

his poetic counter and till and struck, were it but with his gimcrack mandolin, home.

Tennyson's influence on poetry may, for a time, be modified. This is the fate of every man who throws himself into his own age, catches the echo of its temporary phrases, is kept busy in battling with its temporary delusions. There are many men whom history has for a time forgotten to whom it owes more than it could count. But if Tennyson is extinguished, it will be with the most glorious extinction. There are two ways in which a man may vanish—through being thoroughly conquered or through being thoroughly the Conqueror. In the main the great Broad Church philosophy which Tennyson uttered has been adopted by every one. This will make against his fame. For a man may vanish as Chaos vanished in the face of creation, or he may vanish as God vanished in filling all things with that created life.

G. K. Chesterton.

II.

ROBERT BROWNING.*

A party of tourists cannot travel by a more comfortable funicular railway than this to the summit of Parnassus, there to enjoy liberal prospects while they picnic and the Muses attend. Genial, affluent, sensitive, discriminating, youthful and mature, sometimes eloquent, Mr. Stopford Brooke straightens out the tangles of Browning, and, what is better, does not find the chief joy of Browning's poetry in the tangles. The pleasure of reading such a volume lies largely in testing our own feeling for this and for that as we go along. Have we felt the meaning and the music as broadly or as finely as the critic? No? Then an upward stretch; a pull of his friendly hand, and we may see things from where he sees them. Or has he by misadventure failed to find the fortunate point of observation? Then it is exhilarating to assert our independence, and, like Bottom in the ass-head, walk up and down, singing to our own tune and showing that we are not afraid. Thus both ways we may get satisfaction—out of our acknowledged

*The Poetry of Robert Browning. By Stopford A. Brooke. Isbister and Company.

inferiority and out of some imagined superior insight.

Mr. Brooke begins by contrasting the genius of Browning with that of Tennyson, and setting forth the causes that delayed so long the popularity of the former. Browning was a psychological analyst before psychological analysis became the mode; in shorter poems he was an impressionist before impressionism was discovered; he felt more deeply than others the clash and complexity of modern life, and, by an original theory which the public could not at once accept, he resolved the dissonance into a harmony, while yet he saved himself from the monotony of a theorist by the vast variety of his subjects and by a certain youthful freshness of temper; he was a historical critic in verse, as in his poems which revive the Renaissance period before historical criticism was fully understood or appreciated; he broke away from conventions in a conventional age, thus anticipating a movement of the later years of his century; though English in certain qualities of his mind, he took little interest in English thought or English social questions; he was rather cosmopolitan than patriotic. Perhaps we may add that the poetry of a great poet being a discipline of the feelings and the imagination, and the public having, for sufficient reasons, accepted the tutelage of Tennyson, it was needful that the training of the accepted master should be complete before a second master could be widely received. We can hear many singers with pleasure if they do not dominate our senses and our fancy and our thought; but the service of a master is exacting, and for the time is exclusive of a different service.

Mr. Brooke passes to Browning's treatment of nature. Tennyson humanises nature; the natural world with Browning (speaking generally) is, like humanity, one manifestation of the creative joy of God, but it is a manifestation independent of man. Earth and sea are "giant creatures who are not ourselves; Titans who live with one another and not with us;" man is the culmination to which nature tends, "its seal, its close, but not it." Nature, in Browning's poetry, may, indeed, be "unsympathetic wholly, mocking and playing with us like a faun." Browning's method of presenting landscape is studied by the critic, his extraordinary

