsiding,
I would hold thee in the hollows
Where the storm-trump never follows,
Never pierces with the clang of its alarms. (C.P., 56-57)

There is in such passages a reminiscence of many poets—of Swinburne, of Whitman, of Poe, particularly—yet taken in context, there is a quality which is Brown's alone. Here he comes as close to sheer musicality, to word music for its own sake, as in any passage I can recall. Yet this is but a prelude to the presentation of the philosophical apologia which follows. The major constructional flaw of the poem inheres in the fact that he does not make clear the relationship between the sixty lines in which the sea-cliff image is expanded, and the concluding twenty-two lines in which his own position is described. Here is the key passage in this conclusion:

Dreams are but dreams, they say;
The ordered world is one both night and day,
And we are but the gear,
Nor have we sought of voice or will,
But, borne on her great zones, we must obey,
Nor move but with the moving sphere.

So, when in meek compliance,
I hear the distant roar
That comes of jubilant waves on ocean's shore,
When on the nether plain
The iron monster snorts defiance,
And boasts himself the slave of fate no more,
Exulting in his fiery pain,
I heed the challenges of change
Not once, nor once would leave
The dale, like that proud stream so proud t'achieve
His course of giddy mirth.
We ask not for such chartered range:
We are content with her to joy and grieve
Who is our mother, and did us conceive,
The children of the earth. (C.P., 57)
The major problem of interpretation centers on our identification of the speaker in these final stanzas. If the poet speaks here, rather than the sea, we would seem to have a statement of belief in an ordered universe, in which action is possible only in compliance with immutable natural laws and in which there is no place for free will. Applied to humanity, it would mean a conception of men as cogs in a machine moved by elemental forces outside themselves and beyond their power to alter. Freedom of will and conscience in such a universe would be unthinkable. The "meek compliance" of the first line in the final stanza indicates acquiescence in such a view, and the other elements in the stanza would seem to bear out this interpretation. The waves on the shore may be "jubilant," but they are free only within limits prescribed by natural law; the train may move, and "short defiance," but it can move only where the rails lead, and in compliance with other natural laws; the little stream that leaves the dale is proud, but achieves only a "course of giddy mirth," which can lead only downward. The alternative solution presupposes that the sea speaks throughout, and that no symbolical or allegorical meaning is intended. This proposal I find difficult to accept. The poem is intentionally ambiguous. It may be that his real meaning is somewhere between the two extremes: real freedom, uncharted range, is possible only in full submission to the will of God, expressed through the laws of nature.

We might apply many terms, all of which are in a sense properly descriptive of his poem "The Well"—parabolic, mystical, metaphysical.
It contains some of his finest lines, and is in essence a denuncia-
ciation of restraints and limitations, and a bid for freedom—
freedom of will, of thought, of growth and development.

I am a spring—
Why square me with a kerb?
Ah, why this measuring
Of marble limit? Why this accurate vault
Lest day assault,
Or any breath disturb?
And why this regulated flow
Of what 'tis good to feel, and what to know?

O cruel force,
That gives me not a chance
To fill my natural course;
With mathematic rod
Ecorpseing God;" (C.P., 58)

This protest, begun simply and calmly, builds consistently to a
powerful and emotion-packed climax in which Brown's precise ob-
servation of natural forms, his classical background, and his sense
of communion with the Deity are immutable welded:

A fount, a tank:
Yet through some sorry grate
A driblet faulters, till around the flank
Of burly cliff it creeps; then, silver-shooting,
Threads all the patient fluting
Of quartz, and violet-dappled slate:
A puny thing, on whose attenuate ripples
No satyr stoops to see
His broken effigy;
No maed begins the languor of her nipples.
One faith remains—
That through what ducts soo'er,
What metamorphic strains,
What chymic fil't'ring's, I shall pass
To where, O God, Thou lov'st to mass
Thy rains upon the crags, and dim the sphere.
So, when night's heart with keenest silence thrills,
Take me, and weep me on the desolate hills! (C.P., 58-59)

There is an exaltation in these final lines that makes commen-
tary seem an impertinence. Where else, amid the so-called "decadent"
poetry of the final quarter of the century—with the notable exception of Hopkins—can one find comparable lines? The artistic unity of the poem is of a calibre that Brown does not always reach. The spring, the well, is the perfect symbol of the curbed and repressed spirit. As the water comes from the heavens and after "metamorphic strains" and "chymic filterings" returns once more, so in the poet's vision does the spirit find its way after long travail and suppression back to the spiritual fountainhead which is God. As the confined spirit is a poetic force, so are the curbed waters capable of almost indefinite expansion; but as the spring escapes its marble limits only in "puppy driblets," so does the curbed spirit realize only the smallest fraction of its potential.

In these lines, too, Brown proved his capacity for concentrated utterance: consider the condensation of such a phrase as "metamorphic strains." In word choice generally, the poem sets a high standard, and some of the phrases are brilliant: "With mathematic rod economizing God," for example, or "Weep me on the desolate hills." While he follows the couplet rhyme scheme through most of the poem, he varies the line length to good effect. His use of alliteration adds an appropriate musicality; both the emphasized repeated sound and the line length are skillfully fitted to the sense of the line. Take for example the rather abrupt sibilants of "no satyr stoops to see/ His broken effigy," or the liquid lulling of "No naiad leans the languor of her nipples." These lines suggest another element of interest in the poem. In verses which
yearn toward mystic union with the Godhead, is it not a trifle surprising to encounter loving references to Zeus, to satyrs, and to naiads? Along with Brown's pantheism, there was a fondness for the beings with which classic mythology has populated the universe; this is not to say that he was ever consciously pagan, but that the boundaries between pagan and Christian belief sometimes blurred a little in moments of exaltation. A variation of the image in the last line reappears in the final lines of "Hallam's Church, Clevedon" eight years later.

His touch in "Dunoon" is much lighter. Maggie, that "rhythmic little sinner," eludes the hell-fire theology of the Calvinist minister who thunders at her from the pulpit.

*Cubic, orthodox,
Sink the ordered blocks:
Doctrinal adamant,
Riven with the fiery rant
And hammered with the hammer of John Knox;
*S*amented with the cant
Of glutinous emotion;
Rivet ed with logic
Hard-gripped, presbyterous,
Something, mayhap, to us! (C.P., 70)

But to Maggie, with *eyes* of light and lips of dew," dreaming of "potential kisses," it means nothing. She rises above the subtleties of fundamentalist orthodoxy by virtue of innocence and love:

Knowing of no trouble;
Flecked only
With shadows of those lofty things and lonely,
That from the seventh sphere
Pencil their diamond traces
Nowhere but on the mere
Of hearts that stir not from their places. (C.P., 70)
The satire on conventional theology expressed here takes on a sharper tone, along with increased humor, in "A Sermon at Clevedon: Good Friday." Saintsbury found the satire here "stale and in bad taste," but in my opinion it is neither. His method is to intersperse quotations from the sermon with his own quizzical comment, as here:

Now Justification—
"By faith?" I fancy; Aye, the old equation;
Go it, Justice! Go it, Mercy!
Go it, Douglas! Go it, Percy!
I back the winner,
And have a vague conception of the sinner—
Limbs nude,
Horatian attitude,
Nursing his foot in Sublapsarian mood—
More power
To you my friend! you're good for half-an-hour.
Dry bones! dry bones!

