

APPENDIX

MY CRAPULOUS PREDECESSORS

NO. I.

ROBERT BROWNING

[The method of critical analysis is not our own, who reverence Robert Browning as one of the greatest of the Victorian Poets. It is borrowed, with the acknowledgement of inverted commas (even the commas!) from distinguished luminaries of the Bench and Bar. ED.]

("I'll have some hesitation" in printing "the following, as I see ladies" at the booksellers'. S. C. H.

"Any ladies" waiting at the booksellers' "are probably far beyond any scruples of that sort." Mr Justice Mutton)

PIPPA PASSES, BY ROBERT BROWNING.

" I would call your lordship's attention very particularly to the initial letters of this obscene and revolting poem." Separately: how every Englishman must shudder and vomit at "the loathsome and abominable creature who has the effrontery to" have been dead and buried without giving posterity "a chance to cross-examine him"! Together: how every Frenchman must cry "Faugh! Ugh! Faugh!" and blush! Transpose two vowels only: what hideous and filthy anagram springs to sight!

“If this is accidental, Mr” Browning “is a very fortunate man; if it is intentional, no words of mine can be strong enough to denounce the loathsome and abominable character of this book.” But can it be accidental? Was not Mr Browning a friend—a friend!—of that Mr Scrutton whose name is an anagram of a sentence—not merely a word, mark you!—which asserts a pathological fact familiar to every Syphilographer and his clients, couched in the crudest and coarsest language!

And if this be accident too, what shall we say of the infamous examples of paraprodokian from the plain text itself?

“Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe’s plaister—One strip cools your lip. Phœbus’ emulsion—One bottle clears your throttle. Mercury’s bolus—one box cures . . .”

And—

“I have made her gorge polenta
Till her cheeks are both bouncing
As her—name there’s no pronouncing!”

And what of the whole scheme of the poem?

The chief character is a vile procurer who is trying to sell Pippa into the White Slave Traffic.

The first episode deals most realistically with adultery crowned by murder

The second episode describes a plot to marry an innocent youth to a harlot.

The third episode shows a mother trying to prevent her son from committing a murder in cold blood, and failing to do so. This assassination has the open approval of the “so-called poet.”

And “the loathsome and abominable creature” who “disseminates this unutterable filth” was allowed to die in peace! “Where were the police? What were they about to let him escape” to Italy?

Italy indeed! This horrible creature dedicates “his best intentions” (I’m sorry, I can’t think of any bad meaning for H.B.I.) “affectionately to Mr Sergeant Talfourd.” Affectionately, mark the word! What do such “loathsome and abominable creatures” mean by affection? Gentlemen of the jury, if this Mr (*sic*) Sergeant (save the mark!) Talfourd (Ugh!) had come to court to ask you to clear him from a blackmailer’s libel, you would have known how to brand him from a blackmailer’s libel, you would have known how to brand him with everlasting infamy!

S. C. HILLER