love of colour is illustrated, and also his universal love of living creatures, not only beautiful creatures, but what we call grotesque. A chapter follows in which Browning's "theory of human life" is set forth with illustrations from "Pauline" and "Paracelsus," in which early poems the theory is formulated. Here Mr. Brooke cannot be novel, but he is clear and precise. Man's tendency toward God through the shows and similitudes of earth is the central idea of the poet; it is part of man's discipline to accept loyally the limitations of life, while pressing through them to something higher; and in all failures of earth lies the promise of his infinite success. This naturally leads to "Browning as the poet of art," for the strivings of the true artist form a conspicuous example of the applications of Browning's theory of life. Special chapters are devoted to "Sordello," in whom Mr. Brooke discovers a Sordello-Browning, and to "The Dramas," which the critic, while recognising much in them that we should unwillingly lose, regards as the obstinate errors of one who was not a dramatist born. In his study of the "Poems of the passion of love" Mr. Brooke's contention is that (speaking again in a general way) Browning's imagination "was more intellectual than passionate; that while he felt love, he also analysed, even dissected it, as he wrote about it." The wide range of passions "other than love" of which Browning treats, his exhibition of individual personages who are also general types—"imaginative representations," as Mr. Brooke styles them, for want of a better name—and womanhood in Browning are dealt with in successive chapters. And what reasonable bystander