But after this irreverent outburst, Brown indicates the source of his own theology:

But in my ear the long-drawn west wind moans,
Sweet voices seem to murmur from the wave;
And I can sit, and look upon the stones
That cover Hallam's grave. (C.F., 97)

This same note of dissent runs through "Ecclesiastes," in which a group coming from church "laden with persistence of the humming/ Where-in men think they pray" meets a girl coming from the down with an armful of flowers. She is abashed and made to feel guilty by their "spruce decency," but the poet concludes that she is closer to God than those "proper" people returning from "duty performed."

It is a tenet of his creed that we are too self-centered, too intent upon our own petty interests and ideas to leave room in our hearts for the Creator. This is the theme of "Indwelling." It is the theme of "The Pitcher," with its mechanically regular quatrains:
So He filled me—then I lost Him,  
Lost Him in His own excess;  
For he could not but transcend me  
In my very nothingness. (C.P., 672)

The message of "Pain" is much like that of "The Empty Cup"; The man who has great griefs is not to be pitied, for he has "touched the fact,/ And probed till he has felt the core, where, packed/ In pulpy folds, resides the ironic ill." Such contact has a spiritual function:

For thus it is God stings us into life,  
Provoking actual souls  
From bodily systems, giving us the poles  
That are His own, not merely balanced strife. (C.P., 670)

I cannot here unravel all the philosophical concepts with which this poem is packed, and at the risk of oversimplification, will say only that he implies the necessity of pain and sorrow as a prerequisite of spiritual joy.

In a moment of imperturbable faith and optimism, he could compose a perfect little jewel like "Juventa Perennis":

If youth be thine,  
Spare not to drink its wine;  
If youth be fled,  
Hold up  
The golden cup—  
God's grapes are always red. (C.P., 688)

But in the dark moments, in his mental wrestlings with the ultimate and eternal problems, he wrote the magnificent "Dartmoor: Sunset at Chagford," with the editorial subtitle, "Homo Loquitur." "How infinite a walk on Dartmoor seems!" Brown said in an 1892 letter, "not so much in physical space as moral. Suppose I did walk all over Dartmoor now, could it be the Dartmoor of old! a dream of heaven and all that is elastic and tense and free—no! no!" The poem opens with the speaker, a representative of humanity, gazing at a gorgeous sunset, and
agonizing to discover its meaning:

Is it ironical, a fool enigma,
This sunset show?
The purple stigma,
Black mountain cut upon a saffron glow—
Is it a mammoth joke,
A riddle put for me to guess...

It may be a dole, "scrap/ Tossed from the table of the reveling gods";
if so, it is a cheat. If intended as an anodyne, he will have none of
it: "I want no opiates." If intended as speech, as a message to man,
it is hopelessly inadequate:

What is the alphabet
The gods have set?
What babbling! what delusion!
And in these sunset tints
What gay confusion!

The gods in bliss
Scrabble a baby jargon on the skies
For us to analyse:
Cumbrous? Nay, idiotic—
A party-coloured symbolism,
The fragments of a shivered prism:
Man gives the swift demotic.

Poor upward-striving man sifts the elements, while God "on Chaos drifting,
/ Sows broadcast all His stuff." It is lavish, but incredibly
wasteful, and it has unforeseeable consequences. For the most part,
this display is ignored by the animal kingdom, but not by all:

Wrong-headed thrushes
Blow bugles to it;
And a wrong-headed poet
Will strut, and strain the cogs
Of the machine, he blushes
To call his Muse, and maunder;

The poet again reproaches the Creator for the tantalizing ambiguity of
expression:

Call you this speech?
0 God, if it be speech,
Speak plainer...
Perhaps the most remarkable passage in this long poem is that in which the poet submits himself to vivisection, with God as the surgeon and a crowd of angels as observing students:

"Behold the cerebellum
A smoky yellow, like old vellum!
Students will please observe
The structure of the optic nerve.

Another lancet—thanks!
That's Manx--
Yes, the delicate pale sea-green
Passing into the ultra-marine--
A little blurred—in fact
This brain seems packed
With sunsets.

Now this is the most instructive of all
The phenomena, what in fact we may call
The most obvious justification
Of vivisection in general.

Observe, I say, the incipient relation
Of a quasi-moral activity
To this physical agitation!
Of course, you see...

Yes, yes, O God,
I feel the prod
Of that dissecting knife.
Instructive, say the pupil angels, very:
And take some notes, and take some sandwiches and sherry;
And some are prying
Into the very substance of my brain--

But please remember that I am not dead,
Nor even dying.  (C.P., 622-84)

In this section as a whole, the poet is in a bitter and cynical mood, castigating the Almighty for his failure to communicate with man, and denouncing in scathing terms His cold and unfeeling treatment of man for the edification of His angels, the waste of His gifts and the inequitable distribution of them to just and unjust, human and non-human.

The sequel to "Dartmoor," with its presentation of man's charges, is "Respondent ΑΗΜΙΟΥΡΓΟΣ," in which the Creator replies. He is
grieved by man's dissatisfaction, but interprets it kindly:

It is not that you don't believe;
It is but that you misconceive
The work I have to do.

Man is caught up in temporal activity, and has the faculty of articulate voice. Demiourgos is also active, but he is neither omniscient nor clearly articulate:

And yet I would be kind.
And so I strain
To speak, as now;
And, in more cheerful vein,
You haply will allow
I make my meaning fairly plain.

But I can do no more; wherefore I am not vexed;
But you are, being perplexed
With suppositions, scribbling o'er the text
Of natural life. . .

Because of man's vexation, He has scattered His beauties bountifully, and his liberally bestowed His joys throughout creation, hoping that man would find them. His final modest speech is one of reassurance:

And this
Is certain: never be afraid!
I love what I have made.
I know this is not wit,
This is not to be clever,
Or anything whatever.
You see, I am a servant, that is it:
You've hit
The mark—a servant; for the other word—
Why, you are Lord, if any one is Lord. (C.P., 685-87)

F.S. Boas has commented:

. . .In the daring sweep of its imagery, in its passionate intellectualism, "Dartmoor" is a survival of the "metaphysical" school at its best, and seals Brown of the tribe of Donne. . . . The interdependence of man and nature, the all-embracing and redemptive power of love—these are the bases of Brown's conception of life and the world.14

I should like to postpone for a moment consideration of the question
raised here: To what extent was Brown a metaphysical? a pantheist? a mystic? First we should examine a few remaining poems of a general philosophical nature. Among these "Life" takes a high place as an intellectualized and highly compressed view of the central tragedy of man's earthly existence. It demands and repays careful study. The final stanza sums up his thesis that man could better understand the universal pattern and the oneness of creation were we less subject to an "idiot cheer of self" and "zigzags of the will." In "Dreams" he regrets that the soul, released from the trammels of consciousness and bodily limitations by sleep, does not utilize its liberty more effect­ively in the search for truth, but wanders aimlessly. Those who claim Brown as a mystic have strong evidence in this poem.

"Salve" is an unqualified success. It is a comment on the struggle which went on throughout most of the poet's life between the need for privacy and spiritual isolation, and the desire for social contact in which he might share experiences with his fellow men.

To live within a cave—it is most good.
But, if God make a day,
And some one come, and say:
"Lo! I have gathered faggots in the wood!"
then should you build a fire, and spend the night in pleasant companionship with him, and then go your own way once more: "His morning is not thine."

