

**LONGMANS' MODERN SERIES;  
SHAKESPEARE'S MERCHANT OF VENICE  
WITH  
INTRODUCTION, NOTES, EXAMINATION  
PAPERS AND AN APPENDIX OF PREFIXES  
AND TERMINATIONS**

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Longmans' Modern Series; Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice with Introduction, Notes, Examination Papers and an Appendix of Prefixes and Terminations by William Shakespeare & Thomas Parry

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**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE & THOMAS PARRY**

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'I crave the law, the penalty and forfeit of my bond.'—ACT IV. SC. I.

Longmans' Modern Series

SHAKESPEARE'S  
MERCHANT OF VENICE

WITH

*INTRODUCTION, NOTES, EXAMINATION PAPERS  
AND AN APPENDIX OF PREFIXES  
AND TERMINATIONS*

BY

THOMAS PARRY, F.R.G.S.

EDITOR OF 'JULIUS CÆSAR' IN THIS SERIES



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## INTRODUCTION.

### SECTION I.

1. *Shakespeare's Life and Writings.*—William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, the 23rd April, 1564. At the time of his birth his father, John Shakespeare, was a well-to-do tradesman, and in 1568 he was Mayor of Stratford. His mother, whose maiden name was Mary Arden, brought her husband a small landed estate. As a boy, William Shakespeare probably attended the Stratford Free Grammar School; but, his father becoming involved in money difficulties, early took him from school to assist in his business. Some time later, probably in 1579, his father apprenticed him to a butcher. About 1586 he removed to London, leaving behind his wife and three children. Arrived in London, he became an actor, play-writer, and shareholder in the Blackfriars Theatre, and subsequently in the Globe, where he was patronised by Queen Elizabeth, James I., and the Earl of Southampton. He saved money, with which he assisted his father, as well as purchased houses and land in his native town. Year by year he visited his family, until about 1604 he left the stage and retired to Stratford. He continued to write, and, during the few quiet years that followed, produced some of the grandest of his works. He died on the 23rd April, 1616, and was buried in the chancel of Trinity Church, Stratford, where soon afterwards a bust was erected to his memory. He had two daughters and a son, and several grandchildren; but the latter all died childless.

There are extant thirty-six plays and various minor poems attributed to Shakespeare. Some of these were not originally written by Shakespeare, but were more or less edited, recast, and refurbished by him. His best-known writings are:—  
(1) Tragedies: *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Julius Casar*, *Romeo and Juliet*. (2) English Histories: *King John*,



*Richard II., Henry IV., Henry V., Henry VI., Richard III., Henry VIII.* (3) Comedies: *Tempest, Midsummer Night's Dream, Merchant of Venice, As you Like it, Winter's Tale.*<sup>1</sup> (4) Minor poems: *Lucrece, Venus and Adonis, Sonnets.*

2. **Shakespeare's Grammar.**—Shakespeare lived at a time when the grammar and vocabulary of the English language were in a state of transition. Various points were not yet settled; and so Shakespeare's grammar is not only somewhat different from our own, but is by no means uniform in itself. In the Elizabethan age 'almost any part of speech can be used as any other part of speech. An adverb can be used as a verb, "They *askance* their eyes;" as a noun, "the *backward* and abysm of time;" or as an adjective, "a *seldom* pleasure." Any noun, adjective, or neuter [intrans.] verb can be used as an active [trans.] verb. You can "happy" your friend, "malice" or "foot" your enemy, or "fall" an axe on his neck. An adjective can be used as an adverb; and you can speak and act "easy," "free," "excellent;" or as a noun, and you can talk of "fair" instead of "beauty," and "a pale" instead of "a paleness." Even the pronouns are not exempt from these metamorphoses. A "he" is used for a man, and a lady is described by a gentleman as "the fairest *she* he has yet beheld." In the second place, every variety of apparent grammatical inaccuracy meets us. *He* for *him*, *him* for *he*; *spoke* and *took* for *spoken* and *taken*; plural nominatives with singular verbs; relatives omitted where they are now considered necessary; unnecessary antecedents inserted; *shall* for *will*, *should* for *would*, *would* for *wish*; *to* omitted after "*I ought*," inserted after "*I durst*;" double negatives; double comparatives ("more better," &c.) and superlatives; *such* followed by *which* [or *that*], *that* by *as*, *as* used for *as if*; *that* for *so that*; and lastly some verbs apparently with two nominatives, and others without any nominative at all.<sup>1</sup>—Dr. Abbott's *Shakespearian Grammar*.

