

The next in order of these “lays of many lands” refers to a period far earlier in point of date, and has for its scene the banks of what our Teutonic friends are won’t to call their “own imperial River!” The incidents which it records afford sufficient proof (and these are days of demonstration), that a propensity to flirtation is not confined to age or country, and that its consequences were not less disastrous to the mail clad *Ritter* of the dark ages than to the silken courtier of the seventeenth century. The whole narrative bears about it the stamp of truth, and from the papers among which it was discovered I am inclined to think it must have been picked up by Sir Peregrine in the course of one of his valetudinary visits to “The German Spa.”

SIR RUPERT THE FEARLESS: A LEGEND OF GERMANY

Sir Rupert the Fearless, a gallant young knight,
Was equally ready to tipple or fight,
Crack a crown, or a bottle,
Cut sirloin, or throttle;
In brief, or as Hume says, “to sum up the tottle,”
Unstain’d by dishonour, unsullied by fear,
All his neighbours pronounced him a *preux chevalier*.

Despite these perfections, corporeal and mental,
He had one slight defect, viz. a rather lean rental;
Besides, as ‘tis own’d there are spots in the sun,
So it must be confessed that Sir Rupert had one;
Being rather unthinking,
He’d scarce sleep a wink in
A night, but addict himself sadly to drinking,
And, what moralists say
Is as naughty — to play,
To *Rouge et Noir*, Hazard, Short Whist, *Ecarté*;
Till these, and a few less defensible fancies
Brought the Knight to the end of his slender finances.

When at length through his boozing,
And tenants refusing
Their rents, swearing “times were so bad they were losing,”
His steward said, “O, sir, It’s some time ago, sir,
Since ought through my hands reach’d the baker or grocer,
And the tradesmen in general are grown great complainers.”
Sir Rupert the brave thus addressed his retainers:

“My friends, since the stock
Of my father’s old hock
Is out, with the Kürchwasser, Barsac, Moselle,
And we’re fairly reduced to the pump and the well,
I presume to suggest,

We shall all find it best
For each to shake hands with his friends ere he goes,
Mount his horse, if he has one, and — follow his nose;
As to me, I opine,
Left sans money or wine,
My best way is to throw myself into the Rhine,
Where pitying trav'lers may sigh, as they cross over,
‘Though he lived a *roué*, yet he died a philosopher.’ ”

The Knight, having bow'd out his friends thus politely,
Got into his skiff, the full moon shining brightly,
By the light of whose beam,
He soon spied on the stream
A dame, whose complexion was fair as new cream;
Pretty pink silken hose
Cover'd ankles and toes,
In other respects she was scanty of clothes;
For, so says tradition, both written and oral,
Her *one* garment was loop'd up with bunches of coral.

Full sweetly she sang to a sparkling guitar,
With silver cords stretch'd over Derbyshire spar,
And she smiled on the Knight,
Who, amazed at the sight,
Soon found his astonishment merged in delight;
But the stream by degrees
Now rose up to her knees,
Till at length it invaded her very chemise,
While the heavenly strain, as the wave seemed to swallow her,
And slowly she sank, sounded fainter and hollower;
— Jumping up in his boat,
And discarding his coat,
“Here goes,” cried Sir Rupert, “by jingo I'll follow her!”
Then into the water he plunged with a souse
That was heard quite distinctly by those in the house.

Down, down, forty fathom and more from the brink,
Sir Rupert the Fearless continues to sink,
And, as downward he goes,
Still the cold water flows
Through his ears, and his eyes, and his mouth, and his nose,
Till the rum and the brandy he'd swallow'd since lunch
Wanted nothing but lemon to fill him with punch;
Some minutes elapsed since he enter'd the flood,
Ere his heels touch'd the bottom, and stuck in the mud.

But oh! what a sight
Met the eyes of the Knight,
When he stood in the depth of the stream bolt upright! —

A grand stalactite hall,
Like the cave of Fingal,
Rose above and about him; — great fishes and small
Came thronging around him, regardless of danger,
And seemed all agog for a peep at the stranger.

Their figures and forms to describe, language fails —
They'd such very odd heads, and such very odd tails;
Of their genus or species a sample to gain,
You would ransack all Hungerford market in vain;
E'en the famed Mr. Myers
Would scarcely find buyers,
Though hundreds of passengers doubtless would stop
To stare, were such monsters expos'd in his shop.

