WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAY OF THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

William Shakespeare

Shakespeare's play of the Merchant of Venice

Arranged for Representation at the Princess's Theatre, with Historical and Explanatory Notes by Charles Kean, F.S.A

EAN 8596547343677

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

PREFACE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—VENICE.(A) SAINT MARK'S PLACE.(B)

SCENE II.—BELMONT. A ROOM IN PORTIA'S HOUSE.

SCENE III.—THE MERCHANT'S EXCHANGE ON THE RIALTO ISLAND.(c) SAN JACOPO, THE MOST ANCIENT CHURCH IN VENICE, OCCUPIES ONE SIDE OF THE SQUARE.

SCENE IV.—SALOON OF THE CASKETS IN PORTIA'S HOUSE, AT BELMONT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—VENICE.(A) EXTERIOR OF SHYLOCK'S HOUSE.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—SALOON OF THE CASKETS IN PORTIA'S HOUSE AT BELMONT.

SCENE II.—RIALTO BRIDGE (A) , AND GRAND CANAL.

SCENE III.—SALOON OF THE CASKETS, IN PORTIA'S HOUSE, AT BELMONT.

SCENE IV.—VENICE. THE COLUMNS OF ST. MARK. (c) .

SCENE V.—SALOON OF THE CASKETS IN PORTIA'S HOUSE AT BELMONT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—VENICE. A COURT OF JUSTICE.(A)

SCENE II.—VENICE. THE FOSCARI GATE OF THE DUCAL PALACE, LEADING TO THE GIANT'S STAIRCASE.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—BELMONT. AVENUE TO PORTIA'S HOUSE.

PREFACE.

Table of Contents

Venice, "the famous city in the sea," rising like enchantment from the waves of the Adriatic, appeals to the imagination through a history replete with dramatic incident; wherein power and revolution—conquest and conspiracy—mystery and romance—dazzling splendour and judicial murder alternate in every page. Thirteen hundred years witnessed the growth, maturity, and fall of this once celebrated city; commencing in the fifth century, when thousands of terrified fugitives sought refuge in its numerous islands from the dreaded presence of Attila; and terminating when the last of the Doges, in 1797, lowered for ever the standard of St. Mark before the cannon of victorious Buonaparte. Venice was born and died in fear. To every English mind, the Queen of the Adriatic is endeared by the genius of our own Shakespeare. Who that has trod the great public square, with its mosque-like cathedral, has not pictured to himself the forms of the heroic Moor and the gentle Desdemona? Who that has landed from his gondola to pace the Rialto, has not brought before his "mind's eye," the scowling brow of Shylock, when proposing the bond of blood to his unsuspecting victim? Shakespeare may or may not have derived his plot of *The Merchant of Venice*, as some suppose, from two separate stories contained in Italian novels; but if such be the fact, he has so interwoven the double interest, that the two currents flow naturally into a stream of unity.

In this play Shakespeare has bequeathed to posterity one of his most perfect works—powerful in its effect, and marvellous in its ingenuity. While the language of the Jew is characterized by an assumption of biblical phraseology, the appeal of Portia to the quality of mercy is invested with a heavenly eloquence elevating the poet to sublimity.

From the opening to the closing scene,—from the moment when we hear of the sadness, prophetic of evil, which depresses the spirit of Antonio, till we listen at the last to the "playful prattling of two lovers in a summer's evening," whose soft cadences are breathed through strains of music,—all is a rapid succession of hope, fear, terror, and gladness; exciting our sympathies now for the result of the merchant's danger; now for the solution of a riddle on which hangs the fate of the wealthy heiress; and now for the fugitive Jessica, who resigns her creed at the shrine of womanly affection.

In the production of *The Merchant of Venice* it has been my object to combine with the poet's art a faithful representation of the picturesque city; to render it again palpable to the traveller who actually gazed upon the seat of its departed glory; and, at the same time, to exhibit it to the student, who has never visited this once

> "—— pleasant place of all festivity,
> The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy."

The far-famed place of St. Mark, with its ancient Church, the Rialto and its Bridge, the Canals and Gondolas, the Historic Columns, the Ducal Palace, and the Council Chamber, are successively presented to the spectator.

