

# Harley the Hypnotist.

By WALFORD BODIE.

Nearly everyone has either seen or read Shakespeare's famous play "The Merchant of Venice." Its principal character, Shylock, was Irving's favourite part. Tree and others of our great living actors have played it. This story deals with an unrehearsed, but extraordinarily dramatic rendering of the part, and will doubtless cause much discussion in theatrical circles.

## VIII.—The Soul of Shylock.

**I** HAVE been reading 'Trilby' again," observed Walton White abruptly, after a pause in the conversation.

"Indeed?" questioned Harley.

Walton White was a young actor whose impersonations of some of Shakespeare's characters had attracted considerable attention. Harley's acquaintanceship with him was but slight, and he had been somewhat surprised at receiving a call from him. So far the talk had been quite general. Now Harley wondered whether the reference to "Trilby" were intended as a lead-up to the object of the visit.

"A remarkable book," continued White. "Of course you have read it?"

"Of course," replied Harley. "Who has not at some time or other?"

"Do you remember the description of Trilby's first appearance in Paris as a singer?"

"I do," said Harley. "It is very graphic. The tall, statue-like form of the girl stands in front of the platform. Her hands are clasped behind her; her thick hair lies loose on her shoulders. Her eyes are fixed on Svengali, who faces her with uplifted baton. Her lips smile—the innocent, unreasoning smile of a child. Then she—the girl who in her natural state does not know one note from another—breaks into glorious song. Yet she is simply a singing machine—a voice and nothing more—an automaton controlled by the mind of Svengali."

"But is it possible?" asked White. "Do you think a hypnotist could really do that with his subject?"

Harley reflected for a few moments and then said:

"I do, given that the subject is possessed of a phenomenal voice, and that the hypnotist has full control over her and also has

the art of the musician. It is a similar sort of thing to the dream dancing at some of the variety theatres recently. I have inquired very carefully into one or two cases. They are genuine enough. The dancer has the natural gift for dancing; the hypnotist gives it the necessary artistic form."

"It is all very mysterious to me," said White. "Will you pardon my asking you, Mr. Harley, if you have ever done anything of the same kind yourself?"

"Not exactly," replied Harley with a smile. "And yet—and yet—there was the case of Fräulein Varnhagen."

"What was that?" questioned White eagerly.

"A very simple affair. She herself has spoken of it to many people, and there can be no objection to my mentioning it to you. You have heard of her, of course?"

"You mean Fräulein Varnhagen, the violinist?"

Harley nodded, and continued:

"I met her at Vienna a couple of years ago. She had not then begun her public career. Indeed, it seemed that such a career was impossible for her. She was a fine violinist, with the true, passionate feeling for music. But she was weirdly self-conscious. She could play to herself or to her intimate friends, but not to the public. The glare of the lights, the multitude of people, the very atmosphere of the concert hall, unnerved her. On the only occasion on which she attempted the task, she burst into tears and fled from the platform."

"I understand," said White. "What we actors call stage fright?"

"Exactly. And I cured her of it by the aid of hypnotism. With her consent

I placed her in a trance. Then I gave her the suggestion that always when she stepped on to a concert platform she was to think of nothing except her violin and the music it was to play."

"And has the suggestion been successful?"

"Quite. When recently she gave a series of recitals at the Queen's Hall, several of the critics remarked on her complete freedom from any form of self-consciousness."

"Marvellous!" commented Walton White. Then he knit his brows, and appeared to be making up his mind as to something. Harley waited for his next words with considerable curiosity, feeling that they would probably touch on the object of his visit. They did.

"It was about hypnotism that I came to see you," said White at last.

"I guessed so when you turned the conversation on to the subject of 'Trilby,'" replied Harley. "That book has done more perhaps than anything else to acquaint English-speaking people with the possibilities of the science. I gather that you want me as a hypnotist to help you in some way or other. Surely you are not suffering from Fräulein Varnhagen's complaint?"

"Stage fright? Yes. But in a different form."

"Please explain."

Again Walton White knit his brows. For some moments he was silent. Then he said:

"To-morrow night I am to play Shylock for the first time. Ever since I became an actor I have wanted to appear in the part. Yet now the chance has come I am afraid. I cannot get a firm grip of the part. My conception of it changes at every rehearsal."

