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FOR
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THE COMEDY
OF THE
MERCHANT OF VENICE

BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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MERCHANT OF VENICE

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



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MER. VENICE.

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INTRODUCTION.

ALTHOUGH "The Merchant of Venice" was written and on the stage at an earlier date, possibly as early as 1594, it appeared for the first time in print in 1600, two editions having been published in that year. We know nothing of any other edition of the comedy till it is met with in the collection of Shakespeare's plays published seven years after his death, known as the "First Folio," or "Folio of 1623." This is the volume to which modern editors and commentators look mainly for the authentic text of the poet's dramas.

The plots on which the genius of Shakespeare wrought in the production of his plays were rarely original with him. Both the story of the bond and that of the caskets, which occur in "The Merchant of Venice," were old and accessible to him at the time that play was written. They are found, one or both of them, in one shape or other, in the "Gesta Romanorum," compiled in the latter half of the thirteenth century; in "Il Pecorone," a novel by Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, composed in 1378; in Gower's "Confessio Amantis;" in the ballad of "Gernutus;" and in "The Jew and Ptolome," a play mentioned by Stephen Gosson in his "Schoole of Abuse," put forth in 1579, as a drama free from the grossness and immoral tendency of so many of the plays on the contemporary stage, against which licentiousness his book was directed. There is little doubt that Shakespeare had from this play hints for the framing of "The Merchant of Venice."

As Jews were banished from England in 1290, and were not readmitted till Cromwell's time (1650), it may well be asked how it was that this antiquated story of the Jew and "the pound

of flesh" should have been made the groundwork of a drama written for the stage, and to interest an audience of Shakespeare's day. It seems, however, that, notwithstanding the interdiction, there were Jews in England in Elizabeth's reign, and at least one holding a high official position. In a paper in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for February, 1880, Mr. S. L. Lee tells the story of a certain Dr. Roderigo Lopez, a Spanish Jew, who in 1559 was sworn physician to the Queen, and was subsequently tried, convicted, and in 1594 finally executed, on the charge of being bribed by the King of Spain to poison her. That popular prejudice against the race had not died out, or was easily revived, was manifested at his trial. Coke, the solicitor-general, laid special stress on the fact that Lopez was a Jew. "This perjured and murdering traitor and Jewish doctor," he said, "is worse than Judas himself." His judges spoke of him as "that vile Jew;" and "wily and covetous," "mercenary and corrupt," were the mildest of the epithets that assailed him. At the gallows the doctor made an endeavor to address the vast mob that had collected to see him die; but his first utterances were interrupted with the cruelest jeers, and, as the bolt fell, the people shouted, "He is a Jew!"

It may be added, that the intense excitement produced in London by this trial probably influenced Shakespeare to write "The Merchant of Venice" at this time, that it might be brought out at his theater, when it would be an attractive card.

At the opening of the play, to outline it briefly, Antonio, one of the "merchant princes" of Venice, conversing with two of his friends, Salarino and Salanio, admits a feeling of sadness, which they had noticed, but he can assign no reason for it; when Bassanio, Lorenzo, and Gratiano enter. Bassanio, a young gentleman of Venice, somewhat more extravagant in his style of living than his income justifies, is already indebted to Antonio, and having been to much expense in prosecuting his suit for the hand of Portia, a noble heiress, "richly left," living at Belmont near by, now comes to ask further aid from his friend. This Antonio

is glad to render, but having no ready money, his means being largely with his ventures at sea, suggests that they try what his credit can do to raise the needed sum. In the second scene, at Portia's villa in Belmont, a conversation between Portia and Nerissa (her waiting maid) develops the device of the caskets. By the terms of her father's will, Portia's choice of husband is constrained; and she is to accept the man who, of three chests, — made of gold, silver, and lead respectively, — selects the one containing her picture. With the third scene we are again in Venice, and find Bassanio and Shylock (a rich Jew) discussing the terms of a loan from the latter by Bassanio, for which Antonio is to be bound. While they are talking, Antonio himself comes in. As he is one who lends money without charging interest, and is withal a Christian holding the Jew in much disdain, Shylock bears him no good will. Dissembling his feelings, however, Shylock offers to lend him three thousand ducats, with "no doit" of interest, but in "merry sport" to take his bond, that, if the sum be not repaid on a certain day, the forfeit shall be a pound of flesh to be taken from what part of Antonio's body it pleases the lender. Bassanio objects; but Antonio, confident that his ships will come in long before the time of payment, readily agrees to the proposition; says there is much kindness in the Jew; and they part, to meet at the notary's to execute the bond.

In the first scene of the second act we are at Portia's house. The Prince of Morocco has arrived to try his fortune with the caskets, but after some conversation with that lady the trial is delayed. Returning to Venice, there is a humorous scene of Launcelot Gobbo debating with himself whether or not he shall run away from his master, Shylock, and serve Bassanio, which gentleman coming in, he is accepted. Gratiano now enters; and his earnest request to accompany Bassanio in a proposed visit to Belmont is granted, with a caution that he "allay with some cold drops of modesty his skipping spirit," for Gratiano is a "gay companion," somewhat "rude and bold of voice." "Now follow

in rapid succession Jessica's preparation secretly to forsake her father, Shylock, in order to marry Lorenzo; Shylock leaving his house to sup with Bassanio; and the masque prepared by Lorenzo, Gratiano, and Salanio, under cover of which Jessica, disguised as a boy, shall be able to make her escape." In the seventh scene we are back at Belmont, where the Prince of Morocco, after reading and commenting on the inscriptions, chooses the golden casket, and, finding within it a death's-head, takes leave of Portia with a heavy heart. At Venice, in the eighth scene, we learn from Salarino and Salanio that the wrecking of one of Antonio's richly laden ships is reported; and it is feared that it will go hard with him if the bond is forfeited to Shylock, who, we are told, is distracted by the elopement of his daughter, and the loss of the ducats and jewels she has taken with her. In the ninth scene, at Belmont, the Prince of Arragon makes choice of the silver casket, and is disappointed. As he goes out, a messenger announces the approach of Bassanio.

The third act opens on a street in Venice. Salanio and Salarino have news confirming rumors of the loss of Antonio's vessel; and while deploring his misfortune, Shylock enters, still harping on his daughter and his ducats, and his bad match with Antonio, of whose ill luck he has heard. His friend Tubal, coming in, details to him, in a tantalizing way, reports of the extravagance of his daughter on the one hand, and the certain bankruptcy of Antonio on the other. In the second scene we meet Bassanio, Gratiano, and Portia in her house, where, after she intimates to Bassanio that she would gladly tell him how to choose were she not then forsworn, he finally opens the leaden casket, takes out her picture, and, turning, claims her with a loving kiss. In the mean time Gratiano has been pressing his suit with the maid Nerissa, and is so far successful, that she has consented to become his wife in case Bassanio is fortunate in his choice of caskets. Their mutual congratulations are interrupted by the entrance of Lorenzo and Jessica, together with Salanio, who brings a letter to Bassanio from Antonio, communicating

the loss of his ships, the cruelty of his creditors, and the forfeiture of his bond; stating that all debts were cleared between them, but expressing a wish that before he died he might see his friend. Portia, learning the amount and nature of the bond, and that Antonio was bound on Bassanio's account, urges him but "first to go with her to church and call her wife," then speed at once to Venice, taking with him gold to pay the petty debt twenty times over, and, when paid, to bring his friend with him to Belmont. Again at Venice, in the third scene, we find Shylock, Salarino, and, in custody of a jailer, Antonio, who, having been arrested by Shylock, is petitioning for an abatement of his creditor's rigorous course. But the Jew will not listen, and upbraids the officer for bringing his prisoner abroad. In the fourth scene, at Belmont, Portia tells Lorenzo, that, in the absence of their husbands (Gratiano has accompanied Bassanio to Venice), Nerissa and herself will abide in seclusion at a monastery in the neighborhood, and that she would leave the care and management of her household in his charge till her return. Portia then dispatches a messenger to her cousin, Dr. Bellario, a famous lawyer of Padua, with instructions to the servant to bring any notes and garments he should receive from the doctor to a named station on the road from Belmont to Venice; and, having disclosed to Nerissa somewhat of her design to take part in Antonio's trial, they enter a coach and "haste away."

The fourth act brings us to the culmination of the play, — the trial scene at Venice, Shylock suing for the enforcement of the penalty of Antonio's forfeited bond. The Jew, the merchant, Bassanio, Gratiano, and others are in the court. The Duke, presiding, calls Shylock before him, and hopes he will have commiseration on the state of the royal merchant, and not only loose the forfeiture of the bond, but forgive a portion of the principal of the debt. But Shylock is unyielding. Bassanio offers him twice the amount of the bond, which he refuses, demanding the penalty. Nerissa, habited as a clerk, comes in, bearing a message from Bellario, who has been sent for to determine the case,

in which he states his inability to attend, but strongly recommends a young lawyer with whom he has been in consultation, who is thoroughly informed of the matter in controversy, and who would appear in his stead. Portia now enters in the guise of a doctor of laws, and replying to a question of the Duke, that she is well advised of the cause before the court, the trial proceeds. Plaintiff and defendant are pointed out to her. She asks Antonio if he confesses the bond, which he does. She then says the Jew must be merciful, and makes an urgent appeal in that behalf, admitting that in strict justice, sentence must be given against the merchant. Shylock, deaf to all prayers, is inexorable in his demand for justice and his bond. Judgment is about to be pronounced in his favor, when Portia, reëxamining the deed, announces that it gives him "no jot of blood;" tells him to take his pound of flesh, but if in the cutting it he sheds one drop of Christian blood, or if it weighs more or less than a just pound, he dies, and his lands and goods are confiscate to the state. Confounded by this decision, the Jew is now willing to receive the amount of his overdue debt, but this, having been already tendered and refused in open court, it is held, he cannot claim, and can have only the forfeiture with its risks. Foiled in the cruel purpose of his suit, and half crazed by the loss of his money, Shylock is leaving the room in disgust, when he is stayed by Portia, by whom he is told, that under Venetian law, if it is proved that an alien attempts the life of any citizen,

"The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive
Shall seize one half his goods; the other half
Comes to the privy coffer of the state;
And the offender's life lies in the mercy
Of the Duke only, 'gainst all other voice;"

that he stands in this predicament before the court; and that he has no other hope than the clemency of the Duke, who pardons him his life, decrees one half his wealth to Antonio, the other half to come to the state. Antonio intercedes with the court

to quit the fine for one half the goods, so Shylock will let him (Antonio) have

“The other half in use, to render it,
Upon his death, unto the gentleman
That lately stole his daughter;
Two things provided more,— that for this favor
He presently become a Christian;
The other, that he do record a gift,
Here in the court, of all he dies possess'd,
Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.”

More dead than alive, Shylock says he is content, has permission to leave the court, and asks that the deed be sent to him for signature. Bassanio now tenders Portia the three thousand ducats due to the Jew, which she does not accept, but, being pressed to receive something as a remembrance, would have a ring from his finger, which Bassanio, greatly embarrassed, refuses, protesting that it was placed there by his wife under a vow to “neither sell nor give nor lose it:” but overcome by a sense of shame, after Portia leaves the court, he sends it to her by Gratiano, from whom Nerissa begs the ring he had from her.

The fifth act is a delightful evening scene in the garden at Belmont, where the music, and the honeymoon talk of Lorenzo and Jessica, are broken off by the return of Portia and Nerissa, followed immediately by the arrival of Bassanio, Antonio, and Gratiano. Nerissa soon makes it convenient to discover that Gratiano's ring is missing, and is sure that some woman had it; he insisting that he gave it the judge's clerk, “a little scrubbed boy no higher than herself.” The quarrel is noticed by Portia, who sides with Nerissa, and is certain her lord would not part with the ring she had given him for all the wealth of the world. Bassanio, confused, confesses; and after much protestation and entreaty on his part, and assumed indignation on hers, Portia produces the ring, explains everything, delivers Lorenzo the deed of gift from Shylock, tells Antonio she has true news that three of his ships were safely in, and the play closes with all happy at Belmont.

Of SHYLOCK, Thomas Campbell remarks (as quoted in Furness's *Variorem Shakespear*), "In the picture of the Jew there is not the tragic grandeur of Richard III., but there is a similar force of mind, and the same subtlety of intellect, though it is less selfish. In point of courage, I would give the palm to Shylock, for he was an ill-used man and the champion of an oppressed race: nor is he a hypocrite, like Richard. In fact, Shakespeare, whilst he lends himself to the prejudices of Christians against Jews, draws so philosophical a picture of the energetic Jewish character, that he traces the blame of its faults to the iniquity of the Christian world. Shylock's arguments are more logical than those of his opponents, and the latter overcome him only by a legal quibble. But he is a usurer, and lives on the interest of lent moneys; and what but Christian persecution forced him to live by these means? But he is also inhuman and revengeful. Why? Because they called him dog, and spat upon his Jewish gaberdine. They voided their rheum upon him, and he in return wished to void his revenge upon them. All this is natural, and Shylock has nothing unnatural about him." Hazlitt (*Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*) says, "Shylock is a good hater, a man no less 'sinned against than sinning.' If he carries his revenge too far, yet he has strong grounds for the 'lodged hate' he bears Antonio, which he explains with equal force of eloquence and reason. . . . There is a strong, deep, and quick sense of justice mixed up with the gall and bitterness of his resentment. The constant apprehension of being burnt alive, plundered, banished, reviled, and trampled on, might be supposed to sour the most forbearing nature, and to take something from that 'milk of human kindness' with which his persecutors contemplated his indignities. . . . In all his answers and retorts upon his adversaries, he has the best, not only of the argument, but of the question, reasoning on their own principles and practice. They are so far from allowing of any measure of equal dealing, of common justice or humanity between themselves and the Jew, that even when they come to ask a favor of him,

and Shylock reminds them that 'on such a day they spit upon him, another spurn'd him, another called him dog, and for these courtesies request he'll lend them so much moneys,' Antonio, his old enemy, instead of any acknowledgment of the shrewdness and justice of his remonstrance, . . . threatens a repetition of the same treatment. . . . After this, the appeal to the Jew's mercy, as if there were any common principle of right and wrong between them, is the rankest hypocrisy or the blindest prejudice."

Hazlitt is not so happy in his delineation of PORTIA, of whom Mrs. Jameson (*Characteristics of Women*) writes, "Portia is endowed with her own share of those delightful qualities which Shakespeare has lavished on many of his female characters, but, besides the dignity and tenderness which should distinguish her sex generally, she is individualized by qualities peculiar to herself, by her high mental powers, her enthusiasm of temperament, her decision of purpose, and her buoyancy of spirit. These are innate. She has other distinguishing qualities more external, and which are the result of circumstances in which she is placed. Thus she is the heiress of a princely name and countless wealth; a train of obedient pleasures wait round her; and from infancy she has breathed an atmosphere redolent of perfume and blandishment. Accordingly there is a commanding grace, a high-bred, airy elegance, a spirit of magnificence, in all that she does and says, as one to whom splendor had been familiar from her very birth. . . . She is full of penetrative wisdom, and genuine tenderness, and lively wit; but as she has never known want, or grief, or fear, or disappointment, her wisdom is without a touch of the somber or the sad; her affections are all mixed up with faith, hope, and joy; and her wit has not a particle of malevolence or causticity. . . . The sudden plan which she forms for the release of her husband's friend, her disguise, and her deportment as the young and learned doctor, would appear forced and improbable in any other woman, but in Portia are the simple and natural result of her character. The quickness with which she perceives the legal advantage which may be taken of the cir-

cumstances ; the journey to consult her learned cousin the doctor, Bellario ; the spirit of adventure with which she engages in the masquerading ; and the decision, firmness, and intelligence with which she executes her generous purpose, — are all in perfect keeping, and nothing appears forced : nothing is introduced merely for theatrical effect. But all the finest parts of Portia's character are brought to bear in the trial scene. . . . Her intellectual powers, her elevated sense of religion, her high honorable principles, her best feelings as a woman, are all displayed. . . . A prominent feature in Portia's character is that confiding buoyant spirit which mingles with all her thoughts and affections. . . . Portia's strength of intellect takes a natural tinge from the flush and bloom of her young and prosperous existence, and from her fervid imagination. In the casket scene she fears, indeed, the issue of the trial on which more than her life is hazarded ; but while she trembles, her hope is stronger than her fear. While Bassanio is contemplating the caskets, she suffers herself to dwell for one moment on the possibility of disappointment and misery. . . . Then immediately follows that revolution of feeling so beautifully characteristic of the hopeful, trusting, mounting spirit of this noble creature. . . . In the last act, Shylock and his machinations being dismissed from our thoughts, and the rest of the *dramatis personæ* assembled together at Belmont, all our interest and all our attention are riveted on Portia, and the conclusion leaves the most delightful impression on the fancy. The playful equivoque of the rings, the sportive trick she puts on her husband, and her thorough enjoyment of the jest, . . . show how little she was displeased by the sacrifice of the gift, and are all consistent with her bright and buoyant spirit."

Rev. John Hunter (*Introductory Remarks*) portrays ANTONIO as "a good man, — a man whom we love for his high integrity, his disinterested liberality, his devoted friendship ; but his rashness in signing the bond suggested to the dramatist the propriety of characterizing him as deficient in worldly prudence ; and, too easy and unwary in his dealings with mankind, . . . he thought

lightly of the condition stipulated in the bond ; he was imprudent in allowing himself to forget, or in failing to exert himself that he might be prepared for the day of payment ; he was incautious in venturing the whole of his wealth in argosies upon the ocean. That he was a rich merchant, we may suppose to have been owing more to patrimonial inheritance than to his own mercantile sagacity and success."

