

# The Industrial Revolution and Robert Browning

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## Introduction

From the middle of the 18th to the middle of the 19th century, England changed greatly and gathered her national power rapidly. Land which had been subjected to common rights of villagers or free tenants was inclosed. Such inclosed land created an efficient farming and produced an ever-increasing agricultural output. Population also grew markedly because the poor, agricultural laborers, who wanted to be engaged in more profitable jobs, moved to cities where they could work as factory workers. As small villages grew into factory towns, carts, sailing vessels, and hand looms gave way to railroads, steamships, and machines for mass production—all the mechanical equipment that lies behind the enormous efficiency and prosperity of the modern industrialized world. This great social and economic upheaval was ushered in by such inventions of the cotton industry as John Kay's fly shuttle (patented 1733), James Hargreaves's spinning jenny (1764), Richard Arkwright's water frame (patented 1769), Samuel Crompton's mule spinner (1779) which combined the features of the jenny and the frame, and Edmund Cartwright's power loom (patented 1785). These inventions in the cotton industry brought about a chain reaction of other great inventions in the iron industry, the coal industry, heavy industries, and transportation.

On May 1, 1851, Queen Victoria opened the first world's fair—"Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations"—at the mammoth Crystal Palace in London, thereby announcing that the

Industrial Revolution had come of age. As the Industrial Revolution progressed, the position in English society that had been held since the Middle Ages by the landed aristocracy gradually diminished in importance, while the middle-class industrialists increased in numbers and in wealth. Capitalism appeared on a large and new scale, and a new type of commercial businessman developed from the old class of merchant adventurers. The Industrial Revolution created specialized and independent economic life, and made the urban worker more completely dependent on the will of his employer than the rural worker had been. Industrialists earnestly pursued their wealth but took very little care of their workers. The more England prospered and thrived, the more she had to cope with various problems, such as filthy, dangerous factories, inhumanly long hours of work, child labor, exploitation of woman workers, low wages, slums, and frequent unemployment.

It has sometimes been pedantically said that religion should perform the great task of saving the poor. In fact, the Evangelical Church of those days demanded of poor people a more thorough and strict discipline in their daily lives. According to the evangelicals, our world is the place full of pains and trials which were imposed upon us by God; therefore, by means of perseverance a reward has already been promised to us in the other world, where poverty is much more favorable for Him than richness in that we will have many opportunities of receiving His love and benevolence. Because of this fact, they also said, the poor should be satisfied with their position which God gave them, should endure poverty and hard work which He also gave them, and should be grateful for the charity of the rich people. In those days, perseverance and obedience of the poor were justified in the name of religion. Religion itself, however, met with a great crisis which was caused by a new scientific theory in geology. Until the late 18th century, catastrophism had prevailed in the scientific world of Europe. This theory declared that at intervals in the earth's history all living

things had been destroyed by floods or earthquakes, and replaced by entirely different populations. During these floods and earthquakes the features of the earth's surface, such as mountains and valleys, were formed. This theory was based, of course, on the Christian doctrine, and remained for some time the interpretation of the earth's history accepted by the majority of natural scientists, specifically the French zoologist Baron Georges Cuvier. So far as catastrophism was correlated with Christianity, it stood on safe ground; however, a new theory, uniformitarianism, shook its foundation.

The Scottish geologist James Hutton first advanced the theory in the late 18th century, holding that changes in the earth's surface that occurred in past geologic time are referable to the same causes as changes now being produced upon the earth's surface. Because uniformitarianism seemed in several ways to be contrary to religious beliefs, it was overshadowed by the doctrine of catastrophism. In the 19th century, however, it had its day when it was widely accepted as a result of the efforts of the English geologist Sir Charles Lyell, who is said to have facilitated later acceptance of Darwin's theory of evolution (1859). The other famous forerunner of Darwin was the French naturalist Lamarck who is noted for his introduction of evolutionary theory. His theory of evolution, or Lamarckism, asserted that all life forms have arisen by a continuous process of gradual modification throughout geologic history. He also refused to accept the doctrine of catastrophism. Hutton, Lyell, and Lamarck made a great contribution in that they separated science from Christianity.

