

unveil the picture, express the same feeling, and hence he says, "Fra Pandolf, by design" that is, he gives the name of a famous artist whose character was above reproach. The fact that the duke keeps his picture veiled and allows no one but himself to put by the curtain, is a further indication of the selfishness of his nature. He has a dog-in-the-manger spirit.

The surprised look in the stranger's face gives Browning the opportunity to begin the delineation of the duchess' character. "It was not my presence only," the duke says, "which called that spot of joy in the duchess' cheek, but some trifling pretty compliments of Fra Pandolf, '—courtesy, she thought, and cause enough for calling up that spot of joy. She had a heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad, too easily impressed.'" These and a few succeeding lines give us the duchess' character, full-formed. Her nature was sweet, pure, and unselfish, and got its happiness from the common scenes of life about her. She loved dumb animals, and the beauties of nature, and she felt and expressed gratitude and delight for the slightest service done her.

And now in juxtaposition and contrast to the duchess' character, the duke gives his own some additional touches. This indiscriminate scattering of approving looks and words by the duchess did not please her lord. His favor at her breast, the gift of a nine hundred years' old name, should have stood in a higher class than the gifts of others, yet he would not stoop to show her that she should recognize this fact. She might answer him and get the best of the argument, but even if she remained silent it would be a lowering of his pride and dignity to make any explanation of what he thought her duty was.

"O sir! she smiled, no doubt, when e'er I passed her, but who passed without much the same smile? This grew, I gave commands, then all

smiles stopped together. There she stands as if alive."

In these lines we reach the climax of the poem. What a picture of a life's tragedy do these short, abrupt sentences paint for us! Shakespeare in his "Othello" has represented for us the life of Desdemona in the process of being literally crushed out, but the slow breaking of the duchess' heart in Browning's poem is not capable of representation in drama or novel. In the abrupt sentences, however, which we have quoted, the whole story is given to the imagination.

These lines complete the delineation of the duchess' character. Browning now proceeds to give the finishing touches to that of the duke. He, in the same matter-of-fact tone which he had used in discussing his dead wife's picture, now turns to another subject, a subject which the unveiling of the picture had interrupted. The duke is negotiating for another marriage, and the stranger is the representative of a certain wealthy count whose daughter he desires to wed. It is, he assures his visitor, the fair daughter's self which is his object, but still he does not expect that any just claim of his for dowry will be disallowed. Here we get another glimpse into the hard and mercenary spirit of the man.

As the duke and the stranger start to go down to the company below, the former draws attention to "Neptune taming a sea horse, thought a rarity." Putting this and previous facts together, we get a complete idea of the duke's character. He is a member of the Italian nobility, possibly of the period of the renaissance, a period in which the secular nobility and churchmen were patrons of art, and virtuosi in judging it, at least from the standpoint of external beauty of form and color, but seldom penetrating to its inner spiritual significance. The lives they led made them selfish and destroyed natural human feelings. They discharged no public duties, and had no interest in the life of the common