

The Merchant of Venice

by William Shakespeare

Act 3, sc. 2 (line 250 - Verse)

Bassanio

PORTIA

*There are some shrewd contents in yon same paper,
That steals the colour from Bassanio's cheek:
Some dear friend dead; else nothing in the world
Could turn so much the constitution
Of any constant man. What, worse and worse!
With leave, Bassanio: I am half yourself,
And I must freely have the half of anything
That this same paper brings you.*

BASSANIO

O sweet Portia,

Here are a few of the unpleasant'st words
That ever blotted paper! Gentle lady,
When I did first impart my love to you,
I freely told you, all the wealth I had
Ran in my veins, I was a gentleman;
And then I told you true: and yet, dear lady,
Rating myself at nothing, you shall see
How much I was a braggart. When I told you
My state was nothing, I should then have told you
That I was worse than nothing; for, indeed,
I have engaged myself to a dear friend,
Engaged my friend to his mere enemy,
To feed my means. Here is a letter, lady;
The paper as the body of my friend,
And every word in it a gaping wound,
Issuing life-blood. But is it true, Salerio?

Have all his ventures fail'd? What, not one hit?

From Tripolis, from Mexico and England,

From Lisbon, Barbary and India?

And not one vessel 'scape the dreadful touch

Of merchant-marring rocks?