

**THE RING AND THE
BOOK; IN FOUR
VOLUMES, VOL. III**

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The ring and the book; in four volumes, Vol. III by Robert Browning

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ROBERT BROWNING

**THE RING AND THE
BOOK; IN FOUR
VOLUMES, VOL. III**

THE
RING AND THE BOOK.

BY

ROBERT BROWNING,
M.A.,

HONORARY FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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1869.

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CONTENTS.



	PAGE
POMPILLA.....	I
DOMINUS HYACINTHUS DE ARCHANGELIS.....	90
JURIS DOCTOR JOHANNES-BAPTISTA BOTTINIUS	175

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THE
RING AND THE BOOK.

VII.
POMPILIA.

I AM just seventeen years and five months old,
And, if I lived one day more, three full weeks ;
'T is writ so in the church's register,
Lorenzo in Lucina, all my names
At length, so many names for one poor child, 5
—Francesca Camilla Vittoria Angela
Pompilia Comparini,—laughable !
Also 't is writ that I was married there
Four years ago : and they will add, I hope,
When they insert my death, a word or two,— 10

Omitting all about the mode of death,—
This, in its place, this which one cares to know,
That I had been a mother of a son
Exactly two weeks. It will be through grace
O' the Curate, not through any claim I have ; 15
Because the boy was born at, so baptized
Close to, the Villa, in the proper church :
A pretty church, I say no word against,
Yet stranger-like,—while this Lorenzo seems
My own particular place, I always say. 20
I used to wonder, when I stood scarce high
As the bed here, what the marble lion meant,
With half his body rushing from the wall,
Eating the figure of a prostrate man—
(To the right, it is, of entry by the door) 25
An ominous sign to one baptized like me,
Married, and to be buried there, I hope.
And they should add, to have my life complete,
He is a boy and Gaetan by name—
Gaetano, for a reason,—if the friar 30
Don Celestine will ask this grace for me
Of Curate Ottoboni : he it was

Baptized me : he remembers my whole life
As I do his grey hair.

All these few things 35

I know are true,—will you remember them ?
Because time flies. The surgeon cared for me,
To count my wounds,—twenty-two dagger-wounds,
Five deadly, but I do not suffer much—
Or too much pain,—and am to die to-night. 40

Oh how good God is that my babe was born,
—Better than born, baptized and hid away
Before this happened, safe from being hurt !
That had been sin God could not well forgive :
He was too young to smile and save himself. 45
When they took, two days after he was born,
My babe away from me to be baptized
And hidden awhile, for fear his foe should find,—
The country-woman, used to nursing babes,
Said “ Why take on so ? where is the great loss ? 50
“ These next three weeks he will but sleep and feed,
“ Only begin to smile at the month's end ;