"BASSANIO," says W. W. Lloyd (*Critical Essay*), "has lived like a prodigal, run in debt with his friends, and now coolly proposes to his chief creditor to make a serious addition to his debt on the speculation that it will give him a chance to pay all by that very precarious as well as undignified resort of making up to an heiress. How is it that in reading the play we never withdraw our sympathy from the hero of transactions that affect us in common life with the unpleasant associations of dissipation, imprudence, impudence, and meanness? The reason, I apprehend, is partly because we are reading a romance, and we accept the compatibility of whatever phenomena the poet chooses to group in the moral as in the material world. Portia has faith that the lottery of the caskets will give her infallibly the husband who deserves her, and we are not disposed to check agreeable sympathy with the generous liberality, in mind and purse, of the Merchant of Venice, by any mistrust, shabby it would seem to us, of the desert of his friends or the coöperation of natural chances with his free intentions. Character gives confidence ; truth is bondsman for troth. We believe Bassanio on the same ground that Antonio does ; we approve of the consent of Antonio on the same grounds that made Bassanio think it not wrong to ask it. . . . Soundness at heart in a recipient makes imprudence prudent ; and our faith is made happy when Bassanio, who has nothing either to give or hazard, chooses the casket of least promising exterior. . . . Even in setting forth his project to Antonio, the leading tone of his description makes her wealth but one accessory of her attractions ; and, as a lover should, he passes on with more fervor to observe, 'And she is fair ;' and yet again to the crowning praise which

no lover of Portia could overlook and be worthy, 'and fairer than that word of wondrous virtues.' Hence we confide most absolutely in the ingenuousness of Bassanio; and if he appears to engage his friend somewhat inconsiderately to a bond, . . . we are prepared to ascribe this to the eagerness of a lover who has such cause to love as encouragement from Portia."

Although a subordinate character, none in the play has a more distinct individuality than GRATIANO. He is always Gratiano; and, notwithstanding his rattling volubility, not a few of his utterances have become proverbial, and are familiar in our mouths as household words. He is thus sketched by Charles Cowden Clarke (*Shakespeare Characters*): "Gratiano is one of those useful men in society who will keep up the ball of mirth and good humor simply by his own mercurial temperament and agreeable rattle. . . . If a picnic were proposed, he would be the man for the commissariat department; and the wines shall be unimpeachable in quantity as well as quality; the ladies shall lack no squire of dames, and the men no stimulus to keep their gallantry from rusting; and what is better than all, if a friend be in adversity, Gratiano will champion him with good words and deeds, if not with the most sagacious counsel. He would, no doubt, talk a man off his legs, and therefore Shakespeare has brought him as a relief against the two grave men, Antonio and Bassanio. . . . Bassanio says of Gratiano, 'that he speaks an infinite deal of nothing;' 'that his reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them they are not worth the search.' The best of all this is, that Bassanio himself advances no claim to be the censor of his lively companion, for, in comparison with him, he is dull in capacity; and the very observation just quoted follows one of the most agreeable and sensible speeches in the play, made by the 'infinite-deal-of-nothing' Gratiano."

JESSICA "is a very faithful picture of a love-inclined young woman, betraying the oriental warmth of her race, together with its craftiness. But she is not to be taken as a true sample of a

Jewish daughter, for among no people are the ties of domestic life held more sacred than among the Hebrews." "When at Belmont, she speaks of her father as of a person in whose company she once happened to be; the first words, 'when I was with him,' are painfully unfeeling to those inclined to sympathize with a father whom she has robbed; but there were none such in the company, because the man was a Jew, and she knew that opinion was in her favor."

NERISSA displays no special characteristics. As she is Portia's confidential companion as well as waiting woman, we may suppose her to be of good family, and there is no incongruity in the marriage of Gratiano and herself.

"The Merchant of Venice" is one of the most perfect of Shakespeare's dramas, and, with the possible exception of "The Tempest," it has always been the most popular.

Incidental to a critical notice of the Shakespearian literature of the day, "The Edinburgh Review," July, 1840, has these remarks on this play: "In 'The Merchant of Venice,' the poetical elevation is obtained by a migration into a foreign and southern region; the tideless bosom of the Adriatic reflects the Venetian palaces, the pine trees and fountains and terraces of Portia's villa, and the deep-blue sky of the Italian clime. But everywhere—in the garden of the Doge's hall, on the 'campo' of the Rialto, or beneath the penthouse that projects from the Jew's den—we feel that we are still in the world, among men jostling one another on the crowded highway of life, and hurrying towards the common goal. Here action is in its appropriate place; and here, therefore, adventure and surprise are accumulated upon each other. The drama invades the domain of the romantic novel, but, unlike most usurpers, ameliorates the region into which it has intruded. During four acts of the play we are hurried from one crisis to another. Each of the two leading plots is in itself improbable, and even revolting; but the harshness of each balances and conceals that of the other. Poetical fancy, likewise,

wedded to the charm of love, disguises the story of the caskets; while that of the pound of flesh is ennobled at once by variety and unsurpassed truth of character, by the most vigorous strokes of passion, and by a temperate judgment, which is the most admirable feature of the piece. At length the perplexities and dangers are overcome, love and hatred have both received their reward, and most poets would have dropped the curtain on their characters; but Shakespeare saw that something was still wanting. If the play had closed there, it would have deserved to be called a 'tragi-comedy' in a reproachful sense of the term: it would have been a play in which it was impossible by reflection, or by the surer test of feeling, to determine which of the two opposed aspects of life was intended to be exhibited as the prominent one. The main action of the piece in both its branches has touched the very frontier of that region within which it was designed to move. The scenes at Belmont had been prevented from becoming tragic by mere accident. The judgment scene is really and sublimely tragic in everything except the artifice which gives the turn to its catastrophe. The feeling which genuine comedy should leave on the mind, the perception of those relations of man to higher powers which make his very weakness the fountain of happiness and reconciliation, is assuredly not that which rests on the mind as we retire slowly from the piazza of St. Mark, still agitated by the perils of the trial, and perhaps not less moved by the blow which has smitten down into broken-hearted abasement Shylock's whole soul, his intellectual strength, his bitterly pregnant humor, his Hebrew devotion, and his hatred for those who have oppressed and insulted his nation and his name.

"The fifth act . . . gradually and gently relieves the heart from its oppression. A sportive love trick introduced purposely in the preceding scene furnishes its materials; the tragic ideas removed to a distance serve but to heighten the new impression by contrast, and thus justify for themselves the place they hold; and the drama closes in music by moonlight amidst the placid gladness of rescued innocence and united love."

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY.

DUKE OF VENICE.	OLD GOBBO, <i>father to Launcelot.</i>
PRINCE OF MOROCCO, } <i>suitors to</i>	SALERIO, <i>a messenger.</i>
PRINCE OF ARRAGON, } <i>Portia.</i>	LEONARDO, <i>servant to Bassanio.</i>
ANTONIO, <i>the Merchant of Venice.</i>	BALTHASAR, } <i>servants to Portia.</i>
BASSANIO, <i>his friend.</i>	STEPHANO, }
SALANIO, } <i>friends to Antonio and</i>	PORTIA, <i>a rich heiress.</i>
SALARINO, } <i>Bassanio.</i>	NERISSA, <i>her waiting maid.</i>
GRATIANO, }	JESSICA, <i>daughter to Shylock.</i>
LORENZO, <i>in love with Jessica.</i>	Magnificoes of Venice, Officers of the
SHYLOCK, <i>a rich Jew.</i>	Court of Justice, Gaoler, Servants,
TUBAL, <i>a Jew, his friend.</i>	and other Attendants.
LAUNCELOT GOBBO, <i>a clown.</i>	

SCENE: *Partly at Venice; and partly at Belmont, the seat of Portia, on the Continent.*

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Venice. A Street.*

Enter ANTONIO, SALARINO, and SALANIO.

Antonio. In sooth, I know not why I am so sad:
It wearies me; you say it wearies you;
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn;
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,
That I have much ado to know myself.

Salarino. Your mind is tossing on the ocean ;
 There, where your argosies¹ with portly sail,
 Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,
 Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea,²
 Do overpeer the petty traffickers,
 That curtsy to them, do them reverence,
 As they fly by them with their woven wings.

Salanio. Believe me, sir, had I such venture forth,
 The better part of my affections would
 Be with my hopes abroad. I should be still
 Plucking the grass, to know where sits the wind,
 Peering in maps for ports and piers and roads ;
 And every object that might make me fear
 Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt
 Would make me sad.

Salarino. My wind cooling my broth
 Would blow me to an ague, when I thought
 What harm a wind too great at sea might do.
 I should not see the sandy hourglass³ run,
 But I should think of shallows and of flats,
 And see my wealthy Andrew⁴ dock'd in sand,
 Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs
 To kiss her burial. Should I go to church
 And see the holy edifice of stone,

¹ Argosies were large ships, generally mercantile vessels, though ships of war were sometimes so called. The derivation of the name is uncertain; possibly from "Argo," the mythical ship which carried Jason and his companions to Colchis in search of the Golden Fleece.

² "Pageants of the sea," a comparison of Antonio's vessels to the huge images of towers, castles, ships, giants, etc., paraded in the street shows or pageants of London.

³ Watches and clocks were novelties in England, and hourglasses were still in use, at the close of the sixteenth century.

⁴ Andrea Doria was a famous admiral of Genoa, who died in 1560. It is not unlikely that his name, in Shakespeare's time, was in common use to designate Italian ships of the largest size and best class.

And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,
Which touching but my gentle vessel's side,
Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks,
And, in a word, but even now worth this,
And now worth nothing? Shall I have the thought
To think on this, and shall I lack the thought
That such a thing bechanc'd would make me sad?
But tell not me; I know, Antonio
Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

Antonio. Believe me, no: I thank my fortune for it,
My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate
Upon the fortune of this present year:
Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.

Salarino. Why, then you are in love.

Antonio.

Fie, fie!

Salarino. Not in love neither? Then let us say you are sad,
Because you are not merry: and 'twere as easy
For you to laugh and leap and say you are merry,
Because you are not sad. Now, by two-headed Janus,¹
Nature hath fram'd strange fellows in her time:
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes
And laugh like parrots at a bagpiper,
And other of such vinegar aspect²
That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile,
Though Nestor³ swear the jest be laughable.

¹ This two-faced god of the Romans presided over gates and avenues. On some images he is shown with one sad and one laughing countenance.

² This word is always accented on the latter syllable in Shakespeare's verse.

³ A Grecian hero renowned for his wisdom, prudence, and great age.

Enter BASSANIO, LORENZO, and GRATIANO.

Salanio. Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman,
Gratiano and Lorenzo. Fare ye well:
We leave you now with better company.

Salarino. I would have staid till I had made you merry,
If worthier friends had not prevented me.

Antonio. Your worth is very dear in my regard.
I take it, your own business calls on you
And you embrace the occasion to depart.

Salarino. Good morrow, my good lords.

Bassanio. Good signiors both, when shall we laugh? say,
when?

You grow exceeding strange: must it be so?

Salarino. We'll make our leisures to attend on yours.

[*Exeunt Salarino and Salanio.*

Lorenzo. My Lord Bassanio, since you have found Antonio,
We two will leave you: but at dinner time,
I pray you, have in mind where we must meet.

Bassanio. I will not fail you.

Gratiano. You look not well, Signior Antonio;
You have too much respect upon¹ the world:
They lose it that do buy it with much care:
Believe me, you are marvelously chang'd.

Antonio. I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.

Gratiano. Let me play the fool:
With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,
And let my liver rather heat with wine
Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.
Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?

¹ "Respect upon," i.e., regard for.

Sleep when he wakes and creep into the jaundice
 By being peevish? I tell thee what, Antonio —
 I love thee, and it is my love that speaks —
 There are a sort of men whose visages
 Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,
 And do a willful stillness entertain,
 With purpose to be dress'd in an opinion
 Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit,¹
 As who should say, "I am Sir Oracle,
 And when I ope my lips let no dog bark!"
 O my Antonio, I do know of these
 That therefore only are reputed wise
 For saying nothing, when, I am very sure,
 If they should speak, would almost damn those ears
 Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.
 I'll tell thee more of this another time:
 But fish not, with this melancholy bait,
 For this fool gudgeon, this opinion.
 Come, good Lorenzo. Fare ye well awhile:
 I'll end my exhortation after dinner.

Lorenzo. Well, we will leave you then till dinner time:
 I must be one of these same dumb wise men,
 For Gratiano never lets me speak.

Gratiano. Well, keep me company but two years moe,²
 Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.

Antonio. Farewell: I'll grow a talker for this gear.

Gratiano. Thanks, i' faith, for silence is only commendable
 In a neat's tongue³ dri'd and a maid not vendible.

[*Exeunt Gratiano and Lorenzo.*]

Antonio. Is that anything now?

¹ "With purpose," etc., i.e., designing thereby to acquire a reputation for wisdom, gravity, and profound thought.

² An old form of "more."

³ A neat's tongue is the tongue of an ox, bull, or cow, — what we call a "beef's tongue."

Bassanio. Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them, they are not worth the search.

Antonio. Well, tell me now what lady is the same
To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage,
That you to-day promis'd to tell me of?

Bassanio. 'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,
How much I have disabled mine estate,
By something showing a more swelling port¹
Than my faint means would grant continuance:
Nor do I now make moan to be abridg'd
From such a noble rate; but my chief care
Is to come fairly off from the great debts
Wherein my time something too prodigal
Hath left me gag'd. To you, Antonio,
I owe the most, in money and in love,
And from your love I have a warranty
To unburden all my plots and purposes
How to get clear of all the debts I owe.

Antonio. I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it;
And if it stand, as you yourself still do,
Within the eye of honor, be assur'd,
My purse, my person, my extremest means,
Lie all unlock'd to your occasions.

Bassanio. In my school days, when I had lost one shaft,
I shot his fellow of the selfsame flight
The selfsame way with more advised watch,
To find the other forth, and by adventuring both
I oft found both: I urge this childhood proof,
Because what follows is pure innocence.

¹ "Something showing," etc., i.e., somewhat more extravagant style of living.

I owe you much, and, like a willful youth,
 That which I owe is lost ; but if you please
 To shoot another arrow that self¹ way
 Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,
 As I will watch the aim, or to find both
 Or bring your latter hazard back again
 And thankfully rest debtor for the first.

Antonio. You know me well, and herein spend but time
 To wind about my love with circumstance ;²
 And out of doubt you do me now more wrong
 In making question of my uttermost
 Than if you had made waste of all I have :
 Then do but say to me what I should do
 That in your knowledge may by me be done,
 And I am prest unto it : therefore, speak.

Bassanio. In Belmont is a lady richly left ;
 And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,
 Of wondrous virtues : sometimes from her eyes
 I did receive fair speechless messages :
 Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued
 To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia :
 Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
 For the four winds blow in from every coast
 Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
 Hang on her temples like a golden fleece ;
 Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos'³ strond,⁴
 And many Jasons come in quest of her.
 O my Antonio, had I but the means

¹ Same.

² Round-about talking.

" In the grove of Ares (Mars) at ÆEa, afterwards called Colchis or Colchos, was suspended the Golden Fleece, guarded by a dragon. In quest of this, Jason, accompanied by several of the great heroes of the age, sailed in the 'Argo,' and aided by Medea, the daughter of the King of Colchos, succeeded in carrying it off."

⁴ Strand.

To hold a rival place with one of them,
I have a mind presages me such thrift,
That I should questionless be fortunate!

Antonio. Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;
Neither have I money nor commodity
To raise a present sum: therefore go forth;
Try what my credit can in Venice do:
That shall be rack'd, even to the uttermost,
To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.
Go, presently inquire, and so will I,
Where money is, and I no question make
To have it of my trust or for my sake.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Belmont. A Room in PORTIA'S House.*

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA.

Portia. By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world.

Nerissa. You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are: and yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing. It is no mean¹ happiness therefore, to be seated in the mean: superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lives longer.

Portia. Good sentences and well pronounc'd.

Nerissa. They would be better, if well followed.

Portia. If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree: such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the

¹ Small.

meshes of good counsel the cripple. But this reasoning is not in the fashion to choose me a husband. O me, the word "choose!" I may neither choose whom I would nor refuse whom I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one nor refuse none?

Nerissa. Your father was ever virtuous; and holy men at their death have good inspirations: therefore the lottery, that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver, and lead, whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you, will, no doubt, never be chosen by any rightly but one who shall rightly love. But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

Portia. I pray thee, overname them; and as thou namest them, I will describe them; and, according to my description, level at my affection.

Nerissa. First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

Portia. Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse; and he makes it a great appropriation to his own good parts, that he can shoe him himself.

Nerissa. Then there is the County Palatine.¹

Portia. He doth nothing but frown, as who would say, "If you will not have me, choose:" he hears merry tales and smiles not: I fear he will prove the weeping philosopher² when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly sadness in his youth. I had rather be married to a death's-head with a bone in his mouth than to either of these. God defend me from these two!

¹ "Count" and "County" are used indifferently by Shakespeare. A Count Palatine, or Count of the Palace, was a title that came to be applied "to governors of provinces who had full regal powers. These were principally border provinces, such as Lancaster, Chester, and Durham in England."

² "Weeping philosopher" refers to Heraclitus, a celebrated Greek, who lived five hundred years before the Christian era. He was known as the mourner or obscure philosopher from his unconquerable custom of weeping at the follies and vicissitudes of human affairs.

Nerissa. How say you by the French lord, Monsieur le Bon?

Portia. God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man. In truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker: but, he! why, he hath a horse better than the Neapolitan's, a better bad habit of frowning than the Count Palatine; he is every man in no man; if a throstle¹ sing, he falls straight a capering: he will fence with his own shadow: if I should marry him, I should marry twenty husbands. If he would despise me, I would forgive him, for if he love me to madness, I shall never requite him.

Nerissa. What say you, then, to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

Portia. You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him: he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian, and you will come into the court and swear that I have a poor pennyworth in the English. He is a proper man's picture, but, alas, who can converse with a dumb show? How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behavior everywhere.

Nerissa. What think you of the Scottish lord, his neighbor?

Portia. That he hath a neighborly charity in him, for he borrowed a box of the ear of the Englishman and swore he would pay him again when he was able: I think the Frenchman became his surety and seal'd under for another.²

Nerissa. How like you the young German, the Duke of Saxony's nephew?

Portia. Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk: when he is best, he is a little worse than a man, and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast: an³ the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I shall make shift to go without him.

Nerissa. If he should offer to choose, and choose the right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's will, if you should refuse to accept him.

