

Act III.

In the preceding act the main subject was the elopement of the miser's daughter.

In this it is the choice of the right casket by Bassanio. But, to begin with, we have a scene that shows the consequences of Jessica's flight, and prepares us for Shylock's insistence on his bond.

Scene I.

Of Antonio's losses at sea, and of Shylock's intended revenge.

2. It lives there unchecked, *i.e.* the report remains uncontradicted.

This phrase and what follows show that a long time had elapsed in the interval between the second and third acts. Tubal has had time to go to Genoa and return. The bond is within a fortnight of expiry (line 106).

6. my gossip report. Report is figured as a talkative old woman, fond of ginger, and full of pretended emotions. (For other such 'picture-phrases' in Shakespeare, see i. 2. 17, 18.)

honest of her word, another specimen for a collection of idiomatic uses of this preposition. See also 'slips of prolixity' in line 10 below.

8. knapped = not 'snapped', as in 'he knappeth the spear in sunder', but 'gnawed' or 'nibbled'. See Glossary, and Furness' note in his Variorum Edition.

10. the plain highway of talk. Similarly Hamlet calls conventional conversation 'the beaten way of friendship', *Hamlet*, ii. 2. 276.

17. cross my prayer, that is, come between Salanio and Salarino before the former could say his prayer, 'Amen' or 'so be it', to confirm the latter's good wishes.

20. none so well, none so well. Though weeks have passed since Jessica's flight, Shylock's rage is not abated. His own fury, the mockery of his enemies, the jeering of the boys in the streets have driven him to a point not far short of madness; and his passion appears in his convulsive and broken sentences, and the repetition of phrases. He has a 'hunted' look, and seems older, wilder, and more neglectful of himself than in the earlier scenes.

34. rhenish, a 'hock', or white wine, is contrasted with red wine.

36. bankrupt, one whose 'bank' is broken, either

(a) referring to the original meaning of 'bank', the bench or wooden stall at which a merchant sat, or

(b) referring to the use of 'bank' for capital or stock of money. Compare below, line 97, "he cannot choose but break".

37. a prodigal. This word, as applied to Antonio, has given some trouble to the critics. But Shylock's peculiar habit of regarding money naturally comes out in his use of words, which are, so to say, scaled on a different principle from that of the rest of mankind. Launcelot thought himself starved in the Jew's service, but to Shylock he appeared to be a 'huge feeder', and to 'gormandise'. So Antonio is a 'prodigal', though others would only have called him 'generous' or 'munificent'.

41. let him look to his bond. The phrase is repeated three times with increased feeling, and a peculiar emphasis on the last word.

43. It has been pointed out that Shakespeare is in prose-writing not less great than in verse. The paragraph that follows is a superb instance of his skill in 'oratory', so rhythmical in sound, so keen in argument, so overwhelming in passion. Yet it is so true to the character and the 'situation' that it appears inevitable and necessary, an effect of nature, not of art. On the stage, in the mouth of a great actor, the speech excites the hearers, almost beyond endurance, to pity and terror. Even Salanio and Salarino have no answer to it.

58. sufferance, endurance or patience, as in i. 3. 100.

60. it shall go hard but, &c., *i.e.* if I fail to improve upon my pattern it will not be for want of endeavour.

62. Antonio sends for his friends. His troubles have depressed him, and he avoids coming out of doors. The intimacy of Antonio with those who had helped in Jessica's elopement, expressed in such a message as this, still further inflames Shylock's anger.

71. For the omission of the relative, see note on i. 1. 175.

72. The curse seems to refer to some such place in the Bible as that in *Daniel*, ix. 11: "All Israel have transgressed thy law; . . . therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses". This again refers back to the terrible curse denounced against Israel, if it should not keep the Law, in *Deuteronomy*, xxviii. 15-68, many of the points of which would apply to Shylock's state, *e.g.* "Thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look and fail with longing for them all the day long. All thy labours shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed away".

75. would my daughter were dead. Such 'wild and whirling words' must not in fairness be pressed further against Shylock than similar speeches against Lear. And in any case they are not merely the utterance of disappointed avarice. Jessica was already 'dead' to him and to his nation in Shylock's belief; she had 'cut herself off' from her people.

77. Why, so. Shylock mutters as he makes rough calculation of the different sums lost.

102. Out upon her! The expression 'out upon' seems an extension of such a phrase as that found in the *Lucrece*,

"Out, idle words! servants to shallow fools".

103. Leah. The touch comes unexpectedly, and carries the mind of the hearer back to other days in Shylock's life with a bitterness of contrast hardly less sharp than in the terrible place in *Macbeth*, ii. 2. 14.

110. at our synagogue. Places of worship were common resorts for business in Shakespeare's day (e.g. St. Paul's, in London). So that it is perhaps fanciful to press the reference here as François Victor Hugo does in a passage quoted by Furness: "The Jew invokes the Ancient of Days who spoke unto Moses aforetime: 'If a man cause a blemish in his neighbour, as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth'. In entering his synagogue, Shylock entrusts his hatred to the safeguard of his Faith". Yet it is certainly true that Shylock regards himself as 'the depository of the vengeance of his race' and religion. (Compare, at the trial, "I have an oath in heaven", and above, on hearing of Antonio's losses, "I thank God, I thank God". See also iv. i. 36.)

Scene 2.

How Bassanio, by discerning truth from show, makes choice of the right casket, and so achieves his quest; how news arrives from Venice that Antonio has lost all his ships and is in prison for Bassanio's sake; how Portia speeds Bassanio on his way to save his friend.

This is the middle point of the action where the intricacy of the plot is at its greatest. In the course of this scene the three stories become one, the issue of which Portia takes upon herself.

An interval of more than a fortnight has elapsed since the last scene. The bond is forfeit, and a messenger will, ere the scene be over, have had time to arrive from Venice to report Antonio's danger.

"Enter Bassanio, Portia, &c., and Attendants." They must woo, like sovereign princes, each at the head of a retinue. How nobly and gracefully it is done!

6. quality. See Glossary for different uses of this word in the play.

15. o'erlook'd. To 'overlook' was to cast a spell upon, by means of the 'glamour' or power of the eye. So it comes to have the meaning of 'to blight' with the evil eye, as in *Merry Wives*, v. 5. 87:

"Vile worm, thou wast o'erlook'd even in thy birth".

20. The line must be read:

"And so', | though yo' | urs, not' | yours, prove' | it so'".

'Yours' is dissyllabic at first, then monosyllabic, after the strongly accented 'not'. Compare the line in the *Tempest*:

"Twelve ye' | är since', | Miran' | da, twelve' | year since'".

See Abbott, *Shakesp. Grammar*, § 475 and § 480.

22, 23. peize and eke, 'peize' means to keep suspended, 'eke' to make longer; together they mean 'to delay'.

29. fear the enjoying, *i.e.* 'fear that I shall not enjoy'; as in v. i. 273, 'fear keeping safe' means 'fear that I may not keep safe'.

33. Torture was applied in Great Britain to a prisoner suspected of treason as late as 1690. The opinion that Portia utters here of its uselessness became established by the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was never sanctioned by English 'Common Law', but inflicted by ministers of the crown with sovereign authority. "The rack seldom stood idle in the Tower for all the latter part of Elizabeth's reign" (Hallam, *Const. Hist.*, vol. i.).

39. Verb of motion omitted, as in ii. 2. 100, &c.

41. True love will give the necessary insight. Compare i. 2. 27.

44. The legend of the swan's death-song is found in Greek literature. Tennyson has given a poem to it, 'The Dying Swan', and a fine simile in the *Passing of Arthur*:

"the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs".

