

the play closes it furnishes an indisputable proof to Bassanio and Gratiano that Portia and Nerissa were in reality judge and clerk at the trial.

To sum up, then, we have in the first half of the play the development of the caskets story and the bond story, both growing out of Bassanio's loss of fortune; and these stories are closely connected, not only by the common interests of Bassanio and Antonio, but by the subordinate incidents in the play, and in particular by the story of Lorenzo and Jessica. The two main stories reach their crisis in the middle of the play; and the success of Bassanio in the choice of the caskets brings with it also a solution of the difficulty in the bond story, inasmuch as it makes it possible for Portia to act as judge at the trial of Antonio. The arrival of Lorenzo and Jessica at Belmont makes it easier for Portia to carry out her plan; and at the same time Lorenzo and Jessica are, as it were, a sort of compensation for Shylock when sentence is pronounced upon him at the close of the trial. The Rings' Episode with which the story concludes, provides a happy ending for the play, and at the same time furnishes proof that Portia and Nerissa have indeed been present as judge and clerk respectively at the trial of Antonio.

Sources of Interest in the Play.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, as in other dramas, the main sources of interest lie in the development of plot and the portrayal of character. But aside from these general sources of interest the dramatist has used special means to arouse and hold the attention of the audience.

Unusual Situations and Incidents. In the first place, many of the situations or incidents in the play are in themselves so unusual or so picturesque as to awaken and hold the interest. To begin with, the bargain between Antonio and Shylock in which a pound of flesh is named as the forfeiture is sufficiently strange to challenge the attention. In the Second Act the masque forms a picturesque setting for the elopement of Lorenzo and Jessica. Nothing could be more romantic than the method by which Portia is to be won, and the choice of the caskets is made all the more striking by the fact that one of the suitors is "a tawny Moor" and another a broken-down