will censure Mr. Brooke for falling fathom-deep in love with Balanston? His imagination is so youthful that there is no bar through disparity of years, and Mr. Brooke is much more an Athenian than a Spartan, moving more to the Ionian than to the Dorian mood. Finally, "The Ring and the Book" is taken as a turning-point in Browning's development—that at which intellect began to oust imagination; and as the volume is not on Browning, but on his poetry, and Mr. Brooke finds comparatively little poetry in the latest volumes, they are discussed with a few hasty words.

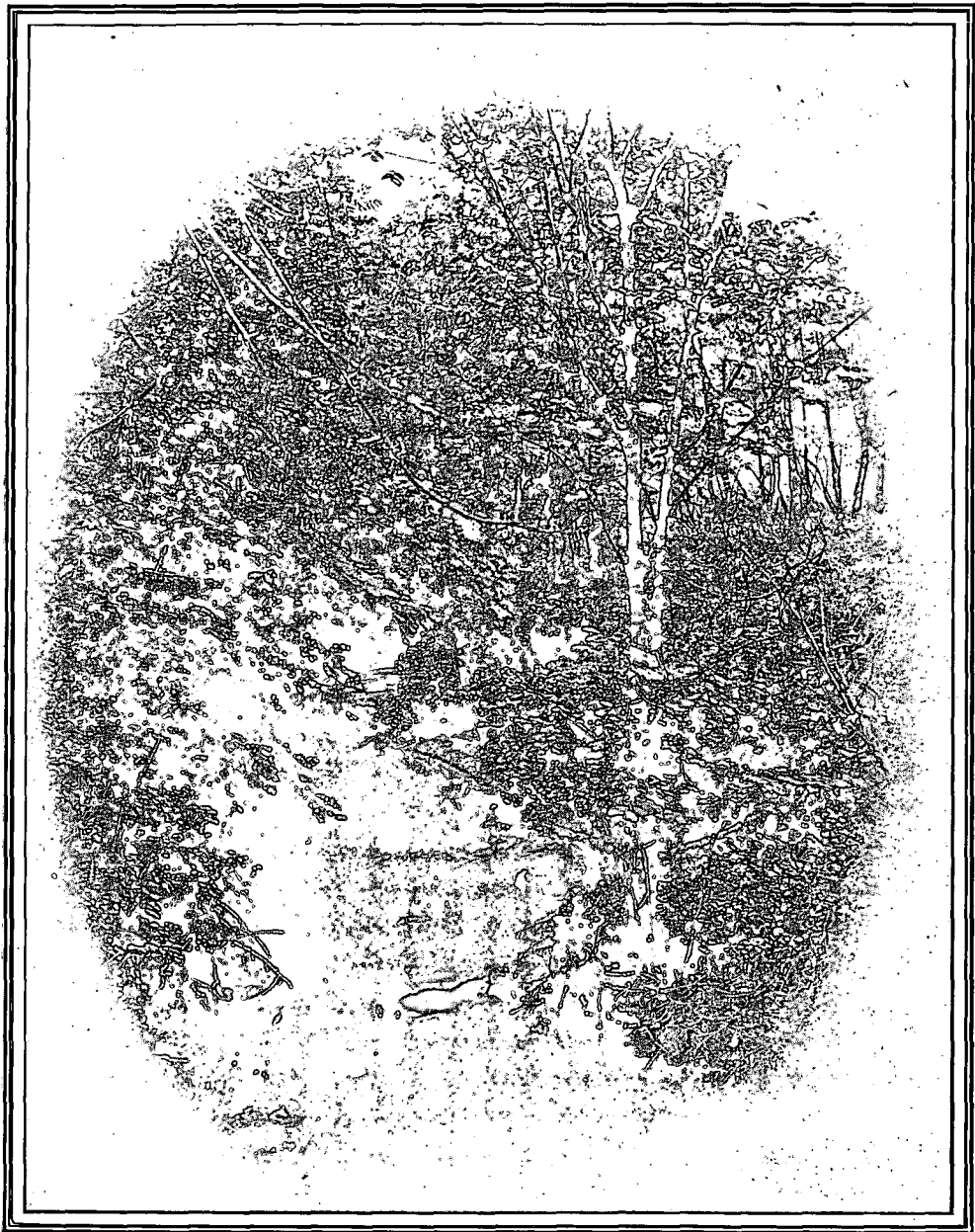
I do not think that Browning's imagination waned. But I think that he had again and again expressed his best thoughts and his best feelings in a direct, immediate way; and that in competition with his earlier self he was forced to new and less fortunate methods. The idea that truth is to be wrought out through falsehood grew upon him; and he more and more threw himself into a casuistic sympathy with characters alien to his instincts, his effort often being to use his opponents to demonstrate the truth of some portion of what we may term the Browning philosophy or doctrine of life—which term is not meant to describe it as purely intellectual, for this "philosophy" was a matter of feeling or of faith or of passion more, perhaps, than of the reason. He had said his say one way—and the best way; now he would wring some fragment of his own truth out of the lips of an unwilling witness. His effort was that of an athlete, and even where the result was not in itself beautiful, may there not be a certain æsthetic beauty in the spectacle of an old athlete's exercise?