55. young Alcides. The story of the rescue of Hesione, daughter of Laomedon, by Hercules, is told by Ovid, *Metam.* xi. 199 f. The love of Hercules is here said to have been not so great as that of Bassanio, because he saved Hesione for the sake of certain horses which Laomedon offered him. He gave Hesione to Telamon. All the detail of this picture is Shakespeare's.

56. howling Troy, *i.e.* loudly lamenting. So in the Authorized Version of *Isaiah*, xxiii. 6, "howl, ye inhabitants of the isle".

In the splendid series of images with which this speech is filled, Portia shows how deeply her heart and imagination are touched.

Song. What is the metre of the song?

63. fancy, that is, love, in which sense the word is common in Elizabethan English, *e.g.*—

"In maiden meditation, fancy-free",

a line in which the last two words are often misquoted and misunderstood.

73. So may the outward shows. The "so" does not refer to anything in the song, but to some previous thought of the speaker's. We only hear the conclusion of Bassanio's comments.

least themselves, *i.e.* least like the reality within.

74. still = always.

82. his, where we should expect 'its'. See Abbott, *Shakes. Gr.*, § 228, where it is shown that 'its' was a new word, only formed in Shakespeare's lifetime, and scarcely used by him except in his later plays.

84. stairs of sand. The phrase is a curious but most expressive one. Nothing could be imagined more untrustworthy than a stair of sand. There is therefore no need to press the spelling of the early editions—'stayers' or 'staiers',—and to suppose that the word means 'props', as Knight suggested.

85. beards, used for hair on the face generally, and sometimes for 'moustache' or 'whiskers', particularly the military moustache, e.g. in the famous phrase which Jaques uses of the soldier, "bearded like a pard".

86. white livers. See note on fi. i. 7.

87. excrement. Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. i. 109: "Dally with my excrement, with my mustachio". See Glossary.

88. beauty. There are many references in Shakespeare to the practice of 'making up' complexions, e.g. *Hamlet*, iii. i. 51, a cheek "beautied with plastering art"; and 149, "I have heard of your paintings, too; God has given you one face and you make yourselves another".

91. lightest, i.e. fickle, 'light o' love'.

92. golden locks. Bassanio is so absorbed in his reflections that he seems to have forgotten the colour of his own lady's hair. See i. i. 169, 170.

94. supposed fairness, false beauty; 'known' does not qualify 'fairness' but 'locks'.

96. The skull that bred them in the sepulchre. What word might be inserted after 'them' to make the construction plainer? What is such a construction called?

97. guiled shore. See Glossary.

99. an Indian beauty. If the text be right, the last word is used ironically in contrast with the direct sense of 'beauteous' in the previous line. But the repetition of the word suggests a printer's error, and it is possible that we have not got the passage as Shakespeare wrote it. It has been proposed to alter the punctuation, and to put a semicolon after 'Indian'. (See Appendix on the Text.)

100. times. The word offers a pretty exercise in interpretation. What does Shakespeare signify by it? and what similar uses can you quote? (You will find one in *Timon of Athens*, iv. 3. 519—

"Doubt and suspect, alas, are placed too late:
You should have feared *false times* when you did feast".)

102. hard food for Midas: a whole story in a phrase. The tale is told by Ovid, in the eleventh book of the *Metamorphoses*. The student should collect for himself all the passages in this play which contain references to classical stories. Shakespeare realized these stories so vividly that he could say what occurred between one

incident and another, where the classical story-teller himself had not filled the gap, e.g. in the wonderful simile:

"Even such a man, so faint, so spiritless,
So dull, so dead in look, so woe-begone,
Drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night,
And would have told him half his Troy was burnt,
But Priam found the fire, ere he his tongue".

—2 *Henry IV.*, i. i. 70.

103. pale and common drudge. It is curious that the 'pale-ness' of silver repels Bassanio, whilst that of lead moves him 'more than eloquence'. Taking the words as they stand, we must be careful to emphasize 'thy' at the beginning of line 106, and suppose a contrast between the paleness of the public slave and that of the stern challenger. But here also, as in 99, the repetition of the word suggests a printer's error. Warburton's emendation of 'paleness' to 'plainness' seems likely to be right.

109. thoughts, anxieties, as in the common Elizabethan phrase, 'to take thought', i.e. to brood over cares.

124. having made one. Analyse the whole sentence. In what respect does it differ from the usual grammatical forms?

131. continent. Shakespeare, in spite of his 'small Latin', uses derivatives from that language with a clear feeling for their original senses. As he gives to 'continent' the meaning of 'that which holds', so in *Hamlet*, to 'extravagant and erring', that of 'roaming and straying'.

140. Notice the effect produced here, as in line 110 and the following, by the rhymed passage. The speech of the lovers grows musical with happiness.

142. contending in a prize, that is, in a race for a prize.

158. livings, properties.

159. account, sum, in gross. The metaphors are drawn from a merchant's books. With noble courage and grace Portia speaks openly of that which any woman less sincere or less wise would have tried to pass over or to disparage—her wealth, wishes it sixty times as great as it is, then by one gift abolishes it, and presents herself to Bassanio, as she is, by herself alone. The simplicity and humanity of the words here are more 'symptomatic' of the real nature of Portia than the oratory in the trial scene.

163, 164. can learn, 'may learn'. The original distinction in meaning between 'can' and 'may' is here maintained. To 'can' is to know, to have the wit or skill to do something. To 'may' is to have the thing in one's might or power. Thus 'may' here means I am not disabled by age; 'can' means further, I have the faculty to learn.

165. her gentle spirit commits itself, is equivalent to 'her spirit gently commits itself'. The force of the adjective is diffused

over the whole phrase. Compare the expression in *Macbeth*, i. 6.: "the air Nimble and sweetly recommends itself Unto our gentle senses": or in this play, iii. 4. 36, where 'fair' similarly seems to qualify more than the substantive to which it is attached.

169, 171. But now . . . but now, expresses complete and sudden change from one moment to another.

179. The excited feelings are compared here to a crowd of loyal subjects in a state of joyous uproar, as in *Julius Caesar* they are compared to subjects in insurrection:

"The genius and the mortal instruments
Are then in council, and the state of man—
Like to a little kingdom—suffers then
The nature of an insurrection".

183. Each cry is a 'something', a word with a meaning, but when all are mixed together they become inarticulate, 'a wild of nothing', a chaos without meaning; and yet not without meaning, for the very noise is expressive of delight. Schlegel's translation is an admirable commentary on this passage:

"Wo jedes Etwas in einander fließend,
Zu einem Chaos wird von nichts als Freude,
Laut und doch sprachlos".

193. from me. There is a play here on the double meaning of the preposition, either "given by" or "taken from". Taken in the second sense, the phrase means, as Johnson points out, "none away from me, none that I shall lose if you gain it". The quibble is slight enough, but any quip is worth making to relieve the solemn insipidity of a formal congratulation. Here again Schlegel is the best commentary:

"Ich wünsch' euch was für Freud' ihr wünschen könnt
Denn sicher wünscht ihr keine von mir weg".

For a very similar quibble on two senses of 'from', compare *Richard III.*, iv. 4. 255-260.

195. bargain, that is, contract. The word is, of course, used without any implication of gain to one party as compared with the other. It is interesting to collect from the play all the instances of words which have modified their meaning since Shakespeare's time, such as 'complexion', 'estate', 'shrewd', 'convenient', 'envy', &c.

197. so = provided that.

