The Letters of
Elizabeth Barrett Browning
to Her Sister Arabella

Edited with Introduction and Notes
by

SCOTT LEWIS

In Two Volumes
Volume I

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
2000
Abstract

This thesis is an edition of 167 of the 239 extant letters addressed to Arabella Barrett by her sister Elizabeth Barrett Browning and by Robert Browning during the years of their marriage.

An introduction provides an analysis of the 167 letters: the first is dated Paris, 26 September 1846, fourteen days after the Brownings' marriage; the last was posted in Florence on 18 December 1856, following the release of her major work, *Aurora Leigh*, the previous month. This study places the letters in the context of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's life and works and examines the relationship between the content and style of the poet's epistolary writing and her major poetical works during this period. It also traces the major themes that emerge from the letters: her reactions to theological ideas (Swedenborgianism, spiritualism, and Christianity); her response to social and political issues (the Risorgimento, Napoleon III's policies, and English politics); and her reflections on marriage and family life (Browning, Pen, and her extended family). The introduction concludes with a brief examination of the relationship of Browning and Pen with Arabella after their return to London in 1861 until Arabella's death in 1868.

The text of the letters follows with explanatory annotations at the end of each letter. The notes identify and amplify significant persons, places and events, artistic works, as well as literary, historical, and philosophical allusions. These notes include cross references, and provide an overview of patterns of thought, and offer links between important thematic developments.

The thesis concludes with an appendix listing the remaining 72 letters written before EBB's death in 1861, followed by another appendix outlining the key historical and political events for this period. A bibliography is followed by a comprehensive index, affording the reader ready access to specific as well as conceptual topics in both the introduction and the text of the letters.
## Contents

Preface 8  
Editorial Principles and Procedures 11  
Short-Titles, Abbreviations, and Symbols 14  
Introduction 17  
Chronology 58  

## The Letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Manuscript Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>[26 September 1846]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 October 1846</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>[16–19 October 1846]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>[21–] 24 November [1846]</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>24 November 1846</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>14 December [1846]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8 February [1847]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>24 February 1847</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>[?5–] 9 March [1847]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>[26 March 1847]</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>12 April [1847]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>6 May [1847]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>6 May 1847</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>29–30 May [1847]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>22–25 June [1847]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>26 July [1847]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>2 August 1847</td>
<td>Armstrong Browning Library</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>29–31 August [1847]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>[13 September 1847]</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>4 October 1847</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>25 November [1847]</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>[ca. 10 February 1848]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>2 April [1848]</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>15–19 April [1848]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>10–11 May [1848]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>4 July [1848]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30 7–11 October [1848] Berg Collection 227
31 20 November 1848 Missing 236
32 16–18 December [1848] G.E. Moulton-Barrett 238
34 22 January 1849 G.E. Moulton-Barrett 256
35 3 [-?] March [1849] G.E. Moulton-Barrett 257
36 [9 March 1849] Missing 262
37 13 March [1849] G. E. Moulton-Barrett 264
38 18 March [1849] Missing 264
39 8–16 April [1849] G.E. Moulton-Barrett 266
40 6–7 June [1849] G.E. Moulton-Barrett 274
41 [23 June 1849] G.E. Moulton-Barrett 278
42 4 July [1849] G.E. Moulton-Barrett 286
43 17 August [1849] G.E. Moulton-Barrett 289
44 31 August [1849] G.E. Moulton-Barrett 296
45 [8 October 1849] G.E. Moulton-Barrett 299
46 19 October [1849] Missing 302
49 [15–16 April 1850] G.E. Moulton-Barrett 325
50 [?5] [May 1850] G.E. Moulton-Barrett 328
52 24 June [1850] G.E. Moulton-Barrett 341
53 30–31 July 1850 G.E. Moulton-Barrett 345
54 4 [-5] August 1850 G.E. Moulton-Barrett 346
59 12 January [1851] Berg Collection 374
60 1 [–2] May [1851] Berg Collection 379
61 16 May [1851] Berg Collection 381
63 12 [June 1851] Berg Collection 391
64 26 June [1851] Berg Collection 392
65 2–4 [July 1851] Berg Collection 395
66 [10 July 1851] Berg Collection 400
67 [21 July 1851] Berg Collection 404
68 [26 September 1851] Berg Collection 406
69 [28–29 September 1851] Berg Collection 408
70 5 October [1851] Berg Collection 411
71 [12–14 October 1851] Berg Collection 414
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Date/Description</th>
<th>Collection/Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>18 November [1851]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>25–26 December [1851]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>[25 December 1851]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>13 January [1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>11–12 February [1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>[18 February 1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>[24 February 1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>[5 March 1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>23 March [1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>28 April [1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>25 May [1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>29–30 May [1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>[30 June 1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>[13 October 1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>[17 October 1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>[22 October 1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>[25 October 1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>5 November [1852]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>21 December 1852</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>[2 March 1853]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>1 [–2] April [1853]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>4 April [1853]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>12 April [1853]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>30 April [–1 May 1853]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>11 June [1853]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>[ca. 28 June 1853]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>15 August [1853]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>11–12 September [1853]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>1–2 February [1854]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>28 February [1854]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>3 April [1854]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>24 May [1854]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>22 August [1854]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>[12–] 13 September [1854]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>21 October [1854]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>26 November [1854]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>20 December [1854]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>10 January [1855]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>[ca. 26 February 1855]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>[late March 1855]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>15 May [1855]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>11–12 June [1855]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>25 June [1855]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>[27 June 1855]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>30 June [–1 July 1855]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>[8 July 1855]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>[10 July 1855]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>[3 September 1855]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>[4 September 1855]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>[6 September 1855]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>[10 September 1855]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>[17 September 1855]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>[29 September 1855]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>[1 October 1855]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>[2 October 1855]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>[3 October 1855]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>[23 October 1855]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>31 October [1855]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>22 November [1855]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>31 December [1855]</td>
<td>Berg &amp; Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>[?10] [February 1856]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>[27 February 1856]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>13 March [1856]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>22 April [1856]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>1 May [1856]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>[22 June 1856]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>[26 June 1856]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>[27 June 1856]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>[6 September 1856]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td>[7 September 1856]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td>769</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Date Description</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>11 September 1856</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>16–17 September 1856</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>21 September 1856</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>25 September 1856</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>4 October 1856</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
<td>13 October 1856</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>18 October 1856</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>2 November 1856</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td>23 November 1856</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td>789</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix I: Checklist of Letters from EBB to Arabella: January 1857–June 1861 799

Appendix II: Chronology of Political and Social History: September 1846–December 1856 801

Bibliography 803

Index 807
ERRATA for Volume I

p. 75, n. 3, line 2: “EBB asked to decide” should read “EBB asked RB to decide”.  
p. 79, 6 lines from bottom: “nothi1ng” should read “nothing”.  
p. 89, n. 8, line 5: “(under the rack-w!heel)” should read “(under the rack-wheel)”.  
p. 94: “Publication: BC, 14, 70–79” should read “Publication: BC, 14, 70–73”.  
p. 107, n. 30, line 1: “Catholic devotion” should read “Roman Catholic devotion”.  
p. 107, n. 30, line 2: “before 1224” should read “before the year 1224”.  
p. 146, n. 17, line 5: “admission is 3 pauls” should read “admission to a single service is 3 pauls”.  
p. 149, line 23: “Mrs. Freeman” should read “Mr. Freeman”.  
p. 156, line 6: “Publication: None traced.” should read “Publication: BC, 14, 223–235”.  
p. 156, n. 9, line 4: “imitations of Roman cars” should read “imitations of the Roman cars”.  
p. 158, line 3: “flat as pancakes” should read “flat as pancakes,”.  
p. 165, line 6: delete call-out 20 after Monro  
p. 166, n. 10, line 3: “are preferable” should read “are far preferable”.  
p. 166, n. 23, line 2: “in 1554” should read “in 1564”.  
p. 173, n. 12: publication date “1843” should read “1850”.  
p. 181, n. 20, line 2: “independent Monarchs” should read “independent MONARCH”.  
p. 181, n. 20, line 4: “Italians to organize themselves” should read “Italians to organize or arm themselves”.  
p. 181, n. 20, line 5: “kingdom of Italy.” should read “kingdom of Italy’ (p. 4).”  
p. 181, n. 20, line 6: “tranquil, meaning that” should read “tranquil, meaning, we suppose, that”.  
p. 181, n. 20, line 8: “each.” should read “each, no doubt can be entertained’ (p. 4).”  
p. 189, n. 10, line 7: “met the preceding summer in Rome” should read “met in Rome”.  
p. 194, n. 15: Hand-Book for Travellers to Northern Italy should read Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy.  
p. 209, n. 9: Hand-Book for Travellers to Northern Italy should read Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy.  
p. 301, n. 4, line 24: “justice which as natives” should read “justice which, as natives”  
p. 324, n. 25, line 7: “secret and confidential letter” should read “secret and confidential circular”.  
p. 324, n. 25, line 9: “anarchical government” should read “anarchical Government”.  
p. 324, n. 25, line 12: “government officers” should read “public officers”.  
p. 324, n. 25, line 16: “to publish the order” should read “to publish the severe order”.  
p. 324, n. 25, line 17: “and beard ‘those horrid” should read “and beard,’those horrid”,  
p. 324, n. 25, line 18: “To-day has thought” should read “To-day he has thought”  
p. 339, n. 7, line 5: “its wearer?” should read “its wearer?’ (p. 5).”
Writing to her brother George in July 1841, Elizabeth Barrett described Samuel Laman Blanchard's life of Letitia Landon as a "dreary melancholy book ... And then the biographer is parsimonious of her letters,—which always tell a story of life better, than the best abstract of it, elucidated by the cold hands of another" (BC, 5, 93). Considering the perennial interest in the life and work of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, but especially with the emergence during the past quarter century of Elizabeth Barrett Browning as one of the pre-eminent women writers of the 19th century, and the recovery of Aurora Leigh as "the heroine text" of feminist literary studies during the past several decades,¹ it seems appropriate that the longest and most intimate series of letters written by the poets during the years of their marriage should be made available to scholars.

The length of the 239 letters Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote to her sister Arabella (amounting to over 530,000 words), coupled with the issue of literary copyright and location of the originals has resulted in them remaining mostly unpublished. More recently, anyone contemplating the task of editing them might have avoided it on the basis that the letters will eventually take their place in the collected edition of The Brownings' Correspondence. Indeed, the first 23 letters have already appeared there. However, there is a strong case to be made for isolating these letters outside the larger context of the collected correspondence.

Over the years, EBB’s letters to specific correspondents have appeared, such as her Greek-scholar-friend, Hugh Stuart Boyd, the artist Benjamin Robert Haydon, the novelist Mary Russell Mitford, and her Scottish friend Eliza Ogilvy.² However, the letters to Arabella are invaluable for the insight they offer on the Brownings’ poetic achievements during this period—when Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote Casa Guidi Windows and Aurora Leigh, among other works—and Browning wrote Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day and Men and Women. As a sequel to the poets’

¹. Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Aurora Leigh, ed. Margaret Reynolds, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996, p. ix. Reynolds further records that “in the 1980s and 1990s Aurora Leigh has become the central text of nineteenth-century women’s writing in academic circles; it competes with Christina Rossetti’s ever-popular Goblin Market for first place as the most written-on text of Victorian women’s poetry” (p. x).

courtship correspondence; these letters provide a *journal intime* of the Brownings' marriage; they trace the development of the poetical careers of both poets—the acceleration of Browning's and the apogee of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's—during these years. Moreover, by providing a chronicle of their life in Italy, these letters link the two poets to the wider cultural milieu in which they moved, showing the effects they had on fellow authors, artists, philosophers, and politicians, as well as the influence those individuals had on the Brownings. The range of topics is vast—from literature, art and music to history, theology and politics—offering a unique perspective for students of many different disciplines. Additionally, these letters offer a commentary on sisterhood in the mid-nineteenth century by providing at least one side of the relationship between Elizabeth Barrett Browning and her sister.

The principal aim of this thesis is to present accurate and complete transcriptions of the letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning (as well as those from Robert Browning) to her sister Arabella Barrett from September 1846 through December 1856, and to complement them through the application of a consistent editorial standard and substantial annotation. The Introduction places the letters in context by providing a brief background, and examines a number of their major themes, particularly in relation to the poems Elizabeth Barrett Browning composed during this period. I believe that an examination of these letters will provide new insights into the events and experiences that informed and influenced Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poetry, as well as Robert Browning's, during these years.

A total of 239 letters for the series is based upon a tabulation where a single letter number is assigned to letters written contiguously by both poets on the same sheet of stationery. Two numbers are assigned if both poets wrote under the same cover but on separate stationery. Due to the length of these letters (letter 16 exceeds 7,000 words) and the unusual number of words required to annotate and introduce them, only the first 167 letters are presented in this thesis. They consist of those written by Elizabeth to Arabella (146); Elizabeth to Arabella and Henrietta (4); Browning to Arabella (3); Browning to Arabella and Henrietta (10); Elizabeth and Browning to Arabella (1); and Elizabeth and Browning to Arabella and Henrietta (3). By including the few letters not written solely by Elizabeth to Arabella, this series then comprises all the known letters from the Brownings to Arabella from the time of the Brownings' marriage until just after the release of *Aurora Leigh*.

For access to the original manuscripts and permission to edit these letters, I am grateful to the owners: The Armstrong Browning Library of Baylor University; the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations; The College Library, Eton College; and, Captain Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

I must also thank the other libraries and institutions which allowed me to examine original materials in the course of my research: the Bodleian Library; the British Library; University College London, Special Collections; the Guildhall Library; the Family Record Centre; the Library of Congress; the Institute of Historical Research, University of London; and Dr. Williams's Library. Particular thanks to the staff of the British Library for their many courtesies, especially Mrs. Nina Evans.
I am grateful to members of the Barrett, Moulton-Barrett, and Browning families for their support and encouragement, especially, Miss Mary V. Altham; R.A.J. Altham; R.A. Barrett; Anthony Moulton-Barrett; the late Edward R. Moulton-Barrett; Captain Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett; Elaine Vivienne Browning Baly; Norman Collings; and, Anthony E. Vicars-Miles. I would also like to express my thanks to members of the Browning Society, whose response to a presentation of part of this material provided numerous insights.

Thanks are due to the Revd. Dr. Perry Butler, Priest-in-Charge, St. George’s, Bloomsbury, for directing me to the records of the Inter-Continental Church Archives. Philip Errington, Michelle Lovric, and Diana Procter have made contributions to my work for which I am grateful.

I am indebted to Philip Kelley for his suggestion to undertake this project in the first place. Without the benefit of his knowledge and assistance, the task would almost surely have been impossible and not nearly as pleasant.

A special debt of gratitude is due to Professor Daniel Karlin, whose supervision of this thesis resulted in a congenial collaboration.
Editorial Principles and Procedures

In general the following editorial principles and procedures are based upon those outlined in an article by Philip Kelley and Ronald Hudson: “Editing the Brownings’ Correspondence: An Editorial Manual” in *Browning Institute Studies*, 9 (1981), 141-160. Some modifications have been made to accommodate this selection of letters.

1. The letters are arranged in chronological order. Each letter is assigned a sequential number, which is used for cross references.

2. The letter is presented as it was intended by the writer to be read; any text that has been altered or cancelled by the writer is not restored. Where the writer has made changes or deletions of critical interest, explanation is provided in the notes.

3. Text that has been altered or cancelled by a second hand is restored when possible. Where it is not possible to reconstruct the passage, the extent of the alteration or cancellation is explained in a note, as well as who made it. Based upon numerous examples, it has been possible to distinguish cancellations made by EBB from those made by Arabella. Since Arabella generally shared EBB’s letters with her siblings, she occasionally cancelled passages she considered too private for other family members to read.

4. The author’s unique stylistic characteristics are reproduced as far as possible within typographical boundaries. The text is transcribed exactly, and only those lapses and errors which are most likely to be interpreted as misprints are indicated by the conventional [sic]. Spellings that are not offered as variants in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1984) are also indicated by [sic]. However, some variant spellings allowed by the OED that could easily be mistaken for typographical errors (e.g., sieze and medecine) are also indicated by [sic] to prevent any potential misreading. Easily understood irregularities, such as a word or name spelled differently in the same letter, is left as written by the author, unless the specific context requires explanation. Misspelled names are corrected in the identifying annotation. Foreign words and accents are reproduced faithfully; incorrect or missing accents are indicated by [sic].

5. Words that are unintentionally duplicated are omitted without comment.

6. Interpolations are included in the text without comment unless they are of critical interest.

7. Words or phrases that are underlined once are indicated by italics; double underlining is indicated by small capital letters. More than double underlining is indicated by small capital letters with a note.

8. Underscorings in addresses, dates, and signatures are not reproduced or noted, as they are flourishes, or written to assist in direction and not used for emphasis.

9. Words missing due to physical damage to the manuscript, e.g., holes, seal tears, or deterioration are treated as follows: if part of a word remains and suggests the entire word, the balance is supplied in angle brackets. Completely conjectural words are given in angle brackets,

[11]
and are preceded by a question mark if the reading is uncertain. Where there is no sound basis for conjecture, missing words or phrases are represented by ellipses within angle brackets.

10. The writer's punctuation is followed as faithfully as permissible within typographical boundaries. Double and single quotation marks are retained as given by the writer, and the use of two periods instead of the more conventional dash has also been preserved. Paragraph divisions have been added in a few cases to prevent unclear run-ons, and these are not noted. Also, the writer's variable-length dashes have been standardized.

11. Superior letters and numbers have been retained, as well as the period below; however, dashes used with superior letters and numbers have been converted to periods.

12. Ampersands, abbreviations and contractions have been retained, including EBB's habitual placing of the apostrophe between two parts of a word rather than over the omitted letter(s). EBB's habitual spelling of "cant," "wont," and "dont" has been retained without being noted.

13. The place from where the letter is addressed is normally placed by the writer at the top right of the first page. This information has been transferred to this position if it appears elsewhere. If the writer does not give the place where the letter was written, the place is supplied in square brackets at the top right of the first page.

14. The date the letter is written is mostly placed by the writer at the top right of the first page. This information has been transferred to this position if it appears elsewhere. If the dating of a letter is based on the postmark, it is given in square brackets preceded by the word Postmark. If any component of the date is not provided by the writer, the information is conjectured and placed within square brackets and a note explains the basis of the conjecture. Any element of doubt is indicated by a question mark within the square brackets, the doubt extending from the question mark to the following closing square bracket. Thus, [?5–] 9 March [1847] indicates that the beginning date of the letter is questionable; the year is provided from the postmark. When it is not possible to provide exact dating, letters are placed at the earliest possible date.

15. The complimentary close is separated from the letter unless it is so informal as to be considered part of the text.

16. The text of the letters is presented in sequence without comment on any unconventional placement, such as conclusions appearing on an envelope, or writing in the margins, unless the meaning or context would be unclear without explanation.

17. At the end of each letter the following information appears:
   a. Address of recipient if given by the writer;
   b. Docket or endorsement added by the addressee or a contemporary;
   c. Previous published text;
   d. Location of manuscript or derivation of text.

18. All foreign words or phrases are translated, except those that are found in The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (3rd ed., Oxford, 1984). When a foreign word or phrase is used more than one time in the same letter, such as "balia," it will be translated only at the first occurrence in each letter.
19. Annotations are numbered sequentially for each letter. Notes are provided to identify persons and to amplify or clarify events, quotations, allusions, textual irregularities and statements that seem to need elucidation, specifically as follows:

a. To identify every person mentioned on their first appearance only, unless a subsequent mention requires clarification. Every effort has been made to provide full names and dates of births, deaths, and marriages, where relevant and available. The index indicates the principal identifying note(s) for persons and places mentioned frequently;

b. To identify every reference to literary or other artistic works, providing full titles, and date and place of publication based upon first editions. Titles of literary works referred to in annotations include the date and place of publication as well;

c. To provide identification of embedded quotations or allusions. Generally, this has been done only when there is emphasis to show that the writer meant to call attention to the reference. In all cases, where an unsuccessful attempt has been made to provide an annotation, this has been indicated in the notes;

d. An attempt has been made to locate all personal objects, such as jewelry, photographs, paintings, pictures, household items, and other items referred to in the letters. Due to the nature of these letters, and the numerous references to such items, where it has not been possible to identify these things, no comment is made; and

e. In cases where EBB refers to her correspondence, when a letter is extant, the published source is given, or if it is unpublished, the manuscript location is given. No comment is made if the letter has not been located.
# Short-Titles, Abbreviations, and Symbols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ABL</strong></td>
<td>Armstrong Browning Library, Baylor University, Waco, Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Altham</strong></td>
<td>Mary V. Altham, Babbacombe, England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Altham, R.J.L.</strong></td>
<td>R.J.L. Altham, Preston, England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BBIS-10</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Letters from Owen Meredith (Robert, First Earl of Lytton) to Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning,&quot; ed. Aurelia Brooks Harlan and J. Lee Harlan, Jr., <em>Baylor Browning Interest Series Ten</em> (Waco, Texas, 1936)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BL</strong></td>
<td>British Library, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brown</strong></td>
<td>Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BSN</strong></td>
<td><em>Browning Society Notes</em> (London: The Browning Society, 1970–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Columbia</strong></td>
<td>Columbia University, New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAB</strong></td>
<td><em>Dictionary of American Biography</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dickens  

DNB  
*Dictionary of National Biography*

EB  

EBB  
Elizabeth Barrett Barrett / Elizabeth Barrett Browning

EBB-EAHO  

EBB-MRM  

Eton  
Eton College Library, Eton College, Windsor, England

Fitzwilliam  
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, England

Harvard  
Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Hawthorne  

Huxley  

Last Words  
Thomas Carlyle, *The Last Words of Thomas Carlyle* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892)

LEBB  

Lilly  
The Lilly Library, Bloomington, Indiana

LRB  

Maynard  

Meredith  
Michael Meredith, Eton, England

NL  

OED  

PMLA  
*Publications of the Modern Language Association*

Princeton  
Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey

RB  
Robert Browning

RB, Sr.  
Robert Browning, Sr., RB's father
Reconstruction


Scripps

The Browning Collection, The Ella Strong Denison Library, Scripps College, Claremont, California

Smithsonian

Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Surtees

Journal of William Surtees Cook (afterwards Altham), 1844–87. Manuscript with Mary V. Altham

Texas

Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin

*TTUL*


Wellesley

Wellesley College Library, The English Poetry Collection, Wellesley, Massachusetts

Yale

Yale University, The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut

[ ]

Square brackets indicate material inserted by editor

⟨ ⟩

Angle brackets denote some irregularity in the manuscript. The absence of a note indicates that the information within the brackets is a conjectural reconstruction caused by seal tear, holes or physical deterioration of the manuscript

⟨...⟩

Angle brackets enclosing ellipsis show an actual omission caused by a defect of physical irregularity in the manuscript. Except in the case of text lost through seal tears, holes, etc. the nature of the irregularity in indicated by a note. This symbol appeals on a line by itself if lost text exceeds half a line

⟨★★★⟩

Angle brackets enclosing triple stars indicate the lack of a beginning or end of a letter

...

Ellipses indicate omissions from quoted material in notes, but in the actual texts of the Brownings’ letters they merely reproduce the authors’ style of punctuation
Introduction

In January 1846, Elizabeth Barrett told Robert Browning that her sisters knew about their engagement:

I will take courage to tell you that my sisters know—Arabel is in most of my confidences, & being often in the room with me, taxed me with the truth long ago—she saw that I was affected from some cause—and I told her. We are as safe with both of them as possible (BC, 11, 322).

Browning responded:

And am I not grateful to your Sisters—entirely grateful for that crowning comfort,—it is "miraculous", too, if you please—for you shall know me by finger-tip intelligence or any art magic of old or new times...but they do not see me, know me—and must moreover be jealous of you, chary of you, as the daughters of Hesperus, of wonderers and wistful lookers up at the gold apple—yet instead of "rapidly levelling eager eyes"—they are indulgent? Then...shall I wish capriciously they were not your sisters, not so near you, that there might be a kind of grace in loving them for it? but what grace can there be when...yes, I will tell you—no, I will not—it is foolish—and it is not foolish in me to love the table and chairs and vases in your room (BC, 11, 324).

Nine months later, on 12 September 1846, the poets met at mid-morning in St. Marylebone Church and were married, and a week later they left England en route to Italy. "There was no elopement in the case, but simply a private marriage" (letter 2), as EBB emphatically explained to her sisters three weeks later. The celebrated courtship had given way to the now-acclaimed marriage.

If that courtship has, as Daniel Karlin points out, inevitably "taken on the form of a heroic myth of rescue and regeneration," then one might ask if the marriage was as heroically mythical as the courtship had been. At this distance of time we cannot know whether the Brownings' marriage was the "unqualified success" Dorothy Mermin has called it. There have been various reports—from tabloid-style gossip to respectable and dependable memoirs to almost fictionalized accounts—depicting the Brownings as a married couple. The earliest known record is by George Stillman Hillard, an American visitor to Florence, who met the Brownings in late 1847. Although

1. According to a contemporary guide for etiquette and manners, in a situation where the parents or guardians refuse permission to marry, and "the opposition is implacable, the lady and gentleman being arrived at legal age, they may be justified in respectfully and openly declaring their intentions to celebrate their marriage" (Etiquette of Courtship and Marriage, London: David Bogue, 1844, pp. 15-16). From this it is apparent that the only impropriety the poets committed was in not declaring their intention.


4. The most recent is Dared and Done (London: Bloomsbury, 1995), by the novelist, Julia Markus.

5. For the text of Hillard's account, see BC, 14, 408-409.
he was the first, Hillard was certainly not the last to announce that the poets had achieved a "perfect union." Since Robert Browning wrote to no one as frequently or in such detail as his wife did to her sisters (or if he did those letters have not survived), then it is in EBB's letters to her sisters that the most complete account of the poets' marriage is likely to be found, particularly in the letters to Arabella. In a review of Leonard Huxley's edition of EBB's letters to her sister Henrietta, William Lyon Phelps claimed that those letters show "how amazingly happy she was; and they prove that while Browning was a great poet, he was the greatest husband in the history of mankind." Phelps suggested that "those who believe that married life is an art form worth cultivating might learn something from Browning."

Arabella Barrett Before 1846

When the poets met at St. Marylebone Church to be married, Browning was accompanied by his cousin, James Silverthorne, and EBB by her maid, Elizabeth Wilson. Under different circumstances, it is likely that EBB would have been joined by one of her sisters, probably Arabella. Browning had met Arabella, as well as Henrietta, early on in the poets' courtship, but in September 1845, nine months after their correspondence began and four months since their own first meeting, EBB decided that he should know them better:

And then I take it into my head as you do not distinguish my sisters, you say, one from the other, to send you my own account of them in these enclosed 'sonnets' which were written a few weeks ago; & though only pretending to be 'sketches,' pretend to be like, as far as they go, & are like, my brothers thought, when I 'showed them against' a profile drawn in pencil by Alfred, on the same subjects (BC, 11, 66–67).

She went on to explain:

Henrietta is the elder, & the one who brought you into this room first--- & Arabel who means to go with me to Pisa, has been the most with me through my illness & is the least wanted in the house here, . . . & perhaps . . . perhaps—is my favorite—though my heart smites me while I write that unlawful word. They are both affectionate & kind to me in all things, & good & loveable in their own beings—very unlike, for the rest,—one, most caring for the Polka, . . . & the other for the sermon preached at Paddington chapel, . . . that is Arabel—so if ever you happen to know her you must try not to say before her how 'much you hate' &c. (BC, 11, 67).

EBB's description of Henrietta and Arabella says as much about her family in general as it does about her two sisters. As individuals each had her or his own particular interests and personalities, and as a group they formed a close-knit and interdependent unit—basically a happy and supportive family. At the head of this circle was their widower father, who controlled his family with an unusual if not extraordinary firmness. But however severe and threatening his idiosyncratic behavior might have been, there is nothing to indicate that any of them ever questioned his right

---


7. The sonnets are entitled "two Sketches, No. I and No. II." The second one was published in The Christian Mother's Magazine (October 1845, 635). They were published together in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine (June 1847), and were later collected in Poems (1850) as "Two Sketches. I and II." See Reconstruction, D1061–64.
to exercise his paternal authority, nor did any of them ever abjure their love and affection for him. And even though he favoured his eldest daughter, in some ways it was Arabella who shared more of his serious and solemn nature.

When this series of letters began, EBB was 40 years old, and her sister Arabella was 33. Born on 4 July 1813 at Hope End, Ledbury, Herefordshire, Arabella was the youngest of four daughters (one of whom died as a young child) and the sixth of twelve children of Edward Barrett Moulton-Barrett and Mary Graham-Clarke. Named for her maternal grandmother, Arabella Graham-Clarke, daughter of Roger Altham of Latton, Essex, Arabella had several close relations who bore the same Christian name: an aunt, Arabella Graham-Clarke (1785–1869), called “Bummy” or “Bum,” as well as two first cousins, Arabella Hedley (1828–70), daughter of Robert Hedley, and Arabella Butler, daughter of Sir Thomas Butler, 8th Baronet. EBB’s sister was often described by her mother as pretty and lively, but some teething problems as a small child developed into more serious complications, as EBB recalled in a letter to Sarianna Browning in 1853:

When Arabel was a child, through the accident of overbleeding when she was a baby & cutting her teeth . . . (a leech got upon an artery) her system became enfeebled & she was subject to swellings on the glands. It is a complaint from which our family, on all sides of it, has been uniformly free, but, there is a beginning to these things of course. When she grew up the tendency appeared to have ceased; but two years ago there was a return . . and now again this spring. Cold winds & weather are necessarily injurious, & the exceptional season everybody complains of has re-acted on her. She has suffered acute pain . . which is now past, she says, but the swelling continues . . on the back of the neck, this time. Poor darling. That sort of affliction is vexatious & disagreeable on other accounts than for the actual suffering.  

As a result of this childhood illness, Arabella was sent away to recuperate, and in the summer of 1817, a nurse/companion was engaged for her—Mary Robinson, always referred to as Minny—and together they were sent to Ramsgate, and then to Worthing in Sussex, where it was hoped that the sea air would bring about a faster recuperation. A report that Minny Robinson gave in a letter to EBB in November 1817 told of some sign of improvement, but this illness and separation had lasting effects. Her personality and habits were evidently affected by being isolated with only adults for company and reading as her main activity. In January 1818 Arabella was with her grandmother, Elizabeth Moulton, who wrote to EBB that “dearest Babes is quite well, & in fine spirits, indeed my Beloved Ba, she promises to be very clever, no present seems so welcome to her as a Book, two hours every Morng. she is closeted with Minny at her lessons—she send[s] her very best love to all” (BC, 1, 53).  

8. EBB to Sarianna Browning, [ca. 10 August 1853], ms at Lilly.  
9. According to the unpublished “Recollections of Mary Altham, May 1936”, “a story was told of Minnie that once when Arabel, her charge, was terribly ill, indeed doctors had gone downstairs assuming her to be dead, Minnie sat by,—fancied she detected light breathing,—recalled the doctors—she was right” (ms with Altham).  
10. A letter from Arabella to EBB, written in August 1819, indicates that Arabella had been reading The Parent’s Assistant (1800) by Maria Edgeworth, as well as Whim and Contradiction: A Tale, anonymously published in 1815 (BC, 1, 82).
Except for some brief letters and the traditional birthday greetings that she and her siblings shared throughout their youth, not much is known about Arabella’s teenage years. She is generally portrayed as quieter and more serious in nature than her sisters, and she observed the Hope End custom of corresponding with her family on a fairly regular basis. In March 1825, her brother Edward asked EBB to “tell Arabel how much obliged I was for her most edifying, entertaining, and witty letter, tell her I acknowledge the justice of her complaint in not thanking her for the former one” (BC, 1, 218). However, in March 1827, by the time she was almost fifteen, she stopped sending birthday odes, and even complained about being “again called to the employment of writing another birthday letter which you know I inwardly detest.” In May of that same year she wrote to her mother: “I shall not attempt to describe my feelings on such an occasion as I know it is totally impossible and as I am conscious of my inability of [sic] a letter writer so I shall include them all in three words, ‘I love you.’” And a few weeks later, on her father’s birthday, she told him that her pen was “not skilful enough to say all that my heart could on this happy occasion.” As well as illustrating Arabella’s genuine and straightforward disposition, her reluctance to write odes and letters suggests that she was perhaps conscious of her sister’s literary achievements, and did not want to compete.

Her sincere and direct nature is further exemplified by her response to EBB’s An Essay on Mind and Other Poems. According to Mary Moulton-Barrett, when an advance copy of the work arrived at Hope End in February 1826, Arabella “who had read the fugitive peices [sic] & some of the Essay to the listening circle, told me she thought the former beautiful, but that she did not understand a word of the former [sic, for latter]; which is more honesty than all its readers will observe” (BC, 1, 235–236). On 4 July 1831, EBB noted in her diary that it was “Dearest Arabel’s birthday. She is 18; and an interesting intelligent amiable feeling girl. I should love her even if she were not my sister; & even if she did not love me” (Diary, p. 42).

Among the frequent references to Arabella in EBB’s letters of the 1830’s is a report to Julia Martin that Arabella had “made a good deal of progress in her drawing, lately” (BC, 3, 206), and soon thereafter she took up oil painting. In describing her sisters to Miss Mitford, EBB noted that “Henrietta’s predominant fondness is for music, & Arabel’s for drawing” (BC, 4, 75). In 1841 Miss Mitford provided introductions for Arabella to go to several artists’ studios, including Benjamin Robert Haydon’s, where Arabella went specifically to see the fresco of Uriel that Haydon was working on, and EBB reports that she came away “utterly disappointed” (BC, 5, 145). Nevertheless, Haydon visited 50 Wimpole Street “to encourage & counsel Arabel upon her painting” (BC, 5, 174).

Apparently there was a playful side to Arabella’s personality. In a letter to her brother George in June 1840, EBB describes an incident involving “Arabel’s and Brozie’s separate romances,” and although the details are sketchy, the account proves that Arabella would occasionally have fun:

As to Arabel, was’nt it an adventure. Poor dearest Bella! With the scolding after the perils—

& after that ideal drowning & assassination, the real thorough fatigue of half running nearly

11. 4 March 1827, ms with Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.
12. [1 May 1827], ms at Wellesley.
13. 28 May 1827, ms at Wellesley.
eight miles! But two days stiffness was all the harm done—and she & the Mackintoshes continue
great friends, & I encourage her being with them as much as possible because their happy
spirits & love of fresh air & country excursions are both exhilarating & advantageous to
her—forming breaks upon the monotony & gloom which her kindness to me necessarily
produces—She was so kind when I was ill—It was all Dr. Scully c^ do to keep her from sitting
up night after night—which we never have done (BC, 4, 287).

Even though we are left with no clues to the specific nature of this incident, EBB’s letter reveals
that Arabella was an energetic and lively young woman.

When EBB went to Torquay in 1840 to recuperate from a major illness, several of her brothers
and sisters stayed with her at various times, but it was Arabella who slept on a sofa in her sister’s
room, a habit she continued later in Wimpole Street. While they were in Torquay their brother
Edward (“Bro”) drowned in a boating accident. EBB suffered an emotional breakdown, which is
widely recorded and which was largely the result of the guilt she felt for her own part in this
tragic accident. As she explained to Browning in August 1845, her father “never reproached me
as he might have done & as my own soul has not spared” (BC, 11, 43). It was more than a year
before she was sufficiently recovered and could return to London, but the “selfreproach,” as she
later described it to Browning (BC, 12, 22) had left its emotional scar.14 Arabella’s grief at her
brother’s death, though not recorded, was presumably great, but it lacked the element of self­
blame that afflicted her sister, and did not affect her health; indeed, the sea air agreed with her,
and her physical health was drastically improved. EBB told George that it had been years since
she had “seen Arabel so excursive & capable of exercise” (BC, 5, 22). Arabella seemed to think
nothing of an eight-mile walk, unlike her brothers and sisters, and of taking such walks every day.

As EBB’s companion, Arabella shared her sister’s friends, among whom was Hugh Stuart
Boyd. Arabella frequently called on him, and in almost all EBB’s letters to Boyd there is a reference
to Arabella, if only to “send her love.” In one of the few surviving letters from Boyd to EBB
written in February 1843, Boyd calls Arabella “that other Child of Virtue, and Sweetness, and
Kindness” (BC, 6, 318). EBB relied on Arabella’s rapport with Boyd as a means of communicating
with him, writing often to Boyd that “Arabel should have told you,” or “Arabel forgot to tell
you,” or “did Arabel tell you,” which indicates that at least one aspect of her personal visits to
Boyd was to convey messages from EBB. Arabella would continue this role with Boyd, as well
as with others, especially their brothers, after EBB left England.

Another friendship in common between the two sisters was that of the Rev. James Stratten
and his wife Rebekah.15 Stratten was the pastor of Paddington Chapel, a thriving non­conformist
chapel in Marylebone. The earliest references to the Strattens appear in 1836, and by the time
EBB and Browning were married ten years later, Arabella was teaching a Bible class at the chapel,

14. It seems worth speculating that EBB perhaps transferred some of her lost love and affection for Bro to
Arabella—they were together through the ordeal; they were already deeply attached; and they were strongly
sympathetic in their natures and interests. The bonding they experienced as a result of this tragedy might add to
an explanation for their intense devotion to each other.

15. James Remington Stratten (1795-1872) and Rebekah (née Wilson, 1792?-1870). For a biographical sketch
of Stratten and his family, and their relationship with the Moulton-Barretts, see Scott Lewis, “The Reverend
and she and Mrs. Stratten had become close friends. EBB and Browning at one point considered asking Stratten for advice about their decision to marry, but EBB decided that involving him might cause her father to “forbid Arabel’s going to the chapel or communicating with his family, & it would be depriving her of a comfort she holds dear” (BC, 13, 316). “Does Mr. Stratten blame me much?” EBB asked in one of the early letters to Arabella (letter 3), referring to her marriage, and references to Stratten appear throughout the letters to Arabella. EBB enquired about his thoughts on topics as various as Swedenborgianism and the Russo-Turkish War, as well as her own poetry.

As indicated above, Arabella and Henrietta were the first to learn of their sister’s engagement to Browning. Arabella’s habit of spending long periods of time with EBB and sleeping on a sofa in her room had continued from Torquay days. A reciprocal intimacy and confidence between EBB and her sisters had long been part of their day-to-day life together, and it would have been impossible for her to keep the courtship with Browning a secret for very long. In November 1845, by which time the poets were meeting on a regular basis, Browning was worried that he might be noticed coming and going, but EBB reassured him that “there is nobody to ‘observe’—everybody is out till seven, except the one or two who will not observe if I tell them not—My sisters are glad when you come, because it is a gladness of mine” (BC, 11, 200), for which Browning called them “your kind, gentle, good sisters!” (BC, 11, 241). Browning’s cousin, Cyrus Mason, records in his memoirs that the poet’s “hope to marry Elizabeth Barrett could only be fulfilled by both lovers, assisted by the lady’s sister, maintaining perfect secrecy.” In one of his earliest letters to Arabella and Henrietta, Browning referred to “the early discoveries which you both made,” and explained “that all that delicacy and considerateness was quite understood and appreciated then and now—altho’ I could not, certainly, know the full value of your behaviour at the time. I earnestly trust you may yourselves find such friends as you have been to me—such admirable, perfect friends!” (letter 14).

Arabella and Henrietta were loyal and discreet, and the poets were careful to plan their meetings to avoid EBB’s father; nevertheless, a month before the poets’ marriage, they were all taken unawares when EBB’s father arrived home unexpectedly one afternoon. Concerned that EBB would be frightened by a bad storm, her father left the City early, and when he arrived at 50 Wimpole Street and discovered that Browning had been in EBB’s room alone with her, “which was not to be permitted,” EBB explained, “he was peremptory with Arabel” (BC, 13, 216). Nevertheless, her loyalty to EBB was unshaken, and more than once Arabella came to EBB’s defence when family members suggested a romantic involvement with Browning. Her attempts to divert attention away from the poets were not always entirely convincing. One cousin shrugged off her explanation, admonishing her that it was “perfectly unnecessary for you to tell any stories, Arabel,—a literary friendship, is it?” (BC, 12, 135–136). However, as Daniel Karlin notes, although the sisters might have been in on the secret of the romance, when EBB made her decision to marry and leave, she knew she could not tell them because she would be leaving them to face their father’s anger.

EBB's brothers, on the other hand, were not in her confidence to the same degree. They were preoccupied with their own interests and activities. Charles John, often called "Storm" or "Stormie," was eventually involved in overseeing the family's property in Jamaica. George was a barrister on the Oxford Circuit with the Assize Court. Henry, who never took up a profession or occupation, seems to have aspired to a military post. Alfred, nicknamed "Daisy," was connected with the Great Western Railway during the 1840's, but otherwise little is known about his professional life. Septimus, called "Sette" or "Set," also became a barrister. And the youngest brother, Octavius, known as "Occy," studied architecture under Charles Barry. To some extent their lesser intimacy was probably the reason EBB's brothers took their father's side against her when she married, though they were all eventually reconciled to their sister.

Less than a month before the Brownings' marriage, Stormie confronted Arabella with the blunt question: "Is it true that there is an engagement between Mr. Browning and Ba?" (BC, 13, 283). Arabella told him to ask them if he wanted to know—"what nonsense" she called it. Of course she knew better, and once or twice she annoyed EBB by making ill-advised remarks, such as when she told Kenyon that "Ba is inclined to be a great deal too wild, now that she is getting well" (EC, 13, 258).

Near the end of the courtship, Arabella, even if not officially informed, was apparently aware of the approaching event, and was it seems, in her own quiet and resolute way, helping her sister to prepare. Their frequent outings—to the shops, to the park, to Westminster Abbey (where EBB was overcome by the organ music), and drives, including one when they went as far as Harrow Cemetery (which Arabella could not persuade EBB to enter)—were most often Arabella’s idea and frequently spontaneous. It seems that she was determined to ensure that her sister was as strong as possible, as well as emotionally prepared for what lay ahead. During an outing that included a visit to Kenyon and Boyd, in June 1846, EBB was fidgety and wanted to go home, and later she reported to Browning:

"can you guess what Arabel said to me?—'Oh Ba,'—she said, 'such a coward as you are, never will be... married, while the world lasts'. Which made me laugh if it did not make me persevere... for you see by it what her notion is of an heroic deed!" (BC, 13, 95–96).

The time spent together on these excursions reinforced the sisters' close bond. During a walk together in the park, Arabella told EBB that she was "sure, without being told, that I had had a happy visit [i.e., with Browning], just from my manner" (BC, 13, 174). Even Arabella's insistence that EBB should take Wilson with her if she decided to go to Italy seems to suggest that she was helping EBB anticipate various contingencies, as well as silently protecting her own (and Henrietta's) position of not being active participants in EBB's plans. And consciously or not, Arabella was perhaps preparing herself for the inevitability of her sister's departure and eventual absence. During the last few weeks EBB was at home, the two sisters spent even more time than usual together. Finally, though, EBB simply looked forward to being "out of reach of evil" and to knowing that "Henrietta & Arabel are not too miserable" (BC, 13, 371).

18. For more complete biographical information about EBB's brothers, see BC, 1, 289–296.
"Heaven, earth, & the kitchen"

In the early letters written after leaving England, EBB describes the fear and concern she felt for her sisters as she prepared to leave them behind: "how I suffered that day—that miserable saturday . . . when I had to act a part to you—how I suffered!" (letter 2), and she had rightly feared that any appearance of their involvement would have resulted in "the grief which otherwise remained my own." This regret and sorrow, however, was soon overshadowed by the excitement of being newly-wed and living in a foreign land.

The family scene EBB left behind involved not only her father, sisters, brothers, and domestic servants, but numerous cousins, aunts and uncles, as well as many old friendships. Her role in the domestic life of 50 Wimpole Street was much more significant than is often supposed, and despite her precarious health, her presence provided a focus in the daily routine for both the occupants of and visitors to the Wimpole Street residence. Indeed the immediate household revolved around her more than any other single member of the family, not excluding her father.

Although the importance of EBB’s role in her family and her influence were disrupted by her departure, and by her father’s condemnation of her marriage, she never completely relinquished her right as the eldest child to supervise her brothers and sisters, and her letters to Arabella always exhibit a deep concern for their health and welfare. In one instance she claimed to abdicate "all supposed right 'to counsel or command,' which might be supposed to rest in my elder sisterhood and deeper love" (letter 164), but her resolve was short-lived, and soon she was urging Arabella to take "care of me in yourself—by not doing too much; by not exposing yourself to cold weather—by using means when you require them" (letter 166). At first she struggled with her changed role in the family: "I was half inclined to write to the Medleys to enquire about poor uncle James, but I don't know that I shall . . . they all seem to do very well without me, I must say, Bummy included" (letter 32). Seemingly, she felt her extended family had forgotten her: "Don't fancy, now, that I am offended. On the contrary I am certain they all think of me kindly & affectionately .... when they think of me at all" (letter 39). Consequently, she depended on her sisters letters for news of family and friends: "You never told me a word of the Deffells, & what happened to them after Mr. Deffell's death, though I asked twice. And you never speak of Crow and her children" (letter 32) . . . "a hundred questions I have to ask you, Arabel, and a hundred & fifty answers with which to receive yours" (letter 29). She not only wanted news but she regularly asked for it in detail: "Tell me everything .. oh do! & dont talk about ‘tiring me’ by such & such subjects as Henrietta does,—as if your happiness were not mine indeed" (letter 32). She instructed Arabella in very direct terms to "tell me everything of everybody" (letter 94). "Notes through Mr. Kenyon are welcome," she explained, "but don’t count as letters" (letter 118).

The long letters EBB wrote were hard physical work, and the fatigue evidently affected her health. In at least one case, Browning explained to the sisters that he firmly believed that this last attack was influenced greatly (for I will not pretend to say produced) by the long, long[,] far too long letters that she would write the day before. I said, as I saw her flushed cheeks, 'See if you will not suffer for it!' (letter 26). He was quite sure that "could Henrietta or Arabella know! how they would refuse such pleasure at such price?" Apparently, EBB intended to write to her sisters alternately every two weeks, but
her plans soon proved difficult to carry out, and she was often out of sequence, a pattern that
follows throughout the letters, explaining that “it is Henrietta’s turn to be written to” (letter 6),
and that she knows that “this letter is not in turn” (letter 10). At one point Browning even declared
that she was writing to Arabella “now for the third time— To which I answer that I must at any
rate, write to you now, for especial reasons” (letter 16). At times, letters between the sisters
crossed in the post, interrupting the flow, or a letter from one sister arrived just as she was preparing
to answer one from the other, making it

more natural to answer the speaker, than to speak triangularly, in the fashion we generally
do. Quoth Henrietta to Ba ‘so & so’: quoth Ba to Arabel ‘so & so’. Still as we say to encourage
each other . . . ‘it’s the same thing when a letter comes who is written to’ . . and it is much the
same thing (letter 19).

Arabella and Henrietta shared EBB’s letters with each other, often at EBB’s direct request: “I
wish you would send this letter to my dearest Henrietta that she may know it too” (letter 65).
This became more frequent after Henrietta married and left Wimpole Street, as EBB explained:
“I shall henceforth write rather oftener to you, Arabel, because she has more to amuse her now”
(letter 51). Not only did she write more often to Arabella, she would often reply to Arabella
before answering a letter from Henrietta: “My ever beloved Arabel In spite of Henrietta’s dear
long welcome letter I go to you, you see, like a dog to his master, feeling that you want me most”
(letter 116). EBB’s sensitivity to Arabella’s needs is particularly evident in these letters.

The loyalty and devotion between the sisters manifested in EBB’s letters had been established
for many years, and was an essential condition for the unencumbered exchange they would enjoy
during EBB’s absence. In one of the few extant letters from EBB to Arabella written before this
series begins, EBB reassured Arabella that “I never show your letters” (BC, 4, 93), and she assured
both her sisters that she did not allow anyone, including Browning, to see or read her letters, so
they could be as candid as they liked. Browning confirmed this in November 1887 in a letter to
his brother-in-law, George, in which Browning expressed his fear that EBB’s letters might
eventually be published, and referring specifically to the sisters’ letters, said that he had “never
read one line” (B-GB, p. 309).

EBB felt no fear of constraint in writing to Arabella, and as a result her letters are uninhibited,
unpremeditated, and often unremitting. She frequently reminds Arabella that “I tell you everything”
(letter 12), and “Robert ... declares that I never have done when once I begin to write to you”
(letter 92), and she admitted that “I tell you all sorts of things huddled up together but not ‘joined
together’ by any means or order—” (letter 13). Her letters are conversational and natural: “When I
say to you all sorts of stuff, it is just for the pleasure of talking stuff to you . . . as if we could
afford such words . . sitting together over the fire” (letter 10); and confessional: “you see I tell
you these things, .. good taste or bad taste!” (letter 28); and confidential: “I would not write of
these things to any but yourself— To you, silence would be mere affectation, & a very unkind
affectation ... I talk to you as if we were together talking” (letter 167). Often her letters are
feverish and agitated: “I write like a race horse” (letter 8); “I am writing as fast as a racer” (letter
122); or “Well—I am writing in a dislocated manner—out of joint in every sentence” (letter
141), and “How my words tumble one over another” (letter 152). It is perhaps when she is restless
and excited that she is most captivating. Always aware of her recipient, she carefully mixes topics of interest and discreetly checks the depths to which she goes, and no where, except perhaps in the love letters, is her spontaneous and conversational style better exemplified than in the letters to Arabella.  

In these letters to Arabella, EBB progresses naturally from the pre-nuptial courtship correspondence into a post-nuptial epistolary narrative of her life with Browning. In the early letters to Arabella, the emotional intensity of the love letters is continued in EBB’s portrayal of Browning as a husband, and in her frequent and candid protestations of his love for her, further indicating the intimacy between the sisters. The shift from writing intensely private love letters to sharing her new life with Arabella seems effortless and natural. From the seemingly mundane details of their daily routine to the expressions of her innermost thoughts and feelings, EBB carries the reader along a widespread and complex range of ideas and images. Near the end of the Brownings’ six-month stay in Pisa, in a parenthetical comment to Arabella, EBB furnishes perhaps the most succinct description of this unique series of letters: “never surely were such rambling letters as mine, .. treating of Heaven, earth, & the kitchen, in paragraphs mixed together!” (letter 10).

EBB’s remark suggests a convenient framework for outlining the three main topics that emerge from these letters: religious and spiritual issues (“heaven”); political and social issues (“earth”); and personal and family issues (“kitchen”). And her statement, “in paragraphs mixed together,” tagged at the end, further supports presenting the letters in full rather than excerpts or a selection from them, despite their length. Her thoughts are often contained in mixed sentences as well as “mixed paragraphs,” layering idea upon idea. “How can you understand such a tumble-down letter?” she asks Arabella in letter 162. In a review of volume 14 of The Brownings’ Correspondence, Mary Ellis Gibson wonders as always in reading letters— who cares, who should still care, about many of these details? Do we need Barrett Browning’s sketch of her newly rented apartment in Florence? The details of the price of eggs in China—or coffee and carriage in Italy, rather? Is there a payoff in our greater understanding of the period, our pleasure in the letters, our insight into the poems?  

Gibson responds to her own queries by quoting Surtees Cook in his introduction to EBB’s letters to Henrietta:

the letters, especially domestic letters, unguarded and unprepared, of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, were thrown off with such facility, and always so naturally, so happily and pleasantly expressed that they indicate a latent power in prose, which might, had she so selected, have equaled, if not surpassed in brilliancy her own poetry (Gibson, p. 332).

19. Daniel Karlin says that he came away from the Brownings’ courtship letters “with the feeling that she is a much better letter-writer than Browning, as good letter-writing is understood. She is, for the most part, easy, unaffected, and witty; she has a sense of humour and sense of proportion, about her own concerns as well as others’; and her writing gives, as Browning’s almost never does, that sense of a speaker which is one of the sleights of style we most prize in letters” (The Courtship of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985, p. 60).

And Gibson further adds that EBB's "power in prose ... comes from her ability to make us see, hear, touch, feel the experiences of one new both to marriage and to Italy" (Gibson, p. 332).

Unlike Jane Austen's letters to her sister Cassandra, which are more formulaic in their organization and more restricted in range of references, the miscellaneous nature of the content of EBB's unrestrained and "tumbled" letters to Arabella result in references to one type of experience providing analogies for completely different experiences. Moreover, her longer letters, some of which, like Keats's journal-letters to his brother George, allow her a freedom of discourse in which her skilful depiction of characters and her anecdotal accounts often read like short stories. This is especially evident in her ability to see the comic and even ridiculous nature of persons and events. In her letter-writing, EBB is less restrained by the visionary drive that informs much of her poetic writing, and many of the limitations resulting from her high-minded calling as a poet are not imposed on the prose of her letters. This lack of constraint, combined with the intimate nature of her relationship with Arabella, allows her to convey her experiences and ideas without reserve. There is no limit to her sense of pathos and humour, and she perceives and acknowledges the absurd side of things, often including even her own opinions. What emerges from these letters, even more than from her self-conscious poetry, is a truly poetical nature, one with a (often unconscious) rhetorical power to "make us see, hear, touch, [and] feel" 150 years on.

Additionally, her practice of merging feelings and ideas creates an immediacy for the modern reader despite the distance in time. Not only does she mix references to different subjects in both paragraphs and sentences, but she has a tendency to fuse these subjects, especially in references to her son. Often embedded in her accounts of Pen are her own thoughts and ideas. EBB's method of combining domestic, political, religious, and social topics indicates her ways of thinking and the priorities of her thoughts. This is evident not only in these letters, but in her poetry as well.

"Heterodox enough"

Perhaps the most pervasive topic in these letters is religion, which is an indication of the importance it played in the close link between Arabella and EBB, as well as in EBB's poetry. The sisters shared a heritage of dissenting Protestantism, having attended Congregationalist chapels with their father. Fifteen months before their marriage, EBB told Browning that she had always attended "the nearest dissenting chapel of the congregationalists" with her father (BC, 11, 10), and in her description of her sisters to Browning in September 1845, it was Arabella's preference for the "sermon preached at Paddington Chapel" (BC, 11, 67) that distinguished her from Henrietta. More than any of their siblings, their shared beliefs and faith reinforced the bond between EBB and Arabella. EBB's religion, and its influence on her poetry, is well-documented elsewhere; it has been the subject of numerous studies, and these letters to Arabella further demonstrate how EBB's religious ideas and opinions developed during this period, as she responded to life in a Catholic culture; as she was influenced by new associates and friends who encouraged her study

---

21. Often written over a period of several days or weeks.
22. For specific examples, see pages 47 and 48 below.
23. One of the most recent is a book by Linda M. Lewis entitled Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Spiritual Progress: Face to Face with God (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1998).
of Swedenborgianism; and as her earlier interest in mesmerism led to further experiments in spiritualist activities, such as involuntary writing, table-moving, rappings, and séances.

"A congregation of promenaders"

Writing to Miss Mitford in December 1841, EBB described Roman Catholicism as "religion sensualized. The opera in the place of the tragedy!" (BC, 5, 182). EBB's personal experiences with Catholicism did little to improve her opinion. Two months after the Brownings arrived in Pisa, they attended Christmas Eve mass in the cathedral, and she recounted her first impressions of and reactions to Catholic worship to Arabella: "I was impressed for the first ten minutes! Afterwards it grew all weariness of the flesh and no edification of the spirit" (letter 7). She was shocked by the lack of reverence and by people walking around the cathedral during the service and talking while kneeling to pray: "a dog that sate in the midst with his eyes gravely fixed on the altar, Robert pointed out as the most reverent member of the congregation ... call them congregation—call them rather promenaders" (letter 7). The elevation of the host was the only moment of complete attention and reverence she could observe, and she could not help but wonder "how English protestants can come here, & ever be English Puseyites." A few months later she reported how they had been to hear a friar preach some Lenten sermons at the Duomo, and how "this people give their attention & reverence when they understand— ... The chanted, muttered Latin mass leaves them as I told you, a congregation of promenaders" (letter 9).

Nor did the Church's involvement in the political sphere ameliorate her opinions. Pope Pius IX ("Pio Nono") had ascended the papal throne only a few months before the Brownings' marriage, and his liberal acts of reform early in his papacy led many, including the Brownings, to believe that he might lead the cause of Italian unity. In 1847 he granted a civic guard in Rome, and when Leopold II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, followed the Pope's lead by granting a civic guard in Florence, EBB proclaimed: "see what a Pope we have, & how bravely he is doing his work!" (letter 19). The little child EBB hears in the opening lines of Casa Guidi Windows was surely singing one of the popular hymns to Pio Nono; however, she soon wrote that "the Pope is in disgrace a little—Our Italians who wore him in their heart of hearts cant bear to mention his name. He is an excellent man, but unequal to his position" (letter 28). Julia Markus has rightly defended EBB against the charge that she trusted the Pope. EBB's comment in letter 28 makes it clear that any support she might have had for him as a possible political leader had yielded to a realisation that he was not equal to the task. When Pius IX fled to Gaeta in November 1848, EBB declared it "a heinous mistake," and observed that his actions "are too late in the world's day to do any good or harm except just to undo himself. ... even if the pope shd be restored as a temporal prince his authority as Head of a church has perished at the root. ... So Robert & I are sorry for the pope, & glad for the world" (letter 33). And in 1850, when the Pope reinstituted the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England, EBB noted that it "never was meant for an insult but is purely the result of a mistake" (letter 58), confirming her opinion that the Pope was weak and mis-directed—"a serene wax doll in a mitre," as she had earlier called him (letter 48).

EBB’s censorious view of the church’s power was not limited to the political sphere. Her observations of the influence of Catholicism on Italian culture were no less critical. When the Brownings considered leaving Florence in the summer of 1848, EBB reported that Annunciata, their housemaid, had made offerings to the Virgin Mary, “putting up an especial prayer that the Holy Mother would not permit Signor & signora Browning to stir from Florence throughout the summer” (letter 27). EBB’s disdain for Catholic “superstitions” eventually led her to insist that “their symbols and decorations, when seen in daylight of heart & simplicity, are just fit for babies” (letter 96). In fact, it was the outward forms of Catholicism that she felt were perfectly suited to her child, as she explained to Arabella:

> do you know I am heterodox enough to think that whatever influence he does receive in the Italian churches is for good? I do indeed. It is a child’s sense of mystery, ... of something above & beyond ... it is reverence, in fact. The shortcomings and errors of doctrine, he can know nothing of: he only sees the space, feels the silence (letter 58).

Operatic religion was fine for children but not for adults, and she was annoyed by the hypocritical excuse, as she perceived it, that Italians made of religious festivals and saints’ days when “every now & then, all Tuscany rushes into the coffee houses ... and why? Because the Blessed virgin is in ‘expectation of her confinement’” (letter 32). These observations find their way into EBB’s poetry, for example in *Aurora Leigh*, in the description of Assunta “crossing herself whene’er a sudden flame / Which lightened from the firewood, made alive / That picture of my mother on the wall” (I, 124–127).

**“Talking of protestantism”**

Despite the status of Roman Catholicism as the official state religion, Protestant chapels were allowed in Italy, and the Brownings soon discovered that practising Protestantism in Italy in the mid-nineteenth century was not impossible, although, for EBB, it was not particularly pleasant, at least not the Anglican variety. After they attended the English chapel of St. George the Martyr in Pisa, EBB remarked that “we could not go often to hear such trash ... it amounted to imbecillity ... the catholic discourses delivered four times a week during Lent, I had much more satisfaction in listening to,” and it left her wishing that “the Scotch church at Leghorn were here” (letter 15). In Florence, the Church of England had a “pied de terre,” but EBB resented them making “everybody pay sixteen pence ... for every service” (letter 15). And later in Rome, she complained that the “English church here is intensely puseyite” (letter 106). Soon after their arrival in Florence, EBB wrote to Arabella: “It is a drawback to Italy, you will say, to lose sight of the means of open communion among Protestant Christians,” (letter 15); nevertheless, the Brownings attended services in a number of churches, including the Swiss Church in Florence, where Presbyterian services were eventually held. They also attended the French Evangelical Protestant Church, where their son was baptised by the Rev. Moise Droin. Before the baptism, Browning went to call on Droin, and EBB reported that he “was delighted with him: he is a devout man & has much Christian simplicity. He said that Robert must forgive him for asking a question, ... but, ‘as we were English, what were our reasons for preferring the French Lutheran to the English church’”. Robert entered with detail into our reasons,” which, unfortunately, EBB did not elaborate, but Mr. Droin was satisfied and “observed that we were perfectly justified & right in his opinion” (letter 42).
The Brownings also attended French Independent services during their visits to Paris, where on one occasion, as EBB reported, "Robert heard one of the most eloquent sermons ... he ever heard in his life" (letter 74). The preacher was one M. Bridel "whom Robert quite loves," and EBB added that the church "is said to be a most spiritual church, 'a most praying people'" (letter 83). Browning’s church attendance was more regular than his wife’s, whose health often prevented her from going out; however, it seems that she might have used that as an excuse. As Linda Lewis has observed, “by early adulthood she had taken to avoiding the religious services of her father’s church” (Lewis, pp. 11-12), and from her references to church attendance in these letters it is evident that the pattern continued after her marriage. Lewis has also noted that EBB “was highly critical of most sermons” (p. 12), and there are ample illustrations of this in these letters. “We went again to the French independents yesterday, & heard a good scriptural sermon, but nothing in any way remarkable. As usual, Robert liked it better than I did” (letter 69). And in recounting her unorthodox theological discussion with Robert Lytton after a sermon they had heard at the English chapel in Bagni di Lucca, EBB conceded that it “was not a bad sermon of its kind nevertheless, but I am apt to fall upon such reflections after nearly all sermons” (letter 103).

While Protestants were allowed a certain freedom of worship, they were not permitted to proselytize among the Italians. It was illegal in Italy to own an unauthorised Bible, and the distribution of Bibles was a serious and punishable offence. In late 1849, John Pakenham, a retired Admiral from the English Navy and an active member of the Bible Society, was ordered to leave Bagni di Lucca as a result of distributing unsanctioned religious material. Having received permission from the provisional government to print the authorised Catholic version of the Bible for distribution, Pakenham took it upon himself to begin printing the Protestant version, and a few months later he was put on trial and ordered to leave the country. EBB recorded that “a protest of the English has been got up, to which Robert put his name—and he was one of the three or four Englishmen who went into court, in order to give some sign of sympathy to the 'prisoner'” (letter 47). While the Brownings sympathised with the ultimate aims of their fellow Protestants, EBB is clear when she explains that “we foreigners are upon sufferance here, & have no right to act against the laws” (letter 47).

It was about this time that Browning was composing *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day*, and no doubt his predilection for the Dissenting point of view in *Christmas-Eve* was influenced by his observations of Roman Catholicism (and the English Puseyites) in Italy, as was his reflection on the struggles of Christian discipleship in *Easter-Day*. While we might presume that Browning signed the protest against Pakenham’s arrest as a matter of principle, he clearly attached himself to the Protestant cause in doing so.

Not long after the Pakenham affair, an Italian couple, Francesco and Rosa Madiai were arrested, tried, and imprisoned for several years when they were found in possession of an unauthorised Bible. EBB reported to Arabella that Madame Madiai was not allowed to “have a protestant bible” while in prison, and she called it “an iniquitous affair” (letter 93). The incident enraged the Protestant community in Italy; in England, news of the case stirred popular interest, and a deputation led by Lord Roden petitioned the Grand Duke for their release. The Brownings were indignant when they learned that their housing agent, Centofanti, had been implicated as
spying on the Madiai. When the couple were set free in March 1853, EBB was among those who believed that Louis Napoleon had been the liberator. “Whatever that man undertakes to do he does it with his hand, observe, . . . while other people talk, he acts” (letter 98). Although the French government was credited with the Madiai’s release, it was later learned that an English chamberlain in the service of the Duke of Parma was responsible.

These incidents did not discourage the Brownings from practising their faith, nor is there evidence that they felt threatened by the political situation. Religious faith was a very personal experience for EBB. She read the scriptures and prayed regularly. On one occasion the chair she had knelt on to say her prayers fell over with her in it (letter 30). But her religious beliefs cannot be easily defined or classified, as she explained to Arabella, “I am a little heterodox in certain ways. I don’t like some things which are generally approved” (letter 114). EBB’s ideas had developed from her wide reading of theology—from the Bible to the early Church fathers to Swedenborg. The latter was a subject she took up with great interest early on in her marriage, and it became a focus of her religious philosophy until the end of her life.

“Blue-tunic’d angels”

In the autumn of 1847 Sophia and Henry Cottrell settled in Florence “to which city the Brownings had preceded us.” EBB had known Sophia and other members of her family in London, and Browning had been acquainted with one of Sophia’s brothers. Sophia’s father, Charles Augustus Tulk, was with the Cottrells in Florence, and he and Browning shared common interests in Coleridge and Blake. Tulk lent the Brownings his copies of Galignani’s Messenger, leading EBB to describe him as “the kindest, most benevolent man. Shame to us, it w’d be, if we didn’t, in return, pay the right reverence to Swedenborg’s blue-tunic’d angels!” (letter 25). As the author of several books on Emanuel Swedenborg, Tulk’s knowledge of and enthusiasm for Swedenborg’s teachings, especially concerning marriage, caught EBB’s imagination when it was especially susceptible. Tulk lent the Brownings a copy of Swedenborg’s Conjugial Love, “which is his marriage gift to his own children, & Robert & I are reading it devoutly,” and considering her own father’s rejection of her marriage, Tulk’s emphasis on Swedenborg’s doctrines on conjugal love must have been reassuring to EBB.

“What exists between parent & child, is comparatively nothing—merely temporal—Conjugal love is the one eternal bond which God has set his seal on.’ Swedenborg saw in the vision that true husbands & wives were seen as one body in the spiritual life,—the two making one angel. M’ Tulk said that his daughters never were interfered with in their dispositions to marry. Oh, of course he w’d consider all such interference as mortal sin. The whole of his solicitude consisted in his seeing that they really loved & were loved (letter 28).

As solacing as these thoughts must have been, and as interested as EBB might have been in this aspect of Swedenborgianism, it was, however, the philosopher’s mystical concept of eternity and the shadowy, thin veil between this world and the next that most attracted EBB’s fascination.

26. EBB to Henrietta, 21–24 February 1848; transcript in editor’s file.
EBB had been acquainted with Swedenborg’s writings as early as 1840. In a letter to Miss Mitford in October 1842, EBB called Swedenborg “a mad genius—there are beautiful things in his writings, but manifold absurdities” (BC, 6, 128), which was not unlike her comment to Arabella that “Swedenborgianism, it is a name like another, and there’s a deep embroidery of fantastic absurdity about the hem of it,” though she added that “the fashion of the garment itself is Christ’s own—and of that, you may be very certain” (letter 32). From 1848 until the end of her life, EBB developed an increasing enthusiasm for Swedenborg’s teachings, which in turn influenced her poetry. In early 1853, referring to her two-volume collection of Poems, she admitted that “I am impelled to observe, that the readers who have pretended to see in them the views of Swedenborg, are by no means so wrong. There is a strong leaning to the peculiarities of his spiritual philosophy everywhere, to a degree quite curious in a writer who was at that time ignorant of them specifically” (letter 95). She continued to study Swedenborgianism, but she made certain that any direct references or allusions to his ideas in her poetry were disguised. In February 1854, she wrote: “You see the tendency of my writings to Swedenborgianism,” nevertheless, she added, “I use phrases sometimes of which you have not the Key” (letter 107). Earlier, in April 1853, she had cautioned Arabella about reading Swedenborg’s writings; she did not want Arabella “to recoil, to misapprehend,” so she asked her to “wait till I come. Robert says that when he is rich he will buy a Tuscan villa. And I say that when I am rich I will buy a complete edition of Swedenborg” (letter 98). And in June 1853, she notified Arabella that “next summer I shall be absorbing you & making you pale with a course of Swedenborg & rapping spirits” (letter 100).

A few months later, EBB told her old friend Julia Martin that she “had just finished a summer of mountain solitude, succeeding a winter’s meditation on Swedenborg’s philosophy” (LEBB, II, 141). This focussed study of Swedenborg immediately preceded the beginning of her serious work on Aurora Leigh, and continued thereafter. After finishing the fifth book of Aurora Leigh, she informed Arabella that “its quite unlike anything of mine . . . & I hope, of anybody’s else. As to Swedenborgianism, spiritualism &c. the advantage for me is that though I write myself out with a good deal of frankness, neither you nor Robert will find much, if anything in me objectionable” (letter 146). EBB reported that the early responses to Aurora Leigh contained a good deal of praise, “and there’s one sort of compliment which would please you particularly,” she assured Arabella, “people are fond of calling it ‘a gospel’— That’s happy—is’n it?” (letter 167). She explained that this came from a number of different sources in England, America, and in gossip at Florence ... still, that there is an amount of spiritual truth in the book to which the public is unaccustomed, I know very well,—only, I was helped to it—did not originate it—and was tempted much (by a natural feeling of honesty) to say so in the poem, & was withheld by nothing except a conviction that the naming of the name of Swedenborg, that great Seer into the two worlds, would have utterly destroyed any hope of general acceptance and consequent utility. Instead of Mrs Browning’s ‘gospel’, it w’d have been Mrs Browning’s rhodomontade! (letter 167).

Linda Lewis has rightly commented that EBB “preaches a Swedenborgian gospel of ‘Divine Love and Divine Wisdom,’ a gospel that she sees as but an extension of New Testament teachers such as St. Paul and St. John” (Lewis, p. 14–15).
“Rapping spirits & the rest”

For EBB, Swedenborg’s philosophy was closely associated with her intensifying interest in spiritualism, especially her conviction that the division between this life and the next is but a shifting of consciousnesses, and that correspondence between the two is possible. Her comments in January 1849 show how she linked these two systems: "I did mean however to tell you that I fancied the Swedenborgian reception of certain visions of the world of spirits, reconciled their human feelings, to the idea of Death, by rendering more definite, distinct, & proximate to our habits of life, so-called, the things of the unseen habitation" (letter 33). She went on to explain how she perceived that the Swedenborgian system “reduces the separation between loving friends, to one simply tantamount to a separation between bodies . . . to a going into the next room simply.” Still, she was aware that this was an analogy, not a physical equivalence. “You are not to confound,” she later cautioned Arabella, “spirits are in a state, not a place” (letter 107). For EBB Swedenborg’s angels and Home’s rapping spirits were much the same, and her belief in her role as a poet-prophet, with mystical powers, influenced her deep probing into both these areas.27

EBB’s fascination with spiritualism dates from her interest in mesmerism in the early 1840’s. Harriet Martineau’s experiences with mesmerism had been the subject of several letters exchanged between EBB and Browning in 1845, and Alison Winter has observed that EBB and Browning “used mesmeric language in their courtship and debated the practice between themselves.”28 Winter cites several examples in which EBB “used the mesmeric language” to express her feelings for Browning, and Winter goes on to suggest that EBB’s attitude toward mesmerism and its associated phenomena was divided into two categories: “There was the control of one person by another person, which she still associated with obliteration. But this was increasingly distinct from the phenomenon of the blending of two people, which she now associated with love and life” (Winter, p. 240). EBB’s use of “mesmeric language” continues in the early letters to Arabella in descriptions of Browning and his love for her: She is “living as in a dream” (letter 1); Browning “rises on me, higher and higher” (letter 1);29 he is “beyond me in all things” (letter 2); and instead of “obliteration,” “now the ghost has its body back, with a little colour in its cheeks” (letter 3). Finally, to make the “blending of two people” complete, she announces most emphatically that “Love makes a level” (letter 2)—again linking her thinking to Swedenborgian ideas.

The first direct references to spiritualism in these letters do not occur until early 1852, when the Brownings were in Paris, where EBB found a fellow-believer in Lady Elgin, with whom she agreed “about spiritualism, mesmerism, clairvoyance, visions, and the like—and she sends me all the news she has from America about the Rapping Spirits” (letter 83). Other friends shared and encouraged her curiosity, especially Americans: Hiram Powers, William Wetmore Story,

---

27. It seems likely that EBB’s fragile health might have led to a heightened awareness of her own mortality, resulting in her increased interest in the link between the spiritual and material world.


29. She repeats this exact phrase in letter 2.
William Page, and James Jackson Jarves. Since the spiritualist movement had spread largely as a result of the Fox family experiences in Hydesville, New York in 1848, America was seen to be the centre of activity, and EBB was particularly interested in having reports from and about Americans. In January 1853, she reported that "the thing is spreading in America to a degree which w'd be scarcely credible to you, as we hear from every American ‘within hail’ of us; and ‘The wonder is,’ I heard an American say, ‘that nobody in America thinks it a wonder. Families in all classes of society sit at nights, as a matter of course, communicate with spirits’" (letter 94).

She used the experiences of prominent and respected Americans to support her own convictions: George Bush, a noted Hebrew professor; John Edmonds, a Supreme Court Justice; and Grace Greenwood, a well-known author. From the latter, EBB heard a report about Nathaniel Hawthorne’s sister-in-law, Miss Peabody, whose relatives’ dead daughter had kissed them. EBB told Arabella how Longfellow’s brother-in-law, Thomas Gold Appleton, was “giving his whole intelligence to a solution of this question, which he considers ‘the sublimest conundrum ever offered for the world’s guessing’” (letter 102), and how the daughter of the American Consul at Paris was “known to fame besides, being the medium in Paris through whom Lamartine, Arago & others had their experience of the spirit-rappings & table-movings”; furthermore, Washington Irving was investigating, and the Bishop of Rhode Island and a noted Presbyterian minister “converse with spirits” (letter 116). Dr. Wilkinson says “that the movement is spreading on all sides … & that the manifestations promise to be of a far higher character than in America” (letter 163). EBB shared these stories with Arabella, often in great detail, not only as evidence of the phenomena, but also as proof that she was not simply following a craze.

Even though we do not have Arabella’s specific thoughts on the subject, EBB’s letters indicate that her sister was at least willing to consider the subject, and she even dabbled in a few experiments, although she was dubious as to spiritualism fitting into her own system of Christian beliefs. EBB, on the other hand, believed that “what God permits us to investigate, while we fear & love Him, can scarcely be more objectionable in psychology than in mineralogy” (letter 95). To her the spirit communications were chiefly a sign that the spiritual world was accessible. She disagreed with Dr. Carré who told her that “they were assuredly evil spirits, and how I was to keep my beautiful soul clean from their communion” (letter 83) and Mr. Hanna who declared them “contradictory to Revelation” (letter 98), nor did she agree with Frederick Tennyson who felt “that it’s purely devilish,” but maintained her opinion that “there’s a mixture of good & evil, truth & falsehood in it, … that it’s simply an influx from the spiritual world” (letter 97). EBB claimed that it was “a development of Christ’s work on the earth,” and, she added, “Mr. Stratten has no right or reason to conclude that spiritual communications mean perforce Satanic communications” (letter 106). She even offered examples of how spirit manifestations had converted, or almost converted, non-believers to the Christian faith. The spirits persuaded Dr. Prime to believe, and Mr. Jarves was converted “from a state of complete infidelity into very earnest, if not precise, religious views, entirely by these ‘spiritual manifestations.’" Also he

30. Browning later cruelly mocked this dependence on authority figures in “Mr. Sludge, ‘The Medium’”.
31. Considering the religious consequences of the advances in geological science in the preceding fifty years, this is a bold analogy.
has been corresponding with Mr. Trollope whom he found disbelieving in God & the soul, & left ‘much moved.’ She begins to think there may be such a thing as a spiritual world, after all—” (letter 117). An American friend of Margaret Fuller, Mr. Clarke, who was a Unitarian minister and denied the divinity of Christ, recounted his experience with spirit-writing, through which his dead son communicated with him, saying “Christ not a mere man. Christ not a mere man” (letter 94).

EBB used these examples to support her view of the spirits as “good & evil perhaps—foolish & intelligent—a great mixture of kinds” (letter 95), revealing the connection between her thinking and Swedenborg’s teachings. Swedenborg’s writings describe a system of higher, middle, and lower heavens, each occupied by spirits (or angels) whose goodness corresponds to the heaven they occupy. After an experiment to communicate with the spirits had failed, she explained that “other spirits pressed in before mine came—or perhaps mine are in the interior Heavens, from whence there have been few communications hitherto” (letter 104). She held to Swedenborg’s concept that “some are ignorant & evil—some are weak & only learning—some are of a higher order, but I think few have come from the interior Heavens—We must wait” (letter 106). “A spirit out of the body does’nt pretend to more infallibility than a spirit in the body” (letter 124).

Modern readers may find it difficult to understand EBB’s preoccupation with what might be thought of as an irrational subject; however, it should not come as a complete surprise that her ideas developed as they did. She was not superstitious, and her investigations were not the result of a need to satisfy a casual curiosity. Her interest in spiritualism emerges from her lifelong endeavour to increase her own personal spirituality in an effort to bring herself closer to God, as well as perhaps her own increasing sense of mortality. Explaining to Arabella how she accepted the evidence for what it was, she remarked, “I never in my life fancied that I saw what is called ‘a ghost,’—I never in my life had a presentiment to which I could attach much importance” (letter 106). Not all of EBB’s family and friends were as willing as Arabella to support her explorations in this area. Mr. Kenyon had laughed at her and Mrs. Jameson had told her that in London the spirits “are ‘taken up by the dreamers,’ but that the nonsense talked about them would not, if I heard it, command the subject to me,” to which EBB retorted that “no amount of nonsense talked, ever discommends any subject with me. The most nonsense is talked always of the most important subjects—such as religion and politics. People don’t talk nonsense about poonah-painting, for instance” (letter 98). Nonsensical or not, EBB was undaunted in her quest; despite any disapproval or discouragement she received, she continued her investigations—although not without difficulties.

It was her husband, however, not her sister, who proved to be her most sceptical adversary. According to EBB, Browning’s scepticism wavered from time to time; he wanted personal proof. “When Robert is brought face to face with witnesses to the phenomena, he believes as much as I do—but the witness being removed, he falls back into doubt. ... He says he desires the ‘communications’ to be true, passionately. He wishes they could be justified in his own experience” (letter 98). As a result of Browning’s reluctance to embrace his wife’s enthusiasm, the subject became one of the most contentious elements of their marriage. Browning’s main objection was largely his suspicion that mediums employed trickery in order to produce spirits, and that susceptible individuals like his wife were deceived as a result. When Lytton asked EBB her opinion on the spirits, she replied “Why, Mr. Lytton, my husband says that I am no authority upon any
subject of the kind, because I have a trick of believing everything” (letter 97). Grace Greenwood was prepared to tell them her experiences, but she was “unwilling to speak to persons whose sympathy she could not count on. On which, out-spake Robert & assured her that nobody in the world would be more sympathetic than I was, . . & in fact, that I not only believed everything I had heard, but a good deal that I had’nt heard” (letter 100). It was her “absurd credulity” (letter 101) that made him angry.

Notwithstanding his misgivings about the subject, these letters show that Browning was more willing to experiment than has previously been known, and, according to EBB, he was prepared to admit that no trickery was involved if he felt there had been none. “Robert would say only that it was very curious—he couldn’t account for it. . . didn’t pretend. . . was sure there was no false play on the part of anyone. . . but. . . but! Oh, how difficult to believe against preconceived opinions!” (letter 104). And after they tried several experiments together with the Storys and a few other friends in Casa Guidi, EBB wrote that “Robert is as persuaded as I am that every one was in good faith. . . & that no trick was used or attempted” (letter 106).

The friction this subject caused between the Brownings reached fever pitch in the summer of 1855 when the poets attended a séance conducted by the famous medium Daniel Dunglas Home.32 EBB first refers to Home in December 1854, when she mentioned that Mr. Jarves was going to America “to seclude himself with the medium Hume for several months” (letter 116). Jarves’s parents were Home’s patrons in America. A short while later she mentioned that Home would “be in London in the summer [i.e., of 1855],” and she also noted that he is “said to be very devout, & is preparing for the ministry” (letter 120). EBB’s references to Home before attending his séance reveal her view of him as a man of honesty and integrity. She told Arabella that he was “highly spoken of for moral conduct & devoutness of disposition” (letter 121), and he had “been the means of the conversion of two hundred infidels” (letter 122). EBB had heard that Home had also been invited to Paris by Louis Napoleon, and she noted that he “comes to Europe in order to establish mediums & circles here” (letter 121). Home arrived in England in April 1855, and EBB was determined to see him. She was equally determined that Arabella should go along, but apparently Arabella felt it would be improper; EBB protested: “you might as well say that going up into a balloon is impious” (letter 124). EBB told Henrietta that Home was “the most interesting person to me in England out of Somersetshire, and 50 Wimpole Street” (Huxley, p. 218). EBB’s desire was fulfilled when the Brownings attended a séance with Home as medium at the family home of John Snaith Rymer in Ealing on 23 July 1855. At this sitting, a wreath was placed on EBB’s head, which was then passed under the table to Browning. When Browning asked to touch the spirit hand that was conducting these manoeuvres, he was promised he would be allowed, but was not permitted to do so after all.33 Consequently, Browning was convinced that Home was an impostor, and he felt that his wife had been duped. According to an account by

32. The name was often pronounced ‘Hume,’ which led EBB and others to misspell the name; after she met him, she more frequently used the spelling Home.
33. Browning’s complete account, as recorded in a letter to Mrs. Kinney, dated 25 July 1855, can be found in Bosco, pp. 85–89.
William Allingham, when Home called on the Brownings “with a cordial smile and right hand outstretched in amity” to show there were no hard feelings, Browning threatened to throw him down a flight of stairs if he did not leave. And although Browning did not throw Home down the stairs, according to EBB, when the wreath she had kept from the séance “was nearly withered to dust, Robert ... threw it out of the window into the street.” Regardless of the exact details, these events, which EBB later called “the Hume affair” (letter 145), marked a significant moment in the Brownings’ marriage. As EBB explained to Henrietta in August 1855, Home became “a tabooed subject in this house,—Robert and I taking completely different views, and he being a good deal irritated by any discussion of it” (Huxley, p. 219).

EBB continued to believe in Home’s powers, and offered examples of his effects by explaining that the Cottrells had become “believers in Home’s spirits” (letter 143). Despite his weaknesses, she defended his ability as an agent for communicating with the spirits: “Hume is used precisely as the electric wire is used” (letter 144). And even when he fell into some disgrace amongst her Florentine circle of friends, EBB explained that it “proved an advantage to him by removing him to others more cultivated & intelligent” (letter 148). She was disappointed when he lost his spiritual powers, “he is no more interesting to me than to Robert, observe” (letter 149), and she felt that “he has crowned all his misdeeds by turning R. Catholic at Rome” to please his Polish patrons (letter 150). “He is as weak as a straw,” she admitted, “but was a wonderful medium notwithstanding all” (letter 150).

After “the Hume affair,” spiritualism was an extremely sensitive subject between the Brownings. EBB often went to great lengths to avoid the topic being discussed in her husband’s presence. When Henry Spicer announced that he planned to call on them in London in September 1855, EBB “felt inclined to go to bed & be extremely ill till I set out for Paris” (letter 131), but Robert had insisted, so she decided to entreat another guest, Mrs. Sartoris, “to sing so loud and long, that not a word will be utterable or audible about the spiritual world” (letter 131). After the Brownings returned to Paris in October 1855, EBB found it increasingly difficult to keep abreast of the latest of the spiritual news without upsetting her husband. When the Lyttons arrived one evening with Mr. Jarves, EBB “wished for a moment to slip between the boards,” but there was no incident, and after the tea was poured she found a chance for Jarves to tell her “in a low voice that he himself saw spirits now ... but just then Robert called me away to hear something Sir Edward was saying ... considerably to my vexation” (letter 140). Jarves left early that night, but came again another evening, and EBB assured Arabella that Browning had been kind to Jarves, if only he had “added to the benefit by going out of the room for half an hour” (letter 140). EBB’s

35. See letter 140, note 6.
36. Others have recorded their observations of the Brownings’ disagreement over Home and spiritualism. In a letter dated 20 April 1857, Joseph Milsand told W.H. Darley that “Robert and his wife are again at war on the subject of the famous wizard Hume” (transcript in editor’s file). And Ada Shepard (governess to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s children) wrote to Henry Clay Badger on 27 August [1858] that “Mrs. Browning is a firm believer, but Mr. Browning ridicules it in every possible way” (typescript at Yale).
description of these and other episodes reveal the tension the matter had produced in the Brownings' relationship. Apparently Arabella suggested that EBB should be more acquiescent in light of her husband's feelings, against which EBB defended herself:

When you say I am not submissive as a wife I am sure I don't know what you mean—it seems to me I deserve the gold medal for passive perfection . . except in thought & conscience . . which can't be made passive, if one happens to have any (letter 140).

EBB went on to explain how Sir Edward Lytton had invited Browning to go with him to see a medium, and Browning had agreed, so Sir Edward invited EBB as well, "I looked at my liege-lord and was permitted to say my natural 'yes'" (letter 140).

Robert said to me afterwards . . "You see I am not ashamed of acting against my own resolutions."—To which I answered truly that it was one of the noblest things in him, not to be tenacious in either wrong-saying or wrong-doing! And so we were the best friends in the world with regard to spiritual matters (letter 140).

The tone of EBB's report further indicates the strain that had developed. She did not wish to upset her husband, but she was not prepared to give up her interest. "At the same time, Arabel, I shall never moot the subject, unless it is first mooted," and somewhat amazingly, she was sure her husband would eventually change his view. "He will be convinced one day, this Robert of mine, . . but it won't be by me, or by my means" (letter 140).

There is no evidence to suggest that Browning abandoned his disbelief, and he would later recollect the Home incident in "Mr. Sludge, 'The Medium'" (1864), a poem that EBB never saw, but which clearly confirms Browning's opinion that his wife had been duped by Home's fraudulent mediumship. For her part, EBB continued to hope that her husband would eventually believe in the spirits. A letter from Mrs. Kinney describing manifestations in Florence left him surprised but unconvinced, and he continued to attend séances in Paris, but to no avail, and in March 1856, EBB told Arabella "it is not destined for me to have other than a sceptical husband. I told him I expected to have him prostrate before me in an attitude of repentance & conversion—but no, it can't be" (letter 147). Meanwhile, they were both distracted by EBB's work on *Aurora Leigh*, and Browning was caught up in the Paris social scene, so the tension lightened, and soon EBB was reporting that "Robert is 'meek as a maid' upon the subject now. Not that he believes. Oh no— but he is ready to speak reason & hear it" (letter 148). And not long afterwards she wrote that they were "the most united of friends & lovers—I said to him the other day in a gush of gratitude . . 'If truth were not truth & I could disbelieve what I believe, I would give up the spirits for you & set them down as mere bosh.' And he answered—'If you could, I should not like it. I like you best as you are, & believing as you believe'" (letter 149). However, Browning's spells of agreeableness were short-lived, and a few months later, EBB reported how she "was horribly vexed with Robert yesterday for disproving & laughing at all my convictions on that subject—Oh, I did not tell him so, but I was very vexed—very sorry" (letter 158). Only a short while later she explained how he had announced that "he never, never, never, will interfere with me on the subject again. Oh, oaths of men! Should a woman trust them?" (letter 164).
“Theologe politics”

On Sunday, 12 September 1847, the Brownings celebrated their first wedding anniversary in the Palazzo Guidi in Florence, where they had been living since mid-July. The next day EBB wrote to her sisters describing how “our Italians had resolved to keep our day for us” (letter 20), and how she and Browning had watched from the windows of their apartment the processions taking place in Florence to celebrate the granting of a civic guard by Leopold II, Grand Duke of Tuscany. Although born in Italy, Leopold was of Austrian descent, and his benevolence in allowing Tuscans the right to take up arms in defence of their property was seen as a progressive step on his part. It was the second of three important concessions he would make within the space of a year. Earlier, in May 1847, a free press had been granted in Tuscany, and in February 1848 a constitution was proclaimed. For EBB these events—the second one in particular—marked the beginning of what became a central aspect of her life and work. And if we take her literally in Casa Guidi Windows when she writes: “Shall I say what made my heart beat with exulting love, / A few weeks back?” then we can date the beginning of the composition of Casa Guidi Windows to about this time, certainly before October 1847. EBB’s passionate response to events on her wedding anniversary was only the beginning of her preoccupation with Italian politics, particularly her belief that Louis Napoleon (later Napoleon III) would rescue Italy from the Austrians.

A few references in the early letters to Arabella indicate that the Brownings planned to write a book together about Italy (see letters 8 and 10). In May 1847, she told Arabella that they hoped to visit Siena, Volterra, Prato, and Pistoia, as well as Pisa again, to find material “for our book” because, she added, “I have seen nothing yet to write of” (letter 13). Their joint project was never completed, but these remarks suggest that they were originally thinking in terms of a social/historical/cultural book, rather than a political book, and before her letter of 13 September 1847, the few remarks about Italian politics consist of only brief comments. From this point on, however, EBB’s preoccupation with Italian unification is one of the main topics throughout the letters to Arabella; moreover, EBB adopts variations on the theme as the basis for several later poems.  

Casa Guidi Windows, as the first of her Italian poems, is particularly relevant in terms of the development of her ideas about Italian history and politics. In the letter she wrote on her anniversary, the scene she describes to her sisters is very similar to the one that eventually appeared in the poem. Even if she had not started writing the poem at that time, and whether or not she was aware that she was sketching a draft, the ideas were certainly germinating, and the images she observed in the Piazza Pitti offered a rich source of material for her to draw upon. What follows is a comparison of lines taken from EBB’s anniversary letter together with lines from Casa Guidi Windows:

---

37. For example, see Poems Before Congress and “Napoleon III in Italy”; it was later the subject of RB’s Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.
Ah, you should have seen our day
we ... graciously appropriated
prospect of liberty of Italy through union
with all their flags & symbols
the Duke & his family stood in tears at the
window to receive the thanks

Tuscan states, deputations & companies
inhabitants of the different Tuscan states
The windows ... seemed to grow larger
magistracy ... with their flag
priesthood (brown monks there, with the
rope girdle)
clapping of hands, & the frenetic shouting
and the music which came in gushes

got to a window in our palazzo which had
class after class

peasants
foreigners (French, English, Swiss,
Greeks such a noble band of Greeks!)
for above three hours the infinite procession
filed under our windows with all their
various flags & symbols
The windows dropping down their glittering
draperies, seemed to grow larger

There was not an inch of wall, not alive
Robert & I waved our handkerchiefs till my
wrist ached
hands which threw out flowers

Clouds of flowers & laurel leaves came
fluttering down on the advancing procession
people were embracing for joy
state of phrenzy or rapture, extending to
children of two years old
I heard lisping "Vivas"

Exulting faces ... exultation between man

 wasn’t a very perfect keeping of Sunday
grand Duke ... sacrifices everything ... well
& nobly as if his heart helped him

---

38. In the letter EBB describes this scene as taking place later that day when they went to see the illuminations along the Arno; the scene does not change in the poem.
The poetic language in EBB’s epistolary account is in many ways more evocative than in the poem. “There was not an inch of wall, not alive, if the eye might judge,” as she describes “clouds of flowers & laurel leaves came fluttering down on the advancing procession”; in the letter, these are gentler and more graceful images than the walls that “seemed to bend” in the poem. And “the gesture’s whirling off / A hurricane of leaves” offers more of an impression of a storm than the sense of revelry and celebration depicted in the fluttering flowers and laurel leaves in the letter. These examples support Gardner Taplin’s claim that “a comparison of the prose passage with the description of the same scene in her poem will illustrate why her letters (in contrast to Robert’s) have all the charm, ease of manner, and vividness which are lacking in much of her verse.”

When EBB submitted the first part of Casa Guidi Windows (then called “A Meditation in Tuscany”) to Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine for publication, it was returned. The English were aware of and interested in Italian affairs, but Blackwood’s felt that English readers were unlikely to be interested in failed political reforms in Tuscany as a topic for a poem. Kenyon warned her that “nobody will care for my ‘theologic politics’ touching popes & the rest” (letter 30). Even when the poem was finally issued, EBB anticipated that it would not be popular. In June [1851], she told Miss Mitford that “numbers of people will be sure to dislike [it] profoundly, & angrily, perhaps.” The Brownings were in Venice when the poem appeared in England, and it was several weeks before EBB knew details about the reviews. The criticisms were not all that severe: The Athenæum called it “courageous and wise,” and The Spectator claimed that she had succeeded in certain areas, such as combining “womanly faith and trust” together with “a manly power of analyzing events and facing disagreeable truths.” EBB’s response to the reviews and the opinions of her friends was characteristically good-humored, and in her letters she comments on her response to the critics, who felt she should have avoided the topic as an unsuitable subject for poetry. If Julia Markus is correct, as I believe she is, in claiming that Casa Guidi Windows is “one of the most detailed accounts of the political happenings in Florence in 1847 and 1849 that has come down to us. As such, the poem can be read as an illuminating and significant document of its time” (Markus, p. xxx), then EBB’s letters are essential as supporting documents, and serve to augment and enhance a reading of the poem.

EBB’s response to events in Italy has been interpreted as a symbol of her emancipation from her father’s domination, as much a song of personal freedom as a hymn for Italian liberation. Whether her emotive observations are read as a personal risorgimento, that is “her own personal and artistic struggle for identity,” a reading offered by Sandra M. Gilbert, or as emblematic of death and resurrection, an interpretation presented by Linda Lewis, it is impossible not to

40. EBB-MRM, III, 323.
see how her version of the events from her perspective as an Englishwoman is crucial in both her letters and in the poem. As Julia Markus has rightly observed, "centrality is achieved in Casa Guidi Windows by the poet's linking of all her immediate personal experience to a political ideal—her hope for freedom of the Italian people and for the birth of an Italian nation" (Markus, p. xxxii). A detailed reading of EBB's letters to Arabella helps to outline her experiences and to define the development of her ideas with much greater certainty.

"Love makes a level"

As to marriage . . . it never was high up in my ideal, even before my illness brought myself so far down. A happy marriage was the happiest condition, I believed vaguely—but where were the happy marriages? I, for my part, never could have married a common man—and never did any one man whom I have had the honour of hearing talk love, as men talk, lead me to think a quarter of a minute of the possibility of being married by such an one. Then I thought always that a man whom I could love, would never stoop to love me—(EBB to Miss Mitford, 18 September 1846).43

EBB wrote this the day before she and Browning left for Italy; only two weeks later she wrote the following to Arabella: “Today we have been together a fortnight, & he said to me with a deep, serious tenderness . . . ‘I kissed your feet, my Ba, before I married you—but now I would kiss the ground under your feet, I love you with a so much greater love.’ . . . It is strange that anyone so brilliant should love me—but true and strange it is . . . and it is impossible for me to doubt it any more” (letter 2). And in her first letter home EBB had assured her sisters that she was well, “and being loved better everyday . . . seeing near in him, all that I seemed to see afar” (letter 1). Thus, in Browning EBB had found “a man whom she could love” and who would stoop to love her.

Daniel Karlin has shown that EBB, prior to her marriage, “saw herself, dwelling among tombs,” casting Browning in the role of “a Christ-like saviour.”44 This image of Browning is continued in the letters to Arabella: “He is perfect—far too good & too tender for me—far too high & gifted” (letter 1); and he has “such a pure, tender, religious spirit” (letter 1). When he kissed her at the altar in St. Marylebone Church, “I looked like death,” (letter 2); but Mrs. Jameson soon declared her to be “altogether a different person,” almost resurrected, whereas previously she looked “like a ghost. Now the ghost has its body back” (letter 3). Karlin also points out that EBB’s descriptions of Browning in the love letters are often “surrounded by imagery specifically associated with Christ, particularly the imagery of light” (p. 268), and in the early letters to Arabella this portrayal continues, for example “if ever a being of a higher order lived among us without a glory round his head, in these later days, he is such a being” (letter 2), and she describes how he loves her “through a lustrous atmosphere” (letter 4). Browning's role as EBB’s saviour / husband is also sacrificial: “there never was nor can be such another husband as mine, giving up his whole life &

43. EBB-MRM, III, 189.
soul & tenderness—" (letter 7). And she often speaks of Browning’s “goodness and tenderness” in terms of it being infinite and perfect, “past speaking of” (letter 12).

One of EBB’s misgivings about marriage was that if there ever was love in a marital relationship it was sure to give way to something less. As she wondered to Browning a few months before their marriage, “What is there in marriage to make all these people on every side of us, (who all began, I suppose, by talking of love, ..) look askance at one another from under the silken mask .. & virtually hate one another through the tyranny of the stronger & the hypocrisy of the weaker” (BC, 12, 143). And no doubt Browning did not like to hear EBB rehearse Miss Mitford’s theory that “every marriage in her experience, beginning by any sort of love, has ended miserably” (BC, 12, 255), nor could he have been inspired by EBB’s recollection of a conversation she heard as a child, in which one married woman told another that “the most painful part of marriage is the first year, when the lover changes into the husband by slow degrees” (BC, 13, 126). But EBB would have a different experience to relate, and almost as if to reassure herself that this would not happen to her, very early on she recounts how “it is strange for him to love me with increase, in this way: it is not the common way of men” (letter 4). But Browning was no common husband, and theirs was not a common marriage, as Miss Bayley observed to Mr. Kenyon, “that ‘surely our marriage was made in Heaven’!—which I believe too ... & when I hear Robert speak of his ‘unutterable happiness’, & feel that instead of decreasing, his attachment to me deepens day by day” (letter 7). And when Mrs. Jameson declared her opinion that “the happiest marriages ... end quickly in an affectionate friendship,” Browning’s reply was emphatic: “Why if I thought such a thing possible, I never w! have married you, Ba—never— If you live to be eighty & have hair as white as snow, I can only admit of the change of loving you better! I know I shall love you better then!!” (letter 10). And ten years later, she informed Arabella: “He never loved me so much, he said the other day.” (letter 143).

The Brownings’ marriage might have been made in heaven, but it was lived out on earth, and had its share of mortal moments. Disagreements and tensions are part of most marriages, and the Brownings’ marriage was no exception. What was exceptional, perhaps, is that their marriage lacked any sensational scandal. Nevertheless, there were differences between the poets, as there are between most husbands and wives. At first, EBB assured Arabella that “if ever we quarrel, you may expect it to snow stars” (letter 6), and a few months later she reiterated that “we never do ‘quarrel’ whatever you may imagine” (letter 12); however, this soon changed and before their first anniversary, she reported that they had had “a regular quarrel ... at the end of which we begged each other’s pardon” (letter 19).

RB considers the subject of quarrelling in “A Lovers’ Quarrel” (1855), which refers to at least two of the issues on which the Brownings differed: Napoleon III and spiritualism. In a letter to Isa Blagden in September 1867, Browning writes “α β γ δ ε ζ η θ ι There! Those letters indicate

seven distinct issues to which I came with Ba, in our profoundly different estimates of thing and person" (DL, p. 282). Edward McAleer has speculated that the seven issues "might include (1) spiritualism, (2) Napoleon III, (3) Mrs. Eckley, (4) Mrs. Trollope, (5) the method of raising Pen, (6) the subscription for Mrs. Jameson’s sisters, and (7) their own marriage, which EBB opposed at first." EBB’s letters to Arabella support McAleer’s speculation about spiritualism, Napoleon III, Mrs. Eckley, and the method of raising their son. However, based upon EBB’s letters to her sister, I would suggest the following as substitutions in McAleer’s list: Daniel Home, as a “person” and Swedenborgianism, as a “thing;” although it is not referred to in the letters to Arabella, McAleer is probably correct to conjecture that the subscription for Mrs. Jameson’s sisters was one of the seven issues.

Referring to the “seven distinct issues,” Browning continued by explaining to Isa Blagden:

And I am glad I maintained the truth on each of these points, did not say, “what matter whether they be true or no?—Let us only care to love each other.” ... If I could ever have such things out of my thoughts, it would not be to-day—the day, twenty years ago, that we left England together. If I ever seem too authoritative or disputative to you, dearest Isa, you must remember this, and that only to those I love very much do I feel at all inclined to lay down what I think to be the law, and speak the truth,—but no good comes of anything else in the long run,—while, as for seeing the truth, it seems to me such angelic natures don’t—and such devilish ones do: it is no sign of the highest nature: on the contrary, I do believe the very highness blinds and the lowness helps to see.

Browning’s remark to Isa Blagden six years after his wife’s death is interesting in light of EBB’s comment to Arabella shortly after the coup d’état in Paris in December 1851. Expressing her “hope for France & for liberty” (letter 74), she noted that she and Browning had “had some domestic émeutes on this question,” but referring to their differing views she wrote

You know I do think for myself (if the thought is right or wrong) and I do speak the truth (as I am capable of apprehending it), to my husband always—Also, we agree absolutely & always in the principles of things:—& therefore it is, that what you used to call ‘our quarrelling’ is an element of our loving one another, & a very important element too (letter 74).

And a year later EBB admitted that she and Browning quarrelled, explaining though that it was “because we love one another too much to be contented with temporizing” (letter 91). EBB frequently says to Arabella that she and Browning disagree or quarrel, particularly referring to political issues: “we ‘divide on the question’” (letter 29); “Robert & I fight about Louis Napoleon—true” (letter 75); and “We are famous for quarrelling—are we not?” (letter 91). A few months later, EBB could report that “Robert & I, by the way, are rather on better terms, with regard to Napoleonism, rapping spirits & the rest. But if I wrote a book on the rapping spirits, or Swedenborgianism—oh poor, darling Robert” (letter 98), indicating that they seem to have negotiated an understanding that prevented either one from having to agree to an unacceptable compromise.
“Genies of housekeeping”

There were other, potentially divisive issues in the Brownings’ everyday life. To be sure, where EBB’s health and welfare were concerned, Browning was fairly inflexible. The frequent references to her health in these letters reveal that her physical well-being was a matter of concern to both poets, but especially to Browning, “who if my foot goes to sleep, gets the headache with the fright of it” (letter 7), as EBB wrote only a few months after their marriage. Browning’s anxiety was not unfounded, and he no doubt felt a special obligation to see that his wife’s health did not deteriorate. He was particularly “anxious for me to be free of the morphine” (letter 10), EBB explained in March 1847, and she reported “that I gradually diminish . . . to seventeen days for twenty two doses, . . . which I used to take in eight days.” Two years later she told her sister “what in July, at the Ancona-journey lasted twelve days, now lasts seventy-two,—think of that, Arabel!” (letter 35). This was largely the result of Browning’s personal management, as she explained how “a vial of the made up mixture (one draught, that is:) divides into eleven times. How Robert contrives it, I cant make out really” (letter 35). During her pregnancy with her son she was particularly abstinent, and she took greater care with her diet, which Browning verified in his letter announcing Pen’s birth: “Then in her food, habits . . . she was perfect and faultless from first to last . . . the nurse says of the babe ‘e stavito ben nutrito’, ‘how well nourished he has been’” (letter 36). And later she declared that Pen was healthy and had a good complexion “just because I gave way to no fancies & took plain food, with great regularity” (letter 51).

Browning’s concern about EBB’s morphine usage might also have been linked to its expense. A month before they were married, EBB told Browning that her “greatest personal expense lately has been the morphine” (BC, 13, 229). A report in The Times in December 1847 notes that the cost of laudanum for an average patient such as EBB was £20 a year. Wilson’s annual wage was £16 year, so the sum of £20 a year for morphine represents a significant percentage of the Brownings’ expenses. For the first few years of their marriage; the Brownings’ annual income was approximately £200-250 a year, and that depended to a large extent on how much they received in dividends from EBB’S investment in the David Lyon, a Jamaican packet ship, which was much less some years than others. This burden was mitigated after 1851 when they received an annual gift of £100 from Kenyon.

Kenyon’s assistance with their finances began early on in their marriage. When EBB’s father and brothers refused to communicate with her, Kenyon intervened to help with arrangements for her marriage settlement. EBB first mentions the settlement in December 1846, explaining that it “is to be of the strictest—tying up into a knot a hundred a year’s separate allowance on me!” (letter 6). The very fact that EBB had a marriage settlement is an indication of her personal wealth; fees for settlements could amount to as much as £100.46 Her comments reveal that she was opposed to the idea from the outset; nevertheless, Browning clearly wanted the settlement in order to disprove any notion that he had married EBB for her money. In fact once the deed was settled, by virtue of which EBB could legally make a will, Kenyon recommended she do so, naming her husband as sole heir. Browning agreed and further insisted that she plainly express

46. See letter 6, note 4.
her wishes. He had made it clear to her that if the decision was left to him as her survivor, he
would give everything back to her family, so she made the necessary legal arrangements, agreeing
only “to his [RB’s] lifetime, for perfectly I agree with him that the ultimate disposition of money
received from my family, should (in the failure of directer heirs) regard my family exclusively”
(letter 15). Ultimately both poets signed the document without reading it, and it was witnessed
by Compton Hanford (the nephew of EBB’s friends, James and Julia Martin), who was visiting
Florence with his sister, thus avoiding any possibility of the matter becoming part of the Florentine
gossip mill.

The Brownings’ finances were uncertain from the beginning, and this constantly plagued
Browning with worry and doubt. He was a meticulous manager of money, as his account books
show. EBB was quite the opposite, as she confessed to Arabella after six months of marriage:

As for me I dare say I sh^ get into ever so many scrapes & debts if left to myself .. but he who
hates a debt like a scorpion, (or rather far worse) not only has everything paid at the moment,
but puts it down in a book, so that we may not transgress the limit of the in-comings by the
out-goings (letter 10).

And Browning was shocked when EBB suggested they spend five shillings on a Pisan lottery
ticket, citing Jules Janin’s previous luck as a good omen. EBB considered Browning inordinately
wary about most things, but especially about money: “you must learn that he sees snakes &
crocodiles in Thames water without the microscope—he sees in every drop of good every
possibility of evil—and as to money-matters, the idea of being in a difficulty is absolutely horrible
to him” (letter 132). The poets’ worries about money were finally alleviated when they received
a very generous legacy from John Kenyon after his death.

The great advantage of residing in Italy, aside from its salutary effects on EBB’s health, was
the relatively low cost of living. References to money in these letters often occur with regard to
housekeeping and to their travels. When the Brownings arrived in Florence in early 1847, they
had no intention of making a home there. However, they found Florence both economical and
beautiful; a month after they arrived, EBB wrote rapturously to Hugh Stuart Boyd: “At Pisa we
say ‘How beautiful’, .. here, we say nothing .. it is enough if we can breathe.” But they could
not live on Florentine air alone. In Pisa EBB had boasted that a dinner “of soup for two . . roast
chicken, browned potatoes, a pudding, & a bottle of the best wine . . our Chianti . . cost two
shillings & a halfpenny—this for three people” (letter 9), and in Florence they had daily dinners
similar to this sent from a local restaurant for nineteen shillings a week. They paid a housekeeper
six shillings a month to do basic cleaning chores on a daily basis, and EBB noted that meat was
three pence a pound (it was four pence a pound in Paris, but the French pound had four more
ounces), and they could have a bowl of cherries for only a penny. And after half a year of marriage,
Browning could report that “our six months spending, inclusive of our journey from London &
week at Paris, medecines [sic] & everything in the world, had amounted to one hundred & fifty
pounds . . and three of us remember!” (letter 10). EBB assured Arabella that the “genies of

47. BC, 14, 213.
48 Compared to the sixty or seventy pounds the Brownings calculated that EBB’s cousin Arlette and her
husband must have spent “in the course of a month for just living” (letter 23).
housekeeping never did nor can do as much” for Henrietta as “the Genii of us ignorant people for
ourselves” (letter 13). EBB described buying ribbons at a fair in Florence for three pence a yard,
“such as you w’d give a shilling or fifteen pence for in England” (letter 20), as well as two large
sponges for only three pence, which would have cost ten shillings in London. And later, in Paris,
she reported similarly inexpensive living costs, and their man-servant, Ferdinando, who was also
their cook, introduced “every dish with . . ‘This would have cost so much in England–’” (letter
140). Soon after they arrived in Florence, EBB wondered “if people of small incomes are not
justified in leaving their own country of dear England, on the mere ground of the cheapness of
this Italy? I did not imagine the difference to be so great” (letter 13).

After several short leases in different apartments in Florence, the Brownings finally decided
on taking a longer lease on a suite of eight rooms in the Palazzo Guidi, opposite the south wing
of the Pitti Palace. EBB explains how they paid “at the rate of the ‘Pancras’s working classes’ . .
They pay annually for the three best rooms in the institution, £12—and we for our seven rooms,
three of which are magnificent & the others excellent . . to say nothing of our terraces . . twenty
guineas” (letter 28). EBB’s use of guineas rather than pounds disguises the fact that they
paid a little more than twice as much (25 guineas = £26/5s) as “Pancras’s working classes,”
albeit for much grander and more spacious rooms. Eventually, they acquired more space, for
which they paid some £5 per year extra. Of course they had to furnish these large rooms at
additional expense: £8 for the drawing room carpet; £6 for a bed and bedding; £6 for a bookcase;
and £4 for a side board and throne chair. Gradually other items, essential and decorative, were
added; nevertheless, at an initial expense of approximately £60 for furnishings—compared to
EBB’s report that furnished rooms cost £4–10s per week (£208 per annum)—Casa Guidi was a
bargain. At its most expensive, Casa Guidi cost the Brownings little more than half what her
sister Henrietta and her husband paid for “a sitting room, bedroom & dressing room, in Taunton,
over a pastry-cooks” (letter 51). And they had the option of sub-letting, from which they could
recover some of their outlay.

EBB’s early reports of their lifestyle in Italy depict a quiet routine of reading, sitting in front
of the fire together, and discussing their plans for the future. “Our gaieties are between the chesnuts
& the fire” she wrote in November 1846 (letter 4), and a few months later she told Arabella that
“one of our days is like another” (letter 8). Although the Brownings meant to lead a very quiet
and private life away from the socialising of the expatriate community, they soon found themselves
faced with certain social obligations. In Pisa they were called upon by a Mr. Irving, who claimed
a Jamaican acquaintance with EBB’s father, and there were others—Mrs. Young, Mrs. Loftus,
and Mrs. Turner. In Florence it was quiet enough at first, but soon they made new acquaintances
(some of whom would become friends). One of the first was the American sculptor Hiram Powers.
He and his family had been in Italy for a decade, and were to become close friends with the
Brownings. His statue, “Greek Slave,” which was exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851,
inspired EBB’s sonnet “Hiram Powers’s ‘Greek Slave’” which was published in Poems (1850).
She told Arabella how they sympathized “about angels and spirits,” and she was pleased to report
that he was “a Swedenborgian” (letter 94). And they were sought out by visitors to Florence.
American travellers, George Stillman Hillard and George William Curtis later published their recollections of meeting the Brownings in Florence in 1847. New friendships developed and flourished, and old ones were sustained by correspondence and/or occasional visits as friends and family passed through Florence, as well as during the Brownings' visits to London, Paris and Rome. Cottrell, Story, Ogilvy, Blagden, Eckley—are just a few of the familiar names in Browning biography that feature prominently in EBB's letters to Arabella.

Originally, the Brownings had planned only a short stay in Florence before visiting other parts of Italy. From the start, they planned to visit England, hoping to return in the summer of 1850, but, as EBB wrote to Arabella, "we are dependant upon possibilities, you must understand,—and, to speak clearly, on the point of whether we shall be rich enough. A journey to England will cost us fifty pounds—double it, to include the return. Then at least a third fifty pounds will be required to cover the expenses of our visit" (letter 48). Consequently, they did not make the journey that year, but instead went to Siena for six weeks. Even so that was a particularly trying year financially, as EBB explained (while trying to appear optimistic) toward the end of their stay at Siena: "A month ago we had but sixty pounds to take us to the end of the year—(you see the medical expenses were great) and this does not leave room for a superfluity of luxury & travelling about— As it is we have enjoyed much, at a little price" (letter 56).

Their travels not only included journeys to other Italian cities, but also to Paris and London. These trips, which often included extended visits, provided an inspirational source for EBB’s poetry. After staying several weeks in Venice in May and June 1851, the Brownings travelled on to London via Paris, where they resided from October 1851 until July 1852. EBB’s comparison of Venice and Paris in letter 65: (“If Venice is in the sea, Paris is in the country—”) is clearly reflected in *Aurora Leigh*. “The city [i.e., Paris] swims in verdure, beautiful / As Venice on the waters, the sea-swan” (VI, 89–90). The images of Parisian boulevards, squares, fountains, shops, and the trees are all recalled in her letter and in the passage in Book VI of *Aurora Leigh*. The Brownings were fortunate in being blessed with a child who happily shared in their travels. Reporting on their journey to Paris in October 1852, EBB declared that Pen “is a born traveller certainly” (letter 87).

"A poetical child"

Perhaps the most momentous event in the Brownings’ marriage, at least for EBB, was the birth of their child. EBB had suffered two miscarriages before this successful pregnancy, and afterwards she miscarried two more times. In light of her history of invalidism and her advanced age, it is something of a miracle that she succeeded in giving birth at all. The poets named their child Robert Wiedeman Barrett Browning; Wiedemann was Browning’s mother’s maiden name, “pronounced Weedyman—the naturalized W is not V understand, as in Germany,” EBB explained (letter 43). Later, when he was about two and a half years old, EBB told Arabella that “he has taken to call himself Wiedeman, which he has turned into Peninny—by an extraordinary resolution of syllables” (letter 71). In time “Penini” was shortened to “Peni,” and eventually became simply “Pen.”
After his birth, EBB's letters are filled with references to Pen—describing everything from his weaning process to his education. EBB's comments about her son, although they may seem tedious at times, are a rich and relatively untapped source for her psychology and habits of mind; for example, her remarks about his prayers provide insights into her religious convictions, as do her frequent asides that his ideas are his own and not hers or Browning's. Reporting Pen's insistence "about going into the churches ... which perhaps will make you start back with horror," EBB notes that Wilson was amused by his imitations of the people, "crossing himself, & stretching up to the holy water" (letter 57). EBB's references to Pen play-acting as a soldier from an early age reveal her interest in the subject. She describes him taking his medicine "so like not only a soldier, but a great captain and a Napoleon" (letter 80). And referring to his pleasure at carnival time as "the very holiday of a child," she adds that "he thinks the world goes on most satisfactorily in spite of the Czar & other small grievances" (letter 108). In Rome, the Don Alfonso Cirella "presented him with a gun [presumably a toy model] which has lifted him to the heights of generalship—he is only afraid that the pope may get hold of it before he escapes the bound of the pontifical territory" (letter 110). Her delight in Pen's enthusiasm for the French soldiers in Rome speaks of her personal political ideas; her satisfaction with him being taken for an Italian (especially a Tuscan) and her determination that he should be a cosmopolite suggest something of her own notions of citizenship: "and now he has taken to his soldiering as absorbedly as ever, & is frightfully Italian, talking of 'you English' with great contempt" (letter 166). She notes his accomplishment in learning to speak French with motherly pride, adding that "he makes himself understood better than the president of the republic does" (letter 73). Her descriptions of the shared parenting between her and Browning are a revealing portrayal of the poets as parents, and by relating her role as a mother with Arabella, we begin to see how those experiences inform and influence her poetry.

When EBB wrote the opening lines of Casa Guidi Windows: "I heard last night a little child go singing / 'Neath Casa Guidi windows," Pen had not been born. But when she concluded the poem three years later with the lines: "Howe'er the uneasy world is vexed and wroth, / Young children, lifted high on parent souls, / Look round them with a smile upon the mouth," she could relate her own personal experience and say "Such cheer I gather from thy smiling. Sweet!" as if speaking directly to her own child. Her letters to Arabella afford unique insights into her notions of motherhood, and they offer an interesting parallel to the development of that theme in her poems. As Dorothy Mermin has commented, EBB "had had little to say about mothers until the joyful celebration of maternity in Casa Guidi Windows. Aurora Leigh, however, is replete with the presence or felt absence of mothers, babies, feeding, and eating" (Mermin, p. 190). Other scholars have examined this theme in EBB's poetry, especially as it is developed in Aurora Leigh. Sandra Donaldson claims that EBB's "treatment of motherhood in Aurora Leigh has been misread

---

49. For example see letter 95 in which she declares that "he has his own ideas, I assure you"; see also letter 99 in which she explains that "the great aim should be to make a child vital in his religious thoughts—I mean that they should not be my thoughts put into him but his own thoughts,—not my words but his own words." And in letter 102 she insists that "I don't 'instruct' Penini in these things— Neither would I try to keep them from him. The more distinctly we feel the relation between the spiritual & the natural, the better we are—that's my opinion!"
by those who do not realize that her attitude toward mothers and children had matured since her early poems," and Virginia Steinmetz asserts that "the maternal images throughout *Aurora Leigh* reveal the poet's awareness that the Victorian idealization of conventional motherhood could be an evasion of the social consequences of unripe motherhood, of maternal deprivation, and a defense against fantasies of loss." After Pen's birth EBB's letters to Arabella resonate with maternal thoughts and images, and they offer an interesting parallel to the development of this theme in her poems. As Virginia Woolf observed, "as we turn the pages of *Aurora Leigh* or of the *Letters*—one often echoes the other." EBB's preoccupation with Pen's wet-nursing and weaning go far toward offering an explanation for the predominance of motherhood in *Aurora Leigh*. Her images of Pen being "like a rose" and "rosy" (letter 43) and having "rosy cheeks" (letters 46 and 56, for example) are echoed throughout *Aurora Leigh* in references both to children and adults. These parallels between the letters and the poetry provide additional background for the coincidence of the "personal" and "literary" in both EBB's letters and her poetry, adding further evidence of the influence of the Romantic poets on EBB's poetic development.

*Aurora Leigh* has been described as a woman's version of *The Prelude*.

Comparing the two poems, Kathleen Blake explains how a Wordsworthian project turns out very differently because of sexual difference. With their similar aesthetic bases, the poems also parallel each other in many ways in their narrative lines. But a new element emerges in each work that further articulates the aesthetic and strongly directs the narrative. This is the grounding of art in love, with the different consequences for the stories of male and female artists.

EBB herself identified Wordsworth as a "poet-hero of a movement essential to the better being of poetry," and for both poets, the association of the "personal" and "literary" is an extension of their belief in the poet's role as a mediator between God and man. Marjorie Stone has noted that EBB's "affiliations with Romantic poets and traditions have been largely unexplored, with the exception of her connections with Wordsworth" (Stone, p. 49). And although the convergence of the "literary" and "personal" in EBB's poetry is too complex a subject to take up in detail here, I believe that a careful comparison of *Aurora Leigh* and EBB's letters to Arabella would shed additional light on the pattern of Romantic aesthetics that informs EBB's poetry.


53. For example, see *Aurora Leigh*, I, 106; I, 284; I, 991–992; III, 274–275; VI, 571–573; and VI, 596–598.


The references to EBB’s ideas about educating and disciplining her son indicate how her wide range of reading informed her personal philosophy concerning how to raise children. She believed that her sister Henrietta and her cousin Arlette both overworked their children, and she refused to do the same with Pen. Nor did she agree with Arlette’s position on whipping children. Although EBB agreed that “whipping may be necessary to some children,” her child was “far too sensitive & tenderhearted” (letter 58). It is clear from references in her letters that she was familiar with the writings of Rousseau, and her ideas about raising Pen further support this. Another reason for EBB’s opinions about her son seems to be her idealised image of him. In May 1850 she described him as “poetical child” (letter 50), and in April 1853, she proclaimed that he was “like a child taken out of a poem & incarnated” (letter 96). And when not poetical, he is angelical: she describes his “angelical little face” (letter 99) and refers to his “angelical mildness” (letter 119).

EBB’s idiosyncratic ideas about how to raise Pen were frequently a source of contention between her and her husband. They disagreed on the clothes he wore, how to administer discipline (or whether he should be disciplined at all), whether he should speak Italian or English, the length of his hair, as well as numerous other aspects of his upbringing. EBB often triumphed over Browning, but when he was determined, even her special pleading was of little use. Several factors may have affected EBB’s general psychology and approach to raising Pen. Unquestionably, the very fact that she successfully conceived and gave birth to a healthy child at her age affected her ideas about raising her son. Because of her delicate health, and her fear that her weak constitution would naturally pass to him, she determined not to breastfeed him—a decision supported by Dr. Harding. Nevertheless she was jealous of the bond that developed between Pen and his wet-nurse (or “balia,” as she was known in Italian), and EBB decided early on that she would have to spoil him as a result. She was exultant when the balia announced that “she ‘never would nurse the baby when I was in the room’. ‘What was the use of it? he attended to nobody but me . . . he wouldn’t suck or do anything’” (letter 50). Some of EBB’s notions may be explained as a result of her reading Swedenborg, for example, wanting Pen to be neither male nor female, and her view of him as an angel.

In addition to EBB’s thoughts on motherhood, the letters to Arabella reveal EBB’s notions about fatherhood. Extensive references to her own father, together with her impressions of Browning as a father, give an indication of her concept of paternity. The themes in Casa Guidi Windows “converge in images of parents and children: the relationship between the past and the present,” as Dorothy Mermin has observed. EBB returned to those themes in Aurora Leigh, as well as in Poems Before Congress. These letters show how her concept of daughterhood was always at the centre of her ideas about the family. Other roles—wife, mother, and sister—were shaped in accord or conflict with this primary role. In the same way these family roles extended outward to the role of women in society, so that “sisterhood,” for example, incorporates both her personal sisterhood, as well as her identification with the wider world of women.

57. Angela Leighton asserts that for EBB “it is the father who stands for that ‘Other’ against which her poetry shapes itself and grows strong”; Elizabeth Barrett Browning (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1986), p. 22.

Introduction

This present series of letters ends with the Brownings back in Florence after the flurry of preparing *Aurora Leigh* for publication. In the penultimate letter, EBB describes her relief “not to be obliged to do anything,” and especially to be in Florence, which “seems so out of sight & out of hearing of the whole world. I shall not have to face a man who has read my book & is thinking what a shameless wretch I am” (letter 166). Her fear was not entirely exaggerated; even her brother George thought *Aurora Leigh* “worse than Don Juan” (letter 162). Nevertheless, some of the early responses were quite positive. Ruskin sent a letter “unqualified in its praise” (letter 167), and “the extravagant things said about that poem, would make you smile (as they make me),” she told Arabella (letter 167). Her anticipation *ehouX Aurora Leigh*, was, to some extent, overshadowed by the death of John Kenyon on 3 December 1856. “For these ten years he has put himself in the place of my own father, in taking care, for me & mine, that we did not want. We should have wanted much, except for him” (letter 167). Because of Kenyon’s generous legacy to each of the poets, their financial worries came to an end. Kenyon’s death was followed a few months later by the death of EBB’s father, with whom she had remained unreconciled. She was able to draw on her inner strength to sustain her through these sadnesses, and she had her husband’s support, but it was largely to Arabella, “my comforter, Arabel, you always, always were” that she turned for the help that no one else could give.

The letters to Arabella end shortly before EBB died in June 1861. Reflecting on her death in his journal, Surtees Cook did not mention Browning or Pen, but his thoughts were directed toward his sister-in-law: “Poor dear Arabel your heart is bleeding terribly!” The burden of loss was lessened for Arabella when Browning and Pen returned to London, where they lived only a few doors away from Arabella. Her residence at 7 Delamere Terrace had become the Moulton-Barrett family centre when 50 Wimpole Street was dismantled upon their father’s death. Known as “Aunt Boo,” Arabella was visited frequently by Henrietta’s children. Her daughter Mary recalled in her memoirs

> the arrival of Uncle Robert Browning & Pen from abroad, after Aunt Ba’s death. I can see the two now, the widowed husband & sister, arm in arm walking slowly up & down the double drawing room, in speechless sorrow. Pen, I thought w! like to see the Barges on the canal, from the balcony but they did not prove of the same interest to him as to me!

And she described her aunt’s home as

> a sort of family hotel, and there were delightful opportunities of seeing dear kind uncles. I recall an evening’s surprise, when my aunt was informed of a gentleman wishing to speak to her in the hall. Pen & I at the piano presently heard the dining room door open, & a voice say ‘Capital, capital!!’ It was Uncle George, suddenly returned from abroad.

---

59. EBB to Arabella, [29 April 1857], ms with Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.
60. Surtees, 6 July [1861].
61. Unpublished “Recollections of Mary Altham, May 1936” (ms with Altham). The recollections end with “some simple lines,” entitled “An Old Woman’s Cupboard,” which includes the following verse: “Mother’s sister in London / Would have me every year; / T’was there I met the great R.B.; / Pen, my cousin, too, came there.”
Arabella’s own health gradually deteriorated as a result of heart disease, and she died on 11 June 1868, seven years after EBB. Browning was with her when she died, as he recounted in a letter to Isa Blagden:

Yes, I could have seen you on that Wednesday, because, ill as Arabel was, the doctor saw no danger. I made him call in a second wise man, who saw with the eyes of the first, and a third was to come and help on Thursday at 3 o’clock: there was superabundance of female attendance, and though I had my own convictions (rather than fears) from the beginning, I was not warranted in breaking the usual engagements. I heard therefore Rubinstein play at a party whence I returned late, and was summoned to Arabel’s by the servants at six next morning, when I found her in a deplorable state: I stayed till the Doctor came, who repeated that there was no immediate danger, and that he was anxious she should not look worse than she really was when the other Physician arrived at 3 o’clock. So he went, and, five minutes after, I raised her in my arms where she died presently (DI, p. 298).

Arabella’s other brother-in-law, Surtees Cook, recorded how for “so many years she had been ailing—and yet she outlived the strong and healthy who went before her &—we were so accustomed to her patient suffering—with her heart disease—that we are surprised when God takes her” (Surtees, 12 June [1868]). The brothers were summoned, and Surtees describes how they met a few days later on 17 June

at Delamere Terrace—at 12—and proceeded to Kensal Green—in the usual way—and wept over the grave of our dearest Arabel—all the fraternity there, except George—who cannot be heard of, (travelling in Ireland) and Sept. who is in Jamaica. There were Storm, Harry, Alfred, Ocky, Robert Browning, and his son (Pen)—and myself. She rests close to the grave of her old nurse Minny—which is No. 18534” (Surtees, 17 June 1868).

Browning worried about George, “the useful brother ... He is alarmingly susceptible, and may find the blow too much” (DI, p. 298). A month later, as Browning prepared to leave London for his annual holiday in France, he wrote to George, expressing the hope that “you are through the worst of it. I have not been in a condition to render any service,—but I have sympathized with you however fruitlessly” (B-GB, p. 290). Browning remained friendly with the brothers, especially George, but Arabella’s death represented the end of the special bond that so closely linked Browning to his wife’s family.

Provenance

In May 1848, EBB instructed Arabella to take “any papers of mine, letters, &c. left in Wimpole St—(& there was a deal box full, which came from Hope End besides the green box,) these things I beg you to take care of for me—& we will make a bonfire of many of them when we meet” (letter 28). And soon thereafter she repeated her request to Arabella to guard her letters and papers for her:

And, darling Arabel, will you remember ... NOT to send the busts, nor the green box of papers, nor the narrow deal box which came from Hope End & never was opened by me. And put together & seal up for me all the papers in the drawers &c of my sittingroom ... there were papers, I know, . . & take care of them for me, you! (letter 29).
Arabella took her charge faithfully and preserved the papers. The bonfire never took place and after EBB’s death Arabella apparently continued to house the early papers from Hope End and other items in the narrow deal coach box. To this repository she added those letters she received from EBB. As Surtees Cook noted in his journal, after Arabella’s death, there was “no will to be found” (Surtees, 17 June [1868]). Subsequently, letters of administration were granted to her brothers George and Henry, and the former took possession of her effects, including the deal box.

The letters that Arabella wrote to EBB have not survived. However, a sufficient number of her letters to other family members and friends exist to indicate that she was not lacking in the art of letter-writing. They show that Arabella was highly intelligent and well-educated, with a good command of languages. Descriptive power, wit, repartee, and the logical setting forth of thoughts and arguments are well in evidence. While the letters emphasize her immediate surroundings and activities, they also demonstrate a knowledge of national and international politics, as well as an awareness of art and literature. Arabella’s handwriting is very different from that of her sister. The formation of her script is very angular, consistent, and clear, even legible when she cross writes. Her letters, like EBB’s, are lengthy and executed in great detail.

It is conjectured, with some degree of certainty, that Arabella’s letters were kept intact during Elizabeth’s life-time, and indeed as late as 1887, when, during the course of changing his London residence, Browning spent a week destroying his own letters to his family, along with all but the most important correspondence directed to him and his wife. Presumably among the casualties were those written to EBB by Arabella.

However lamentable Browning’s act was, we can at least be grateful that he did not choose to destroy his wife’s letters, many of which were in his possession, including those to Julia Martin, Fanny Haworth, Isa Blagden, Hugh Stuart Boyd, Mary Russell Mitford, and Anna Jameson. He had intended a selective destruction of these letters, after inspecting them for what should be destroyed and what preserved; however, he found this form of redaction impossible. In the end, there is no evidence that he ever destroyed any of EBB’s letters. Furthermore, he was most reluctant to give any to autograph seekers. He resolved that no biographer would see any document in his possession; and he remained steadfast in his resolution.

The issue of whether or not letters should be published was a matter on which the Brownings did not entirely agree. Browning was less willing to accept that others had any right to the secrets of his private life or that of his wife, and so after destroying his own, he kept a close guard over her letters. While he was confident about the future disposition of the letters in his keeping, he was apprehensive about those he did not possess, and he was especially anxious that the letters to Arabella be suppressed. Concerning them, he wrote to George on 2 May 1882:

There is however a danger which I apprehend, and cannot be responsible for. The letters to Arabel were deposited in security somewhere: I suppose that the copyright of them belongs to me—so that, if by any accident publication was attempted, I could prevent it: but if I am off the scene, if you, and the Brothers, in due time follow me, who is to be the keeper of what must inevitably be the most intimate and complete disclosure of precisely those secrets which we unite in wishing to remain secret forever? Are the young people likely to be interested in this as we are, or certain to be as able to withstand literary cajoleries ... as I have been and shall be? The same danger is to be apprehended from any publicity given to the letters to Henrietta—which I am altogether powerless
Browning remained uneasy about the future of EBB’s letters to her sisters. Five years later, he reiterated his concern to George in a letter dated 5 November 1887:

Let me repeat—for probably the last time—how much it is on my mind that, when I am no longer here to prevent it, some use will be made of the correspondence not in my power: all in my power is safe, and will ever remain so; and I shall enjoin on Pen, with whom will remain the property allowed by law in the manuscript letters—not in the writings themselves, but in the publication of them,—to hinder this by every possible means. The letters to the sisters,—of which I never read one line, but their contents are sufficiently within my knowledge,—these unfortunately contain besides the inevitable allusions to domestic matters, all the imaginary spiritualistic experience by which the unsuspecting and utterly truthful nature of Ba was abused: she was duped by a woman through whose impostures one more versed in worldly craft and falsehood would have clearly seen at once,—and discovery of this came too late to prevent disclosures which will never be properly accounted for by the careless and spiteful public, only glad to be amused by the aberrations of a soul so immeasurably superior in general intelligence to their own. I have done all I can do,—you have naturally influence where I am helpless, and so I leave the matter—with grave forebodings (B-GB, p. 309).

In one last appeal to George, in a letter written on 21 January 1889, Browning again expressed his misgivings about the eventual publication of EBB’s letters. However, by this time, he had acquiesced to a certain degree:

I feel deeply indeed the interest which attaches itself to the merest scrap of that beloved handwriting, and am perfectly aware of a very general desire on the part of the Public to possess such a collection of letters as you suggest might be made,—and some collection of what may be procurable will be one day made, I have no doubt, when matter over which I lose control becomes, by accident or otherwise, the property of the collector. But there seem to me insuperable obstacles to my taking on myself such an office: not so much,—strange as that may appear,—from the repugnance of the writer to any publicity of the kind, as from certain unfortunate circumstances connected with the case. I could disregard perhaps a feeling caused by the modesty and avoidance of notoriety which were conspicuous in the writer, and which I have on occasion been forced to withstand: but the difficulty is that if once a beginning is made there will be no power of stopping there: we cannot pick and choose what portions of a life may be illustrated and what left obscure—it is precisely upon what is so left that the public curiosity would be exercised. I could perhaps see my way to presenting just so much of the correspondence as merely relates to literature, politics, theology, description of persons and things: but if once matters of a personal and more intimate nature were ventured upon, every endeavour would be made—eventually—to supply the gaps: and, you will believe me, it is not for my own memory, once safe out of this gossip-loving and scandal-hungry world, that I am at all apprehensive (B-GB, pp. 319–320).

Browning was aware that the letters to Henrietta—131 in number, including 15 addressed jointly to Arabella—were in the possession of her husband, Surtees, with whom Browning did
not maintain a close relationship. Perhaps Browning hoped that George, for whom Surtees felt a special affection, would intercede; however, Surtees had already, in 1875, taken the precaution of laboriously transcribing EBB's letters to Henrietta into eight copy books, which he entitled "The Happy Years of Elizabeth Barrett Browning." Surtees edited out some two-fifths of the contents of the letters. In his preface, he notes Henrietta's wish "that these letters might one day be submitted to the public" (BC, 14, 407).

In the late 1920's, an Altham family member sent the copy books to the publishing firm of John Murray (who had by this time come into possession of the Brownings' literary copyright) to ask his advice about publication. The work was entrusted to Leonard Huxley who made further excisions, "many nursery details" and "passing references to persons and things that have no general interest," with the result that only approximately half of the original text appeared in Huxley's *Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Letters to Her Sister, 1846–1859* (London: John Murray, 1929). This included three letters addressed jointly to Arabella and Henrietta.

Within weeks of the release of this work, the family was approached by a book dealer who acquired all but twenty-three of the original letters. The remaining letters (except one that the family retained) were sold five years later and were published as *Twenty-Two Unpublished Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning Addressed to Henrietta and Arabella Moulton-Barrett* (New York: United Feature Syndicate, 1935). The originals exchanged hands several times to be re-united by Arthur A. Houghton, Jr.

In all probability Browning did not know that EBB's letters addressed solely to Arabella were in George's keeping—in the narrow black deal coach box. Since there is no evidence that George ever responded to Browning's concern about the Arabella letters, it seems possible that even George did not know that he had them, or he chose not to look through letters and papers that might have been emotionally upsetting to him.

Harry Peyton died in 1935 and upon his executors' instruction, a number of the items from the deal box were sold, with literary copyright, at Sotheby's on 7 June 1937. Lot 6 of this sale is catalogued as follows:

One-Hundred-and-Eleven Autograph Letters (signed "Ba") from Mrs. Browning to her favourite sister, Arabell, ... covering about 875 pp. 8vo., etc. Including the earliest letter known describing the "elopement," and another telling the history of the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," and disclosing the circumstances of their publication. A series of the greatest biographical interest and importance, forming the most complete account known of her life with Robert Browning.

---

62. Since there is no evidence that George ever responded to Browning's concern about the Arabella letters, it seems possible that even George did not know that he had them, or he chose not to look through letters and papers that might have been emotionally upsetting to him.

This series of letters was purchased by Quaritch, the antiquarian bookseller, and subsequently sold to Walter Hill, a Chicago dealer, from whom they were bought by the collector William T.H. Howe. Later, Howe's extensive holdings were acquired by the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library. There the 111 letters to Arabella have been available to biographers and scholars.

These letters were thought to be the whole of the extant letters from the Brownings to Arabella, and their publication was being considered by the Berg Collection. In 1964, however, this undertaking was abandoned when it was discovered that a similar number of letters were still in Moulton-Barrett family possession.

The 239 letters written to Arabella Barrett by the Brownings after they left England in September 1846 are, with few exceptions, from Elizabeth—only 17 are written solely by Browning—and were sent on average every three weeks. Of the total, 111 manuscripts are located in the Berg Collection and 112 are in the possession of Capt. Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett. Four letters were incorrectly divided in 1937, resulting in the Berg Collection and Capt. Moulton-Barrett each owning half a letter. In addition, the Armstrong Browning Library and Eton College Library each owns one manuscript—the former previously in the Arthur A. Houghton, Jr. Collection, and the latter from the papers of the late Edward R. Moulton-Barrett. Fourteen manuscripts, previously in the possession of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., who allowed photocopies to be made while they were in his possession, were sold in 1979, and their present location is not known. The current location of the manuscript is given at the end of each letter.

Transcriptions have been made either from the original manuscript or from a photocopy of the manuscript. Additionally, while preparing the annotations for the letters, I have used a CD-ROM version of the manuscripts to check my transcriptions regularly during the research process. In reconstructing obliterated passages, I have in all cases consulted the manuscript.

As Browning foresaw, EBB's letters did become available in the ensuing years, posing problems of what to print and what to exclude. Imagination, no doubt, did more harm in conjecturing the excisions than the full passage could possibly have done. At this distance in time, there is no question of the benefit to be derived from printing the text in full—the "gossip-loving and scandal-hungry world" may still be with us, but, as EBB declared in a letter to Browning in February 1846: "I, for my part, value letters . . (to talk literature) . . as the most vital part of biography" (BC, 12, 77). What follows is "the most vital part" of the unpublished sources of biography on Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Never burn
Your letters, poor Aurora! for they stare
With red seals from the table, saying each,
'Here's something that you know not.'

_Aurora Leigh_, III, 42–45
Chronology

1846

19 September—EBB & RB leave London en route for Italy, accompanied by EBB’s maid Elizabeth Wilson and Flush, EBB’s spaniel.

20 September—Rest in Le Havre till 9 pm departure for Rouen.

21 September—1 am departure for Paris; mid-morning Brownings arrive at Messagerie Hotel; Paris.

22 September—Meet Mrs. Jameson (& her niece Gerardine Bate), who accompany them for the rest of the journey to Italy. Arabella and 50 Wimpole Street household leave for Little Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey, while the house is refurbished.

23 September—Brownings change hotels to Hotel de la Ville de Paris to be near Mrs. Jameson. In Paris, the Brownings visit the Louvre with Mrs. Jameson.

28 September—Evening departure for Orleans via Chartres, and afterwards Bourges, Roanne (via Nevers), Moulins, Lyons, Avignon, Aix, and Marseilles. At Orleans, EBB receives letters from her father, sisters, and brother George.

October—Seven poems by EBB are published in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine (see letter 3, note 21).

8 October—Day excursion from Avignon to Vaucluse.

11-14 October—Journey to Pisa via Genoa (by steamer) and Leghorn.

18 October—Take lodgings in Pisa in the Collegio di Ferdinando, near the Cathedral.

23 December—EBB sends “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” to James Russell Lowell for publication. The poem is published in The Liberty Bell, a Boston anti-slavery publication, in 1848.

24 December—Brownings attend midnight Mass in the Cathedral, prompting EBB’s observations on the lack of reverence in Catholic worship.

1847

23 January—1 February—Brownings nurse Elizabeth Wilson through an illness.

February—Charles John (“Storm”), EBB’s brother, leaves England for Jamaica, not returning until 1857, after their father’s death.

21 March—EBB suffers her first miscarriage.

20 April—Brownings arrive in Florence, staying at the Hotel du Nord.

22 April—Take rooms in Via delle Belle Donne, 4222 (now 6).

23–30 April—Brownings visited by Anna Jameson and her niece Gerardine Bate.

21 May—Brownings’ marriage settlement witnessed by Compton John Hanford.

June—EBB’s “Two Sketches,” sonnets on her sisters, are published in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine.

14–19 July—Visit to Vallombrosa to escape summer in Florence; they return to Florence after EBB is refused entry to the monastery because she is a woman.

20 July—First residence in Palazzo Guidi, Piazza San Felice.

12 September—The Brownings’ first wedding anniversary coincides with celebrations in Florence of the Grand Duke’s granting a Civic Guard. EBB will recall these events in detail in Casa Guidi Windows.

19 October—Move to Via Maggio, 1881 (now 21).

29 October—Move to Piazza Pitti, 1703 (now 8). During their stay here, EBB begins writing “A Meditation in Tuscany,” which becomes the first part of Casa Guidi Windows.

1848

Early March—EBB’s second miscarriage.

ca. March—EBB sends “A Meditation in Tuscany” to Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine, but it is not published. The publisher wanted explanatory notes “to assist the intelligibility” (letter 30).

9 May—Brownings return to Palazzo Guidi; it becomes their principal residence until EBB’s death.

17 July–early August—Three-week excursion to Fano (3 days), Ancona (1 week), Loreto, Senigallia, Pesaro, Rimini, Ravenna, and Forli.

November—EBB accepts the help of the eccentric Jesuit, Father Prout, in nursing RB through a fever brought on from a sore throat.

27 November—A production of RB’s A Blot in the ‘Scutcheon by Samuel Phelps is performed at the Sadler’s Wells Theatre; additional performances are given in December and again in February 1849.

1849

January—RB’s Poems, the first collected edition of his poetry, is published in two volumes by Chapman and Hall, marking a change in publisher from Moxon. Paracelsus, Pippa Passes, and other works are revised, and the edition omits Strafford and Sordello.

9 March—Robert Wiedeman Barrett Browning—also called “Pennini,” but most often referred to as “Pen”—the poets’ only child, is born. During her pregnancy, EBB responds to RB’s help and stops taking morphine.

18 March—RB’s mother, Sarah Anna Browning, dies without knowledge of Pen’s birth, causing RB intense emotional suffering.
Mid-June—EBB and Browning take an excursion to Pisa, La Spezia (2 days), Lerici, Seravezza, Bagni di Lucca and Lucca.

30 June–17 October—Browings take up summer residence in Bagni di Lucca in the Casa Valeri, Bagni Caldi. Sometime during this visit, EBB gives RB the Sonnets from the Portuguese.

October—Margaret Fuller, an American writer, and her Italian husband, Angelo Ossoli, visit the Brownings at Casa Guidi. Fuller presents a Bible as a gift from her son to Pen.


1850

1 April—Publication of Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day, RB’s first poem since his marriage, and the first time RB’s poetry is published at the publisher’s expense since Strafford.

6 April—Henrietta Moulton-Barrett marries William Surtees Cook, despite her father’s refusal to approve the marriage.

23 April—William Wordsworth dies. An article in The Athenœum, written by T.K. Hervey (not Henry Chorley, as long suspected), mentions EBB as a possible candidate for the laureateship.

2–3 July—RB goes to Siena (without EBB) and returns to Florence.

28 July—EBB’s fourth and final miscarriage. The severity of this illness leads Dr. Harding “to set to with all force of his will to prevent its happening again” (letter 55).

August—Brownings receive news that the Ossolis had drowned on 16 July when the Elizabeth, the ship they were aboard, wrecked off the coast of Long Island.

31 August–8 October—Summer residence at Villa Poggio al Vento, Marciano, near Siena. The first night and the last week are spent in Siena.

26 October—EBB’s “Hiram Power’s Greek Slave” is published anonymously in Household Words.

late October—EBB probably begins serious work on the second part of Casa Guidi Windows.

1 November—EBB’s Poems (1850) published. The collection contains revisions of earlier poems, as well as new poems, including Sonnets from the Portuguese and a new translation of Prometheus Bound.

1851


4–6 May—Two-day visit in Bologna.

ca. 6–10 May—Brownings travel with David and Eliza Ogilvy to Venice, via Modena, Parma, and Mantua. In Venice the Brownings take rooms in a palazzo on the Grand Canal. EBB enjoys Venice, where they visit San Marco, see performances of Verdi’s Attila and Ernani, and visit the monastery of San Lazzaro degli Armeni, where they meet the monk who taught Byron Armenian. However, RB is irritable and Wilson is unwell.
31 May—EBB’s *Casa Guidi Windows* is published.

13–30 June—Brownings leave Venice for Paris, travelling via Padua (where the poets take an excursion to Arqua to visit Petrarch’s tomb), Verona, Brescia, Milan, Como, Cadenabbia, Menaggio, Porlezza, Lugano, Bellinoza (where the poets take an excursion to Lago Maggiore), Faido, St. Gotthard, Fluellen, Luzern, Basel, and Strausbourg. In Paris, the Brownings stay at the Hotel aux Armes de la Ville de Paris. While in Paris, the Brownings meet the Tennysons, who offer the poets the use of their house in Twickenham during their upcoming visit.

22–23 July—Journey from Paris to London, via Dieppe and Newhaven. In London the Brownings take rooms at 26 Devonshire Street. They see old friends, make new acquaintances, visit the Great Exhibition, and EBB is reconciled to her brothers, but her father remains implacable in his refusal to communicate with her, returning all her previous letters unopened to RB together with a fierce reply to their plea for reconciliation. EBB determines to stop writing to him.

August—A highly understanding and complimentary article, entitled “La Poésie anglaise depuis Byron, II—Robert Browning,” by Joseph Milsand is published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. In December the Brownings are introduced to Milsand in Paris the following winter through the offices of Louisa Corkran (wife of English journalist John Frazer Corkran). Milsand becomes an intimate and important friend with both poets, as well as with Browning’s father and sister.

25 September—Brownings return to Paris, accompanied by Thomas Carlyle. The party stop in Dieppe for one night; in Paris the Brownings return to the Hotel aux Armes de la Ville de Paris.

10 October—The poets take up winter residence at 138 Avenue Champs Elysées. In Paris they attend receptions given by Lady Elgin, with whom EBB shares an interest in spiritualism.

November—The poets learn of RB, Sr.’s relationship with Margaret von Müller, a widow who later brought suit against him for breach of promise.

EBB’s health suffers during the winter of 1851–52 due to the cold weather in Paris.

1852

January—The Brownings are shocked by Miss Mitford’s indiscreet revelations in her *Recollections*, on the subject of EBB’s eldest brother’s death, which are publicised in lectures given by Philarète Chasles at the Collège de France, Paris.

15 February—The first of two visits to George Sand (according to EBB, RB sees her seven times).

March—RB, Sr. and Sarianna Browning leave Hanover Cottage for 28 Chepstow Place, Bayswater.

March/April—Joseph Milsand becomes a regular visitor to the Brownings.

27 May—EBB, accompanied by Anna Jameson and Madame Mohl, witness the reception of Alfred de Musset in the Académie Française.

5–6 July—Brownings travel from Paris to London, where they reside at 58 Welbeck Street.

mid-July—RB, Sr. and Sarianna Browning move to Paris to avoid paying the damages of £800 awarded to Mrs. von Müller in her breach of promise suit against RB, Sr.
August—Wilson asks for an increase in her annual pay from £16 to £20; the Brownings are forced to consider losing her since they cannot afford the additional expense, but Wilson relents and agrees to stay after a visit to her family in Yorkshire.

21–23 August—The poets visit the Paines (hop-growing admirers of the poets) in Farnham, Surrey.

September—The Brownings meet Ruskin and his wife, visiting them in Denmark Hill where they see Ruskin’s collection of Turners.

25 September—Sarianna Browning joins the poets in Welbeck Street after disposing of 28 Chepstow Place.

30 September—Brownings, including Sarianna, move to 15 Bentinck Street.

12 October—Brownings travel from London to Paris, via Folkestone, Bolougne, and Amiens, accompanied by Sarianna. RB, EBB, and Pen stay at the Hotel de la Ville l’Eveque in Paris.

mid-October—RB, Sr. and Sarianna take residence in the Rue des Ecuries d’Artois, a street between the Avenue des Champs Elysées and the Faubourg St. Honoré.

23 October–ca. 11 November—Brownings travel from Paris to Florence, via Châlons, Lyons, Chambéry, Lanslebourg, Mt. Cenis, Susa, Turin, and Genoa. They spend two days in Turin and ten in Genoa.

1853

March—EBB has been working on *Aurora Leigh* (letter 95).

Spring—RB, Sr. and Sarianna change their Parisian residence to 138 Avenue de Champs Elysées.

June—Brownings hire Ferdinando Romagnoli as a manservant. He becomes a member of the household, eventually marries Elizabeth Wilson, and accompanies the Brownings on many of their travels.

15 July–10 October—Brownings take up summer residence in the Casa Tolomei in Bagni di Lucca. With William Wetmore Story (an American sculptor living in Italy) and his wife they take excursion to Bernabbio, Prato Ponto, and other locations in the area.

15–23 November—The Brownings travel to Rome, via Perugia, Assisi, Foligno, Spoleto, Terni, and Narni. In Rome they take up winter residence at 43 via Bocca di Leone. During their stay they visit the Campagna and other sites around Rome. Their stay in Rome is, however, marred by the death of Joseph Story, shortly after their arrival.

1854

9 January—Brownings visit the Colosseum.

28 February—The poets hear celebrated German composer play Beethoven in the presence of the Prince of Prussia (letter 108).

April—The poets each write a poem in support of Arabella’s Ragged Schools Bazaar: EBB’s “A Plea for the Ragged Schools of London,” and RB’s “The Twins,” are published under the title *Two Poems by Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning*, the only instance in which the poets jointly publish their work. Chapman and Hall print the work at the poets’ expense. Also at this
time, at the request of Bryan Waller Procter, the Brownings contribute poems for Marguerite
Powers's annual, The Keepsake.

26 May—ca. 1 June—Brownings return to Florence.

June—Soon after their return from Rome, EBB reports the death of Flush, her faithful companion
for thirteen and a half years.

September—EBB's father is hit by a cab and suffers a broken leg.

1855

10 January—EBB has completed 4,500 lines of Aurora Leigh (letter 117).

10 January—Mary Russell Mitford dies.

late March—EBB has completed 5,500 lines of Aurora Leigh (letter 120).

12 June—Elizabeth Wilson and Ferdinando Romagnoli are married in Florence by an English
clergyman and accompany the poets to Paris and London.

13 June—The Brownings miss their boat in Leghorn, and return to Pisa for a night.

14 June—Brownings return to Florence to wait for another boat the following week.

20–24 June—Brownings depart for Paris, travelling via Leghorn, Bastia (in Corsica), Marseilles,
where they stay at the Hôtel des Empereurs, and Lyons. They are accompanied by Isa Blagden as
far as Marseilles. In Paris they stay at 138 Avenue des Champs Elysées.

10 July—Wilson and Ferdinando are married by a Roman Catholic priest in Paris.

11–12 July—Brownings, accompanied by Sarianna, travel from Paris to London, via Folkestone.
In London they stay at 13 Dorset Street, Baker Street.

23 July—The Brownings attend a séance conducted by Daniel Dunglas Home. Browning suspects
the medium of using tricks to dupe EBB.

mid-August—EBB is thrilled when she learns that her father sees Pen playing with his uncles at
50 Wimpole Street and asks whose child he is, to which George replies that he is "Ba's child."
Mr. Barrett responds "And what is he doing here, pray?"

late August—Wilson announces that she is pregnant. The 50 Wimpole Street household is sent
to Eastbourne.

29 September–3 October—Pen travels to Eastbourne with Arabella.

ca. mid-October—Sarianna returns to Paris.

17 October—Brownings travel to Paris, staying at 102 Rue de Grenelle, Faubourg St. Germain.

ca. November—RB, Sr. and Sarianna move to 151 Rue de Grenelle, Faubourg St. Germain.

13 December—Brownings remove to 3 Rue du Colysée.
1856

June—EBB completes the final book of *Aurora Leigh*.

29 June—Brownings travel from Paris to London, where they stay at John Kenyon's residence at 39 Devonshire Place.

23 August—Brownings travel to Melbourne Villa, Ventnor, on the Isle of Wight, where Arabella and EBB's brothers are staying at the nearby Milanese Villa.

6 September—The poets travel to West Cowes, Isle of Wight, to visit John Kenyon. While here, EBB works on the proofs and revises for *Aurora Leigh* (letter 158).

22 September—Brownings travel to Wilton, near Taunton, Somerset, to visit EBB's sister Henrietta and her family.

30 September—Brownings return to 39 Devonshire Place in London, where EBB completes the final revises for *Aurora Leigh*.

17 October—EBB dedicates *Aurora Leigh* to John Kenyon, and sends it with the title page to Chapman and Hall.

23–30 October—Brownings travel to Florence, via Paris, Dijon (where Millsand meets them at the station), Marseilles, Genoa, and Leghorn.

15 November—*Aurora Leigh* is published; initial sales are brisk, and an early second edition is called for.

27 November—Ruskin declares *Aurora Leigh* "the greatest poem in the English language" (letter 167).

3 December—John Kenyon dies; his legacy to the Brownings, totalling £11,000, solves their financial problems.
The Letters of
Elizabeth Barrett Browning
to Her Sister Arabella
Letter 1

Hotel de la ville de Paris. Paris-
Saturday [26 September 1846]

My beloved Arabel I write to you after a thousand thoughts .. (for I have not heard a breath of any of you yet) but the strongest brings me still to writing to you— I believe that you at least, you & my dearest Henrietta, would rather hear from me than not hear— So without a word more of feeling .. leaving all the grief & the doubt on one side, .. I hurry on blindly to let you hear the whole story of me, which seems to me to run in a whole circle of years rather than days, .. so strange it all is, & full of wonder.

After the Havre passage which was a miserable thing in all ways, there was nothing for it but to rest all day at Havre- We were all three of us exhausted either by the sea or the sorrow, & Wilson & I lay down for a few hours, & had coffee & what else we could take—this, till nine o'clock in the evening when the diligence set out for Rouen. Four hours by the diligence, we thought,—& then to rest, till the middle of the next day when we meant to go by the Paris railroad. In the diligence we had the coupé to ourselves .. we three .. & it was as comfortable & easy as any carriage I have been in for years—now five horses, now seven .. all looking wild & loosely harnessed, .. some of them white, some brown, some black, with the manes leaping as they galloped [sic], & the white reins dripping down over their heads .. such a fantastic scene it was in the moonlight!?—& I who was a little feverish with the fatigue & the violence done to myself, in the self control of the last few days, began to see it all as in a vision & to doubt whether I was in or out of the body. They made me lie down with my feet up—Robert was dreadfully anxious about me—& after all, he was the worst, I believe, of any of us—Arrived at Rouen,—through some mistake or necessity of form, we were allowed to remain if we pleased, but were forbidden to keep any part of our luggage. The luggage was to go by the railroad on to Paris directly—What was to be done? So I prevailed over all the fears, that we should continue our route, after a rest of twenty minutes at the Rouen Hotel .. coffee & the breaking of bread,—& you would have been startled, if in a dream you had seen me, carried in & out, as Robert in his infinite tenderness would insist on carrying me, between the lines of strange foreign faces & in the travellers' room, .. back again to the coupé [sic] of the diligence which was placed on the railway, .. & so we rolled on towards Paris. It was a night's travelling, & the daylight was at ten or eleven a.m. when we were deposited in the Messagerie Hotel, in a great noisy court—taking & not choosing that Hotel .. taking it for being the nearest, & meaning to remain there, for that day & the next, on account of the necessities of the passport, which the Mayor of Havre promised faithfully to let us receive in time for an early departure—For me, I was quite satisfied with our accommodations in this hotel—but they were small & not over convenient, & the light & the noise, my two enemies, poured in upon us on all sides. Still we had good coffee, & everything was clean, & everybody courteous to the top of courtesy—& while I lay resting, Robert went to speak to Mrs. Jameson according to her address & the agreement of us both that her goodness to me deserved some passing look or sign, if we could give no more—She was not at home. He left a note .. "Come & see your friend & my wife EBB—"^4 .. nearly as brief as that—, & signing it RB. Never thinking
of either of us she stood for some moments, she told us afterwards, in a maze... wondering what these things could mean. In the meanwhile, it was night... or nine in the evening at least... & he was so thoroughly worn out with the anxiety, agitation, fatigue, & effect of the sea voyage together with that of having scarcely eaten anything for three weeks, that he quite staggered in the room, & was feverish enough to make me talk of sending for a physician, & in default of it, to entreat him to go & lie down where he could not be disturbed... I promised to receive M'^® Jameson myself... imagine with what terrors... She came with her hands stretched out, & eyes opened as wide as Flush's... "Can it be possible? is it possible? You wild, dear creature! You dear, abominable poets! Why what a ménage you will make!— You should each have married a 'petit bout de prose'5 to keep you reasonable. But he is a wise man... in choosing so... & you are a wise woman, let the world say as it pleases!—& I shall dance for joy both in earth & in heaven, my dear friends." All this in interrupted interjections! She was the kindest, the most cordial, the most astonished, the most out of breath with wonder!—& I could scarcely speak—looking "frightfully ill" as she has told me since. So she would not stay... I was to rest, she said, for the first thing, & never to think (for the second) of travelling all night in that wild way any more—also I was to prevail on Robert to go with me to her apartment at the Hotel de la Ville de Paris, in the morning, when we could talk about Italy & the rest.

Which was done as she said. We went to her in the morning. She received us both as the most affectionate of possible friends could... kissing Robert, embracing me... professing to be as delighted as she was astonished, praising us for our noble imprudences which were oftener successful, she said, even in this world, than the chiefest of worldly wisdoms... in short, nothing could be more cordial & more cheering. May God bless her for all the good she did me—& does me—for we did not leave her.

She persuaded us to remove from the Messagerie to her Hotel, induced us to take the apartment above her own in the same (this same Hotel) a cheap, yet delightful suite of small rooms, furnished with very sufficient elegance... dining room, drawingroom, two bedrooms, & a room up higher for Wilson... as quiet as in the midst of a wood, nearly, & in the best situation, or one of the best, in Paris— She persuaded us to settle here for a few days, in order to rest, both of us, & manage the passport business, & wait for herself, she promising to go with us to Pisa, travel with us, & help him to take care of me. You may think how grateful we are! I am! & he is, still more, perhaps... if possible,—for it lifts from him a good half of the anxiety about moving me from one place to another, which, well as I bear it all, is felt by him too much at moments. Now he is well... I thank God... & I am well... living as in a dream... loving & being loved better everyday... seeing near in him, all that I seemed to see afar, thinking with one thought, feeling with one heart, & just able to discern that (if it were not for what I have left behind, & the dreadful, dreadful looking for the letters at Orleans perhaps... I should be the happiest of human beings... happiest through him— He loves me better he says than he ever did—& we live such a quiet yet new life, it is like riding an enchanted horse. We see M'^® Jameson at certain hours, but keep to ourselves at others. We breakfast quietly, & spend the morning... have bread & butter at one, (& coffee) then dine with her at the Restaurants... walking there, ordering our own dinner at our own table in Parisian fashion, & walking home afterwards. The distance is short, being understood... & I do not at all dislike it. M'^®
Jameson & Robert talk. he pouring out rivers of wit & wisdom. (it is wonderful). & she the agreeable, cultivated, fervid & affectionate woman I but half guessed her to be. I in the meanwhile, sit silent, & enjoy or suffer, as God lets me. Oh never, never believe that I can forget you, or love you less, my dearest dearest all of you, my own Arabel, do not think so! I never do, even while I feel that as far as any human choice can be wise & happy, made under such circumstances. I mean, as far as I could have a right to choose at all, I have done well, & received full compensation for the past sorrows of my life. He is perfect — far too good & too tender for me — far too high & gifted. To hear him say that he is happy because of me, overwhelms me with a mixture of wonder & of shame.

He will carry me up stairs, & make me eat too much — our chief disputations are on such points: & for the rest, we have broken no peace yet — we sit through the dusky evenings, watching the stars rise over the high Paris houses, & telling childish happy things, or making schemes for work & poetry to be achieved when we reach Pisa. This, if the good spirits & hopes take the pre-eminence.

And everybody cries out that I look well — the first fatigue has passed. & the change, & the sense of the Thing Done (resuming the place of a painful resolution) & the constant love & attention of every moment. have done me good — for they touch me, besides the pain & fear. I am quite capable of travelling. quite. And on Monday, we set out again. M. Jameson & Gerardine her niece, Robert & I & Wilson. We go to Chartres, because a visit to the cathedral there is necessary for a book she is completing, & we can only go by Diligence. Thence by railroad to Orleans — (oh my letters, how you frighten me at this distance!) & slowly onwards to Marseilles. You shall hear again. Robert has told M. Jameson to call me Ba. & I am to call her Aunt Nina which is her favorite name for relation or friend. I tell you this nonsense to let you see how we are on familiar terms. She writes little notes to us, nearly every morning, sent up stairs by Gerardine for a post, beginning. "Dear friends, how are you today, & where will you go?" You comprehend why I repeat such foolishnesses to you. She has taken us once to the Louvre — I, trembling for fear of meeting somebody too dear! And, by the way, I have not written a word to Jane [Hedley] — DONT tell her how long I have been here, not daring to give her a sign. although Robert & I walked up the Rue Champs Elyssées only yesterday.

The glance of the Louvre was a mere glance — the divine Raphaels, unspeakable, those are. M. Jameson on one side of me, & Robert on the other, were learned equally. & I, the ignoramus, between! He & I have seen nothing of course, comparatively, of Paris wonders, — but we shall return here some day, & see & hear. The colouring & life everywhere are very striking, & the magnificence of the city, as a city, infinitely beyond London. M. Jameson spoke to Lord Normanby (the English ambassador) about the wrong done to us in our passport at Havre — for we have not yet received it — & he instantly said that he knew M. Browning by reputation & would be happy to give us another which should put us to no trouble whatever. It was graciously said, & quickly done. And now the mayor & his devices are to be defied.

My dearest, dearest Arabel. my beloved all of you. my heart goes out to you. I love you. I bless you in the name of God. Forgive me that I have caused you this pain, oh, I beseech...
you— Kiss dearest Trippy for me, & say so too. My excuse is in him— If he were as another man in anything, I should have less an excuse— I wish you heard him talk of you all . . . how he grieves to have offended where he would give up all (except me) to conciliate— Wishing, he was, this morning, that you or dearest Henrietta were with us here, & hoping for me, that, one day, he might have you with us, as his sister & mine— You would love him & hold me justified, if you knew him— such a pure, tender, religious spirit, . . . apart from the secular attainments & the specific genius— He rises on me, higher and higher—

Now this is a long letter— Write me one I beseech you— & direct to Posta Restante, Pisa.—

May God bless you— Tell dear Minny not to follow me with too hard thoughts. No woman, beloved as I have been by such a man, could have acted much otherwise in the same circumstances— Is Stormie very angry? & George?

Dear Henrietta will understand why I do not write to her today— it shall be for another day— I love her—I love you—

I am your own attached
Ba

Do you think, Arabel, that dearest Papa will forgive me at last?——

Answer

Wilson likes everything— & we try to make her comfortable in change for her great services— Oh, that day, Arabel when I left you!14——

Arabel, Henrietta, dearest ones, both of you write to me.

Publication: BC, 14, 8-12.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. The only Saturday during the Brownings’ stay in Paris fell on 26 September 1846.
2. According to Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in France (London: John Murray, 1847), “The French stage coach or diligence is a huge, heavy, lofty, lumbering machine, something between an English stage and a broad-wheeled waggon. It is composed of three parts or bodies joined together: 1. the front division, called Coupé, shaped like a chariot or post chaise, holding 3 persons, quite distinct from the rest of the passengers, so that ladies may resort to it without inconvenience, and by securing all 3 places to themselves, travel nearly as comfortably as in a private carriage. The fare is more expensive than in the other part of the vehicle. . . . They are drawn by 5 or 6 horses, driven by a post-boy from the box, instead of the saddle, as was formerly the case” (pp. xxv–xxvi).
3. Cf. II Corinthians 12:2: “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.”
4. Anna Brownell Jameson (née Murphy, 1794–1860), the author of numerous books on travel, art, literature, and women’s roles. She had married Robert Jameson in 1825, but they separated in 1836 after an unsatisfactory marriage. Both Brownings had known her before their marriage, and she had offered to accompany EBB to Italy. She and her niece, Gerardine Bate (see note 8 below), had arrived in Paris on the 18th, three days earlier than the Brownings. She had left England during the second week of September, and, together with her niece, was en route to Italy to research a book she was writing. While in Paris they were contacted by RB, and soon thereafter the two parties agreed to travel together to Italy. Mrs. Jameson left the Brownings in Pisa and journeyed on to Rome. She and her niece returned to England in the autumn of 1847, a year earlier than planned. Mrs. Jameson gave an account of meeting and travelling with them on their journey to Pisa in letters to Lady Noel Byron. For extracts from these letters dealing with the Brownings, see BC, 14, 362–368.
5. “A little bit of prose.” Earlier in April 1846, EBB had explained to RB that Mrs. Jameson had “brought out a theory of hers which I refused to receive, & which I thought to myself, she would apply to me some day, with the rest of what Miss Mitford calls ‘those good for nothing poets & poetesses’” (BC, 12, 204).

6. EBB received letters at Orléans, as indicated in the following letter; presumably she had asked her father and George to write to her there (see BC, 14, 13).

7. According to Galignani’s, “whatever hotel the traveller may fix himself in, it is not necessary that he should take his meals there; he will always find a coffee-house or restaurant in the neighbourhood. ... The table-d’hôte, if there be one in his hotel, is generally the cheapest plan” Galignani’s New Paris Guide (Paris: A. and W. Galignani and Co., 1847, p. 14). Galignani’s further notes that “nothing is more common than for a great part of the Parisian community, including persons of the first distinction, to dine occasionally at a restaurateur’s. ... there are generally private rooms called cabinets de société, in which two friends or a party may dine in private” (pp. 15–16).

8. Gerardine (“Geddie”) Bate (afterwards Macpherson, 1829–78), eldest child of Mrs. Jameson’s sister Louisa. While in Rome with her aunt, Gerardine formed an attachment with Robert Macpherson. Mrs. Jameson hoped that by leaving Italy Gerardine would forget Macpherson. She did not, however, and the two were married in 1849 and settled in Rome. Gerardine Macpherson later published a biography of her aunt; Memoirs of the Life of Anna Jameson (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1878).

9. Mrs. Jameson was collecting material for her book Sacred and Legendary Art (London: Longmans & Co., 1848). In a letter to Lady Noel Byron, dated 28–29 September [1846], Mrs. Jameson wrote: “While travelling with these friends I am obliged to put all my own convenience & all selfish projects out of the question” (BC, 14, 363). They did not stop in Chartres.

10. “Ba” was EBB’s family’s pet name for her, and sharing its use is an indication of the important attachment they quickly formed with Mrs. Jameson.

11. EBB uses the adjective “divine” to describe Raphael again in letter 15, and she names him as the great Renaissance painter in Casa Guidi Windows, I, 181 (see also I, 395 and I, 1110), as well as in Aurora Leigh, IV, 595. Raphael’s pictures were also a favourite with RB, and he mentions the artist and his paintings in “One Word More,” including the Madonna “left with lilies in the Louvre” (line 24). Raphael is also a subject in RB’s “Old Pictures in Florence,” “Andrea del Sarto,” and Fifine at the Fair.

12. Cf. EBB to Arabella, 7 July [1858]: “Paris—how splendid this Paris is! Wherever we go, no city is to be found so beautiful” (ms with Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett).

13. Constantine Henry Phipps, 1st Marquis of Normanby (1797–1863), had been appointed ambassador to Paris the preceding month, which post he held until 1852; and from 1854 until 1858, he was minister to the Court of Tuscany in Florence. In 1832, Normanby had been appointed captain general and governor of Jamaica, and was involved in the emancipation of slaves in the island. He probably would have known EBB’s cousin, Richard Barrett, as well as her uncle Samuel, and he might have met her eldest brother, Bro, when he was in Jamaica in 1833.

14. Because of the need for complete secrecy, EBB’s last few days in Wimpole Street had to seem completely normal to her family, and the distress she felt knowing that she was about to leave them was exacerbated by not being able to say any farewells. Her anguish is indicated by her erratic handwriting in the last few letters she wrote before leaving.
I thank & bless you my dearest dearest Henrietta & Arabel .. my own dearest, kindest sisters!—
What I suffered in reaching Orleans, & at last holding all these letters in my hands, can only be
measured by my deep gratitude to you, & by the tears & kisses I spent upon every line of what
you wrote to me .. dearest & kindest that you are. The delay of the week in Paris brought me to
the hour of my death warrant at Orleans—my ‘death warrant’ I called it at the time, I was so
anxious & terrified. Robert brought in a great packet of letters .. & I held them in my hands, not
able to open one, & growing paler & colder every moment. He wanted to sit by me while I read
them, but I would not let him— I had resolved never to let him do that, before the moment came—
so, after some beseeching, I got him to go away for ten minutes, to meet the agony alone, & with
more courage so, according to my old habit you know— And besides, it was right not to let him
read— They were very hard letters, those from dearest Papa & dearest George— To the first I
had to bow my head— I do not seem to myself to have deserved that full cup, in the intentions
of this act—but he is my father & he takes his own view, of course, of what is before him to judge
of. But for George, I thought it hard, I confess, that he should have written to me so with a sword.
To write to me as if I did not love you all .. I, who would have laid down my life at a sign, if it
could have benefitted one of you really & essentially:—with the proof you should have had life
& happiness at a sign. It was hard that he should use his love for me to half break my heart with
such a letter—— Only he wrote in excitement & in ignorance— I ask of God to show to him & to
the most unbelieving of you, that never, never did I love you better, all my beloved ones, than
when I left you—than in that day, & that moment. I ask Him too to bless you from Himself, my
own beloved sisters, for the good & blessing & tears your writing brought me, when I read last
the kindness & faith of it.

Now I will tell you—Robert who had been waiting at the door, I believe, in great anxiety
about me, came in & found me just able to cry from the balm of your tender words— I put your
two letters into his hands, & he, when he had read them, said with tears in his eyes, & kissing
them between the words—“I love your sisters with a deep affection— I am inexpressibly grateful
to them— It shall be the object of my life to justify their trust as they express it here.” He said it
with tears in his eyes. May God bless you—bless you!—

Dearest Henrietta & Arabel, .. how I suffered that day—that miserable saturday .. when I
had to act a part to you—how I suffered! & how I had to think to myself that if I betrayed one
 pang of all, I should involve you deeply in the grief which otherwise remained my own. And
Arabel to see through it, notwithstanding!— I was afraid of her—she looked at me so intently, or
was so grave .. my dearest, dearest Arabel! Understand both of you, that if, from the apparent
necessities of the instant, I consented to let the ceremony precede the departure by some few
days, it was upon the condition of not seeing him again in that house & till we went away. We
parted, as we met, at the door of Marylebone Church—he kissed me at the communion table, &
not a word passed after. I looked like death, he has said since. You see we were afraid of a
sudden removal preventing everything,—or at least, laying the unpleasantness on me of a journey to London previous to the ceremony, which particularly I should have hated, for very obvious reasons. There was no elopement in the case, but simply a private marriage,—& to have given the least occasion to a certain class of observations, was repugnant to both of us. And then, he was, reasonably enough, afraid lest I should be unequal to the double exertion of the church & the railway, on the same morning: and as he wished it, & had promised not to see me, I thought it was mere cavilling on my part, to make a difficulty. Wilson knew nothing till the night before. What I suffered under your eyes, you may guess—it was in proportion to every effort successfully made to disguise the suffering. Painful it is to look back upon now—Forgive me for what was expiated in the deepest of my heart.

With your letters at Orleans, I had one from dearest Mr Kenyon, in reply to those which we had written to him at the last. Nothing could be more generously & trustingly kind,—& to poor Robert it was a great relief, as the verdict of a friend whom he loved & looked up to on many grounds— I will transcribe to you what Mr Kenyon says, ...for you—you will understand how it is of great price to us. “My dearest EBB I received your & your husband's letters yesterday. To speak briefly as I must, I sympathize in all you have both been thinking & feeling, & in all you have done. Nothing but what is generous in thought & action could come from you & Browning—And the very peculiar circumstances of your case have transmuted what might have been otherwise called “Impudence” into “Prudence,” & apparent wilfulness into real necessity.— To speak personally of you both, ...I know no two persons so worthy of each other; & to speak personally to you both, be assured that out of your own households, you can have no warmer & more affectionate well-wisher than I am. It is a pleasant vision to me to think that, if I live, I may hereafter enjoy your joint society & affection, as hitherto I have derived happiness from each of you singly— ... Altogether I am not only delighted that you, my dearest cousin, should have so virtuous, & highminded a protector, but if the thing had been asked of me I should have advised it, albeit glad that I was not asked for the reason which I have given. Saying God bless you both, I am obliged to close abruptly &c... Most affectionately yours always & ever J. Kenyon.” The one or two sentences omitted, (for I have not room) are in harmony with all the rest— Dearest, kindest M! Kenyon! how I love him better than ever!— Also I had kind notes from Miss Mitford, Nelly Bordman & M! Jago, who sent me the prescription for the draughts with ever so many good wishes. Nelly wishes to be let go to see you sometimes, Arabel, ... which for my sake you will not say ‘no’ to. She loves me, & is worthy of love. I wrote to Jane when I was in Paris ... or rather about to leave it—but to Bummy I have not written yet. When the fatigue gives me half an hour I will do it, be sure. I thank you for those letters you speak of having written for me. Did you get my long letter from Paris? And Trippy, my short note from Havre? Oh, dear Trippy—let her not think hardly of me. No one can judge of this act, except some one who knows thoroughly the man I have married. He rises on me hour by hour. If ever a being of a higher order lived among us without a glory round his head, in these later days, he is such a being. Papa thinks that I have sold my soul for genius ... mere genius. Which I might have done when I was younger, if I had had the opportunity, ... but am in no danger of doing now. For my sake, for the love of me, from an infatuation which from first to last has astonished me, ... he has consented to occupy for
a moment a questionable position— But those who question most, will do him justice fullest— &
we must wait a little with resignation. In the meanwhile, what he is, & what he is to me, I w’d fain
teach you— Have faith in me to believe it. He puts out all his great faculties to give me pleasure &
comfort, .. charms me into thinking of him when he sees my thoughts wandering .. forces me to
smile in spite of all of them— If you had seen him that day at Orleans— He laid me down on the
bed & sate by me for hours, pouring out floods of tenderness & goodness, & promising to win
back for me, with God’s help, the affection of such of you as were angry— And he loves me more
& more— Today we have been together a fortnight, & he said to me with a deep, serious tenderness
.. “I kissed your feet, my Ba, before I married you—but now I would kiss the ground under your
feet, I love you with a so much greater love.” And this is true, I see & feel. I feel to have the
power of making him happy .. I feel to have it in my hands. It is strange that anyone so brilliant
should love me— but true & strange it is .. & it is impossible for me to doubt it any more—
Perfectly happy therefore we should be, if I could look back on you all without this pang— His
family have been very kind. His father considered him of age to judge, & never thought of
interfering otherwise than by saying at the last moment .. “Give your wife a kiss from me” ..
this, when they parted. His sister sent me a little travelling writing desk, with a word written ..
“EBB, from her sister Sarianna”— Nobody was displeased at the reserve used towards them,
understanding that there were reasons for it which did not detract from his affection for them &
my respect.

I told you that Mrs. Jameson was travelling with us, & that we had seen a great deal of her in
Paris. She repeats, of Robert, that she never knew anyone of so affluent a mind & imagination
combined with a nature & manners so sunshiney & captivating— Which she well may say .. for
he amuses us from morning till night,—thinks of everybody’s feelings, .. is witty & wise, .. (&
foolish too in the right place) charms cross old women who cry out in the diligence “mais, madame,
mes jambes!” .. talks latin to the priests, who enquire at three in the morning whether Newman
& Pusey are likely “lapsare in erroribus”? (you will make out that) & forgets nothing & nobody ..
extcept himself .. it is the only omission. He has won Wilson’s heart I do assure you— & by
the way, Wilson is excellent & active beyond what 1 could have expected of her. Most affectionate
& devoted she has been to me throughout, & now she is not scared by the French, but has learnt
already to get warm water & coffee & bread & butter. We applaud Wilson very deservedly. And
she desires me to name her to you, & to regret properly that she was “forced to leave your things
in such disorder.” Also she is a little afraid of dear Minny, lest Minny sh’d be angry with her. Let
dear Minny forgive her if she can—because the blame was all mine, you know, & Wilson’s part
was simply the consequence of her attachment to me & her unwillingness to leave me to my trial
alone. By the way, what does George mean by speaking of “Arabel or Minny my accomplices”?-
Does he not believe me when I have spoken the very contrary of such a thing?— or is it that dear
Minny has spoken too gently of me to be unblamed? For my Arabel, I know her as I love her, ..
& do not ask how she spoke.

But I think .. think .. of the suffering I caused you, my own, own Arabel, that evening!— I
tremble thinking of you that evening—my own dearest dearest Arabel!— Oh—do not fancy that
new affections can undo the old. I love you now even more, I think. Robert is going to write to
Letter 2

2 October 1846

you from Pisa, & to Henrietta also- He loves you as his sisters, he says, & wishes that you were
with us, & hopes that one day you will be with us, . . staying & travelling with us, . . exactly as I
do myself. And I must not forget to tell you that M' Jameson said the other day to me, . . “Well,
it is the most charming thing to see you & M! Browning together! If two persons were to be
chosen from the ends of the earth for perfect union & fitness, there could not be a greater congruity
between you two—” Which I tell you, because I think it will please you to hear what is an
honest impression of hers, though far too great a compliment to me- (The only thing she objects
to, is his way of calling me “Ba” . . which I like: & which she never will talk him out of, I am
confident, because he likes it as well-) And for the rest, if he is brilliant & I am dull, (socially
speaking) Love makes a level
does me good— which is my comfort.

Two separate (not following, of course) nights we have passed in the diligence;—& I have
had otherwise a good deal of fatigue which has done me no essential harm. I am taken such care
of,—so pillowed by arms & knees .. so carried up & down stairs against my will, . . so spoilt &
considered in every possible way. Also the change of air does me good— I am able to do more—
& when we get to our rest at Pisa, the fatigue will leave no trace, I think, except of good. You
would stare however to see me thrown abroad out of all my habits, . . I seem to be in a feverish
dream. Tomorrow we take the railroad to Lyons, & the next day embark on the Rhone. At Avignon,
we pause a day & go to Vaucluse to hunt Petrarch’s footsteps. Today I have not been allowed to
stir from this bed where I write, because last night we were travelling—& there has been a table
brought close to it (foreign fashion, Arabel!) for Robert to dine on & to make me dine- M's
Jameson & Gerardine dine by themselves in their own room today, much in the same way.

I am so glad that you are in the country—do write—do write .. & tell me everything, & tell
me if you like Little Bookham. Half of my soul is with you .. May God bless you my own
beloved ones. Give my best love to dear M! Boyd, to whom I shall write in time- And let M's
Martin understand the same— And do you feel & know, that as for me . . for my position as a wife
. . it is awfully happy for this world. He is too good & tender, & beyond me in all things—& we
love each other with a love that grows instead of diminishing. I speak to you of such things rather
than of the cathedral at Bourges, because it is of these, I feel sure, that you desire knowledge
rather.

I am going to write to Papa—& to George—very soon, I shall. Ah— dear George would not
have written so, if he had known my whole heart—yet he loved me while he wrote, as I felt with
every pain the writing caused me. Dear George— I love him to his worth— And my poor Papa!—
My thoughts cling to you all, & will not leave their hold. Dearest Henrietta & Arabel let me be as
ever & for ever

Your fondly attached Ba-

Does Stormie like the new house? my dearest Stormie.

Flush is very gracious, & behaves perfectly—but moans & wails on the railroad, when the
barbarians insist on putting him into a box.

May God bless you, dearest all of you- I hope dear Trippy is with you.

I meant you to have the letters an hour after I left Wimpole Street- It was very unhappy—I
grieve for it. As to going to Bookham, I had thought of that once—but the wrong to you w
Letter 2  
2 October 1846

have been greater, to have spoilt & clouded the new scene, instead of allowing it to be a resource to you—Be happy, my dearest ones—I will write, be sure—

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / The Rectory / Little Bookham / near Leatherhead / Surrey.
Publication: BC, 14, 13–18.
Source: Transcript in editor’s file.

1. EBB made this notation on the reverse of the envelope. Roanne is located on the left bank of the Loire River in southeast France, about 40 miles northwest of Lyon.
2. These letters are not extant, nor are the ones that EBB wrote to her father or his reply to her. In cases where EBB refers to her correspondence, when a letter is extant, I give the published source, or if it is unpublished, I give the manuscript location. I make no comment if the letter has not been found. A complete list of the Brownings’ letters can be found in The Brownings’ Correspondence: A Checklist, comp. Philip Kelley and Ronald Hudson (New York: The Browning Institute; and Arkansas City, Kansas: Wedgestone Press, 1978), together with supplements as published in Browning Institute Studies.
3. On 9 September 1846, EBB informed RB that “an edict” had gone out from her father that “he ‘must have this house empty for a month in order to its cleaning’” (BC, 13, 352). With this news, EBB asked to decide what they should do: “Therefore decide! ... you must think for both of us.” It was the cue RB needed, and his reply was definitive: “We must be married directly and go to Italy—I will go for a licence today and we can be married on Saturday” (BC, 13, 354). Not long after the Brownings left England on 19 September, the Barrett family household was relocated to the Rectory in Little Bookham, Surrey, while 50 Wimpole Street was redecorated, which precipitated the Brownings’ marriage and departure to Italy.
4. The Brownings were concerned that news of their marriage would leak out before they left England. EBB was worried that the newspapers might find out, and in the letter she wrote to RB following the wedding ceremony she asked if the register books were “ever examined by penny a liners” (BC, 13, 358).
5. Because the Brownings had not informed Kenyon of their plans, he could not be implicated as an accomplice, and therefore was not placed in a compromising situation with EBB’s father.
6. Eleanor Page Bordman (18157–78), only daughter of the late Rev. James Bordman, curate of Ickham, Kent. EBB first met her in 1831 when she visited Hugh Stuart Boyd in the company of Boyd’s sister (see Diary, p. 58). An orphan, Nelly lived at Hammersmith with her guardian, Francis Robert Jago (d. 1862), surgeon, Royal Navy; they married on 30 June 1848. He occasionally provided medical advice for EBB. Nelly Bordman was a regular visitor to Wimpole Street.
7. A year before the Brownings married, EBB told Julia Martin that she was “in the habit of taking forty drops of laudanum a day” (BC, 11, 115). In August 1846, she told RB that her “greatest personal expense lately has been the morphone” (BC, 13, 229).
8. “But, madam, my leg!”
9. “To lapse into error.” Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800–82), Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, and John Henry Newman (1801–90), Vicar of St. Mary’s, Oxford, from 1842–43. Newman’s interpretation of the Thirty-Nine Articles in Tract No. 90 (London: J.G. & F. Rivington, 1841) was condemned by the Bishop of Oxford and led to Newman’s breach with the Church of England. He was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1845 and afterwards elevated to the rank of Cardinal (1879). Newman and Pusey worked closely together in support of a revival of traditional doctrines and practices in the Church of England, including apostolical succession, and were leaders of what became known as “the Oxford Movement,” whose adherents were often referred to as “Puseyites” or “Tractarians.”
10. Although this sounds proverbial, I have been unable to trace a source. This expression contradicts “And Death must dig the level where these agree” in Sonnets from the Portuguese, III, 14.
11. The fountain, or spring, of Vaucluse, near Avignon, is the source of the river Sorgue, and was immortalised by Petrarch, who, seeking to escape the city of Avignon which he disliked, “discovered a delightful valley, narrow and secluded, called Vaucluse, about fifteen miles from Avignon, where the Sorgue, the prince of streams,
Letter 2

2 October 1846

has its source,” and where, “every bit of writing I did was either done or begun or at least conceived there,” as he claimed in a “Letter to Posterity” (see Selections from the Canonziere and Other Works, trans. Mark Musa, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 6). EBB describes Vauclose in Casa Guidi Windows, I, 1111–1118, as does RB in “Apparent Failure,” line 12.

This seems to indicate that EBB had left a letter for her sisters before leaving London—as she had done for her father and her brother George—but there are no letters extant from EBB to either of her sisters before the one addressed from Paris (letter 1).

---

Letter 3

Pisa– Hotel Peverada
Tre Donzilla
[16–19 October 1846]

Ever my beloved Arabel—

It is your turn, I think, to be written to, but I owe the best gratitude I have to give, to both of you... to my dearest Henrietta as to yourself... for the happiness of hearing from you on the second day of our arrival at our great journey’s end. Oh, if you think that ever I cease to think of you for one hour of the whole twenty four (except when I am fairly asleep you know, without dreaming) you mistake me altogether, as others have done from whom I might have hoped a truer comprehension. But surely you know & feel that I think of you, yes, & miss you, yes, & long for you & love you & pray for you my very dearest ones, & thank you from my heart for every thought of kindness you give me now that I am away from you thus. The letters made me happy last night... made both of us happy—though you are not to fancy, by that, that I shall “show” anything secret; so write as openly as possible. Between R. & myself there is the fullest confidence & liberty too... the liberty being a part of the confidence. But last night’s happiness in the letters belonged to us both I thought,—particularly as he was looking into my eyes as anxiously as ever they could look, for the news from you— My own dear dearest Arabel... I am glad you are at Little Bookham & that the country is pretty & I do hope that you make sketches & allow the time to pass pleasantly. The worst of all my thoughts is that of having given you all pain, & it is present too often notwithstanding my absolute contentment with my own choice & lot altogether. R. is more than ever I believed him to be, when the belief was at fullest before we married. I can only wonder increasingly at the fact of his selecting me out of the world of women—. Without the least affectation, it is the wonder of my life. Also, the repentence does not seem to come, nor to threaten to come. He loves me better every minute, he says, on the contrary— There is no honeymoon for us any longer,... but the stars keep us in light. The goodness & tenderness of every moment is the “thing to dream of & not to tell”. At Genoa (where we disembarked, slept, & spent a day), he positively refused (quite “unreasonably,” as Mrs. Jameson agreed with me) to leave my side for the sake of the cathedral[,] the pictures, or any of the great sights, just because I was tired & could not go to see them. “He would come with me to see them some future time... but now... no... it would not be the least pleasure to him if I were not there”. And so, notwithstanding all entreaties, there he sate... & Mrs. J & Gerardine went alone to see the glories
of Genoa. One little walk however (it was that which tired me) he & I had together, & we wandered through close alleys of palaces looking all strange & noble, into a gorgeous church where mass was going on—altar pressing by altar, every one of a shining marble encrusted with gold—Great columns of twisted porphyry letting out the inner light of some picture: the frescoed angels glancing from the roof—Glory upon glory it was, as far as art went—and on the marble pavement, knelt monks with the brown serge & cord .. nuns of various orders—and Genoese ladies dropping their fans from their fingers, as they prayed covered with the national veil .. the head is covered, (not the face) & the white drapery is crossed over the breast in the most graceful manner imaginable. We met in the streets several ladies apparently of distinction, gliding along in these same white veils, & with large painted fans— And no woman takes a man’s arm unless she is his wife or engaged to him. Beautiful Genoa—what a vision it is!—& our first sight of Italy beside. I am going backward in my story of our adventures & it ought to be forwards instead— So to begin properly. After our week at Paris we began our journey as I hope you heard from my Orleans letter, & a long time indeed we have been about it since then, .. far longer than either of us had contemplated. We took the water only from Lyons to Avignon, & the rest of the way went by diligence & vet[t]urino, in order to give M'® Jameson the opportunity she required of seeing certain cathedrals. The one at Bourges is glorious & worthy of dear M: Kenyon seeking the sight of by mesmeric trance,—it looks as if all the sunsets of time had stained the wonderful painted windows of which the secret is lost.^ By two nights we had some travelling, resting during the days after—& often I felt desperately tired but always had the strength back again—renewed like the eagle’s— The change of air appeared to act on me like a charm, & then we had delightful weather & learnt to calculate on the sun by day as on the candle by night. M'® Jameson declares that I look like altogether a different person from what I was—especially at our first meeting in Paris when the agitation & fatigue made me look like a ghost. Now, the ghost has its body back, with a little colour into its cheeks. No wonder that you wonder at me. I wonder at myself— Yet continual change of air with a climate growing warmer & warmer, were good for me even humanly speaking .. & though dear Papa said that I ought not to speak of Providence, God['"]s mercies always seem too close to me for my unworthiness. One disappointment we had—for our only rainy day was the day we especially wished to keep bright .. the day of the Rhone .. from Lyons to Avignon— The wild, striking scenery .. the fantastic rocks & ruined castles we could only see by painful glimpses through the loophole windows of the miserable cabin—was'n't it unfortunate? At Avignon however, there was consolation. We stayed there three or four days, & made a pilgrimage to Vaucluse as became poets, & my spirits rose & the enjoyment of the hour spent at the sacred fountain was complete. It stands deep & still & green against a majestic wall of rock, & then falls, boils, breaks[,] foams over the stones, down into the channel of the little river winding away greenly, greenly—the great, green desolate precipices guarding it out of sight— A few little cypresses, & olive trees—no other tree in sight— All desolate & grand. R. said “Ba, are you losing your senses?”—because without a word I made my way over the boiling water to a still rock in the middle of it .. but he followed me & helped me, & we both sate in the spray, till M'® Jameson was provoked to make a sketch of us—^ Also Flush proved his love of me by leaping (at the cost of wetting his feet & my gown) after me to the slippery stone, & was repulsed three
times by R. (poor Flushie!) till he moaned on the dry ground to see me in such a position of
danger as perhaps it seemed to him .. poor Flushie! .. & he not suffered to share it with me.

From Avignon we took a voiturier, or rather a voiturier took us, on to Marseilles, .. sleeping
at Aix, the city of troubadours & embarking in a French steamer, of which we were the only
first class passengers— M* J, Gerardine, Wilson & I had the ladies' cabin to ourselves, & every
comfort & cleanliness (write down that the French are not dirty, .. & not delicate certainly—
there was not a woman for any use—the 'garçons' did all the duty, .. & very pleasant, as you
may think, that was) & at five oclock on one burning, glaring afternoon we sailed from glittering,
roaring Marseilles .. coloured even down into its puddles— The heat was intense. I felt sick with
it. And when we got to sea, everybody else was sick in quite another way & from another cause
for we were cool enough then, the wind getting up boisterously. Such a rolling night it was, ..
& when in the morning, I got up the cabin stairs toward the deck, I left behind me prostrate
everyone of my companions— Robert, too, was very miserable—only when he heard my voice he
would go with me upon deck .. & there we leaned, wrapt up in all come-atable cloaks, along the
stem of the vessel, watching the magnificent coast along which a thousand mountains & their
rocks leapt up against the morning-sun, & counted the little Italian towns one after another. I
never saw scenery of such a character,—& it was lamentable to think that we had passed Nice &
such much beside in the night, missing the glories of it. The ship was near enough to shore for us to
see the green blinds to the windows of the houses,—& if it had not been for the roughness, we
should have coasted still nearer. And the scenery .. the scenery!— In one place, I counted six
mountains (such mountains!) one behind another, colour behind colour, from black, or the most
gorgeous purple, to that spectral white which the crowding of the olives gives. And sometimes a
great cloud seemed to cut off the top of a mountain from its foundations .. & sometimes fragments
of cloud hung on the rocks, shining as if the sun himself had broken it. It was all glorious, & past
speaking of. We were in Genoa by nightfall, .. slept under the frescoed roof of what had been a
palace, .. & as the next night closed in, returned to our steamer for the Leghorn voyage & another
night. Poor Wilson—how she suffered!— And M* Jameson too!— and she & Gerardine very much
alarmed beside at the stormy weather, & because the engine stopped for two hours, & the waves
dashed over the vessel. Perhaps I should have been, once—but through a strange re-action, I
seem to be perfectly indifferent (as far as myself am concerned) to that sort of danger now.10 Not
that really there was danger—I dare say not! So we landed at Leghorn, looking as miserable as
possible—everybody ill except me .. observe that! & poor Wilson more dead than alive—but
going to the hotel & having breakfast & feeling ourselves close to Pisa soon produced a general
revival. (M* Jameson had fainted, several times before we came to that.) And now this is Pisa—
beautiful Pisa! A little city of great palaces, & the rolling, turbid Arno, striking its golden path
betwixt them underneath the marble bridge— All tranquil & grand—it is the very place for being
tranquil in,—& I am delighted with the whole aspect of it. Because we brought letters of
introduction from Baron Rothschild,11 M* J's economy took fright, & she would not go to the
same hotel—but the end is not precisely answered, I imagine. We have done more cheaply in
fact, notwithstanding the horrific protection, than she has. For three days we were at the Tre
Donzelle, taking merely bedrooms & dining at the table d'hôte .. where I sate next to M! Surtees,12
secure in the incognito of my new name. Wilson was warned not to betray me to the ladies' maid—such a fear I was in! And such a man he seems to be—talking of cauliflours [sic] & wine, & being an Englishman "abroad" in all possible senses. Also it was a detestable table d'hôte altogether, not like those we had been used to & which I did not object to in the least, but a regular dining-out party at it, everybody talking to everybody, on the strength of all being English. Then we met there the same people whom we had met in the French diligence, & in the Rhone steamer, & Robert with his perfect goodness & benevolence, cannot help talking kindly to people .. who are enchanted accordingly & unwilling to lose his acquaintance—. But we do mean to keep clear of the whole world, let it be hard or not. There was one lady travelling with her consumptive husband, who offered on his part & hers to take appartments in common with us!—horrible to imagine! By the way he could scarcely when he left England—would only creep along between his stick & his wife's arm .. & was given up by two physicians, .. having completely lost a lung .. and now after this long, fatiguing journey, & entirely in consequence of the change of air, he is wonderfully better & able to walk & talk & looking like another man.

Well—we stayed at this hotel of the Tre Donzelle till we could suit ourselves with an appartment, .. & since I began this letter we have had great difficulties. The prices of houses are higher than we imagined, & poor Robert has had ever so much uncongenial trouble going from house to house, & divided between his wish of putting me in a good situation, & our common fear of falling into undue expenses— He went & came, .. coming to insist on carrying me up stairs to see something that might be possible— At last the success came & the "very thing"—& now I write to you from our home, lying on the sofa thereof, & perfectly contented with the solution of the problem. Now I will tell you. We are in the very "most eligible situation in Pisa," as accidentally we heard proclaimed at the table d'hôte by the most intelligent physician in the place, Dr Nankivell!—close to the cathedral & leaning tower, as we see every moment from the windows & in an apartment consisting of one sitting room & three excellent bedrooms, with entrance rooms or hall .. & with attendance & cooking, & the use of silver, china, glass, linen (& the washing thereof)— .. all inclusive, for .. what do you think? .. £1 .. 6 .. 9 English money, a week. Hot water à [sic] discrezione. Is it not tolerably cheap? Moreover the house is a palazzo of the largest, & we inhabit the only let-apartments in it, & it has a grand name Collegio di Ferdinando, & a grand marble entrance, marble steps & pillars & a bust over all of Ferdinand primo. Built too by Vasari. You would certainly smile to see how we set about housekeeping. R. brought home white sugar in his pocket—so good he is, & so little inclined to leave all the trouble "to the women" as nearly all men else would do! On the contrary his way is to do everything for me even to the pouring out of coffee, .. & our general councils with Wilson .. "What is a pound? what is an ounce?" .. would amuse you if you could hear them. Yesterday when dinnertime came (that was our first day 'at home' you must observe) we discovered that there was nothing to eat, .. an ominous beginning— So we set out to the "trattoria," the traiteur, & dined excellently for sixteen pence, we two (8' each), .. & sent a dinner apart home to Wilson—& were well pleased enough with our own proceedings, to make an arrangement that the said traiteur should send our repasts to us everyday at two o'clock—& we are to try that plan, .. going ourselves there when we are inclined .. —& if it answers, we shall be freed from other domestic cares than of the coffee &
milk & bread. Wilson is as an oracle—very useful too & very kind. She was delighted with your
remembrance— Poor thing, the mosquitoes have singled her out for a special vengeance. They
torture *me* in a measure, but she is tormented by them out of measure. And then, it is unfortunate,
just when she had succeeded so well in French as to be able to ask for various things, to have to
merge all the new knowledge in the Italian “which seems to her harder still!”— But patience & a
mosquito-net! Flush is much thinner, because he barks so violently at every beard that we do not
dare to let him appear at tables d’hote,—but otherwise he is well, & fonder of me than ever,
because he has not *you*. Oh, Arabel! I am almost glad after all that you did not get my letter from
Havre .. the note, I mean, written to dearest Trippy .. for I was sad at heart when I wrote it &
perhaps it would have made you sadder. How wrong Henrietta was, in fancying me too happy to
write! Too happy! I loved R. enough to leave you for him, but not for that did I love any of you
less than ever, & the anguish of quitting you *so* was not less felt. May God bless you my own
dearst dearest Arabel. I love you. My thoughts cling to you. Believe it, with the fullest knowledge
however, otherwise, that I am absolutely happy in the one to whom I have given myself, & that
he rises on my admiration, and is better & dearer to my affections every day & hour. *Ought* I not
to be happy, with such love from such a man? And we have been together a whole month now, &
he professes to love me “infinitely more”, instead of the dreadful “less” which was to have been
expected. He keeps saying that never he was so happy in his life—which is more magical than
music in my ears, while I listen to him. Then such a delightful companion he is, .. with what M!”
Jameson calls “his inexhaustible wit, & learning & good humour.” She said the other day “My
dear Browning, I have admired your genius for many years, but now I feel it to be still better to
love yourself.” So I can repeat such things, you see, without the “blushing.” And as for you,
Arabel, you must love him, if you love me .. for all the tenderness which one human being can
give to another, he gives to me every moment of my life. Love him for my sake & do not call him
M! Browning. How you would love him for his own sake if you knew him .. knew him thoroughly,
that is .. in the soul & in the life!

Since I was writing two lines backward I have been reading Papa’s letter at Orleans which
then frightened me so with a glimpse, that I scarcely dared to read it, but put it by to read at
leisurely courage.

May God bless him, my dear Papa— As R. says, “Our Father who is [in] Heaven will judge us
more gently”—yet I did not show it to R.—he only read it in my face. May God bless you all— If
somebody sends to ask you if you have a parcel for Italy, send me my black cord, .. my mittens
.. (out of the bag) your portrait (which I set aside for more care & forgot it) a locket surrounded
by a serpent .. (also set aside) a little Virgil, sent to be bound .. can I think of anything else? I
left on my table some letters & an Italian poem bound in pink paper, addressed to Robert .. (not
by me) & his manuscript of a play*—take care of these things, do.

Tell Surtees Cook that I cordially thank him for his kind wishes—tell him too that the little
green book is of use & beauty every day. How long do you stay at Little Bookham? Do let me
hear everything. *Has Papa forbidden you to write?*—answer that question. If he has not, I am
gratefully bound to him still. I have written directions to George about the money, & those debts
I mentioned to you—Minny’s, dear Minny’s, especially. Is Minny with you? & how are her legs? and who waits on you & H.? I want to know. To M’s Martin, with a grateful sense of her goodness, I mean to write. I wrote from Marseilles to Bummy— I write to Papa by this post, as humbly as I can with truth. Let me hear every little thing. Poor Leonard,** indeed!—

Does M’ve Stratten of course blame me much? Oh—in any position except my own peculiar one, I would have asked. But in my state of nervous weakness, I had not fortitude for the dreadful scenes & the resolute courage— I could not have held out, I am certain— It was bad enough as it was— I hope George gave my name to Blackwood as Elizabeth Barrett Browning—because I do not like to drop my old name which is my own name still. Also, do write to request that the immature translation of Prometheus be not brought before the public by any specific mention. If I had been in London, I would not have sent it to Edinburgh at all. It was enough to say that it was an early, immature translation, now out of print.21

We are going to be busy—we are full of literary plans.

But have I not written enough? May God bless you, my own, own Arabel! I trust Henrietta had my letter from Orleans. I love you all deeply & tenderly— Tell Stormie that I do love him & that he must think gently of me if he can.

Your very ever most affec.t

Ba—

Dearest Trippy—does she love me still? Ask her not to forget me—& say if she is staying with you as she ought to be.

A leaf from an olive tree at Vaucluse[.]

You had better tell M’ Greville to leave out the stanzas in question. Of the double letters, open & read, send abstracts of the important parts.


Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. According to Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy (London: John Murray, 1847), this hotel had previously been called Le tre Donzelle, but the name had been changed to the Hôtel Peverada (p. 440). Murray’s Hand-Book notes that Sig. Peverada “speaks English well, is agent to Messrs. Coutts and Co., and carries on his banking business, both here and at the Baths of Lucca” (p. 441).

2. The Brownings arrived at Pisa on 14 October 1846. At the beginning of this letter EBB mentions hearing from her sisters “on the second day of our arrival,” which would have been the 15th, and she then refers to that date as “last night.” Thus, she would have started her letter on the 16th. The Brownings took their rooms in the Collegio Ferdinando on the 18th—a day which, near the end of her letter, EBB mentions as “yesterday.” The Collegio Ferdinando is located in the Via Santa Maria, near the Cathedral of Pisa.

3. According to Johnson’s Dictionary, honeymoon is defined as “the first month after marriage,” so technically EBB means that their first month of marriage has come to an end. From the context, her comments can be taken to mean that they have settled into a domestic routine of a happily married couple.

4. Cf. Coleridge, Christabel (1816), 1, 253: “A sight to dream of, not to tell!”

5. See letter 91, in which EBB explains that RB again refused to see Genoa without her when they were there in 1852.

6. In the description of the cathedral of St. Etienne at Bourges, Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in France (London: John Murray, 1847) notes that “one of the chief boasts of this cathedral is the quantity, excellence, and good preservation of the painted glass of the windows of the choir and chapels. They include specimens of the art from the 13th down to the 17th century” (p. 357). Marie d’Agoult visited Bourges with Liszt in the
summer of 1837, and she described the cathedral "enveloped in the sensation of the infinite. ... One moment, the rays of the setting sun, refracted by the Gothic stained glass windows, tint the vaults with nuances of violet and purple which, veiling the contours and the ruggedness of the lines, raise, over our heads, a fantastic dome of ether and light" (Comtesse d’Agoult, Mémoires, 4th ed., Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1927, p. 97). Mrs. Jameson did not mention the cathedral at Bourges, nor any of the depictions of its patron, St. Stephen, in Sacred and Legendary Art; however, she does refer to three New Testament scenes: "The Good Samaritan" (p. 378); "The Rich Man and Lazarus" (p. 381); and "The Prodigal Son" (p. 387), as illustrated in windows of Bourges Cathedral, in The History of Our Lord, 2 vols., London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1864. In none of these references does she refer to colours.

7. Psalm 103:5.

8. Mrs. Jameson’s sketch has not survived, but her niece, Gerardine, recalled this occasion thirty years later: "We rested for a couple of days at Avignon, the route to Italy being then much less direct and expeditious, though I think much more delightful, than now; and while there we made a little expedition, a poetical pilgrimage, to Vaucluse. There, at the very source of the ‘chiare, fresche e dolci acque,’ Mr. Browning took his wife up in his arms, and, carrying her across through the shallow curling waters, seated her on a rock that rose throne-like in the middle of the stream. Thus love and poetry took a new possession of the spot immortalised by Petrarch’s loving fancy" (Gerardine Macpherson, Memoirs of the Life of Anna Jameson, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1878, pp. 231–232).

9. Murray’s Hand-Book describes Aix as “the resort of the troubadours, the home of poetry, gallantry, and politeness” (p. 496).

10. Doubtless a reference to her dread of drowning as a result of her brother Bro’s death by drowning years earlier. This is an interesting comment in view of her plea to RB several weeks before their marriage that he “never must go away in boats” (BC, 13, 300).

11. RB’s uncle, Reuben Browning, was associated with the House of Rothschild, and doubtless provided this introduction, which was not only a potential source of credit, but evidently made it possible for the poets to use the courier services of the Rothschild firm.

12. Robert Surtees of Redworth, a distant relation of EBB’s cousin, William Surtees Cook. He and his wife, Elizabeth, together with their daughter, Margaret Caroline Surtees (1816–69), were travelling in Italy.

13. Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy (London: John Murray, 1847) confirms that “Dr. Cook and Dr. Nankivell, English physicians, practise at Pisa” (p. 441). The Archives of the Inter-Continental Church Society, London, indicate that Dr. Charles Benjamin Nankivell was sometimes secretary of “The Pisa Book Society.”

14. The Collegio Ferdinando was first opened as a college in 1595, taking its name from its benefactor, Ferdinando I (1549–1609). Although a contemporary Italian guidebook ascribes the design of the building to Vasari (Nuova Guida di Pisa, Pisa: Nistri, 1843, p. 202), a later work explains that Vasari was responsible for renovating the building that was formerly the home of the Familiati family (Giovanni Grazzini, Le Condizioni di Pisa alla fine de xvi e sul principio del xvii secolo sotto il granducato di Ferdinando I de’ Medici, Empoli: Edisso Traversari, 1898, pp. 17–18). The Brownings resided here from 18 October 1846 until 20 April 1847.

15. From the context it seems that the situation was the same in Pisa as it had been in Paris, i.e., meals were taken a la carte, or fixed, and sent out on request. Galignani’s New Paris Guide (A. and W. Galignani and Co., 1847) explains that “there is also another class of cooks in Paris, called traiteurs, or petty restaurateurs, whose principal business is to send out dishes, or dinners ready dressed, to order” (p. 16); see letter 1, note 7. Murray’s Hand-Book does not mention trattorias specifically, but points out that generally “the table d’hôte ... where it exists ... should be preferred” (p. xvii).

16. Nearly four lines, containing comments about EBB’s father’s reaction to her marriage, were cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.
17. Perhaps *A Blot in the Scutcheon*, in Sarianna Browning’s hand, as well as an “ode” by “an enthusiastic Roman” which RB had sent to EBB in May 1846; see *BC*, 12, 356. I have been unable to identify the copy of Virgil she refers to here.

18. EBB’s cousin Leonard Edmund Graham-Clarke (1817–83) had married another cousin, Isabella Horatia (née Butler, 1822–46) in November 1843; she died on 26 September 1846, a few weeks before this letter was written, “at Kinnersley Rectory, Herefordshire, after a long and painful illness, which she bore with Christian fortitude, aged 24 years” (*The Carlow Sentinel*, 30 October 1846).

19. James Stratten (1795–1872) was the pastor of Paddington Chapel, a non-conformist congregation in Marylebone, which the Barretts attended and where Arabella taught a Bible class for young women. Stratten and his wife, Rebekah (née Wilson, 1792–1870), became good friends to Arabella, and are frequently referred to in correspondence between EBB and her sisters. For a biographical sketch, see *BC*, 14, 357–360.

20. Two months before the Brownings married, EBB told RB much the same thing, explaining that in some ways she would have liked to tell her father if she were strong, but that she “should have fainting fits at every lifting of his voice” (*BC*, 13, 168).

21. EBB’s first translation of *Prometheus Bound* had been published by A.J. Valpy in 1833. In March 1845 she completed a second (“revised”) translation which she presented to John Kenyon for his appraisal—“And then, you shall advise me whether it would be worth while for me to write & ask Blackwood to take it in bodily” (*BC*, 10, 137). Her request, directed to *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* that autumn, was not answered until late August 1846 (see *BC*, 13, 284). Most likely EBB sent the new version to *Blackwood’s* a few days before leaving for Italy, together with the seven poems which appeared in the October issue. If so, I conjecture that when submitting proof of the poems, Blackwood’s requested a copy of the earlier work. In her absence, EBB’s brother George responded, indicating his intention of sending the work in November (see SD1281 in *BC*, 14, 364). Due to Arabella’s timely report of George’s intention and EBB’s comment in this letter, the earlier work was not sent (see letter 8). The new translation first appeared in *Poems* (1850). The seven poems which appeared in *Blackwood’s* (October 1846, pp. 488–495) were: “A Woman’s Shortcoming,” “A Man’s Requirements,” “Maud’s Spinning,” “A Dead Rose,” “Change on Change,” “A Reed,” and “Hector in the Garden.” These were later collected in *Poems* (1850).

22. Robert Northmore Greville was the editor of *The Poetic Prism, or, Original and Reflected Rays from Modern Verse, Sacred and Serious* (Edinburgh: Maclachlan, Stewart & Co., 1848). This collection contained four poems by EBB: “The Sleep” (pp. 16–17); “Victoria’s Tears” (pp. 123–124); “Cowper’s Grave” (pp. 232–236); and “Wisdom Unapplied” (p. 309). The first three of these had been published in *The Seraphim and Other Poems,* “Victoria’s Tears” had appeared in *The Athenæum* of 8 July 1837. “Wisdom Unapplied” was first published in *The Christian Mother’s Magazine* for October 1845 from a manuscript dated 1829; see *Reconstruction*, D1118. Although the stanzas “in question” here cannot be positively identified, a likely possibility would be the last two stanzas in “The Sleep” because of the personal tone; “Victoria’s Tears” seems too short to have stanzas removed, and “Cowper’s Grave” and “Wisdom Unapplied” are unexceptionally pious, suitable to Greville’s purpose. All four appeared unchanged in Greville’s collection. Greville had first solicited works by EBB the previous August; see *BC*, 13, 302.

---

**Letter 4**

[Pisa]

Nov. [21–] 24 [1846]

My ever dearest Henrietta’s letter which I should have received twenty days ago, no, not quite that... but certainly ten... arrived with Arabel’s!– Which will account to her for my swearing at her & you so very intemperately in my last notes. Now the swearing goes to the post & the
post-regulators ... only it was impossible to do anything but thank God & be glad when I held in
my hands both your dear letters, my dearest kindest sisters, after a good deal of anxiety. In the
future, remember to write over the address “via France” as that precaution secures the speed— I
knew by the sound of Robert’s step in the passage that he had letters for me from you, & held out
two open palms to take them— Such ideas I had had about you, though I put them away as fast as
I could ... but Papa’s sending my letter back made an impression.2 Oh but how happy, happy,
happy, three times happy I am to hear of his being in spirits & in a mood to have people to dinner
& to talk to them! I do thank God & you for sending me such good news! Let him be angry now
with me & send back my letters unopened; I will bear it all patiently. What I could not have
borne without deep pain would have been the thought of having thrown a shadow over his life—
which, observe, I did not anticipate the probability of— (He)3 lost in me nothing, just nothing—
circumstances had bound me up past being of use to him:—then, whatever he may say, he cannot
really think (nor can any of my family) that I have disgraced him or them by conducting myself
as I have. Throwing all considerations of literature & genius into the fire, I have married a
gentleman in every sense of the word, & a man of high principles & delightful manners—the
whole world, with its code of artificial morality in its hands, can say nothing against
him—&
therefore I do consider that in consulting my own happiness I have committed an injury against
no one ... unless indeed it is a painful thing to hear of my being happy & free, & the circumstances
where I am able to recover my health & strength in the best way. Also it must be something to
such as have ever loved me, to know me united legally to one to whom I am bound in the closest
sympathies besides, as to the highest things or the lowest— When the first anger has past, these
considerations must recur—& it will be better for Papa to have them than to have me shut up in a
prison with a sense of responsibility on himself which he could not well cast off. On this account
I think Surtees quite right in his opinion— Give him my kind regards & wishes that he (may be as
happy as I, which no mere worldly prosperity could secure alone.) As for you, my ever dearest
Henrietta, be wiser than I am & happier so far, that you may not (if it be possible) give offence
where we all owe affection & reverence— God grant that it be found possible—

In the meantime, dont be too angry with poor George on my account— I know his heart— I
have more faith in him than he has had in me— He wrote to me affectionately & as if he had loved
me .. only treating the whole case, I must say, precisely as if I had run away without being
married at all in “leaving the weight of sorrow & shame to be borne by my family.” (The quotation
is genuine—) How could he have said more in the other case? Still what vexed me most was
something about “M! Browning,” & of course I showed none of the letter to him. I left the vexation
of it to myself. But I know George’s heart, & that he is good & kind & upright at the bottom, &
will do everybody, & especially himself, justice in the end—I love him dearly, & if he would
accept from me a scold & a kiss, at once, he should be welcome to both, one as the other— or the
kiss ⟨I⟩ hope might come first— So let you & Arabel calm your perturbed spirits4 & forgive George
for my sake— I always take his part, remember, & shall. Besides I am in a particularly good
humour just now, because dearest Storm was going to write to me—was going—wont he? And
who constituted the “all” who sent their love to me? Ah, if you think that I love anyone of them
less because of late circumstances ... but you dont!— You perfectly understand. It is delightful to
think that Storm meant to write to me, even if he meant it for only a minute— Robert says to me sometimes that though my brothers wrong him it is not so much him as the false idea they have of such a man & that had they known him personally, they would have done him probably more justice—& that had they known him entirely in his motives, desires & affections, the justice would have been entire too. His wish, often expressed, is to be as a friend & brother to them all—and as to you he loves you dearly & gratefully, & again & again says so to me,—& longs that it were possible to have you two alternately, to stay with us for six months together. He is about to write to you under this envelope, & has come to consult me on the audacity of calling you Henrietta & Arabel in a letter. “And why not, if they call you Robert?” “Ah, but that is different—they are women, you know, & they might think it overbold of me.” I will answer for it that he loves you—and we talk of you so much that almost he has learnt his lesson of everything about you & all the reasons for love. Then I read to him things from your letters that he might catch the droppings of my happiness in them. This morning when we were at breakfast, sitting half into the fire & close together, & having our coffee & eggs & toasted rolls, he said suddenly in the midst of some laughing & talking, “Now I do wish your sisters could see us through some peephole of the world!” “Yes,” said I, “as long as they did not hear us through the peephole! for indeed the foolishness of this conversation would—” … On which he laughed & began, “Abstract ideas &c.” That was for you to hear, you understand, to save the reputation of our wisdom. Certainly we are apt to talk nonsense with ever so many inflections & varieties & sitting here tête à tête, are at times quite merry— He amuses me & makes me laugh, till I refuse to laugh any more—such spirits he has & power of jesting & amusing & alternating with the serious feeling & thinking, & never of a sort to incline him to leave (this) room for what is called “gaieties.” Our gaieties are between the chestnuts & the fire & the pine-fire “from the Grand Duke’s woods.” When Mrs. Peyton fancied us about to be “very gay”—in the sense she meant, nothing could be more different from the fact. We have been no where but into the churches, & have exchanged no word with a creature, except on two occasions with Professor Ferucci who certainly threatens to bring his wife to see me, but who is too much occupied at the university to spend time on any person. We have permission to go to the university library, but have not done that, even—being contented so far with subscribing 8$ a month to a circulating bookshop, & yawning over the dreary state of Italian fiction— Robert says sometimes, in one of those desperate fits of philanthropy to which he is subject, “Really Ba, you are too severe!” (yawning) “really this is not so very heavy … y!” (conclusive yawns!)— We wish, in time, to associate with a few Italians, for the advantage of knowing the people & speaking the language. (Professor Ferucci & his wife speak French as by a point of honour)—but for the present it is not possible to lead a more secluded life— I saw many more people in my room in Wimpole Street— And we both delight in the quietness & give no sign of being tired of one another which is the principal thing— For my part, I am happier now than at first—not so extraordinary perhaps!— But it is strange for him to love me with increase, in this way: it is not the common way of men. Wilson may well say what she does—yet Wilson does not know, of course— I assure you, I have far more extravagances & “voluntary humilities” to put away from me, than ever I had in the Wimpole Street days of adoration,—& now I begin to wonder naturally whether I may not be some sort of a real angel
Letter 4

[21–] 24 November [1846] 86

after all. It is not so bad a thing, be sure, for a woman to be loved by a man of imagination—He loves her through a lustrous atmosphere, which not only keeps back the faults, but produces a continual novelty, through its own changes—Always he will have it, that our attachment was "predestinated from the beginning." & that no two persons could have one soul between them so much as we—which I tell you, but mind you do not tell it to ... even dear M! Kenyon, to whom every confidence is due & open, except ... such a letter as this for instance—You must not show him my letters—In other respects you were entirely right—(so right in my opinion, that I had written to the same effect to him, & I earnestly hope that the necessary communications, about money, may be made by letter & without personal intercourse between George & himself.  

He has a very strong opinion on the whole case, I can assure you,—& might be as warm as the other party. His generous & quick comprehension of myself & my motives, I shall be grateful for to the end of my life—& in his letter the other day, he calls Robert "an incarnation of the good & the true," which is the truest truth, of my husband, & draws from me a deeper gratitude still. It is nothing after that, that he desired us—desired me ... in the case of any accidental hitch as to funds ... to consider him as our banker ... appealing to me as "his Ba & very dear cousin" to look for no nearer friend under any circumstances—Though we did not require that kindness, it proved what his spirit was towards us—yet was less in its degree (to our feeling) than his sympathy so generously given. I love dear M! Kenyon better than ever I did— I am bound to him for ever.  

In answer to Arabel's question, I have not had one line from the Hedleys—though I wrote a long letter to them before leaving Paris. I am sorry for Jane's sake. Either she is wanting in consistency or in courage— I will not say which—but, considering all that passed between the Hedleys & myself, all they knew of my position, all they approved & thought desirable as to my prospects about Italy, the difference between our views must really be so small—that they ought to have written kindly to me, throwing into the scale the uncertainty about my health & power of resisting certain unkindnesses—Almost I feel sorry for having spoken my heart to them as I did— Still I am sorry for their sake ... for aunt Jane's ... much more than mine. (Where did you hear of the Bevans—) As to poor Bummy ... I smile too! But I never could quarrel with people for acting consistently with their nature or their conventional character which is sometimes stronger than nature. I wrote to her from Marseilles at great length. Give my love to dear Arlette if you write to her again— In answer to your question, I am happier than ever I was in my life ... except that now I know the uncertainty of all life, & that the horizon is not so broad. Childhood has infinite hopes for life—mine are beyond life!— While here the satisfaction is complete, with the exception of the displeasure of my poor dear Papa, whom I seem to love more dearly than when I was with him— But I tell you the simple truth—I never, in my earliest dreams, dreamed of meeting a nobler heart & soul, & a deeper affection—and remember, if you please, that I have been married nearly three months, though the first week (as I remind Robert) "went for nothing." (Remind dear Minny of what I said to her once about angels—I have found my angel—)! I have a full satisfaction for earth, & a hope for over the grave. I mean the infinite hope—since for some finite ones <there> seems room still upon earth. And I remember always, how in our dreary marriage at Marylebone C(hu)rch, he pressed my hand which lay in his, declaring to me forever the union bound oath ... we have <the> hope in that which is infinite. Therefore, taking all in all, I am
Letter 4

[21–] 24 November [1846]

beyond comparison happier now than ever in my life I was. Who would have prophesied that to me six years ago? As to the liberty & the spoiling, both are complete— I am free for all things except a headache or any sort of ache . . . which seems whenever it occurs, to be about to overturn the world— It is dreadful to be of such importance, I can tell you, Henrietta! Seriously I wish & pray for you & for my adored Arabel, some happiness to emerge, & that it may not be found offensive to others whom we all dearly love.

So now do write & tell me everything about Wimpole Street, what the workmen have done & undone & how Papa receives you. Provoking that they should mar my room for Arabel. I feel quite provoked myself. The necklace, I forgot to leave out, dearest Henrietta, & you must wait till we can come to England with the keys, I fear—only it is yours in the meantime, & you shall have it certainly. I dont know why I sh^ have taken the diamonds which would have been more useful to you—& I would far rather have had Arabel’s picture, & the locket surrounded by the serpent . . . both left to the last that I might have them nearer to me, . . . & forgotten in the haste & agitation— I wonder I did not leave my senses behind me at the same time. In the locket, among other most precious hair, is yours, Henrietta. Arabel’s I wear constantly since it was in the ring which Robert had as a pattern for the wedding ring, & which he restored to me on our journey. I wear it day & night. Tell Arabel too that I am quite ashamed whenever I think of the picture. I mean mine, which I meant to replace by the Daguer[r]otype, & never did. One day she shall have it—it is my debt to her—— M! Stratten could not well disapprove if he knew none of the circumstances—ask her how he could—but it is kind that he & M! Stratten should speak of me with interest. Tell me the name of your maid, Bonser . . . do you say? Wilson is resigned to losing the place for her sister, but would be grateful by your enquiring for a situation for her—Will you? Oh, of course she c^ not go to you under the circumstances— Why do you not make your new maid attend a little to poor Minny, which she might well do with the reduced occupation. Ask Arabel to tell dear M! Boyd that I answered Nelly Bordman’s letter who had written me one & sent me a prescription from M! Jago, relying upon his hearing everything of me from herself . . . viz. Arabel . . . & wishing to defer my own letter till I was at the end of my journey & agitations, when my hand should shake less & write more legibly for Jane’s perusal. I wrote to him two days ago & shall write to him again soon.— Let Arabel assure him of my grateful & affectionate thoughts in the meanwhile, & remind him that I trusted to his hearing of me through her— And did I not send a message? Yesterday came a letter from one of my American pilgrims . . . a M! Rebecca Spring . . . who went to Wimpole S! with peas in her shoes & found the shrine deserted, & heard of me afterwards she said, by dining at Carlyle’s. Her letter begins “Dear Elizabeth Barrett,” & she gives me an account of her “delicate state of health since the birth of a child nine years of age”— which Robert declared must mean that the child was born at nine years of age, or else that there c^ be no peculiarity in the circumstances worth relating— She said further, however, that at this dinner at Carlyle’s where she had heard of our marriage, Carlyle had declared that “he had more hopes of Robert Browning than of any other writer in England,” which pleased me of course, though she talked besides of coming to Italy. May the gods keep us from all Springs or Springes! While I write all this, . . . a card comes in . . . & Wilson asks if M! Browning w^ see the proprietor thereof— I run into my bedroom, and Robert receives . . . M! Irving who calls himself
Papa's next door neighbour in Jamaica, & comes to enquire about me & to offer his services & his wife's to both of us— Robert says that he looks past sixty considerably, & that he talks of having lived here four years, & of having saved by that means, a son in the last stage of consumption. Is it the father of your M' Irving of the mortal memory? Mind you tell me. I am vexed to have to exchange visits with these people—though of course it must be done— Robert says that he seemed to have heard all about my illness, & discoursed accordingly of the climate. How kind of dearest dear Trippy to speak so kindly of us. Tell her that we speak of her, & that Robert has a whole bundle of love ready for her—dear Trippy— I am so glad she was with you at Little Bookham— The cold would have put an end to me, as you describe it, for even here I have felt what we call the cold .. which is a mere passing wind & an overpowering sun. We c4 not bear fires in the bedrooms (indeed there are no fireplaces) & I have only one blanket & leave open the door for air— The climate is exquisite. Robert has (I rebelled against the decree in vain) insisted on having an armchair for me, so that, with the sofa, I am at my ease. Oh no, we did not put on mourning! Where was the use? Never having seen Isabel, and knowing nobody here: but tell me how Leonard is—poor Leonard.23 I am full of pity for that pitiable M' English—24 How did her husband die & how is she? If Arabel sees Flush in her dreams, he must disturb them—so impudent he has grown & noisy. It's his way of talking Italian. Best love to all—all. Do, do write .. & let me be your most attached Ba, & may God bless you constantly.

Tell me of Crow.25

Robert & I have had a regular war about his letter— He wont let me see one word of it he says—not even the beginning, nor the end, nor the middle— And he has been telling you all my faults .. which is abominable. Let Arabel direct M' Westwood's note for me .. if she has his address.

How amused I am about "poor M' Chapman."26 I wonder tho' that he sh'd like it. Tell me anything. What is this appointment at Taunton[?] Surtees is very kind to speak kindly of me & sensibly I feel. Say how Henry is—do.

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France / To the care of Miss Trepsack / Miss Barrett / 5. Upper Montagu Place / Montagu Square / London.


Source: Transcript in editor's file.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. In October, near the conclusion of letter 2, EBB expressed her intention of writing to her father. I conclude that she did so, and it is this second letter, not the one she left for him in London, that he has returned. This caused EBB to leave off writing to her father for a while, but she eventually resumed doing so and was encouraged by the fact that her letters were not returned. In mid-September 1851, when the Brownings were again in England, she wrote to her father "to say that I was here .. to beseech my father at least to kiss my child—and my husband wrote a letter which I fondly thought, would be irresistible. There was a violent reply to Robert, together with two packets enclosing all the letters I had written in the course of five years, seals unbroken .. several of them written in black edged paper, suggesting the death of my child, perhaps. The doubt had not moved my father to break a seal. They all came back to me. So now, I cannot write again" (EBB to Miss Mitford, 24 September [1851], EBB-MRM, III, 328). EBB's letters to her father surfaced in Florence in 1912 upon the death of the Brownings' son. Because of their personal nature, the letters were not offered in the 1913 Browning sale, but were retained by members of EBB's family. The last reference to the letters occurred on 20 February 1924,
when her nephew, Colonel Harry Peyton Moulton-Barrett, acknowledged taking receipt of them from Henry Surtees, the family solicitor, in whose vault they had been kept for the previous ten years. In the same letter Colonel Moulton-Barrett went on to say that “the letters have been burned by me in the presence of a witness” (ms at Eton).

3. Reconstruction here and elsewhere in this letter is due to the fact that it was written on thin stationery that has frayed in a number of places.

4. Cf. Hamlet, I, 5, 182: “Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!” In this and subsequent Shakespearean quotations, the line numbers correspond to those used in The Riverside Shakespeare (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974).

5. Although “A Lovers’ Quarrel” would not be written for another six years, and the Brownings had yet to develop strong differences of opinions about Louis Napoleon and spiritualism, these lines evoke the domestic scene in RB’s poem, in which he explores the inherent dangers of what EBB called their “perpetual tête à tête” in a letter to Miss Mitford a couple of weeks before this one to Arabella; see BC, 14, 38.

6. Eliza Peyton (née Griffith, 1788–1861) was a friend from Herefordshire. She and her late husband, Nicholson, lived in her mother’s home, Barton Court, which was about 1½ miles from Hope End.

7. Michele Ferrucci (1801–81) was a professor of Latin literature and archaeology in Geneva from 1836 until 1844, and by this time he had taken up his post at the University of Pisa. His liberal ideas brought him into conflict with the papal government. His wife, Caterina Francesca (née Francheschi, 1803–87), was a poet and writer.

8. In a letter to Mrs. Jameson, dated [21 November 1846], EBB wrote that Professor Ferrucci “came in one evening & caught us reading, sighing, yawning over Nicolo de’ Lapi, a romance by the son in law of Manzoni. Before we could speak, he called it ‘excellent, trés beau,’ one of their very best romances .. upon which, of course dear Robert could not bear to offend his literary & national susceptibilities by a doubt even. I, not being so humane, thought that any suffering reader would be justified (under the rack-wheel) in crying out against such a book, as the dullest, heaviest, stupidest, lengthiest. Did you ever read it? If not, don’t. When a father in law imitates Scott, & a son in law imitates his father in law, think of the consequences!” (BC, 14, 47).

9. Writing to Fanny Dowglass in July 1846 about the possibility of going to Italy, EBB stated: “If I go, it will be into quiet & retirement” (BC, 13, 202); and in her letter to Miss Mitford, explaining her marriage and departure to Italy, EBB wrote: “We go to live a quiet, simple, rational life” (BC, 14, 5). Almost a year later RB would write to Arabella that they enjoyed “exactly as much solitude as we like—not receiving six visits in six months” (see letter 21).


11. From this comment and other similar remarks, it is clear that Kenyon acted on the Brownings’ behalf regarding financial matters.

12. From EBB’s comments in a letter to RB, dated [28 August 1846], it is clear that EBB’s Aunt Jane and Uncle Hedley thought she planned to go to Italy with her sister Henrietta and Surtees Cook, and that they approved of this plan; see BC, 13, 309–310.

13. In a letter to RB in November 1845, EBB called him “my angel” (BC, 11, 177); and his angel guardianship is the theme of Sonnets from the Portuguese, XLII.

14. An allusion to the “Solemnization of Matrimony” in The Book of Common Prayer which refers to “the mystical union … betwixt Christ and Church,” and during which the man and woman hold each other’s hands while they exchange vows and pledge “to have and to hold … till death us do part, according to God’s holy ordinance.”

15. “This necklace, which was a very valuable one, had belonged to their mother” (Surtees Cook, in an editorial note with a transcript of this letter, ms with Altham). The necklace (a string of pearls) was misplaced but was recovered in 1855, when EBB insisted that Henrietta should take it.
16. Betsy Bonser, christened 18 May 1828, was the daughter of John Bonser and his wife Fanny of Holme Pierrepont, Nottinghamshire. Her name appears as Elizabeth Bonser in the 30 March 1851 census of 50 Wimpole Street, and she is listed as a servant, aged 22. She had been engaged to replace Wilson as lady’s maid to EBB’s sisters, Henrietta and Arabella. In a letter to her sister Henrietta in October 1857, EBB said she “liked Bonser’s lively manner” (Huxley, p. 283). Bonser remained a member of the 50 Wimpole Street household until the death of Edward Moulton-Barrett in 1857.

17. Frances (“Fanny”) Wilson (b. 1822), who had evidently hoped to take a position in the Wimpole Street household, but for obvious reasons was not hired.

18. i.e., Jane Miller, Boyd’s maid, whose duties included reading for the blind scholar.

19. Rebecca Spring (née Buffum, 1811–1911) was the daughter of one of the founders of the American Anti-Slavery Society. In 1836 she married Marcus Spring (1810–74), son of Adolphus and Lydia Taft Spring of Northbridge, Massachusetts. Marcus Spring was a successful merchant who later became a prominent reformer. Margaret Fuller became a close friend of the Springs, and they invited her to accompany them to Europe in 1846. They arrived in Liverpool in August 1846, visiting Edinburgh and Birmingham before proceeding to London, where they arrived on 1 October, only a few days after the Brownings had left for Italy. Pilgrims traditionally put peas or pebbles in their shoes as an act of penance.

20. I have been unable to verify this statement attributed to Carlyle by Rebecca Spring.

21. i.e., traps or snares; cf. Aurora Leigh, II, 1095: “If thus you have caught me with a cruel springe?”

22. James Irving (1792–1855) and his wife Judith (née Nasmyth). Irving’s grandfather, James Irving (b. 1713), traded his estate in South Carolina for Richard Dunn Lawrence’s estate of Ironshore, which was situated between Montego Bay and the Goodin estate of Spring. His father, James Irving (1749–98), was Custos of Trelawny. James and Judith Irving had two sons: James (1822–56) and Robert Nasmyth (1827–94).

23. See note 18 in the preceding letter.

24. Jemima Georgiana English (née Carden) of Park Road, Regent’s Park, whose husband Commander Charles English, R.N., had died 10 October 1846, aged 54 (The Gentleman’s Magazine, 26 November 1846, p. 553). His death certificate lists a combination of factors as the cause of death, including gout, gastric poisoning, and cerebral effusions. Mrs. English was a friend of Harriet (née Mallory), wife of Osman Ricardo, of Bromesbury Place, near Ledbury, and was apparently related to EBB’s early physician Dr. John Carden of Worcester.

25. EBB’s former lady's maid, Elizabeth Treherne (née Crow), had given birth to her second child in June 1846 (see letter 9, note 15).

26. Thomas Palmer Chapman (18217–92) had been one of Henrietta’s suitors (see BC, 12, 17, note 7).

---

**Letter 5**

[From RB]

Pisa,

Nov. 24, 1846.

Ba directs me to address this letter to “my sisters,”—or, even more familiarly,—to ["]Henrietta & Arabella”!— If I could make up my mind to obey her, the liberty would be in some measure justified, perhaps, by the unaffected sincerity of the brotherly feeling with which I must ever regard them both—nor have I any right to doubt that they will kindly accept an assurance which their own letters drew forth. For I will say, my dear sisters, that I had not to wait for those letters to know what your conduct has always been to Ba,—and whoever loves her as you do, must take my own love too, whether it be worth taking or not. But when I find that in addition to that constant love, continued under many trying circumstances, you further can afford to myself that generous sympathy which I never had the good fortune to be able to claim thro’ a personal
Letter 5
24 November 1846

acquaintance,—what shall I say? Believe me thro’ life, in all affectionate truth, your brother, as you have already proved yourselves the dearest of sisters—for which may God bless and reward you. I am the better enabled to bear what is at least as much a surprize to me as a matter of concern,—tho’ it does concern me deeply—I mean, the light in which other members of your family, I am informed, look upon a step which your good sense must see to have been altogether unavoidable. There is no need that I should reiterate what was, no doubt, sufficiently stated at the beginning, and, so far as I can find, is not disputed now. I will only say that if, on a consideration of all the facts, your brothers can honestly come to the opinion that, by any of the ordinary methods applicable to any other case, I could have effected the same result,—that any amount of exertion on my part, any extent of sacrifice, would have availed to render extreme measures unnecessary,—then, I will express all the sorrow they can desire—tho’ at the same time I shall expect some forgiveness for a very involuntary error—assuring them, as I do, that I believed,—and believe,—that their sister’s life depended upon my acting as I acted. Nor can I think that, if they saw her, as I have the happiness to see her, so changed as to be hardly recognizable, and with a fair prospect of life and enjoyment for many years to come .. they could not be very angry I am sure! I can too easily understand the disappointment anyone must feel who has been accustomed to her society and is now deprived of it—but if I were convinced that her welfare was to be most effectually gained by her leaving me, she should leave me. This is a subject, as you feel, in which my tongue is tied— I could not help saying this much however— Now, let me speak of her. There are very few to whom I can be at liberty so to speak—but you will understand, and forgive what may seem superfluous,—knowing her as you do— I, however, thought I knew her, while every day and hour reveals more and more to me the divine goodness and infinite tenderness of her heart,—while that wonderful mind of hers, with its inexhaustible affluence and power,—continues increasingly to impress me. I shall not attempt to tell you what she is to me. Her entire sweetness of temper makes it a delight to breathe the same air with her—and I cannot imagine any condition of life, however full of hardship which her presence would not render not merely supportable but delicious. It is nothing to say that my whole life shall be devoted to such a woman,—its only happiness will consist in such a devotion.

How I wish you could see us in our strange home here! We inhabit a huge pile, (.. that is, some rooms in one corner of it—) on the front of which I counted about forty[-]seven doors and windows the other day— We sit there alone on mornings and evenings, seeing nobody in this strange silent old city. The weather continues very fine,—tho’ the natives assure us the cold is portentously premature, and that January has got into November’s place—accordingly they go about muffled up in vast cloaks, with little earthenware pots full of live embers to warm their fingers, besides. Our letters from England describe the cold there as something considerably more terrible,—so that Ba is better here—where at five o’clock (now striking) I am writing at an open window whence I see not a few trees as green as in summer. In the middle of the day the sunshine is overpowering—but we have had one grievance in the east wind which has persisted for the last week. Or, perhaps, one may give a better notion of the general mildness of the season by telling you that the gnats continue to molest Ba (having always had the good taste to spare me). Still our woodfire will look very pleasant & cheerful when I go in presently, and Ba will sit at the table by.
Letter 5
24 November 1846

it and make coffee with due ceremony. Could you not ever come and see all this for yourselves? I heartily wish you could, nor do I see why it needs be impossible. At all events some day or other we hope to return to England—and then I shall not despair of your giving that completeness to Ba's comfort which will be impossible before.

And now, may I ask you a favour? It is, that if any thing should strike you with respect to Ba's well-being .. any suggestion that you may think of for her comfort,—you will write of it to me—not to her, with her unselfish, generous disregard of what she fancies (most erroneously) to relate exclusively to herself- In all probability I should never hear of it—but for a hint, a word to me, directly, I shall be very grateful.

And now, my dear sisters—once more, God bless you for all your love and goodness. I thank you from my heart and shall never forget it—being ever most affectionately,

yours
RB.

Publication: BC, 14, 56-58.
Source: Transcript in editor’s file.

Letter 6

Now I am certain it is Henrietta’s turn to be written to—but this is only a note, and chiefly on business. The next long letter shall be hers—My own dearest Arabel, I have asked M' Kenyon to send you seventy pounds in his good time, .. out of which you will have the goodness with as little talking as possible, to pay dear Minny, Bell's bill of £16.. 4.. 0, & the trifles owing to M'r Alajnier, & M'r Blizzard .. & M' Jago .. a bare few shillings, I think. And I believe that nothing beside is owing. When this is done, I shall breathe a little .. It would have been pleasant to me, if my own family had settled all this as a previous arrangement, before M' Kenyon had taken up the affair .. but Papa’s resolution threw me off this possibility, & now there is no other way—M' Chorley has accepted the trusteeship, & also M' Arnould I fancy—and the “settlement” is to be of the strictest—tying up into a knot a hundred a year’s separate allowance on me! When I cry out against it, Robert says, “Pray dont be pedantic” .. and I am silent,—through the extremity of the absurdity!— Only, I do hope, people will open their eyes & observe that this is my husband’s own doing, & that he would not precisely have done it if he had calculated his “advantages” after the fashion of the world or counted like Judas the “forty pieces of silver.”

Two days ago I had two letters .. from Bummy & from Jane—the first a regular thunderstorm .. the scold coming & rolling & crashing! oh, such a letter- My conduct is to be a “drawback to my happiness through life,” & perfectly gratuitous wickedness, inasmuch as if I had but consulted Papa he would have approved & blessed Robert & me as Jacob blessed Esaw. Well, that is all very convincing & satisfactory, is’n it? She says that the world blames me dreadfully (which being a reprobate, I dont believe) & that perhaps I may hold her “in enmity” because she writes
me all this truth .. which as certainly I shant do. Poor dear Bummy— the foolishness of it strikes me more than anything else! but she means no more. Then she says, after all the rest, "I hear that Cap! C[ook]. is constantly in W St, & that Henrietta is preparing her trousseau. Surely she will not plunge herself into poverty & disappoint her father’s expectations." Jane’s letter is quite of a different character .. as cordial & affectionate as possible-- If I fancied that her silence came from coldness & disapproval, (which certainly I did) I never was more mistaken! Directly she got my letter, she drove to our hotel in Paris, & heard with dismay that we had been gone two days!-- Then she did not know where to direct!— Then, her hand was weaker than usual! So, time went. She is delighted to think of me as free & happy in Italy, instead of that gloomy chamber! She has the greatest affection for me, thinks I had every right to do as I please, & takes my part steadfastly. Still, she will be frank & say that it was a pity & wrong not to have declared my intention to Papa by letter previously to marrying. To have asked his consent, w^ have been, she thought, a sort of mockery—but I ought to have declared my intention, & so have removed the sting of having deceived him, of which he complains. Uncle Hedley sends the kindest messages— & Arabella & M! Bevan7 “would have assisted me in my escapade” they desire Jane to tell me— which she comments on as “very wrong.” You see the kind of letter. Oh, nothing could be more affectionate .. if it had but come a little earlier. The contrast between her’s & Bummy’s is curious. At last however she says .. “Bell tells me that Capt C. is constantly in W St,— & that Henrietta is preparing her trousseau & to follow your example— Is this true”. And there is a duplicate of ‘Reports’ about Henrietta’s trousseau. Is she hemming a new pocket handkerchief (as I imagine) or what?

M! Bevan is praised, & Arabella called a ‘lucky girl’—who is still “idolised”. Glad I am, that they are so happy. They are staying with the Hedleys, & in the spring, go to England “to settle”–

Yesterday & today have been the only cold days we have felt in Italy .. & yesterday, was a sleet falling for half an hour, so like snow as to be awful .. I keep close, close to the fire .. but the house is very bearable– We have entered on our fourth month of matrimony, & what do you think Robert said the other day—“The great charm of marriage I feel to be the stability” .. I told him it was the best word he could say on the subject .. the most welcome, I mean, to me. I am happy as any one ever was in the world, as far as he is concerned, the only thing is that he loves me too much .. so much that I feel humiliated, as some one crushed with gifts.¹ If ever we quarrel, you may expect it to snow stars.—

Think of poor Flush, the other day— He is as insolent to all the strange dogs in the streets as possible, & the consequence the other day was, that a great black Beelzebub of a dog, siezed [sic] him by the nose, & bit him & nearly killed him, rolling him over & over. Robert interposed just in time—and Flush yelled piteously all the way home, looking up into his face as much as to say “Why did not you prevent it?” For two or three mornings after, he w^ only go out with Wilson—which was ungrateful & undiscerning of him I must say— I often talk to him of you, and he always makes his eyes dim, as he does when sorrowful. Most impatient & (ab)solute he has grown—barking violently if Robert loiters in preparing to go out, or if I dont give him my toast directly he asks for it. He barks at the doors too, when he wants to get in. Twice as violent he is, & impatient, as ever you knew him. Pray when am I to hear from you, my very dearest Arabel &
Letter 6

14 December [1846]

Henrietta? Every day I expect a letter—and if you mean your last inch-square notes to be sufficient for my necessities, you are altogether mistaken, I do assure you. Do, do write regularly & at large—At little, too, when you have the opportunity. Say how dearest Trippy is—While I write, my head swims with Chianti—And if you think that a mystical dew of the Muses, you are not right—How are dear Minny's legs? Do keep her in bed—And get George or Alfred to place her money well for her, when Mr. Kenyon gives it to you—

May God bless you, my own dear dearest! I am your Ba—

always & always—

Best love to all—if all love me or not—.

I can't write this over again .. so forgive & try to read—Robert's love to you & Henrietta—and (he has the impertinence to say) kisses besides.

Address, on integral page: Miss Arabel Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street.

Publication: BC, 14, 70-79.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year determined from EBB's references to the "settlement" and to initial letters from her aunts, Arabella Graham-Clarke and Jane Hedley, following EBB's marriage.

2. Due to the hasty and secret nature of the Brownings' departure from England, EBB had left certain accounts unpaid. In late February (see letter 9) EBB reminded Arabella that Mr. Kenyon needed to pay Minny £55. Mary ("Minny") Robinson (1785-1864) was the housekeeper at 50 Wimpole Street. EBB also owed money to the chemist, Robert Bell, 34 York Street, to Francis Robert Jago, one of her physicians, and to other tradespeople.

3. Joseph Arnould (1814-86) was an old friend of RB, and one of the "Colloquials," or "Set," that RB was a member of in the 1830's and early 1840's. Arnould, a lawyer and author, was educated at Charterhouse and Oxford, where he was the recipient of the Newdigate Prize for Poetry in 1834. He later served on the supreme court of Bombay, and in 1859 he was knighted. Henry Fothergill Chorley (1808-72) was an author and critic for The Athenaeum, in which magazine, as well as other periodicals, he reviewed both Brownings. He was generally praiseworthy of EBB, and he was mostly favourable about RB's works, although in early reviews he referred to RB's obscure style. Although RB met Chorley socially before the Brownings' marriage, EBB did not meet him until 1851, when they were visiting London. Chorley has been identified in the marked file of The Athenaeum now at City University (London), as the author of the obituary of EBB in The Athenaeum (6 July 1861), in which he called her "the greatest of English poetesses of any time." For more detailed accounts of Arnould's and Chorley's relationship with the Brownings, see BC, 6, 361-363, and 8, 325-328, respectively.

4. EBB told Henrietta that Chorley and Arnould had accepted the trusteeship "to express their high esteem for Robert. Mr. Kenyon himself is the third trustee" (BC, 14, 74). However, the Brownings' marriage settlement was not completed until six months later; see letter 13, note 17. Marriage settlements were one way of creating "separate property" for married women at this time: "Frequently the document creating a woman's separate estate in equity used some set form of words to describe the property, as, for example, that it was 'for her sole and separate use and benefit, independently and exclusively of the said [husband], and without being in anywise subject to his debts, control, interference, or engagements.' ... Usually the document specifically named a trustee of the separate property, but the Court of Chancery would validate the trust even if this was not done" (Lee Holcombe, Wives and Property: Reform of the Married Woman's Property Law in Nineteenth-Century England, Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983, p. 40). Holcombe also notes that "fees for drawing up a marriage settlement usually amounted to well over £100, and this was but one of the expenses involved," and for this reason, "according to one estimate, marriage settlements in equity applied to only one-tenth of the marriages in the country" (p. 46). In reform debates a few years later, marriage settlements were held up as an example of the need for reform since they were in effect a way of circumventing the common law that gave married men rights
to their wife's property. They were also used as an illustration of laws that favoured the wealthy since only women of fortune could take advantage of them.


6. Sic, for Esau; see Genesis 33:9-11.

7. Arabella (née Hedley, 1828-70) had married James Johnstone Bevan (1818-98) on 4 August 1846 at St. James's Church, Piccadilly. They eventually settled near Tunbridge Wells at a house called Calverly Park.

8. An allusion to Tarpeia, daughter of Spurius Tarpeius. She accepted the Sabines' bribe of the ornaments on their arms in exchange for opening the gates of the citadel. When they crushed her with their shields—decorated with ornaments—she died. EBB alluded to Tarpeia in a letter to RB nine months earlier to explain that she felt overwhelmed by the gift of his love; see BC, 12, 155.

9. In a letter to Henrietta at this time, EBB explained that RB "aspires to make me take more of this claret than he wd. take himself... pouring it into the glass when I am looking another way" (BC, 14, 78). She explained to Henrietta that by the end of a meal she would be "giddy," but that it never made her feverish: "it is a light wine... the famous Chianti" (p. 78). Edward C. McAleer has suggested that RB "was trying to wean her from the morphine" (The Brownings of Casa Guidi, New York: The Browning Institute, Inc., 1979, p. 3). Evidently, this practice was endorsed by Dr. Cook, the physician who cared for her in Pisa, but once they arrived in Florence, she reported that her physician there, Dr. Harding, proscribed the wine in favour of the morphine.

Later in 1848, when she was pregnant, she gradually reduced the amount of morphine she took. In mid-December 1848 she told Arabella: "Morphine lasted 32 days! Are you not astonished?" (letter 32). And just before her son was born she reported: "What in July, at the Ancona-Journey, lasted twelve days, now lasts seventy-two—think of that, Arabell!" (letter 35). EBB never completely gave up using morphine, but it was not the serious addiction for her that it might have been. Alethea Hayter notes that EBB "never thought it important, either way; it was a medicine among others, to her, and there is almost no evidence that she connected it in any way with her writing" (Opium and the Romantic Imagination, London: Faber and Faber, 1968, pp. 298-299).

Letter 7

Pisa-
[24-25] Dec- [1846]

My beloved Arabel, your letter... your letters... for M' Boyd's envelope counts... are three times welcome. In the first place, pray believe that I do not keep a "separate account" for all manner of maladies, & that I tell you honestly the precise truth about myself... for better or worse. I dont tell you that I am ill, because, I am not ill—there's the satisfactory reason. As to all that story of the morphine, I told it to Nelly Bordman, in consequence of her sapient interest in drugs—it was a passing inconvenience, just proving that I couldn't do without the medecine, with all my arrogance of health,—& not otherwise regarded even by Robert, who if my foot goes to sleep, gets the headache with the fright of it, & who certainly, before the cause was ascertained of that sudden change in me, was seriously uneasy. The right quantity of morphine being restored, I was as well as possible again, & have had no more reason to complain of Italian pharmacy. Oh—do not think, Arabel, of sending any medecines from Bell or elsewhere. I should have asked you if it had been necessary, but it is, in fact, most unnecessary. Our Italian explained afterward, with a multitude of apologies, that the English preparation of morphine being nearly always of an inferior strength to what they are able to procure here, he conscientiously thought it right to make allowances for that difference—! Which was wrong, of course! In every case he sh'd have explained
the matter to Robert! I doubt the motive a little. Still, it has been right ever since, & Dr Cook observed to M'* Jameson that the people here were in general distinguished for the excellence of their drugs & the fidelity of their attention to prescriptions, & that in his opinion, the man was startled at the quantity in my case.—This quantity I am diminishing gradually—a little interrupted by the late cold, when I took more of course to stop the evil symptoms—While there was frost, I did not leave these two rooms, the bedroom opening on the sittingroom, & wore the red chinese crape shawl crossed over my chest, undressing & dressing by the fire here. A little languid & uncomfortable in the throat & chest, I felt during that time, but it did not last long, & now I am revived & enjoying the thaw—and you will believe that I am well when I tell you that I am going out tonight at eleven to the cathedral to witness the great ceremonies of the season. It is so warm that Wilson with whom the casting vote was left (Robert did not dare to take the responsibility. Oh, you would laugh to see how he goes to consult Wilson on every occasion about me,—she is the Delphic oracle!) Wilson decided that I couldn't be hurt by this warm air, particularly as the cathedral is so near, & I could wear my respirator—He wants to carry me under his cloak—he is sure he could carry me perfectly well!—Which I decline with ever so much gratitude, for myself & him—And think of my going out to walk at eleven oclock at night—Christmas eve too! I am sitting on a stool (while writing this) a stool which M'* Jameson made for me between the tail of Robert's coat and the fire, as he sits at the table preparing the new edition of his poems. After tea, it is, with us, & before supper—and here we shall sit till eleven oclock—which is quite contrary to our usual habits—The fire is nearly on a level with the floor—my knees being higher. Now fancy us—My thoughts went to you & I was forced to write, to draw you closer to us & wish the right Christmas wishes! What are you doing, I wonder, at this moment? At dinner, you are, perhaps—taking wine with M! Bell! My poor darling Arabel!—I know you miss me,—for with all I have gained here, (which seems to me everyday a greater gain) I miss you, & bear the thought of you close to my deepest affections, never to be cast out while I have life & reason. How perfect & generous you have been to me—how true & tender!—Yes, let me always be in your prayers—Perhaps it is to them, that I owe all this joy & satisfaction—You are doing me good as usual, even at this distance!—May God bless you!—and my dearest Henrietta whom I love so, and all of you whom I must continue to love. I hope, Arabel, that you are right in your assurance, & that there is exaggeration in M! Boyd's statement—

We have just had such a kind letter from M'* Jameson, who having been snowed up at Florence, is just about to set off to Rome. She says that she reckons among her best blessings of the year, having won the friendship & intimacy of "two such Hearts"—think of my reciting compliments to you like a paternoster!—only she loves us both, I know, & I like you to understand it. Her eyes were full of tears when she took leave of me, & Robert, who took her to the railroad was cordially kissed, at parting, both by herself & Gerardine! I assure you he was. She says that Lady Byron says that she (Lady B) has had a letter from Joanna Baillie, "full of interest" about us—and Lady Byron herself (I told you) has taken us up with both hands. Think of M! Forster (of the Examiner) writing to Robert at Vaucluse!—So the letter has of course been waiting there these three months—I laughed so when I heard it.. could not help laughing—If you knew what a
place Vaucluse is! A chasm between two black rocks with a black face of another rock shutting it up, out of which rushes, rushes, & roars the immortal fountain! There are a few caves here & there, to be sure, .. and a little inn at the outer end, like the smallest village-alehouse you ever saw in your life. Now think of a man’s understanding that we had taken up our abode at Vaucluse! One supposition is that we being perfectly & most poetically mad, to his mind, he fancied we had gone tout de bon\textsuperscript{11} to live in a cave. We have sent to Avignon for the letter. Dear M! Kenyon says that “a new pleasure awaits me in England .. the finding in how strong an affection & a no less strong respect, my husband is held by his many friends.” But I need scarcely go to England for it—such proofs of it come to us day by day. When I go to England it will rather be to talk to you & see your faces, you who love me, & whom I love continually,—and we shall accept dearest Trippy’s invitation some day, tell her with a kiss from me. Is she with you? Why do you not mention her— M! Kenyon says too .. “How you will love your sister in law when you know her!”— He speaks warmly of all Robert’s family. Also he talks of coming to see us before very long—not this winter exactly .. say nothing about it!—and of M! Chorley’s coming with him. Is it not too late in the year for the Martins to travel so far, by the way, as this Italy? They always set out too late. We shall be very pleased if we do see them, appreciating them as they deserve ..

I, most affectionately,—and Robert, delighted with the letter M! Martin wrote to me. So characteristic, that was!—they have been true, steadfast friends to me! I have not written to Bummy yet. I shall write in time, & there is time enough. Did I tell you that Miss Bayley said of us in a note she sent to M! Kenyon, that “surely our marriage was made in Heaven. [\textsuperscript{[1]}]”\textsuperscript{12}—which I believe too, in the sense of its being a providential grace & gift .. to me, at least!—& when I hear Robert speak of his “unutterable happiness”, & feel that instead of decreasing, his attachment to me deepens day by day, I take courage to believe that so, it is, to us both. If ever I wish for you & Henrietta (and I do persist in wishing it for you, notwithstanding your being an infidel on some points & laughing when you sh! look grave) if ever I wish for you both an equal happiness .. I am stopped by the persuasion that there never was nor can be such another husband as mine, giving up his whole life & soul & tenderness— Why, where are such men in the world? M! Boyd says rightly that I owe everything to him—a debt of inexpressible gratitude. When I write of it all, I give you but faint ideas .. as I had myself before I married. I knew then, though loving him enough to act as I did, only something of what he was, & of the happy atmosphere into which I was raising myself. Thank God for me always, beloved Arabel—my own thanks seem too cold .. too weak.

Christmas Day— Well! we went last night to the Duomo (the cathedral) & did not come home till nearly one in the morning— Now I am tired, very tired .. but have caught no cold, which indeed was impossible with all the precautions taken. When Robert found that he was ‘nt allowed to carry me, he wanted me to put his cloak over my head & wear it—& tried the effect of it, making me look “just like a little monk”– But the cloak was too heavy for me to carry .. I begged to eschew it—so we settled at last that he sh! wear his own cloak & make room for me under it—which was perfectly effectual. Fancy me, respirator-bound, shawled & furred, & then covered with the cloak from head to foot .. face & all. I could not see a ray of light—only he made me a crevice just as we got to the Leaning Tower, that I might see it by moonlight—for the rest ..
“here’s a step .. a second .. three .. four,” .. I was as blind as that! Yet the air was perfectly mild: with a good deal of soft west-wind though!—The Duomo was very striking as we entered it, illuminated from end to end .. Galileo’s great lamp glittering with a starry splendour .. then the choir & the organ!—I was impressed for the first ten minutes! Afterwards it grew all weariness of the flesh & no edification of the spirit, certainly. I sate on that hard oaken seat under one of the columns, till my back & head ached one against another,—Robert whispering at intervals “Are you tired, Ba? oh, so am I!” We were both following humbly in the steps of the Pisan martyr San Torpé. We did not manage ourselves as well as two signoras on their knees beside us, who were laughing & talking to one another with all their might. Nothing does strike me so much in these Catholic churches, as the want of all reverence & decency ever in the people. Call them congregation—call them rather promenaders. In the cathedral last night .. it was a grand religious festival, observe, & everybody in Pisa who could go, I suppose, thought it a religious duty to go. Well—the people walked up & down & talked loud while the service proceeded—loud enough for me to hear three yards off—or else they stood in groups & talked. The people who didn’t talk, stared. Here & there, somebody was kneeling down .. and the chance was that the kneeler was talking too, .. as in the case of our neighbours—but really scarcely anybody knelt anywhere. They just walked, & walked, & talked & talked. A dog that sate in the midst with his eyes gravely fixed on the altar, Robert pointed out as the most reverent member of the congregation .. “That’s a new picture” .. “C’è un nuovo quadro,” .. “put up today” .. I heard said several times—and then, the criticisms!—just as if it were a picture put up in a dining room— The service in the meantime was carried on at the altar with the usual hoarse chanting of old priests, & curtsies & gestures of various sorts—all magnificent & feeble .. saying nothing to the senses even,—which mine could be impressed by. If they would have let the organ & the choir sound & sing on, & the incense burn .. I liked that cloud of incense floating about the brazen crucifix .. we might have felt an effect—but the priests dispossessed us of our own imaginations even!— At the moment of the uplifting of the host, .. for that one moment .. there was attention & silence, & everyone knelt or stood still. That one moment of devotion was the only one for the people, observe— I have looked everywhere to see more than this & cannot see it. In the French churches it did not surprise me, but here it does— and how English protestants can come here, & ever be English Puseyites afterwards I cannot understand or hope to understand. Wilson went with us last night as she wished it, & Flush was shut up in my room (poor Flush,— I can hear him begin to cry) because we feared a crowd .. but in the great cathedral there was no crowd—oh, plenty of room to walk about! If Stormie saw these things as I see them, he would be surprised I think. We have tried again & again to hear a sermon preached—but it seems the most difficult thing possible, to hear a sermon. The giving of religious instruction in that form, seems shrunk from— Only once, Robert entered some church by accident, as he was taking his walk, and came on a monk, who was preaching— Did I tell you that? and how the people hissed at the end, some of them, & some clapped their hands? I am not apt, you know, to be narrow, & attach undue importance to unessential doctrines .. much less to forms—but the state of things in this Italy does seem to me most melancholy,— melancholy beyond all my expectations. They have the sun, & no light. Oh, such a day we have today, for Christmas Day! So hot it is—the air so soft, the sunshine so bright!— But I am too tired with last
night’s great deed, to go out this morning— I must forego my walk. Robert has returned Mr. Surtees’s card . . just the card— Mr. Surtees showed no sort of empressément, about coming to see us, so we may do as we please I suppose— Mr. Irving had a card too . . but meant for a visit, that was, . . & he was not at home. How detestable it ŵd be if we were to be drawn out at everyone’s <★★★★>
death, EBB wrote to Arabella about Sarah Bayley’s reaction to Kenyon’s death: “Miss Bayley takes it compassionately, but more quietly than you or I would ... I respect her, & feel ‘antipathetically’['] in regard to her. Not a bit does she care for Peni—& for me, still less, perhaps. She said to me the other day, ‘You & I disagree upon every possible subject, Ba.’ ‘Out of opposition,’ said I, ‘arises love’—(how we lie, sometimes, for the sake of being civil!) ‘I don’t know that,’ said she very coolly. In fact, I do know that she rather bears with me than likes me—it’s plain” (letter 159). Because of her strong affection for John Kenyon, EBB was undoubtedly disappointed that she and Miss Bayley were not better friends.

13. “The bronze lamp suspended in the nave, and of fine workmanship, is said by some to be by Tacca; by others, by Vicenzo Possanti. According to the well-known story, this lamp suggested to Galileo the theory of the application of the pendulum” (Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy, London: John Murray, 1847, pp. 445–446).

14. Cf. Ecclesiastes 12:12: “… and much study is a weariness of the flesh.”

15. San Torpes was a 1st-century Christian martyr under Nero and is one of the patrons of the Republic of Pisa.

16. As a mother, EBB would form a more yielding opinion of the Italian approach to worship. In letter 112, she explains to Arabella that she let Pen go into churches “without the slightest misgiving on my own part lest he should grow up a Papist” ... in the catholic churches people go in & out,—there’s no long service to constrain anybody except such as choose to stay.”

17. EBB’s comments here and elsewhere imply that her brother Charles John (“Storm” or “Stormie”) was sympathetic to Roman Catholicism. In April 1853, EBB told Arabella that “if he talks only as he used to talk to us, a stranger would conclude him to be a Roman Catholic without waiting for more evidence” (letter 98).

Letter 8

[Pisa]
Feb. 8– [1847]

My own dearest Arabel, this will not perhaps be a long letter, but I can send you satisfactory news of Wilson, thank God— She is reinstated in her various offices, & has taken leave of D! Cook though still weak & restricted as to diet. Coffee she is commanded to take leave of for ever .. mark that, Arabel! Where the stomach is feeble & irritable, it is very bad— And no eggs, no butter, .. poor Wilson!—& no wine,—& no potatoes .. I wonder how she gets on. There is still swelling in the side, but it is going away gradually, & she looks very well, & is likely to be really well, I hope & trust, & she is not at all afraid of Italy—& she takes rice & milk & tea & chicken & the light rolls we have here, & presently promises to add a great deal of exercise— As to what she has to do for us, it is light work as you may suppose, & we have, both of us, every reason for feeling a regard for her & attending to her comfort .. poor Wilson! A most excellent & amiable girl she is,—& I never shall forget what she has done for me.

And now my dear dearest Arabel, do tell me why you dont write to me, .. neither you nor Henrietta?– Unfortunate me, if you have sent a letter in the little parcel; because Sarianna Browning finds no means of sending it until March—and I may wait till April for a word from you, at that rate— The steamers from England dont begin to come until March—so provoking. But as to the letter, it was my fault if you sent one so, seeing that I ought to have explained how a parcel comes to Italy on four feet, & a letter flies on wings. Arabel! do write directly! Henrietta, I entreat you to write— And Arabel, beware of ever thinking of returning that watch to me— It is
your own—& I shall be dreadfully offended by a word against my resolute word on the subject long ago. If you like, you know, to change it for a watch of a more useful size, it will be the same thing, & I shall have my share in the gift & in the thoughts—— There, now!— This is the third time of answering— Let me remember while I can, to say that I am very well, .. even if only to change the subject— Write, write!—

I dreamed of you last night—always I am dreaming of you, & when you dont write, I dream blackly & wide awake. The weather does not admit yet of my going out .. but as soon as we have a few fine settled days we are certainly going to Volterra & Siena for one excursion, & to Lucca & the Baths of Lucca afterwards, for another, .. & both must be in the course of the next two months as we leave Pisa then. We can go to Lucca & return in one day by the railroad, but the Baths being eight miles farther & exquisitely situated in the Apennines, I was saying yesterday to Robert, that I should like to sleep there & have time to enjoy it, to which he replied that we could spend a week there if I preferred it .. but we shall see—it depends on the weather & the chestnut trees, to say nothing of our caprices— I have a fancy rather for those Baths of Lucca: for being in the mountains—think of it, Arabell!— So often I wish & long for you! So often Robert says "I wish your sisters were with you", .. knowing what my thoughts are— Still, the hour of meeting will come, & in the meanwhile we love one another heart to heart as always— May God bless us all to the best ends of love— Now what am I to tell you? One of our days is like another,— & the only 'news' is, that we have both had excellent reports from Moxon as to poetry,—the proceeds this year being seventy pounds! There's riches for you—all expenses paid!— Moxon desires however, .. as some copies remain of some of Robert's works, that the issue of the new edition shd be delayed till our return to England, in order to secure, as he says, "an immediate success". Altogether we are sufficiently pleased, I assure you, by this report—and are turning our faces to a new book on Italy which is to move the world— Not that we shall spend money in printing anything—oh no!—you shall see presently .. only not immediately, if you please!— I must know rather more of Italy in the first place, before I can do my part— Talking of worldly prosperity, however, I shall tell you that I proposed to Robert the other day to put into the Pisan lottery .. there's immorality for you! but Jules Janin, the French critic, hazarded once five shillings & won a palace with orange groves & marble balustrades & the ghosts of the Medici know what, .. & I suggested the risking of only five shillings. It would be as well, I thought, to have a palace too,—where was the objection? Oh, but Robert would'n hear of it, & looked rather shocked at me for my want of principle in the matter. He said quite coolly that he had no doubt of being successful, if he considered it a justifiable experiment & so made up his mind to try it,—but that he would rather get a palace by any other means .. some honest means—he should only be ashamed of it, after he had won it so,—he seriously hoped that I was only in jest in proposing such a thing. I declared that I was perfectly in earnest, but laughed outright at his gravity while he cut his pencil & put away his palace, just as if they both were in his hand together—he always believes that he has only to wish for a thing, to have it—he believes it as I do that the sun will rise tomorrow— There is a tradition in his family that "a Browning can fail in nothing"—& in his own experience, is proved by ever so many miracles, that he has only to wish for (…) for that impossible thing,— to find it close to him the next moment— So, this (…) he wont have a palace by any manner of
means—more's the pity, I think! Jules Janin, besides his orange groves, had plate & linen & furniture, .. all in a glorious situation in the Baths of Lucca. The lottery is very popular in Italy—a lottery carried on by small sums—The people want amusement & excitement:—if they did not, they would be freer perhaps: as it is, the intellectual & moral degradation is striking. The national newspapers sound like theme-writing by boys of twelve years old,—the literature reminds one of the “World of Fashion” or “Belle Assemblée”?: there seem to be no men here. France & England are centuries before these Italians—to judge from the writings! (observe!) Of the living humanity, we shall know more presently. We heard from dear M! Kenyon (oh, so kind he is!) two days ago—and Mr. Panizzi (of the British Museum) & M! Babbage have given us letters of introduction to two or three more professors here— I argue ill of professors, though, since our Signor Ferucci, who, as Robert says, is just “the husk of a man”,—full of platitudes & commonplaces. Oh thank you, Arabel, for sparing us “the Groemes”.^ Most curiously, just before your letter mentioned them, Robert who had been down to Peverada upon business (he keeps the Hotel sacred to the English in Pisa) had been making me laugh by a story about the miraculous stupidity of some M! Groeme (your very Groeme!) whom Peverada could not instruct in the necessity of being subject to the custom house officers. It is too long to tell but it made me laugh at the moment .. & induced Peverada to exclaim with a long drawn sigh .. “See what I have to endure”—for his office is to explain everything to everybody .. who can understand anything. He speaks excellent English & is a person in great request of course.—M! Kenyon says that George is in the country, & M! Martin told me that I was to hear from him—Tell me about him, & Storm, & all of them .. & dont let dear Sette think that I was ungrateful for his letter.—So Leonard Clarke is by no means inconsolable—it makes one laugh & sigh at the same time—but she never was much his companion—(tha)t makes a difference: still it is not decent conduct, considering how, af(ter all) she was his wife & the mother of his child.— Bummy does not write .. she told me that aunt Fanny had been ill—did you hear of it? Do let me hear every detail of how you get on & whom you see & where you go—& do go among your friends a little more, my own Arabel? Does Mary Hunter continue better?—mention her—& Tell me too of M! Hunter, & if there should be room with him for my love, give it to him! & instruct me concerning his visit to Paris—let me lose no detail. Surely he must be in a kinder mood by this time. I shall write to Blackwood & send him some old sonnets,—& take the opportunity of enquiring about my Prometheus & explaining why the other was not sent. Dear Henry must be wholesomely disgusted of his Austrians, I should think by this time, considering the Cracow business. Neither have my French much distinguished themselves as to integrity & righteousness in the matter of the Spanish marriages—I say my French .. because I have been taking Guizot’s part against Robert, evening after evening—reading the despatches & arguing on each of them .. (such discussions we have had!) till at the last revelations I was forced to give in—though it was wrong of me to blame “my French” .. when simply it was my Guizot who failed. In fact the French people are highly indignant .. I like & love the French: & Guizot only stands up to face the charge of defective honour & truth, such as appear too undeniable.—Tell me of Occy’s drawings—I love him dearly, dear Occy .. tell him so— I love them all, dear things, with all my heart. Mind you speak of dearest Papa— Are Minny’s legs better? My best love to her— Mention dear Trippy, & say how
she is & if she is with you much—I never forget her, tell her— And thank Lizzie for her welcome little letter—she is a darling. Does Surtees Cook get his appointment .. & Susan, does she return from the country—the more you instruct me in, the better. So you are of opinion that Robert & I sh° quarrel rather, to break up the monotony? How we sh° ever quarrel, is impossible for me to conceive of—though I have had my pardon begged several times for mysterious offences beyond my apprehension. Seriously, how sh° we quarrel, when I am always in the right, & he knows it? He loves me more every day, he says & I believe—yes, sure I am, that he loves me, .. these five months being e(…) more than when we married .. inexpressibly more— Yet his (…) dogma is, “that I do not know & never shall know, how much he loves me—and, as to loving him in a like proportion .. why, it is foolishness of me to pretend to such a thing—it cannot be—” If all married people lived as happily as we do, how many good jokes it would spoil! against marriage & so on!—only the world w° be too happy for the graves in it—far too happy.

When Lent begins we hear that one of the first preachers in Italy is to deliver a discourse in the cathedral, four days of the week—& we mean to go, if the weather sh° anywise admit of it— I shall like it much on every account— How is Arabella Gosset? & Miss Russell? I thought of her, when I heard of the sulphuric æther experiments: & how wonderful they are!—and what a merciful remission of the pangs of humanity! I write in the greatest, greatest haste, & can read over nothing. Mrs Martin made me glad at heart by the assurance that you & Henrietta looked well—you are very idle though, as to writing— Oh now, do, do write. Wont the new debtors act enable uncle Richard & the poor Barretts to come to England? Indeed the account of the latter is very melancholy,—but I never can comprehend how a man like him, in the prime of life, & with a sufficiency of intelligence & energy I suppose, should not at once exert himself to get occupation either in England or France— The French railroads are as feasible as the English— Occupation is not only his resource, but his duty!— I grieve for poor Maria & her six children— And is it not his fault & his reproach, that those debts in Jamaica are unpaid at this day?

Observe, Arabel, that the cathedral is close by, .. as near to us in this house, as Devonshire Place .. the beginning of Devonshire Place—is to you—so that the distance was not great enough for a carriage, while the great cloak covered me into the very depths of prudence—therefore), there was no danger! Then the cathedral is not like cathedrals in England—I felt no cold at all. Three days ago we had a letter from Mr Jameson, who is enjoying herself in Rome & wishing for us, she has the goodness to say, most fervently. I heard too from dear Miss Mitford who spoke of receiving a kind message from you & of intending to visit you when she shall be in London this summer.

Now I shall write no more— May God bless you, my dearest own Arabel, my dearest Henrietta—may God bless you always— Give my love to those whom I love, & who will have it— I write like a race horse “scouring the plain” .. or as an Italian writer quotes from the “Gintilman’s Magazine”, .. “like a scouring race horse”— May God bless you— Pray for me as I do for you—

Understand that I can write better than this really, when I try: but the haste drives the words before one!

Your own ever attached  
   Ba-
Flush has grown, from being simply insolent, a complete tyrant now—another Nicholas—\(^{24}\) He barks one distracted, the first moment he takes it into his head to want anything— I was saying to Robert (who spoils him) the other day, that soon we sh’d have to engage a page for his sole use—or brown livery turned up with white.

Yes, I think he does mean it for Italian—\textit{pure Tuscan}, you know.

N.B—mind, nobody makes me melancholy by writing about my birthday—\(^{25}\) (Speak in time!) How I think of you all!

[Continued by RB] Pisa, Feb. 8 ’47.

I have to thank you, my dearest sisters, for two of the kindest notes in the world. It is an unspeakable delight to me to find that I can sympathize with Ba in every thing, and love most dearly the two whom she loves most dearly— I know, and nobody so well, what you have lost in her—that is, lost for a time—yet your generosity pardons me that loss, while your \textit{woman’s} tact and quickness of feeling does justice to the conduct which occasioned it—for both of which, I am, and always shall be most truly and gratefully your debtor— You tell me that the way to pay such debts is to love Ba—but I cannot obey you there—she takes all my love for her own sake—just as you,—whom I was prepared and eager to love for her sake,—you make me love you on your own account. You wish to know how Ba is—from me, as well as from her. I assure you that thro’ God’s goodness she appears quite well; \textit{weak}, certainly, as compared to persons in ordinary health, but with no other ailment perceptible. A few days ago, she seemed to have caught a slight cold—(thro’ her kind care of Wilson, who has been ill as I am sure Ba will have told you)—but yesterday & today the few symptoms of aching &c have disappeared. Dr Cook, the physician we called in to Wilson, who had seen Ba just on his arrival, expressed his surprize & delight at the manifest improvement in her appearance—and he observed to Wilson, “this comes of a visit to Pisa \textit{in time}”—(he is learned in pulmonary disease and has written a book about it\(^{26}\)—he has just returned, moreover, from England—“where the cold was intense” he said[]). Here, also, the cold has been considerable, and we are too indebted to the good already produced by the climate, to peril it by going out rashly at this (as we hope) the winter’s end: but I trust and believe that, with the stock of strength \textit{preserved} thro’ the winter we shall so profit by the coming fine weather, as to need fear no relapse. Ba sleeps admirably—and is steadily diminishing the doses of morphine, quite as much as is prudent. I daresay she explained to you the cause of the Apothecary’s mistake about the prescription,\(^{27}\) at the beginning—he really believed his morphine to be so superior to what we could get in England that he felt himself bound to diminish the quantity—ever since, his performances have been unexceptionable—indeed, he is said to be one of the best Chymists in Italy. What, I think, you would be most struck with in Ba, is the strengthened voice— Wilson hears it, she says, thro’ her door and ours. I cannot tell you of other qualities that are “strengthened,” however—no words can convey the entire sweetness, unselfishness of that dear nature! Yet I have been used to the kindest of natures, and am by no means likely to err from excess of indulgence to any one.\(^{28}\)

You found fault, I am told, with our midnight attendance at Mass on Christmas eve—but we took great precautions and the Cathedral is but a few paces from our house. When the weather
permits (and not before) we hope to make an excursion to Sienna, Colle, and Volterra,—fine old Etruscan cities, one & all. In the meantime, we are in Carnival season, and I saw full half a dozen masqueradors [sic] yesterday,—a more effective sermon on the vanity of human pleasure you would not wish to hear! It may grow better by and bye. There is to be a grand affair in August, a service to a particular picture of the Virgin “Sotto gli Organi” which, they say, saved this city from the earthquakes last year—but we shall be away. I believe I have filled my envelope without telling you very much, but another time I shall succeed better. Know me for your most affectionate

RB–

Address, in EBB’s hand, on integral page: (To the care of Miss Trepsack) / Miss Arabel Barrett / 5– Upper Montagu Street / Montagu Square.
Publication: BC, 14, 121–128.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark and the dated continuation in RB’s hand.
2. According to Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy (London: John Murray, 1847), Bagni di Lucca is “about 15 miles from Lucca” (p. 415).
3. This is one of the earliest known statements of account of sales of either of the Brownings’ poetry.
4. Early in the courtship correspondence, RB mentioned the possibility of the two poets writing something together, and EBB responded that she “should like it for some ineffable reasons” (BC, 10, 204). This is the first of several references in the letters to Arabella that they intended to produce a book together “with our separate signatures,” as EBB noted a month later in letter 10. They must have been discussing the idea about this time; in a letter to Moxon of 24 February 1847, RB wrote that “Providence helping, my wife and I want to print a book as well as our betters, after what we think a new and good plan” (BC, 14, 135). EBB makes no further reference to Arabella about such a scheme after May 1847 (see letter 13); although in September 1847 she told Thomas Westwood “you may have the ‘joint volume’ you kindly desire” (BC, 14, 299), which indicates that he might have anticipated their plan and suggested that the two write something together.
6. In the fifth letter RB ever wrote to EBB, he began: “Real warm Spring, dear Miss Barrett, and the birds know it; and in Spring I shall see you, surely see you ... for when did I once fail to get whatever I had set my heart upon?—as I ask myself sometimes, with a strange fear” (BC, 10, 97).
7. A reference to La Belle Assemblée, or Court and fashionable Magazine and to The World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons, both of which would have fit EBB’s implication here of a publication comprised of writing in the style of the blue-stocking school.
8. Charles Babbage (1792–1871), a mathematician and inventor of an elaborate calculating machine, made several extended visits to Italy, including attendance at a “scientific congress of Turin in 1840, when he was received with singular and unexpected favour by the king, Charles Albert” (DNB). Kenyon and Babbage had been acquainted for many years; EBB wrote to her brother George in 1841 that their father had met Babbage at a dinner at Kenyon’s house (BC, 5, 31), and RB met Babbage at Talfourd’s in July 1846 (see BC, 13, 144). Antonio Panizzi (1797–1879) had become assistant librarian of the British Museum in 1831, and keeper of printed books shortly afterwards in 1837. Acquisition of the Grenville library in 1846 was mostly due to his efforts, and he was largely responsible for the design of the round Reading Room of the British Museum.
9. Unidentified.
10. See letter 3, note 1.
11. Mary Frances Graham-Clarke (afterwards Wilmer, b. 1845) was the only child of Isabella and Leonard Graham-Clarke. EBB's allusion to his conduct is unclear, but it might refer to his subsequent marriage to Lavinia Horsford.

12. Mary Hunter (b. 1826) was the daughter of George Barrett Hunter (d. 1857). Hunter had been Minister of the March Independent Chapel in Sidmouth, where EBB became acquainted with him in 1832. He left the Marsh Chapel in 1834, and took up itinerant preaching in that area. Hunter was married, but his wife suffered from some form of mental illness, and must have been institutionalized. EBB admired Hunter’s eloquent preaching, as well as his sympathetic interests in poetry and literature, and they soon became good friends. Eventually, however, EBB became weary of Hunter’s bitterness over her success in the literary world. Mary Hunter was always a favourite with EBB, as well as with Arabella. Hunter, and his daughter Mary, eventually settled in Ramsgate, Kent (see letter 66, note 13), but according to The Congregational Year-Book (1855) he retired from Ramsgate in 1854 to Beer, Devon.


15. The Republic of Cracow had been an independent state since the Congress of Vienna in 1815, but the Austrian government sent troops to Cracow in March 1846, and in November 1846 it was incorporated into the Austrian empire. Despite the protests of other countries, especially England and France, it remained under Austrian rule until 1918, when it was returned to Poland.

16. On 10 October 1846, Queen Isabella II of Spain and her sister Luisa Fernanda, the Infanta, married the Duke of Cadiz and the Duke of Montpensier, respectively. The French and English governments had previously agreed that the marriage of the Infanta to Montpensier was not to have taken place until after the Queen’s marriage. For this reason, Guizot, Louis Philippe’s minister, was accused of deceit in the affair. He also saw the advantage of the triumph as a political victory for his party, as well as feeling a sense of personal pride because of his dislike for Palmerston. Despite initial success, these events led to the fall of Guizot and the Orleans monarchy the following year. Both poets make passing references to Guizot in their poetry: EBB in Aurora Leigh, IV, 402, and RB in “Respectability,” line 22.

17. EBB’s brother, Octavius, was studying with Charles Barry (1795–1860), the architect chosen to design the new Houses of Parliament. Drawings by Octavius made during this period were given to the British nation by members of the Moulton-Barrett family (see BC, 1, 296).

18. Georgiana Elizabeth (“Lizzie”) Barrett (1833–1918), was the only daughter of George Goodin Barrett (1792–1854) and his wife Elizabeth Jane (née Turner, 1800–86), who was placed in a lunacy asylum soon after her daughter’s birth. Lizzie was a frequent visitor of the Barrett household, and is first mentioned being with them in Torquay in 1838. When her father and brother left England in 1840 to look after their Jamaican affairs, Lizzie was placed in a boarding school near Wimpole Street, and EBB’s father was her unofficial guardian. She was the subject of EBB’s poem, “A Portrait,” published in Poems (1844). Except for a valentine greeting addressed from EBB, Henrietta, and Arabella in 1844 (see BC, 8, 200), there are no extant letters between EBB and Lizzie.

19. As in letter 4 (see note 5), this passage calls to mind the imagery in “A Lovers’ Quarrel,” although the poets had yet to discover the sources of their quarrelling.

20. Mary Anne Russell (18167–70); she was a sister of Sir William Russell (see BC, 11, 298) and of Emma and Jane Munro. EBB’s cousin, Arabella Sarah Butler, had married Allen Ralph Gosset in 1835.

21. The first public demonstration of the use of sulphuric ether as an anaesthesia was made by William Thomas Green Morton (1819–68), a dentist from Massachusetts, on 16 October 1846. Robert Liston was the first Englishman to demonstrate its use in an amputation at University College Hospital on 21 December 1846. EBB mentions “chloroform and ether-gas” in Casa Guidi Windows, I, 695.
22. EBB’s uncle by marriage, Richard Butler, and her cousin Samuel Goodin Barrett (1812–76), with his wife Susanna Maria (née Bell, 1816–1904) and their family, were residing outside England to avoid creditors and imprisonment. EBB is apparently referring to the “Act to abolish the Court of Review on Bankruptcy, and to make alterations in the Jurisdiction of the Courts of Bankruptcy and Court for Relief of Insolvent Debtors,” a new act which was being debated by Parliament. It became law in July 1847, but it would not have affected EBB’s family members since its advantage was to creditors who could recover small debts without great cost. Imprisonment for debt was not abolished until 1869.

23. Cf. Pope, An Essay on Criticism (1711), line 372: “Not so, when swift Camilla scours the Plain.”

24. An allusion to Nicholas I (1796–1855), who reigned as Czar from 1825 until his death; he was known for his obstinate and tyrannical nature.

25. RB did not learn the day and month of EBB’s birth, 6 March, until August 1885 (see Reconstruction, A232, now at Eton). RB was informed of the year, 1806, by her brother George in November 1887 (Harper’s Monthly Magazine, March 1916, p. 530).

26. See note 3 in the preceding letter.

27. EBB explained this incident in the preceding letter, and told Arabella that the Italian pharmacist “was startled at the quantity” in EBB’s case.

28. This is an interesting—and somewhat unusual—aside in reference to RB’s family.

29. Volterra and Colle are southwest of Florence. According to Murray’s A Hand-Book for Travellers in Central Italy (London: John Murray, 1850), “travellers returning from Volterra to Florence may proceed through Pontedera and Empoli. The distance is 66 miles, about 20 more than that through Colle and Poggibonsi; but it is more level than that route” (p. 204). Poggibonsi is a little more than halfway between Florence and Siena. Volterra is noted for its Etruscan architecture as it “was one of the most powerful of the twelve confederate cities of Etruria” (EB), and Murray’s claims that it “retains more of its ancient character than any other Etruscan settlement” (p. 194). Although EBB mentions the possibility of visiting Volterra in numerous letters, they never went there. In a letter to Isa Blagden, dated 1 October 1871, RB wrote: “... thus I never saw—(after fourteen years of intention to see)—Volterra, St Gimignano or Certaldo, Pistoja, and other points of great interest to me,—Ba could not go, I could not leave her” (DI, p. 368).

30. The “Madonna dell’Organo, the object of Catholic devotion ... is a Greek painting, and was venerated at Pisa before 1224, and may possibly be as old as the first foundation of the present building” (Murray’s Hand-Book, p. 445). Another guide-book to Pisa calls it the “Madonna di sotto gli Organi” and says it has been attributed to Francesco Curradi (Nuova Guida di Pisa, Pisa: Nistri, 1843, p. 93).

Letter 9

8 February [1847]

My most dear Arabel, here am I waiting, waiting for letters!—There may be one today perhaps, & while Robert prepares to go out to the post & Flush adjusts himself for an interrogative bark (“am I to go too?”) I begin an answer to what may arrive ... I do hope so. Something will be said in it of my dear Stormie, ... of the manner of his going, & whether his joy lasted to the end. It is certainly a comfort to think that his choice was in the matter, ... & also (what George tells me) that he goes for a short time only & may travel in another direction afterwards. I dont find fault with people for wanting to travel ... it seems as natural as wishing to read—It is only the climate, which frightens me—ah well, but Retreat' is cool, I suppose, & he will take care, he promises ... and God is over all. I have heard from George, you see—Not an unkind letter, if considered by
itself, & considering me by myself... but unkind, I must think, after all I have said, & in relation to the circumstances in which I am—Good Heavens, how little they know of me, if they imagine it to be possible to thrust me into the position, the possibility of which they assume! There is one person in the world who might do it... Papa might. If he said "I will write to you... I will see you... your husband's name never being named between us",... I should think it my duty to accept under any condition any alms of kindness from him—He is my father... I would kiss his hands & feet at any moment— Also he has peculiarities which I deeply pity the tendencies of, & which, where it is possible, should be dealt with tenderly. But to my brothers... in fact to another human being except my father,... this does not apply— I have used my last word on the state of the question as relates to them—they must choose their alternative,—& if they do not love me enough to accept mine with me, why they must cast me off at their pleasure—I cannot help it. I say it in sorrow more than in any anger— I should not have acted to them as they have acted to me. Here have six months passed since my marriage, & I hold that the merest natural affection calls loudly for a different line of conduct— I do not however invite them to it... they are judges of what becomes them best— Only I, for my part, will not be so base & ungrateful as to admit the formula of a kindness which insultingly excludes the one who has given up his life to me with the very perfection of tenderness! He who from first to last, never for a moment failed to me,.... I am to stand aside from him as if he had failed! No!—As my husband he has claims on the respect of those who love me—but as ROBERT BROWNING, he has stronger claims on me than even the word 'husband' suggests,... even as his goodness & persistent affection have exceeded far & far the common kindness of kind husbands & the expectations of reasonable women. If I sinned against him so, I should scorn myself—there is an end!—Tell dear George that I dearly love him... better than he ever loved me,... but that I do not answer his letter for these reasons— It is better not to answer it... we cannot hold a false position... false on his side,... most unworthy on mine. Oh, when Robert saw me ruffled about that letter the other day, he begged me not to care for it... to let it pass... "It is enough for me, darling, that you understand me... that you know my heart & my motives". But I appealed to him whether if his family agreed to blot me out of the world after that fashion, he could bear it—"He! his family! to me!"—So then he was bade to observe that it was my affair, & concerned my own feelings, & that he had no right to interfere— And in fact it is simply my affair. My brothers confer no honour on my husband by their notice, nor inflict any injury by their neglect— The injury is mine... to my feelings... my affections! the blow falls there. This is all, I think, that is necessary to say.

Wilson is getting strong by degrees, I am glad to say, & last night put me to bed for the first time since a month—it has been a long illness—that is, the weakness hung round her long: and it seemed best that she should rest & not sit up after seven. But last night she rebelled, & w'! have it that such early hours kept her from sleeping, & our vigils at the latest, are not apt to be exhausting. With all the improvement she cannot touch butter... and has only taken chicken two days with impunity—she suffered so, she had to leave it off. Rice milk & tea & roll are the whole of her sustenance,... & of course she must be weak. She goes out twice in the day to walk, & looks by no means ill—oh, she will be strong, I hope & trust, in a little while—D'r Cook seemed to have no fears— She & I agree sometimes (by way of comfort) that if she had gone to Jamaica with the
Barretts, it would have killed her outright, & that (our way) she has been only half killed, poor thing. I never saw anyone suffer so from sickness—and then the mucus membrane of the stomach was previously in an irritable state—and the 'remedies' upon that! The weather is turned to spring—Every day last week I was able to walk out... Robert, as delighted to have me with him as a child when the flowers take to blowing in the garden! Moreover we heard three sermons last week at the Duomo, besides one (by far the worst) in the English church²... Arabel, we could not go often to hear such trash... it amounted to imbecillity, Mr Green's trash, you are to understand that I mean. The catholic discourses delivered four times a week during Lent, I had much more satisfaction in listening to, though fluency & great earnestness & an adroitness in the arrangement of commonplaces, made the chief merit of those. There was not a word of controversial matter... of peculiar doctrine... except when the preacher desired from each of the congregation at the end, an ave maria "in sua ritenzione",³... for his particular benefit—But the voice, the articulation, the vibrative earnestness of the tones of the preacher... a friar in a brown vesture & a rope round his waist... legs & feet as bare as nature left them... his striking gestures as he stood in the chair of the great cathedral... above all, the crowds of listeners... men... thronging, standing leaning against the columns with uplifted dark Italian faces... such a crowded & breathless congregation... all made a grand sight; & the coloured sunshine streaming through the windows, was scarcely wanted to complete the effect—Just see how this people give their attention & reverence when they understand—It makes all the difference, the understanding. The chanted, muttered Latin mass leaves them as I told you, a congregation of promenaders—but the words of their own language, appealing to their sympathies & experience, draw them, fasten them, impress them... the silence in the great crowd seemed to take away your breath. We had chairs under the pulpit, but the majority stood the whole time,... an hour... most of them, men. Some appeared very much moved. The last subject, the text delivered in Latin "Be not deceived, God is not mocked",⁴ had rather more doctrine than the preceding ones, & scarcely anything to object to, I think, & some good things without the least trace of original thinking. But oh, Mr Green, I would rather listen to our friar than to you! The imbecillity & inconsequence of the English preacher is something past describing,... & in order to afficher⁵ it in the strongest way, he preaches extempore, & says like an orator that "gratified ambition gratifies," & profundities of that kind—It is a shame that the church of England should not place here some man of faculty & instruction, where both among visitors & residents there must be such noble opportunities. We found it disagreeable altogether to go to that room... a mere room... into a selection of pink & blue bonnets, everybody looking at everybody—"a shilling each for entrance" like a religious academy. I do wish the Scotch church at Leghorn were here... but soon we shall go away,... hope to do better perhaps—and in the meanwhile we mean to hear all the Lent sermons in the cathedral. Our present plan is (the way we make our plans up & down, we quite amuse you) to go to Florence for a month & then to the north of Italy—there are cool Baths near Vicenza... said to be the coolest place in this country,... & there, we are close to Venice, observe!—We shall travel slowly, & through Bologna, of course, where by means of letters of introduction, we shall visit Rossini, tell Henrietta, who resides there.⁸ How Mr Jameson meets us, is not decided yet. She leaves Rome early in April, & we shall find it hard to give up our month at Florence... but we
must contrive somehow. Such affectionate letters she writes to us, first to one then to another, then to both together—& I love her the better that I think she loves Robert the best of us two—Over & over I have heard her say .. “No, I never did see before such a combination in mortal man .. such intellect with such moral excellence—it is really not fair”. As we landed at Genoa, & he who had been as ill as he well could, began in his old way to keep up everybody’s spirits forgetting himself altogether, she whispered to me, “My dear, that inexhaustible sweetness of disposition of his is worth to you just ten thousand a year .. or a good deal more perhaps”. Which is my own opinion .. upon still fuller evidence. You cannot know what he is to me & how deeply I believe that there is not his like among men now alive. All these months we have passed together in this little room, .. every hour of time has drawn us nearer .. & when he tells me that he loves me more than ever, why I see that before he speaks—& I feel it by my own feelings too. There is no restraint .. no reserve & at the beginning, when people love one another at best even, there is apt to be a touch of either- As to fear .. why the day before we married he said to me, “Ba, if ever I thought it possible that you should be afraid of me, I should have strength to give up everything at this moment—I could bear anything from you but that” .. so now I say sometimes, “If I am very impertinent to you, it i’snt my fault, remember .. it was in the bond.” And really I am very impertinent not infrequently, & we have great arguments about the Spanish marriages & M. Guizot, & Balzac & Rousseau, & subjects not to be counted .. & he, who mounts an argument just like a battery, growing warmer & warmer, till he gets quite into extravagances, (that’s a tendency of his) makes me feel warm too .. & then I take up a book & observe in a provoking way .. “I wont dispute a moment longer—you say things that you dont mean or that you ought’n’t to mean. Only, I protest against all you have been saying .. & there’s my last word”. The other day, there was a silence after this, of at least ten minutes, & I confess, I thought to myself .. “now he is angry with me at last”. Seriously, I was plotting how to be forgiven, & how to put my impertinent book down with sufficient dignity .. when lo, a voice said .. “Ba, do you know one of the reasons why I love you?”— “Hard to guess”, I answered, in a resumption of goodhumour .. “you know very well that your reasons for loving me, I have always ranked among the mysteries”.

“Then I will tell you one of the many reasons. When I get into a petulant irritable humour ...” (he!!) “& have the headache as I have now, & say unreasonable & improper things, which my own reason would recoil at another time, you do not give up to me, & attempt to soothe me by agreeing with me or letting it pass, as so many good tempered women do to the eternal injury of foolish men, .. but you always tell me the truth plainly, Ba” .. (“The reason is, that I have too much respect for you not to tell you the truth, when I apprehend the truth myself, .. or at least what I take to be truth—”)——— But the goodness & tenderness of this return quite moved me of course— Think what an adorable disposition, what candour, what an unmasculine freedom from pride, it expresses—! I tell you just as it comes into my head, because you have not had opportunities of knowing him, & I want you to know him—but this only is one of the thousand traits which I might make the same use of. He is too good—he puts me to shame, sometimes. May God make me at least grateful, if I cannot be worthier.—

The weather has seemed suddenly to burst into summer, though today there is a cold wind & it is safer to keep at home. Robert brought me heaps of violets the other day which he had gathered
himself beyond the walls of the city, & soon we shall think of our excursion to Volterra & Siena. When we leave this place, we shall be housed more cheaply .. (that our hosts have perfectly “taken us in & done for us” here is indisputable) but in other respects, there cannot, I think, be an improvement- Our dinner yesterday, for instance, .. consisting of soup for two .. roast chicken, browned potatoes, a pudding, & a bottle of the best wine .. our Chianti .. cost two shillings & a halfpenny—this for three people .. at least Wilson had some of the chicken. Now, you see, there is no pitiful economy in all this—we require nothing more, in the way of luxury even- Viva la trattoria, I say. It is cheap & direct, & saves unlearned people like Robert & me from the dreadful pass of “keeping house.” What w^t become of me, I am sure, I cant imagine, if I had to manage & manage! And then to have to eat cold mutton & other delicacies of small establishments, w^t be as difficult as the rest & neither Robert nor I have been used to it, & we have not the trained appetites for the sort of thing. If we lived in Paris, especially during the mild weather, we shd always go to the traiteur’s .. that’s still better perhaps—but here, it is a dark place, a good deal thronged with men, & we find the advantage in having the dinner sent. The other day M. Irving called on us again, & I saw him— Really an intelligent, very gentlemanly (person— & with a benevolent countenance & smile. He gave us sundry pieces of advice, & praised Italy to the uttermost—“he wondered, for his part, how anyone could live out of it, who could live in it”—he could not bear the winters in England, & had his two sons in the university here at Pisa .. otherwise he should go to Venice, which he believed to be the best winter climate in the country .. better than Pisa itself. Tell me if this man is father to the celebrated person of the same name who used to visit you (& other people) in Wimpole Street? He is of Jamaica .. & has estates next Papa’s .. Also, think of our having an invitation in form from M. Cook to an evening party for thursday! I sate down to answer it in form, & not being “native to the manner”, tore up one manuscript before I could write another fit to send, Robert sitting opposite to me in admiration at my want of dexterity!! Tell Henrietta that I wished aloud for her. I w^t rather have written a sonnet, I thought. It was his fault, in some measure, because he kept on saying—“Mind, you dont put down that we are engaged .. pray be very decided .. do be as civil as possible” .. till at last I retorted .. “Dont talk to me .. dont look at me .. pray take up your book & read”. I grew quite desperate— I wish darling Arabel, you would write a little note to M. Kenyon & tell him from me that when he pays Minny’s fifty five pounds (is’nt it fifty five) he would pay besides the half year’s interest .. amounting to thirty shillings, .. as they will be due to her justly. Give my best love to dear Minny .. I shall write her a little note some day soon— Tell her that from me. Is Crow’s youngest child likely to keep its dark hair & eyes? Let me hear something about her & Lizzie. Tell me particularly too about M. Boyd, (my love to him always, Arabel) & what you mean by his being more weak & whether it is the effect of the cold. George thought that we c^t not beat at Pisa your thermometer being at 50 one day out of doors. Why I was sitting out of doors last week in the shadow of the cathedral—the coldest situation in Pisa, & feeling it too warm—or when Wilson goes on the Arno she comes back exhausted. Do tell me everything—of dear Stormie especially. Any news of Bummy & the Hedleys. Yes, I love uncle Hedley, & I believed that he could not be otherwise than kind to me under all circumstances. Even Bummy, in the memorable scolding letter, sent a very kind message to Robert, keeping the stripes for my particular use—poor, dear Bummy. Do
Letter 9

24 February 1847

you hear of Leonard’s child? and of the Bevans? and of Arabella Gosset’s health? Let me hear of all at home at full length though. I shall write to Blackwood, tell George, to arrange that matter. Dearest Trippy is the most hospitable and dear of hostesses, tell her with two great kisses .. & Robert sends his love to her too, mind. Oh, we shall go to drink tea with her, some of these evenings. Ask Lizzie, dear Liz, not to be too tall to look down & see me when I come back—My love to George & all of them, dear things. I love you my own Arabel. Bear me on your heart & in your prayers .. & Robert .. he says—

Your ever attached & grateful
Ba---

Speak of Papa.

Address, on integral page: (To the care of Miss Trepsack) / Miss Arabel Barrett / 5- Upper Montagu Street / Montagu Square.

Publication: BC, 14, 128-134.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Retreat Penn, a Barrett estate, was located in the parish of St. James, Jamaica. No doubt EBB’s concern was partly due to the death of their brother, Samuel, who died of a tropical fever in Jamaica in February 1840.

2. The Chapel of St. George the Martyr was situated near the Lungarno on a site that had been purchased in 1839 with money raised by subscriptions, and built to the design of Joseph Pardini. The building was completed in 1843. The Rev. Henry Greene (1808?-76) was Chaplain from 1846 until 1875 (Archives of the Inter-Continental Church Society, London).

3. “To keep in your memory,” or “to keep in mind,” i.e., remember a prayer for him.


5. “Show.”

6. In the entry for Leghorn, Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy (London: John Murray, 1847) notes that “every species of religion is permitted to have its place of worship. The English chapel is regularly served by a resident chaplain” (pp. 470-471), but it does not specifically mention a “Scotch Church” at Leghorn.

7. At Recoaro, which is “about 3½ posts from Vicenza to the north-west” (Murray’s Hand-Book, p. 293). They had discussed going to Recoaro with Mrs. Jameson; see BC, 14, 166.

8. Rossini was in Bologna, off and on, from 1837 until 1848, when the revolutionary movements and his ill health caused him to leave Bologna for Florence, where the Brownings met him in 1849. RB refers to Rossini in “Bishop Blougram’s Apology,” line 386.

9. Cf. The Merchant of Venice, IV, 1, 259: “Is it so nominated in the bond?”

10. Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) was the author of numerous works, including La Nouvelle Héloise (Amsterdam: M.M. Rey, 1761). In a letter to Miss Mitford in May 1844, EBB called Le Lys dans la Vallée (Paris: Charpentier, 1839) by Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850) “one of the most perfect of the ‘Nouvelle Heloises’ of the day” (BC, 8, 316). In April 1846, RB told EBB that he had given up reading “English Romance-writers” on his “first introduction to Balzac, whom I greatly admire for his faculty, whatever he may choose to do with it” (BC, 12, 281). In February 1847 EBB assured Miss Mitford that RB “is a warm admirer of Balzac & has read most of his books, but certainly .. oh certainly .. he does not in a general way appreciate our French people quite with our warmth” (BC, 14, 116). The Brownings visited Rousseau’s home, Les Charmettes, near Chambery, in 1858, and RB visited it a second time many years later in 1881. Both times he was there RB played “Rousseau’s Dream” on the old harpsichord (Learned Lady: Letters from Robert Browning to Mrs. Thomas Fitzgerald, ed. Edward C. McAleer, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966, p. 126).

11. The bracketed passage was originally written in narrative form and introduced by “I told him,” but EBB later altered it, making it a direct statement from her to RB.
Letter 9
24 February 1847

15. Ellen Treherne, second child and second daughter of William Treherne and his wife Elizabeth (née Crow), was born at Kentish Town, St. Pancras, on 29 June 1846.
16. See note 11 in the preceding letter.

Letter 10
[Pisa]

[75–] Finished on the 9th of March. [1847]

My own dearest Arabel, I know that this letter is not in turn... but it seems to me that we are entangled in our correspondence some way, & that I answer Henrietta’s letters to you, & yours to her—Therefore I shall try to set the threads straight, & begin by thanking you for the kindness I had from you yesterday in these dear sheets—The next letter will be from her, & so we shall be all right again. Very anxiously I have been waiting to hear of dear Stormie—As he was to go, he could not go better—May God bless him & us by keeping him well & bringing us all together happily. Oh, I know & understand that he has a tender heart... & I believe that under different circumstances, the impulses of it would have acted quite differently. As it is, he wrote me a frank affectionate letter, for which I shall thank him... dear Stormie!—How much better it would be if Papa had spoken before, openly, calmly, kindly, & not kept for the hours of parting, confidences which would have brightened & softened the years of actual association. I know by myself & (... y) his influence over me, how one is powerless, how I should have dropped... not the sense of a right, but the power of claiming a right, before a little frankness of affectionateness. As to prayer, I really do not understand the principle he goes upon—& of course it is one which, if carried out, would dissolve every congregation in the world. I love him & grieve for him—he cannot be happy, I think, in the depths of his heart, when he can give no sympathy, extend no pardon, make no allowances—it must be a continual wrestling against those natural feelings which he has, let him heap the stones over them ever so... The whole Repose of Christ lies in one word... forgiveness... and if we cast it from us, what remains?—Is Alfred any nearer than he was to being shaken hands with as Alfred? I wish Stormie had taken courage & spoken for him before he went—and this for dear Papa’s sake more than Alfred’s own. You do not say whether he gets on or how—whether new offers have been made to him & what? If I were Surtees Cook I would sell my commission, & embark in some civil employment at once—military affairs will not prosper nowadays, though L. Palmerston & M. Guizot quarrel ten times over. He may get his appointment... but it is a chance; & to my mind, other chances are better. Agencies upon properties he has not the necessary vocation & instruction for I imagine—a great deal of specific knowledge being necessary for the management of a property. Do you think I could undertake to manage a dairy?... par exemple!—The cream will turn sour in the pans at the very prospect of it. If I were he, I sh’d try for a share in some business... & advertise, for the first step—and that is, because so many employments appear to be infra dig... for “a man in the army.” Otherwise it w’d not be
difficult, I sh'd think, to take occupation on the railroad, somewhere, at home or abroad—and as an engineer, observe, this may be done, certainly, as captain or major even. Where is M' Hunter now? you do not say. Has his pupil left him? is he in London—Norwood? tell me. What his pretext can be for quarrelling now at least, is a question that moves my wonder. Did he mention my name when he was with you? Can anything be in more execrable [sic] taste than the whole bearing of him!—& yet have patience with him, & remember how he walks among the thorns—Last time I was at the Duomo, three chairs off from us sate a man so like him that he quite distracted my attention from the friar—only there was less intellect in the face, & more good humour .. & also he might have been a few years younger. But the eyes, nose, mouth, shape of the cheeks, manner of the hair .. oh, so like! I pushed Robert to make him look at him—it was a most striking likeness. Very glad I am to hear of dear Mary's position, because it is safe & happy for her—Otherwise she certainly might have forty or fifty pounds a year I sh'd fancy, in a private family .. but then she w'd not be with her friends. Give her my best love & say that often I think of her.

