ROBERT BROWNING

CONFESSIONS

What is he buzzing in my ears?
“Now that I come to die,
Do I view the world as a vale of tears?”
Ah, reverend sir, not I!
What I viewed there once, what I view again
Where the physic bottles stand
On the table’s edge, — is a suburb lane,
With a wall to my bedside hand.
That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
From a house you could descry
O’er the garden-wall; is the curtain blue
Or green to a healthy eye?
To mine, it serves for the old June weather
Blue above lane and wall;
And that farthest bottle labelled “Ether”
Is the house o’ertopping all.
At a terrace, somewhere near the stopper,
There watched for me, one June,
A girl: I know, sir, it’s improper,
My poor mind’s out of tune.
Only, there was a way… you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house, two eyes except:
They styled their house “The Lodge.”
What right had a lounger up their lane?
But, by creeping very close,
With the good wall’s help, — their eyes might strain
And stretch themselves to Oes,
Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic, there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled “Ether,”
And stole from stair to stair,
And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,
We loved, sir — used to meet:
How sad and bad and mad it was —
But then, how it was sweet!