Under these circumstances, the intelligentsia and sincere scientists could not have ignored the new current of scientific thought, and they must have been anxious about it. On November 17, 1855, Robert Browning published the two octavo volumes of his poetry. The title "Men and Women" would seem to show he might have been deeply interested in how people in his day led their lives. He once mentioned, however, that his greatest concern was the incidents in the development

of a soul. Therefore, it may safely be said that he did not try to represent the world as it was, but to accurately depict mental or spiritual lives of men and women.

In the following pages, I intend to deal first with "An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician." The subject of the poem is the raising of Lazarus from the dead, a miracle account in the Bible. However, it manifests the particular tendency of Browning's time, together with the original religious meaning. In other words, Karshish himself is "an experimental truth, truth born from mystical experience and truth derived from scientific investigation."<sup>1</sup>

Second, "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" will be treated in detail because I believe that a meaningful suggestion is given to solve the conflict between religion and science, and to overcome that conflict. Thus I will study these two poems, which are complementary to each other, in an attempt to reveal Robert Browning's attitude toward the Industrial Revolution and his insight into the future.

## Chapter I

### "An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician"

Karshish, a scholar and physician, writes to his master, Abib, from whom he has learned medical science. In his letter, he says that he is on the way from Jericho to Bethany. The time in the poem is, according to DeVane, about 66 A.D.<sup>2</sup> His journey is full of various difficulties.

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1 Thomas Balckburn, *Robert Browning: A Study of His poetry* (London: The Woburn Press, 1967), p. 138.

2 DeVane, *A Browning Handbook* (New York: Appleton-Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 224.

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My journeyings were brought to Jericho,  
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art  
Shall count a little labour unrepaid?  
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone  
On many a flinty furlong of this land.  
Also the country-side is all on fire  
With rumours of a marching hitherward—  
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.  
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear;  
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:  
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone. (11. 21–31)

Besides, he met with robbers twice and was beaten and robbed of his belongings; once he was taken for a spy in a town. These accounts are given with liveliness and with that economy which is characteristic of Browning's best works.

As it has been stated before, Karshish is a doctor and he calls himself humbly, "Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs." (1.1) This is because he pays great homage to his master whom he respects as "being all sagacious in our arts" and next to God in clinical diagnosis. According to him:

. . . falling sickness (i.e. epilepsy) hath a happier cure  
Than our school wots of; there's a spider here  
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,  
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back;  
Take five and drop them . . . (11. 44–48)

In addition to this case, he reports others with the attitude of a scientific practitioner of medicine. A certain case, however, surprises him very much. Although he, as a man of science, thinks it unworthy to have an interest in such an unscientific happening in comparison

with the new herbs and new diseases he has discovered on the way, yet he is carried away by it and now gives his master a full account of the strange case of Lazarus. At first, it seems to him that Lazarus belongs to a mania complicated by trance and epilepsy. In spite of Karshish's easy diagnosis, Lazarus positively states that he was raised from the dead at the command of a certain Nazarene Physician. The deeper he observes Lazarus, the more fascinated he is by the case. Lazarus does not act like a faker, nor a fool. He really looks and lives as if he had been dead, had seen some great life beyond the boundary of death, and had come back with its ineffaceable impression upon him.

The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,  
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,  
As much, indeed, beyond the common health  
As he were made and put aside to show,  
Think, could we penetrate by any drug  
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,  
And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep!  
Whence has the man the balm that brightens all? (11. 108–116)

Lazarus is an apparition quite inexplicable in terms of scientific concepts by which Karshish understands the mystery of existence. Lazarus views the world like a child. He hardly listens to what happens about him, yet he is no fool. He has lost all sense of our values and the proportion of things, because he thinks and acts not with reference to this world he is living in, but with reference to the invisible world. In Browning's phrase, "His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here." (1. 185) Therefore, if we speak of some little fact, little as we may think it is, he is astonished with its prodigious import. Even though his child is dying, it does not seem to matter to him. But let him see the least signs of evil in the child, and he will be strangely moved with an agony of fear and anger. In other words, he has lost

his sense of the proportion of things. He desires only perfectly to please God.

