FAIR Isabel, poor simple Isabel!
Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love’s eye!
They could not in the self-same mansion dwell
Without some stir of heart, some malady;
They could not sit at meals but feel how well                    5
It soothed each to be the other by;
They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep
But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

With every morn their love grew tenderer,
With every eve deeper and tenderer still;              10
He might not in house, field, or garden stir,
But her full shape would all his seeing fill;
And his continual voice was pleasanter
To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill;
Her lute-string gave an echo of his name,               15
She spoilt her half-done broidery with the same.

Isabel’s digging:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Soon she turn’d up a soiled glove, whereon |  |
|   Her silk had play’d in purple phantasies, | *370* |
| She kiss’d it with a lip more chill than stone, |  |
|   And put it in her bosom, where it dries |  |
| And freezes utterly unto the bone |  |
|   Those dainties made to still an infant’s cries: |  |
| Then ’gan she work again; nor stay’d her care, | *375* |
| But to throw back at times her veiling hair. |  |
|   |  |
| That old nurse stood beside her wondering, |  |
|   Until her heart felt pity to the core |  |
| At sight of such a dismal labouring, |  |
|   And so she kneeled, with her locks all hoar, | *380* |
| And put her lean hands to the horrid thing: |  |
|   Three hours they labour’d at this travail sore; |  |
| At last they felt the kernel of the grave, |  |
| And Isabella did not stamp and rave. |  |

Interruptions: 12-13

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Were they unhappy then?—It cannot be— |  |
|   Too many tears for lovers have been shed, | *90* |
| Too many sighs give we to them in fee, |  |
|   Too much of pity after they are dead, |  |
| Too many doleful stories do we see, |  |
|   Whose matter in bright gold were best be read; |  |
| Except in such a page where Theseus’ spouse | *95* |
| Over the pathless waves towards him bows. |  |
|   |  |
| But, for the general award of love, |  |
|   The little sweet doth kill much bitterness; |  |
| Though Dido silent is in under-grove, |  |
|   And Isabella’s was a great distress, | *100* |
| Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian clove |  |
|   Was not embalm’d, this truth is not the less— |  |
| Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers, |  |
| Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers. |  |

19-20

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| O eloquent and famed Boccaccio! | *145* |
|   Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon, |  |
| And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow, |  |
|   And of thy roses amorous of the moon, |  |
| And of thy lilies, that do paler grow |  |
|   Now they can no more hear thy ghittern’s tune, | *150* |
| For venturing syllables that ill beseem |  |
| The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme. |  |
|   |  |
| Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale |  |
|   Shall move on soberly, as it is meet; |  |
| There is no other crime, no mad assail | *155* |
|   To make old prose in modern rhyme more sweet: |  |
| But it is done—succeed the verse or fail— |  |
|   To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet; |  |
| To stead thee as a verse in English tongue, |  |
| An echo of thee in the north-wind sung. | *160* |
|

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 49Ah! wherefore all this wormy circumstance? |  |
|   Why linger at the yawning tomb so long? |  |
| O for the gentleness of old Romance, |  |
|   The simple plaining of a minstrel’s song! |  |
| Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance, |  |
|   For here, in truth, it doth not well belong | *390* |
| To speak:—O turn thee to the very tale, |  |
| And taste the music of that vision pale. |  |

14-16 the brothersWith her two brothers this fair lady dwelt, | *105* |
|   Enriched from ancestral merchandize, |  |
| And for them many a weary hand did swelt |  |
|   In torched mines and noisy factories, |  |
| And many once proud-quiver’d loins did melt |  |
|   In blood from stinging whip;—with hollow eyes | *110* |
| Many all day in dazzling river stood, |  |
| To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood. |  |
|   |  |
| For them the Ceylon diver held his breath, |  |
|   And went all naked to the hungry shark; |  |
| For them his ears gush’d blood; for them in death | *115* |
|   The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark |  |
| Lay full of darts; for them alone did seethe |  |
|   A thousand men in troubles wide and dark: |  |
| Half-ignorant, they turn’d an easy wheel, |  |
| That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel. | *120* |
|   |  |
| [Why](https://www.bartleby.com/126/1000.html%22%20%5Cl%20%2238.121) were they proud? Because their marble founts |  |
|   Gush’d with more pride than do a wretch’s tears?— |  |
| Why were they proud? Because fair orange-mounts |  |
|   Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs?— |  |
| Why were they proud? Because red-lin’d accounts | *125* |
|   Were richer than the songs of Grecian years?— |  |
| Why were they proud? again we ask aloud, |  |
| Why in the name of Glory were they proud? |  |