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**TWENTY-TWO
BROWNING
LETTERS**



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ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING
*Marble bust by William Wetmore Story in the
Wellesley College Library*

TWENTY-TWO
UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING
AND ROBERT BROWNING
ADDRESSED TO HENRIETTA AND
ARABELLA MOULTON-
BARRETT

NEW YORK: The United Feature Syndicate

Mcmxxxv



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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*" 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 latter days, he is such a being. * * * And he loves me more and more. Today we have been together a fortnight, and 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 and 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 and strange it is . . and it is impossible for me to doubt it any more."*

LETTER I

" . . . 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 unceasingly 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 me that my whole life shall be devoted to such a woman,—its only happiness will consist in such a devotion."

LETTER II

FOREWORD

AN ACCOUNT of how these twenty-two letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning came to be preserved, as given in an interview granted by

J. A. S. ALTHAM

grandson of Captain Surtees Cook, later known as Major Altham, who married Henrietta Moulton-Barrett, sister of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

The interview took place in June, 1935, at Mr. Altham's home at Pleamore Cross, Taunton, Somerset, England.

THE habit of collecting family letters has been a tradition in the Altham family for something like three hundred years. There is in my possession now a volume of letters of the family dating back to the middle of the seventeenth century. The earliest of these is dated about 1670. These original manuscripts of Altham family letters are pasted in an enormous calf-bound volume, fully indexed at the beginning, and they are annotated to show their dates and contexts and the events in connection with which they were written.

My grandfather, Captain Surtees Cook (or Major Altham, as he was known later in life) showed

all the characteristic Altham passion for collecting family letters. Perhaps I ought to explain how it was that my grandfather changed his name from Cook to Altham. It is not generally known that he and Henrietta were actually cousins of a sort, both descended from the Altham family. That family came to an abrupt end with five Miss Althams—all very plain from the miniatures we possess of them. From one of these Miss Althams Henrietta Moulton-Barrett was descended, while Surtees Cook was descended from another. Some time after Surtees' and Henrietta's marriage, they changed their name by deed poll to Altham in order to carry on the family name which had become extinct.

Complete diaries were kept by Major Altham in which constant mention is made of the life of the Barrett household at 50, Wimpole Street. They are in my possession, but they have far too many private references, and I should never dispose of them. Where they are of interest, however, is that they throw an entirely new light on the character of Edward Moulton-Barrett. Instead of being the incredible monster he has been represented, he is shown up as quite a pleasant old gentleman, although perhaps slightly eccentric. Certainly he was not insane, as has been suggested. Another point which they reveal is that Surtees' marriage

to Henrietta was not the runaway match it is supposed to have been. In fact, as a relative, Surtees Cook was received by old Barrett on friendly terms both before and after the marriage. He was certainly not introduced to the family as a total stranger by Henrietta. They must have known him a long time before the marriage.

Every letter that Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning wrote to Captain Cook's wife, Henrietta, my grandfather Major Altham preserved carefully, with the full intention of having them published some time or another. With this object in mind, he not only kept the original manuscripts but transcribed copies of most of them into note-books.

Altogether, I believe, 131 letters were collected. The originals were preserved by my grandfather and all were kept in a curious old casket brought from 50, Wimpole Street. The casket, which I have still in my house, is full of secret drawers. In fact only recently when I was poking about in it I came across several I had not known about previously. But they did not reveal any more letters—only a couple of seventeenth century coins.

My grandfather transcribed the Browning letters into six leather-bound school exercise books. It was these books that my father, Major Altham's son, allowed Dr. Leonard Huxley to use in writing

his book.* Parts of all but twenty-three letters were transcribed for publication, with the exception of passages considered of too intimate and private a character. The other twenty-three apparently were not copied at all because the envelopes were marked "Private" on the outside.

Some time ago I disposed of the one hundred and eight letters, of which parts had already been published by Dr. Huxley. I retained in my possession the other twenty-three unpublished letters, as well as a few envelopes on which scraps of the ends of some of the letters were written. Recently I sold twenty-two of the remaining twenty-three. (These are the letters which appear in this volume.) I am keeping the notes on the envelopes and the one remaining letter for sentimental reasons. This last letter in my possession is quite brief and written on a small scrap of paper and is from Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her sister Henrietta, discussing the question of Henrietta's husband getting promotion in the Army, and the uniform he would wear.

* "Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Letters to Her Sister, 1846-1859" with notes by Leonard Huxley, including about one half the text of some 108 letters in the correspondence.

NOTE ON THE STORY BUST

THE William Wetmore Story bust of Mrs. Browning, a photographic reproduction of which is used as a frontispiece, is in the Treasure Room of the Wellesley College Library.

It is interesting to know that "there are two busts of Mrs. Browning by Mr. Story, the first one having been made after her death in 1861. It is only by very careful study that one may detect one or two slight variations in the treatment of the dress in the bust which is the property of Wellesley College. This was given to the College by the founder, Henry Fowle Durant, in 1880, when he set aside a room at the right of the main entrance of College Hall to be known as the Browning Room, 'To enshrine the memory of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, not as a matter of sentiment, but as a tribute of appreciation to a woman who illustrated in her own culture the character of education best befitting a cultivated woman.' (*New England Magazine*, November 1892.) The bust which was in the possession of the Brownings was sold at Sotheby's in 1913 for £30-10s. This was reproduced for the frontispiece of Volume I of *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, edited by Frederic G. Kenyon."

Grateful acknowledgment is here made to the authorities of the Wellesley College Library for granting permission to use a photograph of the bust in the present volume, and to Lilla Weed, Associate Librarian and Curator of the English Poetry Collection, for permission to use material furnished in her letter as quoted above.

**TWENTY-TWO
BROWNING
LETTERS**



*TWENTY-TWO Letters of Elizabeth Barrett
Browning and Robert Browning
Addressed to Henrietta and
Arabella Moulton-
Barrett*

I

[E. B. B.]

[Roanne] October 2nd, 1846.

I THANK and bless you my dearest Henrietta and 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, and by the tears and 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 and terrified. Robert brought in a great packet of letters . . . and I held them in my hands, not able to open one, and growing paler and 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, and 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 and 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 and 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* and essentially:—with the proof, you should have had life and 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 and in ignorance. I ask of God to show to him and 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, and that moment. I ask Him too to bless you from Himself, my own beloved sisters, for the good and blessing and *tears* your writing brought me, when I read last the kindness and 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 and found me just able to cry from the balm of your tender words—I put your two letters

into his hands, and *he*, when he had read them, said with tears in his eyes, and 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 this trust, as they express it here." He said it with tears in his eyes. May God bless you—bless you!

Dearest Henrietta and Arabel,—how I suffered that day—that miserable Saturday . . when I had to *act a part to you*—how I suffered! and 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, and 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 and till we went away. We parted, as we met, at the door of Marylebone Church—he helped me at the communion table, and 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; and 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 and the railway, on the same morning—and as he wished it, and 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 and trustingly kind—and to poor Robert it was a great relief, as the verdict of a friend whom he loved and 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 E. B. B.

I received part of your husband's letters yesterday. To speak briefly as I must, I sympathise in all you have both been thinking and feeling, and in all you have done. Nothing but what is generous in thought and action could come

from you and Browning. And the very peculiar circumstances of your case have transmuted what might have been otherwise called "Imprudence" into "Prudence," and apparent wilfulness into real necessity.—To speak personally of you both, I know no two persons so worthy of each other; and to speak personally *to* you both, be assured that out of your own households, you can have no warmer and 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 and 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 and 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 and ever

J. KENYON.

The one or two sentences omitted, (for I have not room) are in harmony with all the rest. Dearest, kindest Mr. Kenyon, how I love him better than all! —Also I had kind notes from Miss Mitford, Nelly Bordman and Mr. Jago, who sent me a 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, and is worthy of love. I wrote to Jane when I was in Paris . . or rather about to leave it—but to Minny 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. Ah, 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 latter 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—and we must wait a little with resignation. In the meanwhile, what he is, and what he is to *me*, I would fain teach *you*. —Have faith in me to believe it. He puts out all his great faculties to give me pleasure and 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 and sate by me for hours, pouring out floods of tenderness and goodness, and promising to win back for me, with God's help, the affec-

tion of such of you as were angry. And he loves me more and more. Today we have been together a fortnight, and 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 and 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 and strange it is . . . and 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, and never thought of interfering otherwise than of saying at the last moment. "Give your wife a kiss for me" this, when they parted. His sister sent me a little travelling writing desk, with a word written, "E. B. B. from her sister Sari-anna." 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 and my respect.

