

Lives of the Great Romantics

Edited by
John Mullan



ROUTLEDGE


Lives of the Great Romantics

Shelley

Edited by
John Mullan



ROUTLEDGE


LIVES OF THE GREAT ROMANTICS

GENERAL EDITOR: JOHN MULLAN

VOLUME EDITORS: JOHN MULLAN

CHRIS HART

PETER SWAAB



William Holl (1807–71), portrait of Percy Bysshe Shelley
By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London

William Holl, the son of an engraver of the same name, made a living engraving mainly portraits. All the many portraits of Shelley engraved in the nineteenth century derive in the end from the painting of Shelley by Amelia Curran, begun in May 1819, but completed after his death. Mary Shelley obtained it from the artist in 1825, and Jane Williams had a copy made by George Clint, with reference to a water-colour of the poet by Edward Williams, apparently the only other portrait taken from life. (The Curran and Clint portraits are both now in the National Portrait Gallery.)

LIVES OF THE GREAT ROMANTICS

BY THEIR CONTEMPORARIES

VOLUME

1

SHELLEY

EDITED BY

JOHN MULLAN

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1996 by Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited

Published 2016 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group,
an informa business*

© Taylor & Francis 1996

All rights reserved, including those of translation into foreign languages.
No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by
electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented,
including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval
system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice:

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks,
and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

BRITISH LIBRARY CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

**Lives of the great romantics: Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth
by their contemporaries**

1. Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 1792–1822 – Criticism and interpretation
2. Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron, 1788–1824 – Criticism and
interpretation 3. Wordsworth, William, 1770–1850 – Criticism and
interpretation 4. Poets, English – 19th century 5. English poetry –
19th century – History and criticism 6. Romantics – 19th century –
History and criticism

I. Mullan, John II. Hart, Chris III. Swaab, Peter
821.7'09'145

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

**Lives of the great romantics : Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth / by
contemporaries ; edited with introduction and notes by John Mullan,
Christopher Hart, Peter Swaab.**

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

Contents: v. 1. Shelley -- v. 2. Byron -- v. 3. Wordsworth.

ISBN 1-85196-270-0 (set)

1. Poets, English--19th century--Biography. 2. Shelley, Percy
Bysshe, 1792-1822--Biography. 3. Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron.
1788-1824--Biography. 4. Wordsworth, William, 1770-1850--Biography.
5. Romanticism--Great Britain. I. Mullan, John. II. Hart,
Christopher. III. Swaab, Peter.

PR105.L58 1996

821'.709--dc20

[b]

95-21350
CIP

ISBN 13 978-1-13875-445-4 (hbk)
ISBN 13 978-1-85196-270-9 (set)

DOI: 10.4324/9780429348198

To my parents



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	viii
Introduction	ix
Bibliography	xxv
Chronology	xxix
Copy Texts	xxxiii
1. Hazlitt, William, 'On Paradox and Common-place'	1
2. Shelley, Mary, Preface to <i>Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley</i>	9
3. Medwin, Thomas, <i>Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron</i>	17
4. Hunt, Leigh, <i>Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries</i>	33
5. Hogg, Thomas Jefferson, 'Shelley at Oxford'	53
6. Medwin, Thomas, <i>The Shelley Papers</i>	90
7. Shelley, Mary, Preface and notes to <i>Essays, Letters from Abroad</i>	115
8. Dix, John, <i>Pen and Ink Sketches of Poets</i>	136
9. Medwin, Thomas, <i>The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley</i>	142
10. Hunt, Leigh, <i>The Autobiography</i>	184
11. Hogg, Thomas Jefferson, <i>The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley</i>	205
12. Trelawny, Edward, <i>Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron</i>	264
13. Peacock, Thomas Love, 'Memoirs of Shelley', 1858	308
14. Shelley, Lady Jane, <i>Shelley Memorials</i>	321
15. Peacock, Thomas Love, 'Memoirs of Shelley', 1860/1862	343
16. Hunt, Thornton, 'Shelley. By One Who Knew Him'	363
17. Trelawny, Edward, <i>Records of Shelley, Byron and the Author</i>	371
18. Polidori, John William, <i>Diary, 1816</i>	416

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the assistance that I have been given at the British Library, Cambridge University Library, Dartmouth College Library, and the University of London Library. This anthology relies a good deal on the scholarship of others, and I would like to acknowledge, in particular, my debts to the editors of two scrupulously annotated collections of correspondence: *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), edited by Frederick L. Jones and *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 3 vols (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980–88), edited by Betty T. Bennett. I would like to thank Peter Swaab and Chris Hart, the editors of the two accompanying volumes in this edition, on Wordsworth and Byron, for their advice, and Bridget Frost, for her patience and know-how. Special thanks to Harriet Stewart, for her help in everything.

INTRODUCTION

On June 15th, 1893, *The Times* reported a ceremony that could be seen as the culmination of all the efforts made by Shelley's family, friends, and admirers, since his death in 1822, to have him accepted as one of his nation's greatest poets.

THE SHELLEY MEMORIAL AT OXFORD

The memorial to the poet Shelley which has been presented to University College, Oxford, by Lady Shelley, was opened yesterday in the presence of a distinguished company. It is the work of Mr. Onslow Ford, and a cast of the monument was exhibited at the Royal Academy last year. . . . Amongst those present at the ceremony were Lady Shelley, the Bishop of Southwark, the Master of the University (Dr. Bright), the Master of Balliol (Professor Jowett), Sir William Markby, the Warden of All Souls, the Resident of Magdalen, the Warden of Merton, the Rector of Exeter, Mr. Arthur Sedgwick, Mr. Onslow Ford, Canon St. John, Dr. Garnett, Mr. William Esdaile (grandson of the poet), Mr. Hamilton Aidé, Mr. Champneys (who designed the chamber in which the memorial is placed), and Mr. H. M. Burge.

The university and the college from which Shelley had been expelled over eighty years earlier for his inflammatory pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism* were welcoming him back. Near the end of a century in which his beliefs and his way of life had as often been a matter of dispute as the merits of his poetry, his status and respectability were being acknowledged. Other poets, as well as many readers, might long since have proclaimed their respect for him. (Browning had recorded his admiration of Shelley, and indeed of 'the whole personality of the poet shining forward from the poems', in his 'Essay on Shelley' of 1852 (Browning, p. 1005). Tennyson too, while thinking Shelley 'too much in the clouds', was happy to call himself an admirer (Tennyson, p. 657; see also p. 475).) Now the very institution of learning against which Shelley had rebelled, the custodian of a nation's literary and intellectual traditions, was commemorating his achievements.

As *The Times* says, the memorial – which resides to this day in its specially designed chamber at University College – had been donated by Lady Shelley. She was the widow of Sir Percy Shelley, the poet's son and only surviving child by Mary Shelley. For her the ceremony was the fulfilment of

decades of unwearying promotion of Shelley's reputation. Here was official recognition.

Having handed a gold key of the chamber to Dr. Bright, Lady Shelley said she begged to thank the Master and Fellows of University College, and the distinguished artist who designed the memorial, for enabling her to fulfil one of the dearest wishes of her heart. For more than 40 years she had been a student of Shelley, and so far as she was able had striven to give the world a just impression of his character. She had lived in the companionship of his noble-minded wife and of his son, and she had been acquainted with most of his friends, none of whom, she believed, were now survivors. They were much mistaken who fancied that Shelley and Mary were regardless of the duties of life. Men of great genius could not always be reduced to rule. They erred sometimes, but they were not therefore to be deprived of the love and admiration of their countrymen.

As the newspaper report indicates, Lady Shelley's advocacy could not wish away, and yet somehow had to minimize, Shelley's unconventional beliefs and conduct. As she herself says, having the poet's 'genius' widely recognized had meant establishing 'a just impression of his character'. Some of her own work to this end is recorded in this anthology. As self-appointed guardian of Shelley's memory on behalf of the family into which she had married, her aims had been more determinedly celebratory (and thus, frequently, more dishonest) than any of Shelley's other memoirists. The project of justifying his 'character', however, was not singular. For one writer after another through the nineteenth century, such justification was a necessary condition for the establishment of his literary reputation. His life was attacked and was defended, but rarely was it suggested that the work might be judged separately from it. For those who had known him, almost all of whom had once shared some of his ideals and habits, the necessity to defend his 'character' was strongest.

The unveiling of the Oxford memorial is a good place to begin and end an account of the making of Shelley's posthumous reputation for other, though connected, reasons. One is that, as Lady Shelley here remarks, it comes at a point when the last of his 'friends' have all died: Claire Clairmont in 1879, in Florence, pursued to the last by hunters after Shelley manuscripts; Edward Trelawny in 1881, celebrated by the obituary writers as the bosom friend of great poets; Jane Hogg in 1884, the last and most reticent of the 'Pisa Circle', also harried in her old age by Shelley biographers. From now on there would be no more actual witnesses – no one to make a name by remembering what Shelley said or did (in Trelawny's case, apparently remembering in ever greater detail as the years went by). From now on, biographers and critics would work from what was written. And here is another reason why an event that crowns Lady Shelley's efforts is a natural

punctuation mark in the story not only of Shelley's reputation but also of the making of the canon of his poems. For the previous year, 1892, Lady Shelley had marked the centenary of the poet's birth by offering the Bodleian Library a large number of the relics and manuscripts of Shelley in the family's possession. Her hold over all this material (which included many of the letters of both Shelley and Mary) was not entirely relinquished, for one box of letters was to be kept sealed until 1922, the centenary of Shelley's death (when eventually opened, it proved to contain little that was not already in print). The gift, however, might be seen as the making available to scholarship of the private Shelley, jealously guarded by Lady Shelley for almost half a century. (She left some papers to the descendants of Shelley's brother, John, and to those of her own adopted daughter: eventually these too came to the Bodleian.) When she died, aged seventy-nine, in 1899, Shelley really had been returned to the University from which he had once been driven. With the pioneering editorial work of H. Buxton Forman in the 1870s and 1880s, he had already begun to pass into the hands of scholars. The story of this scholarship goes on, and it is worth noting that over a century after Forman's first attempts to bring rigorous textual scholarship to Shelley's work, there is still no reliable and complete edition of his poetry (for a succinct account and explanation of this, see Matthews and Everest, Introduction). However, the story of the struggles of memorialists to leave to posterity that 'just impression of his character' had ended.

The nature of the memorial that Lady Shelley and the assembled dignitaries were opening remains, in all its grotesque sentimentality, a demonstration of how, in the eyes of some beholders, death could romanticise the poet's life. In bronze and marble, the monument depicts the drowned Shelley – not, of course, in the state in which his body was actually found, but as one of the beautiful dead beloved of nineteenth-century art. In fact, it had originally been commissioned by Lady Shelley for the poet's tomb, and was to have been installed in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome where his ashes were interred. However, Trelawny had bought the plot, and had had his own ashes buried next to Shelley's. His daughter, Laetitia Call, refused to allow Lady Shelley to pursue her scheme, saying that her father had given strict instructions to 'resist every innovation' (Norman, p. 258). So University College was offered it instead. The cemetery piece was just as suitable for its new setting, for the tragedy of a cruelly curtailed life (Shelley was twenty-nine when he was drowned) had become familiar to Victorian poetry lovers, in part through some of the texts represented in this volume. The poet had been cut off when his visionary enthusiasm was still in full spate. 'Men of great genius. . . erred sometimes', but this genius's premature death allowed his supposed errors to be seen as the excesses of youthful idealism – an idealism forever preserved.

For the representative of Oxford University on this satisfying yet potentially awkward occasion, the task was to dissolve any sense that there was something incongruous in this gathering of academics and clergymen to celebrate the work of English Literature's most notorious rebel and atheist. Dr Bright made the best of his obligation.

The MASTER of the UNIVERSITY returned thanks on behalf of the corporation of which he was the head for the generous gift which Lady Shelley had bestowed on them, adding that the gift received fresh charms from the tender way in which she had delivered it over to them. It was not often that a college in Oxford had a modern work of art given to it. The reason of that was, he thought, that there was a sort of erroneous fancy that Oxford belonged completely to the old. If Oxford was to be what it claimed to be – the very centre and heart of the growth of young England – it seemed to him clear that Oxford must advance with the world, must expand and be open to all new influences, and he could not conceive any more true emblem of the present century than the great poet whose effigy they had now received. For if they came to think of what really happened to him, he thought it was this – that he was prophetic in all directions of what was to come to the world. Their thanks were very largely to do with this fact – that the gift of the memorial was a sort of emblem and symbol to them of a rubbing out of old ill-wills and old ill-feelings, and of a perfectly peaceful feeling towards that great man. He did not think they ought to judge of their predecessors very harshly, or to say that the action of the college was very extraordinarily wrong, for he believed there was hardly any place in Oxford which would not have acted in the same way as University College acted. But what they had to observe was this – that the very greatness of the man had rendered open to that kind of treatment. It was because there was in him such a well-spring of hatred of all that was false and oppressive, and because he had such a strong feeling of all that was gloomy and sad in the history of the world and mankind, that he could not but become a rebel. But the rebel of 80 years ago was the hero of the present century. In other words, the great aspirations which he had, the intense love of the human race which he had, the intense admiration of all objects that met his eyes in the natural world, the intense hatred of all that was evil and all that was sad, what was it but the very thing they had been learning for these last 80 years? And when at this time they had constant repetitions of very sad and pessimistic views as to what the world was going to become, it was very cheerful to come across a prophet who prophesied good things and not bad. Although it probably was true that the great giant lay still chained upon the hilltops, and although Jupiter, the emblem of what was false and conventional, still in some degree reigned, it must be confessed that the prophecies he uttered had been hastening towards their fulfilment, and that, in some way or other – though it might not be as he fancied it – the human race was coming, as they all hoped, to something like a condition of happiness in universal and divine equality and love.

Rebel to hero: Dr Bright confirmed the transformation that Victorian Shelleys had worked hard to bring about.

We might also notice that, with his reference to 'Jupiter, the emblem of what was false and conventional', he shows some knowledge of Shelley's most ambitious and demanding work: *Prometheus Unbound*. The 'condition of happiness in universal and divine equality and love' of which he speaks, however, has been changed from the radical dream of that poem to the strangely confident kind of pronouncement that we can only call 'Victorian'. The Romantic poet turns out to have prophesied Victorian progress (readers of the relevant extracts will find that this is the thought of Lady Shelley's *Shelley Memorials*). By the end of the nineteenth century, with a map of Romantic literature – and, indeed, the term 'Romanticism' – established, the poet can be looked back on as a 'prophet'. For Romanticism itself had surely singled out 'the Poet' as a culture's best kind of prophet. (Although the Master of the University's expression of relief at coming across 'a prophet who prophesied good things and not bad' turns his reclaiming of a great rebel into something close to bathos.) When Samuel Johnson had written his *Lives of the English Poets* near the end of the eighteenth century, he had composed salutary narratives of the petty vanities and material pressures of authors' lives – especially the authors whose poetry he most admired. One of the successes of Romanticism with Victorians was to make poets better than this. Individual genius was emphasised, and therefore the life of the writer dignified. The memorialists whose accounts are represented in this volume and others in this edition were contributing to an idea of authorship at the heart of Romanticism.

In Shelley's case, the poetry seemed to force biography on the curious reader, and often to tempt the hostile critic to reflection on the poet's life. This was not only because the lyrical verse beloved of Victorian readers seemed to speak directly of particular occasions of rapture or dejection. It was also because some of his most self-consciously idealistic writing seemed – and, indeed, still seems – to insist that ideals should be practised, that manners of living and writing should not be dissociated. For Shelley, we could say, the personal was the political. He was not the first English poet to write with passion of the poverty and powerlessness of the labouring classes. However, he was the first to stake the creative claims of atheism, and, with the possible (and still obscure) exception of Blake, was the first to turn a politics of sexual liberation into poetry. How could the poet's life not matter, when his earliest long poem, *Queen Mab* (1813), privately distributed by Shelley but popular in pirated editions from the early 1820s, spoke so strongly against marriage and in favour of free love? Working to make his verse carry his ideas (*Queen Mab* is subtitled 'A Philosophical Poem') Shelley appended lengthy 'Notes' to the poem, keyed to particular lines.

One of these declares, 'Love withers under constraint: its very essence is liberty: it is compatible neither with obedience, jealousy, nor fear' (Matthews and Everest, p. 368). Any law, therefore, binding a husband and wife 'for one moment after the decay of their affection' can only be 'intolerable tyranny'.

Constancy has nothing virtuous in itself, independently of the pleasure it confers. . . Love is free: to promise for ever to love the same woman, is not less absurd than to promise to believe the same creed: such a vow, in both cases, excludes us from all enquiry (Matthews and Everest, p. 370).

It is true that Shelley was not quite twenty-one when he wrote this (and, it might be added, still apparently happy with his wife Harriet, whom he had married almost two years earlier). But the idea that political freedom should be accompanied by a liberation from the 'system of constraint' governing sexual relations – that the pursuit of sexual satisfaction outside marriage might even be, as is implied in the passage above, a kind of intellectual exploration – was pursued in his mature poetry. 'Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world', proclaims the last sentence of the Preface to Shelley's longest poem, *The Revolt of Islam*, published in January 1818 (see Hutchinson, p. 37). 'Love' here, as elsewhere in Shelley's writing, includes both what the Preface calls 'love of mankind' – that feeling stirred in the 'most generous and amiable natures' by the first phases of the French Revolution, of which this poem is in part an allegory – and sexual passion. In its first incarnation, as *Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century*, the poem was more 'revolutionary' than the version eventually published. In this earlier version the two lovers of the title were brother and sister, and several highly wrought passages of *The Revolt of Islam* (see particularly Canto VI, stanzas xxix–xxxviii) were once apparent celebrations of an incestuous passion, consummated. When the poem, although already printed, was suppressed before publication by the publisher, Charles Ollier, it was because of his worries about this aspect of the narrative, rather than because of its political radicalism or its hostility to established religion. Shelley wrote to Thomas Moore a few weeks before *The Revolt of Islam* appeared saying that the alterations 'consist in little else than the substitution of the words *friend* or *lover* for that of *brother & sister*' (Jones, *Letters*, I, p. 582). (Although Richard Holmes points out that 'Shelley was being less than frank', as he also cancelled rather more lines with 'controversial references to God, Hell, Christ, republicanism and atheism': Holmes, p. 391). The 'seclusion of my habits', he explained, had made him oblivious to what 'revolts & shocks many who might be inclined to sympathise with me in my general views'.

Even with this fundamental rebellion against sexual taboo excised, the

implicit and explicit advocacy of free love remained. When Cythna, in the guise of Laone ('most eloquently fair'), makes a rousing speech to her fellow revolutionaries in Canto V, the rhetoric of *Queen Mab* returns in her celebration of intellectual progress, vegetarianism, and free love:

'My brethren, we are free! the plains and mountains,
The gray sea-shore, the forests and the fountains,
Are haunts of happiest dwellers; – man and woman,
Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow
From lawless love a solace for their sorrow

(Canto V, stanza li, verse 4: unless otherwise stated, all references to Shelley's poems are to the one-volume Oxford text, ed. Hutchinson).

Shelley's Preface calls his poem 'an experiment on the temper of the public mind, as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live' (Hutchinson, p. 32). The 'happier condition' would be one of equality between the sexes (thus the point of having a brother and sister as leading characters). Laon fixes his bond with Cythna when he realizes that

Never will peace and human nature meet
Till free and equal man and woman greet
Domestic peace

(II, xxxvii).

