

A Pretty Woman

BY ROBERT BROWNING

I.

That fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers!

II.

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet!

III

You like us for a glance, you know- -
For a word's sake
Or a sword's sake,
All's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

IV.

And in turn we make you ours, we say- -
You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V.

All's our own, to make the most of, Sweet- -

Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet!

VI.

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
in a mortar- -for you could not, Sweet!

VII.

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there:
Be its beauty
Its sole duty!
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

VIII.

And while the face lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX.

As,- -why must one, for the love foregone,
Scout mere liking?
Thunder-striking
Earth,- -the heaven, we looked above for, gone!

X.

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
Love with liking?

Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey-bee?

XI.

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
If love grew there
'Twould undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

XII.

Is the creature too imperfect,
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye!

XIII.

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
Just perfection- -
Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV.

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
Into tinder,
And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

XV.

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
Your love-fancies!
- -A sick man sees

Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

XVI.

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose,- -
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose:

XVII.

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals,- -
Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

XVIII.

Then how grace a rose? I know a way!
Leave it, rather.
Must you gather?
Smell, kiss, wear it- -at last, throw away!