

## **‘What Mignon might be in maturity and maternity’**

*Sara Coleridge*

Mrs Browning is in weak health, and cannot remain in this foggy clime; they are to reside in Paris.<sup>1</sup> She is little, hard-featured, with long dark ringlets, a pale face, and plaintive voice, something very impressive in her dark eyes and her brow. Her general aspect puts me in mind of Mignon, – what Mignon might be in maturity and maternity.<sup>2</sup>

*Memoirs and Letters of Sara Coleridge* [ed. Edith Coleridge], 2 vols (London, 1873), ii.447

### **Notes**

S. T. Coleridge’s daughter met the Brownings at John Kenyon’s in August 1851. Earlier she had corresponded with Barrett: see above, p. 16–17.

1 They lived in Paris for extensive periods of 1851–2 and 1855–6.

2 For the mysterious girl Mignon see Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795–6).

## **‘The delight of the encounter’**

*Bayard Taylor*

In his lively, cheerful manner, quick voice, and perfect self-possession, he made upon me the impression of an American rather than an Englishman. He was then, I should judge, about thirty-seven years of age,<sup>1</sup> but his dark hair was already streaked with grey about the temples. His complexion was fair, with perhaps the faintest olive tinge, eyes large, clear, and grey, nose strong and well cut, mouth full and rather broad, and chin pointed, though not prominent. His forehead broadened rapidly upwards from the outer angle of the eyes, slightly retreating. The strong individuality which marks his poetry was expressed, not only in his face and head, but in his whole demeanour. He was about the medium height, strong in the shoulders, but slender at the waist, and his movements expressed a combination of vigour and elasticity.

Mr Kenyon<sup>2</sup> had called to say good-bye to his friends, and presently took his leave. ‘There,’ said Browning, when the door had closed after him, ‘there goes one of the most splendid men living – a man