

SHYLOCK.

While Portia is justly considered the beauty of the play, "Merchant of Venice," the character of Shylock is universally looked upon as the strength of it. His life is a typical representative of the race to which he belongs, which from times of Biblical history has never ceased to meet with the severest hostility, but which no public sentiment will ever subdue.

Avarice, the characteristic passion of his people, together with revenge, as the state of soul in which he mainly lived. Altogether thoroughly and intensively Jewish, he is not more a Jew than he is Shylock; aside from his Jewish peculiarities we now and then get a glimpse of the inmost man himself. A bit of originality and genius manifests itself in his periodic peals of sarcastic humor, but as a whole it is the disposition of one, so to speak, soured against the world.

In every scene in which he appears he is the central figure, and in no two scenes do we find him, in every sense of the word, like himself, but consecutively setting forth different phases of his character. His self-possession and coolness is well displayed in the scene with Antonio and Bassanio when he is solicited for the loan of 3000 ducats, and his inhuman and diabolical nature which prompts these things is still better shown if possible in his communication with Salino and Salarine when first he makes known his intention of exacting the bond. It even appears that he was aware of the probable loss of Antonio and might have resolved to use his cunning to that purpose; for it would seem very unnatural for this man to grasp so eagerly at so bare a possibility of revenge. However the general impression of the play is that he simply lent the amount to Antonio, a Christian enemy, on the mere chance of obtaining the forfeiture.

He shows with what hatred he regards the Christians in