"You have studied the renderings given by other actors?" questioned Harley.

"All of which there is any record. Those, for instance, of Burbage, Doggett, Macklin, Kean, and Irving. They differ greatly, ranging through the emotions from the noisy mirth of Doggett to the silent agony of Irving. Sometimes I incline to one, and sometimes to another."

"But have you no personal views—no intuitive realisation of the man Shylock?"

"I have. And that is just the difficulty. You know, Mr. Harley, that, although for stage purposes I have taken an English name, I am a Jew?"

Harley nodded. The fact was evident. Walton White had well-defined Jewish features, and the intelligent, emotional expression common to the educated of that race

"And as a Jew," continued White. "I realise Shylock from a Jewish point of view. To me he is not a villain. He is a hero—the champion of his race. The memory of centuries of wrong is always with him. He hates the Christians with a whole-hearted hatred. And naturally so. For the Christians have beaten, and robbed, and spat upon the chosen people. Shall he not take vengeance? Shall he not catch one of them upon the hip? Shall he not feed fat the ancient grudge? Yes, yes, yes! It is his right by law of God and law of man."

Walton White spoke with deep feeling. His words stirred Harley strangely.

"Why," he cried in reply to them, "you have your conception there. Play Shylock in that spirit, and you will triumph."

"It is in that spirit that I want to play it. But I am afraid I shall not be able to."

"Why not?"

"Because my audience will expect the traditional Shylock, and will not understand another. The knowledge of that will be fatal to me."

"You mean that it will prevent your doing justice to your conception of the part?"

"Yes. I shall be thinking of the effect I am producing on the audience. If I am not in touch with them, and they with me, I shall fail. For, like your Fräulein Varnhagen, I am naturally very self-conscious."

"And," said Harley, "you wish me to give you a similar hypnotic suggestion to the one I gave her?"

"Yes," replied White. "A suggestion which will enable me to be alone with my conception of the part to-morrow night."

Harley thought for a few moments, and then said:

"I will give you such a suggestion. Have you ever been hypnotised before?"

"Never."

"Still I think you will make a good subject," said Harley. "You have the nervous, artistic temperament which is peculiarly susceptible to the influence. Now, if you please, just look into my eyes and give up your mind to mine."

Walton White obeyed, and very soon passed into the hypnotic sleep. Again Harley meditated. What form should the suggestion take? Should it be simple as in the case of Fräulein Varnhagen? Or should it be something bigger and bolder? Presently, making up his mind, he bent over the sleeper and said:

"Listen to me."

"I am listening," replied the actor.

"To-morrow night you are to take the part of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*."

"I am."

"The Shylock you will play will be a man with three consuming passions in life—greed of money, love of his daughter, hatred of the Christian race. From the moment you step on to the stage you will be such a man. You will not simply act the character; you will be the character himself. The rich Venetian Jew, with cunning thoughts and fierce instincts, will live again. The soul which will animate you will be the soul of Shylock."

"It will be the soul of Shylock," assented Walton White.

"You will suffer as he suffered. The bitter memory of the long oppression of the Jewish race will be yours as it was his. The greed—the love—the hatred—you will feel them all. Antonio will be the fawning publican whom you long to catch upon the hip. The bond, with its forfeit of a pound of flesh, will be a grim truth to you. Which of the three passions will be the strongest your soul must decide. And your soul will be the soul of Shylock."

"It will be the soul of Shylock," repeated Walton White.

Harley now proceeded to make the reverse passes, and presently White awakened from his sleep. He looked about him wonderingly; and then, recollecting what he had asked Harley to do, said:

"Is it done? Have you given me the suggestion?"

"Yes," replied Harley gravely. "You need no longer fear that you will be troubled with self-consciousness to-morrow night. So far as you are concerned the audience will not exist. You will be alone with your conception of the part."

"I am grateful to you."

"And I to you," concluded Harley. "The experiment, whether considered from the hypnotic or the dramatic point of view, interests me very much. I shall be at the theatre to watch its development."

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The curtain rose on *The Merchant of Venice* to the usual packed first-night audience. Harley was seated in the front of the stalls. He watched the progress of the first two scenes with little interest, and waited impatiently for the appearance of Shylock.