—As to Bummy .. dont mind, my darling Arabel!—dont be angry— She has ideas of a different "dispensation" from the one regnant in the world just now, when (to do the bad world justice) it has got to be more enlightened on certain social rights than it used to be. People have learnt now the possibility of being tolerably upright & pure out of buckram—and then, Bummy, .. why you know her so well that you c'd not certainly be surprised at anything written either to you or to me. For my part, I dont feel in the least angry—& if you see her, you may give her a kiss for me without drawback of malice. Besides, she laid all the blame on me (which was just & right) & sent a very kind message to Robert—. Only I was a naughty child, & whipt, .. which I did'nt mind so very much!— So dont you mind— Consider, that she has to choose examples for Arlette .. & for you & Henrietta besides!— Jane's letter & her's received on the same day, made certainly a curious contrast. For my part, to friends & opponents, I wish nothing better nor worse (as far as concerns me) than for both to witness & see how perfectly happy I am in my new position—and as to Robert I will answer for it (let that sound ever so conceited!) that he has not repented yet for half a moment. We are not rich—but on the other hand, we neither of us wish to run into expenses—— Oh—by the way, Arabel, you ask about the proceeds from Moxon— The seventy five pounds this year represent both Robert's & my poems—and then you are to remember that he published last summer three "Bells & Pomegranates" which made a certain expense, all safely covered & leaving an overplus. An hundred & eighty copies of my poems remain, together with copies of his—and nothing forbids .. indeed it seems a matter of course .. that next year, we sh'd have at least as much. For several years now the expenses of publication have been so surely covered—his poems, that Moxon has sent him in no bill even .. but the overplus was a pleasant surprise— I assure you we shall make our way by poetry yet .. you will see. The ship money this year is not so well as George supposed .. but it is of no consequence to grand people like us .. we always end by saying to one another "Oh, we shall do very well". As for me I dare say I sh'd get into ever so many scrapes & debts if left to myself .. but he who hates a debt like a scorpion, (or rather far worse) not only has everything paid at the moment, but puts it down in a book, so that we may not unconsciously transgress the limit of the in-comings by the out-goings. His
poems (having survived all the flat years of poems) are getting on now... it will be all clear gain
now, says Moxon... & there will be a regular income, even apart from our great schemes—and
before the year closes we hope to bring out a collection of poems on Italy, with our separate
signatures. Then there is his second edition, ... & presently, perhaps, mine... in neither of which
we shall risk anything—Send me a list of what did appear of mine in Blackwood, because I
have no copies & must enquire what they mean to do with the rest—Dear Arabel, why send
any ms book, if you could not the right one? It is of no consequence however—You are far far too
kind & dear, in thinking to send me the mittens—but they will be most useful gifts to me. I am
writing now in detestable leather ones—the shops here not being of the most various—Often I
wish (in spite of my manifold extravagances in London) to have brought with me just twice as
much as came. The green gown like yours, Robert likes so much that I wont wear it while we
have fires—You cant guess what our pinewood fires are. They shoot one through & through (at
least one’s gowns) with red hot arrows. This black silk gown, I have on, is shot into fifty holes... besides some lawful wearing out at the elbows—and Wilson says “Really you must make it last
till the fire is done with.” You see, there is no ‘guard,’ no ‘fender’... and splinters of the wood fly
every moment. Flush looks up in horror & gets close to me for protection. But I was talking of
the parcel—I shall write to thank dearest Trippy—As for your goodness, you know how to please
me, Arabel—And Henrietta’s slippers, how I shall like to have them!—My direction about the
others (the antiques) will have come too late, I observe—Never mind! The teapot is a happy
thought too, and I shall like to have it for dear Trippy’s sake. Such a kind affectionate little note
she wrote to me—tell her that two people here love her for it... besides all other reasons—Robert
was quite touched by her way of speaking of him—But what is this about her eyes... You never
told me of this weakness in her eyes... she says she has lost the sight of one. Why how is
this? Do tell me— I hope she does not expose herself to the cold unnecessarily. It is cold here
again... indeed nearly as cold as ever, & we hear of snow at Florence. We thought that summer
was come, a week ago... but pazienza! Our hosts say “Cattiva Pisa”—& M! Irving’s son, I am
sorry to say, is ill again. For my part, I dont run risks like rash people, but keep in these rooms
which are very warm. Talk of the coldness of Italian houses!—Why the walls are as thick as an
English house almost. We had a visit the other day from Mr & Mrs Irving. Forced to see them!—
She is a very young looking woman, & so glorious in silk & velvet as to astound one. Is she a
second wife? Surely she must be. Young enough she looks, to be her husband’s daughter. The
‘celebrated M! Irving’ cannot in any case be her son—the thing is impossible—Very cordial they
both were, and I like him. The Surtees’s have changed their house & come into our street—and I
heard of Miss Surtees professing to “feel quite well,” in the warm weather a week ago—but now,
he told Robert on meeting in the street, she was in bed as a matter of precaution. He called on us
the second time, & we were again “at dinner”—“how unfortunate!”—M! Irving said the other day
that his son who is the invalid, was very much vexed not to be able to go out & see Robert—“he
has a strong feeling about literary people, & is a great admirer of M! Browning’s poetry.”——
Not a word yet of poor Wilson! By which you will conclude rightly that the convalescence
continues. She is able now to take chicken & pudding everyday without suffering from it... and
in other respects, seems quite strong. Being desired to take a great deal of exercise, she goes out
generally twice a day & walks into the country with Flush. Still, the swelling in the left side is not quite gone... but it is going off, she says, & Dr. Cook did not think it important... & she feels very well when she does not transgress in point of diet. The least fragment of a potatoe, or of butter, she dares not touch— My darling Arabel, I dont beat the air as much as you seem to think, in talking about coffee. It may do your headaches good for the moment, for the occasion, as anything warm & stimulating would,—& yet it may be keeping up the cause of the headache, & preparing the next day’s— Dr. Cook explained to us how things, really injurious, appear to be remedies, while in effect they are doing harm. Wilson’s complaint was just a crisis, of many of your symptoms— But for the violent sea-sickness she might not have been ill... but the tendency to the irritation on the coats of the stomach was there... & any weakness of that sort is increased & exasperated by coffee—it is a specific evil under some circumstances. Oh—I would not exhort you never to touch it!—only to be more moderate than I know you are inclined to be, & not have three great cups a day—as of old— And then the no exercise, ... the staying at home, you hint at!—now is it wise & right of you? Which reminds me (now that I have filled you up to the brim with ill humour... as far as such a thing can be, that is!) of my own imputed offences about morphine. Always I forget to tell you that I gradually diminish... to seventeen days for twenty two doses, ... which I used to take in eight days. Whether it is desirable to diminish still faster indeed, I have enquired of M’ Jago— So you may see if I am obstinate, & if I deserve a return-scold. ‘I speak as to a wise woman—judge what I say.’ Robert is very anxious for me to be free of the morphine, & yet even he admits that I do what I can— The cold weather, of which we have had too much for Pisa, has been against great progresses, observe, in this particular respect,—for though it has been very different from England, & I have had much more liberty, ... yet during the whole of January & the beginning of February I was shut up fairly in these rooms, & to leave off morphine by teaspoonfulls at a time.—

March 8th Dearest dear Arabel, I have not written in this letter for two or three days, & here come, inside M’ Kenyon’s letter, your & Henrietta’s most welcome little scraps—oh, how happy it makes me to see your writings!— You are both the best, kindest, dearest... the words go, which should praise you aright!—so good you are to me. To hear from you is the greatest pleasure I can have... remember it always! After which proper expression of gratitude, I ought really to scold you, because it is very unreasonable & wrong in you to think of buying gowns for me, & I should be perfectly angry, if anyway I could have the heart. When I say to you all sorts of stuff, it is just for the pleasure of talking stuff to you... as if we could afford such words... sitting together over the fire. I open my eyes with wonder at the idea of your making conclusions, & buying for me at Davis’s... what I sh’ have bought for myself in Florence— Everything is to be bought at Florence, say the learned,—& at the cheapest. So mind you never do such a thing again, you naughty dearest people... it is at once too good & too bad of you—so good as to be bad!— Then for you, Arabel, to make me another pair of slippers!! What am I to say? If feet could blush mine would be red as the brick floors you refer to—but as it is they pray my cheeks to do it for them. By the way, it is only in travelling that we fall on the brick floors sometimes, & ours are very carefully covered with reed matting & carpets... there is more comfort, in fact, than I expected. I must tell you however, now I think of it, (never surely were such rambling letters as mine, ... treating of Heaven,
earth, & the kitchen, in paragraphs mixed together!) that dear Treppy's teapot will form an extraordinary contrast to the general aspect of our "plate & china." When Dr. Cook attended Wilson, & came in to us to make his report, the preparation for our breakfast looked so remarkable, that, after a glance at Robert's face, I ran away with the teacups into the bedroom— Do you know what a blue mug is ... a real blue mug, such as when I was a child, I drank my milk out of?—Such is our idea of a teacup in this land of Taste! The coffee pot & milk jug, ... if I call them pewter, you will add a false splendour—they look more like lead ... only I hope they are rather pewter under a cloud. You never saw such "utensils" in the course of your life, I am certain. Item ... two silver spoons, which have to put the sugar into the cups, then, stir the coffee., & then, help the eggs—If I forget to stir my coffee before I break my egg, I turn to supplicate Robert for the use of his spoon ... "just for a moment". And if both eggs have employed both spoons, & one of us requires another cup of coffee ... should it be Robert, ... I hold out the sugarbasin & graciously enquire if he will put in his own sugar with his own fingers. As to sugartongs I have never seen such a thing since I saw you—neither in France nor Italy, My® Jameson used to laugh at my 'scrupulousness' in our fine hotel in Paris even!—For the rest, I dare say we shall find more luxury in our next residence,—& indeed here we might have done better if we had made a fuss & not been so supernaturally contented with everything— Our hosts will certainly be in despair to lose us ... for we have paid double like angels, & never rustled our wings—The lady said to me the other day "I loro signori sono buonissimi,"—& in spite of all modesty I did not so very much wonder—Think of having lodgers who pay by the clock, (& twice as much as they ought to pay,;) & except on Christmas eve at the cathedral, have not once been "out" later than six in the evening. They must doubt whether Robert is saint or martyr, most. Never even the odour of a chance cigar!—Their garlic has it all its own way along the passages!— They enquired the other day of Wilson if "there were no hope of our staying a little longer" ... but for that, no. Five weeks more, & we are gone to Florence. In the meanwhile we have made a great discovery at the Trattoria, of the possibility of a pigeon pie even in Italy! Robert & I were so blasés on the eternal roast chicken, that we both felt inclined to leave off eating altogether, ... and as he began to carry the inclination into practice, I protested, & we resolved to change the dynasty—First we made a desperate irruption (not for the first time!) into what are called the "made dishes" (for good reasons) of Italian cooking! & there arrived, ... at the first glance upon which, what Robert calls my "prejudices" rose up rampant. "Really, Ba, you are so prejudiced! Now this seems as good as possible" ... (choosing the least questionable shape!) "Well, dear, I am delighted that you like it ... I only hope it wont poison you"— "Very good indeed!—only rather rich ... here, Flush, you shall have it."!— And Flush after a great deal of hesitation & meditation with the end of his nose, submitted to be the victim— Poor Flush!—You, Arabel, never could imagine the blacknesses or brownesses & greynesses, all swimming in oil, which define themselves eatable substances here ... and I never can get over the oil to begin with ... having "prejudices." So we held a council & wondered whether these Italians who really excel in pastry, could not cover some pigeons with a pastry. Robert went to give his directions, & after a long speech ... "vedete”—said he ... "é una specia di pasticcio"—"una specia di pigeon pie" was the quick answer ... oh, they understood perfectly! A pigeon pie had manifestly a continental reputation!— And never was a better pie than
what they sent us .. an immense one too, large enough for two dinners for us three, & at the expense of 2s. 2d. by which let Minny judge of the cheapness here of the means of life. By the way, Robert showed to me the other day that our six months spending, inclusive of our journey from London, & week at Paris, medicines & everything in the world, had amounted to one hundred & fifty pounds .. and three of us, remember!— Wilson having shared equally in all respects— Also there has been no painful & niggardly economy—we have had every comfort. So we are more than at ease as to our future prospects, & feel ourselves free to please ourselves about Venice .. or wherever our next fancy may turn itself. Such planners & dreamers we are—and having shifted plan & dream so very often, I for one, do not trust quite so much as I did to the present plan & dream— If it were not for “the fashion of England” we should yield to the spring-temptation perhaps of the mountain scenery & the chestnut forest, rocks & cataracts of the Baths of Lucca, which must by all description, be quite exquisite .. but the English fashionables, the pink mantillas & gaming houses keep us off—so we shall go there only for a day or two or three, in April perhaps & on the way to Florence. Mrs Jameson leaves Rome on the 10th of April & is very anxious for us to meet & travel with her— We wd willingly do it, only there are difficulties .. we cant give up Florence for instance .. & we have written to ask her to give us tryst there at least.

Impertinent Arabel!—how you made me laugh about my chronological observations, & the more that I had a sort of recollection of having gone still deeper into the subject in my last letter which you had not received in writing this— Was I ever chronological in my life before, I wonder? Perhaps some of it, is Robert’s fault, who began by keeping the ‘anniversary’ of our marriage once a week, & who now, three days in every month as I assure him, says “Another month is gone, Ba.” He is fond of telling me that I have not “the least idea” of the depth of the love he feels for me, & that by the time we have been married “ten years” I may guess at it perhaps .. therefore he wants the weeks & months to go fast. For my part I am too well contented (with) everything as it is—I seem to “guess” quite well enough(Otherwise I sh’d be very obtuse .. because no human being could give to another (better) proof of attachment than he does to me every moment of (…). I am certain that he loves me far better than at the (…) says himself. Between you & me, Arabel, Mrs Jameson (…)ily by her dreary jests about the passing nature (…)tance at Genoa, when he chose to sit by me, instead (…)ts, .. which really was foolish & vexed me (…) ,” in one extreme or another. My dear Browning, you (…) but in a month or two, unfortunately, the reason (…) “Ba said so for nearly two years,” he answered (…) (getting up impatiently!) He never wd contest such points with (…)— Only, afterwards, when with me alone, he declared against (…) & bad taste” .. (being fond of using strong words)—but the truth (…) Mrs Jameson has been unhappy in her own experience & in the experience (…) best friends— She has not been used to deal with such natures (as Robe)rt’s .. as who has, not dealing with himself? “The happiest marriages” (she says), “end quickly in an affectionate friendship”— “just what one might feel for an old armchair,”! .. is his commentary aside to me— “Why if I thought such a thing possible, I never wd have married you, Ba—never— If you live to be eighty & have hair as white as snow, I can only admit of the change of loving you better!! I know I shall love you better then.”— A great deal too frank I am, in telling you such things, Arabel .. but the position is peculiar & justifies or rather demands that I sh’d set your dear tender affectionateness
at full rest from a full evidence. Not being able to be frank enough before, I am led to be overfrank now—Oh, you understand that! Then I want you to know him, & what he is to me. & to thank God for me, with “connaissance de cause.”—22 Write always & every detail—My best love to dearest George & all of them—To my very dear Henrietta, my next letter shall go, & make up, perhaps, for the lack of news in this. I do like to hear of “happy days”—their joy reaches me—How I love you all, ... sometimes I think ... Be happy, you, my darling Arabel! Where is Emma Monro?23 Do ... come & go? I am glad that Papa is relenting into some justice to ... he might as well be angry with the angel Gabriel. Poor, unfortunate A(nnie Hayes, whether) she thinks so or not!24—for degradation is the worst misfortune, & (it is degra)dation to live on with such a wretched man as that. Right or Wrong I would not do it—I could not. "Divorce" was another extreme: but I do not live with him. While I write, a Mrs Young calling herself a friend of Mr Stratton's, (whose daughter) has married a Professor Matteucci (both settled in Italy) make their way in to me. (They) could not be resisted. Not very charming though!—sensible, & cold! We sh! scar(cely lack for) visitors if we were to stay here long—I am glad for M! Hunter. Should he first rise to the estate of yo(ur ... ) my love— Also to dear Mary. I e! write on ... Robert) tells me to say that “he loves you & Henrietta with ...”—& give it to Lizzie Barrett. Your very own Ba.

... the same thing happened to another friend of yours on a certain solemn occasion. ... face & negligent costume produced this natural effect.26

Address, on integral page: Angleterre, via France. / To the care of Miss Trepsack, / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 5. Upper Montagu Street, / Montagu Square, / London.

Publication: BC, 14, 139-148.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Dated by EBB's reference on 8 March to having "not written in this letter for two or three days." Year provided by postmark.

2. EBB has written and crossed out "the fear of."

3. i.e., stand by his oath, or determination, not to forgive her; see Genesis 31:44–49.

4. William Surtees Cook (later, 1862, Altham, 1813–87) was EBB's cousin and would become her brother-in-law after he married Henrietta in 1850. Surtees had followed his father in a military career and had purchased a commission as an ensign in June 1834 in the 65th Regiment of Foot. In December 1845 he was promoted to captain, and in a letter to RB in January 1846, EBB explained that Surtees had obtained an adjutancy as well (BC, 12, 9–10). As Adjutant for the 1st Somerset Militia in Taunton, he was responsible for the affairs of the entire troop. The system of purchasing commissions in the army was an old one, and while there was a small percentage of very wealthy individuals who purchased commissions, the vast majority came from the lesser gentry, who were favoured by the monarch and parliament. It was assumed that if a man invested money in the army, he would be unlikely to support political moves that might threaten his investment. Efforts to reform this system were begun in the 1850's, and the system was abolished in 1871; see Anthony Bruce, The Purchase System in the British Army (London: Royal Historical Society, 1980).

5. An allusion to the dispute between England and France regarding the marriages of Isabella II of Spain and her sister Fernanda; see letter 8, note 16.

6. See letter 8, note 12; I have been unable to determine why Hunter would have been in Norwood.

7. Evidently EBB is confused about the number and dates of RB's Bells and Pomegranates. Luria and A Soul's Tragedy were published together as the eighth and last of the series in April 1846, which she is counting as two numbers. Prior to that, Dramatic Romances and Lyrics had been published in November 1845.
8. Part of EBB’s income was an annual return from shares in a West Indies packet ship called the David Lyon. She also received dividends from a legacy of £4,000 left to her by her paternal grandmother.

9. This idea for a joint collection of poems on Italy was never realised; see letter 8, note 4.

10. Seven poems by EBB were published in the October 1846 issue of Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine (pp. 488–495); see letter 3, note 21.

11. See Reconstruction, H348.

12. “Nasty Pisa” or “Bad Pisa.”

13. This is doubtless a reference to the Irving’s elder son James (see letter 4, note 22), who died aged thirty-three at Leghorn.

14. The Irvings married in 1819, and there is no evidence that he had been married before.

15. EBB has altered “wise men” to read “a wise woman”; cf. I Corinthians 10:15: “I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.”

16. Unidentified; however, Kelly’s The Post Office London Directory for 1846 lists John Davis, a dyer, at 91 High Street Marylebone.

17. “You are (both) very good.”

18. “You see,”—said he “it’s a kind o’ pie.”

19. Final sheet of this letter is badly crumpled; at this point, a large torn area begins.

20. An allusion to Mrs. Jameson’s unhappy marriage to Robert Jameson. They had married in 1825, and were separated in 1829 and again in 1836. In a gossipy letter to Miss Mitford in 1841, EBB explained how, according to Kenyon, Mrs. Jameson’s husband had married her only to avenge her first rejection of his offer. EBB further records that as they stood at the altar, Jameson “broke upon the echo of his own oath to love, by words of this kind .. ‘I have overcome—I am avenged—Farewell for ever.’” (BC, 5, 321). In several passages in the love letters, EBB refers to Mrs. Jameson’s negative views toward marriage. In May 1846, EBB told RB that Mrs. Jameson “said to me the other day, .. that ‘love was only magnetism’” (BC, 12, 303); and a few days later she reported that Mrs. Jameson “was inclined to repropose Lady Mary Wortley Montague’s septennial act!” (BC, 12, 310).

21. Cf. RB to EBB, [12 April 1846]: “… the love I have gained is as nothing to the love I trust to gain. I want the love at our lifes’ end, the love after trial, the love of my love, when mine shall have had time and occasion to prove itself!” (BC, 12, 239).

22. “Full knowledge” or “knowledge of the reason.”

23. Emma Monro (née Russell) was the sister of Sir William Russell (1822–92); they, as well as their sisters Jane and Mary Anne, were contemporary in age with EBB’s brothers and sisters, and they were often together. Henrietta and Jane were particularly close. Emma married Theodore Monro in April 1842, but he died soon after the birth of their child in 1843. She subsequently married Peter John Margary in July 1847. She is hardly mentioned after this period. One of the last family references to her is by Surtees Cook in a journal entry he made many years later: “Coming down Baker Street, I was accosted by an enormously stout lady wading onward, as it were, figure all out of proportion—the lady advanced in life. This turned out to be Mrs. Margary, a sister of Sir William Russell Bart. … She was, 25 years ago! the pretty widow Munro, whom I knew so well in old 50 Wimpole Street days. Oh! Oh! how altered, how changed! Time! Time!” (Surtees, 2 May 1871).

24. Ann Henrietta Boyd (b. 1811) married Henry William Hayes on 1 August 1837. The marriage was not a successful union—EBB often refers to her difficulties—and the marriage ended in divorce in 1854.

25. Mary Young (née Ancrum, d. 1867). Her husband, Robert Young, a minister in the Church of Scotland, died four years after they were married. After his death she adopted Robinia Elizabeth Young (1812–97), daughter of his brother Samuel. Robinia married Carlo Matteucci (1811–68) at All Souls, Marylebone, on 7 September 1846. He was a Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Pisa, and later became an Italian senator, and was a source of political information for EBB in 1860 and 1861.

26. This passage appears as a marginal notation on the penultimate page. Because of the damaged condition of this sheet, I have not been able to determine its placement within the context of the letter.
Letter 11

Letter 11

[26 March 1847]

[26 March 1847]

My ever dearest Henrietta... Don't reproach me! spite of seeming sins. Though the last letter was out of turn, & unfollowed immediately by the due one, as I meant at first, ... & though when you read this you may be tempted to lay to my charge most unkind reserves, yet don't reproach me! I am not indeed so to blame— And now listen to what comes next—& remember that I write it myself & am doing as well as possible— I have been stupid beyond any stupidity of which I ever, that I know of, was thought capable, by me or others,—and the consequence has been a premature illness, a miscarriage, at four o'clock last Sunday morning, & of five months date, says Dr Cook, or nearly so ... all the pain of it for just nothing, except this purchase of experience. Everything, I did wrong, ... & he attributes the result to the heat within & without ... sitting on the rug to bake myself if I felt the least uneasy ... taking hot coffee to boil myself at other times ... choosing the worst positions possible, out of an instinct of contrariety ... yes, and until the event, believing like a child or idiot that I had just “caught cold,” & nothing else was the matter— Pray laugh at me— As for me, I could cry, out of the sheerest remorse— And don't think that ever I deceived you about my state, calling myself well when I wasn't—no, indeed— Until about six weeks or seven weeks ago I was perfectly well in all respects ... & then, for a week or two or three, became subject to sudden violent pains which came on in the night, relieved by friction & a few spoonfuls of brandy, & going off as suddenly as they came. Wilson told me at last that she suspected my condition, & that if it were so, the pains were “not right” & signified the possibility of miscarriage; & she had great fears about the influence of the morphine &c. Robert of course made a fuss besides & entreated me to call in Dr Cook— I was frightened out of my wits by the suggestion about the morphine, & of my wit by the entreaty about Dr Cook ... & being wrought upon on all sides, I pacified Robert & my own apprehensions by agreeing to appeal to M' Jago ... just to ask him whether in such a case the morphine w'd produce such another case. My letter was no sooner out of the house however than I repented sending it— You know it would seem so ridiculous, merely to imagine a case—& I had at best doubts! Oh, of course, I did doubt—I have always had such good general health that some symptoms made me doubt— But then, I thought, if when Wilson was ill, I unconsciously caught cold by going out into the passage, I might be affected so & so & so. As to Wilson, I fancied her determined to make a certain set of deductions from any sort of premises— If my finger ached, she w'd say “This means that”. So I would not be convinced by her ... & when my poor dearest Robert besought me about Dr Cook, I put him off with ever so many impertinent speeches, yes, & obstinate ones—mea culpâ... I repent in dust & ashes. In fact, by the time the event took place I was perfectly convinced, would have died for it at the stake, that I had just caught cold! Most stupid, stupid!—

The night pains quite went away, & I had only one return after writing to Nelly Bordman. But last Friday I felt unwell & submitted to see Dr Cook. He came ... declares that he found the room at seventy, a scandalous fire, a wrong posture, & my pulse very irritable—laid me down on the sofa—commanded cold tea ... & promised to come again on Sunday. Though his opinion
went with the majority, the minority of one remained obstinate...mark that. Still I did what I was told, & on saturday morning felt rather better. Towards evening however regular pains came on, every five minutes...& these lasted for above four & twenty hours, much as in an ordinary confinement—Oh, not so very violent! I have had worse pain, I assure you—It did not continue long enough at once to exhaust one! and when my eyes were open to the truth, I was as little frightened or agitated as at this moment, & bore it all so well (I mean with so much bodily vigour) as to surprise Wilson...& Dr Cook, too indeed—

Robert was rather worse than I, I think, on sunday evening, when we had our tea together, Wilson shaking her head behind the curtain. In the first moment of his readmission into this room he threw himself down on the bed in a passion of tears, sobbing like a child,..he who has not the eyes of a ready-weeper. He had better have scolded me well, I say, for bringing all this agitation on him—for Dr Cook pronounces that if he had been called in six weeks ago, everything would have gone as right as possible...he had only to lay me on the sofa for two months & to apply leeches to the back, keeping the temperature cool...& he is said to be an experienced accoucheur. Well! A wilful woman who has her way, must have her punishment—or rather, let it be God's will, if my wilfulness. As Robert says..."we are rebellious children, & He leads us where He can best teach us". In the meanwhile I am getting strength fast, & everything of this sort, Dr Cook tells me, is excellent for my chest...Indeed I have wondered lately where my chest had gone to, it seemed so entirely clear & right...& it puzzled me rather to think how after all I could catch cold, & feel well in the chest. Dr Cook is of opinion that I am likely to be wonderfully benefitted by what has happened—So, remember that you are to be glad upon the whole, however you may condole with me on my stupidity—For three days I kept quiet,...& was up for an hour on the sofa on the fourth, & on the fifth, for two hours—Today this sixth day, I am to go to the sofa in the next room—& by the time you get this letter, the convalescence, should it please God, will be complete. Dr Cook does not come "for a few days"...So you see! Robert wrote to dear Mr Kenyon on sunday night, but by my especial desire, begged him to keep the news from you until I could write it myself—and this, for the obvious probability's sake of your being most unnecessarily alarmed otherwise. If Robert had written to you, you w'd have been frightened—now wouldn't you?...Not that we ever keep from you anything— I w'd have told you long ago, had I known myself. Now I must not write anymore, because I am under a vow to Robert. He laid his commands on me not to write much (or I could, I assure you!) & just at present my mood inclines to be a more obedient wife than I have been.

Will my darling Arabel write for me to dear Nelly Bordman & say that her kind letter arrived just too late, & that I shall write very soon a full account of myself. Thank her most affectionately in the meanwhile, & our kind good friend Mr Jago & say that I admire his sagacity (with the few data I gave him) as to the time—but it was farther off still...beyond all calculation—Say too how well I am, & in excellent spirits notwithstanding disappointments. God's will be done—and, we are happy enough here. How can I tell you what Robert has been & is to me throughout this
illness—so tender, past speaking of! Which reminds me, mind him more. May God bless you!
my own dearest sisters—

Your Ba.

The morphine did no harm at all—

Wilson is much better, & a great comfort of course. Love to all & Trippy— I will write again
very soon. Do write—

[Continued by RB] Pisa,
March 26, '47.

My dearest sisters: You may depend upon the most satisfactory state of Ba, as, I make no doubt,
she has described it to you in the enclosed letter. She will have told you that I wrote to Mr Kenyon
on the 22d, but,—being persuaded there was no danger,—could not help seeing the force of her
arguments against informing you of the matter by any other hand than her own. She is at this
moment on the sofa in our sitting-room, and wonderfully well and strong—beyond all reasonable
hope, indeed. It is entirely thro’ my begging & praying that you have so short a letter—but that
will be remedied in a few days. I shall not try to tell you how perfectly good and patient she has
been. Be sure, quite sure, that we will take every precaution. I have a very good opinion of our
Physician, and we abide implicitly by his commands.

Let us congratulate each other on the safety of this dearest of creatures, and be thankful to
God for his great goodness. God bless you.

RB.

Ba was delighted to receive your joint letter with Mr Boyd’s—and I shall write my own
answer to my own kindest of notes that came last week[.]

Address, in EBB’s hand, on integral page: Miss Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street.
Source: Transcript in editor’s file.

1. Dated by the continuation in RB’s hand.
2. This was the first of four miscarriages EBB would have; a second one occurred in March 1848, a year
before the birth of the Brownings’ son in March 1849, and two more thereafter (see letters 26, note 3; 48, note
3; and 53, note 1).
3. Literally, “my own fault,” from the Latin liturgical confession; used in conversation as an acknowledgement
of one’s own guilt.
4. EBB has cancelled about one line, including an interpolation of several words.

Letter 12

Direct- Poste Restante, Firenze, Toscana, Italy. April 12– [1847]

Now my own dearest Arabel it is your turn— I have expected to hear from you with or without a
reason. Perhaps I am unreasonable. Certainly you are, when you persist in telling atrocious things
about postage— oh Arabel—is it not too bad? Judge yourself! Would you, do you, can you
calculate postages in your own case? As for ours, why Robert observes constantly that he would rather find a letter from some indifferent person at the office than none at all... a stupid letter from an indifferent person. Think then, what it is to us to have letters from the dearest people, every word of which is full of interest. It is our one luxury—and you grudge it, you unkind naughty Arabel! All this about such an obvious matter! I drop the subject for ever, entreating you to put away the thought of it for as long. Only think that by writing to me you give me the greatest joy you can give me, & that the oftener you give it the more generous a giver of gifts you are! There's an end!—or here's a beginning, rather. The next thing to say is that though going on well, I have not done being an invalid yet—not quite. I look well, sleep well, eat well & am in good spirits—but still to lie on the sofa is a necessary inconvenience because of a persisting symptom which does not suffer one to be oneself altogether. Dr. Cook says that it is a "slow & sure" affair... satisfactory in every respect except as to our Florentine schemes! There seems little hope of a journey to Florence as soon as the seventeenth, and very vexatious it is to be kept here... "a week" says Dr. Cook, ... "a month" says Robert when he is out of spirits... "a few days" say I when inclined to laugh doctors & prophets to scorn. Mrs. Jameson will be at Florence on the twenty second on purpose to meet us (by the way), and if we cant go on time we shall have no opportunity of apprising her of the fact. And then these cheating signori of ours have ceased to be agreeable "padroni"—altogether it is vexatious. Dr. C. affirms that if anyone except myself were in question, he could set all to rights by a few doses of quinine, but that he is half afraid of giving it to me, ... awed by the nervous instability of which he read the signs... & would rather trust to nature's own resources, taking a little more time. He assured me the other day that while he has attended me, he has seen nothing morbid about me—neither disease nor the tendency to disease—and that the lungs from first to last have been perfectly unembarrassed.

—& there is no wonder that at the end of these weeks, a woman not originally strong, should be still weak—is there? Oh, I wish you could answer that question as quickly as it goes, to you! Robert's goodness & tenderness are past speaking of, even if you could answer me. He reads to me, talks & jests to make me laugh, tells me stories, improvises verses in all sorts of languages (did I ever tell you that he was an improvisatore? indeed he is, & a surprising one! What is there that he cannot do & know?) sings songs, explains the difference between Mendels[so]hn & Spohr by playing on the table, & when he has thoroughly amused me, accepts it as a triumph, a pleasure of his own... the only pleasure he will have for himself. Of course I am spoilt to the uttermost! Who could escape? I think sometimes of your opinion on the demoralizing effects of "a long courtship"... & then I admit that "the courtship," with me, was by no means the most dangerous thing. There has been a hundred times as much attention, tenderness, nay, flattery even, ever since—and is not this the close of the seventh month, Arabel? is'nt it? You will be disappointed if I dont continue my calculations... you know you will. Our parcel has left London only ten days by a sailing packet, & I despair to calculate in that direction. Sarian[n]a Browning waited for the steamers in vain, & so the time passed. Mrs. Browning's health is better, I am glad to say. Did I ever tell you that the Brownings were fierce & strong Puritans in the old years? Always,
since I knew it I meant to tell you, feeling sure that you would care more for that than for our noble deeds at the battle of Harfleur, or even perhaps (who shall say?) than for the old poetical laurel of the first English poet, who was a Robert Brunynge, yes, really— In the register of the Tower of London, is still to be seen the name of a Browning puritan who suffered imprisonment & death there in James the first’s reign, & Robert says laughingly that perhaps it is the old Puritanism which brews in his blood against the very sign & symbol of any sort of gambling, inclusive of my lottery-phantasms of palazzinos in orange-groves. The Drama was a different thing—it conquered: but he never touched cards... shrank from them by a sort of instinct, even in Russia where everybody plays his course through society. By the way, Arabel, or out of the way, we never do “quarrel” whatever you may imagine— Not one breath of unkindness or crossness has passed between us... not one, for one moment. It is not my credit, & I do not mention it for that—I should be as savage as a tiger if I would get up a quarrel any way. Yet Henrietta is not right—there is no “hen-pecking” in the case either— I am satisfied with picking up my seed. I have too much reverence (seriously speaking) & he is too much above me, to admit of such a thought. But simply I am spoilt & petted, & the object is to watch for my least wish & turn it to a reality. If you saw how I have to beg & entreat & draw him out to take his walk everyday! Otherwise he would not leave me at all—We are very happy—

Do you remember my ending one of my letters with a visit from a Mr® Young who called herself a friend of M® Stratton’s & whose daughter had lately married Professor Matteucci of this university? Now I will tell you a history. She & Madame (the daughter) had sate with me about half an hour when Robert came in. I had hoped that he w® not come in, knowing how he hates indiscriminate visitors (worse than I, he is!) but he heard from Wilson in the passage as he returned from his walk, that Mr® Stratton’s name had been mentioned, & desired to show whatever respect he could to a friend of his— Well! but upon coming in & the ordinary conversation continuing, he was struck with a sudden dislike of both visitors (he never was deceived in his life, he says, about physiognomy...it is his “one strong point”...that’s what he says of himself!) & all I could explain of my own view as to Madame’s apparent stiffness being shyness & so on, went quite for nothing—they were detestable people... not kind, not unaffected, not anything good. He & I argued the point half the day after. M® Young seemed to me, a rather sensible woman & meaning to be cordial... & her daughter reserved, to an appearance of coldness—not much over-refinement... but passable enough—so of course I argued the point. Well—the memory of these things had vanished almost, when a week ago Robert came to me in “considerable excitement”... “Oh, that hateful woman! that wretched M® Young! Tell me again, Ba, that I dont see through people at a glance—doubt my judgements again! but hear first about what that detestable woman has been saying of you!” “Of me!” I could not help laughing a little at the very idea of such a thing, & opening my eyes incredulously— And then it came out that M® Young who had called upon me with every intention of showing me civility... of inviting me to her soireés, & various condescendences, professed herself to be absolutely astonished at the rudeness with which I had repulsed her advances,—never returning her visit, nor meaning to do so! The airs I gave myself were quite prodigious! I had even told her plainly face to face that I did not intend to return her visit! (Which was my politeness, you are to understand, Arabel, as far as the
intention went—I thought I had explained ever so blandly, that if I did not call on her instantly, she was to be kind enough to remember that the causes were this & this .. telling her how I had to shun an exposure to cold winds &c.) M® Y. had delivered herself of the above declaration to kind M® Turner who was “sure there was a mistake somewhere,” as from what she had seen of me—she thought me incapable of giving myself “airs”—“Inciable! after her conduct to M® Loftus!”— My female major aforesaid!—whose apartment I wanted to “take over her head” (a feat, considering that she is nearly six feet high!) & pay double or triple for—you remember—Also you may imagine how furious Robert was to hear all this from M® Turner who told him with the best motives, “as there must be a mistake & it ought to be cleared up”— He sate by me using his very strongest language & at last sprang from his chair .. “He should go & call on that M® Young instantly as she wanted a visit.” I begged, for the sake of peace & me, that he would not do such a thing .. dreading a fuss & a scandal—“What nonsense! do let the foolish people talk out their foolishness”— But he insisted on going—[“]he sh’d make no fuss .. he sh’d avoid of course being rude to a woman—whatever the woman might be .. but directness was the best thing in the world & he would directly make them all ashamed of themselves.” Off he went to M® Young’s—

A splendid apartment—the lady & her daughter visible. Great politeness on all sides. Did me the honour of enquiring after me— Robert replied in measured language that I had been very ill, .. (He thought, he says, that under the circumstances he could not be too specific)—“And yet I understand” he continued, (after they had expressed some civil regret) “that, in the face of these circumstances, & of the other fact that M® Browning came to Pisa on account of the previous weakness of her health, there are persons here who have absolutely taken offence & made it a ground of complaint against her because she has not returned their visits—” (Obvious embarrassment & a glance exchanged from mother to daughter)—“But how could that be? People must surely be unreasonable if they could complain .. .” said M® Y. “Most unreasonable indeed,” pursued Robert ..“& not only so, but uncharitable, unsympathizing, & unkind”— Poor M® Young agreed with him à l’outrance, looking painfully embarrassed—“And you will admit” he went on to say, [“]that such a want of consideration & good feeling is enough to produce, among persons who like ourselves are seeking in Italy just health & tranquility, a disinclination towards the society of our own country people—”— She admitted it was quite enough—(Such cowardice! says Robert to me!) And then, to clinch the argument, he narrated to her the Loftus affair as if he were talking to a sympathizing listener—explained how we were ignorant of the existence of Major Loftus’s apartment .. & how the whole lie had probably originated. She listened .. & when he found that the impression was complete he let the conversation turn into other channels, & met with extraordinary cordiality at every turn of it—Italian newspapers were thrust into his hands, & he came home laden with messages & assurances to me— Three days after, the professor & his wife called here & a note came last night .. (to Robert himself, mind!) overflowing with interest about me, & suggesting that if I could get to their house for change of air &c &c— Oh, such affection—it grows like mustard & cress!— Moreover we have had a humble apology from the Major’s minor, who for the future “never means to believe what she is told.” Altogether, I am glad now that the truth was set in the light— M® Loftus had raged against me even to D’Cook, he has admitted since, and declared that she intended to take the first opportunity of complaining to
Letter 12  
12 April [1847]  

M! Browning of the unladylike conduct of his wife— She had been uncomfortable in her apartment throughout the winter because of me & “had no idea of it”! .. There’s Pisa gossip for you!—just observe how people can talk in Italy & .. not of Michael Angelo!— M" Young went to M" Turner to reproach her with reporting her conversation—but M" Turner reminded her that she, M" T., had said at the time she should find out whether there was a mistake or not— So all is right now— I shall leave cards on everyone before quitting Pisa, should it be possible, & lose my bad character of “giving myself airs” as completely as I can. M" Young & Madame are said to give great soirées in Pisa & to “have everybody”— They receive the Religious, one night, to tea & serious conversation, .. and the irreligious, another, to the sound of music & dancing— There’s gossip, you see, on my side! But this place is too English for us, in the social party-giving sense— We cant be left alone, observe. Venice will suit us best, .. & Florence better .. in the meanwhile.

My best darling Arabel, you go out to walk, I do trust & entreat— Do it for my sake & when you think most of me. The weather is exquisite, & D! Cook who has just been here, thinks that in a few days I may try the carriage .. which looks like Florence, does’n’t it? He is going to give me iron .. I cant persuade him to attempt the quinine .. and I am to have a glass of port wine a day, besides French wine .. claret. Sette would call that “jolly”, I think .. & my own opinion is that I shall be an irresponsible agent by eventide. But you will at once see how free I must be from fever & bad symptoms, to admit of this excess. Then I have two eggs a day, at breakfast & tea, besides animal food at dinner—seed cake for supper & luncheon— I am inclined to eat everytime, I assure you, & take the whole egg, the shell being once broken, so that egg stands for egg with me now— D! Cook thought me looking better, & said that no symptom except such as arose from weakness occurred. The iron, he hopes a good deal from. Pray take for granted that there is not a single thing to be uneasy about in my behalf .. except indeed the port wine!— I tell you everything, that you may understand, & not be uneasy. Write & give me all the news of all. Have you heard from my dear Stormie yet? I dream of you all often & cry in my sleep. Tell me of Papa. Has George returned from circuit & did he do well? Bid Henry take courage & look about for an occupation. There is hope in the world for him, bid him be sure with my love. I fear, for Sette, that the Law is not the best profession just now—but it gives a position, which is something. Occy & M! Barry must triumph in the House of Lords— As to Alfred he triumphs alone, it appears. Good speed to them all. Tell me of Papa— Do you ever paint now, dear dearest Arabel! Speak of yourself. Henrietta takes long walks I know.— When is Susan Cook to be married? My love to her & Surtees. How does Annie Hayes get on with her husband? & how is her health, poor thing? My best love to my dearest Trippy, & assure her that I have a letter in my heart for her, yet unwritten. In the meanwhile, this will do as well, considering her kindness & that I am forbidden to write much. I want to write several notes .. to dear M! Boyd (tell him so) & to others— Who has reached London, of the Expected? If Bummy has, & if she cares still for any of my love, you may give it to her. Also to Arlette. I want to write a little note to dear Minny, & it shall be written some day.

Wilson continues better. Robert tells me to give his love to you & dearest Henrietta, which I agree to— I am your own Ba in deepest affection—

Flush’s love & a paw.
1. Year determined from the Brownings' residence in Pisa during the first half of April 1847.

2. Letters from England to Tuscany had to be paid by the sender through France; postage from the Italian border to the final destination was then paid by the receiver. Evidently, Arabella was concerned with the Brownings having to pay the high rates of postage on receipt of her letters.

3. "Landlords."

4. Two and a half lines have been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

5. Ludwig Spohr (1784–1859) and Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47). Spohr's compositions (now seldom performed) were romantic in style, whereas Mendelssohn adhered to a more classical tradition. Both enjoyed success in England during their careers.

6. This is EBB's first mention of RB's mother; references to his family are infrequent in these early letters to Arabella.

7. EBB probably has in mind Robert Mannyng or Robert de Brunne (fl. 1264–1340), author of *Handlyng Synne* and a *Chronicle of England*. EBB used three lines by Robert de Brunne as an epigraph to "Minstrelsy" (published in *Prometheus Bound*, London: A. J. Valpy, 1833). I have been unable to identify any ancestor of the Barrett or Moulton families who fought with Henry V at the Battle of Harfleur in 1415, nor any Browning ancestor being a prisoner in the Tower. RB's background as a dissenter was largely the result of his mother's family's influence since his father's family were mostly members of the Church of England; for more on this topic, see Maynard, pp. 52–56.

8. During the "Puritan Interregnum" in the mid-17th century, stage plays were banned, not only for religious reasons but for political and social reasons as well. Actors and others associated with the theatre were often sympathetic to the Royalist cause, and it was believed that the theatre provided opportunities for "subversive" activities; see *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, 4th ed., ed. Phyllis Hartnoll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 670.

9. In a letter to EBB in August 1845, RB briefly recalled his trip to St. Petersburg in 1834, and remarked how Sir James Wylie "chose to mistake me for an Italian ... looking up from his cards" *(BC, 11, 22)*.

10. See letter 10, note 25.

11. RB's interest in physiognomy and faces in general might have been acquired from his father, who was an accomplished caricaturist. The poet's fascination with faces manifests itself in several of his poems, for example *Sordello*, "Pictor Ignotus," "My Last Duchess," "A Face," and "A Likeness."

12. "... with gently flattering or soothing words or actions" *(OED)*.

13. Margaret Harriet (née Langrishe), the wife of William Francis Bentinck Loftus (1784–1852). In a letter to Henrietta, dated 31 March [1847], EBB wrote: "The owner of the house opposite in defence of his own dignity, was obliged to get up & swear that Mrs. Browning (mark .. Mrs. Browning) had offered him a fabulous price for his rooms if he wd. break a prior engagement with Major Loftus's wife who thereupon being a woman of masculine understanding, (& superstructure besides) walked about Pisa, abusing Mrs. Browning in good set terms for being unladylike & the saints know what" *(BC, 14, 161)*.

14. "Beyond all measure."

15. Cf. EBB's comment in letter 10 about the "English fashionables" of Bagni di Lucca.

16. See letter 8, note 17.
Thank you, thank you, my beloved Arabel! thank you my ever dearest Henrietta! thank you for these slippers which make the soles of my feet pink with shame, .. to say nothing of the gown & the soul of my body strictly speaking! It was an extravagance in you to send me the gown, as I explained to you before .. but nothing could be prettier or more after my particular taste, than the colour & texture of this gown. Robert too likes the colour .. it is a favorite colour with both of us: and if you had sent me instead of it, a scarlet garment turned up with yellow, it would still seem to me best, beautifullest, welcomest, with the touch of your affection so warm upon it, dearest Both of you! Now I need not, I think, buy a summer costume— I think not. And also I can wear nothing which will not remind me of you .. the green plaid which is Robert’s favorite & which I just begin to wear every day, brings Arabel before me bodily in a great vision between the hooks & eyes: the silk shot, will bring Henrietta; this blue barége, both of you. How hard it will be to keep from thinking of you! Even my shoes will not help me into a distraction .. for here are these prettiest of possible slippers, which Henrietta has made for me! & these other pretty ones .. yes, pretty ones, .. with the dear stitches in the soles, which would perish, they swear, if I dared to use them for washing slippers, till they are worn out for higher purposes. They are very pretty & will look well with the blue gown— As to Henrietta’s, Wilson & I are lost in admiration, tracing the intricacy of the silken embroidery! And both pairs fit perfectly, perfectly— Then comes the crimson note-book, like a rose leaf. Robert says that it w’d be better to keep it for addresses, which we are always in a maze about, .. so that it may lie on the table & be free from such blots & erasures as come with the composition of “great works.” Thank you dear darling Arabel! how too good to me you are! and then, your goodness about Wilson’s gown! She desires me to thank you much for it: she was very much pleased. As to the purse, .. though the one concerned will write his own feeling about it, I must press in with a word of gratitude, & in the spirit, kiss your dear fingers which constructed it, .. because they could not (dear fingers) give me more pleasure than so— His eyes shone with pleasure, for his part, at receiving such a mark of kindness from you—Thank you for him & for me. We had other presents by this box, besides Trippy’s & yours: for with our cards, which Robert left behind him in the hurry, Mrs Browning sent me (among other things) a carved cardcase, something like the one Arlette gave to Arabella Bevan on her marriage, only with more carving .. & prettier altogether;—and Sarianna, a little gold pencil case set round with turquoises .. far too pretty. Do you remember my pencil case, with the little Ba seal— Well! one day as I walked out at Pisa, the ring broke & the pencil case was lost of course. Very sorry I was—and Robert in his kindness, without saying a word to me tried every shop in Pisa, to replace it, all in vain. The Pisan barbarians (you have no idea how barbarous those Pisans are, Arabel!) could not conceive of pencil cases except of thick silver ones four inches long, and seals the size of a small fist .. therefore, still without a word to me, he wrote to ask his sister to buy what he wanted, .. which she sends as a gift of her own, & as I describe it, worth six of the one I had lost. Such a pleasure it was to me to have the box! So impatient I was about it’s coming that Robert
was quite amused at me! I longed to see slippers & purses—all the marks of your dear fingers:—
and the dear old teapot, out of which we had such excellent coffee last night & this morning.
Strange it seemed indeed! It is just large enough for Robert & me, with some superfluity for
Flush. Darling Arabel, I had yours & dearest Henrietta's joint letter a few days ago, as I was
about to seal mine to you—Dear, dear, dear you are—both of you! But be perfectly at ease about
me for the future— I am honest & frank to you & will be so, and I do assure you that I am as well
as you could wish me to be, if not yet quite as strong, & that the strength is coming in long
strides. The journey to Florence was undertaken by medical permission, remember, & I have
fulfilled the condition of keeping six weeks to the sofa,.. now this fortnight, without stirring out
of doors—and I shall lie down a good deal for a long while, by the purest discretion, although
meaning to get out in the carriage & to the galleries in a day or two. The journey retarded the
recovery a little—I wont say that it did not: but then it was only a little, & the change of air & the
increase of comforts here, were in my favour—& I have steadily been growing stronger & stronger
ever since our settlement. Two days before M.'4 Jameson left us, there was suddenly a great
improvement (like a leap) and after she had gone, .. from that time to this, .. I have recovered &
something over .. for certainly I have not looked so well for years & years as I do now. Robert
drew me into the light yesterday, &, after a due period of contemplation, exclaimed, “No, your
sisters would not recognize you! Seriously I say that they would not recognize you.” Which I
flatter myself is rather an error, in despite of his flattery—but the truth is that I have grown fatter
& look different to my own eyes in the glass— I can see how much better I look. There now! I do
hope you are satisfied! On the other side of the question, the walking is less agile than usual &
stooping is still rather painful— Of course! So I shall lie down still a good deal & make myself
perfect .. if God's will permit it. In the meantime it is dreadful not to see the Venus de’ Medici!3
but I shall see her now in a day or two, & without indiscretion,—and what I already behold is
better blessing to the eyes than any marble goddess in the world .. videlicet Arabel's picture.4
Thank you my dearest dear Arabel, thank you again & again for the delight of having this picture!
it seems like a renewal of the first gift of it, with more than the first joy!. Oh, so like! so yourself!
Only the eyes are drawn up with a sun’s ray transfixing them—& the blotting shadows are too
strong! As Robert says, it is you at the greatest disadvantage! But what full joy to have you to
look at & kiss, through the cold glass or any way. And dont think that it does’nt remind me of my
debt to you— I owe you a likeness of myself, & you shall have it, be sure— Otherwise I should be
a traitor & a highwayman—oh, I understand all that perfectly— You have me fast by the collar of
my conscience.—

To go to other subjects then, you cant think, Arabel, how much & increasingly I like these
rooms of ours, & how we enjoy the accession of comfort on all sides. The Pisa apartment did
very well at the time— We were quite contented, except in the cheating which spoilt something of
the prestige. But now we look back on poor Pisa, at least on our accommodations there, with
absolute scorn, & wonder how we could bear this thing & the other—see how ungrateful a little
prosperity makes one! The hard chairs & sofas, the stony beds .. the linen of sackcloth—the
teaspoons & teacups of immortal memory! Here we have every luxury really—& I never sh'd
desire to live in better rooms (& these are carpeted all over) nor with completer comfort. And the
cheapness is something miraculous .. frightful almost .. I open my eyes wider & wider every
day as our dinner comes! Observe, that according to our present arrangement, nobody orders the
dinner— The restaurant agrees to send us a certain number of dishes every day, on the payment of
so much a week .. about nineteen shillings. Now is'nt it delightful to take no thought of what we
shall eat, & without so much as rubbing a lamp like Aladdin, to see the table covered, with a
dinner cooked [&] served hot in the flash of a miracle, precisely at three oclock?! I told Henrietta
some particulars in my last letter, but really I must tell her some more,—because the genies of
housekeeping never did nor can do as much for her, nor for dear Minny, as the Genii of us ignorant
people for ourselves .. see if it can. Yesterday's dinner for instance—now observe! Soup à la
macaroni- A shoulder of lamb, roasted- A chicken, boiled, served with peas. Risolles of veal-
Fried potatoes & spinage[-] A rice pudding- I could not help saying, "I do wish my sisters were
here! There is dinner enough for four besides Wilson; & it's really a pity that my sisters are not
here." To which Robert answered, .. "How glad I should be if they were! it w4 give me the
greatest, greatest pleasure". And we are as loud in our wishes at coffee times, because the coffee
being peculiarly good & aromatic (& at 6½ a pound, tell Minny! but there are only ten ounces in
an Italian pound, & I heard the other day that you count twelve in England)^ it drives me to wish
for you, my own Arabel- Oh, for a good & happy talk over the Mocha! “Give us a wind, if you
are kind”6 M! Stratten, & send her out to us! You should have bread & butter too, both excellent,
& the latter stamped with the arms of the Medici—all I have seen of the Medici, by the way,
since I came to Florence— But tell me if people of small incomes are not justified in leaving their
own country of dear England, on the mere ground of the cheapness of this Italy? I did not imagine
the difference to be so great. Which reminds me of my surprise in hearing of the new plans of
Tours, adopted by the Hedleys. Do you imagine that uncle Hedley has lost money in the late
French railroad panic?^ because I do! I cant otherwise explain his leaving Paris to settle for three
years in such a place as Tours. I heard it with astonishment. Tours is cheap, & affords facilities
for education, I believe, cheaply—but to settle down in that close provincial atmosphere, asphyxié
by the worst kind of English wateringplace society, is a position which for myself I should not
choose by any means, & which I should have supposed undesirable to the Hedleys for various
reasons—10 And for three years! I fancied that they fluctuated between Nice & Florence for next
winter—and how anyone in the world could prefer Tours to Florence, is incomprehensible, even
from motives of pecuniary prudence. Perhaps they want to be within reach of Pau, & think of the
expense of travelling. Expense has something to do with it, be sure— When does Arabella Bevan
arrive? & how is she? And tell me everything of M! Bevan, & whether the turning Roman Catholic
be true or not— If true, I am sorry on some accounts—but you know my opinion that as far as a
man is personally concerned, on all essential points, he might as well be a Catholic by profession,
as what he was when he talked in my room.11 A man with a conscience put in irons by other men
under the name of “Church” & “Tradition”, .. a man who cannot think or love, or breathe, in
fact, intellectually, but under the biting pressure of such iron, is a Roman Catholic already, &
worse than many Roman Catholics, who being born in their creed instead of choosing it, often
hold to it more loosely than a convert can by possibility do— I felt sure that M! Bevan would not
stop where he stood—I told Jane so quite openly. Not that persons may not stand there & stop—
hundreds of persons stand there & stop: but then they stand there because pushed there by the shoulders, & they stop there because not pushed away by the shoulders. But when a man has walked there of himself, or even partly of himself.. there's no reason why he sh'nt not walk away of himself—do you understand? if he has thought for himself (very falsely as I think) to A, he is likely to think for himself to B... that is, if there is any logic in the man,.. for everything depends on that. And M! Bevan's views were not hastily taken up without examination. He had examined, he was in earnest—it was'nt a mere matter of either feeling or fashion, remember. I felt very sure of the conclusion in his case, just as I feel very sorry for the Hedleys—Uncle Hedley will be distressed, I think. Will Arabella settle in England really? or does she go to Tours? & is that the object? Mind you tell me the whole history of Capt. Reynolds. Henrietta says that she likes what she hears of him. Wont it be a long while to wait for his Majority? and in the meanwhile will it be pleasant to live near Canterbury, under cover of a regiment? Will Arlette like it? Above all things dont let dear Bummy (if the persuasion of all of you can do anything) bury herself in the country in a cottage, unless she can press near some other cottage with a loving friend in it. Little she knows the effect of such a life on her— In no way, is it a healthy, wise life, for one of her temperament—advise her against it earnestly. And yet it is difficult to know what to substitute... it is difficult to advise: but certainly I would not advise that— Anything but that, I think. I do wish she had a friend to live with or travel with—change of scene w'd be good for her spirits & health, but she w'd not have courage to travel alone, like our friend M!' Jameson, & other female friends of hers. Perhaps she will go back to Ireland with the Butlers—Poor dear Bummy— Give her my love, if she holds it worth having. Papa's refusal to receive her, accounts sufficiently I think, for her silence lately towards you—it was strange in Papa!—but he probably thought awfully of the gallant Captain & the matrimonial plague-spot. I wish he had spared poor Bummy the expense of taking lodgings, so considerable at this time of year in London. Tell me all about Bummy, & Arlette too—& tell me how Arlette behaves under the approximated shadow of orange-blossom & if she is very much in love indeed; & where she goes after the marriage.

By the way, we are amused at my 'settlements' just arriving! They came in the box, you know, which was'nt the reason of my being so anxious about it's safety, I do assure you, Arabel. Eight months after my marriage, it will be a most satisfactory settlement indeed, & Robert will "tie himself up" after his good pleasure rather than mine, against the temptation of... what w'd the temptation be?.. of ruining me & letting me have no more coffee! Oh, the wisdom of this world, how foolish it is!—I do laugh it all to scorn from the deepest of my soul, knowing what HE is, & what I'am even, & what the world is that would guard one of us from the other!— These settlements make such a packet, I could not hold it in one hand— Very good settlements, I have no doubt at all. There they are, thrown into the cabinet for the present, because, being just too late for M!' Jameson, we want another witness to the signatures. Perhaps the Hanfords, when they come, will afford us one.. or two.— Afterwards I am to make my will, says M! Kenyon.. & Robert is to make another will in addition to the one or two made already—oh, there cant be too many wills & precautions. It is only a pity rather that we have not each of us fifty thousand a year to make it all worth while. Now pray dont be anxious about Venice— If we spend the winter there, we shall hear & give good reasons for it—we dont bind ourselves to M! Irving's theory,
although founded on the experience of an invalid who had tried other places. I know it is the fashion to cry out against poor Venice; & very likely the fashion may be able to justify itself—we shall enquire further & not be rash, though of course wishing to be at Venice & to keep tryst with dear M! Kenyon who proposes to meet us there late in October—Now October is too late, unless we c^ winter in Venice—only I dare say we might draw him further on to the south, were it needful. We *don*t* go to the Baths of Lucca. We said we would, when I was ill & Robert was frightened, but now in this smooth water we say nothing of the sort—I would’nt go there for the world if I could draw breath anywhere else in Italy. The scenery is beautiful, .. but the society .. the ways & means of the place .. nothing can be more detestable! “divided between Gambling & Church of Englandism”, say our informants—meaning no disrespect to the church of England, observe, but simply that the schismatic & controversial spirit is keen & bitter there. Then there are races, & promenades, & soirees east & west; & people live so close together in the small mountain hive, that one could’nt escape the buzzing & stinging. No—our plan is to remain at Florence as long as the heat will let us:—(and I cant fancy these rooms being hot, let the sun do its best! ..) & then .. why, then, we must fix on some one plan of the hundred. We want to take the round through Sienna & Volterra & Pisa again—& Prato & Pistoia—we want them for our book. I have seen nothing yet to write of. Depend on our shunning the heat, & the cold—Robert would think for me if I did not for myself. I assure you quite enough fuss is made about my taking a step on the floor—M’s Jameson said, “Now my dear Browning, dont force Ba to eat anymore than she really can[..]” The fuss made about me is something extraordinary. Moreover I heard the other day, in consequence of being so much better, that “for the rest of my life” I was to drink every day so many glasses of port wine—a libation poured out of gratitude, I suppose, for want of another reason. Naples is the most uncertain of climates, tell Mr. Orme—hot sun, cold winds. Pisa & Rome are considered equable & mild beyond other places—Wilson has revived since she came here, as by a miracle. She feels, she says, quite herself, quite well—I am so glad. It is a pure, clear air, & the weather has been lovely, & she likes & admires this beautiful city .. with the exception of the statues in the piazzas & gardens, which appear to her quite scandalous. She confesses to me in confidence that she would’nt “walk with a gentleman” in the piazza Gran Duca, “on any account.” Today Wilson has bought a very pretty watch for herself .. silver .. but very small & flat & elegantly made, & has given for it only £2—4! If the works are really good, it is surprisingly cheap .. but I sh’t be afraid.—Sorrento (I just think of Sorrento) is such a way off, remember! Tell Henrietta THAT! I wonder poor M! English sh’t return to Torquay—Such things surprise me always. If Wilson’s sister sh’t go to the <…>23 *I shall be sorry .. & this “pour cause”.*24 Cant you get her some milder situation .. talking of climates, & begging my dearest Henrietta’s pardon for some of her friends. You cant think what pleasure it is to me to have this piano for Robert’s playing—He plays well, & has a great deal of science, & we have a constant succession of new music. The library too is excellent—& Flush approves of the sofa. Did you hear that Heraud had been lecturing somewhere (at Manchester I think) on the poems of Robert & Elizabeth Barrett Browning “now joined together in the bonds of holy matrimony”.25 Just that form, as it was repeated to us! How exquisitely absurd, to be sure! I tell you all sorts of things huddled up together but not “joined together” by any means or order—Now do you sit
down & write me a delightful, delightful letter, as so often you do, & never often enough. When I write next, which will be to my dear, dear Henrietta, I shall be able to say perhaps a little about the Venus. Robert went today to reconnoitre the staircase, & there are five flights! But he can carry me up he says, though half it frightens me lest all this carrying injure him—only it w'd not be right for me just now to walk upstairs, & if it were right, cospetto di Bacco! why my conscientious convictions w'd avail nothing. I might as well talk to Fiesole in the distance as try to persuade him. Since my marriage I have scarcely walked up any sort of stairs above three times, even when as able to walk up stairs as you: its a thing not permitted ... "Pray what did I marry you for but to carry you up stairs". I am going out to drive tomorrow by the way its settled at last. Wilson thinks, can only do me good— We shall engage a carriage for a month, so as to have an hour's drive every day—just engaged, understand, for that hour or hour & a half: the expense will be a daily fifteen pence: & already it is so hot that we are to go "in the cool of the evening" at about six. I who have not been out, cant fancy its being hot these rooms are so very cool—and if it were not for Robert's & Wilson's affidavits to its being "burning, out of doors", & to possible walks between hedges of scarlet roses in full bloom, I should laugh at the idea of taking such precautions. No warmth, except the most temperate has penetrated to me yet. We are on the north of the Arno, you see—& are perforated with doors & windows & protected from the sun both by walls of marble, & Venetian blinds. I do hope we shall be able to remain here some time. We shall have letters of introduction to Powers & some other artist. Mrs Trollope is said to have settled herself in Florence by purchase, but she is absent, & our terrors have "for the nonce" subsided— Till now I have put off mentioning the books George sent to me because I wanted to look into them a little first. Tell him with my best love that I thank him affectionately for his kindness & sh'd still more thank him if he had written something rather, rather kinder than that "Mrs Browning" on the fly leaf,—but I have corrected it in my own hand and put "To Ba from her ever dear George", so it is all right now. Emerson has fine thoughts but seems to want the artistic faculty wholly. Sir L Bulwer is justified to the utmost, I think, & is a gentleman in his justification. The Eclectic Review is on the excess side of flattery. How curious, the quotation from Landor's poem on Robert, is on the last page! quite unconsciously done too of course! Give my best love & thanks to my dearest George. And mind you congratulate dear Sette for me. And speak of Henry & Alfred & Occy. Why cant George speak to Papa of Henry's wish to accept Mrs Margary's offer? It really does at this distance, appear to me a quite monstrous state of things, that he sh'd be hindered in the legitimate & honorable desire of taking a step out into life for himself. Best love to him & all of them.
poem which is “full of sweet & noble grandeur” & “certainly the best thing he has done yet.”

Very glad I am for Tennyson & the world. Do you see M! Hunter often? Tell me of him, & how Mary is— Any prospect of settlement? What bazaar are you working for? Do walk out Arabel, if ever you think of me. Do you see M! Boyd? My love to him: I shall write soon. You sh! be very flattered by the extraordinary confidence reposed in you by your friends. Tell me more & more. Why doesn’t Susan have bridesmaids instead of enacting them? I thought... I thought!... My love to her & Surtees too. Is the successful man at Taunton likely to move soon? Mention your headaches & love me as I love you. To dearest Henrietta I shall write next. Shall I dare to put my feet into these too beautiful slippers of hers? And what fairy gloves you send me! Dear & kind, both of you! Remember now that I am well... eat, sleep, look... but I can’t describe myself. God bless you dear, darling Arabel! How I love you!

Best love to dear Minny, whom always I mean to write to & shall soon. Do remember me when you hear of dear Storm.

Address, on integral page: Miss Arabel Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street.
Publication: BC, 14, 186-194.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year determined from EBB’s reference to the Brownings’ removal from Pisa to Florence in April 1847.
2. Sic, for bârège, a semi-transparent textile made of silk and wool, which would have been particularly suitable for summer wear. The “silk shot” was a type of design pressed into the fabric.
3. This famous statue, discovered at Hadrian’s Villa about 1580, and attributed to Cleomenes, was taken to Florence during the reign of Cosimo III. It has been in the Uffizi since 1680.
4. I have been unable to identify a likeness of Arabella from this period that fits EBB’s description.
5. Since 1826 the English pound had been measured at 16 ounces, but previously it had generally been measured at 12 ounces.
7. A bad harvest in 1846 led to an economic crisis in 1847, and this was followed by rising costs of food, and high unemployment. Railway concessions, which had been popular investment opportunities for banks such as Rothschilds, suffered declines when they were unable to meet the government’s high expectations for lower expenses and higher revenues.
8. Underscored twice.
9. “Stifled,” or “suffocated.”
10. Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in France (London: John Murray, 1847) notes that “the number of English established in and around Tours is very considerable; they have a subscription club” (p. 197); however, it says nothing about the educational facilities available there.
11. For her account of their meeting in Wimpole Street, see BC, 13, 158.
12. Charles William Reynolds (1813-85), a captain in the 16th Lancers, married EBB’s cousin, Charlotte Mary (“Arlette”) Butler (1825-88) on 24 June 1847 at St. George’s, Hanover Square.
13. Cf. I Corinthians 3:19: “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”
14. Underscored twice.
15. Cf. RB, “Respectability”: “How many precious months and years / Of youth had passed, that speed so fast, / Before we found it out at last, / The world, and what it fears?” (lines 5-8).
16. See letter 6, note 4. A married woman’s right to make a will was directly linked to a marriage settlement; “without a settlement her property would have become her husband’s at the time of their marriage, and she would have had no right to make a will without his consent” (Lee Holcombe, Wives and Property, Oxford:
Martin Robertson, 1983, p. 14). Holcombe also points out that "if a wife died before her husband [as happened in the case of the Brownings], her real property passed not to him but to her heirs-at-law as specified by statute—her children and grandchildren or, failing these, her father or her mother brothers and sisters. At the same time, a surviving husband had the right by the 'curtesy of England,' as it was called, to a life interest in his wife's lands. ... The husband's right depended upon the birth of a child of the marriage capable of inheriting the property, for whom he acted as guardian" (p. 22). No will from this period has survived for either of the Brownings.

17. Frances Hanford (1823-75) and her brother Compton John Hanford (1819-60), en route to Rome from England, called on the Brownings on 28 November 1846, and again on their return from Rome in May 1847 (see BC, 14, 368 and 371). While the Hanfords were in Florence he witnessed the Brownings' marriage settlement, which he took back to England. The Hanfords were the niece and nephew of EBB's friends, James and Julia Martin, and their family seat was Woollashall, Worcestershire, near Hope End.

18. An allusion to the debate then current in the Church of England between the Anglo-Catholic faction (i.e., the "Puseyites" or "Tractarians") and the more protestant evangelical wing of the Church.

19. Presumably for their joint book on Italy; see letter 8, note 4.

20. Charlotte Orme (née Searman, 1787-1862) was governess to the Barrett children at Hope End. Evidently she was considering a visit to Italy for her health after her unfortunate experience with the cold water cure the previous year (see the postscript to letter 2165 in BC, 11, 299).

21. Now called the Piazza della Signoria. Wilson might have been scandalized by any one of several statues in the Piazza, including Michelangelo's "David," Cellini's "Perseus," Bandinelli's "Hercules subduing Cacus," or "the Rape of the Sabines" by Giovanni di Bologna, each of which is a realistic (and nude) portrayal of the human form.

22. Underscored three times.

23. The name of the family to whom Wilson's sister may go into service has been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella. It is unclear as to which of Wilson's five sisters EBB is referring; they are identified in BC, 13, 381.

24. "With good reason."

25. John Abraham Heraud (1799-1887), poet, dramatist, and journalist, was at this time the editor of The Christian's Monthly Magazine. Although Heraud reviewed RB's works, for example Dramatic Romances and Lyrics in The Critic for 27 December 1845 (see BC, 11, 366-367), I have been unable to verify EBB's reference to him "lecturing."

26. See note 3 above.

27. Literally, "by the face of Bacchus!," used as an exclamatory expression to mean "good heavens!"

28. Hiram Powers (1805-73) was an American sculptor from Vermont. He and his family had been living in Florence for ten years, and they were to become some of the Brownings' closest friends in Florence. The "other artist" might be Horatio Greenough (1805-52), another American sculptor living in Florence at this time. John Kenyon wrote a letter of introduction to Powers for the Brownings in April, as did George Duyckinck on 10 May (see BC, 14, 371).

29. Frances Milton Trollope (1780-1863) had established herself in Florence in 1843 with her son, Thomas Adolphus Trollope (1810-92). He married Theodosia Garrow (1825-65) in early 1848 (see letter 24). In 1850, together with his mother he purchased a house in Piazza Maria Antonia (now Piazza dell'Indipendenza), which became known as the "Villino Trollope," a popular meeting place for the Anglo-Florentine community. At this time they were living in the Casa Olivieri.

30. George sent a copy of The Eclectic Review (Reconstruction, A846) along with books by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Edward Bulwer. A review of EBB's Poems (1844) appeared in the November 1846 issue of The Eclectic Review (for the complete text, including the quotation from Landor, see BC, 14, 375-380). Westwood had mentioned this review to her in a letter in December 1846 (see BC, 14, 66), but he seemingly failed to recognise the closing lines of the review as those from Landor's "To Robert Browning." The work by Emerson
Letter 13

6 May [1847]

which George sent was doubtless Emerson’s *Poems* (1847). Describing the poems in general, a review in *The Athenæum* for 6 February 1847 parallels EBB’s criticism, suggesting that “a wild, low music, indeed, accompanies these artless strains; an indistinct, uncertain melody” (no. 1006, p. 145). *A Word to the Public* (London: Saunders & Otley, 1847) by Edward Bulwer, sent by George, sold as lot 529 in *Browning Collections* (see *Reconstruction*, A526; present whereabouts unknown). George inscribed the volume “Mrs. R. Browning,” and EBB added “From dear George to Ba, Florence, 1847.”

31. Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer (1803–73), 1st Baron Lytton, had to supplement his income by writing after his marriage in 1827 to Rosina Doyle Wheeler, and by this time he had written a number of popular novels, including *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), *Rienzi* (1835) and *Zanoni* (1842), all of which were known to the Brownings. According to the *DNB*, “some criticisms about his idealisation of criminals had provoked him to answer in 'A Word to the Public.'” Macaulay reassured him that his “vindication is undoubtedly well written and with great temper and dignity” (Victor Alexander Lytton, *The Life of Edward Bulwer First Lord Lytton*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1913, II, 94).

32. It is unclear what position Peter John Margary had offered to Henry.

33. Cf. I Thessalonians 4:17: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.”

34. Tennyson’s poem *The Princess* was published in December 1847. EBB had referred to the poem in January 1846; see *BC*, 12, 29.

35. From letters written at this time, it is clear that EBB thought that Susannah (Susan) Cook (1822–61), sister of Surtees Cook, was to be married. However, in a letter from EBB to Henrietta, dated 9 July 1847, it is clear that EBB had misunderstood or confused Susan Cook with someone else (see *BC*, 14, 242). Susan Cook married Thomas Bruce Stone (1820–55) on 9 May 1855.

Letter 14

[From RB]

Florence,

May 6, ’47.

My two dear sisters’ notes have been left for too long without acknowledgment—but I know Ba could not have written those long letters wherein I see her put her very heart & soul, without saying something of my gratitude and delight—indeed, she always promises me to do so—but when I watch the little rapid fingers working, I can never flatter myself so far as to say—“now she is delivering my message!” So, this time, there shall be a word from myself—a word of sincerest thanks for all your kindness, from those first days which Henrietta reminds me so charmingly and unnecessarily, down to that last letter of hers which came to Pisa, and this very pretty purse of Arabel’s which arrived two days ago. How perfectly good of you both! You do, indeed, deserve Ba for a sister—and she also, deserves you,—if the truest, warmest affection can deserve anything. And do you not conceive what a happiness it is to me that I can so entirely sympathize with Ba in this bestowal of her love, and feel that instead of losing by it, I gain infinitely? Henrietta speaks of the early discoveries which you both made—but neither of you has yet to discover, I hope, that all that delicacy and considerateness was quite understood and appreciated then and now—altho’ I could not, certainly, know the full value of your behaviour at the time. I earnestly trust you may yourselves find such friends as you have been to me—such admirable, perfect friends!
Let me say no more of this now, when I can please you more certainly by speaking of Ba—
She will have told you about our arrangements at Florence—how happy we are, and hope to
continue. She is fast recovering health and strength, and, I doubt not, will be in a few weeks
better than ever. Henrietta asks me to say candidly if she is “always obedient”; this Ba, who is
my wife;—very disobedient she is—for all my commanding, and imploring to boot, will not
make her eat a little more at dinner, or supper—nor fancy something she would like me to get her
from this gay Florence—nor otherwise occupy her thoughts with herself for one moment. The
serious truth is, that I no more believe her to be capable of one selfish feeling than of—.. but the
comparison breaks down altogether,—or, rather, I can find nothing to compare with her entire
generosity and elevation of character—and when I solemnly affirm that I have never been able to
detect the slightest fault, failing or shadow of short-coming in her,—recollect that we have lived
constantly together for eight months: I certainly never believed such a creature to be possible,
and am full of thankfulness to God for blessing me with such a priceless gift. I can hardly talk
after this fashion to all the world, you will easily conceive— but it is my privilege to be able to
make such confidences to you—quite inadequate as they are!

I delight myself by thinking that one day you will see Ba again, and hear all the things never
to be written—I cannot help thinking, also, that your eyes would detect many particularities in
which we go wrong, like beginners as we are—(or rather, as I am—for Ba never sets me right—I
can only guess what tends to her good—and therefore to mine) But whether we meet sooner or
later, be very sure of one thing—that I am now and shall ever be attached to you by every feeling
of gratitude and affection. This is just a line for the present—but I will soon write at greater
length, when we fairly settle. God bless you—dearest Sisters, as you are to your

RB.

Address, on integral page: Miss Barrett.
Publication: BC, 14, 194–196.
Source: Transcript in editor’s file.

1. See BC, 11, 322.

Letter 15

[Florence]
May 29–30–[1847]1

My own dearest Arabel here I am, writing to you again—Yesterday was Papa’s birthday2 & made
me sorrowful with the recollections of which I had of course a whole heartfull— I could not drink
his health though Robert proposed that. I only could pray for him, & think for myself & him that
no one in the world has more tenderly loved him than one he has cast off— Has loved him? does
still love him, as God knows well. There is no use in talking. To be so cast off is a lasting grief to
me, notwithstanding all other sources of happiness: I cannot, as seems easy to some, forget in a
moment the beloved of a whole life—and for Papa, my love for him has always been a peculiar
thing, and if he had stooped to hold me by a thread, why the thread we have been strong enough.
I would give my life for his .. even now, when my life has acquired a new value— Well—I am glad that yesterday is done with at any rate— And now I shall try to write to you of something else—

We are thinking, Arabel, of a wild, delightful way of spending the summer .. at least of spending some of the summer months .. or weeks even .. for we need not bind our inclinations: we are thinking of going to Vallombrosa. You know, Milton knew, everybody has a degree of knowledge about this place—has seen it between sleep & wake— There is a monastery like an eagle’s nest, in the Apennine, .. in the midst of mountains, rocks, precipices, waterfalls, drifts of snow, and magnificent chesnut forests—

“Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks
Of Vallombrosa.” All from chesnut trees!

The solitude is complete .. a few cottages, & some house of refuge .. no carriage-road within five miles of it. You go in a kind of basket-sledge drawn by oxen, if you cant ride on mules, and in order to any sort of residence, you must have a “permission” from the Archbishop of Florence. The monks w4 admit you, upon this, to their interior; but Wilson & I being women, we sh^ be the ruin of the confraternity of course, & so we must stay outside in the house assigned to meet fair perditions, .. being supplied with food from the monastery— Now what do you think, Arabel?

The plan is to me the most exquisite of the hundred we have made. The solitude, the wildness, the coolness—and then the nearness to Florence—for it is within twenty miles, though from the precipitous character of the road, thrown out of the usual casualties of ‘neighbourhood.’ Practically we shall be a hundred miles off, or more— Also, in the case of our being tired or unwell, forthwith we can tumble down the mountains back into Florence—no harm is done. But we shant be tired .. we shall sit & wander in the forests, & do a great deal of writing I hope, & get old books from the monks, & enjoy the change from this present luxurious way of living— I hope I shall have rather a soft sofa, & for other things I dont care a straw now, being well enough to walk on my two feet— Arabel, you w4 be surprised to see how transformed I am since even I wrote last. There is a continual moaning & lamenting about the heat .. I cant help moaning .. I cant do a single thing in the way of coherency of ideas .. I read six sentences & fall fast asleep—the thermometer standing at eighty four you will imagine the effect on all breathing beings, Flush included!. But after all, & though going out in the morning to see any sight under the sun is out of the question, I am well & getting fatter & stronger day by day .. and when we drive to the Cascine4 at six which we do every evening for two hours, .. open carriage, parasol over one’s eyes, .. & as little clothes as possible .. why at one certain little gate we leave our vehicle & walk into the hayfield, & walk & walk .. & watch the pheasants & hear them crow in the woods—Robert was in raptures at my walking as far as I did yesterday, without being in the least tired by it. I am surprised myself indeed— I sh4 have thought that nobody c5 get strong in such a temperature— A most unaccustomed heat say the Italians, for May, .. and they only hope that it does’nt threaten something prodigious—not an earthquake perhaps, but certainly a “burrasca”. In England such heat w4 be past supporting— Here the air is elastic, & there is always a breath of wind about six o’clock in the evening, which comes to revive us. Earlier we sit with every door open, every window open, every green blind shut fast, in as deep a darkness as can be cultivated. I generally
sit in a doorway .. in a confluence of distant doors- The worst is at night. Doors & windows stand wide open then just the same .. but Flush & I cant sleep, & are given to wandering from one room to another- I sleep half the day instead .. so nothing is lost .. as you wd say indeed if you could see me. Nothing lost, except the great sights—but the galleries close at three, and you may conceive the impossibility of going out in the morning- At six, we begin our drive generally by entering some church .. by looking at Masaccio’s frescos, or standing by Michael Angelo’s tomb6 .. & then proceed to the CASCINE which we more & more enjoy- Robert says that the effect of that peculiar scenery, half woodland half suburban, is calming to the nerves—and I think the same. We fall into deep silences which turn to reveries of themselves. Some of the avenues remind me of Cheltenham—the trees take hands over your head & perfectly shut out the sky .. but then, there are depths of wood, & ravishing glimpses of hills, & sometimes the shining river. It is not of course very extensive- I speak more of the influence of the place, & of the impressions you take from it- I have been twice to the galleries .. once to the Pitti, & once to the Ufizzi [sic] .. which is nearly equal to not going at all, so impossible it was to gather in one sight of every thousand.

But the heat .. the heat!- Oh, one cant dare it or bear it- If the weather does not change a little, we must return from Vallombrosa [sic] in the autumn (which is our plan indeed) & catch up what we let fall now. The first day, the day of the Pitti, was cool enough—we went there with the Hanfords. Wasn’t it curious that we sh’d go with the Hanfords? The carriage had been ordered the preceding day to be at the door at nine the next morning— & at eight oclock while we were at coffee, (eight in the evening) the Hanfords arrived—were to leave Florence by diligence the evening after, & would go with us to the Pitti gallery. So in the morning we called at their hotel for them, & we took them to the Pitti, & then to Powers’s studio .. & he was kind & cordial & showed us his Greek Slave & Fisher boy, and the Eve yet unworked in the marble7 .. of which I liked the Eve best & the Fisher boy least, I think— Go to see the Fisher boy & tell me how you like it— Oh, it is beautiful of course .. but less satisfying to my imagination than either the Greek Slave (exhibited in London last year) or the Eve .. though Robert admired it beyond my admiration— The Eve stands in divine unconsciousness of naked beauty—the apple, plucked, in her hand .. plucked but not tasted .. the sadness rather than the impurity of sin is in her face .. just one touch of sadness, .. the foreshadow of all loss— The serpent has his trail about her feet, loosely, not touching them, & looking into her eyes with his eyes of satisfied expectation, having no need to tempt any more, after the first failure. What she has plucked she will taste, he knows. It is very serenely, beautifully sad—the passion is behind a cloud, as it ought always to be in sculpture— & I admired it more for having just seen the Venus of Canova,8 with her large ringletted head, huddling her drapery round her waist with some suggestion of indecency. But oh, Arabel, the Raffaels of the Gallery!—9 I shall not speak of them— I cant paint Raffael over again. Divine, divine they are— The Madonna della Seggiola—and the Madonna del Gran Duca, my madonna, which stood on my chimney[.]-piece in Wimpole Street— Oh, that divine child, that infantine majesty—that supernatural penetrating sweetness of the eyes & lips— Raffael understood better than all your theologians how God came in the flesh, “yet without sin.”10 Divine is the only word for these works— No engraving can give you an idea of them— Another day when we went to the
other Gallery & saw the famous Venus,\(^{11}\) I am almost ashamed to tell you that I was *disappointed in the Venus*— It produced (to tell you the bare truth) very little effect on me— My own fault I do not doubt— & Robert says that I shall feel differently in a little time: I do hope I shall— You see I was familiar, from drawings, with the attitude .. the turn of the head, the position of the arms .. (such great hands, Arabell!) .. & what was new to me in the whole did not suffice to produce an emotion,—except that I thought, "Here I am face to face with the Venus"— I would rather have that unfinished "Dead Christ & the three Marys"\(^{12}\) which was the last work of Michael Angelo & struck me so in the cathedral, two days since— how infinitely rather. The work is unfinished .. the marble half awake—but the passionate suggestiveness of what is done there, in the midst of which the artist fell asleep,\(^{13}\) is to me worth a hundred of such elaborated shining things as that Venus— & I cant help telling you so, indeed.

As I told Henrietta, the Hanfords came to dinner with us after the gallery, & I was .. we were .. much pleased with them both .. especially with Fanny who talked more than her brother, & was very affectionate to me— Mind you see her when you have an opportunity— She would please you: she ought to please you. We seized [sic] upon M! Hanford as "a witness" to the great "Settlement",\(^{14}\) which had arrived a fortnight before & been cast into the cabinet unexamined.

An English witness had been recommended: and by no means, let me assure you, was it agreeable to go about soliciting our compatriots in Florence to witness our marriage settlement nearly a year after our marriage— (nine months, Arabell!) There was not the least need of further gossip about us: and it is so delightful to gossip, that nobody would abandon the opportunity, if we let them have it .. of that, we were certain— M! Hanford’s goodnature made to the rescue, then, just in time— I did not mind him— of course he knew everything from the Martins, long before: & willingly, he said, he wd do anything. So Robert & I when he & Fanny had left us on the first evening, pulled out the Deed from the cabinet (quite large enough to convey all the Rothschild funded properties to all possible generations) & began to look into it a little, because we were told to correct something— some trifle .. about a name. (The lawyers told us.) .. (Nothing in the world altogether could be more legal.) It was half past ten o'clock, & Robert said .. "Now, Ba, do you lie down on the sofa, and I will read this to you"— "Oh," I exclaimed, throwing myself down in utter prostration of body & soul, .. "if you read a page of it to me, I shall be fast asleep! .. I give you warning. I feel half asleep already at the very idea of it— I dont pretend to listen— & cant, I assure you. So I shall go to bed, if you please, and you may sit up all night, & read; & I wish you joy of it, & a very good night. I will find you asleep here in the morning, I dare say."

"But my darling, you cant behave in that way .." “But my dearest I can indeed .. It’s your Deed, you will please to remember, yours & M! Kenyon’s, & not mine by any manner of means. I do a great deal more than I ever meant to do, I can tell you, when I write my name to it as I shall, tomorrow, I suppose—” – Well & how do you think the discussion ended? *He would'nt read it either*— but "if I wd just stay, we wd draw the ends of our fingers down each page, to find the word we wanted", .. which I did .. I dont suppose that any legal instrument of the kind was ever signed unread, so, by the male principal? Women may do it— men scarcely ever perhaps— I should have insisted on his reading it, but he had put the business into M! Kenyon’s hands & resolved to sign whatever might be written— therefore there was not much use in wearying one’s soul with
that detestable jargon .. was there? Then he knew the general purpose, of course. As for me
while we were drawing our fingers down the parchment, oftener than once I had strong temptations
to put the whole into the lamp—if it had been my Deed, nothing could have saved it, I assure
you— One might laugh at the sixteen children (oh,—a countless progeny rather!) but the “future
husbands” were a little strong .. “un peu fort” .. as a legal provision in a marriage-document.
Say nothing of all this to dear M! Kenyon— He has had a great deal of trouble & the best kindest
& most generous intention in everything both to Robert & myself—only no possible argument
could have induced me to consent to a document of this sort, when I was mistress of my own
money & will & opinions— Moreover I think that any woman w’d have shrunken from it, if she had
respected the man she was ⟨about to marry⟩\textsuperscript{15} in the most vulgar sense. Robert is tied up in his
hands & in his feet—but <b>h</b>IMSELF <i>has done it—</i>my single consolation;! And now I have to make a
will, having the power “in virtue of my marriage-settlement”, and M! Kenyon advises that I should
nominate my husband as sole executor—\textsuperscript{16} I would rather make <i>no will & leave it to</i> Robert to
fulfil my wishes which he knows already—but he insists on my openly expressing them, .. for
generous, characteristic reasons which he gives me, .. & alas lest we sh’d both die on the same
day which is a possible casualty. But after all these provisions, I am a little uneasy, & shall
remain so, I fear— He has solemnly assured me that if he survived me he w’d instantly throw back
the whole into the hands of my family, & upon that single point no word of mine could make the
least impression on the resolve he had taken— Knowing him; I know he would do it— I see it as a
fixed resolution. And now he refuses to discuss the subject any more— (Say nothing when you
write.) Of course I refer only to his lifetime, .. for perfectly I agree with him that the ultimate
disposition of money received from my family, should (in the failure of directer heirs) regard my
family exclusively— There is a clear justice in <i>that</i> .. which is better than Law— But anything is
better you will say, than a dull letter— I think the “public notary” who has been here to witness a
“power of attorney” has “infected” me with his odour of parchment— And then the heat .. <i>oh</i>, the
heat— You never felt such heat, Arabel!! I dont dare to go to church through it—for the church of
England has a “pied de terre”\textsuperscript{17} here also .. & makes everybody pay sixteen pence .. every
individual .. for every service—is’nt it quite shameful? Murray promises the discontinuance of
this blot on the Establishment, in his book; but they discontinue nothing, not they! I had hoped to
find here some “branch company” of the Scotch church at Leghorn\textsuperscript{18} .. hoped in vain: & from
what we hear, the Church of England is as ill represented in this Florence as we found it at Pisa!
It is a drawback to Italy, you will say, to lose sight of the means of open communion among
Protestant Christians—but we must try to open our hearts instead, & enlarge the circle of Christian
communion which God sees, larger than we are apt to try to see. In the meanwhile, if dear M!
Stratten were here himself, I could’nt go out to his preaching .. unless he did it “in the cool of the
evening,”\textsuperscript{19} .. and <i>y</i>ou couldnt, even .. unless you aspired to St Laurence’s martyrdom on the
gridiron— Poor O’Connell! Robert has this moment been saying, “After his troubled, stormy life,
just a finger is held up, and the quiet comes”! I wish they had let him die in England, & not
agitated his last hours by the fatigues of quarrelling—yet there was a last vote, I suppose, to satisfy:
and all was done for the best— Poor O’[\textsuperscript{’}]Connell!!\textsuperscript{20} To go out with the extinction of his people, is
a melancholy end— I have felt more for him lately than ever I did, .. more <i>with him—</i> Dearest
Stormie will be in despair. By the way we shall have a letter soon, I do trust, to set a crown on the head of the other good news of the safe arrival—

Now while I think of it, let me answer your enquiry into the size of our drawing room—it is twenty four feet by eighteen, and high more than in proportion, with two very large windows—The dining room is smaller, & with only one window, eighteen feet by twelve—we use it only for dining. We have been forced to have all the carpets taken up there was no bearing the heat of a carpet: so that the rooms are less pretty to an English eye than when we took them first. 'En revanche' we keep totally free from fleas, next to mosquitos, the pest of the country. The mosquitos have not begun their regular persecutions yet, but there were a few & it is a matter of struggle & doubt whether to run the risk of a nocturnal pilage that way, or of a nightly suffocation under the mosquito net—My horror of them is fair game for Robert, whom they never bite at all—If our Stormie suffers more heat than we do, it must be ill with him—and I do hope you entreat him in all your letters, as I shall, to take precautions to drink only cooling things. It was wrong to arrive in Jamaica just as the great heats were setting in—I am expecting Henrietta's letter day by day—I have just heard from Sarianna Browning, enclosed in a letter to Robert—but I wanted one from my very own sisters besides. Not that I mean to reproach you, you Dearest—you are always kind—and I am always impatient, as well you know—You never can (only) write too often. When we are at Vallambrosa [sic] our letters will be forwarded to us, so go on directing to Florence, Poste Restante—and understand, O considerate calculator of postages, that we pay less for our letters here than we did at Pisa where the people charged us more or less precisely as they wanted pauls. "Pisani traditori" I stand by the proverb—We get our letters here about as soon, I think—but they go through Pisa, always—I have written to Bummy to her lodgings, and hope to hear that she bears up cheerfully under the parting from Arlette, and that she has some more cheerful plan for the summer than a visit to Kinnersley. She hinted to me about their wishing her to join them in the Tours colony & that sounds to me feasible & pleasant—But how could the Hedleys take a house for three years at Tours? Nobody sends me the riddle—Ends of economy might be compassed equally I should think at a less sacrifice in other ways—Italy cannot be exceeded anywhere for cheapness, be certain—Our "donna di faccenda" (we have a donna who comes for a few hours everyday to make the beds, clean the rooms, brush Robert's clothes, wash up the cups & saucers &c &c, & give her about six shillings a month for it) our donna was complaining of the price of meat the other day, the best being three pence a pound—It is dearer than usual just now—Then fruit on which the poor live so much, is to be had almost for the asking—We had a dish of excellent cherries the other day for a penny—and presently cherries are to be more than half as cheap again, they say—Figs & grapes are most wholesome nourishment—Think of these advantages for the poor! I think sometimes of our poor, Poor of England, & sigh for them—Robert, in his fits of abstinence, has dined sometimes on three halfpence worth of macaroni—the cooking & serving up & cheese being included. The accounts from England are melancholy indeed, as to the poor! How I have wandered (I observe) from the Hedleys & Tours & the hypothetical economy, & now I come back just to prophecy that they never will live out the three years there—never. Dont forget to tell M' Bevan of my adventure with his Italian grammar, and of our 'padrone' Signor Centofanti & Francesco Centofanti,—who
enquires of him continually, & whom I should like to be able to tell that his favorite master
remembers him.27 We like Centofanti very much, & if we return here from Vallombrosa to see
Florence in the autumnal coolness, should like to be in a house of his if we could manage it—
besides he is curious in all sorts of spring sofas & chairs & soft cushions .. wherever I sit I
sink—and this touches me sensibly. Certainly I think we shall be in Florence in the autumn ..
unless we go to Venice .. unless you will let us: and dear M! Kenyon says that a hundred miles or
so should make no difference to him in his journey to see us— Oh, how I wish Papa would send
you down the Rhine this year—we w^ compass anything to meet you— Go to the Tyrol .. even go
into Switzerland, I am sure— George at any rate, had better come & see us in his vacations &
“make it up” for once & all, & make me very happy besides— Tell me of Henry—& indeed of
them all— How is dear Trippy? Give her my best love always; & say how her landlord goes on.
Mention her hands & eyes— We like Florence so much that if we found it possible by the selection
of a warm situation, to winter here, we should like that—the beauty on all sides is past speaking
of, & the resources most varied— Oh, there is no harm of M" Young—she mistook—that was
all— We were excellent friends at parties.28 The amusing part was that I was under the delusion
that Robert had displeased her and I had reproached him a little for talking of George Sand &
abusing Italian literature— But by no means—, he was in the odour of sanctity with her.—29 Last
night (I finish this on the 30th,) we went to the Center of Florence to take ices, everybody being
there. It was Florence in an undress, I assure you. Women with short sleeves—& who can
wonder? This at eight oclock after our dinner. Then we came home to coffee— Wilson is much better in
spite of the heat, & likes Florence exceedingly— Tell me of M! Hunter & Mary— Do you ever hear
of Eliza Giles—ever?30 You will wonder how she came into my head— but I want to know if she
took any notice of my marriage. May God bless you my dear beloved Arabel— Think & pray for
me— Love me—as I love you— Robert’s best love to you & Henrietta— Do write, write!— Has
Lizzie come back? Do you see the Cooks? Love all ways— I am

your ever most attached

Ba.

Of course you will write the moment you have a letter from dearest Stormie— I mean to write
to him soon—& to think of him in the meanwhile, every day, very anxiously.

Always mention Papa particularly—will you? I wish Emma Monro had been about to marry
some one settled in London for your sake—but will she reside always in Devonshire?31 There
may be an alternative settlement I sh’d fancy—

God bless you dearest Arabel! how I love you!—

Love to dear Minny— I am sorry about M! Boyd.

4. Murray's *Hand-Book* describes the Cascine as "the Hyde Park of Florence, for displaying fashionable carriages or exhibiting horsemanship" (p. 576). EBB refers to the Cascine in "The Dance," stanza 1.

5. "Storm."

6. In the church of Santa Croce. The frescoes of the life of St. Peter by Tommaso Masaccio (1401–28) are in the Brancacci Chapel in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine.

7. "Eve Tempted" had only been completed in plaster; the marble would not be finished until 1849. "The Greek Slave," a nude female figure, was completed in 1843. The statue caused controversy in America, where the morality of its nudity was a focusing issue. The work was first exhibited in London in 1845, and again at the Great Exhibition in 1851. It was the subject of a sonnet by EBB, published in *Poems* (1850). *The Athenæum* for 24 May 1845 called it "a very remarkable work,—and might be thought still more so as the work of an American, were it not remembered that the sculptor has been for ten or a dozen years past resident in Florence" (no. 917, p. 522). The reviewer also commented at length on the nudity of the figure. The "Fisher Boy," begun in 1841, had been completed in 1844.

8. In the Pitti Palace; Murray's *Hand-Book* describes it as standing in the centre of the "Hall of Flora ... upon a pivot, and can thus be turned round by the custode. Her head, owing to the hair being curled and arranged, seems to be too large for her body. When the Venus de' Medici was carried off to Paris, this statue replaced her in the tribune" (p. 564). EBB's depreciation of Canova might have been influenced by RB. Upon returning from his trip to Italy in 1838, RB told Fanny Haworth that he "was disappointed in one thing, Canova" (*BC*, 4, 67), and he refers pejoratively to the sculptor in *Pippa Passes*, I, 375.

9. For EBB's earlier praise of Raphael, see letter 1, note 11. Murray's *Hand-Book* defines this as "the sweetest of all his Madonnas, if not the grandest" (p. 560), and the Madonna del Gran' Duca as "a very singular and beautiful picture. It consists simply of the Virgin and Child upon a dark background, almost without any accessories" (p. 563). It had previously been in the possession of Grand Duke Ferdinand III, "who was so pleased with it, that whenever he travelled he took it with him on his journey" (p. 563). Evidently, EBB's father had owned a copy or print of this famous painting; however, it does not appear in the Christie's catalogue of the sale of his effects (see *Reconstruction*, pp. 593–606), nor in a list of paintings made by EBB's brother Alfred in 1853.


11. i.e., Venus de Medici.

12. Murray's *Hand-Book* explains that "behind the high altar is a group of Joseph of Arimathea, the Virgin and another Mary, entombing the body of our Lord, left unfinished, by Michael Angelo ... It is said that he worked at this group during the later years of his life, intending to have it placed upon his tomb" (p. 487).

13. Cf. I Corinthians 15:18: "Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." Also, I Thessalonians 4:14: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Frederick Hartt has commented on Michelangelo's "Pietà" (now in the Museo del Duomo in Florence) that "rough though the unfinished surfaces may be, the emotional and spiritual relationships and the power and beauty of the forms and composition need no analysis" (*History of Italian Renaissance Art*, 4th ed., London: Thames and Hudson, 1994, p. 640).

14. At the end of a letter to Henrietta on 16 [-21] May [1847], EBB wrote that "the Hanfords have been here: just one day—& I like them both much— They went with us to the gallery, and then dined with us ... & Robert would give them champagne! ... The Hanfords witnessed the signature of the great 'Settlement' & take it to England to Mr. Kenyon. Neither Robert nor I read it—we only signed. It was enough for me & my particular satisfaction to see, by a glance, that provision was made for a countless progeny! & all 'future husbands!!'" (*BC*, 14, 210).

15. EBB has written the phrase in angle brackets above the word "married," which she has crossed out.
16. See letter 13, note 16.

17. According to Murray's *Hand-Book*, "Divine service is performed every Sunday at 11 in the morning, and 3 in the afternoon, in a new church situated nel Maglio, at the back of S. Marco. It was built by subscription, and opened in Nov. 1844. A debt is charged on this church which it is hoped the liberality of travellers will soon discharge. Persons wishing to engage seats for any period, should apply at the church every Saturday from one till three o'clock. The price of admission is 3 pauls. This charge was made at the doors, but was about to be discontinued, and the contributions left to the generosity of those frequenting the church, and who had not taken settings for a fixed period" (p. 477). According to Francis Coghlan, "English divine service is performed twice every Sunday in the church, *Via della Aqua*" (*Hand-Book for European Tourists*, London: H. Hughes, 1847, p. 585).

18. See letter 9, note 6. There was no Presbyterian Church in Florence at this time; however, one was eventually established, and the service was "performed on Sundays, in the morning in French, and in the evening in English, at the Swiss Church, next the Casa Schneider, on the Lungo" (Francis Coghlan, *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, London: Tallant & Allen, 1856, p. 169).

19. Cf. Genesis 3:8: "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day."

20. The Irish politician Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847) had left England on 22 March 1847 for Italy, as opposition within his own ranks weakened his already failing health. He reached Genoa on 6 May, and he died there nine days later. Although his heart was embalmed and carried to Rome, where it is entombed in the Church of St. Agatha according to his wishes, his body was returned to Ireland and buried in Dublin.

21. Evidently, EBB's brother had sympathies for the Irish national cause. which might have been linked to his interest in Catholicism; see letter 7, note 17.

22. "In return," or "on the other hand."


24. Kinnersley Castle, in Herefordshire, was the home of Leonard Parkinson, a dealer in slaves with EBB's great uncle, George Goodin Barrett. Parkinson's daughter, Mary, married EBB's uncle, John Altham Graham-Clarke, in 1812, and they made their home at Kinnersley Castle.

25. "Housekeeper."

26. An allusion to worsening economic conditions; see letter 13, note 7.

27. Francesco Centofanti. EBB had related the story of Centofanti and Bevan's book in a letter to Henrietta a few weeks earlier (see *BC*, 14, 205). The Brownings later engaged Centofanti as their agent for letting Casa Guidi while they were away; however, the association came to an abrupt end when they discovered that he had been less than completely honest in his dealings with them. In a letter to James Russell Lowell (who sub-let Casa Guidi) in August 1853, William Wetmore Story reported: "Browning received your letter enclosing Centofanti's receipt for the rent of Casa Guidi—and I believe it had the effect of utterly smashing C's credit with Browning" (*BAF*, p. 280).


29. i.e., all is well. EBB is referring to an old tradition that the bodies of saints, or saintly people, give off a pleasant odour at the time of death.

30. Eliza Wilhelmina Giles (née Cliffe, 1810-48), a neighbour and correspondent from Hope End days. In her diary entry for 16 November 1831, EBB recorded that "Eliza had stated that I wd. not marry an angel from Heaven" (*Diary*, p. 180). Eliza married George Giles in 1844, and they resided in Larkfield, near Waterford.

31. See letter 10, note 23.
My own dearest Arabel I am writing what I hope may reach you on a day when I shall think much & tenderly of you\textsuperscript{2}... more than I do everyday, & that is saying a great deal—You will know, whether it reach you or not, that I most think of you... that no absence could make you less present to me—perhaps you will guess that I shall love you more than ever. May God bless you dearest dearest Arabel, & make you happy according to your choice & His will, recompensing you for all the good & gracious affections which is the debt I owe you forever—To see you & hear you would be the greatest of joy to me—believe it while you believe me—May God bring us together before long... yet how close to you I feel while I write this—close in heart & in love—

Robert declares to me that I am writing to you now for the third time—To which I answer that I must at any rate, write to you now, for especial reasons, but that assuredly my last letter but one went to dearest Henrietta—Did'nt it? Do tell me. I meant to preserve the perfect symmetry of my correspondence—only there are necessary exceptions as on the present occasion—And I have just had your letter... went to the post office for it myself. How far can I walk?—farther than Hodgson's do you ask?\textsuperscript{3} Yes, certainly farther than Hodgsons. The post office is in the Piazza Gran Duca, where the Palazzo Vecchio is & the gallery of the Uffizzi [sic]. Well, when I got your letter I was on my way to the Gallery... walked to the doors... perhaps about as far as to Cavendish Square... or say, Oxford Street... then, up stairs, (stairs as high as to my Wimpole Street room,—positively refusing to be carried) & through & through the gallery, sitting down of course at intervals—then, returning by carriage—I was tired, but not too tired for our drive in the evening, and altogether I call it miraculous—If you had but seen me when we came here first! It is only a month, recollect, since I began to go out even in the carriage—and now I am stronger than before the Pisa illness... oh, infinitely stronger—The air of this Florence vivifies, I think, & yet is not too stimulating: it agrees with all three of us, Robert,—Wilson & myself, and we might perhaps do a foolisher thing than settle here, for next winter & autumn, after our escapade to Vallambrosa [sic]—Yet we shant[.] Robert is afraid of the winds for me, and he is cherishing a rather romantic speculation about my being able to escape all shutting up next winter if we go to a warmer place—But even at Pisa you see, there were two months imprisonment for me—only I admit that that winter was unusually cold for Italy, & that we were in a wrong situation—still, a perfectly free winter seems too high an aspiration—Everywhere there will be occasional cold winds and there is a habit of irritability, I suppose, about my throat & chest... which however are well now to all intents & purposes—I walked up quite a hill in the Boboli Gardens last Thursday & felt no inconvenience—no gasping for breath... the very place in respect to which Mr Jameson said to me six weeks ago, “ah Ba, you will never be able to go there— I have no hope for you! You must give it up.” Robert said that she made much more fuss & sighing in the walking there, than I did—Only it is to be admitted that the carriage took me to the gate of the gardens—So beautiful they are. High overarched embower all sorts of trees.\textsuperscript{4} You look down green galleries of shade—not a stripe of blue sky visible. Some of these bowery alleys are as long as you can see: you just
see a little light at the end. We did not explore the gardens, of course; it would have been too much; but we saw enough to understand the character & feel the beauty. The cypresses & acacias in this Italy are very beautiful, and so are the evergreen oaks, & they strike our English eyes wherever we look. The stone pines too are characteristic—but I like the cypresses. One thing I observe is the extraordinary luxuriance of the ivy, which enwraps & hangs in festoons on nearly every tree of the Cascine, without appearing to do the harm which ivy in England would certainly do. The effect is beautiful. Still more beautiful however are the vines, trained everywhere in Tuscany upon trees. The manner in which the tendrils climb & climb, & then throw down floods of leaves, even to the ground, is a thing to see once in a life & never forget afterwards—Ah, people may talk about hops—There’s no comparison I assure you. They might as well talk about peas. People who, having seen both, prefer hops to vines, I am prepared to think very small beer of— I am writing now on the 23rd but I thought yesterday of Arlette’s marriage & of poor Bummy, who seems as usual to have embittered to herself this event, as much as possible. Really it is a misfortune to be ridden so by one’s temper & kind & affectionate as she is under it all, & so sure to be loved less perhaps than she would have been if less heart-kind & more gentle of manners— I hope however that Mr Reynolds will remember the fact of her having tried to take the mother’s part towards Arlette—it ought not to be forgotten. Extraordinary, that you should not be asked to be bridesmaids. So much the better for you of course, but it is not altogether kind, I must be allowed to think, & I wonder how they could make up their minds to venture on the appearance of such a slight— Do tell me all about the ceremony—Poor Arlette— I do hope she has chosen wisely! That you shd not be considered is a better sign—So the mustachios linger, Henrietta says! Talking of mustachios, I cut off Robert’s with my own hand before we left Pisa; it was my last wish on the last night & Mr Jameson reproached me for it, & so did Gerardine, when they arrived, having been used to nothing but mustachios & beards at Rome. But I was right I know. Robert let it be as I liked, & I accepted the full responsibility. He looks much better so—Not that I have changed my mind about beards—I am as little a misopogonist as ever—Only what gives character to common faces, is a detriment to his, I think— The mouth was quite materialized by the mustachio—So I cut it off with a pair of scissors & my own right hand— “myself I did it” … & I don’t repent the least in the world. Otherwise, everywhere you see superfluities of hair; nothing is less singular than a beard of three or four inches, & very picturesque these beards are, black, brown, & white I assure you— The majority of English gentlemen even, has the moustache; so perhaps Mr Reynolds’s looks towards Italy. How I laughed, & so did Robert, at Bummy’s successful readings from my letter—So she just made out that I was going to retire with “some artist to Vallambrosa” (sic). Well—

\(<\ldots>\)
decide,"... & ran out of the room. The truth is that it was'nt so easy. I wanted to go and I wanted to stay, & what could one do under such difficult circumstances? Then the weather grew suddenly cold & rainy, & people said on every side "If you go to Vallambrosa [sic] so early in the summer, you will be blocked up with snow." Altogether we talked & talked, & hesitated & hesitated, & the days passed & found us here still: yet we may not stay to quite the 22d of July: if the heat sh'd be intense, we shall probably persuade M. Centofanti into letting us go & return in the cool of the year to serve out our time. Meanwhile, here is the grand festa of San Giovanni, the patron saint of Florence, the grandest festa of the year—and there are to be chariot races in the piazza close to us, & horse races (without riders) somewhere else—games in the manner of the ancients—also fireworks at night— We had intended to have hidden our sublime faces from these things—but after all, I suppose we shall not—it seems foolish not to see what is so characteristic of the people when we have only to open our eyes—so we have ordered the carriage as usual at six, & I will tell you the result. The fireworks I certainly shall like to see: for I like fireworks, & Robert says that Italy is famous for them. Altogether it will cost us a few pauls & two headaches, perhaps. Now you will never guess where I was, last night .... Drinking tea with the ex consul of Venice & his family, M! & Mr® Hoppner10... the Hoppners mentioned & written to in Lord Byron's letters & I think Shelley's. M! Kenyon sent us a letter of introduction to M! Hoppner; & on Robert's returning his visit, so much was said so kindly about our going there in the evening to hear all about Venice & Rome, that I could see Robert wished me to go, ... & went accordingly at half past eight & returned at ten. I was dreadfully nervous, but got over it all pretty well— Everybody in morning gowns up to the throat, & everything—so "sans façon"11 as was promised to Robert in the first place—only a M® Collyer who is a friend of Miss Dowglass's & lives at Rome, and a M® Freeman, an artist, and a Frenchman who spoke in an undervoice, & M® Hoppner's daughter & niece—12 She (the mother) is French herself, & speaks her very fluent English with an accent, but is one of the frankest & most pleasing women I ever saw ... full of vivacity & intelligence— I remember that Lord Byron praises her in one of his letters. He, M! Hoppner, appears full of refinement & shrewd sense ... but I like his wife ... she was very cordial to me, & I sh'd have liked her, I think, even without that. The daughter is rather pretty & very cultivated—and the niece is pretty too, as Robert makes affidavits— There was a table cloth on a table, & tea & bread & butter just as if we were on English ground again, and a good deal of talk about poor Shelley & his wife, & how they passed three weeks, with the Hoppners once at Venice, & how on their arrival they ate nothing except water gruel & boiled cabbages & cherries, because it was a principle of Shelley's not to touch animal food, & how M! Hoppner did, as she said, "seduce" him into taking roast beef & puddings ... "Dear M! Shelley, you are so thin["]. (Fancy all this said with a pretty foreign accent.) "Now if you w'd take my advice, you would have a very little slice of beef today— You are an Englishman & you ought to like beef— A very little slice of this beef, dear M! Shelley"— And so, she said, by degrees, he took a little beef & immediately confessed that "he did feel a great deal better"—"Why of course he did. He was so thin". The news of Venice were anything but as satisfactory. Venice is said to be cold & damp in the winter, & they left it simply on account of the climate— And so, there's an end of poor Venice!— Yes indeed, what you said of your fears made a great impression on Robert— He said that even if there were no risk but of
making you uneasy, it w\d not be enough to deter him from wishing to go—but Mr Hoppner's opinion is final for the present; and now our uncertainty is between Florence & Rome—but we shall at any rate stay at Florence until November, to give us a chance of seeing dear Mr Kenyon—who frightens us by threatening not to come at all. Don't misunderstand—We don't mean to stay at Florence from this time to November—We shall go for the summer to Vallambrosa [sic] or elsewhere perhaps, & return here for the autumn months. November is excellent travelling time in Italy, & even better than earlier—Or we may stay altogether at Florence—who knows? .. viz—after November. In the meanwhile we must get to Vallambrosa [sic]—if we can. We tremble a little, because we have not yet absolutely received a permission, & because Mr Hoppner prophecies that we shall not .. declares that some friend of his was lately refused an entrance there: it appears that there's a new prior who is an austere man & fears the approximation of unclean beasts—\textsuperscript{13} It will be a serious disappointment if we are rejected applicants at last—& the decision will probably reach us tomorrow—Why, notwithstanding your conjecture, even Wilson will be disappointed—She seems to think it an excellent jest to be shut up with forty-five monks between precipices, and the Centofantes are getting up a laugh about it, she says: "there is not a woman within miles & miles, & we shall have to send five miles to have our washing done—"Oh they w\d not let us in on any other pretext but that of \textit{bad health}”—but as \textit{invalids}, the chemist is sanguine as to a probability of our being admitted—My darling Arabell, I knew you would like to come with us—I knew it was just the thing for you. And as to the "musty books" don't suppose that we shall have any part or lot in them, except when perfectly tired of the rest—we shall make the most of the grand, wild nature we expect to see. "Like Switzerland", they say it is. Mr Collyer last night told me to my surprise, that Miss Dowglas[s] was at the \textit{Baths of Lucca} .. Think of that! She will however return to Rome. Her health is wonderfully better & she is very fond of the very young wife lately married by her cousin D: Pollock\textsuperscript{14}—married last year, & only eighteen .. "just taken from the nursery", said Mr Collyer, "but very intelligent & affectionate." Rome is said to be not dear, except as to apartments. Don't tell Mr Kenyon anything of our thoughts of Rome, & assure him that we shall be here in October & early in November, even if we don't winter at Florence: because if he fancies that we are going to Rome, he is capable of not coming to see us for fear of keeping us from the journey. Interrupted by Mr Hoppner—by a visit from her. Charming she really is, from the heart & goodness in her face & manner, and as vivacious as if she were fifteen—and she is not young, as you may suppose of a friend of Lord Byron's. I am captivated with her & so is Robert .. It is pure \textit{sweetness} .. that's the word! but not vapid sweetness—Wine of Cyprus as Mr Boyd has it—\textsuperscript{15} She came to tell us that we had very little chance of Vallambrosa [sic], & therefore, but for the \textit{charm}, we sh\d have taken her for the most disagreeable woman on earth—"She has enquired this morning; & the opinion is that \textit{strangers} like us, have no manner of chance of getting the permission, since the only way of processing it is through a monk & on personal grounds." Still, when we told her of our chemist and of our plea of ill health & of our hold on the physician of the monastery, she thought there was still hope for us, & we hope on. By tomorrow, it will probably be settled.—

Now I am going to tell you of the chariot races & of much beside— I am out of breath with news. We went (Wilson with us—she took it into her head to be very shy at first & refused to go,
because M. Centofanti had assured her that she would be the only femme de chambre in a carriage, so,—but it was quite right that she should see it all, it would have been a shame otherwise) we went to the piazza Santa Maria Novella close to us here, & one of the larger piazzas in Florence though scarcely as large as Montagu Square perhaps: It is not like a square—but open, in the manner of your Trafalgar. On all sides up against the houses, up against the great church, up against the convent walls, seats were raised, one over one, and the people crowded everywhere close as bees, only shining like butterflies, with their pretty dresses & glittering fans— Every seat, every window looked alive. The monks stood at the monastery windows, & we laughed to observe that there was room for just two at each, they were so holily fat. A recess hung with crimson drapes, held the Grand Ducal court & the ambassadors, all in full dress .. the duchesses & princesses with bare shoulders & arms, looking as royal as possible. For the rest, nothing could be more childishly innocent than these “races”, I do assure you. There were bursts of laughter & the waving of fans—but no betting, no gambling, no drinking—the most peaceful good humour on every side. The spectacle was brilliant—the houses letting down silken draperies [sic] from window to window, seemed to catch life from the enthusiasm of the people— We drove round the piazza twice or thrice, & then were deposited on seats, up against the church, up high. All this occupied an hour—& straightway the races began after the long, gorgeous preparation & filled just three minutes—that was all. There were four chariots, precisely of the ancient form & device gilt all over .. the charioteer standing upright in a flowing robe, with bare arms. (My horses are just like dogs I observe, but you must help them with your imagination)- Round the piazza they galloped [sic] about three times, & the people shouted & clapped their hands at the winner— .. & then we looked at one another & laughed to think it possible that that could be all— I did not believe it for some time— While it lasted my attention was dreadfully distracted by two dogs, who persist in running in the course of the chariots & whom I expected to see crushed by the wheels every moment. It made me quite sick. Well—but nobody was hurt, not even a dog. The crowd flowed off—in little rivulets, & we got quietly to our carriage about half past eight. The driver drove to the Lung’Arno to take possession of the window at an hotel, provided for us by M’ Centofanti very goodnaturedly, in order to see the fireworks— My reflection as it went, was, that never was a more childish people, amused more innocently— In England we shall at any rate take advantage of the occasion & do something wicked to prove ourselves of mature age— I felt quite tenderly towards a people capable of making so much fuss, from their Grand Duke downwards, about that game of the chariots .. for they have been at work putting up seats in the piazza for weeks & weeks, really. The ambassadors must find it hard work to keep their countenances. Throughout the whole, the spectators were the true spectacle—the whole population was there, .. the very poorest of the peasants in their great uncut Leghorn bonnets nodding over their eyes, and the very richest of the nobles in dresses suitable to their degree. Half a religious ceremony, you see, it is— There are three days of the Feast of St John the Baptist, & yesterday was the vigil—

But, now I am going to tell you of the fireworks. We had a window in a little bedroom all to ourselves, in the great hotel opposite to the house in which Alfieri lived & died16 & it would have been perfect, we agreed, if we had remembered to bring a bottle of Champagne .. only we didn’t.
You know the Arno cleaves the city in two, and the houses (palaces) on each side, press forward into the water—They were illuminated up to their last window .. and the spire of the Campanile behind was drawn out in light against the sky as black as ink. (I was dreadfully afraid of its beginning to rain & spoiling the fireworks .. nota bene!) Do you see how the river runs between the houses through my scratch? The three bridges were equally drawn out in light, and little boats with coloured lamps, floated up & down. On the bottom bridge, the fireworks were exhibited at about nine o'clock & lasted for half an hour without intermission .. and I do say that it was worth while coming to Italy only for that sight— I could'nt help screaming out for pleasure, and surprise— I never had seen any good fireworks, but Robert, who had, declared that nothing ever met his eyes to compare with these .. and then the whole scene, the river, the people, the gardens & characteristic houses[,] contrived to throw one into a fit of ecstazy—it was my turn to be a child, after all my fine reflection of the hour before. Beyond description beautiful, these fireworks were. Great temples, living in light up in the sky, .. fantastic palaces, burning there & going out, fading away, leaving rains of glory, .. fountains of flame rising upward as if to find the stars, & then falling, falling into the river, dripping in a regular noiseless splendour which took away your breath! and then entire globes which leapt above the houses, & there broke into a rain of fire or of living fiery serpents which seemed tensing & curling when you looked at them! I cannot describe to you how marvellously beautiful it was— At last there was a great explosion of Light— & down on both sides of the river & up into our faces & over all the bridges at once broke the trailing fire .. oh, glorious it was! Only, the smoke & smell & noise were rather overcoming! I coughed, & so did Robert— As to Wilson she was in a rapture. Coming home we bought three pence worth of San Giovanni-cakes[?] on the bridge, & poor Flush who had been shut up in the house, was consoled in good time. This was last night & neither of us c[?] sleep much after it—though we did’nt go to the ball indeed! .. nor even to the concert! Robert took out with him one of his worst headaches, which was not of course improved by the smell of gass & gunpowder— It is said that Dante drew some of his ideas of hell from this annual exhibition, some five hundred years ago— How the world goes, yet stands still! This morning we walked to the Duomo, as the air was cool, & saw & heard what impressed me very much .. & Robert was struck too I think. It was the music which was so grand, & the sight of the crowding people, in that dim cathedral—the crucified Christ hanging, with its bent deathly head of marble in the midst of the choir, & a hundred burning candles, three times the height of a man, sending up their smoke about its feet— I felt quite overcome for a few minutes & could not keep from tears— There! now I have told you the whole, I think— We shant go out to see the lottery & the riderless horses—it is quite enough as it is— Yes, & we met our friend the chemist who cant he says get us a decision from Vallambrosa [sic] before two or three days; & therefore I shant be able to mention it in this letter— My dearest beloved Arabel, I am the most ungrateful of women not to have acknowledged the arrival of what you wrote, enclosing Nelly Bordman’s letter— Certainly I
Letter 16  
22–25 June [1847]  
received it. I thank you for that, & also for the last dear packet. oh, how glad it made me. The news of dearest Stormie were worth a thousand thanks, of themselves . . . and yet I was a little, little vexed at his talking so of postage, just as if he did'nt mean to write to me. Really I can pay still for letters & my daily bread—& if I carried economy out further, it w'd be because I was not hungry & did'nt love anybody at a distance. As it is I dont understand this calculating of postages—Well! At any rate Storm might send a note to me through you, & then we might correspond without any postage at all. It will be too hard, now that the others wont write to me, that he sh'd take up such a motive of another sort. Thank dear Minny for her kind note & tell her that Robert was quite pleased with some of the words—he knows her though he has not seen her yet. I shall write to her on some other day. Give her my love & say so. Nobody tells me if Crow’s youngest child is pretty.18 And nobody tells me (though I ask & ask) if M. Bevan is a professed Roman Catholic. I heard lately of a major in the English army taking “office” .. serving .. under the Duke of Tuscany. Ask Surtees the meaning of that, with my love, & whether the change admits of pecuniary advantage. Not that I particularly like this, serving in foreign troops, of an Englishman, .. only these Tuscanks here are comparatively enlightened & liberal—they are not altogether like the Austrians .. whisper to Henry.19 I dont speak of serving in Tuscany for him, by the way: & there w'd be no adequate pay for a beginner. It might be otherwise for officers in the army perhaps .. but I know nothing, nor have means of knowing, & only because the thing came into my head, spoke of it. The Pope20 is perfectly idolized in Italy, & we heard of a riot in (…) the other day because eight hundred people “conspired” …. to cry ‘viva Pio nono’. Of such innoxious childish stuff are Italian conspiracies generally made! People talk or cry aloud like children, & there an end. And when other people get up amusements for them .. gilt chariot races & the like, .. why everything gets right again & smooth. I have just been entreating Robert to go out & be about—Half I am inclined to be out of humour. Exercise is necessary for him & he knows it, yet positively he will only walk as far as I do—except just to the post in the morning— Now this morning because I was with him at the cathedral & confess to feeling tired, he refuses to leave this house any more—yet it is a lovely morning & the whole city being in a state of festa, there is plenty everywhere to see & hear—No, he wont stir. We have been standing up at the window & watching the people go by, & feeling the cool air. Wilson, I think, has gone with Madame Centofanti to see the riderless horses— We stood at the window till I could’nt stand anymore—it is a sight, to see the people. Every human being looks something like a countess or her cousin .. I mean of beings female. Where all the poverty of the world has gone, you would take for a problem— Elegant bonnets & sweeping muslins, & bare throats strung with Roman pearls & gold chains, catch your eye wherever you look. If it were not for the men, who generally forget their gloves—, there w'd be no end of the wonder .. & altogether it w'd be very pretty, .. except for the women's faces—You smile at my exception .. but Robert & I, having given the deepest investigation to the subject, are really of opinion that the faces are not pretty at all. Robert says that the ugliness indeed is wonderful—and I will answer for it that a like number of Englishmen would give a very different deduction. As to delicate youthful beauty, such a thing is not to be seen. Plenty of red hair & colourless skins instead. Otherwise, great black eyes, & brows rather stern. The quite old women are hags, & all the uglier for their habit of never covering their heads—oh, you would see many a
half bald head I assure you, in opposition to your theory, the white lanky hair hanging on each side the bareness.

—Today we had a letter from Mr. Chorley—a very affectionate letter—Robert had it, but he spoke of “dear Mrs. Browning”. Only, Mr. Forster’s letters are the most tender of all—you would think that he adored us. I can’t think where Mr. Jameson is . . . she does not write. I did not understand till you told me that Mr. Powers’s Eve was in London—Mr. Powers called on me the other day.21 Not quite Eve! though by no means an ill-looking woman . . . we agreed that she looked & talked like a woman who had been battered about among the open ways of the world: ever so many children she has, & her voice has had to keep silence only by crying louder than the loudest, & scolding the maid perhaps— Also she is not by any means refined in manner & accent & language—& what, in the man of genius, struck us as a charming simplicity, was another thing in his wife. But I dare say she is an estimable woman, & one ought’nt to be critical on such. Flush is quite well, but very thin, & I don’t understand why. I am putting him on a milk diet (besides the meat) to try to fatten him a little like poor Shelley[.] Exercise he has more than ever in his life yet not too much exercise. The other day when we had put him & Wilson out of the carriage at the Cascine, & she had finished holding him (we being out of sight) he set off suddenly & ran like a hare & came up with us panting & gasping & with his eyes stuck out— So delighted he was to be taken into the carriage again— He is in great spirits & as full of caprices as ever . . . only thin. Why should he be thin, I wonder. Wilson thinks it is the change of climate. She is well & liking Italy much better than in the Pisa days. I could not help telling her what Minny says of her so truly— You are imagining . . .22 . . . to trivial . . . happy . . . observance . . . liberty . . . duty . . . full liberty— not a . . . single . . . you blame . . . severe . . . would not . . . have it. Oh yes, Arabell! you do right in considering our marriage as exceptionally happy. I tell you openly & truly that if I had expected such a measure of happiness, my own thoughts would have seemed to myself romantic & unreasonable. I did not expect it. Love, trust & sympathy, I expected, because I knew what he was from whom I looked for them; I knew in a degree . . . but I had schooled myself from all the traditions of married life, from the experience of life in general, to be satisfied with a modest proportion of even these things, and not to stretch out my hands to the impossible— Yet, you see, the Impossible, or what I took for the impossible, came to me, of itself . . . or rather of God’s great mercy—& I never could wish to the dearest, a happier life than mine . . . as far as depends on my husband— Never was a more united life led, than this of ours . . . never! People say that the married get tired of one another if they live too much together . . . but when people say this loudest, they must admit the perfection of happiness to be the living together always—& never being tired, if the thing is feasible— Well!— it is feasible to us—& that is saying all— I am certain that we are happier now than at first . . . & that he loves me better— I am certain of it—and yet we are constantly in the same room, at the same books, in the same thoughts even . . . there is every opportunity of being tired. Thank God for me always dear, dearest Arabell!
You do not tell me a word before of Eliza Giles. Ah, my own Arabel! \(\ldots\) I think that it w\(\text{d}\) be wrong in you to give up M\(\text{'}\) Stratton’s from the cause in question, & also I believe that if you did so it w\(\text{d}\) not draw back Papa to a position he has quitted long enough to form a habit. The scene of the toast made me wonder & smile a little. His heart is soft in strange corners— Poor dearest Papa! It is a great blessing to hear of his being well & in good spirits in any case. Your dreadful headaches!— how are they, do you think, on the whole? How is dearest Trippy? You speak of her dining in Wimpole Street which is a good sign, but I want to hear all about her, dear thing— Does she ever go with you to the schools?\(^{24}\) Tell me of her, & tell her that I love her always .. signed & sealed with a large kiss— I could not believe that anything but a consideration of economy w\(\text{d}\) fasten down the Hedleys at Tours—it was my way of complaining of their taste, observe— As to Bummy’s settling at Leamington, why \(\ldots\) doubt there is a good deal to say on either side of the subject— If I were she I would go to Tours I think .. to the Hedleys— No wonder that she took Sarianna’s writing for yours— yet your writing is more rapid & flowing & characteristic: but the likeness is extraordinary otherwise. Tell me any little detail about yourself my beloved Arabel. As an example, I have had my new gowns made up with quite plain bodies, notwithstanding my vow against it .. but it was to please Robert who liked Fanny Hanford’s. By the way you shant see the Hanfords I fancy— They were to pass too quickly through London— only if it were possible, Fanny meant to try to see you. Arabel, I wish you had gone to Miss Bayley’s .. not for my sake but yours— You visit the poor & not the rich as dear Minny says. Now I want to know why you sh * ? draw a line between rich & poor— Does God, do you think? Because I have a piece of gold in my purse, am I shut out from your sympathies? Poor me, then.!— Do consider this— I want you to have mental intercourse, which you cant well have with the uneducated— Certain I am that it is wrong & disastrous for you to refuse all equal society .. looking both to the fact & its consequences— My love to George & all of them— My next letter is to dearest Henrietta of whom I think very much. Love me as always, both of you, & let me be known for my own Arabel’s most affected & grateful Ba—

Robert’s best love of course— He was \(\text{deligh}t\)ted with H’s note. Ah .. I find from the almanack that the 4\(\text{th}\) of July is Sunda(y—\& that you cant get this till monday— May God bless you. My regards to the \(\text{(Sra)ttens—\ Love to Lizzie. Count that I remember anyone who remembers me, as Henrietta suggested, tell her.}

Wilson has made us some knead cakes!\(^{26}\) R. will be delighted to accept any hospitality of which knead cakes are constituent elements, he likes them so much. Arabella, when you begin “gypseying,” we claim you, remember!—

Our letters will be sent after us to Vallambrosa [sic]— The monks get theirs, & medecines &c from Florence—send for them.

Think of M! Giles\(^{27}\) & M! Browning! There’s a combination!— By the way, I call him M! Browning sometimes, that is, whenever he is impertinent & calls me Miss Barrett.

Love to M! Boyd. I am very glad about M! Hunter— Do write, both of you— Here’s an example of a letter!—\(^{28}\) Does M! Orme really go to Naples[?] Dearest Arabel, how dear you are to me!—— May God bless you always.
Letter 16
22—25 June [1847]

Oh, you need not keep a secret against dear M' Kenyon. You may tell him if you have the opportunity that we think of Rome—only you must add that we shall not think of going south until November, whether he comes or not.

Address, on integral page: (To the care of Miss Tr<ipsack> / Miss Ara<bel> Barrett / <5- Montagu Street / Montagu Square / London).

Publication: None traced.


1. Year determined from EBB’s references to residence in Florence after the move from Pisa.
2. i. e., her 34th birthday on 4 July.
3. Hodgson’s bookshop and library was located at 6 and 9 Great Marylebone Street (now New Cavendish Street). The Brownings met there the day they left England for Italy.
6. EBB’s use of “materialize” is unclear, but in context it seems to mean that RB’s beard over-emphasized his mouth.
7. This is the first of several sketches EBB makes in these letters. Although not frequent, she occasionally made impromptu sketches in her letters; for example, see BC, 7, 352, in which EBB has drawn a picture of Flush for Horne.
8. A little more than a line has been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.
9. The feast of St. John the Baptist is celebrated on the 24th of June. EBB’s description is similar to Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy (London: John Murray, 1847): “Midsummer-day, or the feast of St. John the Baptist, the ancient protector of Florence, is solemnised by the races of the Cocchi, in the Piazza of Santa Maria Novella. These Cocchi are imitations of Roman cars, but have four wheels, and were invented by Cosmo I… On the vigil of the Saint’s day there are fireworks on the Ponte alla Carraja, and an illumination on the Lungarno. On the morning of the festival the Court attends high mass in the cathedral, and afterwards the races in the Piazza di S.M. Novella” (p. 571). The Hand-Book does not elaborate on the “riderless horses” referred to here and below, but Giuliana Artom-Treves mentions “the race of riderless horses (Corsa dei Barberi)” in The Golden Ring: The Anglo-Florentines, 1847—1862 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1956, p. 13), and James Wood Brown observes that “the horses ran, sometimes with riders on their backs, sometimes without, but always across the city from west to east” (Florence Past and Present, London: Rivingtons, 1911, p. 392).
10. Richard Belgrave Hoppner (1786—1872), the son of the artist John Hoppner, married Marie Isabelle May in 1814 at Brussels. He was the British Consul at Venice from 1814–25, during the time Byron was there, and was described by the poet as “a good listener” and “a thoroughly good man” (Conversations of Lord Byron with the Countess of Blessington, London: Henry Colburn, 1834, p. 153). In a farewell letter to Hoppner written in December 1819, Byron asked him to make his “respects to Mrs. Hoppner, and assure her of my unalterable reverence for the singular goodness of her disposition … for those who are no great believers in human virtues would discover enough in her to give them a better opinion of their fellow-creatures” (Letters and Journals of Lord Byron: With Notices of His Life, by Thomas Moore, London: John Murray, 1830, II, 291). Shelley called Hoppner and his Swiss wife “the most amiable people I ever knew” (Essays, Letters from Abroad, London: Edward Moxon, 1840, II, 136).
11. “Simple,” or “without ceremony.”
12. Mrs. Hoppner’s daughter and niece have not been identified, nor has the “Frenchman,” or Mrs. Collyer (in other letters written at this time, EBB spells the name “Colyar”). Mrs. Freeman was Horatia Augusta (née Latilla, b. 1826), an Anglo-Italian sculptress, who married James Edwards Freeman (1808—84), an American artist, in 1845. See letter 6, note 4.
13. Cf. Leviticus 7:21: "Moreover the soul that shall touch any unclean thing, as the uncleanness of man, or any unclean beast, or any abominable unclean thing ... even that soul shall be cut off from his people."

14. James Edward Pollock (1819–1910) practiced medicine in Rome from 1842 to 1849; he became Physician Extraordinary to the Queen in 1899. His marriage to Marianne Malvars on 2 September 1846 at West Derby, near Liverpool, was witnessed by his cousin Frances Dowglass.

15. EBB had addressed the poem "Wine of Cyprus" (in Poems, 1844) to Boyd as a result of his gift to her of Cyprus wine, which she had praised as "ideal nectar" (BC, 9, 22).

16. Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803) was a poet and author of nineteen tragedies, of which Saul (1782) is considered the finest. A copy of Alfieri’s plays, owned by RB, sold as part of lot 602 in Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, A43; now at ABL). Alfieri spent the last ten years of his life in Florence. In his autobiographical Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Victor Alfieri (London: Henry Colburn, 1810), he wrote: "Towards the end of this year [1793], we found out near the end of the bridge of Santa Trinita a house, which, though small, was admirably adapted for our accommodation, situated on the Arno, and facing south. We took possession of it in November, since which I have uniformly occupied it. I shall here probably close my earthly career, should fate cease to persecute me" (II, 249).

17. Small sweet cakes sometimes called ciambella or confortini; for a more detailed discussion of this tradition, see James Wood Brown, Florence Past and Present, London: Rivingtons, 1911, p. 368.


19. This remark, together with EBB’s comment in letter 8 that "Henry must be wholesomely disgusted of his Austrians," seems to imply that her brother Henry was sympathetic to the Austrians. He might have developed this predilection while he was studying in Germany in the 1830’s.

20. Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti, Pius IX (1792–1878), known as “Pio Nono,” ascended the papal throne shortly after the death of Gregory XVI in June 1846. He began his papacy by granting a general political amnesty and by calling for a spiritual revival in the various religious orders. These early liberal acts identified him as a reformer, and EBB joined those who hoped that he would offer moral leadership for the national movement, but he was unable to meet demands quickly or broadly enough. EBB’s early optimism for his attempts at progress soon gave way to disenchmtment and disappointment.

21. Elizabeth Powers (née Gibson, 18107–94), the eldest of five daughters of James Gibson (d. 1862) and Anna Reilly (d. 1854), was originally from Philadelphia and later Cincinnati, where Powers met her and where they were married on 1 May 1832. At the time of this letter, five of their nine children had been born; however, the eldest child, James, had died in March 1838, only a few months after the Powers family had arrived in Florence.

22. A large portion of the final leaf of the manuscript is missing, causing loss of text from here to the end of the paragraph.

23. Almost one line has been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

24. A reference to the Ragged Schools, with which Arabella was involved until her death. The Ragged Schools movement developed from the charitable efforts of several individuals in the late 18th century, including Robert Raikes in Gloucester, John Pounds in Portsmouth, Thomas Cranfield in Camberwell, and William Watson in Aberdeen. The Ragged Schools Union was founded in 1844, and Anthony Ashley Cooper (1801–85), 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, soon became President of the newly-formed Union. In the late 1840’s “eighty different schools ... were affiliated to the Ragged School Union” (Claire Seymour, Ragged Schools, Ragged Children, London: Ragged Schools Museum, 1995, p. 6). Many of the ragged schools began as Sunday Schools, and since Arabella taught Sunday School at the Paddington Chapel it is likely that this is how she became involved. In a letter to his cousin George Goodin Barrett, dated 31 December 1851, Edward Moulton-Barrett explained that “Arabel besides is much from home in the mornings, attending some Schools or Charities of which she is a Directress” (ms at Eton). In 1854, at Arabella’s request, EBB and RB both submitted poems to be sold at a bazaar in aid of the Ragged Schools.

25. A few words are missing due to loss of manuscript.
26. "These knead cakes have been famous things in the family for many generations, especially do they come forth to conduce to the glories of festa-days—Christmas mornings—birthday-breakfasts &c. The custom comes from Northumberland, we believe. These cakes, flat as pancakes are made of flower [sic] and milk, with, or without dried currants, and are baked on a fire, on an iron plate or pan, called a girdle—hence they are sometimes called girdle-cakes in the north" (Surtees Cook, in an editorial note with his transcript of EBB's letters to his wife, Henrietta; MS with Altham).

27. George Giles, husband of Eliza Giles (née Cliffe); see note 30 in the preceding letter.

28. This is the longest extant letter written by EBB.

Letter 17


July 26- [1847]

My own dearest Arabel,

I had said & promised myself to make up for the lightness of the scale on Henrietta's side, by writing this present letter to her, but since it must relate to your particular subject of Vallombrosa, where you agreed to go & live with us, you have a right to it I think, & I make over the two next times instead, to the beloved creditor— For we have been to Vallombrosa, Arabel—we have been . . . seen & "came away conquered," excommunicated, thrust out ignominiously by the Father Abbot . . . who being a holy man, "can't abide" anything impure & feminine to keep a stinking in his nostrils above three days— Now let me begin from the beginning— We left M. Centofanti's house on the Wednesday of last week . . . nearly a week before our time was up, just as we thought the heavens & earth of Florence were about to be dissolved downright, so excessive the heat was. Thermometer at eighty five, and my bedroom growing furnacelike by three in the morning, & the state of the atmosphere rendering the noises of that street (which always were the great evil of the position) scarcely endurable. So we fled before it all, drove round the city at eight or nine in the evening to say goodbye to M[. Powers & the Hoppners, and at four the next morning were swallowing our last Florentine breakfast as it seemed to us, & in the carriage immediately afterwards— Even at that hour the heat was wonderful—we left Florence steeped in a hot vapour, and every mile seemed to throw off a blanket— At a less early hour there wd have been no travelling at all, though we soon were in the mountains & able to breathe— The carriage took us to Pelago, a little mountain-village perched on the rocks where the road for wheels, (the via rotabile) stopped altogether; & so far it was a delightful drive & we were in great spirits, . . . the scenery rejoicing our eyes with hill & valley, purple hills & vine-covered vallies, & the river rushing at our right hand as a companion of the road. As the carriage stopped at Pelago, before the door of the little inn, a voice said "M! Browning"—and I started as well I might, at being called by my name in that wilderness by any mortal voice. It was M! Curtis, our American friend, who introduced himself to us by letter as I told you, & had taken coffee with us one evening in Florence, impressing us most agreeably by his refinement & cultivation—quite remarkable in so young a man, for he can't be more than five & twenty I sh'd think— He is travelling with his brother & two or three other American young men, and their plans had drawn some
three of them to Vallombrosa where they meant to sleep, he said, & leave the place on the following day. We heard all about it in the little inn while our conveyances were being prepared—The Americans very considerately did not intrude on us, & went forwards on horseback. Robert too rode,—only keeping by me of course: and Wilson and I took our places as my illustration shows, in what they call a sledge or *treggia*, but which is nothing but a common wine-hamper, (you know those brown baskets) with two chairs tied into it by ropes, for us to sit on, and a little hay (disagreeably populous) strewn at the bottom—

There is no wheel of any kind; & two white oxen dragged it as if they dragged a plough. A second sledge of the same fashion took our luggage,—and so we set off, with four wild looking men to drive the four white oxen & prevent accidents at the dangerous places—and really you have opened your eyes if you could have seen at all the way we were bound for. A more romantic excursion, could scarcely be I think, and when I tell you that we were four hours in travelling five miles, you will have some notion perhaps of the difficulties of the road—Then, the scenery! Precipices striking down from under the feet of our oxen into the deep dark gullies, dark with shade,—rocks above, straining upwards as precipitously,—& mountains, mountains everywhere, on all sides, as if they caught one from another an aspiration to the Infinite—often I thought of Malvern—Malvern was nearest of all that I had seen to what I saw—But then the wildest and the greatest of Malvern was but as the *seed* of this grand, developped nature—Where the Malvern hills throw out a single ridge, here are seven times seven of hills—You remember Walm’s Well? Take the remembrance, & multiply it fifty times, & you fall below the sight of what I saw—A sort of paved path, impossible indeed to wheels, threaded up & down the mountain ground—and how we descended without rolling, & ascended at all, is a little wonderful to me when I think of it coldly now—“As steep as a house” may be an exaggeration—but “as steep as the Leaning Tower” scarcely any—I was so frightened about Robert’s horse! Only these horses receive a peculiar education, & walk up & down stairs without blinking or stumbling—Well! five hours we spent in climbing, .. & our poor oxen were so fatigued that I moaned in the spirit through sympathy for them, & Wilson & Flush & I got out to let them breathe & sate in the chestnut forest—By the way Flush was very lazy & insisted on sitting in the sledge when rather he might as well have run by the side—The truth however was that Flush was distraught with fright—The whole time he was at Vallombrosa he never recovered his equanimity,—& nothing could be plainer both to Robert, Wilson & me than his manner of protesting against the whole scheme of going out into the wilderness, among the mountains & pines & waterfalls, away from civilization & little dogs. There was a black pine-forest close by the monastery which was his special horror: he would not leave the hem of my petticoat when we walked there—And when Wilson took him up the hills, why, there at the ridge of the steeper places, he used to sit & see her safe to the bottom, & look & pause & muse till he was called “cowardly Flush,” .. with one foot out in the air—He likes fresh fields! .. as many of those as you please!—but for wild solitary nature, ‘no, I thank you’, says Flush .. ‘there’s neither pleasure nor safety in it’. He as soon trust himself in a den of cats as near a convent of monks—But I was telling you of our ascent to them—Up from Pelago, .. straight up we went, along a
thread of mountain-path which wrapped round & round & still up & up those savage eminences—The first mountains, skirted with grey olives & vineyards which seemed to creep upward painfully as far as they could & then let go—Beyond the mountains were mountains & presently we had to drop down into the gorge to the right & cross the torrent & climb into the chestnut forest & climbing[,] climb there more than ever—At the end of four hours, we had arrived—The monastery stood vast & blank before us, on a strip of tableland, flanked with pine woods—Arched with the mountains—To the left, was an open stretch of prospect...a great sea of Appenines [sic]...I counted a fold of eight mountain ridges, all wild & purple. The nearest were clinging to the woods—beach [sic] woods, chestnut woods, pine woods—The monks may cut with a thousand axes, but those woods are too strong for them still—Now look at the monastery—Something like it, only the mountains are higher, & I can't throw out the grey island of rock where the chapel stands with any expression. There is another rock-island opposite, on which is the hermitage—the “house of strangers” where we were received, faces the tower of the monastery, & is after this fashion containing simply a few rooms on the ground floor. Here the women-guests go, & their husbands or fathers—otherwise all male strangers betake themselves to the monastery itself. The Americans dined with us, & we had dinner on our arrival—I was dreadfully tired as you may imagine, & the magnificent scenery could scarcely do more than make me feel that I had a soul somewhere, if I could but get at it. Then Father Egidio had come to assure Robert that we were most welcome for three days, but that no power in Heaven or earth, except the Pope's or Archbishop of Tuscany's could induce his Abbot to admit of our staying longer—What we had called...a “permission,” was merely a “recommendation,” & inefficient in the case. Robert poured floods of eloquent amiability against the iron of this resolve—no, nothing would achieve anything—Afterwards he was half vexed & swore that he never had been so “subservient” in his life before, & that he "only did it for me & that I sh'd not be disappointed"—"those idiots of monks"! (relieving himself from the pressure of his own compliments, in an aside!) So provoking it was, after we had brought the whole of our possessions & a dozen of port up to that eagle's nest in the clouds,..to be pecked out by the eagle! I was lying on the sofa perfectly exhausted, for my part, & failed in power to protest even against Robert's desperate crisis of appeal in my behalf, as having written about & translated from the Greek Fathers! Yes, he was driven to that, I assure you. “She is'nt frivolous like women in general, though she looks young enough still...as you, padre reverendissimo,* may see”. The reverend father smiled benignantly, but evidently thought that no woman in the world young or old-looking could be called otherwise than frivolous except by an heretical device—As to the Gregories & Chrysostoms, he never had heard of them at all, I fancy, unless in some dim, indefinite way, as more modern saints than St Joseph perhaps. He said that our American friends (very goodnatured of them) had spoken highly of us both, as literary persons & &c& &c...and when Robert assured him in conclusion, by way of producing a final, thrilling effect, that we never ate anything nor caused any sort of trouble, he could say
beside only that he would do what he could for us, & procure us two more days if possible,—
Beyond the five days, was no possibility. So there we had to yield, the Lord divo being obdurate.
We stayed from wednesday to monday, & it was all. On thursday morning I did not feel well &
looked worse, and Robert fell into despair & declared that he never saw such a difference in
anyone, from three days before, ... until it was discovered that the confusion had caused Wilson
& me to forget my medicine both at night & in the morning;!! which, added to the fatigue, had
produced the evil of course. I set myself right in an hour, & was very well indeed afterwards, so
well, that we had a little talk about an extravagant project of plunging deeper into the mountains
& extending our pilgrimage to the more distant convents of Laverna & Camaldoli ... only it w^d
have involved thirty miles of either riding on mule back or sledge-driving, and there might be
imprudence, ... we thought, ... though we went ever so slowly. Some day we may return &
attempt it—oh, we dont give it up for ever. Because there are intermediate villages—and if we
travelled only four miles a day in the glorious mountain-wilderness, it w^d be a peopling of one's
dreams for the whole of a life— For the rest, it was probably a less evil than first appeared, that we
sh^d have been restrained from our intended two months retreat at Vallombrosa. With all drawbacks,
I sh^d have liked it, mind—still there were drawbacks. In the first place, we were there as mere
guests & dependents. What we paid (though our payment was more than sufficient to cover our
expenses) was to be considered as a pure gift to the convent;—& what we received, as the purest
hospitality .. for which we were to return ever so much pure gratitude over & above. In this
position, we could make no request for little matters necessary to our comfort— If waiting an hour
for breakfast, (between the hot water & dry toast) & having the coffee altogether forgotten at
night, struck us as an inconvenience, we had to look in one another's face & be “contentissimi”,
perfectly satisfied. We were never sure of strangers not being thrust into the midst of us, never—
There was not a woman within reach of service, of course; & the beds were made by a young
'secular', who attended to other details of the same class— Then as for food, ... you know I profess
to care for nothing, if I can have good bread & eggs .. & coffee for a luxury—and in going to
Vallombrosa, Robert meant to live upon milk & cheese & fruit, & I on curds & whey, .. fixing
on the simplest things. Now these were precisely the things, we could not attain to by any means—
Plenty of beef & veal & fish, steeped in floods of oil, .. & the wine—excellent & copious supplies,
we had—but we never saw fruit nor vegetables, nor cheese, nor whey .. and the milk was mere
city-milk for waterishness, & such as it was, hard to procure—and the butter came & went once in
two days like a very apparition .. and the hens of the convent thought it improper to lay more
than one egg all the time we stayed. What they called coffee, I take to have been the emptyings of
the holy water-vase at the monastery door, with the taste & colour of the crossing finger of every
holy monk communicating by it some perpetual benediction. Worst of all, the bread was— To call
it sour w^d be flattery— Neither was it only bitter: Nasty resumes everything. Robert swears that it
had in it the “flavour of corruption”— But perhaps it was only made out of sawdust from the firs,
& kept with the beef .. which combination will account for a good deal. These things I call
drawbacks, and if we had stayed as we wished, certainly we sh^d have been thinner by force of
them— Still .. we did wish to stay. The glorious scenery .. the black, breathless silence of pine-
forests, .. the sweep of the infinite mountains, the sound of water breaking on & gurgling down
among the rocks .. these were greater things than a mere care for bodily comforts could counterbalance. I thought, while Robert & I & Father Egidio were walking together in the forest of pines, how strange it was, & how I sh³ have started to have seen myself so in a vision, some three years since. I thought too of you, my own Arabel, & how strange it w⁴ seem to you & Henrietta if you caught a sudden glance at us from England— I walked out two or three times a day every day we spent there, & sate out of doors in the woods & enjoyed it as much as I could; but Robert & I falling into a sudden panic or prudence, I did not as we had planned, take a mule & ride out farther— We may go again, without the panic perhaps—we shall see. Father Egidio led him to the more salient places & showed him all the sights hidden from my eyes .. for of course they would’nt permit an unclean beast like me to pass the threshold of monastery or chapel .. oh no!— Out of spite however, when nobody was looking, I put my foot through the gateway & stamped on the gravel of their courtyard—(see the gate in my drawing)— There, was profanation for them, poor men! The little Abbot will have had a visitation of Satan through it, by this time, after the manner of St Anthony.⁰¹ If it had’nt been for Robert who w⁴⁶ let me, I should have run in & opened the way for a troop of devils, so provoked I was— These monks are Benedictines & said to be for the most part wholly noble & originally rich—¹² They have each an apartment & food supplied, and from four to six pounds for a yearly income of pocket money[,] Father Egidio is the only one who had intercourse with us, it being his peculiar province to attend to the guests (he is likely to be Abbot some day!),—and a goodnatured, narrow-minded uneducated host we found him, .. gently insinuating at the close, that although he was forbidden by the Rule to receive money, his hands were free toward other gifts, & that several strangers had presented him with snuffboxes, coffee pots & the like— In reply to which, we really could’nt give him Trippy’s coffee pot—and, having no snuffbox in either pocket, we had to delay our generosity to another occasion—¹³ —Well—so we passed the time till monday, .. reading the Life of San Gualberto¹⁴ (who established the monastery) & learning from that only book within our reach, how spiritual holiness & benediction float in the air of the place & purge the waters thereof, & how no mortal soul can approach the mountain, without partaking the sanctifying advantage. Certainly we lost there the very memory almost of the heat of Florence— The change of temperature was extraordinary– Wilson & I had to put on our flannel petticoats as soon as we c⁴ unpack them, and even then we were rather too cool— Once or twice somebody talked of “shivering with cold”—& somebody else said “Do shut that window”— But on monday morning it all ended; & in order to escape the dreadful Heat which waited to catch us up again in the valley, it was agreed that we sh⁴ set off at four. At three, we were up, & having hoarded the dry toast of the previous evening (which was’nt much harder than a slice of fir tree) we soaked it in the glass of port wine Wilson had provided for me, & so she & Robert & I broke fast for the day, & then set out on our travels— Sledges as before—and the descent rather alarming, I assure you. But oh, how grand the mountains were, rending the clouds & feeling through them for the sun! Never shall I forget the glory of that morning’s spectacle. We came down so much faster than we went up, that we reached Florence at nine oclock, and it was very much like going into the fire. But, Arabel, where could we go? There seemed no choice, no alternative. We had missed Vallambrosa [sic] after considerable
expense of both strength & money, & were not rich enough to begin a hunt after cool places—and all
we had to do was to make the best of our disappointment & take Florence at its shadiest side.

(...)\(^{15}\)

So back we came to Florence, & home to M. Centofanti's .. a day or two of our time remaining
there. Annunziata,\(^{16}\) the servant who had served us & was still in the house, rushed down stairs in
an ecstasy, & after rapturously kissing both my hands threw herself into Wilson's arms. It was
really a scene—and to tell you a secret to boot, Robert & I were the happiest of disappointed
people when we found ourselves on the old sofa & the breakfast table drawn close to it— We
laughed & talked exultingly over the coffee & bread & butter, & praised them up to the height of
the Ideal of coffee & bread & butter, .. we never had seen coffee & bread & butter before, you
w'ld have thought certainly—! Still, the coffee passed away & the heat remained .. a blind smothering
heat. Night would come, & how was I to sleep in my bedroom? Fitter that room was, to bake
rolls in— So after breakfast I lay stretched on the sofa & Robert went out (poor dearest Robert) to
try to get cooler rooms, .. the coolest rooms he c'd get in Florence— Two or three times he came
back in despair, looking white with exhaustion, .. but at last the grand success befel u s .. at last
.. the next day .. and we have been in our new apartment now these five or six days. Such
fortunate people we are: it is extraordinary I think— We thought at Pisa that we did well in an
apartment, .. but at M. Centofanti's we did so much better that we took to scorning Pisa
altogether—and here is best, best of all—you w'ld be rather surprised if you saw what an apartment
we have in this Palazzo Guidi, a few steps from the Grand Duke's palace & in the situation of
Florence & close too to the Boboli Gardens to which we are to have daily access in right of our
position, and on the first floor besides.\(^{17}\) Of course, we could not achieve such rooms except now
in the dead part of the season, but with every consideration, it is cheap & happy & I wonder to
find myself here as successor to a Russian Prince, & suite with satin couches & arm chairs "à
discrétion"— And we pay precisely what we paid M. Centofanti .. a guinea a week .. with an
additional nine shillings the month to the porter who is a necessary part of the grandeur it appears,
& lights the staircase & brings water & so on— The rooms, that is the drawingroom diningroom
& my bedroom are very large, very much larger than any room in Wimpole Street, & furnished
& overfurnished as I told you, .. marble consoles, carved & gilt arm chairs, all in crimson &
white satin, noble mirrors, & instead of the memorable Pisan spoons (or spoon, was it?) such
splendours fit for the entertainment of the court of Tuscany, that we grow a little nervous for fear
of being ruined to the end of our days by the chipping of a teacup.

There's the plan of the apartment! The eight windows which are very large, opening from
ceiling to floor, open on a sort of balcony-terrace .. not quite a
terrace, yet no ordinary balcony neither .. which is built out from
the house, giving it an antique & picturesque appearance to the exterior— And you may suppose what a pleasure it is to have
such a place to walk up & down in, when we are not inclined to go into the streets. Opposite is the grey wall
of a

church, San Felice,\(^{18}\) and we walk on the balcony listening to the organ & choir—
Nothing can be much more delightful after all—so let the monks keep their Vallombrosa—
Robert was unwell with pain in his head, all the time we were there, the consequence he thought, of a slight smell of paint in the House of Strangers, but just as attributable to the food, perhaps .. whereas here at Florence we are all well, it agrees with us all three, let us burn through it ever so—As for coolness we are cooler than at M. Centofanti's considerably—at night particularly. I can sleep, & the oppression loses itself in these large rooms, where the sun never comes except for a side-glance. Still, every place in Florence must be hot, & you would be rather amused to see the costume I appear in day by day—

... 19

You know I have my mantilla—and besides Robert insists on it that I look just as well without any, .. & seriously he proposed to me the other morning that I never sh'd put them on again. And the white gowns he particularly admires,—Oh, I assure you there never was a less critical husband in the world. As long as I eat enough, & have my hair in tolerable curl & wear clean gloves, all the rest pleasures however it be—and the eating enough is the chief thing. We have taken our apartment for two months certain, & may have it perhaps for a third month—after which the world is all before us where to wander, 20 & I cant tell you what our plans are, they shift so, and are so dependent on circumstances independent of us— Also, we have agreed, seeing how an excess of scheming defeats itself, to leave the future alone a little .. God takes the best care of us and events fall into their places without our meddling over much— It is curious how Robert gets his wishes! 21 Since we have been in Florence, walking carelessly past this palace & admiring the architecture, he has wished two or three times to live here ... just as you might in a fancy wish to live ... where shall I say? ... at Northumberland House or Chiswick! He did not suppose even that appartments were to be let here— ... yet here, lo! we are! The next thing may be that the Grand Duke may invite us to occupy the left wing of the Pitti .. I dont know what's to come next. What nonsense I write to you, to be sure! We have taken Anunziata with us in our (place) of residence—Flush likes it much better, he ... than he liked the mountains— At about eight in the evening we walk in the comparative cool .. stand on the bridge of Santa Trinita, 22 & go eat an ice at Dony's .. then return to supper, & dont sit up three m(inutes) afterwards— Think of our taking a dozen of port wine up to Vallombrosa! That was Robert's insisting for thought for me & he will make me hold to the port wine, though it is quite unnecessary, so well I am—none the worse for the fatigue—Which surprises me— We did not expect an opportunity of such bold adventure, and in the midst of it, when it was too late to go back, I certainly feared that I might suffer in some way—but you see——— — Give my love to dear M' Boyd & thank him very much for his kind letter which I will answer soon— It is delightful to me, tell him, to be remembered by him so affectionately .. Always, dear Arabel, let me have the least detail which reaches you about Stormie. Give him my love & pray him to write to me— My love to them all. I had a letter from M' Martin while George was with her, & she talks of his 'success'——is it true? Such kindness too she writes to me of myself, & of her “exulting” sympathy in my happiness— I imagine that the Hanfords have spoken of us to her very kindly .. I mean, of us both— Indeed I could not understand how anyone could see Robert for an hour, & not carry away a pleasant impression—I say that as if in the capacity of the Goddess Justice herself, carved in marble in the Piazza & holding the scales— far on the outside of all affection & intimate knowledge— What he is to me, only God knows. We shall be
here to keep our wedding day on the 12th of September, & we mean to do it very jovially—very thankfully, I hope. Neither of us has repented for one half moment what was done on that day—that fountain of blessing for all other days—repented . . . oh no! And yet there have been pain & sorrow—only not from him to me . . nor . . I thank God . . even from me to him. It has been for us, a perfect union of two lives & souls, . . happier than anyone can understand from these words of mine, or any like them. Let me hear of Emma . . no more Monro . . . do congratulate her from me— It seems to me that the repetition of such a ceremony, must be awkward, to use no sadder word. She must be glad that it's over. What do you mean about 'morals' in relation to Fiesole? I intended to suggest no moral, I am certain, & do'n't remember what you refer to. Tell dearest Trippy that I love her & will write soon to her. Perhaps the Reynoldses will be too charmed with their house to leave it for Rome—

Always mention him particularly . . poor dearest Papa! Ah, if he knew how I love him through it all!! Kiss Lizzie for me . . Lizzie Barrett. My love to the Cooks—does Surtees get an appointment? Remember me gratefully to M' & M'n Stratten . . mind you do— I hope you had a pleasant day. My beloved Arabel take care of yourself for me & be wise, & dont choose a monastic life out of which no good comes— Be certain that no good comes of it ever— See the fruit of it at Vallombrosa! There, be "morals" for you! so be quick & gather them up. How is the school? Tell me everything—as I shall tell you, . . when I have anything to tell. Oh, to compare Vauxhall to Florence! Tell Alfred he is a barbarian. Robert has seen Vauxhall, & Wilson the Surrey Gardens, but the sight here—was the wonder of wonders— Write, write— I love you, both of you . . all of you, . . & am my own Arabel's most attached Ba.

Love to dear Minny— Tell me of Crow—
Robert's best love to you & dearest Henrietta.

Address, on integral page: (To the care of Miss Tripsack) / Miss Arabel Barrett / 5. Upper Montagu Street / Montagu Square / London.

Publication: BC, 14, 252–262.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year determined from EBB's reference to the recent trip to Vallombrosa. EBB places this journey in June in Casa Guidi Windows, I, 1129–1164.
3. Cf. Amos 4:10: "... and I have made the stink of your camps come up unto your nostrils."
4. A small village about 14 miles from Florence on the road to Vallombrosa; see Aurora Leigh, I, 111.
5. EBB has mis-remembered: she told Henrietta, not Arabella, in a letter a few weeks earlier (see BC, 14, 247–248). George William Curtis (1824–92) was an American author and journalist travelling in Europe with his brother Burrill, Christopher Cranch, and Cranch's wife, Elizabeth. In September 1861 Curtis published an account of meeting the Brownings in Harper's New Monthly Magazine. His recollection was eventually revised and reissued in that same magazine in March 1890. For the complete text, see BC, 14, 408–412.
6. A spring on the side of a hill near Hope End; see Diary, p.88.
7. Murray's Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy (London: John Murray, 1847) identifies "a building called the Forestiera for the reception of strangers, upon whom it is the duty of one of the monks to attend" (p. 584); presumably, in this case, the Father Egidio mentioned below.
8. “Most reverend father.”
10. Because of the mountainous terrain, the journey from Vallombrosa to La Verna is 27 miles, and a further 12 miles to Camaldoli. Murray’s *Hand-Book* describes the road towards La Verna as “exceedingly steep, with awkward turns, and for those who cannot walk, horses or mules are preferable” (p. 585). The convent at La Verna dates from the 13th century, and Camaldoli “is said to have been founded about A.D. 1000” (Murray’s *Hand-Book*, p. 586).

11. St. Anthony (ca. 251–356) whose life of solitude in the desert was beset by temptations, artistic representations of which have taken the form of ugly demons, fantastic creatures, or naked women.

12. Murray’s *Hand-Book* notes that the founder, San Gualberto, was the son of “the head of a noble and rich family in Florence,” and that the monastery “became very rich from endowments, by the Countess Matilda and others” (p. 583).

13. “Gentlemen are provided with comfortable beds in the convent; but ladies, who are not allowed to enter the convent, have apartments assigned to them in this building [i.e., the Forestiera]. No charge for board or lodging is made upon the traveller: the usual mode of payment, therefore, is, to give the monk who attends upon strangers a sum of money requesting him to distribute it among the servants” (*Hand-Book*, p. 584).

14. Giovanni Gualberto (d. 1073) was canonized in 1193. He joined the monastery of San Miniato in 1013, but when a simoniacal abbot was elected, he moved to the monks of Calmaldoli. From there he retreated to a severer rule of monastic life at Vallombrosa, and eventually formed his own order according to the rules of St. Benedict. The order was approved by Pope Alexander II in 1070. EBB recalls this visit to Vallombrosa, as well as San Gualberto, in *Casa Guidi Windows*, 1, 1129–64. There are several accounts of his life in verse, as well as the *Historia di San Giovangualberto* (Firenze, 1640) by Diego de Franchi.

15. Nearly three lines have been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

16. She was the first of two domestics of this name employed by the Brownings in Florence.

17. The Brownings moved to Palazzo Guidi on 20 July 1847, and, except for the period of 19 October 1847 until 9 May 1848, it was their principal residence until EBB’s death in June 1861. Soon after the birth of their son in 1849 the Brownings began calling their apartment Casa Guidi, by which name it is known.

18. This ancient church was largely rebuilt in the 14th and 15th centuries. EBB refers to it in the opening lines of *Casa Guidi Windows* (I, 1–2), and RB in *The Ring and the Book*, I, 112.

19. Three lines have been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

20. Cf. “The World was all before them, where to choose,” *Paradise Lost*, XII, 646.


22. According to Murray’s *Hand-Book*, “this bridge is a favourite evening walk” (p. 481). Murray’s also notes “The café Doney, in the Piazza Sta. Trinita, is the most frequented in Florence. Doney is the Gunter of Florence as regards ices, confectionary, &c.” (p. 474). Cf. *Aurora Leigh*, VII, 1181.

23. In the Piazza di Santa Trinità. The porphyry statue by Ferrucci is mounted on a granite column brought from Rome by Cosimo I and erected in 1554 (Murray’s *Hand-Book*, p. 528).

24. Perhaps Arabella commented on EBB’s remark near the end of letter 13: “I might as well talk to Fiesole in the distance as try to persuade him,” referring to RB carrying her up stairs.

25. A little more than a line has been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

26. Vauxhall Gardens were located on the south side of the Thames, and were first laid out in the seventeenth century. The gardens were closed in 1859 (*The London Encyclopaedia*, ed. Ben Weintreb and Christopher Hibbert, London: Macmillan, 1983, p. 910–912). The Surrey Gardens were founded by Edward Cross in 1831 and closed and sold for redevelopment in 1877. Various attractions made the gardens “extremely popular for some years—in 1850 *Punch* referred to ‘that grand shilling’s worth of beasts, flowers, music, and fireworks—the Surrey Zoological’” (p. 848).
Letter 18

[From RB]

My dearest sisters— Every thing I hear of you from Ba, and every word you write to her, make me love you the more—you have this in common with her, that the more one knows of you the more dear you become— The increase to Ba’s happiness and mine that arises from this constant affection of yours to her, and sympathy with me, is incalculable: and I comfort myself by thinking that she deserves it, at all events. It will be a perfect delight to see you face to face and not thro’ these letters merely, plain as your kindness shines thro’ them—and let us hope that this will be at no very distant day. Your Ba is looking very well, nor suffering so much from the weather as you would apprehend— Some very seasonable showers with a little thunder have reduced the temperature to .. at this minute .. 76—Fahrenheit— tho’ we are at halfpast twelve— She will have told you about our doings in this new house, our evening walks on our terrace, and our other pleasant ways— Only I could not help slipping in this little word, poor return as it is for so many warmhearted greetings, every one of which goes to my soul— God bless you both for Ba’s sake and that of

your affectionate

R Browning.

Address, on integral page: Miss Arabel Barrett.
Publication: BC, 14, 270.
Manuscript: Armstrong Browning Library.

Letter 19

[Florence]
August 29—[1847]

This very day I had my dearest Henrietta’s letter and I lose no time in beginning to write back again—and now it must be to you my best own Arabel .. although it always seems to me more natural to answer the speaker, than to speak triangularly, in the fashion we generally do. Quoth Henrietta to Ba “so & so”: quoth Ba to Arabel “so & so”. Still as we say to encourage each other .. “it’s the same thing when a letter comes who is written to” .. and it is much the same thing: and also, have I not your little note to answer? let me remember all my duties. As Henrietta observes too, it was a little note filled up to the brim & worthy of especial thoughtfulness— As to the great letter today, directed to the Palazzo Guidi, it came to me while Robert was at the post looking for letters addressed to Poste Restante, and scarcely I could believe my own eyes when I saw it— He came back presently— “Where’s my letter, pray?” (I had calculated that there must perforce be a letter for me that morning.) “Why, Dear— I am sorry to say that there are no letters—” “Yes, but my particular letter from Henrietta: there must be a letter for me.” “Indeed there is not. I looked through all the letters myself and I can answer positively” .. “And I feel positive
Letter 19
29–31 August [1847]

... I feel as certain, .. as certain as can be .. that there's a letter from Henrietta for me by this morning's post. I think that for once, you have made a mistake". —He laughed .. laughed .. and said that nothing was more amusing than my positiveness ... "Why Ba, what have you got in your head". Whereat I answered triumphantly, "Say, rather, what have I got in my pocket" .. and pulled out my document & held it close to his eyes. But for the future tell Henrietta & yourself to direct as usual "Poste Restante" because it is safer on several accounts, one being that the accomplished postman cant read .. has stopped Robert twice in the street to beg him to interpret this & that direction written as plainly as the campanile against the sky—and as he goes to the post office every morning, it is best to let him have the letters there— By the way, mind you write oftener. On the twentieth of September we go—and shall have to wait till we get to Rome—after that date. So before it do be generous & let me hear. I do delight so in these letters—ah, if you ever think that I could be happy without them under the most sunshiney circumstances God could plant me in, you are three times wrong— It is a great mistake to fancy that being married can undo the past & make those you once loved less loved than ever .. oh no. I seem to love you all more dearly than ever on the contrary. So write oftener before the twentieth—there's my moral!—— I dont know exactly what we shall do on the twelfth. Have knead cakes perhaps? or a larger water-melon than usual .. or we shall think of something better, I dare say. Being sunday, it's difficult—and saturday, Arabel, is not by any means the same thing. Before the year which that day brought in, I could not have believed to any one's swearing that a married life was so happy a thing .. so purely happy. We must take care to behave discreetly before ⟨the Reynoldses⟩ at Rome, & appear to hate one another with a due decency—oh, & we shall, of course. For my part, I always did, you know, hate & detest, those public expressions of affectionateness, and Robert hates them too——only it is my humble opinion, nevertheless, that before a cousin & intimate friend like Arlette, M' Bevan might have been allowed to call his wife "Darling" without an observation. It was not highly improper, even in the presence of a stranger— Why can you ask me to like ⟨M' Reynolds⟩ after all this? What does he allow Arlette to call him, I wonder, without "turning her out of doors?" Ah, well—to much tenderness cannot be as a fault, I think, in a compact of the nature of marriage: nobody ever complained of being too tenderly treated in that relation, at least. It is not a relation for mere civilities & cordialities of next-door neighbours—it is something nearer than that, or worth nothing— Be sure that Arabella's lot is brighter a thousand times than Arlette's, though she does without the Brougham & phaeton. Robert said today, "I wish the Bevans were going to Rome instead of the ⟨Reynoldses⟩. I am sure I should like M' Bevan." So we dont discharge him for discharging his servant, bid Henrietta know, though altogether that act of his seemed & seems to us wrong & illiberal, notwithstanding her apology. How good & kind he must be to Arabella—how he has justified his professions before marriage! how it does one's heart good to hear of such goodness!— Give my love to them both. May their anxieties be soon happily over! Perhaps the unusual heat may have helped to increase her indisposition—is it supposed to? To have her mother with her will be great comfort & happiness, of course. Tell me of the dear Hedleys when they come— Tell dear Henrietta that it is not at all on the ground of its being an act expressive of "ill-will" that I ventured to blame M' Bevan for discharging his servant; I do not doubt that he meant it in all goodwill & benevolence, on the contrary .. that is .. that he
meant well by the person discharged. I blamed him on other grounds & on these... namely, that we have no right to exact unity & agreement in matters of religion among the members of our household, & especially on what she calls herself "minor points." If God leaves his people at liberty to differ on such points, by what right do they refuse one another such liberty? Supposing that I sent Wilson away for not agreeing with me on this or that point of conscience, would dear Henrietta blame me or not? She ought, in any case, to blame me, I think. All persecution arises from such exactions, and if you admit the principle, it carries you to the Inquisition.

By the way, see what a Pope we have, & how bravely he is doing his work! The other evening there was a great shouting & crowd which drew us to the balcony—and we heard that the whole populace were gathered in the piazza Pitti opposite the palace to entreat the Grand Duke to grant them a civic guard as the Pope had granted at Rome. This is the way the popular feeling is expressed, here in Italy. It is said that the Grand Duke will grant it. He means well but is timid. Did I tell you how our carriage-wheel was almost locked in his, some weeks ago, and we had the honour of a great stare, & salutation—Hat taken off most absolutely. He has a good frank face, much care-worn, & looks greyer than his years, being scarcely fifty yet. The new royal baby has given occasion to various festivities, and Wilson met the wet nurse the other morning driven out gently to exercise like a milk-cow. A word which reminds me of grass & freshness, so I will tell you that we have had rain & are suddenly in the cool; and I have condescended to dress myself & signify to Robert that I was ready to walk out with him wherever he liked—If you were to see how pleased he is when I can walk out with him! nothing seems to delight him so:—and he was to choose the walk for himself—and he chose the Boboli gardens & took me to see a part of them I had not seen, the great fountain, surrounded with the famous nudities which overwhelmed Wilson at her first arrival at Florence... and then we went into the arbour-walks, with lattices cut out of the deep green, showing glimpses of the Appenines [sic], of Fiesole, of olive grounds grey against the hills: altogether it was delightful. The wind was as fresh as a night English wind, only softer; and the sun rather shone than scorched. Also in those shadowy walks, there was no need of a parasol. Robert carried mine, and then we sate down on the marble benches & talked of everything in Heaven & earth & Wimpole Street especially. The worst was that Flush could not come with us. The barbarians of the Boboli gardens do not admit dogs. Here in Italy they are civilized enough to let dogs into their churches, .. but into their gardens, no I thank you. Robert & I have various controversies on the church-question, because, notwithstanding permission & custom, he hates to take Flush into a church, whereas I, you know, like to take him everywhere—The fact is, that Flush has, it must be confessed, a way of walking straight up to the High Altar & performing his devotions thereat, which is scarcely orthodox, & might be objectionable to the faithful—Robert declares that he is in an agony the whole time ... "My darling, you dont see other dogs behave so".—(Ah yes!—my darling! Just so! You see what personal reasons I have for protesting against the Reynolds-theory, .. seeing that just that word is his very favorite .. or sometimes it is "my little darling", which of course wd be considered twice as disgusting.) Flush is a sort of Luther, & "protests" more vigorously than gracefully—I must tell you what an illusion he fell into however, on the subject of water-melon. He saw one cut into slices, which being very red, he took it into his head could only represent slices of underdone beef; and dashed up against my knee, entreating
with eyes coming out from under his ears, that I would give him some instantly! I acceded & he swallowed down a great piece without a moment’s consideration—dreadful to be so deceived! slowly & mournfully he retreated with his tail between his legs & nothing more to be said—He never has asked for another slice. Talk of water-melon, & here it comes! Wilson brings me in a “small one” for our home consumption, a yard (except two inches) round, & price five pence halfpenny, .. which will last us five days (for dinner & supper) though Robert is a frightful consumer of it, eating it on so large a scale that only by experience I am satisfied that the excess will not hurt him .. he who scarcely eats anything else! We keep it in ice, & it is not like other melons .. it is not indigestible, I should think, and is much the more agreeable fruit besides. This which Wilson brought me in, I tried in vain to carry. I could just with all my strength lift it up. She is better, poor Wilson!—The lump is not to be felt now, & so it could only have been flatulency .. but there is a tendency to obstruction in the side, & exercise & diet are not sufficient to obviate the need for strong medicines. Sir Charles Herbert says that her eyes and nails are of a better colour, & that he will soon set her to rights—If it had been myself I would not have gone to him .. I would have kept to the old prescriptions .. & walked more & eaten still less .. but I advised her to go to him of course, for she gets nervous .. and so do I, shrinking from the responsibility—The swelling she had at Pisa is gone, and she has looked as well as any one could look throughout our residence at Florence until quite lately, and in my own mind I do attribute the whole return of evil to that detestable bread at Vallombrosa which was enough to upset any delicate digestion. How well it was that we were kept from staying there, after all! Our disappointment was a “blessing in disguise” as usual & only that. Did I, when I mentioned Carlyle’s letter, tell you that he suggested our going to live at Chelsea near him, when we went to England? At the same time he said, that he felt inclined towards Italy himself .. towards coming out here, as Robert had suggested. I have heard from Miss Martineau & she wrote one side of M: Kenyon’s sheet, & invited us in the kindest words to visit her at the Lakes.8 Now did I tell you that before? The other day Robert met in the street M: Irving.10 He had just come from Pisa & was going back for a day or two but “on his return would call directly on us”. M: Powers we see sometimes & like better & better. Never was a simpler man of genius in a better sense. He is meditating a statue of Franklin with uplifted hand plucking down the lightning .. and Robert in the flash of a moment gave him a motto, in a Latin line by a Frenchman, which he translated so “He snatched the bolt from Heaven, the badge from Kings.”¹¹ M: Powers, quite delighted, said he would engrave both Latin & English on the base of his statue.

August 31. Wilson is much better, I am happy to say, since I began this letter—In the former part of it I begged you, Arabel, to write often while we were at Florence, and now on calculation it appears that you have time to send me only one more letter—the more vexatious for me! .. & that to reach me it must be posted on the next day to the day on which you read what I write— I beseech you to let me have therefore, the one letter I can receive— Write instantly— Also, let the first letter which you write to Rome be written on a single sheet of paper, without envelope.12 To my horror & consternation Robert brings up before my eyes an idea which I struggle against receiving, about the postage-regulations in Rome on this head—He fancies, in fact he has seen in a newspaper, that enclosures are not permitted in the Roman post—a fact, which if a fact, draws,
to my mind, a permanent mist over the Seven Hills. He says that you must write oftener to us... that is all! Yes! but nothing makes amends for my delightful thick packets, and the inconvenience on every account is great— I dont believe his newspaper authority, ... and indeed he & I had a regular quarrel about it last night, at the end of which we begged each other’s pardon. He declared that never in his life, had he seen me so angry—and “was it his fault if the Roman postoffice was different from this at Florence?” Why certainly it was’nt his fault, and if really I was angry, the more foolish I ..! but I dont think I was angry, exactly, with him—and I agreed at last to tell you; and if it is a mistake (which I cant help still hoping) I will tell you again the contrary. In the meantime, let the first Roman letter be written on as large a sheet as you can find— I hate, too, writing on those great sheets. Robert says that I dont believe it, just because I dont like it— Well, we shall see. I shall send you another Florentine letter before we leave Florence and he will enquire in the interim, so that perhaps I may be able to tell you something prior even to the Roman experience; but, if not, hold yourselves warned. We talk confidently of living on the top of the Tarpeian Rock,* precisely as if we had taken the apartment already— A capital place for blowing soap bubbles!— and we have’nt yet blown ours. Florence is too public, rather. It will be grand & philosophical to send bubble after bubble over the ruins of old Rome—wont it?— We shall go on the twentieth of September, if everything goes smoothly besides—if I am well & prepared to travel .. for it would be easy to delay the journey for a month in case of its seeming better on any ground to do so— I am very well now .. only being made of doubtful stuff speculative people & cautious people take occasion from me for doubting this or that .. I only know that I am very well indeed. Also, we mean to travel very quietly & slowly, & eschew every sort of fatigue. The day after the Boboli gardens excursion, we went to the Museum close by,* to see the famous waxen preparations of plants .. the most beautiful & curious in the world—also the waxen representation of the plague, .. which I hesitated rather to see & sickened in the seeing .. it is so ghastly & dreadful!—only, being on a minute scale, the horror is idealized away to a safe distance. The anatomical exhibition, also in wax, Robert would not let me see—nor did I desire it, for various reasons—though women are admitted indiscriminately, & the Italians come in crowds. I meant to write to M! Boyd today— Give him my love if you see him before I send his letter. Think of Miss Mitford having taken back K!!^ She says that she never has had a happy day since she parted with her, & now is entirely satisfied, & hopes that I shall forgive her for being so. Of course it is matter of feeling— For my part, it w^ be most painful to me to have close to me a person in whom I could not reasonably place the least confidence or faith. As to repentance & reformation, I hope the grounds for believing in them are good grounds—but I remember too vividly how after floods of tears, the woman sinned & sinned .. I cannot think that dear Miss Mitford has done well or wisely. It was such a flagrant case .. such a compound iniquity!— But the thing is done, & though I have let her see that I could not sympathize in any way in the doing, there was no use in making reproaches & I have not made them. She has been suffering from rheumatism, poor Miss Mitford, and on that account, changed her London-plan, & has been seeing her friends at dinner in the country instead, & enjoying herself, she says, a good deal. How glad I am that (Emma Margary)* appears happy. Ah, Arabel!—yes!— You know my thought about a “first husband”— There was a grateful sort of affectionateness in that case, but as little love proper
as might be— I do not doubt that she may not easily be happier in the new position than in the old. Give her my affectionate congratulations. Mr. Margery is probably a stronger-headed man than Mr. Monro was, and if a warm heart enters into the composition, why there is more stuff to hold by,—for an impulsive, vivacious woman like Emma— I dare say they won't live very long at a distance from London. Does Alfred complain & fear for the Great Western in the general panic about railroads as constaté in the newspapers. Hearing of it I fear a little for him— Tell me if he considers his prospects as good as ever— Something too is said of drought in the West Indies? I trust dear Storm is not thirsting for the watercourses. Are his bees the makers of golden honey for him? Never forget to mention anything relating to Stormie. It is delightful to hear of George looking well after his labours in the country. As to Henry, bid him be of good courage & look out steadily for occupation: he will get it in time, be sure— Occy . and Sette the barrister at law . whose marriage, did we see or not the other day announced, ..? S. Barrett Esq., barrister at law.— Tell me of dearest Papa always— I wonder if really & in his heart, he does not love me now— while I love him so unchangeably— If he does not, .. God judges betwixt us two, which of us has loved the other best! —— But it makes me giddy to look back & speak of the past, & of the present in reference to it. Tell my dear Henrietta that I took it into my head she wrote her last letter, being out of spirits, & that that, I really cannot permit— there is no reason for being out of courage & spirits, and to be unreasonable is to be very, very naughty— I wish Papa would send you all out of town as he did last year— She does not seem to care much for it, but it would do you all good, I think .. If you up & turn your faces round into the light & sunshine— At any rate, do make Tripp, (dearest Trippy, give her my love) do make Trippy go. It is necessary for Trippy to have change of air. Do persuade her to go somewhere. You, my dear, dear Arabel, are going to Tunbridge to the Strattens, did you not say something of it? and you mean to have a picnic in some quarter of the world, according to your announcement— Florence is a city & so is London; but Florence is not like London, I can assure you— If you were to see the moonlight dripping down the wall of our grey San Felice—and how presently we stand knee-deep in it; on our own terrace. Such moonlight—such a divine, still air! —— The worst of Florence is the noise. I do believe that the people never sleep at night except by the merest accident— The whole of the night they are walking & talking under my windows, and laughing & singing ... what Flush may call singing & music perhaps, for aught I know— Robert says that at Rome it will be very different, to which I answer that I hope it will be as different as possible— London-noise is nothing in comparison— The streets here, observe, are all narrow—and paved all over with flat <***>
7. Charles Lyon Herbert (1784–1855) was one of the “excellent English physicians” practicing in Florence at this time (Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy, London: John Murray, 1847, p. 476).


9. EBB mentions this letter in several other letters about this time, but Harriet Martineau’s letter is not extant.

10. See letter 4, note 22.

11. “Eripuit coelo fulmen, mox sceptrum tyrannis”—cf. “eripuitque Iovi fulmen viresquire tonandi et sonitum ventis concessit,” Manilius, Astronomica, I, 104, which has been attributed to the French statesman and economist Anne Robert Jacques Turgot. The line was used as an inscription on the statue of Franklin by Houdon in 1778. Powers had accepted a commission for a statue of Franklin in 1843, for which he used a copy of a cast by Flaxman of the Houdon bust of Franklin. This and other study materials were sent to Powers some time in 1847 by his friend Richard Henry Wilde. Wilde was unsuccessful in raising the necessary subscription for the statue, and it was not until 1858, when Wilde received a commission from the United States government, that he completed the model. There are two marbles of this statue: one in the Senate wing of the United States capitol building, and another in the Benjamin Franklin Senior High School in New Orleans (Richard P. Wunder, Hiram Powers: Vermont Sculptor, 1805–1873, Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press and London: Associated University Presses, 1991, II, 150–152). Neither of these bears the inscription suggested by RB, nor do any of the busts of Franklin completed by Powers after Flaxman’s cast in 1848 and 1849.

12. Murray’s A Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy (London: John Murray, 1843) explains that “the postage from England [to Rome] is 34 bajocchi [about ½ pence]; letters with envelopes are charged double” (p. 290).

13. Described by Murray’s Handbook as being “on the southern summit of the Capitoline, which faces the Tiber” (p. 321). This precipice takes it name from Tarpeia, daughter of Spurius Tarpeius. See letter 6, note 8.

14. The Museo di Storia Naturale, where, according to Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy (London: John Murray, 1847) “the models in wax are interesting. The more ancient by Zummo, a Sicilian, who executed them for Cosmo III., principally represent corpses in various stages of decomposition. The others are, more strictly speaking, anatomical, and display every portion of the human body with wonderful accuracy” (p. 565).

15. In 1844 Miss Mitford’s maid, Kerenhappuch (generally referred to as “K”), gave birth to a child. She claimed to have been secretly married, but when it turned out she had not been married, and the gardener, Ben Kirby, would not marry her, Miss Mitford dismissed them both. Eventually, however, she took them back into service, and when “K” married in 1851, it was not Ben Kirby, the father of her children, but Sam Sweetman, the gardener/handyman who replaced Kirby, with whom she had another child. “K” and her husband remained in Miss Mitford’s service until her death in 1855. EBB’s disapproval of Miss Mitford’s decision to take “K” back was based not on her “want of chastity” but rather her “systematic lying” (see BC, 8, 161).


18. The Times of 5 August 1847 identified the bridegroom as “Samuel Barrett, Esq., of Lincoln’s-inn, barrister-at-law.” He was not a relation, and EBB’s brother, Septimus, never married. He eventually went out to Jamaica, where he died at Cinnamon Hill in 1870.

19. RB recalls images similar to these in The Ring and the Book, 1, 548.
Letter 20

Florence—
[13 September 1847]

Love to love my dearest both of you!

How else should I thank you adequately for your kindest of letters, which happily came on the wrong day, Saturday, inasmuch as if it had come on the twelfth we should have missed it till Monday, it being impossible to force one’s way to the postoffice through the crowded streets. Robert expected a letter from home & had to give it up—the thing was impossible. The fact was, that our Italians had resolved to keep our day for us on a most magnificent scale; an intention which we, on our parts, not only graciously appropriated, but permitted in return to perfect the glory by keeping at the same time the establishment of the civic guard & prospect of the liberty of Italy through union—Ah, you should have seen our day! Forty thousand strangers were in Florence. I mean, inhabitants of the different Tuscan states, deputations and companies of various kinds; and for above three hours the infinite procession filed under our windows with all their various flags & symbols, into the Piazza Pitti where the Duke & his family stood in tears at the window to receive the thanks of his people. Never in the world was a more affecting sight, nor a grander, if you took it in its full significance—The magistracy came first, with their flag, & then the priesthood (such as chose) & and I saw some brown monks there, with the rope girdle, I assure you—and then & then, class after class, troops of peasants & nobles, and of soldiers fraternizing with the people. Then too, came the foreigners, there was a place for them—and there are so many foreign residents here that it was by no means unimportant to admit their sympathy—French, English, Swiss, Greeks (such a noble band of Greeks!) all with their national flags—Meanwhile there was no lack of spectators. The windows dropping down their glittering draperies, seemed to grow larger with the multitude of pretty heads, & of hands which threw out flowers & waved white handkerchiefs—There was not an inch of wall, not alive, if the eye might judge—Clouds of flowers & laurel leaves came fluttering down on the advancing procession—and the clapping of hands, & the frenetic shouting, and the music which came in gushes, & then seemed to go out with too much joy, and the exulting faces, and the kisses given for very exultation between man & man, and the mixing of elegantly dressed women in all that crowd & turbulence with the sort of smile which proved how little cause there was for fear—all these features of the scene made it peculiar, & memorable & most beautiful to look at & to look back upon. We went to a window in our palazzo which had a full view, and I had a throne of cushions piled up on a chair, but was dreadfully tired before it was all over, in spite of them, as you may suppose from the excitement of such a scene. And then Robert & I waved our handkerchiefs till my wrist ached, I will answer for mine. At night there was an illumination, & we walked just to the Arno to have a sight of it, & then, the streets were as crowded as a full route in London might be, only with less pushing probably, & with the soft starry air in change for a stiffling [sic] atmosphere—And even then, the people were embracing
for joy. It was a state of phrenzy or rapture, extending to the children of two years old, several of whom I heard lisping .. "Vivas," with their little fat arms clasping their mothers['] necks. So was'nt our day kept well for us? Yes, and without a single discord to mar the harmony- You never see drunkenness nor brutality in any form in the gladness of these Tuscans. You never see fighting with fists, nor hear blasphemous language. It is the sort of gladness in which women may mingle and be glad too- Our poor English want educating into gladness—they want refining, not in the fire but in the sunshine. How different a thing a crowd is here to an English crowd, you must come here to learn—yet whose is the fault, I wonder? And why should it be so, with all our advantages of a more scriptural instruction and larger constitutional rights? One reason is that our religious teachers in England do not sanctify the relaxations of the people. The narrowness which cuts down literature & refuses to accept Art into the uses of the Christian Life, is more rife with injury & desecration than you see at a first glance- Of this I am more & more sure the more I see & live. It is a worse mistake than marrying on Litany wednesdays, and dining on fast-fridays, .. and we should repent it in the ashes of ash-wednesdays, if people repent deepest really in such ashes. You will say that it was'nt a very perfect keeping of sunday yesterday even though it did perfectly for our anniversary. The whole company of which the procession consisted, went in the first place to the cathedral, observe, the great Duomo, (where nobody unconnected with the ceremony was admitted, for the plain reason that there was no room) & there the banners were blessed, and the ‘Veni Creator’ & Te Deum sung in choral magnificence^— and I could not for my part take it for desecration when the next movement brought them to thank their sovereign, & fraternize in hope with one another. Besides their view of the meaning of the “Lord’s Day” is different you know from the general view of it in England, .. whether nearer or farther from the true one, being another question- And now, pray dont take it into your dear imaginations that Italy is in arms, & that I am on the eve of being massacred— you & dearest Trippy may set your hearts at ease, on the contrary, for the safety of my head- The excitement here which certainly exists, & that I am on the eve of being massacred—you & dearest Trippy may set your hearts at ease, on the contrary, for the safety of my head- The excitement here which certainly exists, & is at its height perhaps in Tuscany just now, is all joyous & good & innocent & preventive of evil. If Italians join hands, Austria may throw in vain her poisoned arrows, .. and the noise we hear is only the clash of the gauntlets as friend meets friend- Every Austrian in Florence was desired to keep the house yesterday, by an order of the police,—& this because it had been discovered that here as lately in Rome, paid Austrians were in league to produce disturbance in the streets, in order to justify the interference of the Austrian government. Is it not hateful & loathsome? Metternich puts out these fangs, .. trembling in his hole, poor reptile, for his power in Italy. Which may God shiver into dust- Our grand Duke has behaved well- Think!—it was a hard position for him! himself an Austrian, & his family & associations leaning to absolutism naturally. But he sacrifices everything, & does it well & nobly, as if his heart helped him. After all, however, the Pope is the liberator- He is a great man .. I call him great. It is wonderful how a man in such a position, should have his soul free & pure for such a course of action. Liberty seldom originates for a people from the throne, .. and when you consider that it is a Pope’s throne, the wonder grows most wonderful- I think I must go to see him when we go to Rome to express by that act what a man I hold him to be. And it is expected that after the court of the sanctuary, he means to wash the sanctuary itself,—to reform the priesthood (which requires it, as
some of the laity know) and to cleanse various practises of the church. A most devout man, he is said to be, and brave and gentle at once—and as the people in Rome adore him, he may attempt very nearly what he pleases without fear of being accused of heresy. He rides about the streets on a mule, they say, & dreams by night & day, of doing good humbly. Think of such a Pope!—

And of such a letter too!—you will be tired of it & of me long & long before this, I am certain, .. you who dont want to hear about Popes & crowds— So let me go on & tell you of our day. The worst of it was that Robert was not well—he had caught cold & felt unwell for several days, & yesterday he was as languid, as languid .. and looked so pale .. and of course it spoiled our good spirits rather, though he made me very happy by saying again & again such things as cant be repeated nor forgotten, besides, that never in his life, from his joyous childhood upwards, had he enjoyed such happiness as he has known with me— Too happy it makes me to hear such things! Indeed if the perfectest love & sympathy can give any happiness, we both enjoy it— There has not been a cloud, nor a breath. The only difference is from happy to happier, and from being loved to being loved more— When he says he loves me more, I see that it is just so— Every word I say is something right & bright, let it be ever so dull: and if I say nothing, why then, I am sure to be looking right, or pouring out coffee right, or listening divinely to something said to me—so that mine is not a difficult part by any manner of means. We have gone over all our days last year in rather a pleasanter way than we did the original days, which were wretched, to say the best of them—oh, that dreadful day at Hampstead! If you knew how I suffered while I talked word upon word- My darling Arabel was grave, & you looked suspicious, and the life of us all seemed to hang on the suspicion being put away. But in talking lately of these things, I could not help laughing a little, & catching a glimpse of the ridiculous side as they turned into the passing year. Always it does make us laugh, for instance, to think of the official’s (the man with the wand in the church) attitude & gesture of astonishment, as he stood at the churchdoor & saw bride & bridgroom part on the best terms possible & go off in separate flies. Robert was very generous & threw about his gold to clerk, pew openers &c &c in a way to convict us o f being in a condition of incognito .. and this particular man with a wand, had hazarded, between two bursts of gratitude, a philosophic sentiment about “marriage being a very serious event in one’s mortal life”, .. this as we left the church— And there he stood in the doorway, his speech scarcely ended on his lips, .. mouth wide open in mute surprise! “Never had he seen anything more remarkable than that, in the whole course of his practice!”— On our day we gave Wilson a turquoise broach as a memorial of it having chosen it on the jewellers bridge8 the day before-. If it had not been for Wilson, on the real day, it w! have been worse with me than it was. I assure you she only knew the night before, and, I am sure, had her own share of suffering, .. she who is so timid & easily daunted. She was more glad to make us knead cakes yesterday: & we had them for tea at seven oclock. But now I am going to tell you how a cloud came. Robert, as I said, was not well, & did not take his walk as usual with Flush for company—& therefore, because we hold it necessary for Flush to have daily exercise, we sent him down stairs with Annunciata just for one run— Well— Not only did he run, but he ran away. A little dog passed at the moment, & after the dog he went, & upstairs without him came Annunciata. ‘Oh’ said she .. [“]è niente! Tornerà presto, presto,”9— and really I thought he might be back soon .. but hours passed, & no
Flush. Was'n't it too bad of him to spoil our wedding day so? As it grew darker & darker the tears could scarcely be kept out of my eyes, .. for Flush has a new collar & I feared that he might be stolen by one of the forty thousand visitors, and so farewell to poor Flush. And so passed the night- The porter left open the gates till twelve oclock .. but not a sign of Flush—and when Wilson came to dress me in the morning no Flush, no Flush! (Robert had gone round to Piazza Pitti in vain, I forgot to say .. but then who could see a dog in that crowd). Well, while I was dressing, in the morning and sighing over all these vicissitudes in the most melancholy of moods, a dash was made against the door of the room which either betokened Flush or the devil .. and of the two you may suppose that it was Flush— Yes! he had come back & laid down at the entrance of our appartment, & a charitable person had let him in— and very guilty he looked & tired, as if he had been roaming about all night. “Quite disgraceful for a respectable dog like him,” as Robert said reproachfully. But I dont doubt that the great crowd & confusion & illumination of the night before had frightened & confounded him, & that he had lost himself completely- In the calm of the morning he had recovered his head a little—poor Flush—and in this way the evil was remedied. Ah, you dearest kindest best Henrietta & Arabel, how I thank you from my heart of hearts for your dear letters & tender words. First I read your letters always to myself, & then Robert sits down by me to hear everything that is not too secret. Well—I read your letter so, to him, yesterday, Henrietta, .. and then I began Arabel’s, without the precaution this time, of reading it to myself first. I managed it all very well until I came to that part where she spoke of praying for me in the place where we used to pray together, and there, I could not get on but burst out crying in the most unforeseen way possible, .. which was unfortunate, .. for he hates to see me cry & began to look a little unhappy himself just for company. Yet it grew better by degrees, and at last nothing was left but the brightness of knowing how you both love me who love you back again from the soul of my soul—dearest Things! May we look on one another’s face before long—I long to see you!

We have had a great fair here, and the cheapness of everything has been miraculous. I have bought neck ribbons, five or six or seven of them, very pretty, at three pence a yard—such as you wd give a shilling or fifteen pence for in England. Also a winter’s gown, .. a sort of Orleans cloth, (more like that than anything else) with a silk stripe in it, .. really pretty & fine .. of an invisible green colour .. and I gave for the whole dress 5s-6d It was five pence halfpenny a yard—So much it pleased me that I wanted another in black, (which blackness is convenient at Rome, women being excluded from some of the ceremonies if unclothed in it .. and I have worn out my black silk gown) but it rained the last day of the fair and Wilson missed her opportunity of getting it for me. If I buy at the shops a black French merino, it will be a guinea—and to give a guinea for a dress in this land of cheapness, seems to me rather an extravagance. Yet you would give rather more in England .. wouldn’t you? Wilson paid three halfpence a yard for the lining of the green gown— Think of that! Such prices only, account for the elegance of the women of all classes, which strikes foreigners so much on the frequent festa-day. Otherwise it wd be a problem to solve. Our baker’s wife is an Englishwoman married to a German,11 and she said to Wilson .. “Ah, you may talk of England—everybody does that! but when you go back you will cry your eyes out for Italy, just as I did when I thought I would return, and then longed to get out of it all
again. England is not the place for the poor. They are treated like dogs there, and never enjoy anything like other human beings— The rich on one side, the poor on another, . . that’s the way in England— Here we are all men & women & can reach to the same pleasures.” Which has a great deal of truth in it— I am jealous for poor England . . Why should not her people be as happy? Why should I pay here only three pence for two large soft spungs, for which in London I sh’d pay some ten shillings? Wilson has this instant brought them in to my utter astonishment. She says that though the fair is done, she can get things even cheaper, and has brought some more neck-ribbons, three halfpence a yard. We are providing ourselves with everything at Florence, because Rome has a reputation of being dearer & more difficult— And now I am about to tell you of a new visitor we have had. I found a letter on the table from a Miss Boyle, who said by the way, that she knew nothing scarcely of Miss Boyle except that she was in deep anxiety to find us out, having been already introduced to Mr Browning!! &c &c &c. & intimated that we both sh’d know in the flash of a thought all about the said Miss Boyle, she being a notorious personage. Well! Robert & I looked into one another’s faces in blank confusion— how could he remember an introduction in London, one of the many? & as for me I had never heard of her, I thought. So I wrote back to Miss Dowglass, beseeching her to send us a key—and I wrote to Miss Boyle, who had invited us to the Carreggi villa (the villa of Lorenzo the Magnificent) in her mother’s name, that I had not been much out lately but would gladly receive her in Florence if she thought it worth to call on us. !" Answered Miss Dowglass from the Baths of Lucca . . that Miss Boyle was the daughter of Lady Boyle, sister of the Queen Dowager’s maid of honour, niece to the Earl of Cork, and authoress of certain poems, . . that she had met Robert, whom she excessively admired, at Lady Morgan’s, & had just begun a conversation with him in the hollow of a window when the lady of the house spoilt it all . . that knowing Miss Dowglass slightly she had caught sight of my books on the table & had begun to enquire eagerly “where M. & M Mrs Browning were, whom she had hunted for in vain through Pisa & Florence” . . . she had heard of their having gone into Switzerland”. 2* Answered Miss Boyle that she would come . . and she came straightway, at a most unfortunate moment, . . Wilson & Annunciata being both out, & Robert opening the door of our apartment, without the prestige of the cravat . . unaeled, uncravatted!15— . . in the merest, wildest state of dishabile. He has the art however of making the best of a situation, & managed to laugh us back into respectability, and to be so cordial to the visitor that she condescended to say “Oh, you ought to see me & my sister in the morning”.— As for me I had been lying prostrate on the sofa & leapt up in horror,— and if really, as he assured me afterward, my hair & appurtenances were ‘quite perfect,’ it was a miracle of the uncommonest. “Here’s Miss Boyle, Ba, come to see you,” did confound me utterly, I must admit— But she seemed after all, good natured, & was clever in conversation & made herself a good place at last. “A little lively aristocrat,” as Robert describes her well . . and somewhat better under and over. He remembered about her in a moment as soon (<as>) Lady Morgan’s name was mentioned, and says she is the ‘crème de la crème’ in London society, with certain literary pretensions to boot. Almack’s16 clever (&) original she certainly seemed in her talk, and she sate an hour with us & “hoped to come again.” Lord Holland had lent Lady Boyle the villa Carreggi & they had been there for months without suspecting that we were not in Switzerland, when a
chance took Miss Boyle to Lucca Baths & threw her in with Miss Dowglass. Tell Arabel in regard to the latter, that in writing to me she is very reserved about religion, seeming to avoid the subject as much as possible. I imagine, that she unites with the church of England, . . with differences perhaps. She rides out a good deal in “gallops” . . . it is her favorite exercise. How much better she must be to admit of this!— As to Mrs Cook, I quite quite agree with you that Bummy sh’d be defendant rather than plaintiff— The case is obvious. Give my love to Surtees & Susan— How sorry I am about poor dearest Minny! Oh, Holloways pills! What could she be thinking of to be so rash— Keep her in bed as long as you can & mention her particularly— I am sorry too about Crow— and I assure you Wilson has been invited to go to England for a husband & return with him to settle here. It doesn’t seem so bad a plan to her, I fancy, as it would at one time. We are each of us “taken” in a different charm. Yet we go, & go on monday the twentieth— having doubted to the last,— but the winter prices (just double in these rooms) coming in to turn the scale. Also it is better perhaps on all accounts to travel now— We shall be ten days on the road which is usually travelled in five— but probably you shall hear again before we set out. I am perfectly well, only annoyed by a little occasional distress— & the change of air will do me good, I dare say. Don’t be afraid of the Austrians, nor Italians either. Tell Arabel it would be impossible to get a passport at this time for Palermo, Naples & Calabria being in actual revolt. The Reynolds’s wont go to Naples we prophesy. In other parts of Italy, where the government gives signs of sympathy with the people, there is no reason to fear for the tranquillity & safety of anyone— Tell my dear dear Treppy that her note shall be answered to herself & that meanwhile I love & kiss her through the air for it. Robert was so gratified, & both of us grateful. Is it possible that Henry will write to me! How happy that will make me— I love him & all of them from the roots of my heart—but it is difficult to believe that they love me as you say, when for my sake they refuse to give up a little of this . . . what is it to be called? determination, any wise— Could I have stood aside from one I loved a whole year as they have done from me? Love to them is the uppermost feeling with me after all— Tell them all so— If I and mine have wronged them, why not forgive us legally? And so little thought as there was of wronging them! God bless you—

Your own

Ba—

Robert’s “dearest love,” he says—

Address, on integral page: To the care of Miss Trepsack / (Miss Barrett) / 5— Montagu Street / Montagu Square / London.
Publication: BC, 14, 300-308.
Source: Transcript in editor’s file.

1. Dated by EBB’s reference to the celebrations on the day of the Brownings’ first wedding anniversary, and by her reference to their anniversary as “yesterday.”
2. Not easily seen on her sketch, EBB has identified or written the following: “Our palazzo”; “via maggio”; “Pitti Piazza”; “Palace of the Pitti—surrounded by balconies of stone, most of them thronged”; “Foreign ladies being admitted to the top of the great tower”; “The procession ending up at Piazza Pitti”; “Piazza San Felice alive & filled with people”; “Viva P. IX.” EBB’s illustration and description here is echoed in Casa Guidi Windows, I, 446–576, as well as in RB’s “Old Pictures in Florence,” lines 253–288. According to E.E.Y. Hales, the new Pope was popular beyond the Catholic world of Italy: “From the meeting halls of working men in New York to the common rooms of colleges at Oxford were echoed the cries of viva Pio Non! which rang in the piazzas of Italy” (The Catholic Church in the Modern World: A Survey from the French Revolution to the Present, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1958, p. 107).

3. “Te Deum Laudamus” (“We praise Thee, O God”) and “Veni, Creator Spiritus” (“Come, Creator God”) are the opening words of two ancient hymns of praise and thanksgiving.

4. Prince Clemens von Metternich (1773–1859) dominated European diplomacy during his term as Chancellor of Austria (1809–48). In July 1847 he ordered Austrian troops to occupy the entire city of Ferrara, which was under papal sovereignty, thus violating international law. Pius IX was outraged, and lodged a formal complaint. A few months later when Metternich requested permission for Austrian troops to march across the Papal States to suppress uprisings in the Kingdom of Naples, the pope refused. Metternich’s term as Chancellor ended the following March. EBB refers to him in Casa Guidi Windows, I, 662.

5. Amongst other acts early in his papacy, Pius IX had called for a revival in the religious orders, urging bishops and other clergy to lead the way by example (see letter 16, note 20); he was himself respected as a model of pastoral leadership.


7. See EBB’s comments in letter 2, in which she laments “that miserable saturday .. when I had to act a part to you—how I suffered.” In that same passage she wrote: “We parted, as we met, at the door of Marylebone Church.”

8. i.e., the Ponte Vecchio; according to Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy (London: John Murray, 1847), “like the Rialto, it is a street of shops, appropriated with few exceptions to jewellers, goldsmiths, and other workers in metal” (p. 481). The Ponte Vecchio is still known for its many jewellery shops.

9. “It’s nothing! He will come back very, very soon.”

10. Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in Central Italy (London: John Murray, 1850) notes that “ladies who wish to avail themselves of seats [in St. Peter’s] must be dressed in black veils during all the ceremonies. Gentlemen, if in black evening dress, or military men in uniform, are admitted within the bar” (p. 399).

11. EBB provides “Miller” as the baker’s name in a letter to Sarianna Browning dated [2 December 1854] (ms at Lilly).

12. Mary Louisa Boyle (1810–90) youngest of five children of Courtenay Boyle (1770–1844) and Carolina Amelia (née Poyntz, d. 1851). Mary’s sister Carolina Boyle (1803–83) was, for many years, Maid of Honour to Queen Adelaide, and her uncle was Edmund (1767–1856), 8th Earl of Cork. Mary Boyle wrote The Forester (London: Longmans & Co., 1839) and The Bridal of Melcha (London: Henry Colburn, 1844). Shortly after arriving in Florence in the summer of 1847, she, her mother, and her brother Charles John (1806–85) took up residence in the Medici Villa Careggi, which was owned by Henry Edward Fox (1802–59), 4th Baron Holland, who had been appointed envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to the court of Tuscany in 1839. See Mary Boyle: Her Book, edited by Sir Courtenay Boyle (London: John Murray, 1901), p. 201.


14. Placement of quotation marks is EBB’s.


16. Almacks Assembly Rooms in King Street, St. James’s, were opened in 1765 by William Almack, a Scotsman. Almacks soon became a mecca for London society ladies, and was ruled by the patronesses, who
alone distributed tickets of admission. Their power to offer or to deny entry made them the undisputed arbiters of fashion and manners.

17. Elizabeth Cook (1783–1862), the mother of Surtees and Susan Cook.

18. One of the “secret remedies” marketed by Thomas Holloway (1800–83), whose ointments and pills were widely advertised. In 1845 he spent £10,000 on advertising (DNB). Holloway was later founder and benefactor of Holloway College.

19. From the context, this seems to refer to a failed pregnancy.

20. A notice in The Times for 17 September 1847 reported recent disturbances in Naples. The Times expressed its views in the following terms: “A riot in a Sicilian town should surely not recommend the independent Monarch of Southern Italy to join hands with a German Power which has been pleased to announce its determination of not suffering Italians to organize themselves for their own protection. The cause of Austria can never be the cause of any kingdom of Italy.” On 21 September 1847, The Times reported that “further letters from Naples of the 9th inst. state that that city and Messina on the 6th inst. were ‘materially tranquil,’ meaning that nothing in the shape of actual revolt existed in them respectively; for that every disposition to insurrection prevailed in each.”

Letter 21

[Florence]
Oct. 4, '47.

Ba has been writing a long letter to her dear Sisters,1 who are also mine—and if I did not know that they love her as she loves them, I should make sure that nothing I could tell them would be listened to after her—for how I remember what her letters are!—but I also know that any little piece of news about the writer, will always be affectionately received by those of whom .. only yesterday .. I will tell you what she said: we had just got a note (of which, very likely, Ba’s letter may speak) from Mrs. Jameson’s niece—goodnatured and full of kind feeling, but rather abundant in sentimentalities about the Coliseum, St Peters &c— Upon which I remarked to Ba—“How much more it would interest you if she had described the dresses your sisters wore .. since she speaks of their calling at Ealing”—“Their dresses?”—said Ba—“what I would give to hear of their shoes!”— And, dear Henrietta and Arabel, be quite sure that she was entirely true in that, as in every other utterance she is capable of .. the longer I have the happiness of living with her, the more do I understand and venerate her perfectly loving nature—but all this you know, and my only chance of interesting you is in telling you what news I can. I hope and believe that at this moment Ba is better than she has been for some weeks, or even longer. She looked so decidedly better and stronger yesterday that we took advantage of the lovely weather—and walked out—with no ill effects. I must tell you, that she is the most tractable and docile creature in the world—keeping in the house, when fatigue seems properly avoided, and observing all regulations of diet &c just as if her own good were not concerned in it—as it certainly is not, in her thought. She always retains that sweetest of all imaginable sweet tempers, making it a blessing to be near her—and I see every day fresh reason to admire your generous kindness to me, who have taken such a blessing away from you—tho’ only for a time, I trust, and to return it to you with increased powers both for your good and her own. I wonder if she tells you anything about her good looks—
her rounded cheeks with not a little colour on them, and her general comparative... shall I dare to write it... plumpness? It surely is so, or my eyes are very faithless. She will have told you about our interrupted journey to Rome: I know it will be difficult, or, indeed, impossible for you to make yourselves quite easy about the dangers or inconveniences of our movements,—but you may rely upon one thing—that we do nothing without a great deal of deliberation,—and whatever poor human sagacity can foresee,—we endeavour not to miss seeing: but unluckily there is no plan, that we have yet hit on, without disadvantage in some degree, to counterbalance the advantage—to travel,—to stay still and be overtaken by the winter in a bad wintering place,—to stop short, with little fatigue, but in some city where the comforts are less certainly attainable,—or to go further, for the purpose of faring better, but with a great increase of trouble in the going,—all these considerations have to be weighed carefully. Depend on it, we shall do the best we can, trusting in providence that has hitherto interfered so signally in our behalf. Of one matter, which looks formidable in the English papers, you need have very little fear indeed. One would suppose, to read some of these accounts, particularly those extracted from the French gazettes, that we were in open insurrection, with all the horrors of mobs, riots, noises and dangers: while there is not a symptom of anything of the kind—indeed, there is no mob in this admirably civilized country,—much less in this renowned city, where you two young ladies might walk alone in the evening without the least fear of an impertinent word or look. We certainly find it very delightful to be in Italy just at this time, when it is so thoroughly alive—and our pleasure will not be greatly diminished, if all those rumours operate as they are said to do in keeping away the flocks of travellers—however accounts differ, and we know nothing positively as yet. Meanwhile, we are (as) happy here as the day is long—and it will be no great misfortune if we are for(ced to) take up our quarters in Florence for some six months longer. On another (im)portant point, too, we have been reassured lately—there appears to be no (cause) to doubt that one of the Physicians here is an able and desirable man—(unfortunately, this "one" is not Mrs Jameson's old friend, Herbert—who may be getting too old a friend.) Mrs J., by the way, is a kind, good, sympathizing friend of ours—but don't take her notions of Florence, and the life there, without a little allowance—for she found Florence the gayest of gay cities, distracting from its routine of visits, given & received, &c. and gave us the notion of a place where we should be teased to death... quite a mistake; for (as I dare say it happens in most other gay cities)—you must seek out these dissipations or they will never seek out you—the world being quite able to amuse itself without either Mrs. J. or Mr & Mrs B: so that, where she felt unable to read or write for an hour by herself, we enjoy exactly as much solitude as we like—not receiving six visits in six months. I have got to the end of my piece of paper,—and what have I told you, after all? Whereas, what true, truest delight your affectionate congratulations gave me when Ba & I got your letters so fortunately the day before our great day!—for on the day itself it was impossible to go thro' the streets for the procession. God bless you both for your goodness to her and to me. Believe me ever with the deepest love and most earnest wishes for your happiness,

your RB

Address, on integral page: Miss Barrett.
Publication: BC, 14, 315–318.
Source: Transcript in editor's file.
Letter 21
4 October 1847

1. This letter was accompanied by a letter from EBB, no longer extant, in which she apparently referred to the possibility that she might be pregnant again. (In a letter to Miss Mitford dated 22 February [1848], EBB wrote that “the people about me, months & months ago, took the fact for granted, in spite of all I could say or think to the contrary” EBB-MRM, III, 229–230). The Brownings’ departure from Florence to Rome had been postponed for a month from 20 or 21 September 1847 to about 19 October 1847. Between the 4 October 1847 date of this letter, when the journey to Rome is only “interrupted,” and shortly thereafter, the Brownings decided not to leave Florence at all during the winter of 1847–48, and began the search for alternate accommodations.

2. Although the revolutionary spirit was flourishing throughout Tuscany, the worst demonstrations at this time were, for the most part, limited to Leghorn (Harry Hoarder, Italy in the Age of the Risorgimento: 1790–1870, London: Longman, 1983, pp. 80–81). The Times, for the week leading up to this letter, in extracts from Parisian papers, as well as in its own articles, reported disturbances at Leghorn, as well as in Massa and Ferrara, and rioting in Bologna.

3. Thomas William Trotman (18107–62), a physician and accoucheur, was recently established at “Via della Scala, 4280” (Murray’s Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy, London: John Murray, 1852, p. 457).


Letter 22

Florence,
Nov. 25. [1847]¹

Thank both my dearest Sisters for their most affectionate letters: I had intended to write a proper answer—(i.e. proper as to length, for the feeling of it would be much the same, whether expressed briefly or otherwise)—but this last day allowed me, is formed to rather a bustling one for us quiet people—as I have to make some couple of journeys to the Post Office, besides calling on an American friend of Mr Kenyon’s,² just arrived; so take in few words, instead of many, the repeated assurance of the great happiness and comfort which your sympathy gives me. I know we three have only one object at heart,—the good of Ba,—and it is the greatest comfort, as I say, that you two, who are away, should be so indulgent to me who am obliged to act according to the best of my poor judgment: but then you, who know Ba, must not believe all she believes about the wonderful kindness of getting out of a scrape when one has been goose enough to get into it—the taking that cold house was all my fault, for I ought to have known that no comfort makes up for the absence of the sun in this country whither we come precisely for the sun—never mind! it is well over, and we are here in little funny rabbit-hutch rooms,—but so warm, and cheerful! we shall do capitally, I have little doubt,—though Rome, with its deliciously soft—(not bracing and dry—) air would have been the proper wintering-place, had all circumstances proved propitious. Ba is very much better than she has ever been: she walked out with me yesterday for a good half hour in the blazing November sun(!)—and purposes doing the like this morning, when the weather seems finer than ever. She is always in the best of spirits, talking & laughing to heart’s content, and (best of all) sleeping soundly after it: a letter from you makes her still happier, however,—so you must help me in that respect. If you could see her face when I come in from the Post with one
in my pocket,—and perhaps try to look peculiarly grave and disappointed ... she sees thro' me in a moment!

I am sure Ba has told you of all the little nullities which pass for events in our life—and how the time passes swiftly by without our noticing it: I dare say she did justice to my sublime feelings on the occasion of the earthquake which I supposed to be merely poor Flush solacing himself by a hearty scratch!3 Does she tell you how the said Flush's faculties are developing themselves surprisingly—how he sits and talks in the oddest way, for minutes together? I dare say you know all our news. If you were here we would, however, try hard and amuse you better—not that there would be any great difficulty in this lovely city with its still lovelier neighbourhood: what a pity of pities that this may not be! still let us be thankful for what we have got—in this restoration to health of Ba. I will not write more now—only this,—Be quite sure I will keep you well & constantly informed of whatever happens, as it happens. Ba, herself, writes more than is said to be good for her: but then she is so used to it, and it so gratifies her, that I hold my tongue—oftener than I ought, perhaps! Good-bye, dearest Henrietta & Arabella. God bless you ever—

RB.
herself. The consequence is that I have come seriously to consider all other marriages as not to be named in the same sentence as any way comparable or analogous to mine—they seem something different, & it’s an unfairness to talk of parallel lines. For instance, Arlette’s .. I speak as far from myself as possible, in speaking of her’s. She appears to me quite happy—indeed she told me that she was .. which she needn’t have done, for of course I put no question. She said that her husband was very amiable & kind, & that they “suited one another exactly”—and I observed with pleasure that she “would not be afraid of keeping the dinner waiting a little while” .. which is a definitive trait in a man of what I conceive to be Capt. Reynolds’s nature. It proved that the rein was not held too tight after all. The first time she came to see me, she came alone: the second morning, she brought him—after which I never saw him, although she had the kindness (& I thought it really kind) to come to me almost every day of the short remainder of their stay in Florence. Now you bid me say my thoughts of Capt. Reynolds. Remember that I had only some ten minutes or fifteen, of his society, & that he has not much “abandon” in his conversation, to assist one out of this disadvantage. I was a good deal struck by his very veteran appearance—the twenty years difference between himself & his bride, which you seemed to see, being still more obvious to us. He looks to me nearer fifty than forty, much. Yet; life in India is a wearing thing, & as he said “he had had his fling in life altogether” .. which I did not at all doubt, .. he may look older than he is– In any case, if it is no objection to Arlette, it is of no consequence to anybody. For the rest, he is what would everywhere be called a fine-looking man— but as to being “handsome”, !!! I take the Apollo over the river to witness that I open my eyes with wonder at the idea of any one’s calling him so even by an eccentricity. It is a coarse face with a common expression– A good presence, though, with a certain air of military gentlemanliness– No remarkable polish, with all this– Robert who is a physiognomist, says that he believes him to be an amiable man & goodnatured; & when he (Capt Reynolds) asked me how I thought Arlette was looking, he did so with a glance of interest, which made me feel that he loved her. Reserved & shy he is .. and this is rare in a military man, & I dont like him the less for it upon the whole, .. but of course it shackles him terribly in conversation, & adds to the inconvenience of not really having much to say. What could have induced dear Arlette & him to set out for Italy, is a sort of riddle to me—it is quite curious how little interest they seemed to have in seeing anything. Think of their being here a month, & never going to Fiesole! We tried to persuade them to go in vain— I even hinted to Arlette that it w’d be a sort of disgrace not to have been to Fiesole. Only an hour’s drive, too— “But what is there to see?” asked Cap! Reynolds– Milton’s Fiesole, the Fiesole of the Romans, the Fiesole of the Etruscans, and “what to see”? Robert answered that there was a splendid “view”, in any case— We thought they had resolved on going at last, but the weather “looked uncertain”, and so, that came to an end. Moreover they did not see half nor a quarter nor a tenth of what was to be seen in Florence, & went to Rome the shortest way .. missing Perugia & all the interest & beauty. So strange it seemed to us, & would seem to you, I think: for why come to Italy at all if one does not care for the sights of Italy? Their travelling is done in the most expensive way possible, the courier who was with them persuading them to prefer the hotels to the private apartments, notwithstanding Arlette’s inclination to the latter—& by what she told me, we are calculating that they must have spent from sixty to seventy pounds in the course of a
month for just living. Not that she thought it at all dear—but in reality & according to Florentine prices it was most extravagant: and then they were not particularly comfortable.. complained of smells.. & were on a second floor, to boot—They did not appear to use their carriage here–Arlette always walked to see me & came by herself, & once Robert walked back with her, & once he & I did so together. I thought her looking very handsome– I never saw her looking so well. Oh, I made her tell me about you, ..but she went away without telling half I wanted to hear, & some things I did not dare to ask questions of, feeling too deeply for the possible answers. Dear Arlette! I quite loved her, do you know? She seemed the representative of so much of the past & the absent. When she came into the room first, I was glad that Robert was out walking, for he hates to see the tears in my eyes; & the emotion of receiving her took me by surprise .. I never thought to cry at seeing Arlette, and the tears came in spite of reason. Everything past came back at the sight of her & was joined to the present—everything .. everybody—the poor dark room in Wimpole Street, & your beloved faces & voices. Such a dream it seemed, to meet in Florence, & so! She is to write to you, she says, to certify what she thinks of my looks— She told me & Robert that the change was past belief almost—meaning the change for the better. Well, now! shall you be able to garble an extract from all these words, which may not displease Bummy? She wrote to me at the first arrangement of the marriage, about the bridegroom’s beauty & talents, & the fairies only know what—so if she expects me to be “dazzled”, nothing herein said can of course satisfy her—but you must use tact & discretion & not get me into a scrape. Robert told me I was inclined to be over-severe, & that his own impression was in favour of the goodnature & amiability—& he is famous as a physiognomist I assure you. They seem resolved on buying a house in London & living there & Arlette thinks that the Bevans’ plans are of a like colour. You know, Arabella, Mr Bevan is ten times more a man than this Capt Reynolds!—that is, to my mind: infinitely his superior in intellect, & of a higher nature altogether. Still, in his class & after his pattern, Capt Reynolds may be an excellent person, .. & we must not deny that it is a class & pattern which many women prefer. Only, Arabella will be elevated by her marriage, ..and Arlette never can. Not by that means, at least. Which brings me back to my preference after all— How sorry I am that dear Bummy shd have returned to the same house in the same place: nothing could be more unfortunate— I am sorry too that she did not go to Tours:—it seems to me a pity altogether! Most of all sorry I am that no letter should come today. Oh you wicked people!—and Henrietta was beginning to have the influenza, when you wrote last, & I hear that the newspapers talk of influenza .. influenza! Do take care of yourselves— Now, Arabella, you who go out at night, do you cover your chest & throat up. Robert tells me two or three times a day that I dont love him, & once with ever so many impromptu verses he said & sung it .. (did I tell you what an improvisatore he was?) said & sung that I did’nt love him ..

That I only deceive
Beguile him and leave
At the treason to grieve,
While like fair mother Eve
I laugh in my sleeve!”
& all because I object to turning him out of his chair, when my sofa is as near the fire . . . or
because I dont sit with a shawl over my head, or some such fantastical reason. Of course this cold
weather . . . why there is a sprinkling of snow in the piazza today . . . affects my throat a little—and
the fuss, oh, the fuss! I cant help laughing sometimes, though I could cry too, at, the dear dreadful
look of anxiety in his eyes— "Now Ba, if you love me, you will think of something to do yourself
good— Now, my love, I do beseech you to think of something—" But I cant think of anything
except ordering out the sun, or a slight mizzle perhaps . . . Oh, but he wont have me laugh—Because
if I were to be ill . . . what wld become of the universe, I wonder? You are to understand, all this
while, that I am not ill, my darling Arabel, nor with any inclination to illness: it is simply that
my throat is a little hoarse, off & on . . . (no losing of voice, mind!) with the sharper air, . . . which is
softening again. The snow vanishes while I write . . . also there is no sign of frost on the windows.
But Robert has taken to abuse poor Florence, . . somewhat unjustly, it seems to me, because we
have had really wonderful weather until the last few days. Arlette thought poor Flush as much
altered for the worse as I was for the better—but he improves rapidly & will soon recover his
beauty, having an extraordinary appetite plainly with that design, the cold weather being favorable
in another way. Now, Arabel, while the winter lasts & you go out at nights, mind to cover yourself
up. If you were married to Robert, how you wd quarrel to be sure, just on that subject of covering
up . . just as you & I used to quarrel, when you wouldnt put on a shawl or a boa or a something.
I tell you that he reproaches me who am an innocent & do such things most obediently, precisely
that you may understand how for love's sake you ought to behave— And there's Henrietta—Wetting
her feet in walks to Hampstead I dare say. Tell me particularly about the influenza. My best love
to dearest Trippy, & exhort her to take care, & keep by the fire & avoid catching colds & coughs.
Dear thing, I think of her a good deal. Oh, how I think of you all— How I love you, my own
darling Arabel, & long for the presence of you, which wd be so much better than the summer!—
You must say to M' Stratten, with my true & grateful regards, that he always was better to me &
kinder than I had a right to claim; and that, for my poetry, even if he were severe upon it, I hope I
should try to use the opinion as a means of improvement,—since, as an "occasion of discord," I
never could. But instead of being severe, he is over-gentle,—& you must thank him for this as
for the rest. It gives one courage to rub together the pieces of dry wood & try to strike a light in
the darkness: and when it shall be light enough to see my face he will see it full of respect &
esteem for him always. He has helped me in more important things than poetry itself. Arabel,—
Why do you not mention poor M' Hunter? I see no sign of him in a letter of yours. Is it quarrel
the nine hundred & ninety-ninth, or what? I wish much to hear whether he is prospering in the
pupil-plan, & how dear Mary likes Ramsgate, & her new duties— As to poor dear unfortunate
Annie Hayes, I tremble to think or imagine. I hope you wrote to her affectionately & earnestly,
for it is my strong conviction that you may do something . . . at least, if you cannot, that no one else
will care to try. Also it is not in sorrow & in sin, that human beings should be cold to & stand
aloof from one another—though the world's maxims & experience are of a different complexion.
Do not give her up, Arabel, whatever you hear. I am sorry that you did not see her in London. No
one is ever compromised by another's ill conduct, except when ceasing to tell the truth unsparingly—
I am sure you agree with me in this at the bottom—and I agree with you, of course, as to the
painfulness of associations without sympathy. Mr. Hayes's conduct appears detestable, past believing almost, . . but if he acted on provocation & in sudden passion, what better could be expected from a coarse-minded man? I am full of regret that Annie shd have quarrelled with Papa—Oh miserable, miserable marriage! She had better have died before that hour. I have heard from Mr. Strutt of her arrival in Rome & answered by desiring her to send her precious parcel to join Clara Lindsay—writing by the same post to Clara that both shd be sent to me by the safest public conveyance, as I cant have patience to wait any more for “private hands.” At first I was afraid of “risks”—but I cant have patience. I have had a very kind letter from Lady Margaret Cocks. So the Martins are gone to Pau? The other evening Miss Boyle brought her brother to us, celebrated for his Vandyke beauty. A handsome man certainly, & with a beard to justify my predilections, besides the moustache—and such a melodious voice, such refined or over refined manners! A very charming person, really, & I dare say the hero of many a “grande passion”. Lady Morgan says of him—“He never shd marry: he belongs to all of us!” Then we have had two American ladies, pleasing & cultivated, but talking detestably, with that provincial enunciation of the vowels, which I never shall get over in the Americans. They brought letters of introduction from Mr. Sigourney. Ah—Christmas is coming! My heart flies across the mountains to you—may God bless you all! Tell me of Papa & all. It grieves me that you answer my questions so . . . but I feared it. Severity is one thing, injustice another. On what grounds he continues that line of conduct, is past my power of guessing at. Poor Papa! After all, it is most grievous for himself. I wonder if he & others will even think of me this Christmas. Robert says every now & then “We will have a merry christmas, Baba . . . shant we?” and I say ‘yes’ & smile: but the truth is that these anniversaries are filled to me with bitter thoughts & that I shall be glad when they are over. Take care of dear Minny, that she does not tire herself with Christmas work, so as to be ill again. My love to all my brothers. But oughtn’t I to say particularly to dear Henry, after his kindness to me? Love me, Arabel! May God bless you for ever.

Your Ba—

The weather quite mild again.

Address, on integral page: To the care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 10 [sic, for 12] Upper Gloucester Street / Dorset Square. / [and in another hand] Not known as directed / W Sidman / Try 12.

Publication: BC, 14, 351-356.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year determined by EBB's references to the visit from her newly-wed cousin, Arlette Reynolds (née Butler).

2. Perhaps a reference to the “Apollino,” in the Tribune of the Uffizi, which Murray's Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy (London: 1847) says is “considered one of the most valuable monuments that have reached us. It exhibits very high qualities of art” (p. 544).

3. The Tuscan Athenæum of 6 November 1847 announced the arrival of Captain Charles Reynolds during the week of 29 October to 5 November, first at the Albergo Reale and afterwards at the Albergo dell’Arno (no. 2, p. 16).

4. The most ancient foundations of Fiesole are Etruscan, which were later built over by the Romans. Milton visited Fiesole in 1638 during his Italian trip, and the town is referred to in Paradise Lost, I, 289.

5. The Times of 6 December 1847 noted an outbreak of influenza in Scotland, and a report of 21 December noted the disease had spread to several prisons. There were several pandemics of influenza during the 19th

6. I have been unable to trace the source of this quotation.

7. Presumably Elizabeth (née Byron, 1782-1867), wife of Jacob Strutt (1784-1867), an English artist in Rome. He and their son, Arthur John Strutt (1819-88), are both described as "landscape painters" in *The Roman Advertiser* for 10 February 1849. Their studio was located at 52 Via del Babuino, which is the address recorded in EBB's earliest extant address book; see *BC*, 9, 387 under "Strutt." Mrs. Strutt was the author of numerous books, including one entitled *The Feminine Soul: Its Nature and Attributes. With Thoughts upon Marriage, and Friendly Hints upon Feminine Duties* (London: J.S. Hodson, 1857). Writing about the "emancipation of women," she refers to EBB, claiming that it was "an idea which seems to have taken hold of the fancy of one of our most gifted poetesses; one whom to wish 'unsexed,' would be to wish the disrobing of one of the gentlest, and most loving intellectual forms; yet who, strange to say, has, amid much that is beautiful, much that is lofty, written two of the most absurd and most unpleasing sonnets in the English language, addressed to ... George Sand" (p. 215).

8. Clara Sophia Lindsay (née Bayford, 1811-93), EBB's cousin, had married Martin Lindsay (d. 1864) in 1846, and they were coming to Italy because of his poor health. They visited the Brownings in 1849, shortly after the birth of Pen Browning. It was Clara who gave a letter of introduction to David and Eliza Ogilvy, with whom the Brownings became very close friends.

9. Margaret Maria Cocks (1792-1849) was a friend from Hope End days. Her father, the 1st Earl Somers, built a grand house called Eastnor Castle in the style of Edward I, about 3 miles from Hope End. The house was designed by Robert Smirke, with interiors by Pugin. EBB often visited there when she was younger. She and Lady Margaret Cocks shared an interest in poetry, but their opinions and sympathies eventually differed, and the two continued only sporadic communication after the Barretts left Hope End.

10. In *Mary Boyle: Her Book*, ed. Sir Courtenay Boyle (London: John Murray, 1901), she describes her brother as follows: "Yet the real, surpassing gift of beauty was reserved for my brother Charles. Ah! what a store of love and memory is connected with that dear name, and how well did the Greek epithet 'Kalos' become him, which implies in its melodious sound both moral and physical beauty. The term beautiful does not appear, perhaps, often applicable to a man, but it certainly was to Charles. In feature, colouring and expression he was the counterpart of our mother, the same soft brown hair, the same sapphire blue eyes, the same faultless outline of profile" (pp. 11-12). In 1849 he married Zacyntha Moore, whom he had met the preceding summer in Rome, where they had become engaged (*Mary Boyle*, pp. 205-206).

11. Unidentified.

12. Lydia Howard Sigourney (née Huntley, 1791-1865) was the author of *Moral Pieces, in Prose and Verse* (Hartford, Connecticut, 1815), as well as being a contributor to and editor of various journals. She was sometimes called the "Sweet Singer of Hartford," as well as the "American Hemans." EBB described Mrs. Sigourney's *Pleasant Memories of Pleasant Lands* (Boston: James Munro and Company, 1842) as "nothing beyond pretty description & gentle sentiment!" (*BC*, 6, 324).

---

**Letter 24**

[Florence]

[ca. 10 February 1848]

〈...〉 managed to set the (hearth ru)g on fire only ten days ago, & had a crowd & a fuss .. our Italians seemed to think the world was coming to an end immediately-- But I was talking of my night's rest-- It was secured to admiration, and the voice came back at once, & is itself this
morning. The sofa is very narrow .. narrower than your old one in Wimpole Street; & also I put no bed in it as you did, but slept bona fide on the sofa, which being a spring one (in a different way from yours—much softer!) was perfectly comfortable, & answered the purpose every way; as I dont make too many evolutions nor revolutions in my sleep, habitually, you know. But I think the weather is inclined to change— There has been a wind like a scythe cutting down particular streets, Robert says—and in the face of it, Louisa Ley would go out—— How could she expect to be well? This is what Sophia calls “having too much energy”. She had better have stayed in England in company with a little prudence, than have directed such energy upon Florence in the winter. Wilson has not her parcel yet, as they are slowly getting their things through the custom-office. Mind, you dont fancy I am ill—or unwell. I am well, indeed—only it was necessary to take a precaution or two, if I meant to keep so. Last night we had a visit from Miss Boyle— So agreeable she is, .. but so tired I was, before twenty minutes to twelve when she went. She likes talking to Robert, & she likes our supper-tray .. thinks it an excellent invention, & by no means confines herself to the theory: & she & I, between us, made considerable inroads upon a bottle of port I do assure you.— He

twelve oclock, one at dinner—and the half go(es) to supper-time. Robert keeps it in his head that “it strengthens me”, .. & after that, one might as well talk to the mountain above Fiesole as talk to him about my leaving it off. Oh Arabel, you & Henrietta refer to our plans for the summer. The top-wish of my heart is to look in your dear, beloved faces .. believe that of me: but the truth is that it is quite impossible to decide on anything at present. What we are able to do, must depend upon circumstances which are yet to be made out—and even yourselves must be aware of this in a measure. We hear that the railroad is open all the way from Marseilles to Avignon .. after which, there’s the Rhone to Lyons,—so that we are nearer already by two days Dili-gence-travelling. Robert’s mother is very anxious to have us back—but we cannot possibly decide yet—oh, it is not possible. If you were here, I could make it plain to you in two moments. Why, we cant even say when we may be able to leave Florence. See how many months between January & May! Only be sure that I love you dearer & dearer, & long to look into your darling eyes. Henrietta wants to know besides about my new marriage.5 No, no .. you must wait, to hear that. I am locked up in a vow. But it will astonish you considerably, I may say, whether you approve or disapprove— I, for my part, approve & am very glad. I will tell you of another new marriage instead .. Miss Garrow, to M! Tom Trollope, famous in Florence for horse-jocke(ing)!

better a little overt immorality, which might “go off in a tangent”—because this appears to me essential immorality, a root of evil set deep in mud of the vilest, the miasma of which is never likely to go off. Marriage, without the marriage of minds, is an abomination;—& I cannot think otherwise. You heard of the death of poor dear Wordsworth’s daughter.8 We hear that he does not recover from the affliction, but sits whole days in silence, neither naming her name, nor appearing to wander in thought from the memory of her. His old servant said to him, “Sir, it is your duty to bear up”. “Oh Thomas—she was so bright a creature”. “And is she not brighter
Letter 24

[ca. 10 February 1848]

now?" was the suggestion. His friend Mr. Robinson went to see him & spent three weeks in vain attempts to revive him— Only, at parting, Wordsworth burst out into tears. This is the man, of whom misunderstanding people have been pleased to say that he was "insensible". Just see! Miss Martineau is at the Lakes in "triumphant health & spirits", says my informant. She gets up by candlelight, takes a cold bath, & then walks, out, without any more trouble, into the open air!!

Hearing which, Robert made me laugh by a grave remark, . . that he should keep away from that particular tract of country as long as there was a possibility of seeing such a vision "in puris naturalibus" in combination with the rest of the wild nature of the neighbourhood. But, of course, she must tell these things—or who w'd know them? At half past seven, she breakfasts, & writes till two. She is getting up her book upon Ægypt— Also, we hear that she has brought a pipe from the East & smokes it everyday religiously. We are very much interested about Tennyson's new poem, & are to get a copy—soon, I hope, from Moxon. Is'nt this the end of my English news? I think so. Oh—dear Miss Mitford has lost her Flush, my Flush's father. He died without suffering & quite suddenly— M. Greenhough, the artist here, has a dog, a grey hound, twenty three years of age, who complains only of the cold. My Flush is grown quite beautiful again—his eyes like agates . . his body as shining & round as ever—only the curls dont come back. I shall have him washed soon & then we shall see. Such spirits he has, such an appetite, & is so very good. Robert loves him nearly as much as I do, & "has his love allowed". Now, when he wants anything, he does'nt bark one's ears to scorn—unless indeed he has to insist on a point with energy—he only cries in a low, expressive voice. While I sleep in this drawingroom, he sleeps beside me, at the foot of the sofa:—and, in his opinion, it is a most excellent plan . . nothing was ever better. Also, he goes out by himself, whenever he likes, to run in the piazza (never farther) & enjoy the best society of the Florentine dogs. The Grand duke's palace, he looks upon himself as having a claim to, & salutes the guards with a graceful familiarity. When he has run round the piazza once or twice he comes home directly—& then, there's his long walk with Robert in the afternoon—& positively Robert takes him to his favorite places, I mean Flush's favorite places, . . to the Cascine, where he always dances for joy of the long grass & thick underwood . . or to Bellosguardo, up the hills, where Milton went to visit Galileo, & which (probably for that reason) is a favorite walk of Flush's. When Robert & he go out, if Flush goes first . . choosing to turn to the right or left . . his companion thinks it "only fair that his preferences sh'd be consulted" . . particularly as sometimes he does condescend to go with Robert to that horrible music-shop, where he has to sit up a ladder all the time, for fear of a dog who lives there & snarls at him. Mind you give my love to Mary Minto & my thanks for her kindness of remembering me on a bough of her Christmas Tree. It was very kind— I wish she w'd persuade M. Minto to try Florence—she w'd enjoy so much here, that I must go onto wish it— And then, the Tulks being in Italy, would help to draw her, I sh'd think. M. Tulk has been unwell—he told Robert, that since he came, he had once or twice fallen into a state of unconsciousness, through an affection of the nerves, & that his memory had been temporarily affected. I sh'd fancy the sort of seizure [sic] alarming for a man of his age, but his daughter did not speak of it to me. Do you know that the Gordons are at Calcutta? I have not seen M: Tulk— Robert saw him, & they talked of Coleridge & Blake, subjects interesting to each. Do tell me of Annie Hayes & what she writes to you & what you hear. Remember how safe I am
as to secrets. Methinks that I see Mr. Hunter walking in at Wimpole Street. Ah; but how delighted the prospect of his doing well at Ramsgate makes me—I really am pleased. Is it not true that Mary might write to you (at least) a little oftener than apparently she does? No reserves, Arabel, but speak out. As to people “attached to the church of England,” I confess I have no patience with those very legitimate attachments which yet abjure the customary issues. What hinders people “attached to the church of England” from being of the church of England by public profession? Have you read the new puseyite book (or did you read the old puseyite book?) by the authoress of “From Oxford to Rome”, who went over from Oxford to Rome, repented it, but can’t come back for fear of the sin of apostacy!! So she writes a book (I don’t know its name) to beg other puseyites by no means to slip after her . . . because it’s so dreadful not to be able to come back without committing the sin of apostacy. She is said to be a very clever writer, notwithstanding all this idiocy, & moreover to have mentioned my name two or three times most honorably . . . the Madonna knows on what pretext. For my part, with all my weaknesses, inconsistencies, & inconsequences, . . . which I wish I could throw off as I confess them, . . . I will say of myself that it is not in me to see a truth, & not openly profess it,—I would go backwards & forwards, & in & out of any church in Christendom, let me be a three-times-dyed apostate, but I would profess the truth which I saw. Let us remember that truth is God, before we bandy with it. I think her name is Miss Sewell . . . & the popularity of her books is said to be immense. Oh—don’t let me omit, this time, to send my love to Mrs. Gipps, & my grateful recognition of her kind interest. Tell me of Emily, & of her married daughter . . . & of dear Mrs. Gipps herself—but pray don’t read my letters to her because though she may tolerate Mrs. Stratten’s preaching by a wonderful stretch of Christian charity, she won’t tolerate them, be very sure. My best regards to the Strattens always. I meant to write to dear Mrs. Boyd . . . give him my best love & say so . . . but I shall wait till the wind changes & I am more at ease. Tell him that often I think of him, & that he is to think of me now & then. When speaking of Miss Mitford I forgot to tell you that she is in an agony of fear lest the altogether incomparable K. should leave her again; a marriage pending between K. & Ben!—— Better late than never, you see! The child reunites in himself the attractions, if not the virtues, of both parents,—poor child! I am really inclined to suggest for poor Miss Mitford’s sake, that she sh’d let them marry & live on with her—She will not be happy in her solitary house, & the experiment of taking back K. having been satisfactory so far, there w’d be the less risk in extending it. Such an affectionate letter I have had from Miss Bayley . . . beginning “dearest Ba”. She is about to live in London, not far from Mrs. Kenyon . . . Since writing or beginning to write this letter, the winter has changed into spring . . . & now I return to my own room without risk of the slightest. We have had no snow, nor even frost since that white sprinkle which I spoke of & which vanished as it appeared— I am very well, & you have not a pretext to fear for me. Sophia Cottrell told Robert that I looked considerably better in all ways that [sic] when she saw me last some eight years ago—which delighted him, if true or not. Mind you take care of my dearest Trippy & don’t let her catch the influenza— Give her my tender love & bid her be careful for me. Oh Arabel, & so you take care of yourself—you! If I do you justice, I am to say so. Then I can’t do you justice. Instead, . . . I will say that I can manage my husband far better than I did my sister, in these things. “What! without your great coat? Go & put it on this moment.” “I will obey you, Ba, to the last.” Back to his room.
he goes, & puts it on dutifully. There’s an example for you! How I used to beg & scold & get into impotent passions about your shawls & handkerchiefs— Always mention my always beloved Papa—and let me be

your own Ba.

Say how dear Minny’s legs are— Love to all—

Address, on integral page: Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12. Upper Gloucester Street / Dorset Square / New Road.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. This letter was sent under cover to New Cross for posting and bears a London postmark of 16 February 1848; the letter is placed six days earlier, the approximate time required for a letter to reach London from Florence.

2. Louisa Susanna Ley (née Tulk, 18197–48), fourth daughter and ninth child of Charles Augustus Tulk (1786–1849) and his wife Susan (née Hart, 1787–1824). Louisa Tulk married James Peard Ley on 8 August 1844; see BC, 9, 75.

3. Sophia Augusta Cottrell (née Tulk, 1823–1909) was the youngest of twelve children born to Charles and Susanna Tulk. She married Henry Cottrell (1811–71) on 25 September 1847 at Totteridge Park, her father’s seat in Hertfordshire, and after a short honeymoon at St. Anne’s Hill, she and her husband left for Florence. Cottrell, a recently-retired chamberlain in the household of the Duke of Lucca, was one of three Englishmen ennobled by the Duke. For a complete biographical account, including Sophia Cottrell’s “Recollections,” see BSN, 24 (May 1997), 7–49.

4. The lower quarter of the sheet has been torn off.

5. In a letter to Henrietta dated 4–6 January [1848] (Huxley, p. 74), EBB hints about a forthcoming marriage, details of which she discloses in letter 27 (see note 13).

6. Thomas Adolphus Trollope (1810–92) and Theodosia Garrow (18197–65) were married on 3 April 1848 in Florence in front of eight witnesses, including Frances Trollope.

7. The lower quarter of the sheet has been torn off.

8. Dorothy (“Dora”) Wordsworth (1804–47), the second child of William and Mary Wordsworth, died at Rydal Mount on 9 July 1847, and was buried in the Grasmere churchyard. She married Edward Quillinan on 11 May 1841, despite her father’s objections. In a letter to Miss Mitford in April 1842, EBB relayed John Kenyon’s (confidential) report of Wordsworth’s objection to the marriage: “I am satisfied with the marriage, but I really dont see why I should. For my son in law is a Roman catholic—and an Irishman—and a widower—and the father of a family & a beggar” (see BC, 5, 321). Doubtless Kenyon was EBB’s “informant” in this case as well.

9. Henry Crabb Robinson (1775–1867), journalist, editor, and diarist, was part of a circle that included EBB’s cousin John Kenyon. Robinson went to Rydal Mount on 17 December 1847 and remained there until 8 January 1848. His recollections of the visit, as recorded in his diary, indicate that he was the source of EBB’s information, by way of John Kenyon; see Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers, ed. Edith J. Morley, London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1938, pp. 670–673.

10. “Of undefiled nakedness.”


12. The Princess was published by Moxon in December 1847. As indicated in letter 27 (see note 11), the Brownings borrowed a copy from Mary Boyle. EBB had referred to the composition of this poem in a letter to RB in January 1846 (see BC, 12, 29).

13. Horatio Greenough (1805–52), an American sculptor and friend of John Kenyon, had lived in Florence since 1828. He married Louisa Ingersoll Gore, a Boston heiress, on 24 October 1837. His studio was located.
first at 5937 Via San Gallo, and later in the Piazza Maria Antonia. According to Henry T. Tuckerman, Greenough had “a remarkably fine English greyhound, ... called Arno, whose intelligent gambols always amused him; this favourite dog lived to a green old age, and his marble effigy, in an attitude peculiar to him, from the chisel of his master, long ornamented the library of the Hon. Edward Everett” (Book of the Artists: American Artist Life, New York: G.P. Putnam & Son, 1867, p. 255).

14. Cf. Oliver Goldsmith, “The Deserted Village” (1770), line 154: “has his claims allowed.”

15. The Villa Segni at Bellosguardo, which Galileo occupied from 1617 until 1637; however, when Milton visited Florence in 1638, Galileo was living at the Villa Gioello, near Poggio Imperiale (Murray’s, Hand-Book for Travellers to Northern Italy, London: John Murray, 1847, p. 574). Doubtless both EBB and RB would have remembered this famous encounter between poet and astronomer as the subject of one of Landor’s Imaginary Conversations (London: Edward Moxon, 1846). See Casa Guidi Windows, 1, 1179-84.

16. Mary Eliza Minto (afterwards Ruxton, 18237-97), only daughter of Walter Minto (17797-1830) and his wife Mary, who owned estates in Jamaica, in the parish of Trelawny. The Mintos lived at 32 Cambridge Terrace in London, and had been friends with the Barretts for a number of years. In a letter to Miss Mitford, dated 3 August 1843, EBB had described Mary as “a very accomplished & intelligent young woman” (BC, 7, 271). Mary Minto also shared an interest in mesmerism, as EBB reported to Miss Mitford later in 1843, “Mary Minto begged Arabel to get a lock of my hair which none but myself had touched, by diplomacy, & wrap it in oisilk,—that she, Mary, might send it to a chief Rabbi of the Magnetisers in Paris, who was to declare straightway the nature of & remedy for my complaint. Instead of being diplomatic, Arabel brought me the note,—and I refused to part with my locks for any such purpose of witchery” (BC, 8, 58).

17. John Gordon (1810-49), a barrister and friend of Bro, and Caroline Augusta Tulk (b. 1815) were married in 1834. The preceding year his sister Anne Elizabeth Gordon had married Samuel Moulton Barrett, EBB’s paternal uncle. Gordon took his family to Sydney in the mid-1840’s to pursue a business scheme which he financed on borrowed money. When that failed, he found employment in Calcutta.

18. Tulk’s interest in these subjects was linked to his interest in Swedenborg; see note 17 in the following letter.

19. From Oxford to Rome: and How It Fared with Some who Lately Made the Journey. By A Companion Traveller (London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Longmans, 1847) was written by Elizabeth Furlong Shipton Harris (1822–52), not Elizabeth Missing Sewell (1815–1906), as EBB speculates below. Elizabeth Harris was also the author of Rest in the Church (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1848), referred to in letter 27 (see note 20), in which she mentions EBB. A review of From Oxford to Rome in The Quarterly Review for June 1847 (pp. 131–166), begins by describing the voice of the author as declaring “itself to be the voice of one who has overleaped the fearful chasm that separates the actual living systems of the Churches of England and Rome, and who has made the late but not wholly ineffectual discovery of having been betrayed into a portentous error” (p. 131). However, nowhere in the book does the author explicitly state her intention in writing the book. As the reviewer in The Quarterly Review notes, the narrative must “be regarded as little more than a parable under which the writer has chosen to convey his views” (p. 138).


21. Emma Maria Gipps (née Bentham) was the widow of the Rev. Henry Gipps (d. 18 December 1832), who had been Vicar of St. Peter’s, Hereford. The Barretts became acquainted with her and her two daughters in Torquay. Mrs. Gipps’s youngest surviving child was Elizabeth Emily (1831–84). In 1853 she married William Kelly (1821–1906), a Plymouth brother and biblical scholar. Mrs. Gipps’s married daughter was Mary Matilda (b. 1822). She had married in 1844 Robert John, eldest son of Robert Ramsden of Carlton Hall, Nottinghamshire.

22. See letter 19, note 15.
My ever beloved Arabel, whether I have, or not, a right to expect a letter from you, I scarcely know. Robert says not. But take notice, all of you, that this is the third at least which I have written, since one has come from you—with the exception of dearest Henrietta's little scrap of a notelet through M' Kenyon ... so that, altogether, I am taking the liberty of beginning to be uneasy. My "presentiments" always turn out to be sentiments in the wrong place—otherwise I might say that I seem to feel something wrong somewhere. It is in my head; & I cant get it out of my head. I wrote to Henrietta ... then to Trippy—and now I write to you again. Is it fair, that you dont write to me? Or have you written, & has the letter perished in the revolution at Paris, as I fancy sometimes? Tell me how Wimpole Street is in politics—how dear Papa likes the great change. For my part, republican as I am by profession, I was quite shaken by the sense of the misfortunes of the Orleans family, the grey discrowned King,—and his sons & daughters turned back on the threshold of so bright a life. Then, there were dreadful reports here ... of the Duc de Nemours being shot through the head! & Robert heard besides though he did not tell me, that the Duc de Montpensier had been torn to pieces by the people, & that Louis Phillippe himself had died of apoplexy, in the emotion of hearing of it. I was quite shaken & could'nt help crying at every turn of the day, it made me so nervous. It made me laugh, after, when Wilson told me that kindest dearest Robert would'nt quit the house without leaving instructions to her, to beg of any possible visitor who might have access to me in his absence, "not to say anything, about the French Revolution, to M" Browning." If a visitor had6 come, there w'd have been a curious impression produced, I think, respecting M" Browning's susceptibility to politics. Oh, but it was so sudden, so unexpected!—and while the great edifice of French nationality was shuddering to its base, who could be calm, ... & what safety, sure, in the falling & crushing of the towers? Now, that we can breathe & look around us, ... & see no more lives lost than the crisis naturally involved, ... now, I take up my republicanism, & am cordially glad that the experiment of the most rational & sincere of governments, a pure democracy, should be tried for Europe. Robert & I agree & thoroughly agree in politics as in other things; & we talk & talk on this subject, very seldom differing on any angle of it. That Louis Phillippe has not been true to the popular principle which crowned him, is certain— I do consider, however, that he sinned rather up to the moment^ of the Reform banquet, than in that moment. To be just, as we should all try to be, the calling out by a private committee, of ten thousand national guards in the streets of Paris, was undeniably illegal: and a "monster meeting" in the heart of a city, (& that city, excitable Paris!) was more rationally alarming than a monster-meeting on the plains of Ireland, such as was put down without much scruple or blame, by our own government. The event proved that the Banquet itself w'd have been better than what was found to replace it—but men cant reason from events backward, when they have to act forwards. The sin was in the general policy—in the refusal of an enlarged franchise, & reforms generally—and the sin has paid its price. Oh, that poor, poor Louis Phillippe—that poor, noble Duchess of Orleans, & her little son! What a drama! how passionate & moving!
And then, on the other side, the Provisional Government, with a poet for the soul of it—Lamartine has made us proud of him!\(^{10}\) he will teach the world how poetical men can be practical men when they please.\(^{11}\) And the first acts—the abolition of death for political offences . . . (Grand, that was!) & the abolition of slavery . . . which will startle America into a little shame, I hope. As to the *doing away with titles* . . . it is another thing; & Robert & I agree that the thing is absurd altogether. They should disassociate the titles from feudal & political priviledges of every sort—so, most righteous!—but no man has any business with my own personal distinction, with my name, or with the red ribband in my buttonhole . . . it is a species of property & ought to be sacred. On the whole, my love for the French has been charmed & flattered by this great change. Curious, it is. After one of our talks, about two months ago, Robert said with an emphatic sigh . . . "Ah Ba! I see there’s no hope for me! You wont let me off going to Paris to stay, I see. Well—only wait till there’s a republic in France, & then we'll go." To which I answered pertly that I sh\(^{dei}\) wait for anything of the kind—for that it was all stuff—his pretending not to like Paris, when he knew in his heart that he did like it, & when there was George Sand to see, & Balzac, & Victor Hugo,\(^{12}\) & ever so many good for nothing men & women, besides pictures & statues & palaces—! So, we talked—and, behold!, almost while we talked, the tocsin sounded & the scene changed, & France was a republic!——

You will set me down as bewitched, Arabel, for sending you all these politics—you wd rather hear about Flush perhaps! Or as dear M! Kenyon wrote the other day . . . "Tell me of yourselves, & skip Regenerated Italy". By the way, if he is as vexed as I am, about M: Landor’s ungenerous letter, he *is* vexed.\(^{13}\) I cant get over it—though for your sake, Arabel, I will try . . . & write of something else. Robert’s second edition\(^{14}\) . . . did I tell you of *that*? Yes, I think so. It is our chief subject just now. I sewed, stitched, paper to paper for him yesterday, . . . to his astonishment & my own admiration. If I could have a dear, pleasant letter from you, now, I should be very well indeed: even as it is, I am well . . .

\[^{15}\] saving the sickness, which prevents . . . & though by no means . . . my appetite for breakfast & dinner.\(^{15}\) It seems to me that, since the capacious days of my childhood, I really never had a better appetite. I can manage a whole mutton chop for dinner, for instance, & take pudding besides:—only you needn’t quite think that I “eat till I am sick”, (perhaps dear Minny may suggest that theory!) for it is in all simplicity of diet, understand, & in all studiousness of the digestive dialectics. M: Tulk sends us Galignani’s till we are quite grateful to him.\(^{16}\) He is the kindest, most benevolent man. Shame to us, it wd be, if we did’n’t, in return, pay the right reverence to Swedenborg’s blue-tunic’d angels!\(^{17}\) And Arabel, you are to interpret more gently, if you please, what I said rashly about the sons in law. There is a great deal of good I do not doubt in both of them—& M: Ley is an excellent liberal & very affectionate in his home feelings. Sophia seems to me out of spirits—but it may be manner or want of health. Her father wd not look so happy if his daughter had reason for being otherwise. Dear dearest Arabel, dont let me forget telling you what comes to my thoughts at wrong times—*pray dont buy Tennyson’s Princess for me*. Now, I am in earnest, Arabel. When an opportunity shall occur of our being able to read it, Moxon will certainly send it to us—he could’n’t do otherwise—though he is a shabby man, & I am in the worst humour with him possible, just now. Shameful it was, to refuse the risk of Robert’s second edition, after some thirteen years publishing connection, &
having been paid throughout & step by step. Mere strangers like Chapman & Hall, do that for him, as strangers, which a friend refuses to do. Oh, I have quite been in a passion, a good rational passion, that is! You heard in my last letter that George was wrong in his way of expounding my secret. You will know it in the course of the summer—or sooner, perhaps. I shall ask for leave to tell you. At last I have written to Mr. Martin who deserved better of me; but very lazy & disinclined have I been about writing. There's the truth—Oh—it is n't a truth for you in Wimpole Street, mind—always I behave well to you, I think. Enclose this little note to Storm—& the other you will either send or take to Mr. Boyd. Arabel; write & tell me everything. Have you heard from Annie Hayes, & what? Undoubtedly if her father has it in his power to advance any part of her claim, he ought to do it: and if Jane sh'd be using her influence in any unrighteous way, there is dreadful injustice done, which ought to be revolted against. Now, would it be impossible for you to touch on the subject to him? I would, in a moment, I assure you—and I dont like to write, only because of my ignorance of the circumstances. I must believe in Mr. Boyd's essential justice & integrity—I mean as far as his intentions go—but he is perfectly capable of acting unjustly without knowing it. Say, that he has only two hundred a year through the adversities of Ireland—one hundred should go to his daughter, even so. Is 'nt it plain & clear & just, Arabel? The circumstances are peculiar, & very hard.

How glad I shall be to have a letter from Wimpole Street. I really am uneasy, though Nelly Bordman, whom I heard from yesterday, talks of your all being well when she last had news of you:—but when might that have been? You might manage to write oftener, you dear, wicked people! Robert & I wish, one to another, that we had been in Paris at the time of crisis. Where we were before, in the hotel de la ville de Paris, was close to the great scene—we used to pass every day that beautiful church of the Madeleine, to the restaurateur's. Under any other circumstances it would have been great shame to stay so short a time in Paris & see scarcely anything, & certainly it must be corrected one day. Dear dearest Arabel, in all your words & in all my thoughts I sympathize with you more deeply than I can say. Never think that in weighing the feelings of others I think lightly of yours. May God help us all—where the prop is needed we find His hand. Tell me of our dear Trippy. In what way, is she "not as well as we could wish"? I get uneasy in the thought of her, with no better account than that. Is she less strong, or what? Do tell me. As to our plans, they remain & must remain in the highest degree uncertain—only that in seven weeks we assuredly must get out of this house if we dont mean to be roasted like larks, in a true Italian manner. Whether we shall be able to leave Florence as soon, is another consideration—I do not know. Oh Arabel, you dont doubt that I long to see you & all of you—but what if I should not be able to travel—for one thing. You must see that it does not depend on us, not on our will & choice. It will be dreadful (using soft words) to stay in Florence in the noon of the summer; and to get into shadow somewhere in the mountains, would be pleasant—but we cant say a decisive word, either for England or the Baths of Lucca, or Catigliana, a mountain-place among the chestnut-forests, wild & lonely & with exquisite scenery. only one must be sure of not needing medical help before one goes there. Supposing that we had to stay in Italy this whole summer, it would be a place for change of air & rest, when one had ceased to require anything else. I say all this as bare supposition, mind—and ever so many "ifs" are between it & us.——
Ah, you dearest, kindest Henrietta & Arabel, both of you, I have your letter at last. Henrietta's outside, written in such a gigantic hand, & Arabel's inside, in the rational minute comprehensive way. I grudge all the large bold writing—mind! But, first, thank you, thank you. I positively had it in my head that something was wrong with somebody. Thank God, above all. You say nothing of Trippy this time. I mean, of her health. Give my dearest Trippy three kisses for me, & tell [her] I have thought of her more than usual lately & not with as much pleasure. What you said, Arabel, was entangled in my thoughts of her. Here's the spring when everybody ought to be well & strong, & I do hope when I go to England (whenever it may be) to find her as brisk & bright as ever, dear thing. Pray in the meanwhile let none of you be uneasy about the safety of the expatriated English. Nothing can be more absurd than the panic which, I dont deny, is sweeping people to England. If the Austrians were to come, why what then? And do you imagine the Austrians more likely to come, because the French revolution has secured help to the Italians? Three times, no. As to France, the English are perfectly safe there, let whatever happen—If they were safe, in the height of the Parisian fury, are they to be in danger now? Robert is quite chafed by the cowardice shown generally by English residents. Florence is as quiet as Wimpole Street—& considerably quieter than Pall Mall according to Henrietta's last report. Our noble Tuscan are charmed with their new epaulettes, & look rather that way, than to the edges of their swords. Austria, on the other hand, proves by the dismissal of Prince Metternich (that most significant act) that she contemplates no aggressive policy. Now, pray put out of your heads that we are at the "post of danger": People cant be safer anywhere in the world, than precisely here.—My dearest Arabel, .. if pictures could have souls in them, how mine w'd have kissed you again! My soul kisses you now over the mountains! Do you fancy that I have forgotten how I owe myself to you in a Daguer[robe]otype or otherwise? Ah indeed—I shamefully did cheat you—there's the truth! but you shall have a better resemblance of me than that .. you shall see. Probably your copy is a far better painting than the wretched thing in question .. which Robert thinks like, in spite of every fault. Did ever I tell you? It is hung in the drawing room at Hatcham, & visitors constantly take it for a likeness of Sarianna Browning—whereas a sketch of her, sent to us since we have been in Italy, is nearly always supposed by visitors to us, to be my portrait. It is the hair, I think, which hangs in ringlets—but Robert insists on it that a real likeness exists between me & his sister, & that often he feels inclined to call me 'Sarianna'. Of course his mother must miss him .. & I say, that, if she could hate anybody, she must hate me, for taking him away from her. If he went out to walk, he used to run all over the house to find her, & kiss her, first. With a peculiar tenderness, he has always loved his mother, & she him. Do you imagine that she can see him taken away & kept away, quite equably? Yet she & they all apply the most affectionate words to me .. though I dare say they do set it down as my fault altogether .. which it is not. To settle in England, .. would of course be bad for me—but there is another objection .. my health. Certainly one might live in Devonshire or Wales .. or rather Sette—it is Sette, I think, who says so? one .. in Devonshire Somersethshire & Wales .. but neither to our satisfaction nor .. We shd be at a distance from our families, just the .. hate that sort of benighted provincial living. To .. is one thing, with the means & appliances of refined life .. know what I like—your "cottage", Arabel, is the last thing to .. Robert or me—and Henrietta's "cottage" is considerably
worse. No—our ideal is to pass our summers in England, & our winters nearer the sun—but we are interrupted sometimes in the pursuit of an Ideal, you see, be it ever so earnest, & then, that is the fault of neither of us. It does not hurt me to write, at all—walking does not agree so well, unfortunately .. but I assure you I am as well as possible.

( ...)²⁹

There is not the slightest swelling of the ankles, which when in Paris, & in the hot early part of last summer, I observed a little; the heat & unusual exercise accounting for it at the time. But my feet never swell now on any pretext—I wish you wē tell me as much of yours. And your headaches, Arabel—you, who expect people to be so wonderfully "open", & "candid" by all manner of difficult virtues, & never say a word of yourself! How vexed, how vexed I am, that you shē have been disappointed so inconsiderately & hardly!— Indeed it was very hard!— Oh, if Papa wē but sympathize a little .. a very little more! how different it would be for you all, & how happy for himself. I said last night to Robert .. “Now, with these successful emeûtes on all sides of us, I do think that women ought ⟨... for their part, & reorganize their position.⟩— “My little ⟨...⟩, said Robert, “what kind of liberty do you want?. or what change in the government? Take whatever you like .. choose any kind of constitution you please! P¹ I am no obstacle to anything.” “No,” I answered .. “I was'nt thinking of myself, but of other women .. of women in the mass—of the daughters & the wives, who must be obedient without regard to their own feelings or opinions”.— Seriously, it is a great evil that personal liberty should be restrained by social obstacles—more ruinous to the happiness of individuals, than all the political obstacles in the world .. Thank dear Lizzie for her note– Have I thanked you & Henrietta? Give my love to them all, dear things. I will write, but I do write far oftener than you. If anything were wrong, you wē hear from Robert, be sure. My regards to the Strattens—& all who think kindly of me. Love to dear Minny. I am so glad she is better. Always mention Papa—his cough has surely lasted long. Write to me Arabel, every little detail– I am your own

ever loving

Ba–

Address, on integral page: To the care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12. Upper Gloucester Street / Dorset Square / New Road.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year determined from EBB’s references to the revolution in Paris.
2. Social and political unrest in France due to economic failures and the reluctance of Louis Philippe and Guizot to allow reforms had finally culminated in fighting in Paris in February 1848. The revolution resulted in the overthrow of the July Monarchy and the establishment of a provisional government, which was proclaimed on 24 February 1848 and led by the poet Alphonse de Lamartine.
3. Louis Philippe (1773-1850) was 74 years old at this time; he had reigned as King of France since 1830. He and his wife, the Sicilian princess, Marie Amélie de Bourbon (1782-1866), together with their seven living children (4 sons and 3 daughters) went into exile in England.
4. Louis Charles, Duc de Nemours (1814-96) was the second son of Louis Philippe. “On the outbreak of the revolution of 1848 he held the Tuileries long enough to cover the king’s retreat, but refrained from initiating active measures against the mob. He followed his sister-in-law, the duchess of Orléans, and her two sons to the
chamber of deputys, but was separated from them by the rioters, and only escaped finally by disguising himself in the uniform of a national guard. He embarked for England, where he settled with his parents at Claremont" (EB).

5. Antoine, Duc de Montpensier (1824–1900) was the youngest son of Louis Philippe. His marriage to Luisa, Infanta of Spain, in October 1846, had seriously affected relations between France and England, and precipitated the end of his father’s reign.

6. Underscored three times.

7. Due to the intransigence of Guizot and Louis Philippe against the most basic reform measures, the opposition had gained unusual momentum by holding a series of banquets to promote their agenda. The last in this series, planned for 22 February 1848 in Paris, was suddenly called off, triggering the downfall of Guizot, the government, and ultimately Louis Philippe.

8. “Monster-meeting” was the phrase used to describe the enormous crowds that gathered to hear Daniel O’Connell’s speeches promoting repeal in the early 1840’s; these gatherings sometimes numbered more than half a million. These “monster meetings” were not violent, nor were they intended to incite violence, but when militaristic language was used in announcements about a meeting at Clontarf in October 1843, Peel’s government responded quickly to ban the gathering. This may be the meeting to which EBB is referring.

9. EBB is referring to Louis Philippe, Comte de Paris (1838–94), the eldest son of Ferdinand, the late Duc d’Orléans (1810–42) and Hélène Louise of Mecklenberg-Schwerin (1814–58). In the instrument of abdication, Louis Philippe wrote: “I abdicate this crown which the will of the nation called me to wear in favour of my grandson the Comte de Paris. May he succeed in the great task which falls to him today.” (T.E.B. Howarth, Citizen-King: The Life of Louis-Philippe, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1961, p. 325) However, the Duchess’s attempt to secure the throne for her young son was unsuccessful, and she was forced to flee—first to Saxony and then to England. Although EBB mentions only one son, the Duchess d’Orléans had another son, Robert, Duc de Chartres (1840–1910).

10. Louis Alphonse de Lamartine de Prat (1790–69) was well-known as a poet and writer. Ten years earlier EBB had told Miss Mitford that his “poetry is holy and beautiful, though deficient, as it appears to me, in concentration of expression and grasp of thought” (BC, 4, 17). His wife was an Englishwoman, Marianne Eliza de Lamartine (née Birch, 1790–1863). Her cousin, George Royds Birch (1804–74) was the minister of a chapel in East Finchley from 1843 to 1854. He and his wife, Sophia, and Arabella were friends (BC, 13, 267). Despite Lamartine’s determined attempts to lead in an impossible situation, he did not live up to EBB’s hopes as a poet-politician. In elections a few months later he received only a small percentage of the vote; he resigned on 24 June 1849.

11. Cf. Mrs. Jameson’s theory about useless poets and poetesses; see letter 1, note 5.

12. EBB eventually met George Sand in 1852; however, she never met Balzac or Hugo. These three French authors were always a literary triumvirate for EBB, and RB shared her enthusiasm for them to a large extent, especially regarding Hugo.

13. I have been unable to clarify EBB’s remark about “Landor’s ungenerous letter.”

14. See letter 7, note 5.

15. Passage in angle brackets is partially reconstructed, having been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

16. Galignani's Messenger was a English-language newspaper founded in Paris in 1814 by Giovanni Antonio Galignani (1757–1821) and his English wife, Anne Parsons. The newspaper, especially popular amongst the English on the continent, consisted almost exclusively of articles reprinted from English newspapers and magazines. EBB often quoted Galignani's as her source for news of current events. In addition to the newspaper, the firm also published books; they also owned a bookshop and circulating library in Paris, which the Brownings patronized.

17. Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) was a Swedish scientist, philosopher, and theologian, whose followers formed a society known as the New Jerusalem Church. Among other aspects of his vision of “The Joys of

18. Moxon never financed any of RB's publications; they were always subsidized by the poet. In a letter to EBB in August 1846, RB had complained that Moxon was "the 'slowest' of publishers, and if one of his books can only contrive to pay its expenses, you may be sure that a more enterprising brother of the craft would have sent it into a second or third edition" (BC, 13, 308). This frustration with Moxon's slowness, as well as with delays in reporting accounts and making payments, led RB to switch to Chapman and Hall with the publication of Poems (1849)—as did EBB. Chapman and Hall remained their publisher until RB changed to Smith, Elder when his six-volume Poetical Works was published in 1868.

19. Since her marriage, EBB had written only four letters to Mrs. Martin, the last one was dated 7 August 1847 (BC, 14, 273-278).

20. Jane Miller (see letter 4, note 18) had been a servant in Boyd's household from as early as 1830. In his will Boyd specifically states that "my daughter Mrs. Hayes late Miss Boyd is already provided for by the property which she now possesses and which she will take at my decease and therefore I make no further provision for her by this my Will." After making a few specific bequeathes (including two Greek books to EBB), he adds "and all the Residue of my personal Estate and Effects unto my faithful Attendant Jane Miller the Wife of Mr. William Miller of Kentish Town in the County of Middlesex Baker absolutely for her own sole and separate use and benefit and I do hereby nominate and appoint the said Jane Miller Executrix of this my Will" (Public Record Office, London). EBB's concern for Boyd's daughter was evidently based upon the rumours circulating about the details of his will. The allusion to Ireland doubtless refers to the effects of the recent famine on Boyd's land interests there.

21. The Parisian church of La Madeleine, a classical Corinthian-style temple surrounded by a colonnade, was planned by Napoleon I as a "temple of victory" for his Grande Armée. The building was designed by Pierre Vignon, and was completed as a church under the restored Bourbon regime. Galignani's New Paris Guide (Paris: A. and W. Galignani and Co., 1847) describes it as one of the "best specimens of the decorative taste of the present day" (p. 139).

22. Sic, for Cutigliano, a small village on the Lima river northeast of Bagni di Lucca.

23. EBB's comment on her sisters' handwriting indicates that Henrietta's handwriting was large and Arabella's was small; examples of their writing bears this out.

24. See Appendix, 11, p. 801.

25. On 6 March there were demonstrations in central London against the income tax. Most of the protests took place in Trafalgar Square and Charing Cross, but at one point, the demonstrators marched down Pall Mall, shouting and breaking lamps as they made their way toward Buckingham Palace.

26. An uprising in Austria forced Metternich to step down. He submitted his resignation on 13 March 1848, and the emperor accepted it on the 18th. Metternich and his family left Austria, first for England and later for South Africa.

27. This likeness of Sarianna may be one by an unknown artist, which formed lot 4 of Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, H25). The portrait of EBB which hung at Hatcham was a miniature by Matilda Carter done in 1841, and was given to RB by EBB in March 1846 (see BC, 12, 175). The verso is inscribed by Sarianna: "The Portrait of E.B.B. given to me by R.B."; it formed lot 1410 of Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, F11; and is now in the Robert Browning Settlement—it is reproduced as the frontispiece to volume 5 of BC). I have not traced a likeness of Arabella from this period.

28. The ends of several lines are missing due to a seal tear.

29. About three-fourths of a line has been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

30. Words are missing at the start of two lines due to the seal tear.

31. Underscored twice.
April 2. [1848]

Would I take a worse way, dearest Henrietta & Arabella, to get back your favor, which this great stoppage in note-writing may have put in peril,—than by beginning, as I must, with the confession that it is all thro' me, you do not receive a great letter from Ba,—whole sheets overflowing, such as I used to see her perpetrating,—while I could not find the heart to stop the quick little fingers, or do more than interpose at intervals with "Now, Ba,"—"What did you promise me? "There's your face getting red and redder," and the like! All to no use! "Just to the end of this page"—"only a word here,—something I forgot and must say"—and so at last the letter was piled up story on story like a Tower of Babel—and then,—once the letter [was] safely off at the post and away, I used to hear—"Perhaps...
...
it was not wise in me to write so much—it may be the cause that I don't feel quite so well!" How I used to cry out—"Could Henrietta or Arabella know! how they would refuse such pleasure at such price!" And so I am confident you would—and that you will, after a minute's consideration,—you will rather support me in the exercise of a proper authority, than try to weaken it by complaining .. (which would overthow it, indeed, tho' I save my dignity by saying "weaken" merely)— For, here is the truth, in spite of all that Ba says, I firmly believe that this last attack was influenced greatly (for I will not pretend to say, produced) by the long, long[,] far too long letters that she would write the day before. I said, as I saw her flushed cheeks, "See, if you will not suffer for it!" But I need not say any more on the subject, as what would have induced her to write, by gentle stages, so short a letter this time, had it not been her conviction, after all, that I am right and she wrong? And now, dearest Sisters, this is the way you must help me, you must write as long and {at least} as often as before,—otherwise, who shall answer for this refractory creature not precipitating herself upon a Box of Bramahs, a quire of cobweb paper, and a bottle of Blue-black warranted to stand any climate—and—and...

Here she is sitting, looking very well, gaining strength every day,—with delicious Spring weather to help us. Don't feel the least alarm at the rumours of war that fill the world—I mean, alarm on her account— I will not be caught sleeping, I promise you. She will be able to get to some cool place, I trust, and do much better than last year. The cowardly English are leaving the place—infinitely to the satisfaction of the less mouse-hearted who stay, not being frightened at their own shadows: should our city be entered,—we can reach Leghorn in a few hours and find a hundred merchant vessels, plus the squadron from Malta, which will arrive at first warning of hostilities, but nothing of the kind will be needed, in all probability. All the excitement and busy sense of life does Ba good—we only want you here—and say so, as we see the two seats unoccupied in our comfortable carriage every afternoon.

Goodbye, and God bless you— Ba loves you better than ever, I will undertake to assure you—tho' I only know what her love now is—it can hardly have been so great—but greater, impossible! Remember me always for yours ever most affectionately and faithfully,

RB.
Letter 27

Florence.

April 15–19– [1848]

My own dearest Arabel, you have not been the least, least, uneasy about me, of course, through the past fortnight? There was nothing for me, you know, but to get better & better: & better & better I have become, thank God. Every day we have our drive, & every day I come back with more colour in my cheeks, till how it is to end, the peonies only can suggest to you. What a scheme you have made for me, to go to England by a Leghorn & Southampton [sic] packet—now listen! If I did it, we sh'd set off three,—& arrive one. Wilson w'd be quite slain, & Robert nearly so .. & Flush & I should have to nurse all the way as cheerfully as we could. Indeed Flush offers a protest of his own inasmuch as people have a barbarous mania for chaining dogs upon deck all night, & he has horrible recollections of a certain passage to Havre, when a lady with six screaming children objected to the nuisance of my having Flush with me in the same cabin, & delivered him over to the tormentors though he had escaped from them to me for the third time. Finally, all the packets for the next three months are engaged by fugitives from Italy .. swept away by the great panic here! Such nonsense! such cowardice! Captains & Colonels running as if a mad bull were after them! If they were to run so on a field of battle, they w'd really "cover themselves with glory". 2 Tuscany, meanwhile, as quiet as a sheepfold! only that the soldiers have gone out of it to do battle in Lombardy against the Austrians 3 .. which makes Wilson have misgivings on the power of the civic guard to protect her, notwithstanding the new epaulettes. But we are as quiet, as quiet—you w'd not know that anything was going on except the selling of leeks & roses, in all Florence. And even if the Italian cause does not triumph, (and it will, I pray God!) & even if the Austrians marched here to thank our Grand Duke for declaring war on them, .. why, what then? What's to happen to the English, I wonder, who keep in doors & shut their windows? Besides, there's always time to run—Our knapsack is soon made up, you see—& we need not wait till you take a lodging for us. But you will understand my darling Arabel that we have not settled our plans yet & that we cant—only if we dont go to England this summer, you
Letter 27

15–19 April [1848]

will certainly have us with the early spring (if it shall please God), & in that case, we may stay longer than now we could: it might be more satisfactory in all ways. I am scheming against Robert that when, after being in England, we have to return, we may reduce the expense (the expense of going & coming in one year being so heavy,) by spending the next winter in the south of France instead of Italy. The sea-expenses are heavier than those of a land journey—but we are not forced into Italy exactly. Oh, I wish Italy were as near as Paris—but we cant “annihilate time & space”; let us knit our brows ever so. The railways will however do something of the sort, & I dont despair even of the railways in France. That dear uncle Hedley sh^ have resolved notwithstanding, on leaving Tours, scarcely surprises us .. though we would have stayed—and are quite ready (by the way) to occupy either of his houses that he will leave to our occupancy. Still, with the children, & his power of moving backward & forward, there’s no wondering at his decision—and now do send me his address that I may write at once to him, dear, kind uncle Hedley. Oh, I would not have him think me ungrateful for the world, France included. As to France, we are very anxious, .. & rather painfully than joyfully are reading of the state of things there. All will come right at last—but as Robert says, “how many hearts may be broken in the meanwhile, is another question”. Promises of impossible good are extended to men who from want of education & habits of reflection, look rather to the ends than to the means. When a majority plays a game of thick sticks against instructed heads, humanity in general is sure to suffer. I quite tremble to think of the wild, rampant doctrines of some of those communists, which, if carried out, would destroy the individuality of men, break off, like Tarquin, the heads of the flowers, & blunt the points of all energy & genius. Monastic & conventual institutions are not, as has again & again been proved, favorable to the evolvement of great faculties—neither do they make men purer in the mass: and although it is quite possible & certain indeed for families to gain everything in point of œconomy, by voluntary association of life … by living together in large houses, purchasing together, & cooking together—yet this is to be done by voluntary & individual association, & not by government-scheming, I think, if it is to be done with impunity to real freedom. When governments begin to be patriarchal, they are sure to end by being absolute—this has been from the beginning of the world. I fear much then for liberty & nobleness of soul, in the midst of these theories devised by men of the noblest souls & purest virtues, themselves .. though, for the most part, unbelieving men (however they may talk of Christianity), & therefore incredulous of the inborn infirmities of the humanity they speak of. Still, one must go with them to a certain point—to communism of education, for instance, by the Law: & they lay the precisely right stress upon that necessity, which is the foundation-stone of all.— Just see how I write, as if it were lawful to [write] prose across the Alps—it’s bad enough, foot by foot on the fender! But the times are so extraordinary, that they force one to talk of them, in & out of season. I never in my life was half as anxious about public affairs; & who can help it I wonder. Why England should be tranquil (if you really keep quiet in England) passes my understanding,—unless it proves, which I suspect it does, that the understanding of your masses is not as politically ripened as in France. And then, the freedom of discussion is a safety-valve for the moment—but we shall see. The inequality between class & class, & the power of priviledge, are wrongs infinitely more rampant in England than Louis Phillippe left them in France, .. however you may all refuse
him your sympathy, cruel people that you are. The bitter wrong of primogeniture, & of legislative privilege by birth, cry up out of the ground... particularly from the acres of those “ancient parks” which are made a boast of so curiously. Now every year, as it passes, subdivides property in France—(apart from all revolution) precisely as every year accumulates it in England: & under Louis Phillippe, there was no aristocracy, to speak accurately, ... none in a political sense at all. There—now I wont write a word more of this. Everyday we expect to hear of an outbreak in Ireland. Tell Henry that if he puts down the Kennington common meeting, he will do just what Louis P... did, over again—no more nor less—& pray let him take care of himself for the sake of some who love him. I get a little nervous to think of it. By the bye, when I am talking most valorously about Austrian armies & the like, & suddenly the table cracks, & I cry out “What’s that?... a little paler perhaps than usual, ... Robert begins, “Do you know, Ba, I have certain doubts of your extraordinary courage... now & then, ... however I may admire it at other times.” To which I reply that a sceptical state of mind is by no means to be encouraged—and that, in fact, I am afraid of only a few things in the world ... for instance, of thunder & lightning, ghosts, musquitoes [sic], & a tête à tête with D’ Alnutt & others,—the Austrians being all on one side. By the bye again ... think of D’ Alnutt’s being one of the physicians whom we ran for when I was ill ... D’ Harding & D’ Trotman both being out. Happily, D’ Alnutt was out too, ... & the note left for D’ Harding brought him straightway. We did not, either of us, choose D’ A—only somebody was wanted quickly, if good were to be done at all. Henrietta seems to be by no means charmed with him. The Leys, & probably the Cottrells, go to the Baths of Lucca for the summer—M! Tulk, too. These last are settled in their new house, which I & Robert shall go to see in a few days— I have been waiting to get stronger. Count Cottrell’s paintings, I hear, adorn the walls of it—Oh, I assure you he’s a count! and Sophia seals her notes with a coronet; besides the “great fact” of the cards. Everyday we meet the whole party driving in the Cascine—except Count Cottrell himself who may have better things to do. Today the beautiful Cascine were full of Florence, it being a holiday; yet holiday or not, the indefatigable people were shooting at their usual mark, an Austrian soldier—not a live one, understand! if so, they might not hit so fast.

—Miss Boyle has sent us Tennyson’s Princess, having managed at last, in her active kindness, to borrow it for us. Oh, and I am so disappointed! indeed we both are. Even the beauty is not to the height of the beautiful in his former works—and the flatnesses & weaknesses are many. Yet exquisite things there are, & we sh! be properly grateful after all. Only why sh! M! Forster & others announce the new lamp as outshining the old ones: M! Forster said so to us. Robert’s edition is just in the press, so you need not look for it out of it [sic, for look out for it] for the present. I dont at all like having a different publisher; but as my poems will be out of print in the course of this year, according to Moxon’s account which we have just received, (fifty copies were left at the end of last December:) perhaps Chapman & Hall will take my second edition beside ... that is, when I come to ask them. Moxon sends us more than fifty pounds for the year’s profit, advertisements &c being deducted. You see that poet’s trade is by no means as bad as might be thought! He however is pathetic about having to break with us all on behalf of his large family, & never intending at whatever expense of private friendship, to publish anything but prose any more: & Robert is going to write & part goodnaturedly from him. At the same time...
I can't but think from the tenure of his own account, that he has not done so very badly by us, & moreover that it's his own fault if he did not do still better. If he had undertaken all at his risk, our gain w'd have been his—and the percentage for his money, not so miserable. You will see how Robert's new edition, with the advantages of type & energetic advertising, will sell! Of Paracelsus, not a copy remains. A hundred & fifty copies of my poems sold last year—so that the sale continues regularly on my side also. The Brownings are about to have their house painted & done up in various ways, in order to which their furniture is to be packed & they themselves to migrate to Windsor for a part of the summer—so, you observe, if we had fixed on England we should have gone at an untoward moment. It seems wiser for every reason therefore to delay a little—though you may count on us as far as human beings may count on anything, for next spring—& though I miss great happiness in the meanwhile—Ah, tell me that you are not too much disappointed. How vain of me to say that "tell me". You see, I can't believe a word of your "callous heartenedness", not though you bring in Mary Minto as witness— I know you too well, Arabel. Laugh if you like,—but anything I w'd give to have you happily married, after that own heart of yours—yes indeed, I think often of it. The nunnery will by no means answer—you belong to me, mind, when other people leave go of you. Then you "revert" to me: as the lawyers say of estates & money—& certainly you are a golden part of my riches. Robert holds with me in this as in the rest—& so you need'n't say shaking your head, that I have a husband. I have a husband I thank God .. but I have him to make me happy & not the contrary: & if I wanted to grieve him, it w'd be by seeming for a moment to separate my good & his. You ought to have seen his face when I happened to say the other day that I was quite ashamed at everything that was spent, being spent for me .. "Blessed are they that do not say such words—you must know that they go to my heart. I entreat you never to say them again". And often he wishes for you .. & Henrietta too .. dearest Henrietta. So my secret is out! Well—it's time to deliver it I suppose .. & I did long to say 'Ay!' to your admirable guess, except for the fear that Nelly might do just what she has done .. tell you herself, & so catch in your countenance the fact of my treachery. I must confess that I was very much astonished—and that when her letter informed me of her being about to marry, I yet did not anticipate the name— I quite exclaimed aloud & struck my hands together .. to Robert's profound wonder, as he sate at dinner looking at me while I read. The difference of age is so great!— And yet again, on the whole, I grew glad after reflection. Even marriage is not the same thing to all persons—and women are satisfied in having to look up & love up, on any terms. Nelly Bordman has for ever so many years quite adored that good, admirable M' Jago—she is thoughtful & earnest, & has outlived all girlish levities, even if once she partook them—which I don't think: she always was earnest & thoughtful. As she says herself, she could not be happy apart from the Hammersmith attraction—and as M' Jago set his heart on her in that particular way, why I do think that she was right & wise in letting her own speak to the same cadence:—yes, both wise & right. For the rest, don't be uneasy for them, even if one cries "child" & the other answers "Sir". There may be the utmost reverence & tenderness, you know, even without that familiarity of sympathetic companionship, which would certainly be a difficult condition between hair so very white, & so very brown. He will pet her a good deal, I hope .. & she, I am sure, will do all but worship the twinkling of his eyelids:—and an admirable, saintlike man he is,
for whom God has reserved this compensation. Did she tell you that his desire was for her to be married ... now guess! ... in white muslin? I hope it may answer as well as my old brown muslin, ... a shred of which Robert begged of me & keeps in his desk for a relic. Your fear lest this marriage shall produce a sensation & some talking in Hammersmith is mine too—People are sure to gossip a little about a household's so shifting its construction: but what then? No harm has been done—and doers of a pure conscience may be courageous against the harm which is talked, or implied even. Nelly seemed nervous, poor thing, at having to tell her relatives & friends,—none of them very near though, or able to pretend to constraining her. Mr Jago has himself been the most tenderly like a relative—& now he may well keep the first place. How strange that people shall flock into marriages so! It's the comet perhaps! the same influence which sets the nations revolutionizing. And you never told me how Mr Orme's daughter came to be a widow with a new name? Whom & how did she marry? Does Mr Orme ever ask of me? Give my love to her in any case. Tell me too of Emma Monro—Is she happy still? You are safe with me, remember: & I know that she did keep nothing from you. Did'nt I promise to tell you the truth if ever I married? And I have told it often enough surely. Give three kisses to my dearest Trippy, & thank her for keeping Robert in her thoughts (did'nt she say so?) because of his being good to me. Her affectionate thoughts I like to be kept in—it is both for him & myself. She is in mine too, indeed. Tell me what you mean about her feet? Has she had a return of the pain in the heel? or has it been gout—or what? Now tell me exactly, Arabell. I do trust that the lovely spring may renew & revive her, as it does to the elm-trees. It is full summer here—the foliage at its height & breadth; & not a leaf burnt yet at the sun, like a moth's wing! We talk & talk of going here & there, ... & yearn a little (if we can't get to you) to go into the mountains ... to some wilder place than the Baths of Lucca, if possible. But our Cutigliano is filled with troops ... & then, we must think rather of our defences, notwithstanding the valour of one of us. (Of course, me!) The other day as I came in to breakfast, I said to Robert... "Well,—its all over with us! we shan't be able to leave Florence this summer again, do what we can." Such a face of consternation he put on—"what can you mean, Ba?"—"Why, I mean this—Wilson gave sundry of my medicine-bottles to Anunziata the day before yesterday; and yesterday Anunziata filled one of them with oil & carried it to the church of Santa Trinità, & then & there lighted a lamp to the virgin, putting up an especial prayer that the Holy Mother would not permit the Signor & signora Browning to stir from Florence throughout the summer. And so, you see, dear, we're in for it, & you may go & take a house at once." It was complimentary to us of Anunziata—wasn't it? ... to wish to keep us at the expense ... of a bottle of oil? Oh, and I assure you, it was the very best oil, ... she told Wilson;—for otherwise, it would'nt have been complimentary to the Madonna.

—Poor Miss Boyle is in despair at having to leave Italy ... for she is going with the panic-people, on account of Lady Boyle who is old & infirm. D' Harding held up his hands & eyes at the absurdity of the English who run, with so little cause for running. Mr Hillard returned from Rome the day before yesterday, spent a few hours in Florence, on the road to Paris, & thought me "looking better" than in the autumn—so you may conclude that my late illness left most fugitive signs of its whereabouts. Indeed I am looking quite well again, &, though not yet as strong as before, becoming every day stronger; toward which the carriage-exercise plays its part. God's
goodness is very perfect to me—& even my best gratitude is unworthy of the least of that. Tell me if you never, no, never, hear of Mf Hunter & Mary? If you really never hear of Mary, I must say that I am not pleased with her:—if never of Mf: Hunter .. why that too is strange enough. Tell me whatever you ma(y gather) about them & about their "establishment" at Ramsgate—is'nt it at R(amsgate)?? I cant understand how persons, apparently fast bound to you, can slip the ⟨…⟩ with such facility. Nothing left of so much!—

Remember me affectionately & thankfully to the Strattens. About a week ago (I write on just as the thoughts come uppermost) Robert called on Mf. Powers the scu[l]ptor, .. & in came the gift of wedding cake from Mf & Mr® Tom Trollope! So Miss Garrow has sealed her destiny. She is to live with Mr® Trollope .. or did I tell you before:—

Is the buzz over in England, pray, about D! Hampden? Oh—the absurdity of it .. The wasps themselves know better:—& your English wasps, who dont, are likely to be instructed farther if the world rolls on at the actual rate. If you could know the impression made abroad .. that is, upon all minds out of the narrow sphere of party-influences, by the late fuss, .. it might be a wholesome knowledge. The narrowness of bigotry is to me detestable, I must say, from whatever side it manifests itself: and as to state-interference, that being one of the received conditions of the church of England, those who object to it on this occasion, should leave the church: the remedy is easy. Your account of "Rest in the Church," gives a curious idea of rest, to be sure. And how gracious to me the lady is—if a lady! I heard (I think from Miss Mitford) that the writer was one, & that her name was Sewell or something of the sort, but I know nothing, of course.— Talking of 'rest,' the horrors to which travellers through France are exposed, have just been poetically related to us. We hear of flying families stopped by brigands & the like,—the workmen of the towns, reduced to starvation by the withdrawing of the richer classes, having dispersed (many of them) in bands of brigandage. There's a great deal of exaggeration in all this, I dont doubt—but the effect of such reports will be to stop some of our ⟨fu⟩gitives by force of the very panic. Do tell me the address of the Hedleys, that I may write. How the Bevans manage with their income & their household, I cant make out—nor dear Arabella's philosophy of adaptation neither. Glad I am indeed, to hear of her happiness!— You should hear the Italians talk wonderingly of the new English party, "who are neither catholics nor protestants, only much more strict than the Catholics".—"who take their books & pray in the churches, just like Catholics, and curtsey & bow to the altars & crucifixes, & do everything right except putting their fingers into the holy water". The Italians open their eyes & wonder they dont call themselves catholics. Mf Hillard, too, told us of the sensation produced in Rome by the same phenomena; the Puseyites rendering themselves most conspicuous there.—

⟨…⟩

It is a wrong system altogether. Tell me if George gets on upon circuit—if he is making way in his profession, poor fellow. He cant care for me though—that's too certain. Wilson is quite well & in spirits. I forgot to tell you how she ended the carnival by going to an Italian private ball. At the end of the evening, one of the young ladies lingering behind the rest, a son of the house introduced her to his father as his wife, married that morning!— "A great surprise," said Wilson—but nobody in the least aggrieved!! Marriages in this Italy are accepted as the glory of life. Best
of love to all—So glad I am that dear Minny is better. My love to her always—How’s Crow? Why did’nt you tell me before of dear Lizzie—^23 Mention her now. Thanks for letters both of you, dear things! I love you with all my heart. Will you write! Oh, write!——I am

your own Ba—


Do you hear of Arlette? What dear letters you write to me! Write, write, I beseech you!——I have your picture, Arabel, on the table alas.

Address, on integral page: To the care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12. Upper Gloucester Street / Dorset Square / New Road.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. I have been unable to trace the source of this quotation.
3. A despatch from the Tuscan representative in Turin to the Tuscan government on 14 April contained the following message: “The government of King Charles Albert charges me therefore to make known to your Excellency that now or never is the time to devote to the cause of Italy the last man and the last scudo” (G.F.H. and J. Berkeley, Italy in the Making, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940, p. 136). Florentine troops had left for Lombardy as early as 22 March, and others followed. The Grand Duke had issued a proclamation on 5 April, “in which he reminded them [i.e., the volunteers] that the holy cause of Italian independence would be decided on the fields of Lombardy” (Italy in the Making, p. 139).
5. Ovid explains how, when the city of Gabii was under siege by Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, the last King of Rome, his son, Sextus gained entry to the city, and then sent a messenger to ask his father for further instructions. The messenger returned with no message, but explained how the King had strode up and down the garden striking off the heads of the tallest lilies. Sextus slew the chief men of the city, which then surrendered (Fasti, trans. James George Frazer, London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1931, II, 685-710).
6. Cf. Genesis 4:10: “… the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.
7. A demonstration of Chartists was held on 13 March 1848. According to The Annual Register for 1848, it was “pronounced as ‘great,’ and expected to be troublesome,” but “it turned out a despicable affair.” A second, and larger, meeting was planned for 10 April, at which upwards of 500,000 to 1,000,000 were expected to gather on Kennington Common and from there carry a petition to Parliament. Due to recent events on the continent, the authorities were prepared for potential uprisings. Thousands of police were enlisted and stationed at points along the route, but in the end there were far fewer numbers than expected—only 15-20,000 attended—and the whole affair ended quietly. This unsuccessful event effectively marked the end of the Chartist movement.
8. Richard Hopkins Allnatt, author of Tic Douloureux, or Neuralgia Facialis, and Other Nervous Causes (London: John Churchill, 1841), whom EBB had mentioned to Miss Mitford in a letter in January 1843; see BC, 6, 266.
9. For Dr. Trotman, see letter 21, note 3. James Harding (1788?-1868) is described as “the Locock of Florence” in Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers to Northern Italy (London: John Murray, 1847, p. 476). Sir Charles Locock (1799-1875) was a renowned obstetrician.
10. Throughout the Brownings’ correspondence there are various references to Cottrell’s collection of Italian paintings. It was known to many in the Brownings’ circle. In a letter dated 15 August [1871], Isa Blagden wrote to Charlotte Cushman: “Count Cottrell is dead and Sophia wants to sell some of his pictures. I hear there is a gallery to be formed in New York. Do you know who is charged to collect pictures for it?” (MS at Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.). Cottrell was an artist as well as a collector.
An allusion to the magician taking the lamps in the story of “Aladdin or the Wonderful Lamp” in *The Arabian Nights*. EBB’s comments echo many of the contemporary reviews of Tennyson’s poem. A notice of the poem in *The Christian Remembrancer* for April 1849 (pp. 381–401), contends that *The Princess* does not represent a significant improvement over Tennyson’s previous works: “But woe to those who had been hoping to see its author rise higher... They found his faults and his beauties still the same; and alteration in degree, but not in kind; an improvement, if any, which was not a development” (p. 382).

Moxon published *Poems* (1844), but with the publication of *Poems* (1850), EBB changed publishers from Moxon to Chapman and Hall.

i.e., in the house called Trejago, at Hammersmith, where Nelly Bordman had lived as the ward of Francis Robert Jago since 1841.

A comet had been observed by Mauvais, at Paris, the previous July 4th [1847], and remained visible until mid-April 1848 (J. Russell Hind, *The Comets*, London: John W. Parker and Son, 1852, p. 168).

Eleanor Charlotte Orme (b. 1813), who, according to probate records at the time of her mother’s death in 1862, was alive and was described as a “widow.” On 5 April 1836, she married Jeremiah Linde Jones (aged 40), purser of H.M.S. *Jupiter*, at Old Church, Calcutta.

In the piazza of the same name just across the Arno from Casa Guidi.

George Stillman Hillard (1808–79), American lawyer, editor and critic, first met the Brownings the previous winter. EBB described him to Miss Mitford in a letter dated 8 December [1847]: “Then we have had another visitor, Mr. Hillard, an American critic, who reviewed me in the old world & so came to view me in the new:—a very intelligent man, of a good, noble spirit” (*BC*, 14, 341).

18. A seal tear occurs at this point, affecting three lines.

Renn Dickson Hampden (1793–1868) was consecrated Bishop of Hereford on 26 March 1848 after controversial resistance to his appointment. He had been elected on 28 December 1847, but the Dean of Hereford and one Canon had voted against him. Opposition to Hampden resulted from statements he made in lectures he had given as Regius professor of divinity in Oxford, to the effect that the authority of the scriptures had greater weight than the authority of the church. The whole episode created such a public uproar that, according to the *DNB*, “upwards of thirty works on the matter issued from the press.” Despite his opponents, he served his diocese for two decades.

The author was Elizabeth Harris, as identified in letter 24, note 19. In the introduction to *Rest in the Church* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1848), Harris lists several different types of authors and names specific ones as examples of “a great spirit which is at work,” including Miss Strickland, Harrison Ainsworth, Dickens, “and his kindred writers, even his imitators” as evidence of the truth of the Catholic Church (p. 75). “And run through the range of the day’s poetical productions, from Miss Barrett to Alfred Tennyson, to the merest rhymer of the magazine—and you will feel that there also is a searching current of loving thoughtfulness, which can find its vent nowhere at last but in The Catholic Church!” (p. 75).

EBB’s cousin Arabella (née Hedley) and her husband James Bevan had recently bought a house (Calverley Park) in Tunbridge Wells. Their first child, James Hedley Bevan (1847–87), was born in October 1847 while they were staying at 27 Wimpole Street.

Nearly one line has been cancelled by EBB.

Mary Elizabeth (“Lizzie”) Treherne (b. 5 June 1844) was the eldest daughter of William Treherne and EBB’s former lady’s maid, Elizabeth (née Crow). In a letter to RB, dated [15 July 1846], EBB wrote: “I had visitor on visitor today, .. my old maid coming to bring me her baby to look at, to Flush’s infinite delight” (*BC*, 13, 162).
Letter 28
Palazzo Guidi.
May 10–11—[1848]

My ever loved Arabel, I wished hard for your letter; & though a dear kind perfect letter, as always, yet now I wish it had not come today, so saddening is the news about my very dear friend, Mr. Boyd. May God keep him in sunshine, consciously or unconsciously to his own sense—that is my prayer. There is truth in what you say, of course, but still, if we felt by such truths, we should not need to suffer any more pain even on the earth. Our human constitution is not so rightfully balanced—& I cannot help anxiously waiting for the next account & anxiously hoping that it may speak of improvement rather than of release—improvement, such as we call it, rather than release, such as God sees it. A slight paralytic stroke, is your expression—and we are reminded that Miss Boyle’s mother after two severe strokes of the same kind five years ago, travelled to Italy two years since & is now travelling back to England, having quite lost the use of one hand nevertheless, & being by many years further advanced in life than my dear friend. Therefore I will not do otherwise than hope—May God bless & keep him— I cannot trust myself to speak further— It is very saddening to be anxious & absent at once .. & a great black shadow seems to have fallen down straight on me—

Darling Arabel, I was just about to write to you on a different subject— I am not sure whether at the first glance it will strike you pleasantly or unpleasantly, but I am quite certain that upon a little reflection & a patient hearing of the whole cause you will conclude that it ought to strike you pleasantly for every reason .. supposing that you wish to have us frequent visitors in England instead of infrequent. You know already the mysteries of our small income & the weak health of one of us,—which render it imprudent to attempt a settled residence in England—you would not wish us to try such a thing, I am certain. The perfect plan would be to pass every summer there— but, on the other hand, the expense of travelling is tremendous to persons of our means. This, therefore, was the problem to solve. Now, Florence is the cheapest place in Italy, which brings it to being the cheapest place in the world. Also this is the cheapest moment for Florence, through the panic .. really a silly panic .. without a pretext in rationality. After a good deal of thinking then, we resolved on taking advantage of the cheapest moment in the cheapest place, to adopt the infinitely cheapest means of life, .. by taking instead of a furnished apartment, an unfurnished one & furnishing it ourselves— Observe—we calculated that at the end of a year in a furnished apartment, the money simply goes & there an end!—whereas in our unfurnished one, the furniture remains: that is, we are the better by the whole worth of the furniture: and we may either sell it off & give up our house, or let our furnished apartment & make use of the proceeds in travelling to England— And when you come to know the cheapness of furniture (especially in this moment) & the comparative dearness of a furnished apartment, you will see the case clearly. We are told by both English & Italian residents that as a mere investment for money, nothing could be wiser: while in every way we shall be more comfortable with our own house, of course—and then, Moxon’s fifty pounds (from our books) nearly accomplish the whole purchase of furniture. For the apartment, the same we occupied two or three months last summer, & which happened just
Then to be open to us (you remember how I praised to you the great palace-rooms in the Guidi, last year) for that very apartment, on a first floor in one of the best situations in Florence & at a stone’s throw from the Grand Duke’s palazzo Pitti, we pay at the rate of the “Pancras’s working classes” when they take advantage of the benevolence of England in the new buildings open for them. They pay annually for the best three rooms in the institution, £12—and we for our seven rooms, three of which are magnificent & the others excellent .. to say nothing of our terraces .. twenty five guineas, with the liberty of giving up or not at the end of the year & of under-letting in any case. Now do please to take note of this,—& to remember besides that the cheapest furnished apartment we have occupied since we came to Italy, we have paid £4-10 a month for. Not dear of course, in reference to the usual piece of such a way of living .. but very unsatisfactorily dear when a cheaper mode became accessible with so little trouble— At which you will exclaim .. “Ah but, the furniture! they will get into a scrape with the furniture!” And I shall confound you by the fact of the prices .. of sofas “for a song,” chairs “for love,” and tables for nothing at all. We meant to pay only to the worth of Moxon’s fifty pounds, & people told us it would be quite enough. But we wanted linen & plate, & then our rooms being immense, yearned for more & more filling—and then again, we grew ambitious, & instead of four legs to every chair we looked to gilding & spring seats, .. & so, we have passed sixty pounds & still want curtains & one or two other things. So next summer we shall let our apartment for at least eight pounds a month, (it has been let for twenty) for six months—perhaps & return here in the winter to a rent-free residence. Is’t it wise of us? would’nt it have been absolutely stupid to have gone on throwing money into the Arno for the sake of the life of a lodger .. scarcely quite worth the price of it. It was by a mere chance & good fortune that we got into this Palazzo Guidi last year, it being far beyond our means—but now we have the experience of its advantages as a residence— We shall put orange trees & myrtles on the terraces (one tree before & one behind) & we have discovered under the carpet in my bedroom that the floor is all in scagliola, the arms of the Counts Guidi blazoned there in many colours— It was the favorite room of the last Count—and Robert was trying to frighten me with noble ghosts at one o’clock this morning. We took possession yesterday.

Now I shall draw you a plan because you have forgotten what I sent before, I am sure. ——— And very badly it’s done. Can you make it out, I wonder. Ah, I meant to have written all this to you in such good spirits, but you see one cant count upon spirits in this world & even so all I have had to say has tumbled heavily out without the least degree of leaping vitality— Robert & I were laughing so yesterday morning about our “service of plate” .. six tea spoons, & two large ones .. table ones, those are called, & we intend to have four of them in time. We gave 2s & 9d each for the tea-spoons .. is that cheap? I dont remember, but I seem to fancy that I paid more in London for Crow’s. As to the linen that must be cheap—two pounds for five pair of sheets; of which only two were cotton! Wilson says it is excellent linen—all I dont make such a fuss about fineness as I used to do, it’s fair to say also. We are beginning to settle, & I write to you stretched on the sofa, in the drawingroom though the carpet is not down yet. Piazza Pitti was growing too hot—the rooms we had there were small & stifling, and to
breathe is delightful in this enlarged atmosphere of ours. They cry ‘cherries’ & strawberries through the streets, & we have had new potatoes, peas & asparagus since the early part of April—Judge the difference of climate— I do wonder why the Hedleys do not rather come here than live at Tours—they might live here royally & educate the children in the sun, & out of the taint of all provincialism, which is nearly as bad in France as in England. I certainly would not choose Tours for a residence—& the conveniences of life & its luxuries beside, abound in Florence, not to speak of the climate which agreed so pre[-]eminently with dear uncle Hedley. Tell me all about them. I shall write instantly. For this large spring sofa which I lie upon, we gave 5 or 6 scudi .. that is a pound & two or three shillings—for a small round marble table, twelve shillings, & so on. I must tell you that Count Cottrell has been exceedingly kind in taking trouble about us & helping Robert to buy these things .. & we are bound to speak gratefully of him from henceforth—There is good in him also—it seems to me that his wife is happy & much attached to him—& M! Tulk assures us that he has a kind & tender disposition. By the way, I am sorry to say that M! Tulk has had two other attacks within the last few days, & that his memory was much affected by the second. He had been quite well since January, & fell suddenly,—his son-in-law catching him in his arms. Count Cottrell says it’s all through imprudence of beginning to write again (he is writing some work on spiritualism & Swedenborgianism) but that he wont be reasoned with, because his desire of every moment is to die & go to his wife, & that whenever he is in the least unwell his first word is, “Now I hope I am going! I hope this is the call.” “Which,” said Count Cottrell, “I should’nt so much object to, if he did not think too much about it to prevent his attending to his affairs in this world .. but really they are not in the most satisfactory state”. Count Cottrell says that sort of thing quite bluntly, but meaning no unkindness, I do believe— M! Tulk in his talk with me the other day, said that now he had seen his daughters married so happily, he would gladly retreat into the new world—“But,” I objected, “you would injure their happiness by that very thing. Oh, you sh4 be content a little time longer in seeing them happy, & in teaching to so many what you have the power of teaching.” “Tell me,” he asked, “you who say this .. if M! Browning were to go from you, would’nt you desire to rejoin him?— I want to go to my wife—There’s no other tie in life like that tie. What exists between parent & child, is comparatively nothing—merely temporal— Conjugal love is the one eternal bond which God has set his seal on.” Swedenborg saw in the vision that true husbands & wives were seen as one body in the spiritual life,—the two making one angel. M! Tulk said that his daughters never were interfered with in their dispositions to marry— Oh, of course he w4 consider all such interference as mortal sin. The whole of his solicitude consisted in his seeing that they really loved & were loved. The rest was perfectly indifferent to him: and as to money, his idea is that people are rather better without it than with. Notwithstanding which, the Cottrells have a delightful apartment & have furnished it most beautifully— The curtains to Sophia’s bed, are blue satin, & her toilette glass, quite a curiosity of splendour, with a gilt & carved frame, nearly a quarter of a yard deep. And he says that two hundred pounds will cover his expenses. Also, they have a pretty Garden—but I dont like the situation of the house .. quite at the other end of Florence, in a new piazza .. the houses looking like Cheltenham houses .. nothing characteristic or Florentine. We like better to be in a palazzo which belonged to the Guidi who inter-married with Dante’s Ugolino family of
Pisa—close to the Pitti also, & the Raffaels inside, & the lovely Boboli gardens. Louisa has changed her plans about Lucca, because it was considered dangerous for her to travel just now, & has taken an apartment in the next house to her sister’s—a happy arrangement for both of them. Count Cottrell has a great deal of taste in the furnishing department,—& paints in oils very well for an amateur & has a feeling about pictures. His own performances hang on the walls of his new residence. If you could see us in these great rooms (they are so immensely high that they look still larger) you would think it all rather desolate still—No carpets down—no curtains bought yet: a carpet is bought for this drawing room .. 31 feet long by 20 broad .. & a very good, pretty carpet, for eight pounds—carpets for such large rooms are expensive. And as everything is to be paid for from our regular income & without getting into debt (the very idea of which w'd frighten Robert more than an incursion of the Austrians inclusive of M' Fowkes) we have been wise & resolved on dispensing with the carriage for the present. I am very much stronger now, & can take little walks with advantage even, & then here’s the terrace & the windows opening down on it .. air enough & sun enough! We can do perfectly without the carriage. Also, it's a sacrifice for a time—& next year we shall have money for every fantasy—oh, & even for this year, we may have the carriage when it is necessary—we just wait for a little, you understand, because we want to have our house comfortable & pretty to perfection. It will be a pied-de-terre in Florence, to return to, when we have let it to go to Rome or to England—Such uncertainty we were in for a time—Going to Sorrento, going to Bologna .. to Fano .. to Sienna .. to the Baths of Lucca .. anywhere to wait for the hour of getting to Rome. We had almost agreed on terms at Pratolino, one of the Grand Duke’s villa-parks .. where we sh'! have been shut in with the Greenhoughs— he is an American artist—Poor Annunciata was in absolute despair .. threw her arms round Wilson’s neck, crying, “O, Wilson, Wilson, vi voglio bene!..” & offered a candle to the Madonna, in aid of the persuasive oil I told you of. Somebody else, still more deeply interested, added a nosegay .. & altogether, I suppose, it was irresistible— Wilson herself, who by no means wished to leave Florence, was incited to make some offering of the sort, but as, she said, she didn’t believe in the efficacy of either wicks or roses, there was no use in her trying it. You sh’! have seen Annunciata’s rapture when it was fixed for us to stay— She siezed [sic] Robert’s hand & kissed it, kissed mine, & re-iterated that we were “tre angoli,” he, I, & Wilson. Yes, but first she rushed out of the house, down to the church of Trinita, to return thanks at the high altar. Then we were very near taking another apartment—a groundfloor in the Frescobaldi palace .. the brother of Count Frescobaldi, tell Henrietta, married Miss Parker whom she knew at Torquay, & who died, .. I think in her confinement .. certainly a few months after her marriage. M' Parker still lives in the house!) .. rooms less large than these, but looking on a garden, with a fountain & gold & silver fish & very pretty indeed. Robert was enchanted with this garden, though it was not to belong to us, understand, & we were on the brink of an agreement, when I took fright at the clouds of mosquitos which I saw with my own eyes hovering round the fountain—I do dread those mosquitos, & in no other part of Florence have I seen one yet, at this early period of the year. Then the back-rooms were rather dark— Altogether, I breathed something like a hesitating word—& even to “hint a dislike” being more than enough for Robert in the perfection of his goodness, he gave up the whole scheme instantly, & wouldn’t hear a word in modification.
of the decision—Never can I make you understand what he is to me. It is too much, & that is what I feel continually. The apartment we have actually taken, was just taken because I liked it—and he never does nor thinks of doing anything without being sure that it is the thing to please & not displease me. Indeed, to such an extreme has this grown, that I have got the habit of giving an opinion upon subjects quite indifferent to me & of which I am ignorant, because I must say something.

And now, you will turn upon me perhaps the blame of not going to England this year. "It's Ba's fault by her own confession." Well—he did certainly tell me that he "w'd take me to England if I made a point of it, but that he thought it undesirable & imprudent this year & would do it less willingly than if it were for next year." The reasons he gave, were reasonable to me as to him,—& so, we resolved on the delay! Oh, Arabel, it is wiser, be sure. Next year if we all live & God wills it, we shall meet, & see how the months pass meanwhile away!—Oh, would, would that I had you out here—We have a room for you,—& here's the French protestant church close by which we shall attend & which is one of the advantages we have looked to. The minister is said (to) be as evangelic in private life as in the pulpit—Then you should go with us on our pilgrimage, which we talk of confidently, to the mountain-monasteries, where we did not dare to penetrate, when we were at Vallambrosa [sic] last year. Thirty miles through the forests & mountains, by a road impossible to wheels (& this time I shall try a horse or ass, rather than a basket & two oxen .. I shall ride, & so shall Wilson!) bring you into the heart of divine scenery, where two other societies of monks break bread & practise sanctity .. or think they do—We shall carry a knapsack with a night cap; & no fuss as before, when we travelled with our house on our back like snails. Oh Arabel, you w'd like this certainly—and you wouldn't be more than one Sunday away from the French church, & so there w'd be no "drawbacks." I am certain that upon the whole you w'd be able to "put up" with our way of living—it's so still & silent, yet free & amusing. We have plenty of laughing sometimes, & when Wilson brings in the supper-tray .. "what, Wilson!—nothing but toasted cheese!" We are very merry notwithstanding.

I hope M! Hunter has no reason for liking Ramsgate less. I wish Mary were more frank & less what you call ‘idle’. It does not please me altogether, nor is it quite loveable in her. Tell me of the Giles's. I shd fear Ireland more than any part of the continent or peninsula. Bad news from poor Lombardy nevertheless. And the Pope is in disgrace a little—17 Our Italians who wore him in their heart of hearts cant bear to mention his name. He is an excellent man, but unequal to his position,—which Robert has kept saying from the first. Think of the courage of M! Tulk's sisters—of them quite an invalid—They have been in Venice throughout the disturbances, & are travelling alone back to Florence. At Padua they had to stop within sweep of the cannons through an access of illness, but the invalid rallies & on they come. M! Tulk himself with this tendency to paralytic affection, talks as coolly as you might do, about going to Calcutta to see his daughters. And when anybody observes "But this is courageous," he smiles & says "Only we are not atheistical." Did you write a word to Nelly Bordman to tell her how it is with me? If not, do. I shall write soon. So Henry is against us! Can that be possible? Give him my love & tell him that it ought not to be possible. From the quiet of Florence, you never would imagine that anything was going on in the way of war; but the people feel intensely. Tell Trippy that I wont confess to
cowardice, because I am equal to a situation, when there's time to make up my mind. Dearest Trippy, give my truest love to her always. Does she walk now with you? Give her a kiss from me as ever. Her tea pot remains the glory of our establishment, tell her, in spite of our new spoons, & a Venetian glass chandelier of which we are properly proud & were ambitious enough to give two pounds for. I have written myself into better spirits— It does one good (it always did me) to be near you, my dearest beloved Arabel. Now I write .. & let us be as close together as we can while so far apart. And tell me what you think of our new plans,—remembering that one of the motives of making them was to be freer to get to you. Wilson wishes that Mrs Robinson would "throw us some ends of old carpet," till we get our new ones. Oh, Arabel, how anxious I shall be about dear, so dear, M! Boyd. God grant that good news may come instead of bad! —the letter on the road perhaps!—

You did not mention Papa once. Always mention him particularly. There are moments that I quite yearn to him— And he never thinks of me probably! Probably I am "the old shoe"9 to him for ever. Love to all who will have my love—and to my dearest Henrietta of course.

I am your own Ba.

Give my love to Surtees & thank him much for his newspaper. How is Lizzie, Arabel? You said she was unwell. Have you heard again from Storm[?] Louisa & Sophia send love to Henrietta & you. R's love as ever.

How is Mrs Orme & what of Sam Barrett & poor Maria20—— You dont say a word of Crow & the children. I shall write to Mrs Martin.

1 Postscript

No letter yet! It’s a relief—

Arabel, we are paying for those boxes at the warehouse at least five pounds a year—must be paying five pounds: & on enquiry, we discover that four or five great packages could be sent by sea to us for two pounds or thereabouts. So even if, a twelvemonth’s after, we had to send them back again, you will agree to the wisdom of having the things out here rather than where they are, .. especially as we have room here for tables & chairs, & a use for books. Now my dearest Arabel, what I want you to do is to take note of the contents of the boxes— There was a box of letters, which I hope is in Wimpole St, & which certainly I dont want here. The books, on the other hand, might as well come. Have you my desks? The jewel box may as well stay with you—it is so heavy: but I sh'd like the desks: & if Henrietta should want the pearl necklace, some maker of keys would enable her to open & get at it. In any case I dont want the jewel box—of which most of the contents are with me; & the necklace in question belongs to Henrietta. If I had gone to England this spring myself, I would have arranged all this—but as it is, where can be the use of waiting. Dearest Arabel, any papers of mine, letters, &c left in Wimpole St—(& there was a deal box full, which came from Hope End besides the green box,) these things I beg you to take care of for me—& we will make a bonfire of many of them when we meet. Robert says, [']'If Arabel were here, I should go out & let you talk.” A compliment in its way I assure you!— I leave the room for three minutes, & straight he is after me—“Where are you? what are you doing? what a time you are.” Whether my husband or my dog follows faithfullest, is a question,—& I
fail in pretending to be vexed at not being left alone, I am really so proud & pleased at it. You see I tell you these things, … good taste or bad taste!

