

simultaneously with the success of Bassanio comes the news that Antonio's bond is forfeit.

In the meantime, however, the dramatist has made use of special means to maintain a close connection between the two stories. To begin with, the clown, Launcelot Gobbo, who has been employed by Shylock, enters the service of Bassanio, and Shylock is glad to part with him because he will help to waste Bassanio's borrowed purse. At the same time, too, Shylock has been "bid forth to supper" by Bassanio, and he goes in hate to feed upon the prodigal Christian. Lorenzo, the guest of Bassanio, has in the meantime fallen in love with Shylock's daughter Jessica; and the intrigue of the lovers is a means of connecting the two stories. And finally the flight of Jessica with a Christian and with a friend of Bassanio, and her theft of ducats and jewels, has the effect of enraging Shylock still further against Antonio, so as to make it certain that if the bond should fall due, he will exact the forfeiture.

The crises of the two stories meet, as we have seen, in the centre of the play; and as a result of the good judgment of Bassanio the problem of the caskets is successfully solved. The latter half of the play is then devoted mainly to the solution of the problem which the bond story presents. And now just as in the first half of the play Bassanio's need of money has helped to bring about the crisis in the affairs of Antonio,—so in the second half of the play his success in the choice of the caskets proves to be the means by which Antonio is rescued from his perilous position. Portia, now having the interests of Bassanio at heart, devises and carries out the plan by which Shylock is cheated of his revenge. At the same time, in order to preserve the balance of the play, Lorenzo and Jessica and Launcelot are transferred from Venice to Belmont, and their arrival just at the opportune time makes it easier for Portia to carry out her plans. At the close of the Trial Scene, furthermore, the audience are reconciled all the more readily to the punishment that is meted out to Shylock, when it is remembered that Lorenzo and Jessica are to benefit by the deed of gift which Shylock is forced to draw up in their favour. The Rings' Episode with which the play concludes is not so essential to the main plot as the Jessica story; but it serves to relieve the intense strain of the latter half of the play: and besides as