216. Salanio, spelt very variously in the early editions. The Cambridge editors understand a new personage to be introduced here, called 'Salerio'. I prefer to follow Dyce and Furness and Beeching, and to regard the variations as printer's errors. In the previous scene Antonio had sent for Salanio and Salarino. One of them remained in Venice to comfort the Merchant, the other sped to Belmont to procure rescue.

225. Lorenzo excuses himself for his appearance without invitation. Salanio had pressed him to come, with a "reason for it". He wished to summon all Antonio's friends into council.

233. estate, condition, where we should rather use the other 'doublet' *state*. Compare the gradual differentiation of 'history' and 'story', 'to' and 'too', 'of' and 'off'. In line 256 below, contrariwise, 'state' is used where we should say 'estate'. By this ambiguous answer we are meant to understand that Antonio was afflicted not in mind or body, but in estate.

236. royal merchant, not in any technical sense of 'privileged', as some of the commentators suppose, but 'princely', 'munificent', as Antony calls *Cæsar* 'royal and loving'.

239. We are the Jasons. The story of the *Life and Death of Jason* should, by any who are not familiar with it, be read in William Morris' poem. This line contains a clear reminiscence of one in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (in rhythm as well as in meaning): "I'll be thy Jason, thou my golden fleece" (Act iv. sc. 4).

240. shrewd, spiteful, bad, means literally 'accursed'.

245. I am half yourself. Compare what Brutus' Portia says to him (*Julius Cæsar*, ii. 1. 267):

"No, my Brutus;
You have some sick offence within your mind
Which by the right and virtue of my place
I ought to know of; . . .
. . . unfold to me, *your self, your half,*
Why you are heavy".

259. his mere enemy. *Mere*, by derivation, means unmixed, pure. In modern usages, e.g. a 'mere trifle', it has a depreciatory sense, 'nothing more than'. In this passage it signifies 'thorough-going', 'intense'.

273. confound = overthrow, as in the "let me never be confounded" of the *Te Deum* in the Book of Common Prayer.

275. impeach the freedom, i.e. he threatens an action to annul the city's charter. Shakespeare uses terms that would be vividly understood by English citizens possessed of rights to administer justice by royal charter. Compare iv. 1. 39, where Shylock says:

"If you deny it, let the danger light
Upon your charter and your city's freedom".

Venice, of course, was not a 'free city' in the sense that her judicial powers depended on a charter; she was an independent sovereign state. In such points as this Shakespeare used the terms of his own country and his own time, as being to his hearers the truest and most vivid; just as the 'Old Masters' painted the persons of Hebrew history in the dress of their own Italian countrymen; or as the German schoolboy, quoted by Jespersen (*Progress in Lan-*

guage, p. 363), described Hannibal as swearing to be always a *Franchman* towards the Romans.

Ruskin, in an interesting place, extracted in the *Frondees Agrestes*, defends the Shakespearean practice as being right and true, in contrast to modern 'realism'.

279. *envious* = hateful, as 'envy' = hatred, in iv. i. 126.

282. *Chus*, *i.e.* Cush, a name taken, like Tubal, from one of the early chapters of Genesis.

Jessica's recollections here make it certain that an interval of some length of time must be supposed to elapse between the events in Act i. and those in Act ii.

290. That is, 'the best-condition'd and *most* unwearied spirit', the superlative in 'best' is carried on to 'unwearied'. Refer back to note on ii. i. 46.

308. *you shall hence*, verb of motion implied, as in ii. 2. 100.

311. *Since you are dear-bought, I will love you dear.* Portia has a delightful way of relieving from embarrassment those on whom she bestows kindness. Here she covers her generosity under what seems a rather spiteful pun, and so escapes, and gives escape to her friends. For a similar instance of her 'tact', see v. i. 137.

So rapidly and brilliantly does she rise to the occasion here that she hardly gives us time to realize the sacrifice she is making. It is all the more heroic that she spares us the 'heroics'. By an effort of clear imagination, she sees that Bassanio would never afterwards have forgiven himself if he had hesitated now. By prompt self-suppression she makes it easy for him to do the right thing.

315. *between you and I.* Jespersen, *Progress in Language*, p. 246, says, "I was preferred to *me* after *and* because the group of words 'you and I' would occur in everyday speech so frequently as to make it practically a sort of stock-phrase taken as a whole, the last word of which was therefore not inflected". He quotes a number of instances similar to this from great writers, to which we may add that 'Mr. Perker' uses this very phrase in chapter x. of the *Pickwick Papers*.

Scene 3.

The three months having expired, and the bond being forfeit, Antonio has been cast into prison; guarded by a gaoler, he now seeks an interview with Shylock, who refuses to hear him.

A short interval of time has elapsed since the last scene. The trial is fixed for the morrow. Antonio is expecting the arrival of Bassanio.

9. *naughty, fond*, have altered in sense somewhat since Shakespeare's time. 'Naughty' was not then confined to children, nor

used in a half-humorous way, but meant as much as 'wicked', 'worthless'. Compare v. i. 91:

"So shines a good deed in a *naughty* world".

What is the derivation of the word?

For 'fond', see Glossary.

18. *impenetrable*, whose heart cannot be touched. We may compare Cloten's use of 'penetrate' in *Cymbeline*, ii. 3. 14: "I am advised to give her music o' mornings; they say it will *penetrate*".

19. *kept, lived.* To 'keep' remains in this sense among Cambridge undergraduates.

27. The reading followed here is Theobald's. See Appendix on the Text.

Scene 4.

How Portia, leaving the charge of her house to Lorenzo and Jessica, departs, under pretence of a vow, for Venice, to aid her husband in the rescue of Antonio.

The time is the afternoon of the day on which Bassanio made his choice among the caskets. After a hasty ceremony of marriage, he has parted from his wife at the door of the church. She and the rest of the company have just returned to the house. (From v. i. 249, it appears that Portia left Belmont almost immediately after Bassanio.) Full of the daring plan she has devised, she astonishes Lorenzo by the courage she shows at her lord's departure.

2. *conceit* is by derivation the same word as 'concept', from which it has become 'differentiated' gradually, both in spelling and in sense (compare 'estate' and 'state', 'history' and 'story'). In meaning, 'conceit' has passed from a notion or idea in general to a quaint or fanciful notion, and finally to a notion of one's own importance. Here it still bears its original meaning of idea or conception. Compare i. i. 92.

3. *godlike amity.* Lorenzo means that Portia shows her esteem of friendship as something higher than human by speeding Bassanio on his way at such a moment. There is not a *conflict* here, as has been sometimes said, between love and friendship. It is more correct to say that Portia feels the truth of her husband's love involved in the loyalty of his friendship; but indeed Shakespeare in this scene, as often elsewhere, uses the same word 'love' of both passions, as the cavalier did of devotion to his mistress and devotion to his cause:

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more".

9. = Than commonplace kindness can oblige you to be.

11. For the double negative, compare iv. i. 56, 73, 159.

12. waste the time, spend the time (just as Valentine says in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ii. 4. 63, "We have conversed and spent our hours together"). 'Waste' has here no sense of unprofitableness. Rolfe compares Milton (Sonnet to Mr. Lawrence),

"Help waste a sullen day".

See note on 'bargain', line 195 above, and 'imposition', line 33 below.

15. manners, compare note on ii. 3. 17.

25. husbandry and manage, stewardship and control. What is the derivation of 'husbandry'? To what Greek word, with a common English derivative, does it exactly correspond?

