

**THE ROBERT BROWNING  
CENTENARY CELEBRATION  
AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY,  
MAY 7TH, 1912**

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The Robert Browning Centenary Celebration at Westminster Abbey, May 7th, 1912 by  
William Angus Knight

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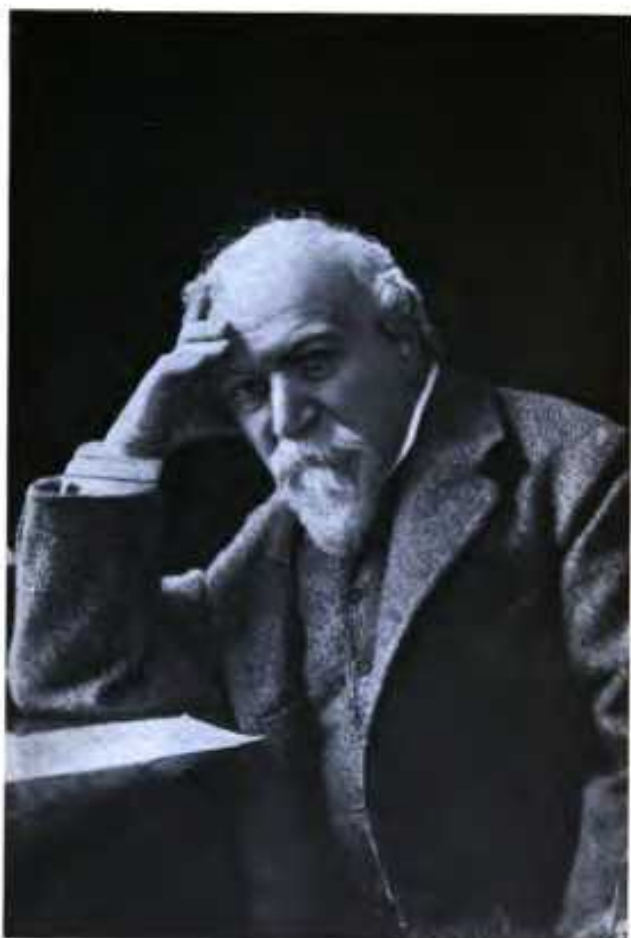
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**WILLIAM ANGUS KNIGHT**

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AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY,  
MAY 7TH, 1912**





ROBERT BROWNING

(AGED 77)

*From a photograph by W. H. Grove, 1889  
the last taken in England*

*Not in N. D.  
2/25 '12  
GMS*

# The Robert Browning Centenary Celebration

At Westminster Abbey

May 7th, 1912

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EDITED

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND APPENDICES

BY

PROFESSOR KNIGHT

*William A. ...*

*B. S.*

WITH A PORTRAIT

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From a photograph by William H. Grove, 1889,  
the last taken in England.

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*Delivered in Westminster College Hall,  
May 7th, 1912.*

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ROY WAIN  
OLIVER  
WAIN



## Introduction

SOME years ago it occurred to me as "a fit and proper thing" that the sorrowing friends of our great English poet, Robert Browning, should commemorate the centenary of his birth within the Abbey where he is buried.

After thinking it over, I corresponded with several persons younger than myself, who knew the poet more or less familiarly; as I thought they might be able to carry out a project which involved a good deal of organisation, better than myself. As it was impossible, however, to find any one able to do so, I have tried to realise it.

My only warrant was a somewhat intimate knowledge of the poet, and my correspondence with him, published in the first volume of my *Retrospects*,<sup>1</sup> our varied meetings at 19 Warwick Crescent, and walks thence

<sup>1</sup> Some eighteen of his letters to me are printed, pp. 22 and 95.

## INTRODUCTION

with him on Sunday afternoons through Kensington Gardens, to call on old Mrs. Procter at Albert Mansions (to whom he used to go to read his poems), my numerous lectures on him, and public readings from him, both in this country and in American Universities, and my being asked to be a pall-bearer at his burial in Westminster.

From my boyhood I have felt that he and Tennyson were together the greatest of our English poets since Wordsworth died; and as it fell to me to have something to do with the securing of Dove Cottage for the nation, and afterwards helping to fill it with memorials of its most illustrious occupant; subsequently assisting to obtain for posterity the home at Nether Stowey in Somerset, where Coleridge lived and did his best poetic work, I was more than glad to aid in this centenary celebration of one equally great among the teacher-poets of the world.

After correspondence with those mentioned in it, the following preliminary letter was sent out by me to some who knew Browning, or had written about him:—

## INTRODUCTION

*Private and Confidential.]*

GRETA LODGE, KESWICK,  
*October 1911.*

I am trying to organise a Browning Centenary Celebration for the 7th of May 1912, at Westminster Abbey, where he is buried beside Tennyson.

The Dean of the Abbey, with the Headmaster of its School, have together granted the use of the Abbey and their College Hall for this purpose, from 3 to 5 o'clock on the Centenary Day; just as the late Dean Bradley granted it, and the Jerusalem Chamber, for two meetings of "The Wordsworth Society," when in 1883 Matthew Arnold, and in 1886 the late Lord Selborne presided over it.

Lord Crewe, who is a Man of Letters as well as a Statesman, and whose lines on Browning occur in his *Stray Verses* of 1889, has been asked to preside on this occasion.

It has been thought better—during the few hours of the celebration—to have from ten to twelve brief (ten-minute) speeches or addresses, rather than three to four longer orations on the poet; and the following persons have