

Cymbeline

by William Shakespeare

Act V, sc. 5. Line 152 – Verse (intercut)

Iachimo

Upon a time,--unhappy was the clock
That struck the hour!--it was in Rome,--accursed
The mansion where!--'twas at a feast,--O, would
Our viands had been poison'd, or at least
Those which I heaved to head!--the good Posthumus--
What should I say? he was too good to be
Where ill men were; and was the best of all
Amongst the rarest of good ones,--sitting sadly,
Hearing us praise our loves of Italy
For beauty that made barren the swell'd boast
Of him that best could speak, for feature, laming
The shrine of Venus, or straight-pight Minerva.
Postures beyond brief nature, for condition,
A shop of all the qualities that man
Loves woman for, besides that hook of wiving,
Fairness which strikes the eye--

CYMBELINE

I stand on fire:

Come to the matter.

IACHIMO

All too soon I shall,
Unless thou wouldst grieve quickly. This Posthumus,
Most like a noble lord in love and one
That had a royal lover, took his hint;

And, not dispraising whom we praised,--therein
He was as calm as virtue--he began
His mistress' picture; which by his tongue
being made,
And then a mind put in't, either our brags
Were crack'd of kitchen-trolls, or his description
Proved us unspeaking sots.

CYMBELINE

Nay, nay, to the purpose.

IACHIMO

Your daughter's chastity--there it begins.
He spake of her, as Dian had hot dreams,
And she alone were cold: whereat I, wretch,
Made scruple of his praise; and wager'd with him
Pieces of gold 'gainst this which then he wore
Upon his honour'd finger, to attain
In suit the place of's bed and win this ring
By hers and mine adultery. He, true knight,
No lesser of her honour confident
Than I did truly find her, stakes this ring;
And would so, had it been a carbuncle
Of Phoebus' wheel, and might so safely, had it
Been all the worth of's car. Away to Britain
Post I in this design: well may you, sir,
Remember me at court; where I was taught
Of your chaste daughter the wide difference
'Twixt amorous and villanous. Being thus quench'd

Of hope, not longing, mine Italian brain
'Gan in your duller Britain operate
Most vilely; for my vantage, excellent:
And, to be brief, my practise so prevail'd,
That I return'd with simular proof enough
To make the noble Leonatus mad,
By wounding his belief in her renown
With tokens thus, and thus; averting notes
Of chamber-hanging, pictures, this her bracelet,--
O cunning, how I got it!--nay, some marks
Of secret on her person, that he could not
But think her bond of chastity quite crack'd,
I having ta'en the forfeit. Whereupon--
Methinks, I see him now--