

"Sonnet 43" from "Sonnets from the Portuguese" (1850)

Elisabeth Barrett Browning



The Victorian Web

literature, history, & culture in
the age of Victoria



How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Transcribed from "Poems of Elizabeth Barrett Browning," in **The Best Known Poems of Elizabeth & Robert Browning**. New York: Book League of America and Blue Ribbon Books, 1942, Page 86.

Note: The title of Elisabeth Barrett Browning's sequence of 44 sonnets (published in 1850, somewhat after their composition) is deliberately misleading, intended to disguise the intensely personal nature of these love lyrics, written prior to her secret marriage in September 1846 to Robert Browning after a three-year courtship. Apparently it was as a result of her husband's nicknaming her "the little Portugee" in admiration of the poems that led to her entitling them **Sonnets from the Portuguese**. "The volume was the object of a notorious bibliographical fraud, the so-called "Reading edition" of 1847 fabricated by T. J. Wise" (Ian Ousby, ed., **The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English** [Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 2003] 889) [[PVA](#)].

Related Materials

- [Reading and Discussion Questions](#)



E. B.
BROWNING

Last modified 30 July 2004