Now darling Arabel, don't take fright & fancy that we are giving up England. I would as soon give up your letters. Oh no, no. You will have us in England more certainly by all this—we only feather an Italian nest for the winters—and you will admit that to pay for those boxes in London, would be a mere waste of the goose-feathers. Mr. Kenyon will not keep them, nor will they be left at New Cross. So I want you to take note of the contents, so to have out here (we shall arrange the means) my 3 tables, 1 armchair, books, desks, lamp &c &c. Remember the Martins with their house in France!

Second postscript—This letter which should have been enclosed in another to New Cross as usual, was left out & found on the table to my despair, when quite too late for the post. Tomorrow's however will take it to you as quickly, with a surplus of postage which you won't mind, I know. Robert has been to enquire after Mr. Tulk—and he has had, I grieve to say, more attacks still, & although better & sitting up, his memory is quite gone, & he talked about the French revolution as if he had just heard of it,—he who has been so deeply interested in the events of it from the beginning. Yet his family hope for the removal of these painful symptoms which have occurred before & subsided. He enquired kindly after me & said, "One of the pleasures I looked forward to in coming to Florence was seeing her; and I wanted to see you too … only I forget why that was." Robert said, "Perhaps because your son knew me once." (Some eighteen or nineteen years ago Mr. Augustus Tulk was acquainted with Robert & invited him to Duke Street—an unaccepted invitation.)—"Yes, perhaps that might have been the reason. I don't know." I do hope he may rally again, good kind Mr. Tulk. He was looking so wonderfully better & his family so perfectly unprepared for anything of this kind. It is the result they all say, of an excess of mental exertion united to a little carelessness in the neglect of the specific medicines. The heat seems to be beginning, but these rooms are deliciously cool & have the reputation of being warm in winter. The carpet is down in the drawingroom & looks very well. The walls are green, the chairs crimson, with white & gold frames, & the carpet mixes up all colours. The ceiling has a good deal of gilding in Italian fashion, and the little sittingroom at the end of the suite, a very pretty room, has a cloud full of angels looking down on you, which if not in the highest style of art, is yet graceful & suggestive. Of course you are to understand that our furniture is not new—but it is in good taste & characteristic notwithstanding. My bed is not come home yet—The framework we bought of Count Cottrell himself (he had bought it for himself & then preferred another) for £1-10—and he has ordered at the manufactory the mattresses, that we may have them the best & with springs: so in the meantime a borrowed bed is put up in my room—Wilson’s bed is bought, curtains & all. Tell me if you hear anything of Arlette—And you will be going to Tunbridge Wells to see the Hedleys of course—I know you will, & then you will tell me what sort of house the Bevans have & what they pay for it. Tell me too of their baby.

No letter can come from England tomorrow—and it seems a sort of respite. You will remember to speak to me of Annie Hayes & to let me know how she is situated … without exaggeration … that is, according to your own perception. Give my love to dear Mary Hunter, 'idle' or not. Why does she like Ramsgate?
God bless you all.

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France. / To the care of Miss Tripsack, / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12.
Upper Gloucester Street, / Dorset Square, / New Road. / London.

Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Evidently, Arabella had told EBB of Boyd’s declining health; he actually died the day EBB began this letter. She paid tribute to him in the form of three sonnets subtitled “His Blindness,” “His Death, 1848” and “Legacies” (see Reconstruction, D350–355). All three poems were published in Poems (1850)—see letter 52, note 11.

3. Cf. EBB to Sarianna Browning: “we only pay in the proportion of your ‘working classes,’ in the Pancras building contrived for them by the philanthropy of your Southwood Smiths” ([mid-May 1848], ms at Lilly). According to the DNB, Southwood Smith was among those responsible for founding “the ‘Metropolitan Association for improving the Dwellings of the Industrial Classes’.” The buildings EBB refers to were presumably one of the results of the Public Health Act of 1848.

4. Tulk was the author of several works on Swedenborgianism, including Spiritual Christianity Collected from the Theological Works of Emanuel Swedenborg (London: William Newberry, 1846), but he died before completing the work.

5. According to Swedenborg, “Love taken by itself is nothing but a desire and hence an impulse to be joined; conjugal love is an impulse to be joined into one. For the male and female of the human species are so created as to be able to become like a single individual, that is, one flesh; and when united, then they are, taken together, the full expression of humanity” (The Delights of Wisdom on the subject of Conjugal Love, trans. John Chadwick, London: The Swedenborg Society, 1996, p. 40).

6. Presumably a reference to the nondescript row houses that were developed as a result of Cheltenham becoming a popular spa resort in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

7. Ugolino della Gherardesca (d. 1289) was the Guelf leader who conspired with Archbishop Ruggieri, a Ghibelline, to gain control of Pisa, but Ruggieri betrayed Ugolino and imprisoned him together with his sons and grandsons in the Tower of Famine, as recounted by Ugolino in Dante’s Inferno (canto xxxiiii). Ugolino’s daughter, Gherardesca, married Guido Novello da Bagno (d. 1293), who was head of the Tuscan Ghibellines after the Battle of Montaperti (Page Toynbee, A Dictionary of Proper Names and Notable Matters in the Works of Dante, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). The Palazzo Guidi, where the Brownings occupied a suite of rooms on the piano nobile, was built in the 15th century by Count Camillo Guidi, who was Secretary of State to Lucca Pitti, hence the close proximity to the Palazzo Pitti. After the Brownings’ son “Pen” was born in 1849, EBB began calling the apartment Casa Guidi.

8. See note 10 in the preceding letter.

9. Gustavus Woolaston Fowke (1818–49), the second son of Frederick Gustavus Fowke, 1st Baronet, was a Lieutenant in Prince Lichtenstein’s Regiment of Dragoons in the Austrian Service. According to EBB’s cousin Surtees Cook, Fowke was a friend of EBB’s brothers.

10. Due to financial difficulties, the Brownings gave up all thoughts of returning to England to visit family and friends. They remained unsettled about their plans to escape the heat of Florence until 17 July, when they left for a three-week trip that took them to Arezzo, Fano, Ancona, Senigallia (formerly Sinigaglia), Pesaro, Rimini, Ravenna, and Forli.

11. “I’m so fond of you.”
13. The Palazzo Frescobaldi is situated in the Via Santo Spirito and backs onto the church of the same name; it is not far from Casa Guidi. The garden with the fountain is still part of the Palazzo Frescobaldi, and it was the setting for celebrations at the opening of the newly-refurbished Casa Guidi in July 1995.
14. Marianna Parker (1820-42), daughter of Richard Louis Parker, had married Luigi Angiolo dei Frescobaldi (1811–63) on 15 November 1841. Frescobaldi was the son of Matteo, Marchese Frescobaldi.

15. Cf. Pope, An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot (1734), line 204: “Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike.”

16. The French Evangelical Protestant Church, described to Sarianna by RB as the “chapel at the Prussian Legation at Florence” (2 July 1849, LRB, p. 23). The minister was Moise Doin (see letter 42, note 4).

17. Doubtless referring to the allocution of Pius IX issued on 29 April 1848, in which he stated that he would not declare war on Austria. This was a serious blow to Italian liberation, and it marked a general and considerable decline in the popularity of a pontiff who had been seen as the great liberator until this event. EBB’s support of the pope soon gave way, and she added her voice to those who felt he had betrayed the cause of liberty; cf. Casa Guidi Windows, II, 445–446ff.

18. Caroline (1798–1864) and Eleanor (“Ellen”) Tulk (1802–55) were travelling from England to Italy to join their brother. Eleanor was an invalid and became ill several times during the journey which lasted six weeks, as indicated by EBB in letter 29.

19. I have been unable to trace the source of EBB’s quotation.

20. See letter 8, note 22; presumably their situation had not improved.

21. Postage for letters from Italy was paid by the recipient. To prevent correspondents from incurring this expense, the Brownings sent letters under cover to Sarianna, who would affix local postage and forward them at the poets’ expense. This letter, however, was sent direct to Arabella.

22. Charles Tulk had seven sons; Augustus Henry (b. 1810) was the second eldest.

23. See note 21 in the preceding letter.

Letter 29

Florence.
July 4– [1848]¹

My ever loved Arabel, I am writing on a day which brings you closer to me than ever & makes my heart fuller than usual of the love with which it is always full to you.² How can I make you feel this as I do, through the mountains & the sea. Yet it would scarcely be easier if I were nearer. May God bless you my dear dearest Arabel, as I love you—or better than I love you, since He must always in His blessings be beyond us when we try most to bless one another in our poor love—Dear darling Arabel, what I would give to see you, to be with you, to talk to you face to face! Next year at this time, we shall be together again— A few months, and then a meeting, if God pleases. Meanwhile you all seem bent on punishing me for not going sooner to England—Oh, if this were another day than it is, I should not have the heart to write on it to you .. so very long is it since I first wished in vain for a letter from you. Now, calculate. Here is the fourth of July .. and the last letter is dated April—and I have written & written, four, .. five times .. this is the fifth time .. and not a movement in reply?³ Is it right, I ask of you both! —— Certainly, twice, through M! Kenyon, I have had little strips of paper with a few words to tell me bad news: but not one letter, have I had!—and most seriously frightened I should be (I am at moments, as it is!) if Robert had not talked it into my head that, by failure of your direction, the letter has gone astray. Whenever you write, .. and I do beseech you for pity’s sake to be more regular in writing, let it be with the utmost precision of your pen in the address. Take care of the great Bs and the little double us; and remember that we by no means read as well in Italy as you do in England. Think,
beside, that even if you have written one letter between you, you & dearest Henrietta, the letter which is astray, .. one swallow does'nt make a summer, nor one letter my full right. Surely you sh^ write oftener than once in two months. If I did only that, what would you say? Yet, today, there shall be no more reproaches. Robert has been very unwell with influenza, till I was a little uneasy at his feverish hands & distressed eyes—but he is better again & the weather is somewhat cooler .. which is good for him .. and for me too, though I have been quite well, through heat & coolness. We keep our rooms bearable & at seventy five or six, when it is unbearable out of doors, between eighty & ninety in the shadiest places, by just shutting the windows close, .. the glass windows I mean! It's the only way— In England you w^ suffocate rather faster by doing such a thing, but here the light air saves you. Then at six oclock, there's always a sort of breeze & freshness .. and so, we throw open every window in a moment, & Robert draws my arm-chair close to a wide open one & sits down by me on a heap of cushions, and we have the tea tray on two chairs, & sometimes kneadcakes of Wilson's making,^ .. and so we talk & have tea, & then either walk up & down on the terrace, or put on our hats & wander out of doors fairly. But we have had thunder & rain, & the thermometer stands at seventy this morning—delightfully cool, that is, in Italy—and after all, I have been able to dress as usual, corset & all, every morning this year—whereas last year, you know how I abandoned myself to a dressing-gown, which is the manner of men & women here in Florence. Bearable as it is however, we scheme seriously about getting away for a few weeks, .. just a month, perhaps, .. for Fano & the Adriatic, and the great Fair of Sinigaglia.^ Ravenna is given up for the sake of the expence—we cant afford such a round, we fear: and Ravenna will do for another excursion, beside. Now Fano will not cost much, or if we find on enquiry that it does, we shall probably go to Siena or some, nearer place. The mountain-monasteries, we have clung to, as a necessary part of our summer-tour:—but there will be a great deal of riding on horseback, or mule-back, or ass-back at best, and if I dont feel supernaturally strong, it may very likely end in nothing just now. Oh, I dont say—but 36 miles of road "impossible to wheels", one looks at consideringly before one attempts! Still, it would be most delightful—& there are resting-places .. sleeping-places even, I suppose .. where one may lie on a mat & eat the biscuit out of one's knapsack, here & there in the hills & chesnut forests. Oh, if you were with us, how delightful!— The road to Fano, itself, takes us over the Appenines, & abounds, they say, in wonders of beauty! Supposing we go at all, it will be towards the end of the present month—we shall see. And our furnishing is nearly done—that is, everything essential is nearly provided, & waits for the arrangeing [sic]—the man to polish the carved wood & to put up beds & bookcases, curtains, bellropes & the like. This morning, a side board arrived—about a hundred years old .. looking like a chest of drawers, but with groupes [sic] of figures at the sides, and old men's heads for handles, & locks of gilt bronze— Beautiful it will be, when polished & done up. And with it came a seat of carved wood, all in grinning heads & arabesque, for the drawing room. Let your fancy set a crimson velvet cushion in it, & a band of crimson velvet for the back behind .. no wood, observe, but just the velvet. This comes from a convent in Urbino, & is of the most curious antiquity, & extremely beautiful & highly wrought. Robert got them yesterday, and I applaud them today— four pounds the two! But of all our purchases, I am not at all sure that I dont
enjoy the armchairs most, particularly one which Robert calls mine, because it's the most luxurious of possible chairs, very low, very languid looking as if the back of it were drooping from the softness of the seat. Here's my chair, Arabel! No—it looks uncomfortable as I have drawn it—so rather take my word for it than my work. You sink into it as into a nest of air, I assure you, and find a difficulty in getting up. The two new sofas are not stuffed yet, and stretch their skeleton arms. They, too, are very low, and we mean to fill them with springs and cover them with crimson satin. You will wonder if after all this, we should still have a few pounds free for our excursion, but I hope we shall, nevertheless. Did I tell you what the learned say of our bookcase, that, "when finished, it will be worth from sixty to eighty pounds, even at Florence"? and we gave six for it, I think. For the packages you are to send, I did not mention, but I do hope your discretion discerned that I rather not have any of the busts sent, supposing that the busts are to be considered mine. They are heavy, easily broken, and would not find their exact place in this land of statuary. Perhaps somebody will give them room somewhere. Wilson too has directions to give to her sister about her box—as she wants certain things in it, some things of mine among them, which might as well accompany the rest. Dearest Arabel, I give you, not only trouble, but perhaps unpleasant trouble—but after all, it will be wrong of you not to understand the design of the whole, and how it is calculated to bring us nearer. One of our plagues is "con rispetto" ... the fleas which are worse than usual, say the Florentines, just now. Robert's and my first work every morning after breakfast is to sit on the floor with a basin of water and small tooth comb and "do" Flush, who otherwise infallibly be eaten up bodily, all but his teeth. Robert holds him, and I comb—and the basin looks blackly at the end—but poor Flush, we have brought him out here, and we can't leave him to be a victim. He is in great spirits, and knows Florence so well that he is at perfect liberty to run out whenever he likes, which he enjoys to the uttermost. Then his duties as guardian of the house, are fulfilled to the horror of my ears. He barks whenever the doorbell rings, most vehemently, and makes violent assaults upon the coats of visitors in his old way. M' Ware, the American, author of the 'Letters from Palmyra', 'Last Days of Aurelian' &c, who is a very nervous invalid, was seized upon without remorse a few evenings ago, when he came to have coffee with us, and pathetically complained of the "agitation" &c. So Flush had to be locked up in Wilson's room, and was taken away crying. M' Ware has epileptic fits, and because "he couldn't bear to be watched by his family", left America for Italy without one of them, and without the help of friend or servant. How terrified they must be—and what a strange hallucination! But he is an interesting person, with a face of striking intelligence, deep depression in every tone of his voice. I think you read the 'Letters from Palmyra', at least—we had them in the house when we were at Sidmouth, I think.

M' Tulk has come back but we have not seen him yet. Count Cottrell was here an evening or two ago and told us of his arrival, and that of the Miss T ulks who have been six weeks in travelling from Venice to Florence, delayed by illness at various places. Louisa Ley is on the sofa—and Sophia expecting her confinement daily. Count Cottrell improves on us most agreeably, and indeed there is much to like in him in many ways—a groundwork of natural affectionateness & goodness, & a superstructure of a various knowledge of the world, which does not however render him a
Letter 29

4 July [1848]

refined man. 'Savoir vivre', he has; but it is a different thing from refinement. A sort of abruptness of manner is in his disfavour with strangers: he was a sailor before he was a chamberlain, an Englishman before he was an Italian, and the intermixtures never attain quite to harmonious combinations. Still, we like him increasingly, and I am certain that his wife is perfectly happy—What puzzles me is, how he could ever have read Swedenborg & called him “divine,” as M'Tulk said. He is not quite the man for spiritual & ecstatic speculations.—Oh, this dreadful news from France! It makes one's heart ache to think of the gulf of misery yawning before poor France! before & behind. Military despotism is a bad preparation for republican institutions, and, having made itself necessary, I for my part, believe now that a kingship of some sort must succeed. Robert does not think so—we “divide on the question”. Socialism has tripped up republicanism at least, is a thing to agree on. Impossible aspiration is imminent ruin in great games like this of government—and the theories of socialism are not only impossible in any state of human society, but ought to be impossible in order to the heroic growth & development of men.—I wonder if Blackwood will do anything with my poem—it is in the press now: and Moxon is bade let us know when my first edition is quite out in order to our looking round for a purveyor of a second. Whenever I bring out a second, I shall attach the Seraphim as a third volume, and by the way there was a copy of the Seraphim in my room, covered with erasures & in preparation for reprint—was it put among my books, so that I shall have it here with them. Look about & see if by any chance it is left in Wimpole Street, & let it come to me with the other books, Arabel. And, darling Arabel, will you remember to send my shawl left behind, and the worsted couvre-pied which aunt Jane worked for me? Remember not to send the busts, nor the green box of papers, nor the narrow deal box which came from Hope End & never was opened by me. And put together & seal up for me all the papers in the drawers &c of my sittingroom there were papers, I know, & take care of them for me, you! Some of this I have said before, & repeat, that you may have it clear & in one view.—The other day I heard from Nelly still Bordman, & she wrote in most cheerful spirits. But Arabel, what do you mean to say about green & blue bridesmaids? She says that her friends entreat her for gaieties, but that she feels a gay wedding under the circumstances would be unbecoming & keeps to her own first decision. She is to be married, or was to be married (for it's over now) in white muslin—and makes no excursion from Hammersmith, at which last resolve I do really wonder a little. And do you know, she, on the other hand, wonders at me for liking railroads? She says that the railroad to Cheltenham made her quite ill! A railroad, which is the next best thing to flying!! I think I could glide by day & night on a railroad, & never feel tired! And then you see the country so much more than I had expected! Oh, when we have the railroad quite through France, I shall feel as if I touched England with one foot. How are the dear Hedleys making up their minds about France. Wouldn't it be the best opportunity in the world of coming to Florence where we are perfectly tranquil & likely to be tranquil, and, where under every possible contingency, English residents will be provided with money uninterruptedly? Lord Vernon who lives here & has been received as member of the
Tuscan academy, . . he is a very cultivated man, . . has just gone to England to bring back his wife, who went there some months ago to see her daughter, & took fright & stayed. He says that if she won't return with him, he shall come back by himself—for as to living in England, he would 'nt do it on any consideration—! We hear of fugitives being about to return. The Baths of Lucca are quite full—& the panic ends dishonorably. I never could make out indeed why people were frightened at all. At the worst, there was Leghorn . . and Malta with open English arms! —— And the worst was next to impossible. The Baron de Poillet, the French chargé d'affaires from whom we bought the best of our furniture, our beautiful mirror, sofa & secretaire, . . yes, & armchairs, . . still lingers in Florence on the bed we did not buy, . . because, on account of the Parisian disturbances, nobody is sent to take his place. I dare say he wishes now that he had not been in such haste to sell—for he is likely enough to keep his position. Arabel, did I ever tell you—why yes, I certainly must have told you . . of Mademoiselle de Fauveau? the celebrated French sculptress, who was maid of honour to the Duchess of Berry, & being an exile from her country on account of attachment to the Bourbons, & falling into consequent adversity, threw herself on the resources of her genius which is something surprising & celebrated all over Europe. Her sculpture is middle age, & full of grace & life. She has just finished a work for the Emperor of Russia— Well—this extraordinary woman has lived in Florence these twelve years with her mother & an elder brother who assists her in her works. She has called upon us—and Robert has been to see her once or twice (—as I did one cool morning . .) & he admires her so much that as I tell him I am on the verge of being jealous . . though she has not a trace of youth or beauty left—A large masculine looking woman, with chesnut hair, a little silvered with grey, cut in short curls all over her head like a man’s—wearing in her atelier sometimes, a small black velvet cap, (Robert wants me to have one the same!) and a sort of half-man’s costume, half-woman’s riding-habit. The mixture of vivacity & melancholy, of genius & manly frankness in her manner, very much strikes him—and I take my revenge by being struck by the brother too, who has a head like an apostle and the gentle dignity of a French nobleman. A beard just so, I assure you —and the courtly manners go curiously with it, for I never saw a more polished gentleman. These interesting people wanted us very much to take an apartment in the house they occupy, and it w4 have been an attraction strong enough for everything except the damp & cold we heard of there. She has ever so many male workmen employed in her atelier . . just like an ordinary sculptor.— Oh—to look up & see what a horrible caricature I have sent you! Rather more like our last but one landlord, than apostle or noble, I do confess—only the beard may stand for a beard . . or must.

Dearest Arabel, mention my loved Papa . . mention dearest Trippy—how is she, this summer? Able to walk & have picnic parties with you all? mention her particularly, & kiss her particularly, particularly, with the kiss which I send you for the purpose. It is large enough for two, indeed. Oh, I long so to hear of you all, dear, dear things. And, Arabel, do remember how it was last year, & how Papa said that somebody sh4d remind him of your going out of town. Now dont let it be put off till the winter, as it was last year, but speak in time, & go somewhere to have fresh air & distraction at the right time. It runs in my head that some of you will see Tunbridge Wells—and if so, tell me all about the little colony there . . about the Bevans’ house, & the new baby,—&
whether Bummy got my letter, .. & how they all are, Ibbit20 & all. They had much better come to Florence at once—that’s my opinion. Being better than Tours, it must be still better than Tunbridge, I think. How is dear Minny? Give her my love, & tell me how she is— As to Crow, you never say a word—was the second baby as pretty as the first—and is there a third? and does the baking get on pretty prosperously—? Oh Arabel, another thing!- DONT send the pictures in my room. Cant .. dare’nt .. some of you hang them up in yours? But run no risks. Nelly Jago wd take care of them perhaps, if you asked her. Only dont send them out to me, because that wd be foolish. Is it possible, Arabel, that you never hear from Mary Hunter? Tell me whenever you have a sign of life from either herself or her father; and you may tell them truly, if you like, that I am continually enquiring after them in my letters to you. I should be very glad to be sure that the school or seminary or whatever the thing may be, is going on in prosperity—for the hint you dropped about Mary’s not “appearing” to like Worthing as much as she did, struck me with some fearful significance. How many pupils are they, & of what ages?21 Cant you tell me anything? And Mr. Hunter .. has he never been to London since the winter? does he never write? never speak of me when you see & correspond with him? —Another person you have ceased to mention, Arabel, is your own friend, Emma. Surely there’s no reason for this silence— Now, if you get into the way of not telling me everything, what am I to do, pray? Nelly Bordman told me one thing which you passed over without a word .. namely that Annie Hayes recoiled before the insults of that woman (whom I cannot praise) into the church of Rome. The absurdity of such a motive of conversion or aversion, is flagrant, of course .. but why did’nt you tell me? Say what you know of her, & whether she is definitively parted from her husband. The Peytons22 .. what of them? Did Berry get my note? and is she happy in her prospects still? A hundred questions I have to ask you, Arabel, and a hundred & fifty answers with which to receive yours—but I write with a weight of lead round my neck, through this extraordinary silence of yours, which I have too much faith in you, dearest, to call an unkind silence— There is fault somewhere, but it cant be with you. What would I not give, to see you all in vision, Papa & all of you—for first I think uneasily of one & then of another. Does Storm write regularly—dear Stormie who has not repeated his gift of a kind note. Tell me of him always. Flush has a new accomplishment. When he wants anything we tell him to scratch with his paw on the table—and most ridiculously does he leap up at once & scratch with his paw. Robert is so struck with admiration that he forgets his own proprietary feelings & how infallibly there will be a hole anon in all our new table-cloths. Arabel,—I am going to ask you to do something for me. It’s impertinent of me, and a taking undue advantage of your excess of kindness already .. but I really will ask you to make a pair of slippers for Robert— A pair which his sister worked for him, is just falling into ruins, and as he always wears slippers in the house & has an impotent wife, I cant help coming to you for help. Make them of Storm’s size—that wd do perfectly, I think—but dont have them made up, lest it should not. Besides, the making up is done for nothing almost, in Florence. If you make them, Mr. Kenyon may be coming, .. or somebody in the autumn, .. and they wd be ready for the winter. My own slippers are not nearly done for yet; so dont fancy (in an hallucination of the imaginative powers) that P23 want any—Mine will take me through the winter warm-shod— Do you see the Strattons, often? Give my kind regards, always. And the Clayssones24 .. do you ever come together by a clash of the elements?
Forgive me for enclosing this note to Miss Mitford—she is very unwell with an attack of rheumatism & nervous debility, and has been frightened out of her wits by a kicking poney when K.25 was driving her out. I want to persuade her to go to the seaside—Very much depressed she is, poor thing, . . . being so little used to illness.

Did I tell you that M! Kenyon is about to bring out a new volume of poems, and a dedication to me?26 Miss Bayley says . . . shall I tell you what she says, in her last letter . . . oh no, I did tell you in my last. Write I beseech you my dear beloved Arabel . . . Henrietta! Not a voice among you!—— Where are the Reynolds’s? Are the Cooks as much with you as ever? When is Susan to be married?27 Give them both my love.

And dear little Lizzie Barrett? Not a word of her? Write, write, write!—Arabel—dont suffer yourself to be put off on any pretext, on the point of my letters in the hands of M! Smith.28 I shall be easier when you have them in yours—and after all, I think I may trust her delicacy & generosity—Tell her so, if there shd be occasion. Robert’s very best love— I am in such haste that I can look over nothing, even by a glance—Love me, my own dear Arabel—and give my love to those around you who will hold out their hands for the poor gift—May God love you, beloveds!——

Your ever most attached

. . . & very anxious

Ba——

Robert’s letter to New Cross not being ready, I send this to you straight in spite of his reproaches! You wont mind the postage I know.

Mind you speak to Papa about going out of town—and FORCE Trippy to go with you this time!

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France. / (To the care of Miss Tripsack) / Miss Arabel Barrett, / 12 Upper Gloucester SÎ / Dorset Square, / New Road. / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. i.e., Arabella’s birthday on 4 July; her 35th.
3. There are only four extant letters from EBB to Arabella or Henrietta written between April 1848 and this letter.
5. Senigallia is located approximately midway between Fano and Ancona on the Adriatic coast. According to Murray’s Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy (London: John Murray, 1853), “The great modern interest of Sinigallia is the celebrated Fair of St. Mary Magdalen” which “commences on the 20th July, and lasts to the 8th August; during these 20 days the town is crowded with visitors from all parts of Italy, with merchants from countries beyond the Alps and from the Levant . . . There is scarcely a language of Europe which may not be heard on this occasion. . . . It is beyond all comparison the richest and best attended fair in Italy. . . . The English traveller, who so often seeks in vain for fresh objects of excitement, will do well to visit the town at this period of general enjoyment: it is a scene where national character and costume may be studied more effectually than in any other place perhaps in Italy” (pp. 111–112). In a letter to Miss Mitford, dated 24 August [1848], EBB reported that they had made their journey to the Adriatic, but that “there was no fair this year at Sinigaglia—Italy will be content, I suppose, with selling her honour!” (EBB-MRM, III, 249).
7. William Ware (1797–1852) was an American Unitarian minister who suffered from epilepsy. His interests, besides religion, included art and literature, and from 1839–44 he was editor of The Christian Examiner. He
was the author of *Letters of Lucius M. Piso from Palmyra, to his friend Marcus Curtius, at Rome* (New York: C.S. Francis, 1837), which was entitled *Zenobia; or, the Fall of Palmyra* in subsequent editions, and *The Last Days of Aurelian* (London: Richard Bentley, 1838), which was first published as *Probus; or, Rome in the Third Century* (New York: C.S. Francis, 1838). Arabella could not have read the book in Sidmouth, as EBB suggests, since the Barretts left Sidmouth for London in 1835. See Gardner Taplin, "The Brownings and the Rev. William Ware," *The Browning Newsletter*, 7 (Fall 1971), 3–8.

8. "Good breeding," or "good manners."

9. In mid-June 1848, the French government announced that the National Workshops were to be closed. This led to a workers' revolt, and an insurrection ensued. The army and the national guard were required to hold the mobs in check and prevent a replay of revolution.

10. "A Meditation in Tuscany." This eventually became the first part of *Casa Guidi Windows*, but it was never published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. As EBB explains in the following letter, when she enlisted Kenyon's help to find out why *Blackwood's* was delaying, he told her that they wanted notes to explain the poem, and that he agreed it needed them.


12. EBB eventually received the volume in late August; see letter 44. An "extensively revised and corrected copy of pp. [1]–78 excised from the first publication" is now at ABL; it was the printer's copy for *Poems* (1850), and was eventually presented to Tullio Romanelli by Pen Browning (see *Reconstruction*, D840). Although "The Seraphim" was published in *Poems* (1850), it did not appear "as a third volume," but appeared in volume 1, pp. 93–136.

13. "Coverlet," or "quilt."

14. Nelly Bordman and Francis Robert Jago were married on 30 June 1848 at St. Mary's, Fulham.

15. George John (1803–66), 5th Baron Vernon, was an English Dante scholar, who went to Italy when he was very young and "lived much in Florence, where he studied the Italian language and history. His whole life was devoted to Dante, to whom he erected a noble literary monument" (*DNB*). Vernon collaborated with most of the eminent Dante scholars of his time. "He was a socio corrispondente of the Academia della Crusca [1847], and was a member of many other literary societies" (*DNB*). In 1824 he married Isabella Caroline (née Ellison, d. 1853) by whom he had two sons and three daughters: Caroline Maria (1826–1918), Adelaide Louisa (d. 1913), and Louisa Warren (d. 1894).

16. Sic, for Sig. Barone Enrico de Poilly, as identified in the *Almanacco Toscano* for 1846–47. EBB refers to him in a few letters written about this time, but this is the only reference to him by name.

17. Félicie de Fauveau (1799–1886) was a French sculptress whose works were inspired by the writings of Dante and Walter Scott, and her style influenced by Cellini. She and her family had been exiles in Florence since 1834 because of their Royalist sympathies, and specifically because of her support, during the revolution of 1830, of Caroline Ferdinande Louise, Duchess of Berry (1798–1870), for which she was imprisoned for seven months. In a biographical sketch of Mlle. de Fauveau, published in *The English Woman's Journal* for October 1858 (pp. 83–94), Isa Blagden stressed Mlle. de Fauveau's devotion to her political and religious convictions, and quoted her as having said "My opinions are dearer to me than my art" (p. 90).

18. In a letter to Miss Mitford, dated 15 April [1848], EBB wrote: "An exquisite fountain she has lately done for the Emperor of Russia" (EBB-MRM, III, 234). In a description of Mlle. de Fauveau's studio in Florence, Isa Blagden notes that there was "a silver bell ornamented with twenty figures for the Empress of Russia" (p. 92), presumably an artist's copy. A biographical notice of Mlle. Fauveau in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts: Courrier Européen de l'art et de la curiosité* notes that she received commissions in Italy, Russia and England (June 1887, p. 519).

19. Hippolyte de Fauveau. Isa Blagden noted that he was "also an artist of merit, lives with her [i.e., his sister], and is devoted to her. He assists her in most of her works, and is the support and comfort of her life" (*The English Woman's Journal*, October 1858, p. 93). Isa Blagden described Mlle. de Fauveau as having blonde hair "cut square on the forehead and short on the neck, left rather long on the sides in the Vandyck manner,"
and referring to her face, she said that there "is a look of thoughtful melancholy" (p. 84). "‘How much of the man there is in this woman,’ said her friend the Baroness de Krafft, … ardor, purity, and impulse are the characteristics of her genius" (p. 85).

20. Elizabeth Jane ("Ibbit") Hedley (b. 1834 in Florence) was the fourth child and second daughter of EBB’s uncle Robert Hedley and his wife Jane (née Graham-Clarke). EBB addressed "A Song against Singing" to "My Dear Little Cousin Elizabeth Jane H------" in The Seraphim (1838, pp. 318–320). For Ibbit’s sister, Arabella, and her husband, see letter 27, note 21.

21. From the context here, as well as EBB’s comments in letter 23, it seems that Mary Hunter was teaching in a school in Ramsgate; however, I have been unable to trace any further details about her or her occupation.

22. The Peyton family were friends of the Barretts from Herefordshire days. Eliza Berry Peyton (1827–1907) was the youngest daughter of Nicholson Peyton (1783–1841) and Eliza (née Griffith, 1788–1861). Her "prospects" refer to her marriage which did not take place until 1851; see letter 60, note 3. For the names of the rest of the Peyton children, see letter 58, note 9.

23. Underscored twice.

24. Unidentified.

25. i.e., Kerenhappuch, Miss Mitford’s maid; see letter 19, note 15.

26. A Day at Tivoli: With Other Verses was published the following year; the dedication to it reads: "To / Elizabeth Barrett Browning, / And to / Robert Browning, / This poem, / Referring to the land which they now / inhabit, / Is affectionately inscribed." And a note to the poem entitled "The Gods of Greece" states that "This paraphrase has been made through the medium of a literal English translation; the writer himself not knowing German. Whether successful as a paraphrase, or not, at least it has been glorified as having called forth Miss E. B. Barrett’s (now Mrs. Browning’s) noble lyric of the ‘Dead Pan’.”

27. See letter 13, note 35. EBB’s cousin Arlette and her husband Captain Reynolds had visited the Brownings in Florence the previous autumn (see letter 23, note 3).

28. Mary Ann Smith, youngest daughter and biographer of Dr. Adam Clarke (1762?–1832), was a close friend of Mr. Boyd, and was present at his death. EBB’s letters to Boyd fell into Mrs. Smith’s hands, and when asked for their return she refused and suggested EBB write a chapter for a memoir of their mutual friend; see letter 33, note 32.

Letter 30

[Florence]
Oct. 7–9–10–11 [1848]

I did mean, my ever dearest Arabel, to write to Henrietta this time, considering that my last letter to her only covered an envelope—But as she has flown away into Herefordshire & as besides you seem to want me to write to you, here I am writing—and it will come to much the same end after all. Her dear letter, with yours, reached me yesterday. Wilson who went to post for it, looking a little disappointed that Minny sh’d not have answered her note—“Nothing for me!” And now, let me explain to you, that I really wanted some refreshment from your beloved hands, as ever since my letter went to you I have been much less happy than usual, & only within these few days have begun to be easy again—Otherwise I would have written before. I always meant to write sooner this time, since you were in the country & asked for letters—but see how it has been with me. You remember how I said that I w’d not let Robert write that day through his not being well—Little did I think then how it was to be—and that from three weeks from that day he was not to
leave the house through illness . . . fever & ulcerated sore-throat . . . he refusing to let me send for a physician, & I in a continual state of anxiety . . . because, you see, fevers in Italy, are really not to be trifled with & he though generally in excellent health, is by no means of a robust habit & constitution. Oh, I w^ have sent to D! Harding without asking him, if it had not been that he never w^ do such things to me . . . often saying to me that he c^ not treat me so, without confidence, whatever his own feelings might be:—and therefore when he appealed to me by his former forbearance on such points towards myself, not to vex him by sending for a physician without his consent, I was paralyzed . . . I could not do it!—only Wilson was as nearly as possible doing it without consulting either of us—she had made up her mind, she said, one night, that if he were not better in the morning, she w^ send to Dr Harding . . . and I sh^ have been delighted, for my part—so quite wrong it was to be without advice as we were under such circumstances. Such burning hands, so rapid a pulse, & then, when the ulceration of the throat began, such suffering, such impeded articulation. Relief came at last by the breaking of something in the throat, & by nearly a wineglass full of matter coming up, . . . so you may suppose what illness must have preceded such a crisis—and he so patient, poor darling, & so dreadfully afraid of giving anybody any trouble. “Oh Ba, it cuts me to the heart to see you doing this for me,” . . . if I did but carry him a cup of tea—but always he thinks that he is to do everything, & I nothing,—that’s his idea of mutual help! Altogether I sh^ have been perfectly miserable if it had not been that just as he began to grow obviously weaker & the fever obviously stronger, in came, by God’s providence, no less a person than Father Prout, M: Mahoney, the celebrated Jesuit—³ Now, those Jesuits are learned in all arts, & this Jesuit in particular, is alive with talent to the end of his fingers, . . . & besides, I must say, most kind & affectionate . . . no friend c^ have been kinder than he! and he felt the pulse, & pointed out how the fever was getting ahead through exhaustion of the body . . . beat up two yokes of eggs in port wine with his own hand, & made Robert take the whole . . . (the consequence of which was that he slept & was the better) . . . & laughed my anxieties to scorn . . . “Had’nt he stood by five or six hundred deathbeds, & did’nt he know when an illness was serious or not?—but I was a regular child . . . a bambino, my dear . . . & now he would take his revenge for my putting that veil down at Leghorn, by having a good stare at me.”⁴ A most peculiar person certainly, Father Prout is, full of agreeableness, of apt & various quotation, at once witty & humourous, a scholar & a man of the world, & what beside Heaven knows, . . . Carlyle says, . . . “of all manner of spiritual wickedness,”⁵ & others talk loud of ecclesiastical doubleness & so on . . . for my part I shall speak of him as I find, & it is my strong impression that he is a most warm-hearted man, & perhaps a Christian man in the large sense. It is strange, to be sure, to see the priestly vesture, . . . (for here he wears the silk gown, & walks about in it on most occasions, as the custom here is, . . . though Robert has seen him in London in highly distinguishable waistcoats & gold chains . . .) heave with such laughers & jests as seem characteristic of the laity. We have heard a ‘damn’ and a “devil” too, upon great opportunities . . . certain heresies about Solomon’s song & the old testament generally . . . (which “now that it has attained its end of pointing to Christ, had better, in his opinion, be burnt!” . . .) some curious doctrines about certain popes, and still more curious mockeries on English proselyting Roman Catholics & proselyted Puseyites, (ask Henrietta to forgive me . . . I am only talking historically just now) who could see nothing in
Christianity but the mark of their own footsteps & called the ground beyond, heresy. Then, as to Rome, he says, it will be a hundred & fifty years before they understand there anything wider than Roman Catholic Christianity, & the present pope, though liberal on most subjects, is as narrow on this, as the narrowest of his predecessors. Strange, to hear a priest talk so—and still stranger the manner!—and observe that not only is he a priest & Jesuit, but that by no means does he disown his order, as you might fancy, but on the contrary .. & he is one of their most active members & in constant employment, .. holding high trusts, it is said, & with his biography already among the “Lives of Modern Jesuits,” published in France. I was asking last night what were the chances for “Henri cinq”8 there. “Chances! why none at all!— The French will never have him back, whomever else they have. Why, if he came back, he w^d bring the catholic clergy; & education is too general in France, even in Britannay, [sic] for the people to endure that.” Well, we have had Father Prout everyday for these three weeks & more, sometimes twice a day, & generally for two hours at a time—he came to doctor (in the first visits) & remained to talk & recite verses .. & now the habit seems to have set in of spending a part of everyday with us during his stay in Florence. When he burst upon our astonished senses by lighting his cigar at the lamp, I could scarcely keep my countenance at the expression in Robert’s eyes .. the Rev’d Father walking up & down in the room & performing an alternation of expectorations now in the fireplace & now on the carpet— If you knew Robert as I do, you w^d be aware of the immense exertion of self restraint, his politeness cost him at that moment—As the cigar ignited he had had the delicacy to say .. “That’s right!—my wife likes the smell of a cigar”—“of course she does,” was the reply—and if she did’nt it w^d be the same thing, thought she. We agreed afterwards that his considerate observation was altogether supererogatory .. except as a proof to me how far his sense of courtesy c^ go .. his detestation of certain habits far exceeding mine at the utmost of my intolerance. In fact, you know, I do profess to like the cigar per se, when the quality is good, & when the smoker is delicate .. conditions unattainable in this particular position, I confess to you—but he hates the whole business root & branch, & except for a shrinking from the appearance of affectation, would talk much as Henrietta does, I am certain, about “that abominable smell in the coats.” So, little did I ever think to have a smoker, of the extremest order, on our new carpet!— Well—but considering everything, I am delighted that it sh^ be so— he did good to Robert & brought comfort to me—although I heard of Alessandro’s” wringing his hands in an agony & exclaiming “O Inglesi, Inglesi,”12 at the prescription of port wine & eggs for a fever, which he thought the purest madness of medical hallucination. Alessandro was very attentive & kind, throughout the illness, & kept saying .. “Questo buono signore .. sempre buono, sempre ridente! mi dispiace molto veramente.”13 He is, as Wilson says, a wonderful talker, & very fond of his own way in all things .. but for the rest, we continue to like him & dont doubt that we shall manage to get on excellently. Oh—and to return to Father Prout, he has been wonderfully affectionate to me! called me “Little dear” in his first visit, and “Dearest” on the second, so that, as I told Robert, I fully expected to be kissed on the third— “But you surely would’nt allow that, Ba”. “Allow it, dear? I shant be asked, depend on it, whether I allow it or not—”. Which made him look rather grave, & murmur about “ungentlemanly familiarities.” But this is all my fun, you know .. say nothing of it—it’s only the way of the man .. not over refined in the way of him,
though so highly cultivated in intellectual respects. Then it is a grace in these fathers of the church, to be “fraternal” they think; & notwithstanding the tender beginning, he has never got farther with me than “addio carina” which was his farewell last night.

As for the medical department we are clear of it altogether, the beloved patient being quite himself again, except for being thinner & paler—and I have walked out with him twice, I, in proprià personà—but I dont mean to walk much—it does not answer for me, I believe . and I am obviously better when keeping quiet on the sofa just now. Perhaps it might be good in a little time, to walk, though—we must try the effect of it by degrees. I am well, quite as well as is admitted of, & when any difficulty occurs, shall appeal to Dr Harding as matter of course—you may depend upon that, Arabel, but a high council of physicians do nothing at this moment. (If the sensation of life comes, I shall not be sorry, however satisfactory the whole matter may be settled. It is not time yet, they say. The morphine lasted to the twentieth day, last time, which I told Robert he ought really to blush for!—appetite good, & the regular morning sickness beginning to terminate . though there is sickness enough now I assure you. Some women (like Arlette) that Wilson tells me of last to the end. It is likely to be mild suffering & very little of it on account of the very illness & tendencies from which I have suffered hitherto. This is in God’s hands like the rest . but I tell you for the hope’s sake. The chief danger, in my own apprehension, is it not lasting. Still, I never have been in such promising circumstances, in all ways, (for be pleased not to read this aloud, or the business of Chapman & company) & Wilson has had the gratification of letting out gowns & stays, at last.) She is well, this dear good Wilson, but has to guard her diet with some strictness still.— Now for Henrietta—Oh Henrietta— How she could venture on such a mad expedition as the one into Herefordshire, moves me with astonishment— The peculiar mode too of preserving an incognita, by going to the parish church, just strikes me as a part of the same madness! Well—I do hold that the whole was not worth the risk— When I dare anything, you know, I like it to be for something. Still, as she has done it, I do hope & trust she did it happily, .. leapt the fence clearly, & left none of her sheep’s wool behind to show which way she went. Most anxious I shall be till I hear the end of it all—and just think, if any servant at the Bartons mentioned it to any tradesman in Ledbury, how Papa might have it in the rebound. He never w’d trust anybody out of his sight again—you w’d never, any of you, find another Fifield, be sure of it. Now write directly, & let me hear— It’s against my doctrines, I confess, to make an “émeute”, as they do in Leghorn, about a tax on salt . Rebellion never pays its own cost till it is rebellion on a large scale & for a great cause— Then we call it revolution instead, & have to deal with general officers rather than the police— Which means, that, for a caprice or a pleasure, a mere pleasure, I would not risk the danger of vexing Papa & falling under his anger—it is bad enough to do it when a great happiness & right of life is manifestly at stake. Was’n’t I always obedient about little things? Oh, I do trust there has been no catastrophe to the Herefordshire business, & that she enjoyed herself, dear thing, to the point of forgetfulness of the danger. For my part, nothing sh’d induce me ever to set foot on that ground—not even to let Robert do it with me . not even under these altered circumstances . I could’n’t bear to look at that outside gate a moment . not so much for the sake of the place . no— But we feel so differently on certain points, that one can’t think even, for another, .. & therefore I leave this consideration quite on one side. Write & tell
me that everything has passed prosperously—You told me yourself, Arabel, that it was four miles from Fifield to chapel, therefore, four back. Four & four make eight or used to do before the late revolutions. At chapel, you can't rest—you have to sit on a bench, & stand up—Altogether I concluded & conclude that it would be much too fatiguing for you. Always I like you to walk, & firmly, hold that regular exercise of that kind does you good in an obvious way. But from your own account it did strike me that what you proposed attempting, my own dearest Arabel, would be an excess likely to be injurious, especially as you had a scheme about the afternoon church, & "three miles off" you said that was. Now do be careful & wise, & not headstrong, and use the donkey when it is necessary,—walking only in the prudent degree. Beautiful & delightful your Fifield must be—As to Windsor Forest, the 'gnats' would spoil it a little to me. Our Italian mosquitos are just gnats neither more nor less; and I have never been bitten by them as I used to be at Hope End (you remember) where they must have been drawn by the low situation & standing water. At Pisa, & in parts of Florence too they are a plague—but in this house which is dry & airy we have only a few occasionally & are very little tormented. Poor Wilson cannot go out at Pisa for weeks, her face looking exactly as if she had had the smallpox when we first arrived in Italy. But that state of things has never recurred, & would not have been so bad at the moment, if we had understood better & not used eau de cologne to the parts affected, which produced irritation & inflammation—Oil of lavender will act on the swelling directly on the other hand, & in an hour or two remove the whole evil. Remember it if you are annoyed with gnats in the country—and I assure you I have seen so many more in some of the Hope End bedrooms than I have seen in Italy. Once or twice, here, in the earlier part of our residence, I have not been out through the inability to get on gloves—the hands swelling so: but it never happens now, because one has grown learned in remedies, as I tell you—Dearest Arabel, I do hope & trust that the improved account of M! Stratten may continue, & since the fever has turned, we may be sanguine that God's mercy will withhold so heavy a stroke from his family & the church. It would indeed be a desolating loss on many sides and I should be grieved, not least of all, for yourself who have looked to him so long for instruction & consolation. Of course you will tell me exactly how he is—and if the moment should come for mentioning one of the many who have felt anxiety about him, mention my name—will you? with my grateful regards. I wish you would give me more particular accounts of my dearest Trippy, as Henrietta talks of a stiffness in the joints, & I want to know exactly what that means—Is it of the same nature of the affection she used to complain of sometimes, or anything worse? If I saw her, should I think she was weaker?—less able to walk? I dreamt of her, dearest Trippy, the whole of the night after Henrietta's letter came, & I was kissing her as she sate in a chair—Give her my best, best love, & a kiss wide-awake, & thank her a hundred times for her thought of me in the slippers & butter-plate—How kind, & very kind! Yes, and now we come to think of it, we have no butter-plate at all—it never entered our heads till this reminded us. The teapot continues to be the most useful & pretty of teapots, & Father Prout admired it the other day just as he ought. Oh, so glad I am that she is with you—it will do her good, & she ought to have come from the beginning—I felt almost sure that my letter would find her with you—Would that we could share our grapes with her & all of you—she would like them, I am certain—Such grapes nobody in England ever saw or dreamt of, as we have had this year,
through the long dry & hot season it is said, & Robert & I scold one another for eating too many, he being always the only one in fault. And dont fancy that people live merely on grapes, in this Florence, & not at all on beef. I have always been wondering at the beef, which struck me as being quite a different thing from “the beef of England,” . . . rather like the idea of game in the abstract . . . and we attributed these effects to the charcoal cooking, until we heard the other day that there is an actual superiority of flavour & delicacy, through the cows being fed upon vine-leaves— Better than turnips & oil-cake, is’nt it? We have bought a little spit of French construction which is wound up like a watch, & looked quite pretty on the dining room table— Dearest Minny w’d think it was meant for a baby house—not much larger than that. My love to her always— Is she able to creep about the shrubberies a little? The sight of the trees & fresh air must in any case be good for her—and the rest from that Wimpole Street staircase.

(Oct. 9.) Now I am going to tell you, Arabel, what happened to me last night. Being bewitched by a spirit of foolishness, I knelt down to say my prayers in one of these great chairs . . . the one called mine, instead of the common one I was in the habit of using. Observe . . . it slopes in the back—so of course—(I could’nt much expect the laws of gravitation to be reversed for me!) of course, over I went chair & all, head foremost, most happily falling with my whole weight upon the forehead, which prevented the injury to the body which was to be dreaded most—I was stunned for a moment, but unless the shock . . . the shaking . . . sh’d have done harm without my knowing it, there was no effect except an hour’s headache . . . & you w’d not wonder at headache . . . if you saw me at this moment. The floor (under the carpet) is stone, & the mere force of the fall was such that both the forehead & upper part of the nose bled, besides a most frightful swelling . . . which this morning has subsided however, leaving just the marks of excoriation which defigure one without being of the least consequence.19 I slept at night—the headache went off . . . and I have had no other pain of any sort:—therefore Wilson is of opinion that no injury can be done—(Write & ask Nelly Jago, if M. Jago thinks that injury likely from the fall—it taking place at the end of the fourth month.)20 There was no fever—the very headache went off in a strangely short time—and the pains which I am sure to have after sitting upright for an hour, or walking for twenty minutes, never touched me at all. After I got into bed there was some internal beating—but so there was the night before, (when I felt it for the first time) & I slept quite as well as usual—21 In spite of which, & my own impression that the entire force of the fall was broken by my poor broken head, I cant help feeling uneasy, though I dont say so to Robert. It is bad enough for him to be vexed by the fact as it is “written on my brow.”22 Oh, my stupidity—my unutterable stupidity! May God grant that only / suffer by it!— Here’s the effect of lying on sofas for ever so many months— One falls off a chair & meets one’s fate so!— Not that I myself am in the least the worse, understand,—I sh’d just laugh at it all if under ordinary circumstances—as you would, or anyone else— In a day or two, the disfigurement will have passed away, & one does’nt care for it in the meanwhile.

The next great news is, that at last, after my being forced to write to M. Kenyon to ask him to rouse Blackwood (who refused to give sign of life after swallowing all my poems)23 there is at last an answer for which we have paid nine shillings . . . an answer containing a full proof of the ‘meditation’. He calls it a “Grand poem”24 but past all human understanding,—in consequence
of which, the proof must be sent to the poetess to get her to attach notes or something to assist the intelligibility, or he does’nt know what in the world his magazine-readers will do with it. Still, he wd be very loth to refuse the poem on that account! ‘Prometheus’ too is to appear—he had wished me to see a proof of that also—Dear M! Kenyon seems to do more than agree with Blackwood’s complaints of Ægyptian darkness, & tells me than [sic, for that] nobody will care for my “theologic politics” touching popes & the rest— I cant think, for my part, what people do care for!— The best is that poor Robert had congratulated me on being so “perfectly clear this time!” I shall see what I can do with notes &c,— & am the more inclined to be goodhumoured as Blackwood has sent five & twenty pounds for the poems already accepted, & I think it liberal.

(Oct. 11) The force of gratitude can scarcely much farther go. Meaning, that Father Prout’s disagreeableness is beginning to pass his agree[a]bleness, & that when he sets out to Rome, there will certainly be ‘compensations’— Every evening, now, he plants himself close to my sofa, smokes at leisure two or three cigars, takes one of our Raffael-basins for a spitting convenience, & last night, not for the first time by any means, both Robert & I were fairly sick. As he said, “It was enough to disgust one for ever of the duties of hospitality.” And yet, poor man, he was so goodhumoured & full of jests, that I should have been quite mortified if I had had to run out of the room (a catastrophe as nearly occurring as possible) through an ascend(ing)^25 of the personal incommodity— When he had gone . . . between ten & eleven windows & doors & relieved ourselves by swearing gently. Since . . . myself to people in general . . . (you would’nt, to people in particular . . . my long white dressing-gown, which I had forsworn since the we<.. .> no visitors . . . except this Father Prout— Oh, you will wonder . . . with Father Prout . . . but, you see, Robert’s illness & his kindness brought . . . Robert had only known him before by chance interviews—the first time was . . . at Emerson Tennant’s^26—(now have I written that before to you? I fancy I have in this very . . . letter.) There’s the effect of writing by fragments in this way!) Then he is goodnatured—bringing us books . . . & ‘Prout-papers,’ & really very clever & amusing— By the time we are done with him . . . I shall be perfectly cured of my tenderness for years, . . . “I see as from a tower the end of all.” As to the fall . . . not from the tower but the chair!. I am cured of that also . . . at least I have felt no inconvenience in any frightening way, & shall be fit to be seen perhaps in another day or two, by others than Father Prout. Robert met the Cottrells yesterday & heard from them that the unfortunate Lee-baby [sic] expired on the second day of its arrival in England.28 Quite natural, of course! The Lees were raving mad in their eagerness to throw off Italy . . and the fact of weening [sic] a baby of a few weeks old & putting it on board ship for a long voyage, with a provision of water & biscuits—(for they could not get any sort of milk at sea . . ) could only be followed by the other fact of untimely death. Such a fine, healthy baby too! They must reproach themselves, I think. Thank you, thank you, for all your kindness about the boxes— I wish you wd tell me of the expenses incurred, to your knowledge, in England; & (for instance) whatever out-of-pocketing there has been, apply to M! Kenyon to re-imburse. This, without fail or delay, or we will be very much offended. Is it possible that I shall have my dearest Henrietta’s portrait? If this interpretation be right, joyfully welcome it will be. Your’s, my beloved Arabel, is a bright comfort to me, as I turn to it on the table where it always lies. Beloved, think of me as I do of you, with tender thoughts. May God bless you for ever. I wish you c’d have gone
to Emma Margary .. it w4 have been such a pleasure. Did Eliza Giles go back straight to Ireland, or where? Do you hear nothing of M: Hunter & Mary? Is it possible that they can throw you off so? It seems to me scarcely credible. And any other tidings of Annie Hayes? Tell me when you hear. And Bummy, where is Bummy all this while? Surely not in Ireland still. Arabel, send me the receipt of Sally Lunns29 as you can make them. Wilson is going to try some orange-marmalade according to a celebrated one at New Cross— Yes, indeed I did laugh at the happy meeting, the influence of stars at Fifield. If both gentlemen were pleased, who sh4 be displeased, I wonder?30 Give my love to dearest Henry & ask him what he means by thinking about postage in regard to me? What have I done (if postages were seven shillings instead of 7 pence) that he sh4 calculate such things? To hear from him, will always delight me of course, .. and he is the only one of them who will think it worth while to consider that, .. so I say so to him— Even Storm never sends me the least word after the few words he sent. While Robert was ill I fell into a paroxysm of most unChristian humour— My whole heart seemed turned into bitterness of a sudden, & I thought within myself (thoughts come like lightning, you know) that if any dreadful affliction struck me & I couldn't die .. as it has been proved that I am not "worthy to die of grief"31 .. never w! I set foot on English ground again .. never! Not very kind to you, you will say—but say nothing, for people are apt to be unkind when they are unhappy & embittered .. feeling wronged in what they love .. as I did then. Which is all passed .. I mean, the unchristian temper. Dont mention it when you write, & believe that I love you tenderly & gratefully & shall to the end. You are of those who have been better to me than I deserved. God bless you— Write soon!—at once, that is, to 

your own 
Ba—

Is poor Maria's husband better?

I suppose Surtees is returned or turned to Somersetshire by this time. Thank you for thinking of us on the 12th. Dear things you are! I have just heard from Lady M. Cocks[.] Nobody mentions Crow<,> Why<,> Rem<ember<> to t<.. .> her <.. .> who<.. .> Rob<in<> Hed<ley <.. .> lov<e <.. .> evn<.. .>

Too long a letter to enclose to New Cross & admit of another inclosure from Robert, or he wanted much to write to you this time. His affect^ love to you both .. and to dear Treppy, tell her. Miss Mitford has been very unwell, I regret to say.

Address, on integral page: Miss Arabel Barrett / Fifield House / Bray / Near Maidenhead.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Underlined three times.
3. Francis Sylvester Mahony (1804–66), a journalist who wrote under the pseudonym Father Prout. He was dismissed from the Jesuit order in 1830, and subsequently was ordained as a secular priest (DNB); however, EBB seems not to make the distinction if she knew. He was the Rome correspondent for The Daily News at this time, and from 1858–66 he was the Paris correspondent for The Globe. According to DeVane, he provided RB with information about Cardinal Wiseman which RB used in "Bishop Blougram's Apology" (p. 241).
4. As EBB had explained in a letter to Henrietta in May 1847, Father Prout had told Mrs. Jameson that he had not been able to see EBB's face at Leghorn through her black veil (Huxley, p. 29).

5. I have been unable to trace the source of Carlyle's description of Prout.

6. E.E.Y. Hales has suggested that despite the liberalities in the first years of Pius IX's papacy, "the Church, under his guidance, having flatly contradicted the confident sophistries of an age of superficial progress, having condemned its facile optimisms and denounced its crude secularism, would have lost the good will of many, but would have saved her own soul, would have renewed her strength, and would have girded herself for the battles of a new age" (The Catholic Church in the Modern World: A Survey from the French Revolution to the Present, London: Spottiswoode & Eyre, 1958, p. 121).

7. Mahony is mentioned in Les Jésuites Modernes (Paris: Ambroise Dupont et Cie, 1826) by the Abbé Martial Marcel de la Roche-Arnaud, who, according to the DNB, attributed to Mahony "'the fanaticism, the dissimulation, the intrigue, and the chicanery,' usually deemed Jesuitical characteristics."

8. Henri Charles Ferdinand (1820-83), Comte de Chambord and Due de Bordeaux, was the son of Charles Ferdinand, Duc de Berry (1778-1820), the younger son of Charles X, and his wife Caroline Ferdinande Louise (1798-1860). He was living in exile in Vienna at this time, and although he was "Henri Cinq" to the Legitimists, he was never officially crowned.

9. According to the EB, "the Bretons are by nature conservative ... and there is probably no district in Europe where the popular Christianity has assimilated more from earlier creeds." Historically, Brittany has been a Catholic, legitimist (reactionary) stronghold since the Revolution.

10. Cf. Malachi 4:1: "... and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave neither root nor branch." Unlike Father Prout, Napoleon III, in RB's Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau: Saviour of Society (1868), asks permission to smoke a cigar: "I don't drink tea: permit me the cigar!" (line 24).

11. The Brownings' manservant from mid-1848 until late 1852. In a letter to Miss Mitford, dated 24 August [1848], EBB described him as "a cook, housemaid, valet de chambre, butler, all in one" (EBB-MRM, III, 251). Before they left for their first visit to England and France in 1851, they had decided to dismiss him because they had learned that he conspired with merchants to overcharge them for provisions. However, when they returned and found him in another position, they felt at liberty to engage someone else—a man called Vincenzio. However, he soon became ill and asked to be released; he was replaced by Ferdinando Romigano.

12. "O the English, the English."

13. "This good gentleman ... always good, always laughing! I'm truly very sorry."

14. "Goodbye darling."

15. Passage in angle brackets is reconstructed, having been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella. For "the business of Chapman & company," see the following note.

16. The Barrett household was staying at Fifield House, Bray, near Maidenhead, at this time. According to a journal entry by their cousin, Surtees Cook (Henrietta's future husband), Henrietta went with her brother Alfred to Barton Court on Saturday, 23 September 1848 and returned during the night of 25-26 September. Surtees noted that "Poor dear Henrietta was much excited she not having seen Hope End since they left it in 1832" (Surtees, 22 September 1848). From EBB's remarks, and from the context of Surtees's journal, it is clear that Henrietta went without her father's knowledge or permission. EBB's fears were not unreasonable. When their father learned that Mr. Chapman, Henrietta's former suitor, was also at Fifield, he wrote to Septimus ordering them all to return to London, but Septimus replied that they (the brothers and sisters) had had nothing to do with Chapman being there (Surtees, 28 September 1848). In a letter dated [19 November 1848], referring to Henrietta's trip to Herefordshire, EBB told her that "nothing more insane was ever committed by the sane," and she called Chapman's behaviour "ungentlemanly, indelicate in the extreme ... I have no patience to think of his exposing you to such risks of displeasing Papa & being forced back to London" (Transcript in editor's file).

17. The Bartons, or Barton Court, was the Herefordshire seat of the Peytons (see note 22 in the preceding letter). EBB's concerns about news of this visit getting back to her father by way of the servants and tradespeople
Letter 30

7-11 October [1848]

is borne out by the fact that, when Edward Moulton Barrett died in 1857, the tradesmen in Ledbury closed their shops for the day of his funeral in the parish church.

18. An allusion to recent disturbances in Leghorn. According to G.F.H. and J. Berkeley, "it was in Tuscany, however, that the new democratic phase found its most violent exposition, headed as usual by the city of Leghorn" (Italy in the Making, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940, p. 389). Cf. RB, "Up at a Villa—Down in the City" line 56: "They have clapped a new tax upon salt."

19. Based upon EBB's account of her accident, she must have grazed her forehead on the carpet causing an abrasion, hence the "marks of excoriation."

20. Passage in angle brackets is reconstructed, having been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

21. I take this to refer to the heartbeat, or some movement, of the fetus.

22. Cf. Philip James Bailey, Festus (1839), line 2912: "And qualifying every line which vice / Writes bluntly on the brow."


24. EBB is referring to the first part of what would eventually be Casa Guidi Windows. In the manuscripts at Harvard, the first part of the poem is entitled "A Hope in Italy," as well as "A Meditation in Tuscany" and in the draft at Yale it is entitled "A Meditation in Italy" (see Reconstruction, D110-D113). In the "Advertisement to the First Edition," published in 1851, EBB explained: "Of the two parts of this Poem, the first was written nearly three years ago, while the second resumes the actual situation of 1851." The poem was never published in its separate parts. In the first edition of the poem, there are ten notes at the end of the poem, as well as a note at the bottom of p. 37 and p. 125; when Casa Guidi Windows was collected in the fourth edition of EBB's Poems (1856), the notes all appeared at the bottom of the relevant pages. EBB's revision of her translation of Prometheus Bound (see letter 3, note 21) did not appear in Blackwood's.

25. About one-sixth of the page has been torn from the sheet, resulting in loss of text here and below.

26. James Emerson Tennent (1804-69) was an M.P. who became a civil secretary in the Ceylonese colonial government after he was knighted in 1845. EBB described him similarly in a letter to Miss Mitford (see EBB-MRM, III, 254, note 6). I have been unable to determine when RB met Father Prout at Tennent's.

27. Cf. Shelley, The Cenci (1819), II, 2, 147: "I see, as from a tower, the end of all."


29. A light, sweet teacake "originated in Bath" in the late 1790's (OED).

30. EBB is referring to Surtees Cook and his recent rival for Henrietta's affections, Palmer Chapman. During the Barrett family's stay at Fifield, Surtees and Chapman shared accommodation at a nearby farm house (Surtees, 15 and 28 September 1848). This would have been amusing to EBB as she remembered Surtees's emotional outbursts before Henrietta finally declared him the champion suitor.

31. Cf. EBB, "The Sea-Mew" (1838), line 41: "He lay down in his grief to die."

Letter 31

[From RB]

Florence, Nov. 20. '48.

Dear Henrietta & Arabel will see what a famous letter this encloses,¹ and so will easily forgive the poverty of my own news—which, however, are good so far as they go—for Ba is quite well— as well as heart can wish—better than she has ever been; she is also admirably docile, and disposed to mind wise lecturings. I really venture to believe, in short, that all will go favorably on to the
end—and how happy that will make us, will it not? My dear sisters, if you could only know how often we talk of you—(not to speak of mere thinking)—how we put you in your proper places at our dinner table, when the viands come up particularly tempting,—and round our fireplace at supper time when the wood fire looks more cozy than usual, and we get the chestnuts glowing from the brazier,—you would see & feel how little a thing distance is, and how much nearer people may be to each other with the sea between them, than with a few str(ects) in London-town. Still, near as we are after that fashion, it (would) be more delightful, we all know, to see you face to face,—which may happen some day, and not a very distant one, I trust. How kindly you write about my illness, which is quite gone & past—not so, the remembrance of what Ba was to me while it lasted. I feel jealous of speaking about it, because it might seem to imply that I discovered some new proof of her affection in what she did then,—whereas she is doing all possible for a human creature (& something more) every minute of her life; and it is the mere illness that gives that affection a little wider power of showing itself .. but not in my eyes, who know her now. May God bless her for us all,—and you for us, here— I am happy to be able to associate with “you” your Brother who mentioned me so kindly in a note which gave Ba great pleasure—on both of which accounts I am very grateful to him. See our ink! and be ashamed when I tell you it is veritable English—but it calls itself “Japan Black”, I observe, and may turn out decent shoe-polish, after all! I will make it serve, however, to tell you that the sun is shining brightly after yesterday’s rain—(our rain falls all at once, and now is the time, it seems)—and that all looks cheerful as if there were none of these turbulent doings all about us. Don’t fear whatever you may read or hear,—I will be very watchful, depend on it, and anticipate the least real danger—but there is none at present, nor, I think, will be. You shall keep hearing from Ba & me—the long letter was written rationally by easy stages; and so it shall be for the future. Meantime, your letters are a joy to Ba’s heart,—and warm her thro’ & thro’ better than the fire she is now sitting before, a few inches from my elbow. Flush gets old, but super-naturally wise, which is a compensation—in short we all do supremely well, so may you do, dear Arabel and dear Henrietta, earnestly wishes ever your affectionate

RB-

Address, on integral page, in EBB’s hand: Angleterre via France / Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 12. Upper Gloucester Street / Dorset Square / New Road / London.

Publication: TTUL, pp. 58-61.

Source: Transcript in editor’s file.

1. This letter accompanied one from EBB to Henrietta, dated [19 November 1848].
2. In a letter to Henrietta written the preceding day, EBB mentioned “Henry’s kind note” (Transcript in editor’s file).
3. Perhaps a brand name, but doubtless refers to Japanese types of ink made from “soot obtained from pine wood or rosin, and lamp-black from sesameum oil for the finest sort” (EB). The OED describes “Japan Ink” as “a superior kind of black writing ink, generally glossy when dry.”
4. The density of the text of this letter fluctuates between heavy and light.
My beloved Arabel, I just have Henrietta's dear letter, & your note joined to it—at least I had both yesterday. Yes indeed—there was more in them of the sad than the joyful. Five times this week have I heard of the death of persons known to me—Mr Bayford's... Dr Chambers's... and three young women swept suddenly out of reach of our human senses & sympathies. One of these you do not mention, & I only heard of her death from smallpox, through the English papers... Miss Fisher, Mr Garrow's stepdaughter... though she died in Florence it appears, where the complaint is very prevalent just now... Louisa Ley... & now, Eliza Giles, dear Eliza, with whose memory so much of our past is associated! I do grieve for poor Mr Cliffe—Mr Best & the Allen Cliffes are a poor substitute for all the life & joyousness which flowed in upon her from the dried up fountain—no society, no companionship will seem like Eliza's. The other daughter is made of different stuff altogether, & I cannot fancy that she will be happy with her. How strange! how impossible to guess where God's finger will lay itself next! No one seemed more made to live long than Eliza was. Yet of course the quick change into the stoutness you described & in her appearance altogether in those few years, denoted a tendency, somewhat morbid at her age, towards inflammatory affections. Ah—when she & I parted last, who w'd have said that she was to be the survivor?—It shocked me very much. Tell me whatever you hear of Mr Cliffe, & write to her, Arabel, & mention my name as she would care best to hear it. For Louisa Ley, I will tell you—Count Cottrell was here last Thursday & told me that at last & for the first time since the Leys left Italy, she had written to Sophia a letter which had reached her the preceding day, Wednesday... or rather, the beginning of a letter... a few lines in a straggling, trembling hand... she could write no more, she said—she was as weak as a child... & then she made melancholy reference to her lost baby, & spoke of the little boy as unwell & as if she were uneasy about him. Count Cottrell concluded, “I am afraid she is in a bad way”, & observed that the loss of the baby had preyed on her spirits, & giving me to understand by a few additional words how much more fortitude & calmness Mr Gordon showed under a similar affliction (she too has lost her baby of the same age, & would not, she declares, recall it to the world). Well—on Friday evening, when our lamp was lighted, he called again with Sophia, who looked quite happy, poor thing, & had quite a bright smile, as both Robert & I remarked. “They were going home to dinner,” they said—“What,” said Robert—“dinner now, when we are thinking rather of going to bed!” Sophia left the room laughing; & on Sunday, her sister's death was in the papers. On Monday morning, Robert called to enquire, but only saw the Italian maid who answered “Non c'e male” to his question about the “signora contessa”. She may bear it very bravely, but must feel it bitterly... for it was hard for two sisters to appear more attached than they were: & then, in spite of Count Cottrell’s expression about Louisa’s being “in a bad way”, the event was perfectly unexpected. She suffered much less than Sophia, in her confinement, & seemed to recover as quickly as usual. Also, the medical men had persisted in saying that the lungs were not diseased, [sic] notwithstanding the repeated attacks of spitting of blood, & the difficulty of breathing which was most painful when
she walked up stairs. It struck me as resembling asthma rather than consumption—her face was not in the least thin—and though the expression of the eyes was distressed, it did not impress you with any idea of a mortal disease [sic]. Very probably, grief for her child did much—and, and the tendencies to illness were excited moreover by the imprudent change from the heat of an Italian summer, to the cold of an English autumn & winter, & this when she was peculiarly weak through her confinement, & exhausted by fatigue of various sorts. Nothing could be more insanely imprudent than their expedition to England, . . with a baby just weaned, & two other infants, the eldest only three years old, . . & the one English maid they brought from home, a raw, awkward country girl, looking like a scullery maid—the mother wanting as much help & attendance as the children could. I dare say poor Mr Ley curses the very dust of Italy,—whereas the wise plan w'd have been to have stayed on here, when his wife was beginning to profit from the climate, instead of turning all into injury, by removing as he did. May God help him & his infants! he is a kind feeling man, I believe, & acted for the best. It has rather frightened Robert about long journeys after confinements, and he wont see any other cause for the event, in a human relation. As to Mr Tulk—oh, you dont know Mr Tulk, if you think of his being overwhelmed by this blow. I must say of Mr Tulk, that "so great faith has not been seen . . no, not in Israel." I have seen many believers, & loved many—but I do tell you, Arabel, that to the closest of my observation, I never knew a man who carried his heart so far above the world, so brightly into the supernal sunshine, as that man carries his continually. He will think of Louisa as in the next room to him . . just so much nearer than Devonshire is to Brompton . . yes, he wont talk or write merely of thinking of her so, with the sob in his throat, as so many of us professing christians do—but he will smile & really think it, & calculate that the spiritual world will open on him today or tomorrow with her smile in it, the first thing perhaps. He told me himself that when he lost his wife, "the greatest grief of his life," he was overcome for half an hour—but that after that time he rose up & said to his father in law "You will see me shed not one tear more," & he shed no more tears. And a more tender-hearted man than he, & more naturally dependent on domestic love for happiness, you will not find—it is by no means that the man is hard & unfeeling. As for me, I know he takes me for half an "atheist" . . because most unhappily at our very first interview, he said something, meaning it in the kindest way . . but which I could make no better answer to than just bursting out into tears & sobbing so hysterically that Robert had to take me out of the room. Afterwards I observed how he siezed [sic] every opportunity of talking to me of the difference between speculative & practical faith, as tested by the christian's bearing up under the separation of life & death. Only he was "very impatient to die," he confessed. For Swedenborgianism, it is a name like another, and there's a deep embroidery of fantastic absurdity about the hem of it; but the fashion of the garment itself is Christ's own—& of that, you may be very certain. Also, it has none of the narrowness & exclusiveness of most other professing sects.

—I wish you w'd tell me where Clara Lindsay is, & if she was in Italy when she lost her mother. Has Henrietta written to Angela, who adored her mother, & will feel the deprivation deeply? And now, do write to me all particulars about dearest Papa, & if he continues well & has lost his paleness, for I cant help thinking of him not altogether easily, in spite of his daily excursion to the city. It is intolerable to me, this idea of his being unwell—Never miss speaking of him,
Arabel. I look for that word in your letters always. Had he anyone to see him when he was ill; & did you know nothing of it at Fifield? For the rest, you dont tell me many things, I observe—for instance, I believed Bummy to be in Ireland all this time, & never had an idea of her having taken “a villa” at Tunbridge Wells. Taken by the year, is it? and unfurnished? or how? Do tell me, and in what part of Tunbridge Wells? Stormie, too, has not been mentioned these two letters back! I was half inclined to write to the Hedleys to enquire about poor uncle James, but I dont know that I shall . . . they all seem to do very well without me, I must say, Bummy included,—& as to Kinnersley, I should’nt think of intruding there the least remembrance of relationship. Robert is not deeply impressed with the violent attachment demonstrated to me by my family, nor has much reason, let us acknowledge—but relationship means nothing out of the red book, and friendship & loveship may take their stand by themselves & quite on another side; and I always suspected this, as you are aware, & long before it was proved to me. To make amends, what great heaps of dear sisterly love I have from you, my darling Arabel, & Henrietta . . and is’nt my dear kind Trippy a very close relation? Ask her, and kiss her when she says yes. Do you mean that uncle James’s “singular life” has continued up to now? it is rather late to “take warning”, as Henrietta phrases it, if he has reduced himself so far. I sh’d have thought that in France, & removed from the scene of his old habits, he w’d have reformed in some measure & with less effort. Dreadful indeed, is the misfortune of M’t Stratten too, & rapid has her son been in his ruin of body & soul . . as far as the earth is concerned! It is surprising to me that men of licentious morals, dont go mad oftener, . . seeing that all madness means licence, and all reason, restraint. Why, when the conscience gives up God, should not the intellectual principle give up Light & Law! I do not see why. Very, very glad I am that M’t Stratten should be restored to his place as a teacher—glad for his family, glad for you, glad for all who are the taught by him— Congratulate M’t Stratten affectionately on my behalf, Arabel. And now you will choose to hear how I am going on. Perfectly well, everybody says, and I myself have no reason to say otherwise. The symptom continues, sometimes more & sometimes less, but it continues—and so does the cramp, in a milder form on the whole . . & so does the sickness which I hoped was going away. I have hints of the other affliction (one morning or two mornings ago) too, but it keeps its place steadily in the long run . . but, I suffer less from sickness & am comfortable & tranquil during the day, & I am satisfied that the [illegible passage] is stopped, the Peyton’s judgement confirming that. No swelling of the feet up to the present point! Indeed feet, ankles, & hands are as thin as certainly they still can be; & form a striking contrast to the proportions between. Still, Arlette must be before me, I fancy from what you say, though I hope to precede her, & though it w’d be difficult to look at her apart from certain occasions. I am beginning to feel, in fact, rather ashamed of being looked at. A[n]unciata paid us a visit the other day, & was triumphant in the realization of her prophecy—“it was certain to be right this time”. Now, I do want to know the meaning & use of seeing Dr Harding under such prosperous circumstances? Remember that he knows “my constitution & frame,” as Arlette learnedly expresses it, already—that he has attended me already & that he is aware of everything . . morphine included . . that I have diminished the morphine far more rapidly than he anticipated the possibility of my doing, & that strictly I have followed his counsel in an abstinence from wine. I am not in a morbid state, observe, but in a
natural state—& I do think it most absurd that women sh’d hurry forward to throw themselves into the hands of physicians .. to ask .. what, pray? If the least difficulty occurred, I w’d see D: Harding in a moment—but now, he w’d just smile & show his teeth, after his peculiar fashion, & say slowly, “Very well, very well—I shall come & see you again”—& there an end .. or a beginning rather. Only you need not imagine that I am likely to put off seeing him till the last—it shall be done in good time, be certain, & quite in time!

Meantime, here is Ma’am Petri to annunciate oracles, if oracles are wanting—& they all are to the effect that after February I am to grow fat & strong & “another person altogether”. So make the most of me before I change so. Yes, I “help” Wilson .. though you will smile diabolically to calculate in what way. Robert made me smile a day or two ago by gravely observing that he really must “get a worktable for me” .. See what the best disposed people may come to!— I absolutely did buy a thimble three weeks ago, .. which I have not had since I was a child, .. and the wonderful progress made by me in hemming, whipping, & sowing on lace borders, gives me a lively sense of universal genius. Learn that I have “done” all the frills of four nightcaps, three rows to each—hemmed two little shirts, & made the sleeves to the same, & finished three or four flannels of an indescribable order. Oh, I do wish you were here to help a little better— Wilson is in a great fright not to have everything ready in time. Our endeavour is to use as much economy as possible, as I have been rather alarmed by M” Ogilvy’s’ prognostic that it cant be effected though ever so simply, at less than fifteen guineas. She has English prices in her head, I do maintain. I shall get what is necessary, & keep the superfluities for the happy afterwards if God grants it—though I had the extravagance today to buy a Valenciennes full trimming for a cap, at four & sixpence the whole. Does Minny mean that the very finest, most transparent French cambric can be had at three or four shillings the yard? If so, we can hardly exceed you in cheapness, I acknowledge. For the shirts & nightcaps we use only what is called here Scotch cambric, the very finest, for which we paid sixteen pence a yard—and very pretty they look, & like French .. trimmed with narrow English lace, a halfpenny a yard. The flannel is Italian—at sixteen pence—but I shall get two day-petticoats of the English, because it is better & finer. Wilson is doing everything most beautifully, and if there sh’d not be time to finish, we must employ somebody .. that’s all—only, as it adds to the expence, I w’d rather not of course. We are somewhat crushed just now with the weight of curtain & chair expences, our apartment making ample amends by putting on a most delightful look of comfort. Would that you were here, to see! Robert bought another bed, three days ago:—it was a necessity, as we had only Wilson’s & our own; .. and in case of illness, what were we to do, I wonder? There was the room, but no bed. Always we have put off buying it, and the opportunity occurring, and the convenient sofa not being a sufficient convenience after all, we bought it .. and at a singular cheapness—little more than six pounds for an iron bedstead as large as the large one provided already, including spring & other mattresses, pillows, quilt, two blankets, and muslin curtains .. mull muslin .. & gilt ornaments for the top of the bed & the bedposts. Altogether I really prefer it to our own bed—it is handsomer & better, in every respect except the pillows which are not of down nor as large—and perhaps you will remember that for our mattresses only, with the pillows, we paid above six pounds—they being manufactured for us & we grumbling a little at the price in spite of Count Cottrell’s representations-
Letter 32
16–18 December [1848]

Everyone says of the new purchase that it is a wonderful ‘bargain’, .. and so, I suppose it really is. Iron bedsteads are necessities here, unless you have brass .. because wood is a harbour for things unclean, the very idea of which makes you uncomfortable. We are getting generally into order .. have the chimneypieces covered with crimson velvet, (which is everywhere done on the continent) & the curtains up— The rooms look beautiful—and my bedroom is really growing into perfection— You never saw a more comfortable & spacious one .. although I do want still a washing stand, and the sofa, which belongs to the room, in from the drawingroom. The drawingroom sofas not being covered yet, it is in use there meantime. For our book case we shall have to wait, on account of the expense—it wont do to be imprudent & get into scrapes. As it is, through the rooms being so large & the windows so many & high, our apartment has cost us much more in the furnishing than we had any thought of at first. The curtains have exceeded the estimate in an especial manner. The bill of lading arrived safely, and we hear of the arrival of the cases at Leghorn, though the ship is not yet unladen, & I cant make this letter wait for the much I shall have to say when I have the boxes. Struck with remorse I am, at having made you uneasy by previous delays—but my dearest dear Arabel, if anything was wrong you w^ be sure to hear it .. always think of that .. do! When we write, there’s always a “business” about it .. or generally— so many letters to put under one cover to New Cross— We are the coolest people in the world, as I say to Robert, to make his family pay for the whole of our correspondence in this way—but M^ Browning was quite hurt once when we sent a note to her through you, for instance. She chooses to have the whole expence & trouble, so that I have the greatest fuss sometimes to persuade Robert to let me send a letter to you directly. As to the Roth[s]child medium, it was too far round—she w^ have that either. Such kind, generous people they are at New Cross, & so affectionate to me always! Only I take none of it to myself, because with any woman whom Robert had married, it w^ have been the same; they love him so entirely.

—A visit from M^ Ogilvy’s nurses & pretty children interrupts me, & she has sent me four crowns for little caps .. gifts to herself she says in a note, but which in the case of her own baby she did not put to use, having enough & to spare. They are beautifully worked .. Indian & French .. & will complete everything I shall want in the same way. I have a plan of buying a French embroidered pocket handkerchief, of which there are exquisite specimens here, & so of making up the caps bodily— I can get them as fine as a cobweb & with the best embroidery for ten shil­lings—one making four caps!—& thus, pray observe how perfectly cheap the arrangement will be. You see, you have plenty of French collars & handkerchiefs, .. all that sort of thing in Florence .. but the babies are not as well taken care of as the ladies. The latter send the former out to nurse, properly tied up in the legs .. & they dont want purple & fine linen for that: or if a Duchess or Marchioness feels particularly maternal on such points, she sends to Paris for what she requires, & there an end. I dare say Arlette means to be magnificent—tell me if she does & how. I agree with Henrietta that I sh^ prefer the small house & carriage of the two alternatives,—& give my love to Arlette when you see her next.— Wilson begs me to thank you & Henrietta for your kind wishes, .. & for the rest, all of which I told her, she is not without hope she says, of M! Righi’s becoming a protestant one day, though it must not be while his mother is alive. He is said to have a certain leaning towards protestantism—at least, so is her impression. For the living
in Italy, she does'nt consider that altogether an objection— Wilson is half an Italian already in her preference of certain things—and it is by no means impossible for Englishwomen to go to England & back again with English families, free of expense, in exchange for their personal services. M'dme Petri was there last year & was nearly going again this year, though she has two young children of her own. Now, could Wilson get to her family oftener, in the case of her being married in the south of England? I suggested that perhaps her father might procure railway employment in the north for her husband— "Oh—she thought he could! but then, M! Righi wouldn't like England for a continuance she was sure. Her father thought nothing of being in steady employment from eight in the morning till six or seven at night—and M! Righi had not been used to do without relaxation in that way." Which is quite true— The Italians have no notion of work in the English sense. Which raises them in one way, & lowers them in another—makes them more refined in fancy & manner, & reduces their energies & general power of exertion. I dont speak of him exactly, because he is above the ordinary class, & has led much the life of an English officer in barracks—but for instance, here is our upholsterer, who thinks it an extraordinary day's work if he comes at ten oclock & goes away at twelve—comes at three again, & goes at five—not to say that he comes once or twice in the week only. We scold & send messages by Alessandro, but he seems to drop with exhaustion when he has covered a chair—people cant tire themselves that way! The festa-days or half festa days, come two or three times a week sometimes, beside— & the gross irreligion of not walking about at leisure in one's best surtoun on a saint's day, is foreign to the hearts of the nation. Every now & then, all Tuscany rushes into the coffee houses . . & why? Because the Blessed virgin is in "expectation of her confinement". I speak the plain truth . . rather too plainly perhaps!— Nobody works on such a day, not for their life's sake. Also, even when there's no supernal being to be especially honoured, . . you go at two or three oclock to some great shop in the greatest thoroughfare, to buy a yard of muslin . . Shop shut up . . nobody at home . . the padrone has walked out with the key in his pocket, to take a little fresh air. Should he happen to be at home, he will loll on the counter & show you your muslin with a proud superiority & indifference as to whether you buy any or not. If you say it is'nt fine enough, he will listen distractedly, & wait till you ask if he has finer, before he thrusts his hand into the shelf over his head & pulls down the thing you want. In fact, the whole time you are impressed with the idea that in selling you this & that he does you a very great favour, for which, if you are not grateful, . . "che raza di gente."!!19 He is a sort of Medicis in his way—& what are you, pray? Why, not even an Italian. When we came to Italy first I was much struck & pleased by the aspect of a whole people apparently of one class . . all at leisure, . . all enjoying the refinements & pleasantnesses of life: and it is still charming to me in many respects, only no longer in all. I see now that the want of painful necessity, producing a want of habitual exertion, ends in a corresponding want of the energies so excellent & noble in all great nations; I cannot choose but see it. Yet in England we have the other extreme; and grievous indeed, that is! Who can tell which is worse in God's eyes—the permitted suffering, or the demoralizing ease?

In addition to Wilson's small20 labours of late, she has been making orange marmalade with triumphant success, after a Scotch receipt sent to us by M's Browning. You know I used to like it, & so does Robert, and we have it for tea, to please us both.— When you read that our Grand Duke
has run away, don't believe it—believe nothing you read, except my letters. The other evening, we were startled by the beating of the “Generale” (so called) under our windows—a peculiar beat of drum, signifying that all Florence was up in arms. Wilson was in a dreadful fright—“trembling all over,” she said she was: but Robert & I sat in the calmest state of indifference, quite certain it would turn out to be nothing. Only when he “thought he might as well go out to see”, I threatened to be frightened too, & begged & entreated him to keep still in his chair. We listened for cannon or guns—not a sound except drums & feet! It was just a gathering of the people in the Piazza Grand Duca, who got up a cry of “Down with the ministry” .. their own ministry, observe, whom, at a great expense of democratic ardour, they had elevated to office a month ago. So Guerazzi,21 the minister, went out to them & made an harangue, at the end of which, it was “Up with the ministry” & “Down with their ringleaders” instead; & the latter have been torn to pieces directly, if they had not been taken away to prison for protection. Such children, to be sure! The disturbers of the peace were said to be not Florentines, but Livornese for the most part—and the beat of the “Generale” brought up two thousand men in arms that night, to keep order; so that there was no danger whatever, under any point of view. The poor Grand Duke grows greyer & greyer & paler & paler— it is natural enough that he should be anxious under the weight of such responsibilities. Still, there will be no anarchy in Florence—not in the hard, bloody sense—of that, I continue to be certain, & so may you. Did I mention that we had a visit from Mr. Charles Lever & his wife22 during Robert’s illness, & that, before he was able to return our cards, they had gone to the Baths of Lucca for the winter .. rather an extraordinary preference, like our going to Ancona for the summer. They have lived at Florence for some time, kept a large establishment, carriages, horses & the rest, .. & people say, may have rather exceeded their means:—we shall have them back again in the spring probably. He is said to be “better than his books” .. which is some comfort, for I never admired them much you know. Then, two days ago, we had cards (& a letter of introduction from Rome) from two American families—very sorry we were for it, but forced to return the cards. One family is a son of Judge Story’s, with his wife—& another, Mr. & Mrs. Cranch23—one is described as rich, the other poor, —one grave, the other gay .. but both admirable in different ways, and “the glory of my country” of course! Most of our visitors are Americans; & one, two or three, we have very much liked & regarded—only it’s dreadful to have an incursion of this sort—just now, too, when I am not particularly inclined to see strangers. Mr. Hillard24 whom we knew last winter, & who went to England from Italy, wrote us the kindest note of farewell previous to his embarkation at Liverpool for Boston. He should describe in America, he said, “a marriage & a home, where the heart found food, & the spirit wings”25—this, with other kind expressions towards us both. And now, Arabel, I am going to ask you to do something for me— Our friend, Mr. Ware, the author of the ‘Letters from Palmyra,’ suffers frightfully from epilepsy as I think I told you—and it is in his behalf that I wish you to lose no time in ascertaining from Louisa Carmichael the address of Baron Sloët,26 or his successor .. for the original Baron, I fancy to have heard, is dead. Our friend would willingly go to Holland for the express purpose—only you must lose no time, remember. Do this for me, dearest Arabel! Tell me too of poor Mrs. Cliffe. I wrote to Miss Tulk, who replies that Sophia was overwhelmed just at first, but had recovered all her calmness, .. “resolving by a cheerful submission to the
Divine will, not to repel the happy spirit." Right & wise, cheerful submission is! but I cannot believe that a human spirit, however happy, could be "repelled" by any expression of human love, even when expressed by the weakness & inconsistency of und(ue) grief, perhaps. If it is indeed so, it seems to me that we need still more comforting, such of us as are weak. You never told me a word of the Deffells, & what happened to them after M' Deffell's death, though I asked twice. And you never speak of Crow & her children-- Speak of them. I wish I could help you in different ways—but it seems very difficult just now to get any kind of employment. Personal endeavour & application are the only means, & there must be a stone somewhere to turn up with one's own hand. How is Alfred getting on with the railway? Great Westerns appear no steadier than other great things & kings. I think much of you & very anxiously always: Tell me everything . . . oh do! & dont talk about "tiring me" by such & such subjects as Henrietta does,—as if your happiness were not mine indeed. I have returned the proof to Blackwood at last. Take care of Folly, lest he sh^ be stolen Flush-wise. Oh—you sh^ see Flush now. Suddenly he has grown fat . . . as fat as when you saw him—and his hair is all restored. We wonder whether it is the effect of his sudden passion for grapes, or not. For the rest, such spirits he has .. & such insolence of power! Alessandro has been "to Germany Paris & London, & never saw "un cane tanto impertinente". Does Minny like Folly? My love to dearest Minny. How is she? God bless my darling Arabel— I love you . . . & Henrietta! Yes, & all. Write, write. Give my love to Surtees & Susan Cook. Tell me of Papa— Robert's best love, with that of your own, own

Ba—

Morphine lasted 32 days! Are you not astonished? What of M' Hunter & Mary?

Address, on integral page: To the care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12. Upper Gloucester Street / Dorset Square / New Road / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.

2. A notice of the death of William Frederick Chambers appeared in The Times of 4 December 1848, and the following day another notice appeared in which he denied the report himself. Chambers died in 1855. Frances Bayford (née Heseltine, 1781–1848) was EBB's mother's first cousin; she died on 12 September 1848.

3. Eliza Wilhelmina Giles (née Cliffe, 1810–48) was a neighbour from Hope End Days, when the Cliffe family lived only 3½ miles away at Mathon House. She married George Giles in 1844, and they lived at Larkfield Cottage, Waterford, Ireland. In letter 16 (see note 27) EBB makes the elusive comment: "Think of Mr. Giles & Mr. Browning! There's a combination!" In 1831, when still Eliza Cliffe, she painted a portrait of EBB, in response to which EBB wrote stanzas entitled "To E.W.C. Painting my Picture" (see Reconstruction, D963–965). Louisa Ley died on 26 November 1848 at Durrant House, near Bideford, very soon after the death of her own infant child. Harriet Theodosia Fisher, daughter of Joseph and Theodosia Garrow, died on 12 November 1848, aged 37 (Archives of the Inter-Continental Church Society, London).

4. Elizabeth Cliffe (née Dean) was the mother of Eliza Giles (see letter 15, note 30), as well as Mary Catherine Best (18027–83) and Robert Allen Cliffe (1806–97). In a letter to their brother Samuel, Henrietta wrote in August 1838 that Mrs. Cliffe was "as fat & good as ever" (ms at Eton)—an interesting comment in light of EBB's remarks about Eliza's change into "stoutness."

5. Unidentified.

6. "Pretty well," or "not bad."

7. Cf. Matthew 8:10: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."
8. Angela Owen (née Bayford), whose mother, Frances, was EBB's mother's first cousin; see note 2 above.

9. Kinnersley Castle, near Hereford, was the home of EBB's maternal uncle, John Altham Graham-Clarke and his wife Mary (née Parkinson). EBB's uncle James Graham-Clarke (1792–1859) was involved in the family's Jamaican business interests, and conducted his affairs from Newcastle-upon-Tyne. In his later years he seems to have suffered from "severe paranoid tendencies" (BC, 1, 299).

10. Boyle's *Fashionable Court and Country Guide, and Town Visiting Directory*, a directory of names and addresses in London, was published annually and was popularly known as "The Red Book."

11. In letter 167, EBB said that he suffered from the same mental condition as her friend George Barrett Hunter, i.e., severe paranoid tendencies.

12. Name was cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella. The Strattens had two sons: John Remington (1823–1905) and Arthur Clegg (1828–1907); however, it is unclear to which of the two EBB is referring, nor is it possible to explain what she means. The former was ordained in the Church of England in 1849, and the latter became a stockbroker in the City of London, and was later consulted by Arabella regarding financial matters.

13. Mary Arabella Susan Reynolds was born on 26 March 1849 at 8 Gloucester Square, Paddington.

14. Passage in angle brackets is a reconstructed reading. Eleven lines have been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

15. An English nurse/midwife recommended by Eliza Ogilvy, but whom the Brownings declined to engage in favour of Madame Biondi. The latter proved to be a wise and happy choice, and EBB was so pleased with her performance that in 1852 she asked Kenyon if he would "ask Mr. Murray to set down the name of Madame Biondi, as the best monthly nurse in Florence. ... [She] is recognized as the head of her order here, a peculiarly intelligent person in whom I am much interested— She attended me in fact—and is now attending the Grand Duchess. Murray's omission does her harm" (ms at Wellesley). Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* (London: John Murray, 1854) notes "Mrs. Petri, an Englishwoman ... and Mad. Biondi, Via Tornabuoni, at the English Pharmacy, are excellent monthly and sick nurses" (p. 446).

16. Eliza Anne Harris Ogilvy (née Dick, 1822–1912) married David Ogilvy (1813–79) on 6 July 1843. Mrs. Ogilvy was introduced to EBB in the summer of 1848, and the two, finding they had much in common, soon began a correspondence which lasted until EBB's death (see EBB-EAHO). The Ogilvys had two children: Louisa Mary (1846–70) and Alexander William (1848–87), who was only three months old at the time this letter was written.

17. See letter 3, note 11.

18. Signor Righi was a young and dashing member of the Ducal Guard, to whom Wilson was engaged. Intervention by his family prevented the union. At the end of letter 45, EBB refers to his Christian name as "Egideo."


20. Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi (1804–73), a native of Leghorn, was a lawyer, author and member of the Tuscan Assembly. He became dictator of the Republic during the absence of the Grand Duke, Leopold II, in early 1849, but was later imprisoned for his political activities. In a letter to Henrietta written in May 1849, EBB said that "Guerazzi betrayed the Duke, and then betrayed the republic" (Huxley, pp. 105–108). EBB refers to him in an ironic aside in *Casa Guidi Windows*, II, 135–140. In a later letter to Arabella (letter 78, note 24), EBB explains that he wrote to her after the publication of *Casa Guidi Windows*, and called the poem "magnificent."

21. The cover sheet of this letter, bearing the last two pages and address panel, is torn and damaged.

22. Charles James Lever (1806–72), an Irish novelist whose works EBB had earlier dismissed as unreadable (BC, 7, 255). Horne included Lever in his chapter on Irish novelists in *A New Spirit of the Age* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1844). Lever's wife, Kate (née Baker) gave birth to their fourth child the following month.

23. Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813–92), an American poet, and his wife Elizabeth (née De Windt, 1821–98), were from Massachusetts, but they lived in Paris from 1853 to 1863, and travelled on the continent before
then. Cranch graduated from the Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but he never became a minister. He turned instead to art and literature, and wrote for *The Messenger* and *The Dial*. William Wetmore Story (1819–95), a sculptor and man of letters, was born in Salem, Massachusetts, and was the son of Joseph Story, who was a founder of and professor in Harvard Law School. In 1842, Story married Emelyn (née Eldredge, 1820–94), and they had two children at this time. Both the Storys and the Cranches were introduced to the Brownings through Margaret Fuller. In a letter to Emelyn Story of late January 1849, Margaret Fuller wrote: “I have a letter from Mrs. Browning in which she expresses their pleasure in making your acquaintance. I am very glad for both. Since I cannot see them now, I want some of their thoughts” (*The Letters of Margaret Fuller*, ed. Robert N. Hudspeth, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988, 5, 189).

25. See letter 27, note 17. Hillard’s “note of farewell” has not survived.

26. In a book entitled *Six Months in Italy* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1853), George Stillman Hillard gave an account of his meeting the Brownings in Florence, which ends: “A union so complete as theirs—in which the mind has nothing to crave nor the heart to sigh for—is cordial to behold and soothing to remember” (1, 178); for the complete text of his remarks on the Brownings, see *BC*, 14, 408–409.

27. See letter 29, note 7. EBB and RB wrote to Ware in October 1849, at which time she explained: “Also, may I say one word, on the subject of your health? You are not discouraged, I do trust, & do not suffer your nerves to be broken down by an absence of hope. An uncle of mine was affected by the worst kind of attacks you speak of, coming on him as quickly as every fortnight, & of an hereditary origin, so that the medical men in England shook their heads altogether, & could do as little as usual. In this straight, he had recourse to a Baron Sloët of the Hague, in whose family is a certain cure for the complaint... went to Holland with very little hope, & returned at the end of a few months in a perfect state of health in which he continues to this day. The Baron, I think, is dead—but his son holds the secret... I could enquire for you—for it all happened many years ago when I was a child & I know only the facts. They are not professional people, observe, but delighted to do good in the way open to them, the secrecy being made incumbent by some hereditary oath—all sounding, you will say, very quackish & improbable,.. only that my family can certify the trustworthiness of the whole. One of my cousins was baptized a Sloët, out of natural gratitude.” (Gardner Taplin, “The Brownings and the Rev. William Ware,” *The Browning Newsletter*, 7, Fall 1971, 7.) EBB’s uncle who suffered from epilepsy was Sir Thomas Butler, and it was his daughter, Louisa Carmichael, that EBB asked Arabella to enquire of regarding Baron Sloët. Louisa’s brother, Antoine Sloët Butler was named after the famous Baron. It was only during the early part of the 19th century that epileptics began to be separated from insane persons. During the middle part of the century researchers were developing new methods of investigating and treating the disease (Owsei Temkin, *The Falling Sickness: A History of Epilepsy from the Greeks to the Beginnings of Modern Neurology*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1945, pp. 245–280). I have been unable to identify Baron Sloët.

28. John Henry Deffell, who lived in Harley Street, was a Barrett family friend for many years. He owned estates in Jamaica, and his nephew, Duncan Anderson of Mincing Lane, was a broker for EBB’s father. As a result of bad business circumstances, Deffell became despondent, and, on 28 October 1847, he entered a chemist’s shop in Whitecross Street, and posing as a doctor, asked for prussic acid, which he seized and drank. Although he was chased down and taken to Cripplegate Dispensary, he died shortly afterwards. Deffell was survived by his wife, Elizabeth (née Mackenzie), as well as three sons and three daughters: John (40), Henry (38), Francis (20), Caroline (41), Justina (39), and Charlotte (32).

29. A King Charles spaniel puppy which Surtees had purchased on 28 August 1848 as a gift for Henrietta. Flush had been stolen on three occasions: September 1843, October 1844, and September 1846. EBB paid seven sovereigns for his return for each of the first two times, and the last time his ransom was six guineas; see *BC*, 13, 343, note 3.

30. “Such an impertinent dog.”

31. See letter 6, note 9.
Ever beloved Arabel you will all think us the most ungrateful people in the world, inclusive of His Holiness's tender-hearted subjects. If a benefit makes nine malcontents & one 'ingrat', as is said, what is to be expected (you will have observed) from two pairs of slippers, a beautiful purse, an unparagoned pillow, an artistic inkstand & penholder, a miniature which is the very image of a precious person, & ever so much else in the form of benefitting kindnesses? Still, forgive me - I wrote to Sette almost as soon as we received these things - & since, I have waited morning after morning thinking of you & loving you & meaning to write directly. Save that stone from the tessalated [sic] pavement of the Infernal regions, & spare me. For the first word spoken, let it be most grateful - I do thank you for all your care, all your goodness, all your gifts. Henrietta's picture is the delight of my eyes - oh, so like! "There can't be a prettier person" says Robert. "It doesn't do her justice" says Sophia Cottrell. "The mouth is a little drawn aside" say I. The eyes too, like your eyes, (I mean the eyes in your Daguer[re]otype, Arabel) are too small — but all the rest is excellent — better than your Daguer[re]otype, though *that* is very, very dear, & looked at, oh, so often! .. the contour is more softly conveyed, the colours more vivid, & the dress better arranged .. it is by far the best Daguer[re]otype I ever saw. Women are generally thrown into despair by the dark lines which furrow their pictures — and Wilson who had hers done for M' Righi the other day, though she escaped the infliction suffered by some of her friends, declares that she looks "exactly like a negress". With men it is much better — & M' Righi's own mustachios show gallantly, & might make Radetsky wink. Well — but to go back to my thanks — Why, Arabel, what made you think of sending me this splendid cushion? What it must have cost, in time, worsted & satín! Though it agrees so well with our room & looks so beautiful on the carved wood throne-sofa, still I can hardly keep from scolding you my darling Arabel for going to such expense & trouble. Yet thank you, thank you. I value it very, very much — so does Robert. His slippers he shall thank you for himself. By the way, did you not say something dishonorable of those slippers? Arabel, they are on the contrary, most worthy of admiration — & I particularly admire the black velvet stripe, which is quite a stroke of original genius on your part. We have sent them to be made up at the shoe makers. As to my slippers, dearest Trippy's gift, (& didn't Henrietta leave the trace of her fingers on them?) my feet went into them of their own accord & have never been out since. The old slippers, I keep now for my bedroom, because their souls are fast exhaling or being exhaled, whatever the right grammer [sic] should be. Henrietta's pretty inkstand is just the thing wanted for the table — Kind, kind, you both are! And Trippy's butter-stand .. so pretty & useful. Dear kind Trippy. Robert will write himself to Trippy, & so will I write. And George's books .. which he wouldn't write one word upon .. when George comes to see me, he shall sit only on the throne-sofa — *that* shall be my revenge. And what trouble, Arabel, you have had altogether, & how am I to thank you. Everything came safely & uninjured, except M' Kenyon's table .. *& the clock*, I grieve to say. The last, I have not seen yet — the great box Robert unpacked himself in his dressingroom, & he tells me (for I have not had courage yet to
look at it—nor at dearest Papa's picture*) he tells me that the picture-part of the clock is a good deal hurt ... holes made in it— Not that the works are injured, for directly the unpacking took place, the chimes broke out—which I am glad I was not near enough to listen to. We shall have it repaired & hang [it] in the dining room eventually. For Papa's picture, that is to go to my bedroom without delay, as soon as the upholsterer comes ... though a little I tremble to look at the dear face again. Mf Kenyon's table is injured in the rail-work ... you remember ... & it is gone already to be repaired. Your's is intact & has been close to my elbow ever since, with the customary desk ... not to speak of loads of tapes & flannel & cambric, & cotton balls which are always rolling about the room for poor Robert to run after. He gently remonstrated the other evening— "Something else tumbled down! Now you know, dear, that I dont mind the trouble—i(t's) nothing for me! But if I happened to be out of the room, just think how you would have to stoop, yourself, & it w^ not be good for you .." Oh, Arabel,

<...>°
dearest Minny may laugh (tell her) abo<ut> Wilson & I have regretted ever since we <...> O Annie

<...>
days, which means very quiet indeed, <...>—ah Arabel, how vexed I am with you for sitting up, even to write to me! Why not have your fire lighted earlier? what can be the use of sitting up? Think how bad it is for you, with your headaches & swelled ankles! Tell me, darling Arabel, how they both are—& dont sit up I beseech you. If you were with us you w^ open your eyes at being forced to shut them so soon. We are in bed when the clock strikes ten—imagine such a barbarous state of things!— Yet it is civilized dissipation in comparison to what it was in the Pisan days, for you remember what my habits were of getting tired at night, & none of them were broken till I grew stronger. Did I tell you of our new acquaintances .. two American artists & their wives? Mf Story, only son of the judge—& Mf Cranch? quite young men & full of talent & refinement, & their wives the prettiest & most refined American women I ever had sight of.10 Mf Story has great sweetness both of face & manner, & we like them altogether, & they come to us in the evening occasionally. Lovely children too, the eldest only four years old.11 Oh—but, Arabel, Mf Ogilvy has been here, & Ma<dm> Petri, it appears, thinks herself highly aggrieved by the decision against her— She is a gossipping woman, this Ma<dm> Petri, & I am very vexed— First I was vexed for her, but now I am vexed for myself, .. Wilson observing that she is just the person to tell all sorts of stories of a pretended engagement. Yet I said to her distinctly ... "Remember, this is no engagement"—I was resolved to make none under the circumstances. Altogether, how could I possibly help it? It is very, very vexatious! On the other hand, the Biondi12 has been here again, & I am getting used to her & like her much better—she has a gentle voice & cheerful manner, & Wilson thinks that she will be a pleasanter person in a house than our countrywomen, prejudices apart. Then, although so much older, & so fat, she is apparently active, quicksighted, quick-hearing & light-hearted, inclined to look on the bright side of things—& I dare say I shan't be overawed or horror-struck after all—that was all nonsense. We shall be ruined in absolute prosperity. Also, we have succeeded, partly, about the insertion work I mentioned on the other page. Darling Arabel, thank you a thousand times for what your kindness says about help ... your kind regret about not having sent contributions by the boxes. My darling Arabel, what did not
you & Henrietta send last winter, I wonder? Besides, there is no need—besides the result is too uncertain yet. If God should bless us enough, .. presently, that is, when you see us in England, you shall show your nepotism by knitting a pair of shoes or something of the sort. Meanwhile, we shall do rather better than our betters, it appears .. & the Biondi has much admired sundry of our performances, Wilson says.— No, the thing you ought to have sent & have not, is simply my ‘Seraphim’— the copy in my room with ink-corrections .. & I am in distress about it, being stopped in the new edition .. thrown back wholly as we cant get the book here anywise. Now, Arabel, listen to me, & “make a note on’t,” as is said in Dombey. Look out, ask out, put out feelers, for an opportunity .. some private hand, .. & try hard to send me that book together with Robert’s two new volumes, about sending which we have written to Sarianna Browning. If she finds an opportunity before you can, I have begged her to apply to you for a book you have to send; and if you find it first, write to let her know, that she may forward to you the new volumes in question. Also, supposing the opportunity to admit of it & to occur not too late, you might perhaps fold my Seraphim up in whatever fragments of old linen Minny can conveniently let me have—only it will be too late, I fear, I fear— Remember the Seraphim in any case.— There—that’s all my business-side of the letter. Arabel, Robert & I insist on your not buying his new edition—Wait to have it from the “author’s” own hands—we shall give it to you face to face. We would bid Chapman & Hall provide you with it instantly indeed, but have a certain delicacy .. considering that the speculation is wholly their own, & that they have not offered us copies. Of course they must mean to give us copies—a few copies—but Robert has had no sort of intercourse with them or communication from them up to the present time.—

Dearest Arabel, on the subject you wrote of, it seems to me that “temperament” is not after all to be the final point of appeal on similar occasions. We are all fond of referring to those tears by the grave of Lazarus—yet certainly they proved only profound tenderness & embracing sympathy, & not grief for him who lay there, whatever “the Jews” might have judged blindly. They could not reasonably be tears for the loss of one, whom He was about with the next breath on his lips, to “awaken out of sleep”—they were not tears of the sort we speak of. Therefore we come back to the old question—and if temperament is to triumph, why doctrine & faith do not triumph, .. that is all—and the human weakness is proved, which, as God knows, it is, in the case of some of us. To sorrow as those who have no hope, is to sorrow just humanly, .. keeping the fact of separation nearer to the thoughts, than the fact of re-union. Also, if I had thought the temperament merely concerned, I shd not have wondered at all at the singular, at what struck me & still strikes me, as the very singular bearing of these disciples of Swedenborg, .. for there are men & women, ......

What in the world I was going to say about “men & women” yesterday, when Miss Tulk came in & interrupted me, I cant anyhow remember today. I did mean however to go on to tell you that I fancied the Swedenborgian reception of certain visions of the world of spirits, reconciled their human feelings, to the idea of Death, by rendering more definite, distinct, & proximate to our habits of life, so-called, the things of the unseen habitation. There may be something in this, & I for my own part, believe there is much. It reduces the separation between loving friends, to one simply tantamount to a separation between bodies .. to a going into the next room simply, I
mean—The dreadful unlikeness between the Dead & the Living, which strikes into every thought of love, like a knife, even when we consider These as blessed & ourselves as desolate, . . . is no idea at all for persons who with visionary eyes have had insight into the place of souls—and the absurdity of some of Swedenborg’s visions is nothing to the purpose, observe—he & his disciples believe these things, and the illusion operates like a reality, exactly. Mr Tulk’s most singular letter on his daughter’s death, which his sister read to me at the time, was worth hearing read. With great tenderness for his ‘dear blessed Louisa’ (Arabel, be certain of it that that man’s nature is deeply tender & loving!) he expressed the most absolute satisfaction in the event, free from a single drawback—“It was altogether impossible for him even for the sake of what was called decency by the world, to pretend to feel regret on account of the consummated happiness of his child—He had not felt so well for years! He seemed to be running over in his heart with thoughts of felicity. In his own recent illness, he had tasted something of the exquisite bliss of death; & the foretaste of the rapture of it, was still in his soul—But this happy subject must not make him forget” &c &c . . & then the letter went on to some points merely terrestrial. As to Sophia, why poor Sophia was a good deal shaken for the first hour or two, but seems to have recovered her serenity & cheerfulness almost immediately, . . & thought it “quite ridiculous to put on mourning”, said Miss Tulk. Also, I have seen her two or three times since the event (she is in mourning now, though Robert had sight of her in bright silk a fortnight afterward) & the way in which she talks continually of “her dearest Luti,” quoting her opinions, her fancies, & even her jests, is a continued wonder to me who knew that she loved her sister, . . though she is probably of rather a soft than a deep & passionate “temperament.” “You see,” said she to me, “dear Luti was really wanted, in the spiritual world, to attend to her baby, & to Caroline’s which was taken at the same time, or a little before”. Swedenborg says that motherless babies are given to a particular department of spirits to nurture & educate—but poor Louisa has the privilege [sic], it appears, of attending to her own. She died quite without shadows round her—Nobody thought of danger on Saturday—on Sunday she had a fit of coughing, & sank backward on the pillow, saying (with her husband by her) . . “O my God, how happy I am! O Jamie, how I love you”. Not a word more! So, she was silent, slept & passed away, while they thought she slept still. It is supposed that a vessel had broken either in the head or heart.—Robert makes me smile sometimes by maintaining, “that they all have a certain satisfaction in speaking of that poor unhappy Mr Ley” as “heartbroken” & in “deep affliction["], & that if he took his deprivation with quite the satisfaction of the rest of the family, it might not be altogether acceptable, though he’s a Swedenborgian too & has every right—for, as Mr Tulk observed, “If she is as useful & tender a ministering spirit to her husband, as my wife has been to me, it will be the greatest advantage to him”. I cant help telling you these things . . I have watched them so curiously, & they strike me as so strange. In a second letter, Mr Tulk has said that he “never had so clear an insight into the spiritual world as now”. “Which I am rather sorry for” remarked Miss Tulk quietly. “Sorry!” cried Robert—“Will you tell me why you are sorry?” “Because in proportion to his insight into the other world, he becomes dim-sighted to this—and his affairs go to ruin, & his selfish sons make him their prey”. Don’t you call that curious? Oh—his memory is only impaired in a temporary manner, after these attacks, & upon indifferent subjects—his faculties are as strong as ever,—& I must say it is a radiant, elevated
nature, & one impossible to consider without interest & regard. And in respect to Swedenborgianism as a system, full as it seems to me of puerile absurdities, & though the doctrines, as doctrines, are farther in some points from many which I take to be Scriptural, than those of what are called the orthodox Denominations, yet I tell you, Arabel, that these men & women do seem nearer to my soul & my sympathies (oh, infinitely!) than that bishop of Exeter & his cruel unChristlike bigotries. Oh, that letter, so insulting to a great body of his fellow-christians, which implies (in the grossest of insults) that "incestuous marriages" can scarcely make a dissenter's case any worse. Do you know, Robert came back from the reading-room in an absolute fury about that letter, & only wished he was near enough, to kick the bishop!— "My dearest," I began .. "now, is that language—"?— "Hear & judge, yourself, Ba— I am talking not of theological errors, but of natural insults— Hear, yourself, & tell me if such a man would'n be worthily kicked? When I think of my dear, pure father & mother . . ."— Dearest Henrietta must forgive me— I can allow easily for wide & startling differences of belief among believers, but more & more do I recoil from the bigoted straightnesses which form the first principles of certain sects, such as this sect of the Puseyites for instance,—who, just as the Roman Catholics begin to widen their garments, take up the shoes & coats & badges which have grown too small & narrow, for the elder branch, & adapt them to their own feet & bodies. Let me see a Puseyite, ready with the kiss of peace, for every fellow-christian who will not serve at his "altars", and I will love that Puseyite as my fellow-christian. But Love is the sign of the christian— Truth is the opener of the sympathies—the Sun does not shut up the flower. The bigot, whether the bigotry is shown in a little or great thing, is in a dangerous position so far—just so far, he is farther from Christ. Now she wont call me a bigot because I cry out against bigotry, because that w'd be unreasonable, quite. I dont speak of articles of belief, but of a spirit which belongs to unbelief: & I wish for nothing more than for the Puseyites, both as a party & as individuals to justify themselves gloriously. So be it!——

The state of things here is very remarkable. I did not adore the pope a year ago, & therefore could afford to feel deeply for him, for the kind, benevolent, tender-hearted man he is, when his people pointed the cannon against his palace & assassinated two of his dearest friends. I, for one, applauded him for leaving Rome .. I w'd have done so myself under the circumstances .. he did not sit in that chair to be a puppet-pope, nor was he made of stuff to be a Hildebrand-pope. So there was nothing for him but flight & absence. But going to Naples was a heinous mistake: & this "excommunication" & threat of "interdict", though perfectly natural actions in a man who c'd be a pope at all—(and the truth is, as I have said in my poem, the man is a pope, &, his head must fit his tiara ..) though natural actions on his part, they are too late in the world's day to do any good or harm except just to undo himself. Which they have done essentially, we think. Talk of ghosts at mid-day, & most people laugh: & the pope's ghost is made a mere jest of everywhere in Italy. Fancy papers advertising "confutations of the papacy—by the gospel" stuck up on the very cathedral-walls of this Florence! Robert has seen them himself! Fancy pamphlets, written, printed & eagerly read by the people, addressed to the arch-bishop of Florence upon the corruptions of the church! (Alessandro who swears devoutly every half hour by the Blessed virgin, with an occasional interpolation of Per Baccho, thinks it a very sensible pamphlet). Fancy the archbishop replying in a pamphlet ... which is by no means considered so sensible! Fancy
people saying, "Well, we have'nt a pope any more—so much the better! we will have Christ instead". Fancy the Bolognese newspapers crying out, that the "popish lies had lasted long enough"!— Fancy these things in Italy, where no one spoke of religion but with the sign of the cross, & where the ecclesiastical power was supreme, & where the body of the people could'nt be made to understand how any protestant could be a christian. "Non siete christiani, voi,"[^29] was the simplest phrase in the world. Now, they say .. "It has for years been different in England—so why not in Italy? Why should'nt we do without popes & cardinals too?" Is'nt this most surprising? Yet it is not of course all good— A change which proceeds from indignation rather than dispassionate conviction, cannot be all good. The people want education, want knowledge, want a right reverence for truth as truth, .. & if they talk protestantism, they also talk blasphemy .. many of them .. & we hear terrible things of the words spoken in the caffës against God & Christianity. Always it must be so— The recoil from one extreme dashes you against the other .. unless you have a hold, which this populace has not. The great body of infidels throughout the continent is composed of renegades from the Catholic church .. Remains the conclusion .. that even if the pope sh'd be restored as a temporal prince his authority as Head of a church has perished at the root. All the dews of the earth may fall upon it vainly. So Robert & I are sorry for the pope, & glad for the world! ----

And now guess what Miss Tulk came to tell me yesterday, when she broke o ff my sentence about "men & women" & musings on Swedenborgian spiritualism— It's a secret, .. so you must'nt mention it to anyone, mind!, out of Wimpole Street, nor to anyone there who cant keep a secret. Count Cottrell is going off to California to pick up gold!—° Yes, & Sophia stays behind with her aunts in Florence, & if he remains away as long as a year & a half or two years, she is to follow .. give him the meeting in Jamaica .. & they are to dust themselves well with gold. Robert & I are in a paroxysm of astonishment. So end spiritual visions in this dusty world of ours! I could'nt help exclaiming to Miss Tulk .. "Well, if my husband were sure to bring me home chests on chests of gold, he should'nt leave me for that." Twenty thousand miles removed from civilized territory! If he went for duty or honour .. well! but for gold-dust! Only, "Sophia is such an heroic little creature," say her aunts! No room to expatiate farther.— Since beginning this letter I have your note— Robert found it where I had dropped it out of dear Mr Kenyon's— oh, so glad I was! I assure you he was kissed for his pains. Thank you my darling Arabel. Delightful news of Papa .. it made my heart leap to think of his dancing & being merry! Dearest, dearest Papa! Now let me answer your question. At the end of February, quite the end— & if it's the middle of March, nobody is to be uneasy. You will hear directly of course. Don't be afraid for me— my only reason of apprehension is the excessive happiness which has been granted to me already as far as relates to my new position .. Did I tell you that Dr H said the event w'd 'quite reinstate my health'? Don't be afraid. I am in capital spirits, & without a single bad symptom— ⟨...⟩[^31] When I was afraid before, it was not for myself, observe. Tell me what makes Arlette nervous— ⟨...⟩[^32]

Give her my love, & bid her not be low, because that is said to be likely to influence the child's spirits in after life; the animal spirits of the child. Bid her confess too that I had in my medical adviser soon enough .. seeing that he has been here three times & never advised one thing, except about the Biondi, the baby clothes, & the wisdom of not nursing, myself— not one thing, literally.
So I am not headstrong & foolish, as she sets it down! I will write to M" Smith, since I must, but there's no room to write of her. Is dear Minny better? You don't say. My best love to her. Never a word of Crow? I will write next time to Storm. Think of Set fancying that Robert was scorning them all this time! Ah, if he knew Robert! — Tell Mary Minto that I thank her for her very pretty pincushion, & send her my love. And I have not thanked you for the M's. books—What wickedness, Arabel, to spend so much money on me— I love you all & pray God to bless you. Your own attached & grateful Ba. — Arabel, I wish you could have asked Mary Hunter to s(tay) in W. St— Why not, I wonder? Here's my note to her. For once, I send my letter straight to you— T(ry to write) oftener. I sh'd be reproached so.

Robert has on your slippers, & they look surpassingly well—. My love & Robert's go to you together— & to Henry & Sette & whomever will have either. We have had very cold weather, though now it is mild— & I have borne it wonderfully. very probably from the effects & influence of my present position. The last morphine ends with the fortieth day. And at Ancona I used it in twelve days.

Affec^ regards to M! & M" Stratten.

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France / To the Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12. Upper Gloucester Street / Dorset Square / New Road / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Cf. Voltaire, Siècle de Louis XIV (1752), ch. 26: "toutes les fois que je donne une place vacante, je fais cent mécontents et un ingrat"—"Every time I make an appointment, I make 100 people discontented and one ungrateful."
3. A jocular reference to Dr. Johnson's "Hell is paved with good intentions" (James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., 1791, I, 484). Cf. EBB to Miss Mitford, 1 June [1838] (BC, 4, 38).
4. This daguerreotype of Arabella has not survived. A similar daguerreotype, presented to their brother Alfred, is now at Eton.
5. Count Johann Joseph Radetzky (1766-1858) was the commander of the Austrian troops in the campaign against the national revolutionists in Italy. Known for his courage, as well as his attempts to modernise and improve the Austrian military, he led the Austrian forces in decisive victories over Italian troops at Custoza in 1848 and at Novara in 1849.
6. Cf. this praise of Arabella's handiwork to EBB's assertion in Aurora Leigh that "the works of women are symbolical" (I, 456), in which she gives as specific examples slippers, a stool, and a cushion; see letter 7, note 4.
7. This clock has not been identified. In a letter to Julia Martin in October 1844, EBB wrote: "Mr. Kenyon has given me a new table, with a rail round it, to consecrate it from Flushe's paws, & large enough to hold all my varieties of vanities" (BC, 9, 174). Arabella's table is the lady's work table pictured in the Mignaty painting of the Drawing Room at Casa Guidi, to the right of EBB's deck chair. This table sold as lot 1311 in Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, H398).
8. Presumably the chalk drawing of Edward Moulton-Barrett painted in February 1840 by John Mills, which EBB's father gave her upon its completion. It hung in her room in Wimpole Street over her chimney-piece (BC, 6, 160), and was placed in her bedroom at Casa Guidi but has not survived. An artist's copy is in the family's possession, and is reproduced in R.A. Barrett's The Barretts of Jamaica (Winfield, Kansas: Wedgestone Press, 2000), between pp. 148-149. An oil painting of Edward Moulton-Barrett, ca. 1815, by Henry William Pickersgill (see Reconstruction, H19) has been hung in its place in Casa Guidi.
9. The original manuscript consisted of twelve pages. Four pages (3–6, except for a small fragment) were excised after receipt. Presumably they contained details about EBB’s pregnancy.

10. See note 24 in the preceding letter.

11. Edith Marion Story (1844–1917) and her brother Joseph Story (1847–53), and the Cranches children were George William Cranch (1847–67) and Leonora Cranch (b. 1848).

12. See note 15 in the preceding letter.


14. Charles Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1848) was published in parts between 1846–48. The catch-phrase, “when found, make a note of,” belongs to Captain Cuttle.

15. *Poems* (1849); see letter 7, note 5.

16. I have been unable to trace a presentation copy from RB to Arabella of RB’s *Poems* (1849).

17. EBB is referring to the story of Christ raising Lazarus from the dead, and especially the scene in which “Jesus wept” at the grave of Lazarus; see John 11:35.

18. Cf. John 11:11: “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.”

19. Presumably Caroline Tulk; see letter 28, note 18.

20. In *The Delights of Wisdom on the subject of Conjugial Love*, (London: The Swedenborg Society, 1996), Swedenborg has an entire chapter entitled “The Link Between Conjugial Love and the Love of Children,” in which he states: “As soon as small children are revived, which happens immediately after death, they are taken up into heaven and handed over to angels of the female sex, who in their bodily lives in the world had loved children and at the same time feared God. Since their maternal tenderness had made them love all small children, they accept them as their own, and the children there, as if by instinct, love them as if they were their mothers” (p. 384).

21. Henry Phillpotts (1778–1869), Bishop of Exeter from 1830. EBB goes on to refer to a letter he wrote in reply to a memorial from his clergy, on the subject of the reform of the marriage laws to reduce the number of prohibited degrees of consanguinity. He stated that “the judgment of the Church Catholic in all ages, and of our own Church in the ninety-ninth canon, has pronounced these marriages which it is now sought to legalize to be prohibited by the law of God, to be incestuous and unlawful” (*The Globe and Traveller*, 6 January 1849, p. 1).

22. Surtees Cook, Henrietta’s future husband, was in sympathy with the Puseyites, hence this remark. Puseyites would not have recognized the validity of baptism outside the authority of the established church.

23. In response to popular pressures, the Pope proceeded to introduce various reforms designed to give the laity a greater voice in the government of Rome. However, his proclamation of papal neutrality towards the outbreak of revolution against Austria in Milan in March 1848 precipitated open resistance to authority. The Pope’s premier, Count Pellegrino de Rossi (1787–1848), was assassinated on 15 November. The Pope was compelled to assent to the formation of a radical ministry under Galetti, the Swiss Guard was disbanded, and the Pope became virtually a prisoner. Late in November, he fled to Gaeta, whence he issued various decrees—one of which, dated 1 January 1849, forbade any participation in the forthcoming elections for a national assembly, threatening the disobedient with excommunication, a translation of which was printed in full in *The Globe and Traveller* of 18 January 1849.

24. Like Pius IX, Hildebrand, who ruled as Pope Gregory VII from 1073 to 1085, occasionally found himself in conflict with temporal rulers, and more than once was forced to defend his papacy. He was, however, a political realist and a dominating figure whose statecraft compelled Henry IV of Germany to submit to papal authority. EBB refers to Gregory VII in *Casa Guidi Windows*, I, 896–897. RB makes him the model of the reforming papacy in *Sordello*.

25. i.e., the first part of *Casa Guidi Windows*, which was not published until 1851. Regarding the “truth” about the Pope, in the “Advertisement to the First Edition” of *Casa Guidi Windows*, EBB pointed out that “the discrepancy between the two parts is a sufficient guarantee to the public of the truthfulness of the writer, who, though she certainly escaped the epidemic ‘falling sickness’ of enthusiasm for Pio Nono, takes shame upon herself that she believed, like a woman, some royal oaths, and lost sight of the probable consequences of some obvious popular defects.”
Letter 33
19–22 January [1849]

26. Ferdinando Minucci (1782–1856) was consecrated Archbishop of Florence in 1828.
27. "By Bacchus."
28. I have been unable to identify this pamphlet. Cf. Casa Guidi Windows, II, 152–154: "We chased the archbishop from the Duomo door— / We chalked the walls with bloody caveats / Against all tyrants."
29. "You are not Christians."
30. This scheme did not progress further.
31. Three or four words have been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.
32. A line has been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella. Since Arlette was expecting a child as well, the passage most probably covers some comparison between the two pregnancies.
33. As explained in letter 29, note 28, EBB was uncomfortable about Mrs. Smith having her letters to Boyd. Mrs. Smith refused to return them, and instead asked EBB to write a chapter for a proposed memoir of their mutual friend, which EBB refused to do (see letter 40). EBB's letters were finally claimed by RB some 40 years later.
34. The general procedure was to make a packet of letters and direct them to New Cross, where Sarianna, RB's sister, would either forward them through the English postal system, or send them on by a servant.

Letter 34

[From RB]

Florence.
Jan 22. '49.

Dearest Henrietta & Arabella, I am sure I want words to thank you for your kindness at all times—but really, really you are too kind in these dear evidences of your thoughts about us. You know very well it would be "us,"—or rather "me," emphatically—that you conferred your favors on, if all of them went nominally to Ba,—whereas you are determined I shall have my own slippers, and inkstand, and book—all so beautiful, but far more dear than beautiful, even! There are the slippers gracing my unworthy feet at this moment, and the inkstand and its accompaniment on the table I write at, and the book not far off—and I promise you I shall never look at any of them without remembering you—whom I should have loved for Ba's sake, had you not given me every reason to love you for my own. I know you get a huge letter that has been in progress some days—I will only add, therefore, that she is quite well,—well as you could wish her,—that is, as you have any right to wish her; and considering what great things God has done for her, I do venture to be confident in the happiest result,—which will make you happy, too, I know well. This hard winter has passed over her without even the comparatively trifling inconvenience that last year's far gentler cold occasioned—at this moment a real spring sun is shining merrily, and I hope other spring delights will follow. Now, be sure I shall not neglect you, who never neglect me, but give you information on all points (within my province!) as soon as I get it myself, if it should not be advisable for Ba to make the requisite effort; she will make it up to the very last, I have no doubt. Good bye, dearest Henrietta & Arabella—give my best regards to all who will accept them, and believe me, ever,

Yours most affectionately,

Robert Browning.
Letter 34

22 January 1849

[Continued by EBB on reverse of page, which apparently RB had already folded]

Here is Robert in the most suspicious humour, fancying that I am going to penetrate his secrets in this note! So glad I am to hear of poor uncle James, of whom I feared to hear the very worst.¹ Is Bummy at Tours still? Write, I entreat you, directly, to me.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. See letter 32, note 11.

Letter 35

(Florence)

March 3⁴—& a few days later. [1849]¹

My ever loved Arabel, I thought when I began my last letter to send it away sooner,—but this must go soon .. I cant afford to keep it this time, positively. You are thinking of me a good deal I know, & so am I of you—and I must write to my dearest Henrietta—and I must tell you both that we are neither cut to pieces by adverse armaments nor have come to other harm. Also, I am well still—it may go on to the fifteenth or past it. The cradle is the prettiest I ever saw. Behold—open-work wicket, lined with pink twilled muslin .. covered with white mull muslin, embroidered .. fragments of our drawing room curtains trimmed with edging—a rosette of pink ribbon & muslin at the opening of the curtains—the pillow, pink, covered with white muslin & frilled round:—little linen sheets done with edging—and a Marseilles quilt. I assure you it is quite elegant, & strikes observers into sudden admirations. Wilson has contrived the whole with surprising art & success. The basket is finished in the same way, with dear Minnys pincushion in the middle— & if the pincusion had been made purposely to suit the rest, it could not look more harmoniously. Oh Arabel—so often, I have thought of your basket for ’Emma Monro’. We are less magnificent of course, & eight or ten shillings cover the whole expense of cradle & basket together—but really, the effect is far better than you might imagine in an abstraction from white satin & blonde. Only it looks too pretty & frightens me sometimes— Shall I ever see a little living face inside the curtains? God knows—& cares .. & decides best—if we could but say so frankly & not sigh.

Now I am going to talk politics by way of change. The other night, or evening rather, there was a sound of guns .. cannons as it appeared to me, while Robert & I sate by the fire. Presently, I said .. “Do you hear?” “Yes, I have been hearing for some minutes—& there’s the Generale”.² And there, too, came up the hum of many voices from the street, the noise of many footsteps .. a confused din. Wilson came into the room, “trembling,” she said, “from head to foot!”— M’ Righi was with her, & he thought it was the “cannon from the forts, two fortresses at opposite Gates of Florence, & that of course the Piedmontese army under Laugier³ was attempting an ingress.” “Now,” cried Robert, “I will run out for one moment & ascertain the truth— I will just run into the street—now, Ba, I give you my honour not to run any risk” .. (for I was about to sieze [sic] on him!) .. “why you cant believe that I w² run any risk, & you as you are.”— I let him go in the
confusion of the moment & bitterly repented it afterwards when twenty minutes passed without his returning. Not that he would not have avoided danger for my sake, I knew, as he promised, but I could’n t help thinking how two or three English gentlemen had been shot accidentally in Naples at the time of the disturbances, through going into the streets from curiosity. So I was frightened till he came back— & Wilson & I went out on the terrace, & saw the streets filled with men, & heard cries of “To arms, to arms” & then again, “Viva Leopoldo secondo”!−4 I didn’t wait to put on hat or shawl, I can tell you—there I stood in the night-air. There was a scuffle at the church-door opposite—because one set of men wanted the bells rung, & one wouldn’t have it so— In the midst, Robert returned− A volley of reproaches in salutation! “But, my dearest, you must’nt wish to make a woman of me! I told you I wouldn’t expose myself, & I have kept my word, as certainly you could not doubt that I would—but it was quite right to ascertain facts as far as possible”— So then he went on to explain that as far as such ascertaining of facts was possible in such a confusion of conflicting opinions & rumours, there was no army of Piedmontese at all, nor Laugier neither, but some descent of the peasantry from the hills, who having taken into their heads that Leopold was in the neighbourhood, resolved on opening the gates to him & themselves in a burst of triumph. And this proved to be true— People say that some five thousand peasants had congregated . . the poor Grand Duke being adored by the Tuscan peasantry . & that they very nearly entered the city− As to the firing of guns, that was only out of joy—they have the stupid habit of expressing joy & triumph here by firing into the air . . gunpowder without balls! so stupid!−5 If the peasantry had entered, there were bodies of brave citizens ready (just waiting for the encouragement) to give up the city & the “provisional government;” but we are such heroes at Florence that we always wait for encouragement. Oh, I was’nt in the least afraid, except about Robert when he was away—and even if the Austrians come, I sha’nt be afraid in the least. In my ordinary state of health I sh’d have liked to have gone out with him & seen for myself. But God keep the Austrians far from us—farther than they are now, it appears, on the frontiers of Tuscany!−6 Angry as I am with this poor people, who have no strength in either heart or hand, & suffer themselves to be put under the feet of a turbulent minority, with all their affections & sense of gratitude, just because the minority can bawl a little louder & wear nailed shoes? . . . angry as we feel sometimes, & can’t help feeling, . . yet God keep Austria away, we do earnestly desire. The people is [sic] so innocent & amiable, so everything except heroic, that one can wish no harsher thing to them than an unpainful experience. For republicanism, I myself being a republican as much as ever, I have no belief in the reality here− Liberty by coercion is not credible . . is it? . . nor is, a republic by a party. They planted a tree of liberty* close to the windows of our palazzo the other day, or night rather, by torchlight, & we went to the same window from whence last year we witnessed the triumph of the “constitution” to see the great bare tree, branchless, leafless, fruitless, the merest pole, planted & blessed by a priest in an oration− A striking sight, yet a melancholy. Not a singingbird will ever light upon that tree. Falsely called tree! falsely called liberty!− Poor Florence!—— Everything is calm, too calm . . as calm as death itself. The English, we hear, are going at once, for the most part—& we have taken on our apartment till May twelvemonth in spite of all, & though Robert & I were agreeing the other evening that in the case of some great tax being imposed (the worst thing to be feared) we sh’d have to move off with
our furniture to the south of France somewhere. But the man came about the rent, & we had to signify either an intention of going or of staying, . & Robert said to me "How do you think of it?" & I said to Robert "Is there danger of this tax? What a pity to move, when we are just settled!" "What a pity!" said he—"& what an expense" said I—"and no danger after all" he added. So we decided & took on the apartment. Nowhere in the world could we have such beautiful rooms at such a price, you know—and we have besides the option of taking another kitchen & two cellars down stairs for some thirty shillings in addition to the actual rent. If we want a 'nursery', we shall want the room which Robert now uses for his dressing room, a delightful room with communication through to Wilson's sittingroom, but inconvenient for him on account of the distance from me—, the only inconvenience of the house. Our present kitchen is close to my bedroom up a sort of ladder staircase (so narrow the steps are) & Alessandro complains of the dimensions altogether— It w ould be the very thing for a dressing room—& then Alessandro might have his kitchen down stairs, & I hear it is a lordly one. Still, this is not settled— For the present we shall manage as we are. I had rather planned to get Robert to dress in the little sittingroom at the end of the suite of rooms. In London, you know, gentlemen often use the library as a dressing room, even though on a lower floor—but he is fond of the little sitting room, which is very prettily furnished, & does’nt like to throw coats & waistcoats about in it. Well—we shall see! Everybody admires our rooms & calls them delightful & enviable, & is of opinion that we may let them any day at the holding up of a finger. Not any day of a republican kalend perhaps!

Poor Wilson’s betrothed has gone to Prato to his shop, & certainly she must miss him dreadfully— The guard at the Pitti palace, was dismissed in a body by the “provisional government.” Also, the removal to Prato is, by no means the worst part of the position, she being in great fear that this new conscription to which all young men from eighteen to thirty are liable, may seize on him even over the counter & send him off against the Austrians. Meanwhile, he is likely to come to Florence every festa day at least, to pay her a visit—it is scarcely a separation, & the Prato business is likely to flourish through everything adverse. Dr Harding has just come .. (he has been to Prato this morning, he says, to see a patient) has come & gone, & except the lifting up of hands & eyes at the diminution of the morphine, has made no sign. “Why,” he observes, “what you take now is only equal to a glass of wine in the comforting effect of it”.— What in July, at the Ancona-journey, lasted twelve days, now lasts seventy-two—think of that, Arabel! A vial of the made up mixture (one draught, that is:) divides into eleven times. How Robert contrives it, I can't make out really, because the truth is that I do not suffer in consequence. Last night I slept as soundly as I well could—& to be able to sleep just now is considered no common advantage. “Very probably,” says Dr H, I “shall go on to the fifteenth”— so the Biondi & he are agreed. It may even be later, he seemed to intimate— so mind you dont think of me till you hear—& he repeated his old opinion that afterwards I am likely to be “reinstituted in health & strength”—& that nothing so good for me could possibly happen. Not a single medical suggestion! indeed he wouldn’t let Robert go out of the room while he spoke to me. Mention Arlette when you write— & do write—& tell me all of all. Have you heard from Mrs Cliffe or of her? Sophia Cottrell brought her child to see me yesterday—a fine, rosy little girl, but too like the “signor conte”! to be very pretty. She was very kind, & said that she w ould come to see me directly I was taken ill,
desiring to be to me some comfort..."something like one of my sisters." Very kind—but I am not inclined to take advantage of the kindness, & have already refused a similar offer from M's Ogilvy. You know my old way of liking to get into a corner when there is anything to suffer—and I do assure you I would do anything to make Robert go to Fiesole, or somewhere out of sight & hearing, so dreadfully afraid I am for him, poor fellow—Dearest Arabel, dear, dearest Arabel, I just receive your letter through M's Kenyon. My dearest Arabel, what foolishness of you to be frightened about Florence! Now, believe me—Florence never was quieter than at this moment—there's the truth. The "republican party" (so called) is satisfied with singing about the streets & planting trees of liberty. The party is in a minority of the smallest, & can't stand, & ought'n't. The majority submit rather than make a disturbance,.. the men hiding their "Leopold buttons" under their over-coats, & the women their tears in their pocket handkerchiefs.. everybody expecting & waiting for an "opportunity". If the G Duke had not been rather a Florentine than an Austrian (poor Leopold!) he would have kept his ground as he sh'd have done. He will return, by some quiet turn of the cards—as quiet as all the rest. Why, if the Piedmontese army had arrived the other night, do you think there w'd have been fighting? Fighting in Florence? Oh no—So put out of your head these thoughts. I am not, nor have been, the least frightened, I do assure you, (not being one of the "Civic guard".) The Biondi says, "questo popolo è tanto buono, .." which is true as goodness may be predicated of children. This letter sh'd have gone to you two days ago, but I am sorry to say I grew suddenly lazy through having caught cold, or an influence from the east wind or something very sudden—The chest has been slightly affected, & I fell into a panic lest my baby sh'd be born 'with the croup'.. but I am better again, & M's Biondi has been here to assure me that there was nothing to fear on that particular ground. Otherwise, my spirits have kept up surprisingly (if Arlette is to be surprised for such reasons) & I try to persuade Robert that people exaggerate gigantically both "pains & perils", & I repeat to him what M's Cranch the American told me the other day, that "on the whole it was rather pleasant than otherwise".. which, being a peculiar opinion, I give you, too, the benefit of. Now, dont be uneasy about me—However it may be, God's will is best, be very sure.—I think that M's Jameson is afraid, actually afraid, of going to Wimpole Street. Gerardine said to me .. "Aunt Nina will never dare to go to see your sisters". But she has never been even to New Cross, where she promised to go & couldn't fear at all about going, .. & Robert is very much vexed at this omission of her's. You astonish me on the subject of Stormie— Why, how can Papa imagine that he gets on, .. & what embarrassing positions he must be liable to, in a strange country without money? Send him my little note. And send this less note to Mary Hunter—now dont lose it, Arabel. You say nothing of dearest Trippy, & you must always mention her particularly. My love to her between two affectionate kisses. Does Papa take in the Morning Chronicle now? Why it is a "young England" paper—having made a great sweep as to politics. Count Cottrell has the kindness to send me his "Galignani" which includes the "leading articles" of all the best English & French gazettes, & sometimes I wonder at the Morning Chronicle, & Robert is furious about the attack on Milnes. Which of Crow's children is prettier at this hour? & does she mean to have another? & does William bake his own loaves? You surprise me about the Bevans—and yet the reason is quite plain. Depend on it the expenses at Tunbridge W (said to be one of the most expensive places in
England) were too heavy for their income. Why is’tnt M’ Bevan a favorite with uncle Hedley & the rest? The “Puseyism” cant be an objection, when they embraced him with it in the earliest period of their connection. I should think M’ Bevan was so very amiable a man, and in many respects an agreeable man, besides. Louisa Carmichael & Arlette are both of them, kind, in enquiring about me— Give my love to both— Love to all—and to dear Minny. Robert writes in the greatest hurry to save the post today. May God bless you my beloveds! My own Arabel, I do love you. Robert’s love. Always love him, Arabel, for he is perfect to me. He will write the first news, if I cant write sooner—only dont expect, too soon.

Your most attached & for ever attached Ba-

Address, on integral page: Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12. Upper Gloucester Street / Dorset Square / New Road / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark. This letter was concluded on or about the 7th; see letter 36, [9 March 1849], in which RB mentions posting it “two days ago”.
2. i.e., an alarm; see the beginning of the final paragraph in letter 32.
3. Cesare de Laugier, Conte di Bellecour (1789–1871) fought in the Napoleonic campaigns in Spain and Russia. He returned to Tuscany, and rose to the rank of major-general in the Tuscan army. He led 5,000 Tuscans against 35,000 Austrians at the battle of Curtatone in May 1848. However, in February 1849, defying the Provisional Government, he made an unsuccessful attempt to restore the Grand Duke, but he was unable to find the support he needed from the Austrians, so he abandoned his fight and joined Leopold at Gaeta.
4. “Long live Leopold III!”
5. Cf. RB, “Old Pictures in Florence,” lines 253–254: “None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge), / Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer.”
6. The provisional governments in Piedmont and in Tuscany were threatened by the ever-present Austrians across the border in Lombardy, who were waiting for a chance to reclaim their recent losses.
7. Heavy brogue shoes and boots were nailed rather than hand welted as were softer leather indoor shoes.
8. Cf. EBB’s comment in letter 39 (see note 18); “Liberty by constraint is a contradiction in terms.” Cf. also Casa Guidi Windows, II, 178–183: “Nay, what we proved, we shouted—how we shouted, / (Especially the boys did) boldly planting / That tree of liberty, whose fruit is doubted, / Because the roots are not of nature’s granting. / A tree of good and evil!—none, without it, / Grow gods!— alas, and, with it, men are wanting!”
9. For a description of the rooms in Casa Guidi, see EBB’s sketch in letter 28.
10. See letter 6, note 9.
11. “Lord Count.”
12. i.e., when she went into labour; cf. RB’s use of this expression in the following letter.
13. Unidentified; from the context, taken to refer to tokens identifying the wearer’s allegiance to the Grand Duke.
14. The bracketed passage is interpolated above the line.
15. “These people are so good.”
16. Presumably Mrs. Jameson would have been concerned that EBB’s father assumed she had played a role in the Brownings’ courtship and secret marriage.
17. “Young England” was a faction within the Tory party led by Disraeli. In early 1848, ownership of The Morning Chronicle had passed from Sir John Easthope to a group of new owners, including “the Duke of Newcastle, the Earl of Lincoln, Sidney Herbert, and other influential Peelites who were willing to spend money during seven years in pushing the interests of their party” (H.R. Fox Bourne, English Newspapers: Chapters in the History of Journalism, London: Chatto & Windus, 1887, II, 123). In October 1848, Disraeli wrote to Prince...
Metternich: “With regard to the English journals which you mention, the ‘Morning Chronicle’ no longer Whig, was purchased about eight months ago, by the Peel section.” Disraeli went on to explain that “the writer on Foreign affairs in it is Mr. Smythe [George Smythe, afterwards 7th Viscount Strangford] … once my aide-de-camp; but Sir Robert bought him away from me” (Benjamin Disraeli Letters: 1848–1851, ed. M.G. Wiebe, et al., Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1993, 5, 100). As a postscript, Disraeli added the circulation for five London newspapers, which showed The Morning Chronicle next to last with 4,000; The Times was at the top with 38,000.

18. Richard Monckton Milnes (1809–85), later (1863) 1st Baron Houghton, politician, poet, and writer, was friends with Tennyson, Hallam, and Thackeray, with whom he had been a member of the association called “Apostles” at Trinity College, Cambridge. Always active in politics, Milnes, according to the DNB, “failed to make any mark as a politician.” He contributed his poetical works to journals, as well as publishing several volumes, and in a generally favourable notice, EBB reviewed his poetry in Home’s A New Spirit of the Age (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1844). In 1848 Milnes had gone to Paris to observe the revolution first-hand, and upon returning wrote a pamphlet, “in which he offended the conservatives by his sympathy with continental liberalism, and in particular with the struggle of Italy against Austria. The pamphlet excited some controversy and much hostile criticism, which came to a head in a leading article in the ‘Morning Chronicle,’ written by George Smythe” (DNB). The morning edition of Galignani’s Messenger for 24 February 1849 contained an extract from The Morning Chronicle (22 February 1849), referring to a pamphlet Milnes wrote in support of Lord Palmerston: “After the levity of Lord Palmerston’s characteristic defence of his own peculiar foreign policy, there was wanting nothing more than a pamphlet in its eulogy from Mr. Monckton Milnes. … Thus, immethodic, absurd, and illogical as is this pamphlet of Mr. Milnes, it is occasionally, and by involuntary glimpses, so unwittingly true, that it is not without a purpose that we propose to gibbet him, in front of every country of which he has written with universal ignorance and omniscient pretensions.” The copy, extending to almost an entire column, ends on a rather personal note: “Indeed there is only one observation of Mr. Milnes in which we can entirely agree, when he speaks of long years of repose, indolence, flattery, assentation, and folly—‘fattening men for destruction.’” The DNB notes that Milnes “challenged the writer; but Smythe made an apology, and it was accepted.”

Letter 36

[From RB] [Florence] [9 March 1849]

Dearest Henrietta, dearest Arabel— This is written on the 9th of March at 4 o’clock in the morning, to tell you that thro’ God’s infinite goodness our blessed Ba gave birth to a fine, strong boy at a quarter past two: and is doing admirably. She was taken ill at five o’clock yesterday morning, and suffered still increasing pains, with only a few minutes intermission between them, for more than twenty one hours—during the whole of which time she never once cried out, or shed a tear, acute as the pains were; I sate by her as much as I was allowed, and shall never forget what I saw, tho’ I cannot speak about it. Dr Harding assures me that, without flattery, the little creature is the very model of a beautiful boy; but the only remarkable point in him I can safely testify to, of my own knowledge, is his voice—which made me effectually aware of his existence,—before it had well begun,—tho’ a thick wall & double door. Dr H. was most kind, attentive, and indisputably clever. Mad. Biondi (of whom I dare say you have heard) was all zeal and discretion, while dear Wilson proved herself the loving soul we have always found her—so, you see, Ba was not made to feel more than could be helped that she was in a strange land. I will leave off here—and add a
few lines some hours hence. But these few I could not help writing at once that you might join, when you read them, in my & Ba's joy and thankfulness to God for this great mercy. (9 o'clock) Ba is going on perfectly well—she is as happy as human creature can be—and don't think that she ought not to be so with you at a distance; so far from that, it is your perpetual presence with her that fills up the measure of her delight, for she keeps thinking and talking of you every moment,—"how glad you will be," glad of this thing,—and the other,—of every thing, in short. Will you be glad, I wonder, that all her store of little caps prove too little for the great little head? I have not seen the head's owner yet, having a reverential fear of disturbing him, but the nurse says he is "so strong, so strong"—he took whatever dainty they call it! twice in the night, and is expected to do justice to a famous specimen of a wet nurse who is to come by the middle of the day. All these professional matters will doubtless be told you with due effect by Wilson, if Ba cannot wait to be her own chronicler, and I am a poor substitute, of course, for either of them, but I know you will forgive my lame attempts for the sake of the good news they will manage to convey to you with every disadvantage. How God has rewarded our dearest, most precious of creatures for her perfect goodness, patience, selfdenial and general rationality. That resolution of leaving off the morphine, for instance—where is one among a thousand "strong men" that would have thrown himself on the mercy of an angel, as she did on mine, quite another kind of being! Then in her food, habits .. she was perfect and faultless from first to last .. the nurse says of the babe "e stato ben nutrito," "how well nourished he has been" —It has been all God's divine goodness in giving her first such a heart and mind, as she has,—and then, the reward of these in the present, & all previous mercies. Let him but give us thankful hearts! Now I will leave off here, having many things to do; rely on one thing,—that we will take every precaution with respect to Ba—and not allow her to put herself too forward. I have not done justice to Wilson's kindness, nor told you half of what would interest you—but this will do for a beginning. Ba sends her best, best love with mine. She begs you to send the news to Mr & Mrs Jago with our united kindest regards. I will write again very soon—you received a letter from Ba posted here two days ago, I hope. Ever yours, dearest Henrietta and Arabel, most affectionately,

RB.

Was it not dear of Ba to refuse to look at the Babe till I could show it [to] her? as I did. Wilson says (this minute) that the little hands and fingers are wonderfully strong, and more beautiful and delicate than a boy's ought to be! (I find that the caps being too small, only means "as they were tied"!)

(1.0'clock) Dr H has just been: Ba and Babe are quite wonderfully well: Babe has got the nurse he was beginning to call for, and is now feeding like a hungry man.
Dearest Henrietta & Arabel. I am happy beyond expression to be able to assure you that Ba is
going on as well as even you would wish her: Dr H. has just left, and tells me nothing can be
better than the state of both Mother & Babe; this last little fellow grows prettier and bigger visibly.
I shall get Wilson to help my inexperience and tell you all his wonderful points,—she says, for
instance, that she never did see such a delicate & beautiful skin,—what would my opinion on that
matter be worth? We have got a famous wet nurse, from the country,—our first was a failure, but
Ba will amuse you, I hope, with telling you herself. We are entirely satisfied with Mad: Biondi
who is unremitting in her care—as, indeed, is Dr Harding—all goes on prosperously, thanks to
God for his goodness. I put you off with a shabby scrap of note, this time, but time presses really,
and next letter shall make amends— After all, “quite well” is easily said, and gives satisfaction
after all. Ba particularly begs you to apprise her cousin Mrs Reynolds of this good news,—giving
Ba’s best love and truest hope that Mrs R.’s good fortune may equal her own.² And Ba kisses you
both with the most loving of kisses . . as, if you let him, will yours ever affectionately,

RB.

I informed Miss Mitford . . can you let Mr Kenyon know all continues well? I wrote to him
also, of course.³

Address, on integral page: Miss Barrett.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by RB’s reference to Pen’s birth.
2. Mary Arabella Susan Reynolds was born on 26 March 1849 at 8 Gloucester Square, Paddington. She
married Major Herbert Mitchell, R.A., on 28 December 1871.
3. RB’s letter to Kenyon is no longer extant; for the letter he wrote to Miss Mitford, dated 9 March 1849—
at EBB’s request—see LRB, pp. 22-23.
Letter 38  18 March [1849]  265

says Mad. Biondi; but having been punished for his sins by gentle doctoring, he is now fast asleep, and is likely to commit them again, as ever. He is the sweetest little creature you can imagine; so strong and lively—and good, except when they plague him with dressings and washings, a point in which Flush deeply sympathizes with him. His eyes and forehead are only equalled by his red little mouth:—Mrs. Cottrell came to look, yesterday, and wound up her praise by saying, “He is such a bright creature”, which is just the word—while another friend & young mother, Mrs. Ogilvy, who called also, a few minutes before, expressed her wonder at the beautiful-coloured complexion he had managed to get; and as to his hair, see for yourselves! I have just got three little tufts cut off,—for you, and Miss Tripsack, and my own Mother. The said Mrs. Ogilvy’s child, six months older to a day, has not got a hair, she says. And, do you know, he follows lights or noises with his little great eyes, and even hands—and, when I make a chirrup to him with my lips, fairly takes hold of my nose!—All indubitable signs of his being what Mr Disraeli calls the “Coming Man”, so, being blessed already with an exalted genius, which nobody can give or take away, we intend to devote ourselves wholly to the improvement of his corporeal part—the first step to which has been the getting a good wetnurse—this woman we have now, being only the fourth! The first was picked out as an animal but proved a beast .. wanting to get us to allow her to manage two engagements at once, she got up at [sic] went off at Midnight last Sunday—thinking we should be in such extremity of distress as to consent to any thing when she pleased to return next morning: Providence that always has taken care of us, brought us in a few minutes a nurse from upstairs,—a charming creature, who helped us till we could send into the country for another—a nice young person came on Monday night, who pleased us all at first—but she suddenly became deficient in nourishment (from content at coming, it is surmised)—and, after a little while, we were obliged to send for no[.]. and last, I hope. She is a mighty woman, that would cut up into twenty Bas, aged 26, with a child of not yet a month old—good-natured, and intelligent spite of her fat cheeks which overflow her neck as she bends down. And now, good bye for a little longer, dearest sisters—

Wilson has behaved perfectly, as she invariably does, being, indeed, our friend rather than our servant. Depend upon me for letting you know soon our next news. God bless you,

RB.

Will you inform Mr. Kenyon, with our love.

Address, on integral page: Miss Barrett.
Publication: TTUL, pp. 66–69.
Source: Transcript in editor’s file.

1. Year determined by RB’s references to Pen’s recent birth.

2. The lock of Pen’s hair cut for Arabella and Henrietta is now with Altham; see Reconstruction, H501. The locks cut for Miss Tripsack and RB’s mother have not survived.

3. Alexander William Ogilvy was born on 9 September 1848.

4. I have been unable to trace the source of this quotation in Disraeli’s works. However, in a speech on 9 August 1843, Peel replied to Disraeli’s comments: “Some great man, it seems, is expected to arise with some vast and comprehensive measure, and I was in hopes that I should find from the nature of the measure proposed by the hon. Gentleman, some indication of the coming man by whom such great results are to be achieved” (Sarah Bradford, Disraeli, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982, p. 132).
I thought to be so happy in beginning this letter to you—& see how it is! The letter by the way, goes to you my dearest dear Arabel, just because all Robert’s were directed to my dearly loved Henrietta. Otherwise, it w’d be her turn, I don’t forget this time. But my heart goes out to you both, . . . thanking you first of all for all your love & all your prayers & all your thanksgivings, . . . for all of which I know I have to thank you. God has been very gracious—and, you may be half aware, I had the feelings that our happiness here was not to be allowed to flower out into the absolute bloom which seemed possible. Therefore the great affliction which has fallen on my poor darling Robert, it is not for me to be surprised at, though I w’d have given my own life to have saved him from it. Oh, such dreadful hours we have had, Arabel. You know a little how he has loved his mother—he passionate in all his affections, & she, deserving of all attachment. If it had not been for poor Sarianna’s courage & tender consideration, in writing two letters of preparation, the sudden revulsion from our joy to terrible deprivation, might have . . . I do not dare think how it might have affected him in body & soul. In the first letter she spoke of his mother’s being unwell . . . “very unwell with her old complaint,” & she “had sent for advice”. The mention of the “old complaint” (which it was not, but ossification of the heart) kept him quiet . . . because we knew that it did not threaten life. That letter was in answer to the one announcing the birth of our child. The next, the next day, said, “I grieve to say our dearest mother is very ill. I will write to-morrow”—written when all was over—Sarianna had great courage, for which I thank God & her. He waited till the post of the succeeding morning, meaning to go off to England instantly & travel day & night. That dreadful morning!—That dreadful letter. The dreadful days since! He has done what he could for my sake, but I never saw a man so overcome & wrung to the soul—The bursts of convulsive weeping, the recapitulation of all her goodness & tenderness in words that made the heart ache, & then the recovery of composure with such a ghastly violence, that you wished the agitation back again—these things, I shall not try to describe. That he sh’d not be ill, is a blessing well worth thanks & astonishment—but very pale & thin he looks certainly— I have persuaded him to get into the air, & God is giving him, I trust, a more settled calmness & a healthier tone of mind. The divine Grace has been very present in suggesting alleviations—but when God’s own Hand, even, binds the human Heart to the cross, we all know how it will struggle. But from the beginning he has recognized God’s Hand, & felt God’s grace, & looked up for God’s comfort as all that could come. Her death, in its suddenness, was very beautiful. Found senseless on the floor, by her husband & daughter, after two hours she revived to a state of partial consciousness . . . to murmur some half articulated words of human fondness . . . “God bless my dear . . . dear . . . dear . . .”. Presently she said “Ready to go”—& then, spoke no more till death was on her, when, as the spirit passed, she exclaimed in a distinct voice, “Come, come quickly . . . quickly . . . quickly”, . . . and “even so” the “Lord Jesus” came & took her. A saintly life could scarcely close more serenely, and Robert dwells on the words spoken, pressing with the whole weight of love the essential perfume out of them. He goes back to his first memories, when he was a little child &
she knelt every night by his bedside, praying in a phrase that struck his childish fancy at the moment, that God would “remember that child when He should make up His jewels”. Through childhood, through youth, always the thought of her, the love of her, has been like the grace of God itself, coming with it & interposing between the evil & him. To the last night of his leaving home for Italy, he slept in the next room to her, with the door open—she came in to kiss him every night. Very bitter it has been to me, to consider how, like a thief, I have deprived him (and her) of the last two years, & more, of precious intercourse—and it seems to me I can see plainly that he repents in the secrecy of his heart, having called it happiness to be with me rather. If we had known—! But we did not know—none knew, nor could.

April 12.

Now I am going to write in better spirits. The last day or two, he has been better—gone out .. & though very depressed, is stronger towards life, I think, & able to exert himself to happier issue. I was glad that he saw the Lindsays—he has gone to leave his card on them this morning. I said “Dont let it teaze you, dear—stay at home”, but he would do it, meaning to be kind to relations of mine, as they are in Florence for only a few days .. and I thought it might do him good after all, so yielded the point. Clara was kind & came here twice,—& M' Lindsay (the second time) surprised me on my earliest appearance in the drawingroom in my white dressing gown & night-cap. Certainly I would not have seen him, except by surprise. A very intelligent & gentlemanly man, we both thought him,—& dear Clara looks quite well. You will guess by my saying ‘dear Clara’ so affectionately that she has been praising the baby—and so she did .. called it “the loveliest baby she ever saw” .. while M' Lindsay was of opinion that the likeness was striking “to the prettiest of my sisters”. I wont be invidious enough to try to guess whom he meant by “the prettiest”, especially as he had called both my sisters “charming” the moment before,—“your two charming sisters”. Wilson said at first that baby’s mouth was like Henrietta’s with its rosy lips—the lips being quite rosy, & the forehead white when he was born. Dr Harding could see “both father & mother” in the whole little face, he said—but I persist & persist in fancying it like Robert only—but infantine & rounded away into a dim image, of course. You wont wonder if he & I consider him the prettiest baby ever seen, & we cant expect to be believed when we send you our descriptions—they will be set down as purely descriptive poetry, we cant doubt. That’s why, (or one of the whys) I long so for you to see him with your senses, mine being so little reliable. Only, observe .. D' Harding called him just three days ago “a specimen of a beautiful baby”, and I was’nt in the least surprised, I can assure you. What is peculiarly beautiful in him, is & has always been his complexion—never a taint upon it,—as clear as a flower—his eyes bright & strong from the beginning .. (M' Ogilvy said “But I never saw such eyes as those in a young baby” ..) & not a shade of the usual yellowness .. not a tinge of it—and his skin from head to foot as soft as velvet. It is imagined that a good deal of this may be attributed to my peculiar way of living regularly, & of taking neither wine nor medecine from first to last. At any rate, the babe’s complexion has been a wonder to all spectators—and now, when he is a month old, he has actually two faintly pink cheeks to add to the beauty of the little rose-coloured mouth. The features, too, are quite regular . . the forehead is high & wide, the eyes dark blue (at present) .. and the mouth & chin of remarkable delicacy & loveliness .. the nose, we wont talk much
about, because it has'nt taken proper rank as a mature nose yet... the cheeks after the pattern of a cherub's for roundness... the hair dark as you saw. And you are not to think, if you please, that he has a "gigantic head"—on the contrary, the proportions are perfect & have always been. Such arms, & legs, & above all such a wide chest, & decided strength of lungs. Also, he grows fatter & fatter... you see him get fat & grow as you look at him. D. Harding is in an enthusiasm... "Quite extraordinary that child is! I have not seen so thriving a child for an age"... Oh—when I heard his first cry, the unspeakable rapture of it! I who had been a good deal tired & exhausted by the prolongation of the pain, instead of sinking into a half state of insensibility as Mr. Ogilvy said she did, or being just "able to smile" like Sophia Cottrell, rose up suddenly in my spirit to a sort of ecstasy,.. not only forgot the pain but the ease,.. clapped my hands & clasped them, & exclaimed aloud in various incoherent exclamations which I do hope nobody listened to particularly, as I was very ashamed of them afterwards. For four & twenty hours from that moment, I did not feel in the least weak or exhausted— I was weaker on the third day—but as to suffering, there was no...<...>6

baby, Madre Biondi". This was on friday at twelve oclock. My bedroom is very large but is inconvenient through having no room to lead out of it, so that nurse, wetnurse[,] baby & I were all shut up together, and I heard nearly everything spoken, let them speak ever so low. All friday I heard Madre Biondi using every sort of argument, persuasion, flattery, carress [sic], with this same amiable wet nurse, who wanted to take another baby into partnership with ours, (not her own child, observe, or one might have felt for her!) & walk backwards & forwards through Florence from one house to another. "She had too much milk—she would'nt suffer for the sake of any picinino"! Madre Biondi offered to draw the superfluity of milk, & was really admirable in good temper & gentleness with her... "Ma, mia cara, tu sei giovane, tu non sai &c &c". Just like a spoilt child, she was—there was a burst of weeping every hour or so—she would & she would'nt,—and being six or twenty, one might have expected as much sense from her as if she had been six or seven years old,.. Italian as she was! Not at all. Between eleven & twelve oclock that night, she suddenly sprang out of bed, vowed that she w * ?  go away instantly, sobbed, cried, tore her hair, stamped with her feet, dashed herself down at full length on the sofa... "Ma questa donna e matta! come si fa?"9 I sent to Robert who had just gone to bed, and in he came in his dressing-gown. Stood mute in the middle of the floor,.. the woman continuing to rave. Nothing was to be done, but to let her go. Out of compassion, we sent the porter through the streets with her, & all the way, he said, she talked to herself... "She had had enough of the palazzos of the gran signori"10 &c &c! So here was poor baby left to himself in the middle of the night. What was to be done? At last we thought of a Turinese family who having fled from the troubles of the north of Italy, had been residing for the last few months in the apartment above us, & comforting themselves with grand concerts, balls & dinner parties throughout the carnival. We had lent them china & glass once or twice. This family had an infant & a wet nurse, so Wilson went up stairs to ring at the bell & ask for charity. With the utmost kindness, the lady rose from her bed, & just sending for Madre Biondi to ascertain the fact of our child being healthy (necessary for the safety of her own) she directed her nurse to come to us instantly. The nurse came,.. the most beautiful
woman we have seen in Italy, & as gracious as beautiful, as if she had resolved to prove to us, what an Italian might be after all. She had just risen from [her] bed, & had a scarlet handkerchief twisted round her raven hair; eyes of most glorious blackness, and a bearing like a queen’s. The most tender pity she expressed for the poor baby, admired his beauty, & only hoped that the ‘povera signora’ mightn’t have a fever from the agitation produced by “questa cattiva donna”. Well—she nursed him at intervals throughout the next day:—only I must not forget to tell you that at seven in the morning the heroine of the mad scene made her way into my room through all impediments, having rung furiously at the door bell, & rushing past Wilson who tried to hinder her—“she had come to nurse the baby,” she said. Ma^{ene} Biondi got her out into the passage however, & there informed her that if she didn’t leave the house that instant the police sh’d be appealed to, & that as long as she, Ma^{ene} Biondi, lived, she should not wet-nurse another child in Tuscany. Upon which, “O povera me!” she cried, & disappeared at once. Meanwhile Robert had run off to D! Harding who sent into the country, .. beyond Pescia somewhere, .. & by sunday we had another nurse, .. a young peasant, with a Madonna face, & mild, languid manners—She was nurse, the third. I thought at the time she was rather too young, too inexperienced, & above all too pensive & quiet, but of course we could not look so closely to it all—we were glad enough to have a healthy nurse who was not mad nor bad,—on any terms. For some hours she did well, but the next morning, to my horror it was discovered that she had not milk enough for the necessities of the child, & that the little milk was becoming less. Poor little Babe sucked so vehemently that you heard him all over the room, yet he scarcely had anything to swallow. Wasn’t it sad? Robert began to find out that he was “too sweet & lovely,” & had “something too spiritual in his eyes”, & in short took this failure of nurses so to heart, that I had to take on myself the office of comforter—“after all, the child was well, & we had only to look out for another supply of food”— And so, we had nurse the fourth—the third going away in a flood of tears, because she wanted to stay & couldn’t. The fourth whom we have still & every day congratulate ourselves on having, was introduced by D! Harding as a “regular cow-woman”, .. “She would have milk enough, we might be sure, ..” .. with enormous red cheeks, & a rosy mouth smiling to the ears, & broad enough in her proportions to bear “cutting up the middle” (said D! H) “into a tall woman”. For grace, & beauty, therefore, we can say nothing about either .. but good health, good humour, good spirits, these things she has to a superfluity. Also, she has had two children, & been out as nurse before, & so she doesn’t hold the baby as if she were drawing a sword .. she has had a little experience. But you may suppose how I thought of M! Jago’s permission & Nelly’s exhortation, all this while—& D! Harding told me too that I sh’d have had an “abundance” of milk myself, if he had’n’t taken means to suppress it .. only he never wavered as to the propriety of that course— and I never regretted it I must say .. never thought of it to the point of regret, .. because I felt too glad & grateful for the child’s having escaped so far the consequences of my “phisique,” to run more risks, of my own will. M! Jago calculated for me, I am certain, rather than for the child. M^{ene} Biondi told me, that for myself, she sh’d have thought it desirable to nurse for one month—Longer, in her opinion, w’d have profitted nobody—she is sure I could not have borne it longer. Now, just consider if I sh’d have been justified in running risks for the child, let the benefit to me, be proved ever so clearly! The very idea of it was dreadful! Also, as if to sweep away all hesitation,
in the cold caught just before my confinement the chest was more affected than at any time since I came to Italy. The voice was not much affected... it was lower down in the air vessels, the respiratory organs or something of that sort, & very unpleasant for some days... but it went off, and now I am absolutely well, you may rely on it... up in the drawing room & dressed, & with an appetite of the most undeniable capacity. Sophia Cottrell has been here & declaring that she was not able to do as much at the same time.

You will see, Arabel my dearest, how long I have taken to write this letter. Have you wondered at not hearing— Robert's affliction began the silence, you know,... & he bids me say how, but for it, you shd have had a fifth letter from him— you ought to have received four as it was. Then, very soon after, I meant to have sent mine, the political troubles & stoppage of the post alone preventing me. For eight or nine days there have been no letters received at nor despatched from Florence, and we have been in daily expectation of the Austrian invasion,— an event rendered far less likely now by the new revolution of yesterday, in the course of which, after some terrible battling in the streets between the Leghorn troop & the Florentines, the Grand Duke takes his place again, Guerazzi flies, & the trees of liberty fall down everywhere with a crash. When Henrietta says that I have had enough of republics, she is mistaken. What I objected to was the sign being put for the reality, & a republic with a public dissenting. Liberty by constraint is a contradiction in terms. At least nine out of ten of these Florentines in their hearts held to the Grand Duke, yet had no courage in heart or hand for resistance to a small party of Leghorn revolutionists— So much the more shame for them! Robert was out yesterday during the fighting, & had just time to cross the bridge before the soldiers intercepted the passage there, & get home. D! Harding could not reach his house, & getting behind a coach-house door, four men were shot on the other side of it, a moment after. Now we shall have peace for a while, I suppose. The Duke is sent for. Robert is certainly better, though at times much depressed. My darling Arabel, you were right & not wrong in trying the homeoeopathists—and have patience & submit absolutely, because time & submission are always necessary when persons have recourse to them. For some chronic affections, I do not doubt their success: the danger is, when rapid measures are called for... fevers, inflammations, & the like. Tell me everything & let me rely on hearing the whole truth... or how can I be easy? Say how Papa's cough is. Yes, he must have seen in the papers... & perhaps it was better for nobody in Wimpole Street to attempt communicating anything... and yet it makes me very sad to think of it all. We have seen dear Arlette's confinement in the paper too. A little girl! Kiss mother & baby for me & tell her that none can rejoice more in her safety than I do. “Write to Tours”? But why write to Tours, Henrietta? Robert said “I will write to Tours if you wish it, Ba,” but I did'n't wish it—it appeared to me unnecessary & a little overzealous under the circumstances. The Hedleys have not once asked a question about me for above a year, and from Bummy I have not heard since Arlette's marriage. Oh, I am not in the least vexed:— only to volunteer this piece of information... where was the use of that? What I was inclined to write about was uncle James's illness, & if I did not do it through the fear of giving trouble to somebody, w'd it become me to make Robert write in this pure obtrusion of our own matters? Besides they w'd see in the papers & hear from England. Don't fancy, now, that I am offended. On the contrary I am certain they all think of me kindly & affectionately... when they think of me at all.
At last we receive your three times welcome little notes. Robert is glad, Arabel, that you wrote to Sarianna—she is very deeply afflicted, poor Sarianna! He often wishes that you knew her. There we have been comfort in such sympathy. Oh dearest, dearest Arabel, what do you still seem to expect of us? All our happy plans... where are they? Am I to bring Robert back to that desolate house at New Cross, to "break his heart" as he says it would, "to see his mother’s roses over the wall, & the place where she used to put her scissors & gloves." 22 I, who understand so entirely those feelings, am I to say "Let us go there nevertheless". Judge yourself, my beloved Arabel, judge yourselves, my beloved sisters, both of you. At the same time, I know nothing at all. If any duty, or wish of his father & sister sh’d draw Robert home, he will go,—and no communication between them on subjects of the kind has had time to pass. For Sarianna herself to remain in that house appears to me highly undesirable—but God having sent so heavy an affliction we must simply be patient under it in all its forms & consequences, & wait till the "cloud" shall turn up its "silver lining"... which in His own time it will. You can scarcely guess how Robert, man as he is, has suffered intensely, & how deeply depressed he is at the actual moment. Ah, poor little babe! it cannot fill the void of so many years love & holy example! The grief has over-ridden the joy... we could not help that. He said to me this morning, "It seems to me that the sadness sinks deeper & deeper"—to which I answered stupidly, "that he would feel better when the weather was a little brighter"... reminding him, he said, of a bishop’s advice to a man “who had serious doubts about the christian religion”, to... “Take horse-exercise”. Still, both I and the bishop, I maintained, might be rather sensible than otherwise... after all, for the body has its influence both in melancholy & scepticism sometimes, & in the present sad case, the pressure of skies full of rain & cloud, is heavy upon him beside the other weight. When any one comes, he appears much better, & at intervals he is really so—oh, certainly & generally he is really better, and he sees clearly the stedfast reasons for comfort. With little of the conventional form or (too little, as I tell him sometimes... we have some discussions on this point) few persons live more habitually (... & recognition of the Christian’s providence in the commonest details of life & time, than he does—and from the beginning he has seen & confessed God’s doing & perfect doing in this sorrow. Pray for him, Arabel, that God’s comfort to him may be perfect too! Do let the dear Jagos know how we both have thought of them & thanked them. We remembered that you w’d communicate with them, & therefore Robert did not write. Dear Mr. Martin’s little note is very kind. We were ignorant of her direction, or she sh’d not first have heard of our happiness from the papers: soon she shall hear. Miss Mitford Robert wrote to... because she had made a particular request to that effect. Miss Bayley’s kindest letter I am going to answer... Tell her if you see her.

Will the Martins be in London soon? How I feel for poor M’s Peyton! 26 What sorrow upon sorrow. If you write to the Peytons, do mention me in sympathy. D! Harding came yesterday to vaccinate our baby, 27 he being five weeks old. It is early, you will say, but the smallpox has been in Florence & we were frightened to let him go out before he was vaccinated—Tell dear Minny that Robert has said over & over, “I am sure M’s Robinson w’d like to see him,” & so I am sure she w’d. Thank & kiss her from me for being glad. Since I began this letter he is prettier than ever—oh, such cheeks, Arabel, & such a chiselled little mouth & chin! You take me now for the owl
of the fable describing my offspring, but I will just tell you what Dr Harding (who is always overpowering in his compliments to Baby) said of him yesterday. "You have a singularly beautiful child, Mr Browning! Seldom in my life have I seen such a beautiful child! He is a study for a painter! a model fit for Michel Angelo!" Yes, and the wet-nurse has confided her opinion to Robert. "that the signora must have seen some very pretty persons (persone molto belle) when she walked out in the streets, to account for so "pretty a bambino". Think of this, & of the health & strength of the child—as strong as if the child of the strongest woman of your acquaintance! Ought I not to thank God that he has not been unwell for half an hour? A few days since, appeared at our door. Father Prout! Wilson who opened it to him said after the first words, "Perhaps, sir, you dont know that Mrs Browning has a little son?"— "What! Alive!" He had'nt had the least idea it appears of what kept me on the sofa last winter. How is my dearest Trippy, & how will she settle again? Tell me all, & give her the usual kisses, dear thing.—

Just received, Henrietta's envelope with dear dear Trippy's kindest & warmest of little notes. I must write a little one back, though this letter will be heavy, I fear. Terrible news, this of M! Gordon's death. Stroke upon stroke falling on that family—poor M! Gordon losing at once, almost, father, husband, sister, child, mother in law!—your letter tells me for the first time. I do hope that our dear Trippy may lose less than appears— In any case I w'd rather be ruined to the last penny, than see my husband's honor left in suspicion so!— Dreadful indeed. We have put Wilson into mourning—not Alessandro, nor the nurse,—not the baby, of course—Nothing settled yet about the baptism, though we lean rather to the Scotch church at Leghorn. I sh'd like dear M! Stratten indeed—& if I dont thank him for baptising my child (you see, in any case it w'd be long to wait) let me, for praying for it! God bless you, I pray always—you, both of you, all of you! write directly to your Ba— Tell Mary Minto that I will answer her kind note.

I am distressed for dear Trippy. Dont let her take it to heart. No madness about India!! W'd not Papa accept rather poverty in England than military life anywhere?

A letter will reach Papa before this reaches you,—as Trippy thinks it best. I write to Henrietta before long, bid her remember. Mr Browning's complaint of the heart had existed unsuspected for twenty years, say the physicians. Too kind you are about the hair— That sh'd be our business. Clara Lindsay promised to come again, & I cant help thinking, she must be gone. Tell me of Henrietta & all— Mention your health particularly.

D! Harding told Robert that if I had continued to take the Port wine, I sh'd have had a succession of miscarriages, & never a living child. It was physically impossible, he said, with my tendencies. Now, he lets me take half a wineglass of Italian wine with double the quantity of water.

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France / Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. RB's mother died on 18 March 1849, aged 76; this news cut short the great joy over the recent birth of their son.
3. Parenthetical passage is interpolated above the line.
5. See letter 23, note 8.
6. Two or more pages missing, probably excised because of the details of her labour and Pen's birth.
7. “Little boy.”
8. “But, my dear, you are young, you don’t know.”
9. “But this woman is mad! what can we do?”
10. “Palaces of the great masters.”
11. “Poor lady.”
12. “This bad woman.”
13. “O poor me!”
15. Above the word “capacity,” EBB has written “rapacity.”
16. There are only three letters from RB to the sisters extant for the period immediately following Pen’s birth.
17. On 11 April, one of the Leghorn regiments brought to Florence by Guerazzi (ostensibly to be trained) was attacked by Florentines in the Piazza Santa Maria Novella. This riot provided the necessary opportunity for the Moderate faction to take control. A Provisional Government was proclaimed in the name of Leopold, and Guerazzi was forced to surrender himself in order to avoid the crowds clamouring for his life. See Bolton King, *A History of Italian Unity* (London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1899), I, 326. EBB’s thoughts here are echoed in *Casa Guidi Windows*, II, 257–264.
18. Cf. EBB’s comment in letter 35: “Liberty by coercion is not credible.”
19. It is unclear whether EBB is referring to a notice of Pen’s birth or of RB’s mother’s death. Both were reported in *The Times*, the former in the 19 March 1849 issue: “On the 9th inst., at Florence, the wife of Robert Browning, Esq., of a son.”; and the latter in the 24 March issue: “On Sunday, the 18th inst., Sara Anna, wife of Robert Browning, Esq., of New-cross, Hatcham, Surrey.”
20. See letter 37, note 2.
22. This confirms the image of RB’s mother and her garden in “The Flower’s Name.”
23. Mrs. Martin’s letter is not extant; however, EBB’s letter to her, dated 14 May [1849] (ms at Wellesley), was published in part in *LEBB*, I, 404–408.
24. RB wrote to Miss Mitford on the day Pen was born (ms at BL); for the text, see *LRB*, pp. 22–23.
25. Neither Sarah Bayley’s letter to EBB, nor EBB’s to her, is extant.
26. Eliza Peyton’s son, Charles William (b. 1822), had died on 29 March 1849 while a medical student at Guy’s Hospital.
27. In a letter dated 18 February [1850], EBB told Miss Mitford that Pen had been vaccinated for smallpox when he was six weeks old (*EBB-MRM*, III, 291).
28. Cf. the proverbial: “The owl thinks all her young ones beauties.”
29. John Gordon, husband of Caroline (née Tulk); see letter 24, note 17. Some time in the winter of 1848–49 their two-month-old child died, followed soon thereafter by several successive deaths: Caroline’s sister, Louisa Ley; Mr. Gordon’s mother, who lived with them in Calcutta; and only twenty-four hours after his mother’s burial, Gordon himself died on 21 February 1849. Caroline Gordon left India, expecting to return to her father in England, but she arrived to find that he too had died. Henry Cottrell went to England and brought Caroline and her children to Italy to be near her remaining sister. Her arrival in Italy, however, was the cause of a difficult situation for the Brownings. Part of the money her husband lost in Sydney included £4,000 he had borrowed from Maria (“Trippy”) Trepsack, long-time companion to EBB’s grandmother, Elizabeth Moulton. EBB felt strongly that Caroline Gordon should repay her husband’s debt, or at least provide some type of annual settlement. When she made no effort to resolve the matter, the Brownings felt unable to accept her on a social basis. Despite this difficulty, the Brownings maintained their friendship with the Cottrells.
30. Pen was not baptized in the Scotch church; see letter 42, note 4.
My beloved Arabel, This is only the ghost of a letter, sent to remind you of the antediluvian
letter-<Smith>^2-affair & give you a little more trouble. Besides, I have really to thank her for the
mournful story of my ever dear friend's last hours, which at last I have had courage to read.
Thanking her for that, I was under the necessity of urging the other affair, and also of replying to
her proposition that "I would write a chapter of the intended memoir". I would rather put my
hand into the sun (which sounds absurd to you but would'nt, if you were here & felt the adjacency
of it in this burning heat!) than do such a thing. The memoir itself is a thing which the worst taste
only could contemplate—I protest against it with all my strength—and the inauguration of it by
M'<Smith> makes the blood creep in my veins. If I were inclined to it, also, Robert would not
suffer it—he has an absolute horror of M'<Smith>, .. who is, we must all confess, a vulgar,
coarse woman, .. only I know her to be excellent in her peculiar way, & respect & am grateful to
her for her faithful affection to my dear friend, M! Boyd. Robert only sees the indelicacy of
keeping my letters, which with one or two other transgressions in the mode of expressing herself
on the subject, combines intensely with his aversion to all unnecessary entrances upon personalities
in the face of the public. Therefore I should not have leave to do it if I were inclined, and you
may imagine how little I am. The whole scheme is full of inapprehensiveness & bad taste—and
no one who understood anything of the present conditions of literature, and of the characteristics
of our dear friend, w^ dream of such a thing. I have told her that I shall confine myself to a sonnet
perhaps in my new edition, & be silent in prose. Will you send my note to M'<Smith>? I do
hope that she will return the letters after that.

Darlingest Arabel, I write only a few words to you today—the next time shall be better. Did
Henrietta get my last letter written very lately? I am rather uneasy, because Robert said "Dont
write politics", and I had written them already—and since then I have been musing to myself
how they were written on the corners of the sheet, where an Austrian lynx might read without
breaking the seal. If so, the letter is suppressed, I am sure, & you are wondering at my silence.
Poor Florence is in the shut hands of Austria—we dare'nt move or breathe. We have had to give
up our arms .. and M'<Vansittart4 who "carries a dagger["]& appealed to the English ambassador
whether she might not keep it, .. (I suppose it is a mere ornament of dress & a woman's coquetry,
.. jewelled & so on!) had this answer .. "You are certainly sure of not being shot—but if you
receive your passport with an order to leave Tuscany in twelve hours, dont come to me, for,
remember, I can do nothing for you." Even old rusty scimitars, curiosities of times bygone, have
had to be given up— Some of the poor Florentines, to escape the dishonor of this yielding of arms
to the German, have thrown their muskets into the Arno—heaps of guns & broken swords have
been found there. The aspect of the city is at once brilliant & melancholy—Austrians everywhere,
at the gates, before the palaces, before the churches—everywhere. You hear German spoken at
every turn. The Cascade, meanwhile, are thronged with the carriages of the nobles, who loll lazily
on their cushions & look at the Austrian officers—dont speak to them .. (that is curious:)—you
never see intercourse between an Austrian & a Tuscan. Only the fact is that these ignoble nobles, who have been hitherto shut up in their country villas "to avoid anarchy" come back to face invasion very mildly. The comfort is, that they have to pay, (for Austria's tax is heavy) which circumstance with a little shame, preserves from personal association with the invader. Meanwhile I never saw so brilliant a sight as the Cascine—very few English, but very brilliant the show is otherwise. We go in the evening, because it is the only fresh drive under green trees & by the riverside, & indeed the whole spectacle, when hundreds of open carriages stand still in the open space surrounded by thick foliage, is curious & amusing. Wilson & the nurse & baby, & Robert & I. Some of the ladies nod their feathers to Baby & admire him aloud, and he always is good & laughs & coos as long as he is in the open air; he enjoys it more than any of us. The English are nearly all gone—A palace is prepared for Radetsky, who comes in a day or two to give meeting to his beloved friends the Grand Duke and the Pope. The next event will probably be war between France & Austria. No, the next event is the putting our child into short petticoats, or nearly short, for we are to see the end of his little boots—The Biondi has been here to give instructions—She wonders at his improvement in intelligence & strength, & commanded that he sh'd be laid on the floor now (on a pillow) to kick about freely.—

—Since I wrote the sentence about the short petticoats yesterday, Wilson & I have cut them short... made a little flannel one and sewed it on to a little pair of stays—I did that. He hates being a baby & made to lie down, and so now he is to be a baby no longer. So funny he looks in his virile toga... such a little creature!: although by the way our friend the lace-woman who came here today said it was scarcely credible that he could be my child, seeing that he was as large as myself—Certainly the cheeks are considerably larger than mine. M' Powers has been here to see him—arrived by appointment at the hour of the bath, and Wilson brought him into the drawingroom, stark naked, wrap in my red shawl...your shawl, Arabel, for you sent me the wrong one. M' Powers assured us that he never had seen a finer child in every way, & thought the shape of the head particularly beautiful...admired too his little knowing face & predicted he was born to be a judge, he looked so wise—he would try to walk already... only we want let him. He observes colours, & wanted to eat some roses which Miss Tulk brought me the other day... and likes his nurse twice as well as he likes me... I have a horrible dread indeed that he may like Wilson better. He stays with me for a little while, & pulls my curls quite straight, after which he begins to wriggle about & kick... and even scream when it is necessary, till the "balia" comes to the rescue, & then he is good again. Is't it dreadfully natural that he should like her best? Of course—though Robert pretends that he likes me after all comparisons. I shall be forced to spoil him in self defence, and have already got into two scrapes with Robert, by giving him bits of white sugar at the end of my finger, which were perfectly appreciated, I can assure you. Otherwise, he has never taken food, except his 'balia's' milk, and will not, must not, the Biondi says, till he is five or six months old. An Englishwoman could bear with difficulty such an arrangement, but our nurse seems to me to grow fatter & rosier in proportion to the nurseling. Such spirits, she has...such childish ways...you w'd certainly say that she was rather seven, than seven & twenty. Taking off her shoes & stockings at night &
running up & down the terrace, is one of the gravest of her eccentricities. But there is a great deal
of goodnature & frankness in her, and dear Wilson is very patient with her for Baby's sake, when
the playfulness grows rampant over much, and she is happily fond of Wilson & minds what she
says. Altogether we could not have succeeded better in a nurse—because, you see, the restless
animal spirits are a part of the animal, and not the least valuable part—and our child is quite
enough inclined to be nervous—burst out crying the other day when Flush kissed him suddenly,—
and starts .. starts: he is very nervous for so young a child. Do write to me, dearest Arabel, my
own Arabel,—& say how you are with the homœopathy. Persevere, Arabel, .. or there's no use.
Tell me of Henrietta & all— How is Papa's cough. It is very hot, very, and will be hotter. Mention
the poor Peytons, when you write, & dont forget my love to them. Robert's spirits do not rally as
I would wish, & now he has left off eating. We two are thinking of going alone for a few days
wandering—, to the Gulf of Spezzia, Baths of Lucca &c— Oh Arabel, it is a terrible disappoint­
ment to me as I know it is to you, this suspension of English plans: but can it be helped? see if it
can. Robert must not do a thing of this sort for my sake— You can scarcely fancy how he has
suffered. Even now he breaks suddenly into tears without an apparent reason,—he who is natu­
rally so joyous & who has so much self command. I must consider him, you know. Not that he is
not better, oh, of course he is better—but before he is himself again there is much to do. I ob­
serve that his soul is much with God—only souls drop from their heights, and to attain to the
absolute calm of constant elevation is very difficult for this weak humanity. Except the
Swedenborgians, ... who puzzle me really—! As to England, the world is so full of tempests just
now, there is no saying where we may be swept in a few weeks—therefore it may be different
from what we expect, even now. Give my dear love to dearest Trippy, & many kisses. I do hope
that Mr® Gordon will bring her good news about money-matters. Miss Tulk told me that Mr®
Gordon felt it acutely, as well she may; and I cannot help thinking that she may manage to pay
the interest of the money, which is the important thing. Tell me of dear Trippy, & tell her that I
love her dearly.

I meant only to write a few words to you, Arabel, and see where I am carried!— We hear
that Mr Kenyon has inherited immensely, & is greatly perplexed in selecting horses, carriage &
coachman .. and a country villa—so, Miss Bayley tells me. I am very glad that he should be
rich—it is well that the generous & benevolent should be so—

—The white merino cloak is already too hot for Baby, and we have given him, deep capes of
cambric muslin instead of it— Very pretty he looks, with his blue satin hood,—very pretty. Tell
me how Arlette equips her child, and if there is anything new. Oh, to let you see Baby in the bath,
(now it is scarcely more than lukewarm) how he plunges & splashes & throws out his little feet
& arms, .. & dashes the water all over the carpet, .. laughing & crowing for joy. We have a
regular bath for him, like a warm bath used in England, painted green without & white within.
By the way, or rather out of the way, did I tell you that when he was a month old Sophia Tulk had
the kindness to bring him two pairs of knitted boots, knitted by herself, a green pair & a pink
pair. The pink pair are too small already—he kicks them off.

Tell me everything— Oh, do write, do write. Dearest Papa never returned my letter nor noticed
it. So I shall take courage to write again presently—not too soon, so as to teaze him. When you
write to Storm, send him my love always. I shall hear from him again, surely. Sette does'nt mean to write, I suppose. May God bless them all. Tell Henry that I have a certain admiration for Radetsky & am most curious to see him, the old lion. I make our nurse shriek with laughter by talking of “questi cari amici”\textsuperscript{10} the Grand Duke, the Pope & Radetsky, who are coming here. How the Pope has fallen from his spiritual supremacy is curious. “Questo maladetto [sic] papa”, .. “questa gran bestia, il Papa”\textsuperscript{11} .. so the people talk of him! Now I must go.

Robert’s best love always– Do write. Tell me, if you paint– Read Macauley,\textsuperscript{12} mind. Is Bummy in England? Tell me of her.

\(\text{(I hate to send this blank—but Robert sends his letter to New Cross—)}\)

Address, on integral page: Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

\begin{itemize}
  \item 1. Year provided by postmark.
  \item 2. EBB's comments here refer to her refusal to cooperate in Mary Ann Smith's proposed memoir of Hugh Stuart Boyd; see letters 29, note 28, and 33, note 32. The name Smith has been cancelled here, and three times after receipt, probably by Arabella.
  \item 3. For EBB’s sonnets to Boyd, see letter 28, note 2.
  \item 4. Presumably Diana Sara (née Crosbie), wife of Arthur Vansittart (1807–59) who founded the Jockey Club of Italy in Florence in 1835.
  \item 5. “Radetzky’s favourite scheme was to signal out the rich for punishment … To terrify or exasperate the Milanese aristocracy, he imposed a fine of 20 million lire on 200 of their leaders, and when the fines were not paid, sequestrated many of their houses and estates” (Bolton King, \textit{A History of Italian Unity}, London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1899, 1, 301).
  \item 6. EBB’s source must have been mistaken; the Austrians entered Florence on 26 May, and Leopold had fled Florence in February, joining the Pope at Gaeta, where Pius IX remained from October 1848 until his return to Rome on 12 April 1850. Cf. EBB, “The Mournful Mother,” lines 78–79: “Until ye two give meeting / Where the great Heaven-gate is.”
  \item 7. Underscored twice.
  \item 8. “Wet nurse.”
  \item 9. Cf. EBB’s comment in letter 43 that Kenyon had “come into two hundred thousand pounds from his brother in law’s inheritance.” When Kenyon died, Surtees Cook recorded in his journal that Kenyon was “worth £180.000” (Surtees, 4 December 1856). Kenyon was the principal beneficiary of his brother-in-law, John Curteis, who had died on 27 April 1849. The legacy to Kenyon included Curteis’s house in Devonshire Place. EBB’s remark is particularly poignant in view of Kenyon’s munificence both to her and to RB: Kenyon left £4,500 to EBB and £6,500 to RB.
  \item 10. “These dear friends.”
  \item 11. “This cursed pope”, .. “this great beast, the Pope.”
  \item 13. The passage in angle brackets is written in an empty space on the address panel, which normally would have been used to continue her letter.
\end{itemize}
I wrote last to you my beloved Arabel but only in a note, and I shall strike the balance by sending a note to Henrietta in this letter. "The city is deserted"—Yes, Robert & I deserted it & went off to the Gulph of Spezzia six days ago, & were five days away. What do you think of that? .. just he and I. Wilson stayed to preside over Baby and the 'balia', and Ma’am Biondi promised to come & see after them all every day. Robert promised for his part, to manage my hooks and eyes, and we took one carpet bag, and his hatbox to hold the more tumblesome things. The truth was, there was a necessity for our going. His nerves were unstrung, and as he began to leave off eating altogether, I looked forward to nothing less than a nervous fever, & teased him till he consented to go with me. Oh, he did'nt like to go! he was'nt up to it, he said! he who is so fond of travelling, had to be reasoned & wrangled with & tormented. At last I made it so clear to him that we shd all be very ill (particularly I and Baby) if he tyrannically persisted in keeping us the summer through at Florence, & that it was necessary to go ourselves and look for a cool place somewhere, .. I made this all so clear to him that he yielded & we prepared to go. Then, just as it was settled, he took it into his dear head that something wld happen to the child while we were away, and I had to begin the teasing over from the beginning. Such a fuss, there was, and once I gave it up & thought it never wld be managed. At last, one morning at breakfast he said, "Well, .. then we will set off this evening". The carriage, with Wilson, the balia and Baby, took us down to the station house towards Pisa, & after they left us at the railroad they went on with their usual drive. It was hard to kiss little Babe, .. who did'nt care a straw, .. and to say 'good bye' to Flush, who had to be held fast—poor dear Flush; we didn't take Flush with us. Pray, Arabel, dont fancy that Flush is uncared for now; and pray, Henrietta, dont imagine for a moment that either of us denies Flush's soul. Both Robert & I, on the contrary, are more than ever sure that he has a soul, and a good, true, thoughtful soul too! Well, but we did'nt take him with us. We left him with Baby. Then on we went to Pisa, arrived after three hours, about eight o'clock p.m.—left our carpet bag at the diligence-office & thought we had done wonders in taking the coupé of the diligence to Spezzia, which diligence was set out at half past twelve the same night. To pass the time, we intended to loiter in the cathedral, & then to pay a visit to the Irvings, and to go to a caffé [sic]—for refreshment. As we approached the cathedral, a voice said "Is it possible"? and the kind, cordial Irvings stood there, delighted to see us. So after seeing together the bones of San Raniero which were exposed for the occasion as it was his festa .. (there was an illumination in Pisa, and a particularly brilliant one, inasmuch as the saint was offended last year at the scarcity of candles, which produced the Austrian invasion & various other evils, ..) we went home with them & they gave us tea, .. or rather supper & tea together, prawns, ices, cold chicken, cakes of all kinds. Nothing could be more considerate, & we did justice to everything. Then they kept us, wouldn't let us go, until past twelve o'clock, & M! Irving walked down with us to the diligence-office. Most agreeable, intelligent people, certainly; and the young man is so miraculously better, after hanging over the grave for months, that it was quite pleasant to see him & them so happy again—He has a great fancy for us,
and Mr Irving told us that he was always longing to go to Florence, “because M'l & M'l Browning were there”. In spite of illness, he has lately taken honours in the Pisan university, to his father’s great satisfaction. Mr Irving is an attractive, vivacious little creature, as I think I told you once—owing something to art, in her remarkable youthfulness of appearance, and a good deal to nature:—clever too, and spirited:—we both like her. She professed to have turned Tory extraordinary, having been frightened out of her wits during the late disturbances, .. going to bed, for nights & nights, in an agony of terror:—she hoped that we didn’t pretend to object to the Austrians!! Mr Irving, who is an extreme liberal, spoke despondently of the prospects of Italy, and shook his head over the doings in Rome. He believes that the real Romans are not the fighters in the breach—he blamed Mazzini for want of wide views & discretion. As a patriot & hero let none accuse him—but as a wise man (and wisdom sh’d be a part of virtue,) there are other words to say. I consider Rome with an unspeakable melancholy. What France is doing, has been an alternative; and you must consider her line of conduct in relation to the policy of Europe generally & not abstractedly. It seems to me impossible not to regret the bombardment of dear Rome, but most unjust not to remember that if France had stood off, her fate would have been yet more miserable. Was Austria to be allowed to impose an absolute Pope, unconditionally? Yet there was nothing for France to do apart from her actual doing, but to allow this, unless she had recognized in haste the Roman republic & rushed hastily into a general war. My opinion has always been that Mazzini sh’d have accepted the terms of France in the interests of Italy. The passiveness of the French w’d have been worse than their activity—and I hope you will observe the outcry of the whole Tory press against this act of France, together with the significant protest of the papal nuncio,—oh, they all know very well that the pope wont be made absolute by France. At the same time, the expedition has been badly managed, .. and there is much to go to one’s heart in the condition of Rome. I sh’d feel still more for those who are fighting there if they had fought well before, as they might have done, & shut the gates of Italy against Austria. Piedmont had no helpers, she who fought for all—Where were the helpers of Venice? yet Venice struggles on still, heroic without a crime: the blood of no Rossi cries out from her. If I led a regiment it w’d be for Venice. Yet Robert is delighted that you sh’d care so much for Rome, & he has been himself in the most painful anxiety— See how one can’t help writing on these subjects, yet I agree that there’s a peril in it! Letters are opened, dogs are to be killed in the streets (lest they sh’d interfere with the Austrian cavalry[]), all sorts of insolences perpetrated .. The blood boils in my veins sometimes—but poor Tuscany is now “a province of Austria” indeed. The walls were overwritten in various places with these words, “uniti con Roma”, .. and some cruel wit has preceded them with a large P ..! “puniti con Roma”. Now I must go on to talk of something else.

We found the coupé [sic] we had striven for, different from other coupés [sic], & quite exposed to the weather, .. the rain drove in our faces all night, .. a drizzle of rain, dying my cheeks black from my veil. Impossible to sleep, though Robert tucked up my feet across his knees as usual. At seven in the morning we arrived at Pietra Santa, & were allowed half an hour for breakfast .. I made my way to a bedroom & washed my face & tied up my hair, which hung down straight below my waist— The effect on the waiters must have been prodigious! An excellent, clean breakfast put a little life into us, and we had the inside of the diligence the whole way to Spezzia.
Letter 41

[23 June 1849] 280

for the rest of the day. At two we arrived there, after passing through the most exquisite & varied country you can imagine—through Massa, & Carrara & the heart of the white marble mountains, through olive-forests & chestnut-forests, the trees thronging the ways on each side of us, swinging their thick ropes of vines. I never saw the olive grow so magnificently like a forest tree as in this country, nor the vines so luxuriant. Italy never struck me as so wonderfully beautiful. Spezzia (you will wonder at our going to Spezzia, but Robert seemed to have a fancy for Spezzia & the sea, so I took care to agree at once ... I have been really uneasy about him Arabel!) Spezzia is full of beauty—the hills sweeping down abruptly into the blue waves & carrying the woods with them. There is an esplanade in front of the town close to the sea, an avenue a mile long of accacia trees: shade & coolness there is always. The town itself is small & noisy, full of men, soldiers & fishermen, & mosquitos, scarcely a woman to be seen anywhere,—but beyond the gates of the town, they swore to us, the mosquitos do not reach. We went to look at a few houses, which were pleasantly situated enough, and found the prices enormous. I sh¹ think the proprietors had gone mad or else that they waited for mad visitors—Think of five or six little, brick floored rooms, with two or three summer-house chairs (without a cushion) in each, to be charged from ten to fourteen guineas a month!—here, in Italy! Sane or insane, the people did not persuade us, seeing that such prices were altogether beyond our means,—so that, after staying two days in an inn of indescribable beastliness, we turned back to Pietra Santa, setting off at five in the morning, arrived there to dinner at two, took a light carriage & drove to Seravezza, which has the reputation of being cool, and is a very beautiful mountain-village, situated in the close fist of the mountains, romantic rocks driving in their perpendicular wedges to the houses' roots, and a wild stream working itself into white anger, like curdled milk, through the whole town. We saw two apartments—one miserable, & both too dear—& then we returned to Pietra Santa, & took another carriage straight on to the Baths of Lucca. Now Robert was always prejudiced against the Baths of Lucca, because the English always thronged there & gave it a watering place notoriety—but I persuaded him to go there just to see it, & no more. It seemed a reproach not to have seen these celebrated Baths, & purely to please me he agreed to cast a glance over them on our way to some mountain wilderness, such as the frontier town of San Marcello, or Cutigliano farther on. Well—we went to the Baths of Lucca. The people at Pietra Santa gave us only a one horse carriage & deceived us as to the distance, and it was nearly two in the morning before we reached the hotel at the Baths. Imagine how exhausted I was! No springs (or nothing worth mentioning!) to the carriage and nothing eaten since our dinner at two in the day. It was pitch dark except for the fire-flies, which were so numerous that we seemed to be travelling through the stars, the milky way. Both of us were very tired (imagine how wonderfully stronger I must be to be able to bear it at all!) and Robert comforted me by predictions that we should'nt attain to even a crust of bread at the hotel at that time of night, to which I answered soothingly that in such a case I sh¹ be dead before morning. Well, we arrived: the waiter & chambermaid in dishevelled condition, came to offer their services, and we asked humbly for beds and a little something to eat, a cup of tea if it were possible. Upon which, by the time I had brushed the dust out of my hair & put on my nightcap, (which I did directly to have the less to do afterwards) up came a splendid collation—tea, hot rolls, excellent butter, an English
ham, a cold chicken, and a fruit tart, .. just as if we had been expected all day. It is the most admirable hotel possible, and I could'nt have believed in the supernatural cleanliness & zelacrity [sic] of it on this side the Alps. In the morning I was still alive. We went to find out the Ogilvys who were charmed to see us, or seemed so, & recommended a house adjoining their own, .. Robert having lost his prejudices against the place, as by the touch of a talisman, in looking up to the noble mountains & down to the bounding river. I did'nt persuade him, .. I would'nt say a word. I felt it to be such an object that he sh'd like the place we went to, that I rather begged him to do nothing in a hurry, & to see San Marcello before he decided. But, Arabel, certainly the Baths of Lucca is an exquisite place. You may take some suggestion of it from Malvern, .. only Malvern is nothing in comparison. There is a throng of mountains, much higher of course & more romantic than the Worcestershire hills, .. the chesnut woods running up them perpendicularly, and the pretty, bright village, with a scattering of villa residences, burrowing, like rabbits, in the clefts of the rocks, .. & on each side of the alive little river, which rushes with a ceaseless sound & sequence of waterfalls through the midst of the whole. You look up at some of the houses, and wonder if the people who live there have wings. It is most beautiful. The town itself is not larger than Great Malvern, .. perhaps with more shops .. the quiet, absolute— and in consequence of the flight of the English from Italy, plenty of vacant houses at very reasonable prices— I call ten shillings a week a reasonable price. Then, there is a reading room where one can see the date of the rest of the world coming to an end, (which it seems to be doing rapidly,) and circulating libraries where one can get some sort of books, good or bad. And there are donkeys with spanish side-saddles, .. & the air is cool & refreshing, & famous for its influence over children. And the cleanliness is wonderful: the houses look as if they washed their faces in the river every morning. Some people compare this place to Matlock, others to scenes in Cumberland, .. & I bid you think of Malvern—so you may suppose that it is really very beautiful. You have no stare as at Malvern—so you are not to think of that. It is a deep valley .. with mountains hand in hand all round it! and you only see their sides & the ravines, & the tops against the blue sky.

We stayed a whole day at these Baths, and I walked twice in the course of it up to the Bagni Caldi—steeper than any staircase—weak people are carried up in portantini!! I was astonished at myself—something in the change of air must have added to my actual strength, which is wonderfully improved, as you may suppose. I seem to be new strung all over. I wont say that I was'nt tired, for I was tired, & have felt so ever since, but it has done me no sort of harm,—none. We dined at the table d'hôte connected with the hotel, in company with Gibson (the sculptor from Rome) & two or three other English gentlemen. Going to the reading room, somebody came up with a cordial face & outstretched hand .. M! Lever of Lorrequer reputation. He said .. “M! Browning, I believe”, .. and then went on to say how he considered it his reproach, to have inhabited Florence for months together with us, without making our personal acquaintance. He has an open countenance radiant with good humour, & the most frank, ingratiating manner possible—no expression of high intellect; but the mind is active & able, & the animal spirits minister to it. He did his best to recommend the Bagni, and said that he was there with eight horses & six servants, & never lived so cheaply in his life. In truth, M! Lever lives on a very large scale wherever he is, & nobody knows how he does it. It is said that he makes all his money by literature; and, if so, he finds it a thriving trade.
Letter 41

[23 June 1849] 282

His youngest child is five months old22 ... nearly two months older than ours: & you w'd have thought that he provided for it by persuading us to settle at the Bagni, ... so eagerly he argued the point. Of course that was a touch of the blarney. No Irish accent, though, and particularly gentlemanly in the conventional sense of manners.23 Gibson is like Carlyle, Robert says—Slow and quiet in his way of talking—small features, &, in proportion to them, a wide brow. Not a man of high education evidently—very simple & earnest, like all great artists, or most of them. We had tea with the Ogilvys, & returning to the hotel to sleep, were on the road to Lucca (the town—15 miles off) at four in the morning ... at Lucca, took the railroad, & paid 11d each for our journey of an hour to Pisa. At Pisa we had to wait an hour & a half for the Florence railroad,—went into a caffè & had breakfast .. (two great breakfast cups of coffee, & two buttered hot rolls, ...) for which breakfast we paid two pence halfpenny each. For two & sixpence each we went to Florence by the railroad, ... a journey of three hours & some sixty miles ... and the nearer we went to Florence the hotter we grew,—hotter & hotter. What made me hotter still than the sun, was a sudden anxiety about little babe—If anything had happened to him we could not have heard—Wilson did not know where to write. We scarcely dared speak to the porter as we reached home, ... till he said "Tutto va bene"24 ... which made us very happy. Then, we rushed up stairs, saw at the door of our apartment, there, was Wilson, & the balia & the child in her arms! He opened wide his blue eyes, with wonder in them at such an irruption of kisses! he looked rosier & fatter & sweeter than ever—he always smells like a rose after rain. Wilson said that he had been in a constant paradise of good humour, laughing & cooing. He is more goodhumoured than ever, I think. Now he does'nt cry even when he is dressed, unless he happens to be very sleepy indeed. Not that he pretends to like being dressed, only if you talk to him & take off his attention, it is a different thing. Sometimes he makes a little pettish mouth, drawing down the comers, ... trying to cry—& then he laughs instead—and we have found out a brass ornament on the chest of drawers which being loose, twirls & goes round, and as he considers this by far the most wonderful phenomenon he has yet seen in the world, he will submit to any operation, .. having his stays tied & all, .. rather than turn his eyes from it. You need'nt be afraid of the bath any of you—it is not more than tepid now that the weather is so hot. If you were to look at him, you would not fancy that he had been relaxed unduly by warm water. Henrietta is shocked at our (Robert & me) going to see him bathed together, but such a pretty sight it is, that I for one, have quite forgotten to think of the indecency of it. Never once has he cried in relation to water. He is in ecstasies to get in, and it is his ambition to make a great splash, ... all over the carpet and into his own eyes, ... and then he laughs, he is so pleased. Is not this better than to make a poor child scream with terror, which the use of cold water, or even what he felt to be cold water, w'ld be sure to do? This sort of bathing does him good—he seems to expand in the bath. The water has been gradually made colder, and now it is tepid ... not more than that, ... and so it is to be left. I certainly think that our system has answered admirably, & you w'd say so if you saw him. His body looks as if it were modelled in wax, the skin is so smooth and rose-white, and the limbs so rounded & dimpled. There never has been the least irritation of the skin anywhere, though he is so fat that it might have been expected. We have not used soap once to him, except occasionally to his head. What's the use of soap when he is at least five minutes in the bath every morning, & when he has a half bath in a basin,
every evening? Wilson is so angry with me for telling you his eyes are small. I had said so once or twice, & then she had exclaimed that “really she did’nt know when I should be satisfied”—but “how I could go & write such a thing to England, was past her understanding”. (Perhaps I did it to prove to you my virtuous impartiality.) She declares that his eyes are not small, .. just in proportion .. and indeed it [is] her opinion that they w^d be quite ugly if they were any larger. Dear Wilson is very fond of the child & thinks him perfect altogether, and is sure that you have none of you any idea of his sweetness & goodness. You cant understand how he can be like Robert & Henrietta too—nor can I precisely. (Sophia Cottrell told me yesterday that I had grown the image of Henrietta myself— “She never saw such a change in any human being! Quite miraculous it was.”— It must be, if I am like Henrietta!—) In fact I dont think he is like any specific person in my family; though there is a family look sometimes, particularly when he smiles. The likeness is to Robert—but you would not see it, I dare say, because unless you were very familiar with Robert’s features and expression, you could not trace a resemblance in the little face where everything is round & rosy & infantine. When he is grave & shuts his lips close, he is very like Robert, who thinks that he is like his mother, .. which may well be. Yet people say sometimes that he has my forehead & eyes—Wilson does; & there is a look of the Barretts certainly. One thing is sure that he is full of intelligence—so fond of music that he remains fixed while Robert plays .. & beginning to prove a most precocious understanding in most things. A child, eighteen months old, was here the other day—Annunciata’s granddaughter—and his legs were found to be just double the size—of hers. People wonder at him for size & vigour, & guess his age at two or three months older than what is true—yet with all this strength there is no coarseness—on the contrary his features & complexion are very delicate .. like a little girl’s—he is taken for a girl often. Oh darling Arabel, how I too am grieved that you sh^ not see him in his quite babyhood! it is a grievous disappointment indeed. Cant you imagine what a joy I miss, in looking down at our happy, shattered plans? Well—as you say, it is impossible to know where we may be driven by the next current of wind. The state of Italy does not admit of any stedfast scheme of habitation— We shall go to the Baths of Lucca for a time,— quite necessary for Robert, and indeed for us all, the heat here being extreme—the thermometer at eighty in my bedroom. We have written an offer to Pagnini the keeper of the hotel,25 .. of nine shillings a day (two francesconi) for us all, our two selves, Wilson & the balia, for which he is to give us a suite of private rooms, & to provide breakfast & tea in our rooms—we agreeing to dine at the table d’hôte. He told us that he w^d do it for thirteen & sixpence—we have no answer to our offer nor can till tomorrow. Just now comes a letter from M! Irving to Robert, begging to know if we are going to the Baths of Lucca, by return of post—because if we go, he will. See what favorites we are!—Yes, and we like them very much indeed—we write to say that we go.

M! Righi is settled in his shop at Prato & beginning to prosper. He writes to Wilson & comes to see her very regularly, and she is quite satisfied with him. Indeed I believe him to be a young man of excellent principles & sincerely attached to her. As to their marrying, they will be prudent & wait till they can marry with good prospects. There is a subject, Arabel, on which I perfectly agree with you—more than I like to say, even. A great & superfluous fuss is made about income, only this is not a question on which one can judge for another. At the same time, being quite
clear of debt is necessary, and also a determination to limit one’s desires to one’s means. If one
cant eat white bread, there is brown bread: & one lives as well on either! How little Robert & I
spend on dress, for instance, would surprise you, who are not extravagant in such things! Give
my dearest love to dearest Trippy—Oh, I do hope that M’ns Gordon will satisfy her just claim—I
do hope so! Arabel, will you try to get my ‘Seraphim’ sent to me by M’ns Gordon? If it were
possible, we sh’d like to have Robert’s book beside—and in the case of its being so, send to Miss
Browning for it—will you? We wanted to send you a Daguer[re]otype of Baby, if we could manage
it, by Count Cottrell. but he made so many complaints to us of the commissions with which
he was overpowered, that we did not dare to ask him to do anything for us. Darling Arabel,
persevere in the homeopathy, since it does you good, & I can easily conceive of that. Take
care, in yourself, of what I so unspeakably love. May God bless you, my dearest!

Your Ba—

Thanks on thanks for your letters.

Direct Bagni di Lucca, Toscana.—and do write—I beseech you write.

Love to dearest Minny.

We don’t go to the Hotel after all—because to our surprise the proprietor of a delightful
apartment has closed with our offer of twelve pounds for 4 months. We shan’t stay so long
perhaps. He asked eighteen.

I wonder at your imaginations about Flush. How ungrateful & fickle you think me! Why
Flush has as much love & perhaps more attention than ever. He is no longer jealous of Baby, &
when baby lies on the floor on aunt Jane’s worsted couvre-pied (did she ever think it would
come to such use) Flush lies close beside.

Address, on integral page: Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12 Beaumont Street / Devonshire
Place / New Road / London—

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. RB wrote to Sarianna on 23 June as noted in his letter of 2[-5] July 1849 (ms at Robert Browning Settlement,
London). This letter would have been enclosed with that one, and bears a London postmark of 4 July 1849.

2. The Gulf of Spezia is on the coast road about midway between Pisa and Genoa. According to Murray’s
Hand-Book For Travellers in Northern Italy (London: John Murray, 1847), it is “not less remarkable for its
beauty than its security ... possessing from nature more advantages than the art of man could possibly bestow”
(p. 114). EBB told Miss Mitford that “Spezzia wheels the blue sea into the arms of the wooded mountains,—
and we had a glance at Shelley’s house at Lerici. It was melancholy to me of course” (EBB-MRM, III, 272).

3. “Wet nurse.”

4. This word does not occur in the OED; EBB seems to have coined it.

5. Cf. EBB’s comment to Thomas Westwood in a letter dated 18 November 1844: “Besides Flush has a soul
to love. Do you not believe that dogs have souls? I am thinking of writing a treatise on the subject” (BC, 9,
234). Cf. also RB, “Tray,” line 45: “How brain secretes dog’s soul, we’ll see!”


7. San Ranieri of Pisa (1117–61), a well-educated son of a wealthy Pisan merchant, who made a pilgrimage
to the Holy Land, and then returned to Pisa where his healings and conversions resulted in his eventual
canonization, probably by Alexander III. San Ranieri was made the patron saint of Pisa in the 13th century, and
according to Murray’s Hand-Book, “there is a triennial fête in honour of him called the Illuminaria, early in
June, when the whole of the Lung’Arno is illuminated. It is a beautiful sight” (p. 452). Murray’s also notes that
the transept in the cathedral is "called the Crociera di San Ranieri," (p. 444), and there are various representations of his life and works by Simone Memmi in the Campo Santo (p. 452).

8. Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–72), patriot, revolutionary, author and critic, was the founder of "Young Italy," which became the central organization for the Italian nationalist movement. He was instrumental in the recent formation of a republic at Rome, and ruled briefly for a time. Both RB and EBB were originally supporters of Mazzini’s aims for a democratic and united Italy, but they became disillusioned with some of his extreme ideas, such as assassination, which he suggested only as a last resort. Mazzini did not share Cavour’s belief that kings and nobles have the best interests of common people at heart. Mazzini had written to RB upon the publication of "Italy in England" in 1845 (see BC, 11, 169–171), and both Brownings met him in London in July 1852.

9. According to George Martin, "the sympathy of Europe as a whole was with the pope. No government recognized the new Roman Republic. … Practical politicians joined the devout in insisting that the pope must return to Rome" (The Red Shirt and the Cross of Savoy, New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1969, pp. 350–351). Fighting began in Rome in late April, and in early June 1849, the French army began the siege of Rome. After that it was only a matter of days before Rome fell; however, the Pope did not return to Rome until the following April.

10. EBB refers to the cold-blooded assassination of the Pope’s unpopular premier, Count Pellegrino di Rossi (see letter 33, note 23). She accuses "Italy" of his murder in Casa Guidi Windows, II, 544–550.

11. “United with Rome,” and “punished with Rome.”

12. About halfway between Pisa and Spezia.

13. According to Murray’s Hand-Book “the road to Lucca [from Massa and Carrara] passes through a most fertile country … The noble forests of olives also add much to the fine and peculiar character of the scene” (p. 407).

14. Murray’s describes Seravezza as “a cool cheap and picturesque summer residence,—a sort of quiet miniature Bagni di Lucca” (p. 407).

15. Bagni di Lucca is about 15 miles from Lucca, and Murray’s notes that an excursion to the baths “occupies a summer’s day” (p. 415). The Brownings presumably did not go via Lucca, but rather went east across the mountains, travelling a distance of more than 15 miles, hence the lengthy journey.

16. San Marcello and Cutigliano are to the northeast of Bagni di Lucca, and were situated at that time on the border between Tuscany and Modena.

17. A picturesque area in northwest England; Matlock was a popular resort with mineral springs and baths.

18. EBB uses this word here, as she does in letter 56 (see note 3), to mean “view” or “vista;” however, I have been unable to trace such a definition for this word.

19. "Sedan chairs." Bagni Caldi is one of three villages of the Bagni di Lucca; the other two being Ponte a Serraglio and Bagno alla Villa. Murray’s assured travellers that “those who prefer an exciting air, will find it in perfection in this situation” (p. 418).

20. John Gibson (1790–1860), an English sculptor born in Wales, had gone to Rome in 1817. He studied with Canova and Thorwaldsen, and was acquainted with Flaxman. Gibson was known for his efforts to revive the art of polychrome sculpture, which was met with mixed critical acclaim. RB refers to him in “Youth and Art” (line 8).

21. Charles James Lever (1806–72) was an Irish author of popular novels Harry Lorrequer (1839), Charles O’Malley (1841), and Jack Hinton the Guardsman (1843). In a letter to Miss Mitford written in July 1843, EBB wrote: “I hate & detest Lever—cannot read him even for your sake … my dislike to Mr. Lever is founded on the fact that he believes life to be a jest” (BC, 7, 253). R.H. Horne wrote about Lever in A New Spirit of the Age (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1844), and in response to Horne’s request for EBB’s opinion, she described Lever’s writing as “contracted & conventional, & unrefined in his line of conventionality” (BC, 8, 188).

22. The Levers’ youngest child, a daughter named Sydney, was born on 20 January 1849 at Bagni di Lucca.

23. EBB also told Miss Mitford that Lever had “not the slightest Irish accent” (EBB-MRM, III, 274). However, Lever’s biographer, Edmund Downey, recorded: "'Lever's accent,' according to Major Dwyer, 'was au fond Dublinian.' 'He never dropped his Irish manner or his Irish tongue,' says Anthony Trollope, who was an excellent

24. “All’s well,” or “everything’s fine.”

25. Gustavo Pagnini was hotelier in Bagni di Lucca. He operated three hotels which were “furnished with fireplaces, carpets, and every necessary accommodation” (W. Snow, *Hand Book for the Baths of Lucca*, Pisa: Rosa Vannuchi, 1846, p. 23). He also acted as an agent to find accommodation or lodgings.

26. Taken as a reference to the two-volume edition of RB’s poems published earlier in 1849. The Brownings had been waiting for a copy since January (see letter 33).

27. There is no evidence that a likeness of Pen Browning was made at this time.

28. i.e., the Casa Valeri; see the following letter. The Brownings stayed in Bagni di Lucca from 30 June until 17 October.

29. “Coverlet,” or “quilt.”

---

**Letter 42**

[Bagni di Lucca]

July 4, [1849]

My ever ever dearest Arabel, on this dearest day I write one word to say how I love you, think of you always, long to see you with my soul! May God bless you, & make you & keep you happy. Never will you find any in the world to love you better than I do, more tenderly, more gratefully, my own dear sister. May God bless you. See what a sketch I have made for you to laugh at & catch up some idea of the place we have climbed to. The great tree in the upper drawing is a mimosa tree, which shuts up its fan like leaves at night & shows bright yellow blossoms underneath, to meet the moon. It stands half sheathed in a high hedge of box & jasmine. I hope you will be able to make out where the hills are covered with wood, . . . for the most part chesnut-forests, . . . and certainly you will guess at the various beauty of the mountain shapes, peak behind peak. In the lower drawing, is our garden & arbour, with the perpendicular road up to us—& dont overlook the river at the bottom of the deep valley. Neither my skill, nor my paper & pencil are sufficient to show you how it shines whitely & rushes murmurously. 2 Indeed the beauty of this place is hard to suggest to you. At every turn you have romantic bursts of scenery, & Robert who penetrated deeper into the mountains yesterday, came back in a rapture, & talked wildly about torrents, & precipices & deserted villages– An old woman met him in some solitude & exclaimed, . . “tu sei troppo curioso! tu sarai perduto in queste montagne!” 3 Oh that you were here, Arabel. It is the very place for you to enjoy. Observe the
wildness of the look of the hills! The country is not cut up here with hedges as in England, not
even where it is cultivated,—and these vast vast mountains, even in England, could not be tamed so.
A spade, if planted, in one of the perpendicular sides, would fall out of itself. Yet there is room
for the vintage in hollows, & where it is not too steep— And the chesnut forests have crooked
roots to hang by. I am going to ride on a donkey to keep pace with Robert! As to little Baby, he is
out all day, . . sometimes for hours without his hat, with his bare arms. I told Henrietta yesterday
that the heat of Florence made him paler, . . & just afterwards he came in with cheeks like
roses & his eyes sparkling out of his head, . . only very dissatisfied to have to come in at all.
Wilson says that he is so strong, he quite frightens her sometimes. She expects him to get down
& walk away. When lying flat down on the floor, if you put out your two fingers the child will
sieve [sic] them in his fists & drag himself up by them till he sits quite straight & w'd stand, if he
were allowed:—and he not four months old yet! Then he understands everything: he plays with
Flush's ears & talks to him. By the way, I forgot to tell you that I cant help calling him Flush, and
Flush, Baby—& Robert is apt to make the same mistake— Now that he is baptized, we must try to
treat him with more respect. Robert called on the minister M. Drouin* & was delighted with him:
he is a devout man & has much Christian simplicity. He said that Robert must forgive him for
asking a question, . . but, "as we were English, what were our reasons for preferring the French
Lutheran to the English church". Robert entered with detail into our reasons:—after which, he
observed that were perfectly justified & right in his opinion, & that he sh'd have great pleasure
in baptizing our child. He seemed to understand the state of religious parties in England, & talked
about them with melancholy. I hope we shall be friends when we return to Florence— . Yesterday,
M! Lever called on us, & brought the largest dog I ever saw except that memorable one of M!
Biscoe's.® Just imagine Flush beginning instantly to bark at him!! —— Flush is a regular Tuscan!
He knew perfectly well that it was a gentle, magnanimous dog, and so he who runs away from all
the tiney [sic] curs, thought he w'd show off sublimely. We had to send him out of the room.
There is a hot spring here which rushes out of a rock, & Flush is washed there every day. He
looks as always he does in the summer, as ill as he well can—but he is not really ill, & he enjoys
the place & the coolness & the running in & out, . . which, since the last Austrian proclamation,
we have had to restrain him from at Florence. Think of aunt Jane's letter to me never reaching
me® and I suspect that mine to uncle Hedley has equally 'fallen upon evil days',® as Bummy did
not mention it. Explain about it for me. This morning while we were at breakfast, came a note
from Sophia Cottrell, who had just arrived, to beg Robert to go about with her to look for houses—
and he has gone, though by no means well today. He will be much the better, I hope & trust, for
this place, and is delighted with it, just as I am. Dont think, because you see houses in the sketch,
that we are in a town—there is a mere scattering of houses, & we can go out & in as if in a
solitude. But when you go out & in you go up & down. Such winding paths, steps in the rock, all
sorts of contrivances for climbing & losing your way. Oh Arabel, that you were here! Robert has
come back & has succeeded in his house-seeking with Sophia Cottrell. She has settled at the villa
. . the other village . . much less cool, Robert says, than where we are, but more accessible.® The
Miss Tulks & she live together—& the former are to arrive today, having been detained at Lucca
by the illness of the invalid. Your homeopathy, Arabel, does nothing for her, though she has
been trying it this year—but the other sister declares that she is no longer obliged to take nightly immense doses of Epsom salts & that she owes this to the homeopathists. Sophia is coming to see me today, she says. While Baby was out walking today, an English gentleman passed & patted him on the arm. Flush always goes out walking with him,—but I was considerably flattered, when Robert & I met his walking party a day or two since, & Flush chose rather to go with me.

Accounts from Florence mention a state of siege. Things cant continue in their present state. Here it is tranquillity itself, & they talk of the Grand Duke’s coming here. Nobody wants him, I am sure!—Living is even cheaper than at Florence—excellent butter at two pence a pound—only an Italian pound has two ounces less than the English, you will remember.9 We have heaps of mountain strawberries (the real Alpine) & eggs newly laid. Arabel, will you tell dear Nelly Jago that if I do not write by this post, it is not that I do not deeply sympathize with & congratulate her. I am going to write to her very soon. I wish I could do for her a little of the good she did to me under similar circumstances. It is curious how much less I seem to have suffered from depression of spirits than almost everyone else: &, now I look back upon the crisis, I am certain I have endured more pain on other occasions—For instance… do you remember the spasms I had in Wimpole Street, when you gave me the hot brandy,10 my own dearest Arabel? That pain was certainly three times as bad at least—only it did not last so long, there was the saving point: or rather it did not come & go, come & go for one & twenty hours. I dare say that many women suffer much more than I did, & I can only speak of what I felt. Madame Biondi told me that in her belief Italian women suffer more than Englishwomen, …

What do you think she bade me give my baby when he was six months old? He is to have nothing but the sucking till then—& on the ninth of September, once a day he is to begin to have … what do you imagine? Pap made of bread & water, with salt in it, & a small tea spoonful of oil— I exclaimed & protested, but Robert insists upon it that I am “full of prejudices,” & that Madame Biondi’s instructions are to be strictly attended to. So my only hope is that the unfortunate child will reject the unpalatable [sic] food, proving himself the true son of his mother. For my part, nothing induces me to touch oil, whatever philosophy I may hear about it. God bless you my own, own Arabel. Write to your Ba.

Address: on integral page: Arabel.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year determined from EBB’s labelling the upper sketch “Casa Valeri Bagni Caldi, Bagni di Lucca.”
2. Cf. Aurora Leigh, VII, 1168-1173: “… saluting on the bridge / The hem of such before ’twas caught away / Beyond the peaks of Lucca. Underneath, / The river, just escaping from the weight / Of that intolerable glory, ran / In acquiescent shadow murmurously.”
3. “You are too curious! you will get lost in these mountains!”
4. Moise Droin (1806–97). RB wrote to Sarianna on 2 July 1849 that Pen was baptized on the 28th June “at the French Evangelical Protestant Church, being the chapel at the Prussian Legation at Florence. I enclose the certificate, which is of the birth as well as baptism; please take care that it is properly registered, with the whole of the above description, as difficulties sometimes arise from omissions or negligent entries … I saw the minister, a very simple, good and sincere man … The minister’s name, illegible in the certificate, is Droin” (LRB, p. 23).
Letter 42
4 July [1849]

Pen's "Certificat de Naissance et de Baptême" was sold as an unspecified lot in Browning Collections, and is now at ABL (see Reconstruction, L45).

5. Writing from Sidmouth in May 1834, EBB told Hugh Stuart Boyd: "You will be surprised to hear that Mr. Joseph Biscoe arrived here three weeks ago with his bride ... He met Arabel & me in the lane opposite to our house, & introduced to us Mrs. Joseph Biscoe ... A splendid Mount St Bernard dog follows them about, & makes them celebrated people at Sidmouth" (BC, 3, 92).

6. This letter is not extant.


8. The Cottrells had taken a house in Ponte a Serraglio.

9. See letter 13, note 5.

10. I have been unable to trace any record of this specific illness.

11. A little more than a line has been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

Letter 43

[Bagni di Lucca]  
August 17th [1849]

My beloved Arabel I have your letter & begin by thanking you & reproaching you (you will be pleased to understand it as a real, serious reproach of somebody in a state of vexation) for sending Baby the frock you speak of. Dearest Arabel, you are wrong to be so kind, ... and indeed I suspect you must be mad when you set down in writing that you regret not having sent any more presents!! Have you a genius of the Lamp? Yes! of the 'old lamp', which always burns bright with affection for me. But dont rub it to make more miracles ... you will make me enraged. I have been overwhelmed with presents from dearest Trippy & Henrietta & your darling self; and I give you all warning that henceforward I shall kick against the prick of all such rose-bushes. Still, I wont say that the 'frock' is'nt likely to please me. Worked by your hands, how could it else? And, however thick the material, it wont be too thick for the winter—do not fear—for Wilson & I have agreed that Baby must have mouseline de laine & merino in the cold weather, and she had already cut off the tail of his cashmere mantle to make a frock of when the time comes. Twice since we came here Sophia Cottrell's child has come to see us in a merino frock—which certainly struck us all as most extraordinary in the summer-months—but that baby is fenced in against every breath of air, poor little Lily ... (they call her Lily: it is'nt a flower of speech on my part.), and whenever she comes, somebody is to shut the window or the door or something, ... (Imagine this, in Italy.) & there are dreadful fears of the dampness of sunsets & moon risings. Whereas our little Wiedeman (pronounced Weedyman—the naturalized W is not V understand, as in Germany) though less than half her age, goes out with short muslin frocks & bare arms, with a white muslin cape tied on loosely, and flourishes in all sorts of draughts by day & night, ... sleeping with the window open, undressed by the open window (no sort of precaution taken) & in the open air till dusk. He never catches cold. He is like a rose & grows with the dew.

You wont believe me perhaps, but my reason for writing today was not that I wanted to write about him. Only I could'nt help thanking you for the frock ... which I have not seen yet of course as M® Gordon has been in quarantine in Genoa & cant arrive until Saturday, ... and thanking you
Letter 43

17 August [1849] 290

for your goodness about the lace beside, .. & for every affectionate word & thought. But I am writing today about dearest Trippy, because I desire to tell you of a conversation which Robert has just had with Count Cottrell on the subject of her affairs. Your letter made me unhappy & very anxious. I had fully expected that M" Gordon would have seen Trippy & been frank as to her means of atoning for the wrong inflicted, leaving them loyally at Trippy's disposal. If she had done this we sh'd all have respected & pitied her—she would have done well & honourably. The account you sent us on the other hand .. what was to be said of that? Robert formed so strong an opinion of the whole case that he declared we could have nothing to say to her when she came, .. that he did not like for either my sake or his own, to associate with persons so absolutely wanting in common integrity. I said "Let us see" at least. I still had some hope. Well, the day before yesterday, we met the Cottrells who had called on us & found nobody at home. Robert observed a certain embarrassment in the manner of both of them; and, said he, "I am confident Cottrell wants to have the subject out & done with";—only there was no opportunity at the "Ponte" where we met, for private conversation. This morning he went to return their visit, and after seeing Sophia a message came from Count Cottrell to ask him to go into the next room—The object was plain—Robert had determined to say nothing unless the occasion was given,—but, in that case, to speak out fully & frankly his own view of the affair, without caring for any one— We agreed before he went, that it was best to do so, & not to leave M" Gordon in the delusion that the shame was covered by the misfortune, in the eyes of bystanders. I particularly begged him, to prevent them from relying on Papa, which probably they had been doing .. which certainly they had, since the first words showed it— "Miss Tripsack is living at M's Barrett's, is she not?" And so they plunged into the subject. Count Cottrell evidently wanted to know how much Robert knew & what his impression was .. Robert avoided stigmatizing M' Gordon's conduct as much as possible except as the facts did so,—& began by observing that of course it was no business of his, (Robert's) except as Miss Tripsack was the oldest & dearest of friends to his wife, but that that was one of the closest of ties to him, & that she had been kindly affectionate to us both since our marriage—that I had been very anxious on the subject, & that he had naturally heard the particulars of the whole business—considered it most deplorable—told Count Cottrell how it began by the absolute trust which Trippy placed in M' Gordon, both as a lawyer & a friend .. how she imagined that her money was going to M' Tulk & not himself .. how he gave her securities which were just worth nothing .. & how it ended in her ruin, through excess of faith. A great deal more he said, which I needn't write here— Count Cottrell replied very little, .. made no excuses—Robert said he was sorry for him—which was something for Robert to say—for he has been raging against Count Cottrell for putting his hand to so dirty a business as the escorting M's Gordon through London under the presumed circumstances. He made it quite clear that Papa meant to do nothing—"Not" said Robert "that M: Barrett is at all deficient in generosity, .. but that he is very peculiar." (It was right not to allow them to hang their consciences to dry on a supposition like that .. although I myself cant doubt for a moment that Papa only waits the conclusion of the affair to come forward as he ought:7 only it was just & right that M" Gordon should not depend on any probability of the kind.) Robert's impression is that they have all been just "waiting to see" whether there was a chance of escaping the restitution, & what sort of view
was likely to be taken of the point, if they did, by persons acquainted with the whole subject. After a good deal of conversation, Count Cottrell said . . . “Well, my sister in law has five hundred a year, and if she lives with economy & is a little assisted by her aunts, she may be able to spare an annual hundred—but more than that, it will be impossible for her to do for Miss Tripsack.” Without making any observation as to the adequacy of such an arrangement, Robert repeated that it was a most hard case, & shâ‖ be a lesson to women not to take the administration of their affairs into their own hands. “For my part,” continued Robert, “if anyone came to me to ask me for money, I should know whether I wished to give it or not; but if a transaction of this sort were proposed to me by any friend whatever, I should refer him straight to my lawyer, not pretending to understand matters of business.” Of course a very pungent reproach to poor M! Gordon who assumed to be both lawyer & friend! Count Cottrell bore it all mildly, simply observing that his brother in law had lost his life by too assiduous efforts to replace the money lent to him.– So Robert told me all this when he returned, and although you must see that it must not be quoted, nor hinted at in any way, because it was a confidential conversation and between persons not authorized to conclude anything, I cant help writing directly to relieve my dearest Trippy’s mind a little– You see that something is likely to be done for her. Only dont let her say a word of this to the Mintos– it is strictly private. The Mintos are not likely to see a farthing of their money, and even in Trippy’s case, it seems to be less the justice than the necessity of the case which will produce the good we look for. Count Cottrell asked what Trippy had remaining– “Just four hundred pounds”, said Robert, “she who has always lived in prosperous circumstances.” I think he has done good by letting them see the view we took of the whole affair . . & he has not the least doubt in his own mind, that at least a hundred a year will be conceded. I think George might contend for the whole annual sum that she received from M! Gordon—they might be made to strain a point & give a hundred & fifty or thirty. If M! Gordon has five hundred a year in Florence, that is equal to fifteen hundred a year in London—and it is all stuff & shame talking of “perhaps economizing a hundred” out of that. I would rather, as you say, wrap myself & my children in sackcloth, in order to wipe out as far as I could the stain upon the memory of their father & my husband. By doing so, I should best comfort myself, & ennoble them. Also we know what can be done, . . we who with three servants, keep the estimate of our expenses at two hundred a year, & never exceed three . . calculating extraordinary occasions, travelling, carriage hiring, medical attendance & the like,—& living in the utmost comfort & without parsimony. Of course we cant do everything we like, . . and, who can? Not even dear M! Kenyon, who (I heard from Miss Mitford yesterday, who had it from M! Harness) has come into two hundred thousand pounds from his brother in law’s inheritance.— There’s a fortune to spend,—in addition to what he had before!– Well! I am quite satisfied with much less– We arrange everything as if we had only two hundred a year, because that’s the only settled part of our income, & we take the rest for extraordinary expenses which must come in some shape or other. Sometimes, Robert has to put off having his hair cut, and I to postpone a new pair of shoes . . but we have never yet put off paying a bill, . . & get on most admirably on the whole. Indeed I am sure that everyone thinks we are much richer than we are—which is not always very convenient— I have had to explain before now, “But we are poor—we cant do this or that”– The great rooms at Florence lead people into mistakes. With M! Gordon’s
five hundred a year we should live like the Grand Duke, .. without the spot on his reputation. Wretched Grand Duke! only not very unworthy of his subjects who have been kissing his feet & calling him 'l'intrepido' & other appropriate epithets. What do you think the heroic people of Florence are going to do next week in his company? Keep the ‘festa’ of the Emperor of Russia, to be sure! There’s consistent patriotism for you! In the meanwhile the Austrian officers are making Florence so charming, that nothing can be like it—people dont mind even being fried .. they cant ‘get away’. There have been mock fights in the Cascine to show Leopold how his faithful subjects were slaughtered in Lombardy, & he & his Florentines clap hands at it. Heroic Charles Albert dead of a broken heart before the misfortunes of Italy & the ingratitude of his friends, .. how Leopold’s guardian angel (if he has one) must envy that noble fate for the future “Fieldmarshall of the austrian armies in the peninsula”!! Leopold is to be just that, they say. And now I wont write any more of him.

Mr® Gordon is coming here with her children, & Count Cottrell has taken a house for her near his own, till the end of October for six pounds. In Florence she is to live in the apartment above the ground floor which he occupies; & I understand there is an arrangement that the two families are to be cooked for by the same cook,—Mr® Gordon engaging only one servant for her separate establishment. Certainly he has been & is full of affectionate kindness to his wife’s family. It will not be an increase of expence to him, of course; but still, not many men would like the annoyance of having six children in the same house, (too closely related to treat as strangers) and a widowed sister in law dependent on him for protection.—

My dearest dear Arabel, I admire you for your energy & perseverance about the Ragged schools, but I do think that it is quite, quite wrong in you to run such obvious risks in this cholera-time. You make my blood run cold when you tell me of walking through alleys in Westminster, & joining in crowded associations on hot evenings— Now Arabel—I do beg & beseech you to take care, & to consider the duty of modifying habits of this kind under such peculiar circumstances— I altogether doubt whether schools sh! be allowed to assemble .. schools of that character .. while the cholera lasts. Where it prevails, the authorities have often found it necessary to prevent assemblages of people even in the open air: & in close rooms there must be a more positive degree of danger. Oh do get out of town, all of you, as fast as you can— I am not easy indeed. Yet your letter on the whole made me easier— for I was very uncomfortable at the prolonged silence .. very .. I fancied myself into a thick growth of presentiments & was getting lowspirited in spite of Robert’s ratiocinations. Now, is there a chance, I wonder, of your coming abroad? On the Rhine somewhere? or in France? I hear the Certosa is delightful in the summer & autumn. I have had a letter from Mr Irving, from Leghorn, (he calls our boy a “she”, which deeply offends us,) & a friend of his has wished to persuade him to go to the Certosa, & thence to Nice for the winter. Oh, if you could come anywhere within reach, & rush down to us in a whirlwind—some of you at least. We would house you, & in what joy! The whole journey from London to this place, cost Count Cottrell, he says, nine pounds—and he took the first class in the railroads, which is not at all necessary even for women. The Ogilvys always, on the continent, travel by the second class—they declare they would’nt think of doing otherwise, & were surprised at our extravagance in doing it when we left Florence for Spezzia. So on this second journey we
took their advice, & found the second train pleasant in every way, furnished with sofas—filled with well dressed women... I dont believe that anybody in Italy except Grand Dukes & that sort of canaille (including ignorant English people like ourselves) go by first class carriages. Take care in any case to select a healthy neighbourhood within reach of medical advice, when you leave London. — What a dull letter I am writing today—but it is all written, please to understand, on dearest Trippy’s affairs— Is it not right that she should see how matters stand? Only be very particular to let no word of this pass beyond your own circle—and also ... Robert is afraid lest my brothers... George for instance... should think he had been meddling... that he had not practised the proper delicacy of reserve. I say it is impossible anyone can think so: and indeed it was important & certainly has had its weight, that his & my opinion should be made clear to the Cottrells & M’r Gordon. From opinions in England they are at a distance,—but our’s confronts them daily. Give my dearest love to Trippy. Always I think of her.

Wilson is delighted about Baby’s frock & sash. She reproaches me for not making him fine enough, (he has’nt a sash in his possession yet) but his red cheeks are as good as ribbon or better. Also, you are not to think he is not always very becomingly dressed— Trust that to my vanity. Pretty lace & ribbon in his caps, & shoes to match every colour—but his frocks are plainly tucked, & Wilson is ambitious for him & thinks that he ought to have one very splendid one. So now, he has it, thanks to your dearest fingers! I like to hear all about Arlette’s baby, —& mind you give my love to her. So she has left off the caps already. Well—I know it is much the fashion—but I always said I would’nt do it, and Ma’mse Biondi authorizing me to resist, Baby shall wear his caps till next spring. M’r Ogilvy said, “Oh, but you ought after two months, to let him be bare headed—the hair grows better for it, and it is strengthening.” “No,” said I, “I wont! I am too vain to have my baby disfigured so”. So said, so done—and you ought to see him to know whether he has suffered. Her child, without caps from two months, has scarcely a down on his head... quite bald at eleven months old. And mine at five has a head covered with glossy hair; it has grown so wonderfully since last I mentioned it to you. The difference of the strength of the two children is about as great. You see, if you keep on the caps... light, thin caps, ... you may dare draughts & open windows—but otherwise a young child runs risks with that delicate, unprotected head of his. I am very glad that Arlette keeps to the tepid water. M’n Ogilvy’s child is plunged into cold water— & so are many children of the English here... shrieking of course all the time. The Italians dont torment their babies much with either hot or cold water. Baby was in fits of laughter in his bath yesterday, because Wilson held up the spunge squeezing it, & he trying to catch the stream of water with his little dimpled hands held up. He laughs in such a musical fresh voice—it is very pretty. Flush has grown immensely popular—and, curious to relate, Baby is fonder of Flush than Flush of Baby. Flush likes him well enough, but not nearly as well as he did Crow’s Lizzy, as Wilson & I observe. He wont go out with Baby & the balia, unless Wilson goes too. Wilson nearly always does go with them, only if by any chance she does not, why Flush does not neither. On the other hand, Baby screams after Flush when he runs away under the bed, & is in an agony of joy to seize [sic] hold of his ears, ... and to see him jump up for a piece of bread throws Baby into raptures of laughter. The merriest little creature that ever was, this child is. He is even rather too generally & indiscriminately philanthropical, smiling at everybody he sees out...
of doors. He smiled most graciously at Count Cottrell, who said he had grown so fat as to have exceeded all memory of his face. Oh—he is’nt heavily fat, or stupidly fat, I assure you—but he has a round infantine face—quite a cherubical baby-face, as in pictures, & whereas it is common for young babies to be pale, & he is so rosy, the colour expounds the dimples. There are quantities of babies here, nearly all the English who remained in Italy & had children, having come here from the heat & as their nurses choose the flattest walks, they are apt to walk all together. Seven or eight babies were together the other day, when two gentlemen came by, & one said to another, after turning round to examine the infant congregation, “That’s the fattest .. yes, & the prettiest too”, pointing at our child. A week or two ago, Dr. Alnutt (whom Wilson recognized) came up & asked whose child he was. “Mrs. Browning’s” .. [“]Why, are Mr. & Mrs. Browning here? A beautiful child, indeed!” And Dr. Trotman (the other English physician here) asked the same question & admired him exceedingly. Somebody else called him (I am not sure I liked that) the “John Bull of the babies!” “and he looks so goodnatured too”. Goodnatured he certainly looks & is .. the sweetest tempered little face—and “so wise” as Wilson always adds. He does’nt crawl yet—but if he does’nt, it is rather from want of science than strength. When he is laid on his back on aunt Jane’s couvrepied, he rolls round on his face, & lifts himself quite up on his hands .. then, lifts himself up by putting the soles of his feet on the ground. Then he rolls over & over .. off the couvrepied in a moment– The use of the bran, is that it softens the water & has at once a strengthening & detersive effect on the skin– Soap has never once touched Baby, except his head a few times, .. (Wilson washes his head & face before she puts him into the bath). Then, he is dried in a warm towel. Water has never made him cry once—he has only pleasant associations with it—and he does’nt cry now even when he is dressed, being too old & good. He understands & takes notice of everything; & particularly admires the slippers you made for Robert & the bag Henrietta worked for me. We give them to him to play with—they come after Flush’s ears. Will you write, you bad people?

Oh—Robert says it will be too late for the post. I meant to have written to Henrietta—dearest Henrietta. Tell her I love her dearly—she is wrong in some things .. in being out of spirits, for instance. Oh I shall be too late–

Love, best love .. from your own own
Ba.

Do you hear of Nelly Jago?

I read over nothing– Accept me at my worst– Do write the address more distinctly, particularly the first letter of the name– Direct simply Bagni di Lucca, Toscana, Ita.–

Robert’s best love.

If anyone writes to Mrs. Martin I am going to write to her (say) about her commission.19

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France / Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. See letter 27, note 11.
3. Cf. Acts 9:5: "... it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

4. Alice Augusta Enrica Cottrell, eldest child of Henry and Sophia Cottrell was born on 14 July 1848; she died later the following year, on 8 November 1849. EBB paid tribute to her in a poem entitled “A Child’s Grave at Florence: A.A.E.C. Born July, 1848. Died November, 1849.” which was published in The Athenæum for 22 December 1849, and collected in Poems (1850).

5. For EBB’s use of this imagery in Aurora Leigh, see Introduction, p. 50.

6. See note 8 in the preceding letter.

7. There is no evidence that EBB’s father ever intervened in this matter.

8. Evidently the Mintos had lent money to John Gordon in 1842 for his business scheme which ultimately failed.

9. William James Harness (1790–1869) was at Harrow with Byron, and he and Miss Mitford were friends; his father was Miss Mitford’s godfather. Harness was Perpetual Curate of All Saints, Knightsbridge. He was the author of an edition of Shakespeare published in 1825, and later (1870) he wrote a biography of Miss Mitford. Harness and Kenyon had been friends for many years.


11. Doubtless part of Austrian celebrations of the pacification of Hungary by the armies of Nicholas I. In April 1849 Kossuth had declared Hungary independent of the Habsburg Empire. Shortly thereafter in June, Nicholas agreed to Franz Joseph’s request for military aid against Hungary. General Görgei surrendered the Hungarian forces at the end of July, and Kossuth resigned as “governor” of Hungary on 11 August.

12. Tuscans had joined the King of Sardinia in revolt against the Austrians, but defeat at Novara on 23 March 1849 led to the resumption of Austrian domination for another 11 years. EBB describes her disillusionment and repents her faith in Leopold, expressing her disdain for his betrayal of Tuscany in Casa Guidi Windows (II, 28–99).

13. Unable to accept Radetzky’s terms of surrender after the defeat at Novara, King Charles Albert of Sardinia abdicated in favour of his son, Victor Emmanuel. On the night of the surrender, after some time with his sons, “he left the town in a carriage and, posing as the Comte de Barge, passed through the Austrian lines and started for Oporto … There, four months later, he died, broken in spirit but consoled by his religion” (George Martin, The Red Shirt and the House of Savoy, New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1969, p. 342–343).

14. A report in The Ragged School Union Magazine for November 1854 noted that “in 1849, when the cholera raged in this neighbourhood, it carried off 175 persons. During the last visitation only three cases are known to have been fatal” (p. 215).

15. From the context, this is taken to refer to the Certosa monastery at Pavia (near Milan), as opposed to one of the many other Carthusian monasteries, including one just outside Florence.


17. “Wet nurse.”

18. “Coverlet,” or “quilt.”

19. I have been unable to clarify this reference.
I don't think I shall be able to fill this page though I take it up. My darling Arabel, I write only to tell you something of dearest Trippy's affairs. Walking yesterday down at the Ponte (the village below) Count Cottrell drove past us, with Mrs. Gordon—stopped the carriage—Mrs. Gordon got out & walked with me. Count Cottrell seized [sic] on Robert. There was but a short time .. we were in the road & in public. He said that his sister in law had written to her lawyer ("I may tell you, at my dictation") to offer fifty pounds a year to Trippy, in consequence of the other creditors including his wife & Annie Roberts, withdrawing their claims & consenting to "wait". "She has only four hundred a year," continued Count Cottrell, (who told Robert at their last conversation on the subject that she had five) "and what's four hundred a year? Bread and cheese! It's impossible that she can give more than fifty pounds a year, quite impossible." (He said, you remember, before, that it was "impossible she could give more than a hundred"). Robert confined himself to observing that it was a very, very sad case. He is furious with Count Cottrell about the whole transaction, which indeed is by no means creditable. George will insist as he ought, I am certain, and it seems to me right to put him in possession of the "stage asides," that he may see as much as possible of the character of the plot. Whatever I tell you is strictly private of course—or Robert & I shall get into a great scrape. His impression is, that very probably Mrs. Gordon has, like her sisters, a prospective claim on Mr. Tulk's will (for certain sums of money bound up in mortgages) in which case, Mr. Gordon's creditors might claim for their parts .. might they not? If such a claim were capable of proof, persons might be found (learned in law) who would accept that contingent claim, & instead of it, give Trippy a very sufficient annuity—George should examine into this. At any rate he should be careful not to let Trippy accept a miserable fifty pounds a year "for her life" as Count Cottrell repeated again & again emphatically, with such a contingency among the possibilities. What are the "other creditors" "waiting" for, I wonder? Count Cottrell spoke rather cavalierly of the affair yesterday—treated it as if, after all, Trippy had bought an annuity with her four thousand pounds. Cool!—to imagine that anyone would accept five per cent as an annuity & sink the principal, .. even if such a percentage were paid faithfully. Mrs. Ogilvy was complaining to me three days ago that she & her husband had only four instead of eight per cent from the French rail roads last year (—"Of course they should do better this year! but it was very inconvenient.") "After all," said Count Cottrell, "she has received back so much of her four thousand .." counting the annual payments. "And after all," continued he, "it is her fault, because she refused to pay up the insurance & preferred having the money to spend". Now all this is very pitiful—Not straightforward, not frank, least of all generous & gentlemanly. I shd. be the last not to commiserate poor Mrs. Gordon; but "four hundred a year" I do know to be more than "bread & cheese" in Italy: and even if it were only bread & cheese, she shd. give up the cheese & be honest & noble. I do hope that George will be very wary & energetic, & not yield upon light grounds,—because it is my full impression & Robert's, that something is to be done in this case by determination—She probably has five hundred a year (or why did Count Cottrell
say so before?) and possibly prospective claims on the will. I have not the least doubt of her ability to concede more than is proposed. Write & tell me for I am very anxious about Trippy.

This, if it were a letter, should have gone to Henrietta; but it's only a note, & so you must take it. I have received the books—thank you!—but the frock & the lace have, I rather fancy, gone to Florence, & we shant see them for these two months—more's the vexation. At least, M" Gordon has'nt sent them yet, & Sophia Cottrell said something to Robert which made him think so. M" Gordon appeared to me quite unchanged .. perhaps a very little stouter & more unwieldly—She said that she was thunderstruck at me .. I was so wonderfully improved in my looks!!! Very kind her manner was to me—quite smiling & serene: but do you know her first word, when we began to walk together, fell on me like a blow—If I lived a hundred years I could not get used to some sounds. I staggered & was nearly flat on the ground .. the sky seemed under my feet—it was only the thought of how Robert w'd be frightened at having to pick me up, that kept me standing. She asked me to forgive her .. & began to talk of her own griefs .. of the child, husband, father, sister, she had lost .. & of the happy memories which were present to her always, till I felt ashamed of myself & told her so. She said that the tenderest consolations were lavished on her from without & from within—she felt Love everywhere. I confess I envy the attainment of this high, serene atmosphere. She asked me quite smilingly if her second boy was not like her husband. "His name is John," too," she said. Well, now I must write of something else.

It is not likely that Sarianna sh' come to us this autumn— We had a disappointing letter yesterday. The Arnolds' dont come—and then Robert is rather (u)neasy at the thought of his father being left alone at this cholera season—he who is like a child, and, if he felt unwell, would as soon, in a fit of abstraction, take a glass of lemonade as the prescribed chalk-mixture. The cholera is raging about New Cross— . So, he writes to promise that, in any case, we shall be in England in the spring, & carry her back with us, if she cant come before. But in any case, Arabel, if we are kept alive & at liberty, we shall be in England in the spring. I was afraid to think of England—. Robert has said over & over, "Oh, I hope I never again shall see England"—and although I answered that he w'd certainly have to go with me, seeing that I was'nt going to give up England, not a pebble of her, .. yet I have thought sighingly in myself "When shall I have courage to insist on what is so painful to him?" So that I did not dare name the subject to you. But now it is his own proposition & resolution to go— He considers it “a duty”, he says, to go to England, at whatever cost— Now you will have us, you see. Meanwhile I am very, very uneasy about the cholera— Increasing it is, instead of diminishing; and if you, Arabel, persist in attending those schools under such circumstances, my conviction is that you deceive yourself & are anything but fulfilling a duty in doing so. You expose your family to great risks of danger & sorrow, .. and in order to what? The meeting of these schools at such a moment is an evil both to the teachers and the taught. Forgive me, darling Arabel! I love & admire you: but you have good sense enough to avoid the pedantry of a virtue, when it is pointed out to you. If you love me, mind what I say—for my sake my own precious Arabel.—

Great & glorious news in our house! Baby has a tooth. The balia rushed in to us while we were at dinner, Wilson after her, .. Alessandro in the rear .. “Listen to the rattling of the glass against his tooth! he has a tooth”. If I had been Duchess of Tuscany, I should have fired the
cannons. Oh—if you knew how frightened we have been about the tooth cutting. People frightened us to death with dreadful instances of perils by the teeth. One said “Dont be alarmed, but he is sure to grow thin”,—and another said, “You must think nothing of it, but he will lose all these roses”! . . another said “Ah, poor child! A beautiful child now, . . & we must hope that he will get through his teething”, . . and another said “The only way is to have his gums lanced at the first symptom—” and another said, “Mind you dont delay calling in a doctor when the tooth-fever comes”— . . so that Robert & I have been as frightened . . as frightened!— Think of our joy. He never felt the tooth come—and a second is just through, and two more at hand. He laughs more than ever, he is growing out of Raffael into Michal Angelo, . . out of the delicacy into the robustness. Nobody says now he is like a little girl. Think of that child’s riding six miles on horseback the other day, to a village three miles off in the mountains. He rode on Wilson’s knee. The balia had a donkey & Wilson a horse—and his e[ ]stasies were something indescribable, Wilson says! He was laughing & screaming for joy the whole way, & putting out his arms to catch the horse’s ears. The guides said they never saw such a child. This is the second time he has been out on a riding party. May God bless you. My much loved Henrietta shall hear from me soon. Do out of pity write. Love to dearest Trippy & all.

Your Ba.

You dont mention dear Minny. My love to her always. Write oftener, Arabel. Finished my paper after all. Robert’s love. He is much better.

Address, on integral page: Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Anne Elizabeth Roberts (née Gordon), sister of John, had married EBB’s uncle Samuel who died in 1837; in 1840 she married Martyn John Roberts, on which occasion EBB’s father wrote to Septimus Barrett on 12 September: “Annie, Gordon’s Sister, I mean Annie Barrett who was supposed to be so very ill, is going to be married to one Mr. Martyn Roberts; all I know of whom is, that he makes himself known at Edinburgh as a scientific inventor of considerable power. He is 34 yrs. old, a widower with one little girl” (ms with Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett).
4. The ones she asked for at the end of letter 41.
5. John Hart Gordon was the fifth child and second son of John Gordon. His elder brother was Charles.
6. i.e., RB’s old friend Joseph Arnould and his wife Maria; see letter 6, note 3.
7. “Wet nurse.”
I sketched this outline yesterday evening my own dearest Arabel, in the walk Robert & I had together. yes & Flush. I can’t give the effect of any of it, but you will guess something:—our path wound up where you see the rocks, so narrow a path that it made me dizzy with the precipice on one side & full of wonder how the chestnut trees managed to grow there. It is a precipitous forest above & below,—with a torrent in the midst of it. Flush is getting used to the wildness, but he keeps very close to us, I assure you—he doesn’t run away, as his custom is in London or Florence. He evidently thinks that great discretion is necessary. We came to a fountain & made cups of chestnut leaves to drink out of. Oh, how I long for you Arabel. You will enjoy everything so much—you would not miss M’l Stratten even, in the midst of these vast churches of mountain & forest. Baby went out this morning before breakfast with his balia & Wilson, & was two hours & a half away; & they came back with stories of wonderful discoveries, . . of a world of new mountains behind those we see. They are dreadfully tired—even the balia is, . . having carried baby up indescribable [sic] places, they say—stone ladders & beds of torrents. Baby is laughing & delighted—that is just what he likes, he tells me;—& now he doesn’t mind going to sleep, for an hour or so. Now really Arabel, if his warm baths have been “a risk” for him, it is wonderful that they sh’d have done him such good. Tell me if Arlette puts her child into cold water—Ma’am Biondi assured me that it was altogether an injurious practice, . . a great mistake, . . & she gave me what I thought were sensible reasons for it—and if you were to see the difference between our baby & M’l Ogilvy’s pale, delicate, peevish poor child of ten months old who has suffered the cold-water system & been weaned prematurely, you would wonder & not wish me to change. Still, he is in only tepid water now, . . or a very little warmer than tepid.—

I am so sorry I tantalized you about the Daguerreotype—but Count Cottrell is not disobliging—he was overburdened with commissions, I am certain. Only, after what he said, it was impossible to ask him to do anything for us. Thank you my darling.

Do you remember my naming a Capt? Packenham to you? who spoke once to Baby? Well—the authorities have ordered him straightway out of Lucca, on account of a tract which he had given to a poor cripple who had begged him for books. Perhaps you will see the protest against this act of tyranny, made by the English, in the newspapers—and Robert’s was the second signature to it. Most abominable the whole affair has been! Capt. Packenham has never opposed the priests & the authorities,—doing as much good for seven years together as was compatible with the
laws—and the giving of this tract, was the single point on which a finger could be laid, yet the tract itself was not controvertial, & the publication of it had been permitted at Pisa—“Primitive catholocism” the title was. He had established a school for the mere teaching of reading & writing, allowing the erection of a great crucifix in the midst, & attempting no doctrinal interference. But even this was too much for the present intolerance of the Tuscan-Austrian government; & now, I suppose, the half savage peasantry of the place will be allow(ed) to recoil into whole savageness. Capt. Pakenham has gone to Florence where his bank is, but in the full expectation of not being allowed to remain very long even at Florence: it is only the beginning of persecution, he thinks.—

Arabel, we have decided! we go away on thursday— The rain & scirocco have set in together, and it is damp & unpleasant, not to say that we are to lose our Galignanis & the whole news of the world. The balia is in the greatest delight:—because you see, every family having gone away, she can meet no stray ‘balia’ nor “cameriera”, & has nobody to talk to, which is a dreadful misfortune. “Santissima Maria, non c ’e nessuno”, she has been crying aloud,—“it’s enough to make one old before the time”. Even gathering the grapes is not compensation, & now that the rain comes people cant even gather grapes. Tell dearest Minny that she never directed her note to Wilson, & that I hoped it was for me, & read the first lines in a mistake. I shall write to her again one of these days, as she wont write to me. I do hope the change of air is doing her good. Baby is seven months old tomorrow, & we are going to get him a little cage-iron bed when we get to Florence, because it really is’nt safe to leave him for a minute in his cradle. The cradle is placed on two chairs, the backs being at top & bottom; and, a fortnight ago, on Wilson’s suddenly turning round, behold! M! Baby was standing up at the end, having crawled down, & pulled himself up by the chair-back. He might have been over on the floor in a moment.

Now, Robert is to take this to the post, & waits for it. May God bless you all! Do write to me, if you think of me. Prove it so.

Did I tell you that Gerardine was married at last,— & that she & M! Macpherson are to see us in Florence as they go through to Rome. M! Jameson is not consoled, but hopes it may be for the best—

Give my best love to the Peytons— I shall be glad to see them in Italy, but have not courage to recommend Florence for the winter to Reynolds, with its cold winds that cut the hot sun. It answers for me, because I shut myself up whenever these winds prevail—but Reynolds is not likely to be so prudent! Dearest darling Arabel, I cant read my letter over— Take it as it is! I love you, I love dearest Henrietta, I love you all! I am,

your ever & ever attached Ba.

Robert’s love as always. We shall be in Florence at half past twelve p.m. on thursday—if it please God. Wilson is delighted too; because, so, she will be near to "Egideo".

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France / Miss Arabel Barrett / 3 Liverpool Terrace / Worthing / England.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. “Wet nurse.”
2. See the end of letter 41.
3. John Pakenham (1790-1876), who retired as an Admiral in the Royal Navy in 1854. This is EBB’s first mention of him to Arabella, but in a letter to Henrietta, dated [19 September 1849] from Bagni di Lucca, EBB wrote: “... the balia & Wilson met Capt. Pakenham .. an English banker at Florence, & a very active man about the Bible society .. Arabei may have heard of him. He stopped them to ask whose child, Baby was— ‘What a fine little fellow! Why he looks as if he were up to any mischief already’” (Transcript in editor’s file). Located in the Piazza Santa Trinitâ, the firm of Maquay and Pakenham, is one of three banking firms listed in Florence in Murray’s *Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy* (London: John Murray, 1847), and the firm is described as having “branches of their bank at the Baths of Lucca, Pisa, Siena, and Rome” (p. 475). I have been unable to trace the tract “Primitive catholicism.”

4. In a book of recollections published in 1862, his wife wrote: “the month of October [1849] arrived, and we were particularly pleased one day, and had just finished our dinner, when a loud ring at the bell introduced an official—the paper was handed to A.P. [i.e., Admiral Pakenham]— ‘in three days we were to quit the Lucca territory’” (F.J.P. [Frances Julia Pakenham], *Life Lines; or, God’s Work in a Human Being*, London: Wertheim, Macintosh, and Hunt, 1862, p. 103). Mrs. Pakenham goes on to explain that they returned to Florence, and after an unsuccessful trial, they were forced to return to England; see letter 47, note 15. *The Times* of 1 October 1849 reported: “We learn by a letter from Tuscany, that great sensation has been caused at the Baths of Lucca, by an arbitrary order to an English officer there to quit the territory. Our correspondent says:

‘The prefect of Lucca has issued a mandate, without previous trial or inquiry, to an officer of rank in the British service, who has been a continuous resident at the Baths of Lucca for seven seasons, to leave the department within three days, and has had the courtesy to order his lady away with him; the front of his offence being that he had given a tract upon a religious subject, published in Tuscany, to a paralytic in the hospital. The British residents have on the occasion, agreed to the following protest, which has been forwarded to the British Minister at Florence:—

“We, the undersigned British residents and visitors at the Bagni di Lucca, having heard that our countryman, Captain Pakenham, R.N., has received a peremptory order from the authorities of Lucca, requiring his departure from the territory within the space of three days, and forbidding his return thereto unless provided with a special permission from the government, hereby protest against an act which, not merely arbitrary and oppressive as regards an individual, is also a deep offence to a nation whose members have ever shown a willing obedience to the laws of the country, and a prompt readiness to assist by all means in their power its local charities. We protest against the injustice of a mandate that does not convey the sentence of a tribunal, nor even the shadow of an allegation. We protest against the tyranny of an order for whose peremptory execution we are convinced no exigency calls; and finally, we protest against an act that must subvert that confidence in the due administration of justice which as natives of a free country, we esteem a birthright, and without relying on which we never would have made this land our residence”’

5. According to EBB’s comments in the following letter, they arrived back in Florence on Wednesday, 17 October.

6. “Maid.”

7. “Most holy Mary, there’s no one here.”

8. Her marriage was announced in *The Times* of 6 September 1849: “On Tuesday, the 4th inst., at the Catholic Chapel, Isleworth, and subsequently at the parish church, Ealing, Robert T. Macpherson of Rome, to Louisa Gerardin, eldest daughter of Henry Bate, of Bromfield Place, Ealing.”

9. Wilson’s friend, Mr. Righi; see letter 32, note 18.
My beloved Henrietta & Arabel! How kind of you, how good of you—how I thank you both for those beautiful presents—Such fabulous sashes, such mittens (always of use!) and oh, my own dearest Arabel, such a perfect frock! Directly we arrived in Florence I sent Wilson, the balia & baby to the Cottrells to ask about my parcels, & they came back laden, & I was the more glad that I had been uneasy about the safety of the precious things before I had them. Arabel, your frock is exquisite—Baby was charmed with the shoulder knots especially, & screamed to have it in his own hands—We told him to kiss it because it came from you, and instantly he opened his mouth wide & kissed it in his way—Never was a prettier frock seen! How I thank you! How I look at all the stitches & trace your fingers in them, dear, dear Arabel! But, Arabel, you magnified your office a little! you took yourself to be working for some small Titan, I think. We tried on the frock directly, & its waist came somewhere across the abdomen of the living subject. He is such a little creature, you forgot to consider—very fat, but with slight bones,—& then only seven months old! If we water him well & he grows prodigiously, the frock will do for next summer perhaps; & then, if we get to England, he will appear in glory—Wilson is always lamenting that we have not “worked robes” for him, & this meets her ideal—it is “perfectly elegant” she says—And I am glad it’s too large, because so it will last longer, & be available in the summer when people needn’t wear coats & hide their sashes—It will be a frock to last for years—As to the sashes, which are most beautiful, both of them, he shan’t spoil them this winter—They shall be kept for the summer sun, when he can toddle about a little & show his gorgeous train like a peacock—I really could’n’t consent to the balia’s tumbling them as she carries him about in her sturdy arms—Meanwhile the use of the frock (besides reminding me of Arabel’s kindness) shall be to afford us a pattern in the shape of the body & robes for a winter frock for him—we want patterns dreadfully, and the frocks which Madame Biondi gets from Paris sometimes, may suit her princesses & duchesses, but are too expensive for me—And then I dont like taking a pattern of what I dont buy—you understand! Thus your frock is a treasure in a double sense—The lace is just what I wanted—very pretty! thank you, dearest Arabei!—And thank you dearest Henrietta! How kind you both are!

A letter has just come from M' Kenyon which makes me quite unhappy. I do beseech you to tell me the truth. Is Papa looking unwell? is he altered since I saw him? Is he unwell now? M' Kenyon speaking in an incidental manner of his meeting with Papa, observed that he walked feebly & looked ill—The words went down to the roots of my heart & turned them cold. If you love me, I beseech you, one of you, to write to me without losing time, to tell me exactly how he is, how he looks—the truth, the whole truth. I cannot bear any disguises—the idea is dreadful: I shall count the days till your letter comes—Robert assures me that I am alarming myself unnecessarily, & that M' Kenyon probably was under quite a wrong impression through Papa’s having felt embarrassed perhaps for a moment on meeting him suddenly after their correspondence—and this may be so—but still it may not be so, and that is enough to make me
unhappy. Has he changed any of his habits? lost any of his energy? Tell me the whole truth—
Should I think him altered? I do love him so entirely, that having to write these questions is a
pain of itself— Your manner of naming him does not seem to imply any evil—but what if you
have been deceiving me for love's sake, against truth's sake? Write truly now— I wrote to him
from the Baths of Lucca a letter which he will have received the day before your return— It was
humble & tender, & I begged him in it if he would not forgive me, at least to forgive my writing
to him from time to time—not too often, so as to tease him. I asked him too to remember that my
child a little belonged to him & had not offended him, so as to name it in his prayers even if I
myself were excluded— I cannot think that he would send back that letter—but he will not answer
anything, I know. Robert would write—only I am afraid to let him do it. If a savage word were
replied, I mean, a stern word spoken in anger, . . . the gulf between us would be wider— God knows
that I am ready to humble myself in the dust before Papa—but how, how? Only tell me that he is
not ill, nor changed, nor weak—God grant that you may be able truthfully to tell me that.

Now let me take breath & change the subject,—for certainly I have not been writing what
has amused you— We arrived in Florence on Wednesday, after a very fatiguing journey, having
missed the railroad at Lucca (through Alessandro's miscalculation) & been forced to post it to
Pisa . . . six hours on the roughest road I have travelled in Italy: & then came the rail-carriage to
Florence. If as Robert said, "we had'nt had such a saint of a child" it would have been worse,
and indeed the saintship was confined to him, for we were all vexed & tired. As to Baby, he
never even made a cross face once, much less cried, & was in a permanent state of rapture at
everything he saw— He seized [sic] upon the golden buttons of a railroad official, & with both his
hands, in a transport of incipient hero-worship, springing from the balia's arms—and the grave
dignitary could'nt help smiling & patting the fat rosy cheeks— Baby has'nt the least notion of
being shy—he's afraid of nobody in the world—and he & Flush agree in their marked preference
of populous streets with carriages, & men, to forests & mountains. Wilson says that his delight in
being taken out to walk in Florence is something curious—he turns his head from one side to
another, screaming for joy at the horses, & the soldiers— I am afraid that he even admires the
Austrian uniform— We have bought him a white beaver (or rather felt) hat, . . .
soft & light, . . . & with a long drooping white feather . . tied with rosettes of rose-
coloured ribbon—where the brim is turned up—but you cant see how lovely the
child looks in it— Wilson says that all the people turn round to admire him— Little
angel, he is. So good & sweet & engaging! such winning little ways! No, I dont
think I exaggerate. Remember what I said about his eyes!— Robert is always reproaching me for
having been unjust & unkind about his eyes,—and really they are pretty eyes, with long dark
eyelashes that touch the eyebrows when the eyes are wide open—and I oughtnt to have called
them small . . . it was not kind of me. They are much improved lately, & shine like blue fire—
When he was asleep in the rail-carriage, he reminded me of Ibbit Jane in her young childhood,
though I did not know Ibbit when she was as young as he—but it is curious, that he has quite a
fair complexion, with light brown hair, of a golden lustre, & marked eyebrows quite golden.
Minny was'nt wrong, you see, when she predicted light hair for him— Not that Robert will agree
that it is light—oh, but it is—it's a matter of fact! though it may grow dark of course, & will,
very probably. Wilson declares that he is like my family, & particularly like you Henrietta—& once when I met him out of doors, he struck me as like Arabel—there is a look of my family in him most undeniably—only the mouth & chin are fac similes of Robert’s—so I dont know how you will make it out. We are very glad to get back to our chairs & tables, .. & I am ignoble enough to be not sorry that I can walk out without having to go up or down a ladder .. or the equivalent of a ladder—and yet the dear mountains & silences, how I miss them. Tell Arabel that the first thing I did on receiving her letter & instructions, was to send to the English chemist’s for the solution of camphor,—but I have'nt had occasion to use it yet. What I took at Lucca was plain camphorated water—we made it ourselves, & I took a wine-glassful at a time— During the whole four months the tendency was permanent, but was attended with no pain whatever—& notwithstanding all, M'dame Biondi exclaimed at my looking so much better & fatter! So you see there has been nothing very wrong. It was a common complaint at the ‘Bagni’, .. & indeed four persons died of dysentery—also it has been prevalent, they say, at Florence—but no instance of cholera has occurred. Moreover the general health has much improved since the cooler weather has set in. M'Righi has had an attack at Prato, & didnt write to Wilson for a long time— We were sure something must be the matter—and the ‘balia’, who had observed to me one morning that ‘we had better talk about the silence cheerfully, not to make poor “Lisa” too anxious,’ judiciously broke out at noon-day, in her presence, with a “No, non posso credere che sia morto”!! I really could’nt help smiling at this singular proof of consideration for (Lisa’s) Wilson’s anxiety, while I said, “Morto! come morto!—ma non si pensa di queste cose”. The ‘balia’ is the completest baby grown up I ever saw or heard of. When the explanation of the silence came, he had been ill with the prevailing malady. Still, it does seem to me that M'Righi has'nt written quite as often as he might have done, & Wilson has expected him every day since we arrived, and he does not appear— I have a high opinion of M'Righi—of his attachment for Wilson—but if he isn't here tomorrow (I think he will) & if he is in good health, I shall not know what to conclude. She fancies that he has suffered some vexation about the Grand Duke—but mind you say nothing about this—dont let her family hear a word of it, mind— Because I tell you in confidence— He, like all these Florentines, made no proof of heroism in fidelity toward the sovereign; and, though averse at heart to Guerazzi's revolution, was submissive to it in fact— The Grand Ducal guard has been dissolved .. & it is surmised that his retiring pay has been suspended, with that of others— At the same time, there's the shop at Prato, which is said to be doing well— We shall see— I think he will come tomorrow & explain everything—but I do hope to take back Wilson to England as Wilson, if we go to England next summer— Oh, I hope we shall— I try to keep Robert up to it, I assure you. Who knows but that there might be a chance for me with Papa? who knows? I yearn to him so—oh, I yearn to him so, Henrietta! and especially since those words of M' Kenyon's .. who did'nt fancy he could pain me so, (dear M' Kenyon) when he wrote them. There is only one obstacle to our going to England— I am afraid, Henrietta, it will be quite impossible for me to leave Florence in May .. consequently in June! Consequently how late it will be for the journey! But we shall see— Dont talk about the obstacle, if you please, because one can be sure of nothing, so far—and I should'nt have said even that uncertain word, if it had not been that M' Kenyon's set me on feeling earnestly— Also, I thought of that beloved Arabel's “counting the
months”. Oh, I dont “give it up” mind- Don’t fancy so- There may be such a thing as a somewhat shorter visit- We may arrange something- We shall see .. as I have said ever so often in the course of this letter. Robert always says it’s my favorite form of speech,—because I wouldn’t believe that the French would restore the old forms of priestly despotism at Rome,13 & curse them accordingly, .. without waiting “to see[’]”!— I wish Arabel would enquire how M? Jago goes on & let me know. I am afraid she is suffering more than usual, since I have not for months heard from her, .. & dont wish to hear, so as to fatigue her- Is she nervous about her situation? I think much of her, let Arabel say. Two letters I have written .. or three, I think—yes, three. Mind you dont forget to send my love & warm congratulations to Arabella & M! Bevan— What of Arlette? Why do you dislike Henry Trant’s14 being so much in Wimpole Street? I like him for ‘auld lang syne’ & send him my love. Bummy wont settle all alone at Tunbridge Wells, I think—When it comes to the point I know she wont, & I dont think I would if I were she. Do the Hedleys stay on at Tours?—or what?—& did uncle Hedley get my letter after all? You will be horrified at the word I have dropt about May. I suspected it when I wrote last which made me speak hesitatingly of England— dear England—something always happens. Yet better now than in the winter— there may be a chance, & I cling to the hope, fast & with both hands. Except for England, I should not be sorry. But one cant be certain— Remember to keep sacred this secret, both of you, as it is so unpleasant to have things talked of prematurely——

With regard to dearest Trippy’s business, that she shâ not yet have received M? Gordon’s “offer”, is a proof of Robert’s being right in his suspicion that Count Cottrell was feeling the ground in what he said of the £50— He told Robert that M? Gordon had written the letter “a few days ago” and I wrote to you on hearing of it—the letter might have been written, but could’n’t have been sent— There, was a quibble— Ignoble business, altogether! If they conclude finally <in> behaving ill to Trippy, I certainly dont mean to treat them as friends— Quarrelling is a detestable thing—but one cant compromise one’s clean hands & dear friends— Meanwhile, however, it is better to maintain the usual forms, because we have more hold, so, on the negociators— Robert & I were wishing the other day to have Trippy with us here to strike shame into them— I was quite in earnest in what I said of her coming to Florence to live with us. If she wâ come we would seize [sic] on her with open arms. Robert observed that it would be our duty to have her, even if it were not our pleasure, which it certainly is— Give her ten kisses from me, dear thing— I did not propose a very monstrous proposition, Henrietta, after all— To get somebody to present a letter, implies a certain introduction—and then I have a faith in a direct line of manly conduct in these things— Lord Palmerston not only answered a letter of Robert’s, but sent a special messenger with the letter to New Cross15— and perhaps he did not do this through any great enthusiasm for poetry. Have you seen Susan Cook since your return? Give my love to her & Surtees. You will be glad to be in London again. I love you & sympathize with you, my own Henrietta, with my heart & soul. May God bless & prosper you. Do one of you write instantly & truly about Papa— I never had the heart to tell you before—I lost my glass on the journey from the Prato Fiorito,16 & all our enquiries were vain, for a month. The evening before we left the Baths of Lucca, a peasant brought it back— May I find Papa’s love again, as I have his gift! God bless you all— Grateful thanks from your attached

Ba—
Robert's best love always. I found your three times welcome letters in Florence—Thanks on thanks to you both.

How is Crow? how does she get on in business, & where are the rest of her "six children"? Tell me if Mrs Orme is better & where she is. I meant to keep writing at this letter for two or three days but finish it at once that I may hear of Papa—Love to Minny!

Address, on integral page: Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.


Source: Transcript in editor's file.

1. Year determined by EBB's references to baby presents.
2. "Wet nurse."
3. Kenyon's letter has not survived.
4. Underscored twice.
5. The journey from Lucca to Florence, via Pisa and Empoli, was about 62 miles; the railway from Lucca to Florence, via Pistoia and Pescia was still being constructed at this time.
6. Cf. Aurora Leigh, III, 760–762: "A sick child, from an ague-fit, / Whose wasted right hand gambled 'gainst his left / With an old brass button in a blot of sun."
7. See letter 29, note 20.
9. "No, I can't believe that he is dead."
10. "Dead! how dead!—but you don't have to think of these things."
12. EBB was pregnant, but she would suffer a third miscarriage a few months later (see letter 48, note 3).
13. An allusion to the intervention of the French government in restoring the Pope to his position at Rome. Although motivated at least as much by the threat of Austrian intervention as by any devotion to the Holy See, in June 1849 Louis Napoleon had sent General Oudinot to reclaim Rome for Pius IX. EBB expressed her hope that France would intervene on behalf of Italy and specifically Rome in Casa Guidi Windows (II, 647).
14. Henry Trant (b. 1804) was EBB's cousin; her great-grandfather, Edward Barrett, and Henry Trant's grandfather, Wisdom Barrett, were brothers. After her husband James's death, Henry's mother, Mary Trant (née Barrett), lived at South Lodge, Little Malvern, for a number of years when the Barretts lived at Hope End.
15. I have been unable to trace this exchange between RB and Palmerston.
16. Murray's describes this as a place "remarkable for its early and brilliant vegetation, and for the rapid melting of the snow from its surface" (Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy, London: John Murray, 1856, p. 467). This interesting spot is about 5½ miles from Bagni Caldi, to the northeast, and it was the setting for RB's "By the Fire-side" (1855); the Brownings visited it again in 1853 with their American friends, the Storys.
17. EBB knew of Crow's hopes for a large family. Despite her desires however, Crow only ever had two children: Mary Elizabeth ("Lizzie") and Ellen.
My beloved Arabel, Thank you for the comfort of your letter. If it is not everything, it is much—and we must trust God & hope. Do not fail to give me particular accounts of Papa, and write often. I know you think of me, darling Arabel,—& remember that you can't prove it better than in writing...writing. I have set you a bad example this time, I confess,—but let it pass in consideration of the weather we have had, which has been miraculous for Italy, & has made me feel very uncomfortable,..with my usual loss of voice & appendix of cough,..in spite of the peculiar circumstances which always protect me more or less. This is the second winter which has exceeded the ordinary severity of an Italian winter—and this second winter has been far severer than the last: the Florentines say, that not for five & twenty years has such a season been known. We had no appearance of frost on the windows, but the Arno was frozen, & we had difficulty in keeping our thermometer in these large rooms above sixty. At the same time, we always have the comfort here of knowing that it 'can't last'—and it has 'nt of course—for several days it has been quite spring—only that today it seems to me to be getting colder again. My voice is unfrozen, and the cough all but gone—and I have ventured into the dining room to dine with Robert, which was out of the question during the cold weather. He used to bring me my plate into this room, & I sate by the fire & dined. What was the worst of all, was Wiedeman's catching cold. He had cold & cough, & one evening frightened me out of my wits, by waking out of sleep crying, with a dreadful sort of hoarseness, which made me think of croup or inflammation of the chest being imminent. I happened to be in his room, & sent for Robert instantly, who found me looking so 'scared', he says, that rather for my sake than the baby's he proposed going for D' Harding. ['']'Oh yes—go, go' said I—while the balia whose opinion is that the use of doctors is to kill, and who insisted that nothing was the matter with the child except a little cold, sate beating her forehead with her hands & calling on all the saints. "O Santissimo Pietro, come la signora s 'è appassionata per niente! Un medico per un bambino tanto sano—o cielo!'" But really, Arabel, to hear that little creaking sort of cry was enough to frighten anyone. That sort of hoarseness in a grown up person is a different thing—but such a mere baby, you see, as Wiedeman is! Nevertheless, he ceased crying, & began to suck as if nothing was the matter, & fell asleep with such soft regular breathings, that my panic went off, and by the time Robert had returned to say that D' Harding was dining at the Embassy, & to ask whether I thought it necessary for him to be routed out at every risk, why I was ready to take counsel & wait. In the morning, the invalid was almost recovered—so we had no doctor after all—and now he has gathered back all his roses & more than his fat—The child is fatter & more vigorous than ever. As to sitting on people's knees he disdains it: and the difficulty is to keep him from running about the house by himself. He runs on all fours like a little cat, & almost as quickly as a cat,—& out of the door the instant it is open, under the chairs, under the drawers, under the beds: every now & then, the child is lost. His delight is, to hide himself under the beds, and to have somebody to scold him & drag him out,—then, he falls into fits of laughter—why, Arabel, at the Baths of Lucca, months ago, he used to laugh loud enough to be heard outside
the house. We have always had to restrain him in this respect, for fear of the effort's doing him harm: it has made him sick oftener than once, I assure you. He can't stop himself when he begins. Also, we don't want him to walk too soon, as we hear it is bad—but, by everything that comes in his way, chairs, sofas, knees, or Flush's tail, he pulls himself up, & stands holding by one hand as firm as a rock. One of these days, he will walk away in spite of us—and in the meantime he has made himself perfectly independent—yes, indeed. And he understands nearly everything in Italian—The English is not so advanced— I am obstinately of opinion that, the object being of course to develop his intellect, & language being only a symbol, the introduction of two different symbols, must, by complicating the difficulty, render the process slower. We have known of English children two years old, being reduced to a complete state of puzzledom & inability to utter or understand a word, from being in the habit of hearing both languages constantly spoken. Why it is reasonable that it should be so, when you come to think. So I persist against Robert who is all for English—oh, 'the child's English, & shall be English,' he keeps saying— So he is & so he shall be of course. Only let us make him an intelligent human being, first of all. The English will come fast enough presently—there's no danger of that. Time enough for national distinctions! Yet Robert insists on talking English to him ... except when he particularly desires to be understood. For only a few things does the child understand in English ... though Wilson sometimes talks it to him too. As for me, I am consistent, and never do: and the 'balia' being in a state of permanent oratory, (besides Alessandro's) his Tuscan opportunities much preponderate on the others—so that he seems seldom at a loss when he hears Italian. When he was under the bed the other day, I pretended to have lost him, which always enchants the child:—"Dove è questo bambino? è perso." (Laughter under the bed.) "Forse sia andato nell'altra camera"—... (great laughter) "o forse, andato fuori, nelle Cascine, per vedere i cavalli"... (prolonged laughter!) How he understood & enjoyed all those excellent jokes, was amusing to observe. You see, wit is'nt thrown away upon him. In spite of which ... all this I have been telling you ... he has only four teeth, still—and the one that is coming, is only coming: so Arlette is victorious on the point of teeth. In other respects, we are in advance of all the children within our reach to observe, and Wilson always ends our comparisons by deciding that Wiedeman is "a miracle." When he pulls himself up by a chair & stands, he looks quite absurd though, I must admit, he is so little. Robert said to me seriously the other day, [''] 'Are you sure Ba, that he grows?' Which made me laugh & propose that in case he should turn out a 'Tom Thumb the third' we should travel about the world in a caravan & make our fortunes besides—which would be convenient with our wandering propensities which are difficult to gratify under present circumstances. Still,—he does grow—there's the truth: his frocks are nearly up to his knees already: but he is a delicately made child, with slight bones: if it were not for his fat, he w'ld look frail, I dare say—but being so fat and rosy (yes, rosy, tell Henrietta) & having such round, mottled arms & legs, you are struck instantly by his appearance of health & vigour, & nobody calls him little ... except me & Robert, when we see him setting off to walk, or preparing to set off to walk, on such a small provision of nature. I hear that D. Harding says of me that "I have a child as large as myself." By the way, D. Harding brought his daughters to see me yesterday ... two of them ... for I think he has four.6 He has shown us such kindness, that we were glad to prove our sense of it by receiving them cordially. The eldest told me that he had a strong interest
in me, & really I can believe it. After every illness I have had, he has always thrown in a few visits at the end "as a friend"—which was unnecessary of course. His daughters are accomplished women—sing and paint beautifully. Two of them knew Miss Mitford in England. M"Ogilvy has a new little girl—a pretty little creature. Also, just before her confinement, there was a dreadful business up stairs— their Italian maid being convicted of having opened M"Ogilvy's desk, & taken out from time to time money to the amount of above ten pounds English. He suspected her, & at last marked the pieces, &, calling in the police, the marked scudos were found on her person. She is a pretty woman, just married—it was a terrible scene, I fancy. She brandished a knife, as if to stab herself.

Oh, and Arabei—such a melancholy Christmas, we had! I have not had such a Christmas since I married. Poor Alessandro's wife, who was nursing her youngest child, six weeks older than mine, was suddenly seized [sic] with fever, & died the evening before Christmas day. Six children left .. the eldest indeed, twenty, but the others all wanting help—and the poor little unweaned baby! Alessandro was going backwards & forwards from his own house to ours, looking stupified with grief. A fortnight's illness carried her off—such a strong healthy looking woman too! And since then, the baby, which seemed for a few weeks to be going on well, has been attacked with intestinal inflammation through the sudden change of diet—but is well again—poor Alessandro is spared that last grief. We seemed throughout the Christmas time to be living & breathing in a cloud .. Robert having remembrances full of dejection, and I, feeling uncomfortable about home .. Wimpole Street, I mean: & the balia's husband had just gone to the hospital to complete our associated grievances. Once, Robert said gravely, "Suppose we all kill ourselves tonight," which made me laugh again, though it was a dreary sort of joke certainly. Alessandro has got over his calamity (for I dont wish to wound your sympathies too much,) with wonderful quickness, and as I heard the balia saying to our little dressmaker, Girolama, a little sprightly black-eyed creature, with deformed crumpled up legs, who comes here to work sometimes, & who asked compassionately .. "Come sta Alessandro?"— "Sta bene! Mangia bene, beve bene, e cerca un'altra moglie." Only our balia is rather too severe upon Alessandro, I must add—there being a deadly enmity set between them. Dearest Arabei & Henrietta, how dear & kind you are, but how extreme & absurd, to have thought of sending stockings to Wiedeman by Ma"Braun (Miss Thompson)12—now I do seriously beseech you on Robert's part & mine, not ever to do such a thing again—you will make us uncomfortable, otherwise, every time what you call an 'opportunity,' occurs. D"Braun & his new wife were so kind as to come & take coffee with us, the only evening they spent in Florence, arriving late & setting out early in the morning .. so that if they neglected to send for your parcel, it was the discretion of the Fates who knew well that you had given me a great deal too much already, .. you dearest, kindest things!— D"Braun charmed us both .. it is long since I have been so much pleased by any one. Fervid & simple, he is .. with an apparent goodness radiating through his intellect— I liked him very much. What Miss Bayley could mean by not seeming to do so, I cant make out. Moreover, I believe that there were no obstacles on Miss Thompson's part— .. none of the personal revulsion we all had imagined. When I said to her, 'You wont find any of the household difficulties in Italy which Miss Bayley seems to fear for you'— 'Oh,' she answered, 'Miss Bayley saw every sort of difficulty
Letter 47  
23 January [1850] 310

where there was none at all—Indeed she gave me a great deal of pain.” Spoken earnestly & emphatically. I passed it off with .. ‘Well, it was all done in love .. be sure—for she idolizes you’—but I dont think the sense of love was the preponderant thing in Madame Braun’s mind. How difficult it is for the most intelligent, sympathizing & loving .. yes, & disinterested, as I believe Miss Bayley to be .. to judge for another on subjects near to the inner life! This strikes one more & more. The heart is subtle, & Miss Bayley may have been influenced unknown to herself, by her natural unwillingness to see the person dearest to her, transplanted from England altogether. Certainly my impression & Robert’s, of D’ Braun, was quite different from our imagination of him beforehand. He seemed to me delightful— I said to Robert, ‘I should like him as Arabel’s husband’, .. and a greater compliment could scarcely be paid. They both appeared full of happiness & with the best mutual understanding, .. she looking forward with delight, to her life in Rome. They urged us to go there too— ‘there was an apartment vacant in the house they occupied,’ said D’ Emil Braun .. ‘though not such a one as we had in Florence’ .. “What a poetical place!” said he, turning round his eyes upon our tapestried walls. (Did I tell you that we had bought three great pieces of tapestry, to shut us in?13 and did I tell you that our bookcase was up, to the admiration of everybody?) He was astonished to hear what we paid for our rooms .. ‘quite palace-rooms’! .. and wished that he too could settle at Florence. Which she didn’t assent to— ‘oh no, she wouldn’t give up the Tarpeian rock’!14 We, on the other hand, are afraid of Rome, .. of the comparative expense, and of the relaxing air for children— Wiedeman might lose his roses there, perhaps. But we mean to go one day to visit Rome, which is a different thing. There has been a great sensation & is still here, in respect to Capt. Pakenham, who is in another scrape with the government, as you will see by the papers.15 He has the character of a very imprudent man, & probably is so—although it is a case for strong sympathy from all who care for liberty of the press & the diffusion of God’s truth. Of course, we foreigners are upon sufferance here, & have no right to act against the laws—but it appears that he applied for the permission of the G Duke’s provisional government in order to the printing of the Catholic authorized version of the Scriptures16 .. had an interview with the liberal minister, who wished him well, .. & proceeded to print the book upon such high authority. Only, when he had printed this authorized book, he thought (or I believe some unwise advisers in England thought) it was a good opportunity for beginning to print the unauthorised protestant version .. & although he had not proceeded beyond three sheets, yet the fact places him in a more questionable position. The publication of neither of these versions took place .. as on the coming of the Austrians & succession of the less liberal ministry, everything was seized [sic], & legal proceedings instituted against Capt. Pakenham. The trial took place a few days since .. & before it ended (here is the iniquity) he was ordered to leave the country. A protest of the English has been got up, to which Robert put his name—and he was one of the three or four Englishmen who went into court, in order to give some sign of sympathy to the ‘prisoner’. Capt. Pakenham thanked him for going. Also, there was present, I was glad to hear, the minister of our French church—17 Sorrowful to relate, the minister of the church of England-chapel,18 though really a pious man, I believe, was cowardly enough to stay away, on the plea of its being ‘no business of his’, & refused, on the same plea, to sign the protest. M: Wolley, who is one of the kindest of human beings whatever else he may not be,
saved the character of the Ch. of England, by doing what he ought to have done. For some time we thought it impossible to preserve Capt. Pakenham from the penalty incurred—but now it appears, that on the ground of his health, he will be allowed to remain in Florence. He appeared in court in his full Naval uniform, presenting a dauntless front. I tell you all this, knowing that it will interest you.

The Cottrells talk of going to England—and I should so much have liked to send you Wiedeman’s picture—We have consulted about it, but as to making that child sit still one instant, it’s impossible—and now, the least stir, or change of light wakens him out of sleep. Wilson thinks it utterly impossible. Before he went to Lucca we might have done it well—-I am so sorry:—we might have had him taken asleep with the greatest ease. I forgot to tell you that Madame Braun, whom I took to his room to see him asleep in his cradle (for it was night when she came) called him ‘a very pretty child’ .. ‘such a beautiful complexion’! We dont often see him in his bath now, because he is bathed at our breakfast time instead of later, as he used to be; and this morning the balia came running to ask us to have sight of him ‘crawling in the water’— “Che bambino! che bambino!”20 He always delighted in his bath, & now he thinks he may combine with it some dry-land advantages .. such as crawling & climbing. We have exchanged his small bath for a larger one—he has room for swimming if he pleases. Strange to say there is no devoted friendship between him & Flush. Flush thinks it quite absurd that such a fuss should be made about an irrational child: and Wiedeman is of opinion that Flush takes a great deal too much upon himself, as if he were master of the house indeed. Still there are moments of affectionate intercourse. Wiedeman’s great pleasure is to feed Flush with one piece of bread after another at breakfast time—& when they wont give any more bread for such a purpose, he gets into a passion, & struggles to get away himself to the floor & Flush’s company, .. & sometimes, too, hugs & kisses Flush, & pulls his tail to make it wag. Flush, on the other hand, takes the bread so tenderly as never to hurt the little fingers, & kisses him very often as he sits on the floor—but he wont go out of doors with him & the balia alone, & upon Wiedeman’s staying too long in the drawing-room, walks into another room in disgust. Then they have great fights about who is to be nearest the fire. Wiedeman has a notion that being in the fire, with the red blazing wood, might be very pleasant .. which Flush wont allow of, & has his ears boxed & cuffed soundly by a pair of dimpled fists, accordingly. In revenge, when Flush is called a ‘cattivo Flush, che non ha pazienza,’21 for barking in his wish to go out .. Wiedeman turns to him most magisterially, squeezing his lips together, & scolding hard at him, with a full sense of human superiority. Yes! The Cottrells were gratified by my verses,22 & came to thank me, both of them. I am glad you liked them. My new edition, I shall send by the Cottrells, if they will take it— I scarcely like asking, but the difficulties of the case will be my excuse for troubling them so far. The packet will go to Sarianna Browning, who is kindly to correct the proofs for me as she did for Robert.23 I know my own dearest Arabel, that you would have done this, if I had asked you— I know you w’d not have objected for the trouble’s sake. But she is accustomed to the correction of proofs, and the eye has to be educated to the mechanic(al) accuracy, which is the more necessary now through the absence of the writer. Also, M’ Forster will have access to the sheets, by this arrangement .. & be within reach of any difficulty .. Sarianna can ask a question of him & be answered. Not that she sees him:—scarcely ever she does—but they are on terms of acquaintance— He had the kindness to offer himself to
take the whole care of the proofs—but I did not like this. The edition includes the best Seraphim-poems, *carefully corrected*, & strengthened & improved as far as possible . . . the Prometheus, which at last I have got back from Blackwood, & a few new things—*not* the poem on Tuscany though—²⁴ I shall write a second part to that, and publish it separately . . . and besides, I have no room for it in the two new volumes: they will be almost overthick without it. The Blackwoods write me a very civil note (oh, they send me plenty of civility—*that* costs nothing!) to say how sorry they are, never to have found an opening for so long a translation, . . . and to hope that I will not give up sending them such compositions as I may have by me, “suitable to their plain taste in poetry”. (They have probably seen the verses in the Athenæum,²⁵ & fancy that I am in a rage with them! which is true!) They add that they have ordered an early copy of my new edition—intimating that it will be noticed in the magazine—but all this conciliation together with the fact of their having paid me very well for those few lyrics & sonnets,—(five & twenty guineas! you remember) scarcely sets me up again in good humour.²⁶ Robert is busy with new poems—²⁷ What I have seen is very fine—²⁸ He hopes to be out at Easter. You grieve me about dear dearest Trippy, but as to despairing, I by no means despair— I feel persuaded on the contrary that M'A Gordon will concede the ground. She must, in justice, in honour, & for shame. Tell me everything. Give her my dearest love & say how I think of her. I meant to have written to her this Christmas—only a letter to you is the same thing—she hears the whole, & she feels the love in it. I love her dearly, & anxiously wait for news.— Oh—you people, to misunderstand me so! Why, Arabel, my dearest, I never said a word to you of Nelly Jago’s child being ill.²⁹ Dear Nelly will that I am bewitched & predicting evils to her— God forbid— When I said I was anxious about the child, I only meant to express my horror & fear at her attempting to bring it up “by hand”.³⁰ Here, such an attempt is almost sure to be fatal: everywhere, dangerous, says D’ Harding. You never told me a word about your visit to Trejago, Arabel . . nor of the dear little creature there. Do tell me.

<. . .>³¹

So sorry I am about dearest Minny’s grief. I hope she has better news.³² Give her my love, & tell me of her. The disappointment was not one to me— I felt too sure of the result. M(ay) God open a door. You dont always tell me particulars enough . . . & (I am) very anxious . . . So you miss me still, my dearest darling Arabel, and I, (you,) indeed! Do believe it of your own Ba.

I shall write to Papa in a very few days as nothing shall be lost through not trying. I have said nothing of Alfred— There are subjects which begin to overpain me. My brothers have gone too far with me indeed. Well—but of Alfred, I can’t wish him to go to S.A.³³ feeling convinced that the opening there is not what he expects. Is there nothing on the French or Belgic railroad. Without languages, Spanish &c, he will make no progress in S.A.

Wilson is well & in good spirits: so glad I am. Robert’s very best love.

*Address, on integral page: Angletterre via France / Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.*

*Publication: None traced.*

*Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.*

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. A report in *The Times* for 26 January 1850, noted that "the cold had been excessive throughout Tuscany and Piedmont. At Florence the thermometer had fallen to ... 5 deg. Fahr." (p. 6). Earlier on 15 December 1849 *The Times* reported that the Pope had "pleaded the inclemency of the weather and the state of the roads covered with snow" as a reason for his not yet returning to Rome (p. 3); and another report in *The Times* for 19 January 1850, noted snow in Rome on 29 December 1849, as well as on 6 January 1850 (p. 6).

3. "Wet nurse."

4. "O Blessed Peter, how the lady gets herself excited about nothing! A doctor, for such a healthy baby—O heavens!" The passage starting "Un medico" is interpolated above the line.

5. Cf. *Aurora Leigh*, I, 387-391: "I left off saying my sweet Tuscan words / ... because / She liked my father's child to speak his tongue."

6. "Where is this baby? He's lost." ... "Maybe he's gone into the other room" ... "Or maybe, he's gone out, to the Cascine, to see the horses."

7. Presumably, EBB has in mind the character in Fielding's satiric play *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1730), as Tom Thumb the first. The second was Charles Sherwood Stratton (1838-83), otherwise known as "General Tom Thumb," an American midget performer who was promoted by P.T. Barnum in London in the 1840's (see *BC*, 13, 83).

8. James Harding (see letter 27, note 9) had three daughters: Adeline Ellen, Margaret, and Augusta Caroline, but I have been unable to determine which of the three did not visit EBB.

9. Marcia Napier Ogilvy, the third daughter and fourth child of Eliza and David Ogilvy, was born on 12 January 1850. She eventually married Horace Bell and died in 1940.

10. This is the first of several references to Girolama, who became a great favourite with Pen. I have been unable to identify her beyond EBB's descriptions.

11. "How is Alessandro?"—"He's fine! he eats well, he drinks well, and he's looking for another wife."

12. Anne Braun (née Thomson d. 1863) was the "niece" of Sarah Bayley (see letter 7, note 12), John Kenyon's companion. Anne Thomson married August Emil Braun (1809-56) on 20 October 1849; they had passed through Florence on their way to Rome earlier in January 1850. EBB had first corresponded with Anne Thomson in 1845 when she solicited EBB's help on some translations for a "Classical Album" she was working on. The album was never completed, but some of EBB's intended translations later appeared in *Poems* (1850) and in *Last Poems* (1862). In 1854, Emil Braun published *The Ruins and Museums of Rome* (Brunswick: Frederick Vieweg and Son, 1854). A copy inscribed to EBB "with Mrs. Emil Braun's best love and good wishes" in January 1855 sold as part of lot 931 of *Browning Collections* (see *Reconstruction*, A300). For a more complete biographical sketch, see *BC*, 10, 327-328.

13. The Brownings owned at least seven tapestry panels, but it is impossible to say which of those EBB is describing here. Two of the seven are now at Vizcaya (see *Reconstruction*, H667 and H668, as well as H669-673).


15. See letter 45, note 3. Mrs. Pakenham explains that after they returned to Florence from Bagni di Lucca in October 1849, "the Bible trial then came on. Sir G.H. [i.e., George Hamilton] had done little or nothing, and the trial ended in nothing as regards our position, but God made it useful for spreading further His own word! We were living on comfortably, till one day, as I was in my little studio, waiting for A.P. to pay visits with me, wondering his wonted punctuality kept not to its time, he entered, and 'we are to be sent away,' was his greeting. ... all ended in our being forced to quit under a ten days' notice! And to England we went!" (F.J.P. [Frances Julia Pakenham], *Life Lines; or, God's Work in a Human Being*, London: Wertheim, Macintosh, and Hunt, 1862, pp. 103-104). Mrs. Pakenham makes no reference to either of the protests made by her fellow-countrymen.

16. i.e., the Douai-Reims Bible, otherwise known as the Douai (or Douay) Bible, which is a translation from the Latin Vulgate; the New Testament was completed in 1582, and the Old Testament in 1609. It was meant to provide an English version of the Bible free from heretical renderings. It has been replaced by the New Jerusalem...
Bible and the Revised Standard Version in this century. A report in *The Times* for 7 February 1850, quoting from the *Tuscan Monitor*, noted that bishops, who had been holding a conference in Florence, had reported to the Grand Duke the need to smooth over difficulties existing between Tuscany and the Holy See, and further for the need to prohibit "the importation from abroad, and circulation among the people, of books which corrupt their morals and attack religion" (p. 6).

17. Moise Droin; see letter 42, note 4.

18. The Chaplain at this time was the Rev. George Robbins (1809–73); he had been elected in 1843. The Rev. J. Wolley had been elected Church Warden of the English Church in Florence in 1849, but I have been unable to determine how long he held this post. See Catherine Danyell Tassinari, *The History of the English Church in Florence* (Florence: Barbiera Press, 1905), p. 65. According to Catherine Tassinari, "During the eight years that he held the Chaplaincy at Florence, the Rev. George Robbins proved himself to be in every way admirably fitted for the post. He was a man in the prime of life, with wide sympathies, and considerable knowledge of the world. He possessed a sense of humour, and tactful, pleasant manners which stood him in good stead in steering through the numerous difficulties which always beset the path of the continental chaplain. To these qualities he added great kindness of heart, and an earnestness, and devotion to his work which won him the respect and regard of his whole congregation. When early in 1851, Mr. Robbins resigned the Chaplaincy for a living in England, the news was received in Florence with a genuine and widespread regret." (p. 71).

19. The Cottrells were in England in March and April 1850.

20. "What a baby! What a baby!"

21. "Bad Flush, who has no patience."

22. A reference to EBB’s lines on the death of their daughter, Alice, published the preceding month; see letter 43, note 4.

23. The proofs sent to Sarianna Browning are doubtless the copy "containing extensive *ms* revisions, used as printer’s copy for *Poems* (1850)," now at Wellesley; it sold as part of lot 156 in *Browning Collections* (see *Reconstruction*, D722). The edition was eventually published on 1 November 1850 (see letter 52, note 7). Sarianna often helped the Browning with preparations for printing their works; she had assisted with corrections for RB’s 1849 edition. In mid-1848 EBB wrote: "Robert says that if ‘Blackwood’ likes to print a poem of mine and send you the proofs, you will be so very good as to like to correct them. To me it seems too much to ask, when you have work for him to do beside. ... I would ask my other sisters, who would gladly, dear things, do it for me; but I have misgivings through their being so entirely unaccustomed to occupations of the sort, or any critical reading of poetry of any sort" (*LEBB*, 1, 370).

24. i.e., *Casa Guidi Windows*, the first part of which EBB originally called "A Meditation in Tuscany"; see letter 30, note 24.


26. For the poems published in *Blackwood’s* in October 1846, see letter 3, note 21. *Blackwood’s* did not review her collected edition of *Poems* (1850).

27. *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day* was published on 1 April 1850.

28. Taken together with EBB’s comment in letter 118 that RB had made her "swear not to read a word of what he has written," this implies that EBB saw RB’s work in progress.

29. Eleanor Elizabeth Clara Consuelo Jago (b. 7 October 1849) was the daughter of Francis Robert Jago and his wife Eleanor ("Nelly," *née* Bordman); see letter 2, note 6.

30. Based upon EBB’s comments in letters 51 and 57, I take this to refer to bottle feeding as opposed to nursing.

31. Six and a half lines have been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

32. Minny suffered from lameness in her feet.

33. From the context, it appears that Alfred was considering going to South America to work on the railroad.
My ever ever dearest Arabel, This little note for Henrietta has been lying by me ever so many
days, & I send it to prove that I forget nothing, notwithstanding the stupidity otherwise as clearly
expressed in it. Now first of all, let me tell you, Arabel, that I was right & everybody else wrong,
on the subject which has been interesting us all lately .. in fact, that all ends in nothing at all. The
movement, the only symptom, (one that staggered me, I confess) is explained into having been a
mere convulsive agitation, the consequence of debility, & the scarcely perceptible distention has
entirely past away. The truth is (& everybody now, including D! Harding, thinks it the truth) the
truth is, that the attack at the beginning of the winter was neither more nor less than a
miscarriage—and a very slight degree of distention followed, as has happened with me before.
At the beginning I was sure of it,—& for any pregnancy to continue after the sort of illness, w'd
have been neither more nor less than miraculous. But the movement, & the incessant ‘talking
down’ I have experienced since then, made me catch (by fits) at a hope, which it vexes me
unreasonably to part with. I am vexed too, to have talked to you of it, & set you upon thorns,
instead of the green bank you had a right to, in your thoughts of me at least. Forgive this, &
everything I ever have done to vex you. Oh, would that I could give you joy & only joy from now
to the end of my life! it would be indeed, a making amends to you & to me! I am perfectly well, I
may say honestly, fatter & stronger, & within these few days, have begun my long walks again.
Will you expect to hear that we are going to England early in the summer? If we can, we shall—
but we are dependant upon possibilities, you must understand,—and, to speak clearly, on the
point of whether we shall be rich enough. A journey to England will cost us fifty pounds—double
it, to include the return. Then, at least, a third fifty pounds will be required to cover the expenses
of our visit, .. perhaps. M! Browning & Sarian[n]a talk of changing their house at Michaelmas—they cant, earlier. If Robert went to that old house, he w'd be miserable while he was in England,—
and, in fact, our going there, while they are just preparing to go away, would be scarcely possible—
very inconvenient, certainly. Then it is unfortunate, this year,—our books (through the second
editions being only at the beginning of their race) cant be expected to bring us anything till next
Christmas—. I tell you exactly how the lions roar in the path .. but, remember, I dont tell you
that we shant contrive to tread it. On the contrary .. if it is possible (and we shall be unable to
know until May what the precise possibilities are) if it is in any way possible, you are sure of us—
Sure of our longing, yearning wishes, you may indeed be. For my part, Robert can scarcely keep
me quiet—he lectured me the other day upon the necessity of being prepared for a
disappo[ ]ntment—which means the necessity of submitting to necessity—and, as I said
indignantly at the moment, I am not such a great baby as to insist on doing an impossible thing
when it is proved to be impossible. Robert told me that if I liked to leave Wiedeman behind,
there might be less difficulty—
As to leaving Wiedeman behind, how could I? how ought I? Oh no, that cant be indeed!
though I should not have minded perhaps so much to leave the new baby (if it had come)– I had a
scheme of the sort, in my head. But Wiedeman, cutting his teeth, & abandoned to the heat of Florence, I never could leave .. that's certain. Besides, what would you give to see me without the baby? He's more than half the sight. I should be ashamed to show myself without him, to you or anybody, & should be dreadfully & naturally uneasy during the whole visit, in addition. Well—we shall see—hoping, yearning, in the meantime. For half an hour's vision of you, I would give up .. so much, so much! I fall into moody humours every now & then, & storm against Italy, because really this sort of thing is not to be borne long. Now, I empty my heart of these doubts & fears, & you are not to interpret them into a decision against England, because, if we can go, we shall go .. you may consider it a promise. Robert says that when he has all his information as to means & ways in his hands (which cant be yet) he will lay it before me & I shall judge of the whole case .. of the whole possibility, that is. He feels himself that he ought to see his father & sister:—only if we cant go, we cant. It wont quite do, to beg our way, with Baby playing on the tambourine, though he plays it beautifully to be sure, .. holding it up with one hand, & beating it with the other fist. He has seven teeth now—had, before he was a year old—and I think I told you that the day he was eleven months old he stood up without touching anything. Now he stands quite firm—but when you ask him to come to you, down he drops & begins to crawl directly. If it had'nt been for the crawling, he w'd have walked alone before this time. Having rendered himself perfectly independent, he doesn't care for hazardizing the walking. Do you know, I did not like to keep his birthday much? & when it came to the point, I would'nt let Alessandro make his intended plum pudding nor invite Madam Biondi to dinner. Robert was low about his mother—the association with the event of last year, was yet too strong with him. He said to me, "Ah, now I understand, Ba, your dislike of keeping anniversaries." So we did nothing—we did'nt even drink his health, little darling! In the morning, however, Mrs Ogilvy had the kindness to bring a horse, cut in white wood, as a birthday present for him, which he screamed with delight at, but cant be persuaded into being too familiar with—he thinks there's something dangerous about it .. so pats it gently,—& draws back when Wilson sets it gallopping. Then Robert & I, when we went out, brought him a barking dog & a squeaking cat—Robert's present was the cat (because he is fond of cats) & mine, the dog—and Wiedeman is enchanted with both, & kisses them reverentially, & strokes them, & uses his little coaxing voice to them as he does to Flush—but as to holding them in his hand & taking the personal liberties with them which he expends upon his friend Flush, he is not to be induced into any rashness of the kind. Wiedeman is very daring in some things, but he has a prudence of his own. For instance, he climbs upon a low window seat in his nursery, & comes down head foremost, with admirable precautions— The first time I saw him do it, I thought he was going to be killed—till Wilson exclaimed as I was rushing forward, "Oh, let him do it! he understands! he wont hurt himself—" And down he came victoriously. A regular boy, he is, in all his ways, fond of fun & mischief & every possible sort of noise—in all his ways, except in liking to be petted & kissed—Generally, being kissed, teazes children of his age, whereas he has always been pleased at it: I never saw nor imagined such an affectionate baby—he pats your cheeks, he kisses you again & again, he makes a little carressing [sic] murmur to show how he loves you! All admiration, and wonder, & approbation & gratitude mean just a love, with him. If he sees a picture he likes, he kisses it directly—and if a stranger in the streets stops to smile at him and say
“what pretty little hands,” he holds out his mouth to return the compliment in his peculiar manner. And if he wants you to take notice of him, there’s no better way of doing it, he thinks, than just kissing you! never was a child before so fond of kissing. Flush has enough of it now, I assure you—he has grown very fond of Flush—and when they are together in the CASCINE rolling on the grass, people stand round & look at them—oh, he must kiss Flush exactly on the mouth, & Flush sometimes puts his nose between his paws & wont be kissed, & then there’s a tussle for it. Wiedeman has a sweet, sunshiney temper of his own, which it is delightful to see expanding. God is good to us in everything. Passionate the child is certainly—he will kick with his little feet, & bump up & down on the floor in fits of impatience: but sullen & obstinate he never is—the cloud passes in a moment—and with tears on his cheeks, they dimple all over with joy again! You may think it very soon to speak of a child’s temper—but there’s a great difference even with little children, as we see all round us. He gives up his favorite toys when other babies (friends of his) cry for them—and though he comes for them again after a minute or two, yet it is only to return them if they are particularly wished for. Not a symptom of fretfulness, ever! He isn’t spoilt up to this moment, tell Henrietta. At the same time, I must confess that he has everything much his own way: that, as Wilson says, “he is master & mistress already”. If he chooses to eat orange-marmalade and to play with the scissors .. (pretending to cut his frock, & throwing back his head & shutting his eyes everytime in the most affected way) it is by the softest of persuasions that we hint & “hesitate dislike” to the whole proceeding. If on the other hand, poor Robert is deep in his practising, having said first “Do contrive to amuse him, Ba, that I may finish this”, in two minutes I am by his side .. “Here’s your child! he will come! you must take him”, & as Robert recognizes the necessity instantly, there is a new performer on the knees of the old one, thumping with both hands, accordingly. Which he is’nt satisfied with—oh, Robert must play too—then he observes how the fingering is done, & imitates it in the most curious way, you can fancy—with such a grave, satisfied face too, looking up to me for applause. We laugh—who could help it? he’ll be a musician some day, I feel sure. Wilson & I have been in council about his summer costume, & we have bought (to begin) a light French mouselines de chine, blue, and a Leghorn round hat, to be trimmed with blue satin ribbon & a blue & white feather. The heat makes a change of dress necessary to everybody. I forgot to say in my last letter, what amends for our two months severe winter we had received in the change of weather. From the beginning of February until now, the weather has been exquisite—and when I went out to walk early in March, I could just bear my silk mantilla—it was & is like an English June. Windows open down to the ground, fires let out, and the shady side of the way diligently enquired after. At the same time I recommend nobody with a weak chest to winter at Florence, unless they have renunciation enough in them, to give up going out of doors for some two months of the winter. There is death & destruction in our cold winds. Only I never could join in the ungrateful & most unreasonable cry raised by many of the English against the climate of Florence. People accustomed to an English winter of six months, consider themselves quite aggrieved by a cold of six days here: you would think they had just come out of paradise! And, while we were freezing last December & January, who else in the world was being sunned, I wonder? Were you? Even in Sicily, there was frost too—it has been very cold everywhere. Now, we are rather too warm, & the complainers by profession are
of course complaining of that. "So very enervating! so trying." To be satisfied, they must needs
go out of the world, indeed!