But little reck'd Rupert these queer-looking brutes,
Or the efts and the newts
That crawled up his boots,
For a sight, beyond any of which I've made mention,
In a moment completely absorb'd his attention.
A huge crystal bath, which, with water far clearer
Than George Robins' filters, or Thorpe's (which are dearer),
Have ever distill'd,
To the summit was fill'd,
Lay stretch'd out before him, — and every nerve thrill'd
As scores of young women
Were diving and swimming,
Till the vision a perfect quandary put him in; —
All slightly accoutred in gauzes and lawns,
They came floating about him like so many prawns.

Sir Rupert, who (barring the few peccadilloes
Alluded to,) ere he lept into the billows
Possess'd irreproachable morals, began
To feel rather queer, as a modest young man;
When forth stepp'd a dame, whom he recognised soon
As the one he had seen by the light of the moon,
And lisp'd, while a soft smile attended each sentence,
“Sir Rupert, I'm happy to make your acquaintance;
My name is Lurline,
And the ladies you've seen,
All do me the honour to call me their Queen;
I'm delighted to see you, sir, down in the Rhine here,
And hope you can make it convenient to dine here.”

The Knight blush'd, and bowed, As he ogled the crowd
Of subaqueous beauties, then answer'd aloud:
“Ma'am, you do me much honour, — I cannot express
The delight I shall feel — if you'll pardon my dress —

May I venture to say, when a gentleman jumps
In the river at midnight for want of ‘the dumps,’
He rarely puts on his knee-breeches and pumps;
If I could but have guess’d — what I sensibly feel —
Your politeness — I’d not have come *en dishabille*,
But have put on my *silk* tights in lieu of my *steel*.”
Quoth the lady, “Dear sir, no apologies, pray,
You will take our ‘pot-luck’ in the family way;
We can give you a dish
Of some decentish fish,
And our water’s thought fairish; but here in the Rhine,
I can’t say we pique ourselves much on our wine.”

The Knight made a bow more profound than before,
When a Dory-faced page open’d the dining-room door,
And said, bending his knee, “*Madame, on a servi!*”
Rupert tender’d his arm, led Lurline to her place,
And a fat little Mer-man stood up and said grace.

What boots it to tell of the viands, or how she
Apologiz’d much for their plain water-souchy,
Want of Harvey’s, and Cross’s,
And Burgess’s sauces?
Or how Rupert, on his side, protested, by Jove, he
Preferred his fish plain, without soy or anchovy.
Suffice it the meal
Boasted trout, perch, and eel,
Besides some remarkably fine salmon peel.
The Knight, sooth to say, thought much less of the fishes
Than of what they were served on, the massive gold dishes;
While his eye, as it glanced now and then on the girls,
Was caught by their persons much less than their pearls,
And a thought came across him and caused him to muse,
“If I could but get hold Of some of that gold,
I might manage to pay off my rascally Jews!”

When dinner was done, at a sign to the lasses,
The table was clear’d, and they put on fresh glasses;
Then the lady addrest
Her redoubtable guest
Much as Dido, of old, did the pious Eneas,
“Dear sir, what induced you to come down and see us?” —

Rupert gave her a glance most bewitchingly tender,
Loll’d back in his chair, put his toes on the fender,
And told her outright
How that he, a young Knight,
Had never been last at a feast or a fight;
But that keeping good cheer

Every day in the year,
And drinking neat wines all the same as small-beer,
Had exhausted his rent,
And, his money all spent,
How he borrow'd large sums at two hundred per cent.;
How they follow'd — and then,
The once civillest of men,
Messrs. Howard and Gibbs, made him bitterly rue it he
'd ever raised money by way of annuity;
And, his mortgages being about to foreclose,
How he jump'd in the river to finish his woes!

Lurline was affected, and own'd, with a tear,
That a story so mournful had ne'er met her ear;
Rupert, hearing her sigh,
Look'd uncommonly sly,
And said, with some emphasis, "Ah! miss, had I
A few pounds of those metals
You waste here on kettles,
Then, Lord once again
Of my spacious domain,
A free Count of the Empire once more I might reign,
With Lurline at my side,
My adorable bride,
(For the parson should come, and the knot should be tied;)
No couple so happy on earth should be seen
As Sir Rupert the brave and his charming Lurline;
Not that money's my object — No, hang it! I scorn it —
And as for my rank — but that *you'd* so adorn it —
I'd abandon it all
To remain your true thrall,
And, instead of 'the Great,' be call'd 'Rupert the Small,'
To gain but your smiles, were I Sardanapalus,
I'd descend from my throne, and be boots at an alehouse."

Lurline hung her head,
Turned pale, and then red,
Growing faint at this sudden proposal to wed,
As though his abruptness, in "popping the question"
So soon after dinner, disturb'd her digestion.

