

**ELIZABETH BARRETT  
BROWNING**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649572748

Elizabeth Barrett Browning by John H. Ingram

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**JOHN H. INGRAM**

**ELIZABETH BARRETT  
BROWNING**





ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

BY

JOHN H. INGRAM.

BOSTON:  
ROBERTS BROTHERS.

1893.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

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No writer approaching the eminence of Elizabeth Barrett Browning has been so little written about. Hitherto, nothing even claiming to be a biography of her has been published in her native land, whilst her works, which reveal so much of her inner self, have been attainable only in costly editions. It would almost appear as if it had been desired to retard, rather than promote, the popularity of one of England's purest as well as greatest poets.

All critical persons who have read the correspondence of Elizabeth Barrett Browning assign it a pre-eminent place in epistolary literature; yet it is only allowed to appear in fragments, without proper or responsible editorship. It is to be hoped that this injustice to the memory of a great writer will not continue much longer, because, as Mr. Browning has

himself said of another great poet, "letters and poems are obviously an act of the same mind, produced by the same law, only differing in the application to the individual. . . . Letters and poems may be used indifferently as the basement of our opinion upon the writer's character; the finished expression of a sentiment in the poems giving light and significance to the rudiments of the same in the letters, and these, again, in their incipency and unripeness, authenticating the exalted mood and re-attaching it to the personality of the writer."

Notwithstanding these pregnant words, as also Mr. Browning's uttered opinion that "it is advisable to lose no opportunity of strengthening and completing the chain of biographical testimony," the testimony to the goodness and greatness of our poetess which the publication of her literary correspondence would afford, is still withheld. Those letters of Mrs. Browning which have been published, it should be observed, do not express any repugnance to afford biographical information, but rather the reverse.

The mystery which has hitherto shrouded Mrs. Browning's personal career has caused quite a mythology to spring up around her



name; and this fictitious lore the publications of those assuming to speak with authority have only increased. Miss Mitford, who saw Mrs. Browning frequently, knew her relatives intimately, and claimed to have received two letters a week from her, is utterly wrong in her biographical statements about her; Richard H. Horne, who published two volumes of Mrs. Browning's correspondence, muddles the dates almost beyond elucidation; whilst Mrs. Richmond Ritchie, who has contributed to the "Dictionary of National Biography" the most copious and authoritative memoir of Mrs. Browning extant, has, so far as biographical data are concerned, made "confusion worse confounded."

With examples so misleading, and material so restricted, neither accuracy nor substance sufficient for a volume might have been hoped for; but some past success in the paths of biography has encouraged me to place before the public what, with all its shortcomings, is the initial biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

JOHN H. INGRAM.



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