The Ogilvies are in an awful state of doubt, talking of Naples, of Paris, & of Florence by
turns. I think it likely that they will decide on Paris, after all. We shall miss them— They are
excellent persons, & very cultivated. The little baby is very pretty—a model baby—and not much
more fault is to be found with the maturer members of the family. Quick sympathies, fine tastes,
& a great deal of kindness, make them agreeable friends & neighbours. I am not drawn into love
with M" David Ogilvy . . with all her prettiness, liveliness, intelligence, & feeling . . there is
wanting somehow the last touch of softness & exterior sensibility— I like her much . . like her
society, respect her good qualities, feel an interest in her actions & sentiments . . yet I dont love
her, & I dont feel that she loves me—you meet with delightful, unloveable people, you know,
sometimes, & then you blame yourself for finding them unloveable when you undeniably find
them delightful. Observe—she has sentiment, goodness, kindness—brightness: masculine, no
one could call her! there is just a want of softness in the character . . a want of tenderness, somehow.
I  would'nt say such a thing to any but you. She & her husband are our friends, & have shown us
every sort of attention, and we shall be most sorry to lose them. As to D' Braun, perhaps I decided
on him in a hurry. ‘A brother in law’ should receive more consideration certainly. But I was most
pleasantly surprised—he is a sort of man, I like— I seemed to see a brain & a heart in the man. As
to his being a little supra-mundane & unpractical, I dont care for that at all— When a woman
loves a man, it is'nt too much to see to his bills, & the dusting of his carpets—. Even I could
learn to do it, on a strong impulse, though happily it has not, in my case, been necessary. There is
something generous, fervid, & simple about him, which took my fancy—and when you add the
fact that his acquirements have established for him a European reputation,8 one must see
compensation for the want of worldly wisdom & practicability. So easy it is for an Englishwoman
to turn into ridicule any man a little out of the common mould of English conventional
gentlemanliness, (though I saw nothing ungentlemanly in the commonly received sense, in D' Braun)
that Mary Minto’s laughter must not seem to you to establish too much. For my part, I
think (as far as my opportunity of observing goes) that Ma’dene Braun has done well & wisely. I
am sure she thought so herself when she was here. I said, “Why you could'nt have done better!
It’s the very position suited to you!” Which she acceded to with a smile of perfect contentment.
As to an uncertain income, why he has his income in his brain. People never think of that, & are
perfectly foolish in not doing so. Before Dickens became famous, a young lady & her family refused
him disainfully “because he had’nt a penny”—9 Now they w'd be glad to exchange the whole of their
property for the least valuable copyright of one of his books. I like to hear of such things—it gives me
a malignant pleasure, I confess. A deficiency in love & faith does’nt always make one’s fortune, even
after the ways of this world, you see. By the bye, M' Forster has written to ask us to contribute to
Dickens’s new periodical—which wont succeed, I predict, especially as they have adopted the fashion
of not printing the names of contributors. It was tried with the Monthly Chronicle, years ago, and
failed entirely.10

—They have given us another room in this house, opening out of Robert’s dressing room—
an enormous room with three great windows,—for which we pay two pounds a year more . . no,
two guineas. Strictly speaking, we dont want it now . . (through my disappointment) but even if we give it to Wiedeman for a playroom, it is worth the money—and if we let the apartment, that room will be an advantage.11 Having made this agreement, we have further agreed on another year's residence. I hope, if we go to England or not, to let the apartment in the winter & spend it at Rome . . which must be visited, before we finally leave Italy, if ever we do. Every now & then Robert professes to be tired of Florence—and there is not another climate in the country where I should quite like to take our child.— Oh, I do hope & trust to see you this year! I long for it on many, many accounts—it would do good to my very soul to see you! Also, I remember & remind Robert, that always at the beginning of every year, he begins to despond, & cry aloud that there wont be money to do what we want to do in the course of it. He said so at the beginning of last year—yet, after his misfortune, it became plain that we should have had the pecuniary means of going to England, if others had not failed— Therefore, I am not in the least inclined to despair—only I tell you the truth—because truth is best— We have been very busy with his new book, which comes out at easter. I hope you will like at least some things in it. Still, Arabel, half I am afraid of you! Dont knit your brows, I beg of you, till you get to the end, & see the scope of the whole. The opening will introduce you to a dissenting chapel of the poorest & lowest description, . . of the Methodist Whitfieldite order:12 an extreme case is taken to make the ultimate decision stronger. I expect an outcry from nearly all classes of readers, for my part.13 I dare say, the merely literary reader will call the writer a Methodist, and the religious one will accuse him of some levity in the treatment of his subject: I am prepared for those drawbacks. At the same time, the fact will remain, of the recognition of Christ's faith in its simplicity—and men who can understand how the individuality of a writer is a proof of his earnestness, will not find fault with the mode. Both poems (there are two in the book) are dramatic in a sense—they express certain aspects of Christian experience.14 M! Forster, to whom they have been sent, on their way to Chapman & Hall, will open his eyes wide at them, I prophecy—and I feel rather uneasy about what is likely to be the next word from him. There are very noble & grand things in the poems, let him say what he pleases! We have had another letter from Father Prout, who is editor of the Globe, just now—did I tell you that!15 He says that Dickens looks like a man of sixty, his hair quite grey, & his face, furrowed— I suppose the working of the brain begins to tell outwardly: nothing is so consuming as imagination-work, though ignorant persons rank it but lightly. To lead an army, is recognized as work worth reward in England— Titles and pensions fall on such men. In another hundred years (or less, probably) the real service will be discerned & compensated. Father Prout sends his “love to the Ba”, as usual.—

I have just heard from M! Irving of Pisa, who says that M! Scarlet,16 the secretary of the Legation, here, “remembering me when I was a little girl,” desired to pay us a visit. I shall get off it, if I possibly can—for Robert & I dont feel as if the acquaintance was likely to suit us. I think I told you that his wife died last year, six weeks before the time of her confinement, leaving him with two babies:—which is the most interesting circumstance about him. We must, by every means, keep out of the English society of Florence—we must do it. We have had however a visit from a Miss Blagden,17 a single lady, with black hair, black eyes, yet somehow not pretty, who does literature, leads a London life among the ‘litterateurs’ when she is in England, & is an
intimate friend of Bulwer Lytton through whom she applied to Forster to get a letter of introduction to us, as she wanted particularly to see us. Mr. Forster would not give her a line—And why, do you think? "Because," said he to her, "if I gave you one, you would only see Browning. As to Mrs. Browning, it is as difficult to see her in Florence as it ever was in London, I assure you. She lives just such a shut up sort of life there as she did here." Which made us laugh a little: it is not true exactly. She got a letter however from Robert's half uncle (who gave it, at another person's interposition) & by way of making sure, she brought it & presented it, herself. I liked her little dog extremely—and by no means disliked her. She says that Bulwer is out of spirits at the non-success of his 'King Arthur,'—& staying at Nice, having fallen into intimacy with Lord Brougham. Poor Bulwer's only daughter, dying some time ago, left him in great depression—and now, his sole remaining child, is his son, a boy of fifteen, full of talent & dreaminess— with all sorts of supernatural tastes & eccentricities—falling into mesmeric trances, & having perpetual communications with the world of spirits. How I should like to know that boy! Robert is reading 'the Caxtons' & is much pleased with the book. I am reading 'Shirley,' and am interested—only it does not seem to me equally suggestive of power (so far) with Jane Eyre.21

How are the Stratton's? Give my affectionate regards to Mr. & Mrs. Stratton, mind, Arabel. Do you go there often, now? Capt. Pakenham's lawsuit, (that is the appeal of the printer, against the decision of damage &c) was, or was to have been, favorably re-decided, a day or two ago. Which, however, wont enable him to return to Tuscany, without some further act on the part of the government. There was neither law nor the shadow of justice, in the first decision; & out of shame, the judges could not hold to it. But the Government (apart from legal forms) cant be expected, after this long course of shameless iniquity, to yield any point "out of shame". The Swiss chapel, is thronged with Italians—the movement seems to go on. The Guicciardini family was there the other sunday—historical Florentines. Some people think that it wont be suffered long, & that M. Drouin will be expelled next. I dont think so. The church is in connection with the Prussian legation, and the King of Prussia is accustomed to stand up firmly for his own rights. The gospel generally, & in particular the true doctrine of a universal church, are preached there simply & fully—and although there is neither power nor eloquence, we are quite satisfied with what we hear. The only written form is, the 'Apostles Creed' & the "Lord's prayer"—and instead of using "catholic" in the former, there is always 'l'eglise universelle'. I wish it was expressed so always: many miserable mistakes might be avoided. The cardinals at Rome have just commanded that all persons should cut off their beards!! The fatuity of imbecility cant go much further— The pope is done for, everybody feels. I commiserate the position of the French more than that of the Romans. With every inclination to do good, all they can do, is to secretly let men out of prison, & remain in their own place of shame. A miserable mistake, that has been, from first to last. The republic could not have stood at Rome—but better to have suffered Austria to do her own congenial dirty work. Believing in the pope's liberality (he who is a serene wax doll in a mitre!) they thought to retrieve everything—and lo, the passive obstinacy of the cardinals, with Austria at their backs, is harder to blow to pieces, than they found the poor Roman walls.—26
I hope you will tell me if you observed anything in Papa's reception of my letter. It was a very long letter—and I ventured, in it, to tell him a great deal about our way of living &c—things, which I had not dared to touch on before. I have no answer: but he has not sent it back. Mind you mention him particularly—and others. Somehow I feel anxious to get your next letter. Tell dearest Minny, that I was delighted to have her note, and will answer it soon. But one thing, she says, Arabei, which I am not happy about. I thought from your own story that your homœopathy had done you good—and she says that you are just as you used to be—no better, in the swelling—no stronger, at all!—Is it right of you not to tell me exactly? Did the effect go off? Tell me, I beseech you—Are you tired of attending to orders? are you doing too much with the schools? My dearest, darling Arabel, take care of yourself for me who love you down to the very end of your fingers—who think of you always . . . who turn you over & over in my mind, till I fancy you must be giddy almost, at a distance. You wont, for my sake, neglect yourself—will you, now? If ever you loved me, you wont. I am afraid of teasing you, yet grumble secretly at those schools. Take care, Arabel, if you love me. Tell me, will you, how you are? I am anxious. On other accounts, too, I am anxious. For one thing, there is Trippy's business—Let me know if Count Cottrell brought any termination, or mediation to the affair. Give a heap of kisses to my much loved Trippy, & tell her how I think of her. Something must be done, I am convinced—and to hear that it is actually done, will be great comfort to me. Has Alfred succeeded in getting occupation? Let me hear all you can let me know of everyone—and write soon, write soon. Nelly Jago told me of your kindness about the frock (which was kindness to me) but you did'nt tell me of your visit, I assure you. I hope her baby is getting on as well as ever. If you hear, say. She does'nt write: oh, I dare say she has too much to do—for she seems to do everything for the child herself. Wiedeman is undeniably little for his age:—we see such giants here! but he is beautifully proportioned, & may shoot up, one day. Arabel—your frock is still acres too large for him. Wilson threw me into despair by concluding the other evening that it w'd fit him exactly when he was five years old!! The 'balia'28 proposes tucks in the body! Which w'd be a novelty! and I cant have the frock spoilt. Perhaps by June, he will have grown into a baby of Anak,29—fit for it—We must hope. Dear Minny's feet seem to be very bad— I am so sorry—but with the spring, there is generally improvement, & you must tell me about her. How is Arlette's child? how many teeth? Baby's eighth is nearly through. Oh, Arabel, I never could wean him at a year.—Ma'dre Biondi advises against it— And consider his natural disadvantages in being my child! I want to put as much strength into him as possible, such as he could not get from me, . . . though the picture of health he is now! I cant read this letter over. Love me & pray for me.

I am your own,

own Ba—

Robert's best love—

Do you ever hear from Mary Hunter? Tell me— If you dont, how unkind!—— Dear Lizzie. Give my love to Lizzie— Has she re'd an answer. I wish she were gone from Miss Sykes.31

Address, on integral page: Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Arabel Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.
1. Month and year provided by postmark.

2. This “note” to Henrietta was published as the first part of letter XVIII, dated 4 March [1850], in TTUL, pp. 75–77.

3. See letter 11, note 2. This was the third miscarriage EBB had. In a letter dated 1 December [1849], she wrote to Miss Mitford: “I was taken ill in the night rather more than a month ago, & miraculously escaped a miscarriage . . . if the miscarriage is really escaped, . . . which I cant help still being doubtful of, in spite of the strong opinion of the learned that everything is now going on well” (EBB-MRM, III, 283–284). Only a few months later EBB had a fourth and final miscarriage; see letter 53.

4. i.e., 29 September, “one of the four quarter-days of the English business year” (OED). RB’s father and sister remained at Hanover Cottage, New Cross, until March 1852, when they settled briefly at 28 Chepstow Place, Bayswater. In July, they relocated to Paris because of the breach of promise case brought against RB, Sr., by Margaret von Müller (see letter 81, note 7).

5. Records of the sales of the Brownings’ poetry for this period are not extant.

6. Cf. EBB to Sarianna Browning, 21 August [1847]: “Surely you must know him [i.e., RB], . . . and that he is given to hear Lions roar round corners” (ms at Lilly).

7. Cf. Pope, An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot (1734), line 204: “Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike” (see letter 28, note 15).

8. Braun had recently been appointed as the German secretary of the Archaeological Society in Rome.

9. A reference to Dickens’s first love, Maria Beadnell. Their courtship lasted for four years with her parents approval, “but sometime in 1832, perhaps having heard rumours of John Dickens’s financial instability, they began to discourage CD’s visits” (Dickens, 1, 16, note 2).

10. Dickens wrote to Forster on 24 September 1849: “The old notion of the Periodical, which has been agitating itself in my mind for so long, I really think is at last growing into form” (Dickens, 5, 613). Forster was one of the principal proprietors of Household Words, the first number of which appeared on 30 March 1850. Neither EBB nor RB sent anything in response to Forster’s request; however, EBB’s sonnet “Hiram Powers’s ‘Greek Slave’” appeared in the issue for 26 October 1850 (p. 99), and was for a time misattributed to Dickens. The Monthly Chronicle was founded in 1838 by Dionysius Lardner and Edward Lytton Bulwer, and only continued until June 1841. The Chronicle often announced prospective contributors, but names were not attached to individual articles. In a letter to Richard Horne in August 1841, EBB wrote: “So the Chronicle is gone . . . it was such a fatal mistake to keep back the names! I saw it to the last” (BC, 5, 111). Household Words, on the other hand, when Dickens closed it down in 1859, had lasted three times as long.

11. See EBB’s sketch of the floor plan in letter 28.

12. George Whitefield (1714–70) was a Methodist evangelist, whose extreme brand of Calvinist theology led him to break with the Methodists and form a “Tabernacle.” After his death most of his followers joined the Congregationalists. The opening scene of RB’s poem depicts the beginning of a dissenting chapel service, which, as the poem develops, is compared to St. Peter’s and a German lecture-room. At the end of the poem, despite the narrator’s objections, the dissenting chapel is preferred to the other two.

13. More than a dozen reviews of Christmas-Eve and Easter Day appeared in the first few months after the poem was published. EBB’s anticipation of the critical response is interesting in light of several reviews that appeared. J. Westland Marston wrote in The Athenæum that “the form of doggerel—carried to excess by strange and offensive oddities of versification—is not that in which the mysteries of faith, doubt, and eternity can be consistently treated” (6 April 1850, no. 1171, p. 370). Marston is identified as the reviewer in the marked file of The Athenæum now at City University (London). John Forster noted in The Examiner that “at the close of the first portion of this poem the reader is warned against hasty judgments drawn from what may appear to be its occasional levity of tone. We do not think that any really earnest or thoughtful man will require that warning” (6 April 1850, p. 211). James Davies points out that Forster, despite finding praise for RB’s poem, added the “patronizing forecast: ‘(Browning) will yet win and wear his laurel!’ (John Forster: A Literary Life, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983, p. 140). G.H. Lewes commented in The Leader: “On the theology of the poem
we should have much to say did time and place serve; meanwhile we need only applaud in passing the sincere and earnest spirit which breathes through it. The sincerity of it will to many look like levity" (27 April 1850, p. 111). Rosemary Ashton points out that Lewes reviewed both Brownings, "enjoying the boldness of Browning's Christmas Eve and Easter Day, though missing in it 'the element of Beauty'. His wife, says Lewes, has that quality in abundance; unlike her husband, she is a 'born singer'.” (G.H. Lewes: A Life, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, p. 104).

14. Countering the notion that he deliberately designed them as autobiographical utterances.
15. See letter 30, note 3.
16. Peter Campbell Scarlett, third son of the late Lord Abinger (EBB's father's guardian) was the Secretary to Her Majesty's Legation in Tuscany. His wife, Frances Sophia Mostyn (née Lomax) died on 27 September 1847 at the Villa Galli, near Florence. The "two babies" EBB refers to are Florence Scarlett (afterwards Walsham, 1844–1915) and Leopold James Yorke Campbell Scarlett (1847–88).
17. Isabella Blagden (18167–73), novelist and poet, was born on 30 June 1816 or 1817 in the East Indies, the daughter of an Englishman and an Indian mother. Little is known about Isa, as she was commonly known, before she arrived in Florence in 1850, where she became one of the central figures in the Anglo-Florentine community. She was educated in England, probably at Louis Agassiz's Ladies School, Regent's Park, where most of the students were children of parents living in India. By the time she was seventeen, she had composed a play that was later privately printed. In 1842 Edward Bulwer Lytton read the work and his positive response encouraged her in her literary pursuits; however, a copy of the play has not survived. He was also the inspiration for her first published work, a poem entitled “What is Sir Lytton Bulwer's 'Zanoni'?" (The Metropolitan, July 1842, p. 307), which was followed by another poem addressed to Lytton, published in the same journal in April 1843. Encouraged by EBB, she turned to writing novels: Agnes Tremorne was published in two volumes in March 1861, and she later published four novels that are little known today. With comfortable means she resided at Bellosguardo, and is best remembered for her kind and generous nature as a friend and companion to members of the Anglo-Florentine circle, especially the Brownings and the Trollopes. Isa Blagden died alone in Florence on 20 January 1873, and is buried near her friend EBB in the Protestant Cemetery. (Extracted from my article in the New DNB, Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.) I have been unable to identify Isa Blagden's connection with RB's half-uncle, Reuben Browning.
18. King Arthur (London: Henry Colburn, 1848), an epic poem by Edward George Lytton Bulwer, was not a critical success, but "Tennyson believed Bulwer's epic ... had helped at least to prepare the public taste for his Idyls" (Allan Conrad Christensen, Edward Bulwer-Lytton: The Fiction of New Regions, Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1976, p. 230). “At the end of May, as indicated in his last letter to Lady Blessington, Bulwer went abroad ... He travelled about Germany for some months, ... and settled at Nice in October, where he remained until June 1850" (Victor Alexander Lytton, The Life of Edward Bulwer First Lord Lytton, London: Macmillian & Co., 1913, II, 117–118).
19. Henry Peter Brougham (1778–1868), Baron Brougham and Vaux, went to Cannes about this time where he later died and was buried (DNB); however, I have been unable to verify EBB's assertion about Brougham being in Nice or Bulwer-Lytton visiting him there.
20. Edward Robert Bulwer Lytton (1831–91), afterwards (1880) 1st Earl of Lytton and Viceroy of India from 1876–80. As a poet and novelist, he used the pseudonym “Owen Meredith.” In July 1849, his father had him removed from Harrow and sent to a private tutor in Bonn; however, six months later he was sent back to England after being accused of various misdeeds. Finally, in the autumn of 1850, thanks to the intervention of John Forster, Lytton was sent to Washington, to take up the post of unpaid attaché to his uncle, Henry Bulwer, minister to the United States. The appointment had been made a year earlier, but his father had not thought he was suitably prepared. In 1852 Lytton was posted to Florence as second attaché of the British Legation, and soon thereafter he met the Brownings and became a good friend of both. EBB particularly liked him because of his interest in spiritualism, an interest that he shared with his father. According to Sir Archibald Alison, the father had "succeeded in calling up the spirit of his daughter, a charming girl to whom he had been deeply
attached, and that he had conversed with and received answers from her!" (Some Account of My Life and Writings: An Autobiography by the late Sir Archibald Alison, Bart., ed. Lady Alison, Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1883, II, 52). Lytton's sister, Emily Elizabeth (b. 27 June 1828), had died of typhoid fever on 29 April 1848.

21. Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre was published in 1847, and was soon followed by Shirley in 1849. The Caxtons, a Family Picture (1849) by Edward George Lytton Bulwer was published in 1849. In February 1850, EBB wrote to Miss Mitford that "nobody seems to have read ‘Shirley’—we are too slow in getting new books" (EBB-MRM, III, 292), and in the first extant letter from EBB to Isa Blagden, dated [?19 March] [1850] (ms at Fitzwilliam), EBB thanks Isa for the loan of these books.

22. See letter 45, notes 3 and 4.

23. Together with the Medici and the Strozzi families, the Guicciardini family is one of the most ancient of the Florentine patrician families, dating from the 13th century. The family name was made famous in the 16th century by Francesco Guicciardini (1482-1540), who became a renowned Italian historian. Count Pietro (1808-86) was head of the family at this time. In May 1851 he was arrested for attending protestant services at the Swiss Church in Florence. Together with a small group of fellow Florentines, he was sentenced to house arrest for six months in Volterra, but he appealed, and was allowed to go to Turin and from there he went to England. For a complete account of his ordeal, see Religious Liberty in Tuscany in 1851: or, Documents relative to the trial and incarceration of Count Pietro Guicciardini, and others, exiled from Tuscany by decree of 17 May 1851. Translated from the Italian (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1852).

24. "The universal church," which is a free adaptation of "one holy catholic and apostolic Church" in the Nicene Creed, or "holy catholic Church" in the Apostles' Creed.

25. In early March 1850, Pius IX called "the Cardinals to Portici for a secret consistory" (Frank J. Coppa, Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli and Papal Politics in European Affairs, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1990, p. 79). As a result of this gathering, a Motu Propio was issued, which evidently contained the announcement EBB mentions. It was doubtless an attempt to thwart anti-papal espionage in anticipation of the Pope's return from Gaeta the following month; and probably a result of the fact that Garibaldi sported a beard. The Times of 16 March 1850 (p. 6), extracting a report, dateline "7th inst.," from the Statuto of Florence, noted that "a secret and confidential letter, issued by the police, has been received. The Minister of the Interior and Police observes in that document that many employés of the Administration continue to wear the beard and moustachios, which they had allowed to grow at the instigation of the chiefs of the anarchical government, and which they previously were in the habit of shaving. The preservation of those external signs is a sad recollection of past times and of the detestable conduct of some of those functionaries, who, by suffering their beards to grow, gave an unequivocal adhesion to that deplorable order of things. The government officers still maintained in their posts will consequently do well to renounce a practice introduced at a time and by persons of which it would be advisable to efface all recollection. The Minister, in the meantime, recommends prudence in the execution of that order." Extracting a report from Bologna, dateline "5th inst.," The Times added that "Monsignor Bedini was at first little disposed to publish the order issued by M. Savelli, Minister of Police, who gave the employés only 24 hours to cut off their moustachios and beard 'those horrid and shameless signs of terror and anarchy.' To-day has thought proper to suspend the execution of that measure, at the prayer of the sbirris and police agents, who observed that they could not mix with the crowd if they shaved off their beards, as they would be immediately recognized" (p. 6).

26. The Pope's return from Gaeta in April 1850 was marked by an absence of his earlier liberalism. EBB, like many others, had hoped that Pius IX's liberal reforms in the early days of his reign would lead to independence and unity for Italy. In the first part of Casa Guidi Windows, she compares him to Saint Gregory and Andrea Doria, both great reformers (I, 896-897). However, her optimism soon gave way to disappointment, and in the second part of the poem, she reveals that her earlier uncertainty has been proved true: "Why, almost, through this Pius, we believed / The priesthood could be an honest thing" (II, 514-515). One of Pius's biographers notes that although the Pope was accused of having "become the mouthpiece of obscurantist Cardinals (and Jesuits)," he simply refused "to be swept
into the leadership of a national revolution," and that "he would go on reforming, as he had always reformed" (E.E.Y. Hales, Pio Nono: A study in European politics and religion in the nineteenth century, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1954, pp. 149–150).

27. In a letter to Sarianna Browning on 10 August 1853, EBB explained that Arabella suffered from "swellings on the glands" (ms at Lilly).


29. The "sons of Anak," or Anakim, were a Semitic tribe of giants referred to in the Old Testament; see Numbers 13:33.

30. It was six months later before Pen was finally weaned; see letter 56.

31. Marianne Depledge Sykes (1822–96) and her mother ran a boarding school at 71 Euston Square, where Lizzie Barrett was a student. Lizzie had written to her father and requested permission to change from Miss Sykes's school to one in Hackney run by a Miss Bourlier. On 9 September 1850, her father wrote to Edward Moulton-Barrett: "I dont know how I can sufficiently thank you for your great and ready kindness in having so well arranged about Lizzy’s removal" (ms at Eton). Nevertheless, Lizzie and Miss Sykes remained acquaintances, sharing a mutual interest in their artistic talents. For a portrait of Lizzie in later life by Miss Sykes, see R.A. Barrett, The Barretts of Jamaica (Winfield, Kansas: Wedgestone Press, 2000, between pp. 148–149). From a joint letter written from Lizzie and Arabella to Henrietta on 11 April 1850, it is evident that there was a letter from EBB to Arabella written between this one and the following letter (49). Arabella’s part of their letter begins: “Since Lizzie wrote this note, this letter from Ba has come” (ms with Altham). Arabella also told Henrietta that she would “write to Ba tomorrow,” i.e., 12 April. A letter from EBB arriving on 11 April would have been sent from Florence around the 5th or 6th of April; however, there is no letter from EBB written near that time. I therefore conclude that a letter is missing.

Letter 49

[Florence]
[15–16 April 1850]¹

<***> a boy; & congratulating himself that at Florence he could live his student’s life with a more facile access to books, than was possible at Naples. This introduction happened about a fortnight since,—& now, he is exiled from Tuscany, on the pretext that he associated with “anarchists.”² Contemptible cruelty! cruelty to flies! His last act, was to make open profession of Protestantism—that was all they got, by exiling him: they exile and convert together. Not that these conversions can mean much in a spiritual point of view: they are revolts, rather than conversions. But you hear in them the breaking of chains.

This letter was begun yesterday— I began to write as soon as I had calmed myself a little after reading your news³—and, while I was writing, in came, Madame Ossoli⁴—stayed dinner . . . stayed coffee . . . hours upon hours, the rain helping. I like her much . . . but I wanted to write to you, & shall lose a post, or rather two posts, by that visit . . Robert would’nt let me write in the evening, because, what with the agitation & the talking, I was tired into a headache. After all, it may be better, perhaps, not to send you a too hurried letter. Nothing w⁵ have been gained by doing it, as I had nothing to say except . . . my heart. Beloved Arabel, how perfect of you to write to me on Saturday.⁶ Do you know, though you promised, I could’nt believe that you would be able to write, with all that necessary occupation & agitation,—and I had made up my mind, not to be too distressed, should there be no letter. Robert returned from the post, holding it up in the air. “A
white seal! it must be over.” Thank you, dearest, darling Arabel. Shall I have the two other letters I prayed you for, as well? Arabel, I shall be uneasy, if you dont write directly again. There is so much left in a cloud! And then, when the serious part is over, I shall want all the particulars .. you cant be too particular. Trouseau & everything- I want to know.

How good & dear of dear dearest Trippy, to be present. Kiss her for it, on my account, most tenderly & gratefully. She is always good & dear, & I hold her in my heart for it, tell her, dear thing! At the same time, I shall be uneasy about her, as well as about so much else, unti I hear again, .. lest there should be a difficulty with Papa- I would’nt for the whole world, that Papa quarrelled with Trippy- What pain that would be, Arabel!—

Will Henrietta be without a maid entirely, for any time? As to the so called “imprudence” of her marrying, in the way of money, I really cant sympathize with anxiety on such a ground. If she & Surtees live prudently & keep energetically within their income, they will learn to judge better, perhaps than they have hitherto done, of the meaning of poverty & riches. I know that England is different from Italy—but there's a way of living even in England, (which I shouId'nt like, I tell you frankly, but which need not be unpleasant to persons of other tastes) of living quietly in a cottage & a shrubbery, & putting the ruralities around to use in the obvious ways. Think of some of those little Sidmouth cottages .. so green & pretty. One might be happy in a green nest of the sort, I feel. Yes, I could be happy so too .. although I like larger rooms with fewer drafts, & more colour to life, as well as more blue to the sky. If they dont like Taunton, why not try another place—and, after all, they are not bound to England. Surtees might come & do his work at Taunton, once or twice a year, & live for just nothing in France. The advantage of the continent is the free way of living, which cheapens everything to a degree you cant judge of by a comparison of the specific expenses. Then France is as near to you as Somersetshire is: You would lose nothing, my own Arabel. I wish we were in France, for just that reason. The distance is dreadful here—Does Louisia remember that we have to travel up the whole length of Italy & through Switzerland, before we get to the “Rhone & German railroads”? We should far rather go that way—it would be new & interesting; but certainly the expense must exceed the other, I am afraid so, at least.—

We know nothing yet—we tell every body as we tell you, that “we are going to England if we can” .. and certainly, if we can, we shall do it. I long to give you your share of Wiedeman. He partly belongs to you, I always consider—and you will find him a loving little creature & worth being loved for that reason. Within the last few days he has taken one or two steps by himself. Give him a finger, & he patters about the room beautifully—and he could go alone, if he chose .. but he does’nt choose .. he thinks it safer & quite as convenient, to run on all fours like his friend Flush— The balia is in despair about it, because he dirties his frocks—and I could’nt help laughing the other day on hearing from Wilson, how she told people out of doors, that the child had been ruined from walking, because “his papa & mama had taught him to crawl.” “Ma come!” said I to the balia .. “how did we teach him to crawl? how could we?” “Certainly Signora!,” she answered- “I saw you myself! You laid him on the floor .. you said, ‘Put out your arms, put out your legs .. bravo, bambino!’” All this, as seriously as possible.

I put away my letter for dinner—and then we had Wiedeman as usual, while the other dinner went on. Well—he has walked five (or) six steps quite alone. My news comes in time, you see.
Now, I know (of) several children here in Florence, who at nineteen months are just beg(inning) to go alone— Mr Ogilvy’s child could’nt or would’nt take a step by (himself) when they went to Naples, & he is past ninety nine months. So Wiedeman does well at thirteen months, after all the reproaches. Undoubtedly the crawling did keep him back—for at eleven months he could stand alone,— but never w'd take steps till these few days. He learns something new everyday, & is the most amusing, engaging little creature! He is so fond of lifting up the cover of your table, & admiring your painting. The cow in the river, takes his fancy. When he is pleased with anything, he claps his hands: not spontaneously, but because he considers it a proper expression of approbation. For instance, when the tea comes in, he screams out for joy first naturally, (he likes to drink tea) & then as an oratorical artifice, upon second thoughts, he claps his hands. I build him houses on the floor, with the pieces of the Swiss basket, (you remember the basket Henry & Stormie brought me) & when the house is built, he claps his hands, & when he knocks it down, which he does directly, he claps his hands again. The other day, he took off his shoe & stocking, & after examining his little fat foot, he gravely kissed it. When the balia carries him away from us to his nursery, he always waves his hand, for ‘Addio’—he never omits that ceremony. Upon occasions too, he kisses his hand .. which is rarer courtesy however. One of the most curious things he does (quite out of his own fancy, for nobody w'd have thought of bidding him try it) is to pretend to sew. He takes the stuff in his left hand, just as you w'd,— & with his right hand imitates the motion of the needle & thread towards the right shoulder & back again. We have been in fits of laughter at him while he sate on the floor sewing gravely. So I tell you his accomplishments, because I have nothing better to tell you of today. They will make you smile a little. Yes, and he bows his head for “Thank you”—and if you say ‘Thank you’ to him, he bows his head again. He reads all your letters aloud, & any book he can find. Robert doats on the child, & I love him rather. Your frock, my dearest, dearest Arabel, is too precious to be clipped & altered. Wait patiently, & he will grow to the frock—in less than five years .. if it pleases God. I w'd have that frock cut—no, not for the world. It is the balia who is impatient, because she wants to have the glory of it. Dearest darling Arabel, tell me how you get on with the house-affairs! I sympathize with you in every small as well as great vexation. But you will be admirable to the end— I know your devotion of character & strength of mind— I appreciate & admire as well as love you, my own Arabel. But say that you have not had dreadful headaches after all this work .. say so if you can truly. Tell me everything— I feel close to you though so far. Tell me of dearest Trippy’s business too. Something will be done, I think, before the Cottrells leave London. May God bless you & love you, my beloved. My love & a kiss to dear kind Minny.

Your fondly & for ever attached Ba

Robert’s truest love.

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France / Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. This letter is postmarked from Florence on 16 April 1850, and EBB mentions having begun it “yesterday.”
2. I have been unable to clarify this passage.
3. i.e., of the marriage of Henrietta and Surtees on 6 April 1850.
4. Sarah Margaret Fuller (1810–50), an American author and one of the leading figures of the “Transcendentalist” movement, was a founder of The Dial, which she edited from 1840–42. She was a literary critic for the New-York Daily Tribune, for which she wrote favourable reviews of both EBB’s and RB’s works (see BC, 13, 255). Together with Marcus and Rebecca Spring, she travelled to Italy in 1847. The Springs returned to America in mid-1847, but Margaret Fuller remained in Italy. Although the exact details are unknown, she formed a union with the Marquis Angelo Ossoli some time in late 1847 or early 1848. On 5 September 1848, a son, named Angelo, was born. In 1849 the Ossolis decided to travel to the United States, stopping in Florence en route, where they met the Brownings. EBB first mentions her in a letter to Miss Mitford on 1 December 1849 (EBB-MRM, III, 285). The Ossoli’s eventual voyage to America was ill-fated, and she, her husband, and their infant son drowned when their ship, the Elizabeth, wrecked in a storm off the coast of Long Island.
5. EBB is referring to Saturday, 6 April 1850, which was the day Henrietta and Surtees Cook were married.
6. There is no evidence that Treppy’s presence at Henrietta and Surtees’ marriage ever caused any particular difficulties between her and Edward Moulton-Barrett.
7. The Barretts were in Sidmouth from August 1832 until December 1835; see Rosemary Conry, “The Barretts at Sidmouth,” BSN, 23 (December 1996), 67–73.
8. Henrietta and Surtees Cook settled in Somersetshire for the remainder of their married life together, first in Wilton and later in Stoke St. Mary, both near Taunton, where Surtees was Adjutant to the Somerset Militia. EBB’s comments indicate that she thought residency was not required.
9. Louisa Charlotte Carmichael (née Butler, 1817–99) was the daughter of EBB’s maternal aunt, Lady Frances Butler (née Graham-Clarke) and Sir Thomas Butler. Louisa had married Sir James Robert Carmichael in 1841.
10. “Wet nurse.”
11. “But how!”
12. i.e., a landscape painting on the top of the work table that Arabella had sent EBB (see letter 33, note 7).
13. After Henrietta’s marriage and departure from Wimpole Street, Arabella had the responsibility of managing the household of 50 Wimpole Street with Minny’s assistance.

Letter 50

[Florence]
[?5] [May 1850]

〈★★★★〉 see, I had had some tendency towards a cough since the cold in the winter,—and then, my imprudence in running out on the terrace when the air was damp, carried it suddenly out to perfection. Oh, it was nothing but a common cold—nothing to care for in the least, except that Robert would’n’t let me stir into Baby’s room, while it lasted, which was a vexation. Now I am free again. Baby walks alone most beautifully, staggering sometimes like a drunken fairy, but managing to get across the room notwithstanding. Such little, tiney, [sic] pattering feet, Arabel! He has such a pretty little figure too .. as upright as a dart stuck in the ground, .. and so delicately made—you see it all better when he walks. We have bought open work thread socks for him, but the velvet shoes are not yet too hot. Still, he w’d rather crawl—and whenever he catches sight of a puddle out of doors he wants to sit in it .. which is’n’t quite so convenient, particularly as I have just finished braiding for him two silk polkas,^2 .. one, shot with crimson & blue, .. braided with blue .. another of the raw silk of the country, which washes, & is the colour of
silkworm-silk. I have an inexhaustible vanity about Wiedeman. I like people to say “What a pretty child”—and then, really he is an interesting child, a poetical child, in his looks & ways—He sings ‘Margery Daw’ quite correctly now—and I don’t believe that a baby of thirteen months and a half ever held a pen or pencil before as he does, .. just like a writing master. Who taught him? Nobody. But he observes everything, and he has always delighted in seeing us write. Now, if you give him a pencil, he arranges it in his right hand, with his left hand, .. first & second finger, carefully arranged, .. thumb in its place, .. in the most scientific manner you could desire to see, .. looking up gravely into our faces to find if that is perfectly as it should be. We laugh—how could anybody help laughing? .. but he is grave, & sighs deeply to express the sense of difficulty, and then looks round for the inkstand. Robert gives him an empty inkstand, into which, every two minutes, he solemnly dips his pencil, & goes on writing. This is not an accident, but his usual way of proceeding. As to reading, for these six months past & longer, he has understood all about it .. opening all the books he can find, & beginning with a loud voice, “ah, ah, ba ba, papa”—If he falls on a letter, it is just the same, he opens it wide, & reads it. There is a note of dear Minny’s to Wilson, which he is never tired, Wilson says, of pulling out of her basket & reading aloud with every sign of satisfaction. Considering that he plays on the piano, (oh, and with such sighs, and turnings of the head from side to side!) and blows the fire with the bellows, and dusts the room with the duster, & combs & brushes his own hair, and sews the table cloths, he really must pass as an accomplished baby—mustn’t he? Wilson says always that she never saw a child like him for forwardness. The other evening, Robert was reading, and folded one knee over the other, as he sate by the fire—Wiedeman sate by me on the sofa, and seemed, to my amusement, quite absorbed in contemplation of his father, ... when suddenly, with an indescribable [sic] sly smile, he doubled one of his knees over the other, (just like Robert) pulling up his petticoats to see if he had done it right. I told you that he waves his hand for “addio”:—when any stranger stays too long in the room, he waves it emphatically, by way of dismissal. Isn’t that ingenious? But a passionate little creature, he is. The last letter I sent you, I took into the nursery to seal. He wanted it of course, and I gave it for a moment into his hands which instantly set about breaking open the seal, so I took it away from him. Whereupon after trying in vain to persuade me to let him have it, he fell into a passion & seized [sic] on my hair with both little fists, trying to tear it to pieces .. then, took himself away from me in disgust, & went off full speed, crawling to his balia.\(^4\) She received him with an explosion of sympathy .. “Poverino! La mamma non vuole darti questa lettera! Che cosa!”—but before she had settled him on her knee, down he struggled again .. “miserable comforters, are ye all,\(^6\) .. down he dashed himself on the floor, .. face on the carpet, .. hands beating on each side .. that’s always his way when he’s in a passion .. in a most theatrical state of desperation! then, in a half minute, & of his own accord,—he was up again, & coming back to me full speed, .. climbed up my knees, and kissed me with his lips full of sobs. So I said “Shall we go to Papa,” and he danced & laughed in my arms & we were the best friends possible directly. Nobody asked him to come to me! He is affectionate, has not the least bit of sullenness in his nature.

He is very fond of Robert, & of me too .. and I was proud to see the balia out of temper yesterday, & to hear her say, that she “never would nurse the baby when I was in the room”. “What was the use of it? he attended to nobody but me .. he would’nt suck or do anything”−
We have taken a new room... I think I told you... a new drawing room with three windows, a most beautiful room, to which our rooms open through a once condemned door: we pay two additional pounds a year for this—I think I told you... & we began to have access to it from the 1st of May. We do not want it particularly just now, but we might want it, and in any case it is well to have another great room, if only for Baby to play in, as we have no garden. This room I sit in, our old drawingroom, is hung round with tapestry... did I tell you of our ancient tapestry,.. & with the carved wood & old pictures, it looks antique. The carved bookcase is beautiful—D' Braun called it a “most poetical room.” The pictures are a few, which, Robert, who understands a good deal about Art in general & Florentine art in particular, has picked up at different times & places, for a few shillings each—you know we cant afford to buy pictures in the grand sense—but he has been very successful in getting them for nothing or next to nothing. We have specimens of Gaddi, Lippi... the like. Well—in the early part of the winter, he bought two companion pictures of angels.. gave four & sixpence for the two.. painted on panel. Some understanding persons admired them much, and M' Ogilvy offered to take them at any price Robert liked to mention—but he would'nt part with them of course. He heard, where he procured them, that they had been sawn off the sides of a great picture representing the Madonna, in a church at Arezzo—the priest was reported to have said that the Madonna c4 take care of the altar alone,.. saying which, he had sawn off the angels & sold them. Well—Robert sent to Arezzo to try to get the Madonna for a few shillings more—he thought the priest c4 not resist a few more shillings. The answer was, the holy man had gone to Rome, & nothing c4 be done until his return. So we thought no more about it.—A few days since, Robert fell upon some pictures in a com shop outside the walls, & was much struck by one called the “Eterno padre”,10—by a Christ with an open gospel in his hand,—by a crucifixion which was curiously like Giotto,.. & two smaller pictures. When he told me of them, I said.. “Oh, but I do hate those subjects.. the Eterno padre!” “So do I,” said he, “but its a very fine picture, and we can get it for two pounds—we may be sorry afterwards, if we dont take it, for even a delay may throw it into the hands of some artist, & then our chance is gone.” We agreed, then, that he sh4 get the pictures. They arrived yesterday. On putting them into the light in our new drawingroom, the whole glory of the discovery became apparent. One curious thing I must tell you first. The ‘Eterno padre’ (so called) is surrounded with a rainbow, & sits clothed in a sort of high priest’s mystical garment—an open book in the left hand, the right hand upraised— It is very grand. Robert cried out .. “How curious! the hands are painted precisely in the manner of the angels from Arezzo, in the next room—I will go and fetch them & prove it to you.” In a moment he came back with the angels, and immediately burst out into fresh exclamations. Arabel, our angels had been sawn off that very picture. There is no doubt about it—The circle of the rainbow, and bits of the mystical garment join on line for line— Is that not surprising? Robert is in a state of rapture at the discovery— Whenever we can afford it, we shall have the pictures fastened together, and a frame to unite them. It is a fine picture of Ghirlandaio, of whom I think there is only one specimen in the Florentine gallery.11 But this is not all— Robert went directly to M' Kirkup12 the artist and antiquarian, who has a fine collection himself, & great experience & acumen in matters of art. M' Kirkup came here without losing time. After recognizing & praising the Ghirlandaio, he said that Robert had done admirably in respect to the other
pictures—that the crucifixion, if not Giotto, was Giottesque, of his time, and an unique specimen or nearly so, being painted upon linen . . . it was very valuable, . . . and that the Christ with the open gospel, a deep, solemn, moving picture, he believed to be a Cimabue, & worth five hundred guineas.  

Think what good fortune, . . . great fortune, I may say! Robert has walked me backwards & forwards to the next room “to see our Cimabue and Ghirlandaio” till I am quite tired today. Certainly he may well be pleased, because if the fortune was good, the perceptive faculty in himself was better & more effective. I forgot to tell you that of the two little pictures, one was of the Greek school & very curious, and the other, a Giottino, Mr. Kirkup said, & rarer than a Giotto. It seems fabulous that this treasure of pictures sh.f have been found together & at a corn shop, & I dare say you will scarcely believe it. The fact is that they had been deposited by somebody who objected to paying the picture-duty on passing the gates of Florence, & who had left them there in ignorance & indolence, two or three years. One or two of them to which at last Robert made his way, were pushed behind the corn-dealer’s bed—and there were trashy pictures in their company, as you may suppose. It was a mile from Florence.

Arabel, tell me if Alfred obtained the situation he hoped for—tell me too, if George continues to get on in the circuit— Has Occy no prospect at present? How I should like him to come to us & see Florence! it would be an advantage to him in his profession. Mention Stormie whenever you hear from him. As to Henry, I cant wish him among these Austrians even for the pleasure of having him near me. Tell him so. There is a strong feeling among the Italians against the Austrians—an Italian lady who dances with an Austrian, is a marked woman & injured in reputation. A lady refused, at the Grand Duke’s ball the other night, to dance with an Austrian officer, who afterwards in some dance which admitted of the gentleman selecting his own partner, drew her out, forcing her compliance. She exclaimed in great emotion . . . “Vous m’insultez, Monsieur! vous êtes un lâche” . . . (French being the means of communication when Italian & German are not mutually understood.) There was a sensation & confusion, as you may suppose, in the whole room. The best of it was, that the lady’s husband looked frightened out of his wits & by no means inclined to accept the situation patriotically.

Did dear Lizzie hear from her father—and what news? If you go to see Nelly Jago, describe her child to me, and give her my best love— I want to know too of Arlette’s child particularly, it is so nearly the age of mine— How many teeth? can she walk? can she talk . . . say any word, I mean. Is she fat? & tall? and rosy? and pretty? how is her hair? is she of fair or dark complexion? Well! I hope I may see her for myself this summer . . . I hope so. I am very glad that on the whole you liked the poems. We hear that the book is “much talked of” in London, and “accused of irreligion.” There’s the effect of writing a religious book! Its always so. People have reproached me for “irreverence;” and “boldness approximating to blasphemy,” because I used liberty in speaking of divine things: if I had never named them or thought of them, there w.d have been clear approbation, as far as the world went. At the same time I can understand how much in Robert’s book is open to misunderstanding with the ordinary run of readers. Then, the last part, which on some accounts, I, too, prefer, I think much too ascetic— I told Robert so at the time . . . but he answered that it was one view of the subject . . . which is true, though it is not the view from the height, it seems to me. All men who have lived in caves, starved on columns and forsworn
Letter 50  [May 1850]  332

"fashionable yellow starch"\textsuperscript{19} like our puritan ancestry, have taken that view and no other, . . . but Christ and the sunshine are wider & more abundant than these, and the large-hearted Christian is called to inherit the earth as well as the Heavens. Music, Beauty, Joy, Love—even in the terrestrial senses, are good for us all, and should be welcome, I do hold, in Christ's name. The sacrifice of them is enjoined, as fasting is enjoined, . . . when they impede duty, . . . & not otherwise, I believe.

Still there is a condition of Christian experience when the line taken by the poem is verified,—and Robert sees things passionately:—that's his characteristic: to feel passionately is more common. Certainly the poem does not represent his own permanent state of mind, which was what I meant when I told you it was dramatic.\textsuperscript{20} What a dissertation! The Athenæum's virulence is to be accounted for by a Unitarian influence, which, we hear, is predominant in it of late.\textsuperscript{21} I suppose you are all in a storm in England on the Gorham question.\textsuperscript{22} M' Lindsay has called here once this winter . . . Clara,\textsuperscript{23} rather oftener, . . . but we see scarcely anything of them. Clara came to congratulate me on Henrietta's marriage, & approved of it altogether. I fancied at first that M' Lindsay had more taste & cultivation than I can see in him now—He is a strange, unwieldy sort of man, I think. I am going to write to Surtees & Henrietta—Tell them of our having received their letters & how happy they made me feel. Robert's best love. How is dearest Minny? Mind you let her take great care of you & pet you properly—

My own Arabel's devotedly attached

Ba—

A letter from M' Kenyon just arrived. "I will not gossip about the late marriage at N° 50, of which indeed I have not had time to hear much. Henrietta wrote to me beforehand, but for obvious reasons I did not answer her letter nor did she, I know, expect to hear from me. I did not like to seem a conspirator against her father, even in what I consider a just cause."\textsuperscript{24} He says that if we go to England, we are not to leave it without paying him a visit of a day or two, in his country house . . . his "hut", he calls it.

Address, on integral pager: Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Month and year provided by London receiving stamp of 11 May 1850. The day is conjectured six days previous, the time necessary for a letter to travel from Florence to London.
2. According to the OED, "a woman's tight-fitting jacket, usually knitted."
3. A reference to the Mother Goose nursery rhyme, "See, saw, Margery Daw, / Johnny shall have a new master; / He shall have but a penny a day, / Because he can't work any faster."
4. "Wet nurse."
5. "Poor little thing! Mama doesn't want to give you this letter! What?" or, "What's the matter?"
7. See EBB's sketch in letter 28.
8. RB's interest in hunting pictures is reflected in "Old Pictures in Florence."
9. A full-length portrait of St. Jerome by Giovanni Toscani, although attributed by RB to Taddeo Gaddi (1300?-66) and referred to in "Old Pictures in Florence," stanza 26, formed part of lot 66 in Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, H22). I have been unable to trace any work by Fra Filippo Lippi (1406?-69) belonging to the Brownings.
10. "Eternal father." This picture by Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio (1483–1560), an altar piece, is discussed at great length by EBB in a letter to Mrs. Jameson dated 4 May [1850] (LEBB, I, 448); it sold as lot 43 in Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, H9). It is easily recognizable as the picture above the mirror over the mantelpiece in Mignaty’s painting "Drawing Room at Casa Guidi." RB refers to Ghirlandaio in "Old Pictures in Florence," stanza 23.

11. Murray’s Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy (London: John Murray, 1847), describes an "Adoration of the Magi," in the Uffizi, as well as a "Nativity" in the Accademia delle belle Arti, both by Ghirlandaio (p. 540 and p. 566, respectively).

12. Seymour Stocker Kirkup (1788–1880) was an English artist who, in his youth, had known Blake and Haydon. He had lived in Italy since the 1820's, and was present at the funerals of Keats and Shelley. His interest in and expertise on Giotto were widely known. In 1840, together with Bezzi and Wilde, he uncovered the portrait of Dante attributed to Giotto in the Palazzo del Podestà (now the Bargello). He claimed that he was led to this painting by way of spiritualism. For this achievement he was later created a Cavaliere of the Order of S. Maurizio and Lazzaro, which he stylised as "Barone." Kirkup was always a believer in and practicer of mesmerism and spiritualism. He died and was buried in Leghorn.

13. This painting of "Christ with an open gospel," supposedly by Cimabue (fl. 1270), has not been located. In a letter to Mrs. Ogilvy of the same date, EBB describes "a very curious crucifixion, supposed to be too unequal to be a Giotto, but of his time, & unique or nearly so, through being painted on linen" (EBB-EAHO, p. 8); however, it has not been located. Another crucifixion attributed to the "Tuscan school" sold as lot 64 in Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, H23).


15. "You insult me, sir! You are a coward."

16. Concerning her removal from Miss Sykes's school; see letter 48, note 31. Lizzie's father was in Jamaica.

17. i.e., Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day, published a month earlier; see letter 48, note 13. In a letter to Eliza Ogilvy written on 3 May [1850], EBB wrote: "The poem is said to have made much sensation in London, and to be 'much accused of irreligion'" (EBB-EAHO, p. 7). From the letter to Mrs. Ogilvy, it appears her source for this was Chorley.

18. In her review of Poems (1844), Martha Jones in The British Quarterly Review (November 1845, pp. 337–352), commenting on "A Vision of Poets," noted: "We must, without suspecting the writer of any intentional irreverence, strongly censure the phrase—'Poet-God,' which occurs more than once in the poem" (BC, 11, 349). Referring to "The Cry of the Human," George Gilfillan wrote in Tait's Edinburgh Magazine (September 1847, pp. 620–625): "The poem may truly be called a prayer for the times, and no collect in the English liturgy surpasses it in truth and tenderness, though some may think its tone daring to the brink of blasphemy, and piercing almost to anguish" (BC, 14, 382).

19. I have been unable to trace the source of this quotation.

20. Cf. EBB's remark in letter 48: "Both poems (there are two in the book) are dramatic in a sense—they express certain aspects of Christian experience."

21. I have been unable to verify EBB's impression that The Athenæum was under a "Unitarian influence." The reviewer of Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day, J. Westland Marston, who was not Unitarian, was critical of RB's language (see letter 48, note 13), but he described RB's "theology," in the last part of the poem, as "highly transcendental; and that although Mr. Browning has here risen above the verbal trickery which disfigures the former division,—yet transcendentalism delivered in doggrel verse has throughout the effect of a discord" (6 April 1850, no. 1171, p. 371).

22. A reference to the case brought before the judicial committee of the privy council by George Cornelius Gorham (1787–1857). Gorham had been presented by the Lord Chancellor for the Vicarage of Bramford Speke, near Exeter, but Henry Phillpotts (1778–1869), Bishop of Exeter, refused to institute him on the grounds that he questioned the soundness of Gorham's orthodoxy on the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Gorham appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, who ruled in his favour on 8 March 1850. Phillpotts then
applied to prevent the decision from being upheld by the Court of the Queen’s Bench, but his application was refused on 25 April 1850, making the subject particularly timely at the writing of this letter. Phillpotts subsequently applied to the Court of Common Pleas and the Court of Exchequer; both denied his applications—on 27 May and 11 June respectively. Phillpotts still refused to institute Gorham, but eventually he was instituted by the Archbishop of Canterbury on 6 August 1851. This controversy aroused great interest, and numerous pamphlets and books were written; for a complete account, see J.C.S. Nias, Gorham and the Bishop of Exeter, London: S.P.C.K., 1951.

24. Kenyon’s letter is not extant.

Letter 51

Florence
June 15 [sic, for 14] & 16. [1850]

My beloved Arabel, you have been anxiously waiting to hear our plans spoken of, I know—and I have been as anxious as you can have been—anxious & vexed—for day after day passes, & there are no news of the ship-money, on the amount of which everything depended. Here is the fourteenth of June! What are we to say? It is the more piteous, that such a delay never took place before, & that last year, we had the full means & knowledge in April. I fear the meaning may be, that repairs have been wanting to the ship, & the accounts could’n’t be made up—in which case the supplies will be diminished of course. Well—if we can’t get to England this year (not that I give it up yet) but if we can’t, . . we shall have another plan for next, & try Paris where we shall be within nine hours of you & no summer pass without our meeting. I am sick of this long distance & absence. Bearable, it is not. Paris, we hear, is to be lived in as cheaply as Florence is, by those who understand,—& the winter is short—and one can but try it— You see we are unfortunate this year every way. Books are in the incipient state of selling—the publishers pay themselves first, & till after Christmas, nothing will come in to either of us from them. The transference from Moxon was attended with a suspence of receipts. Do you understand? Then although we can live perfectly here on some hundred & sixty or seventy a year (the whole of our settled income) we can’t think of travelling to England on it. The going & coming & staying w’d cost quite as much as that, of themselves. Oh, of course, we shall have the ship-money in time—but when & how much? there are questions! & this, the fourteenth of June! —

Tell dearest Trippy that I am far too proud to take her advice about writing verses to the queen in hope of the Laureateship. If they give it to me I shall condescend to accept it, tell her—& that’s all, . . it’s curious to myself that I should seem to have a chance—a faint one though, because the gallantry of Englishmen always takes care, carefully taking off its hat, to push a woman against the wall, upon principle. Besides, even among the candidates named, both Leigh Hunt & Tennyson are worthier than I . . & except as a proof that women have made some way against prejudice, I should shrink from the very thought of appearing in the competition. To say nothing of my own husband’s rights! At the same time it is just possible, that the choosers may escape from the difficulty of choice by choosing a woman, & in that case, may choose me. (They wont though.) Somebody of the name of Langley suggested it first, in the Daily News— The Globe
took it up—& Robert saw it in two or three other English papers, besides Galignani. The article in the Athenæum, which I do hope you read, was very kind & flattering. We must be indebted for that, to M. Chorley. As to the office being abolished, there is no chance of it, Arabel, and a disgrace to the country if it were if there were. England is already behind other nations in her recognition of literary men, & cannot afford to cancel the only public testimony of poetical distinction which she has been used to give. But the office will cease to be associated with the courtiership of poetry—& so best. The proposition to connect it with the wardenship of Shakespeare’s house, would be a poor oeconomy, I fancy— For my part, I w’d not be tied to live at Stratford on Avon & to keep a show house, not even for Shakespeare—much less for the queen’s Laureateship & three hundred a year. The Wardenship sh’d be another office. Dont repeat to anyone that I have said a word of this subject, for Robert & I have been very careful to abstain from all allusion to it in our letters to England. He w’d like me to have it of course—but neither he nor I w’d like to say a word or take a step which w’d seem to involve a wish of the sort. In my own mind, Leigh Hunt ought to be chosen Younger poets may afford to wait, you know.

I have had a most satisfactory letter from Henrietta—& such news in it! Oh, so glad I am. Certainly she has lost no time. Mind you tell her from me to be careful, & not to take too much cider & fruit & such things.

My child was said to be “bene nutrito” & to have a beautiful complexion just because I gave way to no fancies & took plain food, with great regularity. If she were to take food every three or four hours regularly, (the sickness might be less, dear thing—) Oh, if I were she, I wouldn’t on any account pay those visits just now. How much better to put them off for a month or two! And as to the Malvern cottage-plan, it strikes me as dangerous. Would it be worth while to let Reynolds furnish his cottage for a few months only, & to have all the fuss, themselves, of housekeeping & housepacking?—for how they could pack a servant in those four rooms, gives me a crick in the neck to think of. Also, Malvern is very expensive. Henrietta has “come to the conclusion,” she says, “that no one need live out of England for oeconomy’s sake.” Entreat her from me not to come to conclusions, until she has examined both sides of the question for herself. She manages excellently in England—but, after all, she should remember that she is living on a different scale there, in a different way altogether, from what she might live on in France or here at the same expence. Of course, I know that we might live in England for even less than we have. How many dissenting ministers keep their families for less, Arabel, we both know. But we should not have rooms like these in England, nor could we live in anything like the same way. Henrietta gave a guinea a week for a sitting room, bedroom & dressing room, in Taunton, over a pastry-cooks,—and we give twelve shillings & three pence a week for our apartment in one of the finest palaces of Florence, in one of the best situations, (& a first floor) consisting of eight rooms, besides pantry &c, four of these rooms from twenty five to thirty feet long, with beautiful ceilings, & en suite, . & two excellent rooms towards the courtyard, inhabited by Wilson & Baby, with terrace behind & before. We could not expect such a residence in England, if we had three thousand a year—& something of the kind a friend of ours was observing yesterday. The French ambassador was in treaty for this very apartment, & only broke off because he could get no ‘offices’ on the ground floor. I mention this to prove to you that I am not romancing in any
way. If Surtees took a cottage he would have to pay taxes besides rent. Remember that—we pay no taxes.

Then, for the housekeeping, I have told you, I think, that two guineas a week cover all expenses (kitchen fuel & all) for five grown up persons & a child (hot meat suppers always, & ham or tongue for breakfast)—including candles, oil, & wine. I write this over again to you rather than wait to write it to Henrietta because I am afraid that in the triumph of economy, they may plunge into some Somersetshire cottage, she & Surtees, & repent when they can't get out. Why not wait & consider? They are comfortable at Taunton, & can afford to wait & consider. An appointment would bring obligations with it—but, if they have no appointment, they would do wisely in my mind, to try the north of France—particularly with their present prospects. Henrietta told me of her attempt with Papa. Oh Arabel! I almost laughed & almost cried to read it—Yes, it was ill judged—I can't imagine how she could take such a fancy into her head, tell her;—yet it is still harder to imagine how there should have been heart for such a reply. Dearest Henrietta!

Surely I have told you of Madame Ossoli. She is an American authoress, who was staying at Rome at republic-time, & came from the siege to the astonishment of everybody, with a live husband and child—having married the Marquis Ossoli, a Roman. I disagree with her perhaps on every serious point—and have avoided two or three different subjects, in talking to her, because I felt there was a gulf betwixt us, even while our hands leant over to clasp. Yet there is a curious sympathy between us—she drew me, I felt, by her truthfulness & generosity, yes, & tenderness of character— I loved her, & could not bear to measure the depth of this gulf— Robert felt precisely so— She is a socialist by profession, & I had hints & glimpses of desecrating opinions connected with that doctrine, from which I shrank away in conversation— She said she “had thought much & made up her mind” & discussion, where persuasion is out of the question on either side, is a cruel thing. Also, you know my favorite belief, that the heart is often wiser than the head— & her heart at least is wise. I like her atmosphere if you know what I mean by that. I was much surprised & touched by her giving to my child, as a gift from her child, a bible, before she went to America. She said to Robert “there must be good in it” & she wrote in the fly leaf, “May God keep them both pure.” She did not mean what you would mean in giving a bible—but still she thought “there must be good in it”. One of the very plainest yet most interesting women I ever saw!— She has chiefly written for newspapers— & her writings are very inferior to her conversation which is of a high order.

I am anxious to have a letter from you, to hear about dearest Trippy— If nothing has been done, surely something ought to be done. has anyone written to Mr Gordon to protest? What if Trippy were to write herself, with dignity & calmness, to state the facts? Something must certainly be done. In the meanwhile, it is melancholy to count the strokes of affliction which have fallen & are falling on that family. The night before last, poor Sophia's baby died! It was small & delicate from the first, & there must have been some defect, I conclude from what I have heard, in the pulmonic system— At least, whether from organic causes or cold, the lungs refused to act, and to the great grief & consternation of everybody, the three weeks of life terminated abruptly. Robert, who was sent for yesterday to manage the funeral, to help to put another poor little coffin into the grave of five months ago. little Lily's grave was quite saddened by it. He saw Madame Biondi in tears—it was the first child she had lost in her long experience. Poor Sophia—aft
comfort she had looked for in this baby, & after the brief happiness of its birth! At first they thought all was going on well, .. & the duke of Lucca was to be godfather, & the child to be baptised Carlo Ludovico—then, the evil became apparent, and Count Cottrell carried away his wife to another room that she might’tnt, as she lay in bed, cry all day & night to hear the difficult & gasping breathing. Is’nt it all very sad? How Robert & I ought to thank God for unspeakable goodness to us! If a baby were to die at three weeks, of obstructions in the lungs, who w’d not have thought that it w’d have been my baby rather than Sophia Cottrell’s? Some are of opinion that the journey to England was too fatiguing under the circumstances, for she is not strong. When they saw the child was dying, Count Cottrell baptised it “in the name of the Father, the Son & Holy Ghost”—18 Also (which really I could’nt help smiling at) Maic Biondi baptised it again .. thinking perhaps that the ceremony, as performed by her predecessor, was not as sanctifying as it might have been. Well—the first question, asked of Robert, when he applied to the church of England to come & bury the little creature, was, “Has he been baptised.” “By the father,” said Robert .. repeating under what circumstances of sudden alarm. He was a young clergyman, fresh from Oxford,—he “would go & take advice .. he dared say there w’d be no difficulty.” After a consultation of heads of the church, back he came to Robert, .. “was very sorry indeed, .. but he could’nt perform the whole service—the child had not been baptised at all, as it had not been baptised by a regular minister, & it was impossible to consider it a Christian child”.20 Robert spoke indignantly in remonstrance, representing how the elder child had been publicly baptised & registered in his church, & how the intentions of the parents in this case had been prevented by the act of God’s providence in rapid death. Nothing w’d do— “May I ask, sir, who you are?—” “My name, Sir, is Browning. I am a friend of the family. For myself, I am happy to say I am a dissenter, & do not pretend to limit the operations of God’s spirit, & the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice.”—— “My dear sir, I am sure we should be very sorry to limit … I am sure, sir, we are ready to hope for everybody .. I am ready to say, sir, that I commit the body to the ground in hope ….. “Oh no”, said Robert, “we wont trouble you!– There is a friend of mine who is a minister of the Free church of Scotland, & I will go to him directly– Good morning, sir.” But this prospect of a minister of the Free Church of Scotland produced a revolution– No argument had produced any equal effect– Robert was entreated to accept the terms that were offered—the rev’d gentleman really could not conscientiously read the whole service .. he could not go to the church, or read the chapter from Romans, .. but he w’d meet the funeral at the grave & read the latter part, .. which, as he observed profoundly, was all that was of importan<ce.> Robert’s blood boiled within him, & he told me that he had to struggle with himself not to break off at once & insist on going to M’ Hanna (an excellent young scotch minister whom we know, & who is here for his health,—) but, upon consideration, & really the whole thing being unimportant, he concluded that it w’d be better taste to get it over as quietly as possible. So, after protesting, he allowed it to be so .. & told Count Cottrell how it was arranged. Count Cottrell was furious & vowed that “if he had twenty children, not one of them should be baptised into the Church of England again”22—he w’d rather go to San Giovanni .. the Catholic Baptistery—anywhere than to the church of England.” For my part, although I agree that it was better to make as little fuss as might be, I could not have borne, if it had related to a child of my own, to accept the
services of a man who kept repeating “but it is no Christian”, affronting one of Christ's glorified “little ones.” I would rather have buried my child without service or minister— Cruel, narrow hearts, sectarian souls these men have. It is true that the Church of Rome, on this, as on some other points, is less narrow than the church of England as lately constituted. The Church of Rome always admits the efficacy of lay-baptism whether performed by man or woman, in circumstances of extremity. I had had the impression that the Ch. of England did so too. The combination of the doctrines,— no safety ... except by baptism ... & no baptism except by our priestly hands, ... is cruel beyond expression. Those who hold such a creed, shd know what it is to have the blessed spirit of an infant snatched from them, insulted upon their own principles, in spite of their lacerated hearts.—

The Lyndseys have gone to a villa near Florence, & I just have a note from Clara to say that they will come to us at eight o'clock tomorrow evening (sunday) after church. The heat begins but is as yet tolerable. Wiedeman adds to his accomplishments day by day. We tell him to imitate Napoleon, (“far Napoleone”) & then he draws himself up, folding his arms. Also, he is always ready to “far il soldato,”33 marching with a stick over his shoulder. And he tells long stories in long whispers with his finger up, which is generally a sign that he has privately performed a piece of satisfactory mischief, such as putting the comb into the water-jug or throwing the soap into the court. Quite a passion he has for the churches—and twice last week they had scenes with him out of doors, because he w'd go first into the cathedral (the Duomo) & then into the Santissima Anunciata34 .. he kicked & screamed & insisted on it. In the churches he runs about & admires the altars & monuments, & shouts & sings sometimes rather inconveniently, as Margery Daw is scarcely ecclesiastical music. Arlette's child must be a dear little thing. Perhaps you w'd not think Baby so pretty— I dont know. He has a round infantine face & small delicate features, & looks far more like a girl than a boy, having the fairest of complexions. Dearest darling Arabel, comfort me by writing to me, & write of your dearest self whom I love more than ever, & tell me exactly how you are. Dont over walk & work yourself for my sake if for no better reason. You will see us if we can. M' Browning talks of coming here for a week to look at Baby, if we dont go,—and Robert w'd be sorry to cause such an effort & expense on his part— Rely on our good will then. Tell me of dearest Trippy whom you must kiss ten times for me. God bless my own, darling sister—

Her Ba

Mention Papa always.

Surely Alfred is long in getting strength.35 Speak of him particularly. We had the honour of a visit a few days ago from the American Ambassador at the court of Vienna, Gen. Watson Webbe,36 as he passed through Florence.

Love to dear Minny. How is she? Love to Lizzie always. How little M' Justice Talfourd knows of Robert. He is better than I, in everything.37

I hope Henrietta has my letter, directed to Taunton. I shall henceforth write rather the oftener to you, Arabel, because she has more to amuse her now.38 Will you give my best love to Nelly Jago, & say that I never forget & am going to write to her. Perhaps her darling will overtake mine in cutting her teeth, & then, will be a triumph for glass bottles, tell her!39 Wiedeman has only
eight still—eight more on the way. Let me hear about her baby. Wiedeman has maccaroni three times a day,—twice in soup & once in pap. It is said to be very good for infants.

Mind you speak particularly of Trippy's business, for I am anxious. We pass close to Mrs Gordon's house & never enter it, nor shall, under present circumstances.

Address, on integral page: Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. EBB originally wrote "14," then superimposed "15." However, early in the body of her letter, she wrote: "Here is the fourteenth of June." The year is provided by the postmark.
2. See letter 54 in which RB explains EBB's income for 1850.
3. Wordsworth's death on 23 April 1850 had left the post of Poet Laureate vacant; EBB's name was one of the first to be mentioned as a possible successor.
4. Cf. this imagery in Aurora Leigh, II, 1040-1043.
5. Galignani's Messenger for 17 May 1850 contained extracts from The Times and The Daily News. Although not referred to specifically by Galignani's Messenger, The Daily News for 15 May 1850 contained a letter to the editor from Samuel Langley, in which he suggested that "more than one distinguished man has been identified as worthy to succeed the venerated William Wordsworth in the laureateship; but no person seems to have recollected that England possesses an Elizabeth Barrett Browning, a Mary Howitt, a Caroline Southey, and a Caroline Norton, women, who in the true poetic genius, are at least equal to the poets whose respective claims have been brought forward in various journals, English and Scotch.... Why, I ask, should we not have a female laureate? The laureateship, from its foundation, has been bestowed upon men exclusively, but now that the sceptre of this mighty empire is swayed by a most gracious woman it is high time, I think, to 'reform altogether' the duties of this office, and to declare it open henceforth to genius irrespective of sex." I have been unable to trace a reference to the laureateship in The Globe. The Times carried articles about the laureateship in both the 14 and 25 May 1850 issues.
6. EBB is referring to a notice regarding the poet laureateship in the "Our Weekly Gossip" column in the 1 June 1850 issue of The Athenæum (no. 1179), in which the writer, not Chorley as suggested by EBB, but T.K. Hervey as confirmed in the marked file of The Athenæum now at City University (London), maintains the position that the title should be abolished altogether, and although he says "it is not our business to indicate the quarter in which it should be bestowed;" goes on to suggest that "in the reign of a youthful queen, if there be among her subjects one of her own sex whom the laurel will fit, its grant to a female would be at once an honourable testimonial to the individual, a fitting recognition of the remarkable place which the women of England have taken in the literature of the day, and a graceful compliment to the Sovereign herself. It happens to fall in well with this view of the case, that there is no living poet of either sex who can prefer a higher claim than Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning" (p. 585). The Athenæum maintained their position in the 22 June 1850 issue (no. 1182, p. 662).
7. There were calls for reforming the laureateship. In a notice of Wordsworth's death in the issue of 25 April 1850, The Times argued that "the title is no longer an honour, but a badge of ridicule, which can bring no credit to its wearer," and claimed that "whatever emoluments go with the name be commuted into a pension." The writer of the article asked "why retain a nickname, not a title, which must be felt as a degradation rather than an honour by its wearer?" There are still calls for reforms to the position, but the laureateship remains a post in the Royal Household, for which a token stipend is received. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust was founded in 1847 when the property was purchased with funds raised by public subscription. It was planned to turn the property over to the government, but that proved unsuccessful. About the time of this letter, "Dickens sponsored an appeal for the endowment of a perpetual curatorship of Shakespeare's house. His plan was to make Sheridan Knowles, then in great financial need, the first curator. Dickens organized amateur performances
to this end in London, Manchester, Birmingham, and elsewhere, ... Although he raised a considerable sum of 
money, the project failed, presumably because it did not eventually prove acceptable to the Stratford Committee”
(Levi Fox, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: A Personal Memoir, Stratford: Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 
and Norwich: Jarrold Publishing, 1997, pp. 6–7). Negotiations with the Government failed, and the post was 
ever created.

8. EBB told both Miss Mitford and Mrs. Ogilvy that she felt the laureateship should be given to Leigh 
Hunt; see EBB-MRM, III, 302 and EBB-EAHO, p. 9, respectively.

9. i.e., of her pregnancy. The child was born 21 January 1851 and was named Altham Surtees; he died in 
1931.

10. “Well fed.”

11. Bracketed passage is reconstructed, having been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

12. “By 1849 Algernon Wells was calling the attention of the Congregational Union to the need for a 
comprehensive scheme to augment the salaries of ministers, and in 1853 it was reported that 217 ministers 
received less than £70 per annum and of these ninety-seven received less than £50 from their churches” (R. 
Amos Barton, as curate of Shepperton, received a stipend of only £80 per annum, with which he had to support 
a wife and six children (George Eliot, Scenes from Clerical Life, London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1858, 
chap. 1).

13. Presumably any property tax paid by the Brownings’ landlord would have been passed on (even 
proportionally) in the rent. Surtees would have paid a land tax.

14. In a letter to Julia Martin, dated 15 April [1850], EBB explained that Surtees Cook asked her father’s 
permission to marry Henrietta, and that he refused to consent, so Henrietta wrote to her father to say that she 
had been engaged for some time, and that she hoped he would not expect her to break the engagement because 
she could not do it, thus declaring her intention to marry despite his disapprobation.


16. The inscription reads in full: “Robert Wiedeman Barrett Browning in memory of Angelo Eugene Philip 
Ossoli Florence, 1850, second year of their lives. God keep them pure both; and lead them to fulness of love 
and wisdom!” RB dated the frontispiece: “Sunday, May 5, 1850” (Reconstruction, A225). Arabella gave Pen a 
Bible (see letter 131), as well as an Italian New Testament; see Reconstruction, A235).

17. Carlo Ludovico Cottrell, first son and second child of Sophia and Henry Cottrell, died 11 June 1850, 
aged 28 days, and was buried on the 13th (Archives of the Inter-Continental Church Society, London). Apparently, 
EBB was under the impression he died on the day he was buried.

18. i.e., according to the “Trinitarian Formula,” based upon Matthew 28:19. “In the questions to be asked by 
the Clergyman of those who bring a privately-baptized child to the Church to be received [and presumably to 
be buried], it is expressly stated that the ‘things essential to this Sacrament’ are the ‘matter’ and the ‘words’” 

19. Charles W. Molony (B.A., Lincoln College, Oxford, 1848) who was officiating on behalf of George 
Robbins (see letter 47, note 18).

20. Referring to the validity of baptism by a person not in Holy Orders, The Annotated Book of Common 
Prayer (ed. John Henry Blunt, London: Rivingtons, 1866) says that “in ancient times this question was not one 
of very extensive bearing, as none but the Clergy ever baptized, except in cases where there was danger of 
death, and no clergyman could be found” (p. 212). The commentator further adds: “Lay Baptism being thus 
allowed to be valid in case of necessity, it is yet clear that its validity depends upon the manner of its 
administration, not upon the reality of the necessity” (p. 213). The acting chaplain might have denied the baptism 
on the ground that the water used was not consecrated since this was generally a requirement made by adherents 
of the Oxford Movement; although, the rubrics in The Book of Common Prayer make no mention of the necessity 
of the water being consecrated. As EBB points out below, Roman Catholic teaching is that lay baptism may be 
performed provided the manner and formula are followed.
21. Robert Maxwell Hanna (d. 1857), a Scottish Presbyterian minister with whom the Brownings became friendly. They frequently attended the services he conducted in the Swiss Church in Florence, and in letter 166 EBB says he “is tremendous in heaviness as a preacher.” Hanna was a friend of Frances Julia Pakenham (née Peters, d. 1894), wife of Captain Pakenham (see letter 45, note 3). In his correspondence with Mrs. Pakenham, Hanna made several references to EBB, which Mrs. Pakenham quotes in her memoirs entitled Life Lines; or, God’s Work in a Human Being (London: Wertheim, Macintosh, and Hunt, 1862, pp. 153 and 160, respectively).

22. The Cottrells subsequently had three children: Henry (“Hal”) Edward Plantagenet (1851-1938), Violet Amy (1859-1936), and Agnes Isa Sophia (1865-1945), and there is no evidence that any of them was ever baptized in the Church of England.

23. “Imitate the soldier.”

24. This renaissance church, built in the early 14th century, is just northeast of the cathedral in the Piazza Annunziata. The square is dominated by the equestrian statue of Ferdinando I by Giovanni da Bologna (1524-1608), which is the subject of RB’s poem “The Statue and the Bust.”

25. In a letter to Henrietta dated 20 February [1850], EBB noted that she was “sorry about poor Alfred’s disappointment—it was enough to produce a relapse into jaundice” (Transcript in editor’s file); however, there is no other mention of his health in letters written about this time.

26. James Watson Webb (1802-84), an American journalist, soldier, and diplomat, who, according to the Dictionary of American Biography, “had journeyed to Vienna in 1849-50 under appointment (Jan. 7, 1850), as chargé d’affaires to Austria, only to be greeted with the news that the Senate had refused to confirm his appointment, perhaps because of a widespread desire to break with Austria in protest against the Hungarian war.”

27. Thomas Noon Talfourd (1795-1854), lawyer, author, and judge, had dealings with EBB’s brother George in the legal profession. Probably George was the source of Talfourd’s comments.

28. EBB kept to her decision. After Henrietta’s marriage there are 90 extant letters to Henrietta compared to 174 to Arabella.

29. See letter 47, note 30.

Letter 52

Florence.

24 June [1850]

You will be prepared for bad news, my own beloved Arabel, and yet it goes to my heart to have to put the final blow to our happy hopes for the summer. No England for us, dearest Arabel! I thought the delay must mean no good, and I suppose they have been putting the ship into dock or something as expensive, .. for instead of a hundred & seventy pounds we get seventy,² .. which not only forbids England as a matter of course, but will throw us into convulsions of economy for the rest of the year. Robert said on Saturday, when he had the letter, that we should’n’t be able indeed to leave Florence at all—only he spoke then in a moment of desperation, and we shall certainly be able to get away for a month or two to some near place. If it should be possible it will be right, for all our sakes, .. especially Baby’s: I should not like to expose him to the heat here, .. whenever the heat comes .. for so far, the temperature has not exceeded seventy two, & generally the thermometer has stood lower. There is something in the comet I fancy, to keep the weather so unItalian.³ Well! this is grievous,—is it not? Still you see how impossible going to England w⁴ be! Our income during the present year falls far short of Henrietta’s & Surtees’s,—& we must
keep the balia\(^4\) till October, ... a considerable expense.\(^5\) Six of us, there are—and little more than a hundred pounds, to go to the end of the year with!! Oh Arabel, I am not vexed about that ... we shall do perfectly: I am only bent on making clear to you that it is not our fault, not our breach of promise, not our change of mind, if we don't go to you as we intended, and that rather you sh\(^6\)d pity than be vexed with us. Robert had even made the sacrifice of his feelings & consented to visit New Cross—which was an effort on his part very favorable to the arrangement. But it was not to be this year. One comfort is that we have lost two months of the summer & sh\(^6\) have had an abbreviated time— Others will come upon consideration & in time, I dare say. Look at it all brightly, my darling Arabel, as a part of God's will, ... which sh\(^4\) always come to us with a sense of brightness— It is the fault of our eyes, you know, if we do not see it bright always. For the rest, you must have been prepared for this decision—when we go to England it sh\(^6\) be early in May,\(^6\) and here's the end of June! I was prepared! I was certain there was some great diminution from the delay. In spite of which, we are all disappointed—everybody in bad spirits, and poor Wilson especially so, I think, although she insists that she “had been giving it up lately”.—everybody in bad spirits except Wiedeman, ... who has his little body overflowing with such ineffable joy, that he may well be thought merry enough for all the rest of the house. Robert & I look at one another sometimes & say, “But that child's going mad! Did you ever see anything like that?”. A few evenings ago, we sent him to a toyshop, where he bought a cart and two dolls, & came home in a sort of ecstasy which you w\(^4\) scarcely believe perhaps from my description— Half an hour afterwards he was running about the rooms, clasping his hands, covering & squeezing up his face with them, & at intervals, siezing [sic] his own head & holding it, as if he expected it to burst with joy—it was almost frightful to see the child. Wilson says sometimes that he has had too much excitement, & that it might have been better if we had kept him in his nursery like other babies of his age.— I dont know I am sure—we meant to make him happy & joyous: and certainly he is happy & joyous—and healthy besides—he never has anything the matter with him, little darling. Under no circumstances, perhaps, w\(^4\) he have been otherwise than an excitable child— The more reason, you will suggest, for not over-exciting him. Still there is a good deal to be said on our side of the question— All his pleasures have been out of door pleasures, & within the reach of his simple senses—air & sunshine & music & the processions of the country—we have not pulled at his brain or tried to teach him the least thing in the world. We mean to neglect his education in the most praise-worthy way— Meantime, he is very funny—you w\(^4\) open your eyes at him. At the least sound of music (even at the canary bird’s singing in the apartment above us) he begins to dance—& dances generally, till he tumbles down. That canary bird is the joy of his life. Twenty times in half an hour he will run out on the terrace to see if the cage is in its place. Two days ago he was in the courtyard & found an empty cage belonging to the porter, ... which he was enchanted with, & stood by ever so long, with his arms thrown up, calling to the swallows to come down from the sky & live in it. He is very fond of pulling the pins out of my pin-cushion when he comes in to me while I dress. I lectured him about this, & to prove to him how these pins might hurt him, I pricked his hand with one of them— At which he only laughed loud,—& now his great joke is to prick himself with a pin or a needle & pretend to be in dreadful pain. I assure you he is a curious child. When I told Wilson that Mr. Bevan did not believe a word of my account of him,
she said, "Of course, nobody could, without seeing with their own eyes—" She seriously is of opinion that there is not, nor ever has been, a child like him. I quote Wilson—because what Robert & I say, must naturally go for nothing. Did I tell you that when he was six months old, he used to pretend to be asleep—& then jump up suddenly to frighten us. It is still a standing joke, and he has not advanced to shutting his eyes (which he does'nt consider a characteristic of sleep)—he only lies quite still & grave. All this I have written of Baby, as being the most cheerful news within reach. If the money had been too little for England, yet enough for Naples, we had had a plan of going to Capri for the summer—but the expense will be too great— We talk now of Elba, which is two hours from Leghorn & a cheap place— After all the probability is that we shall have to be satisfied with the neighbourhood of Leghorn itself, where the sea-breezes may be worth paying a little for, on Baby's account. Next year we shall remove bodily to Paris, after selling our most unwieldy furniture, & taking the rest with us by water-carriage—and then, Arabel, we shall be at home, to all the intents & purposes for which I care. We may be in England at any moment, & shall see you constantly. It is not right, I feel, this living away from you for years—& Robert has duties to his father. Paris combines the cheapness & continental liberty of life, with the nearness to the dearest—and we have quite decided upon trying Paris. If the climate sh'nt not agree with me, it will be a thing tried at least, & we shall have the satisfaction of a completed experiment. M! Browning does not come to us this autumn— they could have only stayed a week or ten days, and Sarianna says that she is not strong enough for such an undertaking, though her father wished it for himself. Oh—such a plan w' have been absurd! Too kind it was of M! Browning to think of it—and by this earnestness we are naturally the more anxious to make an effort on our own side.

My dearest darling Arabel, I write in the greatest haste as you see—Do write to me— I want to hear about you. I want to hear about Trippy. I want to hear about Alfred.— And I want to hear how Henrietta goes on— Besides .. how much, besides? Do write to me a little oftener, to make up for this prolonged absence. You shall be rained upon by letters from me. Are they not shamefully long about my new edition? It might have done good, if brought out now. I hope you will like it. I had to leave heaps of poems out of the Seraphim volume, they were so weak & inferior—and among them, I am vexed to say, were those hymns, one of which had an inscription from Mr Hunter's sermon. I tried to find a place for the inscription elsewhere but could'nt, and the verses were too weak to leave. The more vexed I was, that for the same reason, I had to omit the stanzas to "The little friend." What could I do? I came to the conclusion of omitting them myself, & when I appealed to Robert he could'nt help saying that I had done wisely. To make some amends, I inscribed the 'Sea Mew' "affectionately to MEH"—lest they sh'<> fancy that I meditated any unkindness. Was this enough, do you think? Though M! Hunter has acted strangely to me, it would pain me to seem to show my sense of it by such means. There are three sonnets on the subject of dear M! Boyd— you will see. Did you have sight of the Martins as they passed through London, & did M! Martin get my letter? Where are the Peytons?— And what was concluded about Reynolds? You know you may tell me & be certain of the secret being well kept. Most anxious I am about dearest Trippy's affairs—so let me hear everything.
Robert comes in to say that the letters must go this moment. God bless you, my own Arabel. Speak of yourself—& write, write, to your ever & ever fondly attached Ba-

Love, where it is acceptable— I am in such a hurry.

Address, on integral page: Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. This was less than half the usual return, approximately £175, of EBB's shares in the David Lyon.
3. EBB wrote of the unusual weather in several other letters at this time, blaming the cool conditions on the comet. The Annual Register for 1850 notes that "a considerable number of Comets have rewarded the diligence of observers." Several different comets are mentioned and dates given, including 11, 14, and 15 April and May 1850. It also recorded the reappearance of the "periodical comet of Faye."
4. "Wet nurse."
5. There is no record of how much the Brownings paid the wet nurse but the "monthly nurse"—as EBB called Madame Biondi—was paid nine pounds per month.
6. The Brownings would not make their first return visit to England until a year later, departing on 3 May 1851.
7. Capri is a small island just off the coast from Naples; Elba is a slightly larger island farther north, just a few miles SW off the coast from Piombino. Elba was part of Tuscany at this time.
8. In letter 47, EBB mentions her intention of sending the proofs to Sarianna Browning for corrections, and thanked her soon thereafter for her help. On 13 June EBB wrote Thomas Westwood that "my new edition has been in the press much too long, & when it will be out, I have no more idea of than you can have" (ms at Berg), and on 7 July EBB told Henrietta that she was beginning to "think they never will be out of the press" (Transcript in editor's file), and that more timely publication of her new edition might have helped her chances for the laureateship. Publication was being delayed until late October because Chapman wanted to launch the book after he relocated from 186 Strand to his new offices at 193 Piccadilly, as EBB explained to Mrs. Ogilvy on 22 September (EBB-EAHO, p. 30). The two-volume edition was published on 1 November 1850.
10. In Poems (1850) "The Sea-Mew" was "Affectionately Inscribed to M.E.H.," but the epigraph (from Gascoigne's Steele Glas) that had appeared with the poem in The Seraphim was not retained in the 1850 collection.
11. The three sonnets on Hugh Stuart Boyd are subtitled "His Blindness," "His Death, 1848" and "Legacies." See letter 28, note 2.
12. The "secret" alluded to here has not been explained. The Peyton family was evidently thinking of coming abroad. They arrived in Italy in December 1850, evidently for the benefit of Reynolds Peyton's (1815-61) bad health.
My dear Arabel—

Another vexation for Ba! she was, it is supposed, two months advanced toward confinement, and apparently quite well—we took every precaution—she kept the house for the last six weeks, and scarcely ever left the room or, indeed the sofa. And yet, spite of all our pains, she became unwell a week ago, and on Sunday M# a miscarriage took place: she perhaps suffered more than on previous occasions—but we had the best medical aid, and yesterday morning she was very much better—all day & night the improvement continued; and to-day she is most satisfactorily progressing—takes nourishment & sleeps. The doctor hopes that in a fortnight we may be able to go into the country, where the change of air will soon restore her to health. (I had all but engaged the house the day before she was taken ill.) Let this reconcile you to our not having attempted the journey to England this summer, as we should, I dare say, had our finances allowed it—for imagine such an accident happening on the road, perhaps miles away from a house, not to say a town!—and without the promptest of remedies the effect might be most disastrous— Of Ba and her perfection of patience & goodness I shall not attempt to say anything—we are more & more satisfied with Dr Harding,—who takes a real interest in her— Dear Wilson, too, has been of every assistance. Very fortunately, the weather has grown delightfully cool with rain.

July 31/ Ba has past a very good night,—is very much better— There is nothing to apprehend, and I trust that (ere) many days she will be comfortably installed in our little villa which is described as cool, situated on a hill, “with meadow surrounded by cypresses”— Italian, is it not? She sends meanwhile her most affectionate love to you & Henrietta. I shall leave to your discretion the communication of this letter to her, or part of it. Our boy, (for he is clearly past babyhood,) is perfectly well. Ba fancied he looked pale some time ago—but surely that was a gentle drawback for a child with six or eight teeth coming at once—two double ones on the same side were out last week and the others are to be seen & felt—it is wonderful that he suffers so little. He is strong as a colt, runs up & down and round & about from morning to night and every now & then orders me off, in the most tyrannic style, to follow him into nooks & corners. Woe be to us if we don’t go to dinner, or coffee, for instance, the moment he has pulled our coats or gowns and pointed to the next room where he has seen the preparations—if we are obstinate, he stamps, & wrings his hands that the world should be going so wrong! He is strangely backward in speaking—or in choosing to speak—for he can, if he will, say words—thus he said “pappa” this morning, when asked if he had not had it for breakfast (pap)—and yesterday repeated the word “povero”—but he makes himself so well understood by nods & signs & inarticulate cries, that, I suppose, he sees no use in further efforts. Ba will send you a curl of his pretty light brown hair—much lighter than what we sent once.

Ba says she shall give you letters enough the moment she is able—yours are always a perfect delight to her, so be as beneficent for your part. I shall write to you in a few days to tell you how she is advancing—and who knows but she may add a line or two herself? In any case, rely upon
it that I have told you all there is to tell—that I have no sort of apprehension, beyond the inconvenience of a little weakness for some short time to come—Also, that should there be any change or reason I would write directly—but there will not be, in all probability. And so good bye & God bless you, dear Arabel—Don’t fear, once again,—there is no need whatever.

Your most affectionately,

Rob! Browning.

Address: Miss Barrett, / 50 Wimpole S!
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. This was the fourth and last miscarriage EBB suffered; see letter 48, note 3.
2. Villa Poggio al Vento, Marciano, near Siena, where they arrived on 1 September for a month’s stay.
3. These comments, taken together with remarks in following letters concerning (1) the disappointment over money and the need to economize; (2) the Brownings’ temporary residence in Siena and the Villa Poggio; and (3) the fountain mentioned in letter 57, may suggest a date for RB’s “Up at a Villa—Down in the City.”
4. “Poor,” or, as a noun, “poor person” or “poor thing.”
5. RB had sent EBB’s sisters a lock of Pen’s hair shortly after his birth; see letter 38, note 2. EBB eventually sent another lock; see letter 56, note 16.

Letter 54

[From RB] Florence, Aug. 4. ‘50

My dear Arabel,

You may depend on Ba’s being better, as much better as could reasonably be hoped for:—the attack was no inconsiderable one, & her recovery has been, & will be, gradual of course—but it has not been stopped for a day. Dr Harding hopes she may be moved to the sofa to-day—and once the first step taken all the rest will soon follow. She is half-expecting that I will let her add a line of postscript to this—you must be magnanimous enough to thank me for letting her do no such thing, & reserving her energies for the great duty of eating her dinner:—but I dare say the next note you receive will be from the white little hand which is at least as anxious to resume its exercise as the feet whose claims I favour in preference. Meanwhile she bids me assure you that all is well, with truest love to you & Henrietta from whom she has received a letter she means to answer the moment she is strong enough—one point in it, however, is referred to me as the more competent authority, and I may as well dispatch it at once. Expressing kind regret at Ba’s inability to go to England this year thro’ the falling off in her ship-dividend, Henrietta adds that she is surprised at such straitened finances, since she had understood before Ba’s marriage that she had nearly £500 a-year—or words to that effect. Ba’s income this year will be, when it all comes in, £257,10s,10d. And Mr Kenyon writes concerning the ship-money, that “as freights are lowered, she will probably not have a better dividend next year, or again”. He writes something else however, which tho’ I am sure he would dislike my mentioning, yet I cannot deny myself the gratification of imparting to you, dear Arabel; you who, with Henrietta, have always understood & sympathised with me from the beginning. In this letter, which reached me the day after Ba’s accident, & so
just when its kindness “told” most, he spoke of our scheme of going to settle in Paris,—approving it, but rightly judging that with our limited means Ba would be obliged to leave Italy without having visited Rome & Naples—whereupon he pressed on her, & me thro’ her,—with every possible refinement of delicate considerateness, every circumstance that might render a refusal difficult,—to accept £100 for the visit to Rome, & £50 for the journey to England afterwards. I was forced to refuse, however—or rather to accept all of the kindness except the money: but assuredly I shall never, nor will Ba, hear of Rome without thinking how we might have gone there: & if we should be able to go there at our own expense,—which is not quite so possible as I have told him that it is,—I am sure we shall get no such gratification from anything to be seen there, as from this signal piece of generosity in him.

Let me just add that Babe is very well—cut two double teeth last week and boasts two more just out, white to see & hard to feel—these will complete the dozen. He is a little tyrant, and must outgrow all that nonsense in these days of universal constitutionalism. Good bye, dear Arabel—don’t fear that I will keep you long without another note, should Ba prove less competent than I expect to write one herself. With best regards to Henry, Yours ever most affectionately, R Browning.

Best love to Trippy if you please—Mrs Gordon has gone, by the bye, to Viareggio, a sea-side town—and so prevented our going there which we otherwise should have been glad to do.³ (Ba sent this love specially but I have a right to part of it)

Monday M# The Doctor’s visit yesterday kept me at home till past the post-time: to make amends I can give you later news & quite as good. Ba is visibly stronger & better—was able to lie on the sofa for half an hour—and may be expected to do as much, or a very little more, to-day. Your nephew is at this moment seated in a donkey-cart, which a peasant has come with from the country, and screaming to the “ciuco”,⁴ as we call them, to move on,—while poor long-ears stands musing on what strange master he has been suddenly gifted with. The Cottrells called last evening to enquire after Ba—they are very kind apparently &, I fancy, softened by their misfortunes—we give them every possible benefit of the doubt, in their connection with Mrs Gordon—they have heard & believed her story: but there is more distaste to a residence in Florence produced in us by the coming hither of Mrs Gordon than by any other circumstance. Ba’s new edition is all but ready—you saw the advertisement in the “Athenæum”.⁵ Good bye, once more, & God bless you.

RB.

Address, on integral page: Miss Barrett, / 50. Wimpole S!
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Sunday fell on 4 August in 1850; RB concluded his letter on Monday, the 5th.
2. See letter 51 in which EBB reported her anxiety caused by the lack of news about the ship money.
4. “Donkey,” or “jackass.”
My very dearest Arabel, at last I am let write to you—but it is to be the shortest of letters, Robert says, and so it can't be the longest, as I fain w'd have it. I do hope & trust you have not been uneasy about me, Arabel, because all this time I have been just recovering strength which is'n't a very alarming operation at the worst, you know, however tedious it may be for patient & bystanders. Now I am in the drawingroom, in my own chair, & shall be able to walk in a day or two, & to be out in the carriage, & Dr Harding who has left us a minute ago "thinks it likely that he will be able to send us out of Florence in the early part of next week"—I myself scarcely expect that. I really don't see the use of going away before one has attained a little to the power of comfortable independency of body—but the change of air will be good for all of us, & I shall be relieved & delighted to have a little coolness & silence. My darling Arabel, since Robert wrote to you ten days ago, our baby has been ill, & seriously...to catch us up from one trouble to a higher. He has had a sort of sun-stroke...or rather sun-pat...we oughtn't to use exaggerated expressions...and you may fancy what painful anxiety we were in, when he came home from his walk one day with crimson cheeks & hot heavy head, & eyes with that unnatural, pitiful, glassy stare which there was no mistaking. He had a great deal of fever one night & day, & lay in a sort of half stupor, & would not touch a single thing except the balia's milk—how I thanked God that he was not weaned! Dr Harding treated him with the utmost skill... (I cant tell you how high an opinion we have of his skill,..his quietness, goodsense & decision:) and as soon as ever the medicines had had time, the fever went away, and the darling patient called for his drum. The attack ended in a bad cough & cold, seeming like a common cough & cold, but Dr H. said it was the development of the previous symptoms, the passing out of the system, of the malady, & that nothing more was to be feared. Now he is quite well...only demoniacally cross, I must say...getting into such passions...stamping with his feet, dashing his hands about, insisting on having the whole world to do what he likes with...a half-world wont serve—At one moment, we have a rebellion, because I don't take my medicines twice over (he likes to see people take medicines) & at another moment, there's a fury because the great picture over the chimneypiece is not taken down for him to play with. Henrietta made me laugh in her last letter by most pathetic exhortations 'not to spoil Wiedeman'. If she were to see him just now, she might enforce the pathos. You see, poor little darling, he feels himself rather pulled down by his illness, & this irritates him—he doesn't understand how it is, & struggles against it: he has never been used to any feeling of illness. Ah—but indeed, he is well now, & quite well—even the cold has gone away, & he takes no more medicine—and, although a little paler & thinner, the difference in his looks is very inconsiderable—It is a great mercy from God's unspeakable goodness. Don't imagine that we are careless with the child, because of this accident with the sun—While I was so ill, Wilson could not go out with him, & the poor balia went alone—she declares that she avoided the sunshine...but Italians naturally are less apprehensive of the evils of their climate—In any case, Dr Harding says there can be no doubt of the character & cause of the indisposition, & that we must look to it in future.
In general, our friends laugh at Baby’s train .. “two maids & a dog” .. so careful are we in our usual ways.

Thursday

Beloved Arabel, it is a two days silence that I have put between the forgoing & what must succeed. I could not help fancying at the time of beginning this letter, that Robert had heard some bad news—it is difficult for him to keep anything from me— So at last he told me— & I have of course been dreadfully shocked & affected, & couldn’t have the heart to go on with my letter all yesterday. You have seen probably in the papers the late tragedy—& how our dear friend Madame Ossoli, with her husband & child, were lost in their passage to America—lost within sight of shore .. of home3 .. oh, gracious God, what an awful manifestation of thy divine will!— We had a note from her off Gibraltar, [sic] (did I tell you?) saying how they had been in trouble through the Captain’s illness, which had ended in the worst species of confluent smallpox .. “never had she recoiled before from any shape of human suffering”— They had tried to get a medical man from Gibraltar to verify the disease .. but the authorities w4 not allow even so much intercourse between the ship & the shore, & had placed them in the strictest quarantine— There was a touching & poetical description of the “consignment of the body to the deep”— I, in my foolishness, exclaimed to Robert, when we received the note, to burn it directly— You know me & my cowardice, Arabel— “Do burn it,” said I, “the complaint may be plague, for what anybody knows”. “Indeed”, replied he, “I will not burn it. How are you sure that it may not be the last note we ever may have from her”. At which, I laughed in my folly, but he put the letter away.—“I remember she called us in it, “Dear precious friends”, and it was the last indeed:—how seldom we know when the last time comes! The last evening in Italy they spent in this room— Jestingly they told us it had been prophesied to the Marquis Ossoli, “that the sea w4 be fatal to him, & that he sh should avoid travelling by it”——and then, she said, turning to me with that peculiar smile which lighted up her plain, thought-wom face, “I accept as a good omen that our ship should be called the Elizabeth”—

But to write all this to you is worse than foolish & profits neither of us. You are not to think that I am hurt in body .. oh no—and Robert could not do otherwise than tell me. The first newspaper or first letter or first visit w5 have been sure to tell me,— & then I was certain that something had moved him .. I could see it in his eyes. I am recovering strength, & Wiedeman’s temper is better, & I hope to be out in the carriage before the week is at an end.

You were startled at the news Robert sent you? I meant to wait till the precarious time (for me) was over, because, I am so uncertain, that it does not become me to speak of Januaries & Febraries like people in general. Everything however seemed going on well .. I took every possible precaution .. & was full of hope & joy in the prospect of a little creature to match Henrietta’s— Ah—what a vexation! ⟨Only one ought’nt to talk of vexations, even vexations, just now— it is a shame. I was very ill—far worse than on my former occasion—(though it was most like Pisa) & Dr Harding means to set to with all force of his will to prevent its happening again, he says—because four times in less than four years, to say nothing of Wiedeman, is exhausting
to the constitution. And then, they are not common accidents—You see my constitutional tendencies
c, & their

How is our dear Minny? Tell me—and give her my kindest love. Write to me, I beseech you,
& mention Papa always. God bless you my beloved. Hold me to your heart & in your prayers as
your Ba.

I dont forget Baby's hair. You shall have it next time.

Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. RB’s last letter concerning EBB’s illness was written on 4 and 5 August 1850. EBB says that he wrote
“ten days ago.” EBB headed this letter “Tuesday” and further along wrote “Thursday.” The 13th was a Tuesday
and the 15th a Thursday.

2. “Wet nurse.”

3. The Ossoli family perished when the ship (the Elizabeth) they were aboard for America wrecked off the
cost of Long Island on 16 July 1850.

4. According to Moncure Conway, RB “spoke with much feeling of Margaret Fuller. ‘From her plague-
stricken ship poor Margaret wrote my wife a letter. After a long time it reached us, but so blurred that we could
make out very little, the paper so foul that we burnt it’” (Moncure Daniel Conway, Autobiography, Memories

5. Two and a half lines have been cancelled by EBB.

6. Passage in angle brackets has been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.

7. Two or more pages are missing. The balance of the text is written on the side and top of the first page.

8. See note 16 in the following letter.

Letter 56

Villa Poggio al vento
Siena.

Sept. 29—October 4—[1850]

I should have written to you long since, my
beloved Arabel, having promised to rain
letters—but my letter to Henrietta will have set
you at ease about me, & I waited a little till
our shifting plans were made up, and also I longed to receive your country address from yourself
that I might send what I wrote straightforwardly for once. Now, I am almost despairing of your
leaving London. Oh, how vexatious! Do you know I would have pushed for another answer; I
wouldn’t have sat down quietly under such circumstances, with a house taken & boxes packed:
and then Papa is sure to be displeased at having to pay that money, so you might as well have run
the other risk. So vexatious it is! so necessary that you should have had country air & change! I
am very much vexed. Only, after all, you may have gone—It is scarcely credible that with a house
taken, you should make no sort of use of it, and I shall try to hope against hope as long as I can.
Meantime you will have heard our history (a bit of it) from Henrietta—how we lost the
Vallambrosa \[sic\] villa, & came to Siena & took a villa a mile & a half from the town,² tiptoe on a hill commanding magnificent stares³ all round, a beautiful & variously undulated country, but not romantic like the Baths of Lucca, with the mountains ranged at a distance, & no water, & no forests. Though the vineyards & olivegrounds are everywhere, we are much reminded of England by some of the features of the landscape, especially by the bowery green lanes & heaps of blackberries—on each side. Also the air is very fresh—and (which is not so good though quite as English) we have seen such fogs here as I could not have believed to be in Italy—(coming from the maremma⁴ probably) but they keep at our feet as we are so high, & do us no harm. Indeed nothing has done us harm since we have been here. You never saw such a miraculous change as has past upon me! At the end of three weeks, I could walk a mile without being tired, & now at the end of the month I consider myself perfectly well, if still perhaps a shade paler than I was before my illness. I assure you I never dared hope for such a complete & rapid change— I hated going from Florence, feeling, as is natural when one is knocked down, that it was better to lie where I fell—out of spirits, in fact, with the courage as well as colour wrung out of me. D' Harding used to keep saying “No wonder, no wonder”—but that didn’t help one up—& I scarcely saw then what could— Oh—of course I knew it was only a question of time—only one gets low & does’nt reason. Nothing could be kinder than D' Harding’s whole bearing to us—he even wanted to come & see us the morning we set off, but we wouldn’t hear of it as we left Florence at seven oclock. He was imperative about our coming, though I tried to get off,—he told us “not to settle down” anywhere, . . rather to “go to Siena for ten days, & then to return to Florence, & then to go somewhere else”— Very easy to advise, thought we, & hard to put in practise, [sic] considering the practical state of the purse! Still we mean to keep more than you would think to this prospectus—we have been here a month, and tomorrow we go into Siena for a week . . not only for the sake of the change, but because I must see the churches & pictures in Siena . . the Sienese school being famous as you know, and Sodoma⁵ wonderful, says Robert, . . and in spite of my new strength I cant walk in & out, three Italian miles into the city, besides the sight-hunting—Now we calculate that it is a more economical thing to take an apartment in Siena, changing our place of residence, than to hire a carriage—though we pay immensely, by the way, for the apartment in Siena, through taking it only for a short time—and there are four bedrooms, just as we have here, & three sitting-rooms and the situation is one of the best in the town. Here we pay eleven shillings & five farthings the week, and you cant think what a pretty little villa it is, & how we roam about the grounds without our hats to enjoy it rurally.

The worst is that the grapes and peaches & apples & pears keep Wiedeman in a continual state of excitement— He cant be allowed (how can he?) to eat as much fruit as he chooses, and such shrieks we have every now & then!— I assure you it is heart rending. He has a way, whenever he has eaten anything he likes, of striking his breast with one hand—the child is as full of gesticulation as a little Italian— Well—there, he stands looking up at the grapes. First, he points up to them, with one finger up, in admiration, . . “How beautiful they are!” and when you assent to that, he begins striking his breast vehemently, like a Trappist in act of contrition, to express
‘how good they are to eat’, . . and then if you resist that & the insinuating smile into your face which accompanies it, you must be prepared for a burst of grief . . unless indeed the pigeons come down to make a diversion. We are delightfully off for animals here— There are pigeons, there are chickens, there’s an immense yellow dog (which poor Wiedeman had a great cry about on his arrival, because he wanted to hug it round the neck & kiss it on the mouth as he does by Flush, & we were afraid to let him), then there’s a pig, which he & Robert & I go to feed every day after dinner, with apples & peach-stones, & which Wiedeman is particularly fond of. He’s afraid of nothing, this child . . he wants to pat the pig’s snout—and is delighted to find himself the centre of a flock of turkies from a neighbouring farm. Also, he has made friends with all the peasants, runs into their cottages, & can’t be stopped from furrowing his way into their bedrooms where he suspects them of hiding the apples. The little peasant children are shy of him, but he . . he calls after them, orders them about, examines what they have in their hands, & sews up (in his curious fashion) the holes in their clothes. He is a funny little fairy, certainly. The other day Wilson & the balia were in a cottage with him, where the cottagers were eating their black bread . . made partially of beans, but by no means, bad. Wiedeman who must do what other people do, threw away instantly a piece of cake he was eating, & insisted on having some black bread— The peasants, being much flattered at the compliment to their bread, gave him a little bit . . as much as Wilson would let him have . . and then, he pressed for more, till he had to be carried away in disgrace, crying. And there’s a child who won’t touch white bread unless it is buttered, & even then, is particular as to the sort of bread! But he thought it fine to eat what the peasants were eating. I assure you he will leave a reputation in this part of the country; he has achieved great popularity. One old woman speaks of his going with tears in her eyes. The peasantry about here, are remarkable for cleanliness & industry, & live patriarchally, whole families, & sometimes two generations of families together. They are very pleasing, more so than I should have expected in Italian peasants, . . contented & joyous—eating meat generally once a week, & living for the rest on fruit, vegetables, oil, wine, & bread. Robert asked an old man if they didn’t want more animal food . . “Oh,” he said “certainly not! one gets tired of having it too often— Si stanca di questo!.” Perhaps the oil, being very nutritious, may make amends for the loss of it, for they are a fine race of people, the women very handsome. Well, but we leave all these advantages tomorrow, & are full of regret, though the change will bring other good, & we must certainly see the pictures. After our week at Siena, we do talk . . if the finances, in any way, admit, of it, of going to Volterra, for a few days, before we return home—but all depends on Robert’s calculations, & we mustn’t get into scrapes. A month ago we had but sixty pounds to take us to the end of the year—(you see the medical expenses were great) and this does not leave room for a superfluity of luxury & travelling about— As it is, we have enjoyed much, at a little price—& have gained much indeed . . Wiedeman’s cheeks have put on a rose-colour delightful to behold . . and his legs have grown as hard as stones—and his appetite is admirable—and this, though he has cut another double tooth & is now cutting his two eye-teeth—and though (here’s a piece of news) he has been enduring the first adversity of being weaned. Yes, we have actually weaned him— So frightened I was— because the prospect was worse with him than with your English children, who are nursed only four or six times a day, whereas he had it at every hour of the day & night, if he chose—it was a
great change. Yet, through God's mercy, neither he nor we have suffered much in the fact. First we took advantage of the new place, to amuse him, & show him this & that, & give him a quantity to eat, (as the change of air admitted of it by changing his appetite) and then, as soon the habit had been a little broken, we were so cruel as to put aloes upon the breast. Poor darling! he could'nt think what had come to his favorite diet! He made the balia get out of bed, & go to the old seats where she had used to nurse him—he thought it might be better there, perhaps .. poor darling! He cried a little, the first night it was tried,—and, the second night, he fell twice into a rage & screamed, because he thought the world was against him—but when I went into the room in the morning, he was sitting on the bed with cheeks like a rose, & playing— So the balia who was in bed too, described to me gravely what had happened to her & how all the milk was changed & grown nasty .. “tutto cangiato e divenuto naughty boy”, .. so that it was impossible for poor baby to take any more of it. He looked intently into her face while she was speaking, & then to me for my sympathy— Upon which I answered .. “Then, for the future, he must have ham, & wine, and water-melons & grapes, and Mama's cakes”, .. and he smiled brightly at that, & stretched out his arms to me, making signs that I should take him into the drawingroom at once & give him one of the macaroons kept there for him, so as to lose no time—and off I carried him, and he seemed to be quite consoled for that morning— Of course the grief recurred .. oh, he was persistent! he would'nt give it up for two or three days—but now, it is perfectly over, and I for one, feel relieved as of a burden. At a year & a half it was necessary to wean him, and, since he has begun to eat solid food to my satisfaction, I agree that it is better he should. What I feared was his being thrown out of sustenance altogether—because at one time he would eat nothing of his own will, except spunge cakes & things of that kind. He began to be better before he left Florence, but this place has much hastened the improvement, & I do hope it will last. The worst is that he has a fanciful appetite & does'nt like his soup & things strictly wholesome. But then he takes his chicken every day for dinner, without an objection, and he has milk & water & sugar at all hours of the day, (beating his breast, to show his full appreciation of it) and plenty of plain buns lightly made. As to the wine .. it is only “a taste” you know .. just to colour the water .. & you are not to confound our wine with strong port, though it is too strong for me. Ma*® Biondi told me that children of two & three years, were the better for a little wine & water—but certainly, even on this view of the question, he is too young & we^4 be better without any— One finds it hard (there's the truth) to keep it away from him—he w^ think it the worst wrong in the world. (See what a spoilt child, by Ba's own account!) Tell me Arabel—does Minny think we are poisoning him, taking one thing with another? I shall write & ask her some day. Nevertheless if you saw him you would admit he was the picture of health, if delecately [sic] constituted .. for you may combine those two things. He can climb upon the high chairs, by himself (must'nt he be strong?) and has been amusing himself all this morning by mounting on the portmanteau & then jumping off .. the balia sitting on the floor to prevent his hurting himself. In spite of which boyish activities, he likes his doll .. hushing it to sleep when he is put to sleep himself .. and he is the vainest little creature that a girl could be, delighting in red shoes, & comforted in the deepest of his griefs, by being decorated with necklaces & bracelets & broaches—he likes even to have bracelets on his legs— The way he looks at himself in the glass & smiles, when his hat is newly trimmed with red,
Letter 56

29 September–4 October [1850]

is ineffable. He & Robert & I have walked together by ourselves sometimes nearly half a mile from the house, . . . he as good as a child could be, gathering all the flowers for me, & all the snail-shells for Robert, & insisting on our keeping to our portions, . . . yes, and walking all the way. In fact, he walks far too much for his age— Sometimes he won't be carried, & Wilson & the balia have to struggle for it. The consequence of over-activity & over-excitability is that at the end of the day perhaps, he can't sleep— & his rest is broken through the night— Not that he cries—but he sleeps & wakes, sleeps & wakes. I wish he slept better.

Wednesday— Siena—

Here we are in the town of Siena—we came yesterday— You can't think how sorry we were to leave our villa, . . . it was quite affecting to take the last look at the pig,— and, as to Baby, he had a good cry after our first dinner here, because we could not go back again with the apples, to feed “signor porco”[10] . . . grunting, poor child, to show us what he wanted. Our rooms are very convenient on the whole (not considering the lack of tables & carpets & looking-glasses) but the town seems much colder than the country, & it will scarcely be desirable to stay longer than our week— Then, we have an idea (just an idea!) of going to Volterra for a few days, and, so, of returning home. I have been to the cathedral—it is very fine. The elaboration of parts does not detract from the general effect, . . . which is miraculous almost—for nothing can be more ornate in detail—not even the Pisan great church. Then I saw a crucifixion or rather a Taking down from the cross, by Sodoma, in the church San Francesco[11] which is divine in the pathos of its expression— The virgin lies at the foot of the cross, in a deep fainting-fit, which seems (to bring) the bitterness of (de)ath, & death itself, together—you doubt whether (she) ever can recover. He is a great painter, certainly, this Sodoma— I mean to lose no time here & see as much as I can—but if it keeps on raining in the present dismal fashion, it will be difficult to see much. A Mr & Mrs Fletcher, friends of Miss Dowglass, have been very kind to us here, in helping us to apartments & so on, . . . & she seems a most affectionate woman, to judge by her affectionateness to me, and he, full of benevolence if not especially wise. They belong to the Newman Street churches[13], — are quite elderly people . . . and one almost wonders, with their views about ordinances, ministrations & the like, how they can bear to have lived seven years in Italy where there is neither priest nor altar, according to their own way of thinking. She takes a prayerbook & goes into the cathedral, combining in that way. Robert & they have great controversies about the priesthood, authority & the rest, and Mr Fletcher told him yesterday that really he was “almost a Quaker”, . . . which Robert responded to by an intimation that the holders of contrary views were “fast in bondage”. So I got up & proposed that we should have no more theology for that morning visit— Of course, it was all in good humour on all sides—they are the kindest people in the world—and apparently most pious & excellent— I told Mr Fletcher that I should get her to instruct me more particularly in the Newman Street doctrines . . . “some other morning”. The talk began yesterday by her lamentations over the crowds of church of England people who were turning R Catholics— She has a personal interest in Lord Fielding,[14] for instance.— Arabel, I wish you would write a little note for me to Mr Jago, to say, with my best love & thanks for her kind, welcome letter, that if she should have any application from a Mr Oxenford,[15] of Mecklenburgh square, on the subject of a young boy supposed to be afflicted with spine-desease, I entreat her good offices with Mr Jago to commend the case to
benevolent interest—M. Fletcher has a nephew who has become suddenly a sufferer from spine symptoms—and, as I naturally spoke of M. Jago to her, she wrote to England instantly in order to persuade her family to have recourse to his skill. I shall write soon to dear Nelly myself, but it seems best meanwhile to lose no time in apprising her of the circumstances in question.— My own darling Arabel, how too kind & dear of you to send your work to Wiedeman & me .. & to Robert .. since you cant send to us without sending to him .. it is the same thing. Wilson is in ecstasies about the cloak because I had fallen into a fit of economy, and would have it that the old one should do again this winter. At the same time you make me a little vexed with you for such over-generosity—You overwhelm me, Arabel. Here’s a lock of his hair .. Wiedeman’s, I mean. It curls all over his head—but you see how changed the colour is. In the sun, it glitters like gold. Will the Peytons really come? Oh Arabel,—if indeed they c’d bring you! I have the extreme vanity of thinking that you w’d enjoy being with us— As for me, the rapture w’d be too much .. but I sh’d try to bear it. I do hope Trippy goes with you if you go—My dear love to her. I still maintain that she will end by hearing of M’ Gordon—The infamy of the hesitation is bad enough—Tell me more of Alfred—I wish Surtees Cook had either of the two employments!—May God bless you, my own beloved! There’s so much more to say—

Your ever loving Ba
Write, Write.

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France / Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. In letters written about this time, EBB refers to the possibility of them taking a villa about four miles from Vallombrosa. When RB went to Siena to enquire about the villa there, it was, as EBB wrote to Henrietta, “the first time he ever left me” (Huxley, p. 125). He left at 7 in the morning and did not return until 3 o’clock the following morning.
4. A marshy area south of Pisa on the Tuscan coast, which was generally considered unhealthy and malarial.
5. Giovanni Antonio Bazzi Sodoma (1477–1549), together with Beccafumi, was the leading Sienese painter of his time.
6. “Wet nurse."
7. “One gets tired of this!”
8. See letter 8, note 29.
9. “All changed and become.”
10. “Mister pig.”
11. Murray’s describes the Church of San Francesco as “a fine and spacious church built from the designs of Angelo and Agostino da Siena,” and notes further that it “contains a masterpiece of Sodoma, the Deposition, which Annibale Caracci admired so much as to say he found few pictures equal to it” (A Hand-Book for Travellers in Central Italy, London: John Murray, 1850, p. 211). Sodoma’s “Deposition” was completed sometime before 1502 as the altarpiece for the Cinuzzi Chapel.
12. There is a Matthew Fletcher in the Brownings’ address book at 72 Newman Street, a boarding house in London. Perhaps they were travelling in Italy at this time.
13. The Catholic Apostolic Church, founded by Edward Irving, met in a former picture gallery belonging to Benjamin West at 14 Newman Street after Irving and his followers were expelled from the National Scottish Church in May 1832. Catholic Apostolic priests wore vestments, and the ceremonies were a combination of Roman Catholic, Greek, and Anglican rites. The group, often referred to as Irvingites, moved to a large neo-Gothic building in Gordon Square in 1853.

14. Rudolph William Basil Fielding (1823-92), afterwards (1865) 8th Earl of Denbigh, was received into the Church of Rome on 28 August 1850. In 1869 he received the Grand Cross of Pius IX.

15. Edward Oxenford (b. 1792), a joint stock banker specializing in Brazilian mining interests, resided at 44 Mecklenburgh Square with his wife and seven children. Their youngest son, aged 7 at this time, was presumably the child affected with a spinal complaint. Oxenford's address in Florence is listed in the Brownings' address book as Casa Tantini in Via Calzaiuoli.

16. The lock of hair remains with this letter, folded in a sheet of paper, on which EBB wrote: "Siena. 1850. Wiedeman's hair at a year & a half old. It curls so all over his head, & is of different colours in different lights."

Letter 57

Florence.

October 21 [-] NovT I [1850]^1

I have a dear kind letter from Henrietta which I ought to answer—but the Miss Coores^2 have arrived, my beloved Arabel, & I have also your too beautiful presents, and "what can a body do" but write & thank you? Ah, indeed it is excess in goodness on your part—it is wrong, quite wrong! Only that does'n't prevent my being very grateful, and Wiedeman's being the happiest of children in his costume this winter. The cloak .. polka^3 .. whatever we should call it, .. is quite, perfectly beautiful and fits him to a precision and a grace. By the way, tell me— Is it right that the bottom of it should touch the bottom of his frock, the frock being just a little (the least possible) below his knees? I want to know whether he is taller or shorter than you supposed. Any way, the effect is perfect, & we are all in ecstasies about it, .. and last winter's great coat is discarded accordingly. As to my apron, Wilson makes up her mind that I shall never make up mine to wear it .. "I shall be sure to think it too pretty to wear." But I shant. You sent it, and I shall wear it, to have the stitches as near to my heart as can be.

M\(^\text{m}\) Tomkyns\(^4\) & the Miss Coores sent the parcel & letter (dear Henry's) by their courier, & we received them on our return from a walk which had left me very tired. So Robert went to call on them directly by himself, and found them "waiting till the heat of the day was over, to go out." He made them laugh by saying that we had been lamenting the cold, and more than half wishing for a fire. They thought it a bad joke on our parts. They called Florence charming altogether, & the climate absolutely perfect, & only wished that such a temperature could last for ever. The next day, Robert went, by appointment at ten in the morning, to walk with them through the pictures,—and he was to take me to pay my visit in the afternoon, only they insisted very kindly on waiving all etiquette & coming to see me instead, in order to spare me some interminable staircase at the hotel— A very pleasing woman M\(^\text{m}\) Tomkyns is, with a sweet countenance & conciliating manner,—& really I liked her the best of the party. The others are young-lady sort of young women, appearing goodnatured & used to good society—but I turned to look at the poor
widow—married since we left England, widowed since last December, & with a young child,—
two years and a half old. She told Robert she "had been very happy". Her hair is quite grey—no
sign of which was observable, Robert says, when he knew her in Harley Street—yet her smile is
cheerful & serene—Oh, what deep griefs can move softly in this world!——

Now let me think, dearest darling Arabel, where I left off with you last. At the Sienese villa,
I fancy. We stayed there a month, & then went into rooms in the town, that I might be within
reach of churches & pictures .. There are fourteen churches in Siena, and we went into all the
best—indeed into most of the fourteen. Then I would go into St Catherine’s house & saw the
kitchen where she cooked for her father the Dyer, and the bedroom where she slept on a stone—
and the place where Christ stood when she saw him in a vision—"Here Christ stood". It was
interesting to me. I dont believe in saint-worship nor in saint-day keeping,—but in the abstract
seeing of visions, I perfectly believe—and she was a most devout woman & subject to ecstatical
states, .. and I dont disbelieve in the visions she professed to see. It might have been:—I dont
disbelieve— The cathedral at Siena is gorgeous. The colour of the marbles is so warm & heavy,
that I felt quite suffocating—it was almost too much for my imagination. Then, such pictures!
Bazzi (Sodoma)—Beccafumi, Pachierotto [sic]—painters, you never hear of except at Siena. I
walked backwards & forwards in a haze of admiration,—able to walk, observe!—as strong as
ever I was! I am able to walk two miles now, & more perhaps,—& D! Harding calling yesterday
"never saw me looking better, if as well"! You see, I may call "wolf, wolf" for the future, &
nobody will believe me! Mr Jago thinks I have a "charmed life" & am by no means to be killed.
Ah, better than such light words, would be grateful ones on my lips, for indeed God has been
very full of mercy, & beyond my expectations to me! It is miraculous how I gathered up my
strength at Siena, in those last weeks— The balia kept saying .. "But nobody who had only seen
the signora when she left Florence, would know her again"—which was literally true. There I
was, carrying about the baby, .. running with him to play at horses—just as if nothing had been
the matter. And with such a different face! Well! after a week at Siena, we hesitated much whether
or not to go on to Volterra— I was inclined to the imprudence of going; but Robert, upon calculation
of the ways & means, found that we really couldn’t afford it,—and, so, back we came to Florence.
Oh, he wished to go just as much as I did, .. only I always forget the means;—you know my way.
Still, I have just wisdom enough to say to Robert .. "Calculate, calculate! If we cant go, we cant"
.. which, considering I am only a woman, is tolerably wise after all. Also, I dare say it was as
well that we did not go, for the cold of Siena began to be over the mark, and Volterra would not
probably be very much warmer. As to Florence it was delightful to return to it—it was like bathing
in a bath of cool sunshine. We threw off shawls & cloaks, and bathed at our ease. Then, the
comforts, the comforts! The soft beds, the noiseless carpets, the French coffee-pots! Of course,
in our villa, we had’nt a bit of carpet. I asked for "the least bit for the side of my bed, being an
invalid,"—whereupon there was presented to me in the most gracious & conciliatory mood, a
door-mat, which having been used to clean the boots & shoes of half Siena, was correspondingly
clothed with mud. "But," said I very humbly, "indeed this is not clean enough for a bedroom."
"Certainly it is not, signora," was the eager answer, "but wait until I have taken it to the fountain
& washed it. THEN, you will see the difference". I begged to decline it altogether, & took the
green baize from Robert's desk in preference . . . the green baize case, I mean. (Fancy washing a hay door-mat in a fountain!) I declined it even for Flush, but with as much politeness as it had been offered with, of course. Oh Arabel! what wicked thing do you fancy we did when we were at Siena? Went to the play— Robert & I paid eleven pence each & walked in & walked out, & saw the Tuscan Stentarello— The first time we have done such a thing! Robert is fixed to go no where without me—he says that really he does'nt enjoy it—and I believe that this piece of dissipation was far more for the sake of amusing me than for any other reason. Nothing could be worse than the acting—nothing; and nothing more innocent than the whole performance, I do assure you. The immoral system, connected unnaturally & unnecessarily with the English theatres, does not exist on the continent, & thus every objection one could suggest here, must submit to fall under the head of a superstition. I kept my bonnet on all the time—nobody dresses. And when we came home, we had some hot wine & water, & bread & butter & ham, . . seeing that it was eleven o'clock at night—a tremendously late hour for us—You would laugh if you knew what hours we keep. At the villa, especially, I used to say at nights, “How very sleepy I am!” “So am I,” said Robert. “Yes”, I added, “it must be very late! it must be past eight, I am sure.” But then we were up early, & had breakfast at eight as matter of course. I dont know how it is, but I never have recovered my old love for sitting up at nights, & I dont think I ever shall. What I should do in Wimpole Street is unimaginable. If anybody has tea with us at Florence & keeps us up till ten, I groan as poor Bummy used to do at Papa's late vigils. Are you as late as you were, you in Wimpole Street? I do hope not: it is a habit which dessicates [sic] life. On the other hand, I like getting up early in the morning . . it's never too early for me, as long as I have breakfast directly . . for that's a necessary condition.

Since we returned we have had a visit from M! Hanna. I think I told you of him. He is related to D! Chalmers’s biographer & son in law, & connected with the Free Church of Scotland—here, on account of his health—oh, certainly, I must have told you. In certain respects, he is narrow,—for instance, he “never read Dickens,” and “from the extracts which accidentally he has seen, & from what he has heard of the writer, he should not like to recommend anyone to read him.” That sort of man, you see—and yet, not as narrow (upon the whole) as my anecdote w2 lead one to suppose: for he is very gentle & sympathetic & inclined to judge kindly of both persons & things, . . and he is a favorite of Robert's, who calls him “pure-minded”, which is just a word for him. Well—he has been here, & brought us the religious news of Florence while we were at Siena— M. Drouin is gone for good— an evil for us. We supposed him gone for a few weeks as usual in the summer, . . but his wife's health did not admit of his return. Instead, we are to have another Swiss, quite equal to M. Drouin, says M! Hanna, . . and also, a M. Malan from the Vaudois churches who is to preach in Italian: then there's to be somebody else who will preach in German once a fortnight,—while every sunday afternoon, M! Hanna is to have an English service—So you observe how well off we shall be. He says that the Protestant movement is going on prosperously in Tuscany, & that several priests have been much affected—one, a distinguished preacher, is a decided convert, & gone off to Geneva. While the Pope is making sure of England, from the Puseyite movement, Italy is slipping through his fingers, perhaps. It is curious. The eagerness about bibles among the young men, would surprise you. Every copy is caught up &
bought—here is an opportunity for your missionaries. Only to do great good, to be fit for the position, they should bring the gospel in hands with the nails cut— We must have educated men, with wide views, & no traditions whether of the fathers or the puritans—because, my darling Arabel, we must confess that the puritans have traditions, just as much as the fathers have, . . and these wont do in Italy, you know. For instance, the puritan view of Sabbatarianism never will do, in Italy—happily, I think,—as you dont find a shadow of a likeness of the thing throughout the new testament.

Talking of protestantism, I am now going to tell you of something which perhaps will make you start back with horror. You are aware of Wiedeman’s insistance about going into the churches,—Wilson has often wished lately that I could see him there, imitating the people, crossing himself, & stretching up to the holy water. She said it was the most amusing thing she ever imagined, & worth going across Florence to see. Well, the other day, Robert was playing a church-chant on the piano, and the child was looking at him in a fixed, rapt way, as he does when there is music. Suddenly, he put down on the floor the three dolls he held in his arms, threw his eyes up to the ceiling till you saw nothing but the whites, and muttered with his lips as quick as lightning, . . then crossed himself, . . then counted his beads, . . and afterwards, walking up to the door, he pretended to change his dress as the priests do, bowed very low, as they bow to the altar. All this, with the utmost gravity—just fancy the child! Was it wrong that we laughed? Right or wrong—Robert & I laughed till we lost our breath—it was absolutely irresistible. The association of the church-music had reminded him of these church-ceremonies, understand. For the rest, you wont attach too much importance to this story, . . because the child imitates equally everything he sees. He used to walk lame between two sticks at our villa, in imitation of a cripple whom he met in the lanes—and once, he made himself quite sick, by coughing & spitting like somebody in the street. He is not likely to catch the corruptions of the papacy really in his soul, by seeing people cross themselves, though he imitates that as the rest, poor darling. But you dont like it, Arabel, now do you?—He has just cut an eye-tooth, & is looking particularly well—he has, at present, thirteen teeth—and his cheeks are as red as a rose. We have left off his pap & oil by D! Harding’s desire, and one of his soups, by his own. D! Harding, to whom I was complaining of his want of appetite, thought that milk & bread w4 be better than the pap, & I was too delighted to leave it off, the child not liking it much, & beginning a system of shutting his lips quite close & shaking his head, which it was useless to strive against. But he did the same by the boiled milk & bread, . . only smiling up into first the balia’s face & then Wilson’s, . . as much as to say, “what new mess is this, pray.” He is however very fond of warm milk in a glass, with a little water & sugar—& he will sometimes drink almost a tumbler full. Then, he likes buns, and he is appreciative of minced chicken—so that we begin to get on. D! Harding said (only I dare say that was rather said to content me) that he was delighted to hear he did not eat as most children did & suffered from—that nothing was so perilous for children as excess of appetite,—& that he w4 be sure to take as much as was good for him. Tell dear Minny, he never has the least disorder of the stomach or digestive organs . . that is a very happy thing. Also, he sleeps much better at night, having left off his habit of waking every hour, to everybody’s satisfaction. On the other hand nothing will induce him to sleep in the day—you cant make him:—and he is much too young to pass the day without
sleep. Still, the child looks & is as well as he can be, and besides, he grows. He has just run in to me dressed to go out, in your cloak, in a flutter of delighted vanity. I tell him that certainly it is "molto bellino", upon which he smiles & folds his arms to increase the effect. Then he strokes down the embroidery again & again, & holds it out at arm's length that I may overlook no part of it. "Veramente bello", I repeat, . . and out he walks, looking over his shoulder, with the utmost self complacency. Never was such a vain little creature! And in that cloak, he has a right to be vain. His white felt hat is done up as well as new for the winter, with a new white feather in it, and altogether, he really is pretty. An English gentleman said to his companion yesterday while they looked at him, "What a beautiful boy". "Oh," I cried to Wilson who told me this, "then people dont take him for a girl, now". "Because his hat is like a boy's" said Wilson, in humiliating explanation.

Have you heard that within these six weeks, Sophia Cottrell has lost one of her brothers, & that another is raving mad? What an extraordinary series of misfortunes! Count Cottrell met Robert two days since by the Arno, & said that "she had been much affected by the madness . . but that, as for death, it was not to be considered an affliction at all". Indeed, they are none of them in mourning, nor have been—not in the slightest pretence of mourning. Do you know which of the brothers it is who is dead? Is it Augustus? I am vexed to have to say that Mr Gordon goes on the first of November to the Cottrells house to live—the Cottrells have the groundfloor, & she is to have the first floor. Therefore I must give up visiting at the house altogether—there will be no help for it. Also, the Miss Tulks, whom we both really like, go to live close by—it is very unpleasant. I dont agree with you as to the relative blame attributable to Count Cottrell & Mr Gordon. He does not know probably, the precise circumstances,—he considers Trippy as a creditor simply; & being very fond of his wife's relations, as he proves by all sorts of sacrifices on his own part, all he is anxious about, is to see his sister in law uninconvenienced in respect to money. A man of a high sense of justice & honour would not submit so easily to the circumstances,—that, there is no denying—but he has rather a coarse nature, though most affectionate & kindhearted otherwise. He lets all those Gordon children follow him about, crowd his drawingrooms—nothing seems too much for his good nature. One must consider these things, in judging of the man. Also one shd remember that before Mr Gordon arrived at Lucca he never seemed to hesitate on the expediency of giving a hundred a year towards the debt—No, Arabel— The onus of the shame lies on Mr Gordon, and the whole weight of my indignation falls on her. And now I must say that, in my mind, George should have written to her, & set the case before her in precise language . . bidding her remark how it was a debt of honour—neither more nor less. If I were George, I would write now— He might well say that he had waited in expectation of some arrangement— I cant help believing that, if he did so, a settlement might yet be made, in which case he would rejoice at having made the effort for dearest Trippy's sake. Give her my affectionate love, & tell her how I think of her & never shall cease.

November 1—

When my last letter went away, when it was gone, I remembered that I had omitted to thank you for your remembrance of the twelfth of September. Thank you my own beloved Arabel. Indeed it is a day for congratulation more & more,—and if you could see into our house & hearts
Letter 57

21 October–1 November [1850]

you would more & more thank God for me. Will you believe me, Arabel, when I gravely assure you that the love increases instead of diminishing? that is my experience of love in marriage. It is contrary to the traditions, I know—but the right of private judgement is to be maintained here as elsewhere, & I tell you mine. Robert is as blind to my faults as the first day he was, while on the other hand I am grown more necessary to him—he loves me better & closer—it is my sincere belief that he does. I tell you this because you can't see it, & don't know him personally well enough to be aware of the profundity of his loving nature. He says himself that he loves me more.

Arabel, I just have your letter—just come! The present one has been kept by me these ten days since the day I began it, because Robert begged me to keep it for his packet to Sarianna—but now I can't wait any more. What will you be thinking of me? Another time I will order my 'showers' better, & avoid this long drought—So provoked I am about your not leaving London—oh, so provoked! It is inexplicable. Then as to Henrietta, you make me anxious about her plans—surely, in a first confinement, it would be wise to have good advice & attendance—& I distrust Malvern for both. Observe, she can't stay on in that farmhouse—she must have more room, & must pay for it everywhere—I am very anxious that she sh'd go to London. Oh England, how expensive it is to be sure! Yes, Dresden is very cheap—but the climate is impossible to us. As to Capri, Arabel, the Athenæum writer romances a little. The Ogilvys were there this summer, & we wished to go—but the drawbacks are great,—the expences double those in Tuscany & you can't have fresh meat: everything comes from the mainland. If you can live on fish & oil, well. People who talk of cheapness compare it with Naples, which is an extravagant place for a continental town. Go to Paris, Arabel, & live with us. There is a French princess in this house, the princesse de la Tremouille, who has taken the apartment above us for six months—She is only just from Paris, & her people tell ours that Florence is dearer in every respect. Where we give three pence a pound for meat, the Parisians give four pence half-penny, but then their pound has four ounces more in it.—You don't tell me of Mr. Hunter & Mary—do. My book is printed, but Mr. Chapman & Hall have kept it back on account of changing the place of their establishment, that the new shop may suit the new edition. Robert certainly saw it advertised. Look out, again. I have never called on the Coores—I went out with the intention, was caught in the rain, drenched, had a cold & cough in consequence & couldn't stir out again—So sorry I was, but Robert went about with them to the Galleries, tell Henry. They considerably modified their opinion I sh'd think, about our exquisite climate, for they had rain incessantly while they were here, & a cold, miserable rain too. They had the kindness to give Wiedeman the most beautiful toy possible, Parisian, a donkey and flower girl, and he was enchanted—We never asked them here to coffee even, barbarians as we were—but they were so many, & I was not equal to it. Now I am well again, or nearly. It was only a cold. I do hope Henry won't go to Jamaica—tell him so from me. God bless you my own, own Arabel. I am your

Ba.

Now, directly Wiedeman hears the churchbells, he kneels down before a chair. With the piano it is the same. He will kneel for five minutes together, muttering, & turning his eyes up—So pretty! like a little younger Samuel! And what is one to say about it? It is not a subject to
make a play of certainly—but he is rather possessed with an imagination than given to a mimickry. He does'nt laugh—and though we pretend not to look at him, he follows up his idea—He comes & insists on Robert's going to the piano, & then instead of sitting on his knee as he used to do, off he goes to the chair by the window & betakes himself to these solemn gesticulations. Fancy the little creature kneeling down & looking up with his hands clasped, & seeming quite rapt. It's the prettiest sight I ever saw— For a full quarter of an hour yesterday he was engaged in this way—nobody taking any notice. But if the piano stopped for a moment he sprang up & stamped with his foot & shouted out that it should go on. He can do nothing without music— Is he not a curious child? And looking so infantine—with such a baby face! It is most curious. I overheard the balia saying lately to Girolama the dressmaker,²⁰ that "he quite martyrized her by forcing her to go into the churches, & that now he had taken to say Ave Marias for himself."— You will call us extravagant perhaps, but we decided on keeping on the balia for a few months. He is too heavy for Wilson to carry out of doors, & he cant walk always, at his age, you know— So we keep her on a little, diminishing her wages of course, & no longer giving clothes, which was a considerable expense. During her baliaiship, she had some ten or eleven gowns, & shoes &c more than in proportion. She was delighted to stay on the reduced terms, & Wiedeman is very fond of her naturally— As to whipping him, I dare say he deserves it quite as much as Arlette's little girl, but I dont know who in the house could be found to do it for him. I asked Wilson—and she answered with an alarmed face— "If that child were to be whipped, he would die of a broken heart. Depend upon it, the least harshness would kill him—he is not made for it". With such opinions among us, you may follow out Henrietta's prophecy about his being infallibly spoilt—dont you think you may? Call him unfortunate child on that ground, if you please—but dont call the frock you worked for him an "unfortunate frock", because I wont allow it, and because the said frock is put away only till next spring when Wilson hopes to take it in & make it fit beautifully. We waited till then, that the cutting might not need be too great— His cloak is the admiration of everybody, especially of himself—and I must not forget to tell you that Robert said, about that & the apron, "Dont be so selfish, Ba, as to thank Arabel, for you, only, & not for me." He admir(es) the apron (as) the prettiest of my costumes—&, do you know, (…) has grown dreadfully particular about my dress lately— Shall I tell you? He has actually made me, with a frightful inconsistency to the resolutions of all my life … wear a bustle!!!²¹

After that, there is nothing more to tell you. Everything will fall flat. I told him that I never gave such a proof of wifely obedience as in obeying him so, and you, who know something of me will understand the sublime of it.

What a letter this is—"never ending, still beginning".²² As I send direct to you, I am able to take more paper, you see. Arabel, I am in distress about my baby-caps & Henrietta— I enquire in vain for people going to England. It is a bad time of year, and I have great perplexities about it. Still, there are two months before us, & an occasion may offer. What you say of the possibility of her needing a balia, is so true, that I have long intended to urge you to keep before her eyes & Surtees's that possible necessity—keep them prepared for the alternative, I mean—and, if she cant nurse, as many a strong woman cant, dont permit them to think even of bringing up by hand.²³ Beseech them never to think of it. They will pay rather more, with a balia, but will probably
escape horrible medical expenses, which are worse things. The Fletchers are come from Siena &
have paid us a visit already. Good, affectionate people they are. What Bayfords do you dine
with? Augustus, or James?24 The Lindsays mean to go to Rome about February, avoiding the
autumn there as it was considered bad for Julia.25 By the way, Julia (the last person I shd have
expected such enthusiasm from) is enchanted with Italy, & told me a few days since that if it
were not for her brothers & sisters, she would never wish to see England again.!! That was strong—
wasn't it? We see scarcely anything of them, though they have taken an apartment close by. M:
Lindsay, we don't get on with, somehow—our acids are not homogeneous.

Dearest Trippy! May this suffering have passed off while I write. Kiss her for me— Do you
ever see anything of the Bevans? You never name them— I am going to embroider (braid) three
merino frocks for Wiedeman this winter—one is done, a grey one: a second (blue braided with
black silk braid) nearly done: the third is to be scarlet & black braid. I assure you they are pretty.
Once more goodbye—

Your own, ever attached
Ba.

You may well be surprised at me— & you wld be more so, if you had seen me before I went to
Siena. Arabel, will you tell me about your headaches. Robert's best love. How is dearest Minny?
I have written again to Papa.

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France / Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street
/ Devonshire Place / New Road / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Lucy Elizabeth Coore and Annette Augusta Coore were the younger of five daughters of Frederick Richard
Coore and Isabella {née Blagrove). The Coores had Jamaican interests and were friends of the Barretts. RB
knew the Coore sisters, as well as their brother, Henry John Blagrove (né Coore), when they resided at 34
Harley Street; their names are listed in his earliest extant address book (see BC, 9, 390).
4. Isabella Frederica Tomkyns (né Coore) was the eldest daughter of Frederick and Isabella mentioned in
the preceding note. She married John Tomkyns (1783–1849), Rector of Greenford, on 30 December 1845, nine
months before the Brownings left England. Their daughter, Isabella, was born on 23 July 1847, making her 3½
years old, not 2½ as EBB states. She was baptized on 25 August 1847 by her father.
5. Murray's notes that "of the numerous Oratories, the most interesting are those occupying the house of St.
Catherine of Siena, and the ancient Fullonica of her father, who was a dyer and fuller" (A Hand-Book for Travellers
in Central Italy, London: John Murray, 1850, p. 212). Murray's lists nineteen churches rather than the fourteen
EBB gives.
6. Murray's describes the Sienese school as "nearly equal to that of Florence, and there is no doubt that it
exercised an important influence on the great masters of the fifteenth century" (Hand-Book, p. 206). Referring
to the cathedral, Murray's states that "the grandest compositions are those by Beccafumi" (p. 208). Jacopo
Pacchiarotto (1474–1540?) is now thought of as a second-rate artist and unsuccessful politician. RB ranks
Pacchiarotto with Bazzi and Beccafumi in Pacchiarotto and How He Worked in Distemper (1876), lines 14–19.
7. "Wet nurse."
8. A Florentine masque, the creation of which is attributed to the late 18th-century actor, Luigi del Buono,
but doubtless an offshoot of the medieval commedia dell'arte.
9. i.e., prostitution, which was a common occurrence in English theatres in the early and middle part of the nineteenth century. Cf. EBB's objections to Miss Mitford in 1842: "I do not blame you or others for attending the theatres—in all liberty of conscience. I shd. not blame my own brothers & sisters for doing it—if Papa had a less particular objection. But I quite see the sufficiency of the objection as it is seen by him and others. Do you know how Mr. Macready has been attacked for even trying, even beginning to try to suppress the saloons—(the miserable application of which is very well known)—& how it has been declared that no theatre can exist at the present day without a saloon—& how, if it could, the effect wd. be to force vicious persons & their indecencies into full view in the boxes—!!" (BC, 5, 280). According to Michael R. Booth, "Macready seems to have been the first manager to have made a determined effort to keep out prostitutes, for which he was commended in the press" (Theatre in the Victorian Age, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 64).

10. i.e., Robert Maxwell Hanna (see letter 51, note 21); however, I have been unable to trace the relationship between him and William Hanna (1808-82), the author of Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 4 vols., 1849-52).

11. Moïse Droin (see letter 42, note 4) married Jeanne Marguerite Farjon in Geneva in 1839. I have been unable to trace any additional information regarding her health or their departure from Florence.

12. Unidentified. The Malan were an old and prominent family from the Vaudois valleys in Piedmont where the heretical Christian sect called Vaudois (or Waldenses) originated in the late 12th century. I have located several accounts of English protestants visiting the Vaudois valleys during this period, in which several different Malans are mentioned; however, none of these Malans is identified as having connections to Florence. Baptist W. Noel, referring to seven foreigners taking part in the Synod of the Vaudois churches in June 1854, mentions several individuals known to the Brownings, including "Dr. Stewart and Mr. Hanna, of the Free Church of Scotland … and Francesco Madiai, of Florence" (Notes of a Tour in The Valleys of Piedmont in the Summer of 1854, London: James Nisbet and Co., 1855, p. 23). Edward Baines also mentions an M. Malan in A Visit to the Vaudois of Piedmont (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855, p. 102).

13. Sabbatarianism, or strict observance of the Lord's Day, has its origins in the early days of the protestant reformation. As a result of the evangelical revival in the late 18th century, the "Lord's Day Observance Act" was passed in England in 1781. This made it much more difficult not to follow a stricter observance since most activities that involved money were not allowed on the Sunday. This debate continued as greater mobility of large numbers of the population led to increased opportunities for Sunday activities; see letter 151, note 7.

14. "Very pretty."

15. "Really beautiful."

16. Marmaduke Hart Tulk, afterwards Hart (b. 1817), was the 5th son and 8th child of Charles Augustus and Susan Tulk; he died on 23 September 1850. I have been unable to identify which of the other four brothers living at this time was "mad." Augustus Henry Tulk, about whom EBB inquires below, was acquainted with RB; see letter 28, note 22.

17. In The Athenæum of 28 September 1850, in the "Foreign Correspondence" column, under the title "The Island of Capri" (no. 1196, p. 1023), an anonymous correspondent reported (from Naples): "I know of no place better suited to the invalid or to the man of small income. The air is so salubrious and bracing that a twenty-four hours' residence seems to fill the veins with fresh life … For hectic complaints I doubt whether the island could be recommended; but for chronic bronchitis I know of no place, after considerable experience, so desirable as a residence. … As for economizing pecuniarily, I think the island may vie with any part of Germany. … 3l. 10s. a-year would secure a small house. … As to food, it is cheap and abundant:—eggs being a farthing each, the best fish 4d. or 5d. a pound, and poultry 10d. or 1s. for a fine capon."

18. Augusta (née Murray) who married Louis Stanislas Kotska, Prince de la Trémoille in 1834. She is listed in the San Felice Church census records in April 1851, together with her two children.

19. An allusion to the Old Testament prophet Samuel; see letter 59, note 12.

20. See letter 47 (note 10) where EBB describes her as "deformed."
21. Bustles, designed to create a puff in a woman’s skirt in the back, and in use since the early decades of the 19th century, generally disappeared by 1856 with the advent of crinolines. (C. Willet Cunnington, *English Women’s Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1937, p. 205). In letter 93, EBB explains that RB had insisted on her drinking asses milk, “but I never sacrificed my inclination so much to conjugal duty … except once, when I put on a bustle.”


24. EBB’s cousins, James Heseltine Bayford (b. 1804) and Augustus Frederic Bayford (b. 1809) were sons of John Bayford (d. 1844) and his wife Frances (née Heseltine, 1781–1848), EBB’s mother’s first cousin.

25. Julia Bayford (b. 1814), the youngest daughter of John and Frances Bayford, was travelling with her elder sister Clara Sophia Lindsay. Julia and Clara and the Barretts shared common great-grandparents: Roger Altham and Mary Issacson (see BC, 1, 86n and 297).

---

**Letter 58**

[Florence]

Dec. 16–18–19– [1850]

For two delightful letters I have to thank my dearest beloved Arabel, & this does not seem like ‘raining letters’ on my part. Then the little note which comes with my very dear Henrietta’s makes me happier & more at ease in many ways– I thank God that such excellent news can be told of her at this time, and I trust to Him for the crowning of our joy about her within a few weeks. As to the *time*, tell her from me that she must endeavour to spare the respectability of her family, & accept Mrs Stragnell’s (is that the name?) is dates instead of her own. Indeed they might be thrown forward a little with considerable advantage—until over the *ninth*, for instance. Meanwhile I have been suffering spasms of vexation on the subject of the little caps. The other day an American gentleman, an acquaintance of ours, set out for England—but Wilson & I, talking it over, calculated that he would be too late, just too late… since when, I have been so dreadfully vexed that I did not send by him, late or early… because the cambric would be better than what Henrietta has—oh, I am so vexed. I thought at first that he would be longer on the road than appeared to be his intention at last—& at last, the borders were not sewn on… & then, Wilson thought that certainly other caps would be provided by that time, & perhaps prettier ones, & we agreed it might be wiser to wait & send something more sure to be acceptable. You see, you are such magnificent gift-presenters in England—& these are quite plain cambric night-caps. Wiedeman had scotch cambric for his, but I repented it afterward, & that is why I wanted French for the new darling— As to *keeping* such things for myself, oh no, no, no, Arabel! Wilson would tell you that it is quite a frenzy of mine, not to keep anything— I cut up into bits, or give away everything of the sort, as if it burnt my fingers. It was only that those caps happened to be new-made & unappropriated, that they are still in the drawers—& besides, don’t you fancy that it would be more pleasure to me on every account that Henrietta had them? I do wish I could be with her, rather than Louisa Carmichael—it would be so natural & pleasant & right that I should be with her! M‘Ogilvy wanted to be with me, very kindly, but I would have nobody for my part… you know that’s rather a way of mine— Then, Robert was with me the whole time till the last five minutes,
when Dr Harding sent him away—he lay on the bed, & I nearly pulled his head off, as the pains came. I shall be so anxious to hear—you will understand, how anxious. Which is wished for, a boy or girl? Which does Henrietta wish for? I am half jealous for Wiedeman, Arabel, that you will have the nursing of his small cousin, while he lost the privilege of being nursed by you.

Ah, but it will be his turn soon to go to you & get his share of petting & loving & hugging & kissing. Meanwhile he is learning to be worthy of it all, having grown (now I must have you tell Henrietta that, to the glory of the spoiling system) the most supernaturally good child you ever saw or heard of. Some weeks ago, I told you what violent passions we used to witness—what screamings & kickings & stiffening of the legs & arms. Have we whipped him for it? No. Mr Powers said, "You should whip him" .. and the traditions from Arlette's house & others all said aloud "whip him". Robert cried out every now & then "If three women devote themselves to spoiling an unfortunate child &c &c .. on which I begged people not to be out of humour, because one man could do sometimes quite as much as three women could, in the way of spoiling. True, yet not satisfactory. The babe was imperious & passionate more & more, it seemed—whatever he wanted, he must have in a moment, or woe to us! A sweet, joyous, affectionate disposition he had always—but the passions came notwithstanding. So everybody said "Whip him". Did we? No, indeed. And suddenly without the least apparent reason, he grew as good as if he had been whipped fifty times—For the last five or six weeks he has really been supernaturally good .. amusing himself for hours together, seeming to understand reason in everything, & only stamping a little when he suffers the last trial of patience in Robert's not going to the piano the very moment he is asked to go. Wilson declares that she never saw so good a child in her life—he is quite perfect. I keep saying, "If we had whipped him, we should have attributed the change to that", .. whereas the previous naughtiness evidently came from his teeth .. he was cutting his eyeteeth, poor darling, & the pain must have made him impatient & irritable, sometimes. Would'nt it have been hard if he had been whipped because he suffered? Oh—whipping may be necessary to some children— I dont say otherwise—but this child is far too sensitive & tenderhearted—he is only made to be spoilt, I think. Only yesterday he cried twice, because Flush was scolded. Yet Flush's offence was eating Wiedeman's only bun, and Wiedeman didn't like to lose the bun neither: it was meant for his supper. But he would'nt have Flush scolded, & Wilson was obliged to forgive Flush at once, for fear of Wiedeman. And two days ago, when they were out walking, because a man struck once or twice a horse which had fallen down, the child shrieked & screamed—and he always cries to see the oxen struck,—and he is very kind to the little flies on the window,—and, the other day, when a mouse was found dead in his bath, we had a dreadful scene—he shuddered and cried so—poor little mouse! You see, a child of such sensibility, may be influenced without whipping— dont you see it? One can manage too by talking, to do something. Some mornings since, he was in a very bad humour because he was not let go out on the terrace. He sate in the balia's arms and would'nt kiss me by any manner of means— 'Very well,' said I, 'I dont want to be kissed'. And after a moment, I showed her the scarlet merino frock I had just finished embroidering with black braid, which he perfectly knew the destination of. Said I— "I think I shall give this frock to Flush, Flush is so good". Wiedeman could'nt help smiling at the
idea of giving the frock to Flush, but he struggled to preserve his ill humour. "Ah, Signora"," exclaimed the balia, "ma questo vestitino mi pare molto troppo bello per Flush". "No," I answered gravely—"quando una persona sia buona, niente è troppo bello per lei [sic, for lui], e Flush è molto buono oggi."5 Upon which, he could not contain himself any longer:—throwing back his head he laughed aloud and long, & when he had done laughing, put out his little mouth of his own accord to kiss me & we were the best friends possible directly. There's nothing stubborn, you see, in the child. Also, about a week since, he had contracted a most selfwilled, naughty habit, of taking the turf out of the woodbasket (we sometimes burn pieces of turf called forme; cut symmetrically into rounds) heaping them up on a chair, & completing the naughtiness by breaking off a bit & putting it into his mouth. Then he opened his mouth & expected somebody to pull it out for him—it was just for mischief's sake. He was doing this when I went into the nursery, & heard Wilson & the balia reproaching him bitterly—So I said quietly to the balia,— "But why should he not eat these forme, if he likes them? Let him eat them all, if he pleases—Let him have them for dinner today, instead of chicken". Upon which, making a loud exclamation of decided disapprobation & shaking his curly head backwards & forwards to clench the negative, he carried the forme one by one, & dashed them into the woodbasket with fury & scorn. He wouldn't have such things as those for dinner, .. not he, indeed! After the expression of which resolution, he brought his little chair & sate down close to me, putting on the most good face he could find. Since then, we have seen nothing more of eating forme—there, was an end of it at once. He has an extraordinary memory, and one day's lesson does for ever, if it makes any impression at all. As to the R Catholic tendencies .. now, listen to me, Arabel .. do you know I am heterodox enough to think that whatever influence he does receive in the Italian churches is for good? I do indeed. It is a child's sense of mystery, .. of something above & beyond .. it is reverence, in fact. The shortcomings and errors of doctrine, he can know nothing of: he only sees the space, feels the silence .. & guesses dimly at the need of a worshipping spirit around him, which no lesson of mine could express to him in the same degree— The churches here are always open, & everybody goes in & out as a matter of course, whether there is service or no service—you might as well exclude him from the piazzas as the churches—but of course he is not sent to mass, .. you are not to understand that, .. though he has seen it accidentally. No—the only danger I have ever feared, is lest, through our laughing, which it has been difficult to help sometimes (I saw him the other day baptizing his doll with the most devout gestures you can fancy) he should take to considering it all as a play & a jest—that is the danger to my mind. Two days ago, I said to him in his nursery, "Papa è tornato—tu puoi andare in salone",6 .. and he, who is very fond of Robert, set off running at full speed before me. You go through the diningroom to the drawing room, and I stood at the diningroom door seeing him run. In the middle of the room, he stopped suddenly—he had just heard the piano struck in the drawing room. Down he fell on his knees, clasping his hands & looking up. You never saw anything prettier— I called Wilson to look at him. Observe, he was full of eagerness to get to Robert, & running & bounding in the height of a joyous humour. The distant sound of the music was enough to stop it all & change the association. Curious—is'nt it? Also, when the church bells ring at six in the morning, Wilson says he is on
his knees in his little bed—He understands that the bells come from the churches, & that makes him think of praying ... which nobody does here, you know—it is not a custom, I assure you. As to our balia teaching him anything, if you knew the balia, you wouldn’t have such an idea. I said to her that my sister said she taught him .. “No signora, .. mai, mai, in consienza [sic, for coscienza] dell’anima! Non ho mai visto un bambino facendo così, e non l’avrei mai pensato.”— and then, she appealed to Wilson, who scarcely ever loses sight of Wiedeman, night or day. In fact, the balia thinks that protestants are quite as safe as catholics, “although we dont believe much in the Madonna”, which is our great defect, she thinks— And as to troubling her head with polemics ... why, she half quarrelled with Wilson last christmas because Wilson gave her name as being a catholic, to a priest who came to take down everybody’s name in the house. She was obliged in consequence to go to confession, where she had abstained from going for two years, because the last time she went, absolution was refused to her & her husband, on the ground of their having persisted to eat meat on fridays. She had resolved never to go to confession again—but Wilson, by her ill advised statement, forced her to go. (If catholics dont go once a year to confession, they expose themselves to the suspicion of the police—there’s a happy state of things for you!) You are not to imagine that Italian catholics, except here & there devout persons, are at all like English catholics .. or like the Tractarians8 indeed. Both Alessandro & the balia keep very loosely to rules about abstinence & fasting generally, & think as little as possible about the heresies of persons differing from them. She is about as much a child as Wiedeman himself is, .. “and more”, says Wilson, .. and is perfectly inadequate to the notion of a scheme of making him sprout up an infantine Papist. Indeed it’s rather a vexation to her, this fancy of his of going to the churches—she likes keeping out in the streets much better—and the child knows this so perfectly that he siezes [sic] hold of Wilson in the neighbourhood of a church, because Wilson is apt to be indulgent & take him in.

Dec:18

While writing, the Peytons came on me.9 They look very well, .. Mra Peyton & the girls— Of the rest I have only seen Nicky. Affectionate they all are & of course I am touched by it, & interested naturally in whatever good can happen to them. Robert was the whole of yesterday, & is again today, engaged in going about with Reynolds to look for apartments, and I hope he will succeed in pleasing them—but if they knew what an effort it is to him, & how he never would do it for himself, they would be still more obliged to him than they say they are actually. For the rest you bid me tell you sincerely whether I am glad or sorry ...? Oh Arabel. Now you know just as well as I do myself. I would do anything for any of them—but just see! When there is not a full love between persons (for love always makes a level)10 & when there is’nt half an idea in common, .. when the habits are all different, the whole atmosphere opposed, .. & when people try, as we do, to keep their lives tranquil & out of the current of society, even society more sympathetic that [sic] this, .. what is there to rejoice in at an arrival of the kind? In fact, we see too many people already— We groan in the spirit, at finding our evenings broken into, too often. Miss Blagden comes to tea one night, & always we are glad to see her—a most intillegent [sic] affectionate woman .. I like her much— But the next night, comes an Italian professor, perhaps—and the next,
an American artist, or traveller--& the next, an English antiquarian—and the next, the Ogilvies
(Mr & Mrs Ogilvy have returned suddenly to Florence from Naples which almost ruined &
quite wearied them) . . and if the next . . we have to order coffee for seven Peytons, (with our five
tea spoons!) why, it is an excess, Arabel, & we must go somewhere to shut ourselves up in a
cave. Most of these visitors are agreeable & welcome . . but we grudge the time in the aggregate,
observe—we grudge the loss of our cozy, happy evenings, when we feel so close, so close together!
We have been reading together Tennyson's 'In Memorian' in the evenings. Most beautiful &
pathetic. I read aloud, Robert looking over the page—& we talked & admired & criticised every
separate stanza—Now, we are going in like manner through Shelley. In the midst, if the bell rings
.. how detestable! Robert has to run away & put off his slippers, & I, to put on as goodnatured a
face as I can. What's to be done, after all? It might be worse still, that's certain, .. inasmuch as
our acquaintance is by no means numerous, & is composed of cultivated people, for the most
part. Robert says we must resolutely refuse to increase the number—& he began, the other day,
by most rudely (as I maintain it was) refusing to receive Mrs Trollope, who (through Dr Alnutt)
proposed to pay us a visit. Preserving every form of courtesy, he answered that we wished to live
in a retired manner, . . that we were here on account of health, & found it a necessity of the
circumstances, to avoid general society. I scolded him a little, afterwards—it seemed to me rude:
but he maintained that he had done right about it, . . Mrs Trollope being in the full flow & float of
Florentine-English society, . . and he, besides, hating Mrs Trollope in her books . . which was the
great reason of all. We had a very interesting visitor the other day . . M. de Goethe . . Goethe's
grandson. He spent two days in Florence, on purpose to see us . . or rather to see Robert, having
been interested in the design of his Paracelsus . . and we had him here both evening & morning,
& thought him delightful every way—There is a purity & elevation of the moral nature in him,
which in a young man is striking—& besides Humbolt in Cosmos calls him one of the most
learned of the 'rising' men of Germany. He brought us letters from Mrs Jameson, who returns
home from Vienna, & does not come to Italy this year—more's the pity! Poor Gerardine will be
very disappointed, & I am too. The Ogilvies both startled & pleased us by their sudden return—
no place in Italy, they declare, is so liveable as Florence . . not so cheap, not so agreeable, not so
healthy— Wiedeman went yesterday to dine with their children . . one of which is six months
older than he, another eight months younger,—the eldest being five years old—three children,
there are. Wilson says he was as good as a child could be—but he surprises everybody by eating
so little. I do wish he had a stronger appetite. All that can be said in favour of his, is, that he
seems to prosper in spite of it: when he has taken three or four or five spoonfuls, he is satisfied
for the most part. He has learnt a new word, "babbo" (the familiar word for 'padre') & is always
saying it. 'Gatto', too, he says— I suppose he'll speak some day, after all. Wilson says, "He's so
wise that he doesn't like to speak till he is sure of the right pronunciation" . . so we are to expect
a burst of polished eloquence, if we wait a little. Another favorite friend of his, is little Tassinari, a
small giantess, two & a half years old, to kiss whom he stands on the very tip of his tiptoes,—
and she is to come to dine with him tomorrow. He likes her because she speaks Italian, besides
being very fond of him. Madame Tassinari is an Englishwoman, a daughter of Sir William Thornton's,
who was the English ambassador in Paris in the time of the ‘Holy Alliance’— Eight years ago, she was given up by the physicians in England, (for lungs) & her friend Miss Blagden who is now staying with her had to communicate to her the fact that she was dying. “Still,” said the medical men, “life may be prolonged a little by her going to Italy,” & she came to Pisa .. then to Florence .. & in less than a year, she married an Italian, having recovered perfectly. Quite a strong woman she is, & with this enormous child!— but during the first six years of her marriage there were various accidents & disappointments. The child speaks both Italian & English, as I hope Wiedeman will in time—

Dec. 19-

Now, of my book, my own beloved Arabel— I am provoked in the first place about your buying it, because it turned out at last that I might have got a copy for you .. two or three, it appears, were attainable. I asked for one which was sent to Mr® Smith .. (did I tell you of meaning to ask .. just to feel the way?) because I felt as if it were necessary, to make some return for the enforced courtesy about the letters. What a violent hurry you are in always, you dearest! If you had but waited a little! As it is, I should like much to have a dozen copies to give away .. but I am shy of these Chapman & Hall people, .. as they are said to look very sharp to their own interests— & of course I have no right to a single copy by our terms. Make Mr® Jago understand all this, do. What really annoys me is the difficulty about giving a copy to Miss Mitford, because there are reasons why she wants to see the book & why she cant buy it, equally .. and I do think I must wring out a copy for her—it cant be refused, for once. She sends her love to you in her last letter, & means to pay you a visit after Christmas, when she goes to town for a day, she says. “Dear Arabel”, she calls you.— How do you like the getting up of the book? and, do you observe the alterations? The end of the Seraphim is all but new-written, observe—and the “island,” has scarcely a bit of itself left. It was more trouble than the thing was worth, but it would have been reprinted with all its defects by some fatal friend some day, if I had not caught it up & removed a few of them: & I have improved much in strength & rhythmical art since the days of its first production. See also the beginning of ‘Isobel’s Child’— Now .. as to the Portuguese sonnets .. I am really astonished at you, Arabel! How can you possibly know that I have not been studying Portuguese, a language rich in sonnets, all these four years! What else can I have been doing, indeed, .. except, braiding Wiedeman’s frocks? Impertinent person, to doubt my learning in Portuguese!! So I do hope you wont mis represent my book, & spread scandalous reports about it & me, .. throwing ‘Keys’ about the world, to open supposed (B)luebeard’s chambers of imag(ery). To nobody but yourself would such an idea occur— As to Henrietta, she is innocent, I am convinced, except of listening to your suggestion— And oh—if you say a word of it to M! Kenyon ..!!

M! Westwood, sent me the Athenæum from Brussels—it is certainly most wonderfully kind— Why, what in the world have I done to the Athenæum, that they should be so kind to me all of a ‘sudden’. They are unjust to Robert, & then praise me to make up for it, till, like the green sea, I am “all one red”. I am to be Laureate, & Heaven knows what, .. if it stands with them! Indeed it was not right to say what they did about Tennyson & Lord John Russe[l] & the back stairs—not right—Tennyson having a claim to all honours in the eyes of all discerning men & women.
I had thought the Laureate’s pension consisted of three hundred a year, whereas it seems to be only a hundred, giving him, with his previous pension, but three hundred in all—nothing too much for Tennyson. It is a national disgrace that literary men are not more sustained in England. Perhaps Robert & I may make end some day in Bulwer’s “Assylum”[sic]—that’s a resource for us certainly.—

Arabel, I am moved with indignation against Mⁿ Gordon.—with indignation & wonder. Surely George will write to her. It seems to me a justice to Trippy, that her case should be taken up, & held steadily before Mⁿ Gordon’s eyes. Mⁿ Gordon has left off coming to visit here— Our feeling towards her must have grown too plain— So sorry I am that dea(rest) Trippy should have had the gout, but (she) seems recovered so she could go to Henrietta. My affectionate love to her always—Tell me if you never hear from M! Hunter & Mary. Is Papa furious about the Pope—he cares about the Pope surely ... more (to tell you the truth) than I do. Robert rages & blazes,—but the polemical embers are gone to ashes in me. It’s too late in the world, I hold, for the Church of Rome to make way anywhere— I am more afraid of Nationalism & Infidelity, which seem to be sapping the most intellectual minds both in America & Europe. Then what is called the “papal aggression,” which never was meant for an insult but is purely the result of a mistake on the part of the Papacy (as to the weakening of the protestant feeling in England) a mistake produced by Tractarian representations here & at home . it will teach a wholesome lesson, & bring the new movement in the English Church to a crisis— I apprehend no evil whatever from it. You can’t think how many English paid their devoirs to Cardinal Wiseman as he passed through Florence—among them Clara Lindsay! One lady was on her knees, kissing his feet. Don’t repeat what I have told you of Clara. She says she went out of fun! but people had better keep clear of such fun, I do think. Give my love to dear Alfred & tell him how regretfully I hear of his having suffered so much. May he be well again by this time— God bless you all—all! Will Henrietta read this letter? Perhaps so— Make her walk more, Arabel!

My own dearest beloved Arabel’s Ba.

Mention your headaches when you write again—and do write. How I should delight in seeing the cradle, which I dare say is beautiful. And Minny’s basket!

Robert has found a satisfactory apartment for the Peytons—in a good sunny situation, close to the Cascine where they can walk—six bedrooms & two sitting rooms, kitchen &c. at two pounds five shillings, the week. They w’d take it only for three months. Oh, if you had come with them, Arabel! Too much joy for me! Robert’s “tender love” he bids me give you. Make Henrietta walk. It is right— She will suffer less at last.

I am glad that the Bishop of London’s published correspondence with M! Bennet[t], absolves him from some of the charge of acting with duplicity—though his address to the clergy, a few years since, certainly did harm at the time by its want of decision & openness. Probably M! Bennet[t] will go over to Rome now—nothing w’d surprise me less.27

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France / Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.
Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.

2. Henrietta and Surtees had engaged Mrs. Strugnell as a nurse according to Surtees’s journal (23 January 1851). Altham was born on 23 January 1851 in London. Henrietta had been married on 6 April 1850, which placed Altham’s birth “over the ninth” by two weeks and two days.


4. “Wet nurse.”

5. “But this little frock seems to me much too beautiful for Flush. … When a person is good, nothing is too beautiful for him, and Flush is very good today.”

6. “Papa is back—you may go into the salon.”

7. “No, signora, … never, never, by my soul’s conscience! I’ve never seen a child doing this, and I would never have thought it.”

8. i.e., early proponents of the Oxford Movement; see letter 2, note 9.

9. Eliza Peyton (née Griffith, 1788–1861) and her seven surviving children: Reynolds (1815–61); Thomas Griffith (1816–87); Henry Nicholson (1818–97); Frances Maria (1820–1900); Elizabeth Rosetta, “Rosa” (1824–74); Eliza Berry (1827–1907); and Nicholson Julius (1831–1915). The eldest child, Charlotte Lea (1813–42) had died eight years earlier from heart disease; Charles William (b. 1822) had died in 1849, and a daughter called Mary Ann had died in infancy.

10. See letter 2, note 10.

11. Tennyson’s In Memoriam was published anonymously in June 1850. A copy inscribed “John Kenyon to Elizabeth B. Browning. 1850” sold as lot 1145 in Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, A2278; now at University of Virginia).

12. Wolfgang Maximilian von Goethe (1820–83), the younger son of August and Ottilie von Goethe, was a jurist and writer; at this time he was attached to the embassy at Rome. Ferdinand Gregorovius recorded meeting him in Rome in May 1855, when he was “Councillor to the Legation here. In conversation he is not so entirely eccentric as are his wholly incredible poems. On his brow, however, stand imprinted his grandfather’s lines: ‘Woe to thee, that thou art a grandson’” (The Roman Journals of Ferdinand Gregorovius: 1852–1874, ed. Friedrich Althaus and translated from the second German edition by Mrs. Gustavus W. Hamilton, London: George Bell & Sons, 1907, p. 18).

13. Friedrich Heinrich Alexander Humboldt (1769–1859), a traveller and scientist, was the author of the five-volume Kosmos: Entwurf einer physicien Weltbeschreibung (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1845–62). I have been unable to trace this reference to the young Goethe in the first three volumes of the English translation of Cosmos that had been published by this time.

14. “Cat,” and “babbo,” as EBB explains is translated as “daddy.”

15. Alice Isolina Gaspera Tassinari (1848–1911) was the daughter of Giovanni Tassinari (1805–92), Chamberlain to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and Mary Amalia (née Thornton, 1819–95), whose father was Sir Edward (not William) Thornton (1766–1852).

16. On 22 March [1851], EBB told Miss Mitford: “Meanwhile I send you (at last) a copy of my new edition. You are the only person, in or out of my own family, to whom I give one .. except one intimate enemy who required a sop .. no, not an enemy, .. only somebody who had fancied herself aggrieved by me. I am forced away from giving copies, by the terms of Chapman & Hall, who have everything in their own hands” (EBB-MRM, III, 321). Miss Mitford’s copy (now with Meredith) is not inscribed by EBB, and the copy presented to Mrs. Smith has not been located.

17. The metre and rhythm of “The Island” remains the same in the revised poem “An Island,” but otherwise the two poems are quite different. However, exactly what EBB means by saying that “The Seraphim” is “all but
new-written" is unclear. While a cursory collation of the two editions shows significant alterations throughout, it does not appear that any part of "The Seraphim" is rewritten.

18. The OED cites an 1844 letter from EBB to Home as the example of this word.
19. EBB has made a few alterations to "Isobel's Child" as it appears in Poems (1850).
20. When Bluebeard was called away from home, he left his wife with keys to all his treasures, but he forbade her to use one key to a certain closet. However, her curiosity was too strong, and she opened the door to the secret room only to find the bodies of Bluebeard's former wives. Perrault, Contes, 1697, text presented with a preface by Michael Patrick Hearn, London: Garland, 1977, p. 20.
21. The review of EBB's Poems (1850) in the 30 November 1850 issue of The Athenæum was especially praiseworthy. The review concluded: "Often in the struggle to overtake her ideal, the Muse totters to the goal. But she gains it. The wreath is justly awarded, though it crowns a fainting victor. . . . We close these volumes by a Poet and the Wife of a Poet with deep admiration and reverence. Desirous as we have been to afford glimpses of Mrs. Browning's genius in its various phases, we are conscious that we have here given due prominence only to its sympathetic truth and its high spiritual tone. Much remains to be said on its electric passion, its noble thought, its bold yet delicate imagination. But in adverting for a moment to the blending of these various qualities in the same mind, we will briefly say that literature has few precedents of such an union. Mrs. Browning is probably, of her sex, the first imaginative writer England has produced in any age:—she is, beyond comparison, the first poetess of her own" (no. 1205, p. 1244). J. Westland Marston is identified as the reviewer in the marked file of The Athenæum now at City University (London).
22. Cf. Macbeth, II, 2, 58-60: "No; this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine, / Making the green one red."
23. Announcing Tennyson's appointment as Poet Laureate, The Athenæum suggested that the honour might have been given to a woman, but this "was too chivalrous a view of the subject for the Minister,—who has a trick of looking for his favourites down the back stairs" (23 November 1850, no. 1204, p. 1218).
24. An allusion to the Guild of Literature and Art, of which Bulwer, Dickens, and Forster were the prime movers. This scheme developed from an earlier attempt which was called the "Provident Union of Literature, Science & Art," and "in addition to an insurance scheme, it aimed to provide houses for needy or retired writers and artists, built on Bulwer Lytton's estate at Knebworth" (Dickens, 6, ix).
25. i.e., about Pius IX re-establishing the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales. Cf. RB's passing allusion in "Bishop Blougram's Apology" (lines 973-974): "... (the deuce knows what / It's changed to by our novel hierarchy)."
26. This expression originated in a letter from Lord John Russell to Dr. Maltby, Bishop of Durham, (4 November 1850). The re-establishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales led to a strong outcry against Roman Catholicism. Numerous pamphlets were issued in response, e.g., The Real Causes of 'The Papal Aggression' Considered, In a statement respectfully presented to the Lord Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, by certain of his clergy, in Lent, 1851, Oxford & London: John Henry Parker, 1851, as well as Papal Aggression and Concessions to Rome ([London, 1851]).
27. William James Early Bennett (1804-86) was an Anglican High Churchman, who was forced by the Bishop of London, Charles James Blomfield (1786-1857), to resign as priest-in-charge of St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, in early December 1850 because of opposition to his High Church tendencies. The controversial event sparked riots, and led to an exchange of letters between the two churchmen, which were published in leading newspapers in December 1850, and later appeared as single titles: Correspondence Between the Rev. William James Early Bennett, of St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, with the Bishop of London, Relative to the Resignation of Mr. Bennett (London: Charles Weston, 1850); and William James Early Bennett, A Farewell Letter to His Parishioners: Part I: Statement of the Case; Part II: Correspondence with the Bishop; Part III: Answer to Objections (London: W.J. Cleaver, 1851). Despite his high church tendencies, Bennett remained in the Church of England. The dowager Marchioness of Bath appointed Bennett to the vicarage of Frome, Selwood, Somerset, and Bennett took possession of the benefice in January 1852, where he remained until his death.
Letter 59

12 January [1851]

[Florence]
Jan' 12. [1851]

While your letter is coming, mine must be going, my beloved Arabel, for I cant wait any longer. I ought to write to Henrietta—but I wont: because a letter will be due to her on certain accounts, within a few days perhaps—may God grant it. How much happier we shall all be when all is happily over—Not that I am uneasy—only anxious. And it would have pleased me better, if she had kept up her walking—she ought to have done it, & will probably suffer more through not doing it. Sophia Cottrell, who is delicate, as we all know, was yet made to walk four miles a day before her last confinement, & had an excellent time in consequence— When there is tendency to premature illness it is different of course, but Henrietta has given proof of none such, & I am sorry that, instead of the carriage exercise, she did not keep more to her feet— Through not taking exercise, I suffered longer than I shd otherwise have done—but I had only the choice of evils, you see. May God grant as happy an escape to her as to myself. You never told me if she wished for a boy or a girl—mind to tell me what was wished for. One thing I am really angry about,—having found out only now that she had meditated having a sage femme instead of an accoucheur. It was pure wickedness of her, tell her from me, and I do thank Surtees from my heart for having decidedly put an end to that imagination of her's. In Italy women receive a scientific education & take regular degrees as levatrici, & are always employed, except by the richest classes; yet with every advantage of instruction & experience, they are apt to fail terribly & tragically when the least difficulty occurs:—how then, in England without the said advantages? Mrs. Greenhough nearly lost her life & her child's life, she told me herself, just because she ventured so .. Mrs. Greenhough, the wife of the sculptor. I draw a deep breath of thankfulness for Surtees's good sense & right feeling.— I suppose they will have some woman's attendance besides the monthly nurse's. Will it not be necessary? Yes, a child will raise their expenses a little—but one must pay for cloth of gold. Tell Henrietta that I am always talking to Wiedeman about his cousin, though I dont know yet whether to say 'cugino' or 'cugina'.

Dearest darling Arabel, Mr. Martin tells me that you are thin, & I cant bear to hear it. Why are you thin, pray? Are you overdoing yourself at the schools, or what? I entreat you to tell me why this is, & whether your headaches are bad, & your homeopathy worth nothing? She did not send me a bad account of you, mind, but she said you were 'thin' & that was not good .. & you are not good (but very bad) if you overdo yourself .. as I much suspect. Now mind you do not forget to speak to me of this, Arabel.

Do you know I have had a fit of remorse about what I said, in respect to some very kind friends. Only you asked me & I confessed the hidden sin in the deep pit of my soul. It was sin though, and I am aware of it. You, on your side, are aware of my besetting sins, & that in a moment of impatience one is apt to give too much way to them. We had been suffering, besides, from an unusual succession of evening visitors, when I wrote— For a week, only one evening was free, & Robert & I had been groaning one to another, though we really liked the people who came. The consequence was that I being cross, answered your question crossly. But you must do
Letter 59

12 January [1851]

me justice & admit that I am not usually insensible to affectionateness, much less when it comes associated with yourself, my own darling sister—& these are your friends.. and mine too.. and welcome for every reason—

Lately we have been quieter— You know how visits are apt to come as the rooks do, a multitude together. Not that I put myself the least out of the way on the occasion of visitors. I never dress in the evening,— indeed it is not done in Florence: nobody, even to go to the opera, appears in a low gown: with the exception of ball-occasions, nobody ever does. So there is'n any fuss. We order coffee—& there’s an end. But it’s a spoilt evening after all when people come in—except now & then,—& Robert has to take off his slippers which are one of his luxuries.

The Peytons are quite well, & apparently contented with Florence—but they dont strike me as being in a state of enthusiasm about it. They are disappointed in the climate though we have had a beautiful season hitherto—but people always come to Italy with the idea of never feeling a cold wind. Tom told me he considered it “a most trying climate, & how Reynolds could have chosen it for a residence, was incomprehensible to him—you are broiled in the sun, & frozen out of it.” Reynolds on the other hand maintains that there are cold winds even in Rome, & is perfectly satisfied with the climate. Certainly he is looking another person already— I have seldom seen a greater & more sudden difference: and yesterday, he walked up the mountain to Fiesole which is a five miles pull. It may agree with him after all. It has done more for M[ Hanna (who has lost the use of one lung) than Naples or Nice could—he calls himself quite well, & really looks & speaks as if he were,—and the gossip is that he is going to be married. Also, there’s a great difference of opinion about temperature. The Ogilvies are in one of the colder situations, & they only have a fire in the evening,—“the heat is so extreme,” they think. For my own part, if I went out, I should be done for .. that’s certain; but, with my precautions, I do (instead) perfectly well. Yet, more or less, the winter always affects me. When the cold wind gets up I feel it in my throat & chest, & am apt to have the cough the Peytons told you of, .& I don’t look as well as in the summer. Still, that’s all transient, and I am perfectly well just now. I assure you Wiedeman keeps me in exercise. His favorite game just now is “giving me a fright.” He is a soldier with a gun . which every now & then he fires, & then I am to run about the room in a distracted state. Oh, if I dont rush & shake my petticoats, he is quite discontented—& after a time, it is really exhausting work. When I am too soon tired, he falls out of fits of laughter into agonies of despair .. because you see he doesn’t understand the possibility of people being tired & sets it down as pure wicked malice on my part—“Ah di!” he cries & throws himself on the floor. In every paroxysm of mental anguish he says “ah di!” Wilson says he means “Ah Dio”!—but I have some hope that it may be merely inarticulate agony. His passions are over directly, & do you know, Arabel, he never thinks now of slapping anybody or pulling their hair as he did mine once, let him be ever in such a passion. Also, he has grown good & sweet, more & more,—Wilson is never tired of praising his goodness & sweetness. The lovingness of that little child, is a quite lovely thing to see— He seems to be full of love to everything in heaven & earth—to the flowers & the flies, & the birds in the picture books. The shoemaker brought home a pair of new shoes the other day .. “Mama’s shoes” Wilson told him they were—& directly he kissed them of his own accord. Darling things of that kind, he is always doing— And the beggars in the street, he must give halfpence to—he shakes his
head & sighs & thinks it a pitiful case altogether. He is very fond of playing at being an old woman—he comes limping along with a stick, & holds out his hand for a crazia—& you must pretend to give it or he is'nt pleased. Always he gave proof of a sweet disposition, but lately it is turned to roses .. & I catch myself thinking of the little Samuels & Timothys who had God's Spirit full of them from the beginning. He is not as absorbed as he used to be in his mystical services: he cares more for the soldiering just now. Still, there is praying everyday—and .. oh Arabel!—I scarcely know whether to tell you or not. certainly you will be shocked .. & certainly I did'nt like it myself much .. but he is a baby, & means no harm, as God knows—he took the little glass I use for my medicine, carried it off to his chair .. knelt down & pretended to take the sacrament, .. turning round afterwards with a most ineffable face & hands lifted up to give Robert & me the benediction— We rushed away—we couldn't imagine at first what the child meant—but the meaning was too clear. Are you horrified? very much? Remember what a baby he is. We dont encourage any of these things. We take no notice of them—its the best way, I think. The only danger which I discern is, that of treating sacred things lightly .. which w^ be the case if we played with him at them—as we do at his soldiering for instance. As for his being a Roman catholic, you will see, Arabel— I would guard against such a possibility quite as zealously as you do, when the hour of possible peril comes.

Now I am going to speak to you about those sonnets. I have had a letter from dear M! Kenyon, & he & M! Forster detected them as well as you—and a letter from America speaks of “the Portuguese sonnets so called.”—and a letter from M! Payne disapproves of the “blind” & tells me that the open truth w^ have been “worthier of me” .. by which, I am a little, just a little, vexed. The truth is that though they were written several years ago, I never showed them to Robert till last spring.. I felt shy about them altogether .. even to him. I had heard him express himself strongly against ‘personal’ poetry & I shrunk back— As to publishing them, it did not enter my head. But when Robert saw them, he was much touched & pleased—&, thinking highly of the poetry, he did not like, .. could not consent, he said, that they should be lost to my volumes: so we agreed to slip them in under some sort of veil, & after much consideration chose the “Portuguese.” Observe—the poem which precedes them, is “Catarina to Camoens”. In a loving fancy, he had always associated me with Catarina, and the poem had affected him to tears, he said, again & again. So, Catarina being a Portuguese, we put “Sonnets from the Portuguese”—which did not mean (as we understood the double-meaning) “from the Portuguese language” .. though the public (who are very little versed in Portuguese literature) might take it as they pleased. To judge by the opinions which have reached me, the sonnets are likely to be great favorites— M! Forster is said to think highly of them. The Boston publishers would have reprinted the two volumes, giving me certain pecuniary advantages, .. when behold!—a new edition comes out at New York, just preceding the London one, & of course, without the alterations & additions! I dont know when I have been so provoked. It is a point of honour with the American publishers (honour among thieves) that what is printed at one city, shall not be interfered with at another .. so I lose everything—both money & reputation. Observe how ill that Harper (sharper) of New York has behaved to me. You know we had a regular agreement, a signed paper, to the effect of my having the half profits of the first large edition of fifteen hundred copies, which I gave him.
the facility of publishing. He sent me fourteen pounds, the first few months—& not a sous [sic] since—though he must have sold every copy to justify him in proceeding to another edition. But what I most care for, is not the pecuniary part of the transaction, certainly. We have heard nothing from Chapman & Hall this Christmas—Perhaps we shall, & I am sure I hope so—

No, no, no, my dearest Arabel...we don’t go to Rome—it is impossible. The Brauns urged it...and, not knowing what might happen, we answered vaguely—but I assure you we are forced to take heed to our steps in economy even here, or we couldn’t pay our way. As to going to Rome, when the very possibility of going to England depends on ship money &c &c, we should not be so false to you as to think of it.

I am happy in your having good accounts of dearest Storm. Has George written to Mrs Gordon? Do urge him to it. It is a right & straightforward thing to do. Excellently Alfred must be getting on—congratulate him affectionately from me: but Sette & Occy you don’t mention? Mrs Peyton wished to see dear Henry here the other day in an Austrian uniform—but I shouldn’t like (I who love him dearly) to have him an aim for the curses of this aggrieved people. The Austrian are loathed, of course—Arabel!—I shall write you another letter very, very soon, to make amends for the haste of this—but it appears that Robert’s must go today, and the Fletchers have come in & interrupted my writing. What a vexation! I hate to send a letter to you in a hurry—half written in fact. Is Minny’s lameness better? You did not speak of her when you wrote.

On Christmas day, we were as quiet as you could be, & thought of you, as you did of us. Wiedeman had a heap of presents—a box of nine pins... (no, he had those two or three days before) from Mrs Ogilvy—a box of houses & trees, from little Alice Tassinari—a box of soldiers & cannons, from Miss Agassiz... (a friend of Miss Blagden’s) a cart drawn by two oxen from Miss Blagden herself—a cart & horse, from Wilson, & a pigeon and a boar carved after the antique in marble, from the balia. He was in an ecstatical state accordingly,—& was wishing everybody a happy new year (buon capo d’anno!) in an unknown tongue & with bursts of laughter. I suppose he will speak sometime before he is one & twenty. In the meanwhile he makes beautiful O’s, & is beginning the M’s. And he is advanced in his education in the Italian “dreambook”, wherein he points out among the pictures, the sun, moon & stars, a ‘mill,’ a ‘royal palace’, & various sorts of animals, when you bid him find them for you. A most clever child he certainly is—never forgetting a thing he has heard once. Also, what pleases me better,—he looks stronger, & has a much improved appetite. The Peytons don’t see him to advantage, because he has taken it into his head to be particularly shy to them.

Oh—Arabel Arabel—what a stupid, stupid letter to send you!— Half covered the paper is— I have scrambled, rather than written. God bless you my beloved—Tell my dearest dearest Henrietta, that I love her & pray for her. How strange, about Lizzie! I am glad she was let come after all.

So Mrs Dodsworth has gone over to Rome. Better so—
Did Mrs Orme dine with you on Christmas day? & how is she?
Give my tender love to dearest Trippy—mind you do. Robert’s best love—

I am your own, own Ba.
When you ask Wiedeman "what o'clock it is"—"che ore sono"? He pretends to pull his watch out of his frock (as Wilson does by hers) and then holding up something imaginary, he says with the gravest face... "Bue"—meaning 'Due'23 of course.

Address, on integral page: Care of / Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 12. Beaumont Street / Devonshire Place / New Road / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. In his journal entry for 23 January 1851, Surtees Cook wrote: "My dearest Henrietta's trial came on last night, & at half p. 12. the morning of this day, brought into the world a little son" (Surtees). This child was named Alatham Surtees Cook, and he lived until 1931.
3. underscored twice.
4. Literally, "wise woman," but here the meaning is "midwife."
5. "Midwives." In a letter to Surtees dated 1 February [1851], EBB wrote: "So right you were, dear Surtees, to have a physician, & so much thank you for it—Probably, as the case stood, there was no necessity, ... but there might have been a necessity, (tell Arabel who accuses me of prejudice) and it was against the possibility of a danger, that you guarded" (ms with R.J.L. Altham).
6. Horatio Greenough and his wife Louisa had three children: Henry, later Horatio, Saltonstall (1845-1916); Mary Louise (1848-54); and Charlotte (1850-1919). It is unclear to which of these three EBB is referring.
7. "Cousin" (male) or "cousin" (female).
8. From the context, I take this to refer to EBB's comment about the Peytons in the December 18th section of the preceding letter.
9. Thomas Griffith Peyton (1816-87) and his brother Reynolds (1815-61); see note 9 in the preceding letter.
10. "Oh God."
11. The smallest coin in Tuscan currency equivalent to 1½ pence in English money.
12. Both Samuel and Timothy are depicted in the Bible as the sons of mothers who instilled great faith in them; see letter 57, note 19.
13. Neither Kenyon's nor Forster's letter has survived.
14. The letter from America has not survived, nor has the one from Caroline Paine (née Newham, 1822-1904), who had travelled from her home in Farnham, Surrey, to visit EBB in April 1846, preempting one of RB's regular courtship visits (see BC, 12, 208). Her husband, John Manwaring Paine (1807-58), was a landed proprietor and hop farmer; the Brownings visited them in 1852.
15. There are lines in the courtship letters which suggest that EBB was composing the Sonnets from the Portuguese as early as late 1845; for example, see BC, 11, 176, n. 2; 11, 198, n. 4; 11, 268, n. 1; and 12, 98, n. 8. Despite EBB's comment here about "last spring," i.e., 1850, she means 1849 because the Brownings were not at Bagni di Lucca in the spring of 1850, where they were staying when he first saw the sonnets. RB later explained in a letter to Julia Wedgwood in November 1864: "Yes, that was a strange, heavy crown, that wreath of Sonnets, put on me one morning unawares, three years after it had been twined,—all this delay, because I happened early to say something against putting one's loves into verse: then again, I said something else on the other side, one evening at Lucca,—and next morning she said hesitatingly 'Do you know I once wrote some poems about you?'—and then—'There they are, if you care to see them,'—and there was the little Book I have here—with the last Sonnet dated two days before our marriage. How I see the gesture, and hear the tones,—and, for the matter of that, see the window at which I was standing, with the tall mimosa in front, and little church-court to the right" (Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, a Broken Friendship as Revealed by Their Letters, ed. Richard Curle, London: John Murray & Jonathan Cape, 1937, p. 114). See letter 42 for EBB's sketch of the courtyard and the mimosa tree.
16. “Catarina to Camoëns” was first published in Graham’s Magazine of October 1843 (pp. 208–209), and was later collected in EBB’s Poems (1844). RB quoted from and/or referred to this poem no fewer than 14 times in the courtship correspondence.

17. James Thomas Fields (1817–81), partner with fellow-Bostonian W.D. Ticknor in the firm Ticknor, Reed, and Fields; Fields was later editor of The Atlantic Monthly. Fields had written to Miss Mitford on 7 January 1851 that his firm had “intended to republish Mrs. Browning’s new edition, but another house in New York claims the right, so we give it up” (James T. Fields, James T. Fields: Biographical Notes and Personal Sketches, with Unpublished Fragments and Tributes From Men and Women of Letters, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1881, p. 35).

18. The publishing firm of Harper & Row was founded in 1817 by James Harper (1795–1869) and his brother John Harper (1797–1875); they were joined by their brothers Joseph Wesley Harper (1801–70) and Fletcher Harper (1806–77) in 1825, and the firm became Harper & Brothers in 1833. EBB is confusing Harper with Henry G. Langley; see letter 73, notes 18 and 19.

19. Charlotte Louisa Susanna Agassiz (1822–1900), was the daughter of Jean Gabriel Agassiz (1784–1845) and Charlotte (1798–1822), daughter of James Valloton (1754–1828). Her aunt was Louisa Agassiz (1768–1847), with whom Isa Blagden, as a young girl, was acquainted.

20. “Wet nurse.”

21. Apparently there had been some concern on the part of Edward Moulton-Barrett that Lizzie should spend her Christmas holiday at Wimpole Street.

22. William Dodsworth (1798–1861), a catholic writer, had formerly been the minister of Margaret Street Chapel, Cavendish Square, and according to the DNB, “his faith in the church of England was so rudely shaken by the judgment in the Gorham case, that he resigned his preferment and joined the Roman catholic church in January 1851.”

23. “Two.”

Letter 60

Casa Guidi—Florence—
May 1. [1851]¹

My ever beloved Arabel,

This is Thursday, & we go off to Bologna on Saturday. I write my last words to you from Florence .. and if you could see in what confusion!—The painters & cleaners have been filling the rooms—the nursery has been painted throughout—the upholsterers covering chairs & renewing spring sofas .. all the carpets up .. all the curtains down .. my head goes round only to look on!—But we are at the end of it, & have not paid too much for making our apartment quite perfect .. too perfect almost to leave! .. & fit to receive anybody in the shape of an occupant. The money will be paid back to us by the occupancy of a month, & we shall return next year to most complete rooms, if we return to live here. In any case we shall return for a time. I have just written a long letter to Papa.

So we go to Bologna, as I said, stay there two days .. then, by Parma & Mantua (at each of which places we shall stay a day or two for the pictures), to Venice for a fortnight or longer. The Ogilvies leave us at Venice & go straight on to England. We, if the money holds, cross to Milan, .. so, by Como, over the Splügen, into Switzerland, .. wait awhile at Interlacken [sic] to enjoy a little and economize, then, down the Rhine to Cologne .. taking the railroad to Paris. That's our
scheme—but the working of it depends on circumstances. You will see that it admits of a great deal of pleasure . . . of sights of mountains & lakes, besides the cities & art in Italy. Yet there’s nothing in me pleasurable just now—I leave Florence with pain . . . we both do . . . & are wearied out with the labour of it all—Oh—it will be different when we are fairly gone. I think that to comfort myself. Then the poor balia is not well & looks sad—there is some inward weakness which she ought to lie up for—not of the least consequence, I hope & trust, but still the idea of it does not make me gayer. Wiedeman will not suffer from parting with her, for he has got used to only seeing her a part of the day, and even bears the hearing her name in her absence . . . which is great progress. He shakes his head & puts on a melancholy face, but he does’nt cry & sob, as he used to do when he even saw her old gown hanging at the bedpost. The Peytons go today to Spezzia [sic] for three weeks, & return to a villa they have taken near Florence for four months I think—Very, very kind they are. Such presents they have given me . . . covers for travelling-pillows, frills for Wiedeman, cases for pocket handkerchiefs—took kind they are. If we visit Rome in the Spring according to our programme, we shall probably meet again . . . but do you know, though they persist in professing to like Florence “so very much”, I see plainly that they w^ all give a great deal to be in Herefordshire again—oh, it is very plain. They admit however, that, for scenery, “it is’nt to be compared to what they have seen abroad” . . . and that’s an admission—Reynolds goes home soon “upon business”, and Nicky with him, to get some employment. Berry is in better spirits than I thought her at first, and does’nt appear to distrust her lover. I do wish they could marry,—and I continue to think it just as desireable that they should do so at once, as I thought at first—Prudence, so called, is sometimes the very height of imprudence, so proved. That’s my doxy.²

Do you know what Robert says . . . that if he had to marry one of them, it should be Fanny.³ Which is Robert’s taste & certainly not mine, but you know he has proved enough that he does’nt particularly care for beauty in wives—Talking of beauty, I have been having my picture taken in spite of myself—in profile & in outline, so you may fancy what classical contours!! So provoked I was! It was a M’ Latilla,⁴ an artist with a large family going to America, who wanted to introduce himself by a book of engravings of literary English people—So provoked I was—for I hate to touch the public with my personal self . . . you know how I refused the first miniature-painter in London! But Robert would insist on it, and I yielded after a struggle & a tussle . . . and now he repents it as well as myself. The artist is inferior . . . and you never saw such a vision of a dishevelled nun, the hair nearly down to the waist in expectation of the “fatal shears[,]”⁵ the countenance in profound melancholy and the mouth full of sugar plums . . . administered in the way of comfort by the lady abbess!—And that’s “me,”⁶ and so, I am to float through the Union! Robert’s profile is better, I am happy to say—He would’nt let me have a cap . . . & because I threw a lace veil over the top of my head to avoid catching cold, the veil is introduced, to the nunship’s further development. Arabel dearest, write to me directly at poste restante, Venezia. Robert’s best love with that of

Your own Ba—

Think of Wiedeman’s saying “Diamine” . . . a sort of demi-oath of the Italians . . . and much like the English cry of “The deuce”. He looks at me with a provoking sly smile & cries, “Mamma,
Mamma! diamene." That's for fun. But really whenever he's vexed he says it. The last words are written on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of May, & as its too late for the Florence post, we shall take it with us tomorrow at six in the morning towards Bologna & post it there—If you get it, it will signify that we were not stopped in the mountains by bandittis ... which is a sort of probability, they say—

Address, on integral page: Miss Arabel Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year determined from EBB's references to travel plans.
2. In letter 2 EBB attributed this "doxy" to Kenyon, quoting from his letter to her and RB on learning of their marriage: "And the very peculiar circumstances of your case have transmuted what might have been otherwise called 'Imprudence' into 'Prudence'." Eliza Berry and Henry Jasper Selwyn were married on 1 July 1851 in Florence.
3. Frances Maria Peyton (1820–1900) was the third daughter and sixth child of Eliza and Nicholson Peyton.
4. Eugenio H. Latilla (1800–59), an English artist, whose daughter, Horatia Augusta, married James Edward Freeman, on 20 May 1848 (see letter 16, note 12). The following year Latilla produced Cartoons in Outline Illustrative of the Gospels with Illuminated Text, but it does not contain a likeness of either of the Brownings.
5. Cf. Milton, "Lycidas" (1638), line 75: "Comes the blind Fury with th'abhorred shears."
6. EBB has printed this word in very bold letters.
7. "The deuce," "the dickens," or "the devil."

Letter 61

Venice.
May 16\textsuperscript{st} [1851]

I send you a note this time, my beloved Arabel, to keep you up on information about us. We are all well, you see, and at Venice! The place is exquisite—and though my fancy had of course been brim-full of floating sea-pavements, marble palaces with sea-weed on their marble steps, & black gondolas sweeping through sunlit & moonlit silence, ... though I had fancied these things all my life, (my "eyes making pictures while they were shut.")\textsuperscript{2} the real sight exceeded the imagination ... oh, by far & far! I have been in a sort of rapture ever since we arrived. It is wonderful, enchanting ... nothing seems to me equal to it in the world. For the sake of it, I would give up Florence, & twenty Parises besides—only I cant quite give up you. Do you know what Wiedeman did? He is very sensible to beauty at all times. When he saw for the first time the church of St Mark, (as he was carried out of the gondola in Wilson's arms across the great piazza) he threw up his little hands with a shriek of joy, & then turning round suddenly, he kissed her, to show how delighted he was. This after a long, tiring journey from Mantua, when most other children would have been cross & perfectly indifferent to architecture, to say the least. Again, at the sight of the Dogana del Mare,\textsuperscript{3} with the great golden ball at the summit, he threw his hands out east & west & clasped them together, crying "Oh, mamma,—oh, papa." He generally invokes us when he is in any particular ecstasy. The child has enjoyed everything in the journey as much as anybody, & instead of suffering, as I feared he might, from fatigue & change of diet & hours, has visibly grown & improved—his cheeks are redder & fatter than when we set out. I should not be nervous now to
take him a voyage round the world. Mrs Ogilvy says that her children would have been laid up, all three of them, with the same amount of fatigue—she laughs at me when I call him "delicate." But he has a delicate organization, notwithstanding, & we must be careful of him in certain ways. I have made a great fuss, for instance, about the apartment we took here, & insisted on airy rooms at a somewhat higher price, to avoid the risk of close ones. I think Mrs Ogilvy thought me fanciful— but Robert let me have my way, & we have only paid eight pence a day more for very evident advantages. To stay at the hotel, you see, was impossible—we had to find private rooms. We have taken four two bedrooms, a large dressing room for Robert, & a delightful sitting room with four windows & balconies upon the Canal Grande, the best situation in Venice, & in a noble palazzo, at the rate of thirty shillings a week. We call this immensely dear—because Florence spoils us for prices—but considering that Venice is not Florence, & that we have taken the apartment only for a short time, I have begun to incline to think that our outcry is rather unreasonable. Mrs & Mrs Ogilvy have a bedroom down stairs—& she comes up to join us at breakfast. She— not he, I am sorry to say—we have all been in trouble about him. Probably he caught cold, somehow, in the railway—in the gondola—one doesn't know how—but on the night of our arrival in Venice he was seized [sic] with fever & affection of the throat, & has been in bed ever since. The day before yesterday a physician was called in, & yesterday (the fever not yielding) he was bled. You may suppose how anxious & pained his poor wife has been, & that indeed it was painful in different degrees to every one of us. At one time I felt quite frightened—for he seemed stupified, Robert said. Today however he is better, & he will probably be up in a day or two. There is nothing infectious—it is just fever from cold, he being what is called a "highly inflammatory subject." The physician never apprehended anything bad, but thought it should be "taken in time." This illness may make some difference in their plans, as they intended to remain here only ten days & then hasten on to England by Munich. Most agreeable fellow-travellers they have been to us—full of intelligence & good humour—really clever in their knowledge & apprehension of pictures & churches—and yet, and yet, Robert & I agree sometimes that being alone is a good thing. The whole day, for instance, he was outside & I inside, travelling—and I had to talk talk—Now I like to receive impressions quietly & deeply, without so much talk of this & that. Still, it seems ungrateful to write down any drawback to a delightful journey,—& to really delightful persons. She is both good & charming—only a little wanting in repose & concentration of character—too sensitive to all manner of impressions—omni-sensitive, rather than intense. We have taken our apartment for a fortnight certain, & mean to stay a month at least. If it were not for you, I could stay here all my life. The aspectable reason, however, is our wish to wait & hear something of the ship-money, as travelling is very expensive. We left poor dear Florence in the rain—I am glad it rained—I was very sorrowful. The poor balia we took leave of the evening before, that Wiedeman might not be distressed by leaving her behind. She cried dreadfully— I promised to write to her, & not to let Wiedeman forget her, & that when we came back, he should bring her a "regalo" from Paris. It was a heartbreaking business. For Alessandro, he almost squeezed my hand off as he helped me into the carriage—he cried too: but as himself & the balia hate one another intensely, there is some hope that the pleasure of separating may console them by degrees. We escaped the banditti on
the mountains, M'o Ogilvy holding the probability of them in great dread, & slept at Pietra Mala, a mountain station between Florence & Bologna, where it was so cold that I lighted a great heap of faggots in Wiedeman's room & mine with my own hand. When we travel, I generally get a double bedded room & sleep with Wilson & the baby, sending Robert away by himself because it is so convenient to have Wilson at dressing time, & to have our night things in one carpet bag. On the second day we were at Bologna, spent two days there among the pictures—then to Modena—spent half a day there—then to Parma, to which we gave a whole day. Correggio, he is the Venice of painters. From Mantua we took the railroad, & swept through Verona, past Vicenza, past Padua, along the glittering snow Alps, as in a vision—then shot into the heart of Venice. The air is not too hot—indeed it is cool & fresh & most enjoyable. I can't describe what the scene is—the mixture of intricate beauty & open glory, the mystery of the rippling streets & soundless gondolas. I could be content to live out my life here. I never saw a place which I could be so glad to live a life in. It fitted my desires in a moment. If Paris turned out ill, & Florence failed us, here would be Venice, ready!—Robert & I were sitting outside the caffè in the piazza of St Mark last night at nearly ten, taking our coffee & listening to music, & watching the soundless crowd drift backwards & forwards through that grand square, as if swept by the airs they were listening to. I say 'soundless'—for the absence of carriage or horse removed all ordinary noises. You heard nothing but the music. It was a phantom-sight altogether.

We go to the traiteur to dine—even Wiedeman does. By which you may judge what a good adaptable child he really is. He has made friends with the "holy pigeons," & they were surrounding him like a cloud today for the sake of his piece of bread, he stamping & crying out for rapture in the grand piazza. You have read perhaps about these pigeons, & remember how the whole people of Venice protect them, & how to kill one of them is a crime against the nation. In consequence of which, they are so tame that they mix with the crowd, having no fear of man. You may fancy that Wiedeman is enchanted with the holy pigeons. Also, he has gone with Wilson, to see all the churches on our route. He shook his head at those of Parma, when I asked him if he thought them beautiful, & said "No, no"—But nothing has pleased him so much as Venice, & St Mark's—& the gondolas. Only he always wants to get into the water, "per fare bagno." We enquired of him how long he would stay here, and he answered "Due"—by which he meant "a long while," "Due" being his idea of more than one—in fact of the infinite—

Here I must end, Robert says. Oh Arabel—do let me have a letter directly. God bless you my beloved. I don't wait to read this over—and it has been written in course of conversation.

Your own Ba——
3. "On entering the Grand Canal, the Dogana del Mare [i.e., the Maritime Customs House], built in 1682, is on the left hand, on the point of land dividing the Grand Canal from that of the Giudecca" (Murray’s Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy, London: John Murray, 1847, p. 338).


5. “Present,” or “gift.”

6. About midway between Florence and Bologna. Murray’s describes it as “a village with a tolerable inn” (Murray’s, p. 472).

7. Antonio Allegri da Correggio (ca. 1489–1534) completed two ceiling paintings in Parma: “Christ Ascending” (1520) in the Church of San Giovanni and the “Assumption of the Virgin” (1530) in the cathedral. EBB later (8 July [1851]) wrote to John Kenyon: “Correggio … is sublime at Parma; he is wonderful! besides having the sense to make his little Christs and angels after the very likeness of my baby” (LEBB, II, 9). In a letter to Mrs. Jameson in March 1842, RB had enquired: “At which of the Colnaghis can one see the Correggio you spoke of one evening at Carlyle’s? I am just now hungry for his pictures” (BC, 5, 258). And in “Bishop Blougram’s Apology,” RB describes him as “the marvellous Modenese!” (line 117).

8. “To take a bath.”

Letter 62

Venice—June 5th [1851]

You don’t write again, my own dearest Arabel, and I have been unreasonable to have waited for a second letter—Yes, indeed—But I fancied somehow it would come, & it may possibly still come—but you mustn’t answer what I write now to Venice, because we shall be gone. We go on Friday (tomorrow) week—and, do you know, after all I might describe to you of the charm-working of this enchanted place, I shall be glad to go It is exquisite, to be sure, but it’s “bilious”, and poor Wilson has been miserably unwell ever since she came .. much as she was at Pisa, only less ill, of course2 .. forced to a course of castor oil after the gondola, & feeling constant headache & sickness & an incapacity of digestion. Also, Robert is by no means as well as usual .. cant eat or sleep, .. & suffers from continual nervous irritability. I and Wiedeman are the only ones who escape, and we have been invincible hitherto. You know, a moist relaxing air always answers in my case, and he has been growing fatter & fatter even since he began to travel—eating more, sleeping oftener & faster, & in a state of inextinguishable jubilee— I should like more red in his cheeks, but when we get into the mountains it will come I dare say—Oh, and I don’t mean to tell you that he is pale, even now. He has a colour, though it is not yet as vivid as suits my ambition—We had taken our apartment for a month, or I should have teased Robert to go away sooner— It grieves me to see him so uncomfortable, & Wilson so really unable to enjoy the least thing. She counts the days, poor thing, between Friday & Friday— On Friday week (today week[1])3 we go to Padua, then to Vicenza, then to Verona, lingering hours or days, whichever may be necessary to see everything worth seeing, .. then we spend some days at Milan. Write directly to poste restante, Milan, & I shall get your letter. Afterwards our plans are less definite, but we talk of seeing Como, & of passing into Switzerland by St Goatherd [sic] rather than the Splugen. People tell us that we shall see more of the glory of the Swiss lakes that way—only nothing is decided—and I
shall write to you in all probability from Milan to tell you the rest. Yes, I shall be glad to leave Venice—and if you knew what Venice is, you would know that I must have some very strong motive to be able to say so— Even Genoa was not more beautiful than I expected— Indeed I had fancied the hills higher. But this Venice has exceeded to me all expectation & all dreams. The fantastic beauty of the buildings, the mysterious silence of the waters, St. Mark’s piazza by gaslight, with its great populace swept up & down as if by the breath of the music, the moon on the lagunes, & the gondola’s passing in & out of the shadows, with their little twinkling lamps— these are things not to be told, Arabel… its a dream which loses its charm while you talk it out— I comfort myself for not having you here to enjoy it, by the persuasion that you would’nt so much enjoy it after all through being ill like the others— You would be ill too—you would. We understand that it is a common result— The young swiss woman who makes our beds declares that she has not been well for a year and a half of her residence in Venice— Constant attacks of bilious sickness. She must go, she says, as she does not get acclimated in the least. Yet the people, the natives, do not look unhealthy, and the children, I observe, have particularly clear & fresh complexions— the women very pretty! so much prettier than our Florentines!, and the men more intelligent & keen of eye. Every evening Robert & I go out for our coffee to the piazza San Marco, and there we sit at a little table out of doors, reading the Galignani & French papers, while the crowd sweeps round & round us—and, what is a great charm to me, a real Italian crowd, a crowd not of a fashionable class, or of a bourgeois class, or of any other class in particular, but of a good breathing, living humanity.. men, women, & children .. such heaps of rosy children not asleep yet .. the rich & the poor, noble & artizan, all mixed together, walking together, listening to the same music, yes, and eating the same ices (ices are so cheap) & sitting on the same chairs side by side— I cant tell you how delightful this sort of association is to me—it strikes me always as ideally Christian. At the same time I observe a shade of difference here—arising probably from Austrian influences,—who knows? When I say “Felice notte” to one of the poorer class in Venice, the answer is “Serva sua” instead of the hearty, equal response I should get at Florence, of “Felice notte” in exchange for mine— Last Good Friday I was in the Duomo during service— A peasant woman, coming in late, sate down close to Robert & me, turned her large black eyes into my face & asked me what oclock it was. I said I did’nt know in the least: upon which, she took hold of the chain to which my glass hung, & shook it gently with a sort of questioning smile, as if to ask the use of having a watch if I did’nt know what oclock it was. “But it is’nt a watch” said I, returning the smile, & holding up the eyeglass. You cant think how pretty & naïve the woman’s action was, & how the farthest in the world from impatience! No one can be more opposed to socialism than I, on the ground of its bad morals, bad logic, & utter inadequacy as to results, involved in such systems—but I do love Christ’s equality, the beating of heart to heart, the response of hand to hand, & I do repudiate with my heart, as I would willingly with my hand, the class-divisions, the walls & fences between man & man, as they are built up in England.

You have heard perhaps that dissipation is the way of a Venice life— Robert & I have therefore been dissipated, not to disgrace the poets who came before us— In this month I have been twice to the opera & the play— shut your eyes & turn away your head from me, Arabel—for what is worse than all, I was delighted, & saw no manner of harm anywhere. The operas were Verdi’s
Attila, and Ernani... Robert criticising the music, & I in my ignorance thinking it beautiful because so dramatic. Verdi is the idol of Italy just now, as to music, without deserving the pre-eminence. We took a box to ourselves in the best position, the ground-tier, & large enough to hold eight people, & paid for it... what do you suppose?... two shillings & eight pence. I went in my bonnet & Swiss muslin gown & black silk polka as I had been dressed all day... & put up my feet on the cushion beside Robert when I felt tired. The music was well if not excellently executed, and I enjoyed it extremely—No ballet. We have been sliding up & down the waters besides in a gondola, & have visited the chief Venetian islands... the islands of the condemned priests, and of the madhouse, and of the Lido, where poor Lord Byron used to ride, and of the Armenian convent where he studied Armenian. Now that's a convent where I really could live, if I took no vows & kept no laws, & spent my time as I chose. As we passed through the pretty, bowery garden, an old man with a white beard long below his waist, sitting under a rose-tree in full bloom, spoke out to us in English to our great surprise... "You are English?" "Yes." "Why are you not in London? Why are you not at the Exhibition?" (See how your exhibition resounds to the ends of the earth.) He was the Superior of the convent, and it was he who "had the honour" as he told us afterwards, "of teaching Armenian to Lord Byron." A beautiful convent, with a good, really good library, it seemed to us, by the glances we took at the books—(not mere books of the church & schoolmen—) & shady walks to walk in, & flowers & sunshine & the Adriatic.

All this time the critics may be splitting me up in England, I knowing nothing about it. You who do, will know before now that there is nothing "particularly likely to displease you" in my book—unless it be that you have taken the peace society under your protection—have you, Arabel? But you will understand what I mean. Peace is excellent—but when one half the world is under the feet of the other, & when the one which is uppermost cries out "Now let us all be quiet", who is to sympathize with that cry? So you wont be displeased, I think, with the opinions of the book—Whether you like it otherwise is another question—Tell me sincerely. I dont expect that it will be a popular poem... I have little hope of it for my part—and a great deal of offence is sure to be given by certain things. Aunt Fanny however, wont be sorry that I dont call upon her in September if she & I happen to be in London at the same time, after such a display of infamous schism in matters ecclesiastical. As to dearest Henrietta & Surtees, they must try to forgive me—and they will succeed, for love's sake, I feel sure. So Henrietta has fallen into the inodorous fashion of the day of leaving off baby-caps, to the immense disparagement of baby-heads— I never would give in to such barbarism. Wiedeman wore a light cap with full borders for above a year, and until yesterday he always wore the same under his hat, & would continue to do so, only that Robert & I had a quarrel about it yesterday & Robert had the upperhand. Robert wants to make the child like a boy, he says—(because he is a man)—and I, because I am a woman perhaps, like him to be a baby as long as possible. I maintain that he looks prettier, too, in the cap under the hat, but I yield the point, & Wilson consoles me by declaring that he looks pretty anyhow. The truth is that the child is not "like a boy," and that if you put him into a coat & waistcoat forthwith, he only would look like a small angel travestied. For he isn't exactly like a girl either—no, not a bit. He's a sort of neutral creature, so far. But it vexes Robert when people ask if he is a boy or a girl—(oh,
man's pride!) and he will have it, that the lace caps & ribbons help to throw the point into doubt. As to the question of young babies, like Henrietta's, wearing caps for the first year, I do think that reason as well as the sense of beauty should constrain you. Poor little bald pates, so ugly, poor little delicate unclosed sutures, so liable to cold! Keeping heads too hot, is one thing, but why rush into the other extreme? The Venetians admire Wiedeman exceedingly, & Wilson says it is quite common for people (men with great mustachios) to come up to him in the street & ask to kiss him. He had an adventure one day. An elderly gentleman, after looking at him some time, asked Wilson in Italian "how old he was"—"Two years old," said she. On which he begged her to have the goodness to take him into a neighbouring shop, which she acceded to directly. In the shop, sate a younger lady & gentleman in deep mourning, who took him in their arms, & asked him to kiss and embrace him. "dacci un bacio ed un abbracciamento", which he did with the utmost readiness, twining his little arms round their necks. The lady's eyes were filled with tears, and they both spoke with low sad voices. Then, they looked round the shop & bought him a little box of beads, the only thing suited to a child's taste, and thanked Wilson, who carried him away again. She says that she felt sure, they had lost a child of his age—Wasn't it pretty? The way in which that child enjoys everything, you would scarcely believe unless you saw it. He looks at the palaces & churches with a radiant smile, seems to comprehend really why a thing should be admired—Whenever he sees a church he begins to chant (he used to join his hands) & when we were out in the gondola the other day, we had a continuous strain, for he saw churches on all sides—"Due, due," said he. What do you think, Arabel, he has taken to do now? He stays with me while I dress in the morning. The instant I kneel down to say my prayers, he insists on Wilson's giving him a candle stick, & he stands opposite to me holding it & chanting at the top of his voice. When I get up, he makes two curtsies, with an air of solemnity which one scarcely can resist, sets down his candlestick, & taking one of my fingers prepares to go with me into the breakfastroom. He has done this for a week past—Wilson says he "wishes to make my prayers better by it." What is one to say or do? When he pretends to read, he "entones" precisely like the priests, and the chanting, when he chants, is really ecclesiastical—Robert says it's the best thing he does, & is wonderfully correct. I don't know whether he admires priests or soldiers most. His love for the soldiers is fanatical in itself. He got away from me at a place near Bologna where we stopped to dine, slipped down the stairs & rushed out of the house into a crowd of soldiers stationed at the door in order to be ready to escort Radetsky who was expected there. Think of that little child, without hat or protection, in the midst of a crowd of soldiers. I screamed after him in vain—"Baby, Baby"... and saw him, to my horror, walk quietly in between the knees of an officer who was sitting down, and prepare to seize [sic] upon his sword. I had'nt courage to follow him... and ran into the house to get Wilson. She had not missed either of us—but she went out after Wiedeman, when I had told her, and carried him back screaming, for he had made capital friends with the officer already, & was at the height of glory & felicity when she broke the spell—Whenever he sees a soldier, he looks in his face, & says "boum", pretending to shoot him, which is very goodnaturedly smiled at by most of these Austrians. On the other hand, there were priests in the railroad who gave him sugar plums—How they came to have so many sugar plums, I can't say—every priest there had sugar plums, & from every side (in the Venice railroad) they were showered
upon Baby—the kindness he has shown his sense of by saying “pretè” \textsuperscript{14} & by a redoublement of honour to the order. He says ‘latte’ too and “pane” \textsuperscript{15} & one or two other new words. Did I ever tell you that he says “La zia”? \textsuperscript{16}

Oh—I cant write more of him today, though there’s so much to write of— This letter must go. My darling Arabel, why did you tire yourself by doing so much at the Exposition— You should see a little of it at a time—that’s the only possible way of seeing anything without killing oneself. See how the queen manages it. Better to go twelve times, at a shilling \textsuperscript{17} (which wont ruin you) & take small segments of the great sight— That’s what I shall try to do—but it must be deeply interesting, & suggestive, & worth much fatigue—& after all, from the ventilation & the security against crowding, there must be less necessary fatigue than from a morning at the Royal academy, I should fancy.

Oh Arabel, if there were a possibility to arrange it so, how I should like to arrange your going out of town in combination with our movements. For instance, if you went to the south anywhere . . . to the isle of Wight . . . to the south coast, . . . better still, to any part of the French coast,—there, we might meet & be together. The Brownings w’d do anything— & Robert & I should both escape the dreadful necessities of London, in that way. Think of it, talk of it, I beseech you . . . He recoils from the idea of New Cross—I, from the idea of London . . . We must do what we can, of course—but if there were a possibility of escape, so as to make our meeting feasible otherwise, I would leap at it & thank you— Would it be out of the question, do you suppose, to go to the French coast . . . or inland into France? I mean for all of you— We should see more of one another so, & with much less pain on my side— I told Papa all our plans, sent a copy of M‘ Kenyon’s letter, with a few expressions left out, . . . & spoke of our intention about London. But he w’dnt see me, you know—& he w’dnt see even Wiedeman, I am certain, though I entreated that. Was his cough bad in the winter, Arabel— Does he look ill? Tell me, my beloved Arabel. I cant help thinking for the rest, that he might accede to your coming to the verge of the continent just now when facilities are so great & expenses so small. He did’n’t seem anxious about South Wales last year, surely! The exercise is spent. French w’d be advantageous to everybody— There’s Dieppe, for instance! Or you might hunt for some interesting place near Calais—more or less interesting. The plan about Paris, w’d be exquisite, & certainly I have you & Henry set down as our visitors to Paris— it’s less difficult to go to Paris than to Herefordshire, as Henrietta did . . & we have Henry’s promise— But now the question is about a general removal, & I know Papa w’dnt agree to your all going to Paris. No such luck for me! Think of it all, I beseech you. You must not write to Milan—Robert has doubts, all of a sudden about Milan. We may go to Recoaro perhaps . . . the Baths . . . but you had better write to Venice, & the letter will follow us— Provoking it is that the shipmoney lingers & lingers so. This has been a most expensive journey—far more expensive of course . . by quadruple & quintuple . . then the road through France, where there are public conveyances & railroads. No, Chapman & Hall buy no copyright—& it is better for us, in the long run, that they should’n’t, though a sum of money prepaid, is occasionally convenient \textsuperscript{18}— God bless you my own dearest dear Arabel. So vexed I am at the loss of Henrietta’s letter. Send her this because I cant write to her just now & it will be the same thing if she sees this account of us. We certainly leave Venice on Friday week . . . today week.
How is dearest Trippy. Give her kisses & loves from me, warmly. I have M'n Smith's second letter. The first I never received. I will write a note to her—but just say that I have received the second letter. What a worthy, vulgar woman, to be sure!—I am glad Robert is not acting with Dickens & Company—but he would'nt, under any circumstance. Our friends, the Ogilvies left us—did I tell you? he quite well. Does Storm write?

My own Arabel,
I am your Ba-

Love to Minny—how is she, dear Minny? Love to Henry & who ever loves me.

We can see nothing here in the shape of an English paper. No Athenæum[,] nothing.

I am glad to hear Thackeray opposes the Guild! I wonder what next is to be imagined to the advantage, & honor of literary men & women. Disgusting it all is to me. I would rather starve in the magazines, for my part. Write to Venice my own dearest. Remember. And speak particularly of your headaches.

Address, on integral sheet: Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 26. Welbeck Street / Cavendish Square-
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. See the beginning of letter 8.
3. The phrase in parentheses has been interpolated, indicating that this letter was begun on 5 June, a Thursday, but was concluded the following day. This is verified near the end of the letter where EBB indicates that she is writing on a Friday.
4. "Pleasant evening."
5. "At your service."
6. In letter 29, EBB wrote: "... theories of socialism are not only impossible in any state of human society, but ought to be impossible in order to the heroic growth & development of men."
7. I take this to refer primarily to Byron.
8. Ernani, based upon Hugo's play, Hernani (1830), was composed for Venice in 1844, and Attila, based upon Werner's 1808 play, was composed for Rome in 1846. According to The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London: Macmillan Publisher's Limited, 1980), "all of his operas before Aida were composed in the shadow of impending or actual revolution and war in his country, and, as Luigi Dallapiccola wrote (1965), 'the phenomenon that is Verdi is unimaginable without the Risorgimento ... [he] 'formulated a style through which the Italian people found a key to their dramatic plight and vibrated in unison with it'" (19, 638).
9. "San Lazaro, the Armenian convent, stands out of the main city, on its own island. ... The church and conventual buildings are patterns of neatness and good order. Here, as is well known, Lord Byron amused himself by studying the Armenian language; and he has borne full testimony to the merits of its worthy inmates. ... They have an excellent library, with a great number of curious Oriental manuscripts; and the convent may be regarded as a species of metropolis of Armenian literature. Many important works, such as the translation of Eusebius, have been printed here" (Murray's Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy, London: John Murray, 1847, p. 356). On the journey from Venice to Chioggia, the steamer passes "the islands of S. Servolo, on which is the madhouse," as well as the shore of Malamacco, which "constitutes the Lido, now associated with the name of Byron, as the spot where he used to take his rides" (p. 366). I have been unable to identify an island for condemned priests.
11. Reviews of Casa Guidi Windows were beginning to appear, and generally they contained praise, although a few were critical of EBB’s use of language. However, The Guardian of 11 June 1851 called it “an unmistakeable and complete failure” (p. 424). Two reviewers used the adjective “loose” to describe different aspects of the poem: The Literary Gazette of 31 May 1851 noted that there were “frequent lapses into loose rhythm and unmusical rhyme, and the introduction of thoughts and modes of expression essentially prosaic” (p. 372), and John Westland Marston (see letter 64, note 6) in The Athenaeum (7 June, no. 1232) declared it “too loose and colloquial in its manner” (p. 597). The Leader of 14 June 1851 complained that it was “somewhat abstract in its treatment,” but declared it “a noble poem” (pp. 560–561).

12. In a letter to Henrietta dated 23 May 1849, she stated emphatically: “I dont mean to let him go without caps, though it is the fashion in England ... it is a disfigurement to a baby to go without caps—! dont you think so? ... Mrs. Ogilvy wanted to persuade me to leave them off, but I would’nt” (Transcript in editor’s file). In letter 43, she informed Arabella that their cousin Arlette “has left off the caps already. Well—I know it is much the fashion—but I always said I would’nt do it, and Madme. Biondi authorizing me to resist, Baby shall wear his caps till next spring.”

13. Sic, for “dacci”—“give us a kiss and a hug.”
14. “Priest.”
15. “Milk,” and “bread.”
16. “Aunt.”

17. The Great Exhibition opened on 1 May 1851 and continued until 15 October 1851. “Monday to Thursday were shilling days,” and “attendances, always greatest on one-shilling days, increased to a first peak of 68,000 on Wednesday, 17 June,” after which time the numbers declined until near the end, and during the last three days “visitors exceeded 100,000” (C.R. Fay, Palace of Industry, 1851: A Study of the Great Exhibition and Its Fruits, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951, pp. 74–75). For the Queen, “visits to the Crystal Palace were constant, regular, and methodical. She went everywhere and saw everything. Each Saturday morning would find her with the Prince making a long and exhaustive tour of some particular section. She interviewed exhibitors, asked them questions, listened to their explanations” (Yvonne French, The Great Exhibition: 1851, London: The Harvill Press, 1951, p. 251). For the first three weeks of the Exhibition, “the public consisted solely of holders of season and 5/- tickets” (French, p. 257). However, this soon changed, and “after three weeks a new public appeared” (French, p. 258). “On the first shilling day [26 May 1851, three weeks after the opening] the Queen was there on purpose to see them arrive, and though ... the police had been strengthened so that they almost outnumbered the visitors themselves nothing untoward took place. There were no crowds and no scenes,” and even when they started coming in larger numbers, they were “always in great order and discipline” (French, p. 259).

18. EBB wrote to Mrs. Jameson a few years later (12 April [1853]): “Ah, yes; how unfortunate that you should have parted with your copyrights! It’s a bad plan always, except in the case of novels which have their day, and no day after” (LEBB, II, 112).

19. i.e., in one of his “amateur theatricals,” as explained in the following note.

20. The Guild of Literature and Art, as identified in letter 58, note 24. Thackeray disapproved of this scheme; he “particularly disliked Dickens’s proposed method of fund-raising: amateur theatricals” (Ann Monsarrat, An Uneasy Victorian: Thackeray the Man, 1811–1863, London: Cassell, 1980, p. 267). Bulwer Lytton wrote Not So Bad as we Seem to be performed as a benefit for the new Guild; it was presented before the Queen and Prince Albert at Devonshire House on 16 May 1851.
My ever dearest Arabel, In the greatest haste I write a last word to you from Venice. Today I had your letter & tomorrow we go away.. What an escape! I had given up the hope of hearing from you while we stayed—and the more sorry I was than usual even, because from the absence of English newspapers we could not get the least word about the book. Sarianna had just mentioned that she had seen advertisements speaking of the publication—and that was all the intimation we had. Such things don’t generally make me uneasy, but I have been a little anxious from different reasons about this particular poem, & was delighted in proportion to hear that you liked it on the whole. Did it strike you as obscure? did George think it so? Mind you answer.— Now I have three minutes to write in, Robert cries out— So hold, about the book. Only when you write tell me what you hear.. because we get no news, read no English papers—— Remember. And write to Lucerne, poste restante—and pray write directly, and of yourself more than of my book, if you please. I am full of things to say to you—and three minutes to say them in, says Robert—

We dont go to Interlacken [sic]— Beset by English we hear— We dont go by the Splugen. St. Goathard [sic] appears the shorter, & cheaper way, & on the whole more interesting— We doubt much about going to Milan—through the expense & heat. But of all this, you shall hear at length. Write to Lucerne— Lucerne we shall make headquarters of for some time perhaps—

My dearest, darling Arabel!— You are one of the most rational of human beings, & yet you talk about our ship-money just as if it were not travel-money.¹ We dont want it to put by in a drawer,— but to use for travelling purposes,— dont you understand? we dont want to hang it ‘by a chatelaine’ to our left side, I assure you. Travelling is very expensive, but when we stay at a place we relax from heavy payments, & are forced to do so. Would you have us stopped in the Alps, for instance, for want of money? Would you have us borrow money of the innkeepers, in order to get on to Paris & London? No, of course. The Marseilles route is very comparatively cheap, but we wished to see Venice & the north of Italy & decided on this road. Our money, observe, flows in at intervals, & we must travel when we can. Now are we not moving on towards you steadily? Write to Lucerne, & let us take patience, & mind you consider the question I suggested to you in my last letter about the point of meeting.

I am not very grieved to leave enchanting Venice after all, for it has seriously disagreed with Wilson, & Robert is by no means as well as usual, though he professes to be nearly acclimated. He & I went to Chioggia² by the steamer yesterday at nine yesterday morning, & were unable to reach Venice again, through contrary winds, till half past one this morning, frightening Wilson. Oh Wiedeman, how you shake me! He must sit by me to see how I write to “la zia”.³ La zia is a mythical being .. & I suspect him of confounding in a grand mythological mist, Arabel & Henrietta & Sarianna. But you'll explain yourselves before long. The affectionateness of that child is like the rest of his qualities, peculiar— How he cried when we went away yesterday– And what heaps of kisses we both had this morning! And how he has spoiled my letter with insisting on making os for “la zia.”⁶
Heres an end of the three minutes—

God bless you, beloved & dearest Arabel— Thanks on thanks for this dear welcome letter—Lucerne, (Poste Restante) En Suisse. I thoroughly agree with you about Henrietta’s letter, but have no moment to say how—

So glad I am you saw my Venice, even in panorama.

Your own Ba.

Mention dearest Trippy’s gout— My dear love to her. So grieved I am that she sh’d suffer so.

*Address, on integral page:* Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett[]) / 26 Welbeck Street / Cavendish Square / London.

*Publication:* None traced.

*Manuscript:* Berg Collection.

1. Month and year provided by postmark.


3. Almost a month earlier EBB had written that they remained in Venice “to wait & hear something of the ship-money, as travelling is very expensive” (see letter 61). The Brownings’ financial situation had been affected by a number of factors during recent months: in addition to the annual rent of £20 for Casa Guidi, they had to pay an extra £10 for refurbishments before leaving Florence. And although Kenyon had advanced them £100, as EBB explains in letter 65, the travelling was more expensive than they anticipated, and after arriving in Lucerne they learned that the ship money was not only late, but only amounted to £50, far less than the £120 RB mentioned it should be in a letter to his uncle, Reuben Browning, and which was further exacerbated by the high rates of commission they had to pay to the Venetian banker Schielin {NL, pp. 47-49).

4. “The distance between Venice and Chioggia is about 20 miles, which is performed in two hours [by steam-boat]. It is an excursion worth making, as thereby a good general view of the Lagoon, south of Venice, of the small islands studded about it, and of the long islands which divide the Lagoon from the Adriatic, is obtained. Chioggia, too, preserves those features of a fishing and mercantile settlement amid the waters” (Murray’s *Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy*, 1847, p. 366).

5. “Aunt.”


---

**Letter 64**

Lucerne.

June 26– [1851]^1

My ever dearest Arabel, here we are on your side of the Alps! We arrived the evening before last, into the heart of the divinest scenery in the world, I should really think, and in the hope of being able to loiter out some of the heat of the summer in Switzerland, for Wiedeman’s sake as well as our own. Letters meet us here however, with desperately bad news as to the state of our finances. Only fifty pounds from the ship,² tell Henry! Twenty pounds less than the badness of last year!—We have, Accordingly, just eighty pounds to spend in the next six months!——. It is very bad, you see—and with Robert’s anxious temper which has vexed him terribly throughout this journey,
there is nothing to do but to give up lakes & mountains & make the shortest & cheapest of journeys into Paris. He is constantly regretting having ever left Florence & upbraiding himself for the commission of the greatest of imprudences— Well— There's no use groaning— I tell him that I have twice the share of artistic temperament that he has— It's impossible to fret me about money-matters. If we can't live on bread & cheese, we must live on bread alone .. and that's better than cheese alone, is'nt it?

Observe, we have done everything with the utmost economy, consistently with the journey through the north of Italy. The way by Marseilles would have cost a fourth of the expense—but as we did not see Rome we thought we ought to see Venice & Milan. We had an exquisite journey through Brescia to Milan, stayed there two or three days, went to Como, took the steamer down the lake to Cadenabbia opposite Belaggio, .. then, from Managgio, took a carriage to Porlezza, & a boat across the lake Lugano to Lugano .. slept, & proceeded the next morning to Bellinzona .. left Wilson & Wiedeman there a day & steamed down to Lago Maggiore & back—crossed the St. Goathard [sic], & dropped into this most beautiful of all the lakes at Fluellen whence we reached Lucerne by steamer,³ with just ten francs .. Robert in a horrible fright all the way—he lets his imagination master him, indeed— Here letters meet us with money—so good! but with the deplorable financial news I told you of before—& so, very bad, certainly. Yet no long journey was ever more economically managed. In six weeks we have spent but fifty pounds—and fifty pounds for two months used to be our allowance at Florence when we stayed still at home— I dare say you wonder how we manage to be no more at our ease after Mr Kenyon's generosity, but the reduction of income is immense this year—we have not, you see, much more than two hundred a year, apart from Mr Kenyon's gift.⁴ Then we had to pay some thirty pounds at Florence in leaving it .. twenty for the house, & ten for certain refreshments of our furniture— That will all be more than repaid us, I am confident .. but Robert is despondent now about house-letting as well as everything else in the world .. & for the present, of course, we have nothing from it. Well, you observe .. what a tug such a long journey on such a short income must be. Its a vexation to leave the lakes & mountains .. (oh, so glorious, Arabel!) only you will understand how it is possible that Robert should be in a high fever of anxiety. When we get to Paris, we shall do very well— We shall know how to accommodate our situation to our means. We go to Bâle tomorrow morning by diligence, & so slide into the railroads & Rhine-road, via Strasburg, & I hope some day to come back & explore these Righis⁵ & shining waters.

And to rise up out of the warm lap of Italy, from the blue lakes, & chestnut-covered hills & gorgeous sunshine, into that sublime of cold desolation .. you cannot realize the sensation. Como is exquisite, & Lugano still more beautiful— The drive from Lugano to Bellinzona is like a dream of mountains & waters & chestnut forests rather than the thing itself. And when I have said that, think what Lucerne must be, to exceed all.

Arabel—Milan cathedral is worthy (almost) to look towards the Alps— I climbed up three hundred & fifty steps to the topmost pinacle—— Imagine that! It overtired me, but I was resolute to do it—

Now, says Robert, I must go—I must'nt even mention Wiedeman, & tell you .. no, I cant. He is well, however, & has travelled like an angel using his wings— I have been dreaming of
dearest Trippy— How is she? Write to me at Paris. Poste Restante— God bless you my beloved— Tell Henrietta this.

A moment more— Wilson is quite well again— I never heard a word of my book till we reached Lucerne, when Sarianna’s letter apprises us of the favorable critiques. Was the Athenaeum’s really good? Next year, we shall be too rich again—

Wiedeman travelled (I must tell you) sixteen consecutive hours & all night, to Milan from Verona— Good .. perfect .. enjoying everything. Think of that child laughing & taking soup at half past twelve at night at Brescia .. amused at the situation! I had actually dropped down on the stairs with fatigue .. quite fainting .. but he, when asked if he would‘nt go to bed, answered “no, no Papa, Mamma cavalli.”—he would go with Papa & Mama & the horses. Certainly he slept very well all night .. only there was fatigue enough, & heat & dust enough to try him. He pretends to admire the mountains exceedingly, & I believe, does admire them .. though Wilson & Robert will have it that it’s half affectation & because he sees that we admire them. He throws out his arms & says “Due, due”— The colour has come to his darling cheeks so since we arrived here, that it makes me regret more our not being able to stay— The milk & air of Switzerland w4 have braced & nourished him.

Why, how cold you are, Arabel, at this side the Alps— Robert & I quite shiver through the evenings— At dear Florence they must be broiling comfortably just now—

Write to me at Paris. Do you feel how near we are. My heart beats at the thought. Love to all— Wiedeman cant bear the German here— Poor unfortunate child—he has fallen into Babylon. I dare say he thinks it a hideous language, which really it is— He shakes his head at the chambermaid & says ‘no, no.’ But there’s a waiter who speaks Italian & has made fast friends with him .. & he receives a great deal of attention & admiration from everybody. People call him interesting, & wonder at his not being cross like other travelling children—

Address, on integral page: Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 26. Welbeck Street / Cavendish Square / London. 

Publication: None traced. 

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. See note 3 in the preceding letter.
3. EBB described this journey to Mrs. Ogilvy in a letter dated 2 July [1851], explaining how in Milan she “climbed to the topmost pinnacle of the cathedral” and how thrilled she was “for having seen such a sight” as the St. Gothard pass (EBB-EAHO, p. 41).
4. One hundred pounds as explained in the following letter.
5. The Rigi is a mountain (elev. 5,906 ft.) north of Lake Lucerne in Switzerland, and Bale, or Basel, is just to the northwest as one crosses the French and German borders of Switzerland.
6. A review of Casa Guidi Windows appeared in The Athenaeum for 7 June 1851 (no. 1232); J. Westland Marston has been identified as the reviewer in the marked file of The Athenaeum now at City University (London). Marston is generally complimentary, although EBB would not have approved of his comment “that Mrs. Browning has, consciously or unconsciously, caught the tone of her husband. Ere this grows on her, we desire to warn her that her own poetical mantle was of too good stuff and pattern for her not to be a loser by borrowing any other” (p. 597). Nevertheless, Marston concludes in highly praiseworthy terms: “The mind which at first sadly contrasts the actual with its ideal, learns in time to find the ideal in the actual. Such is the highest office of the poet,—and
one which, to our thinking, Mrs. Browning has here fulfilled. Her generous sympathies with a wronged nation
have not blinded her to the errors which wrecked its struggles,—nor have the familiarities of the present hid
from her the spiritual truth which underlies them. Her book is at once courageous and wise. Amidst the many
who hold failure as disgrace, she has apprehended the right that should have triumphed. Through the obloquy
of defeats she has recognized as heroes now, men who will be so chronicled in the future. She has perceived by
foresight what Posterity discovers through retrospect,—that greatness unreviled lacks its credentials—that
martyrdom is the path to canonization” (p. 598).

---

Letter 65

Paris
June [sic, for July] 2–3–4. [1851]¹

My ever dearest Arabel, here we are at home!—close to you—nearer than if we were in Wales
for instance—nearer & more accessible. I wish you would send this letter to my dearest Henrietta
that she may know it too. I have not written to her straight for ever so long, but she will understand,
I am sure, how in travelling one finds it difficult to make out a corner of time to stand & write in,
& how you being in London (and alone, my darling Arabel!) caught naturally the first spray of
the letters .. only the wave was intended to go on to her always, & I am sure you kept back none
of the news from her. Now that we are in Paris, she shall hear from me directly & henceforward
as usual, but for this once will accept the reflection of a letter in this stream which goes to you— I
want you to know as soon as possible that we are in Paris— Your letter from Lucerne, Arabel, I
found here .. with all the advice that we should go to England first. My dearest Arabel, you &
Bummy & everyone who think we have made “an expensive round” are mistaken altogether. We
wished to go up the Rhine to Cologne, because on our arrival at Strasburg we found it all but
impossible to escape a perilous shutting up in a diligence during four & twenty continuous hours
if we pursued that road to Paris, & really I was frightened, chiefly for Wiedeman & a little for
myself. You see there is a railroad unfinished that way² .. with intermissions .. so that one has
absolute need of a diligence. The diligence goes on the railroad, & then on the road—and if we
had slept at Nancy as we wished, we should have run the risk, from the immense pressure of
passengers, of losing all power of getting on, & of having to stay two or three or four days en
route, which would have been intolerable. I cant explain it to you—but I went with Robert to the
office at Strasburg & we turned it in every possible manner— and one of the manners was going
up the Rhine to Cologne. Not that we ever meant to go to England— It was imperative on us to
settle ourselves in Paris & see our road a little before we could think of London. But we should
have preferred something of a circuit by Cologne to the fatigue of four & twenty hours in diligence—
Well—to prove to you the expenses of the Rhine route, we found that to go from Strasburg to
Cologne (that short distance!) cost exactly the same as from Strasburg to Paris. Now you may
calculate whether from Cologne to London would not cost more than from Paris to London, &
understand that (even with a mere reference to the cheapest way to London) it was not right to go
through Paris. Indeed there was no sort of comparison, & we should have done just the same, if
our object had been to go to you straight— Bummy forgets the Strasburg railroad. Then the Rhine
is enormously dear. One must travel first class by water; & three first class places in those steamboats are not so easily paid for. Well—so we had to resign ourselves to the four & twenty hours travelling, & really I did it with fear & trembling—setting out at six in the evening, never to stop till six o’clock the next evening in Paris, except for half an hour to dine, & a quarter of an hour for breakfast. This with a young child, looking as if made of wax!— How good God’s providence has been to us! How we ought to love Him for His mercies!— Wiedeman slept as if in his bed, & was in the highest spirits when awake, observing & enjoying everything, even to the last drive to the hotel in the fiacre, shrieking out with joy at Paris shops, & at the number of golden O’s & A’s set up in the shop-superscriptions. You would have thought that he had just come out to look about him, & was not in the least tired! Certainly a most spirited child he is. Wilson grows pathetic sometimes, & maintains that he doesn’t show his fatigue on account of his good spirits, & that we should all the more beware of trying him too much. But there was no choice at Strasburgh, since we were not rich enough to go the Cologne way. We took the whole coupé [sic] of the diligence, & I lay down on the floor at night & had a good deal of sleep—really was not nearly as tired as during the nightwork once before in Lombardy, the French diligences being very comfortable & half the way ours went smoothly on the rail— Still, I was dreadfully tired & must have looked ghastly on my first appearance in Paris. And do you know, our journey was interesting, notwithstanding fatigue. The driver of the diligence drove six in hand, three abreast full gallop (and once or twice they were all white horses) with flowing tails & manes. It did look so wild, yes, & feel so wild! I cant wonder that Wiedeman liked it when his eyes were open, for I did myself. And then the railroad went through tunnels to a rather frightful degree, & it was all new & strange. So we came into Paris in good spirits (Wiedeman & Wilson & I did— for my poor darling Robert allows his imagination to distress him unreasonably about money matters, & he was not at ease) and we meant to go to our old hôtel [sic] de la ville de Paris. Instead of which they drove us to the hôtel [sic] Aux armes de la ville de Paris ... on the same boulevard de la Madelaine, but a shade or two less elegant in its arrangements, ... still, very comfortable & clean & quiet, & excellently situated. We didn’t find out our mistake till we had taken our rooms—more’s the pity!— We should have liked the old place & its associations. I cried out that the stairs were different, but Robert & Wilson insisted that we were on the other side of the hotel & had other stairs of course— Never mind— We have done as well as possible. Our apartment is au premier, & consists of a very nice salon, a small diningroom & antichamber, a bedroom for ourselves, & another for Wilson & baby with two dressing-rooms attached. For the whole of which we pay six francs the four & twenty hours—five shillings! Do you call that dear, Henrietta? Think of Paris. It is cheaper than anything we have met with in Italian hotels; & upon the whole journey, indeed, for just two poor bedrooms (we never were so extravagant as to have a sitting room while we travelled) we paid six & seven francs. Robert & I dine at the restaurant’s [sic] every day, but they give us dinner here for Wilson & Wiedeman, as it w! not do to take him out in Paris. He gets admirable bread & butter, &, these two days that we have been here, has attained to such an appetite & looks so well that Wilson says she is “quite satisfied”. You see his weak point is his appetite. The way Wilson & I have had to tempt him first with one kind of cake & then another, to make him eat, would surprise you. Mrs Ogilvy used to say, “Well—
If my children wont eat dry bread, I let them go without, & they always come round to the bread."
Because her children have great appetites & must have something to eat-- But Wiedeman will go & play, & leave off eating altogether, if you suffer it. While we were travelling, once or twice he scarcely was prevailed on to touch anything all day.. seeming quite well, but making us most uneasy by his want of appetite. If eating is a necessary condition of life, it's peculiarly so in childhood-- One day we gave him bread & cheese in the carriage.. he took a fancy to that, .. & one day, bread & ham. He has such fancies. But just now we are delighted—he takes a whole egg every morning & manages the bread & butter to our heart's content.. to say nothing of soup & mutton-cutlets-- I think it likely that Paris may agree with him: his cheeks promise it by their increasing redness-- As to his ecstasy at the shops, Wilson says that he draws people's attention till she is uncomfortable—he stands before pictures of lions, clasping his hands & roaring. When he comes in from walking he has heaps of things to tell us in his way, gesticulating & talking in his pretty half words. He knows numbers of words now, & one English word.. yes.. pronounced less. It sounds to me sweeter than anything else he says.. except the Mama & Papa, which still, as at the beginning, thrill through me--

Wilson began to get better at Padua, two hours from Venice, & now is as well as ever, she says. She declares that another month at Venice would have quite killed her. Certainly she looked very ill & was falling away perceptibly, with continual pain in the left side, especially after eating-- It did not swell, as at Pisa, but would have done so, I dare say, had she stayed. The liver, of course-- She was out of spirits too, & imagined herself worse than she was—flattering friends from Florence meeting her in the street & pretending scarcely to know her!—flattering & considerate. Also, the first night at Padua, Robert slept well—the first time he had done so for a fortnight. Enchanting Venice has its drawbacks. Yet I was so unfeeling as to grow absolutely fatter in the midst of my suffering companions! It agreed with me as much as it disagreed with them, & for the same reason probably.. the relaxing softness of the air. I ate & slept comme quatrième.—

Do you know we have lived so long in Italy that we.. at least I am.. perfectly confounded with & from the French language-- English I can still speak pretty well, but when I attempt to speak French, it is pitiable to hear how the Italian words come instead.. half a sentence in French, half in Italian-- Robert says he wont let me know any French people till I behave better in speaking, for it's disgraceful. He is apt to be severe on my Italian indeed, & I call him pedantic for his exactitude about this & that—but of course my Italian is fluent enough after all these years, even if it should be sometimes rather slip-slop-- But to mix up the aforesaid Italian with French, is too Babylonish to be abided, & I dont want at him for scolding me-- I only wonder at myself—yet it's natural enough, I suppose, & in a week or two I shall get over it-- As to poor Wilson, she is thrown out entirely—her Italian is useful now only to Wiedeman, & she declares that she cant read the phrasebook, "because the pronunciation is all different from the spelling"--

My dearest Arabel, I wrote you a rather disconsolate financial letter from Lucerne, but it's right that you should see how things are & that we cant exactly do at a moment what we please. We have been forced to "sell out" a hundred pounds, out of the two hundred left in our power by the settlements & put by for emergencies,.. which has extremely & extravagantly as I say,
annoyed Robert, as he can’t bear doing anything of that kind— It was however necessary since even the doing it leaves us with restricted means for the next six months. Our seven weeks journey, including the residence at Venice & at various hotels, cost us exactly seventy seven pounds—so Robert finds on calculating the whole:—within M! Kenyon’s hundred pounds you see. Still, if we got only fifty pounds from the ship, our year’s income (apart from his munificence) would not have allowed us to keep up our ordinary establishment at Florence,—& with it, would only have sufficed. Therefore the extra expense of the journey & of the consequences of it, has necessarily thrown us into embarrassment. Do you see? It’s just for a few months, & we shall do extremely well in spite of it all, so don’t be uneasy—only you must be considerate, my beloved, & not reproach us because we don’t rush over to you directly as our hearts & thoughts do—Robert, I have had to scold & coax & reason with by turns, he has been so depressed—& the worst was that we had two rainy days to begin with, & the impression was disastrous—Yesterday & today we are better again..& dear Sarianna Browning’s consolatory letter in which she said that we should find Paris as dear as London, is beginning to fail of its effect, while on all sides of us the testimony is to the exact contrary. I am sure of everything here except of the climate in the winter—but even of that, one may hope for the best—Now we are going out to look at apartments. The beauty & brilliancy of this city charm me as much as ever. If Venice is in the sea, Paris is in the country—Green trees everywhere. They are young trees though on the boulevards, for the revolution destroyed the others—only so brightly green—no stain of smoke anywhere. As to the shops, I am like Wiedeman— I drag Robert back every two minutes, till he says, “You are sure, Ba, to be tired, if you stand still in this way—We shall never get home”. Never was such an amusing place to walk in. Used I to like looking at shops in London? Yes, I think I used (to) like it even there. I hope I am not quite in a second childhood. And London shops are nothing to Paris shops—The brilliancy & beauty of arrangement are not to be rivalled anywhere, I should think. Oh, I quite sympathize with Wiedeman in standing still & roaring at the lions.

Just now, he is rushing about the room pretending to be a steam engine. First he blows a trumpet (as they do in France) & then squeaks out the whistle, and then puffs the smoke, & then rushes, rushes.....! Well done, steam engine. He gives me to understand that he is going to Venice to hear the clock strike at St Mark’s. It’s a favorite clock of his & a curious piece of mechanism, for, when it strikes, the three Magi come out at a door & bow to the Madonna & child seated in the niche. He imitates that too, & does it admirably, with the very jerk of the mechanical figures in making his bow—Well done, clock!

Dearest Arabel, this letter has been waiting two days, to be written in day by day. I am so taken up from it with one thing & another that I can’t get on. You see I go out with Robert—Yesterday we were driving more than half the day, to look for apartments, & he is in better spirits I am thankful to say—the prospect brightens. We looked at rooms on first floors (because he w’d see the best first, & because he doesn’t like me to have many stairs to walk up) and we both agreed (now you will open your eyes certainly!) that furnished apartments are cheaper in Paris than in Florence. From thirty shillings to two pounds a week you get on a first floor a complete apartment, furnished with every comfort & even elegance, drawing & dining room, three bedrooms, & generally another bedroom for the cook, kitchen &c—& trees everywhere & little gardens
attached, into which we might send Baby without his hat— The situation excellent, the Champs Elysees & that neighbourhood. The rooms are small after our Florence rooms, but so pretty that it really makes amends— Such a pretty apartment I was taken with yesterday, looking to a garden full of trees .. you might fancy yourself in a wood there & window-doors opening to your own garden .. and the furniture quite luxurious with spring-sofas & armchairs .. thirty shillings a week. Only unfortunately it had no sun .. it looked eastward .. & the thought of the winter warned us off. In the same house, however, on the first floor was another, quite perfect, with a spare bedroom & every sort of luxury. They ask two pounds a week for that—but Robert is so charmed with it that he was near taking it on the spot—nay, we may take it after all—for the impression remains— It's the house opposite Emile de Girardin's— he who persuaded Louis Philippe to abdicate—and if we take it we shall hear of all the revolutions there certainly— Only .. we must consider—

Everything indicates that we shall be able to live here, as far as pecuniary matters go— The climate is another thing— The thermometer has varied from sixty six to seventy—very good! but we miss our radiant depth of Italian sky, & what is to be hoped for the winter? Well, one must hope. People swear to us here that it is'nt cold—over-cold.

Tell me of the Peytons, & tell the Peytons of me. I had their letter from Spezzia, & answered it to Florence (because it was so long coming that I had no time to catch them at Spezzia) begging them to write to me at Milan to say how Reynolds was. There was no letter for me at Milan, & I want to know the reason. I hope Berry was too happy, & the rest too sympathetical in her happiness, for anybody to write. Say this for me, Arabel— You dont mention dearest Trippy, & she had an attack of gout before— Do speak of her & give her my tender love. I hope to kiss her myself before long, say. The very thought of you all makes my heart beat into my throat. It delights me that you sh'd like my poem— I hear that the Literary Gazette also reviewed it most favorably immediately on its appearance. Alter the word rail in the last line to veil, the allusion being to the Jewish temple, & the meaning railed out.

But Sarianna has corrected the press wonderfully well, & there is no other error of much consequence, I believe. Correct that with pen & ink, Arabel—do.

It was the ship people who made answer that the return w'd be “only fifty pounds more or less”— Yet they have not paid us a fraction of even the fifty pounds. How could they possibly know anything about it if the ship doesn't come in till winter? How is Mr Owen. Tell me. This is for my dearest Henrietta as well as for you. I want her to know particularly about Paris— God bless you forever & ever, my own. Robert's Best love—

Address, on integral page: Angleterre / Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 26. Welbeck Street / Cavendish Square / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Month and year provided by postmark.
2. Murray's Hand-Book for Travellers in France (London: John Murray, 1847) observed that the railway from "Paris to the German frontier, by Nancy, Strasburg," although "laid down," would "require many years to complete" (p. xxviii).
3. EBB's description of the journey by diligence, as well as the horses, is interesting by comparison to her
description in letter 1; see note 2.
4. "On the first floor."
5. "Excessively," literally, "like four."
6. Probably this was related to the "hundred a year's separate allowance" settled on EBB by virtue of her
marriage settlement; see letter 6, note 4.
8. The clock tower was designed by Pietro Lombardo in the late 15th century, and the clock itself was made
by Giovan Paolo Rinaldi (Murray's Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy, London: John Murray, 1847,
p. 322).
9. Émile de Girardin (1806–81) was an entrepreneur in the field of journalism, but he always mixed literature
and politics, and he was a Member of the Chamber of Deputies for several years. It was he who issued the letter
requesting Louis Philippe to abdicate.
10. In the issue of 31 May 1851, the unidentified reviewer of Casa Guidi Windows commented that "many of
the passages are dashed off with a fiery energy and a picturesque brevity which are almost Dantesque," and
concluded by exclaiming "Long may such music as this come to us from Casa Guidi windows" (p. 372).
11. Sic, for "vail." EBB wrote to John Kenyon on 8 July [1851]: "There is only one error of consequence,
which I will ask you to correct in any copy you can—of 'rail' in the last line, to 'vail'" (LEBB, II, 13). Cf. Casa
Guidi Windows, II, 783: "The Vail, lean inward to the Mercy-seat."
12. Angela Owen (née Bayford, 1810–88) was the daughter of John and Frances Bayford (see letter 57, note

Letter 66

Paris
Thursday [Postmark: 10 July 1851]

Our letters crossed the other day, my beloved Arabel. Robert took mine to the post & brought
back yours. So provoked I am that I did not answer your repeated question about M! Kenyon. No,
indeed—you are quite misinformed: he never asked us. In fact, on a re-examination of his kind
letter of long ago, he did not invite us even for next year—he only said that he hoped we might
come near him for a part of the summer of 1852. Recollect, we have a child; & I dare say dear
M! Kenyon would as soon think of inviting a dragon as a child, into either of his luxurious houses.

For the rest you may trust us. If we can get to England we shall certainly go— I should have
been delighted if you had found out any way of meeting elsewhere than London, because Robert's
family w4 set off instantly & join us here, so that there is no need of considering them, . . . but as
you cant move, we must of course, when there's a possibility, & we may go sooner than you
fancy. So dont vex yourself about us, my own dearest Arabel, & rely on our doing what we can.

As to the taking of apartments, we have taken none yet, & it is still in discussion how we are to
manage. Thank dear Minny for her kind & welcome note & advice,—only our luggage is not
heavy enough to make it necessary, tell her, to take a room. If we were rich enough I should
certainly wish to take an apartment at once for nine months, not minding the double payment, . . .
because the fact of being settled, & having a home ready here, would be pleasanter to poor Robert,
I know— You cant imagine how he lets his imagination buffet & torment him in the small
uncertainties of life. I always say that he ought to have five thousand a year—and really he ought,—to meet the exigencies of his nature. He says that he is anxious for me & not for him—but of what consequence is it, whom, one is anxious for, when the anxiety is perfectly unnecessary? You ought to hear me scold sometimes: it is edifying.

I think we might have quite sufficiently good, indeed very pretty rooms here, for thirty shillings a week—but the apartment at two pounds being perfect, Robert hankers after, & we still consider about. Remember, we have only looked at houses in the very best situations & on first floors whereas Tom Butler’s family^2 (all heiress as his wife is) lives at the very top of a house as he told me the other day yesterday in desiring me not to fatigue myself by attempting to call. Oh—people in Paris think nothing of living up in the clouds. But Robert will have a first floor for me, he says, lest I should be tired—whereas I could manage very well with a second or third, as I assure him but nothing is decided yet. Understand the price they ask us is to take us through the season for nine months. Two pounds a week is very moderate yet it is a good deal for us to keep on giving, for so long.

I went to see uncle Hedley, Arabel. Robert & I went down on Monday evening at eight & found him at his hotel. He is somewhat greyer & thinner, but looked infinitely better than I expected, after what I had heard of his increased illness some time ago—Very affectionate he was to me, & a great pleasure was it to me to look into his face again. The next morning he called upon us & brought Tom Butler—and I liked Tom Butler extremely, & was gratified by the cordiality & warmth of his manner. It appears that he comes backward & forward to “visit” his wife. There’s one of the felicitous money-marriages!

We had told Wiedeman that “uno zio”^3 was coming to see him, & he was to have on his red sash and to be ready with a “bacio” & “abbrac[c]iamento.”^4 Charmed he was at the thought of “lo zio”. “Lo zio” seemed like an approach to that mystical “la zia” whom he talks about incessantly, who is to buy him, he says, “a trumpet, a violin, and a piano-forte,” & who is to give him wine to drink when he can get none otherwise in England. I believe his idea of “la zia” is of a Madonna in glory, or at least of an angel with a pair of wings & a nimbus. Certain it is that he was dreadfully disappointed when “lo zio” appeared under so earthly an aspect. He went out of the room directly to Wilson, shaking his head “Lo zio ... no, no ...” in a most melancholy state of disillusion. Wilson said, “Come! Lo zio non ti piace?”^5 “No, no, no”, said he. It was something different from what he had expected. Yet he was very good, & held up his arms for the “abbrac[c]iamento”, & showed Tom Butler the last drawing of a serpent which Robert had made for him.

Whenever he sees either of us writing a letter, or receiving one, it must be, he says, to or from “la zia”. Whenever he is good, he bids us write to “la zia” to tell her. Whenever he is naughty, we exclaim, “What will la zia say when she knows”, & the effect is prodigious. After that sixteen hours night & day work in Lombardy, he woke up at seven in the morning very thirsty: he is always used to have milk to drink when he wakes, & we had not even a drop of water for him, poor darling—and the sun & dust of Italy driving through the blindless windows of the diligence! We were all suffering dreadfully from thirst & heat—no wonder, Wiedeman did. For a whole hour & a half, his idée [sic] fixe was to have something to drink—and we kept him
from bursting out into a roar, only by talking of "la zia," & how if he did'nt cry I would write a letter to her to say how good he was. So he kept his quivering lips from the cry that was ready on them, though his little face grew crimson— Still, at last nature could bear no more— & he was on the very verge of roaring out, when to our surprise the diligence stopped; we had arrived. As Wilson carried him out at the door he turned his face over her shoulder, & said to me significantly, "La zia"! He had'nt cried, after all.

I left your little note for uncle Hedley at the hotel, that he might have it immediately on his arrival, . . with a word from myself to say that I would be there at eight. He told me, when I went, that he had directly written about the governorship, but seemed to think there was small hope of Surtees' obtaining such a situation, which wd scarcely be given, he thought, but to somebody of a good deal of experience & of well-known antecedents. Also, he thought, that, even if attainable, it would be an unpleasant sort of situation, . . "very unpleasant for Henrietta". Still, five hundred a year, one cant call unpleasant exactly,— & they are right of course in trying, & I wish with all my soul, that it may not be trying only.

So the Guardian has attacked "Casa Guidi"! No wonder— The curious thing is, what you may not be aware, that the selfsame Guardian praised me to the skies last spring (two or three months ago) in a long & elaborate article which fell into my hands accidentally at Florence . . said that I had "a glorious career before me" . . things of that sort, . . & that I was'nt weak like women in general . . things of that sort. Said moreover, that I "made idols of Carlyle, & of my husband" (a curious literary criticism) & was "a good deal influenced by both those writers", . . & though I had something of their "irreverence" "in touching on religious matters, yet I avoided the flagrant sins of them. In fact, I was naturally devout, though the critic could see plainly that I was very ignorant, & had'nt right views at all on ecclesiastical affairs & doctrines. Only, probably I had never heard the truth . . & how could I be blamed therefore for not speaking it?" Oh, I assure you, my Guardian took me graciously under his protection, & talked about "splendid genius" & the rest. I write to you what he said, as far as I can remember it; & I read it at the beginning of our journey, on the road, as it was stuffed into my basket, by the goodnature of M' Latilla the artist; so that I remember a good deal. But Guardians prove faithless, it appears, and I am a ward betrayed. Now, why shouln't I have the benefit of my "ignorance" as before? Why, should I be expected to speak the truth (which I never heard) today more than yesterday? "I pause

a compliment & took the first that occurred to him. (He said too that it seemed fabulous "to see me in Paris with my eldest son!").

But he spoke of Papa . . I did not like the way in which he spoke of Papa— I lay awake half the next night thinking of it. He said he seemed quite well but did not look as well as he used, & that he had spent "a very bad winter", . . "with a most distressing cough"— so Papa told him, he said. Tell me the truth, Arabel— Does Papa look ill? Is he less strong, do you think? Mind you do not neglect to answer these questions.

I never thought, Arabel, of concealing from him our intention of being in England. Why, it would have been wrong . . would'nt it? I have told him everything about us in all my letters. It was right,
to Wiedeman— But no— That, he would not. Only it was right to leave it in his choice. Also, I should not like him to hear from others that we were in England, & he to have heard no breath of it from me. I dont think it necessary to tell him at the time, “we are here” . or “there” . because it might interfere with our meeting. Yet, could he have the heart . after five years nearly . to hinder you from seeing me? I cant think so.

My idea is to write & tell him of our being in Paris & meaning at some uncertain time to pay a short visit to England— No more than that.

I have written to Miss Mitford.\footnote{Kenyon’s letter is not extant.} She would stay in that damp house last winter, & has fallen into a state of health which makes me uncomfortable to hear of— Nothing could be more unfortunately absurd surely than to stay on in a house which nearly killed her the year before— And here’s the end.

It was an adventure, indeed,—that about the thief! So Lizzy, dear Lizzy is with you—\footnote{Thomas Butler (1814–93) was EBB’s cousin, second son of Sir Thomas Butler, 8th Bt. and Francis Graham-Clarke. He had married Mary (d. 1859), daughter and heiress of Henry Tulip of Brunton and Walwick Hall, Northumberland, on 5 May 1840. They had one child, Henry Thomas Butler (1842–81).} My love to her, mind! I shall see presently whether or not she remembers me.

M: Hunter leaves Ramsgate for good!\footnote{Not that I have seen it— What I least like in Paris is that they wont let Flush go out in the streets without being muzzled.!! what a shame.} But where then does he go? Do tell me everything you know of him & Mary. Does she write to you ever?

Wiedeman grows fat. Wilson says she can almost see him grow fat, it is so evident. His appetite grows magnificent. He runs about the Tuileries Gardens; he leaps, & dances, & watches the swans. Also he has seen a balloon! That child sees everything. He says he wont go back to “Firenze”, till “\textit{domani}”\footnote{None traced .} but he will go to England, because of “la zia”. By the bye dear Minny calls him “Master Wiedeman”— Tell her he never was called Master Wiedeman in his life before, & that for Minny to begin, was too bad. If ever she does such a thing again!! She must love him & call him Wiedeman. It will do her good to go into the country I hope, for she seems to be very lame— poor dear Minny! how much she suffers! Sarianna wrote to propose coming next week with her father—but we wont suffer it.

It is very kind—but we shall go if we can, any how— And if I go, how shall I see Henrietta. Mind you write. I shall write to Henrietta directly. See what \textit{notes} I write! We are close to you, observe.

Love your own
Ba.

My true loves & many a kiss to my ever dear Trippy— Love too to all who care for me.

I hear that the \textit{Spectator}, who abused the two volumes, makes amends in praising the new poem—\footnote{Publication: None traced .} Not that I have seen it— What I least like in Paris is that they wont let Flush go out in the streets without being muzzled.!! what a shame.
4. "Kiss" and "embrace."
5. "What! Don't you like uncle?"
6. As EBB explained in a letter dated 13 August 1851 to Julia Martin: "She [Henrietta] & Surtees are sanguinely hoping for the jail-governorship at Taunton . . . are you aware? Three hundred & fifty a year, & perquisites to a great amount, besides house coals & candles. If they succeed, they will be rich—for he has leave to keep his adjutancy" (ms at Wellesley). Surtees was not successful, as explained in the fifth paragraph of letter 71.
7. As noted in letter 62, note 11, of the several reviews appearing around this time, The Guardian reviewer was the only one to call Casa Guidi Windows "an unmistakeable and complete failure" (11 June 1851, p. 424). The earlier "long & elaborate article" EBB refers to and quotes from was published in The Guardian on 22 January 1851, pp. 55–56.
8. Bottom quarter of the sheet has been cut away, consisting of approximately five lines on each side.
9. Bracketed sentence was squeezed in as an afterthought. From EBB's comments above, this refers to her uncle, Robert Hedley.
10. See note 8 above.
11. EBB's letter is dated 9 July [1851]; see EBB-MRM, III, 324–327.
12. Lizzie spent her summer holiday with her cousins at 50 Wimpole Street; she returned to boarding school at the beginning of the autumn term.
13. The Congregational Year Book for 1855 notes that Hunter left Ramsgate for Beer, Devonshire, in 1854, not 1851 (see letter 8, note 12).
15. A review of Casa Guidi Windows appeared in The Spectator for 28 June 1851 (pp. 616–617). The notice began by saying: "We concluded a review of Mrs. Browning's collected poems, not many months ago, with a hope which scarcely rose above a wish, that she might live to work herself free of carelessness and affectation, and produce compositions worthy of her really fine sensibility and vigorous imagination. We gladly acknowledge Casa Guidi Windows to be a step, nay a stride, in the right direction." The earlier review, of Poems (1850), had appeared in the 25 January 1851 issue of The Spectator (pp. 85–86).

Letter 67

Paris—
Monday. [Postmark: 21 July 1851]

My ever beloved Arabel, we cant leave Paris till Tuesday at one. We had calculated on being able to set out quite early in the morning,—but in that way, we find we shall pay more, & so have decided on the other hour. At one, then, tomorrow (tuesday) we leave Paris, and at nine or thereabouts, the next morning (wednesday) shall arrive (if God pleases) at the London station. It appears that we shall stay some two hours at Dieppe—& perhaps something more at Brighton . . . or at Newhaven, close to Brighton . . . which makes us longer.

No—dont come directly— I shall be worn out, I dare say—& the dreadful joy of seeing you again requires a little strength. Come, my ever dearest, at six, or later—

No, you cant come, I remember, at Papa's dinnertime— For Heaven's sake, do not get into trouble again for me. See how it shall be.
From six & after . . . all the evening till ten . . . I shall be ready for you; & if you dont come at any hour of those, I shall understand that you could'nt get away safely, & feel quite satisfied— Or you might send me a little note by Edwin to say that you cant come, if you cant. Only dont run any risks. If you cant come on wednesday evening, it shall be on thursday morning after breakfast—

Perhaps Robert will be away on wednesday evening— Perhaps—I dont exactly know—but he talks of going over to New Cross directly—and I certainly wont let him go in the morning.

Well—you wont make out what I am writing. My head is sotto sopra,¹ as we used to say in poor Italy—

Did I tell you that we had spent the evening with Alfred Tennyson.² The next day, he called here again, & brought his wife,—& we returned his visit, & were the warmest of friends, all of us together, I assure you. Mr Tennyson kissed me at parting,—and he insisted . . . yes, insisted, . . that we should forthwith take possession of his house at Twickenham & his two servants, & use them as long as we liked to stay in England!³ He was so much in earnest that we hold in our hands a note addressed to his servants, desiring them to make over the possession to us directly . . with a postscript [sic] from Mr Tennyson, bespeaking for me, “as much attention as for herself” on account of my “delicacy of health.” We accepted the note, as a very precious memorial of his kindness. What could be more kind? What ordinary man, even friend, would have acted so? Robert has been touched to the heart by it. Observe,—there had existed no kind of previous friendship between them— They had only met at dinner-parties in London, & two or three times at most.

I like him very much—& I like her.⁴ She has the sweetest manner, the gentlest smile, the softest tone of voice, that a woman can have. And evidently she understands her husband profoundly, & with her heart—which is the best way— But I am afraid she is in a very weak state of health—probably from some accident⁵—for I heard last winter that she was to be confined in April, & they have no child. She had to lie on the sofa, & appeared incapable of much exercise of any kind. He goes out of England, because you English have hunted him half to death— He says you are the greatest nation in the world & the most vulgar—& he hopes to have a little peace & liberty away from you—Amen.

Oh my darling Arabel, it will be better for Robert to get it all over at New Cross—far, far better. He will be happier afterwards. And it was your letter that brought us over, certainly it was— And he’ll be the better for it, & so shall I!

God bless you, dear dearest Arabel. I wont write to Henry now— I shall see him instead— Best love to him & all— Best love to dearest Trippy— I shall pay her a visit directly, tell her— your Ba.

Tell them to have breakfast ready at <ten at> George St. 4 (I found the number afterwards—Forgive me & dont send to Hodgson’s⁶—coffe & plent)ty of hot milk (to use with the coffee) eggs & bread & butter—perhaps a few slices of « . . . » we shall want ‘restoration’ in full.

Breakfast, half past ten— Better so.

Address: Angleterre / Care of Miss Tripsack / (Miss Barrett) / 26. Welbeck Street / Cavendish Square / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.
Letter 67

[21 July 1851]

1. “Upside down.”
2. The Tennysons were en route to Italy to visit his brother, Frederick.
3. Chapel House in Montpelier Row, at Twickenham, which the Tennysons had rented in March 1851.
4. Emily Tennyson’s impressions were mutual; she wrote to her father on 20 July 1851: “We have had time for little else but sightseeing and unpacking and entertaining or being entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Browning. Whether she thinks being a poet’s wife entitles me to rank with poetesses I know not but she has been extremely kind and even kissed me on parting” (The Letters of Emily Lady Tennyson, ed. James O. Hoge, University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1974, p. 53). And in her journal, Emily Tennyson wrote: “In Paris we saw the Brownings …. They came to us at the Hotel Donores where we were staying. …. She very fragile-looking with great spirit-eyes met me more as a sister than a stranger. …. The Brownings came to say goodbye but we were out. We found on our return two beautiful Paris nosegays exactly alike. The flowers of both arranged in a sort of Grecian pattern (in colors beautifully mixed)” (Lady Tennyson’s Journal, ed. James O. Hoge, Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1981, p. 26).
5. Emily Tennyson had given birth to their first child, a boy, earlier that year on Easter Sunday (20 April 1851), but the child was stillborn—strangled by his own umbilical-cord.

Letter 68

Dieppe.

Friday morning [26 September 1851]

Thank God for us my beloved Arabel,—we arrived safely here last night; at twenty minutes past nine— But it was a dreadful passage. As soon as we touched the open sea, the wind & waves roughened together, the decks were swept by the water, & everybody was ill— Even I . . . think of that . . . even Baby . . . even Flush . . who had to be taken away, poor dog, into the hole . . and Robert & Wilson were in extremities. What made me ill was holding Wiedeman for an hour asleep in my arms in an uncomfortable position— When I once got down stairs & could lie down I did perfectly—only, do you know, I was a little frightened,’ seeing that upon asking the stewardess “whether there was danger,” she answered “it was impossible to know how it might be, in such a stormy sea.” Wiedeman was wonderfully good— Certainly he shines in travelling. The whole of yesterday, he never even made up his face towards a cry. He understood when I explained to him that I could’nt hold him on deck any more, & let the captain carry him down stairs & lay him on Wilson’s sofa close to mine— The truth is, I am sure he had great satisfaction in being sick himself— He thought it a grand thing, as everybody was sick; he had aspired to the consummation from the beginning, by signifying, before the vessel moved, that he had a pain in his stomach & that it was caused by the ‘vapore’. Also, he did’nt suffer much. He slept a good deal, & when he was awake, lay as still as a sleepy dormouse. Everybody praised him—“such a good child never was seen before,” and I promised to write an account of the goodness to “la zia”[’] . . to which he said “Less—anche nonno.” On our arrival when we had all to go to the custom house, he was in the highest spirits, observing that there were “due soldati,”[!] & he was’nt in bed till eleven, laughing & singing to the last. Never was such a traveller before, at his age. We came to a good enough inn, though not the best . . (spring seats & beds, Arabel . .) & we are all refreshed this morning.
M! Carlyle is delightful—The silent gentleman in the corner of the rail-carriage yesterday, must have been amused with the talk he heard, & wondered among what manner of persons he was.\textsuperscript{5}

Ah—dearest, dearest Arabel, we drove through Wimpole Street. I looked up at the windows as well as I could for tears, and Baby said mournfully “Minny.”

Carlyle has been walking about Dieppe since six this morning & is so charmed with the old simplicity of houses & manners, that he would like, he says, to come & live here. He & Robert kept on deck the whole time, yesterday, in spite of the drenching waves.\textsuperscript{6} We go on to Paris at eleven & shall arrive at four.

Everything passed the customs safely—See how your aromatic vinegar has stained my paper! Did you get the money I left?

I write in the utmost precipitancy as you see—\textsuperscript{7} I dont thank you my own, own Arabel, for any of your perfect goodness & love to me—You are too much part of me to be thanked. I hold you in my heart of hearts.—I shall write to Trippy, dear Trippy .. give her a kiss & say so—My best love to dear George & Henry & all. I am your very own

Ba.

You receive this at M! Stratten’s. Remember me affectionately & gratefully to him & his family.

Address: Miss Barrett / Rev'd J. Stratten / 65 Hamilton Terrace / St John’s Wood / London.

Docket, above address in unidentified hand: This letter has been mislaid by the person who undertook the carriage from Dieppe to Newhaven—

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Dated by reference to the Brownings’ trip with Carlyle from London to Dieppe on 25 September 1851; the following day, Friday, was the 26th.
2. Literally “steam,” i.e., “fumes.”
3. “Grandpapa also.” “Less” is Pen’s baby talk for “Yes.”
4. “Two soldiers.” Pen used the number two to mean many, as EBB explained at the end of letter 61.
5. Carlyle’s description of this scene is interesting by comparison: “Browning with wife and child and maid; then I; then an empty seat for cloaks and baskets; lastly at the opposite end from me, a hard-faced, honest Englishman or Scotchman, all in grey and with a grey cap, who looked rather ostrich-like, but proved very harmless and quiet … and so away we went, Browning talking very loud and with vivacity, I silent rather, tending towards many thoughts” (Last Words, p. 152).
6. According to Carlyle, “Browning was sick, lay in one of the bench-tents horizontal, his wife, &c., below; I was not absolutely sick, but had to lie quite quiet, and without comfort, save in one cigar, for seven or eight hours of blustering, spraying, and occasional rain” (Last Words, p. 153). “At eight was on the street, in the clear sun, with my portmanteau lying packed behind me; to be back for breakfast at nine” (p. 156). “Before eleven we were in the omnibus, facing towards the débarcadère (rail terminus)” (p. 158); and “at length Paris itself (4 p.m.), and we are in the terminus at our set hour” (p. 161).
7. This part of the letter is written in the throat of the envelope because EBB was hurrying in order to give the letter to a waiter to post it for her, as revealed at the beginning of letter 70. However, a docket on this letter indicates that the waiter mislaid it, so it was probably received some time later.
Letter 69
Sunday night. [28 September 1851]

Ever beloved Arabel, Did you get my letter from Dieppe? I do hope so. We arrived here on Friday, through a stream of sunshine, & really, upon the whole (that is, excepting the sea) had a delightful journey. Carlyle talked like himself, & was so kind & genial besides, that even I did not count upon liking him, as a man, as much as I do. Robert saved him all the trouble everywhere, and he told me that he had not travelled so pleasantly these seven years, .. which was a pleasant thing to hear. Then I must say that Baby was particularly agreeable. Robert & I were in a glow of parental pride the whole way. The child was in the highest spirits, as he usually is when he travels (for he had put down all his regrets at going away from ‘la zia’ and ‘nonno’ by settling that he would come back ‘domani’) and he devoted himself to amusing everybody by the most elaborate representation of the various sights which had struck him in London .. first, Punch, and then the street musicians, & then the street dancers—standing on the elbow of the rail-carriage seat, waving his arms, extending one leg, as if really he were learned in ballets (and wore trowsers [sic]) and at the end bowing most gracefully to the spectators, & holding his hat to everybody for ideal pence. Carlyle contributed very goodnaturedly, but an ostrich-beaked gentleman at the opposite corner gave nothing, an omission which Wiedeman reproved magnanimously by giving something out of his own pocket & never asking that person any more. I think I never saw him in greater force. Carlyle said, “The child has as much enterprize as Napoleon Buonaparte already,” and, he might have added, “as little scrupulousness” — for the remotest pretension to shyness had vanished altogether in the excitement of the circumstances.

Well—we are at our old hotel. How fortunate! A family had left our rooms the day before, after a residence here of six weeks. They are comfortable, & look spacious & splendid after Mr. Thompson. But oh, Arabel, how I miss you! How dull it is, to be all day without sight of you, .. without any pulling of the door-bell which makes one start up for joy— How I miss you! how I miss you all who came to see me! Not a bit of love in all Paris, as far as I am concerned! That’s dreadful. It’s a flat falling-off, to be sure. Still, the climate is another thing from your’s— The air, the sunshine, the light everywhere, one cant help being surprised by, as if one had not looked for something different. The houses seem crystalized by the atmosphere, so clear it is. Carlyle compares the general appearance to a theatrical effect at Drury Lane, & that’s just my idea of it: it’s very striking after London. I do hope we may be able to stay. We have had some cold wind and this morning (when I go on with my letter) Monday, the air seems colder. Still, my cough is decidedly better already. The night before leaving London, I coughed nearly the whole of it, & Robert kept saying that we did not go before it was necessary. But the evil subsided even at Dieppe .. probably from the change of air, which is always good, you know, for a cough—and then the painful excitement of leaving England was at an end. As to apartments, there seems a difficulty in getting one close to the boulevards, as dear M! Kenyon wished, within our means—because we want room—we dont want to be cooped up like “dutts”: we must have room for writing in, you see. Robert saw an apartment on saturday which would have suited Henrietta,—at
a pound a week—two bedrooms, a salon, & kitchen &c—very pretty indeed, but too small for us of course. We shall have to pay more than we like, I dare say. Paris is crushingly full just now, but probably it wont last—I will tell you how we get on. Meanwhile we are comfortable here, & paying less than at M'r Thompson's, so that we can afford to wait.

We went again to the French independents yesterday, & heard a good scriptural sermon, but nothing in any way remarkable. As usual, Robert liked it better than I did. The minister had lost his child, & there was a substitute. The singing is certainly beautiful. Nothing like it, in England.

Baby remembers everything in Paris, & points out the way here & there as if he had lived here all his life. He even stood up suddenly before a shut up shop, moving his head backwards & forwards, because he recollected in that shop, a wax figure of an old woman who shook her head like a mandarin. And consider, he was only three weeks here, and that two months ago. At his age!— Wilson says he is much admired at Paris, . . but she seems in doubt whether it may not be the red frock which attracts the number of gazers— For I let him wear his beautiful frock, Arabel, (till the time comes for George's pelisse), when he is out of doors, sometimes. I told him yesterday morning that he ought to think very often of God now, and thank God for bringing us safe over the sea— "Less," he said, signifying that, besides, God had made Lili well & also himself— So ever since, he has been saying his prayers—three or four times, yesterday & today.

The meaning of Carlyle's coming to Paris was the paying a visit to Lord Ashburton who is at Meurice's hotel. He (Carlyle) came to us on saturday morning & complained pathetically of the impossibility of sleeping in the room to which he was consigned— He had half a mind he said, to run away from it all & take refuge with us—but they had promised him a back room & he would try it. "Oh—if he was'nt more comfortable he would certainly break with it all & come off to us & our quietness, which suited him much better"!— But as he did'nt appear yesterday, I suppose he was satisfied to some certain degree—only, at best, Meurice's hotel must be a noisy place, & so overflowing with visitors that the attendance is scarcely adequate to the demand. Carlyle declared that he rang six times for a bath (having not slept all night) & that at last they brought him a quart of water. Lord Ashburton had carried him off to the Théâtre Française on friday night, instantly on his arrival,—which was'nt exactly the best way of providing him with a good night's sleep, & the complicated excitement & fatigue had undone him, he said.

Nothing can be more Carlyleish, than Carlyle's way of talking. You should have heard him talk when Robert was doing our business at the custom-house &c— "Ah—it's a triumph for these fellows to have a poet to do just their will & pleasure. That's the way in this world. The earth born order about the heaven-born, & think it's only as it should be."

Robert called at Tennyson's old hotel but did not find him. Still, he may be in Paris.

Now, write to me, Arabel—do write everything— Tell me if anything should come to pass in respect to Papa— I think it just possible that he may say something about that letter. Tell me above all about yourself— Be as happy as you can, my own beloved sister—half my heart you keep with you. How you not only helped me to bear, but sweetened (almost) to me, what in London I expected to find intolerable. How much happier I am now than before I went!— Tell dear George to mind & write to me. Robert said yesterday, "I mean to write to George." Give our
very best love to him & dear Henry & all the rest—to Occy, not least: you shall hear more at length when we have subsided.

Had you a pleasant visit to M. Stratten's? Tell me everything, Arabel—and say whether you took the new little girl into the Refuge... the little street-sweeper whom we saw? Tell me about the Refuge, & all things you touch with your finger.

We were very provoked at having to leave behind us the two jars of pickle & preserve,—but we are still more so than we were, because the extreme civility of the custom house would have made another package easy to carry. I could ask Sarianna to bring these jars, if I were not afraid of troubling her above measure, she & her father being such inexperienced travellers. Indeed we might have brought plate, or anything else. The only thing, looked at obliquely, was Wilson's new green shawl which, in spite of my repeated advices, she wd persist in carrying on her arm. One of the custom house women took it up & said—"This is English, & quite new." "No," answered Wilson, "I have worn it." After a moment's consideration it was given back to her, but I assure you I trembled during that moment.

Tell dear Minny how deeply I feel her kindness to my child & me. Tell her to love us still & remember us in her prayers. I keep her gifts among my precious things.

I shall write to Henrietta next, for she may really be vexed with me & have the reason on her side. But she heard from you while I was in London, & that was far better, with such a whirling head as I had & indeed have still. So anxious I shall be as the fourteenth approaches!—But they wont get it, Arabel—oh, I fear much that they wont.13 Robert's affectionate love will be yours, I know, when he comes home—he is house-hunting—

I am your own grateful devoted

Ba

What I regret most to have left undone in London is the visit to Annie Hayes.

I do wish you could get to Hastings. The change & sea-air wd be of infinite use to you. C6 not George ask Papa ... a little, & see our way about apartments. Remember how near we are after all—

The sandwiches &c were most useful—Thanks on thanks.13

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Dated by Paris postmark of 29 September 1851, a Monday.
2. See note 7 in the preceding letter.
3. Carlyle wrote: "The Brownings, and their experience and friendly qualities, were worth waiting for during one day" (Last Words, p. 151); and he commented several times on RB's handling of details; on the steamer journey, "Browning managed everything for me" (p. 152,) and after they arrived in Dieppe, "Browning, as before, did everything" (p. 158), and finally at Paris, "the brave Browning fought for us [to get their luggage through customs]" (p. 161). Unfortunately, Carlyle's account of this journey mentions EBB only in passing.
4. "Aunt" and "grandfather."
5. "Tomorrow."
6. Mrs. Thompson kept lodgings at 26 Devonshire Street, where the Brownings had resided during their recent two-month stay in London.

7. An imitation of Pen's baby talk for “ducks.”

8. EBB further identifies the church in letter 74 (see note 31). It is listed in Galignani’s as the “chapelle Taitbout, 44, rue de Provence; service in French and English” (Galignani’s New Paris Guide, Paris: A. and W. Galignani and Co., 1851, p. 126). In letter 83 (see note 14), EBB identifies the minister as M. Bridel, and she gives more details about the death of his daughter, as well as the death of his wife and unborn child.

9. Carlyle writes that “noises from the street abounded, nor were wanting from within. Brief, I got no wink of sleep all night” (Last Words, p. 164). He also records his difficulty in arranging a bath, nevertheless he explains “at length I victoriously got my baquet ... huge tub, five feet in diameter” (p. 166). His second room would prove “a much better ... but still not quiet one” (p. 167). He also relates his visit to the Brownings, whom he “found all brisk and well-rested in the Rue Michodière (queer old quiet inn, Aux Armes de la Ville de Paris)” (p. 168).

10. Carlyle notes that Lord Normanby had furnished a box, which he (Carlyle) describes as a “very bad box, ‘stage-box,’ close to the actors” (Last Words, pp. 162–163).

11. Unidentified, but related to Arabella’s work with the Ragged Schools.

12. EBB’s prediction was correct; see letter 71, note 12.

13. The last sentence appears on the throat of the envelope, as does some scribbling by Pen including a boat.

Letter 70

[Paris]

Sunday Oct- 5. [1851]

Oh my beloved Arabel, how very vexed I am that you should have suffered such vain uneasiness about us! That traitor of a waiter at Dieppe who swore to me to take care of my letter & speed it safely by the packet!— I wrote the note-paper quite full, I assure you, & you ought to have had it at M[ Stratten’s on Saturday morning—W ell—there’s no use in raging & raving. Only, Arabel, you ought not after all to have been too uneasy. If anything had been very wrong, observe, either by packet or rail, you would have heard it by the newspapers without fail— Did’nt George remind you of that?

As to the voyage, nothing could have been much worse, except that we arrived safe at last. Immediately on getting to Newhaven we went on board the packet, never thinking of what was to follow, because there was no apparent wind. But on issuing from the haven, the sea was in a foam, & presently we had wind more than enough, till the ship rolled & toppled & creaked with the deepest of her timbers, the decks swept everywhere by the waves. I sate on deck for an hour & a half, however, wrapt in a blanket, & with Baby asleep on my knees, but at last the constrained position overcame me & I had to go down stairs with him by the help of the captain— As to poor Robert he was past help long ago,— & so was Wilson, in the cabin. I went down then, with Wiedeman, & lay on the sofa next her, and as soon as I lay down the sickness went off & I kept well the rest of the passage. Was’n t it disgraceful that I should have been ill at all? Indeed I think so. And Flush was ill. Flush had to be removed from the deck & deposited in some black hole, poor fellow, he was so very sick. And Wilson suffered dreadfully the whole way. And Wiedeman, after growing paler & paler, sate up gravely & was sick & lay down again with great
satisfaction—I "advised him," I said, "to lie quietly"—and he answered "Less," & lay perfectly still for hours till I told him that we had arrived, and then he jumped up in an ecstasy & said he would have "latte e tè" direct, and that we had all been sick, Papa, Mama, Lila, & Wiedeman, too, which has added considerably, he seemed to think, to his social importance. It was in the very highest spirits he landed at Dieppe, shouting out about the soldiers, & examining everything at the inn— He didn't go to bed till eleven, & then he was laughing & singing as if it was getting up-time instead— I only wonder that he wasn't frightened at sea. The cabin-windows, hatchways &c, were all closed, so that even before the sun went down we were in the dark, rocked backwards & forwards & startled by the crash of crockery & tables & chairs tumbling about, at intervals. I confess to you I was nervous myself; I asked the stewardess if there was any danger, & she answered quietly "It was impossible to know how things might end, in such a stormy sea as that." Indeed, a most disagreeable passage it was altogether & very thankful we were to arrive at nine o'clock, half past nine, rather. From half past one, eight hours of it—Wiedeman never cried once. Robert stayed on deck the whole time, because he was too ill to move—he & Carlyle who was very uncomfortable indeed— When I threw myself on a (spring, Arabel!) sofa at Dieppe & had ordered coffee, the cares of life seemed thrown at an enormous distance in the very act— Robert went off to the custom house however, but our boxes passed free & everything went smoothly. I slept the whole night through without waking, and didn't dream even of you—

Oh, dearest, dearest Arabel, we drove through Wimpole Street in coming away— I let down the glass & looked up at the windows through some bitter tears, and Wiedeman made them fall faster by saying very softly "Minny, Minny." If you miss me, never think that I do not miss you, my own beloved sister— I miss you, miss you, miss you, at every hour of the day— I love you better than I ever did before,—believe that of me,— & that all your dear tender sympathy & goodness to me are treasured deeply in my memory among it's [sic] precious & holy things. Thank you for what you say of Robert. He loves you as his own sister—that he keeps declaring & I know. Yes, yes— God will bring us together some day, to keep longer & closer together—you will see. I shall have you in Paris, I feel sure. Now, I am gathering still more hope of being able to stay. Our weather has been delightful on the whole— interspersed with rainy hours, but let up by splendid sunshine, & with a clear blue high sky over all. Yesterday & the day before the temperature was just like May— & the air, when I was walking with Robert on the boulevards at past six, was the softest & balmiest possible. Certainly we have great advantages over you in point of climate, & Robert who feared the most, begins to take good hope about it— Then, after great tribulation on his part, we have engaged an apartment. The difficulty was to attend to Mr Kenyon's wishes & establish ourselves near the Madeleine. Robert did everything in vain. Paris is crushingly full, & the number of apartments in this particular situation is small & the dearest of all. There were two within our means certainly—one on a first floor, dingy & small & without sun; the rooms so close together that we should have heard Wiedeman turn in his bed. Who could write under such circumstances?— The second, on what was called a fourth floor, but what I call (counting the entresol) a fifth— It was really unsafe for me with my weak chest, to climb so high as a matter of necessity everyday. It made me cough, even to try it once. Otherwise, & for a strong person, nothing could be better, the rooms being very nice & sufficiently numerous,
bathed in sunshine, a piano thrown into the bargain, too. But the risk was obvious, so we gave up the thought of it, & went off to the Champs Elysées [sic].—& I do hope dear M. Kenyon will recognize when we come to confession with him, that we did not do it without a reason. Also, the distance is not so immense. Robert proved to me yesterday that I could walk it myself, and we can come to the boulevards any day in a cab for a shilling when we feel lazy at all. Our apartment is in an excellent house kept by an Englishwoman, on the sunny side of the Avenue des Champs Elysées [sic], 138, with a large terrace belonging to ourselves, overhanging the beautiful avenue, & surrounded by trees on all sides— It’s a situation which exactly answers to those houses in Hyde Park you & Robert admired so much. We have drawingroom, dining room, a room for Robert’s dressing & writing, a bedroom for ourselves, one for Wiedeman & Wilson, another for a servant, with kitchen &c.—bedrooms & sitting rooms carpetted & very clean & comfortable in all ways . . . spring chairs & sofas, Arabel—two pounds a week. Ah—it’s too much, I know; but we could’n t beat them down, and, with this writing in prospect, it was necessary to have a complement of rooms. There’s a small apartment above us, three bedrooms & sitting room, very small but with a magnificent view, for a pound a week— I do wish Henrietta w’d come & take it. Observe, you must direct as usual, till the tenth (10th) because we cant enter till then.

Write to me quickly—directly, mind. Kiss dear Trippy for me— Give my best love to dear George, Henry & all. I am decidedly happier for having seen them, dear things— The chamber maid here said to me yesterday, speaking of Wiedeman, “il commence à parler le français.” Poor child— Wilson heard him saying to himself the other morning “œuf—ovo” . . & now he orders his own “œuf” in french.

God bless you my beloved. Robert was quite vexed that I would’nt stay the communion this morning at the church—7 He “does dislike going out in that way.” Really I had not courage, for fear of being asked, our business there— Still perhaps they w’d have let us stay. We can try another time.

Your ever own
Ba

Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by internal references to the Brownings travelling to Paris with Carlyle.
2. See letter 68, note 7.
3. “Milk and tea.”
4. Carlyle records that “towards 10 p.m.” they finally received “some very bad cold tea, and colder coffee,” and that RB returned from customs with their luggage at “half-past ten” (Last Words, p. 155).
5. “He is starting to speak French.”
7. EBB’s reason for not taking communion is unclear, although she might have felt that specific permission was required. In a description of a “presbyterian worship” they attended in Rome in December 1853, EBB described the communion service and noted that they “stayed without any permission, beyond the general invitation to christians of all denominations given in the sermon—we saw at once that we were free to stay” (letter 106).
Letter 71

138. Avenue Champs Elysées.

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday– [12–14 October 1851] 1

My ever dearest Arabel, The first thing I do in our new house is to answer your letter which I find in it, if indeed any legible word may be carried to you by this pale ink– My dearest, dearest Arabel, how grieved I am to hear of your rheumatism! Why what can you have done that such grievous suffering should have befallen you? stayed out in the fog at the Refuge or some other as imprudent thing, I dare say. Oh, Arabel, tell me exactly how you are & whether this strange, astonishing journey to Kinnersley has done you harm or good. It will do you good, I think, in certain respects, and I am very glad that you are about to take it—and yet I shall feel rather uneasy till I hear that you do not suffer more from the rheumatic pains in consequence of it. It seems a risk to run, setting out so soon, when you have by no means recovered—as it is plain you have not. You went to D! Hamilton, I hope, before you left London. And do, in the country, wrap yourself up well, & dont think of such madness as going out “sketching” at this time of year– The resource of “picking mushrooms”, I wont shut you out from (will there be any better at Kinnersley?) but the “sketching” may cost me too dear, for me not to cry out against it in time. After all, the change of air & scene will do you good, I hope & pray. Write to me faithfully & very often, for your letters are too precious, to do without beyond a short breathing-time.

We are much pleased with our apartment. The situation is splendid really—and to see so much of the life & gaiety of Paris trailing between the trees, of the great avenue by lamplight yesterday evening, under our windows, kept us fixed at them when we ought to have been unpacking our boxes. Then the rooms themselves, though not very large, are bright & comfortable, carpeted throughout, & with all sorts of luxurious chairs everywhere. We have strewn our books about the drawing-room, & drawn the curtains close to keep out the sun, & opened the desk on the table—& now it looks quite artistical & as it should look–

There’s a room for a cuisiniere [sic]1 up stairs, & we have taken a very nice-looking, cheerful person, who is to keep the apartments clean, make the beds &c, & wait, besides cooking, & to receive twenty two francs a month. Yes, and, Arabel, we went yesterday to a ready-made linen ware-house & bought two pairs of cotton sheets for her, at 3½–8d the pair– So much cheaper than any I could get in England, you will remember. They asked me 7½–6d at Moles’s, & at theshop in Crawford Street, 5½— and these French ones are even made! Do you know, I had not courage to ask the price of the linen sheets: I had a sort of inward assurance that they would be cheaper here than those we got with so much pains in London. For observe, the cotton sheets are excellent—as fine as they need be. And we bought six pillow-cases of fine cotton for our own use, at a shilling each, beautifully made. Also, we bought knives & spoons & forks for common use, five pence each the spoon & fork, & you could not tell them from silver. We can use them perfectly ourselves till we get our plate
Letter 71

[12–14 October 1851] 415

over, & afterwards they will do for the kitchen. The knives were ten francs the dozen. Altogether, we thought we did very well & very unpoeetically. What keeps pleasing me most is the climate. "Fires," my dearest Arabel,!! why we could not bear such a thing. I am sitting with the windows thrown open, quite oppressed with the heat, & really Robert & I felt at a difficult matter to do our walking yesterday & the day before. The thermometers stood at seventy on the Boulevard, out of the sun. I cant help thinking it must be unusually warm weather for Paris, seeing that Florence last year by no means was as warm at this season. As to England, you cant compare an English climate with anything else in the world I do believe. It has a supremacy in badness. How people can go on breathing there, with a chance of getting out of it, fills me with wonder. You cant tell what it is, till you do get out of it, .. there's one explanation. You dont know what it is to get free of that leaden paper-weight of low sky which presses you & creases your very soul. Robert gravely suggested the other day that the extraordinary evils of your English climate might arise from a general deficiency of drainage—& that natural philosophers may in time find out a remedy. In which case, I shall belong to the Anti-fog Law League, remember, & do my duty as a zealous female Cobden.5

Meanwhile, it is very pleasant here in this blaze of sunshine & lovely clear air. Did I tell you that we were on a second floor? But the staircase is very easy, & I have nothing to complain of anywhere. The garden-trees wave deliciously against the bedroom windows, and the mixture of quiet & cheerfulness is charming! Miss Haworth has sent us a letter of introduction to Lady Elgin,6 & we mean to present it, now that we are settled, chiefly because she knows Lamartine & various of the notabilities. Also, Carlyle procures for us from Mazzini, a letter to George Sand.7 Poor Carlyle was in great anguish all the time he was in Paris. As a visitor to Lord Ashburton, I suppose he did'nt like to leave his host at the hôtel [sic] de Meurice, and he was distracted at the hotel, what with noise, & light—he used to get up at four in the morning & smoke, to keep himself from going mad outright from the continual want of sleep, he said. Lord & Lady Ashburton seemed to have been full of attention to him—took him to Lord Normandy's [sic], introduced him to M. Thiers,8 & drove him about in the carriage from one end of Paris to the other, day after day. The driving about Paris was the only thing he could bear—Everything else appears to go sadly wrong. At dinner at Lady Sandwiches9 (when he had resigned himself to the evil of French cookery) up came M. Prosper Merimée,10 "academician," and began to talk down Goethe & Jean Paul. He bore it for twenty minutes & then rushed away to his pipe, not to cry out "Why you impertinent blasphemous scoundrel, what do you mean!" Poor Carlyle. It was very unfortunate altogether. He kept saying, "If I had but come to you that first night—!" His two last evenings he did spend with us & was most interesting. I like him very much. I never saw a writer so like his own books—that is, in society. He admired Paris after all, & said he would bring M'n Carlyle some day & settle himself quietly, & then "keep driving about the city at the top of an omnibus." He "thought he could get most good out of that." This time he stayed only a week, & Robert had a letter from him yesterday, to say that he had slept ever since!—He "had'nt slept so much these seven years!—" An eight day's sleep he had had!—11

My dearest Arabel, I am very much afraid about Surtees's disappointment—I mean about the effect it may have on him. He will be much depressed I fear, & Henrietta for his sake. As to
the thing itself I have never expected much—for various reasons it seemed unlikely that he should succeed in it. How I wish he had done as Robert would certainly—have given it up upon receiving Papa’s letter. That would have been an opening to a reconciliation, perhaps. Papa wd have found it difficult to keep his position under such circumstances, at any rate. For my part, I feel despondent altogether. But dont let me write of it.

Wiedeman talks of you constantly, & always remembers you in his prayers. You are “la zia”—& Sarianna Browning is “la zianna.” He cant say “Arabel” anyhow. He has taken to call himself Wiedeman, which he has turned into Peninny—by an extraordinary resolution of syllables. I asked him if he loved me, the other day. ‘Less,’ said he—“Peninny Mama’s boy.” He takes the easiest words out of the various languages he hears, & uses them with great impartiality. Wilson reproved him for saying “dinë” today, instead of “dinner”; but he persisted in “dinë”— “Dinner, ah..h” (nasty) he said. Then he has learnt to say ‘Ti voglio bene’ to great perfection, & to translate it by “I love you”... not quite as well pronounced—sounding indeed very much like “I wash you” as Robert accurately remarked. He is delighted with the “nuova casa,” which he calls his “hom” (home) & lays immense stress on the “pateti” (alberi)—to say nothing of the advantage of seeing from the windows all the troops in Paris march to & fro with music & trumpets, and the balloons go up close by, and the neighbourhood of four highly respectable Punches on every holiday. I assure you his cheeks get redder & redder, & Wilson says she never knew him eat such a dinner as he did today. Dont let me forget to tell you that by a singular good fortune, Suzanne our new servant, speaks Italian, relieving poor Wilson from a most uncomfortable condition of non-intercourse. She was in Italy some years ago for seven or eight months, & is delighted to exercise her old accomplishment.

You must understand that this letter is put into the post on tuesday. I have been scratching on day after day, & at last refused to write a word more till Robert went out to bring me some ink. If men’s ‘good deeds are writ in water,’ so is the first part of this letter. Can you read it, I wonder. We like our apartment more & more. Robert, poor darling, has taken to his new room with green curtains, & sits there half in sun & half in shade, “doing” his Shelley to his heart’s content.” “Monday,” he said, “was the happiest day he had had since he left England; and we never have lived in a house, he likes so well as this.”! So ‘Casa Guidi’ is slighted you see—dear Casa Guidi. I am faithful, at least. “among the faithless, faithful only found” The truth is, his room is very comfortable, and, the blaze of sunshine we have lived in since we came, is most inspiriting, taken in connection with the stir & quiet & brilliancy of the great Paris life as seen from the windows. Last night, (that is, as late as half past six) he & I were walking in the crowd, & at last standing quietly on the bridge which faces the chamber of deputies, looking down into the beautiful Seine & up to the amber skies beyond, & round on the fantastic city drawn out in gas light. It was an enchanted scene altogether. The fountains, like silver mists, seemed hanging in the air by a spell—And I was there without a shawl, even. As to my cough, I have quite forgotten it; I believe it is all but gone if not utterly. Oh—and I am delighted that Robert should be so pleased: he is really pleased. Our divorce is at [an] end, Arabel, .. I mean the divorce which London dissipations made necessary for the time. Now, we are always together again, except when he writes about Shelley in the next room. “I feel in such good spirits,” he says! Your letter relieved me in some
respects, though it gave the bad news about your unwellness. We must leave everything in God’s hands—but there is a sort of lunacy which does’nt come under the doctors. As to my marriage, that was the absolutest wisdom, I maintain, & the event has proved. Some fine kinds of prudence are apt to be confounded with imprudence—but they should never be—

Write to me, my beloved Arabel—oh, let me remember to say that your combs have been comforts indeed—My hair was in splendid curl as I made tea for M! Carlyle at Dieppe, in consequence of them, and Robert is reconciled to the occasional loss of the lank straight streamers in order to the permanent advantage. I have bought a bonnet—foolishly went to the Place Vendome where bonnets are dearer, & so had to pay eighteen francs, which I grudged rather—fifteen shillings. But it is a pretty bonnet—drawn moroon [sic] satin trimmed with moroon [sic] velvet, & Robert is tolerably satisfied with it, which is miraculous. —Arabel!—it will be miraculous also if you dont get into a scrape where you are—you dearest of non-conformists!—Certainly to “sit under” Leonard, cant be the most edifying of positions. Tell me all about it, for I feel very sympathetic.

But say especially how you are. Is your grey shawl at all like the one Sarianna gave me, I wonder.

Give my best love to dear Bummy if she cares to have it—& think of me my beloved Arabel at prayer time & love-time, as

your own ever attached

Ba.

Robert’s affectionate love. I dont like to ask Sarianna to take the preserves, as she talked of wishing to take so little luggage. Send me the receipt for the pommade for the hair, as Robert likes it.

I am afraid that Wiedeman does’nt make great progress in theology. We had been talking gravely on religious questions the other day—and at last I said—“Chi è el piu buono di tutti?” To which he answered without hesitation, …“Penimny[.]” Dear M! Kenyon had the goodness to go to New Cross to enquire about us. We have written to him now.

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / The Rectory / Kinnersley Castle / near Hereford.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Dating based on internal references to the Brownings’ move into 138 Avenue des Champs Elysées on Friday, 10 October 1851. The envelope bears a Paris postmark of 14 October 1851.
2. Edward Hamilton, 22 Grafton Street, Bond Street.
3. “Cook.”
4. Probably John Watkins Moule, a silk mercer, at 54 Baker Street, Portman Square. There are three silk mercers and ten linendrapers listed in Crawford Street in Kelly’s The Post Office London Directory for 1851.
5. Richard Cobden (1804-65), M.P. for Stockport from 1841–46, one of the principal proponents of the Anti-Corn Law League, was actively involved in education reform about this time.
6. Elizabeth Bruce (née Oswald, d. 1860) was the widow of Thomas Bruce (1766–1841), 7th Earl of Elgin. He was responsible for transferring antiquities from Greece, now known as the Elgin Marbles. Euphrasia Fanny Haworth (1801–83) and RB had been acquainted since the late 1830’s. She is the “English Eyebright” referred
to in Sordello, III, 967, and her friendship extended to EBB about this time. For a complete biographical account, see BC, 3, 314-315. Her letter of introduction for Lady Elgin has not survived.

