

man life and society of the present Mrs. Browning has used her genius in defending a social question of vital importance to her own sex, that in which women take the initiative and are independent. Combined with this question there is in her poem, "Aurora Leigh," another, the call for greater unity between the idealist and the worker providing for each day's need which shows life triumphant in doing rather than thinking or believing.

"Aurora Leigh" is the autobiography of a heart and intellect in which is shown the development of an æsthetical and imaginative nature and the failure of a life so blinded by the ideal that the possible forms no part of its existence.

The first glimpse of the heroine Aurora is as a little child among Italy's sunny mountains where ignorant of a mother's tender care she wanders at will or sits and gazes, 'half in terror half in adoration,' at the picture which is the sole reminder of the life whose care she lacks.

"So nine full years were hid with God among his mountains."

In this free life containing an unseen source of growth the flight of time is unheeded until there comes a sudden awakening to "full life and life's needs," and Aurora realizes that she is entirely orphaned, that her home is no longer under the blue dome of Italy but under the more chill and leaden sky of England, that she is in the care of a stranger who is generous, bland, more courteous than tender doing her duty—"as it fearful that God's saints would look down suddenly and say: Herein you missed a point, I think through lack of love."

Aurora's guardian was one who knows only one variety of human character and who would cast everyone in the same mould. The sculptor may gradually shape his marble to the form of the image in his own mind, but the human soul with its own peculiarities cannot be shaped in this way. The spirit will either be crushed or find a secret means of life.

To Aurora the constrained life with her aunt, the uncongenial tasks, the feeling that an effort was being made to shape her character to a pattern wholly foreign to her natural inclinations made living almost unbearable.

Then she found a means of life in the voice of nature speaking on all sides and learned, while wandering over the fields yet fresh and sparkling with the morning dew, to "fly her fancies in the open air." Then again she would lose herself to actual surroundings between the magical covers of her father's books.

Those around her could not fail to see the change in the external life resulting from the quickening of the inner and to know she had sources of thought and enjoyment which they had not provided and could not remove.

Aurora becomes absorbed in her ideals and filled with a longing for freedom to express the ideas with which her own soul is overflowing. When her aunt is removed from her pathway she can feel no sorrow for one to whom she came as a stranger, and one whose nature being so entirely unlike her own she could not learn to regard with affection. She rejoices to be free from restraint, free to assert her independence.