Incest was necessary to the original design because the poem was dreaming of an equality between the sexes that could involve both intellectual affinity and sexual passion. This idea returns in some of the memoirs that follow when the braver biographers try to justify Shelley's abandonment of his first wife for Mary Godwin: Harriet was youthful infatuation; Mary was intellectual soul-mate.

The Revolt of Islam was dedicated 'TO MARY — —' (and was clearly much influenced by Shelley's reading of the writings of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft). His dedicatory verses make only slightly abstracted reference to his own quest for the sympathies and satisfactions envisioned in the poem, and, it is implied, privately experienced in his relationship with Mary.

Alas, that love should be a blight and snare
To those who seek all sympathies in one! –
Such once I sought in vain

(Dedication, vi).

In his search for this 'one', 'never found I one not false to me,/Hard hearts, and cold'. Until Mary.

Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry heart
 Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless plain
 (Dedication, vii).

One does not have to be one of Shelley's nineteenth-century antagonists to feel that a reading of such a poem might need to be set against the life of its author. In this century, even the most sympathetic critics have flinched from Shelley's assertion that all before Mary were 'false', when tested against what we now know of his relationship with and separation from Harriet. Whatever our verdicts, and those of the memoirists included in this anthology, it is impossible to deny that Shelley makes his life, and what Victorians would have called his 'conduct', a matter of enquiry.

His conduct had, in one particular respect, become public a year earlier when, after the discovery of Harriet Shelley's suicide in December 1816 and the marriage of Shelley and Mary Godwin at the end of the same month, Harriet's father, John Westbrook, had filed a Bill of Complaint in Chancery for the appointment of guardians for Harriet's children by Shelley, Charles and Ianthe. Shelley lost his struggle for custody, and was quick to see the court's judgement as having been made, as he wrote in a letter to Byron, 'on the ground of my being a REVOLUTIONIST, and an *Atheist*' (Jones, *Letters*, I, p. 530). Eliza Westbrook, Harriet's sister and often the target of Shelley's hostility, had 'whilst she lived in my house... possessed herself of such papers as go to establish these allegations'. That this interpretation was self-serving would be evident even without the later confirmation of Shelley's friend Thomas Love Peacock, included in this volume. John Westbrook had in fact put together more ordinary evidence of Shelley's supposed unfitness as a guardian, including his failure to visit the children after his separation from his wife (see Holmes, pp. 356-7). It is a sign of Shelley's (at this time understandable) inability to examine his own part in 'unexpected and overwhelming sorrows' that, in the same letter to Byron, he wrote that Eliza Westbrook 'may be truly said (though not in law, yet in fact) to have murdered her [Harriet] for the sake of her father's money'. The basis for this conviction – that Harriet had been driven from the family home and into despair by her sister's machinations – seems to have been solely Shelley's desire to believe it true. Yet even if his own role was, in the immediate aftermath of Harriet's suicide, invisible to him, it was certainly not, after the Chancery case, a private affair.

Characteristically, four years later Shelley turned the effects of this tragedy into part of a poem in which an autobiography of love is treated as an allegory of the yearnings of the human soul. The poem in which readers have frequently found this autobiography is another which seems to speak in favour of free love: *Epipsychidion*. It is addressed to 'EMILIA v - ': in fact,

Emilia Viviani, the nineteen year-old daughter of Count Viviani, the Governor of Pisa, who was confined in a convent while her parents attempted to arrange her marriage. 'Discovered' by Claire Clairmont, she was introduced to Shelley in December 1820. The Shelleys visited and corresponded with her and, writing to Claire, Shelley confessed himself her admirer: 'She continues to to enchant me infinitely' (Jones, *Letters*, II, p. 254). This enchantment spoke itself in *Epipsychidion*, composed in January and February 1821 and published by Ollier (anonymously) in the Summer of the same year. The most autobiographical passage of the poem speaks of that same pursuit of love described in the Dedication to *The Revolt of Islam*.

In many mortal forms I rashly sought
The shadow of that idol of my thought
(ll. 267-8).

Now the pursuit has taken a new direction. Mary Godwin, once consummation of all hopes, seems to appear as the Moon, who 'makes all beautiful on which she smiles' (l. 282), but is also 'cold' and 'chaste' (as if acknowledging the association, in her Journal entries for 5 and 10 October 1822 Mary Shelley refers to herself as 'moonshine', and in October 1822 ends a letter to Byron by saying, 'now I am truly *cold moonshine*: Bennett, *Letters*, I, p. 284). The death of Harriet is surely the substance of the part of the poem where 'storms' obscure the Moon, and Shelley's first wife the 'She' of these lines:

when She,
The Planet of that hour, was quenched, what frost
Crept o'er those waters, till from coast to coast
The moving billows of my being fell
Into a death of ice, immovable

(ll. 312-16).

Epipsychidion goes on to speak of the 'Comet beautiful and fierce,/ Who drew the heart of this frail Universe/ Towards thine own' (ll. 368-70) – apparently an idealization of Claire Clairmont – and then directly to address 'Emily' as 'my heart's sister', invited to share some imagined 'Elysian isle' with the poet (ll. 415 and 539). It ends with an ecstatic expression of the 'passion in twin-hearts' that he and she will enjoy: 'Our breath shall intermix, our bosoms bound,/ And our veins beat together' (ll. 565-6). Perhaps it is unsurprising that it is the only lengthy poem that Mary Shelley was to print entirely without comment when she produced her edition of Shelley's *Poetical Works* in 1839. (Shelley's feelings for 'Emily' had already ebbed by the Spring of 1821, and in July she wrote to Shelley, perhaps at her family's bidding, to ask the Shelleys not to visit her again – although she was to write asking him for money that Autumn. She was married to a presentable

husband in September 1821.) It is in *Epipsychidion* that Shelley seems to speak most clearly of his personal adherence to a belief in free love.

I never was attached to that great sect,
Whose doctrine is, that each one should select
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
To cold oblivion, though it is in the code
Of modern morals

(ll. 149–54).

‘True Love in this differs from gold and clay,/ That to divide is not to take away’ (ll. 161–2): neat rhyme for a doubtable proposition. In a first draft of the passage he had written not ‘True Love’ but ‘Free love’ (see Hutchinson, p. 426).

It has always, then, been particularly difficult to apply in Shelley’s case the argument that the titillating details of the writer’s private life are not relevant to his poetry. Yet, surprisingly, only occasionally in Shelley’s lifetime did hostile reviewers refer to the poet’s own conduct. John Taylor Coleridge, Coleridge’s nephew, did describe Shelley as a man ‘who thinks even adultery vapid unless he can render it more exquisitely poignant by adding incest to it’ in a review of Leigh Hunt’s *Foliage* (*The Quarterly Review*, 18 May 1818) – the ‘incest’ presumably being a reference to Shelley’s rumoured liason with his wife’s ‘sister’ (in fact her step-sister) Claire Clairmont. The same critic was to end an antagonistic review of *The Revolt of Islam* a year later by implying a scandal which he would not specify: ‘if we might withdraw the veil of private life, and tell what we *now* know about him, it would be indeed a disgusting picture that we should exhibit, but it would be an unanswerable comment on our text’ (*The Quarterly Review*, April 1819, in Barcus, p. 135). Yet this review drew down on Coleridge the anger of the anonymous reviewer of *Alastor* in the conservative *Blackwood’s Magazine*. The reviewer, who might have been John Gibson Lockhart, disdained him as ‘a dunce rating a man of genius’. ‘If that critic does not know that Mr. Shelley is a poet, almost in the very highest sense of that mysterious word, then, we appeal to all those whom we have enabled to judge for themselves, if he be not unfit to speak of poetry before the people of England’ (ibid, p. 103). ‘He *exults* to calumniate Mr. Shelley’s moral character, but he *fears* to acknowledge his genius’.

In *The Examiner*, Leigh Hunt vigilantly surveyed responses to Shelley’s poetry and defended his achievements; his efforts at biography represented in this volume were but a posthumous continuation of the campaign on behalf of Shelley that he began with his ‘Young Poets’ article of 1 December 1816, and pursued vigorously in his periodical between 1818 and 1822. John

Taylor Coleridge's review of *The Revolt of Islam* brought angry replies from Hunt in *The Examiner* of 26 September 1819; 3 October 1819; and 10 October 1819 (see Barcus, pp. 135–43). Hunt declared that Shelley was much more remarkable for 'Christian benevolence' than his supposedly Christian critics (ibid, p. 140), and denounced the assault on 'the private life of an author'. 'Failing in the attempt to refute Mr. Shelley's philosophy, the Reviewers attack his private life'. Rejecting all notion that Shelley might be 'dissolute in his conduct', Hunt described him living a life of asceticism and high-minded intellectual enquiry – 'nor have we ever known him, in spite of the malignant and ludicrous exaggerations on this point, deviate, notwithstanding his theories, even into a single action which those who differ with him might think blameable' (ibid, p. 143).

In his collection of contemporary criticism of Shelley, *The Unextinguished Hearth*, Newman Ivey White points out that Hunt's partisanship might not have always helped Shelley. 'Gallant as Leigh Hunt's long championship of Shelley seems today, it was certainly more disastrous than beneficial during Shelley's lifetime' (p. 20). It was the association with Hunt that often drew the fire of critics. Thus another *Blackwood's* article berates Shelley for having 'the same pernicious purposes' as the 'COCKNEY SCHOOL', but finds in him the poetic genius that Hunt and Keats lack (Barcus, pp. 115–6). Yet even here, despite 'the author's execrable system', the critic finds the poetry 'impressed every where with the more noble and majestic footsteps of footsteps of his genius' (ibid, p. 116). After all, Shelley is not really a 'COCKNEY'.

Mr. Shelley, whatever his errors may have been, is a scholar, a gentleman, and a poet; and he must therefore despise from his soul the only eulogies to which he has hitherto been accustomed – paragraphs from the *Examiner*, and sonnets from Johny Keats. He has it in his power to select better companions; and if he does so, he may very securely promise himself abundance of better praise (ibid, p. 122).

What will often seem surprising to modern readers about contemporary reviews is their willingness to find merit (even if it is only 'poetic') in what Shelley was writing. Hunt might have needed to believe this unlikely ('the bigot will be shocked, terrified, and enraged; and fall to providing all that is said against himself: *The Examiner*, 1 February 1818, p. 75) but even John Taylor Coleridge concedes 'beautiful passages' (see Barcus, p. 125). The efforts of Shelley's friends and admirers to celebrate his poetry and justify his life were never simple and necessary responses to contemporary hostility or stupidity. As will be seen from the following pages, certain biographical issues were difficult for them because, at the very least, they seemed to indicate contradictions between ideals and actions, and these in the life of

the most idealistic of writers. Some of the difficulties are different for different memoirists, although all need either to explain or (more often) carefully to avoid being clear about Shelley's separation from Harriet, and his adultery with Mary Godwin. Because of the embarrassment of Shelley's first biographers, the facts of the matter were only debated with any precision when Peacock entered the memoirists' fray almost forty years after the poet's death (see the headnotes in this volume to extracts from his 'Memoirs of Percy Bysshe Shelley').

When narrating this part of Shelley's life, twentieth-century biographers have also had to take account of testimonies that might have been influential upon those who wrote memoirs, but which remained private in the nineteenth century. Contradicting the 'official' story that Shelley and his first wife had separated before he commenced his relationship with Mary Godwin, for instance, Claire Clairmont told Trelawny, when he was preparing his *Records* in 1878 and had written to her asking about Harriet's suicide, that 'It was no fault of her's that S— quitted her – he fell desperately in love with Mary' (in K. N. Cameron, *Shelley and His Circle 1773–1822*, vol. 4, p. 787; readers will find the information about Harriet Shelley's death, and reactions to it, expertly marshalled in this volume, pp. 769–802). Claire went on to say that Harriet's 'lover' after the separation was 'a Captain in the Indian or Wellington army' (ibid, p. 788). (She had this story from her mother, who was apparently given the details by Eliza Westbrook.) In this letter to Trelawny she added that he should not believe rumours that Harriet had 'a connexion with some low man': this might be implied in William Michael Rossetti's 'Mémorial' of 1870, but he wrote 'to suit Lady Shelley's predilections – and she is a warm partisan of Shelley and Mary, and like all warm partisans does not care much about Truth'.

To Claire we also owe the report, transmitted via Mrs Godwin, that Shelley persuaded Mary to stay with him 'by declaring that Harriet did not really care for him; that she was in love with a Major Ryan; and the child she would have was certainly not his' (ibid, p. 772). Since White's 1940 biography, scholars have worried over whether, if this was so, Shelley was deceiving Mary, or deceiving himself. As White says, 'In no normal sense of the word does it seem possible for Shelley himself to have believed her unfaithful at this time... In all subsequent references to Harriet's two children he plainly assumed paternity. Charles Clairmont [Mrs Godwin's son], who drew his information from Shelley, later expressly exonerated Harriet from this charge while condemning her on other grounds' (I, p. 346). Mary's father, who ostracized Shelley after the elopement with his daughter and step-daughter, needed to believe some such chain of events once the two men were reconciled at the end of 1816. In a letter of 12 May 1817 to William Baxter, he wrote that Harriet 'had proved herself unfaithful to her

husband before their separation. Afterwards, she was guilty of repeated acts of levity, & had latterly lived in open connection with a colonel Maxwel' (Cameron, p. 787). Baxter's daughter Isabel had been a friend of Mary's, but her family had forbidden all contact after Mary's elopement with Shelley. Godwin's attempt to persuade Baxter to reconsider this ban – which is, of necessity, also an attempt to justify his own acceptance of his new son-in-law – manages to sound, as William St Clair notes, almost pleased by Harriet Shelley's death:

My first information you will be very glad to hear. Mrs. Shelley died in November last and on the 30th December Shelley led my daughter to the altar. I shall always look with poignant regret upon the preceding events but you can scarcely imagine how great a relief this has brought to mine and Mrs. Godwin's mind. Mary has now (most unexpectedly) acquired a status and character in society

(in St Clair, *The Godwins*, p. 417).

Godwin's testimony as to Harriet's character and conduct can surely be worth very little.

In a letter to Mary the day after being informed of his first wife's suicide, Shelley wrote that 'this poor woman – the most innocent of her abhorred & unnatural family – was driven from her father's house, & descended the steps of prostitution' (Jones, *Letters*, I, p. 521). Both parts of this seem unlikely, although Shelley sometimes wrote of 'prostitution' rather loosely, using the word to refer to any case of cohabitation without 'love'. At this stage he actually knew very little of his wife's fate, and did not have the most vivid and sad testimony to her last days, a letter that she wrote shortly before her death, addressed, in turn, first to her sister, and then to her husband. 'Too wretched to exert myself lowered in the opinion of everyone why should I drag on a miserable existence embittered by past recollections & not one ray of hope to rest on for the future' (Cameron, p. 805: the letter is also given in Jones, *Letters*, I, p. 520). Harriet Shelley's last request of her husband went against the grain of his rooted hostility to her sister: 'let me conjure you by the remembrance of our days of happiness to grant my last wish – do not take your innocent child [Janthe] from Eliza who has been more than I have, who has watched over her with such unceasing care' – Shelley's contesting of the Chancery case, of course, went against this wish. More painfully, her letter, in its address to Shelley, made that connection between her fate and his actions that his memoirists would find difficult: '... if you had never left me I might have lived but as it is, I freely forgive you & may you enjoy that happiness which you have deprived me of'.

Clearly, none of Shelley's memoirists could ignore the history of his two marriages. Lack of documentary evidence that has since become available

meant, however, that they could more easily deal with – or avoid dealing with – other questions about the poet's life. In particular, Shelley's relationship with Claire Clairmont, still a matter of controversy, is either ignored or treated as unproblematic. Since the 1930s, we have known that, in early 1815, Hogg, with Shelley's encouragement, courted Mary, who was, when the would-be love affair commenced, heavily pregnant (for Mary's letters to Hogg at this time, see Bennett, *Letters*, I, pp. 6–14). She wrote that her 'affection' for him was not 'exactly as you would wish', but thought that it would 'dayly become more so – then what can you have to add to your happiness' (ibid, p. 8). It would seem that, with Shelley's full knowledge, she was contemplating a sexual relationship (although it is unlikely that it was consummated). Inevitably, the extraordinary correspondence between Mary and Hogg, and Shelley's evident willingness to share his lover with his friend, has provoked speculation about Shelley's relationship with Claire, with whom, often to Mary's disgruntlement, he was spending much of his time. At least some contemporary witnesses, perhaps including Godwin, seem to have assumed that the two were, or had been, lovers (see St Clair, *The Godwins*, pp. 420–1) – although such assumptions cannot quite be evidence. Speculation was given another twist, in this century, by the discovery that, in Naples in December 1818, Shelley registered a baby girl, falsely, as his child by Mary. The true parentage of Elena Adelaide Shelley, who died eighteen months later, remains a matter of dispute (see White, II, pp. 71–83 for the earliest and most painstaking account), but a possibility frequently entertained is that this child was, in fact, Shelley's daughter by Claire, who was in Naples with the Shelleys at the time. This possibility was the subject of the 'malicious reports' to which Lady Jane Shelley refers in an extract in this volume (see p. 339). There is still sometimes sharp disagreement about this.

The likelihood, or otherwise, of a sexual relationship at some time between Shelley and Claire Clairmont is frequently discussed in modern biographies not only of these two, but also of Mary Shelley, who in recent decades has become an important literary character in her own right and the subject of many biographical studies. To browse through a few of these is to encounter some of the necessary illusions that bolster biographers, in the twentieth as much as in the nineteenth century, for they usually express equal but incompatible certainties about the relationship between Shelley and Claire. This is true of even the more scholarly accounts. The first important biography of Mary Shelley to be produced after her dalliance with Hogg became clear, R. Glynn Grylls' *Mary Shelley. A Biography* (1938), did not imagine what later biographers have often thought obvious, but then it found Claire such 'a feather-brain' that any real intimacy between her and Shelley seemed beyond consideration. More recently, Claire has had her advocates, with

their different sympathies. In her invaluable edition of Claire Clairmont's *Journals*, Marion Kingston Stocking decides that 'a sexual union between Claire and Shelley' would have not have been 'inconsistent with their principles, provided that they had been genuinely and deeply in love. I can find, however, no evidence that they were' (p. 97). Nineteenth-century biographers struggled to make Shelley true to his principles; in the second half of the twentieth century, writers have tried to do the same for Mary and Claire.

Some of the principles that most trouble Shelley's admirers in the the following pages now give rather less pause to readers. In every tone from apology to endorsement, those who produced memoirs of the poet dealt with the poet's atheism – proclaimed not only in his poetry and polemical prose, but in his life. His adventures had, after all, begun with the publication of *The Necessity of Atheism* (appropriately, a rare copy of the original edition of this pamphlet was part of Lady Shelley's bequest to the Bodleian). Frequently it was found necessary to convert Shelley into an essentially Christian, or essentially religious, person: his acts of charity and his devout wonderment at the beauties of Creation are therefore constant themes. The man once reviled for blasphemy was to become the 'divine' poet, drawn upwards from the sublunary world into a heaven of ideals that, however impractical, were always admirable. Not that the sense of a man with his mind on higher things was merely wishful. Hogg's version, for instance, of Shelley at Oxford – one biographical 'explanation' of his atheism in its early shape – has always, with its recollections of electrical experiments and audacious, sceptical talk, simply rung true. Like plenty of other anecdotes in the memoirs in this anthology, its details have been preserved in more recent and disinterested accounts.