¹ An old diminutive of "thrush."

² "The principal was said to 'seal to' a bond; his surety 'sealed under.'"

³ If.

Portia. Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee, set a deep glass of rhenish wine on the contrary casket, for if the devil be within and that temptation without, I know he will choose it. I will do anything, Nerissa, ere I'll be married to a sponge.

Nerissa. You need not fear, lady, the having any of these lords: they have acquainted me with their determinations; which is, indeed, to return to their home and to trouble you with no more suit, unless you may be won by some other sort than your father's imposition depending on the caskets.

Portia. If I live to be as old as Sibylla,¹ I will die as chaste as Diana,² unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable, for there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence, and I pray God grant them a fair departure.

Nerissa. Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came hither in company of the Marquis of Montferrat?

Portia. Yes, yes, it was Bassanio; as I think, he was so call'd.

Nerissa. True, madam: he, of all the men that ever my foolish eyes look'd upon, was the best deserving a fair lady.

Portia. I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of thy praise.

Enter a Serving-man.

How now! what news?

Servant. The four strangers seek for you, madam, to take their leave: and there is a forerunner come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco, who brings word the prince his master will be here to-night.

¹ The Sibyllæ were certain prophetic women who flourished in different parts of the world. Portia refers to the Sibyl of Cuma in Italy, to whom Apollo granted her demand to live as many years as she had grains of sand in her hand.

² The goddess of hunting, and also, according to some mythologists, personifying Luna or the moon. She was the daughter of Jupiter, and obtained from her father permission to live in perpetual celibacy.

Portia. If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good a heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach: if he have the condition¹ of a saint and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me.

Come, Nerissa. Sirrah, go before.

Whiles we shut the gates upon one wooer, another knocks at the door. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. *Venice. A Public Place.*

Enter BASSANIO and SHYLOCK.

Shylock. Three thousand ducats; well.

Bassanio. Ay, sir, for three months.

Shylock. For three months; well.

Bassanio. For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

Shylock. Antonio shall become bound; well.

Bassanio. May you stead me? will you pleasure me? shall I know your answer?

Shylock. Three thousand ducats for three months and Antonio bound.

Bassanio. Your answer to that.

Shylock. Antonio is a good man.

Bassanio. Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

Shylock. Oh, no, no, no, no: my meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient. Yet his means are in supposition: he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies; I understand, moreover, upon the Rialto,² he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath, squand'red³ abroad. But ships are but

¹ That is, qualities. Frequently used in this sense by Shakespeare.

² Rialto was the Venetian island where merchants met for business transactions. The name is derived from *riva alta* ("a high bank"), the island being the highest of the group on which the city is built.

³ Scattered; not used in a sense implying waste.

boards, sailors but men: there be land rats and water rats, land thieves and water thieves, I mean pirates, and then there is the peril of waters, winds and rocks. The man is, notwithstanding, sufficient. Three thousand ducats; I think I may take his bond.

Bassanio. Be assured you may.

Shylock. I will be assured I may; and, that I may be assured, I will bethink me. May I speak with Antonio?

Bassanio. If it please you to dine with us.

Shylock. Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into.¹ I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. What news on the Rialto? Who is he comes here?

Enter ANTONIO.

Bassanio. This is Signior Antonio.

Shylock. [*Aside*] How like a fawning publican² he looks!
I hate him for he is a Christian,
But more for that in low simplicity
He lends out money gratis and brings down
The rate of usance³ here with us in Venice.
If I can catch him once upon the hip,⁴
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,
Even there where merchants most do congregate,
On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift,
Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe,
If I forgive him!

Bassanio. Shylock, do you hear?

Shylock. I am debating of my present store,

¹ See Matt. viii. 28-32.

² Under Roman rule, publicans were the taxgatherers to whom the collection of taxes in the provinces was farmed or rented by the Imperial Government.

³ Interest; usury.

⁴ "Catch him," etc., i.e., take him at disadvantage. It is a phrase from wrestling.

And, by the near guess of my memory,
 I cannot instantly raise up the gross
 Of full three thousand ducats. What of that?
 Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,
 Will furnish me. But soft! how many months
 Do you desire? [*To Antonio*] Rest you fair, good signior;
 Your worship was the last man in our mouths.

Antonio. Shylock, although I neither lend nor borrow
 By taking nor by giving of excess,
 Yet, to supply the ripe wants of my friend,
 I'll break a custom. Is he yet possess'd¹
 How much ye would?

Shylock. Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

Antonio. And for three months.

Shylock. I had forgot; three months; you told me so.
 Well, then, your bond; and let me see; but hear you;
 Methought you said you neither lend nor borrow
 Upon advantage.

Antonio. I do never use it.²

Shylock. When Jacob graz'd his uncle Laban's sheep —
 This Jacob from our holy Abram was,
 As his wise mother wrought in his behalf,
 The third possessor; ay, he was the third —

Antonio. And what of him? did he take interest?

Shylock. No, not take interest, not, as you would say,
 Directly interest: mark what Jacob did.
 When Laban and himself were compromis'd³
 That all the eanlings⁴ which were streak'd and pied⁵
 Should fall as Jacob's hire,
 The skillful shepherd peel'd me certain wands
 And stuck them up before the fulsome ewes,
 Who then conceiving did in eaning time

¹ Informed.

² "I do never use it," i.e., it is not my use or custom.

³ Agreed.

⁴ Newly born lambs.

⁵ Party-colored.

Fall party-color'd lambs, and those were Jacob's.
 This was a way to thrive, and he was blest :
 And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not.¹

Antonio. This was a venture, sir, that Jacob serv'd for ;
 A thing not in his power to bring to pass,
 But sway'd and fashion'd by the hand of heaven.
 Was this inserted to make interest good ?
 Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams ?

Shylock. I cannot tell ; I make it breed as fast :
 But note me, signior.

Antonio. Mark you this, Bassanio,
 The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
 An evil soul producing holy witness
 Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
 A goodly apple rotten at the heart :
 Oh, what a goodly outside falsehood hath !

Shylock. Three thousand ducats ; 'tis a good round sum.
 Three months from twelve ; then, let me see ; the rate —

Antonio. Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding² to you ?

Shylock. Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
 In the Rialto you have rated me
 About my moneys and my usances :
 Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,
 For suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe.
 You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
 And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,
 And all for use of that which is mine own.
 Well then, it now appears you need my help :
 Go to,³ then ; you come to me, and you say,
 " Shylock, we would have moneys : " you say so ;

¹ See Gen. xxx. 27-43.

² This word in the sense of beholden (" obliged ") is frequently met with in Shakespeare and other Elizabethan writers.

³ " Go to, " a phrase of reproof here, is used in various senses by old authors as an exclamation of impatience, encouragement, expostulation, etc.

You, that did void your rheum upon my beard
 And foot¹ me as you spurn a stranger cur
 Over your threshold: moneys is your suit.
 What should I say to you? Should I not say,
 "Hath a dog money? is it possible
 A cur can lend three thousand ducats?" Or
 Shall I bend low and in a bondman's key,
 With bated breath and whisp'ring humbleness,
 Say this;
 "Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last;
 You spurn'd me such a day; another time
 You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies
 I'll lend you thus much moneys"?

Antonio. I am as like to call thee so again,
 To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.
 If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
 As to thy friends; for when did friendship take
 A breed for barren metal of his friend?
 But lend it rather to thine enemy,
 Who, if he break, thou mayst with better face
 Exact the penalty.

Shylock. Why, look you, how you storm!
 I would be friends with you and have your love,
 Forget the shames that you have stain'd me with,
 Supply your present wants and take no doit²
 Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me:
 This is kind³ I offer.

Bassanio. This were kindness.

Shylock. This kindness will I show.

Go with me to a notary, seal me there
 Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,

¹ Kick.

² "No doit," i.e., "not a cent," as we would express it. A *doit* was a German coin of trifling value.

³ Kindness.

If you repay me not on such a day,
In such a place, such sum or sums as are
Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit
Be nominated for an equal pound
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
In what part of your body pleaseth me.

Antonio. Content, i' faith: I'll seal to such a bond
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

Bassanio. You shall not seal to such a bond for me:
I'll rather dwell¹ in my necessity.

Antonio. Why, fear not, man; I will not forfeit it:
Within these two months, that's a month before
This bond expires, I do expect return
Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

Shylock. O father Abram, what these Christians are,
Whose own hard dealings teaches them² suspect
The thoughts of others! Pray you, tell me this;
If he should break his day, what should I gain
By the exaction of the forfeiture?
A pound of man's flesh taken from a man
Is not so estimable, profitable neither,
As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats. I say,
To buy his favor, I extend this friendship:
If he will take it, so; if not, adieu;
And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.

Antonio. Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

Shylock. Then meet me forthwith at the notary's;
Give him direction for this merry bond,
And I will go and purse the ducats straight,
See to my house, left in the fearful³ guard
Of an unthrifty knave, and presently
I will be with you.

¹ Continue.

² "Teaches them," i.e., "teach them to," as would nowadays be written.

³ Doubtful.

Antonio. Hie thee, gentle Jew. [*Exit Shylock.*

The Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.

Bassanio. I like not fair terms and a villain's mind.

Antonio. Come on: in this there can be no dismay;
My ships come home a month before the day. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I. *Belmont. A Room in PORTIA'S House.*

*Flourish of cornets. Enter the PRINCE OF MOROCCO and his train;
PORTIA, NERISSA, and others attending.*

Morocco. Mislike me not for my complexion,
The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun,
To whom I am a neighbor and near bred.
Bring me the fairest creature northward born,
Where Phœbus'¹ fire scarce thaws the icicles,
And let us make incision for your love,
To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine.
I tell thee, lady, this aspect of mine
Hath fear'd² the valiant: by my love, I swear
The best-regarded virgins of our clime
Have lov'd it too: I would not change this hue,
Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen.

Portia. In terms of choice I am not solely led
By nice direction of a maiden's eyes:
Besides, the lottery of my destiny
Bars me the right of voluntary choosing:
But if my father had not scanted me
And hedg'd me by his wit, to yield myself
His wife who wins me by that means I told you,
Yourself, renowned prince, then stood as fair

¹ Phœbus was one of the names given to the sun in ancient mythology.

² "Fear'd the valiant," i.e., caused the valiant to fear.

As any comer I have look'd on yet
For my affection.

Morocco. Even for that I thank you :
Therefore, I pray you, lead me to the caskets
To try my fortune. By this scimiter
That slew the Sophy¹ and a Persian prince
That won three fields of Sultan Solyman,²
I would outstare the sternest eyes that look,
Outbrave the heart most daring on the earth,
Pluck the young sucking cubs from the she-bear,
Yea, mock the lion when he roars for prey,
To win thee, lady. But, alas the while!
If Hercules³ and Lichas play at dice
Which is the better man, the greater throw
May turn by fortune from the weaker hand :
So is Alcides beaten by his page ;
And so may I, blind fortune leading me,
Miss that which one unworthier may attain,
And die with grieving.

Portia. You must take your chance,
And either not attempt to choose at all
Or swear before you choose, if you choose wrong
Never to speak to lady afterward
In way of marriage : therefore be advis'd.⁴

Morocco. Nor will not. Come bring me unto my chance.

Portia. First, forward to the temple : after dinner
Your hazard shall be made.

¹ An old word signifying "wise man." It was formerly applied to one skillful in natural magic, and afterwards became the common name of the Emperor of Persia.

² Sultan Solyman, the Magnificent, was defeated by the Persians in 1535.

³ Hercules was a celebrated hero of antiquity, who, after his death, was ranked among the gods. He is sometimes called "Alcides," being a descendant of Alceus. Lichas was a servant of Hercules.

⁴ "Be advis'd," i.e., consider well.

Morocco.

Good fortune then !

To make me blest or curs'd'st among men.

[*Cornets, and exeunt.*]SCENE II. *Venice. A Street.**Enter LAUNCELOT.*

Launcelot. Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew my master. The fiend is at mine elbow and tempts me saying to me, "Gobbo, Launcelot Gobbo, good Launcelot," or "good Gobbo," or "good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away." My conscience says, "No; take heed, honest Launcelot; take heed, honest Gobbo," or, as aforesaid, "honest Launcelot Gobbo; do not run; scorn running with thy heels." Well, the most courageous fiend bids me pack: "Via!" says the fiend; "away!" says the fiend; "for the heavens, rouse up a brave mind," says the fiend, "and run." Well, my conscience, hanging about the neck of my heart, says very wisely to me, "My honest friend Launcelot, being an honest man's son," or rather an honest woman's son; well, my conscience says, "Launcelot, budge not." "Budge," says the fiend. "Budge not," says my conscience. "Conscience," say I, "you counsel well;" "Fiend," say I, "you counsel well:" to be rul'd by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master, who, God bless the mark, is a kind of devil; and, to run away from the Jew, I should be rul'd by the fiend, who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnal;¹ and, in my conscience, my conscience is but a kind of hard conscience, to offer to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the more friendly counsel: I will run, fiend; my heels are at your command; I will run.

¹ Launcelot means "incarnate." His diction, as well as that of his father Gobbo, abounds with barbarisms equally ridiculous.

Enter Old GObBO with a basket.

Gobbo. Master young man, you, I pray you, which is the way to Master Jew's ?

Launcelot. [*Aside*] O heavens, this is my true-begotten father! who, being more than sand-blind,¹ high-gravel blind, knows me not: I will try confusions with him.

Gobbo. Master young gentleman, I pray you, which is the way to Master Jew's ?

Launcelot. Turn up on your right hand at the next turning, but, at the next turning of all, on your left; marry,² at the very next turning, turn of no hand, but turn down indirectly to the Jew's house.

Gobbo. By God's sonties,³ 'twill be a hard way to hit. Can you tell me whether one Launcelot, that dwells with him, dwell with him or no ?

Launcelot. Talk you of young Master Launcelot ? [*Aside*] Mark me now; now will I raise the waters. Talk you of young Master Launcelot ?

Gobbo. No master, sir, but a poor man's son: his father, though I say it, is an honest exceeding poor man, and, God be thanked, well to live.

Launcelot. Well, let his father be what a' will, we talk of young Master Launcelot.

Gobbo. Your worship's friend and Launcelot, sir.

Launcelot. But I pray you, ergo, old man, ergo, I beseech you, talk you of young Master Launcelot ?

Gobbo. Of Launcelot, an't please your mastership.

Launcelot. Ergo, Master Launcelot. Talk not of Master Launcelot, father; for the young gentleman, according to Fates and Destinies and such odd sayings, the Sisters Three⁴ and such

¹ Partially blind; purblind.

² A contraction of an old imprecation, "By the Virgin Mary."

³ Possibly Gobbo means "saints."

⁴ In Greek mythology the Three Sisters, or Fates, — Clotho Lachesis, and Atropos, — spun the thread of each human being's life. The first wound the

branches of learning, is indeed deceased, or, as you would say in plain terms, gone to heaven.

Gobbo. Marry, God forbid ! the boy was the very staff of my age, my very prop.

Launcelot. Do I look like a cudgel or a hovel-post, a staff or a prop ? Do you know me, father ?

Gobbo. Alack the day, I know you not, young gentleman : but, I pray you, tell me, is my boy, God rest his soul, alive or dead ?

Launcelot. Do you not know me, father ?

Gobbo. Alack, sir, I am sand-blind ; I know you not.

Launcelot. Nay, indeed, if you had your eyes, you might fail of the knowing me : it is a wise father that knows his own child. Well, old man, I will tell you news of your son : give me your blessing : truth will come to light ; murder cannot be hid long ; a man's son may, but at the length truth will out.

Gobbo. Pray you, sir, stand up : I am sure you are not Launcelot, my boy.

Launcelot. Pray you, let's have no more fooling about it, but give me your blessing : I am Launcelot, your boy that was, your son that is, your child that shall be.

Gobbo. I cannot think you are my son.

Launcelot. I know not what I shall think of that : but I am Launcelot, the Jew's man, and I am sure Margery your wife is my mother.

Gobbo. Her name is Margery, indeed : I'll be sworn, if thou be Launcelot, thou art mine own flesh and blood. Lord worship'd might he be ! what a beard hast thou got ! thou hast got more hair on thy chin than Dobbin my fill horse¹ has on his tail.

Launcelot. It should seem, then, that Dobbin's tail grows backward : I am sure he had more hair of his tail than I have of my face when I last saw him.

flax on the distaff ready for the second to spin, while the third cut the thread upon the termination of the individual's career.

¹ " Fill horse," i.e., the shaft horse, the horse that is placed between the thills or shafts of the vehicle.

Gobbo. Lord, how art thou chang'd ! How dost thou and thy master agree ? I have brought him a present. How 'gree you now ?

Launcelot. Well, well : but, for mine own part, as I have set up my rest to run away, so I will not rest till I have run some ground. My master's a very Jew : give him a present ! give him a halter : I am famish'd in his service ; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs. Father, I am glad you are come : give me your present to one Master Bassanio, who, indeed, gives rare new liveries : if I serve not him, I will run as far as God has any ground. O rare fortune ! here comes the man : to him, father ; for I am a Jew, if I serve the Jew any longer.

Enter BASSANIO, with LEONARDO and other followers.

Bassanio. You may do so ; but let it be so hasted that supper be ready at the farthest by five of the clock. See these letters delivered ; put the liveries to making, and desire Gratiano to come anon to my lodging. [*Exit a Servant.*

Launcelot. To him, father.

Gobbo. God bless your worship !

Bassanio. Gramercy, would'st thou aught with me ?

Gobbo. Here's my son, sir, a poor boy, —

Launcelot. Not a poor boy, sir, but the rich Jew's man ; that would, sir, as my father shall specify —

Gobbo. He hath a great infection,¹ sir, as one would say, to serve, —

Launcelot. Indeed, the short and the long is, I serve the Jew, and have a desire, as my father shall specify —

Gobbo. His master and he, saving your worship's reverence, are scarce cater-cousins² —

Launcelot. To be brief, the very truth is that the Jew, having

¹ Affection ; that is, desire.