Venice is re-peopled with the past, affording truth to the eye, and reflection to the mind.

The introduction of the Princes of Morocco and Arragon at Belmont, hitherto omitted, is restored, for the purpose of more strictly adhering to the author's text, and of heightening the interest attached to the episode of the caskets.

The costumes and customs are represented as existing about the year 1600, when Shakespeare wrote the play. The dresses are chiefly selected from a work by Cesare Vecellio, entitled "Degli Habiti Antichi e Moderni di diverse Parti del Mondo. In Venetia, 1590;" as well as from other sources to be found in the British Museum, whence I derive my authority for the procession of the Doge in the first scene. If the stage is to be considered and upheld as an institution from which instructive and intellectual enjoyment may be derived, it is to Shakespeare we must look as the principal teacher, to inculcate its most valuable lessons. It is, therefore, a cause of self-gratulation, that I have on many occasions been able, successfully, to present some of the works of the greatest dramatic genius the world has known, to more of my countrymen than have ever witnessed them within the same space of time; and let me hope it will not be deemed presumptuous to record the pride I feel at having been so fortunate a medium between our national poet and the people of England.

CHARLES KEAN.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

ACT I.

Table of Contents

SCENE I.—VENICE.(A) SAINT MARK'S PLACE.(B)

Table of Contents

Various groups of Nobles, Citizens, Merchants, Foreigners, Water-Carriers, Flower Girls, &c., pass and repass. Procession of the Doge, in state, across the square. [1]

ANTONIO, SALARINO, *and* SALANIO *come forward*.

Ant. 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.

Salar. Your mind is tossing on the ocean;
There, where your argosies[2] with portly sail,
Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,
Do overpeer the petty traffickers,
That curt'sy to them, do them reverence,
As they fly by them with their woven wings.

Sal. 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,[3] 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.

Salar. My wind, cooling my broth,
Would blow me to an ague, when I thought
What harm a wind too great might do at sea.
I should not see the sandy hour-glass run,
But I should think of shallows and of flats;
And see my wealthy Andrew[4] dock'd in sand,
Vailing her high-top[5] lower than her ribs,
To kiss her burial.
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 merchandize.

Ant. 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 merchandize makes me not sad.

Salar. Why, then, you are in love.

Ant. Fie, fie!

Salar. Not in love, neither? Then let us say you are sad,
Because you are not merry: an 'twere as easy
For you to laugh and leap, and say you are merry,
Because you are not sad.

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

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

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

Enter BASSANIO, LORENZO, *and* GRATIANO.

Salar. Good morrow, my good lords.

Bas. Good signiors, both, when shall we laugh? Say, when?
You grow exceeding strange: Must it be so?

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

[*Exeunt* SALARINO *and* SALANIO.

Lor. 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.

Bas. I will not fail you.

Gra. You look not well, Signor Antonio;
You have too much respect upon the world:
They lose it that do buy it with much care.
Believe me, you are marvellously chang'd.

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

Gra. Let me play the fool:[6]
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?
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[7] and mantle like a standing pond:
And do a wilful stillness entertain,[8]
With purpose to be dress'd in an opinion
Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit;
As who should say, '*I am Sir Oracle*,
And when I ope my lips let no dog bark!'[9]
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, 'twould almost damn those ears[10]
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, a while;
I'll end my exhortation after dinner.[11]

Lor. 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.

Gra. Well, keep me company but two years more,
Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.

Ant. Farewell: I'll grow a talker for this gear.[12]

Gra. Thanks, i'faith; for silence is only commendable
In a neat's tongue dried,[13] and a maid not vendible.

[*Exeunt* GRATIANO *and* LORENZO.

Ant. Is that any thing now?

Bas. 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.

Ant. 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?

Bas. 'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,
How much I have disabled mine estate,
By something showing a more swelling port[14]
Than my faint means would grant continuance.
To you, Antonio, I owe the most in money and in love;
And from your love I have a warranty
To unburthen all my plots and purposes,
How to get clear of all the debts I owe.

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

Bas. In my school-days, when I had lost one shaft
I shot his fellow of the self-same flight
The self-same 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.
I owe you much; and, like a wasteful youth,
That which I owe is lost: but if you please
To shoot another arrow that self 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.