I told you that Mrs. Jameson was travelling with us, and 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 and imagination combined with a nature and manners so sunshiny and capti-

vating. Which she well may say . . for he encases us from morning till night—thinks of everybody's feelings . . is witty and wise . . (and 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 and Pusey are likely "lapsare in erroribus" (you will make out *that*) and forgets nothing and nobody . . . except himself . . it is the only omission. He has won Wilson's heart I do assure you—and by the way, Wilson is excellent and active beyond what I could have expected of her. Most affectionate and devoted she has been to me throughout, and now she is not scared by the French, but has learnt already to get warm water and coffee and bread and butter. We applaud Wilson very deservedly. And she desires me to name her to you, and 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 should be angry with her. Let dear Minny forgive her if she can—because the blame was all mine, you know, and Wilson's part was simply the consequence of her attachment to me and 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 . . and 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 you from Pisa, and to Henrietta also. He loves you as his sisters, he says, and wishes that you were with us, and hopes that one day you will be with us . . staying and travelling with us . . exactly as I do myself. And I must not forget to tell you what Mrs. Jameson said the other day to me . . “Well, it is the most charming thing to see you and Mr. Browning together. If two persons were to be chosen from the ends of the earth for perfect union and fitness, there could not be a greater congruity than 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, and 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 and I am dull, (socially speaking) *Love makes a level*, which is my comfort.

Two separate (not following, of course) nights we have passed in the diligence—and 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 and knees . . . so carried up and down stairs against my will . . . so spoilt and considered in every possible way. Also the change of air does me good. I am able to do more—and 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. To-morrow we take the railroad to Lyons, and the next day embark on the Rhone. At Avignon, we pause a day and 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—and there has been a table brought close to it (foreign fashion, Arabel!) for Robert to dine on and to make me dine. Mrs. Jameson and 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—and write . . . and tell me everything, and 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 Mr. Boyd, to whom I shall write in time. And let Mrs. Martin under-

stand the same. And do *you* feel and know, that as for *me* . . for my position as a wife . . it is *awfully happy* for this world. He is too good and tender, and beyond me in all things, and 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—and 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, and will not leave their hold. Dearest Henrietta and Arabel let me be as ever and for ever

Your fondly attached

BA.

Does Stormie like the new house? my dearest Stormie.

Flush is very gracious, and behaves perfectly—but moans and 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 Book-

ham, I *had* thought of that once—but the wrong to you would have been greater, to have spoilt and clouded the new scene, instead of allowing it to be a resource to you. Be happy, my dearest ones—I will write, be sure.

[Envelope addressed: 'Angleterre' 'Miss Barrett, The Rectory, Little Bookham, Near Leatherhead, Surrey. Back of envelope carries notation, 'Written at Roanne,' apparently in Mrs. Browning's hand. Postmarked 'Avignon, October, 1846,' exact date illegible.]

II

[R.B.]

Pisa, Nov. 24, 1846.

BA directs me to address this letter to “my sisters,”—or, even more familiar—to “Henrietta and 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 thru' a personal acquaintance,—What shall I say? Believe me thru' 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 surprise 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 de-

pended 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 recognisable, 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 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 unceasingly 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 me that my whole life shall be devoted to

such a woman,—its only happiness will consist in such a devotion.

Now, 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 portentiously 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 over-powering—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 and cheerful when I go in presently, and Ba will sit at the table by 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 anything 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

R. B.

III

[E. B. B.]

Jany. 7, [1847] Collegio Ferdinando [Pisa].

MY own dearest Henrietta, Praise me as the best letter writer in this world of posts. Had I been with you, I should have been

frozen white—thrown out of use, as the pipes in the shower bath—Such accounts as the newspapers give of the cold in England!—for we see the newspapers now—so much the more credit to me! I have teased and entreated Robert for two things ever since we have been here—to have a piano, and to subscribe to a better library than the purely Italian one . . . somewhere where we could have French books and newspapers. The last point is gained at last—through my perseverance, and through the persistent dulness of these modern Italian writers who haven't a soul among them all. If it were not for the Bible and Shakespeare, we might say seriously that we had not seen a real book since our arrival in Pisa, until my great victory a few days ago, of the new subscription. And now Robert is as pleased as I am, after all his jokes against "his little Ba-lamb" (one of my names!) "who in spite of her innocence, couldn't live without wicked books by Eugene Sue." Now, we have every evening at five o'clock, just as we sit down to coffee, a French newspaper . . . the *Siecle*—and besides, Robert, when he goes to the post, may have a glance, if he feels inclined, at the English and German newspapers—and then he brings home books in his pocket. We never see a creature, and to talk for four and twenty hours together, would be rather exhausting—and one is not always in a humour for

writing prose or rhyme. As to the piano, I begin to despair. I was foolish enough to say that I did not play—and the idea of even *seeming to have anything for himself* . . . (though I have talked myself hoarse about my love of music and so on) is quite enough to make Robert turn back determinedly. He calls it a foolish expense, and wont listen to it. Such pleasure it would be to me to hear him—Mrs. Jameson told me that his playing was “full of science and feeling,” which I can easily believe, for he could not do a thing moderately well. By the way we heard from her two days ago, from Florence, on the verge of setting out for Rome—the most disconsolate letter possible. She had suffered herself to be drawn into the English society in Florence, and had lost time and patience, and gained nothing . . except the acquaintance of two interesting foreigners whom she considered unfit for Gerardine to associate with. She is of course, particular about Gerardine—or she herself would have enjoyed it. The English seem to have made a most *tedious* and dull impression—“Miss Garrow spoke of” me “with enthusiasm”—and Mrs. Stisted meant to come to Pisa on purpose to have the sight of *us*—you ought to have seen Robert’s and my consternation. Wilson has just received “instructions” accordingly. When we go to Florence . . and early in April we turn our faces that way . . it will

be in the most royal state of incognito. We mean to cut everybody we ever knew, so that nobody need be offended. Robert works himself up into a fine frenzy in talking of the horrors of mixed society, and sometimes exhorts me just as if I wanted exhortation—"Those people will spoil all our happiness, if we once let them in,—you will see—If you speak of your health and save yourself on that plea, they will seize upon *me*—oh, dont I know them?" He walks up and down the room, thoroughly worked up—"But, dearest," say I, with my remarkable placidity . . . "I am not going to let anybody in! If one of us lets them in, it will be Wilson, most probably—! but we need not suffer it—I desire it quite as little as you"—"There is that coarse, vulgar Mrs. Trollope—I do hope, Ba, if you dont wish to give me the greatest pain, that you wont receive that vulgar, pushing, woman who is not fit to speak to you."—"Well . . . now we are at Mrs. Trollope! you will have your headache in a minute—now do sit down, and let us talk of something else, and be quite sure that if we get into such scrapes, it wont be my fault."—I assure you I dont exaggerate his visionary fears of 'the world,' and 'society'—What makes him perfectly happy is to draw his chair next mine and let the time slip away. We would like to know one or two Italians, to have an opportunity of speaking the language ;

but that is the whole of the ambition, as to things of that sort. The weather is mild, but too damp underfoot for me to walk, and I keep by the fire, feeling very contented and very well. Surely it must strike some of those who are angry with me, that by staying in England through this severe winter, I should have probably been put an end to . . . and *certainly* have lost all the advantages and strength which the summer and mild season before it, had allowed me to receive—Only that is no argument to those who wish me dead!—Dearest Henrietta, I could not hold out against poor Bummy when the old year ended, so on the first day of the new I wrote to her not an unaffectionate letter certainly. At the same time I told her the truth as I understood the truth—I was as sincere as possible. With regard to you I just said that you were not in the least a likely person “to follow in my footsteps,” and that whatever you did or did not do, every usual form of respect and affection would be strictly observed by you. When I had done my letter I thought that I would enter on the subject a little more, and wrote on a paper my opinion specifically upon persons and rights . . . which, when written, I took fright and burnt . . . I did not dare send it, lest I might do some harm in an intention of doing good. I thought to myself, “Why Bummy will not take up my view of this

question for anything I can say—she has lived too long in a different mould : but she may make some mischief perhaps, with as good an intention as mine, and therefore” So I burnt what I had written. I cant think who can send her such accounts of you . . all that absurdity about ‘trousseaus’ and the rest—Louisa cannot, you know—It is also a complete mystery to me how Anne Gent had the information about me, which assuredly she had . . since Minny was not the informant. Could Arlette have said anything to Patten? but that is impossible too. Bummy talks decidedly of coming to Italy, and all on account of *Arlette’s singing*. Also Jane talks of it . . of either Nice or Florence for the winter, and probably Florence. Do write to me soon, and let me hear how you have lived lately and whether my darling Arabel has her room yet, and whether Papa is kinder to her—I want to know too of other things . . . but I dare not hope that my brothers will accept the peace offering I sent them—I suppose they mean to salute me with the point of the sword for the rest of my life. As to making friends with *me*, with an “avaunt” to *mine*, they have better taste than to dream of such an impossible thing. Does Alfred get on in the railroad? Has Occy made any good drawings lately? Did George go to Cambridge? How is the Law, too, with Jim and Sette? And tell me of Henry.