² " Scarce cater-cousins " means here " not on good terms." Cater-cousins are cousins by courtesy, friendship cousins.

done me wrong, doth cause me, as my father, being, I hope, an old man, shall frutify¹ unto you —

Gobbo. I have here a dish of doves that I would bestow upon your worship, and my suit is—

Launcelot. In very brief, the suit is impertinent² to myself, as your worship shall know by this honest old man; and, though I say it, though old man, yet poor man, my father.

Bassanio. One speak for both. What would you?

Launcelot. Serve you, sir.

Gobbo. That is the very defect³ of the matter, sir.

Bassanio. I know thee well; thou hast obtain'd thy suit: Shylock thy master spoke with me this day, And hath preferr'd thee, if it be preferment To leave a rich Jew's service, to become The follower of so poor a gentleman.

Launcelot. The old proverb is very well parted between my master Shylock and you, sir: you have the grace of God, and he hath enough.⁴

Bassanio. Thou speak'st it well. Go, father, with thy son. Take leave of thy old master and inquire My lodging out. Give him a livery More guarded⁵ than his fellows': see it done.

Launcelot. Father, in. I cannot get a service, no; I have ne'er a tongue in my head. Well, if any man in Italy have a fairer table⁶ which doth offer to swear upon a book, I shall have good fortune. Go to, here's a simple line of life; here's a small trifle of wives: alas, fifteen wives is nothing! eleven widows and nine maids is a simple coming-in for one man: and then to 'scape

¹ Specify.

² Pertinent.

³ Effect.

⁴ The Scotch form of the old proverb is, "The grace of God is gear enough."

⁵ "More guarded," i.e., more gaudily trimmed.

⁶ "Fairer table:" Launcelot is well up in palmistry, and examines his hand to account for his present good fortune, and to learn what he is to look for in the future.

drowning thrice, and to be in peril of my life with the edge of a feather bed; here are simple scapes. Well, if Fortune be a woman, she's a good wench for this gear. Father, come; I'll take my leave of the Jew in the twinkling of an eye.

[*Exeunt Launcelot and Old Gobbo.*]

Bassanio. I pray thee, good Leonardo, think on this:
These things being bought and orderly bestow'd,
Return in haste, for I do feast to-night
My best-esteem'd acquaintance: hie thee, go.

Leonardo. My best endeavors shall be done herein.

Enter GRATIANO.

Gratiano. Where is your master?

Leonardo. Yonder, sir, he walks. [*Exit.*]

Gratiano. Signior Bassanio!

Bassanio. Gratiano!

Gratiano. I have a suit to you.

Bassanio. You have obtain'd it.

Gratiano. You must not deny me: I must go with you to Belmont.

Bassanio. Why, then you must. But hear thee, Gratiano;
Thou art too wild, too rude and bold of voice;
Parts that become thee happily enough
And in such eyes as ours appear not faults;
But where thou art not known, why, there they show
Something too liberal. Pray thee, take pain
To allay with some cold drops of modesty
Thy skipping spirit, lest through thy wild behavior
I be misconstrued in the place I go to
And lose my hopes.

Gratiano. Signior Bassanio, hear me:
If I do not put on a sober habit,
Talk with respect and swear but now and then,
Wear prayer books in my pocket, look demurely,
Nay more, while grace is saying, hood mine eyes

Thus with my hat,¹ and sigh and say "amen,"
Use all the observance of civility,
Like one well studied in a sad ostent²

To please his grandam, never trust me more.

Bassanio. Well, we shall see your bearing.

Gratiano. Nay, but I bar to-night: you shall not gauge me
By what we do to-night.

Bassanio. No, that were pity:

I would entreat you rather to put on
Your boldest suit of mirth, for we have friends
That purpose merriment. But fare you well:
I have some business.

Gratiano. And I must to Lorenzo and the rest:
But we will visit you at supper time.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III. *The Same. A Room in SHYLOCK'S House.*

Enter JESSICA and LAUNCELOT.

Jessica. I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so:
Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil,
Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.
But fare thee well, there is a ducat for thee:
And, Launcelot, soon at supper shalt thou see
Lorenzo, who is thy new master's guest:
Give him this letter; do it secretly;
And so farewell: I would not have my father
See me talk with thee.

Launcelot. Adieu! tears exhibit³ my tongue. Most beautiful
pagan, most sweet Jew! But, adieu: these foolish drops do
something drown my manly spirit: adieu.

¹ "Hood mine eyes," etc. It was the custom formerly for all persons above the rank of attendants to keep on their hats at the dinner-table, removing them only while grace was said.

² "Sad ostent," i.e., show of serious behavior.

³ Prohibit; that is, silence.

Jessica. Farewell, good Launcelot.

[*Exit Launcelot.*

Alack, what heinous sin is it in me
To be asham'd to be my father's child !
But though I am a daughter to his blood,
I am not to his manners. O Lorenzo,
If thou keep promise, I shall end this strife,
Become a Christian and thy loving wife.

[*Exit.*

SCENE IV. *The Same. A Street.*

Enter GRATIANO, LORENZO, SALARINO, and SALANIO.

Lorenzo. Nay, we will slink away in supper time,
Disguise us at my lodging and return,
All in an hour.

Gratiano. We have not made good preparation.

Salarino. We have not spoke us yet of ¹ torchbearers.

Salanio. 'Tis vile, unless it may be quaintly order'd,²
And better in my mind not undertook.

Lorenzo. 'Tis now but four o'clock: we have two hours
To furnish us.

Enter LAUNCELOT with a letter.

Friend Launcelot, what's the news ?

Launcelot. An it shall please you to break up³ this, it shall
seem to signify.

Lorenzo. I know the hand: in faith, 'tis a fair hand;
And whiter than the paper it writ on
Is the fair hand that writ.

Gratiano. Love news, in faith.

Launcelot. By your leave, sir.

Lorenzo. Whither goest thou ?

Launcelot. Marry, sir, to bid my old master the Jew to sup
to-night with my new master the Christian.

1 "Spoke us yet of," i.e., bespoken; arranged for.

2 "Quaintly order'd," i.e., neatly or gracefully arranged.

3 "Break up," i.e., break open, referring to the letter.

Lorenzo. Hold here, take this: tell gentle Jessica I will not fail her; speak it privately.

Go, gentlemen, [*Exit Launcelot.*

Will you prepare you for this masque to-night?

I am provided of ¹ a torchbearer.

Salarino. Ay, marry, I'll be gone about it straight.

Salanio. And so will I.

Lorenzo. Meet me and Gratiano

At Gratiano's lodging some hour hence.

Salarino. 'Tis good we do so. [*Exeunt Salarino and Salanio.*

Gratiano. Was not that letter from fair Jessica?

Lorenzo. I must needs tell thee all. She hath directed

How I shall take her from her father's house,

What gold and jewels she is furnish'd with,

What page's suit she hath in readiness.

If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven,

It will be for his gentle daughter's sake:

And never dare misfortune cross her foot,

Unless she do it under this excuse,

That she is issue to a faithless Jew.

Come, go with me; peruse this as thou goest:

Fair Jessica shall be my torchbearer.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V. *The Same. Before SHYLOCK'S House.*

Enter SHYLOCK and LAUNCELOT.

Shylock. Well, thou shalt see, thy eyes shall be thy judge,
The difference of old Shylock and Bassanio:—

What, Jessica!—thou shalt not gormandize,

As thou hast done with me:—What, Jessica!—

And sleep and snore, and rend apparel out;—

Why, Jessica, I say!

Launcelot.

Why, Jessica!

¹ With.

Shylock. Who bids thee call? I do not bid thee call.

Launcelot. Your worship was wont to tell me that I could do nothing without bidding.

Enter JESSICA.

Jessica. Call you? what is your will?

Shylock. I am bid forth to supper, Jessica:
There are my keys. But wherefore should I go?
I am not bid for love; they flatter me:
But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon
The prodigal Christian. Jessica, my girl,
Look to my house. I am right loath to go:
'There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest,
For I did dream of money bags to-night.¹

Launcelot. I beseech you, sir, go: my young master doth expect your reproach.²

Shylock. So do I his.

Launcelot. And they have conspired together, I will not say you shall see a masque; but if you do, then it was not for nothing that my nose fell a-bleeding on Black Monday³ last at six o'clock i' the morning, falling out that year on Ash Wednesday was four year, in the afternoon.

Shylock. What, are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica:
Lock up my doors; and when you hear the drum
And the vile squealing of the wry-neck'd fife,

¹ Last night.

² Launcelot means "approach," of course, but Shylock prefers to take him literally.

³ "Black Monday." Furness (*Variorem Shakespeare*), quoting Peck (*Memoirs, etc.*), who cites Stow, has this on the origin of the phrase used by Launcelot, and which was of course familiar in Shakespeare's time: "Black Monday is a movable day. It is *Easter Monday*, and was so called on this occasion: 'In the 34th [year of] Edward III. (1360) the 14th of April & the morrow after Easter-day K. Edward with his hoast lay before the cittie of Paris; which day was full darke of mist & haile, & so bitter cold that men died on their horses backs with the cold; wherefore unto this day it hath beene called the Blacke Monday.'"

Clamber not you up to the casements then,
 Nor thrust your head into the public street
 To gaze on Christian fools with varnish'd faces,
 But stop my house's ears, I mean my casements:
 Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter
 My sober house. By Jacob's staff,¹ I swear,
 I have no mind of feasting forth to-night:
 But I will go. Go you before me, sirrah;
 Say I will come.

Launcelot. I will go before, sir. Mistress, look out at window,
 for all this;

There will come a Christian by,
 Will be worth a Jewess' eye.

[*Exit.*

Shylock. What says that fool of Hagar's offspring, ha?

Jessica. His words were "Farewell, mistress;" nothing else.

Shylock. The patch² is kind enough, but a huge feeder;
 Snail-slow in profit, and he sleeps by day
 More than the wild cat: drones hive not with me;
 Therefore I part with him, and part with him
 To one that I would have him help to waste
 His borrow'd purse. Well, Jessica, go in:
 Perhaps I will return immediately:
 Do as I bid you; shut doors after you:
 Fast bind, fast find;
 A proverb never stale in thrifty mind.

[*Exit.*

Jessica. Farewell; and if my fortune be not crost,
 I have a father, you a daughter, lost.

[*Exit.*

SCENE VI. *The Same.*

Enter GRATIANO and SALARINO, masqued.

Gratiano. This is the penthouse³ under which Lorenzo
 Desired us to make stand.

¹ See Gen. xxxii. 10, and Heb. xi. 21. ² Fool. ³ Shed.

Salarino. His hour is almost past.

Gratiano. And it is marvel he outdwells his hour,
For lovers ever run before the clock.

Salarino. Oh, ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly
To seal love's bonds new-made, than they are wont
To keep obliged faith unforfeited!¹

Gratiano. That ever holds: who riseth from a feast
With that keen appetite that he sits down?
Where is the horse that doth untread again
His tedious measures with the unbated fire
That he did pace them first? All things that are,
Are with more spirit chased than enjoy'd.

Salarino. Here comes Lorenzo: more of this hereafter.

Enter LORENZO.

Lorenzo. Sweet friends, your patience for my long abode;
Not I, but my affairs, have made you wait:
When you shall please to play the thieves for wives,
I'll watch as long for you then. Approach;
Here dwells my father Jew. Ho! who's within?

Enter JESSICA, above, in boy's clothes.

Jessica. Who are you? Tell me, for more certainty,
Albeit I'll swear that I do know your tongue.

Lorenzo. Lorenzo, and thy love.

Jessica. Lorenzo, certain, and my love indeed,
For whom love I so much? And now who knows
But you, Lorenzo, whether I am yours?

Lorenzo. Heaven and thy thoughts are witness that thou art.

Jessica. Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains.
I am glad 'tis night, you do not look on me,
For I am much asham'd of my exchange:

¹ "Ten times faster," etc., i.e., the goddess of love, in her dove-drawn chariot, flies ten times faster, to assist in sealing new bonds of love, than to assist in keeping inviolate the bonds that have been formed.

But love is blind and lovers cannot see
 The pretty follies that themselves commit ;
 For if they could, Cupid¹ himself would blush
 To see me thus transformed to a boy.

Lorenzo. Descend, for you must be my torchbearer.

Jessica. What, must I hold a candle to my shames ?
 They in themselves, good sooth,² are too, too light.
 Why, 'tis an office of discovery, love ;
 And I should be obscur'd.

Lorenzo. So are you, sweet,
 Even in the lovely garnish of a boy.
 But come at once ;
 For the close night doth play the runaway,
 And we are stay'd for at Bassanio's feast.

Jessica. I will make fast the doors, and gild myself
 With some more ducats, and be with you straight. [*Exit above.*]

Gratiano. Now, by my hood, a Gentile and no Jew.

Lorenzo. Beshrew me but I love her heartily ;
 For she is wise, if I can judge of her,
 And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true,
 And true she is, as she hath prov'd herself,
 And therefore, like herself, wise, fair, and true,
 Shall she be placed in my constant soul.

Enter JESSICA, below.

What, art thou come ? On, gentlemen ; away !
 Our masquing mates by this time for us stay.

[*Exit with Jessica and Salarino.*]

Enter ANTONIO.

Antonio. Who's there ?

Gratiano. Signior Antonio !

Antonio. Fie, fie, Gratiano ! where are all the rest ?

¹ Cupid, the god of love of classic mythology, is represented as a winged infant bearing a bow and quiver full of arrows.

² " Good sooth," i. e., in very truth.

'Tis nine o'clock : our friends all stay for you.
 No masque to-night : the wind is come about ;
 Bassanio presently will go aboard :
 I have sent twenty out to seek for you.

Gratiano. I am glad on't : I desire no more delight
 Than to be under sail and gone to-night. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII. *Belmont. A Room in PORTIA'S House.*

Flourish of cornets. Enter PORTIA, with the PRINCE OF MOROCCO, and their trains.

Portia. Go draw aside the curtains and discover
 The several caskets to this noble prince.
 Now make your choice.

Morocco. The first, of gold, who¹ this inscription bears,
 " *Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire ;*"
 The second, silver, which this promise carries,
 " *Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves ;*"
 This third, dull lead, with warning all as blunt,
 " *Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.*"
 How shall I know if I do choose the right ?

Portia. The one of them contains my picture, prince :
 If you choose that, then I am yours withal.

Morocco. Some god direct my judgment ! Let me see ;
 I will survey the inscriptions back again.
 What says this leaden casket ?

" *Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.*"
 Must give : for what ? for lead ? hazard for lead ?
 This casket threatens. Men that hazard all
 Do it in hope of fair advantages :
 A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross ;
 I'll then nor give nor hazard aught for lead.

¹ " Who " and " which " were to some extent used indifferently by writers of the time.

What says the silver with her virgin hue?
 "Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves."
 As much as he deserves! Pause there, Morocco,
 And weigh thy value with an even hand:
 If thou be'st rated by thy estimation,
 Thou dost deserve enough; and yet enough
 May not extend so far as to the lady:
 And yet to be afraid of my deserving
 Were but a weak disabling of myself.
 As much as I deserve! Why, that's the lady:
 I do in birth deserve her, and in fortunes,
 In graces and in qualities of breeding;
 But more than these, in love I do deserve.
 What if I stray'd no further, but chose here?
 Let's see once more this saying grav'd in gold;
 "Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire."
 Why, that's the lady; all the world desires her;
 From the four corners of the earth they come,
 To kiss this shrine, this mortal-breathing saint:
 The Hyrcanian¹ deserts and the vasty wilds
 Of wide Arabia are as throughfares² now
 For princes to come view fair Portia:
 The watery kingdom, whose ambitious head
 Spits in the face of heaven, is no bar
 To stop the foreign spirits, but they come,
 As o'er a brook, to see fair Portia.
 One of these three contains her heavenly picture.
 Is't like that lead contains her? 'Twere damnation
 To think so base a thought: it were too gross
 To rib her cerecloth³ in the obscure grave.
 Or shall I think in silver she's immur'd,

¹ Hyrcania was the name given to a district of uncertain extent south of the Caspian or Hyrcanian Sea. Shakespeare alludes to it in other plays as a "land of tigers."
² Thoroughfares.

³ A prepared cloth used for wrapping a corpse.

Being ten times undervalued to tri'd gold?
 O sinful thought! Never so rich a gem
 Was set in worse than gold. They have in England
 A coin that bears the figure of an angel¹
 Stamp'd in gold, but that's insculp'd upon;
 But here an angel in a golden bed
 Lies all within. Deliver me the key:
 Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may!

Portia. There, take it, prince; and if my form lie there,
 Then I am yours. [*He unlocks the golden casket.*]

Morocco. O hell! what have we here?
 A carrion Death, within whose empty eye
 There is a written scroll! I'll read the writing.

[*Reads*] "*All that glisters is not gold;
 Often have you heard that told:
 Many a man his life hath sold
 But my outside to behold:
 Gilded tombs do worms infold.
 Had you been as wise as bold,
 Young in limbs, in judgment old,
 Your answer had not been inscroll'd:
 Fare you well; your suit is cold.*"

Cold, indeed; and labor lost:

Then, farewell, heat, and welcome, frost!

Portia, adieu. I have too griev'd a heart
 To take a tedious leave: thus losers part.

[*Exit with his train. Flourish of cornets.*]

Portia. A gentle riddance. Draw the curtains, go.

Let all of his complexion choose me so.

[*Exeunt.*]

¹ An old English coin first coined in the reign of Edward IV. (1465) bore the figure of St. Michael piercing the dragon.

SCENE VIII. *Venice. A Street.**Enter SALARINO and SALANIO.*

Salarino. Why, man, I saw Bassanio under sail:
With him is Gratiano gone along;
And in their ship I am sure Lorenzo is not.

Salanio. The villain Jew with outcries rais'd the duke,
Who went with him to search Bassanio's ship.

Salarino. He came too late, the ship was under sail:
But there the duke was given to understand
That in a gondola¹ were seen together
Lorenzo and his amorous Jessica:
Besides, Antonio certified the duke
They were not with Bassanio in his ship.

