

My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord  
Will never more break faith advisedly.

*Por.* Then you shall be his surety. Give him this 240  
And bid him keep it better than the other.

*Ant.* Here, Lord Bassanio; swear to keep this ring.

*Bass.* By heaven, it is the same I gave the doctor!

*Por.* I had it of him. You are all amaz'd:  
Here is a letter; read it at your leisure;  
It comes from Padua, from Bellario:  
There you shall find that Portia was the doctor,  
Nerissa there her clerk: Lorenzo here  
Shall witness I set forth as soon as you  
And even but now return'd; I have not yet 250  
Enter'd my house. Antonio, you are welcome;  
And I have better news in store for you  
Than you expect: unseal this letter soon;  
There you shall find three of your argosies  
Are richly come to harbour suddenly:  
You shall not know by what strange accident  
I chanced on this letter.

*Ant.* I am dumb.

*Bass.* Were you the doctor and I knew you not?

*Ant.* Sweet lady you have given me life and living;  
For here I read for certain that my ships 260  
Are safely come to road.

*Por.* How now, Lorenzo!  
My clerk hath some good comforts too for you.

*Ner.* Ay, and I'll give them him without a fee.

There do I give to you and Jessica,  
From the rich Jew, a special deed of gift,  
After his death, of all he dies possess'd of.

*Lor.* Fair ladies, you drop manna in the way  
Of starved people.

*Por.* It is almost morning,  
And yet I am sure you are not satisfied 270  
Of these events at full. Let us go in;  
And charge us there upon inter'gatories,  
And we will answer all things faithfully.

*Gra.* Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing  
So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring.

[*Exeunt.*]

## NOTES.

### Act I.—Scene I.

*How Bassanio, a scholar and a soldier, tells the merchant, Antonio, of his purpose to win Portia, the heiress of Belmont; and how Antonio undertakes to find the money to fit out a ship for him.*

The early scenes of Shakespeare's plays serve both to introduce the foremost persons of the action, and to give a foretaste of the kind of tale that is to follow. Fine instances of his art in 'overture' are the beginnings of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*.

Here, we begin by making the acquaintance of the Merchant of Venice himself and of two of his friends, who appear to be courtiers or soldiers. Antonio is out of spirits, and his melancholy is ominous—

"By a divine instinct men's minds mistrust  
Ensuing dangers" (*Richard III.*, ii. 3. 42).

His anxious words, together with the description by the others of a merchant's risks, suggest the coming trouble. At the same time their solicitude and kindness are prompted by a touch of the same loyal friendship by which that trouble is to be remedied.

Later, we are also introduced to Bassanio and certain of his companions. Immediately upon this the threefold action of the plot begins with Bassanio's story of his hopes of Portia, with Lorenzo's agreement to meet Bassanio 'after dinner', and with Antonio's promise to raise money.

8. Scan this line, and note the word which has a different pronunciation from the modern. Compare 'óbscure', ii. 7. 51, 'aspéct', ii. 1. 8.

13. The little ships feel the motion of the waves, and seem to bob and curtsy to the big, steady galleys of Antonio.

15. had I such venture forth. Put this expression along with i. 1. 143, "to find the other *forth*", and ii. 5. 11, "I am bid *forth* to supper", and explain the meaning of the adverb.

16. affections in Shakespeare's time had a wider sense than in modern English, and included all feelings or emotions; so also in iv. 1. 49.



18. sits. The wind is said to 'sit' in the quarter towards which it blows. So in *Much Ado About Nothing*, ii. 3. 102, "sits the wind in that corner?"

19. roads, parts of the sea where a ship may safely 'ride' at anchor.

28. Andrew, a name for a galley. It is not known whether Shakespeare had any particular ship in mind.

32. touching but, merely touching. There is a similar order of words in line 153 of this scene, and in iv. 1. 272, "repent but you".

50. two-headed Janus, the god of gates and doors, who therefore was figured 'facing both ways', and so is a type of opposite extremes united in a single nature.

52. peep through their eyes, *i.e.* their eyes are 'screwed up', as their faces wrinkle with laughter.

56. Nestor, a proverb for age and gravity. He lived through three generations, and in the third fought with the Greeks against the Trojans.

61. prevented, anticipated; compare the derivation of the verb.

70. dinner-time, *i.e.* about eleven a.m. Compare the passage in *A Description of England* by William Harrison, an elder contemporary of Shakespeare's (p. 105 in *Elizabethan England*, ed. Furnivall, in the *Camelot Series*), "With us the nobility, gentry, and students do ordinarily go to dinner at eleven before noon".

71. where we must meet. Lorenzo is already laying his plans to run off with Jessica, with the help of Bassanio.

74. *i.e.* you take the world more seriously than it is worth, and 'lose' it by losing the power to enjoy it. So Robert Louis Stevenson, after Thoreau: "A man may pay too dearly for his livelihood by giving his whole life for it".

77. At its *second* occurrence in the line, 'world' must be read with a different intonation, and be understood with a different meaning:

'I take the world, but as the *world*'.

A fuller emphasis gives quite another colour to a word, as in—

"Love is not *love*

Which alters where it alteration finds",

or

"If it were *done*, when 't is done, then 't were well  
It were done quickly".

78. [In what other places does Shakespeare compare life to acting in a play?]

79. Rosalind says much the same: "I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad".

In this passage "play the fool" means 'act the part of clown'.

80. old wrinkles, *i.e.* such as old age produces.

84. his grandsire cut in alabaster, that is, like an effigy on a tomb. Alabaster tombs of Elizabethan times may be seen in many churches. There is a noble example of one at Mytton Church in Yorkshire.

90. entertain, we should now say 'maintain'. Schmidt quotes "here we entertain a solemn peace" from the first part of *Henry VI*.

91. opinion of wisdom = 'reputation for wisdom'.

92. conceit has its original meaning of 'something conceived', a 'thought' or 'fancy'. See note on iii. 4. 2.

99. Expand the phrase from the condensed form in which it appears in the text. What passage of the New Testament is referred to?

101. Gratiano accuses Antonio of putting on an appearance of melancholy to establish his reputation for wisdom. There is a curiously exact parallel in Howell's *Instructions for Forreine Travell* (first published 1642, reprinted by Arber), "The Italians are for the most part of a speculative complexion [*i.e.* disposition], and he is accounted little lesse than a foole who is not melancholy once a day".

102. this fool gudgeon, a greedy and stupid fish, easily caught, because it will swallow any bait, and not worth the trouble when you have caught it.

