

up when someone pushed against me. I bought the book and took it home. Another day it was Browning who plunged me far down under the surface of things, so that I forgot where I was and what was happening around me.

Can you believe that, actress as I was, I had never seriously read Shakespeare since I grew up until I bought there, at that shop, a little volume containing "The Merchant of Venice" ? Yet it is true.

I had seen a few, a very few, of the plays produced by popular American actors, and I had been thrilled by them. But I imagined it was the acting that thrilled me. I had not been seized by any desire to read for my own pleasure. After "The Merchant of Venice," in Venice, I went on and read everything, every tragedy, every comedy, every sonnet. It was a wonderful time for me—the birth of my intellect.

From Venice, Jane and I went to Florence; and it was there I first saw olive trees massed together behind black cypresses. It was like looking at moonlight from between prison bars, just as I was looking out at the light from the prison of my past. But I thought then that the doors of the prison were open. Now I know that they were never open. It was a dream I had.

At last we went to Rome, and stayed there all winter. I took a little flat of a few rooms, with a servant to come in for two hours each day, for I had to economise. I knew that if I chose to go back to America, Mr. Otis would find an engagement for me somehow, though it was late in the season, and his companies were made up. But I couldn't go back. I would rather, as I felt, have lived on crusts of black bread and a little water in Italy than have luxury and a greater success than I had ever known, in New York. And that was not because I did not love my own