On the whole, when we close this volume, our feeling is the satisfactory feeling of Tennyson's Northern Farmer:

"I thowt a 'ad' summut to saäy,
An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said an' I
coom'd awaäy."

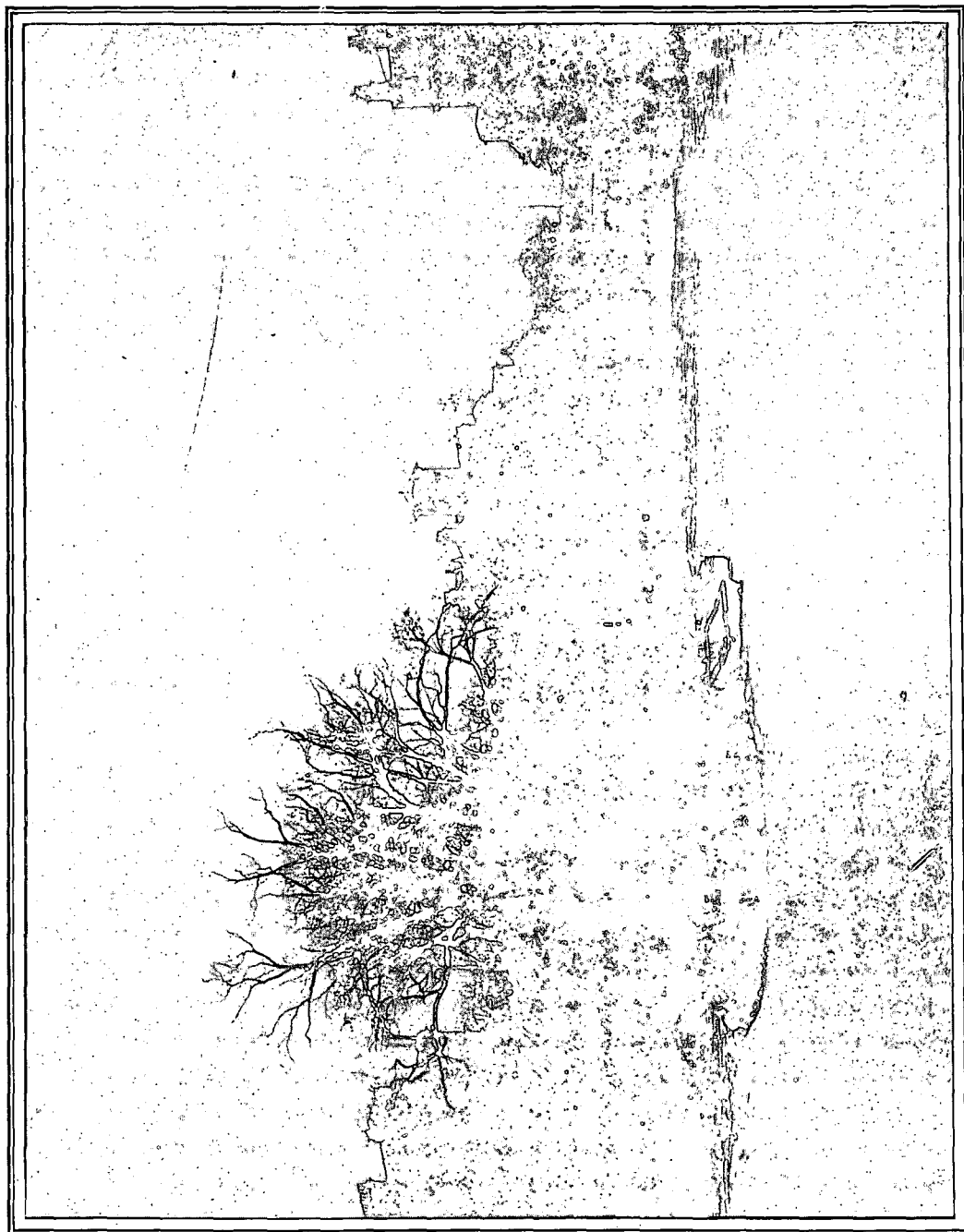
But in speaking of "Fifine at the Fair," Mr. Brooke seems to have missed the mark. He is prepared for opposition from those who mistake cleverness for poetry and find "Fifine" delightful; but in the future, he is assured, this piece of ingenuity will be the study only of pedants. Mr. Brooke has misread this admirable poem, which for vigour of thought, noble play of imagination and brilliance of expression is hardly surpassed by any work of its author. Its subject, Mr. Brooke tells us, is an everyday occurrence; a husband grows a little weary of his married life and indulges a passing desire for novelty and change. Is this very ordinary affair worth two thousand lines of verse?

Is not Mr. Brooke's sight somehow holden that he cannot see Browning's poem? A husband's desire for a new experience is as much the subject of "Fifine" as tar-water is the subject of Berke-