108. moe, a different word from 'more', and—in old English—differently used. 'Mo' or 'moe' was used of number, 'more' of size; 'mo' was the comparative used for the positive 'many', 'more' for 'mickle' or 'much'. Vide Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. 'more'.

124. something, used adverbially = 'somewhat', as in line 129.

port = style of living. How does the word come to have this meaning? What other English words contain the same metaphor?

126. make moan to be abridged, means 'complain of being cut down'. Cf. note on line 150.

137. to stand within the eye of honour, means 'to be within honour's range'. How would you expand the metaphor contained in this phrase into a simile?

140. school-days. It is amusing to put together some of the passages in which Shakespeare speaks of school-days and school-boys: *e.g.* *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ii. 1. 21, "to sigh like a schoolboy that hath lost his A B C"; *Much Ado About Nothing*, ii. 1. 229, "the flat transgression of a schoolboy, who being overjoyed with finding a bird's nest, shows it his companion and he steals it"; *Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 2. 156:

"Love goes toward love, as schoolboys from their books,  
But love from love, toward school with heavy looks";

and, best known of all, *As You Like It*, ii. 7. 145:

"And then the whining schoolboy with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school".



In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, iv. 1., a lad named William, who is being taken to school by his mother, is met in the street by the schoolmaster and made to say his 'Hic, haec, hoc' then and there. The whole passage is very curious, and reads like a reminiscence of Shakespeare's own boyhood.

141. of the self-same flight, *i.e.* feathered and weighted for the same distance.

144. = 'I put forward this experience of my boyhood, because of the simplicity of what follows.'

For this sense of 'proof' compare *Julius Caesar*, ii. 1. 21:

"It is a common proof  
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder".

150. = 'I have no doubt, from the way in which I mean to watch the aim, that I shall either find both or', &c.

In Shakespearean English 'to' with the verb is used in many senses where nowadays we should either use other prepositions, or else a conjunction with a dependent clause. See line 126 above, and 154 below.

153, 154. = 'You only waste time by approaching your friend in roundabout fashion.'

166. Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia, a clear reference to Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Life of Brutus*, wherein Porcia says: "I am the daughter of Cato, and wife of Brutus".

It is interesting to see that, some four or five years before the *Julius Caesar* was written, Shakespeare had this heroine already in his mind. Bassanio's Portia had several of her namesake's qualities, as Plutarch describes them: "This young Ladie being excellently well seen in Philosophie, louing her husband well, and being of a noble courage, as she was also wise", &c.

The name Porcia is the feminine form of the 'gentilician' name of M. Porcius Cato, retained by his daughter, in Roman fashion, after marriage.

The spelling Portia is due to the common sixteenth-century substitution of *-ti-* for *-ci-* in the endings of Latin words. [Sir Thomas North spelt it with a *c.*]

171. Colchos, more accurately *Colchis*, a country at the eastern end of the Black Sea, whither Jason went in quest of the Golden Fleece. See note on iii. 2. 238.

175. I have a mind presages me such thrift. We should insert the relative pronoun before 'presages'. In modern English we omit the relative only when it would be, if expressed, in the *objective* case, as, *e.g.*: 'I cannot find the book I was reading yesterday'.

Take care to put the accent on the right syllable in 'presages'. Scan the line. Under what general rule does the pronunciation of the word come?

## Scene 2.

*How Portia, the Lady of Belmont, declares her resolution to marry none but the man who should win her in the manner of her father's will; how she speaks of Bassanio; of the departure of certain suitors, and the coming of the Prince of Morocco.*

This scene does something more than show us some of Portia's qualities, her insight into men, her wit, and her loyalty to her father's wishes. It shows that the conditions of the 'lottery' are such as to frighten away the fainter-hearted among her suitors, and to constitute some test of true love; and further, that she has already seen in a poor 'scholar and soldier' from Venice, who had visited Belmont in the train of the Marquis of Montferrat, the man whom she would prefer above all others.

For the *dress* in which we are to imagine Portia, see Godwin in Furness' Variorum Edition, p. 387: "Portia would do her shopping probably at Padua, and would therefore follow the fashions of the mainland". But any sixteenth-century picture of an Italian lady would be near enough.

1. Portia's opening words recall Antonio's. She is not entirely at ease, though for a different reason.

7. There is a play here between two words, spelt and sounded alike, but of different sense and origin. 'Mean', in the phrase 'it is no *mean* happiness' = trivial or contemptible, and is derived from A.S. 'maene', wicked. 'Mean', in the phrase 'to be seated in the *mean*', = middle or moderate, between two extremes, and comes from the French 'moyen', the Lat. 'medianus'.

In line 21 there is a play of another kind, namely, on two different meanings of the same word, 'will', as again in v. 1. 135, 136, on two meanings of 'bound'.

Such 'puns', or plays on words, have nowadays associations with pantomime or farce; but in Queen Elizabeth's time were often used quite seriously (even 'in real life'), as if the similarity in word or phrase pointed to some analogy in the things themselves. For a serious use of a pun, in this play, compare Antonio's words in what he thought was his dying speech:

"And, if the Jew do cut but deep enough,  
I'll pay it presently, *with all my heart*".

11. chapels had been churches, *i.e.* small churches would have been large ones. The distinction between a chapel and a church originally was that a chapel had no parish belonging to it, while a church had.

17. Such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple. *Draw* the emblem suggested by the words, and see if it is not an admirable picture of the idea. How many such 'picture-phrases' there are in Shakespeare's



poetry! Here are one or two instances to start a collection with: 'Pity' is a 'naked new-born babe' (*Macbeth*). "This drivelling Love is like a great natural, that runs lolling up and down to hide his bauble in a hole" (*Romeo and Juliet*, ii. 4. 95). "Wither'd Murder, alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf" (*Macbeth*).

38. **County Palatine.** 'County' for 'Count', as often in Shakespeare ('Princes and Counties', *Much Ado About Nothing*, iv. i. 317). A 'Count Palatine' was a count holding office in the *palace* of king or emperor, with almost royal prerogatives in his own 'fief' or territory. There were three such in England: the Duke of Lancaster, the Earl of Chester, and the Bishop of Durham. In Germany the title had at first a general meaning, as above ('palatine' is the same word as 'paladin'), but was afterwards applied particularly to the Lords of the 'Palatinate' on the western bank of the Upper Rhine.

40. **If you will not have me, choose.** Apparently something is omitted after 'choose', which Portia expresses by a gesture. Perhaps the phrase means, choose your weapon, as for a duel. His frown conveys a threat.

42. **weeping philosopher,** a name traditionally given to Heraclitus, in contrast to the 'laugher', Democritus.