7. Amantine Lucile Aurore Dudevant (née Dupin, 1804-76)—known by her pseudonym George Sand—had come to Paris “to be present at the first night of Le Mariage de Victorine. A few days after the opening Louis Napoleon staged his coup d’état and George returned to Nohant with Solange [her daughter] and the little granddaughter” (Ruth Jordan, George Sand: A Biography, London: Constable, 1976, p. 271).

8. Louis Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877) was a French statesman and writer. Carlyle mentions the drive and the visit with Thiers in his account of his visit to Paris. Recalling the 26th of September, Carlyle wrote: “At four o’clock home, when two things were to be done: M. Thiers to be received, and a ride to be executed,—of which only the former took fulfilment.” He said he “had seen the man [i.e., Thiers] before in London, and cared not to see him again, but it seemed expected I should stay in the room” (Last Words, p. 168).

9. Mary Ann Julia Louisa (d. 1862) was the widow of George John Sandwich, 6th Earl of Sandwich. Carlyle said that “Lady Sandwich’s dinner was wholly in the French fashion, this was its whole result for me,—to see such a thing once. … Kickshaws, out of which I gathered a slice of undone beef, wines enough, out of which a drop of good sherry and tumbler of vin ordinaire … then to the drawing-room for coffee and talk with Thiers and Mérimée, who said, or could say, nothing notable” (Last Words, p. 181).

10. Prosper Mérimée (1803-70); Carlyle described him as an “utterly barren man (whom I had seen before in London, with little wish for a second course of him)” (Last Words, p. 172). Referring to the encounter at Lady Sandwich’s and afterwards, Carlyle wrote: “Mérimée sat again in the drawing-room at Meurice’s; got upon German literature: ‘Jean Paul [Richter], a hollow fool of the first magnitude;’ ‘Goethe the best, but insignificant, unintelligible, a paltry kind of scribe manqué (as it seemed)’:—I could stand no more of it, but lighted a cigar, and adjourned to the street. ‘You impertinent blasphemous blockhead!’ this was sticking in my throat; better to retire without bringing it out” (Last Words, p. 182).

11. Carlyle concluded his account with a description of the journey from Paris and his return to Chelsea: “Near midnight, through muddy rains, am home safe,—scarce credible!—and have, as it were, slept ever since. Oh the joy of being home again, home and silent!” (Last Words, p. 191).

13. “Small aunt,” as opposed to “la zia” meaning “aunt.”
14. Depending on the context, “I like you very much”, or “I love you”, as EBB indicates.
15. “New house.”
17. “Here lies one whose name was writ in water” was the inscription Keats requested for his tombstone (Richard Monckton Milnes, The Life and Letters of John Keats, London: Edward Moxon, 1848, II, 91).

18. RB was working on his essay for the Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley: with an introductory essay, by R. Browning (London: Edward Moxon, 1852). The forty-four page essay is dated: “Paris, Dec. 4th, 1851.” Moxon had purchased the letters at auction, where they had been placed on consignment by William White, a bookseller in Pall Mall. The letters turned out to be spurious, written by someone who claimed to be Byron’s son. According to Thomas J. Wise, RB never saw the letters, but worked from a set of transcripts supplied to him by Moxon (Thomas James Wise, A Browning Library, London: privately printed, 1929, p. 19).

19. Cf. Milton, Paradise Lost, V, 897: “Among the faithless, faithful only hee.”
20. See letter 60, note 2.
21. “Who is the best of all?”
The Letters of
Elizabeth Barrett Browning
to Her Sister Arabella

Edited with Introduction and Notes
by

SCOTT LEWIS

In Two Volumes
Volume II

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
2000
p. 428, n. 6, line 3: “shining.” should read “shining’ (p. 5).”
p. 442, n. 8: “Charles Montalembert” should read “Charles Forbes René Montalembert”.
p. 442, n. 17: “deplore.” should read “deplore’ (p. 4).”
p. 447, n. 17, line 3: “… The Cathedral” should read “The coup d’œil on entering the cathedral”.
p. 482, n. 10: “(see note 2 above)” should read “(see note 3 above).”
p. 527, n. 9: “of truth of and soberness” should read “of truth and soberness”.
p. 555, n. 19, line 3: “issue of 6 March 1853” should read “issue of 1 March 1853”.
p. 555, n. 19, line 6: “unfitted for.” should read “unfitted for’ (p. 6).”
p. 556, n. 27: “everybody makes holiday” should read “every body makes holiday”.
p. 574, n. 28, line 7: “Louis Napoleon” should read “LOUIS NAPOLEON”.
p. 583, n. 21, line 7: “Daniel Dunglass Home” should read “Daniel Dunglas Home”.
p. 632, n. 2, line 4: “months.” should read “months’ (p. 1).”
p. 642, n. 16, line 3: “Ettrick Shepherd was £50 per year” should read “Ettrick Shepherd was given £50 per year”.
p. 642, n. 16, line 3: “poetical talent.” should read “poetical talent’ (p. 7).”
p. 656, line 26: delete call-out 16 after Villa Torrigiani.
p. 663, n. 9: “UPSHARIN” should read “UPHARSIN”.
p. 748, n. 5, line 3: “no. 1418” should read “no. 1480”.

Letter 72

138 Avenue des champs Elysées
Oct. 31. Nov. 2. [1851]

Ever beloved Arabel I hope you have been looking out for a letter from me some days now—Robert’s father & sister are with us—that is, are spending all their time with us except the sleeping time. They came sooner, by a sudden arrangement, than they had thought of, or than we exactly wished .. for we happened to be in a desperate state of crisis just at the moment. Our French servant, who was an excellent servant, cooked well, did everything well, was accused one fine morning by the proprietor of the house of very defective morals—She had received a “bon ami” three times already—the ‘bon ami’ never left her till daylight—it was a case past explanation. So we were forced to send her away, & there was a ‘scene’, in which she prayed the gods might provide us with as good a servant as herself, with no worse fault than such a “bêtise” as what we sent her away for—Certainly she had been imprudent—she ought to have known that the English were “excessivement severes” about such things—but she did think that upon her promise to be careful for the future, we should keep her in her situation. It was impossible however. The facts were known in the house, & we could not keep a woman of a disreputable character. But it was very vexatious, especially at that moment. Now we have a little brisk laughing creature, who tumbles about everything .. “has no method,” Wilson says, but who cooks extremely well & is as good natured as possible. Her name is Desirée, and I dare say she will do for us perfectly. Things appear cheaper instead of dearer as we come to understand better, and a good manager (which neither I nor Robert can pretend to be) might live for very little. On the other hand it is colder—much colder, the last few days,—and I cant get out, which is a pity just now when the Browning are here,—but Robert wanders about with them, & the weather will change soon, I must hope. I shall insist this evening on his taking Sarianna to Mme Mohl’s ‘soirée, [sic]’ because she called here two days ago & invited her particularly—but as to going myself that’s out of the question. I was there with Robert last friday, & liked it as well as I can like anything of the sort—Oh it was amusing enough, and as little constrained as the coffee-drinking in the piazza of St Mark’s at Venice—You stay half an hour, an hour, or more, just as you like—and you may wear a cloak & bonnet, if you like, for I saw one lady equipped so—Then you have the satisfaction of knowing (if you have sensibility) that your hostess cant by any possibility be ruined, even if you persist in going to see her every friday in the year. We had each of us a cup of very watery tea (—which Robert pretended to take, & set down on a table—) but not the shadow of a piece of bread & butter even, to break on the repose. The refreshments are altogether spiritual, I assure you—There were a good many French, & among them a friend of George Sand, whom Mme Mohl wanted to bring up to introduce to us, but failed, she says, because we were so knotted round with English. There was M’ Phillimore, George’s friend,—the writer in Blackwood & barrister—he came in George’s name. Then, M’ Thompson, the abolitionist, who is rather a philanthropical bore, it must be confessed—he would insist on talking to me about his flight from Boston from the mob of five thousand, & various circumstances appertaining. I sympathize with him so utterly, you see, that nothing remains to be said—and he is not eloquent in conversation
... for an orator! Then, M'am Chapman,* the female mover of the American abolition-movement.. a pupil of Dr Channing’s—I had had one or two letters from her, years ago. She is a clever woman, & still pretty, though with two grown up daughters. Then, a Mr Savile Morton,* whom Robert met once at Mon[c]kton Milnes’s— (He writes, I think, for the Daily News[.]) Then, a Miss Julia Smith,** whom I have heard of all my life as an intimate friend of Harriet Martineau .. with a keen, impressive face. People not of the highest interest, but in their degree, interesting enough. For the rest, there seems to be a general inclination of kindness towards us, & as I say to Robert, we must really take care not to be taken off our feet by the stream of society .. especially English: it would be the ruin of our life & comfort. I like Lady Elgin— She has an earnest countenance, with a soul looking out of it,— & nothing can be more cordial than her bearing to us. She wrote to me the day before yesterday to beg us to let her take us in her carriage to St Cloud*— “a beautiful drive along the banks of the Seine” .. but we had visitors, & it was impossible. Robert has done his Shelley, except something of the writing out part, & just now he can’t do much of course. As for me I have not set myself to think what I shall do, yet, but it must come.

We have had a visit from a M. Emile Forgues,* who is to bring his wife, he says— It was he who reviewed Robert in the ‘Revue des deux mondes’ some three years ago. I like him. He is characteristic & animated. By the way, an article on Robert in this same ‘Revue des deux mondes” appeared last August, & we have had sight of it at last. It is very ably & conscientiously written, & the most satisfactory review I ever met with on the subject. If it satisfies me, you may suppose that it is in the highest degree appreciating— Here’s a phrase or two— “J’aborde une individualité singulière, les uns diraient maladive, les autres diront merveilleuse, en tout cas une individualité bien propre à embarrasser ses juges. Pour apprécier M. Browning, on est forcé de prophétiser, comme lorsqu’il agit d’une religion naissante. Pour donner une idée de lui, les mots font défaut. — Son genie à lui, c’est de pouvoir ce que M. Tennyson ne peut pas; c’est de revoir en chaque fait un abrégé de la creation. Chacun son rôle: aux uns de centraliser toutes les emotions humaines, aux autres de centraliser toutes nos conceptions. Pour les uns, le lyrisme; pour M. Browning, la poésie epique.— De tous les poètes que je sache, il est le plus capable de résumer les conceptions de la religion, de la morale et de la science théorique de notre époque, en leur donnant un corps poétique.” * * *

Those are a few sentences drawn out at hazard. It is a very long & elaborate review, & I can’t pretend to give you an idea of it—but, of course, it will be a fortunate introduction into the society of men of letters here. Also, I should be delighted, under any circumstances, at such a notice from the first literary periodical in Europe. The writer is a M. Milsand—

Arlette came twice to see me, & Ml Reynolds & Sir James Carmichael, with her, on one occasion: afterwards she brought her little girl. Very affectionate she always is to me, & very pretty she looked— prettier, I maintain, than before her marriage, though there’s a difference of opinion on this point. I do hope she may enjoy Florence. She talks of Paris for next winter. I wonder Bummy did not go with her to Italy, as she thinks of Italy at all. Arlette told me she had begged her to go.
The Hedleys have taken an apartment in Rue l'astorg, near the Madeleine, and are so much engaged in furnishing it that Robert and I have been to see them only once, we were so afraid of being in the way. The Tours furniture was considered unworthy of Paris, and they are exchanging chintz for satin, and reforming everything altogether. When we saw the apartment, it was all confusion accordingly, but I dare say, it will be beautiful at last. It is on a second floor (no disadvantage at Paris, as I have told you) and the windows look on a garden full of trees—I have seen more picturesque rooms, certainly. The drawing room is large and square, and the dining room close to it—but the furniture will look well, and the general result will be very handsome and comfortable, I think. The rooms for the little girls and their governess are particularly nice, and Aunt Jane's own bedroom is delightful. She looks well and is charmed to be in Paris. Not quite so, poor Uncle Hedley, who keeps sighing for the country, the country! He likes nothing but the country, he says, and should be happy to be able to live in England. He had a garden at Tours. Still, I do think the removal here is a wise thing. They have all been most affectionately kind to me—I never come to see me again and again, and Robert is quite won over from his old disbelief in the love for me of any of my relations. Ibbit is lovely—very like Aunt Jane in that look of sweetness she has. Yet she is not regularly handsome, nor is likely to be considered so. The other little girls don't seem to me pretty at all—Fanny is most so. Aunt Jane told me that Mr. Bevan was not a step nearer the papacy—"he was firm as a rock": and she thought him "quite right in his opinions." She was more surprised at Bummy's Puseyism than I am, by any manner of means—but I can't help being amused at the idea of your face, Arabel, under the development of the causes of the "Danger of the church of England" in Leonard's reading. Tell me everything, do.

Wiedeman was called "an angel" by Ibbit the other day, to my great satisfaction. Aunt Jane thinks him "very like Sette": He gets on capital with his talking, and is more and more winning. The other morning Ma'am Mohl was giving us a graphic account of the last revolution. (She is an Englishwoman, I think I told you, and married a German, naturalized French) "Suddenly," said she, "my heart beat at the rate of a hundred and sixty—I heard the tocsin." "Boum" said Wiedeman. Carried away by the situation, beyond all sense of shyness. He had been listening to her with intent, staring eyes, for a quarter of an hour together, and now, they were coming out of his head with excitement. "Boum" said he.

She turned quite with wonder to us—"Do you mean to say that child understands what we are talking of?" Indeed he did, perfectly. And soon, when Robert said that he would like to go into the streets and see the fighting, and when I said that he shouldn't go, unless he chose to take me and Baby with him, the child burst out into one of his fits of animation and eloquence. "No, Peninni—Peninni, no[ ]—he would stay at "hom" with "Lili"—he would not go out among the "babas" (the soldiers) to hear "boum, boum" & be fought against, this way, & this way (striking into the air with his little arms) "no, Peninni, no, Papa." And ever since then, whenever you want to move him you have only to talk about the "revoluzione"—I assure you he thinks deeply about it.

By the way, we are all to have our heads cut off on the fourth of November—so we were told yesterday. There's to be a stormy 'chamber,' in any case, and I would give much to be present. If we could but get tickets! It is said that the president is a "fatalist" and "entété" to an extreme, believing that he is necessary to France. So his enemies say, and I, who do not count among them,
believe they speak quite truly. How things will end, it is difficult to guess at all, but certainly they are likely to end before May; & I, for my part, would rather they ended with Louis Napoleon than Henri cinq. It is very exciting.

Dearest, darling Arabel, I do trust your rheumatic pains have quite left you. I hear from Henrietta who does not hear from you she says— I do hope you are too amused to write,—& no worse reason. I wish I could hear. Put the enclosed little sheet under an envelope to Henrietta— She asks me one or two questions & I dont like either to delay answering them or to make her pay for a letter immediately. I hope this wont be overweight. Write & tell me everything—Write directly. I am hungry & thirsty for letters. Wiedeman wore George’s pelisse yesterday, which together with a becoming new hat, a white felt hat & feathers, made him look really pretty. But he doesn’t like it as well as your red frock— The red frock, is his joy & glory—and I assure you we had to send him out in it, (with his trowsers, Arabel!) today. He cried for it, & being a spoilt child, had his own way of course. Wilson says that he is very much admired here. People turn round to look at him. And do you know, Miss Geraldine Jewsbury told Carlyle who told me, that I had the “most beautiful child that ever was seen.” I suppose she saw him (when she called on me & I was out) with scarlet cheeks just awake, which always make him look pretty, you know.

God bless you my own very dear sister— Pray for me & love me—hold me tenderly in your heart, for it is a precious place to

your Ba.

Read if you please what I send to Henrietta. It’s an answer to questions chiefly.

Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year determined by the return address; 1851 was the only year in which the Brownings resided at 138 Avenue des Champs Elysées in October.
2. They stayed for three weeks. Their lease at Hatcham was due to terminate in March 1852, and they were contemplating removing to Paris.
3. “Stupidity.”
4. “Excessively severe.”
5. Mary Elizabeth Mohl (née Clarke, 1792–1883) was an Englishwoman who married Jules Mohl (1800–76), a French orientalist, in August 1847; she had lived in Paris since 1814. “Madame Mohl’s salon did not resemble the salons of former days, where only a chosen few were admitted. She was careful as to the residents in Paris, for, as she said, it was not like an evening by special invitation. Once invited to her Fridays, you might always go” (M.C.M. Simpson, Letters and Recollections of Julius and Mary Mohl, London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1887, p. 86). In addition to her salon on Fridays, she also entertained in smaller groups “by invitation,” particularly when she wished to introduce certain individuals to one another; these gatherings “were far more interesting than the ordinary Friday evenings” (p. 87).
6. John George Phillimore (1808–65), a jurist and a contributor to Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine; see BC, 9, 230.
7. George Thompson (1804–78) was a British abolitionist who was instrumental in forming an antislavery society in Edinburgh. At the invitation of William Lloyd Garrison, he travelled to America in 1834 to speak against slavery before large crowds. In October 1835 he just escaped being mobbed in Boston, and the following month he was forced to leave America. The mob was estimated by some at six to ten thousand, but other estimates placed it nearer two to five thousand (William Lloyd Garrison, 1805–1879: The Story of His Life Told by His
Letter 72  
31 October–2 November [1851]  

Children, New York: Century Co., 1885, II, 11). Thompson had been in America a second time from November 1850 until June 1851. As indicated in letter 83, EBB set aside her otherwise negative opinion of Thompson when she learned that he had had personal experiences with the rapping spirits.

8. Maria Chapman (née Weston, 1806–85), was the editor of The Liberty Bell, an abolitionist annual in which EBB’s poem “A Curse for a Nation” was published in 1856.

9. William Ellery Channing (1780–1842), a Unitarian preacher and author whose The Importance and Means of a National Literature (London: Edward Rainford, 1830), EBB praised as “a very admirable, & lucidly & energetically written production” (Diary, p. 155). He was also the author of Slavery (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1835) and a pamphlet entitled Emancipation (Boston: E.P. Peabody, 1840). According to a letter from EBB to Henrietta in March 1859, Channing’s spirit appeared to her at a seance in Rome (Huxley, p. 311).

10. Savile Morton (1811–52) had been correspondent for The Daily News, but at this time he was writing for The Morning Advertiser (see letter 90, note 5).


13. Paul Émile Daurand Forgues (1813–83), French translator and journalist, wrote under the pseudonym “Old Nick.” He contributed articles to numerous journals, including the Revue de Paris and the Revue de Deux Mondes on various English authors, including Burns, Southey, Coleridge, and Bulwer-Lytton, and he translated the works of, among others, George Meredith and Nathaniel Hawthorne. His review of RB’s Paracelsus, Bordello, and Bells and Pomegranates appeared in the Revue des Deux Mondes of 15 August 1847 (pp. 627–653). Forgues is listed in the Brownings’ address book for this period at 2, Rue du Tournon (ms at Texas). There is no evidence that EBB ever met his wife.

14. “I am becoming acquainted with a singular individuality, some would say unhealthy, others will say marvelous, in any case an individuality well fitted to embarrass his judges. To appreciate Mr. Browning, one is forced to prophesy, as if it were a matter of dealing with a new religion. Words fail to give an idea of him.—His unique genius is to be able to do what Mr. Tennyson cannot; it is to see again in each act a summary of all creation. To each his rôle: to some that of concentrating all human emotions, to others of concentrating all our ideas. For some, lyricism; for Mr. Browning, epic poetry.—Of all the poets I know, he is the most capable of summing up ideas about religion, ethics, and theoretical science of our age, in giving them poetic embodiment.” For the complete text of this review, see BC, 14, 386–397.


16. At no. 12, according to the Brownings’ address book (ms at Texas).


18. “Headstrong.”

19. The Assembly had been prorogued on 10 August, and was scheduled to meet again on 4 November. Louis Napoleon’s unsuccessful efforts during the spring and summer of 1851 to amend the constitution of
Letter 72 31 October–2 November [1851] 424

1848, which prohibited the re-election of a president, eventually led to the coup d'état on 2 December 1851. "Henri cinq" refers the Orléanist pretender, Henry V.

20. Geraldine Endsor Jewsbury (1802–80), a novelist; for EBB’s reference to her Zoë: The History of Two Lives (London: Chapman and Hall, 1845); see BC, 10, 263. EBB met Miss Jewsbury at John Kenyon’s house in July 1851, where the company also included Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle, with whom Miss Jewsbury was well acquainted. In a letter to Miss Mitford, dated 22 October [1851], EBB wrote: “And do you know I was much taken, in London, with a young authoress .. Geraldine Jewsbury. You have read her books. There’s a french sort of daring, half audacious power in them—but she herself is quiet & simple, & drew my heart out of me a good deal. I felt inclined to love her in our half hour’s intercourse” (EBB-MRM, III, 331).

21. EBB enclosed in this letter a “little sheet . . . just to speak about Paris and to answer some of your questions” (Huxley, p. 145).

Letter 73

138 Avenue des Ch. Elysées.
Nov. 18–[1851]¹

My ever dearest Arabel, I answer quickly your letter, lest you should take up Bummy’s doctrine as a real thing. I dont pretend to say how it may be with others,—but I, for myself, know perfectly that instead of loving you less, dearest beloved Arabel, I love you more than ever I did. I dont take my love for Robert & Wiedeman out of my old love for you, but out of my heart which has grown larger for the new growth– Surely I have said that to you before– So never, never fancy that silence means want of love on my part—it shall mean want of life rather– May God bless you my own very dear sister—my very precious Arabel.

And was I really so long in writing? For one thing, the letter lay aside two days after it was written, through an oversight. Well, I shall try to behave better for the future. Only mind you write to me faithfully, or I am capable of taking revenges.

I hesitated for a moment whether to write to you or George this morning, but as Robert wants to write with me & is very busy just now, I put off George & take up you. He wrote me the kindest of letters the other day, & I was delighted to have it. Robert was interrupted in Shelley by the arrival of his father & sister,² & could not touch it while they were here, as, all day long, of course, he was walking & driving about with them.³ Think of me, not being able to go out once, through the whole nearly three weeks– There were fine enough days, but too cold for me, & I had to sit at home by the fire as if there were no visitors– Nothing could exceed their affectionateness to me, I must tell you– M' Browning said again & again that he loved me dearly, “just like his own child,” & that he would far rather stay with me than go out sight-seeing– Sarianna too was very affectionate. She is excellent .. full of tact & good sense—clever & loveable together—easily pleased & of an even spirit & temper. The mourning had disappeared– They were both so satisfied with Paris & so delighted to be with Robert & Baby, (we must put motives in their right places) that their plan is at present (should no unforeseen obstacle arise) to settle here in March when they leave New Cross. What do you think of that scheme? M' Browning must of course leave the Bank, & at his age it is time.⁴ We talk of taking two unfurnished apartments in the same house .. so as to be near each other, & yet to be unshackled by one another, with separate
establishments in every way. Robert told them that he did not bind himself at all—he might even
go to Italy for a year.. he would certainly travel about as he had the means & inclination: so this
is understood. For some forty pounds a year each, we can have our own house, each of us, & the
taxes are nought .. scarcely perceptible they are so small. M. Emile Forgues says "je vous les
guarantis" meaning two apartments, one on the first floor & one on the entresol, at that rate of
cheapness. Then furniture is very cheap here. Well—I only talk of plans & dreams—they are
dependent upon facts of course. It has been & is (while we plan & dream) extremely cold—only
people swear to us that the weather is "exceptional", and we have letters from Italy talking of
falling thermometers & even falling snow, so that it is probably a general evil just now. Also, the
Martins left the London thermometers below zero—we are better off than certain of our
neighbours. The Martins stayed a few days in Paris, & everyday came to us—It was a very great
pleasure to me. M. Martin looks to my eyes entirely unchanged—if anything, a little fatter than
when I saw him last, six years ago: & most kind they both were—and they were pleased with
Robert, M. Martin told me, which of course pleased me. She said that, now she had seen him,
she could understand everything I had spoken concerning him. One morning she came in a broad
sunshine & took me out with her in the carriage, a close carriage, for half an hour, & it did me no
harm, though Robert was in terrible consternation when he came in & found me gone out,—but
the sun was hot, & what with shawls & furs, I escaped the breathing of the air which wasn't hot
by any means. We find these rooms very warmable .. yes, & warm, now that our "propriétaire"
has had rolls of stuffed cloth nailed round the windows & doors. We keep up immense fires—
uncle Hedley upbraided our extravagance when he came here yesterday, & said he hadn't seen
such a fire since Paris. I assure you, I am apt to singe your slippers at this fire. But I could do
better without eating, than without warming myself, & cant consent to be economical in that
department. The Hedleys are very kind in coming here. I must look again at Mary, but it didn't
certainly strike me when I saw her, that she was pretty—they are nice little girls, all three of
them. Poor little Anna has been very ill with hysteria, but the medical man maintains that the
complaint is at an end & that the late convulsive remains are controllable. Therefore he went to
her on Saturday & said that if she had another attack, he would apply red hot irons to the soles of her
feet!!!—in consequence of which threat, uncle Hedley told us yesterday that she had been well
for three days—! That's "homeopathic treatment," Arabel! & dont think I shall like it for my child!-

Desirée is an admirable cook, & otherwise a little, flighty, energetic, joyous, goodnatured
creature, suiting us exactly so far. Her cooking is really superior—we have a new kind of soup
every day of the week, made out of vegetables chiefly, but of such flavour & delicacy that scarcely
you can believe it .. and her creams & cakes are fit for fairy-land. We pay her at the rate of only
twelve pounds a year. She has taken Wiedeman into especial affection, & he, her,—"Jamais je
n'ai vu un si drôle d'enfant"! He mimics her ways of speaking, & goes into such fits of laughter
when they two are talking together, that it's really alarming. The consequence of all this intercourse
is naturally that he is getting on with "his French" .. poor child!—& talks of an "apeau,
(chapeau)" & cries 'voilà' at interjectory moments. Desirée declares that he understands every
word she says to him in French— "Quel enfant, mon Dieu!" I overheard her telling somebody the
other day .. "mais, voyez vous, cet enfant comprend bien le français: il parle trois langues."
Which I could'nt help laughing at, because his speech in any one of the three languages is highly doubtful. Yet he tries at everything now, using all his materials in a mass, the Italian ore preponderating still. He has a song about "buono pretty van," (swan) which is very characteristic & he talks of "lapis vass," (white) meaning "a white pencil" & and "liss buttolo," meaning "this zucchero" for sugar. In spite of which eccentricities, he makes himself understood better than the president of the republic does. When asked if he is English, he says "no, no—ah ...h,"—(nasty!) & that he's an italiano .. (Italiano). There was some powdering of snow .. a few flakes falling .. the morning before last, & Robert asked him "who made the snow." "Dio—" said he, pointing upwards—and then, in a tone of conviction .. "Dio, buono!" Then pausing as if in thought .. "E Flush, buono."

Last night I said in my old way .. "Chi è il tesoro di Mamma?"13 — ['']Peninni" .. said he. But, correcting himself quickly, .. "no, Peninni! Peninni, no .. Dio!" (with his hand raised)!—"Dio, buono! Dio, eve .." (neve)—(God made the snow—) For Peninni admires the snow excessively, you are to understand.

The goodness & sweetness of that child are indescribable—he is scarcely ever naughty for a moment now. I was saying to Robert this morning at breakfast that the naughtiest of his life was in London, when he went out to walk with Arabel & me, & always cried to be carried. "But he was a more little child then," said Robert. "Less!" interposed Wiedeman who had listened attentively—putting up his finger & thumb to show how very little he was .. & squeaking out "Mamma, mamma" in what he considers the infantine voice "par excellence". I do wish you could see him—you would think him wonderfully improved, he is so much fatter & redder in the cheeks. He eats & sleeps like the strongest of children— Paris agrees with him incontestably, & so does even the French cooking,—which according to Wilson's theory, is "too rich for a child a great deal." She holds notwithstanding that she never knew him to be so well since he was born.

Yes—his "nonno" doated upon him, while the nonno was here, and gave up all the fireside hours, to drawing 'swans' & 'soldiers' for him. Baby had at one time about thirteen foolscap sheets of paper full of swans, which he regularly took to bed with him. Sarianna insisted on taking him to a Daguer[re]otypist, (the best, as far as we could make out, in Paris) & was so generous as to have three portraits taken .. one on metal, and two on paper14 .. because I happened to say that I admired the last .. although they are more than doubly as expensive. After all, the one on the plate was so very beautiful & Robert liked it so, that she insisted on our keeping that. The two paper transcripts she has taken to England, and intends one of them for YOU, Arabel— There's a secret betrayed— You will think it very pretty, certainly—but the child looks larger & older that [sic, for than] he is in reality (five or six years old) .. this, from no harshness in the shadows, for the face is as infantine as his own, but from the size & general effect— You will observe that he wears your red frock—though it is not coloured.

I had a note from Lady Elgin the other day to signify her fear that our absence on her mondays meant illness on my part, & that she should be very glad to come & spend an evening with us if I could'nt go out. I made Robert go for an hour to her last night, & he assured her of our being delighted to see her in the case of her caring to come. We think we shall be obliged to have "an evening" like other people, otherwise we shall be afraid of people coming in every evening, which
is not comfortable. Morning visiting is not liked here by anybody:—and yet to have a crowd in
this little room would'nt answer for either it or me. Oh—we must not know a crowd, Arabel—but
it will be difficult, I dare say, to steer our course clearly & escape the muddy current. We like Ma*^" Mohl extremely— Her husband is the Oriental professor of the Institute, & she herself,
very clever & agreeable—knowing everybody worth knowing, in French society. I assure you
Lady Elgin is much more liberal in the approvisionment of her mondays than Ma*^" Mohl is—
has she not bread & butter & even buns & sponge cake par occasion? Perhaps what Bummy
says, refers to English society in Paris, which, naturally retains its English character—but I think
that among the French, in the ordinary way of the salons, you would find it to be much as I tell
you. I have heard that even at the house of M. Thiers, the sole refreshment is tea. Mazzini has
sent us a letter for George Sand addressed to Ma*^" George Sand,—and she is to be in Paris in
a week to get a play acted, says M*^^ Mohl, who is reconoitreing for us— I will tell you everything
as it happens. We had a visit yesterday from a M! Fields, an American publisher,—(the publisher
of Robert’s poems in Boston, in fact—) on his way to Italy. He told us a great deal about my
poems also. Langley, who printed my first edition, is not to blame for not keeping his agreement
with me—he became bankrupt & gave up business— But the edition sold. A second edition was
printed by Francis, & sold—and a third edition by Francis also, came out just before the last
English one. M! Fields said that he wanted to bring out a new one on the English model, but M!
Francis remonstrated so emphatically against the injustice & cruelty of it, that he forborne ..
observing however that he had intended to pay M! Browning as if she were an American author
.. on which, said Francis .. “Whatever you will give her, I am ready to give her!” Very generous
intentions on both sides; and between the two, I get nothing! — To make the piracy complete,
Francis siezes [sic] on the “Portuguese sonnets” & “Casa Guidi Windows,” while Fields gives a
smile of sympathetic publisher-ship, from under the knitted brows of his disapproving moral
sense—

He might have paid Robert at least, I think. Robert’s first edition is almost sold, & when
Fields brings out another, he means to pay, he says— “The first edition is only an experiment, you
see!” Yes, but as the experiment succeeds, I dont understand why the profits of it go exclusively
to M! Field’s pocket— That’s curious, I think.

Also, we have had a visit from M! Longfellow, the brother of the poet, & said to be an
accomplished man— He is in Paris for the winter.

Also, we have the cannons planted on the faubourg—close to us. The storm is deafening, and
we listen with deep interest & no fear— The President stands firmer than he ever did with the
people. That seems certain enough, but nothing else, that I can see.

Wilson declares she “never shall know French,” but she stumbles on in some sort of way, as
Desirée does’nt know a single word of English or Italian. Did I tell you that I had heard from
Sophia Cottrell, & that she has a “magnificent boy”! at last? Very glad I am, indeed.

Oh no, Arabel— We shall not be dissipated in Paris. That’s not our way, you know— But we
shall have more intercourse with our kind than in Florence, & for the rest, live as simply as ever.
I want Robert to have a few people to talk to—it is good for him, I am sure. You shall hear
everything.
Dearest, dearest Arabel... take care not to expose yourself to cold & wet. How can you justify before God & me, that staying out to sketch in a cold rain, for instance? I was very angry. I beseech you to take care. Kinnersley must be dull & cold, & I would not have you overstay your right time there. Oh—that you were here with me!— You would not dislike our life here, for all the riotous gaiety you forsee in it— You might trust me that it would’nt be quite past bearing— I am certain you would be happy & free here. Oh, to have you!— Poor uncle John & aunt claire! [sic] A miserable life indeed— And Bummy’s spirits, how are they? I cant help laughing at Leonard & his application

<...>23

<Ar>abel!— And she has a great deal of<...> too!”— Tell me exactly how you are, Arabel & how your face is; I am frightened of the cold for it. God bless you, my beloved!

Your own ever attached

Ba.

I don’t give up Henrietta yet.

Best love to Bummy.

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / The Rectory / Kinnersley Castle / near Hereford.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. See letter 71, note 18.
3. RB, Sr. and Sarianna had visited the Brownings in Paris for three weeks—from late October until mid-November.
4. RB’s father had held a clerical position in the Bank of England since 1803. He resigned in 1853 after he decided to leave England and move to Paris as the result of losing a breach of promise suit brought against him by Margaret von Müller, a widow with whom he had become involved in 1851.
5. Sic, for “garantis”, “I guarantee them to you.”
6. The Times for 19 November 1851 reported that “During the past three days the weather has been intensely cold.... On Monday [i.e., 17 November] afternoon the thermometer stood at 30 deg. while the sun was brightly shining.” The report also mentioned snow on Sunday the 16th.
7. “Landlord.”
8. The three youngest of the Hedley’s eight children were Frances (1836?-1914), Mary (1838?-54), and Anna.
9. “I have never seen such a funny child!”
10. “Hat.”
11. “Look!”
12. “What a child, my God!” “but, you see, that child understands French well: he speaks three languages.”
13. “Who is Mama’s treasure?”
14. These likenesses are not extant.
15. See note 5 in the preceding letter.
16. “By chance.”
17. See letter 59, note 17. On 10 November 1849 Fields wrote to Miss Mitford to say “I am busy just now superintending the republication of the complete poems of Robert Browning, the first American reprint. It will be issued by our house in a few weeks” (James T. Fields, James T. Fields: Biographical Notes and Personal Sketches, with Unpublished Fragments and Tributes From Men and Women of Letters, Boston: Houghton,
Mifflin and Company, 1881, p. 32). A few months later on 18 February [1850], EBB complained to Miss Mitford that “the Americans have already reprinted my husband’s new edition—‘Landthieves, I mean pirates’” (EBB-MRM, III, 292). About a month after this visit, EBB wrote Miss Mitford, describing how Fields “was kind & cordial,” and how she did not think his “widowhood” would “last six months longer” (EBB-MRM, III, 341); however, EBB did not refer in that letter to the details of Fields publishing the Brownings’ works in the United States, and Miss Mitford wrote to Fields in January 1852 that “Mrs. Browning was delighted with your visit,” adding “She is a Bonapartiste; so am I” (James T. Fields, Yesterdays with Authors, London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1872, p. 294). Sophia Hawthorne wrote to her sister, Louisa, on Christmas Day 1851 that “Mr Fields writes from Paris that Mr Hawthorne’s books are printed there as much as in England—that his fame is great there, & that Browning says he is the finest genius that has appeared in English Literature for many years” (Hawthorne, 16, 520).

18. Henry G. Langley was the publisher of The United States Magazine, and Democratic Review from 1841 to 1846. The manuscript agreement regarding Langley publishing EBB’s poems is now at Wellesley; see Reconstruction, D1462, as well as BC, 9, 32-35.

19. EBB wrote to Mrs. Ogilvy on 20 August 1851: “Think of a copy of an American edition of ‘Casa Guidi’ [i.e., Casa Guidi Windows] being sent over the other day to Mr. Kenyon. The pirates keep early hours, you see” (EBB-EAHO, pp. 50–51). C.S. Francis published several pirated editions of EBB’s Poems, both the 1844 and the 1850 editions; see Warner Barnes, A Bibliography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Austin Texas: The Humanities Research Center of Texas University and Waco, Texas: The Armstrong Browning Library of Baylor University, 1967, pp. 109–110.

20. Samuel Longfellow (1819–92), a Unitarian minister and poet. In 1886 he co-authored, together with T.W. Higginson, a life of his brother.

21. Henry Edward Plantagenet Cottrell was born 1 August 1851; he was the Cottrell’s third child and second son, and he died in 1938.

22. i.e., John Altham Graham-Clarke and his wife Mary (née Parkinson) of Kinnersley Castle, who often suffered financial difficulties.

23. The letter continues on the inside flap of the envelope at this point, the top half of which is missing, containing approximately 25–30 words.

Letter 74

138. Avenue des Ch. Elysées

Thursday—Friday—Saturday—Sunday [11–14 December 1851]

No indeed, we are not shot, my dearest Arabel. Robert says I shall make him a sort of reputation of a “Waterloo Selby” (you remember Vanity Fair!) by my accounts of his desperate approximation (a mile off or more) to the cannon’s mouth. The truth is, he never went near the scene of the conflict! he promised me too faithfully not to do it. Besides, it’s pure madness when people do such things—they would be safer on an ordinary field of battle than at a barricade, in the funnel of a street—and the number of curious persons, simply curious, shot in this last insurrection, is melancholy to hear of. One English lady, a friend of an acquaintance of ours, had her brother killed, & her brother in law dangerously wounded. An unsatisfactory way of dying, I must say. And people were entreated by public proclamation, to keep at home, on the ground that beside the danger to which they exposed themselves, they impeded the movement of the troop. Also, there is, to my mind, a great deal of insensibility at the bottom of the foolish curiosity— I dont like it on any ground.
As to the English, they have not really distinguished themselves per bene, as we Italians say, on this subject of the coup d’etat. The prodigious quantity of nonsense which is talked on all sides, makes me sick with shame, to hear the very reverberation of—young ladies & old ladies, very young gentlemen & extremely senile gentlemen .. out-talking one another about the French government & nation, with an utter want of sentiment & taste only equalled by the want of instruction & good sense. I heard last night, that Lord Normanby had intimated some strong disapprobation of the tone adopted—and not before such reproof was needed, certainly. Dont believe a word written either in the Times, or, I am sorry to say, in the Examiner—neither paper seems to be playing a very worthy part. As to the correspondent of the morning chronicle, he has been only too leniently treated in being allowed to remain in Paris, after the notice given to him to leave— Think of a man in so responsible a situation sending to a great public organ, such as the Chronicle, all the lies of the streets! His very brothers of the press here, in the midst of their deep commiseration for “poor Fraser,” thought he had been “extremely ill-advised.” The recoil of the English papers, you remember, is felt in Paris instantly—& it[s] quite hard enough for us to bear truth & fact, without invention & distortion on the back of them.

As for the repression of printed opinions just now, it is the condition of our life, you must consider. It is a moment of revolution, & every party, at all such times, has done precisely the same thing. The republic in 1848, was exactly as stringent, as the president is now: every adverse newspaper was gagged—not a cry, not a breath even!— They were justified then by the situation—then, as now. The people are to speak by the law & the vote in a few days, and until then, we are to have order & quiet. So best. In the meantime, my impressions as I received them at first, deepen gradually. I believe that the salvation of France as a free nation may be involved in this very coup d’etat. Nearly everybody agrees now that the people of Paris have accepted it—“scandalously” say some—“apathetically” say others!—“Yes, they tell you they like it,” sighed an American lady to me .. “but I THINK there’s something painful in their faces while they profess to be delighted.” A specimen of the stuff you hear!— The fact is, that from the very beginning, they have given the measure full sympathy, believing that there was no safety for France out of it!—there’s the fact purely.

Here’s another fact— Tell dear George—thanking him a hundred times for his letter to me. Lamartine’s paper has given in its adhesion—calling upon all parties, in the name of France, to support the government. I was assured last night that Lamartine had personally given in his adhesion to the president—but for this I cannot vouch, & I dont want to send you false reports. But his newspaper, I have seen, read with my eyes. Now if ever there was a pure patriot, it is Lamartine—a man too purely ideal, to be effectually practical, indeed. He is very ill, I am sorry to say—has been for many months,—the consequence of a rheumatic fever, it is said to be, but rather painful than dangerous.

Tell George that the “great statesmen of France” will all come back if they should be wanted. There will be a union for the people’s sake, after the extinction of parties. I have good hope both for France & for liberty—better hope than ever.

Robert & I have had some domestic émeutes on this question .. that’s true, tell George. He began with a tremendous hatred towards the imperial name, you see— Then, he has been mixed
up with quantities of Legitimists, Orleanists, & Reds (when he has gone out in the evening) & heard such stories about the movement, . . . such stories of cheating & dirty tricks connected with it, . . . that he who is upright & noble himself in everything, took it all into absolute disgust, & was very vexed with me because I had another view, . . . I looking at the facts & not at the misrepresentations. You know I do think for myself (if the thought is right or wrong) and I do speak the truth (as I am capable of apprehending it), to my husband always— Also, we agree absolutely & always in the principles of things:— & therefore it is, that what you used to call "our quarrelling" is an element of our loving one another, & a very important element too. I persisted in disbelieving nearly all the stories Robert brought home to me, & insisted that this contradicted that, throughout them all. 'Quite vexing,' he said I was! And "quite absurd" I said they were. And so we fought. But I trust to Robert's characteristic candour and to the actual development of events. Already he has confessed to me, that the "excessive nonsense he heard last night has produced some revulsion of feeling with him." We shall see further.

Our dear delightful friend Ma^one Mohl, an Orleanist, (to show the passion of these parties) declares that she will receive & talk to nobody who is not of her opinion!— That's one way of getting at truth.

Nothing can exceed the intense interest of things here just now. Arabel, you are very wrong in saying that you would rather not be in Paris— We are leading the most vivid life possible. The first thing I do in the morning is to get a french newspaper— then in the evening, we get the Galignani . . & have quantities of live tradition besides— Nothing passes, I assure you, that we dont hold it in our hands, sift & analyze it.

Be sure of this, that "military despotism" will not be imposed on France—nor would it be accepted, if it were imposed— Every honest precaution seems taken to secure the freedom of the elections—which may well be done in fact,— for Louis Napoleon will only gain by it, can only gain— He has the mass of the people clearly with him. Even his opponents admit this now.

It is curious to see how people begin to modify their opinions . . I mean, people who were adverse entirely— We know the correspondent of the Daily News, & also the correspondent of the Morning Herald. Daily News changed his mind completely in the course of four & twenty hours—only dont tell anybody. Morning Herald has been more steady, perhaps. Daily News is the cleverer though, after all,—but, to make up, Morning Herald has a very clever wife,— who, as another self, should be counted in one's estimate of the whole man.

Robert & I went out last Saturday, the 6th, to visit the place of conflict. We drove through the boulevards, & looked at the houses bored with cannon, & the glassless windows staring out ghostily. The pavement was black with men; but the tranquility was absolute: they had even begun to open the shops again on the immediate scene of action—& the barricades had vanished, so that I was disappointed in my wish of having a sight of them. In other parts of the town, you would not have thought that anything had been the matter.

Think what weather we must have to admit of my going out in December. On Saturday I went in a carriage; but yesterday it was so supernaturally fine that I walked to the Tuilleries [sic], returning in an omnibus— & the sun shone gorgeously, as if he had mistaken one season for another. Both yesterday & today we were forced to let out the fire & open the door for air— &
bilious headache is the reigning malady in consequence [sic] of the heat. The weather has been mild for a fortnight past—Now it is more than mild. You are not as warm in London, to judge by the meteorological reports—far from it—

Last night we had M. Milsand here, Robert's reviewer in the Revue des deux Mondes. He seems to know a great deal about English literature, & England in various ways. Think of his having written an analysis of the Wesley & Whitfield movement! An extraordinary subject for a frenchman, & at this time of day too. I think he is a very earnest & thoughtful writer. For the rest, a little man, young, & agreeable, though not brilliant—We have begged him to come & see us whenever he likes to do so.

I am a little afraid, Arabel, (to tell you the exact truth,) about our position here in certain respects. It seems to me that we are taken in a regular net of English—"good society" in the usual sense of the word certainly—but not in our sense—not particularly interesting people, nor likely to do us much good, on the whole. I insist on Robert's going out in the evening—we might as well be at Florence if he did not—it's only morning-visiting transplanted, observe, only that you get conversation, which you can't generally in a morning visit. We have tea at eight o'clock, & then, on certain evenings of the week, he goes out for an hour or two, & brings me back the news, which is pleasant for both of us, though I have "to drive him out with a broomstick" according to Ma^t^e Mohl's expression. But really it's good for him, right for him, & right for me to insist on his going. Only, always I say, "do take care—don't get entangled with people we don't care for"—& he gets entangled somehow, with all sorts of repentance, but entangled nevertheless. Both at Ma^t^e Mohl's & at Lady Elgin's, quantities of English go—& it's impossible, when people ask if they may call on you, to say brutally, 'no, no,' however you may desire it. Here are English whom we know, some willingly, some perforce—Miss Fitton, old & shrewd, who knows Mr Kenyon—& has various accomplishments— I like her rather: a family of Shores, numerous enough to personate the white cliffs of Albion .. but nice people—one of the daughters very intelligent & cultivated—Mr Stewart Mackenzie, the venerable head of the clan, & her daughter who is pretty, & asked Robert if the Portuguese sonnets were really Portuguese!!—Mr & Mrs Carré .. he, the angel of the Irvingite church! Robert meets him everywhere. Major & Mrs Carmichael Smith, who are coming, not come yet. Miss Williams Wynn[,] Sir Watkyn's daughter (a cousin of Gladstone) whom Robert knew in London!—Miss Stirling .. who calls herself a connection of mine, because her brother married a cousin of Papa's, you know—& her sister Mr Erskine—Mr & Mrs Corkrane .. of the Herald aforesaid—she dresses like a muse, & almost looks like one really—a fine face, & exaggerated forehead. She covers her hair entirely with a net .. not like my nets, but large & loose & covering the whole hair, except a brown loop upon the neck—a most peculiar & rather pretentious costume, I must say. She has a beautiful countenance though, & a smile like light—but she is rather pretentious altogether, & Robert does not like her on that account. She made the first drapeau for Lamartine's government, with her own hands—but then she talks of "our revolution in Ireland, of 1848."!!—you see the sort of woman! She spent the other evening with us, she & her husband, and I liked her better than Robert did.—Then Aunt Jane brought Mr Stre[a]tfield here & is to bring Miss Blackett,
they both wanted to come. I like Mr. Stre[ate]field's face & manner—but just see how we are surrounded—for there are others—the list is not ended. It's kindness on the part of these people of course, but it makes me rather uneasy lest we should be baffled of our comfort & tastes by it—

And with all this, I have missed "George Sand"—which throws me into what Robert calls one of "my flurries", I suppose a polite word for my "rages". I cant help saying that if I had had the management of the affair instead of Robert, whom I accuse of some coldness & laxness, it w'd have come to a favorable termination. Robert was proud & cold about it—there's the truth. George Sand came to Paris a fortnight since, with a determination of living incognita, though "with eyes brighter than ever." The object of her coming was to bring out a new play at the Gymnase. After all her adventures, she's a shy woman, & shuns strangers from a fear that they should book-make about her, as so many have done. Madame Mohl introduced Robert to her particular friend M. François, but the particular friend swore that he did not "Dare" give her a letter of introduction from anyone ... & she did'nt care for Mazzini, not she!—though, when he came from Rome, she kissed him, to poor Mazzini's great confusion, as Carlyle told us. She kissed him once—she kissed him twice—and the second time, Mazzini thought it "de trop." He's a great prude ... Mazzini is! that's certain.

Well—to return to Madame Sand. She had only a bedroom when she was in Paris ... the room usually occupied by her son, ... and referred her friends to a neighbouring caffé which was the only place where she was visible. Moreover M. François w'd not give us the name of the caffé ... he "did'nt dare": he only suggested that we might leave the letter at the theatre. Which Robert refused to do in a pet. He said he "would'nt mix up our letter with the love-letters of the actresses" ... & pettishly added, ... "Madame George Sand might go to the devil, if she pleased, & if she cared neither for us nor for Mazzini—it was an honour thrown away on her, after all! he dared say she was absorbed in a 'sentiment' for the "premier comique," & when that was over, there might be a chance for us!"

So between Robert's fit of pride & M. François's fit of reserve, we lost George Sand for the time. She has gone back to the country. I have been vexed by it all extremely, & have reproached everybody concerned—and now, Robert promises to send our letter to her into the country by a private hand, which Monsieur François is to find, he says, & if she does'nt come to Paris, "we will go to her," ... the promise is to that effect, too—But just see. She lives as far off as Tours, & farther—and I cant travel in the winter, & there may be twenty obstacles beside.

Last sunday Robert heard one of the most eloquent sermons (to change the scene a little!) he ever heard in his life he says, at the Independent French church. The reference to the public agitation was very pathetic—though no opinion was implied upon politics, which are excluded upon principle from discussion in that pulpit.

Sunday—Dearest darling Arabel, I have been two or three days about this letter—now writing, now forced to break off. This morning I have a letter from Henrietta, who is uneasy about me. I had concluded that you would have let her have the news of us I sent you at the time, or I would have written myself. She exaggerates the dangers immensely. We all knew that an outbreak would come, though exactly how, was not discerned—and nothing of the sort could have happened at less cost of life & terror. I asked aunt Jane the other day whether the idea of flying ever had crossed
her mind— She said "Never, for a moment." Do write & tell Henrietta this— She wanted to hear by return of post. Thursday was the only bad day. Henrietta proposes to us to meet her in London at the end of January—!! I am far less afraid of Louis Napoleon’s cannons than [sic] of your winds & fogs!— To run out of the "cannon’s mouth" into a fog, would not strike me as a piece of wisdom— Dearest Henrietta!——

Dont you see that if the Brownings settle here, we certainly shall not resettle in Italy?—33

When we are in Paris, we are at your doors—& shall be in London every summer as a matter of course. But nothing can be said to be fixed, while March is so far off. So dont think of it yet. Today, it is much colder again; & Robert & Wilson being both at church, I have the care of Wiedeman, & it[‘]s not a sinecure, as you may suppose, or is it easy to write & talk to him all the time. He was knocking at the wall, with his gun, & when I told him not to do it, he intimated he was in a course of theological investigation . . . “he was looking for God!”—adding that he would “look through the ceiling next!”—— You dont understand this—I will explain to you. The other day, he was playing with my card case . . . which I took away from him on the ground of it’s [sic] being “prezioso”34 to Papa, who w’d not like to see him break it—(Mr* Browning gave it to me).[.] Upon which, Wiedeman instantly shut the door between Robert’s room & this room, & put a chair before it, & then, with a most satisfied face, as if the whole difficulty were obviated, came back to seize [sic] on the card case. “Oh no” . . . said I—“God sees you, if Papa does’nt. God can see through the ceiling & the walls.” This happened some days ago, & the child had it in his mind just now. His theological views cant be said to be very clear yet. He said the other morning, looking through the window at a gloomy sky, that “God was naughty, as there was no sun.” It was explained to him that whether there was sun or not, God was good—but that did’nt seem to strike him as a reasonable doctrine, poor child—and after all, & for his elders, it’s one of the difficult doctrines of life. Yes, the Daguer[re]otype is not flattering generally. And it is particularly unfaithful to his hair which is really beautiful just now, so much longer & thicker than when you saw it, & in such splendid curl, that people accuse us most unjustly of putting it in papers.

〈. . .〉35

Will you write a few words to Nelly Bordman, just to say that I thank her much for her letter, & that we are all well, safe & unalarmed. It appears that M: Pigott36 stays here till after the elections. Tell her that. I had written a letter to send back to her by him, but I put it into the fire on hearing what his plans were— Arabel, say how your face is—if the cold has affected it much.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated by EBB’s reference to “last saturday, the 6th,” and by her references to Louis Napoleon’s coup d’etat.

2. Sic, for “Sedley,” i.e., Joseph Sedley, a character in Thackeray’s Vanity Fair (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1848). Fearing for his life, “Jos” Sedley fled Brussels at the time of the battle of Waterloo, but later in India he bragged about his exploits, “and was called Waterloo Sedley during the whole of his subsequent stay in Bengal” (chap. 38).

3. Unidentified.

4. “As one should.”
5. EBB warns Arabella against The Times in the following letter (see note 15), as well as in letter 77 (see note 14).


7. Seemingly, EBB has written “poor Fraser” mistakenly, for John Fraser Corkran, instead of Crowe.

8. A plebiscite was held on 20 December 1851 to validate the coup d’état of 2 December 1851.

9. Earlier in 1851 Lamartine had accepted editorship of Le Pays, and he had used his position to write in support of the Republic, which he felt was threatened by the policies of Louis Napoleon. He resigned as editor after the coup d’état of 2 December. It was Arthur de La Guéronnière, Lamartine’s assistant editor, who had been writing articles in Le Pays in support of Louis Napoleon; see William Fortescue, Alphonse de Lamartine: A Political Biography, London: Croom Helm, 1983, pp. 259–260.

10. i.e., socialists or communists, particularly French extremist revolutionaries who dyed their hands in blood; however, by this time, it referred most commonly to socialists. Legitimists were supporters of the Bourbons as opposed to the Orleanists who backed the descendants of the Duke of Orleans, the younger brother of Louis XIV.


12. John Fraser Corkran (1807–84) was the Paris correspondent for The Morning Herald. He and his wife, Louisa (née Walshe, 1824–92), were both originally from Ireland; they married in Dublin on 1 July 1839, and shortly thereafter in 1840 he was appointed Paris correspondent for the Evening Standard and a few years later to The Morning Herald. He held the latter position until 1857. In an application for assistance from the Royal Literary Fund in 1862, Fraser described his wife as “a woman of remarkable endowments,” and she was known for her ability as a translator. They had three daughters and two sons. EBB’s first impressions were not favourable, but the Corkrans soon became good friends, and it was Mrs. Corkran who introduced the Brownings to Joseph Milsand.

13. See letter 72, note 15. According to Henriette Corkran, “it was my mother [Louisa Corkran—see preceding note] who introduced M. Milsand to Robert Browning ... He [Milsand] was very small, with a huge intellectual head which seemed too heavy for his slight body; he had calm, penetrating grey eyes, a long thin nose, the sweetest of smiles. ... I often recall his piquant, pungent remarks ... He was always full of charity, tenderness, and tolerance; childlike in many ways, and having many delightful inconsistencies; a strong brain and a big heart, no wonder that during his lifetime he was Robert Browning’s chosen friend!” (Oddities, Others, and I, London: Hutchison & Co., 1904, pp. 15–16).

14. I have been unable to trace Milsand’s “analysis of the Wesley & Whitfield movement” to which EBB refers. John Wesley (1703–91), together with his brother Charles Wesley (1707–88) and George Whitefield (1714–70), as well as others, were the founders of the Methodist movement, which began at Oxford in 1729. Whitefield later broke with the Methodists (see letter 48, note 12).

15. Sarah Mary Fitton was born ca. 1790 in Dublin. She and her sister Elizabeth, who had died in 1850 (aged 63), had lived in Paris for over 20 years. The sisters co-authored Conversations on Botany, published anonymously in London in 1817, as well as a handbook of musical harmony, published in French.

16. Thomas Shore (1793–1863), his wife Margaret Anne Twopeny (d. 1859) and their children: Richard Nowell Shore (1821–1902), his wife and their two children; Arabella Shore (1822–1901); and Louisa Catherine Shore (1824–95). The “intelligent and cultivated” daughter was Louisa, who wrote poetry which was collected and published many years later in Poems: with a memoir by her sister, (London: John Lane, 1897). Her sister recorded that “a change full of varied interest was made in 1851–3 by an eighteen months’ residence in Paris and its neighbourhood. Frequent soirées of a cosmopolitan type introduced the family to delightful English and French society, and, above all, they made the valued acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Browning” (p. 15).
17. Maria Elizabeth Frederica Stewart-Mackenzie (1783–1862) was the coheiress of Francis Mackenzie, Earl of Seaforth. After his death in 1815, "she succeeded to the family estates ... and became the chieftainess of the clan Mackenzie" (DNB). She married Sir Samuel Hood (1762–1814) in 1804, and three years after he died, she married James Alexander Stewart, a younger son of the 6th Earl of Galloway; they had three sons and three daughters. The daughter referred to here is the youngest of these children, Louisa Caroline (1827–1903). She married William Bingham Baring (1799–1864), 2nd Baron Ashburton, in 1858. For an account of RB’s friendship with her in later life, see Virginia Surtees, _The Ludovisi Goddess: The Life of Louisa Lady Ashburton_ (Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1984), pp. 138–147.

18. Collings Mauger Carré (1809–54) was an Englishman born in Guernsey. He was a member of the Catholic Apostolic church (or Irvingites) from 1828 until his death. From 1835 he was an "angel" (or bishop) in Geneva and in Paris. His address is given as 114 Avenue des Ch. Elysées in the Brownings' address book (ms at Texas).

19. Anne Carmichael Smyth (née Becher, 1792–1864), Thackeray’s mother who was widowed in 1815. In 1817 she married a second time Henry Carmichael Smyth (1780–1864), whose nephew, Sir James Carmichael, had married EBB’s cousin Louisa Charlotte Butler in 1841. The Carmichael Smyths lived in Paris from 1838 until his death, and formed the centre of a wide and interesting circle.

20. Charlotte Williams-Wynn (1807–69) was the eldest daughter of Sir Charles Watkin Williams-Wynn and Mary (née Cunliffe).

21. Jane Stirling (1804–59), daughter of John Stirling (1742–1816) of Kippendavie and Kippenross, Scotland, was a student of Chopin and had resided in Paris for a number of years. Her sister Katharine (d. 1868) had married James Erskine, her cousin-german, in 1811. Their brother William (b. 1787) married Elizabeth Barrett (1794–1830) in 1811; she was the only child of Henry Barrett, eldest son of Edward Barrett of Cinnamon Hill.

22. "Flag," presumably a traditional "tricolore." Lamartine strongly opposed making the red flag the national flag of France when it was proposed by the Provisional Government in February 1848; see _Alphonse de Lamartine_, pp. 154–155.

23. Frances Mary Blackett (18237–95) married Henri, Comte du Quaire, in 1857, but he died only three years later. She lived in London and Paris, and spent time in Rome in 1860, where the Brownings saw her fairly frequently. Sara Jane Streatfeild (née Cookson, d. 1867) had married Sidney Robert Streatfeild, an army major, on 12 September 1839. Her cousin, Matilda Cookson (d. 1893) had married EBB’s cousin, Richard Pierce Butler (1813–62) in 1835.

24. They would finally meet George Sand in February 1852. I have traced no other references to EBB’s "flurries" or "rages."

25. Cf. EBB, "A Denial," line 39: "With brighter eyes than these ...," as well as RB, _Paracelsus_, V, 94–95: "His eye / Brighter than ever!"

26. According to her biographer, “In mid-November 1851, George came to Paris to supervise final rehearsals and attend the premiere of her play _Le Mariage de Victorine_ at the Gymnase” (Renee Winegarten, _The Double Life of George Sand: Woman and Writer_, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978, p. 277). However, the performance was pre-empted by the coup d’état on 2 December, and she left Paris on December 4th, not returning until late January 1852.

27. Presumably François Rollinat (1806–67), or "Pylades," as she called him; he was a lawyer, and one biographer describes him as "her rocklike friend" (Winegarten, p. 198).


29. In this context, EBB’s meaning seems to be “strong feeling” or “emotion.”

30. “Leading comedian.” Probably a reference to Pierre François Tousez, who used the stage name Bocage (1799–1862). He was a leading comic actor with whom Sand had briefly had a love affair, although it had ended by this time.

31. As identified in letter 69, note 8, the chapelle Taitbout, 54, rue de Provence; see also letter 83, note 14, where EBB identifies the minister as M. Bridel.

32. _As You Like It_, II, 7. 153.
33. As indicated in letter 72, RB’s father and sister had arrived in late October. In the preceding letter, EBB wrote that they had discussed taking a house together in Paris, but that they would still travel. RB, Sr. and Sarianna settled in Paris, as planned, and although RB and EBB spent a great deal of time with them during 1852, they eventually returned to Florence in October 1852.

34. “Precious.”

35. EBB presumably wrote more, including her signature, on the inside of the envelope which is missing. The final paragraph, as printed, appears on the margins and at the top of the first page.

36. Edward Frederick Smyth Pigott is listed in the Brownings’ address book at “Leader Office, 154 Strand (9 Southampton Row, Russell Square)” (ms at Texas). It was about this time that Pigott assumed ownership of The Leader, a weekly newspaper founded by Thornton Hunt and George Henry Lewes, and published from 30 March 1850 to 30 June 1860 (see Rosemary Ashton, G.H. Lewes: A Life, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, p. 109).

Letter 75

[Paris]
Christmas day [1851]

Ever my dearest Arabel. I was sure I should have a letter from you today, or would have written yesterday myself. My thoughts & affections are with you most tenderly & gratefully, full of wishes & prayers. May God bless you, my beloved sister, & all with you.

I am glad that Henry has more discernment than the rest of you .. which he must have (modestly speaking) if he agrees with me! .. on the subject of the late revolution.

Remember—I do not bind myself for Louis Napoleon’s purity of motive, nor do I pretend to say that he will not make improper uses of his unparalleled [sic] position at this moment. What I say is, that the purest of patriots might have done & would have done, precisely what he did at the beginning,—and that if he had not done it, worse would have been done for France, worse was imminent. The election expresses the most extraordinary unity of national will almost ever manifested—and as to your idea, Arabel, of the votes being prepared, why the thing is impossible physically, and, if it were not, would be unnecessary altogether. Observe—we see here the most furious of the anti-Napoleonites .. ex-writers of the leading journals now gagged, .. \& all these frenchmen, gnashing their teeth through their black beards, & foaming with rage, say every bad thing that can be said against the government \& the people, .. only nobody says that the votes are falsified. Robert exclaimed some days ago, to a socialist in this room, “The government is capable of falsifying the votes.” “Oh—” was the answer—[“]they are capable of that or any other iniquity—but unfortunately it wont be necessary—they are too sure of their majority.” The fact is, the people were with Louis Napoleon from the first moment—the commercial, \& the agricultural parts of the people—the army (which is essentially a popular element in France) \& the peasants \& owners of land—Say of them, as Lammenais does, that “they are a people of a putrified heart”, .. call them “des animaux,” .. as I heard them called the other day by an animated compatriot,—say besides (which is true to a great extent) that they act under terror of a socialist regime, \& a strong desire for tranquillity at any price. The fact remains, that the people, such as it is, \& from whatever motive, are with the president, to a degree which is extraordinary. For my
part, I am a democrat, & I respect the decisions of any people. Also, I believe this French people to be as noble, in their own way, as you are in England, however you may knit your brows at them across the sea. All these writers & talkers who have written & talked for the last three years about the glory of democracy & universal suffrage, now talk about the "intelligent minority," the "minority which is France," and "absolute" stuff of that sort. Which, I for my part, being consistent, cannot help smiling at. The people are to have their way only (observe) when Monsieur tel, of the 'Presse,' or Monsieur tel autre of the 'National' agrees with the people. Otherwise .. alas, for the "intelligent minority"! The rest are "des animaux."

Monsieur Pellatreau (of the Presse) .. a great friend of Lamartine's, by the way, though more liberal than Lamartine, as he gave us to understand .. furious against the coup d'état, filled this room the other evening with invective against Napoleon .. not the nephew, but the uncle! Napoleon was "le plus grand scélérat [sic] du monde"—his empire, "le regne de Satan,"—& all his marshalls & all their sons, "des coquins infâmes." He told Robert that he himself belonged to one of the southern departments, which was wholly agricultural, & divided into those very small landed estates, which have been produced by the laws for subdivision of property in France, .. held by what we should call in England, small farmers, only farming their own land. He mentioned the number of these .. some thousands, but I cant remember numbers. He said that he had talked with them,—& here was the fact!—they were democrats to a man .. and, to a man, Buonapartists. The truth is, the tradition of Napoleon is the one tradition still precious to the mass of Frenchmen. It is a sentiment—& I think it honorable. If Louis Napoleon does not abuse it, he will do well, & France with him—If he abuses it, and attempts to impose upon France any form of absolutism, the country will rise & throw him at once. We shall see. I hope more in his ability than in his virtue. I think that what others see he must see,—why not?

In the meanwhile you should hear these journalists talk. You know, the journalist in Paris is a power. All french statesmen have to pass through the journal—it is not as in England. Thiers & Guizot, as Lamartine & Montamambert [sic], have been journalists. The journalists console themselves after this fashion.

"Patience. Let the election be unanimous, yet his difficulty will be to come. The difficulty in the way of his government will surely come— At this moment great expectations are entertained of him, & it is impossible that he can satisfy all. The country-people expect the reduction of the taxes. If he reduces the taxes, he cant make popularity as he does just now, by carrying out public works. There, will be the financial difficulty. On the other hand, if he puts himself at the head of liberalism, which is the only position he can hold for a moment, the bourgeoisie will start back before the phantom of socialism. Patience."

Upon which I say softly to myself, that every possible government in France must be exposed to such difficulties. That's no argument against the specific chances of Louis Napoleon, I say.

As to the gagging of newspapers & various suppressive measures, why no revolution was ever carried without such means. Every newspaper was gagged in 48, I can assure you, which did not praise the republic. And Lamartine broke the letter of an oath as deeply in rejecting Louis Philippe as Louis Napoleon can be said now to have done. Also, two assemblies were illegally
dismissed & destroyed then. Yet, we all clapped our hands—at least I did, and you did, I think, together with various other stainless moralists—Justice, Arabel! I cry out for justice.

And you, for some other subject to talk about—But I know you are under the influence of that horrible Times,¹⁰ which, precisely because it loathes democracy, is always in a state of chronic hatred against France, & I cant help trying to distrust it. Lamartine does not make adhesion. But he explains that his reason for not doing so, is peculiar to himself—he is the man of the 24th of February!—¹¹ How characteristic of Lamartine. “Il se doit à sa gloire.”¹² For my part, I should be sorry to be a mere man of a date—That's not greatness as I conceive of it—

Yes, the Hedleys have invited us to dinner, & Robert by himself to dinner, again & again,—but neither together nor separately will we dine out—we have resolved against it. They wanted him very kindly to dine with them today, & he compounds by going to them in the evening. They have really been as kind as possible to us. The dinner is to be seventeen deep. Not a temptation, indeed!

As for me I am dumb—though you mightn't think so by this talkative letter. Oh yes. We had a terrible three days last week—much more terrible as far as I am personally concerned, than any coup d'état in the world...fog & frost together...not a London fog indeed, but a cold mist which was killing—and my cough came siezing [sic] me like a wolf...and I lost my voice, & looked like a ghost, & felt weak & miserable. If the weather had lasted, I dont know what I should have done—but it did not last, thank God. Desirée told us that “it would not pass the third day—it never did here.”—& it did’nt—& the temperature became mild again. Today is colder than yesterday, but is bearable nevertheless, .. & my cough has been much better for some days—and my voice seems to begin to struggle through again—Still the voice is absent .. there's no denying. One must wait to recover oneself after such a knock-down blow. Enough that I am a great deal better in all essential respects, feeling much better & stronger. Oh—I yearned towards Italy, those three days. But even there, they have had cold weather. Besides the Peyton testimony, I have a letter today from Mrs Ogilvy, who talks of cold and even fog, & of having suffered herself through the unusual weather. If we stay in Paris, it wont be in the Champs Elyseés, though the situation pleases us on most accounts. But it is decidedly warmer on the other side of the river .. in the St Germain quarter.¹³ Here we are on an elevation, you see. When Robert went to Lady Elgin’s or Madame Mohl’s .. I forget which .. he said it was like another temperature: while we were freezing, they were thawing that night. At the same time we must acknowledge a great advantage here in the warmth of our house. Do you know, Arabel, I never was in so warm a house in my life. In fact it is apt to get too warm—there's the danger. This morning we have been forced to sit with the doors open:—it's warm in the very antichamber .. or entrance-passage, .. to use the less dignified word.

You are quite wrong about England. When we went to England last year for instance, whom did we go to see? Certainly not Robert's family. If we had considered only them, we should have infallibly stayed away, seeing that their visit here was a settled thing. Oh, you are wrong, Arabel.

Robert likes Paris excessively, and I dont much wonder, because people pay him great attention. Miss Mitford writes to me that a relation of Count Molé told her of his having had "un grand succes,"¹⁴ at Paris—and Madame Mohl said the other day .. “We are all so fond of him! It's well for him, that he has'nt a jealous wife, Mrs Browning.” Which when I repeated to Robert, I
could'nt help adding, "But it is not certain that he has'nt a jealous wife, M' Browning." Indeed I always maintain that I could be tremendously jealous upon occasion, though he will have it that I dont care a bit for him, now,—he said so this very day. "Women never care for a love they are sure of—not they." A magnificent apothegm that makes me laugh.

Shall I tell you whom I care for in the meanwhile? Little Wiedeman. He's really a darling more & more, the sweetest little Peninni of a child that ever was seen. Wilson, in bringing him home yesterday, was telling me how good he had been out of doors—how he had walked, how he had run, how he had not once asked to be carried. He listened earnestly to all these compliments, & then looking up in her face, said with most ingenuous gratitude .. “Grazie, Lili.” Thank you, Lili! He was very much obliged for her good word.

He did not like the cold last week at all. One day we sent him down to the door, & Wilson brought him back again, because he coughed .. which he always does, when he does'nt like anything—it's quite affectation—but when he thinks it "fweddo" it seems to him right to cough. He said .. "Dio vento, Lili— Peninni hom." God had sent the wind, & Peninni w'd rather stay at home. Peninni's language is something really remarkable. Anything, the taste or the smell of which he likes, he calls sugar .. & what he does'nt like, he calls pepper .. using the Italian words. You ought to listen to Desiree & him, talking together. She talks french, & he answers her in his peculiar dialect .. ‘Detitée,’ as he calls her. Very fond of her he is—and sometimes when he wants to stay with her in the kitchen, he intimates condescendingly to Wilson that she has Peninni's leave to go to church. He has no idea of Wilson's wanting to go anywhere else but to church without him.

Robert & I fight about Louis Napoleon—true: but we fight also about the great Fitton cause, & now I shall tell you what that is. Miss Fitton gives a new year's eve child's party, which is to be inaugurated with a Christmas tree, & round games, with thirty children & a christmas gift for everyone. Most goodnaturedly she has pressed Wiedeman to go. The hour is seven, and Wilson is invited to carry him there, if only for a half hour or two. Robert says in his wisdom—"the child is too young for anything of the sort—he goes to sleep at six—and you are a great deal too fond, Ba, of pulling open rosebuds, & anticipating maturities. It is not good for the child, & it's very foolish of you." To which I answer- ['']"Foolish! but I want to show him off. We'll put him to sleep at three, & at seven he'll be wide awake again—& he'll enjoy it as much as any child there." So I shall have my way. And Robert has been really goodnatured about it, for he has let me give twenty two francs for a black velvet frock for the occasion— It will make the child look lovely. A yard & three quarters, at thirteen francs a yard. It sounds extravagant, but we have bought him no frock this year & black velvet endures—& he will look like a picture in it, with his fair skin & bright golden ringlets. He seems to me to grow much prettier than he was, when you saw him. He is to have cherry coloured shoulder-knots, & shoes, and a tucker of my best lace.

Wiedeman had a great shock the other day, out walking. He came suddenly upon a dead cat. Wilson said he grew very pale & could scarcely speak. Then, after a long pause, having left it at some distance, he proposed to Wilson that they should buy it a stick of sugarcandy, which he finds extremely efficient in his own case—he thought a stick of sugarcandy would do the cat
good directly. "Oh no"—said Wilson—"the poor cat cant eat—the cat is dead." Peninni could'nt understand that— "Would'nt dinner do it good"? No—neither dinner nor candy sugar. It was a desperate case indeed. Weideman, directly he saw me, told me the lamentable story of the "gatto," lying down on the carpet & beating his own forehead to show the nature of the misfortune— He could'nt get over the idea of that cat for some days.

Dec. 26. Friday. Robin Hedley & Ibbit came yesterday & prevented my finishing this letter in time for the post. Robert went in the evening to them. I am afraid he did'nt enjoy it, though everybody was very kind—Cards & commonplaces . . everybody playing cards. He has not seen such a thing in Paris before. Came home very much out of sorts, & hoped that I would'nt insist on his going often there. Certainly association of minds is a different thing from association of manners— & society means the first & not the last. Observe, it is'nt at all that Robert cant breathe on the outside line of the literary classes. He likes knead cakes & nonsense as well as any child in the world can—but he cares supremely for earnestness, & detests artificialities. Don't tell Robin this, for Heaven's sake. Is it possible that I never told you about uncle Richard, who (is ill) again! (& unable to) get on with his business? Tell me of them all. Dear George, one must deal with personally— I wont try to persuade Henrietta to come here. You have a right to her after all—and she & Surtees have evidently horrific ideas about the "carnage" in our streets & the shootings under "military despotism" which go on in the back alleys— See 'Times.' But I hope Henry will come some day & see for himself. Uncle Hedley is a Napoleonist, & aunt Jane a legitimist & furious against the President . . which does'nt prevent her going to his first reception next monday!!—

I shall write to dear Trippy. Love on all sides.

Your own Ba.

Write, Arabel! Yes—dont I tell you everything?18

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Cf. EBB to Miss Mitford, Christmas Eve [1851]: “But we know men, most opposed to him, . . writers of the old 'Presse' & 'National'—and Orleanists & Legitimists . . & the fury of all such, I can scarcely express to you after the life" (EBB-MRM, III, 338). See also note 9 below.
3. “The animals.” Hugues Félicité Robert de Lamennais (1782–1854), a priest, as well as a religious, social, and political writer, who never found a suitable way to combine his liberal Christian democratic political ideology with his Catholic faith. In a letter written the preceding day, EBB reported to Miss Mitford: “I hear that Lamennais is profoundly disgusted. He said to a friend of ours that the French people was ‘putrified to the heart’” (EBB-MRM, III, 339).
4. EBB refers to herself in several letters written during this period as a "democrat," not a "Napoleonist" or "Buonapartist." For example, see EBB, II, 35 & 53, as well as EBB-MRM, III, 345.
5. “Mr. So-and-so” or “Another Mr. Other So-and-so.”
6. Sic, for Pelletan. Pierre Clément Eugène Pelletan (1813–84), a journalist, politician, and a long-time friend of Lamartine, under whom he served as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Pelletan was a literary critic for La Presse for a number of years, and he was "a noted opponent of the Second Empire" (EB). Pelletan was from the Charentes Inferieur region of southwest France. More than a decade earlier he had been tutor to George Sand's son Maurice.
7. “The world’s greatest villain” “the kingdom of Satan” “infamous rascals.”

8. Charles Montalembert (1810-70) wrote for L’Avenir; Thiers founded Le National and wrote for the Revue des Deux Mondes; Guizot founded Le Publiciste in 1828 and he also wrote for Revue des Deux Mondes; Lamartine’s writings appeared in various journals and newspapers, including La Presse, Le Siècle, and Le Bien Public, and he edited Le Conseiller du Peuple for a period.

9. EBB’s comment regarding Lamartine and Louis Napoleon seems to imply that each was responsible, though at different times and in different ways, for overthrowing a legitimate government to suit their own ends. In the early days of the revolution in February 1848, restrictions on the French press were loosened, but by late summer there was an increasing hostility between the government and the press, and the earlier freedoms were withdrawn. Printers refused to print opposition journals, and some “radical” journalists were imprisoned. “In Paris the police took possession of the offices of all leading newspapers on the morning of 2 December [1851]. The more notorious opposition journals, among them Presse and Opinion publique, were obliged to cease publication until further notice, and the rest could only appear if they agreed to refrain from comment on the coup d’état. On 12 December newspapers which had been suspended were allowed to reappear, but they remained under strict surveillance” (Irene Collins, The Government and the Newspaper Press in France: 1814-1881, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 115).

10. EBB was not alone in her disapproval of the response in The Times to the coup d’état. Louis Napoleon “particularly resented the leading articles which The Times published immediately after the coup and made every endeavour to secure their discontinuance, both by means of his own underground machinery and by remonstrating with the British Government” (The History of The Times: the Tradition Established, 1841-1884, London: The Office of The Times, 1939, p. 147). Indeed, Walter, manager of The Times, “was gratified to think that the Prince-President read The Times and that it would ‘make him dance round the room with rage.’” (p. 148).

11. It was on this day in 1848 that Lamartine stood on the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville and declared the beginning of the Second Republic.

12. “He owes it to himself for his glory.”

13. On the south side of the Seine, which is described as offering a “striking contrast” to the northern side, and where “the air is pure and salubrious” (Galignani’s New Paris Guide, Paris: A. and W. Galignani and Co., 1851, p. 46).

14. “A great triumph.” Count Louis Matheiu Mole (1781-1855), a relative of de Tocqueville, was from an aristocratic background and had served as prime minister from 1836 to 1839.

15. Pen’s pronunciation of “freddo,” Italian for “cold.”

16. This is the first direct reference in these letters to the fact that the Brownings did not agree about Louis Napoleon.

17. The Times of 5 December 1851 contained the following report: “From the immense amount of military resources of the Government and the stern determination with which they are employed, it was not to be expected that any successful effort of popular resistance could be made in Paris. Nevertheless, from an early hour yesterday the streets of the capital … witnessed a renewal of the scenes of carnage we have so often had to record and to deplore.” EBB often warned Arabella about believing reports in the English newspapers, especially The Times; see the preceding letter, note 5, as well as letter 77 (see note 13). The report also noted that letters from English residents and travellers described scenes of bloodshed.

18. Cf. EBB’s comment in letter 10 describing her “rambling letters … treating of Heaven, earth, & the kitchen.”
Dearest Arabel,

I do not write to you so often as I used at Florence, for many reasons—all good ones; Ba is well, now—nor do you need my assurance that she is so, having seen her with your own eyes. I know, too, that she does not forget me in her letters, any more than in other actions of hers, & that she tells you, what I bid her tell—how affectionately I remember you, and how earnestly I hope to see you again before long. But, spite of Ba's telling all this, I shall just write a word of my own, this Christmas time, to wish you from the bottom of my heart every good you may desire,—or rather, that we could desire for you. Ba can never love you more than she now does,—or, I may say,—than she always did: but I love you ever so much now as seeing is better than believing, and the evidence of one’s own Muses than the testimony of another—even when that other is Ba. Don’t think me so ungrateful, therefore,—were there no other consideration,—as to stay away from England, & you, simply because it is possible that my father & sister may settle here: I shall never forget one sister in the presence of another, be assured. Ba will have given you our little news—she has been much affected by the cold, but seems better now—& I hope the worst is past. Wiedeman is quite well, quite good—as I ought to know, who have just been walking with him for some hours in the sun. I will write in a day or two to George, whose debtor I am for a kind letter,—but I have barely left myself room to do more than repeat my truest love. RB.

Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. This note was sent with EBB’s letter 75, which she wrote on 25 and 26 December 1851. Based on RB’s reference to “Christmas time,” this letter is dated 25 December.

Ever beloved Arabel, I dont hear from you, & it would relieve me to hear. I cant imagine why you dont write. Not a word about Jamaica ever so long, & I see in Galignani that the cholera is there—² Why dont you mention Storm? Perhaps everything goes black in my eyes just now, for something which I have heard lately & which has given me grievous pain. Two or three days ago, Miss Watkyns Wynn told Robert of a rumour that Philaret Chasles³ (one of the paid government professors) was lecturing or about to lecture on the English poets at the Collège de France, & among others, on Tennyson, Browning, & EBB, “the veil of whose private life has been lately raised by Miss Mitford.”¹¹ This made me very anxious & uncomfortable: you may well suppose it. Robert went down to the Collège de France yesterday, & heard a lecture, but only an opening lecture—& it wont be continued till next tuesday. The place was thronged—
well, but that's nothing. Yesterday evening, just as I had gone to bed, in came a writer of the Revue des deux mondes—he was engaged on a paper upon my poetry, & the people belonging to the review had sent him an Athenæum of the 4th of January which contained the full passage from Miss Mitford's book, & desiring him to make use of the biographical details. He, however, could not help feeling (think of a stranger, a Frenchman—a man... feeling what a woman & my English friend did not!!) that the repetition of certain details might be "very painful to Mrs Browning,"... he came therefore to consult Robert about it—I shall be grateful to that man while I live, for his sympathy & sensibility.

Robert just intimated to me the sort of references which she has made, & altogether I am quite upset & unhappy—Good Heavens—how obtuse of feeling, how unconscious of the existence of such a thing as delicacy, some people are. How absolutely ignorant of your heart & habits, some friends are. "If it had been mine enemy who had done it..." But that she in pure kindness of intention, should run a knife up to the hilt in me, as a proof of friendship, & that I should not be able to say in return, even so much as "you are a cruel woman for this."

O Arabel—you who know me! You who know that not even in my poetry where I have written what was deepest in me, could I utter one word of that subject—one direct reference,.. think of what I must be feeling to have it all said quietly like any other "compliment"... good Heavens!... in the face of the whole world... to be extracted here, & translated there, & talked & gossiped about here & there indiscriminately—Also, the pain to you all—dear things! The vexation to Papa... who I dare say wishes me & my books to be all dead & buried out of his sight & hearing! Forgive me, you— I bring you nothing but vexation in one shape or another. Even the Athenæum people, you see, had not the least instinct of delicate apprehension about it—though Mrs Chorley, I acquit of the thing—I am sure he is incapable of such an act—He never could have done it—I am sure.

We have read nothing... observe... yet—What vexes me so that I could "rend my garments" like the orientalists, is, that if it ever had crossed my mind in the shape of an imagination, I might have written in time to her, & entreated her to suppress all personality as far as I was concerned. But it never crossed my mind once—I understood that the book chiefly consisted of a republication of certain criticisms of her's which appeared in the Lady's companion when Mrs Chorley was it's [sic] editor... one of which I knew related to my poetry, & another to Robert's. It never crossed my mind that there could be a personality in either, & I was so much at ease about the papers altogether that I did not think it worth while to examine the old ['']Lady's companions" when I was in England, concluding that I should read them in the book—The title of the book, she told me, did not in the least express the character of it, & was in fact a mere fancy of the publisher's who wanted to attract the public. I imagined, from what she said, that the book consisted of a mere series of literary papers, principally reprinted too—

I hear that among other ridiculous things, there's a story about my having bound up a Plato like a novel, not to be taken for a "Blue"—What a touching trait of modesty! & how like me, to be sure!!—Did you ever hear of it before, Arabel?

But let what is simply ridiculous pass—though I can't even smile at such things. She has pulled out the very heart from me, to hold it up to the world, with its roots still bleeding!——For
you know, Arabel, that I never can forget—never while the night follows the morning— Anything else she might have told, I w^ rather for instance (to show to you how I feel) rather, a hundred times, that she had written pitiful scandals about my marriage—

Yet all was done "kindly"— What am I to say? What, do?

Do you write to me, Arabel, meanwhile, .. for I am fancying all sorts of things about you all. There seems a weight in the air—

My cough is much better. The weather is very warm,—too warm almost,—& in time, I dare say, it will give me back my voice. We have had a week’s warm weather—but I am not very strong—only not ill, I may solemnly assure you— I have written this letter at full speed, for relief of heart as much as anything else— Poor darling Robert is so vexed for me! You know how he is my other heart—

So this is not a very amusing letter. God bless you my own beloved sister— God love & bless you, & keep you as much as may be, from the vexations which come from this as well as from other quarters— Do write to me, dearest!—

Your tenderly attached & grateful Ba

Wiedeman is quite well—& cutting two double teeth. Tom Butler brought his child here yesterday. The boy is very like his mother,—but I did’nt say that— The Hedleys we have not seen for ten days.

Darling Arabel, thank you, thank you! your dear welcome letter comes in like a ray of sunshine. I am relieved about Storm,—for one blackness had wrapt me in close from every other brightness, until you come as usual, my comforter, & break it to let through a little light— Half sorry I am in return to send you such a sad letter—but I cant help it .. I must speak to you, my own friend & sister!—

The falsifications of the Times are not to be accepted, I forwarned you long ago, as verities. No revolution has been accomplished with more moderation, I still believe, than the late French one—and history, from the height of even fifty years, will take a different view of things from what is taken in England through the “insular fog” which is characteristic of the foreign-policy-views of that country. “Without trial”—no. Of course in a transition-period of this kind, the ordinary tribunals are not employed in the examination of political offences—neither are, nor ever were— But every offence has come before tribunals, be sure. Infinitely more rigour was used by Cavaignac, at the time of the June riots, than ever has been used by Louis Napoleon. I persist in respecting the will of the people in France as elsewhere. I am not for “intelligent minorities” in France or elsewhere. And I have hope for the future, in spite of the shameful misrepresentations of agonized parties, & narrow English newspaper-writers, in France as elsewhere.

Remember—it is on the ground of democracy, that I set my foot, & on no other ground. Louis Napoleon may show himself worthy of all our curses in three months more— I dont enter into sureties for Louis Napoleon—he may be worthy presently of our curses. But up to this moment, in the name of justice, no. In pure justice, I cry no. He has not done ill up to this moment— And France does not think so.
Every revolution brings with it certain stringent necessities. It did, under Lamartine—it did under Cavaignac—Cavaignac’s name is hated by the people of Paris, because he was considered universally, unnecessarily severe. An honest upright man, nevertheless, he is, & a true republican.

_Three_ how you are! As to the cold, the Te Deum day, there was a frosty fog, the worst of all things . . . also the day after—but we have had no fog since, & the cold has quite gone away, as I told you. It is so warm that Wilson “would not willingly have a fire in her room” she was saying this morning. We have had only a pretence of one indeed for some days, & keep all the doors open. My voice will come back in time, but, dearest Arabel, you know how it is that a few days of severe weather, off & on, are enough to undo me—My chest is made of paper, I believe—The comfort is, that a little warm weather is enough to make me well again, . . & I dare say the spring will set in early here. Wilson wants me to go out very much, but really I am afraid, with my voice in this state, to run any risks. My first letter to M! Martin was lost . . & I, hearing indirectly that she was complaining at Pau of not hearing from me, wrote a second letter, which surely she must have received by this time. The first letter was very long, & full of politics . . written by return of post after receiving hers. Oh— I dont think the Hedleys are very “gay”—they were only “beginning to be rather so.” Perhaps it may be my fancy about the gravity—it was Ibbit’s & Robin’s that struck me. Now, do write soon again—

Your own Ba—

Dearest George! How like his generosity! He could not have pleased me better than by doing just so. As to Papa & the books, why it is inconceivable.

Robert’s best love—& mine, to all of you—dear Trippy & all, be it understood—

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.

2. The supplement to the 27 December 1851 issue of _Galignani’s Messenger_ gave a summary of news from Jamaica, which contained a report that “cholera . . . was still committing its awful ravages in various parts of the island. It prevails principally in the parish of St. James, on the bank of the Great River, Westmoreland and Saint Elizabeth, the town of Montego Bay, and Hanover. The deaths average two a day in Montego Bay.”

3. Victor Euphémien Philarète Chasles (1798-1873), French critic and writer, from 1851 professor of comparative literature of the Collège de France. Chasles was the author of several books on comparative literature, including _Études sur la littérature et les mœurs de l’Angleterre au XIXe siècle_ (Paris: Amyot, 1852), which contains a section on RB’s _Paracelsus_ (pp. 425-435).

4. Miss Mitford’s _Recollections of a Literary Life, or Books, Places, and People_ (London: Richard Bentley, 1852) includes a chapter entitled “Married Poets: Elizabeth Barrett Browning—Robert Browning” (pp. 266-291). A review of the book appeared in _The Athenæum_ of 3 January 1852, with an extract of the passage on EBB, which was prefaced by the following comment: “None of the connecting prose passages will be read with more interest than Miss Mitford’s graphic account of Mrs. Barrett Browning—the poetess. We have been long aware of the tragic facts alluded to in the following sketch; they are touched by Miss Mitford with the delicacy of true sympathy” (pp. 10-11). The reviewer has been identified as Daniel Owen Maddyn in the marked file of _The Athenæum_ now at City University (London).

6. EBB said much the same thing to her brother George a few weeks later: "If an enemy had done it' one would know how to deal with it—as it was, I was in great difficulty" (B-GB, p. 163).

7. Chorley declined to review Miss Mitford’s book since it was dedicated to him. It is unlikely that he would have known of the details of its contents.

8. i.e., "in token of rage, grief, horror, or despair" (OED).

9. Chorley’s autobiography mentions his editorship of this journal, but it does not refer to Miss Mitford’s contributions. “On the retirement of Mrs. Loudon from the editorship of the 'Lady’s Companion,' the proprietor offered the post to Chorley. ... He conducted this serial from Midsummer 1850, to Midsummer 1851” (Henry Fothergill Chorley: Autobiography, Memoir, and Letters, 2 vols., compiled by Henry G. Hewlett, London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1873, II, 6).

10. i.e., “blue-stockings,” a term used for women “having or affecting literary tastes” (OED). The term originated in the mid-18th century, “and at length, about 1790, when the actual origin of the term was remembered by few, Blue Stockings, in later slang abbreviated to Blues” (OED). In the chapter on EBB in Recollections of a Literary Life, in which Miss Mitford divulged the effects of the tragedy of Bro’s drowning, she wrote that after his death, EBB “clung to literature and to Greek; in all probability she would have died without that wholesome diversion to her thoughts. Her medical attendant did not always understand this. To prevent the remonstrances of her friendly physician, Dr. Barry, she caused a small edition of Plato to be so bound as to resemble a novel. He did not know, skilful and kind though he were, that to her such books were not an arduous and painful study, but a consolation and a delight” (Mitford, Recollections, I, 270-271).


13. See letters 74, note 5, as well as letter 75, note 17.

14. Louis Eugène Cavaignac (1802-57), soldier and Minister of War for the Second Republic, directed troops during the street fights in the Paris uprising of 23-26 June 1848. Shortly thereafter, in a letter to Miss Mitford dated 10 October [1848], when EBB was lamenting the need for a leader in France, she described Cavaignac as “only a soldier” (EBB-MRM, III, 256). In a letter to John Ruskin, dated 5 November [1855], declaring her support for Louis Napoleon, EBB confessed “I was very sorry when Louis Napoleon was elected instead of Cavaignac. At the coup d’état I was not sorry” (LEBB, II, 220).

15. A report in The Times of 3 January 1852 edition questioned how effective Louis Napoleon’s new government would be: “But which of these reforms can be expected from an arbitrary Government, without the liberty of the press and without that support of the intelligent classes which is so essential to the defence of enlightened innovations” (p. 4).


17. On 1 January 1852, the Cathedral of Notre Dame was magnificently decorated for the thanksgiving service for Louis Napoleon’s election. “A solemn ‘Te Deum d’actions de grace’ was performed at the same hour in every cathedral church of France. ... The Cathedral of Notre Dame was somewhat deteriorated by the effect of a dense fog” (The Times, 3 January 1852, p.5.)

18. EBB’s letters to Mrs. Martin reached their destination, and both are now at Wellesley. They are dated 11 December 1851 and 2 January 1852. As EBB had no reply, a third letter was written on 17 January 1852, in which she wondered if “M. le Président has stopped my letters” (LEBB, II, 42).

19. I am unable to elucidate EBB’s remarks about George’s generosity; perhaps it refers to a gift for Pen, or the letter he had written to RB. Her comment about “Papa & the books” also remains unexplained.
My beloved Arabel, To begin .. lest I should be ungrateful & forget it afterwards .. let me beseech you never to do such a thing as to send books to us here. They only make ‘luggage,’ observe, and when there is anything interesting we find opportunities of seeing it, among our friends & acquaintances. For those memoirs, we are to have sight of them through some Americans—but I can’t say that I look forward to much pleasure from them, whatever may be the interest. Robert saw the first Athenæum article, which you speak of, & thought the extracts a very painful exposure, & the letters not fit for publication on various accounts. Whether Carlyle likes it or not, shall we ourselves be safe, do you think, when she writes from Italy? For my part, I am frightened out of my wits at what may be extracted next—people have grown peculiarly disagreeable just now; I think—one is pricked at every turn when one wishes most to move about the world quietly. If it goes on much longer I shall take lodgings in the desert, & wish for a simoom.

Poor Madame Ossoli is of course too blameless in all this. She was a woman full of fancies (.. fine fancies ..) dependent on her state of nerves, .. of noble instincts, but a very hampered intellect,—& of opinions quite the wildest. Perhaps to no woman (at all distinguished) in the world would it be so cruel, to catch her fugitive impressions & offer them to the public. One’s friends are hard upon us sometimes. And these Americans!!—

But you must forgive dear Miss Mitford, Arabel. I had a very touching letter from her the other day. She wd “rather have sacrificed her whole book than have given me a moment’s pain”—Then she tells me of certain reasons—how she had heard all sorts of ridiculous stories about me, sworn to by the most respectable persons. For one thing, I was in paroxysms of love, & wore widow’s weeds to express a sense of despair!!!—And so, she was rescuing my reputation!—She meant most affectionately, be sure—and really the stupidities current in the world do require sometimes a little stemming with mud dykes. I remember once somebody asking Henrietta if I was not my own heroine of “Bertha in the lane,”—and of course we should be the last to hear in general of like speculations—However this may be, forgive Miss Mitford for my sake. To sin against us through loving us, should be at least a pardonable sin in this poor world.

Darling Arabel, I don’t like your scheme of amusing yourself by sitting in the dark .. unless you see angels in the dark .. which may be. And you have dreadful headaches .. & you are out of spirits altogether—oh yes, I see that plainly. I suppose you exhaust yourself with the Refuge, & then you get sad through fatigue—Now do remember that joy is a part of Christian wisdom, & that God is light—in Him is no darkness at all—Also the reverie system is the most dangerous of all .. we had better be doing mischief sometimes with our hands & feet. I tell you, because I have known too much of it myself, & struggled against it strenuously at last as a matter of conscience & probity—The habit steals, grows on one .. & one has to shake oneself hard to stand upright out of it, & be fit for healthful action of mind & body. Don’t be vexed with me that I say this. It may not be necessary I dare say—only you seem to me, you who are always so high out of the dust of the world, in God’s holiness, lower in spirits than usual, & I don’t like it at all, you darling dearest.
Arabel, & I speak out my heart as usual. Oh— I know you are dull, as to outward circumstances, in many ways—do not think that I cannot understand— But then you have privileges [sic] too—and there is nothing more wrong than usual,—is there? Was I wrong in not writing before? I was out of sorts too a little (I who am preaching)— I was ploughed up & harrowed over by that stupid business, & couldn't set myself straight to grow my cabbages as usual—and write my letters— I was ruffled thoroughly, & set myself to read Louis Blanc & Cabet to keep bad thoughts from my head. Then it's a great bore not to speak beyond a whisper for two months, & to feel that horrible lassitude which certain states of the weather produce with me. We have had some very cold days .. twice, three days together .. and I think it certain almost that it was not as cold in England, either time. Yet I dare say I should have been worse in England, because of the quality of your air which is altogether inferior .. heavier, thicker. Also the cold here has been unusual, & very brief, to do it justice. I wish I had counted all the days this winter that we have done without fire— Sometimes Wilson has sate all day without fire, not lighting it even in the evening—and yet the sun does not come into her room. I am very much better, & have quite recovered my voice. The cough also is in abeyance—not gone, but cut down for the present. People are changing their hats, Wilson says, & the trees in our garden are in green buds—which makes Wiedeman say that they are “pateti rossi,” “alberi rossi” .. red trees—he calls every colour ‘red,’ poor darling. Yet I have just bought & had made up a merino gown .. because I couldn't appear to my visitors in burnt rags exactly .. & my old blue gown was singed, to say the least of it— I can wear a merino too, off & on, till the end of April—(I could, even in Florence)— & it will be ready for next winter—nothing will be lost. I was tremendously extravagant & gave a great deal for the finest merino extant .. 28$, the dress. It is brown. Also, Robert made me buy a dark grey chambord, they call it, for 26$ .. I think .. a sort of stuff very much like an Irish poplin .. a new stuff .. very pretty. This will do for the spring, or cool days in the summer even. I have had them both made up much in the same way .. à la Basquine .. which is the only fashion just now, they say .. opening & tight in front quite up to the throat, with polka bodies .. this way .. opening above & below the waist & in one piece. They are very pretty. Henrietta has sometimes asked how gowns were made, & you may both like to know. Robert calls them very pretty. The loose polka is worn besides, as much as ever, & I have a black lace one like yours .. but dearer than yours, alas! You will think that I am opening the year with exceptional extravagances. Perhaps. What is your colour this winter? I like to know, that I may see you “in my mind’s eye, Horatio.”

Henrietta has written to me,—so I know. I only wish I had the like misfortune— I couldn't pretend to be sorry on anybody's account I assure you. Children are better than gold & silver. I have the gold—but should like a silver little girl-baby to make up. I hope she may have one— As to the money, the expense of two, is not much more than the expense of one— One nurse does for two children, you see. Poor dearest Henrietta seems to be suffering very much, and I only wonder that she still should care so extremely for going to London under those circumstances. To be near you, would draw one through fire & water of course, .. but London entails on one too much that isn't you .. too much visiting & crowding in various ways. If I were she, I should be inclined to wait till the summer, & then be in a way to get cheaper rooms & stay over her confinement— But
dont be afraid of my suggesting that. And she has set her heart apparently on going to you in March—What makes you fancy that Altham is backward in his walking? He seems to me on the contrary, very forward. Wiedeman could walk at thirteen months & run at fourteen months, & he was considered forward, though so light a child—Altham is only a year old, & he can almost stand, Henrietta says. And consider the child's weight!

Oh yes—Consuelo Jago\textsuperscript{10} is far, extraordinarily far before poor Peninni in her talking powers—Yet Peninni talks in an incessant stream after a fashion, and is a bewitching child, I really should think if he were not mine—He is like a fairy, with his mixture of languages, & his as strange combination of spirit & gentleness,—very amusing both in his words & his ways, he is! The other day he talked to me about "un bataillon di babuffs"\textsuperscript{11} . Babuffs being the Peninni language for soldiers—He attempts to say everything now, only it's in French, Italian, English, . . whichever comes first—and the difficulty of making him out is tremendous. His vocation for singing continues uninterruptedly. He sings quantities of songs about soldiers & swans, & after every one, says in an enquiring voice .. "Bene, Papa?"\textsuperscript{12} .. ["Bella, Mamma?"\textsuperscript{13} & when we say it is very well & beautifully sung, he begins again, or breaks off with "no more! Peninni domani"\textsuperscript{14} more"—Then he draws . . houses—soldiers . . I must send you one of his drawings some day.\textsuperscript{15} And he said all his letters to me right, except two, the other day—Not that I ever teach him—I should really be afraid. He will read his letters out of a newspaper quite currently, & he always stops at \textit{P} to explain that it stands for Papa & Peninni. He would have read sentences by this time if it had not been for his backward talking. You know he could not when he was in London, even pronounce the letters—though he could point to them when you said their names—He is a strange child in some things. A day or two ago, he was naughty—had cried for nothing longer than he should—and I carried him away from Wilson into another room, & held him on my knee till he was good. I told him that when he was good he should go back. In a fit of sobs he clasped his little hands together & cried out "Dio, buono"\textsuperscript{16} .. meaning to ask God to make him good, .. & then, he kissed me & stopped crying in a moment. Observe, I never suggested such a thing by a word. The child took me quite by surprise. He is too sweet—there's the truth. I tremble for myself sometimes & for Robert, when I look at him, lest he should not be meant for the world. A little time ago he was sitting on the floor & talking to himself .. "Peninni buono—Papa buono. Mamma buona—Lili buona. Flush buono—Tutti, tutti buoni. Grazie a Dio"\textsuperscript{17} —always with the face turned up. Another time, Wilson had turned the silk lining of his pelisse .. (George's—). I observed that it was really as good as new, & that he ought to be thankful .. "bisogna ringraziare"\textsuperscript{18} said I. "Grazie a Dio," he cried quickly—lifting up his eyes. Which took me aback for an instant, & I am ashamed to say I could scarcely keep my countenance—neither could Wilson. Yet how was it reasonable to make distinctions between thanking God for one's daily bread & one's daily raiment? Intending however to recall him to second causes, I observed that "Lili had sown \textit{sic} it very well with her needle" .. upon which he re-iterated, .. "Grazie a Dio \textit{e Lili}."\textsuperscript{19}

I have always forgotten to tell you that one of the Miss Brandlings,\textsuperscript{20} with whom Wilson's sister lived & who were thrown into great adversity by the death of their father, is living as "demoiselle de compagnie"\textsuperscript{21} with Lady Torrens, the occupier of the apartment next to ours .. on the same floor. We had been here a number of weeks before Wilson found it out. Mrs Torrens
with a family of children from fourteen years of age downwards, is with her mother in law.. and these children have taken a passion rather than a love for Wiedeman— The little girls lug him about in their arms, ... saying of him ... "Oh, he is'nt a child at all! he's a wax doll." And he has the character of being wonderful for goodness & cleverness among them. On most afternoons, Lady Torrens's maid comes in for him & carries him away in her arms—& he is delighted to go, & on the most familiar terms with everybody, ... talking of "Bwandling," & imitating the dancing-lessons at which he has been present, with the most affected gliding steps & turns of the head. Sometimes he stays there an hour & a half together .. without Wilson, understand! Since our melancholy reverse of fortune at Miss Fitton's party, we have taken to educate him out of his fits of shyness—& now, Wilson makes a point of sending him into the drawingroom always, when a stranger happens to be present .. & he comes most obediently, & behaves very well indeed—only expecting a little praise afterwards .. "Peninni buono, Mamma?" We have had to give him a dose of castor oil lately—an event in the house. He was sick one night, & it was necessary. Now he is quite well—though every now & then Wilson falls into panics, because of his supernatural singings & laughers in the middle of the night. He laughed so, lying in the dark, one night, that she got up & lit the candle & was very near awaking Robert & me. Quite frightened she was. When she asked him what he was laughing at, he said “Punch” .. or “Boy”. His own thoughts made him laugh—but Wilson could’nt understand it- She took it for a sort of hysteria. He’s too excitable certainly, & we must be on our guard against his temperament in all reasonable ways.

What do you think I received today from Italy? A manuscript chapter of a novel from poor Guerazzi, sent to me by himself, “out of gratitude[ ]” for the interest in Tuscan affairs expressed by “Casa Guidi windows.” The poem was smuggled into his prison (where he has been these three years) & he called it ‘magnificent’ I understand, only objecting to the mention of the “great Guerazzi” & “farthing tax” as “unworthy of the dignity of poetry.” Do you know I feel a sort of remorse—& softening to him—poor Guerazzi—I who never believed in his probity much—! There are difficult situations, & men are sorely tempted in them— It has touched me, that he, perfectly understanding my feeling about himself, should yet talk of “gratitude” to me on account of my feeling for Italy. Poor Guerazzi! he is in prison still.

Then I must tell you I have had a very affectionate letter from the authoress of the Head of the family, Miss Mulock. I wrote a little note to thank her for her dedication, .. & to drop softly on a conjecture of mine that the stanzas in the Athenæum (upon the sonnets, you remember?) were hers. I just hinted .. that I might have felt her hand before .. in “that hand in the air” which came to me with “a touch” at Florence– She confesses at once,—& wins my heart with her letter altogether–

Talking of letters, I wrote to George Sand the day before yesterday—& Robert & I, both of us, signed what I wrote—but it was better for me to write it, as I was the woman— We put my note into an inclosure, together with our letter of introduction (Mazzini’s) and a friend of a friend of ours promised to put it into her own hand yesterday— Still, whether we shall attain our object remains doubtful— She is in Paris for a very short time, & under neither of her known names, having adopted a third name in order to preserve a strict incognita— What with admirers & enemies
& book-makers in general, she has been hunted out of her peace, it appears. Also, she came to
Paris for no less a motive than to have an interview with Louis Napoleon, in order to procure the
commutation of punishment of a friend of her’s, the ex-representative Marc Dufraise, who was
on the point of being sent to Cayenne—27 The president granted her request—(The prisoner is
simply to be banished from France.) and shook hands with her kindly— As she was going away,
he pointed to an enormous heap of "Decrees" which were in course of preparation.!!—

You all of you as entirely mistake me & my views, as you mistake the abstract case. It is in
the very absolute consistency & faithful following out of principles, that I protest against the
tone adopted in England. A man of the most philosophical mind I have had intercourse with in
Paris, (and Robert agrees exactly with me in this opinion) a liberal, (but no party-man) said in
this room two days ago .. "It is difficult for a frenchman to speak without feverishness of the line
adopted by the English press. I give the writers credit for good & honest intentions .." (which is
more, Arabel, than I do) .. "but their ignorance is certainly extraordinary— They do not understand
the A.B.C of France. Also, in respect to the President, however he may be judged of as to certain
of his measures, & whatever view you take of his system, one thing cannot be doubted of .. he is
in earnest in the good he means to do to France by his constitution & the rest— They think he is
not conscientious! Why he is not only in earnest—he is even fanatical"—

I hear with pleasure .. & with the more pleasure on account of the novelty .. some words of
sense across the channel, from public men in the English House of Commons— As to the Palmerston
quarrel, it's all a sham of course.28 Lord Palmerston was out of favour with Court & premier, &
they wanted an opportunity of getting rid of him. The only person really to blame in the Paris
affair appears to me to have been Lord Normanby who was extremely indiscreet, to say the least.29

Pray dont call me a Napoleonist, Arabel. I am no Napoleonist, by any possible wrenching of
the word. I love truth, justice, & the people—that’s my confession of faith.30

The other evening at Lady Elgin's, Robert met M! Owen,31 & he called on me the next morning.
Very glad I was to see him—though I did’nt think I should be, do you know— I hate to see people,
seen last too long ago. Well—who is going to be married? You wont guess. Julia Bayford.32 She
is to marry an Italian, a Neapolitan, a Roman Catholic, a M. di Salis .. of high family, & a
favorite officer of that wretch the King of Naples. Julia writes home to say that she "hopes all
her relations will approve of her marriage"—upon which (to begin!) poor Angela goes into
hysterics. It is natural enough that they should not like either the complete separation involved in
this connection, or the "devotion to the pope" which makes one of the ostensible virtues of the
bridegroom—but M! Owen spoke very sensibly about it .. & they all mean to make the best of it
& be as kind to Julia as possible— I do hope she may be happy, poor thing? You know I can
understand marriage with a Catholic. I am not as severe as you are. Yet the difference of religion
must be a great drawback in my view as in yours. What surprises me most excessively, I must
say, is, that Julia should marry at all—& marry an Italian, who cares so much generally for the
outsides & mere manners of women! She use(d sca)rcely to speak at Florence. Not agreeable
like the other Bayfords! But there’s a fate in these things— He is well off & has a château in
Switzerland where he goes to spend the summer.
I am so afraid I shall make you pay overweight for this long letter— I had other things to say too— M' Owen & I talked a little theology .. but there's no room. This paper Robert has bought, is too thick—

Love to dearest Trippy, & the dearest with you— God bless you for your own Ba

Robert's best love—.

Wilson is delighted to hear about her sister’s marriage. How is dear Minny? M' Owen told me something of a “miracle” which has taken place lately in his church. Very curious & interesting. M' Carré, the 'pastor' (I think he is, here) is a very intelligent man—but without breadth & depth, as seems to me. Lady Elgin has a strong leaning to their church, but does not join them so far!

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli (2 vols., Boston: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1852) had just been published; an English edition was published at the same time by Richard Bentley in London. Several chapters in both volumes contain quotations from the Brownings' poetry as epigraphs.
3. Two separate notices of Margaret Fuller's Memoirs appeared in The Athenæum of 7 and 14 February 1852 (no. 1267, pp. 159-161, and no. 1268, pp. 193-195, respectively). The extracts given in the first review included a long passage from a letter describing her meetings with Carlyle in London, but neither of the two notices contain any direct references to the Brownings. In a letter to Emerson written from Paris in December 1846, Margaret Fuller mentions that “Browning has just married Miss Barrett, and gone to Italy. I may meet them there” (Memoirs, II, 190). In a letter to her mother written from Florence in December 1849, she wrote: “Then I see the Brownings often, and love and admire them both, more and more, as I know them better. Mr. Browning enriches every hour I pass with him, and is a most cordial, true, and noble man” (II, 311). These brief references show that the Brownings were saved from any “painful exposure.”
4. Miss Mitford’s letter is not extant, but presumably it was a reply to the letter EBB wrote in mid to late January (see EBB-MRM, III, 343-346) after learning about Miss Mitford’s book and the extracts of it in The Athenæum.
5. I have been unable to verify this.
6. Étienne Cabet (1788-1856) was a utopian socialist writer, whose 1840 novel entitled Voyage en Icarie inspired the movement known as “Icarians.” This group eventually established experimental settlements on the Red River in Texas before moving on to Nauvoo, Illinois, after the Mormons had left for Utah. Cabot is often considered the most utopian of utopians; EBB calls him “puerile” in Aurora Leigh, IX, 869. She particularly disagreed with his idea that “all journals except one in the right sense” should be suppressed “being, according to Cabet, a condition of a perfectly ‘free state’” (EBB-EAHO, p. 73). Jean Joseph Charles Louis Blanc (1811-82) was another socialist writer, about whom EBB is slightly more sympathetic. A journalist and historian, he wrote Histoire de dix ans (Paris: Pagnerre, 1841), which is an indictment of the July Monarchy, and comprises part of his comprehensive Histoire de la révolution française (Paris: Pagnerre, 1847-62). EBB refers to him in Aurora Leigh III, 585.
7. A type of mantle or cloak, more for summer wear than winter: see C. Willett Cunnington, English Women's Clothing in the Nineteenth Century, London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1937, p. 177.
8. “The basquin body with revers either opening down to the waist, or en demi-cœur” became a popular style of bodice about this time (Cunnington, p. 178).
10. See letter 47, note 29.
11. “A bataillon of soldiers.”
12. “Good, Papa?”
13. “Pretty, Mama?”
15. A number of Pen’s drawings have survived; see Reconstruction, K85–119.
16. “God, good.”
17. “Pennini good—Papa good. Mamma good—Lili good. Flush good—All, all good. Thanks to God.”
18. “We have to be thankful.”
19. “Thanks to God and Lili!”
20. Unidentified.
21. “Companion.” Sarah (née Patton) married Henry Torrens (1779–1828) in 1803; he was knighted in 1815 (and he had received a Portuguese knighthood in 1808). The daughter-in-law living with her may have been Maria Jane Murray, who married Arthur Wellesley Torrens (1809–55) in 1832.
22. See letter 74, note 15.
23. Cf. Aurora Leigh, IX, 422–424: “What! a happier child / Than mine, my best,—who laughed so loud to-night / He could not sleep for past-time?”
24. Entitled Il Tevere” (“The Tiber”) by Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi. This six-page manuscript is subscribed: “Frammento del Cap. XVIII della Beatrice Cenci”; it formed part of lot 255 in Browning Collections, and is now at the Fitzwilliam (see Reconstruction, L115). Beatrice Cenci, storia del secolo xvi was published in Pisa in 1853. Opinions of Guerrazzi’s literary works have been no more positive than EBB’s opinion of his politics. The editors of The Cambridge History of Italian Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) describe his novels as “rather reminiscent of modern heaters disguised as period log fireplaces: one does not know whether to deplore their phony style or their ineffectiveness” (p. 441). His letter to EBB has not survived, but in a letter to the Contessa Contenna del Rosso, dated 2 December 1851, Guerrazzi wrote: “Io ne rimetto a chi può più di noi, non senza però un qualche risentimento che nessuna voce, nessuna italiana—perché d’Inghilterra venne, e si mosse da una donna, Miss. Browning [sic], e lo ha fatto con certo suo poema notabile assai intitolato: Le finestre di casa Guidi;—di cui, se ne avesse vaghezza, ella potrebbe vederne alcuni squarci tradotti nel fasc. Ill degli scritti inglesi pubblicati qui in Firenze” (Lettere de F.D. Guerrazzi, a cura di Giosuè Carducci, Livorno: Coi Tipi Di. Franc. Vigo, 1880, I, 302).
25. Dinah Mulock (1826–87), afterwards Craik (1865), a novelist, dedicated her novel The Head of the Family (London: Chapman and Hall, 1852) to EBB. An inscribed copy “Elizabeth Barrett Browning—from the Author. Feb 6th 1852.” sold as lot 947 in Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, A1687). The dedication reads: “I dedicate this book to no personal friend, but to one who has for years been the good influence of my life. Nothing she knows, or ever may know of me: yet it pleases me to offer this—probably the last novel I shall write for some time—to a woman, the mere naming of whom includes and transcends all praise,—Elizabeth Barrett Browning.” A year earlier, she had published anonymously a sonnet to EBB entitled “To Elizabeth Barrett Browning on Her Later Sonnets” in The Athenæum of 15 February 1851 (no. 1216, p. 191), which was collected in Poems (London: Macmillan and Co., 1888) by the author of “John Halifax, Gentleman,” the work for which Mulock is probably best remembered.
26. The Brownings’ letter, presumably written on 10 February, has not survived. George Sand’s response is dated 12 February, and EBB copies it out in the following letter to Arabella (letter 79). George Sand had returned to Paris in late January 1852. Before leaving she wrote to Louis Napoleon on 20 January, in which she requested an audience and asked him to declare an amnesty against political prisoners who were being maltreated; for the complete text of her letter, see George Sand: Correspondance, ed. Georges Lubin (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1974) 10, 659–664.
27. Sand’s friend, Marc Étienne Gustave Dufraisne (1811–76), a republican journalist and politician, had been ordered to Cayenne, the port of French Guiana where political prisoners were sent, for his opposition to the decrees against the Orléanists. Sand met with Louis Napoleon on 6 February, and thanks to her intervention,

28. Palmerston, Foreign Secretary at the time, unofficially endorsed the coup d'état in a conversation with the French ambassador in London. Normanby, the British ambassador in Paris, "a difficult and haughty man," who "had been nursing for five years the feeling that Palmerston had abandoned him in his bitter quarrel with Guizot," retaliated "behind the scenes" (Herbert C.F. Bell, Lord Palmerston, London: Longmans and Co., 1936, II, 47). Normanby requested "an explanation of the discrepancy between the cabinet's instructions and the foreign secretary's comment," and claimed that "the Paris embassy had been placed in a situation of great embarrassment" (II, 49). Russell demanded Palmerston's resignation, and "the Queen was almost incredulous in her delight" (II, 50). It was generally accepted that "the Queen had been trying to free herself from Palmerston for years" (II, 50).

29. Normanby's brother was secretary to Prince Albert, and Normanby's wife, a favourite with the Queen, wrote letters to her brother-in-law that "were cleverly designed to please the Court and to place Napoleon and Palmerston in the worst light possible" (Bell, II, 48).

30. See letter 75, note 4.

31. Henry John Owen, of Park Chapel Chelsea, had married EBB's cousin Angela Bayford on 16 June 1829 (see letter 65, note 12). There is no record of EBB having seen him except for once in 1830 when he called at Hope End (see BC, 2, 248). Owen was a clergyman of the Church of England, but eventually had to give up his curacy because of his involvement with the Irvingites.

32. According to The Times: "At Naples, 27 May last, Daniel Baron de Salis Soglio, eldest son of the late Pierre Baron de Salis Soglio, of Zurich, in Switzerland, to Julia, youngest daughter of the late John Bayford of Doctors' Commons" (1 July 1852). He died two years later from cholera (see letter 112, note 13).

33. I have been unable to identify which of Wilson's five sisters had married.

Letter 79

[Paris]

[Postmark: 18 February 1852]

My beloved Arabel This is a letter quite out of turn, but I want to say particularly that Robert has directed his Shelley to be sent with his best love to George.¹ We have only six copies to give away, or you should have one for yourself—but you will read George's . . . & I don't think you will care a bit about the "Letters," which in truth are by no means interesting, & Robert's part is a mere preface, as you will see. He thinks very lightly of it himself—but the occasion admitted of nothing more.

We have been a little uncomfortable the last day or two about our darling Peninni. Do you remember my telling you of his supernatural laughers in the middle of the night which I laughed at Wilson for being frightened at? Well . . . that was in my last letter. But the night before last, he had a return of it, & I hearing him in my room, got up & went to his & didn't like it at all. It certainly is not natural laughter—he struggles against it, little angel, & it seems to catch him in his throat from his stomach, & he kicks out as if it were a slight convulsion—exactly hysteria it is, . . only very slight of course. His face looked excited, red yet not flushed, . . for he was not in the least feverish apparently (not hot) & his eyes looked like blue stars. When we said, "Why do you laugh? Don't laugh, darling—go to sleep," he said sadly, "Peninni non bene, Mamma". Then after a few minutes there was another strange laugh—Certainly it is a species of hysteria, . . He
had it again last night, just as he was going to sleep .. upon which we were really frightened (I was at least) & sent out & got him a dose of castor oil & immediately administered it. In the daytime he is perfectly well to all appearance, in the highest spirits .. (oh, far too high his spirits are—there's the truth—he is too excitable a child) running, dancing, singing, acting Punch .. we try to keep him quiet & cant. Ask Minny if she ever heard of such a thing as that sort of hysterical affection in young children of his age. And do you know, Arabel, I think I will ask you to write these facts to M'r Jago, & get her to say what M'r Jago thinks of them. The child is cutting two double teeth, one of them just breaking the gum .. you can see the white corner through. Probably this has something to do with the affection. I am going to write myself very soon to Trejago, but I wont wait till I can do so at length to ask this question I should like you to ask for me- Do Arabel. The child is mine, & I dare say people often think when I speak of him that there is a natural tendency to exaggerate because he is mine. Yet I assure you, I do often & often at the bottom of my heart profoundly & painfully fear lest he should not be meant long for the world, he is so miraculously good & sweet, & has such striking susceptibilities & capacities. Robert is always saying to me .. [']"Do keep that child back—dont encourage him to premature development in that way," .. and we both try in vain to keep him back. He is an extraordinary child .. extraordinary in every way, .. & I do not exaggerate in saying so. We send him out twice a day, & Paris has appeared to agree particularly well with him. He is as well in this situation as in the country,—close to the "barriere" & among the trees, and he grows very much, & looks stronger, people say. Not one cold has he had this winter—not even a cold in the head. Let me tell you how good he was last night. When he found we were going to give him medecine, he cried a good deal, .. & said, [""no, Mama—no, Lili—Ina (medecina) no!""] But upon its being clear to him that it was in vain & that he must take it, & that we were actually mixing it at the table, he suddenly ceased crying & opened his mouth quite wide to be ready for the inevitable medecine, .. just saying, "Mama—Papa, Peninni buono." meaning that I was to tell Papa how good he was, .. Robert being in the next room with M. Milsand. Think o f a little creature not three years old, attaining to that self-command! making up his mind to it by a real effort of fortitude! When it was all over, he expressed an opinion with an air of great satisfaction, that Papa ought to buy him "a horse" as a reward .. & I do agree that he deserved it, .. dont you?<br><br>Arabel, I have seen George Sand.* We had an answer to our letter by return of post— Here it is—<br><br>Madame,<br><br>J'aurai l'honneur de vous recevoir dimanche prochaine, rue Racine 3. C'est le seul jour que je puisse passer chez moi, et encore je n'en suis pas absolument certaine. Mais j'y ferai tellement mon possible que ma bonne etoile m'aidera peutêtre un peu.<br><br>Agreez mille remercimen[t]s de cœur ainsi que Monsieur Browning que j'espère voir avec vous, pour la sympathie que vous m'accordez.¹⁵⁻<br><br>George Sand.<br><br>Imagine how delighted I was to get this note. We were half in despair .. indeed Robert was whole .. about the result, having heard on all sides that she had a vow against seeing anybody, & probably would take no notice of our letter, even.
Sunday came. “The better day the worse deed,” you will observe on this occasion. Moreover, though the weather was magnificent, the air was rather over-keen for me, and I had the greatest difficulty to persuade Robert to let me go. He wanted to go alone, on the desperate hope of being able perhaps to persuade her to come to see me. But it was a desperate hope—and I represented strongly that if I missed seeing her that time, I should never get over it in this mortal life. Also, the sun shone out like a fire. So I prevailed—put on my respirator, wrapped myself in furs, stuffed a muff into my bonnet, & was shut up with Robert & Wiedeman & Wilson in a close carriage. everybody gasping for breath in my service. I coughed going down the stairs—that was the worst part of it—but the enterprise did me no harm at all. As Robert says, “Very imprudent things seldom do any harm.”

In Rue Racine, we left Wilson & Baby in the carriage,... Baby observing to Wilson afterwards in a complaining voice, .. “Papa & Mamma, poeta,—Peninni, no” ... we had gone to see the poet, & he had’nt! —poor Peninni!

We were shown into a small bedroom—a comfortable room enough, but quite without pretension. There was a fire & a writing table & desk in the middle of the room—and two or three young men were sitting there. She came forward very cordially with a hand stretched out, and I, with a most natural emotion, took & kissed it on which she said “mais non, je ne veux pas”... and kissed my lips. She is large for her height, .. (she has grown stouter of late years) .. & was very simply dressed in a sort of grey woollen gown & jacket, (after the fashion of the day), a small linen collar & plain white sleeves—not a shred of ribbon or embroidery anywhere. Her hair was uncovered—twisted back with evident care, .. the black glossy bandeaux divided on the forehead very smoothly. The dark eyes & brow are extremely fine, the nose long, of a Jewish character, & the mouth by no means good .. large, & full of large white projecting teeth. The chin rather recedes. The complexion is of the deepest olive—the cheeks are over full, and it is chiefly in that respect, I dare say, that she has lost something from time. But she never could have been a beautiful woman, .. which surprised me a good deal—the type does not admit of her having ever been beautiful. Robert agrees with me in this exactly, & adds that, except for the increase in stoutness, he should think she remains much as she ever was. I sat there wondering how she could look in men’s clothes— I really can’t fancy it— We stayed with her three quarters of an hour or more, & during that time she conversed, chiefly on politics, with a low, rapid voice, without emphasis or even much modulation— Her manners are peculiarly simple—without a shadow of affectation or consciousness— It struck me that in the very excess of quietness, there was a touch of scorn—there was scorn even while she spoke in pity & sorrow of the misfortunes of her friends. She was giving directions & writing letters for the young men present, all of them listening to her with the profoundest respect, & excellent practical sense distinguishing what she said. As Robert observed, she seemed to be the man of the company, & everybody seemed to know it. She showed her confidence in us by naming names & stating facts before us, just as if she had known us for a hundred years .. & when Robert, seeing her so deeply engaged, expressed some scruple upon the propriety of our staying, she said, “no .. she had no political secrets for us” .. “there was nothing we might not hear.” We heard therefore a good deal, .. & though I shall repeat nothing, I may tell you that my own view, as I entertained it from the beginning, is much
confirmed rather than modified the other way. You are all wrong in England... frightfully wrong, immorally wrong, some of you. God keep us from the consequences. M. Milsand was here last night, & observed... “So ignorant is England of our position, that the democratic-spirit of France will be represented by the government candidates in the elections, and the retrograde parties will be represented by the opposition candidates, while England fancies it’s just the contrary.” I understand that the tone of the English press has excited the army to a fearful extent. I should like to see our dear friend M! Forster gagged for three months for the sake of the world. 

To go back to George Sand, you know she is one of the souls of the ultra republican party, & she came to Paris in order to mediate with the president for certain of her friends. She was grave & depressed, ... but full of candid sense & perfectly appreciating the whole situation, it seemed to me. I should like much to tell you what she said of Louis Napoleon—only Robert declares it would be breach of confidence if I wrote down these things, & perhaps it would. I shall tell you some day notwithstanding.

We are going to see her again— She asked us,—excusing herself, on the ground of her great press of occupation, from returning our visit. She kissed me again, when we went away— & Robert kissed her hand, & she didn’t say to him, “Mais non, je ne veux pas.” Perhaps he hoped she would—with consequences!

Now are you very angry with me for going to see her? Uncle Hedley is, I hear. I hear that he said to somebody the other day, it was “highly improper of me,” & that “indeed Ba knew a great many too many of that kind of people,” ... meaning I dont pretend to know what!—

I have written this in a scribble & a flurry—sentences shaken together while Robert talks. Try to make it out.

Lady Elgin has offered to take him to Lamartine’s. We hear that Lamartine will be very glad to see us, ... but cant possibly comprehend how two poets could marry! So much the worse for him!

God bless you. I have so much to say still & cant say it this time. Write very soon— Best love to dear Trippy & everybody.

Your very own Ba

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley. With an Introductory Essay (London: Edward Moxon, 1852). The book was withdrawn shortly before publication, but RB presented copies to several individuals, including Mrs. Jameson (see Reconstruction, C635); however, I have been unable to trace the copy presented to George. The copy in the British Library is inscribed: “From Palgrave this book presented by Mr. Moxon when he suppressed the publication.”

2. “Peninni not well.”

3. “Gate,” i.e., one of the city gates.

4. The Brownings’ first visit to George Sand took place on Sunday, 15 February 1852. As indicated in the following letter they met again very soon thereafter, probably Sunday, the 22nd. In letter 81, EBB explains that they were to visit again on 5 March, but it is unclear whether or not that visit ever came off; however, EBB notes in letter 82 that RB had seen her seven times. Sand gave them tickets for a performance of her play, Les Vacances de Pandolphe, but RB took Mrs. Streatfeild when EBB decided she could not attend (see letter 81).
5. "I would be honored to receive you next Sunday at 3 rue Racine. It is the only day I can be at home, and even of that I am not absolutely certain. But I shall do my best, and my lucky star may help me a little. Accept a thousand heartfelt thanks also for Mr. Browning, whom I hope to see with you, for the sympathy you have shown me." The original letter, dated 12 February, is at ABL.


7. "But no, I don't want that."

8. Forster was the editor of *The Examiner* at this time, and in addition to his own editorial policies against Louis Napoleon, he was publishing poems by Tennyson, which "were inspired by the coup d'état of Louis Napoleon and the House of Lords' refusal to organize militia in case Louis attacked Britain. They are cutting, aggressive, slightly hysterical poems full of anti-Catholic feelings, appeals to America to rise against tyranny, and to the press to be properly responsible by making 'opinion warlike'" (James A. Davies, *John Forster: A Literary Life*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983, pp. 89-90).

9. Others were also disappointed in EBB's decision to call on George Sand: in letter 81, EBB tells Arabella that one of the things she and Joseph Milson disagree on is George Sand. Mrs. Kinney, an American friend of the Brownings living in Florence (see letter 102, note 23), was shocked when RB announced that both he and his wife had kissed George Sand's hand. Mrs. Kinney recorded that EBB defended George Sand as "not a bad woman, but, on the contrary, a good & charitable one ... [one who] has fallen under the dominion of a sensual appetite which she cannot control; but it is no worse than gluttony or intemperance." Mrs. Kinney further records: "A sigh was all that could for the moment escape me, so swollen was my heart with indignation, that Mrs Browning—the truest & purest of women—could so speak!" (Mrs. Kinney, Journal, 7 June 1855, ms at Columbia).

10. RB finally met Lamartine in mid-April (see letter 82), and Lamartine was supposed to call on the Brownings, but he never did as EBB explains in letter 83.

---

**Letter 80**

[Paris]

Tuesday. [Postmark: 24 February 1852]

Ever dearest Arabel,

By right & law a letter is due to George from me today, with heaps of thanks for his kind gift of Longfellow's poem & the welcome letter to Robert.¹ But, as by your account, he must be on circuit, & you will be anxious to hear of our darling, I turn to you directly, & dear George shall be for another morning. Oh Arabel, I have been dreadfully frightened about our child – Two nights after I wrote last to you .. let me tell you how it was. He had been as well as a child could be all day .. so well, that I yielded the point of calling in a doctor, which we had decided on doing the previous night in consequence of a slight repetition of the attack. But he seemed so entirely well that day that I yielded to Robert's opinion of the absurdity of throwing him into medical hands to be torn to pieces, for perhaps just nothing. We agreed to repeat the dose of castor oil which acted perfectly, — we put him into a warm bath at night to quiet the nervous system, .. & I let Robert go at nine oclock to Miss Fitton's, quite at ease. Well — about ten the attack came on — and much worse than usual. O Arabel, he struck out violently with his arms & legs, .. rolled his eyes .. & certainly for about a quarter of a minute, did not recognize either Wilson or me. Wilson had him in her arms– I, who was just getting into bed, ran out of the room for Desirée, and could not find
her—she was asleep upstairs. Her bedroom is at the top of the house, I don't know where, & not in our apartment—So out I rushed as I was to Lady Torrens's door opposite ours, & rang violently at the bell, & begged her maid who happily came, to find out Desirée & bring her directly. I sent her to D'Rayner who lives near us—D. Rayner was not to be at home for four & twenty hours—While all this happened the child recovered himself perfectly, & fell into a profound sleep, . . his head cool, his cheeks unflushed, not the least sign of malady—But I could trust nothing—& so at the risk of alarming poor darling Robert, I wrote a line to him begging him to come & bring D! MacCarthy, the physician of the embassy, who, I knew, was to be at Miss Fitton's, for that I really couldn't dare to pass the night without advice. Robert thought I was right in all this—but really, I did it by a sort of instinct rather than reflection. He has made merry with me since, & told people that he found me in a state of distraction running about the house in my nightgown—you know I am apt to lose my head when I am frightened, & there was quite enough to frighten anybody. D! Macarthy, however, on his arrival, after listening to the whole story, & looking at Baby as he lay asleep, pronounced that no child with any serious malady could sleep so,—that it was an hysterical affection which we should relieve by applying hot water or cloths to the feet, & the sole danger of it being the flow of blood to the head. It might proceed, he said, from either worms or the teeth . . he could see better in the morning. So, in the morning, he came again. Peninni had begun the day at six by his usual songs in bed—he is our lark, little angel,—and was jumping & dancing the least like an invalid in the world. He was very gracious to D! Maccarthy, having lost all his shyness of late—sate on D' M.'s knee, examined his watch, & wrote 'ti amo' by the side of the prescription. He said, after a careful examination, he could see nothing wrong in the child anywhere—the gums were not inflamed, . . the stomach not flatulent . . the eyes & skin were indicative of the most absolute health. “Really,” said he, “it would be a shame to teaze with medecines, a child in such a state”—He thought on the whole, though the teeth might have something to do with it, that it arose from an over excitable temperament combined with some temporary want of regularity in the stomach—(you see, Arabel, we hate giving him medecines so, that we have run rather into the opposite extreme lately)—& that we had better repeat the castor oil, & give him a small quantity of “Bella donna” (a quarter of a grain, I think) at night, to quiet the system. Six powders he gave us, & we have given one a night. The next day, he came & took leave—making very light of it altogether. Nevertheless the child has not passed a night yet without symptoms of the same affection—little short laughs generally, attended with pushings down of the feet & catchings of the breath—while in the daytime, as Wilson observes, he looks rather better than before he was ill, with cheeks like peaches, & unquenchable spirits. D! Macarthy told us to keep him as quiet as we could, & not have other children to come to play with him & excite him—& this last order has cost him several bursts of tears, for he is very fond of his “boy,” as he calls the concièrge’s little daughter seven years old. Wilson takes him to walk outside the “Barrière” out of the way of the Punchs & other dissipations, & he consoles himself by filling his cart with stones & dragging it along, without the company of his Russian princess & the little Shores. But as to keeping him quiet, nobody can keep him quiet—his head's always running upon something in some intense way. Wilson says that when you see him with other children, the difference between him & them is striking—he doesn't seem of the same species,
he is so much more vivacious than any of them. Certainly Paris has seemed to agree with him hitherto. You would say if you saw him that he really looks well—Reynolds thought him much stronger looking than in Italy—and his appetite is more uniformly good. We have all been joyous for him hitherto. May God have pity on us & take care of the joy.

It is sad, Arabel, to have a young child liable to a nervous affection of this sort, however lightly it may be talked of, & however undangerous it may really be. Also, it keeps one in an uncomfortable state of apprehension. Dear Mr. Jago has been very very kind as usual, & I shall write to Trejago in a day or two—His remedy is simple & likely to do good. As for the homœopathists,.. forgive me, darling Arabel, .. but I would not willingly call in an homœopathist, where the remedy to be effectual, should be rapid of action— I have heard of too many misfortunes from such a use of homœopathy. In chronic affections .. it may do much. Aunt Jane wanted me to have her medical man who combines the system of common medicine with homœopathic remedies,—but Robert & I were disinclined—and besides, when Wiedeman was taken ill, I rushed to the nearest, naturally. No child can have taken fewer medicines than he—& though he has had two doses of castor oil since I wrote last, we dont mean to do it again .. we shall have recourse to simpler means, <.. > That does perfectly for him, & it secures regularity, without injury to the stomach.

The perfection of his goodness is really to be admired. Because I praised him last time (before I wrote to you last) for taking his medicine, “so like not only a soldier, but a great captain and a Napoleon,” he has resolved to deserve such praises on every occasion. He has not cried once accordingly. Only he insisted on “Detitées” being present; & then, calling her attention to the fact of Peninni’s being “uno Apitano e Peone” (“uno capitano e Napoleone”) he opened his mouth without a moment’s hesitation & swallowed every drop. Yesterday, he was in a very bad humour because we would not let him have wine for dinner—he took it as an insult .. & poor Flush pressing up against his feet as he sate on Wilson’s knee, he stooped down & gave him a box on the ear—“Oh[“]—said I .. “poor Tussie. If Baby does’nt love him, he must go away & live with the boy down stairs.” “Boum .. boy” .. cried Peninni shooting through the floor .. “boum, Mamma. Peninni no vino. Diner no buono! Boum, Tussh.” Well—after talking a little to Wilson I went away to the drawingroom & forgot all about this dreadful fusillade. In about a quarter of an hour I saw to my surprise the darling child run across the floor with his arms open to hug & kiss me, & tell me that he had kissed Flush. Was’nt it dear of the child? I went directly to Wilson to ask if she had sent him,—just for curiosity’s sake. No—she had’nt sent him—but she had observed that he first kissed Flush & then ran out of her room. You see his conscience had been working in him. There are quite divine touches about that child. I think he grows more & more affectionate. When he feels the hysteric coming on, he kisses you again & again, as if love were to do something for him— Poor helpless Love! And it makes your heart sick within you to feel him kissing you at that moment—God’s love. God’s love! ———

What a letter I have written to you! But I would not have written at all to you today except for Peninni, & therefore it is scarcely unfair to let him occupy these sheets at full length. Indeed I think of little else but him just now, as you may suppose. Yet it seems almost ridiculous to think of him as an invalid— If you were to see him Arabel, & how he jumps & runs, & how we cant
keep him from acting Punch, & singing at the top of his voice!! Only little children have such frail lives, one can't help fancying. One is always listening to the fluttering wings of their young souls, inclined to fly away—God take care of us.

Oh, you austere Arabel! I am half afraid of telling you that I have seen George Sand again & received another kiss. Only I must tell you that she looked much better ... in the point of beauty ... & that her eyes are splendid really, when all's said. This time, she had as visitors seven or eight men, & one lady .. & she took out a cigarette, but laid it down on the chimney[-]piece without lighting it. It was quite curious to watch her bearing among all those people, & ourselves among them. The most absolute indifference, the most perfect quiet & absence of consciousness. She sate at one corner of the fire & warmed her feet, answering any observation addressed to her, but herself speaking to nobody. Robert said .. “It did very well for George Sand,—but of course if any ordinary mistress of a house were to act so, I should walk out of the room.” Yet was it the farthest possible from rudeness— and indeed I liked it & sympathized with her—she did not need to say clever things nor goodnatured things ... we all knew that she was George Sand—it was enough for us & her,—& the extreme simplicity of her attitude & silence had a sort of sentiment of greatness in it. Curious too, it was, to observe the profound deference with which everybody seemed to regard her—queen or priestess, the deference from all those men could not have been more marked. The lady on the other hand was familiar & affectionate, but she did not stay long. I wished much to know the names of the visitors, who were introduced by a peasant in a blue blouse, whom she had brought with her from the country. He did not announce anybody, being plainly of rustic habits altogether. I should have liked to know their names. She was engaged when we arrived, & being left to amuse ourselves, we had glanced at a few cards in the glass .. our own card,—Alexandre Dumas, fils,⁹—and one of the Buonapartes.

After staying about half an hour we got up to go .. & then her face brightened up to a cordial kindness—that flashing smile came .. & she called me “chere Madame” & kissed me, & hoped to see us both again. She said she would write to fix the time for another interview, as she should be in Paris a little while longer. We hear from a friend of ours that she “likes us very much”.

Arabel—you are wrong in thinking that there is no moral capacity .. no goodness in Ma’mee Sand.¹⁰ She is capable of selfsacrifice & devotion of all kinds .. she is noble in many ways beside her genius. There is a stain of course— It is a damning blot in the eyes of society—but in the eyes of God, the conventional vices which ride in purple through the streets, like the “bœuf gras”¹¹ today, while the crowds clap their unclean hands, are probably of a deeper dye & shame.

Arabel—I should like you to read “André” by George Sand. I dont want to ask you to go through certain of her books .. because I am sure you would shut them in the middle .. and indeed there would be no good in the touch of evil such as is to be found in some of them. But I should like you to read André .. & “La Mare du Diable” & “Consuelo” with its sequence “La Comtesse du Rudolstat”– Read only “André” first—& see if you like it.¹²

Uncle Hedley, though he made that observation to a mutual friend, who of course (like a friend) told us directly, had the kindness (I ought to have told you) to offer me his carriage to go in—but we refused it because one can have carriages here so cheaply that it really is not necessary to borrow any. The Hedleys are kind—aunt Jane came directly when she heard of Wiedeman's
being unwell—but we don't see very much of them. She has engagements, & the little girls have their governess . . . & Ibbit . . . I have asked Ibbit to walk here sometimes, but I suppose there are interposing gaieties. As to the “depth of thought,” I imagine that it refers to ecclesiastical subjects altogether, . . . & I did hear that she had a scruple . . . a memorable scruple . . . about going into society on Christmas eve. Robert likes her very much, . . . thinks her good & natural . . . & pretty . . . for the rest not remarkable. She talks scarcely at all I think. But you see, we have not indeed had opportunities of judging of her, as to character & capacity. Robert spent last Saturday evening there, & heard a little music . . . to the measure of which, Johnie & George slept in divine repose upon two separate sofas. (He does not particularly like the young men of the family—"So different"—he says, "from your brothers")! Indeed I should have thought. Don't repeat this Arabel.)

Best love to all. I must write to Henrietta. I wish you had said meantime how she is—In the greatest haste

Your very own Ba.

Wilson is in despair about her lost letter—And I to lose dear Minny's! And Peninni to lose Edwin's drawing—Get another letter for Wilson, she begs me to say. Peninni says he shall send Edwin a "soldier".

Love to dearest Trippy—

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / Wimpole Street / London.

Note, on front of envelope, in Henrietta's hand: Baby tore this, pray forgive him!

Publication: Tragi-Comedy, p. 154 (in part).

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. EBB wrote to George on 28 February, in which she thanked him for sending her a copy of “Longfellow's poem,” and adds that its “not very full of poetry though we both consider it by far the best production of its author up to this time” (B-GB, p. 171). Based upon EBB's comments to George, the poem has been identified as The Golden Legend (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, & Fields, 1851), which had been published in London in November 1851; the present whereabouts of the copy presented to EBB is unknown.

2. Edward Rayner lived at 109 Champs Élysées.


4. "I love you."

5. Belladonnæ or Astropa Belladonna Linn was used as a "narcotic, anodyne, calmative, antispasmodic" (Alexander Milne, Manual of Materia Medica and Therapeutics, Edinburgh: Maclachlan & Stewart, 1854, p. 31–32). By early March EBB was writing that they had "left off his Bella donna powders for the last two nights" (see letter 81).

6. "Gate."

7. The children of Richard Shore (see letter 74, note 11): Leonora Mary Shore (b. 1848) and Charles Russell Shore (b. 1850). I have been unable to identify the "Russian princess."

8. Five or six words have been cancelled after receipt. I have been unable to reconstruct them.

9. Alexandre Dumas (fils, 1824–95), son of Alexandre Dumas (père, 1802–70), gained immediate fame with the publication of his novel La Dame aux camélias in 1848.
10. Arabella must have written disapprovingly of Sand because EBB wrote to George on 28 February, asking him to “tell Arabel she is far too severe on her indeed,” (B-GB, p. 174); and writing about Sand to Henrietta on 3 March, EBB said that “Arabel thinks she isn’t kind” (Huxley, p. 155).

11. “Fat ox.” This letter was written on Shrove Tuesday, which is known in France as “Mardi gras,” or “Fat Tuesday,” “in allusion to the fat ox which is ceremoniously paraded through the streets” (EB).

12. Both Brownings had very strong positive opinions about George Sand’s André (1832). In February 1848, EBB told Miss Mitford that she and RB had been reading it again, and that “Robert is in an enthusiasm” (EBB-MRM, III, 232); and in January 1855, EBB would again tell Arabella to get André “… which Robert delights in” (see letter 117). Sand’s La Comtesse du Rudolstadt (Paris: L. de Potter, 1843–45) was the continuation of Consuelo (Paris: L. de Potter, 1832); EBB had described them to Miss Mitford as “perfectly unoffensive” in July 1844 (BC, 9, 49). La Mare au diable (Paris: Desessart, 1846) was one of Sand’s rustic novels.

13. The passage in angle brackets is a partial reconstruction of seven lines that have been cancelled after receipt.

14. Edwin Hingson (b. 1828?) was the principal man-servant in the Moulton-Barrett household; he had been in the family’s service since he was a youth, and remained with them until Edward Moulton-Barrett’s death in 1857. EBB’s brother Alfred drew a sketch of him in 1845 that is reproduced in Michael Meredith, Meeting the Brownings, Waco, Texas: Armstrong Browning Library of Baylor University, 1986, p. 32.

---

**Letter 81**

138. Avenue des Ch. Elysées.

Friday– [Postmark: 5 March 1852]

Here’s a right down hail of letters, enough to kill all the fruits of your purse, Arabel! My dearest Arabel, you will wonder what I want to write about today. The truth is I’m ashamed of myself. Uncle Hedley commissioned me, a fortnight since, to speak to you people of Wimpole Street, about a parcel, which was to arrive there from Devonshire to his address, & which you were to pay the expenses of, & take care of until you had further directions. I said “Yes, I will remember, when I write” . . . & lo, I have written again & again, & never once thought of this duty. He said yesterday to me “Did you remember my commission”? I was utterly ashamed of myself as I well might. So I send you a letter today in order to repair the omission of other days.

Dearest dear Arabel, I did’nt go after all to see George Sand’s play. Very disappointed I was, but still to have risked one’s life in such a cause, was not exactly desirable even to me,— and the day, with all its sunshine, turned out too cold—& I gave it up with extraordinary magnanimity, & made Robert go & take our friend Mr® Stretfield in my place. Did I ever write to you of Mr® Stretfield? She was a Miss Cookson . . . the cousin of the Miss Cookson whom Richard Butler married. She lost her husband rather less than a year ago,—has five children . . . the youngest not two years old. Aunt Jane introduced her to us by her own desire—and a more graceful, winning creature, & fuller of intelligence, it would be hard to find. I took a great liking to her for the sake of her countenance, from the first. The face has both prettiness & goodness in it . . . but grace & high breeding are the great characteristics of face & person. I believe she likes us . . . but Robert is a special favorite . . . most special, I assure you—also she knows more of him, through having met him often in society– She & Miss Shore passed the evening here with M. Milsand last tuesday,
... & then it was agreed that she should go in my place to see George Sand's play, if I couldn't go.

The play turned out to be very successful, & the author's name was proclaimed afterwards to bursts of applause. It was only a "petite piece," a light comedy, with very touching things in it... and as pure, "from the first word to the last," Robert says, as if washed in water. Children might have acted it. We are going today to pay her another visit—that is, I am going if the wind will let me. The sun is brilliant... almost like a Florence sun, & Wilson was declaring the other day that she must make use of a parasol for the future: but the air is cold... & I would rather not have gone out under ordinary circumstances. We must see—We have heard some particulars about her. It appears that she was always famous for being perfectly incapable of "receiving," like other women... she was always considered shy & awkward, not knowing what to say or how to look, & letting people come & go as they chose, without helping them with any ordinary courtesy—I am sure she meant to be extremely kind to us... & for my part, I can sympathize with her position... & can even understand how a certain amount of kicks & buffets from the bad world, may be calculated to induce that colouring of a gentle scorn, which was what I observed in her.

While I remember to tell you, let me tell you that I applied to Madame Mohl about dear Mary Hunter, & that she promised to sound all the protestant families of her acquaintance. I have great hopes of attaining to something for Mary—because a knowledge of the English language & literature is much coveted by the French for their children just now,—and, as we will not strain for a large salary, I can't help believing that success will be possible to us. So delighted I should be to do something for her... dear Mary! It would be an advantage to her to come here, on account of getting the language... I mean, of getting to speak it well & fluently. Tell me whatever further you hear of her and her father.

Did I tell you, I wonder, that M. Milsand always spends tuesday evening with us? Arabel, Robert & I really love him—there's no other word for it. Such a deep, active, conscientious intellect, such simplicity & honesty in giving you its results... such sensibility & delicacy in the man altogether! Arabel, I would let him marry you, I assure you—& that's a compliment of the highest. I never saw in a human being, more reverence for the truth... more patience in seeking truth, & more steadfastness in holding by it. We value him deeply. I would trust that man in any contingency of life, & Robert says he feels just as I do. M. Milsand & I disagree notwithstanding on some points... & one of them, do you know, is George Sand. He admires her genius, but even that, I think, with drawbacks—it is the character of his mind, you see, to attach itself rather to manifestations of pure intellect, than of passion... and he can't tolerate certain errors of conduct... the want of self-control, he sets down as weakness, & despises accordingly. I like him for his truth, whether he agrees with me, or disagrees.

We are waiting still for Lady Elgin, who is not well, & who thanked Robert so for waiting for her & not going to Lamartine with another person, that we can't help waiting on. It's vexatious though—for we are told that Lamartine wonders he does not see us, & is good enough to desire it. Lady Elgin is to take us besides to Thierry, the blind historian.

Our darling Wiedeman continues much better—indeed we have left off his Bella donna powders for the last two nights, & the affections in the morning are notwithstanding so very
slight & momentary that you would observe nothing if you were not watching anxiously. He has been once or twice to Lady Torrens's again,—& they all think him looking much better than before his illness . . . that is, with a clearer complexion, & fatter. I am sure you would consider him improved in all ways since he was in England. Wilson walks him away from the Punches still, & into the country, when it is warm enough. There are four stationary Punches which live in the Champs Elysées, & were the delight of his little soul, poor darling—You can stand to see them for nothing; & for a sous [sic], you have a front seat, raised up . . . & there's a good deal of variety in the representations, which are superior to what you have in London. About a fortnight before Wiedeman's first symptoms, he was so enchanted with a dinner scene, in which a bottle of wine was overset, that he screamed with laughter, & was very nearly being carried away by Wilson in the middle. He could'n't get that out of his head for days, & was constantly describing to us poor Punch's consternation—"no diner, Punch—no vino, Punch," . . . throwing himself back in fits of laughter. It was all far too exciting—& we must be wiser now—though it grieves me to interfere with his little amusements— He has these symptoms regularly every morning—(you know it is the characteristic of all such affections to return periodically) but its just for a moment, & more & more slightly—He doesn't fix his eyes now . . . there's only the thrill. Robert asked Miss Fitton what D' Macarthy said of the child (D' M. is an intimate friend of hers)—& she answered, that he called it "a slight tendency to convulsion, but of no importance whatever."

You will be glad to hear, beloved Arabel, that the Brownings have taken that house at Bayswater for a year . . . that house, which M' Kenyon recommended. They say that they can give us two rooms—but I should think, with a difficulty & inconvenience which we ought not to allow of. Who knows but what we may be in England again this summer? who knows? Not I—yet. Only I have hopes, Arabel.

I envy Henrietta & I envy you, for certain reasons. Do you both love me, putting your loves together. I expect to have a true & particular account . . . a real Daguer[r]eotype . . . of Altham & her, from you—& of you from her.

We often see M. Carré, the Newman street church-man, attached to the Paris "eglise catholique." He often comes & talks to us for an hour or two at a time—but I will tell you—There's no time today—Oh Arabel—M' Owen said when he was here, "Take care of making an idol of that child[.]" Just afterwards he was taken ill & the word seemed to lie like a (ch)ill on my heart. God have mercy on us all—& keep us from idols & the agony that comes with them—Love to dear Trippy, Henrietta & all of you at home—Darlingest Arabel, your very own Ba—

Poor Miss Bailey has lost her brother.8

Let me hear of M' Orme—& of M' Jones.9 Don't forget—

Wiedeman says he is going in the carriage to see a "poeta"—"Torge And." He says it so prettily! He has a new song about "la zia Patella."10

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.
2. See letter 74, note 23.
3. Evidently nothing came of EBB's attempts to help Mary Hunter at this time. In letters 93 and 94 EBB mentions Mary and her father considering the possibility of going to Australia.

4. Jacques Nicolas Augustin Thierry (1795-1856) a French historian, to whom, according to the EB, "belongs the credit for inaugurating in France the really critical study of the communal institutions." He was a contributor to journals, such as the Revue des Deux Mondes, and was the author of a number of historical works, including Histoire de la conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1825); Lettres sur l'histoire de France (Paris: Sautet, 1827); and Récits des temps mérovingiens (Paris: J. Tessier, 1840). Thierry's eyesight began to fail early in his writing career; "... in 1826 he was obliged to engage secretaries and in 1830 became quite blind" (EB).


6. Sarianna and her father lived here until mid July when they left for Paris. On 1 July RB Sr. was found guilty in a breach of promise and defamation of character suit brought against him by Margaret von Müller (see letter 48, note 4). The court awarded damages in her favour of £800, and rather than pay, RB, Sr. decided to leave England (see letter 48, note 4).

7. "Catholic church."

8. Sarah Bayley (1783-1868) was a close friend and companion to John Kenyon; the exact nature of their relationship is unclear, but he bequeathed her £5,000 and his house in Wimbledon. Kenyon's will included generous legacies for each of Sarah Bayley's three living siblings. Her brother, Robert Riddell Bayley (1791-1852) had died on 29 February 1852. A codicil to his will made earlier that same month requests his "kind friend John Kenyon Esqre. to accept back the pictures he gave me in the hope that his distribution of them will add greatly to their value in the opinion of their future possessor."


10. "Aunt Arabella."

Letter 82

138. Avenue des Ch. Élysées—
March 23—[1852]

My ever dearest Arabel, I have hesitated whether to write to you or to Henrietta today—it shall be to Henrietta next time. It is delightful to me to think of you so close together, & to have had your pleasant accounts of each of another. But Papa—do mention him in an especial manner when you next write, & write soon. I dont like hearing of his cough, & what people tell us of the cold in England makes me fear that he has not ceased to suffer yet in that respect. Here the weather is gorgeous. Yesterday was like May, or June .. I should never wish to feel it warmer in the summer. For some weeks, now, there has been a burning sun .. but, the wind being sharp & cold, I did not dare to stir out—very much like Florentine weather .. very strikingly like. We could bear no fires, except in the morning & evening. And two days ago the wind changed, & the air came out to match the sunshine,—& I was driving on the boulevards yesterday, with all the windows down, enjoying every breath I breathed. Most exquisite weather certainly! Lady Elgin told me that she had lain on an iron bed in her garden the whole day long, throughout March. (She has not been well lately.) Which surprised me, I confess to you. I should have lain on to the resurrection, if I had attempted such a thing, .. for the wind has been just as cold as the sun was hot. On the eighth
of March I went out in a close carriage with Robert to buy birthday gifts for Peninni, & coughed so much & felt so unwell with it, that I resolved not to do it again till the air lost its sharpness, which is the case now. Yesterday I did not suffer at all, & today I shall go out to walk & get up my strength again if I can. I have lost strength this winter, but am not looking ill now, nor feeling so .. and there is very little cough. For one thing, it is different to be shut up in small rooms, & in our great palace-halls at Florence. At the end of an imprisonment there, I had lost little or nothing in the way of strength. But I revive very quickly, you know, .. & there’s no harm done worth mentioning. We talk of Rome for next winter—mere talk perhaps. What is’nt however mere talk, is, that we have written to take on our apartment at Florence for another year— It covers its own expenses, & does more .. & we cling to it somehow—and besides we didn’t exactly want to go to Italy at the end of April to pack up & arrange matters, which would have been necessary if we had decided on giving it up at once. We talk of England, Arabel, for this summer—only we are so uncertain as to be unreliable in some respects—there’s the truth. I dont like England except where I love it; & were it not for the beloved in England, my scheme would have been to go for the hot months to Switzerland or Rhine-land, till Italy was cool enough for us. But as it is, we both turn to England—ah, you will see us, I think— I yearn to be close to you again. Dearest Henrietta wants us to go to you as soon as April—but April is cold in England, & May itself very trying— M! Jago warned me against returning as soon as May. Tell me if it is impossible for Henrietta to remain longer in London than the time she mentions— She will have to return for her confinement, in August or september—& surely she might find cheap places in or about London for the intermediate time, & even avoid some expense in the journey backwards & forwards to Taunton. Talk of it, think of it, counsel respecting it. I shall be dreadfully vexed, if I miss Henrietta after all. Look in the Times advertisements. I see very cheap rooms advertised continually. Give my love to Surtees, & beg him to consider what may be done for me in this matter.

My poor darling Peninni is still troubled by his teeth which are not through yet .. though Wilson thinks this morning, & so does Robert, that the gum is beginning to break. The hysterical symptoms have disappeared, we may say, as for the last two mornings there has been no sign at all .. not even the slight indications which had been apparent before to our watchfulness. But three days ago there was suddenly an attack of feverishness which is the most unusual thing with him, .. so that when the heat had continued an hour or two, I fell into a panic, & made Robert go for D! Macarthy .. who gave him James’s powder, & came the next morning to take leave, & swear to us on his veracity that the child had nothing whatever the matter with him. “A splendid little fellow— I only wish I had such a child.” He told us that all infants were subject to attacks of feverishness which is the most unusual thing with them, .. so that when the heat had continued an hour or two, I fell into a panic, & made Robert go for D! Macarthy .. who gave him James’s powder, & came the next morning to take leave, & swear to us on his veracity that the child had nothing whatever the matter with him. “A splendid little fellow— I only wish I had such a child.” He told us that all infants were subject to attacks of heat, which would last five or six hours, & pass away as they came— & we had only to attend to the state of the stomach particularly while these teeth were cutting. I suppose I ought to feel ashamed of spending a napoleon on D! Macarthy just for nothing. Robert declares that I have’nt a head that belongs to me. But how is it possible to be cool & wise, when everything is at stake & when nothing is understood? We, none of us know about children, & Wiedeman having been so exceptionally healthy all his life, we have not been trained to “sudden heats” & the like. I never saw him really feverish before, except at Florence after the coup de soleil & it’s doubtful to us all whether he may not have stood in the sun at the window a moment too long, this time. The
heat went off directly, however, & in the morning, he came into the room to see Dl Macarthy, jumping & dancing. I dont wonder that he laughed it all to scorn. The child has been fretful today & yesterday, & he says his gum hurts him. When the teeth are fairly through, we shall all go right .. if it please God. In his fretfulness yesterday, he jumped down from Wilson's knee & ran to Desirée & kicked her. "Mais c'est tres mal" said Desirée. "Questo non piace a Dio," said I. "Oh," said Wilson, (& really made me smile) "pray dont talk to him of God. He does nothing by night & day, but talk of God .. & I am sure he ought'nt to have any ideas put into his head at all. He has far too many ideas as it is." There was truth in what she said, though it sounded odd. It would be quite wrong to excite him in that direction, just now—and indeed he requires no exciting. He will stop suddenly in his play & observe .. "Peninni no Dio oggi" .. 'Peninni had not prayed to God today’ .. & down he will go upon his knees, & thank God for whatever comes into his head:—the other day, it was that the medecine had done him good! Completely out of his own head. About a week ago, he had the two baby Shores to come to drink tea with him, & there was a fight about a cart & horses, between him & the little girl, she dragging one way & he another, till it was taken away from both of them. He cried a good deal, & complained that Mama had given the "taietta," caretta (little cart) to "Peninni" & not to the "boy," & that "boy" was “cattivo, cattivo.” At last there was silence, & I proposed that Peninni should kiss his enemy— “No,” said he, in his most decided way. “Ah well .. I am very sorry. I shant be able to tell Papa, when he comes in, that Peninni has been good.” He stood still for a moment, & then exclaimed (as if he had just thought of an expedient) “Dio Peninni buono” .. God would make Peninni good, & darted out of the room. As he did not come back immediately, I followed quietly, & caught sight of him in the drawing room kneeling on the floor with his hands up—upon which I retreated to his nursery again. In a minute he came running in, his little face beaming, his arms held out, crying “Grazie a Dio, Peninni buono,” .. & gave a great hug & kiss to his enemy first, then to her brother, & then to their nurse .. who thought him a most curiously sweet child, looking at him with eyes of wonder. You see, Peninni, not having the least reserve in the matter of his religious experiences, it is curious to watch their course sometimes.

Oh— Arabel, my dearest, you need not have taxed your generosity (that inexhaustible generosity of yours) by your desire to get birthday presents for him. He had enough, I can assure you. Robert & I went to one of the best toypshops, & we bought him, a trumpet, a cart & horses, & a box of bricks .. to the extravagant amount of fifteen francs & a half. Kind Wilson gave him two magnetic swans .. or ducks .. which he could'nt believe were not alive .. (he got some bread for them directly-) & the Torrens children sent in a horse saddled & bridled & a whip. He was in a state of enchantment all day, & thought he would like to be three years old tomorrow again. We had deposited our presents in a closet in the drawing room, & he was exquisitely “expectant” all the time of our breakfast. Robert gave him the bricks— I the cart & trumpet. The trumpet absorbed him from other glories & joys for a long time—but now the bricks have their turn. They are useful presents & likely to last.

O Arabel .. I have been really turned sick within this fortnight. Robert heard long ago, you know, of my ‘case’ coming on at the Collège de France, & attended the lectures tuesday after tuesday—missing just the tuesday before last when it commenced. The Hedleys happened to be
there however, & we heard quietly enough from other quarters .. & on the next Tuesday, when
the subject was continued, Robert was present. Miss Mitford's story was there in full, .. but that
not being romantic enough I suppose, the lecturer introduced a great deal of tragedy on his account,
.. till the whole was as good as Dumas, & adaptable for the minor theatres. I stopped Robert in
the middle as he was telling me—it made me sick at heart. I am the daughter of a “ministre
calviniste,” do you know .. “not rich, but in easy circumstances enough.”? I wrote the “Poet’s
vow” to convert my husband from “pantheism” .. which was really good of me. For the rest, he
is only my husband—I had a “fiancé” before, to whose memory I was constant for six years ..
(Here a dissertation on the faithful loves of the English generally)— Which tragedy of the ‘fiancé,’
I dont enter into, but it was there in various picturesque details, it appears .. down to the “waving
of handkerchiefs.” Miss Mitford, the lecturer admitted .. (“cette vie[il]le femme babilleuse,
amusante”) did not speak of these things, but they were well known in all the circles of London.
He had received letters in the course of the week to deny the veracity of his statements respecting
me .. a Monsieur Denis had written among others .. but he, M. Philarèt Chasles knew more of
the subject than any such informants— Followed details about “hospitable farmhouses”, “the large
room I had hired in London”, & the “palace of the Medici” which I inhabited in my ultimate
culmination at Florence. Robert could not have borne it with any sort of patience, he says, but for
the enthusiastic appreciation of the poetry—but that subdued him altogether, &, when among
other passages, the page upon our child at the close of “Casa Guidi” was translated into French
prose by the lecturer (.. “prophète avec les yeux d’azur”) & read, with “immense applause”
from the crowded audience, he could’nt keep from tears, he told me, & forgave everything from
the bottom of his heart. Nothing but kindness was meant of course—but I, for my part am
unmitigably vexed—there’s the truth. M. de Tocqueville (who was present) told Miss Williams
Wynn who told Robert, that the whole thing had given great offence to himself & his friends ..
that whether the facts were true or untrue he considered the mode of treatment highly
ungentlemanly & indelicate—& that it was quite unusual in France [“]to analyze the private life
of a writer in that manner.” Robert empowered Miss Wynn to assure him that there was scarcely
a word of truth in the whole history from beginning to end.

I have been interrupted by M. Eugene Pelletan, Lamartine’s friend, who announced M. de
Lamartine’s visit to us tomorrow. This is very kind—& we certainly did not expect it—though
Robert was presented by Lady Elgin a week ago at his house. But he is absorbed by different
occupations, & it never occurred to us that he would think of coming here. I will tell you everything.
It appears that he professes a great admiration for my poetry,—Madame de Lamartine having
helped him to understand it. 12

George Sand leaves Paris today or tomorrow—but returns, she says, as she has not got all
her friends out of prison yet. 13 Robert has seen her seven times, .. once he met her out of doors,
not looking as well as usual, because rather over-dressed in a combination of celestial blues &
terrestrial lavenders. He offered her his arm, & they walked together the whole length of the
Tuilleries [sic]. Her play did not succeed in the end. She did’nt come to visit me after all .. & I
am vexed that she is gone without my seeing her again. Robert cant get on with her, he declares—
The ice breaks .. & then there’s a new frost. But I would break it and break it again—I feel a
deep compassion as well as admiration for that woman. There is something in her tone & bearing which suggests to me exhaustion after agony. God help her.

You would rather see Lamartine, because of his virtue, Arabel—Oh my darling Arabel. I am not a fetcher & carrier of scandals, but this moves me almost to give you the current rumour . . . facts, they say . . . about an opera dancer—he at his age! But everybody talks of Lamartine’s virtue notwithstanding. All the moralists talk of Lamartine’s virtue, with heads turned away from George Sand—

Yet throughout his whole life he has been a dissipated man. So a friend of his wife’s told me, extolling her as a patient angel. God bless you—

Sarianna has removed to Chepstow Place 28. Bayswater. Do go to see her.

My best loves to you all—Write to me—do—Tell me about Fanny Stratten—and give my affectionate sympathy to them all. Oh—I am so sorry!—

I shall write to dearest Trippy, tell her—soon! Robert’s best love—but I break off in haste, forced by the hour.

Your very own Ba—

Mr. Nuttall called here & found me alone—and Baby destroyed his card, so that Robert has no power of finding his address—

Altham must be a darling—I dare say he is twice as large as my child. Does he begin to speak at all? Tell me of him.

Lady Elgin spent last friday evening here, & comes again tonight. I must tell you another time about & the “Irvingites” here. Remember Mrs. Jones. How is the refuge.

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. The Brownings spent the following winter in Florence.
3. Otherwise known as Oxide of Antimony, “a white powder,” which was used as a sedative “in the early stages of fevers, and inflammatory diseases” (Alexander Milne, Manual of Materia Medica and Therapeutics, Edinburgh: Maclachlan & Stewart, 1854, p. 21). Another handbook notes that “few empirical medicines have attained more permanent celebrity than the Fever Powder of Dr. James, commonly called James’s Powder” (J. Forbes Royle, A Manual of Materia Medica and Therapeutics, London: John Churchill, 1852, p. 188).
4. “Sunburn.”
5. “But this is very bad.” “This does not please God.”
6. Presumably EBB is referring to Alexandre Dumas (père, 1802–70).
7. “That talkative, amusing old woman.”
8. I have traced several writers by this name active during this period, but I have been unable to identify with any certainty the person to whom EBB is referring.
10. Alexis Charles Henri Maurice Clérel de Tocqueville (1805–59), author and statesman. EBB wrote to Eliza Ogilvy five days earlier that “M. de Tocqueville said to an acquaintance of ours that ‘he & the friends who were with him, were offended by the indelicacy of the whole exhibition, . . that such things were not commonly done in France, & could only be considered ungentlemanly’” (EBB-EAHO, p. 69).
11. As identified in letter 75, note 6, the journalist and politician Pierre Clement Eugène Pelletan. In a letter to Miss Mitford dated 9 May 1852, EBB explained that the meeting with Lamartine had not occurred because
Pelletan "had been caught up by the government, & sent off to St Germain to 'faire le mort' on pain of being sent farther. ... If he talked in many places as he talked in this room, I cant be very much surprised—but I am really very sorry. He is one of those amiable domestic men who delight in talking 'battle, murder, & sudden death'" (EBB-MRM, III, 358).

12. As explained in letter 25, note 10, Lamartine's wife was an Englishwoman. This proposed meeting between EBB and Lamartine never took place.


14. I have been unable to verify EBB's assertion about Lamartine's affair with an opera dancer.

15. See note 6 in the preceding letter.

16. Frances Elizabeth Stratten (1831–55) was the fourth child of James and Rebekah Stratten (see letter 3, note 19).

17. Possibly George Nuttall, son of Dr. George Ricketts Nuttall, one of the physicians who treated the Moulton-Barrett family when EBB was a child. EBB's paternal grandmother had close ties to the Nuttalls, who shared a Jamaican background.

18. i.e., members of the Catholic Apostolic Church; see letter 56, note 13.

19. "Mrs. Surtees Cook" is written on the face of the envelope in Arabella's hand; apparently the letter was shared by the sisters.

---

Letter 83

138 A. Ch. E.

April 28–[1852]

My ever dearest Arabel, have you expected to hear from me sooner? I dare say you have, in spite of Henry's hearing & Trippy's hearing, ... and now I think that perhaps Henrietta has gone away by this time, and you have nothing a great deal better to please you than a poor thing like a letter of mine— I, in the meanwhile have been getting out of the bark (viz the cough-bark) like the leaves of the trees, & letting my hair grow after the long prison discipline of which I was thoroughly tired. Also, to take up the time, I have had a fright with Peninni, & Mr® Jameson has arrived. To tell you first of the first—

One day he had a cold in his head, ... heavy eyes & sneezings with the rest of the symptoms of it. We were wondering how after having escaped every modification of cold in the winter, he should be attacked by it now & I was moralizing deeply about the pestilential effects of open windows & terraces, when on his waking the next morning Wilson found the cold vanished, and a rash out over his arms & legs. Great consternation fell upon the house as nobody doubted the fact of his having the measles— I sent Robert to Mr® Streatfeild's for the "domestic medecine" (never will I do such a thing again) & spent a happy morning in a pendular movement of mind between measles & scarlet fever ... with a leaning to scarlet fever, on account of its being the worse malady. The unfortunate child was shut up in his bedroom & not allowed to eat any dinner,—dancing, singing, & screaming to get out, by turns. At last we could'n bear it any longer & Robert went for Dr Macarthy. Dr Macarthy arrives, examines the eruption (which had almost disappeared at the end of five or six hours—"a dangerous symptom" said my medecine book in
the case of measles!) and pronounces with a smile of compassionate toleration of our intense ignorance that it was nothing but a little nettle rash & that he wouldn't even prescribe for the invalid. So we opened the door, & the prisoner has been quite well ever since— There's the end of that story.

M's Jameson has taken a small apartment in our house for a month & may stay longer. I am delighted to have her here—it's a great pleasure—there are few persons in the world whom I like as well, in spite of some discrepancies.

Now I want to tell you of M's Carré. It is a french name, but he is English, a native of Jersey, and is the pastor of what he calls the "Catholic Church" .. in the Newman street connection- M's Owen certainly didn't introduce him to us—for we have known him ever since we came to Paris almost, as he is an habitué of Lady Elgin's salon, & called upon us I suppose, in consequence of meeting Robert there continually. He has seemed to like us both from the first, and has often spent an hour or nearly two with us in conversation theological & otherwise—and we both like & esteem him extremely, & have read certain of his writings with sympathy to a certain extent. Now observe, Arabel, .. I sympathize with him & his friends in some things— They are much wider than the dissenters or the evangelical party in England can be said to be—they are not exclusive in their society, in their literature, or in their ways of thought—indeed they profess to have had a direct command through a supernatural manifestation, to go into the world & to associate with men generally, & so to magnify Christ's truth, "showing white by black." Also, as they recognize all the "baptized" of whatever denomination, as brethren, they have no right to make distinctions in respect to their associates. You find M's Carré everywhere. And I do honor him for the boldness & consistency with which he uses every opportunity in every sort of society to proclaim his great doctrine of Christ's coming—it proves how true people may be without shutting themselves up in church-coteries. I like that—I like the wideness, the largeness of intellectual sensibility .. I like, for instance, to be able to tell a man of that kind that I had been to George Sand's & was going again, without using the sort of reserve which Robert & I have found it wise to use, with ever so many worldly men & women who from the mere point of view of the world, would have thought it very indecorous of me to go, & very improper of Robert to allow of his wife's doing such a thing. Oh—I assure you we have not talked much to people in general about our assiduities in that direction, the poor woman's private character simply so in the nostrils of French & English accustomed to rose-water perfumed handkerchiefs. Even our noble friend M. Milsand thought we went too far, I could see. Perhaps M's Carré might have thought so too—he smiled gently though, & observed that he had seen her at Geneva in a man's costume & with bravado gestures throwing stones into the lake. But then he touched on things in her writings significant of good in her, & spoke of her on the whole with far more hope than he did of Lamartine who believes nothing, he thinks from the writings of the man. Well—I like the largeness of these Newman street believers—but I stop short at their idea of churchdom & priesthood, & at their emphasis on what are called the sacraments, though the church notions don't interfere with the importance to be given to the action of the Holy Spirit— In fact they profess to have daily, or weekly, or almost daily & weekly, revelations from the Spirit— They live by the Spirit in the most literal way. It must be a very happy state of reliance—no room for doubts respecting what
should be done or not done—and an absolute conviction of Christ’s waiting at the doors. M’ Carré expects the second coming every hour. The coming is not to be seen of men generally, or recognized by the world. There is to be a partial resurrection, & a catching up into the air of such as “love His appearing” . . not of all believers, mind . . but of the smaller number who have “part in that second resurrection” for which Paul yearned. Then, after such a vanishing the world is to go on as usual—, & the last evils prophesied of in the Apocalypse are to be poured out to the dregs— “Yet for the elect’s sake will He shorten those days.” M’ Carré does not think of dying—he does not consider it in the very least degree likely that he shall die at all. A delightful state of conviction, is it not? God in actual audible communication with them, and the Heavens half open in their sight!!— The repulsion must be strong from certain doctrines, that I am not more strongly drawn— I think too, that the position of women is marked too low among them—it seems so to me. As to the supernaturalism, it’s all attraction to my mind. Every now & then (quite commonly I mean) there is a miracle. A little dying child was cured by M’ Carré he told me, a week or two ago . . “in the name of Jesus Christ.” I can believe that without difficulty. But I cant go with them on the whole. (I do not feel the attraction I feel for the children they . . .) It seems to me a clear scriptural doctrine that the “priesthood” is absorbed into Christ’s life & dignity, and I cant accept as small “retail” popes, such men as M’ Owen & M’ Carré. M’ Carré is however very upright, direct, & devoted. He has a wife, & a large family of children,—& sometimes they have soirées, to which we have been invited of course, but have not been able to go. He is at Lady Elgin’s every monday night, & probably oftener, for she like[s] him and has a strong leaning towards the Newman street churches . . indeed has been on the very point of joining them, but does not feel herself strong enough in her convictions, as she confessed to us one evening. She however attends M’ Carré’s church here, & listens with reverence to the “voices.” A most singular woman she is—and for my part I am quite fond of her . . which perhaps I ought to be out of gratitude, for she shows a warm feeling, amounting to affection, towards Robert & me, & I hear of her speaking of us to others in a manner really touching. Her daughter Lady Augusta Bruce, maid of honour to the Duchess of Kent, has just returned from her duties in England, & told me last night that her mother filled her letters so with us, she forgot to mention her own illness. In fact Lady Elgin is one of those fervid earnest human beings who carry out their nature in all things, & who dont play at life as pasteboard women do. Generous & noble she is, . . never forgetting the relations between the soul & God. This, with a sort of simplicity which is quite childlike, & amusing or affecting, just as you happen to be in the mood for considering it. Clever too—highly cultivated . . with sympathies all abroad—and a kindness & benevolence to everybody which nobody can well exaggerate. I like her extremely. Then she & I agree about spiritualism, mesmerism, clairvoyance, visions, & the like—and she sends me all the news she has from America about the Rapping Spirits. Poor M’ Carré carried me a heap of printed papers on this subject from her, with a sore conscience of his own, . . explaining to me how they were assuredly evil spirits, and how I was to keep my beautiful soul clean from their communion. Both he & Lady Elgin are of this opinion . . holding that the access to this world permitted lately with affluence to these spirits, is one of the great signs of the Coming. She & I have a great deal of (peradventure unlawful) curiosity as to all these things—in which I hold what may be called a potential belief . . that is, I could
believe anything of the sort upon sufficient evidence. The evidence is not however sufficient yet.

Mr. Powers of Florence, and the American poet whom I think you saw with us in London, told us first of them—& Mr. George Thompson the abolitionist related wonderful things in their connection .. of which I cant tell you here. Wait till I go to London. The Athenæum said once that the “trick” had been found out, which is so far from being true, that these phenomena are spreading throughout America to an extent most extraordinary. The believers say that there is communication between the living & the dead, .. the dead having discovered a door opening back, upon the world. There is actually a periodical magazine which is carried on wholly on this subject, professing to convey the last news from the spirit-world. And you are told that nothing for the future will hinder the daily intercourse between families & their deceased kindred. Napoleon & Franklin, & various others, have been kind enough to give their autographs lately in confirmation of the same. An American lady assured Mr. Thompson with a burst of tears that her dead husband had kissed her. The spirits dash about tables & chairs .. and if you provide them with a guitar or any other instrument & desire them to play, they will do so beautifully. You will even see the guitar carried into the air above your head & hear the music— M. Thompson began by extreme incredulity of course, & ended by an admission of the phenomena. He himself saw a heavy table dashed from one side of a room to another because he wished internally for that sign— And the curious part of it is that these things are not confined to one house, or one town even—no machinery consequently can be prepared to produce the effects in question. M. Carré maintains that the spirits are evil spirits who personate the dead—“he has seen enough of that in his own experience”.

You will think it curious to hear reasonable men talking so, at least—so I tell you. As for me, you know I am unreasonable altogether, & you wont be surprised at anything I can say.

Robert goes, & I, when I can go anywhere (for we have never been to M. Carré’s church) to the French independents in Rue Taitbout. There is one preacher, M. Bridel, whom Robert quite loves .. and another whose name I forget .. and Robert is out & I cant ask him— He knows more than I do, because every sunday there is something wrong in the wind or weather otherwise and I have not been there since the autumn— You see, one may go all the way in a carriage, but I should have to walk back as far as the boulevard before I can get another carriage to return in— & then, the staircase & passages of the place are cold— Robert has gone regularly. M. Bridel is most devoted—purified by suffering. He had a horrible misfortune three years ago. He lost his only child, a little girl from three to four years old, a lovely little creature, .. killed by a waggon wheel in the street, through slipping from her nurse’s hand. The nurse was almost frantic, & the father & mother with divine selfabnegation, set themselves quietly to console her. It was too much however for the poor mother—the other child she was hoping for, died within her, .. & she herself did not long survive. The husband struggled on with his duties in spite of his desolated home— It is said to be a most spiritual church, “a most praying people” .. that was the expression which reached me.

Do you think me in a dangerous position, my darling Arabel, what with the “scamps” and the rapping spirits, and the heretics & the infidels? Remember two lines of my own .. I will quote myself for once ..
“without assimilation
Vain were inter-penetration”–15

It is not said to us .. “Touch not, taste not, handle not”16 .. on the contrary, it seems to me. Let us touch, taste, handle, & prove all things, holding fast to what is good.17

I never find myself attracted, simply because I approach.

The truth is, I want a knowledge of real life. It would be useful to me in my profession, and I have felt my defects in this respect very much indeed. I have read too many books in proportion to other kinds of knowledge. Now I am most greedy of actual sights, sounds, facts, faces. I want to see everything in the world, good & bad, .. nothing scarcely is too low or too high for me. I should like to hear the rapping spirits, & to see Louis Napoleon give out the eagles. These things supply a defect in my experience, and I am convinced that I shall think & write better & stronger for the knowledge of them, & have the means of doing more good in my hands, therefore.

As to the state of the intellectual world, you little suspect, I am quite sure, the extent of the evil of it .. I dont say here more than in England & Germany & America– Yes, in England. Everywhere among intellectual people there is the profoundest infidelity—though, of course, persons of sensibility & taste keep their opinions to themselves & spare the feelings of others, all unnecessary negatives. If a man believes in God & the soul—why that is much. Revelation & Christ Jesus .. are out of the question. Mra. Jameson was saying to me the other day, .. “Nobody in England believes anything” .. yet she mentioned exceptions .. Owen the great anatomist for instance, who is an orthodox Christian, .. and Faraday, who is a Swedenborgian.18 I have observed the same thing, myself—but on the continent & in America there is a sort of sentimental philosophical modification of Christianity, with a dash of Swedenborgianism through the more devout natures, which is not at all uncommon—indeed nearly all our American friends have accepted it in a stronger or weaker degree.

As to Germany, you know how they tear the scriptures to pieces there, with teeth & nails— The French socialists use Jesus Christ, & deny Him in the same sentence. To them, He is crucified between Robespierre and Marat.19 Mazzini writes “God & the people” on a banner, & thinks this enough both for theology & politics20.

Jadin,21 Alexandre Dumas' friend, had tea with us the other night– Oh, he is'nt a bit o f a “scamp,” Arabel. I like him. He has lost his wife, and he takes care of his two children, seven and eight years old, like a woman .. has them to sleep in his room, one on each side his bed. Dont you like a man for that? How can such a man be a scamp I wonder? Very amusing too he is himself, and I hope we may get at Alexandre Dumas by his means. The great Alexander is to be in Paris soon, he says.

No, Arabel—everybody does'nt wear a “mask” in the same degree—and if they did, one may like to see the more picturesque kind of masks .. dont you understand? But they dont mask close in the same degree, because it is the characteristic of very strong natures to manifest themselves—you see the teeth shine, the eyes flash .. every now & then you catch sight of a bit of moustache. They lift up the mask for air .. and then you see .. even a nose perhaps.22

We have just found out why Lamartine did not come, just as both Robert & I were getting into a rage. Our intermediate poor friend Eugene Pelletan, who was to have come with him, is in
a political scrape, & sent out of Paris. Here's the explanation— We were getting into a rage, because it seemed unnecessary that Lamartine should send us messages about not being able to live & take breath till he had seen us, when all the time he didn't care two straws to come at all— But now it is explained at once—

Arabel, I was at Lady Elgin's last monday night. A Madame Ledru, a half professional person, recited very well from the Phèdre and Misanthrope, and it was altogether agreeable & amusing— Everybody was only too kind to me, & glad to see me out again. There was a Greek gentleman there who was full of intelligence & told me a good deal of the modern Greek ballads—and in the midst came up the Duc de Rouchefocault-Doudeauville, starred with orders, who desired to be introduced to me, .. & began the conversation in this fashion ... "I have the gift of intuitions ... I don't call myself a prophet, and yet when the impulse comes on me it is most difficult for me not to speak"—(all in french, of course)— "I confess to you that I knew you were to be here .. but I looked round the room and recognized you at first sight in the crowd. I know you perfectly. You can conceal nothing from me. I know your past, your present and your future"— Oh—I exclaimed, in an agony of fright .. "pour le passé, n'en parlez pas,["]“Non” .. said he gravely .. "je vous ferais trop de peine en faisant cela”— He sate by me on the sofa half an hour at least, and I tried to divert the conversation to some less personal subjects. A most curious man, certainly! He spoke of my poetry .. which he said he saw in my face .. for "he couldn't read English, & it was not translated into French." He told me some of its characteristics— He satisfactorily assured me besides that I was "extrêmement bonne." That was encouraging of course. Moreover he couldn't allow of my having any tea—he sent away the tray, as offering just poison for my sort of constitution! I was half amused and half frightened. He is one of the greatest of the old noblesse, & "sans tache et sans reproche" as to private character—yes, and the Duchess is so too—but she was not in the room on monday.

Here's a letter at last, long enough I think— Robert says I must send it if it is to go today— Do write Arabel, & speak of Papa— The wind has changed—hasn't it?

Dearest love to you all. I shall write to George next— I love you & think of you— God bless you, beloved! Your own Ba— Kiss Trippy for me and say that she is well, if you can.

How is dear Minny? My love to her always— Speak how you are— & faithfully. The Ogilvys are to be here en masse on the first of May, & I have taken an apartment for them—five bedrooms, large drawing & dining rooms, antichamber, kitchen &c, at ten pounds the month!—excellent situation & furniture.

Robert's best love.

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Mrs. Jameson had arrived on 20 April and remained until shortly before 20 July; she was with the Brownings at a dinner at the Procters in London on 21 July (Huxley, p. 165).
4. See letter 74, note 18.
5. See letter 56, note 13. Catholic Apostolic teaching regarding baptism is broad by definition, but conforms to the traditional Trinitarian formula using water; it "was thus seen primarily as an act of God rather than as an act of an individual" (Columba Graham Flegg, 'Gathered Under Apostles': A Study of the Catholic Apostolic Church, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 98). EBB's comment about "showing white by black" may be an allusion to the vestments of black cassock and white alb worn by the Catholic Apostolic priests.
6. See letter 81, in which EBB explains to Arabella that she and Milsand disagree about George Sand.
7. Cf. II Timothy 4:8: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."
8. Cf. Matthew 24:22: "... but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."
9. The passage in angle brackets is a partial reconstruction of a line that has been cancelled after receipt.
10. Augusta Frederica Elizabeth Bruce (1822-76), fifth daughter of Lord Elgin, was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Victoria's mother, the Duchess of Kent. In 1857, she met Arthur Stanley in Paris, and they were married in 1864.
11. Thomas Buchanan Read (1822-72), American painter and poet, who published Paul Redding: a tale of the Brandywine in 1845; it went into a second edition the same year. The Brownings first met him in Florence, but he was in London in the summer of 1851, and in May 1851, RB wrote a letter of introduction for him to Edward Chapman (Ms with Mrs. Joseph Ashby Burton, Chatham, New Jersey). Read painted portraits of EBB and RB in 1853 (see Reconstruction, F18 and G5).
12. Automatic writing was one of the more common methods used by mediums to convey messages from the departed to the living. "The communicating spirit might be that of Benjamin Franklin, Plato, the archangel Gabriel, or the sitter's Aunt Nellie. The possibilities were limitless" (Janet Oppenheim, The other world: Spiritualism and psychical research in England, 1850–1914, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 8).
13. EBB's account here fits the standard description for séances during this period: "Reports of séances also told of furniture cavorting around the room, objects floating in the air, mediums levitating, musical instruments playing tunes by themselves, bells ringing, tambourines jangling" (Oppenheim, p. 8).
14. See letters 69 (note 8) and 74 (note 31). Mr. Carré's address is listed as "114 Avenue des Ch: Elysées" in the Brownings' address book (Ms at Texas). M. Bridel may be the French clergyman, Louis Philippe Benjamin Bridel (1788–1856).
15. EBB, "A Lay of the Early Rose," 139–140, slightly misquoted: for "were" read "is."
17. Cf. I Thessalonians 5:21: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."
18. Michael Faraday (1791–1867), responsible for the discovery of electromagnetism, was a Sandemanian, not a Swedenborgian. The Sandemanians were a small sect (never numbering more than 1,000) that originated in Dundee, Scotland in the 18th century. Also known as Glasites, after the founder John Glas (1695–1773), as well as Sandemanians, after Glas's son-in-law, Robert Sandeman. Faraday "noted in an often-quoted letter to the Countess of Lovelace, 'I am of a very small and despised sect of Christians, known, if known at all, as Sandemanians'" (Geoffrey Cantor, Michael Faraday: Sandemanian and Scientist, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1991, p. 5). Richard Owen (1804–92) was a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, Conservator of the Hunterian Museum, and in 1856 was appointed the first superintendent of the natural history collections in the British Museum. He oversaw the move of that collection from Bloomsbury to Kensington. Owen was "a genuinely religious man and a committed Christian theist," (Nicolaas Rupke, Richard Owen: Victorian Naturalist, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994, p. 340).
19. Jean Paul Marat (1743–93) was a French journalist and revolutionary leader who was stabbed to death by Charlotte Corday. Maximilien François Marie Isidore de Robespierre (1758–94), another leader in the revolution, was executed when his opponents came into power. "Most leading left-wing thinkers from Robespierre onwards, and especially socialists, including Saint-Simon, Leroux, Buchez, Blanc, Fourier, and democrats such as Michelet, Quinet and Hugo saw the revolution in religious terms, as an attempt to create a truly moral society—the kingdom of God on earth" (Robert Tombs, France: 1814–1914, London: Longman, 1996, p. 16).
20. As one of Mazzini's biographers has noted, “his religious and political beliefs became complementary and are sometimes hard to disentangle” (Denis Mack Smith, Mazzini, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, p. 17). Smith goes on to add that “an important contribution to the success of the Risorgimento was his [Mazzini’s] confident belief that he could see ‘the finger of God in the pages of the world’s history’” (p. 17).

21. Louis Godefroy Jadin (1805-82), a French artist, who had travelled to Sicily with Dumas on the Speronare in 1835. Under Napoleon III he was the painter of the imperial hunts. I have been unable to verify EBB’s comments about his paternal kindness.

22. Although EBB’s remarks here about masks are not entirely clear, I take this to refer to manifestations of spirits in seances, which was evidently not entirely uncommon: “It will be seen that at these early form manifestations practically no precautions were taken against trickery. There was nothing, so far as can be discovered, to throw any hindrance in the way of the medium if she chose to impersonate the spirit by exhibiting a mask through the opening of the curtain” (Frank Podmore, Modern Spiritualism: A History and Criticism, London: Methuen & Co., 1902, II, 102).

23. Perhaps the wife, or sister, of Alexandre Auguste Ledru-Rollin (1807-74). Phèdre (1677) by Jean Racine and Le Misanthrope (1666) by Molière are two masterpieces of the French theatre.

24. Louis François Sosthène de La Rouchefoucauld Doudeauville, duc de La Rouchefoucauld Doudeauville (1785-1864), French statesmen, was married to Elisabeth de Montmorency.

25. “As for the past, do not speak of it.”

26. “No ... I would cause you too much pain by doing that.”

27. “Extremely good.”

28. “Spotless and blameless.”

Letter 84

[Paris]

May 25. [1852]

Ever beloved Arabel, see how I have behaved to you. I have been so very disinclined to write—completely upset by different things. Wiedeman made me uneasy with his hooping-cough at first, which did not brace me up properly against the cold I caught... perhaps that night at A. Dumas (serving me right as you may say)... or by the touch of ‘grippe,’ (influenza) with which Robert infected me perhaps... Whichever of the two it was, it wakened up my cough like a lion, worse than at any time in the winter—Then the cough seemed quite going off, I put on a mustard poultice & I think that did me good—The Martins thought me looking better than in the autumn, & I was beginning to feel happy & well again.. Wiedeman being recovered... when the bad news came of the death of Robert’s first cousin... the cousin who was the one witness at our marriage... quite his favorite cousin, & a very accomplished & excellent man— I saw him one day at New Cross & liked him much. Well, he is dead—gone... and close upon that news, followed a suggestion of Sarianna’s that it would be showing “respect to the family,” if Robert set off to London to attend the funeral. The idea of it frightened me particularly—Sarianna understands nothing about Robert’s susceptibilities—she is good, & true, affectionate & generous—she has all manner of good & high qualities, but she is not made of the same stuff as Robert, & does’n’t seem to have a notion of what he would suffer in going—There would be the rushing to & fro in four days... to begin with... rushing into the midst of all that distress... why, he would have had
Letter 84  
25 May [1852]

to go to the very cemetery, of course, where his mother's remains lie... and this when he is by no means as strong as usual, the 'grippe' having scarcely removed its effects from him,—and I not there! Oh—the imagination of it all shook me a good deal, and though when Sarianna's second letter came, I bade him go since it was necessary, I could not help looking so pale, that he took fright on his side, & resolved on staying... "spoiling me", says uncle Hedley, & perhaps even so— He is always a thousand times too good & tender. I assure you the fright of all this has absolutely finished to upset me topsy turvy, and I am looking like a white wretch, if you know what that is. I expect Sarianna to be excessively angry, also. There might have been an unavowable superstitious feeling at the bottom of my consternation at the prospect of his going. To part for the first time on such an occasion! And then the duty was not imperative. No request was made by the family—and there were two uncles, probably a brother, & the wife's relations, ready to assist in those last melancholy formalities—For my own part I never can conceive of people in affliction allowing their thoughts to fix on such a subject. I quite agree with the Cottrells... who were a little upbraided at the time, for allowing their child to be buried without the presence of the father, Robert being the only mourner. Such things should be done decently & in order—but in no paroxysm of anguish could I identify or appear to identify the dust there, & the soul there. A complement of mourning coaches is the very mockery of the fulness of the mourning heart, I think. Well— but persons feel differently on these matters as on others, and if Robert had been asked to go by any of the immediate family, he would not have hesitated of course, even if I had looked whiter still than I did. As it is, he said it couldn't be easy to leave me—and really I am upset & unwell, & feeling as if a breath of air would sweep me off the face of the earth... better however today than yesterday, it seems to myself—Fortunately there are no breaths of air at present... fortunately or unfortunately... for the heat is excessive. I keep quite still, & shall catch up my vitality again in the exquisite weather, before long, & be fit for England in a little time. For me to go to England with a cough, would be foolish of course— So unfortunate, it has all been. But our little darling is well again, & that gives me spirits of itself. He has certainly had the hooping cough... decided, crowing hoops—but the cough was not bad... what he suffered from most was the fever which attended the "sickening" period. He grew thin & pale, lost every bit of appetite, & wouldn't leave Wilson's arms for a moment. Now he is the old Peninni again—and though still bearing marks of his late illness in being thinner & paler than he used to be, every morning the rose in the cheek grows a shade redder, & Wilson is quite contented, she says, with the progress in every way. His spirits are vociferous, & he has taken to talking French with a remarkable gusto. I am not sure that he wouldn't soon talk French better than anything else... which is curious, as we never speak to him in it—but Desirée is a great favorite of his, and she has a vivacious distinct way of talking which makes an impression, I suppose, and I observe that he exerts himself to use French words when he speaks to her. He ran to show her a new frock the other day. She admired it of course—"Oui, Detiée, cela toute belle—"5 (We take what French the gods provide, & are thankful.) He is out all day, what with the shady garden where Wilson sits by him with her work, & the long walks in the cooler evenings—and admiral Askew6 is overwhelming in attentions to "his boy." The child calls him 'Amirale,' (in a sort of fashion) & thinks him the greatest man of the age next to 'Napoleon,' because of his cocked hat—An excellent reason, as reasons go, for greatness!
The little Ogilvies, too, have the hooping cough, & M.’s Ogilvy is envying me Wiedeman’s having got through it so well. But she must be patient, & wait. The weather is most favorable, and the sort of attack is mild in every case I have heard of.

We have been very quiet lately, but, about a week since, had the most delicious day we have had in Paris. It was at Ary Scheffer’s— we were invited there to a matinée musicale. In the first place, I had not seen his pictures... nothing except the well known engraving of the ‘Christus consolator’... and I was not prepared for anything so divine as those pictures. I had not believed in the existence, in these latter days, of so sublime an artist. The pictures are poems... are hymns. Well... in the midst of them (for the music was to be in the studio) we sate down to listen to Beethoven’s most wonderful effects as represented by the first performers from the Conservatoire, friends of Scheffer. It moved me so profoundly... not being blasée to fine music... that scarcely I could keep from fainting. The music seemed relentless... as if it were rending you body from soul.

Scheffer & his wife were very kind, & invited us to go to them “morning, noon & night”... which was certainly a great sweep of hospitality.

Yesterday evening, Robert persuaded me to accept uncle Hedley’s considerate proposal of being driven in his open carriage through the Bois de Boulogne. It did me good, I think— And, tonight... oh, tonight, we are asked to go to Arago’s at eight o’clock to look at the moon through his telescope. It will only be the moon & Arago, & I should be sorry to miss it altogether—so if I can go, I will go. Arabel, write to me. I heard of your having been to Sarianna, or I should have managed before to make some sort of sign about Wiedeman. We are going into mourning of course—not the babe, though, I assure you. I dare say I shall find poor Sarianna in black crape & bombazeen... I am prepared for it— Ah—it is a bitter loss to the poor mother, & widow, & little son, not ten years old yet— Very sorry I am.

But black silk will be enough for the mourning sign, it seems to me... and I have bought beside a black & white barége to wear in travelling & at other undress times. Just as the news came, I had bought two summer gowns & a bonnet... of that grey “soie vegetale” which is so fashionable in Paris... the transparent, intersected kind of bonnet. It was lined with blue,... corn, & convolvuluses inside. I had never had it on—but the people refused to change it, on account of the shape having been slightly modified for me—so I had to forgo the black lace bonnet I wanted instead, & to have my grey one lined with black & bugles— It will do I think.

The Martins were here three days, & are both looking well. We met one evening at the Medleys. So much I had to write to you of—but no more today. I want to hear of Henrietta & her baby— Do write. I have not had spirit to write a letter to Henrietta, worth receiving—tell her so—but I think much of her. Was’nt it bad, not to let you know of Wiedeman? Robert says I caught cold by getting up at night to go to his bedside— but I can’t boast of such a virtuous mischance. Now he is really quite well—coughs once in four & twenty hours for instance.

Darling dear Arabel’s own Ba.

Aunt Jane does not go to England—I will tell you. Love to everybody— Tell dear Minny that Wiedeman made Wilson read her letters to him about twelve times. He was delighted with it—

How is Trippy?— Love her & kiss her from me twenty times. I shall do it myself some morning soon. Believe how I sympathize through every thread of my being with you dearest dearest— We

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. “To see the ‘Dame aux Camélias’ on above the fiftieth night of the representation,” as EBB explained in a letter to Mrs. Jameson on 12 April [1852] (LEBB, II, 66). From the context in the following letter (see note 10), EBB had attended the performance at the invitation of Mary Butler.
3. RB’s cousin, James Silverthorne (1809-52) had suffered from inflammation of the lungs, and his health had been declining for several months. In a letter to Mrs. Wood in November 1851, RB’s sister Sarianna wrote that Silverthorne had had “another of his dreadful attacks of inflammation of the lungs. He is now hanging on a thread between life and death … I trust there is still hope” (ms at ABL). He was the “Charles” of RB’s poem, “May and Death,” which was first published in The Keepsake of 1857, and later appeared in Dramatis Personœ (1864). For more on Silverthorne, see Jean Neal, “The Silverthome Family,” BSN, 21 (1991-92), 61-65.
4. Carlo Cottrell; see letter 51, note 17. For the burial of Alice Cottrell, see letter 43, note 4. As EBB had explained to Miss Mitford at the time: “The father was quite unmanned, & could not attend the funeral, & my husband managed the whole melancholy business, selecting the ground for the small grave in the beautiful English cemetery, & officiating as chief mourner” (EBB-MRM, III, 284-285).
5. “Yes, Desirée, that all beautiful.”
6. John Ayscough (1775-1863), Rear Admiral in the Royal Navy and Commissioner of Jamaica and Bermuda Dockyards, was married to Anna Maria (née Parr), by whom he had one son and two daughters. In a letter to George written two weeks earlier, EBB described the admiral as “an English sailor of the antquest type,” and noted that he called Pen “my boy,” & gives him his cocked hat to set on his curls” (B-GB, p. 180).
7. Ary Scheffer (1795-1858) was a Dutch painter whose devotional and classical subjects, though sentimental, were very popular as representative of the Romantic school. He was a friend of Félicie de Fauveau (1799-1886), a French sculptress born in Florence, with whom the Brownings were acquainted. Scheffer’s painting, “Le Christ consolateur,” based upon Luke 4:18, was completed in 1837, and an engraving was made in 1842. In 1850 Scheffer had married “the widow of his friend General Baudrand, a lady of English descent” (Mrs. Grote, Memoir of the Life of Ary Scheffer, London: John Murray, 1860, p. 90). According to Thomas Armstrong, an Englishman studying art in Paris, “socially Scheffer held a very important position, and had a detached house in a garden in the Rue Chaptal. … [The] atelier was beautifully furnished … with interesting works of art on the walls, and something very like a little chapel, … [where] musical parties were given, in which the most famous singers and instrumentalists of the day used to take part, just such as Leighton used to give when his friend Joachim was in London” (Thomas Armstrong, C.B., A Memoir, ed. L.M. Lamont, London: Martin Secker, 1912, pp. 4-5).
8. Cf. RB, “The Boy & the Angel” (1844), line 1: “Morning, evening, noon and night,” particularly since EBB had suggested a change to this line; but cf. also Psalm 55:17: “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray.”
9. Dominique François Jean Arago (1786-1853) was the Director of the French Royal Observatory, and was known for popularizing astronomy in a series of lectures at the Observatory between 1812-45. EBB made a passing reference to him in her courtship correspondence with RB (see BC, 12, 313).
10. The mourning dress was in memory of RB’s cousin James Silverthorne (see note 2 above).
11. “Vegetable silk,” a type of cotton-like cloth. This bonnet is very similar to one listed by C. Willett Cunnington, as part of a “Promenade Costume,” and which is described as a “transparent bonnet covered with blonde and trimmed with blue; low at each side are placed blue roses and bunches of fruit” in English Women’s Clothing in the Nineteenth Century, London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1937, p. 198.
My ever dearest Arabel, what is this that is the matter with you? Do write & say how you are now, as I am extremely anxious about you. What sort of medicine do you take? Homoeopathical, still?-Do take care, do—and, if you can sincerely, send me better news than this which is most uncomfortable— For the rest, I have been in sympathy with you a good deal—and the last thing I said before opening your letter was the ordering of a mustard poultice for my own use for this very pain in the side. I have had a good deal of it when I breathed long, or coughed, & the mustard poultice did more for me than anything else. Ah, mine is my old pain—not as bad as of old, though—amounting rather to great irritation, I dare say, than inflammation . . . and this morning it is decidedly better, going off by degrees—I had no fever neither in the night,—& by degrees, if it please God, I shall grow into myself again—You see it has been a touch of influenza, which in my condition of the chest, was a sort of 'coup de foudre' Wilson declares she hasn't seen me so unwell (without provocation) since we married. Then I, in a fit of impatience at being ill in the summer, which seemed against all reason, struggled up against it a good deal, and even, two successive mornings, took seidlitz powders, desperately & imprudently . . . for they set me wrong altogether . . . I dont think I will ever take medicine again as long as I live. . . .

The only way for me is to be quiet & patient, & not to be amused the least in the world—You will lift up your hands in indignation at me when I tell you that although the day before, I had scarcely felt equal to being driven out in uncle Hedley's carriage which he most kindly sent for the purpose with the governess & little girls, while aunt Jane was at Tours, I yet positively went to the Institute with M. Jameson & Madame Mohl & the Countess de Colegno (the Sardinian ambassadress) in order to see the reception of the poet Alfred de Musset—yes, & sate four hours, in a heat & crowd. . . .—!! it's miraculous to me how I bore it in spite of eau de cologne & other accessories. I had a horrible fear too—of dropping down under an avalanche of Parisian bonnets . . . I wonder the very fear of fainting was resistible. But I did'nt faint, and Madame de Colegno had the goodness to bring us back in her carriage, which saved some fatigue at the end, & shaking of fiacres. You see, Arabel, I had set my mind on seeing this reception. It is very difficult to get tickets, & we had the best-place tickets . . . and it's a great sight to see, a reception at the Institute. Lord Brougham came from England on purpose. There were all the great men of France there, almost—poor Guizot with his noble, pale, melancholy face, which drew my eyes to it every moment—Cousin, Villemain, Montalembert, De Tocqueville, Mole . . . numbers of others: and Alfred de Musset looked like a poet—and altogether, I am very glad I went—very. Also, it did no harm beyond a little tiring, which was more than I deserved certainly,—was'nt it? But upon the whole, I do behave prudently, . . . I did not go last night to hear exquisite music at Mrs Stewart Mackenzie's close by— I mean to be quiet, & well, & then go to England & enjoy you, as I dont anything else in the world my darling Arabel, . . . believe that of me! Only if I dont find you well . . . if I dont hear that you are well . . . Oh—Arabel, do write & say how you are. And be sincere—otherwise there's no use in it. As to dearest Henrietta's anxiety, I have as much reason to be anxious . . . have'nt I? Certainly I
should as little like to miss her, as she could, to miss me. But, in the first place, the militia arrangements never can take place as soon as she imagines—why, the bill has scarcely passed the Commons yet, has it? There’s no danger at all—Then if I went to England before the summer has not only “come in” but *sate down*, there would be an end of me—and really it is desirable that I should be quite well & strong before facing the mildest of your days— It is fair to England & to me too. What would be the use of vexing you all to your hearts by going to England to cough in a little black room, & no more? You can scarcely imagine the immense difference of this climate— My dear Arabel, we have been broiling throughout May—it has exceeded the usual Florentine May in heat, .. but has been oppressive, from the quantity of electricity in the air— I think that, for the last week, we have had thunderstorms every evening. Peninni is out the whole day .. under the trees in the garden till the heat of the day goes off, .. and the open air facility is a great advantage to him while he is passing through the stage of convalescence. Otherwise, of course, change of air is the best thing for the hooping cough. But he never coughs, not he— He is quite well—and day by day he gets stronger & rosier & fatter .. I am content, which is saying all. Thank God for all His great mercies. Did I tell you that ever since the hooping cough came on, he lost his nervous affection, which, before then, was still occasionally observable— He is in the highest spirits, & I do not doubt, will soon look as well as he ever did.

Well—you are right in some things. I believe that I am better without excitement— But the unfortunate thing about that evening business was, that goodnatured M” Butler had taken a place for us after waiting ever so long for me & the weather— Just as the evening came, up came an east wind as my particular friend, & would be of the party. I did not like to stay at home & spoil it all, & have my place paid for .. & though I hesitated, & Robert hesitated more— We stood in a state of indecision even on the staircase, and at last Robert snatched me up in his arms throwing a shawl over my head, & carried me down into the carriage— It was unfortunate & did me no manner of good of course .. but still, I maintain that I caught my influenza from Robert himself & that he caught it from Miss Fitton, whom, to my utter astonishment, he was coolly preparing one night to “sit up with”– You know (or you dont quite know) that Robert is one of the most sympathetical of human beings,—and poor Miss Fitton being old & ill, & he hearing that she really “ought’nt to be left with only servants” who were supposed to be not trustworthy, considered it quite natural that he should go and nurse her— I was surprised— Miss Fitton had lived in Paris above twenty years & knew everybody, and certainly I thought that if anyone stayed with her it should be a female friend & not Robert, who was not likely, in my view of the matter, to be admitted into her bedroom. However, he was admitted fast enough—he did not spend the night there because it was found to be unnecessary, .. but he administered the medecines, & poor old Miss Fitton has never recovered the fit of gratitude into which she fell straightway. She says it was worth while to be ill to have received such a kindness, & that the medecine he gave her, cured her at once— Poor thing!

I am glad you took my view about his going to England.

According to the prophecy of Swedenborg, there’s to be a great influx of Spiritual lights this year, so look out, if you please—**
Letter 85

29–30 May [1852] 485

God bless & love us all. How pleasant to know that this world is not the end.

Your ever attached Ba–

A shower of loves upon Trippy—and I think about seeing her—loving her tenderly as I do—Mention Henrietta’s baby—and everybody. Write & tell Henrietta Robert’s best love.

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. “Thunderbolt,” or “bolt of lightning.”
3. Margherita Trotti di Bentivoglio, whose husband Giacinto Octavio Provana Count Collegno (1794–1856) was minister plenipotentiary at Paris from January to October 1852. She is described as a “woman of superior intelligence and culture” in the Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, and as an affectionate and caring wife by Massimo d’Azeglio in Diario dell’assedio di Navarino memorie di Giacinto Collegno precedute da un ricordo biografico dell’autore scritto da Massimo d’Azeglio (Torino: Pelazza, 1857, p. 135).
4. Alfred de Musset (1810–57), poet, novelist, and dramatist. De Musset was admitted to the Académie Française on 27 May 1852 “chiefly at the instigation of Prosper Mérimée” (Charlotte Haldane, Alfred: The Passionate Life of Alfred de Musset, London: Anthony Blond, 1960, p. 210). In a letter to Henrietta a month earlier, EBB had explained that RB was supposed to have met “Alfred de Musset who passes with some, as the first living French poet” (Huxley, p. 159). Eventually RB was introduced to de Musset by Milsand. De Musset died only five years later at the age of 47 after years of immoderate living had dissipated his health.
5. I have been unable to verify that Brougham attended this reception.
6. For Count Molé, see letter 75, note 14. Victor Cousin (1792–1867) was the author of Cours de l’histoire de la Philosophie Moderne (Paris: Didier, 1841–46). EBB had written to Miss Mitford in December 1844 that “Cousin’s philosophy is probably too dry for Mr. Lovejoy’s library” (BC, 9, 262). Abel-François Villemain (1790–1870), literary historian, critic, and politician, wrote Cours de Littérature Française (Paris: Didier, 1830). He and Cousin had both lectured at the Sorbonne and both had been minister of education. For Montalembert, see letter 75, note 8, and for de Tocqueville, see letter 82, note 10.
7. See letter 74, note 17.
8. After Louis Napoleon’s coup d’état in December 1851, Lord John Russell introduced a National Militia Bill in February 1852. The bill was quickly defeated, leading Russell’s cabinet to resign. Another Militia Bill was soon introduced, and with the support of the Duke of Wellington, it passed in June, placing the militia under the Secretary of War; however, there is no evidence that the bill had any direct bearing on Surtees’s position.
9. Cf. “summer is icumen in” from the anonymous 13th-century “Cuckoo Song.”
10. Mary Butler (née Tulip); see letter 66, note 2.
11. From EBB’s comment in the second paragraph of the following letter, I take this to refer to something she read in Swedenborg’s L’Apocalypte Révélée … Traduit du latin … par J.-P. Moët, … et publié par un ami de la vérité, J.A.T. (Paris: Treuttel et Wurtz, 1823). Although I have traced references to “spiritual lights” and “influx,” I have not found a specific reference to the year 1852. EBB’s manuscript notes on Swedenborg, in French and dated 1849–61, sold as part of lot 141 in Browning Collections, and are now at Yale; see Reconstruction, D1314.
Beloved Arabel, close with the proposition about the rooms you speak of—We can't possibly do better. But you must write me one line by return of post to say what the precise address is. Welbeck street, . . is it not? And what number? We shall leave Paris on Saturday & arrive to breakfast on Sunday morning. . . do *take the house from Sunday, July the fourth*. Certainly we would have much liked to have had another week's tether, but, as it is, there is'nt place for a doubt, inasmuch as I couldn't give up Henrietta even if I asked myself to do so, and, Robert is so perfectly good & dear that he hesitates as little as I do. After all, if I had stayed, I might have just made myself ill by rushing from Fontainbleau to Versailles & from Versailles to Meudon & from Meudon to Montmorency, . . and you won't pity me for not having been to the opera once, Arabel,—under that tremendous misfortune, I must suffer alone. Upon the whole, I throw off my woes & think chiefly of seeing you again. Not that I do not hate England . . (except for this, & this, & this . . .) no, not hate England, but the idea of going there, . . of setting foot into that circle of mesmeric influences which turn me cold to think of—Make a great fire in your large, generous heart, that I may say . . “Ha, ha, I am warm, I have seen the fire”. I love Papa too deeply, not to feel bitterly his indifference—and to be at once near & far, is a very sad thing for love.

All you tell me makes me sorrowful & hopeless. It seems to me only comprehensible as a sort of madness. But persuade dear Occy to take patience & consider, & not throw away anything . . much less his professional advantages. Australia is worth little to him, I should fancy, except for the gold-picking—& there are great risks even there. I sympathize deeply with him . . & with you . . my poor darling Arabel, who have your lot cast in with others too darkly . . as we see with our weak eyes—God bless you, darling Arabel! I should like to make a bundle of you when I come, & carry you off & have you all to myself & keep you in some corner where you should'nt be vexed at all. When I talk about England, I think about certain things, you know—You make it all up to me, . . & the sight of your dear faces will, of itself, be better to me than the sun & trees of Paris—So never fancy that I am going to you as an ungrateful grumbler—oh no. I shut, in the middle, Swedenborg on the Apocalypse, & leave Lady Elgin's Rapping spirits uninvoked, quite willingly. Who knows but, in England, I may find a “chrysalis ball” in compensation . . besides you. Delighted I shall be to see George & everyone of them—Dearest George I shall have more of than I had last time. As to Peninni, he remembers you he protests. We took him the other day to St Cloud to see the waterworks . . but as soon as he caught sight of the railroad, he drew back—“No! Peninni no Italia oggi. Italia pas assez bella. Peninni home giardino.” (Can you make out that?) The fact is he is so happy in the garden here that he does'nt quite like the idea of going away. He always says, yes, he will go, but not today—“oggi, no.” The child is radiant with health & happiness, & I do really rather shrink from taking him away from this out of door life, where, from nine in the morning till eight at night, he is playing under the trees, into the black streets of London—but we must send him to the parks & take courage— I dare say he will do very well. He has faith too, particularly, in Minny, who, he says, is to buy him a “bello home” in London—
because in the celebrated letter she wrote to Wilson, she said something about our chance of getting better rooms than Mr. Thompson's. (I told you that he insisted on that letter's being read over & over to him). I am sorry to say that he isn't as religious as he was, since he has had the hooping cough. The hooping cough took off a good deal of the religiousness, & all the nervous symptoms. He is quite well, & we have sometimes a difficulty about his prayers—he puts off his prayers .. sometimes to after breakfast, & sometimes to after dinner— And I don't like to make it a matter of habit & formalism. That spontaneous devotion was so lovely & sweet—

Shall we be near dearest Trippy in Welbeck street, or will she have gone, I wonder, to Quebec street. How sorry I am that she should be so vexed & teazed.

No—Arabel, indeed— I did not set down your inch of note by Mr Kenyon, as a “letter”. I am astonished at your audacity in thinking I could.

I dare say you will think me looking quite well. I am quite well—there is scarcely a trace left of the cough, & I have recovered my strength to admiration. You put me into spirits a little, by talking of your change of weather— Oh, I do hope England will hold her breath & be good to me & not blow away mine this summer— It is so disagreeable to be unwell just when one has business for one’s body to do, .. & I shall want my body to walk about with you, besides all our talkings .. ah, Arabel .. how pleasant it will be, if God lets it all go happily & quietly on!——

Henrietta, poor dearest, will only stay a week with us— more’s the pity. Such a pity that they should have to go back to that dull Taunton, which neither of them likes, for the sake of that stupid & immoral militia bill, which I dare say won't bring them any compensating advantage. Altham will be shy to me, & Wiedeman will be shy to her .. there will be no time for familiarization. But it will be delightful to see her, dear thing, even by such a flash of lightning.

You are aware, perhaps, that aunt Jane had arranged to go to London on the eighth of July— an arrangement which probably is disarranged, for I heard last night that uncle James had suddenly arrived & intended to remain a fortnight. She received the letter which announced his arrival, only on the morning of yesterday, & he followed it at three in the afternoon. I dare say she is a little “put out” in consequence. She has been very kind of late in calling to take me out to drive— I have been out with her several times.

Now I shall write no more. God bless you, & bless us, till we meet. Perhaps you shall have one other line to mention the hour of our arrival, & to order breakfast— Tell us, on our part, where we are to go.

Your own Ba.

Robert's best love— He is writing to Sarianna— Will you put it into an envelope & despatch it by post?

* Address: Angleterre. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole street / London.
* Publication: None traced.
* Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. The Brownings left Paris for London a few days later; in London they stayed at 58 Welbeck Street until mid-October.

2. Popular locations on the outskirts of Paris for visitors to see: Fontainebleau to the southeast of Paris, and Versailles, to the southwest are both famous palaces; Meudon, also to the southwest, is known for its extensive gardens and a 17th-century chateau; and Montmorency, to the north of Paris, was the home of Rousseau.
3. Although there is no additional information in letters written around this time, from the context, it seems that this could be a reference to their father. Australia is mentioned again in 1853, but Octavius did not go there.

4. See note 11 in the preceding letter.

5. St. Cloud, to the west of Paris (see letter 72, note 12), was a favourite spot for visitors, and the water features were particularly noteworthy. “The architecture of the cascade is ornamented with rock and shell-work, dolphins, and other appropriate emblems, and nothing can be more beautiful than its effect when in full play” (Galignani’s New Paris Guide, Paris: A. and W. Galignani and Co., 1852, p. 541).

6. “No! Peninni no Italy today. Italy not beautiful enough. Peninni home garden,” i.e., “Peninni will not go to Italy today. Italy is not beautiful enough. Peninni will stay at home in his garden.”

7. Where the Brownings had stayed the preceding year; see letter 69, note 6.

8. The Brownings reached London on 6 July 1852 and took lodgings at 58 Welbeck Street, near Miss Trepsack at no. 26. She would relocate to 13 Greater Quebec Street (now Upper Montagu Street) in 1856.

Letter 87

Hotel de la Ville l’eveque
Rue Ville l’eveque. [Paris]
Wednesday morn. [Postmark: 13 October 1852]

My dearest precious Arabel, I dont know how I feel without you. My soul seems to have been dragged through a quickset hedge & to have left some torn shreds of itself on the thorns. God bless you my darling sister who are so more than a sister to me. I love you from the depths of my being-

Except for you, it is excellent for me to be out of England—now that all the painful goodbyes to dearest George (who has been so kind) and the rest, are said & done with— I feel better in myself & above the ills which your climate is undeniable, uncontroverted heir to. I coughed a good deal on the way to the railroad of course, & terribly on the way to the steamboat, for a most cruel wind met us at Folkestone & gave us a farewell for England— Then we all went down to the Lady’s cabin which was so full of shes that the floor was strewn all over. I told you in the pencilled post[s]cript to Robert’s letter to you (written in the railroad & not sent through want of time & opportunity) that the sea was smooth. It looked so at a distance, but we had actually a good deal of swell & motion. Four & twenty basins being called for simultaneously by our companions in the cabin, there was a tremendous prospect .. Sarianna, Wilson[,] Wiedeman & I extended ourselves on the ground & lay without word or gesture scarcely till we reached Boulogne .. & wonderful to relate, none of us were actually sick though Peninni grew pale & Wilson looked ghastly. At Boulogne there was not a moment for breakfast, but I was comforted by the extraordinary warmth of the weather which lasted through the whole journey afterwards. I not only threw off my respirator, but my shawl though both the windows were up—and Peninni observed with more expressiveness than refinement that he was “molto molto ot,” and “tutto wet” in consequence. This was delightful & made some amends for having to wait till three o'clock in the day before we could touch breakfast. If it had not however been for your provisions, I dont know how we should have borne the starvation. At Amiens we had coffee, roll & butter &c .. & Robert on calling for some meat, was supplied by the production of immense slices of
bright red & raw roast beef, which a French lady assured us was intended as a delicate compliment to our English tastes. On our arrival in Paris we found that aunt Jane had been so unexpectedly & unnecessarily kind as to send her Brougham & servants to take us to our hotel, so that we came off & left Robert to bring the luggage by fiacre, after passing the customs. We are not at our old hotel (there is some fatality) but we have very nice & pretty rooms notwithstanding, & found a warm fire, & an illumination of six wax candles, four of which (as we didn’t expect the President) I immediately blew out— We are very comfortable, and Wilson freely confesses that she likes foreign lodginghouses much better than the English, as being more convenient and (hear it!!) more clean. “To live in a house of her own, she would choose England”———that, for patriotism, of course! Oh—don’t let me forget our misfortunes! My prevision about the linen was realized—We were made to pay thirty three francs duty on our two boxes of linen—fifteen per cent—Robert represented vainly that it was the linen of two families—They wouldn’t listen. Only, “as the government wished to give every facility to Englishmen settling in France,” they let us off everything else & did not even uncord a single other box . . . so I might have taken heaps of unmade gowns with impunity. Also Peninni “passed,” unpaid for the whole way. You know they made us pay for him last year, so I suppose he looks younger instead of older. Wilson carried him in her arms. Never was such a good child. He talked & sang the whole way, & learnt to make ss, and wrote his name in the rail carriage. A horrible fright he was in at Amiens lest we should be too late for the train. He is a born traveller certainly.

I wore my respirator till I got on board the steamer, & we had a carriage on the rail all to ourselves so that we had both windows drawn up—so that I coughed very little on that journey—It was the getting in & out that tried so. But now I really seem better—though the air is sharper this morning than I expected to find it—There is no sun in our rooms, except in the dining room where we breakfasted, & where to my horror the attentive waiter (who recommended “lait de poule” for my cough last night) had thrown the window wide open—He says it is warm enough, & I dare say I may feel so towards the middle of the day, but I did not dare go out with Robert & Sarianna who have gone to see their father. Robert says I did not cough nearly as much last night, and certainly the air is like chrystals—The sky strikes me, as it always does after England, with the blue height of it—While he is away I talk politics with the waiter & pass the time. He is a great Buonapartist & tells me that the feeling in Paris, & the provinces too, is very favorable to Louis Napoleon who walks on the boulevards quite unattended, & is doing everything to encourage by immense public works, the industry of the people—He has brought me the newspaper, to read a “discours magnifique” pronounced at Bordeaux—Everybody is delighted with it, he says, & the entrance into Paris next sunday is to be “sublime”. So much of my political news from the waiter. I heard nothing, tell George, of the annexation of Belgium. Quite the contrary—“Il veut la paix, Madame—il ne veut pas la guerre.”

When Robert comes back from his father he means to go to aunt Jane to thank her & I shall go too if it is at all warm enough.

Think of Robert leaving his desk—It is full of everything we have that is valuable—Do take care and let us have it as soon as you can safely. If Mr Reynolds doesn’t come, M’Reuben Browning will have opportunities—And did you find the two collars? They were in a paper.
Letter 87
[13 October 1852]

Even my pens are in Robert's desk—and if Wilson had not found me this paper I should have had none to write to you on, without buying it. Lose no time in writing to me, I entreat you—I want to hear directly—Peninni is crying out at the top of his voice “Desirée, Desirée.” He is very disappointed at not finding Desirée & the Champs Elysées.

Write, & tell me everything .. & how Henrietta is—and remember your promise about yourself— I hold it as a sacred promise— Keep it, by your love for me & by mine for you.

Did you tell dear Minny how very pained I was to have to go without seeing her? Say how she is exactly.

I write with a horrible steel pen, as you may see. Sarianna's especial love to you. Robert holds you in his heart as I do—he comprehends you, being a part of me.

God bless you, my beloved— Love to dearest George & all of them. Sette did'nt come to see me—at last. In uttermost haste

Your own Ba.

Seal this & send it with a stamp—will you? The pencil note was written on the railroad.6

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. “Very very hot” and “all wet.”
2. Previously the Brownings had stayed at the Hotel aux Armes de la Ville de Paris; see letter 65.
3. “Eggnog.”
4. “Magnificent speech.”
5. “He wants peace, Madam—he does not want war.”
6. The postscript was written on the inside flap of the envelope, and quite likely refers to a note that was to be forwarded to a third party.

Letter 88
[Paris]
[Postmark: 17 October 1852]

My very dearest Arabel, Have you had a letter of mine & why dont you answer it? These three days I have anxiously expected to hear from you & you make no sign! What a shame! Robert desires me to repeat (lest my letter did not reach you, which the silence suggests as a possibility) that he left his desk (yours) with everything valuable in it, & to beg you to send it to M' Reuben Browning, Mess' M M Rothschilds & sons, New Court, St Swithin's Lane, so as to have it forwarded to us with as little delay as possible. Write a note to M' Reuben Browning explaining the case. We cant stir a step till we have the desk, though our business in Paris is at an end, M' Browning & Sarianna being settled most comfortably in the Rue des Ecuries d'Artois, a street off the Champs Elysées, on a first floor . . . sitting room, dining room, two best bedrooms, & one for servant, kitchen &c, furnished, at one pound a week.1 Sarianna is quite pleased, & I do hope they may both be perfectly happy there. Our old friends the Corkrans have, out of love to us, quite adopted M' Browning as the grandfather of their children, & M' Corkran professed to have quite
fallen in love with his simplicity & other qualities. Really I can't express to you how touched I have been by the kindness of the people in Paris. You would think we were ninth cousins to the president to see the fuss they make about us—it really humiliates me & turns me all sorts of colours. Do you know it is a wrench to get away from Paris, altogether—The exquisite, bright sky will deepen & brighten as we go on, but the prodigality of life & kindness & appreciation here, the interest on all sides, the picturesque manifestations of the intellect...we must leave these far behind in our passage to Italy. The charm of Paris has begun to work, you observe. Both Robert & I have cried out more than once, "Oh, I wish we were going to stay." And yet, if I stayed I should be shut up almost immediately, & not have a chance of losing my cough during the winter. Also, Italy is Italy, & will draw presently in its turn. Pazienza!

Yesterday was a grand day with us. The Corkrans who live on the Boulevard made room for us on their balcony, & we saw the great spectacle of Louis Napoleon passing on after his entrance into Paris—Nothing so magnificent was ever seen before. All the military & civil pomp of France had gone out to meet him, & from end to end of the broad beautiful boulevard, as far as our eyes could go, and miles beyond, floated down under that limpid sky & cloudless sun the multitudes of the people—it was wonderful. He rode on horseback quite alone—that is, with a considerable space between those who preceded & those who followed, & with no one at his side. As the people shouted he bowed to right & left, & those who were cursing him stopped suddenly to call him at least a brave man. It was admirable tact to show that boldness & confidence...but tact he has always had—he can adapt himself to the fantasies of France.

Arabel, I am in great perplexity about Miss Blagden. All the addresses are in the book which is in the desk, and I have not the least recollection of hers except that it seems to me to be, Westbourne Park Villas, (Mrs Mill’s) .. is the number, 3? Bayswater. Could you try to make it out for me anyhow. Because I want this little note sent, to enquire about Miss Agassiz who if she means to go with us, should come to Paris at once. We spent one evening with aunt Jane, and Ibbet was very affectionate & I liked her better than ever I liked her before. Arabel, you are all wrong about the mourning, & I am right. You should wear no crape. Arlette does not, nor does Ibbet...nothing but black silk & bugles. Aunt Jane being nearer in relationship, wears the slightest hem of crape on her silk flounces,—white sleeves & collar. She told me that I ought not to wear crape. There’s information for you!

I have no paper, nor pens—and Robert cries out that I have no time—which is worst of all. The cough is decidedly better, & I have been out every day since I came, the sunshine being brilliant. Yesterday as I stood in Mr Corkrane’s balcony, though an awning was over my head I was exhausted with the heat really. Yet the air is sharp in the morning, & our hotel is cold from the exposition, having no sun. Wiedeman shouted ‘Vive Napoleon’ when the president rode under the windows, in a most ecstatical state. Wilson & I were considering which frock he should put on on that great occasion, the velvet or the green merino. He thought it better to decide against the merino,—"because," said he, "if the soldiers saw the buttons, they might want to take them away". He has written a letter to you...to “Alibel”...He remembers you always, and Lorge [George] as well as the rest, in his prayers. Pray for him, dearest, and for Robert & me. God bless you & love you!—Tell me how you are.
Robert left on the chimneypiece of the back dressingroom a prescription for my medicine in an envelope with Twinberrow's name on it. Take it out & send it in the answer to this—& do write directly, Hotel de la Ville l'Evêque, Rue Ville l'Evêque. So much I have to say & cant. I love you dearly, dearly— How is Minny? Love to all—your for ever ever attached Ba

Love to dearest Trippy—

Address:Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. RB's father and sister remained at this address until the following spring when they removed to 138 Avenue des Champs Élysées.
2. "Patience."
3. See letter 74, note 12. On 16 October, Louis Napoleon returned from Bordeaux, and was welcomed by large crowds and "triumphal arches saluting 'Napoleon III'"; others watching this procession included Eugénie, his future wife (Jasper Ridley, Napoleon III and Eugénie, London: Constable, 1979, p. 325). The Corkrans lived in the Rue Basse du Rempart, Boulevard des Italiens.
4. The address was 37 Westbourne Park Villas, Harrow Road, as indicated in EBB's address book.
5. Mary Elizabeth Graham-Clarke (née Parkinson), wife of EBB's uncle John Altham Graham-Clarke, had died ten days earlier on 7 October 1852.

Letter 89

Paris—
Friday—morning & night— [22 October 1852]¹

The desk has come, dearest dear Arabel, and your letters came right, all of them,—& we go off tomorrow morning at ten oclock on the railroad, to Peninni's extreme joy. Say no treason against the desk, we beg of you. It was precisely the convenience of it, .. of leaving it out till the last moment .. that made Robert forget it .. but he will be on his guard another time.

Do write a word of enquiry about M's Lowell's address to Mⁿ Procter, & she will tell you the number in Devonshire street. DONT delay it, because the Lowells will be back soon from Scotland & away to America.²

Mⁿ Corkrane I have often mentioned to you though you may not remember. She is the wife of the correspondent to the Herald, a very striking looking & intellectual woman .. a little pretentious perhaps, & peculiar in her costume, .. but good & noble in all her impulses. I always liked her .. and the excess of her warm feeling towards me, .. the way in which she overwhelsms us with all manner of affectionateness, .. has drawn me to her closer, since we came last to Paris. Her husband is the kindest, widest-hearted of men—, I like them both. It was she who lent me some of Swedenborg's treatises last winter (though she is not very deep in them herself) and she has just pressed upon me three volumes by the same writer "Sur la religion vraie,"³ which I refuse (are'nt you glad, Arabel?) on the ground that the papal authorities would naturally eschew
any book whatever, upon true religion, & that I should therefore have to sacrifice them at the custom-house. We are invited to go to her this evening to hear Miss Cushman read, and, as Robert’s Milsand is to be there, though it is our last night I believe we shall try to go. I forgot to tell you that we met Miss Cushman .. the American actress, you know .. on the famous balcony from whence we saw the great entrance on that saturday. She has with her Miss Hayes who translated George Sand, and we all three had a great deal of talk about various matters. Never was a woman in the world less like an actress. I cant conceive how such a woman would look on a stage, or speak, or gesticulate—she has just the look of a sensible woman, not at all young. I understand that she & Miss Hayes have made vows of celibacy & of eternal attachment to each other—they live together, dress alike, .. it is a female marriage. I happened to say, “Well, I never heard of such a thing before.” “Have’nt you?,” said M‘ Corkrane, .. “oh, it is by no means uncommon.” They are on their way to Rome, so I dare say we shall see a good deal of them. Though an actress, Arabel, Miss Cushman has an unimpeachable character, & is as much distinguished for her general intelligence as for her professional aptitude—a little more, perhaps.

M. Milsand has spent two evenings with us. He is altogether admirable— A more noble & conscientious intellect it would be impossible to find. Of the present state of affairs he talks with the insight & wise moderation which are so characteristic of him. What he objects to most is that in the case of dissatisfaction & discontent on the part of the people there is not sufficient provision for the legal act of protest, & that the natural consequence must be a collision between the nation and the government— At the present moment, all goes smoothly, because the masses are satisfied. Louis Napoleon represents the democracy—(which always I have told you—) but let the occasion of dissatisfaction arise, & there must arise a storm .. unless the case be provided for by a modification of the existent laws. At present, says he, the masses are pleased—there is abundance of work, & the interest of the working classes is much considered. He is in sympathy with the masses. I cant give you my own impressions better than in M. Milsand’s words. I agree with him .. I accept his views. He tells me that the stringency upon the press is applied to newspapers, but scarcely at all to books. If you were to read what Proudhon has just published, you English would be a little surprised—just as Robert confesses himself to be. The Buonapartist fervour throughout France is, M. Milsand says, “a little childish”—but “there are various motives at work.”— M. le Moine, one of the cleverest writers for the ‘Debats’ was also on our balcony. He observed sarcastically that he “supposed the next time Louis Napoleon came into Paris, the people would worship his horse, .. for nothing else would be left to them”. By the way, he rode upon a beautiful English horse, which everybody was admiring even then.

You ought to hear Peninni talk on these subjects. He repeated to me a letter he wants to write to you, but it would take too much time & patience for him to write it in his peculiar fashion, just now. I will tell you it therefore— “Dear Alibel, Peninni see Napoleon pass— Plompity babuffs, plompity bwams, plompity twumpets. Peninny cwy Vive Napoleon. Napoleon tate off chapeau Peninni.” So there’s Peninni’s letter for you word for word.

Robert says that he can make you understand the Lowell address without writing to M‘ Procter. Turn round the Procter house, the first house to the right, at the end of a long wall, because a garden belongs to it. Try again.
Remember, Arabel, Bummy is much nearer in relationship than you are. Aunt Jane wears crape—only, in the very slightest form, be it understood, & not as you do,—& with white sleeves & collars. As to Arlette, her silk hat is trimmed with lace & bugles simply. I am sure you are 'deeper' than you need be,—& that horrible horrible mourning is so unbecoming & melancholy! The little Reynolds's were in black the other day when they came here—upon which I exclaimed to Arlette. She told me it was her economy to make them wear out their black pelisses, & that otherwise she would not have thought of such a thing. Mr. Reynolds has written to ask Bummy to come to them for the winter. She will probably do so, I fancy—dount you? Peninni went to have tea with the children yesterday. Very kind it was of Arlette to ask him. Her little Miratry is a head taller than he is—what a disgrace! Her children are both very pretty, I think, particularly Miratry, who has a beautiful complexion & eyes. She does'n know a letter so Peninni preserves his superiority. The way that child writes—as fast as I can dictate the letters . is really surprising. I shall send you, if I can lay hands on it, his drawing of our fireside—& his other drawing of Napoleon on horseback.

God bless you my beloved Arabel— Tomorrow we are gone. Until we get to Lyons we shant decide upon the Mont Cenis. The weather is perfectly lovely— Every day we have been out at the restaurateur,—and indeed even Wiedeman has gone with Wilson, for a two francs dinner between them, ordering his 'toupe' & "little fisks" for first course— Today Robert & I went after dinner to the Hedleys,—& they insisted on keeping me, so that I could'n get to the Corkranes after all—

God bless you,—we are gone. It is nearly eleven at night; & I must put up this letter. Best love to all of you—& to dearest Trippy. Write to Florence, poste restante, & let me find a letter from you & one from Henrietta. Robert's dear love with that of your forever attached Ba.

Berry Selwyn shall have the books, which will be directed to you— So glad I am that dear Minny is better.

Address: Angleterre— / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Dated by Paris postmark of 23 October 1852, a Saturday.
2. The Lowells left for America later in October 1852, and shortly before the Brownings left Paris for Florence in early November, RB wrote to Lowell asking him to take a letter from EBB to Mathews (ms at Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection).
3. A French translation of Swedenborg's *Vera Christiana Religion* had first appeared in 1771, and was reprinted about this time as *La Vraie Religion Chrétienne* (Paris: Amand, 1852-53).
4. Charlotte Saunders Cushman (1816-76), the well-known actress, had met the Brownings the previous week at the Corkranes’ house when they had all gone to see Louis Napoleon’s triumphal entry into Paris. The day after that event, EBB wrote Kenyon: “I never saw anyone so unlike my idea, or anybody’s idea, of an actress: she seems cut out of different stuff altogether” (ms at Wellesley).
5. Matilda Mary Hays (1820-97), daughter of John Hays, was an actress, as well as the author of *Helen Stanley, A Tale* (London: E. Churton, 1846) and *Adrienne Hope* (2 vols., London: T. Cautley Newby, 1866) and a translator of George Sand. Hays was en route to Rome with Charlotte Cushman. They returned to London the following summer, but Matilda Hays soon went back to Rome to be with Hattie Hosmer (Joseph Leach, *Bright Particular Star: The Life and Times of Charlotte Cushman*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970,
p. 259). In a letter to Henrietta in December 1853, EBB described Matilda Hays as "a peculiar person altogether, decided, direct, truthful, it seems to me" (Huxley, p. 196).

6. Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809–65) was a socialist and author of, among other titles, *Les Confessions d’un Révolutionnaire* (Paris: Garnier frères, 1850). EBB mentioned Proudhon in a letter to John Kenyon the day before writing this one, and a few months later both she and RB told their correspondents that they had been reading Proudhon. In a letter to Joseph Milsand, dated 24 February 1853, RB wrote that he had been reading Proudhon’s *Confessions d’un Révolutionnaire*, “and think I remarked many of the inherent faults of his original views of human nature” (Transcript in editor’s file). EBB refers to Proudhon, together with Fourier, Considerant, and Louis Blanc in *Aurora Leigh*, III, 584–585.

7. John Émile Lemmoine (1815–92) was born in London, but his parents were French. He started writing for the *Journal des débats* in 1840, and he was a contributor to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. He was the author of several books including *Études critiques et biographiques* (1862). He was mostly moderate in his political writings about England.


9. i.e., Mary Arabella Susan Reynolds; see letter 32, note 13. The Reynolds’s other child has not been identified.

10. If EBB sent these drawings by Pen, they have not survived.

11. “Soup” and “little fishes.”

12. EBB has written the name “Selwyn” above “Peyton,” which has been deleted. Eliza Berry Peyton, daughter of Eliza and Nicholson Peyton, married Jasper Henry Selwyn, a Commander in the Royal Navy, in Florence on 1 July 1851. Their marriage had followed a prolonged engagement until he finished his naval career. In a letter to Edward Chapman, date 25 October 1852, RB asked Chapman to send “a copy of my wife’s poems & mine, as well as Casa Guidi [Windows] & Christmas Eve,—to Mrs. Selwyn, care of Miss Barrett, 50 Wimpole St.” (ms at ABL).

**Letter 90**

Lyons. Hotel de l’univers-

Monday— [25 October 1852]¹

Beloved Arabel, here we are at Lyons! The journey from Paris to Chalons was delightful— I never travelled more comfortably, though, after my exhortations, we took the second class. Robert is quite of my mind now, & never more will think of first class carriages on the continent. We were alone the greater part of the way, & it was really impossible, in the midst of so many cushions, to feel anything like fatigue. The day was as warm as June & my cough all but gone. The steamboat from Chalons to Lyons, though, steaming down the Soane [sic], took us through rain & mist, & we were shut up in the cabin the whole day—and today it rains, & I cant go out to see Lyons, which vexes me, but our hotel is most comfortable & we are all, Peninni included of course, in great spirits. Oh Arabel! if you were but here, to cross the Mont Cenis with us & find yourself with us in my Italy! What complete joy it would be to me!

Yes, we have decided for the Mont Cenis pass. The weather is so very mild & we hear such encouraging reports on all sides, that we have decided on braving it. Also, I am really much, wonderfully better since I left England. And the cheapness & quickness are on the Mont Cenis
side of the question, & then we shall see Turin—observe! We did not decide till last night, and the arguments were weighed on both sides.

We have not paid a sous [sic] for Peninni since we left England, either through his smallness, or through the large liberality of the railway-people. We took him to be looked at, in Paris, & they gave him a “gratuitous ticket” immediately, together with many complimentary expressions —“Mais c’est un enfant charmant, que ce petit enfant ci. Il est vraiment joli.” (Think of railroad managers stopping to compliment you so in England.) Three or four hours afterwards I asked Peninni what the man said of him when he gave him the ticket—just wishing to make out how much he had understood. The child answered without hesitation & with his slyest smile .. “CHARMANT.”! He was horribly frightened for fear Flush should fall into the Soane [sic], as we entered & left the steamboat, .. shrieking & crying .. “O Fushie, tate tare— No fal in water”—but no human creature of any size could enjoy a journey more, on the whole, than he has done this. He enquires about the names of the towns, & remembers them all. He didn’t like sleeping at Chalons because he said he wanted to go, .. “no Chalons .. Florence,” .. and Lyons, he fancied at first was a dangerous district of the Zoological Gardens .. but now he calls it “bello, bello,” appreciating the hotel as a “velly nice palace,” which really it is.

Do you know, Arabel, I was quite touched & sorry to leave poor M! Browning & Sarianna, in Paris. His simplicity & affectionateness to me draw me a good deal—poor victim of a villainous woman,4 who, if he had been less pure than he is, would have escaped the whole trap laid for him. He cant understand any of it, .. not he!— It is enough to make one both smile & sigh, to see how he struggles against facts & necessities— I pity him from the deepest of my heart. And then, Robert naturally enough, every now & then, gets impatient—as for instance the other day— the poor old man turned to me & said dolefully that “he knew it had been a trouble to me”—“Of course, it has,” said Robert—“what did you imagine?” —At which he looked so very miserable that I had to break in with an assurance that I wasn’t troubled at all & rather liked it upon the whole— Poor kind man. How he cried when we came away, & kissed me again & again—and as to Peninni, Peninni is the pearl of children & scarcely to be parted with—Dear Sarianna too was affected— But they have a most pretty & comfortable apartment, & I indeed think that they will be happy in Paris. You would be surprised to see the pretty rooms Robert took for them at a pound a week—good enough for ourselves, I should have thought, I assure you. It is a miracle of cheapness— We dined with them & spent the evening the day before the last, & everything pleased me, & Robert comes away perfectly satisfied that he has done the best & most successfully for them. For my own part, if I were Sarianna, I should a hundred times rather live there than either at New Cross or Bayswater—but her pride suffers—that, I see, and cant wonder at much.

Dont let me forget again to tell you how we heard a great deal about the Morton business,5 & how we both are convinced that though very foolish, very careless, very inconsequential, he was entirely innocent of the crime for which he suffered. You will wonder how such innocence can be proved now—& I cant explain to you how it can. Only it can, I believe,—and M! Bower is himself said to be convinced of it now. That Bower, by the way, is a bad man .. a bad husband—the mark of his kicks was found on his wife’s body in the hospital .. the madhouse, .. where she was sent. Horrible tragedy! but better to die so, innocent than guilty, of course! Poor M! Morton!
We passed his house & the other house where he was murdered, every day as we went to dinner at the Paris restaurants—

I spent my last evening at Paris with the Hedleys. We had just dined, & dropped in with our goodbyes & found them on the point of dining, so they forced us to sit at their dinner table, & to Robert’s absolute astonishment, I accepted the proposition to take some mutton broth. I grow upon Robert, he says!—He did’nt take account before of my capabilities!—Well—he would’nt let me go to the Corkranes, & I stayed with the Hedleys till ten, & uncle Hedley gave me a very pretty little box to hold a watch… which won’t be quite as useful as pretty, but that’s not his fault.

What am I to say about England? That you are in England—which would make me love it, if there were not another reason.

Tell dearest Henrietta that I think of her little she-creature, & herself, often & often. Tell me whatever you hear. If there should be anything like a convocation, Arabel, they will be settling definitely in the church of England what is to be believed or disbelieved on the subject of baptism & other things, & then will come a great visible schism—it will be curious—High & low church in such a case, never can go on without a schism. I wonder how the ministry can venture to think of a convocation, as I see they do, or are supposed to do, in the papers.

Now, goodbye—dearest, dearest. Our best, best, dearest love to you, & all. Let me hear at Florence. When I write again the Alps will be between us. We go tonight at eight o’clock by diligence, & travel all night to Chambery & shall try to get on to St Jean or St Michel to sleep. We have the coupè [sic] & shall be very comfortable. Peninni says he doesn’t mean to go to sleep but to eat pears all the night. He is in a paradise of fruits of every kind.

Has Henry come back? Tell me if he likes Ireland. Tell me of them all. How does Minny get on? Give our best love to dearest Trippy, & tell me how she is & how her landlord does.

Until slain by an avalanche (& after) & before,

your own Ba—

This note to M’ Chapman will bring you the books to Berry. Explain to her with my love.

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Dated by Lyon postmark of 26 October 1852, a Tuesday.
2. “But this is a charming child, this little child is. He is truly handsome.”
3. “Beautiful, beautiful.”
4. i.e., Margaret von Müller; see letter 73, note 4.
5. Savile Morton (1811–52) was the Paris correspondent for The Morning Advertiser and Harold Elyott Bower (1815–84) for The Morning Post. The two men had known each other as students at Cambridge, and renewed their acquaintance when they met in Paris. Morton, an intimate friend of Thackeray, was known for his profligacy. Thackeray wrote to his mother on 15 March 1852: “I am very much pained to hear of Morton, and you may say that I say so. He is shocking about women. Directly I hear of his being fond of one, I feel sorry for her. He lusts after and leaves her” (The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray, ed. Gordon N. Ray, London: Oxford University Press, 1945–46, 3, 24). Morton’s lust for Bower’s wife led to his death when, on 1 October 1852, Mrs. Bower declared to her husband that Morton was the father of their newborn child. Bower flew into a fit of rage and stabbed Morton to death. He was subsequently tried for murder but was acquitted. He died at Paris in 1884, aged 69. According to a report of Bower’s trial in The Annual Register
for 1852, none of the three principal parties was innocent; they had all confessed to committing adultery. After Morton's death, Edward FitzGerald, another old acquaintance of Morton, asked Stephen Spring Rice “Didn't he die in character?” (The Letters of Edward FitzGerald, ed. Alfred McKinley Terhune and Annabelle Burdick Terhune, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, II, 71).

6. Mary Altham Cook, Henrietta and Surtees's daughter, was born on 28 September 1852 at Wilton, near Taunton. She died 17 June 1950.

7. “For nearly a century and a half the powers of the Crown under the Act for the Submission of the Clergy were interpreted as making it inexpedient for the Convocation to discuss any business whatever, and its meetings were purely formal. It was not until 1852, under the combined influences of the Evangelical and Oxford Movements, that the Convocation of Canterbury took the bold step of discussing business again” (The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. F. L. Cross, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 413). The Convocation was held in November 1852, and in anticipation, there was much discussion in the press and in other publications as to the issues that should or should not be discussed in Convocation; for example, see C.E. Walkey, One Hundred Queries for the Consideration of the Clergy and Laity of the Church of England Concerning the Convocation, 1852, London: Hope and Co., [September] 1852.

8. St. Jean de Maurienne and St. Michel are small villages on the road between Chambéry and Mt. Cenis, where the Brownings crossed the Alps into Italy.

9. Henry had left in mid-September for a tour in Ireland, evidently a holiday. In a letter to Henrietta written on 16 September 1852, EBB noted: “Papa was liberal to him—gave him twenty pounds ... I am very happy to say” (Transcript in editor's file). There is no record of the exact date of his return.

10. See note 12 in the preceding letter.

Letter 91

Genoa.

Friday Nov. 5. [1852]

My dearest dearest Arabel, you will certainly think me among my friends the 'rapping spirits[ ]' if I dont write; and now I can write & say that our tribulations are past, thank God. Oh Arabel, I have repented, Robert has repented, everybody has repented taking the mont Cenis route: it has really been full of danger to us, & to me especially—to me, exclusively perhaps, I should say, only that poor Robert is twice as much to be pitied as I am, when he sees me suffer as I have done from the cold. We left all our summer at Lyons. At Chambéry began cold dismal weather. The diligences had a 'furore' for going by night, and though we arranged everything on our own parts as skillfully as possibly, we were two nights & two days without taking off our clothes. Not that we travelled all the time, remember—oh no. We lay down on beds for five or six hours together, with blazing fires in the rooms,—but to arrive at the luxury of taking off our clothes, we could'nt do that till we got to Lanslebourg at the foot of the Alps. There we went regularly to bed—only I coughed perpetually—the cold had touched me already. On getting up in the morning, we had the satisfaction of finding the whole country covered with snow, and the diligence we had relied on, quite full without us, & going off with ten horses. Wiedeman who had liked everything, enjoyed this particularly, & declared of the snow that it was "molto molto bella", .. "pretty, pretty"; & thought me, I dare say, most stupidly unsympathetic. The truth is, Arabel, that morning at Lansleb[o]urg, my spirits which generally rise on such occasions, were quite on the ground. I
was thoroughly unwell as it was, & "looked dreadful" as Wilson observed encouragingly.. and
the prospect of passing the mountains terrified me—there's no other word for it. Well—we were
in for it— We could only do what we could. Robert engaged a private carriage, which was large &
excellent, .. warmly shut in everywhere, and when we had drawn up all the windows, & the sun
was shining brightly, it soon grew too hot rather than too cold. Still, as the ascent went on, the
bleak air pierced & pierced, & I suffered horribly at the top of the mountain from the pressure on
the chest— You see the chest being less strong than usual, from the cough I had in England, could
not resist— Well—it all passed however,—but it was a most uncomfortable day, & I was thankful
when the light of it was gone,—oh, most thankful when our lumbering carriage reeled rather than
rolled into the streets of Susa,^ where we slept in Italy for the first time, in the shelter & temperate
climate. So worn I was with the day's work that I cant say my heart leapt at the first dear Italian
word .. ("Quante camere vuole il signore"?*) but it gave a sort of dying kick—we were all very
glad. "Now, what will you have?" said Robert to us. And Peninni answered for everybody—"Tea
and Toss and butter, Papa—and buono latte—buono, buono—no cream" (no cream—meaning
the curd on the boiled milk, which he hates.) Oh, Peninni was the life of us all. He never flagged—
not he! He was awake at one in the morning to see the first sight of the mountains— He was eating
pears day & night, and drawing the waterfalls, and singing songs about Italy .. you never saw
such a thorough gipsy [sic] child as that child is.

For my part .. you know, Arabel, it is bad to be "unequally yoked together with
unbelievers,!?—& so my soul found it that day, when it had no sort of pleasure nor exaltation in
passing the Alps, because of its unlucky comrade, this body of mine. How humiliating. I might
just as well have been in Cheapside, I assure you, for the pleasure & glory of it .. and better!

Still, Mont Cenis is not comparable to the St Goattard— There may be something in that.

We went from Susa to Turin the next morning, and I was considerably better & had slept,
which was curious, & my spirits had come back, & it was delightful to all of us to feel & see Italy
all round— At Turin we stayed two days. We got into sunless rooms—the town is cold. The air
seemed to me much keener than in Paris, with a sort of chrystaline feeling, as if affected by the
Alpine snows. I went out to see some pictures, & Robert took me round the city in a carriage, ..
but I had to wear my respirator constantly, & felt unwell & weak, & did not enjoy much. Then
we came on to Genoa—into the heart of the full summer. What a change! Not only warm is it,
but hot—we have to use much self denial in not sleeping with open windows—we aspire to
thorough draughts .. we guard against the mosquitos. But I broke down on my arrival—& Robert
picked me up & said I should stay where I was in the sun, till the effect of the cold had quite
passed—and so I have been lying on the sofa by the open window, getting over it all. We have
been here five or six days, and now I may call myself well again— the cough retreating fast, &
the chest recovering all its equanimity. Perhaps we shall stay a day or two or three more— Robert
thinks it best— Florence cant be expected to be as warm as it is here, and I have had a rather rough
shake, you see. My poor darling Robert has been dreadfully vexed—but it was all my own fault—
I would come by the Alps, & have repented it at leisure. I tell you all this, & conscientiously
assure you at the end that there is not the least room for uneasiness, as I am well now, & enjoying
this beautiful Genoa, which Wilson declares to be the most stupid place she was ever in, in her
life. Poor Wilson too, caught cold on the journey. One night there were only two places to be had in the coupé [sic], and she had a fancy for going into the ‘interieur’. Two men began to smoke, & in self defence she desired them to open both windows. So she caught cold in the draught. And our darling Peninni has a cold at this moment—a mere cold in the head: he is quite well— I think there has been a mixture of cold in my own unwellness— Only that is to be considered past now, and you are not to think about it twice.

I will write to you from Florence of course, but dont be uneasy if you dont hear instantly because we are uncertain in our plans just now. We may go on monday or later—and we may linger on the road or not linger- We have seen little of Genoa yet—nothing of the pictures—and here is my poor Robert who has refused to see anything without me. So now that we have come a little to ourselves we must look about us & see.

Oh Arabel— “Have we quarrelled? how often have we quarrelled?” We are famous for quarrelling—are we not? That is, because we love one another too much to be contented with temporizing. It seems foolish to talk of such things—but for a man to love a woman after six years as he loves me, could only be possible to a man of very uncommon nature such as his. I cannot tell you what his devotion & tenderness are to me at every hour—it brings tears to my eyes to remember it—

Now I must go. This is a letter full of grumbles—is’nt it? The worst is that I keep dreaming of Papa— I do hope he is well, & that you all are. God bless you all— Speak of Henrietta— My dear love to her—& you will let her see this letter or tell her what is in it, . . so that I need not write the same things twice—

Not read over— No time.

My own beloved Arabel love your Ba.

Robert is constantly thinking of you, he says. His true love.

Best love to Trippy—

How is Minny? Peninni talks of her, tell her, & hopes she is out of bed. He has made immense progress in talking English, & says curious things. The other day; he asked “God made the pears”? to which I assented. Then said he— “Pennini sinks, gentle Jesus muss put genially a plampity glue to mate y tins tit so hard.”— (must put generally a quantity of glue to make the skins stick so hard). Robert was finding fault with him two days ago— “Papa, be dood!— Peninni tant bear it when Papa peak so,” said he with sobs.

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. The last stop after Chambery before crossing Mont Cenis into Italy.
3. The first town in Italy after crossing Mont Cenis from France; the Brownings took this route again in 1858.
4. “How many rooms does the signore want?”
5. “Tea and toast and butter, Papa—and good milk—good, good,—no cream.
7. RB had refused to see Genoa without EBB on their earlier visit; see letter 3.
8. This is the first of numerous instances of Pen referring to "gentle Jesus," which is taken from the hymn "Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild" by Charles Wesley, and which was taught to Pen by Wilson, as explained by EBB in a letter to Henrietta, dated 27 January [1853]: "You may not understand why he always says 'Gentle Jesus'. Wilson taught him a verse of a hymn which he repeats with his prayers every morning. . . the only form of words he was ever taught, for I like him to pray for what is in his head & heart, & he does it naturally. The hymn-verse is very pretty, I think" (Transcript in editor's file).

Letter 92

Casa Guidi.

Saturday & Monday [13–15 November 1852]

Ever dearest dearest Arabel, I found your letter & thank you heartily though it does not altogether bring me good news. Do write again, for I shall be very anxious (about you) till I hear.

Dear dearest, what vexation, what sadness, what anxiety! I do wish you had been with me freezing on Mont Cenis instead.

Half sorry I am to have sent you that letter too from Genoa, which, full of groans as it was, must have been better unsent than sent after all. We stayed ten days at Genoa, comfortably enough—in the best hotel, . . where, by the way, Lord & Lady Minto & the princess Borghese were staying at the same time . . and we had rooms that looked on the bay, with the sun at full summer blaze, and every convenience except a soft bed . . but I learnt a little of monastic rigidities at nights, to the aching of my bones, which may have been an advantage. Two days before we came away I had risen too to the estate of convalescence, & was able to go out with Robert & prowl through one or two churches & palaces for pictures, & enjoy the lovely climate. Lord Minto had come the same route we did, in his own carriage of course, and Wilson heard from the lady's maids at the second table that he had had to wait everywhere for post horses & was kept so long on the road as quite to tire out Lady Minto—so that the fine people did not manage it very much better than the poor people. Oh Arabel—to look over maps & predicate which is the short way & which the long, leads to all kinds of deceptions—Depend on it, we should have achieved it both quicker & cheaper by the Nice road—only the thing is done & over now, & so is the evil of it, as I am quite myself again & none the worse for the past . . getting fatter even, which seems ridiculous to say, but I always had the knack you know, of getting fat & thin like a rabbit, in a course of hours. At Genoa, I was quite startled at myself, I had so wasted away in three or four days—but the change of climate from Lyons had been sudden & trying, & really Turin was very little better than Chambery. I would'nt live at Turin for the crown of Sardinia, noble little city as it is, & quickened to the heart by the new life of constitutional freedom. Well—but all that's over— I mean all the adversity of our journey— We lay in the sunshine of Genoa as I told you, ten days & got over it, . . and then I resisted Robert's propositions . . "will you go by sea to Leghorn"? . . "will you go by vettura to Pisa". No, nothing would do for me but that I would take the diligence to Pisa, making an heroic effort— Because you observe, Arabel, by sea, everybody is unhappy, & nobody sleeps much more than in a diligence . . less, indeed—and by a private carriage we were
to be three days & a half on the road, paying triply. So we set off at seven one evening by diligence & arrived the next night at eleven, travelling 'sans intermission'. As to Peninni it's just the same thing to that child where he sleeps, or how long he is in a carriage .. I never saw such a child. He was less tired than anybody. The chief cause for uneasiness about him was the supernatural quantity of pears he managed to consume, & I do think it remarkable that he never suffered at all from this capacity of his, though I counted six pears which fell to his share in four & twenty hours. At Pisa, arriving at eleven at night, half dead as you may suppose with fatigue, & with our hopes laid on coffee, the dear barbarians could not supply us with milk. "Nella mattina, si, ma sta notte, impossibile [sic] affatto." I threw myself down on a bed in a state of despair-- Robert says I even cried out "Good Heavens" in incipient distraction. Peninni exclaimed (not at all crossly, but quite decisively ..) "Peninni muss have Peninni's tea." Then outspoke the landlord & humbly proposed that, instead, we should have chicken & cheese-- "Less'" cried Wiedeman before anybody could speak .. "Peninni tate some chitten." So that was arranged, as a matter more of duty than pleasure as far as I was concerned, & then we went to bed & had to do with swarms of musquitos [sic] all night,—& no mosquito curtains!!—no sleep till nearly four in the morning. Poor little Wiedeman's hands & arms were spoilt for a week, to my utter vexation, but on the whole we escaped better than might have been expected. The plague of Pisa those musquitos are. Since coming to Florence I have heard the hum of one, & that's all-- Well—but I was at Pisa. The next morning at eleven we were on the railroad, & three hours afterwards, entered Florence to our great joy, to my deep joy .. I cant tell you how pleased I felt. Dear Florence, I do love it certainly, though Robert (demoralized man that he is by the too enchanting Paris) maintains that it's dead & dull .. which is true, .. particularly true to us who are fresh from the Parisian boulevards. Everything must be dead & dull after Paris--and Paris with the imperial vertigo on it as we saw it last. Oh yes—dead & dull we must confess our poor poor Florence to be—trodden flat too under the heel of Austria .. the people suffering from want of moral air, .. gasping for moral life under the cruel pressure. Arabel—here is the difference! here you feel the difference between a people really oppressed, and the French people oppressed after the fashion & fantasy of the English newspapers. France is asserting herself in every fact which implies a Louis Napoleon: Louis Napoleon is France; while, here, the people are down, down .. and loathing those who keep them down. It is certainly a very sad spectacle, and I dont wonder that Robert should feel saddened by it—it saddens me. Such hatred, such internal revolt & protestation as we hear on all sides—the Austrians are detested. The worst version of the Madiai story is the right one— I could’nt believe it you know, on account of the badness .. but it is right, right .. all badness is credible in this place. The report runs now however, that the Grand Duke intimated secretly to Lord Roden, though he could not receive the deputation, it was his intention to pardon the prisoners, taking occasion of the Grand Duchess's approaching confinement to do so. It is expected daily, so we shall soon see– But that false man, .. even if he has promised, what is his word worth?
As we passed the ponte delle Grazie into Florence, Peninni cried in a penetrated manner,— "Poor Floience"! .. and then, (as if the child's heart were full) he kissed Robert & me, again & again. Wilson says he had been much too excited about Florence. For two days he stammered, every word he used, & had some of his old convulsive startings—nothing to signify, but enough
to show some over-excitement which should be guarded against. You see he had heard us talking about Florence, Florence, & was wound up to a state of too sensitive expectation. We found our house looking beautiful—the carpets & curtains rather better for wear, it seems to me—chairs & beds bearing the closest comparison with the luxuries of Paris— I feel myself back in my nest again, & can't enjoy it too much. We have no fires on this fourteenth of November, nor think of fires . . . and I have half forgotten my cough . . it's all but gone . . and the chest is as free as a bird. The house might have been let three times, & once for a year, since we resolved on coming, . . but Centofanti understanding we were to be back in September & misunderstanding our plans altogether, refused every offer. He has gone to Milan, leaving his accounts & a certain sum of money—but alas, Arabel, I do fear he has cheated us, or rather is trying to cheat us—the accounts making mention of only two tenants, whereas by the testimony of the porter & other witnesses, there have been three—the house having been let eleven months out of the first twelve-month: so when Centofanti comes back there will be a “row” . . which is vexatious—but the witnesses are too many for him to struggle against the setting up of the truth. In fact, he owes us about twenty two pounds more than the twelve he has left— Say nothing of this to the Bevans, by any chance—He may explain perhaps, poor man. Certainly he has taken excellent care of the house, and we ought not to expect heroic virtues from an Italian & an ex courier. Alessandro is in a situation, which saves some embarrassment, and we have another man-servant,* who commends himself to Wilson by his punctuality & cleanliness & civility, & cooks very well, though I am inclined, for my part, to be very critical on his appearance, I, who am not apt to be critical on such points. He looks to me much like a subsidiary stableman—not half such a nice looking servant as poor Alessandro. There's the consequence of engaging servants in the dark as Robert engaged him!—

Oh Arabel—my fingers have been nearly kissed off by the dear Italians—fingers by the men, & lips by the women—and everybody says . . what do you think? . . that I look much better than when I went away— Wilson & I set down that to the account of costume, & hair-dressing . . which have been freshened up at Paris—for certainly I am considerably thinner since leaving Florence. Yet I have wonderfully brightened & revived during the last fortnight, & feel very well indeed just now. The poor balia came with sobs of joy, the tears pouring down her cheeks, . . seizing [sic] upon Wiedeman, kissing him again & again . . “O Dio mio, come è bellino!” She almost knocked out all my front teeth with her energetic kisses— The poor balia! I am delighted to tell you that the whole story against her was a pure scandal. Eight months ago, she procured a separation from her husband before the tribunals, and in that legal paper he recognized the child, which she is expecting the birth of everyday now. She says her husband's conduct rendered their living together absolutely impossible—in fact, he persisted in living with another woman, & she could not consent to make a third. The tribunals consented to the separation, but only for a year, on account of the youth of the parties—so there may be a reunion, after all. Then we have had Alessandro's children here . . and Madame Biondi, who is expecting to be called in to the Grand Duchess . . and M' Stuart . . and the Cottrells & heaps of other people. Sophia Cottrell looks well & pretty—her boy is nearly sixteen months old, & has cut all his teeth except two, & has a balia still & will have, till he shall have reached the mature age of twenty two months. That's the way we do things in Italy, tell Henrietta. He runs alone, already, & is very healthy & very
sweet-tempered, Sophia says. The Cottrells were most cordial & affectionate to us—"Oh," she said, in a manner that touched me. "I never shall forget your kindness about Lily. It is a tie between us for ever." They thought Wiedeman much grown & improved & "turned into the image of Henrietta"—which, great as the compliment is, I find it difficult to accept. I can understand by it however that he is considered prettier. His dress is admired too—the pattern of his frocks was asked for twice yesterday!—set down that, Arabel. Yes, I admire Louisa Carmichael for admiring him. You can't think how admired he has been everywhere on the road & here, as a matter of course! I must tell you of an adventure he had on the railroad from Turin towards Genoa, where he was drawing with his usual attention, when an Italian gentleman looked at his great works & was very much struck by them. A very gentlemanly & intelligent man, talking with a finesse & incision which reminded you more of a Frenchman than an Italian, but he was Italian, nevertheless. Much struck he was by Wiedeman's drawings—said they were surprising—"sorprendente," & that he might turn out a Michael Angelo. "And what little hands!" "Che manine"!—He asked to shake the little hands—and so we parted. When he had left the rail-carriage, another gentleman bent forward to Robert & told him, that he was one of the most celebrated artists of Turin—an historical painter—the name, Gonin. That was an adventure, wasn't it?

I forgot to tell you, Arabel, that I went to a dentist in Paris—yes, I did it at last—a first rate dentist too—with a beard!—& he did all that was to be done to my teeth, that is, he cleaned & filed them, & charged twenty francs, fifteen shillings & ten pence. So I shall be satisfied with Parisian dentists for the future.

We have been to see Robin Hedley & his wife. She is rather pretty, & very pleasing & amiable looking, I think,—both of them delighted with Florence, which they leave for Rome on the first of January. They will be in Paris again in April.

Is this a long letter? Robert is dunning me to go out, & declares that I never have done when once I begin to write to you. God bless & love & take care of you my dearest dear Arabel. Mention your own health when you write, or I shall think you are ill—now remember! I tell you everything. Peninni was in great awe of the wolves, as we passed the Alps, & perfectly contented to have the windows "shutted up" accordingly. He has made great progress in talking English, & says "I" and "me" every now & then (when he thinks of it) to my consternation, as you know how I like the old pretty fashion. Yesterday he said in the most affected way, "Lily, open your window. Too ot. I can't bear it. Mates me sit." (sick). Give my very best love to dearest Trippy & tell her M's Gordon is not married. So sorry I am that Trippy is not well. Mention her particularly always.

Love to all—

Your own attached Ba

Address: Angleterre via France / Miss Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Dated by Florence postmark 16 November 1852, a Tuesday.
2. Six lines have been cancelled after receipt, presumably by Arabella. The passage is probably referring to a health problem with which Arabella was afflicted. EBB wrote to Henrietta, 30–31 November [1852]: "When I
was in England she really needed medical advice and would not go and take it ... I am haunted day and night with the thought of Arabel; and because she doesn’t write, I think there must be something wrong with her” (Huxley, p. 173).

3. Presumably Thérèse Louise Alexandrine de la Rochefoucauld (b. 1823), second wife of Marco Antonio Prince de Borghese (1814–86); however, he had two daughters who might have been called princesses: Agnes (b. 1836), by his first wife, Gwendoline Catherine (née Talbot, d. 1840), daughter of the 16th Earl of Shrewsbury—and Anne Marie (b. 1844), by his second wife. Gilbert Elliot Murray Kynynmound (1782–1859), 2nd Earl of Minto, and his Mary (née Brydone), had been in Italy on a diplomatic mission since 1846; she died in 1853.

4. “In the morning, yes, but tonight, entirely impossible.”

5. In April 1851, a proclamation was made severely limiting religious liberty in Tuscany, and giving the police almost unlimited powers to arrest anyone suspected of possessing a Bible. This led to a number of arrests: in early May of Count Guicciardini (see letter 48, note 23), followed by others, and a few months later, of Francesco and Rosa (née Pulini) Madiai. He was arrested on 17 August and she on the 27th. They were tried and found guilty of “impiety,” and sentenced to several years’ imprisonment on 8 June 1852. He was sent to Volterra and Rosa was imprisoned at Lucca. A very sketchy outline of the arrest and imprisonment of the Madiai appeared in “An Interview with the Madiai” in the 20 November 1852 issue of Household Words (pp. 239–240), and a more complete account of the incident and the Madiai’s eventual release from prison is given in Edward Steane, The Madiai: Narrative of the Recent Persecutions in Tuscany, London: Seeleys, 1853. Also published in 1853 was Letters of the Madiai, and Visits to Their Prisons, by the Misses Senhouse, London: James Nisbet, which contains an introductory note by R. Maxwell Hanna (see letter 51, note 21).

6. Robert Jocelyn (1788–1870), 3rd Earl of Roden, was an ardent supporter of evangelical protestantism. In late October 1852, a deputation made up of a group of distinguished individuals from several different countries petitioned the Grand Duke for an audience. Despite his refusal to meet them, the deputation nevertheless left with the Foreign Minister a copy of the document they had intended to deliver to the Grand Duke, petitioning him to reconsider the decision of the court. Casigliano replied that he was unable to deliver the memorial to the Grand Duke and that the matter was considered closed. Nevertheless, EBB’s information seems to have been partially correct: In a letter dated Florence, 10 November 1852, Henry Bulwer, who had arrived from Rome, wrote to the Earl of Malmesbury that although the efforts of the deputation had failed, he felt that it was “well to allow the Grand Duke a little time, in order to see whether, on the occasion of the approaching confinement of the Grand Duchess, His Imperial and Royal Highness may not include amongst other acts of grace the mitigation of the sentence passed upon the Madiais” (Case of the Madiais, Printed for the use of the Foreign Office, London, 1852). Bulwer also sent an account of the expenses which the British government had paid for the “defence of the Madiais and those of the appeal against their sentence.”

7. See letter 15, note 27.

8. This servant was called Vincenzio, but he only stayed until the following June (see letter 101); the Brownings were never completely satisfied mainly because of his unkempt appearance. He was replaced by Ferdinando Romagnoli.

9. “Oh my God, how beautiful he is!”

10. James Montgomery Stuart had first met the Brownings in 1849 in Bagni di Lucca when he was there lecturing on Shakespeare. In his lectures he cited Anna Jameson as an authority, much to the Brownings’ pleasure (LEBB, I, 416). Stuart resided in Florence from 1852–58, and later he published a volume entitled Reminiscences and Essays (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1884), in which he mentioned “the writings of Mr. and Mrs. Browning, and the Shakespearean drama on which I was then lecturing in Florence” as subjects for his correspondence with Macaulay (p. 18).

11. Francesco Gonin (1808–89) was born at Turin, and “was one of the first Italian artists to specialize in lithography and wood-engraving”; he “became famous as the first major illustrator of I promessi sposi” (The Dictionary of Art, London: Macmillan, 1996, 12, 901). In 1854 Gonin became the stage designer for the Teatro Regio in Turin.
12. Robert ("Robin") Hedley (1825–1912), EBB's cousin, had married Charlotte Emma Catherine (née Coote, 1829–1917) on 19 August 1852.

13. However, she did remarry—her brother-in-law James Peard Ley—in April 1856.

Letter 93

Casa Guidi.

Dec 21 - 1852-

["]You naughty, naughty Alibel," as Peninni would say. How uneasy you made me by your silence! I had whipped myself up into a state of chronic apprehension, & if it had not been for Robin who heard from his father who had dined in Wimpole street, I dont know what I should have done. Dearest dearest Arabel, do write in future & take no thought of postages—it's too provoking when you talk of postages, & I, any day, would have given five scudi for a letter. As it was, your letter when it came, did not altogether satisfy me—about you .. do you understand? You seem to me, Arabel, to evade instead of answering directly. You did not promise me to have advice if it were “necessary,” but if you were not much better at once. Everybody has advice when it's necessary, that is when they cant do without it— I am not easy about you Arabel, and I entreat of you if that swelling has not satisfactorily diminished to go to your homeopathist & be set right again—this, by your love to me, dearest, I leave to your heart in its generosity—

Which I should have written to you long ago if it had’n’t been for Peninni’s being ill— He has had the chicken-pox—of the very mildest description .. scarcely the least sign of eruption .. but unmistakeable, D! Harding said—& with fever, night after night, which did not prevent his running about in the day, but kept me uncomfortable, so that I did not like to write to you till I could say he was well again. D! Harding pronounces him “of a fine constitution” & “pure blood,” .. the complaint could not prosper with him, he said. I was a little vexed however by the heat returning for several nights after we had apparently done with the malady .. but D! Harding assures us it is nothing whatever .. (there may be a slight tendency to febrile action because of the teeth which he is cutting (back teeth)) that he is absolutely well & that we are to turn our thoughts into some other direction— Poor darling! You ought to see his airs of invalidship .. “Papa, dont mate lis noise. I tant bear it. Lis mates me tuite ill.”—clasping his hands, & turning his head about. I am sorry to say he has adopted the personal pronouns to a great degree, & he does not very often now use the third person form of “Peninni” &c which charmed me so. Also his English, .. general fluency of speech, .. has immensely improved, & he grows more & more amusing as a matter of course. He talks in a very slow deliberate manner, which makes this fashion of pronunciation still more curious .. “I sink,” .. coming in at every moment. D! Harding kept him in one room for two days, & once when Wilson had to come to me, she asked him to stay by him self for a few minutes—“would he”? “Less”—said he—and then, with a sigh .. “Poor Peninni!” he said, .. “Peninni just lite poor Robin .. sate in a barn To keep himself warm, & put his head under his wing. Poor sing!” Oh, he has been very pathetic about his illness, I assure you. His head ached “dayfrey” (dreadfully) at first, he said, & nobody quite believed it. I must tell you that on our arrival, I showed him your picture—the Daguerreotype.² As he opened it, he said “Mama” .. at
the first glance..“No,” said I, “don’t speak before you have looked at it well—Take it to the
window & consider it.” In a minute he exclaimed—“Alibel!! velly, velly lite!” Then, after a
pause,..“But lis not tuite enough pretty—Eyes so”..screwing up his eyes to illustrate what he
meant. The exact fault, you know. I don’t think he could possibly remember much about Florence,
though of course he pretended to do it. He adopted the balia from the first, & allowed Wilson to
go to church last Sunday if she w’d stay with him—which almost I wonder at because she has not
been here more than six or seven times on account of her confinement. She complains that when
Wilson is at home he talks nothing but English (& the poor balia makes nothing of it) though in
Wilson’s absence he carries on the whole conversation in Italian with great facility, .. which I
had an opportunity of observing yesterday .. not even mixing English up with it in his old way.
In making his drawings now, he dedicates them alternately to Robert & me .. writing ‘Mama’ or
‘Papa’ quite of his own impulse & spelling. Often & often he talks of you—always as “poor
Alibel”—& he should like to go & see you he says, you & Minny & Lorge, in “Minny’s home,”
.. the ‘mitaines’1 haunting the premises, being forgotten for the nonce—His memories are indeed
multiplying prodigiously. And the common form is on all occasions .. “I remember in Palis” ..
or “in Lenoa” or “in Londra” .. The other day it was, “I remember five years ago in Londra &c
&c” something about a book I had given him. When we arrived here it was so much too warm for
his white Paris hat, that we had the brown straw done up with green ribbons & a green feather, &
it is the prettiest possible hat at the present moment, & accords to admiration with your green
merino frock, the buttons of which are as deeply in his soul’s love as ever—At Paris he used to
dazzle the waiter every morning by lifting up his pinafore— ‘Ah mon Dieu,’ said the waiter. And
the other day somebody observing (by way of cultivating popularity) “Those buttons are like the
stars,”—“Less”—said he with modest satisfaction—“lit the stars & the sun.”

Arabel, I must correct what I told you, about M. Centofanti. He was traduced in the matter of
the house. These Italians are so vague & incorrect. As soon as ever we came to examine seriously
into the matter, nobody could affirm anything—“Mi pare e non mi pare”4 was the answer. Oh—
he explained all to our satisfaction in the business of the house—There was a mistake against us
of a few pounds, but that was a mistake, & instantly rectified. The house has not answered badly
on the whole, as, after all expenses paid, we found ourselves with the advantage of six months
clear possession .. either to let or to inhabit—and we cant get a house either at Paris or Rome
for less than two pounds a week during the season; you may calculate. If we let our house, we go
at once to Rome, .. but, if not, we shall be economical & stay .. perhaps till March—there will
be time enough for Rome, even then. It has not been a healthy season at Rome, & I am quite
satisfied for Peninni’s sake, to say nothing of other reasons, to stay on where I am. The weather
here has been exquisite. I was out walking yesterday, feeling it too warm—think of that, on the
20th of December!— At the same time we have had a few rather chilly days, & for two sundays I
have let Robert go alone to M’ Hanna’s church. Oh yes—the Swiss church is open as usual—
only the Italian services are no longer as they were. I am quite well—and if ever by the last
chance I happen to cough Robert “wonders” about it, .. so completely is the cough vanquished &
done with. Meanwhile he is tying me up & fattening me. So unhappy he was about me at Genoa
that my heart melted (& my obstinacy) and I vowed to him that I would sacrifice myself to the
cod liver oil when we got to Florence—not that I had the least notion of being able to keep it down. To my surprise, however, it agrees perfectly—I take two tablespoonfuls (in milk) twice a day, & am decidedly prospering—that is, I am “flesh & bone,” instead of “bone” simply, as at Genoa. The contours are filling up slowly—and the process being helped by a tumbler of asses’ milk every morning (how you will laugh at Robert & me!) it cannot fail, I should think, of proving effectual,—& I shall appear before you next year in magnificent proportions. Wilson swears that my cheeks are being puffed out—(Oh, I shall be after the image of the ‘west wind’ when I see you!) and Robert makes observations full of grave, satisfied experimental philosophy. Dr Harding says, “As to the chest, it can do no good to the chest, but the general health & substance it may & does assist”; .. & I really begin to think it does. But I never sacrificed my inclination so much to conjugal duty .. except once, when I put on a bustle.5

Arabel!—I should not be at all surprised if this oil would do you good!— I am sure you want to be made less thin—Consider it a little—will you?

Mv & Mr® Twistleton6 have called on us .. they are going to Rome soon, so we shall not see much of them. He is the brother of Lord Say & Seele, .. fond of Greek literature—& she is an American & pretty. She called on me in London she said .. but I did’nt remember the name in the least. I like her— Then two families of ‘Wills Sandfords’7 have come—one of the daughters a devoted reader of mine—she wrote me an anonymous letter before she left her card with letters of introduction!. They are very rich people & live chiefly in Paris– Mv Wills Sandford hates the French but can live no where else. Friends of Robin’s wife they are. Then Sir Henry Bulwer left cards on us .. & his two attachés, Mv Lytton (Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton’s son) & Mv Wolff (Wolff the missionary’s)8 have spent the evening here. Mv Lytton often comes in the evening & seems to have taken a fancy to us .. which is much reciprocated—he is really an interesting young man, full of intelligence, & affectionate we think. You will understand how sympathyistical he is with me when I tell you that he is considerably given to witch-craft & opinions thereto appertaining. Now listen, Arabel .. he had a letter the other day from his father—and the Rapping spirits are imported into England, & are just now at Knebworth.9 They were brought over by media. Sir Edward avows himself so entirely puzzled by them that his mind is oppressed—he would rather consider the subject no longer. Sir Henry Bulwer had communications with them in America10 & could explain them away by no means. They told him that he should hear of them again. A short time afterwards, while the attachés &c &c were at dinner in another town of the Union, a tremendous knock came upon the ceiling of the room. One thought struck everybody & they rushed up stairs. Sir Henry Bulwer had been too unwell to come down to dinner, & as he occupied the room immediately above the dining room of the Legation, it was imagined that he was taken suddenly ill, & had fallen or made a signal to them by the noise– They found him however on the sofa—he had not moved since they left him– But he added that he had been in a state of “extase,” and that voices which were not human voices had discoursed with him, though what had been said, he always refused, Mv Lytton told us, to report. Afterwards he remained depressed for days together. The manner in which the Americans talk of these things, would scarcely be credible Mv Lytton said besides, if you did not hear it yourself. There was an intelligent physician who had lately lost his son—“An immense comfort it was,” observed the father, “to
have Tom drop in of an evening for an hour or two! Very often he did it! And whenever any of
the friends he used to like to meet, were in the house, he” (the father) “always called him & he
came.”—!! M’Powers (of the Greek Slave) was here the other evening—& he too was talking of
the rapping spirits & avowing his belief in them. At first he was inclined to decide that there was
a trick in it—“but I consider,” said he, in his grave deliberate calculating manner, “that a secret
will always escape when more than fifteen persons are involved, while in this case fifteen thousand
persons are involved: I am convinced, therefore, of the truth of the visitations.”

A short time since, Ma’^e Biondi asked us if we should like to see her daughter magnetised.
Yes, of course. So she came one morning .. the daughter did .. with her father, and the magnetiser
an enormous Bolognese man, who spate every now & then on the carpet. She was placed in an
armchair & put to sleep, & she talked & answered questions— Now always I try to speak the truth
in these things— I admit to you that it was an absolute failure. Robert says, “a humbug”—but I
am inclined to think that really she was asleep, although in the matter of clairvoyance she saw no
more than the blind—out of fifty answers, forty nine were as wrong as possible. And here, again,
is the curious thing—— She was placed in the chair as I said, & we drew our chairs round to see
closely & well. Well! he had not made more than four or five passes, .. when I felt my blood run
cold & hot, my eyes shut against my will, & my whole body drawn forwards in an irresistible
way .. I should have fallen, if I hadn’t caught Robert— I lost consciousness for a moment—and
the Bolognese demagnatised me— Robert insists on it that it was a common fainting-fit .. but I
don’t believe a word of it— Why should I have fainted without rhyme or reason, when I was quite
well? Oh no—it was magnetic influence certainly. The Bolognese wanted very much to seize
[sic] on me as a patient—there appeared a wonderful adaptability about me—it was promising ..
was’nt it, Arabel? .. but I persisted in my refusals—and kept quite at the other end of the room
while he followed up the process on the Signorina Biondi—

My dearest Arabel I receive your letter. How happy that it did’nt cross mine. Now you are a
“dood dood Alibel” & I recall my reproaches. Still, .. & in spite of dearest George’s kindness
about the homœopathic check &c .. do you know I opened my eyes in horror at your sitting
down quietly to doctor yourself instead of recurring to the advice you ought to have— .. & I am
not .. there’s the truth .. quite content about you—no indeed. You would’nt, you say, commit
imprudences & trust yourself too far— I hope you would’nt—but I know you ought to have advice
at this moment & you are not having it— “Better in some respects”— It is’nt satisfactory: I am not
contented. Think of me, Arabel, & act as if you loved me.

As to the oil, I began with a teaspoonful twice a day; & now I take a tablespoonful twice a
day. The English chemist’¹¹ told Robert we should stop there. It does good by preventing the
wasting which goes with affections of the chest, but there cant be any specific effect on des[sic]cated
organs of course—& it is equally good in other complaints where emaciation is a symptom— I
have no sickness .. it seems to agree with me entirely, therefore it must do good, I imagine.

I am glad Robin’s wife likes me, for I like her & I dont want my liking to be thrown away.
Robin wrote me a note the other day to intimate that she had’nt courage to call me ‘Ba’ till I bade
her do it—& I am to call her Kate, & we are to be all cousins & friends accordingly.
Letter 93  21 December 1852

You don't mention Trippy—give her my warmest love & say that I shall write, & that Peninni & I kiss her over the Alps—so would Robert if he dared. Has she found another house? and where?

So sorry I am that little Altham should have been unwell again—these feverish attacks must frighten Henrietta, I should think, though they mean no more than the cutting of a tooth. I wish all the teeth were through, & they soon will be. Prick Henrietta into writing to me—& write yourself, Arabel—write, write—ruin me in writing—I want to be ruined—but mind, if ever you pay the postage again, we shall pay ours, & nothing will be gained either way—As to the books .. here is the history of them. Lady Elgin wanted a copy of Keats with the larger type, & she had been so very attentive to us, that Robert meant to give it to her, ordering it from Moxon—¹² I suppose Moxon, on the other hand, meant to be liberal to us, by the redundant glory of the binding you describe—If he sends us in a bill for it, we shall be rather startled. The Tennyson Ode is a gift from him to us.¹³ Now, will you send the Keats to aunt Jane's care in Paris by any sufficient opportunity? Direct to "the Countess of Elgin".

Do you hear any new 'critical facts' about the new Wilton baby?¹⁴ I like to hear the particulars about Henrietta's babies. Wilson is delighted about her sister's—¹⁵ The faithless lover is neither heard of nor seen. Peninni goes out as usual now, &, though pale, he looks well & is in great spirits & appetite. I assure you he has been called "the prettiest child in Florence"—the Florentines have done him great honor—and Madame Biondi told me that the Grand Duchess had talked much of him & enquired if he walked usually in Boboli gardens .. the gardens attached to the palace. Not that we care for Grand Duchesses—& such grand-duchesses!—oh no. Indeed Peninni ignores the whole of the royalty here, & gets quite angry when you try to explain to him that these soldiers & trumpeters don't belong to Napoleon. By the way, I was observing wisely, about one of his frocks the other day, that it was just as beautiful as the robes Napoleon w⁴ d be crowned in. Suddenly he exclaimed, "I¹⁶ lite to have a twown. Papa get Peninni a twown Mama?" "Why," said I, "you see, if you have a crown you must have soldiers & horses & a city—& all that w⁴ d be difficult[.]"

Miss Agassiz did not travel with us.¹⁷ I thought I told you that I had a note from her at Paris to intimate her inability to keep up with us as to time. We mean certainly to go to Rome—& to Naples: and M: Kenyon rather wished us to stay three or four months at Florence—it will please him rather than the contrary. Now let me tell you about M: Browning. The plaintiff went to the Bank herself, and, soon after, sent her attorneys to have audience with the governor, reproaching him for having assisted in an evasion of the law. He answered that he had nothing whatever to do with any matters of the sort, .. the person in question was absent on sufficient grounds & by leave. They obtained nothing. Also, directions have been given that if the lady should come again, the shortest answers should be returned. Nothing can be clearer than the complete understanding of the case, & sympathy with the victim in that quarter. Poor Sarianna seems to torment herself still with various impossible terrors, & I very much fear, Paris can scarcely seem much better to her than a penal settlement, with her inconsoleable way of looking at things. As to her father he takes matters more easily—he goes to draw at the Louvre, & has contemplative walks in the Bois de Boulogne, & enjoys himself, I dare say. Perhaps what vexes him most in the world just now is Peninni's being away from him, Peninni being a crowned idol. Robert gives you his 'dear love,'
he says, & thanks you for your answer to the enquiries about the address. Sarianna’s few friends
know it—Never answer such questions.

I was going to tell you about M. Centofanti. Honest enough about the house, I believe he
was—but he has done a much worse thing than a common breach of confidence can be accounted.
Think of his having informed against the Madiai18... in fact, of his having been the first to inform
against them, .. & on the noble ground of their being rival lodginghouse keepers to himself.!!—
Of course we shall have nothing more to do with him; & I understand he is shunned on all sides
.. by the catholics, observe; “fare la spia”19 being considered an excess of dishonor here as
elsewhere. It seems to me probable that the Madiai will be let out of prison .. somebody told me
the other day that they certainly would, before the expiration of two months. In the meanwhile
they are not in dungeons—dont let us exaggerate matters. They occupy rooms not uncomfortable,
& receive necessary attentions—which does not prevent their suffering from grief & nervous
irritation. An English lady is allowed to see Mânee Madiai three times a month,—they dont allow
her to have a protestant bible, and will admit of scarcely any protestant religious books .. I think
none. It is an iniquitous affair at the best.

What news of Mr Orme?

I shall think of you all & love you on the coming days– Tell me of Mr Hunter. I do hope he
has given up that mad Australia scheme.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Cf. the anonymous nursery rhyme, “The North Wind Doth Blow,” lines 3–8: “... And what will poor
robin do then? / Poor thing! / He’ll sit in a barn, / To keep himself warm, / And hide his head under his wing. / Poor thing!”
2. A daguerreotype dating from this period was presented to their brother Alfred, and is now at Eton.
3. In a letter to Henrietta dated [25 September 1852], EBB wrote: “‘Mitaine,’ you comprehend, is a French
hobgoblin, into the mystery of which he was instructed by Desirée” (Transcript in editor’s file). “Minny’s home”
was 50 Wimpole Street, and as EBB had further explained to Henrietta, Pen’s fear was an extension of EBB’s
anxiety that she might meet her father when visiting Arabella at 50 Wimpole Street. “Mitaine,” an abbreviation of “croquemitaine,” was a character in medieval legend, and for her bravery in searching out Fear Fortress
(which existed only in the imagination of the fearful), Charlemagne made her Roland’s squire.
4. “It seems to me and it doesn’t seem to me.”
5. See letter 57, note 21.
6. Edward Turner Boyd Twisleton (1809–74) had married Ellen Dwight (1828–62), a Bostonian, on 19
May 1852, and they were travelling in Italy. His brother was Frederick Benjamin Twisleton Wykeham-Fiennes
(1799–1887), 16th Baron Saye and Sele.
7. William Robert Wills-Sandford (d. 1859) and three of his four daughters—Jane Catherine, Ellen Marie
Sarah, and Caroline Julia—made up one family. The second was his son, William (1811–82), with his wife
Julia (née Foster, 18217–83)), whom he had married in 1849, and their two children, Henry (1850–72) and
Florence Mary (b. 18527). Wills-Sandford’s eldest daughter, Jane, was the “devoted reader.”
8. Henry Drummond Charles Wolff (1830–1908) was the only son of Joseph Wolff (1795–1862), a Jewish
convert to Christianity known for his missionary travels to Bokhara, and later a founder of the Irvingite church
with Henry Drummond, for whom his son was named. The younger Wolff had been attached to the legation at
Florence in June 1852 and returned to the foreign office the following year. William Henry Lytton Earle Bulwer
Letter 93

21 December 1852

(1801–72), Baron Dalling and Bulwer, was the uncle of Edward Robert Lytton (see letter 48, note 20), and was the minister for the British legation at Florence.

9. I have been unable to trace the letter from Lytton’s father.

10. Bulwer had served as ambassador at Washington from 1849 to 1852.

11. Henry Roberts; see letter 46, note 8.


13. This copy of Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington (London: Edward Moxon, 1852) has not survived. Issued on 18 November, the day of Wellington’s funeral, it was Tennyson’s first publication as poet laureate. The pamphlet’s unsuccessful reception led Tennyson to revise it. The revision was published in February 1853, and EBB felt it contained “wonderful strokes of improvement” (EBB-MRM, III, 382).

Letter 94

[Florence]


Henrietta will let me write to you, my darling Arabel, this time—though I cant bear she should say that I send her few letters—² I was just going to write to her when your letter came, & I must write to you, as she knows as well as I, now—who can help it. Oh, I do wish I could send ministering angels to you, Arabel, to make a smooth, soft path for your feet— As it is, I only send thoughts .. loving ones.

We are all well .. and, as Penini dictated for your letter .. (I mean the letter he wrote) .. which there was no room for with his print-hand .. “Mama velly fat, and Penini velly large.”³ The cod’s liver oil certainly does me good & has obliterated certain of the more prominent bones, filling up “the interstices between the intersections”⁴ to admiration, that is, to Robert’s. I never miss taking it—two large table spoonfuls .. Robert never forgets the due administration—and I take besides a tumbler of asses milk which helps the work I dare say. Penini is full of compassion for me about the oil, & said one night to Wilson as he was going to bed, .. “I not lite Mama tite any more medecine– Mama too dood!”. Happily he does’nt want medecine. Never in his life has he had such an appetite as now. Wilson & I look on astounded. And he grows fat & looks rosy, .. his very hair glittering more & hanging down in longer & thicker ringlets—they touch the top of his frock behind, & draw everybody’s attention. He certainly is the incarnation of an ideal child,
& I could’nt if I were to sit down & fancy one, make a bit of improvement in his grace & sweetness & goodness. I said to him as he sate on my knee some days ago, “What should I do without you, my darling.” “Oh no,” he answered, .. “I wont be lost, Mama! I not lite be tilled. I stay with Mama, and laugh & love, and tate tare of Mama.” Then very seriously, after a pause .. “Mama, I not lite fly away into gentle Jesus’s home now.” “Why?” said I, thrilled through at the thought. “Becase I afwaid Dod pull me all to pieces to mate me over again, and I sint I tuite enough made”. There’s an idea for a child’s head.

Arabel, I had a letter from M” Jameson two days ago, & she says that poor Gerardine has lost her child .. the only one. Is it not sad? She & M” Macpherson both feel it bitterly. — Today I had a letter from Miss Blagden, dated from Civita Vecchia—on the verge of Rome. After all, Miss Agassiz is left behind,—though everything was packed .. intentions & all. Isabella Blagden paid a visit to some friends & Folkestone, & Charlotte was to follow her on a fixed day to Paris, when suddenly arrived, instead of her, two lines .. ‘Dont wait—I cant come.’ Miss Blagden is musing still over the mystery of it. The young invalid is with her. Tell me if I told you of the proposition made to M” Jago by the Indian father? No, I think I did’nt. M” Jago was to receive two hundred & fifty pounds a year during four years, & if, at the end of that period, the cure was not perfect, he was to pay back the sum of a thousand pounds. A reasonable proposition certainly! I told you how we knew here M” Lytton, Sir Edward Lytton’s son, & how he had had letters from his father to announce the migration into England of the American rapping spirits—& how Sir Edward was astounded & perplexed by them down at Knebworth, & could find no solution, .. Well—Isabella Blagden says in her letter that she has had a visit from Sir Edward & that he had narrated to her most interesting & astonishing things on this subject, which she is duly to communicate to me when we meet at Rome— Among other wonders, he specified the moving of a table at his request. But really I have heard so much lately about the moving of tables, that it seems to me less wonderful than you might think— M” Powers is engaged on some experimental philosophy on the subject even now— As to the spirits, I understand you have had a London pretended manifestation shown up by Dickens. Very well—show up, show up. Let us see the bottom, where there is a bottom. Meanwhile the thing is spreading in America to a degree which w’d be scarcely credible to you, as we hear from every American “within hail” of us; and “The wonder is,” I heard an American say, “that nobody now in America thinks it a wonder. Families in all classes of society sit at nights, as a matter of course, & communicate with spirits .. and life goes on just as if nothing peculiar happened”. Now I am going to tell you a curious history. Do you remember in the memoirs of Ma” Ossoli, the name of Clarke occurring as the name of her friends—& of a beautiful child, called Herman Clarke, dying in America to her great distress, while she was in Italy? Well— M” & M” Clarke left Boston last October, for the purpose of trying a Rome climate on account of M” Clarke’s failing health. They brought letters of introduction to us, & we received them here one evening on their way to Rome. He is a cultivated man, & she has one of the sweetest, serenest countenances I ever looked at. There was the usual talk about Italy & literature & climate & cod’s liver oil & various other interesting subjects,—& then she said “I must show you my children, M” Browning, though I left them in America—here are their pictures”—pulling out a miniature & a Daguer[r]eotype. Robert & I were fixed by the miniature—
“Oh how lovely,” we both cried. “That,” said she softly, “is my eldest boy Herman when he was five years old. We lost him when he was eight. If he had lived he would have been twelve years old now.” Robert shrank a little from looking at it. ‘It reminded him of Penini,’ he told me in a whisper, & there was something in the division of the hair, & the falling of the ringlets down the neck which was certainly like Penini, though the features taken one by one were much better than Penini’s, much more regularly beautiful. “He was beautiful,” said the father, “& how his face used to light up when he saw us!” I shut up the portraits gently, & changed the subject which seemed perilously moving—and we had tea & talked about Emerson’s poetry & other people’s poetry. At last, said I lightly, as we closed round the fire, “Pray can you tell me the last news of the Rapping spirits?” “The last news would be hard to get,” said Mr Clarke, “for the manifestations are spreading like fire—scarcely a village without a manifestation, throughout the States.” He spoke about them a good deal but very guardedly, not pretending to come to fixed conclusions, but rejecting the idea of systematic imposture as absolutely untenable. Then as we warmed & grew more intimate, “Now, I will tell you,” said he, “what happened to myself—It is a circumstance which deeply impressed me—and before it happened, I was an unbeliever altogether in the manifestations. One evening I was on a journey homewards from Lake Michigan where I had gone upon business. A violent storm came on, the horses of the public vehicle in which I travelled grew restive, & at length I resolved on staying half way. So I went into a small wayside inn, & sate down. After a few minutes, I observed four or five men gathered round a table in a corner of the room, & presently I was induced to draw nearer to them & see what they were about. One of them was writing in a very peculiar way—his arm seemed convulsed & the pen looked as if it were moving itself. What is this?, said I to another man who stood by resting his hand on the table. I am a medium, he answered, & the man who writes, is receiving a spiritual communication. I watched the process a little, & then I asked if I might hold the pen myself, which was acceded to directly. Then I thought in my heart of my child Herman, & wished, if it were possible & lawful, to have a sign concerning him. I was desired to hold the pen in my hand quite loosely, & to make no sort of movement myself only to obey the impulse given—In a minute, the pen moved—There was a C turned the wrong way, then corrected into C . . then LARKE . . The next word was ‘Herman.’ The medium asked if I knew the name, &, on my assent, he proposed that we should go into a private room, as plainly I should have a communication. This time ‘Herman Clarke’ was written at once—The next words were . . Love to Mama—Love to Lillah—(his sister). Love to . . (I forget, Arabel, the name of the little brother.)—Love to Lizzy—And while I was wondering “silently” continued Mr Clarke, “why he should designate his aunt Lizzy as only Lizzy, . . the pen went on to write “Storer”, . . Lizzy Storer being his favorite cousin. The effect on me was profound. On my return home I told everything to my wife, & she was satisfied that our child had communicated with us. So was I myself on the whole—and yet,” he added musingly, “there were other things written after the words I have repeated, which did not appear to me relevant [sic].”

Arabel, you can’t think what it was to hear a man, a father, with honest eyes filled with tears, (while the mother’s smile was still more pathetic) tell a story of this kind. Both Robert & I were moved. For my part, I confess it was all I could do to help breaking into tears myself.— After a
pause, "Might I ask," said Robert at last, "if the part which appeared to you irrelevant was anything very peculiar?" (I was so glad he asked, for I did not dare.) Mr. Clarke stopped for a moment, & then answered with evident reluctance— "Well—I will tell you exactly what was written. I am a unitarian minister, but I have always honored, & taught my children to honour, the name of Jesus Christ. The words were, Christ not a mere man. Christ not a mere man— several times repeated. Now it did not seem to me that I deserved the apparent reproof of my child. I do not hold that Christ was a mere man, because I hold that he had the gift of the spirit beyond measure"— "You hold," said Robert, "however, that he was a mere man, apart from that—["] "Yes," admitted he slowly—

Was not that striking? "If they believe not Moses & the prophets, neither will they believe though one should rise from the dead." This man was deeply & obviously persuaded that he had had to do with the very spirit of his child & yet the only message delivered to him, he would not understand, & he put away from him as irrelevant. It is curious as a piece of mental philosophy, think of the manifestation what you please. Mr. Powers says— "Ah .. but the truth will burn itself into his heart. He wont die a unitarian, be sure." Perhaps not.

Now I tell you all this, but you must'nt let names be sounded about, because it would be a breach of confidence on my part. Only I really could'nt help telling you. We had the visit about a fortnight since. I dare say you will set it down as a pretty ghost-story, and there an end—but if you had heard him, Arabel!

Another fragment of news from America is very sad. Do you remember Mr. Greenhough, when we were in Devonshire street last year— He has been insane, & is since dead of brain fever. It is said that the change to America, the cutting air & exciting society overwhelmed the nervous system. How happy that his poor wife went with him, which she did against his expressed wish. She would have suffered still more if the separation had taken place.

Did I tell you of our making Mr. Tennyson's acquaintance, the poet's brother? Robert likes him much—and I too. He is refined & sensitive & very cultivated .. reserved & heavy .. simple & upright .. only not amusing by any means. He comes here & sits till twelve o'clock— Mr. Stuart sits till past twelve. Between them they would wear me threadbare if they came here very often. But I like them; & I like Mr. Powers best of all. Mr. Powers & I sympathize about angels & spirits— He's a Swedenborgian too, Arabel!—think of that! Such great, black, steady-burning eyes, the man has! visionary eyes—yet a cautious, reasoning man, rather calculating than otherwise! It's a curious combination.

Arabel—while I think of it—where's Mr. Jameson's "Cleveland," the book I left with you to be sent to her. She says to me, "Where's Cleveland"— & I echo 'where'? The Hedleys, instead of going to Rome, have taken another house, & are likely to stay on for three months longer. Say that Florence is not fascinating! — Poor Mr. Cust, you see, turned out of office! She loses ever so many hundreds & can scarcely afford it, .. & the new aid dê campship cant make it up to her.

How many people do you think, were at Mr. Hanna's church last sunday?— 'Four'— & how many today, when I am writing? Twelve. Robert goes regularly & counts the money, .. but the congregation does not grow. I cant go just now on account of the wet—not even I. But Mr. Hanna
is not dispirited. The Madiai still live, & will come out of prison soon, I do hope, although promises & prophecies are alike unreliable in this poor Tuscany.

Let me tell you now about the “calamitous,” as Robert calls it, Browning business. A letter was sent to us from Sarianna a few days since, received from the lawyers of the ‘plaintiff’... who have “the pleasing duty to be the medium of conveying” to M! Browning’s lawyers—what, do you suppose? Why, that if he will pay the costs (some three hundred pounds) he need’nt pay a farthing of the damages!— As to his “expatriation,” it is “quite unnecessary.” Let him return home at once, & he shall be “in no degree molested.” Very well. But we shall not pay even the costs. It is too flagrant a case of extortion; & Robert wouldn’t, he declares, if he had the money in his hand, though probably I should be inclined myself to pay & have done with it. Of course the meaning of all this conciliation is that they are in a fright about their costs. They will “outlaw,” at the worst, & we must put up with it: & Our friend M! Corkran in Paris will take care (as he did most kindly of his own impulse, in the case of the trial) to keep the outlawry out of Galignani, no other newspaper being much read on the continent by the English. It has been intimated by the Bank, on the other hand, that if the resignation is sent in, two thirds of the income will be accorded—so that there will be sufficient funds, however limited. For thirty pounds a year the Brownings can have an excellent unfurnished apartment in Paris, even in the dearer situations, as Sarianna has ascertained for herself, and furniture is very cheap too. Oh, they will be able to live perfectly. What I regret most is the melancholy view she takes of it, the penal association which comes with Paris. As to him, he will be happy enough there or anywhere. Having been as light-headed as a child, he will be as light-hearted. So much the better, I think. Meanwhile none of the gods descend to cut the knot—not even a Saunders, Arabel!

We shall go to Rome in March & then to Naples. Penini feels his gipsy blood beat in him—he is very anxious to go to Rome—“I must go to Brome. I tuite tired of Florence.” Yet he likes & enjoys Florence extremely, & talks learnedly of different parts of it by name—but he thinks we have been here a long time & that it’s the hour for moving again. At Christmas Robert & I went out to the best toyshop in Florence, & there we bought an immense horse for him, bridled & saddled, a German horse, for which we gave five shillings & sixpence, English. There has been a great fuss ever since about “mine horse.” That was our only Christmas pastime I think, so that we shrink from any comparison with Henrietta’s festivities, (tell dearest Henrietta)—even the plum pudding was a failure, Vincenzio being by no means an adept like Alessandro... & the famous English compound when brought to table, proving to be one half plums & the other half bullets. Also, he mistook the traditions, & gave us instead of a turkey, ducks!—alas!—We had the turkey the next day by way of correcting the mistake. On new year’s day, we had another plum pudding (only a quarter, bullets, this time) and we invited little Alice Tassinari to spend the day with Penini, so that the two children dined with us, & he was in his glory, giving himself tremendous airs & showing off on all sides of his nature before Alice whom he is very fond of. She is a year older than he, & being a gigantic child of her age, the very largest child I ever remember to have seen, is taller by head & shoulders of course, but not comparable to Wiedeman, I must add, for either grace or vivacity. You should have heard him at dinner ‘making conversation’ for Alice! She has an English mother you know, & since she went to England a year ago, she
speaks English perfectly. I was asking her how she liked England. "Very much indeed," said she. But . . . interposed Penini "Londra velly told, (cold) and velly dirty fleets—(streets) No sun! I stay in mine dirty home all day, waiting for sun. Sun tome out a little bit and den I go out. Velly told, I sint, Londra is. You sint, Alice?" with such airs of the head & such affected inflexions of the voice that it was impossible not to laugh. He has'nt the least remainder of shyness now, and whoever happens to come, he makes his way into the drawing room & helps to entertain the guest—but he was'nt shy when you saw him I remember. Since the day he had Alice to dinner, he scarcely ever omits to pray for her—we are going to have her again, because it is so great a pleasure to our darling. He caught sight of her in a carriage in the Cascine the other day, & Wilson says his cheeks grew scarlet with joy. — Oh Arabel, I am suffering sharp pangs of jealousy just now. I used decidedly to be the ascendant power with Wiedeman—nothing could be done without ‘Mama’, . . . and here is that traitor Robert who has usurped everything.22 "Papa’[’] is admitted even to sit in his room & "sing," when Wilson is in my room helping me to undress, . . . "Papa" has all the best drawings . . . he must sit close to "Papa" at breakfast . . . (he has a second breakfast with us always) & though he “sints" that Mama draws “pretty well,” it is in a very inferior style to "Papa's." Certainly Robert pays him unlimited attention just now—he doats upon the child . . . & who can wonder? Then as Penini is quite supernaturally good, the spoiling goes on with as little remorse of conscience on the other side of the house as on mine. Still, he has strong fits of love for me . . . "Dear Ba . . . poor dood Ba . . . bless Ba", with heaps of kisses between. Such a sentimental child it is! Wilson & he had a quarrel the other day, . . . he had pulled off her cap in a romping fit, & she was displeased. "You tiss me, Lily?" "No," said she—she “would'nt kiss naughty boys". He went away in a melancholy mood and sate down by the fire, leaning his head on a chair. After some minutes' silence . . . “I velly, velly solly! I not do so no more. You tiss me now, Lily?” — The only hour of temptation for Penini seems to be four o'clock in the morning, when he wakes up very hungry and wants to have some bread— which Wilson properly refuses, & then there is sometimes rebellion, & he calls her a "velly naughty boy," & sometimes (such things have been, though seldom) sometimes even cries. Then comes the usual, . . . “you tiss me, Lily?” and once or twice she has been hardhearted enough to say 'no'. "Den, tiss dat" . . . putting his hand resignedly upon her mouth. Wilson says herself it is very happy he should be good naturally, for that he is an irresistible child, & nobody in the world could help spoiling him. It seems as if he could'nt breathe out of the atmosphere of Love. The avenging powers just now with him are not the mitaines23 . . . after calculating that there was room in the great drawingroom chimney for three mitaines, . . . he ceased paying much attention to the subject—but there is a Judge who lives in this house . . . think of that!24 A judge who sends people to prison! You know the apartment on this floor consists of seventeen rooms, & we have scarcely half, . . . the communicating door being plastered up. This door is in Penini's room, & of course you hear through it from the Judge's dressing room . . . & sometimes he raps like a rapping spirit to Penini's great terror. No—the Parisian mitaine & the London old clothes man was nothing to the Judge. Penini came to me the other day to beg me to speak to "Papa" and get this judge sent out of the house, 'betause' he was "daegous," (dangerous) . . . Penini having a wholesome fear of prisons in general, & in particular of the Florence Bargello25 which often he had passed & peered into. He
told me once that he saw some of the “naughty peoples waiting for the lions to eat them” . . . which I couldn’t make out the meaning of till the light flashed on me that he was confounding the history of Daniel in the lions den26 (which Robert told him in Paris) with modern usages, & understood that to be eaten up by lions was a common part of prison discipline now a days.

He has been twice to the galleries lately, and “plompity of gentle Jesuses”27 (a quantity) he saw there, he said. Oh let me tell you— There is a shrine in a wall which he passes in his walks. The other day it was shut up, when, to Wilson’s horror, he cried out in the street at the top of his voice, “Gentle Jesus, Gentle Jesus—”! “Oh hush” said she—for the people turned round to look. “I want to see it open, Lily” . . he persisted . . . “Gentle Jesus”!!—

Well—this is a full & true history of Penini, & now you have enough of it surely. You remember the beautiful blue pelisse dear George gave him last winter, & how because it was too small for a pelisse this year we had turned it into a frock. The material was a good as new,—therefore I thought I would be siezed [sic] by a fit of industry & embroider it with black braid in the manner of your green merino. I paid one shilling & ten pence for the drawing of the pattern, . . a very elaborate one . . and have actually finished my work . . so that now he has two merinos to wear in turn. He has really an overflow of frocks just now, & if they had’nt been nearly all gifts we should stand convicted of extravagance.

Talking of extravagance Henrietta wanted to know what our house-expenses are, & though I shall write to her soon, the answer may as well go to her through you. We have a servant less since we were last in Florence, & poor Alessandro no longer cheats us, and yet we scarcely live more cheaply. How it is I cant fancy. Certainly Penini counts now as a person—he eats more than I do. Still, the cheapness of everything, article by article, w’d lead you to expect a general saving which we dont make. Vincenzio has meat three times a day . . & partakes a little with the porter I do not doubt. Well— About two pounds & six shillings a week cover everything, eating & wine, and oil for three lamps, & spermeceti [sic] candles, and fuel for the kitchen, and washing—Take away the washing, & we lived very nearly as cheaply in Paris . . before Desiree began to cheat— About two pounds covered everything in Paris . . except the washing, & the wine, says Robert. We ought to live in Paris for two pounds, & here for less . . M!” Tennyson told Robert that one pound & ten shillings should be enough for us. She herself with four children28 & two men servants besides women servants, pays two pounds & six shillings. So that we fail somehow—that is I fail—. I suppose . . that is, I suppose I ought to know how to succeed & I have’nt a notion. Vincenzio is honest, Robert thinks. Come si fa?29 as the Italians say when there’s no use saying anything. Here’s a place where you have a turkey ‘stuffed’ for two shillings & two pence—other poultry proportionably cheap! We live upon poultry. We live comfortably in all ways—use a quantity of milk & cream & butter . . (which by the bye are not as cheap as in Paris) have eggs & cold meat for breakfast . . have nothing in fact scantily or uncomfortably. What does Henrietta think?— She & Surtees are far better managers than we are, I humbly recognize, &, with our advantages, would live upon just nothing.

Such a pleasant, pleasant letter I had from her. It lighted up the room for days after— I like to think of her in a home of her own, with a household, because I know she likes & enjoys all the
details of the thing .. to say nothing of the babies up stairs. So Altham's hair has begun to curl
after all- I wish it good fortune at every turn! It will be a decided piece of prettiness.

I send this packet by the embassy bag.\textsuperscript{30} Tell me how it is delivered to you, & what number
of pence you have to pay. It is postage enough for you to have all the trouble of sending notes
here & there. Is Penini improved in his drawings, do you think? He produces them at the farthest
end of the room, nobody suggesting—and even his letters are of his own composition & writing
entirely- I do nothing except the spelling, I assure you solemnly. The worst of it is that his invention
is so very copious that it's impossible to write it all down. He looks back with regret on the
"large teas" he used to have with Alibel & Trippy. Minny's parrot was dead before we left England.
"I memember," said he, "after dinner in Minny's home, I loot ... No pretty Polly—" clasping his
hands pathetically! Only a cage!!" (cage.) Another clasp of the hands.

Bummy will stay all the winter in the north I dare say. When do you put off mourning,
Arabel?\textsuperscript{31} Directly, I should think.

