

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? ²⁸³

Ant. Sweet lady, you have given me life and
 living;

For here I read for certain that my ships
 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. ²⁸⁴

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
 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 ³⁰
 So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring. [*Exeunt.*]

NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbott	Abbott's <i>Shakespearean Grammar</i> , 3d edition.
F 1 or F	First Folio (1623) of Shakespeare's plays.
F 2	Second Folio (1632).
F 3	Third Folio (1663 and 1664).
F 4	Fourth Folio (1685).
Ff	The four Folios.
Cent. Dict.	<i>The Century Dictionary</i> .
New Eng. Dict.	<i>A New English Dictionary</i> , ed. Sir J. A. H. Murray and others, published by the Oxford University Press.

For the meaning of words not given in these notes, the student is referred to the Glossary at the end of the volume.

The numbering of the lines corresponds to that of the Globe Edition: this applies also to the scenes in prose.

ACT I—SCENE 1

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.

5. *I am to learn*, i.e. I do not know, I have still to learn.

8. Scan this line, and note the pronunciation of "ocean." See Appendix B, § 9 (d), at the end of this book.

10. *burghers*, great city-merchants.

13. The little ships feel the motion of the waves, and seem to bow 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*. The word had a wider sense than in modern English, and included all feelings or emotions; so also in i. 1. 50.

17. *still*, always, continually.

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 and anchor.

27. *Andrew*, a favorite name for a galley, especially at Venice and hence used here as a general term, as Dobbin is sometimes used for any horse.

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."

43. *estate*, wealth, possessions.

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

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

54. *aspect*. To be pronounced "aspéct." Compare "obscurer" in ii. 7. 51.

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, forestalled, taken the place of. From what Latin original did the word come?

67. *strange*, reserved, withdrawn from the society of friends.

70. *dinner-time*, i.e. about eleven A.M. William Harrison, an elder contemporary of Shakespeare, says, "With us the nobility, gentry, and students do ordinarily go to dinner at eleven before noon." (P. 105 in *Elizabethan England*, ed. Furnivall, in the *Camelot Series*.)

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.

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

"I hold the world but as the world."

A fuller emphasis gives quite another color 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 (in other dramas) does Shakespeare compare life to acting in a play?

79. *play the fool*, act the part of the Fool in a play, such a part as Touchstone's in *As You Like It*. Rosalind's sentiment is much the same as Gratiano's when she says, "I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad."

82. *mortifying*, depressing to the spirits or feelings. What is the literal sense of it?

84. *his grandsire cut in alabaster*, that is, like an effigy on a tomb. Alabaster tombs of Elizabethan times may be seen in many English churches.

89. *cream and mantle*, become covered with a stiff surface, like the scum on stagnant water. In *King Lear* (iii. 4. 139) Shakespeare speaks of "the green mantle of the standing pool."

90. *entertain*, 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 "mental conception," "thought." See note on iii. 4. 2.

99. The meaning is that those who heard them speak would be tempted to call them fools, and hence incur the penalty threatened in Scripture (*Matt.* v. 22). No subject of the verb "would . . . damn" is expressed. What would it be if supplied?

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." See *New Eng. Dict.*, s. v. *moe* and *more*.

124. *something*, used adverbially = "somewhat," as in line 129. *port*. See Glossary. The word comes from Latin *porto*, "I bear or carry." What other English words of about the same meaning contain the same metaphor? See another use of it in iii. 2. 284.

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

137. *to stand within the eye of honor*, means "to be within honor's range of vision." 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 school-boy that hath lost his ABC;" *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

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

143. *adventuring*, sending forth on a venture or enterprise; venturing, risking.

144. *proof*, a case drawn from common experience; a test-case, an example.

145. *innocence*, childlike simplicity.

150. "I have no doubt, from the way in which I mean to watch the aim, that I shall either find both or," etc.

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.

The use of the correlatives *or . . . or* where we should now use *either . . . or* can be observed in a number of other passages in the play.

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

156. "In calling into question my willingness to serve you with all that I have."

161. *richly left*, left with a rich inheritance.

166. *Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia*, a clear reference to Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Life of Brutus*, wherein Portia 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 Cæsar* 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," etc.

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. 244.

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?

184. *question*, doubt (as in line 156).

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.

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

8. There is a play here between two words, spelled 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. *mæne*, wicked. "Mean," in the phrase "to be seated in the *mean*," = middle or moderate, between two extremes, and comes from the French *moven*, the Lat. *medianus*.

In line 27 there is a play of another kind, namely, on two different meanings of the same word, "will," as again in v. 1. 136, 137, on two meanings of "bound."

Such puns 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*."

10. *Competency*, wealth just competent for one's needs.

14. *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.

20. *Such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple*. There was a proverb in Shakespeare's

time to the effect that one should not set a cripple to catch hares. It was often illustrated in books of "Emblems," in which proverbs or moral maxims were provided with word-cuts, and Shakespeare may have learned it from such a book.

41. *level at*, aim at, guess.

49. *County Palatine*. "County" for "Count," as often in Shakespeare ("Princes and Counties," *Much Ado About Nothing*, iv. 1. 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.

