

MRS. BROWNING'S POEMS.

(Concluded.)

To the same influence is to be ascribed the intensity of her realization of the central truth of religion. To her, in a sense far stronger than can be said of most even of so-called religious poets, God was not simply an almighty Existence, but a personal, living Friend to whom she was attached by close personal feeling. Some of her sonnets are condensed sermons of a kind that *would* have themselves heard. Were space allowed me I should quote two, "Substitution" and "Comfort," and let me also point out to those who have not read them her sonnets on "The Two Sayings," "The Look" and "The Meaning of the Look." Her favorite trains of thought lead her up from the world to the Throne of God, and many of her poems give us anticipatory glances towards the heavenly rest that remaineth after the toiling and sorrowing of this bodily life are ended. We see in nearly all of her poems, which let out a personal feeling, a reaching out of and above herself, a standing on tip-toe to see what was afar off. She longed for something purer, higher, deeper, fuller, than she had yet found; and we feel that even when she tells us most, she herself feels that there is still more to be told, far more than she can tell us. A very striking line in the Vision of Poets will perhaps help to illustrate a little by similarity of idea, that which I am trying to express. Speaking of an angel, she says

"His eyes were dreadful, for you saw

"That they saw God."

She herself soaring far aloft, sees the yet unrisen sun, and is made glittering like "a winged star" by beams that are as yet not seen by those who mark her glowing flight. This, however, is probably not characteristic of her, as distinguishing her from other poets; it is a mark of the poetic character which she shared with others.

In the 5th book of *Aurora Leigh*, several glimpses of her theory of Poetry are given.

" * * * * There's not a flower of spring,
That dies ere June, but vaunts itself allied
By issue and symbol, by significance
And correspondence, to that spirit-world
Outside the limits of our space and time,
Whereto we are bound. Let poets give it voice
With human meanings; &c."

It has been said that no age can be made poetic to those who live in it. We see the detail, and miss the significance of the general plan. Hence a poet should avoid singing about the movements of the life in which he lives. This objection has been urged against *Aurora Leigh*, which is a story of our own times. It is