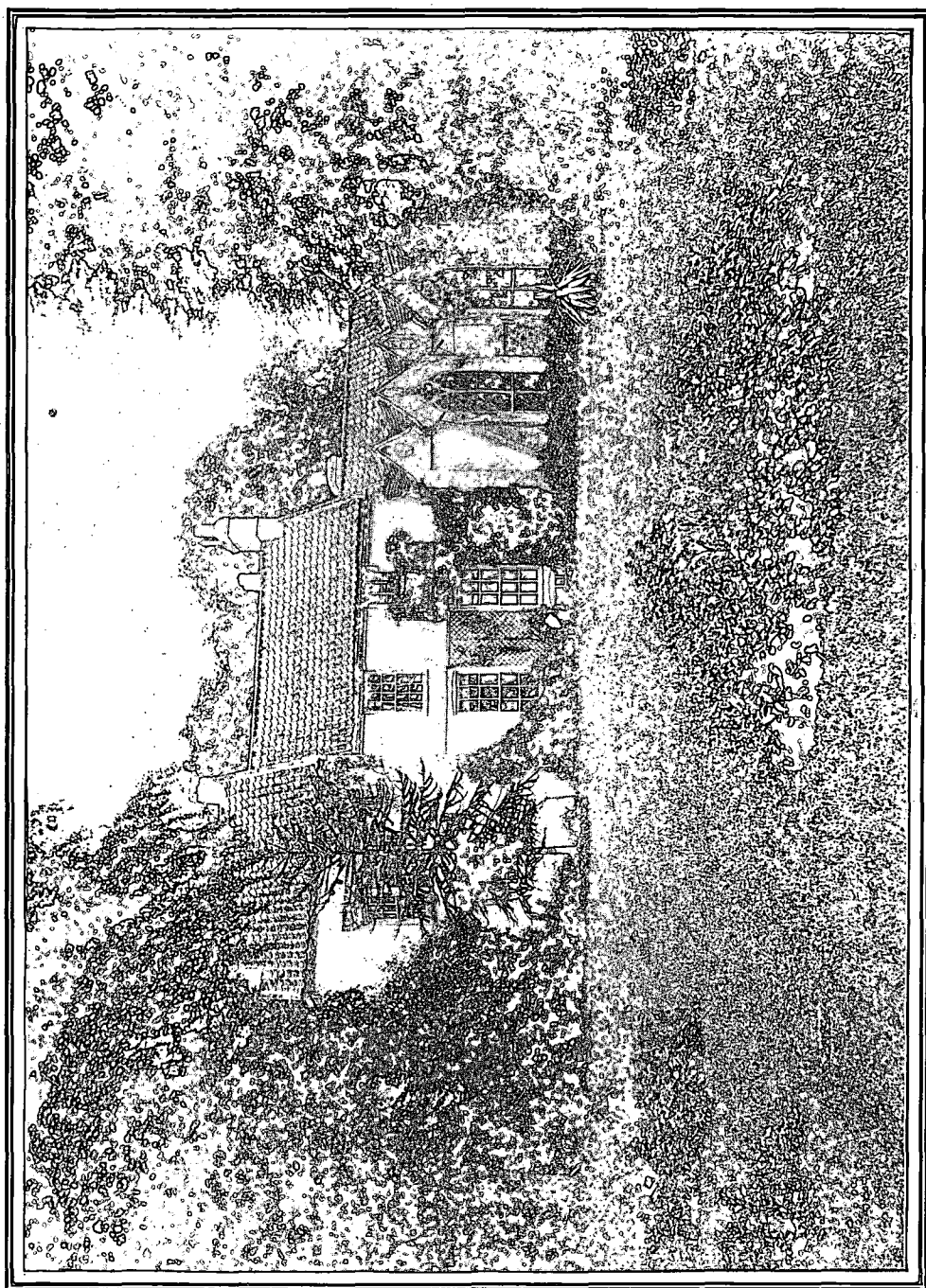


"THE BROOK." SOMERSBY.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles;
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.