At last the third scene opens. It is a public place in picturesque Venice. In the background is a white marble palace. At

the side is a quay, with porters lading goods. And beyond that is a glimpse of the blue water of a canal.

Shylock enters. His dress is the traditional one—a gabardine with flowing sleeves and hood, Venetian slippers, a three-cornered red hat, jewelled rings in his ears and on his thumbs. He is a man of between fifty and sixty years of age, with black hair turning grey. His face is sallow and harsh. He walks slowly, and with bowed shoulders. A figure of humility. Yet there is strength in the lines of his features, pride in the expression of his eyes, and a certain dignity in his whole aspect.

He speaks:

*Three thousand ducats; well?*

Harley nods approvingly as Walton White utters the words. They come from his lips slowly, as if laden with much thought. It is the soul of Shylock speaking. *Three thousand ducats; well?* Shylock leans forward on his stick, and gazes askance at Bassanio. The greed of money and the hatred of the Christian race are both in that glance. *Three thousand ducats; well?* Each syllable seems fraught with meaning. What is in the Jew's soul? Does he already venture his gold against the pound of flesh?

The talk between Shylock and Bassanio proceeds. With the entry of Antonio comes the full expression of the hate. He is the merchant who wishes to borrow the three thousand ducats. Fire is in Shylock's eyes, ferocity in his voice, as he talks with him. He is reflecting that Antonio is the chiefest of his Christian enemies.

Presently the idea of the bond, with its forfeit of a pound of flesh if the money is not duly repaid, possesses him fully. He gloats over it. He justifies it by the recollection of the insults he has suffered from this man who now comes to him for a loan. Has not Antonio many times rated him in the Rialto, spat upon him, and called him dog and cur?

Shylock bites viciously on the epithets. The dog, the cur—is thinking of venegance. But he must proceed warily. He must not disclose the purpose which is in his soul. The pit is dug full deep. But he must lead his enemy to it cunningly. What better than to speak of his purpose as a jest?

*Go with me to a notary; seal me there*

*Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,*

*If you repay me not on such a day,*

*In such a place, such sum or sums as are*

*Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit*

*Be nominated for an equal pound  
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken  
In what part of your body pleaseth me.*

Bassanio objects to the terms of the bond. But with fair words Shylock persuades Antonio to agree. His soul exults. In imagination he already bares the knife and cuts into the hated flesh. But still he dissembles. There is humility, and only humility, in his bow as he turns away to get the ducats. The scene ends.

As the curtain fell, Harley again nodded approvingly. Then he turned to a dramatic critic who was seated next to him, and said:

"What do you think of Walton White's rendering of the part?"

"Great!" was the enthusiastic reply. "He is the very Jew that Shakespeare drew."

Harley smiled; for he felt that he himself had assisted to draw the character as it was being presented that evening.

The play proceeds. Shylock enters again. He stands before his house—a dull, substantial-looking building—a fitting abode for him who dreams of money-bags. Now the third great passion of the man is to manifest itself. He summons his daughter:

*What, Jessica! What, Jessica!  
Why, Jessica, I say!*

There is music in the words. The man loves his daughter. She is his only child. His soul rejoices in her. He rates and storms at her; but always he loves her. Soon she is to be stolen from him. Already the plot is laid.

Presently the plot succeeds. Jessica elopes with a Christian, taking part of her father's wealth with her as a dowry. Shylock decides to exact vengeance from another Christian. Antonio is undone. His argosies have sunk with all their precious burden. He will not be able to meet the bond. Joy for the losses of Antonio, grief for his daughter, mingle in Shylock's soul. The thought of vengeance is sweet balm. He makes arrangement for the immediate arrest of Antonio in the event of his incurring the forfeit of the pound of flesh.

The play proceeds. Antonio has failed to repay the three thousand ducats on the appointed day, and has been cast into prison. Shylock exults. The time for which he has planned so cunningly has come. Shall he not now feed fat the ancient grudge? The God of his fathers has delivered the Christian up to him.

Antonio pleads for mercy. Shylock scorns

him. His shoulders straighten, his eyes flash, his finger wags the air, as he says:

*I'll have my bond; I will not hear thee speak.  
I'll have my bond; and therefore speak no more.*

At the end of the act Harley left his seat and went round to the back of the theatre. The experiment was succeeding admirably, and he wished to congratulate Walton White. He inquired for him at the stage door, and was taken up to his dressing-room. But White was not there.

