ROBERT BROWNING'S SONETTDICHTUNG.

Wer die versuche beobachtet hat, die in unseren tagen von englischen dichtern gemacht worden sind, archaistische versformen in England einzubürgern, welche ehemals in Frankreich volkstümlich waren und in der neuzeit von der neoromanischen schule daselbst wider eingeführt wurden, dem kann es nicht entgangen sein, dass diese versuche nichts weniger als erfolgreich gewesen sind. Die englische dichtung unserer zeit hat nach französischen vorbildern rondels, rondeaux, triolets, villanelles, ballades u. s. w. hervorgebracht, und hat leistungen von bewundernswerter kunst und schönheit aufzuweisen. Trotzdem will es mich bedünken, als ob die englischen poeten mit der wahl dieser gallischen fesseln keinen glücklichen wurf getan hätten, denn Englands literaturfreunde haben diese bestrebungen im allgemeinen so kühl und gleichgültig aufgenommen, dass eine lange dauer für dieselben nicht in aussicht steht.

Der grund dieser erscheinung ist nicht leicht festzustellen; doch kann mit ziemlicher gewissheit angenommen werden, dass die ursache des frostigen empfangs, welcher dem wideraufleben dieser alten formen in England zu teil wurde, nicht in deren fremdländischen charakter zu suchen ist. Denn das sonett, welches ursprünglich aus Italien nach England importiert wurde und geradeso unbekannt war, wie die eben genannten gattungen, ist auf britischem boden vollständig heimisch geworden, ist geradezu die Lieblingsform der grössten englischen dichter geworden, und wird heutzutage für wenig mehr schwierig erachtet, als der sogenannte heroische vers (der jambische pentameter), den man in England als spezifisch englisches metrum zu betrachten sich gewöhnt hat.

Merkwürdig ist es daher zu finden, dass unter den dichtern der gegenwart der bedeutendsten und produktivsten einer

sich der sonettform fast gar nicht bedient hat. Robert Browning hat bis ganz kürzlich weder ein sonett noch ein dem sonett im bau verwandtes gedicht geschaffen.

Bei näherer betrachtung lässt sich jedoch, wie mir scheint, das fehlen von sonetten und sonettartigen gedichten unter den zahlreichen werken Browning's unschwer erklären.

Es ist nicht meine absicht, über wesen und ursprung des sonetts zu schreiben. Ich habe meine ansichten darüber schon früher niedergelegt in der abhandlung: 'Das Sonett und seine Gestaltung in der englischen Dichtung bis Milton. Halle, Niemeyer. 1886'. Zum poetischen ausdruck von nur einem gedanken, zur sorgfältigen darstellung eines besonderen zustandes, einer besonderen stimmung u. dergl., ist die sonettform ganz vorzüglich geeignet, und ist tatsächlich in der englischen lyrik die am meisten angewendete form. Zum erguss subjektiver stimmungen, persönlicher gefühle des dichters, ist sie unzweifelhaft in hohem grade befähigt.

Ein urteil von Walter Bagehot über Hartley Coleridge mag hier am platze sein:

'It is in this self-delineative species of poetry that, in our judgment, Hartley Coleridge has attained to nearly, if not quite, the highest excellence Perhaps there is something in the structure of the sonnet rather adapted to this species of composition. It is too short for narrative, too artificial for the intense passions, too complex for the simple, too elaborate for the domestic; but in an impatient world, where there is not a premium on self-describing, whoso would speak of himself must be wise and brief, artful and composed, and in these respects he will be aided by the concise dignity of the tranquil sonnet'.

(Literary Studies, London 1879, bd. I, s. 63.)

Ueber Bagehot's ansichten lässt sich streiten; sind dieselben aber auch nicht in jeder hinsicht stichhaltig, so lesen wir doch darin ganz deutlich den grund, warum Browning kein grosser sonettendichter ist, und warum er niemals einer werden kann.

Robert Browning ist kein *narrative poet*; seine muse beschäftigt sich weder mit *simple passions* noch kennt sie die *domestic*. Um mit Benj. Sagar (Manchester Quarterly no. XXII) zu reden: *he does treat largely, almost wholly, of those deep, soul-stirring passions which go to make up complex man*. Im

vorwort¹ zu einer 1863 erschienenen neuen ausgabe des im jahre 1840 zuerst veröffentlichten gedichtes 'Sordello' schreibt Browning zur motivierung dieser dichtung die seitdem oft citierten gewichtigen worte:

'My stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul; little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so —'.

Auch ist Browning keineswegs ein sogenannter 'persönlicher' d. i. ein sich selbst schildernder dichter in dem sinne, wie wir diese bezeichnung z. b. sehr passend auf William Wordsworth anwenden dürfen. Er ist im gegenteil weit entfernt davon. Unter seinen späteren erzeugnissen finden wir gedichte, worin auf das bestimmteste dem publikum das vermeintliche recht verneint wird: in die geheime gedankenwelt und das privatleben des dichters (als eines solchen) zu spähen. In der dichtung 'House' (Pacchiarotto, etc., 1876, s. 283 f. — Selections from The Poetical Works, Second Series, 1887, p. 288 f.) stellt er diese frage:

Shall I sonnet sing you about myself?

