

is a gay and thoughtless damsel, easily influenced by anything which appeals to the senses; a light, highly strung nature, one which feels, does not reason. She is affected by music; not in the sense in which Abt Vogler is carried away by it, but in a purely sensuous way. She can actually "leave off talking" to "hear a master play." She is incapable of understanding, far less of experiencing the rapt visions of the true artist. To her, music merely suggests that this gay life may possibly have an end—it does not tell her of a higher and better one. Her glory is departed. Wealth to her takes the place of genius, and she prefers "actually living" to the "life of the mind."

"Venice spent what Venice earned."

Through her susceptibility to impressions of all kinds, she earned a thorough appreciation of the delights of the senses, and she spent them—enjoyed them to the full. She did not earn or discern a soul, and therefore could not spend or use it. The highest ideas she could grasp concerning a soul were mental, not spiritual:—

"You know physics, something of geology, etc.,
You'll not die, it cannot be!"

Browning forms his judgment of the gay city upon the fact that there is no life left in her. The "Soul's Tragedy" has been enacted there, and to all the higher phases of life she is dead. She is bankrupt, because she spent what she earned and laid up no store of incorruptible treasure. Her present poverty of soul is the result of former extravagance and neglect.

6. The characteristics of Browning as a poet of love.

A VERY large part of Browning's poetry consists of love-lyrics or poems dealing with the emotion of love, written with much tenderness and revealing the noble sentiment and gentle pathos of the poet's character. The key-note of his whole teaching is Love. It is greater than either knowledge or thought, because it is the spirit of both. It is in this, the most

powerful of the human passions, love in its mystical ideal and spiritual fervor, that the depth and fullness of the soul is best realized. In its most simple type love is the passion of soul for soul, an exchange of ideals, a response of depth to depth of human life. Browning dwells on the soul of love and not the forces by which it springs, nor the effects which it produces. There was a great deal of deep-seated affection in his nature; to those who knew him best he was the truest and most loyal of friends. He loved with a large heart such as few can give to love. In parting from a friend his last words would be: "Remember, wherever you are, if you need me, send for me, I would go to the ends of the earth to serve you." His marriage was a truly happy one. He loved his wife with an intense passion. We read of their ideal home with its books and paintings, its terrace and balcony full of flowers, and the large drawing room where "She who was the glory of it all" sat in her low arm-chair.

In many of his love lyrics the poet brings before us with romantic realism pictures of unrequited love, of a "hopeless hoping and a pathetically resigned love," etc., etc. There is no talk among his lovers of "blighted hearts;" no professions of contempt or of reproach, but a noble resignation and a grateful sorrow. In "James Lee's Wife" we are presented with a picture of a truly unconquerable wifely love—"a love that was a life and a life that was love." Browning's touch is always singularly refined; his sentiment never verges on hysteria, and because of his idealism his warmth never strays towards coarseness. Love is to him "one of those supreme, indomitable passions which upset the nice balance of prudential motives, reveal nature to itself, and raise us above the earth upon the wings of self-sacrifice." It is life's highest prize, and without it life is imperfect. Though unrequited, it brings its own reward. Those who have loved are better for the revelation, even if others win the prize for which they contended. By learning love men learn God, and love in life prepares us for a life in love. The higher the ideal the more per-