52. **a capering.** 'a' in such phrases is another form of the preposition 'on'. (Cf. abed, alive, afoot.)

60. **Latin** was still a 'living language', in the sense of a common means of communication, in Shakespeare's time,—a relic of the days of the Roman dominion in Western Europe, when Latin was everywhere the language of church and state. Two generations later than Shakespeare, when Milton was Cromwell's secretary, Latin was still used in state despatches to foreign courts, and, even later still, was used by George I. to converse with Walpole.

62. **proper**—handsome, as in Authorized Version of *Hebrews* xi. 23: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a *proper* child".

64. **doublet,** a garment fitting close to the body from the neck to the waist; **round hose,** clothes that went from the waist to the knees, called 'round', because puffed, so as to be globe-like in shape.

67. **Scottish lord.** Altered from the reading in the text, which is that of the 1600 editions, to "other lord" in the First Folio (1623). What had happened meanwhile in English History to make the alteration a politic one?

70. **Frenchman;** referring to the frequent alliances between France and Scotland against England. **Sealed under,** *i.e.* put his seal below the Scotchman's, as his surety.

83. **Rhenish wine,** a white wine like the modern Hock, grown in the valley of the Rhine.

91. **imposition,** conditions laid down.

92. **Sibylla.** The Sibyl is used here as a proverbial type of old age in *woman*, as Nestor in scene i. for old age and gravity in *man*. Stories are told of various sibyls or prophetesses, but the most famous by far was the Sibyl of Cumæ, who guided Æneas to the under world, and afterwards sold her three books to the Roman king for the same price as that for which she had at first offered nine. She obtained as a boon from Apollo the power to live for as many years as she could hold grains of dust in her hand.

97. **in your father's time,** seems to imply he had been dead some little while, and strengthens the general impression produced by the play that Portia is older than most of the heroines of Shakespeare. The Marquises of Montferrat were famous in Italy for centuries. Dante saw one in purgatory:

"the Marquis William,  
For whose sake Alessandria and her war  
Make Montferrat and Canavese weep".  
—*Purg.* vii. 134, Longfellow's trans.

107. **The four strangers.** *Four* should be *six*, to be consistent with the rest of the scene. The same mistake is made in both the Quartos of 1600 and also the First Folio, showing that they are not independent authorities for the text. [Compare a similar blunder, made by all the early editions, in v. i. 49, where "Sweet soul" is—in spite of sense and metre—given to the clown instead of Lorenzo.] This mistake can hardly be taken as a safe ground for believing that a revision was made by the author, and two other characters added to an original four. It is only one more instance of inattention to 'minutiæ', on the part of editors and printers.

### Scene 3.

*How the Merchant of Venice, who had reviled Shylock the Jew for taking interest on loans, is obliged to ask him for money, with which to equip Bassanio for Belmont. How Shylock agrees to lend it, without interest, on forfeit of a pound of the Merchant's flesh.*

No more striking proof of the range of Shakespeare's power could be given than the transition from the previous scene to this, from Portia to Shylock. Each picture is superb, but together they produce the strongest possible effect. Note particularly in this scene the touches by which we are made to feel Shylock's intellectual force, and his stiff-necked tenacity of will. The constant reference to Palestine and Scripture, to Rebekah and Jacob, to the publicans, to the temptation and miracles of Christ, seems to charge the lines with recollections of Jewish history, and of the events which both joined and severed Christianity and Judaism. But how these 'abstractions' are living flesh and blood in Shakespeare's Jew!

The 'get up' of Edwin Booth, the famous American actor (quoted, from his own MS., on page 387 of Furness' *Variorum Edition*), may



help to call up the detail of the picture. "My costume for Shylock was suggested by one of a group of Oriental figures in a picture by Gérôme. It consists of a long, dark-green gown, trimmed at the edge of the skirt with an irregular device of brown colour. A dark-brown gaberdine, with flowing sleeves and hood, lined with green, and trimmed as the gown. A variegated scarf about the waist, from which depends a leather pouch. Red-leather pointed shoes, and hat of orange-tawny colour. . . . Head gray and pretty bald; beard of same colour and quite long. Ear-rings and several finger-rings, one on the thumb and one on the fore-finger; a long knotted staff. Complexion swarthy; age about sixty."

11. a good man, *i.e.* of substantial or adequate means, commercially *sound*. Bassanio takes the word in the ordinary sense, and misunderstands Shylock. Its use in commerce is akin to its use in law, as when we speak of 'a good title', 'a good claim', or contrariwise, 'a bad document'.

15. in supposition, *i.e.* dependent on conditions, and not actually in hand.

bound to Tripolis. The word *bound* here has no connection by derivation with the word in line 4 above, "Antonio shall be bound". Applied to ships it means 'ready to go', 'fit for sea', and was in Middle English spelt 'bown', or 'boun', the final 'd' is an 'exrescence'. There is a fine use of the word in *Sonnet lxxxvi.*—

"Was it the proud full sail of his great verse  
Bound for the prize of all too precious you  
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse?" &c.

In general, it means 'prepared', 'ready'. Like the word with which it is confused, it is a past participle, but from an obsolete verb meaning to 'till' or 'prepare', which also gives us the substantive 'boor' or 'boer' = a farmer.

Tripolis, *not* the city in Barbary in N. Africa (as is clear from a comparison with iii. 2. 265 and 266), but the seaport in Syria, a little to the north-east of Beyrout. The *African* Tripolis was chiefly famous for its pirates, though there was some little trade with it in oil (for which see a curious tract, by one Thomas Sanders, called *The Unfortunate Voyage of the Jesus to Tripoli in 1584*, reprinted in vol. ii. of Arber's *English Garner*, where illustrations in plenty may be found of the risks which Shylock speaks of here). The *Asiatic* Tripolis was on the way from Venice to the East, by the 'Euphrates valley route'. It was a famous port in Crusading times, and traded with Venice in glass.

16. the Indies, *i.e.* the *American* Indies, as in Maria's famous simile in *Twelfth Night*, iii. 2. 85: "He does smile his face into more lines than is in the new map with the augmentation of the *Indies*."

17. The Rialto, the great meeting-place or 'exchange' of mer-

chants, or a bridge connecting the island named 'Rialto' with the St. Mark's quarter of Venice.

18. England. Throughout the fifteenth, and in the early years of the sixteenth centuries, a fleet sailed yearly from Venice for Flanders and England. But this had ceased in the reign of Elizabeth.

21. Pirates. The Barbary pirates were a terror in the Mediterranean down to the bombardment of Algiers by Lord Exmouth in 1816.