As to dear Stormie, I do trust that he has other plans than for that dreadful Jamaica. I love them all very dearly . . . better than any of them loved me ever, or we should not be thus. We were talking this morning at breakfast of O'Connell and the Irish, and I was describing Stormie's enthusiasm for both. "Indeed" said I, "he is so generous and tenderhearted, that he naturally takes the part of every party or person attacked by others—He defends everyone who is *accused*."—"Everyone, except *you*" . . . observed Robert gravely. I could not speak a word,—my heart was full. The observation was too true a one, indeed. From Stormie, the pain has been more disappointing than from some others, for I could not have expected this from *him* . . . but rather quite, *quite*, an opposite course.

How is Minny? Do you take as much care of her as you can, and make her rest—I think it is unkind, tell her, that she should refuse to lie down properly. The new maid I have taken into my head, is not a pleasant person. Why do you keep her, in that case? Give my love, to dear Minny. I am very glad that she took my carpet. Remember to tell me the colour of the drawing room curtains and paper &c, that I may conjure you up properly. Has Papa made it up with Alfred? is it a settled thing? Question after question, I could ask you. So Matilda Bell is going to be married to a man with a

purse. So much the better if she likes it, but the transferred heart . . . the family inheritance . . . I wonder she *should* like. Wilson fancied, too, that she was *inclined* to another quarter, herself. Tell me of the Barretts—I heard that Maria had a sixth child—Poor children, poor mother! He ought to get something to do on the foreign railroads, which should not be difficult—Mr. Bell gives up his heir-ess then, and is not thinner for it, I dare say. Has dearest Trippy been with you during the Christmas? My love to her and ten kisses—and tell me how she looks and whether she has given another festival since the one you told me of . . . and how the lodgers on the lower floor go on, and whether she still likes her house. So you go to church to hear matins, just as much as ever. I agree that there is no harm in going to church. Otherwise, *we* are strongly against every Pretence or pretext of Puseyism—Robert *so* strongly, that I wish sometimes to “pit” him against Mr. Bevan—only . . . *poor Mr. Bevan!* He understands the scriptures thoroughly and learnedly, and begins by denying that there is any Priesthood but Christ’s, or any christianity apart from the doctrine of justification by faith as taught by the first reformers—then wishes for more Martin Luthers, and disdains all saints like San Raniere and San Torpé!—thanks God that he is likely to die a dissenter . . . then admits

that as a body, the dissenters have quite as many faults as any other class of christian men. What he likes *alone* among all the catholic forms, is the carrying of the crucifix before the corpse, in the many ghastly funerals which pass our windows. He thinks it significant and touching that the sign of faith should precede the dumb Dead, and "would rather like it" to be done in his own case! The funerals throng past our windows. The monks, sometimes all in black, and sometimes all in white (according to the order) chant in a train, carrying torches . . . and on the bier comes the corpse . . . open-faced . . . except just a veil. At first, we both used to wish to see the sight . . . but the horror (my old horror, tell Arabel) grew too strong for me soon . . . and he feels it too, and attends to me often when I say, "Oh, *dont* go to the window." But sometimes he cries out . . . "I can't help it. Ba—it *draws* me." Such horrible, hoarse chanting, it is—Like the croaking of death itself.

Give my love to Susan and Surtees both—they always remember me. Does he go again to Taunton this spring? does he dine with you often? Tell me everything. Have you heard from Lady Bolingbroke and is it good news? Be wiser than I have been if you can, and give no occasion for conversation. My thoughts are with you at the tenderest and faithfulest! when they are prayers. I pray for

you and my dearest Arabel, that you may be as happy as I am (or nearly!) as far as personal position goes, and happier in other respects. I say "nearly," because I do not in my conscience believe that there can be another husband like mine—it is such a perpetual and unexceptional tenderness. Indeed all women might not like *the excess* . . . I do not know. If you ever thought I was likely to *be afraid*, that is a mistake at any rate. There is on each side, the most absolute confidence—How God has Blessed me infinitely, after all the trial!——I look at myself in wonder—

Always I pour out the coffee now . . . it is my only 'active duty' I think—that and to keep Flush in sight, to prevent his barking. Dearest Henrietta . . . or dearest Arabel . . . if you will send Mrs. Jameson's mittens . . . having found them . . . (those she gave me) together with Arabel's picture, and the *Serpent locket* . . . left somewhere on my table . . . under cover (making a small parcel of them) to Sarianna Browning, she will let us have them together with a book of Robert's which he requires for his new edition. She sends the book, understand, and will enclose the other things from you. Do not delay—Miss Browning, New Cross, Hatcham, Surrey, the full direction. There is a m.s. book too of mine . . . left behind—but I am afraid I can't describe it. It has some translations from Petrarch—Never mind, if

you cant find it. Why is there no letter today? Write, write, and at large, and in detail. Believe that I am with you both in my heart. Dont grow thin again, dearest Henrietta—Also, keep up the fire! Tell Arabel (in sympathy) that *I*, too sleep in the most uncomfortable of beds . . stuffed with orangetree-shavings—but I sleep well notwithstanding, and have a regular siesta after dinner. Mind! Arabel *didn't tell me that her bed was uncomfortable*. You may send me a yard or two of elastic (black) for sandals—but I dont care much. May God bless you dearest and best . . both of you! —Robert's "dearest love" (his own words) to you both.

Your ever and ever attached

BA.

Love to Lizzie—dear Lizzie—tell her, my "portrait."
I am glad of the good news of Crow—Say *whether I may safely direct to you in Wimpole Street.*

[Addressed: 'Miss Barrett, 50 Wimpole Street.']

IV

[E. B. B.]

[Pisa, January 23-9, 1847.]

MY own dearest Henrietta must, to begin, forgive me all untoward and objectionable words however and whenever let

fall, about "Puseyites" "Newmanites" "Tractariani" or whomever so called or miscalled. I cant remember what I wrote, but I am sure that if it was written in an ungentle spirit, I am sorry for it, and agree it was wrong, without a word more. Dont you know that I hate a controversial and bitter tone in religion, above every error or whatever may so seem to me, in the same? Only standing here upon the shore where all those waves of certain ideas and trains of thought naturally tend and break, I spoke upon impulse, just as I should have done if face to face with you,—and you must forgive me as you would have forgiven me then. Even at that moment I did not mean the least reproach by the word "Puseyites" . . one *must* use words you know, or the meaning one has lies in the dark. I meant simply the holders of the opinions revived by Dr. Pusey, and about which there has been so much contention. If I had said "members of the Church of England," I might have referred to persons as absolutely opposed to those I speak of, as possible—low churchmen, for instance!—And High churchmen, even, would by no means have expressed the precise thing; for there are high churchmen and high churchmen. Now forgive me for saying awkwardly and harshly whatever I may have said so—of course there are Christians in every body of men who call on Christ . . while the

purest Christianity may probably be on the outside of all. I went into the churches here with the desire of praying with the people, and, with all my disappointment and distraction and quenching of the imagination, I hope I did it a little—the worst was that they did not appear to pray themselves very much. By the way, some things I cant make out. Will Storm reveal to me, for instance, why it is, that the fasting is done in Italy on Saturday, and not on Friday? On Friday they eat magnificently. On Saturday they come to the eggs, and the beans . . . beans pounded into the likeness of *peas-pudding*—we had some the other night for supper, from our people of the house, who sent it to us with an ‘Aviso al publico,’ that to enjoy it to perfection we should add some white sugar and plenty of oil!—Perhaps it was the ideal perfection which disturbed my positive pleasure, but really and altogether it was beyond me. Peaspudding “adapted to the capacity” of horses, may rather be like it in the state we saw:—with the oil, it would be brought down to the pigs, I should fancy. So I swore by the celebrated pork of Epicurus, never to touch it again. Robert always says that I have dreadful prejudices, and he is so anxious of surmounting his and talks so learnedly of the instincts of nations in relation to the food they select, that you would take for granted (to hear him) that he lived here

upon oil and garlic . . . whereas, most happily for both of us, he never touches either—"the Signora's fault," as he explains to the Trattoria people, when they open their eyes at the barbarism of our taste. Not to like oil!!—The fact is that he hates it just as much as the signora, only with remorse!! i. e. wishing that he didn't—while I avow my frailty—as shamelessly as I would eschew (rather than chew) the acorns of our English ancestors.