Salanio. I never heard a passion so confus'd,
So strange, outrageous, and so variable,
As the dog Jew did utter in the streets:
"My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
Justice! the law! my ducats, and my daughter!
A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,
Of double ducats, stol'n from me by my daughter!
And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones,
Stol'n by my daughter! Justice! find the girl;
She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats."

Salarino. Why, all the boys in Venice follow him,
Crying, his stones, his daughter, and his ducats.

Salanio. Let good Antonio look he keep his day,
Or he shall pay for this.

Salarino. Marry, well remember'd.
I reason'd² with a Frenchman yesterday,
Who told me, in the narrow seas that part
The French and English, there miscarried

¹ The Venetian pleasure boat.² Talked.

A vessel of our country richly fraught :¹
 I thought upon Antonio when he told me ;
 And wish'd in silence that it were not his.

Salanio. You were best to tell Antonio what you hear ;
 Yet do not suddenly, for it may grieve him.

Salarino. A kinder gentleman treads not the earth.

I saw Bassanio and Antonio part :
 Bassanio told him he would make some speed
 Of his return : he answer'd, " Do not so ;
 Slubber² not business for my sake, Bassanio,
 But stay the very riping of the time ;
 And for the Jew's bond which he hath of me,
 Let it not enter in your mind of love :
 Be merry, and employ your chiefest thoughts
 To courtship and such fair ostents³ of love
 As shall conveniently become you there : "
 And even there, his eye being big with tears,
 Turning his face, he put his hand behind him,
 And with affection wondrous sensible⁴
 He wrung Bassanio's hand ; and so they parted.

Salanio. I think he only loves the world for him.
 I pray thee, let us go and find him out
 And quicken his embraced heaviness
 With some delight or other.

Salarino. Do we so. [Exeunt.

SCENE IX. *Belmont. A Room in PORTIA'S House.*

Enter NERISSA with a Servitor.

Nerissa. Quick, quick, I pray thee ; draw the curtain straight :⁵
 The Prince of Arragon hath ta'en his oath,
 And comes to his election⁶ presently.

¹ Laden. ² To do carelessly. ³ Manifestations. ⁴ Sensitive.

⁵ At once. ⁶ " To his election," i.e., to make his choice.

Flourish of cornets. Enter the PRINCE OF ARRAGON, PORTIA, and their trains.

Portia. Behold, there stand the caskets, noble prince :
If you choose that wherein I am contain'd,
Straight shall our nuptial rites be solemniz'd :
But if you fail, without more speech, my lord,
You must be gone from hence immediately.

Arragon. I am enjoin'd by oath to observe three things :
First, never to unfold to any one
Which casket 'twas I chose ; next, if I fail
Of the right casket, never in my life
To woo a maid in way of marriage ;
Lastly,
If I do fail in fortune of my choice,
Immediately to leave you and be gone.

Portia. To these injunctions every one doth swear
That comes to hazard for my worthless self.

Arragon. And so have I address'd me.¹ Fortune now
To my heart's hope ! Gold, silver, and base lead.
“ *Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.*”
You shall look fairer, ere I give or hazard.
What says the golden chest ? ha ! let me see :
“ *Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.*”
What many men desire ! that “ many ” may be meant
By² the fool multitude, that choose by show,
Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach ;
Which pries not to the interior, but, like the martlet,³
Builds in the weather on the outward wall,
Even in the force and road of casualty.
I will not choose what many men desire,
Because I will not jump with⁴ common spirits

¹ “Address'd me,” i.e., made myself ready.

² For. ³ The house martin.

⁴ “Jump with,” i.e., go with. “Jump” is often used by Shakespeare in this sense of “agreement.”

And rank me with the barbarous multitudes.
 Why, then to thee, thou silver treasure-house ;
 Tell me once more what title thou dost bear :
 “ *Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.*”
 And well said too ; for who shall go about
 To cozen fortune and be honorable
 Without the stamp of merit ? Let none presume
 To wear an undeserved dignity.
 Oh that estates,¹ degrees, and offices
 Were not deriv'd corruptly, and that clear honor
 Were purchas'd by the merit of the wearer !
 How many then should cover that stand bare !
 How many be commanded that command !
 How much low peasantry would then be glean'd
 From the true seed of honor ! and how much honor
 Pick'd from the chaff and ruin of the times
 To be new-varnish'd ! Well, but to my choice :
 “ *Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.*”

I will assume desert. Give me a key for this,
 And instantly unlock my fortunes here. [*He opens the silver casket.*]

Portia. Too long a pause for that which you find there.

Arragon. What's here ? The portrait of a blinking idiot,
 Presenting me a schedule ! I will read it.
 How much unlike art thou to Portia !
 How much unlike my hopes and my deservings !
 “ *Who chooseth me shall have as much as he deserves.*”

Did I deserve no more than a fool's head ?
 Is that my prize ? are my deserts no better ?

Portia. To offend, and judge, are distinct offices
 And of opposed natures.

Arragon. What is here ?

[*Reads*] “ *The fire seven times tried this :
 Seven times tried that judgment is,
 That did never choose amiss.*”

¹ Dignities, not property.

*Some there be that shadows kiss;
Such have but a shadow's bliss:
There be fools alive, I wis,¹
Silver'd o'er; and so was this.
Take what wife you will to wed,
I will ever be your head:
So be gone: you are sped."*

Still more fool I shall appear
By the time I linger here:
With one fool's head I came to woo,
But I go away with two.
Sweet, adieu. I'll keep my oath,
Patiently to bear my wroth.²

[*Exeunt Arragon and train.*

Portia. Thus hath the candle sing'd the moth.
Oh, these deliberate fools! when they do choose,
They have the wisdom by their wit to lose.

Nerissa. The ancient saying is no heresy,
Hanging and wiving goes by destiny.

Portia. Come, draw the curtain, Nerissa.

Enter a Servant.

Servant. Where is my lady?

Portia. Here: what would my lord?

Servant. Madam, there is alighted at your gate
A young Venetian, one that comes before
'To signify the approaching of his lord;
From whom he bringeth sensible greets,³
To wit, besides commends and courteous breath,
Gifts of rich value. Yet I have not seen
So likely an ambassador of love:

¹ Am sure.

² "Patiently to bear," etc., i.e., patiently to bear the disappointment that has caused my anger.

³ "Sensible greets," i.e., substantial greetings.

A day in April never came so sweet,
To show how costly summer was at hand,
As this fore-spurrer comes before his lord.

Portia. No more, I pray thee: I am half afraid
Thou wilt say anon he is some kin to thee,
Thou spend'st such high-day wit in praising him.
Come, come, Nerissa; for I long to see
Quick Cupid's post¹ that comes so mannerly.

Nerissa. Bassanio, lord Love, if thy will it be! [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I. *Venice. A Street.*

Enter SALANIO and SALARINO.

Salanio. Now, what news on the Rialto?

Salarino. Why, yet it lives there uncheck'd that Antonio hath
a ship of rich lading wreck'd on the narrow seas; the Good-
wins,² I think they call the place; a very dangerous flat and
fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried, as they
say, if my gossip Report be an honest woman of her word.

Salanio. I would she were as lying a gossip in that as ever
knapp'd³ ginger or made her neighbors believe she wept for the
death of a third husband. But it is true, without any slips of
prolixity or crossing the plain highway of talk, that the good
Antonio, the honest Antonio, — Oh that I had a title good
enough to keep his name company! —

Salarino. Come, the full stop.

Salanio. Ha! what say'st thou? Why, the end is, he hath
lost a ship.

Salarino. I would it might prove the end of his losses.

¹ Postman.

² The Goodwin Sands, not far from the mouth of the Thames. They were
at one time an island, the property of Earl Goodwin, which was submerged
about the year 1100.

³ Snapped, or broke off.

Salanio. Let me say "amen" betimes, lest the devil cross my prayer, for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew.

Enter SHYLOCK.

How now, Shylock! what news among the merchants?

Shylock. You knew, none so well, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight.

Salarino. That's certain: I, for my part, knew the tailor that made the wings she flew withal.

Salanio. And Shylock, for his own part, knew the bird was fledg'd; and then it is the complexion¹ of them all to leave the dam.

Shylock. She is damn'd for it.

Salarino. That's certain if the devil may be her judge.

Shylock. My own flesh and blood to rebel!

Salanio. Out upon it, old carrion! rebels it at these years?

Shylock. I say, my daughter is my flesh and blood.

Salarino. There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet and ivory: more between your bloods than there is between red wine and rhenish. But tell us, do you hear whether Antonio have had any loss at sea or no?

Shylock. There I have another bad match: a bankrupt, a prodigal, who dare scarce show his head on the Rialto; a beggar, that was us'd to come so smug² upon the mart; let him look to his bond: he was wont to call me usurer; let him look to his bond: he was wont to lend money for a Christian courtesy; let him look to his bond.

Salarino. Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh: what's that good for?

Shylock. To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgrac'd me, and hinder'd me half a million; laugh'd at my losses, mock'd at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine

¹ Disposition.

² Studiously neat and trim, with a self-satisfied air.

enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villany you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

Enter a Servant.

Servant. Gentlemen, my master Antonio is at his house and desires to speak with you both.

Salarino. We have been up and down to seek him.

Enter TUBAL.

Salanio. Here comes another of the tribe: a third cannot be match'd, unless the devil himself turn Jew.

[Exeunt Salanio, Salarino, and Servant.]

Shylock. How now, Tubal! what news from Genoa? hast thou found my daughter?

Tubal. I often came where I did hear of her, but cannot find her.

Shylock. Why, there, there, there, there! a diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort! The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it till now: two thousand ducats in that; and other precious, precious jewels. I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! would she were hears'd at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin! No news of them? Why, so: and I know not what's spent in the search: why, thou loss upon loss! the thief

gone with so much, and so much to find the thief; and no satisfaction, no revenge: nor no ill luck stirring but what lights on my shoulders; no sighs but of my breathing; no tears but of my shedding.

Tubal. Yes, other men have ill luck too: Antonio, as I heard in Genoa, —

Shylock. What, what, what? ill luck, ill luck?

Tubal. Hath an argosy cast away, coming from Tripolis.

Shylock. I thank God, I thank God. Is't true, is't true?

Tubal. I spoke with some of the sailors that escaped the wreck.

Shylock. I thank thee, good Tubal: good news, good news! ha, ha! where? in Genoa?

Tubal. Your daughter spent in Genoa, as I heard, in one night fourscore ducats.

Shylock. Thou stick'st a dagger in me: I shall never see my gold again: fourscore ducats at a sitting! fourscore ducats!

Tubal. There came divers of Antonio's creditors in my company to Venice, that swear he cannot choose but break.

Shylock. I am very glad of it: I'll plague him; I'll torture him: I am glad of it.*

Tubal. One of them showed me a ring that he had of your daughter for a monkey.

Shylock. Out upon her! Thou torturest me, Tubal: it was my turquoise: I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor: I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys.

Tubal. But Antonio is certainly undone.

Shylock. Nay, that's true, that's very true. Go, Tubal, fee me an officer; bespeak him a fortnight before. I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit; for, were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise¹ I will. Go, go, Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue; go, good Tubal; at our synagogue, Tubal.

[*Exeunt.*]

¹ Profit by merchandising.

SCENE II. *Belmont. A Room in PORTIA'S House.*

Enter BASSANIO, PORTIA, GRATIANO, NERISSA, and Attendants.

Portia. I pray you, tarry: pause a day or two
Before you hazard; for, in choosing wrong,
I lose your company: therefore forbear awhile.
There's something tells me, but it is not love,
I would not lose you; and you know yourself,
Hate counsels not in such a quality.
But lest you should not understand me well, —
And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought, —
I would detain you here some month or two
Before you venture for me. I could teach you
How to choose right, but I am then forsworn;
So will I never be: so may you miss me;
But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin,
That I had been forsworn. Beshrew your eyes,
They have o'erlook'd¹ me and divided me;
One half of me is yours, the other half yours,
Mine own, I would say; but if mine, then yours,
And so all yours. Oh, these naughty times
Put bars between the owners and their rights!
And so, though yours, not yours. Prove it so,
Let fortune go to hell for it, not I.
I speak too long; but 'tis to peize the time,²
To eke it, and to draw it out in length,
To stay you from election.

Bassanio. Let me choose;
For as I am, I live upon the rack.

¹ Bewitched, in allusion to the superstitious notion of the influence of malignant and envious eyes.

² "To peize the time," i.e., to weight the time, that it may pass slowly. "Peize" is from the French word signifying "to weigh" or "to balance."

Portia. Upon the rack, Bassanio ! then confess
What treason there is mingled with your love.

Bassanio. None but that ugly treason of mistrust,
Which makes me fear the enjoying of my love :
There may as well be amity and life
'Tween snow and fire, as treason and my love.

Portia. Ay, but I fear you speak upon the rack,
Where men enforced do speak anything.

Bassanio. Promise me life, and I'll confess the truth.

Portia. Well then, confess and live.

Bassanio. " Confess " and " love "

Had been the very sum of my confession :
O happy torment, when my torturer
Doth teach me answers for deliverance !
But let me to my fortune and the caskets.

Portia. Away, then ! I am lock'd in one of them :
If you do love me, you will find me out.
Nerissa and the rest, stand all aloof.
Let music sound while he doth make his choice ;
Then, if he lose, he makes a swan-like¹ end,
Fading in music : that the comparison
May stand more proper, my eye shall be the stream
And watery deathbed for him. He may win ;
And what is music then ? Then music is
Even as the flourish when true subjects bow
To a new-crowned monarch : such it is
As are those dulcet sounds in break of day
That creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear
And summon him to marriage. Now he goes,
With no less presence, but with much more love,
Than young Alcides,² when he did redeem

¹ It is an old belief that the swan, at other times songless, " chants a doleful hymn to his own death."

² It fell to the lot of Hesione, daughter of Laomedon, King of Troy, to be exposed to the sea monster to whom the Trojans from time to time offered

The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy
 To the sea monster: I stand for sacrifice;
 The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives,¹
 With bleared visages, come forth to view
 The issue of the exploit. Go, Hercules!
 Live thou, I live: with much, much more dismay
 I view the fight than thou that mak'st the fray.

Music, whilst BASSANIO comments on the caskets to himself.

*
 SONG.

*Tell me where is fancy bred,
 Or in the heart or in the head?
 How begot, how nourished?*

Reply, reply.

*It is engender'd in the eyes,
 With gazing fed; and fancy dies
 In the cradle where it lies.*

*Let us all ring fancy's knell:
 I'll begin it, — Ding, dong, bell.*

All. Ding, dong, bell.

Bassanio. So may the outward shows be least themselves:
 The world is still deceiv'd with ornament.
 In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt
 But, being season'd with a gracious voice,
 Obscures the show of evil? In religion,
 What damned error, but some sober brow
 Will bless it and approve it with a text,
 Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?

a marriageable virgin to appease the wrath of Apollo and Neptune, whom Laomedon had offended; but Alcides (Hercules, see Note 3, p. 35), who, returning from his expedition against the Amazons, had stopped at Troy, promised to rescue the princess provided he received as a reward six beautiful horses. The king consented, and Alcides attacked and slew the monster just as he was going to devour the maiden.

¹ "Dardanian wives," i.e., Trojan matrons. It is fabled that Dardanus, son of Jupiter, founded the Kingdom of Troy: hence this appellation of "Dardanian" to its inhabitants.

There is no vice so simple but assumes
Some mark of virtue on his¹ outward parts:
How many cowards, whose hearts are all as false
As stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins
The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars,
Who, inward search'd, have livers white as milk;
And these assume but valor's excrement²
To render them redoubted! Look on beauty,
And you shall see 'tis purchas'd by the weight;
Which therein works a miracle in nature,
Making them lightest that wear most of it:
So are those crisped snaky golden locks
Which make such wanton gambols with the wind,
Upon supposed fairness, often known
To be the dowry of a second head,
The skull that bred them in the sepulcher.
Thus ornament is but the guiled³ shore
To a most dangerous sea; the beauteous scarf
Veiling an Indian beauty; in a word,
The seeming truth which cunning times put on
To entrap the wisest. Therefore, thou gaudy gold,
Hard food for Midas,⁴ I will none of thee;
Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge
'Tween man and man: but thou, thou meager lead,

¹ In Shakespeare's time "his" was used as the possessive of "it" as well as of "he."

² "Valor's excrement," i.e., the outward sign of valor, referring here to the beard.

³ Treacherous.

⁴ Midas was a King of Phrygia. According to the mythologists, his hospitality to Silenus, the preceptor of Bacchus, was liberally rewarded by that god; and he was permitted to demand any recompense he desired. The King asked that whatever he touched might be turned into gold. His request was granted; but, when the very meats he attempted to eat became gold in his mouth, he begged Bacchus to revoke a gift that must prove fatal to the receiver.

Which rather threat'nest than dost promise aught,
Thy plainness moves me more than eloquence ;
And here choose I : joy be the consequence !

Portia. [*Aside*] How all the other passions fleet to air,
As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embrac'd despair,
And shudd'ring fear, and green-eyed jealousy !
O love,

Be moderate ; allay thy ecstasy ;
In measure rain thy joy ; scant this excess.
I feel too much thy blessing : make it less,
For fear I surfeit.

Bassanio. What find I here ?

[*Opening the leaden casket.*]

Fair Portia's counterfeit ! What demigod
Hath come so near creation ? Move these eyes ?
Or whether, riding on the balls of mine,
Seem they in motion ? Here are sever'd lips,
Parted with sugar breath : so sweet a bar
Should sunder such sweet friends. Here in her hairs
The painter plays the spider and hath woven
A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men
Faster than gnats in cobwebs : but her eyes, —
How could he see to do them ? having made one,
Methinks it should have power to steal both his
And leave itself unfurnish'd. Yet look, how far
The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow
In underprizing it, so far this shadow
Doth limp behind the substance. Here's the scroll,
The continent¹ and summary of my fortune.

[*Reads*] “ *You that choose not by the view,
Chance as fair and choose as true !
Since this fortune falls to you,
Be content and seek no new.* ”

¹ “ Continent ” means here “ that which contains.”

