

"Italy" ["My Last Duchess"]

By Robert Browning

*Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and markup
by Students and Staff at the University of Virginia, Tonya Howe*

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BELLS AND POMEGRANATES.
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BY ROBERT BROWNING,
AUTHOR OF "PARACELSUS."

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ITALY AND FRANCE.

I.--ITALY. ["My Last Duchess"]

1 That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
2 Looking as if she were alive. I call
3 That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
4 Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
5 Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said
6 "Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
7 Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
8 The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
9 But to myself they turned (since none puts by
10 The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
11 And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
12 How such a glance came there; so, not the first
13 Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
14 Her husband's presence only, called that spot
15 Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
16 Frà Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
17 "Over my Lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
18 "Must never hope to reproduce the faint
19 "Half-flush that dies along her throat"; such stuff
20 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
21 For calling up that spot of joy. She had
22 A heart . . how shall I say? . . too soon made glad,
23 Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
24 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
25 Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
26 The dropping of the daylight in the West,
27 The bough of cherries some officious fool
28 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
29 She rode with round the terrace--all and each
30 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
31 Or blush, at least. She thanked men,--good; but thanked
32 Somehow . . I know not how . . as if she ranked
33 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
34 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
35 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
36 In speech--(which I have not)--to make your will
37 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this

38 "Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
39 "Or there exceed the mark"--and if she let
40 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
41 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
42 --E'en then would be some stooping; and I chuse
43 Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
44 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
45 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
46 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
47 As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet
48 The company below, then. I repeat,
49 The Count your Master's known munificence
50 Is ample warrant that no just pretence
51 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
52 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
53 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
54 Together down, Sir! Notice Neptune, tho',
55 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
56 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me.