Browning and Jane Carlyle

Alexandra Orr

He always thought her a hard and unlovable woman, and I believe little liking was lost between them. He told a comical story of how he had once, unintentionally but rather stupidly, annoyed her. She had asked him, as he was standing by her tea-table, to put the kettle back on the fire. He took it out of her hands, but, preoccupied by the conversation he was carrying on, deposited it on the hearth-rug.¹ It was some time before he could be made to see that this was wrong; and he believed Mrs Carlyle never ceased to think that he had a mischievous motive for doing it.

Orr, p. 366 n.1

Notes

Jane Welsh Carlyle (1801–66), married to Thomas Carlyle in 1826, is now best known for her letters.

- 1 In Pen Browning's version of the story he had taken up the kettle of his own (absent-minded) accord and 'deposited' it when 'Mrs Carlyle cried shrilly "Put that down!"' (William Lyon Phelps, 'A Talk with Barrett Browning', *The Century Magazine*, n.s. 63 (1913), p. 420).

Browning, Macready and Forster I: *Strafford*

William Charles Macready

1835

November 27. Mr Robert Browning, the author of *Paracelsus*, came in after dinner; I was very much pleased to meet him.¹ His face is full of intelligence.

December 7. Read *Paracelsus*, a work of great daring, starred with poetry of thought, feeling and diction, but occasionally obscure; the writer can scarcely fail to be a leading spirit of his time.

December 31. Mr Browning was very popular with the whole party; his simple and enthusiastic manner engaged attention and won opinions from all present; he looks and speaks more like a youthful poet than any man I ever saw.