*If you be well pleas'd with this
And hold your fortune for your bliss,
Turn you where your lady is
And claim her with a loving kiss."*

A gentle scroll. Fair lady, by your leave ;
I come by note, to give and to receive.
Like one of two contending in a prize,
That thinks he hath done well in people's eyes,
Hearing applause and universal shout,
Giddy in spirit, still gazing in a doubt
Whether those peals of praise be his or no ;
So, thrice-fair lady, stand I, even so ;
As doubtful whether what I see be true,
Until confirm'd, sign'd, ratified by you.

Portia. You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
Such as I am : though for myself alone
I would not be ambitious in my wish,
To wish myself much better ; yet, for you
I would be trebled twenty times myself ;
A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times
More rich ;
That only to stand high in your account,
I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,
Exceed account ; but the full sum of me
Is sum of nothing, which, to term in gross,
Is an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractic'd ;
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn ; happier then in this,
She is not bred so dull but she can learn ;
Happiest of all in that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed,
As from her lord, her governor, her king.
Myself and what is mine to you and yours
Is now converted : but now I was the lord
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,

Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,
This house, these servants, and this same myself
Are yours, my lord: I give them with this ring;
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love
And be my vantage to exclaim on you.

Bassanio. Madam, you have bereft me of all words,
Only my blood speaks to you in my veins;
And there is such confusion in my powers,
As, after some oration fairly spoke
By a beloved prince, there doth appear
Among the buzzing pleased multitude;
Where every something, being blent together,
Turns to a wild of nothing, save of joy,
Express'd and not express'd. But when this ring
Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence:
Oh, then be bold to say Bassanio's dead!

Nerissa. My lord and lady, it is now our time,
That have stood by and seen our wishes prosper,
To cry, good joy: good joy, my lord and lady!

Gratiano. My lord Bassanio and my gentle lady,
I wish you all the joy that you can wish;
For I am sure you can wish none from me:
And when your honors mean to solemnize
The bargain of your faith, I do beseech you,
Even at that time I may be married too.

Bassanio. With all my heart, so thou canst get a wife.

Gratiano. I thank your lordship, you have got me one.
My eyes, my lord, can look as swift as yours:
You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid;
You lov'd, I lov'd; for intermission¹
No more pertains to me, my lord, than you.
Your fortune stood upon the casket there,

¹ Delay.

And so did mine too, as the matter falls ;
 For wooing here until I sweat again,
 And swearing till my very roof was dry
 With oaths of love, at last, if promise last,
 I got a promise of this fair one here
 To have her love, provided that your fortune
 Achiev'd her mistress.

Portia. Is this true, Nerissa ?

Nerissa. Madam, it is, so you stand pleas'd withal.

Bassanio. And do you, Gratiano, mean good faith ?

Gratiano. Yes, faith, my lord.

Bassanio. Our feast shall be much honor'd in your marriage.

Gratiano. But who comes here ? Lorenzo and his infidel ?
 What, and my old Venetian friend Salanio ?

Enter LORENZO, JESSICA, and SALANIO, a messenger from Venice.

Bassanio. Lorenzo and Salanio, welcome hither ;
 If that the youth of my new interest here
 Have power to bid you welcome. By your leave,
 I bid my very¹ friends and countrymen,
 Sweet Portia, welcome.

Portia. So do I, my lord :
 They are entirely welcome.

Lorenzo. I thank your honor. For my part, my lord,
 My purpose was not to have seen you here ;
 But meeting with Salanio by the way,
 He did entreat me, past all saying nay,
 To come with him along.

Salanio. I did, my lord ;
 And I have reason for it. Signior Antonio
 Commends him to you. [*Gives Bassanio a letter.*]

Bassanio. Ere I ope his letter,
 I pray you, tell me how my good friend doth.

¹ True.

Salanio. Not sick, my lord, unless it be in mind ;
Nor well, unless in mind : his letter there
Will show you his estate.¹

Gratiano. Nerissa, cheer yon stranger ; bid her welcome.
Your hand, Salanio ; what's the news from Venice ?
How doth that royal merchant, good Antonio ?
I know he will be glad of our success ;
We are the Jasons,² we have won the fleece.

Salanio. I would you had won the fleece that he hath lost.

Portia. There are some shrewd³ contents in yon same paper,
That steals the color from Bassanio's cheek :
Some dear friend dead ; else nothing in the world
Could turn so much the constitution
Of any constant man. What, worse and worse !
With leave, Bassanio ; I am half yourself,
And I must freely have the half of anything
That this same paper brings you.

Bassanio. O sweet Portia,
Here are a few of the unpleasant'st words
That ever blotted paper ! Gentle lady,
When I did first impart my love to you,
I freely told you, all the wealth I had
Ran in my veins, I was a gentleman ;
And then I told you true : and yet, dear lady,
Rating myself at nothing, you shall see
How much I was a braggart. When I told you
My state was nothing, I should then have told you
That I was worse than nothing ; for, indeed,
I have engag'd myself to a dear friend,
Engag'd my friend to his mere⁴ enemy,
To feed my means. Here is a letter, lady ;
The paper as the body of my friend,
And every word in it a gaping wound,

¹ Condition.

² See Note 3, p. 23.

³ Bitter.

⁴ Thorough.

Issuing lifeblood. But is it true, Salanio ?
 Have all his ventures fail'd ? What, not one hit ?
 From Tripolis, from Mexico and England,
 From Lisbon, Barbary and India ?
 And not one vessel 'scape the dreadful touch
 Of merchant-marring rocks ?

Salanio. Not one, my lord.

Besides, it should appear, that if he had
 The present money to discharge the Jew,
 He would not take it. Never did I know
 A creature, that did bear the shape of man,
 So keen and greedy to confound a man :
 He plies the duke at morning and at night,
 And doth impeach the freedom of the state,
 If they deny him justice : twenty merchants,
 The duke himself, and the magnificoes ¹
 Of greatest port,² have all persuaded ³ with him ;
 But none can drive him from the envious ⁴ plea
 Of forfeiture, of justice and his bond.

Jessica. When I was with him I have heard him swear
 To Tubal and to Chus, his countrymen,
 That he would rather have Antonio's flesh
 Than twenty times the value of the sum
 That he did owe him : and I know, my lord,
 If law, authority, and power deny not,
 It will go hard with poor Antonio.

Portia. Is it your dear friend that is thus in trouble ?

Bassanio. The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,
 The best-condition'd and unwearied spirit
 In doing courtesies, and one in whom
 The ancient Roman honor more appears
 Than any that draws breath in Italy.

¹ The chief men of Venice.

² "Greatest port," i.e., highest dignity.

³ Argued.

⁴ Malicious.

Portia. What sum owes he the Jew ?

Bassanio. For me three thousand ducats.

Portia.

What, no more?

Pay him six thousand, and deface the bond ;
 Double six thousand, and then treble that,
 Before a friend of this description
 Shall lose a hair through Bassanio's fault.
 First go with me to church and call me wife,
 And then away to Venice to your friend ;
 For never shall you lie by Portia's side
 With an unquiet soul. You shall have gold
 To pay the petty debt twenty times over :
 When it is paid, bring your true friend along.
 My maid Nerissa and myself meantime
 Will live as maids and widows. Come, away !
 For you shall hence upon your wedding day :
 Bid your friends welcome, show a merry cheer :¹
 Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear.
 But let me hear the letter of your friend.

Bassanio. [*Reads*] "*Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit ; and since in paying it, it is impossible I should live, all debts are clear'd between you and I,² if I might but see you at my death. Notwithstanding, use your pleasure : if your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter.*"

Portia. O love, dispatch all business, and be gone !

Bassanio. Since I have your good leave to go away,

I will make haste : but, till I come again,

No bed shall e'er be guilty of my stay,

No rest be interposer 'twixt us twain.

[*Exeunt.*]

¹ Countenance.

² "Between you and I," a grammatical irregularity often found in the literature of the Elizabethan age.

SCENE III. *Venice. A Street.*

Enter SHYLOCK, SALARINO, ANTONIO, and Gaoler.

Shylock. Gaoler, look to him: tell not me of mercy;
This is the fool that lent out money gratis:
Gaoler, look to him.

Antonio. Hear me yet, good Shylock.

Shylock. I'll have my bond; speak not against my bond:
I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond.
Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause;
But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs:
The duke shall grant me justice. I do wonder,
Thou naughty gaoler, that thou art so fond¹
To come abroad with him at his request.

Antonio. I pray thee, hear me speak.

Shylock. I'll have my bond; I will not hear thee speak:
I'll have my bond; and therefore speak no more.
I'll not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool,
To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield
To Christian intercessors. Follow not;
I'll have no speaking: I will have my bond.

[*Exit.*]

Salarino. It is the most impenetrable cur
That ever kept² with men.

Antonio. Let him alone:

I'll follow him no more with bootless prayers.
He seeks my life; his reason well I know:
I oft deliver'd from his forfeitures
Many that have at times made moan to me;
Therefore he hates me.

Salarino. I am sure the duke
Will never grant this forfeiture to hold.

Antonio. The duke cannot deny the course of law:
For the commodity that strangers have

¹ Foolish.

² Lived.

With us in Venice, if it be denied,
Will much impeach the justice of his state;
Since that the trade and profit of the city
Consisteth of all nations.¹ Therefore, go:
These griefs and losses have so bated me,
That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh
To-morrow to my bloody creditor.
Well, gaoler, on. Pray God, Bassanio come
To see me pay his debt, and then I care not!

[*Exeunt.*]SCENE IV. *Belmont. A Room in PORTIA'S House.*

Enter PORTIA, NERISSA, LORENZO, JESSICA, and BALTHASAR.

Lorenzo. Madam, although I speak it in your presence,
You have a noble and a true conceit²
Of godlike amity; which appears most strongly
In bearing thus the absence of your lord.
But if you knew to whom you show this honor,
How true a gentleman you send relief,
How dear a lover of my lord your husband,
I know you would be prouder of the work
Than customary bounty can enforce you.

Portia. I never did repent for doing good,
Nor shall not now: for in companions
That do converse and waste³ the time together,
Whose souls do bear an equal yoke of love,
There must be needs a like proportion
Of lineaments, of manners, and of spirit;
Which makes me think that this Antonio,
Being the bosom lover of my lord,

¹ "For the commodity," etc. "To refuse to strangers their privileges will be an imputation on the state's justice, since it is to the strangers that the city owes its trade." Shylock was not a citizen of Venice.

² Conception.

³ "Waste" means here simply "spend," not "spend uselessly."

Must needs be like my lord. If it be so,
 How little is the cost I have bestow'd
 In purchasing the semblance of my soul
 From out the state of hellish misery !
 This comes too near the praising of myself ;
 Therefore no more of it : hear other things.
 Lorenzo, I commit into your hands
 The husbandry and manage of my house
 Until my lord's return : for mine own part,
 I have toward heaven breath'd a secret vow
 To live in prayer and contemplation,
 Only attended by Nerissa here,
 Until her husband and my lord's return :
 There is a monastery two miles off ;
 And there will we abide. I do desire you
 Not to deny this imposition ;
 The which my love and some necessity
 Now lays upon you.

Lorenzo. Madam, with all my heart ;
 I shall obey you in all fair commands.

Portia. My people do already know my mind,
 And will acknowledge you and Jessica
 In place of Lord Bassanio and myself.
 And so farewell, till we shall meet again.

Lorenzo. Fair thoughts and happy hours attend on you !

Jessica. I wish your ladyship all heart's content.

Portia. I thank you for your wish, and am well pleas'd
 To wish it back on you : fare you well, Jessica.

[*Exeunt Jessica and Lorenzo.*]

Now, Balthasar,
 As I have ever found thee honest-true,
 So let me find thee still. Take this same letter,
 And use thou all the endeavor of a man
 In speed to Padua : see thou render this
 Into my cousin's hand, Doctor Bellario ;

And, look, what notes and garments he doth give thee,
Bring them, I pray thee, with imagin'd speed
Unto the tranect,¹ to the common ferry
Which trades to Venice. Waste no time in words,
But get thee gone: I shall be there before thee.

Balthasar. Madam, I go with all convenient speed. [Exit.

Portia. Come on, Nerissa; I have work in hand
That you yet know not of: we'll see our husbands
Before they think of us.

Nerissa. Shall they see us?

Portia. They shall, Nerissa; but in such a habit,
That they shall think we are accomplished
With that we lack. I'll hold thee any wager,
When we are both accout'ed like young men,
I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,
And wear my dagger with the braver grace,
And speak between the change of man and boy
With a reed voice, and turn two mincing steps
Into a manly stride, and speak of frays
Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint² lies,
How honorable ladies sought my love,
Which I denying, they fell sick and died;
I could not do withal; then I'll repent,
And wish, for all that, that I had not kill'd them;
And twenty of these puny lies I'll tell,
That men shall swear I have discontinued school
Above a twelvemonth. I have within my mind
A thousand raw tricks of these bragging Jacks,
Which I will practice.
But come, I'll tell thee all my whole device
When I am in my coach, which stays for us
At the park gate; and therefore haste away,
For we must measure twenty miles to-day. [Exeunt.

¹ There is no other instance of the use of this word. It may be a misprint for "traject." The ferries in Venice were called *traghetti*.

² Fanciful.

SCENE V. *The Same. A Garden.**Enter LAUNCELOT and JESSICA.*

Launcelot. Yes, truly; for, look you, the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children: therefore, I promise ye, I fear you.¹ I was always plain with you, and so now I speak my agitation of the matter: therefore be of good cheer, for truly I think you are damn'd. There is but one hope in it that can do you any good; and that is but a kind of base hope neither.

Jessica. And what hope is that, I pray thee?

Launcelot. Marry, you may partly hope that you are not the Jew's daughter.

Jessica. That were a kind of base hope, indeed: so the sins of my mother should be visited upon me.

Launcelot. Truly then I fear you are damned both by father and mother: thus when I shun Scylla,² your father, I fall into Charybdis,² your mother: well, you are gone both ways.

Jessica. I shall be sav'd by my husband; he hath made me a Christian.

Launcelot. Truly, the more to blame he: we were Christians enow³ before; e'en as many as could well live, one by another. This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs: if we grow all to be pork-eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher⁴ on the coals for money.

Enter LORENZO.

Jessica. I'll tell my husband, Launcelot, what you say: here he comes.

Lorenzo. I shall grow jealous of you shortly, Launcelot.

¹ "I fear you," i.e., I fear for you.

² Scylla and Charybdis were two dangerous rocks on either side the narrow strait between Italy and Sicily. Mariners, in their solicitude to keep clear of the one, were imperiled by the other: hence "in avoiding Scylla to run upon Charybdis" became proverbial as expressing the condition of those who, anxious to shun one evil, meet with a greater.

³ Enough.

⁴ A rasher is a slice of bacon broiled over a quick fire.

Jessica. Nay, you need not fear us, Lorenzo: Launcelot and I are out. He tells me flatly, there is no mercy for me in heaven, because I am a Jew's daughter: and he says, you are no good member of the commonwealth, for in converting Jews to Christians, you raise the price of pork.

Lorenzo. Go in, sirrah; bid them prepare for dinner.

Launcelot. That is done, sir; they have all stomachs.

Lorenzo. Goodly Lord, what a wit-snapper are you! then bid them prepare dinner.

Launcelot. That is done too, sir; only "cover" is the word.

Lorenzo. Will you cover then, sir?

Launcelot. Not so, sir, neither; I know my duty.

Lorenzo. Yet more quarreling with occasion!¹ Wilt thou show the whole wealth of thy wit in an instant? I pray thee, understand a plain man in his plain meaning: go to thy fellows; bid them cover the table, serve in the meat, and we will come in to dinner.

Launcelot. For the table, sir, it shall be serv'd in; for the meat, sir, it shall be covered; for your coming in to dinner, sir, why, let it be as humors and conceits shall govern. [*Exit.*]

Lorenzo. O dear discretion, how his words are suited!
The fool hath planted in his memory
An army of good words; and I do know
A many fools, that stand in better place,
Garnish'd like him, that for a tricky word
Defy the matter. How cheer'st thou, Jessica?
And now, good sweet, say thy opinion,
How dost thou like the Lord Bassanio's wife?

Jessica. Past all expressing. It is very meet
The Lord Bassanio live an upright life;
For, having such a blessing in his lady,
He finds the joys of heaven here on earth;
And if on earth he do not mean it,² then

¹ "Quarreling with occasion," i.e., ill-timed punning and quibbling.

² "Mean it," i.e., mean to live uprightly.

In reason he should never come to heaven.
 Why, if two gods should play some heavenly match
 And on the wager lay two earthly women,
 And Portia one, there must be something else
 Pawn'd with the other, for the poor rude world
 Hath not her fellow.

Lorenzo. Even such a husband
 Hast thou of me as she is for a wife.

Jessica. Nay, but ask my opinion too of that.

Lorenzo. I will anon: first, let us go to dinner.

Jessica. Nay, let me praise you while I have a stomach.

Lorenzo. No, pray thee, let it serve for table-talk;
 Then, howsoe'er thou speak'st, 'mong other things
 I shall digest it.

Jessica. Well, I'll set you forth. [Exeunt.

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *Venice. A Court of Justice.*

*Enter the DUKE, the Magnificoes, ANTONIO, BASSANIO, GRATIANO,
 SALERIO, and others.*

Duke. What, is Antonio here?

Antonio. Ready, so please your grace.

Duke. I am sorry for thee: thou art come to answer
 A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch
 Uncapable¹ of pity, void and empty
 From any dram of mercy.

Antonio. I have heard
 Your grace hath ta'en great pains to qualify
 His rigorous course; but since he stands obdurate
 And that no lawful means can carry me
 Out of his envy's reach, I do oppose

¹ Incapable.

My patience to his fury, and am arm'd
To suffer, with a quietness of spirit,
The very tyranny and rage of his.

Duke. Go one, and call the Jew into the court.

Salerio. He is ready at the door: he comes, my lord.

Enter SHYLOCK.