Tell me if Papa has had his cough this winter. You never mention him as to his being well.
Tell me if George is at home or not. Tell me everything of everybody. Miss Heaton wrote me an
account of her visit to M' Hunter.\textsuperscript{32} Put Australia out of Mary's head,\textsuperscript{33} because except for workers
with their hands, it is nought. A cook has a larger income than a governess, as I was observing
the other day. She had better stay in England & teach for twenty pounds a year, .. & I do hope
she may attain to something better there. I thought I had got something for her in Paris, but it
would not do—we must wait. Dearest darling Arabel, do you ever go to the Strattens? remember
us affectionately to them all. How is Fanny? How does the Refuge get on? Are you satisfied?
Tell me more of yourself than you do usually. I think of you—oh how very much! I love you, &
I pray God for you, only not as much as I love you. May He love you .. & He does .. more
effectively.

Tell me—are you very thin? Tell me the truth about your health I beseech you for pity's
sake.

Robert & I are doing a little writing,\textsuperscript{34} & passing a happy tranquil time. If it were not for M'
Kenyon I should not perhaps desire to go to Rome .. oh yes, I should! I must see Rome & Naples.
Rome is very full, I hear— Fanny Kemble is to be there this month, & Miss Cushman is there,\textsuperscript{35} &
a world of Americans— Only we shall keep apart, & among the ruins.

Tell me the last news of M' Orme. I really want to know something of her.

God bless you all! Shower down loves on all sides to dearest George, Henry, & the rest.
What of Storm? Give my best love when you write, to Storm. How is dear Minny? has Christmas
tired her out as usual? Oh I do hope she has been prudent .. for a wonder. My kind love to her.

And to you, dearest, dearest Arabel, what except my whole self? .. being your own Ba.

I shall never write you a longer letter than this—if so long! 14 pages.

On new year’s day an anonymous bouquet came addressed to the "Olive-eyed prophet."\textsuperscript{36}
The most splendid roses, not monthly roses indeed! Miss Sandford sent it we found.

Address: Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London. [Franked in lower left corner by H. Drummond Wolff.]
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.
The following items have been preserved with this letter: a) sketch by Pen in pencil picturing several buildings surmounted by large crosses; trees in foreground; at left the sea, with two ships, and a balloon descending; b) sketch by Pen in pencil showing two soldiers, one with a busby, and carrying a flag; the other wearing a shako, and carrying a sword; c) a drawing in pencil of a steamer with a flag, above which Pen has written: "Dear Alibel, I love you and Longe and Minny and Edwin with the Pencils: and I hope you all pretty well. / I sure Alibel be pleased with this Letter from Peninia"; d) a copy, in the hand of Arabella, of a passage from EBB's letter to Henrietta, 27 January [1853], in which EBB quotes Pen: "Well, I been to Church-I said my prayers. Quantity of lights & flowers. This for gentle Jesus. Boys & girls & men sing very pretty music. Then a monk go up stairs, & tell the people to say their prayers & hear what God says." A Capital account, I think, of service & sermon—Yesterday, I said, as I had him in my arms "God bless my child" on w, he repeated squeezing me fervidly with his little hands "God bless mine Ba."

1. The envelope indicates this letter was sent by diplomatic pouch. It arrived in London on 25 January 1853, the Tuesday of the following week.

2. Before Henrietta married, EBB's intention was to write to her sisters on an equal basis, although she almost always wrote more frequently to Arabella, as well as writing longer letters. However, after Henrietta's marriage, by her own admission (see the penultimate paragraph in letter 62), EBB wrote more frequently to Arabella.

3. See letter 89, in which EBB wrote out Pen's letter for him.

4. Cf. Samuel Johnson's definition of "network" in The Dictionary of the English Language (1755): "Anything reticulated or decussated at equal distances, with interstices between the intersections."

5. I have been unable to identify this child.

6. See note 17 in the preceding letter.
7. A reference to Louisa Emma Alexander (1838-58), second daughter of James Alexander and his wife Fanny (née Abbott) and granddaughter of Josias Du Pré Alexander. During the previous summer in London, Louisa had been placed in Isa’s care at Dr. Jago’s advice. In a letter to Isa Blagden a few weeks earlier (24 December [1852]), EBB called James Alexander’s proposal “most extravagant” (ms at Fitzwilliam).

8. The article, which concerned the exposing of an American medium named Maria Hayden (née Trenholm, 1823-84), appeared as “Rappers, or The Ghost of the Cock-Lane Ghost,” in the 20 November 1852 issue of Household Words. Although Dickens sent two individuals to the séance and each paid Mrs. Hayden, neither received any correct information, and Dickens himself did not attend the séance as was later claimed; see Household Words, 15 January 1853, 420, as well as letter 100, note 11. For a more complete account of Dickens and mesmerism, see N.C. Peyrouton, “Rapping the Rappers” in The Dickensian, 55, 1959, 19-30.

9. An old expression used by sailors when another ship was close-by.

10. In a letter to her mother from Italy, Margaret Fuller Ossoli wrote: “The three children I have seen who were the fairest in my eyes, and gave most promise of the future, were Waldo, Pickie, Hermann Clarke;—all nipped in the bud” (Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli, edited by Emerson, Channing, and Clarke, London: Richard Bentley, 1852, III, 223). James Freeman Clarke (1810-88), a Unitarian minister who married the Hawthornes in 1842, and his wife, Anna (née Hudekoper b. 1818), had three children living at this time, but their eldest child, a son named Herman (b. 15 October 1840), had died eight years earlier as EBB explains. Clarke recorded their visit to the Brownings in his diary entry for 30 December 1852: “Spent two evenings with Mr. and Mrs. Robert Browning” (James Freeman Clarke: Autobiography, Diary, and Correspondence, ed. Edward Everett Hale, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891, p. 195).

11. EBB has emphasised the name by printing it in large script.

12. Unitarian teaching rejects the divinity of Christ.

13. Cf. Luke 16:31: “And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”


15. Frederick Tennyson (1807-98), elder brother of Alfred, settled in Italy about 1839, and soon thereafter married Maria Giuliotti (d. 1884), the daughter of the chief magistrate of Siena. They lived in the Villa Torrigiani. On 24 February 1853, RB wrote to Joseph Milsand: “I have a new acquaintance here much to my taste—Tennyson’s eldest Brother, who has long been settled here: with many of his brother’s qualities—a very earnest, simple & truthful man, with many admirable talents and acquirements, the whole ‘sicklied o’er’ by an inordinate dose of our English disease—‘shyness.’ He sees next to no company, but comes here, and we walk together” (Transcript in editor’s file).

16. i.e., James Montgomery Stuart, as identified in letter 92, note 10.


19. Mrs. Cust was the widow of Sidney Streatfeild (see letter 74, note 23). After his death she married Henry Francis Cust, of the 8th Hussars and M.P. for Grantham. As EBB had explained to Julia Martin in a letter dated 16 June [1852], the then Mrs. Streatfeild’s “... betrothed is made first secretary to Lord Eglinton [Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1852], with nine hundred a year” (Transcript in editor’s file). Eglinton was replaced as Lord Lieutenant by Edward Granville Eliot, 3rd Earl of St. Germans. According to the Royal Kalendar, Cust was an aide-de-camp in Dublin Castle from 1852-54.

20. Only one announcement appeared in Galignani’s Messenger: the 5 July 1852 issue contained an extract from The Times in which Browning was misspelled “Brownrig.”

22. In a letter to Henrietta, dated 4 March [1853], EBB reported that she was “still rather jealous of Robert who is the favorite. When I want more kisses, I am sometimes told: ‘No—no more! all mine oller kisses are Papa’s. I tant dive them away—they are all marked with Papa’s name.’” (Huxley, p. 180). However, RB was soon replaced by Ferdinando as Pen’s favourite as EBB explained to Arabella in letter 103: “Penini takes violent passions of love, & just now scarcely anybody can contend with Ferdinando.”

23. See note 3 in the preceding letter.

24. Perhaps Sig. Ghell, a lawyer listed in the civil census for Palazzo Guidi at Easter 1854 (“Stato Anime,” San Felice Church, Florence, 1854, p. 164).

25. Now a museum of sculpture and medieval decorative arts, the Bargello was once the Palazzo del Podestà, or magistrate, and served as a prison as well. It is one of the principal buildings in Florence.


27. See letter 91, note 8.

28. Maria and Frederick Tennyson eventually had five children: Giulio; Emily (b. 1850); Matilda (b. 1851); Alfred (b. 1854); and based upon EBB’s remark in letter 102 (3rd paragraph), an unidentified child seems to have been born in 1852.

29. “What can we do?”

30. This letter was franked by Henry Drummond Wolff (1830–1908), an attaché in the British Legation. Preserved with this letter are four enclosures (see below), three of which probably accompanied it.

31. See letter 88, note 5.

32. Ellen Heaton (1816–94), a wealthy heiress from Leeds, whose sizeable fortune enabled her to travel and to collect art, first met EBB in 1846; she later became better acquainted with both Brownings in Italy, although she was too unrefined and “provincial” to succeed as an intimate friend. Largely based upon recommendations from Ruskin, she commissioned works by several Pre-Raphaelite artists, including D.G. Rossetti and Arthur Hughes. The subjects of two pictures by the latter are based on lines from EBB’s poems. They are entitled: “Aurora Leigh’s Dismissal of Romney” (also known as “The Tryst”) and “That was a Piedmontese! and this is the Court of the King.” Both these pictures are now in the Tate Gallery (London). Ellen Heaton was also responsible for commissioning a portrait of EBB by Field Talfourd in 1859 (see *Reconstruction*, F34), which is now in the National Portrait Gallery together with its pendant of RB, also by Talfourd.

33. There is no evidence that Mary Hunter ever went to Australia.

34. In February 1853 RB wrote to Joseph Milsand: “I am writing a sort of first step toward popularity—(for me)—‘Lyrics,’ with more music & painting than before, so as to get people to hear and see ... something to follow, if I can compass it!” (Transcript in editor’s file). These “lyrics” included “A Toccata of Galuppi’s” and “A Woman’s Last Word,” as evidenced by a heretofore unrecorded manuscript, “containing on one side the last few words ... of ‘A Toccata of Galuppi’s,’ the date [Florence] Jan. 13. ‘53,’ and the whole text ... of ‘A Woman’s Last Word,’ dated at the foot ‘Feb. 18’” (The Pencarrow Collection of Autographs, London: Sotheby’s, 1999, pp. 12–13). EBB refers to RB’s lyrics in the following letter to Arabella, and to her own writing, including corrections for the 3rd edition of her collected *Poems* (1850), which was published on 12 October 1853, as well as further work on *Aurora Leigh*.

35. Charlotte Cushman had gone to Rome with Matilda Hays the previous autumn and remained there until the summer of 1853; see letter 89, note 5.

36. These roses were the inspiration for RB’s poem “Women and Roses,” as he explained many years later: “one year in Florence I had been rather lazy; I resolved that I would write something every day. Well, the first day I wrote about some roses, suggested by a magnificent basket that some one had sent my wife” (Lilian Whiting, *The Brownings, Their Life and Art*, Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1911, p. 261).
Chapman wants to bring out a third edition of my poems directly, & I am deep in the corrections— As there is least to do to the second volume Robert has set me to that, and it is going off to England directly. The second edition is out. When the first volume is done with, I shall go back to my poem-novel which I am about now. It is a poem of the times & for the times, & I mean everything to be found in it. Written in blank verse— Robert's work is a collection of Lyrics in which he will assert himself as an original writer I dare say—there will be in them a good deal of Italian art .. pictures, music. Both he & I mean to make a success if we can. Revising my two thick volumes of poems, I observe, Arabel, .. I am impelled to observe, that the readers who have pretended to see in them the views of Swedenborg, are by no means so wrong. There is a strong leaning to the peculiarities of his spiritual philosophy everywhere, to a degree quite curious in a writer who was at that time ignorant of them specifically. This illustrates the sort of sympathy & attraction which his books find in me— I am far from accepting Swedenborg as an infallible teacher. But he has been deeply misrepresented—even by some of his admirers:— and, for the rest, that there is a depth of spiritual insight in the man, worthy of meditation & reverence, I do maintain. Robert & I have been reading in quite another direction lately, .. Heath on the apocalypse which is clever certainly, though I dont admire it as much as Robert does. It takes the dense material view of the personal reign at Jerusalem—rather like the Newman street churches, with a difference though! Robert & M! Tennyson were immensely struck with it—but for myself I look for another sort of solution to prophecy. That ever Israel will be restored as a temporal Kingdom, I do entirely doubt. I think the time is passed for Jew or Gentile. A type is not to be resumed after the fulfilment of that very type—and the Kingdom of Israel was the type (as all agree) of the Christian church: we do not go backwards. Yet I never would dispute on subjects of this kind, & it seems to me that the N.S. churches, right or wrong, give too much importance to their views. Will anyone who really loves Christ, not rejoice in whatever mode of manifestation may please Him? Therefore it is the love, & not the theory about the mode & time of coming, which is important, I think. We shall all "love His appearing"—shall we not? Yes, indeed. But I look to other modes, higher & more spiritual—not more unreal, mind! So it seems to me. As to dear Mary Hunter, I do not fear for her any evil influence— I have no sympathy (just as you have none) with the ecclesiastical opinions of the N.S. churches .. I am not drawn to them in the least on the points of dogma & discipline you mention. Still, I think I have more tenderness to them personally, .. I believe there is more light & good & Christliness in those churches than you are aware of— I think they are wide & liberal .. large hearted more than is customary among Christian denominations— Also (dont be angry, Arabel) I am by no means sure that they may not be in the reception of partial spiritual teaching, superhumanly given— I am not sure—having heard nothing myself I am not in a position to give an opinion .. but I think it very possible than [sic] in their assemblies or in any other earnest & faithful assembly, such communications may be permitted. Which, if it were so, would by no means persuade me of their infallibility as churches.
Now you may think that a contradiction—but I seem to see the case clearly. As to Mary, if she is but competent to the situation, she will like it & be the better for it I dare say. She is sure to meet with justice, truth, integrity, even kindness & affectionateness. Still it seems to me likely that she will not be influenced to their ways of thinking. M! Owen, with all his excellence, is too authoritative, & high priestly. I should prefer as a teacher (if I chose either, which is far from me) M! Carré of Paris. Oh—I know what they all think of the American spirits. But that seems to me a thing much taken for granted. There are good & evil perhaps—foolish & intelligent—a great mixture of kinds. You can scarcely go wrong when you don't think wrong or intend wrong in such a matter. To invoke spirits in the name of the Devil is one thing—but what God permits us to investigate, while we fear & love Him, can scarcely be more objectionable in psychology than in mineralogy. Isabella Blagden writes to me that Sir Lytton Bulwer told her he considered the kinds of spirit to be inferior for the most part—in fact, not much better, some of them, than tormenting fairies who could instruct us in nothing important. I am very curious about the facts, important or unimportant—and must get nearer to them somehow. I shall try every means—use every opportunity lawful, for I must satisfy myself one way or the other on the subject. Meanwhile I don't believe in fairies ("up to this time") but I will talk of something else lest you set me down as mad. No, I am not mad, most noble Festus, indeed.

Where are we thinking of going this summer? Guess. To Constantinople. The American minister there, recalled as far as Florence by the change of Presidency, but likely to return, has been urging us to pay him a visit there for a few weeks—he sees scarcely any but diplomatic society, & thinks we should like it—which certainly we should do. M! Marsh has an invalid wife, pretty & interesting, who is quite fanatical about my poetry—so they made their way to us, & have spent evening after evening with us,—she lying on the sofa, & he condescending from the heights of his ambassadorial dignity to Wilson's knead cakes. I hear that we have not disappointed them, which is highly satisfactory. She particularly desired to have a visit from Wiedeman, so I sent him one morning. He did not like going—but I persuaded him at last on the ground that he wouldn't be invited to Constantinople if he didn't show himself—yes, and he wasn't in the least shy.. on the contrary, said Wilson, "most amusing." They showed him some books of oriental engravings & he made various observations on them—"He had seen waterfalls," he said, "sometimes in the mountains"—& he had "seen camels in Paris, & a man with a black face leading them"— In fact he related various illustrative details of his travels, & made a deep impression, & was invited to Constantinople with a promise that he should have a boat all to himself everyday, and six men dressed in white with white turbans to row it—Which Penini is looking forward to with considerable complacency. Don't be too much afraid, Arabel! It takes money to get to Constantinople—Otherwise I am sure we should go—

I am very glad you have been reading some amusing books. I think I have been more grave than usual in respect to books. I have been going through an improving course of socialism, Proudhonism, & Louis Blanc-ism, which in conjunction with my other isms Arabel, will be effective. But I have read heaps of novels since I came to Florence, too. Did you consider 'Agatha's Husband' an improvement or a falling off from Miss Mulock's Head of the family &c? No woman, .. no man .. ever had such a triumph as M! Beecher Stowe—and I rejoice in it,—for
the good done will be great in many ways. M. Hanna is pleased because of its being a means of teaching scriptural Christianity here in Italy, where it is read everywhere by permission of the authorities. As to Mazzini he is not doing well. A deplorable catastrophe is the result of his proclamation, & no sort of good to anybody. A more unwise man has seldom been gifted before with so much energy & virtue. For Kossuth, I am on my guard against believing him, when he disowns the paper published under his name. Kossuth is not true, from all I hear of him. The Marsh’s [sic] who saw much of him at Constantinople, speak of him painfully. I never did trust much in that man. He seemed to me from the beginning to want truth.

What do I think of Napoleon’s marriage? Well—I like it. And I consider it highly characteristic. You will all think better of him one day. I have not modified my opinion. Penini takes quite a different view from yourself of the “unfortunate Eugenie.” He says, “I sint Napoleon’s wife muss lite it velly mush.” When he heard that Napoleon had a wife, at last, he clasped his hands & exclaimed—“oh, I so glad!” He had deeply sympathized in the disappointment about the Princess Wasa, particularly as “poor Napoleon” had bought her shoes! what an expense! He plays on the piano a loud martial piece of music, which he calls “Napoleon”— Then he says, “Now I play Napoleon’s wife” .. which he performs with the softest notes— What an idea for a child! Besides that, he has ‘prayer-music’. He has his own ideas, I assure you.

Robert observed the other day that God sent the rain to do good to the plants. “Yes,” Wiedeman said, “and gentle Jesus sends the wind to make the windmills turn round & make Penini some bread.” On which, I interrupted .. “Jesus is God, you know.” “Oh, les!” he cried eagerly .. “I tand, (understand) Mama! Gentle Jesus only a name!” There’s theology for you. Somebody asked him how old he was .. “I dont know, but I been a long time at Flolence.” If ever he goes into the churches, he kneels down in his old way— “Well! I been to lurch. I said mine players for Mama & Papa.” He dances quite curiously well with such steps & gestures! We were admiring him the other day, & observing one to another that nobody ever taught him such a thing.— “No,” said the child breaking in suddenly, “nomony! (nobody)— But I sint God helps me to do it.” Such a darling never was.

I am scarcely anxious about Surtees’s letter. Of course no notice will be taken. I should have said “dear Sir” if I had been Surtees—but all is of no use, & really it is difficult to decide which is the best kind of inutility. Sad at heart I am when I think of Papa! sad—sad. Tell me how he is now the cold has begun. It seems to be very severe with you. Arabel, as I am not in mourning for the Ad[ams]’s .. (poor Miss Ad[d]ams! I am sorry for her severe trial nevertheless) I am wearing your gown .. the thick one .. & it will please your dear goodness to know how exquisitely comfortable it is. I never liked a winter gown so much. I do hope you have one for yourself, & dont mean to brave the cold in silk, which would be very wrong of you.— Say how you are, dearest! While I think of it let me tell you that the “unfortunate Eugenie” fainted twice just before the marriage, when the “coiffeur” was engaged on her hair. People tell us all sorts of good of her. “Kindness of heart to the uttermost”—“very decided opinions”—“brave & bold when necessary.” She shoots with pistols, leaps a five barred gate, drives four in hand, & thinks nothing of upsetting the carriage for a freak. Some years ago she fell in love with a man who had not a sou & was without rank; & her mother had immense difficulty in breaking through her intentions.
She said "I have money enough for two."—I like everything I have heard of her. As to charity she would give away everything down to her shoeties,—they say. A good deal of this came through the Duchesse de... something .. I forget .. who had known her intimately from childhood, & who, while she objected to L Napoleon's marrying "so much below him," observed that if he was bent on a mesalliance, he could not have chosen better at least. The Hedleys are gone to Rome. She expects her confinement in the course of the summer— I have known it some time, but was desired to be discreet. We did not see a very great deal of them—don't let me mislead you. You know they were engaged night after night in Florence society, in which we have neither part nor lot. Robert likes him much for his gentlemanliness, frankness & goodnature,—& we both like her—though there is not much in her, Arabel—& as to the singing, if you call it pleasing you praise it. She has little voice, & no execution—in fact, the singing is quite without pretension. I cant imagine how aunt Jane could speak as she did.— I fear that our poor balia is going very wrong! It quite grieves me. She keeps away from us as much as she can—& Penini is offended, I suppose, at this, & has quite lost his love for her. He told me the other day, "I not lite Balia. Her face too fat—not pretty!" "I said .. So, if Mama were to grow fat you would not love her." He paused a moment & resumed very earnestly—"Mama! dont tate too mush o' lis oil! I not lite you to have a glate fat tomach lite Balia."

Ah— I must tell you—He said—"Mama, I lite to write a letter to God to ask him to come down & let me see Him. I lite to see gentle Jesus's face so velly, velly mush!" I told him some people thought that gentle Jesus would come before long—which seemed to comfort the child extremely. So he "loves His appearing", see you, without belonging to Newman Street! Arabel, your letter he had read over to him again & again. He quite understood the whole, & keeps it in his desk as a treasure. He remembers & talks much of you all. Tell me how dearest Trippy is, & kiss her well for me— What about her house? Where is George? Bid him write to me! Robert loves you dearly. He says "Arabel is a perfect woman, I consider. Her only fault really is that she annihilates herself for others." Quite true!— Do you hear of M.'s Orme? Will you send Lady Elgin's books to M! Reuben Browning with a note to ask him to send them to Paris by the first opportunity? His address is .. Messr® Rothschild, New Court, St Swithin's Lane. Lady E's parcel enclose in one to aunt Jane, .. 12 Rue d'Astory Faubourg St Honoré Paris— Your own Ba ever. Read 'La petite Fadette,' by G Sand.

Address: Angleterre viá France. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. The second edition had been issued in November 1850 (see letter 52, note 8). The third edition of EBB's Poems was published on 12 October 1853; for a complete description of the contents and variations from earlier editions, see Gardner Taplin, The Life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, London: John Murray, 1957, pp. 41-45.
2. i.e., Aurora Leigh; see note 34 in the preceding letter.
3. See note 34 in the preceding letter.
4. See letter 107, note 21. However, despite numerous references in EBB's letters written about this time regarding her interest in and reading of Swedenborg, this is the only instance I have found where she comments on the possible influence of Swedenborg on her poetry. Furthermore, I have been unable to trace any specific references to Swedenborg in reviews of her poetry that appeared about this time.
5. Dunbar Isidore Heath (1816-88) was an English cleric, who was deprived of his living in 1862 as a result of his controversial teachings, which were alleged to be "derogatory to the Thirty-nine Articles" (DNB). He was the author of The Future Human Kingdom of Christ; or, Man’s Heaven to Be This Earth, (London: J.W. Parker, 2 vols., 1852-53) and Our Future Life (London: Partridge and Oakey, 1853). Volume 2 of the former title, as well as the latter title had not yet appeared, so EBB is referring to vol. 1 of The Future Human Kingdom.

6. II Timothy 4:8.

7. See letter 74, note 18.

8. In a letter to Isabella Blagden, dated 3 March [1853], EBB wrote: "As to the spirits, I care less about what they are capable of communicating, than of the fact of there being communications. . . . There is probably, however, a mixture of good spirits and bad, foolish and wise, of the lower order perhaps, in both kinds" (Lebbeus, II, 104).

9. Cf. Acts 26:25: "But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth of and soberness."

10. Franklin Pierce had defeated Millard Fillmore in the presidential election of 1852. George Perkins Marsh (1801-82), an American lawyer, statesman, and author, had been appointed minister to Turkey in 1850 by President Zachary Taylor; Marsh later served as minister to Italy from 1860-82. Marsh and his wife, Caroline Marsh (née Crane, 1816-1901), were soon to leave Florence on their way back to Turkey via Athens, where Marsh had been sent to investigate a controversial legal dispute involving an American missionary. As EBB told Arabella, as well as a number of other correspondents, the Marshes hoped to persuade the Brownings to visit Constantinople during the summer of 1853.

11. i.e., Swedenborgianism and spiritualism.

12. See letter 78, note 25; Agatha’s Husband (London: Chapman and Hall, 1853, 3 vols.) was Mulock’s most recent publication. On 4 April [1853], EBB told Fanny Haworth: “I have been trying to get her last novel ‘Agatha’s Husband,’ here in Italy, but have failed hitherto” (ms at Fitzwilliam).

13. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-96), American writer and abolitionist, whose Uncle Tom’s Cabin (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1852) was enormously successful around the world—it sold more than 300,000 copies in the first year. After meeting her four years later, EBB praised her in terms similar to these: “Her books are not so much to me, I confess, as the fact is, that she above all women (yes, and men of the age) has moved the world—and for good” (Lebbeus, II, 259).

14. Mazzini was in hiding in Lugano, Switzerland after an attempted revolt in Milan in early February had been a miserable failure.

15. Louis Kossuth (1802-94), Hungarian revolutionary. On 21 April [1853], EBB told Julia Martin that "Kossuth is neither very noble nor very wise. . . . The truth is not in him" (Lebbeus, II, 115). After Kossuth had fled to Turkey in the summer of 1849, he persuaded Marsh to help him and his fellow revolutionists to obtain asylum in U.S., and Marsh reluctantly agreed, hoping to demonstrate American resolve against Austrian oppression. Nevertheless, Marsh was wary of Kossuth’s motives and plans, and when Kossuth managed to leave the ship bound for America when it stopped at Spezia, Marsh was angered but not surprised. “For Kossuth personally he had no use whatever. He considered the Hungarian’s selfishness and egotism boundless; to these traits he now added ingratitude” (David Lowenthal, George Perkins Marsh: Versatile Vermonter, New York: Columbia University Press, 1958, p. 128). I have been unable to identify the “paper” published by Kossuth to which EBB refers.

16. Maria Eugenia Ignacia Augustina de Montijo de Guzman, comtesse de Téba (1826-1920) and Louis Napoleon were married in a civil ceremony on 29 January 1853, and in a religious service the following day in Notre Dame; soon thereafter she was declared “Impératrice.” EBB praised her beauty and abilities in a letter to Miss Mitford in February 1853, saying that “there is less physical & more intellectual beauty than is generally attributed to her” (EBB-MRM, III, 377). EBB was unaware that the new Empress was a devout Roman Catholic and would eventually support the French Ultramontanes in opposition to her husband’s policies in Italy.
Letter 95

[2 March 1853]

17. Louis Napoleon had previously considered a political marriage with Princess Carola av Vasa, one of the Swedish royals in exile, but her father intervened, and the match was prevented; see Jasper Ridley, Napoleon III and Eugénie, London: Constable, 1979, pp. 324–325.

18. As indicated in a letter to Henrietta, dated 4 March [1853], Surtees had evidently written a letter of attempted reconciliation with his father-in-law.

19. Arabella Addams (née Bishop), wife of Jesse Addams (1785–1871), died 10 February 1853; she was EBB’s cousin. Her daughter, Arabella Addams (1830–1908), married William Surtees Cook on 20 February 1862, after the death of EBB’s sister Henrietta.

20. I have been unable to verify EBB’s account of Eugénie fainting, but there were reports that after the civil ceremony she “was nervous and pale as she sat for three-quarters of an hour on a throne while a succession of ministers and diplomats and their wives bowed and curtsied to her” (Ridley, p. 335).


22. I have been unable to identify EBB’s source.

23. Alice Jane Hedley was born on 27 August 1853 in Brighton.

24. See note 6 above.

25. See letter 93, note 12.

26. La Petite Fadette (Paris: Michel-Lévy frères, 1849) was one of Sand’s “rustic novels,” dealing with superstition and love.

Letter 96

Florence.
April 1– [1853]

I dont know, I scarcely know, my ever dearest Arabel, whether you or I must pass for the “naughty boy”, as Penini calls all criminals. Robert says I had a cross-letter from you last—however that may be, let me write, for I do long for some new sign from you. Also I have something to say, which even now it may be somewhat too late to say, inasmuch as if Messrs Chapman & Hall have sent you proofs for your correction, you will be considerably puzzled about the meaning of it. The truth is, when I sent the second volume of my poems to be reprinted for the third edition, I took a great liberty with you, for which, Arabel, I do humbly entreat your forgiveness. I told Chapman (or rather made Robert tell him) that if he were not perfectly sure of a minute attention being paid to the work, punctuation &c, he was to send you the proofs. Oh, I knew you would do it for me—and as you have been lately correcting proofs for your “own work,” you wont be out at sea in the doing. All that is necessary, is the attention to my corrections, punctuation &c. There’s just a knack in it. If you found a difficulty, George would have the great goodness to see to it, I think .. (dy at the side means ‘[‘]destroy,” ‘put out.’) After all, Chapman may choose to trust to his own resources, & we left it to him to decide. I sent the second volume to him first, because of there being less to alter in it, and now the first volume is ready to send by the earliest conveyance. Very busy I have been with this correcting, & so has dear Robert, helping me. You will wonder perhaps that there should be anything to do after the previous grand revision,—but indeed there was much to do, & the poems will be considerably the better for the labour spent on them.
And now for our movements. We remain in a state of suspended animation, nothing arranged yet for Rome. Robert says it is out of the question to undertake extra expenses without means—that he would not do such a thing for the world as encounter such risks—and I find nothing to answer in spite of my anxiety about going to Rome. Who could calculate on such a thing as the omission of fifty pounds from our half year's income? I feel convinced that it has been simply forgotten—though Robert still supposes that the time was changed, & that it is intended for us to receive it with our April dividend. But it was always paid on the first of January & again in June—and my opinion is that, if another arrangement had been adopted, it would have been explained at the time to us, to save us from any doubt on the subject—Oh no—dear generous Mr Kenyon has just forgotten it—and if he should forget it again in June!! What then? Meanwhile, to prove to you, that we have not frittered away our money lately, I will tell you that since we left London six months ago, we have spent exactly one hundred and forty four pounds. That includes the hundred pounds Mr Kenyon gave us for Rome—but though we did not go to Rome we came as far as Florence upon it, & our journey was more expensive than it would otherwise have been through my being ill at Genoa where you know we were kept at an hotel ten days. A fortnight, too, at an hotel in Paris! Mr Kenyon knows perfectly that we have had no more to spend than I have told you, because our dividends pass through his hands:—and certainly it would be difficult for any family to live & travel upon less. Also, out of that hundred & forty four pounds we have prepaid a year's rent for Casa Guidi. See if we have been extravagant, Arabell! Robert has only just drawn for the book-money (twenty eight pounds). In a day or two there will be another dividend—forty four pounds or about that. But to plunge into travelling expenses on so little .. (should the retarded fifty not come up) would be impossible as you must see. I am sorry—Because you see Mr Kenyon may think it strange that we don't go to Rome if he fancies he has given us the January fifty as usual! Really that is what chiefly vexes me—On the other hand, it is plainly impossible under the circumstances. Dearest, I tell you these things in the profoundest confidence. I never would forgive, understand, your letting out such a thing to Miss Bayley or any human being who might talk to you on the subject. I should not only be pained but disgraced in my soul by it. I tell you, simply that you may not set us down as capricious, unreasonable creatures. As for the hundred a year, we have no claim on Mr Kenyon for a hundred halfpence a year—and perhaps it would have been as well if we had not accepted it in the first place. People do always best, relying on themselves.

For my part I thank God for a very, very happy winter—so happy! All I wanted was you. Money-affairs never trouble me, be certain,—and, what pleases me is, that Robert is not troubled this time. He is well & not nervous .. in a healthy state of mind & competence to repose—the thing I have desired for him very often when he let himself be lashed by all the winds of the compass. Thank God.

Penini is like the small angel of the house—so radiant, so loving, so good!—Think of his saying to Robert yesterday, "The first sing I sint of in the morning is how mush Papa & Mama love me—den I call to Vincenzio." Robert said, "You should think besides how good God is to you". "Oh, les! I sint lat too." Wilson says he certainly does. When he opens his eyes he thanks
God, in Italian, for having made him sleep well. He always did that you know, & he still does it. And then he talks sometimes about “Papa & Mama” & how they love him “too mush, I sint,” and how he loves them, “velly mush.” There is such spontaneous sweetness in the child’s thoughts, that he seems to me as I was telling Robert yesterday, & he agreed, like a child taken out of a poem & incarnated. Wilson declares that he is irresistible & carries everything before him— I found him two days since helping to wash his socks in a basin of water with lather over his wrists— “I really could’n’t help letting him,” said Wilson apologetically— “he coaxes so! he said to me . . “Tome, my little darling, you be dood. I^velly dood’’ So she let him wash. He rules the house I can assure you. But it is’nt only for gaining his ends that he is caressing [sic]—oh no. Last week he was shutting his box of letters while I held it . . “Tate tare”! he cried . . “tate tare I dont hurt your little pretty darling fingers!” He said it quite paternally. As to Robert, Robert perfectly adores the child. He always loved him pretty well—but now! No wonder—for Robert is an immense favorite & I have good reason for jealousy—I am as jealous as Othello. Now is the fair at Florence, & he goes every day to buy fairings. One fairing was a tamb[o]urine, for which we had to pay two pence three farthings, (we are not ruined by Penini’s fairings after all) and he dances & plays on the tamb[o]urine in the prettiest way possible, while Robert accompanies it on the piano. This is the Easter fair. On “holy thursday” he went to five churches . . nay, to seven, which is the catholic pilgrimage—for Girolama being “forced to go to seven,” she said, asked Wilson to go twice into two of the five, to keep the letter of the ordinance!!! (Wilson not liking to take Penini to all the seven on account of the distance). He didn’t understand going twice over into churches, and enquired “Perché—” “Per visitare Jesu,” answered Girolama. On which he looked up to Wilson quite awestruck . . “Where is gentle Jesus, Lily?” Wilson properly told him Girolama only meant that she wanted to say her prayers to Jesus. I advise Wilson to be simple & direct with him about all these things, so that he may not apprehend any of their superstitions. For the rest, their symbols & decorations, when seen in daylight of heart & simplicity, are just fit for babies like Penini— Oh, he was delighted with the easter lambs, and resurrection gardens, as elaborately and fantastically exhibited in the churches on thursday. What is evil in doctrine, & absurd in medium, he doesn’t understand, little darling,— it floats him by!—and I would rather see him in sympathy with Christians, (ever such imperfect Christians) than teach him so soon that there are schisms in Christianity. Mª Ogilvy’s young children, whom she never would suffer to set foot in the churches, thought naturally that the Italians were going straight to hell, when they thought at all.— She had some difficulty in teaching her little girl charity on the subject. No wonder.— What were children to think?— I must however admit to you that Penini once startled us a good deal by observing to Robert . . “I sint there are a dood many Dods in Florence.” Robert said directly—“Pictures, you mean.” “Oh les. I tand, Papa” . . (I understand). Indeed it seems to me that he may understand more than some of the learned amongst us— Just now Wilson has brought him in his nightgown to give us the goodnight kiss— “Dood night,” he says, “mine two little darling friends.” (friends) Girolama is Penini’s favorite in Florence. She stands about as high as my shoulder . . or rather below it, to be exact. To the hips downward she is well made . . but the legs withered or contracted in some way in her childhood . . and so with all her glossy black hair & good features, she is just a dwarf. Penini takes her to be a sort of child, & we have
no peace unless Girolama comes to dinner some three days a week— which, as she is very poor, is a most acceptable desire on his part. Also, he carries her about with him very often to the fair & elsewhere— & if it rains & he can't go out, Girolama is sent for to spend the day with him. This is a great help in talking Italian, & I encourage it for various reasons. He never talks Italian to us. He won't. He announced to Wilson one day,— "Now, Lily, I *tan* pelat Inglese— You muss not say *si* to me no more. I peat Italian to Vincenzo & balia & Girolama, but not to Mama & Papa & Lily."

So it was settled on the spot. He does not mix up the languages. He speaks English with fluency, if not well . . . (he is'nt intelligible by any manner of means) and Italian very nicely indeed. As to the poems . . . oh Arabel, I am afraid he has forgotten most of them— It is'nt his fancy now to repeat poems, though he quotes them occasionally. He *writes* them, if you please. That's a different matter. Oh Arabel! your message about your kind desire of sending him a present on his birthday, threw him straightway into a fit of sentimentality. "Oh dear me!" said he, "I lite to go to Londra to see mine flënds—" "Who are your friends in London," I asked— "Alibel, Lorge . . . so many, I tant tell you all leir names. You know, Mama." He remembers everything I can assure you. One of his most tender recollections, tell George, is being taken into the bazaar & presented with his favorite pump which still is treasured up. I was reading one day to Robert & mentioning the name of a Hebrew professor in America, a George somebody, on which Penini interposed with a deep sigh . . . "Oh, dear Lorge!— Lorge dave me mine pump." M' Tennyson has just sent me Tait with a review of the Rapping spirits . . . a review of M' Spicer's book on the subject that is— Now, Arabel, I expect you to read that paper in Tait! I wish I had as much facility in getting at M' Spicer, but everything in good time. The judge Edmonds, mentioned as a medium, is one of the most distinguished judges of the United States. For any rational human being to ignore such a sign of the times is most irrational. It is deepening & deepening. Remember, I am by no means prepared to maintain or to believe that the spirits of Robert Southey, Edgar Poe, & others, produced the writings put forth in their names. The *authenticity* of the spirits is quite a different question. For my part I believe there is a mixture of good & evil, of the instructed & uninstructed, in them, and that no doctrine (as indeed M' Spicer says) should be received from them without other evidence. Also, many have been struck into insanity by their means—that is, by the excitement & fanaticism produced through them— Twenty one persons are in one madhouse, I heard the other day, from this very cause. The more reason for investigating the subject. It is one to me of the very deepest interest, & certainly ought to be to every thinker interested in nature of man & eventualities of man. No wonder that M' Lewes who has done his best to instruct the nascent English public in Comte's atheism, should deny these things. All the Sadducees of the age, (and there are many) who deny angel & spirit, must of necessity scoff at every manifestation of the kind. Miss Bayley, of course, considers it just as "unworthy of my high intellect," that I should believe in Jesus Christ, . . . or even in my own soul, . . . as give ear to "Rappers." I never mind being laughed at on these occasions. Let them laugh. Frederick Tennyson (Alfred's elder brother) is an out & out believer. We like him very much. As to Robert he quite loves him— & likes to have him here evening after evening. Did I tell you that he was a reader of Swedenborg. Yes—but not very deeply, nor sympathetically. He has shifted away from that ground. He goes more with Heath & the materialists, is strong upon prophecy . . . trusts Faber . . . & is full of the
Second Coming, as it is expected by a certain class. Even so, or in any other way, come, Lord Jesus! We should not be too particular about the way, I think. Frederick Tennyson is quite a Christian, & one of the simplest & most truthful of men. Cultivated & refined too, to a fault almost.— Did I tell you that Miss Sandford comes here at least once a week in the evening? sometimes oftener. We like her. M' Hanna has been at Rome for a fortnight & Robert had a letter from him on ecclesiastical affairs yesterday—& Robert & M' Stuart are to be at the church today to send away the congregation as they come, the preacher not being come-at-able. M' Hanna gives tremendous accounts of the weather at Rome—rain, rain, rain! Prices inordinate, he says! By the way, Robin Hedley wrote to Robert much the same history. So we have our consolations upon the necessity of lingering here. Indeed it seems to me that the weather at Florence has been better than anywhere else—& yet even we complain. One must grumble in this world. Here is a fact. A full week ago, the may was in full bloom in our hedges. I am very well, and Peninni like a rose—

Arabel—do write to me about Trippy. I ask & ask, & you never send me news of her or a message. I want to know how she is, & about her house. My true love to her.

So touched I was to see in the papers about Miss Price’s death.19 Good for her, I do hope, such a dismissal from the body must be. I had no idea she was as old as seventy. What an indelicate unfeeling fashion that is of advertising the age, in the advertisement of the death. People dont always do it happily—& it always jars on me when they do, & my attention is called to it. There’s a want of personal delicacy in it, it seems to me. They might as well say .. “and she had grey hair” .. or “brown” .. of what consequence is it to the world, I wonder? The living person would not have liked to be published so, & that consideration is conclusive, or ought to be.

Wilson has never had a sign from M' Righi20 but she hears that he is in a lucrative situation. She has no regrets, I am happy to perceive. For the rest, we go on very well. The first possibility which admits of our raising her wages, we shall certainly give her the benefit of—but just now, you may judge!—I should like to give her twenty pounds a year directly for my part, & if it were in any way possible. Do write to me, dearest, & tell me of yourself particularly—& then of everybody. God bless you beloved! How I think of you! What of Henry? Nothing of Jamaica I do trust. This is a dull unsatisfactory letter .. & scribbled in a hurry .. Robert spurring me on. Do you mean to say that there’s a chance of Henrietta being shovelled off to Ireland?— That would be lamentable. Tell me of Henrietta & the babies— When have you a chance of seeing them? Dont be a Plymouth sister21 please. I would rather .. I wont say what I w’d rather.

Robert said last night, “I must write to that dear Arabel. Give her my dearest love meantime.” Love him, for he deserves it. God bless you my own. Hold me in prayer & love. Your own Ba always.

What of M’ Orme? Is Mary Hunter with the Owens. The Lindsays are gone to England. I cant read over— Such haste! Mention Papa.[] 

Robert is so vexed with you for paying the postage.22 Observe—— You pay more than we do. I entreat you not to do it.

Address: Angleterre via France. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.
1. Year provided by postmark of 2 April 1853. From a remark in letter 97, EBB did not conclude this letter until the following morning, the 2nd.

2. EBB provided the following "Postscript" to the "Advertisement" in the 1853 edition: "In the present edition the author has done her best to remedy the oversights and defects of that former revision, which her absence from England rendered less complete than it should have done" (p. viii). Nevertheless, the contents and pagination in this edition are the same as the preceding one. The few revisions made are limited to the longer poems, including quite a number of alterations in punctuation. Because she was working with the physical limitations of the earlier edition, she added no new poems, nor deleted any. The most significant changes were the addition of a 28-line speech by Lucifer at the beginning of "A Drama of Exile," and two stanzas omitted from "A Vision of Poets."

3. EBB's comment seems to imply that the advance made by Kenyon in 1851 (see letter 63, note 3) had been extended.

4. EBB crossed out the following passage: "Only, nobody with a family can travel about on two hundred a year, let them live on it ever so contrivedly."

5. See, for example, her comment in letter 10 about how she should "get into ever so many scrapes & debts if left to myself... but he who hates a debt like a scorpion, (or rather far worse) not only has everything paid at the moment, but puts it down in a book."

6. Underscored twice.

7. "Why... "To visit Jesus."

8. The Ogilvys' two youngest children were Marcia Napier Ogilvy (1850-1940) and Walter Tulliedeph Ogilvy (1852-1927).

9. EBB refers to "the famous pump" again in letter 113.

10. i.e., Professor George Bush; see letter 102, note 34.

11. Henry Spicer (1812?-91) was the author of a number of minor dramas, including Jeffrey's or the Wife's Vengeance (London: G.W. Nickinson, 1846) and Cousin Cherry: a comic drama (London: S.G. Fairbrother, 1852); he also wrote poetry. He had recently published Sights and Sounds: The Mystery of the Day (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1853), "comprising an entire history of the American 'Spirit' Manifestations," as described in the sub-title. Because of the response it received, he published a few months later Facts and Fancies: A Sequel to Sights and Sounds (London: T. Bosworth, 1853). The latter contained an eight-line epigraph from EBB's "A Rhapsody of Life's Progress." The review EBB mentions appeared in Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, March 1853, 157-164.

12. John Worth Edmonds (1799-1874), a U.S. Supreme Court justice, and, together with George Dexter, a physician, co-authored Spiritualism (New York: Partridge & Brittan, 1853), a popular work on the subject in which Edmonds revealed the results of his investigations, including having received communications with the dead. Additionally, Edmonds authored numerous books and pamphlets on the subject of spiritualism. Spicer identifies Edmonds as a medium of "most wonderful power" (Sights and Sounds, p. 111).

13. The reviewer in Tait's pointed out that while Spicer "admits that the aptitude to degenerate into fanaticism is the most distressing feature in this spiritual manifestation, he looks upon that only as an additional reason why its true character and powers should be ascertained and defined" (p. 158). The review contains extracts of poems allegedly dictated by Edgar Allan Poe and Robert Southey (pp. 160-161).

14. Isidore Auguste Marie François Xavier Comte (1798-1857), French Positive philosopher, and author of various works, including System of Positive Philosophy (1851-54). "Lewes's interest in Comte found full expression in his exposition of the Philosophie positive in the Leader in 1852-53, reprinted as Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences in 1853" (Rosemary Ashton, G.H. Lewes: A Life, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, p. 46). In December 1852, Lewes had objected to Dickens's treatment of the death of Mr. Krook in Bleak House, who spontaneously combusts. "Lewes, angered by all the pseudo-science which was gaining adherents in the 1850s—phrenology, mesmerism, spirit-calling—felt obliged to rap his old friend over the knuckles. He did so in the Leader of 11 December [1852], saying Dickens was guilty of giving currency to 'a vulgar error'" (Ashton,
Letter 96 1 [-2] April [1853] 534

p. 144). In a letter to Fanny Haworth, dated 12 February [1854], EBB further objected to Comte's atheism: "As to Comte & his translator, a thinker who will not receive the notion of God as a probability, throws me off at once—I have no sympathy with him or his" (ms at Fitzwilliam). EBB refers to Comte as "absurd" in *Aurora Leigh* (IX, 869).


16. See note 5 in the preceding letter. George Stanley Faber (1773–1854) was the prolific author of numerous books and articles on often controversial religious topics, nevertheless "throughout his career he strenuously advocated the evangelical doctrines of the necessity of conversion, justification by faith, and the sole authority of scripture as the rule of faith" (*DNB*); see also, letter 98, note 30 and 100, note 15, respectively.


18. Jane Wills-Sandford; see letter 93, note 7.

19. Caroline Price (1783–1853), only daughter of Sir Uvedale Price (1747–1829) and Lady Caroline Price (née Carpenter, 1749–1826). She was godmother to EBB's brother Alfred, and a friend from Hope End days. She died on 10 March 1853.


21. The Plymouth Brethren were founded by J.N. Darby, a former Anglican priest, in 1830 in Plymouth. They took a conservative interpretation of scripture, stressing a puritanical lifestyle and renouncing secular occupations. Arabella seems to have had several friends who were members, and evidently attended services with them. EBB refers to "your Plymouth brethren" in letter 98.

22. Postal regulations between England and the continent were not standardised at this time, particularly between England and Italy. Postage on letters sent to Italy could be paid by the sender or the recipient, and not only did the former pay more but risked the letter going astray since the added incentive of collecting the postage was alleviated. On 15 April 1853, RB wrote to Chapman that "the unpaid letters go the safelier" (*NL*, p. 63).

Letter 97

Florence.
April 4–[1853]¹

I begin to write this letter .. "What! another letter to Arabel!!" .. while Robert is proceeding with his last criticisms on my first volume. Our friend M' Cassells,² of Leghorn, goes to England he says, on the sixth, & if we give him our commissions in time he will execute them duly. So I cant help sending you a few more scratches. I have written a note to Miss Haworth,³ which will you throw into the post? I have been wanting to her altogether. This note I enclose in a sheet to you, & that, I shall bid M' Chapman to forward to you. The much or little of what I shall be able to write, I cant answer for now.

Arabel, dearest. I wrote to you the day before yesterday—and since then, nothing has happened to us—nothing 'historical,' I mean. I was out at M' Stuart's lecture today—⁴ I told you, I think, that he was redelivering his lectures on Shakespeare. M' Tennyson called for Robert & me, as he always does for Robert, & we went together. Such a day. A spring day, do you call it? A hot summer day rather! a July day in England . . . *when it does'n t snow!* We had to creep round the shadiest streets to avoid a coup de soleil.⁵ Penini & Wilson at the Boboli gardens, were lolling in the shade, under the trees, sitting on the grass. Penini came in with his frock full of flowers, daisies, & dandelions which he thought beautiful. "I saw a soldier watching me. I dot away in
sush a hully.” The soldiers are supposed to object to the felony of picking flowers. It is divine weather—and we, not able to go to Rome! Is’nt it vexatious, Arabel?

Robert’s play will probably be played at the Haymarket in a few days, & I am growing rather anxious about it. In one sense it’s no affair of ours. A work which has been in print above ten years, nobody can be foolish enough to suppose to be offered to the theatre now. So that if there’s failure, it is’nt our fault—we are not responsible for the speculation. Helen Faucit thinks to make a success for herself in Colombe—and if she does, so much the better for us! if she does’nt, so much the worse for her. In case of success the pay will be a welcome thing just now.

Oh, Arabel! here is my letter broken into! Mr Lytton comes in while Robert & I are least wishing for anybody, & so busy that our business is likely to suffer from the interruption. My letter above all things will. I like Mr Lytton. So does Robert. He is interesting, & has good & pure aspirations. But I wish he had’nt come tonight. By the way I ought to have told you that Sir Edward’s mischance was not strictly speaking an ‘accident.’ It is an abscess on the hand, necessitating an operation, & of a very painful kind. Still it comes to much the same thing. He saw, himself, at Knebworth I understand, the table lifted by the so called spirits. It was done by his desire. He desired that the table with a lamp on it sh^ be moved—then, that the lamp should be moved without moving the table. Done. Then that a decanter of water on another table should be moved without moving the table. Done. Then, that the water in the decanter sh^ be moved without moving the decanter. Done. This last manifestation is of so striking a character that Robert admits, “If I saw that done I should believe.” M! Lytton said to me last night .. “What is your opinion of these things, M! Browning.” “Why, M! Lytton, my husband says that I am no authority upon any subject of the kind, because I have a trick of believing everything.” “But is it possible to resist all this evidence?” “I  *  think not, I confess to you.” You ought to hear M! Tennyson talk on the subject— He cant imagine how Robert can doubt .. how anybody can doubt for a moment. Only, he & I split on the point of devilism. He will have it that it’s purely devilish [sic] .. (if you permit me such an expression as purely devilish ..) & prefatory to the second coming & personal reign. I think there’s a mixture of good & evil, truth & falsehood in it, .. that it’s simply an influx from the spiritual world– We shall see further. Any way, depend upon it, Arabel, you have’nt heard the last of it. It is increasing & to increase, and the thinkers of the age will have to consider more deeply than a [sic, for they] have done, an abnormal class of phenomena.

Such pains Robert & I have taken with my new edition. The poems are worth a nugget or two more for the labour. Of that I am sure. Now I am going back to my new poem. I should like to have this winter over again, it has been so pleasant. The little Leys were here yesterday, poor Louisa’s children, & I hated to hear little Luti speak of M! Gordon as ‘Mama’. Think of my teaching my child, if he had lost his father, to call somebody else .. ‘Papa’!! On no principle, is it comprehensible to me. They are nice children— & M! Ley left them to play with Penini for an hour or two—and tomorrow they are coming to dine with him—though nothing consoles him for Alice Tassinari’s absence in the country. He wrote a letter to her the other day, & we had a sobbing fit because Robert thought it unnecessary to send it to the post—but the sobs persuaded him, & the letter was sent away as it ought to have been. Penini has related to us a pathetic story of a danger to which Flush was exposed at the Cascine. Two boys began to throw stones at him—
“Lily said, *Teto tane* (questo cane) *non fa male,* and Flush tome to me and I put mine arms tight lound his net. Velly naughty boys! I sint dirls (girls) never beat dogs. Only boys.” “You have found that out already,” said I, “have you?”—[“]Les! boys not know better, I sint. Poor, litty tiney babies!” .. shaking his head with a pitiful air of superiority. “But I *sure* God not lite it.”— Oh poor Flush. He is worse than ever, from the usual effects of climate. What will happen when it grows warmer I fear to think of. He is fat, has a good appetite, but looks very bad indeed from the state of the skin & hair. I think we must have a dog doctor’s opinion of him—and yet nothing will avail in this climate. Italy is to him what England is to me—

Let me tell you something of Penini- I had your testament in my hand the other day, & he came & said, “Lead me somesing out o f Dod’s boot.” I read where the page was open, about Jesus receiving & blessing little children. When I had done, he stooped down & kissed the leaf. “Why do you do that,” I asked. “Itiss what you lead about gentle Jesus.”

He said to Wilson yesterday— “Lily, I want to peat to you a minute. I too large to be talled Baby any more. I not lite you to say Baby. You muss say Penini—” In which I quite agree with him. At four years old it is time to abdicate one’s babyhood—more’s the pity. I grudge the years going away with the simplicities .. how I grudge them! Yet the child grows sweeter & sweeter, dearer & dearer— God keep him, .. blessed little spirit that he is! It is only Wilson who persists in saying Baby. Robert & I left it off long since. Tell Minny, that he professed an intention yesterday of writing her a letter soon.

At the fair we have bought him a green silk frock, very pretty, & gave 5! 5! English, for a superfluity of stuff. There may be enough, over, to make a jacket. Things are given away at the fair. Then I have embroidered a frock of the undressed silk .. in black braid. This washes, & will be useful for the summer. He asked me the other day to buy him a red frock & embroider it with yellow. “I sint lis so velly pretty.” You know he has a weakness for pretty frocks. Your green merino is still in the ascendant. He saw a “dleen flock” in Boboli gardens yesterday, he says .. “but no buttons! not one button.” There was the difference!— What a charm!——

Tell me of Henrietta & the babies— all you know. And Arabel, I do beseech you to write to me ofterner. Its really wrong that I should’nt hear ofterner. I am anxious about you altogether. Mind, when you write, to mention Trippy, whom I have not heard of satisfactorily [for] much too long. Has Papa kept in the house much this winter? and does it affect his spirits & appetite. Tell me about Papa. I would give a great deal of wishing for a little direct tiding of you all this moment. How are you, Arabel? *Be truthful.* Have you been imprudent in going out in the cold? Oh, I do hope & trust you have not, but there are fears of you beside. Tell me of the Refuge.13 Do the means prove adequate? And how did the ‘dinner’ go off? and have you seen the Strattens since? I want you to give me information concerning Mary Hunter & her father. Has she gone to the Owens, & are they likely to agree? I have apprehensions, relating to her want of accomplishments, which at the age of Angela’s girls14 must be a *telling* defect, unless they have masters. You ought to write to poor M! Hunter, Arabel, if he does’nt write or if he does, it seems to me.

Here, has M! Stuart come in, .. this monday morning .. to shatter my letter to pieces, for the rest of it. He sits down in the chair opposite, takes off his great coat, .. is going to stay .. regularly. So I propose to finish what I am writing while he sits there. It cant, you see, be for long. How I
have to scud for it with this pen of mine!— Vexatious, indeed— Do you hear of M" Orme? Tell me.

We have letters from the Brownings. Sarianna never complains, except of the cold—but I am penetrated with the conviction that she dislikes Paris— I was sure she would— & I am sure she does. The penal association is too strong— & then, Sarianna is not mobile, flexible— she has no enthusiasm in her, & likes chiefly I think what she has been used to, & chiefly because she has been used to it. Her sense of duty, & her excellent sense are so strong, that she will bear up & say nothing about it—but she enjoys evidently nothing at all, she appreciates none of her new advantages; she is not alive enough to receive the influences of life. Observe— I could entirely understand a woman's regret, violently removed from a happy situation in her own country— But what there can be to regret in her case, I cant understand. Well— perhaps it does'nt amount to regret. It is only that she does'nt take root & live & flourish where she is— Still, it comes to much the same thing. Oh— if she had married (...)!

That's my last sigh. Poor, dear, good Sarianna!

God bless you, dearest, dearest— Robert says I must end—he comes in to say that, after having gone out to enquire about hours. As to M! Stuart, I have touched the climax of rudeness with him in going on to write all this time.

And I cant read it over— Love, best love to everybody.

Your own Ba—

Address: Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street—
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year determined from EBB's references to Helen Faucit and Colombe's Birthday.
2. Walter Richard Cassels (1826-1907) was in Leghorn conducting business on behalf of Peel, Cassels & Co., in which he was a partner. His recollections of the Brownings were later recorded in an article by Leonard Huxley, entitled "A Visitor to the Brownings at Casa Guidi," published in The Cornhill Magazine of January 1924, pp. 96-112.
3. EBB's letter to Fanny Haworth, dated 4 April [1853], is at Fitzwilliam.
5. "Sunstroke."
6. In January 1853, Helen Martin (née Faucit, 1820-98), wrote to RB asking permission to stage Colombe's Birthday at the Haymarket, and RB responded that he would be "delighted if you can do anything for Colombe" (T. Martin, Helena Faucit, London: Blackwood & Sons, 1900, p. 237). RB had written the play for Charles Kean and his wife, but they did not want to produce it immediately, and RB did not want to leave it unprinted, so it was published as Bells and Pomegranates, No. VI (April 1844). This Haymarket production opened on 16 April 1853, and played seven times before closing; see note 34 in the following letter.
7. The review in The Daily News observed: "The heroine is a charming character— finely imagined and painted with exquisite delicacy. Miss Helen Faucit entered completely into its spirit, and displayed all its loveliness" (26 April 1853, p. 6). And she received the following adulation from The Morning Post: "Miss Helen Faucit has returned to us in the full possession of those remarkable powers which long ago made her a cherished favourite of the London public. Never did she look, or act, better than on the present occasion; and the applause which greeted her, though frequent and cordial, was not half so much as she deserved" (26 April 1853, p. 6).
8. Underscored twice.
9. i.e., *Aurora Leigh*. For the revisions in the 3rd edition of *Poems* (1850), see note 2 in the preceding letter.
10. Louisa and James, children of Louisa and James P. Ley. James Ley later married his late wife’s sister, Caroline.
11. “This dog isn’t doing anything bad.”
13. i.e., the Ragged School in which Arabella worked. EBB referred to it as a “refuge” in letter 69 (see note 9), but my attempts to identify it more specifically have been unsuccessful; see also letter 16, note 24.
14. From the context EBB is referring to her cousin Angela Owen, but I have been able to identify only one daughter, Frances Mary Owen (b. 1843).
15. A name has been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella, which I have been unable to reconstruct.

Letter 98

Florence.
April 12. [1853]

My ever dearest Arabel, here I am again. Rap, rap—If I were a spirit I could’nt haunt you much more. M’ Lytton has most graciously bethought him of the possibility of our caring to send a letter by his special messenger,² on thursday, so I hope he may repeat this civility. M’[ Stuart seems to me in a scrape with the Legation past recovering from, and although M’ Lytton comes here frequently, I dont know how it was, .. I fell into a convulsion of shyness & could’nt utter a request about special messengers, as he seemed never to think of them. I got from him a right of entrance to the Boboli gardens on private as well as public days—and the other petition ’stuck in my throat.’ Well—he has thought of it himself at last. I like him all the better for that, & so will you. But really he is interesting on other accounts, full of good & talent, it seems to me. I only wonder how his father submits to be separated from his only remaining child, particularly as I think he is not happy here nor strong in health, nor with any leaning to diplomatic pursuits, nor with the least social necessity on him for doing uncongenial work— I heard the other day that the chargé d’affaires⁳ here was complaining of him for not working enou gh, .. for “just going about dreaming over M’[ Browning’s poems.’! He writes poems of his own too, I fancy, & is about to print them. And as he is now borrowing Swedenborg from somebody,! I fancy that Sir Edward Lytton wont gain his point of “making him less visionary by sending him into the world.” That’s why the father parts with him. I would’nt part with my Wiedeman for such a reason, no, indeed. A violent plunge into the world, to an uncongenial temperament, is followed by a violent reaction of the inner life. The young man has taken a villa in the neighbourhood,⁴ in an utter state of disgust at the society of Florence, and there he dreams his heart full I dare say. He likes us both, I am sure. He squeezes my hand almost off; & he told Robert the other day that he was the “least like an author” of any man of the pen he ever knew .. which was intended as an immense compliment, whichever way you may understand it, you—

Thank you, darling Arabel, for your welcome little note by M’ Kenyon. Little note, say I. I deserve a long letter from you by this time. M’ Kenyon wrote most kindly to us, & I had enclosures from Miss Bayley who does not deign to mention the spirits, & M’[ Jameson who does. M’[ Jameson says that they are much talked of in London, & “taken up by the dreamers,” but that the
nonsense talked about them would not, if I heard it, commend the subject to me. I shall tell her
that no amount of nonsense talked, ever dis-commends any subject with me. The most nonsense
is talked always of the most important subjects—such as religion, & politics. People dont talk
nonsense about poonah-painting, for instance.

Let me not forget to tell you that Mr & Mr Clarke,\(^5\) who had that supposed manifestation
from their child, you will remember, .. and Mr Spring,\(^6\) have returned from Rome. They stay a
few days in Florence & then go north. Mr Spring was Ma\(^\text{a}^\text{z}\)e Ossoli's great friend— I think I told
you—& how he came here on his way to Rome & spent an evening, & expressed a very sceptical
opinion about the "spirits" generally, .. yet could'nt believe that the whole affair was imposture,
.. but concluded that the most of it was. Well—he told me yesterday that he had changed his
views since he saw me. He had had letters from America. The Lowerings,\(^7\) connections of the
Greenhoughs & intimate friends of his own, had become mediums, and \emph{that} was a testimony
which it was out of his power to reject. I was to set him down therefore as a believer from
henceforth. Then Mr Clarke had heard a letter read at Rome from Mr Child\(^8\) .. Maria Child ..
you may have heard of her perhaps, (I have) as an American author. The first part of her letter
expressed her incredulity about the spirits—she thought the whole might be deceptive—she was
unbelieving altogether. Then, suddenly came a passage .. “Since writing the above I have had
an experience which changes my views” .. going on to narrate a manifestation she had been
witness to, & a communication which she herself received from a departed friend of her own.
This & the fact of the mediumship of the Lowerings, .. (Miss Lowering is one of her favorite
friends, to whom she dedicated a book of hers,\(^9\) ..) had entirely convinced her. As to the moving
of tables, nobody wonders at it even, it has grown to be so common. Indeed, the \emph{will} of persons in
a peculiar mesmeric state, is said to be sufficient to produce it. Some people talk of it as a “new
law, issuing from the intellectual development of the race, & showing the influence of spirit
upon matter,” .. not necessarily connected therefore with disembodied spirits at all—these things
are explained differently by different thinkers, you see.– Then there is a case which has just
occurred, of a D' Tims,\(^10\) whom, it appears everybody knows in America. He is a clergyman of
the episcopal church, of evangelical principles, & widely respected. Well—this man has been
investigating the spirits, & they have made a sort of onslaught on him it appears—and he has just
entreated the prayers of his congregation, feeling himself in danger of insanity or possession.
There is a calvinistic minister\(^11\) too, a good deal vexed by the spirits—not that they do him any
harm, .. but they tease him, put him out of temper, dash about his lamps & furniture generally, &
rap the patience out of him, poor man. Tell me if it tires you to hear of these things. As I am not
going to write a book about them, Arabel, (oh, there’s no danger at present) I tell you everything
in my letters. Does it tease you? tell me. Oh—and you have given me a fright about borrowing
Swedenborg—Dont do it, till you have me back—mind you dont. I am frightened. Because, you
see, I dont want you to recoil, to misapprehend—and Swedenborg is a writer hard to do justice
to. By looking in to him” you see neither form nor colour. You catch up sentences perhaps which
will make you conclude .. “he is a heretic on this point, on that point, .. & you, Ba, if you listen
to him will go to the devil straight.” Then, read by glimpses, he is fanatical, fantastical, say mad.
If you take him, on the other hand, in a firm grasp, give him your full consideration, and carry his
whole system into your comprehension, he is a wonderful writer,—I know of none like him for
my part, .. Plato was never so grand. Also, the system of the universe, as he gives it, seems to
stand out in its own light of self-evidence; one thinks, 'I wonder I never thought of that before'.
But you learn nothing by an odd volume, or the rapid reading of a volume. You dont understand
the parts except by the whole. Milton caught sight of his system when he said .. "What if earth
Be but the shadow of Heaven" &

Swedenborg does not hold the received view about the Trinity—but he holds by the Trinity. He
objects to the phrase “three persons” (not to be seen in Scripture certainly) but he believes in the
three Divines, the Father, Son, & Holy Ghost, the Divine Esse, the Divine Existere, & the Divine
Proceeding. He considers that this Trinity is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. He objects to the
ordinary form of application to God “for the sake of Jesus Christ,” because he says it makes
separation in the human mind of what is One, & because no human being can approach God
except in His manifestation of Jesus Christ. He magnifies the work of Christ everywhere, though
not accepting the usual explanation of the word “propitiation” holds that without Christ’s
work on the earth, all were lost, & except by it, none are saved. He believes in universal
redemption (just as your Plymouth brethren do, Arabel, so dont frown too much), .. &
maintains that Christ “stands at the door & knocks” while every man lives. He rejects the idea
of “instantaneous mercy”, .. because without regeneration, a man could not breathe in Heaven ..
he would “writhe as a serpent before the fire.” He rejects the idea of ‘arbitrary punishment’
here or hereafter. The Lord wills the spiritual death & damnation of no man. In the next world,
men cast themselves down into Hell, simply because their love is there. Finally he rejects the
resurrection of the body as usually understood, holding the doctrine of a spiritual body in all
points similar to this—so similar, that men when they are first dead have to be told they are dead,
there is so little apparent change in their state. Then, those who are in union with the Lord, grow
gradually into an ineffable youth & beauty. He does'nt believe in angels or devils as a distinct
race or species. He says they are all taken out of human nature. The fall of man he receives
literally, but the account of Adam & Eve in the garden, he says, is symbolical of the state & fall
of the “most ancient church.”

His views of the Church generally, I think very beautiful & scriptural—but I am not going to send you an abstract of Swedenborg. These are the points, (these which I have written about) on which chiefly he is peculiar, doctrinally speaking. His
philosophy of the universe is rather a philosophy than a theology, and I consider it very grand, &
probably true. You are to consider that the worst said of this man in his life was, that he was mad.
But there is strong evidence to show that he was a calm strong-headed man, a man in strong
health. His honesty & piety were unimpeachable. Oberlin was a disciple of his. He predicted
the day of his death a month at least before in a letter still extant, .. and he solemnly declared
just before he died, as he received the Lord’s supper from a Swedish clergyman, that he had seen
these things in real vision. I am inclined to think that he had a veritable spiritual insight, & was
admitted into much that is divine. At the same time, I deduce no belief in his infallibility— It
seems to me that he mistook the representatives of things for the things themselves sometimes,
& made other mistakes. Still he should be honored[,] in my opinion, as a great Christian visionary.
If not a true visionary, he is one of the greatest geniuses that ever wrote among men. Take your choice.

But don't read him just now, Arabel. Wait till I come. Robert says that when he is rich he will buy a Tuscan villa. And I say that when I am rich I will buy a complete edition of Swedenborg. One of his books is in twelve thick volumes. And that's nothing to the rest. So wait, Arabel. Meanwhile neither Robert nor I are likely to be rich, I assure you . . . unless we make fortunes with our new books. No Rome for us, it seems to me. Not a word,—perfect oblivion! The dividend must be paid to us in a day or two, & then we shall see if Robert is right or if I am . . . It is bearable & healthy at Rome till the end of May, if we choose our situation carefully. Till the end of June, some of our friends swear—but we must be on the prudent extreme side for the sake of our Penini.

Such a darling that child is. He loses none of his grace & prettiness indeed, & his hair gets longer & thicker which improves him. The waterfall of golden ringlets under the little green hat is lovely in my eyes, & in other people's too, for Wilson says he never goes out without audible admissions on all sides. His friendship with Girolama continues fast. It's difficult to get him past the street where she lives with her mother & friend, Anina, & the doves (a great attraction) up a dark pair of stairs. Wilson gets out of patience sometimes. “Its nothing but Girolama, Girolama!” said she— ‘I am quite tired of Girolama.’ “O naughty, untind Lily! Mates me twite ill if you peat so. Mates me cly. Poor litty Olam! (Girolama)— Poor litty tiney Olam!” I must tell you one thing of him — The day before yesterday or the day before that, (I forget) he was very anxious to go out, but the skies were lowering & threatening a ‘bur[r]asca’. He ran out on the terrace & looked up at the clouds— “Gentle Jesus, you not going to send the rain when poor Penini wants to go out so velly mush? Wait till tomollow.” Then, he came in to Wilson who was listening— “I asked gentle Jesus not to send the rain,—and I sint he won’t.” He has such winning little ways, more & more. He comes to me when I am reading, & kisses my sleeve (to make the interruption as gentle as possible) & then begins . . . “Dear Mama, . . you dive me” . . . this or that— Sometimes when there's a decided intention of coaxing, it's “mine dear Ba”, or “mine darling”. Robert is generally “mine dear Wobit”. Oh, Robert keeps his advantages I assure you. I have reason to be jealous.

As to Girolama's doves they are objects of deep interest. He prays for them occasionally, & always sends them lumps of sugar by poor Girolama, who probably turns the sugar to more personal uses. He told us the other day, that “now,” the “papa-dove had done an egg,” over which Penini was greatly rejoicing. He is in supreme joy at having his “tittet” (ticket) besides, and having the right of entrance to the Boboli gardens at all days & hours. These, I think you know, are the Grand ducal gardens, close by, & magnificent . . rich with trees, & bowering walks & fountains, & with splendid views of Florence from the upper part of them. At first he expected, he said, that the soldiers would salute him from the drums, as they did the Grand Duke himself. And now he is hoping that he shall be allowed to play with the “Lan Dute's litty boys” which of course is a very moderate expectation. I have just had to get six new pinafores for that child. The diaper we bought, Arabel, has worn very badly indeed, English as it is. I have bought too, some embroidery for a little muslin polka jacket for him for the summer, at a reasonable price for Italy—it is from
Letter 98
12 April [1853]
542

A convent. Perhaps we are rather extravagant about Penini’s dress, but the temptation is too strong for me—I can’t resist what is to add a touch to his prettiness.

Arabel! here’s a good thing done by Louis Napoleon. He got out the Madiai. Mark that. It was always said here that he had done it, but I did not know for a certainty until yesterday that it was he. Mr. Hanna has returned from Rome. We heard him preach on Sunday, & yesterday, Monday, he paid us a visit in the morning. He says he believes it to be an incontrovertible fact that Louis Napoleon liberated the Madiai. Whatever that man undertakes to do he does it with his hand, observe... while other people talk, he acts. And he has better & nobler intentions, as always I have maintained, (have’n’t I?) than his critics have an inkling of. You see, after all the talk there has been about his supposed intention of abolishing civil marriages, the Moniteur comes out with the declaration that he never contemplated such a step. Of course he never did. I have been swearing he never did, ever so long! Mr. Stuart is one of his foes to the death—he goes a mile or two on the other side of Robert. Robert & I, by the way, are rather on better terms, with regard to Napoleonism, rapping spirits & the rest. But if I wrote a book on the rapping spirits, or Swedenborgianism—oh poor, darling Robert. How I remember he was vexed in Paris, when Madame Thiebault cried out across Lady Elgin’s drawingroom, “I think, Mr. Browning, you don’t believe in matter at all.”—Ah—Robert & all of you set me down as wild & headlong & the rest—but there’s considerable reason in my wildness, & thought in my head-longness. My creed is, that we have not so much wisdom in the world as to afford to leave off learning, & I try to keep myself open to truth let it come from what quarter it may.—Mr. Hanna had heard a good deal at Rome about the American manifestations. “He is much interested in general about superstitions,” he said, “but not in these—First, they are not poetical, & then they are contradictory to Revelation”—He went on to explain that the state of the spirits wasn’t satisfactory—Evidently he was uneasy because the questionable sorts of spirits were much too easy & said nothing about fire & brimstone! I answered meekly [‘] that the thing to ascertain was whether or not the manifestations were facts. No fact could contradict revelation, though it might contradict a specific interpretation of revelation—as Geological science does the common interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis.” Mr. Hanna & I never get into an argument—oh no—He is a Calvinist of the highest—and I am content to sympathize with him where we are agreed. By the way, Arabel, don’t ruffle Mr. Stratten with any mention of Swedenborg—It would just ruffle him, & he would misapprehend a good deal. Men who teach, are so used to contemplate a truth in a form, that they are always apt to confound the form & the thing, giving an incommensurate importance to the form. Only what is in me I let out naturally to you. I want you to understand that with all my madness, I am not likely to go far from you in belief & love. Let us all hold fast by the scriptures. Indeed I do try not to let go.

I should like to see Faber’s book.30 Does he take the view of “suspended consciousness,” or does he admit the “spiritual body” from the first. Frederic Tennyson is vehemently in favour of Faber’s view of the prophecy. You should hear Mr. Tennyson talk. When we knew him first he gave ear to Swedenborg. But now he has thrown off Swedenborg, & takes the most earthy-of-the-earth view of the body & state of things which shall be. You should hear him talk. He said quite seriously the other night, that the sea would be abolished to make more room, & that Christ
would reign at Jerusalem & carry on the government throughout the world by means of the electric
telegraph. I want to know what Swedenborg has said, wilder than that! M' Tennyson & I fight a
little sometimes, & confute one another out of your testament, Arabel— Robert leans to his side
of the argument, but helps me generously now & then. Oh—that you were here for a righteous
umpire, dearest, darling Arabel! As for Robert, I have a trick of fancying that he is half agreeing
with me in his heart, when he is bumping me most about the head.

It grieves me, what you said about Storm. But then I comfort myself with the idea that if he
talks only as he used to talk to us, a stranger would conclude him to be a Roman Catholic without
waiting for more evidence. Still, it is sad enough that he should not have put away those fancies
after so many years. Fancies fashioned according to the process we know! Arabel—dont forget
to give my true love to Storm when you write to him. I dare say he has left off thinking of me
altogether—but I have not left off loving him dearly—& you must say so—

M' Lytton has come in suddenly to apprize us that the special messenger goes away tomorrow
instead of thursday, so I cant write the letter I meant to send to dearest Henrietta. Well—I must
write to her next time. Meantime I rather grudge all this abstract meditation which I have bestowed
on you, since the rest of my letter must be shortened.

Arabel—Chapman sends a note today to say, that the second volume of my poems is in the
press, & that the proofs will be forwarded duly to “Miss Barrett.” Really—oughtnt I to be
ashamed of myself for troubling you so? It seems to me impudent, to use a mild word. As you
said nothing of any proofs in your last note, I began to conclude that Chapman had taken the
correcting of the press on himself—but no, not he. Dearest Arabel, if you should have much to
do, or not feel well .. what then? Write to me & say how it is— Oh, if you can do it, I know you
will not grudge the time or the pains, but if I helped to tire you it would vex me in the thought
even. And this cold, Arabel—you have had a bad cold. I had a presentiment about your having
a cold. You have been out in all sorts of weather, at the chapel, at the Refuge, everywhere where
you oughtnt to be, & you have a dreadful cold as the consequence! Mention yourself particularly
when you write—& write, I beg of you. Remember with regard to the proofs, to have enough of
them—send for another & another, if not correctly printed. I have swept away heaps of stops
because there were too many. George will be so very kind as to explain where anything is doubtful.
Tell George he doesnt write to me, & he ought. And Robert ought to write to you, & he doesnt—
He cries out against himself every now & then, for really he loves you Arabel, & is always
praising you. Didnt he say once that you suited him as a wife better than I did. Oh—something
that came to the same thing, he said! I remember it! I upbraid him for it! at intervals .. when hard
pressed for something to quarrel about!—

After all, Arabel, Robert & I get on very well together considering, dont you think? We are
actually in the seventh year of marriage, and he pretends to love me better than at first—and,
what is extraordinary, I believe it, Arabel. He bids me tell you too, Arabel, that “we are very
happy in our little child.” I should think we were, indeed. May God be praised for all He has
done for us—

Miss Sandford comes to us tonight. She & her family are about to leave Florence, & I shall
miss her, & so will Robert. We like her much. The Hedleys spent thursday evening with us, &
left Florence yesterday—

They are of opinion .. at least Kate is .. that Italy is considerably colder than England!! You cant think how many English say the same thing— The Olives, the vines, & myself are of a different mind— Robin talks of buying an estate in the isle of Sky .. or an encumbered estate in Ireland, & devote himself to farming—which, poor Kate very reasonably & naturally objected to .. but he really seemed to have it in his head. He discussed, too, patriotically about the duty of living in one’s own country, & spending one’s money there, .. which drew a round of applause from the galleries as a noble sentiment, until we discovered that he had invested his cash, in the meantime, in the Marseilles railroad! So ends patriotism, now a days— I do like Robin— He is so frank & cordial & sunshiney. They go to Paris for a fortnight, & then to England for her confinement .. they dont know where—perhaps to Tunbridge Wells.

I wish I had been there .. at dearest Trippy’s “festa”; as Penini would say! God bless her. Give her some good warm kisses for me.

Arabel, Robert makes the modest request to you that you will go to see his play at the Haymarket.33 Of course you will. Seriously speaking, tell George & all of them from me that, if they go to anybody’s play, they are to go to ours, & clap & shout & save us from damnation,— for really I am anxious about it, seeing that I cant believe that the subtlety & refinement & poetry of Colome’s Birthday will not baffle an English audience.34 It frightens me a little. Perhaps we may be damned enough to satisfy even M! Hanna! —

Dont think that’s a malignant cut against M! Hanna, .. whom I respect & regard with my heart as a true, honest, disinterested Christian man. Would that the church had many such men.

As to the play, a hideous rumour reaches us that it has been “adapted to the stage by the author.”35 Robert referred them to his new edition, if that’s “adapting to the stage”!

Best love to everybody. Tell me all about Papa— & how long he stayed in to avoid the cold, .. & if it did him any harm. God bless you all— Dearest darling Arabel’s Ba.

Will you put Robert’s notes into envelopes & send mine to post with his. He pretends to be “horribly ashamed.”

Address, in RB’s hand: Dear Arabel—with Robert’s kindest love.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year determined from EBB’s references to the performance of Colombe’s Birthday and to “the seventh year of marriage.”
2. By virtue of his attachment to the British Legation; see letter 48, note 20.
3. i.e., Wolff (see letter 93, note 8) had been left in charge during Henry Bulwer’s absence.
4. i.e., Villa Bricchieri at Bellosguardo.
8. Lydia Maria Child (née Francis, 1802–80), a staunch abolitionist and journalist, was the author of romances and children's stories, including *Hobomok, A Tale of Early Times* (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, 1824); *Emily Parker; or Impulse, Not Principle. Intended for Young Persons* (Boston: Bowles and Dearborn, 1827); and *Philothaea. A Romance* (Boston: Otis, Broaders, 1845), as well as numerous articles and sketches for periodicals. A letter of this description does not appear in *The Collected Correspondence of Lydia Maria Child, 1817–1880*, ed. Patricia G. Holland and Milton Meltzer, Millwood, New York: Kraus Microfilm, 1980.


10. *Sic, for Tyng; Stephen Higginson Tyng (1800–85), an Episcopal clergyman from Massachusetts, whose preaching skills intimidated Henry Ward Beecher. The DAB describes him as "a typical low churchman. Trained in the straitest school of the Evangelicals, he never faltered in his allegiance." Theodore Tilton mentions the "Rev. Dr. Tyng" in a letter dated 1 September 1860, as one of the "Special Contributors" to *The Independent* (ms at ABL).

11. The Rev. Dr. Phelps of Stratford, Connecticut, who, in 1850, had experienced "a series of disturbances, which continued with extreme frequency and violence for several consecutive days, and were renewed at intervals for about eighteen months. Objects of all kinds were thrown about the house ... windows were smashed, and a great deal of damage was done" (Frank Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*, London: Methuen, 1902, I, 194–195). A more detailed account of his experiences are recorded by Henry Spicer in *Sights and Sounds: The Mystery of the Day*, London: Thomas Bosworth, 1853, pp. 101–109.


13. Swedenborg claims that "the one God, who is the Creator of the universe, is Esse and Existere in itself, thus God in himself. ... Therefore to introduce into the church a belief that there are three divine persons ... is utterly to destroy the idea of God's unity" (Emanuel Swedenborg, *The True Christian Religion*, London: William Newbery, 1847, p. 29).


15. i.e., universalism—the idea that all humanity is saved by Christ's redemption and that there is no eternal punishment. I have been unable to verify that Swedenborg believed in "universal redemption."


17. According to Swedenborg, "with those, however, who are in evils and untruths [i.e., without regeneration], it is allowed to go up into heaven as a favour; but when they enter they begin to catch their breath or breathe with difficulty, ... and in that condition they writhe like a serpent brought to the fire" (Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Apocalypse Revealed*, translated by Frank F. Coulson, London: The Swedenborg Society, 1970, II, 581).

18. At this point EBB has cancelled the following passage: "(so did the apostle Paul long ago, I maintain)."

19. There are various references in Swedenborg's writings to spirits being in a human form.

20. "Adam and his wife mean the most ancient church that existed on our earth" (*The True Christian Religion*, 466).


22. According to Swedenborg's biographer, when John Wesley wrote to say he was coming to visit Swedenborg, "Swedenborg is said to have replied that the visit proposed by Mr. Wesley would be too late, as he [Swedenborg] was to enter the world of spirits on the twenty-ninth of the next month, never more to return" (Cyriel Odhner Sigstedt, *The Swedenborg Epic: The Life and Works of Emanuel Swedenborg*, New York: Bookman Associates, 1952, p. 431). In preparing to administer communion to Swedenborg on his death bed, Pastor Ferelius suggested that if Swedenborg had delivered his "new theological system" only "to make a name
for himself," that now was the time "to deny either the whole or part of what he had presented." Swedenborg replied, "with great earnestness: 'As truly as you see me before your eyes, so true is everything that I have written; and I could have said more had it been permitted. When you enter eternity you will see everything, and then you and I shall have much to talk about'" (p. 432).

23. Several multi-volume editions of Swedenborg's works were in print at this time.

24. "Storm."

25. Which Lytton had arranged for them; see the beginning of this letter.

26. Ten days earlier EBB had written to Louisa Corkran and asked if she and her husband had found out who had secured the Madiai's release, and reported that she had been "told the other day by somebody who was sworn to secrecy, that England did not do it, & that Louis Napoleon did not do it, (it was attributed to him here) & that the archbishop of Lucca did not do it--Who did it, was a mystery, & by no means to be divulged" (ms at Texas). Ostensibly the French government was credited with the release of Francesco and Rosa Madiai; however, Edward Steane explained that the ex-Duke of Parma and his English chamberlain, Thomas Ward, had intervened on behalf of the Madiai. After they were set free on 15 March 1853, the couple was exiled to France, aided by a subscription raised on their behalf (The Madiai: Narrative of the Recent Persecutions in Tuscany, London: Seeleys, 1853, pp. 84-86). Rosa Madiai died in 1871 and was buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Florence, not far from EBB's grave (Catherine Danyell Tassinari, The History of the English Church in Florence, Florence: Barbèra Press, 1905, p. 188).

27. Louis Napoleon's failure to abolish civil marriages had displeased Pius IX and was one of several reasons why he "made difficulties about crowning the Emperor in Notre-Dame" (Jasper Ridley, Napoleon III and Eugénie, London: Constable, 1979, p. 348).

28. This event occurred in early June 1852, and is mentioned in a letter dated 10 June 1852 from EBB to Mary Minto, in which she is referred to as Baroness Thiébault. I have been unable to provide additional identification for her.

29. Or "testa lunga," as said of EBB by her Italian master; see BC, 10, 25.

30. In 1851 George Stanley Faber (1773-1854) published The Many Mansions in the House of the Father (London: Royston & Brown), a 2nd edition of which appeared in 1854, the year of his death. I take EBB's comments to refer to Faber's description of man in his resurrected state, in which "the Spirit will be reunited to the Body: and thus each individual man will exist, through all eternity, in the condition of a Spirit, but yet with Matter so refined and etherealised as to constitute what the Apostle calls a Spiritual Body (The Many Mansions, 2nd. ed., 1854, p. 66).

31. See letter 7, note 17.

32. EBB's cousin, Robin Hedley, and his wife had left by early March; see letter 95, note 23.

33. There is no evidence that Arabella went to see the play; however, it seems that George went (see B-GB, 183).

34. In June 1853, EBB wrote to Joseph Milsand: "You will have heard, and gladly, through your kindness, of the success of 'Colombe's Birthday.' At the same time, we cannot expect it to be what is called a 'drawing play' with our English audiences, who require broader and coarser outline and color than you do in France" (Scribner's Magazine, July 1896, p. 113). The reviewer in The Athenæum of 30 April 1853 remarked: "Whether the taste of the public for so refined a creation on the stage is yet formed, remains to be seen" (no. 1331, p. 537). Edward Litt Laman Blanchard (1820-89), who attended the opening night of Colombe's Birthday at the Haymarket Theatre on 25 April 1853, recorded in his diary: "The play very dull and heavy; elaboration of poetical idea." (Clement Scott and Cecil Howard, The Life and Reminiscences of E.L. Blanchard, 2 vols., London: Hutchinson & Co., 1891, I, 106).

35. EBB expressed the same concern to Mrs. Jameson: "By the way, a dreadful rumour reaches us of its having been 'prepared for the stage by the author.' Don't believe a word of it. Robert just said 'yes' when they wrote to ask him, and not a line of communication has passed since" (LEBB, II, 112). In offering his permission to Helen Martin, RB wrote: "do what you think best with it, and for me ... Only, pray follow the corrections in the last edition (Chapman & Hall will give you a copy), as they are important to the sense" (T. Martin, Helena Faucit, London: Blackwood & Sons, 1900, pp. 237-238).
My ever beloved Arabel I have your note. Even a note is precious of course—but it is'nt to take the place of the letter you owe me, if you please . . . or if you dont please. I claim my letter—Arabel, I observe that your "cold" is only just now "going away". It has therefore been a very long standing cold—a bad cough, I dare say. I do entreat you to tell me precisely & in detail how you are . . . how you are looking . . . whether you are thinner than usual—everything about you in fact. You are much too general for anybody as far off as I am, Arabel, and really I must hear everything about you. As for me, I hold you out a glorious example certainly in the way of writing letters— I deserve to be praised (and imitated). As Penini says of his drawings .. “Say it’s pretty! I like you to say it’s pretty.” And we will both praise M’ Lytton who gives us warning of another special messenger. One advantage of these messengers, is, by the way, that they go faster than the post—in five days only!

To begin with what you will think not bad news, . . dear M’ Kenyon sent us the fifty pounds yesterday, apologizing for not having done it before. Of course he had forgotten it, though he does’nt say that. This piece of prosperity is balanced by an equal adversity . . the announcement that instead of receiving anything from the ship this year, we are just to pay the insurance. I suppose, in fact, that on the side of the ship, there will be no more income. Robert & I infer that it was such information that reminded M’ Kenyon of the January omission. He concludes that at so late a period we shall not go to Rome & Naples now, but put it off for next winter—!! Well—we have not made up our minds about it after all– Robert says we must talk it over & compare the means & ends quietly. If we had the money, we might still make out a month or six weeks at Rome & then go to Naples—& then to Paris, & England? Only, calculate, Arabel, how expensive this great sweep would be! Sarianna writes from Paris that she has laid by ever so much money to enjoy herself with in London, but that we must go with her, to that end, . . that we must "keep our promise to dear Arabel" . . and so on. I for my own part, cant bear to give up the thought of seeing you this summer . . oh, I DONT, I do assure you. We must be patient & take it all into consideration quietly & rationally. Many things may fall out—for instance there’s Robert’s play, which may have a success, though I am not very sanguine. It’s like hanging a miniature on a wall, and high up too, & expecting effects from it. Yet the theatrical people ought to know their own trade. We shall see.

Arabel—I am to give a note of introduction to Miss Sandford who asked for one to you—Perhaps you wont like it—perhaps you wont like her. But she asked for it, & I could’nt refuse, you know. She is going to London for the summer, to her despair. Her dream is the country & silence, and her father & family drive about the world from city to city, till she talks seriously (oh quite seriously!) of dying of it. This last crisis of going to London for the summer, threatens to be fatal. “Paris is better than London.” They generally spend their winters in Paris. Very wealthy
people they are—a peculiar person, with great earnestness & veracity of character—full of what may be called 'soul'... that is, carrying sentiment into the senses, in a remarkable degree. There is unequal cultivation, otherwise—but I like her, we both like her extremely. She grows much on you as you know her. She has been most affectionate to us, & as it is for love of me that she wants to know you, you must let her, for your love’s sake to me, whether you like it or not— We have seen a great deal of her—once a week or oftener she has spent an evening with us, & really I shall miss her, & so will Robert— Also she was very kind to our Penini, which is never thrown away on me of course.

My dearest Arabel, if the “Rapping spirits” pass away, & there is no more heard of them... if they break like a bubble... there, will be an end, as you say. But that’s the point in doubt, you will be pleased to observe; & instead of the end, I am much inclined to believe it to be the beginning. If you see nothing extraordinary in that article in Tait, certainly you are difficult to startle. Admitting the facts, (and remember, there is evidence for these or the like facts quite apart from M! Spicer) admitting the facts, the movement appears to me most extraordinary & teeming with extraordinary consequences & inferences. It is plain also that it is about to make way in Europe—that the first steps are taken. You read of course in the Times, the table experiment at Vienna. When the Times catches up a subject, that’s a sign that it is at the level of the popular interests—Otherwise, not a word, of course, from the time-serving Times! Now observe. At first the possibility of moving tables was a thing absolutely denied. Now it is no longer denied, but people think they receive it on rational principles when they say the word... electricity. That’s a word like another—it sounds scientific—it does’nt imply a ‘soul’... there’s nothing objectionable therefore about it. The fact is that the table-moving is involved in the history of the Rapping spirits... which the very same persons will maintain to be “humbug”—“deception.” You cant separate the two things. It was by the direction of the “spirits” (so called) that the “circles” were established &c. You must look back & connect one thing with another. As to ‘magnetism’, of course there is the magnetic influence & current—no one doubts it. And that the tables which are ordinarily moved must be moved by spirits external to you, I am not inclined to maintain. But that it is the action of spirit upon matter; abnormally, ... I do believe—a modification of mesmerism whatever that may be. The soul obtains an abnormal position in reference to the body in all mesmeric circumstances, & this, when intensified, admits the spiritual communications. M! Powers imagines that the table-experiments which are being tried everywhere in Europe just now as a matter of dilettante [sic] philosophy, will be the means of making in many places what are called mediums & inducing the spiritual manifestations—he thinks it probable that this may be “the way of Providence.” M! Lytton is expecting “a new development of Christianity.” (oh, he is’nt a Swedenborgian, Arabel—you mistake!) M! Tennyson says it’s a device of Satan to persuade man that his will is omnipotent, and so to give him over, body & soul, to a legion of devils. (This is a pleasing mode of viewing the question.) But you may suppose how in the midst of all this visionariness, my poor Robert is in a glorious minority, trying hard to keep his ground as a denier, & well-nigh carried off his feet—oh, you ought to be with him, Arabel, for really it’s hardly fair. “I cant understand” says M! Tennyson in his grave, slow, quiet way, “on what possible principle
you can resist the evidence." Robert has his mind open, he maintains, & is ready to believe what
he shall see & hear himself. And Mr Clarke made a deep impression at the moment, I must tell
you—only such impressions pass. Still Robert is inclined to try some experiments. We tried the
table-experiment the other day . . . Mr Tennyson, Mr Lytton, Robert & I . . . & failed. We tried only
for twenty minutes though—& Robert was laughing all the time . . which was wrong . . because
there ought to be concentration of thought. Mr Powers brought a letter he had received the other
day from a friend of his, an elder in a presbyterian church, who said he had seen a table spin
round under the touch of a lady & child, & was himself whirled round in a chair— Penini was
fixed in attention while this letter was read, the soul leaping out of his blue eyes; & Mr Powers
couldn't help dropping the conversation to say "What a splendid little fellow that is!" Oh—and I
must tell you—when Penini went to bed the same night, he observed .. "Well, dear Papa &
Mama! Tomollow morning, let us hope, the table will dance and pin." (spin). The "let us hope"
was magnificent. You see he is preparing already to carry out cheerfully the aspirations of his
age.

Mr Powers told us that the lady who had moved a table in Rome was in Florence . . that he
was going to see her, & that if she could do anything worth seeing he would bring her here. Mr
Powers, with all his spiritualism, has one of the most cautious, & investigating intellects, I ever
met with. Such eyes that man has. They look through, as well as looking up. He was not satisfied
with the experiments when he came to see them, & would not bring the lady here. Certainly the
table span round—but she walked round with it, her hands touching it, & he could not be absolutely
sure, he said, that unconsciously to herself (she was much excited) some movement was not
given by the hands. It might not be so—but he was not convinced. He was to go again, & then
would examine the case minutely. The child, (said to be stronger than the mother) was in bed, &
he had not seen her. But this lady was no "medium" . . she knew nothing of the subject—she
didn't believe in the Rapping spirits: she had simply been trying experiments just as we had tried
them—so it was not likely that we should get much good from her. Robert is going to try the
table-experiment again at Mr Power's, with some other gentlemen, friends of his,—but I believe
the efficacy of anything of the kind depends entirely on the persons, & they may fail again. As to
Mr Tennyson we are not going to draw him in—because he has "scruples"—he said the other
night that it was "satisfactory to him to have failed, considering that the success w'd be altogether,
in his opinion, the work of the Devil." 7

A most absurd conclusion surely—but . . with those views . . "to him it is unclean," 8 and one
would not draw him into it on any account, of course.

Did you read in the papers, Owen of Lanark's 'manifesto'? 9 Was'n't that curious? A disbelief
in future existence is mixed up with his whole famous system, you know.

Mr Kenyon says in his letter yesterday, that as he does'n't believe in a world of spirits, its too
great a jump for him to believe in rapping spirits . . & he laughs at me in his goodhumoured
way,—but admits that in London too there are believers. Miss Bayley, who writes an enclosure,
does'n't condescend to refer to the subject.

And you will be tired of it by this time. With regard to Swedenborg, my dearest Arabel, you
quite mistake, if you imagine that he spiritualizes away the life & death of the Saviour. He receives
the letter of the scripture everywhere, & maintains that from the letter the Church is to derive doctrine. The apparent exception is the history of Adam &c—which you must be aware, very orthodox theologians have received in a typical sense: & Swedenborg says of it naïvely, that the church on earth is at liberty to understand it literally, though it is differently apprehended by the angels. But even here you cant say that he spiritualizes away—he believes historically—only understanding that of “the most ancient church,” which is predicated of an individual. He respects the letter of Scripture in fact, to a degree beyond what I have been accustomed to think rational. There’s a great deal of the Jewish reverence of the words, of the form—and, to the letter, he insists, the church is to look for doctrine. At the same time he pretends to have discovered an internal sense, a spiritual sense, to the whole Scripture,—which is a part of his great doctrine of correspondence .. such as he delivers it concerning the natural & spiritual worlds, & the natural & spiritual bodies of man. Oh—he is a wonderful thinker, & has hit upon deep truths touching our relations to the universe, I feel sure. He impresses me immensely, & makes me humble in regard to him even where I am inclined to think him mistaken. My dearest Arabel—The redemption of man by Christ’s life & death, he holds as fast as you do—he says that without that great humiliation of the Christ-God, the human race must have perished before now—and that no individual is saved except by the means of it. It is curious in relation to these so called “spirit-manifestations,” to observe that their (the spirits’) state appears to agree exactly with Swedenborg’s account of the spirit-world (by the lower spirits)—while their differences & imperfections of opinion, as related on all sides, commends his advice to you when he says that it is not lawful for a man to receive doctrine from spirit or angel, but from only the Lord & the Word.

Arabel—I had a visit the other day from (Justina Deffel.) She is not charming, you know, .. she abused Italy, depreciated art, climate, scenery, in the most trenchant way—swore that all the trees were pollarded!-!!!!- Do you understand how Robert was all but uncivil to her after that? It was the way, the manner, the tone of voice. Oh, he took such a hatred to her—he never “saw such a hateful woman in his life.” Well—she came another time, & M' Stuart was here. When she went away, I said to him .. “There’s Robert’s detestation!” He laughed a good deal & declared that although he himself did not dislike her at all, he had been thinking she was just the woman to be displeasing to Robert. She is’nt very pleasant certainly—but it was goodnatured of her to come here twice during her week at Florence, and it is’nt her fault that she cant see beauty,—with a blind soul. We are hard upon people for mere faults of capacity & sensibility, I do think. She said that she knew all the pictures almost, by engravings, .. but that she had had pleasure in seeing some of those which she had copied herself in England.! As to the climate—she never knew it to rain six days running in England(!) .. & it rained seven in Naples .. which was vexatious certainly—and she has had rain here too .. so vexation is legitimate & exaggeration natural. Only, the peas & asparagus dont agree with her—we have had them this fortnight or three weeks—a small dish of peas at two pence halfpenny English. Think of the magnificent chestnut forests being pollarded, every tree of them!! Robert would have pollarded the lady, if he had had his own way.

We are very anxious—at least I am very anxious about our play. Did I say that before? Yes. Say nothing of it,—I would’nt for the world suggest such a thought to Robert, to whom it never
seems to have occurred,—but I am haunted by the fear of the Van [sic, for Von] Muller enemy catching scent of it & coming in at the death with brutal cries as they might. Those people, you see, must be irritated to the heart—and here w'd be a public opportunity. So frightened I am. It's quite extraordinary to me that Robert never seems to think of such an apparent possibility!—he who thinks of everything in general—God keep us from such an annoyance, I pray.

The poor Hedley's! Oh, I am so sorry for them! Both the sons to bring such grief & disgrace! Robin will be very much vexed. It appeared in Galignani under the head (in large letters) of "Gentlemanly English officers." You see it is cutting short John's career in all public respects—because his father could not apply for even a civil office for him if dismissed [from] the military service. I am very sorry. As to uncle Hedley, he has not deserved this grief from his children indeed. Tell me whatever you come to know.

Arabel—what is this about poor Maddox & her knee? How is she now? I wish you would say something of my dear Minny too, whose legs, in your note before last, seemed worse than usual.

How I thank you for teasing yourself with all the trouble about my book. Of course I knew it w'd not be difficult—it just requires attention & exactness—there's a sort of knack in it. You don't tell me whether the type is like the old type—the page, the same size. They are slow, you seem to imply—which is a pity, because the book ought to be out soon to catch the season. Robert & I are very busy with our new books, & he has nearly enough lyrics to print he announced to me the other day. As for me I am not so near the goal—not half way, nor a quarter, perhaps. I have work for the summer before me.

No, we saw no more of the Lindsays this winter than in former ones. They are peculiar, & we don't join on somehow. The Robin Hedleys were embraced & deserted much as I was—but I believe they mean well by us all in spite of everything. I wish if you see Clara, that you would tell her, Robert was vexed to find them gone before he could give them the letter of introduction they asked for—He understood from M! Lindsay a later day for the departure than the actual one. Arabel, you don't say one more word about Mary Hunter. Did she go to the Owens, & how does it seem to answer? Tell me something of her & her father. You ought to write to him, Arabel, I think—and if you do, mind you say that I think affectionately of both him & his.— Well, I am delighted with the prospect of the Jamaica mines—coffee & gold .. for poor dearest Papa's sake chiefly .. & also for all of you. Why, it will be sublime if you find a gold mine at Retreat. Not that you personally, you darling Arabel, will care very much—just as I, in your place, would not care much—I would rather have satisfactory news of the Rapping spirits—Do you know, Arabel, I am in a state of high expectations just now—wonderful things will soon be learnt, it seems to me—but in the meantime you needn't be afraid; I shall not go mad .. I am simply holding my eyes open .. & ears. To go back to the "mines", .. a prosperity of that kind would be excellent even for you .. & the Refuge!—now wouldn't it?—after all?—

A most wonderful recovery Mr Orme's is—if it lasts—Give her my love & say how glad I am.

Have you read Bulwer's 'My Novel'?—? Most interesting it is, after you get into it. We have just done reading it. What sort of letter this is, I am afraid to guess—Robert is talking to me about
the fixed stars .. & millions of billions of miles .. which will leave you as a result an infinity of perplexities to make out my ideas which are unfixed correspondingly.

Oh, you please me so by telling me of dearest George, & his new opening. It must be of good augur, I should think. As to Australia, who can be sure, or even hope steadily that £800 a year there is worth £100 in England? The accounts are not charming .. to me .. & the prices are prodigious evidently. See what M' Howitt says of it, my dear Occy!—19

So you think us much happier here than in Paris. “Who knows?” as Penini is fond of saying. I liked Paris— we liked Paris— Paris was very amusing. After all, probably I have enjoyed more this last winter. In the first place, I have been better in health— much better— then, the quiet has been exquisite— we have had “books & works & healthful play”20 (with Penini) enough to please D' Watts,— much less me. It has been a very happy winter. Still, to stand in the magnetic current of ideas in Paris, has a great charm too. Which is best— champagne or milk? Milk, if you take it every two hours. Then, from habit, or weakness, I always like quiet, in spite of Robert's charges against me for dissipation. It's always an effort to me to go into society, & I never feel a moment's depression because of a “retired life.” Then Robert seems to me not very miserable, really. And we enjoy our evenings particularly .. when it rains, & when it grows too late for a ring at the door.

So glad I am that you have put off the horrible black.21 The new dress must be pretty too. Thank you for telling me that I may see you with my inward eyes. There's help in the knowledge of costume. It is right to have the jacket— Have you the waistcoat .. which I see by Galignani who always gives the Parisian fashions,22 is still in the ascendant. Nothing prettier or more convenient— yes, & more feminine-looking, when adapted properly. It would suit you—it suits everybody who is not over-broad. As for me I go on steadily wearing your gift. I never liked a gown so much in my life, I think—which is partly for your sake of course!— a curious admission.

Penini comes to ask Robert to measure him against the door, to see if he shall soon have “anoller birsdays” to get “some more toys.” Indeed he has improved, Arabel. For goodness & sweetness he is an exceptional child. Wilson was saying this morning that the only thing she had to reprove him for ever, was some feat of mischief, when he cut a skein of silk in two, or hid her shoes out of fun. There's not a rufflement of temper in the child!— which, considering his great vivacity, is extraordinary. Robert & I are both persuaded that God's grace is in the child, making him so sweet & radiant. I know you have prayed for him, Arabel, & from the seed time of many prayers who shall question the springing of the corn? I, at least, cannot. We had a picture of a Holy family sent here the other day, & he kissed the little Jesus again & again. Robert who was looking on said, “Yes, it was very good of Jesus Christ, .. was'nt it? .. to come down & be made a little child to save Penini”— “Oh, les! I love gentle Jesus!,” he answered fervently. So you know he has taken to give us his benediction every night. Wilson carries him in in his nightgown to say good night, & when he is at the door going away, .. he says .. he said last night .. “Dood night mine darlings! Dood night mine two fiends! mine little one & mine gleat one! I hope gentle Jesus and the little lamb will tate tare o f you & mate you dood.” Always he says something of the sort, & I would'nt miss such a blessing for the world. He seems to have an 'idée fixe' of Jesus carrying the lamb, as he has seen it in a picture, .. and one cant explain it out of his head. He is
too young to have types explained, but it will do as it is for a while. The great aim should be to make a child vital in his religious thoughts—I mean that they shouldn't be my thoughts put into him, but his own thoughts,—not my words but his own words. There is something gained when a child thinks as naturally about God as about his toys—doesn't it appear so to you?

His argument on all occasions is that God won't like this or that. The other day I, being very busy, refused to do something he asked of me—cutting out a castle in paper it was! I have a fatal accomplishment of the kind which occasions me a great deal of trouble. He held up his hand like a "Paul at Athens." God not lites it, when anybody won't do what anybody asks. See here. Gentle Jesus velly kind (kind) to Mama & Penini and Papa,... so you ought to do what he says."—

Then, changing his voice, (for I was about to controvert the application of this theology) & putting on his most coaxing smile, & kissing me kiss upon kiss. "Tome, (come) mine dear Ba, you be dood! I not lite to see you naughty. It won't tire you velly much, I sint"— There was no resisting that of course— I yielded at once, & was rewarded (by the time I had got to the turret-windows) by a burst of gratitude—"Mine darling Ba, how velly kind you are"!— Just now he has gone out. He comes to say good bye to me with his hat on. looking such a darling. It is sunday—Robert is at church alone, & I am writing to you because of not being very well this morning. (Oh, it is nothing... I shall be myself tomorrow). Penini comes with the modest suggestion that he should like to go to the play to see the dancing horses, directly. I answer that he should certainly go some day... (it's a day theatre... the Goldoni... —) but that today being sunday, its out of the question—people don't go to plays when they can go to church. Penini doesn't seem quite convinced, "because of Papa"—"where's Papa gone to?"... he suspects that Papa is with the dancing horses. I say... No. "Papa is at church, saying his prayers. Don't you think that's better?" His face lighted up in a moment,... "Oh, les!" said he!— "Dear gentle Jesus!" Kissing up into the air. You never saw such a shining, angelical little face!... In a moment after, he had run off, but returned in haste to tell me that "tomollow" he means to go the "races" in the morning, and to the "play" in the evening—(there's a programme of dissipation for you!) & that in the meantime he shall go to Boboli gardens, & then pay a visit to Girolama. "And I spect (expect) Olama will be at the window looting out for me. Who knows?" Off he runs at the height of good spirits.

Has Alfred taken actual possession of the situation you mention...— & will it take him from London? Tell me everything, for I am anxious.

I am doubtful about <Annie Hayes>, because you only hint at what you have heard. If it is anything decided & authentic, you certainly should not visit her—there can be no question about that. And what you say sounds very threatening. Ah—poor <Annie Hayes>!— When I think of her in the days gone so far by, & hear this discord against that keynote! How lovely she looked! how her mother loved her!— But there was always a defect of love in her, whether of the natural or spiritual affection.

There are races, English & Italian, at the Cascine just now... but nobody from this house has been to them. Wilson was going to take Penini one morning, & got into an omnibus which ran up against a wall & frightened her—whereupon she came home.
It's a lovely, lovely May day! It makes me look back. (Justina Deffel) will forgive Florence
for once— By the way here's Robert's last word of crossness against her—he wrote it in pencil
& threw it to me, promising that he w'dt be cross anymore.—

How much upon a level
Lie these expressions tw–
We see just-in-a Devil
What we see just in you.28

Have you seen Mary Ruxton?29

How are dearest Trippy's household affairs going on? Give her some kisses from me & say
that I dearly love & think of her. Here's a tolerably long letter I think. Now, Arabel, if you dont
write to me!— This letter had to go to London—or I owe one to that dearest dear Henrietta who
will be surely complaining of me & <thinks> perhaps that I dont think of her as much as I do.
Ah—if I were to get to London this summer I should see her as well as you!— God bless you all–

My darling Arabel, take care of yourself, & write to me. Robert's true love as at all times–
Mine to everybody–

Your ever attached Ba–

Address: Miss Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. EBB started this letter on 30 April, a Saturday; then, near the end, she mentions Sunday and May Day.
Year provided by postmark.
2. See letter 96, note 3.
3. See letters 93, note 7 and 96, note 18, respectively.
4. In The Times for 20 April 1853, a report entitled “Table Moving' in Vienna" referred to the phenomenon
as the “American discovery,” noting that “in two cases ladies fainted; but this is hardly calculated to excite
surprise, as there is something weird in the whole affair,” and closed with the observation that “table movers ... are like so many wild witches and warlocks” (p. 8).
5. Unidentified.
6. Unidentified.
7. See EBB's comment in the 4th paragraph of letter 97 that Frederick Tennyson “will have it that it's
purely develish.”
9. Robert Owen (1771–1854) was a socialist reformer, who established a thriving community of schools at
his mills in New Lanark, near Glasgow. He was the author of numerous works on related subjects, and had
recently published a pamphlet entitled Manifesto of Robert Owen To All Governments and Peoples (dated London,
30 March 1853), in which he related his personal investigations of “these new manifestations,” in visits to an
American medium named Mrs. Hayden. “Until the commencement of this investigation, a few weeks since, I
believed that all things are eternal, but that there is a constant change in combinations and their results, and that
there was no personal or conscious existence after death” (pp. 1–2). On 20 May, EBB wrote Miss Mitford:
“You heard of ... Owen of Lanark yielding up his infidelity to a future state, at the bidding of the ‘Rappings’”
(EBB-MRM, III, 385).
10. Not traced.
12. EBB was afraid that Margaret von Müller, who had won a breach of promise suit against RB, Sr. (see letter 73, note 4), would use the occasion as an opportunity to publicise the fact that she had never been paid.

13. EBB's cousin John Hedley (18307-1912) had been involved in an "altercation," according to the 20 April 1853 issue of *Galignani’s Messenger*: "Gentlemanlike English Officers—A general court-martial assembled at Preston on the 7th inst. for the trial of Lieutenants Shirley, Dashwood, Hedley and Fawcett, of the 50th (Queen's Own) Regiment, and closed its proceedings on the 13th. ... It appears that on the evening of 17th March, 'St. Patrick's Day,' some altercation took place in the officer's mess room between Lieut. Shirley and Ens. Leeds, and others; Lieutenants Shirley and Hedley, using disgusting, insulting, and threatening language towards Ens. Leeds, which ended by Lieutenants Shirley, Hedley, Dashwood, and Fawcett forcibly taking Ensign Leeds to a pump, and pumping on him. A court of inquiry assembled on 21 March to investigate the affair, which resulted in the present general court-martial."

14. Mary Maddox (b. 1793) was a dressmaker and seamstress in Ledbury. She was the subject of stanzas by EBB, first published in *Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Hitherto Unpublished Poems and Stories, with an inedited autobiography*, ed. H. Buxton Forman, Boston: The Bibliophile Society, 1914, pp. 126-128. This is the first of seven references to Maddox EBB makes until June 1855 (see letter 122, note 11), after which time, there are no further references. From the context of these references it seems that Maddox had suffered either an injury or illness.

15. See letter 94, note 34.

16. Clara and Martin Lindsay; see letter 23, note 8.

17. In a letter dated 23 July 1853, EBB's father was encouraged by his cousin George Goodin Barrett to consider speculating in the Consolidated Copper Mining Company: "Never was such a show of ore of the best & most abundant" (ms at Eton). Edward Moulton Barrett replied on 1 September that, in his opinion, "the immense expences attendant on working the Mines" would cause "the expectation of large profits" to be "woefully disappointed" (ms at Eton).

18. *My Novel or Varieties in English Life* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1853) had first been published in 1851 by Tauchnitz.

19. William Howitt (1792-1879), husband of Mary Howitt and author of numerous books (see letter 107, note 17). Howitt was in Australia from September 1852 until August 1854, and several letters he wrote from there appeared in *The Times*. In the issue of 6 March 1853, he wrote in detail about the scandalous price of living in Australia due to the emigration, and noted that a house which would rent for 10/ a year in England cost 200/ per year in Australia. He also mentioned the harsh conditions, referring to "hardships and severity of labour that men accustomed to offices and banks are totally unfitted for." He later recorded his Australian adventures in *Land, Labour, and Gold; or, Two Years in Victoria* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855, 2 vols.).


21. For Mary Elizabeth Graham-Clarke; see letter 88, note 5.

22. I have been unable to trace any details in *Galignani’s Messenger* corresponding to EBB's comments; however, advertisements in issues around this time note various Parisian shops offering assortments of barêges and jackets.


24. "Teatro Goldoni, in the Via S. Maria, on the south side of the Arno; connected with it is a day theatre, or *Arena*, an open place for various spectacles" (Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, London: John Murray, 1852, p. 543).

25. Alfred had been offered a situation "in some steam company of £500 a year" (EBB to Julia Martin, 21 April [1853], ms at Wellesley); however, it seems the position didn't come through after all.
Letter 99

30 April [-1 May 1853]

26. See letter 10, note 24; this is an allusion to her marital difficulties.
27. Perhaps in anticipation of the Feast of the Ascension (5 May 1853), which, according to Murray’s “is kept as a species of popular jubilee; everybody makes holiday. The Cascine, in particular, are filled with family parties ... taking their merry banquets” (Murray’s Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy, London: John Murray, 1852, p. 544).
29. i.e., formerly Mary Minto; see letter 24, note 16.

Letter 100

Florence.
June 11 [1853]

My beloved Arabel I am vexed about the Legation. I calculate on the messengers—but plainly, (though just now in the absence of Sir Henry Bulwer they send the despatches much more seldom,) the messenger has gone without Mf Lytton’s warning us of the opportunity. He has been ill with an attack of quinsey, otherwise I am sure it would not have happened. Ill or well however I cant wait for him any more. You will be wondering about me. So, this time, you must have a duodecimo instead of the usual folio— I had a letter yesterday from dearest Henrietta, & she shall hear from me, assure her— If you had two babies you would not have the rights on me which she acknowledges—but as it is, what with the infantry & the general militia, she seems to me filled up to the brim with business & pleasure too. What a comfort it is, Arabel, to see her so happy! Really her letter made me quite joyous yesterday. I envy her the she-baby .. that’s certain—but I wont use the evil-eye for that! I am glad she has it, dear thing, .. and I wish you had the same, Arabel, under respectable circumstances. Now just see! If she had chosen to imagine it impossible to live under a thousand a year, & put the extinguisher on her life accordingly! How unwise—how lamentable! even after the fashion of this world, Arabel!

Ah my dearest, dearest Arabel, I tremble to begin to speak to you of England! Here is deep in June! Rome unseen! How could we bear the expence of going north & south again this summer! & how could we look at Mf Kenyon’s face without having looked at Rome! Ask yourself. I should have told you, in justice to dear Mf Kenyon’s generosity, that in his last letter he desired us whenever we wanted money to do him the gratification of drawing on him—but you know we would not, could not, should not do such a thing, unless Penini wanted bread— And even then!!—If we were rich I would go across Europe to see you for a week, & not think of fatigue or trouble—Certainly we would go to England this summer & return for Rome in the winter. Sarianna is horribly disappointed for one thing. She had made up her mind to make an English visit this summer with us .. & we seem to use her & her father rather ill to leave them on their own resources in Paris. I am convinced (in my instincts) that they dont like Paris—that everything there goes against the grain with them:—and yet Sarianna is more agreeably situated than she was in London .. infinitely more. Our friends the Corkrans have been the most affectionate of friends to her—& Mf Carmichael Smith has paid her many attentions. Still, the place forbidden,
you know, always passes for Eden, with man or peri: & I can see plainly that poor Sarianna looks back yearningly to that desolate lantern at Bayswater as a lost paradise. Not that she says so. Oh no, she never complains. But I can see. The last letter was more cheerful however— She had been to Montmorency with the Corkrans to see Rousseau's house, & she likes the view from her own rooms. I should think so— The most splendid view to be had in any European city perhaps, with the exception of Venice.

Did Mf Kenyon tell you the whole story of his adventure with M's Van [sic, for Von] Muller— how she introduced herself to him as her own sister (mark what an intriguing woman she is!) & how he considered her clever "with good manners" & "by no means unattractive." It's really a justification of the poor victim that she should appear in such a light to Mf Kenyon. For my part I make many allowances for him— He could not have a chance with such a woman. She told Mf Kenyon that "her sister" had had an adventurous life .. & when she was very young, in consequence of a secret marriage, had a child without the knowledge of her parents. Another sort of confession, you know, had been made to Mr Browning— Ah well! the wicked get the prizes in this world! Her object in going to Mf Kenyon was plainly to extract money, by a statement of the melancholy necessity she was under (otherwise) of outlawing the beloved object. Mf Kenyon said wisely that were it his own case, he should be quite indifferent to being outlawed or not outlawed, & that Mf Browning, having resolved on living out of England, would not care a straw for a mere form such as outlawry was. Afterwards he had a note from the lady .. "I am not my sister but myself." There was a coup de theatre! He replied coldly, that the subterfuge 'she had thought fit to adopt in the manner of her introduction to him', had not raised her in his esteem. So, an end. Robert doubts still whether they will carry out the outlawry. I am convinced they will, though I dont vex him by saying so— Not that he will take it to heart. He has learnt some philosophy on the subject of late— & our Paris friends will keep the announcement out of Galignani, we know. I am more sorry for Sarianna than for the rest. I fear it will distress her inordinately. The old man is not to be told of it. Why should he? He would understand it to mean being posted as a highwayman,— poor innocent man.

We must get away from the heat in July of course, but where, I dont know any more than you. We should like Sorrento best, & then we might turn on our heel to Rome for the winter—the difficulty being the expence of getting there & living there. The Neapolitan states are the dearest part of Italy. Also, Robert thinks it w'd be hazardous for us to present ourselves there by sea, .. for they are very strict about names just now, & we fear our names may have penetrated. A man of the name of Barclay, for instance, was stopped because of brewrey [sic] associations. "Casa Guidi windows" is prohibited in Florence—there's an honour! Its a sign at the same time that eyes, we are not suspecting, may be on us. The prohibition is only of late. It would be inconvenient if we travelled to Naples & were sent back—wouldn't it?

Depend on it Arabel, if we are alive & God suffers it, we shall be with you early in next year's summer. Such a time! Yes, such a time! But I do entreat you to utilize this season & get into the country. If it is proposed to Papa he cant refuse it! You must really go—you must. Now let it be proposed to Papa—dont make obstacles. Its your duty to see to your health this summer. Next summer I shall be absorbing you & making you pale with a course of Swedenborg & rappl
spirits—if indeed we are not familiarized, all of us, with these manifestations long before then in a way you little expect. We shall be in England as soon as the weather is mild enough, printing our books7. that will be a business-necessity. I shall like to see my own book through the press, in spite of the second me-ship which you present—because when a M’s. is set up in type I can always do something more to it as a writer— I must have the opportunity therefore of doing good to my own work. You will take as comfortable rooms for us as you can—but so far off—so far off! Ah yes, I am very vexed, very. And the worst is there’s no use in being vexed.

It is true enough that you may move tables muscularly by cheating, & perhaps even unconsciously when in a state of excitement. But this does’t account for actual phenomena the least in the world. It does not account for tables being moved, when touched gently by the tips of the little fingers—raised up on two feet . & one foot . & then, toppled over. Such things have been done in Florence even. Still less does it account for tables being moved without touch of finger or foot. Does it, do you think? M: Powers who is a great mechanic, & with all his spiritualism very cautious in the reception of evidence, has made a little machine to test these phenomena . a slight piece of wood turning upon a pivot, so that the least amount of force would move it. This, it is not necessary to touch at all. It follows your finger—but only after being sufficiently mesmerized, I think. For the explanation of these table phenomena, as ordinarily observed, seems to be simply that you mesmerize the wood, which, when saturated with the magnetic fluid from you, partakes of your vitality as if it were a living thing itself. Therefore the question resolves itself into the old mystery— “What is mesmerism? what is animal magnetism?” It implies an abnormal state of the soul, surely. A connection with spirits, many say. Persons subject to animal-magnetism are more recipient of the influence of the rapping spirits, for instance— Undeniably these mesmerized tables come to us through the rapping-spirits. You cant get rid of that fact. Whether, in Wimpole Street, you move the tables voluntarily or involuntarily, we cant decide here of course—but if you all are honest I dont see why you should’nt do what certainly has been done elsewhere. “Electricity” is a word that explains nothing, observe. Electricity is probably the means through which the soul acts on matter. But the word means nothing in itself. I had a letter the day before yesterday from Athens, . the wife of the American minister to Constantinople. She says that nothing is talked of in Greece except “table-moving & spiritual manifestations”. What she herself saw was quite unsatisfactory to her, however—but she added that with the testimony so high & reliable, she cant believe the majority of persons mixed up with the subject, capable of imposture. Now M: Marsh when she was here, did not even believe common mesmerism. She is sceptical on all those subjects—or was. She has lived too out of America, some years. M: Tennyson was much satisfied that you, Arabel, cant help to move a table. He considers it a corroborative fact touching his theory of the devil. In the same way he congratulated himself that a professor, learned in the new science, who called upon him lately, failed to move his hat. I could’nt help smiling. “What,” said I, “you think your hat was too holy to be practised on by the powers of evil?” “Not exactly that!” (he meant exactly that notwithstanding)— “But in houses where prayer has been much offered, there may be less facility for this kind of operation.”

Now, Arabel, I am going to bring you to the level of my new facts. Miss Clarke (Grace Greenwood,8 the authoress) has passed some days in Florence & several evenings with us. I had
heard of her as a sort of Corinna—but I found her unassuming & cultivated, a pleasing woman whose prettiness is an open question—with fine eyes, & graceful hair. The first evening, not a word of rapping spirits!—I dont know how it was. I had it in my head that she would care only for the "spirits in the leaves" of books, & would scorn all manner of superstitions. On the second evening, however, we were getting intimate, & after being put "en rapport" by a complement of knead cakes, I hazarded a question. To my surprise . . . she winced . . . hesitated . . . & then admitted that her own experience was of so deep a character, that she was unwilling to speak to persons whose sympathy she could not count upon. On which, out-spake Robert & assured her that nobody in the world would be more sympathetic than I was, . . & in fact, that I not only believed everything I had heard, but a good deal that I had'nt heard. Out-spake myself—"I was so interested—so anxious for information . . . I entreated her to tell me what she could." Then we heard a history . . . a mystery . . . call it what you please. I tell you as it was told to me.

She is a resident in Boston with her family, but was absent from home at New York for some months, during which she heard much of the new spiritual phenomena. They were repugnant to her altogether. The "rapping" did not please her imagination, & a great many ridiculous accounts of what had been communicated, disproved the supernaturalism by the apparent inutility. She scoffed therefore at the whole affair & refused to investigate anything. On the evening of her return to Boston, her mother said . . . "I have something to tell you. Since you went away, I have a new belief'—going on to imply that she meant the new phenomena. "Now," said Miss Clarke, "my mother is a very peculiar woman. Of great strength of character, & of a judgement for which I always had the greatest reverence. A deeply religious woman—full of Christian experience. A spiritual woman, yet not visionary. Her admission gave me deep pain.

What I exclaimed . . . you mean to say you believe these absurdities about the rapping spirits? I was glad that the day had closed in, & that she could'nt see the tears of vexation which rushed into my eyes."

Her mother gently advised her to "investigate the subject before she talked of absurdities," & then went on to relate what had passed during her absence from home. It appeared that a family with whom M* Clarke was acquainted, was going to change their place of residence into another neighbourhood. They had a young daughter who was an invalid from a spinal disorder; and, to save her from the fatigue of these circumstances, M* Clarke offered to take charge of her till the removal had been comfortably effected. After the child had been received . . . (she was about twelve years old, & was a slight delicate girl . . ) certain noises were heard in the house—raps. "I hope you wont be displeased" . . said the child to M* Clarke . . "but wherever I go, those noises come! I cant help it indeed. At first I was very much frightened, but now I know there's no harm in them—only I cant help their coming." M* Clarke was much annoyed. She had a strong feeling against the manifestations herself, and her husband & sons had a stronger. She repented her hospitality to the child. Still, the thing was done—and she would use the opportunity for sifting the facts. She watched the child continually. When the raps were at the loudest, she took her on her knee, took off the shoes, and her daughter (Grace's sister) held the feet. That was to test what had been said about the toes, you know. There was no possibility of trick, she became convinced. She even went softly into the child's room at night & stood at her bedside while she slept, & heard the rappings going on on all sides,—on the wall above her head, for instance. Convinced there
was no trick, Mrs. Clarke was not unwilling to test the rapellers by the alphabetical card which she had heard of as the ordinary way of arriving at the meaning of the noises. Then began the wonders of significance. The spirit of her daughter Adelaide, her eldest & favorite daughter who had left the flesh five & twenty years ago presented herself, & brought signs .. identifying herself by detailing various circumstances known only to daughter & mother all those years ago .. for one thing, reminding her of the last scripture-chapter they read together .. naming it .. on the daughter’s deathbed,—& addressing the mother by the word .. “my beloved”—an unusual form of words between daughter & mother, but which this Adelaide between whom & Mrs. Clarke (said Grace with tears running from her eyes) there was a peculiar tenderness, always used, alone of all the daughters-. Not “my beloved mother,” observe, but simply “my beloved”. Other characteristic details were as striking. Mrs. Clarke suffered great conflict of mind. She was troubled greatly at the idea of her daughter being personated by another spirit. She could not rest. One day she was sitting in her own room alone .. no medium present .. She clasped her hands passionately & said, “Oh Adelaide, Adelaide, if this is you, give me a sign that I may be sure of it.” What passed through her mind while she spoke, was, that she might hear a sound addressed to her own ear, like what she had been used to hear through the medium—but suddenly, in a moment, on her breast and on her brow she felt the breath and the pressure of a living creature. “I had my daughter in my arms” was her expression. She was very much overcome.

On Grace’s return, the communications went on. They have kept notes of everything, and the papers are most curious. The spirit-daughter told the mother that she loved her as dearly as ever, .. & that again & again since they parted she had tried to communicate with her but in vain. Often she had been near .. “for we are where our love is”– Only now, is the way of communication opened. It is the beginning of a new era. By an arrangement of Providence the “raps” are used in order to familiarize human nature with other forms of manifestation which are at hand—& are intended, by effects almost ludicrous, to produce doubt, incredulity, discussion in every degree, & so gradually to overcome the natural horror which is set between man in the flesh & the disembodied spirit– That’s the rationale of the proceeding. Adelaide told her mother (said Grace) that she had the power now of approach by vision & voice, .. but that the mother would be overwhelmed & suffer, not being yet prepared for the sight of the “spiritual body.” “Remember” was added, “how you suffered when a communication was made to you by the touch– Wait– Before you leave the body you shall have another sort of sign.” At this time, Grace’s sister, now living at home, has become a writing-medium. The arm of the writer becomes numb & irrespective of the volition, the most rapid communications are made, the signature of the dead sister being precisely autographic.– There are communications too from a brother—& a young nephew. I can’t repeat to you all the details: they are too many. Said Grace to me .. “People say that nothing but trivial things have been communicated. That is supposed, because in families, where the most precious things are said, they are considered too precious for repetition. I have heard the most grand & beautiful communications. The amount to which the medium-faculty is possessed & concealed in private families, is extraordinary, & the greatest communications are made in private families”. “Sometimes,” added Grace, “the gates of Heaven seem indeed open—it is as if you looked in upon the glory– Then, on a sudden, there’s darkness, confusion, contradiction.
Only, many spirits dont contradict their own statements. Adelaide, for instance, whoever the medium may be, is consistent everywhere." She (the so called spirit) exhorts to spirituality of perception in these things—to patience & a spiritual discernment. Now tell me if all this is not curious.

Miss Clarke told me that whatever has happened to her in Europe, her slight illnesses, departures from the intended route, & so on, are known to her mother before Miss Clarke's letters reach her. The spirits tell everything. She says that for herself her life is lightened up. Death appears under another aspect. It is abolished .. as death & separation.

Oh—but I must tell you a pretty, fantastic story,—for which I have not her direct testimony. Miss Peabody,¹⁰ a sister in law of Hawthorne's (the novelist) told it with her own lips however to Grace. Relations of hers had lost a daughter & were in great anguish. The parents believed in these spirits, & had recourse to a medium in order to have communication. They entreated that they might see. The answer was, .. "Sight was not good for them, but they should have a token."

They went into a darkened room in their house, Miss Peabody, the father, mother, & a medium,—and the father, to prevent the possibility of intrusion, locked the door & put the key into his pocket. He held one hand of the medium, & Miss Peabody (who distrusted her, disbelieved in spirits, & submitted to all this through compassion,) held her other hand. The mother was between the father & Miss Peabody .. & so was formed the magnetic circle. In a short time there was a rustling sound, the mother exclaimed that something touched her head, but scarcely had articulated the words when she shrieked out a shriek of mixed terror & joy .. "Oh—she has kissed us." The father struck a light instantly—when to the wonder of all, the head of the mother was discovered crowned with lilies of the valley, which had apparently been snatched from a vase of flowers in the room. She maintained that her daughter had kissed her lips. What are we to say?—If people dont lie .. and why should refined, sensible people take suddenly to lying on a point of this kind?

M' Tennyson granted this much to me after, hearing these stories & others—He would "suspend his judgement about the Devil's doing it all." He is in difficulties about the resurrection you see. What he & I agree absolutely in, is the profound interest with which we look on these things .. expecting what is coming on the earth. Testimonies are pressing in on us all sides—phenomena multiply themselves. That unbelieving old M' Kirkup gets accounts from his friends which stagger him. "Somebody told me the other day that the truth of Swedenborg was demonstrated by these things!!— I always thought Swedenborg was a madman. What has he written?" As to Robert, he was moved while Miss Clarke spoke .. you could'nt doubt her sincerity— And for me, I could'nt help crying a little. Nobody could help being moved. But when she had gone away, he went back to his scepticism—declaring that h(e) would believe only when he saw & heard, himself—

Arabel, if I were in London, I believe, with all my incommunicable feelings on some subjects, I couldnt avoid going to that medium. If a name were articulated by those sounds to me—there would be proof to me. How could I help going? When people go in the spirit of M' Dickens & M' Lewes they meet tricky spirits & are tricked.¹¹ I would go quietly & reverently—and a word would satisfy me. I would go alone, without Robert, without you—¹²

If you see Mary Ruxton, get her to tell you what she knows on the subject. I hear through Sophia Cottrell who had it from Miss Hume¹³ (but dont betray the fact of my information) that
M. Ruxton has been to the medium three times, & that after being perfectly satisfied on some points, he was told to go there no more—"If it was good for him, he should not have need to go again—the spirits would go to him in that case." Tell Mary how interested I am & eager for any particulars.

Here I draw up. Do you recommend phlebotomy or fasting? It's a case of mania with me—isn't it? I could tell you more too, if I had room—but this is enough on the testimony of one person. You like to hear, you say. After all I am tolerably quiet & calm. Robert has not had recourse to a straight waistcoat once up to this time. I said to Penini, .. "If the angels were to come down, should you be afraid?" "Oh no—I not afraid a bit. I love it very much. I afraid when the carriages are going to run over the litte dogs." That's Penini's idea of what is terrible. His sympathy with the little dogs is most tender. Dear darling! Just now I let out, we were going to Prato tomorrow by railroad—his face grew scarlet, his lips trembled .. & while I explained in a hurry that we were coming back to dinner, down he dropped into my lap in a fit of sobbing. Such a tender hearted child! Yesterday, he ran in to ask if we might go out in the carriage—he is very fond of the carriage. I answered I was so tired with walking I really couldn't. In a moment his arms were round me .. "I not want you to go, darling .. I only ask." How can you resist such a child? It's always "dear Papa", "dear Mama", & "dear Lily"—unless it's "darling Ba" & "mine dear Wobert". He took my hand & clasped it under his chin the other day .. "Oh, I love his litte hand." Then I have compliments paid to my "pretty turls," I assure you. He's made of love & knows all its graces & ways. Yes indeed, he's clever enough. But I care more for the sweetness & goodness—so much more. Think of Sophia Cottrell sending for his hat the other day, & asking me to tell her the colours he was to wear for the summer. She has ordered hats as identical as possible, trimming & all. He leads the fashion you see in Florence. Did I tell you that we have bought him a Leghorn hat with white ribbon & feather, & that the favorite brown straw is retrimmed with purple feather & ribbon. The book in which Faber speaks of Lucifer is a new one,—isn't it? At what date? Mr. Tennyson has no such reference in his copy, he says. I suppose Faber's imagination is stimulated by his struggle to escape from the new fact, established by geology, that death was in the world before Adam. It's mere imagination however. Oh Arabel, I am so grieved for Maddox. When Minny writes—my true love & sympathy, remember. And dearest Minny is not well. That's bad news. My best love. Say how she is. And you don't say how your cold is. Surely it has left you, Arabel. God bless you. Write to me, dearest, & tell me everything. Does Papa ever talk of spirits &c. In Paris I hear of Mr. Dyke (Robert's half cousin) & a French lady lifting a hat from the table & as far up the wall as their arms could reach. Lifting means drawing. I am very glad about Mr. Hunter & quite approve of the yielding to the condition in the matter of presbyterianism. Tell me of him—but mind you don't go near the Owens. The infection of that fever clings. God bless you all dearest things. Oh- I long to pour out my heart, Arabel .. it's full of you. Robert's love—His play is being played in the provinces now. Write—or I shall take revenge. Is George vexed with me about the spirits? If you have serpents, we have scorpions. Five found in the house this summer.

Your own Ba-
Miss C. said that in America the tables frequently will move to the alphabetical significance. She had seen this done herself. M. Lytton is here constantly & we like him more & more. Miss Cushman only passed through Florence but gave us half an hour. I am sorry for I liked her. What of Annie Hayes. Best of loves to dearest Trippy. Send this to Chapman & Hall. He is to send you a copy but you will read.

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France— / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. A genie in Persian mythology.
3. “The house called the Hermitage was inhabited by Jean-Jacques Rousseau from 1756 to 1758. Here it was he composed his Nouvelle Héloïse. His furniture is still shown here” (Galignani’s New Paris Guide, Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1851, p. 533). Montmorency is a small town on a hill about 12 miles to the north of Paris.
4. Although they had not managed to conceal an announcement earlier; see letter 94, note 2.
5. Unidentified.
6. Despite EBB’s protestations, the Brownings did not go to London until June 1855.
8. Grace Greenwood was the pseudonym for Sara Jane Clarke (afterwards Lippincott, 1823–1904), daughter of Thaddeus and Deborah (née Baker) Clarke, an American author, who was travelling in Europe at this time. In her volume, Greenwood Leaves, a Collection of Sketches and Letters (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1850), she refers to EBB in a passage about Fanny Kemble: “She [Fanny Kemble] might have stood side by side with Caroline Norton, on a height which commands the world, though not on that sublime and misty mount where stands Elizabeth Barrett, half wrapped in the clouds of heaven, from whence descend her poetic visions, now like falling-stars, and now like—soo-bubbles” (Greenwood Leaves, 3rd ed., Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1851, p. 366); however, this passage does not appear in the London edition of this work. Nor does her account of meeting the Brownings, which was published in Haps and Mishaps of a Tour in Europe (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1854), in which she recalls meeting the Brownings in Casa Guidi on 12 May 1853, and in which she calls them “two noble poet-souls, whose union is a poem, profounder and diviner than words can compass” (p. 357). She also described them “as the truly great and good ever are, simple, earnest, frank, and kindly in word and manner” (p. 358). Margaret Reynolds has suggested that Grace Greenwood might have been EBB’s model for the “transatlantic girl, with golden eyes” in Aurora Leigh, V, 837 (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1992, p. 640).
9. Cf. Wordsworth, “Nutting” (1799), line 56; however, this tag is from Christopher North’s adaptation of Wordsworth’s line, substituting “leaves” for “woods” in Recreations (1842); see BC, 3, 178; 4, 289; and 8, 175.
11. In The Dickensian article referred to at letter 94, note 8, N.C. Peyrouton quoted the following from the American publication, The Spiritual Telegraph: “The objects which Mr. Dickens, and Mr. Lewes, of The Leader, proposed to themselves, were completely defeated by the excess of their zeal” (p. 27). In a letter to the editor of The Critic in the 2 May 1853 issue, Spicer admitted his disbelief in the spirit rappings, but he was careful not to be too harsh on Mrs. Hayden. Referring to Lewes’s contention that she was an impostor, Spicer noted Lewes’s admission that he “laid traps” for Mrs. Hayden, and these traps, wrote Spicer, “however excellent in principle and intention, catch more than the ‘unsuspecting’ medium—they ensnare our own judgment, and neutralise our best opportunities of using it to efficient purpose” (p. 244).
12. However, when she finally went in July 1855 she did not go alone.
13. Identified by EBB in a letter to Sarianna Browning as Mary Hume, “the youngest daughter of the economist [i.e., Joseph Hume, 1777-1855], and a Swedenborgian besides a poetess. ... She is an intimate friend of a friend of mine Countess Cottrell” ([ca. 20 May 1853], ms at Lilly).

14. I have been unable to clarify EBB’s comment; perhaps it refers to Arabella’s homeopathic treatments.

15. I have been unable to trace a reference to Lucifer in Faber’s works written about this time, but in an earlier work, A Treatise on the Genius and Object of The Patriarchal, the Levitical, and the Christian Dispensations (London: C. & J. Rivington, 1823), Faber wrote: “by the fall man indeed first became subject to death, agreeably to the original penalty imposed upon eating the forbidden fruit: but no intimation is given, that the brute creation then first became liable to it” (I, 146).

16. Louisa Jane Browning had married R. Jebb Dyke in 1846 and settled in Paris. She was the second daughter of RB’s uncle, William Shergold Browning.

17. Helen Faucit Martin’s performances of Colombe’s Birthday in London and Manchester in the spring of 1853 were limited but successful. EBB reported to Sarianna Browning that “We had a Manchester paper speaking warmly of the author as a poet. Surely the success of this play must be favorable to the poems generally” ([ca. 20 May 1853], ms at Lilly).

18. According to Cushman’s biographer, her decision to return to London was sudden, but “en route north, they [Cushman and Matilda Hays] stopped in Florence a day or so to visit the Brownings,” and they were back in England by 5 July. See Joseph Leach, Bright Particular Star, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1970, p. 258.

19. Presumably a letter to Edward Chapman, dated 11 June [1853], in which EBB asks Chapman to send two copies of her Poems to Arabella—one for her and one for George (ms at Texas).
me sometimes. Indeed he told me the other day that if I didn’t eat more, I should be a little baby when he was a great man, & that then he would have to carry me about—A new view of life, that!—He didn’t mean the second childhood either, “though by your smiling you seem to say so.”

Which reminds me however that I have altogether to disavow & repudiate Miss Sandford’s charges against my expiring condition! What exaggeration, to be sure! Thus it was—she came to pass the evening with us once a week for months, & sometimes twice a week. I am not as tough as leather, we all know, & occasionally everybody is less well than usual,—therefore she naturally saw me now & then a little pale—and oh, once, I remember, she came for me to take a drive when I had been faint & was unfit to go out. Then, it strikes strangers as a dreadful thing, not to go out of the house for two months together, which was a necessity on me this winter of course. With all this, I have been extremely well & am looking well—and only the morning your letter came, I had been overwhelmed by a tremendous compliment from Robert who maintained, that “we two having been married nearly seven years, I looked exactly seven years younger than when we married”—which would be a saying very satisfactory to my vanity, but for the obvious fact that Robert is & always has been perfectly blind as regards me .. subject to hallucinations of vision on that particular point. I might represent Miss Sandford in sadder colours than she used in my service, if I chose—She nearly always wrote notes to me in pencil, because she had not vital energy enough to use a pen. And if she heard a noise in the street, she shrieked aloud .. as she confessed to us herself. Also, staying in London this summer was to be fatal, seriously fatal & final to her—Oh, her case is considerably worse than mine in most respects I believe. Don’t let her frighten you with nonsense, Arabel. As to Penini, you didn’t think him fading out of the world through delicacy, did you? I am sure she did, when she knew him first,—& that’s what she meant to suggest by his “looking so much better” &c &c. The fact is her little nephew presented another sort of type of a boy certainly—a great clumsy, noble-looking boy, who at three was twice the size of Penini at four, but tumbled about the room, could’nt run without tumbling .. one of those heavy disjointed children. She used to say it was a case of “matter & spirit”: & besides, our materiality, such as it amounted to, was more healthy; the little Sandford being shut up with “dreadful colds” again & again this winter, while we passed scatheless. Still, that small giant made Penini look very delicate till they got used to him. As to his obedience to Robert & me at the expense of Wilson, why he never was famous for his obedience to anybody .. was never much trained to obedience, though the best & sweetest child that can be: he considers that he ought to do what he likes himself generally, & generally does it. Robert indeed is strictly obeyed for the most part. There’s a potentiality of wrath about Robert, I suppose, .. for he actually spoils the child as much as I do. I am sure you will like Miss Sandford much more as you know her more. She is very peculiar, and intense in her particular way—quite different from the rest of the family who seemed to us extremely commonplace, though we saw scarcely anything of them. Mr. Sandford gave great dinners (for twenty people & more) & Robert would’nt go to them—& I didn’t ask the younger sister here because I felt sure it could’nt be a pleasure to her to come to us. Kate Hedley liked & knew intimately all the family except just our friend—which is easy to understand.
The heat has come in like a tiger with a spring! and we are going to fly at once. We have heard of a villa in the mountains, at two pounds a month, & we think of taking it for a month, to Peninii's excessive joy—"Mine villa" is the favorite conversation just now. He is only afraid that "some boys" will get there before him & pull all the flowers. The country is said to be most picturesque, & likely to be infested by brigands, (according to M: Tennyson's agreeable suggestion), from its wildness. We want to persuade him to come too that we may rusticate together, & he seemed in a yielding mood about it. If we like it, we shall stay on of course,—as Florence is not generally tenable till September.

Last night Wilson called us up at two .. to my great fright. Poor Vincenzio was taken ill, & like a true Italian was in agonies of fear. "Mi manca la gamba—mi manca il core—io muojo—adesso vado via," crying aloud for a doctor. So Robert went down stairs to wake up the porter—& when the medical man came he bled the patient, said there were symptoms of apoplexy, .. that he had been eating & drinking too much & that from henceforth there must be moderation. This morning there are signs of fever—& we were recommended not to oppose the patient's desire of removing, because it might end in miliary fever—So he is gone, poor Vincenzio. It is not of importance, the doctor thought—there would be convalescence soon—Robert paid his wages to the end of the month & made him a present .. which overjoyed him .. ("Troppa attenzione, Signore!") & he walked away by no means in a desperate state it seemed to us all. Therefore, (if he does'nt suffer much) we must really be the gainers by this move, & congratulate ourselves softly upon it. I assure you, Arabel, we have practised a hair's breadth of Christianity (for a wonder) in keeping this man so long. He is good & attentive & honest, & we could'nt bear to hurt his feelings by dismissing him—but Robert & I have been starving for some time through the disgust of his personality coming between us & our natural appetite. "Con rispetto," as the Italians say, the smell of that man .. & the idea of the smell together .. were enough to make one fast like a saint. Then he looked like a stable man of the lower degree, as I have told you before—he made one ashamed at the hour of visitors. Well, poor man—there's our end, with him. We have caught up the Peyton's [sic] servant, & shall be only too glad to keep him .. Ferdinando .. but there's an unfortunate entanglement with some other family & an apparent doubt whether or not he can stay. I hope we shall manage to keep him. He is a good servant & looks reputable, which his predecessor certainly did not do.

Did I tell you, Arabel, of a M: Turner who brought letters to us, & spent a week in Florence. I have been told that, among the poets, he prefers Isaiah & me .. with a side place for Wordsworth. He is a man of considerable acquirement & quickness, & the most prodigious vanity I ever observed in man or woman. He is a Chinese & Japanese scholar, writes sonnets, & cuts profiles in black paper. Of course he came down upon us with a request that we would sit for ours—& of course I refused convulsively, & Robert made me submit— Well, here I send you the results. The artist was in ecstasy at his performance—he always did succeed!—Gibson thought nothing could equal the expression he conveyed! "Can this be possible"? said Gibson. Can black paper emulate the sublime of my marble? Oh yes, of course.—To be candid, I think he has done excellently with us. Robert's is particularly like—the very countenance caught! Penini too, is good. And as for me, considering what my sideface is, I have everything to be grateful for I think. My profile belongs
to you— I meant it for you from the beginning. Robert’s I cant part with—the mouth .. the whole face is so strikingly like!—so his & Penini’s you must keep till I ask you for them. Which reminds me of George’s news about that horrible, vulgar engraving of Robert being in the shop-windows. Oh—I detest it so! It never could have been in the least like him, ever so many years ago, .. for the character, the whole mind is different. It’s precisely the young man from Waterloo House making a pathetic appeal to a customer .. “You wont allow me to cut you a dress from the sweet blue poplin?”

M’ Turner made the most of us during his week in Florence—that is, we had the most of him. We had him morning, noon, & night. He is a tremendous man. He knows something of everything—all his intimate friends are wonderful persons—his brother is the “most spiritual christian now in the world,” & so with the rest—even the Russian Baron whom he met by chance in Germany was the “most accomplished man in Europe”—he has affinities with excellence. He knows Swedenborgians, Irvingites, & Plymouth brethren .. sympathizes with most christians somehow .. is evangelical himself, & belongs to the church of England, because you may belong to her without agreeing with what she teaches— He is strong on the second coming. He wrote a series of theological sonnets on the London Great Exhibition,—but his particular vocation is the pulling down of the papacy, in order to which he was strongly impelled to lift up his voice in St Peters this last spring & adjure the Pope—(in which case we should’nt have had the pleasure of making his acquaintance in Florence.) He almost excoriated me with the analysis (viva [sic] voce) of a Japanese romance, till, as M’ Lytton feelingly observed, I “grew paler & paler,” & might have fallen into a swoon as the clock struck one in the morning, with a very little provocation more. He “hoped Penini thought deeply of the “Kingdom of Heaven” .. which puzzled Penini considerably, as the phrase did not enter into his theological spheres. That was next to talking Japanese to me. At the end & when we were parting, he desired us to give him a note to Chapman & Hall that he might have presentation copies of our works. We assented as people taken by surprise are apt to assent. Nothing like an absolute freedom from timidity! “Now” said he, “the obligation is on my side.”! By thirty two shillings and coffee at indiscretion!— When the door closed, Robert exploded into a passion, & I into laughter. I laughed till I lost my breath .. & that made Robert more angry still.

Tell my dear George that I shall answer his letter though he bids me not. I like him to write to me. Tell him also that it is not I who “take it easily” (respecting the “spirits”) but himself—for that nothing is so easy as to ‘pooh pooh’ away facts & so to escape from the difficulty of a solution. If he had given half as much hard thought to this question as I have, he would have thought it worth while, I fancy, to think the other half & considerably beyond. As to imposture, it is out of the possibilities in the greater number of cases— You will see presently. I told you a year ago about the tables, & nobody supposed then that that part of the question would have emerged as it has done. M’ Jameson who was half vexed with me for listening to such nonsense in Paris, wrote to me yesterday how interested she had been, & how, from the flexibility & variety of the opinions of scientific men in England she began to distrust their judgements altogether on the point. She does not however believe in the rapping spirits— That’s to come, I say. And now I am going to tell you what has happened to Sarianna in Paris. You know Sarianna. If Robert is sceptical
upon subjects of the kind, she is more sceptical, for she lacks that impulse from his imagination which drives him into faith under certain influences with a recoil under others. He has confessed to me sometimes when he used fairly to be angry with me for what he called my absurd credulity, (long ago in France) that half his nature was taking my part & that therefore he had to strive both against himself & me—which vexed him all the more. But Sarianna is calmly & resolutely unbelieving. She has fixed opinions, & a distaste to new lights. She laughs at even the common forms of animal magnetism—she sets all these things down as “frauds, fallacies, & falsehoods”—(I quote George.). With this (you will say perhaps, because of it) she has excellent sense, & is most truthful & accurate in observation—clever & keen, is she not? Well—now I must tell you that the following extract is taken from a letter she has just written to us—“I said before that our table-experiments at the Corkrans had been failures, but they spoke so often of the performances of a Miss Kemp, a friend of theirs, that Papa expressed a wish to see her, and dear Mr Corkran who spoils him, accordingly invited her to meet us at their house last monday. She came with her mother, & is a thin sickly looking girl, with large dark eyes,—rather interesting, I thought. She seemed to take it all as a simple matter of fact. We chose a small work-table; she said that being so small it would soon move,—and she, Miss Kemp, the two elder girls,” (the young Corkrans, from ten to twelve years old) “Papa & myself placed our hands on it. (Touching each others hands she called all nonsense.) In ten minutes it began to move, turning round so quickly that we ran to keep up with it, those behind clearing away our chairs. It ran so violently towards the window that we were afraid it would break the glass, but on Miss Kemp's ordering it to stop, it went back & finally upset itself into the fireplace. The oddest thing was that almost as soon as it began to move it turned on one side, and in that position ran about.

Thus. When we pulled it out of the fireplace it began to heave, and knocked with one of its legs. Miss Kemp asked if it would answer questions. A rap of assent. Then we began to ask all sorts of questions.— Henrietta Corkran’s age—the Emperor’s,—the empress’s—(the table made her older than common report). I asked the age of my nephew.—four knocks in reply .. the number of people in the room .. right—the number of chairs in the room .. wrong—of tassels in the room .. right—of flowers on the mantel piece .. wrong—the number of sketches Papa had just brought .. answer 19—on counting, it was quite right. Then we called for initials, taking the numbers for letters of the alphabet, and the answers were right .. excepting when Miss Kemp & I asked for names we were thinking of, when they were quite wrong. M. Corkran asked for the initials of her eldest sister .. right—for those of the artist who painted her portrait .. right. We each occasionally took off our hands without any perceptible difference, except that when Miss Kemp went to the other end of the room it began to flag. Then she tried a hat, & that turned on its side as the table had done. So much for our magnetic experience. I cant say I was as deeply impressed as I ought to have been, but I am bound to speak the truth, that I do not think it possible for anyone to have been playing tricks, for we made the children take away their hands from time to time, & we were all standing with our hands near the centre. M. Corkran has lent me a pamphlet just published “par un catholique” in which the whole phenomena are attributed to evil spirits, and the pope and cardinals called on to exorcise them. Well, I hope when I leave this world I shall not be doomed to take up my abode in the leg
of a table, answering silly questions.” — The last sentences I copy out with the rest to prove to you the gesture of mind with which she takes leave of the subject... not that it is in the least a consequence of that order of facts, that a spirit is “abiding in the leg of a table”... any more than the worker of the electric telegraph is abiding in the electric wire. Also the answering of “silly questions” is the special result of the asking of silly questions... the askers being certainly (Sarianna & the Corkrans) intelligent persons above the average. It is a favorite quotation among the spirit-believers that “the fool is answered according to his folly.”* On this specific occasion I must observe that the questions were not at all good,—indeed were less wise than are usually asked. The Emperor’s age—anybody’s age! anybody’s initials! the number of chairs!—Curious for instance, that the answer about the chairs which anyone could make right, was wrong!—Their questions, as tests, were not good—, & except as tests, there is no use in asking such questions. But what is the wonder in this circumstance is, that any intelligent answer should be given. I can see no solution except the spirit solution... unless indeed the theory of “unconscious clairvoyance” is admissible as some people think—but that seems to me more difficult & dark than the other. None of them asked what spirit was present—I dare say the Brownings did not like to touch the subject by such a handle—and M! Browning, I am sure, would not have tolerated it without pained feelings. M! Powers met one of the professors in the street the other day, a scientific man, whose attention has been turned much upon these phenomena lately. He said in passing that a book had just come out in France which he was reading,... & that it established the fact of an actual communion between the living & the dead beyond contestation. He was in a great hurry & could’nt stay to explain then, but M! Powers means to find him out & enquire further. In America, the spirit of Calhoun the celebrated statesman who died a short time ago,... has, by the attention of his friend M! Tallmadge, member of Congress, given proof of his identity again & again,... & lastly by his autograph written in pencil on paper placed beneath the table for that purpose—The line written was in any case a facsimile of his handwriting, as is attested by Calhoun’s own son,... besides some of the first names in America, members of Congress.

Now, Arabel, in recompense of your patience in reading all this madness of mine, I am going to be more generous to you than the first impulse made me. I thought at first that I would’nt give away the profile of Robert, because it is so very like him. But now I relent... On second thoughts, if you will graciously accept these three profiles such as they are, the whole family group “en complet,”... you shall have them. Robert says I ought to give them to you, & I think so too. Therefore accept them. They are yours— I owe you, besides, a portrait of myself, I remember. Meanwhile you may condescend to the three ‘blacks’. Will you?

M! Tennyson has received at last from England Spicer’s book on “Sights & Sounds”.... He came here on receiving it, “A delicious-looking book... all in blue!” he was going to enjoy it like a child. Afterwards he is sure to let me have it. He & I sympathize in the deepest manner, just now. “An intensely interesting state of things,” he exclaims! Only he is less sanguine than I am, looking more towards devildom. Talk of seeing God in all things! I never saw such a man as he is, for seeing the devil in all things.

But Robert & I have the truest affection for him, & for the best reasons. So true, so unconscious, so removed from all selfhood that man is: to know what christian simplicity is, you have only to
know that man. He draws one more & more. Then he is full of poetical elements. Really he is interesting.

Penini says with complacency, . . . “a table in Pallis says I am four years.” Not that he accounts it at all extraordinary for a table to have an opinion on the subject. Only the tables in Casa Guidi are obstinate & taciturn, & wont “lun about” when he pats his little hands on them. He is getting on with his reading but he does’nt like it much– Sometimes he says in the morning “Oh, I wish mine lesson done”. Nobody likes learning to read. He can read little sentences very nicely when he attends . . . but often he does’nt attend . . . and then you cant be vexed with him. He makes you impotent with his kisses . . . “Dont peat untind (speak unkind) mine darling,” he said to me yesterday. On the whole he is very good as well as clever with this reading-lesson, & we must be patient, teachers as well as learners.

Some days ago Robert was expending some too emphatic indignation upon the fools of the earth, & I told him to moderate himself & not use such words before the child– Robert drew up . . . & observed that “if he used such a word as fool, it was because he knew the meaning of it, whereas Penini who did’nt, would be wrong in using it”– Said Penini with considerable dignity— “But . . oh les! . . I know velly well. When naughty boys throw stones at litty dods, . . (little dogs) I tail lem fools.” . . (I call them fools.) It was impossible not to smile— “Tow see”, said I!

Thank you for M’s Ogilvy’s letter . . . but, oh Arabel, how tantalizing it is when I open an envelope of your writing, & find scarcely anything from you. That’s too bad, really. The Ogilvys are going to Paris to reside next september.

That poor Vincenzio! We hear this morning that it is really the milliary [sic] fever & that he is gone to the hospital. I am afraid he is a bad subject. The medical man had told us it was more for our sakes than for his that he had encouraged him in his desire to go away—& indeed it would have been dreadful to have had him here under such circumstances—his bedroom is close to Penini’s . . so near that I am not quite easy even now . . only the complaint was not developed when he left us. He was taken ill in the night & gone in the morning . . even then able to walk about & dress himself, & arrange everything previous to going. The mattrasses [sic] were carried out into the court instantly, & are to be washed before they are brought back. Still I should like to be out of the house– It’s a most infectious fever, though the English are not usually attacked with it– You know how I am not heroic about such things. Everybody laughs at me on this occasion, & so probably I deserve it, which is rather satisfactory than otherwise. Today there is an exquisite air—the glass in this room at only seventy five .. which is a most exceptional degree of coolness for the time of year. Still I shall be glad to go to “mine villa”—it will be good for us all.

You ought to hear Penini talk Italian. Indeed it is pretty, the way in which he passes from one language to another as the circumstance requires– “Venda, Olam, a signora Totts” . . meaning “Venga, Girolama, a signora Cox”24 . . M’s Cox being an Englishwoman who deals in crumpets. The “signora Totts” was excellent we thought. I heard him saying his prayers the other night– After two verses of two different hymns, he went on in his extempore fashion– “God bless Papa & Mama and Flush, and Alibel & Lorge. (He generally names a great many more names, but I wish to be exact.) God bless us all & make us good and make us well. God bless Penini & mate me velly well. I hope I fleet velly well (sleep) tonight. God mate me velly dood– And when we
all dead, God tate us up to live there—and send me down anoller day." Amen. Sending him down another day seems a special piece of his theology, with which really . . . particularly under the open state of present questions . . . I dont like to interfere.

Miss Tulk was here lately & called him a cupid. When she was gone, he looked in my face in a state of considerable anxiety. "What she mean, tailing me stupid?" Evidently he had fears lest it should have relations with "stupid."

Mr Stuart told us yesterday what follows. A friend of his, a signor Bianchiardi was visiting three days ago at the house of a lady employed occasionally by the government people in matters of translation. She said "I have a new English book sent to me yesterday to translate, by the Council of prefecture."

"What book is it," he asked. "Casa Guidi windows"—This is curious. The book is already prohibited—What they want more with it, I can't imagine. The prohibition is not formal,—only by intimation—Perhaps they want a broader ground for acting formally. Mr Stuart fancies it is simply curiosity about the book. Suppose it is a means of establishing a charge against the author! Suppose we are bidden presently to go away further than to the mountains! This is possible too.

The unfortunate Guerrazzi is condemned to fifteen years imprisonment & hard labour. The public emotions . . . the sense of justice everywhere . . . are deeply stirred. It is supposed that the Grand Duke must pardon him, or take the consequences personally. Impossible to carry out such a sentence. The Italians are gasping for expectation towards the war. In the case of war, Austria overtly or secretly assists Russia . . . Then is the time for Hungary . . . & Italy . . . leaning on the right arm of Louis Napoleon.

But there will be no war unless the Czar is mad. In England there is plainly a split in the ministry . . . the ministry has not been energetic & direct, from the want of internal union. The line taken by the Times, sinuous as a snake, is disgraceful as usual.

Ah—my dearest dearest Arabel, how my blood thrilled as you told me of Papa—It is a good change as far as it goes, & let us thank God for it—Next summer how shall I go to M' Stratten's . . . by the way? Think of that.

And think of going out of town above all things. George & I entirely agree on the subject. Now Henry, now George, dont put it off to the end of the summer. Speak, speak. And about Rome, Arabel!—is it hopeless? Turn it over in your mind.

You dont mention Minny in your last letter, though you said before that she was suffering more than usual. Tell me of her—dear Minny!—Wilson is very satisfied, it seems to me. We get on smoothly, & she is good & kind. Ferdinando will make her comfortable, I hope. Vincenzio did so as far as he could. He was regular & well-inclined—only poor Vincenzio's failings were as unpleasant to her, of course, as to us—She did not care much about losing England this summer—not nearly as much as I feared she would. So sorry I am that you should have heard, through Miss Heaton first, of this— Dearest, dearest Arabel, that quite vexed me!—but the times [sic] passes . . . even too fast, it passes . . . and if we are alive we shall be with you next summer. Let us keep up heart, Arabel! Only speak to me of yourself! tell me exactly how you are. I am anxious—

How happy it is about Mary Hunter! Miss Heaton writes to me that her father has taken a house in Norfolk street in order to [have] pupils—Oh I do hope it may answer. I wonder if he has ever thought of Paris in relation to pupils— I used often to hear complaints of the want of good
English instructors—and many English families (with their foreign prejudices) send their young boys to England on that precise account. Give my best love to M' Hunter—if he will have it, that is—and to dear Mary. I forget neither of them.

I have good news from Miss Mitford which has made me much easier about her state of health.29 M' Kenyon’s brother & sister in law30 are staying with him, says M' Jameson, so I suppose he is absorbed.

Will you be good to me, Arabel, & write to me oftener & at length—Tell me everything. What of Annie Hayes?

Not a word does dearest Trippy ever send me by a message—Tell me why she doesn’t send me a message. How is she? dear thing. Give her kisses one two & three, from us all.

Henrietta sent me a delightful account of her darlings, & not a bad one of herself—but don’t let the details slip through your fingers as she gives you any, & you give on to me. I mean to write to her soon, tell her with dear love.

God bless you all! God bless you my beloved!

Think of me, pray for me, love me, dearest, dear Arabel. I am your own, night & day—

Tell me exactly what you all think of the profiles—Tell George, with Robert’s best love, that his news upon the outlawry made him joyful & grateful—It was most considerate of him to remember to tell us.

As to Chapman & Hall, [the] manner of how they make up their accounts is probably highly satisfactory to themselves on the present occasion, though, if applied generally, it would not answer their purpose as the publishers of MSS on their own responsibilities. What slowness about the new edition, to be sure! It really is too bad!—

My love to the Strattens. How is Fanny?

Not a word of all this, can I read. M’Lytton comes in for the packet. I have been writing the last sheet against time.

God bless you, dearest!

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.
Brownings' service, and was later cared for by Pen Browning; for a more complete account of his life, see Scott Lewis, "Elizabeth Wilson," BSN, 23 (1996), 74–91.

10. Identified as I. Turner on the silhouettes he made of the Brownings. He made at least two of EBB; one sold as lot 1411 in Browning Collections, and the other, together with the ones of RB and Pen originally sent with this letter, are now at Eton College; see Reconstruction, F19–20, G6, and H118.

11. A building at Cockspur Street and Pall Mall East occupied by Halling, Pearce and Stone, fashionable mercers and drapers; see BC, 14, 274 (note 4).

12. Despite his many talents and accomplishments, Turner remains unidentified, but the impression he made on EBB was shared with several correspondents about this time, and the silhouettes he made of the Brownings have survived.

13. Placement of quotation marks is EBB's.

14. Underscored four times.

15. Sarianna remained firm in her scepticism. Many years later she told Jean Morison Campbell Miller-Morison that "the only thing I ever saw that interested me was once from Alexis the clairvoyant" (30 June [1900], ms at Texas); and a few weeks later she added that it would make her "sad to think my dear ones who died in the hope of going straight home to God, were now rapping out idiotical sentences through furniture" (14 July 1900, ms at Texas).

16. Unidentified.


18. Cf. Proverbs 26:5: "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."

19. Unidentified.

20. John C. Calhoun (1782–1850) was a former U.S. Senator and Vice-President. Nathaniel Pitcher Tallmadge (1795–1864), author of religious tracts and a convert to spiritualism, had been senator from New York from 1833–44, and afterwards he was Governor of Wisconsin Territory until 1846. An appendix entitled "Communication from Governor Tallmadge" appeared in John Worth Edmonds and George T. Dexter's Spiritualism (New York: Partridge and Brittan, 1854, 10th ed., pp. 393–442). These letters included various accounts of Tallmadge's experiences in spiritualism. A letter from Tallmadge to Sarah Helen Whitman that had originally appeared in the New-York Daily Tribune contained an account of how a guitar "was touched softly and gently, and gave forth sweet and delicious sounds, like the accompaniment to a beautiful and exquisite piece of music" (p. 428). The same letter included an account of Calhoun's spirit writing the sentence "'I'm with you still'" (p. 430).

21. I have been unable to identify which of Calhoun's five sons EBB refers to.

22. "Complete."

23. See letter 96, note 11; the copy I examined in the BL is bound in a bright blue binding, which has retained most of its brightness, despite some fading of the spine.


25. Stuart refers to translations from "the pen of Professor [Stanislao] Bianciardi", ... including "the writings of Mr. and Mrs. Browning" as part of his correspondence with Macaulay, but he gives no further details (James Montgomery Stuart, Reminiscences and Essays, London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1884, p. 18). I have not traced a translation of Casa Guidi Windows by Bianciardi.

26. According to Harry Headder, Guerrazzi's trial "shocked Tuscan liberals, but was in its way an indication that the conscience of the restored régime was far from dead. Guerrazzi's prison sentence was commuted by the Grand Duke to one of exile" (Italy in the Age of the Risorgimento: 1790–1870, London: Longman, 1983, p. 89).

27. War between Russia and Turkey broke out in October 1853, but "France and Britain were not to go to war with Russia until 28 March 1854. ... The preoccupation of the French and British governments was with
the securing of Austrian help, if possible in the form of a full military alliance against Russia” (Hearder, p. 219). Hearder further suggests that Italy, i.e., Piedmont with Cavour in the lead, was “pressurized by Britain and France to enter the war,” at least in part because otherwise “Piedmont might seize the occasion to stir up revolution in Lombardy” (pp. 219–220). Once Cavour decided to send Piedmontese troops, they numbered 15,000, “the British army in the field numbered only about 20,000” (p. 220), so the Italians weren’t the only ones “leaning on the right arm of Louis Napoleon,” whose troops numbered 90,000.

28. The “line” EBB opposed might well have been the expression of suspicions of Louis Napoleon, such as appeared in The Times for 1 June 1853: “The policy of a united intervention of England and France for the defence of the East from Russian invasion has frequently been warmly advocated by us on former occasions; and we very recently expressed our regret that changes should have taken place in the Government of France which shake our faith in that salutary alliance. But, to engage in so important an undertaking, the British Government must have ample reason to be satisfied that it will accomplish the object required, and that it will not be used for any other purpose. Louis Napoleon, on the contrary, has lately intimated that, in the event of any territorial aggression on the part of Russia, France would seek compensation elsewhere” (p. 6).

29. EBB wrote to Miss Mitford on 15 July [1853], expressing her delight at the “prospect of absolute recovery” (EBB-MRM, III, 388).

30. John Kenyon’s brother, Edward, and his wife Louisa lived in Vienna.

Letter 102

Casa Tolomei (Alla Villa) Bagni di Lucca.

August. 15. [1853]

My own dearest Arabel, at last, at last! You really do behave harshly to me, Arabel! As soon as I see one of those slips of paper slipped through M’ Kenyon’s hand, I know it’s all over with me, & that I shall have to wait days upon days, even weeks, for the letter that’s due to me. As for myself, I am beginning to conclude that there must be something good & reasonable in the Romish doctrine of supererogatory merits . . . by the time I get to Rome I shall have embraced it entirely I fancy. Think of four of my letters going to England, to you, George, Henrietta . . . while you imagine that a letter in return is virtue enough. I have been anxious about you too, my darling naughty Arabel—yes, & am. I was sure it was not well with you—certain. Now understand once for all. If we are to write comfortable deceitful letters to one another, let us agree. For the future I shall keep my adversities to myself. But if you have the least idea of hearing the whole truth from me you must make up your mind to tell it— I am very angry with you, Arabel. I shall never have a happy moment if I may believe it possible that you will go on to treat me in that fashion, in the face of our most sacred conventions.

That you were unwell I was certain, & in the way you mention. The more absolutely necessary it is that you go to the sea, and I do hope that that good kind dear Henry wont be good by halves, but will do his utmost to represent the necessity to Papa. Dear George might do it, I think. I dont understand why the extraordinary bearing about the money, should imply the probability of a refusal about going out of town. Rather I should be prepared to find that the ‘quantum’ of bitterness being spent, the next droppings would be of a somewhat less acrid quality. Also, poor Set & Occy wont want more money in the country than in town—nor so much. Now I entreat George to speak at once. I am confident it would satisfy him & everybody (me certainly) to have done the
best that can be done towards giving you the change of air which is necessary for your health. And now, Arabel! I am going to ask you. Have you been doctoring yourself out of the medicine-chest all this time, or have you loved me enough to go for my sake to the homoeopathist who used to attend you? I ask that question with a painful sort of feeling at my heart—a doubt. If you loved me, you will have done it. If you love me, you will do it directly. I shall look anxiously in your next letter for an answer to this enquiry. I know what I would do for you—

Lest I should forget again, let me be quick to tell you that I had your letter with the enquiries from Mary Ruxton. Our apartment in Florence would not suit her—We have only two large bedrooms & two small ones—Now if Mr Minto comes, three good bedrooms will be required. You cant put either Mr Minto or the baby where there is'nt space & a free circulation of air, in Italy. Our rooms would not answer. For the rest, Arabel, I admire your accuracy in telling her that Florence is as dear in London. Sugar is dearer than in London—milk is cheaper than in London but dearer than in Paris—For a turkey, you pay £1 10s one shilling & ten pence or eleven pence—for a duck, eleven pence—for a couple of fowls, sixteen or seventeen pence—for the best pieces of meat, three pence or three pence halfpenny a pound—(only the Italian pound has but twelve ounces .. which makes a difference.) Judge whether we have not the advantage over you of cheapness! As soon as I had your letter, I wrote one to Mary, & when it was finished, remembered that I didn't know her address. Since then, I heard from Mr Kenyon that she was going or gone to Boulogne to reside—Can it be true? Tell her, with my love, if she still cares to hear, that October is an excellent time for a journey to Italy, & that the “baby” will probably travel as well or better than any of them—She need not fear for the baby—You should consider, Arabel, that if we did not spend more in London than elsewhere, which perhaps we didn't on most weeks, the reason was simply that we did not live as well,—also that one of us, at least, dined out most days of the seven .. & that nobody at home touched either wine or beer—&, above all, that we were one less in family. Here we have a man-servant, we live with every comfort .. soup, poultry, creams, & fruit of all kinds at discretion. Yesterday we had four dishes of fruit at desert—Ferdinando is an excellent cook. His soups & pastry are as good as possible—and his creams & iced puddings would do honour to the best tables in England. Well—this is all to be considered, you know. Mr Tennyson says that a scudo, that is, four shillings & two pence a day ought to cover our whole expences—but we are not economical, & spend more.

I thought I had told you about Mr Tennyson. She is what is called a fine looking woman, stout, no longer in her first youth, & her husband married her many years ago—At that time, she was a contadina .. a peasant .. it is said, .. & absolutely without education. I have been assured that he did all he could to teach her to read & write, but had to give it up. There was an entanglement beyond the pale of morals, when a priest came down on him with her family, & Frederick Tennyson being really an honest man, performed his obvious duty & married her. But of course, it cannot be a connection in which much happiness is possible. They have heaps of children, from a boy of fourteen years to a baby of fourteen months I think, and of course I called upon her & she called on me & we repeated our visits to the last. She never came to us in the evening—She & he are seldom or never seen together out of doors. It is'nt that sort of marriage. But she is very fond & careful of her children, & a capital manager in her household .. & I observe that he is cared for &
that every English delicacy is provided for him, even down to preserves & hot cakes at breakfast which an Italian would never dream of at the hour of most fervid vision. People say that her temper is bad—I can't answer for it. He seems to treat her like a child, & never (when by chance we have seen them together) makes a pretence even, of turning the conversation her way. He prefers going on talking English, of which she doesn't know a word. Still, I must tell you that he has made her a protestant, & that I heard her make certain observations very bold & sweeping upon the Madonna, which startled one from the lips of an Italian woman. Also she has appeared with him once or twice at the Swiss church, & she assured me that she understood a good deal of the French sermon & had been taking French lessons lately in order to seek comprehension. Not that 'Frederigo' gives the lessons—oh no. To give the last touch to your idea of her, I must suggest a costume of the most brilliant order. She received me one morning in a headdress of lilac feathers & lace, & a silk gown of striped blue & pink. A very good natured, affectionate woman after all, I do not doubt. But one compassionates 'Frederigo'! He with his delicacy & susceptibility of taste & feeling! Poor fellow.

Mr. Lytton can't come to us because of his being left in charge of everything at Florence, Mr. Scarlett being absent—but he will come he says, directly he is at liberty. Meanwhile we are thinking of asking Mr. Powers to come—he would like it I do think, & he & I & Mr. Story might carry on the spiritual investigations. Mr. Story has a sort of undeveloped faculty of moving tables, & writing with the pencil mystically—He takes the pencil & it moves into writing—but he is half conscious, & can't be sure, he says, that he doesn't do it by a half volition—and I certainly won't believe in anybody who doesn't believe in himself—It is probably a rudimental faculty which by persistence, might strengthen & become a real faculty, but at present is nothing worth a thought—Also, the arm is not numb—there are none of the right signs—Mr. Story is absolutely honest, & distrusts himself at every turn—just the man for a medium—only he isn't a medium, more's the pity. He believes all these phenomena, but is much inclined to attribute them to an unconscious projection of a second personality, with clairvoyance. He doubts as to the external spirits. His solution is more difficult than the spirit-solution,—considerably more so in my opinion. Mr. Powers & I are wholly spiritualists, on the other hand. Yes—Arabel, if the picture is like him it must give you the idea of a very handsome man. Such eyes! angel-seeing eyes! And he saw a vision of angels years ago, of which I will tell you,—but you must not speak of it to anyone likely to repeat the story, because he warned us against that. He had just gone to bed where his wife & her baby were asleep. It was his custom to put out the candle after he was in bed, leaving it on the floor in order to facilitate the operation—He put it out. After a moment, there was a light seeming to rise up from the floor, & his first idea was that the candle had not been perfectly extinguished. He looked, satisfied himself—still the light rose up,—rose, rose gradually & established itself in a spherical form on the ceiling—first small...something like the circular light which is produced by a French lamp...then the sphere extended itself...grew larger & larger. At last it opened & disclosed a deep ætherial blue like a summer sky at the bluest, leaving the rim of light all round. Then, he said, it was borne in upon his mind that he was to see a vision—and as the idea came, the vision came—two angels in the centre of the azure. Their vesture was bright...the sort of mixed, shot red & blue you see in autumn woods sometimes—the arm of one angel was round.
the neck of the other .. & both of them with bowed beautiful faces were looking stedfastly at the baby in the bed, with the sort of tender look which might be given to a young child. Mr Powers said, "I saw it as distinctly as I ever saw anything in my life—and neither then nor since has it been possible for me to doubt for a moment that it was an actual vision." Slowly it passed away.

When it was gone he felt his pulse which beat healthily & quietly, & then woke his wife & told her. Mr Powers burst into tears & was "convinced that the child would be taken from them". He said no, no—it was borne in upon him that it all meant good, good to them—even such good & joy as they understood by the words .. there would be no pain in connection with that sight. "And what effect did it have on you"? said Robert. "I have felt it as a sign of God's grace— I have been sure that, as long as I walked uprightly, the Lord would be with me—and He has been with me indeed." The "baby" is now fifteen years old. The man is not an exciteable sort of man, but simple, direct, truthful in little & great things. His yea is yea, & his nay—people complain of him for not being imaginative enough—for being too practical. See what sort of man!—— Since then, he has become a Swedenborgian.

Ah—dearest Arabel, mathematics wont do any good. There are more things in heaven & earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, mathematical or otherwise. And now as to the 'affair' of the young baker—Let us be just. If a man gives up all to follow a truth .. or even an Art .. we are apt to commend him for it. There are worldly thinkers indeed who scoff a man for leaving family & home for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the chinese .. and there have been worldly aldermen, such as Darley's father, who have persisted in turning a son out of doors because he chose to be a poet. But we, who dare not to be worldly, praise the follower of any truth for conscience's sake, or of any art, for love's sake— Therefore I pause before I pass a rash condemnation upon your baker— "To walk in velvet" is not indeed a good end to look to—but nothing seems to me more natural than the desire to obey a communication of the kind he believes in, at all risks & events— Where you see the baking trade left, he sees a spiritual command acquiesced in— He is reasonable from his own point of view— At the same time he should be advised & instructed & cared for by some sympathizing person— Too true it is that the madhouses are crowded in the United States by persons who throw themselves down headlong before these spirits so called, angels or demons. Some have rushed into suicide in order to attain to the spiritual world, in absolute impatience of the interval— Some obey foolish spirits in earthly affairs, to the letter. Even wise spirits may err sometimes—and to accept doctrine or direction in contradiction to the written Scripture, or to obvious duty must be in the highest degree blamable. "If an angel preached another gospel['], said the apostle Paul, "let him be accursed[']!"—showing the possibility of an angel preaching another gospel. I am glad that Mr Stratten is at any rate beginning to give a grave thought to this subject. It is the absolute duty, in my mind, of all persons in his position, of all religious teachers & thinkers, to set themselves seriously to face the actual difficulties, both as a matter of speculation & of practical use. If such men dont go with the age, the age goes on without them .. that's all. As Mr Stratten observed when we called on him last year, "Christians like Lady Huntingdon are not to be found any more—the type is broken up". In fact Christianity itself is breaking the old dyke, the old formal bounds, & flowing down into the broad courses set for it— God's providence is quicker than God's ministers are apt to be—& if
they do not quicken their steps, the laity will give up the ministry, I think. As to evil spirits, I don't believe it, I for one. I see no reason for believing it. Christian teachers cry out about evil spirits, because of their old schoolmen-fancies about the spiritual world which they totally misconceive the nature of. They fancy that on the outside death, everything is either all evil or all good, & that knowledge is perfect with all—which is a mistake, I believe. More will be known however before long. To my surprise I find people talking here in the wilderness of these things... even people, like the Stisteds, who live here altogether, & who have not read Dickens!! —

We met Mr. Green the clergyman at Mr. Stisted's house the other evening. He is a liberal man & deeply interested in the subject, & was very patient with me when I quoted Swedenborg. The conclusive argument against infidel materialists was what he was eager to get at— Now I am going to tell you something interesting— Do you remember Mr. & Mrs. Greenhough who were in London two years ago on their way to America? I remember that you were struck with his face... & beard? You remember? And did I tell you that soon after his arrival in America he was seized [sic] with insanity & died? I think I told you. Well—Mr. Greenhough took an Italian maid with her who has returned to Italy & is just engaged by Mr. Stisted. A few nights ago Mr. Stisted asked her if she had heard anything in America of the ‘turning tables’—? “O si, si! she had heard much—much! more than she could tell.” She was agitated—& after some hesitation she told this story to Mrs. Stisted— It appears that for two months after the death of her husband poor Mrs. Greenhough was in a dreadful state of depression— He had died without a word or sign—insane—she had no comfort in thinking of it. At last she took into her head that she would consult a medium—and the physician who attended the family, promised to bring to her house a young lady, a friend of his, ... not a professional medium, but possessed of a strong faculty. She came one evening, & she, Mrs. Greenhough & the physician sate round a table in the ordinary way. The raps happened as usual—& I suppose as in other cases it was by their direction that paper & a pencil were laid on the table. After which, they put out the lamp, & sate in darkness for a time shorter or longer. When the lamp was re-lighted, the paper was found covered with Mr. Greenhough’s writing—a facsimile of his autograph... to the effect... that it was well with him... with affectionate words to his wife & his children. The young Italian told this to Mrs. Stisted in the utmost agitation, even to tears— She said she had not dared speak of it in Italy—it had produced the strongest effect upon everybody in the house, & Mrs. Greenhough had been a different woman ever since, having received it as the most conclusive consolation. Here, you see, is another instance of the writing without visible agency, which has occurred repeatedly in America. You may conclude that the medium, in the dark, forged the autograph of the dead— In that case, what prodigious wickedness?! And the other witnesses must have been stupid indeed to have admitted of such an imposture— I tell you the story as I heard it. Take it for its worth! —

A few days ago I heard a most interesting letter from Paris read—a letter addressed to the Storys by Mr. Appleton, Longfellow’s brother in law. He is said to be a very able man, & is giving his whole intelligence to a solution of this question, which he considers “the sublimest conundrum ever offered for the world’s guessing.” There is a Miss Goderic in Paris whom he knows intimately, “a very sweet girl & a very strong medium,” says the letter—of course not professional, & he introduced her the other evening into the salon of Lamartine who was curious
Letter 102  
15 August [1853]  
579

on the subject— There were a good many people present—all the phenomena were produced, .. “everybody was convinced, & the poet in ecstasies.” Among other spirits who professed to be present was the spirit of Henry Clay, who said “J’aime Lamartine”. There was to be a séance also at Hahnemann’s in a few days. A learned Hungarian is going to write a book on the subject, & to try to get at the bottom of it as far as a man can. Louis Napoleon gets oracles by the raps—& it is said that the Emperor of Russia does the same. The King of Holland is going mad on the subject—thinks of nothing else. As to M: Coale whom you doubt, Arabel—why should you imagine that an intelligent, well-educated man, apparently deeply religious, is telling you a lie? What object had he to compass in telling lies? He is a man of well known respectability .. the American Minister, M: Kinney, knew him,—so did M: Kellog who travelled with Layard so did M: Powers. Then his testimony does not stand alone— When you hear five or six people, unknown to each other, testify to a certain class of facts, what are you to say? M: Kellog (an artist who resides in Florence) told me that he lived in the house at New York, where the Miss Fox’s came to show the manifestations to Griswold (who wrote on the poets of America) and that for two days afterwards the raps went on in that house. To pretend that the thing is imposture is the most irrational of pretenses— Nothing can be more foolish. See the course the Athenæum is taking! There’s wisdom & justice for you! They admit Faraday, & nobody on the other side. I wrote the most impudent of letters the other day to M: Chorley, congratulating him on this happy mode of conducting a controversy, & offering myself (in the case of a change of plan) as “spiritual correspondent to the Athenæum.” People gag you & then observe, “Why, you have nothing to say for yourself.” Such a false statement too about the state of things in Paris—you saw it I suppose, in a late Athenæum.

Oh no— Arabel. I dont “instruct” Penini in these things— Neither would I try to keep them from him. The more distinctly we feel the relation between the spiritual & the natural, the better we are—that’s my opinion! Also, children have their instincts. Every child who is not corrupt, believes in a fairy. Just now, Penini is full of Ferdinando’s juggling tricks with two marbles. This morning the child lifted up his back curls,—“Dear Mama, you see any holes in mine neck?” ['"]No, I dont indeed.”—“Because those marbles go through mine neck into mine stomach.” Then, said he—“Dear Mama, when somebody coming to have tea?” I did’nt know— When anybody was coming I was to tell him—& if I wanted any cake for tea .. any particularly good cake—Ferdinando had only to throw up the marble, & there was the cake behind the chair! This was Penini’s theory of the phenomenon. “The marble goes up, then an angel catches it—I saw the angel catch it, & send down the cake.” “Oh Penini—you saw the angel!” “Not all the angel, dear mama! only the angel’s head peeping down.”—“Oh Penini.”— “Well—I not saw the angel, but all the other things I saw—the cake and the marbles, I saw.”

After all, you need’nt be uneasy. Penini is thinking just now more about donkeys & rabbits than about spirits & angels. He has given up the arts, & we have some difficulty to keep the reading steady. Such a happy wild bird of a child has not often been seen—out all the day in the garden, running & romping with Carlo (the little son of our padrone) & his young brothers & sisters— Penini has chickens & turkeys of his own, & Robert brought him a rabbit in his pocket handkerchief yesterday, having bought it from a peasant on the mountain in the course of a walk.
Penini introduces this rabbit into his prayers by the side of Flush, & is in a rapture of love for it, poor child. Then there's a swing in the garden, low & safe—& there's an arbour where he has tea, with room on the bench for "twenty two peoples," says he. For about six—but twenty-two is his 'number of perfection.' He gives tea parties with strawberries & milk, to the little Storys, Edith & Joe. Edith is nine years old, & Joe six—Edith being much his favorite. He & Edith sit close together always & make confidences & have sympathetic conversations, Joe being perfectly despised. Then he returns these visits, & goes on a donkey to the top of the mountain & a little on the other side, in order to have tea with Edith who shows him her famous "cock," & the enviable silkworms—You may fancy how he enjoys himself. Yes, & he grows fat, yes, & rosy—and never, in the memory of woman, was known to have such an appetite. The other day, up he came, out of breath, desiring to know if he might go with Ferdinando to bathe in the river. Robert said he wouldn't trust him with Ferdinando, but if he liked to go with Wilson he might. Penini sate in the chair with melancholy dignity .. "Well, you must do as you like"—"Of course," said Robert, ['"]I shall do as I like." (For my part I couldn't help laughing—) At last Penini condescended to go with Wilson, & Frederica the signorina of the house,—& down they went to the river .. a mountain-stream that rushes & murmurs as if it had a constant wind in it. Penini stood on the shore at first, refusing to go in, .. saying that he was "tuite shot" (quite shocked) to see Frederica in her bathing gown. But he ended by plunging in head foremost of his own accord & appearing to like it extremely. Well—but since then, he has been unpersuadable. Nothing could make him go again. Wilson heard him telling Ferdinando that he would willingly go with him (Ferdinando)—but .. "non mi piace di andare ton telle donne" .. (con quelle donne). Think of Penini objecting to go with those women!!—

He has vague ideas however—or had, just before we left Florence. One morning he was persuading me into cutting out a house for him, when I was busy—& he began with one of his usual forms of theological exhortation—"When a man asks another man to do something, & the other man won't do it, God not likes it—" I said suddenly .. "But I'm not a man—I'm a woman."—"Oh mama! You not a woman, wiz lat litty tom at!" (with that little stomach—) The balia is his tremendous type of womankind— I persisted in being a woman notwithstanding my defects. The next day, in he came again, with paper & scissors. I, still very busy— He began, with a slight modulation of the key—"When a woman asks another woman to do something, & the other woman won't do it" &c &c "But," said I, "you are not a woman—you're a man!" He looked into my face, for a moment puzzled, & then exclaimed, "Now, Mama, you tuite naughty!" (quite naughty)— It really was provoking of me, wasn't it?

The note to Chapman is of not the least consequence as you know, & you shant be punished for the crime connected with it. We are going to write to him—and to direct him to send copies of my poems & Robert's to Paris, to the Hedley's—so, when the book is out, tell aunt Jane of it. She has none of our books, except that horrible ghost of the Seraphim which makes me sicker than other ghosts when I see it on a table. I shall ask you to catch at an opportunity of sending, if you know of any—

Here's a letter from Miss Sandford— She has various crotchets (not very reasonably or scientifically got up) about art & literature—but she is uncommon, through her habit of throwing
intense personal feeling into abstract questions. The consequence is that she becomes very interesting as you know her—Now I really will write to you what she says of yourself. "I found her alone in the back drawingroom. I liked her much—better without her bonnet. She looked much younger,—more indulgent, and more full of abandon. The shape of her eyes, and the way she walked reminded me of you. Her hair was in thick curls taken back; the black velvet round her throat was a pleasing contrast to her fair hair and the blueness of her eyes. We talked a long time—how very fond she is of you!" (Darling Arabel, I say.) "I see she is not very happy & she feels being parted so long from you. (The expression of her face is uncommon & very winning.) I was longing to ask to see your room which is her’s now, but at first I did not dare, & after, the time was so short—I hope to see it yet. At luncheon there was a young fair girl, a cousin; and a brother of yours fair & sensible-looking (but I should not like to vex him.)"

Who was the terrible brother, pray? Do tell me. One charming thing in Miss Sandford is her absolute truthfulness—she always speaks the truth as she sees it, & does’nt wait to consider whether it is a kind of truth likely to please you. The description of her agonies in London made me smile a little, I must say, in spite of all sympathy. I assure you she absolutely suffers.— What of Mr. Orme?—

We go backwards & forwards to the Storys who have an exquisite house at the Bagni Caldi—You seem as if you could jump fathoms down into the ravine from the drawing room windows. Every three or four days, they come to us to tea & strawberries, or we go to them—never separating without fixing a day for meeting. Also, they take us out to drive in their carriage; for though he is a sculptor, they are rich people .. belonging to a rich family. The Stisteds too take us out to drive whether we will or not .. but they are very kind really. I have a great deal of riding on donkeys besides this—one day I rode six miles on a donkey. Oh Arabel my dearest, I do wish you were with us! I long for you—it’s just that .. long & yearn for you! How painful & how foolish and how immoral, that all the wishing we two can do together, will not bring us nearer!—

Penini is admired here as everywhere. Mr. Sunderland says she hears of him from everyone. Wilson is stopped & interrogated. The English female grocer at the Ponte confides to M’ Story that “he’s a real poet’s child—fit to be a poet’s child, in her opinion—Generally speaking there’s nothing particular in them.” I am glad you liked the profiles. I grumbled at Penini’s hair not having had justice done to it. Such hair!—He’s a very lovely child just now, & that’s past doubting of, and has picturesque fanciful ways which are captivating, to me at least—Darling dearest Arabel write to me, I beseech you & be particular in speaking of yourself. Papa is not a clairvoyant—that, too, is past doubting of. Does he ever talk of the spirits & what does he say? Do you think I shall have courage to go to the chapel when he’s there? In the gallery—then. Is Henrietta nursing her baby still? Tell me all. And write, write, write. Give my love to M’ Hunter & tell me of him always. What does he say to the spirits? I ask Penini if he has a message & he says “Give my good love to dear Alibe!” his precise words. Its more my fault than Robert’s that he does’nt write to you, but always I grudge the room. His love. Best of loves to dearest Trippy—How you would scoff to see me in my flat round mountaineer hat. Robert & Wilson swear it is becoming. Only I
am decent & matronly at church, so dont be afraid too much. How is dear Minny. Your very own Ba-

May God love you ever!

Our love to everybody— What a shame of Chapman's—

Directly we get out of this place, where we cant trust the postman, I pay everyone of my letters, remember— You are past toleration Arabel, & really vex me— We are in reach still of human infirmity in spite of our general perfection. Robert called in at the door when Penini was a little naughty. Good directly of course. Wilson observed, very provokingly I must admit. .. "It[']s a very good thing to have a Papa I think—" He exclaimed .. "Oh Lily, you naughty boy! I dont sink it a bit a good sing— Not a bit! I sink it be a velly nice sing to have no Papa at all—only a Mama." I scolded him for this unnatural sentiment, but really I could scarcely keep a grave face. After all he is just as fond (if not fonder) of Robert as of me—but when one is provoked! ——

You are to understand that there are two kinds of spiritual writing—one by the hand of the medium, the hand being used as an unconscious machine, and the other where no visible agency is used at all— Writings in most of the oriental languages are said to have been produced in this way. The Hebrew professor in New York was addressed by means of the raps in Hebrew— He was convinced— So glad I am about dear Mary Hunter—

Address: Angleterre via France. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Underscored twice.
3. There is no evidence that Mary Ruxton (née Minto) or her mother ever visited Florence. The baby EBB refers to was Mary Augusta Ruxton (afterwards Roberts).
4. Sic, for as.
5. EBB originally began "A turkey," then added "For," but left the upper case "A."
6. EBB's assessment does not seem to fit the daughter of the "chief magistrate of Siena" as Maria Tennyson is described in biographical accounts of him; see letter 94, note 15. According to the Archives of the Inter-Continental Church Society, London, Tennyson and his wife Maria had three daughters: Elizabeth (b. 28 April 1848); Emily (b. 17 February 1850); and Matilda (b. 29 September 1851). A second son, Alfred, was born on 23 December 1854.
7. Secretary to the British Legation in Florence (see letter 48, note 16). According to the DNB, Wolff, the chargé d'affaires, "returned to the foreign office in 1853," evidently by this time, leaving Lytton in charge.
8. In letter 94, EBB wrote: "Such great, black, steady-burning eyes, the man has! visionary eyes." In September 1847, she had told Miss Mitford that Powers "has eyes like a wild Indian's, so black & full of light. You would scarcely wonder if they clave the marble without the help of his hands" (EBB-MRM, III, 222).
9. Cf. James 5:12: "but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay."
11. Perhaps someone Arabella knew from her involvement with the Ragged Schools.
12. Arthur Darley (1766–1845) father of George Darley (1795–1846), the poet, was not an alderman, which was "a mistake made current by Miss Mitford when she wrote that the poet was the son of a rich Dublin alderman who had disinherited him because he would be poet" (Claude Colleer Abbott, The Life and Letters of George Darley, Poet and Critic, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928, p. 1). Miss Mitford had shared this information
with EBB as early as 1840; see BC, 4, 264, note 10. However, since one of Darley's cousins, Frederick, was an alderman, Abbott is just in claiming that "Miss Mitford's mistake is therefore pardonable" (p. 2).

13. Cf. Galatians 1:8: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preached any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

14. Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon (1707–1791), English religious leader and founder of a sect of Calvinistic Methodists, known as the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection. She used her social position to promote the cause of Methodism.

15. Henry Greene was British Chaplain at Pisa and Bagni di Lucca from 1846 to 1875 (see letter 9, note 2). He married Isabella Ellen Reynolds on 23 April 1850 at Florence, where their son William Henry Mackenzie Greene was baptized 9 April 1851 (Archives of the Inter-Continental Church Society, London).

16. According to Greenough's biographer, "In July [1851] he and Louisa and their children, together with two young Italian nursemaids, left Florence" (Nathalia Wright, Horatio Greenough: The First American Sculptor, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963, p. 263). Nathalia Wright further records that "throughout 1853 Louisa corresponded with the poet and spiritualist Mrs. Sarah Whitman, attended seances, and read a good deal about spiritualism, in the hope of establishing communication with Horatio, but she never felt that she did" (pp. 298–299). However, nine days later EBB reaffirmed this account to Isa Blagden: "Mr. Greenough's spirit has addressed his wife ... She was in a dreadful state of depression after his death, and the consolation came by these means [i.e., spirit-writing]" ("New Letters from Mrs. Browning to Isa Blagden," ed. Edward C. McAleer, PMLA, 66, 1951, 598).

17. Thomas Gold Appleton (1812–84), the brother of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's second wife Frances Elizabeth, was the author of a volume of poetry, Faded Leaves (Boston: Roberts brothers, 1872), and a book of essays, A Sheaf of Papers (Boston: Roberts brothers, 1875). He was probably best known for popularizing spiritualism as a parlor game in Paris. In letters to several correspondents about this time, EBB mentioned his letter referred to here, in which he talked of his interest in spiritualism; however, it has not come to light. In 1856 Appleton wrote to Longfellow from London that he "met the Brownings at the Gallery yesterday, and put them on the way to see Hilary Curtis's picture, which I hunted up. The Brownings are a happy couple,—happy in their affection and their genius. He is a fine, fresh, open nature, full of life and spring, and evidently has little of the dreamy element of Wordsworth and others. She is a little concentrated nightingale, living in a bower of curls, her heart throbbing against the bars of the world" (Final Memorials of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, ed. Samuel Longfellow, Boston: Ticknor & Co., 1887, p. 48).

18. Sic, for Goodrich; see letter 116, note 5.

19. "I love Lamartine."

20. The wife of Samuel Christian Friedrich Hahnemann (1755–1843), a homeopathist.

21. There is no evidence that Nicholas I sought spiritualist assistance for his political troubles. According to his biographer, W. Bruce Lincoln, Nicholas, by this time, "was ill, and a strong fatalism had set into his manner of thinking" (Nicholas I: Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russians, London: Allen Lane, 1978, p. 341). Lincoln adds that "not only Nicholas, but also his advisers, had commanded too long. Nicholas had ruled Russia since 1825, and his decisions in 1853–54 lacked that creative and dynamic quality which had been characteristic of those taken in 1828, 1830 or even 1848" (p. 341). Napoleon III attended to prophecies and later admitted the medium Daniel Dunglass Home to his court. William III (1817–90) reigned from 1849–90 as Holland's first constitutional monarch; I have been unable to verify EBB's claim that he was interested in spiritualism.

22. I have been unable to trace any further identification; however, in a letter to her brother George, EBB described him as "an underwriter to an Insurance Company in Boston—a man of considerable quickness & apparent conscientiousness" (B-GB, p. 191).

23. William Burnet Kinney (1799–1880), diplomat and journalist, was the U.S. representative at the Court of Sardinia in Turin from 1850–53. A month earlier EBB had written to her brother George: "Mr. Kinney told me he had pointed out to the King that passage in 'Casa Guidi Windows' about his father Charles Albert, & that he was 'much gratified' (B-GB, p. 189). Kinney and his wife, Elizabeth Clementine (née Dodge, 1810–89), settled
Letter 102

15 August [1853] 584

in Florence with their two daughters, Clementine and Mary. For an account of the relationship between the two families, see Bosco, 57–119.


25. Ann Leah Fox (1814–90), afterwards Fish (1829), Brown (1851), and Underhill (1858); Margaret Fox (1834–93), afterwards Kane (1856); and Catherine (“Kate”) Fox (1836–92), afterwards Jencken (1872), achieved immense fame as the “Rochester Rappers” in the late 1840’s when news spread of the knockings in their family cottage near Hydesville, at Wayne County, New York; see Mariam Buckner Pond, The Unwilling Martyrs: The Story of the Fox Family (London: Spiritualist Press, 1947). The sisters travelled around New York, as well as to Cincinnati and Cleveland, Ohio, giving demonstrations of their powers as mediums. “Sometime in 1848 he [Miner Kellogg] and Rufus Wilmot Griswold attended a New York seance held by female mediums named Fish and Fox. . . . in what Kellogg thought the first meeting of the ‘spirit rappers’ ever given in New York” (Friend, p. 45). The modern spiritualism movement is often dated from the experiences of the Fox sisters.

26. In a short notice in the “Miscellanea” column in The Athenæum of 30 July 1853, the “Paris Correspondent of the Literary Gazette” reported that “Prof. Faraday’s explanation of the mystery of table-turning has been translated into all the newspapers here, . . . Gratitude is expressed to the eminent savant for the pains he has taken to demonstrate, by actual experiment, that it is by physical power, and not by any magnetic fluid, that tables move on being pressed by the fingers” (no. 1344, p. 923). EBB’s “impudent” letter to Chorley is dated 10 August [1853]; see LEBB, II, 127–131.

27. A week later Pen was entertained by the Story children at a birthday party for Edith, as recorded by William Wetmore Story in his journal for 23 August 1853: “Edie’s birthday. Presents coming in & great joy. Joe-Joe full of his secret which was constantly leaking out until the Gar zone de Sardinia brought in the two little rabbits which were his birthday present to Edie. Peninni Browning came to pass the aft with the children. And Mr & Mrs Browning took tea with us & spent a long eveg on the balcony. Short stories were told. E & I walked home with them to the villa” (ms at Texas).

28. “I don’t like to go with those women.”

29. RB wrote to Chapman on 24 August, enquiring about the new edition, and instructed the publisher: “When it does appear, may I trouble you to send two copies to Wimpole St.—(to ’Geo. Barrett, Esq.’ and to ’Miss Barrett.’) Also a copy, together with Casa Guidi, my poems, and Christmas Eve to Reuben Browning, Esq.—Messrs. Rothschilds’, New Court, St. Swithin’s Lane—for [”]Mrs. Hedley, Rue d’Astry 12, Faubourg St. Honoré, Paris.” (NL, p. 64). A few days later, RB sent a short note to say that they had “since heard that Mrs. Hedley will soon be in London. Will you therefore have the kindness to make up the parcel (of all our books) and put it by until she sends for it” (NL, p. 65). I have been unable to trace the present whereabouts of the volumes referred to here as being presented to Jane Hedley; her copy of The Seraphim, inscribed by EBB: “Jane Elizabeth Hedley. With the author’s most affectionate love” is now at ABL (see Reconstruction, C162).

30. It is impossible to say with any certainty to which of EBB’s brothers this refers, but probably either Alfred or George. The cousin is doubtless Lizzie Barrett, who had now finished her schooling with Miss Bourlier. Edward Moulton-Barrett had written to Lizzie’s father on 16 February 1853 to “urge on you to determine something, & that immediately, as respects your Daughter, who, you know, has been here since Midsummer last, waiting anxiously your decision as to her future residence” (ms at Eton). In a letter to Henrietta written in August 1853, EBB expressed her frank opinion about Alfred and Lizzie: “I have been afraid of speaking for fear of saying something wrong, & I was forbidden to speak. Very sorry & anxious I have been. A girl under age—a young man in the involved situation of Alfred . . . the peculiar relation to W. St—of her being there for protection. It is so different from the rashest of love-matches, where the evil is mere poverty. Then the painlessness
to Arabel ... what is one to say & do? ... I think of Arabel chiefly—It is hard on her. Love for love you dont get, except from the better natures—it is sowing mignonette-seed on the pavement” (Transcript in editor’s file).

31. Casa Lena is given as the Storys’ residence in the subscription book of the English Church at Bagni di Lucca (Archives of the Inter-Continental Church Society, London). Story’s journal for this period is peppered with references to the Brownings and the various activities they enjoyed together. For example: 19 August, “Took tea with the Brownings & stayed until nearly 12. ... Thursday Sept 15th. Went to Prato Fiorito to picnic. Our party consisted of the Duppas, Brownings, Lytton & ourselves” (ms at Texas).

32. Unidentified, but based upon references in the Brownings’ correspondence, we know that she was a friend of Mrs. Stisted (as well as Mrs. Ogilvy) she owned a villa at Bagni di Lucca, and that she painted.

33. See letter 94, note 22.

34. George Bush (1796–1859), an ordained Presbyterian minister who later became an adherent of Swedenborgianism. From 1831 to 1847 he was Professor of Hebrew language and literature in New York University, and in 1831 published A Grammar of Hebrew Language. In an account of the manifestations of oriental languages in spiritualism, Emily Hardinge records that “On one occasion Professor Bush being present with Mr. Fowler and desirous to test the possibility of communicating in Hebrew through the raps, called the alphabet in that language, and received highly satisfactory answers which he afterwards translated, bearing testimony to the indisputable test character of the communication, and its purity and correctness of orthography” (Modern American Spiritualism, New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1970, rpt., p. 102). Bush was the author of The Soul; or, An Inquiry into Scriptural Psychology (New York: J.S. Redfield, 1845).

_Casa Tolomei, Alla Villa, Bagni di Lucca—_  
September 11–12– [1853]

My ever dearest Arabel, now for a gossip with you! I grudge the week which is between our letters ... or ten days, is it? only as I had just written to Henrietta it seemed better to wait a little till the interests accumulated a little— Even now, when I feel I must write to you, I have nothing at all amusing to say. Not a word more, or scarcely one, about the spirits. I have written to Fanny Haworth & bidden her give my address to M! Westland Marston, so that I shall probably hear from him in a few more days ... only I cant be patient for them. At Rome they have constructed a sort of stand upon castors with a table fixed in the middle of it & chairs all round ... upon the stand ... observe. The circle was formed, & after twenty minutes the whole thing revolved, disproving the muscular motion. It is an idea far simpler & better than Faraday’s—only none of these tests are wanted at this hour of the day. Miss Blagden has a friend, a M! Thompson, who is a Swedenborgian & who had a brother, a Roman Catholic convert. M! Thompson’s father is a protestant of one of the orthodox denominations. He, the father, has lately received the gift of the spiritual writing ... & What do you suppose he writes? Communications of the most urgent kind from the spirit of the son who died a Roman Catholic addressed to the son who is a Swedenborgian, ... announcing to his brother that he himself had made a great mistake in embracing popery & bitterly repented it, & advising that Swedenborg’s views should be adhered to as the nearest approach to the truth— This is curious,—the father medium being equally opposed to the Swedenborgian & papistical theories, as far as his personal opinions are concerned. From what I can hear, they have had no ‘raps’ at Rome, nor intelligent movements from the tables. I dont
think they know how to set about eliciting these things .. but we mean to try this winter, Mr Story & I and others— Here, the tables are rather scaffoldings, & of a most temporary description: it would take a whole company of spirits to move any one of them. I do wonder, you dont try, some of you who had a turn to table-turning some time ago. Why should'nt you succeed as well as others? If the tables move, you have the sign of presence in the spirits, & have only to call on them respectfully by the voice of the medium-agent. — When Mr Spicer comes, I shall hear a great deal of what is doing in England & France & Germany just now. You know he is the author of the book reviewed in Tait—the 'Sights & Sounds'— There's a quotation from me in it, by the way, which in its application to the present phenomena pleased me ..

"God keeps His holy mysteries
Just on the outside of man's dream."\(^4\)

& I am told he is an enthusiast about my poetry generally, & particularly pleased that I should be a believer in the "spirits." He is not a 'medium' you must understand,—simply an observer & historian.

My dearest dear Arabel I just have your letter. It came the day before the 'anniversary', in time for me to think of it off & on throughout that 'festa' of ours—thank you, thank you. Oh yes—indeed I should thank God for a round of seven years with so much happiness everywhere! And think of being able to say .. it is even better at the end than at the beginning! A fuller love, a closer confidence, a more complete satisfaction in what has been & is— And then, here's our Penini, with a face like an angel's, and little human ways still sweeter to us who are human! What a present & increasing blessing he is! Thank God for all—do you help us to thank Him!—

We are not alone just now— Mr Lytton came a week ago & will stay until summoned back to Florence by the Legation. He always was a great favorite with us & has lost nothing by the closer contact—a young man without the vices & defects of young men .. full of pure & noble aspiration of all kinds. We try to amuse him by giving him his own way as much as possible, & by varying the scene & society by the help of the Storys. Last night we were all at the Stisteds—but our visitor did not enjoy it much—in fact he cant bear being with strangers, & it w^ have been wiser to have kept him quietly at home, in consideration of his comfort, to talk poetry & spiritualism, upon which he is exactly as "mad" as I am said to be— Oh—so that's the opinion of the brethren assembled in Milford House\(^5\) Is it? 'I am not mad, most noble Festus,'\(^6\) notwithstanding. And if I am, why, I am mad in company, & in good company, I assure you, .. for everybody who has given any consideration to the subject is mad .. nobody, who has examined the question, sanely, says 'there's nothing in it.' I am glad that Henrietta shows signs of right reason & logic, among you— If we are to receive evidence, at all, the weight of evidence on this subject is to be received. If we are not to receive evidence, we have no grounds for believing in Julius Cæsar, much less in the apostle Paul. Of course it remains an open question whether the agency is of external spirits, or a development from within of some mysterious clairvoyante faculty— A man may have his opinion (more or less reasonably) on the mode of solution .. but as to the existence of the phenomena, he cannot hesitate .. because a matter of fact ceases to be a matter of opinion, & these things are established as facts by the testimony of thousands. You ask about Robert— Well—you seldom hear me quote Robert upon the subject—& there's the reason of it. When Robert is
brought face to face with witnesses to the phenomena, he believes as much as I do—but the witness being removed, he falls back into doubt & three days afterwards he denies, & wont admit that he ever believed at all. That's natural, I think. He is not like me—His theories are not the same in certain respects & having suffered violence under the pressure of such irresistible evidence as we have had, they recover with a spring when the face & the voice of the man who says "I saw this & that" are withdrawn. He generally maintains a determination to be incredulous until he can see & hear by means of his own senses. He means to apply a test, which will be absolutely convincing & final to his own mind. Now ever so many people.. Sir Edward Lytton among them.. have applied tests of the same kind.. even in more stringent forms. A name, for instance, half spoken on a deathbed.. the last articulate word.. & kept secret for reasons.. that name was spoken by a spirit.. to the person who asked for it mentally. Only Sir Edward knew it & his son, & one other person now in Germany. Do not repeat this. It was conclusive with everybody concerned of course & it was not all. As to Robert, he says he desires the 'communications' to be true, passionately. He wishes they could be justified in his own experience. And I, for my part, believe they will—only we must be patient about it. I dont like to propose trying experiments here, because there seem to be difficulties, & experiments which end in nothing had better not be made where there are sceptical persons concerned. For me, a hundred fruitless experiments would not shake my convictions—they are too strong. M! Lytton expects nothing less than a new æra. What is wanted among us.. is more of the receptive mind.. we are not serious & earnest.. we play at spiritualism at the best. In this way, the inferior spirits are drawn to us, & we get no good of any kind. I told Fanny Haworth as much when I wrote to her. People who drain a course of "London engagements" of an hour or two in order to "spiritual intercourse," had better go to the theatre & see [']the Last King of Assyria" instead. The complaint is.. "But wise spirits dont come to us".. "holy spirits dont come to us".. & these being our dispositions—, where's the wonder, I ask?

Let me tell you that Miss Blagden enquires particularly about you. She is delighted at the idea of having us in Rome, where she seems quite settled. Her invalid is much better, she says—For answer to your question about Rome, we cant stay here beyond the fifteenth of October if the cold will let us stay as long as that.. and October is at least a month too early for Rome. So we shall go to Casa Guidi from hence & remain there till the end of November perhaps, if we dont let the house before. The weather at Lucca has changed & the autumn rains have been glooming us over for a week past, making arbours impossible. I dare say it is still too hot at Florence just as M! Lytton left it. This place has suited Penini admirably—you never saw a child more improved. So much more rosy & round he is. Ferdinando tells Wilson that it is through drinking wine & eating fruit.. Ferdinando being reproached for administering to certain Bacchic tastes of the 'signorino'.. but the change of air & out-of-door mountain life is the more probable cause. The quantity of fruit that child eats with impunity is remarkable certainly.. sometimes five or six pears a day, with peaches & figs at indiscretion, & he never seems to be affected injuriously by anything of the kind. Arabel—we too have poultry—But ours is devoted unfortunately to the infernal gods & the spit, so that I never can bear to look at them. Their destinies are concealed from Penini who supposes that they take flight over the hills every now & then, & is not much
disquieted. By the way four of our turkeys [sic] were stolen the other night, & with them disappeared a rabbit of Penini's—either it ran away or was taken. Ferdinando put another in its place directly. He is very kind to that child, & Wilson & I are rather jealous of the affection lavished in return. Penini takes violent passions of love, & just now scarcely anybody can contend with Ferdinando. The other day Wilson in joke was telling some of the signore's here (suspected of considerable admiration for his moustache,) that he was going away on such a day .. whereupon Penini whom nobody had been thinking of, burst into a fit of sobs & rushed into his arms, crying, “oh no, Ferdinando! non va via! sta buono! non va via.”!10 Ferdinando, taken by surprise, had the tears in his eyes, & there was quite a scene.

We give 1s–10d for our turkeys [sic], & five pence or sixpence for our chickens— I dare say you give more for yours. If we lived expensively it would be worth while for Penini’s sake, he is so well & happy— The Tolomei children are playfellows always ready to be played with. I complained the other day of seeing him so seldom .. “I’ve lost my friend Penini,” said I, “nobody comes to sit with me now.” “At Florence, dear Mama, I be your flend anoller time. Now I muss play wiz lose litty shildem.” One morning he prayed that it might rain, considerably to Wilson’s surprise. When he rose from his knees he said, “Lily, I sint it will lam. tom ollow, and then Evelina wont go to school”—Evelina being the favorite companion— But Edith is the beloved par excellence!—11

Well—here’s the wedding-day. Robert told me this morning that he should love me still more the next seven years—but I shall be satisfied with the old love. We are to have the Storys here tonight. Last night we had tea with them—after church in the evening—M! Lytton & I talked theology all the way up the mountain, I on the donkey & he walking, but I dont know how far you would have gone with us— We were agreeing that there must be a breaking up of the old forms of Christianity. & that the churches must be re-organized altogether in order to the preservation of the vital Heart of doctrine— Infidelity is rising everywhere .. and scholastic phrases & ecclesiastical conventions will go out, & ought to go out, to make way for the true & rectifying Christ. That was our conclusion upon M! Green’s sermon yesterday—not a bad sermon of its kind nevertheless, but I am apt to fall upon such reflections after nearly all sermons. By the way, it is a satisfaction that we are not likely to see you baptized!12 Ah, we should’nt exaggerate the force of the sign & type—that is a too prevalent cause of corruption among all Christian Churches. Half our mistakes for instance, come from a clinging to Jewish ordinances .. to the forms of the Jewish church which in itself was a type only. We want the resurrection of the spiritual body .. but we look for the resurrection of the material body .. flesh & blood .. though we are taught that it shall not inherit immortality.13 This, in ecclesiastical matters, as in others.

My dearest darling Arabel, you dont say that you are better. I wish you would never fail to mention yourself, otherwise I shall conclude on something bad. I am anxious about you, remember—So Uncle Hedley & Ibbit have been really staying with Henrietta!— That must have been an undertaking, for Henrietta! I should have been half afraid .. in a small house, & with the double babies. By the way, I wish you would write a note to aunt Jane asking her to apply either by letter or messenger (giving her name) to Mess² Chapman & Hall, Piccadilly, for the parcel of books
which belong to her there. I want her to have them before she goes back to Paris. Say at the same
time, how glad I am about the late event, & how I congratulate everybody 'implicated'.

We have seen a little, off & on lately, of young Wilson, the son of D: Wilson the missionary
& orientalist.14 He was intended by his father for a scotch minister, but having fallen into infidelity
or what I call atheism . . . (for a belief which excludes the idea of personality from God, is simply
atheism, though nobody likes being set down as an atheist after all) he of course had to give up
everything, & is now on his way to India to visit his father who desires to see him, for the purpose
I suppose of trying on him the power of parental persuasion & argument. Really in some respects
he is an interesting young man—full of earnestness & thought & cleverness . . learned in the
learning of the Ægyptians . . that is, the Germans . . & believing with the whole force of his soul
that he has no soul whatever, & that he is going out presently like another worm. M' Hanna left
him as a sort of legacy to us, just hinting that all was not right with him—but I cant imagine that
he can have opened out to M' Hanna as he did to us again & again— The hideous nonsense he
talked in this room, is frightful to think over—considering that he is one of many . . a specimen
of an increasing class. Not conceited, not insolent, having come to these results in cold blood &
after a certain quantity of hard thought! It is frightful to think of. We had a great deal of discussion,
& when he was going away (he is gone to Rome) we said that we hoped to see him at our next
meeting with other opinions— "Oh," said he . . "that was absolutely impossible! he never could
take a step backwards." Yet he listened with a certain respect to Robert on the subject—only
evidently he was not shaken. A strange state of mind he was in altogether. He observed one day
for instance that he "could'nt understand the interest excited everywhere by these moving tables"—
"Oh—" said I . . "I suppose you think they move by involuntary muscular action". "Not at all," he
answered . . "I have seen them moved . . I have helped to move them myself— Faraday is all
wrong about that certainly—but I cant imagine why there should be a fuss about the matter." I
did'nt try the subject with him any farther— People seem obtuse .. blind & deaf .. in certain
moods of mental obstinacy: & if they dont believe in God, after looking round the world, they
cant be expected to give ear to a rapping spirit, let him rap ever so loudly— I wrote to Miss Bayley
the other day & never mentioned the subject at all. A great effort, you will say.

Give my love to my dearest George, & tell him that I do most dearly love him. Ah— I wish
we had him here. It would be better than M' Lytton, though M' Lytton is good. Such a susceptible,
imaginative young man—there's more danger that the spirits sh'd affect him injuriously than Penini,
& his father seems to think so.— Arabel, in the midst of my sentences, rushes in one of the signorine
.. "will I take charge of a bible & some religious books for her?" The gendarmerie are in the
house close by, & may come here. M'n Cunningham, & the Miss Cunninghams[,]15 mother &
daughters[,] are arrested for having distributed protestant books among the peasants— There has
been a great commotion. M' Lytton was sent for but could do nothing—he & Robert went
together—but no help was possible—they had the law against them. Miss Cunningham was taken
off to Lucca by the gendarmes— Oh—infamous! She has been very imprudent, there's no
denying.—

Wilson has had better news of her mother,16 which is a relief—but she is still confined to her
bed. God bless you, my beloved Arabel. Best of loves to everybody. Does dear Henry get any
fishing? Say how you are & write, & love me & pray for me. Robert’s love always with that of your own Ba-

They have found a quantity of bibles among the poor peasants—in fact, the number of protestants here is extraordinary—For every bible found, there’s a fine of ten scudi! On people who live upon chesnuts!——

Address: Angleterre via France / Miss Barrett / Milford House / near Lymington / Hants.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. John Westland Marston (1819-90), dramatic poet and critic. He did write, but his letter has not survived; however, EBB’s response to it has. In it she thanked him for his account of his experiences with spiritualism; for the complete text, see Victorian Newsletter (31, Spring 1967, pp. 49–52). For part of the text of EBB’s letter to Fanny Haworth, dated 30 August [1853] (ms at Fitzwilliam), see LEBB, II, 135–138.
3. Cephas Giovanni Thompson (1809-88), an American painter whose studio in Rome was in the Via Sistina near Story’s. The Brownings met Thompson and his wife, Mary Gouvmeur (née Ogden, b. ca. 1822) in Rome in December 1853. Thompson’s father, also Cephas (1775–1856) was a portrait artist and passed his talent and trade on to his son Cephas. When he discovered his younger son Jerome (1814–86) painting, he destroyed the easel and canvas. The younger brother left home, together with their sister, and succeeded as an artist. Although the DAB entry for Jerome points out that he was religiously devout, it does not clarify which faith he adhered to, nor have I been able to trace the religious persuasion of the elder Cephas.
5. As indicated by the address of this letter and one written to her brother George in early October (see B-GB, pp. 199–206), the household of 50 Wimpole Street had relocated to a country house for several months.
7. A highly successful revival of Byron’s Sardanapalus, a tragedy (London: John Murray, 1821) staged by Charles Kean at the Princess Theatre had just ended, and would open the season again in October 1853—see Sardanapalus, King of Assyria. A Tragedy. In Five Acts by Lord Byron. Adapted for Representation by Charles Kean (London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, 1853). In addition to Kean’s production, “two burlesques on ‘Sardanapalus’ appeared within a week of each other, at different theatres, whilst the original at the Princess’s, was in the first glow of its attraction” (John William Cole, The Life and Theatrical Times of Charles Kean, F.S.A., London: Richard Bentley, 2nd ed. 1860, II, 66). After a rather lengthy discussion and justification of Kean’s decision to stage Byron’s play, Cole wrote: “If there be any truth in spirit-rapping, and the dead are really cognizant of, and take an interest in the everyday occurrences of the life they have left, we wish some specially-minded medium would charm up Lord Byron, and inquire of him how he feels as to the stage treatment of his dramatic works” (II, 66).
9. “Young ladies.”
10. “Oh no, Ferdinando! don’t go away! be good! don’t go away.”
11. From the context, I take Evelina to refer to one of the Tolomei children, but I have been unable to identify them.
12. Arabella was christened on 14 August 1813, together with her brother Samuel, in the Colwall Parish Church, Herefordshire. EBB’s comments seem to indicate that Arabella had been considering the need for “adult baptism.”
13. See 1 Corinthians 15:50.
14. Andrew Wilson (1831–81), who is described in the *DNB* as a “traveller and author” and “the eldest son of the learned missionary John Wilson (1804–75).” The younger Wilson “lived some time in Italy” before going to India, where he worked as a journalist writing about his oriental travels.

15. Sarah Cuninghame (*née* Peebles) was the wife of John Cuninghame (1756–1836); two of their daughters, Margaret (d. 1863) and either Christiana or Sarah, are referred to here. Mrs. Cuninghame is registered for two places in the subscription books for the English Church at Bagni di Lucca for the summer season of 1853. In a letter to RB dated 19 September 1853, Robert Bulwer Lytton related some of the details of this incident, explaining that there were two sisters, only one of which Lytton says was arrested (*BBIS*-10, pp. 46–50). A letter from Archibald Cuninghame to the Editor of The Times in the 5 November 1853 issue, refers to this incident involving his sister “Miss M[argaret]. Cunninghame.” The Foreign Minister, the Earl of Clarendon eventually intervened on her behalf, and she was released on 10 October 1853. Her arrest and imprisonment added to the debate regarding “popery” and “papal aggression” in England, including references in several issues of The Church and State Gazette: “Popish Intolerance and Cruelty: The Grand Duke of Tuscany Again! (30 September 1853); and a reference to her release and an editorial about Romish persecution in the 14 October 1853 issue.

16. Mary Wilson (*née* Wallace, 1782–1853) was suffering from a severe case of bronchitis; see note 8 in the following letter.

---

**Letter 104**

Florence.


My ever beloved Arabel, at last I have a letter from you. One in two months! And you pretend to justify yourself! For my own part, though you hear from me three times as often, I confess myself guilty of a certain laxity of correspondence lately, which arises however a good deal from your previous guiltiness. You dont keep up the ball—& so it falls . . . and I get too lazy to stoop & pick it up. Then I have had a shadow turning about me concerning you .. whether your silence meant perhaps that you were unwell! The longed for letter relieved me partly of this apprehension—though you are not after all well—no,—that horrible inconvenience remains with you still. Take care of yourself my beloved, this winter. To do so is the matter of the clearest & simplest duty. Oh— how excellent it would be for you (and me) to come out to Rome this winter—to come through Marseilles to Civita Vecchia by sea & spend the cold months with us? George, dearest George, I appeal to you—Is it impossible to manage it? Could’t Ocy, on grounds of architecture, come out to Italy for a few months & bring Arabel with him—Lizzy being about to be in Ireland, there’s no obstacle in Lizzy. The expence is slight— Less than eight pounds cover the expence to Marseilles, and in Rome we are there! A warm climate is a specific for certain affections, & a winter in the south would set all to rights. Could you not say, George, that Arabel had been pressed to go to Rome—without naming me—Papa w’d understand .. and a permission of the sort would be a mezzo termine between forgiveness & non-forgiveness . . . a sign of toleration & goodwill which might be given after seven years— Do you not think it possible? Now dont shake your heads all of you— consider, rather—& try! We are going to Rome in a week.

Meanwhile we have been keeping open house here (at tea time) with droves of Americans & a few English passing in & out– It is expensive work, the consumption of coffee & cake being enormous,—fatiguing work too . . & I want some quiet evenings again. Think of our having in
this room the other evening, the Cottrells, the Kinneys (American minister) M'r & M'st Story, M'r & M'st Shaw (American millionaires) Miss Courtenay (a friend of Mr Kenyon's) Mr Lytton & D'r Pryme, a clergyman from New York. Another evening, with most of the above, we had besides General Lodwick & Cap'n Eastwick—an East Indian director, who came to us with introductions from England. It's quite out of our way to be crowded upon so—out of mine, especially. And in the midst of all my poor dear Wilson lost her mother as you may have heard, which quite saddened me for days together. Happily the terrible letter fell into our hands, & seeing at a glance what it meant, I was able to try to break it to her a little—but she was much shaken of course—such things always fall like thunderbolts, & no amount of human care will break the fall of a thunderbolt. Now she is better of course, & has begun to smile again & talk rather more cheerfully. The spirits do not go far from us, Arabel—and at the present time the apparent adamantine wall of partition has breaches in it.

Of that I am more & more sure. I have heard some strange things since I wrote last— I have even witnessed. Dearest, you said once that you would believe my personal experiences. Dearest, as surely as I write to you now, there have been communicating spirits in this room where I write—that at least is my conviction. Let me hasten however to tell you that no communication came to me— Our experiments were imperfect from various causes, & other spirits pressed in before mine came—or perhaps mine are in the interior Heavens, from whence there have been few communications hitherto. Let me tell you what passed. Mr Shaw who has just come from Rome is a medium— One of the most interesting women, by the way, I ever saw... a simple, sweet creature, spiritual in a good sense, looking at these matters reverently & religiously. She told me all her experiences, shewed me copies of the mystical papers produced at Rome... & after that first interview, we kissed one another, for my sympathies were drawn much to her, & you know, Arabel, I have a decided genius for kissing. Well, it was agreed that we should have a circle here one evening— She did not much like it, .. having a strong feeling against submitting these things to the curiosity & irreverence of sceptical people,—but to please me she yielded. There were Mr & Mrs Tweedy, Americans, (believers in the phenomena) Mr & Mrs Shaw, Mr & Mrs Story, Mr Lytton, Mr Powers, & a Miss Silsbee, a young girl of thirteen, whom Mr Shaw brought with her on account of the power she had over the tables, & ourselves. Some of us assembled round a small four legged table (with a drawer in it) and after about a quarter of an hour, it moved. I never shall forget the heave it gave under my hand, like a living creature waking from a sleep. Then it turned upon itself, .. & swept us round & round till we were giddy. The motion being over we resumed our seats which had been scattered on all sides in the confusion, & Mr Shaw asked in a dead silence, .. “If any of our friends are here will they signify it by tilting the table?” Instantly the table tilted from one side to the other. “Will the spirits give a communication tonight?” Tilting of the table— “To which of us will the spirits give a communication tonight. Ask, each of you.” We all asked one by one— My voice trembled when it came to my turn, as you may suppose.— But the table remained still at each question— “Will the spirits indicate by the alphabet the name of the person to whom they will communicate?” Strong tilting of the table. (You are to understand that only a few of us were sitting at the table & that Robert with the rest stood without.) Well—Mr Shaw said the alphabet slowly—and at the letter
R. the table tilted—at the letter O, the table tilted .. till Robert’s name was spelled— He observed that there were two Roberts in the room — & the spelling was therefore continued until Browning was spelled out. I was very much moved— As cold as stone my hands & feet were, but I felt no fear .. only gladness & conviction. You will wonder perhaps that believing as I did, there was not more painful excitement— I was rather moved than excited. Certainly I expected that his mother’s spirit wù be announced. Instead of her, came Eliza Flower, to whom Robert was once warmly attached .. you remember her relations with M: Fox. ¹° Nobody in the room knew anything of her of course, & Robert himself was not at the table— Upon this however, it was asked whether he should come to the table. Table tilts in assent— (You are to understand that the tilting of the table means ‘yes’ always— & its remaining immoveable, ‘no’.) He sits at the table & asks if Eliza Flower will give him proof of her identity by telling him the second name of her sister Sarah. ‘Yes’— ‘Will she do it by tilting the table according to the alphabet.['] ‘No’. Will she do it by the writing. ‘Yes.’ Will she use M: Shore’s¹¹ mediumship for the writing? ‘Yes.’ M: Shore takes paper & pencil—her hand is convulsively moved—she writes a word— & another, evidently the same word, below it. Nobody can read what is written. Robert says it is wrong— upbraids the spirit as being untrue, & not giving the promised proof of identity. Confusion among the embodied.

At first, observe, everybody had been awed in spite of themselves, but the impression wearing off there was a good deal of what I considered unsightly attentiveness— M: Shaw asked if the spirits wù meet us again— ‘Yes’. On Monday? ‘No’. On Tuesday? ‘no’. On Wednesday? ‘Yes.’ Her husband took her away, & with her went Miss Silsbee, the other medium, & M: & M: Tweedy. When they were gone Robert & M: Story began examining the table & considering that it was “a great deal too easily moved”—

I proposed sitting down at the table we four, M: & M: Story, Robert & I, to try whether we could get questions answered by ourselves,—taking care to touch with the fingers as lightly as was possible. We gave one another “words of honour” to be on our guard, & preserve the conditions sedulously— Then somebody asked if a communication would be given to any of us— Table tilted violently .. never tilted so violently before. “Is the communication to me?” each asked. ‘No’— till Robert spoke—then, a violent tilting as before. ‘Dear Eliza Flower’ said Robert, ‘give me proof of your identity. Will you give it?” “Yes.['] By the tilting?— ‘No.’ By the writing? Yes. “May M: Story write?” No. “May my wife write?” ‘Yes.’ I took paper & pencil, but no effect ensued. Then I asked .. “Will you give any other communication to Robert?” [’] “Yes.” “By the alphabet?” Yes. The alphabet was called —and the phrase “Be earn” .. was spelt out .. (M: Lytton writing down the letters at some distance from the table to prevent any misapprehension ..) on which it was exclaimed that of course ‘Be earn’ must be intended. “Do you mean Be earnest” we asked of the spirit— Violent tilting of the table— Hereupon we ended the séance, the Storys & M: Lytton all declaring that it was [a] most inappropriate exhortation to Robert. I differed from them all. I thought it appropriate to him in reference to the subject & occasion. Strange to say, when Robert looked at the mystical paper the next day he became all but convinced that the word he had asked for (that second name) was written really though imperfectly. I myself have no doubt of it. The medium was not equal to the demand made— We are to understand that no miracle properly so called, is performed in these communications—it is but law under a new development.
There is as much difficulty on the other side of the veil as on this... difficulty arising from our obtuseness of instrumentality.— On the Wednesday we had another séance, with results on the whole perhaps less satisfactory— The table was much longer before it moved. It expressed itself then not by tilting but by pointing,—it ran with one corner & then drew itself back... like a dog pointing... accompanied with quivering & pulsation which were very curious. On that occasion, Mr Lytton received a communication... the name spelled was Emily L... when he stopped the operation by asking if the word was Lytton—‘Yes’. His sister’s name. Shall I have a communication? ‘Yes’. By the alphabet & the table? ‘Yes’. The first letter given was F... on which he asked if Mr Shaw might receive the rest of the communication for him— (I suppose he felt nervous) ‘Yes.’ But on Mr Shaw’s taking up the alphabet, the next letter to F was given L... & so Flower was spelled again—as if one spirit pressed in before another.— Much more was done, but all ended in a conflict & confusion of the Embodied, ... M! Story taking down questions & answers like a reporter, Robert reproaching false spirits, & I inveighing against every person present who instead of trying these experiments with humility & reverence, played at sharp-shooting with the invisible world— So there our séances ended. The impression on me was decisive. My previous belief was deepened into conviction— Robert would say only that it was very curious—he could’t account for it... did’nt pretend... was sure there was no false play on the part of anyone... but... but! Oh, how difficult to believe against preconceived opinions! I should have told you that on the name ‘Flower’ being spelled, Robert recurred to his test, and that the invisible intelligence acquiesced in his proposal to write the “second name” by Mr Shaw... that Mr Shaw wrote accordingly, & that while she was writing (in a rapid sort of convulsion) Robert as well as myself was convinced by the movement of the hand, that the right name was written. The paper however being examined[.] the writing was extremely indistinct... might stand for anything... only a word of the same character was evidently repeated there. I am convinced that the effort towards writing the word was made,—but the medium was more imperfect than usual & failed in her part— Also, on somebody soliciting ‘raps’, we had raps— There was a sound like a cricket chirping, from the table— “Will the spirits give three raps more?” Three came. “Now, four more.” Four came. Then M! Story began to insist that it was only the creaking of the table— (Quite a different thing, I say!) Great confusion. Mr Shaw asked if the raps should be repeated in the case of our all taking off our hands? “Yes.” We took off our hands, & no rap ensued—which was inveighed against by some of the critics as a contradiction & a lie—and so we broke up. Mr Shaw advised me to make no more experiments under such circumstances— She had begun, on entering the room, to predict that she would prove but a weak medium that night, as she had been in a frivolous & worldly state of mind all day... (Emelyn Story could’nt understand what was meant by a ‘worldly state of mind,’ but you will) & nobody else was humble, patient, & reverent.— We were all ajar, somehow. If we had been otherwise minded & in a state of unity with ourselves, there is no saying what results we might have arrived at. As it was, everybody (after the first shock of awe & astonishment) was objecting to everybody, and aspiring in different directions— One person wanted ‘raps,’ & another declined the raps, & we be satisfied only with table-tilting— M! Lytton tells me that ever since that evening he has yearned after the communication which he lost perhaps by asking Mr Shaw to take up the thread of it.—
Dearest darling Arabel we go to Rome on tuesday morning, & shall be seven days on the road, passing through Perugia, seeing Terni & everything worth seeing. We go by vetturino, & are to pay for our whole household, for travelling, feeding, fires & beds at the best inns, the sum of twenty napoleons, sixteen pounds. Remember there are four of us besides Penini—we take Ferdinando—and we live for seven days. I expect to enjoy the journey much. The Storys pressed us very much to go with them, so that we should travel in their carriage & put the children & servants into the vettura—but they were forced to go ten days ago, and Wilson & I could'nt get ready. Also, to tell you the truth, I like liberty in a long journey, & the priviledge of silence when one is tired. We have not let our house here, and the apartments in Rome are exorbitantly dear . . . dearer than in Paris. It really is rash to rush on such expenses with a nearly empty purse, but we cant go north without Rome & so we must have Rome. Penini is enchanted at the thoughts of the new journey. Such packings up of “mine desk” we have had for a fortnight past. “Ferdinando, you going to take your gun”? “No,” said Ferdinando, “No paura del papa.” Penini suggests with a hand held up, . . “Alibel che mi ha dato questo vestito, (the famous green merino with buttons) dice che se si da un bacio al papa qui (pointing to his foot) non farà male”. See how he has remembered & adapted to his new view of the papal terrors, your joke about kissing the pope’s toe. He remembers, I assure you. Only, when asked about Henrietta, he will persist in having it that she is his “tuzzin,” cousin. So I did’nt mention Penini, in my letter to George? That letter was abruptly cut off, & in the act was cut off Penini. We continue to be jealous of his passion for Ferdinando. He is a child subject to passions of the sort, like one of his parents you will suggest. Did I tell you what he said, (when asked once if he did’nt love Mama & Papa more than Ferdinando), with a magnificent evasion— “I love evellybody, .. Mama, Papa, Lily, Ferdinando, God, & Flush.” When he is what he calls “unhappy,” (fancy Penini’s being unhappy!) he cries out for Ferdinando, sometimes with sobs . . “I muss see mine Ferdinando! I muss love mine Ferdinando,” & when he sees him the child embraces his knees in a passionate way—Ferdinando has bewitched him I think. He was very interested about our seânces, & tried hard to keep his eyes open till eight oclock that he too might see. He lay on my sofa while I was dressing—“Oh— I velly tied. I aflaid I tant teep mine eyes open, dear Mama. Dear Mama, if you det (get) an angel, tell Papa to bwing him in to me, to mine bed—” I just answered & turned round to speak to him further, & there he was, dropped asleep in the very words, looking like an angel himself, with that seraphic face of his. You need’nt be afraid, Arabel. He heard very little, & what he did hear he took quite as a matter of course. He believes in a spiritual world, he at least, & would not be startled by any visible spirit or angel. He says [“]he velly often hears the spinnets knotting” (knocking) but what frightens him is if the knocking is supposed to come from the judge next door—Th(at)’s his only fear. So anxious he is to see “the least piece of wing” of an angel. He w’d run in to the “dlawing loom” directly he says, to tell me. You cant think how fluent he is with his Italian— Its just the same as English to him, & he has left off mixing the languages. By the way, his reading English is curious, because of the imperfect articulation, and really he begins to read quite nicely. A book of stories in one syllable was given to him a fortnight ago & he has read it half through already—he reads a page a day, & we never miss a day of the reading on any pretext.
Sometimes he brings me "God's book", as he always calls the bible, & makes me read to him—
but the mode of expression is beyond him yet.—

Robert & I have been persecuted into sitting for our portraits to a painter & a sculptor ..
the American poet & painter M! Buchanan Read, & M! Wood a young English sculptor who
insisted on doing us in bas relief .. in separate medallions, a little smaller than life. The paintings
are separate too .. in oilcolours, but cabinet pictures. Robert's is not unpleasing, but null for
expression,—& I am inclined to say the same of my own. The medallions are for Elkington in
London, & are to be done in bronze. You cant imagine the boredom of all this to me .. or rather
you can. M! Read paints well, & the pictures are good as pictures. He is to use them for his own
profit of course. M! Story is to do a bust of Robert in Rome, I understand, if he does'nt change
his mind. M! Wood returns to England in December, & one of these days you may see the bronzes
at Elkington's shop.

Your & George's merinos will answer for Penini all this winter, by lengthening the waists a
little, in spite of his growth. I have bought for him besides only a plaid, which trimmed with
broad black velvet, is a pretty dress, for the warmer days. His white hat is done up again & looks
admirably with its white feather. Penini leads the child-fashion everywhere .. & I am thinking of
publishing an infantine "journal des modes," my taste (& Wilson's) is so much applauded
generally.

M! Shaw is the wife of one of the merchant-princes of New York— They are immensely rich,
& in Italy for her health—have been in Rome for the last year, & have come to Florence for the
winter. So we just cross. You would think her very interesting—simple, direct, truthful to a charm,
unspoilt by the world. Robert delights in her. She tells me that in Rome where some earnest &
devout persons met periodically for the 'circles', the communications they received were most
striking as well as satisfactory & relevant— For instance .. once when she was much depressed in
spirits, not observably, she says, but consciously .. she received words of this kind .. "The Lord
has said, Be not afraid." I could tell you much more .. but there is no space in a letter— When
we meet, Arabel, we will try ourselves, .. shall we not? selecting our own circle. The mixed
circles are foolish & wrong. You get nothing good by them. But you shall be convinced, when I
come to England, if not before. As to producing the phenomena, you can all do it—it is in the
power of nearly all.

What an interesting letter you sent me about your visit to dearest Henrietta, & your adventures
on the road. My poor Arabel! to think of you, wandering in the dark in that state of exhaustion!—
And how pleasant, on the other hand, to see our beloved Henrietta in your picture, with that glow
of happy light on her face! —

Now write to me, I beseech you. Oh— I am anxious, anxious, anxious, this cholera time—
How do you find Papa looking? Tell me all. I hope my books will be found in Wimpole Street.
Of course Lizzie will go to Ireland directly. Consider, all of you, what I have said about Rome.
Write to Rome. And take care that your letter be within (that is, under) a quarter of an ounce, &
then we shall pay a moderate postage by the new arrangement, arranged just in time for us. I do
beseech you to write often, if ever you think of me or care for me. Direct posta restante, Rome.
Arabel, fancy my passing the evening before last with M’ Lytton, Signor Villeri, & M’ Wood, ... Robert being out. We had been engaged to the Kinneys, & it was too cold for me to go, but Robert was forced to go, to prevent a moral storm. In the meantime in came my male visitors. We have tea & cigars—we talk literature & spiritualism—"A delightful evening", said M’ Lytton at eleven oclock when we broke up. I think I shall send Robert out another time.

Last night there was a more general levee—everybody came to wish us goodbye. We know too many people in this Florence just now, & M’ Tennyson, who is worth a score, has not returned yet. Wish that we may be well out of the expedition to Rome. How we have lived this year, moving to & fro, & seeing much society in a quiet way, on less than three hundred a year is really astonishing. I am afraid of the Roman expenses, but we must hope & do as well as we can. By securing Rome we make a first step to Paris & London, & if we can let the house for a year, it will be excellent. Write & tell me of yourself, your health, my beloved ... & say how you find Trippy ... who never sends me a message—Shall you see M’ Hunter, I wonder. My love always, if you do—How is dear Minny? Tell me if you hear of Maddox. Wilson is anxious to hear from her sisters—God bless you all of you—. My tender thoughts are with you. Kisses & loves to dearest Trippy though she sends me no message. Robert’s love with those of your very own Ba-

Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated by EBB’s reference to leaving for Rome on Tuesday, which was 15 November 1853.
2. Lizzie had written to her maternal aunt Sarah Ryves, in Dublin, for permission to visit. Her aunt had agreed, and Lizzie wrote to her father for his approval, which was given in a letter dated 18 August, together with a Bill of Exchange for £25 to cover Lizzie’s expenses. Lizzie left Wimpole Street at the end of November, and a month later, Edward Moulton-Barrett wrote to her father: “you are aware that at her earnest desire & with your own concurrence she is now with her Aunt in Dublin. I submit then to you that you should make arrangements, if you have at present no other views for her, for her continuance there, where I would hope is a large family of Girls she might form friendships from congenial tastes & see more of society, whereas here my Daughter’s pursuits & occupations are so opposite to hers, that she can scarcely be so comfortable as she would otherwise be, were there more agreement of purpose. However independent of this it is most objectionable to me that Lizzy should be here in a house of young Men; it is not seemly, opposed to the usage of Society & must be put an end to, therefore I hope that you will lose no time in writing desiring her to remain with her Aunt until you may determine upon future plans for her” (MS at Eton).
3. “Compromise.”
4. See note 11 below.
5. Louisa Bithia Courtenay (1812-1904) for whom EBB had written out “The Sea-Mew” in an album in 1836 at Kenyon’s request (BC, 3, 176).
6. Samuel Irenæus Prime (1812-85), a Presbyterian clergyman from New York and editor of the New York Observer, and the prolific author of numerous religious books, including Thoughts on the Death of Little Children (New York: Anson D.F. Randolph, 1853). He also wrote Travels in Europe and the East (London: Sampson Low, Son, & Co., 1855), in which he describes meeting the Brownings: “… both of them charming persons—his is a warm, genial spirit, gushing over in his free and familiar conversation. She is intellectual, spiritual, one whom you recognize as holding communion with the unseen. I was greatly pleased with both of them” (II, 95). And in his Autobiography and Memorials (New York: Anson D.F. Randolph, 1888), he described an incident
in 1853 "in Mr. Kinney's parlor one evening, with Mrs. Browning and Mrs. Kinney, congenial poets and friends, with Powers and Gould and other artists,—a brilliant company. A question in religion came up in the midst of our conversation, when one of the party avowed himself an unbeliever, and with an air of confident triumph said, 'I will not believe anything that I cannot understand.' Mr. Kinney broke the silence that ensued by asking, 'Will you tell us, sir, what you do understand?' And then followed one of his tornadoes of conversational eloquence or parlor discourse, in which he demonstrated the utter human inability to understand the simplest phenomena, which nevertheless we intelligently believe" (pp. 245-246).

7. William Joseph Eastwick (1808–89) was introduced by Bryan Waller Procter, who described Eastwick as "an East Indian Director—a very intelligent & most agreeable man" (ms at ABL). Peter Lodwick (d. 1873), of the Bombay Infantry, is listed in the Brownings' address book at 72 Via Sistina, and later he lived near RB in London at 63 Westbourne Terrace.


9. Miss Silsbee was presumably the daughter of Nathaniel and Marianne Cabot Silsbee, American friends of the Shaws and Tweedys. The Brownings' address book gives Mr. Silsbee's Rome address as "Casa Dies, Via Gregoriana." Edmund Tweedy (1812–1901) and Mary (née Temple, 1810–91) had married in 1850 and had two children: Catherine (1851–59), born in Paris, and Francis Temple (1853–59), born in Bagni di Lucca; both died of diphtheria while visiting family in Albany, New York, in 1859.

10. Eliza Flower (1803–46) and her sister Sarah Fuller Adams (née Flower, 1805–48) influenced RB in his youth, and it was through these two sisters that the poet was introduced to W.J. Fox, for whom Eliza worked as a housekeeper, as well as caring for his children, which led to gossip concerning their unconventional relationship.

11. Sic, for "Shaw's," here and immediately following. Sarah Blake Shaw (née Sturgis, 1815–1902) married Francis George Shaw (1809–82) in 1835. As EBB explains below, he was a wealthy merchant and philanthropist, and he and his wife travelled in Europe in the 1850's with their children.

12. Lytton's only sibling; see letter 48, note 20.

13. Underscored three times.

14. See note 6 in the following letter, following EBB's comment about Mrs. Story's "vague natural piety."

15. An Umbrian town about midway between Perugia and Rome. "The great interest of Terni is derived from the Caduta delle Marmore, one of the wonders of Italy, and celebrated throughout Europe as the 'Falls of Terni'" (Murray, A Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy, London: John Murray, 1853, part I., p. 257). As EBB reports in the following letter to Arabella, the Brownings stopped there on their journey to Rome, and in January she described the trip to Miss Mitford, mentioning specifically "the wonderful Terni ... that passion of the waters which makes the human heart seem so still" (EBB-MRM, III, 400). Earlier poets, such as Byron, had described the famous cataract: "The roar of waters!—from the headlong height" (Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, LXIX). RB refers to Terni in Bishop Blougram's Apology, as well as in Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.

16. "I fear not the pope."

17. "Alibel who gave me this suit, says that if you give a kiss to the pope here it won't harm you."

18. For the text of EBB's letter to George, dated 7 October [1853], see B-GB, pp. 199–206.

19. Thomas Buchanan Read (1822–72), American painter and poet, painted portraits of both Brownings in 1853 (see Reconstruction, F18 and G5). A copy of The House By the Sea. A Poem (Philadelphia: Parry & McMillan, 1855) was presented to RB by Read on 25 December 1855, and sold as part of lot 931 in Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, A1930). In April 1855 EBB wrote to Isa Blagden that RB had "exasperated against" Read's poetry (ms at Fitzwilliam).

20. Marshall Wood (ca. 1830–82), whose medallion of Browning was his first exhibit for the Royal Academy in 1854. Between 1854 and 1875 he exhibited 23 other works, busts, statues, and medallions; see Algernon Graves, The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and Their Work ... 1769–1904 (London: Henry Graves & Co., 1906, 8, 339). Wood's medallion of EBB was later reproduced in Tait's Edinburgh Magazine (January 1856); see Reconstruction, F22. The image was also reproduced in the March 1857 issue of The National Magazine.
Letter 104

[12-14] November [1853] 599


22. Story's bust of RB was not made until 1861; he later (ca. 1864) made one of EBB; see Reconstruction F54 and G24. The busts are now on display in Florence at Casa Guidi.

23. "Fashion magazine."


25. Pasquale Villari (1827-1917), Italian historian and statesman, and professor of history at Pisa and Florence, had been exiled from Naples in 1848 after he was accused of participating in riots against the Bourbon government. Villari was well-known for his lives of Savonarola and Machiavelli.

Letter 105

Rome. Via Bocca di Leone. 43.

Monday--Tuesday-- [28-29 November 1853]

My ever dearest Arabel. We have been at Rome since Tuesday & I scarce believe it even now, though it does indeed seem like some city of the tombs--The Storys had busied themselves to get us an apartment, & we called at their house, as was previously arranged, in order to know where we were to drive. M's Story ran down stairs & induced me to go up & take a cup of coffee, while M's Story went on with Robert to give him the choice of two apartments. Little Edith & Joe were not there—she was out walking .. & he, said M's Story, "had caught cold .. she had given him some slight medicine, & he had fallen asleep & had better not be disturbed. Tomorrow he would be well .. might Penini come & dine tomorrow with him & Edith?" The Storys came with us to our apartment, when Robert had decided on it, .. sate by us a moment or two, hearing us praise the rooms, & so we parted, bright faces on both sides. The next morning before breakfast .. the man-servant brings in Edith. "Joe had just been in convulsions .. Mama was crying. Mama had sent her over to us." (Edith is nine years old.) Robert & I, leaving Edith with Wilson & Penini, set out instantly of course to see what the evil was. Oh—Arabel, it was death's own evil! The child had a succession of convulsions .. never recovered consciousness, & before the night had set in, was dead under Robert's eyes,.. he never leaving it for a moment. A boy six years old, & beloved by its mother above all her loves--Husband, & remaining child are as nothing in her sight compared to the least remembrance of that boy. I shall not forget the destruction in which she threw herself down, beside the empty little chair. O ever loving God!--what agonies are permitted on this earth of ours by that great love of Thine!—She has one of the soft, flexible expansive natures, however, which by talking as well as weeping out its grief, relieves itself easily, and I do not expect for her any very protracted affliction. I was more afraid for M's Story—much more. Now hear the rest. Edith, left at our house, sickened—lay on the bed all day in a state of fever .. was carried down stairs (because we had no night-room to give her) to the apartment below occupied by friends of the Story's [sic],—the physician who came to see her having given it as his opinion that she could not safely go home—and that following night was in extreme danger. "She may not live till morning" was the medical apprehension. So the poor mother & father quitted their own house, with the still unburied little body of their boy in it, and came here
Letter 105

[28–29 November 1853]

...to wait & tremble before the possibility of another blow— The anxiety has been great & wearing—
but she is better on this sixth day of the fever, & although we are warned to look for further
fluctuations, I am sanguine now as to the result. Meanwhile, the English nurse too is dangerously
ill— In all three cases, it has been gastric fever, which is apt to complicate itself with nervous &
brain fever, & so to become fatal. At first I was troubled with the fear of infection. Robert & I
were on the point of sending Penini to Miss Blagden, but took the precaution of asking D.'s
Pantaleone, the physician in attendance, who assured us that the sort of fever was not contagious
nor infectious in the slightest degree— & that the coincidence of the illnesses arose from all three
patients having been exposed to a coup de vent late in the evening of Sunday. Think what an
abyss of misery we have fallen into by our first step into Rome. Except to Joe's deathbed, I have
been nowhere. Robert went to his grave. The place is embittered to me—the taste of these aloes
will not leave my lips, I think, while I stay here. Miss Blagden has come to try to talk me up
again .. but I drop. Oh—it is so sad! That poor child on the bed downstairs, asked her mother
"how Joe was," & she answered quietly "he is better"— Think of that! The child is constantly
talking of Joe, & of wishing to "go to play with him." But it is absolutely necessary to keep her
calm, & the mother's & father's heart bear up courageously. Oh—hard, hard!

See what a horrible letter I am about to send you. But we are tolerably well ourselves—quite
well except for the shatter of nerves—and we are in very comfortable rooms .. I must admit so
much comfort. Such an exquisite journey we had .. took a holiday on the road at Perugia where
we passed forty eight hours—made an excursion to the monastery & triple church at Assissi [sic]
.. another excursion to Terni .. I was sorry when it was all over, even though I thought the
glories of Rome, & not this sorrow, were to come after. I kept saying "I wish we were travelling
on for eight more days." We never made a journey with so little fuss & so much enjoyment— No
bills to pay—the vetturino managing everything. Rooms & provender ready for us—and such a
Penini all the way! So bright & joyous that child was .. making friends at the inns with his
chattering Italian .. people looking at him in admiration everywhere. Certainly, Arabel, he grows
much prettier— His eyes have an intenser expression, his cheeks have a vivider colour, & then the
bright golden ringlets dropping nearly to the waist are very picturesque. He would sit with
Ferdinando in the coupé [sic] more than half the time—and once when we took him in towards
evening for fear of cold (the coupé [sic] being more open than the interior) we had rather a scene—
he cried a little, & went to sleep, and on awaking at the inn afterwards, there was great lamentation
& sense of humiliation. “All the peoples” said he “would sink him to be twite a baby and not a bit
a toashman.” (His idea was that being in the coupé proved him a coachman at once.) Then bursting
into sobs .. “Oh, dont tell lese peoples I not dood.” Really he was good the whole joumey, with
scarcely the exception of a minute. Every time he said his prayers, he asked to be “taken tare of
in the traveller, in the talliage, on the hills,” & the night he arrived at Rome, it was thus he
prayed while my heart swelled to hear him, .. “Tank you, God, for bwinging us safe through the
tountily, (country) and to see Blame.” I like to feel that his little imperfect prayers are at least
something growing out of his life .. vital so far .. and not exterior things said by rote. For instance
the other evening he had been crying with a pain in his teeth. When he came to say his prayers,
he put in, (unsuggested by anybody of course) “and tate away mine toosate—” (toothache.) He
prayed God to “make Joe well” after Joe was well indeed— Wilson had not the heart to tell the truth. I called the child to me and said how it was . . . that “God had taken Joe to be happy in heaven”—. He looked at me with his earnest eyes and said, “Did Papa see the angels take Joe”? “No” said I, “he did not see.” “How then?” he asked . . . “Did Joe do up to gentle Jesus by himself?” I tried to explain that “the outside of Joe had died on the bed, & that we knew then how the real alive Joe had gone to God.” He fixed his eyes on me & said slowly, “When I and papa & mama & Ferdinando & Lily go to God, then we see Joe again”. Robert who had listened in his dressing-room, opened the door & said, “Penini, what has mama been telling you?” The child paused for a moment, and then bursting out crying, said, “Oh, Joe dead!” He screamed so at first & sobbed so afterwards that Wilson was vexed with us—— “So young as he was, how was it possible he should understand?”—but the fact was that he understood perfectly—and any way, it was necessary to tell him the fact. The emotion soon passed & he recovered his spirits like the baby he is, poor darling. As to working upon his feelings I would’nt do such a thing for the world. I would’nt blot the divine sunshine of his infancy with the shadow of the handsbreadth of a cloud—but these poor children, though older than he, have been his playmates all the summer, & he is likely to see Edith continually, if God spares her. Two days, since we have been here, he & Wilson have spent at Miss Blagden’s . . . she is very very kind, and would have him to dine &c—& he became suddenly quite familiar with her & at home, & has bewitched the whole house, it appears. On her first visit to us he brought out your green frock with the immortal buttons, (“shining like the sun”, said he) to show her. Wilson has let down the waist to meet his growth, & it still is a beautiful frock & the especial glory of its owner. He wears, too, George’s blue frock . . . the frock made from the pelisse . . . and I bought him at Florence a plaid merino which we have trimmed with black velvet, so that he is well off, & looks . . . oh, so pretty!— But just now I look at him with a tremble at the heart! These treasures,—which at once are ours, & not ours!!— The late affliction has been all the more painful to me that the persons afflicted have very unformed opinions . . . belief which is no belief . . . a certain vague natural piety on Emelyn’s side, but on her husband’s, what I must call absolute infidelity . . . The immortality of the soul he believes in indeed, & he is’nt troubled by doubts about the happiness of his child— The Divine goodness is so great, Arabel, that God seems to help persons who scarcely admit His personality . . . as is the way with the holders of Emersonian doctrines. She sees farther than he does . . . or rather feels farther, which is the case with women, sometimes. Robert fancied that conviction was struck into them both by this blow—but grief of itself does not convert—no. Say nothing of all this. I write to you because my heart is open to you. Little Joe was buried (on the third day) by Mr. Baird, the american minister of the Scotch church, an excellent man, whose ministry we mean to attend. Robert liked him much— Think of my poor Robert! Not only did he never leave the deathbed of the child, but when all was over he (and a manservant helping him) did everything horrible in the last necessary offices to the poor little body, (being entreated) & yielded to the mother’s pathetic fancies in the arrangement of this & that— She made a garland for the head, Arabel, with her own hands . . . twisting up violets & white roses with twists of her hair— How my very soul sickened while I sate by her. She could do it. For me, this way is’nt my way. This dust is not my beloved. I recoil from this paddling with clay, when what made it precious to me is above, looking down upon it & me. Robert & I feel
much alike as to such things, but we had to be tender & bear with other sorts of feelings. The funeral took place on the third day—Robert chose the place .. close to Shelley’s grave in the cemetery—\textsuperscript{8} I thought \textsuperscript{R}obert would have been quite \textsuperscript{k}ai\textsuperscript{d} up—He looked broken by the labour of heart & hand. Emelyn is a sweet, loving creature; we would either of us do anything for her—or indeed, for \textit{him}. I did not see the body— I was afraid they would make me go in .. that I could not avoid it without wounding their feelings .. but Robert managed to spare me that— It was dreadful enough, even so.

Today M! Story has gone to his studio, & Edith is decidedly better though the fever will run its course obviously, & cover five or six more days. Still, we begin to see light. The nurse is better. I have persuaded Robert to go & call on Isabella Blagden\textsuperscript{9}—it will do him good. The weather too which since our arrival has \textsuperscript{bee}n miserably cold (we had exquisite weather on the road) \textsuperscript{is} beginning to be bright & beautiful—Our apartment is very complete, & \textsuperscript{full} of sunshine—On a third floor .. which is considered more healthy at Rome—& the stairs are easy—it is’n’t like the third floor of a London house, understand. We pay forty scudi a month .. at the rate of a fraction more than two pounds a week .. but the prices everywhere here are exorbitant .. and the rooms are quite unexceptional— Two or three windows, you see, in each room, & every corner carpeted. Furniture comfortable. Armchairs, & sofas enough to please me even. Then the situation is excellent—just off the Piazza di Spagna— in the heart of the English quarter which is considered espe\textit{cia}lly \textit{he}\textit{alth}y. I have just taken courage to arrange the rooms, as if we meant to live in them & not die. Robert praises me you know, for my knack of arranging rooms, & I had begun it, the first dreadful morning .. & there the tables stood, just as I had pushed them, when interrupted, in the middle of the floor! But now it all is put into order, & looks pretty & cheerful— I told you that the Storys were with friends of theirs down stairs, in the second-floor apartment. The friend is M! Page—the great American artist\textsuperscript{10} .. the “American Titian” as he is called. His three grown up daughters (young girls) are with him, & his second wife, who looks like one of them .. such a mere girl, she is. He is a Swedenborgian “with reservations,” I understand .. & he has taken a decided part in the spiritualism which has been going on at Rome, M!' Shaw\textsuperscript{11} told me. People talk of him as a man of extraordinary eloquence in conversation .. but I have heard none of it yet, though we have been thrown together several times by these events, of course. Always he has been peculiarly silent— Last night I said to him in an aside, that I hoped to hear his opinions on some points on which we sympathized—but I have resolved to avoid such subjects where they were likely to lead to discussion—and the Storys’ sympathy was entirely out of the question.

I showed Isabella (Bla)gden the paper on which was the mystical writing of Eliza Flower’s sister’s second name. She agreed with me that the name (\textit{Fuller}) was distinctly written. Yet M! Story insisted it was not .. that “it might be anything” .. & carried away Robert from his first impression.\textsuperscript{12} I say calmly .. the disbelief of men is more wonderful to me than the access of spirits! \textit{I never} discuss the subject now with Robert— I never will again—\textsuperscript{13} He said to me suddenly the other day—“If those are spirits, Ba, they are \textit{evil} spirits”. That remains to be proved. It is not proved to \textit{me}. There \textsuperscript{is a} mixture, evidently, to my mind. This thing has been working in the
Newman street churches,—precisely this thing, whatever it is, I do believe—Dont quote me on the subject however, because I have not seen much—Some of the spirits announce the beginning of the Millenial reign. So much more I have to tell you—it does me good to write. Speak of Henrietta—of Trippy—of Minny too—of my dearest Papa—Write, I beseech you! Your own Ba my own beloved! Tell me of yourself. Wilson is much better, but is in great anxiety at not hearing from her sisters.14 She has not heard once from any of them since her mother’s death & the letter which told it. Is it kind?

Tell me if this letter is charged single. I want to know how much I may send with impunity.

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection and Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated by Rome postmark 30 November 1853, a Wednesday.
2. Joseph Story had died on 23 November 1853 at 93 Piazza di Spagna, where the Storys were residing.
3. Isa Blagden had arrived in Rome the previous March and was living at 13 Via Gregoriana, near the Quirinale, the summer residence of the Pope. She had tried unsuccessfully to find the poets lodgings prior to their arrival in Rome.
4. Diomede Pantaleoni (1810–85) occupied a house at Borioni al Babuino, 107. He was an Italian physician and patriot, whose ease with English language and customs made him the physician of choice among the English tourists and expatriates in Rome. He treated Pen in the spring of 1854, as well as Edith Story again, but the Storys were eventually dissatisfied with his treatment.
5. “Sudden gale,” or “gust of wind.”
7. Charles Washington Baird (1828–87) attended the Union Theological Seminary from 1849 to 1852. “He graduated in the spring of 1852, and, after licensure by the Presbytery of New Brunswick, sailed for Europe in the month of September, to become chaplain of the American Chapel in the city of Rome … . During his vacation in the summer of 1853, he returned for a few weeks to the United States, in order to receive ordination at the hands of the same presbytery by which he had been licensed to preach the Gospel” (Henry Martin Baird, Memorials of the Rev. Charles W. Baird, D.D., New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1888, p. 5). The Church and State Gazette of 18 November 1853, noted that he had “passed through London a few days since on his way to Rome” (p. 722).
8. Joseph Story (see letter 33, note 11) was buried in the “parte vecchia” of the Protestant Cemetery in Rome just opposite the graves of Shelley and Trelawney.
9. It should not go unnoticed that this would not be the last time that Isa Blagden would offer comfort to RB. When EBB died in 1861, Isa was the most immediate friend to provide support for RB, as well as for Pen.
10. William Page (1811–85), lived in Italy from 1849 to 1860. After his return to America, he maintained a studio in New York City. He and his first wife, Lavinia (née Twibill), whom he had divorced in 1841, had three daughters: Anne, aged nineteen at the time of this letter; Mary, seventeen; and Emma, fourteen. He married a second time in 1843 to Sarah Augusta (née Dougherty). According to Reynolds, EBB refers to Page’s theory of proportion (based upon Revelation 21:17) in Aurora Leigh, I, 867–869. Earlier in that same passage Aurora mentions “speakers of essential truth” and “teachers who instruct mankind,” no doubt referring to Swedenborg.
11. See note 10 in the preceding letter.
12. See EBB’s description of the spiritual writing in the preceding letter.
13. Although RB’s scepticism about spiritualism is hinted at before this remark, this is the first allusion to the serious disagreement between the Brownings regarding EBB’s interest in the subject.
14. See note 8 in the preceding letter.
I had been thinking, my beloved Arabel, that I would write to you before your dear letter came to bid me. You are not to be uneasy about us—we are all well, thank God. Also the invalids.. (did I tell you that the youngest Miss Page had been seised [sic] with fever, much to my horror—?) are both able to sit up,.. the invalids in this house,—and Jane too the English nurse at the Storys', is convalescent. Little Edith has not yet been able to be moved from M. Page's apartment—for above three weeks she has been confined to her bed, in considerable danger oftener than once. At last the gastric fever passed into Roman fever.. a common transition—and Emma Page's did precisely the same. When Emma was taken ill I began to “lose my head” as Robert calls it—that is, I insisted on sending Penini away to Miss Blagden's—. Said Robert .. “Well, you shall do as you like—but speak first to the physicians, because they have no kind of interest in killing Penini .. let us hear.” And the physicians assured us over & over that infection was out of the question.. that we might even sleep with impunity in the patients' room. ‘Roman fever’ is simply ague .. like a febrile fever—not dangerous, except in its exhausting affects on the constitution .. and to be cut down, says Pantaleone, to the roots, by the free use of quinine. Pantaleone is the Italian physician set upon a pedestal very deservedly by all the English here, as nothing can exceed, (according to my own impression, & Robert's) his ability & straightforwardness— If he had been called in earlier to poor Joe .. but I cant bear to write or think of it— M. Story believed in homœopathy & employed a clever homœopathic physician, till Robert insisted, when they were all powerless with despair, on calling in Pantaleone & doing something. Oh. Arabel, I have seen much of homœopathy & its workings! It has no cathartic medecine .. and in active cases there is no help in it whatever. When Pantaleone was called in the child had been unconscious for hours— He said, “I will do what I can, but it is late.” A simple dose of castor oil the day before might have saved that child .. only, God's providence arranges these things, & it is vain to say “if this had been,” when all is after His will.

Emelyn Story is wonderfully well, I think, just as I expected she would be, although the truth is that she lost the light of her eyes & her soul in that boy & that she cares little comparatively for the remaining child. But that very expansive & demonstrative kind of grief goes out in the explosion—she is not only composed but quite cheerful almost always when I see her now .. chiefly distressed (oh, no wonder!) by Edith's talk about Joe .. her little poor plans to spend her half pauls on a Christmas present for Joe .. “What shall she buy for Joe, this year?” You see they have not dared to tell Edith of his death. She has been told, “he is better” .. which is true, as God knows. And when she says such things, the mother's & father's hearts faint within them—we found them both quite overcome two nights ago, crying bitterly.

Yes, Rome has been unusually unhealthy this year, & at this time even it is unhealthy— Still, every day that passes carries us into a better air, and we shall be very mindful of ourselves & Penini in the meanwhile— As for me, I am particularly well .. able to go out almost daily .. forgetting almost that I have a chest— But I keep anxious about Robert & Penini— We who lived
at Florence without the least care or precaution, have to consider now the sun, now the damp, now the wind— Penini is'nt to run for fear of heating himself, for instance, & if he is out after four, I am beating myself against all sorts of fears— Now that is'nt pleasant—is it? I would rather be shut up in dear Florence for my usual two months, & be undisturbed about my child— Oh—I dare say I am far more anxious than is necessary—but how natural under these circumstances, to be unnecessarily anxious! People say “There’s not the least danger if you take common care!”— But what’s the meaning of “common care”? It seems to me an uncommonly difficult thing to take this common care, .. for us who are not used to it.

I have seen very little in Rome yet, having still less inclination to go anywhere— I forget whether I told you that my first drive was with poor Emelyn— “There’s the colisseum [sic]— there’s the temple of Vesta— there’s Joe’s grave!” for she would insist on driving to the English cemetery & stopping the carriage at the gate. I felt so sick I had to struggle with myself not to faint, which would have been not only very wrong of me but very ridiculous under the circumstances— You know my old natural horror of grave-yards .. the earth-side of death.* I cant bear to look at all if I dont look over & up. And the situation I was placed in seemed to me scarcely bearable, indeed.

We have been besides to St Peter’s, which moved me less than I had expected. I have been more impressed by other churches—by the Milan cathedral for instance, .. or even by the gorgeous mystery of St Mark’s at Venice— Still, it was grand. Penini, I must tell you, has made various sketches of St Peters, & of the Vatican, “wis two Popes looting out of y window.” As to the Vatican I have not set foot in it .. to my eternal disgrace, you may say— The weather has been rather wet, but mild, & interspersed with glorious floods of sunshine— just weather to suit me— The damp is not heavy— the air is light & soft. The city generally is much more brilliant & alive than I had thought to find it, .. green eminences covered with gardens standing up from the heart of it, and a hundred silver fountains leaping to reach them— We have a most comfortable apartment, and we are feeling by degrees better inclined to be happy in it—

By the way, quantities of people have called— Ml & M† Brotherton* .. she was a Miss Reece whom you may remember at Sidmouth, though Henrietta knew more of her than you & I did— Annie Hayes, I think, knew her. Since then she has turned to a literary woman .. has contributed to the Athenæum & printed apart some very poetical sonnets .. is a friend of Frederick Tennyson’s .. a friend too of M! Westwood’s— & married two or three years ago. I rather like her, without being in any way innamorata, understand.— Gerardine Macpherson I scarcely recognized! “Am I not a woman & a mother?” she seems to say. Not a sign of girliness left— but as affectionate as ever. I feel glad to have seen her.— M! Hemans* .. a convert to Romanism too .. is very liberal notwithstanding, besides being cultivated & refined. He rather won on me by enquiring after Penini who was out, & observing that he had “heard much” of the child’s “attractions & accomplishments”— (of course he had.) I was glad to see him for his mother’s sake, of course too. M! Thackeray & his daughters* .. who spent an evening with us some days ago— M! & M† Archer Clive9 .. You have heard of her as V. A most peculiar woman as to appearance— Voice, articulation, movement, expression, everything against her— It must be hard work to make a soul penetrate & influence through such a body. People say she has a third iron leg (wound up at
intervals) to assist two over-soft ones—and she speaks through tusks rather than teeth when she has wriggled her way to you with a stick. The ugliest woman I ever saw in my life, yet it is said that her husband loves her (which is to the honor of both of them) and she has two nice looking children twelve & ten years old. A very different person, too, has called on me.. Fanny Kemble with such eyes, such a voice!— She has enchanted me—and I fancy almost she meant to enchant me, for she has called repeatedly & been very gracious.. which, it is said, she is not always. Robert calls her theatrical.. but she does not strike me as being more than effective—not affected by any means. She has selfpossession & grace, and speaks beautifully & nobly both as to thought & language. Her manner of life here is the most retired possible, though her sister Adelaide (Ml Sartoris) is much in society. Then we have had Miss Watkins Wynn & her sister Ml Lindesay— we knew Miss Wynn in Paris, & she offered to come & spend an evening with us & came a few days since.. the same evening we had the Thackerays- Also, General Lodwick & his family have called. Also Ml Cass, the American chargé d' affaires. I hope there wont be too much of this visiting, but there seems a prospect of excess really. The English church here is intensely puseyite, I understand—the clergymen is said to consider himself in the diocese of the "bishop of Rome," meaning Pio nono— & his own ecclesiastical surveillance of his flock is after the straightest sect of ecclesiastical shepherds. He calls on everybody if they dont go to church & remonstrates with them for schism.. (yet he has not found us out yet, I must tell you)—and if they go to church only on sundays, neglecting the saints’ days, he remonstrates with them for heresy. For our part, we attend the presbyterian worship in a private room of the American embassy, where Ml Baird officiates— He is a young preacher of no great ability, but simple & fervid—he has learnt much through suffering, I understand— Robert & I received the Lord’s supper from his hands the sunday before last, & though a portion of the service was read we both of us enjoyed it much—indeed those were the happiest moments I have had in Rome. I never saw the sacrament so administered, Arabel—there were great pieces of bread as large as two of my fingers. For the rest, not more than five or six communicants besides ourselves, & those, women. We stayed without any permission, beyond the general invitation to christians of all denominations given in the sermon—we saw at once that we were free to stay. Ml Baird is of the church of Scotland & is said to be a liberal man— He came to see the Pages, who are Swedenborgian, & gave them leave to sing their own hymns, music, words, & all, which they were accustomed to use in their places of worship in America— which he might well have done seeing that they consist of extracts from the old & new Scriptures adapted literally, .. only men in general are so narrow that you come to praise individuals for being simply reasonable. Ml Page is a great favorite of ours. He is called the American Titian, & I have heard some Americans contend that as a portrait-painter he surpasses Titian— Certainly nothing can go beyond two portraits we have seen .. especially one of Miss Cushman. You see soul & body together. The colour throbs with life. Then the man himself is interesting—full of quiet & power—as gentle as the holder of a great faculty ought to be— I expect to sympathize with him on many subjects—he is a believer in the manifestations .. but we have not spoken on them except by a few passing words, though we are to have mutual confidences one of these days as is already agreed— I am rather more shy than I used to be of talking on the subject before people who dont sympathize—there comes very little good out of it, I think. Then,
one does not care for discussion when one has strong convictions—It is curious that you should quote Mr Bunn just in this letter, when I had just thrown down the English journal called the "critic" & a review of his book—The unbelieving ‘critic’ reproaches Mr Bunn for having published his "experience" of the rapping spirits, without any explanation of how his friends must have cheated him in the course of it because, you see, this said experience which is given in full, is calculated to counteract all the excellent effect of that marvellous discovery about the table with the drawer & internal machinery—Even the ‘Critic’ could observe that!!

—As to the discovery .. you are to consider that two hundred pounds have been offered this long while by public advertisement in America for any physical solution of the facts—Therefore nothing can be more natural (or more stupid) than the suggestion by a working carpenter, of this splendid idea of tables with machinery inside—why here’s Robert himself who cries out “That’s perfect humbug, of course”—Why, even your professional, paid mediums, who use their own tables in their own houses, when they come to yours, use the first table you bring them, producing the same effects. Why, if the phenomena occurred only in prepared places, or in places where preparation is possible, I should have believed, like the greatest sceptic of you all, that there was trickery somehow—But the manifestations exclude the idea of the possibility of machinery .. you must begin by seeing that clearly—No indeed—Mr Shaw brought no table—She said, “any table, if it is not too heavy”—and we gave her an old little table, about twice as large as the one you painted for me, & of the usual height—That table span round till we were all breathless—Somebody cried while it was spinning round & round, [“"]If spirits are present let the table stop.” It stopped so suddenly that we were quite jerked forward—Yes, Arabel—I was certainly convinced by testimony before I was confirmed by experience. But if the experience had failed it would have been only the failure of an experience—I should have lost nothing in losing it except just an experience—just as I have lost others—(for I have seen failures, admitting them to be failures, in the attempt to move both tables & hats, & certainly I never tried to unsee them) therefore my interests as a theorist were not so passionately involved as you appear to think, in the verity of those particular phenomena. Also I do not think, myself, that I am peculiarly facile in receiving evidence of the kind—It is quite one thing to have a theory, & another to see. I never in my life fancied that I saw what is called “a ghost”—I never in my life had a presentiment to which I could attach much importance—& with regard to these manifestations I have tried over & over to be instrumental in the mystical writing, holding a pencil for half an hour at a time yet never fancied a success—! Now, for what I saw in Casa Guidi .. I was convinced at the time & I hold to my conviction, that those manifestations were veritable—Observe,—Robert is as persuaded as I am that every one was in good faith .. & that no trick was used or attempted. As to Mr Shaw, she & the assistant medium had left the house, when we .. (Mr & Mrs Story, Robert & I) had the final experience; when the table rocked violently, & spelled out the phrase “Be earn”——. By the way, I cannot be sure of having told you, that previously, under her mediumship, on the first announcement of E Flower, the name was spelled Floyer .. with a y instead of a w—We saw at once what the name was .. that is, I and Robert did .. & then Mrs Shaw observed that she had doubted at the moment whether the movement indicated w or y. Nobody at the table knew of Eliza Flower—nearly all were Americans. In the same way, when Lytton’s sister was
announced, nobody at the table knew her name except himself. Of course I do not feel certain of the identity of these spirits—the spirits in question may or not have been present—but that spirits were present I have an unwavering conviction. That I have not persuaded you does not surprise me. I did not think you would believe from what I said; but I think you will believe one day, let it come soon, let it come late— In reply to what you say—of course nothing happens except by God’s permission whether it is exceptional or general— If intercourse with the spiritual world is permitted to be general instead of exceptional as it used to be, we must imply I think that God sees a utility in it, instead of denying the facts because we see no utility in it— As to Dives, I dont understand how he can be quoted against such an intercourse— The general access was not permitted in his days, though in the early days of the church (I dont speak of the new Testament church) it probably was. At present .. supposing there is access .. we are not to look for apocalyptic teachings, it seems to me .. if we do, we shall fall into grievous errors .. as the Newman street churches partially & many others in a worse degree have done before us— These spirits are as fallible as embodied men are .. some are ignorant & evil—some are weak & only learning— some are of a higher order, but I think that few have come yet from the interior Heavens— We must wait. In the meantime it seems to be a great work, abolishing to the mortal flesh of us the terrors of death & the separation of death—making all clear & familiar—a development of Christ’s work on the earth—developed through the humanity of us .. not through any special faculty or gift .. but through the mere, bare putting together of soul & body— For the mediumship does not belong to men of genius or women of genius, or even exclusively to religious men & women, but it seems to be exercised simply in virtue of some sort of bodily constitution .. through some electrical or Idylic redundancy .. which is used by the spirits .. & which is so common in men than [sic, for that] one person of every five or six is said to be more or less fitted for this use— As to the ignobility of the mode of expression .. often have I heard it asserted & objected to. To me the mode is most impressive— I was more moved that night than when I stood in St Peter’s near the high altar— We were all awed before the phenomena grew familiar. The mystery of that palpitating wood thrilled me through & through— I felt lifted up face to face with the unseen to a height above tears—and names overwhelming to me at other moments might have been spoken then & found me quite calm. It was the spiritual against the mortal, & the spiritual prevailed.

Robert says in one of his poems that “with Him there is no great nor small”. I dont consider M‘ Jameson’s comparison “irreverent”, .. though what she added about the connection between tables & carpentry was un peu fort & made me laugh out. She has a very open mind & has heard, I dare say, much more than you read to her from my letter— In Paris a year ago she used to laugh to scorn the whole subject, but nobody now can dispose of this question with a laugh— Nor with a sermon, Arabel! M‘ Stratten has no right or reason to conclude that spiritual communications mean perforce Satanic communications—it is very irrational. All the churches are wrong, one as much as another, I do believe, with regard to the spiritual world as state & as relation— The church of Rome goes farther than M‘ Stratten. For “madness” &c &c— religion & love have made more madmen than merchandise & voluptuousness .. yet religion & love are none the less surely divine for that. But the truth is that these statistics of madness are immensely exaggerated & incorrect— A M‘ & M‘ Thompson have just been here—she just from America .. where her
sister M* Moett is about to give public readings of my poems, I understand— She tells me that her father who is deeply interested in the manifestations, uses a test which silences & banishes the evil spirits— "Do you acknowledge our Lord & Saviour Jesus Christ"? Again & again she has seen it prevail— They cannot answer or sign—they give place to other spirits instantly— Three days before she left America her little daughter, 24 eight years old, was developed as a medium—but she means to discourage it. "Why," said I— "Because it sometimes increases nervous susceptibility— One of my sisters is a medium, & now she is afraid of being in a room by herself, for fear of the spirits manifesting themselves in some unaccustomed way." —— This is not however the usual consequence of mediumship.

Wilson tells me there is a child 25 here just like Penini—looks like his brother—of the same age—the hair a little longer! (think of that, Arabel!) & a little lighter— His nurse told Wilson that she had said to her mistress . . . an English lady . . . "For the first time your child has a rival!" and the lady was rather jealous . . . just as I am. Penini, for his part, says, "I muss have pottets in mine polta" . . because his double has pockets. After all he cant be a child like my Penini . . I dont believe a word of it. Oh yes, Arabel . . you will love him . . this Penini of ours, . . better & better, as you come to know him— He is so good, this Penini—so good & sweet & true. I have scruples about telling him the common fancy-stories because of his accepting everything as a pure truth— As we were travelling I told him "Jack & the beanstalk," which delighted him—but I was rather taken aback when he asked me at the end, "Did Jack see God? I sint he muss when he went so high up in the sky." The next conclusion was, "When we det to Blome I mean to det some beans & plant them— P26 lite to go up too."— Almost I felt a sort of remorse—as if I had deceived the child with my story. He believes so entirely in the supernatural that a vision of angels would'nt startle him in the least—of that I am convinced. He asked the other day . . "Can Joe see me?" I said I was not sure . . I did not know—I only knew that God saw him. "Oh yes, God. But if Joe wants velly mush to see me—& if he loots down so . . ." (looking down fixedly on the carpet with his body bent) "can Joe see me, you sint?" "Well," I answered, "I think he can"— Another time he asked . . referring to his medal of the Duke of Wellington .. "Dear Mama, you sint Joe has seen the Dute of Wellyton?" Robert thought the question should be whether the Duke had seen Joe.

Never was a journey so much enjoyed by a child before, as our journey by him. He was amused at everything—laughed aloud when the oxen were fastened to the carriage in the mountain-ascents— "Well, I sint soon they'll mate the pigs do it." A good deal of the necessity however was accounted for by the immense weight of his desk which he was constantly talking about to Ferdinando & the vetturino .. "Mio segretario un gr(ande . . .)." 27 A few days before he left Florence he began to say 'y(es)' instead <of "Less"— & I heard him boasting a day or two ago— "When I a <little> baby and not four, I said Less, and sant you—now I tan say yes, and tant you." (thank you.) His Italian is the prettiest thing possible—prettier even than his English—and he & Ferdinando are studying French at the present moment to make his accomplishments complete. He has read a child's book (written in one syllable) once through, & nearly through a second time—you cant think how nicely he reads—and within this week he has begun to write & astounds us all with the facility he brings to it— He has two pages of "dear papa's" and "Ferdinandos" which we have never done admiring. There is not the least difficulty now about the reading—
only he does it regulary. Even while <we> travelled he read a page a d(a)y at the inns. Perhaps you dont know that the old women of Italy of the lower classes, are apt to be surprisingly ugly—He said to me the other day .. “Dear Mama, I not lite old peoples not a bit— Their faces not a bit pretty.” “Oh Penini,” said I, “what a thing to say! So I suppose when I am old, you wont love me a bit.” He paused for a moment in deep consideration, & then lifting up his hand emphatically .. “It be a long time before you old, I sint. FIRST, you muss det large lite Papa.” He calculates on my extreme youth you see, because of my low dimensions—— Since I began this letter, Edith has been removed home—she is quite out of danger, & up the greater part of the day .. Emma Page, in this house, is also convalescent— We have paid another visit to Mª Kemble—sate with her an hour & a half .. She talked of her children\textsuperscript{28} in such an agony of sorrow that no one could sit by & see that face, & hear that voice without tears of sympathy. She is coming to spend an evening with us alone, & I hope we shall be friends— The weather is exquisite— I only hope that Rome may agree half as well with Robert & Penini, as with me it is likely to do. Think of my being able to go out everyday. We are going to the midnight mass in St Maria Maggiore on Xmas Eve & to St Peter’s on Xmas day—\textsuperscript{29} There is every facility offered to us through Mª Cass of getting tickets for everything—but I cant do & bear everything—we must select. My beloved Arabel, my heart will be with you through all— God bless you everyone .. dearest things!— Tell dearest Henrietta how I love her!— Write & tell me of yourself (whom you dont mention) and of Papa—Mind. Else I shall be uneasy. Give a heap of Christmas kisses from us all three to dearest Trippy— Do you hear of Mª Orme? Write as you promise, & tell me of yourself—but if ever you pay the postage you shall accept the consequences! It makes letters insecure, observe. Never mind writing without an envelope— There is a new arrangement, & now the envelope does no harm at all—only write on thin paper— God bless you dearest & darling— Love me, think of me, pray for me— Robert’s best love as ever

with that of your ownBa—

Love to Bummy & Arl(ette)—remember.

We paid nothing (more’s the shame) for your letter<~ I do>nt prepay this, this time, for fear of its being lost—but I will run all risks nex(t time )\textsuperscript{3} if you pay a sous [sic] for your letters. Understand clearly-- Will you tell me what is the postage of this letter.

\begin{itemize}
  \item Address, on integral page: Angleterre. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
  \item Publication: None traced.
  \item Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.
\end{itemize}

1. Dated by Rome postmark of 19 December 1853.
2. Emma Page (b. 1839); see note 10 in the preceding letter.
3. I have been unable to trace any further identification.
4. In July 1846, EBB and Arabella went out for a drive and went as far as Harrow Cemetery, where, as EBB wrote to RB later that night, “Arabel tried hard to persuade me to go into the cemetery—but let me deserve all she said to me about weakness & foolishness, .. really that sort of thing does sadden me—my spirits fall flat with it: it is the dark side of death” (BC, 13, 114). See also EBB’s remark in the preceding letter about not wanting to see Joseph Story’s dead body.
5. Augustus Hervey Brotherton, a landscape painter, and his wife, Mary Isabella Irwin Brotherton (née Reece, 1817?–1910) had married in August 1851.
6. Mrs. Brotherton was the author of Poems (2nd ed., Brussels: J.H. Briard, 1855), which contains 30 sonnets in addition to other poems. She was also a medium and a practitioner of automatic writing. I have been able to trace only one poem by her in The Athenaeum: "Mid-Winter Day" (24 December 1853, no. 1365, p. 1556).

7. Charles Isidore Hemans (1817–76) had established The Roman Advertiser in October 1846, the first English-language newspaper in Rome. "To English visitors in Rome and to English residents he was always a friendly guide, noted for his amiability and modesty" (DNB).

8. Anne Isabella Thackeray (1837–1919), Thackeray's eldest child, and her sister, Harriet Marian Thackeray (1840–75), Thackeray's third child. Both Annie and Minnie, as they were known, were in Rome with their father from 3 December 1853 to 8 February 1854; he had recently returned from a lucrative lecture tour in America. The former became a writer and friend of RB, and it was to her that he dedicated Red Cotton Night-Cap Country. She was the author of the entry on EBB in the DNB.

9. Caroline Clive (née Meysey-Wigley, 1801–73) married the Rev. Archer Clive in 1840; their children were Charles Meysey Bolton Clive and Alice Clive (afterwards Greathed). Caroline Clive was the author of several volumes of poetry, including IX Poems by V (London: Saunders & Otley, 1840), The Valley of the Rea: A Poem. By V. (London: Saunders & Otley, 1851), and most recently she had published The Morlas. A Poem (London: Hope & Co., 1853). She also wrote fiction, and is probably best remembered for her novel entitled Paul Ferroll (London: Saunders & Otley, 1855). For EBB's opinion of that work, see letter 141, note 9. EBB described her to Miss Mitford as "a very peculiar person as to looks .. & even voice & general bearing .. & what a peculiar unconsciousness of peculiarity!" (EBB-MRM, III, 402).

10. Frances Anne ("Fanny") Kemble (1809–93), well-known actress, as well as author of plays and poems. RB had met Fanny Kemble previously in London at a dinner given by Anne Skepper Procter in 1845.

11. Adelaide Sartoris (née Kemble, 1814–79), had given up a successful opera career when she married Edward Sartoris in 1843. According to the DNB, she and her husband "spent much time in Italy. Their house, near the Trinità dei Monti, was said to be one of the pleasantest in Rome."

12. Harriot Hester Lindesay, sister of Charlotte Williams-Wynn (see letter 74, note 20). The latter had known RB in London and met both Brownings during their stay in Paris (1851–52). The Brownings' address book lists her with residences in Paris, Rome, and London. She was a friend of Thomas Carlyle and F.D. Maurice. Memorials of Charlotte Williams-Wynn, edited by her sister, Harriot Hester Lindesay, was published in 1877.

13. Lewis Cass, Jr. (1813–78), American diplomat, was sent to Rome in January 1849 with instructions from the Secretary of State not to deliver either his credentials to the Minister of Pope Pius IX, or to the revolutionary government, until he should receive further instructions. In 1854, they were presented to the papal government and he held the post of Minister until November 1858 (Hawthorne, 14, 787).

14. According to the Memorials of the Rev. Charles W. Baird, D.D. (see note 7 in the preceding letter), "the chapel was conveniently and centrally situated on the western side of the great square known as the Piazza del Popolo, and facing the Pincian hill. ... So courteous and judicious, as well as faithful to principle, was Mr. Baird's course, that it conciliated and held all classes. So long as he remained, therefore, the American Chapel maintained its ground and grew in numbers and in favor" (pp. 5–6).

15. EBB's comments suggest that a certain part of the service was read from a set liturgical text, rather than being extemporaneous.

16. See note 10 in the preceding letter.

17. Cushman's biographer describes Page's portrait of Charlotte Cushman as "no prettified likeness from a Thomas Sully. Page had painted her life-size and real, a heavy-jawed, unsmiling woman clearly aged thirty-six ... The face looked pleasant enough, she supposed, though Page had scarcely bothered to suggest any grace or feminine charm. Yet for all its honesty, she liked it, and in her eyes it only took on added merit when it soon became celebrated" (Joseph Leach, Bright Particular Star: The Life and Times of Charlotte Cushman, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1970, p. 257).

18. Alfred Bunn (1796?–1860) was a London theatre manager and husband of the actress Margaret Agnes Bunn (1799–1883). His efforts in 1833 to have a bill for the abolition of patent theatres thrown out of the Lords
led to his being disliked in the arts world. And for his feeble attempts at poetry, *Punch* called him “poet Bunn” (see BC, 12, 167). Bunn had just published *Old England and New England, in a Series of Views taken on the Spot* (London: Richard Bentley, 1853). Of Bunn’s “encounter with the Rappers, and his exposé of the trick,” the reviewer in *The Critic* suspected “that a trap was laid for him, and that his hospitable friends are laughing at the success of the mysterious revelations which enticed Mr. Bunn into a partial state of belief” (*The Critic*, 1 December 1853, pp. 622–623). “We have no right to suppose that Mr. Bunn was let in to the secret which caused his amazement, or that the story of his *experience* is intended only to amuse the credulous. The anecdote quoted at the end of the chapter, however, looks very much like a recantation.” The reviewer related how “the secret of table-rapping is communicated in a letter from Hiram Pack, who was employed to make tables for the reception of the ‘spirits,’ which included “a little hammer strike inside a table bed.” Based upon Bunn’s revelation, the reviewer felt that “he is not, therefore, excusable for leaving his own case unexplained” (p. 623).

19. Unidentified.


21. Cf. *Aurora Leigh*, VII, 809–810: “‘There’s nothing great / Nor small,’ has said a poet of our day”; in the gloss for these lines, Margaret Reynolds cites lines 190–201 of RB’s *Pippa Passes*: “All service ranks the same with God . . . .” RB later used the line as EBB quotes here in *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*, line 970: “Because there’s neither great nor small in life.”

22. “A bit much.”

23. Anna Cora Mowatt (née Ogden, 1819–70), a well-known American actress, was the sister of Mary Thompson (see letter 103, note 3). However, I have been unable to trace any record of her giving a public reading of EBB’s poems, nor have I been able to identify which of Mary Thompson’s sisters was a medium.


25. Unidentified.

26. Underscored three times.

27. “My desk a (big one.)”

28. In 1834 Fanny Kemble married Pierce Butler, an American slave owner, and they had two children: Sarah (b. 1835) and Frances Anne (b. 1838). As part of the lengthy and acrimonious divorce proceedings in 1848–49, she had settled for his “annual allowance of $1,500 with the privilege of her children’s society during two months of each year” (Leota S. Driver, *Fanny Kemble*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1933, p. 155). Although a later biographer claims that the settlement contained a “provision that the children should be allowed to spend one month a year with their mother” (Dorothy Marshall, *Fanny Kemble*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977, p. 221). Marshall further maintains that Fanny Kemble did not see her children from September 1850 until she returned to the States in 1856, the only explanation being that “… perhaps Pierce, as he had done in the past, contrived so many obstacles that Fanny found it impossible in practice to spend any time with them while their father remained in sole control” (p. 221).

29. According to Murray’s, Santa Maria Maggiore is “the third basilica in rank, and one of the 4 which have a Porta Santa” (*A Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy*, part II, London: John Murray, 1853, pp. 116–117). Here, in the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament, “called also the *Capella del Presepio, . . . is preserved the sacred Presepio*, or the cradle of the Saviour, which forms the subject of a solemn ceremony and procession on Christmas Eve, at which the cardinal-vicar generally officiates” (p. 118). However, according to the “Italian Correspondent” in *The Critic* of 1 December 1853, “for the first time, the Sovereign Pontiff will be drawn from the Vatican to Sta. Maria Maggiore, to celebrate the Midnight Mass of the Nativity, through lines of light produced by this yet novel agency [i.e. gas lamps]” (p. 632).
My beloved Arabel, your reproaches go to my heart—Certainly if I waited a month in order to write that letter I was very wrong—the time had passed without my taking account, and I had been under the impression of having written to [you] very soon after the first wretched news I was forced to send. Well—do forgive me. To do myself justice, when I am amused & happy I am more apt to write to you than in times of anxiety & heaviness. That proves how I dont forget you after all—Never can I be bribed away from you ... though I may be slow to write through the feeling that I have not much to say which would gladden you.

One of my objections to Rome is the enormous time of a letter coming and going. We used to complain of our seven days at Florence—& here we have to wait ten—^ It's insupportable nearly. I have the reputation, you must know, of "disliking Rome,"—and of course people set me down as insusceptible & unpoetical in proportion to this flagitious taste. Now it's wrong to say I dislike Rome— If I may have leave to stand alone with Robert & look at the Campagna, the far opal mountains, the forum, the blue sky flowing in full tide through the rifts of the Colesseum [sic], I can enjoy it intensely— Also the climate is much warmer & more suitable to me during the winter months than the climate of Florence is. On the other hand, the place is not comparable as a residence to Florence, ... & considering that I have with me what is more precious than myself according to my own valuation, I would far rather have to stay in the house during the three winter months, than be thrown into panics reasonably or unreasonably every second day about Penini or Robert— For instance Penini caught cold yesterday .. a simple cold in the head .. & because "colds generally turn to fevers in Rome" I was wretched last night & could scarcely sleep for it. In England or Florence it would'nt have ruffled a thought of me, you understand. Well—today, after taking a little senna, he seems convalescent—but still the fact remains that I was wretched last night & that I would willingly have given up some beautiful sunshiney walks last week to have forgone last night's fear— Edith is well .. playing with her hoop on the Pincio^ ... & comes today to dine with Penini— There's an immense friendship between them though she has twice his years,—and his attention to her when she was ill was really touching. Once he said to the Miss Thackerays with a consequential air .. "I sint you mate a glate deal too mush noise for Edith" .. & there he sate by her, kissing her & patting her! Somebody asked him the other day if he liked May Sartoris—^ "Not velly mush"—said he—"she tumbles up mine turls!" Then (with emphasis and stretching out his arm in his characteristic form of gesticulation) "I love only one dirl, (girl) and lat's Edith!" I am glad to see such an ideal of constancy in him already .. are not you?^5

With all my faults, Arabel, I have written a long letter to Henrietta & another to George^6 .. I certainly send more letters home (more pages of letters) than ever reach me, and I hope you become aware of this by receiving what I send. You will hear from Henrietta of M' Kenyon's generous kindness—without that I dont know how we should have reached England .. we were waiting for the heavens to fall .. and here's a lark, observe!— Yes, Arabel, the months pass swiftly—
Soon if it shall please God, I shall hold you in my two arms—dearest dear! Try to be looking as well as you can! So much we shall have to talk about. I feel . . . I begin to feel . . . a little . . . what Penini calls 'sy' . . . in talking of my Spirits . . . & perhaps presently you will taboo the subject & bid me speak of something more reasonable. It is even possible that you may have all been vexed about what I told George in my last letter? . . . yet it was right, I think, to tell it—Whatever the theory may be, (spirits or mesmeric reflex of the mind) the physical facts are undeniable, & worthy certainly of some consideration with all thinking & feeling persons. I mean the fact of the pencil moving in the hand in a quite abnormal manner, & of words being produced, 

(...)

class of the actual manifestations as evil— Now the logic of that I cant understand— If there's access to the spiritual world, there must be access to both evil & good . . . it's a matter of course—That there are many blaspheming spirits, is patent— (How any man of sense & piety could publish such words as you sent me from D! Dibdin's pamphlet, I cant understand by the way.) That there are still more adoring & christian spirits, is also patent. Because you hear Tom Barke damn somebody's eyes in the street, do you conclude that James Stratten does not pray devoutly in his chamber? You are not so illogical. Why therefore reason one way respecting the spirit-world & another way respecting this natural world?— As to what I said about . . . “few having come from the interior Heavens” . . . I meant simply what I said—“few”— I did not say . . . “none”—Then, you must understand what I mean by the interior Heavens. Many blessed spirits remain, rejoicing & learning, in what is called “the spiritual world” as opposed to the three Heavens, for years & years before they enter into the “angelic societies.” You see “the tendency of my writings being to Swedenborgianism[.]” I use phrases sometimes of which you have not the Key. It is supposed that scarcely one soul since the beginning, has entered immediately into the interior Heavens, though sometimes the interval is very short— When Christ spoke of “paradise” it is supposed he meant the spiritual world— You are not to confound. Spirits are in a state, not a place.— As to the manifestations, D! Prynne, (quite an unbeliever) told me that, on paying a visit on official business to General Thompson, a member of congress, late ambassador to Mexico, . . when the talk upon business was over, the General began thus . . “D! Prynne, you are a minister of the gospel”— “Yes.” “Then you will have pleasure in knowing that I, who have been a professed atheist all my life, recognize now in peace & joy, not only God's Being & the immortality of my own soul, but this book . . this word of the Lord” . . placing his hand upon a bible which lay by—“And” (after a pause).charAt(499,275)all this has come to me through the instrumentality of what are commonly called the rapping spirits”— “That was a conclusion which startled me” said D! Prynne— “And the general went on & discoursed for two hours on the communications he had received from the spirits of his wife & daughter and on his own profound & rapturous conviction of all the truths of Christianity”—. “Also,”continued D!Prynne, “it is right to confess that the New York spiritual-conference-people will tell you they have testimonies of this kind flowing in to them by hundreds & thousands from all parts of the country week after week.” If this is Satan's work he is scarcely as shrewd as has been commonly supposed.

Well—I have not convinced you— I might as well talk of something else. You only think. “Ba is a little mad, & presently she will be very mad as poor Wilson is already. These nervous excitable
people always have some fancy or other—we must be patient & turn away our heads”. It is just for this that I want you to feel the pencil or pen move in your own hand. Tell Henrietta to try too.

What is this new medical friend of Papa’s? Has he given up Dr Elliotson? Tell me of Papa, Arabel—for I fear much the effect of the dreadful winter upon him. A cold wind has got up for the last week & put a stop to my walkings out here. We have invitations heaped upon us .. for everyday of the present week, one a night at least—but I can go nowhere. I make Robert represent me. Excellent music is to be had liberally—and as for the society, it rains lords & ladies for the especial benefit of Thackeray perhaps .. see how ill natured I am! But his friends will have it that he has a weakness for marquises .. remarking it tenderly, as friends will. The Duke of Northumberland gave a dinner the other day to the Duke of Wellington, when it was found, curiously enough, that the Duke of Wellington was not of rank enough to take down to dinner any lady there, he was so exceeded & preceded in dignity by rows of cardinals & civil princes. Some of our friends have come to us on their way to the Duke of Northumberland’s, and had Wilson’s knead cakes .. or rather Ferdinando’s—(for Ferdinando makes the knead cakes now as if “to the manner born”14—) & I assure you, I think they may have lost something in going to the Ducal saloons from our cozy warm little sitting-room. These rooms are very comfortable, & I have nothing to say against the Roman houses as far as my own experience goes— Thankful I am for having been driven up so high .. to the 3rd piano .. for Pantaleone the physician gives it as his opinion that every first floor in Rome is more or less damp– You can see it in the discoloured staircases—very unlike the Florence staircases!- The person who interests me most in Rome—next to M! Page .. is M! Kemble .. a noble creature really! She spends the evening alone with us tonight, which always I enjoy.— Oh, dont let me forget to tell you .. I always do forget .. that this second winter I have been wearing the Carmelite dress you gave me & that my opinion is it never will wear out. For the rest I have had my brown Paris merino trimmed with black velvet, & I wear it in the evenings when it is cold & I am at home to anybody– Going into society I have been rather restricted, with the black satin & the plumcoloured silk, so I am forced to buy a Roman silk, .. which is pain & grudging to me, .. forced by Robert & the necessities of change. Two pounds English will have to go to it—everything here being expensive more or less. Our weekly expenses are three pounds instead of two— (Let nobody who cares for economy come to Rome!) We live very comfortably however—nobody can live more comfortably .. liberally without waste .. than we do. Ferdinando is well-conducted in every respect & we get to like him more & more—a nice-looking servant, a good cook, & kind & amiable in all his ways– He gives us all sorts of northern soups, from pea-soup to Scotch broth .. ‘broda Scozzese’ .. to the admiration of occasional lookers-in. He did not dare to bring his Italian bible with him .. & Wilson left hers from a like fear– I am sorry now we had not more courage, for we were not vexed by the police at all on the road. He wants us to take him with us to Paris & England .. but nothing is decided, or even much considered. Penini’s love for him (deserved by so much goodnature) is an argument in his favour with me always– “Dear Papa—you will tate Ferdinando wiz us to Pallis”? “I know nothing about it yet.” —“Betause, if you dont tate him, I’ll be velly untappy.” There’s a threat!——

We went to the Clives, that evening .. Robert would have it that I should go. Well—it was dull according to the most excellent English provincial pattern. Madame Braun came & sate by me– “I have grown so disused to English society,” said she, “that I feel strange in it– Still there’s
a pleasing atmosphere of decency and propriety—""Ah—"" I exclaimed .. "I am afraid I have no
taste for decency." I do assure you it was altogether intolerable to me. Relays of young ladies at
the piano singing & playing in that sixth rate amateur-manner which neither gods nor men should
endure, .. while the lady of the house exclaimed at regular intervals, "Very pretty—thank you."
"Beautifully sung .. thank you". "V"15 is not inspired in her poetry .. but in her talk she seems
below par, & people call her common-place & fond of fine society- I have seen too little of her
to have much of an opinion, but my impression is scarcely favorable. We had ordered the carriage
that evening at eleven, and before ten Robert came up to say to me that he could'nt bear it any
longer. "I cant walk," said I .. "I have only my thin shoes". Five minutes after, however, I was
ready to walk at all risks,—& where it was wet, Robert carried me, (for the instruction of the
police) & we finished the evening with the Storys who sent us home in their carriage very kindly.
That's what people call "society," in this world. People with souls!— The pink crape meeting the
blue silk, & the white net coming into intercourse with the black satin!— Which is getting egotistical.

Now I am going to relieve your mind & George’s about my religious reputation. Yesterday
M™ Brotherton sent me a column from a Brussels English paper containing extracts from an
article in the Church & State Gazette.16 Said Ch. & St Gazette has been extracting largely from
poor Robert Hall’s distinguished American editor’s preface, & observing thereupon that the authors
so commented on, should know what is said of them in the new world. Certainly nothing can be
more absurd than what is said— The Howitts are "Unitarian, with a tendency to
Swedenborgianism"17 .. that is, bolt upright, with a leaning to the floor. Why, the central doctrine
of Swedenborgianism is the Godhead of Jesus Christ—and no other sect insists on it with equal
emphasis. I could prove to you if I had room. That the Howitts are Unitarian however, is true
enough I fear. "Macauley is neutral .. & Talfourd writes no more".18 Talfourd writes no more—
there’s a misfortune to the church, indeed! (when he wrote, he was a professed unitarian!) Let the
seven churches mourn!19 Talfourd writes no more. Selah. Then this instructed gentleman represents
poor Frederica Bremer (read her book on America & judge for yourself) as a Straussite .. and a
disciple of Emerson’s.20 A lie! What is said of me is like unto it.

But I wanted to tell you that a letter is subsequently addressed to the Church & State Gazette,
& printed by it & reprinted in the Brussel’s paper, written by somebody “not authorized to vindicate
M™ Browning’s religious creed”21 but who does it boldly, & ga†22 nevertheless .. quoting
〈...〉 poems & appealing to 〈...〉 fervent and sympathetic recogn〈...〉 expressed. Unitarianism
〈...〉 It is very kindly done .. with 〈...〉 tells me it is by my old friend 〈...〉 directly— Though I
could not hav〈...〉aid cur-dog back-biting, I am 〈...〉

I do hope Henrietta does’nt over-teach Altham—it is so dangerous, tell her—particularly
during teeth-cutting.

He must be a darling & too forward. Do give dearest Bummy my best love—and to Arlette.
How strange of Papa! Poor dearest Papa! Tell me of him. I am anxious thinking of the cold.
Speak too of yourself. How is dear Minny? Your letter was 11. This will be more I fear. I write
& write.

Your very own Ba
Will you give this homoeopathical note to Messr^Palmer?

It's to direct Reuben Browning to pay two pounds of kind dear Wilson's to the bearer for her father—Oh, how grieved I am about our dear friend M' Hunter. Do tell me of him—and give him my love as ever.

How does dearest Trippy bear the cold? She does not leave the house you say—which is wise. Give her a batch of kisses from me, warm from the heart. Love to all round besides. Write, I do beseech you.

[Continued by Penini]

I will send St Peter's another time. Penini. Rome.

[Continued by EBB]

His own writing, perfectly unassisted, except in the spelling—and he has learnt to write only since the middle of December—not two months—about six weeks in fact. It seems to me as wonderful as the spirits writing.

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50, Wimpole Street / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.

2. "The mail, by the land route, arrives every day, bringing letters from England in 9 days; if by steamer from Marseilles to Civita Vecchia in 6 or 7 days" (Murray's A Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy, London: John Murray, 1853, p. 7).

3. A large public garden laid out in the 19th century in the northeast quarter of Rome, with a promenade near the Piazza del Popolo (called the foreigners' quarter). It was fashionable to drive there in the evening and to pay and receive visits in carriages. A military band played two hours before sunset to large mixed audiences.

4. Mary (May) Theodosia Sartoris (1845-1925), the second child and only daughter of Edward and Adelaide Sartoris. In 1871 she married Henry Evans Gordon. She was a talented amateur actress and a singer of some note, and became a member of the Bach Choir.

5. Edith's only rival for Pen's affection prior to this was Alice Tassinari; see letters 94 and 97.

6. EBB had written to George on 10 January 1854 and to Henrietta on 30 December 1853; in the latter letter she explained that Kenyon had sent them fifty pounds as a gift in addition to the allowance he was making them (Transcript in editor's file).

7. On 10 January EBB wrote to George that Wilson, a firm doubter in the spirits, had attempted writing at Isa Blagden's house and that the pencil had moved in her hand. On returning home, she proceeded to demonstrate to EBB, and the pencil wrote "backwards & upside down at once, presenting the letters to me. ... 'Mary' was written distinctly— I said 'It is a christian name only— Will you write the other name?'— 'Barrett' was written after— I commanded myself & asked again 'There are two bearing that name in relation to me— Will you write what relation?' —O George— 'Mama' was written under my eyes—turned to me carefully—that familiar word from which we have been orphaned all these years— I was very deeply moved—you will understand that. Of course you will believe nothing, any of you, but I have made up my mind to tell you whether you believe or not" (B-GB, p. 213).

8. Two or more pages are missing.

9. Robert William Dibdin (1805?-87), a clergyman, was the author of Table-Turning. A Lecture. Delivered in the Music Hall, Store Street, Nov. 8, 1853. (London: Aylott and Co., 1853), as well as Swedenborg, and Electro-Biology: A Lecture by the Rev. R.W. Dibdin, M.A., delivered in the Music-Hall, Store Street, on Tuesday Evening, December the 6th, 1853 (privately printed). In both these lectures, Dibdin echoed a number of fellow
clergymen in declaring magnetism, spiritualism, and Swedenborgianism all to be “diabolical.” The Bishop of London was sufficiently concerned to forbid any of his clergy who were believers or practitioners of spiritualism from discharging their duties as long as they practiced table turning.

10. Unidentified.

11. Waddy Thompson (1798–1868), congressman from South Carolina and minister to Mexico from 1842–44. EBB undoubtedly misheard the name, Dr. Pryne, for Dr. Prime (see letter 104, note 6), but I have been unable to verify EBB’s account of his meeting with Thompson.

12. Perhaps John Elliotson (1791–1868), a well-known and highly respected physician, who had been professor of medicine in the University of London from 1831 to 1838. However, his interest in and practice of mesmerism had caused him to resign his post. The “new medical friend” has not been identified.


15. The capital “V” is underscored twice. Caroline Archer Clive wrote under the pen-name “V”—see note 9 in the preceding letter.

16. Robert Hall (1764–1831), a Baptist divine remembered for his eloquent preaching. One of his greatest sermons, first published in 1800, was often reprinted, and an edition had recently appeared in America with an introduction by J. Newton Brown. Modern Infidelity Considered, with Respect to Its Influence on Society (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1853). EBB refers to remarks made by Brown in a section headed “Influence of the ‘New School’ on English Literature.” “The poetry of the Brownings has a Swedenborgian tendency; but the lady—a sincere friend of Martineau—was recently a Unitarian. She turns from the whole Christian church. It has, ‘Too much of envy in its heart. And too much striving in its hands.’” (p. 24). Brown’s introduction was extracted in a notice of the work in the 30 December 1853 issue of The Church and State Gazette (p. 818).

17. William Howitt (1792–1879) and his wife Mary (née Botham, 1799–1888), known for her translations of Hans Christian Andersen and Frederika Bremer, were both subjects in Horne’s A New Spirit of the Age. The Brownings had discussed William Howitt’s “book making about Poets” in their courtship correspondence (see BC, 12, 292). J. Newton Brown immediately followed his comments on the Brownings with an attack on the Howitts and Frederika Bremer: “William and Mary Howitt are called Quakers, but they have long ceased to be connected with the Society of Friends. They have no definite creed. They never attend any place of worship. If any thing, they are Unitarians, with a leaning toward Swedenborg” (Brown, p. 24).

18. EBB is quoting a remark made by J. Newton Brown at the conclusion of a paragraph in the introduction cited in note 16; Brown laments how few “modern English authors . . . recognize the great truths of Christianity,” and declares that “even the Christian Wordsworth, but for a few passages, might pass for a heathen poet” (p. 25).

19. The seven churches of Asia Minor to whom the letter of St. John is addressed in the opening chapters of the book of Revelation.

20. Frederika Bremer (1801–65), a popular Swedish author, whose works had been translated by Mary Howitt. Howitt compared Bremer to Jane Austen, and in a letter to Miss Mitford in 1842, EBB not only agreed but said that she considered her “book of a higher & sweeter tone than Miss Austen had voice & soul for” (BC, 6, 190). “And what has been the influence on Frederika Bremer, whose writings Mary Howitt first introduced to the British public? Miss Bremer is filled with a Swedish dilution of Straussism. She takes Emerson to be a prophet indeed” (Brown, p. 24).

21. The letter to the editor in the 13 January 1854 issue of The Church and State Gazette is signed “T.W.,” i.e., Thomas Westwood who was living in Brussels at that time. Referring to a notice in the 30 December 1853
issue, and the reference to EBB being "a liberal Unitarian," he wrote: "... though in no wise authorized to enter the lists in vindication of that lady's religious creed, I may, perhaps, be permitted to show, by reference to a brief passage or two from her published works, that this alleged Unitarianism is a gross error, if not a gratuitous invention, on the part of the American writer" (p. 27). He goes on to quote from The Seraphim, "Cowper's Grave," and "A Drama of Exile" to support his claim.

22. This portion of the letter is written on the flap of the envelope, half of which is torn away.
23. Unidentified.
24. I have been unable to explain EBB's concern for George Barrett Hunter.
25. i.e., one of his sketches which EBB mentioned in the preceding letter.

