

36 NOTE ON THE PORTRAITS OF BROWNING

**Earliest known
portrait of
Browning**

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**From the crayon
drawing in 1866
by Field Talfourd**

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**From the
painting by
Rudolf Lehmann,
1879**

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**From the
painting by G. F.
Watts, R.A.,
about 1876**

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**From paintings
by Prof. Legros,
Felix Moscheles**

see pages 13, 22

**From
photographs
by Mrs. F. W. H.
Myers, Mr.
Cameron, and
Mr. W. H. Grove**

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remained abundant to the last. The earliest known portrait of the poet was executed when he was about thirty-two, and was engraved for Horne's "New Spirit of the Age" in 1844. A highly finished pencil drawing by Frederic Leighton (1854) was apparently lost. The following year Giordigiani painted both Mr. and Mrs. Browning, and in 1850 Woolner executed a bronze medallion of the former. In 1850 husband and wife sat to Field Talfourd for life-size crayon portraits. These were drawn in Florence, and now hung in the National Portrait Gallery. Of his own likeness, which was formerly in the possession of Mr. Edmund Gosse, Browning wrote to the owner, February 23rd, 1880: "My sister a better authority than myself—has always liked it, as resembling its subject when his features had more resemblance to those of his mother than in after-time, when those of his father got the better—or perhaps the worse—of them."

In the same year a painting was made by Mr. Rudolf Lehmann, and Browning sat again to the same artist later. The picture executed in 1879 is now in the National Portrait Gallery.

"I think the likeness very true," writes Mr. W. M. Rossetti in the *Magazine of Art*, "and the expression of sharp and concentrated resolve quite accurate, but mixed with a certain degree of sternness of which Browning's face was indeed capable, but which it only rarely exhibited. The strong and rather massive line of the jaw, which was one of the many elements of virility in the visage, is well marked. This work has the character of an historical portrait."

"This portrait," continues the same writer, describing the painting by Mr. Watts, "presents Browning in a reflecting mood; not as if he were in the act of conversation with any one, but still with a certain potential look, as if he might at any moment hunch an observation, or turn a thought into a written couplet, and as if whatever he did would be done suddenly and on impulse; a true point of character truthfully realised."

Other paintings of Browning are those by Professor Legros in 1880, which now hangs in the South Kensington Museum; by Felix Moscheles in 1884; and several executed by his son, Mr. Robert Barrett Browning. Among the latter, one painted in the summer and autumn of 1880 may be mentioned as a particularly satisfactory representation of the poet.

In later years Browning was willing to sit frequently for his portrait, and among the numerous and excellent photographs in existence, those by Mr. Cameron, Mrs. F. W. H. Myers, and Mr. William H. Grove are all worthy of notice. To the latter was accorded the privilege of photographing the poet in August, 1880, shortly before his last journey to Italy.

"From ten till one he spent the time in his study writing, and when I afterwards photographed him," writes Mr. Grove, "I took him in an attitude I have seen him in thousands of times—his head leaning on his hand. He would sit like that for half an hour sometimes, and then take up his pen to jot something down."