Duke. Make room, and let him stand before our face.
Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too,
That thou but lead'st this fashion of thy malice
To the last hour of act; and then 'tis thought
Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange
Than is thy strange apparent cruelty;
And where thou now exact'st the penalty,
Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,
Thou wilt not only loose the forfeiture,
But, touch'd with human gentleness and love,
Forgive a moiety¹ of the principal;
Glancing an eye of pity on his losses,
That have of late so huddled on his back,
Enow to press a royal merchant down
And pluck commiseration of his state
From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint,
From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never train'd
To offices of tender courtesy.
We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

Shylock. I have possess'd your grace of what I purpose;
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn
To have the due and forfeit of my bond:
If you deny it, let the danger light
Upon your charter and your city's freedom.
You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have
A weight of carrion flesh than to receive

¹ A moiety is literally "a half," but is used here, and frequently elsewhere by Shakespeare, for "a portion."

Three thousand ducats: I'll not answer that:
 But, say, it is my humor: is it answer'd?
 What if my house be troubled with a rat
 And I be pleas'd to give ten thousand ducats
 To have it baned? ¹ What, are you answer'd yet?
 Some men there are love not a gaping pig;
 Some, that are mad if they behold a cat;
 For affection,
 Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood
 Of what it likes or loathes. Now, for your answer:
 As there is no firm reason to be render'd,
 Why he ² cannot abide a gaping pig;
 Why he, ² a harmless necessary cat;
 So can I give no reason, nor I will not,
 More than a lodg'd hate and a certain loathing
 I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
 A losing suit against him. Are you answer'd?

Bassanio. This is no answer, thou unfeeling man,
 To excuse the current of thy cruelty.

Shylock. I am not bound to please thee with my answers.

Bassanio. Do all men kill the things they do not love?

Shylock. Hates any man the thing he would not kill?

Bassanio. Every offense is not a hate at first.

Shylock. What, would'st thou have a serpent sting thee twice?

Antonio. I pray you, think you question with the Jew:
 You may as well go stand upon the beach
 And bid the main flood bate his usual height;
 You may as well use question with the wolf
 Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb;
 You may as well forbid the mountain pines
 To wag their high tops and to make no noise,
 When they are fretten ³ with the gusts of heaven;
 You may as well do anything most hard,
 As seek to soften that — than which what's harder? —

¹ Destroyed.

² This person.

³ Fretted; troubled; moved.

His Jewish heart: therefore, I do beseech you,
Make no more offers, use no further means,
But with all brief and plain conveniency
Let me have judgment and the Jew his will.

Bassanio. For thy three thousand ducats here is six.

Shylock. If every ducat in six thousand ducats
Were in six parts and every part a ducat,
I would not draw them; I would have my bond.

Duke. How shalt thou hope for mercy, rend'ring none?

Shylock. What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?
You have among you many a purchas'd slave,
Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules,
You use in abject and in slavish parts,
Because you bought them: shall I say to you,
Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?
Why sweat they under burthens? let their beds
Be made as soft as yours and let their palates
Be season'd with such viands? You will answer,
"The slaves are ours:" so do I answer you:
The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,
Is dearly bought; 'tis mine and I will have it.
If you deny me, fie upon your law!
There is no force in the decrees of Venice.

I stand for judgment: answer; shall I have it?

Duke. Upon my power I may dismiss this court,
Unless Bellario, a learned doctor,
Whom I have sent for to determine this,
Come here to-day.

Salerio. My lord, here stays without
A messenger with letters from the doctor,
New come from Padua.

Duke. Bring us the letters; call the messenger.

Bassanio. Good cheer, Antonio! What, man, courage yet!
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones and all,
Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood.

Antonio. I am a tainted wether of the flock,
Meetest for death: the weakest kind of fruit
Drops earliest to the ground; and so let me:
You cannot better be employ'd, Bassanio,
Than to live still and write mine epitaph.

Enter NERISSA, dressed like a lawyer's clerk.

Duke. Came you from Padua, from Bellario?

Nerissa. From both, my lord. Bellario greets your grace.

[*Presenting a letter.*]

Bassanio. Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?

Shylock. To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there.

Gratiano. Not on thy sole, but on thy soul, harsh Jew,
Thou mak'st thy knife keen; but no metal can,
No, not the hangman's ax, bear half the keenness
Of thy sharp envy.¹ Can no prayers pierce thee?

Shylock. No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.

Gratiano. Oh, be thou damn'd, inexorable dog!
And for thy life let justice be accus'd.
Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith
To hold opinion with Pythagoras,²
That souls of animals infuse themselves
Into the trunks of men: thy currish spirit
Govern'd a wolf, who, hang'd for human slaughter,
Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,
And, whilst thou lay'st in thy unhallow'd dam,
Infus'd itself in thee; for thy desires
Are wolfish, bloody, starv'd, and ravenous.

Shylock. Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond,
Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud:
Repair thy wit, good youth, or it will fall
To cureless ruin. I stand here for law.

¹ Malice.

² One of the most celebrated of the old Greek philosophers. He was the first among them to support the doctrine of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls into different bodies.

Duke. This letter from Bellario doth commend
A young and learned doctor to our court.
Where is he?

Nerissa. He attendeth here hard by,¹
To know your answer, whether you'll admit him.

Duke. With all my heart. Some three or four of you
Go give him courteous conduct to this place.
Meantime the court shall hear Bellario's letter.

Clerk. [*Reads*] "*Your grace shall understand that at the receipt of your letter I am very sick: but in the instant that your messenger came, in loving visitation was with me a young doctor of Rome; his name is Balthasar. I acquainted him with the cause in controversy between the Jew and Antonio the merchant: we turn'd o'er many books together: he is furnished with my opinion; which, better'd with his own learning, the greatness whereof I cannot enough commend, comes with him, at my importunity, to fill up your grace's request in my stead. I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation; for I never knew so young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better publish his commendation.*"

Duke. You hear the learn'd Bellario, what he writes:
And here, I take it, is the doctor come.

Enter PORTIA, dressed like a doctor of laws.

Give me your hand. Came you from old Bellario?

Portia. I did, my lord.

Duke. You are welcome: take your place.
Are you acquainted with the difference
That holds this present question in the court?

Portia. I am inform'd throughly² of the cause.
Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?

Duke. Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.

Portia. Is your name Shylock?

Shylock. Shylock is my name.

¹ "Hard by," i.e., close at hand.

² Thoroughly.

Portia. Of a strange nature is the suit you follow ;
 Yet in such rule that the Venetian law
 Cannot impugn you as you do proceed.
 You stand within his danger, do you not ?

Antonio. Ay, so he says.

Portia. Do you confess the bond ?

Antonio. I do.

Portia. Then must the Jew be merciful.

Shylock. On what compulsion must I ? tell me that.

Portia. The quality of mercy is not strain'd,¹
 It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
 Upon the place beneath : it is twice blest ;
 It blesseth him that gives and him that takes :
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest : it becomes
 The throned monarch better than his crown ;
 His scepter shows the force of temporal power,
 The attribute to awe and majesty,
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings ;
 But mercy is above this scepter'd sway ;
 It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
 It is an attribute to God himself ;
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's
 When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
 Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
 That, in the course of justice, none of us
 Should see salvation : we do pray for mercy ;
 And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
 The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much
 To mitigate the justice of thy plea ;
 Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice
 Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.

Shylock. My deeds upon my head ! I crave the law,
 The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

Portia. Is he not able to discharge the money ?

¹ " Is not strain'd," i.e., is free from constraint.

Bassanio. Yes, here I tender it for him in the court ;
Yea, twice the sum : if that will not suffice,
I will be bound to pay it ten times o'er,
On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart :
If this will not suffice, it must appear
That malice bears down truth. And I beseech you,
Wrest once the law to your authority :
To do a great right, do a little wrong,
And curb this cruel devil of his will.

Portia. It must not be ; there is no power in Venice
Can alter a decree established :
'Twill be recorded for a precedent,
And many an error by the same example
Will rush into the state : it cannot be.

Shylock. A Daniel come to judgment ! yea, a Daniel !
O wise young judge, how I do honor thee !

Portia. I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

Shylock. Here 'tis, most reverend doctor, here it is.

Portia. Shylock, there's thrice thy money offer'd thee.

Shylock. An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven :
Shall I lay perjury upon my soul ?
No, not for Venice.

Portia. Why, this bond is forfeit ;
And lawfully by this the Jew may claim
A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off
Nearest the merchant's heart. Be merciful :
Take thrice thy money ; bid me tear the bond.

Shylock. When it is paid according to the tenor.
It doth appear you are a worthy judge ;
You know the law, your exposition
Hath been most sound : I charge you by the law,
Whereof you are a well-deserving pillar,
Proceed to judgment : by my soul I swear
There is no power in the tongue of man
To alter me : I stay here on my bond.

Antonio. Most heartily I do beseech the court
To give the judgment.

Portia. Why then, thus it is :
You must prepare your bosom for his knife.

Shylock. O noble judge ! O excellent young man !

Portia. For the intent and purpose of the law
Hath full relation to the penalty,
Which here appeareth due upon the bond.

Shylock. 'Tis very true : O wise and upright judge !
How much more elder¹ art thou than thy looks !

Portia. Therefore lay bare your bosom.

Shylock. Ay, his breast :
So says the bond : doth it not, noble judge ?
"Nearest his heart : " those are the very words.

Portia. It is so. Are there balance² here to weigh
The flesh ?

Shylock. I have them ready.

Portia. Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge,
To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death.

Shylock. Is it so nominated in the bond ?

Portia. It is not so express'd : but what of that ?
'Twere good you do so much for charity.

Shylock. I cannot find it ; 'tis not in the bond.

Portia. You, merchant, have you anything to say ?

Antonio. But little : I am arm'd and well prepar'd.
Give me your hand, Bassanio : fare you well !
Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you ;
For herein Fortune shows herself more kind
Than is her custom : it is still her use
To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,
To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow
An age of poverty ; from which ling'ring penance
Of such a misery doth she cut me off.

¹ " More elder," a double comparative, not infrequent with Shakespeare.

² That is, a pair of balances.

Commend me to your honorable wife :
Tell her the process of Antonio's end ;
Say how I lov'd you, speak me fair in death ;
And, when the tale is told, bid her be judge
Whether Bassanio had not once a love.
Repent but you that you shall lose your friend,
And he repents not that he pays your debt ;
For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
I'll pay it presently with all my heart.

Bassanio. Antonio, I am married to a wife
Which is as dear to me as life itself ;
But life itself, my wife, and all the world,
Are not with me esteem'd above thy life :
I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all
Here to this devil, to deliver you.

Portia. Your wife would give you little thanks for that,
If she were by, to hear you make the offer.

Gratiano. I have a wife, whom, I protest, I love :
I would she were in heaven, so she could
Entreat some power to change this currish Jew.

Nerissa. 'Tis well you offer it behind her back ;
The wish would make else an unquiet house.

Shylock. [*Aside*] These be the Christian husbands. I have a
daughter ;
Would any of the stock of Barrabas¹
Had been her husband rather than a Christian !
We trifle time : I pray thee, pursue sentence.

Portia. A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine :
The court awards it, and the law doth give it.

Shylock. Most rightful judge !

Portia. And you must cut this flesh from off his breast :
The law allows it, and the court awards it.

Shylock. Most learned judge ! A sentence ! Come, prepare !

¹ The reference is to the descendants of Barabbas, the malefactor who was pardoned at the Crucifixion (see Luke xxiii. 18, 19).

Portia. Tarry a little ; there is something else.
 This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood ;
 The words expressly are “ a pound of flesh : ”
 Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh ;
 But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed
 One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
 Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate¹
 Unto the state of Venice.

Gratiano. O upright judge ! Mark, Jew : O learned judge !

Shylock. Is that the law ?

Portia. Thyself shalt see the act :

For, as thou urgest justice, be assur'd
 Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desirest.

Gratiano. O learned judge ! Mark, Jew : a learned judge !

Shylock. I take his offer, then ; pay the bond thrice
 And let the Christian go.

Bassanio. Here is the money.

Portia. Soft !

The Jew shall have all justice ; soft ! no haste :
 He shall have nothing but the penalty.

Gratiano. O Jew ! an upright judge, a learned judge !

Portia. Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh.

Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more
 But just a pound of flesh : if thou cutt'st more
 Or less than a just pound, be it but so much
 As makes it light or heavy in the substance
 Or the division of the twentieth part
 Of one poor scruple, nay, if the scale do turn
 But in the estimation of a hair,
 Thou diest and all thy goods are confiscate.

Gratiano. A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew !
 Now, infidel, I have you on the hip.

Portia. Why doth the Jew pause ? take thy forfeiture.

Shylock. Give me my principal, and let me go.

¹ Confiscated.

Bassanio. I have it ready for thee ; here it is.

Portia. He hath refus'd it in the open court :
He shall have merely justice and his bond.

Gratiano. A Daniel, still say I, a second Daniel !
I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.

Shylock. Shall I not have barely my principal ?

Portia. Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeiture,
To be so taken at thy peril, Jew.

Shylock. Why, then the devil give him good of it !
I'll stay no longer question.

Portia. Tarry, Jew :

The law hath yet another hold on you.
It is enacted in the laws of Venice,
If it be prov'd against an alien
That by direct or indirect attempts
He seek the life of any citizen,
The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive
Shall seize one half his goods ; the other half
Comes to the privy coffer of the state ;
And the offender's life lies in the mercy
Of the duke only, 'gainst all other voice.
In which predicament,¹ I say, thou stand'st ;
For it appears, by manifest proceeding,
That indirectly and directly too
Thou hast contriv'd against the very life
Of the defendant ; and thou hast incur'd
The danger formerly by me rehears'd.
Down therefore and beg mercy of the duke.

Gratiano. Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang thyself :
And yet, thy wealth being forfeit to the state,
Thou hast not left the value of a cord ;
Therefore thou must be hang'd at the state's charge.

Duke. That thou shalt see the difference of our spirit,
I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it :

¹ Situation.

For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's ;
The other half comes to the general state,
Which humbleness may drive unto a fine.

Portia. Ay, for the state, not for Antonio.

Shylock. Nay, take my life and all ; pardon not that :
You take my house when you do take the prop
That doth sustain my house ; you take my life
When you do take the means whereby I live.

Portia. What mercy can you render him, Antonio?

Gratiano. A halter gratis ; nothing else, for God's sake.

Antonio. So please my lord the duke and all the court
To quit the fine for one half of his goods,
I am content ; so he will let me have
The other half in use, to render it,
Upon his death, unto the gentleman
That lately stole his daughter :
Two things provided more, that, for this favor,
He presently become a Christian ;
The other, that he do record a gift,
Here in the court, of all he dies possess'd,
Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.

Duke. He shall do this, or else I do recant
The pardon that I late pronounced here.

Portia. Art thou contented, Jew ? what dost thou say ?

Shylock. I am content.

Portia. Clerk, draw a deed of gift.

Shylock. I pray you, give me leave to go from hence ;
I am not well : send the deed after me,
And I will sign it.

Duke. Get thee gone, but do it.

Gratiano. In christ'ning shalt thou have two godfathers :
Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten more,¹
To bring thee to the gallows, not the font. [Exit *Shylock.*

¹ "Ten more," i.e., instead of two godfathers, he should have had a jury of twelve men to try him.

Duke. Sir, I entreat you home with me to dinner.

Portia. I humbly do desire your grace of pardon: ¹
I must away this night toward Padua,
And it is meet I presently set forth.

Duke. I am sorry that your leisure serves you not.
Antonio, gratify ² this gentleman,
For, in my mind, you are much bound to him.

[*Exeunt Duke and his train.*]

Bassanio. Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend
Have by your wisdom been this day acquitted
Of grievous penalties; in lieu whereof,
Three thousand ducats, due unto the Jew,
We freely cope ³ your courteous pains withal.

Antonio. And stand indebted, over and above,
In love and service to you evermore.

Portia. He is well paid that is well satisfied;
And I, delivering you, am satisfied
And therein do account myself well paid:
My mind was never yet more mercenary.
I pray you, know me when we meet again:
I wish you well, and so I take my leave.

Bassanio. Dear sir, of force I must attempt you further:
Take some remembrance of us, as a tribute,
Not as a fee: grant me two things, I pray you,
Not to deny me, and to pardon me.

Portia. You press me far, and therefore I will yield.
[*To Antonio*] Give me your gloves, I'll wear them for your sake;
[*To Bassanio*] And, for your love, I'll take this ring from you:
Do not draw back your hand; I'll take no more;
And you in love shall not deny me this.

Bassanio. This ring, good sir, alas, it is a trifle!
I will not shame myself to give you this.

¹ "Desire your grace of pardon," a form of expression frequent with old writers. Shakespeare has elsewhere, "I desire you of the like" and "I shall desire you of more acquaintance." ² Reward with a fee. ³ Requite.

Portia. I will have nothing else but only this;
And now methinks I have a mind to it.

Bassanio. There's more depends on this than on the value.
The dearest ring in Venice will I give you,
And find it out by proclamation:
Only for this, I pray you, pardon me.

Portia. I see, sir, you are liberal in offers:
You taught me first to beg; and now methinks
You teach me how a beggar should be answer'd.

Bassanio. Good sir, this ring was given me by my wife;
And when she put it on, she made me vow
That I should neither sell nor give nor lose it.

Portia. That 'scuse serves many men to save their gifts.
An if your wife be not a mad-woman,
And know how well I have deserv'd the ring,
She would not hold out enemy forever,
For giving it to me. Well, peace be with you!

[*Exeunt Portia and Nerissa.*]

Antonio. My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring:
Let his deservings and my love withal
Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment.

Bassanio. Go, Gratiano, run and overtake him;
Give him the ring, and bring him, if thou canst,
Unto Antonio's house: away! make haste. [*Exit Gratiano.*]
Come, you and I will thither presently;
And in the morning early will we both
Fly toward Belmont: come, Antonio. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *The Same. A Street.*

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA.

Portia. Inquire the Jew's house out, give him this deed
And let him sign it: we'll away to-night
And be a day before our husbands home:
This deed will be well welcome to Lorenzo.

Enter GRATIANO.

