

In Sickness

WRITTEN SOON AFTER THE AUTHOR'S COMING TO LIVE IN IRELAND, UPON
THE QUEEN'S DEATH, OCTOBER 1714

'Tis true – then why should I repine
To see my life so fast decline?
But why obscurely here alone,
Where I am neither loved nor known?
My state of health none care to learn;
My life is here no soul's concern:
And those with whom I now converse,
Without a tear will tend my hearse.
Removed from kind Arbuthnot's aid,
Who knows his art, but not his trade,
Preferring his regard for me
Before his credit or his fee.
Some formal visits, looks, and words,
What mere humanity affords,
I meet perhaps from three or four,
From whom I once expected more;
Which those who tend the sick for pay,
Can act as decently as they;
But no obliging tender friend
To help at my approaching end.
My life is now a burden grown
To others, ere it be my own.

Ye formal weepers for the sick!
In your last offices be quick,
And spare my absent friends the grief
To hear, yet give me no relief:
Expired to-day, entomb'd to-morrow,
When known, will save a double sorrow.

Jonathan Swift – 1714

The British Poets: Including Translations. Vol. 37. Chiswick: C. Whittingham, 1822. 155-156.

From *Sonnets from the Portuguese*

If thou must love me... (Sonnet 14)

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
'I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day'—
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee—and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry, —
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning – 1850

The Poems of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Int. Ruth M. Adams. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974. 217.

To Marguerite—Continued

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour—

Oh! then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent!
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges meet again!

Who ordered that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cooled?
Who renders vain their deep desire?—
A God, a God their severance ruled!
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea.

Matthew Arnold – 1852

The Norton Anthology of English Literature. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt, et al. Vol.2. New York:
W. W. Norton & Company, 2006. 1355-1356.