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Casa Guidi Windows

In 1847, Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–61) moved with her new husband to an apartment in Florence, in the wake of perhaps the most famous literary courtship of the nineteenth century. She soon took to calling their home the Casa Guidi. From there, she observed the events of the early Risorgimento. It was at this time that she produced some of her finest work, including *Aurora Leigh* and *Casa Guidi Windows*. An impressionistic and thoroughly atypical landmark in the Romantic canon, the latter was written in two parts, separated by several years. Beginning with the memory of a singing child and a lush description of Florence's beauty, the first part explores the air of optimism that permeates both the city and the narrator. By the second, disillusionment is rife: Florence has become the scene of demonstrations and broken political promises. This reissue of the 1851 first edition includes Barrett Browning's own introduction.

Casa Guidi Windows

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paolo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108059916

This edition first published 1851
This digitally printed version 2013

ISBN 978-1-108-06038-7 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-108-05991-6 Paperback

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS.

A Poem.

BY

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN & HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1851.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Poem contains the impressions of the writer upon events in Tuscany of which she was a witness. "From a window," the critic may demur. She bows to the objection in the very title of her work. No continuous narrative, nor exposition of political philosophy, is attempted by her. It is a simple story of personal impressions, whose only value is in the intensity with which they were received, as proving her warm affection for a beautiful and unfortunate country; and the sincerity with which they are

related, as indicating her own good faith and freedom from all partisanship.

Of the two parts of this Poem, the first was written nearly three years ago, while the second resumes the actual situation of 1851. The discrepancy between the two parts is a sufficient guarantee to the public of the truthfulness of the writer, who, though she certainly escaped the epidemic "falling sickness" of enthusiasm for Pio Nono, takes shame upon herself that she believed, like a woman, some royal oaths, and lost sight of the probable consequences of some obvious popular defects. If the discrepancy should be painful to the reader, let him understand that to the writer it has been more so. But such discrepancy we are called upon to accept at every hour by the conditions of our nature . . . the

discrepancy between aspiration and performance, between faith and dis-illusion, between hope and fact.

> "O trusted, broken prophecy,
> O richest fortune sourly crost,
> Born for the future, to the future lost!"

Nay, not lost to the future in this case. The future of Italy shall not be disinherited.

FLORENCE, 1851.