27. I have toward Heaven breathed a secret vow. This vow is not a mere pretext to cover her journey. It is doubly characteristic of Portia, first because such a vow is in keeping with the many small touches by which we learn to think of her as contemplative and devout (e.g. i. 2. 11-18, 48, 91, 113; iii. 2. 13; iv. 1. 178-196; v. 1. 89-91); and secondly, because though the vow is in the literal sense set aside or postponed, this only arises from the fact that her noble and brave spirit sees that here she can act as well as pray. Afterwards, when with wit and courage she has done all that was to be done, she fulfils her vow. As she returns home

"She doth stray about
By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays
For happy wedlock hours" (v. 1. 31, 32).

The *vow* is in the spirit of Imogen or Desdemona; the *action* is like Rosalind or Beatrice. The union of the two belongs to Portia.

33. imposition, something 'put upon' a person, but without any of the secondary idea of fraud, which the word often carries in modern English. Compare i. 2. 114.

Another instance of Portia's generosity of mind; she represents her hospitality and trust as a *task* laid upon Lorenzo, and so tries to relieve him from a sense of obligation.

36. in all fair commands, the adjective colours the whole phrase, not 'commands' only. See note on iii. 2. 165.

45. Now, Balthasar. The incident of Balthasar's ride from Belmont to Padua, and from Padua to the Ferry, is one of the most exciting in the play, though it is only by slight touches here and there that we are enabled to follow it.

Bassanio had only been gone an hour or two before the solution occurred to Portia (v. 1. 249). She must go herself to Venice. But she wants a lawyer's robes and some notes on technical points of legal procedure. How to get them? There is her kinsman Dr. Bellario of Padua, the most famous jurisconsult in Italy. Her trusty man, Balthasar, must ride on the spur to Padua with a letter to the doctor. Arrived at Padua he finds the lawyer laid up with sickness,

but also pen in hand, answering an invitation from the Doge of Venice to come and decide the very case on which Portia had written to him. Cannot the two messages be made to work together? Portia shall be Bellario's deputy to the Doge. While the robes are being fetched, the doctor writes two letters, one, afterwards read aloud in court, to His Grace the Doge, recommending Portia as substitute for himself, under the name Balthasar, borrowed from her messenger; the other to Portia.

Armed with these letters and the precious robes, Balthasar gallops off again to ride through the night, so that he may catch his Lady at the Ferry in the morning. There was no time to be lost, for even Bassanio, travelling straight, would only arrive on the evening before the trial (iii. 3. 34), and he had some hours' start. Balthasar reaches the Ferry in time to meet the lumbering coach which had brought Portia along one side of the triangle, while he had been riding the other two. Portia just reaches the court at the critical instant.

52. imagined speed. Cf. *Sonnet* xlv.—

"For nimble thought can jump both sea and land
As soon as think the place where he would be".

53. traject, Rowe's correction for the printer's error 'tranect'. Hunter quotes from Coryat's *Crudities*, "There are in Venice thirteen ferries or passages, which they commonly call Traghetto".

56. convenient speed, the speed that suits the occasion.

67. reed voice, 'voix flûtée', as F. Victor Hugo translates it.

69. quaint lies, ingenious lies.

72. I could not do withal, 'I could not help it'. Dyce quotes from *Lesclaircissement de la Langue Française* (1530), "I can nat do withal, a thyng lyeth nat in me, or I am nat in faulte that a thyng is done".

77. Jacks, fellows, a term of contempt common in Shakespeare.

80. in my coach, which stays for us At the park gate. Portia throughout this scene shows not only infinite spirit and courage, but a power of combination and decisive command equal to that of Lady Macbeth herself. Compare the words to Balthasar—

"Waste no time in words,
But get thee gone: I shall be there before thee".

Scene 5.

Of Jessica, Lorenzo, and Launcelot at Belmont, and what Jessica says in praise of Portia.

This scene occurs probably just after the departure of Portia and Nerissa.

1. the sins of the father, &c., another instance to be added to a collection of references to the Bible in this play.

2. I fear you=I fear for you; compare the note on iii. 2. 29 above, and Abbott, *Shak. Gram.*, § 200.

4. agitation, a 'malapropism' for 'cogitation'.

9. one by another, means either 'one in competition with another', or 'taking one with another, reckoning all up'.

29. cover, a play on two different senses of the word. (i) To put the dishes on the table; (ii) to put the hat on the head.

32. quarrelling with occasion, like 'defying the matter' in line 46 below, seems to mean to slight the business in hand for the sake of a verbal quibble.

40. O dear discretion! Discretion is invoked as the quality which Launcelot had shown least of. His words are an army, 'suited', that is, in uniform. They correspond to one another, but not to the subject of discourse; they obey his orders like so many soldiers, but he orders them to the wrong posts.

43. A many. It is one of the curiosities of language that we still say 'a few', while 'a many' has become obsolete, or only provincial. The phrase is to be explained as a 'collective'.

44. Garnish'd like him. Does this mean as ill-furnished with discretion as Launcelot? The habit of quibbling and punning was universal in Shakespeare's time. Compare note on i. 2. 7.

52. merit it, Pope's emendation. The double 'it' at the end of the line seems to have led to misprints.

62. stomach=appetite.

Act IV.—Scene I.

Of the trial of the cause between Shylock the Jew and Antonio the merchant; how Portia, disguised as a Doctor of Civil Law, delivers Antonio out of the hand of Shylock; and how Bassanio is persuaded to give the Doctor his betrothal ring, which he had vowed never to part from but with his life.

The scene which follows answers in some points to the scene of Bassanio's choice of the leaden casket. To the eye it is even more splendid; the background is the great hall of the High Court of Justice; in front is a throng of eager people, Antonio's merchant-friends from the Rialto, Bassanio's companions-in-arms, and magnificoes from the ducal court, all in dress of many colours; round the bench and near the prisoner stand ruffed halberdiers; aloft sits the Doge, in crimson velvet with an upper garment 'of white cloth of silver, with great massy buttons of gold'; a degree below him sit the Senators in red cloth tipped with white ermine; on the right, in earnest talk with Bassanio and Gratiano, stands Antonio, ready for either issue; and, presently, on the left, enter, with bond and knife and scales, Shylock, alone.

1. What, where we should rather say 'now', or 'well'. Compare, "What, Jessica", ii. 5. 3 and 4.

5. Un capable. It has been pointed out that the use of 'un-' and 'in-' in compounds varies capriciously, or by laws of euphony so delicate that they cannot be analysed. Thus we say, 'unequal' but 'inequality', 'ungrateful' but 'ingratitude'.

5, 6. empty from is equal to 'empty of'. This double use is like the Latin construction with genitive or ablative in the case of a word such as *egeo*.

7. qualify, *i.e.* to temper, or alter by mixing or blending. The word carries on the metaphor implied in 'dram of mercy'.

10. envy. See Glossary on the word.

16. Make room, indicates the crowded state of the court.

18. *i.e.* 'that you are carrying this show of hatred up to the moment when you would have to carry it into action'.

20. remorse. See Glossary.

29. royal merchant. Here the phrase seems to have the technical meaning which it has not in iii. 2. 236. It signifies a merchant of such wealth and position as to be dignified with a special title from the court.

39. charter and freedom. See note on iii. 2. 276.

43. it is my humour. The word contains a reference to the strange physiological theories of the Middle Ages, whereby certain mental dispositions were connected with different 'moistures' or 'humours' of the body. Many terms still in use are derived from this old belief, such as 'phlegm' and 'phlegmatic' applied to temper; 'choleric', 'melancholy', 'sanguine', &c. The 'temperament' or 'complexion' of a man was thought to depend on the blend of his humours.