And here we come to an odd fact about the little industry of commemoration whose climax was the opening of the Shelley Memorial at University College, Oxford. However untrustworthy and mutually hostile the memoirs excerpted in this volume, they have nevertheless contributed a great deal to our knowledge of the poet. This is not only because they are sometimes our clearest evidence, even in their evasions, about certain aspects of Shelley's life. (After all, most of the testimonies to which any biographer returns will be *parti pris*.) It is also because they often do seem, despite their deceptions or self-delusions, to bear the impressions of real memory – to catch, if not the character of the writer, at least a recall of the effects of knowing him. In this way, their efforts to make the best of his life could be thought to do a kind of justice to him. In part, this is because of a kind of unanimity in their verdicts, if not in their 'facts': Shelley undoubtedly inspired loyalty and affection that even the reader attentive to the memoirists' likely distortions must recognize. It is also because only a remarkable writer – and a writer

who made his life remarkable in his writings – could command such efforts at explanation. In 'Julian and Maddalo', a poem in which we can find a vivid depiction of his friendship with Byron, Shelley provides one of the many self-characterizations to be found in his writing, apparently inviting biographical criticism. He is Julian, 'passionately attached to those philosophical notions which assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may yet be susceptible' ('Julian and Maddalo', Preface). He is also, it is to be confessed, 'rather serious'. As if foreseeing all those posthumous memoirs, the poem's preface wryly invites us to test the ideals against the character: 'Julian, in spite of his heterodox opinions, is conjectured by his friends to possess some good qualities. How far this is possible the pious reader will determine'. It is an invitation that has proved difficult to refuse.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

References to works are by author's or editor's names, and volume and page number. If a person is author or editor of more than one work, an abbreviated form of the work's title is used (e.g. St Clair, *Trelawny*, p. 150).

Primary texts

- [Dix, J.,] *Pen and Ink Sketches of Poets, Preachers, and Politicians* (London, 1746)
- Hazlitt, William, 'On Paradox and Common-place', in *Table-Talk; or, Original Essays*, (London, 1821)
- [Hogg, Thomas Jefferson,] 'Shelley at Oxford', in *The New Monthly Magazine* (January, February, April, July, October, December 1832; May 1833)
- Hogg, Thomas Jefferson, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1858)
- Hunt, Leigh, *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries; with Recollections of the Author's Life, and of His Visit to Italy* (London: Henry Colburn, 1828)
- Hunt, Leigh, *The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt; with Reminiscences of Friends and Contemporaries*, 3 vols (London, 1850)
- Hunt, Thornton, 'Shelley. By One Who Knew Him', in *The Atlantic Monthly* (Boston) February, 1863: pp.183–203
- Medwin, Thomas, *Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron: Noted During a Residence with his Lordship at Pisa, in the Years 1821 and 1822* (London, 1824)
- Medwin, Thomas, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 vols (London: T.C. Newby, 1847)
- Medwin, Thomas, *The Shelley Papers. Memoir of Percy Bysshe Shelley by T. Medwin, Esq. and Original Poems and Papers by Percy Bysshe Shelley Now First Collected* (London, 1833)
- Peacock, Thomas Love, 'Memoirs of Shelley', in *Fraser's Magazine*, June 1858, January 1860, and March 1862
- Polidori, John, *The Diary of Dr. John William Polidori 1816*, ed. William Michael Rossetti (London: Elkin Mathews, 1911)
- Shelley, Lady Jane (ed.), *Shelley Memorials: from Authentic Sources* (London, 1859)

- [Shelley, Mary (ed.)] *Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London, 1824)
- Shelley, Mary (ed.), *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments, by Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 vols (London, 1840)
- Trelawny, E. J., *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron* (London: Edward Moxon, 1858)
- Trelawny, E. J., *Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author*, 2 vols (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1878)

Secondary texts

- Barcus, James E. (ed.), *Shelley. The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975)
- Bennett, Betty T. (ed.), *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 3 vols (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980–88)
- (ed.), *Selected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995)
- Browning, Robert, 'Essay on Shelley' in *The Poems, Volume I*, ed., John Pettigrew (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1981)
- Butler, Marilyn, *Peacock Displayed. A Satirist in His Context* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979)
- Cameron, K. N. (ed.), *Shelley and His Circle 1773–1822*, Vol. II (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961)
- (ed.), *Shelley and His Circle 1773–1822*, Vol. III (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970)
- (ed.), *Shelley and His Circle 1773–1822*, Vol. IV (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970)
- Engelberg, Karsten Klejs, *The Making of the Shelley Myth. An annotated bibliography of criticism of Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1822–1860* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1988)
- Feldman, Paula R. and Diana Scott-Kilvert (eds), *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814–1844*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987)
- Forman, H. Buxton (ed.), *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, by Thomas Medwin (London: Oxford University Press, 1913)
- Garnett, Richard, 'Shelley in Pall Mall', in *Macmillan's Magazine*, No. 8 (June, 1860) pp. 100–110
- (ed.), *Relics of Shelley* (London: Edward Moxon & Co., 1862)
- Grylls, R. Glynn, *Mary Shelley. A Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938)
- Holmes, Richard, *Shelley. The Pursuit* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974)
- Hutchinson, Thomas (ed.), *Shelley. Poetical Works*, rev. G.M. Matthews (London: Oxford University Press, 1970)

- Ingpen, Roger, *Shelley in England: New Facts and Letters from the Shelley-Whitton Papers*, 2 vols (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1917)
- Jones, Frederick L. (ed.), *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964)
- (ed.), *Maria Gisborne & Edward E. Williams, Shelley's Friends. Their Journals and Letters* (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951)
- Jones, Stanley, *Hazlitt: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989)
- Lovell, Ernest J., *Captain Medwin: Friend of Byron and Shelley* (Austin, Tx: University of Texas Press, 1962)
- (ed.), *Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966)
- Marchand, *Byron. A Biography*, 3 vols (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957)
- Matthews, Geoffrey, and Kelvin Everest (eds), *The Poems of Shelley. Volume I 1804–1817* (London: Longman, 1989)
- Medwin, Thomas, *The Angler in Wales*, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1834)
- Miller, Barnette, *Leigh Hunt's Relations with Byron, Shelley and Keats* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1910)
- Norman, Sylva, *Flight of the Skylark. The Development of Shelley's Reputation* (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954)
- Redpath, Theodore, *The Young Romantics and Critical Opinion 1807–1824* (London: Harrap, 1973)
- Reiman, Donald H. (ed.), *Shelley and His Circle 1773–1822*, Vol. V (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973)
- Rolleston, Maud, *Talks with Lady Shelley* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1925)
- St Clair, William, *Trelawny. The Incurable Romancer* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1977)
- , *The Godwins and the Shelleys. The Biography of a Family* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989)
- Smith, Robert M., *The Shelley Legend* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945)
- Stocking, Marion Kingston (ed.), *The Journals of Claire Clairmont* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968)
- Sullivan, Alvin (ed.), *British Literary Magazines. The Romantic Age, 1789–1836* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983)
- Taylor, Charles H., Jr., *The Early Collected Editions of Shelley's Poems* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1958)
- Tennyson, Hallam, *Alfred Lord Tennyson. A Memoir*, 1st ed. 1897 (London, 1899)
- Thompson, James R., *Leigh Hunt* (Boston, Mass.: Twayne, 1977)

White, Newman Ivey, *Shelley*, 2 vols, first published 1940, 2nd ed. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1947)

—— (ed.), *The Unextinguished Hearth. Shelley and His Contemporary Critics* (1938; rpt. London: Frank Cass & Co., 1966)

CHRONOLOGY

- 1792 (4 August) Percy Bysshe Shelley born.
- 1798 Enters the school of the Rev. Edwards, the local vicar.
- 1802 Begins boarding at Syon House Academy, Isleworth, Middlesex.
- 1804 (September) Is sent to Eton College, where he remains for the next six years.
- 1809 Meets and begins a correspondence with his cousin, Harriet Grove.
- 1810 (March) *Zastrozzi*, a Gothic novel, published. (October) Shelley begins at University College, Oxford, and meets Thomas Jefferson Hogg.
- 1811 (February) 'The Necessity of Atheism' published. (March) Shelley writes to Leigh Hunt for the first time; Shelley and Hogg expelled from University College. (April) Shelley becomes friendly with Harriet Westbrook and her sister, Eliza. (May) Shelley meets Leigh Hunt. (August) Shelley and Harriet Westbrook elope to Edinburgh where, though both under legal age, they are married on 29 August. (November) The Shelleys leave York for the Lake District with Eliza Westbrook after Hogg attempts to seduce Harriet.
- 1812 (January) Shelley writes to Godwin for the first time. (February) The Shelleys travel to Ireland with Eliza Westbrook, returning to Wales in April. (June) They travel to Lynmouth, Devon, where they live for two months. (October) The Shelleys are in London, and Shelley first meets Godwin. (November) Shelley meets Thomas Love Peacock and Mary Godwin; his friendship with Hogg is restored. (December) Shelley returns to Wales with Harriet and Eliza, living for three months at Tremadoc, a model community created by philanthropist and MP William Madocks.
- 1813 (April) After another trip to Ireland, the Shelleys are back in London. (May) *Queen Mab* is printed. (June) The Shelleys' first child, Eliza Ianthe, is born. (July) The couple are staying in Bracknell, Berkshire, near their friend Mrs Boinville. (December) They move to Windsor, though Shelley continues to spend much of his time with the Boinvilles.

- 1814 (22 March) Shelley re-marries Harriet in London, possibly because of doubts about the legality of their Scottish wedding. (May) Shelley meets Mary Godwin again. (July) Harriet comes to London, and Shelley tells her that he is in love with Mary Godwin. On 28 July, he, Mary, and Claire Clairmont leave for France. They spend August and early September travelling through France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland, before returning to London. Godwin refuses to meet Shelley, who lives with Mary and Claire Clairmont at various London addresses. (30 November) Harriet Shelley gives birth to a son, Charles.
- 1815 (January) Hogg commences an amorous correspondence with Mary. (22 February) Mary gives birth, prematurely, to a girl, who dies two weeks later. (August) Shelley and Mary rent a house at Bishopsgate, near Windsor. *Alastor* is written by the end of 1815.
- 1816 (24 January) Mary gives birth to a son, William. (February) *Alastor* published. (March) Claire Clairmont begins an affair with Byron; she is now living in London with Shelley and Mary. (May) The three of them leave England for the Continent and travel to Geneva. (June) They move to a small house at Cologny; Byron stays nearby at Villa Diodati. They travel in the locality, visiting Mont Blanc at the end of July. (September) The Shelley party returns to England. (October) Fanny Imlay, Mary Godwin's half-sister, commits suicide. (10 December) Harriet Shelley's body found in the Serpentine; Shelley is informed by Thomas Hookham on 15 December. On 30 December he and Mary are married, and he is soon on friendly terms once more with Godwin.
- 1817 (January) The commencement of the Chancery hearing to settle custody of Ianthe and Charles Shelley; on 12 January, Claire Clairmont's daughter by Byron is born, and called Alba – later, at Byron's request, Allegra. 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty' published in *The Examiner*. The Shelleys stay with the Hunts. (March) They move to Marlow, where Peacock lives. (September) Mary gives birth to a daughter, Clara. (November) *Laon and Cythna* printed, but withdrawn from publication. Shelley agrees to make alterations to it.
- 1818 (January) *The Revolt of Islam*, the altered and retitled *Laon and Cythna*, is published. 'Ozymandias' appears in *The Examiner*. The Shelleys return to London. (March) *Frankenstein* published anonymously. The Shelleys, with their two children, Claire Clairmont, and her daughter, Allegra, depart for Italy. After travel around Northern Italy, they settle in Bagni di Lucca in June. (July) Shelley translates the *Symposium*. (September) Shelley begins *Prometheus Unbound*.

- Clara Shelley dies. (October) The Shelleys in Venice, where Shelley spends time with Byron and begins 'Julian and Maddalo'. (November) The Shelley party, including Claire Clairmont, travels to Rome and Naples. (December) 'Elena Adelaide Shelley' registered in Naples as the Shelleys' child.
- 1819 (28 February) The Shelleys and Claire Clairmont leave Naples. They stay in Rome until mid-June. (7 June) William Shelley dies. (August) Shelley completes *The Cenci*; later this month he hears of the Peterloo Massacre, which inspires 'The Mask of Anarchy'. The Shelleys spend the next four months in Florence, where 'Ode to the West Wind' is composed. (November) The Shelleys' son, Percy Florence, is born on 12 November.
- 1820 (January) The Shelleys move to Pisa. (March) *The Cenci* is published. (June) Elena Adelaide Shelley dies in Naples. (August) *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts, with Other Poems* is published. (October) Thomas Medwin arrives. (December) The Shelleys meet Emilia Viviani.
- 1821 (January) Edward and Jane Williams arrive in Pisa. Shelley completes 'The Witch of Atlas' and commences *A Defence of Poetry*. (February) Shelley writes *Epipsychidion*; Keats dies on 23 February. (May) The Shelley household moves to Bagni di Pisa, where they live for six months. (June) Shelley writes *Adonais*, an elegy to Keats. (August) Shelley in Ravenna with Byron. Mary Shelley writes to her friend Mrs Hoppner denying rumours about the true parentage of Elena Adelaide Shelley. (September) Emilia Viviani marries. (November) Byron arrives in Pisa. Shelley completes *Hellas*.
- 1822 (January) Trelawny arrives in Pisa. (February) *Hellas* published. The building of Byron's boat, the *Bolivar*, and Shelley's, the *Don Juan*, begins. (April) Allegra dies. The Shelleys move, with the Williamses, to Casa Magni, Lerici, near La Spezia. (May) The Hunts sail from England. Shelley begins work on his *Triumph of Life*. (June) Mary Shelley suffers a miscarriage. (1 July) Shelley sails to Leghorn to meet the Hunts. (8 July) They set off on the return journey with deckhand Charles Vivian. (17 July) Williams's body is washed ashore, and the next day so are Shelley's and Charles Vivian's. Williams and Shelley are buried in quicklime. (19 July) Trelawny tells Mary Shelley and Jane Williams of the discovery of the bodies. They travel to Pisa with Claire Clairmont. On 16 August, Shelley's body is exhumed and cremated, under Trelawny's supervision, on the beach near Viareggio, where it was washed ashore. Byron and Hunt are present, but Medwin arrives just too late to witness the ritual. In January 1823,

Shelley's ashes are buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. In April 1823, Trelawny arrives in Rome to organize the reburial of the ashes and the erection of a gravestone with Leigh Hunt's suggested epitaph (COR CORDIUM) and his own addition of lines from *The Tempest* ('Nothing of him that doth fade...').

COPY TEXTS

The following extracts are reproduced in facsimile except in one case (indicated in the headnote) where the text has been reset due to the poor quality of the original. Breaks between excerpts (which may cover paragraphs or whole volumes) are indicated by three asterisks:

* * *

In order to fit texts comfortably to the pages of this edition certain liberties have been taken with the format of the original: occasionally right-hand pages have become left-hand pages (and vice versa) and text from consecutive pages has been fitted onto a single page. Endnotes in this edition refer to Pickering & Chatto page and line numbers. Readers wishing to consult the passages in the original are referred to the table below.

TEXT NO.	PROVENANCE	ORIGINAL PAGE NUMBERS	P&C page no. ff
1.	<i>BL</i>	354-9	3
2.	<i>BL</i>	iii-viii	11
3.	<i>CUL</i>	248-59	20
4.	<i>CUL</i>	174-8, 182-8, 202-5, 227-9	36
5.	<i>CUL</i>	January 1832: 91-6 February 1832: 137-8, 139-40 April 1832: 346-51 July 1832: 67-73 December 1832: 509-13 May 1833: 23-9	55 61 64 70 77 82
6.	<i>CUL</i>	9-10, 25-9, 41-51, 104-6	93
7.	<i>CUL</i>	I: xiii-xvi, xxiv-xxviii; II: 344-52	118
8.	<i>CUL</i>	140-44	137
9.	<i>CUL</i> <i>LL</i>	I: 27-34, 147-52, 185-99, 324-31; II: 24-6	145
10.	<i>CUL</i>	II: 188-200; III: 16-22	185

TEXT NO.	PROVENANCE	ORIGINAL PAGE NUMBERS	P&C page no. ff
11.	<i>CUL</i>	I: v–xii, 136–41, 444–52, 457–60; II: 1–8, 300–10, 414–20, 536–8	209
12.	<i>BL</i>	20–3, 57–6, 70–75, 115–35, 139–43	267
13.	<i>LL</i>	June 1858: 643–4, 652–9	311
14.	<i>BL</i>	iii–vi, 21–3, 61–6, 67–8, 160–64	324
15.	<i>LL</i>	January 1860: 92–104, 109 March 1862: 343–6	345 358
16.	<i>BL</i>	186–9, 196–8	365
17.	<i>CUL</i>	I: v–xvii, 107–17, 156–62; II: 14–20, 240–45	374
18.	reset	101, 106–8, 112–13, 127–8	419

Texts are reproduced by kind permission of: *BL* – the British Library Board; *CUL* – the Syndics of Cambridge University Library; *LL* – the London Library.

William Hazlitt, 'On Paradox and Common-place', in *Table-Talk; or, Original Essays*, 2 vols (London, 1821)

Hazlitt's description of Shelley is unusual in having been published during the poet's lifetime. Other accounts based on personal knowledge of Shelley were posthumous: attempts either to form or to exploit his reputation. Written by friends and followers, these memoirs presented themselves as sympathetic, even if sympathy was characterized by the effort to exculpate Shelley from the misconduct or intellectual folly of which his opponents accused him. Hazlitt's portrait is written by a member of the liberal, literary circles in which Shelley moved for a time, but is satirical rather than admiring. He was often enough mocked by those who did not know him and were his natural ideological foes; this text is interesting (and unique) because its satire comes from a writer who did know him, and who might have been expected to have shared his political discontent.

Hazlitt became acquainted with Shelley shortly after Harriet Shelley's suicide and his marriage to Mary. In February 1817, he and Mary were staying with Leigh Hunt and his family in Hampstead. During their stay, they met many of Hunt's literary acquaintances, including Keats, Charles Lamb, and Charles Ollier, who was to become Shelley's publisher (Holmes, p. 359). Mary Shelley's *Journal* records meeting Hazlitt twice. On the first occasion, there was clearly animated discussion: 'Sunday 9th. . . Several of Hunt's acquaintances come in the evening – Music – after Supper a discussion untill 3 in the morning with Hazlitt concerning monarchy & republicanism' (Feldman and Scott-Kilvert, I, p. 163). At this time the Shelleys also frequently visited Godwin, in whose company they almost certainly met Hazlitt again. Indeed, in a letter to them in July 1821, Leigh Hunt implies as much when he tries to explain Hazlitt's motivation for penning the portrait given here: 'Did Shelley ever cut him up at Godwin's table? Somebody says so, and that this is the reason of Hazlitt's attack' (Jones, *Letters*, II, p. 383). Hunt clearly saw the essay as an act of betrayal, and says in the same letter, 'I wrote him an angry letter about Shelley – the first one I ever did; and I believe he is very sorry: but this is his way. Next week, perhaps, he will write a panegyric upon him. He says that Shelley provokes him by his going to a pernicious extreme on the liberal side, and so hurting it'.