Do I live in a house you would like to see?

Is it scant of gear, has it store of pelf?

Unlock my heart with a sonnet-key?

Invite the world, as my betters have done?

"Take notice: this building remains on view,

Its suites of reception every one,

Its private apartment and bedroom too;

For a ticket, apply to the Publisher".

No: thanking the public, I must decline.

A peep through my window, if folks prefer,

But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine!

¹ *Sordello*. By Robert Browning. London: Edward Moxon, Dover Street. MDCCCXL. pp. IV, 253. — Preface to *Sordello* (not in first edition, but added in 1863). 'I reprint it, — though still retained by the author, — on account of its great importance as a piece of self-criticism or self-interpretation'. Vgl. Arthur Symons, An Introduction to the Study of Browning. London, Cassell. 1886, p. 210.

'To J. Milsand, of Dijon.

'Dear Friend, — Let the next poem be introduced by your name . . . 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

Outside should suffice for evidence:

And who so desires to penetrate
Deeper, must dive by the spirit-sense —
No optics like yours, at any rate!

“Hoity-toity! A street to explore,
Your house the exception! ‘With this same key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart’, once more!”
Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!

Nach meinem gefühl wird gegen Wordsworth in diesen versen zu hart und unbillig verfahren; auch mit dem den erklärern der unsterblichen Shakespeare-sonette darin versetzten hiebe kann ich mich durchaus nicht einverstanden erklären.

Ich frage vielmehr rückhaltlos: Hat denn überhaupt Robert Browning in seinen zahlreichen schriften die verdienste und den wert William Wordsworth's. genugsam anerkannt und gewürdigt?

Mir ist ein frank ausgesprochenes, ungeschmälertes lob des Lakisten bei Browning nicht erinnerlich; es fällt mir aber sein *Lost Leader* ein, und ich gebe das oft citierte gedicht hier wider, und lasse ein ‘bekenntniss’ des verfassers unmittelbar darauf folgen: damit ihm auf diese weise volle gerechtigkeit zu teil werde.

Browning schrieb diesen brief für die öffentlichkeit, und richtete ihn an Dr. Alexander B. Grosart in Blackburn: zur einfügung in die von diesem veranstaltete ausgabe der *Prose Works of Wordsworth* (Drei bände. London, Moxon, 1876; s. 36, 37).

The Lost Leader.¹

I.

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat —

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,

London, June 9, 1863.

R. B.

Vgl. die neue gesammtausgabe von B.'s werken (1888) I, 49.

¹ *The Lost Leader* is a lament over the defection of a loved and honoured chief. It breathes a tender regret for the moral injury he has

Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
 Lost all the others, she lets us devote;
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
 So much was theirs who so little allowed:
 How all our copper had gone for his service!
 Rags — were they purple, his heart had been proud!
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
 Made him our pattern to live and to die!
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
 Burns, Shelley, were with us, — they watch from their graves!
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
 He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

II.

We shall march prospering, — not thro' his presence;
 Songs may inspirit us, — not from his lyre;
 Deeds will be done, — while he boasts his quiescence,
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire.
 Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
 One more devil's-triumph and sorrow for angels,
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
 Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
 There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
 Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,
 Never glad confident morning again!
 Best fight on well, for we taught him — strike gallantly,
 Menace our heart ere we master his own;
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
 Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

(Selections from *The Poetical Works*.

First Series, p. 57, 58).

inflicted on himself; and a high courage: saddened by the thought of lost support and lost illusions, but not shaken by it. The language of the poem shows the lost "leader" to have been a poet. It refers to Wordsworth, in his abandonment (with Southey and others) of the liberal cause' (Sutherland Orr: *A Handbook to the works of Robert Browning*. London 1885, p. 284). — '*The Lost Leader* was originally written in reference to Wordsworth's abandonment of the Liberal cause, with perhaps a thought of Southey, but it is applicable to any popular apostacy. This is one of those songs that do the work of swords. It shows how easily Mr. Browning, had he so chosen, could have stirred the national feeling with his lyrics.' (Arthur Symonds: *An Introduction to the Study of Browning*. London 1886, p. 69).

Brief Browning's an Grosart.

19, Warwick Crescent, W.

Feb. 24, 1875.

Dear Mr. Grosart, — I have been asked the question you now address me with, and as duly answered it — I can't remember how many times. There is no sort of objection to one more assurance, or rather confession on my part that I did in my hasty youth presume to use the great and venerated personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model: one from which this or the other particular feature may be selected and turned to account: had I intended more, above all, such a boldness as portraying the entire man, I should not have talked about 'handfuls of silver and bits of ribbon'. — These never influenced the change of politics in the great poet, whose defection, nevertheless, accompanied as it was, by a regular face-about of his special party, was, to my juvenile apprehension, and even mature consideration, an event to deplore. But just as in the tapestry on my wall I can recognise figures which have struck out a fancy, on occasion, that though truly enough thus derived, yet would be preposterous as a copy, so, though I dare not deny the original of my little poem, I altogether refuse to have it considered as the 'very effigies' of such a moral and intellectual superiority. —

Faithfully yours,

Robert Browning.