43, and following. These lines contain Shylock's first defence for his insistence on the execution of his bond. Some feelings, he says, are ultimate; they cannot be further analysed. They resemble hysterical states, or strange bodily impulses over which the reason has no control, such as, instinctive fear of certain animals. Of this sort is my antipathy to Antonio.

47. gaping pig. Malone quotes from Nashe's *Pierce Penilesse*: "Some will take on like a mad man if they see a pigge come to the table". A boar's head was, and is, served with a lemon in its open mouth.

49. for affection, Mistress of passion. Affection here has its old sense of an impulse of any kind. It is distinguished from passion as excitement from feeling, the nervous impulse from the mental state. The whole passage may be rendered, 'For impulse controls feeling, and excites a mood corresponding to itself'. This mood may or may not be *reasonable*. For instance, a cat may cause

in some particular individual a nervous shock of the kind which is always connected with the mental feeling of fear. In that case fear will be felt in spite of any reassurance by the reason that the cat cannot do any real harm.

The passage is interesting, both for the subtlety of the argument underlying the simple illustrations quoted by Shylock, and also because it is one where 'emendation' (see Appendix on the Text) has certainly given us Shakespeare's original words. The quartos and folios put a full stop at 'affection', and put 'Masters' or 'Maisters' at the beginning of the next line. The emendation, adopted in the text, is Thirlby's. Dr. Abbott has confirmed it by reference to two other places where 'mastres', 'maistresse', 'mistress', have been confused, viz. *Tempest*, ii. 1. 5; and Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Coxcomb*, ii. 3. 9: "Where be thy mastres, man? I would speak with her".

54. a harmless necessary cat. The phrase is one of those which, for some subtle reason, stick in people's memory, and enter into the language so fully as to be used constantly by folks who could not say where they come from. It is only requisite to look at attempted translations to see that the magic of such phrases is not transferable; e.g.

"Un chat, familier et inoffensif" (F. Victor Hugo).

"Katz', ein harmlos nützlich Thier" (Schlegel).

How many of such phrases, since become 'household words', can you collect from this play?

55. a woollen bag-pipe. The adjective refers strictly to the covering of the wind-bag. The wind-bag itself is commonly made of 'greased leather', but it is often covered with woollen cloth. It is hard to see why the commentators have made so much difficulty over the epithet, which conveys just the idea of bleating inoffensiveness that the passage requires.

57. lodged hate, i.e. hate that has gathered and accumulated.

59. a losing suit, i.e. a suit by which he will forego the repayment of his money, and take flesh instead.

61. the current of thy cruelty, a sweeping tide of feeling, just as Othello compares his own wrath

"to the Pontic sea,
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne'er feels retiring ebb".

62. and following. Mark the peculiarly forcible effect of the thrust and counter-thrust of the argument in these epigrammatic single lines.

63. Bassanio's question contains the refutation of Shylock's philosophy. 'True, we have feelings, produced by external physical

causes, feelings which we cannot keep from arising. But we need not *act* upon them, unless we will to do it.'

67. think you question—remember you are holding converse with.

73. no noise with 'forbid' makes a double negative, as in 56 above and 157 below.

74. fretten. See Abbott, § 344.

79. conveniency, promptitude or despatch.

86. What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong? This is Shylock's second defence. He here takes 'wrong' to mean that which is contrary to statute law, and denies therefore that he himself is doing any wrong. He thus occupies the position of the Scribes and Pharisees of the time of Christ, when, for instance, they considered it no 'wrong' to refuse help to near relatives, so long as the formula of the Law respecting 'Corban' was properly observed. He claims the literal fulfilment of legal obligations, and believes 'right' to consist in that. See, further, note on line 200.

88. Shylock's third line of argument: 'You admit property in human flesh by allowing the purchase of slaves. I have acquired property in a pound of Antonio's flesh. Grant me possession of that which is lawfully mine.'

The argument here is far stronger than that in Silvan's *Orator*, with which it has been compared. Silvan's Jew claims to be allowed to take a pound of flesh as a *milder penalty* for a defaulting debtor than the common one of slavery. Shylock bases his claim on the *same principle* as that implied in the purchase of slaves. The court, as is evident from line 101, feel the argument unanswerable.

89. parts, functions, duties.

101. Upon my power, by my constitutional authority.

Up to this point Shylock has had the advantage over his enemies, and despair settles upon Antonio's friends. There seems no alternative but either to grant the Jew his forfeit or to adjourn the court. It is now that the Duke mentions that he has sent for Bellario, and it is now that we hear of Portia's arrival in Venice, only just in time for her purpose.

111. A tainted wether, touched with some disease or disabled by some accident. For the bearing of this passage on the character of Antonio, see the study in the Introduction.

120. Not on thy sole, but on thy soul. In Shakespeare's time these two words were not, as now, pronounced exactly alike, but 'soul' was longer, almost dissyllabic in sound. The same play on words occurs in Act i. sc. 1 of *Julius Caesar*. This passage between Shylock and Gratiano takes place while the Duke reads Bellario's letter.

122. hangman's axe, hangman was used in quite a general sense as an 'executioner', whatever the method of execution might be.

123. *envy*. See Glossary on the word.

125. *inexorable* is the correction of the Third Folio for the earlier 'inexecrable'. Dr. Abbott attempts to defend the latter, as meaning 'not to be execrated enough', 'too bad for execration', which does not fit in with the first half of the line; while, on the other hand, 'inexorable' just carries on the sense of the end of line 123.

126 seems to mean 'Let justice be blamed for having allowed you to live so long'.

128. *To hold*, *i.e.* so as to hold. Pythagoras and his doctrine of the transmigration of souls are referred to also in *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, two plays written perhaps not much later than the *MERCHANT OF VENICE*.

131. *a wolf, hang'd for human slaughter*. "On the Continent, down to a comparatively late period, the lower animals were in all respects considered amenable to the laws. Domestic animals were tried in the common criminal courts, and their punishment on conviction was death; wild animals fell under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts." Trials of domestic animals were founded "on the Jewish Law, as laid down in *Exodus*, xxi. 28". The last trial and execution of an animal (a cow) in France took place in 1740. See the amusing article in Chambers' *Book of Days*, vol. i. pp. 126-8.

132. The belief in the interchange of souls between men and wolves is ancient and wide-spread, and has led to some of the most uncanny stories in existence. See Baring Gould's *Book of the Werewolf*; and, for the connection of the belief with that in the transmigration of souls, see Tylor's *Anthropology*.

157. *impediment to let him lack*, is to be compared with 'forbid to make no noise', above, line 73. There is a negative too many for modern English grammar in these constructions, though not for good Elizabethan, any more than for good Greek. Compare 'just cause or impediment why these two persons should not be joined together', where the positive word 'cause' is coupled with the negative 'impediment'.

163. Enter Portia.

Up to now, as Booth, the great American actor, notes (quoted by Furness), Shylock has fixed all his attention upon the Duke, and has shown only contempt for the other persons present. Bellario's letter disturbs him, and he anxiously watches the young lawyer as he comes into court.

Observe that Portia comes, as Bellario's deputy, to 'determine' the cause (line 103 above). She is therefore judge, not advocate. She takes command of the whole cause, and speaks with the authority of the whole court (line 294 below).

For a similar case, in Spanish law, of the delegation of a judicial decision to a 'referee' in the person of a jurisconsult, see an extremely

interesting note by J. T. Doyle, quoted on page 417 of Furness' Variorum Edition.

