

**‘Never say of me that I am dead’***William Sharp*

It seems but a day or two ago that the present writer received from the lips of the dead poet a mockery of death’s vanity – a brave assertion of the glory of life. ‘Death, death! It is this harping on death I despise so much,’ he remarked with emphasis of gesture as well as of speech – the inclined head and body, the right hand lightly placed upon the listener’s knee, the abrupt change in the inflection of the voice, all so characteristic of him – ‘this idle and often cowardly as well as ignorant harping! Why should we not change like everything else? In fiction, in poetry, in so much of both, French as well as English, and, I am told, in American art and literature, the shadow of death – call it what you will, despair, negation, indifference – is upon us. But what fools who talk thus! Why, *amico mio*, you know as well as I that death is life, just as our daily, our momentarily dying body is none the less alive and ever recruiting new forces of existence. Without death, which is our crapelike churchyard word for change, for growth, there could be no prolongation of that which we call life. Pshaw! it is foolish to argue upon such a thing even. For myself, I deny death as an end of everything. Never say of me that I am dead!’

*Life of Robert Browning* (London, 1890), pp. 195–6

**Notes**

Sharp (1855–1905) wrote such works as his *Life of Browning* under his own name and, unknown to most of his contemporaries, much of his fiction and verse as ‘Fiona Macleod’.

**‘One who never turned his back but marched breast forward’***Sarianna Browning*

Which did he prefer of the *Asolando* poems? I can scarcely say – only I know, that on the very last Sunday he was up, before the last, Fannie and I were alone (she had been unwell and was lying down), he came into the bedroom and had afternoon tea with us, and Fannie asked him to read to her – she wanted something from the