3. **Shakespeare's Versification.**—Shakespeare's Plays are written mainly in what is known as *unrime*, or *blank verse*; but they contain a number of riming, and a considerable number of prose lines. As a general rule rime is much commoner in

<sup>1</sup> This is the usual classification, but it is purely artificial.

the earlier than in the later plays. Thus, *Love's Labour Lost* contains nearly 1,100 rhyming lines, whilst (if we except the songs) the *Winter's Tale* has none. *The Merchant of Venice* has 124.

In speaking we lay a stress on particular syllables: this stress is called *accent*. When the words of a composition are so arranged that the accent recurs at regular intervals, the composition is said to be *metrical* or *rhythmical*. Rhythm, or Metre, is an embellishment of language which, though it does not constitute poetry itself, yet provides it with a suitably elegant dress; and hence most modern poets have written in metre. In blank verse the lines consist usually of ten syllables, of which the second, fourth, sixth, eighth and tenth are accented. The line consists therefore of five like parts, each of which contains an unaccented followed by an accented syllable, as in the word *attend*. Each of these five parts forms what is called a *foot* or *measure*; and the five together form a *pentameter*. 'Pentameter' is a Greek word signifying 'five measures.' This is the usual form of a line of blank verse. But a long poem composed entirely of such lines would be monotonous, and for the sake of variety several important modifications have been introduced.

(a) After the tenth syllable one or two unaccented syllables are sometimes added; as -

'*Me-thought | you said | you nei | ther lend | nor bor | row.*'

(b) In any foot the accent may be shifted from the second to the first syllable, provided it be not done in two adjoining feet:

'*Pluck' the | young suck' | ing cubs' | from' the | she bear'.*'

(c) In such words as 'yesterday,' 'voluntary,' 'honesty,' the syllables *-day*, *-ta-*, and *-ty* falling in the place of the accent, are, for the purposes of the verse, regarded as truly accented:

'*Bars' me | the right' | of val'- | un- ta'- | ry choos' | ing.*'

(d) Sometimes we have a succession of accented syllables:

'*Why, now, blow wind, swell billow, and swim bark.*'

(e) Sometimes, but more rarely, two or even three unaccented syllables occupy the place of one; as—

'*He says | he does, | be-ing then | most flat | ter-ed.*'

(f) Lines may have any number of feet from one to six.

Finally, Shakespeare adds much to the pleasing variety of his blank verse by placing the pauses in different parts of the line (especially after the second or third foot), instead of placing them all at the ends of lines as was the earlier custom.

N.B.—In some cases the rhythm requires that what we usually pronounce as one syllable shall be divided into two, as *fi-er* (fire), *su-er* (sure), *mi-el* (mile), &c. ; *too-elve* (twelve), *jaw-ee* (joy), &c. Similarly, *she-on* (-tion or -sion).

It is very important to give the pupil plenty of ear-training by means of formal scansion. This will greatly assist him in his reading.

4. **The Merchant of Venice** is believed to have been written about the year 1596. It was entered in the Registers of the Stationers' Company in 1598, and two editions of it, in quarto, were published in 1600.

The story of the lawsuit between Antonio and Shylock, and that of the three caskets, had been written in Italian long before Shakespeare's time. To these Shakespeare added the episode of the elopement of Jessica, and combined the whole so skillfully that we nowhere lose the thread, but the separate stories blend together into one organic whole.

5. **The Scene of the Play** alternates between Venice and Belmont. **Venice**,—for many years the capital of a celebrated republic, the first maritime and commercial power of the world, and one of the finest cities in Europe,—is built on eighty islands in the Adriatic, about thirty miles north of the mouths of the Po. The city is intersected by 147 canals, which form the highways of communication, as streets do in other towns, and are spanned by 450 bridges. The most famous of these is the superb bridge of the Rialto, which is built of white marble, and crosses the Grand Canal by one arch of ninety-one feet span. There are two rows of shops and three footways running along the bridge.<sup>1</sup> Venice attained the height of its prosperity in the fifteenth century ; it began to decline at the beginning of the sixteenth, mainly owing to the discovery of America, and of

<sup>1</sup> A picture of the Rialto Bridge and the Grand Canal will be found at p. 37. The gondolas in the picture are such as were formerly used. They are not now hung with rich curtains, as in the picture, but are draped and painted plain black.