

At the beginning of the scene it is evident that Shylock has no definite idea of how he can turn this opportunity to advantage; and when Antonio urges his request, Shylock reproaches him with the indignities which he has suffered from Antonio in the past. It is evidently Antonio's reply,

"If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
As to thy friends; for when did friendship take
A breed of barren metal of his friend?"

that gives Shylock the idea of taking interest in the form of a pound of flesh; for at once his whole tone changes and he attempts to disarm the suspicion of Antonio and Bassanio by speaking of the bond as a piece of "merry sport," and by assuring them that he wishes to buy the friendship of Antonio by lending him the money free of interest.

In the scenes in which Shylock next appears in the play, we are given some insight into the character of his home life,—and we are left to judge how hard and sordid that home life must be. Jessica in speaking of her home says, "Our house is hell"; and Launcelot declares that he is famished in Shylock's service. When Shylock is about to set forth for supper, the directions which he gives to Jessica show how dull and narrow is the life which he forces her to lead; and his parting threat, "Perhaps I will return immediately," shows the atmosphere of mean suspicion in which his household lives.

In the beginning of Act III. we see Shylock again after he has learned of Jessica's elopement with Lorenzo, and just at the moment when further news is brought regarding Antonio's misfortunes. There is little need to analyse this scene to show the effect of these two incidents in arousing the passions of Shylock,—his hatred of the Christians, his grief over his losses, his eagerness for revenge, mingled with his blind fury at the flight of his daughter and his despair when he learns of the loss of his turquoise which had been given him by his dead wife Leah. It is probable that when Shylock first proposed the bond he intended only to humiliate Antonio; but he is goaded by these losses as well as by the taunts of his enemies, to a frenzy which can be satisfied only by the life of Antonio. And Shakespeare has taken care to show that in this passion for revenge Shylock is only human. There are few passages