164. *Take your place*, that is, on the judge's bench. The Duke has been so perplexed by the subtlety and vigour with which Shylock has put his case that he is glad enough to leave the responsibility of deciding to someone else. Portia could not have had so free a hand if she had arrived earlier.

172, 173. 'Yet in such a form that no technical objection can be raised to your procedure.'

174. *danger* is an ancient legal term, derived from Low Latin *dominium*, and meaning (i) absolute control in general, (ii) the special form of control conferred by the allowance of a legal claim. The words may be rendered, 'You come under his claim, do you not?'

176. *Then must the Jew be merciful*, *i.e.* the Jew *must* be merciful, if the case is to end well. Shylock takes the word in its legal sense.

178. 'Mercy is a virtue that is not to be forced'; "la clémence ne se commande pas", as F. Victor Hugo translates it. For 'quality' see Glossary. *strained* = forced or constrained.

185. *attribute to awe*, that which properly belongs to awe, its characteristic symbol. In line 189 below, 'attribute' signifies 'property' or 'natural quality'.

194. *We do pray for mercy*, refers, of course, to a clause in the Lord's Prayer, which Portia takes for granted that Shylock knows.

200. *My deeds upon my head!* Shakespeare may have had in his mind a similar cry in a court of justice, "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (*Matt.*, xxvii. 25).

I crave the Law! or as he said before, "I stand here for Law!" This claim of Shylock's, with the appeal of Portia to which it is a reply, may be paralleled with many passages in the Epistles of Saint Paul, where the demand of the strict Jew for the literal fulfilment of the whole of the Law is shown to be self-destructive and to lead of necessity to an Equity or Charity which transcends, but does not evade it. (See particularly Epistle to the Galatians, chaps. ii., iii., and iv.) This Equity is not to be Lawlessness, but a newer and more perfect Law.

In this as in other points Shakespeare intended Shylock to embody the Jewish spirit as he conceived it. Similarly Portia's position is not less clearly thought out nor less subtly maintained, as we shall see when we reach its final development. But, once more, we must be on our guard against supposing that Shakespeare's chief object was to illustrate two opposing philosophical views. His purpose was to portray Shylock and Portia truthfully. (See Appendix 'On the Meaning of the Play'.)

212. *It must not be*. Portia's refusal to 'wrest the law' here

reminds us of her saying in i. 2. 92, "If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will". Compare also iii. 2. 12.

217. A Daniel come to judgement! refers to a story in the Apocrypha, in which Daniel is narrated to have delivered, by his shrewdness, a woman suffering under false accusation.

219. Let me look upon the bond. Portia goes concisely, but gradually to her point. She wishes (i) to give full opportunity to both sides to 'say their say', (ii) to prove to the uttermost that Shylock's aim was, not the recovery of his losses, but the 'judicial murder' of Antonio.

241-243, *i.e.* the scope of the law certainly includes the exaction of a forfeit, whatever that forfeit may be. In this case there is no doubt that the forfeit is clearly described in the bond.

245. more elder. Double signs for the comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives are common in Shakespeare, *e.g.*:

"This was the most unkindest cut of all"
(*Julius Caesar*, iii. 2. 187).

249. Are there balance? See Abbott, § 471. The plural and possessive of nouns in which the singular ends in a sibilant, such as 's', 'se', 'ce', &c., are frequently written without the additional syllable, *e.g.* *Sonnet* cxii.:

"my adder's sense
To critic and to flatterer stoppèd are".

258. I am arm'd, *i.e.* 'with a quietness of spirit' (line 12).

266. of such misery. As the line stands, 'misery' must be read with the stress accent on the second syllable. But there is doubtless a monosyllable, such as 'slow' or 'sad', dropped out, by printer's error, after 'such'.

269. Observe the beautiful rhythm in this monosyllabic line.

271. a love, used of a friend here, as in iii. 4. 7, 13, 17.

277. Which, referring to 'a wife'. 'Which' was often applied to persons (as 'who' to things) in Tudor English, *cf.*:

"The mistress which I serve", *Tempest*, iii. 1. 6.
(*Abbott*, § 265.)

280. Bassanio is not to be taken literally in his readiness to sacrifice his wife. He is expressing his feelings with exaggerated force. The passage amuses the audience in the theatre, who have almost forgotten Portia in the Judge, and have been moved by the sad reality of Antonio's farewell. The situation is full of 'irony', but the irony is comic, not tragic. Gratiano and Nerissa extend the relief for a moment longer.

292. pursue, accented on the *first* syllable.

298. A sentence! Come, prepare! Here, as Irving acts the part, Shylock makes a spring at Antonio, in front of whom Bassanio flings himself.

300. This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood. Portia's judgment has given rise to great controversy among the critics. A full account of the controversy is given in Furness' Variorum Edition.

It must be remembered that Shakespeare did not *invent* the judgment, but took it from the old story in *Il Pecorone*.

It has been pointed out that Portia's interpretation overlooks the general understanding "that the right to do a certain act confers the right to the necessary incidents of that act", *e.g.* that the right to cut a piece off a melon, confers the right to spill some of its juice.

But to appeal to such a general understanding is to appeal to a principle of common sense or equity, which is not 'nominated in the bond'; therefore Shylock has no more right to invoke it, than Portia had a right to compel him to provide a surgeon for Antonio at his own cost.

The judgment is an ancient and traditional one, and is far indeed from being a mere quibble. It belongs to an exceedingly important class of decisions, by which, under the guise of extreme severity, equity was introduced into law, without injury to its stability. Such judgments struck the common imagination deeply because of the cleverness with which the law was saved from defeating its own purpose, and causing injustice. The judgment of Solomon is one instance; another is that of the judge who, being called upon to punish a man for having killed a youth's father by accidentally falling from a high window upon him, bade the youth go and fall out of the same window on the defendant—a means of redress which the youth naturally declined to accept.

In later times such decisions became 'bad law', merely because law had absorbed so much of the spirit of equity.

[In connection with the notes on lines 86 and 200 above, as to the similarity of Shylock's position to that of the Pharisees, it is interesting to remember that St. Paul's refutation of the 'Judaizers' of his time was, in essence, the same as that of the judgment here. If the letter of the law is to be invoked, it must be invoked in every detail and in every particular ("thou art a debtor to the whole law"), which is seen immediately to be impracticable, since no man *can* keep it with absolute precision. The new 'spirit', however, does not defeat or subvert the law, it fulfils it and completes it, and so saves the law itself from self-destruction.]

Shakespeare is careful to add to the old solution a further point of his own ("the law has yet another hold"), *viz.*, that the bond was an alien's attempt to murder a citizen, and therefore, *ipso facto*, criminal.

325. estimation, *i.e.* on the scales, 'weight'.

328. on the hip. See note on i. 3. 40.

329. Why doth the Jew pause? He is hesitating whether to choose his revenge or his life, unconscious that, should he still resolve to take his pound of flesh, the young judge had 'another hold on him'.

336. barely. Note the effectiveness of the metrical form here.

340. stay question, as above, ii. 8. 40, 'stay the riping of the time', where 'stay' = 'wait for', and compare the colloquialism to 'stop supper' (Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*, ch. xxvi.).

347. seize, legal term = take lawful possession of.

367. Ay, for the state, not for Antonio, seems to mean that the half which is forfeited to Antonio *must* become his, while the court has power to commute the state's half for a fine.

