

THIS compact volume of 450 pages, uniform in style with the Riverside Edition of Browning, will be a welcome 'Open Sesame' to the many obscurities which all but a few self-sufficient people have to confess that they find in the poems. Mr. Cooke has taken great pains to collect from all sources the explanations of these obscurities and perplexing allusions—from Mrs. Orr's 'Handbook,' Corson's and other 'Introductions,' the less known and less accessible publications of the English Browning Society, etc., and has apparently added some of his own, not always so satisfactory. He also gives the history and sources of the poems, the date of their first publication, their various readings, and a deal of other bibliographical and miscellaneous information for which the curious student would have to hunt long through many libraries. Some fifteen poems by Browning, not included in the standard editions, are printed in full. The main facts of the poet's life are recorded; and a list of the most valuable books, reviews, and criticisms concerning him is another interesting and useful feature.

The work has, indeed, been done so well that occasional errors, mostly of a minor sort, may be pardoned in a first edition. The printer or the proof-reader is evidently responsible for some of these—like 'fould fiend' (page 78), 'noisset' for the Latin *novisset* (page 297), etc.—but others must, we fear, be charged to the editor. He does not seem to be aware that 'Sant' Ambrogio' and 'St. Ambrose' (p. 149) are the same person, the former being his name in Italian. On page 148 he tells us that the Church of San Lorenzo at Florence contains 'several of the great pictures by Michael Angelo,' but does not mention his famous *statues*, which are probably what was meant. We believe there are no pictures by the great artist in any part of the church. In the note on 'In a Gondola' (p. 173), Mr. Cooke says:—'The poem is wholly imaginary, as are several of the persons alluded to; and among them *Schidone's eager Duke*, *Castelfranco's Magdalen*, and *Tizian*.' He goes on to explain that Schidone and Castelfranco are painters, but appears not to be aware that the 'Duke' and the 'Magdalen' are paintings, and that 'Tizian' is Titian, his name being put for one of his pictures. '*Pou sto*' (p. 297) does not mean 'where I stand,' but 'where I *may* stand,' the Greek verb being in the subjunctive. The Italian *acquetta* (p. 349) is translated 'wine and water'; the passage in which it occurs in 'The Ring and the Book' being as follows:—

Murder had come first  
Not last with such a man, assure yourselves!

\* A Guide-Book to the Poetic and Dramatic Works of Robert Browning. By Geo. Willis Cooke. \$2. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

The silent *acquella*, stilling at command—  
A drop a day i' the wine or soup, the dose— etc.

It would be murder on homeopathic principles that were committed by 'a drop a day' of 'wine and water' in the wine or soup. Has Mr. Cooke never heard of Signora Tofania and her famous *acquella*, by which so many Neapolitan wives attained to premature widowhood? On pp. 402 and 403 there is a constellation of errors. 'The Piazza dell' Annunziata is *not* in the Via Larga (now Via Cavour), Florence. It is the Piazza, or the arcades about it, *not* the church, that is 'adorned with busts of the Medici family.' 'The Riccardi palace in the square is *not* the one described by Mr. Cooke, his description being that of another palace near the Church of San Lorenzo. Lorenzo was *not* the 'son' of Cosimo de' Medici, but his grandson. The bust of 'The Statue and the Bust' was *not* Ferdinand's, and was *not* erected by him. The Robbia of the poem is *not* 'the ware of which the bust was made,' but the artist from whom the ware gets its name, as one may see by referring to the text; though Browning is guilty of an anachronism in the use of the name, as both Luca and Andrea della Robbia were dead before the time of the story in the poem, which must be early in the 17th century, as the statue was erected in 1608. This statue, by the way, though the last work of John of Douai (or of Bologna, as he is oftener called), is *not* regarded as 'his best.'

On page 443, the Ponte dell' Angelo, associated with a poem in 'Asolando,' is said to be 'a well-known bridge in Venice, described in any of the guide-books.' It is not mentioned in Murray or Baedeker, or Hare's 'Northern and Central Cities of Italy,' or any other guide-book known to us. Whether the palace referred to in the poem is in existence Mr. Cooke does not inform us.

The book is well supplied with cross references; but one is needed on page 299, where Catherine Cornaro is briefly mentioned. There is a longer account of her on page 39, and something more about her on page 173. The index—which is very good in its way—refers to pp. 39 and 173, but not to 299. The errors we have pointed out, and others like them, should be corrected in the next edition, for which we are not likely to have to wait very long.