Letter 108

Via Bocca di Leone 43.
Feb 28–[1854]¹

My ever dearest Arabel I wrote last to you with the intention of enclosing a note to dearest Stormie, but the letter w? have been overweight so I put it off. Now I send the enclosure & write at once that you may not fancy a letter lost, or his particular letter less tenderly prized than it was. It was very kind—and the very sight of the handwriting thrilled me into joy. Do convince him out of his postage-mania. I never object to my dinner, tell him, because of the trouble of swallowing... nor am reconciled to the silence of people I love because I should have to pay... some tenpence halfpenny... for the words they would send me. Why, really he must attribute to me sublime ideas about Love. I wonder if I should grudge the cab-hire of going to see him at Bayswater once in seven years, supposing that I lived in Devonshire Street. What do you think, Arabel. "What you sint"? as Penini is fond of saying—He & Robert have gone together to M's Page's balcony (people take balconies for the occasion and receive their friends) on the last day of the carnival. I have seen nothing, no, nothing of it—and until yesterday Robert refused obstinately to go alone. My comfort is that Penini has been several days in the best places, throwing bonbons into carriages with great adroitness, & having them thrown at him to his immense glory—It must be the very holiday of a child... & he thinks the world goes on most satisfactorily in spite of the Czar & other small grievances. Fancy Penini, masked (to prevent the missiles of flowers & confetti from hurting him) flinging bonbons into the carriages and on the hats of the street-passengers—"I always hit," says he. And he's a favorite mark for others... standing there with his ringlets, little angel! As for me I see as much of it as you do, & this is the last day. The weather has been cold for three weeks, & through an imprudence of mine, I have had some cough—Two days ago, however, Madame Braun held out a temptation—a noontide temptation to go to her house to hear M' de Witt, the German musical artist, & her housemate, play Beethoven before the prince of Prussia who had wished to hear him.² Robert & I were the only visitors admitted—D'Braun could not get a permission for even the celebrated Cornelius—the prince would be alone, he said. How we obtained the right of entrance, I cant imagine, but it must have been through some goodnatured misrepresentation of our host's, I suppose—At first I thought of nothing but refusing as usual—(I have done nothing but refuse for a month) & then Robert opened the window & decided that the air was too mild to hurt me in that middle-hour of the day—so we went. The music was perfect,
and the Royalty as gentlemanly as if he were not a prince—Set it down, that he is rather like Alfred...the sort of type. He bowed to me profoundly & I curtsied down to the ground floor—By the way I must observe that both Robert & I admired the dignity & simplicity with which Ma'am Braun received her royal guest...just as if she had done nothing else all her life. Almost I was as much struck by that, as by her kindness to me. I like her very much. D' Bra...
he wrote of de Witt: "An English poetess well known to fame exclaimed, on seeing him enter the room, 'He looks like spirituality itself'" (p. 78). William, afterwards Kaiser Wilhelm I (1797–1888), became regent in 1857 when his brother, Frederick William IV (1795–1861), suffered a paralytic stroke. I have been unable to identify Mrs. Braun's housemate. The celebrated Cornelius may refer to Cornelius Conway Felton (1807–62), the Eliot Professor of Greek Literature at Harvard from 1834, and later President of the College. He had just arrived from a visit to Athens.

3. i.e., John Gibson Lockhart (1794–1854); he had retired a year earlier after more than 25 years as editor of The Quarterly Review, and had come to Rome for the winter of 1853–54, where, according to the DNB, he "read Dante with enthusiasm."


5. At least two pages are missing. The rest of the letter is written in the margins of the first page.

6. i.e., of the poems she and RB had agreed to write in support of Arabella's Ragged Schools bazaar. This is the first allusion to the poems, which were published under the title Two Poems by Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning (London: Chapman and Hall, 1854). EBB's contribution was entitled "A Plea for the Ragged Schools of London" and RB's was "The Twins." The bazaar was held on 19 April 1854. In a letter to Chapman on 30 March 1854, RB asked the publisher if he would "kindly get two or three hundred copies struck off, in the simplest fashion, with as much taste as is consistent with cheapness—so that they may be sold, say, at sixpence a copy? No covers, you know, or anything but the plain sheetfold simply doubled into shape—making the best show you can for the little we want to spend. Will you have the goodness to get this done at once (otherwise all our labour will be thrown away) and charge the same, together with the postage of this heavy letter to our account—not on any consideration allowing Miss Barrett to interfere—except to correct the proof which you can send her with the copy. Please also to keep the said copy clean—as she will sell the m.s. as an autograph, with other ware of a like character" (NL, p. 71).

Letter 109

43 Via Bocca di Leone.

April 3. [1854]

My beloved Arabel you will get a proof of the Ragged school verses from Chapman & Hall, & see that it stands as correctly as you can, as these little things should be particularly accurate. What Robert sends you is not worth much he says .. being a simple versification of a fable of Martin Luther's—but, in my mind, it is characteristic both of Robert & Luther, & very appropriate to the occasion. As for me I have done as well as I could, & what's written from the heart must have some sort of good in it after all—The Ragged School cause is one of those unquestionable causes, which every man with a sense of justice in him & every woman with a throb of pity in her, whatever their opinions may be otherwise, must give their sympathy & good wishes. You know, I often find fault with things for being 'narrow'—Well, this is'nt narrow, at least—The condition is only ... rags.

Now, Arabel, I am going to suggest something to you which was suggested to us the other day by a letter. Barry Cornwall wrote to Robert asking us to contribute to the "Keepsake" for his sake, because he is interested in the editress. 'Do this,' he says, 'for me, and I will send an autograph poem to your sister in law for sale at the Ragged schools bazaar of which I have heard.'
Whereupon we thought directly that you would do something good by the sale of autographs—& we have written to M' Procter to accept his offer. You will have his poem for one .. & you may take, if you please, the mss of our poems when they are sent to you with the proof. We told Chapman to keep them clean. Also, I mean to besiege M's Kemble for something, which she wont refuse either to me or to the cause. If I could get her prologue to the amateur play acted in Rome this winter & which she came & repeated to us the same night, it would be excellent, I think. The actors applied to Lockhart for a prologue, but he was unwell or sulky & refused, & she goodnaturedly wrote it & recited it too for them when only a few hours were given to her for the purpose. Perhaps M' Kenyon might get an autograph or two for you from the people he knows.

If Miss Mitford were well enough she would give you a few lines—old or new, would not matter so very much, you know. Sarianna has promised to let you have the drawings. And now, Arabel, if we .. Robert & I .. happen to have pleased you by our contributions, show your "gratitude" by just one thing .. i.e. making no fuss about the printing of the poems. Observe—if you talked till doomsday you would'nt produce the smallest effect upon our decision .. so, dont talk. It quite pained me in London not to be able to assist you in your works of Christian charity, except with sympathy—but we are poor, more's the pity, & cant give money. Here, now, is a thing we can do. The expense of printing & paper, in so small a m-s. is scarcely anything,—& even that we shall only see deducted from the sum due to ourselves,—& not miss therefore in any way. If you knew the pleasure it gives us to do it, you would not grudge indeed the allowing us to do it—Why, I am not sure that I did'nt stop Robert in some sort of rash vow when we were in London .. (he's a Jephtha[h] for rash vows .. & I've stopped him twenty times in such vows as never to take another wife, & the like .. I've held his lips together with both hands .. I would'nt have it!) well .. I am not sure I did'nt stop him in a rash vow to give the first fifty pounds we could spare to your Refuge. .. \textit{Refuse} .. Arabel,—he was so struck by the noble object of it & by your devotion to it— On that occasion I stopped him .. but now I dont stop him, & you shant stop us. Much a-say about nothing! I say so much that you may have to say nought. Chapman is bidden to send you the number of copies he may think suitable to such an occasion— If you prefer any particular number, say so to him— You know there's nothing but the price of paper to consider—& paper is so cheap now that you might as well (like dear Storm) consider deeply the postages of letters. How pleased I am that dearest Bummy is with you—give her my best love & say so!— I have your little note by M' Kenyon's last letter .. but his first letter never reached us & I am horribly vexed on every account. Among other enclosures it contained a letter to me from Grace Greenwood containing of course the latest American news in spiritualism, for she asked me if she might send me anything interesting on the subject & I said 'yes.' It was a thick packet, says M' Kenyon— His kindness leads him always to prepay our letters which makes them more subject to risks of loss, as I have told you.*

Oh— I certainly told you about Grace Greenwood— Her other name was Miss Clark— Now she is married to a M' Lippingcot, or some such extraordinary piece of cacophony. She travelled through Florence, & passed some three evenings at our house, & told me various curious spiritual stories, such as the one about the lilies of the valley set on the mother's head .. you remember?— & the one about the spiritual embrace & kiss—oh, you remember. Her sister is a medium— She
told me that the news of all her letters home was anticipated by the spirits—Her mother heard everything about her through the spiritual writing. Our spirits here are much less communicative—When we hear facts, which we do, not infrequently, they are generally wrong. I can't account for it—Frivolous spirits intrude—and true spirits make mistakes. Henrietta wishes us in “sober England”—You don't know what passes around you in sober England. This spirit-writing (so called) is spreading everywhere in England—The wife of the professor of mathematics at the London Colleges, Miss De Morgan,*® who lost her daughter aged fifteen, a few weeks ago, is or believes herself to be in constant intercourse with the spirit,—& is suffering none of the bitterness of the separation of death—The other children have even seen their sister in vision, & so have certain friends of the family. Talking of unbelief, the first piece of scepticism that ever passed my Penini’s lips startled both Robert & me the other day. He said at breakfast, addressing himself to me (as the centre of the opposition) . . . “Dear mama, I don’t believe in angels” — ‘What’—said I scarcely believing my ears—‘you don’t believe in angels!’ “No”—(with a dogmatic air—and knitting his brows to a Voltaireish sort of resolution). . . “I sint lat angels teeps in Heaven and does’nt come into looms” — Said I in a state of consternation . . . “Where did you hear that, Penini?” “Miss Blagden told it to me.” Well—I was horribly vexed with Isa Blagden, & as I was writing a note to her I reproached her vehemently for polluting my child—Why, even Robert has never dared to breathe a doubt against the chrystal glass of that child’s soul who walks as if in a cloud of witnesses,*^ recognizing the spiritual world about him as distinctly as the sun & the flowers of the natural. She was very penitent & explained how it was—Penini was there the day before, & enquiring very eagerly about a little dog of Miss Hosmer’s[,]¹⁴ the American sculptress who occupies the apartment above Miss Blagden’s. The dog was little & pretty & had siezed [sic] on all Penini’s affections. He coveted the possession of it much—“And” said he, “lat woman has, too,” (besides the dog) “a silver angel lat tomes to see her sometime”—(referring to the vision she said she saw of a luminous figure . . I told you about it in a former letter.) Well—Louisa,*¹⁵ the little invalid was lying close by & heard him say it—she exclaimed, “what, what!”—in a nervous excited way—and Miss Blagden, to quiet her, turned round & said in a low voice that it was all nonsense, & that angels remained in heaven & did’nt come into houses. She had’nt had the least idea of Penini’s hearing her—but he heard & put the piece of infidelity into ostentatious use directly. Miss Blagden represented that Louisa was morbid in mind & body, had been accustomed to associate fear & horror with apparitions, & that what Penini was perfectly unaffected by would have been injurious to her. I think it would have been better, even with Louisa, rather to give her just ideas than to deny possible facts—but it is true that she is very delicate—and I can't blame Isa Blagden for any degree of caution in regard to her. Isa's knee is better—that is, she is able to walk—and ought not to walk.—¹⁶ The medical men are very hopeless about the ultimate cure—they think she will always be lame. Is’t it sad? I am sure she ought to move into a less relaxing air than this, but Rome has bewitched her & she will stay the winters at least, I fear. The Storys have left Rome at last—they should have gone three months ago . . Edith's fever had taken an obstinate & threatening character. They were going a fortnight since to Naples—but at Velletri a miserable place some thirty miles from hence, she was siezed [sic] with a frightful attack & lay with congestion on the brain & heart & liver, in a state of almost insensibility. M! Story wrote a sort of
mad letter to Robert—How was he to stay there alone if the child died? He adjured Robert to come or send someone. We agreed that Robert could only go— which he did in half an hour, taking Mr. Page who insisted on going, with the kindness of heart common to her, though she was by no means strong enough for the exertion. We had all taken for granted that Edith must be dead before they could arrive, & that the funeral would detain them for another two or three days. Think how I felt at letting Robert go! Penini made it no better by uttering the most pitious [sic] screams & sobs at seeing the carriage drive away,—which Wilson & I together could scarcely put a stop to— He said at last, when he could articulate anything, “I sint Misser Story not velly dood to tate papa away— I sure papa will tate ilF. In fact, the child was frightened & grieved Just as I was. For my part I scarcely closed my eyes all night, and would’nt have sate down to any spirit-writing for the world. I dont know when I had had before such a concussion of nerves. At four the next day, just as I was expecting a letter, in came Robert—laughing. Edith was better instead of being dead—& really, making every allowance for the exaggerated apprehensions natural to such circumstances, Mr. Story should scarcely have written such a letter— At the worst, he was there with his wife, two servants, three physicians, & full pecuniary resources, & should have felt himself sufficient for the straight, in all manliness & fortitude, without calling upon Robert— who, after all, was only a friend of a few months. I am ungenerous enough to grudge a little the parting & the fear, (to say nothing of the dollars) to an end which was really useful to nobody. Still, at the moment, I thought just as Robert did, that there was no possibility of refusing to go. It would have been dreadful if they had lost their only remaining child, & the case was moving to one’s compassion. I like Mr. Story infinitely better than I like her—by the way, in spite of this want of courage & firmness—

Penini’s birthday was a great day with us. I gave him a sword and a book of costumes, & Robert gave him a set of kitchen-utensils (he has a vocation for cooking) and a farmyard full of feathered chickens. Wilson gave him a watch, and Ferdinando a collection of the views about Rome. The padrona of the house presented to him a nosegay of artificial flowers. Little Edith Story gave him a Punch stuffed with bonbons, Louisa Alexander (the invalid) a collar which she had worked herself, and Miss Blagden two golden scudi—about nine shillings, English. We had kept the day a secret as far as possible, out of delicacy, because really Penini is so popular in Rome that we should have been overwhelmed with gifts if it had been generally known. He whispered it however as a profound mystery to one or two of his particular friends, & so there was a partial .. very partial disclosure— As it was, Mr. Page, on hearing it a few days after, would’nt be cheated out of her kindness, & brought him an enormous donkey, with an inside (in the manner of the Trojan horse) peopled with bonbons, & moveable ears & tail— Well .. to go on with the birthday— After dining at one oclock, we put him into an open carriage with Ferdinando & Wilson & sent them all to Villa Pampili Doria, five miles off, to walk in the beautiful grounds & gather flowers— Nothing could exceed his rapture, as Wilson described it— He stretched out his arms as if he would gather all the flowers at once. And such a basket of violets as he brought home, and such scratched legs!— And .. “Such a nice time, dear mama!” I should have liked very much to have gone too as you may suppose, but there was a treacherous wind in spite of the magnificent sunshine & I was afraid of doing myself some harm.
My darling Arabel I have just received your letter— Oh—how grieved I am for the poor Hedleys.21 Dear, dear aunt Jane! What a blow— what a trial. If I were she I should forgive the mistress of the school with considerable difficulty—for the misery is that the child was old enough to feel the whole sentiment of the desolation of that deathbed among strangers. It is a misfortune indeed. No, we shall not go into mourning—it would be foolish under our circumstances, and I will not as I am tempted, write to dear aunt Jane, because such letters are the mere vanities of grief... worse than the vanities of pleasure. Do tell me whatever you hear further of all of them— & say, if you communicate with them, how deep my feeling is—

Arabel—you are doing a very cruel injustice in this suspicion of one of the simplest & most upright natures I ever had to do with. Why, here is Robert who does not believe he says! but who never has had a moment's suspicion of Wilson's honesty in the matter. I have often said that I dont understand how he reconciles the belief & the unbelief... the faith in the individual & the scepticism in the phenomena... but still he does it somehow. You are more reasonable in your point of view, perhaps,—because how a person can be self-deceived in a matter of this kind... sit down at nearly any hour of the day & write whole sentences... not in a state of excitement, but as coolly as I write now... professedly without knowing a word of what she writes... professedly having her pencil & hand moved by an external force unconnected with her will... & yet be mistaken... & yet be not mad... & yet be not bad... is more than I can comprehend. You think the illness &c “suspicious”—. It’s suspicious if the whole phenomena are taken for granted to be delusive—but certainly not as I see & know them. And how do you account for what has happened to me again & again, when the pencil has turned round in my own hand. Here is M' Page, in this house, ... the great artist... he is a wonderful painter, Arabel—& if possible, stands as high with me as a man. Robert was saying of him the other day, that he never knew a man whose habitual modes of thought & feeling had attained to so high a spiritual elevation. He is a Christian even to the tip of his paint-brush... that man. Well—his hand too has moved—& he has written... yes, & drawn... not by his own will— Facts of the kind are multiplied on all sides of us— There’s no excitement—on the contrary, the natural results of these things is [sic] to take away all superstitious irritation & fear— Wilson was saying the other day, she felt herself in the midst of spirits & had lost all sense of the nervousness about such things natural to her— I dont talk much about the subject of the writing to Penini— I dont want to excite him into trying experiments— I dont want him to write for long reasons. But he knows—& believes (in spite of Isa Blagden) in spiritual presences & manifestations & would’nt be “excited,” so as to be hurt, by any manifestation of a kindly nature. No—Arabel. I shall not make him nervous & excited, but the contrary. Isa Blagden when she answered my reproaches said... ['"]'Oh, of course it is different with Penini—born & nurtured upon spiritualism of all sorts, & with his healthy mind & body”! And he has obviously a healthy mind & body. His nerves are not susceptible as they used to be. As he says of himself in classical language... “I not afraid of nosing at all.” Also the spiritual is natural to him, in a sense. His simple objection to the writing is that it “spoils all his time”... i.e. it keeps people from playing with him— You never saw a child so altered in respect to shyness. He will go anywhere with anybody, if there’s a “party” in the wind (Arabel, you’ll think me extraordinary in my programme of education, with angels at one end & parties at the other—) M'n Page gave a child’s
party in his honor the other day— There was a great cake with his name, Penini, inscribed in white sugar, & he sate at the head of the table & presided. He had “allanged” as he called it, (arranged) about this party all himself & invited the guests, & you never saw a child in a more radiant consciousness of glory than he was. In return, he brought home an album of Mr® Page’s in which he was to make a drawing which at first we hesitated to permit .. but he was so earnest that we yielded, & he did his best, & really the drawing was wonderful. But I cant let him send you St Peters’ today— you would pay for it. I grudge the room even for Robert’s writing—the omission is chiefly my fault— He shall write someday when I can afford it. Such heaps of things I have to say to you. Robert has been out very much lately in the evening, & we are both going with the Kembles .. I mean Fanny Kemble & M! Sartoris into the country tomorrow— I believe M! Lyons, the son of Sir Edmund, is going, with some others. I have not dared to go out at night for some time, though I am well enough. Robert has seen a good deal of Lockhart, who took an immense [sic] fancy to him, I understand, & pronounced he was “not at all like a damned literary man.” The Quarterly called upon us moreover & was very gracious—and Robert broke the vow against dinners so far as to dine at the Sartoris’s in his company just before he left Rome for England. In the evening came the Duke of Wellington & M! Lyons, & I had’nt Robert back till one in the morning because he did’nt like to break up the party when they were so few in number. Lockhart however went away early. He and the Duke are travelling together, & he is in dreadful health. Said his grace .. “What shall I do if Lockhart dies on the road? shall I send the body to England .. or bury it at once? can anybody advise me?” — Well—it was a difficult question. “I wonder if it would be delicate,” added the Duke gravely, “to ask him”. Somebody suggested that he had better ask Lockhart what he would do if the Duke died. Poor Lockhart—he is not in a state of health to travel in tenderer & somewhat less distinguished company, if at all. Robert met the Duke of Wellington often at the Sartoris’s & elsewhere— He’s just like the old Duke, but a nullity, goodnatured enough though .. except perhaps to his wife. Tell George, M! & M! Denman (son of Lord Denman) have called on us & the children are great friends of Penini’s. So you believe that story about Louis did you hear it (...) December where in his office (...) at the court & ridden with the (...) different as he told it to me. (...) his adoration of her & could’nt bear (...) of insanity. Whereas she cared for nobi(…)— believe as much as your story. As to intol(ance ...) papers printed lately, & enquire into the terms (…) offered. Paris (…) opened— The exaggerations of certain parties are really (comic)al. Come, Arabel, if L N divorces the empress, I give him up to you to be executed for ever. He will neither divorce her nor betray US. Have you read M! Drummond’s pamphlet about the end of the world— I dont believe in that either. You see I too can be sceptical when I try.

Mr Brotherton goes on writing Greek. Write to me, & tell me all about the bazaar— How I should like to see it— What have you done yourself? You dont say— Love to dearest Trippy—say how she is— Do you know you dont mention Papa—how he is I mean. God bless you, beloved—Oh how wrong of Henrietta— I have her dear letter. Tell her I would’nt for the world [say] that Penini could count to a hundred! What is the use?

Tell Henrietta I tried by the watch how long Penini was at his lessons— Just half an hour, including reading & writing. It frightens me to think of her teaching Altham an hour or so. If the
health doesn't suffer the intellect will—She can't judge now of the pernicious ultimate effects. Tell her so with my fond love.

No indeed—Penini isn't grown past petting. Why he's a regular darling—You will see.

Mrs. Fisher's picture of Robert is admirable as a likeness, & that cartoon of Penini is like him—but not so like by any means.29

Address: Angleterre Via del mare / Miss Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. See note 6 in the preceding letter.
3. DeVane identifies RB's source as William Hazlitt's The Table-Talk or Familiar Discourse of Martin Luther, London: H.G. Bohn, 1848, pp. 151–152 (p. 266).
4. Marguerite A. Power (1815–67), author and editor of The Keepsake. Procter had written to RB on 13 March 1854: "I am going to ask you a favour. I want you to send me a scrap of verse—and to prevail on your wife to send me another—for the Keepsake. ... The book is edited by Miss Power (Lady Blessington's niece)—a young woman who is very respectable—very hardworking—and wretchedly poor. It forms almost her whole subsistence. ... Kenyon tells me that your sister (or sister in law) is getting autographs for some charity-bazaar, and that she has written or is writing to you and Mrs. B. for verses. Cut one piece of verse (each of you) from the abundance that you're about to give her, for me. And I will give her in exchange (my brass for your gold) some rhymes by your humble servant (B.C.)—for her charity. They shall be moral and smell of the closet" (Richard W. Armour, Barry Cornwall: A Biography of Bryan Waller Procter, Boston: Meador Publishing Co., 1935, pp. 233–234). EBB contributed "My Kate" to The Keepsake (London: David, Bogue, 1855, pp. 116–17), and for the 1856 Keepsake, RB contributed "Ben Karshook's Wisdom" (p. 16).
5. There is no evidence that either one contributed anything.
6. A reference to the story of the Old Testament character Jephthah, a Gileadite warrior, who, before going into battle, vowed that if he returned victorious, he would offer as a burnt offering (i.e., human sacrifice) whoever first came to his house to welcome him home. His only daughter was the first, and they were both faithful to his unfortunate promise (Judges 11:30–40).
7. A playful revision of the title of Shakespeare's play Much Ado About Nothing.
8. The letter was never found, and Grace Greenwood eventually wrote again, which EBB answered in August 1854 (ms at Cleveland Public Library).
9. See letter 100, note 8.
10. Sophia Elizabeth (née Frend, d. 1892) was the wife of Augustus De Morgan (1806–71), who had been appointed the first professor of mathematics at University College London in 1828. They had seven children; their eldest daughter, Elizabeth Alice, to whom EBB refers, was born in 1838. Mrs. De Morgan wrote a memoir entitled From Matter to Spirit: Ten Years' Experience in Spirit Manifestations (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1863), and her memoirs, edited by her daughter, Mary, were published three years after her death: Threescore Years and Ten: Reminiscences of the late Sophia Elizabeth De Morgan, to which are added Letters to and from her Husband the late Augustus De Morgan, and Others, ed. by her daughter, Mary A. De Morgan, London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1895. In neither of these works have I been able to trace any reference to the death of her daughter, or her appearance to her parents or siblings. However, in the former work, in which no names are mentioned, and in which she gives numerous examples of the last words of those who have died, she records an incident which I take to refer to EBB: "Within the last ten years an authoress died whose works are the outpourings of a mind full of graceful and lovely images. As her last moments approached, she looked up with an expression of quiet delight, repeating thrice, very softly, the words 'How beautiful!'" (Matter to Spirit, p. 183).
11. Underscored three times.
12. Underscored twice.
13. Cf. Hebrews 12:1: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.”
14. Harriet Goodhue Hosmer (1830–1908), an American sculptor who had arrived in Rome in 1852, and soon afterwards joined the studio of John Gibson. EBB first mentioned her in a letter to Henrietta in December 1853, together with the other women who were living at 13 Via Gregoriana: “Oh—there’s a house of what I call emancipated women—a young sculptress—American, Miss Hosmer, a pupil of Gibson’s, very clever and very strange” (Huxley, p. 196), and Isa Blagden’s apartments were on the floor below.
15. i.e., Louisa Alexander; see letter 94, note 7.
16. A month earlier EBB had written to Henrietta about Isa’s knee: “I found her here with a dislocated knee pan which neither my wishes nor those of other friends could persuade her to have advice upon— At last—a month ago, she was forced to have it— The Italian surgeon called in recommended violent rupture & setting again, preparing pulleys & c & c for the occasion— Said the English physician, [']he will kill you— Here’s the French military surgeon,— call in him’— French surgeon proposes ‘mild methods’— ‘bandages & rest’— French surgeon accordingly bandages the whole leg with all his might, bringing a male assistant to help to pull— It might have answered with a horse—or even a grenadier— With the delicate flesh & limb of a woman, the effect was to put her to the utmost torture, to produce high fever, & to necessitate the loosening of the bands— Foot found swollen & black— leg blistered all the way up— Suppuration has come on—all the blood in a state of congestion— knee cap grown looser than ever— After three weeks in bed she is on the sofa, but I am really frightened to think of the harm which may be irremovable— And that dear, generous, disinterested creature .. it quite grieves me .. Robert goes to see her everyday— I am sure Arabel will be sorry” (Transcript in editor’s file). Isa would later be treated by an Italian physician, Dr. Zanetti, whose treatment was effective; see letter 114.
17. As EBB indicates, they went to Velletri (about 20 miles south of Rome), and then on to Paris for the winter of 1854-55. They returned to America in August 1855, but returned to England for the summer of 1856, and then back to Rome where they settled.
18. After RB returned, EBB wrote to Story: “Why say anything more about Robert’s journey? Never think that either he or I grudged the little trouble he took in the attempt to relieve you from a single pang of the great apprehended anguish. In my part I had more joy in seeing him come back with his good news than I had pain in seeing him go” (B4F, p. 29).
19. “Landlady.”
20. Described by Murray’s as “the most extensive villa about Rome,” to the west of St. Peter’s, popular for its gardens, terraces, and fountains (A Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy, London: John Murray, 1853, p. 241).
21. EBB’s cousin Mary Hedley (1838-54) died on 18 March 1854 at Brighton; the “mistress of the school” was possibly Juliet Syndon, who is recorded as “present at the death” on Mary Hedley’s death certificate.
22. See letter 107, note 25.
23. Richard Bickerton Pemell Lyons (1817-87), later 1st Earl Lyons, served from 1853-58 as attaché and after 1856 as secretary to the British Legation in Florence. In December 1858, having succeeded his father, Edmund Lyons (1790–1858), as second Baron Lyons, he was appointed British minister to Washington.
26. Richard Denman (1814-87) was the third son of Thomas Denman (1799-1854), 1st Baron Denman, who was Lord Chief Justice from 1832-50. Richard Denman and his wife Emma (née Jones, d. 1904) had five children: Richard (1842-83), Emma Sophia Georgiana (1845-1939), Elizabeth Margaret (1847-1929), and Anna Maria (1848-1938). Denman was a barrister-at-law with chambers at 6 King’s Bench Walk, The Temple, not far from George’s chambers at 3 Paper Buildings, also in The Temple. Denman’s address appears in the Brownings’ address book for this period at Via des due Macelli 24 (m/s at Texas).
27. Half of the flap of the envelope on which this portion of the letter is written is missing.
Letter 109

3 April [1854] 629

28. Doubtless a reference to *The Fate of Christendom* (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1854) by Henry Drummond (1786–1860), one of the founders and leaders of the Catholic Apostolic Church, and the author of numerous pamphlets on religious subjects. According to the *DNB*, “in 1836 Drummond posted down to the Archbishop of York at Nuneham to tell him of the approaching end of the world.”

29. William Fisher (1817–95), an Irish portrait painter, whose portraits of Landor and Kenyon are in the National Portrait Gallery. His portrait of RB, which sold as lot 60 in *Browning Collections*, is at Wellesley (see *Reconstruction*, G7). Fisher’s drawing of Pen has not been located; in a letter to Sarianna, EBB wrote: “Mr. Fisher’s cartoon of him is very pretty, but doesn’t do him justice in the delicacy of the lower part of the face” (*LEBB*, II, 163).

---

Letter 110

Rome—
May 24. [1854]¹

My ever beloved Arabel,

I write in the greatest haste to record that we leave Rome tomorrow by vettura. Write to Florence directly, lest the letter miss us— We have been on the point of taking the cheap route by sea, & nothing but a mere turn of circumstances, & a representation from Pantaleoni that we should probably have to sleep on deck through the immense pressure of passengers .. (everybody rushing to the French boats away from the Italian since the late fatal accident ..) prevented our immolation to that horrible fate— It will be only on the fourth day that we reach Florence, and we shall pay considerably more— Oh—I had yielded the point. Robert said it sh4 be as I liked—but it seemed really wisest (& most disagreeable) to yield,—so I yielded. That unfortunate M[ Knight lost his wife & his two children by persisting in the sea-scheme— & the idea of it was a little in Robert’s head—nevertheless he went down *twice* to take our places by the steamer, & was foiled by a want of change or some such small cause. So glad I am of the actual decision. The land-journey was gently forced on us by the circumstances. Dearest Arabel—you made me very anxious by your long silence, and I took for granted what was the fact of course, that your exertions had made you quite ill. Do write—don’t delay—or we may have left Florence— My Penini has been unwell three times— Three times we have had to call in Pantaleone—& now he is as white as this paper & almost as thin, though perfectly well, I thank God. The evil never was very great indeed— simple diarrhoea attended with a feverishness which would not have alarmed us anywhere else but at Rome—but here fever *mounts*, & we were right in having the best advice instantly— The third attack was of *toothache*. He has a carious back-tooth & caught cold somehow I suppose— The face swelled just as your’s *sic* used to swell—think of that poor darling. For three days, he shook his head rather than say ‘no’— Still we should not have had a physician, if an extraordinary degree of fever (extraordinary for so simple a cause) had not developped itself— I never saw Penini so unwell in my life— So patient too he was! so good & sweet! taking up your hand & kissing it when he could not speak—crying softly to himself. Through all his little illnesses he has taken his medicines without a word— Once he said to me— “Did I tate my medecine velly well”? “Oh yes”—said I,—“beautifully!” . “I did it as well as ever I *tould*, because I wanted to mate Dod pleased.” He certainly looks another child—has lost all his brilliancy .. that sort of prettiness—the very hair hangs dully & uncurled. It’s this detestable climate which, as the summer
grows, takes hold of him & enervates the whole system. Then I was extremely vexed to perceive last night that his two front teeth the lower ones are quite loose— At five years old it is too early to change the teeth, & he will be disfigured if he loses them. I hope it may be from the general swelling of the gums, & that the teeth may fix themselves again . . I do hope so. Pantaleone applied linseed poultices to the swollen face. I was frightened lest there might be a gathering & breaking . . but he said that if it took place it would be in the inside & I need not mind— The swelling dispersed however— Poor little angel, what he suffered! For three days he touched nothing but liquids, & didn’t stir from Wilson’s knee or mine—Robert’s & Ferdinando’s assisting occasionally. Yes, we mean to bring Ferdinando with us to London.3 We like him— & it would be heartbreaking work to part him from Penini— Then there’ll be an advantage in keeping up Penini’s Italian which he speaks as well as English now— & besides Ferdinando is an excellent servant & well-conducted in every respect— & tell dear Henrietta we shant stay long enough in England to pay taxes for him. Sarianna will probably go with us, & we shall leave the poor Nonno4 in Paris in a lamentable condition— nevertheless we shall leave him. You are not to judge our present position with too much melancholy. Penini is well, & in excellent spirits. Duke Alfonso Cirilla5 presented him with a gun yesterday which has lifted him to the heights of generalship— he is only afraid that the pope may get hold of it before he escapes the bound of the pontifical territory. By that time the beloved “general” will begin to recover his lovely rose-colours I do trust, & by the time we reach Florence we shall all be revived. Don’t be too sorry for me meantime. I have not been groaning ever since I wrote last. Ten days ago it never entered your mind where I was, and if you had seen me (in a magic mirror) tête à tête in a carriage with Mr Lyons, the English diplomatical representative here, twelve miles from Rome, I wonder what you would have thought of me. The fact is I had been overpersuaded to join a Kemble-picnic on a day when my Penini was not quite well . . Pantaleone swearing that there was nothing worth a moment’s uneasiness . . & as Mr Lyons had to come to Rome before the others, I caught at the opportunity of coming too in spite of the company. A few miles from Rome we met the Pope walking, the pontifical carriages &c following— Mr Lyons had to get out & stand in the ruts— I sate where I was, only bowing my head as his holiness walked two inches from me brushing the carriage with his white sleeve. Of course I had an especial benediction . . which I took home to Penini . . whose darling pale face grew scarlet with pleasure when I told him of it. Penini has considerable admiration for the dignities of the world. He confided to me the other day that he should like to be the pope—or even, a cardinal. “What!” said I—“would you rather be the pope than Louis Napoleon—” “Oh no— I like better to be Napoleon.” Robert has been present at fourteen Kemble picnics— & I at some five or six. We were at Tivoli at Hadrian’s villa6 last week, & have since been (yesterday) at Vallerano on the campagna— In this way we have had a good knowledge & enjoyment of the country about Rome— and the society was brilliant enough not to spoil the association. I quite love Mr Sartoris . . & Mr Kemble too—then we have had M. Ampere,7 a famous member of the French Institute, M. le Comte de Gozze,8 the Austrian Chargé d’Affaires, D’ Pantaleone, who besides his skill in his profession, is very clever otherwise, & a patriot— was a member of Mazzini’s Legislative Assembly,— & others—agreeable people, all of them.

Now, let me tell you something, Arabel, which has pleased me. I have spoken to you of our friend Mr Page . . told you how we both held him in reverence & admiration as a man & an artist.
Well—in the course of this winter he has been engaged on a portrait of Robert. It was a profound secret—nobody was to be told of it. The picture was finished the other day—a head, full size. painted on his peculiar system, and the most wonderful thing you ever looked at, even if you have looked at Titian’s portraits. The colouring is precisely Titian’s, and the life nature’s... the picture is alive. I go— I look at it.. stand in wonder & ecstasy before it—and at last, the princely artist forces it upon my acceptance— He had done it for me, he said—he would not part with it to anyone else— I objected, resisted, .. was overcome at last. Well— I scarcely know if I was right in yielding, even now. The money value of the portrait is a hundred pounds, and the artist is not rich, with a large family who are expensive in their habits. He says that his wife said to him at the beginning .. “Do it for Mr. Browning, and that he had had no idea from the first but to do it for me!—therefore, if I persisted in refusing, I should frustrate his intentions”! Never was a more princely thing done certainly. At once, two purchasers had promised themselves—(by the way, Mr. Reade’s portraits of us at Florence are sold already to a gentleman of Philadelphia) and as a work of art, irrespective of the subject, the picture would be snatched up & paid for quickly. But then, the noble wish of the artist would, as he says, be frustrated. So I took the picture. Think! a stranger to us the other day. There was Mr. Fisher who painted a portrait of Robert, & did a cartoon of Penini, & never offered me so much as a sketch of either— And this portrait has used time. Robert sate above fifty times. It is the finest head ever produced by the artist, according to his own valuation of his own works. We shall have it exhibited next year, & hope to get a good engraver to work on it & give advantages to the artist—but whatever we may do we shall be his debtors for ever—I, most, of course, both because the gift was to me, & because I naturally have an intenser pleasure in the fact & gain. Mr. Page is very fond of Robert—he had an attack of Roman fever the other day (oh, we go on having the fever as usual in this healthful climate!) & sent up for Robert to go & sit by him— He was much excited .. not absolutely delirious, but raised above his usual quiet mood .. & he discoursed about Swedenborg & the Revelations & the human anatomy till Robert thought it did harm to listen to him any more .. increased the fever. Among other things he said fervently .. “I love you like a brother— Do you know why I love you? Because you believe in the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Arabel, I should like you to know Mr. Page. He is a noble Christian man.

By the way .. I laugh to myself to think how horrified you will be .. Penini has been going through a mild course of Swedenborgianism. We were at a loss for a reading book for him .. couldn’t get such a thing at any booksellers .. & Mr. Sartoris’s children’s books are too old. At last Mr. Thom[pson] (the artist’s wife) came to the rescue, .. with a storybook “for the use of the young children of the New Church” .. which upon examining I approved of entirely, & Penini has just finished two volumes of it—also a Swedenborgian magazine for children .. much less good—though some of the papers in it, particularly one called ‘Willie’s Dream’ enchanted Penini .. so I selected parts, which were read to him over & over to his great joy. As he says, he “likes to hear about God & the angels.” Did I ever tell you that Penini dictates what he calls poems? He chants them, never stopping for a word— Here’s a theological composition, produced the other day. I put it down word for word. (“The earth has God to love me if I am good. But if I want to sit without God He cant help us, for else He dies for nothing on his cross with His goodness for me.
If I don't be good God comes on His cross again. And when we don't like to sit, then He doesn't make us sit. If my eye was opened, then I could see God very well—but still, we can't see Him with our outside on.”—Don't put your finger on any flaw in the theology, or cry out that he is too strong on free will. It's Penini's own—that's all I can say. Here's a specimen of his profane literature. ("One day a boy went out without a gun, and he went in a garden where there was some lions & tigers & serpents & swans & ducks & all other kinds of colours of beasts. Then this boy went near the swans & ducks, & looked at them, & stooped down & took one in his hand and carried it at the gate; but when he saw the man, the man said, "Where you caught that goose?"") The boy said, "I caught it out of that bath."—"Give it to me out of your hand, because I don't allow for you to take it. Tell me if you have some pauls. Twenty pauls you must give me, and then I shall give you the goose." And then the boy gave the man two scudi, & the man gave the boy the goose. And then he went out of the gate & brought it at the door. And when the man came & opened the door the servant said, "Where you caught that goose?" And he said "I

sheets—You don't say a word of Mr. Hunter. Has he settled? & where?—May God bless you my beloved Arabel—My love is with you all—Write to me, Arabel—and tell me of Henrietta—for if she goes off to Ireland... That, one can't stop to think of. It would be past enduring.

Your own own Ba—

Robert's best love.

Address: Angleterre— / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. A report in The Times for 9 May 1854 confirmed that "... on the night the 24th ult., off Antibes, in the steamer Ercolano, Charlotte Owen, aged 26, wife of Edward Lewis Knight, Esq., late of H.M.'s 20th Regiment; also their two children, Edward John Allanson, aged two years and two months, and Robert Wynn, aged nine months." 39 passengers and nine seamen died in the accident, and all but one woman on board was lost; Edward Knight and Sir Robert Peel were among the survivors (The Times, 2 and 4 May 1854).
3. A tax on persons keeping men servants had first been introduced in 1777. In 1853, Gladstone abolished the earlier scale, and revised the rate to "a guinea for every servant of the age of eighteen or more" (Stephen Dowell, A History of Taxation and Taxes in England, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1884, III, 249). Dowell does not explain the exemption for foreign servants, or servants of English citizens not resident in the U.K.
4. "Grandfather."
5. Sic, for Don Alfonso Cirella; he is mentioned in a letter from RB to the Storys, 27 December 1854 (BAF, pp. 35-36); otherwise, I have been unable to identify him.
6. Hadrian's Villa "is situated on the plain at the base of the hill of Tivoli" (A Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy, London: John Murray, 1853, p. 251). Murray further states that "nothing in Italy can be compared to its imposing ruins: the stranger is amazed by their size and extent, which far surpass the ruins of the Palace of the Caesars" (p. 252). Tivoli, a hill town 19 miles east of Rome on the Tiber, overlooks the Roman Campagna and is famous for its Roman temples and villas. A slightly later edition of Murray's notes that "by leaving Rome early, in the season when these excursions are made with most enjoyment, April and May, the visitor will have plenty of time to see everything, and to get back before dark" (A Handbook of Rome and its Environs, London: John Murray, 1858, p. 328).
7. Jean-Jacques Ampère (1800–64), French historian, writer, and member of the Academy. He was the author of numerous books and articles on the history of literature and poetry, and he contributed many essays to the Revue des Deux Mondes. There are references to his visit to Rome in André-Marie Ampère et Jean-Jacques Ampère: Correspondance et Souvenirs (de 1805 a 1864), Recueillis par Madame H.C. (Paris: J. Hetzel et Cie., 1875), in which a picnic in the Campagna with Mrs. Sartoris and Fanny Kemble is recalled (II, 238).

8. Luca di Gozze is described in the Almanacco Romano for 1855 as the “Consigliere di Legazione.” In a letter to William Cornwallis Cartwright, dated 20 July [1854], Frederic Leighton wrote that he had had “a most charming winter, the centre of which for me has been Mrs. Sartoris; oh the success of the evenings, the cosy evenings when only the intimes were invited; Browning a most amusing fellow was a great standing dish, also Mr. Ampère a charming old french savant ... Mrs. Kemble of course always ... and Gozze” (ms at Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton).

9. The portrait of RB by William Page (see letter 105, note 10) sold as lot 57 in Browning Collections, and is now at ABL (see Reconstruction, G8).

10. See letter 83, note 11. Read’s portraits of EBB and RB were purchased by Ferdinand Julius Dreer of Philadelphia, who later gave them to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia where they are today (see Reconstruction, F18 and G5).

11. See note 29 in the preceding letter.

12. Unidentified; however, in a letter to George in July 1853, EBB had mentioned Pen imitating angels he had seen in “a picture in an American spirit-publication called the ‘New Era or Heaven opened’ ... [that] represented an angelical descent” (B-GB, p. 195).

13. At least two pages are missing. The balance of the letter is written on the inside flap of the envelope.

14. It was about this time that Hunter retired to Devonshire; see letter 8, note 12.

Letter 111

[Florence]
June 17–18– [1854]

My ever beloved Arabel you will not doubt that it gives me very deep pain to have to tell you that there’s an uncertainty about our being able to leave Italy this year. You will be expecting to get news from me at Paris, and I am forced to write this to you. The difficulty is simply the want of money— You may judge for yourself when I tell you that (apart from the ship-proceeds) we have just a hundred pounds to spend in six months and a half from this day— At the same time, Mr Kenyon certainly told us in his letter to Rome that there would be a larger dividend than usual from the ship— Robert wrote to him to ascertain what this would be, and he may have an answer today, though, from Mr Kenyon’s usual ways, I dont expect it for some days longer. It keeps me on the rack while we wait for this, to have you expecting us, dearest, darling—when Robert keeps saying that even fifty pounds of ship-money would not justify us in undertaking the journey & the attendant expenses of house-rent &c necessary both in London & Paris. If we had a hundred pounds from the ship, then we would dare all & go— See how it is— I think it better to write & state the whole case to you,—adding however that we shall certainly go to you if the turning up of the cards (still unturned) should render it at all possible. Both Robert & I have been hoping & hoping that we should get good news about the ship long ago, & then we should have set off at once— Observe, darling Arabel, that we seldom go to England till July—it is scarcely summer in
Letter 111

17 [-20] June [1854]

England till then—If we are able to go north at all therefore, we have made up our minds to go straight... even at the end of July... to you... taking Sarianna with us... which will be rather hard on her poor father. Still, as he would have us afterwards for the winter, we should not mind passing him with a day’s salutation on the road. Altogether, a week would bring us to you, considering the new railroads, and it is irrational to give up the hope, as matters stand, of being able to keep our first intentions. You may rely on Robert that he will do anything safe to do—Perhaps I should be inclined to rashness & dashiness, & trust to lyrical poems & the booksellers for making up defective balances. But when he says to me... “Can we travel & live for this & this?” I cant answer— I dont know how to resist the conclusion— The expenses of Rome were immense— It costs us almost a pound less a week here in living, & we have house-rent all but free. Yet here’s another chance— M’ Hanna is to return in a day or two or three after the absence of a fortnight. I understand that before he went he expressed a desire to take our apartment for a year, as he wanted large rooms to give his weekday readings in— Now if we get anything like an acceptable quantity of ship-money & if he takes our house, we shall be liberated to a great degree—Therefore dont let us despair my own beloved Arabel. I wont,—be certain! It is desireable in many ways that we should go, for Penini was so pulled down by that horrible Roman climate, had lost flesh so frightfully (to my apprehension) & looked so languid & changed on his arrival here, that D’ Harding (we did’nt call him in but he came to see us as the kind friend he is) strongly advised us to take the child to England for the summer in order to a complete change of air & coolness of temperature. A fortnight in Florence however has done so much—the little arms are so manifestly firmer & rounder & the cheeks redder, that it does’nt seem absolutely necessary now to take this step. If it were, we should have to beg our way to Switzerland or somewhere... I should take the applewoman’s stall at the corner of Wimpole Street, if need were— It was grievous to me to hear the Florentines exclaim... “Ma, come é cangiato questo bambino! come é pallido e secco!”... Thank God, he has revived like a nosegay put in water. I never saw, in a fortnight, such an extraordinary improvement—and we cant give him too much to eat or tire him with walking. The hot weather has set in for two or three days, and he says he’s “as hot as a piece of the sun”, but the languor does not return—it is a different climate altogether you see, from Rome. If we have to stay, we must go to the Baths of Lucca for two months as usual, and the Roman influences will be overcome, I dare say, without England... though England would decidedly be good for the child this summer, and one of my deep regrets (if we have to give it up) will be on his account—The rest will be for you, my own dearest— I long & yearn to see you—my heart is sad with longing for you. Then there is poor Sarianna, & her father! How they will feel, I tremble to think of— I sometimes think they will come to Florence, tired of waiting for us— They could live here cheaper—but if they came, it would not keep us from England, be very sure. Robert holds you as his own sister, & you are considered in all our plans.

Another thing which has saddened me much these last days is... dear Flush. He is gone, Arabel. He died quite quietly— I am sorry to say Penini found him, & screamed in anguish. There was no pain, nothing to regret in that way—and our grief for him is the less that his infirmities had become so great that he lost no joy in losing life. He was old you know—though dogs of his kind have lived much longer—and the climate acted unfavorably upon him. He had scarcely a
hair on his back—everyone thought it was the mange, and the smell made his presence in the
drawingroom a difficult thing. In spite of all however, it has been quite a shock to me & a sadness—
A dear dog he was

 comforts! It must be however a relief to escape Ireland. Give her my tender love & say how I
think of her—
Is'nt this a miserable letter? It must be—I have felt so miserable in having to write it.
Mr. Sartoris is at the Baths of Lucca & has written to beg us to stay with her which we shant
do,7 because, if we go there at all, it will be to our own house— Fanny Kemble is in England—
Penini wanted to know yesterday who my papa was— “Oh” said he recollecting himself, “I
sint I know. It's my nonno.”8 “No,” said I, “your nonno is'nt my real papa. My real papa lives in
the house with Arabel & Minny.” “Tell me his name. It's George, I sint.”

Arabel you never mention M: Hunter— Is he settled anywhere? and where is it? Don't forget
to tell me.

Miss Blagden has taken for the summer, a pretty villa about three quarters of a mile from
Florence,9 & since she has been here her knee & general health are much improved— She is
thinking of allowing herself to be persuaded to try mesmerism which has been satisfactorily
successful in such cases.

Penini was walking with me yesterday— I had gone to do some shopping with Wilson, leaving
Robert behind for the nonce— You know how he hates shopping. Penini ran on before Wilson &
me up Via Maggio, & when we came up we found him in contemplation before a picture of the
“last supper,” which an old picture-vendor had exposed in the street. “Mama,” said he, as we
came up, “how velly funny it is! Whenever gentle Jesus is at a table, it's always a long table.” A
profound theological & artistical observation— Oh, my Penini is looking so much better. I love
Florence for agreeing with him so. Really at one time I was quite unhappy about the child, &
woke in the night with a sense of oppression & anxiety! It was disastrous to see him fade away as
he did in the course of a few weeks. Oh Rome, Rome. Well—but the cheeks have now bloomed,
& Wilson never knew him with such an appetite. I am quite easy & satisfied now.

This letter! this horrible letter, to have to send you. I have kept it back a day for better news,
but none comes.

Mr. Gordon goes to England immediately with her family, & is to settle at Plymouth!!— A
strange choice after Florence. She says she must educate her boy (& in)troduce her girls, & the
Italians are objectionable.

You say nothing of dear Minny. God bless you, my beloved. How grieved to the heart I am
to have to write this letter—

Your own

Ba

Robert's best love. He will do every thing possible he bids me say.

Address, on integral page: Angleterre via France / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.
Letter 111

17 [-20] June [1854]

1. Year provided by postmark of 20 June 1854, on which date it was probably concluded.
2. Underscored twice.
3. There is no further mention of Hanna renting Casa Guidi, and the Brownings’ financial situation prevented them from leaving Florence until June 1855.
4. “But, how this baby has changed! how pale and thin he is!”
5. In November 1879, RB wrote to an unidentified correspondent that Flush had died of old age and was buried “in the vaults under Casa Guidi” (ms with Meredith).
6. At least two pages are missing.
7. Mrs. Sartoris wrote to EBB on 16 June 1854, asking her to “come here & summer” (ms at Yale).
8. “Grandfather.”
9. The Villa Moutier, near the Poggio Imperiale. In a letter to Mrs. Brotherton EBB had explained that when Isa arrived in Florence, she had “found no villa taken, her preparatory letter having never reached her correspondent- She therefore went to our house, after the trial of a day or two of the hotels” ([ca. 25 April 1854], ms at Texas). Isa remained at the Villa Moutier until 1856 when she relocated to the Villa Bricchieri at Bellosguardo.

Letter 112

Florence-
August 22– [1854]

As Penini said to me yesterday throwing his arms round me, “I love you wiz all my soul”. Darling Arabel, so I say to you. Indeed it is dreadful to write as seldom as we do, but you perfectly forget that the fault was yours—& that I was waiting for the letter you promised me. Meanwhile I wrote to dearest Henrietta who reproaches me in the most acrid way (tell her) for my silences. What can one do but be silent when one doubts about everything? when one considers oneself a rolling stone likely to roll to right or left? Then, writing to you is so much the same thing—she hears everything— And then, latterly, I didn’t know how to direct to her till you told me. Oh indeed, indeed, I am not guilty of forgetting anyone of you! I love you unchangeably to the roots of my heart— And particularly since your last letter came, my thoughts have been with you .. you are never out of my head, Arabel! —and you should have written to me before this letter I have just received. Now let me tell you first—I am very sorry that you did not go to M’n Davidson’s— It would have done you good in various ways whether you liked or disliked going, and I do wish that a little gentle authority (so often and without a reason) had been reasonably exercised in constraining you to go. As to your, so, preventing anybody’s leaving town, why George wd have gone with you, had you gone, & the others might have drifted off along currents not visible yet. As it is, there seems no prospect for any of you— You ought to have gone, indeed. Yet I dont wonder at the unwillingness—not in you, certainly— Oh yes— What would I give to have you here instead! Perhaps you would not care so much for the heat, after all. We generally keep the thermometer down to seventy six in this room by shutting the windows [(]till the sun is down) both glass & Venetian blinds— Open the window (the glass) and you are at above eighty directly. Still, heat in Italy is not to my senses half as oppressive as in London when it is hot. You dont gasp for breath here—you simply melt away .. like an icicle in the sun— Penini complains elegantly
of being "tutto bagnato" twenty times a day... but he is quite well, has grown fatter & is in
exhaustless spirits. On the whole it has, moreover, been a cool summer, for Florence.

My dearest Arabel, in profound confidence I will tell you what has complicated our pecuniary
vexations within these few months. Dear Mr. Kenyon forgot to pay the fifty pounds due to us
according to his generous arrangement, the beginning of last June. Robert drew for it on his
uncle as usual, (supposing it paid) & Mr. Reuben Browning had to pay it out of his own pocket
to our excessive annoyance. I suppose Mr. Kenyon will remember some day or other (as he
remembered after forgetting once before) but in the meanwhile he certainly cant ever think over
our names, or it w'd occur to him to enquire with some wonder what we can possibly be living
upon.!! All our money passes through his hands—therefore he knows our circumstances perfectly.5
People must live somehow upon pence—air wont do altogether—not even Florence air— I dare
say we are not miraculous economists,—but I am quite sure that not a single person with whom
we are in association, has an idea of the smallness of our actual income— We get on, & comfortably
enough, & without a touch of stinginess... and I do really open my eyes wide & wonder how it is
done—Everything is against us this summer you see—the ship, Mr. K's memory,—& even Chapman
& Hall who have the impertinence not to send in their account due last June in spite of two letters
from Robert.6 Ought'nt we to fall into a pet & kick against all these pricks?7 Not in the least.
Robert is wonderfully meek for him, & (with the exception of a few outtearings & outroarings
for a moment or two) is gay & happy, & upon the whole we have had a very pleasant summer. I
never am troubled by money-matters... that you may be sure of— I should have liked
liked to have gone to Lucca—but as Penini keeps well, Florence makes me happy enough— I am content— Miss
Blagden has been a resource to us this summer— She drives through Florence to the Cascine, &
catches us up on the road, gives us a sweep by the riverside & under the Cascine trees, & then
carries us back to a tea drinking at her pretty villa—from whence Robert & I walk home by
moonlight or starlight at worst, through that exquisite avenue of grand cypresses half a mile
long— (Penini shares in the drives—which is excellent for him—) Also, Mr. & Mrs.9 Kinney8 come to
take us out to drive on most evenings— "Those horrid Kinneys" says Isa Blagden! So that we are
wrestled for by these different friends—and the carriage exercise in the hot days is very pleasant
for me, to say nothing of the pleasantness of the society which comes in the carriage— Of the
Kinneys I have often told you, I think—the ex minister at the court of Turin— He is an admirable,
thoughtful, benevolent person, as liberal in politics as an American diplomat is bound to be &
much more religious— Also, he agrees with me textually about Louis Napoleon, with whom he
had an interview in Paris. Indeed Mr. Kinney and I we say to one another, agree upon most
subjects—excepting Swedenborg—but I have prevailed upon him to read & meditate, which is a
step gained. Mr.9 Kinney is a pretty woman, with torrents of ringlets, & dressed perfectly—clever,
literary, critical, poetical... just as you please... rather over-lovely & not over-refined... but a
favorite of mine through her truth & frankness, besides her warmheartedness towards ourselves.
We often spend the evening at teatime with them, & should oftener, but for the crowd at their
house of Americans who are "very tolerable & not to be endured."9 Then there's Mr. Tennyson,
Mr. Norton10 & others— By the way Mr. Norton precipitates himself upon us, body & soul,
makes extraordinary confidences which are amusing enough. He is a R Catholic convert, you may remember hearing, & very fond he is of the subject, but gentle & liberal in controversy—Robert & he have a tug of war about religious dogmas, but it always ends well. For my part I forgive him his dogmas for the sake of that earnestness of religious faith & feeling which in these days it is difficult to find among thinking men. Henrietta says Penini wont love Altham because of ‘Puseyism’. Tell her with my dear love .. I cant wait till I write to her to say that, . . it wont certainly be my fault if Penini should be sectarian to such a frightful degree. Why, I keep out of his sight as much as possible the bickerings of Christians and many people (dear Henrietta chiefest among them I dare say) would shake their heads to see how, in this catholic country, I let my child go into the churches without the slightest misgiving on my own part lest he should grow up “a Papist.” Popery is’nt caught like cholera—and I like him to “walk together as far as we are agreed” according to the apostolic phrase, even with his baby feet. You see in the catholic churches people go in & out,—there’s no long service to constrain anybody except such as choose to stay—and it’s Penini’s delight to go in at Vespers when there is the best music, & untie his hat & take it off, & kneel on his knees & say his prayers—“I do love it,” says he—“But what prayers do you say?” I asked him lately. “Oh, the same sort of prayers I say at night— About Papa & Mama.” He likes what he calls the “prayer-music,” & he has the sentiment of devotional sympathy which is the intention of all public worship. If I took him to the service of the ch. of England, or even to M! Hanna’s shorter service, he would understand none of the teaching, & would fall from the sentiment by the necessary fatigue. I would’nt for the whole world tire him by the forms of religion— I am too anxious to make the spirit of it precious to him. When he was a baby you remember how he used to cross himself & use the holy water— Now he has given up all that as a childish thing. He only hears the music & says his prayers ... “about papa & mama” ... little darling!— On the other hand, from Ferdinando’s inspirations I imagine ... for certainly it is not from mine ... he has a great distaste for the “priests” whom he classes with the Austrians as being something very bad indeed—“I leally must say, dear Mama, I dont lite the priests, not a bit—” He really must say....!

From what Henrietta tells me Altham is certainly a remarkable child for intelligence & memory ... but to be sincere, I would rather see those qualities developped & exercised otherwise than in the way she describes. I hold it to be absolutely impossible for a child of his age to attach any meaning to the services in which he joins verbally! Penini who is older by nearly two years, could not—that, I know. And Penini is a clever child there’s no disputing. Perhaps you would complain, Arabel, of his not being instructed enough in theology— He does not know very much beyond that “gentle Jesus” is God and makes him good & saves him and died for him. Yes, he likes to hear the story of “Madam and Eve” & calls for it at intervals. But the word “Hell” for instance, he never heard in his life. The nearest thing to it came the other day ... when he was expounding a theory of his ... that if ever he was “velly untappy” he should kill himself & go to God. Which I told him would displease God extremely, & that probably God would not have him in Heaven if he did such a naughty thing—. Naughty people were no nearer God in the spiritual world than in this world. He opened his eyes at that. Penini talks familiarly of the spiritual world—
Letter 112

22 August [1854]

he perfectly comprehends the difference between the ‘internal’ & ‘external’— I believe young children have a clearer instinct of this than persons have who have lived longer on the earth. He said to Robert the other day .. “I do wish I could see an angel—but never I can. I sint, only rich people see angels.” “What do you mean by that?” asked Robert—“rich people?” “I mean velly happy people.” It was so pretty one day last week. Wilson & I were having the “involuntary writing.” Penini getting quite tired of not being the first object (that’s Penini’s fault, Arabel—he must be talked to & played with or he thinks himself ill used) climbed on the table & sate down & shook back his curls—“Dear little spillet, will you write somesing for Penini? Do please Penini and write Napoleon.” On which the pencil moved & ‘Napoleon’ was actually written. “Sant you, dear little spillet! If you’re a dood beautiful angel, I love you velly much. I’ll fan you”—(catching up the fan & fanning upwards) “Is’n’t that a ‘lightful air?” (Then turning to me—) “But I sint its only us that’s too hot. Those spillets are tuite tool and tumfoil”—quite cool & comfortable. I really could not interrupt him. The whole attitude, & manner & gesticulation were perfectly beautiful—spirits or no spirits, he is the sweetest child that ever was in the world. The grace of the child is something quite peculiar—grace is his characteristic. The simplicity of faith in the unseen is also a very touching thing— I dont believe he would think a “vision” in the least a startling occurrence. You talk of his being kept from “excitement”— Why there’s more excitement to him in a dish of ripe figs than in all the involuntary writing that ever was written—he considers all such things the commonest of commonplaces, does Penini. Yet we have not done much with the writing lately— Nothing very satisfactory comes—only the facts are there irrefragably. The other morning Ferdinando was not well, & foolishly he said something about the cholera at breakfast which frightened Penini. The child, who adores Ferdinando, said to Wilson—“Oh, dear Lily, I must go back to my room and say my prayers another time” .. and off he ran. His first thought in any distress or fear is of God’s power & presence. Happily the “premonitory symptoms” disappeared. There is no cholera in Florence, & the one or two or three cases which at intervals have been reported are of persons who have come here with the seeds in them of the malady. It is singular—but the air of Florence seems to be repugnant to cholera.12 I think of you all much in these times, and I do trust you are careful all of you in diet & the rest— You, Arabel—you dont expose yourself in all sorts of pestilential places I do hope & trust. You love me enough for that, my beloved!— It is indeed dreadful—that poor Julia’s bereavement—13 Something still more tragical has happened at Turin. Have you heard us talk of Madame de Viry14 (Mr® Procter’s half sister) who lost her husband after three days illness from pleurisy (treated homœopathically, Arabel) some years ago. She was left then with two young children. The Count de Revel,15 .. he is a friend of Robert’s & called on us in Paris .. & was the Sardinian minister in London & Vienna .. had been attached to her for some fifteen years it is said— There was some obstacle about the children’s portions, & they could not marry—when at last the obstacle was overcome & the marriage took place— Four days after he was dead of cholera .. and desease & marriage appeared together in the Italian newspapers. How horrible!— What we may be called on to endure in this world! Still even this might have been worse. Before marriage w¹ have been worse than after, to my mind, for instance.
While I write Chapman & Hall’s account comes. Up to the early part of June. Taking one thing with another—there’s not much for us. My last edition has paid its expenses within six months, except by nine pounds . . and by this time more than paid of course. Casa Guidi is not out yet by about a hundred copies I think—very slow. Robert’s books keep much the same proportion. The publishers must really exert themselves more with our new volumes—and in the meanwhile, is’nt it a shame that nobody thinks of us, with these pensions falling into the hands of the government? We have a double claim, & this should be considered. Only, while they forget Carlyle, it’s a distinction not to be remembered.

Let me remember to tell you .. what do you think .. that Penini’s hair has been cut– Dont exclaim– The fact was that the ends were beginning to split– I attribute every evil to Rome & make Isa laugh—but the child’s health was shaken in Rome—that’s undeniable—and the consequence was that his teeth loosened, & his hair split– “It’s much too early” said Dr. Harding “for his teeth to fall” . . there are two glittering little teeth at the bottom in the place of the other two .. but it’s too early. The hair remained beautiful, only there was the splitting at the ends, which made cutting necessary. So, an accomplished French hairdresser being here in Casa Guidi to meet Isa Blagden & cut her hair, I trusted Penini’s head to him & he cut it throughout with a proper respect for the ringlets, just as he would cut a woman’s hair—only just the ends, you know. Such admiration, by the way, he gave to the hair—“mais c’est extremement rare de voir des cheveux comme ça! des cheveux magnifiques, en vérité.” You would not imagine the hair was cut, from its appearance—it seems as long & full of curl as ever. I took the opportunity besides, of having my own hair cut, which it has not been since I left London— Tell Henrietta in answer to her question, that in spite of fashions (which are pretty enough) I persist in wearing my hair in my old way, being obstinate in such things– Then Robert lets me. Observe. I send you M! Lytton’s poem on him18 that you may know how others besides Ba, may fall in love with him. I admit that the comparison to the apostle Paul is un peu fort.19 If you have an opportunity I should like you to show the verses to M! Kenyon.

Dearest, darling Arabel, do write to me soon. I yearn to hear from you. Speak of yourself, your health especially, & tell me of Papa– Love to everybody & dearest Trippy inclusive– George disappointed me horribly. God bless you my beloved–

Your own Ba–

Penini reads very nicely & with great animation– He shall write you a letter & draw you a drawing, but not today because there’s no room. Love to dear Minny.

Address: Angleterre via France. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London-
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.
To Robert Browning.

By Robert Lytton
Florence 1854

1
O noble heart! noble mind! live
Our leader and King of us all!
Take the love which we languish to give!
Give the love without which we must fall!

2
You .. brave shoulders of Atlas just strong enough
To bear up a world much in want of it!
You .. the wise heart that’s probed our life long enough
To pardon the nonsense and cant of it!

3
An eye that looks straight on to God,
And a tongue that can baffle the Devil:
A wit that walks forth silver-shod,
And sets a fair front against evil.

4
When you speak .. as you speak .. I think Paul
At Athens, posterity teaching,
Said such words, thought such thoughts, just let fall
Such grand language as yours in his teaching.

5
Yet bear with us! Think for us! speak for us!
There is none we can honor above you.
When you think, our own thoughts are too weak for us—
When you speak, we are silent and love you!

6
You are strong: we are weak; and the jostle
Of life seems to bruise us too much:
But you, O beloved, O apostle,
Leave healing behind in your touch.

7
Light and warmth! every look of you piling
Its own magnificent gladness!
But he that would probe your wise smiling
Must have probed all the sources of sadness.

8
For the depth below depth of your being
Unfathomed the soul of you sleeps:
And your great smile is still, to all seeing,
A rainbow that arches the deeps.

9
All that strength, all that power! yet so pliant!
You’re so great we could never come near you,
Were it not that the child with the giant
Is mixt, .. and we honor, not fear you.

10
Oh, but for old times, for one moment!
How we’d hymn you, & crown you, & bring you
Through the Forum with praising and comment,
Stepping proud o’er the flowers we’d fling you!

11
We’d die for you gladly, if need were,—
And gladly we’d live while we might, for you!
We’d follow wherever your lead were,
Believe in you, hope for you, fight for you.

12
These are words, now! and yet .. oh, yet live
Our leader and King of us all!
Take the love which is all we can give!
Take large meanings for deeds that are small!
Letter 112

22 August [1854]

1. Year provided by postmark.

2. EBB’s letter to Henrietta, dated 29 July [1854], begins: “you will have given me up by this time, I dare say, for a good for nothing Ba not worth a thought more” (Huxley, p. 204).

3. Presumably Mrs. Davidson of Ridley Hall, Northumberland, a friend of EBB’s aunt, Arabella Graham-Clarke (see BC, 13, 132).

4. “Soaked.”

5. Kenyon’s assistance with the Brownings’ financial arrangements dates from the early months of their marriage when she asked him to settle some debts she had left outstanding; see letter 6.

6. RB wrote to Chapman on 1 July 1854: “And now since the proper time comes about, will you be so good as to give us the half year’s account” (NL, p. 78). And again on 5 August, RB wrote: “Will you have the goodness therefore to send the account at once, as it particularly interests us” (p. 80).

7. Cf. Acts 9:5: “And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.”

8. Although the Kinneys had thought of going to Rome, they had recently settled in Florence at the Casa del Bello. There seems to have been little affection between the Kinneys and Isa Blagden, the Brownings’ closest Florentine friend. In her Reminiscences, Mrs. Kinney notes that Isa’s “admiration for the Brownings amounted to infatuation, & her ambition to be one with them, seemed to swallow up even her individual literary ambition ... They ever suffered her presence, even as they did Lytton’s, though in her case there was personal love as a motive” (“Personal Reminiscences of Elizabeth C. Kinney,” part 14, ss at Columbia).

9. Cf. Much Ado About Nothing, III, 3, 35–36: “For the watch to babble and to talk, is most tolerable, and not to be endur’d.”

10. Thomas Brinsley Norton (1831–77), afterwards (1875) 4th Baron Grantley, was the son of the celebrated poetess Caroline Norton (née Sheridan) and of George Norton, younger brother of the 2nd Baron Grantley. His Pinocchi, an anonymous volume of verse, was published in 1856.

11. Cf. Amos 3:3: “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

12. In a letter to Henrietta in September 1849, EBB had explained that “Florence was altogether free from it, last cholera-time, and may escape again” (Huxley, p. 112). See also EBB’s comment in the following letter that there had been no cholera in Florence.

13. A reference to the death of Daniel Baron de Salis Soglio on 6 August 1854; he was the husband of their cousin Julia Bayford (see letter 78, note 32).

14. Mrs. Procter’s younger half-sister, Emily Montagu, had married William Augustus Victor Joseph, Chevalier de Viry, Equerry to the King of Sardinia, in October 1840. De Viry died in March 1846, as Procter reported to RB, and which RB passed on to EBB; see BC, 12, 145–146.

15. He is listed in RB’s address book as “Cte. Thaon de Revil (Chargé d’Aff. Sardinia), 26 Mount St.” A notice of his death appeared in The Gentleman’s Magazine in September 1854: “July 31. At Turin, Count Adrien de Revel, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of H.M. the King of Sardinia at Vienna, and formerly at the British Court, five days after his marriage at Genoa, to Emily de Viry, widow of the Chevalier William de Viry, daughter of the late Basil Montagu, esq. Q.C.” (p. 317).

16. A report in The Times of 28 July 1854 noted that some 1,200 pensions were given on a yearly basis and listed fifteen, including those awarded to Bible translators, agricultural writers, and authors of natural history. Although the widow of Ettrick Shepherd was £50 per year “in consideration of her husband’s poetical talent.”

17. “But it is extremely rare to see hair like that!—truly magnificent hair!”

18. Enclosed in this letter is a copy in EBB’s hand of Lytton’s poem “To Robert Browning” (see below). The original manuscript is undated (see Reconstruction, L164). The lines were first published in The Cornhill Magazine, 36 (May 1914), 577–579, where they are entitled “To Robert Lytton” and attributed to EBB. The source was a copy in EBB’s hand which she sent to Sarianna, now with Meredith (see Reconstruction, D1462.1). This confusion was the subject of an article by Aurelia Brooks Harlan, “Not by Elizabeth Barrett Browning,” in PMLA, June 1942, 582–585. There is also a copy of Lytton’s lines in Arabella’s hand at the Berg.

My ever beloved Arabel I have been living on the hope of having a letter from you today— I had hoped for it before—and it does’nt come even today. Dearest Arabel, do you not fancy how anxious I must be to have letters from you at this time? Certainly your accounts were cheering & hopeful, but the fact of such news coming at all, were a great shock to me—and then, at such a distance, at such a distance! Dearest, I beseech you to write. Oh—if I have to wait till you answer that prayer of mine! Perhaps tomorrow a letter may come. Perhaps— Do you know, Arabel, by the return of the post which brought me your information about the accident, I wrote to Papa— just a few words—not to ask for any sign in return .. simply to say that I had heard—& how I felt. I would not write to you at the time lest you should feel nervous & be embarrassed in your answers in the case of questions being asked. My letter was enclosed to London, & put into the London post office—and I made Penini write the direction, to give it a chance of being opened— Penini was inspired for the occasion I do believe, taking the greatest pains & writing so beautifully that Robert fancied I had written the “Esquire” myself. The truth is, the child was immensely flattered by my asking him to direct my letter. “Oh”—said he—“you ta’nt do it yourself— Oh,” said he.

Married today eight years. How happy I should be if I had had a good letter from you, darling. Penini said to me for his last words last night—“Dood night! Try not to sint too much about being mallied.” “Why,” I asked— “Because then you wont have such pleasure from the pretty things—” He meant I should’nt be so surprised by the drawings he brought as presents in the morning .. & by the fresh flowers which he & Wilson & Ferdinando arranged in the vases. Then Robert had a gift for me .. after the precious love undim through all these years .. a beautiful malachite broach: he knew that I admired malachite— It is mystically marked, & of as deep a green as the Elysian ghosts walk in when the poets guide them. But the words he gave it with were more costly. We bought for Wilson a foulard silk, very pretty. By the way she is reluctant to go out of mourning lest she should find her sisters still in black next summer— But surely this is’nt likely to be the case— Here on the continent any mourning that exceeds the year is considered most peculiar, and I had understood that it was much the same now in England.

Dearest Arabel, how good God was to us that that sad accident did not happen worse still. It thrills me to the bones to think of it— Then again I think that out of this evil, good may come .. must come, since the evil was permitted— It may bring him closer to his children (I dont mean Henrietta & me) & make him more cognizant of their attachment & tenderness.

Sept. 13. It was a very pleasant day yesterday— You cant think what a darling that Penini was all day— I was kissed nearly to extinction— “I do love you so much— I like your birsday more than my own birsday. How old are you today?” “Eight,” said I. A venerable age he seemed to think that— Still he had a sort of idea about the true meaning of the day— “You have been married before,” he enquired. Also he said to Wilson in the course of the morning, “Dear Lily when is your wedding day.” He dined with us & had tea with us, and we had knead cakes & crumpets—but Penini read & wrote just as usual .. his usual half hour .. because it’s our way to do that ..
Letter 113
[12-] 13 September [1854] 644

even on Sundays. He is none the happier for missing his one half hour of application. Only he
couldn’t read for kissing me—he “loved me the two worlds full,” he said. Wilson maintains
there never was such a child for love as Penini. Whenever anything goes wrong he shows his
naughtiness by reproaching people for not loving him—“Nobody loves me—You dont love me,
ot a bit. Sometimes YOU are a little naughty, yes, and I love you still. But you dont love me .. oh
no.” Then there’s a scene, & a quantity of embraces & kissings to make it all up. He has written
you a letter today, Arabel, entirely his own, understand, composition & all but the spelling,—
& it was begun & finished this morning instead of his usual writing lesson, so that the dear little
fingers were weary & began to stagger in the middle. He had ruled under the paper of
course—but he wont let me rule the paper with a pencil—he considers it infra dig: altogether.
Certainly I consider his writing extraordinary for his age. People can scarcely believe it to be
genuine when they look at it. “Such an infant as that!” Indeed I hear he is celebrated in the critic
newspaper for “beauty & genius” —so Miss Sandford tells me. Robert is a little disturbed because
Henry is’nt mentioned in the letter—but I would’nt interfere with a word to make it less his own
in any way. George was immortalized by the famous pump which is still a favorite toy—&
generally he speaks of “my uncles & my George,” as if the latter was something especial in
relationship.

Dearest Arabel you will be glad to hear that Mr Kenyon remembered, with kind expressions
of regret for the forgetfulness, & a command that we should remind him in future. Also, the
David Lyon has come in, & will give an immense dividend .. it is supposed as much as £175,
when accounts are made out .. so that there will be every facility for England next summer. We
have not had such a dividend since the year after our marriage—but I suppose it wont be paid for
months, which will be less convenient. Still I ought not to complain of ‘inconvenience’ when we
expected nothing at all till next summer. We have been straightened altogether this year, & I was
 vexed at being disabled from Lucca (for Penini’s sake) but as the child is well there’s little to
regret now, & really it has been a very agreeable summer in many ways. Yes, London is always
more oppressive than Florence when London is at the hottest. Only, with you, there’s hope (which
makes a difference) hope of a wind, hope of a rain, hope of a change. With us, we are “in for it,”
& look forward to a perpetuity of perspiration—“con rispetto,” be it said. Now it is cool enough
for shawls in the evening, & even for a blanket at night with certain person’s, .. though of course
the sun remains burning in the middle of the day. Divine weather it is & has been—& no cholera
in Florence. I am anxious about the cholera in London— Ah Arabel! if I dont get a letter today!—

Dearest, we send directions to Chapman & Hall to let you have an accumulation of books &
letters which lie at his house for us. Tell us the names of the books— & open the letters & give us
some brief account of their insides.

I must throw a light on Penini’s letter. He saw a dinner-set in the bazaar here, which he
described as a “beau— ... tiful dinner-set, wiz silver plates in cotton-wool.” “Will papa buy it for
me?” Said papa cruelly, it was too expensive for anybody who did’nt understand Greek. Penini
threw himself into an oratorical attitude—“Here’s my sumb! (thumb!) Look—it has a gift on it! I
sint the evil spilletts have been looking round the world for someing pretty for Penini, and then
they found that beau .. tiful dinner set, and then they put this gift on my sumb to show my papa
he must give it to me!” “Well”—said Robert—“I’m glad you admit they are evil spirits... you, at least!” “Oh no, no, no! I not meant evil spillets”—(it was a slip of the child’s tongue.) “I mean spillets! I mean dood, beau... tiful angels!” We were all in fits of laughter, and the American sculptress, Hatty Hosmer, who was present, had the great goodnature to buy this “beau... tiful dinner set” & send it to him anonymously directly afterwards. She observed he was the most original child she ever saw—and really I cant give you a notion of his manner & the tones of his voice in conducting this argument of his which turned out so successful.

While I write Robert brings me in... no letter from you but one from dearest George. Give him my love & tell him I am very thankful to him for writing. For this half hour I have been groaning & moaning over his letter, though— “Permanent lameness”—“one leg shorter than another”—but how can a simple fracture produce such consequences? how can they know at any rate, till he walks? I should be more distressed than I am if I fairly believed in any such thing. Write to me, Arabel, & tell me more particulars. Unless there’s contraction... what can be the meaning of this probability? “It is probable,” says George. How, probable? Oh—grievous the very idea of such a thing is—my poor dearest dearest papa! It would interfere so with his comfort & activity—it would be horrible. Mind you write, Arabel. You might have put in another sheet to George’s letter which was too brief... the only fault of it. I entreat you all to take care, to take every precaution against cholera, and to allow no “admonitory symptom” to escape you, without immediate remedy. As for ourselves we shall not leave Florence this year I think. The “fifty pounds” in question were just necessary... and it will be hard to get on with our bread & butter until the arrival of the ship-money, without eating it on the Appenines. Then Lucca is cold, not cool, now...& Florence is grown cool enough for comfort. As to Penini he’s in a flourishing state—he wants no change—I am easy about him. Now, in the matter of Routledge—Tell George with Robert’s love that he approves & I approve much of his idea about the ballads. If George will have the goodness to carry out what he had the goodness to propose doing,—let him go to Routledge & ascertain what he will give me for such an edition of my ballads in a popular shape, I furnishing a few new ballads to complete the collection?—I have a few, one or two written this summer & by no means my worst I think. I do not doubt that a little book of the kind at a cheap rate, would sell well, & would not interfere with the general sale of my works—but I must know what Routledge would give me & then I will consider. Of course it would'nt do to ‘be ungenerous[’] to Chapman & Hall. We must not be too rash about it—we must consider a little.

Isa Blagden’s knee is not much better,... though her general health is,... & I hope it is a mere nervous fancy of hers that all her bones are softening. There’s no swelling of the knee, understand—but the kneecap does’nt adhere, & the bones yield. Poor thing—she has to be carried upstairs whenever she comes to us. Her warm heart & active mind keep her alive & gay, & she thinks as much of other people as if she had no reason for thinking sadly of herself. Really I respect & love dear Isa. She means to spend this winter in Florence & to go north when we do—M! & M’s Irving are also here. Hatty Hosmer, the sculptor, our great pet, Robert’s & mine, is passing the summer in Isa’s villa. M! Norton “has presented the world with a baby” as Robert is fond of saying—It’s generally said of the lady—but poor M! Norton goes for nothing, you know. I went to see her the other day & the baby, and she looked very good & innocent with that sweet tender smile of her’s,
& for the first time I thought her pretty. The poetess sent for her son when the confinement had taken place ten days—“He w’d be better away—his wife had her baby to amuse her.” There was a Nortonian sentiment! I said to poor “Marie” that I would’n’t suffer my husband to go if I were she. What could she do, she exclaimed .. the “signora madre” would be so “arrabiatd’ Sure, however, he has not been well, & this has deferred the departure. She speaks horrible Italian, every word clipt off in the middle. The baby is a nice little thing.

Penini has a pair of rabbits which he keeps on the terrace before his window. Ferdinando (who conspired with him to get them) cleans the place every morning that there may be no smell, but Wilson is a good deal scandalized at Penini’s speculations on the subject. There’s a “man rabbit,” you are to understand, & a “woman-rabbit”—and the “man-rabbit’s” as bold as brass, while the “woman-rabbit keeps in her hole & is quite shocked’ to eat cabbages in public—and Ferdinando has made a house for her where she is “to make her little babies.”

Do you hear ever of Mr® Jago? Because I never do. Tell me what you know. Tell me something about dearest Trippy whom you dont mention this time, & give her my very best love— And yourself Arabel. I ask you again & again to speak of yourself— Now, I do beseech you to speak of yourself. I want to hear exactly how you are—do, dearest, if I am dear to you at all. I adjure you by that word. Was any sign given in respect to my letter? did anybody guess that it came? I mean, the letter to Papa— Henrietta in barracks— Ah, but that must surely be uncomfortable. I am going to write to dearest Henrietta—tell her so— May God bless you & keep you. Let me tell you one thing—“The Spirits” said to me about the time of the accident .. “Your poor father is very ill—in bed.” I was so frightened I ran away (like me!) & would’n’t see any writing for days afterwards. Then, the subject was not taken up again. It might have been a coincidence, but was very curious. Seldom is anything painful ever said, & so I was the more startled.

Address: Angleterre via France. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.
Enclosure:
Casa Guidi. Sept; 1854. / Dearest Arabel, / I send this note because I think it will please you. How is George, & my uncles, & Minny? I hope you are all quite well. I want you to tell George the handle of the pump is broke, but now I have had it mended. / One day, there came a gift on my thumb, & the next day afternoon, a ring at the bell came. I was pumping. And then I saw a large box! I ran & took it in my arms, and took it in the drawing room. I opened it,—& there was a dinner set,—& then a thing to make butter with, & a thing to hold water! And one morning, I made some butter, & I ate it for my tea, & it was very nice. / Goodbye my affectionate friends, Arabel & George. / Penini. / Love to dear Trippy. / [Address:] Miss Barrett— / Wimpole Street.

1. Year provided by postmark, date provided by EBB’s reference to the wedding anniversary and by the subsequent date in the text.
2. EBB’s father had been hit by a cab and suffered a broken leg as a result.
3. The text of Pen’s letter appears at the end of this letter.
4. The Italian correspondent writing from “Florence, June 30, 1854” in The Critic of 1 August 1854, described seeing “Mr. and Mrs. Browning … at home in that Casa Guidi which has become classic in English poetry—an old mansion in one of the quietly respectable and most pleasant streets on the less populous side of the Arno, which bears an aspect of ancestral dignity in its spacious apartments, lofty portals, and wide staircase. Here, in a tapestried drawing-room, several objects of antique art have been collected with taste by Mr. Browning; and
here was born the beautiful and singularly intelligent little boy who promises to prove worthy of his parents, perhaps the inheritor of their genius” (pp. 422-423).

5. “With respect.”

6. i.e., the publishing firm of Routledge (George) & Co. See her remarks in the following two letters, especially letter 115: “all that ever I contemplated was republishing a few of the old ballads, together with a few new ones which I have by me”; however, there is no further evidence that this project was concluded.

7. Isa Blagden had dislocated her knee, which EBB had explained to in a letter to Henrietta (see letter 109, note 16).

8. Carlotta Chiara Maria was born on 21 August 1854; she died in 1931. Thomas Brinsley Norton (see note 11 in the preceding letter) had married Maria Chiara Elisa Frederigo (d. 1892) on 1 August 1854 in the English Church in Florence. The marriage was witnessed by Frederick Tennyson, according to the Archives of the Inter-Continental Church Society, London. However, based upon EBB’s comment in a letter to Henrietta in July 1854, Norton must have married Maria Frederigo earlier in Capri, perhaps in a Roman Catholic ceremony. In July 1854, EBB had written to Henrietta: “I forget whether I ever told Arabel anything about Mr. Norton. He is the younger son of the poetess, & not one & twenty yet. About a year ago at Naples he married a Capri peasant girl of his own age, to the consternation of his whole family,— & they are residing in Florence now & in daily expectation of her confinement” (Transcript in editor’s file).

9. “… the ‘lady mother’ would be so ‘angry’!!”

Letter 114

Florence.
October 21– [1854]

My ever dearest Arabel I seem to have paused too long in writing to you. Then there’s a letter to Henrietta to write. I must write to her in a few days. Will it find her out, I wonder, if addressed to the post office at Plymouth? I will run the chance at least, for I dread her setting me down as unkind & forgetting. If it had not been for the sad affair at Wimpole Street I should have given her one or two of these last letters, but I must write directly to you under the circumstances. Dearest Arabel, I cant help with all that you say, being down-hearted about the lameness. I can not help a misgiving as to the ability of the surgical treatment if such are really to be the results. I hear of people having their legs broken in two or three places &, at all ages, & being free of lameness afterwards— There was Miss Fitton for instance at Paris, & she must be older than Papa, who was laid up for months with a frightful fracture, & now is not in the slightest degree lame. Well. I vex you & perturb you & grumble you into sadness by all this. What is, is for the best, of course. Is poor Papa himself depressed by the fact, or quite aware of it? You are wrong in quoting Miss Blagden’s as a worse case. I am happy to tell you that she is getting rapidly better. She was going on ill— Both legs were a good deal out of their place— & walking twice across the floor was beginning to exhaust her. She said nothing could help her—it was plain the bones were softening & the general health failing . . she would go to England & see what the English surgeons could do for her, as a matter of duty, & then come back & settle herself in Florence for the remainder of her life. Well— I interfered, at that. I am far from having an English faith in English surgeons exclusively. And I entreated her (having reasoned with her in vain) for my love’s sake to call in Zanetti² who is a celebrated man here, & has indeed a European reputation. She said, “I
will do it for you ... but I know what the result will be.” Zanetti came, pronounced the whole evil to be a relaxation of the muscular system, brought to a crisis by the accident to the knee, & suggested remedies which in a week produced the most marvellous results, & restored the patient to hope & cheerfulness. In a fortnight she walked up stairs to see me ... when you may suppose how I scolded. The lower part of the back is rubbed with phosphorous, & there's a cold bath with an infusion of iron ... something of that kind—and the curious thing is that the bones themselves are straining back into their places. Her English physician in Rome had completely mistaken everything—You never saw any person so wonderfully revived as she is. You see it would have been bad for her if she had had to go to England in the winter when she is apt to suffer from the climate; & who knows whether the surgeons there would have been successful after all? Their directions by letter, were failures. Anyhow it is better to be cured at once—isn't it? I am sure you will be glad. She was cheerfully in despair ... if you know what that is. Convinced all was over, & resigned about it. Zanetti is very clever & an excellent man otherwise, lavishing his powers among the poor in a most disinterested way.

Dearest dear Arabel, that is what you have been doing by me, exactly. With admiration & gratitude Robert & I went through your excellent abstracts of our correspondence. I should have been still more grateful if it had not encroached on your letter to me— I missed you, dearest, out of your own letter. The divine young ladies inheritors of the manly virtue of the paternal & patriarchal dentist, have never appeared—but most curiously Robert has seen their portraits—where do you think? On the table of an American dentist who is not yet patriarchal but deserves to be so, & who is practising at Rome & who practised here en route to Rome. He is cousin to those Graces, & brought them in on the ground of “admiring readers” &c. Names being asked, the identity became evident. Dentist himself deserves recognition—I mean the unpatriarchal dentist. He examined Wilson's teeth, & Penini's,—gave Robert four sittings of more than an hour each ... (what he could have been doing I cant tell you—stopping teeth, I believe, & drawing one)—gave me a sitting of half an hour, in which he cleaned mine & he drew five!! Open your eyes, Arabel. I had a headache for a week from it after,—& resisted a little at first seeing that they were roots very far back in the head which caused me no sort of inconvenience ... but he represented so forcibly the advantage & glory ... in relation to the gums & things in general ... of having no imperfect tooth at all, that I was heroic as usual & submitted. Well, for all this work in the family, this angel of a dentist (who by the way is very extravagant in his charges—as high as in England) would take no other pay than about two pounds or guineas English. Indeed, he scrupled at receiving anything, from us! he "did'nt like it"!! That's fame, Arabel,! To have all one's teeth pulled out for nothing! I was considerably affected by it, I assure you, I for one.

You are to understand, besides, that the American dentists are sovereign in their art by the consent of all nations, & that this dentist is very able indeed. He did nothing to Penini's teeth, I should tell you. He said, as everybody does, that the loss of the two under ones (in whose places two new ones are coming) was premature by at least a year & a half, but he did not think it of consequence—"the child might be forward generally."

Which he is, you know—only infantine in the manner: not an old fashioned, precise child, I am happy to say. So you did'nt believe in Wimpole Street that he wrote his letter!! He can do
anything he pleases, that child! He is near upon finishing his second copy-book, & when it is
done we are going to send them both to Paris; & I shall tell Sarianna to let you have them to keep
for us when she & ‘nonno’ have examined them. I hold they are curiosities. The first book contains
the names of all his friends—it’s his first writing, & between lines, of course. The second book is
written throughout on a single line, & consists of compositions on all sorts of subjects by Penini
stories & essays, every word his own. This book lies on our table & everybody takes it up &
wonders over it. Really it is funny, what with it’s babyism & it’s intelligence. There’s an article
upon “Angels”—and another on “Hearts” . . . and another on the “Coliseum,” & another on
“Rabbits” – The table of contents would amuse you in itself. I help in nothing except the spelling—
(the very punctuation he does himself) only I confess to interfering the other day & refusing the
licence with regard to an expression about the rabbits. “There was a man rabbit & a lady—and
this lady had six little ones in her stomat.” “Oh”—said I—“you had better not write that.” “What—
you shocked, dear Mama?” By the way he has really six little rabbits. He came running, in an
ecstasy—“I am in such pleasure.” He expected eggs, & is of opinion that they did come out of
the white rabbit’s ears, & that this remarkable “lady” immediately ate up the shells, which accounts
for their disappearance. Penini is profound in his physiology. But it’s inconvenient sometimes
that he should have a rage just now for going round among all the proprietors of dogs, horses, &
other living creatures, & enquiring, “Is it a man or a woman?” Wilson is in a permanent state of agony.

What a horrible time of anxiety this is for so many. I feel deeply for poor dearest aunt Jane—but
the first lists, which of course we searched with anxiety, will relieve her mind. There seems
to be a delay about Sebastapol [sic]. Robert has been in a frenzy of excitement about it. For my
part, I think the union between the French & English, & the chivalrous justice done by each to
each, a sublime thing. May God defend the right, we may all say. Tell me what John Hedley’s
regiment is. D’ Harding has a son in the 2nd Division, under Pennefeather. By the way, while
doing justice to the liberality of American dentists, I should’nt forget English physicians . . . and
D’ Harding with the utmost delicacy & generosity has forced his advice upon us all the summer
for Penini without payment of any kind. Robert made a fuss about these visits, when he replied . .
“Surely you will let me go & see Mr® Browning”. He has set Penini quite up again from the evils
of Rome. He told me the other day that he had considered the child “far from well,” on his arrival
here, though he made light of it for my sake:—in fact, the thinness & paleness were obvious
enough for uneasiness– Rome had weakened the digestion &c, & promoted a tendency to worms
. . which is constitutional perhaps in Penini . . though never before developped. D’ Harding made
him take a dessertspoonful of camomile tea twice a day, & gave him one or two powders which
freed him from the evil at once. I did’nt tell you this at the time. Now, he is quite well & strong—
continuing the camomile tea though, because the effect cannot be otherwise than salutary. I never
knew him to have so much appetite, and, for rosy cheeks, I will show him against a pippin at any
time, in your English apple-shows. Mr® Irving (the Irvings are here just now) is delighted with
him, & calls him a true “poet’s child.” He went to see her & won her heart by telling her what
seems to have been the whole history of his life—all about “poor Joe”—and “poor Flush,” &
how he loved him. Penini is’nt in the least shy, & is so social & fond of paying visits, that I get a
little alarmed sometimes at this appetite for dissipation. He knows everybody's name in Florence—
and a curious way he has, (for a child) about names. I remember when I was shy at calling people
by their names. He has christian & surname for everyone, & startles you by evoking your visitors
as 'Hatty Hosmer' 'James Irving' &c &c . . or "the Tottles" . . (Cottrells) more simply. Talking
of the Irvings, I sent her a copy of our "Two Poems" (we have a few copies out—and how perfectly,
Arabel, you have seen to the printing!)⁹ and the next morning but one, Mr Irving came from her
with five scudi (about a guinea) for the charity. So you are to count on that sum when we can get
it to you. Make some sort of acknowledgement. Our other readers have not shown the same
degree of sensibility . . dropping tears of silver—not even such as "fell down Pluto's cheek",⁹ in
penny pieces. Let me be grateful too about the general poems. I have seen & examined the new
edition, & nothing can be more accurate than the printing—only one misprint that I can find!
You have done it as if you had all your life never done anything else— Oh, I mean to use you from
henceforth, Arabel, in future editions, till your hardworked kindness shall cry out at last . . "Hold,
enough."¹⁰

I wish you would remember Penini, Arabel, when you are looking over books for your schools,
& put the titles down of anything that strikes you as good & bright, & not too dogmatic. You
know I am a little heterodox in certain ways. I dont like some things which are generally approved.
For instance, though, as you are well aware, I am quite fond of many of Watts' hymns sung in the
chapels, yet most of the Infant Hymns (though he wrote them & you gave the book to Penini) I
have quite a horror of . . they are so full of flames & eternal damnations.¹¹ As a child I suffered
intensely myself from this way of addressing children, and as a christian I do hold it to be an
erroneous mode of appeal altogether. Let us be afraid of sin, instead of the consequences of
sin,— & love Christ instead of fearing hell fire. Then I am Swedenborgian in some things, & I
dont believe in physical torments or in arbitrary punishment in the sense usually taught. Union
with the Lord is happiness & holiness & light—disunion from Him is the contrary to these as a
matter of course:— & the spiritual world only spiritualizes our state here. Penini said the other
day—"I'm sure I² love gentle Jesus. I want to be good & to go to gentle Jesus. I dont like evil
spirits, not a bit. They're all naughty— I hate dark places—" "Then" said he, turning his head on
one side & smiling to think of it . . "I'm sure there must be loads of children in heaven with
gentle Jesus. It must be just like a festa." He has been reading lately the "Peep of Day"¹³ . . a very
nice little book,—with certain drawbacks— There's too much that tends to Arianism, or even
Unitarianism in the separation of the persons of the Trinity¹⁴—and there's a whole chapter at the
end about the general judgement & the burning up of the hills & mountains, which w¹ frighten
Penini out of his wits, & which he shant read certainly. But he has enjoyed very much the account
of Christ's life, & would read the story of the 'loaves & fishes' twice over. Turning the water
into wine did'nt strike him so much, because he said very coolly he had seen that done in Rome.
(By a conjuror, at Mr® Sartoris's.) I tried to persuade him that that was only in cheat, but I might
as well have talked to the wall. He saw the water turn red with his own eyes—he "saw it!!" So
there was nothing for it but to change the subject. Happily he requires no miracles to prove to
him that Jesus is God. And now quite of his own accord, in consequence of an enlarged theological
knowledge from this reading, he has begun to pray for "the Holy Spirit to make him good."
There's a chapter on the Lord's prayer, at the close of which it is pronounced "hard for children to understand." "'Let's velly tue!' said Penini—"it is velly hard for children to understant." What he likes much is to answer the questions affixed to the chapters. He remembers everything—scarcely ever makes a mistake. He reads, too, with great animation & expression—not like a dull, droning child. Robert has begun to teach him the piano—think of that! and you cant fancy how nicely those darling baby fingers run down the "stales" (scales) with both hands. It's quite a curiosity to see him. He is taught at his own particular prayer, & is'nt satisfied with one lesson a day I assure you. Robert expects a great deal from his music. With all this, we dont overwork him. I seldom keep him more than half an hour— Then, there's the music which he considers play & privilege together. Yes indeed—the best of him is that he's full of love. He makes regular love to me— "How I love you! Your face is like a light, with those curls hanging! I sint I must somesing pretty—a bloach . or a beau—tiful dless!." Then he calls me his "sweetest little mama", his "darling little Ba." In the morning, before his eyes are open, he will stretch out his hands, Wilson says, .. "Where's my darling Lily?" The child's made o f love.

Arabel, you didnt mention dearest Trippy. Tell me of her & give her kisses & love from me by wheelbarrows. I want another letter from you dreadfully— Oh— I do trust you will give me good news of my poor, beloved Papa— One reason why I did'nt write before was that I was horribly afraid he had sent back my letter. I heard of a letter, sent to Cutugliano [sic] .. which I had to wait for: but it turns out to be a letter from M! Ogilvy who is settled near London, at Peckham Rye, much against her inclination, for a whole year. I am happy now I wrote to Papa—and yet I dare say he did not read what I wrote.

I hear extraordinary things about the spirits constantly, but the accounts are too long to send you. M! Jerves's mother & other members of his family, see them now— There are visible & tangible, hands & arms, & figures. The whole movement is making still stronger & deeper way in America. The other day I held in my hand & read with my eyes a writing made by the spirits themselves, without the mediation of any mortal fingers— It was written in pencil, & perfectly legible, & produced in the presence of thirteen witnesses in M! Jerves's family. He comes here nearly every week to read fresh letters.

I fear Routledge will not come to terms. Never mind. The Americans are really shabby & dishonest. Tell me of dear Minny? Have you heard of Maddox lately? Give dear Minny my best love. What of M! Orme? What of M! Hunter? Tell me of everybody. I do hope dearest Henrietta will get to London this winter for both your sake & hers—yet she must come also next summer for mine. M! Sartoris has been spending another week here, singing exquisitely & talking brilliantly— Penini told a history, beginning with, "When my mama was mallied (married) I dined wiz her .. &c." Everybody laughed, & May Sartoris cried out "Now, Penini, that must be a story!" Poor Peni!

Tenderest love among you all. Darling Arabel, take care of yourself for me! Love me enough for that—& do write—

Your own, own Ba.

I have heard from Miss Mitford. Really better. tho' not sanguine of herself.
Professor Ferdinando Zanetti correctly diagnosed Isa’s knee problem. A few years later, EBB wrote to Sophia Eckley: “He loved once, & lost the object of his love—and, in a sublime despair, devoted himself, consecrated himself henceforth, to the poor & suffering of his race— A great man, indeed” (13 July [1858], ms at Berg). He operated on Garibaldi, who was wounded at Aspromonte in 1862, when numerous others tried to cure him and failed. (Elizabeth Adams Daniels, Jessie White Mario: Risorgimento Revolutionary, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1972, p. 103).

K.S. Burridge, an American dentist in Rome at 93 Piazza di Spagna, was in Florence temporarily at the English chemist (Roberts) in via Tornabuoni. He is listed in the Brownings’ address book, and in a later edition of Murray’s guidebook, he is described as “an excellent American dentist” (Murray’s, A Handbook of Rome and its Environs, London: John Murray, 1858, p. xviii).

After a delay of several months due to bad weather, disease, and strategic maneuvering by the Russian troops, the siege of Sebastopol did not begin until mid-October 1854. This assault lasted for eleven months before the Russians were defeated and the allies (England and France, aided by Sardinia) took Sebastopol on 9 September 1855. In September, EBB had written to Sarianna that “Robert is furious. ... the expedition has been put off too long, according to us” (ms at Lilly); and in early 1855, EBB told Isa Blagden that “Robert is frantic about the Crimea” (ms at Fitzwilliam), explaining his objection to the mounting opposition by the English government to the war.

EBB’s statement reflects the general sentiment at the time regarding Russian aggression against Turkey. After efforts had failed to find an agreement between the two countries, most of Europe felt that Russia’s invasion of Turkey in 1853 posed a direct threat to stability in the region.

John Lysaght Pennefather (1800-72). “In 1854 he was given command of the first brigade of the second (Sir De Lacy Evans’s) division in the army sent to the East, and on 20 June he was made major-general,” which he directed “with credit at the battle of the Alma” (DNB). Lt. Colonel Francis Pym Harding had previously served with Pennefather in the 22nd Regiment, as he did in the 2nd Division. John Hedley had served in the 50th (Queen’s Own) Regiment of Foot from September 1852 until June 1853, a few months after his court martial (see letter 99, note 13).

Presumably James Irving and his wife Judith; see letter 4, note 22.

See letter 108, note 6; I have been unable to trace the present whereabouts of the copy presented to the Irvings.


Macbeth, V, 8, 34.

Cf. Isaac Watts, “Heaven and Hell” in Hymns for Children, Selected Chiefly from the publications of the Rev. John & Charles Wesley, and Dr. Watts (London: T. Blanchard, 1814), lines 5-8: “There is a dreadful hell, / And everlasting pains, / There sinners must with devils dwell, / In darkness, fire and chains.”

Underscored twice.

By Favell Lee Mortimer (née Bevan, 1802-78). According to the DNB, “she is best known as the author of educational works for the young. Of these the most popular, ‘The Peep of Day, or a Series of the Earliest Religious Instruction the Infant Mind is capable of receiving,’ was first published in 1836, and it has passed through a multitude of later editions.”

Unitarian teaching denies the divinity of Christ (see letter 94, note 12). Arius, Presbyter of Alexandria in the 4th century, and his followers—known as Arians—held that the Father and Son were distinct beings, and that the Son, though divine, was not equal to the Father. This was held to be heresy at the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.). In addition to chapters on the stories indicated by EBB: The Peep of Day contains chapters entitled
“The first miracle” and “The loaves and fishes,” and other chapters include titles such as “The sinner and Simon”; “Jesus foretells his death”; “The resurrection” and “Peter in prison.”

15. “It is a very beautiful prayer, for Jesus said it; but it is hard for children to understand it” (The Peep of Day, London: Hatchards, 1870, p. 112).

16. RB continued to teach Pen, but a few years later he began taking instruction from an Italian teacher, Giuseppe del Bene. Del Bene composed a Fantasia especially for Pen, which is part of an album containing manuscript music, now at ABL (see Reconstruction, A32). In April 1858, del Bene gave a “musical soirée” for his students, at which Pen and del Bene performed a duet.

17. A suburb in south London. Presumably the Ogilvys had gone there for the period of her confinement; their fifth child and third son, Angus, was born on 28 January 1855; see EBB-EAHO, pp. 130–134.

18. Anna Smith Stutson (d. 1874) had married Deming Jarves in 1815.

Letter 115

Florence.
Nov 26. [1854]

My dearest, dearest Arabel, I cant rest upon anything till I have answered your letter. It has made me very sad of course, and I shall wait with the utmost anxiety the next accounts you give me. I need not beseech you to write constantly— Your own goodness will make you write, even though your fatigues in every way must be great—but three lines, three words!— I feel grieved that I did not write to dearest Trippy—why did I put it off? Always it seems to me that writing to you must cover all, & that a message means everything. Oh—if she is able to hear & care, tell her how I have loved her always, & never, never forgotten her, my dear, dear Trippy—tell her how painfully anxious I am about this illness. I will try to hope as you bid me, for the very best—& she may, as you say, rally, as she has done on former occasions, particularly as the disease (has) ceased to be active, & as she is able to take nourishment. Still . . oh, I am very uneasy— It is only reasonable to be uneasy, under the circumstances.

Penini says in the sweetest way—“I am velly solly. She is one o f my ladies—one o f my gleat fliends. She gave me my tup & spoon, & I remember the parrot. But, dear mama,” (turning to me) “donta you mate yourself uneasy! smile again, and dont have the sorrowful things— Come & talk to me about my doll— Do you usterstand about babies?” Penini has not been quite well,—& if he has had the meazles, Wilson & I shall not be surprised to be told so— There was a slight rash for some three days . . like a nettle-rash . . without headache or fever— On the fourth day one eye became inflamed & watered a good deal. The child was so unaffected otherwise, we had no advice for him, & satisfied ourselves with keeping him in his room & attending to his diet— On the fourth day we gave him medecine, grey powder, & senna, & now he is perfectly well, though a little paler & thinner for the few days adversity— Can it be meazles, I wonder— Ask dear Minny her opinion. The complaint is curiously slight in Italy, & we have heard of received cases here affecting the patient much the same. Still, I cant trust to it much. He was good, & bore his little deprivations so beautifully, that Robert promised him a present—and he chose a doll!! Rather a change upon the military occupations in which he usually delights, and really, on the whole, a more sensible amusement. It is one of the new-fashioned infantine dolls, and rolls about it’s [sic]
head & arms & legs in the most lifelike way, & squeaks if you touch its stomach. Such a piece of work there is about the frocks & chemises—and everything is to be made to "button," because Penini can't tie a string—he has'nt arrived at that degree of accomplishment. He says he can make a "knot"—but it scarcely answers, when you come to want to untie it, as you do sometimes.

Isa Blagden was here today when your letter came—(she is all but well—it is the most wonderful cure of an apparently hopeless malady that ever came under my notice.)² I tore open the letter just to see how things were going—read that dear Trippy had been ill & was out of all danger . . read about Papa . . & then shut up everything, supposing that I knew the worst & best, & should enjoy the rest afterwards—Little did I fancy what was on the last two pages—Ah—here is the terrible thing in being away—Here it is!

As to the spirits, do you really (knowing me, Arabel)

have had the visible manifestations—The mythical hand was distinctly seen, & felt, & shook hands with them all . . the feeling being of something cold & soft . . elastic—a perfect hand. As to your jest about "amputations", Arabel, .. now, do be just, & consider! What was the hand which wrote at Balthazar’s feast?⁴ These manifestations throw a curious light upon that. The hand was seen . . the fingers of a hand . . is it not the very expression? And the reason for no more than a hand being seen, is probably identical, then & now. To enable us to see, something of our

As to Sebastopol there will be reinforcements & an end of it all presently.³ It’s horrible in the meanwhile—but war must be horrible—as sin is, & the consequences of sin. If we could surround the city so as to prevent the pouring in of the reinforcing enemy on the open side, it would not be so like emptying a fountain with a bucket. But there are heroic virtues—fortitude, self-abnegation in active exercise—& God defends the right after all. We held off as long as we could in this war—we are not bound to sit still & be tomahawked, even by the Christian law I think.

What you say of Surtees being sent to the Mediterranean moves me much—Something in the Times about the militia had frightened me more than I dared say to any of you⁶—and I do hope & trust he may be left in England quietly. Is dearest Henrietta very anxious about it? Do you know I heard of her (tell her from me) in the ‘Illustrated News’ the other day!? & how she helped Lady Morley to give away the colours—There was the “stand” in black & white, but Robert, who brought me the news from the reading-room, could not find Henrietta’s portrait—only Mf® Surtees Cook’s name. I have no heart to make fun of it all, as I could yesterday. Was Altham there, I wonder?

Ah—if she has courage to do that, Arabel, she may as well go to Sebastopol. It might answer—or it might not. For my part, I never could do it, simply because it would be risking too much. If she gained her point we should all say ‘well done’ & praise her for bravery. If she didn’t, we should say “ill done” & blame her for imprudence. But there may be such a thing as a magnificent imprudence .. only the risk of this seems to me excessive. If I failed I should never recover it, I think. Still, I would not advise her against the act, supposing she were thoroughly set upon it. I
Letter 115

26 November [1854]

confine myself to being glad rather than not being in London at the time. I should feel the vibrations more, if I were.

Dearest Arabel, a card surprised me the other morning. Mr. & Mrs. John Stratten's. In they came, with Miss Hope. Robert returned the visit, & did not find them at home, so no more was seen of them, as they were in Florence for only six days. Do you know her? She is deaf, & not pretty, but young & gentle-looking. He is inferior in picturesqueness of appearance & manner to his father— I never saw him before. They seemed to be struck & delighted with everything, & I wished that we could have been more useful to them than the opportunity admitted of our being.

If you want a book, try to get George Sand's "Maîtres Sonneurs". You know I don't often ask you to read her books, but I should like you to read this for the excessive beauty & purity of it. Robert thinks it rather heavy— it has no brilliant situations: it is a pastoral romance,—all about the country & country people .. and for my part & in its particular line, I hold it to be absolutely perfect. In a woman, after such a life, to be morally capable of writing such a book, proves how exceptional she is.

Dear Mr. Kenyon wrote a pretty kind little note to Penini, & praised his letter in an affectionate way which touched me to the quick. So did you, my darling Arabel, write him a letter—but you are you, & we are yours! I did not think Mr. Kenyon could have put himself so out of the way to be kind to a little child. He said today, after he had read your two notes, with great satisfaction—"I sient everybody lites my letters." Poor little Pen. He has rather a sublime idea of his own qualifications & merits, though you are very amiable people, all of you, he admits willingly.

He has been hankering after this doll for some time, having resisted the inclination at first, on the ground of an idea he had, that it was infra dig: for a "general" to have a doll. At last the desire overcame the sense of dignity, & nothing can be more enchanting than the doll is, now she has come. There, he has put her to bed by the side of him after various tender kisses, & Lily is to make her a new frock tomorrow morning.

Oh— Arabel—how very, very kind you are about the books for Penini! Dearest, you are too good, too kind, and if it were possible I would have out those books of yours at any rate— People must be coming into Italy at this time of year. Ask Mr. Kenyon if he knows of anyone coming. I am so sorry—because Chapman & Hall had a parcel to send to us, which is on its way, I fear, with the rest of Frank & Rosamond we were forced to have out, as Penini cant be kept without books. He has read a part of 'Frank'—(the part which has arrived) he reads it with great facility & likes it better than I do. I cant tell you, Arabel, how disappointed I am with 'Frank'—my memories praised it too much. It's cold & low— just "sensible," in the commonest meaning of that word. I am surprised to find how much the public mind has risen, as measured by the present character of children's books, since the days of 'Frank'. Mrs. Barbauld, too, does not please me— We have passed these things. When Penini was unwell the other day I sent to ask Mr. Powers, who has an immense family, to lend us some books suited to him—and she sent us some very nice little books .. nothing of a very high order, but pretty, & simple .. some printed by the Religious Tract Society .. (I rather hoped, Arabel, she would have sent me a little Swedenborgianism, but she did not) — & Penini has been reading them ever since. I will remember your recommendations. What was Miss Jewsbury's book? The one you have—the one you sent me? You said it was a
child's book. A child of what age?. Do you remember the book Mr M!Intosh gave him about animals.\textsuperscript{14} That's a great resource to him as a book of reference, though rather difficult in length of words both for reading & understanding. Where are the M!Intoshes? In London? Tell me something of the Jagos. Really I should like to know of them.

Dearest Arabel, you never said a word to me about Routledge,\textsuperscript{15} & therefore you are perfectly mistaken in your notion of my having forgotten, or omitted to notice. Now, I am rather afraid—Robert is, at least, .. lest anything should be even talked of which Chapman might consider unhandsome on our parts. Certainly we could do nothing without his adhesion—and moreover all that ever I contemplated was republishing a few of the old ballads, together with a few new ones which I have by me— I should be afraid that the general re-publication might injure the sale at Chapman's. At any rate, &, as there seems to be difficulty, ask George to tell Routledge that we will conclude nothing till we go to England next spring. Time enough then to hear what can be said on both sides. Thank dear George, with my tender love, for what he has done & said already—

Dearest, I have been writing these sheets against the grain a good deal, but I could'n't be so unkind as to send you nothing but groans, as my inclination was. Take care of your precious self, I beseech you—take rest when you can—ah, my advice is too slow in going! If you are well now, for which I do thank God, all this watching is a thing you are not fit for .. and yet of course you must do what you do, & I would not have it otherwise— Only how I yearn to be with you & take turns with you! May God bless you in your work & give us all joy after it. Penini prayed for dearest Trippy last night— May He who hears prayer answer all ours' [sic]!

For my beloved Papa, it is a relief to know that he has yielded on the point of taking carriage exercise—but I am not clear in my mind about his leg's having been well treated. Do you trust absolutely that surgeon, Arabel? The swelling, as well as the rest, makes it doubtful to me.

Have you heard of Stormie very lately? Isa Blagden & M! Norton have taken apartments in M! Tennyson's house .. the magnificent Villa Torrigians\textsuperscript{16}—so almost all our friends will be together. M! Norton came here the other morning & staid five hours! Still, .. I really like him more & more. He is very affectionate & very clever, with a great deal of high sentiment about him too. All these young men adore Robert! I dont know how he bewitches them.

Darling Arabel, this letter goes to you by return of post, but my love & anxious prayers have gone faster still.

Your own, own Ba–

Penini's eye was only an affair of four & twenty (hours). He is perfectly himself now, with a complexion like painted china.

Address: Angleterre via France. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. A reference to the healing of her injured knee; see letter 109, note 16.
3. Two thirds of a page has been excised.
4. Sic, for Belshazzar, the King for whom Daniel interpreted the mysterious writing on the wall; see Daniel 5:5-28. See also EBB's comments in the following letter (note 9).

5. See note 4 in the preceding letter; the fighting did not end until September 1855.

6. Surtees had put forth a proposal that three or four hundred men from his Somerset Militia might volunteer to go to the Crimea if he could be promoted to Major with full pay and allowed to go in command of them (C. Yorke to B. Howes, 2 December 1854, ms with Altham). The proposal was accepted only in part, and Surtees did not go.

7. A report of the “Presentation of Colours to the 1st Somerset Militia at Plymouth” in the 11 November 1854 issue of The Illustrated London News noted that “the platform was soon occupied by the Countesses Morley and Mount Edgecombe ... and the wives of a few officers of the 1st Somerset, namely, Mrs. Leckonby Phipps, Mrs. Quantock, Mrs. Surtees Cook [etc.]”

8. John Remington Stratten, eldest son of James Stratten (see letter 32, note 12) had married Augusta Hope (b. 1826), daughter of Samuel and Rebekah Hope (née Bateman). I have been unable to identify which of Augusta's six sisters was travelling with the Strattens.


10. Both stories in Early Lessons (London: J. Johnson, 1809) by Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849); they later appeared as single titles, and were often reprinted. The fifth edition of Rosamond had been published in 1850 by Longman & Co.; and the seventh edition of Frank by J. Johnson in 1854.

11. Anna Letitia Barbauld (née Aikin, 1743-1825) author of children's books, such as Lessons for Children, Two to Three Years Old (London: 1787), which EBB read as a child (see BC, 10, 96).

12. The Religious Tract Society was founded in 1799 with a committee consisting equally of Anglican and Nonconformist members to publish tracts and books of an evangelical nature. In 1935 it joined with the United Society for Christian Literature. EBB wrote to Mrs. Powers a few days later: “I return you the books, which have given all the pleasure to Penini your kindness can have desired for him & me ... He has read them himself, & had them read to him again & again,—his particular favorite being ‘The pretty Village’” (ms at ABL).

13. The History of an Adopted Child (London: Grant and Griffith, 1853) was the first and only children's book Geraldine Jewsbury had written by this time (see letter 72, note 25).

14. Presumably Frances McIntosh (née Watson), whose daughter Charlotte (1829-61) married EBB’s brother, Octavius, in 1859. I have been unable to identify the book referred to here.


Letter 116

Florence.
Dec. 20. [1854]

My ever beloved Arabel In spite of Henrietta’s dear long welcome letter I go to you, you see, like a dog to his master, feeling that you want me most. The account of Trippy is very painful to me—dearest Trippy— I can only love her & pray for her, & speak of her little. Penini says, “I sint the more I pray the worser she gets—but still I will go on praying.” You cant fancy .. yes, you can .. how my thoughts hang upon her & you— Oh, say to her, if she can hear, that I love her tenderly & ask her good & ease & happiness of God’s mercy. It is but little we can do for one another with ever so much love. This last letter I was very glad to have, but the one before came so slowly that almost I could reproach you Arabel,—though I ought’n’t, I dare say, for you must
have much to do besides writing to me. Only, short letters that come quick would be welcome just now. At post-time I am apt to turn very sick. Let me think now what there is to tell you—

First, of dearest Henrietta. It's the greatest relief to me to hear of Surtees' missing his majority & the chance of a glorious grave at Sebastapol [sic]. At the same time, Arabel, I must confess to you that I didn't take your view of the case—& it seemed to me (& to Robert too) natural & praise-worthy that he should make the offer he did. He is a soldier after all, & we must accept his point of view. If Robert were in his position, perhaps I shouldn't have had the force to act as nobly as Henrietta did, but I should certainly have tried—yes indeed I should have tried.

"I could not love thee Dear so much,
Loved I not honour more."^1

That sentiment is the ideal of us all. I feel no violent enthusiasm about the war. But it turns my blood a little to see "captains", so called, travelling in Italy, & I do think that, soldier or artist, we should go straight on beyond amateurship. Also, if Surtees had been made a major, there would have been advantages to his family which I cannot think him wrong for considering, though at the price of such suffering to poor Henrietta at the first step—Well—I thank God it is as it is, when Henrietta is considered—It would have been very hard on her, poor darling. She has done well, and Surtees has done well,—and as the government did not accept the reasonable condition proposed, the end is well too—Fancy Henrietta with her two babies, shut up in the house at Taunton, listening for the telegraphic reports! What a position. I had it in my head to lay a trap for her & carry her off to Paris—but if she had been caught ever so, she would'nt have been consoled by any of us. Really it w^ have been dreadful, .. & the relief would have been denied to me of scolding at Surtees, because I should'nt have thought him so wrong, you see.

Ah—this christmas season! I never like it very much—I cant get over recollections^2 though I dip back into the old joy for Penini's sake, who has heaps of presents & indulgences. Now, however, I shall be too much with you & you will be too sad I fear, for anything that isn't sad—it will be too strong for Penini this time. The poor child does nothing but dream of "my ti$tmas" & what's to happen then. He rather wants all the people in Florence to be brought to have tea with him, or dinner or something—but it wont do, my Penini, this time,—you will have to curb this social appetite of your's. I hope some of his friends will ask him— Never was such a child for going out & receiving in .. you would be shocked at him, Arabel. He is'nt shy, & is popular with children, so that he has it his own way in society, which is pleasant to us all. But I dare say he wont have so many Christmas parties as he had at Rome last year—he will have to be domestic & to accept quiet days with Isa Blagden & little Harry Cottrell^4 & Alice Tassinari. Henrietta says we have more society than she has—but we have no mixed society at all in Florence—we are out of society, so considered. It is true that it was set down as a wonderful thing last week our having nobody at all in the evening for the whole week—but then, our tea-takings, though frequent enough, amount to receiving a few persons over & over again .. such as M' Tennyson, M' Norton, M' & M'. Kinney, Isa Blagden, M' Stuart. We enjoy our solitary evenings most, I assure you,—tea at seven tête à tête, or Penini appearing as the sole visitor, "I sint I shall have tea wiz you tonight.

Isa has come into Florence. M' Tennyson who is in possession of the splendid Villa Torrigiani with it's [sic] famous gardens, has received her & the Nortons into his house .. that is, into
separate apartments in it, of course—and as they are all friends & inclined to visit one another, &
meet for music & talk two or three times a week, it answers excellently so far. I only hope too
much friendship may not work its contrary. Such things are seen. The Torrigiani people come
here frequently of course—and the Kinneys much more seldom. In the Kinney[s]'s house, .. the
house being divided into apartments, continental fashion, .. the American consul from Paris M'
Goodrich & his family are living now. The father is Peter Parley known to fame, and the daughter
Miss Peter Parley .. otherwise Miss Goodrich.5 .. is known to fame besides, being the medium in
Paris through whom Lamartine, Arago & others had their experience of the spirit-rappings &
table-movings. She had so much notoriety in Paris that her parents feared it might be an obstacle
to her “success in life,” & so stopped it. Now she has begun again with the spirits, it appears—&
she promised Mr. Kinney to go to her some morning & give her an opportunity of judging. A
very pretty girl, quite young—scarce eighteen I hear. She not only moves tables but elicits the
rappings—only she can't write. She has held a pencil in her hand for an hour together & has had
no movements. By the way, tell Henrietta I can't send her what was written about papa6—the
paper is lost. I have put away some of the papers to keep, but I believe scarcely one remains of
them all. I will try to send her something— I have been nervous about the writing lately, & we
tried only once, a week since, when there was nothing legible—just scratches & scribbles. Robert
was at Isa's one evening, & I made Wilson come into this room. Both her arms were siezed [sic]
directly, & when Robert rang, one leg was so affected she could scarcely walk to the door to
open it. In spite of which, no legible writing!— It's a curious & capricious power. We thought the
table was going to move, it creaked & palpitated so, & perhaps it would have done it, if Robert
had stayed away longer. M. Jarves goes to the United States in April or May,7 intently [sic] to
seclude himself with the medium Hume for several months, to investigate the subject & its intenser
bearings with a complete earnestness, & he promises to write me the results. He was here yesterday.
The movement spreads more & more in America. Washington Irving is now investigating.8 As to
your objection to the hand seen alone, I quoted to you Belshazzar's feast, because the writing
there was actually produced by a hand seen alone, according to scripture. That it was the “hand
of God,” is an extraordinary thing to take for granted. We know nothing of how the tables of the
Law were written— but how the “mene mene” &c was written is specified—we can't speculate
about it. By the way, if a writing of the same sort were set up at St Petersburgh before the Czar in
relation to Sebastopol, how you would all cry out that the communication was not spiritual
enough!—

The fact is the hand is not mutilated. It is our sight which is mutilated, into seeing only the
hand.

Zanetti went to see Isa Blagden the other day, said the bones were returning to their places &
shel had only to persevere in the treatment. He examined Louisa too with the greatest care &
hoped to make her walk— Afterwards, refused his fee! Isa may well call him “that angel Zanetti.”
I never heard of such a medical man in my life. He's a prodigy. Isa told him that under God she
owed him everything, & the word seemed enough gratification for him. She walks up & down
stairs much too often, & has recovered from the whole debility which prostrated her. Her drawing-
room at Villa Torrigiani opens upon a magnificent terrace over the gardens, & in a full sunny
aspect,—so that nearly every day she can walk there & Louisa lie there for hours on her couch. And this in the heart of Florence—not a quarter of a mile from our door.

Think of Mr Norton coming & sitting three hours with us the other day, & opening his heart about his marriage .. talking about his “regrets,” & crying, sobbing like a boy. I felt deeply sorry for him— I was more sorry than Robert who set it down as unmanly, after a step of the kind, to repent in public. But women are better at receiving confidences—and then he is so young & has been so foolish & must bear its consequences for ever .. I could not help being very sorry indeed for him. Also, he said nothing in disfavour of his wife—poor thing, you have only to look in her good, simple, gentle face with its radiant Italian smile, to see that nothing is to be said. But he spoke a little about the beautiful accomplished women with whom he had been accustomed to associate in the coterie of the Duchess of Sutherland & others, .. then observed that he had “chosen otherwise—that it all was at end for him— & the worst was that he had no companion, none to understand him. —Oh—in the sight of God she was as noble as the noblest, & she loved him—but” .. there, the voice broke again. What was to be said? He was married. There, an end. I have a good opinion of him, & I believe he will be a kind & tender husband,—but see what a frightful length of misery, if she lives out her years! She came to see me with him the other day, & for the first time I thought her pretty. Her countenance is sweet & truthful. Do you know I told him afterwards what my impression was— & you cant imagine how gratified he appeared, poor fellow. He broke out in a glow at which Robert & I could scarcely keep our countenances .. about the horrible ways of people in general, & how everybody seemed afraid of saying, “Norton, you have a beautiful wife.” The fact is he is mortified at the scanty admiration she has received from his friends—it’s one of his grievances. As nobody thinks her beautiful, nobody says so of course— & really he must love her, to expect it. I set that down as a good sign. Louisa is going to offer to teach her to read— She is heard stammering through the wall to her husband’s instruction. She told Isa that Mr Norton (the signora madre) wished her to learn to sing instead of learning to read!! .. but that, for her own part, she thought reading would be of more use to her. Poor thing! you cant think what a pure, innocent face she has. The baby is not pretty, so far.

By the way Brinsley Norton who is always talking of the divine childhoods of the Sheridans & others of the “blue blood,” said the other day to Isa, that he “never in his life saw such a lovely child as Penini— & that it was’nt only for the face & hair, but for the manners & whole bearing.”! of course this opinion recommends him to me— It’s a very sound opinion too, for Penini’s manners & way of talking always seem to me his chief charm, & quite uncommon among children. You will not think him gone off, Arabel. He has taken lately to say very hard words .. talks of “entering” a room .. of “reposing his hands” .. of “preparing a table” .. of what he does “generally”, & “usually”, & “suddenly”. He’s “velly solly to interlupt you” on asking you for the twentieth time to open or shut the door, and is “quite glieved” (grieved) to have to ask for another bonbon. With all this, you never saw a more perfect baby in all simplicities; & he likes being cuddled on one’s knee & coaxed as much as ever. His Italian is very pretty— & he has caught the Italian modulation exactly, the very sing-song of the voice. I had ordered a white felt hat for him, but I did not like it when it came, & substituted, from the same shop, a black velvet one, made very low, with black
feather,—tied with a green & black ribbon. It is most becoming to the child, set on his golden ringlets.

He came to ask me the other afternoon if he might go to one of the churches to hear a novena the chanted litanies before Christmas. I said yes— I always say yes, Arabel— & added “Remember to pray for Trippy”. When he came back he ran to me out of breath. “I did remember, darling mama! but I couldn’t pray for Trippy—it was ‘nt my fault, not a bit—it was all music, & the priests would ‘nt stop, not one moment.” “Well—but you thought of God, & thanked him, didn’t you?” “Oh yes! indeed.” Wilson said he had chanted most beautifully, the people turning round to look at him on all sides— They were standing to chant. Suddenly whether he was affected by the music, or whether he wanted to pray his specific prayer, he knelt down & held up his darling hands—then he rose again & went on with the chanting. Sometimes he chants at home. “Domini Deo” with the very ecclesiastical intonation & cadence. Henrietta says that Altham chants too at church. Well—these children are brought up very differently. Altham, she says, is never to read a word that is ‘nt pure church of Englandism whereas Penini is carefully instructed to love & worship Jesus with all sorts of persons & irrespectively of forms— I am as frightened of sectarianism, as Henrietta is of heresy. I wonder if it will end by Penini’s being a Puseyite of the straightest sect, and by Altham’s being a red-hot disserter. There are reactions sometimes. Only I do not feel very much afraid. Because all true religion (like moral & artistic good) is developed from within. Hold Christ, the Head, & you must be right in your place as church-member—and if you hold Christ once, you dont unhold him. To “walk together as far as we are agreed” the precept which, after the intimate principle,) makes the universal church. It seems to me to be of great importance. When Penini examines a new book, the first anxious enquiry is apt to be . “Is there anything about gentle Jesus.” He is very fond of hearing about Jesus. The other day a mouse was caught in a trap & he was frightened lest Ferdinando should give it to the porter’s cat. After using various arguments, he said, “If you do cruel things . andrete al cattivo posto” . you’ll go to a bad place.” Said Ferdinando . “Giù . below . I suppose you mean.” “No,” said Penini, “who has peculiar notions of the infernal, “su . up above.” “But paradise is above . il paradiso è su.” “No—il paradiso è su, su . ma questo cattivo posto e un pocchino più giù . the bad place is a little lower, only still above. It’s hot in summer, & cold in winter, & there are serpents! Then it’s full of evil spirits. Lily, you know about the evil spirits. Explain to Ferdinando.” This complimentary appeal to Wilson as being the familiar of evil spirits, was followed by a digression to the gospel, of which he gave the whole story to Ferdinando, to his great astonishment. Wilson was quite surprised herself at the clearness of the exposition—about Peter cutting off the ear of the servant & all. (Penini had thought that a “welly dood sing” when he read of it) everything said in Italian of course, as Ferdinando does ‘nt know a word of English. Penini is quite as fluent in Italian as English, and it’s pretty to hear him turn from one language to another. Indeed within these few days he has made two Italian compositions, by his own special desire. Mr Kenyon was delighted with his letter—thought it “so clever yet so childlike”— Did I tell you? That’s just the right praise. He talks much of you at times & seems to remember everything, though your locality must be seen rather vaguely, I think, to admit of his saying . “When we det to our villa in London, mama, may I buy some tots & hens?”
Yes— I do like Miss Sandford. What strikes you as out-of-the-way in her, is her extreme
earnestness of character. Everything is real to her & in her . . even sending somebody’s regards.
The conventions of society she lives out of, & so she makes one smile by her least ways. I consider
her quite original & poetical in her external life, much more than Robert & I are, professed poets
as we are! And I dare say she couldn’t write a verse worth a straw. It is so sometimes—there are
persons who, unable to make an ideal in Art, struggle for it in their daily life . . their bread and
butter & boiled mutton, . . & such persons are often melancholy & always eccentric . . & interesting,
I will add. Also, you cant imagine how affectionate she can be. Oh, I like her much, & so does
Robert. We had a long letter from her the other day, written in pencil! She’s miserable in London,
where it’s settled she is to live for the present—with occasional transits to Paris. You would like
her if you knew her better. She has just sent Andersen’s Fairy Tales to Penini15 . . who seems to
like them, though they are rather beyond his age, I cant help thinking.

Arabel— I wrote to Mr® Jago from Rome. I never forget her—it was she who had forgotten
me, I thought. I will write now. Letters must wander strangely, for I wrote to Mr® Martin too, not
long since.16 How unlucky!

And tell Henrietta, we never received her Illustrated News17 which she says she was so kind
as to send to us. Robert caught sight of it at the library . . & that was how we came to know of her
military glories. I am a long letter from her the other day, written in pencil! I do hope that her visiting London this
winter wont keep her from doing so next summer. Oh— surely she will promise to meet us then.

I sent the ballad of “My Kate” to Mr Procter for Miss Power’s Keepsake,18 because he wrote
to ask for it. Therefore it does not come under the head of contributing to periodical literature for
money— I have also given lately “A Curse for a Nation” to Mr® Chapman of Paris (her sisters
passing through Florence) to be printed in her American periodical against slavery.19

I am very sorry about Annie Hayes’ divorce.20 As she cant marry again, what can be the use
of it, I wonder? A divorced woman in England (thanks to the state of law & public opinion) is
never in an improved position. She was mad when she married, & is scarcely sane when she
unmarries. That’s my opinion. “As the tree falls, it may lie”21 & her tree fell into a ditch. Most
heartily glad I am to escape being ‘witness’— Poor Arabel. I do quite pity you. You come in for
the worst of everything.

Tell me faithfully about Papa, for I think much of him & anxiously. Why did the Cooks
interfere about Henrietta?22 What she thought of might, by a chance, have succeeded, when nothing
else succeeds. Aunt Jane all but recommended it long ago. In any case, as Henrietta had courage
for it, it was quite foolish to prevent the trial. P3 should not have courage either to do it, or to
prevent its being done.

Arabel, dearest darling, do write to me. Speak to dearest Trippy for me— I pray for her & love
her. Oh—so anxious I am, <★★★>

Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year determined from EBB’s references to Sebastopol and to the Christmas party Pen attended at Rome
the previous year.
2. Richard Lovelace (1618–58), “To Lucasta, Going to the Wars” (1649), lines 11–12.
3. See EBB's comment in letter 23 "that these anniversaries are filled to me with bitter thoughts."


5. From EBB's comments, I take this to refer to Mary Wolcott Goodrich (b. 1837), the youngest child of Goodrich's second marriage to Mary Boott; however, I have been unable to verify EBB's remarks about Miss Goodrich's abilities as a medium. Samuel Griswold Goodrich (1793–1860) was an American author and publisher from Boston who had been U.S. Consul at Paris from 1851–53. In 1827 he began publishing a series of instructional books for children based on geography, history, and mythology, as opposed to the more standard children's books based upon religious subjects. The first title in this series was called *The Tales of Peter Parley, About America* (Boston: S. Griswold, 1827). These stories became popular, and were widely pirated in England. In *Recollections of a Lifetime* (New York: Miller, Orton & Co., 1857), Goodrich mentions various members of the Anglo-Florentine circle; however, the Brownings are not named (II, 521–525). While in Florence they resided in Casa Del Bello, a large building where furnished apartments were available for long or short-term leases.

6. Presumably a paper produced during attempts at spirit-writing. This is the only instance of EBB referring to her father as regards spirit-writing; however, see letter 107, note 7, where she had mentioned her mother's and sister's names being written.

7. James Jackson Jarves (1818–88), an American critic and essayist who was actively developing a collection of early Italian paintings that is now at Yale, had arrived in Florence in 1852. In addition to his love of art, he shared EBB's interest in spiritualism, furnishing her with reports that he received from his parents in Boston. They were not only believers in Home but became his patrons as well. Jarves went to England in late spring 1855 where he met Daniel Duglas Home (1833–86), probably the most renowned medium during the period when popular interest in spiritualism was at its height. Home had just arrived from America. EBB, as did most of her contemporaries, spelled Home's name the way it was pronounced. In May 1855 Jarves wrote from London to Madame Mignaty detailing his experiences with Home: "From my intimacy with Hume, I have attained a practical insight into the 'modus operandi' and conditions of spiritualism such as I could through no other source, because as a medium he is most favored among mortals" (Francis Steegmuller, *The Two Lives of James Jackson Jarves*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1951, p. 141). The details of his letter were shared with the Brownings as EBB indicates in a letter to Isa Blagden in September 1855 (ms at Fitzwilliam).

8. Washington Irving (1783–1859), American author, editor, and diplomat, had had at least one recorded experience with moving tables. In a letter to Mrs. Pierre M. Irving, dated 10 February 1853, he writes about attending a party in Washington "where the grand experiment was made on a large table,... the table gradually raised on two legs, ... performed gyrations about the room &c; all which appeared very mysterious and diabolic. Unfortunately, two or three of us tried an after experiment, and found we could tip table, and make it move about the room without any very apparent exertion of our hands; so we remain among the unconverted—quite behind the age" (Pierre M. Irving, *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, London: Richard Bentley, 1864, 4, 111).

9. Cf. Daniel 5:25: "And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPSHARIN." In the verse immediately preceding, Daniel tells Belshazzar: "Then was the part of the hand sent from him [i.e., God]; and this writing was written" (Daniel 5:24), which indicates that the hand was sent from God, not that it was God's hand. No hand is mentioned at all in the account of Moses receiving the tablets on which the ten commandments were written (see Exodus 24:12).


11. “Lady Mother.”

13. The placement of quotation marks is EBB's.
14. All four gospel writers record the account of Peter cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant at the betrayal of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane; see Matthew 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50-51; and John 18:10. However, only Matthew and John specifically name Peter as committing the act.
15. Hans Christian Andersen (1805-75), Danish poet and fabulist, met the Brownings when he visited Rome in May 1861. In a letter to Isa Blagden, [18 May 1861], EBB wrote: “Pen says of him ... ‘He is rather like his own ugly duck, but his mind has developed into a swan’” (LEBB, II, 448). Andersen is best remembered for his Fairy Tales, which were first published in Danish in 1835; they soon (1843) appeared in English and were often reprinted. The most recent English edition at this time was a translation by Madame de Chatelain: Tales and Fairy Stories (London: G. Routledge & Co., 1852). Miss Sandford’s presentation copy to Pen has not survived.
16. EBB’s letter to Mrs. Martin, dated 25 November [1854], is printed in part in LEBB, II, 180–182 (ms at Wellesley).
17. See note 7 in the preceding letter.
19. “A Curse for a Nation” was originally published in The Liberty Bell (Boston: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1856, pp. 1–9), an abolitionist annual edited by Maria Weston Chapman (1806–85). A copy inscribed by her “To Elizabeth Barrett Browning from her affectionate friend Maria Weston Chapman, Weymouth, Massachusetts, U.S., January 29th, 1856” sold as lot 861 in Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, A621; present whereabouts unknown). Mrs. Chapman had three sisters: Caroline Weston (1808–82), Anne Warren Weston (1812–90), and Emma Forbes Weston (1825–88).
21. Cf. the old English proverb “As a man lives, so shall he die; as a tree falls, so shall it lie.”
22. I have been unable to clarify EBB's remarks regarding Surtees Cook’s family, but from the context and the reference to Aunt Jane, it seems it must have something to do with EBB's father.
23. Underscored twice.

Letter 117

[Florence]

[Jan? 10, 1855]¹

If I were sure Henrietta were in London, I would write this letter to her, for I owe her one, dear thing, .. but as I am not sure even of her being at Plymouth, it will be better to go to you again my beloved Arabel .. wont it? you wont be angry perhaps– I was so horribly frightened to open your last letter that the accounts contained in it (sad enough abstractedly) really relieved me– One may breathe & look forward a little while, it seems– A very bad point is what you meanwhile are enduring, my poor darlingest Arabel– Remember that you must not sacrifice yourself, & that as what is wanted seems to be chiefly attention rather than companionship, any active gentle person to whom dear Trippy is favorably inclined, will do as well as you, or better, sometimes. Of course it is very painful, all this ruffling & irritation of the spirit– We must consider however that it is to some degree a constitutional state, aggravated of course by the circumstances of confinement & illness, and by no means (to my mind) an unfavorable sign of the bodily condition. For the rest, she is not probably aware of the pain she gives– Dearest, take courage & dont be too much cast down by all these trials. For the rest .. at the bottom of her soul she loves you, & also
loves good and God. Christ is in us in very imperfect conditions often .. & when we seem very little Christian. Such undeveloped spirits develop, I believe, .. grow & brighten gradually after death—the germ expands. If it were not so we should reasonably be in great terror for beloved friends in a stormy & unspiritual state,—& indeed the minority of the “saved” would amount to the all but general destruction of humanity— I am persuaded of a very different thing— The choice (upon the whole) of good rather than of evil—the least desire for the Lord’s love .. the lightest touch upon the hem of His garment2—this shall be found enough in His great day— At the same time, of course there must be growth, progress—and spirits so imperfectly developed cannot go at once to the places of the “just made perfect”3 of which the scripture speaks— Very few of us can, perhaps—

Tell dearest Trippy how I think of her, & continually pray for her. I heard Penini in his prayer last night say “and take care of dear Trippy.” He does not forget to pray still. Robert & I are talking sadly everyday of her suffering & your anxiety .. wishing in vain we could do something. But even if I were in London just now I should not help much—for you know how my wings are cut in the winter from all possible kinds of usefulness except using this pen. By the way you want to hear about me— I am very well—but as the weather has been unusually cold, I have had a little more cough .. just in the morning—you know my cough is always there, waiting like a lion in his den & ready to roar on provocation. As the weather changed to winter I began to look winterly .. so they said .. & to grow thin in the customary way—and therefore, some six or eight weeks ago Robert made me begin a course of asses’ milk which has agreed with me excellently— I take a tumbler-full every night at ten before going to bed, .. & M’ Irving who was here yesterday from Pisa, told me I was looking unusually well—so I suppose the effect is produced. Also, the cough is nothing to speak

<...>4

have warmth & air in this house. For the rest, I was shut up even in Rome last winter for two months,—and our Florence is considerably colder than Rome there’s no denying. Very sorry indeed I am to hear about Arabel Bevan.5 Why didn’t her husband take her abroad before the winter? I am much afraid that if the chest does not now improve it wont be better after the confinement— Then, in fact, is the danger— She ought to be better now. How horrible it would be if she were taken away from those young children & poor M’ Bevan who loves her so .. and her mother (not least to be thought of) who has had so much anxiety lately. As to <Charlotte>6 and the dangerous post near the ambulances, why it would have been still more dangerous in the battle. If he were my brother or son, I should not feel satisfied with him, I think.

But, dearest Arabel, I quite agree with you that Surtees could not under present circumstances leave his family .. that he ought not. But if they had granted the majority, he would have been on the way to be a colonel at Sebastopol—& no inglorious way either. As it is, we are agreed of course.

On the other hand

<...>

with them. Tell me, too, how he amuses himself? if he reads much— Arabel, ask for the ‘Initials’7— it’s rather an amusing view of German manners—a novel, of course. And do you know ‘Stuart of
Dunleath' by M‘Norton—III written, but excellently conducted in point of story— I could’nt guess the end, experienced novelreader as I am. I think you have read ‘Consuelo’ by George Sand . & the continuation, the ‘Comtesse de Rudolstat’ if not, you must. Get ‘André’ too by her . which Robert delights in so. I am quite pleased that you liked the ‘Maitres Sonneurs’, as, to my mind, it is a perfect book. Consuelo, however, is more interesting—carries you away more. A thing to know is, that in the first part of the book (the scenes laid in Italy) Ma‘Viardot was the type in the author’s mind, while afterwards in the German part, she took hold of Adelaide Kemble, character & life, & fused her into ‘Consuelo’. The religious speculations in the book will offend you of course, & are abundantly absurd, but there is nothing audacious otherwise. I do think, a little dissipation in some amusing books, Arabel, will do you good just now—it’s a sort of mental change of scene & air. By the way, you never told me how you liked ‘Atherton’. Remember, I heard today from Miss Mitford. She says she is losing strength—but really the whole tone of her letter does not give me that idea.

It is sad, what you tell me about Maddox—Ask dear Minnie to give her my love when she writes to her. There seems to be nothing but sadness on all sides—except in my Penini’s face. And I have been making that sad too, just now, wicked creature that I am. He came in with his hat on, looking radiant . “Dod bless you, darling pet mama! I’m going out.” “Do you love me, Peni?” [“]Oh yes—all the world. More than the world! all the stars.” “Would you be sorry if I went away.” “I never would let you go.” “But if I were to die!!” “Oh—dont speat about it”—with such an expression of pain . that I was siezed [sic] instantly with remorse for my stupidity & began to talk fast of all sorts of pleasanter things to put it out of his head. He always comes to me before he goes out—& there’s always a little parting speech on his part— If it is’n’t “Dod bless you”, or ‘Tate tare of yourself’, it’s “I wish you good fortune in the house!”—a phrase caught from Robert in part, who is fond of asking me to “wish him good-fortune” when he goes out to walk or to his room to write. Penini was very happy again on the twelfth-day morning. According to Florentine tradition he had hung up a stocking the evening before on going to bed,—not a sock of his own . oh no—he sensibly observed it was “too little to hold anything except bon bons” . he would have a stocking of papa’s as being the largest belonging to us. Well—of course the ‘Besana’ the famous visitress of good children, came in the night, & filled this stocking full & tight up to the top. There were cigars & lobsters & fish made of chocolate, and a box of figs, and a box of painted ships, & another box of sportsmen & dogs, and an album, & a stick of sealing wax, & oranges & apples, . & a tray on the outside for the christmas tea service. The child’s ecstasies were unbounded, though at first Wilson says he was a little awestruck, & half afraid of investigating the mystic stocking in the early morning light— Then there was a burst of gratitude . “I really think Lily, I must write a note to the Besana, to thank her, you know. Dont you sint so!” Someone asked Penini the other day if he would’nt like a little sister— “Yes”—said he— Then . after a pause . “Never mind a sister! When I’m a large tall man” (in a loud authoritative voice) “I shall mally!” (marry). “Will you marry me Penini,” asked Isa Blagden. “Yes, Isa, if you lite it” . in a little obliging voice. So funny that child is! really he astounds one sometimes—The evening before last, he & I were sitting over the fire, not doing anything particular,
& I asked him to sing me a song. He began at the top of his voice .. “Ho il core quasi rotto d’amore. O Dio, che fare! io morirô [sic].”15 “Why,” said I, “Penini, that’s a very pretty song—but where did you get the words?” “I didn’t der them at all. I made them my own self.” Which perhaps he did, .. in a certain sense .. (I am sure he did, as he said so) but as Ferdinando & he are often in the kitchen together, singing away the time with scraps of operatic music, of course the sentiment came from that source. Otherwise it would be too miraculously premature. How Robert laughed when I told him. Penini has taken again to his drawings & has done several which I should like very much to show you. He has all sorts of aptitudes, & what will be the ruling faculty it is hard to say— His two first copy books, the second full of compositions, are in Paris, and Sarianna is to take an opportunity of sending them to you .. and you, when you have quite done with them, must send them back to her, as Mf Browning is to have them to keep.16 They are both written in pencil, you will see—but the third copybook on which he is now engaged, is written in ink, & contains compositions in both Italian & English. Its a great deal for a child to do, at his age .. between five & six. Robert & I found out this morning moreover, that he nearly knows the first multiplication table—without being taught. He began .. “Mama, do you know what two tens mates? Twenty.” I was surprised—and then we found that he knew what two sixes .. two eights &c &c made beside. He has taught himself to make figures. I never taught him anything in this way except how to count to ten, when he was in London,—& having an idea (which is true) that I would rather he didn’t think of such things for the present, he has been rather piqued—particularly since hearing in Rome last winter how Altham could count to a hundred— I laughed & said, “O Peni, I never will teach you that”—and he answered “Then I must go to Papa”. And so naughty Papa, out of spite, gave him the theory of counting to a hundred, directly. Peni is very anxious too about learning French. He knows a long list of French words pronounced according to fate & Ferdinando. He said with considerable satisfaction the other day, that he “supposed,” after he had been a year in Paris, he should be “half French & half Italian”, “And English”? said I. “Oh, English!” (with a certain scorn) “I’m not a head of a pin, English.” “I like the English,” observed Isa Blagden .. “I’m proud of being English.” “But you’re only a woman, Isa!” Robert is horribly shocked at these unpatriotic sentiments, & he amuses me sometimes by setting himself regularly to argue the point with the child as a point of dogma & duty. As for me I cant help laughing. You see it comes from a sense of superiority he has with his two languages, over some of the English here who cant speak Italian. He gives himself immense airs even with Wilson sometimes—instructing her in pronunciation—[“]This is the way to say it, Lily— I must know,—because I was born in Florence. The English always will shut their mouses when they speat.” Also he instructs me when he finds it necessary. Then he feels his advantage of belonging to the male sex, to a degree that quite startles me—there’s a sort of instinct in it—I suppose. One morning at breakfast Wilson & Ferdinando were talking, & Ferdinando spoke of some tradesman in Florence who would only employ men. Penini broke out suddenly with .. “Benissimo! Tutte le donne sono cattive, eccetto mia mamma— Mamma solamente e buona.”17 Upon Wilson’s thanking him very much for the compliment to herself, he condescended to make another exception in her favour.
Ought'n't I to be ashamed of writing so much of Penini? But really he's the pleasantest subject just now. Ml Tennyson gave “punch” on the twelfth night to those whom Ml Lytton designates as “the brethren”.. viz Robert, Ml Norton, & Isa Blagden. Robert scarcely would go—but I made him. We had tea together first—but no cake, Arabel. I am happy to say I have had the dullest of Christmases, & Penini did'nt keep his word of “filling this room with peoples out of Florence”-. I was'nt inclined to such “receptions”- Robert & I do work every day—he has a large volume of short poems which will be completed by the spring—and I have some four thousand five hundred lines towards mine. I am afraid that six thousand lines will not finish it.18 I shall be ready, at any rate—for I work on regularly. . . and in order to prevent the interruption of morning visitors, we have given general directions to the effect that we don't 'receive' before three oclock- Ml Jerves is going to Rome for a month. . which will interrupt my spirit-news for the present. Then he goes to America for the purpose of investigation I mentioned to you. Did I tell you of the engagement he entered into with me on that subject?— He is a convert from a state of complete infidelity into very earnest, if not precise, religious views, entirely by these “spiritual manifestations.” Also he has been corresponding with Ml® Trollope whom he found disbelieving in God & the soul, & left “much moved.” She begins to think there may be such a thing as a spiritual world, after all—

Arabel, if papa keeps more in the house than he used to do, next summer, you can come to me, but I cant go to you. Neither can Penini— Only we must smuggle him in to see dear Minny—that must be. Write & tell me all about dearest Henrietta & her children, & Surtees’ plans. It will be dismal work if they are sent abroad—they cannot hope to be sent comfortably, you see. And Malta & Corfu, even, in the summer are bad places for English children. Except for the voyage, Canada might be better. Ah well— I do trust there may be no sending anywhere. Certain of the militia are as necessary in England as any can be elsewhere. Robert says ‘Can you spare me room to write to Arabel’? “Not today.” “Then tell her I love her dearly!" Miss Sandford writes to us together so Robert added some lines to my letter. That’s the meaning of his letter to her. I am so greedy for room or he w^ would have written to you long since. Now he will. Send this note to Chapman.19 How is Ml® Orme. Best love to all of you—

Does papa ever go to see Trippy?—

(The spirits) wrote last night, ‘very ill,’ & w^ say who was ill, or one intelligible word after. Wilson's faculty is unsatisfactory. Dearest darling Arabel, do'nt keep me without news. If you imagine I ever think of the postage of a letter of yours, except to be glad to have to pay it. Dearest, dont have fancies about postages, when I am famishing for heart's food- Tell dearest Trippy how I love her & think of her & pray for her- God bless you in His own ineffable love—

Your Ba.

If you ever write to dear Ml Hunter speak my name to him in cordial affection. You received my scrap of note through Ml® Jago?20

Address: Anglettere via France. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.
Letter 117

10 January [1855]

1. Year provided by postmark.

2. Cf. Matthew 9:20-21: “And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.”


4. The page has been excised in two places: one-fourth at the top of the page and one-fourth at the bottom, affecting the text as noted by ellipses in angle brackets here and below.

5. See letter 6, note 7. From the context, I take this to refer to some difficulties she was having in her pregnancy; however, she must have recovered, as indicated in a letter EBB wrote to Henrietta in July [1855]: “Arabel Bevan came yesterday for half an hour, but the children had already left London. I thought her looking very well, & much more in health than at the time of her marriage” (Transcript in editor’s file).

6. The name Charlotte has been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella. I have been unable to determine which regiment Charlotte’s husband, Robin Hedley, was serving in at this time.

7. The Initials (3 vols., London: Richard Bentley, 1850) by Baroness Jemima Tauphœus (née Montgomery, 1807–93). According to the DNB, “there is no novel in the language in which the epithet ‘charming’ could be applied with more strict propriety than to her first work, ‘The Initials’.”


10. See letter 115 (note 9), in which EBB recommended Sand’s book to Arabella.

11. Michelle Ferdinande Pauline Viardot (née Garcia, 1821–1910) had married Louis Viardot (1800–83) in 1840. Her father was a famous tenor and her mother a celebrated actress, and they provided her with an adventurous childhood. As one of the outstanding operatic singers of her day, she is readily accepted as the model for the character Consuelo; however, EBB’s assertion about Adelaide Kemble seems unique. Consuelo, a young Spanish gypsy singer, marries the Comte de Rudolstadt and then begins a musical career, first in Venice and then in Austria. After the death of her husband, Consuelo explores various mystical religions, including Rosicrucianism, illuminism, and Swedenborgianism, a literary device that allowed Sand to project religious and social harmony under a broad Christian canopy. In a letter to RB in August 1845, EBB admitted many of the faults that RB had found in the novel; nevertheless, she defended it as “a sort of rambling Odyssey, a female Odyssey, if you like, but full of beauty & nobleness, let the faults be where they may” (BC, 11, 32).

12. Atherton, and Other Tales (3 vols., London: Hurst and Blackett, 1854), which Miss Mitford had started work on as early as 1836 (see BC, 3, 176, note 9), but which was not published until May 1854. In a letter written in December 1854, EBB told Miss Mitford that she still had not seen a copy (EBB-MRM, III, 423).

13. EBB’s comment is particularly poignant in view of the fact that Miss Mitford died on this day.

14. “In common Tuscan talk ‘befana’ means a witch” (J. Wood Brown, Florence Past and Present, London: Rivingtons, 1911, p. 306). On the eve of the feast of the Epiphany (i.e., 5 January), she makes her visits, “filling the stockings of good children with presents,” and to avoid her anger, children are made to eat beans on that night, and recite the following incantation:

   “Befana, Befana, non mi bucare,
   Ch’io ho mangiato pane e fave
   Ed ho un corpo duro, duro,
   Che mi suona come un tamburo” (p. 301)

15. “My heart is almost broken by love. O God, what may I do! I’m going to die.”

16. Pen’s copy books have not survived; however, according to EBB’s remarks in a letter to Sarianna earlier in January 1855, the copy books contained sketches by Leighton in addition to Pen’s own work (ms at Lilly).

17. “Excellent! All women are bad, except my mother– Mother only is good.”

18. i.e., Aurora Leigh; RB was working on Men and Women. Only a fragment of (a half page) of RB’s “large volume of short poems,” in which he wrote what would become Men and Women, is extant. It sold at auction at Sotheby’s (London) on 8 December 1999 (see letter 94, note 34).
19. For the text of RB's letter to Chapman, which includes an order for books for Pen, see NL, pp. 80–81.
20. Only the envelope of EBB's letter to Nelly Jago, postmarked 26 December 1854, is extant (ms at ABL).

Letter 118

[In EBB's hand]  
[Florence]  
[ca. 26 February 1855]

(*** that he who speaks it like English, should not read it as currently—and there's a good Italian translation here of Frank, I understand. A quarter of an hour a day will be enough for this. Thank you about the books, my dearest dearest Arabel—but you had no business to add that other book. Observe, I shall be quite afraid to ask you to do business for me if you persist in taking the opportunity to give me alms. I am convinced that you have done nothing effective about the Edgeworth series, by the way, because it is only now that I have found out the secret of the Knot of the blunder made by Chapman & Hall. There are six numbers of 'Frank'—whereas I have one number of Frank .. no. 2. of Harry & Lucy .. no. 3. of Rosamond .. & so on. Never mind. We shall have books enough & more than enough till we get to England. Your parcel has not reached us yet—but I have the loan of a heap of excellent books from Mr Powers .. not Swedenborgian, Arabel .. and through our regularity in reading eight or ten pages daily, we read a great deal in quantity.

So anxious I am about our dearest Henrietta & the mediterranean possibilities. It will be terrible if she has to go, with those children even! I don't quite understand what the post is, for which Surtees has been applying .. but I do trust & pray, whatever it may be, he may succeed. Whatever it may be, it must be better than barracks at Gibralter [sic] or barracks at Malta, each of which places is intensely hot in the summer & improper as the residence of infants from England—They are expensive too—that's another objection .. more expensive than London is! Altham must be really handsome by what you say of his dark brown large eyes, & light long hair. I like that combination. I only hope Henrietta does not over work the child—it makes me a little uncomfortable to hear of his remarkable forwardness, & I ventured to say a word or two on the subject, for which, may she not be vexed with me! but really I could not help it. Penini never looked so robust as he does now. His cheeks are red as a pomegranate, & round too. He is fat & full of dimples. Just now he has come back from the fair with what he calls "a violin." I tell him I rather prefer his gun & pistol– I feel rather more tenderly for his very drum. My soul is on edge with this divine instrument of his, which I admit however, "will look very pretty hung on the wall."

If I once began to write politics, I never should end, and the "revolutionary Times" is writing for me I am happy to perceive, & to more probable results than any writing of mine. We are both sick at heart about the Crimea. At the same time, & apart from the dreadful amount of individual suffering, there will be good in the state of gangrene declaring itself. For I blame the ministry less than the system. The misfortune is that, after hanging Lord Aberdeen, you have probably done an injustice. Where everybody means well & everything turns out as it has, one may "despair of the republic" indeed! A wholesome state of humiliation & European pillory .. will in the
meanwhile be excellent for us—it will be opportunity for meditation, & necessity for reform, at once—Penini said yesterday.. “After all, mama,.. perhaps it would be better if the French & English left off fighting.” “Left off fighting”.. said I!.. “how do you mean?” “Why, perhaps then, the Russians would leave off too. They might think then, ‘Perhaps the French love us’.. and then they would go & kiss directly.” Angelical Penini! He had heard something of some of the French workmen being blown up in the mine, & though he is immensely military on the grand scale, he can’t bear the details of suffering. He has rather the Tuscan notions of war.. military music, plenty of trumpets, & flags flying, & guns with only powder “to make a noise & hurt not.” ~ It is curious how the nations are “gathering like eagles” to this war, certainly—and I do not in the least wonder that the Newman street churches who declared three years ago that precisely such a state of things was imminent.. (“There must be a general war,” said their Paris ‘angel[?]’ to me who was incredulous!) are more confirmed than ever in their views. At the same time I am not drawn over to them on this account— I believe their churches have communication with spirits.. but with fallible spirits (don’t think I mean what are called evil spirits) & that they have partial glimpses of truth. They are too much in disaccord with scripture as I understand it, to impress me in any other way than this. M’ Jerves has returned from Rome, & I have heard him read (yesterday we saw him) various American letters. The bishop of Rhode Island held a paper in his hand, upon which under his eyes & in a strong light, the spirits wrote— (understand without his instrumentality in any way.). Then, there are a presbyterian minister (a M! Fields) & his sister, who see & converse with the spirits, face to face & voice to voice. M’ Jerves goes to America in April, & will write me his own experience. The ‘raps’ continue at M’ Kirkup’s, but I answer for nothing there. M’ K’s deafness & unphilosophical habits being against much confidence.— Sophia Cottrell has a baby.. a boy! I am sorry it is a boy”— she was naturally anxious for a girl. Henrietta was so happy in that completion of wishes. I would give several curls from my Penini’s head for a little girl—that’s certain! but another boy I would scarcely accept. No other could be like Penini— And if he could, he would be impertinent. When I see how Robert has written an “Iliad in a nutshell,” I am ashamed of my great scrambling m’s—he has sent you a letter as long as mine, and really I do feel half jealous of it. Let me diminish too, “small by degrees & beautifully less” so as to emulate him—particularly as he has made me swear not to read a word of what he has written, which is quite irritating. We have just taken on Casa Guidi for another year from May, but dont be frightened .. we are coming nevertheless. It seemed unwise, considering everything, (the cheapness of the apartment with the rest) to drag ourselves up by the roots, leaving ourselves without a home in the fixed sense. Books & furniture— where were they to go?—and then I love the house & Robert indulges me in the love of it. We have applied for the bath.. & hope to succeed in getting it. It will help us to let the apartment to advantage. Robert is afraid of the Paris winters for me. (he has had a fright about me you see) but a winter there, now & then, wont hurt me, even if a succession of them should prove too much—which it may. The railway will open this spring the whole way from Marseilles to Boulogne; & Florence will be by so much nearer to England. Tell me how dear Minny is—& what were the last accounts from Maddox. Tell me about you all—& of yourself chiefly, my darling Arabel. I
I am anxious about you. Write to me, will you dearest? Your notes through M' Kenyon are welcome, but don't count as letters, remember.

[Continued by RB]

Dearest Arabel,—I don't think I have written one word to you for years—two or three! Now, why should I? As I never see a word in Ba's letters I suppose them to be complete things, like whatever else she puts all her heart into—that she not only speaks for herself but for me. At the same time, I feel I could tell you at times many little matters she may, by a chance, leave out— for of course she can't see herself as I see her, or know herself as I know her—can she? Be sure of one thing, however; that writing or not writing there is no one more constantly in both our thoughts, both our words—your dear & perfect goodness, the remembrance of you in a thousand ways, and the ever-renewed hope to see you soon again and get more to remember .. if our life must needs be spent with these unfortunate intervals of absence from you. Ba has been very far from well,—very ill, indeed, this winter: I could not have imagined that the cold could do her so much harm,—no previous winter here was ever so formidable: she was ill enough, for instance, when we left Paris & reached Genoa—but a week here seemed to set all to rights: now this winter began favorably,—till January came with horrible cold, and she broke down at once: that is over now, I can assure you: her cough is quite gone,—and she is far less reduced than one would expect. It is exquisite spring-weather at last, and I am quite easy as about the end of it all—only, I shall fear winter for the future, I promise you. I shall say nothing about her entire sweetness and patience under those sad coughing-fits,—you know her. All else has been favorable to us. Penini's health, for instance, was never so visible & satisfactory: he is very dear & affectionate,—very clever, too,—& more child-like than children of his age, I seem to think: certainly we have not polished off any of his natural bloom,—what he does, he does easily and at once,—of course Ba tells you every thing about him, however. We have been altogether at home, of late. I went out of evenings at Rome,—being forced to do so—here I can do as I please, and I please, very decidedly, to keep the fireside. It will soon be extinguished, I suppose—and we shall be turning our faces to you & England, .. if .. you know the terrible "ifs," which suggest themselves from time to time! I believe we shall manage it, however. And how do all the brothers thrive, I wonder? Henrietta's household is as intimately known to me as this of our own, pretty nearly—but I can only hope that George and the others do well in these disastrous times. Ah, dear Arabel,—there are poor blunderers in the world beside our Italians, are there not? You can't know,—you in England, in your own house, as it were, what it is to read day by day the opinions of the world, our natural enemy, on the broken prestige of "the Duke" and the "British arms" and all we have been so proud of! Don't let us talk of it. Did you hear of the danger we ran a week or two since from the floods? The Arno, which dwindles to a mere thread in dry weather, gets into a famous torrent with a few days' rain,—and he was all but among us the last night of it: people provisioned themselves, on this side the river, as for a siege (the markets being on the other side) and bricked & plastered up all low windows, cellars' [sic] gratings & the like: a boat plied in the quarter of S'a Croce,—with other delights, and I, for my own little adventure, could not cross the nearest bridge, the waters covering the foot of it—& when I did get home, there was Penini crying as if his heart would break at my impending fate! All the lower country is under water, the railway
broken,—& our “comfort” is that at Rome they have suffered worse still. It just occurs to me that you will want an eyeglass to read this scribble... which I have been effecting as if solely for myself! But my allowance of paper was so limited—& even as it is, I have done so little justice to the great love of your most affectionately, Robert—

Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Approximately dated by EBB’s references to the floods and to the birth of the Cottrells’ baby.
2. See letter 115, note 10; I have been unable to identify an Italian translation of Frank. The fifth edition of Maria Edgeworth’s *Harry and Lucy* (1st ed., London: R. Hunter, 1825) had been published in London in 1853 by Simkin, Marshall, and Co.
3. In his journal for 1 February 1855, Surtees Cook wrote: “Henrietta & the children arrived by the Express this evening. The men of the 1st. Somerset were this day asked by their Colonel, Lord Hinton to volunteer for the Mediterranean Stations, viz. Gibraltar, Malta, & the Ionian Islands for five years: in compliance with the directions on this subject from the War Office. Most of the officers and non-commissioned officers stepped to the front: but only 255. men were willing to go” (Surtees). Henrietta and Surtees did not got to the Mediterranean.
4. George Hamilton Gordon (1784–1860), 4th Earl of Aberdeen; see note 17 below for details concerning the fall of his coalition government.
5. Cf. *The Tempest*, III, 2, 135–136: “Be not afeard, the isle is full of noise / Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.” In December 1847, EBB had written to Miss Mitford about the civic guard showing off their helmets and epaulettes (*BC*, 14, 340). She employs this image of ostentation over substance in *Casa Guidi Windows*, 1, 744–758. I have been unable to clarify EBB’s comment about the “French workmen being blown up in the mine.”
6. Cf. Matthew 24:28: “For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”
7. Underscored three times.
8. See letter 74, note 18.
9. Thomas March Clark (1812–1903) had been consecrated Bishop of Rhode Island on 6 December 1854, and served until his death. I have been unable to clarify EBB’s comments about his experience with spirit-writing; however, in a lecture published years later on the subject of spiritualism and materialism, he commented that “material things are the symbols of spiritual things, and we are able to express the latter only through the medium of the former” (“The Seen and The Unseen” in *Boston Monday Lectures, 1880–81: Christ and Modern Thought*, London: Richard D. Dickinson, 1881, pp. 16–17); and no doubt EBB would have agreed with his belief “that everything seen and temporal, which is not of the nature of sin, is a type and symbol and prophecy of something unseen and eternal, only purer and more glorious” (p. 13).
10. Emilia Ann Brewer (1807–61) and her brother Henry Martyn Field (1822–1907), a Presbyterian clergyman, scholar, and traveller, who was at this time owner and editor of *The Evangelist*, a New York publication. I have been unable to clarify EBB’s comments about their spiritualist activities.
11. Clement Cottrell, third son and fourth child of Henry and Sophia Cottrell, was born in Florence on 25 February 1855. He died on 17 March 1855, and was buried with his sister and brother in the Swiss Cemetery in Florence.
12. Henrietta’s second child was a girl, Mary Altham Cook (1852–1951), afterwards (1862) Altham.
13. Cf. the Latin proverb: “*in nuce Ilias.*” RB’s portion of this joint letter is written in an extremely minute, but entirely legible hand on half of the final page.
14. Cf. Matthew Prior (1664–1721), “Henry and Emma” in *Poems on Several Occasions* (1709), lines 427–430: “No longer shall the bodice aptly lac’d / From thy full bosom to thy slender waist, / That Air and Harmony of Shape express, / Fine by Degrees, and beautifully less.”
15. The Brownings’ lease for Casa Guidi was renewed annually on 1 May. Based upon the outline of a plan of the apartment made in 1914 and given to Kate Gowey, a founder of the San Francisco Browning Society, by
Ellen Laura Centaro, the American wife of the Italian owner of the palazzo, the Brownings' had been given the bath as part of their lease.

16. Maddox was a native of Ledbury, Herefordshire, and during the latter years of their residence at Hope End the Barretts used her services as a seamstress.

17. Doubtless a reference to Henry Pelham Fiennes Pelham Clinton (1811-64), 5th Duke of Newcastle, who, as Secretary for the Colonies, had assumed the additional duty of the War Office in June 1854. Due to a series of reports in The Times, blaming the bad organization and shortage of supplies in the face of harsh conditions on the inability of the aristocratic government, the government and Newcastle specifically had come under heavy criticism, which eventually led to the collapse of Aberdeen's coalition at the end of January 1855. On 1 February 1855, the day after Newcastle had resigned, he made a speech in the House of Lords defending himself, "as for incapacity, he would leave the verdict to others, but the other charges of indolence and indifference, which hurt him deeply, he would deny with all his strength" (F. Darrell Munsell, The Unfortunate Duke: Henry Pelham, Fifth Duke of Newcastle, 1811-1864, Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1985, p. 212). RB was evidently affected by what he saw as the press's disgracing of the English government and forces. In a letter to Sarianna ten days earlier, EBB wrote: "Robert is a good deal struck by the generous tone of the observations of the French press, as contradistinguished from the insolences of the Americans, who really are past enduring just now" (LEBB, II, 204).

18. A report in Galignani's Messenger for 26-27 February 1855, noted that "the Eternal City has been just menaced with an inundation. The continued rains had swelled the Tiber, and forced it to issue from its channel. All the low quarters of the city, the Ghetto, the Orso, the Ripetta, and the open space of the Pantheon were under water."

19. In RB's contribution, his handwriting is extremely small, yet very legible; see note 13 above.

Letter 119

[Florence]
[11-18 March 1855]

My beloved Arabel send on this enclosure to dearest Henrietta. I must write to her, dear thing—and I must write to you that I have to thank you for your prodigal generosity to Penini in the glories of whose birthday we are still—Henrietta's note should have gone to her before, besides my thanks going to you before. We received the books on the very day your letter reached me—They came to us (without a sou paid on our part) by the steamer which brings books to the Leghorn Cassels house, & M! Cassels had the goodness to extricate them, by means of all manner of protestation & after some delay from the custom-house where they had been siezed [sic] by the authorities—think of that, Arabel! Heretical works (in words of two syllables) directed against the pa-pal pow-er! "Mama's Bible lessons" could anything so flagitious be borne with? After a time however, the wise people thought better of it & gave up the books—and the "Peep of Day" was ceded to the darkness of the land. Now, (the Tuscan authorities being done with) it's your turn to be clamoured against, for really you are nearly as bad, in your way!—Eight books, did you send to that child—eight books! The end is, I shall never again be able to ask you to do anything for me. I must send my next commissions to somebody who wont empty her purse on me in reply. Oh Arabel. How could you be so suffocatingly kind?—there's no other word for it. As to your gifts, Penini, of course was charmed—. If I could have guessed their extent, I would
not have bought any myself—Eight books from you—eleven from ourselves! It's a complete
library. Isa Blagden gave him a small bookcase on his birthday, & there it stands, full & glittering!
Very few children, six years old, are possessed of as much literature. I must tell you that as he
was in bed when the parcel came, Robert suggested the wisdom of giving only your books
immediately, & of keeping our's till the birthday—lest the quantity of books should hinder their
individual effect. How scarlet with joy the child's cheeks grew when we gave him your parcel!
Such pretty books! The very backs pretty! He has already read to me the first volume of Mama's
Bible Stories, & is in the sequel volume, with the greatest delight. You see, he reads a good deal
at a time now .. & "feels inclined" on some days to go on reading when the regular quantity has
been finished. Also he has nearly finished the book with the "story of the Apple Dumpling"* in
it—which has taken his fancy immensely. One of the stories about children & fireworks he made
Wilson read to him, & brought the next day, begging me to hear him read it, to me. In the midst,
I said—"How dangerous, these fireworks. Now I expect an accident." He, sitting on my knee,
turned round & took my face between his two hands &, peering into it with his blue eyes .. "You
are frightened, my little darling? Don't be frightened. I know what it is. There was only a hole
burnt in the room. But" .. continued he with loud, tragic gravity, & stretching out one arm .. "it
burned tremendous!" (tremendous) March 16th Now, my darling Arabel, you will think we are
always ill, for I began this letter days ago, & stopped short, in great anxiety about Penini—For
months he has been looking like a rose full blown—I may have said so on the other side of this
very page for aught I know. Well—among the gifts on his birthday, was a fatal one of bonbons—
not the innocent chocolate ones to which we generally keep our dissipations—& one day, after
eating them, he came home from picking violets to tell me that he was feeling "deadly pains all
over his stomat." We did not think much of it. He ate a very good dinner in spite of them. In the
evening he said it hurt him to move his eyes, which proved something was wrong—so we
administered grey powder. Before he went to bed he "sought he would read somesing." I offered
him his favorite "Apple Dumpling," but he put it by—languidly—he "felt inclined to read somesing
about Jesus" .. & he took the 'Bible stories' & sate reading in the armchair. Next morning, grey
powder inefficient. Child very sick—I thought it best .. (oh folly!) instead of waiting patiently, to
give him a dose of senna. Restless night—medecine too active—a great deal of pain—"Dear Lily,
I'm sure I'm going to die." Then when the pain passed .. "Sant Dod, lat pain is better." This was
early in the morning, so that I didn't hear it I am glad to say, but Wilson came to tell me later that
there were dysenteric symptoms—& Robert went for Dr Harding directly after breakfast. We
were frightened of course. Dr H—said however that it was all simply the effect of too active
medecine, (irritation of the mucous membrane) the stomach being previously disordered, & he
administered nothing but a sort of almond emulsion which did great good. The danger was of its
running into dysentery—but the bad symptom which occurred only twice, was stopped. Still there
the child lay in bed for two days—never wishing to stir (he who can't generally be kept still a
moment!) but looking like an angel waiting to go, with his pink cheeks & too bright eyes, (there
was a good deal of fever the first day, & Robert ran for Dr Harding again before night) & his
golden hair on the pillow, & most angelical mildness—"Che viso angelico"* said M' Tolomei
who came from the Baths of Lucca, & whom we allowed to see him. On the second day he was
considerably better, & a little burst of silver laughter when Robert was burning the brown paper made me better too & he told a long story to Ferdinando about an elephant. Still, I got up with a heavy heart on the third day, for I thought he would keep his bed that day also... diarrhea continuing in a slight degree with occasional pain. But no, he ate breakfast with appetite (for two days the child had touched nothing) began to sing & talk, & called for his Bible Stories... reading them aloud to our unspeakable joy-- Robert carried him in a shawl into the drawing room where Dr Harding found him & said “But why dont you dress him? Let him run about & play.” So we dressed him & he ran about & played, & was quite well. Only so thin-- In those two or three days, Arabel, he has lost all his roundness—the little bones are visible everywhere. You cant imagine what this house was without him... when he was in bed, & we afraid. It seemed as if the sun had dropped suddenly out of heaven. Shall I ever have courage to give him medicine again? Indeed I am not a great medicine-giver, as you may think—and Penini scarcely ever takes it. Dr Harding comforted me—said it seemed a very rational thing to do &c &c... & that if the stomach had been in its usual healthy state, the grey powder having its ordinary action, I should not have been led into giving the additional senna—I dont reproach myself much indeed—I did it for the best, & Wilson did not think it wrong. Still, for the future I shall be afraid, which you will not think wrong. The child has not been out of doors yet, but is perfectly well, & did his lessons today as usual— I do thank God—Thank Him for us— As for me... before Penini’s illness I was somewhat of an invalid still myself— That is, I kept still in the two rooms— Penini emancipated me at once—Robert & I... if we left him, ... had an express messenger sent after us... we were to come & see him take his medicine, or look at his chicken tea... we were backwards & forwards the whole day— So, in the fashion of the man who first scratched out his eyes with a quickset hedge, & then scratched them in again with another,* have I got out of one trouble by means of a second trouble, & am the better for my Penini’s illness, really. He has been saying to me... “When I was ill, how I wished to be well again.” —“And did you ask God to make you well?” “Oh yes.” (very eagerly) “I did ask Him.” (Which he did, often.) “You know He means good to us even when he lets us be ill. We all, in this world, must suffer something sometimes.” “Yes”—he said—“we are all naughty,—and so we must all work. Look at the poor soldiers at the war!” In his prayer tonight, after thanking God for making him well, he put up a petition that we might “all of us be good, & well and fat,” which sounded rather peculiar.

His birthday was kept joyously. Such presents the child had. Our eleven books, in the first place— Then Isa Blagden gave a bookcase to hold the magnificent library. Madame Tassinari, a chessboard & men. Alice Tassinari, a game of dominos. Charlotte Agassiz a paintbox. Miss Getting (her friend)? an album— Wilson, a doll’s lookingglass & toilet, Ferdinando, Napoleon’s campaigns in a set of coloured prints... Robert & I, a great waggon, a set of nine pins, a toy watch & a whip— Finally, the fatal bonbons... I wont say who. Then he had little Hal Cottrell to dine with him & spend the day—

Ah—the poor Cottrells! While we thank God for our child, they are in sorrow for theirs. The little baby born three weeks ago, died this morning.* It was small & thin—and obstruction occurred, & it died. Robert is to go to the third child’s funeral at that house, on monday. Is it not sad? The poor mother is much afflicted. When the child was dying & it was thought necessary to baptize
it, she insisted that the Ch. of England clergyman should do so upon her bed. He is a liberal
man—Mr Neal of the English church here, ... & took it on him to explain that although he was
happy in performing the ceremony he was far from considering the child's safety involved. "That
opinion is simply a remnant of Romish superstition." You remember how there was disturbance
& difficulty in respect to the last child they lost, through a clergyman of that identical superstitious
opinion.

Tell me Alfred's address at Marseilles that I may try & entice him here. Don't you think he
would come? If it were only for a few days!—

What will dearest Henrietta think of me for not writing to her—for taking no notice of her
illness. See how my letter has been delayed! I was so very, very sorry! She was over-agitated &
overworked altogether in London, I dare say—& indeed the carrying Altham once up stairs under
those circumstances, was enough to account for the catastrophe. I hope she has cared for herself
since— As for the loss, it is of less consequence than her health. Really, Arabel, they want no
more children. Think!—a boy & a girl! So perfect it is. If Altham were like my Penini (who
wrote his last poem about a girl "who was always contented though she had no brother. That was
her only distress" ...) it would be different. But he has a companion of his own age. Tell dearest
Henrietta I have received her letter & thank her for it heartily.

I have heard from Mr Ruskin, who writes to ask if I am at Florence & if his letter would reach
me if he sent me some details about his last interview with my dear friend Miss Mitford. With
the most gratifying expression of opinion upon my poems, he tells me that in his forthcoming
book he is about to speak of me as a writer, in a way not, he hopes, displeasing to me. Robert was
enchanted with this letter. "When have I been so pleased with a letter?" said Robert—

Charlotte Agassiz is about to be married to an Italian, signor Generelli, & to settle in Florence.
She goes to England in June & will marry there. Isa Blagden goes to England in May with Louisa,
who is to sail for India in June. See how the months melt away— I wish they were not so fast, on
account of my poem. I am much interrupted!

Tell dear Mr Stratten how pleased I was with his sympathy about Penini's book. Of course I
was with all yours. Oh no—the child has no application, but he is vivid & quick to a remarkable
degree. He says sometimes "I tan do what ever I like." Tell me of dear Trippy. Very, very painful
her state of mind is indeed. Does she think positively, that you want to poison her?

Tell (me) more, or is it merely a vague & general ill-humour?— I have an uncomfortable
feeling about papa's surgeon—as if he had failed in ability— Still, the crutches—still! Is Papa in
good spirits— Does he read? & what? Is he eager about politics? Poor, dearest papa! Henrietta
throws me into a terror, Arabel— What! you were only able to spend an evening & a half with
her? And with me? What? Dreadful work—indeed! Best love to everybody. Love me & always
think of me in love. Robert's love.

Your ever attached Ba

Write—do. I have sent you a scratch of a letter— Say how you are, dearest. Remember— Penini
is perfectly well.

I am very sorry for the loss of Wilson's sister— She (Wilson) has been so good & tender to
Penini— He is surrounded with love, that child— There is Ferdinando who is most affectionate to
him. Such love there is, between those two. I could’nt bear to part with Ferdinando, were it only for that.

Address: Angleterre via France. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated by Florence postmark of 18 March 1855 and the internal date of 16 March after a five-day delay caused by Pen’s illness.
2. See letter 97, note 2.
3. Doubtless a reference to Mama’s New Bible Stories (London: James Hogg and Sons, 1861) by Emily G. Nesbitt; although this is the earliest edition I have been able to trace.
5. “What an angelic face.”
6. Cf. the nursery rhyme: “There was a man of Thessaly, / And he was wondrous wise, / He jumped into a bramble bush / And scratched out both his eyes. / And when he saw his eyes were out, / With all his might and main / He jumped into another bush / And scratched them out again” (The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes, ed. Iona and Peter Opie, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951, p. 402). A version of these line appears in RB’s Aristophanes’ Apology (1875), lines 1078–1081.
7. Laura Getting (1818–94) was the daughter of a London merchant family with business interests in the Argentine. She was with Isa Blagden at the time of the latter’s death, and had urged her—unsuccessfully—to consult a physician. Laura Getting and Charlotte Agassiz remained lifelong friends, and upon her death Laura left her friend Charlotte “all my money in the Post Office Savings Bank.”
8. See note 11 in the preceding letter.
9. Sic, for O’Neill. Henry O’Neill succeeded George Robbins (see letter 47, note 18) as English Chaplain at Florence. O’Neill had been appointed by the Bishop of Gibraltar in May 1851, and served until 1863. According to Catherine Tassinari, “the twelve years of his ministry were, relatively speaking, uneventful ones in the history of Holy Trinity Church. They were marked, indeed, by a certain stagnation (The History of the English Church in Florence, Florence: Barbèra Press, 1905, p. 88). O’Neill conducted EBB’s funeral service in Florence in June 1861.
10. In a letter dated [13 April 1855], EBB wrote to him at “Hôtel des Empereurs, Marseille.”
11. Surtees wrote in his journal: “Henrietta was this morning taken seriously ill: and, alas! had a disappointment!” (Surtees, 14 February 1855).
12. Dated 4 March 1855, this letter was published in Cook, pp. 191–192. EBB’s pleasure in her husband’s excitement over Ruskin’s letter seems to have diminished her sadness over Miss Mitford’s death.
13. In fact she did not marry until 1857 when she married Alexander Charles Brice, an Indian merchant of Bombay.
14. I have been unable to trace which of Wilson’s five sisters had died.
Letter 120

[late March 1855]

(Florence)

[late March 1855]

<***> a little bit mine too—Ten minutes a day on his reading w'd be the most I should allow him, if he were quite mine—So I speak. Of course you told me about Alfred, & of course I was much pleased—but you omitted his Marseilles address & I wait for it in order to write to him to try to get him to come here for at least a few days—As to his report upon Paris .. it is certainly a very superior climate to what you have,—& anybody, with a chest, would feel the difference in a moment. We have just seen somebody, by the way, who after spending the winter hitherto at Nice, reports on it that she never felt the cold so intense [sic] in either Paris or London!! Ever so many people swore to me at Rome last winter that it was colder there than in Paris!—or England. The fact is, travellers are not reliable. They come from their homes to cold rooms perhaps—or else they expect a few degrees more heat, & suffer from the chill of disappointment besides the atmosphere—or else .. which happens sometimes .. the transition between continental sunshine & the subtle winds, affect them uncomfortably at first. Still .. Paris is less tenable for climate than Italy is—I know that well. In spite of which, I may weather a winter there, & I believe that, when it comes to the push southwards, it will be a matter of convenience or probably of necessity, for us to try. How inconvenient it is to be so brittle, & frightened of this & that. Yet when all's said & suffered, it can't be as bad as it seems—for ... I hope you observe ... I don't die. Instead of which I get somewhat less boney under the influence of my two spoonfuls of oil a day—oh, and Madame Biondi came yesterday to advise another remedy—tea made of a handful of Indian corn to two tea-cups with milk & sugar. She says that ever so many patients with lung-complaints have recovered & grown fat in an extremity—Now, though I am well & fed on cod's liver oil, I prick up my ears always at the notion of growing fat—It's my bodily ideal to grow fat, Arabel,—chiefly, I suppose, because it's impossible—And Robert was earnest—so I began yesterday with my cupful, & today I take two. At the end of two months I'm to be a 'stalled ox'—(prize.). Penini hearing the talk of it, thought he would grow fat too—and we caught at it—and he takes the Indian corn tea as well. Why won't you? Let us have tea together across the Alps. I know the cod's liver oil w'd do you just as much good as it does me—that is, if it agreed with you—if you were able to take it. It's a *specific* for glandular affections—you are not aware perhaps of that. In any case it can operate only indirectly on the digestive organs & the health generally—With me it always corrects my detestable tendencies to relaxation which help to wear me away. I am particularly well just now—Everybody says I look so—and I am so, which is of more consequence. I dare say you are not as well—you with your dreadful headaches! Oh Arabel, what headaches you have! Two days of headaching past reading & writing. It's a thing I never have. A head–?!? You may conclude so from this prettily involved writing. You may think .. if this is the style of the new poem, I shall improve my reputation. By the way, let me relieve you about the "spirits." Nothing about the rapping-spirits in the new poem, up to the present five thousand & five hundred[d]th verse. I don't bind myself .. mind .. for the future—but I am rational, oh, so rational,—that you can with difficulty conceive of me. Let me set you right on the subject of M'
Kirkup. Neither fool nor knave—be sure. He is not philosophical in his experimentalizing, & the
learned say rightly that he does not manage his clairvoyante well, & that she would make a real
medium perhaps in other hands. M. Trollope went the other day "by appointment with the spirit" to
hear the rappings. No rap came. Robert triumphs. I can say nothing. I believe I dont believe
much in these phenomena as enacted at M: Kirkup's house. They seem a sort of dreamwork, &
are at best very imperfect. M: Hume the great medium is to be in London in the summer—& then
we shall see, Arabel, we shall see. He is grandson of the Lord Hume of Scotland—& the
best medium almost in the United States—and I shall know him—& you shall see him
swim in the air,—or do anything else you please. He is said to be very devout, & is preparing for
the ministry, or was .. for his health is failing fast I fear. As to M: Kirkup's being a knave ..
Robert exclaimed at such an idea. Now you will trust Robert .. if not me. The foolishness you
will set down as less disproved, when I have told you a story— M: Kirkup who is a great collector,
has bought lately an old picture of Dante. This picture which he had leaned against the wall, was
placed—& he discovered it on the floor, lying on its face. In his next interview with the spirit
of Dante he asked the spirit who had displaced it— "I," said Dante, .. "because it was ugly, &
into the Arno or burn it in the fire?" "Burn it in the fire" said the spirit. Hereupon M: Kirkup
quietly took his picture & burnt it in the fire. I call that faith. I dont call it wisdom by any manner
of means. This happened two or three days ago—

You are to understand, Arabel, that Penini's "poems" so called, are not to be compared with
any writings of precocious children, .. (though he is miles in everything before any in my
knowledge) simply because they are not writings .. compositions .. at all. Children, when they
compose, always do it stiffly & without fancy— What makes Penini's things so pleasant, is, that
they are the prattle of the young soul .. just pure improvisation. He talks it all so fast that I have
hard work sometimes to put it down—& I assure you he's very particular about being faithfully
followed. Oh no—he's not the least bit an author—& perhaps he never may be. But he's a little
improvvisatore .. which Robert & I were at no time in our childhood. The prettiest notes, that
child speaks out .. & letters .. that can be! And all his talk is pretty & graceful, in the same way,
with that little silver voice of his. His "great poem" was sung out from beginning to end, .. & we
shall bring it to you, if M! Kenyon does not let you see it, as I hope he will. Only pray dont fancy
that he's going the way of his fathers as a juvenile author. I hope he may write hereafter if he can
write greatly & to a noble end—but what he has done, so far, is not in our way at all, but in his
own angelical way. He breathes & lives in that book—it's his prattle .. & no more. You know
him by the book— He has another more than half done, written in ink this time, which we shall
bring. Ah yes—I know you love him—you love him through my heart & with yours, & so you
must love him well. And then, everybody loves Penini, more or less .. As to Ferdinando, it's
more, with him. You cant think how concerned & tender that man was when the child was ill—
he is very good, Ferdinando, & we have a real regard for him. I used to get him to feel the child's
pulse for me .. to get a little comfort so—and he made Peni talk sooner than any of us that worst
day when I was so frightened. Peni who had been lying quite silent, broke out into a fit of Italian
animation & told him how he would take him to see the elephant .. "ma bisogna pagare .. se no,
Letter 120  

[late March 1855]  

non potete entrare per quella gran porta di ferro.”! Think of the child remembering the iron gate! I could have kissed Ferdinando! He’s as well as a child can be— & with a supererogatory appetite just now. I dont mention Wilson’s attention to him when he was ill, because it’s so much a matter of course. She loves him dearly. Isa Blagden says “it’s frightful to see Penini so attached to Wilson & Ferdinando for that unless we all four live together for ever, he will some day break his heart.” Peni takes passions of love— & he took a fancy to Ferdinando from the first, which goes on increasing. Once or twice when Wilson has gone out, he has insisted on Ferdinando’s putting him to bed— Think of that! I would’nt leave Ferdinando behind—not for the world.

Arabel—you would laugh at me if you saw me reviewing & correcting the theology from England. “Peep of Day” has had two pages cut out at the end,— containing descriptive horrors of the world being burnt to bits .. which as I by no means am sure of myself I dont mean to frighten Penini to death by suggesting to him— “Did you ever see a house on fire? How much worse .. &c &c— .. but you must not be afraid” .. Oh no— of course not. What dangerous trash all this is. Then all the conversation between the Father & the Son (. . which is simply Arianism adapted to the plainest capacity . .) I took the liberty of erasing or otherwise changing. Both in “Peep of Day” & “Line upon Line,” the unitarian wd find nothing to object to, or very little— & I a great deal. I object too, extremely, to a sentence like this .. “God has told fathers to beat their children to keep them from hell.” .. a tender adaptation of scripture!— to say nothing of the various places in which “fire & brimstone,” & “your bodies burning for ever & ever,” are mentioned & complacently dwelt upon. I assure you I have weeded the little books (so excellent in many respects) of all these things. He has nearly finished the second volume of Bible stories, & likes to read them very much. Some things he finds hard— For instance, about Abraham’s intention of killing his son for a burnt offering, .. an ‘offering-burnt’ as he persists in calling it, .. he looked up at me with a face of horror .. “Burn his son, he did!” And he was’nt quite satisfied at the end even, seeing that another angel didn’t come down to save the “ram” as well!º He’s tender to animals & told me yesterday that “if the world was’nt so large, he leally would write a letter to all the hunters, to tell them not to till creatures.” (creatures.) I do hope when we get to England, none of you, my dearest brothers, will take to making Penini “manly” & spoiling him so. Ah, Arabel— when his wings drop off! when he grows deeper into the world! I shant like it, I assure you.

How stupendous what you tell me of poor Trippy is. Has she delusions on other subjects?— because this looks like pure insanity. I feel to be angry with her & to pity her both together— She ought not to think such things of you even with a weakened brain— and yet, poor, poor, dearest Trippy! Tell her that I love her & think of her. My darling best Arabel— never imagine that I fancied you were sulky, or could be sulky, though heaven & earth came together! I wd as soon accuse you of administering arsenic. You! the most patient & forbearing of human creatures, & the most magnanimous in smiling down an offence! I know you too well. And now, tell me. If poor Trippy dislikes (with ever so little reason) any servant about her, why not engage another in her place? That might turn the current of thought perhaps, & admit of a calmer state of mind. How wonderfully better she must be. Will not the Lord’s hand give health to the soul also? It is so sad.
Letter 120

[late March 1855]

I am sorry to hear that Mary H. can be ruffled in her temper—it is a bad fault for an instructress. Has she gone over to the N. St Churches? Did you ever talk to her on the subject? I feel sure she will, you know. Dear M! Hunter must have an uncultivated congregation at Ledbury, & sees little reason...<★★★>

Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Approximately dated from EBB’s references to the 5,500 lines of *Aurora Leigh* she had written, and to Alfred being in Marseilles.

2. Cf. Proverbs 15:17: “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.”

3. Presumably by verse, she meant line since *Aurora Leigh* is not written in verses. Evidently, she had not yet written Book V, which contains a passage alluding to spirits—lines 563–570, which would be approximately line 5,400 if the lines were counted continuously. In July 1856, EBB declared to Henrietta that *Aurora Leigh* contained only “one reference to the spirits, but nobody will be offended by it as Robert isn’t” (Huxley, p. 250).

4. Regina Ronti (1837–56) was Seymour Kirkup’s servant and medium, and later became his wife. For a description of their household, see *Hawthorne*, 14, 390–396. Regarding Kirkup and his “clairvoyante,” Julia Clara Byrne recorded many years later in her *Gossip of the Century* (London: Ward and Downey, 1892, 1, 172–173) that:

   “Robert Browning used to tell a story of a visit he paid, when at Florence, to an old philosopher named Kirkup, with the object of borrowing a book of him. He found him engaged with a female ‘medium’ apparently in a state of trance, on whom he was practising experiments.

   ‘Ah! my dear fellow!’ said he, ‘how glad I am you are come, for I can now practically demonstrate to you those supernatural facts which I believe you still doubt. Now see, I will desire this woman to raise her arm—an order you would give her in vain—and I can make her maintain it rigidly in that position as many hours as I please.’

   Suiting the action to the word, after Browning had made the attempt unsuccessfully, he gave command which was immediately obeyed. Browning exerted his strength to move or bend the limb, but it continued as stiff as when Kirkup had fixed it.

   ‘Now,’ said the good old man, ‘I will fetch your book.’

   His back was hardly turned, when Browning, who was examining some MSS. on the table, felt a touch on his shoulder and, turning round, saw the woman wink at him and immediately resume her attitude as Kirkup’s returning steps were heard. Comment is needless.”

5. Home’s father was “a natural son of Alexander, tenth earl of Home” (DNB); however, EBB’s information was not correct about Home “preparing for the ministry.” According to his autobiography, in 1853 he “was at the Theological Institute, but only as a boarder, and in no way included in the theological classes” (D.D. Home, *Incidents in My Life*, London: F. Pitman, 1864, 2nd ed., p. 42).

6. “But you must pay .. otherwise you are not allowed to go through that great iron door!”

7. EBB had first mentioned Pen reading *The Peep o f Day* the previous October (see letter 114, note 13). Although in a later edition, the objectionable passage reads across two pages: “One day God will burn up this world we live in. It is dreadful to see a house on fire. Did you ever see one? But how dreadful it will be to see this great world and all the houses and trees burning!” (*The Peep of Day*, London: Hatchards, 1870, pp. 222–223). In *Line Upon Line* (London: J. Hatchard, 1837), in a chapter entitled “Samuel, or the Little Prophet,” the author notes that Eli was wrong not to punish “his wicked sons. God has told fathers to beat their children with the rod to save them from going to hell” (part II, pp. 7–8).


9. i.e., the Catholic Apostolic Church (see letter 56, note 13). In letter 122 (see note 14), EBB’s comments seem to indicate that Mary Hunter converted to the Catholic Apostolic Church.
Letter 121

[Florence]
May 15. [1855]¹

My beloved Arabel you are wondering at me for my dumbness, I dare say—pondering perhaps whether we mean after all to give you the slip this year again & not come to England. No—it is not so bad. I believe we are coming. In the meantime, in such a terrible trouble & fuss we can scarcely, either of us, turn round,—& to turn round to write a letter is difficult. So much to think of, too! You will have heard by this time about Wilson & Ferdinando.² He has been trying at it these two years, but she would not hear of it for some time—but where men are pertinacious in such things (or women either) they generally get their way— For my own sake, of course it is a shake to one’s comfort— nerves, comfort, everything—because although they will both remain with us as long as it is possible, the probability of course is that there will be results to render it impossible before very long—& then what’s to become of Penini . . . to go no farther . . . is saddening to think. It will be a heartbreak to the child— Still, there’s no use looking forward to what may not happen— Also, there’s no virtue in being utterly selfish, & thinking of everything but of poor dear Wilson herself, who should not, because she has been perfect to one’s child & good & kind in every way, be shut out on that account from her own prospects of domestic happiness. Happy I believe she will be. A better man, more upright & of a more tender nature, it would be difficult to find, than Ferdinando is. Robert, so opposed in general to mixed marriages, has not a word to say against this—has not a fear for Wilson— & is perfectly satisfied for her own sake, that she should act according to her feelings— Ferdinando is rather protestant than catholic, as you know . . . & Wilson has been here so long that she feels herself, she says, half an Italian, and does not care much for English ways of life. They are to stay with us, as I think I said, till we are forced to part, or till some prospect of better separate fortune opens on them. Their fancy is rather, to be married in Paris on the road—but I advise against it—(though Wilson thinks it will save some fuss in England) & also whether we shall stay long enough in Paris remains uncertain. The prices seem exorbitant just now. If Mr. Browning could meet us elsewhere . . . but I know nothing, except that we must positively see him before England: it would be too unkind, otherwise. As to the Paris exhibition, we dont care for it—and, if we did, we shall have enough of that in the autumn, on our return from London. Be sure we shall not linger in Paris at any rate. We linger a little here in the meantime. There’s so much to do. Robert has six thousand lines written out clear, & the rest nearly ready.³ I have’nt a line written out, but between six & seven thousand are ready. I hear Penini’s lessons, the first thing—then write—and such heaps of letters accumulate over my head that they grow unanswerable. Then there’s Girolama at work for us in the next room, & I have to go backwards & forwards to see to the doing of various things necessary to our going north— Our linen did not hold out, I am sorry to say, which it would have done if we had gone to England last year; and we have been forced to reframe ourselves in various ways. Twelve pairs of trousers [sic] for Penini, for instance—embroidery for each—he’s expensive, that child . . . and I’m vain about him. By the way, we were reading the other day in ‘Line upon Line’ about David’s being praised for killing his “tens of thousands,” & what came of it.⁴ Said Penini to me . . . “Mama, I
want to say somesing— When I walk out & go to parties .. when I'm dressed nice, you know .. I hear people say, 'Oh, what a velly pretty little boy that is!,'— and leally I dont like it, not a bit—" (There's humility for you!) "Well," said I, making an exemplary commonplace, "it is'nt worth much certainly to be praised for one's prettiness— It would be better to be praised for being good"—— "Yes," (eagerly) "but it's the same sing. God mates us pretty & God mates us good, and so we ought'nt to be praised, but God ought!" "Certainly," said I— David had slain his tens of thousands and Penini was pretty & good— It was clear that with all the latter's Christian modesty, he had a considerable opinion of his own merits. Poor little Pen! Like most of us, he "walked on Plato's pride with greater pride."55

I'm very anxious to do the impossible as I fear it will prove. I want very much to go by land, the Genoa & Nice road, & see that glorious scenery we have always had to miss. It will be so this time again, I prophecy—for the first vetturino applied to, asks four & twenty napoleons for taking us to Nice, exclusive of hotel-expenses. That's preposterous of course—but it's a bad beginning of enquiries— It will be at cheapest much more expensive than the sea-voyage. I hate the sea. And Penini has taken into his head to be frightened. He had heard at Rome about the "Arctic",6 I am sorry to say—— But we must do as we can. He tells us to "take all his scudi and pay," but to take him by the mountains instead of the sea. (Did I tell you that M! Kenyon sent him a guinea for his poem?)7 The worst is that all his scudi wont be enough, poor child.

Isa Blagden goes on the thirtieth, as Louisa is to embark for India next month. Last night we were at another grand soirée musicale at the Villa Torrigiani,8—the Villa Torrigiani,9 fourteen professional persons, & divine music of Beethoven, Mozart & Weber—we go again on saturday. It's princely of M! Tennyson—is'nt it? He is assisted in some of the expense of it, but the greater part of this falls on him. The music is intensely to be enjoyed— Afterwards there is tea &c. Then we have had a day in the country with the Tennysons, Nortons, & others at the villa Tassinari— Heaps of children were there .. Penini of course .. who was in glory & rode on a poney & saw a calf, & confounded me finally by filling up his pockets with strawberries. If he had'nt boasted of it to me privately, of course he would have spoiled his frock & the gowns of everybody in his neighbourhood—but I was in time happily to scrape out the pockets with a spoon. Such a mess! Fancy me, Arabel .. at a full-dress collation! "Oh Penini, how could you do such a thing." "But I did'nt sint they would melt, dear Mama."

Now, listen, all unbelievers in spirits! You cant survive, much longer, .. so make the most of your life— M! Jerves who had seen personally nothing of these things, though he had believed in them for some time on account of letters containing his father's & mother's experience in America, went to London on his way home. He's rather a cold man,—& honest. He was to try Hume the medium just arrived in London, as he passed through,—& Robert said on parting—"If you see anything, write to us, and I will receive your testimony." With M! Jerves, went a M! Tilton,10 a Roman artist, whom we knew also & who was quite incredulous on the whole subject. Well—the day on which we had calculated on getting M! Jerves's letter, came & passed, & Robert was beginning already to blow the trumpet of triumph upon me— "I told you so. He's an honest man. He has seen nothing & wont write. I knew he would'nt write. These things always slip through." In the midst, in came the letter! Such a letter! In the last fortnight, it has been running up &
down through Florence, nothing else talked of, everybody snatching it from everybody, .. reading it, copying it, dreaming & discussing over it. I cant send you extracts, for it is out of my hands still. Here however are the results— He has seen a heavy table with a French lamp on it lifted into the air, without a finger touching it—the same table tilted up on end .. the lamp kept in its place unmoved .. contrary to all laws of gravitation—same table made so light that he could lift it with a finger—same table made so heavy that all the persons present tugging at it, could’n stir it an inch. (This, in different private houses.) The raps .. in all their varieties, of course. Visions of the hands .. the spiritual hands. “As surely as I clasped your hand at parting” says M! Jerves, “I clasped the hand of a spirit—” repeatedly he did—“hands of different sizes”—“softer & more thrilling than any woman’s”—“conveying an inexpressible pleasure”—the “softest & most loving tenderness of touch”– I give you the words as I remember them. These hands did anything you asked them to do—untied a lady’s apron-string & carried the apron across the room in an undulating gliding movement without mortal intervention—struck playfully or patted tenderly the persons present—took M! Jerves’s handkerchief & knotted it in so ingenious a manner as would be hard for a man’s craft. Then there was music—an accordion was played upon exquisitely—in a full light observe (the room was brilliantly lighted—a private room belonging to friends of M! Jerves) more exquisitely, says he, than a mortal could play it. That may or may not be exaggeration—but the fact is that it was played well, & by no visible performer. M! Jerves took hold of the instrument during the music & held it bottom upwards, & felt the spirits pulling it— I must tell you that altho’ he felt the hands, clasped them, felt the fingers, was aware of their various size & pressure, yet he himself saw them indistinctly—a sort o f floating cloud, each hand was to him—a thing which moved & played about him—but the other persons present, all of them, including M! Tilton our unbeliever, saw the hands of the spirits as perfectly & clearly as they saw their own. Then the house was shaken as with an earthquake .. both the perpendicular & lateral movement .. until the master of it begged for quiet—he was afraid of the consequences to the walls. The whole ended in trance & prayer on the part of the medium—magnificent in character—“like D! Channing” says M! Jerves who had heard him. Well—not satisfied with all this, our friend desired to pass a night with Hume—the demonstrations being often interesting on such occasions. So they slept together. (You see Hume is known to M! Jerves’s family—he is quite a gentleman—related to the Earl of Hume—and said to be a most interesting young man .. refined, frank, affectionate, pious .. & rather like M! Ruskin in personal appearance.) At night the spirits walked round the bed with distinct footsteps—drew the curtains backward & forward, lifted up the heavy fourpost bed into the air .. & did everything M! Jerves asked them to do except one for which there seemed to be a reason. They said they wd try to do it, but they failed. He saw, but dimly, a full-length spirit, upon this occasion. He tells us that he has had extraordinary revelations made to him, not only upon his own affairs but upon matters connected with people in Florence——& two or three ladies here are in agonies here because something is hinted which may refer to one of them. Well—what do you say? As Robert observes we cant any of us sit down & conclude that the man whom we saw the other day cold & sensible .. & sceptical about M! Kirkup’s pet medium Regina11 .. has gone suddenly mad. Robert says, “Upon the whole, I cant make up my mind to believe it is delusion.” Robert is a good deal shaken avowedly then—only he wont finally give up, (never
give up—die game!) till he sees with his eyes. Meanwhile .. “if it’s spiritual,” says he, “I’m inclined to think it’s devilish”—which is the most cruel conclusion I ever heard. I protest against any such conclusion. Well—we are to see with our eyes—Robert & I and Isa Blagden .. and you .. wont you? Only we wont sleep with M! Hume, we have agreed, unless you should particularly desire it.

Louis Napoleon has invited Hume to Paris—Lord Brougham has seen him. I hear of lawyers dropping iron tears at the proofs of the invisible world. This, in London.

Everybody must come over, because the truth is strong & will prevail. “I say with all reverence” writes Mr Jerves, “that I would stake my salvation upon the facts as I give them”. For my part I dont believe in the least degree more since I read his letter, simply because I believed entirely, previous to reading it.

M! Hume comes to Europe in order to establish mediums & circles here. He will be present at any circle not exceeding six .. as he does’nt like to be too publicly ostentatious about it,—but he must be feed,14 because he is poor & cannot contend with the expenses of Europe. In America he wd never, though he had enormous offers, do anything for money, but here he is obliged to pay his way. He is considered the most gifted medium at present known— He was studying for the church when the gift became developped, & is highly spoken of for moral conduct & devoutness of disposition. Not that these have the least thing to do with the physical qualities which make a medium—but spirits are apt to come by affinity .. well, but I have explained to you all that, till you are tired.

I am quite well in spite of over-work—& so are we all. I am chewing the cud bitterly of the word you dropped about going to the country— Now if you bring me across the Alps & then go into the country .. I shall hang myself with the bell-rope of of a London (...) Is dear Bummy with you—(...) a double kiss from me & say (...) be to see her soon. How is (...) rooms? satisfied a little better (...) I ought to be vexed with (...) (a (...) more Stanhopes) are next door to us, & having taken the trouble to write to Rome to get letters of introduction to us, we must honour them—which is a bore— So much to do!— Do write to me darling dearest & speak of yourself & Papa in detail!—also of the rest. True loves to all.

Your own Ba—

Make Wilson’s sister satisfied about her marriage, tell Minny— He is so good—

Mention Altham particularly. I wrote to Henrietta not long since. How is dear Minny? Arabel—perhaps papa may let you go to Paris for the exhibition in September—who knows? Robert’s love as ever.

Oh—M! Ruskin. Such a letter he has written me.17 Robert is delighted— He has selected my Catarina to Camoëns to be “illuminated” by his new old process. First he had fixed on Dante (first canto of the Inferno) & then he thought he would take instead an English poet and fixed on .. Ba!——

Address: Angleterre viâ France. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.
1. Year provided by postmark.
2. i.e., that they were to be married; see note 15 in the following letter.
3. In January she said she had “some four thousand five hundred lines” completed; see letter 117, note 18.
4. For David’s slaughter of the Philistines, and Saul’s jealousy, see I Samuel 18.
6. On 21 September 1854, a United States steamer, The Arctic, left Liverpool for New York with 233 passengers. Six days later, about 55 miles south east of Cape Race, she collided with the French steamer Vesta, and 350 lives were lost. The Brownings’ friend, Mrs. Kinney, recorded in her journal of 22 January 1855 that “eight persons who went down in that ill-fated vessel spent last winter at Florence, some of them passed the last evening they were here in our parlour” (ms at Columbia).
7. The poem was called “Lucy Lee,” and was sent to Kenyon in a letter dated [March 1855] (ms at Harvard), as EBB explained in a letter to Sarianna Browning the preceding month, as well as the fact that Kenyon had sent the guinea (ms at Lilly). Although EBB had mentioned Pen’s poem and Kenyon to Arabella in the preceding letter (120), she had not told her about Kenyon sending a guinea.
8. The villa which Frederick Tennyson leased; see letter 94, note 155. Isa Blagden and Mrs. Norton had apartments in this villa (see letter 116). According to Mrs. Kinney, Frederick Tennyson had originally arranged these concerts in order to indulge his desire to hear good music without a disruptive audience to distract him. “On hearing of Mr Tennyson’s solitary enjoyment, I determined to rally him on his selfishness, & did so, the first time we met thereafter, so effectually that he promised to invite a select few of his more appreciative friends to his next matinée musicale, . . . provided that each of his favored few would promise not to speak a word during the performance. . . . And what a glorious entertainment he gave his select guests in the choicest compositions of the great German & Italian masters!” (“Personal Reminiscences of Elizabeth C. Kinney,” part 14, ms at Columbia).
9. Sic for Casa Pepi in Via Pepi where the Tassinari family (see letter 58, note 15) lived from 1855 to 1863, as recorded in the Brownings’ address book for this period.
10. John Rollin Tilton (1828-88), an American artist originally from New Hampshire, whose studio was at 20 via S. Basilio at the time of his death; he was buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome.
11. See note 4 in the preceding letter.
12. An account of Brougham’s two sessions with Home, together with David Brewster and William Cox, may be found in Home’s biography, Heyday of a Wizard (London: George C. Harrap & Co., Ltd., 1948, pp. 73-74) by Jean Burton. According to Burton, “Home made his first appearance before Napoleon III and Eugénie on Friday the thirteenth [February 1857]” (p. 102).
14. i.e., “paid by fees; hired” (OED).
15. EBB has written this portion of the letter on the flap of the envelope, and nearly half of it is torn away, causing this and subsequent omissions. The postscripts were written in the margins of the previous pages.
16. Unidentified.
17. Ruskin’s letter is dated 6 April [1855]: “... Among various works I have in hand at present, one is the endeavour to revive the art of Illumination. And the day before yesterday, I made my best workman, who has recovered thoroughly the art of laying on the gold, copy out the beginning of the Catarina to Camoens, which, on the whole, is my favourite” (Cook, p. 197). Ruskin’s plans for the illuminations were never realised.
My ever beloved Arabel

Now by this time you are vexed with me for not thinking of you! Instead of which I have been thinking of you more than usual, day & night. For your last letter was altogether a letter of discomfort, & left me uneasy about papa—to say nothing of the open question about whether we may not go from Italy to England on purpose to see you & fail after all. As to papa—I should have written instantly to beg for an answer, if it had not been for the uncertainty about being here to receive it. Now, darling Arabel, do write to me to Paris at once . Avenue Champs Elysées, 138, & tell me particularly of him. I hate to hear of the swelling in the hands .. even though it comes, as you say, from the crutches—it makes me wretched to think of it— And the rheumatic pain I dont like— And now if he gives up the walking, it will be all the worse for his general health. Dearest, do tell me whatever more cheering thing you can, for I turn into the shadow, turning that way—

Now, you will like to hear— We leave Florence probably next wednesday .. by the Bastia boat to Marseilles, Isa Blagden & Louisa accompanying us as far as Paris. We must stay a week at least at Paris, you see, because of poor M! Browning who will be very much cast down at having to lose us so soon, even at latest. Sarianna is to go with us to London. So you will have to get an extra-bedroom for her—

I am the more reconciled to leaving this dear Florence just now, as the cholera is here— & there was a case in our street this morning. You know how little brave I am about such things. Still, it's horrible to have to go north—oh, if I could but pull you here & nail you down, catch you in vines & net you, I never would stir, for one! I dread England, & the moral & atmospheric cold of it—and then this last year at Florence has been particularly happy as far as our intimate home-life is concerned, & I want no change except the change of seeing your faces .. all of you—

It will be deplorable if you go & leave us in London! Observe, Arabel, your weather has been so wintry by all accounts, (snow at Bexley on the second of June!) that if I had gone sooner I should have been ill—moreover, if we had been in Paris, Robert would have shut me up in a room & left me there—so that nothing has been lost by lingering a little among the fireflies & nightingales. Now, it's very hot— & we shall like to breathe a cooler air—that will be a decided improvement certainly. Only .. take note of this—I am not going to stay in London among the solaces you mention of authors & mediums .. no, not even of mediums, Arabel, .. if you go away & leave me. Oh—it will be so very hard! But if it's necessary for dearest papa— What can I say?—

Darling Arabel .. talking of mediums .. I told you Robert was convinced by M! Jerves's letter— So he was for three days— After that time he began to relapse into unbelief— Belief is the strangest thing, & Swedenborg is perfectly right about it that the "will" or "love" enters into it much—which is seen constantly in the mode of receiving the gospel— Now Robert holds to his
previous proposition .. he will see for himself, & if he sees, believe. I was disappointed at first .. but he promises to see for himself.

Well—but what I wanted to tell you was this .. though you too will insist on seeing for yourself. Mf Jerves has written twice since the letter I told you of, and, all Florence having been turned up from its foundations in consequence, M." Trollope & her son have set off to London EXPRESSLY in order to investigate—they mean to remain in London only a few days. It is quite rational in M." Trollope, inasmuch as she is in a state of profound scepticism as to a future prospect for man of any kind, & is willing to catch at a means which has led many to happy conclusions. For Hume has been the means of the conversion of two hundred infidels .. some of whom in a fervour of gratitude have pressed offers of money upon him which he has refused. As to his accepting fees during this visit to Europe, .. as Paul & his brethren thought it lawful to "live by the altar," M: Hume need not be more proud. He is poor observe, & could not remain in Europe without covering his expenses so.

M: Jerves saw more wonderful things afterwards than those I mentioned to you. He slept with Hume—the bed .. a four-posted heavy bed .. was lifted up bodily .. in a floating balloon-like motion—towards the centre of the room. The spirits walked about—the footsteps distinct, with an electrical crackling sound— Everything M: Jerves asked to be done, was done instantly .. except when he asked for a proofsheet to be brought to him out of the sitting-room. The spirits said they would try .. but they failed, on account of Hume's influence not extending so far as that other room— Then there was a wonderful séance in M: Jerves's own lodgings— I think I told you that at first he did not see the outline of the spiritual hands as distinctly as M: Lytton & the other persons present did .. only as something white & floating, playing about him. Subsequently however & especially on this occasion, he saw these spiritual hands as clearly as he saw his own hand— A bell, a hand-bell, was lifted up in the air, & the hand was seen distinctly holding it. M: Jerves asked to see the hand of his aunt with whom he had had intercourse—and immediately the most exquisitely beautiful hand, fair & transparent was lifted up in the sight of all & in a full light—everybody seeing it equally. M: Jerves [sic] asked if he might touch it—permission was given & he touched & clasped it—and it turned upon him & patted him tenderly. Then .. he desired to see a head. Now mark. Scarcely had he spoken—when a complete figure .. head, shoulders & body dimly outlined, rose up by the side of M: Lytton & crossed over to M: Jerves's side— The features of the face were undistinguishable. All was dim .. but the Shape demonstrated it's [sic] full life by taking up things from the table & holding them up .. papers were held up so— You cant think how this has struck me. Think of the undistinguishable features— "A spirit passed before my face, & I discerned not the form thereof" .. M: Tennyson & I keep quoting from Job. M: Beckwith9 whom the Americans call their Voltaire .. a very clever materialist .. came over from Paris on purpose to see Hume .. & went away perfectly convinced. How can people resist such sights? M: Jerves says that the Countess of Hastings10 had him at her house, .. & that, there, three musical instruments were played upon in harmony without mortal interposition—of course Lady Hastings was entirely convinced.— Oh—but I forgot one thing— When the spirit had manifested himself at full length, M: Jerves .. who seems to have been daring enough in the matter .. asked if he might lay his hand on the head— Which he actually did, on receiving permission
(these spirits are most gentle & gracious, if not always very wise) & felt beneath his hand "something soft & springy." I quote his words—

I can't help writing these things to you... though in the horrible bustle of these last days. All our poor books taken from the gaping bookcase! How miserable!

Mr Tennyson is a little shaken in his opinion about the 'manifestations' being purely diabolical. In fact the character is strictly human & benevolent. There is access to the spiritual world, & as a consequence both the good & evil will come. It's irrational to suppose that exclusively either the good or the evil come. Both must come—

Dearest Arabel, how very, very sad about dear Maddox— The idea of her quite haunted me for long—& now I am afraid from what you say of her illness, that it may be worse still. But why worse! We use such poor words.

So I shall miss Bummy— Nay, I may miss you, perhaps! Write, I do entreat of you to Paris—Mind—138, Avenue Champs Elysées.

I shall miss Alfred at Marseilles too— We get there in the middle of the night, & travelling with Isa Blagden, to whose invalid, Ferdinando will be of use, we shall probably push on at once to sleep at Avignon two hours after landing.

You are right about the marriage as far as I am concerned— it's a shake to the security of my comfort. Still, ought one to be so selfish? Wilson's family are entirely wrong in undervaluing Ferdinando—He is excellent & will be an admirable husband— I have not a fear for her— As to his being a catholic, why he is no more a catholic than I am— He has conformed for fear of getting into trouble... which is not heroic of course... but you don't know what it is to be tied to the crushing wheel of the law here, & it is easy for persons in safety, to moralize on what the person under the wheel should do & say. When he is once safely married, he means "never to go to confession again".

Just while I write, in comes Penini with a ring in a little box... "Do loot, mama, what that dear Ferdinando is doing to dive to Lily—he's doing to mally her with lis ling." "What," said I, "will you let him?" For Penini is much opposed to all this marrying... & has bid them be silent about it, & "not mate him sick." "Well"—he answered me... "I dont lite it much—but I'll let him! He says he leally must mally her."12

We mean if we can to have it all ended in Paris— Poor Wilson is very happy. And if I'm not the same, I suppose it's because I am human & amiable, & thinking rather of myself than of her. If they could be sure to be able to live on with us it w'd be different—but all chances are against us of course. In the meanwhile she insists that Penini must be "always first"— Ah—no, no, no, no—

I am writing as fast as a racer—13 Mention Maddox when you write. How distressed dear Minny must be. Best love to Minny.

As to Mary Hunter... it could not be otherwise. Those churches have spirits, I am confident—and to persons of unfixed principles on certain points, the influx is irresistible. My only surprise is that she did not join them long & long ago— What could M! Hunter expect? After all, the degree of error is not, to my mind, dangerous— Their belief is scriptural in many respects—in others, I think, absurd & hard. The alternative is not between the infallible "Spirit of God," and
Satan's own—There are spirits of good intentions but imperfect knowledge who utter themselves in those churches. So, as to dear Mary, I am sorry, but not in despair by any manner of means—still less am I at all angry. But it must be very painful to her father—I can quite conceive of that.

Did you ever see such a scratch as this letter—scratched, scribbled, miswritten.

But you will be glad .. wont you, my own dearest dearest Arabel, that we are coming. Do be glad—

June 12. Now you will be surprised to hear something. We have just been to the British Embassy to see dear Wilson married. She is married—that is, according to the ch. of England. The catholic form will be gone through in Paris. We were not sure how it might be best, & it was suddenly arranged at last. An English clergyman performed the ceremony half in English & half in Italian, & Robert & I & Penini were witnesses—Peni giving his signature in full to the admiration of the clergyman. Dear Wilson behaved very well, & Ferdinando was brilliant with happiness. Robert wished that they might be as happy in the end as we were! As she helped me, it was but fair you know, that I sh^ help her. She only deserved it of me—

It's to be considered no marriage, you understand, till after the Catholic ceremony—& we keep it secret for fear of the priests, who might get Ferdinando stopped from leaving Tuscany, & so produce a tragedy. Penini said this morning to the balia with the most important air .. "Prometeteme di non parlare di questo." He has made a bargain with Wilson, to make Ferdinando do everything for the future that he Penini pleases! Ma^ne Romagnoli!! We mean to call her Lisa for the future .. which is her name among the Italians. Besides ourselves, Marian, Isa Blagden's maid was present. Nobody else. May God bless you all prays your own Ba.

We sail tomorrow at five p.m. shall probably arrive at Marseilles early on friday morning—from whence it is only eighteen hours to Paris. But I must sleep on the word really. So when you get this letter we shall be close to you, if it pleases God.

Address: Angleterre via France / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Underscored twice.
3. In her journal entry for 16 June, Mrs. Kinney recorded the death of her servant, Donato, the preceding day, and added that "the cholera is prevailing now at Florence & very fatal. God preserve the rest of us! All our trust is in Him" (ms at Columbia).
4. The town of Bexley in northwest Kent is about 14 miles from London. A report in The Times of 4 June 1855 noted "a return of cold weather."
5. Not traced.
6. In a letter dated 21 June 1855, Frances Trollope reported the results of several different meetings with Home to W.B. Kinney (ms at New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey).
7. Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:13: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?"
8. Cf. Job 4:15–16: "Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof."
9. Unidentified.
Letter 122  
11–12 June [1855]  

10. Barbara, Baroness Grey de Ruthyn (1810-58), had married the 2nd Marquess of Hastings in 1831, but he died in 1844; in 1845 she married Admiral Sir Hastings Reginald Henry Yelverton.

11. Doubtless Mary Maddox (see letter 99, note 14), but I have been unable to clarify EBB’s comment. This is the last reference EBB makes to Maddox in these letters.

12. See note 2 in the preceding letter.

13. Cf. EBB’s comment in letter 8: “I write like a race horse 'scouring the plain’.”

14. Cf. II Corinthians 4:8: “... we are perplexed, but not in despair.” EBB’s comments here, combined with her earlier remarks in letter 120 (see note 9), imply that Mary Hunter had joined the Catholic Apostolic Church.

15. On 11 June, Ferdinando had received a declaration from the Archbishop of Florence pronouncing him free to marry. The couple were married by a Roman Catholic priest in Paris on 10 July 1855; see Scott Lewis, “Elizabeth Wilson: A Biographical Sketch,” BSN 23 (December 1996), 77-80. On the 12th they were married in the British Legation in Florence by Henry Huntington, British Chaplain at Leghorn.

16. “Promise me that you won’t speak about this.”

17. See letter 46, in which EBB had referred to Wilson as Lisa in reference to the balia.

18. Little else is known about Isa Blagden’s maid, Maryann Martin.

Letter 123  

Still Florence—  
Thursday. [14 June 1855]¹

My beloved Arabel,

Here we are again— We have been to Leghorn & come back—

Thus it was— Yesterday we set off as agreed— Arrived at Leghorn at half past one— Took passages on the Corsican steamer which professed to set out at half past four .. went to the inn & the table d’hôte—took boat at four to reach the steamer, & found .. what do you suppose .. that in the fear of a rising wind, or supposed rising wind (there w as’nt a breath of air) it had started at half past three .. taking with it our money & passports, & leaving us frantic, of course .. Isa Blagden & her party, & ourselves .. besides an unhappy Florentine baker who positively wept at the misadventure— Penini was the only person pleased.

So, after a proper course of despair, what were we to do? We could’nt recover our money, but if we chose to wait a week, we might go by the same steamer for what we had paid. Otherwise, the money was sacrificed. Now, to stay at a Leghorn Hotel for a week would have been an enormous expense, to say nothing of our unwillingness to have anything more to do with the people of our particular inn who are much suspected of being in league with the Corsican boat to betray us— We therefore retraced our steps to Florence, where we had our own house you see, to go to. Even this, we were hampered in, as, so late in the evening, the train would take us only to Pisa. We had to sleep at the hotel at Pisa therefore, & come on by the seven oclock’s morning’s train. Of course the expense of all this has been great— It will be a loss of nearly four pounds which we can ill afford—to say nothing of all the discomfort. Our luggage is all at Leghorn, to avoid expence—I have’nt a pen or writing-case with me— This is written with somebody’s corkscrew—² Horribly tired too I am, & my laughter from the top of my philosophy at all this mischance is somewhat hysterical— Penini who was frightened out of his wits about the boat
"hoping that Dod would take tare of us," says we had much better go by the land now, "the sea is such a velly gleat touble"–

The melancholy state of Casa Guidi you may suppose, but happily the carpets were not all taken up & the curtains down, as I half expected. I did'nt think to be so little pleased at getting back to my Florence.

This does'nt look like my writing, does it?

Did I tell you last year about the viscomtess St Amaro3 (he was the Brazilian minister to Turin, & is just re-appointed to Naples) & she has a wonderful mesmeric faculty. I forget if I told you that we knew her here.– In the train yesterday, most curiously we met them—& I had a great deal of most interesting conversation about Hume whom she saw in London. They offered him money, which he refused. Last year she had disbelieved in the spirit-manifestations—but Hume had astounded her on that head. Yet she had not seen as much as M' Jerves. She said she could'nt—she felt the need of stopping short—she thought it was enough to drive many persons mad. (Yes—people, ill-instructed as to the nature of the spiritual world.)

I wish you would let dear M! Kenyon know about this delay & its cause. Next wednesday we try again– I expect to find a letter from you dearest dear Arabel at Paris– Robert's best love,—with mine to everybody. Speak particularly of papa–

Can she read this? I speak to myself, not to you–

Your own Ba–

Address, on integral page: Miss Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated by EBB's references to the Brownings' travel misadventures.
2. EBB's meaning here and below is unclear; her handwriting is perfectly legible.
3. Unidentified.

Letter 124

138. Avenue des Champs Elysées
Monday. June 25. [1855]1

My beloved Arabel,

Yes—here we are at last, thank God—but after various crosses & vicissitudes of life, owing of course to our having set off on the thirteenth, in the first instance, a day fatal we were assured by certain judicious friends, to all undertakings. We set off to Leghorn & had to return, as you know. We found Florence as I hinted to you lapsing into cholera, and had not spent two days there before I fell into a sort of panic. Cholera never has taken root in Florence from some reason or other which the learned dispute concerning, and even now it can scarcely be called epidemical. Also, the terrors of the Florentines exaggerated the actual facts, I have no doubt. Still, with all allowance made, there were certain points of the city in which cholera began to be found in clots, & the extraordinary thing is that, about Casa Guidi and the Pitti palace, there were the most cases, . . . just round us.2 It began outside the porta Romana, our gate of Florence, & crept down to
us & round us. There was talk of fourteen persons being dead in the street immediately behind Casa Guidi—and in the Church up against our terrace, the cholera bodies were deposited for a short time, being carried under our windows—Robert went to see Mr Kinney—The whole house in confusion! His man servant dying of cholera—an other servant in the same house died the same day—and also, a child of Mr Read, the American poet, was taken ill & supposed to be dying when we left Florence. Robert saw both those cases with his eyes—being drawn into the room American-fashion (the Americans think nobody can die in peace except in a crowd!) to my great subsequent consternation. Well—you may suppose the agreeable condition of bodies & minds this cholera produced. Whether I or Mr Tennyson was most frightened, it would be hard to distinguish perhaps for obtuse persons,—but I assure you solemnly I was heroic in comparison with Mr Tennyson who could’nt even talk of the “spirits” he confessed, he was so entirely crushed & absorbed in apprehension. As for me I went one morning to Robert, & told him that though he set me down as mad he must pardon me & take us away to Leghorn at once, & wait for the ship there. To which, being an angel, he answered benignly, by begging me to be quiet & wait till the next day, when if rumours became worse, he would do whatever I liked—it would be time then. Well—shifting the care to Robert made me better—You see I was chiefly in fear about Penini& I had the promise to go tomorrow in case of need. But the next day things ameliorated—several physicians insisted on it that there was no epidemic, nor would be an epidemic—and that imprudences in diet from the excessive abundance of cheapness of fruit & vegetables were the cause of much of the evil. At any rate the cases had diminished both in number & severity on those last days—Poor dear Florence! I hope it may be spared. So we waited to the wednesday fixed for the packet, & in order to be in time embarked in the Corsican boat at eleven in the morning, to sail at half past four. The sea was not rough. Penini ran about to enquire of the sailors about the wind, & came back with considerable satisfaction to inform me that there “would be a little wind, but not strong enough to overturn the ship.” After which, he was very happy, & the next morning moralized much on the fears he “used to have when he was a baby, & knew no better” meaning the preceding day. We anchored at Corsica, before Bastia, & spent the night; & Robert & Penini & I went into the town in the morning, & entered a church there, & roamed about a little .. for the glory of walking in Corsica. About nine the steamer started again for Marseilles which we did not reach till the next morning—a long day & night of it—not a rough sea nor much wind, but every human being ill, & poor Wilson at the worst. Of course I had Penini to myself (Robert being ill too) Penini clinging to me at nights with his darling embracing arms—and the consequence of it all being extreme fatigue—and a general black & blue-ism. Both he & I, too, had our turn in sickness—very little however, .. & Peni in immense spirits, the moment he was relieved. I crept up on the deck at twelve at night & four in the morning while he was asleep—and at six we both adjourned there together & stayed there in company with the thirty six French soldiers on their way to the Crimea, whom he admired immensely. The nature too, he was full of admiration for .. “that beautiful blue on the sea, and that white of motion!” (meaning the foam) and the “smoke of the ship all trembling on the blue sky” .. nothing escapes Penini—nobody of any age enjoys travelling more than he does. He went about on the deck making friends, & talking Italian to anyone who would talk to him in it! “Dear mama? do you see that man,”
'Yes.' "Well—I know him a little. He’s going to Paris just like us." At Marseilles, being thrown out on the quay, everybody except Penini more dead than alive, and he in extreme haste to go on to the ‘station’ .. (he wants to travel night & day, that child!) we went to the hotel to rest & breakfast dine & sleep. On enquiring about Alfred, we were told that he inhabited a room next our own—on the same floor! Think of that! Robert accused me of a want of sisterly affection because I insisted on washing my face & breakfasting before I sent for him—but, if I had’nt, I certainly should have dropped down in a fit at the first word of greeting. So we breakfasted—& then we sent Penini in alone with a slip of paper .. M[& Mr Browning, in the costume of brigands! Well—& so he came & we met. And I assure you, dear Alfred’s kindness quite touched me— He was so affectionate, so kind—insisted on taking Penini out to walk, (by the way, he said, everybody turned round to look at Peni!) & brought him home laden with bonbons, toys & flowers— Penini’s heart was perfectly won. He said to me afterwards—"Mama, I lreally do llike your uncle." "But he is’n’t my uncle—he’s your’s— He’s one of your uncles & when you know the others, you’ll see which of them you like best." “Well—for the present I llike Alfred lreally almost as much as you and papa.” In fact he refused to dine with Ferdinando (a remarkable circumstance) & pressed to go down to the table d’hôte with Alfred & us—so, as Alfred seemed to wish it, he went. Alfred treated us with a bottle of champagne & Penini had his portion .. upon which he observed upon the phenomenon of the table going round “just like the table in the ship” we thought it best to stop the supplies. It was very pleasant that little glimpse of Alfred—though he told me the bad news of my dear Sette having the second attack. Dear, dear Sette— Give him my love & say how I grieve that he should suffer so terribly. Can there be no remedy to cases of this kind?— Alfred is in high spirits—delighted with France, testifying to the “liberality of the French government,” seeming pleased with his position & prospects altogether. He had taken a country-house for six months, furnished with plate & linen, & paid only twenty pounds for it— What you tell me of his intentions is a key to this—but not a word did he tell me. He did say however that he was going to Paris in a week—and depend upon it Arabel, he comes here to meet & marry Lizzie. That’s certain. I am very, very sorry.

〈...〉

Well—but I was telling you of our misfortunes. Arriving at Lyons we found that we had lost .. what do you suppose? .. only two of our boxes—one containing all my Penini’s pretty dresses, embroidered trowsers [sic], collars, everything I had been collecting to make him look nice in— & the other, all my embroidered collars, bodies, lace—besides poor Lisa’s gowns & bonnets—! Just imagine the state we are in. I wrote three notes to Alfred one after another—& we employed a courier who was going to Marseilles to enquire for us. Of course there was great negligence—But bride & bridegroom had their heads a little turned as was natural. And nobody knows if these boxes were left in the ship, or in the custom-house, or in the hotel— My Penini has nothing to wear (to the chastisement of my vanity!) except his two travelling frocks—and this for Paris!— Is’n’t it horrible? If we really lose the boxes, it will be a loss of some twenty pounds—that’s all—and the least!——
I comfort myself for the cold by putting on my merino directly. Really it's cold—and we feel the change. Sarianna & her father are in great joy to have us—and we have an apartment under them for a week ....

Dearest Arabel—your rooms are too dear— How can we pay three guineas a week? I appeal to you. M' Kenyon sees things through a golden mist belonging to his own means & way of living— We have the fault (if it's a fault in the eyes of our English friends) of being extremely poor, and if they object to come to see us on account of the disposition or indisposition of our rooms, they must be pleased to stay away. I should like to live in large light airy rooms quite as well as any of them—if that fact will recover me their esteem. As to Penini I am in trouble about him & Wilson. Robert says, "Of course you cant separate a man & his wife". Well— I suppose we can't— And yet my Penini who wants somebody to take care of him, & be with him always— what's to be done with him. As to his sleeping in a room by himself, it's out of the question. I suppose he must have a crib in my room. I can't fancy what to do. If he wakes in the dark, he cries instantly— Dearest darling Arabel, try again with the lodgings. Welbeck Street would suit us perfectly— As to the rooms, consult our means & not M' Kenyon's tastes, if you please. I am half afraid of the cold of England—everybody speaking of it as excessive— Even here, it's not in the least like June—

Isa Blagden went by the express train, day & night from Marseilles—therefore we parted from her there—

We arrived here about seven yesterday evening— Write to me instantly. Postage is nothing at all here—remember. I want to hear—

I find a letter from M' Ruskin^... quite affectionate—but warning me off from England on account of the cold. You cant imagine how kind & cordial he has been to me.

Oh—how I feel for the poor, poor Owens— Yes—there's the affliction! How hard to live down such agonies! Yet it's to be done by souls, into which God has put his strength. If you write, speak of me—say how I feel for them. Do I not, when I look at my own treasure?—

You were wrong not to go to hear the spiritual utterance. Yet if you had gone you would probably have been disgusted, & therefore I dont regret your not going. I want to impress upon you the fact, that a spirit out of the body does'nt pretend to more infallibility than a spirit in the body. What you go to receive is the proof of access from the spiritual world, not to receive instruction in doctrine. All sorts of doctrine will be given—you have God's word and God's Spirit & your own. You dont look beyond for your gospel. But into the nature of the two worlds you get wonderful openings, in all these phenomena.

Certainly you shall see Hume. I will have it so. You might as well say that going up into a balloon is impious—as some aged gossips used to hold. You use no impious means— You use a natural gift in the name of God. Nothing is unclean of itself, remember—

My love is with you all— How I yearn to you over this eleven hours interval—Robert's love & Penini's— May God bless you dearest, dear Arabel— You dont speak of Henrietta.

Your ever ever attached Ba

We think of remaining here about a week. If we could but have a little fine weather for England!— What a scramble of a letter I have written, to be sure—still so tired— And in such haste!
Letter 124

25 June [1855]

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. See letter 122, note 3.
3. Lily Read, aged 5, died on 20 June; her mother, who was pregnant at the time, died six days later.
4. Because of her hero-worship of Napoleon, who was born at Ajaccio, Corsica.
5. EBB’s intuition proved correct. Lizzie’s father had died the previous May, and when she came into her inheritance, she and Alfred were able to acknowledge a long engagement. They were married at the British Legation in Paris on 1 August 1855 in a ceremony witnessed by her aunt and cousin, Sarah Ryves and George T. Ryves. The following day, Alfred wrote to Henrietta: “You must know my dearest Henrietta that I have loved Lizzie for years” (ms with Altham).
6. Seven lines have been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella. The passage obviously made disparaging remarks about Alfred’s relationship with the cousin Lizzie.
7. Ruskin’s letter is dated 19 June [1855], and is published in Cook, pp. 215-216.
8. On 18 June Edward Bayford Owen (b. 1848) died at his parents’ home in London; he was their eleventh surviving child.
9. I have been unable to clarify EBB’s allusion to “aged gossips.”
10. Cf. Romans 14:14: “I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”

Letter 125

[Paris]

Wednesday— [Postmark: 27 June 1855]

My beloved Arabel,

I write in a flash of lightning this time, to beg you not to take rooms till you have consulted us—seeing that we are not married, nor have got our boxes, nor are in travelling order altogether. It’s warm—that’s a comfort. We dont mean to lose time here, but it would be vexatious to pay for two houses at a time (three—considering the one at Florence!) and we may be delayed here a few days beyond the week we intended. Try to look out for rooms for us, clean as well as moderate. Here we have an apartment much more expensive than we could meet, if our old landlord did not let us have it for love’s sake, at the rate of £2–10 a week.

We find Mrs Jameson here—& too many besides. Paris is magnificent. I have just been with her (she came to take me) to see the Fine Art part of the Exhibition; & the different schools of national painting are most interesting—Millais is nearly all of England worth looking at.—1

Oh— I am so afraid of losing the post— Do write to me, dearest. Speak of Sette particularly2 & then of rooms. Dear Minny can call Wilson Lily, cant she?—and cant we? The question here is whether she must not ‘faire serment’3 to bring up the ‘children’ as catholics—which of course, she wont— But I hope the difficulty is to be surmounted—

I write faster than you ever can read even if you read at all.4

See how we have got to writing notes!——

Your ever attached Ba—
Penini enters the garden while we look out at him thro' the window.

American gentleman walking—"Pray sir, where do you come from?"

Penini—"Flom Florence. I was born at Florence. I'm Italian! but I tan speat English velly well."

American)—"So, I hear!["]

Penini)—"Yes— I'm Italian still. But papa & mama is English."

Quite hot it is today—

Address, on integral page: Angleterre-/Miss Barrett/50, Wimpole Street/London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Millais exhibited three pictures in the Paris Exhibition in 1855: "The Order of Release," "The Return of the Dove to the Ark," and "Ophelia" (see The Art-Journal, April 1855, 128). In an essay reprinting "French Criticism on British Art," The Art-Journal quoted a French critic who explained that "we have lingered long in the work of analysing Mr. Millais's pictures, because we recognise in him an artist of no ordinary talent, and foresee the influence which his success in the '55 exhibition will exercise not alone on the English school, but on the school of the Continent" (September 1855, 252).

2. He was not well, and evidently was not improving, according to EBB's comments in the following letter.

3. "Take an oath." Wilson eventually agreed not to hinder her children from becoming Catholic if they chose to do so.

4. Despite this remark, her handwriting is clear.

Letter 126

[Paris]
Saturday. June 30—[1855]¹

My beloved Arabel

Things are clearing up a little. The boxes are found, & sent, thanks to Alfred—we have them: but we are not married yet, & there are difficulties. You see, the legal marriage in France is the simply civil marriage—Religionists for the sake of their own consciences use their own forms—but the law exacts only the marriage before the mayor—Now the catholic church has its own rules—and one of these rules is, that, in mixed marriages, the children should be baptised & educated as catholics. Our difficulty is to find a liberal priest who will waive the condition—The archbishop of Paris would do it at once for us, & we are trying to penetrate to him.²

Meantime I get your satisfactory note. Dearest, we would rather not go to London till monday week. Take the rooms from then. You gave us an excellent account of them, & we are ready to pay two guineas & a half a week. Try to arrange a dressing room for Robert near our room—

Robert says, (being relieved & liberalized by the arrival of the boxes) that if you see any great advantage in the Baker Street rooms at three guineas, (with piano & gas) he will yield—Still—the two guineas & a half are more within our means—we had better be satisfied with Dorset Street—your account of which, in fact, is delightful.

Our boxes had about thirty pounds worth of property in them. Just imagine what a loss it would have been!—to say nothing of the inconvenience.
Dear Sette not better!— My poor dear Sette! Do write & tell me of him—for I am anxious—
We are going to see the famous Rosa Bonheur³ (the greatest woman-painter, it is considered, who ever lived) & I am in a tremendous hurry, not to miss the appointment.
The Thackeray girls⁴ were here last night, in a horrible fright about “the Spirits”—“hoping it may not be there!!” M'’ Thackeray said Hume a fortnight ago, had no visible manifestations,— but a bell was put into his hands & he felt the spiritual touches about his person, pulling him, pressing him. In his astonishment what do you think he did? .. he began to swear—gave out a volley of oaths—and then, by a reaction, turned intensely sick. The trouble & surprise were too much. His daughters say he does’t know what to think: it was altogether astonishing—
M” Jameson too is here— I have been unbarbarizing myself in a Parisian bonnet—very pretty & very detestable.

Last night, our little salon was full of people—Corkrans, Thackerays, M” Jameson, M” <Butler>, M. Milsand—
Between you & me, M” <Butler> came smelling intolerably of spirits .. both mentally & bodily. The tone of her conversation made me ashamed of her relationship to me—Dont repeat this to any-one—
I must go— I love you dearly— Love to everybody— I have sent you ever so many letters I find, for which you must have paid double, through my neglect of a postal regulation!

Your ever & ever attached Ba—

Try to arrange with the people to carry water up stairs every morning to our rooms—because Ferdinando is not accustomed to the stairs &c— Make the condition about the water at least—And we will accept your Refuge girl—
Remember—Monday, 9th of July—
I was out yesterday, & so missed the post—& now Robert reminds that there’s no London post on sunday—

Sunday
Dearest Arabel, I do hope we shant lose our rooms by this mischance of posts.
I have just received your Florence letter, sent after me— Thank you, dearest— Write again directly.
Rosa Bonheur’s pictures are wonderful, & she herself charming—in her blouse & cropped hair— I hope we shall be friends next winter—
Do write, & speak of Sette particularly—

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Marie Dominique Auguste Sibour (1792–1857) was one of the few prelates consulted by Pius IX on the subject of defining the Immaculate Conception; Sibour was one of the few opposed to the idea. His predecessor was killed at the barricades in 1848, and he was stabbed to death by an apostate priest.
3. Marie Rosalie ("Rosa") Bonheur (1822–99), a French artist known for her realistic paintings of animals, because of which she was often referred to as the “French Landseer.” Her “Horse Fair,” completed in 1853, was
exhibited in England by Gambart in 1855, and she became as popular a success there as she was in France. In a letter to Eliza Fox in July 1852 [sic, for 1855], W.J. Fox said that Rosa Bonheur had "been in London and turned all the world's head. ... An Artist Conversazione was got up for her reception. Landseer exchanges paintings with her. She is the Lover of animals as he is their Critic. Browning says her atelier is like a select menagerie" (R. & E. Garnett, *The Life of W.J. Fox*, London: John Lane, 1910, p. 313). Rosa Bonheur's "Haymaking in the Auvergne" was being exhibited at the Exposition Universelle at this time.

4. Annie and Minnie Thackeray (see letter 106, note 8) saw the Brownings often during this and their subsequent stay in Paris. In an entry in her journal for 21 September 1855, Annie Thackeray wrote that EBB "is great upon mysticism and listens with a solemn eager manner to any nonsense people like to tell her upon that subject" (*Letters of Anne Thackeray Ritchie*, ed. Hester Ritchie, London: John Murray, 1924, p. 74).

5. It is unclear if EBB saw Rosa Bonheur in Paris the following winter; however, see letter 145, in which EBB explained that RB "sees Rosa Bonheur often, & is in great love with her." Her pictures were receiving much praise in England about this time. William Michael Rossetti, writing in *The Crayon* (27 June 1855), observed that "that wonderful woman, Rosa Bonheur, contributes to the French Exhibition here; a woman, I imagine, unprecedented in Art for vigor and ability armed at all points. A sketch by her of two calves, is among the most admirable things I know, of a truthfulness and thence a beauty, quite touching" (vol. 1, p. 408). And a notice in *The Critic*, asserted that "she has carried mere animal painting higher, we believe, than it has ever been carried before, and invested it with dignity, by simple fidelity to nature" (1 August 1855, p. 372).

---

**Letter 127**

[Paris]
Sunday— [8 July 1855]

My own dearest Arabel

Is it our fault? No! and yet we cant get away till tuesday! I *hope* we shall not be disappointed for tuesday—& at present affairs look brighter. The difficulties have been immense, & it has only been by *favour* that we are likely to escape the general law of the Church of Rome—iniquitous to my mind. There is to be an evasion for us .. no oath exacted—simply a promise that if "the children" *choose* to be Roman catholics, the mother wont hinder them .. which of course she may conscientiously promise. You see it would have been cruel to take poor Wilson on to England in her half married condition—& especially, as it would have been still harder there, we hear, the Roman catholics being stricter on English ground than on French. Now, we have the ear of the authorities & are likely to succeed by tomorrow—so that it is well worth while to put off our departure a day— In fact we were prepared to do so for several days, if it had been necessary. Poor Wilson could not be so little considered. Ferdinando keeps saying "Why wont they" (meaning Robert & me) "let me turn Protestant."? He may turn protestant when he pleases afterwards, but it's our duty *first* to make his marriage legal in his own country. As it is, only Wilson is bound—

People are kind & attentive to us here beyond description .. and Paris holds me in its old charm. We were at M<sup>âme</sup> Mohl's the evening before last, & met Mignet, Vctor Cousin, Prosper Merimée, heaps of celebrities—English countesses & Greek princesses being the *canaille* of it all .. and M<sup>âme</sup> Ristori, the great Italian actress, reciting Manzoni beautifully— Dear Lady Elgin has had a paralytic stroke, and though she is getting quite over it, I hope, I was moved to see her—she was afraid, she said, of thinking of the 'Spirits' .. or even of the funds, & Greek tragedy.
Letter 127

[8 July 1855]

Very affectionate & pleased she seemed in seeing us— We could only get to her however for two evenings, & I refused to drive out with her— I am put into a bottle here, and shaken— No time for anything. Dearest, we think of leaving Paris by twelve o'clock on Tuesday morning, in order to reaching London at twelve that night or past. The tides being very inconvenient. So that I shall not see you till ten on Wednesday morning. Come at ten precisely .. if possible anyhow— I am so glad dear Sette is better. Do you know I had taken it in my head to be uneasy because I had not your letter by the earliest post? Oh— what joy to see you! The weather has been exquisite here since our first day—such a sky! such a sun! such air!— Lend us linen to begin with—and spoons &c, order coffee, tea, groceries &c—eggs for Wednesday morning—and a little cold ham (cooked.) We shall tumble into bed on our arrival & want nothing. Your own Ba.

What is this we hear of the poor Owens. That they have lost most of their money in the ‘Paul’ failure? Do you hear anything? So ends my last letter to ARABEL!!

Address: Angleterre. / Miss Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Date determined from EBB’s references to the marriage of Wilson and Ferdinando and to the planned departure from Paris on Tuesday, coupled with the fact that the Brownings did leave Paris for London on 11 July 1855, a Wednesday; 8 July 1855 was the previous Sunday.

2. François Auguste Alexis Mignet (1796–1884), a French historian, whose Histoire de la révolution française (1824) supported the Liberal cause. According to the EB, “his most noted works are devoted to modern history.” Monckton Milnes gave a less flattering account of the dinner in a letter to his wife: “Lady Monson and I gave a little dinner here yesterday between us—the Sartorises, Lord Holland, Count Cavour, George Sand, Mignet, Browning, &c. It was not as pleasant as it ought to have been. Lamartine and Tocqueville were both too unwell to come” (The Life, Letters, and Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton, ed. T. Wemyss Reid, London: Cassell & Company, 1890, II, 10).

3. Adelaide Ristori, Marchessa Capranica del Grillo (1822–1906) was the premiere Italian actress of her time. Alessandro Manzoni (1785–1873) was the author of I Promessi Sposi.

4. EBB’s cousin Angela and her husband Henry John Owen (see letter 65, note 11) had evidently invested in the bank of Snow, Paul, and Paul. John Dean Paul (1802–68) was one of the principal partners when the bank declared bankruptcy in June 1855. He was later convicted, and “the dividend eventually realised came to 3s. 2d. in the pound” (DNB).

Letter 128

Paris.

Tuesday morning. [Postmark: 10 July 1855]

What will you say of us? That we betray you once again? Lay it to the charge of the R Catholic hierarchy, & set us down as martyrs, my dearest, dearest Arabel—but the fact remains that we ca’nt leave Paris before Wednesday, tomorrow—so that, the tides being inconvenient, we shant reach London till past one in the morning, nor Dorset Street, of course, till two at earliest. The people need only have our beds ready for us, & a little hot water, as we shall have eaten & drunken on the road— We go by Boulogne & Folkestone, I think I told you.
So on Thursday morning, it must be a little past ten before you come. Dearest dear Arabel.. what a heartful (& running over) of joy & love, to look in your face!— in your faces, all of you!

Robert has gone with Ferdinando & Lily to the archevêché¹ in order to have an hour named for the ceremony. I hope the other difficulties are turned— She has agreed to submit to her husband’s wishes on the point of the children—and if they dont exact an oath from him, all will be safe: but I confess I feel no confidence in these priestly authorities. I have just had a note from Mde Mohl who has been kindly active in our behalf, to the effect that the emperor himself could not wring from the church better terms. You see, here, a legal marriage is just the civil ceremony .. so that a frenchman need not apply to the church at all, if in conscience he does not prefer it— But with an Italian .. a Tuscan .. (in Piedmont, they order it better) there is no legal marriage, except by the act ecclesiastical— We were in agonies about it the greater part of yesterday— & Ferdinando being desperate, had resolved to profess protestantism, renounce his country, and set up a fiacre (of all vocations adopted through melancholy!) in Lyons! —— Now we breathe again.

But it was necessary to wait another day. Of course we are horribly vexed. It’s expensive .. to say the best of it!— But the duty to poor Wilson was obvious. To have gone to London, & have had the same fight to fight .. & probably with worse results .. & her family standing by—would have been too sad for her, poor thing. She has shed tears enough, as it is—

Take our eggs off our hands, (if you can in all household economy) and order us fresh. I think we shall be true to you this time, dearest. Darling Arabel, my heart is with you—was, on the 4th of July,² . . will be till I see you. God bless you all—

Your Ba.

She is married.³ I will tell you all.

Address: Angleterre. / Miss Barrett / 50, Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. “Archbishop’s palace.”
2. Arabella’s 43rd birthday.
3. EBB’s terse but emphatic declaration may allude to the news of Wilson’s pregnancy, which Wilson and Ferdinando concealed from the Brownings until after the marriage.

Letter 129

[London]
[Postmark: 3 September 1855]

Enquire for a letter directed ‘Grand Parade[.]’¹

Address: Miss Barrett / 12. Cornfield Terrace² / Eastbourne.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. The text appears in the throat of the envelope.
2. EBB has altered the direction from “Grand Parade.”
Dearest dear darling Arabel, I want you to send me Mary Hunter’s address—I don’t know where to write to her, & she will (as you say) think me a monster. Dearest Arabel, I am very uneasy about our prospect of going to Eastbourne—I am afraid, dear, dear, that the means will prove wanting to the least move aside from the necessary route to Paris– Eastbourne is plainly expensive—and we have not money even for what is cheap. Oh—it grieves me so!– And that dear Henrietta, who will be vexed & disappointed if we don’t go– Well- If it rains money-bags . . . who knows still?

My first letter you have plainly missed because I addressed it to the Grand Parade—printed at the head of your letter which gave me no other direction. Now, will you write soon—& remember to tell me what the meaning is of the white cap inside Trippy’s cap? Is it a pattern cap? What am I to do with it? Answer this question–

Jane Sandford, & the Tennysons, & a Miss Orme, a niece of Coventry Patmore’s wife, passed yesterday evening with us, taking the opportunity of doing ‘waxworks.’ Think of “Maria Manning” having been a maid of Miss Sandford’s. What a touching association, & agreeable recollection!

I feel with you (as far as sympathy can go) for the poor Strattens. Miss Russell said they were much “supported,” & I hope this great calamity may be found easier in the experience than in the prospect. God’s grace is strong & felt most by the weakest.

Dearest Arabel, do be happy, do be well, do get rid of those horrible headaches, do try to come to Paris into the corner we will provide. Even if we don’t see you in England again, there is Paris almost immediately! And next year we shall be back here early, & make up for the back-slidings.

I write this in the greatest haste, & the worst humour possible—but ending, as I always do, your own Ba–

Best love to everybody.

Address: Miss Barrett / 12. Cornfield Terrace / Eastbourne.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated by Eastbourne postmark of 5 September 1855, a Wednesday.
2. The address in Eastbourne to which the Wimpole Street household had removed for ten weeks.
3. Emily Augusta (née Andrews, 1824–62) had married the poet Coventry Kersey Dighton Patmore (1823–96) in September 1847. Her sister Eliza married Charles Orme and they had six daughters; however, I have been unable to identify to which of those EBB is referring. Their fifth daughter, also called Eliza (1848–1937), was the first woman to receive an LLB from the University of London (DNB). From EBB’s letters to Isa Blagden about this time, we know that the “Tennysons” refer to the poet’s brother, Frederick and his wife.
4. Maria Manning (1821–49) and her husband were the figures in a sensational murder trial in 1849; they were convicted and executed (see EBB-MRM, III, 279).
5. EBB must have seen the announcement in The Times of the preceding day of the death of the Stratten’s only surviving daughter, Frances (“Fanny”) E. Stratton (b. 1831); she died on 31 August 1855 at her parent’s home in St. John’s Wood. Miss Russell is presumably the same mentioned in letter 8 (see note 20).
Dearest darling Arabel, if you have cried, I have cried—that's all I can say—Everything has gone wrong ever since I touched English ground, and I shall remember it against England, . . . which has grown wholly detestable to me, now that you are not here—the one lump of sugar in the cup! Penini & I have groaned together, I assure you. When your letter came yesterday with the seaweed . . . such a piteous piece of work there was! He went about the room, sighing,—"Oh—poor Alibel! when shall I see her again?" such sighs, a full yard long!—Then, said he—"I sint I will put this beautiful sea-weed in Alibel's bible, to remember her. I will put it just under her writing"—(meaning where you had written his name on the first leaf). But, finding that the bible wouldn't shut with this heap of sea weed, he deposited there only a little sprig, & then went about selecting your other gift-books to hold the rest,—Mr® Stowe's Geography for instance. Quite his own idea! The child has a great deal of sentiment. And so sweet he is in his disappointment—He told Wilson all you had said about the pic nics, the donkey &c &c— and then, interrupting himself . . . "Oh, it's more better, not to sint about it any more, now."

I have written to beg dear Henrietta not to come,—to wait till next year early, when we shall be here again,—because really it is'nt worth her while in expense & fatigue to come to see only me (you all being away!). Also, my ill-luck is so great just now, that certainly, if she came, she would have a miscarriage in consequence! that would be certain! & I am not in a condition to bear the responsibility of any risk of the kind, indeed—

Think of my having a note from Mr Spicer this morning . . . (who wrote three volumes & a corollary on the Spirits) to ask if at last (he has just returned from the east) he might call on me. I felt inclined to go to bed & be extremely ill till I set out for Paris,—but Robert said I was to say we would see him. So he comes tonight, when Mr® Ruskin does, & Mr® Sartoris, who has suddenly come up to town again for a day or two, impelled by hooping-cough among her children; & I shall entreat her to sing so loud & long, that not a word will be utterable or audible about the spiritual world: nor in fact is Mr Spicer likely to say much that w'd be very sympathetical even to me—leaning, as I believe he does (with all his knowledge and experience) to the physical solution of the phenomena.

I have had a letter from Isa Blagden who saw a medium at Knebworth—a lady—a friend of Sir Edward's staying in the house— The rappings came—and a great heavy table which Gibson the sculptor could'nt move with all his natural strength, was made responsive to the touch of the tip of her finger— Of course, say nothing upon this subject when you write.

Miss Macintosh has called about half an hour ago, on me. She seems to wish to get her mother to Eastbourne or somewhere; only, she is afraid, that if she succeeds in this, she wont get her back again. Our card was left on the poor Strattens yesterday—and the answer was that "M' & M® Stratten were pretty well." You dont mention Trippy's cap. Do tell me. Robert Sarianna Peni & I went to call on her yesterday, & found her looking well & in good humour. The wind was so bitter, I shall have to take care in going out again— One thing is, dearest Arabel, . . . perhaps, if I
had gone to Eastbourne I couldn't have borne it above a week or two or so, without decidedly suffering,—the east winds having plainly a tendency to set in. Isa Blagden at Broadstairs was shivering over a fire, she says in her letter today. But so vexed I am, so profoundly vexed, that all attempt at self-comfort is mere aggravation,—I cant, & I shant, and I wont, & I mustn't be comforted—there's an end.

What did I ever come to England for, but just for you? Answer me that. Robert might have had his proofs at Paris perfectly well, through the embassy. If you were to go occasionally to the continent, I would shake the dust of my beloved country from my feet for ever & ever!—not because I would not have England blessed—but because the very dust of her, is bad for my very shoes, I feel.

The new maid comes on monday, because Wilson can't stay with us beyond next week she says— Not that Orestes is to be born immediately, but that she feels too unwell for the going up & down stairs— She will follow to Paris as soon as possible, she says besides.

Tell me of Trippy's cap—and do, do write. Pray for me, dearest.

Your ever own Ba-

Say how your headaches are.

Address: Miss Barrett / 12. Cornfield Terrace / Eastbourne.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated from EBB's references to Ruskin's visit and to the new maid arriving "on monday."
2. I have been unable to trace the present whereabouts of this Bible.
3. Harriet Beecher Stowe, A New Geography for Children, Revised by an English Lady by Direction of the Author (London; Sampson Low, Son, & Co., 1855). The preface, dated "London, March, 1855," begins by explaining that "this little book having been prepared for the use of children in America, there were many details of that country unnecessary for very young children in England to be made acquainted with; while, on the other hand, there was much needful for them to know connected with their own land, not included in the American edition" (p. xiii).
4. EBB's letter to Henrietta, dated [6 September 1855], opens with EBB regretting how "every thing goes wrong to me in this England—and I can't even make the two ends of our loves (yours and mine) meet comfortably" (Huxley, p. 226).
5. See letter 96, note 11; I have been unable to verify EBB's assertion. Spicer was the author of several dramatic works, but I have been able to identify only two titles published by this time related to spiritualism.
6. Apparently Spicer called, and they met again in 1858 in Rome.
7. Knebworth House, about 25 miles north of London, was the seat of the novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton (see letter 13, note 31). Isa Blagden had met him as a young girl and they became correspondents. EBB and RB were also invited to visit Knebworth, but they declined because of pressure of work. Isa, however, accepted the invitation, and EBB's mentions of her letters about this time contain references to several séances during her stay there.
9. Cf. Matthew 10:14: "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet."
10. Harriet Gray, EBB's lady's maid, who had been engaged to replace Wilson while she was absent for the birth of her child. Harriet remained with the Brownings until the following June.
11. This reference together with EBB's comment in letter 137 (see note 5) seems to indicate that Wilson and Ferdinando had chosen the name before the child was born; see letter 141, note 8.
My own dearest Arabel I have a letter from Henrietta persisting (how Kind!—too kind) in coming to London— She talks of this day week .. monday .. & she puts in my head (as if audacious sins enough did'nt grow in my head of themselves, like mushrooms!) that you might perhaps come then for a few days, to let us all be together. If there was a chance of it I might persuade Mrs Green to give you a bedroom in this house— In the case of having none, surely Mr Mackintosh would—what do you say?— You would do the eating & living of course altogether with us— If such an arrangement were possible I might manage a little comfort out of it—but really Arabel I have'nt the heart to urge it lest you should get into any shadow of a scrape because of me—dear, dear! As it is, almost I am sorry that Henrietta should persist in coming, so afraid I am of her hurting herself by the effort, & by driving about in cabs in London— Then feeling so unwell, how can she enjoy anything? but it is very affectionate of her, very, to think of it even—

As to my going to you with my poor Penini, (who was horribly disappointed— What kisses he gave to your letter!) the cost would be much what the difference would be between our all going straight or crooked to Paris— And besides, it would be worse than bad, my leaving Robert in the midst of the proofs.. just when I can really be of use to him— Oh no, I would'nt for the world think of it darling Arabel, & you must'nt.

As to Robert, you must learn that he sees snakes & crocodiles in Thames water without the microscope—he sees in every drop of good every possibility of evil—and as to money-matters, the idea of being in a difficulty is absolutely horrible to him. Now he thinks that the change from one house to another, entails expense, (besides the journeying)—and he has set it down as certain (which he has done a hundred times before since we have been together) that we are all going down a precipice for want of pecuniary means— Say nothing of it—but he has seriously proposed to me to go straight off to Florence to avoid these northern expenses which we are unequal to meet, he holds— Certainly, considering the cholera, that would be a cheap way of providing for all of us. (Dont be afraid. We are not going to Florence.)

I am sure he is extremely pained by having to pain you. He is very fond of you, Arabel, & having a conviction he says, that you “dont believe a word he has said to you” about money &c, it is very painful to him naturally. So you must be as indulgent as you can. It’s horribly difficult, (as I know,) for rash people like you & me, to sympathize with cautious people, like him—cautious as to spending-money at least—

The weather has grown milder but is feathered thick with fog wherever you look. Penini has a bad cold. I must tell you something he said the day before yesterday— Lady Charlotte Locker had written to propose coming with her husband to us on friday evening, I think it was—& little Peni, who heard me speaking of it, observed gravely, .. “Well, mama— I hope you’ll tell that Lady of Charlotte not to eat no more onions!” An application of Albert Smith’s joke! You remember?

I sympathized with you deeply, or rather highly, as to the terrors at Pevensey. How dangerous! really dangerous! Dearest Arabel, that you should be feeling rather better, physically speaking,
Letter 132
[10 September 1855]

comforts me for this tearing away of a part of my heart... though what remains, bleeds still. May God bless you—Think within yourself, if you can come to meet Henrietta—who proposes staying from Monday to Saturday—

Robert's best love to you—and mine with his to George & the rest—

Ever & wholly your attached
Ba—

Always I write at full gallop—writing in London—within an inch of post-time.

Address: Miss Barrett / 12. Cornfield Terrace / Eastbourne.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Mary Green and her husband George let rooms in their house at 39 Dorset Street. John Macintosh and his wife Frances and their family resided at 39 Dorset Street. Their daughter, Charlotte, married EBB's brother, Octavius, in 1859.

2. i.e., of Men and Women, which RB was preparing for publication. Three days after this letter, she explained to Henrietta that she could not leave "just when I am of most use to him every day in the proof-sheets" (Transcript in editor's file). A month earlier, EBB mentioned to Mrs. Jameson that RB had shown the proofs of the first part to W.J. Fox (see LEBB, II, 208), and in a letter to Isa Blagden at the end of August, EBB said that he had made progress in the second volume, and had shown the proof to Fox, as well as to Forster (ms at Fitzwilliam). The proofs continued to come in until early October; see letter 138, in which EBB told Arabella that they had "just despatched Robert's last proof." Men and Women was published by Chapman and Hall in two volumes on 17 November 1855.

3. Charlotte Christian Bruce (d. 1872) had married Frederick Locker on 2 July 1850. He later described EBB as having "poor little hands, so thin that when she welcomed you she gave you something like the foot of a young bird" (Alethea Hayter, Mrs Browning: A Poet's Works and its Setting, London: Faber and Faber, 1962, p. 100).

4. Perhaps a pun or a drawing or both by Albert Smith (1816-60), a medical student with John Leech, with whom he worked as one of the original contributors to Punch. I have been unable to clarify EBB's comment, but I take the joke to refer to Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott," which was first published in 1832, and extensively revised for the 1842 edition of Tennyson's Poems.

5. A small village 4½ miles from Eastbourne, it was the landing place of William the Conqueror. EBB's comment about "terrors" is unclear, but may pertain to visits by her sister and brothers to the Roman ruins or to activities in and around the sea.

Letter 133

[London]
Monday—5 o'clock. [17 September 1855]1

My beloved Arabel, Proofsheets pushed me into Peni's lessons, and then I caught myself up & rushed violently out of doors into sundry shop-doors in order to complete the decencies of my position tomorrow when of course I should put on mourning.2 On my return, I found Robert frantic with fright & Wilson putting on her hat to "go & look for me." After all I had only been round the corner to Crawford street, where the shopkeepers had lured me on from one half hour to another—So the stray Ba-lamb came back—and after dinner (this is the worst!) I find myself driven to the last rim of the post-hour—and when I had so much to say to you, my own dearest Arabel.
In despair I send this note to forerun the letter which shall go to you tomorrow, if possible—Dearest—shall you have the heart to give us up—because Henrietta does’nt come. I am sure you can have a bedroom in this house. At the same time I am afraid of pressing it— Minny says I ought’nt— So I wont press it— Only I hope I am not forced to say .. “Keep off Arabel! dont come this way by any manner of means!”

We were at M! Stratten’s yesterday morning, & seldom have I been so moved. The text was Jacob’s testimony .. “few & evil have been the days of my pilgrimage”. The discourse was full of dignity & Christian tenderness—no out-break of the personal grief whatever—but what quite overset me at last was his saying at the close .. that it was an “exaggeration on Jacob’s part—” he dwelling on & testifying to the blessings of life—

For a man to speak so, in his position, .. with his heart breaking in his bosom, as he must have felt it .. was to me the very triumph of Christian experience, & made me cry as no eloquence of lamentation could have done— Robert was quite as much impressed by the whole bearing of the man as I was—and indeed so was Sarianna, who went afterwards in the evening .. which I feared to do because of the foggy air— On Saturday we had a card .. “Mr & Mr. Stratten returns thanks &c &c”. Ought we to call, upon this, do you think?—

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Dated from EBB’s reference to purchasing mourning, to mark the death of her uncle, Richard Pierce Butler, who died 10 September 1855.
2. Richard Pierce Butler had died on 10 September 1855 in Kensington.
3. Cf. Genesis 47:9: “And Jacob said unto Pharaoh. The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.”
Paine, to Nelly Jago, inclusive of the Cooks—Mⁿ Cook &, I think, Mary Cook. What a faint rubbed-out woman Mⁿ Cook is! She never could have been in bright colours, & now the picture-cleaners have been quite too strong for her. So meek & gentle, as to provoke one rather against the Christian graces. It was kind of her to come, & I must try to get down to Charing Cross to return her visit. She talked of course of Henrietta, & considered the decision about her not coming, to be perfectly wise—

Besides the really grand character (to my feeling) of Mˡˡ Stratten’s discourse that day, he pleased me a good deal by his spiritualism in my sense—his references to angelic ministrations,— & to the probable ministration of departed spirits towards their friends surviving on the earth. I have thought before several times that he is in advance (on this subject) of the great majority of pulpit teachers .. in fact in advance of the ordinary opinions of the Christians of the day. There is materialism everywhere—and the doctrine of the personal Reign is used & delighted in chiefly because of its tendencies that way. Think of even Mˡˡ Ruskin being materialistic to the uttermost. He holds the Personal Reign—and told me quite cooly that he wished the word “spiritual” out of use altogether. We are going to spend a morning with Mˡˡ Ruskin some of these mornings, by the bye—

Mˡᵉ Forster’s dinner was agreeable—& the next day Macready came here, & sate two hours in conversation. I understand he has taken a great fancy to me .. I mean Macready has—He is not brilliant, but sensible & gentlemanly—with a sadness of tone running through his whole conversation & general bearing. Mˡᵉ Forster is overwhelming us with attentions. Think of his coming the other day with a magnificent toy for Penini! Robert dines with him tomorrow (friday) to meet his publisher, Chapman—& we are all to do the same (minus Chapman) another day. I really do like Forster. He has quite won me by his affectionatness, & quick sympathy for Robert.

Dearest— we shall have you! What joy! Penini has written you a long letter (he said he must—he couldn’t wait to see you! You w’d think it most unkind if he didn’t write) and he is copying it out in his own hand, day by day— He wrote a page this morning. My darling Peni is looking much better— Henry should have confined himself to that fact—

And yet, I have really been feeling better during the last few days. The thoughts of you make one better—

Robert shrieks for me— The rest tomorrow, I hope—though Mⁿ Ogilvy is coming tomorrow—

Your own Ba—
4. Also known as the millennial reign, this belief in Christ's temporal kingship is based upon Revelation 20:6, i.e., that Christ will reign over an earthly kingdom for a period of one thousand years. Elsewhere, EBB had strongly defended her disbelief in such a notion; see letter 95, in which she states "that ever Israel will be restored as a temporal Kingdom, I do entirely doubt." This popular topic of theological debate resulted in numerous pamphlets and books on both sides of the controversy, for example, see Arthur Augustus Rees, The Approaching Personal Reign of Christ Demonstrated (London: Nisbet, 1853), a second edition of which was issued in 1854.

Letter 135

[London]
[Postmark: 29 September 1855]

Dearest dear Arabel, this is a frill for Penini, just come from the wash.¹ Ask Bonser to sew it on instead of the horrid thing he took. Oh—how I miss him & you.² Dearest, the house is full of echoes. May God bless you always. Tell my Peni to think of me & love me, & be very good & happy. I have his kiss—& yours—

Your ever attached
Ba

Address: Miss Barrett / 12. Cornfield Terrace / Eastbourne.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. This note is written on the flap of the envelope which enclosed Pen’s “frill.”
2. Arabella took Pen with her to Eastbourne, where he stayed for four days, returning on 3 October.

Letter 136

[London]
Monday. [1 October 1855]¹

My own beloved Arabel your letter was the greatest comfort possible. I like Peni to be with you—and that's the deepest expression of my love for you—

But we miss him—oh, so much!—you may fancy. Yes, & you too, dearest. I felt desperate that saturday. It was like throwing my head out of the window after my heart.

Keep him till thursday if he likes to stay, of course. Dear darling, I knew he would have outbursts of grief & re-actions of love before the day was out.

Dearest Arabel, Wilson goes away on wednesday,² & we think it excellent that he sh² not see her again. Perhaps before he comes home you had better let him understand that she is gone—(just for the week he allowed)—or use your discretion.

Miss Heaton & Jane Sandford have been here today, &, between the visits, I have been horribly busy—No Tennyson since you went. Yesterday we had the two Ros[s]etti’s for six hours instead—only they happily came after dinner. Ros[s]etti brought us a sketch of Tennyson reading Maud on our sofa, done from recollection, in pen & ink. Excellent!—³
Also, today, I have been over to Moule's buying dinner napkins, a table-cloth, & winter-frocks for my Peni- The last was a comfort. I wonder if people who have many children, love them in any proportion as I do that child.

What of Papa? Do write every day about Peni, I beseech you. How perfect & tender you always have been to me in all shapes. And is'nt he a shape?

The time drives me before it. Love me- Robert's dear love- Best love to George & all of them, dear things.

Your ever & ever attached

Ba-

Say how you are yourself—mind- Dont let Penini teaze himself about writing to me. God bless you-

M: Stratten quite displeased me yesterday by his sermon—view of the war—of our chosen island & enormous glory! & no word of the alliance.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated from EBB's references to Arabella's departure after her brief visit, to Pen being with her, to Wilson's imminent departure, and to the visit from the Rossettis. 1 October 1855 was a Monday.

2. Wilson was pregnant, and her baby was due some time in October.

3. This drawing of Tennyson, dated 27 September 1855, and inscribed by Rossetti: "I hate the dreadful hollow behind the little wood," sold as lot 11 in Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, H114; now at Columbia). Nineteen years later, RB wrote the following note and put it with the sketch: "Tennyson read his poem of Maud to E.B.B., R.B., Arabel and Rossetti, on the evening of Thursday, Sepr. 27, 1855, at 13 Dorset St., Manchester Square. Rossetti made this sketch of Tennyson as he sat reading to E.B.B. who occupied the other end of the sofa. R.B., March 6, '74, 19 Warwick Crescent. μεταποτοντος δαμονος" ("My genius having been supplanted by another"). On 28 September Tennyson recorded in his diary: "I dined yesterday with the Brownings and had a very pleasant evening. Both of them are great admirers of poor little 'Maud.' The two Rossettis came in during the evening" (Hallam Tennyson, Memoir, I, 390). In late September, Emily Tennyson wrote to Edward Lear that Tennyson "had been dining with the Brownings and had had a very pleasant evening. Do you know them and those wonderful spirit eyes of hers?" (The Letters of Emily Lady Tennyson, ed. James O. Hoge, University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1974, p. 83). Dante Gabriel Rossetti described the event in a letter to William Allingham on 25 November: "I never was more amused in my life than by Tennyson's groanings and horrors over the reviews of Maud, which poem he read through to us, spouting also several sections to be introduced in a new edition. I made a sketch of him reading, which I gave to Browning, and afterwards duplicated it for Miss Siddals. His conversation was really one perpetual groan" (Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ed. Oswald Doughty and John Robert Wahl, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965, I, 281). Rossetti's brother, William Michael Rossetti gave this account: "My brother made two pen-and-ink sketches of him, and gave one of them to Browning. So far as I remember, the Poet Laureate neither saw what Dante was doing, nor knew of it afterwards. His deep grand voice, with slightly chanting intonation, was a noble vehicle for the perusal of mighty verse. On it rolled, sonorous and emotional" (William Michael Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti: His Family-Letters, With a Memoir, London: Ellis and Elvey, 1895, I, 191). Describing the event in general and Tennyson in particular to Julia Martin, EBB said "If I had had a heart to spare, certainly he would have won mine" (LEBB, II, 213).

My ever dearest Arabel, It shall be as you & my Peni like. It's dreadful to have to wait till monday—but still, it will be good for him, I dare say, and you will care to keep him, through love for him & me. So let it be as he pleases & as you please. Only dont force him into staying—& dont miss (for love's sake) writing a line to me every day, to let me know how he gets on. And, dearest, dont teaze him about writing—he has to give too much attention to the mechanical part, (when he has much play in hand—) for the writing. But ask him to dictate a letter to me which you could send in your own pen-and-ink. I should like that, I own. My precious Peni—

Think of my wickedness yesterday in writing you a letter about everything but what you & George wanted to know— Dearest Arabel, we would do what we could—but see!—we dont go through Amiens: we take the express-train, which carries us to Paris in eleven hours & stops no-where. Altogether . . we are apt to leave our own boxes behind us, & are scarcely trustworthy. Therefore it would be better if somebody else could be found to do the business— Nevertheless, I repeat, what we can do we are ready to do, of course—

There's a letter from Henrietta today who seems to be going on well. Think of Bummy having written to papa to speak of her visit to Wilton, & of the "ladylike" (!!!) manner of Henrietta's life, & of her happiness except in the single point of his forgiveness . . all very kindly & unavailingly meant. Altham & Mary are both quite well.

Rosetti is going to take a sketch of Robert preparatory to a picture next year—& it was settled that he should do the same by me, but I hope & trust I have succeeded in begging off till 1856 when I shall be a year younger—& that will be rather an advantage.

Mr Forster's dinner is put off to thursday. Tennyson has left London of course,—without keeping his promise of coming to teach me the meaning of his "Brook." I am glad he has written with this pen of mine; & I think I shall write to his wife to tell her how deeply he gratified us altogether. Oh— I do wish you could have heard him read. It was like articulated music. Did you tell George?— Tell him that Tennyson spoke to us of "Venables's hatred of Maud" quite pathetically.4

Wilson goes tomorrow, & I shall be glad when she is fairly gone! (to free Orestes bones)5 She has been very good in beginning our packing, & preparing & setting in order. If Penini does'nt return to us before monday, he will have only a day in London intermediately to the further travelling. You send us delightful news of his appetite. May God keep my treasure!

Henrietta directed a letter wrong to Arlette, & it was returned to her from the Dead letter Office. Is it not a pity that Arlette does not stay longer at Eastbourne? The railroad travelling for three hours is so simple a thing— Robert misses Peni about as much, I think, as I do. It's the bird of the house fled! Great lamentations also come up from the lower regions— Best love to dear George & Henry & all of them— How good they are to Penini!— Arabel, I want to know how you are. I must know.

How I miss you dear, dearest Arabel! I shall always think tenderly of the risk you ran for me, in coming to London!

Your own attached

Ba.
Robert’s very best love. He does love you. I am glad Peni longs for us at moments,—after all!—

I am vexed about the Hedleys. Still the Paris scheme remains. I don’t give you up. You must say that you have a “friend” who will receive you while you are there—& Papa won’t object by a word, I feel sure.

Address: Miss Barrett / 12. Cornfield Terrace / Eastbourne.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Near Taunton in Somersetshire; Henrietta and Surtees Cook had moved there shortly after their marriage. They stayed in Wilton until 1859 when they removed to Stoke Court, slightly farther away from Taunton.
2. EBB wrote to Rossetti explaining she had too much to do and that she was afraid offending another artist friend, and so asked Rossetti “to defer till next summer the honour you intended to do me” (Arthur A. Adrian, “The Browning Rossetti Friendship: Some Unpublished Letters,” PMLA, 73, 1958, 539). Rossetti’s watercolour of RB is now at the Fitzwilliam; see Reconstruction, G11.
3. “The Brook: An Idyl” was originally published in Maud, and Other Poems (London: Edward Moxon, 1855). On [16] October, EBB wrote to Emily Tennyson: “He didn’t come back as he said he would to teach me the ‘Brook’ (which I persist nevertheless in fancying I understand a little)” (Hallam Tennyson, Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son, London: 1897, I, 390). I have not traced any further references to “The Brook” in EBB’s correspondence.
4. George Stovin Venables (1810–88) was a barrister on the Oxford Circuit with George Tennyson’s The Princess was dedicated to Venables, but I have been unable to trace any reference to his opinion of Maud.
5. The passage in angle brackets is reconstructed, having been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella. Doubtless an allusion to the mythological account of the Lacedemonians being instructed by an oracle to bring Orestes’s bones from Arcadia to Sparta after his death; see letter 141, note 8.

Letter 138

13. Dorset Street.

Wednesday. [Postmark: 3 October 1855]

My ever dear dearest Arabel,

I begin this letter that I may send it off when Penini comes. I observe you never say how you are. Now if you persist in this silence, I shall conclude that you are unwell,—so you will gain nothing at all by your want of candour. I beseech you, write frankly—

We have just despatched Robert’s last proof.¹ I am most sanguine about the work, believing in it, I for one.

A note from M’Forster .. “make me happy by sending me news of dear little Penini.” My attachment to Forster grows alarming in intensity.

Oh—of course you delight me by sending him back after all. I was resigned, only resigned, to the delay till Monday—and am overjoyed by the change of plan. Selfishly, selfishly. One can’t help being selfish even about Penini.

How good you have been! how often he must have teazed & tired you! That must have been. But your love held fast to the pleasure after all & through all. I am sure George & Henry & Sette & Occy too have been very, very kind. I can only thank them by loving them, dear things.
Poor Wilson went away this morning at six—and one of the great advantages of Peni’s visit to Eastbourne has been the getting him out of the way of the pain of this. She shed many tears as it was, but was in not uncheerful spirits upon the whole. Harriet was about half an hour arranging my hair this morning. I imagine she is slow, & not scientific—but we must make a patch of it while Wilson is away—and really she does seem very gentle & amiable,—& experience comes with time.

Robert had to jog Mr Kenyon’s memory about the unhappy money, & we had this morning by return of post the kindest, kindest reproach for not having done it before. (That “we put ourselves to inconvenience just to put him to mortification”) adding that he is coming up to London on Monday. & in the meantime sending the order. Quite as kind as possible! And I have a sympathy for people who forget dates & are not clear about money-arrangements. (If it were not for Robert, I wonder how I should make the two ends of the year meet!) Dear Mr Kenyon!

Since Peni went away, by the way, I have been ruining Robert, by my prowess in the shops—I have bought three frocks for my Peni, & a velvet jacket—handkerchiefs for Robert, a black veil for myself. Oh, I can’t enumerate half.

Here I am interrupted by Miss Bayley—who is to be in town on Monday to meet Mr Kenyon, & is full of schemes about our staying a few days longer all together. Robert is out—but I think it likely that he may do it—he is always loth to move when we come to the end of a residence. As for me, I shall like being kind to Mr Kenyon, but for the rest, the sooner I am out of England, (now that I have lost you definitively), the better for me. Robert is “sitting” for Rossetti, and I am likely to be made to sit after all, between my husband & his artist. And there shall I be, perpetuated in sublime ugliness by the head of the Pre-Raphaelite school!——

Dearest dear Arabell, do, I beseech you, write to me. & write in detail about yourself. or I shall be quite uneasy—

We are in a desperate state about Mr Crispin who is’n’t to be found it seems—Such quantities of work we have to do—

Here’s Peni! Thank you, dearest— He is looking so well—I am delighted to look in his radiant face. Robert & I rushed down stairs, & we had a struggle to get the proper amount of kisses, before he pulled out his presents—Oh—thank you thank you for all the roses in his cheeks—

Past five—half past, they say—and no time for a word—

Your own grateful

Ba—

He has only had luncheon he says! Quite ready for dinner again.

Address: Miss Barrett / 12. Cornfield Terrace / Eastbourne.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

3. EBB’s fear was unfounded; Rossetti never made a likeness of her.
4. A housemaid who later replaced Bonser as Arabella’s lady’s maid. Although EBB thought she was a good dressmaker, in a letter to Arabella written in June 1857, she said she did not think she was “lively enough” to be a good lady’s maid (as with Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett).
My ever beloved Arabel you will have imagined us to be sucked down by a maelstrom out of this living & letter-writing world. The fact is, we are in purgatory—"priez pour nous".¹ I had not the heart to write, nor should have now—only that you will be putting on mourning for us if I wait any more, besides being really unhappy which is worse than being even as uncomfortable as we are.

I think I told you in my letter from London that we were in a sort of scrape about an apartment—& that Sarianna went on before in order to get us out of it. The Corkrans had been looking out for rooms for us. They wrote to describe a house at fifty francs a month more than we wished to give, & having a room less than we required to occupy. Sarianna had written to specify both objections. Well—they persuaded the propriétaire to take off the fifty francs, and then, as if affairs of space were quite below their notice, signed in our name an agreement for six months, in the face of our injunctions to the contrary. Sarianna on coming to Paris found the thing in this state,—Baron & baroness (the proprietors) holding us by the bond like jews.² She besought that we might be allowed to see for ourselves, & (if the apartment couldn't be made to suit,) to be allowed to resign it. Not at all. They hold us like bloodhounds. It can't be made to suit. Peni has to sleep on the floor in our room. Robert has to dress in the salon. The front door opens into the dining-room. There's only a roof above us, & under us nothing at all—therefore the cold is a sure thing. On the other hand the rooms are rather pretty .. prettily furnished, that is—though without carpets. Altogether we are utterly wretched, & Robert has been frantically wishing himself back at Mrs Green's. We pay two pounds, English, a week. Now the atrocious thing is that our Baron won't allow us to sublet, except on the condition of getting a tenant at two pound, ten shillings a week—which of course makes it more difficult. If we sublet at the sum we pay ourselves we are to identify [sic, for indemnify] our Baron, by presenting him with two hundred francs down .. the sum of eight pounds English—

Now observe the injustice of the world. Because our friends the Corkrans³ have made a mistake by disobeying our injunction & fixing us in this miserable trap, they follow it up by never coming near us!—And yet we have sent them a kind message & no reproach. But people in the wrong must get wronger by plunging. If a man wrongs another, the injurer is pretty sure never to forgive the victim.

Fancy us in this trap. Not a box unpacked. I have 'nt even my own pen to write with, and have just snatched up the poker as you may observe by the character of the writing.⁴ The aggravating point is that we have seen an apartment opposite, which, although the rooms are somewhat tiney, would exactly suit us by its arrangement.

We like this quarter of the town. The English are never seen here scarcely—it is much more characteristic & national. I can walk to the Tuileries—which I couldn't do from the house we occupied in the Champs Elysées—& the markets are more reasonable, not being unnaturally
inflated by English & American influences. Ferdinando finds everything much cheaper than in London. Butter, milk & bread are perfect, and poultry excellent & cheap. For instance, a fine goose at 3 \( \frac{3}{4} \) — a fowl of large size, sufficient for our whole dinner at two shillings & a penny. We shall do excellently if we can but get out of this detestable house. Meanwhile the comforts are that Penini looks like a rose & eats like a little wolf,— & that the weather is perfectly beautiful—warm & bright together. Also Harriet is very good-natured, & though she has a very reasonable opinion on the conveniences of the house, she makes the best of everything & is generous enough to admire Paris as if we were more prosperous. Penini treats her rather de haut en bas,\(^5\) but allows she is kind— & indulges himself in calling on her for so much admiration of sights Parisian, that she must find his cicerone-ship somewhat fatiguing. I heard him begin at Boulogne—

"Do you see these houses? all white! Sint of the dirty walls in London. Now I sint you dont want to go bat never. Oh yes— you will go and see your fiends, of tourse!"

By the way we were prosperous in our journey—only poor Robert horribly ill on the sea—Penini a little, too. We arrived at one in the morning. At the custom-house they opened two boxes of our twelve, & simply glanced at those. Paris is beyond description beautiful. How they can keep the streets so clean, is a problem to me.\(^6\) The new buildings harmonize wonderfully with the old, and the unity of beauty everywhere is most striking.

Dearest darling Arabel, remember your promise to me—remember. To have you here will transport me with joy, & you must be true to me & try every possible means of getting here. Remember we will take charge of you. We shall be out of this net I do hope & trust in a few days—

Of course we have let nobody know we are here—we lie perdus till we emerge from our misfortunes. Robert ran into M' Lytton & finding him out from home, left no address.\(^7\) We have not looked into the exhibition yet. But that I have not written to you, proves more than all the rest.

My dearest Arabel, Robert & I have a bed to sleep in .. meant for one— For my part I wake fifty times in the night when I sleep best.

But courage. Dont let me send you a letter full of groans from end to end. Last sunday we went to the protestant church close by,\(^8\) & heard M. Coquerel the famous minister, & member of the House of Assembly. The church has an echo, & we had bad places so, that we scarcely heard one sentence in twenty—but he seemed to have great eloquence, & the discourse as far as I could guess at it, seemed good. For the rest he is accused of unsoundness of doctrine on certain points—The church is supplied by different ministers, week after week.

Also Robert & I have roamed about looking into shop-windows—which is a favorite amusement of mine just now—and the Parisian shops are particularly amusing. Then I have read "Female life among the Mormons,"\(^9\) which we bought in the steamer.

You would like Paris if you came. Nobody can help liking Paris .. even when they are cooped up with a trunk on each side, as we unhappy creatures are just now.

Sarianna has taken a very nice unfurnished apartment for her father & herself, at the annual rent of seven hundred francs—that is twenty eight pounds English—salon, diningroom, two bedrooms, kitchen &c—southern exposition & pretty gardens to look out on. She is busy buying beds, & other furniture.
Dearest darling Arabel, write directly & put a little joy into me—I want it very much. Oh—one should'nt take mere discomforts too seriously, I am aware—and then I hope steadily to see the end of them on a day not far off. Say how you are. Peni talks of you. My best love to all. Tell Henrietta of me.

Your own Ba-

Enquire at M. Green’s for five spoons (one large) left in the house—

Address: Angleterre. Affranche / Miss Barrett / 12. Cornfield Terrace / Eastbourne.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. "Pray for us."
2. An allusion to Shylock in The Merchant of Venice.
3. The Brownings had met the Corkrans on their first visit to Paris in 1851; see letter 74, note 12.
4. Although perfectly legible, there are one or two corrections in this part of her letter.
5. "Condescendingly."
6. According to Galignani’s New Paris Guide (Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1855), “the gutters, formerly in the middle of the streets, are now mostly placed by the sides of the trottoirs, and a general system of large and well-arched drains is to be found under nearly every street. Closely connected with the drainage of the town, is the system adopted for removing the night-soil of each individual house. For this purpose an ingenious method has lately been put into practice” (p. 47). EBB’s use of “problem” seems to mean “puzzle” or “quandary” as opposed to a question requiring a solution.

7. Robert Lytton was attached to the British Legation at Paris; as indicated in the following letter, his father, Sir Edward Lytton, was visiting about this time.

8. Athanase Laurent Charles Coquerel (1795–1868), French Reformed Church minister, author, and politician. After the revolution in 1848 he sat as a moderate republican in the National Assembly, but following the coup d’état in 1851, he focused on his ministry. In the preface to Protestantism in Paris: A Series of Discourses, Translated from the French of A. Coquerel (London: Edward T. Whitfield, 1854), he is described as “the exponent of Protestantism in Paris” (p. iii). Coquerel’s son, Athanase Josué Coquerel (1820–75), was also a minister and author. Le Pentémot at 106, rue de Grenelle, was one of the seven reformed churches in Paris, and Athanase Coquerel is the only reformed minister specifically named in Galignani’s New Paris Guide (Paris: A. & W. Galignani, 1856, p. 119).

9. Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years’ Personal Experience by the Wife of a Mormon Elder [Maria N. Ward] (London: G. Routledge & Co., 1855). There were two English editions of this popular title published in 1855 in addition to an American and a French edition. In a letter to Mary Brotherton in January 1854, EBB had expressed an interest in reading about the Mormons (ms at Texas). In her introduction, Maria Ward wrote: “Knowing, as I do know, the evils and horrors and abominations of the Mormon system, the degradation it imposes on females, and the consequent vices which extend through all the ramifications of the society, a sense of duty to the world has induced me prepare the following narrative for the public eye” (p. v). A reviewer in the 15 September 1855 issue of The Critic, states that “there is much in the construction of the story which savours of strongly of romance; but, on the other hand, it is borne out by so many corroborative circumstances, that we are staggered in our unbelief” (p. 455).
My beloved Arabel, as the wind sets in with you towards wrath & indignation, I had better look to my steps of course, & write dutifully & quickly. Then it is but fair that I should'nt let you spend too much good pity upon us when we don't exactly want it. So I write to say that our Baroness has behaved well at last. Robert went to offer her above three hundred francs paid down to allow us to go... she refused magnanimously,—on the ground that that would be more than justice—and she cancelled the agreement for six months on condition that we should pay for two months two hundred & fifty (instead of two hundred) a month, .. either occupying ourselves, or subletting at whatever price we pleased. So we exonerate her at once— In fact she made worse terms for herself than we have offered all along. But here we remain .. though we might easily sublet any day, .. because we want to look about us & do the best for ourselves. I am a little uneasy, though, because of the advance of the season— I should like to be warmly housed before the winter sets in, & I have some fears about my poor chest (in which I don't keep my treasure!) a little irritable for some time past— Well—I shall be prudent, & not go out too much,— and all will end well, we must hope.

Ah—Arabel—Is it possible that one hope is over & gone. No, never can I express to you the extent of my vexation at your determination not to ask about Paris. I don't agree with you, observe, the least in the world. If papa had not himself proposed the going to Paris, it would have been altogether different: but, as it is, he is just as likely to be displeased with you for seeming to care nothing about profiting by his suggestion, as not—very likely indeed to say, “They never accept my suggestions— I wanted Arabel to go to the north last year— I proposed Paris this year— That's enough for her, to refuse in each case.” Of course my dear dearest Arabel I wont tease you about it— You know best. And I know how hard it is to make an effort & speak— Still it seems a miserable pity that with such an opportunity open to us all, you should miss Paris and I should miss you, & I cant resign myself to it quietly—how can I?

Robert has ordered a copy of his book to be sent to you—so remember that you have it after the tenth. We have had a very kind letter from M! Ruskin already— I have .. and he speaks to me of the impression made on him by Robert’s conversation—he “never heard lightning-talk before .. so much rapidity & brilliancy of allusion” &c &c. By the way, you Arabel, have'nt heard Robert talk his best— In fact you had the worst of him in many respects last summer, & that was one of the things which vexed me most.

We are lying here like snakes in a hole—as Penini said yesterday— “my two dear little snakes that bite for love.” (what the child meant. Heaven knows). We wont let anybody know where we are till we get fairly out of prison. Robert however, in looking for apartments, fell upon M! Lytton, & so upon Sir Edward who is spending some days in Paris, and the two came & gave us a whole long evening last friday— I like Sir Edward much better than I thought I should, though the whole tone of the man is less deep less sweet, less pure, than his son’s— I am not in sympathy with him as with Lytton. He is quite young-looking .. & rather inclined to the super-ornate in the costume;
with considerable personal pretention. A quantity of light curly hair (not a touch of grey) and moustaches &c to suit. Speaking somewhat as one with authority ... a slight excess of emphasis—but full of information, & fluent & even brilliant in expression. Robert took to him extremely, & bore him to ... Oh—now you will be surprised when I come to tell you what Robert bore from Sir Edward & thought “not irrational.” But let me begin at the beginning of my story.

Well—on friday evening while we were expecting our guests the Lyttons, the door opened and in came ... judge of my consternation ... Mr Jerves himself! I really wished for a moment to slip between the boards. The whole room seemed to swim with Hades let loose— I was reassured however. Robert met him and he Robert in as friendly a manner .. as if there was no spiritual world .. we sate by the fire & talked, talked, of literature, of politics, of England & America, of our Florence friends—not a word of dangerous questions. When the Lyttons came, I made tea, & the rest of the party being in conversation he said something softly to me .. “Oh,” said I, “I dont dare to ask you.” He looked towards Robert with a half smile, gently, not in vexation, .. & then said .. “I know. And I have so much to tell you, so much, so much.” He went on to tell me in a low voice that he himself saw spirits now, .. saw them as distinctly as he saw me, .. that they came to him at night and woke him up sometimes .. that he heard spiritual voices— It seems to be mediumship of a high order— But just then Robert called me away to hear something Sir Edward was saying, & we all dropped into general conversation, considerably to my vexation. M' Jerves came another evening—but not a moment’s opportunity was allowed me—& now he has gone on to Florence. Robert was very kind & attentive to him, I allow,—and that has pleased me & mollified me in spite of all. If he had but added to the benefit by going out of the room for half an hour, he would have been perfect in his beneficence.

So much for M' Jerves— He went away early that friday evening & left the Lyttons here. When you say I am not submissive as a wife I am sure I dont know what you mean—it seems to me I deserve the gold medal for passive perfection .. except in thought & conscience .. which cant be made passive, if one happens to have any. I sate on the sofa by Sir Edward, talking of things in general & particular .. and dutifully ignoring things spiritual & invisible .. till Robert startled me by whispering across the table “Speak of the spirits”— I looked up in amazement—“Speak of the spirits,” said Robert. “No”—said I .. “I dont like to do that”— And of course I did’nt. Knowing that Sir Edward knew of the whole explosion in London in all its details, I did not choose that he should suppose me capable of the indelicacy of throwing the conflicted subject in the face of my husband before people, without his special permission .. and Robert’s whisper had been inaudible to Sir Edward— Presently however, having retired to the other side of the table, & begun to talk to Lytton, Sir Edward & Robert got into a tête à tête conversation, & from one thing to another .. Lytton & I became suddenly aware that they were in the thick of the spirit-controversy— “Oh”—said poor Lytton to me .. “I do wish they would talk of something else”— (He was so afraid of a quarrel.) Not a bit of it. Whose fault it was I cant say ... very likely Robert’s—but there they were, discussing Home and the Ealing manifestations when we came up with them— Robert recounted his observations .. how he was’nt permitted to touch the “hands” .. how he was sure they were gutta[-]percha .. strings .. and all the rest of it. Sir Edward heard him out, & then said— “These are very acute & shrewd remarks of yours .. and I perfectly agree
Letter 140
31 October [1855]

with you that any possible supposition should be received rather than a contravention of the general experience of mankind. At the same time I will tell you my reason for believing that there was no gutta-percha in the case, and no trick. I held three of these hands in my hand—They were warm, human hands—no gutta-percha. The first time I held a hand I believed it was Home's own—and I thought within myself—"Now, shall I expose this young man?"—Then I considered—He is young, he doesn't do the thing for money— I will rather take him apart presently & speak quietly to him on this ill-proceeding— In a moment however, the indignation overcame me, & I said aloud, "Mr Home, that was your hand." He rose up from the table exclaiming against the wrong I did him by such a suspicion—He went to the window & shed tears hysterically—I followed him & soothed him,—begged him to come back & to allow me to satisfy my natural doubts by holding his hands in mine. He said he would do anything I chose—He came back. I held his two hands in mine—& the three spirit-hands proved themselves to me that they were not his—One great hand, rough like a mariner's—one soft smooth delicate woman's hand, of which I felt the veins and the polished nails—and one child's hand that played with mine, was caught & let go. There was no child in the room. I cannot believe there was a trick at all— Robert listened to it all—Sir Edward added—"that above the hand & wrist, he had felt something stiff like a drapery—and that on feeling out for the arm beyond, there was nothing nothing." You have heard so much on the subject that it's fair you should hear this. Lytton told me in a low voice, he met Mr Cottrell, Count Cottrell’s brother, in the street the other day, & heard curious things of Home—who is at Florence & producing great excitement there. He is staying with the Trollopes. M' Trollope says she has seen him lifted into the air & whirled round the room, with her own eyes. The manifestations in America are said to be more & more wonderful.

Sir Edward observed as he went away, that he was going to see a medium, a French girl, the next morning, & turning to Robert, "would you like to go?" "Yes—" said Robert in a moment. "And would you?" . . . to me. I looked at my liege-lord, & was permitted to say my natural "yes." And we went the next morning—Which seemed to me really more miraculous than what we saw—The medium was not extraordinary—The 'raps' were produced by her, but she was weak otherwise: one of the common writing- mediums only—

Robert said to me afterwards—"You see I am not ashamed of acting against my own resolutions"—To which I answered truly that it was one of the noblest things in him, not to be tenacious in either wrong-saying or wrong-doing! And so we were the best friends in the world with regard to spiritual matters—

At the same time, at the same time, Arabel, I shall never moot the subject, unless it is first mooted. In writing to Florence I dont mention Home—The ground is dangerous & should be trodden lightly—He will be convinced one day, this Robert of mine, . . . but it won't be by me, or by my means.

If you were to see Penini you would allow that Paris agrees with him. He's the crown of rosiness & goodness, together. Ferdinando & he accord as usual in the praise of Paris, which, says the former, is past all comparison cheaper than London. We live on poultry, geese, fowls, partridges & and heaps of grapes & pears. Ferdinando introduces every dish with . . . "This would have cost so much in England—" As to the coffee, he maintains that "you couldn't get such in
London, though you were ruined for it.” On the other hand, the fuel is very dear,—& we have had to buy spoons in default of those you lent us—(six for two francs) we have sent to London however for our own plate. Also we have bought a metal tea pot to make sure of good tea, . . & paid twelve francs for that. Oh—Arabel! We are perfectly reformed since your time, and have breakfast regularly before nine, to the great ease of our consciences. Robert says he will never be late again while he lives, the early hour is so much better & happier.

Harriet goes on excellently. We have not yet heard Wilson’s decision about coming or staying— Dearest Arabel, explain to the Strattons that I understood they were out of town. If I had not (let me explain to you) it would have been very difficult to call—so beset & buffeted was I by things to do— I could’n’t even get to Arlette—or to M‘a Cook— I wrote however to both & I hope Arlette will forgive me for much apparent negligence— I shall write to dearest Henrietta, & to you of course, when we get into another house— May God bless you dearest, dearest— Reconsider the Paris question— Tell me if according to your paper weights I need not have torn this letter— May God keep you my very dearest Arabel— I am your own Ba.

Sarianna’s love— She has furnished her apartment quite prettily, & is well contented.


Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Year provided by postmark.

2. Men and Women (London: Chapman and Hall, 1855) was published a week later on 17 November 1855. RB inscribed Arabella’s copy “To Arabella Barrett from her affectionate & grateful Robert Browning. Ventnor. August 26 ’56” (see Reconstruction, C399).

3. Ruskin wrote on [?28] [October 1855]: “I think I never heard lightningy conversation like your husband’s that night at tea with Mrs Sartoris & Leighton. . . But the simple fact is that I never heard anything to approach your husband’s brilliancy of illustration and swiftness of fancy. But he wants more scolding about his poetry even than you do. He loses half the power he might have over the public by the least possible faults, which with the least possible trouble he might avoid” (“Ruskin and the Brownings: Twenty-Five Unpublished Letters,” ed. David J. DeLaura, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 54, Spring 1972, pp. 321-322). EBB chose not to mention Ruskin’s further comments concerning RB’s poetry.

4. Cf. RB’s comment to Mrs. Jameson in December 1847: “We are as happy as two owls in a hole, two toads under a tree-stump” (BC, 14, 346). Perhaps RB had repeated this statement, or something like it, and Pen had overheard it.

5. See letter 116, note 7. Jarves, who considered himself a medium, had introduced the Brownings to Home, hence EBB’s “consternation.” Jarves was in Paris on his way back to Florence after having been to America.

6. The Brownings had attended a séance conducted by Home on 23 July, at Ealing, at the residence of John Snaith Rymer, during which a wreath was placed on EBB’s head and then passed under the table to RB. Two years later, EBB gave a detailed account of the occasion in a letter to Anna Jameson: “We arrived at Mr. Rymer’s by daylight & Hume, showing us the pretty garden, said that he would prepare a garland of flowers, & that afterwards he would ask ‘the spirits’ to put it on my head. . . A very pretty wreath was made then, and laid upon the table; & when the ‘spirits’ gave sign of presence, Hume solicited one of them to place it on my head. . . I took the wreath with me as a memorial of the séance, & hung it on my dressing-glass; & when it was nearly withered to dust, Robert, with an exclamtion of scorn at my keeping it, threw it out of the window into the street. That was his share of reverence towards the phenomenon” (9 January [1857], ms at Berg). The “whole explosion” refers to an incident that occurred shortly after the séance, Home, to RB’s amazement, had called on
him with his 'right hand outstretched in amity. He bore no ill-will—not he! Browning looked sternly at him (as he is very capable of doing) and pointing to the open door, not far from which is rather a steep staircase, said 'If you are not out of that door in half a minute I'll fling you down the stairs.' Home attempted some expostulation, but B. moved towards him, and the Medium disappeared with as much grace as he could manage" (William Allingham: A Diary, ed. H. Allingham and D. Radford, London: Macmillan & Co., 1907, pp. 101-102). Home published his version of the séance and subsequent meeting in Incidents in My Life, 2nd series, London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872, pp. 105-108.

7. Perhaps Charles Herbert Cottrell (1806-60), eldest brother of Henry Cottrell (1811-73). Two other brothers were living at this time: Clement Chute and George Edward. Sir Edward Lytton had attended a séance with Home in July, two days before the one with Home and the Brownings, and thereafter Home conducted additional séances for Lytton, including several at Knebworth, Lytton's seat in Hertfordshire.


9. Fearing that the letter would be overweight, EBB has torn off the lower half of the last two pages.

Letter 141

102. Rue de Grenelle. F# St Germain.

Nov. 22. [1855] 1

My ever beloved Arabel I get your letter & Henrietta's on the same day—one in the morning, & one in the evening. Though I have some-thing especial to say to Henrietta, I break out at once to you—I cant help it. See how right I was in being uneasy about your silence—you were unwell—& not only that .. for I cant help suspecting that you are still not by any means well. Now my dearest, dearest Arabel— What is the full sense of this? And have you taken the right remedies—those which were so useful to you before? Have you gone to your homeopathic man, & done what he bade you? As to love, .. I wont think you know the meaning of the word if you dont aceede [sic] at once to my earnest entreaties on this point. Observe me, when I am unwell!,—Robert has only to speak, & I swallow the most horrible coarse preparation of cod’s liver oil you ever looked at or smelt at, every day, & in spite of my strongest disgust. Very different from the "refined" preparation I had in Italy! The coarser oil is considered more beneficial, & I have taken it for a fortnight regularly, just because Robert asked me. But you, if I ask and beg & pray, you wont take anything—you leave yourself to fall into all sorts of evil,—you sit in armchairs & use no remedies. Darling Arabel, do remember how I hang on you—how I love you! Dont forget me so far as not to remember yourself for good. It will be cruel. Write to me, dearest, & say that you have had recourse to the old means, & that you are really & truly better .. if it shall please God. Dear Minny too is suffering. Give her my best love, & say how I wish her to be well. In order to which, she must submit to lie the right time in bed—it's the necessity & the duty at once. Oh—Arabel—mind you write to me. I shall be restless till I hear again—only you must tell the truth, or the use will be small. For myself I am really much better again. The immediate cause of my unwellness was simply, I think, going out on a raw cold day, catching cold, in fact—but it was a slight push which would scarcely have pushed me down if it had'nt been for the chest being
previously in an irritable state— Let London bear the blame for *that*. This house is detestable enough—looking to the east—full of draughts. Still, we have kept the rooms warm, and, to be sincere, I don't lay much blame on its back. Only, if the cold came suddenly!— Dearest Arabel, Robert has talked again & again of throwing up the house—but are we justified, or indeed, can we conveniently, throw money out of the windows, considering the present shape of our purse? Then, we have only three more weeks of it to bear, & we should bear it, it seems to me. Meanwhile we are very sulky & won't see anybody or do anything. But I am much better—quite myself again— M'^ Jameson who arrived from Italy yesterday thought me looking much as usual, & I don't cough now.

She remains in Paris a fortnight, then goes to London on business, & returns for the winter: its her plan for the present. It was a great pleasure to me to see her—

No indeed, Arabel, we never meditated living with the Ruxtons. I wouldn't do it with anybody—and such an idea in relation to *them*, never once entered my head. I have heard nothing of Mary since I went in your fly to see her, when she told me she had some thoughts of going to Paris. By the way I might have managed the spiritual sèances delightfully under the same roof with her— But, as Robert would have blown it off directly of course, they wouldn't have profited me much.

I am going to write to that dear Henrietta instantly, by the way, to set him in the right position in her eyes—for what do you think she has taken into her head .. that his poem about Lazarus is written with irreverent & even blasphemous intentions against our Lord. Can you conceive of the poem striking any human being so? Here is a Gentile of that day giving his own impression of Lazarus!. The phenomenon of the raising of Lazarus is looked on from without? Can any one say rationally that the poem is not for the honor of the Lord? It seems to me wonderful that a dramatic intention should be so mistaken. People in general praise the poem as "sublime in conception," which to my mind it is. Tell me honestly .. is there anything in it offensive to your mind? I rub my eyes—I can't realize Henrietta's objection. But oh, of course we are not in the least vexed with her about it, dear thing. She is right to speak the truth as she sees it—only I rub my eyes, as I say, and can't see it by any manner of means.

The Athenæum has treated us very shabbily, and, if M' Chorley wrote that article—shame on him for it! Did papa make a remark? And why need I ask? There has been an article in the Globe, with high admissions, & long drawbacks. I shall be anxious for next saturday, & the Examiner & other saturday papers. Translators are wrestling for Robert, in the service of the Revue des deux mondes,—but he is faithful in his preference to Milsand, as he ought to be. M. Milsand often comes to tea—& M'^ Jameson was here last night & will be tonight. Sarianna & her father come nearly every evening too, & *generally in the morning*. They live at the end of this street—half a mile off though at least—& a little too far (past the Invalides) for the position to be fashionable. Otherwise, nothing can be better than their apartment, looking upon pretty gardens, due south aspect, & the rooms warm to a fault—drawing-room & dining-room, complement of bedrooms, kitchen &c .. twenty eight pounds a year— Furniture so cheap too, that Robert & I seriously thought, at one time, of taking our apartment unfurnished, & furnishing ourselves—It would not have cost us fifty pounds to furnish comfortably, and at the end of eight months we should
not have paid more than we shall at the end of eight months on the furnished-apartment principle. We might have let the rooms afterwards, & had a place to return to from Florence, which would have rendered our journey to & fro much less expensive. But now, the bubble breaks—I am shut up for the winter, & we have been nailed here for two months of our time—It’s not worth while to think of it any more. Also, to get the use of fifty pounds at once is beyond us just now—so we needn’t talk of it. Only to people who have the use of their hands & purses, it’s by far the cheaper way of managing. Isa Blagden comes to Paris next month, & goes to Madrid, she says, in April, for three months, previously to going to Italy for ever. Ferdinando writes romantic letters to his wife on the very day he receives hers always, & is seriously aggrieved because she does’nt do the same. Such a discourse we heard from him this morning—“It was the way with women! they could cry—but they did not feel love or pleasure or pain deeply as men did! Out of sight, out of thought, always.” I could’nt help laughing, though he was seriously taking it to heart. I told him that the true charge was quite the other way. But Penini put up his head gravely from his drawing & observed—“Ferdinando ha ragione. Io lo credo anche... Le donne dimenticano sempre.” Women “always forget” indeed! Was’nt that exquisite? Little Penini, by the bye, has taken a passion for drawing & reading, & for three days has given up every sort of play... sitting with the book or the pencil from morning till night. Robert declared this morning that he wouldn’t allow it any more. The impulse to drawing & painting was, I think, from Nonno’s instruction & sympathy. I will send you one of his heads, which nobody touched, observe, or looked at till he brought it as a present. He is full of cleverness. Such a leap he has made in his lessons too—& so good, so perfectly good he is. Even Robert begins to wonder at him rather—His “own love” to you. He threatens you with a letter. He really “must write to Alibel.” I was speaking of Wilson—It torments me to think what will become of us all, babies & the rest, as time goes on. There may be an Electra, to match Orestes, if she comes back now, by next September—and even if she does’nt, and if there is’nt, how shall we manage presently? With the most affectionate intentions towards Wilson, what can we do for her or with her? I think sometimes that if he could get a good situation as game-keeper, with the Peytons for instance, it would be well for them to remain in England—but then he would be miserable there—It’s a problem to solve.

Read ‘Paul Ferrol’ by Mr. Clive. The book has power & interest, though to my mind entirely unnatural in the conception of the chief character. Well—I am writing in a dislocated manner—out of joint in every sentence. You can scarcely know where you have me. Dearest Arabel, I beseech you to write soon & smooth me from my disorder a little. We do nothing here but grumble from morning till night but it wont last very long now, & we shall grow more amusing in time— I cant fancy myself in Paris, for my part. Penini has a ticket to go to the Invalides with Sarianna & her father, to see the reception of Napoleon & the King of Sardinia. Ah— the poor Strattens! how deeply I do feel for them. I would not for the world have been you to pay that visit—and yet, how right of you to go & bear it! Next time it will be better for you all. You do not realize to yourself how little I doubt that M! Stratten is right in his impression—& that his daughter’s spirit is present to him very often. The obstacle is in him & not in her, that there is no positive & patent intercourse; an obstacle not in his spiritual nature either, but in his physique. How hard that while the spirits yearn out towards us, we will not use the means God has opened
to us, of communicating! There must be waiting till this snow of our prejudices has melted slowly away by much shining of the sun. A medium in the house would probably show the daughter in her place again & fill the parents hearts with joy. But no—(When does) George come back? You say nothing of dearest Papa. Write to me darling Arabel, & write particularly of yourself & him— How did you find Trippy? My love to her. Robert's dear love to you—Your own Ba.

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.

2. This was one of three visits she made to Italy in the last five years of her life (Clara Thomas, Love and Work Enough, London: Macdonald, 1967, p. 212).

