

unwearied spirit in doing courtesies," and Lorenzo in speaking to Portia regarding him assures her that he is one to whom she might be proud to send relief. In the beginning of the play he is represented as being overcome by an unaccountable sadness, and his mood throughout the drama is naturally not a cheerful one; but in his friendship for Bassanio he gives evidence of a self-sacrificing generosity which in itself justifies the admiration and affection of his friends.

Portia. It would be difficult to give a better summary of the qualities of Portia than that uttered by Bassanio when he describes her as "fair, and fairer than that word, of wondrous virtues." But to understand fully what these "wondrous virtues" are, it will be necessary to see Portia herself as she appears in the different scenes in the play. In the conversation with Nerissa (Act I., Scene II.), in which the different suitors are described, it is her keenness of intellect, and the play of wit and humour, that attracts us most strongly; but at the same time beneath this playful exterior we feel that there is an undercurrent of seriousness, and that her vivacity in reality covers up her real feelings of anxiety concerning the conditions of her father's will. In the scenes in which Morocco and Arragon make their choice of the caskets we have a further illustration of Portia's attitude towards her unwelcome suitors, in the case of Morocco an amused tolerance, which gives way to genuine relief when he takes his departure; and in the case of Arragon an ill-concealed contempt, which finds its expression at length in biting sarcasm. But with Bassanio it is different. She had already seen him in her father's time and the "fair speechless messages" in her eyes were in themselves a sufficient proof of her feelings towards him. When he comes as a suitor there is the inevitable struggle between love and modesty in which both feelings alternately find expression; and throughout the scene all the womanly qualities in her nature, qualities of heart rather than of intellect, are revealed. In Act IV. her conduct of the Trial Scene shows not only keenness of intellect but self-control and firmness of will; and these qualities of mind stand out all the more clearly because they form a contrast to the girlish playfulness which she displays both in her preparation for her journey to Venice and in her conversation with Bassanio at