In keeping with a tradition inaugurated by the editors of Collected Poems, and followed by the editors of Selected Poems in the Golden Treasury Series edition, I should like to close this lengthy, yet frequently inadequate and superficial survey of individual poems by quoting in full what I consider to be his finest sonnet:
At the Play

As in a theatre the amused sense
Beholds the strange vicissitudes of things,
Young Damon's loves, the fates of clowns and kings,
And all the motley of the gay pretence—
Beholds, and on an acme of suspense
Stands vibrant till the curtain falls, door swings,
Lights gutter, and the weary murmurings
Of o'er-watched varlets intimate us thence;
Even so we gaze not on the things that are,
Nor aught behold but what is adumbrate.
The show is specious, and we laugh and weep
At what is only meant spectacular;
And when the curtain falls, we may not wait;
Death takes the lights, and we go home to sleep.

* * *

There is considerable variety among Brown's religious lyrics. More significant than any superficial differences, however, are those deep and influential concepts which underlie the lyrics as a group, and give them purpose, meaning, and direction. While many of them are expressions of a momentary mood, they add up to a body of artistic expression which is seen to have consistency and unity. A few basic themes appear again and again, sometimes in direct statement, but more often under the cover of symbolism and allegory. At the core of Brown's religious thought is his belief in the presence of God in Nature as a vital, living, pervading energy. He is there, not so much as a vague spiritual entity, but as the vivid, virile spark of life in an infinitude of natural forms and phenomena. How constantly the name of God was on the poet's lips! It is not without justice that he cries in "Exile": "O God—possessed!" The divinity he knows is a creative and vigorous divinity, not static but developing, not logical but loving, not omniscient but omnipresent. God may inhabit the core of sadness, but He is also a God of fun and laughter. He is an approachable God, not austere and sternly forbidding, but One who is
sincerely and sympathetically interested in man and his problems. He scatters messages of hope and joy and beauty broadcast, trusting man to find them, to enjoy them, and to recognize their source. Brown found a succession of these messages in the course of his long and intimate association with nature, and he came to believe that the Word of God was more likely to be found in its pure form in the fields, on the mountains, and by the seashore than in temples and theological libraries. When the messages were clear, he exulted; when they were undecipherable, he might either lament his own foggy vision, or lecture God on the clumsiness of His handwriting. It is, I think, this unabashed, familiar, robust approach to divinity that gives his religious lyrics their unique flavor, and sets him apart from poets such as Wordsworth who professed a similar faith. He never really attempts to evolve a formal or consistent philosophy. Someone has truly said that Brown's real answer to experience is not a philosophy, but a religion. A clergyman of the Church of England, he was also a devout pantheist, and saw no great discrepancy in holding the two positions simultaneously. In one of his poems, he remarks that God's greatest gifts to His children are love, laughter, and light. Brown had them all in abundance.

He was not so much concerned with the particular variety of religion a man professed, so long as it be sincere and genuine. False sentiment of any kind provoked his righteous wrath, but for falsity or pretense or insincerity in religion, his contempt and hatred were profound. Like Browning, Brown felt "very sure of
God, yet He was not to be found by apathy or inertia: "God seeketh us, and yet He would be sought." This is the message of "In a Fair Garden." Where then does Brown stand as a poet? George Saintsbury attempted to answer this question as follows:

What he is, is excessively difficult to define without those limitations and reservations which are apt to revolt uncritical minds;... About his general poetic kind, there is no difficulty at all: everyone who has appreciated him has seen that he is of the mystics—of the company of his namesake Sir Thomas in prose, of Vaughan, Blake, and to no small extent, Wordsworth in verse. But, with this mysticism, he combines a vivid and sometimes, almost familiar realism of expression and choice of subject which Wordsworth did not reach and which none of the others attempted.

With this first "reservation" we are immediately in difficulty. What I have tried to say in various places, and what Saintsbury is saying here, adds up to a classification of Brown as a "realistic mystic." Both elements of the term are subject to infinite distortion and misunderstanding, particularly the latter. To many people, a "mystic" is simply an escapist who ignores fact, and turns his back on immediate reality. Such flagrant distortions stem primarily from an absence of sympathetic understanding of intuitive as opposed to logical pursuit of truth, and of spiritual as opposed to material values—an understanding, incidentally, which the modern world is peculiarly ill-fitted to provide. We can hardly avoid calling Brown a mystic. We can, however, do what may be done to reduce misunderstanding by providing a working definition of the term. I have been unable to find a more useful one than that given by Percy H. Osmond in The Mystical Poets of the English Church:

...we may take a Christian mystic to be one who knows the my-
311

Mysteries are open secrets—secrets which can be known, though not expressed perhaps, by anyone who will take sufficient interest, and make sufficient effort. The mystic does not simply believe in God; he knows God by personal intercourse; he has a vivid sense of His constant Presence; he consciously aims at a more and more complete union of the soul with Him. The mystic knows by practical experience, Eternal Life, though it may be obscured by the shadows of the seen and temporal. He knows something, at any rate, of the divine meaning which underlies all material phenomena and undane experiences. His soul, its needs and aspirations, are as real to him and as clamant as his body.

Writers on mysticism have usually agreed upon the importance of observing three stages in the mystic's development. The Purgative, the Illuminative, and the Unitive. Not hard and fast divisions, they overlap at times or run parallel; but they roughly mark progressive stages by which the mystic advances toward that conscious union with God which is his constant goal. The mystic must be convinced that God is in him and he in God; spiritual insight and intuition claim a yet higher function than reason, and the soul's deep need of God Himself will not rest satisfied with the substitution of Church, or ceremonialism, or surface-fervour.

Our own examination of the religious poems has disclosed that in essential respects, at least, they bear the unmistakable stamp of the mystic. Other witnesses confirm our impression. Osmond, whose definition we have just quoted, has no doubts in the matter: "It would be difficult to say what is not mystical in the verse of Thomas Edward Brown," he says. Brown had, he continues, the reserve, the strong faith, the hope, the "love that's known to few." "It is hardly possible that anyone can have been more aware than Brown was of the Divine Immanence. A striking characteristic of his Nature-mysticism is his way of describing his own experiences in terms of Nature. Perhaps the best of the pieces in the vein is 'The Well,' in which he makes his protest against all that restricts and deadens in him the flow of Divine Life." In further discussion, Osmond points to Brown's poignant sense of loss and
emptiness caused by his own careless reception of "Him that fill-
eth all in all," his longing for union with God in such a poem
as "Dreams," his description, under a variety of metaphors, of the
so-called "Mystic Quest" in a number of poems. Among these he in-
cluded "The Schooner," a poem which is a perfect illustration of the
poet's blending of mysticism with realism. Other readers of the
poems find similar evidence. Brown's early letters to his mother
are marked by a frank piety almost embarrassing to our generation,
but his later poems and letters show, in their increased humility,
their decreased dogmatic assertion, that he felt the impact of the
spiritual confusion of the times. Natural mysticism was his attempt
to find a personal solution, a degree of inner peace. A. K. Tuell
has written:

One gift of the mystic at least is that very power of interior
loneliness which Brown's friends record...to this neighbour
and prince of conviviality our social life is but an accident...
And in the religious verses the isolation of self becomes of course
a contemplative isolation, the solitude of the private soul...
The complete saint would hardly bother to be a poet, it is true.
Yet Pater was right that the saint and the poet have more in
common than either has with the child of this world.

