

**A STUDY OF
BROWNING'S SAUL**

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A Study of Browning's Saul by Cora Martin MacDonald

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CORA MARTIN MACDONALD

**A STUDY OF
BROWNING'S SAUL**

A S T U D Y O F
B R O W N I N G ' S S A U L

BY

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CHICAGO

“See the Christ Stand!”

SAUL

I

Said Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell,
ere thou speak, ·
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it,
and did kiss his cheek.
And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy
countenance sent,
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from
his tent
Thou return with the joyful assurance the King
liveth yet,
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the
water be wet.
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of
three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer
nor of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their
strife,
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks
back upon life.

II

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child,
with his dew
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living
and blue

Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no
wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III

Then I, as was meet,
Kneit down to the God of my fathers, and rose on
my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent
was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I
stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all
withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my
way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once
more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not
afraid
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no
voice replied.
At the first I saw naught but the blackness; but soon
I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the
vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow
into sight

Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,
showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms
stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the center, that goes
to each side;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught
in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily
hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance
come
With the springtime—so agonized Saul, drear and
stark, blind and dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine
round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noon-tide—
those sunbeams like swords!
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as,
one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be
done.