

phases and especially in religion and art. Hence, in this poem, in addition to the study of Lippo's character, we have an abstract question.

Italian art, up to this time, had been devoted to religious subjects and it was deemed irreverent to make a painting realistic. It could not be right to represent the Virgin and the Christ-child as ordinary beings of flesh and blood. Only so much of realism, whether in drawing of the body and its drapery or in landscape background was allowed as seemed necessary for suggesting the spiritual emotion or setting forth the story.

The Renaissance, however, brought a new sense of the beauty of the natural world and in this poem Fra Lippo is made an exponent of this new development in art. We must be on our guard against thinking that the view of Art expressed in this poem is wholly the view of Browning. It is his method to shew one aspect of his theory of things at a time and thus to stimulate thought.

We shall now proceed to the study of the poem. The scene is laid in Florence. Lippo has been seized on the streets after midnight by the city-guard and is being rather roughly handled. His words, "What's to blame? You think you see a Monk," indicate surprise of the guards at their having arrested a man dressed in the garb of a Monk and the words, "Aha! you know your letters?" indicate likely the approach of the captain of the guard. Lippo then proceeds to tell them who he is and when he gives the name of Cosimo de Medici as his patron he gets more civil treatment.

The scene starts the artist-instinct of the man. The face of one of the guards is that of "Judas to a tittle." He would like another guard's face for "the slave that holds John Baptist's head adangle by the hair with one hand and his weapon in the other, yet unwiped."

The captain of the guard has heard of Lippo's work as a painter and the

latter is in a communicative frame of mind. He will tell the captain his story. He has been working for the great man "apainting saints, and saints, and saints," but it is the time of spring and the nights, when "bands roam the town and sing out carnival," are come. One of these bands pass under his window with hurry of feet, with music and whiffs of song. Lippo affirms that flesh and blood was what he was made of, and hence he could do nothing else but climb out of his window an follow after. It was just when he was about to return for a little sleep before getting up to work again at "Jerome knocking at his poor old breast" the guards seized him. There is fine humor in this contrast of Lippo, with his keen enjoyment of pleasure, spending his days apainting saints like Jerome.

The captain still shews that he does not think Lippo's midnight rollicking fit conduct for a Monk. And so Lippo proceeds to shew him how it comes about. He tells the story of his life, how he starved on the streets as a child (an experience, however, which sharpened his senses) and, how after an eight years' experience of this kind he at last found refuge in a monastery and took an oath to "renounce this very miserable world." Here he soon showed a genius for painting which attracted the Prior's notice and gave him hope that Lippo, as a great painter, might some day bring honor to their order. He therefore allows the boy to daub away on the walls of the monastery. Lippo tells us the figures he drew. In the lines which describe the scenes at the confessional Browning shows wonderful power in depicting external circumstances and situations. The Monks praise Lippo's work for its truth to life, but the Prior and the learned soon began to shake their heads and ere long Lippo's "triumph's straw-fire flared and flunked." They lectured him and even now, he says,