Social dealings in private life are filled with fear, especially in Britain. People take pains not to wear their heart on their sleeves for daws to peck at. As far as they can, they keep their emotions to themselves. They will behave in exactly the same way to you whether they like you or dislike you, provided they have no motive of self-interest for making up to you. They are stiff and shy and imspontaneous. They wear an armour designed to conceal the frightened child within. The result is that social intercourse becomes boring, that friendships have little life in them, and that love is only a pale shadow of what it might be. People quote with approval Browning's remark:

"God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures

Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,

One to show a woman when he loves her."

I am not a psycho-analyst, but I think that if I were I could find something to say about Browning's thankfulness on this point. The side that he faces the world with is the one that he feels he can exploit without the fear of being hurt, the one that gives no handle for ridicule and no knowledge that may be used to inflict pain; the other 'soul-side', the one that he shows a woman when he loves her, contains all the vanity and conceit and bombast that he dares not show to the men at his club. It is almost as much a product of fear as the other, because the other prevents him from letting fresh air into the inner chambers of his ego, and no one can be admitted to these inner chambers except in a relation of mutual adulation. The outer world is bleak, the inner world is stuffy. This is not how human relations should be. They should be free and spontaneous. Vanity should be less touchy and envy less widespread.

The habit of reserve not only makes it easy for self-deception to flourish secretly, but also, owing to the energy spent in the purely negative occupation of preventing self-expression, greatly diminishes the fruitful outflow of energy in useful ways. It has the further defect that men are particularly anxious to conceal friendly impulses, since these especially, if known, make them feel that they are vulnerable. Hours of tedium and years of assistication result from this reign of social terror.

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