(Jany. 27th.) Dearest Henrietta, This letter was begun last Saturday, and now it is Wednesday night . . . but really I have not had the heart to go on writing. I will tell you why—Wilson has been ill . . . not very ill, and not in the least dangerously; and now she is a good deal better . . . doing as well as possible in fact—still, the feelings of responsibility, and also of sympathy with a person for whom I have so much regard and with so much good reason, have kept me uneasy of course. In England, it would have been a lighter thing—but to bring her here and to see her ill at such a distance from her friends—you will understand how I could not have the heart to write. Last week she complained of a pain in the left side . . . just where Arabel used to have hers . . . and we both fancied that it was obstruction or indigestion—and she confided to me (making exclamations!) that she had bought and partly taken *eight shillings worth* of English pills for bilious dis-

orders and that they did not seem strong enough. So at her request, I made Robert bring home from the English Dispensary, three grains of calomel and so much rhubarb—Taken on Friday night. On Saturday morning, she appealed from the rhubarb to certain cream of Tartar and herb water employed by the people of the house and strenuously recommended—entreating me not to tell Robert. This seemed to relieve her, she said . . . but the pain returned . . . burning up into the breast. I couldn't help telling Robert because I was frightened—and we both wished her much to go to Dr. Cook . . . which indeed I had pressed on her before . . . Robert declaring that she would kill herself at last with taking such redundancy of medicine. She would go, she said, if she did not feel better—and once she put on her boots with the intention of going, and fancied herself better . . . she wouldn't go. Which went on till Saturday night while I was putting my feet into hot water by the fire here, all undressed . . . here in the sitting room. All at once she sank down on the sofa, shivering all over, and cried out that she was about to be very ill, and that she would go to Dr. Cook at once . . . asking me to ask the Signorina of the house to accompany her. I asked—(frightened out of my wits) and the girl was afraid to go with Wilson who “would certainly faint in the street” . . . and though I proposed having

a carriage for both, she drew back . . and with very good reason as grew plain to me and to poor Wilson too. So, recovering my senses by degrees, I dried my feet and ran away with the basin, and put on a dressing gown, and sent Wilson to bed, while I went to ask Robert to dress himself and set off himself for Dr. Cook . . which he did at the quickest. It was past ten and he had to go to the other side of the Arno and a good way beside.—“And what am I to do if Dr. Cook wont come? if I cant get in?” “Oh, get somebody to come—” “My love, how can I get somebody at this time of night? I will do what I can . . but if I *cant*—” “Oh, you *must* get somebody.” I was so afraid that as people in a fright generally are, I couldn’t be reasonable. But he ran out, eager to do the impossible—and I ran in to Wilson, poor thing, who was in bed, with her pulse beating very fast, but a good deal from nervousness, I have been certain, since. Still there was fever enough, and for the rest it was quite natural for her to think of her friends as I did for her—and she told me that ever since the sea voyage (or for four months) the whole stomach had been swelled . . distended—not a word of which, I had ever heard before. But Dr. Cook came, and I rushed away—and presently Robert followed to tell me that there was nothing to be uneasy about . . nothing whatever . . but that there *would* have been

something, with a very little more provocation of 'remedies.' In fact, it is said to be a slight inflammation of the mucus membrane of the stomach, arising primarily from the sea-sickness when in a state of indigestion, and further irritated by those English pills, which might have been good in England, but in Italy are too *hot*. If the symptoms had gone on, it would have ended in a gastric fever, which is crowding the hospitals at this instant from the combination of hot sunshine and moisture common to the climate—even here in the winter. She was desired to be in bed and to have five leeches on her side, and Dr. Cook comes every morning—and today and yesterday she has been up for half an hour, and appears very satisfactorily relieved. I asked him this morning if there was the least cause for apprehension—"Not the slightest" was the answer—"she will be quite herself in a day or two." I asked too (being fearful) whether she could bear without risk the hot weather of Italy . . . whether it was safe for her to remain. "Quite safe," he said . . . "only she must be careful of her diet, and live in the simplest way." He forbids *coffee altogether* . . . also wine. He says that she was not well when she left England . . . that the dietary system and organs of digestion were out of order . . . but that everything is coming right quite fast. If the inflammation had extended to the bowels, it would

of course have been more serious. Poor dear Wilson! My fright that night, I shall not easily forget . . . and to complete the whole, when the rest was over Robert gave me a tremendous scold for having run to Wilson's room without any stockings. "I wanted to kill him . . . I played with his life" &c &c! Poor me!—nobody catches cold, in such a fright as I was:—There now!—I have told my whole history. She is very much better tonight, and in quite good spirits . . . and is sure that she was near the same sort of thing in Wimpole Street—but the *sea* evidently did the great harm. Tell Arabel about the coffee—coffee is considered *very bad* for weakness of the stomach and indigestion—*Tea* is ordered to be substituted. All this time, I have been perfectly well and active to a miracle. Think of me, dressing myself all these days, doing my hair, attending to everything. Robert being the kindest of possible persons brings me the tea kettle of hot water, at nights and mornings . . . but other assistance I have none—the Signorina has enough to do in waiting on Wilson and preparing our breakfast. The people here have been very kind indeed, and one could not take advantage of it. Of course we would send Wilson home at once if she desired it, but I believe it would be a disappointment to her and Dr. Cook who is a very intelligent man in his profession, assures us of the safety of her being

here in the warm weather. She has little to do, with us, and is never fatigued, and takes exercise regularly out of doors, and really what has been striking me all this time, is her improved appearance . . . looking so much fatter and more rosy. Fallacious signs, I fear!

(Friday morning) Dr. Cook has just been here—and she is much better and he is not coming again for a day or two. With a little attention to diet and a good deal of exercise, she is likely to be well for the future. Thank God for all things,—and now I may write on.

Thank my own Arabel for the long dear letter which made me so glad some days ago, and enclosed a note from you, dearest Henrietta, to make me gladder still. About the same time I had a most kind one from Mr. Martin, from Paris—he is a kind, earnest friend . . . and so is dear Mrs. Martin. I shall not forget, among other things, that at the very first and without waiting to have a word of explanation from me, they wrote to me, in the spirit of the fullest faith and esteem. Robert always says that he would do anything for either of them . . . and indeed we should have been both happy to have seen them here, let Arabel smile as she may!—I should like them to *know him thoroughly* . . . so as to have the evidence of their senses (besides other evidences) that I have done the wisest thing in the

world. And now, as to the rest . . . Mr. Martin's note pleased me much, by the account he gave of all in Wimpole Street—Oh, let Arabel be sure that I am not irritated against any one of them, and that my whole heart has been open to them from the beginning, to the end, to hold and to love them as ever. Sette's letter was affectionate, and affectionately responded to by my inner feelings . . . only he and they all must understand and feel that it would ill become me in my position, to accept as a personal kindness to me, what refused so emphatically to extend itself to the person nearest to me. If they knew him whom they misknow, how different it would be indeed! a reflection which always arrests me when I am inclined to be vexed for a moment. Let them reflect for their own part . . . Why not let the past be past, and forbear on each side every sort of recrimination? They may think on to themselves, or even say out frankly . . . "You two have both acted foolishly and rashly, and we do not approve of it on any ground: but inasmuch as the thing is done, and we love our sister and desire to love the man who loves her, here is our hand for you both"—something to that effect might be said without inconsistency and without sacrifice, I fancy—even something *more might* be said, considering whom I have married, and what an absolute happiness (as far as he is concerned) I have received

from him. Give my love to them all, at any rate—It is painful to me, to have been the means of painfulness to any of them—I did not think that they would have taken it so. Still they ought to be able to see what every other person of sense, sees in an instant, that to have *given them my confidence* and have destroyed their prospects in the same breath, would have been an act of the most atrocious selfishness on my part, and impossible to one who loved them as I did and do.

Two things in Arabel's letter made me uneasy—she refers incidentally to George's speaking of Storm's going to Jamaica—which I hope refers to something long ago . . . and not that there is talk now of his going to Jamaica. Oh—if dearest Storm would but turn his eyes another way . . . any other way in the world. Why not come our way, in the Statira? if the Statira proceeds to the Mediterranean this year? Why not image out some new plan . . . of farming, or . . . or . . . I should not mind what. Now listen . . . cant he and George and Sette and Occy go up the Rhine this summer and meet us in the Luganean mountains. By the way, assure Arabel that we have not taken root in Italy for life . . . Dont let her take such fancies. Seriously (though) we talk sometimes of going to Jerusalem, and we are both to be marked on the arm as pilgrims, whenever we do, that you may doubt too much our

"complete narrative" . . but we shall see you before we see Jerusalem. The other thing which makes me un[easy]* is her account of Mr. Boyd. How is he "more infirm"? Has he [had] medical assistance?—and did the cold affect him much? Let me [know].