Then, averting her eye,
With a lover-like sigh,
"You are welcome," she murmur'd, in tones most bewitching,
"To every utensil I have in my kitchen!"
Upstarted the Knight,
Half mad with delight,
Round her finely-form'd waist
He immediately placed

One arm, which the lady most closely embraced,
Of her lily-white fingers the other made capture,
And he press'd his adored to his bosom with rapture.
“And, oh!” he exclaim'd, “let them go catch my skiff, I
'll be home in a twinkling, and back in a jiffy,
Nor one moment procrastinate longer my journey
Than to put up the banns and kick out the attorney.”

One kiss to her lip, and one squeeze to her hand,
And Sir Rupert already was half-way to land,
For a sour-visaged Triton,
With features would frighten
Old Nick, caught him up in one hand, though no light one,
Sprang up through the waves, popp'd him into his funny,
Which some others already had half-fill'd with money;
In fact, 'twas so heavily laden with ore
And pearls, 'twas a mercy he got it to shore;
But Sir Rupert was strong,
And, while pulling along,
Still he heard, faintly sounding, the water-nymphs' song.

LAY OF THE NAIADS.

“Away! away! to the mountain's brow,
Where the castle is darkly frowning;
And the vassals, all in goodly row,
Weep for their lord a-drowning!
Away! away! to the steward's room,
Where law with its wig and robe is;
Throw us out John Doe and Richard Roe,
And sweetly we'll tickle their tobies!”

The unearthly voices scarce had ceased their yelling,
When Rupert reach'd his old baronial dwelling.

What rejoicing was there!
How the vassals did stare!
The old housekeeper put a clean shirt down to air,
For she saw by her lamp
That her master's was damp,
And she fear'd he'd catch cold, and lumbago and cramp;
But, scorning what she did,
The Knight never heeded
Wet jacket or trowsers, nor thought of repining,
Since their pockets had got such a delicate lining.
But oh! what dismay
Fill'd the tribe of *Ca Sa*,
When they found he'd the cash, and intended to pay!

Away went “*cognovits*,” “bills,” “bonds,” and “escheats”—
Rupert clear’d off all scores, and took proper receipts.

Now no more he sends out
For pots of brown stout
Or *schnaps*, but resolves to do henceforth without,
Abjure from this hour all excess and ebriety,
Enrol himself one of a Temp’rance Society,
All riot eschew,
Begin life anew,
And new-cushion and hassock the family pew!
Nay, to strengthen him more in his new mode of life,
He boldly determines to take him a wife.

Now, many would think that the Knight, from a nice sense
Of honour, should put Lurline’s name in the licence,
And that, for a man of his breeding and quality,
To break faith and troth,
Confirm’d by an oath,
Is not quite consistent with rigid morality;
But whether the nymph was forgot, or he thought her
From her essence scarce wife, but at best wife-and-water,
And declined as unsuited
A bride so diluted —
Be this as it may,
He, I’m sorry to say,
(For, all things consider’d, I own ‘twas a rum thing,)
Made proposals in form to Miss *Una Von* — something,
(Her name has escaped me,) sole heiress, and niece
To a highly respectable Justice of Peace.

“Thrice happy’s the wooing
That’s not long a-doing!”
So much time is saved in the billing and cooing —
The ring is now bought, the white favours, and gloves,
And all the *et cetera* which crown people’s loves;
A magnificent bride-cake comes home from the baker,
And lastly appears, from the German Long Acre,
That shaft which the sharpest in all Cupid’s quiver is,
A plum-colour’d coach, and rich Pompadour liveries.

Twas a comely sight To behold the Knight,
With his beautiful bride, dress’d all in white,
And the bridemaids fair with their long lace veils,
As they all walk’d up to the altar rails,
While nice little boys, the incense dispensers,
March’d in front with white surplices, bands, and gilt censers.

With a gracious air, and a smiling look,

Mess John had open'd his awful book,
And had read so far as to ask if to wed he meant?
And if "he knew any just cause or impediment?"
When from base to turret the castle shook!!!
Then came a sound of a mighty rain
Dashing against each storied pane,
The wind blew loud,
And a coal-black cloud
O'ershadow'd the church, and the party, and crowd;
How it could happen they could not divine,
The morning had been so remarkably fine!

Still the darkness increased, till it reach'd such a pass
That the sextoness hasten'd to turn on the gas;
But harder it pour'd,
And the thunder roar'd,
As if heaven and earth were coming together;
None ever had witness'd such terrible weather.
Now louder it crash'd,
And the lightning flash'd,
Exciting the fears
Of the sweet little dears
In the veils, as it danced on the brass chandeliers;
The parson ran off, though a stout-hearted Saxon,
When he found that a flash had set fire to his caxon.