At the time that he met Shelley, Hazlitt was almost forty, and was at a peak of productivity as a writer of essays and reviews for periodicals. It is difficult not to hear in his description of the 'shrill-voiced' intellectual enthusiast that he encountered at the Hunts' the resentment of the jobbing

writer for the aristocratic dilettante. Yet we should not forget that, for all the immediacy of Hazlitt's characteristic present tense, the essay dates from four years after the meetings on which it was based. Hazlitt's resentment is likely to have become greater in the interim. By the time that he wrote 'On Paradox and Common-place', the living that he was attempting to earn from periodical journalism and from giving lectures on literary topics had become more precarious than ever (see Jones, *Hazlitt*, pp. 304–6). The Shelleys were now in Italy, and Hazlitt was absorbed by the unrequited passion for his landlady's daughter (and the arrangement of his separation from his wife) that he turned into his strangely confessional *Liber Amoris* (1823). In fact, he wrote most of *Table-Talk* at an inn outside Edinburgh, having travelled North seeking a Scottish divorce. It was, we might say, a difficult time.

The essay from which the passage below is taken sets out to distinguish between 'originality' (which is admirable) and its pale mimic, 'singularity' (which is merely the capacity to manufacture paradoxes). The unthinking prejudices of those who rely entirely on 'custom and authority' are but mirrored by the 'paradoxes' of those who, 'under the influence of novelty and restless vanity', try to think or say what is 'singular' (I, p. 350). This comparison structures the whole essay: 'With one party, whatever is, is right: with their antagonists, whatever is, is wrong. These swallow every antiquated absurdity: those catch at every new, unfledged project – and are alike enchanted with the velocipedes or the French Revolution' (p. 352). Shelley is taken as a prime specimen of the latter sort.

The author of the *Prometheus Unbound* (to take an individual instance of the last character) has a fire in his eye, a fever in his blood, a maggot in his brain, a hectic flutter in his speech, which mark out the philosophic fanatic. He is sanguine-complexioned, and shrill-voiced. As is often observable in the case of religious enthusiasts, there is a slenderness of constitutional *stamina*, which renders the flesh no match for the spirit. His bending, flexible form appears to take no strong hold of things, does not grapple with the world about him, but slides from it like a river—

“ And in its liquid texture mortal wound
Receives no more than can the fluid air.”

The shock of accident, the weight of authority make no impression on his opinions, which retire like a feather, or rise from the encounter unhurt, through their own buoyancy. He is clogged by no dull system of realities, no earth-bound feelings, no rooted prejudices, by nothing that belongs to the mighty trunk and hard husk of nature and habit, but is drawn up by irresistible levity to the regions of mere speculation and fancy, to the sphere of air and fire, where his delighted spirit floats in “ seas of pearl and clouds of amber.” There is no *caput mortuum* of worn-out, thread-bare experience to serve as

ballast to his mind ; it is all volatile intellectual salt of tartar, that refuses to combine its evanescent, inflammable essence with any thing solid or any thing lasting. Bubbles are to him the only realities :—touch them, and they vanish. Curiosity is the only proper category of his mind, and though a man in knowledge, he is a child in feeling. Hence he puts every thing into a metaphysical crucible to judge of it himself and exhibit it to others as a subject of interesting experiment, without first making it over to the ordeal of his common sense or trying it on his heart. This faculty of speculating at random on all questions may in its overgrown and uninformed state do much mischief without intending it, like an overgrown child with the power of a man. Mr. Shelley has been accused of vanity—I think he is chargeable with extreme levity ; but this levity is so great, that I do not believe he is sensible of its consequences. He strives to overturn all established creeds and systems : but this is in him an effect of constitution. He runs before the most extravagant opinions, but this is because he is held back by none of the merely mechanical checks of sympathy and habit. He tampers with all sorts of obnoxious subjects, but it is less because he is gratified with the rankness of the taint, than

captivated with the intellectual phosphoric light they emit. It would seem that he wished not so much to convince or inform as to shock the public by the tenor of his productions, but I suspect he is more intent upon startling himself with his electrical experiments in morals and philosophy; and though they may scorch other people, they are to him harmless amusements, the coruscations of an *Aurora Borealis*, that "play round the head, but do not reach the heart." Still I could wish that he would put a stop to the incessant, alarming whirl of his Voltaic battery. With his zeal, his talent, and his fancy, he would do more good and less harm, if he were to give up his wilder theories, and if he took less pleasure in feeling his heart flutter in unison with the panic-struck apprehensions of his readers. Persons of this class, instead of consolidating useful and acknowledged truths, and thus advancing the cause of science and virtue, are never easy but in raising doubtful and disagreeable questions, which bring the former into disgrace and discredit. They are not contented to lead the minds of men to an eminence overlooking the prospect of social amelioration, unless, by forcing them up slippery paths and to the utmost verge of possibility, they can dash them down the pre-

cipice the instant they reach the promised Pisgah. They think it nothing to hang up a beacon to guide or warn, if they do not at the same time frighten the community like a comet. They do not mind making their principles odious, provided they can make themselves notorious. To win over the public opinion by fair means is to them an insipid, common-place mode of popularity: they would either force it by harsh methods, or seduce it by intoxicating potions. Egotism, petulance, licentiousness, levity of principle (whatever be the source) is a bad thing in any one, and most of all, in a philosophical reformer. Their humanity, their wisdom is always "at the horizon." Any thing new, any thing remote, any thing questionable, comes to them in a shape that is sure of a cordial welcome—a welcome cordial in proportion as the object is new, as it is apparently impracticable, as it is a doubt whether it is at all desirable. Just after the final failure, the completion of the last act of the French Revolution, when the legitimate wits were crying out, "The farce is over, now let us go to supper," these provoking reasoners got up a lively hypothesis about introducing the domestic government of the Nays into this country as a feasible set-off against the success of the Boroughmongers.

The practical is with them always the antipodes of the ideal; and like other visionaries of a different stamp, they date the Millennium or New Order of Things from the Restoration of the Bourbons. Fine words butter no parsnips, says the proverb. "While you are talking of marrying, I am thinking of hanging," says Captain Macheath. Of all people the most tormenting are those who bid you hope in the midst of despair, who, by never caring about any thing but their own sanguine, hair-brained Utopian schemes, have at no time any particular cause for embarrassment and despondency because they have never the least chance of success, and who by including whatever does not hit their idle fancy, kings, priests, religion, government, public abuses or private morals, in the same sweeping clause of ban and anathema, do all they can to combine all parties in a common cause against them, and to prevent every one else from advancing one step farther in the career of practical improvement than they do in that of imaginary and unattainable perfection.

NOTE

p. 3, ll. 14-15: 'And in its liquid texture . . .', *Paradise Lost*, VI, ll. 348-9, slightly adapted.

Mary Shelley, Preface to *Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London, 1824)

On 22 August 1824, two years after Shelley's death, Mary Shelley wrote from London to Leigh Hunt who was still in Italy with his family (thinking of the distance between the two countries, she commented, '... it seems to me as if I wrote to Paradise from Purgatory'). As in many of her letters from the years immediately after Shelley's death, financial concerns are uppermost. With Peacock's help, she has, she says, begun a 'Negociation' with her father-in-law, Sir Timothy Shelley. In return for 'sacrificing a small part of my future expectations on the will' (by which she means the money that will come to her on his death) 'I shall ensure myself a sufficiency, for the present' (Bennett, *Letters*, I, 444). There is, however, a condition – a condition with which she has no choice but to comply. 'I have been obliged however as an indispensable preliminary, to suppress the *Post. Poems* – More than 300 copies had been sold so this is the less provoking, and I have been obliged to promise not to bring dear S's name before the public again during Sir. T—'s life. There is no great harm in this, since he is above 70, & from choice I should not think of writing memoirs *now*'. She adds that, by the account that she has had from Sir Timothy's lawyer, 'Sir T. writhes under the fame of his incomparable son as if it were a most grievous injury done to him'.

In some ways, Mary's position was to become unexpectedly more secure two years later when Charles, Shelley's son by Harriet, died of consumption, aged eleven. Now her son Percy was the Shelley heir, and she could not easily be disowned by the family. Yet her efforts as a writer of novels, tales, and essays brought little financial reward. She and her son remained financially dependent upon her father-in-law for the next twenty years: he lived into his nineties, dying in 1844. Until she was permitted to produce an edition of Shelley's *Poetical Works* in 1839, the *Posthumous Poems* volume was her most significant attempt to shape her husband's reputation and the signed preface to the collection was her only published statement about him. Yet even in her enforced silence she was not inactive. She privately confessed that her novel *The Last Man*, published in 1826 as 'by the Author of *Frankenstein*', contained, in the character of Adrian, a portrait of 'my lost Shelley': 'I have endeavoured, but how inadequately to give some idea of him. . . the sketch has pleased some of those who best loved him' (letter to John Bowring, in Bennett, *Letters*, I, 512). She secretly encouraged the Paris publishers of the Galignani edition of the works of Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley, which appeared in 1829 (see her correspondence with Cyrus Redding and William Galignani in Bennett, *Letters*, II). This collection contained a

biographical sketch of Shelley that borrowed largely from her own preface to *Posthumous Poems*, and Leigh Hunt's *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (see the extracts in this volume). Perhaps most influentially, she promoted the romantic tale of the circumstances in which *Frankenstein* was produced in a Preface to a new edition of that novel, published in 1831. In doing so, she managed to imply that she and Shelley had been married when they went to Switzerland in 1816 (see St Clair, 485).

Even if *Posthumous Poems* was quickly suppressed in the face of Sir Timothy's displeasure, Mary Shelley still remembered it, fifteen years later, as a labour of love. In December 1838, when she wrote to Edward Moxon to accept his terms for the publication of the *Poetical Works*, she described how she had composed the earlier collection from 'fragments of paper which in the hands of an indifferent person would never have been decyphered – the labour of putting it together was immense' (Bennett, *Letters*, II, 300). By the time that she recalled this, she had obtained permission from Sir Timothy to produce an edition of Shelley's writing, provided that no memoir were attached. Famously, in the *Poetical Works* of 1839 she kept to his stipulation by turning her knowledge and opinions to the 'Notes' that framed Shelley's poems. These have been preserved in many subsequent editions, even where the texts of the poems themselves have been amended. Most importantly, they have been reprinted in the Oxford Standard Authors collection, which has been the standard edition of Shelley's poetry for much of this century. (For a short history of editions, see the Introduction to *The Poems of Shelley. Volume I 1804–1817*, eds Geoffrey Matthews and Kelvin Everest.) For this reason, they have not been reprinted in this volume.

When she produced *Posthumous Poems*, Mary Shelley still imagined that there would eventually be an authorised biography of Shelley – either written by herself, or by someone, probably Leigh Hunt, whom she could trust and prompt. The Notes and Preface to her 1839 edition of Shelley's *Poetical Works* indicate, however, that, fifteen years later, she was not unhappy to leave this biography unwritten, and that Sir Timothy's edict was therefore not so unwelcome.

I abstain from any remark on the occurrences of his private life, except inasmuch as the passions which they engendered inspired his poetry. This is not the time to relate the truth; and I should reject any colouring of the truth. No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others; nor shall I further allude to them than to remark that the errors of action committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed by those who loved him, in the firm conviction that, were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary (Hutchinson, p. xxi).

So she wrote in her 1839 Preface. The defensiveness here (so quick to mention those 'errors') concedes that the poet's life has been a matter of controversy, but in order to imply that only small minds will fail to see beyond this. None of the accounts of the life that have been given are to be trusted, but, turning a necessity into a source of pride, Shelley's widow declares that she is not going to enter the biographical fray. She will speak only of his 'qualities': his philanthropy, his idealism, his 'extreme sensibility' (ibid, p. xxii).

Sir Timothy's ban on a memoir might even have made it easier for the 1839 edition to imagine Shelley as, in its editor's words, 'a pure-minded and exalted being' (ibid, p. xxiii). She can only hint at the misfortunes with which he had to struggle, so his poetry can be seen all the more clearly as a transcendence of difficulties that would have broken an ordinary spirit. Her note on *The Revolt of Islam*, for instance, describes it as a poem of reborn hopes after the 'saddest events' of late 1816 and early 1817 – by which she must mean the suicide of Harriet Shelley and the case to decide the custody of Shelley's two children (ibid, p. 156). Yet her own reticence about Shelley's life, and 'the persecutions he underwent', matches her celebration of a poem in which the poet's 'deep unexpressed passion' and 'sense of injury' engender a creation freed from 'the weakness and evil which cling to real life'. Indeed, what embarrassment Mary Shelley seems to feel when she is finally allowed to produce an edition of Shelley's poems is caused by their political content. The respectable widow does have to explain that the noble poet was 'the victim of the state of feeling inspired by the reaction of the French Revolution' (ibid, p. xxi), though she can take refuge in her certainty that, as her Note to *The Mask of Anarchy* puts it, 'Days of outrage have passed away'.

So Mary Shelley was spared the difficulties – and presumably the evasions – to be found in most memoirs of Shelley. This is striking when one looks at her letters and her journals, now available to us. Without the pressure (sensed by the other contributors to this volume) of public explanation, Mary Shelley was able to sustain in these private documents a consistent rhetoric of reverence and devotion. The high tone of the following preface to *Posthumous Poems* is therefore quite consistent with her references to her husband in her private writings. It would have been put under much more strain if she had undertaken to be Shelley's biographer rather than his editor.

PREFACE.

It had been my wish, on presenting the public with the Posthumous Poems of Mr. SHELLEY, to have accompanied them by a biographical notice; as it appeared to me, that at this moment, a narration of the events of my husband's life would come more gracefully from other hands than mine, I applied to Mr. LEIGH HUNT. The distinguished friendship that Mr. SHELLEY felt for him, and the enthusiastic affection with which Mr. LEIGH HUNT clings to his friend's memory, seemed to point him out as the person best calculated for such an undertaking. His absence from this country, which prevented our mutual explanation, has unfortunately rendered my scheme abortive. I do not doubt but that on some other occasion he will pay this tribute to his lost friend, and sincerely regret that the volume which I edit has not been honoured by its insertion.

The comparative solitude in which Mr. SHELLEY lived, was the occasion that he was personally known to few; and his fearless enthusiasm in the cause,

which he considered the most sacred upon earth, the improvement of the moral and physical state of mankind, was the chief reason why he, like other illustrious reformers, was pursued by hatred and calumny. No man was ever more devoted than he, to the endeavour of making those around him happy; no man ever possessed friends more unfeignedly attached to him. The ungrateful world did not feel his loss, and the gap it made seemed to close as quickly over his memory as the murderous sea above his living frame. Hereafter men will lament that his transcendent powers of intellect were extinguished before they had bestowed on them their choicest treasures. To his friends his loss is irremediable: the wise, the brave, the gentle, is gone for ever! He is to them as a bright vision, whose radiant track, left behind in the memory, is worth all the realities that society can afford. Before the critics contradict me, let them appeal to any one who had ever known him: to see him was to love him; and his presence, like Ithuriel's spear, was alone sufficient to disclose the falsehood of the tale, which his enemies whispered in the ear of the ignorant world.

His life was spent in the contemplation of nature, in arduous study, or in acts of kindness and affection. He was an elegant scholar and a profound metaphysician: without possessing much scientific knowledge, he was unrivalled in the justness and extent of his observations on natural objects; he knew every plant

by its name, and was familiar with the history and habits of every production of the earth; he could interpret without a fault each appearance in the sky, and the varied phenomena of heaven and earth filled him with deep emotion. He made his study and reading-room of the shadowed copse, the stream, the lake and the waterfall. Ill health and continual pain preyed upon his powers, and the solitude in which we lived, particularly on our first arrival in Italy, although congenial to his feelings, must frequently have weighed upon his spirits; those beautiful and affecting "Lines, written in dejection at Naples," were composed at such an interval; but when in health, his spirits were buoyant and youthful to an extraordinary degree.

Such was his love for nature, that every page of his poetry is associated in the minds of his friends with the loveliest scenes of the countries which he inhabited. In early life he visited the most beautiful parts of this country and Ireland. Afterwards the Alps of Switzerland became his inspirers. "Prometheus Unbound" was written among the deserted and flower-grown ruins of Rome, and when he made his home under the Pisan hills, their roofless recesses harboured him as he composed "The Witch of Atlas," "Adonais" and "Hellas." In the wild but beautiful Bay of Spezia, the winds and waves which he loved became his playmates. His days were chiefly spent on the water; the management of his boat, its alterations and improvements, were his

principal occupation. At night, when the unclouded moon shone on the calm sea, he often went alone in his little shallop to the rocky caves that bordered it, and sitting beneath their shelter wrote "The Triumph of Life," the last of his productions. The beauty but strangeness of this lonely place, the refined pleasure which he felt in the companionship of a few selected friends, our entire sequestration from the rest of the world, all contributed to render this period of his life one of continued enjoyment. I am convinced that the two months we passed there were the happiest he had ever known: his health even rapidly improved, and he was never better than when I last saw him, full of spirits and joy, embark for Leghorn, that he might there welcome LEIGH HUNT to Italy. I was to have accompanied him, but illness confined me to my room, and thus put the seal on my misfortune. His vessel bore out of sight with a favourable wind, and I remained awaiting his return by the breakers of that sea which was about to engulf him.

He spent a week at Pisa, employed in kind offices towards his friend, and enjoying with keen delight the renewal of their intercourse. He then embarked with Mr. WILLIAMS, the chosen and beloved sharer of his pleasures and of his fate, to return to us. We waited for them in vain; the sea by its restless moaning seemed to desire to inform us of what we would not learn:—but a veil may well be drawn over such misery. The real anguish of these moments

transcended all the fictions that the most glowing imagination ever pourtrayed : our seclusion, the savage nature of the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, and our immediate vicinity to the troubled sea, combined to embue with strange horror our days of uncertainty. The truth was at last known,—a truth that made our loved and lovely Italy appear a tomb, its sky a pall. Every heart echoed the deep lament, and my only consolation was in the praise and earnest love that each voice bestowed and each countenance demonstrated for him we had lost,—not, I fondly hope, for ever : his unearthly and elevated nature is a pledge of the continuation of his being, although in an altered form. Rome received his ashes ; they are deposited beneath its weed-grown wall, and “ the world’s sole monument ” is enriched by his remains.

I must add a few words concerning the contents of this volume. “ Julian and Maddalo,” “ The Witch of Atlas,” and most of the Translations, were written some years ago, and, with the exception of “ The Cyclops,” and the Scenes from the “ *Magico Prodigioso*,” may be considered as having received the author’s ultimate corrections. “ The Triumph of Life ” was his last work, and was left in so unfinished a state, that I arranged it in its present form with great difficulty. All his poems which were scattered in periodical works are collected in this volume, and I have added a reprint of “ Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude : ”—the difficulty with which a copy can be obtained, is the cause of its republica-

tion. Many of the Miscellaneous Poems, written on the spur of the occasion, and never retouched, I found among his manuscript books, and have carefully copied: I have subjoined, whenever I have been able, the date of their composition.

I do not know whether the critics will reprehend the insertion of some of the most imperfect among these; but I frankly own, that I have been more actuated by the fear lest any monument of his genius should escape me, than the wish of presenting nothing but what was complete to the fastidious reader. I feel secure that the Lovers of SHELLEY'S Poetry (who know how more than any other poet of the present day every line and word he wrote is instinct with peculiar beauty) will pardon and thank me: I consecrate this volume to them.

