

July 24. 1841

There was a blank, even at Home, in your  
last note, when you ought to have said  
something about the cough. I hope the  
silence meant that you had quite forgotten  
it. The cutting up & boiling - the whole  
process of your "refinement" - & that  
your present suffering is concentrated in  
the Parliamentary reports. They are  
enough at a time, certainly. My Refinement  
was better.

It is an atrocious system altogether, the  
system established in this England of ours -  
a person no ever finds its own level

but is forced into Caden pipes, up a down,  
his fools lifted into chairs of state, ~~and~~  
his wise men waiting behind them - & her  
poets made Cinderella of & promoted into  
accurate counters of pots & pans - we  
need not wonder at the elections - everything  
is rotten in the state of Denmark -

Have you seen Miss Sedgewick's book,  
& heard the great tempest it has stirred  
up round you in London, without a  
Franklin to direct the lightning? She was  
received from America two or three years  
since by certain societies with open

arms - none ever suspecting her to be  
"the devil among them taking notes". The  
revelation was dreadful - My friend & cousin  
Mr. <sup>-admitted to be</sup> Lloyd, one of the most brilliant conversers  
in London, - fell upon the proof sheets accidentally  
just half an hour previous to their publication,  
and finding them soon thick with personalities,  
side by side with praises of his own agreeable  
wit, took courage & a pen & "cleansed  
the premises". Afterward he wrote across  
the Atlantic to explain "the moral right"  
he had to his deed. For my own part,  
strongly as I feel the saliency of his sermons,  
fault if it struck repeatedly & ungratefully  
against [our self beloved] who had bestowed

some cordial attentions upon her sister au-  
-thorship, & help as an author (so she tells  
me - than as a friend) I am not quite  
clear about Mr. Kingdon's "right". The act  
was - unfortunate in its heroism? &  
probably his American admirer may not  
thank him as warmly as her victims do.

I do not that I ever do or could join  
in the outcry against Roswell & his generation.  
I like them too well. But there is a  
line - a limit - to their communication &  
& such as pass it, dirty their feet -

Thank you very very thankfully for wishing  
me away from this place - do - you do  
not counsel madness" but the sanest wisdom -

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING, A. L., 24 July 1841,  
to RICHARD HENRY HORNE.

July 24, 1841

[no salutation]

There was a blank, dear Mr. Horne, in your last note, when you ought to have said something about the cough. I hope the silence meant that you had quite forgotten all the cutting up and boiling—the whole process of your “rejuvenescence”—& that your present suffering is concentrated in the Parliamentary reports. They are enough at a time, certainly. Why Napoleon was better!

It is an atrocious system altogether, the system established in this England of ours—wherein no river finds its own level [p. 2] but is forced into leaden pipes, up or down, her fools lifted into chairs of state, and [canceled] her wise men waiting behind them—& her poets made Cinderellas of & promoted into accurate counters of pots & pans. We need not wonder at the elections. *Everything* is rotten in the state of Denmark.

Have you seen Miss Sedgwick's book, & heard the great tempest it has stirred up around you in London, without a Franklin to direct the lightening? She was received from America two or three years since by certain societies with open [p. 3] arms—none ever suspecting her to be “the deil amang them takin' notes”. The revelation was dreadful. My friend & cousin Mr. Kenyon—admitted to be one of the most brilliant conversers in London,—fell upon the proof sheets accidentally, just half an hour previous to their publication, and finding them sown thick with personalities side by side with praises of his own agreeable wit, took courage & a pen & “cleansed the premises”. Afterwards he wrote across the Atlantic to explain “the moral right” he had to his deed. For my own part, strongly as I feel the *saliency* of Miss Sedgwick's fault (it struck repeatedly & ungratefully against dear Miss Mitford who had bestowed [p. 4] some cordial attentions upon her sister authoress, & less as an authoress—so she tells me—than as a friend) I am not quite clear about Mr. Kenyon's “right.” The act was

—*un peu fort* in its heroism, & probably his American admirer may not thank him as warmly as her victims do.

Not that I ever do or could join in the outcry against Boswell & his generation. I like them too well. But there is a line—a limit—to their communicativeness—& such as pass it, dirty their feet.

Thank you very thankfully for wishing me away from this place. No—you “do not counsel madness” but the sanest wisdom.

[unsigned]

AL unsigned, 4 pages. Two sheets, 11 x 9 cm.

Wove paper, no watermark.

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Published, garbled and with significant omissions (the references to Napoleon and Mary Russell Mitford were suppressed), in *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Richard Hengist Horne*, ed. S. R. Townshend Mayer (London, 1877), I, 28–30.

Notes: 1. Miss Barrett wrote from Torquay, where her brother Edward (Bro) had drowned in a sailing accident, 11 July 1840. She left *this place* for the house on Wimpole Street within six weeks of writing the present letter.

2. She and Horne were corresponding by the summer of 1839. He helped her place two poems (“The Lay of the Rose” and “A Night-Watch by the Sea”) in *The Monthly Chronicle*, April and July 1840. The best work on Horne’s fantastic career is H. Buxton Forman’s “A Brief Account of Richard Henry Horne,” *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, I (London, 1895), 235–248.

3. The elections of 1841 put the Whigs out and the Conservatives—under Peel—in.

4. The proofs said to be altered by John Kenyon were of Catherine Maria Sedgwick’s *Letters from Abroad to Kindred at Home* . . . New York, 1841. Miss Barrett first met Mary Russell Mitford—nineteen years her senior and her opposite politically and socially—27 May 1836. They corresponded until Miss Mitford’s death in 1855.

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