Brown's mystic lyric, therefore, is a free thing, a play of
delightful notions. Sometimes it recalls the daring of Father
Tabb, But the natural suggestion is of the seventeenth century with
its "sparkle of similitude," its hide and seek of "divine wit," its
trail of fancies staid or fine...We note promptly and with amuse-
ment that Brown studied and lectured zestfully upon Quarles. But
the "pious fancies" of Quarles have rather the elasticity of good
rubber than the liberty of air where Brown met his casual sunbeams.
And when all is said, the symbols of Brown are his own, old in
shape sometimes, but with the fresh tone of the child's invented
word. To his secular fancy, indeed, everything follows an amazing
law of analogy to something else...In the Brownish sense, the
sacraments are all about us, visible signs of invisible friskiness.
The symbolism is engaging and unaffected...his is not the hack-
neyed fallacy, a tiresome spinning of fancies because a fancy is
easier than an idea. Rather it is a lively persuasion of the
pressure and significance of natural forms.
All of this is to the point, and all of it is true. Even that reference to the little-known Father John Banister Tabb (1845-1909) is in the proper direction. Tabb, a priest who taught at St. Charles's College near Baltimore, Maryland, during the 'eighties and 'nineties, published several volumes of poetry. His work, marked by religious intensity, humor, and elaborate conceits, does bear some resemblance to Brown's religious lyrics. Both churchmen, both college teachers, Brown and Tabb shared a fondness for humor and a bold and familiar treatment of things divine that set them somewhat apart from American metaphysicals like Edward Taylor or natural mystics like Wordsworth. Tuell's emphasis upon Brown's need for contemplative isolation is also well taken. That he did demand and get the requisite solitude is beyond question, and the fact is explained by his mysticism. The mystic, in his intuitive search for truth, requires this quiet and isolation, for out of these moments of contemplation, introspection, and receptive quiet come the illumination and insight of which his lyrics are the record. Dealing as he does in Ideal, spiritual, moral, immaterial concepts, the mystic poet inevitably turns to symbolism as a means of expressing what is otherwise inexpressible. The more intimate and subtle his matter, the more involved and elaborate his figures of speech are likely to become, so that in the end we have those intricate conceits which are a distinguishing characteristic of metaphysical poetry. Seldom, however, do Brown's fancies seem forced and artificial. This is due in part to his infectious enthusiasm, in part to
his use of a line which is determined more by the demands of speech units and oral rhythms than by formal patterns, and in part by his use of a diction which is now archaic or Biblical, now formal and learned, now colloquial and rugged. There is a constant shifting of tone and mood—from sadness to joy, cynicism to pathos, humor to awe. He indicates his relationship with the seventeenth century metaphysicals also in his startling ideas (God as a celestial surgeon, for example) often expressed in unexpected images and striking turns of phrase.

Brown was a religious rather than a philosophical mystic, and he was a pantheist. He made no claim of special revelation, asserted no peculiar marks of divine favor, evolved no elaborate explanation for his faith or his hopes of eventual salvation. He insisted always that art and nature are basically one. He refused to gloss over the ugly or unlovely facts of experience, to express a thought which was not genuine, and based on reality. His acceptance of vision, his belief in the superiority of intuition as a means of arriving at truth, his trust in emotion rather than logic—all this was balanced and modified by a very strong admixture of what is known as "horse-sense." He was not easily taken in, had good practical judgment. He loved to laugh, particularly at pomposity and self-righteousness. He wore his mysticism "with a difference"; he gave it an original twist, mixed with it those peculiar qualities of mind and heart which I have tried to represent. For the poet who emerges from the elegiac poems, the nature poems, the religious
poems, I can find no more fitting label than that seemingly contradictory one of "realistic mystic." It is, I realize, something less than perfect: but in the words of Jemmy the Red, attempting to drive his team while one horse went forward and the other backward—"There's nothin' puffed."
NOTES

1 "Fives" is a British school game, resembling handball. The poem, probably written in 1875, was first published in the National Observer, April 30, 1892.

2 The Eighteen-Eighties, pp. 65-66.

3 Memorial Volume, p. 197. There is an interesting connection between this poem and a Manx proverb, which reads in translation:
   "When one poor man helps another poor man, God himself laughs."
   Cited in Norris, p. 187.

4 For title see Virgil, Aeneid, VI, 268.

5 Scarlett Rocks are located at the western tip of Castletown Bay. Cf. Tennyson, "Maud," XXIV.

6 I am indebted to Cubbon's bibliography, pp. 14-15, for the originally publication dates.

7 Good Words, XXXIX (1898), 192-93.


10 Ibid., p. 152.

   The remark by Miss Sitwell is from her study Alexander Pope (London, 1930).

12 Letters, I, 153.

13 The editors of Collected Poems supplied the sub-title "Home Loquitur" to Part I, and they indicate that Part II, sub-titled "Respondet AMHOYFOE," was being printed for the first time. Actually, as the editors of GTS (pp. vii-viii) point out, the last portion of this, consisting of some 44 lines, had appeared earlier in Old John and Other Poems under the title "Homini AMHOYFOE." In order to begin this fragment as a separate poem, Brown had changed the present wording of the five opening lines (C.P., 686) to read:

   What can I do, nor am I vexed
   Nor worn-with endless strife
As you are, being perplexed
With suppositions, scribbling o'er the text
Of natural life.

14 The Eighteen-Eighties, pp. 64-65.

15 This, according to Cubbon, is apparently the earliest Brown poem to be written and printed. It is dated June 9, 1868. Several poems were written earlier, but presumably not published in his lifetime.

16 CHEL, XIII, 217.


18 Ibid., pp. 372-73

19 Victorian at Bay, pp. 43-45.
Chapter 8. Summary and Conclusion

Those who have followed our account from beginning to end are now in possession of more information about Thomas Edward Brown, clergyman, teacher, scholar, letter-writer, critic, and poet, than has ever before been assembled in a single study. His was not an exciting life, outwardly. There was little glamor, little adventure. Those who knew him intimately clearly thought of him as a great man, and considered it the greatest honor of their life to have been associated with him. Few men have had their passing mourned with more evidence of a genuine sense of irreplaceable loss.
on the part of his mourners. The chorus of eulogy and praise reached a kind of crescendo in the volume which honored the centenary of his birth in 1930, and in all this time, amid this mass of unstinted praise, there is hardly a single note of discord or disparagement. To know him, we may accurately say, was to love him. But these men and women who were his friends did not praise the man only, they praised his poetry, often in superlative terms. As someone has said, they saw the poetry through the man. We have attempted to reverse that process.

We are not so much concerned with the outer life of the man, as with the inner; for it was the inner man who wrote the poetry which we have just examined. What qualities does that poetry possess which will either remove it completely from serious consideration, or brush away the gathering darkness of oblivion and insure its recognition as a unique and valuable contribution to English literature? That is the question I shall attempt to answer in the next few pages. It is a large order, and I have no illusions about saying here that legendary "last word" on Brown the poet. There is much more that deserves to be said, and I hope, will be said, by more skilled and experienced critics than myself. I will say that the Brown revealed in these letters and poems has in him no slightest touch of littleness, of pettiness, of meanness, of selfishness, of falsehood, or of fear. He was a man to live with.

Of his Manx poems it may be said that they contain a score or more of character portraits which are convincing, genuine, and life-like. Many of them are originals, character types not before treated
in literature. He presents them, or most of them, realistically, and often with penetrating psychological analysis of their inner motives which reminds us of Browning. Tom Baynes is his masterpiece of character portrayal, and Tom's personality dominates the yarns. In short, whether in his thumbnail sketches of the host of people who appear in the narratives, or in the full-length "autobiographies," or the condensed portraits of the lyrics, Brown's skill in the delineation of character is one of his greatest gifts, and his total contribution in this line can be matched by no minor poet of his day, and by but a handful of the major. His work in the dramatic monologue is second only to that of Browning among Victorian poets with whom I am familiar.

