THE NEW HUDSON SHAKESPEARE; THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

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The New Hudson Shakespeare; The merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare & Ebenezer Charlton Black & Andrew Jackson George

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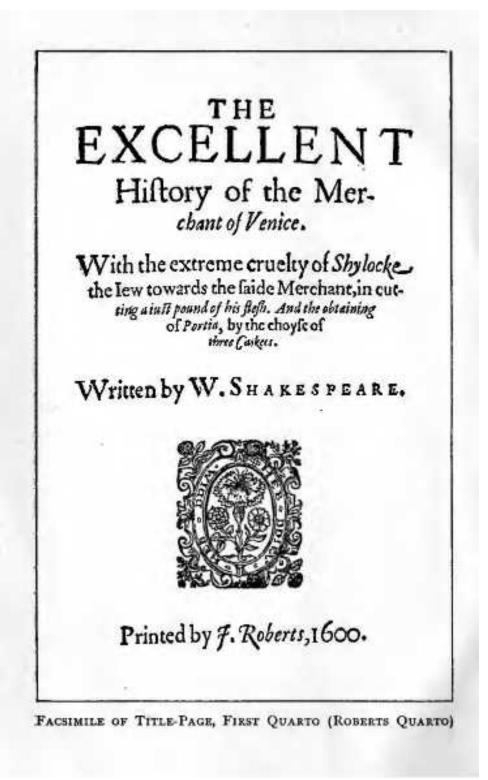
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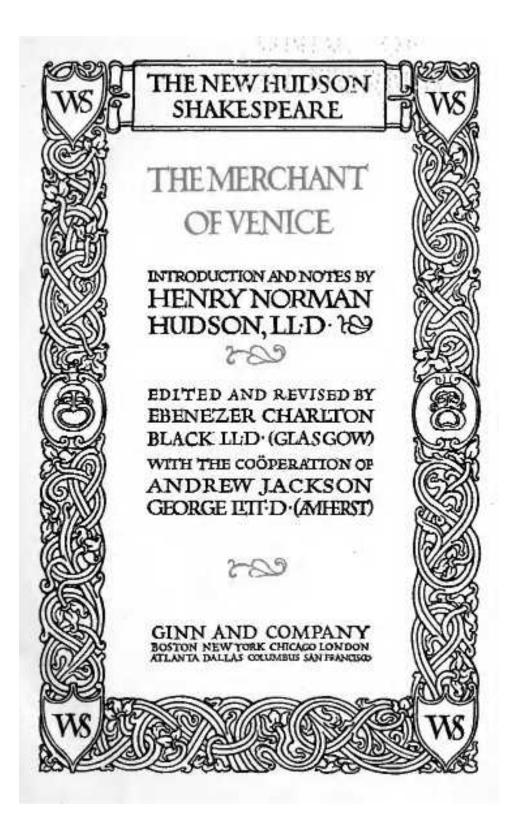
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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & EBENEZER CHARLTON BLACK & ANDREW JACKSON GEORGE

THE NEW HUDSON SHAKESPEARE; THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Trieste





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PREFACE

The text of this edition of *The Merchant of Venice* is based upon a collation of the Quartos of 1600 and the seventeenth century Folios. Exclusive of changes in spelling, punctuation, and stage directions, only five emendations by eighteenth century and nineteenth century editors have been incorporated into the text; and these, with every variation from the First Folio, are indicated in the textual notes. The only omissions are such passages as are out of place in a school edition.

The spelling and the punctuation of the text are modern, except in the case of verb terminations in *-ed*, which, when the e is silent, are printed with the apostrophe in its place. This is the general usage in the First Folio. Modern spelling has to a certain extent been followed in the text variants; but the original spelling has been retained wherever its peculiarities have been the basis for important textual criticism and emendation.

With regard to the general plan of this revision of Hudson's Shakespeare, Professor W. P. Trent, of Columbia University, has offered valuable suggestions and given important advice.

AUGUST 14, 1906

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INTRODUCTION

NOTE. In citations from Shakespeare's plays and nondramatic poems the numbering has reference to the Globe edition, except in the case of this play, where the reference is to this edition.

I. SOURCES

The Merchant of Venice is woven out of story-threads as old and as varied as human nature. Four distinct sets of these story-threads, two primary — the Caskets and the Pound of Flesh (or the Bond) — and two secondary — Jessica's Elopement and the Rings — are in the web of the complete plot. They may be regarded as subplots, and in this summary of sources will naturally be considered first, and in the order in which they come into the play.

THE SUBPLOTS

1. The Caskets. The device of the caskets, varied occasionally by the substitution of vats, or even of cakes and of pasties, for chests and coffers, is found in many languages and is probably of oriental origin. The underlying philosophy of choice as the foundation of moral activity may be read in the *Genesis* narrative of the fall of man and in the mythologies of all Indo-European peoples. In mediæval literature the caskets-form of the story takes definite shape in the Greek romance, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, by Joannes