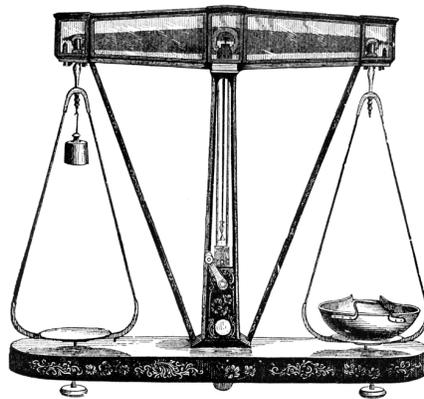


THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

By

William Shakespeare

Act 3, Scene 5



SCENE. 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 you, I fear you. 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 bastard hope neither.

JESSICA.

And what hope is that, I pray thee?

LAUNCELOT.

Marry, you may partly hope that your father got you not, that you are not the Jew's daughter.

JESSICA.

That were a kind of bastard hope indeed; so the sins of my mother should be visited upon me.

LAUNCELOT.

Truly then I fear you are damn'd both by father and mother; thus when I shun Scylla, your father, I fall into Charybdis, your mother; well, you are gone both ways.

JESSICA.

I shall be saved by my husband; he hath made me a Christian.

LAUNCELOT.

Truly, the more to blame he; we were Christians enow 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 rasher on the coals for money.

JESSICA.

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

(Enter LORENZO.)

LORENZO.

I shall grow jealous of you shortly, Launcelot, if you thus get my wife into corners.

JESSICA.

Nay, you need nor fear us, Lorenzo; Launcelot and I are out; he tells me flatly there's 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.

I shall answer that better to the commonwealth than you can the getting up of the negro's belly; the Moor is with child by you, Launcelot.

LAUNCELOT.

It is much that the Moor should be more than reason; but if she be less than an honest woman, she is indeed more than I took her for.

LORENZO.

How every fool can play upon the word! I think the best grace of wit will shortly turn into silence, and discourse grow commendable in none only but parrots. 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 quarrelling with occasion! 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 served in; for the meat, sir, it shall be covered; for your coming in to dinner, sir, why, let it be as humours 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 merit it,
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.)