51. *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.

53. *weeping philosopher*, a name traditionally given to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, in contrast to the "laugher," Democritus.

58. *by*, about, concerning.

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

75. *Latin* was still a "living language," or at least 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.

77. *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."

80. *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.

83. *Scottish lord*. Altered from the reading in the text, which is that of the 1600 editions, to "other lord" in the First Folio (1623). A Scottish king, James I, had in the meantime (namely in 1603) come to the throne of England, and many Scotch noble-

men came to London in his train. Hence, probably, the change in the Folio. In Sir Walter Scott's novel *The Fortunes of Nigel* the hero is a Scotchman who reached London in this way.

88. *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.

104. *Rhenish wine*, a white wine like the modern hock, grown in the valley of the Rhine. Cf. iii. 1. 44.

114. *imposition*, conditions laid down.

116. *Sibylla*. The Sibyl is used here as a proverbial type of old age in woman, as Nestor in scene 1 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 underworld, 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.

123. *in your father's time*, seems to imply that 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.

135. *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 in F 1. 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 minutiae, on the part of editors and printers.

146. *whiles*, while; *-s* or *-es* (sometimes written *-ce*) is still common ending of adverbs in English, as in *needs*, *once*, *since*, etc., but less common than it was in an earlier period of the language.

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 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. 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.

The "get up" of Edwin Booth, the famous 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 color. 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 color. . . . Head gray and pretty bald; beard of same color 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."

12. *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."

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

18. *bound to Tripolis*. Applied to ships, *bound* means "ready to go," "fit for sea," and was in Middle English spelled *boun* or *boun*, the final *d* being an "excrescence." In general, it means "prepared," "ready," and in its origin is different from the word *bound* used in l. 5 above, though in actual use the two are often confused.

Tripolis, not the city in Barbary in N. Africa (as is clear from a comparison with iii. 2. 271 and 272), but the seaport in Syria, a little to the northeast of Beyrout. The African Tripolis was chiefly famous for its pirates, though there was some little trade with it in oil. 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.

19. *the Indies*, i.e. the American Indies, as in Maria's famous simile in *Twelfth Night*, iii. 2. 84: "He does smile his face into

more lines than is in the new map with the augmentation of the Indies."

20. *The Rialto*, the "bourse," or "exchange" in Venice, a stately building in which merchants gathered daily — as in the exchanges of modern cities — to effect the financial and commercial transactions of a great trading center. It took its name from the island on which it stood.

21. *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.

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

30. *assured*. In Shylock's use of the word there is allusion to the technical meaning in finance. 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.

35. *Nazarite*, for Nazarene, or inhabitant of Nazareth. So in all translations of the Bible down to the Authorized Version of 1611. What incident in the New Testament is here alluded to?

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

42. *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. As to the substantive, Shylock's use of it as a term of contempt reveals that he himself is a high-born Jew and proud of his position.

47. *upon the hip*, a metaphor from a wrestling-bout.

52. *interest*. The word has the same bad associations that *usury* still has, for it was regarded as unnatural and wicked to earn money by lending money. See the essay *Of Usury* in Bacon's *Essays*.

60. *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 the subject of "rest," as in "God rest you merry" (*As You Like It*, v. 1. 65), where "rest" has the sense of "keep."

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

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

82. *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," etc. Compare *Macbeth*, iii. 6. 41, and *Julius Cæsar*, i. 2. 267.

92. *This was a venture*. Antonio's argument (certainly not a strange one) is that whatever is produced by nature — animals, grain, etc. — is a proper source of profit for business, but that money, which is a mere medium of exchange — "barren metal" — has in itself no capacity for growth, and should not increase itself. This prejudice, which explains the opposition to the taking of interest (see note on l. 52, above), was as old as the Greeks, and did not disappear until the modern system of doing business on credit had been fully developed.

99. Another of the many references to the Bible in this play. On what occasion, in New Testament history, did the devil "cite Scripture for his purpose"?

100. *holy witness*, sacred authority or testimony.

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

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

120. *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 was originally a true singular, from French "richesse"). In support of this compare "thus much moneys" in line 130 below.

137. *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, § 249, where, however, a different explanation of this passage is given.

143. *This were kindness*, i.e. it would be if Shylock really meant it as such.

146. *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.

150. *equal pound*, exact pound.

162. *dealings teaches*. An Early English third person plural inflection in *-s* still occasionally appears in Elizabethan English, as here.

167. *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. 33, and ii. 9. 49.

168. *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 quite fixed in Shakespeare's time, whatever be said in the famous passage at the opening of Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

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

176. *fearful*, untrustworthy, giving occasion for fear.

ACT II—SCENE 1

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 F 1 edition begins "Enter Morochus a tawnie Moore all in white, and three or foure 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 during a great part of the Middle Ages, and the Mahometan warriors were still a peril to Europe in Shakespeare's time. Lepanto, the battle in which 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 *Othello*, the "Moor of Venice." His words have a fine rolling rhythm, his style has a Southern gaudiness of color.

