

the great actor, and gives to his reading the force and reality of nature, and the commanding impressiveness and beauty of tragic poetry.

The details of preparation that mark the brief speeches of Portia again may have the aspect of pedantry,—but whoever has witnessed the performance of the play knows how these brief details sustain suspense and strengthen the interest and the terror of the scene.

PORTIA.—Therefore lay bare your bosom.

We may easily conceive how with womanly delicacy, and shrinking from a sight of pain, Portia would utter these words, her voice low, her face averted so as not to witness the dreadful act. But here Shylock loses all self-control in the expectation of gratifying his revenge.

SHYLOCK.— Ay, his BREAST:
So says the bond: doth it not, noble judge?
Nearest his HEART: those are the very words.

The best effect will be given to the delivery of this passage by speaking the words "Ay, his breast" and "nearest his heart" with an expression of the fiercest desire, flung especially into the words "breast" and "heart," while in the references to the bond and the appeal to the judge, the manner and tone are instantly changed to an obsequious regard for forms of law, as if they only were the motives and guides of his action. It is this contrast which gives the finest dramatic effect to the passage.

PORTIA.—It is so. Are there balance here to weigh the flesh?

SHYLOCK.—I have them ready.

The question of Portia has a deep and warning meaning. It is the last effort of mercy put forth to save the Jew from the penalty he is invoking, for it is the exactness of the weight of flesh that saves Antonio.

When every preparation is made Portia calls upon Antonio to make his final defence, and as its correct delivery is important I present it with the marks for pause, inflection and emphasis.

PORTIA.—Come, merchant, have you anything to say?

ANTONIO.—But little: I am arm'd and well prepar'd.
Give me your hand, Bassanio: fare you well!

(*Speak these words softly and with pathos.*)

Grieve not | that I am fallen to this, for you;
For herein | Fortune | shows herself more kind |
Than is her custom: it is still her use
To view | with hollow eye and wrinkled brow |
An age | of poverty; (*utter this sentiment mournfully*)

from which *lingering penance* |
Of such misery | doth she cut me off. (*cheerfully spoken.*)
Commend me | to your honorable wife:
Tell her the process | of Antonio's end;

Say | how I lov'd you, | speak me fair | in death;
And, when the tale is told, bid her be judge
Whether Bassanio | had not once a love.

That is, a friend, and read the passage with increasing warmth and force. The cheerfulness is then resumed, and with the aspect of humor which Antonio assumes.

Repent not you that you shall lose a friend,
And he repents not | that he pays | your debt;
For | if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
I'll pay it presently, with ALL my HEART.

But the Jew becomes impatient. He sternly demands judgment.

SHYLOCK.—We trifle time; I pray thee pursue sentence.

PORTIA.—A pound of that same merchant's flesh | is thine.

Force must be given to "pound" and "flesh," as if Portia still lingered on the hope that he would understand the condition.

SHYLOCK.—Most rightful judge!

PORTIA.—And you must cut this flesh from off his breast.
The law allows it and the court awards it.

This repetition of formal statements is not a mark of pedantry—it still indicates the desire of Portia to change by the very delay the purpose of the Jew; or by the exhibition of his relentless hatred to justify the last resource by which Antonio shall be saved. And the Jew is inflexible. With knife in hand and a brief exclamation, he rushes towards Antonio—

SHYLOCK.—Most learned judge!

A SENTENCE! Come, PREPARE!

These words are uttered with the fiercest energy. The purpose is bloody and murderous; the resolution, irresistible and overmastering, towers above all opposition. Then Portia, calmly but firmly, with a dignity and nobleness of mien that instantly revive hope and restore confidence, utters her famous judgment.

PORTIA.—Tarry a little; there is | something else.

This bond—doth give thee here—NO JOY—OF BLOOD.

This saving clause—the whole line—must be delivered slowly, as if weighing every word to make the judgment tell with more terrible effect on the Jew.

The words expressly are—a pound | of FLESH;—

But, in the cutting it | if thou dost shed

ONE DROP | of Christian BLOOD—

(Let the pause be long here, and let the judgment that follows be given with great dignity and determination)

thy lands and goods

Are, by the laws of Venice—CONFISCARE |
Unto the state of Venice.

SHYLOCK.—Is that the law? (*Half whisper and tremor.*)

This question must exhibit the terrible agony, the revulsion of feeling, which now overwhelms the Jew. It is not simply doubt—it is terror uttered with bated breath—a very sentence of death has been passed upon the Jew. He stands in dreadful suspense—the knife, the scales fall from his hands—he is defeated and prostrated by a judgment so unexpected, so unavoidable. He exhibits a sordid abjectness when he appeals for the "Principal." The collapse, the reaction, the agony of his defeat are at once awful and touching. These are the feelings which the reader must impersonate and realize if he would dramatically represent this unique and wonderful creation of Shakespeare.

The last words he hears as he leaves the court are the taunts and mockery of Gratiano. He does not reply, but he is supposed to turn slowly towards his tormentor as he is departing, to give him one look of withering scorn, and then to leave the scene of his punishment. Edmund Kean's last glance has become traditionally immortal. Few living have seen it; but it is recorded as being beyond description, withering and defiant. The writer has seen the younger Kean and Macready in this final act, and in both instances the facial expression and the glance of the eye were eloquent of scorn, and covered the mocker with unutterable contempt.

I cannot retire from this review without again doing what I have so often done—without urging upon the student the importance of realizing to himself the states of mind and the passions which govern these creations of the imagination. Froude says that "where the poet would create a character he must himself comprehend it first to its inmost fibre." Shakespeare did this. He became every character his imagination summoned into his presence. He sat as a king enthroned, beholding the beings of his fancy pass in review before him. But he did more. He stepped down from his throne. He was possessed of them as a man might be of a spirit. He felt all the tenderness and anxiety of Portia. He was moved as Shylock was moved, with the bitterness of wrong, injustice, and hatred. For the time being he was that special character who speaks. All this filled the picture with the reality and strength of life. But mere sympathy will often lead to an extravagant display of feeling.