The Martins saw a great deal in Paris of the Hedleys, and Mr. M[artin] observes that dear uncle Hedley "won their hearts," by the warm affection and interest with which he spoke of me and "Mr. Browning," taking our parts in a strenuous manner. Arabel too is mentioned . . but without a word of her illness. They desire me to write to them at Pau. It was so delightful to hear of my dearest Henrietta and Arabel from their sincere testimony, though I could not help envying a little the beholders of their faces. My own dearest sisters, how I love you and thank you and bless you for all you have been to me! May the hour come when I may be able to give you back a little of the good—the love only, can go to you now. While I am writing, comes an awful interruption in the shape of *Mrs. Cook*. She is an unpretty likeness . . though rather a pretty woman even so . . of Susan Cook . . but very vapid in expression, and weak and commonplace in conversation . . . I mean to say, *very*. She told me however of her intimacy with the Gar-

* A portion of the letter has been torn away.

rows, and how she had had a letter from Miss Fisher two days since. To my astonished ears moreover she revealed, that Pisa was very "gay" just now . . . a weekly "reception" at the Governor's, besides the Baroness . . . When Robert came in, I divulged in my turn, where he might go if he pleased, to which he irreverently replied that the Governor and the governed might be hanged first. I have not even returned Mrs. Turner's courtesy in coming here to witness our papers—though I have been once out in the carriage since I wrote to Arabel. We drove down through the pine forest to the sea side, and met the camels and enjoyed it all exceedingly. The carriages are delightful—Wilson and Flush were on the outside. The weather is fine, and if we were on the Arno I might walk out every day : but as it is the wisdom seems to be on the side of shunning the cold air which waits at our front door. Dr. Cook says that even if I did not go out during the winter (which you know I have done) the advantage of being here is incontestable. He himself is in Italy on account of weakness of the chest, many of his family having died of consumption. He says that he could not *breathe* while he was in England a month ago. Certainly I am very well indeed—better than I could hope to be in the winter. Robert's love to you and Arabel, whose note quite touched and pleased him, and he shall write

to you next time. Love to dear Trippy, and to
Lizzie, dear child—

Your own attached

BA.

Love to Minny. *Speak of Papa always.*

Does dearest Occy get on with the drawings?
Tell me.

[Addressed: 'Angleterre . . viâ France.' '(To the care of Miss Trepsack.)' 'Miss Barrett, 5 Upper Montague Street, Montague Square, London.' Postmark clearly reads 'Pisa, January 28, 1847,' thus presenting a problem for future editors as Mrs. Browning's letter states that she resumed writing again on 'Friday morning' (the 29th).]

V

[E.B.B.]

[Pisa, March 26, 1847.]

MY ever dearest Henrietta . . Dont reproach me! spite of seeming sins. Though the last letter was out of turn, and unfolded immediately by the due one, as I meant at first . . and though when you read this you may be tempted to lay to my charge most unkind reserves, yet dont reproach me!—I am not indeed *so* to blame. And now listen to what comes next—and remember that I *write it myself* and 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, and *of five months date*, says Dr. Cook, or nearly so . . . all the pain of it for just nothing, except the purchase of experience. Everything, I did wrong . . and he attributes the result to the heat within and without . . in 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,” and nothing else was the matter. Pray laugh at me—As for me, I could cry, out of the sheerest remorse—and dont 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 . . and then, for a week or two or three, became subject to sudden violent pains which came on in the night, relieved by friction and a few spoonfuls of brandy, and going off as suddenly as they came. Wilson told me at last that she *suspected my condition*, and that if it were so, the pains were “not right” and signified the possibility of miscarriage ; and she had great fears about the influence of the *morphine* &c. Robert of course made a fuss besides, and entreated me to call in Dr. Cook. I

was frightened out of my wits by the suggestion about the morphine, and out of my *wit* by the entreaty about Dr. Cook . . . and being wrought upon on all sides, I pacified Robert and my own apprehensions by agreeing to appeal to Mr. Jago . . . just to ask him whether *in such a case* the morphine would 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—and I had at best doubts! Oh, of course, I did doubt—I have always had such good general health that sane 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 and so and 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 would say “*This means that.*” So I would not be convinced by her . . . and when my poor dearest Robert besought me about Dr. Cook I put him off with ever so many impertinent speeches, yes, and obstinate ones—*meâ culpâ!* I repent in dust and 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, and I had only one return after writing to Nelly Bordman. But

last Friday I felt unwell and submitted to see Dr. Cook. He came . . . declares that he found the room at seventy, a scandalous fire, a wrong posture, and my pulse very irritable : laid me down on the sofa—commanded cold tea . . . and 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, and on Saturday morning felt rather better. Towards evening however regular pains came on, every five minutes . . . and these lasted for above four and 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, and bore it all so well (I mean with so much bodily vigour) as to surprise Wilson . . . and 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 re-admission 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 and to apply leeches to the back, keeping the temperature cool : — and 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, and He leads us where He can best teach us.” In the meanwhile I am getting strength fast, and 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 and right . . and it puzzled me rather to think how after all I could catch cold, and feel well on 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, and was up for an hour on the fourth, and on the fifth, for two hours. Today this sixth day, I am to go to the sofa in the next room—and 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 special 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 would have been frightened—now wouldn't you? . . . Not that we ever keep from you anything. I would have told you long ago, had I *known* myself. Now I must not write any more, because I am under a vow to Robert. He laid his commands on me not to write much (or *I could*, I assure you!) and 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 and say that her kind letter arrived just too late, and that I shall write very soon a full account of myself. Thank her most affectionately in the meanwhile, and our kind good friend Mr. Jago, and 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, and 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 and is to me throughout this illness—so tender past speaking of! which reminds me to mind him more. May God bless you! my own dearest sisters—

Your *BA.*

The morphine did *no* harm at all. Wilson is

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

VI

[R. B.]

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 22nd, 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 and 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.

R. B.

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.

[Addressed: 'Miss Barrett, 50 Wimpole Street.']

VII

[R. B.]

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 and 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 of 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 be entirely sympathetic 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 *dis*-obedient 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 surely 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—and 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

R.B.

[Addressed: 'Miss Barrett' 'Florence, May 6, 1847.']

VIII

[R. B.]

[Florence] Oct. 4, '47.

BA has been writing a long letter to her dear sisters, 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 what

ever 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 these rumours operate as

they are said to do in keeping away the floods 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 [forced] to take up our quarters in Florence for some six months longer. On another important 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 and received &c, and gave us the notion of a place where we should be teased to death . . . quite a mistake ; for (as I daresay it happens in most other gay cities) you must seek out these distractions as they will never seek out you—the world being quite able to amuse itself without either Mrs J or Mr and Mrs B : so that, when 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

* Possible insertions where a fragment of the letter is missing.

told you, after all? whereas, what true, truest delight your affectionate congratulations gave me when Ba and 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

R.B.

[Addressed, 'Miss Barrett,' on outer fold of letter.]

IX

[R.B.]

Florence, Nov. 25, [1847].

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, 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 delicious *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 this 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 and laughing to hearts' 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 pecul-

ially 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 ! 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 of health of Ba. I will not write any more now—only this ; Be quite sure I will keep you well and 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 and Arabella. God bless you ever—

R. B.

[Addressed : 'Miss Barrett.' 'RBg' is also written on outer fold of letter just under 'Miss Barrett.']

X

[R. B.]

[Florence] April 2 [1848].

WOULD I take a worse way, dearest Henrietta and Arabella to get back your favor, which this great stoppage in note-writing may have put in peril, that 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 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 minutes consideration,—you will rather support me in the exercise of a proper

authority, than try to weaken it by complaining . . (which would overthrow 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 rumors of wars 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—infinity 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 the 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,

R. B.

['H & A' has been written in middle of outer fold of letter.]

XI

[R. B.]

Florence, Nov. 20, '48.

DEAR Henrietta and Arabel will see what a famous letter this encloses, 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 doc-

ile, and disposed to mind wise lecturings. I really venture to believe in short, that all will go favourably 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 and 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 [streets]* in London town. Still, near as we are after that fashion, it [would] be more delightful, as 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 and 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 (and 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,*

* Possible insertions where a portion of the letter is missing.

