

**BROWNING'S
WOMEN**

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Browning's Women by Mary E. Burt & Edward Everett Hale

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MARY E. BURT & EDWARD EVERETT HALE

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BY

MARY E BURT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

REV. EDWARD EVERETT HALE, D.D., L.L.D.

CHICAGO
CHARLES H KERR & COMPANY
175 DEARBORN STREET
1887

TO
JENKIN LLOYD JONES
AND
HIS FIRST
BROWNING CLUB.

*"Give these, I say, full honor and glory
For daring so much before they well did it."*

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PREFACE.

THIS book is written for the one who is too busy to devote sufficient time to the study of Browning's works to get at the poet's meaning. In it I have endeavored to simplify some of his complexities, to supply a few of the missing links, and to make some of his ethical lessons so plain that the one who has not constant access to a reference library, and who can not boast a college education, may easily get a breath of the atmosphere which the poet has created for us.

Knowing the utter impossibility of expressing his thoughts in any different language from his, I have aimed as far as possible to use the poet's own words, either in paraphrase or by direct quotation, without the too frequent use of quotation marks; if the reader will supply these for himself, he will find his book liberally dotted.

MARY E. BURT.

Chicago, October, 1886.



INTRODUCTION.

It is a pleasure even to have it supposed that one can introduce Robert Browning to any readers. Certainly I am glad if I can say any word which will make any person read his poems who might else have passed them by.

He says, in a laughing way, that the British public does not admire him. So much the worse for the British public. I have been glad to see that, year by year, since we first bought our straw-colored "Bells and Pomegranates,"—ah! that was nearly half a century ago,—more people and more in America have known him,—and have of course loved him, honored him, and "admired" him.

In the pages which are in the reader's hands, Miss Burt has pointed out many things in the characters and lives of Browning's women which less careful

readers than she might have passed by unnoticed. The best good which she can do to her readers is to set them to study this poet, or indeed any poet, with systematic and tender care like hers, and not to be satisfied with reading as they run, or skate, or shoot along.

Whatever poem is really first-rate is worth remembering, returning to, and reflecting upon. I shall hope, then, that this book, to which she has given affectionate thought and study, will help readers not only in the reading of Mr. Browning, but in other reading of other poetry.

A common-place and stupid joke pretends that Mr. Browning's poems are so unintelligible that average people are wiser in not taking them in hand. For the fools who can not enjoy them, I have little pity and no advice. For people who have not tried, there is simply this to be said:

A baby can not understand Shakespeare. A Crow Indian can not read the