

**THE RING AND THE
BOOK, IN FOUR
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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The ring and the book, in four volumes, Vol. II by Robert Browning

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ROBERT BROWNING

**THE RING AND THE
BOOK, IN FOUR
VOLUMES, VOL. II**

THE
RING AND THE BOOK.

BY
ROBERT BROWNING,
M.A.,
HONORARY FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE
RING AND THE BOOK.

IV.
TERTIUM QUID.

TRUE, Excellency—as his Highness says,
Though she 's not dead yet, she 's as good as stretched
Symmetrical beside the other two ;
Though he 's not judged yet, he 's the same as judged,
So do the facts abound and superabound : 5
And nothing hinders, now, we lift the case
Out of the shade into the shine, allow
Qualified persons to pronounce at last,
Nay, edge in an authoritative word
Between this rabble's-brabble of dolts and fools 10
Who make up reasonless unreasoning Rome.
“ Now for the Trial ! ” they roar : “ the Trial to test

“ The truth, weigh husband and weigh wife alike
 “ I’ the scales of law, make one scale kick the
 beam !”

Law ’s a machine from which, to please the mob, 15

Truth the divinity must needs descend

And clear things at the play’s fifth act—aha !

Hammer into their noddles who was who

And what was what. I tell the simpletons

“ Could law be competent to such a feat 20

“ ’T were done already : what begins next week

“ Is end o’ the Trial, last link of a chain

“ Whereof the first was forged three years ago

“ When law addressed herself to set wrong right,

“ And proved so slow in taking the first step 25

“ That ever some new grievance,—tort, retort,

“ On one or the other side,—o’ertook i’ the game,

“ Retarded sentence, till this deed of death

“ Is thrown in, as it were, last bale to boat

“ Crammed to the edge with cargo—or passengers? 30

“ ‘ *Trecentos inseris : ohe, jam satis est !*

“ ‘ *Huc appelle !*’—passengers, the word must be.”

Long since, the boat was loaded to my eyes.

To hear the rabble and brabble, you ’d call the case

Fused and confused past human finding out. 35

One calls the square round, t' other the round square—
 And pardonably in that first surprise
 O' the blood that fell and splashed the diagram :
 But now we 've used our eyes to the violent hue
 Can't we look through the crimson and trace lines? 40
 It makes a man despair of history,
 Eusebius and the established fact—fig's end !
 Oh, give the fools their 'Trial, rattle away
 With the leash of lawyers, two on either side—
 One barks, one bites,—Masters Arcangeli 45
 And Spreti,—that 's the husband's ultimate hope
 Against the Fisc and the other kind of Fisc,
 Bound to do barking for the wife : bow—wow !
 Why, Excellency, we and his Highness here
 Would settle the matter as sufficiently 50
 As ever will Advocate 'This and Fiscal That
 And Judge the Other, with even—a word and a wink—
 We well know who for ultimate arbiter.
 Let us beware o' the basset-table—lest
 We jog the elbow of Her Eminence, 55
 Jostle his cards,—he 'll rap you out a . . st !
 By the window-seat ! And here 's the Marquis too !
 Indulge me but a moment : if I fail
 —Favoured with such an audience, understand !—

To set things right, why, class me with the mob 60
As understander of the mind of man!

The mob,—now, that 's just how the error comes!
Bethink you that you have to deal with *plebs*,
The commonalty; this is an episode
In burgess-life;—why seek to aggrandize, 65
Idealize, denaturalize the class?
People talk just as if they had to do
With a noble pair that . . . Excellency, your ear!
Stoop to me, Highness,—listen and look yourselves!

This Pietro, this Violante, live their life 70
At Rome in the easy way that 's far from worst
Even for their betters,—themselves love themselves,
Spend their own oil in feeding their own lamp
That their own faces may grow bright thereby.
They get to fifty and over: how 's the lamp? 75
Full to the depth o' the wick,—moneys so much;
And also with a remnant,—so much more
Of moneys,—which there 's no consuming now,
But, when the wick shall moulder out some day,
Failing fresh twist of tow to use up dregs, 80
Will lie a prize for the passer-by,—to-wit