The size of this collection has prevented the insertion of any prose pieces. They will hereafter appear in a separate publication.

MARY W. SHELLEY.

London, June 1st, 1824.

Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron: Noted During a Residence with his Lordship at Pisa, in the Years 1821 and 1822, by Thomas Medwin, Esq. of the 24th Light Dragoons, Author of 'Ahasuerus the Wanderer' (London, 1824)

There is a telling entry in the Index of Newman Ivey White's *Shelley* (1940), the single most important and influential twentieth-century biography of the poet. Under the heading for Thomas Medwin's *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* it simply says 'citations too numerous to specify' (II, lxi). White's expression of his debt to Medwin is all the more significant as he is using H. Buxton Forman's 1913 edition of Medwin's text, which provides a detailed commentary on Medwin's almost innumerable errors and confusions. White, the most dedicated and scholarly of researchers, announces his reliance on the most careless of biographers – a writer mocked for his inaccuracies from the first appearance of his *Conversations of Lord Byron* in 1824. This paradox is characteristic of Medwin's role as a memoirist of Shelley: though constantly wrong on matters of detail, he has often been felt to be fundamentally truthful, his very mistakes a sign of his lack of guile. 'Muddled and confused' is White's (in context) rather kind judgement on Medwin, whose 'general good faith' he still trusts (I, 437). It is a kindness that is particularly striking when we consider that Medwin's first memoir of Shelley, given below, appears as a lengthy footnote to a passage of the *Conversations* that tells a peculiarly audacious lie.

Medwin's surprising authority derived in part from his knowledge of Shelley as a child and adolescent, a knowledge unique amongst the poet's memoirists. He was Shelley's second cousin, and his family home was in Horsham, only a couple of miles from Shelley's at Field Place. The two were boyhood friends, and for a while attended school together at Syon House (although Medwin, born in 1788, was four years older). Medwin matriculated at Oxford in 1805, and left without a degree before Shelley's arrival in 1810, but the two seem to have remained intimate during this period, and certainly met again in London in 1811, after Shelley's expulsion from Oxford. In his two later memoirs, *The Shelley Papers* (1833) and *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1847), Medwin was to make claims upon this early intimacy.

In 1812, Medwin joined the 24th Light Dragoons. He sailed for India in August of that year, and served there with his regiment until 1819. As he tells the story, his interest in his poetic cousin was re-awakened when, just before he sailed from Bombay, he discovered a copy of *The Revolt of Islam*

on a Parsee book-stall. He was 'astonished at the greatness of his genius' (Lovell, *Captain Medwin*, 55). After his return, he retired on half-pay, and arrived in Geneva in September 1819. Here he rented a house with another half-pay lieutenant whom he had known in India, Edward Williams, and his 'wife', Jane. (They named their first child, born in 1820, Edward Medwin Williams.) He began a correspondence with Shelley, and in October 1820 travelled to meet him in Pisa (the Williams following a couple of months later). He was back in Geneva in August 1821, but returned to Pisa in November and was introduced by Shelley to Byron. He soon became Byron's fervent admirer, and began taking notes of the conversations that the two men had over the next few months. In March 1822, he left the 'Pisa circle', and was in Geneva once again when news reached him of Shelley's death. Though setting out immediately for Italy, he arrived shortly after the famous cremation of Shelley's body. As will be seen below, by altering the date of this event, he falsified his account so that he could make himself a witness to the dramatic ritual.

After stays in Paris and London, he was once again in Geneva, where he composed the *Conversations* in 1824. Mary Shelley was to write to John Cam Hobhouse in November 1824, shortly after its publication, saying that she had refused Medwin's request that she correct his manuscript. (Hobhouse had himself asked for her comments on his pamphlet 'Exposure of the Mis-statements Contained in Captain Medwin's Pretended Conversations of Lord Byron', which was eventually published anonymously in the *Westminster Review* a year later.)

He afterwards sent me his Memoir of Shelley – I found it one mass of mistakes – I returned it uncorrected – earnestly entreating him not to publish it – as it would be highly injurious to my interests to recall in this garbled manner past facts at a time that I was endeavoring to bring Sir T.S. to reason. When I have the book I will point out a few of these misstatements – The book has been a source of great pain to me & will be of more. (Bennett, *Letters*, I, 455)

Some of the mistakes that Medwin makes in the footnote memoir of Shelley, given here in its entirety, concern matters of fact that will continue to embarrass the poet's admirers. He says that Shelley returned to England in 1816 because of his wife Harriet's death, when, in fact, he had already returned, but was living, with Mary, separately from her. He says that Shelley married Mary the year after Harriet's death, but in fact the wedding took place only a fortnight after Shelley first received news of Harriet's suicide on December 15th, 1816. They seem convenient errors. His omissions, such as not mentioning that Mary Godwin (and Claire Clairmont) accompanied Shelley to Switzerland in 1816, are characteristic of Shelley's memoirists, as are his apologies for the poet's 'visionary' speculations.

Perhaps because of the antagonism that they aroused, Medwin's *Conversations* seems to have been rather successful (see Lovell, 176–92, for its reception). It went through six English editions within eight years, and was almost immediately published in America and translated into both French and German. As the first book-length memoir of Byron, it was both particularly influential and particularly open to attack. (For the picture that it gives of Byron, see *Byron*, in this edition.) Inevitably, it was Byron's reputation, rather than Shelley's, over which his antagonists took issue. It was Shelley's after-life, however, that continued to preoccupy Medwin. The headnotes in this volume to extracts from *The Shelley Papers* and *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* describe this preoccupation, and Medwin's life after 1824.

18th AUGUST, 1822.—On the occasion of Shelley's melancholy fate I revisited Pisa, and on the day of my arrival learnt that Lord Byron was gone to the sea-shore, to assist in performing the last offices to his friend.* We came to a spot marked by an old and withered trunk of a fir-tree; and near it, on the beach, stood a solitary hut covered with reeds. The situation was well calculated for a poet's

* It is hoped that the following memoir, as it relates to Lord Byron, may not be deemed misplaced here.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was removed from a private school at thirteen, and sent to Eton. He there shewed a character of great eccentricity, mixed in none of the amusements natural to his age, was of a melancholy and reserved disposition, fond of solitude, and made few friends. Neither did he distinguish himself much at Eton, for he had a great contempt for modern Latin verses, and his studies were directed to any thing rather than the exercises of his class. It was from an early acquaintance with German writers that he probably imbibed a romantic turn of mind; at least, we find him before fifteen publishing two Rosa-Matilda-like novels, called 'Jastrozzi' and 'The Rosicrucian,' that bore no marks of being the productions of a boy, and were much talked of, and reprobated as immoral by the journalists of the day. He also made great progress in chemistry. He used to say, that nothing ever delighted him so much as the discovery that there

grave. A few weeks before I had ridden with him and Lord Byron to this very spot, which I afterwards visited

were no *elements* of earth, fire, or water: but before he left school he nearly lost his life by being blown up in one of his experiments, and gave up the pursuit. He now turned his mind to metaphysics, and became infected with the materialism of the French school. Even before he was sent to University College, Oxford, he had entered into an epistolary theological controversy with a dignitary of the Church, under the feigned name of a woman; and, after the second term, he printed a pamphlet with a most extravagant title, 'The Necessity of Atheism.' This silly work, which was only a recapitulation of some of the arguments of Voltaire and the philosophers of the day, he had the madness to circulate among the bench of Bishops, not even disguising his name. The consequence was an obvious one:—he was summoned before the heads of the College, and, refusing to retract his opinions, on the contrary preparing to argue them with the examining Masters, was expelled the University. This disgrace in itself affected Shelley but little at the time, but was fatal to all his hopes of happiness and prospects in life; for it deprived him of his first love, and was the eventual means of alienating him for ever from his family. For some weeks after this expulsion his father refused to receive him under his roof; and when he did, treated him with such marked coldness, that he soon quitted what he no longer considered his home, went to London privately, and

more than once. In front was a magnificent extent of the blue and windless Mediterranean, with the Isles of Elba

thence eloped to Gretna Green with a Miss Westbrook,—their united ages amounting to thirty-three. This last act exasperated his father to such a degree, that he now broke off all communication with Shelley. After some stay in Edinburgh, we trace him into Ireland; and, that country being in a disturbed state, find him publishing a pamphlet, which had a great sale, and the object of which was to soothe the minds of the people, telling them that moderate firmness, and not open rebellion, would most tend to conciliate, and to give them their liberties.

He also spoke at some of their public meetings with great fluency and eloquence. Returning to England the latter end of 1812, and being at that time an admirer of Mr. Southey's poems, he paid a visit to the Lakes, where himself and his wife passed several days, at Keswick. He now became devoted to poetry, and after imbuing himself with 'The Age of Reason,' 'Spinoza,' and 'The Political Justice,' composed his 'Queen Mab,' and presented it to most of the literary characters of the day—among the rest to Lord Byron, who speaks of it in his note to 'The Two Foscari' thus:—"I shewed it to Mr. Sotheby as a poem of great power and imagination. I never wrote a line of the Notes, nor ever saw them except in their published form. No one knows better than the real author, that his opinions

and Gorgona,—Lord Byron's yacht at anchor in the offing : on the other side an almost boundless extent of sandy

“ and mine differ materially upon the metaphysical portion of that
 “ work ; though, in common with all who are not blinded by baseness
 “ and bigotry, I highly admire the poetry of that and his other produc-
 “ tions.” It is to be remarked here, that ‘ Queen Mab ’ eight or ten
 years afterwards fell into the hands of a knavish bookseller, who published it on his own account ; and on its publication and subsequent prosecution Shelley disclaimed the opinions contained in that work, as being the crude notions of his youth.

His marriage, by which he had two children, soon turned out (as might have been expected) an unhappy one, and a separation ensuing in 1816, he went abroad, and passed the summer of that year in Switzerland, where the scenery of that romantic country tended to make Nature a passion and an enjoyment ; and at Geneva he formed a friendship for Lord Byron, which was destined to last for life. It has been said that the perfection of every thing Lord Byron wrote at Diodati, (his Third Canto of ‘ Childe Harold,’ his ‘ Manfred,’ and ‘ Prisoner of Chillon,’) owed something to the critical judgment that Shelley exercised over those works, and to his dosing him (as he used to say) with Wordsworth. In the autumn of this year we find the subject of this Memoir at Como, where he wrote ‘ Rosalind and Helen,’ an eclogue, and an ode to the

wilderness, uncultivated and uninhabited, here and there interspersed in tufts with underwood curved by the sea-

Euganean Hills, marked with great pathos and beauty. His first visit to Italy was short, for he was soon called to England by his wife's melancholy fate, which ever after threw a cloud over his own. The year subsequent to this event he married Mary Wolstonecraft Godwin, daughter of the celebrated Mary Wolstonecraft and Godwin; and shortly before this period, heir to an income of many thousands a-year and a baronetage, he was in such pecuniary distress that he was nearly dying of hunger in the streets! Finding, soon after his coming of age, that he was entitled to some reversionary property in fee, he sold it to his father for an annuity of 1000*l.* a-year, and took a house at Marlow, where he persevered more than ever in his poetical and classical studies. It was during his residence in Buckinghamshire that he wrote his 'Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude;' perhaps one of the most perfect specimens of harmony in blank verse that our language possesses, and full of the wild scenes which his imagination had treasured up in his Alpine excursions. In this poem he deifies Nature much in the same way that Wordsworth did in his earlier productions.

Inattentive to pecuniary matters, and generous to excess, he soon found that he could not live on his income; and, still unforgiven by his family, he came to a resolution of quitting his native country, and never returning to it. There was another circumstance also that tended to disgust him with England: his children were taken from him

breeze, and stunted by the barren and dry nature of the soil in which it grew. At equal distances along the coast

by the Lord Chancellor, on the ground of his Atheism. He again crossed the Alps, and took up his residence at Venice. There he strengthened his intimacy with Lord Byron, and wrote his 'Revolt of Islam,' an allegorical poem in the Spenser stanza. Noticed very favourably in Blackwood's Magazine, it fell under the lash of 'The Quarterly,' which indulged itself in much personal abuse of the author, both openly in the review of that work, and insidiously under the critique of Hunt's 'Foliage.' Perhaps little can be said for the philosophy of 'The Loves of Laon and Cythra.' Like Mr. Owen of Lanark, he believed in the perfectibility of human nature, and looked forward to a period when a new golden age would return to earth,—when all the different creeds and systems of the world would be amalgamated into one,—crime disappear,—and man, freed from shackles civil and religious, bow before the throne "of his own aweless soul," or "of the Power unknown."

Wild and visionary as such a speculation must be confessed to be in the present state of society, it sprang from a mind enthusiastic in its wishes for the good of the species, and the amelioration of mankind and of society: and however mistaken the means of bringing about this reform or "revolt" may be considered, the object of his whole life and writings seems to have been to develope them. This is particularly observable in his next work 'The Prometheus Unbound,' a bold

stood high square towers, for the double purpose of guarding the coast from smuggling, and enforcing the quaran-

attempt to revive a lost play of Æschylus. This drama shews an acquaintance with the Greek tragedy-writers which perhaps no other person possessed in an equal degree, and was written at Rome amid the flower-covered ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. At Rome also he formed the story of 'The Cenci' into a tragedy, which, but for the harrowing nature of the subject, and the prejudice against any thing bearing his name, could not have failed to have had the greatest success,—if not on the stage, at least in the closet. Lord Byron was of opinion that it was the best play the age had produced, and not unworthy of the immediate followers of Shakspeare.

After passing several months at Naples, he finally settled with his lovely and amiable wife in Tuscany, where he passed the last four years in domestic retirement and intense application to study.

His acquirements were great. He was, perhaps, the first classic in Europe. The books he considered the models of style for prose and poetry were Plato and the Greek dramatists. He had made himself equally master of the modern languages. Calderon in Spanish, Petrarch and Dante in Italian, and Goëthe and Schiller in German, were his favourite authors. French he never read, and said he never could understand the beauty of Racine.

tine laws. This view was bounded by an immense extent of the Italian Alps, which are here particularly picturesque

Discouraged by the ill success of his writings—persecuted by the malice of his enemies—hated by the world, an outcast from his family, and a martyr to a painful complaint,—he was subject to occasional fits of melancholy and dejection. For the last four years, though he continued to write, he had given up publishing. There were two occasions, however, that induced him to break through his resolution. His ardent love of liberty inspired him to write ‘Hellas, or the Triumph of Greece,’ a drama, since translated into Greek, and which he inscribed to his friend Prince Maurocordato; and his attachment to Keats led him to publish an elegy, which he entitled ‘Adonais.’

This last is perhaps the most perfect of all his compositions, and the one he himself considered so. Among the mourners at the funeral of his poet-friend he draws this portrait of himself; (the stanzas were afterwards expunged from the Elegy :)

“ ‘Mid others of less note came one frail form,—
 A phantom among men,—companionless
 As the last cloud of an expiring storm,
 Whose thunder is its knell. He, as I guess,
 Had gazed on Nature’s naked loveliness

from their volcanic and manifold appearances, and which being composed of white marble, give their summits the resemblance of snow.

Actæon-like ; and now he fled astray
 With feeble steps on the world's wilderness,
 And his own thoughts along that rugged way
 Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
 And faded violets, white and pied and blue ;
 And a light spear, topp'd with a cypress cone,
 (Round whose rough stem dark ivy tresses shone,
 Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,)
 Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
 Shook the weak hand that grasp'd it. Of that crew
 He came the last, neglected and apart,—
 A herd-abandon'd deer, struck by the hunter's dart !”

The last eighteen months of Shelley's life were passed in daily intercourse with Lord Byron, to whom the amiability, gentleness, and elegance of his manners, and his great talents and acquirements, had endeared him. Like his friend, he wished to die young : he perished in the twenty-ninth year of his age, in the Mediterranean, between Leghorn and Lerici, from the upsetting of an open boat. The sea had been to him,

As a foreground to this picture appeared as extraordinary a group. Lord Byron and Trelawney were seen standing

as well as Lord Byron, ever the greatest delight ; and as early as 1813, in the following lines written at sixteen, he seems to have anticipated that it would prove his grave.

“ To-morrow comes :

Cloud upon cloud with dark and deep'ning mass
 Roll o'er the blacken'd waters ; the deep roar
 Of distant thunder mutters awfully :
 Tempest unfolds its pinions o'er the gloom
 That shrouds the boiling surge ; the pitiless fiend
 With all his winds and lightnings tracks his prey ;
 The torn deep yawns,—the vessel finds a grave
 Beneath its jagged jaws.”

For fifteen days after the loss of the vessel his body was undiscovered ; and when found, was not in a state to be removed. In order to comply with his wish of being buried at Rome, his corpse was directed to be burnt ; and Lord Byron, faithful to his trust as an executor, and duty as a friend, superintended the ceremony which I have described.

The remains of one who was destined to have little repose or happiness here, now sleep, with those of his friend Keats, in the burial-

over the burning pile, with some of the soldiers of the guard ; and Leigh Hunt, whose feelings and nerves could not carry him through the scene of horror, lying back in the carriage, —the four post-horses ready to drop with the intensity of the noonday sun. The stillness of all around was yet more felt by the shrill scream of a solitary curlew, which, perhaps attracted by the body, wheeled in such narrow circles round the pile that it might have been struck with the hand, and was so fearless that it could not be driven away. Looking at the corpse, Lord Byron said,

“ Why, that old black silk handkerchief retains its form
“ better than that human body ! ”

Scarcely was the ceremony concluded, when Lord Byron, agitated by the spectacle he had witnessed, tried to dissipate, in some degree, the impression of it by his favourite recreation. He took off his clothes therefore, and swam off to his yacht, which was riding a few miles distant. The heat of the sun and checked perspiration threw him into a fever, which he felt coming on before he left the water,

ground near Caius Cestus's Pyramid ;—“ a spot so beautiful,” said he,
“ that it might almost make one in love with death.”

and which became more violent before he reached Pisa. On his return he immediately ordered a warm bath.

“ I have been very subject to fevers,” said he, “ and am
“ not in the least alarmed at this. It will yield to my usual
“ remedy, the bath.”

The next morning he was perfectly recovered. When I called, I found him sitting in the garden under the shade of some orange-trees, with the Countess. They are now always together, and he is become quite domestic. He calls her *Piccinina*, and bestows on her all the pretty diminutive epithets that are so sweet in Italian. His kindness and attention to the Guiccioli have been invariable. A three years' constancy proves that he is not altogether so unmanageable by a sensible woman as might be supposed. In fact no man is so easily led : but he is not to be driven. His spirits are good, except when he speaks of Shelley and Williams. He tells me he has not made one voyage in his yacht since their loss, and has taken a disgust to sailing.

NOTES

p. 22, l. 17: 'The Age of Reason' – Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*, Part I of which was published in 1794, Part II in 1795, and Part III in 1807. A collection of Paine's *Political Works* had been published in 1817.

p. 22, l. 17: 'The Political Justice' – William Godwin's *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, first published in 1793, and revised by Godwin for new editions in 1796 and 1798.

p. 27, l. 11: 'Prince Maurocordato' – Prince Mavrocordato was an exiled Greek nationalist leader whom Shelley met in Pisa in 1821. Later in the year, shortly before Shelley began writing *Hellas*, he returned to Greece to take part in the armed struggle against the occupying Turks.

