



Jessical

MERCHANT OF VENICE, ACT 2, SC. 2.

...mind, Jessica, my love, that her father's name, in her aspect, neither a pleasing nor a terrible picture, though it may be acknowledged that her derelictions from duty are committed under extenuating circumstances.

It is not for deceiving her father, so far as her father's affair is concerned, that we dislike her, nor for sharing her father's fate by his merciless punishment, and still, I feel, that she is a "hell" to her, but for the scandalous and dishonouring gift to her father, for a mother's love can find no palliation, in the best-natured virtue, which is a crime to be easily forgiven, especially in a heroine.

Mrs. Jameson says of Jessica, that she has a "ring" of Orientalism shed over her, worthy her Eastern origin, to us she presents her own face, in her characteristic love of gold, to which, however, she is not so much attached as she is said to be, even in the most ordinary of her people, and in disguise.

...and this is the end of the scene.

...and the scene ends with the same.

...and the scene ends with the same.



JESSICA.

To our mind, Jessica, Shylock's "one fair daughter," is, in her filial aspect, neither a pleasing nor a truthful picture; though it must be acknowledged that her derelictions from duty are committed under extenuating circumstances.

It is not for deceiving her father, so far as her love-affair with Lorenzo is concerned, that we dislike her; nor for eloping from a home which, by his graceless parsimony, and cold, forbidding harshness, he had made a "hell" to her; but for the stealing of the ducats and the jewels—above all, the trading of a turquoise ring, her mother's love-gift to her father, for a monkey—we can find no excuse, no palliation, in the best-natured virtue; theft is too mean a crime to be easily forgiven, especially in a heroine.

Mrs. Jameson says of Jessica, that she has "a rich tinge of Orientalism shed over her, worthy her Eastern origin:" to us she betrays her race only in her characteristic love of gold, to which, amorous and romantic as she is, she can give careful heed, even in the very act of eloping with her lover, by night and in disguise:

Here, catch this casket; *it is worth the pains.*

* * * * *

I will make fast the doors, *and gild myself*

With some more ducats, and be with you straight.

Lor. * * * * She hath directed
How I shall take her from her father's house—
What gold, and jewels, she is furnish'd with.

Fancy Juliet, Silvia, or even little Anne Page, the two latter veritable "run-aways" from the paternal roof, damaging their father's coffers as well as his authority!

As for Jessica's conversion to the Christian religion, we put no faith in it: it is plain that she is as indifferent to the faith of her husband as she was to that of her father; she would just as readily have become a Mohammedan, if her Lorenzo had sworn by Allah and the Prophet.

Once married, however, Jessica assumes a more amiable aspect—her conjugal tenderness is very beautiful; and the garden scene at Belmont, during the honeymoon of the young couple, is soulful enough to cover a multitude of meannesses; Lorenzo is the most poetic of lovers, and for his sake we can almost pardon the episode of the ducats:

Lor. The moon shines bright:—In such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
And they did make no noise—in such a night,
Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls,
And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,
Where Cressid lay that night.

Jes. In such a night,
Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew;
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
And ran dismay'd away.

Lor. In such a night,
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea-banks, and wav'd her love
To come again to Carthage.

Jes. In such a night,
Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs
That did renew old Æson.

Lor. In such a night,
Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew;
And with an unthrift love did run from Venice,
As far as Belmont.

Jes. And in such a night,
Did young Lorenzo swear he lov'd her well—
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,
And ne'er a true one.

Lor. And in such a night,
Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,
Slander her love, and he forgave it her.
* * * * *
How sweet the moon-light sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness, and the night,
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica: Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold!
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins:
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.