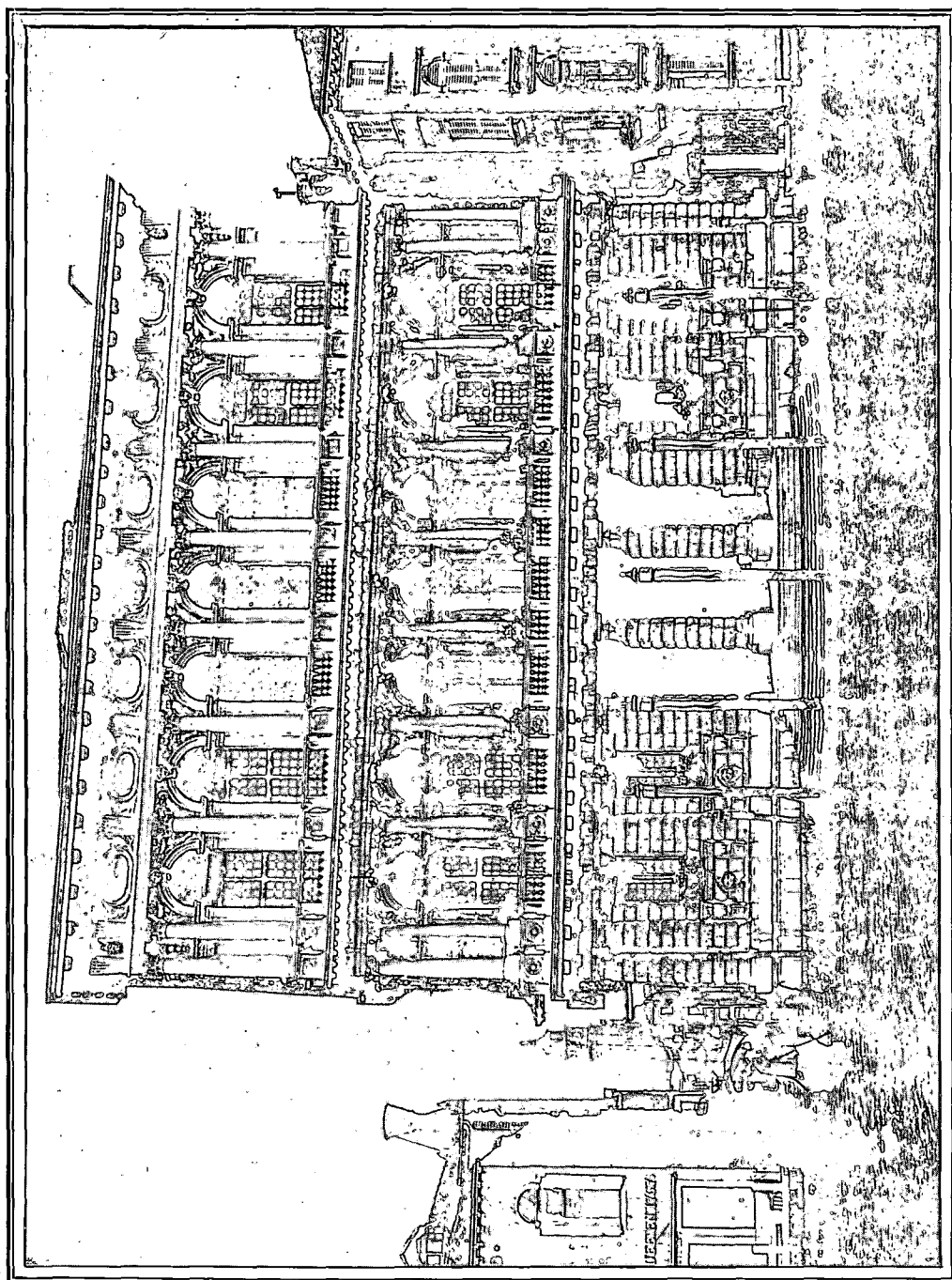
THE VIEW THAT BROWNING LOVED BEST.



