

50, Wimpole Street, London. Mr. Barrett was a selfish tyrant, opposed to the marriage of his children and to everything that interfered with his comfort, and the lovers had to meet without his knowledge. Miss Barrett had been an invalid all her life, and Browning saw that her only chance of recovery and health was to remove her from her unnatural environment. He proposed a private marriage, to which Miss Barrett finally consented, and they were accordingly married in St. Pancras Church on September 12th, 1846. A few days later they crossed the Channel and eventually resided at Pisa for six months. It may be explained that Browning offered to ask Mr. Barrett for his daughter's hand in the usual way, but was obliged to abandon the idea when he learned from Miss Barrett that her father's curse would kill her. Browning's conduct throughout was, of course, that of a gentleman, and the effect of his policy in withdrawing his wife from the unwholesome surroundings of her home was soon evident in a marked improvement in her health, while her deep and abiding affection for her husband was testified to by the exquisite sentiment and melody of her immortal group of *Sonnets from the Portuguese*.

From Pisa the Brownings flitted to Florence, where at length they settled in the Casa Guidi. Here their only child, Robert Wiedemann Barrett Browning, was born on March 9th, 1849, their joy being turned to mourning a few days afterwards by the tidings of Browning's mother's death, an event which greatly depressed the poet. Gradually, however, he recovered tone, and, in 1850, raised a noble monument to his mother in his *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*. During their residence in Florence the Brownings made excursions to various parts of Italy, but in 1851—the year of the first International Exhibition—returned to London. Mr. Barrett proving unamenable to every suggestion of reconciliation, Browning made a last appeal for a reasonable attitude. In reply to this overture of peace he received, still unopened, all the letters which his wife had sent to her father during their five years' absence from England. After a rebuff of such brutal sort, there was nothing for it but silence. The winter of this year was spent in Paris (where they saw something of the *coup d'état*), and in the following June they revisited London, returning to Florence in late autumn. On April 25th, 1853, Browning's play, *Colombe's Birthday*, was produced at the Haymarket Theatre, under the direction of Helen Faucit, and achieved more than a *succès d'estime*.

Most of the next two years were spent by the Brownings in leisurely holidays, sometimes at Bagni di Lucca (where Robert wrote "In a Balcony" and others of his shorter poems), sometimes at Florence, sometimes at Rome (where they met Leighton, Thackeray Fanny Kemble and John Gibson Lockhart), but always on the lines of strictest economy, for increasing domestic expenses had to be met otherwise than by publishers' cheques, which had not yet begun to flow in in a constant stream. In 1855 they returned to England, the poet with his *Men and Women*, published at the end of the year, his wife with the manuscript of her *Aurora Leigh*. The call of the South, however, could not be neglected altogether, and 1856 saw them again in their beloved Italy. On December 3rd their constant friend John Kenyon died and his legacies of £6,500 to Robert Browning and £4,500 to his