

the messenger takes a seat and watches the portrait closely. He is struck by the cheerfulness reflected in the face and the eyes of the portrait. He turns back, and asks the Duke what caused the Duchess to burst into that cheerfulness at the time when her portrait was being painted.

A feeling of the husband's jealousy and a sense of pride of noble birth capture the Duke's soul. He gravely points out to the messenger that he got the portrait painted by a monk, not by an ordinary painter. It means that the portrait is a private thing, not open to the view of everybody. He adds that he seldom or never shows it to strangers like the messenger. Yet whoever has been shown the portrait, he has been struck by that cheerfulness on her face. Some former visitors have also asked him the question put to him by the messenger. The Duke then adds that his last Duchess was very light-hearted. So she burst into gaiety, even when somebody praised her beauty indirectly. The cause of her cheerfulness in the portrait is probably a courteous remark of the painter, Fra Pandolf. So her face flushed with modesty and cheerfulness. For she was impressed and pleased very easily.

Commenting on the Duchess's nature, he further says that her mind made no distinction between a petty gift and a great one. For example, she was equally pleased when he presented her with a royal ornament, and when a foolish servant brought her a bough of cherries from the orchard. Almost every act of courtesy would elicit from her a word of approval of the same kind. Besides, she was in the habit of thanking people for every service done to her. And she thanked the servants as warmly as she thanked him (i.e. the Duke). She had no particular consideration for his royal name which has a nine hundred year old princely reputation attached to it.

Besides, she was not willing to be instructed by him. If he ever lowered himself to point out her faults to her, she would defend her silly conduct, with arguments. So he never chose to instruct her. Her worst fault was that she smiled at everybody. When her habit grew on her, he commanded that she should be stopped from smiling at every man. Her smiles stopped altogether. Such was his last Duchess. The Duke then tells the messenger that the Count will not deny him his just claim for a suitable dowry. He then draws the messenger's attention to a bronze statue of Neptune riding a sea-horse. The statue stands near the staircase. He adds that a sculptor called Claus of Innsbruck represented it in bronze, for him.

The poem comes to an end.