1. *complexion*: to be pronounced as four syllables (com-plex-ion). See below, Appendix C.

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

8. *aspect*: to be pronounced with the accent on the second syllable, as in i. 1. 54.

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."

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 Solymán*, 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" (see below, Appendix A). Quartos and Folios have "rage."

43. Scan the line.

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. 296—

"The best condition'd and unwearied spirit,"

and *Measure for Measure*, iv. 6. 13—

"The generous and gravest citizens."

(See Abbott, § 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 humor. His country appetite and power of sleeping, his untiring spirits and broad outspokenness prove him a "clown" as compared with the courtly attendants of Portia.

1. It looks as if there should be a "not" before "serve." (Halliwell.) But perhaps the meaning is that my conscience will serve me *ill* — punish me — if I do this unscrupulous thing.

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

25. *God bless the mark*. — This phrase, often used by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, is usually meant as an apology for an oath or some dangerous expression. Perhaps the speaker crosses himself as he says it.

27. *saving your reverence* = *salva reverentia*, i.e. if I may say so without offence.

29. *incarnal*. Launcelot has not got quite the right word here. Compare "confusions" in 38, "frutify" in 142, and "impertinent" in 146. His father has an equal difficulty with words from the Latin, such as "infection" and "defect." Mistakes of this sort (now sometimes called "malapropisms," from Mrs. Malaprop, a character in Sheridan's *The Rivals*) were particularly rife in Shakespeare's time, when new words from other languages, especially Latin, were pouring into the vocabulary of English.

37. *sand-blind*, lit. half-blind (O. E. *sám-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."

55. *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," etc.). Old Gobbo utters just such another in line 73 below.

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

64. *The Sisters Three*, i.e. the three Fates.

99. *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.

110. *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.)

115. *give me your present to one Master Bassanio*. For this use of "me," cf. i. 3. 82, 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. 1. 1), and is somewhat like the common Latin use known as the "ethical dative."

119. *to him, father*. The verb of motion is often omitted in such phrases, especially in the imperative mood. So "Father, in," in line 165, and in the infinitive mood,

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

122. *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*, Traill, vol. iii, p. 392 of the 1895 edition, following the passage in Harrison, cited above, i. 1. 70.)

155. *preferr'd*, recommended for appointment or promotion. Later in the line, *preferment* means merely "promotion."

158. *The old proverb*, i.e. as Staunton pointed out, "God's grace is gear enough."

parted, i.e. divided.

164. *more guarded*, with more facings or colored 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."

167. *table*, a term of "chirromancy," the magic art which foretells a person's future from the lines on his hand. "Table" means the palm of the hand extended. Of course the sentence makes nonsense. Like many other people whose brains are muddled or untrained, Launcelot is led away from the correct conclusion of his statement by other phrases that come into his head.

169. *a simple line of life*: "simple" is sarcastic, of course; "line of life" is the main line across the hand.

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

181. *hie thee*. The "thee" is reflexively used.

183. 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, etc.

189. *hear thee, Gratiano*. In this case the "thee" cannot be reflexive, as in 181 above. It stands for "thou," as in such phrases as "fare thee well," "look thee here," "stand thee by," etc.

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*.

191. *Parts*, i.e. qualities.

194. *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.

How many syllables must be pronounced in *liberal* in order to read the line metrically? How many in *spirit* two lines below?

205. *sad ostent*, serious behavior.

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. He is here either aping the courtly manners of the "gentlemen" of the play, or echoing the noble language that he has heard in the theatre.

19. *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 toward his neighbors.

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 "be-fall," "long" for "belong," "friend" for "befriend," etc. often in Shakespeare. (See Abbott, § 460.)

"Us" is the *dative* of the pronoun. For the use of "of," compare below, iv. 1. 402 —

"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 30.

7. *undertook*. In a passage in *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare uses "underta'en." In many verbs two alternative forms of the past participle were in use side by side. The same thing is true of the past tense also (see "writ," for instance, in lines 13 and 14 below). The language was much less fixed in Shakespeare's time than it is now.

24. *provided of a torchbearer*. Another obsolete use of the preposition, exactly paralleled in *Macbeth*, i. 2. 13 —

"Supplied of kerns and gallowglasses."

See above, note on l. 5, and compare scene 5, l. 37.

32. *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.

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

38. *faithless*, unbelieving.

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 the preposition *of*. 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.)

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 led 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.

Which word in line 15 must be slurred somewhat for the sake of the metre?

16. *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 favor but for the grotesque and grim

"For I did dream of money-bags to-night."

17. *towards my rest*, affecting my peace and happiness.

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

25. *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." — *Stov.* (See note in Furness.)

28. *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. The play performed on such occasions or on similar occasions of courtly festivity came finally to be known specifically as a "masque." Milton's *Comus*, for instance, is so designated.

30. *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 Riche's (1616) *Aphorismes*: "A fife is a wry-neckt musician, for he always looks away from his instrument."

31. *clamber*. The small old-fashioned window would be high up on the wall, just under the ceiling, and might have a high window seat below it.

33. *varnish'd*, painted, or disguised.

36. *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."