3. i.e., Mary, née Minto, and her husband; see letter 24, note 16.

4. “An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician” in Men and Women (London: Chapman and Hall, 1855, I, 90–106). EBB wrote to Henrietta on 6 December 1855: “… among all the criticisms we have heard, private and public, such an idea as yours seems to have occurred to no one. The Arab physician considers the case of Lazarus as ‘a case’— represents it as such a man would, who had never heard of Christ before, or conceived of the miracle. It is a view from without of the raising from the dead, &c—& shows how this must have impressed the thinkers of the day, who came upon it with wondering, unbelieving eyes, for the first time. The way in which Lazarus is described as living his life after his acquaintance with the life beyond death, strikes me as entirely sublime, I confess” (Huxley, pp. 235–236).

5. A review of RB’s Men and Women in The Globe of 16 November 1855 declared that some of RB’s poems “will be perfectly repugnant to ordinary lovers of fine poetry. Everything about them repels—the subject, the treatment, and last but not least, the metre.” Nevertheless, the anonymous reviewer called “The Statue and the Bust” “a beautiful poem,” and described “Andrea del Sarto” as “touching and eloquent—full of fire and poetic beauty. One of the grandest poems here is ‘Saul.’” Chorley’s review in The Athenæum (17 November 1855, No. 1464, pp. 1327–28) opened with the claim that RB’s poems “will make the least imaginative man think, and the least thoughtful man grieve. Who will not grieve over energy wasted and power misspent.” He charged RB with “obscurity” and having taken “extravagant licence,” and concluded by stating that “the riches and the ability are there, but the employment and the expression of them seem to us, on the whole, more perverse, personal, and incomplete than they were formerly.” Forster’s review in The Examiner appeared in the 1 December 1855 issue; other reviews about this time included the Illustrated Times (London) of 24 November 1855; The Saturday Review of 24 November 1855; and The Critic of 1 December 1855.

6. I have been unable to trace any translations of RB’s works by Milsand for this period. Apparently, Milsand gave up the idea or did not publish because of a falling out with Buloz which occurred in early 1856.

7. “Ferdinando is right. I believe it too. Women always forget.”

8. This is the first reference to Ferdinando and Wilson’s son, Orestes Wilson Romagnoli, after his birth on 13 October 1855; however, the name seems to have been chosen before the child was born—see letter 131, note 11, as well as 137, note 5. In Greek mythology, Electra was the sister of Orestes who incited her brother to avenge their father’s death. However, when Ferdinando and Wilson’s second child was born two years later, it was a boy and was named Pylades, after the legendary Orestes’s cousin and close boyhood friend who eventually married Electra.


10. Victor Emmanuel II (1820–78) had become, somewhat unwillingly, the constitutional monarch of the principality of Sardinia on the death of his father, Charles Albert, in 1849. “In November 1855 Victor Emmanuel and Cavour visited Paris. Both the King and his Prime Minister had been excommunicated for their anti-Papal policy, but Louis Napoleon and Eugénie nevertheless received them, and several of the French bishops took part in the festivities during the visit” (Jasper Ridley, Napoleon III and Eugénie, London: Constable, 1979, p. 407).
My ever dearest Arabel, here I am again at last—and I want to hear from you already again, dear, dear. Your letter left me not satisfied about you, in spite of what you say to keep me quiet. Rather quiet, than easy I am, after all. I wrote to Henrietta, & I thought you would understand from her that I was alive & the rest, until I could assure you of our being rather prosperous—and free from the “Baroness of that apartment” as Peni says, and the whole dismal locality. That I should have survived to tell the tale, seems strange—Oh—Robert would have thrown it up at once—but how could we throw away ten, twenty pounds? how should we have been justified? It’s hard enough for us to live, under the ordinary circumstances. So I used my whole influence to keep him prudent—and we bore the consequences together. Certainly, I never in my life was so uncomfortable. The cold came on & caught us, & I suffered much from it altogether—but now the evil is past. We resolved to come away last thursday . . . running all risks of the frosty air, . . . when, just as if to save us, the frost broke, & we had a milder temperature, thank God, to remove in. Robert swathed me up like a mummy—till the only danger was . . . of suffocation: woollen shawls wrapt over face & respirator—hot bottles in the carriage. He carried me like a bundle, & shoved me into the carriage & shoved me out, upside or downside . . . all the same, to Robert . . . explaining me to the porter . . . “Elle se porte tres bien—extremement bien—c’est seulement la poitrine & c”3—& leaving him to moralize on “cette originalité Anglaise,”4 and the peculiar way of treating wives in extremely good health. The best part of the joke is, that it’s over—In the first place, the weather has changed to peculiar warmth, instead of cold—and in the second we are so warmly housed that I can scarcely fancy the external temperature acting easily upon us—Indeed Robert has done beautifully with these rooms—well-situated, well-arranged, with an all but south aspect, & in a street just turning from the Champs Elysées—the next door to the corner house—first floor, carpeted—sofas & chairs suited to the Lollards—no glitter, nor yellow satin, but plenty of cleanliness & convenience—(Two pounds, ten, a week though!) I am delighted—and so is Robert. We feel, as he says, as if we had never lived in a house before—Now I shall make you a plan of our rooms, but you must look to the top of the next page for it—From the drawingroom & my bedroom windows we have a side view of the Champs Elysées, & the back windows look on gardens. Observe, how compact—The dining room (where Harriet & Penini sit when we do not dine) is warmed by a caloric stove—and we have to open the doors for air. The arrangement is what I mean when I talk about the comfort of a continental apartment exceeding that of any house in England. Peni was so pathetic.
about sleeping in our room that we had his bed moved in, to his great delight—otherwise he
would have certainly regretted the "Baroness of that apartment" & the advantages she granted to
us. He used to be very mysterious about the "some sings" he liked, he "must say." Then, Robert's
dressing room was too far—The child is timid—afraid not of spirits, Arabel, but of animals of all
kinds. In Dorset street, I used to go to him once or twice every night—also in the Rue de Grenelle,
till my cough began, & then Robert would not let me go—Peni was the best child in the world—
He resigned himself instantly,—but once or twice we heard him crying softly to the bedclothes,
& then Robert went to him of course. One day I said to him, "Tell me, my Penini, how it was that
you were unhappy last night." He hesitated for a moment or two, & then said .. "Well, I will tell
you—I really did sent that a spider was toming down the wall to bite me." "But, Penini, spiders
dont bite." "Yes—they do!" (very earnestly) And off he went to get his "book of animals," to
show me the picture of the "tarantula," & to read the horrible account of the death it could
produce. I might talk as I pleased of that sort of spider not existing in these countries—If it was'nt
the spider, it was a dreadful rat .. or something as bad, poor child: for all the animals of the earth
are at war with him, when he's in the dark & by himself. Imaginative children will have some
sort of haunting terror,—& that's Penini's terror, & we cant help it much. He flourishes in spite
of it. I should like you to see his rosy round cheeks. He is quite different from what he was in
London, & has suffered so little from the cold that I have not put on his jacket which he has worn
the greater part of two winters. He is very good & dear, & continues to like Paris & to disparage
the mother-country, with the exception of Eastbourne which is sacred to him always. To this day
we have long stories about donkies, & sea weed, & sun rises .. "Oh—so beautiful!” & how he
& Alibel did this & that, & how he used to “wate my untles evelly morning redelar.” Peni has
taken by the way to long words: he talks of a "petuliar taste" in pears—and "fortunately" he
has’nt “misellable nights” always—and he “prefers much more better, toast than bread & but­
ter.” With Harriet he gets on capitally, & though he puts her in her place sometimes & informs
her that she is not “one of this family like Ferdinando & Weelson”, there's a great deal of playing
& kissing & dear Harrietting going on to my very serious satisfaction—Harriet is really excel­
ent,—has a memory without flaw, and an attention & good humour beyond criticism. She has
had a very dull time, & now I hope I may find out some opportunity of liveliness for her at last.
As to Wilson she floats about from one intention to another. In her last letter she told Ferdinando
that “in a few weeks she hoped to be able to leave her father and her sisters.” So, it may be! She
said also something of hoping “to be together in Italy & in their own house, at this time next
year” .. so that they probably intend to leave us on our return to Florence. Say nothing of this—
She does’nt know, probably, that Ferdinando, who is as simple as a child, brings her letters for
me to read, & begs me to read them, as a matter of course.

Talking of simplicity, my darling Arabel, I must have been tolerably simple too, I think, to
begin to talk of M! Stratten's private experiences to his son, in relation to mediumship gener­
ally. Really I have a little more discretion than that. I speak to you—to my own house & heart
but, in general, nobody ever hears a word of my peculiar spiritual opinions, unless they begin by
opening the subject—One cant talk even of Christ's Kingdom in mixed society & do any good— I
know that too well. People who care to come near enough to me to know what is in me, know
Letter 142
16–17 December [1855]

it—which is enough for me, and too much for them sometimes. As to dear M\(^{"}\) Stratten I love & revere his boldness & good faith in not shrinking from testifying openly to what he has privately experienced or supposed he has experienced,—what he has actually experienced, I believe as much as he does. The Spirits yearn to impress us so, in many cases, & through our fault they fail. Why shrink? Why fancy that a celestial presence is not to be borne? If he, who sees so much, who understands so nearly what a risen creature is, pressed in towards the light, he might have still other communications. I should have liked to hear that sermon. Certainly the apparition of Moses & Elias (to say nothing of Samuel's)\(^7\) is conclusive on the subject. But the gross materialism of the age blinds men's eyes with grave-dust.

It was a great trial to Robert, that letter of M\(^{"}\) Kinney's.\(^8\) You remember how he wrote to her from Dorset Street & she replied, but you dont know what a dogged determined sort of woman she is. When this last letter came Robert kept it in his pocket all dinnertime, that I might not read it without him, & as we sate before the fire to read it together afterwards, he exclaimed, "Now remember! you wont miss anything." (I was to read it aloud.) He was confident of being confirmed against Home. Such a letter! You will have heard through Henrietta of course. Robert said "a congregation of angels wouldn't convince him, but he certainly was a good deal surprised." She & M\(^{"}\) Kinney had seen "accordians [sic] fly through the air, playing as they went," & wonderful other things . . of which Sophia Cottrell is to write further. But poor Home is all but dying they say—very ill,\(^9\) and he tells them he is to go soon. The séances have been held at different houses of our Florence friends, now at M\(^{"}\) Powers's (chiefly there I think) now at the Trollopes, & now at the Kinneys. Machinery out of the question therefore. It was at M\(^{"}\) Powers's that the spirits told M\(^{"}\) Kinney they could do her good physically (she is out of health) by preparing some "odious water."\(^10\) In order to which, they directed young Powers (the eldest son)\(^11\) to go to Roberts' the chemist, for a bottle of double-distilled water. On its arrival (they had waited) it was placed on the table, & they were told to taste it. Of course it tasted like pure water. Then the spirits began their operations with vibrations across the table, and after a time a vapour was seen by everybody to surround & ascend from the bottle. The water was tasted, & an aromatic flavour observed by each person present. M\(^{"}\) Kinney was directed to keep the bottle in a dark place, & take a tea spoonful of the water every morning & night—"Which I do," she says—"I, the sceptic"! Think of Robert. He had the candour (nobly candid he is always) to show this letter to M\(^{"}\) Sartoris, M\(^{"}\) Jameson, & others who had suffered his influence, without the least word of solicitation from me. He said it was "fair" to do so.

They had all seen the "hands" &c. I am going to write to M\(^{"}\) Kinney,\(^12\) & shall hear more of course. You know by this time that M\(^{"}\) Stratten's son did not come to Paris—not to me, at least. We should have been very glad to see him. Give my love & sympathy to all that house, will you? You must be aware, Arabel, that most people would attribute what happened to M\(^{"}\) Stratten simply to emotion & excitement of nerve arising from it, . . & would set down the least reference to such a thing in a pulpit as a most fanatical imprudence. The hatred of all supposition of spiritual influence & accident in this material world, is positively revolting to persons in general. And this is at the bottom of the intolerance of certain facts & the theory attached to them.
Charles Dickens lives nearly opposite to us.\textsuperscript{13} He is here with his family for the winter, but he has left them to go to England for a few days. The weather has turned unseasonably hot—& it’s difficult to keep our thermometer below seventy. I can’t fancy that this house can be cold though, were it otherwise out of doors. I am feeling a good deal better. Darling Arabel, say how you are exactly, for let me repeat, at the risk of vexing you, I don’t accommodate myself to my thoughts about you—I am not comfortable in my heart. So if you can truly, write & relieve me.

I want you to tell me two things—of what sex was the Carmichael baby?\textsuperscript{14} and when do you go out of mourning? Yes, & had Arlette a girl or boy?\textsuperscript{15} You don’t tell me about Trippy—Give her my best love—I hope she had my letter long ago. How is dear Minny now? Its quite as well that she should be in bed this Christmas when she always does herself harm otherwise. Really Arabel you don’t speak of Papa—Speak, speak—Have you seen the Leader’s review of Robert in two numbers?\textsuperscript{16} He is so pleased at your liking his poems a little—He loves you. What is there in Mrs Ogilvy’s poems?\textsuperscript{17} Not much, I suppose—Your own ever loving

Bar—

\textit{Address: Angleterre— / Miss Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street / London.}

\textit{Publication: None traced.}

\textit{Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.}

1. Year provided by postmark.

2. EBB’s letter to Henrietta, dated 15 November [1855], expresses her displeasure with the apartment they had taken in the Rue de Grenelle (Huxley, p. 232).

3. “She is well—extremely well—it is only the chest.”

4. “This English eccentricity,” or “oddity.”

5. Underscored three times.

6. I have been unable to determine to which of Stratten’s two sons (see letter 32, note 12) EBB is referring.

7. I take this to refer to the sermon mentioned in letter 134 (see notes 3 and 4). In that sermon, Stratten gives several examples of the “presence of glorified spirits,” explaining that “the angels were present at the giving of the law—at the carrying up of the ark. The master’s servant’s eyes were opened, and he saw round the mount, chariots of fire and horses of fire. They were there before, only until his eyes were opened he did not see them” (\textit{MS at Eton}). For Moses and Elias see Matthew 17:1–4 and Mark 9:2–5; and for Samuel, see 1 Samuel 28:7–20.

8. Mrs. Kinney’s letter was a response to RB’s, dated 25 July 1855; EBB had written to Henrietta a few weeks earlier about a letter from Mrs. Kinney, indicating that “she and her husband had come to the conclusion that all trickery, as a solution, was utterly impossible. Certainly if Mrs. Kinney is convinced, we may despair of no one” (Huxley, p. 237).

9. In a letter to Mrs. Kinney dated 17 December [1855], EBB expressed her sorrow for Home’s ill health: “I do hope he may recover & live down all suspicions, & give my husband, among others, the opportunity of confessing the wrong of his” (Bosco, 100).

10. The Odic water refers to water that had been doubly distilled, and then somehow magnetized or otherwise affected by a unique natural force known as the “od,” as identified by Austrian scientist and industrialist Karl Ludwig von Reichenbach (1788–1869). Reichenbach’s efforts to prove the existence of this force were eventually refuted. EBB refers to this force in \textit{Aurora Leigh}, VII, 566, as does RB in “Mr. Sludge, ‘The Medium’,” line 803, and in “A Lovers’ Quarrel,” lines 45–49.

11. Nicholas Longworth Powers (1835–1904), second and eldest surviving son of Hiram Powers, had returned to Florence in September from the United States. Henry Roberts was “an English chemist and druggist” whose pharmacy was located “opposite the Corsi Palace, 4190 in the Via Tornabuoni—the best person to make
up English prescriptions" (Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, London: John Murray, 1854, p. 446).

12. EBB wrote to Mrs. Kinney on 17 December 1855; see Bosco, 99–101.

13. The Dickens family lived at 49 Avenue des Champs Elysées from October 1855 until April 1856. As indicated in a letter from Dickens to E.F. Pigott (12 December 1855), Dickens returned to London on Saturday, 15 December, but he was back in Paris by Christmas Day; see *Dickens*, 7, 763.

14. A girl; May Carmichael, born 13 August 1855. She married Edmund Raven Hollings in April 1890; and she died on 21 March 1942. EBB had gone into mourning on the death of their uncle, Richard Pierce Butler had died in September 1855 (see letter 133, note 2).

15. Ethel Maud Reynolds was born on 24 October 1855 at 6 Oxford Square.

16. The first part appeared on 1 December 1855 (pp. 1157–58), and the second part a week later on 8 December (pp. 1182–83). The review begins with the following statement: "Robert Browning seems to us unmistakeably the most original poet of the day. We do not say the highest in reach, the most perfect in art, but the most distinctively original."

17. *Poems of Ten Years: 1846–1855* (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1856), which EBB later asked Arabella to send to Isa Blagden—see the penultimate paragraph in the following letter. At least one poem, entitled "Newly Dead and Newly Born" is signed "Casa Guidi, Florence" because the Ogilvys also lived in the Palazzo Guidi.

---

**Letter 143**

3. Rue du Colysée.
Avenue des Champs Elysées
Dec. 31. [1855]

My ever beloved Arabel I am so vexed. I mistook, & thought new year's day fell on wednesday rather than tuesday, & now I am driven to the wall for time, though I wished much to write both to you & Henrietta today. I shall have to send you a brief letter then—& Penini, who had begun one, must put off sending his. He is gone out to buy shoes for a grand entertainment at M's Sartori's, to which he goes at three p.m. . & where there is to be conjuring, or magic-lantern-ing or something— He is invited also to Charles Dickens's for a Christmas Tree, in a few days. Dearest darling Arabel, here we are on the brink of another year! May God bless & keep you. I love you with the love which lasts beyond the counting of time.

Your letter was the welcomest Christmas gift to me possible, for I felt anxious about you—you were my cloud—and I like you to be my sun as usual. Even now I am sure you are not very right in certain respects—and I do beg that you will never miss speaking of your health, seeing that the least silence will force me into miserable conclusions of the imagination. For my part, I have been exceedingly unwell since three weeks after coming to Paris, but, within the last fortnight, have turned round the corner, & am now quite lively & looking as different as one can from oneself. I only wonder, . considering the house we fled from & the severe weather we passed through, . . I really only wonder I was so well. Even after coming to this apartment the frost was bitter— For the first time for years, I saw white windows: & Of course I could not but suffer. Now the weather is in the other extreme of heat, & people are groaning about it while I triumph. For a week it has been rather too warm. For two or three days I have'nt been able to bear a fire in my bedroom, either at going to bed or getting up—and the salon-fire goes out without my missing it.
In sunny situations the sun puts out the fire—Robert walks on the shady side of streets—Yesterday the thermometer stood at sixty five in the shade, out of doors. Extraordinary for December, & most happy for me. It cant last, of course; but the pause sets one to rights, & quiets & heals the chest—It's a rest on the road. Then, if the cold returns ever so, the warmth of this house is incontestable, & we shall be found armed cap-a-pié—

While I remember to tell you, Arabel, let me. Think how this government provides for the poor. Public establishments all over Paris provide anybody..you, me, whoever pleases to apply..(without tickets..without humiliating conditions of a verified poverty..) with a basin of good soup for a sou (something less than a halfpenny) a plate of meat for a sou, & a plate of vegetables for a sou. Children at half price. The only security against rich people using these advantages, is, that, as no variety of diet is provided, it is supposed they would prefer the ordinary restaurateurs. I do call it magnificent on the part of the government. I heard a non-admirer of Louis Napoleon observe upon it that he was carrying out the views of the socialists one after another—but I maintain that if such things are really practicable (which has hitherto been denied) they ought to be practised. He has done more for the people, than a thousand constitutionalists could do by uniting & acting out their most excellent plans. Yesterday the entrance of the Crimean troops was very fine, I hear—, conducted with all the sentiment characteristic of the nation. Laurel wreaths were lavished on the poor soldiers, thrown from the windows, till nearly every man had a wreath. A friend of mine who hates Napoleon with a hatred passing the hate of women, said to me that for the first time within her observation, he looked deeply moved, &, that the people recognized the emotion with absolute shrieks of applause, & 'vive l'empereur.'

Did I tell you of my long letter from Sophia Cottrell—written half by her & half by her husband, .. both of them firm believers in Home's spirits. She says her three children came to her, sate on her knee .. that she had the little baby hands in her's, & felt one by one the tiny infantine fingers. Her father also came,—& her aunt Ellen,—& other relations & connections—the names & other particulars given without hesitation. When her father came she said, "Dear papa, tell me what was the intimate name I used to call you by." Answer, without a moment's hesitation .. "Daddy" .. which, by the way, I did not know. These spirits all acknowledge "Jesus Christ as the Lord Jehovah."—& know of "none other means of salvation than by Him". The physical manifestations are curious. Tables lifted into the air more than a foot from the ground, while everybody, including Home, stood off,—not touching with a finger—this was the commonest wonder. They saw an accordion, which had remained on the floor, lifted up to a level with the top of the table by visible hands, they playing it as it went. (The accordion is not spiritual .. but the only earthly instrument of music present.) They placed it on Sophia's knee, & there, Home being at a distance, they drew from it most beautiful music. A Hand took her fan from her, and, holding it in the air, fanned all the persons present, producing much more wind than could have been produced by a mortal using the same means, .. & then returned the fan to Sophia, the handle held towards her. A lovely female hand was shown as Mr® Powers's mother's, & Mr® Powers & her father were both allowed to kiss it. They offered it a pencil & paper & asked the spirit to write her name. The hand accordingly took the pencil, & wrote on the paper in the sight of all. (Sophia does not tell me whether or not the name was actually written & read—&
this I must ask.) Her statement is not very scientifically given, but the impression of the whole is not the weaker for that, upon my mind. Home is going from one house to another, of our friends at Florence, holding séances—but they seem to be held chiefly at M! Powers’s. Sophia says that her relatives in England, the Gordons, wont believe but that the hands are mechanical—as if it were possible she adds for anyone to mistake the feel of a warm fleshy hand! Her father’s hand, she said, was warmer than her own, & precisely a man’s hand. Robert made me read every word of this letter to him. Lytton came here the other evening & we had the whole subject out,—& Robert “behaved beautifully,” as I told him afterwards. He is an unbeliever still, but no longer ferocious. Lytton told us a startling thing—That, when at Ealing, Sir Edward had been drawn under the table by the “large strong hand,” & when he had cried out .. “I swear that’s a human hand—I swear that’s M! Hume’s hand .. & I’ll see the end of this” .. & when Hume burst into tears & rushed away from the table to the window & stood there sobbing, & when everybody at the table, except Lytton, went away also, scattered & frightened at the scene .. still, the strong large Hand pinned Sir Edward where he was—holding on—That, I think, is conclusive—M! Dickens has called on me— Did I tell you? And he is coming, he says— She is a goodnatured, round, smiling looking woman—not meaning anything particular. We have had other visits which Robert has returned for me & him—from Lady Easthope, Lady Farquhar, M! de Bury, & Madame de Triqueti, the sculptor-baron’s wife,—besides the Aide’s & other old friends.

Little Penini is getting on nicely, but I never teach him above an hour & a half. His spelling is much improved,—which allows him to write by himself, without me at his elbow. As to his drawing, here’s an example. People consider his drawings quite miraculous. This head was done without a copy, & with nobody’s advice even. Not the dot of a pencil, besides his own. He is reading Peter Parley’s Universal History with maps—so that he gets notions of geography & history together. Peter uses horribly long words, but he answers in the long run .. & Peni picks up good things here & there. I mean to begin with a little french,— that his winter here may not be infructuous—but we have not yet arranged about the music. Robert says he must see how the money comes in. We hear nothing of the sale of the book. We shall, I suppose, in a few days, when the bills are made up— It has certainly made a stir in England; & has been received better, we are told, by the general public than by the critics. The ‘Sun’ notice of me Robert did not see, nor did we hear of it till you mentioned it. A week before there was a violent attack on his “men & women”, which he saw. Perhaps they praised me with the amiable motive of vexing him more. But he is’nt to be vexed by such means. If a calculation, it was miscalculated.

Send M! Ogilvy’s poems to Miss Blagden, at M! Mackay’s 41 Hamilton Terrace, St John’s Wood—for me—as she is coming here next monday. She comes to an apartment in this street. How absurd of Arlette to teach a girl of six, latin! I never knew anything much more so— What is
there in Latin literature fit for a child's capacity, when she is able to read? It's throwing away energy! Living languages, on the other hand, can scarcely be taught too early. I should like Peni in the next three or four years to be able to speak French, Italian, and German—which he will do without much effort. He reads Italian quite as well as English—and three pages a day are sufficient to keep up the acquirement.

I have had a very smooth pleasant Christmas—Robert has been angelical. He never loved me so much, he said the other day. He works at Sordello, & I at my poem—& I have to drive him out when he goes. And he has tickets for Baron Dupotet magnetic séances, & will use them tomorrow evening, he declares, & will "try to believe whatever I believe". Which only proves that he's <★ ★ ★ >

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Berg Collection and Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

Enclosure: Pen to Arabella in EBB's hand: [Paris, 29 December 1855] / At Christmas I had a quantity of presents—a kitchen with real fire & a dinner set & a knob-sack, & a railroad & a book of pictures. If you would come here I would show you such beautiful things in the Palais Royal, toys of all sorts which they put out for Christmas. I have been making some beautiful drawings & I have been reading Berries & Blossoms this morning a little bit, & I find a few verses in it pretty though it isn't very amusing. I wish you would come here—I have done a picture of Alfred Tennyson reading Maud, & I write on the back—Do you think it just? / I saw today Napoleon & General Canrobert & a quantity of soldiers who had been to battle & their faces all brown & black with lying on the ground, & nosegays in their guns of flowers & laurels which they had brought from the battle—Napoleon opened his hand to waive & he took off his hat to us & made an enormous bow—I took off my hat too. Do you think that's quite right Madame Arabella.

1. Year determined from EBB's references to reviews of RB's Men and Women.
2. EBB wrote to Henrietta the following day, 1 January [1856] (Huxley, pp. 238-239).
3. Pen was also invited to Adelaide Sartoris's for New Year's Eve. EBB set aside her dislike of Christmas to be certain that Pen enjoyed the festivities of the season.
4. Written with heavy lettering.
5. This letter has not survived; however, EBB was still waiting "for the promised letter from dear Sophia Cottrell" when she wrote Mrs. Kinney on 17 December (Bosco, 100).
6. Cf. 1 John 4:2-3: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."
7. Cf. Acts 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."
8. See letter 20 (near the end of the second paragraph) where EBB explains that "first I read your letters always to myself, & then Robert sits down by me to hear everything that is not too secret." Even though this was a letter from Sophia Cottrell and not one of EBB's sisters, it seems to be a significant deviation from the Brownings' usual practice of not sharing their personal letters with each other.
9. As indicated in a letter to Isa Blagden (24 December 1855, ms at Fitzwilliam), Mrs. Dickens had called on 24 December 1855.
10. Elizabeth Easthope (née Skyring) was the second wife of John Easthope (1784–1865), a politician and journalist who had purchased The Morning Chronicle in 1834. EBB had met her in Paris in 1852 (see B-GB, p. 177).
11. Sybella Martha Farquhar (née Rockcliffe, d. 1869), wife of Thomas Harvie Farquhar (1775–1836).
12. Marie Pauline Rose Blaze de Bury (née Stewart) was a writer, mainly for periodicals. RB provided an introduction for her to John Chapman, in which he said “I dare say she writes lively, readable articles—and everybody does not do that, you’ll agree with me” (ms at ABL). A few days earlier, EBB told Julia Martin that “Madame Blaze de Bury has called on me; & though Madme. Mohl hates her, I am glad—because of the access she gives to characteristic French society” (ms at Wellesley).

13. The wife of Henri Joseph François (1804–74), Baron de Triqueti, a French sculptor whose most famous commission was the cenotaph for Prince Albert in the Albert Memorial Chapel at St. George’s Chapel, Windsor. Triqueti also completed panel scenes from the Iliad and the Odyssey for University College London. Madame Triqueti was a friend of Anna Jameson.

14. Charles Hamilton Aide (1826–1906), talented and versatile author and musician, was born in Paris, to George Aida, son of an Armenian merchant settled in Constantinople, by his wife Georgina, daughter of Admiral Sir George Collier. A captain in the British Army, he had retired in 1854. He, like Frederic Leighton, was a devotee of Adelaide Sartoris, in whose Roman salon he had met the Brownings in early 1854. Evidently his mother was in Paris with him.

15. EBB has enclosed Pen’s drawing, a profile of a man, which is inscribed: “Paris 1855. For Arabel. done by Penini.” (see Reconstruction, K93).


17. A review of EBB’s Poems (1853) appeared in the 17 December issue of The Sun, in which the unidentified reviewer concluded by proclaiming “honour to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, whose name … is preeminent among the living glories of our English literature!” (p. 3).

18. A review of Men and Women had appeared in the 6 December 1855 issue of The Sun. Not only did the reviewer criticize Men and Women, but also disapproved of Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day: “Mr. Browning comes anew before his readers with this advantage—that it is now some time since the issue of his last metrical production. He has this no less obvious disadvantage, however—that that last effusion of his was an egregious failure to all intents and purposes” (p. 3).

19. Frances Maseres Mackay (née Fellowes, 1825–88) had married Robert William Mackay (1803–82) on 30 March 1852. He was a philosopher and scholar, and the friendship between the Mackays and Isa Blagden was apparently close; they are mentioned numerous times in RB’s letters to Isa Blagden. The Hamilton Terrace address appears in the Brownings’ address book (ms at Texas).

20. i.e., Aurora Leigh.

21. Jean Paul du Potet (1796–1881), Baron du Potet de Sennevoy, had edited Le Journal du Magnetisme and was the author of An Introduction to the Study of Animal Magnetism (1838), which EBB reported having read in a letter to Hugh Stuart Boyd in December 1843 (BC, 8, 84) when she seems to have been considering the possibility of using mesmerism to treat her own condition. Dupotet had arrived in London in 1837, and gave mesmeric presentations at private gatherings, as well as demonstrations on patients in University College Hospital. He trained John Elliotson, founder of the Phrenological Society (see Alison Winter, Mesmerized, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, pp. 42–48 and 64–66, where he is identified as Charles).

22. According to Galignani’s New Paris Guide (Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1855), “the Palais Royal has been called, not without reason, the Capital of Paris, and it certainly is more frequently entered than any other space of equal dimensions in the city” (p. 225).

23. Thomas Westwood, Berries and Blossoms: A Verse-Book for Young People (London: Darton & Co., 1855). In February 1856, EBB wrote to Westwood and said that she was “thankful, & so is my child, my little Penini, who was very proud to find his name in ‘Berries & Blossoms,’ & who admires the poetry excessively” (ms at Wellesley). Westwood’s presentation copy to Pen has not survived. A review of Berries and Blossoms in The Critic of 16 April 1855 called it “a valuable addition to the literature for juveniles” (p. 183).

24. Pen’s drawing of Tennyson is not extant.

25. François Antoine Certain Canrobert (1809–95) was the commander of the French troops in the Crimea.
My dearest dearest Arabel how uncomfortable I cant help being about you. Dearest, I am sure you must have been very very unwell, to put a blister on—and if your maladies arise simply from weakness I dont see exactly how it was to do you much good. Well—it has done you good you say—and you are taking iron, which is certainly likely to do the swelling good. As to affecting the head, iron always will affect the head more or less, even where it most agrees—and I have hope from it certainly. Still it gives me great pain that you should be driven on any of these expedients, & I shall be very anxious as long as you have anything to say against yourself—I beseech you to write, and to write frankly—for half words as [sic] as bad as most bad whole ones— I am full of bad news just now. Your letter is bad—both for yourself & Papa .. who has been ill too—though D' Eliotson's report is highly satisfactory. Besides which I have had a distressing note from Miss Bayley who writes from Devonshire Place where she is established as nurse to dear Mr Kenyon, only going home at night to sleep. He has been very ill with a tendency to water on the chest .. D' Southey & another medical man attending him twice a day. He is better, thank God, & insisting on going to Cowes before the doctors are willing to let him—but he will probably be relieved in a freer air. Miss Bayley wrote to tell us of his state—simply for that .. assuring us that the symptoms have ameliorated & that she considers him likely to get through it. Still the thought & apprehension make me sad. If he hadn't been seriously ill she would never have written, I think. You have heard, I dare say, of his illness—and yet you may not, perhaps. And poor Arlette! How sorry I am for Arlette!

Well—there's no use in howling or even sighing— Things will not be the better for it. Arabel darling, mind you write as often as you can, & remember I am at your mercy in the whole matter, & that if you dont write to me it will be hard. I cannot say how it touched me that dearest Storm should have written as he did, and I do hope you will tell him, with my tender unforgetting love, that I thank him for it. He does'nt write to me—but Penini & I often talk of him, & I of course think much oftener. Peni holds him in high esteem as his “uncle among the parrots,” & every now & then he wants to “send him a letter” to ask him for something alive & tropical .. either parrot or monkey— Oh—of course what Storm said was perfectly unavailing— For my part I have come to have no hope. Alfred's marriage locked the door on probabilities—for he cant forgive one without a universal act of oblivion of course. Poor Papa— may he be well at any rate. Do, do tell me of him. If he would pass the winters out of London he would probably be infinitely better—& I cant think why he should'nt go for a few months to Hastings or Brighton.

Dearest Arabel, do persuade Henrietta to stay where she is till after her confinement, if Surtees goes or stays. I know it will be very sad. At the same time it is her duty to think of her children .. I mean the new baby & Altham. If she is confined at Plymouth she cant give Altham the proper attention, under circumstances unfavorable to the child, to say nothing of her own condition in barracks & with a medical man unknown to her. Surtees might come to see her occasionally—
but I am of opinion that she ought decidedly to stay. So sorry I am—so very, very sorry. It is deplorable that it should happen so—if it does happen—but after all there is hope perhaps.

Darling, how 'testa dura' you are, as the Italians say, about the spiritual theory. So often as I have tried to make you understand what I believe in it & what others believe, & you will persist in attributing to me ideas which never entered my head, nor need, being so absurd. A spirit at Hume's beck & call! or at my beck & call, if I communicate with one through Hume! Who thought of such a thing? Hume is used precisely as the electric wire is used . . . by which I may speak to you in less than a moment. What association have you or I with the electric wire on that account? How are we at the call of the electric wire? or how interested in the fact of how the wire is composed, as long as it answers our purposes? Observe—it is simply Hume's physique which is used—something in the nervous element & effluence. Many of these mediums are altogether worthless as men—Hume's character was blameless, as far as testimony goes, up to the time he went to Florence—He was discharged from a congregational church in America, but it was simply on the ground of the raps following him into church & disturbing the congregation—He was well known to D' Grey of New York—\(^5\) I thought him very commonplace & a little affected . . . but apparently amiable & affectionate. Well—he goes to Florence—He is flattered & surrounded on all sides, & his weakness succumbs—He gets into a family half in & half out of society, of which there are many at Florence, . . & , as far as I can make out, falls into the clutches of some woman there, famous for spreading nets for all manner of young men—I cant make out the especial charge—for everybody swears & shrieks so high, one can make out clearly nothing at all—but as far as one can make out, its an intrigue with a woman. Also there's more than this—Hume is apt to throw over old for new friends, to gossip unscrupulously, & to fetch & carry scandals against everybody. Thus, M! Powers & M! Kinney are evidently frantic,—furious against him. M! Powers has written me a letter of which Robert himself says that the "personal feeling" is evident.\(^7\) M! Kinney & he contradict themselves at every fifth line. After the great quarrel, the old "circle" held a séance, says M! Kinney, "with Memory for a medium" (very satisfactory of course!) & M! Kinney & M! Powers came to the conclusion that some of the past wonders might have been produced by "trickery," but that some were absolutely unaccountable on any such ground. M! Kinney writes me a dozen lines which begin by asserting broadly her conviction that these things are entirely supernatural, though of the devil, & ends logically by this sentence, "Perhaps M! Browning was right after all." The fact is she is in a state of mania, through some scandal directed against herself. And I cant feel at all clear that Hume is as bad as they would make him, even on the points which do not regard his mediumship. As to the mediumship it stands precisely as it did in my eyes—So, the whole question! Indeed, a general mental & moral weakness & facility to be influenced, are defects very likely to go with that physical susceptibility which makes a good medium. Lytton & I read over the letters together & came precisely to the same conclusions . . only he was more heated by the fury & injustice of the Florence people, than I myself was. And you are to understand that it is only certain members of the 'old circle' who have thrown him up—for he is astonishing the new & others more than ever . . Eight hands at once have been seen where he is now. M! Scarlet came from Florence the other day & was full of it . . to Lytton. After he had seen Hume the raps & movements of furniture followed him to his
own house & remained till he left Florence— How strange! I have seen a letter from Garth Wilkinson\textsuperscript{8} who says that Hume went to his house in London, quite alone, & that he had no one to meet him except his own (Dr W's) immediate family. They had wonderful demonstrations of the ‘Hands’ .. and other things. The other day I saw a note of Wilkinson to Isa Blagden, who wrote to ask his opinion of Hume now, in reference to what had passed in Florence— He replies just as I should .. that the question of the mediumship is perfectly unaffected by the character of mediums whether bad or good—that his friend young Rymer\textsuperscript{9} had returned home (he is much in friendship with the Rymer family) & that the facts remain .. (the phenomena connected with Hume) not to be doubted of. Into the particular scandal offensive to the “pure people of Florence,” he has not thought it worth while to enquire very particularly. Perhaps you know how high Garth Wilkinson stands with all who associate with him either personally or in his books— In certain respects it is a first-rate intellect— And he is a religious man. Now, you asked me,—& I have told you. I thought it right to be quite true & frank in telling you of the explosion at Florence. I saw M\textsuperscript{p} Pinson,\textsuperscript{10} a lady who came from thence two or three days ago—& she told me that everybody was quarrelling with everybody on account of Hume .. whom she had not herself seen. Indeed the only pleasing news I have had from poor Florence for some time is that our house is let at last .. for five months .. at thirty scudi, about six pound ten .. a month—the first three months paid down— This is very convenient and will considerably more than cover our rent— For the rest, I am not sorry to be absent at present. Robert would probably enter into the schism, tooth & nail—though I dont know ..! MP Kinney’s violent comminution clauses are seldom to his taste, and formerly he used to lean to spiritualism immediately he began to talk to her. He might have taken up the Hume side of controversy perhaps, with her on the other. She is a truthful woman .. but very coarse & very violent .. & a little vicious when provoked to kick—Frederick Tennyson has seen none of the demonstrations, M\textsuperscript{p} Pinson told me,—uniformly maintaining that the “spirits” are just devils & “frogs,” & not to be treated with. It has been cold at Florence. The Arno, for the first time since 49, was frozen over— Since then the weather turned to heat, as it has done here. Think of Isa Blagden breakfasting here at the open window— I content myself with letting the fire out.

I am much better in my chest, keeping on with the oil religiously. Still that Rue de Grenelle (on the back of England) did me great harm, & it was some time before I got over the results of it— Even now I am afraid of myself, & more careful than usual, or I should have been out over & over again lately, in a carriage or walking even. We have had six weeks of miraculous mildness. Then our house is perfect, .. if I had but a table for my private papers.

So busy I am—worked out of breath, to get on with the poem. I finished the second book, & gave it to Robert to read, & he lifted me up as high as his dear arms could go, with encouraging sayings of it. He thinks it exceeds anything I have done yet— Oh—I do hope & trust it’s a true judgement. I begin to be braver. Yes—I was horribly desponding about it, (& about most things besides, at one time)—but we get into light again, (in spite of Hume’s disgracing me, Arabel)\textsuperscript{11}—and I go on fagging, fagging. See what I do everyday. We breakfast at nine—& before I am out of bed I hear Peni say his two french verbs, (which he says beautifully) .. & Robert, before I am drest, hears him say his spelling. After breakfast I hear him [say] the rest of his lessons till the
hour and a half are out. He never has more than an hour & a half, unless he is very naughty & keeps me a quarter of an hour longer. Afterwards, from a little after eleven I write sedulously, till half past three or four & we dine. After dinner I take a book over the fire & always fall asleep over it I am so tired. I never receive anybody in the morning—the doors are shut—unless Sarianna comes (which she does less now, seeing me so busy) until the evening—or after four & which is late for morning-visiting at this time of year. In the evening, the Browning’s are here often or others drop in. Sometimes Robert goes out—Which does’nt prevent visitors to me. I assure you I had two tête à tête evenings last week, one with M’ Lytton, when we had our spiritual confidences out—and one with Cap! Aidé, who is scarcely as interesting, though cultivated & very good. M’ Ruskin has sent Robert his new book, an expensive present— He is to mention him in the next volume which comes out in eight weeks for his “extraordinary knowledge of mediæval art,” for which Ruskin considers him “unique among poets.” Then Robert had a letter yesterday from Carlyle who had been present at Lord Ashburton’s when two evenings were dedicated to the reading of Men & Women, Lady Ashburton being the reader. She is distinguished, it appears, for her skill as a reader. The audience were very intelligent & full of admiration & appreciation. Carlyle says he hears everywhere that the books are making way in England. I am discontented with the peace, having hoped too much perhaps from the war. Poor Italy. Penini gets on surprisingly with his French. As to geography—he will analyse the world to you in no time. I never saw such an element of lightning as is in that child’s brain. He flashes & understands a thing: but is a baby as much as ever. Last night he was upbraiding Harriet—“Really I tant allow you to talk Mama ‘mum’. Its tuite deadful.” “What am I to call her,” says Harriet. “Why, mama to be sure!” How glad I am our dear Minny is up at last. My love to her. Peni was enchanted with your letter. Write to me dearest. My best love to everybody—& Trippy in spite of compliments. So glad I am of M’ Hunter. Did Mary get my letter addressed to M’am Owen.

Address: Angleterre. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated by Paris postmark of 30 January 1856, a Wednesday.
2. Henry Herbert Southey (1783-1865), a physician and younger brother of the poet Robert Southey. He was a long-time friend of Kenyon, whom he attended in his last illness. As a mark of his fondness for Southey, Kenyon left him a legacy of £8,000.
3. I have been unable to clarify why EBB was sorry for Arlette, although it is possible that one of her younger daughters had died.
4. Literally, “hard headed,” here the meaning is “stubborn.”
5. John Franklin Gray (1804-82), homeopathic physician, surgeon, and journalist. According to Jean Burton, Gray had “urged Home to take up this science [i.e., homeopathy] to supplement his occult healing powers” (Heyday of a Wizard, London: George C. Harrap & Co., 1948, p. 56). Presumably EBB’s comment about the Congregationalist church refers to an incident in Home’s early life when his aunt called in three ministers—a Baptist, Congregationalist, and a Methodist—to consult and pray for her nephew. According to Home, “the Congregationalist would not enter into the subject, saying that he saw no reason why a pure-minded boy should be persecuted for what he was not responsible to prevent or cause” (Incidents in My Life, London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1863, p. 7).
6. Mrs. Kinney’s journal for late 1855 contains numerous references to Home’s presence in Florence and to séances he conducted among a group of Anglo-Florentines, consisting of the Kinneys, the Powers, the Cottrells, and the Trollopes, which Home labelled the “Circle of Love.” The entry for 20 December 1855 is the first record of the group’s disenchantment with Home, and by 3 January 1856, Mrs. Kinney wrote: “Not the least instructive of my practical lessons has been that received thro’ our experience with Mr Hume (or Home) this spiritual ‘Medium.’ He, who verily seemed of Christ’s fold, but has proved himself ‘a wolf in sheep’s clothing.’ Yes, we have fairly seen ‘the cloven foot’ in him, which sends me back to my first fear, that all these things called ‘Spiritualism’ are of ‘the Evil-One.’ … So ends my experience with this mysterious ‘Medium’ of diablerie” (ms at Columbia).

7. Powers’s letter, dated 9 January 1856, describes Home, séances, and much of the gossip surrounding Home in Florence; his lengthy report is summarised in his own remarks: “My case in regard to Mr Hume is similar to what must exist between one who has heard a falsehood and one who has told a falsehood. I know not when to believe or to doubt, but must suspect every thing that does not prove itself” (Author’s file copy at Smithsonian).

8. James John Garth Wilkinson (1812–99), physician, spiritualist, Swedenborgian, and author of The Human Body and its Connexion with Man (London: Chapman and Hall, 1851), a copy of which sold as an unspecified lot in Browning Collections; see Reconstruction, A2465. In addition to Isa Blagden, evidently Wilkinson had communicated with Charlotte Cushman concerning events in London, as indicated in a letter from EBB to Isa Blagden (9 December [1855], ms at Fitzwilliam).

9. Wilkie Rymer was the son of John Snaith Rymer (see letter 140, note 6).

10. Unidentified; Swin. E. Penson is listed in the Brownings’ address book for this period at 7, Southampton Street, Fitzroy Square (ms at Texas).

11. I take this as an allusion to RB’s opinion that his wife had been taken in by the medium.

12. See note 14 in the preceding letter.


14. For the full text of Carlyle’s letter, see Charles Richard Sanders, “Some Lost and Unpublished Carlyle-Browning Correspondence,” 62 (April 1963), 329–330. He described Lady Ashburton’s reading as “much the best” of the entertainment during the two evenings.

Letter 145

3 Rue du Colysée.
Sunday. [?] [February 1856]

My dearest Arabel, really if you are not very unwell . . . no, I cant say of you that you are very unkind . . I cant– But I am thoroughly unhappy about you—there’s the truth—You let me wait & wait, & fret my soul on the subject of how you are, what is the matter– What keeps you from writing one word to me all this time. Instead of its being gain to me, this being at Paris, it seems to me that I heard oftener in Florence from you! This, when, for fourpence, & the expense of writing four lines, I might be either set at ease, or justified myself to my uneasiness. I assure you I have been waiting & yearning so day after day, that when the post came in without you . . only a newspaper for Harriet . . (who by the way, seems to me to have twenty signs of recollection from her family, where I have one!) I had to sit down to dinner quite sick & disinclined to eat anything. Now my dearest darling Arabel—do be good to me, & think a little how I think of you!
I answered your last letter instantly, & not a word have I had, since! Not a word of you! Not a word of Papa! But I am most uneasy about you, though you told me that he also had been unwell.

I have'nt the heart to write anything which shall even try to be amusing—and yet I dont like sending you a mere wail or upbraiding .. even though both should mean love. I am relieved as to dear M' Kenyon, who is infinitely better for his removal from London—, & who talks of going to Ventnor in March. Miss Bayley keeps with him. I heard from himself & from her— He writes cheerfully & affectionately—so perhaps I am in favour again, .. if ever I was out. At any rate he is beyond danger obviously, & that’s an immense relief.

I am deep in my fourth book. Robert read the third, & persists in encouraging me greatly. Chapman does’nt send us our account. So that when I am inclined to cry everyday over the failing post, Robert’s tendency is to swear. From America we hear that the success of ‘Men & Women’ is great—"they cant be printed fast enough." I had a letter, by the way, from M’ Story!!! on the subject of the spirits, which he has been investigating. He sent me some four sheets of narration, & announces in so many words that “he quite gives it for me against Robert.” You know he heard our discussions last summer on the Hume affair. He took a medium to the house of his brother in law M’ Eldridge, where he never had been, no one else being present except M’ Appleton a brother in law of Longfellow’s. Among other phenomena a table was broken up before their eyes .. a large, strong table .. the nails drawn, the legs broken to little bits—from twenty to thirty pieces in all. Also—hands were felt & grasped— He is going on with the investigation, & is to write to me again.

Little Peni looks so radiant it would please you to see him. He is another child from the one you had in England last year—so rosy, & fat.

As for me, think of my having been out yesterday. Isa Blagden proposed my going with her in a close carriage, & Robert thought it could’nt hurt me, & was right to go— So I went— We drove round the Bois de Boulogne, which is beautiful. “Ornamental grounds” for the people! We drove by waters of chrysal, nearly two hours—an artificial lake, more like a river almost, .. with trees everywhere, & undulating green banks, which seem looking out for deer. I was very tired afterwards— Being shut up so long, makes one tired on going out. Even my bonnet was out of fashion. The world outruns us soon. As to weather, it was nearly too warm—that was all the fault.

Isa Blagden is surprised at the cheapness of Paris, & thinks she could live here almost as cheaply as in Italy— Not quite.

M’ Sartoris was here the other day, descanting on the cheapness of a delightful house with ten bedrooms, she was desirous of taking in the Rue d’Estory. Upon enquiring I found it was the Hedleys’s! The difficulty was that somebody was in possession & refused to abdicate before March. Indeed it surprised me to hear of the Hedleys’ going to Bath— & I am sorry, especially, for the reason’s sake. I cant conceive of a fashionable school at Bath being desireable for a young girl who has had & who may have the advantages of a Paris education. There is every opening here—every facility for acquiring information & accomplishment. What you would desire besides, is familiarity with English literature— & English literature never is, nor can be, taught at schools, even in England.
When I told you what I was doing & teaching in my last letter, I should have mentioned Harriet & added that I had been teaching her French while she brushed my hair at nights. She has a very good idea of it now, I assure you, & is in earnest about it, learning her lesson everyday. Penini gets on nicely. He has formed a passionate attachment to the concierge’s little girl, who is five & a half & called Leocadie, & comes to play with him & talk with him. Its excellent for the French. He told me with satisfaction yesterday, that “really he understood her now, just as well as if he was a Frenchman.” The only ground of difference seems to me that Leocadie does’nt like to be kissed, which Penini thinks quite unreasonable & “very turious.” (curious.) He pronounces his rs perfectly well now, & finds a great deal of glory in exaggerating them. But the Gs & the Ks are, I am happy to say, as bad as ever. He has begun to read the bible—reads your bible, everyday, my darling Arabel— I made him begin with the gospel of Luke. As to geography, . . I am much improved in order to keep up with him! I shall make him read Mrs Stowe’s book, because you gave it to him & it will be a comfort to think of that. Not that I think much of the book in itself. Still there will be some good in it. But he takes naturally to geography & adapts it to politics as he goes on. He thinks it would be “so easy” to come & ‘sieze’ [sic] Austria!

Oh—he had a dream the other night about Charlotte.7 “Some men were mending the house, & the plaster kept tumbling down from the ceiling! So the only way was to sleep in the corners of the room—& Mama & papa slept in one corner of the room, & he & Charlotte in another! Then he was very unhappy about his rabbits, who would run about & were sure to have their legs hurt!—Oh—a horrible dream!”——

He has been to two more “parties,” & came home from the last, discomfitted. Little Mary Corchrane8 had been “very untind to him.” He wanted to be her “lover,” & she went away & would’nt let him. He told her he was sure she [“]hated him”. “And what did she say.” “Oh, of tourse, she said she did’nt—but I know she did.” This was at the Thackerays’ house— I mean, the Thackeray girls had asked him—

As for me I live a very quiet life. Having been put out of humour (& health) when we came first to Paris, we got into a way of not ‘laying ourselves out’ for society—(Rather of ‘laying ourselves out’ otherwise!) & I cant prick Robert into leaving cards. Still people find their way to us, & he might go out every night, . . & does, very often— I had a new visitor yesterday, Lady Mansun,9 who is sympatthetical, & knows George Sand, by the way. Robert sees Rosa Bonheur often, & is in great love with her— She receives on the mornings of every wednesday. It’s pleasant to hear what a good pure life she leads, making no noise even by eccentricities. Did you see that most impertinent article in Blackwood on modern poetry?10 If one cared for such things, it would vex one. I am reading the Newcomes—11 Very good. Read it. But I write so much I have little time for reading— Robert says my poem is quite a novel, . . (★★★)

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Conjecturally dated based on EBB’s references to the letter from Kenyon and Sarah Bayley (dated 6 February [1856], ms at Wellesley), and to being “deep in my fourth book” of Aurora Leigh.

2. Underscored three times.

3. EBB circled the exclamation points. Story’s letter has not survived.

4. Emelyn Story (née Eldredge) had five brothers.
5. "This wood, about two miles from Paris, bears the name of a neighbouring village. ... It is the Hyde Park of Paris ... an artificial lake ... extends between groves of fir and beech-trees, while rocks, tastefully scattered along its banks, form an agreeable contrast with the green turf on which they lie" (Galagnani’s New Paris Guide, Paris: A. & W. Galagnani, 1855, pp. 512-513).

6. As indicated in a letter from EBB to Henrietta on 4 March 1856, the Hedleys went to Bath but did not stay for very long (Huxley, p. 242).

7. Probably Charlotte McIntosh, who later married Octavius Barrett after a long engagement.

8. The child of John Fraser and Louisa Corkran; see letter 74, note 12.


10. “Modern Light Literature—Poetry” was the lead article in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine for February 1856. The reviewer claimed that “in spite of Smith and Dobell, the Brownings and the Mystics, our Laureate holds his place” (p. 129). There is praise for EBB: “Altogether, Mrs Browning’s poems, rank them how you will in intellectual power, have more of the native mettle of poetry than most modern verses. She is less artificial than her brotherhood—and there is something of the spring and freedom of things born in her two earlier volumes; she is not so assiduously busy over the things which have to be made” (p. 137). And commenting on RB’s Men and Women, the reviewer judged that “this writer of rugged verses has a dramatic gift, the power of contrasting character, and expressing its distinctions”; nevertheless, the reviewer added that “we are jealous of the Laureate’s indisputable pre-eminence” (p. 137).

11. William Makepeace Thackeray, The Newcomes: Memoirs of a Most Respectable Family (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1854). A story of frustrated romance between Clive Newcome and his cousin Ethel. The character of Clive is thought to have been suggested at least in part by Frederic Leighton.

Letter 146

3. Rue du Colysée

Wednesday—[27 February 1856]

My ever beloved Arabel I have hesitated between you & Henrietta today—for she has written to me, & I have a leaning out of the thoughts to her much, poor darling, “all alone” there, as Penini says! I should’nt like it, for my part. Still I do want to stir you up to writing to me again, Arabel. Oh, if you knew the good your last letter did me. I had such a fright that day about you. Think of their bringing us in a letter from somebody else .. none from you! I threw myself back on the sofa to be miserable for the day. Penini who was going out stood stock still at the door— ‘What do you wait there for,’ said Robert. ‘Oh,’ he answered, “I must dive poor dearest mama some tisses”. And so he rushed back to kiss away the fear & sorrow .. but he could’nt! not even he. An hour afterwards up comes your letter. I cant make out how the letters come here. We get them three times a day, & sometimes oftener. How I thanked God for the deep relief your letter gave me—how I thanked you & forgave you, you naughty cruel Arabel. I do entreat you for the future not to keep me without letters. Never mind writing long letters when you are not inclined, but write something, something. Four pence are not worth the cost of economies. Three letters for a shilling! Let us have the advantage of being neighbours this winter, do, .. instead of the intercourse between us being slacker than ever? Then I am by no means satisfied about you, in spite of what you say—& I think its a pity you did not use the homœopathist who did you so much good before.
As to expenses, the expenses, in the end, of allopathic attendance & medicines must necessarily be greater—so that’s quite absurd. Ah—but if you had minded the advice given to you last summer about the cod-liver oil, none of it would probably have been necessary. I believe that the cod-liver oil, if persisted in, would be sovereign with you, & I know something of the effect of it—I who am recommencing after the rest of a week. I have taken it regularly throughout the winter, & when people tell me that I don’t look ill & thin, I lay the whole credit to the oil. But I am very fairly well now—there’s nothing to complain of. You have had occasional mildness of weather it seems .. but you have not had persistent mild weather, like ours .. comparing the notes on all sides. Dickens who has been backwards & forwards to London for the printing of ‘Little Dorrit,’ told Robert there was no sort of comparison. In Sarianna’s garden, there’s an apricot tree in full-blossom. Oh—if it hadn’t been for being knocked down & nearly murdered at the beginning, I should have been walking in & out triumphantly all the winter. As it is, I survive, & you won’t see me a bit the worse, if it please God. As to being tired with going out that day in the carriage, I was out above two hours, observe—& then being shut up in these small close rooms for months will tell upon anybody. Strength very soon comes. I assure you I am well— In spite, though, of being nearly frightened to death about Penini, .. who .. what do you think? .. all but fainted on the floor the day before yesterday. I did not see him fall .. but on hearing a sort of feeble wail, & running out, there, he was lying in Harriet’s arms, who had picked him up, quite pale & cold. He did not lose consciousness—he was frightened .. ‘did’nt know what it was,’ as he said afterwards, & so cried feebly .. I behaved very well & did’nt faint too, as you might suppose from my characteristic intrepidity, .. but ran for the Hygienic vinegar, & rubbed his hands, & kept up his courage, though I was trembling all over. It was just the consequence of a dose of senna & manna which he had taken in the morning on account of a slight cold— He had been standing in the hot Kitchen too, which he doesn’t often do now. But think of a little child like Peni, fainting! We laid him on the sofa, Robert & I, .. & I read to him till dinner, & by that time the senna had produced its secondary effect of inspiring him with an alarming appetite. Afterwards his roses came into blow again— Indeed I never saw him looking better, if so well, as he does now—he’s quite radiant!—but not a robust child .. never will be. You can’t think how well that child reads & translates french. We have only the phrase book to read—but by covering up the English, it does for the present .. & today he read two pages, in a way quite to surprise me. He’s proud of his French (and so am I) & is not the least shy about using it on occasions. He never would play with the children in the Tuileries though they asked him repeatedly, till he knew something of French—& then he said one day to Harriet, [‘]’I wonder if it would make those little boys very happy if I went to play with them ..’” & complied with the first invitation. He talks too to Leocadie the concierge’s child—who is “twite a darling! with such bright eyes and beautiful turls!” It’s a passion, I assure you. Tomorrow he’s going to a public ball .. the children’s day-ball in the Jardin d’Hiver, .. Isa Blagden having provided herself with tickets for him & her. So kind. Of course he’s charmed about it— There are to be a hundred musicians—& the children (infantine crème de la crème of Paris) are often dressed most absurdly .. artificial flowers on their heads & ball-dresses. I shall venture to send Peni however, in his velvet frock, with the new arrangement of the body, & cut buttons &c. He’ll look as pretty as any of them, I think. The Jardin d’hiver is a
gigantic conservatory-kind of building in the Champs Elysées—, & presents, on such festivals, quite a fairy scene, people say. Before I leave Peni let me tell you that this morning he was musing on your Daguerreotype—“Oh, how very pretty! how it is very light! Oh—if this picture was mine, I would keep it for ever” . (very emphatically.) “I would keep it till I died.” —

I get on with the poem, & have finished the fifth book—altogether more than six thousand lines written & transcribed. Still I hope to have it contained in one thick volume. There will be two or three more books. Robert praises it magnificently—thinks it “out & out” the best thing I ever did—which certainly it ought to be—& says it is interesting as a story. Its quite unlike anything of mine . & , I hope, of anybody’s else. As to Swedenborgianism, spiritualism &c. the advantage for me is that though I write myself out with a good deal of frankness, neither you nor Robert will find much, if anything in me objectionable . —the poetry will wrap me up & make me acceptable. Why? just because I express myself better, more intensely, in poetry . & then you see the truth of me . understand me . which you dont, in poor conversational prose. It’s so with Robert, at any rate. And as for you, I dont feel the least afraid that you will excommunicate me, or be vexed, after reading what is written— Think of that darling Robert being moved really to tears when he told me his opinion of the poem— Twice he broke into tears— Dont mention it when you write—but I must tell you, for his sake.

Shall I spoil the effect of that when I tell you that he is about to get a letter of introduction to the famous Dupotet, & to take it to him in company with M! Cartwright & Prince Frederick . . (I think he’s a Wurtemberg prince, . but he is a great student & very simple—. Robert spends the evenings with him often at M! Cartwright’s) & that they three are going to investigate about magnetism & spirits . . to see the most they can. Of course I am pleased— Only, people are so soon thrown off an investigation, . . and, as to Robert’s persisting, though he may begin in earnest . . I am incredulous. M! Cartwrights [sic] believes to a certain extent . . but is quite uninstructed, I can see plainly, I who am learned in the matter in question. M! Cartwright is going to have Alexis at his house too. He can afford any sort of experiment. —Dearest Arabel, its shameful of me, but I cut this letter short just to enclose a note to Lady Eastlake because we dont know her address, & I am forced to write to her to get her to use her influence that Page’s picture (of Robert) may have a good place in the Academy. Do find her address for me & direct the note & send it to the post with a stamp on it. Is dear Bummy going to you soon— When she does, remembrance to give my best love. How is Trippy? Has the winter told on her, do you consider? Do speak particularly about Papa— I pour out love over all of you. Oh Arabel—I cant trust myself to speak of your coming to Paris. How very, very hard! M! Owen called one day, & hearing the usual answer given to visitors, went away. He sh! have sent in his card. Ask Mary Hunter if she received my letter . . I’m so afraid I made a mistake in the address. Does Minny keep better? Write & tell me of yourself—my own dearest Arabel. Love me enough for that.

Your Ba.

Tell me true— Have you paid double for any of my letters. I want to know—for a reason.

Penini is just as fond of Ferdinando, but, between you & me, he is not spoilt so much. Ferdinando is considerably embittered by marriage cares. The other day, Penini came to us in very low spirits. "Ferdinando was very untind. Ferdinando had said that as Peni had been naughty
to him he w'd be naughty to Penini." "I told him, said Penini, it was put in the Bible, if people were naughty to us we sh'd still be good to them; but Ferdinando said he did'nt tare." Poor Peni. His naughtiness really does'nt deserve great judgements.

Address: Angleterre. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated by Paris postmark of 28 February 1856, a Thursday.
2. Dickens was in London from 4–10 February. *Little Dorrit* appeared monthly from November 1856 until June 1857, and was published as a single title in London by Bradbury & Evans in 1857. For a publishing history of *Little Dorrit*, see Dickens, 8, 8n.
3. i.e., in the apartment in the Rue de Grenelle, which the Corkrans had arranged for them, which had been very cold (see letter 139).
4. According to Galignani's *New Paris Guide* (Paris: A. & W. Galignani, 1855), "children's balls are also given here occasionally; and on these occasions this charming spot presents what may truly be called a scene of enchantment; the fairy groups revelling in the joyous animation of the dance" (p. 503).
5. This likeness of Arabella has not been identified.
6. See her remark in letter 117 that she had finished some 4,500 lines, and that she was "afraid that six thousand lines will not finish it."
7. See letter 143, note 21.
8. William Cornwallis Cartwright (1825–1915). This is the first of many references in the Brownings' correspondence to Cartwright. Cartwright's family had been the squires of Aynhoe Park, Northamptonshire, since the early 17th century.
9. Unidentified.
10. On the contrary, so great were the debts attached to Aynhoe, Cartwright's Northamptonshire estate, that the house was let out for almost the rest of the 19th century while he and his family lived on the continent in order to economize. EBB had known about Alexis, the magnetiser, when he was in London in 1844 (see BC, 9, 39).
11. Elizabeth {née Rigby, 1809–93) was the wife of Sir Charles Eastlake (1793–1865), President of the Royal Academy. EBB had first met Lady Eastlake in 1851, and EBB's letter to her, enclosed with this one to Arabella, is dated 28 February 1856. EBB explained how Page had insisted on giving the painting to her rather than selling it, and because of his generosity, she wanted to be sure that it was seen in the best possible situation (ms at ABL). Despite EBB's efforts on Page's behalf, the portrait was not accepted for the exhibition.

---

**Letter 147**

3. Rue du Colysée.

March 13. [1856]

My ever dearest dearest Arabel I have been dribbling on, day after day, with meanings to write to you. Yesterday, & the day before, it should have been. I dont mean to countenance you in silences. They won't do between London & Paris—they become regular unkindnesses—so put that in your pipe & smoke it. I suppose I should be content with what you say of yourself, & yet I am not— I have a second sight, Arabel, & know that you want change of air. It was very hard you were not let come to me. Really it surprises me, like an after-stroke of chastisement, that you were not let come— I could'n have supposed that it could be intended, after all these years, to
interfere with our intercourse, your's & mine- I can't suppose it even now. It strikes me that the Owens were not considered trustworthy—that they might be suspected of some fraudulent converting tendency in respect to their deposit. If they had seized [sic] you & made a pillar of you, nobody would have particularly liked it. Penini was overjoyed with his letter, & the frenchman inside, & his two cheeks grew very red at the allusion to Leocadie—"How ould Arabel have heard about Leocadie"? That sentiment goes on with equal ardour, & it[s] excellent in its influence on the French. What surprises me is that Peni is'nt in the least shy about talking French, & how ingeniously & boldly he puts his knowledge into his experience, would amuse you to observe. He gets out quite long sentences . . with plenty of faults of course. I heard him saying yesterday . . ‘je serai revenir’, for ‘je reviendrai’— . . but still he gets on, & these things will correct themselves. He read a page of Berquin to me this morning, really very well, both in the reading & translating. I think his progress is quite astonishing, considering the time—for during our first two months at the Rue de Grenelle, he never heard a french word scarcely, nor attempted to learn anything. His eagerness about it is great, & his emulation of Harriet, sometimes too vehement. Yesterday, because she had read a few lines beyond him, he was almost in a passion . . as near a passion as he ever is . . he seized [sic] the book with flashing eyes—‘No, I wont have it, I wont have it!’ ‘Indeed,’ said I, ‘you must. You cant be so ungenerous as to keep back Harriet, nor shall I be so unjust as to allow it. So if you dont give me the book, I shall have to speak to Papa when he comes in—’ He threw the book down at his feet on the floor. ‘Tate it’ said he vehemently. “But I do wish all women were out of the world except Mrs Browning!” Poor Peni—he would’nt wish me out of the world, even in his passion! & though I was opposing him at the moment. But he thought it sublime to say “Mrs Browning.” Harriet read what she had to read, & then he insisted on adding to what he had read before that morning, in order to keep up with her—which of course I could not refuse. Presently in he came with his hat on, for the usual kiss preparatory to going out. “Are you good,” said I. ‘Yes’—said he, ‘I’m more good. I’m only a little angry now—but really I did feel inclined to take away that boot, and teep it for weets & weets. I tan not let Harriet det before me in French.” — Peni is very funny with his new learning in Peter Parley & geography. If anyone mentions . . Piedmont for instance. ['I know where Piedmont is.” Or Cuba—“I know where Tuba is.” And I heard him (with fresh recollections of the mythologies) observing in a complimentary mood to Harriet . . “Really, Harriet, you are tuite the dod (god) of naughtiness— You’re lite the old Egyptians who . . .” In what way she was like the old Egyptians remains unknown, for she interrupted him by retorting that he was like a naughty boy— Poor Peni—You are not to think he has grown naughty & pert. On the contrary. My own opinion is, & Robert’s too, that the child grows sweeter & sweeter. His lovingness & perfection of disposition become developed as the days go on. “I wonder”, said he, the other day to me, “if I were to tiss you for a month, if it would not mate me dood for a year— I sint it would.” Then he’s so much more disinterested than entered into his baby-nature——its perilous work to get him to take his right quantity of wine, or tartlets, or anything of the sort, while he has the faintest suspicion that there is not a superfluity left for Papa . . or Ferdinando. “No, I leally tant. Pray dont ast me.” He is going to write to you directly—but a brief delay is necessary because of some verses on M Leighton’s new picture, which he is to write out for the artist’s mother. The picture is just finished . . . the
subject, Orpheus winning back Eurydice from Pluto . . and Robert took Penini to see it— & Penini made a poem on the occasion which has been enquired for. Peni’s poems are excessively admired in Paris, I assure you. He made one for little May Sartoris on her birthday, which May (eleven years old) learnt by heart & goes about repeating—besides a magnificent ode on the war which has had its due renown. He said he had a very happy birthday—he had his squirrel & a box of tools, & a box of kitchen utensils, and a cannon, and a nosegay of violets, and a tricolor flag with an eagle . . which he carried off instantly to perambulate at the Tuileries [sic] gardens. He observed to me that “really he was enchanted with that flag.” Then, for the first time in his life, a holiday was accorded. I don’t like holidays for him—because the amount of lessons is so small—but he wanted one & got it—The next day he said he “had still the delight of his birthday.” But today Robert & I were informed gravely that “the gladness of his toys was beginning to go off.” Of course it is literally so.

Well—I have told you enough about Penini—and I shall only be able to use this sheet, I suppose— (You won’t answer my questions—Therefore Robert is probably right in supposing that you have paid double for every one of my letters.) I must send you Alfred’s letter just received . . because it is so pleasant. Oh—if he were but clear. I am much afraid he will suffer from the peace—& so will Surtees . . will he not? Perhaps the latter will not however—for there will be a press in favour of no negligence in respect to military organization for some time. I am quite sick with what Robert has told me of the review in the Athenæum, of that stupid, wretched Biographical dictionary^ which sh’d not have been noticed in any respectable Journal. But the Athenæum ceases to be a respectable journal—it is quite intolerable. The misrepresentations, the absolute lies about French affairs, sting our friends here to the quick. The paper has got hold of some English correspondent who is seduced & poisoned by certain paltry ‘salons’ of the St Germain quarter—It’s discreditable to the Athenæum in all ways. As to Robert, of course there’s nothing but mistakes . . even his works misnamed! There should be penalties for such meddling with private life with dirty hands—— I was writing this letter in the evening while Robert was away at the magnetism séances, & here he comes in (this second week) not having been able to force admission on account of the crowd. He saw Dupotet afterwards, who was ‘very sorry’ but “hadn’t it in his power to arrange it otherwise”— Robert & his friends “must go another Wednesday.” Robert says he won’t, whatever his friends may do. He’s easily daunted in such matters, and it is not destined for me to have other than a sceptical husband. I had told him I expected to have him prostrate before me in an attitude of repentance & conversion—but no, it can’t be. A hundred persons were sent away from Dupotet’s rooms—yet people pay there, a franc a head. Lytton comes to us oftener than he did, not having, I suppose, such a squeeze of parties in Lent—and Isa Blagden too is often here in the evening. “What next,” do you say, about the petition to parliament? Yes, I was asked to give my name, & didn’t answer like Miss Strictland, that, “the sufferings of women being the consequence of Eve’s transgression, she w’d take no step to mitigate them.” Did you read what the prayer of the petition is confined to, & do you mean to say you disapprove? Why, even Sarianna who is rococo about such things, could see no objection, when I asked her. The evil presses chiefly on the lower-class women, whose poor gains are commonly distracted into the gin-shops by drunken husbands away from starving children. And observe,
this evil is properly English. And Why should Englishwomen suffer peculiarly from Eve's transgression? I should like to hear that from Miss Strictland. It was foolish to publish those names in the Examiner, & I have said so—names without either distinction (in some cases) or number to give them force. But these things are always ill-managed. There are many signatures. I have finished my sixth book, & am now in the composition-part. I was anxious about the sixth book & Robert,—as the situation is rather hazardous—"What next?" will you say, Arabel? But he was delighted with it & didn't set it down as too indecent. He keeps saying .. "Out & out superior to anything you have done." I myself (now I am out of my panic) am inclined to think so too. There is more power & variety than in my previous things. At the same time there is much provocation to attacks— I am perfectly aware of that also. Enter Penini .. "Dear mama, I really am ashamed to ask you—but may I have Leofadie adain today?" Yes—she may come. He's of opinion that she "tourages" him (encourages) in French. I am anxious about dearest Henrietta. She should have some one with her indeed—but I can't think it will be befor(e) April. She wrote me a very pleasant letter, dear thing. How unfortunate that now, of all times, Surtees sh'd be absent. The Owens are returned— I heard from Mary Hunter. Angela was ill with change of place & manners! I do wonder how such persons bear the change to the spiritual world .. (don't) you? Swedenborg says it does make some spirits uncomfortable at first. Is Bummy with you? My best love, if she is—Tell me of Papa. Tell me of yourself—dearest! And how is Trippy? May God bless you all as I love you. Write to me Arabel— It's snowing today to our great surprise, for it has not been cold. Your own own Ba.

Address: Angleterre- / Miss Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. "I will be to return" for "I will return."
3. Arnaud Berquin (1741-91), one of the first children's authors in France. He was popularly known for his serial publication, *L'Ami des enfants* (1782-83), which continued to be a bestseller in the nineteenth century. EBB mentions Pen reading Berquin in several letters between 1856 and 1858.
4. Frederic Leighton (1830-96), afterwards (1896) Baron Leighton of Stretton, became one of the most famous artists of his generation. He had met the Brownings in Rome during the winter of 1853-54. In 1858 he returned to England and twenty years later he succeeded Sir Francis Grant as President of the Royal Academy. He illustrated EBB's "A Musical Instrument" in *The Cornhill Magazine* in July 1860, and after EBB's death, RB commissioned Leighton to design her tomb. Apparently, Leighton had requested Pen's poem for his mother, Augusta Susan Leighton (née Nash, d. 1865). The verses were entitled "The Poem of the Picture of Mr. Leighton." A 2½ page manuscript, dated "Paris, March 1856," was offered for sale by Driscoll in 1959; present whereabouts unknown (see *Reconstruction*, L56). Leighton's painting, "The Triumph of Music: 'Orpheus, by the Power of his Art, Redeems his Wife from Hades'" was exhibited at the Royal Academy exhibition in 1856, but it was a miserable failure; see letter 149, note 15.
5. A review of *Men of the Time: Biographical Sketches of Eminent Living Characters: also Biographical Sketches of the Celebrated Women of the Time* (London: David Bogue, 1856) appeared in *The Athenæum* of 8 March 1856, no. 1418, pp. 293-295. Although the reviewer admitted that it was "a vast improvement on the first edition", he declared it "far from perfect", largely due to the anonymous nature of the author(s) (p. 293). The review consists primarily of three extracts, beginning with one on RB, followed by Carlyle and Douglas Jerrold. Although not mentioned in the review, a considerably lengthier notice of EBB, mostly lifted from Miss
Mitford's *Recollections* (see letter 77, note 4), appears in volume two of *Men of the Time* (pp. 815–817). William Hepworth Dixon has been identified as the reviewer in the marked file of *The Athenaeum* now at City University (London).

6. The Petition for the Married Women’s Property Bill was presented to Parliament in March 1856, and both EBB’s and Sarianna Browning’s signatures were on it. It was instrumental in the reforms that led to the Married Woman’s Property Act (1882). The petition had resulted from a pamphlet entitled *A Brief Summary in Plain Language of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women* (London: John Chapman, 1854) by Barbara Leigh Smith (afterwards Bodichon, 1827–91), an early supporter of women’s rights.

7. Agnes Strickland (1796–1874), author of *Lives of the Queens of England* (1840–48). According to her biographer, “Agnes declined to allow her name to be used in this way. In explaining her position she said that ‘the grievances, though founded in fact,’ appear to her ‘irremediable by human means being part and parcel of the penalties entailed by Eve’s transgression.’ She sees no way of helping to right the injustice, but ‘to ask God to regenerate the hearts of wicked men.’ Therefore she must excuse herself and ‘leave the matter in the hands of our heavenly father’” (Una Pope-Hennessy, *Agnes Strickland, Biographer of the Queens of England, 1796–1874*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1940. p. 243).

8. In the issue of 23 February 1856 (p. 122), a notice about the petition concludes with a list of 24 names, including Isa Blagden, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Sarianna Browning, Mrs. Carlyle, … Charlotte Cushman, … Anna Jameson, Harriet Martineau, Mary Mohl, Bessie Rayner Parkes, and Barbara Leigh Smith.

9. “Risky,” or “indiscreet.”

---

**Letter 148**

3 Rue du Colysée.

April 1. [1856]

My ever dearest Arabel I do hesitate whether to send this letter to you or Henrietta– I am thinking much of her just now—but she won’t be thinking as much of me as you are .. (with the two absorbing) babies, & one coming,)3 .. & I know you’ll be wondering what has become of me. Then its much the same thing,—as you send my letters. Dearest dearest Arabel, I’ve been in tribulation since I wrote last, & this kept me from writing again sooner. I told you of Robert’s being unwell. He grew more & more unwell—& then Penini caught it (the ulcerated throat) & we were in fear .. I, in terror .. about Penini. He scarcely complained of his throat,—but one morning he came in to me while I was dressing, & told me he “felt pale all over,” & “inclined to shate.” Which was followed by decided fever .. cheeks like scarlet .. rapid pulse &c. At first we didn’t mind much—gave castor oil .. which he could’nt retain .. a grey powder at night .. equally unsuccessful .. but succeeded the next morning with his usual senna & manna. The fever however went on—& although it was intermittent & he had not bad nights, .. still it told upon him .. he didn’t care for Leocadie .. put away his soldiers’ hat .. & let Harriet carry him about the house like a baby, .. lying curled up by me on the sofa nearly all day .. with a decided taste for literature, which is a mortal symptom with Penini. I sent out to borrow books for him, it was so developed. At last he complained of his head, & then I gave up all equanimity,—& Robert rushed out for a medical man. We had a Frenchman .. who immediately examined the throat & found an ulcer—which was the cause of all. He told us afterwards that if it had gone on it would have ended in croup in so young a child, & that this made him fearful. But all passed off safely,
& he paid us only two visits—most considerately leaving ample directions. Such a relief it was. Thank God. That child, when he is ill, is so frightfully angelic that it breaks one’s heart—“O dearest mama, dont loot so unhappy! its only lite the head of a pin. I tant bear to see you loot so! I shall be tuite well tomorrow—you’ll see now.” Taking everything we gave him—only asking for “tisses”! Our doctor said he had caught the malady from Robert—’it was very infectious.’ Of course. And he couldn’t be kept from hanging about Robert’s neck at all hours— As to poor Robert his attack was worse in reality, complicated too with bilious disorder, although he would have no advice, & he threw the general house into less agitation. Even up to this day he is not strong as he was,—but the convalescence is decided, & satisfactory for the last two days—& last friday he was able to recommence his reading of Keats for Lady Elgin. I assure you she came up in her chair again & again to see after him—but for three weeks he couldn’t get down to her at night—the risk would have been too great. You may be sure he is not ill now— As a proof, he breaks his vow against dinners in favour of Lady Monson, who invites him to meet Monckton Milnes, M! Sartoris, Cavour (the Sardinian minister) and ... George Sand!! who could resist such a temptation? This is for today. Penini who had fallen off dreadfully those four days, has recovered himself quite, & looks as round & rosy as ever .. & went to the Champs de Mars today with Ferdinando to see the review,—& comes back triumphantly having had sight of Napoleon & eaten two oranges. Ferdinando expresses an opinion that the French people are mad in a body .. that for miles, as they walked, there was nothing but eating & drinking and waiting for “l’empereur” on both sides of the road. In fact, says Robert, “Paris is one huge fair.” There’s satisfaction about the peace, and in the “baby” & the weather is splendid—only an undercurrent of sharp wind through the brilliant sunshine, which makes me wary of going out. But everybody else goes out— & I dare say they like it. Oh—how I should like for you to see Paris. It is so southern in character & habits, & so strangely beautiful. Next to Venice it comes, to my mind.— Well—so you dont believe in the “baby” as well as in the spirits. Perhaps you think, as certain anti-imperialists swear, that twenty women in pangs of maternity were screeching at once in the cellars of the Tuileries—first come, first served!—an admirable way, as Robert says, to keep a secret! twenty women,—and nineteen of them under provocation to speak!— No, Arabel—I dont think it “suspicious.” The baby’s a baby .. “genuine,” as the Americans accent it. Also the poor Empress suffered intensely .. through being violently affected by the intrusion round her bed of the necessary male witnesses. This produced such an effect on her .. that she lost all self-command & shrieked repeatedly ‘tuez moi, tuez moi” .. we know this from a reliable source. What is stranger is the bearing of the emperor. The cold, reserved man, (so considered) was so absorbed in anxiety about his wife as a woman, that, for four & twenty hours, a crumb of food did not pass his lips—nothing .. except one glass of madeira which a medical attendant held to them, & forced him to take. At the time of her great suffering he completely lost his head .. He never thought of the baby—(so they swear)—he was in such anguish on her account—& when they told him the child was a boy, he said quite wonderingly .. “Then you must fire the twenty one guns” .. meaning “the hundred and one”– For herself, when the child was given to her, she clasped it to her breast in an agony of joy, & could scarcely be brought to loose her hold. The reaction was too great, poor thing. The emperor had to speak to her to prevail on her to give it up. Penini has
written a poem on the "baby"... called "The baby of Napoleon"... & he wears a medal, (of which he is immensely proud) which commemorates the event. You shall see one of his poems one of these days—but I always grudge the room for my gossip. You know you shall have his copy-book to examine soon. The two last are 'my squirrel,' & ['the baby" &c. He develops very fast mentally. I assure you his French is extraordinary, considering the time he has given to it. He is reading a play of Berquin's which I had fancied would have been beyond him, but he enters into the whole spirit of it, reading it dramatically—, till I quite wonder at the child. But his heart has been in this matter of learning French, & he has put out his powers. I never learnt French with that rapidity... looking back at myself. And he has a good accent too... better than mine is now, I am well aware. Then he is in the fourth volume of Miss Edgeworth in Italian... has read Frank in Italian, & Rosamond—and is reading the second part of Harry & Lucy. I fancied it would be dry & was inclined to keep it from him—but as he heard it was for children ten years old, that was quite enough to make him ambitious of reading it—and he takes it all in quite comprehendingly, & is very learned & interested about "thermometers." He has done a portrait of Napoleon for you... but it is on a great sheet of paper & beyond the post... wonderfly done—really like... copied from a sou. People are amazed at it, looking at the child and the drawing together! I assure you Peni is rather a celebrated person at Paris... what with drawings, poems, & curls. And I'm fairly proud of him when he has read his French, Italian, & English... all so well! Of course his familiarity with the Italian has helped him in French—we must acknowledge that.

I have had another letter from Florence on the spirit-question. Here it is said that Hume's quarrel with certain coteries there, proved an advantage to him by removing him to others more cultivated & intelligent,—from many of which he has received valuable testimonials. A Polish count of wealth & respectability received him into his suite, allowing him the advantage of his son's tutors, & carrying him away with him to Naples. He was forced to leave Florence, I think I told you, through a notification from the government—the spiritual movement extending further than could be tolerated, papistically. The manifestations had remained wonderful—the "hands" writing in sight, & autographs of deceased persons being so produced... one, for instance, of Madame Orsini's father—she recognized it. Baron French, the banker, desired (as a test) that the spirit of his father, who announced himself, should prove his identity by playing on the accordion an air which the said spirit had in life composed,.. which had been executed years ago on Baron French's wedding-day,.. which had never existed out of manuscript, or been known to any person in Florence except himself. The air was played instantly, & most beautifully. My correspondent (Mr. Jarves) has been grievously offended himself by Hume, & considers that on the whole he has behaved very ill in Florence saying things which he should not, &c &c— He is weak, & had his head turned by attentions. There is nothing much worse— But the quarrelling in Florence about him & in consequence of him is to an extent which is quite curious. Mr. Jarves says that in America the manifestations extend—and that though there are many aberrations of doctrine conveyed, the impulse of the majority, the general conclusion, is towards a cleaner &
simpler acceptation of Christian doctrine as Christ gave it, ... to the neglect of all subsequent & modern dogmas & forms ... with a development towards the future to suit these times. Robert is “meek as maid” upon the subject now. Not that he believes. Oh no—but he is ready to speak reason & hear it. I have hope he will be a medium one of these days, for he has taken to rain fire out of his hair! Think of that. He combs it in the dark, & out come the sparks like fire-flies, to Peni’s awe, & my admiration. Robert says I never appreciated him so much in my life. We have excellent news of the poems from America—and Mr. Fields sends to him for his photograph. I am hard at work & write from thirty to fifty lines a day—so that I shall certainly have done in time ...—

Wednesday—

The dinner went off most agreeably last night. The Sartoris[s], Cavour (Sardinian minister), Lord Holland, Mignet, (the French historian), Monckton Milnes, & George Sand ... who smoked five cigarettes ... though no man smoked besides, & Mrs. Sartoris & Lady Monson were present. She was dressed becomingly ... had an ivy wreath round her hair ... femininely, notwithstanding,—& looked, Robert says, very handsome.

Page’s portrait is sent to the Exhibition, & I shall be anxious about it. We talk of going to Rome next winter, but who knows? If we do, we shall come back to Paris probably for the succeeding winter— Only let us get money by our books—and we shall, I hope. Do write at once,

Your own Ba.

Robert’s best love—

Address: Angleterre / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Placement of parentheses is EBB’s.
3. Which he had begun during an earlier visit to Paris; see letter 93, note 12.
5. Camillo Benso Cavour (1810–61), prime minister of Piedmont, was in Paris for the peace conference as a result of the end of the Crimean War. He was hoping to obtain French and English influence to secure, and perhaps increase, Piedmont’s interests. Cavour recorded this dinner in his diary for “1 avril, mardi,” noting the presence of “Monckton Milnes. Mme. Sand. Mignet. – Mme. de Vatry,” but omitting any mention of RB (Camillo Cavour, Diari (1833–1856), a cura di Alfonso Bogge, Roma: Ministero per i beni culturali ambientali, 1991, 11, 719).
6. i.e., the Prince Imperial, Napoléon Eugène Louis Jean Joseph (1856–79), who was born on 16 March 1856, just days before the Treaty of Paris, ending the Crimean War, was signed on 30 March 1856.
7. At this point EBB added above the line “(& terrifying the Emperor)” and then deleted the insertion.
8. “Kill me, kill me.”
9. See note 3 in the preceding letter.
10. EBB had mentioned an Italian translation of Frank in letter 118 (see note 2).
11. Preserved with this letter is a different, smaller, portrait of Napoleon III by Pen. EBB wrote to Henrietta, [10–11 April 1856]: “While I write Peni sits by me drawing a picture of Napoleon which Arabel asks for, & which we have an opportunity of sending ... He had finished a drawing of Napoleon before, better as to
likeness, . . but having taken a fancy to hang it up in his room, it has become so much the worse for wear, that he thinks it necessary to produce another for Arabel."

12. In February 1856, Home left Florence with the Polish Count Branicka and his mother, who was the niece of the Russian Prince Grigory Potemkin. They went first to Naples and then to Rome, where Home converted to Roman Catholicism in the Spring of 1856. In June 1856 Home left Italy (D.D. Home, Incidents in My Life, 1st series, London: Longman, Green, Roberts & Green, 1863, p. 95).

13. Assunta Orsini (née Laurenzi) was the wife of Felice Orsini (1819–58), an Italian revolutionary who, having convinced himself that Napoleon III was the main obstacle to Italian independence, attempted to assassinate the French emperor on 14 January 1858, for which he was executed two months later. I have been unable to trace any further accounts of EBB’s references to Madame Orsini nor to these events in Florence.


16. In a letter to Fields dated 18 June 1856, RB reported that the photograph was on its way and described sitting for it; however, it was temporarily lost en route and when it did appear it was not used. The likeness is reproduced in Meeting the Brownings (Waco, Texas: Armstrong Browning Library of Baylor University, 1986, p. 34; see also, pp. 75–76).


---

Letter 149

3 Rue du Colysée.

April 22. [1856]^1

Dearest beloved Arabel I wrote you a mad half letter a few days since, having been frightened out of my wits by hearing of the birth at Taunton first from the Times—then, on Surtees’s letter coming to hand (which had been wandering about Paris for a week) I abolished mine to you . . & so you hear later. Now I am fearing that you may think it too late—You see I had relied on Henrietta’s passing my letter on to you & on your hearing instantly, that way, that I had not an ulcerated sore-throat, nor was about to have one! But she being taken ill just at the time, of course, you heard nothing of me— I do hope & trust you have been too busy thinking of the new baby, to be vexed at my not writing. Otherwise I must have seemed unkind. What a blessing, this new blessing at Taunton! I wrote to Surtees the moment I had his announcement, & rely on having an account of Henrietta before he leaves her. What a great blessing to her, that, just in that particular parenthesis of his visit to Taunton, the confinement took place! If she frets when he goes away on the twenty fourth, she deserves the new punishment for wife-beating— it will be too bad. He gets home—(he holds the candle to the baby’s entering)^4—what can be completer? Now he goes back to Aldershott—& presently he’ll take rooms in London for Henrietta & company, so as to be near her husband’s regiment . . & Arabel & me. There’s the consummation of all. Meantime, you, darling Arabel, will go with Bummy to M’ Davidson or Ridley Hall^5 or anywhere else where you can get in—Dear, you must, in love to me. The change is necessary for you I am quite sure—and, as for me, remember . . that I shall not be in London till the sixteenth of June—(we cant—we have this house till the fifteenth) & that when I come, I must see you
well, or I shall do as ill, or worse, as I did last year under the Hume regime, which was wretchedly as you very well know. At present Robert & I are the most united of friends & lovers— I said to him the other day in a gush of gratitude. “If truth were not truth & I could disbelieve what I believe, I would give up the spirits for you & set them down as mere bosh.” And he answered— “If you could, I should not like it. I like you best as you are, & believing as you believe.” So this is “dwelling together in unity”—is’t it? At the same time he’s as far from the truth as ever, I lament to say in certain respects— only one can hear oneself speak, & various other advantages— Oh—this dearest Robert—he has not, I assure you, thrown off his illness quickly—in part, I think, because he couldn’t be persuaded to take blue pill enough, & exercise enough. Now he is pretty well however, & has got over a torment of toothache which was very disagreeable. Peni is radiant— And I have been out walking once— not within the last few days however, when a north-east wind has drawn a razor along the sunshine— The day I went out on was warm bright summery weather—and I crept up the Champs Elysées, & sate on the bench & looked at the people, & was horribly tired afterwards. Of course I am the weaker for my winter—but it’s past— & Robert swore to me today he never saw me looking so well in his life—(Use your scepticism in the right place, Arabell! & dont keep it wholly for the imperial baby, & the rapping spirits.) Really however I am very well, & pass the day without cough. Work goes on indefatigably. I am in the last book of my poem, gathering together the reins before I draw up. We had a letter from Chapman two days since, which was satisfactory to both of us— but pleased Robert far the most— to say that he must have a fourth edition of my poems out instantly— a new edition too of ‘Casa Guidi’— & proposing to make three volumes of the whole, together with any new fugitive poems I might have by me—pressing on us, too, an enquiry after my novel-poem— as “something striking was wanted in the market just now.” Of course it will be desireable, to attend to the recommendation at once, & we are to have the proofs of the poems sent over to us. To bring out this new edition in the summer will be well, before the publication in the autumn of my long new poem, that one may not interfere with another; & I have ‘ballads’ &c hitherto unpublished which will give something of a fresh feature to the reprint, and make up the third volume. M’ Ruskin has not sent us his new volume, but I hear that Robert is mentioned in it with a very glowing compliment which is better than sending us the book. Among other things, it is said that Robert is “always right in matters of mediœval art,” & that thirty lines of a poem of his contains the substance of thirty pages of Ruskin’s writing on the same subject— Robert being admitted to be the precursor of Ruskin. Ros[s]etti copied us out some extracts.

Some of our friends are floating away— M’ Sartoris, for instance, & Lady Monson & the Aidés. By the bye Penini has sent you by them what he calls “his own Napoleon,”—a great work which you will perfectly appreciate, & two poems. The first Napoleon was somewhat injured by keeping, so he insisted on doing you another— better in certain respects, if a shade less happy as a likeness. I ’mounted’ it— I’m rather conceited of the mounting just as Peni is of the drawing— & he stood by me in absolute ecstasy to see his work so glorified,—the sole drawback to his gratified ambition being that M’ Aidé couldn’t see it through the brown paper of the parcel— “What a pity, dear Mama!”— M’ Aidé carries it to London. He has told people ever since, the Sandfords & others, that he has “done a most beautiful drawing of Napoleon,” with “two blat
lines all round it” for his “aunt Arabel in London”—from whom, by the way, he expects a proportionate quantity of gratitude. —So look to it, Arabel.

Dear, what do you say to the Leigh & Gordon marriage? Of course, you have seen it in the newspaper .. M' Gordon & M' Leigh .. in Switzerland? Nothing can be worse to my mind, considering the creed & profession of M' Gordon at least. Here is the meaning of her insisting on getting away from Florence, where under Sophia’s eyes it would have been more hard to arrange. For Sophia will be profoundly hurt at it—if that I am sure. I remember now hearing a rumour at Florence, which at the moment I would’nt tolerate as a possible thing—& now I seem to understand why she would’nt believe in Sophia’s spirit-experiences under Hume— Oh, that struck Robert as soon as he had heard of the marriage! It was convenient to keep off the poor spirits as much as possible. A second marriage after such love! & a marriage with her brother in law who had loved her sister, as he did! & she a Swedenborgian, .. believing in the eternal validity of marriage & the consciousness of disembodied spirits! it is monstrous. It crowns her conduct to Trippy with a triple tiara! With grown up daughters & a son, too! Everything against her changing her position!

The Sandfords are come & settled near us. You know the end of M' Sandford’s London house .. after spending fourteen hundred pounds in furnishing, & living in it barely a winter? He leaves it, under oath never to spend another in London, & carries off his daughters to recommence their wandering life. They are trying to persuade him to remain here, & to take an apartment for a year, in hopes it will tie him. As if anything could! As if he had’nt a mole on his foot, & the prophecy ran not that he must have no rest to the sole of it accordingly!10 I tell Jane that I shall push him towards Rome for next winter,—but she says he hates Italy. The more reason for going there in six months, say I. As it is, directly I mention it to him .. “Really,” he admits, “I should like it very much.”!

I think I told you that Lytton was gone .. removed to the Hague as paid attaché—11 Think of the Hague after Paris— We have most affectionate & melancholy letters from him .. and he means to try to give us the meeting in London this summer. Robert told him he really must, for that we meant to go to Knebworth—! I wonder if we shall— By no manner of probability, I dare say.

I am very anxious & fearful about the conferences. I mean, about Italian affairs. Napoleon did what he could, & England was not slow to help .. but I much fear that they could do nothing with “questa bestia d’Austria.”12 We shall see however .. only the rumours are disheartening. The Austrian representative went away much irritated—but where’s the comfort, if he gained his point? The most iniquitous of powers is that Austrian government.

The Athenæum is mendacious beyond one’s patience. Berenger wrote no verses, for instance, & the poem is a forgery, which passes under his name.13 Why the Athenæum has taken it into its head to be political, it’s hard to say—the metier is peculiarly unsuitable—

Isa Blagden is still here, threatening every week to leave us for Florence. M' Cartwright, our all but next door neighbour, knows the Polish count with whom Hume is travelling—he is rich & of one of the best families in Poland. I dont think Arabel, that we are likely to catch up the medium when his present patron has done with him .. (unless it be by the nape of the neck.—) in spite of the advantage to Peni!! As the mediumship is said to have passed from him, he is no
more interesting to me than to Robert, observe.—Our authority about the Imperial baby is an
intercourse which Sarianna has with a woman engaged at the Tuileries every alternate fortnight
in the nursery. The child was much bruised about the face by the accidents of his birth, but is a
strong healthy child, & grows “like a mushroom”. They held him up at the window to see the
“national guard” & he would insist on taking no notice. Is dear Bummy with you? If so give her
my tender love. Tell me, Arabel, if you hear anything of the Jagoes— N elley does not write, & I am
fearing lest M: Jago may be less well than usual. Best love to Trippy— She seems to be very well.
May God bless you, dearest dearest. Write at once, & fully of yourself—& mind you go from
London somewhere. Say how Papa is. Roberts love with mine to all the dears.

Your own Ba

I hope you will see the exhibition at once & find out where they have put Robert’s picture.
Lady Eastlake promised me her influence in the matter. I want to know how you like it— Also
about Leighton’s picture . . which must fail I cant help thinking from the descriptions— Millais
has several pictures— & he wont fail!—

Address: Angletterre—/ Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. The Times of 18 April 1856 announced the birth of Edward Altham (1856–1943), the second child of
Henrietta and Surtees Cook: “On the 13th inst., at Wilton, Taunton, the wife of Captain Surtees-Cook, o f a
son.”
3. Although eventually rejected, the Aggravated Assaults Bill of 1856 proposed imprisonment and manda-
  tory flogging as penalties for violent assaults on women and children (see Maeve E. Doggett,
Marriage, Wife-
to suggest that Henrietta should be punished because of her lack of patience for Surtees Cook’s need to be away
during her confinement. Wife-beating is one of the evils referred to in The Examiner
article mentioned in letter
147, note 8.
4. The passage in angle brackets is reconstructed, having been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.
5. See letter 112, note 3.
6. Cf. Psalm 133:1: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”
7. Chapman’s letter has not survived, but RB’s reply, written the day before this letter, contained various
proposals considering a new edition of EBB’s poems, which was published as the fourth edition of Poems
(1856), and he described Aurora Leigh as a “novel in verse . . in eight books, of about 1200 lines each” (NL,
pp. 91–92).
8. Ruskin had presented a copy of Volume III of Modern Painters to RB (see letter 144, note 13). In Modern
Painters, Volume IV (pp. 378–379), Ruskin quotes 44 lines from “The Bishop Orders His Tomb in St.
Praxed’s Church,” concluding with this praise: “I know no other piece of modern English, prose or poetry, in
which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit,—its worldliness, inconsistency, pride,
hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin. It is nearly all that I said of the central
Renaissance in thirty pages of the ‘Stones of Venice’ put into as many lines, Browning’s being also the ante-
cedent work. The worst of it is that this kind of concentrated writing needs so much solution before the reader
can fairly get the good of it, that people’s patience fails them, and they give up the thing as insoluble, though,
truly, it ought to be to the current of common thought like Saladin’s talisman, dipped in clear water, not soluble
altogether, but making the element medicinal.” Rossetti’s extracts have not survived.
Letter 149
22 April [1856]

9. Sic, for Ley. Caroline Gordon (née Tulk), sister of Sophia Cottrell, had been widowed in 1849. An announcement was made in The Times of 19 April 1856 of her marriage to her former brother-in-law: “On the 14th inst., at Neufchatel, by the Rev. Louis A. Junod, James Peard Ley, Esq., of Bideford, Devon, to Caroline Augusta, widow of John Gordon, Esq., and eldest daughter of the late Charles Augustus Tulk, Esq.” See also letter 92, note 13.

10. Cf. Genesis 8:9: “But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot.”

11. On 15 March Lytton was attached to a diplomatic post in the Hague, as he explained in a letter to Forster on 24 March [1856] (ms at Hertfordshire Record Office).

12. “This beast Austria.”

13. “Aux Étudiants,” a five-paragraph poem in French, dated “Passy, 20 Mars, 1856,” was published in the 5 April 1856 issue of The Athenæum, in the “Miscellanea” column under the heading: “Béranger’s Last Verses” with this headnote: “The following verses by Béranger are circulating in manuscript in Paris” (no. 1484, p. 434). The author of the note has been identified as Henry Fothergill Chorley in the marked file of The Athenæum now at City University (London).

14. The portrait of RB by Page had not been accepted (see letter 146, note 11).

15. See letter 147, note 4. A review in The Athenæum of 10 May 1856 observed that “Mr. Leighton’s Triumph of Music (508) is anything but a triumph of Art. Where is his last year’s quaint solemnity, and where the freshness and poetical gravity? Without doubt this is one of the worst pictures of the Exhibition,—absurd in thought, dismal in colour, and ridiculous in composition” (no. 1489, p. 591).


Letter 150

Rue du Colysée.
May 1–[1856]

My ever dearest Arabel Really you must contrive to write to me a little oftener— It is about six weeks since I heard from you— Why is it, dearest, that it is so very different between us now to what it ever was, or should be? If you are unwell .. (which of course comes up, as the most agreeable supposition of solution) why not write a little letter, if ever so little? I have often been very unwell in writing to you, yet would not keep you waiting over long tracts of time in this way— Remember, my letters to Henrietta go to you, as you have told me—but nobody sends me news of you, except just yourself. I am dependent on you therefore for absolute comfort. It must be very long since I heard, when Robert exclaims suddenly .. he who always makes the best of such things & is given to explaining away silences .. “How very extraordinary it is, that Arabel never writes now!” Indeed it is, very extraordinary. Dear, I entreat you to let me hear from you at shorter intervals. I remember when you did not think it too much to write once a week to Emma Monro—and now it is once in six weeks to Ba.

Now forgive me for scolding so— If you do, write—& speak of yourself—for certainly there must be something wrong somewhere— May God Grant it otherwise—

Surtees was kind enough to send me a good account of our dearest Henrietta, & of the baby, & of his own politics .. a good account, I mean, of very bad politics .. so they seemed to me—
(And he thinks the same of mine.) He wishes he were an Austrian (if he were not an Englishman) & wants the Bourbons back in France. But I’m happy to say France is not of that opinion—neither is Robert. He & I never fight now about Louis Napoleon. So much good is going on on all sides that no candid mind can do otherwise than apprehend it. It’s the only settled government that ever made the ‘bas peuple’, the working classes, the principal object—& really the great modern problem of socialism is likely to be tried here as far as society can bear. The ouvrier\(^2\) class adores him, & with reason. He has just bought eleven miles of building ground on the new boulevard (Maras)\(^3\) where he will build houses for this class, letting them at a very low rate to proprietors, on condition that they sub-let the apartments at the lowest rate compatible with any kind of profit. Observe! Eleven miles of houses laid out in apartments! You may imagine the population there will be room for—But, in everything done, thought is taken for the people. It is another way from government ways in England, I assure you—

I have been very uneasy lately through hearing of M’ Kenyon’s illness—you have heard probably. He returned to London & has been very ill since, with spasmodic asthma .. Miss Bayley who is staying with him still, wrote to tell us—the medical men (three in attendance) think there is no immediate danger, but apprehend a “fatty” affection of the heart—There has been no symptom of water this time. She says he has grown very thin & pale, & can scarcely get about the house—Robert wrote to offer himself as a help—but was declined .. very kindly however—he should be sent for without scruple if any need occurred. Miss Bayley said in her last account that he seemed a little better, & had intervals of hope with regard to his recovery,—with a general feeling of the precariousness of his life. I am afraid he is very evidently altered, from Miss Bayley’s account—but still, with the warmer weather, he may rally & get past it. Dear, dear M’ Kenyon. You may suppose how my thoughts go out to him. Had you heard? Did papa send? Oh—he ought to send, indeed.

We have had a delightful letter from Carlyle on the subject of Robert’s poems—\(^4\) I was so pleased with it when I had read it, that I kissed it. Its a diploma, of its kind!—to be inherited by the children of our child. Such a letter. You know he had seen a few scattered poems, at Lord Ashburton’s & elsewhere, which he named with praise to us before—&, upon that hint, & my urging, Robert sent him the two volumes—Well—you shall see the letter. He considers him the greatest poet which has appeared to the generation,—and he abjures (as far as regards Robert) all his false doctrine that men should write only prose in these days.

M. Milsand is gone to Dijon for a month to see his mother & we are missing him accordingly.\(^5\)

I do hope my darling Arabel, that at least one of your reasons for not writing may be the trouble your thoughts may be in on the question of where you shall go .. north or west. That you will go somewhere, must be a settled question. Oh darling, let me see you well! not fagged, & weary, & out of spirits!—Remember we shall not be in London till the sixteenth of June at earliest. I shall not have finished the last book of my poem till the end of May, & then I must transcribe the two books .. which will be the work of a fortnight. How I have worked out this Paris winter, to be sure!—You will think Peni much grown—too much grown perhaps— I am fearing I must soon cover up his darling arms & shoulders in the high blouse— I am fearing. Will it do as it
is for this summer, do you think? He is as pretty as ever—or prettier, with his new white teeth,—& is as fond of being coaxed & cuddled on one's knees!—Somebody said the other day—"You should begin to put off your frocks, sir." (A very disagreeable person of course—) I have sent his brown straw hat to be done up & trimmed Parisianly, & he is to have a feather in it, green tipped with purple, after the fashion of young Murat, who has just had one. The people wanted very much to have flying ribbons besides—but I thought the flying ringlets were sufficient for my Peni. He said the other day .. "Dear mama would you rather have a son and a half son, or would you see the baby Napoleon." "Oh—the baby Napoleon! sooner than to have five sons—" "And in his blue coat"? "Oh, the baby Napoleon in his blue cloak." "Well—I've seen him— Tuite close too! Just as I see your face now. And oh, such a darling!— And not a bit too large after all—"! Peni had taken it into his head that a baby Napoleon must be as large as the monument in the Place Vendome at least. Yes—& now he has seen this famous baby quite close twice,—both he & Harriet:—& its a very pretty baby she says, in a blue satin cloak & hood embroidered in white, but with shorter petticoats than in England are usual to babies of his age. He is taken to walk on the Tuileries terrace, across the public walk—so there is no obstacle to the closest inspection on the part of the public.

I had a letter from M's Martin the other day to tell me that they leave Pau on the sixth of may & intend to see us in Paris on their way home. Did I tell you, Arabel, that Hume the medium receives from his Polish patron five hundred a year, English!— Think of that. And instruction without limitation, from his son's masters. He is said to be an intelligent man, & immensely rich .. as may be supposed. But in spite of this stipend the amount of which is undeniable, the 'spirits' threaten to keep away for two years and a half. Perhaps Hume has altogether disgusted them by his bearing at Florence—Who knows? They say, too, that he has crowned his misdeeds by turning R Catholic at Rome in order to please these Poles. Bad, altogether. He is as weak as a straw, but was a wonderful medium notwithstanding all, Arabel.

Robert has taken up drawing,—and I am heartily glad of it. He cant, when tired of other work, throw himself into light literature, as I can,—& the consequence is that he has a great deal of time on his hands, which is not good, you know, for anybody! I say that this life is not tenable (to people with any sort of soul in them) without full occupation. Then he knows so much upon art, it is well worth his while to know something of the mechanical forms. He means to keep to drawing though. Well,—you cant think how he has advanced in eleven days application—beginning with eyes & noses .. quite from the beginning. Here are heads really well done, with shading both soft & bold. Robert has an aptitude for everything in the Arts. He burnt all his first drawings, but I insist on preserving these with the dates. Peni (who cant bear being passed) asked my opinion the other day, with some care on his brow as to whether "papa" was "likely to draw better than he"—and has since admitted, respecting a particular head, with a deep sigh, that "certainly" it was "much more better" than his own performances in the same line.

Of course I have not seen Leighton's picture, but from the description, in spite of every degree of cleverness, I cannot but forsee for it great discomforture, [sic] before the public. I shall like to hear if Robert's portrait is thought well of, & if it has a favorable position—which Lady Eastlake promised me to look to—
Is Bummy with you still? Best love to her, if she is— I am very sorry I shall miss her this time. Tell me of my dearest Papa. Tell me too of Trippy— True love to her. I wish you would mention Minny besides, & whether you know anything of the Jagos. Wilson writes to ask Ferdinando if he can go to see her father on his arrival in England. We were not asked, so had nothing to say. But how can she suppose that we are to do without dinners in the interval? As it is, what the arrangement is to be about to herself & the child, I cant imagine. Its wretched to look forward to. Harriet is excellent— wanting only in liveliness. Love on loves!!— Tell me of (Hen)ricia, as you will know more (th)an I— But write of yourself, I beseech you. I cant rest about you.

Your own

Ba.

Address: Angleterre. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Sic, for ouvrière, i.e., la classe ouvrière, or “working class.”
3. Sic, for Marais, an area on the right bank of the Seine. “Louis Napoleon was aware of the need to provide dwellings for the working classes, but he failed to find financial support from local authorities. … So Government attention switched from direct intervention in the provision of accommodation to the creation of favourable conditions for a private building boom” (Anthony Sutcliffe, The Autumn of Central Paris: The Defeat of Town Planning, 1850–1970, London: Edward Arnold, 1970, p. 117).
4. Carlyle wrote to RB on 25 April 1856, declaring that “I admit to myself that here apparently is the finest poetic genius, finest possibility of such, we have got vouchsafed to us in this generation. … I do not at this point any longer forbid you verse, as probably I once did” (Letters of Thomas Carlyle to John Stuart Mill, John Sterling and Robert Browning, ed. Alexander Carlyle, London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd, 1923, pp. 298–299).
5. Milsand’s mother, Claire Hélène (née Gillotte, 1781–1864) lived at 38 Rue des Forges in the centre of Dijon, where Milsand’s descendants still reside in the “Maison Milsand.”
6. Presumably a reference to Joachim Murat (b. 1815), whose father, Joachim, Prince Murat (1834–1901), had been made a prince of the blood royal by Napoleon III after the coup d’état, and whose grandfather, Napoleon Lucien Charles Murat (1803–78), had been Napoleon’s viceroy in Naples from 1808 to 1815.
7. One of the larger squares in central Paris, where there was a statue of Napoleon: “It is 11 feet high, represents the emperor in his military costume, and was designed by Seurre” (Galignani’s New Paris Guide, Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1855, p. 191). The Prince Imperial, called Napoléon Eugène Louis Jean Joseph, had been born on 16 March 1856.
9. None of his works have survived. In a letter written the following day, EBB told Mrs. Jameson “so while I lie on the sofa and rest in a novel, Robert has a resource in his drawing” (LEBB, II, 230).

Letter 151

3. Rue du Colyssée
Monday & tuesday. [26–27 May 1856]

My beloved Arabel I begin the letter I am to send you that it may reach you the right day. I am delighted that you are to have a slight if ever so slight shifting of the scene; for one thing I do see distinctly, that you are fairly out of spirits whether you are well or ill, & absolutely require a
change of some sort. When I go to London I shall feel that I might do better by keeping away, if you stay in London for me. I suppose nothing under heaven can satisfy me about you except seeing you—and I shall see you presently & understand what's the matter & the meaning of it all—Oh, you've had the “three warnings” now, it seems! I’m to take that view of the subject! Well—I am not easy about you. Your letters are not a bit like what they used to be— Take care, Arabel, that you don't shut yourself up in churches, schools, & the rest, from the sunshine of life too much. I know, poor darling, that much is necessity, only all is not necessity as I & other of your friends have sometimes urged on you— Now don't let me torment you as Peni’s squirrel sometimes torments me— Of course you couldn't make a sally upon M' Davidson or Lady Ridley uninvited— I am speaking only generally— Dear, remember, that I refuse beforehand to keep you in London this year—and in fact, if papa will let you go anywhere within reasonable bounds, Robert & I will go with you this time, —Robert said so of his own accord the other day. We shall not be tied up strictly as last year. So keep that in mind— As to my proofs, they shall run after me. No matter for them. And meantime don't let the poem vex your dreams. I do admire how you trust more to Robert than to me— but after all I am not likely to disgrace you altogether. I have finished two volumes of the new edition, & am busy with the third. I subside on it after dinner—and before then the poem holds me. I feel it coming to a point, though it does not end yet, as almost I expected, by this time. Tell me what you have given up in the way of work? The teaching at chapel on sundays, I hope, at least. Of course the success of the bazaar must have been worth a strain— I quite sympathize in that.

The rage of Robert & me about the refusal by the Academicians of Page's portrait is indescribable.² Never for a moment did we imagine a rejection possible— An English artist who has just come from London & who had seen the picture, swears that no such portrait is to be seen in the Exhibition, for power & fine painting. The likeness is another affair,— & I must say that Ros[s]etti’s sketch seems to me more entirely & characteristically Robert. So glad I am that you were struck by it. I wanted Ros[s]etti to exhibit it, but he would'nt, being resolved to save himself for the great portrait he means to have of us two together next year.³ As to me, I shall have no time for much sitting for pictures, therefore if he wants me, he must snatch me— Poor Leighton— it has been a dreadful overthrow, the reception of his work, after the inordinate success, as I still think, of last year— I was sure he could not succeed this time—a poetical subject handled so unpoetically was beyond the conditions of success; but he is undeniably clever, if not highly imaginative, & cannot have deserved all the mud-pelting of all the newspapers.⁴ Robert declares he does not— What grieved him most was Ruskin’s silence. And yet I think Ruskin was silent out of kindness. But nobody likes to be spared— particularly if one has been used to be admired. Tell me if papa talks of going to the Exhibition this year, & if you think he will be able. I should like so much not to go to London at all, if we could meet you somewhere. It’s all bitterness & vexation of spirit to me, that London... always. Tell me whether there is the least chance of your moving out bodily early in the summer, or now, because in that case we might remove to you from Paris. As for proofs they will take care of themselves—I dont care so much for them anyhow— What I care for, my dearest darling Arabel, is to see you well, & like your own dear self, with the spring of you right. Dear, try to let me,—let us two have sunshine on us this summer.
Here I have been shut up all the winter, having my only change in work, work—& I want rest in you, dearest! How untrue it is that when people marry, their hearts go away from what was loved before. For me you are more than ever needful to me. Country has died out of me, & I have come to hate the notion of England apart from what I love in it .. but you, you!

Have you been reading any new books lately? Has the Refuge increased in numbers? Of course you think the Sunday movement right on the ecclesiastical sense. I am for the music, & am sure that it would help the people to de-brutalize. The English way of Sunday-keeping is not scriptural, I believe, & is not wholesome for the thinking being, I am sure. All doors being shut up against natural relaxation after a week of necessary labour, the laborious part of the population throw themselves into pithouse pleasures—it is their only notion of pleasure at all.

—Talking of music, we had a visit the other day from the celebrated composer, the Chevalier Neukomm. A most interesting man he is, Arabel—a little older than you are even (being seventy eight) .. & though “getting older” besides, not more than twenty five in his eyes & spirit— I never saw, patently, a more obviously immortal soul— He told me that he got up every morning at three, and that he works fourteen hours a day—he has taught himself to shave in the dark so as to lose no time. He has been a great traveller as well as worker, & is now on the point of taking a little leap into Styria—and a friend of his told me that he will set out to Heidelberg before breakfast, and breakfast there the next day at past noon, without at all suffering for it. What he thinks of is music, & not bread. For the last fourteen years he has not touched wine, beer, or coffee .. still less tea, of course. He is engaged now chiefly in the composition of devotional music. We were half promised that an organ shd be sent here that we might hear him play, but there was a hitch in getting the organ. It was a great pleasure to see the musician. He is full of vivacity; & in bearing, rapidity of movement & gesticulation &c, precisely like a young man, & speaks English as well as yourself. He was a friend of Haydn, & lived opposite to him.

Give my kind love to Louisa & kiss her children for me. Is it a pretty baby? I am so much obliged to her for inviting you. On M' Thackeray’s arrival in England from America, he sent a telegraphic message to his daughters here .. “Come home.” What shd you understand by that? What he intended was simply to announce his own arrival in England; but they accepting it as a summons (which I should have infallibly done) set off at once, themselves & M.a Carmichael Smith with them, all three penetrated with the notion that something bad must be the matter, to justify so imperative a call for their immediate presence.!! Penini informed me yesterday morning that he wished “to marry Léocadie when he shall be twelve years old”: he “hopes I shall let him.” Poor little Pen. He and I had half a quarrel this morning because he thought it quite unnecessary to translate his Berquin, as he “understood it quite well” in the French. In fact in a page & a half there were not more than three words he did not know. I never learnt French with such rapidity. It’s really curious. And as for opportunities for talking, seeing Léocadie two or three times a week for an hour or so, (& even that, very irregularly) does not amount to much. It is true, that his Italian has helped him. Peni’s “rage” just now, is to have a Museum .. What has put it in his head nobody knows, except that six weeks ago he was at the Louvre. He has collected a box of precious stones out of the road .. & here is .. “an Ægyptian tooth”, says he,—and here is a stone from “Arabia, the desert”,—and “this stone was picked up on the banks of the Euphrates
by king Pharaoh", and "this is from Jerusalem". Robert was grumbling about the dirt of the thing, & wondered how he could pull about what had been handled by all sorts of people—"Only by clean Egyptians," said Peni, with the most vehement earnestness. He is very fond of his squirrel—but by no means fonder than Robert,—& we shall bring the said squirrel with us, for neither of them could be separated from it. The little creature is as tame as possible & so fond of Robert that it comes when he calls it, & follows him about the room like a dog. I never saw a squirrel so tame. He does’nt care for eating, but likes to be played with, & hunts after Robert’s hands when he hides them under his arms. Robert persists in his drawing,—for hours & hours everyday,— and has taken to anatomy, & is already so learned in the bones & muscles as to be competent to any examination. Leighton says he knows more than he does, even now, & Leighton has the reputation for knowing much upon the subject. M’ Martin is in Paris. She has had too bad a cold to come here, & so I went to her once. M’ Martin looks so well .. so exactly what I remember him ever, .. that he must be well, I am sure. He is in great argumentative spirits, & precisely that man of old! It gave me real pleasure to see him. They are to remain in Paris some days longer. Isa Blagden has gone to Italy, & wrote to me directly some testimonies to Hume’s mediumship which confirm my opinions if they wanted confirmation. Madame Tassinari a hard worldly sceptical woman had the most secret things relating to herself & her English family brought out to her—her brother’s spirit played on the accordion in her own hand quite beyond any human being’s reach—But the only thing new in character was the intense cold that filled the room upon the presence of one particular spirit. There’s something ghastly in that. Everybody agrees, believing or unbelieving, that Hume personally is detestable, ignorant, vulgar, conceited. He wrote a letter from Rome to say that he was “convinced of the truth of the R. Catholic religion”, and Isa is to get a sight of the letter in order to give me an account of it. But in Hume personally I am by no means interested—particularly as the spirits have left him. With regard to Louis Napoleon (who does me more credit upon the whole) my “faith in him” is rather intellectual than moral— I know what he meant to do and what he means. Never was so consistent and logical a politician— As a man however I think much better of him than you do. Let me tell you something curious. M’ Martin was requested by aunt Jane to see a French nursery governess whom the Bevans were about to engage. Among other questions, she asked of course what her religious views were—“Catholic,” was the answer. “Mrs Bevan desires to have a catholic for her children.” Can this mean anything but what is obvious? May God bless you, dearest Arabel. You scarcely ever tell me of George. Let me hear of him. My tender love to him & all.

Robert has had his emerald ring altered for me,—& really it is beautiful. His best love—

Address: Angleterre—/ Miss Barrett. / Sir James Carmichael’s, Bart. / Oakdene / Edenbridge / Kent.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated by Paris postmark of 27 May 1856, a Tuesday.
2. See letter 149, note 8.
3. For Rossetti's sketch of RB, see letter 137, note 4. Rossetti never made a likeness of EBB (see letter 138, note 3).

4. See letter 149, note 15. According to Leighton's biographers, he "blamed the 'venomous jargon of envious people', and those Academicians who 'may think that they have cowed me'" (Leonée and Richard Ormond, Lord Leighton, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1975, p. 38). The Ormonds note that "Browning was one of the few people to admire The Triumph of Music" (p. 77). However, despite RB's claim that "there is great merit in it, the expressions are true, the composition simple", he confided in Harriet Hosmer that he couldn't help but "doubt whether folks won't cry out for more than this truth of expression, and ask for the poetry of this grand old subject" (Harriet Hosmer, Letters and Memories, ed. Cornelia Carr, New York: Moffat, Yard & Co., 1912, p. 66).

5. See letter 57, note 13. Sabbath observance was the topic of a number of pamphlets and books at this time, for example S.N. Kingdon's The History and Sacred Obligation of the Sabbath; and the Close Connexion of its Due Observance with our Social and National Well-Being (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1856).

6. Sigismund Ritter von Neukomm (1778-1858), an Austrian composer remembered chiefly "as a transitional figure between Classicism and Romanticism" (The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. Stanley Sadie, London: Macmillan, 1980, 13, 121). According to Grove, von Neukomm's mother "was related to Michael Haydn." Neukomm was an inveterate traveller, but I have been unable to trace any evidence that he visited Styria.

7. An Austrian duchy, with Graz as its capital. Neukomm's travels took him to Austria, Switzerland, France, Germany, as well as the British Isles.

8. May Carmichael (1855-1942) and James Morse Carmichael (1844-1902); a third child was born later.

9. This ring has not been identified, nor have I traced any other references to it. EBB's comment on an item of jewellery is unusual for its rarity.

Letter 152

[Paris]
Sunday. [Postmark: 22 June 1856]

My ever dearest Arabel & ever! We can certainly stay here, and easily stay,—for the proprietress came yesterday to ask us to delay our departure at least till Tuesday, because of the convenience to herself, & we had delayed going till Tuesday at any rate, & I was about to write to you to say so. Robert is out. Jane Sandford took him & me to church, & he left us at the churchdoor to look in at Galignani's,—& I shall keep this open till the last moment to hear his conclusions. Certainly however we shall not go till Thursday.¹

Dearest dear, how you must have been tired & fagged, "you & others", in looking for unfindable lodgings. I think of you chiefly, lest you be so tired as to be the worse for it—in which case I w'd rather have taken my chance in the kennel than have used you so— We have been today to the Oratoire, & heard M. Cockerel, who preaches there occasionally—it was Adolphe Monod's church too.² M. Cockerel preached today on "being all things to all men,"³ quite magnificently. There were chinks & cavities where he was wanting—(he is wanting, you know, in certain respects) but there were some great things said very admirably, & with a boldness not common in the churches. People accuse him of Socinianism you are aware—(which is'nt truly done) But he is not large & full in the Divinity—& I sh'd suspect him of a leaning to a sort of Arianism—⁴ Certainly he is not strong enough on internal Xstian experience .. or was not today. Still, & after
all drawbacks, he preached magnificently,—& to my mind there are always drawbacks with preach­
ers, of whatever colour & character. It is a curious feature of the Oratoire church, that you hear a
great variety of doctrine there—for instance, last sunday, there was the induction of a M.
Grandpierre,⁵ (in the place of Adolphe Monod) who preached afterwards evangelically, in the
strictest sense,—& a beautiful discourse it was.

How my words tumble one over another I cant show you the necessity of—but I have been
interrupted by a farewell visit from Miss Power⁶,—& we have been in one another’s arms with a
shower of tears on her part. She is really an interesting, lovely person, (& whatever Lady
Blessington’s views may be she is guiltless of corrupting her, I am sure.)⁷

Surely, after the first month,—at the dead time of year, .. they should diminish our rent &
take two guineas.

Address: Angleterre. / Miss Barrett. / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. EBB wrote and cancelled: “Is the house taken from then,—so that we could’nt stay out the week here
without paying double?”
2. L’Oratoire was one of the seven reformed churches in Paris at this time; it was located at 157, rue St.
Honoré. The Brownings had heard Athanase Coquerel preach in October 1855 (see letter 139, note 8). EBB and
Arabella had gone to hear Adolphe Monod preach in London in August 1846, but EBB was overwhelmed by
the crowds and left before the service began (BC, 13, 284). *
3. Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:22: “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”
4. For Arians, see letter 114, note 14. Socinians, followers of 16th century Italian theologians Lælius and
Faustus Socinus, denied the divinity of Christ.
5. Unidentified.
6. Marguerite A. Power (1815–67), author and editor of The Keepsake, an annual journal, to which the
Brownings contributed (see letter 109, note 4). She and her younger sister, Ellen Power, had been living in
Paris since 1849, currently at 5 Rue de Courcelles. On 14 June, EBB wrote to Isa Blagden that the younger
sister “had lost her betrothed of yellow fever, off Jamaica, a young naval officer, devotedly in love with her”
(ms at Fitzwilliam).
7. The conclusion in angle brackets is reconstructed, having been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.
The conclusion of the letter is missing, except the postscript written in the throat of the envelope.

Letter 153

3. Rue du Colysée.
Tuesday. [Postmark: 24 June 1856]

My ever dearest Arabel, Your letter with its enclosure has set Robert’s & my head spinning,—&
what in the world to do is the question. You see, one thing is clear—we must do as exactly as we
can—what dear M' Kenyon wishes— Oh, I am so grieved about him!. There is a delicacy required
about his fifty pounds, & the matter of lodgings. He desires that I should put myself in relation
with M's Collier the new housekeeper in Devonshire Place, in order of course to ascertain when
& whether we can remove there. Now will you take my place, & go to her, & speak as one ought
to do, & discover the exact state of the case, viz. whether it is expected & would be perfectly
convenient for us to arrive there .. & on what nearest day. If we can be received .. say, on
saturday or monday .. it would be better to make an effort & get rid of the York St lodgings at as
little expense as possible, without our occupying the house at all. The people would sooner let us
off if we did not occupy, than if we did,—that is certain— If however Devonshire Place cannot
receive us till the end of next week, then we will go for a week from Friday to York Street—only
you must write by return of post to render that step possible. And make an agreement with the
people to let us off after the week. Still it would be wiser to avoid the double removal— We pay
here now by the day, but according to the winter price; i.e. £2–10, the week.

Peni is in despair at being crossed again in the journey to London— When people wonder at
him for [not] wanting to go, he says apologetically, that he “does’nt like London .. oh no” .. but
he “has Arabel there”—and “such a twantity of my unties”. He dreams of the railroad & cries out
“What a pity,”—when Harriet wakes him up.

As for me, judge!– I do long, long to see you— I get stronger everyday, & was complimented
on my good looks by the “concierge” yesterday— Best of loves to George & all.

Dearest Arabel, dont tire yourself for me, I beseech you—& dont be vexed for us, still less.
You only did about the lodgings what we asked you to do, & what at the time was obviously to
be done—

Robert’s true love—

Your ever attached
Ba.

or (as you said last time)

Yours obediently
E B Browning.

Address: Angleterre—/ Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street. / London.
Publication: TTUL, pp. 82–84.
Source: Transcript in editor’s file.

Letter 154

[Paris]
Thursday. [26 June 1856]

Beloved Arabel, your letter comes & astounds us— Dear, we mean to be in London on monday
night late, but we cant let M! Kenyon pay for us. Robert says he wont admit of it. Lending the
house was one thing. Do the best for us that you can, however. Peni sleeps in our bedroom,
remember— Anything does for a bed for him—& Robert’s dressing room must be at hand.

Dearest Arabel, I and the Devil have not tails as long as those with which we are usually
painted. I wrote to you a long second letter at Louisa Carmichael’s, which never c’d have reached
you, & I wrote it immediately after my first one, fearing that you might fatigue yourself uselessly
in searching for rooms for us— I am so vexed— The letter was long,—& besides a dissertation on
the right use of sundays (which would have set you at the head of a “woman[’]s petition” for
doubling the bands in all the parks, with the ginger beer stalls appertaining, ..) there was an explanation of my meaning about “ends in life”, a reminder of all my preaching on that subject, & a protestation that, after it all, I was unlikely to advise you to set up as “fine lady”, I who admired you so for being so actively the contrary. I told you, however, that your duty, as an instrument, was to keep yourself in order, & not to so overstrain your bodily powers, at this time, (when much help from women & men is wanting), that you would be forced to lie by prematurely, cutting yourself off from the great privilege of work & usefulness in this poor world of God’s. There now! Even in my horrible haste today I could be easy under the possibility of your misconstruing me on such a subject—

Oh—Electric despatches!—enough indeed to frighten you. Only bad news w’d scarcely have been sent to you, when you have brothers to bear blows for you. A shower of loves from me on all of them! What joy to see their dear faces, & your’s, my own dear, dear, dear Arabel.

I am much better & stronger this week— Yes, I had begun to feel rather dismal about myself, I kept so languid & spiritless in my body,—but the magnificent weather & floods of air rectify everything— I feel another creature again,—I was at church last Sunday— & have shopped two days victoriously—

What makes me in haste today is, that I waited for Robert, & wont miss the post—

Your own Ba—

The fêtes were magnificent— Peni was carried on Ferdinando’s shoulder through the crowd, having emerged from it with difficulty. He said to me—“Mama, I thought I was going to faint again and be dead.”

As to the house, .. in some way, the servants have made a difficulty— & dear M’ Kenyon did not feel equal to contending about it—that’s my view. But because he cant give us his house, having offered it, he must not consider himself obliged to pay for a house for us elsewhere. No, certainly. I am very anxious about him, very. Dear, let us know if you can get us rooms. We wont go to Devonshire Place for an interval.

Every moment I expect Jane Sandford with the carriage to take me to buy a new bonnet— (just to cover the knob of hair behind!) Now we lose our free house, I feel avaricious about such adornments.

Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. 26 June 1856 was the Thursday before the Brownings left Paris for London on 29 June 1856.
2. See letter 147, note 6; for EBB’s earlier reference to Sabbath observance, see letter 151, note 5.
3. Presumably for the baptism of the Prince Imperial on 14 June, which was marked by illuminations and fireworks.
Letter 155

3. Rue du Colysée—
Friday—[27 June 1856]\(^1\)

Beloved Arabel, You will think, by the sight of this, that we are not coming. But I only write to warn you, to pray you, to get us provided with something to eat for Sunday at breakfast— one looks far into the future for a breakfast— It strikes us that you may be over-delicate about M: Kenyon’s house—but, his house or not, we must eat, you see, & must have coals &c for a fire in the morning. Let our ordinary tradespeople (yours, I believe!) send in sugar, coffee, tea, eggs, a little cold ham even, perhaps—(it will not hurt Robert)—also, plenty of milk, as we take a good deal with our coffee. M: Collier will understand that we may be allowed to use the kitchen, & that we mean to give as little trouble as possible, really. (N.B. Whatever happens, Arabel has trouble by it.)

It has set in intensely hot, & I am half afraid of the scorching & suffocating, which will come, on such days, by travelling. We go by Boulogne—taking advantage of our unusual pecuniary prosperity just now, to be guilty of that extravagance. I went with Robert to Lady Elgin’s the other evening (for the first time of being up to it,) & was received with the warmest benedictions & embraces— But really Robert has been very kind to her in reading Keats & other poets, & there is not so much wonder that she should a little like me for his sake— She looked well—but I was pained to observe an indistinctness in her articulation. Still, it is beautiful to feel her freshness & enthusiasm about everything—green to the edge of the grave! young to the last. Lady Augusta Bruce too, I like—but she is of a lower nature. She invited us to Frogmore by the way, when she goes back next month.

Robert was at D: Castle’s\(^2\) last night .. a very agreeable house, where all manner of artists, & spiritualists, & mesmerists generally, do congregate. I wanted so to go, but was too tired with paying farewell visits & walking up stairs. You will think Peni looking well, it seems to me. He is very well— God bless you all—

Darling Arabel, your Ba—

Ask the people in York Street to forward to Devonshire Place, or to keep, whatever may arrive for us—

Shall I see you on Sunday? Can it be?—— What joy!

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. 27 June 1856 was the Friday before the Brownings left Paris for London on 29 June 1856.
2. Michael Arthur Castle, an American, and his wife Margaret Egerton (née Smith, 1822?–1912).
Letter 156

[Ventnor]
[6 September 1856]

My beloved Arabel I send you back your infinitesimal bottle—with Peni’s & my tender love— I would not let him go to you this morning to say goodbye as he wanted—because there’s no use in such painful things. May God bless you my dearest, dearest—Do be cheerful & well—and take the best side of the world while it lasts—Remember to use the advantages of this place—That’s a duty, as much as another duty.

I will write very soon & you shall hear everything—& you must tell me everything, even to on which side of the tea-table Papa sits. I was thinking that last night. Oh—I do so hate going—leaving you.

Your own Ba.

Address, on integral page: Miss Barrett.
Docket, in Arabella’s hand: Ventnor—Sep’th 7th 56.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated from EBB’s reference to the Brownings’ departure from Ventnor.

Letter 157

[West Cowes]
Sunday—[7 September 1856]

My beloved Arabel I must comfort myself a little for being away from you by beginning to write at once. We had a prosperous journey .. (with sobs in one’s throat all the way). Peni, after the gentlest expressions of life, went to sleep fairly & forgot himself. A dreadful man came in, opposite to me .. a sort of yeoman, bred upon beer– Robert said he was of “the true English type”. He was very attentive & offered me his snuffbox; calling me “Miss” at the same time (which was so highly gratifying, that almost I took a pinch—)

Getting into Cowes, we were met where the coach stopped, by Mr. Kenyon’s servant who escorted us to this house– So frightened I was at the idea of seeing him that my heart beat to take my breath away– We were led into a ground-floor room to take our hats off, & then to the drawingroom up stairs where he was sitting. I put my arm round his neck & kissed him once, twice .. & over, perhaps. Really I was touched to be there & see him & overjoyed to see him so much better than I expected. For he is much better, Arabel, than either Robert or I expected. Thinner he is certainly. The difference is in the thinness chiefly—the expression (which I go upon much) is little changed. He is thinner & paler—and he stoops more. Cough there is none to signify—The only real malady is in the breath .. which I confess to you is at times very painfully difficult, .. & not like the difficulty of asthma. It strikes me as being something peculiar. And the medical men are of opinion that it does not arise from asthma but from a feeble action of the
heart .. which, in fact, he has been liable to all his life to some small degree, even in his early youth—if organic disease of the heart, nobody seems at all sure—and on the application of the stethoscope yesterday, it was a mere matter of opinion whether there was or wasn't anything wrong— In fact, they know nothing about it, as I always suspected— They can't even detect any tendency to dropsy,—not with the stethoscope I mean— Still all that struggle for breath is a bad symptom—it is most painful to stand by & see—& there must be something wrong somewhere— Miss Bayley persists in her opinion that gradually he loses strength, & that the decline is certain. If he were younger I should think however cheerfully about him:—as it is I can't believe that anything immediate is to be apprehended— After we had seen him we were dismissed till dinner. He overpowers us with kindness,—& the servants tell Wilson that he has been in the greatest state of excitement about our coming, preparing for it here & there, by every sort of direction in order to our comfort. Miss Bayley was ill with one of her bad headaches—& he took us into a darkened room to see her— She didn't come down to dinner, but she made tea for us, & was very gracious— We have heard a great deal, Arabel— She enforced “secrecy”——but as we have talked of it, I may say to you that (the Edward Kenyon's)^ have behaved shamefully, cruelly .. considering Ml Kenyon's state of health, .. & that the whole ground of it was a vulgar jealousy of power, perfectly inexcusable under the circumstances. The man is influenced by the woman— there's the whole. Poor Ml Kenyon has been horribly pained by it all, but is getting over the blow .. “the deepest stab” he says “he ever suffered in his life.” ( . . . ) Miss Bayley told me this— She is to show me the copies of the letters. We (Robert & I) believe her to be perfectly blameless— while Ml Kenyon himself has borne himself with a long-suffering and affectionateness, which, with persons of any sensibility, would have melted the dagger in the hand.

Every sort of luxury & comfort is lavished on us—books, newspapers, pretty cheerful rooms, terraces looking out on the sea!—but I yearn for you unconquerably— Dear dearest Arabel, write to me, & say that you are pretty well & not sad—if you can truly .. do tell me this. Ml Kenyon told us we were to stay as long as we could. Poor little Peni's unmanageableness & over-vivacity are all at an end. He creeps about like a small mouse,—and says under his breath .. “What a very quiet house this is.” He sleeps with Wilson in the room next to us, and she gets him his breakfast & brings it up on the tray. As to dinner he dines at our luncheon,—only appearing at ours with the fruit. Still, he has the use of the telescopes,—and I found a Robinson Crusoe^ for him, which he was reading all yesterday evening curled up at the bottom of the sofa, .. breaking the silence at intervals to ask, “What's the meaning of springing a leak”?[—“’What's the meaning of foundering.” All the uncles, the Arabel, the sea-beach & the 'little friend' have passed away like a vision!—such a happy vision it will always seem to him. What a very happy fortnight we had together! And how good they all were to me & mine! and how I never never shall forget it! Tell dearest George Robert said in the coach yesterday, ‘I mean to write to George’—and so he will— He was quite touched.

You dearest Arabel .. see how I mean to write to you!— It strikes me—— If papa should have arrived! And if this letter were carried in to you at dinner, as Henrietta's was,—and if papa said, .. ‘Whom is your letter from, Arabel?’
This place would suit papa better than Ventnor will. It is very animated. Mr Kenyon’s house overlooks the parade (which is immediately under the windows!) and the sea touches the parade—so that the view of the shipping, American steamers, &c &c is in our very eyes, & shifting all day & night—Then there is plenty of flat ground—you wouldn’t have so much climbing. We sit out on the balcony furnished with chairs & telescopes—

And today we are to go out in an oar-boat—the idea of which revives my poor Peni a little. By the way, Mr Kenyon is extremely kind to him—but if you were to see Peni!—All the impudence cleared away!—

Now write to me, dearest— I have a proof today, but no revise—Write & tell me every little thing about all of you. I feel as if I had been at home again, the first time for ten years. How I love you all!—Our best love—best love.

How my heart is with you, Arabel. Try to love me, & take care of yourself as my precious thing—

Your own Ba—

I could’nt go to church today, we breakfasted so late—but I told Wilson to take Peni, either to chapel, or if she liked, to church. He comes back saying .. ‘I did’nt like the church not a bit. I tould’nt understand one word—All the people were talking at once tat tat tat tat. And we toouldnt find our places in the Bible.’ There’s a rampant schismatic for you! Hearing that I am writing to you he says—‘give my best love to all my uncles, & to dearest Arabel—& I am going out on the boat & I hope that boy is quite well.’

After all we came away in your debt nine pence for the parasol. There’s an end of Robert’s financial uproariousness! He bids me say he will remember it.

Address: Miss Barrett / Milanese Villa / Ventnor.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Berg Collection.

1. Dated by postmark of 8 September 1856, a Monday.
2. The passage in angle brackets was cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella. Edward Kenyon was John Kenyon’s brother. His wife was German and they made their home in Vienna.
3. A passage of six or seven words has been cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella. I have been unable to reconstruct it. From the context it appears that EBB is suggesting that Edward Kenyon and his wife alleged that Miss Bayley had ulterior motives in her relationship with Mr. Kenyon—a view they shared with others.

Edward Kenyon, however, died before his brother, to whom his vast estate passed. This resulted in last-minute changes in John Kenyon’s will. Apparently, Miss Bayley persuaded him to name some of her friends as beneficiaries, amongst whom the princely sum of £80,000 was divided. Surtees’ summary of this event, made in 1875, is a little vindictive, but possibly closer to the truth than EBB’s complete exoneration, a view which Browning did not continue to share.

4. Daniel Defoe, The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures Of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner, (London: W. Taylor, 1719). I have been unable to trace which of the many editions available at this time Pen might have been reading; however, a copy, with illustrations by Cruikshank, and inscribed by EBB: “From papa and mama to their dearest Penini—Christmas Day, 1857—Casa Guidi” sold as lot 606 in Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, A770).
Letter 158

[Postmark: 11 September 1856]

My beloved Arabel, here is another revise! I wanted to write yesterday, but was carried away to drive, after the full morning at the necessary proof-work. Our days go here like clock-work. At such an hour, Miss Bayley takes us out in the carriage—Dear M'r Kenyon has not once, since we have been here, gone out. Indeed I am more & more alarmed about him—he is in a distressing state .. suffering much, much—not pain, but what is worse, because it seems as if the struggle were, to live. Oh, no, no—Arabel! There's no asthma in the case. Even an unlearned person can see that, at a glance—there is no sort of resemblance to asthma—though he talks of "his asthma",.—but that's a mere form of words even to himself. The heart may be affected symptomatically only, & not organically—the medical men cant say,—(& still more certainly they cant know—) but the affection is plain—the breath has to be wrestled for .. & to stand by & witness it, is sad indeed. He makes great exertions not to seem an invalid—but the countenance tells, more than words—there is the peculiar look in the eyes, which you cant mistake. Still, (perhaps because I am sanguine), I repeat that I should hope, if he were younger. As to Italy, he is not fit for removal—nor would climate in the least alleviate these symptoms. To avoid attacks of bronchitis is of course desireable, because they irritate & weaken the general system—but the fear is not concerning bronchitis. In effect, the hot weather does not agree—& he was worse while it lasted. Oh, yesterday, I felt in horrible spirits about him, & wished we had not come. He varies however, & is better this morning—They give powerful medecines, & he is upset by taking them—& then he leaves them untaken, by Miss Bayley's advice—so that it is'nt one thing or another. I urge him a little to try homoeopathy—because if the allopathists do nothing (or worse than nothing) why not have recourse to the other mode?- I must say, there never was a more beautiful patience & cheerful sweetness—it would honor Christianity!—But he—there's the misery! He cant help showing & saying, however, through it all, that he desires death—death, to have rest in it. Life is too laborious, in spite of all alleviations found possible. His kindness & consideration for us are infinitely touching under these circumstances,—and my wrath waxes hotter & hotter against the other side of the house.

For my part & Robert's, we are perfectly convinced that the 'rapport' here is of the purest friendship—but if it had been otherwise .. if it had been otherwise, Arabel .. a brother is inexcuseable to have left his only brother in such a straight, .. dying, .. as he & others supposed. It was entirely the wife's influence—& she, having taken it into her wise head that she was to be received here as exclusive nurse, shut herself up, & behaved in the most astonishing manner. Observe, the relation's between herself & Miss Bayley had been always affectionate,—& all the summer Miss B. had written her bulletins three times a week, which she affectionately responded to. But M'r Kenyon, of course, would not, at a moment's notice, give up his former nurse, & instal his sister-in-law—& anyone who had ever been an invalid will understand this. Years ago, he had said to Miss Bayley—"If I should fall into serious illness I shall be very desolate—having no family—no one, to look to"—and she said, "If that happens to you & I am alive, I will come
& be your nurse—" Simply, she keeps her promise. There is no imputation upon character implied—it is simply, a feeling on Mrs. Edward K's side, that her position as sister-in-law, should have excluded all relations on the part of others. She was furious with Mrs. Braun, for instance,—who was here at the time. I do think it is a very bad case. She is a violent woman plainly, & of a vulgar order— As to her husband, he is simply influenced—as many good men are— He writes letters to Mrs. Kenyon, ending 'yours truly', and this in reply to the most affectionate letters. Nothing, under the circumstances, can excuse such things—and Mrs. Kenyon is so hurt, that he has given directions of the minutest kind, in order to avoid troubling his brother in the case of his death.— How sad!— I dont know whether I exaggerate upon the ordinary estimates of the duties of love,—but if a brother of mine were ill, & if even he had an undeniable mistress en titre in the house, . . . I would not leave him on that account— God would leave me as soon I—

We dont go away on saturday. We stay on till the beginning of the week at least. He likes to keep us, it seems—but as to its being any comfort to him, I cant fancy it. Of Taunton we dont talk— My cough is somewhat better at nights—through the warmer house, I think. We found a fire in the sittingroom set apart for us,—but have'nt had it or wanted it since. In fact there has been less east wind than we had at Ventnor.

Little Peni looks rosy, but does'nt talk above his breath—poor Peni! Still, he finds amends. He goes out on the coach-box, & blows an ivory whistle Mrs. Kenyon has given him, & takes walks, & plays in his own room, at being a 'minister'—reading the Bible aloud from a pillow on the table, and giving out the hymns to 'Lily'. It's a new phase of life, rather more convenient just now than the military.—to say the least of it. I have bought him a black velvet dress, which is to be made en blouse—(given a pound for it, to finish ruining Robert—9 6 4 a yard.) Also, a brown straw hat & feather—the other falling into ruins. He does'nt at all like the indignity of dining by himself, but conforms with resignation. Sir Charles Fellowes's boy is a resource. Much he thinks of you, dearest Arabel,—and also, "mine unties." Tell me if you have heard from Alfred, & what,—& where he is in London. I think we shall go to Taunton, though I dont absolutely know. Robert, at least, said so, on the road from Ventnor, in manner of consolation & drying of eyes.

But I feel sad to have left you, particularly as you seem to me quite low—which is altogether wrong & foolish of you, my precious dearest Arabel, seeing that you might very well (P should, certainly, under the same circumstances) make your stay at Ventnor very pleasant as well as very advantageous to you. Tell me if you have begun the baths— Now I insist that you begin the baths. Also, take a donkey often, & explore the hills & downs, & do a little wholesome sketching—& subscribe to the chapel-library, & do a good deal of wholesome reading. Be sure of one thing— Apart from the great earthquakes & tragedies of life, which will interpose sometimes—, happiness is more an intellectual habit, than the product of circumstances. There is no truth, of which I am more sure than I am of that. For my part, I did'nt think 'Anne Grey' was "trashy," a bit—on the contrary— Tell me how you liked 'Died.'6 And say how you like the poem as it gets on,—& how dear George likes it. How I thank him for his affectionate letter to Robert, which pleased Robert very much.

We see Mrs. Kenyon sometimes at breakfast—always at dinner—then a little in the evening. He fights with himself to eat—but it is difficult. Sometimes, quite overcome, he leans on the
table, saying softly, 'O my God, my God—' the life seems impossible. There's no cough to
signify—nor phlegm on the chest, at all, as seems to me. He stoops much—the chest falls in.
Sometimes I can scarcely bear to stay in the room, though we are not much together—

Miss Bayley is very calm, very sensible,—gentle yet decided. If she were a believer, there's
no one fitter to be here! But in the coolest way she talks of immortality & any doctrine connected
with it, just as you do about my "spiritual manifestations"[']— By the way, I was horribly vexed
with Robert yesterday for disproving & laughing at all my convictions on that subject— Oh, I did
not tell him so, but I was very vexed—very sorry. Through this keyhole might a key be put—&
through this, perhaps, only— The fact of the existence of a spiritual world and a future state, is the
thing of consequence.

M' K told me himself the other day that D! Ashburner7 had taken to go to church again,
through the so-called spiritual manifestations— 'A very honest man', said he, 'but not always
wise.' D! Ashburner is himself a 'medium'.

What of Papal— Now, Arabel, if anything should keep him in London, there may be a chance
for us at Taunton—who knows? As to Carisbrook,8 we are in chains here—it might be diffi­
cult—& would it be worth the pain after all? Just time for two kisses . . . meeting & parting. Still,
if we should stay here . . .

Now I cant go on writing. Write. Say that you are pretty well, my dearest dearest Arabel!—
And be good to me through yourself, & take care of yourself. Best love from us two to all of you.
Robert was so touched by what you wrote.

Your own attached
Ba—

Send on the revises.8

Address: Miss Barrett / Milanese Villa / Ventnor.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. "On the regular staff."
2. Underscored twice.
3. Underscored three times.
4. Charles Fellows (1799–1860), traveller and archaeologist who discovered the ruins of the capital of an­
cient Lycia at Xanthus. For his efforts to remove the Xanthian marbles to England, he had been knighted in
1845. His first wife, Eliza, died in 1847, after which he had married Eliza (d. 1874), the widow of William
Knight. Fellows is referred to several times in the Brownings' courtship correspondence; see BC, 10, 21, and
13, 361. His son Charles Francis (b. 1846) was close in age to Pen.
5. Underscored twice.
6. EBB's poem "Died" was first collected in Last Poems (1862). A draft manuscript sold as part of lot 161
in Browning Collections (see Reconstruction, D203; now at Morgan). Anne Grey: A Novel (3 vols., London:
Saunders and Otley, 1834) was by Harriet Cradock (née Lister, 1809–84), a novelist and maid of honour to the
queen. Her brother, Thomas Henry Lister, was also a novelist.
7. John Ashburner (1793–1878) was a translator of Reichenbach (see letter 142, note 10).
8. Carisbrooke is a village on the Isle of Wight, where the Brownings were visiting John Kenyon.
9. i.e., of Aurora Leigh; see EBB's comment in the preceding letter that she had received "proof today, but
no revise." The proofs and revises were passing frequently between the two at this stage. Margaret Reynolds
suggests "that the poem went through (at least) one set of proofs and two sets of revises" (Aurora Leigh, ed. Margaret Reynolds, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1992, p. 142, note 79).

Letter 159

[West Cowes]

Tuesday—& Wednesday [16–17 September 1856]

My beloved Arabel I didn't write because I wanted to say something of our going or staying, & I fancied we might go soon. Now, M'l Kenyon will have us stay till Saturday (decided this morning) and perhaps we may overstay Sunday—who knows? Robert told me this morning he would go to Taunton if I liked it—I have felt rather nervous about staying here, lest we should, by ever such infinitesimal a degree, do him more harm than good. You see he hates being an invalid,—& he can't be other,—& he will go down to dinner where he scarcely touches anything—If I were in his state, I know, I would't see a creature. In certain respects he has been somewhat easier, I think,—the struggles for breath less violent—struggles, till he is bathed with perspiration—still, they go on always, more or less. The languor & weakness I dont care so much for—because when people take digitalis every day, as he does, some such effects must be looked for. They give too, strong drastic medicines, which tell on a person at last. After all, he wont die, I think, soon—it may be very lingering—He says sometimes with his affecting smile—"You see I have been a spoilt child. I have been used too much to enjoy—Now, this seems hard—& I am afraid I dont bear it well."—But he bears it beautifully—It's extraordinary to me how, with his antecedents & his opinions, he bears it as he does—Not a pettish word or gesture—Even when he wishes it were over, it's with a smile chiefly. And he's so good to Penini, .. kisses him, & sees to his little pleasures. There is the Christian heart, if not the head—Dear, dear M'l Kenyon—

And now here's a sad story. You know M'lme Braun, Miss Bayley's niece. She was to have come here last Sunday or Monday, & M'l Kenyon wanted us to stay on to be with her here, as we had known her in Rome & elsewhere. Well,—instead of her, on sunday came a letter. On friday night had arrived a telegraphic despatch, awaking her from her first sleep with the news that her husband was "dangerously ill." Poor thing,—she got up, & went away in the morning,—&, as soon as she had gone, arrived another despatch .. he was dead!—Of course, gastric fever .. in this worst month of the year for Rome!—Isn't it dreadful? She was so happy,—so happy, that she said to me once,.. 'I only desire that this state may endure.' —Miss Bayley takes it compassionately, but more quietly than you or I would, I must say. She is sensible & benevolent—too sensible, to be after my heart. I respect her, & feel 'antipathetically[''] in regard to her. Not a bit does she care for Peni—& for me, still less, perhaps. She said to me the other day, ['']'You & I disagree upon every possible subject, Ba.' "Out of opposition," said I, "arises love"—(how we lie, sometimes, for the sake of being civil!) "I dont know that," said she very coolly. In fact, I do know that she rather bears with me than likes me—it's plain. Oh, there's no want of toleration in me—you would say I sin the other way! I can bear any degree of scepticism & unbelief—but there's a self-satisfied comfortable assumption of a world without God & a body without a soul, which I revolt against inwardly, I who live by & in another persuasion. It's like walking in snow
up to your knees,—you cant get on. I never shall get on with her, never—and yet I’m sure she’s very kind to me, very considerate, very courteous—but we two remain two after all— She considers me all ‘hallucination,’ and I, her, all obtuseness—

Darling Arabel, you didn’t say how you were, in your last letter- I entreat you, if you are pretty well, to say so—otherwise I fancy all sorts of things. Tell me, if we go to Taunton on saturday, or monday, is there a chance for us that you would go too? We sail to Southampton, it seems, and then go by railroad, .. & do the bit to Yeovil, by coach. Surely, dearest, if Papa does’nt come, he does’nt mean to come, and in that case, why shouldn’t we be happy together in this way? Think of it, dear dearest Arabel. I have’nt written to Henrietta, not knowing precisely.

Sir Charles Fellowes took Penini away to his farm, the day before yesterday, that Peni & Frank might enjoy the last afternoon together before the latter’s going to school. Sir Charles came to see us after, in an enthusiasm about Peni, whom he called “the most amusing child he had ever seen in his life.” Peni had told them a great deal about Italy, & France,—he had’nt been shy by any manner of means— He is to have the charge of Frank’s rabbits till he goes away—left heir!—and is as satisfied as heirs are apt to be.

We have quantities of books here, & newspapers,—& I have champagne every day, which is more pleasant than wholesome, I dare say: still, it does’nt seem to me that I’m the worse for it. I send you a revise.

You will take the baths, but you dont take them: you must take them. And sketch a little more, without the ants— I’m forced to go away to the proofs & revises— So much to do today— And I couldn’t finish this letter yesterday. Dear, your weather has been warmer than ours, though we have had a day or two warm—but it is fine generally. Only on Sunday so cold, that Robert wouldn’t let me go out. I told Wilson to take Peni to church— “No I really wont go to church,” said the sucking schismatic! “I’ll go to Chapel, only—” How shocked they will be at Taunton! Robert’s special tender love to you darling Arabel, & both our dear loves to everybody— No revise today. Your own Ba.

We go on monday, definitively. M! K has sent for me & given me fifty pounds for travelling expenses. We go, monday—

Address: Miss Barrett / Milanese Villa / Ventnor.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated by postmark of 17 September 1856, a Wednesday.
2. August Emil Braun (see letter 47, note 12) had died on 12 September 1856. A notice of his death in The Athenæum of 4 October 1856 described him as “an excellent antiquary and scholar, whose investigations of Roman history and topography have given him a fame beyond the limits of the Eternal City” (no. 1510, p. 1221).
Letter 160

West Cowes,
Sunday [21 September 1856]

My beloved Arabel, we go tomorrow,—and having been worked nearly to death today (to say nothing of the cold which is mortal) I have a moment to thank you in, for your two dear disappointing letters—for which, however, a letter from Henrietta had somewhat prepared me. Also, I announce the arrival of George’s parcel—The greatest care, I will take of it.

We are in tribulation,—not knowing which way to go to Taunton– Perhaps we may take George’s & your advice after all. I am so glad you like that revise—As to “burly brutal”—my dearest George, my dearest Arabel, you are both wrong. ‘Burley’ is rather complimentary than otherwise. When anybody shall call me ‘burly’—(in the spiritual world perhaps) I shall consider it satisfactory. ‘Brutal,’ is the specific word for English mobs—They are not frantic & cruel, as a French mob, when hard pressed, can be, (see French revolution) but ‘brutal’ they are, & must be—& nobody ever denied them to be, as far as I have heard. Really I scarcely know what I am writing—Only .. I’m so glad I’m not at Ventnor to see George’s face, after a proof I shall send you presently. Tell me if he thinks it “unfit writing for a lady’”—that I may put my head under the table-cloth. The volume is wearing to an end, and we are in the last ‘Book’ but one—Here we are at the end of September!– Its time to end, indeed.

Tell me of Papa—and tell me if you think the baths agree with you— I am happy to say that dear M’ Kenyon is surprisingly better these two days. Dr Hoffmeister3 told Sir Charles Fellowes the other day, he w’d have been better before, if he had taken the medecines,—but that generally [“]he took half—“]!! (This, by Miss Bayley’s advice, observe) Dr Hoffmeister said, that “he had two different affections,—the heart-complaint (functional if not organic) and the dropsical tendency,—& that what was good for one was bad for the other—trenchant medecines being necessary, in this case, & strengthening ones in that—still, that it was absolutely necessary, of course, that he should submit to the remedy in both cases. Next week, he may be strengthened. And he will recover up to a certain point, and last, a long time, with care—although, of course, added the doctor, [“]an old man cannot be made young again.”

A very satisfactory opinion, to my mind,—and I shall go away in a less melancholy mood than I should have done a few days since—

In fact, dear M’ Kenyon looks & speaks quite differently— The breath is much relieved,—and he is able to take some part in conversation, which has been absolutely impossible to him all the time we have been here.

For my part I never witnessed suffering of so distressing a kind, before. It was like a prolonged death-agony—

So stupid, not to take the medecines!– Miss Bayley says she never takes more than half the medecine prescribed to her! and so——!

No time for another word—
May God bless you, darling Arabel—Write to me. Alfred's letter glows with hope—May it be justified

Tell me of Papa—

Address: Miss Barrett / Milanese Villa / Ventnor.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated by postmark of 22 September 1856, a Monday.
2. Aurora Leigh, VI, 32.
3. William Carter Hoffmeister (1817–90), surgeon to the Queen and other members of the royal family.

Letter 161

Wilton.
Thursday. [25 September 1856]

My beloved Arabel, here we are, without you!—Never was anything so strictly provoking. But the world holds nothing complete—and if you had come, & we had travelled together, we should have all been blown up or at least broken up on the railroad, to make an "end of perfection."

Dearest dear Arabel, write & tell me that the baths are agreeing with you, & that you are getting on with tolerable sprightliness at Ventnor, so that your Image at least, may sit by me with dear shining eyes.

Meanwhile Henrietta & Surtees have planted us in a very hot-bed of hospitality. First let me tell you, that after all your & George’s good counsels, we were advised both against Salisbury & Yeovil, & were directed by the officials at Southampton (who ought to know!) to go round the world (that is, by Bristol) to Taunton, which we obeyed to the letter. Quite ridiculous, doesn't it seem!—To go round by Bristol to Taunton, from Southampton!! This, complicated with your second-class carriages, (do you expect of my patriotism that I should admire your second-class carriages, you in England?) almost finished me, and I barely survived to fall at half past four into Surtees’s extended arms...no, we shook hands simply, I believe, in order to the decencies of the situation...or rather, the station. He put us into a fly, & took us to Wilton, where I found our dearest Henrietta radiant, beaming, looking so well,—seeming so happy! How very happy she is, dear thing. And do you know that both Robert & I consider that Surtees has been very generally underrated. He is kind, & honest, & straightforward, & by no means, in our mind, wanting sense—conscientious, religious—really, as the world goes, these are high qualities. The children are very fine children. Altham is handsome, I think—the setting on of his head on his shoulders is fine, and the expression of the face is very good. Mary is a sweet pliable womanly nature of a little dot. Her hair hangs & curls much as Peni's—if not as thickly—but what I like in the little creature is the tender sentiment of her clinging movements & ways. Peni is enchanted with his cousins—leaning a little, be it whispered, to Mary. Peni has a decided

〈...〉

Robert's best love as ever—and Henrietta’s, she says.
Letter 162

39. Devonshire Place
Saturday. [Postmark: 4 October 1856]

My beloved Arabel I cant miss today's post—and yet I'm driven to the wall, & there's scarcely time to write. Five proofs remain for printing—the presses being all engaged with the previous part of the book—so that I must begin at the beginning & finish the review of all, before you have any more proofs.¹

To break off from which, & get nearer to my heart in you. In the first place, you are less well—Dearest, darling, what's the reason of it? Do you know, it does seem to me that sea-air always makes your legs swell—They were at the worst that could be at Sidmouth, remember? Do you think it possible that the warm baths make more swelling?—Why don't you write for the old prescription, if the swelling persists? You ought not to suffer the legs to swell. One thing I have at heart much,—that when you come to London you would go directly to your former homœopathic man,² who certainly did you more good at the time than any other medical adviser ever did. For these constitutional chronic maladies, I believe nothing is so good as homœopathy. Mr Jameson was giving testimony, two days ago—but, quite apart from new testimony, that the principle is right, I feel satisfied,—and it would be a real relief to me and leave me unspeakably grateful to you, my darling dearest Arabel, if you would (for pure love's sake) give me this promise. For love's sake! I leave it there, under that name—

As for me, I always do what you ask, and certainly I will not miss a point tomorrow. Mr Stratton shall see us all at the chapel—and in Hamilton Terrace before we go away—Even if it rains tomorrow, we will take a cab & go—

Last sunday we went to church in all orthodoxy, as it was the only sunday Henrietta & I could spend together. We had a good deal of theological talk on one occasion, Surtees & I—and he grew very hot .. for which I liked him none the less. It's really good to see a man in earnest, even when he is in the wrong. Which Surtees was, I am bound to add. In fact, Arabel, I tell you what I told Henrietta quite gently afterwards, that, as surely as he and I lived, so surely should I live to see him a R Catholic, & Henrietta & the babies running after him. Henrietta won't like it at first .. she didn't like many things said by him the other day .. but afterwards she'll like it as well as the rest—now mark. When I spoke & prophesied thus, she exclaimed a little,—but admitted that she "did feel rather afraid about Surtees sometimes, his disgust to the union of church & state was so extreme." Yes, she admitted that. Pray do not repeat it .. even to herself. I should be more sorry—I am sorry, but should be more,—if principles did not weigh with me so much heavier than names & signs. He's as much a R Catholic at this moment, as if he were at the pope's feet at Rome. Why not use the name?
I like Surtees much, much. His tenderness to Henrietta & the children, and his manly frankness on all occasions, are both attractive to me. I think he has sense too: he talked as well as many cleverer men, on the subject of his views, &c— Also, I should always admire the man who made a woman as happy as he makes Henrietta.

We were made much of, went out to drive every day, ... were smothered with roses of kindness. Altham is a very fine boy. On Sunday afternoon, Robert & Surtees having gone out to walk, he desired to read the evening service. He read the whole of it, chanted it in a loud voice, selected a sermon himself & read it, & then gave the blessing. I never saw such an extraordinary exhibition!—perfectly wonderful on the part of so young a child; though I am not quite settled as to the advisability of it altogether. Little Mary is a darling—a most winning little creature,—though not very pretty, in spite of her lovely curled hair. But so soft, so affectionate; I used to say she was stuffed with swan’s down,—& the heart seemed as soft as the rest. I should like that little Mary for my own. I covet my neighbour’s Mary.¹

So we came home, I expecting to find a letter from you on the table. I wonder at you for thinking that it was my turn to write! Why, I wrote to you long ago. After all, the letter has made me sadder that [sic] if it had’t come.

The account of papa is not cheering. Do mention him particularly when you write soon again.

Yesterday Alfred & Lizzie came. He was masked in an enormous moustache,—& its a moot point with me, whether it becomes him. Lizzie looked pretty, rather thin, smiling, not overpowered at the notion of separation ... (Alfred going today) ... but intent on following him (to do her justice) in a few days in another vessel. Alfred may complete his business at Madeira in six weeks, or he may be detained three months. Lizzie was’int allowed to go with him, & would have to pay twenty pounds for her passage in another: under which circumstances, I rather advised that she should stay quietly in England. But she said she must be with him—she could not be separated so long. And this morning I have a note from her to the effect that she is to sail next Thursday from Portsmouth. She says in her note, “Alfred is gone—& I am alone in my glory.” Emotion wont break Lizzie to pieces—But she’s very pretty, very.

Alfred was in high spirits—He said he had objected at first (in his secret mind) on account of the cholera,—but that, on enquiry, the disease was stayed, & not above three cases in a week occurred—He has for salary thirty shillings a day, besides expenses—& while he is away, he expects a consulship to be found for him.

We dont sit in the drawingrooms, dearest Arabel, so dont think of us there. We have a fire in the diningroom, & dine & breakfast in the room behind,—& I like this arrangement all the better that I dont see ghosts on the sofas & chairs up-stairs.

Miss Russell¹ came in while Alfred was here yesterday, looking ill, I thought. She asked about you & did not stay long—startled away, it seemed to me, by my society.

Now the poem. No, George, not “worse than Don Juan”⁵ by any manner of means,—because the intention is not licentious—There’s a great difference. I admit, it’s a horrible situation—but I wanted a horrible situation to prove a beautiful verity. The intention of the poem everywhere is to raise the spiritual above the natural; this is carried out in everything. Marian, subjected to the most hideous of trials, in fact though with an unconsenting will, is made to emerge with a glory
of purity & even of moral dignity, (increased by her very misfortune) to which, at the end, no reader shall be insensible. You shall feel the virtue of chastity, in her, more even than in Aurora. Something of the kind was done by Richardson in Clarissa—but Clarissa was a sublime creature . . . more exceptionally attractive than my Marian is—and after all, Clarissa dies . . . which I don't mean Marian to do—Marian shall have a clear triumph even here. Oh—I think it very likely that the poem will be shoved away from the reading of young girls—but if it stoops low on certain dunghills, _that is_, in order that it may leap high to the most skyey significances.

How can you understand such a tumble-down letter? I am running out of breath all day—never was anybody with so much to do—

Mr Forster's married & gone to the Lakes—

I am so glad you liked about the baby. I assure you the baby was necessary.

You cant read . . . you cant understand. I'm perfectly in the dark—

May God bless you my own dearest Arabel. I went to Trippy yesterday, & have'nt seen Minny . . which is quite unkind. Robert & I lost our way coming from Trippy's, which made it late—Best of loves from Robert. May God bless you all—

Your very own Ba.

Address: Miss Barrett / Milanese Villa / Ventnor / Isle of Wight.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. According to Margaret Reynolds, "the second set of revises (representing the last stage of prepublication material) on which they were making the final corrections" (_Aurora Leigh_, ed. Margaret Reynolds, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1992, p. 92).

2. See letter 85, in which EBB's remarks indicate that Arabella had sought homeopathic treatment.


4. Mary Anne Russell, as identified at letter 8, note 20.

5. EBB rather jokingly relayed her brother's comparison of _Aurora Leigh_ to _Don Juan_ to several different correspondents. Byron's epic satire was met by fierce criticism on its initial publication in 1819. The comparison of the two works is particularly interesting in light of EBB's remarks to Miss Mitford in 1844: "I want to write a poem of a new class, in a measure—a _Don Juan_, without the mockery & impurity" (_BC_, 9, 304). It is also of interest to note George William Curtis's remark, writing as the "Easy Chair," in which he said "It is a curious juxtaposition, that of 'Don Juan' and 'Aurora Leigh,' and yet they are related in this that they are the two great poems of modern English social life as felt by a man of the world and a religious woman, who were both poets" (_Harper's New Monthly Magazine_, September 1861, pp. 555–556; reprinted in _BC_, 14, 410).


7. i.e., the baby that resulted from Marian Erle's rape in _Aurora Leigh_. Aurora encounters the baby for the first time in the sixth book, beginning at line 566. EBB offers no further explanation as to why "the baby was necessary."
My ever dearest Arabel, You made me rather easier by what you wrote— Do you know I have been on the verge of writing again— Robert half advised me— But there's no use—is there? you don't advise it, I am sure— On second & third thoughts I don't feel as if I ought to do it, in fact—

Dearest, what will you say to me after all my professions, when I tell you that I have not yet been to M' Stratten's. But the weather (east wind & fog), has acted injuriously on me, and although I slept somewhat better last night, I have been plagued with cough and plaguing—so that Robert has taken oath on his bare sword of matrimony that I shant stir out of the house till I go for good & all— Never mind oaths. I will go if it is possible—if a day will clear up—& today & yesterday have been milder .. though with a fog still thick enough to smother the two princes in the Tower without Richard.² But there's no east wind, & I am better— Observe .. its nothing—by the time I get to Lyons, I shall have cleared up, lungs & all, like the sky itself— A mere passing inconvenience, which I mention to you simply that you might not fancy me careless of a request of yours. Robert wants to hurry me away as soon as he can—& that's only wise perhaps .. as we are really to go. A little more, & I might'n't be able to travel. What vexes me, is having seen Minny only once, & Trippy only once—but I must & will see them both again .. & the Strattens too. I shall have to give up M' Jago, which really distresses me—for Robert has not seen him, either last year or this year. Robert is torn to pieces with business—& so am I— The last proofs are on the anvil— As far as you have read, has gone to America. M' Frederick Chapman is delighted .. and the co' are so sure of success that they are consulting already about the second edition in two volumes.³ The Carlyles, ([the two brothers;) were here yesterday, and Leigh Hunt comes tomorrow.⁴ My heart has been aching all day over dear Miss Mitford's letters .. which I must do something by before I go—¹ I feel as if the world were in ruins— I hate going—hate staying too—nothing pleases me. How irrational one grows, to be sure. London is detestable without you. And, even with you, I suppose I should cough as much.

Mary Ruskin [sic, for Ruxton] came & told me much of spiritualities. D' Wilkinson, (to whom as to a fountain these things are referred), says that the movement is spreading on all sides, .. especially during the last fortnight .. & that the manifestations promise to be of a far higher character than in America.

We go to Florence—that is settled. It is the wiser plan, I think, upon the whole.

Penini & Wilson have spent the last two evenings with Minny, & Wilson thought her well & cheerful—delighted at your coming home soon.

Oh Arabel—Robert talks of our setting out on saturday, & I am afraid we ought to go then— but doubt whether it will be possible, so over-worked we are— Wilson is in despair—about sets of night gowns & the like— As for the poem, parts will have to follow us to Paris I do believe,— where we shall stay one day. Dearest, I cant wish to look you in the face, and [say] goodbye again. I rather would go & come back—which you may rely on our doing next year. Nothing could ever hinder it but lack of money—& money pours in—‘Men & Women’ has begun alread[y]
to divide profits between the Chapmans & ourselves. Then Aurora is to have a tremendous success—all the more perhaps, for being so naughty—Though I doubt that, as I write it— I will try to write a line to dear Miss Dowglass.

May God bless you, dear, dear—
Write to me— May God bless you & love you—

Your Ba—

M! Ruskin’s mother has given me a very pretty knitted scarf—and we have wine, & preserves from them.7

M! Kenyon continues much better.

Address: Miss Barrett / Milanese Villa / Ventnor. / Isle of Wight.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Dated by Ventnor postmark of 14 October 1856, a Tuesday.
2. i.e., Richard III, who, having removed potential rivals for the throne, resorted to having his nephews murdered.
3. Chapman and Hall did not adopt a two-volume format in subsequent editions of *Aurora Leigh*, probably because the sales were so brisk. The second edition was sent to press two weeks after the first edition and was released in mid-January 1857. As EBB reported to Julia Martin in February 1857, “the second edition was issued so early that Robert would not let me alter even a comma, would not let me look between the pages in order to the least alteration” (*LEBB*, II, 254–255).
4. A reference to Thomas Carlyle and his brother John Aitken Carlyle (1801–79) since the only other Carlyle brother, Alexander (1797–1875), had gone to Canada in 1843. Leigh Hunt wrote the following day to apologise for not coming, presumably due to his wife’s illness (ms at University of Iowa).
5. William Harness (see letter 43, note 9) was in the process of writing his biography of Miss Mitford, “amid considerable opposition,” (*DNB*). He had asked for letters from EBB a year earlier, a few months after Miss Mitford’s death. Harness, assisted by Alfred Guy L’Estrange, finally completed *The Life of Mary Russell Mitford* (London: Richard Bentley) just before his death in 1869; the book bears a publication date of 1870.
6. In addition to the financial successes of their combined works, the Brownings’ money worries would soon be alleviated by the legacy Kenyon left each of them upon his death in December 1856.
7. EBB’s letter of thanks to Mrs. Ruskin is dated Saturday, [18 October 1856], which begins: “No sooner do I begin a sentence about a most pretty netted scarf, (which I shall wear thinking of our dear friend Mr. John Ruskin’s mother) than I have to begin another about flowers, ... mended by another about a great box of preserves“ (ms at ABL). In a letter to Joseph Milsand, written three months after EBB’s death, Sarianna Browning explained that RB had been opening the boxes of EBB’s personal effects that had been shipped from Florence, and “one of the things put aside in the box was a lambswool scarf worked for dear Ba by Mr. Ruskin’s mother” (Transcript in editor’s file).
Thank God—and thank you, my own beloved Arabel, for the breath of good news that comes with your letter. It was a great relief—I only wish you had said something good of yourself, to fill me with thanksgiving—

See that I am not gone!—No—and we shan’t get off on Monday,—that, I see plainly. On Tuesday certainly. Its cruel to both of us to be so near meeting, & not meeting: & yet it would be small pleasure, a meeting with goodbye tacked to an end of it so closely.

I saw George twice yesterday. He is very kind—but he would’n’t stay the evening out with our Pre-Raphaelites—& we had five. Robert sent me to bed in the midst—so I liked it rather. I mean (for I like them all really much) I was not over-tired. Last night I slept better & coughed considerably less—There’s no spitting of blood or anything bad .. so dont fancy it: but the cough has been breaking me to bits in the old way .. which considering all the work I have to do .. & that dismallest work of all, with dear Miss Mitford’s letters .. which I have been forced to buckle to, at last .. for M! Harness complains of me loudly they say ... I was on the brink of a black melancholy, & quite ready for bad news from Ventnor. But it’s all better now .. I do thank God—

Try to persuade Papa to come to London by Cowes .. where there is every facility for embarkation. The rail-carriages are smoother too from Southampton, & it’s a much less fatiguing journey in every respect. If he would consent to sleep at Southampton, he need not be fatigued at all. If you go by Cowes, mind you look at M! Kenyon’s house .. in the Parade .. the row of new houses close to the water. You cant miss it. His brother left England for Vienna the day before yesterday— She came to take leave of me the previous day, & looked ill .. said she was very unwell & entirely in consequence of trouble of mind—but not a word did she speak out to us. I confess I should like to hear the other side of the question. She seems to me full of good impulses & very kind. Still I cant conceive how she can be justified, under the circumstances.

Dearest, when we can get a revise for you, you shall have one. The book is in proof .. & that’s all— Yesterday I wrote & despatched the dedication—and the title page .. which wasn’t so very hard as the rest. I hope you will like the winding-up of the poem. It’s a poem which evolves the spiritual philosophy as was never attempted to be done before by a poem—but, of course, the success is another question. That there is truth, must be my comfort, if the poetry should be less recognized—but with all my nervousness on that point, & fears of short-comings (which are incessant) I feel more & more settled in my own mind, that I, Ba, never did anything so good, .. I mean, never put out so much general power, as in this poem. I agree with George there certainly— Which proves nothing as to results, after all— And there are heaps of people who will agree with neither of us— Coventry Patmore told me the other day that I was to send him a copy, because it w’d fall to him to review the poem for the North British. He has just written (& forwarded to me meanwhile) an article upon women, putting us all in our places most dogmatically.4 Fine mince-meat he will make of me in the North British!5—— He must, if he’s consistent.
Dearest, I wrote a long note to M" Stratten, & sent it by Peni yesterday, as you bade me. She
was preparing, I believe, to strain a point on saturday, today, & come to see me—but I let her
understand through Miss Heaton, that it was far better not to come— Talking just now is wretched
both to me & everybody who talks with me—and people throng in—Oh, for a little rest, & freedom
to do these heaps of things! We shall return in the summer & then I shall hope to see M! & M '" Stratten, in comfort—To drag them out on Saturday was wrong in all ways—What rest will be to
me, when it comes! I feel as if I would fain lie on a sofa & shut my eyes for the rest of my life. I
wrote a long note . . . & in it, I put you under the care of M! & M '" Stratten, abdicating to them all
supposed right “to counsel or command,” which might be supposed to rest in my elder sisterhood
& deeper love—So, if you dont obey in all things, where they bid you, . . the degree of rebellion
in you, will be after the fashion of Lucifer’s.

At Marseilles we decide for or against the Cornice. If it’s fine weather, we take that route—
tho‘ it will be six days journey to Genoa even! But we can have a comfortable vettura, & I can
put up my feet, and the inns are good, & the scenery exquisite, & the climate warmer than Italy—

I hear of a great assembling of mediums at D’ Wilkinson’s the other evening—Ros[s]etti was
asked & wouldn’t go. We have hope of a further development in England very shortly—so,
look to it— As for me, I should’nt be much the better for it, if I stayed . . in spite of Robert’s lively
protestation, just now, that he never, never, never, will interfere with me on the subject again.
Oh, oaths of men! Should a woman trust them?

I will write, I will write—that’s my oath. And this is’nt a last word absolutely— May God
keep you my own Arabel

for your Ba-

Peni is out . . or would send his message—

Address: Miss Barrett / Milanese Villa / Ventnor / Isle of Wight.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. As EBB explained to Henrietta in a letter written the preceding day, George had only returned to town on
the 16th, which may explain why he declined a late evening with the “Pre-Raphaelites.” Writing to William
Allingham two months later, D.G. Rossetti lamented the poets’ absence: “The Brownings are long gone back
now, and with them one of my delights,—an evening resort where I never felt unhappy” (Letters of Dante
p. 189).

2. See note 5 in the preceding letter.

3. The title page reads: “Aurora Leigh. / by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. / London: / Chapman and Hall,
193, Piccadilly. / 1857.” The dedication is as follows: “Dedication / To / John Kenyon, Esq. / The words ‘cousin’
and ‘friend’ are constantly recurring in this poem, the last pages of which have been finished under the hospit­
tality of your roof, my own dearest cousin and friend;—cousin and friend, in a sense of less equality and greater
disinterestedness than ‘Romney’’s [sic]. / Ending, therefore, and preparing once more to quit England, I venture
to leave in your hands this book, the most mature of my works, and the one into which my highest convictions
upon Life and Art have entered: that as, through my various efforts in literature and steps in life, you have
believed in me, born with me, and been generous to me, far beyond the common uses of mere relationship or
sympathy of mind, so you may kindly accept, in sight of the public, this poor sign of esteem, gratitude, and
affection from / your unforgetting / E.B.B. / 39, Devonshire Place, / October 17, 1856." See letter 167 (note 7), in which EBB explains that Kenyon purchased forty-seven copies to distribute to friends.

4. Patmore's review of *Aurora Leigh* was published in *The North British Review* for February 1857, pp. 443–462. Patmore expressed his more private opinions in letters to William Allingham. In a letter dated 14 December 1856, he wrote: "Have you read 'Aurora Leigh'? Is it not strange that writers, and still more strange that readers—should prefer shrieking G or F to singing E or D? But the book abounds with 'fine things' and will be a 'tremendous success' no doubt." And on 18 February 1857, Patmore again wrote to Allingham: "'Aurora Leigh' is a strange book for a modest sensible little woman like Mrs. Browning to have written. It is full of 'fine things' of course; but I am inexpressibly sick of such under such conditions." Finally, on 28 April 1857, Patmore told Allingham: "The article in the National on 'Aurora Leigh' is not mine. I should never have called it 'a great poem' in any other than a material sense. It reminds me of an ill-conditioned child jumping at the stars and stamping on the flowers. 'Standing on the head makes not / Either for ease or dignity,' some one says, and the operation becomes still more undignified when the performer wears flounces" (Basil Champneys, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*, London: G. Bell & Sons, 1900, II, 183, 185 and 186, respectively).

5. Patmore's essay, entitled "Victor Cousin on Madame de Hautefort and Her Contemporaries," appeared in the October 1856 issue of *The National Review* (pp. 317–342). It is a review of three books by Victor Cousin: *Madame de Longueville* (Paris, 1855); *Madame de Sablé* (Paris, 1854); and *Madame de Chevreuse et Madame de Hautefort* (Paris, 1856). Some examples of his views on the subject of the "woman question" are as follows: "the attractive radiance of womanhood,—that mysterious influence ... that charming subordination ... that flattering inferiority ... that ever-present and ever-intangible charm .... Of all the monstrous births of modern philosophy, surely none is so monstrous, so marked with moral ignorance and deterioration, as the doctrine of the equality of man and woman, in the form in which it is at present widely preached" (pp. 339–340).

6. EBB wrote to Mrs. Stratten on [17 October 1856] to apologise for leaving England without seeing her, and asked her to "look in my child's face & give him a kiss, and forgive his mother for what she loses" (ms at ABL).

7. The coastal road on the cliff tops along the Mediterranean from Nice to Menton. However, as EBB explained to her brother George ten days later, they decided against the land route as it was twice as expensive as the sea journey (B-GB, p. 219).

8. I have been unable to trace any further references to this event. However, in a letter to William Allingham, dated [18 December 1856], Rossetti noted that "Spiritualism has begun to be in the ascendant at the Hermitage [i.e., the home of William and Mary Howitt] ... Do not say anything to anybody, though. I elicited from W. Howitt, before his family, his opinion of it with some trouble, and found it to be a modified form of my own, which of course I give without reserve—but the ladies of the house seem to take but one view of the subject, and, astounding as it may appear, Mrs. Browning has given in her adherence. I hope *Aurora Leigh* is not to be followed by 'that style only.' Browning, of course, pockets his hands and shakes his mane over the question, with occasional foamings at the mouth, and he and I laid siege to the subject one night, but to no purpose" (*Letters of Dante Gabriel Rossetti to William Allingham: 1854–1870*, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897, p. 195).
coasting by the islands of Hyères, the water an intense purple under us, as if we were Kings of
the East walking home upon carpets. I was in a dreadful humour, to set out with,—which, to­
gether with the smell of a newly painted ship, helped to make me rather sick—while Robert kept
well, to his immense exultation & triumph— Wilson was ill as a matter of course—but only a part
of the way—& Penini for a few moments. Peni was in glory, climbing about with the sailors up
& down ladders—he looked like a black small chimney-sweeper when we came to land. He & I
had a cabin to ourselves,—there being no other first-class passengers,—& at six in the morning
or earlier, there was no peace but to let him get up & go on deck by himself— [‘]”He would
promise, not to lean over.” Instead of which, he was seen a quarter of the way up the mast,
standing by the side of the captain, to Wilson’s horror, when she emerged!— Such a child, that is.
He came in to make me get up to see the sunrise— “Oh, it is so glorious! just like a house on fire!
or else just like heaven.” Out of my berth I tumbled myself too slowly. “Oh now, mama, the most
striking part is over”. Peni’s cheeks were much the redder for the sea-voyage, as much of them
as could be seen for blackness. At Genoa we landed, after twenty six hours of sea, at about twelve
oclock in the day. I had touched nothing since eleven on the preceding day, & the first step I
took on land I reeled & all but fainted—Wilson cried out “You’ll fall into the sea” & perfectly
indifferent I was to that prospect. But after a moment, I recovered myself and walked or was
dragged up to the hotel, where the ravages of famine were repaired rapidly, with exquisite cof­
fee, cold ham, eggs & bread— Never did I enjoy anything in the shape of nourishment so much.
Peni who had been eating fish & sausages on board ship, till it might be supposed he could want
nothing more,—stirred by emulation, began again. When we were all satisfied, we took it by
turns to go into the next room & perform our ablutions & brush our hair,—& then after a luxuri­
ous rest on the sofa, I was perfectly resuscitated & we took an open carriage & had an hour’s
drive round the public gardens & up & down that gorgeous Genoa— Full summer it was—not
English summer, but a pure cloudless sky a “perfect chrysolite”. Oh divine Italy! elsewhere,
men live imperfectly. How I thought of you, & longed for you! We were all in high good
humour, & Robert who of course had been horribly enraged with me for not eating for four &
twenty hours, as if one could help feeling deadly sick from the smell of paint &c . . . forgave me
like a Christian, seeing that I had made up for my sins to such a satisfactory point of devouring
appetite. In gratitude for which gracious pardon, I took upon myself an engagement, to eat my
dinner immediately on our return to the ship—yes, & kept it, Arabel,—though painfully aware
that most of the dishes were cooked in oil! We returned at five that afternoon, & at half past nine
the next morning were landed at Leghorn—after a night of extraordinary calm; breakfasted at the
best hotel in great comfort,— & at two were on our way to Florence by train— Robert & I being
extravagantly disposed, took two first class places & had a carriage to ourselves—n.b. there’s
only a shilling difference between first & second class— & it seemed worth paying that for the
seclusion— (Peni preferred going with Wilson & Ferdinando.) We arrived at Florence at five, or a
little after, & found our house in excellent order, & M. Biondi waiting at the door,—with notes
of welcome from our friends on the table. After tea & while I undressed & went to bed (before
eight) Robert ran up the hill to see Isa, who was in our drawing-room the next morning. Florence
looks perfectly lifeless & dull, Robert says . . which of course must be the impression after
London & Paris—but we are likely to stay through the winter, in spite of that—We have already subscribed to two libraries, & I am enjoying the repose & the beauty. Many persons in former relation to us (tradespeople &c) died of cholera last year, and the accounts of that pestilence are fearful to listen to—Now, people are in better spirits—prices are reasonable, & the last vintage is an improvement. Frederick Tennyson, I grieve to say, has gone to live at Pisa. As he was returning with his family from the sea, he saw "a very nice house, with a back door as well as a front door", so that "Arthur might go in & out" without being an eyesore! whereupon Frederick took the house at once & has furnished it, & will repent at leisure of course. Or I shall, for him. So sorry I am to lose Frederick Tennyson. The Cottrells returned two days before we did. I saw her yesterday. Isa & M! Jarvis spent yesterday evening with us. And I sate upon needles, for Isa would talk of the spirits—Oh—by the way. You heard of M! Kirkup & his medium, Regina,—the girl with lucent spaniel eyes—You must have heard Robert & me quarrel about her. We thought yesterday we would go to see him, & were talking together (in a very peaceable spirit—for Robert & I are on excellent terms just now) about this mediumship, just at his door, when out came a little girl, twelve years old, Regina’s younger sister. She smiled to our greeting—"And," said Robert, "how is Regina?—Come va la Regina?" "Not well," said the child. "poco bene! È morta." ‘Dead,’ cried both of us at once—(Oh, such a shock it was.) “Yes—she died last night. She’s up there.”—(pointing up to the windows.) After a pause. "And how is your mother?" "She’s dead too—She died five months ago."—Round we turned, & put off our visit—It thrilled me through from head to foot. Poor old man—it will be a great hole in his life—for he seemed really to have no other human interest left to him. She died of consumption with a superinduction of milliary fever. I shall be curious to hear how the spiritual experiences went on or off to the last. M! Jarves told us last night that ‘the spirits’ had forbidden M! Kirkup to throw her into ‘the trance’ for some time, & that he had obeyed implicitly—

Peni is enchanted with Florence, & his great drum,—with which he has been regaling our ears these two days—

At the station at Dijon we met our friend M. Milsand. Wasn’t it curious?

Oh—that I had a letter from you saying that you were well, & that papa was better! I drag a lengthened chain, & turn no where but the fetters clink. So anxious I am.

Of myself I can send you an excellent account. I grew much stronger every hour I travelled, & have left off coughing, except a cough now & then at intervals—sleep well, eat well, & am quite pulled up from the pulling down of the last month in London. Robert wants me to have asses’ milk—but I wont—considering it to be altogether unnecessary just now. This vital air does more for one than the milk of many asses. I hear that Lord John Russell is here, & also Macauley.

I left directions that the earliest copy of Aurora shd be sent to you. I found a letter from M! Kenyon, to express his—ever so many kind things—about the poem, saying I came out “as pure gold” &c &c. So, I suppose, Aurora is pardoned. I mean, Aurora herself,—my heroine—though George never w’d marry her, never. It seemed diabolical of me to let M! Kenyon have revises at last, which you had’nt,—but it was through our being so pressed for time that I could’nt get another set of sheets from M! Chapman.
My dearest, dearest Arabel, write to me—& write all the good you can in truth—& may God make the truth good— I hunger & thirst for a good letter. Remember what I prayed you—about yourself, I mean. Robert’s true love— My true tender love to you all. God bless you my dearly beloved Arabel— Ba

Address: (Angleterre via France) / Miss Barrett / 50 Wimpole Street / London.

Publication: None traced.

Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. 2 November 1856 was the Sunday after the Brownings’ arrival in Florence on 30 October 1856.
2. Perhaps an allusion to their childhood games at Hope End, which EBB described in a letter to her grandmother in July 1816: “We have played at a new game lately, we have each been Queen, or King of some country, or island, for example I and Arabella are the empresses of the Hyeres” (BC, 1, 25). EBB was disappointed not to see Hyères, as well as Cannes and Nice, as she explained to her brother George a few days earlier; see B-GB, p. 220.
3. Cf. Othello, V, 2, 144-145: “If heaven would make me such another world / Of one entire and perfect chrysolite.”
4. However, he made periodic return visits to Florence when the Brownings saw him.
5. Arthur Tennyson (d. 1899) was the sixth and youngest of the Tennyson brothers. In a letter to RB dated 7 January [1854], Robert Bulwer Lytton wrote that he had “made the acquaintance of Arthur T[ennyson] at last. He is not the genius we expected, but in all other respects has fulfilled our wildest anticipations; for he dined with me one evg, got !  and his brother has since requested that he may never come up here again. . . . Truly, I don’t doubt but what Frederic regards this winebibbing brother of his as one of the lost sheep, to be at the last shut out of the gates of Jerusalem (BBIS-10, p. 57).
6. Underscored twice.
7. See letter 121, note 11.
8. See letter 150, note 5.

Letter 166

Florence.
Nov. 23. [1856]

My very dearest Arabel I do thank you from my heart for your darling letter like yourself. I have been growling like a wounded bear for a letter, a letter—so frightened that I didn’t dare say I was frightened—you understand. Here, where there’s nothing to distract one, I think of you over & over, turning you round—first, it’s papa—then, it’s you— But you are a darling for writing,—&
Letter 166  
23 November [1856] 790

you have done me, .. oh, so much good!— But, dearest, you should get my letter on the fifth day, & I cant conceive how it is that you waited nine days for it. Well—no growling any more on my part—& for you, you may rely on hearing from me. Dearest George, was very good to let me hear of your safe arrival—but I did not write immediately because I took it into my wise head that you were going to write immediately. The weather here is very cold—ice in the streets—such a thing unknown at the time of year: but I suffer more from languor than any other cause—& the cough keeps off surprisingly. There is certainly something in the atmosphere here, apart from the temperature, which is favorable to me. So much to set you at ease about me,—doing as I would be done by. Penini is in full bloom & great spirits. You cant think how pretty he looks in his new blouses. Only yesterday, two English gentlemen stood still to look at him—“What a beautiful child! So graceful! such splendid hair.” ‘You should’nt hear such things,’ observed Wilson. “And pray why not,” said he, walking on with an air— I am happy to say that he attends much more to his lessons, & that we have to praise him for a general improvement in goodness. I read your letter to him, as far as concerned him, & he was very pleased. He tries to be good, I think,—having told us that he meant to “turn over a new leaf really.” Last night I heard him saying his prayers—“Oh dear God, make me dooy by your Holy Spirit.” Still, the ecclesiastical vocation seems to have passed—it was the gravity of M! Kenyon’s house which threw him on that—and now he has taken to his soldiering as absorbedly as ever, & is frightfully Italian, talking of “you English” with great contempt. We have bought a new little bed for him & put it into our room, as we could’nt leave him with Wilson & Ferdinando. Then he goes to his own room (that is, Wilson’s) to dress. Ferdinando has a room of his own to dress in— Yes, our house is very, very comfortable, & strikes me so, even after all M! Kenyon’s luxuries—and if you were here to see, you would say so. Still Florence is flat, Robert says, after London & Paris. Therefore fittest I say, for the attitude of repose. Not to be obliged to do anything, is a delightful novelty to me just now,—even though I am of course expecting to be torn to pieces for what I have done— The best is, that I dont feel any more afraid of it—, Florence seems so out of sight & out of hearing of the whole world. I shall not have to face a man who has just read my book & is thinking what a shameless wretch I am,—& that’s an inexpressible comfort to a woman who is brave in thought & in writing, but socially & personally covetous of the quiet & safe side of the street, to almost an ignoble degree— Oh! <Annie Hayes,> What a letter. And who is Colonel Downing,? I wonder .. you must try to get me out of this. Explain to her if she comes, and if she seems to insist on her request following me to Italy (for it may be enough to say that I am gone) .. explain to her how I have nothing to do with the book, & have to pay for every copy I give—which is the case, you know— It is’nt as if a publisher simply printed for me. Cool indeed,—, on her part- But try to smooth matters so that I may not appear unkind. I would give her ‘Aurora’ if I thought she really cared for it, and if I were in London—but as it is,—well, it does seem to me an astonishing proceeding on her part.— How sad is your account of dear M! Hunter. Tell me, Arabel. Do you mean to say that his mind is impaired? Where is Mary? What are her present prospects? Is she distressed much,—& has she lost all hope of her father’s being better. Is he able to read & employ himself? Tell me a little more— What sort of ‘hospital’ is it? an establishment where he can have comfort & seclusion? tell me— I had seen in the paper Alfred’s arrival at Madeira, & now
am very glad that Lizzy sailed as she did. No, Arabel,—I fear much that it is merely outside prettiness with her—only she is so very, very pretty, that one would fain give the outward credit for the inward—

Talking of prettiness, the daguerotype of Henrietta's children, which she gave to me, was left, through Wilson's mistake, in Wimpole Street. I have been very angry & vexed, because it looked so like a perfect indifference & ingratitude on my side, to Henrietta's kindness—But after all, the thing is arranged rightly—it was right that you should have the picture, & I give it up to your hands & am the more satisfied that I always felt you ought to have it! Its a very pretty picture, isn't it? & so like both the children, that I wish there was as good a one extant of my little Pen. Talking of him, there was no difficulty between him & the French sailors, on account of their being French, I can assure you—He gets on capitally with the French, & has no shyness about speaking. In Paris, he went out with M! Browning & astonished him by the facility with which he asked the road & interpreted generally for the 'grandpapa', who himself makes no progress from year's end to year's end, in this matter of the foreign language. Penini goes with Robert to hear M! Hanna preach—but really Arabel, I have my secret doubts whether we do well in making him go. M! Hanna is tremendous in heaviness as a preacher—& a child cannot by any possibility keep up his attention. It is difficult to say what should be done under such circumstances,—for though you hate me for saying so my darling Arabel, I do believe in my soul that a child's spiritual nature would be better served by sending him into a kneeling Catholic congregation with his little prayer for five minutes, than by overburthening him with a load of Scotch orthodoxy for an hour & a half. Still, there are objections, I am aware. What may be good now, will act ill, perhaps, on the future—& it might be dangerous to attach a child's devout associations to forms which are associated, on their side, with such an amount of dogmatic error. So Peni goes on to M! Hanna's service, and I sigh for the renewing of the churches in certain respects—for the letting in of more sunshine & air & natural beauty. It will not be perhaps, in my time, but it will be, I think. The world is preparing for some unforeseen spiritual developments—Well. Talking of the R. Catholic church (which will suit them little) M! Aubrey De Vere spent about five hours with me alone the other evening, (while Robert was having tea with Isa Blagden), discoursing on that form of faith. He is a convert within these few years—very devout, very learned, very fluent, almost eloquent & quite acute. He left me with great respect for him, but perfectly untouched by his arguments,—though somewhat exhausted by having to listen & talk so long. Nothing ever does touch me from that quarter of heaven,—my own tendencies are so different. Ending, I thought he was in the way to be saved,—he thought I was'nt ... I had the curiosity to ask him about the process of his conversion—& of course he told me that he had begun by High-churchism—according to the Anglican model. Of course. He was on his way through Florence to Rome, & we parted, excellent friends. He is a very interesting person, & a good Christian—by whatever name he may call himself—for, fortunately, it does not alter a man's identity that he should choose to shut himself up in prison for the term of his natural life.

Oh, Arabel, if you heard all the evidence to the 'manifestations' here in Florence, you would be shaken, though Robert is'nt. It is curious the amount of hatred of Hume, combined with the amount of testimony to the phenomena. Here are people who would be enchanted to be able to
set it all down as trickery, & they turn to Hume’s witnesses—they can do no other. M’ Trollope 
was here the other day—he said it was impossible there could have been “machinery” in his 
house. I made my observations all the time he talked. When we were in Florence last, M’ Trollope 
believed in neither angel nor spirit—he was a free-thinker of the freest order. Now he confesses 
himself perplexed beyond measure,—confounded, in fact. M’ Kinney the ex-american-minister 
from Turin, sate here three quarters of an hour the day before yesterday—said,—a spiritual hand, 
cut off at the wrist (without drapery) took hold of his on the table—felt it, pressed it, shook it,— 
& that he saw, as well as felt—said, that he, too, tried to lift up the pencil from the table, put out 
his strength, & failed,—said that an accordion went playing before his eyes in the air, and then 
settled a foot above the table between him & M’ Powers, (having ceased playing)—said that he 
tried to push this accordion down on the table, & that he failed—the instrument being supported 
in the air as steadily as if it stood on the table—said, that, not only he looked, but carried his 
hands under & round it, to prove that it had no material support of any kind. He concluded that it 
was absolutely absurd to suppose any sort of legerdemain capable of accounting for such effects. 
After this testimony, he called Hume “a baboon” & expressed extraordinary contempt for him. 

In fact Hume has offended everybody by his agreeable habit of repeating to each, his neighbour’s 
opinion of him, . . . which in such a society as this of Florence, could not be otherwise than fatal! I 
was entirely right in all my suppositions—only the testimony to the facts, is stronger than I sup­ 
posed, & stronger than, under the circumstances, could be anticipated by most persons. 

M’ Jerves tells me that the last manifestations in America refer to the making of flowers—a 
real flower is produced before the eyes of all . . . gradually made, as I understood him. Then there 
is spiritual writing on the skin—the skin raised up to present letters, as in printing for the blind. 
The movement is spreading wider & wider.

I have had a letter lately from Miss Bayley; & dear M’ Kenyon has had, she says, ‘a slight 
relapse,’—though she does not seem to apprehend anything, & even talks of venturing “to leave 
him for a few days in December.” She tells us that the Edward Kenyons have arrived in Vienna, 
& that the correspondence henceforth between the brothers is likely to be of the slightest kind. I 
cant think of this final breach with the equanimity she exercises—though I perfectly acquit her 
of all blame in causing it. But it remains to me a very melancholy fact, however caused. Ma’m 
Braun refuses her offers of a home, & determines to reside on in Rome— I felt that she could not 
return to re-settle herself in England, & Miss Bayley considered me most unreasonable for say­ 
ing so. Not that I would have stayed on at Rome exactly—but to take up the old life in England 
would have been impossible to me still more.

I hope two copies of ‘Aurora’ went to Wimpole Street, for you & George. If not, you must 
enquire after them. We have heard nothing yet of course, (as this is only the 23rd) except by the 
advertisement, of the price of the book, which I protest against as far too much.? How can people 
be expected to buy a book at such a price?——

Oh yes, Arabel—Arlette overworks her children; & I think it very unwise both to give a four 
months holiday, & to make up for it by such means.

I go on writing of anything but what I am thinking of . . . you—but it w’d not be amusing to 
you to talk only of yourself. If ever you think of me in love, prove it, dearest dear, by taking care
of me in yourself—by not doing too much; by not exposing yourself to cold weather—by using means when you require them. Now that I am at a distance from you, I am at your mercy, Arabel, & you must be generous & care for me. Also write,—& tell me of papa—I am very anxious. Are his spirits tolerably good. I think you should try to get people to dine—It must be good for him. I am rather sorry that Dr Elliotson does not attend. May God bless you, my beloved, & all of you. I love & wish good to you all. Peni’s love & Robert’s—

Your own Ba.

Address: Angleterre via France. / Miss Barrett / 50. Wimpole Street / London.
Publication: None traced.
Manuscript: Gordon E. Moulton-Barrett.

1. Year provided by postmark.
2. Name in angle brackets was cancelled after receipt, probably by Arabella.
3. Unidentified.
4. See letter 32, note 11, as well as EBB’s comments in the following letter; Hunter’s health steadily declined, and he died a few months later in February 1857.
5. Aubrey de Vere (1814–1902), Irish poet and author, was received into the Roman Catholic Church in November 1851. Interestingly, EBB makes no reference here to De Vere’s earlier criticisms of her poetry, which she seems to have known from a letter written to Sara Coleridge in April 1845 (see BC, 10, 168). Soon after de Vere’s departure to Rome, RB wrote: “I was much interested … by the hours you gave me on that last evening of yours in Florence, and grateful, too, and not ‘tired.’ The sense of the spiritual, the exercise of the soul’s instinct, the attitude of the life towards the Truth and the Love, are always interesting to me. I am never tired of sunrises (Wilfrid Ward, Aubrey de Vere: a Memoir, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904, p. 216).
6. Underscored twice.
7. i.e., twelve shillings; however, the second and third editions were also sold at this price. Proposing the venture to Chapman six months earlier, RB had written: “As for the price, your own judgment must guide you there; we have a certain hankering after low prices, certainly” (NL, p. 91).

Letter 167

Florence

Dec 10. [1856]¹

Beloved Arabel, I am obstinate. True—the letter you posted on the second reached me on the ninth: but the cause of that, & of any other delay of letters, has been delay on account of weather, either in the channel or on the Alps—there has been stoppage everywhere this month, both in letters & newspapers. Otherwise, a letter posted with you on monday, is in my hands on saturday—and so, from me to you: remember! We have had the worst november known here for ten years²—snow on all the mountains—but the Arno unfrozen; no sign of frost on our windows, in spite of frost in our streets—no indeed, we would not change with you—and at our worst, you would have gained, my dearest, by sitting at our fireside, as you proposed. Such a fireside it has been! such fires. I was afraid of going to the diningroom during the cold, & so we dined here in the drawing room,—& my bedroom opening into this, there was warmth everywhere, & not a draught anywhere, . . . these two rooms, each as large as the drawingroom at Hope End, are very warm—and here is one of the advantages of Florence, even when Florence is at the coldest, that one may be
shut up from the cold & yet have air & space, as is not possible either in Paris or London. Penini has his little bed at the foot of ours, placed across—& a very pretty little bed it is, & it doesn’t crowd the room at all, notwithstanding the two sofas, & the new great wardrobe.

I have been well . . . except feeling weak & languid in the cold, which is always my way—but the cough kept back wonderfully—there was none to signify. Which I tell you to give you an example of open speech in such matters. You don’t say enough of yourself in this letter— Now, Arabel, keep in heart all my words, & if you love me, follow them. Are you doing yourself harm again by over work, & exposure? If you are, you may set it down that you love me—but nothing will ever make me believe that the love is any but of the very commonest & stingiest & most unsacrificial sort. I trust it to you therefore. As for papa, I am a little comforted about him just for the present—but the thought of him has been hanging like a stone about my heart for ever so long; now when I ought to be elated & delighted, I suppose, at the success of my poem. Well—I am glad, of course,—but it’s wonderful how little happy, this reaching, in a degree, what has been with me an object in life, has made me. If there was nobody to be uneasy about, how different it would feel, I say to myself. Robert, at least, is happy in the success of the poem. When people write & talk of the “jealousy” of authors & husbands, let them look at him! only that he has the most exceptional heart of gold, to be found, perhaps, in this world, or nearly so . . . in the bosom of men. Yes, Arabel, I have come after ten years to that conclusion. He has a quite wonderful great-heartedness. — To go back to the poem, its success has been extraordinary—rendering it necessary to go to press with the second edition, a fortnight after publication—What surprises me most is, that there have been no violent attacks, except from the ‘Press’—only, of course, these must come with the monthly & quarterly reviews. Meantime, it is taken up into favour with certain persons, to the amount of a mania—with some, perhaps, on account of the story, & with others probably, on account of the philosophy which is . . . not originated . . . but presented for the first time poetically. It strikes me that men like Ruskin for instance, are excited by this chiefly.4 Otherwise I don’t account for the state of things at all. I take no credit to myself for it, for the best poets are inevitably most neglected—nobody can be surer of that, than I. For the rest, I am very pleased that I should have pleased you in this,—not displeased you, as I feared some things might. I would not send a copy to M! Stratten. It seemed to me unbecoming for obvious reasons; (tell me what he says) but that I should have allowed him to buy a copy, seems wrong too. Arabel—I want Mary Hunter to have a copy—but she must wait for the second edition now—& I should advise her to wait for the third, which will be in two volumes, Chapman says, & of the smaller form. Oh—so sad it makes me to think of dear M! Hunter. Get Mary to come & talk to you, & try to ascertain exactly in what position he is—whether he has a room to himself,—& how he is precisely,—whether he can employ himself at all. You know uncle James has, & has had for years, the same affliction, & yet he is not absolutely prostrated. M! Hunter’s consciousness for instance—his connection of ideas—how is it with him there? Something might be done, by his friends, to gather comforts around him,—might it not? I am very grieved. Tell me as much as you can. Shall you be able to go & see him, Arabel, when he is settled? If Mary could attain to pupils, she might take him home in time.—— Dearest, you needn’t think of it, I never will take back that Daguereotype. Dont let us fight over it, therefore. I was always of opinion that
you should have it,—and the Fates having by a sleight of hand (and Wilson's slightness of under-
standing) put it into your drawer. I shall be forced (if your obstinacy renders it necessary) to
take some dreadful oath, never never to call it mine. No. Henrietta & I have arranged that—it's
not your affair, and I beg you'll mind your own business & the Refuge, & leave us to settle our's.

Dec. 14—Some days have passed since I wrote the above; for just then I was interrupted by
Robert's coming in with his letter containing the sorrowful, sorrowful news from Cowes. Miss
Bayley wrote to us the same morning, but the post loitered—. You have heard everything per-
haps—He passed away without suffering, after much, I fear—but the last two days could not have
been very heavy, as he was conscious only at intervals. My beloved & too generous friend—
think how I must feel, Arabel. Not that I fear for him—indeed no. If he did not see much light, he
felt much love, & he yearned aspiringly towards the truth & the Good. Now he is put into a better
position for seeing & knowing. The very act of life here was so laborious to him, that we should
be comforted for his ceasing to live under such conditions—but for me (& how many besides)
the loss is great. For these ten years he has put himself in the place of my own father, in taking
care, for me & mine, that we did not want. We should have wanted much, except for him. His
last act with regard to that book of mine, was to buy & distribute among his friends forty seven
copies—which was important to me chiefly, of course, as being expressive of the tender feeling
with which he accepted my dedication—Also. . . but I will talk of these things presently. A more
princely heart, it would be hard to find among the princes of men & angels.

Of course we are in mourning—not Penini, but ourselves. The relationship was enough to
justify the sign of affection & gratitude—It is very pleasant to me to think of our fortnight with
him at Cowes, & of his loving countenance & bearing to us while he suffered so. I feel that it is
an affection gone from the earth to make the spiritual world a still sweeter & more familiar
place, to us travelling that way—

Dec. 18—My very dearest Arabel, I have kept this letter far too long, but Robert wanted me
to keep it in order to tell you of whatever we might hear from England—& now I really want
keep it one day more—because it will be at the risk of making you uneasy—Now, Arabel, I know
what you have had in your head—& you will remember what I have always had in mine. M' E
K's being called away first, seemed to open out certain possibilities, (since he, if he had lived, w^d
have had everything, & our dear friend was of a too generous & noble nature to allow of an
unfortunate misunderstanding's making any difference whatever)—but it has to Robert & me
appeared always a great improbability that we should be remembered otherwise than by securing
to us the hundred a year we have been recipients of during the last seven years. Now, as we hear
nothing, . . not a word—& Robert says we might have heard several days ago . . I conclude that
there is nothing to be heard, & that by some slip of the memory (not of the affection certainly)
we have been passed over, & shall have to do without the yearly assistance given to us hitherto.
I say . . "of the memory"—because, years ago, our dear friend said, . . "this is, if I live or die"; so
that, if he had remembered, we should not have lost it. Well—you cannot imagine perhaps, how
very little this seems to matter to me now—we must work a little harder—that is all. We have
only one child,—& Penini will have enough in what we shall leave him. Then the success of
'Aurora' is a great thing—will be as to money-results. The extravagant things said about that
poem, would make you smile (as they make me)—and there's one sort of compliment which
would please you particularly . . . people are fond of calling it “a gospel”—10 That's happy—is'nt
it? You suppose perhaps that one unlucky individual calls it so? Not in the least: it's the favorite
phrase, in letters from England—in gossip at Florence— And even from America the other day,
the publisher writes . . “we have received M! Browning's gospel”. I said to Robert, . . “Now this
grows too much. I really must gratify Arabel by telling her at once.” So I tell you. Is it entirely
prophane, or simply ridiculous? I leave you to choose. Still, that there is an amount of spiritual
truth in the book to which the public is unaccustomed, I know very well,—only, I was helped to
it—did not originate it—& was tempted much (by a natural feeling of honesty) to say so in the
poem, & was withheld by nothing except a conviction that the naming of the name of Swedenborg,
that great Seer into the two worlds, would have utterly destroyed any hope of general acceptance
& consequent utility. Instead of M! Browning's 'gospel', it w: have been M! Browning's
rhodomontade! What! that impostor, Swedenborg! that madman, Swedenborg.” But that impostor
& madman, such as he is, holds sublime truths in his right hand, & most humbly I have used
them as I could. My desire is, that the weakness in me, may not hinder the influence. Mind you
tell me what M! Stratten says. (Not that you need repeat to him what I have written above.—)
Mind you thank dearest George for the newspapers, he sent to me. Did you see the Daily News?11
The Tablet turns on me like a tiger, & calls 'Aurora' a “brazen-faced woman”, . . & the whole
poem “like a novel by Frederic Soulié”12 . . which means, something highly improper. But I
agree with you in wondering at the manner in which, generally speaking, I have escaped the
charge of impropriety: it's quite beyond my own expectation. Oh yes, Arabel, dearest . . seeing a
book by bits, as you & George read mine, was just the way to throw out the doubtful things in a
sort of artificial relief. The whole keeps down the parts, & makes them seem decenter, of course.
Any way, I am very much pleased that you should like the book as you say—it's a great pleasure
to me.

Such a letter has come from M! Ruskin! unqualified in its praise.13

Robert has come in—& there is no letter. He still expects one, he says. It may come, (I say)
but it is not likely, after this pause, that the contents should be very important to us,—though the
hundred a year may (by just a possibility) be secured. Of course I would not write of these things
to any but yourself— To you, silence would be mere affectation, & a very unkind affectation
too,—knowing, as I do, that you are, or have been, anxious about us. Have been—probably. By
this time, you may know more than we do— On the whole, the likelihood seems to me that Miss
Bayley has the bulk of the property,14 —& really in that case, I shall not consider the disposition
otherwise than natural. For nearly a year, she has been everything to our beloved friend,—and
the claim of near relationship (such as his brother's) being withdrawn, nothing so near remained,
as her own— I talk to you as if we were together talking.

Penini continues much more good— I have half persuaded Robert to let him have a music-
master from this street15—a man who is happy with children—& if we are not suddenly forced to
contract our expenses I shall complete the persuasion. On hearing him say his prayers the other
day . . to my surprise, I found that he ended his little liturgy with the Lord's prayer,—which he
repeated very sweetly & understandably, & without one mistake. Said I, afterwards . . “I did'nt
know Peni, that you had learnt it.” “Yes,” he said, “it tamed into my mind that I should like to say it—so I learnt it out of the French phrase-book . . . at the end. I almost knew it before, I had heard it so often—and it was’nt at all hard.” Wilson told me that for some days he had added it to his prayers, morning & evening. You know how afraid I had always been lest he should say it before he comprehended it—as has been the way with most of us—Darling child. There are no difficulties now with his lessons—He is very good. And he liked your message so much, dearest dearest Arabel. Through dawdling so over this letter I have had time to accumulate anxieties—and now your last news is no longer satisfying. How is Papa now? and yourself, dearest? I beseech you to write quickly,—& not to use your habitual delays— I live with you all with my dream-life—wondering, hoping, fearing! Be good to me Arabel, & mind what I have said to you again & again. We have had very warm weather since I began this letter . . . how long ago? Robert’s best love.

Your own Ba—
such comments that I have been able to trace. See EBB’s comments in the following letter in defence of her belief in Swedenborg.

11. This review appeared in the issue of 26 November 1856. The Tablet (Dublin) review was published in the 29 November 1856 issue.

12. Frédéric Soulié (1800-47) was one of the contemporary French novelists that EBB had read and discussed with Miss Mitford, for example see EBB’s letter, dated 4 February 1845, in which she encouraged her friend to read Soulié’s Mémoires du Diable, “though they stink in one’s nostrils not infrequently & are full of most gorgeous extravagances” (BC, 10, 57). The reviewer in The Tablet (Dublin) of 29 November 1856, remarked that having read Aurora Leigh, he now had “the painful duty of recording, in the mildest phrase at our command, the deep disappointment and repugnance with which it has inspired us,” and he compared the poem to “a translation into blank verse of a French novel by Frederic Soulié.” Describing the character of Aurora Leigh, he called her “a bad specimen even of her very unattractive class,” as well as “a very ridiculous person” and “intolerably tedious.” However, it was not Aurora but rather Lady Waldemar who was called “brazen-faced”: “avowing her passion to Aurora with brazen-faced effrontery” (p. 762).

13. See note 4 above.

14. Kenyon was generous to Sarah Bayley (see letter 81, note 8), but he made other bequests as large or larger than the one to her. Writing of Kenyon’s death and generous legacies, Bryan Waller Procter told RB in late December 1856 that “Miss Bayley who nursed him for so many months, might have had anything I believe—yet she has comparatively a small (certainly a moderate) legacy” (ms at Brown).

15. See letter 114, note 16.
Appendix I

Checklist of Letters from EBB to Arabella
January 1857–June 1861

The following is a list of the letters from EBB (& Browning) written between January 1857 through June 1861. The numbering sequence follows the current series.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Manuscript Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>25 January [1857]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169</td>
<td>[12–] 14 February [1857]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>[20–] 21 March [1857]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>171</td>
<td>3 April [1857]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>[29 April 1857]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>[29 April 1857]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174</td>
<td>[3 June 1857]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>7–8 July [1857]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>177</td>
<td>23 July [1857]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>28 September [1857]</td>
<td>Berg &amp; Moulton-Barrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179</td>
<td>2 October [1857]</td>
<td>Berg &amp; Moulton-Barrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>7 November [1857]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>22 November [1857]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>183</td>
<td>25 January [1858]</td>
<td>Berg &amp; Moulton-Barrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185</td>
<td>[24 March 1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>186</td>
<td>12 April [1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>187</td>
<td>[12 June 1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>188</td>
<td>[26 June 1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>189</td>
<td>[26 June 1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>190</td>
<td>7 July [1858]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191</td>
<td>[10 July 1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192</td>
<td>30 July [1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>193</td>
<td>4 August [1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>194</td>
<td>[8 August 1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>195</td>
<td>[17 October 1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>196</td>
<td>27 October [1858]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>197</td>
<td>13 November [1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198</td>
<td>[25 November 1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>199</td>
<td>24–25 December [1858]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date/Event</td>
<td>Collector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 January 1859</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ca. 28] Feb – 5 March 1859</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 March 1859</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 April 1859</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 June [1859]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 June 1859</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7–8 October [1859]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 October [1859]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 December [1859]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 January [1860]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7–8 February [1860]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 April [1860]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 May [1860]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 June 1860</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 June [1860]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June 1860</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 July [1860]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 July [1860]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 August 1860</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 August [1860]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 September 1860</td>
<td>Eton College Library</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 October [1860]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 October 1860</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 November 1860</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 December 1860</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 December 1860</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 December 1860</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 December 1860</td>
<td>Berg &amp; Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 January 1861</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 January 1861</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[?5] [February 1861]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 March [1861]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[?20] [April 1861]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 May [1861]</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 May 1861</td>
<td>Berg Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 June [1861]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 June [1861]</td>
<td>G.E. Moulton-Barrett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix II

A Chronology of Political and Social History
September 1846–December 1856

1846
Louis Napoleon goes to England after escaping from prison.
Repeal of the Corn Laws.
Russell forms a Liberal administration after Peel resigns.

1847
(12 September) Leopold II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, grants the right to form a Civic Guard to the Florentines. The Brownings watch the celebrations from Palazzo Guidi, which EBB later recalls in Casa Guidi Windows.

1848
(February) The Grand Duke grants a constitution to the people of Tuscany.
A republic is declared in France. The Brownings are enthusiastic at first, but they are suspicious of the influence of socialists, such as Louis Blanc, Charles Fourier, and Pierre Joseph Proudhon, all of whom EBB denounces in Aurora Leigh.
(December) Louis Napoleon Bonaparte is elected President of the Republic of France.
The Brownings never agree on his motives—EBB becomes a strong supporter, and RB remains suspicious of the French leader.

1849
(February) Leopold II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, joins Pope Pius IX at Gaeta.
Mazzini comes to Florence to support the republican movement.
(March) Tuscans who had joined Sardinian troops against the Austrians are defeated at Novara. The Sardinian (Piedmontese) King, Charles Albert, refuses to accept the terms of surrender and abdicates in favor of his son Victor Emmanuel.
(April) Francesco Guerrazzi, leader of the Tuscan republic, is overthrown.
Kossuth declares Hungary independent of the Habsburg (Austrian) Empire, but he resigns a few months later in August 1849.
(May) Austrian troops occupy Florence and the Grand Duke is restored to power. EBB observes these events, which probably date the beginning of the second part of Casa Guidi Windows, in which she expresses her disappointment in Leopold’s betrayal of Tuscany.
(June) French troops suppress the Roman Republic, and the Pope is restored, but EBB maintains her trust in Louis Napoleon.
1850

(September) Pius IX issues a Bull re-establishing the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England. This leads to a strong anti-Catholic sentiment in England, resulting in numerous books and pamphlets on the "papal aggression" (see letter 58).

(November) Tennyson announced to succeed Wordsworth as Poet Laureate.

1851

(2 December) Louis Napoleon leads a successful coup d’état. EBB’s support for the French leader is rewarded when the coup is backed by a significant majority in a plebiscite held on the 20th.

1852

(February) Derby forms a minority administration, but soon resigns in dispute over Disraeli’s budget.

(14 September) The Duke of Wellington, aged 83, dies.

(December) Aberdeen forms a coalition government with Gladstone as Chancellor. EBB was sceptical of his willingness to negotiate with Russia.

(December) Louis Napoleon is proclaimed Napoleon III and the Second Empire begins.

1853

(29 January) Napoleon III marries Eugénie de Montijo.

Aberdeen’s negotiations with Russia, France and Turkey over Turkish territorial disputes finally fail.

1854

(March) The Crimean War begins when Britain and France declare war on Russia.

1855

(January) Aberdeen’s coalition administration resigns.

1856

(April) Peace proclaimed in the Crimea.
Bibliography

Primary Sources

Manuscripts
Manuscript Letters in the Armstrong Browning Library of Baylor University; the Berg Collection, New York Public Library; Eton College Library; the Lilly Library, Bloomington, Indiana; collection of Capt. Gordon Edward Moulton-Barrett; and the English Poetry Collection, Wellesley College.

Transcripts of manuscript letters previously in the possession of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., in the editor’s file.

Unpublished manuscript “Recollections of Mary Altham, May 1936,” in the possession of Mary V. Altham.

Works by Elizabeth Barrett Browning


Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning


[803]
Works by Robert Browning


Letters of Robert Browning


Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning


Contemporary Reviews of the EBB's Poetry


“Casa Guidi Windows” The Spectator, 28 June 1851, 617.

Secondary Sources

(Books and articles are listed alphabetically by name of author or editor.)


Bibliography


Index

Aberdeen, 4th Earl of (George Hamilton Gordon), 670
Abraham, 681
Académie Française, 483
Adam, 540, 550, 562
Addams, Sarah Fuller (née Flower), 593, 602
Addams, Arabella, 525, 528n
Addams, Arabella (née Bishop), 525, 528n
Addams, Jesse, 525
Adelaide, Queen, 178
Aidé, Charles Hamilton, 734n, 738
Aidé, Georgina (née Collier), 754
Aidés, The, 732, 754
Aix, 78
Aladdin, 131
Alajnier, Mme., 92
Almack's Assembly Rooms, 178
Alps, The, 204, 281, 383, 391, 392, 393, 394, 497, 498, 499, 504, 510, 679, 686, 793
Alexis, clairvoyant, 744
Alfieri, Vittorio, 151
Allingham, William, 37
Allnatt, Richard Hopkins, 205, 209n, 294, 369
Almack's Assembly Rooms, 178
Arno (river), 78, 111, 134, 152, 174, 212, 274, 360, 672, 680, 737, 793
Arnould, Joseph, 94n
Arnoulds, The Joseph, 297
Aurora, 781, 788
Aurora Leigh (EBB), 29, 32, 38, 48–52, 70n, 99n, 254, 288n, 453n, 455n, 457, 523, 535, 541, 558, 640, 668, 677, 679, 682n, 683, 729n, 733, 737, 740, 741, 744, 748, 752, 754, 758, 771–774, 776, 777, 779, 780, 782–784, 788, 792, 794, 795
Aurora Leigh (EBB), 29, 32, 38, 48–52, 70n, 99n, 254, 288n, 453n, 455n, 457, 523, 535, 541, 558, 640, 668, 677, 679, 682n, 683, 729n, 733, 737, 740, 741, 744, 748, 752, 754, 758, 771–774, 776, 777, 779, 780, 782–784, 788, 792, 794, 795
Aurora Leigh (EBB), 29, 32, 38, 48–52, 70n, 99n, 254, 288n, 453n, 455n, 457, 523, 535, 541, 558, 640, 668, 677, 679, 682n, 683, 729n, 733, 737, 740, 741, 744, 748, 752, 754, 758, 771–774, 776, 777, 779, 780, 782–784, 788, 792, 794, 795
Aurora Leigh (EBB), 29, 32, 38, 48–52, 70n, 99n, 254, 288n, 453n, 455n, 457, 523, 535, 541, 558, 640, 668, 677, 679, 682n, 683, 729n, 733, 737, 740, 741, 744, 748, 752, 754, 758, 771–774, 776, 777, 779, 780, 782–784, 788, 792, 794, 795
Austen, Cassandra, 27
Austen, Jane, 27
Australasia, 486, 511, 519, 552
Australia, 102, 153, 175, 198, 258, 274, 275, 279, 287, 300, 320, 502, 571
Australia, 486, 511, 519, 552
Australia, 102, 153, 175, 198, 258, 274, 275, 279, 287, 300, 320, 502, 571
Index
809

Barrett, Gordon E. Moulton- (EBB’s great-grandnephew), 57
Barrett, Harry Peyton Moulton- (“Como”), (EBB’s nephew), 56
appeals to father, 336
courtship with Surtees Cook, 84, 93
health, 186
miscarriage, 677
pregnancies, 335, 343, 374, 449, 468, 704, 735, 749
letters to, 18, 22, 36, 37, 55, 56, 81, 131, 147, 195, 332, 338, 350, 422, 585, 613, 636, 674, 686, 704, 726, 757
likenesses of, 233, 248
marriage, 325, 332
opinion of Captain Reynolds, 132
letters from, 237, 356
letters to, 56, 472
Barrett, Mary Moulton- (née Graham-Clarke), (mother), 19
letters from, 20
Barrett, Octavius Butler Barrett Moulton- (“Occy”), (brother), 23, 53, 102, 127, 134, 172, 331, 377, 410, 486, 552, 564, 574, 591, 713
Barrett, Samuel Goodin (cousin), 103, 109, 216, 234
letter from, 102
letter to, 248
Barrett, Susanna Maria (née Bell), (cousin), 103, 109, 234
Barrow, Frances Elizabeth (née Mease) Apple Dumpling, The, 675
Barry, Charles, 23, 127
Barton Court, 230
Bastia (Corsica), 688, 694
Bate, Gerardine (“Geddie”), 70n, 74, 96, 148, 181, 260 travels with the Brownings, 68, 76, 78
see also Macpherson, Gerardine (née Bate)
Bath, 740
Baths of Lucca, see Bagni di Lucca
Bayford, Augustus Frederic (EBB’s cousin), 363
Bayford, Frances (née Ielshtine), (EBB’s cousin), 238, 239
Bayford, James (EBB’s cousin), 363
Bayford, Julia (EBB’s cousin), 365n, 452, 639
Bayfords, The, 452
Bayley, Robert Riddell, 466, 714
Bayley, Sarah, 43, 97, 99n, 155, 309, 310, 466, 467n, 529, 531, 735, 740, 758, 770, 772, 774, 775, 792, 796
health, 770
letters from, 192, 225, 271, 276, 538, 549, 735, 758, 772, 792, 795
letter to, 589
nurses John Kenyon, 758, 772, 777
Bayswater, 466, 471, 491, 496, 557, 619
Beadnell, Maria, 318
Beatrice Cenci (Guerrazzi), 451
Beccafumi, Domenico, 357
Beckwith, Mr., 689
Beethoven, Ludwig van, 481, 619, 684
Belaggio, 393
Belgium, 489
Bell, Matthew, 96
Bell, Robert (chemist), 92, 95
Belle Assemblée, or Court and Fashionable Magazine, La, 102
Bellinzona, 393
Bellosguardo, 191
Bells and Pomegranates (RB), 99n, 119n
expenses of, 114
“Ben Karshook’s Wisdom” (RB), 627n
Benedictines, 162
Bennett, William James Early, 371
Bentivoglio, Margherita Trotti di (Countess de Collegno), 483
Béranger, Pierre Jean de, 755
Berg Collection, 57
Bergin, Arnaud, 746, 751, 762
Barry, Caroline Ferdinande Louise, Duchess de, 223
“Bertha in the Lane” (EBB), 448
Best, Mary Catherine (née Cliffe), 238
Bevan, Arabella (née Hedley), (EBB’s cousin), 93, 95n, 129, 131, 132, 168, 186, 305, 342, 665, 763
Bevan, James Johnstone, 93, 95n, 112, 131, 132, 143, 153, 168, 186, 261, 305, 421, 665
Bevans, The, 86, 208, 217, 223, 260, 363, 503, 763
Bexley, 688
Bianchardi, Stanislao, 57
Bible, The, 30, 31, 596, 615, 771, 773
Doux Version, 310
King James’s (“Authorized Version”), 310
New Testament, 32
Bible, The (cont.)

Index

Old Testament, The 228

Protestant, 511


Revelation, 631

Romans, 337

Song of Solomon, 228

Blondi, Sig., 509, 787

Blondi, Sig.na, 509


Biscoe, Joseph, 287

“Bishop Blougram’s Apology” (RB), 112n, 234n, 373n

Blackett, Frances Mary, 432, 436n

Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine, 41, 419, 741

EBB’s contributions to, 81, 102, 112, 115, 222, 232, 233, 245, 312

reviews RB’s Men and Women, 742n


health, 623, 635, 645

knee complaint, 647, 654, 659

letters from, 513, 524

letters to, 43–44, 53, 54, 491, 623, 704

meets the Brownings, 319

residences

Villa Moutier, 635, 658

Villa Torrigiani, 656, 658

Blake, Kathleen, 50

Blake, William, 31, 191

Blanc, Jean Joseph Charles Louis, 449, 524

Blessington, Marguerite, Countess of, 765

Blizzard, Mrs., 92

Blomfield, Charles James (Bishop of London), 371

Blot in the ‘Scutcheon, A (RB), 80, 83n

Bluebeard’s chambers, 370

Boboli Gardens, 147, 163, 169, 171, 214, 510, 534, 536, 538, 541, 553

Bois de Boulogne, 481, 510, 740

Bologna, 109, 214, 379, 381, 383, 387

coup d’état of 1851, 429

entrance into Paris, 489, 491, 493

invites Home to Paris, 686

marriage, 525

rumors of divorce, 626

Bonaparte, Maria Eugenia Ignacia Augustina (née de Montijo de Guzman), 525, 527n, 568, 750

rumors of divorce, 626

Bonaparte, Napoléon Eugène Louis Jean Joseph, 750, 754, 756, 759

Bonheur, Marie Rosalie (“Rosa”), 699, 699n, 741

Bonser, Betty, 87, 90n, 710

Bordeaux, 489

Bordman, Eleanor Page, 72, 75n, 95, 122, 197, 206, 207, 215, 224

letters from, 72, 87, 122, 152, 222

letters to, 87, 121

see also Jago, Eleanor Page (née Bordman)

Borghese, Princess, 501

Boston, 244, 419, 427, 513, 559

Boulevard des Italiens, 491

Boulevard Marais, 758

Boulogne, 488, 575, 671, 701, 716, 768

Bourbon, Charles Louis de, 31, 337

Bourbon, Ludwig, 169

Bourbons, The, 223, 758

Bourges, Cathedral of, 74, 77

Bower, Harold Elyott, 496

“Boy and the Angel, The” (RB), 482n

Boyd, Ann (née Lowry), 553

Boyd, Hugh Stuart, 21, 23, 74, 87, 96, 97, 127, 135, 144, 150, 155, 164, 192, 197, 209, 211, 266, 274, 343
dea th, 274

health, 111

letters from, 21, 95, 123, 184

letters to, 21, 46, 54, 87, 171, 197

Boyle, Carolina, 178

Boyle, Carolina Amelia (née Poyntz), 178, 207, 211

Boyle, Charles John, 188

Boyle, Edmund, 8th Earl of Cork, 178

Boyle, Mary Louisa, 178, 179, 180n, 190, 205, 207

letters to, 178

visits the Brownings, 178, 188

Bramah, Joseph, 202

Brandling, The Misses, 450

Branicka, Count, 751, 755, 759

Braun, Anne (née Thomson), 309, 310, 311, 313n, 318, 615, 619, 620, 773, 775, 792

Braun, Emil, 309, 310, 318, 330, 619, 620, 775

Brauns, The, 377

Bremer, Frederika, 618n

Homes of the New World, The

M. Howitt’s translation of, 616, 620

Brescia, 393, 394

Brewer, Emilia Ann, 671

Bridel, Louis Philippe Benjamin, 30, 475

Brighton, 404, 735

Bristol, 778

British Museum, The, 102

Britanny, 229

Broadstairs, 705

Brompton, 239

Bronté, Charlotte

Jane Eyre, 320

Shirley, 320

“Brook: An Idyl, The” (Tennyson), 712

Brotheron, Augustus Hervey, 605
Index

Brotherton, Mary Index 811

Brotherton, Mary Isabella Irwin (née Rees), 605, 610n, 616

automatic writing, 626

contributions to The Athenœum, 605

Brougham and Vaux, Lord, 320, 483, 686

Brown, J. Newton, 616

Browning, Elizabeth Barrett (née Moulton-Barrett), (“Ba”)

attends opera/theatre, 385

Beethoven recital, 619

La Dame aux camélias, 479, 486

soirée musicale, 684

differs with RB, 500

on her lack of life’s experiences, 476

on Regina Kirkup, 788

over finances, 401, 706

over Napoleon III, 440, 758

over Pen, 386, 440

over politics, 430

over religious dogmas, 638

dreams

of Arabella, 101

of her family, 127

of her father, 500

of Trippy, 231, 393


improvement of, 77, 84, 91, 104, 130, 138, 139, 147, 167, 181, 183, 232, 253, 259, 264, 346, 357, 445, 449

loses voice, 439, 449

miscarriages, 121, 123, 304, 315, 345, 346

pregnancy and birth of Pen, 230, 236, 240, 253, 262, 263, 264, 268, 272

seasickness, 406, 412

use of opiates, 72, 95, 96, 104, 116, 121, 123, 161, 230, 240, 254, 259, 263

uses respirator, 96, 97, 457, 488, 489, 499

visits dentist, 504

income, 80, 211, 212, 291, 341, 346, 388, 391, 392, 397, 398, 427

languages

French, 397

Italian, 397

letters to her father, 81, 272, 276, 303, 321, 363, 379, 388, 402, 409

likenesses of, 77, 198, 380, 566, 569, 581, 596, 631

marriage settlement, 92, 132, 141, 142

marriage to RB, 71, 72, 87, 417

on Margaret Fuller, 448

on Venice, 384

reading

Blanc, Jean Joseph Charles Louis, 449, 524

Cabet, Étienne, 449

Mulock, Dinah, 524

Newcomes, The (Thackeray), 741

on socialism, 524

Proudhon, Pierre Joseph, 524

Swedenborg, Emanuel, 484, 486

religious opinions, 367

travels

at Venice, 381

to Italy, 492

to London, 486

wedding anniversary, 168, 174, 175, 586, 588, 643

will, 132

witness to Wilson’s marriage, 691

works

Aurora Leigh, 29, 32, 38, 48–52, 70n, 99n, 254, 288n, 313n, 453n, 519, 523, 535, 541, 558, 640, 668, 677, 679, 682n, 683, 729n, 733, 737, 740, 741, 744, 748, 752, 754, 758, 771–773, 774, 776, 777, 779, 780, 782–784, 788, 792, 794, 795

quotation from, 57

reviews of, 794, 796

second edition, 782, 794

third edition, 794

“Bertha in the Lane,” 448


reviews of, 394n, 402, 403

“Catarina to Camoëns,” 376, 686

“Change upon Change,” 83n

“Child’s Grave at Florence, A,” 295, 312, 314n

“Cowper’s Grave,” 83n, 83n

“Cry of the Human, The,” 333n

“Curse for a Nation, A,” 662

“Dead Pan, The,” 227

“Dead Rose, A,” 83n

“Denial, A,” 436n

“Died,” 773

Drama of Exile and Other Poems, A, 427

second edition, 427

third edition, 427

Essay on Mind, An, 20

“Heaven and Earth. 1845,” 106n

“Hector in the Garden,” 83n

“Hiram Powers’s ‘Greek Slave’,” 47, 322n

“Hope in Italy, A,” 236n

“Hugh Stuart Boyd. His Blindness,” 218n, 343, 344n

“Hugh Stuart Boyd. His Death, 1848,” 218n, 343, 344n

“Hugh Stuart Boyd. Legacies,” 218n, 343, 344n

“Human Life’s Mystery” quotation from, 586

“Island, An,” 372n

“Island, The,” 370, 372n

“Isobel’s Child,” 370, 373n

“Lay of the Early Rose, A” quotation from, 476

“Life,” 106n

“Little Friend, The, ” 343, 344n

...
"Love," 106n
"Man's Requirements, A," 83n
"Maud's Spinning," 344n
"Measure, The," 83n
"Mediator, The," 344n
"Meditation in Tuscany, A," 41, 222, 226n, 232, 236n, 312, 314
"Mountaineer and Poet," 106n
"Mournful Mother of the Dead Blind, The," 277
"My Kate," 627n, 662
"Plea for the Ragged Schools of London, A," 620, 621, 622
"Poems (1844)," 106n, 114, 210n, 222, 333n, 379
"Poems (1850)," 32, 47, 83n, 210n, 218n, 226n, 311, 312, 314n, 343, 344n, 347, 347n, 361, 370, 373n, 376
"Poems (1853)," 523, 528, 535, 543, 551, 580, 640, 650
"Prometheus Bound (1833)," 83n, 128n
"Prometheus Bound (revised)," 81, 83n, 102, 233, 236n
"Prospect, The," 106n
"Reed, A," 83n
"Sea-Mew, The," 236n, 343, 344n
"Seraphim, The," 83n, 222, 226n, 227n, 250, 284, 312, 343, 344n, 580
"Song against Singing, A," 227n
"Sonnet from the Portuguese," 56, 75n, 89n, 370, 376, 427, 432
"Stanzas," 344n
"Student, The," 344n
"Supplication for Love, A," 344n
"Two Sketches, No. I and No. II," 18, 106n
"Vanities," 344n
"Victoria’s Tears," 83n, 344n
"Vision of Poets, A," 333n
"Wine of Cyprus," 157n
"Wisdom Unapplied," 83n
"Young Queen, The," 344n

Browning, E.B. (works), (cont.)

Browning, Reuben (half-uncle), 320, 489, 490, 526, 617, 637
Browning, Robert

criticises EBB’s Poems (1853), 534, 535
differs with EBB, 500

on her lack of life’s experiences, 476

on Regina Kirkup, 788

Index

812

over finances, 401, 706
over Napoleon III, 440, 758
over Pen, 386, 440
over politics, 430
over religious dogmas, 638
over spiritual manifestations, 774
drawings, 401, 759, 763
emotional tendencies, 479
health, 78, 227, 228, 234, 237, 244, 266, 267, 271, 276, 278, 384, 749, 750, 754
income, 211, 212, 291, 341
leaves desk in London, 489, 490
 likenesses of, 77, 380, 566, 569, 581, 596, 627, 631, 712, 714, 752, 756, 759, 761
 marriage settlement, 92, 132, 141, 142
 marriage to EBB, 71, 72, 87
 on financial matters, 396
 on the publishing of personal poetry, 376
 reading

 Aurora Leigh, 737, 740, 744
 travels

 at Venice, 381
 wedding anniversary, 168, 174, 175, 586, 588, 643
 will, 132
 witness to Wilson’s marriage, 691
 works

 “Andrea del Sarto,” 70n
 “Apparent Failure,” 76n
 Bells and Pomegranates, 99n, 119n
 expenses of, 114
 “Ben Karshook’s Wisdom,” 627n
 “Bishop Blougram’s Apology,” 112n, 234n, 373n
 Blot in the Scutcheon, A, 80, 83n
 “Boy and the Angel, The,” 482n
 “By the Fire-side,” 306n
 Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day, 30, 312, 319, 322n, 331, 332, 333n, 580
 reviews of, 332, 734n
 Colombe’s Birthday, 535, 544, 547, 550, 562
 Dramatic Lyrics, 99n
 Dramatic Romances and Lyrics, 99n, 119n
 “Epistle containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician, An,” 723
 essay on Shelley, 416, 420, 424, 455
 “Face, A,” 128n
 Fifine at the Fair, 70n
 “Flower’s Name, The,” 273n
 “How much upon a level,” 554
 “In a Year,” 180n
 “Likeness, A,” 128n
 “Lovers’ Quarrel, A,” 43, 89n, 106n, 729n
 Loria, 119n
 Men and Women, 519, 523, 541, 551, 558, 640, 668, 683, 705, 706, 707, 713, 718, 732, 738, 740, 752, 758, 782
 reviews of, 723, 729, 732, 742n
 “Mr. Sludge, The Medium,” 38, 729n
 “My Last Duchess,” 128n
 “Old Pictures in Florence,” 70n, 180n, 332n
 quotation from, 258
Browning, R. (works), (cont.)

Index

“One Word More. To
70n
Pacchiarotto, 363n
Paracelsus, 369, 436n
“Pictor Ignotus,” 128n
Poems (1849), 9 6 ,99n, 101,115,134, 196, 20 In,
2 0 5 ,2 0 6 , 222 ,2 5 0 , 3 4 7,580
Poems (1850)
Boston edition, 427
Poetical Works (1868), 2 0 In
projected book on Italy with EBB, 101, 115
“Respectability,” 135n
Ring and the Book, The, 166n, 173n
Sordello, 99n, 128n, 255n, 418n
rewrites, 733
Soul's Tragedy, A, 119n
“That I only deceive,” 186
“Tray,” 284n
“Twins, The,” 620, 621,622
“Up at a V illa—Down in the City,” 236n, 346n
“Women and Roses,” 522n
“Youth and Art,” 285n
Browning, Robert, Sr. (father), 73,206, 266, 271, 315,
316, 338, 343, 3 8 8 ,4 1 9 ,4 2 4 ,4 2 6 , 443, 489,490,
496, 516, 556, 568, 569,630, 634, 649, 667, 683,
688, 696, 716, 723, 724, 738, 791
drawings, 510, 568
law suit, 496, 510, 516, 557
letter from, 537
moves to Bayswater, 466, 471
Browning, Robert Wiedeman Barrett (“Pen”), 27, 29,
44, 45, 48-51, 52, 56, 262-264, 267-269, 271,
272,275, 276, 278, 282-284, 287-289, 292-294,
299, 300, 302,303, 3 0 7 -3 1 1 ,3 1 5 -3 1 7 ,3 1 9 ,3 2 1 ,
326-330, 335, 338, 339, 341-343, 345, 347-349,
352, 354-357, 359, 361-363, 365-370, 374,377,
378, 380-383, 386, 3 8 7 ,3 9 1 -3 9 3 ,3 9 5 , 396,401,
403, 408, 409,411, 413,416, 417, 4 2 4 ,4 2 5 ,4 3 4 ,
4 4 0 ,4 4 3 ,4 4 5 ,4 4 9 ^ 5 1 ,4 5 7 ,4 6 3 , 4 6 8 ,4 8 1 ,4 8 6 496,498, 502-5 04,506, 5 10,514,516-518, 524526, 528,-530, 534-536, 541,548, 549, 552, 553,
562, 564, 565, 568, 570,579, 581, 582, 586, 587,
595, 596, 599, 600, 604,605, 610, 613, 615, 619,
623, 624, 630, 6 3 1 ,6 3 4 ,6 3 6 , 638, 643, 644, 646,
648, 650, 651, 653, 655,658, 660, 665, 666, 677,
679, 683, 684, 690, 692, 694-696, 698, 704, 706,
707, 709-711, 713-715, 718, 720, 724, 726, 727,
730, 732, 735, 740-742, 744, 746-748, 750, 752,
754, 755, 758, 761, 762, 766, 767, 769-771, 773,
775, 776, 778, 782, 785, 787-791, 795
baptism of, 287, 289n
birthday, 624, 674, 747
calls him self “Peninny,” 416
dictates/writes poetry, 631, 680
drawings, 450, 494, 499, 504, 507, 519, 520, 547,
605, 626, 640, 643, 667, 724, 732, 754
has look o f the Barretts, 283
health, 264, 271, 297, 316, 321, 338, 345, 347, 348,
353, 465, 472, 613, 629, 634, 640, 645, 649,
653, 656, 670, 672, 675, 706, 743, 749, 768,
787, 796

813

appetite, 3 6 9 ,5 1 0 , 512, 580, 635, 649, 712, 716,
7 4 3 ,7 8 7
cutting teeth, 456, 468, 506
has chicken-pox, 506
has hooping-cough, 479, 480
has hysterics, 451, 455, 459, 461, 468
seasickness, 406, 411, 694, 716, 787
weaning of, 321, 353
imitates Napoleon, 338
letters from, 491, 4 9 3 ,5 1 2 , 535, 644, 648, 709
likenesses of, 2 8 4 ,4 2 6 ,4 3 4 , 566, 569, 581, 627, 631
lock o f hair, 355
speaks/studies English, 370, 450, 504, 506, 507,
5 3 1 ,5 9 5 ,6 3 0 , 661,751
speaks/studies French, 4 2 5 ,4 5 0 ,4 8 0 ,6 0 9 ,6 6 7 , 738,
7 4 3 ,7 4 6 , 751
speaks/studies Italian, 308, 3 7 0 ,4 5 0 ,5 0 7 ,5 3 0 , 531,
570, 595, 609, 630, 660, 661, 694, 751
temperament/behaviour, 349, 351, 366, 375, 450
with Arabella, 710, 712
witness to W ilson’s marriage, 691
works
“Baby o f Napoleon, The,” 751
“Lucy Lee,” 680, 684
“Napoleon 111,” 751
“Poem o f the Picture o f Mr. Leighton, The,” 746
Browning, Sarah Anna {née Wiedemann), (mother),
48, 129, 190, 198, 206, 242, 243, 265, 267, 271,
283, 434, 480, 593
death, 266
health, 124, 272
letter to, 242
Browning, Sarianna (sister), 73, 97, 100, 124, 129,
155, 1 9 8 ,2 2 4 ,2 5 0 , 266, 2 71,284, 297,311, 315,
316, 3 43,361, 388, 3 9 1 ,4 1 0 ,4 1 6 , 417,419, 424,
4 2 6 ,4 4 3 ,4 8 0 ,4 8 1 ,4 8 8 ,4 8 9 ,4 9 0 , 4 96,510, 511,
516, 5 56,557, 567, 5 6 9 ,6 2 0 ,6 2 2 , 6 30,634, 649,
667, 68 8 ,6 9 6 , 704, 708, 715, 716, 721,723, 724,
738, 743, 747, 756
letters from, 1 4 3 ,2 6 6 ,3 9 4 , 3 9 8 ,4 0 3 ,4 7 9 ,4 8 0 , 516,
537, 547, 557, 568
letters to, 19, 266, 487
likeness of, 198
moves to Bayswater, 466, 471
reads proof for the poets, 399
Bruce, Augusta Frederica Elizabeth, 474, 768
Brussels, 370, 616
Bulwer, Emily Elizabeth, 320, 594, 607
Bulwer, Henry Lytton Earle, 508, 556
Bulwer-Lytton, see Lytton, BulwerBunn, Alfred, 607, 61 In
O ld England and New England, 607
Burridge, K.S., 648
Bury, Marie Pauline Rose Blaze de {née Stewart), 732
Bush, George, 34, 531, 582
Butler, Charlotte Mary (“Arlette”), (EBB’s cousin), 86,
114, 127, 129, 132
see also Reynolds, Charlotte Mary {née Butler)
Butler, Frances {née Graham-Clarke), (“Fannie”),
(EBB’S aunt), 102,386


| Butler, Frances Anne (née Kemble), ("Fanny"), 519, 606, 610, 611, 615, 620, 622, 626, 630, 635
| Butler, Frances Anne (dau. of Pierce Butler), 610
| Butler, Henry Thomas (EBB's cousin), 401, 445
| Butler, Mary (née Tulip), 401, 445, 484, 699
| Butler, Richard Pierce (EBB's cousin), 464
| Butler, Richard Pierce (EBB's uncle), 103, 441
| Butler, Sarah, 610
| Butler, Thomas (EBB's cousin), 401, 445
| Butler, Thomas (EBB's uncle), 19
| Butlers, The Thomas, 132
| "By the Fire-side" (RB), 306n
| Byron, Lady, 96
| Byron, Lord, 150, 386
| Bride of Abydos, The
| quotation from, 515
| Don Juan, 52, 780
| quotation from, 684
| Letters and Journals of
| Sardanapalus
| 1853 stage revival, 587
| Cabet, Étienne, 449, 453n
| Cadenabbia, 393
| Cadiz, Duke of, 102, 110
| Caesar, Julius, 586
| Café Doney, 164
| Calabria, 179
| Calais, 388
| Calcutta, 191, 215
| Calhoun, John C., 569
| California, 253
| Calvinists/Calvinism, 542
| Camaldoli, 161
| Campagna, The, 613, 630
| Canada, 668
| Canova, Antonio
| "Venus," 140
| Canrobert, François Antoine Certain, 733
| Canterbury, 132
| Capri, 343, 361
| Careggi, Villa, 178
| Carisbrook, 774
| Carlyle, Jane Baillie (née Welsh), 415
| Carlyle, John Aitken, 782
| Carlyle, Thomas, 87, 228, 282, 402, 407, 408, 409, 412, 415, 417, 422, 433, 448, 640, 738, 782
| comments on RB's work, 87
| letters from, 170, 415, 738, 758
| travels to Paris with the Brownings, 407, 408, 409
| Carmichael, James Morse, 762
| Carmichael, James Robert (2d Baronet Carmichael), 420
| Carmichael, Louisa Charlotte (née Butler), (EBB's cousin), 244, 261, 326, 365, 504, 762, 766
| Carmichael, May, 729, 762
| Carrara, 280
| Carré, Collings Mauger, 34, 432, 436n, 453, 466, 473, 474, 475, 524, 671
| Cartwright, William Cornwallis, 744, 745n, 755
| Casa del Bello, 659, 694
| Casa Guidi, 36, 39, 47, 163, 167, 212, 258, 259, 268, 318, 330, 335, 416, 468, 503, 529, 570, 575, 587, 595, 607, 640, 665, 671, 693, 694
| description of, 517
| furnishing of, 220, 221, 241, 242, 330, 379
| letting of, 737
| prohibited in Florence, 557
| reviews of, 394n, 402, 403
| Casa Lena, 581
| Casa Pepi, 687n
| Cass, Lewis Jr., 606, 610, 611, 626
| Cassels, Walter Richard, 534, 537n, 674
| Castle, Michael Arthur, 768
| "Catarina to Camoëns" (EBB), 376, 686
| Catherine of Siena, St., 357
| Catholic Apostolic Church, 354, 608, 700
| Catholics/Catholicism, Roman, 27–30, 37, 98, 131, 153, 208, 224, 228, 229, 252, 253, 338, 354, 367, 368, 371
| Catigliano, 197
| Cavaignac, Louis Eugène, 445, 446, 447n
| Cavendish Square, 147
| Cavour, Camillo Benso di, 750, 752, 752n
| Caxtons, The (E. Lytton), 320
| Cayenne, 452
| Centofanti, Francesco, 30–31, 143, 144, 149, 150, 151, 158, 163, 164, 503, 507, 511
| Centofanti, Sig.ra Francesco, 150, 153
| Certosa (Pavia), 292
| Chalons, 495
| Chambers, William Frederick, 238
| Chambery, 497, 498, 501
| Champs de Mars, 750
| Champs Élysées, Les, 68, 413, 439, 466, 490, 688, 715, 726, 744, 754
| "Change upon Change" (EBB), 83n
| Channing, William Ellery, 420, 685
| Chapman, Edward, 523, 534, 582, 622, 656, 709, 740, 788
| letters from, 543, 754
| letters to, 497, 580, 637, 668
| Chapman, Frederic, 782, 794
| Chapman, Maria (née Weston), 420, 662
| letter from, 420
| Chapman, Thomas Palmer ("Despair"), 88
| Chapman & Hall, Messrs., 197, 205, 230, 250, 319, 361, 370, 377, 388, 528, 563, 567, 572, 588, 621, 637, 640, 644, 645, 655, 670, 783
| Charing Cross, 709
| Charles Albert, King of Sardinia, 292
| Chartres, 68
| 814
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chartres, Cathedral of</th>
<th>815</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chartres, Cathedral of, 68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chasles, Victor Euphémien Philarète, 443, 446n, 470</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chateaubriand, François René de, 134</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaucer, Geoffrey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury Tales, The Prologue quotation from, 752</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheapside, 499</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea, 170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheltenham, 140, 213, 222</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago, 57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child, Lydia Maria (née Francis), 539 Fact and Fiction, 539</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Child's Grave at Florence, A&quot; (EBB), 295n, 312, 314n, 319, 322n, 331, 332, 333n, 588, 614, 616, 631</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China, 26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chioggia, 391</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiswick, 164</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholera, 68, 69, 70, 716, 718, 718</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Congregationalists, Index 816

Conjugial Love (Swedenborg), 31
Conservatoire, The (Paris), 481
Constantinople, 524, 536, 556, 588, 597, 616, 626, 638, 654, 655, 661, 670, 677, 686, 735, 749, 778, 780

health, 510, 712

likelihood of, 791

Cook, Edward Altham (EBB's nephew), 753, 757, 778, 780

Cook, Elizabeth (née Surtees), (EBB's cousin), 144, 179, 709, 721

Cook, Francis, 96, 99, 100, 104, 108, 116, 117, 121, 122, 123, 124, 126, 127

Cook, Mrs. Francis, 111

Cook, Henrietta Barrett (née Moulton-Barrett), see Barrett, Henrietta Moulton-Barrett

Cook, Mary Altham (EBB's niece), 52, 497, 510, 519, 536, 556, 581, 588, 597, 658, 749, 712, 778, 780

Cook, Mary Susannah Altham (EBB's cousin), 709

Cook, Susan (EBB's cousin), 103, 127, 135, 144, 179, 225, 245, 305


“Happy Years of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, The,” 56

journal, 52–54

letters from, 753, 757

letter to, 332

marriage, 325

seeks situation, 402, 415, 670

writes Edward Barrett Moulton-Barrett, 525

Cooks, The Elizabeth Barrett, 165, 225

Cookson, Matilda, 464

Coore, Annette Augusta, 356, 363n

Coore, Lucy Elizabeth, 356, 363n

Coores, The, 361

Coquerel, Athanase Laurent Charles, 716, 717n, 764

Corfu, 668

Corinna, 559

Corkran, Alice Abigail, 490, 568

Corkran, Henriette Louisa Augusta, 490, 568

Corkran, John Fraser, 431, 432, 435n, 492, 516

Corkran, Louisa (née Walshe), 431, 432, 490, 491, 492, 493, 568

Corkran, Mary Harley Nannie, 490, 741

Corkran, Sutton Frazer, 490

Corkran, William, 490

Corkrans, The, 490, 491, 494, 497, 556, 557, 568, 699, 715

Cornice, 785

Correggio, Antonio Allegri da, 383

Corsica, 694

Cottrell, Alice Augusta Enrica (“Lily”), 259, 289, 295n, 336, 480, 504

Cottrell, Carlo Ludovico, 336, 337, 677

Cottrell, Charles Herbert, 720

Cottrell, Clement, 671, 676


Cottrell, Henry Edward Plantagenet (“Hal”), 427, 503, 658, 676


letter from, 731

Cottrells, The, 205, 213, 233, 290, 293, 302, 311, 327, 347, 480, 503, 504, 592, 650, 676, 788

Courtenay, Louisa Bithia, 592

Cousin, Victor, 483, 700

Cowes, 735, 769, 784, 795

“Cowper's Grave” (EBB), 83n, 83n

Crawford, 102

Croad, Harriet (née Lister)

Anne Grey, 773

Cranch, Christopher Pearse, 244, 249

Cranch, Elizabeth (née De Windt), 244, 246n, 249, 260

Cranch, George William, 249, 255n

Cranch, Leonora, 249, 255n

Crawford Street, 414, 707

Crimea, The, 670, 694

Crimean Troops, 731

Crispin, Mrs. (dressmaker), 714

Critic, The, 607, 644

Crow, Elizabeth, see Treherne, Elizabeth (née Crow)

Crowe, Joseph, 430, 435n

“Cry of the Human, The” (EBB), 333n

Cuba, 746

Cumberland, 281

Cuninghame, Margaret, 589

Cuninghame, Sarah (née Peebles), 589

Curradi, Francesco

“Madonna di sotto gli Organi,” 105

“Curse for a Nation, A” (EBB), 662

Curteis, John, 291

Curtis, Burrill, 158, 160, 165n

Curtis, George William, 48, 158, 160, 165n

Cushman, Charlotte Saunders, 493, 494n, 519, 563

likelihood of, 606

Cust, Sara Jane, see Streatfeild, Sara Jane (née Cookson)

Cutigliano, 207, 280, 651

Cyprus wine, 150

Daily News, The, 334, 420, 431

reviews EBB’s Aurora Leigh, 796

Dame aux camélias, La (Dumas, fils), 479
England (cont.) Index 818

Church of, 29, 109, 133, 142, 179, 192, 208, 287, 311, 337, 338, 354, 371, 497, 567, 638, 677, 691
reform of, 497
English, Jemima Georgiana (née Carden), 88, 133
English Language, 51
Episcopal Church, 539
“Epistle containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician, An” (RB), 723
Erskine, Katharine (née Stirling), 432
Esau, 92
Essay on Mind, An (EBB), 20
“Eternal father” (Ghirlandaio), 330
Examiner, The, 96, 134, 430, 748
reviews RB’s Men and Women, 723
Faber, George Stanley, 531, 562
Many Mansions in the House of the Father, The, 542
“Face, A” (RB), 128n
Fact and Fiction (Child), 539
Facts and Fancies (Spicer), 531
Fairy Tales (Andersen), 662
Fano, 214, 220
Faraday, Michael, 476, 478n, 585, 589
Farquhar, Sybella Martha (née Rockcliffe), 732
Fate of Christendom, The (Drummond), 626
Fates, The, 309
Faucit, Helena Saville, 535, 537n
Fauveau, Mme. de, 223
Fauveau, Félicie de, 223, 226n
Fauveau, Hippolyte de, 223, 226
Fellows, Charles, 773, 774n, 776, 777
Fellows, Charles Francis, 773, 776
Felton, Cornelius Conway, 619, 620
Female Life Among the Mormons (Ward), 716
Ferdinand, Henri Charles, Comte de Chambord (“Henri Cinq”), 229, 422
Ferdinand I (de Medicis), 79
Ferrucci, Caterina Francesca (née Franceschi), 85, 89n, 126
Ferrucci, Michele, 85, 89n, 102, 126
Fielding, Rudolph William Basil, 354
Fields, Henry Martin, 671
Fields, James T., 427, 752
Flennes, Frederick Benjamin Twisleton-Wykeham-(16th Baron Saye and Sele), 508
Fiesole, 134, 165, 169, 185, 190, 260, 375
Fifield House, 230, 231, 234, 240
Fifine at the Fair (RB), 70n
Fisher, Harriet Theodosia, 238
Fisher, William, 629n
cartoon of Pen, 627, 631
portrait of RB, 627, 631
“Fisher Boy, The” (Powers), 140
Fitzton, Sarah Mary, 432, 440, 451, 459, 460, 466, 484, 647
Fletcher, Mr., 354
Fletcher, Mrs., 354, 355
Fletchers, The, 354, 363, 377
Florence, Cathedral of (Duomo), 141, 152, 153, 175, 338, 385
baptistery, 337
campanile, 152
Florentines, The, 693
Flower, Eliza, 593, 602, 607
Flower, Sarah Fuller, see Adams, Sarah Fuller (née Flower)
“Flower’s Name, The” (RB), 273n
Fluellen, 354
death, 634
Flush (Miss Mitford’s dog) death, 191
Folkestone, 488, 513, 701
Folly (Henrietta’s dog), 245
Fontainebleau, 486
Forgues, Paul Émile Daurand, 420, 423n, 425
Forster, John, 96, 99n, 205, 311, 320, 376, 458, 709, 712, 781
letters from, 134, 154, 205, 318, 713
letter to, 319
review of RB's Men and Women, 723
Fowkes, Gustavus Woolaston, 214, 218n
Fox, The Misses, 579
Fox, Henry Edward (Lord Holland), 178, 752
Fox, William Johnson, 593
Foxes, The, 34
France, 44, 53, 102, 103, 117, 196, 198, 204, 205, 208, 213, 217, 222, 229, 240, 259, 275, 279, 292, 326, 335, 336, 388, 421, 437, 452, 458, 483, 491, 502, 586, 758, 776
coup d'état of 1851, 429
revolution of 1848, 222, 445
Francis, C.S. (New York publisher), 427
Francis II, King of the Two Sicilies, 452
“Frank” (Edgeworth), 655, 670, 751
Franklin, Benjamin, 475
Freeman, Augusta {née Latilla), 149
Freeman, Henry Edward (Baron de Freyne), 751
French, Arthur (Baron de Freyne), 751
French, The, 78, 102, 174, 195, 229, 279, 649
French Institute, 630
French language & literature, 49, 85, 331
French protestant church (Florence), 29, 215, 287, 310
French protestant church (Paris), 30, 409, 433, 475
French railway crisis, 131, 204, 296
French Revolution, The, 195, 198, 217
Frescobaldi, Count, 214
Frescobaldi, Marianna {née Parker), 214
Frescobaldi, Palazzo, 214
Frogmore, 768
From Oxford to Rome (Harris), 192
Fuller, Sarah Margaret, see Ossoli, Sarah Margaret {née Fuller
Future Human Kingdom, The (Heath), 523
Gabriel, Archangel, 119
Gaddi, Taddeo, 330
Gaeta, 28
Galignani Reading Room, 764
Galignani's Messenger, 31, 196, 260, 335, 385, 431, 443, 516, 551, 552, 557
Gallileo Galilei, 98, 191
Garrow, Theodosia, 190, 193, 193n, 238
Gartshore, Mrs. Murray
Cleveland: a tale of the Catholic Church, 515
Generelli, Sig., 677
Geneva, 358, 473
Genoa, Cathedral of, 76
Gentleman's Magazine, The, 103
German language & literature, 274, 331, 358
Germans, The, 589
Germany, 245, 289, 369, 476, 586, 587
Getting, Laura, 676
Ghelli, Sig. (judge), 517, 595
Ghirlandaio (Ridolfo del), 330
“Eternal father,” 330
Gibraltar, 349, 670
Gibson, Anna (née Reilly), 731
Gibson, James, 731
Gibson, John, 281, 282, 285n, 566, 704
Gibson, Mary Ellis, 26, 27
Gilbert, Sandra M., 41
Giles, Eliza Wilhelmina (née Cliffe), 146n, 155, 234, 238, 245n
letter from, 144
Giles, George, 155
Gileses, The George, 215
Giotto di Bondone, 330, 331
Givanni, San, 149
Gips, Elizabeth Emily, 192
Gips, Emma Maria (née Bentham), 192, 194n
Girardin, Emile de, 399
Girolama (dressmaker), 309, 362, 530, 531, 541, 553, 570, 683
Gladstone, William Ewart, 432
Globe and Traveller, The, 319, 334
reviews RB's Men and Women, 723
God, 34, 35, 50, 140, 169, 524, 525, 540, 553, 589, 601, 654, 668, 684, 775
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 369, 415
Goethe, Wolfgang Maximilian von, 369
Golden Legend, The (Longfellow), 459
Goldoni Theatre (Florence), 553
Goldsmith, Oliver
Traveller, The
quotation from, 788
Gonin, Francesco, 504, 505n
Goodrich, Mary Wolcott, 578, 659
Goodrich, Samuel Griswold (“Peter Parley”), 659
Universal History, 732, 746
Gordon, George Hamilton, 4th Earl of Aberdeen, 670
Gordon, John, 194n, 272, 273n, 290, 291, 296
Gordon, John Hart, 297, 635
Gordons, The, 191
Gorham, George Cornelius, 332
Gosset, Arabella Sarah (née Butler), (EBB’s cousin), 103, 112
Gozze, Luca di, 630
Graham-Clarke, see Clarke, Graham-
Gran Duca, Piazza del (Piazza della Signoria), 133, 147, 244
Grand Canal (Venice), 382
Grand Parade (Eastbourne), 702, 703
Grandpierre, Mr., 765
Gray, Harriet, 705, 714, 716, 721, 726, 727, 738, 739, 741, 743, 746, 749, 759, 760, 766
Gray, John Franklin, 736, 738n
Great Exhibition (London, 1851), 47, 386, 388, 567
Great Quebec Street, 487
Great Western Railway Co., 23, 172, 245
Greece, 558
"Greek Slave, The" (Powers), 47, 140, 509
Greeks, The, 174
Green, Mary, 706, 715, 717
Greenough, Louisa Ingersoll (née Gore), 374, 515, 578
Greenough, Horatio, 191, 193n, 374, 515, 578
Greenough, Louisa Ingersoll (née Gore), 374, 515, 578
Greenough Families, The, 539
Greenough, Horatio, 214
Gregory, St., see Nazianzen, St. Gregory
Gregory VII, 252
Greville, Robert Northmore, 81
Poetic Prism, The
EBB's contributions to, 81
Griswold, Rufus Wilmot, 579
Groemes, The, 102
Groeme, Mr., 102
Guardian, The,
reviews EBB's Casa Guidi Windows, 402
Guicciardini, The, 320
Guidi, Palazzo, see Casa Guidi
Guidi, The, 212, 213
Guizot, François Pierre Guillaume, 102, 110, 113, 438, 483
Gymnase (theatre, Paris), 433
Hadrian's Villa, 630
Hague, The, 755
Hahnemann, Mme. (Mrs. Samuel Christian Friedrich
Hahnemann), 579
Hall, Robert, 616, 618n
Hamilton, Edward (physician), 414
Hamilton Terrace, 779
Hammersmith, 206, 207, 222
Hampden, Renn Dickson, 208, 210n
Hampstead, 176, 187
Hanford, Compton John, 46, 132, 136n, 140, 141, 155, 164
Hanna, Robert Maxwell, 34, 337, 341n, 358, 375, 507, 515, 525, 532, 542, 554, 589, 634, 638, 791
Hanna, William, 358
"Happy Years of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, The" (Cook), 26, 56
Harding, Francis Pym, 649
Harfleur, 125
Harley Street, 357
Harness, William James, 291, 295n
Life of Mary Russell Mitford, The, 782, 784
Harper and Brothers (publishers), 376
Harris, Elizabeth, 208, 210n
From Oxford to Rome, 192
Rest in the Church, 192, 208
Harrow Cemetery, 23
Harry and Lucy (Edgeworth), 670, 751
Hart, Marmaduke, 239
Hastings, 410, 735
Hastings, Countess of, 689
Hastings, Selina (née Shirley), (Countess of Huntingdon), 577
Hatcham, 198
Haworth, Euphrosia Fanny, 587
letters to, 54, 534, 585
Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 34, 561
Haydn, Franz Joseph, 762
Haydon, Benjamin Robert, 20
"Uriel Disturbed by Satan," 20
Hayes, Ann Henrietta (née Boyd), 119, 127, 187, 188, 191, 197, 209, 217, 224, 234, 410, 553, 563, 572, 605, 662, 790
Hayes, Henry William, 127, 188
Haymarket Theatre, 535, 544
Hays, Matilda Mary, 493, 494n
Head of the Family, The (Mulock), 451, 524
Heath, Dunbar Isidore, 527n, 531
Future Human Kingdom, The, 523
Heaton, Ellen, 522n, 571, 710, 785
letter from, 519
"Heaven and Earth. 1845" (EBB), 106n
"Hector in the Garden" (EBB), 83n
Heath, Dunbar Isidore, 527n, 531
Heaton, Ellen, 522n, 571, 710, 785
letter from, 519
Hedley, Alice Jane, 526
Hedley, Anna (EBB's cousin), 421, 425
Hedley, Arabella (EBB's cousin), 19
Hedley, Charlotte Emma Catherine (née Coote), 504, 508, 509, 526, 544, 565, 665
Hedley, Elizabeth Jane ("Ibbit"), (EBB's cousin), 224, 227n, 303, 421, 441, 446, 463, 491
visits Henrietta, 588
Hedley, Frances ("Little Fanny"), (EBB's cousin), 421, 425
Hedley, George Shake (EBB's cousin), 463, 551
letters to, 72, 86
Hedley, John (EBB's cousin), 463, 551, 555n, 649
Hedley, Mary (EBB's cousin), 421, 425, 625
Hedley, Robert ("Robin"), (EBB's cousin), 234, 441, 446, 504, 506n, 506, 526, 544, 551
letters to, 509, 532
Hedley, Robert (EBB's uncle), 19, 93, 111, 131, 132, 204, 213, 261, 305, 401, 402, 421, 425, 441, 458, 462, 464, 480, 481, 483, 497, 506, 551
letters to, 86, 287, 305
visits Henrietta, 588
Italian language & literature, 51, 85, 104, 144, 331, 358

Italians, The, 28, 29, 30, 42, 49, 175, 189, 198, 211, 213, 223, 243, 268, 269, 293, 320, 331, 380, 507, 566, 635, 691, 736


“Jack and the Beanstalk,” 609

Jacob, 92, 708

Jadin, Louis Godefroy, 476, 479n

Jago, Eleanor Elizabeth Clara Consuelo, 312, 331, 450


letter from, 354

letters to, 305, 662, 668

see also Bordman, Eleanor Page


letters to, 116, 121

Jagos, The, 271, 656, 760

Jamaiaca, 23, 47, 53, 88, 103, 108, 111, 143, 253, 361, 443, 532, 551

James I, King, 125


letters from, 96, 103, 110, 369, 513, 538, 567, 572

letter to, 54

Sacred and Legendary Art, 68

sketch of the Brownings, 77

travels with the Brownings, 67, 68, 73, 76, 77, 78

Jane (English nurse to the Story children), 600, 602, 604

Jane (Mrs. William Miller), (Boyd’s maid), 197

Jane Eyre (Bronte), 320

Janin, Jules Gabriel, 46, 101, 102

Jardin d’Hiver, 743

Jarves, Anna Smith (née Stutson), 36, 37, 651, 684

Jarves, Deming, 36, 684

Jarves, James Jackson, 34–36, 659, 663, 668, 671, 684, 685, 689, 693, 719, 751, 788, 792

letters from, 684, 686, 688, 689, 751

Jephthah, 622

Jersey, 473

Jerusalem, 523, 543, 763

Jésuites Modernes, Les (Roche-Arnaud), 229

Jesuits/Jesuitism, 228, 229

Jewsbury, Geraldine Endors, 422, 424n, 655

History of an Adopted Child, The, 655

Jocelyn, Robert (3rd Earl of Roden), 30, 502, 505n

John, St., 32

John the Baptist, St., 151

Johnson, Samuel

Dictionary of the English Language, The, 512

K., see Kerenhappuch

Karlin, Daniel, 17, 22, 42

Keats, George, 27

Keats, John, 27, 750, 768

Poetical Works, The, 655

Kemble, Frances Anne, see Butler, Frances Anne (née Kemble)

Kemble picnics, 626, 630

Kemp, Miss, 568

Kennington, 205

Kent, Duchess of, 474

Kenyon, Edward (EBB’s cousin), 572, 622, 661, 770, 772, 773, 784, 796

death, 795

letter from, 773

Kenyon, John (EBB’s cousin), 23, 24, 35, 43, 45, 46, 52, 72, 77, 86, 92, 94, 97, 102, 111, 132, 133, 142, 144, 150, 156, 183, 192, 217, 219, 224, 233, 248, 249, 264, 265, 276, 291, 302, 304, 370, 400, 408, 412, 413, 417, 432, 466, 487, 510, 519, 529, 556, 557, 572, 592, 622, 637, 640, 655, 672, 680, 684, 693, 696, 714, 758, 765, 766, 767, 768, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 784, 788, 790, 795

Day at Tivoli: With Other Verses, A, 655

death, 795

financial assistance from, 92, 233, 393, 398, 529, 547, 613, 633, 637, 644, 714, 765, 776, 795, 796

health, 735, 740, 758, 769, 770, 772, 775, 777, 783, 792

letters from, 38, 72, 102, 116, 149, 170, 195, 196, 253, 260, 302, 304, 332, 346, 376, 388, 400, 538, 549, 574, 575, 622, 633, 655

letters to, 72, 86, 122, 123, 232, 264, 633

trustee to the Brownings’ marriage settlement, 141

Kenyon, Louisa (Mrs. Edward), 572, 770, 772, 773, 784

Kenyons, The Edward, 770, 792

Kerenhappuch ("K.") (Miss Mitford’s maid), 171, 192, 225

King Arthur (E. Lytton), 320

Kingsley, Charles

Hypatia, 620

Kinnersley Castle, 143, 240, 414, 428
Kinney, Elizabeth Clementine (née Dodge), 583n, 637, 658, 728, 736, 737
letters from, 38, 728
letter to, 728

Kinney, William Burnet, 579, 583n, 637, 658, 694, 792

Kirby, Ben, 192

Kirkup, Regina (née Ronti), 788

Kirkup, Seymour, 330, 333n, 561, 671, 680, 685, 788

Knebworth, 508, 513, 535, 704, 755

Knight, Charlotte Owen, 629

Knight, Edward John, 629

Knight, Edward Lewis, 629

Knight, Robert Wynn, 629

Kosmos (Humbolt), 369

Kossuth, Louis, 525, 527

Kynynmound, Gilbert Elliot-Murray- (2nd Earl of Minto), 501

Kynynmound, Mary Elliot-Murray- (née Brydone), (Lady Minto), 501

La Verna, 161

Ladies’ Companion at Home and Abroad, The, 444

Lago Maggiore, 393

Lamartine de Prat, Alphonse Marie Louis de, 34, 196, 200n, 415, 430, 432, 438, 439, 446, 458, 465, 470, 471, 473, 477, 578, 659

Lamartine de Prat, Marianne Eliza de (née Birch), 470

Lamennais, Hugues Félicité Robert de, 437

Landor, Walter Savage, 196

“To Robert Browning,” 134

Langley, Henry G., 427

Langley, Samuel, 334

Lanselbourg, 498

Last Days of Aurelian (Ware), 221

Latilla, Eugenio H., 380, 381n, 402

Laud (river), 580

Lindesay, Harriot Hester (née Williams-Wynn, 606

Lindsay, Clara Sophia (née Bayford), (EBB’s cousin), 188, 189n, 239, 267, 272, 322, 371, 551

letter from, 338

letter to, 188

Lindsay, Martin, 267, 332, 363, 551


Line upon Line (Mortimer), 681, 683

Lippi, Fra Filippo, 330

Lippincott, Sara Jane (née Clarke), (“Grace Greenwood”), 622

see also Clarke, Sara Jane

Lisa, see Wilson, Elizabeth and Romagnoli, Elizabeth (née Wilson)

Literary Gazette, The, 399

Little Bookham, 74, 76, 80, 88

Little Dorrit (Dickens), 743

“Little Friend, The” (EBB), 343, 344n

Liverpool, 244

Locket, Charlotte (née Bruce), 706

Lockhart, John Gibson, 620, 621n, 622, 626

Lodwick, Peter, 592, 606

Loftus, Margaret Harriet (née Langrishe), 47, 126

Loftus, William Francis Bentinck, 126

Lombardy, 203, 215, 292, 396, 401

Index 824

London, City of, 239

London (cont.)

727, 735, 737, 740, 743, 745, 753, 755, 758, 761, 766, 773, 774, 779, 784, 788, 790, 794

Macpherson, Gerardine (née Bate), ("Geddie"), 300, 369, 513, 605

Macpherson, Robert, 300, 513

Macready, William Charles, 709

Maddox, Mary, 551, 562, 597, 651, 666, 671, 690

Madeira, 780, 790

Madeleine, Sainte-Marie- (church), 197, 412, 421

Madiai, Francesco, 30–31

Madiai, Rosa (née Pulini), 30–31, 511

Madiai, The, 502, 511, 516, 542

Madonna, The, 330, 576

"Madonna del Gran' Duca" (Raphael), 140

"Madonna della Seggiola" (Raphael), 140

"Madonna di sotto gli Organi" (Curradi), 105

Madrid, 724

Magnetism, see Mesmerism/Magnetism

Mahony, Francis Sylvester ("Father Prout"), 228, 229, 231, 233, 234n, 272, 319

letter from, 319

Maîtres Sonneurs, Les (Sand), 655, 666

Malan, M., 358

Malta, 202, 223, 668, 670

Malvares, Marianne, 150

Malvern, 159, 281, 335, 361

Malvern Hills, 159

Mama's New Bible Stories (Nesbitt), 674, 675

Managgio, 393

Manchester, 133

Manifesto of Robert Owen To All Governments and Peoples (Owen), 549

Manilius

Astronomica

quotation from, 170

Manning, Maria, 703

"Man's Requirements, A" (EBB), 83n

Mantua, Alessandro, 700

Mariage, Jean Paul, 476, 478n

Naples, La (Sand), 462

Margary, Emma (née Russell), 165, 171, 172, 234, 257, 757

see also Monro, Emma (née Russell)

Margery Daw," 329, 338

Marlow, 780, 781

Marlborough, 23, 41, 42

Married Women's Property Bill petition, 747

Marseilles, 68, 78, 81, 86, 190, 391, 393, 591, 671, 677, 679, 688, 691, 694, 695, 696, 785, 786

Marsh, Caroline (née Crane), 524, 558

letter from, 558

Marsh, George Perkins, 524

Marshes, The George Perkins, 525

Marston, John Westland, 585, 590n

review of EBB's Casa Guidi Windows, 394

review of RB's Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day, 332

Margery Daw," 329, 338

Margaret, 780, 781

Markus, Julia, 28, 41, 42

review of EBB’s Casa Guidi Windows, 394

review of RB’s Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day, 332
Mortimer, Favell Lee (née Bevan)
Line Upon Line, 681, 683

Morton, Savile, 420, 431, 496, 497n
Moses, 515, 728
Moule, John Watkins (silk mercer), 414, 711
Moulton, Elizabeth (née Barrett), (E B B’s grandmother)
letter from, 19
Moulton-Barrett, see Barrett, Moulton-
“Mountaineer and Poet” (EBB), 106n
“My Last Duchess” (RB), 128n
My Novel (E. Lytton), 551
Mystère de la Danse des Tables, Le (Anon), 568

Nancy, 395
Nankivel, Charles Benjamin, 79, 82n
Napoleon I, Emperor, 49, 338, 408, 438, 475
Napoleon III, see Bonaparte, Charles Louis
“Napoleon III” (Pen), 751
Napoleonicists, The, 452
Nemours, Duke of, 195
Nesbitt, Emily G.
Mama’s New Bible Stories, 674, 675

Neukomm, Sigismund Ritter von, 762
New Cross, 217, 225, 234, 242, 260, 271, 277, 297, 305, 332, 348, 405, 417, 424, 479, 496
New Geography for Children, A (Stowe), 704, 741
New York, 376, 559, 579, 582, 592, 596, 736
Newcastle, Duke of, 672
Newcomes, The (Thackeray), 741
Newhaven, 404, 411
Newman, John Henry, 73, 75n
Newman Street Churches, 354, 466, 473, 474, 523, 526, 603, 608, 671, 682
Nice, 78, 131, 292, 320, 375, 501, 579, 679, 684
Nicholas I, Czar, 104, 223, 292, 571
Norfolk Street, 571

Normanby, Constantine Henry Phipps, 1st Marquis of, 68, 415, 430, 452
North British Review, The, 784
Northumberland, Duke of, see Percy, Algernon
George, 4th Duke of Northumberland
Northumberland House, 164
Norton, Carlotta Chiara Maria, 645, 660
Norton, Caroline Elizabeth Sarah (née Sheridan), 646, 660

Stuart of Dunleath, 665
Norton, Charles Eliot, 365
Norton, Maria Chiara Elisa (née Federico), 645, 660
Norton, Thomas Brinsley, 637, 642n, 645, 656, 658, 660, 668
takes apartment in Villa Torrigiani, 656, 658
Nortons, The Thomas Brinsley, 684
Norwood, 114
Nunhill Cemetery (London), 480
Nuttall, George, 471

O’Connell, Daniel, 142
O’Neill, Henry, 677
Oberlin, Johann Friedrich, 540
Ogilvy, Alexander William, 265, 293, 299, 327, 481
Ogilvy, Charlotte Dick, 481
Ogilvy, David, 246n, 309, 318, 330, 369, 382
letters from, 439, 570, 651
Poems of Ten Years, 729, 732
Ogilvy, Louisa Mary, 481
Ogilvy, Marcia Napier, 309, 481, 530
Ogilvy, Walter Tulliedeph, 530
Old England and New England (Bunn), 607
“Old Pictures in Florence” (RB), 70n, 180n, 332n
“One Word More. To E.B.B.” (RB), 70n
Oratoire L’ (Paris), 764, 765
Orestes, 712, 724
Orléans, 67, 68, 71, 72, 73, 77, 80, 81, 177
Orléans, Duchess of, 195
Orléans, Duke of, 195
Orme, Miss, 703
Ossoli, Angelo (child), 336
death, 349
Ossoli, Angelo (Marquis), 336, 349
death, 349
Ossoli, Sarah Margaret (née Fuller), 35, 325, 328n, 336, 539
death, 349
letter from, 349
Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli, 448, 513
review of 448
Othello, 530
Owen, Angela (née Bayford), (EBB's cousin), 239, 399, 452, 738, 748
Owen, Angela Frances, 536
Owen, Edward Bayford death, 696
Owen, Frances Mary, 536
Owen, Henry John, 452, 453, 466, 473, 474, 524, 744
Owen, Richard, 476
Owen, Robert, 554
Manifesto of Robert Owen To All Governments and Peoples, 549
Owens, The Henry John, 532, 536, 551, 562, 696, 701, 746, 748
Owenford, Edward, 354
Oxford, 192, 337
Oxford Street, 147
Pacchiarotto (RB), 363n
Pacchiarotto, Jacopo, 357
Paddington Chapel, 18, 21, 27, 779
Padua, 215, 383, 384, 397
Page, Anne, 602
Page, Emma (later Watson), 602, 604, 610
Page, Mary, 602
Page, Sarah Augusta (née Dougherty), 602, 619, 624, 625, 626, 631
Page, William, 34, 602, 603n, 604, 606, 615, 625, 631
portrait of Charlotte Cushman, 606
portrait of RB, 630, 631, 744, 752, 756, 759, 761
Pages, The William, 599, 606
Pagnini, Gustavo, 283
Palais Royal, Le, 733
Palazzo Guidi, see Casa Guidi
Palermo, 179
Palmerston, Lord, 113, 305, 452
letter from, 305
Panizzi, Antonio, 102
Papacy, 371
Papal aggression, 371
Papal States, 253
Paracelsus (RB), 206, 369, 436n
Paris, Archbishop of, 698
Palace of, 702
Paris, Count of, 195
Paris Exhibition (1855), 683, 686, 716
Fine Art division, 697
Parker, Mrs. Richard Louis, 214
Parliament
House of Commons, 452, 484
House of Lords, 127
Parma, 379, 383
Patmore, Coventry Kersey Dighton, 784
“Victor Cousin on Madame de Hautefort and Her Contemporaries,” 784
Patmore, Emily Augusta (née Andrews), 703
Paul, St., 32, 474, 553, 577, 586, 640, 689
Paul, Henry John Dean, 701
Paul Ferrol (Clive), 724
Pays, Le, 430
Peabody, Elizabeth Palmer, 34, 561
Peckham Rye, 651
Peep of Day, The (Mortimer), 650, 674, 681
EBB modifies, 681
Pelago, 158, 159
Pelletan, Pierre Clément Eugène, 438, 470, 476
Pennefather, John Lysaght, 649
Penson, Mrs., 737
Pentémot, Le (French Reformed Church, Paris), 716
Percy, Algernon George, 4th Duke of Northumberland, 615
Peri, 557
Perugia, 185, 595, 600
Pescia, 269
Peter, St., 661
Petite Fadette, La (Sand), 526
Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca), 74, 134
Petri, Sig.ra. (nurse/midwife), 241, 243, 249
Pevensy, 706
Peverada, Sig., 102
Peyton, Charlotte Lea, 271
Peyton, Eliza (née Griffith), 85, 89n, 271, 368, 372n, 377
Peyton, Eliza Berry, 380
letter to, 224
Peyton, Frances Maria, 380
Peyton, Nicholson Julius, 368, 380
Peyton, Reynolds, 300, 335, 343, 375, 380, 399, 461
Peyton, Thomas Griffith, 375
Peytons, The, 224, 227n, 240, 271, 276, 300, 343, 355, 368, 369, 371, 374, 375, 377, 380, 399, 439, 566, 724
Pheidre (Racine), 477
Phelps, Rev. Dr., 539
Phelps, William Lyon, 18
Phillimore, John George, 419
Philpotts, Henry (Bishop of Exeter), 252
Phipps, Constantine Henry, 1st Marquis of Normanby, 68, 70n, 452
Piazza di Spagna, 602
Piazza San Marco, 381, 383, 385, 419
“Pictor Ignotus” (RB), 128n
Piedmont, Kingdom of, 279, 702, 746
“Pietà” (Michelangelo), 141
Pietra Mala, 383
Pietra Santa, 279, 280
Pigott, Edward Frederick Smyth, 434
Pincio, The, 613
Pisa, Cathedral of (Duomo), 28, 79, 96, 97, 98, 103, 109, 111, 114, 354
Pisa, University of, 111, 279
Pistoia, 39, 133
Pitti, Palazzo, 47, 164, 191, 212, 214, 259, 693
Palatine Gallery, 140
Pitti, Piazza, 39, 169, 174, 177, 191, 212
EBB sees, 630
EBB’s opinion of, 252
Place Vendôme, 759
Plato, 444, 540
“Plea for the Ragged Schools of London, A” (EBB), 620, 621, 622
Plutarch
Paral lel Lives
quotation from, 158
Pluto, 747
Plymouth, 635, 647, 664, 735
Plymouth Brethren, 540, 567
Poe, Edgar Allan, 531
Poe, Louisa Greenough, 576, 577
Powers, Elizabeth (née Gibson), 154, 157n, 576, 670, 731
letter to, 655
Powers, Hiram, 33, 47, 134, 136n, 140, 158, 170, 208, 275, 366, 475, 509, 513, 515, 548, 549, 558, 569, 576, 579, 592, 728, 732, 736, 792
has vision of angels, 576
letter from, 736
works
“Benjamin Franklin,” 170
“Eve Tempted,” 140, 154
“Fisher Boy, The,” 140
“Greek Slave, The,” 47, 140, 509
Powers, Louisa Greenough, 576, 577
Powers, Nicholas Longworth, 728
Prato, 39, 133, 259, 283, 304, 562
Prato Fiorito, 305
Pratolino, 214
Prelude, The (Wordsworth), 50
Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 714, 784
Presbyterians/Presbyterianism, 29, 34, 562
Press, The
reviews EBB’s Aurora Leigh, 794
Price, Miss Caroline, 532
Prime, Samuel Irenæus, 34, 592, 614
Princess, The (Tennyson), 135, 191, 196, 205
Procter, Anne Benson (née Skepper), 492, 493, 639
Procter, Bryan Waller (“Barry Cornwall”), 622, 662
letter from, 621
Prometheus Bound (1833), (EBB), 83n, 128n
Prometheus Bound (revised), (EBB), 81, 83n, 102, 233, 236n, 312
“Prospect, The” (EBB), 106n
Protestants/Protestantism, 28-30, 98, 242, 253, 358, 359, 368, 371
Prudhomme, Pierre Joseph, 493, 495n, 524
Prout, Father (pseud.), see Mahony, Francis Sylvester
Prussia, King of, 320
Prussian legation Index 829

Prussian legation (Florence), 320
Punch and Judy (street theatre, London), 408
Punch and Judy (street theatre, Paris), 416, 451, 456, 460, 462, 466
Puritans/Puritanism, 124
Pusey, Edward Bouverie, 73, 75n
Puseyites/Puseyism, 28-30, 98, 192, 208, 228, 252, 261, 358, 421, 606, 638, 661
Quakers, The, 354
Quaritch, Bernard (book dealer), 57
Quillinan, Dora (née Wordsworth), 190, 193n
Racine, Jean
Phèdre, 477
Radetzky, Johann Joseph, 248, 254n, 275, 277, 387
Ragged Schools/Refuge, 155, 157n, 292, 374, 410, 414, 448, 471, 519, 536, 543, 551, 621, 762, 795
Ramsden, Mary Matilda (née Gipps), 192
Ramsgate, 187, 192, 208, 215, 217, 403
Ranieri, San, 278
Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio), 68, 140, 214, 298, "Madonna del Gran’ Duca," 140
"Madonna della Seggiola," 140
Ravenna, 220
Rayner, Edward, 460
Read, Lily, 694
Read, Thomas Buchanan, 475, 478n, 596, 694
portrait of EBB, 596, 631
portrait of RB, 596, 631
Recoaro, 388
Recoaro, Baths of, 109
Recollections of a Literary Life (Mitford), 470
Reece, Mary Isabella Irwin, see Brotherton, Mary Isabella Irwin (née Reece)
"Reed, A" (EBB), 83n
Religious Tract Society, 655
Republicans/Republicanism, 222, 258, 260, 270
"Respectability" (RB), 135n
Rest in the Church (Harris), 192, 208
Retreat Penn, 107, 551
Revi, Thaon de, 639
Revue des Deux Mondes, 420, 432, 444, 723
Reynolds, Charles William, 132, 135n, 148, 166, 185, 186, 420, 489, 494
health
pregnancies, 230, 240, 242, 264, 270
see also Butler, Charlotte Mary
Reynolds, Ethel Maud, 729
Reynolds, Mary Arabella Susan, 264n, 270, 276, 293, 321, 331, 338, 362, 420, 494
Reynoldses, The, 165, 168, 169, 179, 225
Rhine (river), 144, 292, 379, 395
Rhineland, 468
Rhone (river), 74, 77, 79, 190
Richard III, King, 782
Richardson, Samuel
Clarissa, 781
Richter, Johann Paul Friedrich ("Jean Paul"), 415
Ridley, Lady, 761
Ridley Hall, 753
Righi, Egidio, 242, 243, 246n, 248, 257, 259, 283, 304, 532
likeness of, 248
Rigi (mountain), 393
Ristori, Adelaide, 700, 701n
Roberts, Ann Eliza (née Gordon), 296
Roberts, Henry, 509, 728
Robespierre, François Maximilien Joseph de, 476
Robinson, Henry Crabb, 191, 193n
health, 81, 102, 179, 193, 254, 312, 377, 494, 722
letters from, 153, 321, 400, 481, 487
Robinson Crusoe (Defoe), 770
Rocque-Arnaud, Abbé Martial Marceot de la Jésuites Modernes, Les, 229
Rollinat, François, 433
letters from, 727, 760
Romagnoli, Ferdinando, 47, 566, 571, 572n, 579, 580, 587, 588, 595, 600, 601, 615, 624, 630, 638, 643, 646, 661, 667, 676, 677, 680, 681, 683, 690, 695, 699, 700, 702, 716, 720, 727, 744, 746, 750, 767, 787, 790
character, 615, 630
cooks, 575, 615
health, 639
letter from, 724
letters to, 727, 760
marriage, 683, 690, 697, 698, 702
studies French, 609, 667
Romagnoli, Orestes Wilson, 705, 712, 724
Romans, The, 185
Rome, 28, 29, 37, 48, 49, 96, 103, 109, 118, 133, 148-150, 156, 165, 168-172, 175-178, 182, 183, 185,

Ronti, Regina (afterwards Kirkup), 685
“Rosamond” (Edgeworth), 655, 670, 751
Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 710, 754, 761
portrait of RB, 712, 714, 761
“Tennyson reading Maud,” 710
Rossetti, William Michael, 710
Rossi, Pellegrino di, 279
Rossini, Gioacchino Antonio, 109
Rothschild, House of, 141, 242, 490, 526
Rothschild, Lionel Nathan, 78
Rouchefoucault Doudeauville, Louis François Sosthène de La, 477
Rouen, 66
Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 51, 110, 557
Routledge, George, 645, 651, 656
Royal Academy, The, 388, 744
Summer Exhibition (1856), 752, 756, 761
Rubinstein, Anton, 53
Rue de Grenelle, 727, 737, 746
Ruskin, John, 685, 704, 709, 738, 754, 761, 794
letters from, 52, 677, 686, 696, 718, 796
Modern Painters, 738, 754
Ruskin, Margaret (née Cox), 783
Russell, Lord John, 1st Earl, 370, 788
Russell, Mary Anne, 103, 703, 780
Russia, 125, 571
Russia, Emperor of, 579, 619, 659
Ruxton, Augustus Alexander, 562
Ruxton, Mary (née Minto), 554, 561, 575, 723, 782
letter to, 575
Ruxton, Mary Augusta, 575
Ruxtons, The, 723
Rymer, John Snaith, 36
Rymer, Wilkie, 737
Rymers, The John Snaith, 737

Sabbatarians/Sabbatarianism, 359
Sacred and Legendary Art (Jameson), 68
St. Amaro, Viscomtess of, 693
St. Cloud (Paris), 420, 486
St. George the Martyr (English church at Pisa), 29, 109
St. Germain Quarter, 439, 747
St. Gotthard (pass), 384, 391, 393, 499
St. Jean de Maurienne, 497
St. Mark (church), (Venice), 381, 383, 605
St. Marylebone Church, 17, 18, 71, 86, 176
St. Michel, 497
St. Pancras, 212
St. Peter's (Rome), 181, 567, 605, 610

St. Petersburg, 659
Salis Soglio, Daniel de, 452
Salis Soglio, Julia (née Bayford), 365n, 452, 639
Salisbury, 778
Samuel (the prophet), 361, 376, 728
San Felice (church), 163, 172, 258, 694
San Francesco, Church of (Siena), 354
San Lazaro (Armenian convent), (Venice), 386
San Marcehlo, 280, 281
Browning calls on, 456, 462, 465
letter from, 456
letter to, 451
works
André, 462, 666
Comtesse de Rudolstadt, La, 462, 666
Consuelo, 462, 666
Maîtres Sonneurs, Les, 655, 666
Mare du Diable, La, 462
Petite Fadette, La, 526
Vacances de Pandolphe, Les, 464, 465, 470

Sandford, Caroline Julia Wills-, 565
Sandford, Harry Wills-, 565
Sandford, Jane Catherine Wills-, 508, 519, 532, 543, 547, 565, 581, 662, 703, 710, 755, 764, 767
letters from, 508, 580, 644, 662, 668
Sandford, Julia Wills-, 703
Sandford, William Robert Wills-, 508, 511, 565, 755
Sandford, William Sandford Wills-, 508
Sandfords, The, 754, 755
Sandwich, Mary Ann Julia Louisa (Lady Sandwich), 415
Santa Croce (district), 672
Santa Maria Maggiore (church), 610
Santa Maria Novella (church), 151
Santa Maria Novella (piazza), 151
Santa Trinità (bridge), 164
Santa Trinità (church), 207, 214
Santa Trinità (piazza), 164
Santissima Annunziata (church), 338
Saône (river), 495, 496
Sardanapalus (Byron), 587
Sardinia, 501
Sardinia, King of, 724
Sartoris, Adelaide (née Kemble), 37, 606, 611n, 620, 626, 630, 635, 650, 651, 666, 704, 728, 730, 740, 750, 752, 754
letter from, 635
Sartoris, Algernon Charles Frederick, 631
Sartoris, Greville Edward, 631
Sartoris, Mary Theodosia ("May"), 613, 631, 651, 747
Sartoris, The Edward John, 626, 752
Satán, 34, 162, 548, 614
Saye and Sele, Lord (see Fiennes, Frederick Benjamin Twisleton-Wykeham-)
Scarlett, Florence, 319
Scarlett, Frances Sophia Mostyn (née Lomax), 319
Scarlett, Leopold James York Campbell, 319
Scarlett, Peter Campbell, 274, 319, 576, 736
Scheffer, Ary, 481, 482n
“Christ consolateur, Le,” 481
Scotland, 492
Scully, William, 21
“Sea-Mew, The” (EBB), 236n, 343, 344n
Sebastopol, 649, 654, 658, 659, 665
Sedley, Joseph (Thackeray character), 429
Seine (river), 416, 420
Selwyn, Eliza Berry (née Peyton), 399, 494, 497
Selwyn, Henry Jasper, 380
Senigallia, 220
Seraphim, The (EBB), 83n, 222, 226, 250, 284, 343, 344n, 580
“Seraphim, The” (EBB), 312, 370, 372n
Seravezza, 280
Sewell, Elizabeth Missing, 192, 208
Shakespeare, William, 335
quotations from, 84, 110, 111, 131, 178, 449, 577, 615, 637, 650, 671, 787
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, The, 335
Shaw, Francis George, 592, 593
Shaw, Sarah Blake (née Sturgis), 592, 593, 594, 602, 607
Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft (née Godwin), 149
Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 149, 154, 369, 602
Cenci, The
quotations from, 233
RB’s essay on, 416, 420, 424, 455
Shirley (Brontë), 320
Shore, Arabella, 432
Shore, Charles Russell, 460, 469
Shore, Leonora Mary, 460, 469
Shore, Louisa Catherine, 432, 464
Shore, Margaret Anne (née Twopeny), 432
Shore, Richard Nowell, 432
Shore, Thomas, 432
Sibour, Marie Dominique Auguste, 698, 699n
Sicily, 317
Sidmouth, 221, 326, 605, 779
Siena, 39, 48, 101, 110, 111, 133, 214, 220, 351, 352, 354, 357, 358, 363
Siena, Cathedral of (Duomo), 354, 357
Sights and Sounds (Spicer), 569, 586
Sigourney, Lydia Howard (née Huntley), 188, 189n
Silsbee, Miss, 592, 593
Silverthorne, Christiana Matilda (née Wiedemann), (RB’s aunt), 481
Silverthorne, Edward Christian (RB’s cousin), 481
Silverthorne, James (RB’s cousin), 18, 482n
death, 479
Silverthorne, Jane Street (née Hayman), 481
Six Months in Italy (Hillard), 17, 18, 244
“Sleep, The” (EBB), 83n
Sloët, Baron, 244
Smith, Albert, 706
Smith, Julia, 420
Smith, Mary Ann (née Clarke), 225, 274, 370
EBB’s letters to Boyd possessed by, 225, 254, 274, 370
letter from, 389
letter to, 274
Smyth, Anne Carmichael- (née Becher, formerly Thackeray), 432, 436n, 556, 762
Smyth, Henry Carmichael-, 432
Socialists/Socialism, 222, 336, 524, 731, 758
Socinianism, 764
Sodoma, Giovanni Antonio Bazzi, 351, 354, 357
“Deposition,” 354
Somersetshire, 36, 198, 234, 326, 336
“Song against Singing, A” (EBB), 227n
Soules from the Portuguese (EBB), 56, 75n, 89n, 370, 376, 427, 432
Sordello (RB), 99n, 128n, 255n, 418n, 733
Sorrento, 133, 214, 557
Sotheby & Co., 56
Soulié, Frédéric, 796, 798n
Soul’s Tragedy, A (RB), 119n
South America, 312
South Wales, 388
Southampton, 203, 776, 777, 784
Soutey, Henry Herbert, 735, 738n
Soutey, Robert, 531
Spectator, The, 41
reviews EBB’s Casa Guidi Windows, 403
reviews EBB’s Poems (1850), 403
Spezia, Gulf of, 276, 278
Spezia, La, 279, 280, 292, 380, 399
Spicer, Henry, 37, 531, 533n, 548, 586, 704
Facts and Fancies, 531
Sights and Sounds, 569, 586
Spirit Manifestations, 685, 693, 699, 700, 704, 719, 720, 723, 728, 731, 732, 737, 751, 755, 774, 791, 792
Spiritual Magazine, The, 475
Spiritualists/Spiritualism, 28, 33–38, 43, 474, 622, 744, 768
Splügen Pass, 379, 384, 391
Spohr, Ludwig, 124
Spring, Marcus, 539
Spring, Rebecca (née Buffum), 87, 87n, 87
“Stanzas” (EBB), 344n
Steinmetz, Virginia, 50
Stentarello, 358
Stirling, Elizabeth (née Barrett), 432
Stirling, Jane, 432, 436n
Stirling, William, 432
Stisted, Clootilda Elizabeth, 578
Stisteds, The Henry, 578, 581, 586
Stone, Marjorie, 50
Story, Edith Marion, 249, 250, 580, 588, 599, 601, 602, 604, 613, 624
health, 604, 610, 613, 623, 624
Story, Emelyn Bartlett (née Eldredge), 244, 247n, 249, 581, 592, 593, 594, 599, 601, 602, 604, 605, 607, 624
Story, Joseph, 249, 255n, 580, 599, 601, 604, 649
burial, 601
death, 599
Story, William Wetmore

Story, William Wetmore, 33, 48, 244, 247n, 249, 576, 586, 592, 593, 594, 599, 601, 602, 604, 607

bust of RB, 596

letters from, 623, 624, 740

Storys, The, 36, 578, 581, 586, 588, 595, 599, 602, 616, 623

Stowe, Harriet Beecher, 527n

New Geography for Children, A, 704, 741

Uncle Tom's Cabin, 524

Strasbourg, 393, 395

Stratford-upon-Avon, 335

Stratten, Augusta (née Hope), 655

Stratten, Frances Elizabeth (“Fanny”), 471, 519, 572, 724

death, 703

Stratten, James, 21–22, 34, 81, 83n, 87, 119, 125, 131, 142, 155, 165, 187, 192, 231, 240, 272, 299, 320, 407, 410, 411, 542, 564, 571, 577, 608, 614, 677, 708, 709, 711, 724, 727, 728, 779, 782, 794, 796

Stratten, John Remington, 655

Stratten, Rebekah (née Wilson), 21–22, 87, 165, 240, 320, 708

letter to, 785

Strattens, The, 155, 172, 192, 199, 208, 224, 254, 320, 519, 536, 572, 703, 704, 721, 724, 782, 785

Stratton, Charles Sherwood (“General Tom Thumb”), 308

Strausstites, 616

Streatfeild, Sara Jane (née Cookson), 432, 464, 472, 515

Streatfeild, Sidney Robert, 464

Strickland, Agnes, 747, 748, 749n

Strugnell, Mrs. (Henrietta’s nurse), 365

Strutt, Elizabeth (née Byron), 188, 189n

letter from, 188

letter to, 188

Stuart, James Montgomery, 503, 505n, 515, 532, 536, 537, 538, 542, 550, 658

lectures on Shakespeare, 534

Stuart of Dunleath (Norton), 665

“Student, The” (EBB), 344n

Styria, 762

Sun, The

reviews EBB's Poems (1853), 732

reviews RB's Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day, 734n

reviews RB's Men and Women, 732

Sunderland, Mrs., 581

“Supplication for Love, A” (EBB), 344n

Surrey Zoological Gardens, 165

Surtees, Elizabeth, 115

Surtees, Margaret Caroline, 115

Surtees, Robert, 78, 99, 115

Susa, 499

Sutherland, Duchess of, 660

Suzanne (Brownings' French servant), 414, 416

dismissed, 419

Swedenborg, Emanuel, 31–33, 35, 51, 196, 200n, 213, 222, 251, 484, 492, 515, 523, 531, 538, 539, 540, 542, 549, 561, 578, 631, 637, 688, 748, 796

Apocalypse Révélée, L', 484, 486

Conjugal Love, 31

Vraie Religion Chrétienne, La, 492


Swiss, The, 174

Swiss chapel (Florence), 29, 320, 507, 576

Switzerland, 144, 150, 178, 326, 379, 384, 392, 394, 452, 468, 634, 755

Sykes, Mary, 321

Syndon, Juliet, 625

Tablet, The

reviews EBB's Aurora Leigh, 796

Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, 531, 548, 586

Talfourd, Thomas Noon, 338, 616

Tallmadge, Nathaniel Pitcher, 569

Taplin, Gardner B., 41

Tardeian Rock, 171, 310

Tarquinius Superbus, Lucius, 204

Tassinari, Alice Isolina Gaspera, 369, 372n, 377, 516, 535, 658, 676

Tassinari, Giovanni, 370

Tassinari, Mary (née Thornton), 369, 516, 676, 763

Taunt, Charles Sherwood (“General Tom Thumb”), 308

Tennyson, Arthur, 788

Tennyson, Emily, 405

letters to, 712

Tennyson, Frederick, 34, 515, 521n, 523, 531, 532, 534, 535, 542, 548, 549, 558, 561, 562, 566, 569, 575, 576, 597, 605, 637, 656, 668, 684, 689, 690, 694, 737, 788

Tennyson, Giulio, 575

Tennyson, Maria Carolina (née Giulioti), 518, 575, 576

“Tennyson reading Maud” (Rossetti), 710

Tennysons, The Frederick, 684, 703

Terni, 595, 600

Thackeray, Anne Isabella, 605, 611n, 613, 699, 741, 762

Thackeray, Harriet Marian, 605, 611n, 613, 699, 741, 762

Thackeray, William Makepeace, 605, 615, 699, 762

opposes The Guild of Literature and Art, 389

Vanity Fair, 429

Thackerays, The, 699
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thames</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“That I only deceive” (RB), 186</td>
<td>at Henrietta’s wedding, 296, 326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiebault, Baroness, 542</td>
<td>has delusions, 677, 681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thierry, Jacques Nicolas Augustin, 465, 467n</td>
<td>health, 223, 231, 654, 657, 664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiers, Louis Adolphe, 415, 427, 438</td>
<td>letters from, 115, 179, 272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Mrs. (Brownings’ landlady at 26 Devonshire St.), 408, 409, 487</td>
<td>letters to, 72, 80, 195, 472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Anna Cora, 609</td>
<td>Triqueti, Mme., 732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Cephas, Sr., 585</td>
<td>“Triumph of Music, The” (Leighton), 747, 759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Cephas Giovanni, 585, 590n, 608</td>
<td>Trollopes, Frances (née Milton), 35, 36, 134, 136n, 208, 369, 668, 720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, George, 419, 475</td>
<td>goes to England to see Home, 689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Jerome, 585</td>
<td>Trollopes, Theodosia (née Garrow), 208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Mary (née Ogden), 608, 631</td>
<td>Trollopes, Thomas Adolphus, 190, 193n, 208, 680, 720, 792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Waddy, 614</td>
<td>goes to London to see Home, 689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thornton, Edward, 369</td>
<td>Trollope, The, 728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticknor, Reed, and Fields (publishers), 376</td>
<td>Trotman, Thomas William, 182, 183n, 205, 294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times, The, 45, 430, 439, 441, 445, 468, 548, 571, 654, 753</td>
<td>Tulk, Augustus Henry, 217, 360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tivoli, 630</td>
<td>Tulk, Caroline, 244, 250, 251, 253, 275, 276, 287, 291, 360, 571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To Robert Browning” (Landor), 134</td>
<td>Tulk, Charles Augustus, 31, 191, 196, 205, 213, 215, 217, 221, 222, 239, 251, 272, 290, 296, 731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To Robert Browning” (R. Lytton), 640</td>
<td>Tulk, Ellen, 221, 253, 287, 291, 360, 731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tocqueville, Charles Alexis Henri Maurice Cléré de, 470, 483</td>
<td>Tulk, Marmaduke Hart, 360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolomei, Sig., 579, 675</td>
<td>Tulk, Susannah (née Hart), 239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolomei, Carlo, 579</td>
<td>Tulks, The, 191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolomei, Evelina, 588</td>
<td>Tunbridge Wells, 217, 223, 224, 240, 260, 305, 544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolomei, Frederica, 580</td>
<td>Turin, 496, 499, 501, 504, 637, 639, 693, 792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Tom Thumb, General,” see Stratton, Charles Sherwood</td>
<td>Turner, Mrs., 47, 126, 127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomkyns, Isabella, 357, 363n</td>
<td>Turner, I., 566, 567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomkyns, Isabella Frederica (née Coore), 356</td>
<td>Tuscans, The, 39, 49, 153, 175, 198, 275, 287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonbridge, 172</td>
<td>Tuscany, 29, 32, 39, 41, 148, 153, 163, 175, 203, 243, 258, 269, 274, 279, 294, 297, 300, 320, 325, 358, 361, 516, 691, 702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tories, The, 279</td>
<td>Academy, 223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torpes, San, 98</td>
<td>civic guard, 169, 260, 304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torquay, 21, 22, 133, 214</td>
<td>provisional government, 310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torre dell’Orologio e Procuratie (Clock Tower, Venice), 398</td>
<td>Tuscany, Grand Duchess of (Maria Antonia), 502, 503, 510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torrens, Maria Jane (née Murray), 450</td>
<td>Tussaud’s Waxworks, Mme., 703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torrens, Sarah (née Patton), 450, 460, 466</td>
<td>Tweedy, Edmund, 592, 593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torrens, The, 469</td>
<td>Tweedy, Mary (née Temple), 592, 593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tours, 131, 132, 143, 155, 186, 204, 213, 224, 257, 270, 305, 421, 433, 483</td>
<td>Twenty-Two Unpublished Letters, 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tower of London, The, 125, 782</td>
<td>Twickenham, 405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractarians/Tractarianism, 368, 371</td>
<td>Twinberrow, William, 492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trafalgar Square, 151</td>
<td>“Twins, The” (RB), 620–622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trant, Henry (EBB’s cousin), 305</td>
<td>Twiselton, Edward Turner Boyd, 508, 511n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Tray” (RB), 284n</td>
<td>Twiselton, Ellen (née Dwight), 508, 511n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treherne, Elizabeth (“Lizzie”), 209, 293</td>
<td>Two Poems (EBB &amp; RB), 650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treherne, Elizabeth (née Crow), 24, 88, 111, 153, 165, 179, 209, 212, 216, 224, 234, 245, 254, 260, 293, 306</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

automatic writing, 625, 639, 659, 668


likeness of, 248

marriage, 683, 686, 690, 691, 697, 698, 700, 702

receives gift from Browning, 643

wages, 532

Wilson, Frances ("Fanny"), 87, 133

Wilson, John (missionary), 589

Wilson, Mary (née Wallace), 589, 592

Wilton, 712, 778


Windsor, 206

Windsor Forest, 231

“Wine of Cyprus” (EBB), 157n

Winter, Alison, 33

“Wisdom Unapplied” (EBB), 83n

Wiseman, Nicholas Patrick Stephen, 371

Witt, Theodor de, 619

Wolff, Henry Drummond Charles, 508, 511n

Wolff, Joseph, 508

Wolley, J., 310

“Woman’s Shortcomings, A” (EBB), 83n

“Women and Roses” (RB), 522

Wood, Marshall, 596, 597

medallion of EBB, 596

medallion of RB, 596

Woolf, Virginia (née Stephen), 50

Worcestershire, 281

Wordsworth, Dorothy (“Dora”), see Quillinan, Dora

Wordsworth, William, 50, 191, 566

Prelude, The, 50

Worthing, 224

Wynn, Charles Watkin Williams-, 432

Wynn, Charlotte Williams-, 432, 436n, 443, 470, 606

Yeovil, 776, 778

York Street, 766, 768

Young, Mary (née Ancrum), 47, 119, 125, 126, 127, 144

Young England, 260

“Young Queen, The” (EBB), 344n

“Youth and Art” (RB), 285n

Zanetti, Ferdinando, 647, 648, 659

Zoological Gardens (Regent’s Park), 496