Leigh Hunt, *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (London, 1828)

Leigh Hunt's admiring portrait of Shelley is also testimony to Shelley's admiration of Hunt, whom he always looked up to as a campaigner for 'Liberty'. Indeed, it was politics that first drew the two together. On March 2nd, 1811, some three weeks before he was sent down from Oxford, Shelley wrote from University College to 'Leigh Hunt, Editor of *The Examiner*, London'. He wished to congratulate 'one of the most fearless enlighteners of the public mind at the present time' on the 'triumph' of his acquittal on charges of libel brought by the government (he had published an article on the brutality of corporal punishment in the army) (Jones, *Letters*, I, p. 54). Shelley, at his most forward when he thought that he had detected a fellow-thinker, enclosed an 'address' on the subject of organizing 'a methodical society' that would resist 'the enemies of liberty' and promote '*rational liberty*'. A couple of months later, he was proudly telling Hogg that he had been invited to breakfast with Hunt, who was clearly more flattered than alarmed by his introduction of himself. He earnestly reported his attempts to persuade Hunt out of Deism and into Atheism: 'Hunt is a man of cultivated mind, & certainly exalted notions; – I do not entirely despair of rescuing him out of this damnable heresy from Reason' (Jones, *Letters*, I, p. 77). Hunt's wife, Marianne, he added, was 'a most sensible woman, she is by no means a Xtian, & rather atheistically given'.

From his reading of *The Examiner*, Shelley clearly expected a meeting of minds with its editor. Hunt's journal, published with his elder brother, John, was trenchantly opposed to Tory politics at a time of Tory ascendancy. It promoted causes such as Catholic emancipation, Parliamentary reform, abolition of the slave trade and child labour, liberty of the press, and universal education. Its editor, born in 1784, the son of a clergyman, had been educated at Christ's Hospital, and had worked as a clerk in the War Office between 1803 and 1808, before committing himself to a life of letters. He began various politically motivated periodicals, but none achieved the notoriety of *The Examiner*. In part this was because, the year after his meeting with Shelley, it included a bitter attack on the Prince Regent ('a violator of his word, a libertine over his head and ears in debt and disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demireps') that led to Hunt and his brother being convicted of libel (*The Examiner*, 22 March, 1812, No. 221). The Hunts were heavily fined and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Shelley, who appears not to have built a friendship

with Hunt on that first meeting, followed the trial closely (Jones, *Letters*, I, p. 346). In a letter to Thomas Hookham, he said that he was 'boiling with indignation at the horrible injustice & tyranny of the sentence' and that he intended to begin a subscription for the Hunts (ibid., I, p. 353).

The real intimacy between the two men began in 1816, clearly founded on Shelley's early admiration. In October 1816, he submitted his '*Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*' to the *Examiner*, and, on December 1st, Hunt published an article on 'Young Poets' in which Shelley was praised as 'a very striking and original thinker' (the poem appeared in the journal on January 19th, 1817). As a correspondence began between the two men, Hunt took the opportunity to ask Shelley for financial help, which he appears to have given willingly (Holmes, p. 350). Hunt usually had money troubles. In early December, Shelley was staying with the Hunts in Hampstead. The relationship between Shelley and Hunt was intensified by Harriet Shelley's suicide, and its consequences, in particular the Chancery case for custody of Shelley's two children by Harriet, Charles and Ianthe. While this was under way, Shelley and Mary, now married, spent a good deal of time with the Hunts, and would later often recall their kindness. The friendship continued until the Shelleys left for Italy in March 1818. Hunt kept up a correspondence with Shelley, became his main advocate and defender in England (see, for example, the extract from the *Examiner* in Jones, *Letters*, II, p. 134), and was the dedicatee of *The Cenci*, completed in 1819. Eventually, he was persuaded to bring his family (he had six children) to join the Shelleys in Italy.

The Hunts arrived in Genoa in June, 1822, and then travelled on to Livorno, to where Shelley sailed on July 1st. After meeting his friends again, Shelley went with them and Byron to Pisa, where they discussed their projected periodical the *Liberal* (four issues of the journal were to appear after Shelley's death). It was on his return journey from this reunion that Shelley, along with Edward Williams and Charles Vivian, capsized and drowned. Hunt was one of those who witnessed the cremation of Shelley's body when it was finally recovered. (In *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* he was to object to Medwin's misrepresentation of his involvement, denying that his 'feelings and nerves could not carry him through the scene of horror' (p. 97).) In the aftermath of this disaster, he and his family found themselves dependent on Byron for financial support; the relationship between Hunt and Byron suffered as a consequence. The Hunts remained in Italy for two more years. When they returned to England, they were again badly in need of funds, and Hunt's best asset appeared to be his recollections of Byron, who had recently died. The publisher Colburn, who was feeding a market hungry for Byroniana, advanced him money on the prospect of these.

In his Preface to *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, which was published in 1828, Hunt himself indicated that only pressure from his publisher had induced him to make Byron the main subject of his memoirs. While protesting the absolute truthfulness of his account, he also found it necessary to signify a certain distaste for the work to which financial exigencies had forced him. 'I must even confess, that such is my dislike of these personal histories, in which it has been my lot to become a party, that had I been rich enough, and could have repaid the handsome conduct of Mr. Colburn with its proper interest, my first impulse on finishing the work would have been to put it in the fire' (ibid., p. iv). His hostile account of Byron did indicate provoke much anger – but also excellent sales, and further editions. Amongst the controversy over his picture of what he called 'the infirmities of Lord Byron' (Hunt, *Lord Byron*, p. vi), his enthusiastic portraits of Shelley and Keats were unlikely to attract much attention. His allegiance to Shelley is evident in the following extracts, and was to remain throughout his life (for his later career, see the headnote in this volume to extracts from his *Autobiography*). Although his protests about Shelley's supposed religiosity might seem rather too loud, he tackles the poet's opinions and ideals more directly than most later memoirists.

MR. SHELLEY.

WITH A CRITICISM ON HIS GENIUS, AND

MR. TRELAWNEY'S NARRATIVE OF HIS LOSS AT SEA.

MR. SHELLEY, when he died, was in his thirtieth year. His figure was tall and slight, and his constitution consumptive. He was subject to violent spasmodic pains, which would sometimes force him to lie on the ground till they were over; but he had always a kind word to give to those about him, when his pangs allowed him to speak. In this organization, as well as in some other respects, he resembled the German poet, Schiller. Though well-turned, his shoulders were bent a little, owing to premature thought and trouble. The same causes had touched his hair with grey: and though his habits of temperance and exercise gave him a remarkable degree of strength, it is not supposed that he could have lived many years. He used to say, that he had lived three times as long as the calendar gave out; which he would prove, between jest and earnest, by some remarks on Time,

“ That would have puzzled that stout Stagyrte.”

Like the Stagyrte's, his voice was high and weak. His eyes were large

and animated, with a dash of wildness in them; his face small, but well-shaped, particularly the mouth and chin, the turn of which was very sensitive and graceful. His complexion was naturally fair and delicate, with a colour in the cheeks. He had brown hair, which, though tinged with grey, surmounted his face well, being in considerable quantity, and tending to a curl. His side-face upon the whole was deficient in strength, and his features would not have told well in a bust; but when fronting and looking at you attentively, his aspect had a certain seraphical character that would have suited a portrait of John the Baptist, or the angel whom Milton describes as holding a reed "tipt with fire." Nor would the most religious mind, had it known him, have objected to the comparison; for, with all his scepticism, Mr. Shelley's disposition may be truly said to have been any thing but irreligious. A person of much eminence for piety in our times has well observed, that the greatest want of religious feeling is not to be found among the greatest infidels, but among those who never think of religion but as a matter of course. The leading feature of Mr. Shelley's character, may be said to have been a natural piety. He was pious towards nature, towards his friends, towards the whole human race, towards the meanest insect of the forest. He did himself an injustice with the public, in using the popular name of the Supreme Being inconsiderately. He identified it solely with the most vulgar and tyrannical notions of a God made after the worst human fashion; and did not sufficiently reflect, that it was often used by a juster devotion to express a sense of the great Mover of the universe. An impatience in contradicting worldly and pernicious notions of a supernatural power, led his own aspirations to be misconstrued; for though, in the severity of his dialectics, and particularly in moments of despondency, he some-

times appeared to be hopeless of what he most desired,—and though he justly thought, that a Divine Being would prefer the increase of benevolence and good before any praise, or even recognition of himself, (a reflection worth thinking of by the intolerant,) yet there was in reality no belief to which he clung with more fondness than that of some great pervading “Spirit of Intellectual Beauty;” as may be seen in his aspirations on that subject. He said to me in the cathedral at Pisa, while the organ was playing, “What a divine religion might be found out, if charity were really made the principle of it, instead of faith!”

Music affected him deeply. He had also a delicate perception of the beauties of sculpture. It is not one of the least evidences of his conscientious turn of mind, that with the inclination, and the power, to surround himself in Italy with all the graces of life, he made no sort of attempt that way; finding other use for his money, and not always satisfied with himself for indulging even in the luxury of a boat. When he bought elegancies of any kind, it was to give away. Boating was his great amusement. He loved the mixture of action and repose which he found in it; and delighted to fancy himself gliding away to Utopian isles, and bowers of enchantment. But he would give up any pleasure to do a deed of kindness. “His life,” says Mrs. Shelley, “was spent in the contemplation of nature, in arduous study, or in acts of kindness and affection. He was an elegant scholar, and a profound metaphysician. Without possessing much scientific knowledge, he was unrivalled in the justness and extent of his observations on natural objects: he knew every plant by its name, and was familiar with the history and habits of every production of the earth: he could interpret, without a fault, each appearance in the sky; and the varied phenomena of heaven and earth filled him with deep emotion. He made

his study and reading-room of the shadowed copse, the stream, the lake, and the waterfall." — *Preface* to his *Posthumous Poems*, p. 14. "The comparative solitude," observes the same lady, "in which Mr. Shelley lived, was the occasion that he was personally known to few; and his fearless enthusiasm in the cause which he considered the most sacred upon earth, the improvement of the moral and physical state of mankind, was the chief reason why he, like other illustrious reformers, was pursued by hatred and calumny. No man was ever more devoted than he to the endeavour of making those around him happy; no man ever possessed friends more unfeignedly attached to him. Before the critics contradict me, let them appeal to any one who had ever known him. To see him was to love him." — *Ibid.* This is a high character, and I, for one, know it was deserved. I should be glad to know, how many wives of Mr. Shelley's calumniators could say as much of their husbands; or how many of the critics would believe them, if they did.

Mr. Shelley's comfort was a sacrifice to the perpetual contradiction between the professions of society and their practice; between "the shows of things and the desires of the mind." Temperament and early circumstances conspired to make him a reformer, at a time of life when few begin to think for themselves; and it was his misfortune, as far as immediate reputation was concerned, that he was thrown upon society with a precipitancy and vehemence, which rather startled them with fear for themselves, than allowed them to become sensible of the love and zeal that impelled him. He was like a spirit that had darted out of its orb, and found itself in another planet. I used to tell him that he had come from the planet Mercury. When I heard of the catastrophe that overtook him, it seemed as if this spirit, not sufficiently constituted like the rest of the world, to obtain their sympathy, yet

gifted with a double portion of love for all living things, had been found dead in a solitary corner of the earth, its wings stiffened, its warm heart cold; the relics of a misunderstood nature, slain by the ungenial elements.

That the utility, however, of so much benevolence was not lost to the world, whatever difference of opinion may exist as to its occasional mode of showing itself, will be evinced, I hope, by the following pages.

* * *

Conceive a young man of Mr. Shelley's character, with no better experience of the kindness and sincerity of those whom he had perplexed, thrown forth into society, to form his own judgments, and pursue his own career. It was "*Emilius out in the World*," but formed by his own tutorship. There is a Novel, under that title, written by the German, La Fontaine, which has often reminded me of him. The hero of another, by the same author, called the "*Reprobate*," still more resembles him. His way of proceeding was entirely after the fashion of those guileless, but vehement hearts, which not being well replied to by their teachers, and finding them hostile to inquiry, add to a natural love of truth all the passionate ardour of a generous and devoted protection of it. Mr. Shelley had met with Mr. Godwin's "*Political Justice*;" and he seemed to breathe, for the first time, in an open and bright atmosphere. He resolved to square all his actions by what he conceived to be the strictest justice, without any consideration for the opinions of those, whose little exercise of that virtue towards himself, ill-fitted them, he thought, for better teachers, and as ill warranted him in deferring to the opinions of the world whom they guided. That he did some extraordinary things in consequence, is admitted: that he did many noble ones, and all with sincerity, is well known to his friends, and will be admitted by all sincere persons. Let those who are so fond of exposing

their own natures, by attributing every departure from ordinary conduct to bad motives, ask themselves what conduct could be more extraordinary in their eyes, and at the same time less attributable to a bad motive, than the rejection of an estate for the love of a principle. Yet Mr. Shelley rejected one. He had only to become a yea and nay man in the House of Commons, to be one of the richest men in Sussex. He declined it, and lived upon a comparative pittance. Even the fortune that he would ultimately have inherited, as secured to his person, was petty in the comparison.

We will relate another anecdote, which the conventional will not find it so difficult to quarrel with. It trenches upon that extraordinary privilege to indulge one sex at the expense of the other, which they guard with so jealous a care, and so many hypocritical faces. The question, we allow, is weighty. We are far from saying it is here settled: but very far are they themselves from having settled it; as their own writings and writhings, their own statistics, morals, romances, tears, and even jokes will testify. The case, I understood, was this; for I am bound to declare that I forget who told it me; but it is admirably in character, and not likely to be invented. Mr. Shelley was present at a ball, where he was a person of some importance. Numerous village ladies were there, old and young; and none of the passions were absent, that are accustomed to glance in the eyes, and gossip in the tongues, of similar gatherings together of talk and dress. In the front were seated the rank and fashion of the place. The virtues diminished, as the seats went backward; and at the back of all, unspoken to, but not unheeded, sat blushing a damsel who had been seduced. We do not inquire by whom; probably by some well-dressed gentleman in the room, who thought himself entitled nevertheless to the conversation of

the most flourishing ladies present, and who naturally thought so, because he had it. That sort of thing happens every day. It was expected, that the young squire would take out one of these ladies to dance. What is the consternation, when they see him making his way to the back benches, and handing forth, with an air of consolation and tenderness, the object of all the virtuous scorn of the room! the person whom that other gentleman, wrong as he had been towards her, and "wicked" as the ladies might have allowed him to be towards the fair sex in general, would have shrunk from touching!—Mr. Shelley, it was found, was equally unfit for school-tyrannies, for universities, and for the chaste orthodoxy of squires' tables. So he went up to town.

The philosophic observer will confess, that our young author's experiences in education, politics, and gentlemanly morality, were not of a nature to divert him from his notions of justice, however calculated to bring him into trouble. Had he now behaved himself pardonably in the eyes of the orthodox, he would have gone to London with the resolution of sowing his wild oats, and becoming a decent member of society; that is to say, he would have seduced a few maid-servants, or at least haunted the lobbies; and then bestowed the remnant of his constitution upon some young lady of his own rank in life, and settled into a proper church-and-king man, perhaps a member of the Suppression of Vice. This is the proper routine, and gives one a right to be didactic. Alas! Mr. Shelley did not do so; and bitterly had he to repent, not that he did not do it, but that he married while yet a stripling, and that the wife whom he took was not of a nature to appreciate his understanding, or perhaps to come from contact with it, uninjured in what she had of her own. They separated by mutual consent, after the birth of two children. To this measure his enemies would hardly have

demurred; especially as the marriage was disapproved by Mr. Shelley's family, and the lady of inferior rank. It might have been regarded even as something like making amends. But to one thing they would strongly have objected. He proceeded, in the spirit of Milton's doctrines, to pay his court to another lady. We wish we could pursue the story in the same tone: but now came the greatest pang of Mr. Shelley's life. He was residing at Bath, when news came to him that his wife had destroyed herself. It was a heavy blow to him; and he never forgot it. Persons who riot in a debauchery of scandal, delighting in endeavouring to pull down every one to their own standard, and in repeating the grossest charges in the grossest words, have taken advantage of this passage in Mr. Shelley's life, to show their total ignorance of his nature, and to harrow up, one would think, the feelings of every person connected with him, by the most wanton promulgation of names, and the most odious falsehoods. Luckily, the habitual contempt of truth which ever accompanies the love of calumny, serves to refute it with all those whose good opinion is worth having. So leaving the scandal in those natural sinks, to which all the calumnies and falsehoods of the time hasten, we resume our remarks with the honourable and the decent. As little shall we dwell upon the conduct of one or two persons of better repute, who instead of being warned against believing every malignant rumour by the nature of their own studies, and as if they had been jealous of a zeal in behalf of mankind, which they had long been accused of merging in speculations less noble, did not disdain to circulate the gossip of the scandalous as far as other countries, betraying a man to repulses, who was yearning with the love of his species; and confounding times, places, and circumstances, in the eagerness of their paltry credulity. Among other

falsehoods it was stated, that Mr. Shelley, at that time living with his wife, had abruptly communicated to her his intention of separating; upon which the other had run to a pond at the end of the garden, and drowned herself. The fact, as we have seen, is, that they had been living apart for some time, during which the lady was accountable to no one but herself. We could relate another story of the catastrophe that took place, did we not feel sincerely for all parties concerned, and wish to avoid every species of heart-burning. Nobody could lament it more bitterly than Mr. Shelley. For a time, it tore his being to pieces; nor is there a doubt, that however deeply he was accustomed to reason on the nature and causes of evil, and on the steps necessary to be taken for opposing it, he was not without remorse for having not better exercised his judgment with regard to the degree of intellect he had allied himself with, and for having given rise to a premature independence of conduct in one unequal to the task. The lady was greatly to be pitied; so was the survivor. Let the school-tyrants, the University refusers of argument, and the orthodox sowers of their wild oats, with myriads of unhappy women behind them, rise up in judgment against him. Honester men will not be hindered from doing justice to sincerity, wherever they find it; nor be induced to blast the memory of a man of genius and benevolence, for one painful passage in his life, which he might have avoided, had he been no better than his calumniators.

On the death of this unfortunate lady, Mr. Shelley married the daughter of Mr. Godwin; and resided at Great Marlow, in Buckinghamshire, where he was a blessing to the poor. His charity, though liberal, was not weak. He inquired personally into the circumstances of the petitioners; visited the sick in their beds, (for he had gone the round

of the Hospitals on purpose to be able to practise on occasion); and kept a regular list of industrious poor, whom he assisted with small sums to make up their accounts.* At Marlow he wrote the *Revolt of Islam*.