He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live  
So long as God please, and just how God please.  
He even seeketh not to please God more  
(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.  
Hence I perceive not he affects to preach  
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be— (11. 209—214)

Karshish skeptically tries to shake off his obsession, to persuade himself that Lazarus is now insane, and tries to interest himself again in herbs. However, it is impossible because the fact of Lazarus's resurrection dominates him.

Naturally his letter is full of apologies for writing about this nonsense as though it were a curious case. He foresees his master Abib's suggestions that he should seek out the Nazarene who worked the cure of Lazarus. However, he knows that the doctor perished in some obscure tumult, accused of wizardry, rebellion and of holding a prodigious creed. Karshish is finally impelled to write that Lazarus regards the healer as God.

This man so cured regards the curer then,  
As—God forgive me—Who but God himself,  
Creator and Sustainer of the world,  
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile! (11. 267—270)

According to Lazarus, such a one came and lived on the earth in human form, walked around among people teaching and healing, broke bread at Lazarus's own house and then died in his presence.

In a sudden revulsion of feeling, Karshish forces his mind to write scientific reports suitable for the student. He has ended his letter.

Nevertheless, he cannot close his letter without returning to a meaningful suggestion again. He adds the following postscript:

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?  
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—  
So, through the thunder comes a human voice  
Saying, “O heart I made, a heart beats here!  
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself.  
Thou hast no power nor may’st conceive of mine.  
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,  
And thou must love me who have died for thee!”  
The madman saith He said so: it is strange. (11. 304–312)

Karshish, a physician, cannot believe that the Nazarene who was regarded as a saint or who may have been his colleague made man’s heart beating on this earth or made man’s face. At the beginning of the poem he mentions as follows:

Karshish, the picker-up of learning’s crumbs,  
The not-incurious in God’s handwork  
(This man’s flesh He hath admirably made,  
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,  
To coop up and keep down on earth a space  
That puff of vapour from His mouth, man’s soul) (11. 1–6)

This attitude of his toward God, the Creator, is nothing but deism itself. Deism appeared between the 17th and 18th centuries in England. In France, however, it came to be more radical and such eminent thinkers as Voltaire and J. J. Rousseau held that the course of nature sufficiently demonstrates the existence of God. As for them, formal religion is superfluous and they scorned as spurious claims of supernatural revelation.



In the early 19th century, there were two schools of scientific thought: one was the orthodox Christian attitude and the other the new rationalistic attitude toward man's creation. The former insisted that God created all living things, and the latter declared that existing animals and plants developed by a process of gradual, continuous change from previously existing forms. Between these two opposite trends of science, sincere scientists would have been worried about which road they should take. Compared with modern medical science, diagnostic treatment in Karshish's days, was immature and primitive, but Karshish, who kept a constant watch on the external world in the interest of medical science, was a good scientific practitioner with endurance and passionate curiosity and uneasy scepticism. In this sense, he may well be said to be a symbol of the 19th-century rational scientist.

In the poem, Karshish, confronted with Christ's miracle, cannot believe it because he thinks Christ is a man, not God. On the other hand, he cannot ignore the existence of Lazarus who is the symbol of the orthodox Christianity. Between these two poles, rationalism and Christianity, he swings as if he were a pendulum and is anxious about which way he should go. Browning himself does not give us any clue to the solution of this dilemma here, but he does give us a hint in the next poem.

## Chapter II

### "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came"

This is the story of a knight who has made a journey to a certain dark tower across devastated landscapes. The way to the tower is full of difficulties and dangers; the right road is entirely unknown to the seekers, and no one knows how to reach it. Before Roland's pilgrimage, all other adventurers who have tried, have failed. As soon as

he is engaged in the quest, he feels despair, but he is impelled to go on. There is no question of an inadequate motive, because the knight has no motive beyond the quest itself.

