

**SHAKESPEARE'S THE
MERCHANT OF VENICE:
EDITED WITH NOTES
AND AN INTRODUCTION**

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Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*: Edited with Notes and an Introduction by William Shakespeare & Charlotte Whipple Underwood

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & CHARLOTTE WHIPPLE UNDERWOOD

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William

SHAKESPEARE'S

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BY

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PREFACE

THIS edition of *The Merchant of Venice* comes into being because of the pleasure I have found in teaching Shakespeare to classes of boys and girls in secondary schools, and because I have felt the need of giving such classes certain questions and suggestions to help them in their study.

OS S V V A 12/31/11

The teacher of fiction aims to secure from pupils a thoughtful, accurate interpretation of an author's words, and at the same time to arouse an enthusiastic interest in the characters portrayed. To know life is the great end of all literary study, and nothing else is important except as it finally serves this end. In my own teaching of Shakespeare, I have found that a careful study of the poet's meaning never failed to strengthen interest in his characters. I am convinced, therefore, that classes, especially those just beginning

to study Shakespeare, need to give more thought than they often do to the author's language. It is frequently desirable to require from a student the paraphrase of a difficult passage. The dangers of this practice may be fully counteracted by the memorizing of many quotations, and by the reading of many passages aloud.

The practice of reading aloud from the play is always to be commended. Far more valuable to the pupil often than any explanation and study is the hearing of some passage appreciatively read by a teacher. When the play has been carefully worked over line by line, when its characters have been discussed in all possible relations and from every conceivable point of view, even when long quotations have been committed to memory, still the class has not come fully into its inheritance until the whole play, or the most of it, has been read aloud,—whole scenes and whole acts at a time,—and that by pupils who have previously rehearsed their parts with spirit and expression.

The notes in this edition do not pretend to give facts that may be found in such a book as Webster's *Academic Dictionary*. They do, however, aim to give much condensed information for which the student might otherwise need to refer to Classical Dictionaries and similar sources. Many of the notes are in the form of questions, not because each teacher may not find much better ones himself for his own students, but because these may serve to direct the class in its study and to show it what to study for.

In preparing this edition my aim has been merely to present existing knowledge in a form adapted to classes in secondary schools. This work would not have been possible without the help of Dr. Furness' *Variorum*, of Dr. Schmidt's *Shakespeare Lexicon*, of Abbott's *Shakespearian Grammar*, of Halliwell-Phillips' *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, of Symonds' *Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama*, and of Sydney Lee's *Life of Shakespeare*. Where I have quoted from the *Variorum* or from Schmidt, I have not usually stated my authority,

unless I have given long passages verbatim. I am indebted for very helpful suggestions to many other school editions of Shakespeare, especially to the excellent one of this play by Professor Katharine Lee Bates of Wellesley, and to the one of *Macbeth* by Head Professor Manly of the University of Chicago.

I wish to express my gratitude to several friends for criticism and encouragement: to Mr. C. W. French, Principal of the Hyde Park High School, Chicago, and to my colleagues, Miss Jane F. Noble and Miss Julia F. Dumke. For his kind interest and invaluable assistance I desire especially to thank Dr. E. H. Lewis, Professor of English in Lewis Institute.

C. W. U.

CHICAGO, July 17, 1896.

INTRODUCTION

THE ELIZABETHAN AGE

The Awakening of England. — England awoke to a new life in the last years of the sixteenth century. It was an era of expansion. In this age, the age of Queen Elizabeth and William Shakespeare, the universities of England were enriched by the newly found treasures of ancient learning; the territory controlled by the British Crown was many times multiplied by the discovery of new continents beyond the sea; her foes were overthrown and vanquished; and peace and prosperity blessed her people. As the warmth and joy of spring comes after the gloom of a long, cold winter, so came the Elizabethan Age in England.

The New Learning. — For centuries the legends and lore of Greece and Rome had been lost to Europe. In 1453, about a hundred years before the birth of Shakespeare, the city of Constantinople was captured

by the Turks. This city, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, had long been the rendezvous of Greek scholars. Upon the fall of Constantinople these scholars, carrying with them many precious manuscripts of the Greek and Latin masters, came to the cities of western Europe, especially to Italy. There universities sprang up, and students revelled in the long-lost poetry and philosophy of the classics. Soon learned scholars came from Italy to England to teach in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. In return, English scholars and gentlemen visited Florence, Padua, Venice, and Rome, and coming back to England brought to their countrymen Italian tales and old romances. Happiest of all happy coincidences, printing had lately been discovered, and the new literature was soon spread broadcast in the libraries and on the bookstalls of London.

Exploration. — This revival of learning, or the Renaissance, as it is called, was accompanied by a most wonderful series of maritime explorations and adventures. Aroused by a new interest in life, men became anxious to satisfy their curiosity and ambition in searching for new lands and fabled treasures. In less than fifty years after the fall of Constantinople Columbus had discovered America. Discovery followed upon discovery, and colonization and commerce rapidly progressed. By the middle of the sixteenth