Of his use of dialect, perhaps enough has been said already. There is no question in my mind that he was right in using it, the yarns would not be half so valuable or interesting without it, but at the same time it has frightened away many potential readers—unnecessarily, because the dialect is quite easy, but effectively. This language is racy, earthy, vigorous, colloquial. It fits the characters and the matter. It adds measurably to the atmosphere, the humor, the general flavor. When he drops it in favor of standard English in the narratives, the result might be disastrous, as in "Mary Quayle," or it might be a relief and highly successful, as in the blank verse of "Bella Gorry." It is a matter for regret that he did not do more work in blank verse, for this single effort indicates that with a bit more practise he could have handled it in masterly fashion.

These Manx pieces have a special interest as contributions to the school of local color. They are permeated with the sights and sounds
and smells, the customs and the mores, the traditions and legends and superstitions, the character types, and the natural physical characteristics of the Isle of Man. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the island and its people, and nowhere else can you learn so much on this subject as in Brown's narratives.

The yarns have a number of flaws, the most serious of which is probably their prolixity. They ramble interminably. Tom Baynes is largely responsible, for he simply refused to be hurried, and his sidetracking and backtracking and repetition sometimes drag a story out to such length that the reader may lose patience. These digressions have a purpose, and are usually interesting in themselves, but the total effect is one of disregard for the reader's feelings. The charges of abuse of pathos and of excess sentimentality made against the narratives need to be considered in the light of contemporary tastes and standards. Robert Frost once said: "A poem begins with a lump in the throat." Some of Brown's poems begin and end that way. Greater reserve and restraint would have improved them. Some few readers, discovering the manifold values and interests of these bulky tales in verse, will maintain stoutly that these are Brown's greatest and most original contribution to literature, and that it is on these that his reputation should be based. I am sure I enjoy the narratives as heartily as anyone, and appreciate their merits fully, but I cannot agree that they will serve as the cornerstone of his claim to recognition. Certainly they cannot be ignored, but we are speaking, not of story-tellers, or local colorists, or masters of dialect, but of poets —and strictly as a poet, the Brown of the lyrics is greater.
His lyrics, too, have pathos and sentiment—at their worst they babble a sentimental gush, drip with pathetic prettiness. But it is my conviction that a poet should be judged, not by his worst, but by his best. Would anyone now read Tennyson, or Browning, or Arnold, if they had been represented in the anthologies only by their worst? The question is, of course, rhetorical. Yet something very close to this has happened to Brown. With some notable exceptions, those who have praised him highly have singled out for special praise the very poems which the present generation would pass over hastily and forget as soon as possible. Most of the anthologies represent him by "My Garden," a slight little thing, which is no more representative of his best work than "Lilian" is of Tennyson's. Several things of his have been saved, which a kindlier fate would have condemned to the waste basket—but is there one among the poets of the century whose collected poems would not profit from a severe editorial pruning of dead wood?

Many of the nature poems have charm, some of them have a Puckish humor, and a few of severe grandeur. Among the personal and memorial verses, "Clevedon Verses" and "Aber Stations" stand out strongly, and are remarkable examples of their kind. The much-praised "Epistola ad Dakyns" is of greater interest as autobiography than as poetry. "Roman Women" alone should justify his remembrance as a poet. When a friend once remarked in annoyance that he could not find Brown's name in a contemporary periodical article on "Minor Poets," Brown smiled and said, half seriously
and half in jest, "Perhaps I am among the Major." He had confidence that his poems would one day find their public. I doubt whether, at this date, Brown stands much chance of being recognized as one of the "Major" poets, but what chance he has of permanent recognition rests firmly upon the philosophical and religious lyrics. In the previous chapter we examined these lyrics in some detail, pointing out that they are mystical, metaphysical, and pantheistic. In these lyrics he has succeeded in bringing about that transmutation of experience into art which only the true poet can accomplish. He pierces below the surface of life and into the eternal mysteries. In such pieces as "Risus Dei," "Dartmoor," "Disguises," "The Well," "Per Omnia Deus," "The Schooner," and many others, he presents finely-wrought word magic that in its blend of inner vision and boldness of imagery has few counterparts in English poetry.

In reading his lyrics as a whole, one is perhaps most struck by the amazing variety of moods, of subjects, of verse form and meter and rhythm. One is full of sympathy and tenderness, another is overflowing with boyish merriment, still another seethes with anger. The common denominator is emotion: emotion in a thousand forms and disguises, but always warm, and always human. As Lascelles Abercrombie said, his work has not been judged and found wanting, but simply neglected. It is an ambiguous position for a poet to occupy. Several theories have been formulated to account for this neglect, none of them wholly convincing. The bulk of his narratives, and their presentation in dialect, are no doubt con-
tributing factors. It has been suggested that too much of his early work was published anonymously, so that his readers did not connect it with his name. Some have suggested that he did not write enough English verse to merit serious consideration, yet of the 736 pages in *Collected Poems*, almost 200 are in English. Still others have suggested that his unfortunate fondness for Latin titles keeps readers away, and one perplexed reader, grasping at straws, ventures the opinion that critics have refused to give him the attention he deserves simply because his name was Brown! The Smiths and the Joneses and the Browns cannot expect to be taken seriously. It is an ingenious proposal, but can hardly be taken seriously.

The question meanwhile remains unanswered, and I cannot answer it other than by suggesting that Brown has been caught in a vicious circle: he is not appreciated because he does not have readers; he does not have readers because he is not appreciated. If only a few men of established reputation can be persuaded to read his lyrics, and publish their findings, this vicious circle may be broken. One difficulty of late years has been the general inavailability of his work. This obstacle may now be removed, for a new edition of his poems and letters has just been issued by the Liverpool University Press. Reviews of this volume may lead to a general resurgence of interest in his work, and eventually bring about an end to the neglect which has surrounded it for too long.
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APPENDIX I

A BROWN CHRONOLOGY

1830. Born May 5, New Bond St., Douglas, Isle of Man.

1832. Father, Rev. Robert Brown, moved family to the Vicarage, Kirk Braddan.

1845. August. Father suffered serious nervous breakdown.

1846. Summer. Entered King William's College at Castletown.

August. Brother Hugh went to Liverpool as Baptist minister.

October. Eldest brother Robert died in Bahamas.

November. Younger brother Harry died at home.

November 28. Father died.

1847. Mother moved family to The Green, Castletown.

1849. March. Left the College to read at home.

October. Received Barrow Exhibition and went to Christ Church, Oxford, as a servitor.

1850. Went into residence. Elected to a Boulter Scholarship.

1851. Won an additional scholarship.

1853. Won a "Double First," leading his class in Classics, Law and Modern History.

1854. February. Sister Dora died.

April. Elected a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

Appointed Vice-Principal of King William's College.


1857. Married at Kirk Maughold, Isle of Man, to his cousin Amelia Stowell of Ramsey, by Dr. Fowler.

1861. Became Headmaster of Crypt School, Gloucester.

1862. September. Clifton College opened near Bristol.

1863. Went to Clifton as second master and Head of the "Modern Side."

1864. Became a Housemaster; took charge of "Brown's House."

1868. November. Published first magazine article, on "Christ Church Servitors" in Macmillan's Magazine.

1871-78. Published a number of poems in the Isle of Man Times under the general heading of "Rhymes for the Times."

1872. Original publication of Betsy Lee, his first long narrative.


Visited Scotland.

1874. Summer holiday in Switzerland with his wife.

1875-77. Contributed both prose and poetry to Plain Talk, published in Liverpool by Hugh Stowell Brown.