374. There is some little difficulty in following the disposition made by Antonio. But the difficulty is lessened by reading a comma, as in the text, instead of a semicolon, as in the 'Globe' edition, after 'content'. The words then appear to mean: 'If it please the court to remit the fine in respect of that half of his goods which is due to the state, I am content to give the other half,—if I may in the meantime have the use of it as capital,—on Shylock's death, to Jessica and her husband'. Thus Shylock would keep one half of his goods, while Antonio would trade with the other half during Shylock's lifetime. At his death, the sum-total of his property would pass to Lorenzo and Jessica.

390. I am not well. This passage, with the lines 367–371 above, excites our pity for Shylock. He goes out. We hear the crowd howl at him at the door of the court, and then he disappears from our knowledge. We know, however, that he signed the deed in favour of Lorenzo and Jessica (see Act v. i. 265). But what became of him? Each of us may have his idea. It would make a good subject for an essay or 'study'. That his treatment would seem merciful in Shakespeare's time, there can be no doubt. That Shakespeare himself approved of it, we have no evidence to show. On the stage, great actors like Kean and Irving have taken it for granted that we are to pity him, and have made his exit miserably sad to see.

392. The twelve godfathers are the twelve jurymen. Such a reference to purely English institutions is of a piece with the mention of a 'charter' in the case of Venice. See note on iii. 2. 276.

395. I entreat you home, verb of motion implied, as above, 'Father, in', ii. 2. 141, and line 397 below, 'I must away'.

396 contains another obsolete use of the preposition 'of' to be added to a collection of such in this play. See also 'of force' in line 415 below.

398. presently = immediately, as above, 381, and ii. 6. 65; ii. 9. 3.

400. gratify, thank and reward.

405. three thousand ducats. The payment of a fee by the winning side to a judge or referee seems, to modern ideas, a dangerous form of corruption, but it was quite regular in old days. Here the Duke himself recommends a reward of some kind. See further J. T. Doyle's note in Furness' *Variorum Edition*, p. 417.

415. of force I must, I am necessarily obliged.

425. to give you this, *i.e.* by giving you this. So in i. i. 126, make moan *to* be abridged', means '*at* being abridged'. Abbott, *Shakesp. Gr.*, § 356.

426. methinks. In this phrase 'thinks' is an impersonal verb meaning 'seems', while 'me' is dative case.

439. An if. This 'an' is the conjunction 'and', as it is often spelt. For an explanation of the use, see Abbott, *Shakesp. Gr.*, §§ 101–103.

445. commandment is to be pronounced as a quadrisyllable. It is written 'commandement' in the First Folio. Abbott compares *Henry VI.*, i. 3. 20, "From him I have express command(e)ment"

Scene 2.

More of the adventure of the rings.

6. upon more advice, after more thought. So 'advised' = careful, thoughtful, i. i. 140, &c.

16. old swearing, 'old' is used in its familiar, jocular application (as in such phrases as 'old boy', 'old girl', &c.)—not confined to schoolboys in Shakespeare's time. So Sir Thomas North, in translating the *Life of Alexander the Great*, writes "At this feast there was *old drinking*". Cp. also *Macbeth*, ii. 3. 2, and *Much Ado*, v. 2. 98.

Act V.

Of the home-coming of Portia and Bassanio; how he brings the Merchant with him from Venice; and of the end of the adventure of the rings.

The scene is the avenue to Portia's house. Around is the garden, "full of tall shrubs and lofty trees,—the tulip tree, the poplar, and the cedar. There are terraces and flights of steps, cascades and fountains, broad walks, avenues, and ridings, with alcoves and banqueting-houses in the rich architecture of Venice."

Lorenzo and Jessica are waiting for the return of their friends. The interval is filled with talk that richly interprets "soft stillness and the night", and with music played by Portia's musicians "of the house".

Shakespeare does not usually end a play—in the modern fashion—on its culminating sensation, nor send his audience away with their heart in their mouth. He winds his threads of story quietly off. (See the close, for instances, of *Hamlet* and of *Romeo and Juliet*.)

He adds here a consummately beautiful picture of tranquillity and happiness, necessary to restore the balance of the comedy, after the anguish of the trial scene.

1. In such a night. These miniature pictures of three 'star-crossed lovers' and of the witch Medea embody the secrecy, the passion, and the sadness of a moonlit night.

The detail of the pictures is Shakespeare's own, but the persons, as Hunter shows, were probably suggested to him by Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida* and *Legend of Good Women*, in the latter of which Thisbe, Dido, and Medea follow one another.

10. stood Dido. This is perhaps the most beautiful of the series of pictures. Whether or no Shakespeare read Virgil, he was fond of Dido, and several times refers to her. He believed she was reconciled to Æneas in the after-world:

"Dido and her Æneas shall want troops

And all the haunt be ours" (*Ant. and Cleop.*, iv. 14. 53).

willow, the token of unrequited or forsaken love.

12. Medea gather'd. The description of the herbs and other charms with which Medea renewed the youth of Æson, the old father of Jason, is to be found in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book vii.:

"Addidit exceptas Luna de nocte pruinas", &c.

Lichas, Midas, Hercules' rescue of Hesione, Orpheus, all figure in the *Metamorphoses*. It seems as if Shakespeare had the book fresh in his mind when he wrote the *Merchant*.

22. outnight, like 'outface' in iv. 2. 17.

28. Stephano: to be pronounced here with the *a* long. In the *Tempest* it is pronounced correctly, with the *a* short.

31. by holy crosses, such as are still to be seen in Roman Catholic countries by the roadside.

46. post, *i.e.* a messenger, so called from the 'posts' or stations fixed at regular intervals along the main roads, where change of horses, &c., could be obtained.

49. Sweet soul. Printed, in defiance of reason and rhythm, as part of the clown's speech, by all the early editions. The correction was first made by Rowe. See Appendix on the Text.

56. creep in: 'in' for 'into', frequent in Shakespeare. Cf. *Richard III.*, i. 2. 261:

"But first I'll turn yon fellow in his grave".

57. touches, notes.

59. patines, small plates of gold in which the consecrated wafer or bread is presented to communicants.

60. According to ancient theories of astronomy, the planets and stars were fixed in eight concentric spheres which revolved about the earth, making, as they moved, the music of a perfect diapason.

There are numberless references in English poetry to this 'music of the spheres'. In this passage the conception is rather different: it is the stars themselves, not the spheres, that sing; and it is possible, as has been suggested, that Shakespeare had *Job*, xxxviii. 7 in his mind: "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy".

62. still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins. One of the most magical lines in Shakespeare. 'Young-eyed' may be illustrated from Sir Joshua Reynolds' famous picture of cherub-faces. The line recalls, in subject as in beauty, Horatio's farewell to Hamlet—

"Good-night, sweet prince,

And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest".

65. close us in. Rowe's emendation for 'close in it', of Q 1 and Ff., and 'close it in' of Q 2. It is plain that the 'it' at the end of the line has confused the printers. The meaning, or the part of it that can be expressed in prose, is: Immortal souls thus are full of a music which we mortals, while we are so thickly clad in perishable clay, are not able to hear. 'Grossly' conveys the double idea of thickness and insensibility.

66. wake Diana, that is, rouse the moon, which has now gone behind a cloud, and is asleep, as it were. The scene is not meant to be flooded with clear moonlight throughout. See also line 92 below. Further on again there is an indication that the moon is shining once more. What is the indication?

73. Note the effectiveness of the metrical form here.

77. a mutual stand, a general halt, as if by agreement.

