

CII. THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

FIRST READING.

311. **Venice**—*Vē'n-is*.—Where? For what noted?

Usurer—*yu'-zhu-rer*.—One who lends money at very high rates of interest.

Rialto—*re-ā'l-to*.

Best conditioned.—Condition is used in the sense of temper, or state of mind. Of the best temper, or disposition.

Courtesies.—Kindnesses.

Bassanio—*bas-sā'ni-o*.

Patrimony—property or estate inherited from ancestors.

312. **Ducats**—*dū'c-ats*.—Properly, a coin struck in the dominions of a duke. The silver ducat is about equal to a dollar in value. The gold ducat is of twice the value.

Catch him on the hip.—A figure borrowed from the practice of wrestling.

Gratis—*grā'tis*—for nothing; without recompense. A Latin adverb. Often pronounced *grāt-is*, but both euphony and the quantity of the Latin vowel favor the pronunciation given.

Signior—*sec'n-yār*.—A title of respectful address amongst the Italians. Written also *signor*.

Many a time and often.—A tautology quite in keeping with the Jew's imperfect English; used to add force to his accusation.

Sufferance—meek, unresisting endurance.

Unbeliever.—Shakespeare has "misbeliever," a common word in his day. The two words do not express the same idea. Distinguish according to prefixes.

Spit upon, etc.—Though Antonio is to be represented as an amiable and worthy gentleman, he is not free from the prejudices of his class, especially that hatred of the Jews which is still so

characteristic of many European races. Even in asking for the loan, he trusts nothing to Shylock's kindness, but everything to his greed of money.

313. **If I break**—my contract. Fail to meet the payment.

Would be friends.—A peculiar expression, still common in familiar speech. Would that we should be friends.

Shames.—The insults which have put me to shame. Effect for cause.

A pound of flesh.—This incident of the pound of flesh appears in an old Italian tale; also in an old collection of Latin tales, translated in the reign of Henry VIII., and in an old English ballad, in which the Jew's name is Gernutus. In this, as in other cases, Shakespeare uses material already existing in history or tradition as the basis of his plots.

Sign to.—Sign my name to, affix my signature to. We more correctly omit the preposition and say, "sign the bond."

314. **Their own hard dealings**.—Note the cunning of this speech; quite in keeping with the character commonly ascribed to a Jew.

Break this day.—An abbreviated expression. Break the agreement by failing to repay the money on the appointed day.

Exaction—compelling payment.

Forfeiture—the forfeit; the penalty.

Estimable.—Here used in the sense of *valuable*, worth a high price—a rare meaning of the word.

If he will take it so.—Let it be so; *i.e.*, on the condition named.

Train—a retinue; body of attendants.

Gratiano—*gr -she-ā'no*.