

He therefore glances contemptuously at the young judge, and gives his answer in slow, sullen and measured tones.

PORTIA.—Of a *strange* nature is the suit you follow;
Yet in such rule | that the *Venetian law*
Cannot *impugn* you | as you do proceed.—
You | stand within his danger, do you not?

ANTONIO.—Ay, so he says.

PORTIA.—Do you *confess* the bond?

ANTONIO.—I do.

PORTIA.—Then *must* the Jew be *mèrcifil*.

These words are delivered earnestly and tenderly, for Portia appeals to his humanity. But the Jew is stern and unrelenting. His self-esteem, and the certainty that the Venetian law cannot impugn him, rise in fierce antagonism to that "must." Hence, scorn and defiance are flung into his repetition of "must." It demands the full arbitrary emphasis, which is expressed by a slight pause after compulsion, with full force and a prolonged downward inflection on the special word. This was the reading of Edmund Kean. Before his time, the actors gave the emphasis to "compulsion;" but Kean, with a juster conception of the Jew's state of mind, introduced the above reading; the theatre applauded, —for theatrical audiences then were able to appreciate a new reading, and the critics at once confirmed its truthfulness and force.

SHYLOCK.—On what compulsion | *must* I? Tell me *that*.

There is always the tendency to recite hackneyed passages introduced into every book of "Selections for Reading" in the usual hackneyed declamatory form. Let the reader forget all such "school" methods, conceive all the circumstances—a gentle and gifted woman, pleading with all the fervour and tenderness of her sex for the life of a fellow-creature, appealing to one whom she yet believes to be susceptible to pity,—and the first qualification for reading the speech on *Mercy* will be secured. Tenderness and earnestness pervade the delivery of the first lines; but, as Portia advances in her appeal, she is inspired with the zeal and faith of a saint, and the chords of feeling touched by a religious passion pour forth a heavenly music, breathing angelic strains which, in the delivery, demand the highest solemnity of aspect and tone, and the deepest expression of religious reverence.

"The quality of *mèrcy* || is not *strained*"

(That is, it is not forced on compulsion);

"It droppeth | as the gentle rain from heav'n |
Upon the place beneath.—It is *twice* | bless'd;
It blesseth him that *gives* | and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest | in | the mightiest:—it becomes
The throned monarch | better than his *crōwn*;

His *sceptre* | shows the force | of *temporal* power,
The attribute | to awe and majesty,

Wherein doth sit | the dread proud *fear* of kings."

The last two lines must be read in a deeper pitch than the preceding lines. A similar depth of tone should also mark the succeeding lines; but the religious solemnity and fervor pervade the expression, and the speaker becomes more animated as she is inspired by the grandeur of the sentiment.

"But *mèrcy* | is *abōve* | this *sceptred* sway—
It is enthroned in the *heart*s of kings,
It is an attribute | of *Gōd* | *himself*"

(Read this line deeper and slower as if overpowered by the awfulness and sanctity of the thought),

"And earthly power | doth *then* | shew likest *Gōd*'s
When *mèrcy* seasons *justice*.—Therefore | *Jēw* |
Though *justice* be thy *plēa* | consider *this* |
That | in the course of *justice* | none of us
Should see *salvation*—we do *pray* | for *mèrcy* |
And that same prayer | doth teach us | *all* | to *render*
The *deeds* of *mèrcy*."

I have followed with very slight additions the markings of Mr.

George Vandenhoff for the pauses, inflections and emphasis of this passage. I know of no living authority higher than that of this accomplished elocutionist for the guidance of the student, and the correctness of his markings will be fully supported by every reader who carefully examines the nature of the sentiments and understands the principles involved.

But the eloquent appeal of Portia utterly fails in moving Shylock, and sustaining the stern and scornful expression which had marked his first answer, he replies:

SHYLOCK.—"My *deeds* upon *my* head! I crave the *law*,
The penalty and forfeit of my *bōnd*."

The passages that follow have no special difficulty, saving that Bassanio is warmed and excited in his anxiety to save his friend, and that excitement passes into the highest indignation in delivering the line—

"And curb this *cruel* *DEVIL* | of his *will*."

The answer of Portia is given with judicial calmness. Surely this does not betray the "pedantry" of which Hazlitt complains. It confirms the logic of Shylock, and wild with the triumph which this accession of legal sanction brings to his cause, he pours forth his approval in a spirit of uncontrollable joy.

SHYLOCK.—A *Daniel* come to judgment! Yea, a *DANIEL*,
O wise, young judge, how I do *hōnor* thee.

The manner of the best actors in delivering these lines is to mark the first line with enthusiasm, and then in giving the second line to bend in obsequious reverence before Portia.

PORTIA.—I pray you, let me *look* | upon the bond.

SHYLOCK (*with hurried anxiety to please*).—Here it is, most
reverend doctor, here it is.

The tone of uttering this passage, especially "reverend doctor," must be marked by an excess of flattering servility. As it is not genuine on the part of Shylock, it must from its nature and his inflexible character be overdone, and transparent in its hypocrisy.

PORTIA.—There's *THRICE* | thy money | offered thee.

SHYLOCK.—An *oath*, an *OATH*, I have an *oath* | in *heaven*:
Shall I lay *PERJURY* | upon my soul?
No, not for *Venice*.

It is quite possible to believe that Shylock was sincere in his religious regard for his oath. To him there was nothing wrong in the pursuit of vengeance; and therefore this passage is delivered with hands and eyes uplifted, and with an expression of solemn reverence, as if the speaker trembled as he contemplated so heinous a sin as that of perjury. When Portia says:

"Be *mèrcifil*:"

Take *thrice* thy money; bid me *tear* the bond,"

she holds the bond in her hands and is about to tear it, when Shylock arrests her act of mercy, and in the speech that follows he resumes much of his native sternness and dignity.

SHYLOCK.—When it is *paid* | according to the *tēnour*—
It doth appear | you are a *wōrthy* judge; —
You *knōw* the *law*; your exposition |
Hath been most *sōund*.

Let the manner now become sterner and more dignified, warming however into passion towards the conclusion.

"I charge you by the *law*,
Whereof you are a well-deserving pillar,
(*slightly obsequious*)

PROCEED TO JUDGMENT. By my soul | I *swear* |
There is no power | in the tongue of *mān*
To *alter* me. I stay here | on my *bōnd*."

The delivery of this oath must be slow and deliberate, marked by the fierce resolution which betrays the hatred that prompts it, yet controlled so as to suppress violence or rant. It is the skilful management of the conflicting passions involved that distinguishes