

a play and at his ingenuity in thinking of it as a means of sounding the King's conscience, feigns to be mad and plays the madman to the life; who becomes a pure fatalist, the last stage of mental indifference, and, in the very face of death, full of quips, reverts to his happy youth in the few tender words, "Alas! poor Yorick!" words which drew from a sympathetic heart a great English book—Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*; who, by his want of resolution, brings upon himself and others an end of blood, then light begins to dawn, though perfect day is not yet.

Let us consider the earnestness of the Merchant of Venice for a few moments. A double purpose runs throughout the play. We have the highest lesson of life, considered as human only, treated during the first three Acts and summed up by the introduction of the caskets: the golden casket, chosen by the Prince of Morocco, the type of eastern pomp, delighting in the outward adornment of barbaric pearl and gold; the silver, by the Prince of Arragon, a Spaniard typifying the pride of self-love, a shadow enamoured of a shadow, and finding only a "blinking idiot," himself, when the treasure-box is opened; the leaden, by Bassanio, with motto of threat rather than of promise, "who chooseth me, must give and hazard all he hath"—in other words, must use all his talents for the best, and, not thinking of reward or glory or praise, must go whithersoever duty calls, as the man who is earthly perfect ever does. From this episode of the caskets to the end of the drama the second and higher purpose becomes more and more prominent, but how many discern it? How many think of the Jew as the personification of the Old Testament teaching, when, true to the traditions of his race, he demands justice?—of Portia as setting forth the doctrine of the New Testament when she answers justice by the heavenly plea for mercy? How many see that the enmity of Jew and Gentile representing any two antagonisms, is wrought out into peace in the love of Lorenzo and Jessica? that Lorenzo expresses the highest concord of the Universe, of things earthly with things celestial, when he points to the stars, and tells Jessica that the harmony of the spheres—the Pythagoreans supposed that the distances between the heavenly bodies corresponded to the intervals of the