1876. April 21. Death of his son Braddan, aged seven.

1879. John Percival replaced by James Maurice Wilson as Headmaster of Clifton. During December, and January of 1880, Brown spent winter holiday in Rome.

1881. Publication of Po'c's'lle Yarns by Macmillan.

Summer. Visited South Devon and Switzerland.

1882. Death of his brother Alfred.

1883. May. Revisited Switzerland; stayed at Lugano. Vacationed with the Wilson's in Cumberland.

1884. In Isle of Man. Visited Lake District with Dakyns.

Ordained priest by Bishop of Gloucester; licensed to curacy of St. Barnabas, Bristol.
1885. Holiday visits to Isle of Wight, Keswick, and Italy.

1886. February. Death of his brother Hugh.
   Holidays in Wales and Isle of Man.
   Nominated to Archdeaconry of Man; refused appointment.

1887. The Doctor and Other Poems published by Sonnenschein.
   Wife's health failed.


1889. Second edition of Fo'c's'le Yarns.
   The Manx Witch and Other Poems published by Macmillan.
   Wilson resigned as Headmaster of Clifton.

1890. Summer vacation on the Isle of Man.

1891. June. Death of last surviving brother, Will.
   Separate publication of Kitty of the Sherragh Vane and
   The Schoolmasters.
   Second edition of The Doctor.

1892. July 2. Resigned his Mastership at Clifton.
   August. Took up final residence at No. 10 Windsor Mount, Ramsey.

1893. Old John and Other Poems, containing most of his lyrics, pub­
   lished by Macmillan.

1894. Was again offered, and again refused, the Archdeaconry of Man.

1893-96. A series of lectures and articles on Manx life and character.

1897. October 1. Left Man for last time. Visited Wollaston at
   Clifton and sister Margaret Williamson at Cardiff.
   October 25. Returned to Clifton.
   October 29. Collapsed during a speech to students, and died
   shortly after.
   November 1. Buried beside his wife at Redland Chapel, Bristol.
1906. An Appreciation, by Selwyn Simpson.
1919. Son Thomas Birkett Brown died.
1921. Son Hugh died.
1930. Centenary Celebration; publication of Memorial Volume.

APPENDIX II

A listing of the poems, showing date of composition and date and place of original publication, when known. Variant titles are given in parentheses. The order of listing is that of Collected Poems. This information has hitherto been available only in widely-scattered sources, and in random order. For the dates of publication and composition, I am indebted primarily to Cubbon and Radcliffe; supplementary information is from Dakyns, Irwin, Norris, Simpson, Wilson, and H.F.Brown among published materials, and MSS. of several unpublished poems from the Manx Museum and Library.

The "Supplemental List," arranged alphabetically by title, is an initial attempt to list and provide similar information for all of Brown's poems omitted from Collected Poems.

Abbreviations

CCHE : Clifton College Hymn Book, 6th ed., 1924
CP : Collected Poems, London and New York, Macmillan, 1900
Dr : The Doctor and Other Poems, London, Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey and Co., 1887; reprinted 1889
FY : Po'cie's Yarns, London, Macmillan, 1881
IOMT : Isle of Man Times
L : Letters of T. E. Brown, New York, Macmillan; Westminster, Constable, 1900
**MV**: Thomas Edward Brown, A Memorial Volume, Cambridge, University Press, 1930  
**MW**: The Manx Witch and Other Poems, London, Macmillan, 1889  
**OJ**: Old John and Other Poems, London and New York, Macmillan, 1893  
**PT**: Plain Talk—a monthly journal issued in Liverpool (1875-1877) under the editorship of the Rev. Hugh Stowell Brown, the poet's brother  
**S**: Salwyn Simpson, Thomas Edward Brown, the Manx Poet: An Appreciation, London and New York, Walter Scott, 1906

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<tr>
<th>TITLE OR TITLES</th>
<th>DATE OF COMPOSITION</th>
<th>ORIGINAL PUBLICATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Braddan Vicarage</td>
<td>c. 1877</td>
<td>IOMT, Nov. 17, 1877</td>
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<tr>
<td>(I Wonder)</td>
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<td>Chalse a Killey: To Chalse in Heaven</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>IOMT, 1875</td>
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<td>Jus' the Shy</td>
<td>Aug./Sept., 1891</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>(In the Coach-I)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, Ma’am! No, Ma’am!</td>
<td>Aug., 1891</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<td>(In the Coach-II)</td>
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<td>Conjergal Rights</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<td>(In the Coach-III)</td>
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<td>Going to Meet Him</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<td>(In the Coach-IV)</td>
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<td>The Pazons</td>
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<td>Dec., 1878</td>
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<td>Peggy's Wedding</td>
<td>Dec., 1878</td>
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<td>May 5, 1891</td>
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<td>Nov. 26, 1868</td>
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<td>March, 1870</td>
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<td>Roman Women</td>
<td>1880-1895</td>
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<td>In Memoriam (Half-mast the flag)</td>
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<td>Song: Look at me, sun, ere thou set</td>
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<td>OJ</td>
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<td>Dunoon</td>
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<td>The Laugh</td>
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<td>Whitehaven Harbour</td>
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<td>Ibant Obscurae</td>
<td>Aug. 10, 1868</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<td>St. Bee's Head (Cliff Studies)</td>
<td>Aug. 6, 1868</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<td>An Oxford Idyll</td>
<td>May 24, 1875</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Aug., 1883</td>
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<td>Aug., 1883</td>
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<td>Hotwells</td>
<td>June 8, 1868</td>
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<td>To K.H.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Oh far withdrawn into the lonely West)</td>
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<td>Clifton</td>
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<td>OJ</td>
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<td>1875?</td>
<td>PT, June, 1875</td>
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<td>(No Room)</td>
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<td>Salve!</td>
<td>?</td>
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<td>In Memoriam: Paul Bridson</td>
<td>Feb., 1876</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<td>In Memoriam: A.F.</td>
<td>Oct., 1879</td>
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<td>?</td>
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<td>White Foxglove</td>
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<td>New Review, XIII (Oct., 1895), 454</td>
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<td>Octaves</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>New Review, XV (July, 1896), 96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poets and Poets</td>
<td>Aug., 1868</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opifex (Parenthese)</td>
<td>Oct. 8, 1868</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Memoriam: James Macmeikin</td>
<td>April, 1883</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;God is Love&quot;</td>
<td>April 14, 1883</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<td>The Intercepted Salute</td>
<td>July 21, 1869</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaboah</td>
<td>1892?</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessie</td>
<td>July 17, 1868</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Wish</td>
<td>Feb. 25, 1881</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dante and Ariosto</td>
<td>Feb 25, 1881</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
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<td>Boccaccio (Sonetto)</td>
<td>Feb. 25, 1881</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
</tr>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>To E.M.C.</td>
<td>Mar. 14, 1881</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chance-child of some lone sorrow on the hills)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Three kings from out the Orient)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.T.W.</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Organist in Heaven</td>
<td>May 5, 1878</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wesley in Heaven)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To E.M.O.</td>
<td>May 6, 1878</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Oakley, whenas the bass you beat)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A Sermon at Clevedon: Good</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>CP</td>
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<td>Friday (Norton Wood: A Sermon)</td>
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<td>A Fable: For Henricus</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.Lakyns, Esq., Jun.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pessimist; or, The Raven and the Jackdaw</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Sinking of the Victoria: Apr. 13, 1893</td>
<td></td>
<td>National Observer,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Has Nelson Heard?&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XPIEMA: To His Godson</td>
<td>Mar. 2, 1874</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prologue: Spes Altera</td>
<td>June, 1896</td>
<td>IOMT, June 10,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(To the Future Manx Poet)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sept. 5, 1896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication: To Sing a Song</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>IOMT, Dec. 1, 1877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shall Please My Countrymen</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Narratives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsy Lee</td>
<td>1872</td>
<td>I. Evening, Cockermouth, Cumberland, n.d., c. 1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Rose</td>
<td>1872/3</td>
<td>I. Evening, Cockermouth, Cumberland, 1873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain Tom and Captain Hugh</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>IOMT, Dec. 15, 1877-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jan. 12, 1878; Douglas, Brown &amp; Son, 1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommy Big-Eyes</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>IOMT, Nov. 22, 1879-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Apr. 10, 1880; Douglas, Brown &amp; Son, 1880</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Countrymen, Whate'er Is Left to Us (Prefatio) (Dedication)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Doctor</td>
<td>1875/6?</td>
<td>IOMT, Oct. 28-Dec. 23, 1876; Douglas, Brown &amp; Son, 1876</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kitty of the Sherragh Vane</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Dr</td>
</tr>
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<td>The Schoolmasters</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Dr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude: First Comes Tom Baynes among These Sorted Quills</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>MW</td>
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<td>The Manx Witch: A Story of The Laxdale Mines</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>MW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job the White</td>
<td>1894/5?</td>
<td>New Review, XIII (Dec., 1895), 615-27</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Indiaman</td>
<td>1883/9?</td>
<td>MW</td>
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<td>Mary Quayle: The Curate's Story</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>MW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bella Gorry: The Pazon's Story</td>
<td>June, 1880</td>
<td>MW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Envoy: Go Back!</td>
<td>Feb. 27, 1881</td>
<td>CP</td>
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</table>

