

**A DRAMA OF  
EXILE: AND OTHER  
POEMS; VOL. I**

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A drama of exile: and other poems; Vol. I by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

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**ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING**

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**DRAMA OF EXILE:**

AND  
**OTHER POEMS.**

BY  
**ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT.**

AUTHOR OF 'THE SERAPHIM' AND OTHER POEMS.



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## DEDICATION.

### TO MY FATHER.

WHEN your eyes fall upon this page of dedication, and you start to see to whom it is inscribed, your first thought will be of the time far off when I was a child and wrote verses, and when I dedicated them to you, who were my public and my critic. Of all that such a recollection implies of saddest and sweetest to both of us, it would become neither of us to speak before the world: nor would it be possible for us to speak of it to one another, with voices that did not falter. Enough, that what is in my heart when I write thus, will be fully known to yours.

For the rest, my desire is that *you*, who are a witness how if this art of poetry had been a less earnest object to me, it must have dropped from exhausted hands before this day,—that *you*, who have shared with me in things bitter and sweet, softening or enhancing them every day,—that *you*, who hold with me over all sense of loss and transiency, one hope by one Name,—will accept the inscription of these volumes, the

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exponents of a few years of an existence which has been sustained and comforted by you as well as given. Somewhat more faint-hearted than I used to be, it is my fancy thus to seem to return to a visible personal dependence on you, as if indeed I were a child again; to conjure your beloved image between myself and the public, so as to be sure of one smile,—and to satisfy my heart while I sanctify my ambition, by associating with the great pursuit of my life, its tenderest and holiest affection.

Your

E. B. B.



P R E F A C E  
TO THE  
A M E R I C A N E D I T I O N .

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My love and admiration have belonged to the great American people, as long as I have felt proud of being an Englishwoman, and almost as long as I have loved poetry itself. But it is only of late that I have been admitted to the privilege of personal gratitude to Americans, and only to-day that I am encouraged to offer to their hands an American edition of a new collection of my poems, about to be published in my own country. This edition precedes the English one by a step,—a step eagerly taken, and with a spring in it of pleasure and pride—suspended, however, for a moment, that, by a cordial figure I may kiss the soil of America, and address my thanks to those sons of the soil, who, if strangers and foreigners, are yet kinsmen and friends, and who, if never seen, nor perhaps to be seen by eyes of mine, have already caused them to glisten by words of kindness and courtesy.\*

The present collection consists of poems which have been composed since the period of the publication of my 'Seraphim;' variously coloured, or perhaps shadowed, by the life of which they are the natural expression; and, with the

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\* My thanks are especially due to Mr Mathews the eloquent secretary of the New-York Copy-right Club; a gentleman whose success in the construction of fossil romances (see his gigantic Behemoth) does not interfere with the freshness of his cordialities.

few exceptions of what have appeared in American or English periodicals, are offered now for the first time to any public. The first poem of the collection, 'A Drama of Exile,' being the longest and most important work (to me!) which I ever trusted into the current of publication, I may be pardoned for entreating the reader's attention to the fact, that I decided on publishing it after considerable hesitation and doubt. The subject of the drama rather fastened on me than was chosen; and the form, approaching the model of the Greek tragedy, shaped itself under my hand, rather by force of pleasure, than of design. But when the compositional excitement had subsided, I felt afraid of my position. My own object was the new and strange experience of the fallen Humanity, as it went forth from Paradise into the wilderness; with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of being the organ of the Fall, to her offence,—appeared to me imperfectly apprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than a man. There was room, at least, for lyrical emotion in those first steps into the wilderness,—in that first sense of desolation after wrath,—in that first audible gathering of the reproachful "groan of the whole creation,"—in that first darkening of the hills from the withdrawing footsteps of angels,—and in that first silence of the voice of God. And I took pleasure in driving in, like a pile, stroke upon stroke, the idea of EXILE,—admitting Lucifer as an extreme Adam, to represent the ultimate tendencies of sin and loss,—that that idea might be strong to bear up the contrary one of the heavenly good and glory. But when all was done, I felt afraid, as I have said, of my position. I had promised my own intentions, to shut close the gates of Eden between Milton and myself, so that none might say I dared to walk in his footsteps. He should be within, I thought, with his

Adam and Eve unfallen or falling, and I, without, with my exiles,—I also an exile! It would not do. The subject and his glory covering it, swept through the gates, and I stood full in it against my will, and contrary to my vow; till I shrank back hesitating, almost desponding,—fearing to venture even a passing association with our great poet before the face of the public. Whether, at last, I recovered courage for the venture, by a sudden revival of that love of manuscript which should be classed by moral philosophers among the natural affections, or by the encouraging voice of a dear friend, it is not important to the reader to inquire. Neither could the fact affect the question; since I bear, of course, my own responsibilities. For the rest, Milton is too high, and I am too low, to render it necessary for me to disavow any rash emulation of his divine faculty on his own ground; while enough individuality will be conceded, I hope, to my poem, to rescue me from that imputation of plagiarism, which should be too servile a thing for every sincere thinker. After all, and at the worst, I have only attempted, in respect to Milton, what the Greek Dramatists achieved lawfully in respect to Homer. They constructed dramas on Trojan ground: they raised on the buskin and even clasped with the sock, the feet of Homeric heroes; yet they neither imitated their Homer, nor emasculated him. The Agamemnon of Æschylus, who died in the bath, did no harm to nor suffered any harm from the Agamemnon of Homer, who bearded Achilles. To this analogy,—*not*, be it understood, to this comparison!—I appeal. For the analogy of the stronger may apply to the weaker; and the reader may have patience with the weakest while she suggests the application.

On a graver point I must take leave to touch, in further reference to my dramatic poem. The divine Saviour is represented in vision, towards the close, speaking and trans-