At the start of the poem, he meets a “hoary cripple, with malicious eye,” who directs the knight

Into that ominous tract which, all agree,  
Hides the Dark Tower. (11. 14–15)

The knight first thinks that the cripple has told him a lie, and set a trap for him. His suspicion will be justified at the end of this poem. The day is settling to its close, and when the knight turns from that hateful cripple and walks off the highway onto the path which was pointed out to him, he finds he is on a grey plain all around. When he looks back, the road by which he entered on the path to the tower is gone. What is seen is nothing but the plain to the far horizon. Nothing remains for him but to proceed. His fears are increased by the improbable nature of the wilderness.

So on I went. I think I never saw  
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:  
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove!  
But cockle, spurge, according to their law  
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,  
You'd think; a burr had been a treasure-trove. (11. 55–60)

Some weeds seem to thrive in that wilderness, only to add to its desolation. As for grass, it grows as scant as hair in leprosy. The blades of grass look kneaded up with blood. At that time, he recognizes one stiff horse, with its every bone prominent, standing stupefied or petrified. It seems “Thrust out past service for the devil's stud.” (1. 78) The knight is not sure whether the horse is dead or alive, but

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he thinks he has never seen such a hateful brute. He tries to think back of earlier, happier sights. But those recollections are all abhorrent, and so he decides to go on his way.

Better this present than a past like that—  
Back therefore to my darkening path again.  
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.  
Will the night send a howlet or a bat?  
I asked: when something on the dismal flat  
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.  
(11. 103–108)

He comes to a sudden little river which crosses his path as unexpectedly as a serpent comes; it is also a spiteful river over which low scrubby alders kneel down. Drenched willows which fling themselves headlong in a fit of mute despair look as if they were a suicidal throng. The river itself, which has done them all the wrong, whatever that is, rolls by, and deters no whit. Now he tries to wade across it step by step, fearing lest he should set his foot upon a dead man's cheek. Once he thrusts a spear to seek for hollows, but he feels as if it were tangled in a dead man's hair or beard. Furthermore:

—It may have been a water-rat I speared,  
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek. (11. 125–126)

When he reaches the other bank, he feels ephemeral relief. However, the land across the river is, if anything, even more frightful. It seems as if some vague and hideous warfare had been fought and had desolated land. Perhaps the following stanza is the most significant of the poem, because all the features of the Industrial Revolution are condensed into a few lines:

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there!  
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,  
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel  
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air  
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,  
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

(11. 139—144)

As he toils on, he sees that ugly heights and heaps give place to the plain. His pilgrimage finally seems to come to an end, and the apprehension he felt on the path of his early journey comes true:

Here ended, then,  
Progress this way. When, in the very nick  
Of giving up, one time more, came a click  
As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den!

(11. 171—174)

When he looks up, he sees there stands the Tower between the two hills, like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight, and a tall scalped mountain. Now everywhere he hears a noise tolling as if it were a knell. He recognizes the lost adventurers standing in a sheet of fire to see the last of him. He sees them all, and he knows them all. Finally he dauntlessly sets the horn to his lips and blows: "*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*" (1. 204)

Although this poem first appeared in *Men and Momen*, Browning said that he wrote it in Paris on January 2, 1852; that is, one year after the first world's fair. Because of the nature of the poem as well as of the date of composition, readers have tried to seek for some allegorical interpretation. Two years before his death, Browning was asked by a stranger whether he agreed with an allegorical interpretation which had been made of "*Childe Roland.*" It is said that he replied:

Oh, no, not at all. Understand, I don't repudiate it, either. I only mean I was conscious of no allegorical intention in writing it. 'T was like this; one year in Florence, I had been very lazy; I resolved that I would write something every day. Well, the first day I wrote about some roses, suggested by a magnificent basket that some one had sent my wife. Childe Roland came upon me as a kind of dream. I had to write it, then and there, and I finished it the same day, I believe. But it was simply that I had to do it. I did not know then what I meant beyond that, and I'm sure I don't know now. But I am very fond of it.<sup>3</sup>

On another occasion when his friend, L. W. Chadwick, asked the poet if the central meaning of the poem could be summarized in the words, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved," Browning is said to have answered, "Yes, just about that."<sup>4</sup> But this fact does not mean that he consented to the opinion. Browning repeatedly denied that this poem had any allegorical meaning or moral purpose, but many people could not help but attempt to attach some significance to the poem. However, as DeVane has stated, poets often write better than they know. In the opinion of the present author, a good poem naturally offers many, diversified suggestions, which gather together into one ambiguous meaning.

