

**BROWNING AND THE CHRISTIAN
FAITH; THE EVIDENCES OF
CHRISTIANITY FROM
BROWNING'S POINT OF VIEW**

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Browning and the Christian faith; the evidences of Christianity from Browning's point of view
by Edward Berdoe

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*THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY FROM
BROWNING'S POINT OF VIEW*

BY

EDWARD BERDOE

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"THE BROWNING CYCLOPEDIA," "BROWNING'S MESSAGE TO HIS TIME,"
ETC.

"I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it."

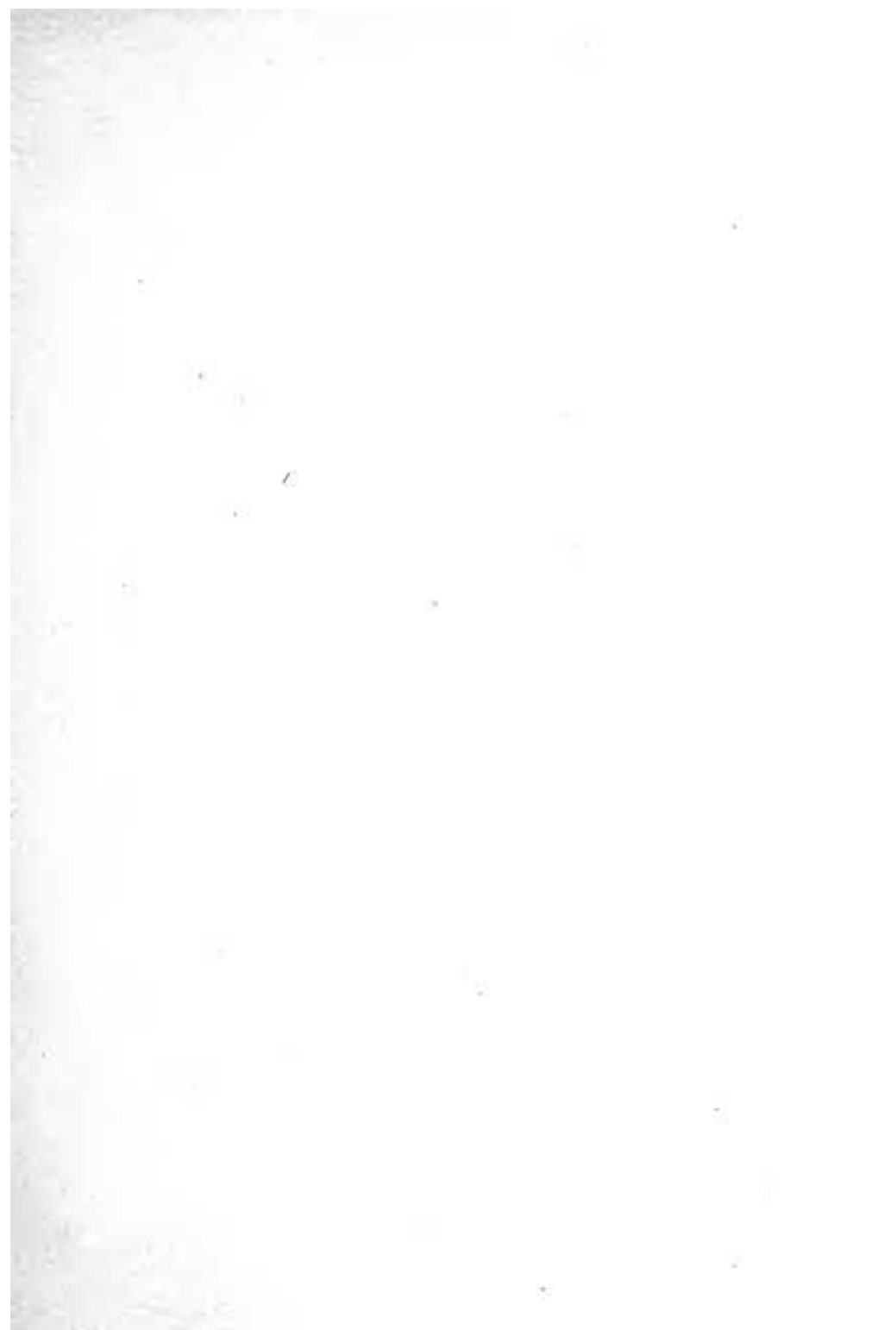
A Death in the Desert.

LONDON
GEORGE ALLEN, 156, CHARING CROSS ROAD

1896

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TO
The Clergy, Ministers, Religious Teachers
OF ALL DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANS, AND
TO THOSE WHO ARE PERPLEXED AND IN
DOUBT CONCERNING QUESTIONS OF
THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE
TO ALL,
THESE PAGES ARE RESPECTFULLY
DEDICATED
BY ONE WHO HAS HIMSELF WANDERED IN THE
MAZE AND FOUND ITS CLUE.



PREFACE

A FEW words of personal explanation seem called for in offering this work to the notice of the public. It is always painful to obtrude one's private concerns on the attention of the outside world, and as I have no claim whatever to invite that attention to matters of my own history, I feel great diffidence in making public circumstances that, it may be said, cannot in any way interest anybody but myself. As my only object in doing so is the hope that I may help some readers of these pages whose experiences may have been similar to my own, I ask a lenient consideration of the following scrap of autobiography.

Twenty years ago, after a long course of reading the works of Agnostic teachers, I ceased to believe in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. About two years after this painful necessity of breaking with all my old associations in religious matters, I had approached as near

to Agnosticism as a reasonable being may ; that is to say, I no longer believed in the God of the Bible, and did not think that any conception of the Supreme Power presented to the mind in any of the religious systems which I had investigated was supported by sufficient evidence to satisfy a scientific thinker of the present day. On the whole, such fragments of Buddhism as I had been able to appreciate seemed to be more satisfactory than anything else in the way of religious teaching ; but so far as my own mind was concerned, I had succeeded in making a *tabula rasa*, not without many regrets at the loss of old ideals and the earnest hope that it might not be long before something better would replace them.

It was my good fortune one day to hear a brilliant and powerful lecture by Mr. Moncure Conway at South Place Chapel, Finsbury, on Robert Browning's *Sordello*. Up to that moment I had read nothing of the works of that poet save the few scraps which appear as quotations, usually from *Rabbi Ben Esra*. On the following day I purchased a set of Browning's works. The first poem I read was *Saul*. I soon recognized that I was in the grasp of a strong hand, and as I continued to read *Paracelsus*, *Men and Women*, and *A Death in the Desert*, the feeling came over me that in Browning I had found my religious teacher, one who could put me right on a

hundred points which had troubled my mind for many years, and which had ultimately caused me to abandon the Christian religion. I joined the Browning Society, and in the discussions which followed the reading of the papers, I found the opportunity of having my doubts resolved, not by theological arguments, but by those suggested by Browning as "solving for me all questions in the earth and out of it." By slow and painful steps I found my way back to the faith I had forsaken. How I reached it, and how my studies have since confirmed it, is told in this book. I trust I may be pardoned for thinking this confession interesting to those who may read these pages, for it is always useful to know how others have solved difficulties which have troubled ourselves. It is this reflection which gives me confidence to make the avowal.

EDWARD BERDOE.

LONDON,

October 21, 1895.