Though all the rest trembled, as might be expected,
Sir Rupert was perfectly cool and collected,
And endeavoured to cheer
His bride, in her ear
Whisp'ring tenderly, "Pray don't be frighten'd, my dear;
Should it even set fire to the castle, and burn it, you're
Amply insured, both for buildings and furniture."
But now, from without
A trustworthy scout
Rush'd hurriedly in,
Wet through to the skin,
Informing his master "the river was rising,
And flooding the grounds in a way quite surprising."

He'd no time to say more,
For already the roar
Of the waters was heard as they reach'd the church-door,
While, high on the first wave that roll'd in, was seen,
Riding proudly, the form of the angry Lurline;
And all might observe, by her glance fierce and stormy,
She was stung by the *spretæ injuriâ formæ*.

What she said to the Knight, what she said to the bride,

What she said to the ladies who stood by her side,
What she said to the nice little boys in white clothes,
Oh, nobody mentions, — for nobody knows;
For the roof tumbled in, and the walls tumbled out,
And the folks tumbled down, all confusion and rout,
The rain kept on pouring,
The flood kept on roaring,
The billows and water-nymphs roll'd more and more in;
Ere the close of the day
All was clean washed away —
One only survived who could hand down the news,
A little old woman that open'd the pews;
She was borne off, but stuck,
By the greatest good luck.
In an oak-tree, and there she hung, crying and screaming,
And saw all the rest swallow'd up the wild stream in;
In vain, all the week,
Did the fishermen seek
For the bodies, and poke in each cranny and creek;
In vain was their search
After ought in the church,
They caught nothing but weeds, and perhaps a few perch;
The Humane Society
Tried a variety
Of methods, and brought down, to drag for the wreck, tackles,
But they only fish'd up the clerk's tortoise-shell spectacles.

MORAL.

This tale has a moral. Ye youths, oh, beware
Of liquor, and how you run after the fair!
Shun playing at *shorts* — avoid quarrels and jars —
And don't take to smoking those nasty cigars!
— Let no run of bad luck, or despair for some Jewess-eyed
Damsel, induce you to contemplate suicide!
Don't sit up much later than ten or eleven! —
Be up in the morning by half after seven!
Keep from flirting — nor risk, warned by Rupert's miscarriage,
An action for breach of a promise of marriage; —
Don't fancy old fishes!
Don't prig silver dishes!
And to sum up the whole, in the shortest phrase I know,
BEWARE OF THE RHINE, AND TAKE CARE OF THE RHINO!

* * * *

And now for “Sunny Italy,” — the “Land of the unforgotten brave,” — the land of blue skies and black-eyed Signoras. — I cannot discover from any recorded memoranda that “Uncle Perry” was ever in Venice, even in Carnival time — that he ever saw Garrick in Shylock I do not believe, and am satisfied that he knew nothing of Shakespeare, a circumstance that would by no means disqualify him from publishing an edition of that Poet’s works. I can only conclude that, in the course of his Continental wanderings, Sir Peregrine had either read, or heard of the following history, especially as he furnishes us with some particulars of the eventual destination of his *dramatis personæ* which the Bard of Avon has omitted. If this solution be not accepted, I can only say, with Mr. Puff, that probably “two men hit upon the same idea, and Shakspeare made use of it first.”

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE: A LEGEND OF ITALY.

... Of the Merchant of Venice there are two 4to. editions in 1600, one by Heyes and the other by Roberts. The Duke of Devonshire and Lord Francis Egerton have copies of the edition by Heyes, and *they vary importantly*.

... It must be acknowledged that *this* is a very easy and happy emendation, which does not admit of a moment’s doubt or dispute.

... Readers in general are not all aware of the *nonsense* they have in many cases been accustomed to receive as the genuine text of Shakespeare!

Reasons for a new edition of Shakespeare’s Works, by J. Payne Collier.

I believe there are few
But have heard of a Jew,
Named Shylock, of Venice, as errant a “Screw”
In money transactions, as ever you knew;
An exorbitant miser, who never yet lent
A ducat at less than three hundred per cent.,
Insomuch that the veriest spendthrift in Venice,
Who’d take no more care of his pounds than his pennies,
When press’d for a loan, at the very first sight
Of his terms, would back out, and take refuge in *Flight*.
It is not my purpose to pause and inquire
If he might not, in managing thus to retire,
Jump out of the frying-pan into the fire;
Suffice it, that folks would have nothing to do,
Who could possibly help it, with Shylock the Jew.

