

**THE BROWNING'S  
FOR THE YOUNG**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649245000

The Brownings for the young by Frederic G. Kenyon

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**FREDERIC G. KENYON**

**THE BROWNINGS  
FOR THE YOUNG**



THE BROWNINGS FOR  
THE YOUNG



EDITED BY

FREDERIC G. KENYON

LATE FELLOW OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE  
OXFORD

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE  
NEW YORK : MACMILLAN & CO.

1895

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO.  
At the Ballantyne Press

J821 - E

PROPERTY OF  
CITY OF NEW YORK

CH.

PREFACE J595676

IN this little volume a selection from the best poems of Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning is offered to those who are, comparatively speaking, beginners in the study and enjoyment of poetry. It is a selection from the writings of one who, in the opinion of many, is the greatest poet of the Victorian age, and of one who, without any question, is the greatest poetess in our literature of this or any other age. And not only are they thus associated in greatness; they also furnish the unique example of two great writers linked to one another by the closest and most sacred tie of all—as husband and wife. There is, therefore, a special appropriateness in bringing together (I believe for the first time) a selection from the poetry of each of them within the cover of a single volume. The selection is intended especially for young readers, who may not yet have made acquaintance with these poets in a more complete form; but if it should come into the hands of their elders, I would bespeak the favour of all lovers of Robert or Elizabeth Barrett Browning for an undertaking, the effect of which may be, it is hoped, to increase the number of those who share their devotion.

The two poets whose names are thus asso-

ciated with one another for ever, dedicated themselves to poetry from their very childhood. At the age of twelve Elizabeth Barrett Barrett (as she then was) had written an epic in four books on the battle of Marathon, and by the same age Robert Browning had produced an impassioned ode to a young lady, fifteen years his senior, besides much minor verse of various kinds. Both of them were insatiate readers of poetry. With both, it is interesting to observe, the prime favourite of their childhood was Pope's translation of Homer; and though in later days their tastes and styles travelled far enough from Pope, they retained to the end the love of Greek literature which they had acquired thus early. Elizabeth Barrett's first published volume of poetry appeared in 1826, Robert Browning's in 1833; and the second publication of each of them (Miss Barrett's "Seraphim," and Browning's "Paracelsus"), secured them honourable prominence among the poets of the day. It was not until 1846 that they met, but long before that time they had known and admired each other's poetry; and the acquaintance thus begun ripened rapidly into affection. They were married in 1849; and their marriage was followed by twelve years of perfect happiness, to which the only drawback was the frail condition of Mrs. Browning's health. For many years before her marriage she had lived the life of an invalid, confined to her room, with apparently little prospect of ever regaining strength.

Marriage and removal to the warmer climate of Italy brought about a marvellous improve-



ment, which lasted for several years ; but her ardent and emotional spirit seemed to wear out her delicate frame, and in 1861 her death ended the earthly duration of this happy union. How happy it was, and how deep and beautiful their affection, may be learnt from the husband's "One Word More" and "By the Fireside," and from the wife's "Sonnets from the Portuguese ;" but poems such as these do not come within the scope of the present selection. Robert Browning lived on until 1889, gaining continually that fuller recognition as one of the leading poets of the day which for many years (in spite of his first successes) had been denied him ; until, at the time of his death, full of years and honour, there was but one other poet who was commonly named in the same breath with him. It is useless to argue the question of precedence between Tennyson and Browning. They lie side by side in our great Abbey ; and side by side they represent the poetic achievements of the reign of Victoria.

The poetic styles of the husband and wife are as wide asunder as the poles, and it was perhaps for this very reason that each so heartily admired and prized the poetry of the other. Among young readers, they appeal, perhaps, to different audiences ; and if Robert Browning's courage, manliness, and serene hopefulness commend him especially to boys, Mrs. Browning's passionate emotion and sympathy with all that is true and good, especially if it be down-trodden or in pain, should find

acceptance at least as warmly among girls. Both are commonly thought of as being too difficult for the young to read—Robert Browning as being too intellectually subtle in thought and obscure in expression, and his wife as too emotional in tone and literary in allusions. On this point the following selection must, however, speak for itself. I believe that it contains nothing which boys and girls with some taste for literature may not both understand and enjoy ; but I have tried to make their path easier by the addition of short introductions to most of the poems, and occasional explanatory notes. I have been anxious not to overlay the text with commentary, and to leave the poetry, in the main, to speak for itself ; but the mean between too much and too little is hard to hit.

In making a selection for the young, I have been compelled to exclude poems which, however simple and beautiful they may be, are yet concerned with subjects in which they have not yet learnt to feel an interest. On this ground I have excluded all poems of which the main theme is love. No one can feel more strongly than I do that this rule shuts out much of the finest poetry of both Robert and Elizabeth Browning ; but I hope that those young readers who are attracted by the poems here given, will be encouraged in due season to make a fuller acquaintance with both poets in their complete works. I can testify to a love of Browning which began at a very early age with the "Pied Piper," and which has but grown and expanded since that time ; and it is in the hope that many

who begin their acquaintance with Browning in the same simple way may push forward until they have mastered that supreme achievement of "The Ring and the Book," and that those who start from the "Romaunt of the Page" may learn in time to love the "Sonnets from the Portuguese," that the present selection has been made. It does not contain nearly all that is good in the writings of these two great poets ; but I believe it contains nothing that is not good, nothing that does not present alike that truth and that beauty which both set before themselves as the highest aim and achievement of their art.

F. G. K.

*December 1895.*