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 and 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’ and thro’ better than the fire she is now sitting before, a few inches from my elbow. Flush gets old, but supernaturally 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

R. B.

[Envelope addressed: ‘Angleterre via France’ ‘Care of Miss

*Trepsack, (Miss Barrett), 12 Upper Gloucester Street, Dorset Square,
New Road, London.' Postmarked 'Florence, Nov. 20, 1848.'*

XII

[E. B. B.]

[Florence, end of February, 1849 (?)].

MY dear dearest Henrietta, as I calculate that this will reach you on the 4th of March and know that you have not my horror of, nor the melancholy which dogs me on such anniversaries, (we mean to keep our wedding day, the 12th of September, as our chief holy day of the sort) I cant help writing down my thoughts as they go to you and rest on you, and would fain express the full affection and many desires of my heart for you. May God bless you, my dear dear dear Henrietta, and fulfill in happiness all and more than I could give now to speech! May God make you and all those whom you love very happy, and turn to light whatever shadow may be on your path! Be cheerful and hopeful! I prophecy for you some bright days. What is necessary, while there is trial, is cheerfulness and hope . . and also firmness—you will be firm when the time comes for *that*. Give my love to Surtees: it seems to me that he has proved for you a true attachment, and that such a true thing is a sufficient foundation for any reason-

able happiness. If I were either you or he, I would not waste the months and years in fruitless delays. If he should be disappointed in the position he wishes to attain, I would turn at once, (were I you) in another direction, and even give up military dignities altogether, should it appear desirable for the attainment of more necessary advantages. As to money, one must have enough to live by of course . . . but money is to be had by a little energy; and other things (such as love and truth for instance) are not always to be had. I never, however, should advise you into any imprudence—you should have enough to live on . . . it is reasonable and right, yes, and *just*, one towards another. At the last crisis, you will avoid my reproaches . . . I mean, the reproaches heaped upon *me* . . . by an open and frank arrangement. Surtees will speak out, and you will make up your mind to bear some unpleasantnesses. Forgive me Henrietta!—I do not love you less that I think more pitifully of my poor Arabel, who will have to bear, to endure with you, without your consolations! Anything I would give to see some brightness for her too!

Now on the 4th of March I shall think of you and Surtees. He will come to see you I daresay, and you will walk out till all the world wonders what has become of Henrietta. *Take care*. It seems to *me* that you are imprudent a little. Mind, you

and Arabel write to me fully and regularly. Dont propose anything to Mr. Kenyon about the furniture. He says that not having place for much of his own, he has sent it to Tilbury's. Oh, we shall get on very well—never fear. Robert lives by my chair. We dont take much room. His love with mine, from your most attached

BA.

[Addressed, 'Miss Barrett,' on outer fold of letter.]

XIII

[R. B.]

[Florence, March 9, 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,—thro’ a thick wall and 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 and 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 dont 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 everything, 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, self-denial and general rationality. That resolution of leaving off the morphine, for instance—where is one among a thousand “strongmen” 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 “è stato ben undrito,” “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 and 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 and 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,

R.B.

Was it not dear of Ba to refuse to look at the Babe till I could show it 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 o'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.

['Miss Barrett' written on outer fold of letter.]

XIV

[R.B.]

[Florence] Sunday Mg. March 18 [1849].

DEAREST Henrietta and Arabel—Your letter came yesterday, and gave Ba the delight your affection intended it should:

she bids me give her best, best love to you both. *I* give you, besides *that*, continued good news of Ba and her babe : both are going on most satisfactorily : the Doctor told me yesterday that it was impossible to meet with a more favorable case—for tho' Ba is inconvenienced a little by the process necessarily attending her peculiar circumstances, (seeing that she does not nourish the infant herself) yet, even *there* we should be sorry to have *no* trouble to encounter, as it would only prove that the natural force was deficient. (All this wisdom is none of mine, of course, but the Doctor's aforesaid.) As to the Babe, he, too, is got into a little trouble, "*thro' gluttony*" 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 Cottrel 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 and 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 Trip-sack, 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 and 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 wet nurse—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 and went off at Midnight last Sunday—thinking we should be in such extremity of distress as to consent to anything when *she* pleased to return next morning: Providence that has always 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 number 4 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,

R. B.

Will you inform Mr. Kenyon, with our love.

[Addressed, 'Miss Barrett,' on outer fold of letter.]

XV

[E. B. B.]

[Florence, 1849 (?).]

ONE word to my most dear Henrietta, because it must come, when I look at her picture and think of her affection, though my thanks for the too kind presents go to her in Arabel's letter. I want to say first . . . Dont be angry at what I wrote of Puseyism, because it refers only to the *narrowness* . . . and forgive me, you and Surtees, if you fancy me bigoted *against bigotry*. But the chief thing to say, is . . . keep up your spirits,

dearest Henrietta, and dont be over-vexed by this or that disappointment ; not even if Sir R. Price should disappoint you as perhaps he may. It seems a bad time for military situations, and were I Surtees I should be tempted to look round for some mercantile investment for the proceeds of his commission ; and were I both of you, I wouldn't be too resolved as to income . . as to a particular income, I mean. Only, in these things, one cant advise another. Do you ever think of California and the gold-dust? Heaven forbid that my advice should turn in *that* direction—pray dont fancy that it does. I wait anxiously for every word you can tell me, on a subject most deeply interesting to me, as you may imagine. May God bless both of you. My love to Surtees always. He has deserved well of us all, in my opinion, by his long and tried attachment to you. May God bless both of you.

Tell Arabel, that, not to make this letter overweight I must put off to the next time, my note to Mary Hunter. Also, here is Wilson who will write to dear Minny as soon as I can give her an opportunity, to thank her for the very pretty collar, and to say how satisfied she is with what was sent, generally. Isn't Mrs. Dupuy rather *too near*, just at present? Oh Henrietta I do wish I could help in anything by the putting out of all my strength—but these things are to be done, I believe, only by *indi-*

viduals, because they understand their own powers, their own requirements, and their own willingness to take so much or so little of such a risk or such a supposed risk. Of course,—disposing of a commission *without an equivalent return*, is out of the question.

Your 'BA
as ever.

[*'For Henrietta—Private' is written on outside fold of letter.*]

XVI

[E.B.B.]

[Florence, 1848 (?).]

PRIVATE
P My beloved Henrietta I have been uneasy since writing to you what I did in my last letter . . all in that broken, undigested way, too. What nonsense of me ! I come back to the old ground of your being the best judges in your own affairs, you and Surtees ; and I would not for the world impel you or even encourage you to an imprudence. At the same time it is my opinion that if as you say, you can make up an income of four hundred a year, or even somewhat less, (if you were prepared to live quietly and prudently) that you might be very happy . . happier than many who are richer. But of course the being *clear of all debt*

should be a preliminary to everything. What I said arose from a strong feeling of its being better to cut short some of this long dreary waiting and waiting, which on many accounts is so objectionable. Four hundred a year would in my mind be ample—*We* should not have spent *three*, this last year, if it had not been for the mistake in Via Maggio about the house;—and yet for above a month an English physician attended me, you remember . . . besides Wilson's illness; and we have lived at our ease in all things. I do wish and pray my own dear, dear Henrietta, that you may come to my happiness through a less painful gate. Perhaps,—it is just possible . . . that poor dear Papa may wish to *prove* his gentleness to those who apply to him directly . . . We do not know how circumstances may have modified his inclinations.

In the joint letter from the Hedley's, aunt Jane said . . . "If Henrietta will not give up her engagement, *which would be the wiser plan*, I almost think it would be better to disclose everything at once." She does not say much more. Uncle Hedley speaks of you very affectionately, and says that Ibbit is like you in character, which is "*his idea of perfection*."

Dont imagine that *I* agree about the "wisdom" of giving up engagements! They have in my eyes too much weight and sacredness:—to say nothing of your obligation of gratitude towards *Surtees*,

whose tried and faithful attachment has a claim on you, from which I should be sorry indeed to dispense my sister. Give my love to him, and to Susan.

Robert cant write this time because theres no room on the cover—He must wait. He has written to enquire if the Rothschilds can do something . . without mentioning names of course.

Dont expect too much from the Rothschilds—you shall hear of course—oh, I should be so glad if we could do anything.

XVII

[E. B. B.]

[Florence, 1849 (?).]