But, however discreetly one cuts and contrives,
We’ve been most of us taught, in the course of our lives,
That “Needs must when the Elderly Gentleman drives!”
In proof of this rule,
A thoughtless young fool,

Bassanio, a Lord of the Tom-noddy school,
Who, by shewing at Operas, Balls, Plays, and Court,
A “swelling” (Payne Collier would read “swilling”) “port,”
And inviting his friends to dine, breakfast, and sup,
Had shrunk his “weak means,” and was “stump’d” and “hard up,”
Took occasion to send
To his very good friend
Antonio, a merchant whose wealth had no end,
And who’d often before had the kindness to lend
Him large sums, on his note, which he’d managed to spend.

“Antonio,” said he,
“Now listen to me:
I’ve just hit on a scheme which, I think, you’ll agree,
All matters considered, is no bad design,
And which, if it succeeds, will suit your book and mine.
“In the first place, you know all the money I’ve got,
Time and often, from you has been long gone to pot,
And in making those loans you have made a bad shot;
Now do as the boys do when, shooting at sparrows
And tom-tits, they chance to lose one of their arrows,
— Shoot another the same way — I’ll watch well its track,
And, turtle to tripe, I’ll bring both of them back! —
So list to my plan,
And do what you can
To attend to and second it, that’s a good man!

“There’s a Lady, young, handsome beyond all compare, at
A place they call Belmont, whom, when I was there, at
The suppers and parties my friend Lord Mountferrat
Was giving last season, we all used to stare at.
Then, as to her wealth, her Solicitor told mine,
Besides vast estates, a pearl-fishery, and gold mine,
Her iron strong box
Seems bursting its locks,
It’s stuffed so with shares in ‘Grand Junctions’ and ‘Docks’,
Not to speak of the money she’s got in the Stocks,
French, Dutch, and Brazilian,
Columbian, and Chilian,
In English Exchequer-bills full half a million,
Not ‘kites,’ manufactured to cheat and inveigle,
But the right sort of ‘flimsy,’ all sign’d by Monteagle.
Then I know not how much in Canal-shares and Railways,
And more speculations I need not detail, ways
Of vesting which, if not so safe as some think ‘em,
Contribute a deal to improving one’s income;
In short, she’s a Mint!
— Now I say, deuce is in’t
If, with all my experience, I can’t take a hint,

And her ‘eye’s speechless messages,’ plainer than print
At the time that I told you of, know from a squint.
In short, my dear Tony,
My trusty old crony,
Do stump up three thousand once more as a loan — I
Am sure of my game — though, of course, there are brutes,
Of all sorts and sizes, preferring their suits
To her you may call the Italian Miss Coutts,
Yet Portia — she’s named from that daughter of Cato’s —
Is not to be snapp’d up like little potatoes,
And I have not a doubt
I shall rout every lout
Ere you’ll whisper Jack Robinson — cut them all out —
Surmount every barrier,
Carry her, marry her!
— Then hey! my old Tony, when once fairly noosed,
For her Three-and-a-half per Cents — New and Reduced!

With a wink of his eye His friend made reply
In his jocular manner, sly, caustic, and dry,
“Still the same boy, Bassanio — never say ‘die’!
— Well — I hardly know how I shall do’t, but I’ll try ,—
Don’t suppose my affairs are at all in a hash,
But the fact is, at present I’m quite out of cash;
The bulk of my property, merged in rich cargoes, is
Tossing about, as you know, in my Argosies,
Tending, of course, my resources to cripple, — I
’ve one bound to England, — another to Tripoli —
Cyprus — Masulipatam — and Bombay;
A sixth, by the way,
I consigned t’other day,
To Sir Gregor M’Gregor, Cacique of Poyais,
A country where silver’s as common as clay.
Meantime, till they tack,
And come, some of them, back,
What with Custom-house duties, and bills falling due,
My account with Jones Loyd and Co. looks rather blue;
While, as for the ‘ready,’ I’m like a Church-mouse, —
I really don’t think there’s five pounds in the house.
But, no matter for that,
Let me just get my hat,
And my new silk umbrella that stands on the mat,
And we’ll go forth at once to the market — we two, —
And try what my credit in Venice can do;
I stand well on ’Change, and, when all’s said and done, I
Don’t doubt I shall get it for love or for money.”

They were going to go,
When, lo! down below,

In the street, they heard somebody crying, "Old Clo'!"
— "By the Pope, there's the man for our purpose! — I knew
We should not have to search long. Solanio, run you,
— Salarino, — quick! — haste! ere he get out of view,
And call in that scoundrel, old Shylock the Jew!"

With a pack, Like a sack
Of old clothes, at his back,
And three hats on his head, Shylock came in a crack,
Saying, "Rest you fair, Signior Antonio! — vat, pray,
Might your vorship be pleased for to vant in ma vay?"