"There's something wrong with him to-night, sir," said the dresser. "He won't leave the stage; he's in the wings now, waiting for his next call. And he won't speak to anybody. He looked at me when I went to him a minute ago as if he didn't even know me."

"Take me to him, please," said Harley.

"Very well, sir."

In spite of what he had just heard from the dresser, in spite of what he had expected as the result of the hypnotic suggestion, Harley was startled by the aspect of Walton White. He was standing in a corner, with bowed head and distorted face. His lips were moving and uttering whispered words—sometimes in Hebrew and sometimes in English. Harley leant towards him and heard:

"My daughter—oh, my daughter! The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it till now. I would my daughter were dead at my feet, instead of in her lover's arms. But Antonio shall pay for all. A pound of flesh next his Christian heart. My daughter—oh, my daughter!"

Then followed an even wilder outburst in Hebrew. The soul of Shylock was speaking in its own language.

"He has been like this all the evening," said the dresser. "At first it was only the three thousand ducats and the bonds. Now it is his daughter as well. He's fair wandering in his mind. Suppose you try to rouse him, sir?"

Harley touched the actor's arm, and said:

"I have come round to congratulate you. You are giving a splendid performance of the part."

White looked at him vacantly, and repeated:

"My daughter—oh, my daughter! But Antonio shall pay for all. A pound of flesh next his Christian heart. Give me the knife!"

Harley shrugged his shoulders and turned away. The experiment was developing

strangely. But it must go on. The soul which animated Walton White was in truth the soul of Shylock. For once an actor was fully realising a part. The Venetian Jew lived again. Yes, the experiment must certainly go on.

With this decision fixed in his mind, Harley went back to his seat in the front of the house. Soon the curtain rises on the next act. The scene is the Venetian Court of Justice—an apartment richly furnished, and decorated with portraits of dead Magnificoes. Shylock enters. The Duke bids the court officers bring him forward.

Shylock bows humbly before the chair of state. Then he stands erect, as a man demanding justice and knowing that his cause is just. The Duke asks him to show mercy to Antonio. Shylock listens with a sullen solemnity of deportment. There is no room for mercy in his soul. He gives his answer :

*I have possessed your Grace of what I purpose ;*

*And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn*

*To have the due and forfeit of my bond ;*

*If you deny it, let the danger light*

*Upon your charter and your city's freedom.*

Antonio and Bassanio speak. Antonio is resigned. He realises that he is in the pit he himself has helped to dig, and that there is no hope of escape. But Bassanio fights for him manfully. He offers the Jew six thousand ducats for the three thousand he lent.

Shylock replies that he will not accept six times six thousand. The pound of flesh is his and he will have it. He stands firm on his legal rights.

Portia enters. Shylock eyes her with distrust, as intruding between him and justice. She tells him he must be merciful. He demands why. She speaks of the quality of mercy that is not strained, but droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven upon the place beneath. He looks away from her. The dull ferocity of his expression is not softened one whit by her eloquence.

At last she is forced to admit his right to exact the pound of flesh. He praises her as a wise young judge—a Daniel come to judgment. Yet again she pleads with him. He listens, with a face of iron and the eyes of a relentless savage. Like the figure of Fate he confronts her, and replies that he has an oath in Heaven and will not lay perjury upon his soul. There is no power in the tongue of man that can alter his determination.

Portia gives judgment. She bids Antonio bare his bosom for the knife. "Nearest his heart," insists Shylock. He whets the knife with fiendish eagerness. At last his soul is to be satisfied. It cries out for the actual moment.

Antonio bids farewell to Bassanio. Shylock is consumed with impatience. He hopes that the sentence may be carried out without further delay.