Wir sollten bei beurteilung des *Lost Leader* der ehrenvollen abbitte stets eingedenk sein, welche in diesem aufrichtigen schreiben Browning's an Grosart enthalten ist. Interessant in diesem briefe ist auch die stelle von *the tapestry on my wall*¹, insofern sie uns die eindrücke erkennen lässt, welche, in verbindung mit einem verse bei Shakespeare (King Lear, akt III, sc. IV), zweifellos des poeten inspiration erzeugten, aus der sein herrliches gedicht entsprungen ist, das er mit denselben worten benannt hat: *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*.²

Wer Browning's werke kennt, der weiss, wie gross seine verehrung für Shelley und Keats ist; namentlich übte Shelley, den er *Sun-Treader* zu nennen pflegte, mächtigen einfluss auf seine jugenddichtung. Seine bewunderung für Shakespeare,

¹ 'I may venture to state that these picturesque materials included a tower which Mr. Browning once saw in the Carrara Mountains, a painting which caught his eye years later in Paris; and the figure of a horse in the tapestry in his own drawing-room — welded together in the remembrance of the line from "King Lear", which forms the heading of the poem' (Sutherland Orr, A Handbook to the works of Robert Browning, p. 266).

² Nach Delius stammt dieser vers aus einer alten verlorengegangenen ballade vom junker (Child) Roland. Vgl. Sutherland Orr, a. a. o. p. 265 f.

obgleich er dessen sonetten keinen beifall zollt, spricht aus vielen seiner gedichte; er nennt ihn *the poet of all poets* und schrieb von ihm diese verse:

'. . . I declare our Poet him
Whose insight makes all others dim:
A thousand poets pried at life,
And only one amid the strife
Rose to be Shakespeare!'

(Christmas Eve and Easter Day, 1850—57).

Bis zum herbst des jahres 1883, also bis vor fünf jahren, hatte das englische publikum (*British Public, ye who like me not* [Ring and Book¹, vol. I, p. 72]) kein einziges von den sonetten Browning's kennen gelernt; und niemand wusste, ob er sonette schreiben konnte, noch dass er deren verfasst hatte. Mancher glaubte vielmehr, er habe, wie sein freund Walter Savage Landor, ein feierliches geltübde getan: niemals ein sonett zu dichten. Da auf einmal, zum grössten erstaunen aller, erschienen in dem bande 'Jocoseria' (1883) drei sonette: die ersten, die er jemals veröffentlicht hat. Und es sind in der tat drei recht seltsame sonette, die Browning zu einer art moral benutzt hat: *to adorn the tale* des Jochanan Hakkadosh² (John the Saint), eines hebräischen rabbi, dessen leben und merkwürdiger tod den gegenstand des gedichtes bilden.

Sein erstes sonett schrieb Robert Browning auf wunsch Lord Dufferin's im jahre 1870; es handelt von dem turme, welchen Lord Dufferin dem andenken seiner mutter, Helen, Countess of Gifford, zu Clandeboye in Irland errichten liess, und erschien zuerst in der *Pall Mall Gazette* vom 28. Dezember 1883, p. 2.

(No. 1) Helen's Tower.³

Who hears of Helen's Tower may dream perchance
How the Greek Beauty from the Scoean Gate
Gazed on old friends unanimous in hate,
Death-doom'd because of her fair countenance.

¹ Vgl. Arthur Symons, *An Introduction to the Study of Browning*. p. 131 ff.

² Vgl. Sutherland Orr, *A Handbook to the works of Robert Browning* p. 317 ff. und Benjamin Sagar a. a. o. (James Fotheringham's '*Studies in the poetry of Robert Browning*', London, Kegan Paul, 1887 habe ich noch nicht gesehen.)

³ 'Reprinted in the Browning Society's Papers, Part V, p. 97. — Written for the Earl of Dufferin, who built a tower in memory of his

Hearts would leap otherwise at thy advance,
 Lady, to whom this Tower is consecrate!
 Like hers, thy face once made all eyes elate
 Yet, unlike hers, was blessed by every glance.
 The Tower of Hate is outworn, far and strange;
 A transitory shame of long ago,
 It dies into the sand from which it sprang;
 But thine, Love's rock-built Tower, shall fear no change.
 God's self laid stable earth's foundations so,
 When all the morning stars together sang.

April 26th, 1870.

Der strenge bau dieses sonettes ist untadelhaft. Von den neun, die Browning im ganzen geschrieben hat, ist es das einzige, welches in der struktur die genaue befolgung der von Petrarca auf uns gekommenen regeln erkennen lässt.