PRIVATE
P My own dearest Henrietta, I must send you an *aside* today. I am afraid of doing harm by some accident if I speak with my face towards the audience, and *I feel* too much on one subject to keep the feeling in wholly. Altogether I shrink from the idea of Surtees's waiting a year for the chance you mention : it seems to me playing a vain game . . one's head against a common marble. If he waits and gains nothing, why he loses much . . everything perhaps . . to wait a year on such terms, seems to me not to be thought of. For the rest, I

do not dare to advise you—I should sooner dare to act if I were in your position, than to advise in mine. It appears to me certain that a *very little more* would give you a sufficient income—and I think less of *that* practically than of its effect in Papa's eyes;—What is desirable being that the marriage should appear to him *not out of the question* on the ground of money. For Surtees I have a sincere esteem, and a full trust in his attachment for you—and I do feel, Henrietta, that it would be ungrateful of you to be out of spirits and hope, with such a loyal heart and hand to hold by as I believe his to be. There should be exertion—I *would not wait* .. I would do something .. advertise in the papers, enquire actively on all sides. The Taunton situation may be attained after all .. but let it come if it will come .. do not count on it .. be prepared to do without it. Give my love to Surtees. Robert and I think and talk of you much. Do not lose your cheerfulness Henrietta. Would it not be worse if *the doubt were of his attachment for you?* Think of that! I would thank God for myself and my own joy if I had it in my power to help you by any means, my dearest Henrietta—But these thoughts and wishes, weak as they are, you will not despise. May God bless you. I like and love Surtees for his faithful affection—it is a better gift, be sure, than a “landed property.” I honor him for it.

Robert waits to take this letter, and I hate to send a blank . . so . . yet must. Thank you, thank you, for all you tell me—write every detail—

I am your own *BA*
Yours and Arabel's.

Robert's best love and thanks for *his* note from Arabel. It shall soon be answered. He loves you both, he says, dearly, and holds you for *sisters* in the tenderest meaning. Do write.

XVIII

[E.B.B.]

[Florence] 4th March [1850].

MY beloved Henrietta, I must begin a little note to you today, to prove that it does not come and go like another day, in spite of the width of earth and sea that separates us. May God bless and keep you, and contrive a light for you which perhaps you do not see yet, but which may burn steadily and brightly on to the 'perfect Day.' I think of you and love you with the force of my mind and heart, and cling to the hope that all will go well with you and yours—May God bless you! Have you thought of the suggestion about the agency? Have you ever thought of foreign consulships? Among other objects?

Some of them are excellent—and the qualifications are not difficult—not much more, I believe, than respectability of station and good character. Perhaps however the *agency* would be more *surely within reach*. Consider it. Keep up your spirits and stir up Surtees's energies. All these disappointments are disheartening indeed ; but we must not be disheartened,—because the world is wide, and Providence merciful, and a great deal is always to be done where one 'nobly dares.' It is a deep pain to me to think of your anxieties, and of Papa, and of Arabel—all is full of pain. I give no advice because nobody *ought* to give advice on such subjects. Only one thing is clear that you should both be cheerful and energetic because otherwise you are clipping your own hopes of happiness. Another year may set everything right—I pray God it may.

Dear Mrs. Martin spoke of you with the greatest interest when she wrote to me some time ago, and said that she respected your motives and conscientiousness too much to interfere with your present conclusions. I wrote to *her*, not long since, and hope to hear again. As to Bummy, she has given me up,—my two letters remaining unanswered—one to Tunbridge Wells, and one to Kinnorsley. Is uncle James quite restored to his usual power of enjoying life ? You only give me general accounts. Let me hear about Aunt Fanny—and more partic-

ularly about Louisa Carmichael. If you see Sophia Cottrell she will tell you, perhaps, that Mr. Lee is going to bring his two children to Florence to place them under *Mrs. Gordon's care!* I confess I wonder how he can bear to part with them, unless he means to live here himself, which, with his hatred for Italy, is not very probably.—May God bless you my own dearest Henrietta, prays your

BA.

[Addressed 'Miss Barrett' on outer fold of letter. The private portion of the letter which follows is written on a separate sheet of paper.]

PRIVATE

My beloved Henrietta, I write a private word to these rather more public dull words, in order to advise you to be *prudent* and keep a good heart and a good prudence as to things to come. Earnestly I hope that Surtees may gain his appointment—give him my love—and remember that as long as *you love one another*, there is nothing to fear nor despond over. Take courage—I am more anxious, to tell you the truth, for my dear Arabel than for *you*. When the moment comes for action, you must act with decision,—and in the meanwhile, give no unnecessary cause for conversation. For instance, if *I were you*, I would not incline to the late walking. Do let me hear everything—I listen for every-

thing with the deepest anxiety. All this is written in the greatest haste, and feeling my way with my pen, in the dark. Can you read any of it? Keep your spirits up, and be vivacious and take exercise, and look well. At the end, and in the "fairy bower," may you be nearly as happy as I am! *More* cannot be. May God bless you, dear—

Your BA.

I shall write to Arabel soon—tell her. Love to dear Minny.

XIX

[R.B.]

Florence, Apr. 16, '50.

MY dear Henrietta,
I believe that even Ba, with all her loving heart, cannot wish you more happiness in your new state than I do. I quite believe that you deserve it, and that you have acted wisely and rightly under very difficult circumstances. From the very first of my own married days I looked upon you as Ba's sister and mine, and I shall never cease to regard your joy or sorrow as my own—but there will be surely much more of the former than the latter, with such a true affectionate heart as yours, resting upon such principles and worth as your husband's—to whom you will please

offer my warmest congratulations on his good fortune, as well as hopes that he will henceforth consider me as his friend and relative. We look forward anxiously for news of you,—but Ba will have said so much on that and other heads as to leave me nothing but the mere opportunity of assuring you, how much I shall ever be, My dear Henrietta,

Yours most affectionately,

ROBERT BROWNING.

XX

[E. B. B.]

[Florence] March [1855 (?)].

MY beloved Henrietta how sorry I am for you. And how sorry I am for me and all of us who have to think of your having suffered *in vain* . . as far as the obvious result goes. Indeed these things always must seem very sad to the sufferer! I have no doubt that you were overworked in London both as to body and heart—and then, from Arabel's account (helped by your own) you were as imprudent as possible—keeping two children on your knees and carrying Altham (whom I take to be about the size of Penini) upstairs—up a London staircase . . . much like a ladder . . it makes me breathe hard to think of it even.

Well Henrietta . . if you mean to deal just so with your children generally, I do consider it's as well that you haven't six. Seriously, dear, the number you have already, the one boy and the one girl, seems to be perfect, and you cant improve perfection—*or* make a circle rounder. For my part, I am content with even a Penini—I should like a little daughter, but as I cant get her she would be sour I dare say, if I had her fast. Then people are disappointed sometimes. I shouldn't have wished to have a second boy, like Sophia Cottrell—Two boys would have made a house too noisy for poet's work. So it's best as it is—and I do advise you to think the same. I hope you have taken care, and not begun to walk and climb stairs too early (even without Altham on your back!) because a miscarriage is a more trying thing than an actual confinement and exacts more precautions. When you can get out, however, dont neglect the fresh open air, Henrietta. Arabel tells me that you are afraid of walking out till quite night when Surtees is ready to walk with you. That's wrong, Henrietta. You should really, under the circumstances, make a point of duty not to mind redcoats or black coats, or even the owner of the celebrated cloven foot who walks or hops rather in your neighbourhood. Surely if you took Altham with you, you might walk through a regiment—A child is a bodyguard for a woman.

May God keep and love you, dearest Henrietta. I have thought much of you lately,—loved you constantly, and wished for you all that those who love, wish to their beloveds, when they love them most tenderly.

As for me—I am very well again, and getting over *my bones*, by means of cod liver oil. Think of my virtue in swallowing two table spoonfuls of that oil every day—think of my stomach, in not throwing it up again! “Think of Ba’s impropriety in writing such things,” you turn round and say, in a parenthesis, to Surtees! Dear, I am so happy you are not going to the Mediterranean—Malta would not have agreed with Altham in the summer—and you are all of you better in England than in the colonies. Do write and tell me of your prospects of getting back to Taunton. I shall write you a long letter one of these days, but in the meanwhile I toss you just this word in sign of the unspeakable thoughts . . . feelings rather. Did you get anything new and pretty for the children in London, in the way of wearing apparel? Oh, I forgot to answer your question. All last summer I wore nothing on the head but a black net. When the weather grew cold I put on my cap—black—with black velvet strings—worn far back. We are coming, be sure—I am in a dream about the “camps,” and how there will be a camp close to London,

and you transported to it on your military duties,
just as we arrive. That will be exquisite. Our best
love to Surtees and the darlings. Your ever, ever
affectionate

BA.

Thank you for the letter dearest Henrietta.

['Mrs. Surtees Cook' written on outer fold of letter.]

XXI

[E. B. B.]

3 Rue du Colysée [Paris]

Tuesday [June 24, 1856].