25. Shylock refuses to be 'assured' in the conventional sense, and will make certain by his own inquiries. His answer is as characteristic of *his* keenness, as Bassanio's invitation of the Jew to dinner is consistent with *his* light-hearted ways of doing business.

29. Nazarite, for Nazarene, or inhabitant of Nazareth. So in all translations of the Bible down to the Authorized Version of 1611 (see note in Furness' *Variorum Edition*).

32. Who is he comes here? For omission of the relative, see note on i. 1. 175.

35. a fawning publican. It is the warmth of the greeting which Antonio gives to Bassanio that suggests the *adjective* (compare the lively feeling he shows at Bassanio's departure, ii. 8. 48). The amiability of Antonio stirs Shylock's gall. (So again in iii. 1. 38, "He that was used to come so *smug* upon the mart".) As to the *substantive*, Shylock identifies himself with the Pharisee's contempt for the humble-minded publican in the parable. Or is he thinking of Zacchæus, the publican who gave half his goods to the poor? The word, with all its associations, by a single touch suggests a whole lifetime of hatred for the religion of people who would "eat with publicans and sinners". [References to the New Testament would not be likely in the mouth of a Jew. But they are none the less vividly suggestive to the *audience*. Compare for Shakespeare's method in this respect the note on iii. 2. 275.]

40. upon the hip, a metaphor from a wrestling-bout.

53. rest you fair. Shylock had stepped aside when Antonio entered and greeted Bassanio. He pretends to have caught sight of him now for the first time.

The phrase 'rest you fair' Schmidt explains by supposing 'God' to be understood as subject to 'rest', as in 'God rest you merry', *As You Like It*, v. 1. 65, where 'rest' has the sense of 'keep'.

56. excess, *i.e.* anything over and above the principal.

57. ripe wants, *i.e.* wants that will not bear delay.

75. pilled me certain wands. 'Me' is idiomatic in phrases of this sort, and has the expletive or demonstrative force of such expressions as 'you know', 'look you', 'I'll trouble you', &c. Compare *Macbeth*, iii. 6. 41, and *Julius Caesar*, i. 2. 267.



88. Another of the many references to the Bible in this play. When was it that the devil 'cited Scripture for his purpose'?

92. oh what a goodly outside falsehood hath, much what Bassanio says in declining the golden casket (iii. 2. 98).

95. beholding, a corruption of 'beholden', the past partic. of the verb 'behold' in the sense of 'to guard' or 'keep', and, metaphorically, 'to bind' or 'oblige' (like German *behalten*). Other instances of the confusion between -ing and -en are quoted by Abbott, *Shakespearian Grammar*, § 372.

109. 'moneys' is your suit—the object of your petition is moneys. The word is quoted again, in contempt, from Antonio's request. It is *quoted*, and hence the singular verb with it. Or perhaps 'moneys' may be regarded as a collective, on the false analogy of 'riches' (which is a true singular, from French 'richesse'). In support of this compare "thus much moneys" in line 119 below.

There are abundant traces, however, of an Early English third person plural inflection in -s still surviving in Elizabethan English, e.g. line 150 below:

"Whose own hard dealings teaches them suspect",

and *Richard II.*, ii. 3. 4; 5:

"These high wild hills and rough uneven ways  
Draws out our miles, and makes them wearisome".

(See Abbott, *Shakespearian Grammar*, § 333.)

124. The superstitious prejudice against the taking of interest arose from a confusion between loans made in charity or friendship and loans made as a matter of business. The prejudice took the form sometimes of a religious prohibition, sometimes of an argumentative attack. It is curious that Aristotle, who founded the scientific treatment of wealth by his exposition of the true nature of money, as a medium of exchange, also lent his authority to the quibble that because metal has no natural power of increase, therefore interest is against nature, as if it were mere metal and not power to acquire commodities which the borrower seeks from his creditor.

126. who, if he break. The 'who' and 'he' are to be taken in close connection with one another as making a compound subject to 'break' (= qui si fidem fefellerit). For similar instances of the relative with supplementary pronoun, see Abbott, *Shakespearian Grammar*, § 249, where, however, a different explanation of this passage is given.

134. your single bond, *i.e.* your bond without any other person as security. This proposal seems a concession on Shylock's part, but it is meant to assist his plan for vengeance, since it leaves no second security to be called in in case of Antonio's failure.

138. equal pound, exact pound.

150. dealings teaches, see on line 109 above.

155. estimable. We should apply the word nowadays only to *persons*, but in Elizabethan English its use was less restricted. Compare 'varnished', which we now only use of things, applied to persons in ii. 5. 32, and ii. 9. 49.

156. muttons, beefs = French 'moutons, bœufs'. The distinction between 'sheep' and 'ox', on one side, as living animals, and 'mutton' and 'beef', on the other, as the same animals brought to table, had not become fixed in Shakespeare's time, whatever be said in the famous passage at the opening of Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

159. = 'And as for my good-will, I beg you not to hurt me by your suspicions.'

164. fearful guard, insecure, risky, or perilous guard. 'Fearful' used to mean 'causing fear for' as well as 'causing fear of'.

#### Act II.—Scene I.

*How the Prince of Morocco would undertake the adventure of the caskets, and what the Lady of Belmont said to him.*

The stage-direction in the First Folio edition begins "Enter Morochus a tawnie Moore all in white, and three or four followers accordingly". The picture of the Moorish prince and his train,

"Dusk faces with white silken turbans wreath'd",

encountering Portia is one of the most striking in the whole of the play. The Moorish chivalry had been, in arts and arms, a match for Christendom, and the romance of the Middle Ages is full of such tales as:

"When Agrican with all his northern powers  
Besieged Albracca, as romances tell;  
The city of Gallaphrone, from thence to win  
The fairest of her sex, Angelica,  
His daughter, sought by many prowrest knights,  
Both *Paynim* and the peers of Charlemain";

or of those who

"baptized or *infidel*  
Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,  
Damasco or *Morocco*, or Trebisond  
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore  
When Charlemain with all his peerage fell  
By Fontarabia".

The Mahometan warriors were still a peril to Europe in Shakespeare's time. Lepanto, where the author of *Don Quixote* lost an arm, was fought in 1571.

This Moorish prince, with his gallantry, passionate feeling, and boyish simplicity, suggests an early study of Moorish character, afterwards worked out in the 'Moor of Venice'. His words have a fine rolling rhythm, his style a Southern gaudiness of colour.



7. *Red* blood, as Johnson pointed out, was thought a sign of courage, while cowards "have livers white as milk" (below, iii. 2. 86).