Edward Berdoe summarized a number of interpretations, which are bewilderingly diverse:

(1) Mr. Kirkman, in the paper already referred to (i.e. Browning Society Papers, Part iii, p. 21) says, "There are overwhelming reasons for concluding that this poem describes after the manner of an allegory, the sensations of a sick man very near to death . . ."

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3 DeVane, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

4 Edward Berdoe, *The Browning Cyclopaedia* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1964), p. 104.

(2) Mr. Nettleship, in his well-known essay on the poem, says the central idea is this: "Take some great end which men have proposed to themselves in life, which seemed to have truth in it, and power to spread freedom and happiness on others; but as it comes in sight, it falls strangely short of preconceived ideas, and stands up in hideous prosaicness."

(3) Mrs. James L. Bagg, in the *Interpretation of Childe Roland*, read to the Syracuse (U.S.) Browning Club, gives the following lesson of the poem:—"The secrets of the universe are not to be discovered by exercise of reason, nor are they to be reached by flights of fancy, nor are duties loyally done to be recompensed by revelation. A life of *becoming, being, and doing*, is not loss, nor failure, nor discomfiture, though the dark tower for ever tantalize and for ever withhold."

(4) Some have seen in the poem an allegory of *Love*, others of *the Search after Truth*.

(5) Others, again, understand the Dark Tower to represent Unfaith, and the obscure land that of Doubt—Doubting Castle and the By-Path Meadow of John Bunyan, in short.<sup>5</sup>

Berdoe seems to be unfavorable to these interpretations; however, notwithstanding this, he himself also gives his own comment:

For my part, I see in the allegory—for I can consider it no other—a picture of the Age of Materialistic Science, a "science falsely so called," which aims at the destruction of all our noblest ideals of religion and faith in the unseen. The pilgrim is a truth-seeker, misdirected by the lying spirit—the hoary cripple, unable to be or do anything good or noble himself; in him I see the cynical destructive critic, who sits at our universities and colleges, our medical schools and our firesides, to point our youth to the

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5 *Ibid.*

desolate path of Atheistic Science, a science which strews the ghastly landscape with wreck and ruthless ruin, with the blanching bones of medicine daily down the road where surgeons become cancergrafters (as the Paris and Berlin medical scandals have revealed) . . .<sup>6</sup>

Now, in his turn, Berdoe is severely censured by Norton B. Crowell: "Berdoe's suggestion is a notable exercise in sustained nonsense, an admirable equipoise of imperception and private bias."<sup>7</sup> In the beginning of Berdoe's passage, however, we can find a clue to explicate the poem correctly. He explains that this poem is "a picture of the Age of Materialistic Science." In spite of the chivalric tone of the Medieval Ages in the poem, Berdoe is clearly conscious of the Victorian Age. Similar to Berdoe's suggestion, David V. Erdman, in his "Browning's Industrial Nightmare," is said to have found the poem to reveal Browning's detestation of the evil of industrialism.<sup>8</sup> There are some clues in the poem itself which back up Erdman's assertion.

In the 13th stanza, there appears one stiff blind horse looking as if it were thrust out for the devil's stud. The Industrial Revolution made the use of the horse unnecessary—the horse which had once been used as the fundamental power in cultivating land, working mills and machines, and transportation. Horses were replaced by steam engines and became useless and were no longer useful. Therefore, they were doomed to be thrust out of factories. Other important clues are found in the 24th stanza, where the reader finds the words relating to machinery: "an engine", 'a wheel', 'a harrow', and 'steel'. These things have "all the air/Of Tophet's tool . . ."