(Lyrics, continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hallam's Church: Clevedon (Clevedon I)</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dora (Clevedon II)</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secuturus (Clevedon III)</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cui Bono? (Clevedon IV)</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star-Steering (Clevedon V)</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Per Omnia Deus (Clevedon VI)</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Norton Wood: Dora's Birthday (Clevedon VII)</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Bristol Channel (Clevedon VIII)</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>The Voices of Nature</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Clevedon IX)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>May Margery</td>
<td>Apr. 14, 1877</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Lynton I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Malmsmead</td>
<td>Apr. 26, 1877</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Lynton II)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk! milk! milk!</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lynton III)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynton to Porlock: Exmoor</td>
<td>July 8, 1877</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Lynton IV)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweet Breeze</td>
<td>Apr. 26, 1877</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lynton V)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Symphony</td>
<td>Apr., 1877</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lynton VI)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Empty Cup</td>
<td>Aug. 18, 1868</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pitcher</td>
<td>July 17/18, 1868</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song: Weary Wind of the West</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veris et Favoni</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Gremio</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exile</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climbing</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risus Dei</td>
<td>June 6, 1875</td>
<td>OJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dartmoor: Sunset at Chagford: Homo Loquitur</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dartmoor: Sunset at Chagford: Respondet AHMIOYFPOE</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>OJ(in part); CP(complete)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Prayers</td>
<td>June 5, 1875</td>
<td>PT, Nov., 1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LICIFICATION: For J. SclhP Percivale (Tap O'the Hill)</td>
<td>Mar. 8, 1870</td>
<td>Church Monthly, May, 1898</td>
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<td>Juventa Perennis</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>CP</td>
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Vespers: May 6, 1878  CP
I Bended unto Ma  May 6, 1878  CP
A Bough of May  May 6, 1878  CP
Is it Amavi or is it Amo?  ?  CP
A Fragment: Yon Bird  ?  CP
To W.E. Henley  ?  CP
When Love Meets Love  May 5, 1878  CP
Between Our Folding Lips  May 6, 1878  CP
Ex Ore Infantis  Dec., 1894  CP; L, II, 74
O God to Thee I Yield  1878?  CP
To G. [George] Trustrum  Dec., 1895  CP; L, II, 157
An Autumn Trinket  Oct. 26, 1870  CP
Reconciliation  July 16, 1875  OJ
Sad! Sad!  May, 1870  CP
In a Fair Garden  June 16, 1875  PT, April, 1876
(Seeking)
The Schooner  Oct. 5, 1868  OJ
Euroclydon  June 15, 1875  PT, Dec., 1875
(Nobiscum)
(Reefing)
(The Rocket)
Disguises  July 5; Oct. 3  PT, Sept., 1876
and 5, 1875  and Aug., 1877
My Garden  July 8, 1875  PT, Sept., 1876
Land, Ho!  July 14, 1875  OJ
Praesto  July 5, 1875  PT, Sept., 1876
Evensong  July 5, 1875  PT, Sept., 1876
(Defunct the Valley of my soul was lit)
Aber Stations  April, 1879  OJ
A Morning Walk  Nov. 2, 1868  OJ
Epistola ad Dakyans  Dec., 1869  OJ
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nature and Art</td>
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<td>(I Once Loved Nature); (Development) (Nature and Human Nature)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Life</td>
<td>June 27, July, 1868</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alma Mater (Mother Earth)</td>
<td>Nov. 27, 1868</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<td>Triton Esuriens</td>
<td>Aug. 13, 1868</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<td>Israel and Hellas</td>
<td>June 20, 1868</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<td>Dreams</td>
<td>June 9, 1868</td>
<td>OJ</td>
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<td>Preparation</td>
<td>June 4, 1875</td>
<td>PT, July, 1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting</td>
<td>June, 1875</td>
<td>PT, July, 1875</td>
</tr>
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<td>Obviam</td>
<td>June, 1875</td>
<td>PT, Aug., 1875</td>
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<td>Specula</td>
<td>June, 1875</td>
<td>PT, Aug., 1875</td>
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<td>&quot;Social Science&quot;</td>
<td>?</td>
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<td>At the Play</td>
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**SUPPLEMENTAL LIST**

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<td>A Bishop He Would A-Wooing Go</td>
<td>1878?</td>
<td>IOMT, Apr. 20, 1878</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Chorus from the Ajax of Sophocles (Hail, Glorious Salamis!)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>S, pp. 229-31</td>
</tr>
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<td>A Gift, Hugh Arnold, from an aged man</td>
<td>Oct., 1895</td>
<td>L, II, 127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Appeal</td>
<td>1877?</td>
<td>IOMT, May 12, 1877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Elegy: To Madame C. Titiens (In Memoriam)</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>L, I, 48</td>
</tr>
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<td>A Night of Spring</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Annihilation</td>
<td></td>
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<td>A Parody of &quot;Hunt the Wren&quot;</td>
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<td>IOMT, Mar. 28, 1878</td>
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<td>Title</td>
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<td>A Song of the See (Hobson's Enfants)</td>
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<td>IOMT, Mar. 30, 1878</td>
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<td>A Translation from Salisbury</td>
<td>June, 1875</td>
<td></td>
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<td>At Sea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Baccy Bill, The</td>
<td></td>
<td>IOMT, Dec. 26, 1874</td>
</tr>
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<td>Baldwin Nelly</td>
<td>Nov. 15, 1875</td>
<td>IOMT, Apr., 1875</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ballad: to the air of &quot;A Fine Old English Gentleman&quot;</td>
<td>1875?</td>
<td>IOMT, Apr. 10, 1875</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bishopric, The</td>
<td>1875?</td>
<td>IOMT, Jan. 23, 1875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken Troth, The</td>
<td>Jan. 10, 1888</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brothers, The: A Ramsey Song</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>By Courier, c.1897</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Brought to Maro's Tomb&quot;</td>
<td>Nov., 1893</td>
<td>L, I, 225, 232</td>
</tr>
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<td>By the mark five!</td>
<td>c. 1893</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caecus Amor (I Know That He Will Come, Mother)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Callimachi Hymnus: a translation</td>
<td></td>
<td>S, pp. 228-29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canto Inferno</td>
<td>Mar. 14, 1881</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cease, My Soul, Thy Tribulation</td>
<td></td>
<td>CCHB, No.173; MV, p. 209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge, The</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chorus of Angels</td>
<td>Oct., 1850</td>
<td>S, pp. 226-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cistercian Propagandhar, The</td>
<td>Jan. 28, 1894</td>
<td>L, II, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A Fragment)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliffs of Bradda, The</td>
<td></td>
<td>S, p. 209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(On Bradda's Heights I Took My Stand)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clover Bloom, The</td>
<td>Jan. 6, 1888</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Courtship Extraordinary: (Rowly and Mona)</td>
<td>1878?</td>
<td>IOMT, Apr. 13, 1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credo</td>
<td>Aug. 18, 1868</td>
<td>GTS, pp. xx-xxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cupid's Garden</td>
<td>Aug., 1893?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dawn Parting