9. *fear'd* = frightened. The verb 'fear' commonly had this transitive force in Old English, and often in Shakespeare, e.g. *Henry V.*, i. 2. 155:

"She hath been, then, more *fear'd* than harm'd, my liege".

24. *scimitar*. Like Othello's famous sword,  
"a better never did itself sustain  
Upon a soldier's thigh" (*Othello*, v. 2. 260).

25. *The Sophy*, i.e. the Shah of Persia. The Persians were famous swordsmen; cf. *Twelfth Night*, iii. 4. 307, "he has been fencer to the Sophy".

26. *Sultan Solyman*, called the 'Magnificent', was the tenth Ottoman Sultan, and reigned from 1520 to 1566. He took Belgrade and Rhodes from the Christians, but failed to capture Vienna. He also suffered defeat in Persia about 1534.

32. *Lichas*, the squire or attendant of Hercules, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, ix. Alcides = Hercules, from the fact that Alcæus was his grandfather.

33. = (to decide) 'which is the better man'.

35. *Page*, one of Theobald's 'emendations'. Quartos and Folios have 'Rage'.

43. *Nor will not*, emphatic double negative = 'No more I will' (speak to lady afterward, &c.).

Scan line 43.

44. the temple where the oath to observe the conditions was to be taken.

46. *blest or cursed'st*. The superlative termination to one adjective does duty for both, as below, iii. 2. 290—

"The best condition'd and unwearied spirit",

and *Measure for Measure*, iv. 6. 13—

"The generous and gravest citizens".

(See Abbott, *Shaksp. Gr.*, § 398.)

### Scene 2.

*How Launcelot Gobbo leaves his master, Shylock, to take service under Bassanio, and how Gratiano obtains Bassanio's leave to go with him to Belmont.*

We must suppose some days to have elapsed since the bond was sealed. Meanwhile Bassanio has bought or hired a ship for his enterprise, and is engaged in hiring and clothing a retinue of followers.

Launcelot Gobbo is the 'clown' of the piece. He is a country lad, son of a small farmer, who has a horse called Dobbin, and keeps pigeons. Occasionally the old man comes into Venice to see how his boy is getting on in town-service. Thus Launcelot is not a professional jester like the Fools in *King Lear*, *Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*, but a servant by trade, and a wag by humour. His country appetite and power of sleeping, his untiring spirits and broad outspokenness prove him a 'clown' compared to the courtly attendants of Portia.

1. It looks as if there should be a 'not' before 'serve'. (Halliwell.)

14. *grow to*, a 'country phrase', applied originally to milk which, in cooking, has been burnt to the bottom of the saucepan, and so has acquired a taste. (See note in Furness' *Variorum Edition*.)

21. *saving your reverence* = *salvâ reverentiâ*, i.e. if I may say so without offence.

22. *incarnal*. Launcelot has not got quite the right word here. Compare 'confusions' in 31, 'frutify' in 120, and 'impertinent' in 123. His father has an equal difficulty with words from the Latin, such as 'infection' and 'defect'. 'Malapropisms' of this sort were particularly rife in Shakespeare's time, when new words from other languages, especially Latin, were pouring into the vocabulary of English. Launcelot's learning, like Ancient Pistol's, smacks of the playhouse, as in his reference to the Sisters Three, to Fortune a woman, and his use of 'via' for away, and 'ergo' for therefore.

30. *sand-blind*, lit. half-blind (O.E. *sâm-blind*); but the first syllable was already in Shakespeare's time misinterpreted, as Launcelot's pun shows. Capell's note on the word is: 'That is, purblind'; a vulgar phrase for it, as *stone-blind* is for those who are quite so; Launcelot finds a 'blind' between these, which he calls 'gravel-blind'.

46. *well to live*, according to Furness means 'with every prospect of a long life'. But it seems better to take it as = 'well off', and then the phrase is an absurdity of the Dogberry stamp ("You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit man for the constable of the watch", &c.). Old Gobbo utters just such another in line 63 below.

49. The father refuses to give his son the title 'Master', which the son continually repeats with increased emphasis.

83. *what a beard hast thou got*. The traditional stage 'business' here is that Launcelot should kneel down and present the *back* of his head to his father, who takes the long, thick hair for a beard.

87. *hair of his tail*. A comparison of Launcelot's words with Old Gobbo's shows that 'of' has much the same sense as 'on' here.



Abbott (*Shakespearian Grammar*, § 175) quotes *Taming of Shrew*, iv. i. 71—

“My master riding behind my mistress—  
Both of one horse”.

The gradual change from Shakespeare's English to ours is nowhere more clearly marked than in the uses of prepositions. The student should collect instances for himself of cases where prepositions are employed otherwise than they would be in modern English.

For 'of' compare line 67 above, “you might fail of the knowing me”, with ix. 11, and

“We have not spoke as yet of torchbearers”, ii. 4. 5 and 23.  
“I have no mind of feasting forth to-night”, ii. 5. 36.

93. set up my rest to run away, to 'set up a rest' was a term in games of chance, and seems to have meant to make a wager over and above the ordinary stake, to 'back one's chance' heavily; and so to 'plunge' on something in a metaphorical sense, to put everything on a single resolve.

Here there is a play on the two meanings of 'rest'. It is an instance of the amazing range of Shakespeare's power that the very same play on words is used with extraordinary effect in one of the saddest scenes in tragedy (written, perhaps, within a short time of the *MERCHANT OF VENICE*):

“O here  
Will I set up my everlasting rest  
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars  
From my world-wearied flesh”.

(*Romeo and Juliet*, v. 3. 109.)

97. give me your present to one Master Bassanio. For this use of 'me', cf. i. 3. 75, where, however, the meaning is not quite the same. Here it = 'for me', or 'please', as in

“Heat me these irons hot” (*King John*, iv. i. 1).

100. to him, father, the verb of motion is often omitted in such phrases, especially in the imperative mood. So “Father, in”, in line 141, and in the infinitive mood,

“I must to Coventry” (*Richard II.*, i. 2. 56).

[The idiom includes far more than an ellipsis after 'will' and 'is', as Abbott explains it in § 405 of his Grammar.]

103. supper...ready...by five of the clock. Elizabethan meals and meal-times were startlingly unlike ours. “The nobility, gentry, and students dined at eleven before noon, and supped between five and six. The merchant dined at twelve, and supped at six. Husbandmen dined at noon and supped at seven or eight. To take two meals only was the rule; none but the young, the sick, and very early risers were thought to need odd repasts”. (*Social England*, ed. H. D. Traill, vol. iii. p. 392 of the 1895 edition, following the passage in Harrison, cited above, i. 1. 70.)