In ancient times, they were used for torture as implements of punishment. One of the obsolete meanings of the word "engine" is a torture implement, especially a rack. According to Webster's

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6 *Ibid.*

7 Norton B. Crowell, *A Reders Guide to Robert Browning* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972), p. 142.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 152.

Third New International Dictionary, one meaning of the wheel is “a chiefly medieval instrument of torture, resembling a cartwheel and designed for stretching, disjointing, or otherwise mutilating a victim.” The brake signifies an instrument of torture, but its original meaning is a toothed instrument for braking flax or hemp. The harrow ostensibly seems to be a brake-harrow which is a heavy one for crushing clods. In the context of the poem, however, it does not seem to be an instrument of cultivation; rather, the harrow suggests in the poem a part of a power loom or a spinning jenny which looks like a harrow. Then it is possible to say “that harrow fit to reel/Men’s bodies out like silk . . .” (11. 141–142) In fact, Arkwright’s water frame used rollers to “reel” rough cotton thread before being made finer; therefore, this annotation is more coherent and direct. These words surely refer to parts of industrial machinery in factories. With regard to these matters, Browning uses such an expression as “Tophet’s tool.” According to Webster’s Dictionary again, Tophet means the shrine in the valley of Hinnom south of ancient Jerusalem where human sacrifices, especially those of children, were performed to Moloch (Jer. 7: 31). Therefore, this place connotes Gehenna, or hell. Child labor was one of the serious problems in the Victorian period. In the filthy, dangerous factories and mines, children were forced to work at least for twelve hours a day. Therefore, many child laborers are said to have died of overwork in their teens. Were children not sacrificed to the grotesque God, Machinery? Or, were they not tortured in the hell-like factories? Even the lives of adult laborers, male or female, were threatened with the God’s greedy, avaricious “teeth of steel.”

The river which the knight forded is expressed to have done all the wrong, whatever that was. Erdman suggests:

“When he crossed the spiteful river he thought he stepped  
on a dead man, and when he speared what he took for a water



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rat, it gave 'a baby's shriek.'" In it we hear the 'sob' or 'cry' of the child in the factory which 'curses' the 'mailed heel' threading on child-workers in its merchant adventures. Is this river the mill stream?"<sup>9</sup>

The river is surely not the mill stream which flows beautifully in the rural districts, but the polluted stream into which factories and mines pour their industrial wastes. People cannot expect clean drinking water from such a river. In 1850, the number of people who died of cholera exceeded 50,000 in England. Even in 1866, many people in London died of an epidemic of cholera because the East London Water Supply Company served the town with dirty water.

In the latter part of the poem Browning shows us the landscape of the knight's destination:

Burningly it came on me all at once,  
This was the place! those two hills on the right  
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight—  
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . (11. 175–179)

Perhaps this tall scalped mountain signifies a mountain which was made bald or bare by the poisonous gases such as the sulphuric gases emitted from the chimneys of a steel mill. Then, what does "those two hills" mean? Judging from the content of the former poem, they seem to symbolize the two opposite currents of thought in the Victorian period: one is rational science and the other irrational religion. Sincere people would have been at a loss which to take. Between the two hills on the right and a tall bare mountain on the left, there stood the Dark Tower which is:

The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,

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9 Crowell, *op. cit.*

Built of brown stone, without a counterpart  
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf  
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf  
He strikes on, only when the timbers start. (11. 182–186)

Until the 18th century, no tall buildings would have stood on the open, pastoral fields in the rural districts of England except wind mills and castles. There suddenly appeared tall stone-built, turret-like steam engines. Because of their efficiency, they rapidly replaced the wind mills and dominated the plain. Owing to the appearance of the middle-class industrialists who used the steam engines in their factories, the lords of castles were also rapidly brought to ruin. The Dark Tower is nothing but a symbol of the modern mechanical, highly-industrialized civilization which now dominates our world. In this sense, it naturally follows that the poem represents the atmosphere not only of the Victorian society but also of our modern world, and Browning gives us a warning that the way to the Dark Tower leads us to destruction or death. Furthermore, the way itself stands for the journey of our soul full of suspicion and uneasiness.