But now there is a sudden change in the appearance of Portia. All the gentleness, all the pleading, leave her face. She is as stern as Shylock himself, as she says :

*Tarry a little ; there is something else.*

*This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood,*

*The words expressly are "a pound of flesh."*

*Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh ;*

*But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed*

*One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods*

*Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscated*

*Unto the State of Venice.*

Shylock listens with an intense earnestness. As she concludes, he demands :

*Is that the law ?*

She replies :

*Thyself shalt see the act ;*

*For, as thou urgest justice, be assured*

*Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desirest.*

And one of the bystanders adds :

*O learned judge ! Mark, Jew, a learned judge !*

Shylock scowls at him. Then he steps back and buries his chin in his hands. Portia and the rest of the players look at him. They are expecting the next words of his part. Harley also looks at him. But he does not know what to expect. For he sees that Shylock's face is lined with deep thought, and that there is perplexity in his eyes. And he realises that a strange thing is happening.

The soul of Shylock is wrestling with a problem. Which is it to choose—vengeance or life and wealth ? Certain remembered words plead for the latter. They are the next words of the part. But it is the soul of Walton White, striving to resume its habitation, which whispers them. Is the hypnotic suggestion strong enough to repel it ? Will the soul of Shylock prevail ? And if so, how will it decide the problem ?

Harley watches and wonders. Suddenly Shylock raises his head. The question is decided. There is to be a change in the play as written by Shakespeare.

Shylock is not to be driven from the judgment seat by this unknown young advocate. He is not to slink from the court, a beaten, broken man. No—vengeance, vengeance, vengeance! He is to triumph over the Christian whatever the cost. With a fierce dramatic gesture he cries:

*I'll take my bond. My lands and goods, my life*

*Itself, can go. I'll take my pound of flesh.*

There is consternation among the players, and among the audience also, as he cries this. Harley hears the prompter whisper excitedly the cue according to the text of *The Merchant of Venice*.

But Shylock does not hear. Hatred of the Christian has overcome his other passions. His soul demands and will have the penalty. Nothing shall come between them. The remembered words are no longer remembered. His lips part and disclose his teeth in a savage grin. He draws the knife back to his elbow, and steps forward towards Antonio.

The consternation grows.

"He is mad," several exclaim, "stark mad!"

One woman screams; another faints. Harley starts up from his seat, with a sudden impulse to intervene. But presently he sinks back again. The experiment must go on. For a space there is silence on the stage. Then, in desperation, Portia begins her next speech according to the text of the play:

*Soft! The Jew shall have all justice; soft, no haste.*

Shylock laughs—a wild, horror-laden laugh. What is the text of the play to him? In a voice which is almost a scream he cries:

*No haste? And I have waited three long months*

*For this my bond. I wait no more. 'Tis now The pound of flesh is mine. And next his heart!*

*At last, oh, God, at last.*

He leaps forward at Antonio. But several of the company have been watching him closely. And now they fling themselves upon him. Bassanio grasps his wrist and struggles for possession of the knife. Shylock foams at the mouth, and shrieks:

*Away! I'll cut the cursed flesh, or die.*

*Most foully wronged am I. Away! 'Tis mine!*

He breaks loose and stabs the air viciously. Blood swims in his eyes. It blinds him, so that he cannot see his enemy. Bassanio

and others close with him again. The knife is taken from him, and he is held by a dozen hands. But still he foams and shrieks. Portia and the Duke make frantic gestures towards the wings. For a moment more the stage is a pandemonium. Then down comes the curtain with a rush. The play is over.

More women in the audience scream and faint. Men gasp interrogations at one another. What does it mean? Only Harley knows. It means that the long-dead Venetian money-lender has lived again that night. It means that the soul of Shylock has been true to itself. It means that the Jew that Shakespeare drew has for once given place to another.

But what of Walton White? What of the actor who has taken part in this extraordinary experiment? How fares he now?

Asking himself these questions, Harley hurried round to the stage door. This time he found considerable difficulty in getting past it. The pandemonium had reached even that part of the theatre, and admittance was being refused to everybody. But at last he succeeded, and again penetrated to Walton White's dressing-room.

It was thickly populated. White himself was stretched out in an easy-chair. He was still in the costume of Shylock. But his gabardine had been torn in the struggle on the stage, and his wig was dishevelled, and the make-up of his face stained with tears. Leaning over him, a hand on his pulse, was a doctor who had been hastily summoned. The manager of the theatre and a number of the actors and actresses were looking on anxiously.

"Most foully wronged!" muttered White in agonised tones. "The pound of flesh is mine by all the laws of Venice. Yet am I denied it!"