135. The old proverb, *i.e.* as Staunton pointed out, “God's grace is gear enough”.

parted, *i.e.* divided.

140. more guarded, with more facings or coloured stripes set across it, the mark of a jester; compare the description of a fool in line 16 of the prologue to *Henry VIII.*—

“A fellow

In a long motley coat guarded with yellow”.

143. table, a term of 'chiromancy', the magic art which foretells a person's future from the lines on his hand. 'Table' means the palm of the hand extended.

It is perhaps futile to expect to make exact grammar or sense out of the sentence beginning, “If any man in Italy have a fairer table”. The passage is 'corrupt', *i.e.* we have not got the words as Shakespeare wrote them. I believe the sentence contains a reference, which the commentators have missed, to the custom of swearing with uplifted hand in a court of law.

144. a simple line of life; 'simple' is sarcastic of course, 'line of life' is the main line across the hand.

152. During this talk between Launcelot and Old Gobbo, Bassanio and Leonardo have been conversing on one side. They now come forward.

155. hie thee. The 'thee' is reflexively used.

157. The respect which Bassanio's friends have for him appears in the way in which they address him, 'Signior Bassanio' here. 'My Lord Bassanio', i. 1. 69, &c.

163. hear thee, Gratiano. In this case the 'thee' cannot be reflexive, as in 155 above. It stands for 'thou', as in such phrases as 'fare thee well', 'look thee here', 'stand thee by', &c. &c.

In these instances, the pronoun following the verb was, by a subtle form of false analogy, put in the accusative case, as Professor Jespersen explains in his *Progress of Language*.

165. Parts, *i.e.* qualities.

168. liberal = 'free' to the point of 'taking liberties'. The word is coupled with 'profane' in *Othello*, ii. 1. 165, and seems to mean 'excessively free-spoken' in *Hamlet*, iv. 7. 171.

182. sad ostent, serious behaviour.

### Scene 3.

*Of a letter, which Jessica, the Jew's daughter, sent to her lover, Lorenzo, by the hand of Launcelot Gobbo.*

10. exhibit. Launcelot has got hold of the wrong word again. See note on line 22 of preceding scene.

17. manners included more in its Elizabethan use than it does



now, and embraced the big rules of life as well as the small ones,—everything, indeed, which the Romans expressed by ‘mores’. Hence it appears in the sixth of the ‘xxxix. Articles’ in reference to the books of the Apocrypha: “And the other books the church doth read for example of life and instruction of *manners*”.

Nothing can quite reconcile us to Jessica’s desertion of her father. He does not seem to have ill-treated her in any way except that he enforced a very strict and lonely life upon her. But he had made himself ‘impossible’ to her by his absorption in business and his attitude towards his neighbours.

#### Scene 4.

*How Lorenzo plans to carry off Jessica, disguised as a page, with the help of Gratiano and others.*

5. ‘We have not bespoken, or ordered beforehand, torchbearers for ourselves.’ ‘Speak’ for ‘bespeak’ is like ‘fall’ for ‘befall’, ‘long’ for ‘belong’, ‘friend’ for ‘befriend’, &c. &c., often found in Shakespeare. (See Abbott, *Shaks. Gram.*, § 460.)

‘Us’ is the *dative* of the pronoun. For the use of ‘of’ compare below, iv. 1. 396—

“I humbly do desire your grace of pardon”.

6. vile; not in so strong a sense as that in which it is now used; but rather = ‘poor’, ‘below the mark’. The stronger sense appears in the next scene, line 29.

7. undertook, for ‘undertaken’, as ‘spoke’ for ‘spoken’.

10. it shall seem to signify, a pleasant sarcasm on this kind of correspondence.

22. provided of a torchbearer. Yet another obsolete use of the preposition, exactly paralleled in *Macbeth*, i. 2. 13—

“Supplied of kerns and gallowglasses”.

See above note on ii. 2. 87.

31. gold and jewels. It never even occurs to Lorenzo or Jessica or any of their friends that there was anything to be said against their going off with Shylock’s property. If they had thought about it, they would have defended it on the ground that Shylock made no use of his wealth, and that he was a common enemy with whom the ordinary laws did not hold.

36. she do it. *Misfortune* is personified as a woman, like *Fortune* in scene 2.

#### Scene 5.

*How Shylock goes to sup with Bassanio, and leaves his keys with Jessica.*

2. the difference of. This is a further instance to add to a collection of Shakespearean uses of this preposition. Here it means

‘in respect to’, and so, in comparing two persons, ‘between’. Compare—

“Since my soul . . . could of men distinguish”  
(*Hamlet*, iii. 2. 68, 69).

Another ‘objective’ use, of a slightly different kind, comes in line 36 below—

“I have no mind of feasting forth to-night”.

3 and 6. What and Why are used as exclamations of impatience. Cf. *Julius Caesar*, ii. 1. 1: “What, Lucius, ho!”

12. Jessica’s alacrity in taking the keys adds to Shylock’s feeling of uneasiness.

15. Jessica, my girl, look to my house. However much Shylock inspires hatred and fear, it is impossible to hear him speak thus without some feeling of compassion. The audience have been let into the secret of the plot; Jessica and Launcelot are part of a conspiracy against the Jew, and here he is, committing his keys to one of them. The whole situation, therefore, is, like Shylock’s words, full of ‘dramatic irony’; that is, it bears a very different meaning to some of the persons present, from that which it conveys to those who are not in the secret.

I am right loath to go. There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest. A helpless presentiment such as this, does more than anything to add to the horror and pity of disaster, because we are inclined to feel ‘it might so easily have been otherwise’. So, in *Hamlet*, the prince says, just before his fencing-bout with Laertes, “Thou wouldst not think how ill all is here about my heart: but it is no matter”. When Horatio urges him to pay heed to the presentiment and to put off the fencing, Hamlet answers, “Not a whit, we defy augury: there’s a special providence in the fall of a sparrow:—if it be not now, yet it will come; the readiness is all”—and so he goes to his death.

This ‘tragic irony’ and these fruitless misgivings might have engaged our feelings too much in Shylock’s favour but for the grotesque and grim

“For I did dream of money-bags to-night”.

20. reproach. Launcelot has got hold of the wrong word again. Shylock takes up his blunder, and accepts it in another sense.

24. Black-Monday, *i.e.* Easter Monday. “In the 34 Edward III. (1360), the 14 of April, & the morrow after Easter-day, K. Edward with his hoast lay before the cittie of Paris; which day was full darke of mist & haile, & so bitter cold that many men died on their horses backs with the cold. Wherefore unto this day it hath been called the Blacke Monday.”—*Stow*. (See note in *Furness*.)