Wir unterscheiden bei Petrarca drei verschiedene sonetttypen, nämlich:

Typus I. abba abba cde cde.

Typus II. abba abba cde dcd.

Typus III. abba abba cde dce.

‘Helen's Tower’ zeigt vollkommen korrekte reimstellung und die logische pause am schluss der oktave; nur in zwei andern noch ist strenge trennung zwischen oktave und sextett beobachtet: in no. 5 und in no. 9, die beide nach typus II gebaut sind. — Browning's erstes sonett ist also das einzige beispiel für den echt italienischen typus, während das mittelste und das letzte seiner sonette korrekte muster von typus II darstellen. Von den übrigen sechs sind no. 4 und no. 8 nach typus I, no. 2 und no. 3 nach typus II konstruiert; no. 6 und no. 7 repräsentieren jedes eine variation von typus I und typus II; alle sechs trennen die oktave nicht vom sextett, es verbindet vielmehr die achte und die neunte verszeile durch fortlaufenden inneren zusammenhang die beiden haupttheile der sonettenarchitektur. Sämmtliche neun sonette Browning's zeigen korrekte reimstellung in den quartetten, nämlich:

abba abba,

und keines von ihnen endigt mit einem *final couplet* à la Shakespeare u. a.

mother on a rock on his estate in Ireland. Lord Tennyson's lines, written on the same occasion, appeared a little previously in *The Leisure Hour*. Vgl. Arthur Symonds a. a. o. p. 207 f.

Uebersicht der reimstellung in den
terzetten.

No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4	No. 5	No. 6	No. 7	No. 8	No. 9
Helen's Tower.	Jochanan (No. I)	Jochanan (No. II).	Jochanan (No. III).	Goldoni.	Rawdon Brown.	The Names.	Founder of the Feast.	Why I am a Liberal.
c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d
e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e
c	d	d	c	d	c	d	c	d
d	c	c	d	c	e	d	d	c
e	d	d	e	d	d	c	e	d
Typus I	Typus II	Typus II	Typus I	Typus II	Var. von Typus I	Var. von Typus II	Typus I	Typus II

Die drei zuerst veröffentlichten sonette Browning's sind die schon erwähnten in *Jocoseria*¹; sie haben zum gegenstand die geschichte von Jochanan Hakkadosh, der sein lebelang

¹ *Jocoseria*. By Robert Browning. London: Smith, Elder and Co. 1893. pp. VIII, 143.

Contents: 1. Wanting is — What? 2. Donald. 3. Solomon and Balkis. 4. Cristina and Monaldeschi. 5. Mary Wollstonecraft and Fuseli. 6. Adam, Lilith, and Eve. 7. Ixion. 8. Jochanan Hakkadosh. 9. Never the Time and the Place. 10. Pambo.

Vgl. Dr. Furnivall's *Browning Bibliography*, contained in the first part of the *Browning Society's Papers* (p. 21—71).

‘The name *Jocoseria* (mentioned by Mr. Browning in its original connection — Melander's “*Jocoseria*” — in the notes to *Paracelsus*) expresses very cleverly the particular nature of the volume, in its close union and fusion of grave and gay. The volume is not, as a whole, so intense or so brilliant as the first and second series of *Dramatic Idyls*, but one or two of the shorter poems are, in their way, unexcelled by anything in either volume.’ — ‘The longest poem, though hardly the best, is the imaginary Rabbinical legend of *Jochanan Hakkadosh* (John the Saint), which Mr. Browning, with a touch of learned quizzicalness, states in his note [this note contains three burlesque sonnets, of very original workmanship, particularly interesting as the *first* sonnets ever published by Mr. Browning] “to have no better authority than that of the treatise, existing dispersedly, in fragments of Rabbinical writing, [the name, ‘Collection of many Lies’, follows in Hebrew,] from which I might have helped myself more liberally”. — It is written in *terza rima*, like *Doctor* — in the *Dramatic Idyls*, and Mr. Browning brings it forward as a fellow or a follower of that. It is unquestionably far superior to the earlier and fimsier poem, though it seems to me that its effectiveness as an example of the serio-grotesque would have been heightened by some metre less

darnach strebte, das unendliche zu erreichen, und welcher schliesslich als *a failure from his birth* aus dem zeitlichen scheidet.

(No. 2)

I.¹

Moses the Meek was thirty cubits high,
 The staff he strode with — thirty cubits long;
 And when he leapt, so muscular and strong
 Was Moses, that his leaping neared the sky
 By thirty cubits more: we learn thereby
 He reached full ninety cubits — am I wrong? —
 When, in a fight slurr'd o'er by sacred song,
 With staff out-stretched he took a leap to try
 The just dimensions of the giant Og.
 And yet he barely touched — this marvel lacked
 Posterity to crown earth's catalogue
 Of marvels -- barely touched — to be exact —
 The giant's ankle-bone, remained a frog
 That fain would match an ox in stature -- fact!