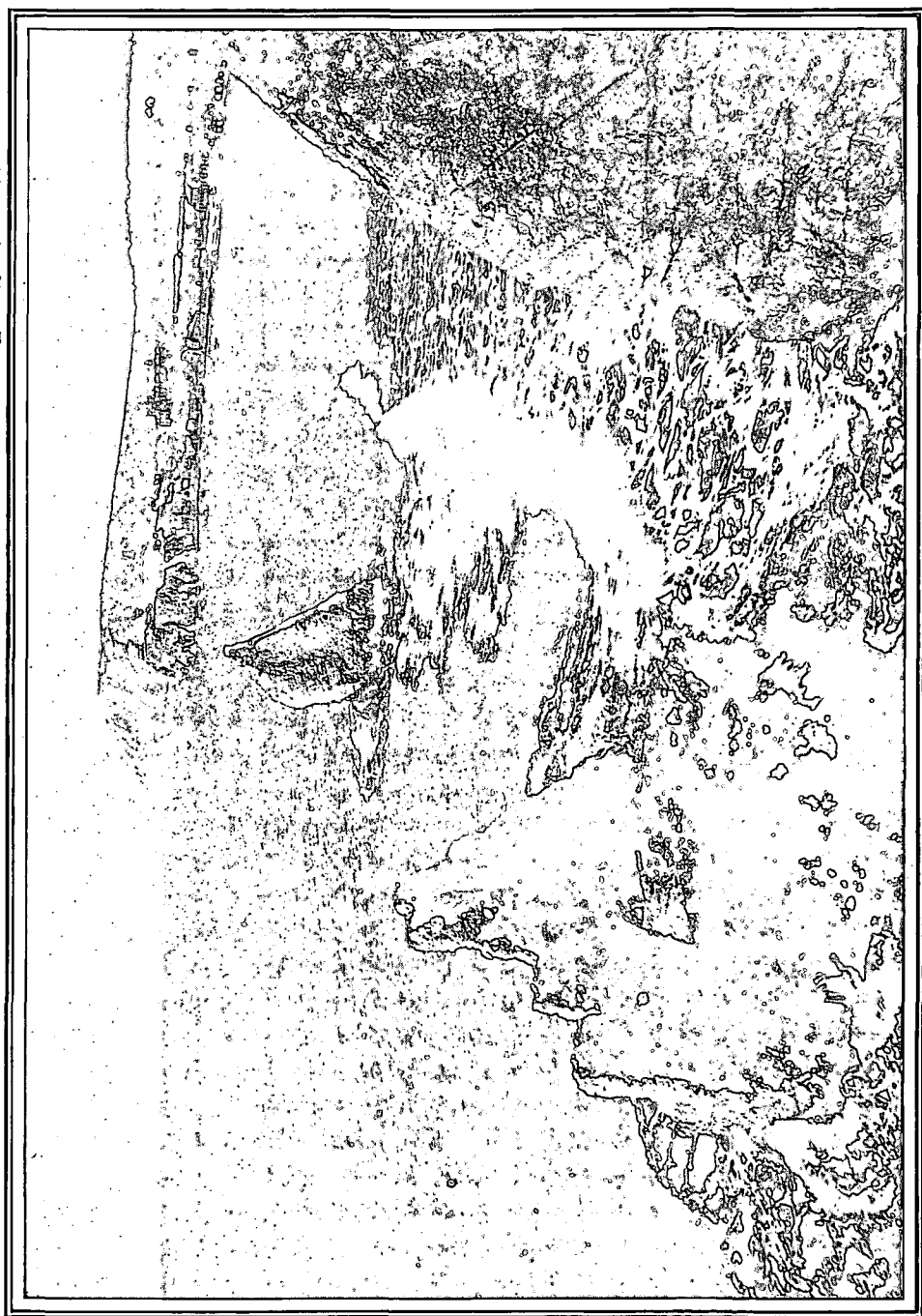
TENNYSON'S BIRTHPLACE.



TENNYSON'S LANE, HASLEMERE.



THE PALAZZO REZZONICO, VENICE, WHERE BROWNING DIED, DECEMBER 12, 1889.



FRESHWATER BAY. ARCHED ROCK. ONE OF TENNYSON'S FAVOURITE HAUNTS.

ley's "Siris." The theme is actually one of the highest that can occupy a poet; it is a study—passionate, imaginative, spiritual—of the relation in human life of illusion to reality, of the transitory to the permanent, of falsehood to truth. The speaker, perhaps, is one who follows *deteriora*, but, if so, he compensates himself by a desperate intellectual sincerity in seeing and approving the *meliora*. He is a many-sided explorer and experimenter in life, imaginative as well as intellectual, witty and wise. Browning detaches himself, and especially by the ambiguous closing incident, from this keen-witted critic of life; the poet desires, as Butler in his "Analogy" desired, to take lower ground than his own; but the curious student of man and woman, of love and knowledge—imagination aiding his reason—is compelled by the very truth of things, as he perceives it, to work out his problems upon Browning's own lines, and he becomes a witness to the truth of Browning's own conclusions. Saul, before the poem closes, is also among the prophets. For him, as for Browning, "God and the soul stand sure." He sees,

as Browning sees, man reaching upward through illusions—religious, philosophic, scholarly, artistic—to the Divine. The Pornic fair has become the Venice carnival, and this has grown into the vision of man's life, in which the fizgig of a philosophy or of a religion has replaced the fizgig of the gipsy in tricot. And in the matter of the love of man and woman, Browning's experimenter in life perceives in the end that the permanent—which is the Divine—can be reached through a single, central point of human love, but not through any vain attempt to manufacture an infinite by piecing together a multitude of points. I imagine that such a misnamed Don Juan as this, if he really intends to meet Fifine again, will be well able to hold her at arm's length, and win from her the truth of her gipsyhood and the heart of her poor mystery, which he certainly desires to understand. In the manner of Jaques he may say:

"To her will I: out of these baladines
There is much matter to be heard and learn'd."

Edward Dowden.



TENNYSON'S
CROSS.
HIGH DOWN.