27. masques, a form of amusement which consisted in a number



of persons, wearing visors and suitably disguised, going in procession to a house where festivities were on foot, and there acting a short play, or leading an elaborate dance. So in *Henry VIII.*, the king himself takes a number of 'masquers' to Wolsey's supper-party.

29. wry-neck'd fife. Here 'fife' means a player on the fife, as in the third part of *Henry VI.*, v. 1. 16, trumpet=trumpeter:

"Go, trumpet, to the walls and sound a parle".

Boswell, cited by Furness, quotes an exact parallel from Barnaby Rich's (1616) *Aphorismes*: "A fife is a wry-neckt musician, for he always looks away from his instrument".

30. clamber. The small old-fashioned window would be high up on the wall, just under the ceiling.

32. varnish'd, painted, or disguised.

35. By Jacob's staff. The reference seems to be to *Genesis* xxxii. 10, where Jacob, on his return from Padan-aram, says, "With my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands".

36. to-night means here the 'coming night', while in line 18 it means the 'night before'.

42. worth a Jewess' eye, worth looking at, to a Jewess. Launcelot puns on the old proverb, 'Worth a Jew's eye', used to express something very precious. The reading of the early editions is "worth a Jewes eye".

43. Hagar's offspring. As a Gentile and as a servant Launcelot is, to Shylock, a child of 'the bond-woman, not of the free'.

46. Launcelot's laziness is so extreme as to stir Shylock's fancy. He compares him to three different animals in two lines.

51. Shylock's suspicion was, in this case, well-founded, but it is suspicion of such a kind and expressed in such a way that 'human' relations had ceased to be possible with him.

54. Notice here the *rhyming* close, frequent in the play. The rhyme not only marks the two 'exits', but also the proverbial or epigrammatic sayings with which father and daughter take leave for the last time.

Fast bind, fast find, as Shylock's last words to his daughter, are again full of 'dramatic irony'—as much so, in a different way, as old King Duncan's last message from his bed-chamber to Lady Macbeth, his 'most kind hostess'. We are prepared for the frightful shock and convulsion, which the news of his daughter's flight will cause to Shylock. Irving goes the length of introducing a 'dumb-show' scene for which there is no warrant in the text. He shows the old Jew at the end of scene 6 returning after supper at Bassanio's, knocking at the door of his empty house, and staring up in fear and anger when no answer comes.

## Scene 6.

*How Lorenzo, helped by Gratiano and Salarino, runs away with the miser's daughter in the disguise of a page.*

5. Venus' pigeons, the doves that drew the airy chariot of Venus.

7. obliged, be careful to sound the -ed in reading this and similar lines, e.g. lines 13 and 16. The word here signifies 'pledged previously'.

10. = What horse retraces a long distance with the same spirit with which he first traversed it?

There is no need to suppose any reference here to a 'performing' or 'dancing horse'. The saying is applicable to any horse which has a long distance to go and come back.

14. The simile is a striking one, all the more too that it is in harmony with a main 'motive' of the play. Scarfed bark is a vivid phrase for a fresh-trimmed vessel, wearing her sails like so much finery.

18. over-weather'd ribs. 'Weather' is here used in the same sense as that in which stone or brick is said to 'weather', i.e. change shape and colour.

24. Scan the line. What irregularity of metre is there, and how is it to be explained?

26. Enter Jessica, above, i.e. in a balcony.

30. who love I. "The inflection of *who* is frequently neglected. Cf. 'Who I myself struck down', *Macbeth*, iii. 1. 123" (Abbott, *Shakesp. Gram.*, § 274).

42. too light, a play between 'light', meaning 'bright', and 'light' meaning 'frivolous', as in v. 1. 129:

"Let me give light, but let me not be light;  
For a light wife doth make a heavy husband".

43. office of discovery, i.e. the duty of a torch-bearer is to show things up.

47. The close night, the secret or concealing night. So the witches in *Macbeth* are called "close contrivers of all harms".

65. presently, not in its modern sense, but 'immediately'. Generations of unpunctuality have weakened the force of the word, cf. ii. 9. 3. And compare the similar change of meaning in 'anon', 'just now', 'by and by', 'soon'.

67. I am glad on't. Here 'on' is interchangeable in usage with 'of', as actually found above, ii. 2. 85 and 87. Abbott (*Shakes. Gram.*, § 181) cites:

"God ha' mercy on his soul,  
And of all Christian souls" (*Hamlet*, iv. 5. 200).



## Scene 7.

*Of the three caskets, the Prince of Morocco chooses the golden.*

3, 4. "who" and "which" used interchangeably, Abbott, §§ 264, 265.

20. A golden mind: 'golden' here has the general sense of 'precious', 'excellent', as elsewhere in Shakespeare, 'golden opinions', 'golden joys', &c.

25. The Moor's good opinion of himself is so honestly and heartily expressed that it is little more than healthy military 'swagger' put into words.

29. = To be doubtful of my own merits would be only a spiritless disparagement of myself.

The feeling is much the same as that in Montrose's famous lines:

"He either fears his fate too much  
Or his deserts are small,  
Who fears to puts it to the touch  
To win or lose it all".

31. Why that's the lady. At the first time this phrase occurs all the emphasis is on 'lady'. Lower down, on line 38, it is on 'that's'.

38. The rhythm of the speech changes from the broken style of indecision to a rapid and continuous flow of excited eloquence. The generous Moor loses the thought of his own merits in the picture, which his mind's eye calls up, of the universal pilgrimage to the shrine of Portia.

40. Mortal breathing, opposed to the sculptured figures of the saints to be found at most shrines.

41. Hyrcanian deserts, in Asia, south of the Caspian Sea, famous for tigers.

44. whose head spits in the face of heaven. The expression is overstrained and the metaphor forced. Such a phrase is called a 'conceit'. Over-elaborate fancy was a common fault in the style of the Elizabethan Age. Shakespeare often makes fun of it (*e.g.* below, ii. 9. 97), but he also is sometimes guilty of it himself. This play, however, is singularly free from 'conceits'. It is quite in keeping that the Prince of Morocco should use them.

50. = It would be too common to inclose her shroud in the darkness of the grave (see Glossary for the words).

53. being undervalued, that is 'silver', not 'she'. The 'ratio' of value between gold and silver in Shakespeare's time was about 10:1. Since then silver has greatly 'depreciated'.

57. insculp'd upon, *i.e.* engraved on the surface of the coin. Coins of this kind were struck by Edward IV., and were in use from his reign to that of Charles I. They were of gold, containing a

weight of metal that would be valued now at something between 6s. 8d. and 10s. The name 'angel' was given to them from the figure which they bore of St. Michael subduing the dragon.