1883.

sober and placid than the *terza rima* — by rhythm and rhyme as audacious and characteristic as the rhythm and the rhymes of *Pietro of Abano*, for instance.' — Vgl. Arthur Symons a. a. o. p. 192 f.

¹ *Jochanan Hakkadosh* relates how a certain Rabbi was enabled to extend his life for a year and three months beyond its appointed term, and what knowledge came to him through the extension. Mr. Browning professes to rest his narrative on a Rabbinical work, of which the title, given by him in Hebrew, means "Collection of many lies"; and he adds, by way of supplement, three sonnets, supposed to illustrate the equally fictitious proverb, "From Moses to Moses never was one like Moses", and embodying as many fables of wildly increasing audacity. The main story is nevertheless justified by traditional Jewish belief; and Mr. Browning has made it the vehicle of some poetical imagery and much serious thought.

Jochanan Hakkadosh was at the point of death. He had completed his seventy-ninth year. But his faculties were unimpaired; and his pupils had gathered round him to receive the last lessons of his experience; and to know with what feelings he regarded the impending change. Jochanan Hakkadosh had but one answer to give: his life had been a failure. He had loved, learned, and fought; and in every case his object had been ill-chosen, his energies ill-bestowed. He had shared the common lot, which gives power into the hand of folly, and places wisdom in command when no power is left to be commanded. With this desponding utterance he bade his "children" farewell.

But here a hubbub of protestation arose. "This must not be the Rabbi's last word. It need not be so;" for, as Tsaddik, one of the disciples, reminded his fellows, there existed a resource against such a case. Their "Targums" (commentaries) assured them that when one thus combining the Nine Points of perfection was overtaken by years before the fruits of his knowledge had been matured, respite might be gained for him by a gift from another man's life: the giver being rewarded for the wisdom to which he ministered, by a corresponding remission of ill-spent time. The sacrifice was small, viewed side by side with the war-

(No. 3)

II.

And this same fact has met with unbelief!
 How saith a certain traveller? 'Young, I chanced
 To come upon an object — if thou canst,
 Guess me its name and nature! 'Twas, in brief,
 White, hard, round, hollow, of such length, in chief,
 — And this is what especially enchanced
 My wonder — that it seemed, as I advanced,
 Never to end. Bind up within thy sheaf
 Of marvels, this — Posterity! I walked
 From end to end — four hours walked I, who go
 A goodly pace — and found — I have not balked
 Thine expectation, stranger? Ay or no? —
 'Twas but Og's thigh-bone, all the while, I stalked
 Alongside of: respect to Moses, though!

1883.

tyrdoms endured in Rome for the glory of the Jewish race [The names and instances given are, as well as the main fact, historical]. "Who of those present was willing to make it?" Again a hubbub arose. The disciples within, the mixed crowd without, all clamoured for the privilege of lengthening the Rabbi's life from their own. Tsaddik deprecated so extensive a gift. "Their teacher's patience should not be overtaxed, like that of Perida (whose story he tells), by too long a spell of existence." He accepted from the general bounty exactly one year, to be recruited in equal portions from a married lover, a warrior, a poet, and a statesman; and, the matter thus settled, Jochanan Hakkadosh fell asleep.

Four times the Rabbi awoke, in renewed health and strength: and four times again he fell asleep: and at the close of each waking term Tsaddik revisited him as he sat in his garden — amidst the bloom or the languors, the threatenings or the chill, of the special period of the year — and questioned him of what he had learned. And each time the record was like that of the previous seventy-nine years, one of disappointment and failure. For the gift had been drawn in every case from a young life, and been neutralized by its contact with the old. As a lover, the Rabbi declares, he has dreamed young dreams, and his older self has seen through them. He has known beforehand that the special charms of his chosen one would prove transitory, and that the general attraction of her womanhood belonged to her sex and not to her. As a warrior he has experienced the same process of disenchantment. For the young believe that the surest way to the Right and Good, is that, always, which is cut by the sword: and that the exercise of the sword is the surest training for those self-devoting impulses which mark the moral nature of man. The old have learned that the most just war involves, in its penalties, the innocent no less than the guilty; that violence rights no wrong which time and patience would not right more fully; and that for the purposes of self-devotion, unassisted love is more effective than hate. (Picturesque illustrations are made to support this view.) As poet he has recalled the glow of youthful fancy to feel it quenched by the experience of age: to see those soaring existences whose vital atmosphere is the future, frozen by their contact with a dead past. As statesman he has looked out upon the forest of life, again seeing the noble trees by which the young trace their future path. And, seeing these, he has known, that the way leads not by them, but among the brushwood and briars which fill the intervening space; that the statist's work is among the

(No. 4)

III.