78. Both savage and modest have slightly different senses here from their modern use. 'Savage' means 'wild', as a wild rose is 'rose sauvage' in French. There is no implication of cruelty in the word. 'Modest', again, is not 'humble', but 'orderly' or 'docile'. The Shakespearean meanings are thus nearer to the original 'silvaticus' and 'modestus'.

79. the poet. Ovid, in *Metamorphoses*, books x. and xi., tells the tale of Orpheus. But there may very likely be a reference here to Virgil's account of the legend in the fourth book of the *Georgics*. What other references to Orpheus do you know of in Shakespeare? What in Milton?

80. drew, in the same sense as 'draw' above, line 68.

82. his, the old possessive form of 'it'. Compare line 61 above.

85. is fit for treasons. Like Cassius, the typical conspirator (*Julius Caesar*, i. 2. 200 ff.), 'he hears no music'.

These lines are sometimes quoted—like many others of the poet's—as if they expressed Shakespeare's own opinion. But the words are *Lorenzo's*. "Let no such man be trusted", seems to have irritated the commentator Steevens: see his long note quoted in

Furness' Variorum Edition. Instances to the contrary might be cited: Sir Walter Scott, Dr. Johnson, Dean Hook, Dean Stanley; good men who could not distinguish one tune from another.

87. Erebus, the covered place, the under-world, 'dim region of dead corpses'.

88. Mark the music. *Enter Portia and Nerissa.*

Portia is still full of the strong emotions roused in her by the trial; on her way home she has talked with the hermit, and prayed at the wayside crosses. For a while her reflections are grave and serious. She stands above Jessica and Lorenzo, and talks softly to Nerissa, while the music plays.

98. Music of the house, that is, a band of musicians.

99. good without respect, *i.e.* without reference to circumstances.

107. Good things miss their final flavour of perfection unless they are well-timed. There is a play on the double sense of 'season'.

109. Endymion, who slept an eternal sleep on the side of Mount Latmus, kissed by the rays of the moon.

121. tucket, a note or strain on a trumpet. Ital. *toccatta*.

127. day with the Antipodes, that is, daylight during the night as well as the day.

130. a light wife, a fickle wife, punned here with 'light' the opposite of heavy; as in the foregoing line it is punned with 'light' in the sense of 'brightness'. Portia, as we have seen before, makes skilful use of puns at moments when her friends might feel constrained or embarrassed. Her play on 'bound', six lines below, is an admirable instance of the cleverness with which she manages to be grateful without being formal or tiresome.

141. *i.e.* I cut short the politeness of mere words. For 'breathing', Malone compares 'mouth-honour, *breath*' from *Macbeth*, v. 3. 27. Compare also in this play ii. 9. 89, "commends and courteous *breath*".

147. cutler's poetry, the doggerel engraved on knife-blades.

154. respective, scrupulous, careful.

160. a little scrubbed boy, short or stunted like a scrub or shrub (two forms of the same word, cf. 'Wormwood *Scrubs*'). The comic 'irony' is delightful in this contemptuous description of Nerissa to her own self. 'A prating boy' ('plauderbube', as Schlegel turns it) is excellent from Gratiano, who had at last found someone that could outtalk him. Compare Lorenzo's complaint, i. 1. 106.

170-2. What difference do you note between the Shakespearean and the modern uses of 'leave' and 'masters' in these lines?

175. I were best, a confusion between two constructions:

- (i) 'Me were best' = it would be best for me
[as 'you were best' in ii. 8. 33 = it would be best for you],

and (ii) 'I had best'.

A different form of the same confusion occurs in *Richard II.*—

"*Me* rather *had* my heart might feel your love
Than my unpleas'd eye see your courtesy" (iii. 3. 192, 193).

'I were best' is a case where the 'psychological subject', *i.e.* the person who is chief in the thought, has become, in spite of rule, the grammatical subject, chief in the grammar also. See Jespersen, *Progress in Language*, § 180, and Abbott, *Sh. Gr.*, § 230.

197. contain, keep.

199. much unreasonable, it is odd that we now only use 'much' in this adverbial way with adjectives of the comparative or superlative degree, *e.g.* 'much older', 'much the oldest', but not 'much old'. So, again, we say "I will come *very* likely", but not "I will come likely" (a Scotticism).

199-202. Portia, in her pretended anger, clips the connecting links between the clauses. 'Who is there so unreasonable (as to) have lacked good manners (to such an extent as) to press for a thing regarded by its owner as sacred?'

206. civil doctor, a doctor of civil law.

212. enforced, morally obliged; compare what Bassanio had said to the doctor—

"Dear sir, of *force* I must attempt you further" (iv. 1. 415).

213. beset with shame and courtesy, 'courtesy' the desire to show gratitude, 'shame' the desire not to seem ungrateful; the negative and positive poles of the same feeling.

216. candles of the night, stars, just as Banquo, in *Macbeth*, says of a cloudy night, "There's husbandry in heaven; their *candles* are all out".

236. which, refers to 'body', not to 'wealth'.

239. advisedly, deliberately.

242. swear to keep this ring. Note, in point of dramatic construction, that the incident of the rings is not a mere 'excrescence' on the plot, but serves to bring about the recognition and explanation at the close with more spirit and humour than would have been possible by any other device.

249. as soon as you. See note at the beginning of Act iii. sc. 4.

251. Antonio, you are welcome. Portia has revealed herself now as Doctor Balthasar of Rome, and she welcomes Antonio once again in her double character.

Here is the crowning point of the play. The Merchant of Venice recognizes in the heroine of the caskets the heroine of the bond, his

own deliverer in the wife of his dearest friend; here we learn that his 'argosies with portly sail', in the fate of which we were interested at the opening of the play (i. i. 9), have come richly to harbour; here also the romance of the flight of the miser's daughter comes to a comfortable end; by Portia's care her future fortune is assured.

259. living=property, as in iii. 2. 158.

261. road, compare i. i. 19.

267. manna, one more reference to a Bible story. How many other such references can you recall from the play?

271. inter'gatories, a clipped form of 'interrogatories', questions which a witness was sworn to give true replies to; a phrase, as Lord Campbell tells us, that belongs to the Court of Queen's Bench; Portia speaks once more as the 'Civil Doctor'.

APPENDIX A.

THE TEXT.

Beginners in Shakespearean study need not concern themselves with minute questions of textual criticism, but it is important they should know some preliminary points.

We have good reason for thinking that in many obscurely-worded passages of Shakespeare, the obscurity arises from the fact that we have not got the words as he wrote them.

Half his plays were not printed at all during his lifetime. The other half show no traces of having been printed under his supervision or with his correction.

The plays printed during his lifetime were printed singly and in quarto size (called *quarto* because each page is of the size of the *fourth* part of a full sheet of foolscap). The first collected edition of the plays was printed in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, and was edited by two fellow-actors of his, Heminge and Condell. This edition is known as the First Folio (called *Folio* because each page has the full length of a foolscap sheet or *leaf*).

The Merchant of Venice is one of the plays printed in Shakespeare's lifetime. Two Quarto editions of the play appeared, both in 1600; one certainly, and the other almost certainly, printed by J. Roberts. The edition known as the First Quarto was not only printed but also *published* by J. Roberts. The so-called Second Quarto was published by Thomas Heyes.

The play was not printed again until it appeared in the First Folio, 1623.¹

Even nowadays when elementary schools, machine-printing, and systematic revision of proofs have greatly reduced the number of printers' errors, an editor finds much to correct before a book can be published. But in Shakespeare's time, when spelling was so uncertain, when printing was often done by ill-educated journeymen with insufficient type at

¹ These three editions are known to critics by the symbols Q¹, Q², F¹.
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