

He first makes mention of her riches, next her loveliness, then of her virtues, and finally of the "fair speechless messages" which he "did receive" from her eyes. Though he mentions these other most desirable qualities first, there is no doubt in my mind that he prized more than all those "fair speechless messages;" for it is evident from what took place later that they were messages of wondrous love, to which she dared not give verbal expression on account of a whim of her father, according to which she was to become the wife of the one who chose the right casket and not the wife of the one who, unluckily, might choose the wrong casket, but was more worthy of her by virtue of the tender love his heart bore her. Doubtless it was the expressiveness of Portia's eyes that first cast the charm over Bassanio and drew his thoughts slowly but surely away from all else save her.

It would be difficult indeed to imagine two people in love where these eye messages did not play quite an important part.

Our modern youths, as doubtless were the youths of Shakespeares' time, are frequently heard to say: "If you love me darling, tell me with your eyes."

Shakespeare does not tell us much about Portia's eye, but it would be a base thought indeed to imagine them other than most charmingly beautiful. They would be out of harmony with the rest of her make-up, were they not so. We have Bassanio's word for it that they could speak very eloquently, and they probably told Portia's secret to Bassanio before she was fully aware of it herself.

At Portia's first appearance in the play she is sad and melancholy, as shown when she alludes to her will being checked by that of her father; also when she says: "My body is aweary of this great world." She soon regains her good humor, however, and as Nerissa names over her numerous suitors to her she makes some ridiculous remark about each. She became grave at the mention of Bassanio's name