64. a carrion Death, a fleshless skull.

65. Scan the lines on the scroll. What metre are they written in?

69. tombs. The two first Quartos and the First Folio have 'timber', a mistake which Johnson was the first to correct. A similar blunder in all the early editions occurs, ii. 1. 35 (where see note). For the inference to be made from such a 'state of the text' see Appendix on the Text.

75. welcome, frost. This is, says Halliwell, an inversion of the old proverb, 'farewell, frost', used on the departure of anything unpleasing.

## Scene 8.

*How two gentlemen of Venice describe the rage of Shylock at finding his daughter flown, and the grief of Antonio at the departure of his friend for Belmont.*

Apparently we are to understand that the choice of the Prince of Morocco took place on the very night that Bassanio sailed.

From ii. 2 to ii. 7 we seem to be dealing with the events of a single day. At the opening of the present scene, a night has elapsed since Bassanio's departure. We hear that Shylock has discovered Jessica's flight, and has suspected Bassanio of being concerned in it. We hear also of that for which i. 1 had somewhat prepared us, namely, of losses of Antonio at sea.

16. Fled with a Christian, and so had cut herself off from the number of the chosen people. Shylock's passion is of a piece with the convictions which the Jews held, at any rate after the return from the Babylonish captivity. So when Ezra heard of the 'mixed marriages', he says of himself, "I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished" (*Ezra*, ix. 3).

27. reason'd = talked, its usual sense in Shakespeare.

33. You were best, *i.e.* it would be best for you. 'You' is the indirect object in this phrase, and 'were' an impersonal verb, as comparison with Anglo-Saxon usage shows. But by Shakespeare's time the origin of the phrase had been forgotten, and we find such expressions as "I were better to leave him", "She were better love a dream" (for "me were", "her were"). See Abbott, § 230. and note on v. i. 175 below.

37. some speed of his return. See note on ii. 5. 2.

42. in for 'into', so v. 1. 56: "let the sounds of music creep in our ears". We still speak of 'falling in love'.

mind of love for 'loving mind'; so in iii. 1. 9, "slips of prolixity" = prolix slips.



45. conveniently, suitably.

48. sensible=sensitive. The alteration in modern English of the use of the words 'sensible' and 'sensibly' gives a strange sound to some old passages in which they occur, e.g.:

"What remains past cure  
Bear not too *sensibly*",

says Dalila, in *Samson Agonistes*, meaning, 'Be not too sensitive about what cannot be helped'.

52. embraced heaviness=grief which he hugs. It is characteristic of Antonio that he 'gives way' to emotion. For 'embraced' compare 'rash-embraced despair' in iii. 2. 109.

### Scene 9.

*The Prince of Arragon makes his choice among the caskets, and chooses the silver one.*

While Bassanio is on his way to Belmont, another suitor tries his fortune. This is a grandee of Spain. He is similar in some respects, in rank and splendour, to the Prince of Morocco. But his pride is of another kind altogether from that of the Moor. It is not boyish vanity, but impracticable self-conceit. A passage in Mr. Strachan-Davidson's *Cicero* ("Heroes of the Nations" series, pp. 192, 193) illustrates these two kinds of vanity: "Two faults, of very different degrees of blackness, are liable to be confused under the common name of vanity or self-conceit. There are men into whose souls the poison seems to have eaten deep; they are pompous, overweening, repellent; their power of judgment and of action is impaired; . . . Sometimes, on the other hand, vanity is a mere superficial weakness, the accompaniment of a light heart, a quick, sensitive temperament, an unsuspecting loquacity, and an innocent love of display. Carlyle has hit off the difference very happily in the contrast which he draws between Boswell and his father: 'Old Auchinleck had, if not the gay tail-spreading peacock vanity of his son, no little of the slow-stalking contentious hissing vanity of the gander, a still more fatal species.'"

Arragon's vanity is of the 'gander-species'. He does not, like Morocco, allow himself to be carried away by an impulsive and generous fancy. He scarcely makes any reference to Portia at all, and chooses on grounds wholly unconnected with her, or with anything, but a belief in himself. She takes his measure in the biting phrase,

"O these deliberate fools! When they do choose  
They have the wisdom by their wit to lose",

and treats him with a scarcely concealed dislike very different from the courtesy she had shown to the Moor.

3. presently. See note on ii. 6. 65.

26. meant by the fool multitude, *i.e.* meant to apply to the fool multitude.

27. fond=foolish. So in iii. 3. 9.

32. jump with='be at one with'. Cf. *Richard III.*, iii. I. II, (a man's outward show) "seldom or never jumpeth with the heart", and the common proverb, "Great minds jump together".

34. then to thee. What must be supplied here? See note on ii. 2. 100.

41. degrees, steps or grades in distinction. The word in Shakespeare's time was not limited, as it is now, to 'degrees' in university rank. Compare the ballad-phrase 'a squire of low degree'.

42. clear honour, *i.e.* 'honour innocently won'. Similarly 'clear' is applied to allegiance in *Macbeth* in the sense of 'unstained loyalty'. Note that 'clear' is not an ordinary attributive adjective here, but that its meaning is as it were diffused through the whole sentence; "Would that honour were won by merit and so won innocently". See note on iii. 2. 165.

44. cover, *i.e.* keep the hat on, as a sign of superiority of rank. Comp. iii. 5. 31.

53. Too long a pause for that, *i.e.* the pause is so long that what you find there cannot be what you are expecting. Arragon tries to argue against the decision of the 'lottery', instead of accepting it, like Morocco.

61. Means 'You must not wish to be both defendant and judge in your own cause, for the two offices are inconsistent with one another'.

68. I wis. See *wis* in the Glossary.

71. You are sped, your destiny is decided.

84. What would my lord? Portia rebukes, by imitation, the affectedly pompous tone of her gentleman-in-waiting. Mr. Beeching quotes, as parallel, *Richard II.*, v. 5. 67—

*Groom.* "Hail royal prince".  
*King.* "Thanks, noble peer".

88. sensible regrets, *i.e.* substantial or tangible tokens of respect.

89. commends and courteous breath, greetings and verbal courtesy. For 'courteous breath' compare

"It must appear in other ways than words,  
Therefore I scant this *breathing courtesy*", v. I. 141.

92-94. Portia might have forgiven him for the sake of these three beautifully musical lines.

97. high-day wit, the opposite of 'work-a-day words'. So in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, young Fenton is said to 'speak holiday'.