— "Why, Shylock, although,
As you very well know,
I am what they call 'warm,' — pay my way as I go,
And, as to myself, neither borrow nor lend,
I can break through a rule, to oblige an old friend;
And that's the case now — Lord Bassanio would raise
Some three thousand ducats — well, — knowing your ways,
And that nought's to be got from you, say what one will,
Unless you've a couple of names to the bill,
Why, for once, I'll put mine to it,
Yea, seal and sign to it —
Now, then, old Sinner, let's hear what you'll say
As to 'doing' a bill at three months from to-day?
Three thousand gold ducats, mind — all in good bags
Of hard money — no sealing-wax, slippers, or rags?"

"— Vell, ma tear," says the Jew,
"I'll see vat I can do!
But Mishter Antonio, hark you, 'tish funny
You say to me, 'Shylock, ma tear, ve'd have money!'
Ven you very vell knows
How you shpit on ma clothes,
And use naughty vords — call me Dog — and avouch
Dat I put too much int'resh't py half in ma pouch,
And vhile I, like de resht of ma tribe, shrug and crouch,
You find fault mit ma pargains, and say I'm a Smouch.
— Vell! — no matters, ma tear, —
Von vord in your ear!
I'd be friends mit you bote — and to make dat appear,
Vy, I'll find you de monies as soon as you vill,
Only von littel joke musht be put in de pill; —
Ma tear, you musht say,
If on such and such day
Such sum, or such sums, you shall fail to repay,
I shall cut vere I like, as de pargain is proke,
A fair pound of your flesh — chest by vay of a joke."

So novel a clause
Caused Bassanio to pause;
But Antonio, like most of those sage "Johnny Raws"
Who care not three straws
About Lawyers or Laws,
And think cheaply of "Old Father Antic," because
They have never experienced a gripe from his claws,
"Pooh pooh'd" the whole thing. — "Let the Smouch have his way —
Why, what care I, pray,
For his penalty? — Nay,
It's a forfeit he'd never expect me to pay;
And, come what come may,
I hardly need say
My ships will be back a full month ere the day."
So, anxious to see his friend off on his journey,
And thinking the whole but a paltry concern, he
Affixed with all speed
His name to a deed,
Duly stamp'd and drawn up by a sharp Jew attorney.
Thus again furnished forth, Lord Bassanio, instead
Of squandering the cash, after giving one spread,
With fiddling and masques at the Saracen's Head,
In the morning "made play,"
And, without more delay,
Started off in the steam-boat for Belmont next day.
But scarcely had he
From the harbour got free,
And left the Lagunes for the broad open sea,
Ere the 'Change and Rialto both rung with the news
That he'd carried off more than mere cash from the Jew's.

Though Shylock was old,
And, if rolling in gold,
Was as ugly a dog as you'd wish to behold,
For few in his tribe 'mongst their Levis and Moseses
Sported so Jewish an eye, beard, and nose as his,
Still, whate'er the opinions of Horace and some be,
Your *aqilæ* generate *some* times *Columbæ*.
Like Jephthah, as Hamlet says, he'd "one fair daughter,"
And every gallant, who caught sight of her, thought her
A jewel — a gem of the very first water;
A great many sought her,
Till one at last caught her,
And, upsetting all that the Rabbis had taught her,
To feelings so truly reciprocal brought her,
That the very same night
Bassanio thought right
To give all his old friends that farewell "invite,"
And while Shylock was gone there to feed out of spite,

On “wings made by a tailor” the damsel took flight.

By these “wings” I’d express
A grey duffle dress,
With brass badge and muffin cap, made, as by rule,
For an upper class boy in the National School.
Jessy ransack’d the house, popped her breeks on, and when so
Disguised, bolted off with her beau — one Lorenzo,
An “Unthrift,” who lost not a moment in whisking
Her into the boat,
And was fairly afloat
Ere her Pa had got rid of the smell of the griskin.

Next day, while old Shylock was making a racket,
And threatening how well he’d dust every man’s jacket
Who’d helped her in getting aboard of the packet,
Bassanio at Belmont was capering and prancing,
And bowing, and scraping, and singing, and dancing,
Making eyes at Miss Portia, and doing his best
To perform the polite, and to cut out the rest;
And, if left to herself, he, no doubt, had succeeded,
For none of them waltz’d so genteelly as he did;
But an obstacle lay,
Of some weight, in his way,
The defunct Mr. P., who was now turned to clay,
Had been an odd man, and, though all for the best he meant,
Left but a queer sort of “Last will and testament,” —
Bequeathings her hand,
With her houses and land,
&c., from motives one don’t understand,
As she rev’renced his memory, and valued his blessing,
To him who should turn out the best hand at guessing!

