

## THE STORY

when, lifting the lid, he gazed upon his lady's portrait. Beside the portrait lay a scroll, which he plucked out and read :—

You that choose not by the view,  
Chance as fair and choose as true !  
Since this fortune falls to you,  
Be content and seek no new.  
If you be well pleased with this  
And hold your fortune for your bliss,  
Turn you where your lady is  
And claim her with a loving kiss.

A gentle scroll indeed ! Bassanio, still giddy and incredulous of his happiness, turned to Portia to have it ratified.

'My lord Bassanio,' said the heiress with beautiful humility, 'you see me here, such as I am : and for my own sake I would not seek, perhaps, to be much better. But for yours I would be a thousand times fairer than I am, ten thousand times richer, that only in your eyes I might seem above price. In truth the full sum of me is nothing—an unlessoned girl, without schooling or practice ; happy in this, that she is not too old to learn ; happier, perhaps, that she has the wit whereby to learn ; happiest of all, that her spirit is gentle and commits itself to yours to be directed, owning you her lord, her governor, her king. Myself with all that is mine is now converted to you and yours. A moment since I was lord of this fair mansion, master of many servants, queen of myself ; and now, now at a stroke, this house, these servants, myself as you see me, are yours, my lord. Look, I give them with this ring ! Wear it always ; and never until you part with it will I reproach you with the ruin of your love—for that, and no less, the loss of it will spell.'

While she placed the ring on Bassanio's finger, and while, still in a maze of joy, he protested that he would sooner part with life itself than with this dear gift, his friend Gratiano drew near with Nerissa, the waiting-maid, to offer their felicitations. 'My lord and lady,' said Nerissa, 'we have stood by and seen our wishes prosper. It is now our time to cry, good joy. Therefore Good joy my lord and lady !' 'I also wish you all joy,' said Gratiano, 'and with the wish offer a petition—that when the