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“THE MERCHANT OF VENICE”
AS
AN EXPONENT OF INDUSTRIAL ETHICS.

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“THE Merchant of Venice,” by its very title, claims connection with industrial life. It presents the problems of industrial morality and the solution of these problems, as viewed by one of the greatest intellects of all time. The intellect, indeed, is that of a poet, and his treatment of industrial problems is, of course, colored by the requirements of poetic art. But poetry, as Aristotle said long ago, gives a more philosophical and more earnest view of life than history. In some respects, we might add, it is more philosophical than philosophy itself. For if history may lose sight of the universal in mere particulars, on the other hand, philosophy is apt, in its universal abstractions, to lose sight of the infinite wealth of concrete life which it is the function of poetry to portray.

The materials of this noble comedy, as students of Shakespeare know, are drawn from old tales which the industry of critics has brought to light. But no work of the great poet illustrates more strikingly the singular clearness of artistic insight with which he discerns the fitness of an old tale for his purpose, and makes his appropriations. While following