Like a good girl, she did Just what she was bid;
In one of three caskets her picture she hid,
And clapped a conundrum a-top of each lid.
A couple of Princes, a black and a white one,
Tried first, but they both failed in choosing the right one.
Another from Naples, who shoed his own horses;
A French Lord, whose graces might vie with Count D’Orsay’s; —
A young English Baron; — a Scotch Peer his neighbour:—
A dull drunken Saxon, all mustache and sabre;—
All followed, and all had their pains for their labour.
Bassanio came last — happy man be his dole!
Put his conjuring cap on, — considered the whole, —
The gold put aside as
Mere “hard food for Midas,”
The silver bade trudge
As a “pale common drudge;”

Then choosing the little lead box in the middle,
Came plump on the picture, and found out the riddle.

Now you're not such a goose as to think, I dare say,
Gentle Reader, that all this was done in a day,
Any more than the dome
Of St. Peter's at Rome
Was built in the same space of time; and, in fact,
Whilst Bassanio was doing
His billing and cooing,
Three months had gone by ere he reach'd the fifth act;
Meanwhile, that unfortunate bill became due,
Which his Lordship had almost forgot, to the Jew,
And Antonio grew
In a deuce of a stew,
For he could not cash up, spite of all he could do;
(The bitter old Israelite would not renew),
What with contrary winds, storms, and wrecks, and embargoes, his
Funds were all stopped, or gone down in his argosies,
None of the set having come into port,
And Shylock's attorney was moving the Court
For the forfeit supposed to be set down in sport.

The serious news
Of this step of the Jew's,
And his fix'd resolution all terms to refuse,
Gave the newly-made Bridegroom a fit of "the Blues,"
Especially, too, as it came from the pen
Of his poor friend himself on the wedding-day, — then,
When the Parson had scarce shut his book up, and when
The Clerk was yet uttering the final Amen.

"Dear Friend," it continued, "all's up with me — I
Have nothing on earth now to do but to die!
And, as death clears all scores, you're no longer my debtor;
I should take it as kind
Could you come — never mind —
If your love don't persuade you, why — don't let this letter!"
I hardly need say this was scarcely read o'er
Ere a post-chaise and four
Was brought round to the door,
And Bassanio, though, doubtless, he thought it a bore,
Gave his Lady one kiss, and then started at score.
But scarce in his flight
Had he got out of sight,
Ere Portia, addressing a groom, said, "My lad, you a
Journey must take on the instant to Padua;
Find out there Bellario, a Doctor of Laws,
Who, like Follett, is never left out of a cause,

And give him this note,
Which I've hastily wrote,
Take the papers he'll give you — then push for the ferry
Below, where I'll meet you — you'll do't in a wherry,
If you can't find a boat on the Brenta with sails to it —
— Stay! — bring his gown too, and wig with three tails to it."

Giovanni (that's Jack) Brought out his hack,
Made a bow to his mistress, then jump'd on its back,
Put his hand to his hat, and was off in a crack.
The Signora soon followed herself, taking as her
Own escort Nerissa her maid, and Balthazar.

* * * *

"The Court is prepared, the Lawyers are met,
The Judges all ranged, a terrible show!"
As Captain Macheath says, — and when one's in debt,
The sight's as unpleasant a one as I know,
Yet still not so bad after all, I suppose,
As if, when one cannot discharge what one owes,
They should bid people cut off one's toes or one's nose;
Yet here, a worse fate,
Stands Antonio, of late
A Merchant, might vie e'en with Princes in state,
With his waistcoat unbutton'd, prepared for the knife,
Which, in taking a pound of flesh, must take his life;
— On the other side Shylock, his bag on the floor,
And three shocking bad hats on his head, as before,
Imperturbable stands,
As he waits their commands,
With his scales and his great *snicker-snee* in his hands;
— Between them, equipt in a wig, gown, and bands,
With a very smooth face, a young dandified Lawyer,
Whose air, ne'ertheless, speaks him quite a top-sawyer,
Though his hopes are but feeble,
Does his *possible*
To make the hard Hebrew to mercy incline,
And in lieu of his three thousand ducats take nine,
Which Bassanio, for reasons we well may divine,
Shows in so many bags all drawn up in a line.
But vain are all efforts to soften him — still
He points to the bond
He so often has conn'd,
And says in plain terms he'll be shot if he will.

So the dandified Lawyer, with talking grown hoarse,
Says, "I *can* say no more — let the law take its course."