MY ever dearest Arabel,
Your letter with its enclosure has set
Robert's and my head spinning,—and
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 Mr. Kenyon wishes,—oh, I am so
grieved about *him* . . There is a delicacy required
about his fifty pounds, and the matter of lodgings.
He desires that I should put myself in relation with
Mrs. Collier the new housekeeper in Devonshire
Place, in order of course to ascertain when and
whether we can remove there. Now will you take
my place, and go to her, and speak as one ought to
do, and discover the exact state of the case—viz
whether it is expected and would be perfectly con-

venient for us to arrive there . . and on *what nearest day*. If we can be received . . say, on Saturday or Monday . . it would be better to make an effort and 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 prices, i. e. £2—10s, the week.

Peni is in despair at being crossed again in the journey to London. When people wonder at him for wanting to go, he says apologetically, that he “doesn’t like London . . oh no” . . but he “has Arabel there ! and such a twantity of my untles.” He dreams of the railroad and cries out “what a pity,”—when Harriett wakes him up.

As for me, judge ! I do long, long to see you. I get stronger every day, and was complimented on on my good looks by the “concierge” yesterday. Best of loves to George and all.

Dearest Arabel, dont tire yourself for me, I beseech you—and dont be vexed for us, still less. You

only did about the lodgings what we asked you to do, and 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.

[Envelope addressed : 'Angleterre' 'Miss Barrett, 50 Wimpole Street, London.' Postmarked 'Paris, June 24, 1856.']

XXII

[E.B.B.]

March 28 [1857 (?)] Via Tritone [Florence].

EVER dearest Henrietta, ever dearest. I have your letter. I have held you in my thoughts long before I have had the paper here to write to you. I love you and think of you on all months and all days, and put you into my prayers. You and yours. I wish you would tell me always about Altham and never abbreviate through thinking of *me* at least. The interest to me is of the deepest, in respect to all your children, and of course in respect to Altham who stands in stricter analogy to my own boy, I am especially interested. I do hope the darling may have got over his attack, and have returned prosperously to the accumulating of victorious marks. You were quite wrong in supposing that we criticised you about the school, or

thought you otherwise than right anywhere—we have an idea of our own about schools (for which we are greatly blamed by very sensible people, observe) but even according to *our* ideas, what's good for one child in one situation, is not therefore good for another child in another situation. Penini is as he said himself one day, "quite a desolate child"—he is alone; we are necessarily moving about: we are able to give him certain advantages which would be expensive if we were not abroad. Then he is not fit for a school—he would be broken to pieces in it. Also, we have only one, and couldn't lose his presence *so*. What I said of your school refers simply to what *you* said of it yourself. But I daresay that with whatever drawbacks, the advantages are just what you tell me in this letter—In fact, Peni, too, wants more independence and self-reliance than he has attained to by our process—only we trust to the future for that. As it is, he doesn't work for his Abbé with his heart in it, unless I sit by him—and I was a good deal amused the other evening by his drawing up his feet on the sofa... Latin grammar on knees... with this exclamation... "Now, Mama, let *us* do *our* verbs!" I have had to explain very seriously that with every good intention on my part, I can't possibly learn his lessons for him. What I *can* do however, is to look in the dictionary for him and set it open

before his eyes—Otherwise he never could get through Monsieur l'Abbé's pieces of work. He said himself the other day "Povero bambino davvero e' troppo," and provided a holiday for his birthday. Think of this for one lesson. Forty Italian nouns to turn into Latin in different cases. A page of Latin 'sacred history' to translate into Italian. A Latin verb to write out—Three lines of Latin to *parse*—Besides *sums*. In no school would he be expected to do a fourth of it. Add that he plays his full two hours on the piano every day. Some days he continues French Dictés with the Latin, and some days geography—on others only arithmetic. Then whenever there's a half hour free I seize upon it to make him read German. Of course he gets on at full gallop—and made Robert and me laugh last night by saying that his abbé was going to "put him into Virgil" very soon. Which will be rather gobbling down the Latin language than learning it. Monsieur l'Abbé teaches very well however, everything almost is done by writing.

Dearest Henrietta, how I should like to see the children together. But I cant say how it will be—There is time for the decision of these things. My health has been more frail (though I am quite well now, understand) than usual, since last summer, and it would be inexcuseable to run risks by late staying in England—I am not fit for it. Then we stay in

Rome till the first days of June. Also, you talk much at your ease of our travelling from south to north and back again, as if it were no strain whatever on our finances. Four persons travelling, (for I can't travel without a maid) a house to be paid at Florence, while we pay again in Paris and London . . and Ferdinando to be kept on with wages and board wages while we are absent!!! And after all, we are not rich, you know. Penini's education too begins to be an additional charge. And you talk of our bringing his poney to England, as if we really could! You consider, (dont you) that Robert and I have a golden leg a piece, like Miss Kilmansegg—While there is Arabel, quite independent who talks of expenses . . . She cant afford this and that. And I dare say she cant. But then *we* can say so with stronger reasons.

Not that I say anything. This subject must be left open. Of course I am aware that Robert especially has duties to his father at the latter's time of life.

Then there are Italian affairs. We shall probably have more fighting after the voting.

Have I "changed my mind about the emperor?" Why? I am sorry that the premature mootng of the Savoy question should have given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme—that's all. The question of Savoy is little understood among you. Savoy is essentially French and sympathetic with France, was separated from France by the same treaties

which crushed Italy, and for many years Piedmont has not been able to extinguish the desire of the people to be annexed to France. Now what is intended is simply to give that population the choice of nationalities by putting their choice to the same kind of popular vote which is claimed and exercised in Italy. The Italians have no sort of objection to this being done—it is pure justice. Piedmont does not cede, or exchange—but adopts and applies a principle.—For the rest, the papal party says and swears here that Napoleon and Cavour “s’entendent comme deux Carrons,” and Odo Russell seems to be of much the same mind—as to the understanding, that is. “*E’ una trama infernale*” said the poor Pope in wrath to the French ambassador yesterday.

The emperor is in most difficult circumstances, both in France and with regard to Europe—but he *never vacillates* though the necessities of diplomatic language make him appear to do so sometimes. “That astute head,” say his enemies. “That great Heart” said Cavour the other day. That great head and heart, say I. Still I may change my mind. I don’t pretend to be infallible. I may be deceived here as elsewhere—And when I know it I will be candid and tell you.

When you get my poems, you are all to consider this, by way of giving them some small interest. Penini has read them *all* with the utmost approba-

tion and something more. 'The Tale of Villafranca' I never could be clear that he understood. In fact Pen couldn't be persuaded that things went ill at Villafranca for any reason. When the Ode to Napoleon was read to him, at the part about Italy his eyes overflowed, and he threw himself face downward on the sofa. The heroine of "The Dance" is the Marchioness Laiatico the wife of that noble Laiatico who died this summer in England. Her son and daughter, the Duke and Duchess of Cassigliano, quite young people, are great favourites of ours. Everything in the little book, is strictly historical—even to Macmahon's taking up the Milanese child as he entered the city . . and to the emotion on the emperor's face. The 'Court Lady' is founded on the general fact that the ladies of Milan went in full dress through the streets to the hospitals.

Hume is in London. I had a letter from Miss Bagley the other day telling me how she had heard from Mr. Booth of his "successful juggling" . . . and how at either Lord Lyndhurst's or the Lord Chancellor's house, the chief notabilities of England had met in order to expose him, but had failed.

—Then a copy of a letter from Mrs. Milner Gibson has told me that she and the Humes met at her house or theirs every Monday ; eight or ten friends . . . and that the phenomena were wonderful. 'Tables floated in the air'—hands seen and touched . .

and other things passing ordinary experience. I shall manage to hear *what* chiefly. Hume (or Home as he calls himself) has come to London from Russia with his wife and child, on his way to America—but London proves so charming that he has “taken a house,” it appears. His baby is said to be a more wonderful medium than himself.

How did you come to fancy that the photograph I sent you of Robert was from a *picture*? I beg to state that it was from his own face and body. We are however about to have photographs taken from Pen’s portrait, on horseback—and I hope it will answer.

Mary must be what she always was, a sweet little dot of a thing. I wish I could kiss her, and your Altham, and Edward. We gave Pen for his birthday, a very pretty microscope, in which he has been studying fleas ever since, and an English knife containing twelve instruments, what with blades, corkscrews &c. . It cost eleven shillings English—and some anxiety on my side lest he should cut off his hands—but he has longed so for it, poor child—on his birthday morning. Very soon, I shall write to Arabel. What I mean about the house is that the situation in London is not good for her—and whenever I am anxious about her I begin to swear in my heart at the house.

[Unsigned]





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AT CROSBY GAIGE'S WATCH HILL PRESS
PEEKSKILL, NEW YORK
MAY TO AUGUST
MCMXXXV