Og's thigh-bone, — if ye deem its measure strange,
 Myself can witness to much length of shank
 Even in birds. Upon a water's bank
 Once halting, I was minded to exchange
 Noon heat for cool. Quoth I, 'On many a grange
 I have seen storks perch — legs both long and lank:
 Yon storks must touch the bottom of this tank,
 Since on its top doth wet no plume derange
 Of the smooth breast. I'll bathe there!' 'Do not so'
 Warned me a voice from heaven. 'A man let drop
 His axe into that shallow rivulet —
 As thou accountest — seventy years ago:
 It fell and fell, and still without a stop
 Keeps falling, nor has reached the bottom yet'.

1883.

No. 2, 3 und 4 sind jedenfalls überraschend merkwürdige
 erzeugnisse der Browning'schen muse: die eigenartigsten sonette

mindless many who will obstruct him at every step, not among the intellectual few by whom his progress would be assisted.

As he completes his testimony another change comes over him; and Tsaddik kissing, the closing eyelids, leaves his master to die.

The rumour of a persecution scatters the Jewish inhabitants of the city. Not till three months have expired do they venture to return to it; and when Tsaddik and the other disciples seek the cave where their master lies, they find him, to their astonishment, alive. Then Tsaddik remembers that even children urged their offering upon him, and concludes that some urchin or other contrived to make it "stick"; and he anxiously disclaims any share in the "foisting" this crude fragment of existence on the course of so great a life. Hereupon the Rabbi opens his eyes, and turns upon the bystanders a look of such absolute relief, such utter happiness, that, as Tsaddik declares, only a second miracle can explain it. It is a case of the three days' survival of the "Ruach", or spirit, conceded to those departed saints whose earthly life has anticipated the heavenly; who have died, as it were, half in the better world [A Talmudic doctrine still held among the Jews. The "Halaphta", with whom Mr. Browning connects it, was a noted Rabbi].

Tsaddik has, however, missed the right solution of the problem. Jochanan Hakkadosh can only define his state as one of *ignorance confirmed by knowledge*; but he makes it very clear that it is precisely the gift of the child's consciousness, which has produced this ecstatic calm. The child's soul in him has reconciled the differing testimony of youth and manhood: solving their contradictions in its unquestioning faith and hope. It has lifted him into that region of harmonized good and evil, where bliss is greater than the human brain can bear. And this is how he feels himself to be dying; bearing with him a secret of perfect happiness, which he vainly wishes he could impart [The "*Bier*" and the "*three daughters*" was a received Jewish name for the Constellation of the Great Bear. Hence the simile derived from this (pp. 83, 118). — The "*Salem*", mentioned at p. 84, is the mystical New Jerusalem to be built of the spirits of the great and good]. Vgl. Sutherland Orr, a. a. o. s. 317 ff.

unter allen, die mir auf diesem weiten gebiete der englischen litteratur bekannt wurden. Aus ihrem ungewöhnlich exklamatorischen charakter und der ungewöhnlich reichen interpunktion resultiert ohne zweifel die seltsame, befremdende wirkung dieser sonette. Ob Arthur Symons in dem öfters citierten buche das richtige trifft, wenn er diese drei gedichte *burlesque sonnets* nennt, will ich dahin gestellt sein lassen; besser scheint mir Benjamin Sagar's klassifizierung, der sie zu Robert Browning's *semi- or serio-grotesque poems* rechnet, von denen wir bekanntlich eine grosse anzahl besitzen.

Das fünfte sonett erschien zuerst in der *Pall Mall Gazette* vom 8. Dezember 1883, p. 2, *written impromptu for the Album of the Committee of the Goldoni Monument at Venice, and inserted on the first page.*

(No. 5)¹

Goldoni, — good, gay, sunniest of souls, —
 Glassing half Venice in that verse of thine, —
 What though it just reflect the shade and shine
 Of common life, nor render as it rolls
 Grandeur and gloom? Sufficient for thy shoals
 Was Carnival: Parini's depths enshrine
 Secrets unsuited to that opaline
 Surface of things which laughs along thy scrolls.
 There throng the people: how they come and go,
 Lisp the soft language, flaunt the bright garb — see —
 On Piazza, Calle, under Portico
 And over Bridge! Dear King of Comedy,
 Be honoured! Thou that didst love Venice so,
 Venice, and we who love her, all love thee!

Venice, Nov. 27, 1883.

Auf italischem boden, also im heimatlande der sonetten-dichtung, schrieb Browning das Goldoni-sonett, dem er am darauffolgenden tage (28. November 1883) ein weiteres hinzufügte, welches die *apocryphal story* von Rawdon Brown zum gegenstand hat: eines in weiten kreisen bekannten englischen bewohners von Venedig, welcher zu einem bestimmten zwecke die lagunenstadt besuchte, in der absicht ein paar tage zu verweilen, — und der vierzig jahre lang sich nicht von ihr zu trennen vermochte!

¹ *Sonnet on Goldoni.* Reprinted in the Browning Society Papers Part V, p. 98. Vgl. Furnivall a. a. o.

Mit des verfassers erlaubniß und mit einwilligung der dame, auf deren veranlassung es gedichtet wurde, erschien dieses sonett (no. 6) in der zeitschrift *Century Magazine* im Februar 1884.

