

the spirit of all Portia's plans and shares in the fun which is created by the Rings' Episode in the last Act of the play.

Salarino and Salanio. Of these two characters all that can be said is that they are lively talkative "gossips," who are keenly interested in the fortunes of Antonio and Bassanio. They do not take any important part in the action, but their gossip helps to show the turn that events are taking and we are able to judge by their feelings how the dramatist wishes the audience to view the incidents in the play.

Launcelot Gobbo does not belong to the class of professional jesters. He is merely a serving-man who is a mixture of ignorance and buffoonery. His humour consists chiefly in his misuse of words and his fondness for using high-sounding expressions which have little or no meaning. Much of the amusement which the audience derives from Launcelot depends upon the buffoonery of the actor, who helps out Launcelot's words by gestures and actions which are equally ludicrous.

Time Analysis.

The action of *The Merchant of Venice* covers a period of a little over three months. In the first scene Antonio sends Bassanio out to borrow the money which he requires in order to prosecute his suit with Portia. Bassanio, no doubt, goes at once to Shylock, and at the close of the First Act the bond is signed. About the middle of Act III. we learn that the three months have expired, and that the bond has become forfeit. Bassanio at once sets out for Venice, and Portia follows on the same day. The trial, no doubt, takes place on the day following. Bassanio remains overnight at Antonio's house, and in the meantime Portia and Nerissa make their way leisurely homeward. The following evening they arrive at Belmont.

It is evident that the chief difficulty regarding the time element in the play lies in the necessity of making the audience feel that three months have actually passed between the time when the bond is signed in Act I., and the time when it falls due in Act III. In order to give the impression of the passage of time, Shakespeare employs two devices. In the first place he engages the attention of the audience by a series of