

large idea, when such happens to spring up in a man's head, generally has trouble in getting itself expressed; and so it is sometimes even good policy—as Carlyle and others long since found out—to cultivate a labored or uncommon style. The business of the journalist is to grind out a certain amount of readable matter, the business of the student is to acquire the habit of "thinking largely," and if he can accomplish this he may rest assured that the English Language will afford him a sufficient means of making known his thought to others.

The Student's Scrap-book.

PORTIA.

The character which we will now consider is one worthy of careful attention and study. Everything connected with the life and surroundings of Portia excites our interest; her wealth, her social position, her many suitors and the peculiar conditions by which her choice was effected; her home and more especially her character, that only sure possession. Friends, wealth and home may disappear but character is always standing by in whatever guise we would have it.

Portia was possessed of great personal beauty. Little is said directly of her appearance, yet much is implied. Bassanio may not be considered an unprejudiced observer in this case, nevertheless he says of her—

"She is fair
And fairer than that word of wondrous virtues."
"Her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece."

We may imagine her as tall and commanding in appearance, yet her manners marked ever with gentleness and kindness.

The only child of a fond, though peculiar father, her every wish was gratified;—however from the part she takes it would seem that careful training had been added to indulgence.

With what pride must her father, a man learned in the law, have watched the development of those powers which afterwards enabled her to rescue her husband's friend from so strange and terrible a death.

Her maidenly virtues greet us on every page. The love and obedience to her father were remarkable, yielding to his will even in what seems to us a caprice, yes even an unkind and ungenerous one. The palace was literally haunted with suitors, for Portia's hand, for whom she had no liking and whose presence, on such an errand, was positively distasteful to her—the more because her happiness was subject to the uncertainties of mere chance. She tells us, in her own way, of her annoyances—the Neapolitan prince ever extolling the virtues of his *colt* and of *himself* in that he could shoe his own horse,—Count Palatine with his continual frown of whom Portia says—"I had rather be married to a death's head with a bone in his mouth."—A French Lord who combined the qualities of the gentlemen aforesaid with others innumerable, or as she expressed it was "Every man in no man." Then followed an English Baron, a Scottish Lord, a German Duke, and the long list is ended

with Bassanio. The manner in which she speaks of this suitor shows plainly the favor in which he is held and causes a doubt as to the disinterestedness of her criticism of the others.

Portia's best nature shines forth in the trial scene. Shakespeare has not created two stronger characters than Portia and Shylock, nor can we conceive of a more perfect contrast. Standing side by side, as they do, their strong points are the more perceptible. Little realizing the nature of him she has to deal with, Portia begins by pleading for mercy in those wonderful lines—old, yet showing forth new beauty with each repetition,

"The quality of mercy is not strained:
It droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes;
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown.
It is an attribute of God himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice."

It would seem that such words as these would have moved an ordinary man but the very soul of Shylock was blackened by the hatred he bore toward all Christians and especially Antonio. His determination for revenge made him blind even to his own interests. She tries in vain to arouse his avarice—appeals to his pity—but without avail, and as a last resort secures her object by a mere quibble brought out by her own ingenuity.

Portia was dignified, endowed with high mental power and possessed of a remarkably joyous nature such as naturally goes with strength of character. No brooding over trouble or signs of that dull despair which is ever indicative of weakness.

Women often have a part of the virtues possessed by Portia. While she seems a *natural* character and one which might very possibly exist yet morality, intelligence, true sentiment, in fact all the qualities which go to make up a harmonious character, are superlative in her and truly such characters are *rare*.

Shakespeare's noble women are almost universally unpretentious. They are *natural*. We often hear them expressing thoughts and feelings so similar to our own that it creates a sympathy and interest which cannot be produced by the common heroines of tragedy. Their words appeal to our better nature and a knowledge of them must result in benefit to us.

H. M. H.

MUSIC IN NATURE.

Beauty still walketh on Earth and air,
Our purple sunsets are as rich in gold
As e'er the Illiad's Music was outrolled;
The roses of Spring are ever fair,
And the deep sea still foams its music old.

Music is sometimes called the daughter of heavenly spheres; but if that is her true home, then men must have come from very different spheres, for in none of the arts do we find a greater variety of tastes. Nature does not guide us, for the sounds she produces differ mainly in the greater or lesser regularity with which they are repeated: The pattering of rain-drops on the roof is a spasmodic explosion of short dissonant notes: in the purling of a brook and the rustling of leaves, the transitions are softer and less sudden, while the howling of the wind presents sounds which change continually, rising and