

palace, from which in September 1847 the Brownings watched the celebrations when Grand Duke Leopoldo II granted the Florentines the right to form a civic guard.

Florence

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

I love Florence, the place looks exquisitely beautiful in its garden-ground of vineyards and olive-trees, sung round by the nightingales day and night, nay, sung *into* by the nightingales, for as you walk along the streets in the evening the song trickles down into them till you stop to listen. Such nights we have between starlight and firefly-light, and the nightingales singing! I would willingly stay here, if it were not that we are constrained by duty and love to go,¹ and at some day not distant, I dare say we shall come back 'for good and all' as people say, seeing that, if you take one thing with another, there is no place in the world like Florence, I am persuaded, for a place to live in. Cheap, tranquil, cheerful, beautiful, within the limit of civilisation yet out of the crush of it.

Letter to Mary Russell Mitford, 6 June 1854 (*LEBB*, ii.169–70)

Notes

The Brownings lived in Florence for much of 1847–61 but with extended absences in Rome, Bagni di Lucca, Siena, France and England. Browning, who found the social life of Florence rather restricted, was somewhat less consistently enthusiastic about the city than his wife.

- 1 In the summer of 1854, lacking funds, the Brownings in fact stayed in Florence. 'Duty and love' necessitated visits (next in 1855–6) to Browning's father and sister in Paris and Barrett Browning's brothers and sisters in England.

Browning and the Anglo-Florentines

Thomas Adolphus Trollope

It may be readily imagined that the 'tag-rag and bob-tail' of the men who mainly constituted that very pleasant but not very intellectual society, were not likely to be such as Mr Browning would readily make intimates of. And I think I see in memory's magic glass that the men