Gratiano. Fair sir, you are well o'erta'en:
My Lord Bassanio upon more advice¹
Hath sent you here this ring, and doth entreat
Your company at dinner.

Portia. That cannot be:
His ring I do accept most thankfully:
And so, I pray you, tell him: furthermore,
I pray you, show my youth old Shylock's house.

Gratiano. That will I do.

Nerissa. Sir, I would speak with you.
[*Aside to Portia*] I'll see if I can get my husband's ring,
Which I did make him swear to keep forever.

Portia. [*Aside to Nerissa*] Thou mayst, I warrant. We shall
have old swearing
That they did give the rings away to men;
But we'll outface them, and outswear them too.

[*Aloud*] Away! make haste: thou know'st where I will tarry.

Nerissa. Come, good sir, will you show me to this house?

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I. *Belmont. Avenue to PORTIA'S House.*

Enter LORENZO and JESSICA.

Lorenzo. The moon shines bright: in such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees
And they did make no noise, in such a night
Troilus² methinks mounted the Trojan walls

¹ Reflection.

² The story of the loves of Troilus and Cressid is not classical, though it is the groundwork of one of Shakespeare's plays. In the Iliad, Homer names Troilus as a son of Priam, King of Troy, but Cressid was not known to the ancients.

And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,
Where Cressid lay that night.

Jessica. In such a night

Did 'Thisbe¹ fearfully o'ertrip the dew
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself
And ran dismay'd away.

Lorenzo. In such a night

Stood Dido² with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea banks and waft her love
To come again to Carthage.

Jessica. In such a night

Medea³ gather'd the enchanted herbs
That did renew old Æson.

Lorenzo. In such a night

Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew

¹ Pyramus and Thisbe were mythical lovers of Babylon, whose parents forbade their marriage. Determined to elude the vigilance of their friends, they appointed a place of meeting beyond the walls of the city. Thisbe came first, but, affrighted by a lion, fled to a cave, in her flight dropping her veil, which the lion seized and besmeared with his bloody mouth. When Pyramus arrived he discovered the stained garment, and, supposing Thisbe had fallen a prey to some wild beast, overwhelmed with grief, stabbed himself. Thisbe, returning, found her lover dead, and in despair killed herself with the sword he had used.

² Dido, it is said, was the founder and queen of Carthage, the ancient city on the Mediterranean coast of Africa. Æneas, a Trojan hero, on his way to Italy with a company of colonists, driven by stress of weather into the port of Carthage, was kindly received by Dido, who would have married him; but, obeying the mandate of the gods, Æneas sailed away with his ships, leaving her despondent and forlorn.

³ Medea, we are told, was a famous magician, daughter of Æetes, King of Colchis. When Jason came to Colchis in quest of the Golden Fleece (see Note 3, p. 23), she became enamored of him. On his return to his native country, the success of his expedition was celebrated with great rejoicings; but his father, Æson, was unable to assist at the solemnities, owing to the infirmities of age. Medea, at the request of her husband, removed the weakness of Æson, and drawing the blood from his veins, and filling them again with juices of certain plants, renewed in him the vigor and vivacity of youth.

And with an unthrift love did run from Venice
As far as Belmont.

Jessica. In such a night

Did young Lorenzo swear he lov'd her well,
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith
And ne'er a true one.

Lorenzo. In such a night

Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,
Slander her love, and he forgave it her.

Jessica. I would out-night you, did nobody come ;
But, hark, I hear the footing of a man.

Enter STEPHANO.

Lorenzo. Who comes so fast in silence of the night ?

Stephano. A friend.

Lorenzo. A friend ! what friend ? your name, I pray you,
friend ?

Stephano. Stephano is my name ; and I bring word
My mistress will before the break of day
Be here at Belmont : she doth stray about
By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays
For happy wedlock hours.

Lorenzo. Who comes with her ?

Stephano. None but a holy hermit and her maid.

I pray you, is my master yet return'd ?

Lorenzo. He is not, nor we have not heard from him.

But go we in, I pray thee, Jessica,
And ceremoniously let us prepare
Some welcome for the mistress of the house.

Enter LAUNCELOT.

Launcelot. Sola, sola ! wo ha, ho ! sola, sola !

Lorenzo. Who calls ?

Launcelot. Sola ! did you see Master Lorenzo and Mistress
Lorenzo ? sola, sola !

Lorenzo. Leave hollaing, man: here.

Launcelot. Sola! where? where?

Lorenzo. Here.

Launcelot. Tell him there's a post come from my master, with his horn full of good news: my master will be here ere morning.

[*Exit.*

Lorenzo. Sweet soul, let's in, and there expect¹ their coming.

And yet no matter: why should we go in?

My friend Stephano, signify, I pray you,

Within the house, your mistress is at hand;

And bring your music forth into the air.

[*Exit Stephano.*

(How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!

Here will we sit and let the sounds of music

Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night

Become the touches of sweet harmony.)

Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven

Is thick inlaid with patines² of bright gold:

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st

But in his motion like an angel sings,

Still quiring³ to the young-ey'd cherubins;

Such harmony is in immortal souls;

But whilst this muddy vesture of decay

Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

Enter Musicians.

Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn:

With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear

And draw her home with music.

[*Music.*

Jessica. I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

Lorenzo. The reason is, your spirits are attentive:

For do but note a wild and wanton herd

Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,

¹ Await.

² A patine was a small plate, generally of gold, used in the Eucharist.

³ That is, "choiring," singing.

Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,
 Which is the hot condition of their blood ;
 If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
 Or any air of music touch their ears,
 You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,
 Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze
 By the sweet power of music : therefore the poet
 Did feign that Orpheus¹ drew trees, stones, and floods ;
 Since naught so stockish, hard, and full of rage,
 But music for the time doth change his nature.
 The man that hath no music in himself,
 Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
 Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils ;
 The motions of his spirit are dull as night
 And his affections dark as Erebus :²
 Let no such man be trusted.) Mark the music.

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA.

Portia. That light we see is burning in my hall.
 How far that little candle throws his beams !
 So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

Nerissa. When the moon shone, we did not see the candle.

Portia. So doth the greater glory dim the less :
 A substitute shines brightly as a king
 Until a king be by, and then his state
 Empties itself, as doth an inland brook
 Into the main of waters. Music ! hark !

Nerissa. It is your music, madam, of the house.

Portia. Nothing is good, I see, without respect :
 Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.

¹ Orpheus, the old mythologists relate, was the son of Apollo, from whom he received a lyre, upon which he played so skillfully that even the most rapid rivers ceased to flow, the savage beasts of the forests forgot their wildness, and the mountains moved, to listen to his music.

² The gloomy region between the earth and Hades.

Nerissa. Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.

Portia. The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark
When neither is attended, and I think
The nightingale, if she should sing by day,
When every goose is cackling, would be thought
No better a musician than the wren.
How many things by season season'd are
To their right praise and true perfection !
Peace, ho ! the moon sleeps with Endymion¹
And would not be awak'd.

[*Music ceases.*]

Lorenzo. That is the voice,
Or I am much deceiv'd, of Portia.

Portia. He knows me as the blind man knows the cuckoo,
By the bad voice.

Lorenzo. Dear lady, welcome home.

Portia. We have been praying for our husbands' healths,
Which speed, we hope, the better for our words.
Are they return'd ?

Lorenzo. Madam, they are not yet ;
But there is come a messenger before,
To signify their coming.

Portia. Go in, Nerissa ;
Give order to my servants that they take
No note at all of our being absent hence ;
Nor you, Lorenzo ; Jessica, nor you.

[*A tucket² sounds.*]

Lorenzo. Your husband is at hand ; I hear his trumpet :
We are no telltales, madam ; fear you not.

Portia. This night methinks is but the daylight sick ;
It looks a little paler : 'tis a day,
Such as the day is when the sun is hid.

¹ A shepherd of mythology, with whom Selene, the goddess of the moon, fell in love. Ashamed to have a mere mortal know that she loved him, she caused Endymion to fall into a deep sleep, during which she visited and caressed him.

² Trumpet.

Enter BASSANIO, ANTONIO, GRATIANO, and their followers.

Bassanio. We should hold day with the Antipodes,
If you would walk in absence of the sun.¹

Portia. Let me give light, but let me not be light ;
For a light wife doth make a heavy husband,
And never be Bassanio so for me :
But God sort all ! You are welcome home, my lord.

Bassanio. I thank you, madam. Give welcome to my friend.
This is the man, this is Antonio,
To whom I am so infinitely bound.

Portia. You should in all sense be much bound to him,
For, as I hear, he was much bound for you.

Antonio. No more than I am well acquitted of.

Portia. Sir, you are very welcome to our house :
It must appear in other ways than words,
Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy.

Gratiano. [*To Nerissa*] By yonder moon I swear you do me
wrong ;
In faith, I gave it to the judge's clerk.

Portia. A quarrel, ho, already ! what's the matter ?

Gratiano. About a hoop of gold, a paltry ring
That she did give to me, whose posy was
For all the world like cutler's poetry²
Upon a knife, " Love me, and leave me not."

Nerissa. What talk you of the posy or the value ?
You swore to me, when I did give it you,
That you would wear it till your hour of death
And that it should lie with you in your grave :
Though not for me, yet for your vehement oaths,
You should have been respective and have kept it.

¹ " We should hold," etc., i.e., we should have daylight when the Antipodes have it, if you would come abroad at night.

² " Cutler's poetry." Swords, the blades of knives, etc., were inscribed, by the action of an acid, with distiches and mottoes.

Gave it a judge's clerk! no, God's my judge,
The clerk will ne'er wear hair on's face that had it.

Gratiano. He will, an if he live to be a man.

Nerissa. Ay, if a woman live to be a man.

Gratiano. Now, by this hand, I gave it to a youth,
A kind of boy, a little scrubbed¹ boy,
No higher than thyself, the judge's clerk,
A prating boy, that begg'd it as a fee:
I could not for my heart deny it him.

Portia. You were to blame, I must be plain with you,
To part so slightly with your wife's first gift;
A thing stuck on with oaths upon your finger
And so riveted with faith unto your flesh.
I gave my love a ring and made him swear
Never to part with it; and here he stands;
I dare be sworn for him he would not leave it
Nor pluck it from his finger, for the wealth
That the world masters. Now, in faith, Gratiano,
You give your wife too unkind a cause of grief:
An 'twere to me, I should be mad at it.

Bassanio. [*Aside*] Why, I were best to cut my left hand off
And swear I lost the ring defending it.

Gratiano. My Lord Bassanio gave his ring away
Unto the judge that begg'd it and indeed
Deserv'd it too; and then the boy, his clerk,
That took some pains in writing, he begg'd mine;
And neither man nor master would take aught
But the two rings.

Portia. What ring gave you, my lord?
Not that, I hope, which you receiv'd of me.

Bassanio. If I could add a lie unto a fault,
I would deny it; but you see my finger
Hath not the ring upon it; it is gone.

¹ Stunted.

Portia. Even so void is your false heart of truth.
By heaven, I will never be your wife
Until I see the ring.

Nerissa. No, nor I yours
Till I again see mine.

Bassanio. Sweet Portia,
If you did know to whom I gave the ring,
If you did know for whom I gave the ring
And would conceive for what I gave the ring
And how unwillingly I left the ring,
When naught would be accepted but the ring,
You would abate the strength of your displeasure.

Portia. If you had known the virtue of the ring,
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,
Or your own honor to contain the ring,
You would not then have parted with the ring.
What man is there so much unreasonable,
If you had pleas'd to have defended it
With any terms of zeal, wanted the modesty
To urge the thing held as a ceremony? ¹
Nerissa teaches me what to believe:
I'll die for't but some woman had the ring.

Bassanio. No, by my honor, madam, by my soul,
No woman had it, but a civil doctor,²
Which did refuse three thousands ducats of me
And begg'd the ring; the which I did deny him
And suffer'd him to go displeas'd away;
Even he that did uphold the very life
Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet lady?
I was enforc'd to send it after him;
I was beset with shame and courtesy;³

¹ This word is here given to the thing consecrated by a ceremony.

² "Civil doctor," i.e., a doctor of civil law.

³ "Shame and courtesy," i.e., shame at being thought ungrateful, and a sense of what courtesy required.

My honor would not let ingratitude
 So much besmear it. Pardon me, good lady;
 For, by these blessed candles of the night,
 Had you been there, I think you would have begg'd
 The ring of me to give the worthy doctor.

Portia. Let not that doctor e'er come near my house:
 Since he hath got the jewel that I lov'd,
 And that which you did swear to keep for me,
 I will become as liberal as you:
 I'll not deny him anything I have.

Nerissa. Nor I his clerk; therefore be well advis'd
 How you do leave me to mine own protection.

Antonio. I am the unhappy subject of these quarrels.

Portia. Sir, grieve not you; you are welcome notwithstanding.

Bassanio. Portia, forgive me this enforced wrong:
 And, in the hearing of these many friends,
 I swear to thee, even by thine own fair eyes,
 Wherein I see myself —

Portia. Mark you but that!
 In both my eyes he doubly sees himself;
 In each eye, one: swear by your double self,
 And there's an oath of credit.

Bassanio. Nay, but hear me:
 Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear
 I never more will break an oath with thee.

Antonio. I once did lend my body for his wealth;
 Which, but for him that had your husband's ring,
 Had quite miscarried: I dare be bound again,
 My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord
 Will never more break faith advisedly.

Portia. Then you shall be his surety. Give him this
 And bid him keep it better than the other.

Antonio. Here, Lord Bassanio; swear to keep this ring.

Bassanio. By heaven, it is the same I gave the doctor!

Portia. I had it of him. You are all amaz'd:

Here is a letter; read it at your leisure;
It comes from Padua, from Bellario:
There you shall find that Portia was the doctor,
Nerissa there her clerk: Lorenzo here
Shall witness I set forth as soon as you
And even but now return'd; I have not yet
Enter'd my house. Antonio, you are welcome;
And I have better news in store for you
Than you expect: unseal this letter soon;
There you shall find three of your argosies
Are richly come to harbor suddenly:
You shall not know by what strange accident
I chanced on this letter.

Antonio. I am dumb.

Bassanio. Were you the doctor and I knew you not?

Antonio. Sweet lady, you have given me life and living;
For here I read for certain that my ships
Are safely come to road.¹

Portia. How now, Lorenzo!
My clerk hath some good comforts too for you.

Nerissa. Ay, and I'll give them him without a fee.
There do I give to you and Jessica,
From the rich Jew, a special deed of gift,
After his death, of all he dies possess'd of.

Lorenzo. Fair ladies, you drop manna in the way
Of starved people.

Portia. It is almost morning,
And yet I am sure you are not satisfied
Of these events at full. Let us go in;
And charge us there upon inter'gatories,
And we will answer all things faithfully.

[*Excunt.*

¹ Port.

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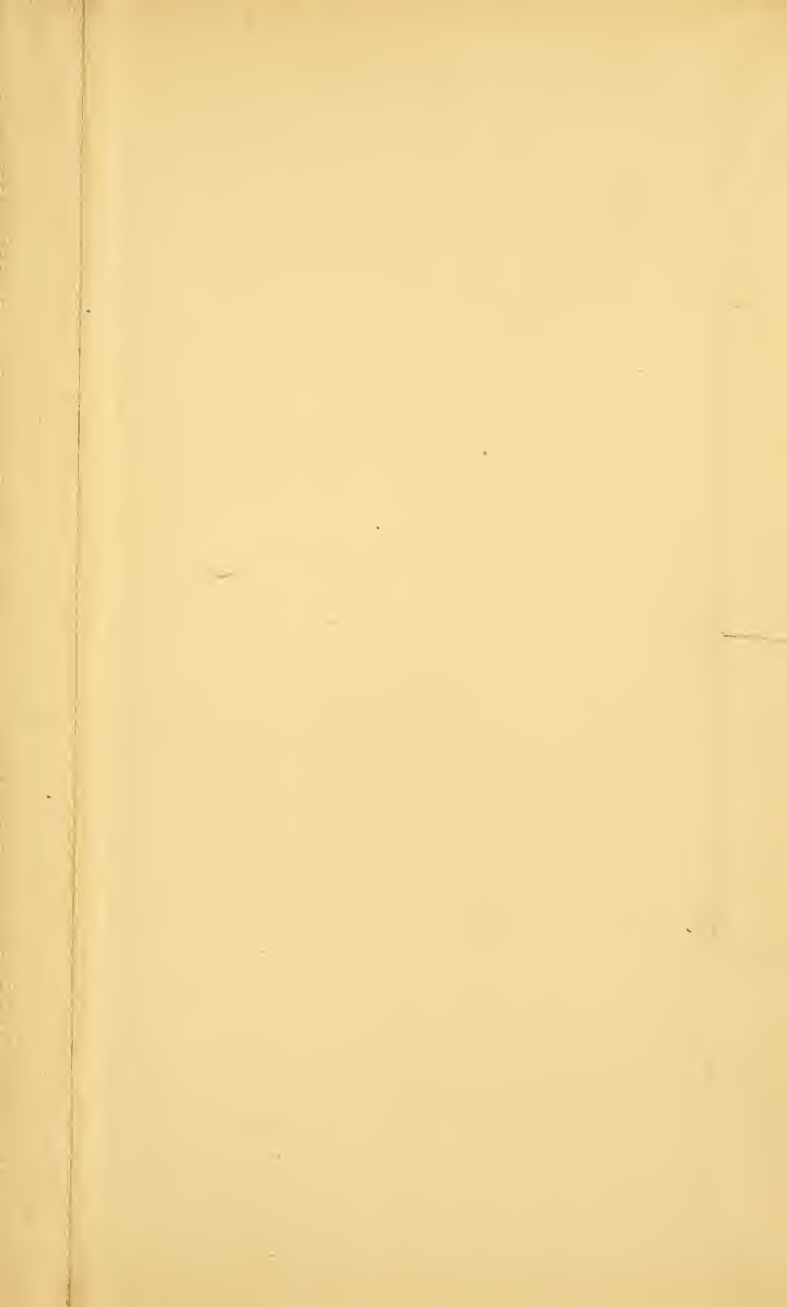
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