

roamed in the Academic groves and drank at the fountain-head of poetry. Mrs. Browning's earliest productions of note were translations, which although exhibiting many crudities, were yet touched by the master hand of genius. She was always healthful and at ease, when her classicism blossomed on the sprays of her own genius. She utilized Greek tradition, but her antique touches were lit up by modern thought and action. Even when her eyes were growing dim and her poetic force abated, while she sang a melody of the pastoral god, her "song on the hills forgot to die and the lillies revived, and the dragon fly came back to dream on the river."

Her style from the beginning was strikingly original; uneven to an extreme degree, equally remarkable at first for defects and beauties. As she grew older, the former gradually lessened, and the beauties grew more admirable. Her verse was often rugged and unfinished, owing to the subordination of taste to feeling. Always intense, racy, sportive, worshipful, sympathetic, and tremulously sensitive to sorrow.

The effect of Mrs. Browning's secluded life was visible in her diction, which was acquired from books rather than from intercourse with the living world, and as she read all books, many of her words were obsolete. Again as she explored French, Spanish and Italian classics with as much zest as those of her own tongue, her words were often fantastical. Her taste never seemed quite developed, but through life was inferior to her feeling. So noble however was this quality of feeling, that critics attended to her poetry, and attempted to correct its faults of style. Her obsolete words were often introduced unnaturally, sometimes producing a grotesque effect instead of an attractive quaintness.

An occasional discord has its use and charm, but harshness was the rule rather than the exception. In many of her poems amid a chaotic mass shine forth wonderfully fine passages. So dazzling are these lustres that it has been said that their number and proximity render her book one flame.

Her imagination knew no bounds but soared away to the infinite. Her conception of the sublime was striking and vivid. It would be absurd to regret that certain characteristics of her poetry withhold it from the many and confine it to the few. It did not belong to the genius of Mrs. Browning to enter the doors of the humble and uneducated. To her belonged the power of stirring the utmost fountain of laughter and tears, of bringing music from the rough metal of every day life; of kindling those lights in human eyes, which glance from scholar to rustic, from peasant to king with the smile of reconciliation and relationship. Yet the words of this woman, burning in tenderness, do not reach the strongly pulsing heart of common humanity! And