The doctor stepped away from him, and, with a hopeless gesture, said:

"Absolutely insane! It is the fixed idea, which nothing except time can eradicate. He must be certified to a lunatic asylum."

"He must not!" exclaimed Harley, advancing into the middle of the room.

The doctor swung round indignantly—he was not used to being contradicted in matters that concerned his profession.

"What do you mean, sir?" he demanded. "I have examined this case carefully, and am quite satisfied that my diagnosis is correct. The man is suffering from the delusion that he is Shylock himself."

"I agree with you as to that," replied Harley quietly. "But not as to the necessity for certifying him to an asylum. I am of opinion that in five minutes I can free him from the delusion."

"Impossible!" cried the doctor.

"Will you let me try? He is a friend of mine, and is peculiarly susceptible to my influence. All I ask is that I may be left alone with him. Five minutes should be sufficient. Will you give me that?"

The doctor looked at him doubtfully. He knew nothing of Harley the Hypnotist. For the matter of that, he knew very little of hypnotism and the possibilities of hypnotism. But the woman who was playing Portia did.

"Give him the five minutes," she exclaimed. "He is the Mr. Harley who does such extraordinary things. Fraulein Varnhagen was talking about him to me only the other day. Let him try. Perhaps he can cure poor Walton White."

The manager of the theatre, who was also acquainted with Harley, seconded her proposal. For a few moments the doctor continued to protest. Then, with a shrug of his shoulders, he led the way from the dressing-room. Harley and Walton were alone together.

The hypnotist leant over his subject. But he did not take his pulse as the doctor had done just before; he simply touched his forehead and looked fixedly into his eyes.

"Most foully wronged!" repeated White.

But the words were feebly spoken, and were not followed by others. The brain of Harley was speaking to the brain of White. It was commanding the soul of Shylock to leave its habitation. It was giving a new hypnotic suggestion in place of the old one.

Two of the five minutes passed. Then suddenly Harley laid his hands on the shoulders of the other and shook him to and fro, crying the while:

"Wake, man, wake! Wake, I say!"

White's eyes had closed. Now he opened them, but rubbed them with his hands as if they were dim and could not see. The shadow of the trance was still upon him.

"What—where?" he muttered. "Ah, my dressing-room—and you, Mr. Harley. But—but—has anything happened? Is not this the evening that I am to play the part of Shylock? And to play it according to the hypnotic suggestion you have given me?"

Harley laughed and said:

"You have played it according to that suggestion."

Then, as briefly as possible, he explained to Walton White exactly what had occurred on the stage during the trial scene.

"And the production?" demanded the actor anxiously, all the instincts of his craft aroused. "Is the production spoilt?"

Again Harley laughed.

"No," he replied. "Not spoilt; but made a triumphant success. This production of *The Merchant of Venice* will be remembered when many others are forgotten. The run can last just as long as the manager likes. So long as you are playing Shylock, the public will fill the theatre."

"But," pursued White, "I thought you said the hypnotic suggestion caused me to depart from the text of the play and almost created a panic."

"It did," said Harley, looking at his watch and realising that the five minutes were nearly up. "But it will not do so again. It has been superseded by another suggestion which I have just given you. For the rest of the run you will be possessed by the soul of Shylock just as you have been to-night. But within limits."

"I do not understand," murmured White.

"And yet it is very simple. The limits will be the text of *The Merchant of Venice* play. In future, so far as words and actions are concerned, you will be the Jew that Shakespeare drew. But the great British public will crowd to see you because on just this one occasion you have been the Jew that you and I drew."

"I do not understand," repeated White.

As he uttered the words there was a knock at the door. The five minutes were up, and the doctor had returned prepared to certify his patient to an asylum.

"I will explain more fully later on," whispered Harley to White. "Meanwhile you must rouse yourself and pose before the audience that is now entering, the pose of a man who knows that he has just recovered from a slight brain storm, the pose of an actor who realises that he has acted not wisely but too well."

Walton White rose to his feet and smiled.

"That, at least, I understand," he replied, as the door opened. "I will do what you bid me to the best of my ability."

And presently he was greeting the doctor with apologies for having troubled him, and was exchanging smiles and hand-shakes with Portia, Antonio, and the other members of the company. It was evident to all that the delusion had gone.