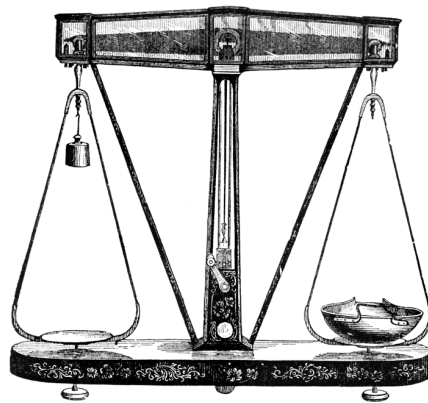


THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

By

William Shakespeare

Act 2, Scene 1



SCENE. Belmont. A room in PORTIA's house.

(Flourish of cornets. Enter the PRINCE of MOROCCO, and his Followers; PORTIA, NERISSA, and Others of her train.)

PRINCE OF Morocco.

Mislike me not for my complexion,
The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun,
To whom I am a neighbour, and near bred.
Bring me the fairest creature northward born,
Where Phoebus' 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'd 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
As any comer I have look'd on yet
For my affection.

PRINCE OF MOROCCO.

Even for that I thank you:
Therefore, I pray you, lead me to the caskets

To try my fortune. By this scimitar,—
That slew the Sophy and a Persian prince,
That won three fields of Sultan Solyman,—
I would o'erstare 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 Hercules 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.

PRINCE OF MOROCCO.

Nor will not; come, bring me unto my chance.

PORTIA.

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

PRINCE OF MOROCCO.

Good fortune then!
To make me blest or curs'd'st among men!

(Cornets, and exeunt.)