Dodie

Drs. Fiddle and Faddle

Endless Variety of Form and Color May 10, 1878

Epigrams 1876?

Etty Fell Apr., 1894 Ex. Annual, 1910, p. 81.

Fall Silent, Gentle Snow 1878?

Festinatio Veris Jan. 1, 1897 New Review, XVI
(Sonnet: To J.R.M. [ozley]) (March, 1897), 336;
(Speed on, great Sol) L, II, 190

Fire at the Albert Brewery, The Mar., 1894

Forsaken, The 1870 IOMT, Jan. 1, 1871

Gazing eastward, gazing seaward

Gel of Ballasallaw, The 1894? L, II, 45-46

Good Manx Broth Nov., 1874

Guardian Angels

Hame cam our guid man at e'em Nov. 4, 1868

Hannah

High Overhead Apr. 13, 1877 GTS, pp. 274-75

Hobsoniana 1878? IOMT, Mar. 9, 1878

Humble Pie 1875? IOMT, Dec. 25, 1875

Illusion June 9, 1878


In Memoriam: F.M. Bartholomew Dec. 26, 1893 L, I, 239-40

Irma June 14, 1875 L, I, 238

Irwin, whenas the suns Dec. 25, 1893
Jack Sartfell and His Wife Nan March, 1894

Jinney Spinney (Clausula Vagula)

John the Divine and the New J.P.'s 1877?

Johnny the Bogh 1876?

Kiss, The May 31, 1893

Kuckandhriss

Laxey Lacrymans 1897

Let the World Run Round

Library Revisited, The May 5, 1878

Litany, The July 13, 1878

Love of Christ, The

Mr. Collett of Cronk y Voddy 1876

Mr. Hobson's Education 1878

Mr. Isdale's Education 1878

Mylecharaine Aug., 1893

My Rose

My See! My See! 1871

 Nel Corso (Two waftures of great eyes)

Newsboy's Petition, The Dec., 1877

Now All Men Thank Ye God

0!Father's at the Sea

Oh the Voice of My Love Feb.26, 1894

O Jesus, Saviour, from on High 1872

Old Church Bell, The

IOMT, May 5, 1877

IOMT, Feb. 5, 1876

IOMT, May 22, 1897

L, II, 234-36

S, pp. 227-28

IOMT, Jan. 8, 1876

IOMT, Mar. 16, 1878

IOMT, Feb. 23, 1878

L, I, 48-49

IOMT, Feb. 11, 1871

National Observer, June 10, 1893

CGHB, No.112; MV, p. 206

Lullabies of the Four Nations(1915), p. 91

CGHB, No.88; MV, p.205

S, pp. 17-18
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE OR TITLES</th>
<th>DATE OR COMPOSITION</th>
<th>ORIGINAL PUBLICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O Love Divine, how sweet Thou art!</td>
<td></td>
<td>GCHE, No. 141; MV, p. 208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O Night of purity and peace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O Shakespeare</td>
<td>May 5, 1878</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pazon Gill</td>
<td>1876 ?</td>
<td>IO MT, Jan. 29, 1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicat Avis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prothalamon for Amy</td>
<td>March 28, 1894</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rain, The</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey, Isle of Man, to Haslemere, Surrey</td>
<td>1895?</td>
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<td>Robbiad, The</td>
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<td>Shooting</td>
<td>1877</td>
<td>GTS, p. 275</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Nay, why didn't kill it?)</td>
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<td>Short Manx Litany, The</td>
<td>Feb. 26, 1894</td>
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<td>Shut Not out the Dead</td>
<td>Sept. 30, 1849</td>
<td>S, pp. 225-26</td>
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<td>Simon Liverpool and Man</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>IO MT, Jan. 29, 1876</td>
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<td>Sodor and Mann</td>
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<td>Sonnet: To Sir Joseph West</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>IO MT, Nov. 2, 1895; L, II, 142-43</td>
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<td>Ridgeway</td>
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<td>(A stainless sword, Ceylon, we give to thee)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sonnet: To the House of Keys</td>
<td>1876/78</td>
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<td>Soul of the Mountains: Brenda Valleys</td>
<td>July 7, 1878</td>
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<td>Stand for Your Country</td>
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<td>Take a Novel</td>
<td>Dec., 1893</td>
<td>L, I, 234-35</td>
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<td>Taking of the Mheillea, The</td>
<td>1897</td>
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<td>Three Manx Songs</td>
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<td>Thy Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>To G. H. Wollaston</td>
<td>June 25, 1881</td>
<td>L, I, 93-95</td>
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<td>(À mon ami G.H.W.) (Evolène)</td>
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<td>To God Alone the Song We Raise</td>
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<td>To H. G. Dakyns</td>
<td>Oct. 6, 1892</td>
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<td>Toil and Burden of the Sea, The</td>
<td>May 6, 1893</td>
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<td>To J. E. Pearson</td>
<td>Dec. 21, 1879</td>
<td>L, I, 88</td>
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<td>Tom Hone</td>
<td>Jan. 7, 1888</td>
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<td>To Océanus emendator</td>
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<td>Weltschmerz</td>
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<td>What if it all should go?</td>
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<td>What Next?</td>
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<td>When all the sky is pure</td>
<td>June 13, 1875</td>
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<td>When youth's gayardours</td>
<td>Feb. 21, 1894</td>
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<td>Where is Margarita going?</td>
<td>1878?</td>
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<td>You'll get lave</td>
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Autobiography

I, Raymond Everett Mizer, was born in Licking County, Ohio, September 29, 1913. I received my secondary education at Perry-Pike (now Union Consolidated) High School in Coshocton County, Ohio, and went on to Muskingum College, where I received the degree Bachelor of Arts in 1940. During the 1941-42 school year I served as Principal of the Jersey Rural School in Licking County. After a tour of duty in the U. S. Army, which took me to The Philippines and Japan, I began graduate study in English at The Ohio State University, and received the degree Master of Arts in 1946. From 1947 until 1950, I was employed as Instructor in English at Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa. Since 1950 I have completed the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy. Following graduation, I shall assume my duties as a member of the Department of English at DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana.