



DELPHI
CLASSICS

Robert Bridges

Complete Poetical Works

DELPHI POETS SERIES

D E L P H I P O E T S S E R I E S

Robert Bridges

(1844-1930)



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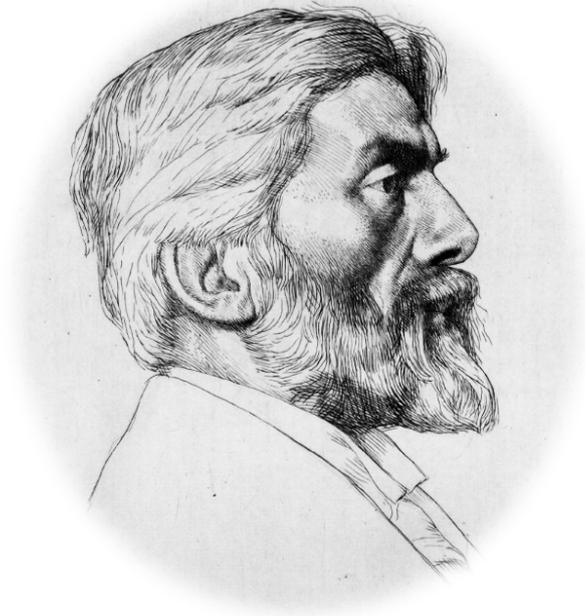
Robert Bridges

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Version 1

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Robert Bridges - Delphi Poets Series

First published in the United Kingdom in 2023 by Delphi Classics.

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ISBN: 978 1 80170 094 8

Delphi Classics

is an imprint of

Delphi Publishing Ltd

Hastings, East Sussex

United Kingdom

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www.delphiclassics.com

NOTE



When reading poetry on an eReader, it is advisable to use a small font size and landscape mode, which will allow the lines of poetry to display correctly.

The Life and Poetry of Robert Bridges



Walmer, Kent — Robert Bridges' birthplace

Brief Introduction: Robert Bridges



In 1844 Robert Bridges was born at Walmer, Kent, the son of John Thomas Bridges and his wife Harriett Elizabeth, daughter of the Rev. Sir Robert Affleck, 4th Baronet. He was the fourth son and eighth child. After his father's death his mother married again to John Edward Nassau Molesworth, vicar of Rochdale, where the family relocated to. Bridges was educated at Eton College, followed by Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He went on to study medicine in London at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, intending to practise until the age of forty and then retire to write poetry. He served as a casualty physician at his teaching hospital, where he made a series of highly critical remarks about the Victorian medical establishment, and subsequently as a full physician to the Great (later Royal) Northern Hospital. He also worked as a physician for the Hospital for Sick Children.

Alas, lung disease forced Bridges to retire in 1882, and from that point on he devoted himself to his writing and research. Still, his literary work had started long before his retirement, with his first collection of poems being published in 1873. A classicist at heart, Bridges was in many ways the archetypal Victorian, who remained apart from the aesthetic movements of his day. Although he published several long poems and poetic dramas, his reputation rests upon the lyrics collected in *Shorter Poems* (1890-1894). *New Verse* (1925) features experiments using a metre based on syllables rather than accents. His experimentation with eighteenth-century classical forms culminated in *The Testament of Beauty*, generally regarded as his masterpiece. Bridges began the long philosophical poem on Christmas Day, 1924, with 14 lines of what he referred to as "loose Alexandrines." He set the piece aside until 1926, when the death of his daughter Margaret prompted him to resume work as a way to ease his grief. *The Testament of Beauty* was published in October 1929, one day after his 85th birthday and six months before his death.

He succeeded Alfred Austin as Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom in 1913 and was active in the Society for Pure English, which was founded mainly through his efforts. This organisation of literary figures and linguistic scholars sought to preserve the "purity" of the English language. He had an important friendship and correspondence with Gerard Manley Hopkins and his publication of Hopkins' poems is considered a major contribution to English literature.

After his illness and a trip to Italy, Bridges moved with his mother to Yattendon in Berkshire, where he met and married Monica Waterhouse, the daughter of the famous architect Alfred A. Waterhouse. Their children included the poet Elizabeth Daryush. It was during his time at Yattendon, from 1882 to 1904, that he wrote most of his best-known lyrics, as well as eight verse plays and two masques. In 1902 Bridges' wife Monica and daughter Margaret became seriously ill, and he decided to move from Yattendon to a healthier climate. The family lived in several temporary homes, spent a year in Switzerland, and finally settled again in England at Chilswell House, which Bridges had designed and which was built on Boar's Hill, overlooking Oxford University. Bridges remained there until his death in 1930.

The traumatic events of the First World War, including the wounding of his son, Edward, had a sobering effect on Bridges' poetry. He composed fiercely patriotic poems and letters, and in 1915 edited a volume of prose and poetry, *The Spirit of*

Man, intended to appeal to readers living in war times. Bridges remained a bestselling poet throughout the 1920's.

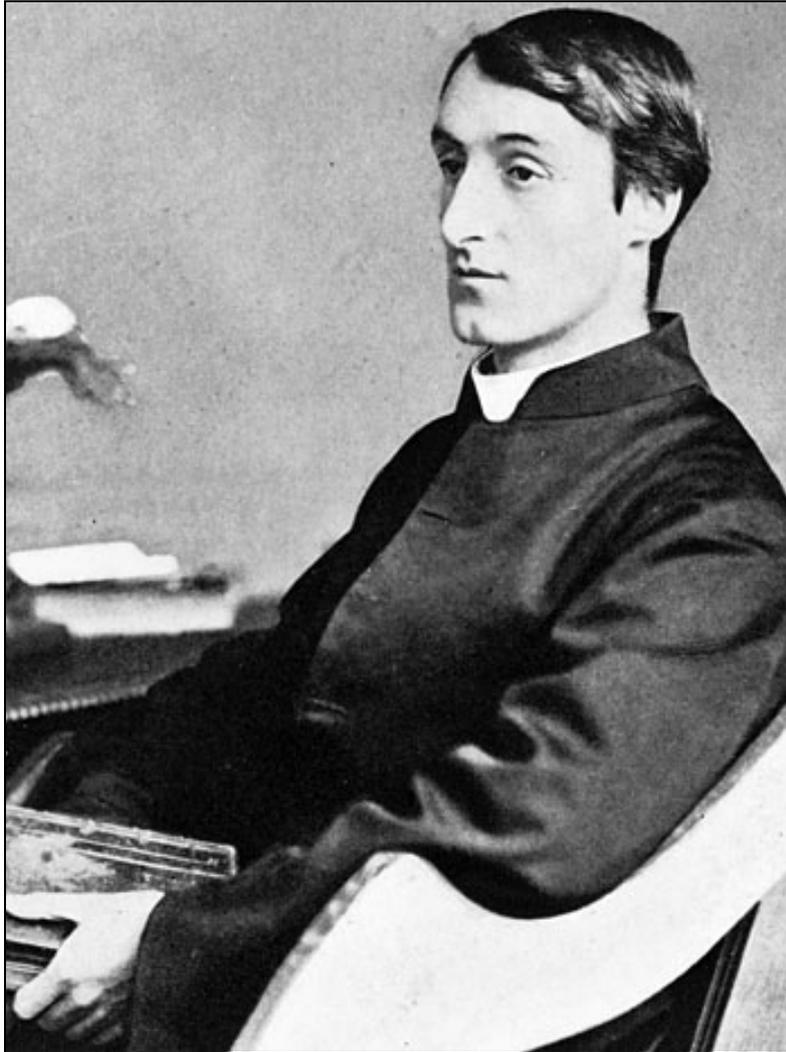
As a poet Bridges stands somewhat apart from the current of modern English verse. His work had a great influence on a select circle, by its restraint, purity, precision and delicacy, yet strength of expression. It represents a distinct theory of prosody and his devout faith underpinned much of his work. Despite being made Poet Laureate in 1913, he was never a very well-known poet and he only achieved great popularity shortly before his death with *The Testament of Beauty*. However, his verse evoked an ardent response from several great British composers of the time. Among those to set his poems to music were Hubert Parry, Gustav Holst and later Gerald Finzi.



Bridges, c. 1889



Eton College, attended by Bridges in his youth



Bridges' friend from Oxford days, Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) — Hopkins' posthumous fame was established by Bridges.

THE GROWTH OF LOVE.

A POEM

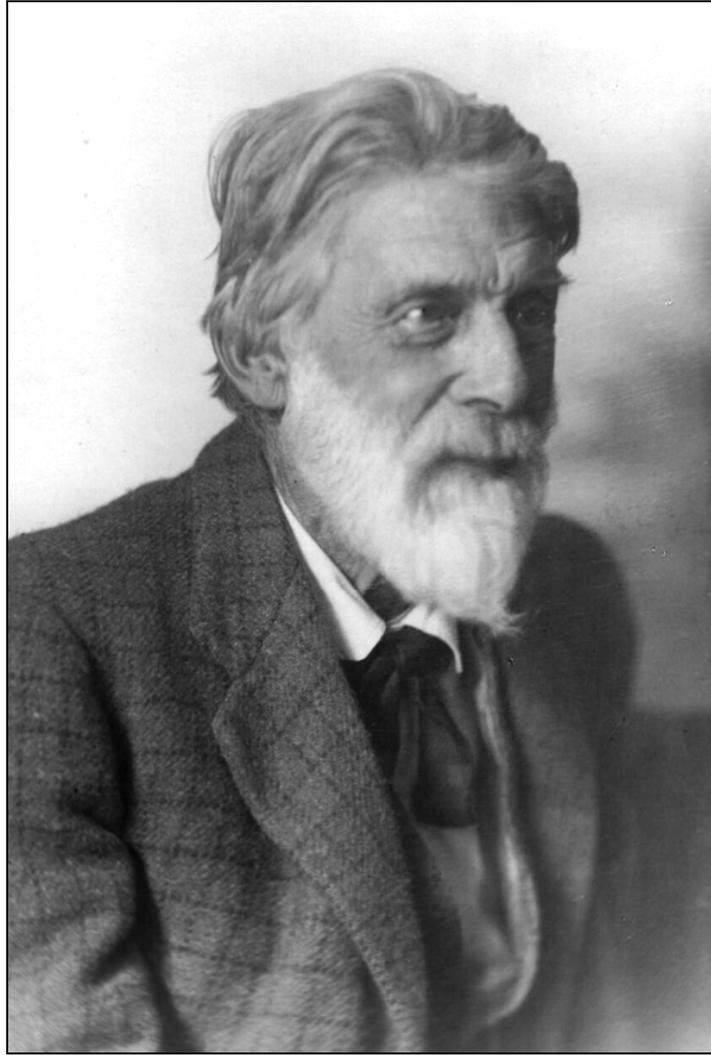
IN TWENTY-FOUR SONNETS.

EWD. BUMPUS,
HOLBORN BARS, LONDON.

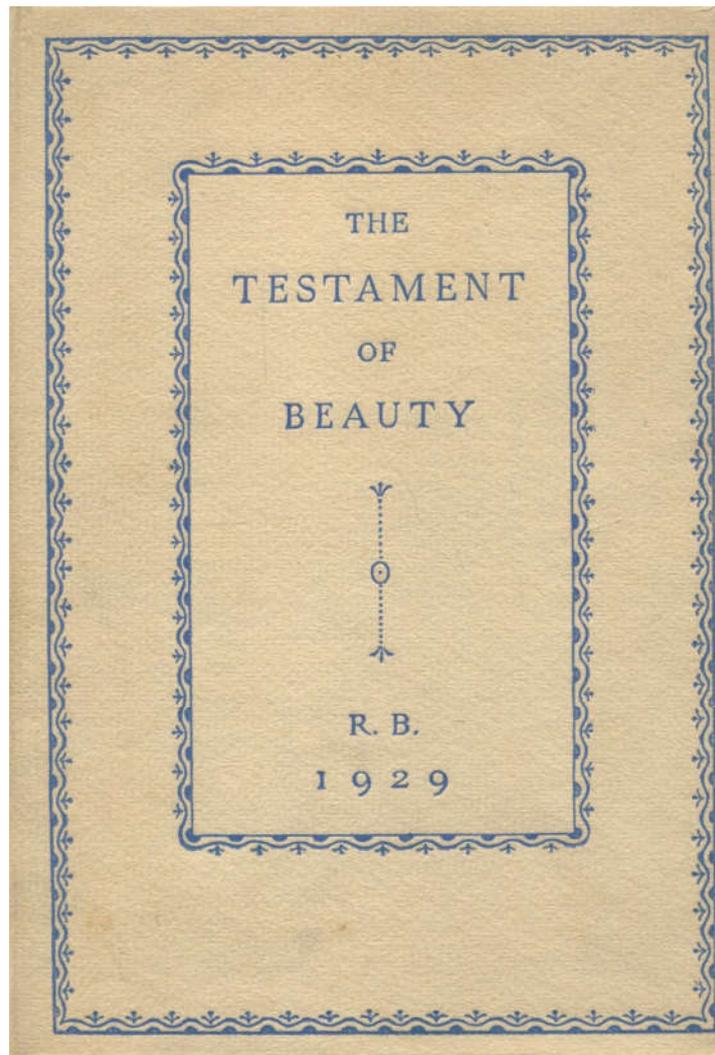
1876.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

The first edition title page of Bridges' first published poem



Bridges, 1923



The first edition of Bridges' masterpiece, 'The Testament of Beauty', 1929

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