(No. 6)

Rawdon Brown.¹

Tutti ga i so gusto, e mi go i mii.

'Everybody follows his taste, and I follow mine.'

Venetian Proverb.

Sighed Rawdon Brown, "Yes I'm departing Toni!

I needs must just this once before I die,

Re-visit England: *Anglus* Brown am I,

Although my heart's Venetian. Yes, old crony —

Venice and London — London's Death the Bony

Compared with Life — that's Venice! What a sky,

A sea this morning! One last look! Good-bye.

Cà Pesara! no lion — I'm a cony

To weep! I'm dazzled; 'tis that sun I view

Rippling the — the — Cospetto, Toni! Down

With carpet-bag, and off with valise-straps!

'Bella Venezia, non ti lascio più!'

Nor did Brown ever leave her: well, perhaps

Browning next week, may find himself quite Brown!

Venice, Nov. 28, 1883.

Sein nächstes gedicht in sonettform (no. 7) widmete Robert Browning dem hochinteressanten, von George Falkner and Sons, Manchester, gedruckten und am 29. Mai 1884 der öffentlichkeit übergebenen *Shakespeare Show Book*; es handelt natürlich von Shakespeare.

(No. 7)

The Names.²

Shakespeare! — to such name's sounding what succeeds

Fitly as silence? Falter forth the spell, —

Act follows word, the speaker knows full well,

Nor tampers with its magic more than needs.

Two Names there are: That which the Hebrew reads

¹ *Sonnet on Rawdon Brown* (Dated 'November 28, 1883'). — *Century Magazine*, 'Bric-à-brac' column, February, 1884. Reprinted in the Browning Society's Papers, Part V, p. 132. Written at Venice, on an apocryphal story relating to the late Mr. Rawdon Brown, who 'went to Venice for a short visit, with a definite object in view, and ended by staying forty years'. Vgl. Furnivall a. a. o., auch Symons a. a. o. p. 208.

² *The Names: Sonnet on Shakespeare* (Dated 'March 12, 1884'). — *Shakespeare Show Book*, May 29, 1884, p. 1. Reprinted in the Browning Society's Papers, Part V, p. 105. Vgl. Furnivall und auch Symons a. a. o.

With his soul only; if from lips it fell,
 Echo, back thundered by earth, heaven and hell,
 Would own 'Thou didst create us!' Thought impedes
 We voice the other name, man's most of might,
 Awesomely, lovingly: let awe and love
 Mutely await their working, leave to sight
 All of the issue as — below — above —
 Shakespeare's creation rises: one remove,
 Though dread — this finite from the infinite.

March 12, 1884.

In dem sonett no. 7 gedenkt Browning des hebräischen gebrauchts, den namen Gottes — Jehova — niemals mit lauter stimme zu nennen: ein zug von pietät in der jüdischen religion, der unverkennbar auf unseren dichter einen tiefen eindruck gemacht haben muss. Denn von den erhabensten seiner charaktere bis zu den alltäglichen finden wir bei mehreren darauf bezügliche stellen: von *Abt Vogler* (*Dramatis Personae* 1864, p. 72, no. 9; auch in den *Selections*, new edition 1887, 1st series, p. 197) bis zu *Mr. Sludge*, '*The Medium*' (*Dramatis Personae* eb., p. 217 ff.; *Selections*, new edition, 2nd series, p. 195).

Sein achttes sonett erschien zuerst in der *World* vom 16. April 1884. Browning schrieb dasselbe auf ansuchen unseres landsmannes, des berühmten geigers Joachim, zur verschönerung eines albums, welches Londoner musikfreunde dem Mr. Arthur Chappell überreichten: dem stifter der *St. Jame's Hall Saturday and Monday Popular Concerts*.

The Founder of the Feast.

'Enter my palace', if a prince should say,
 'Feast with the Painters! See, in bounteous row,
 They range from Titian up to Angelo!
 Could we be silent at the rich survey?
 A host so kindly, in as great a way
 Invites to banquets, substitutes for show
 Sound that's diviner still, and bids us know
 Bach like Beethoven; we are thankless, pray?
 Thanks, then, to Arthur Chappell — thanks to him
 Whose every guest henceforth not idly vaunts,
 'Sense has received the utmost Nature grants'.
 My cup was filled with rapture to the brim,
 When night by night — Ah, memory, how it haunts! —
 Music was poured by perfect ministrants
 By Hallé, Schumann, Piatti, Joachim.

April 5th, 1884.

Dieses gedicht besteht aus fünfzehn verszeilen, gehört somit zu den sogenannten 'geschwänzten' sonetten, und hat keinen anspruch unter die sonette nach Petrarca'schem vorbild gezählt zu werden. Browning hatte dasselbe auf Joachim's bitte an einem einzigen tage improvisiert, gab ihm aber später die nachfolgende echte sonettgestalt.

