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this room in Wimpole street for one in Florence. Robert Browning, already well known as Poet—by his “Paracelsus,” and his “Bells and Pomegranates” led her thither as his wife. They two were no longer to sing a solitary song. Henceforth that land of the beautiful was the external circumstance that surrounded her; and it was Italy chained in a long slavery, but reawakening anew to life. Her strength returns, and she speaks in her letters to England of rambles in the woods, and clambering up the sides of mountains. The passion of Italian strivings to be free found an echo and a voice in the English poetess. In the vividness of her sympathy she becomes altogether Italian, or shall I rather say—more entirely and catholically human. And the round of her experience of life was finished, and the wife became the mother. The women of Florence used to speak of her, not by her name; but as “the mother of the beautiful child.” And so the years passed on, and in the week that Italian freedom was completed, she died, “half an hour after daybreak.” She died exclaiming “It is beautiful.”

I have given this sketch of her life because it helps to a better understanding of her poems, and indicates clearly enough the soil from which they grew, and gathered the richness of their growth. Her prevailing tone is a lofty melancholy, yet it is a melancholy lighted by hope and lofty visions. This, I think, was constitutional, but greatly increased by the intensity of her sufferings, physical and mental. Her favorite quotation was from Shelley :

“Poets learn in suffering
What they teach in song.”

Her sufferings wrung from her, in “Sleeping and Watching” the sad words :

“And God knows who sees us twain,
Child at childish leisure,
I am near as tired of pain,
As you seem of pleasure.”

And in her dedication to her father, she says : “You are a witness how if this art of poetry had been a less earnest object to me, it must have fallen from exhausted hands before this day.” Some passages in *Aurora Leigh*, and other poems, in which she speaks of the mission of poets, are full of a sadness that is only half expressed.

“O sorrowful great gift
Conferred on poets, of a twofold life,
When one life has been found enough for pain !

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But soft ! a ‘poet’ is a word soon said.”

“My Father ! thou hast knowledge, only thou,
How dreary ’tis for women to sit still
On winter nights by solitary fires,
And hear the nations praising them far off.”

“And since
We needs must hunger,—better, for man’s love,
Than God’s truth ! better, for companion sweet,
Than great convictions.”