PHILADELPHIA IN FICTION

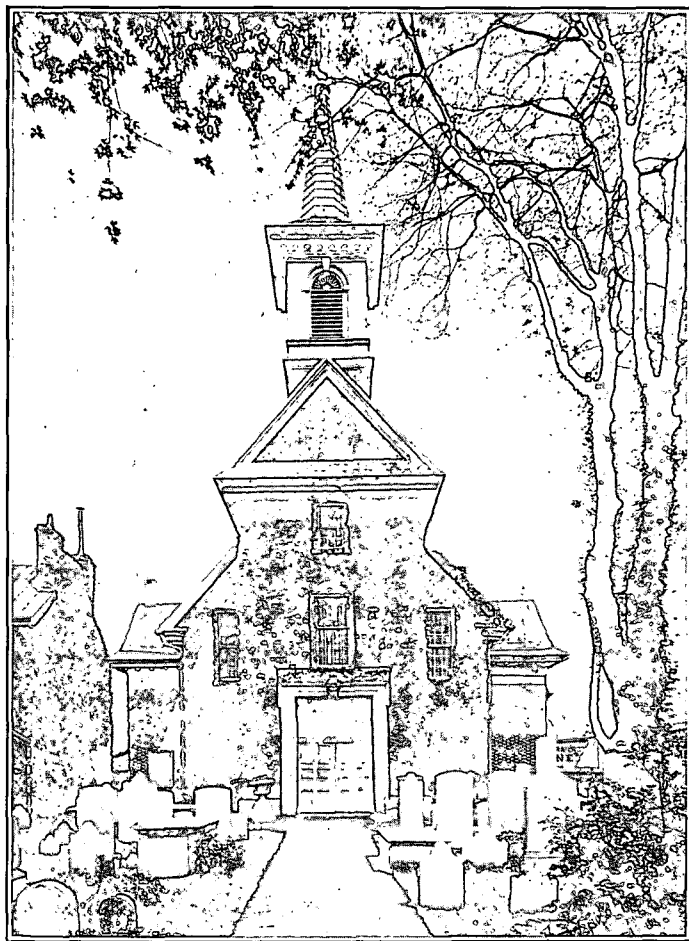
The steady gravitation to New York of those who write books has so accustomed us to look upon that city as the book-making centre that it is seldom realised that the country owes to Philadelphia some of its most interesting and successful literary entertainers. When Frank R. Stockton died, it surprised even Philadelphia readers to learn that he had been born in their city. Louisa M. Alcott, except to her biographers, was a New England woman; she was born in Germantown, a suburb of Philadelphia. Perhaps the most popular of American storytellers to-day, surely the most widely known, Richard Harding Davis, by birth,

family relations and training belongs to Philadelphia, and he wrote the story which first won him recognition while working on one of its newspapers. Dr. Weir Mitchell, whose novels have earned for him a reputation hardly less definite than that which attests to his skill as a neurologist, is more closely identified with his city; but his case is somewhat exceptional. Owen Wister, whose short stories of the plains prepared the way for *The Virginian*, comes of an old Philadelphia family, and has always resided here. Yet his work probably has left the impression that he is a Western man. Nevertheless, a considerable number of maga-

zine writers and novelists are now, or have been at some time, Philadelphians. Rebecca Harding Davis, Ellen Olney Kirk, John Luther Long, Thomas Janvier, Charles Heber Clark (Max Adler), John Habberton, Cyrus Townsend Brady, Robert Neilson Stephens—these are names of the present which suggest themselves readily.

One of the very earliest of American novels, *Wieland*, or *the Transformation* (1798), was by Charles Brockton Browne, a Philadelphian. George Lippard, during the second quarter of the past century, laid the scene of the most popular of his ten novels in Philadelphia. During the palmy days of *Graham's Magazine* and *Sartain's Magazine* Philadelphia was the literary centre of the country, and drew to itself the persons, as well as the contributions, of Poe and his contemporaries of rank.

But that was sixty years ago. The other



"Mary Fairthorne rode out Swanson Street and passed the old Gloria Dei Church, the oldest church in America."—*"Circumstance."* S. Weir Mitchell.