

Robert Browning and Schopenhauer.

Von Alfred Forman (London).

I do not know in what estimation as Poet and Thinker Robert Browning is at the present time held in Germany; but here, at any rate, his title to rank among the foremost glories of English literature has long ago ceased to be seriously disputed. For myself, I have for many years past been accustomed to speculate as to whether or not he was, in some way or other, familiar with certain of the leading ideas of Schopenhauer's Philosophy; but until quite lately I had never met with any explicit reference by him thereto. It was therefore with the profoundest interest that I read in the „Daily Telegraph“ of the first of July last, in allusion to a recent sale of Browning MSS. and letters, the following statement:

Browning on the soul.

The recent Browning sale has unloosed other letters. The Skirrow collection will be accompanied by a series of sixty-five addressed to Miss Fitzgerald, of Shalstone, between 1876 and 1889. In the first of these he strikes a strong note:

What struck me so much in that life of Schopenhauer which you gave me was that doctrine which he considered his grand discovery, and which *I* had been persuaded of from my boyhood—could have based my whole life upon—that the soul is above and *behind* the intellect, which is merely its servant . . . The consequences of this doctrine were so momentous to me, so destructive of vanity on the one hand, or undue depression at failure on the other, that I am sure there must be references to and deductions from it throughout the whole of my works.

This at once reminded me of what Richard Wagner wrote to Liszt in 1854 regarding Schopenhauer's *Verneinung des Willens zum Leben* and I think it likely that this record of another great mind's intuition of a fundamental Schopenhauerian verity may be found not inappropriate to the pages of the Schopenhauer Society's Jahrbuch.