(No. 8)¹

'Enter my palace', if a prince should say,
 'Feast with the Painters! See, in bounteous row,
 They range from Titian up to Angelo!'
 Could we be silent at the rich survey?
 A host so kindly, in as great a way
 Invites to banquets, substitutes, for show,
 Sound that's diviner still, and bids us know
 Bach like Beethoven. Are we thankless, pray,
 To him whose every guest not idly vaunts
 'Sense has received the utmost Nature grants'?
 My cup was filled with rapture to the brim,
 When night by night — Ah, memory, how it haunts! —
 Music was poured by perfect ministrants,
 By Hallé, Schumann, Piatti, Jochim.

Am meisten bekannt geworden ist wol das letzte sonett, welches wir von Browning besitzen, und welches als vorwort zu A. Arthur Reade's kleinem buche erschien, welches antworten vieler politischen und anderer berühmtheiten enthält auf die frage: *Why am I a Liberal?* Robert Browning's antwort ist die folgende:

(No. 9) Why I am a Liberal.²

'Why?' Because all I haply can and do,
 All that I am now — all I hope to be —
 Whence comes it save from fortune setting free
 Body and soul the purpose to pursue,
 God traced for both? If fetters, not a few,
 Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,
 These shall I bid men — each in his degree
 Also God-guided — bear, and gaily too?
 But little do or can the best of us:
 That Little is achieved through Liberty.
 Who, then, dare hold — emancipated thus —

¹ Vgl. Symons a. a. o. p. 208. Reprinted in the Browning Society's Papers, Part VII, p. 18.

² Vgl. Symons a. a. o. p. 208. Reprinted in the Browning Society's Papers, Part VII, p. 92.

His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,
 Who live, love, labour freely, nor discuss
 A brother's right to freedom. That is 'Why'.

1883.

Ein blick auf die sonettdichtung Browning's lässt sofort erkennen, dass er diese poetische form keineswegs zum ausdruck erhabener gedanken oder zur deutung einer tiefempfundenen lebensweisheit verwendet; alle neun sonette sind anspruchslose gelegenheitsgedichte, nichts weiter. — Aber er hat uns den beweis geliefert, dass er auch diese form vollkommen beherrscht: dass er ein sehr gutes sonett schreiben kann, wie *Helen's Tower* und ganz besonders *The Names* bezeugen. Immerhin bleibt es merkwürdig, dass unter der grossen anzahl seiner lyrischen dichtungen ein so fruchtbares genie wie Browning der in seinem vaterland so sehr beliebten kunstform des sonetts bis dato sich nicht öfter bedient hat.

Es möge an dieser stelle auch des im vorvorigen jahre zu Boston erschienenen buches des Amerikaners Hiram Corson gedacht sein. Unter dem titel: *An Introduction to the Study of Robert Browning's Poetry* gibt der verfasser eingehende besprechungen vieler der bedeutendsten schöpfungen Browning's, und u. a. auch *A List of Criticisms of Brownings Works, selected from Dr. Frederick J. Furnivall's 'Bibliography of Robert Browning', contained in 'The Browning Society's Papers', Part I, with additions in Part II.*

Wie hoch geschätzt und gefeiert Robert Browning heutzutage in England und Amerika ist (allerdings nur in einem kleinen zirkel wahrhaft gebildeter), dafür mögen die nachstehenden worte als beredtes zeugniss gelten:

'Quanta subtilitate ipsa corda hominum reserat, intimos mentis recessus explorat, varios animi motus perscrutatur. Quod ad tragicodiam antiquiorem attinet, interpretatus est, uti nostis omnes, non modo Æschylum quo nemo sublimior, sed etiam Euripidem quo nemo humanior; quo fit ut etiam illos qui Graece nesciunt, misericordia tangat Alcestitis, terrore tangat Hercules. Recentiora argumenta tragica cum lyrico quodam scribendi genere coniunxit, duas Musas et Melpomenen et Euterpen simul veneratus. Musicae miracula quis dignius cecinit? Pictoris Florentini sine fraude vitam quasi inter crepuscula vesperscentem coloribus quam vividis depinxit. Vesperi quotiens, dum foco adsidemus, hoc iubente resurgit Italia. Vesperi nuper, dum huius idyllia forte meditabar, Cami inter arundines mihi videbar vocem magnam audire clamantis, Πᾶν ὁ μέγας οὐ τέθνηκεν. Vivit adhuc

Pan ipse, cum Marathonis memoria et Pheidippidis velocitate immortalis consociatus'. — (Eulogium pronounced by Mr. J. E. Sandys, Public Orator at the University of Cambridge, on presenting Mr. Browning for the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws, June 10, 1879.)

Die lyrik ist eine kunst im vollen und wahren sinne des wortes; sie ist die liebenswürdigste und feinste seite der dichtung und ist mehr noch als die dramatische geeignet, jene grosse aufgabe zu lösen: Die welt durch schönheit zur sittlichkeit zu erziehen.

OBERNIGK

BEI BRESLAU.

KARL LENTZNER.