* "Another anecdote remains, not the least in interest." (I was speaking, in the *Literary Examiner*, of an adventure of Mr. Shelley's, at the time he was on a visit to me at Hampstead.) Some years ago, when a house (on the top of the Heath) "was occupied by a person whose name I forget, (and I should suppress it in common humanity, if I did not,) I was returning home to my own, which was at no great distance from it, after the Opera. As I approached my door, I heard strange and alarming shrieks, mixed with the voice of a man. The next day, it was reported by the gossips, that Mr. Shelley, no Christian, (for it was he, who was there,) had brought some 'very strange female' into the house, no better of course than she ought to be. The real Christian had puzzled them. Mr. Shelley, in coming to our house that night, had found a woman lying near the top of the hill, in situ. It was a fierce winter night, with snow upon the ground; and winter loses nothing of its fierceness at Hampstead. My friend, always the promptest as well as most pitying on these occasions, knocked at the first houses he could reach, in order to have the woman taken in. The invariable answer was, that they could not do it. He asked for an outhouse to put her in, while he went for a doctor. Impossible! In vain he assured them she was no impostor. They would not dispute the point with him; but doors were closed, and windows were shut down. Had he lit upon worthy Mr. Park, the philologist, he would assuredly have come, in spite of his Calvinism. But he lived too far off. Had he lit upon you, dear B——n, or your neighbour D——e, you would either of you have jumped up from amidst your books or your bed-clothes, and have gone out with him. But the paucity of Christians is astonishing, considering the number of them. Time flies; the poor woman is in convulsions; her son, a young man, lamenting over her. At last my friend sees a carriage driving up to a house at a little distance. The knock is given; the warm door opens; servants and lights pour forth. Now, thought he, is the time. He puts on his best address, which any body might recognize for that of the highest gentleman as well as an interesting individual, and plants himself in the way of an elderly person, who is stepping out of the carriage with his family. He tells his story. They only press on the faster. 'Will you go and see her?' 'No, Sir; there's no necessity for that sort of thing, depend on it: impostors swarm every where: the thing cannot be done: Sir, your conduct is extraordinary.' 'Sir,' cried Mr. Shelley at last, assuming a very different appearance, and forcing the flourishing householder to stop out of astonishment, 'I am sorry to say that *your* conduct is *not* extraordinary: and if my own seems to amaze you, I will tell you something that may amaze you a little

Queen Mab was an earlier production, written at the age of seventeen or eighteen, when he married; and it was never published with his consent. He regretted the publication when it did take place some years afterwards, and stated as much in the newspapers, considering it a crude performance, and as not sufficiently entering into the important questions it handled. Yet upon the strength of this young and unpublished work, he was deprived of his two children.

more, and I hope will frighten you. It is such men as you who madden the spirits and the patience of the poor and wretched: and if ever a convulsion comes in this country, (which is very probable,) recollect what I tell you;—you will have your house, that you refuse to put the miserable woman into, burnt over your head.' 'God bless me, Sir! Dear me, Sir!' exclaimed the frightened wretch, and fluttered into his mansion. The woman was then brought to our house, which was at some distance, and down a bleak path; and Mr. S. and her son were obliged to hold her, till the doctor could arrive. It appeared that she had been attending this son in London, on a criminal charge made against him, the agitation of which had thrown her into the fits on her return. The doctor said that she would inevitably have perished, had she lain there a short time longer. The next day my friend sent mother and son comfortably home to Hendon, where they were well known, and whence they returned him thanks full of gratitude. Now go, ye Pharisees of all sorts, and try if ye can still open your hearts and your doors like the good Samaritan. This man was himself too brought up in a splendid mansion, and might have revelled and rioted in all worldly goods. Yet this was one of the most ordinary of his actions."



The writer who criticised the "Posthumous Poems," in the "Edinburgh Review," does justice to the excellence of Mr. Shelley's intentions, and acknowledges him to be one of those rare persons called men of genius; but accuses him of a number of faults, which he attributes to the predominance of his will, and a scorn of every thing received and conventional. To this cause he traces the faults of his poetry, and what he conceives to be the errors of his philosophy. Furthermore, he charges Mr. Shelley with a want of reverence for antiquity, and quotes a celebrated but not unequivocal passage from Bacon, where the Philosopher, according to the advice of the Prophet, recommends us to take our stand upon the ancient ways, and see what road we are to take for progression. He says Mr. Shelley had "too little sympathy with the feelings of others, which he thought he had a right to sacrifice, as well as his own, to a grand ethical experiment; and asserts that if a thing were old and established, this was with him a certain proof of its having no solid foundation to rest upon: if it was new, it was good and right: every paradox was to him a self-evident truth: every prejudice an undoubted absurdity. The weight of authority, the sanction of ages, the common consent of mankind, were vouchers only for ignorance, error, and imposture. Whatever shocked the feelings of others, conciliated

his regard; whatever was light, extravagant, and vain, was to him a proportionable relief from the dulness and stupidity of established opinions." This is caricature; and caricature of an imaginary original.

Alas! Mr. Shelley was so little relieved by what was light and vain, (if I understand what the Reviewer means by those epithets,) and so little disposed to quarrel with the common consent of mankind, where it seemed reasonably founded, that at first he could not endure even the comic parts of Lord Byron's writings, because he thought they tended to produce mere volatility instead of good; and he afterwards came to relish them, because he found an accord with them in the bosoms of society. Whatever shocked the feeling of others so little conciliated his regard, that with the sole exception of matters of religion (which is a point on which the most benevolent Reformers, authors of "grand ethical experiments," in all ages, have thought themselves warranted in hazarding alarm and astonishment,) his own feelings were never more violated than by disturbances given to delicacy, to sentiment, to the affections. If ever it seemed otherwise, as in the subject of his tragedy of the Cenci, it was only out of a more intense apprehensiveness, and the right it gave him to speak. He saw, in every species of tyranny and selfish will, an image of all the rest of the generation. That a love of paradox is occasionally of use to remind commonplaces of their weakness, and to prepare the way for liberal opinions, nobody knows better or has more unequivocally shown than Mr. Shelley's critic; and yet I am not aware that Mr. Shelley was at all addicted to paradox; or that he loved any contradiction, that did not directly contradict some great and tyrannical abuse. Prejudices that he thought innocent, no man was more inclined to respect, or even to fall in with. He was prejudiced in favour of the dead languages; he had a theoretical an-

tipathy to innovations in style; he had almost an English dislike of the French and their literature, a philosopher or two excepted: it cost him much to reconcile himself to manners that were not refined; and even with regard to the prejudices of superstition, or the more poetical sides of popular faith, where they did not interfere with the daily and waking comforts of mankind, he was for admitting them with more than a spirit of toleration. It would be hazardous to affirm that he did not believe in spirits and genii. This is not setting his face against "every received mystery, and all traditional faith." He set his face, not against a mystery nor a self-evident proposition, but against whatever he conceived to be injurious to human good, and whatever his teachers would have forced down his throat, in defiance of the inquiries they had suggested. His opposition to what was established, as I have said before, is always to be considered with reference to that feature in his disposition, and that fact in his history. Of antiquity and authority he was so little a scorner, that his opinions, novel as some of them may be thought, are all to be found in writers, both ancient and modern, and those not obscure ones or empirical, but men of the greatest and wisest, and best names,—Plato and Epicurus, Montaigne, Bacon, Sir Thomas More. Nothing in him was his own, but the genius that impelled him to put philosophical speculations in the shape of poetry, and a subtle and magnificent style, abounding in Hellenisms, and by no means exempt (as he acknowledged) from a tendency to imitate whatever else he thought beautiful, in ancient or modern writers.

But Mr. Shelley was certainly definite in his object: he thought it was high time for society to come to particulars: to know what they would have. With regard to marriage, for instance, he was tired with

the spectacle continually presented to his eyes, of a community always feeling sore upon that point, and cowed, like a man by his wife, from attempting some real improvement in it. There was no end, he thought, of setting up this new power, and pulling down that, if the one, to all real home purposes, proceeded just as the other did, and nothing was gained to society but a hope and a disappointment. This, in his opinion, was not the kind of will to be desired, in opposition to one with more definite objects. We must not, he thought, be eternally generalizing, shilly-shallying, and coquetting between public submission and private independence; but let a generous understanding and acknowledgment of what we are in want of, go hand in hand with our exertions in behalf of change; otherwise, when we arrive at success, we shall find success itself in hands that are but physically triumphant—hands that hold up a victory on a globe, a splendid commonplace, as a new-old thing for us to worship. This, to be sure, is standing *super vias antiquas*; but not in order to “make progression.” The thing is all to be done over again. If there is “something rotten in the state of Denmark,” let us mend it, and not set up Sweden or Norway, to knock down this rottenness with rottenness of their own; continually waiting for others to do our work, and finding them do it in such a manner, as to deliver us bound again into the hands of the old corruptions. We must be our own deliverers. An Essay on the Disinterestedness of Human Action is much; but twenty articles to show that the most disinterested person in the world is only a malcontent and a fanatic, can be of no service but to baffle conduct and resolution, in favour of eternal theory and the talking about it.

So do not end the pleasures given us by men of genius with great and beneficent views. So does not end the pleasure of endeavouring to do justice to their memories, however painful the necessity. Some good must be done them, however small. Some pleasure cannot but be realized, for a great principle is advocated, and a deep gratitude felt. I differed with Mr. Shelley on one or two important points; but I agreed with him heartily on the most important point of all,—the necessity of doing good, *and of discussing the means of it freely*. I do not think the world so unhappy as he did, or what a very different and much more contented personage has not hesitated to pronounce it,—a “vale of blood and tears.” But I think it quite unhappy enough to require that we should all set our shoulders to the task of reformation; and this for two reasons: first, that if mankind can effect any thing, they can only effect it by trying, instead of lamenting and being selfish; and second, that if no other good come of our endeavours, we must always be the better for what keeps human nature in hope and activity. That there are monstrous evils to be got rid of, nobody doubts: that we never scruple to get rid of any minor evil that annoys us, any obstacle in our way, or petty want of comfort in our dwellings, we know as certainly. Why the larger ones should be left standing, is yet to be understood. Sir Walter Scott may have no objection to his “vale of blood and tears,” provided he can look down upon it from a decent aristocratical height, and a well-stocked mansion; but others have an inconvenient habit of levelling themselves with humanity, and feeling for their neighbours: and it is lucky for Sir Walter himself, that they have so; or Great Britain would not enjoy the comfort she does in her northern atmosphere. The conventional are but the weakest and most thankless children of the unconventional. They live upon the security the others have obtained for

them. If it were not for the reformers and innovators of old, the Hampdens, the Miltons, and the Sydneys, life in this country, with all its cares, would not be the convenient thing it is, even for the lowest retainers of the lowest establishment. A feeling of indignation will arise, when we think of great spirits like those, contrasted with the mean ones that venture to scorn their wisdom and self-sacrifice; but it is swallowed up in what absorbed the like emotions in their own minds,—a sense of the many. The mean spirit, if we knew all, need not be denied even his laugh. He may be too much in want of it. But the greatest unhappiness of the noble-minded has moments of exquisite relief. Every thing of beautiful and good that exists, has a kind face for him when he turns to it; or reflects the happy faces of others that enjoy it, if he cannot. He can extract consolation out of discomfiture itself,—if the good he sought otherwise, can come by it. Mr. Shelley felt the contumelies he underwent, with great sensibility; and he expressed himself accordingly; but I know enough of his nature to be certain, that he would gladly have laid down his life to ensure a good to society, even out of the most lasting misrepresentations of his benevolence. Great is the pleasure to me to anticipate the day of justice, by putting an end to this evil. The friends whom he loved may now bid his brave and gentle spirit repose; for the human beings whom he laboured for, *begin to know him*.

NOTE

'That would have puzzled that stout Stagyrite': see note on p. 204.

Thomas Jefferson Hogg, 'Shelley at Oxford', in *The New Monthly Magazine* (January, February, April, December, 1832, and May, 1833)

Hogg's memoir, later to be absorbed into his controversial *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1858), is the first in which the meeting and subsequent friendship of poet and memoirist is the focus of interest. As Hogg describes in the first of these articles, published a decade after Shelley's death, the two young men met as fellow undergraduates at University College, Oxford. Hogg was a lawyer's son from Durham (and would eventually become a lawyer himself). He was, he says, fascinated by 'a character so extraordinary, and indeed almost preternatural' (*New Monthly Magazine*, February, 1832, p. 136). He declares, indeed, that he immediately felt 'reverence' for Shelley. The impressions that he recalls in these articles are, of course, shaped by his sense, by 1832, of the poet's greatness. Yet he was clearly gripped by Shelley, and rapidly became a kind of follower as well as a close friend. While the account that he gives here is scarcely disinterested, it has been treated by later biographers as essentially reliable. Pictures such as that of Shelley's college rooms in the second of these extracts seem too vivid and too unusual to be invented. Our idea of Shelley the student – the galvanic experimenter and dabbler in sceptical thought – still derives almost entirely from these articles.

The period that they cover is one of less than five months, from a first meeting in November to their joint expulsion from Oxford in March 1811 for their co-authored tract, *The Necessity of Atheism*. Hogg saw a great deal of Shelley over the next three years, and indeed lived with him for certain periods. (Their friendship at this time, and Hogg's relationships with, first, Harriet Shelley, and then Mary Godwin, are described in the headnote in this volume to passages from Hogg's *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* in this volume.) However, intimacy between him and Mary became a muted antagonism, and from 1815 onwards, he and Shelley were to meet only occasionally. After Hogg was called to the bar in 1817, his attention was diverted to his career. Shelley, however, tried to persuade Hogg to join him in Italy, and continued to describe him in letters as, along with Hunt and Peacock, one of his very few true friends in England. By this time Hogg was the sedulous lawyer that his family had always wished him to be.

Shelley's death had one odd and important consequence for Hogg. Jane Williams, common-law wife of Edward Williams, who had drowned with Shelley, left Italy for England in September 1822, with a letter of introduction

to Hogg from Mary Shelley. 'I would say do all in your power to be of use to her, but to know her is sufficient to make the desire of serving her arise in an unselfish mind. Do what little you can to amuse her' (Bennett, *Letters*, I, p. 258). For all Mary Shelley's initial disbelief, an attachment grew between the two, and they began living together as husband and wife in the Spring of 1827. Shelley's widow stayed a close friend of Jane Williams Hogg, and friendly relations between her and Hogg were re-established. In 1841, writing to the publisher Edward Moxon about an amended edition of Shelley's poetry, Mary was to suggest that it might include a piece by Hogg: 'an Essay on Shelley's life & writings – original – though it might embody the substance of his Articles in the *New Monthly*' (Bennett, *Letters*, III, p. 17). Evidently she believed that the articles in the *New Monthly* gave a proper impression of the poet's youthful idealism (and perhaps as palatable an explanation of his expulsion from Oxford as was ever likely).

Hogg published six articles about Shelley in *The New Monthly Magazine*. Extracts below are taken from all but one: the article that appeared in October 1832. The issues in which the following passages appeared were those for January, February, April, July, and December, 1832, and May 1833. A note at the head of the December, 1832, article indicated that it would be the last. Evidently the description of the expulsion of Hogg and Shelley from Oxford published in May 1833 was either Hogg's or his editor's after-thought. It is also the most self-important and least entirely credible of all the articles.

At the commencement of Michaelmas term, that is, at the end of October, in the year 1810, I happened one day to sit next to a fresh man at dinner: it was his first appearance in hall. His figure was slight, and his aspect remarkably youthful, even at our table, where all were very young. He seemed thoughtful and absent. He ate little, and seemed to have no acquaintance with any one. I know not how it was that we fell into conversation, for such familiarity was unusual, and, strange to say, much reserve prevailed in a society where there could not possibly be occasion for any. We have often endeavoured in vain to recollect in what manner our discourse began, and especially by what transition it passed to a subject sufficiently remote from all the associations we were able to trace. The stranger had expressed an enthusiastic admiration for poetical and imaginative works of the German school. I dissented from his criticisms. He upheld the originality of the German writings. I asserted their want of nature. "What modern literature," said he, "will you compare to theirs?" I named the Italian. This roused all his impetuosity; and few, as I soon discovered, were more impetuous in argumentative conversation. So eager was our dispute, that when the servants came to clear the tables, we were not aware that we had been left alone. I remarked, that it was time to quit the hall, and I invited the stranger to finish the discussion at my rooms. He eagerly assented. He lost the thread of his discourse in the transit, and the whole of his enthusiasm in the cause of Germany; for as soon as he arrived at my rooms, and whilst I was lighting the candles, he said calmly, and to my great surprise, that he was not qualified to maintain such a discussion, for he was alike ignorant of Italian and German, and had only read the works of the Germans in translations, and but little of Italian poetry, even at second hand. For my part, I confessed, with an equal ingenuousness, that I knew

nothing of German, and but little of Italian; that I had spoken only through others, and like him, had hitherto seen by the glimmering light of translations. It is upon such scanty data that young men reason; upon such slender materials do they build up their opinions. It may be urged, however, that if they did not discourse freely with each other upon insufficient information—for such alone can be acquired in the pleasant morning of life, and until they educate themselves—they would be constrained to observe a perpetual silence, and to forego the numerous advantages that flow from frequent and liberal discussion. I inquired of the vivacious stranger, as we sat over our wine and dessert, how long he had been at Oxford, how he liked it, &c.? He answered my questions with a certain impatience, and resuming the subject of our discussion, he remarked, that “Whether the literature of Germany, or of Italy, be the most original, or in the purest and most accurate taste, is of little importance! for polite letters are but vain trifling; the study of languages, not only of the modern tongues, but of Latin and Greek also, is merely the study of words and phrases; of the names of things; it matters not how they are called; it is surely far better to investigate things themselves.” I inquired, a little bewildered, how this was to be effected? He answered, “through the physical sciences, and especially through chemistry;” and raising his voice, his face flushing as he spoke, he discoursed with a degree of animation, that far outshone his zeal in defence of the Germans, of chemistry and chemical analysis. Concerning that science, then so popular, I had merely a scanty and vulgar knowledge, gathered from elementary books, and the ordinary experiments of popular lecturers. I listened, therefore, in silence to his eloquent disquisition, interposing a few brief questions only, and at long intervals, as to the extent of his own studies and manipulations. As I felt, in truth, but a slight interest in the subject of his conversation, I had leisure to examine, and I may add, to admire, the appearance of my very extraordinary guest. It was a sum of many contradictions. His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall, but he stooped so much, that he seemed of a low stature. His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day; but they were tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt, and sometimes violent, occasionally even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate, and almost feminine, of the purest red and white; yet he was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun, having passed the autumn, as he said, in shooting. His features, his whole face, and particularly his head, were, in fact, unusually small; yet the last appeared of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy, and in fits of absence, and in the agonies (if I may use the word) of anxious thought, he often rubbed it fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers quickly through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. In times when it was the mode to imitate stage-coachmen as closely as possible in costume, and when the hair was invariably cropped, like that of our soldiers, this eccentricity was very striking. His features were not symmetrical, (the mouth, perhaps, excepted,) yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful.

They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual; for there was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially (though this will surprise many) that air of profound religious veneration, that characterizes the best works, and chiefly the frescoes, (and into these they infused their whole souls,) of the great masters of Florence and of Rome. I recognized the very peculiar expression in these wonderful productions long afterwards, and with a satisfaction mingled with much sorrow, for it was after the decease of him in whose countenance I had first observed it. I admired the enthusiasm of my new acquaintance, his ardour in the cause of science, and his thirst for knowledge. I seemed to have found in him all those intellectual qualities which I had vainly expected to meet with in an University. But there was one physical blemish that threatened to neutralize all his excellence. "This is a fine, clever fellow!" I said to myself, "but I can never bear his society; I shall never be able to endure his voice; it would kill me. What a pity it is!" I am very sensible of imperfections, and especially of painful sounds—and the voice of the stranger was excruciating; it was intolerably shrill, harsh, and discordant; of the most cruel intension—it was perpetual, and without any remission—it excoriated the ears. He continued to discourse of chemistry, sometimes sitting, sometimes standing before the fire, and sometimes pacing about the room; and when one of the innumerable clocks that speak in various notes during the day and the night at Oxford, proclaimed a quarter to seven, he said suddenly that he must go to a lecture on mineralogy, and declared enthusiastically that he expected to derive much pleasure and instruction from it. I am ashamed to own that the cruel voice made me hesitate for a moment; but it was impossible to omit so indispensable a civility—I invited him to return to tea; he gladly assented, promised that he would not be absent long, snatched his cap, hurried out of the room, and I heard his footsteps, as he ran through the silent quadrangle, and afterwards along the High-street. An hour soon elapsed, whilst the table was cleared, and the tea was made, and I again heard the footsteps of one running quickly. My guest suddenly burst into the room, threw down his cap, and as he stood shivering and chafing his hands over the fire, he declared how much he had been disappointed in the lecture. Few persons attended; it was dull and languid, and he was resolved never to go to another. "I went away, indeed," he added, with an arch look, and in a shrill whisper, coming close to me as he spoke—"I went away, indeed, before the lecture was finished. I stole away; for it was so stupid, and I was so cold, that my teeth chattered. The Professor saw me, and appeared to be displeased. I thought I could have got out without being observed; but I struck my knee against a bench, and made a noise, and he looked at me. I am determined that he shall never see me again."

