

**THE POETICAL WORKS OF  
ROBERT  
BROWNING. VOL. II.  
SORDELLO - PIPPA PASSES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649675623

The Poetical Works of Robert Browning. Vol. II. Sordello - Pippa Passes by Robert Browning

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Cover @ 2017

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THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

ROBERT BROWNING,

M. A.,

HONORARY FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

VOL. II.

*SORDELLO—PIPPA PASSES.*

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., LONDON.

1868.

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SORDELLO.

1840.



TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON.

Dear Friend,—Let the next poem be introduced by your name, therefore remembered along with one of the deepest of my affections, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me. I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many ; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either ? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since ; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might,—instead of what the few must,—like : but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires ; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul : little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so—you, with many known and unknown to me, think so—others may one day think so : and whether my attempt remain for them or not, I trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours,

R. B.

*London, June 9, 1863.*

# S O R D E L L O .

1840.

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## BOOK THE FIRST.

A QUIXOTIC ATTEMPT.

WHO will, may hear Sordello's story told :  
His story? Who believes me shall behold  
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end,  
Like me: for as the friendless-people's friend  
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din  
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin  
Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out  
Sordello, compassed murkily about  
With ravage of six long sad hundred years.  
Only believe me. Ye believe?

Appears

Verona . . . Never, I should warn you first,  
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst  
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell  
A story I could body forth so well  
By making speak, myself kept out of view,  
The very man as he was wont to do,

And leaving you to say the rest for him.  
Since, though I might be proud to see the dim  
Abysmal past divide its hateful surge,  
Letting of all men this one man emerge  
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,  
I should delight in watching first to last  
His progress as you watch it, not a whit  
More in the secret than yourselves who sit  
Fresh-chapleted to listen. But it seems  
Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,  
Makers of quite new men, producing them,  
Would best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem,  
'The wearer's quality; or take their stand,  
Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand,  
Beside him. So, for once I face ye, friends,  
Summoned together from the world's four ends,  
Dropped down from heaven or cast up from hell,  
To hear the story I propose to tell.  
Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick,  
Catching the dead, if fate denies the quick,  
And shaming her; 't is not for fate to choose  
Silence or song because she can refuse  
Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache  
Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake :  
I have experienced something of her spite ;  
But there 's a realm wherein she has no right  
And I have many lovers. Say, but few  
Friends fate accords me? Here they are : now view  
The host I muster ! Many a lighted face