

**ROBERT  
BROWNING:  
PERSONALIA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649421503

Robert Browning: Personalia by Edmund Gosse

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)

**EDMUND GOSSE**

**ROBERT  
BROWNING:  
PERSONALIA**



---

ROBERT BROWNING

*Personalia*

357042

BY

5<sup>th</sup> EDMUND GOSSE

London

T. FISHER UNWIN  
26 PATERNOSTER SQUARE  
1890

## PREFACE

It would not have occurred to me that it was worth while to give a lasting form to the notes which are here reprinted. But I am assured by those who are peculiarly well fitted to know what is required by the readers of Browning that there is constant inquiry for the number of *The Century Magazine* (December, 1881) in which they appeared, and I am bound to confess that I am frequently written to by strangers who ask me to tell them where they can meet with the remarks in question. I have been, in consequence, requested by the poet's American publishers to allow the appended reprint to be made; and the fact is that there is so

much of it which is Mr. Browning's, and so little which is mine, that I have felt it would be mock-modesty to refuse my consent. "The Early Career of Robert Browning" was inspired and partly dictated, was revised and was approved of, by himself. It is here put forth, with great diffidence, not as having any final importance, but as a contribution towards that biography of the great poet which must one of these days be written. The author of that life will, I cannot but hope, turn to these pages with some curiosity, and perhaps, until his work is accomplished and this small star buried in his sun, readers and lovers of Browning may be glad to see what events in his early career seemed notable to the poet himself. With this modest purpose, and no other, I have permitted these personal notes to be re-deemed from the pages of an old magazine.

---

It has been suggested to me that I ought to explain the circumstances under which these data were collected. Ten years ago, it will be recollected, although Mr. Browning was recognized as a great poet, he had not yet excited that degree of personal curiosity which soon afterwards began to be awakened. The facts of his biography were put before the public in the most rudimentary form. The year of his birth was seldom given correctly; the month and day had, I think, never been made known. At that time I had the happiness of seeing him very frequently; for twelve years, I may perhaps mention, I was his close neighbor. I had several times ventured to point out to him how valuable would be some authentic account of his life, but he had always put the suggestion from him. I had ceased to hope that he would ever break through



his reserve, when one morning in February, 1881, he sent round a note to me, saying, "Come; and I will do what you wish." I went, and found him visibly annoyed by an account of his life, mainly fabulous, which the post had brought him. He said, "If you still wish to take down some notes of my life, I am willing to give you all the help I can; I am tired of this tangle of facts and fancies." It was agreed that we should dedicate some hours in the morning, once a week, to this delightful task, and for about a month, at stated intervals, for a couple of hours at a time, I sat at his study table, while he perambulated, and I jotted rapidly down the notes of his conversation. At his suggestion, I came each morning provided with a schedule of questions, one of which I would read, and then let him weave the embroidery of his answer

in whatever way he chose, until information languished, when I would put another question to him. At last I had collected a great mass of facts, gossip, and opinion, which I put into some rough order, and submitted to him. He marked for omission all that his maturer judgment did not wish to preserve. What was rejected was, much of it, of extreme interest, but he asked me to destroy it all, and of course I loyally did so. I then cast in literary form what he determined to let pass, and the article proceeded to America.

It appeared in the December number of *The Century Magazine*, and my little record would be incomplete if I did not publish, among my *pièces justificatives*, the note which Mr. Browning left at my door with his own hand, as soon as he had read the article in its published form:—

19 WARWICK CRESCENT, W.

December 4, 1881.

MY DEAR GOSSE, — What am I to say, or try to say? Your goodness and generosity there can be no doubt concerning; if any reproach to your judgment happen on account of all this partiality and praise, your goodness and generosity must bear it as well as they can. I wish yourself, when the years come, may find such an appreciator. You will at least deserve such an one — I hope and fear — better than does

Your affectionate Friend,

ROBERT BROWNING.

That this volume may make some pretense to be a book, — lest, as Gray said of his poems, "this work should be mistaken for the works of a flea or a pismire," — I have added to it some slight recollections of the personal characteristics of our illustrious friend, contributed to *The New Review* for Janu-

---