### Conclusion

In 1846, Evangelical Alliance was founded in London. This was an association of Evangelical Christians in a union, not of churches, but of individuals belonging to different denominations and different countries. This was advanced from Methodism which John Wesley, his brother Charles and others advocated for religious exercises which were based to a considerable extent upon the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, but great emphasis was laid upon repentance, faith, sanctification, and the privilege of full, free salvation for everyone. This Evangelical movement was a revival of faith in Christ, and was strongly antagonistic to rationalism, radicalism, and atheism. Needless

to say, Lazarus in the first poem is a symbol of orthodox Christianity, while Karshish is a symbol of the 19th-century sincere scientist feeling uneasiness over the conflict between rational science and irrational religion.

In the second poem, Roland was journeying across the wilderness to the Dark Tower. We do not know the purpose of the knight or whether he succeeds or fails in the end. The poem is about the sheer questing, and we are not told what the quest is, except that it is some quest for the sinister Dark Tower. Norton B. Crowell suggests:

Everywhere through the poem is the desperate fear of a nightmare half-recognition of unknown danger and evil, savage, irrational, implacable. It is man face to face with himself, all the comfortable exculpations and rationalizations stripped away. It is thus a study in terror and at the same time a surrealist account of life. It should be noted that in this really terrifying experience, there is not one thing of which one should be afraid. Every fear is wholly within the soul of Roland. He never meets any direct menace or danger, but he suffers the extreme torments of terror, which come not from without but from within, for the journey into his psyche is presented in terms of his journey to the Dark Tower.<sup>10</sup>

It is true from the first line to the last, that we are increasingly impressed with the dreamlike character of Roland's fear and suspicion. He finally achieves the Dark Tower. However, we should not be hasty in our conclusion here, because the knight does not go to it when he finally sees it. It comes upon him suddenly, unaccountably, as an illusion. Mr. Langbaum tells us, "The final stanzas should enable us to see through retrospect that everything leading up to them has been about the experience of the ominous mystery understood in the end.

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10 Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

It is not an allegorical interpretation to say that the poem is about the experience of destiny, as awful presage and as awful yet triumphant understanding of the very worst.”<sup>11</sup> Whether the Dark Tower is “death” or not, Roland decides dauntlessly to go on. If this kind of progress is called triumphant, as Mr. Langbaum suggests to us, it may be so existentially, not pragmatically nor empirically.

Concerning the last scene, the author agrees with Mr. Langbaum’s explanation:

The slug-horn blast is not for any good perceived, nor is it the just reward for a noble quest. There is no reward, and the quest can hardly be called noble since it has been pursued without motive and, as it turns out, for an unworthy goal. The blast, I think, a blast of defiance in that it contains both the knight’s praise of himself for having endured and discovered. The triumph, such as it is, is not moral since there has been no good in the intention or the result; it is a triumph of the knight’s own personality.<sup>12</sup>

Since the 19th century, our civilization has come to its peak, and today it is said that there are many signs of its impending downfall. Rather, it is said that now is the time of turnabout from the Civilization period to the Post-Civilization period. Natural resources have been exploited since the time of the Industrial Revolution. Some worry about the fact that in a few more centuries all of them will be drained out. Factories and facilities for transportation have changed not only our environment, but also nature itself. We have too much enjoyed natural endowments to forget its benevolence. If the plain where Roland made a journey indicates desolation of our civilized world, like Eliot’s *Waste Land*, we are surely coming closer to the ruin of

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<sup>11</sup> Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), p. 194.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

our world. Is there no way for us but to proceed like Roland to our destination even if we recognize our crisis and feel restless? Or else, is it possible for us to evade such catastrophe by hearing Roland's slug-horn? Browning did not give us any solution to this question of our modern world in which we are facing such a crisis. However, he intuitively showed us our destination through Roland's journey across the devastated plain. In this sense, it may safely be said that Robert Browning is a wonderful poet who had insight into our future.

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