Just fancy the gleam of the eye of the Jew,
As he sharpen'd his knife on the sole of his shoe
From the toe to the heel,
And grasping the steel,
With a business-like air was beginning to feel
Whereabouts he should cut, as a butcher would veal,
When the dandified Judge puts a spoke in his wheel.
"Stay, Shylock," says he,
"Here's one thing — you see
his bond of yours gives you here no jot of blood!
— the words are 'A pound of flesh,' — that's clear as mud —
Slice away, then, old fellow — but mind! — if you spill
One drop of his claret that's not in your bill,
I'll hang you like Haman! — by Jingo I will!"

When apprized of this flaw,
You never yet saw
Such an awfully marked elongation of jaw
As in Shylock, who cried, "Plesh ma heart! ish dat law?" —
— Off went his three hats,
And he look'd as the cats
Do, whenever a mouse has escaped from their claw.
"— Ish't the law?" — why the thing won't admit of a query —

"No doubt of the fact,
Only look at the act;
Acto quinto, cap: tertio, Dogi Falieri —
Nay, if, rather than cut, you'd relinquish the debt,
The Law, Master Shy, has a hold on you yet.
See Foscari's 'Statutes at large' — 'If a Stranger
A Citizen's life shall, with malice, endanger,
The whole of his property, little or great,
Shall go, on conviction, one half to the State,
And one to the person pursued by his hate;
And, not to create
Any farther debate,
The Doge, if he pleases, may cut off his pate.'
So down on your marrowbones, Jew, and ask mercy!
Defendant and Plaintiff are now *wisy wersy*."

What need to declare
How pleased they all were
At so joyful an end to so sad an affair?
Or Bassanio's delight at the turn things had taken,
His friend having saved, to the letter, his bacon? —
How Shylock got shaved, and turn'd Christian, though late,
To save a life-int'rest in half his estate? —
How the dandified Lawyer, who'd managed the thing,
Would not take any fee for his pains but a ring
Which Mrs. Bassanio had giv'n to her spouse,
With injunctions to keep it, on leaving the house? —
How when he, and the spark
Who appeared as his clerk,
Had thrown off their wigs, and their gowns, and their jetty coats,
There stood Nerissa and Portia in petticoats? —
How they pouted, and flouted, and acted the cruel,
Because Lord Bassanio had not kept his jewel? —
How they scolded and broke out,
Till, having their joke out,
They kissed, and were friends, and, all blessing and blessed,
Drove home by the light
Of a moonshiny night,
Like the one in which Troilus, the brave Trojan knight,
Sat astride on a wall, and sigh'd after his Cressid? —

All this, if 'twere meet, I'd go on to repeat,
But a story spun out so's by no means a treat,
So, I'll merely relate what, in spite of the pains
I have taken to rummage among his remains,
No edition of Shakspeare, I've met with, contains;
But, if the account which I've heard be the true one,
We shall have it, no doubt, before long, in a new one.

In an MS., then, sold For its full weight in gold,
And knock'd down to my friend, Lord Tomnoddy, I'm told
It's recorded that Jessy, coquettish and vain,
Gave her husband, Lorenzo, a good deal of pain;
Being mildly rebuked, she levanted again,
Ran away with a Scotchman, and, crossing the main,
Became known by the name of the "Flower of Dumblane."

That Antonio, whose piety caused, as we've seen,
Him to spit upon every old Jew's gaberdine,
And whose goodness to paint
All colours were faint,
Acquired the well-merited prefix of "Saint,"
And the Doge, his admirer, of honour the fount,
Having given him a patent, and made him a Count,
He went over to England, got nat'ralis'd there,
And espous'd a rich heiress in Hanover Square.
That Shylock came with him, no longer a Jew,
But converted, I think may be possibly true,
But that Walpole, as these self-same papers aver,
By changing the *y* in his name into *er*,
Should allow him a fictitious surname to dish up,
And in Seventeen-twenty-eight make him a Bishop,
I cannot believe — but shall still think them two men
Till some Sage proves the fact "with his usual *acumen*."

MORAL

From this tale of the Bard
It's uncommonly hard
If an Editor can't draw a moral. — 'Tis clear,
Then, — In ev'ry young wife-seeking Bachelor's ear
A maxim, 'bove all other stories, this one drums,
"PITCH GREEK TO OLD HARRY, AND STICK TO CONUNDRUMS!!"

To new-married Ladies this lesson it teaches,
"You're 'no that far wrong' in assuming the breeches!"

Monied men upon 'Change, and rich Merchants it schools
To look well to assets — nor play with edge-tools!

Last of all, this remarkable
History shews men,
What caution they need when they deal with old-clothesmen!
So bid John and Mary
To mind and be wary,
And never let one of them come down the are'

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