"What did the man talk about?"

"About stones! about stones!" he answered, with a downcast look and in a melancholy tone, as if about to say something excessively profound. "About stones!—stones, stones, stones!—nothing but

stones!—and so drily. It was wonderfully tiresome—and stones are not interesting things in themselves!”

We took tea; and soon afterwards had supper, as was usual. He discoursed after supper with as much warmth as before of the wonders of chemistry; of the encouragement that Napoleon afforded to that most important science; of the French chemists and their glorious discoveries; and of the happiness of visiting Paris, and sharing in their fame and their experiments. The voice, however, seemed to me more cruel than ever. He spoke likewise of his own labours and of his apparatus, and starting up suddenly after supper, he proposed that I should go instantly with him to see the galvanic trough. I looked at my watch, and observed that it was too late; that the fire would be out, and the night was cold. He resumed his seat, saying that I might come on the morrow, early, to breakfast, immediately after chapel. He continued to declaim in his rapturous strain, asserting that chemistry was, in truth, the only science that deserved to be studied. I suggested doubts. I ventured to question the pre-eminence of the science, and even to hesitate in admitting its utility. He described in glowing language some discoveries that had lately been made; but the enthusiastic chemist candidly allowed that they were rather brilliant than useful, asserting, however, that they would soon be applied to purposes of solid advantage. “Is not the time of by far the larger proportion of the human species,” he inquired, with his fervid manner and in his piercing tones, “wholly consumed in severe labour? and is not this devotion of our race—of the whole of our race, I may say (for those who, like ourselves, are indulged with an exemption from the hard lot are so few, in comparison with the rest, that they scarcely deserve to be taken into the account,) absolutely necessary to procure subsistence; so that men have no leisure for recreation or the high improvement of the mind? Yet this incessant toil is still inadequate to procure an abundant supply of the common necessities of life: some are doomed actually to want them, and many are compelled to be content with an insufficient provision. We know little of the peculiar nature of those substances which are proper for the nourishment of animals; we are ignorant of the qualities that make them fit for this end. Analysis has advanced so rapidly of late that we may confidently anticipate that we shall soon discover wherein their aptitude really consists; having ascertained the cause, we shall next be able to command it, and to produce at our pleasure the desired effects. It is easy, even in our present state of ignorance, to reduce our ordinary food to carbon, or to lime; a moderate advancement in chemical science will speedily enable us, we may hope, to create, with equal facility, food from substances that appear at present to be as ill adapted to sustain us. What is the cause of the remarkable fertility of some lands, and of the hopeless sterility of others? a spadeful of the most productive soil, does not to the eye differ much from the same quantity taken from the most barren. The real difference is probably very slight, by chemical agency the philosopher may work a total change, and may transmute an unfruitful region into a land of exuberant plenty. Water, like the atmospheric air, is compounded of certain gases: in the progress of scientific discovery a simple and sure method of manufacturing the useful fluid,

in every situation and in any quantity, may be detected; the arid deserts of Africa may then be refreshed by a copious supply, and may be transformed at once into rich meadows, and vast fields of maize and rice. The generation of heat is a mystery, but enough of the theory of caloric has already been developed to induce us to acquiesce in the notion that it will hereafter, and perhaps at no very distant period, be possible to produce heat at will, and to warm the most ungenial climates as readily as we now raise the temperature of our apartments to whatever degree we may deem agreeable or salutary. If, however, it be too much to anticipate that we shall ever become sufficiently skilful to command such a prodigious supply of heat, we may expect, without the fear of disappointment, soon to understand its nature and the causes of combustion, so far at least as to provide ourselves cheaply with a fund of heat that will supersede our costly and inconvenient fuel, and will suffice to warm our habitations for culinary purposes and for the various demands of the mechanical arts. We could not determine, without actual experiment, whether an unknown substance were combustible; when we shall have thoroughly investigated the properties of fire, it may be that we shall be qualified to communicate to clay, to stones, and to water itself, a chemical recombination that will render them as inflammable as wood, coals, and oil; for the difference of structure is minute and invisible, and the power of feeding flame may perhaps be easily added to any substance, or taken away from it. What a comfort would it be to the poor at all times, and especially at this season, if we were capable of solving this problem alone, if we could furnish them with a competent supply of heat! These speculations may appear wild, and it may seem improbable that they will ever be realized, to persons who have not extended their views of what is practicable by closely watching science in its course onward; but there are many mysterious powers, many irresistible agents, with the existence and with some of the phenomena of which all are acquainted. What a mighty instrument would electricity be in the hands of him who knew how to wield it, in what manner to direct its omnipotent energies; and we may command an indefinite quantity of the fluid: by means of electrical kites we may draw down the lightning from heaven! What a terrible organ would the supernal shock prove, if we were able to guide it; how many of the secrets of nature would such a stupendous force unlock! The galvanic battery is a new engine; it has been used hitherto to an insignificant extent, yet has it wrought wonders already; what will not an extraordinary combination of troughs, of colossal magnitude, a well-arranged system of hundreds of metallic plates, effect? The balloon has not yet received the perfection of which it is surely capable; the art of navigating the air is in its first and most helpless infancy; the aerial mariner still swims on bladders, and has not mounted even the rude raft: if we weigh this invention, curious as it is, with some of the subjects I have mentioned, it will seem trifling, no doubt—a mere toy, a feather, in comparison with the splendid anticipations of the philosophical chemist; yet it ought not altogether to be contemned. It promises prodigious facilities for locomotion, and will enable us to traverse vast tracts with ease and rapidity, and to explore unknown countries without difficulty. Why are we still so

ignorant of the interior of Africa?—why do we not despatch intrepid aeronauts to cross it in every direction, and to survey the whole peninsula in a few weeks? The shadow of the first balloon, which a vertical sun would project precisely underneath it, as it glided silently over that hitherto unhappy country, would virtually emancipate every slave, and would annihilate slavery for ever”

With such fervor did the slender, beardless stranger speculate concerning the march of physical science: his speculations were as wild as the experience of twenty-one years has shown them to be; but the zealous earnestness for the augmentation of knowledge, and the glowing philanthropy and boundless benevolence that marked them, and beamed forth in the whole deportment of that extraordinary boy, are not less astonishing than they would have been if the whole of his glorious anticipations had been prophetic; for these high qualities, at least, I have never found a parallel. When he had ceased to predict the coming honours of chemistry, and to promise the rich harvest of benefits it was soon to yield, I suggested that, although its results were splendid, yet for those who could not hope to make discoveries themselves, it did not afford so valuable a course of mental discipline as the moral sciences; moreover, that if chemists asserted that their science alone deserved to be cultivated, the mathematicians made the same assertion, and with equal confidence, respecting their studies; but that I was not sufficiently advanced myself in mathematics to be able to judge how far it was well founded. He declared that he knew nothing of mathematics, but treated the notion of their paramount importance with contempt. “What do you say of metaphysics?” I continued; “is that science, too, the study of words only?”

“Ay, metaphysics,” he said, in a solemn tone, and with a mysterious air, “that is a noble study indeed! If it were possible to make any discoveries there, they would be more valuable than any thing the chemists have done, or could do; they would disclose the analysis of mind, and not of mere matter!” Then rising from his chair, he paced slowly about the room, with prodigious strides, and discoursed of souls with still greater animation and vehemence than he had displayed in treating of gases—of a future state—and especially of a former state—of pre-existence, obscured for a time through the suspension of consciousness—of personal identity, and also of ethical philosophy, in a deep and earnest tone of elevated morality, until he suddenly remarked that the fire was nearly out, and the candles were glimmering in their sockets, when he hastily apologised for remaining so long. I promised to visit the chemist in his laboratory, the alchemist in his study, the wizard in his cave, not at breakfast on that day, for it was already one, but in twelve hours—one hour after noon—and to hear some of the secrets of nature; and for that purpose, he told me his name and described the situation of his rooms. I lighted him down-stairs as well as I could with the stump of a candle which had dissolved itself into a lamp, and I soon heard him running through the quiet quadrangle in the still night. That sound became afterwards so familiar to my ear, that I still seem to hear Shelley’s hasty steps.



Books, boots, papers, shoes, philosophical instruments, clothes, pistols, linen, crockery, ammunition, and phials innumerable, with money, stockings, prints, crucibles, bags, and boxes, were scattered on the floor and in every place; as if the young chemist, in order to analyze the mystery of creation, had endeavoured first to re-construct the primeval chaos. The tables, and especially the carpet, were already stained with large spots of various hues, which frequently proclaimed the agency of fire. An electrical machine, an air-pump, the galvanic trough, a solar microscope, and large glass jars and receivers, were conspicuous amidst the mass of matter. Upon the table by his side were some books lying open, several letters, a bundle of new pens, and a bottle of japan ink, that served as an inkstand; a piece of deal, lately part of the lid of a box, with many chips, and a handsome razor, that had been used as a knife. There were bottles of soda water, sugar, pieces of lemon, and the traces of an effervescent beverage. Two piles of books supported the tongs, and these upheld a small glass retort above an argand lamp. I had not been seated many minutes before the liquor in the vessel boiled over, adding fresh stains to the table, and rising in fumes with a most disagreeable odour. Shelley snatched the glass quickly, and dashing it in pieces among the sofas under the grate, increased the unpleasant and penetrating effluvia. He then proceeded, with much eagerness and enthusiasm, to show me the various instruments, especially the electrical apparatus; turning round the handle very rapidly, so that the fierce, crackling sparks flew forth; and presently standing upon the stool with glass feet, he begged of me to work the machine until he was filled with the fluid, so that his long, wild locks bristled and stood on end. Afterwards he charged a powerful battery of several large jars; labouring with vast energy, and discoursing with increasing vehemence of the marvellous powers of electricity, of thunder, and lightning; describing an electrical kite that he had made at home, and projecting another and an enormous one, or rather a combination of many kites, that would draw down from the sky an immense volume of electricity, the whole ammunition of a mighty thunderstorm; and this being directed to some point would there produce the most stupendous results.

In these exhibitions and in such conversation the time passed away rapidly and the hour of dinner approached. Having pricked *ager* that day, or in other words, having caused his name to be entered as an invalid, he was not required, or permitted, to dine in hall, or to appear in public within the college, or without the walls, until a night's rest should have restored the sick man to health.



It seemed but too probable that in the rash ardour of experiment he would some day set the college on fire, or that he would blind, maim, or kill himself by the explosion of combustibles. It was still more likely indeed that he would poison himself, for plates and glasses, and every part of his tea equipage were used indiscriminately with crucibles, retorts, and recipients, to contain the most deleterious ingredients. To his infinite diversion I used always to examine every drinking-vessel narrowly, and often to rinse it carefully, after that evening when we were taking tea by firelight, and my attention being attracted by the sound of something in the cup into which I was about to pour tea, I was induced to look into it. I found a seven-shillings piece partly dissolved by the *aqua regia* in which it was immersed. Although he laughed at my caution, he used to speak with horror of the consequences of having inadvertently swallowed, through a similar accident, some mineral poison, I think arsenic, at Eton, which he declared had not only seriously injured his health, but that he feared he should never entirely recover from the shock it had inflicted on his constitution. It seemed probable, notwithstanding his positive assertions, that his lively fancy exaggerated the recollection of the unpleasant and permanent taste, of the sickness and disorder of the stomach, which might arise from taking a minute portion of some poisonous substance by the like chance, for there was no vestige of a more serious and lasting injury in his youthful and healthy, although somewhat delicate aspect.

I knew little of the physical sciences, and I felt therefore but a slight degree of interest in them; I looked upon his philosophical apparatus merely as toys and playthings, like a chess-board or a billiard-table. Through lack of sympathy, his zeal, which was at first so ardent, gradually cooled; and he applied himself to these pursuits, after a short time, less frequently and with less earnestness. The true value of them was often the subject of animated discussion; and I remember one evening at my own rooms, when we had sought refuge against the intense cold in the little inner apartment, or study, I referred, in the course of our debate, to a passage in Xenophon's "Memorabilia," where Socrates speaks in disparagement of Physics. He read it several times very attentively, and more than once aloud, slowly and with emphasis, and it appeared to make a strong impression on him.

Notwithstanding our difference of opinion as to the importance of chemistry, and on some other questions, our intimacy rapidly increased, and we soon formed the habit of passing the greater part of our time together; nor did this constant intercourse interfere with my usual studies. I never visited his rooms until one o'clock, by which hour, as I rose very early, I had not only attended the college lectures, but had read in private for several hours. I was enabled, moreover, to continue my studies afterwards in the evening, in consequence of a very remarkable peculiarity. My young and energetic friend was then overcome by extreme drowsiness, which speedily and completely vanquished him; he would sleep from two to four hours, often so soundly that his slumbers resembled a deep lethargy; he lay occasionally upon the sofa, but more commonly stretched upon the rug before a large fire, like a cat; and his little round head was exposed to such a fierce heat, that I used to wonder how he was able to bear it. Sometimes I have interposed some shelter, but rarely with any permanent effect; for the sleeper usually contrived to turn himself, and to roll again into the spot where the fire glowed the brightest. His torpor was generally profound, but he would sometimes discourse incoherently for a long while in his sleep. At six he would suddenly compose himself, even in the midst of a most animated narrative or of earnest discussion; and he would lie buried in entire forgetfulness, in a sweet and mighty oblivion, until ten, when he would suddenly start up, and rubbing his eyes with great violence, and passing his fingers swiftly through his long hair, would enter at once into a vehement argument, or begin to recite verses, either of his own composition or from the works of others, with a rapidity and an energy that were often quite painful. During the period of his occultation I took tea, and read or wrote without interruption. He would sometimes sleep for a shorter time, for about two hours; postponing for the like period the commencement of his retreat to the rug, and rising with tolerable punctuality at ten; and sometimes, although rarely, he was able entirely to forego the accustomed refreshment.



The sympathies of Shelley were instantaneous and powerful with those who evinced in any degree the qualities for which he was himself so remarkable—simplicity of character, unaffected manners, genuine modesty, and an honest willingness to acquire knowledge, and he sprang to meet their advances with an ingenuous eagerness which was peculiar to him; but he was suddenly and violently repelled, like the needle from the negative pole of the magnet, by any indication of pedantry, presumption, or affectation. So much was he disposed to take offence at such defects, and so acutely was he sensible of them, that he was sometimes unjust, through an excessive sensitiveness, in his estimate of those who had shocked him by sins of which he was himself utterly incapable. Whatever might be the attainments, and however solid the merits of the persons filling at that time the important office of instructors in the University, they were entirely destitute of the attractions of manner; their address was sometimes repulsive, and the formal, priggish tutor was too often intent upon the ordinary academical course alone to the entire exclusion of every other department of knowledge: his thoughts were wholly engrossed by it, and so narrow were his views, that he overlooked the claims of all merit, however exalted, except success in the public examinations. "They are very dull people here," Shelley said to me one evening soon after his arrival, with a long-drawn sigh after musing awhile; "a little man sent for me this morning and told me in an almost inaudible whisper that I must read: 'you must read,' he said many times in his small voice. I answered that I had no objection. He persisted; so to satisfy him, for he did not appear to believe me, I told him I had some books in my pocket, and I began to take them out. He stared at me, and said that was not exactly what he meant: 'you must read *Prometheus Vinctus*, and Demosthenes *de Corona*, and Euclid.' Must I read Euclid? I asked sorrowfully. 'Yes, certainly; and when you have read the Greek works I have mentioned, you must begin Aristotle's *Ethics*, and then you may go on to his other treatises. It is of the utmost importance to be well acquainted with Aristotle.' This he repeated so often that I was quite tired, and at last I said, must I care about Aristotle? what if I do not mind Aristotle? I then left him, for he seemed to be in great perplexity."

Notwithstanding the slight he had thus cast upon the great master of the science, that has so long been the staple of Oxford, he was not blind to the value of the science itself. He took the scholastic logic very kindly, seized its distinctions with his accustomed quickness, felt a keen interest in the study, and patiently endured the exposition of those minute discriminations, which the tyro is apt to condemn as vain and trifling. It should seem that the ancient method of communicating the art of syllogizing has been preserved, in part at least, by tradition in this university. I have sometimes met with learned foreigners, who understood the end and object of the scholastic logic, having received the traditional instruction in some of the old universities on the Continent; but I never found even one of my countrymen, except Oxonians, who rightly comprehended the nature of the science: I may, perhaps, add, that in proportion as the self-taught logicians had laboured in the pursuit, they had gone far astray. It is possible, nevertheless, that those who have drunk at the fountain-head, and have read the "Organon" of Aristotle in the original, may have attained to a just comprehension by their unassisted energies; but in this age, and in this country, I apprehend the number of such adventurous readers is very inconsiderable. Shelley frequently exercised his ingenuity in long discussions respecting various questions in logic, and more frequently indulged in metaphysical inquiries. We read several metaphysical works together, in whole, or in part, for the first time, or after a previous perusal, by one, or by both of us. The examination of a chapter of Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding" would induce him, at any moment, to quit every other pursuit. We read together Hume's "Essays," and some productions of Scotch metaphysicians, of inferior ability—all with assiduous and friendly altercations, and the latter writers, at least, with small profit, unless some sparks of knowledge were struck out in the collision of debate. We read also certain popular French works, that treat of man, for the most part in a mixed method, metaphysically, morally, and politically. Hume's "Essays" were a favourite book with Shelley, and he was always ready to put forward, in argument, the doctrines they uphold. It may seem strange that he should ever have accepted the sceptical philosophy, a system so uncongenial with a fervid and imaginative genius, which can allure the cool, cautious, abstinent reasoner alone, and would deter the enthusiastic, the fanciful, and the speculative. We must bear in mind, however, that he was an eager, bold, and unwearied disputant; and although the position in which the sceptic and the materialist love to entrench themselves offers no picturesque attractions to the eye of the poet, it is well adapted for defensive warfare; and it is not easy for an ordinary enemy to dislodge him, who occupies a post that derives strength from the weakness of the assailant. It has been insinuated, that whenever a man of real talent and generous feelings condescends to fight under these colours, he is guilty of a dissimulation, which he deems harmless, perhaps even praiseworthy, for the sake of victory in argument. It was not a little curious to observe one, whose sanguine temper led him to believe implicitly every assertion, so that it was improbable and incredible, exulting in the success of his philosophical doubts, when, like the calmest and most suspicious of analysts, he refused to admit, without strict proof, propositions, that many, who

are not deficient in metaphysical prudence, account obvious and self-evident. The sceptical philosophy had another charm; it partook of the new and the wonderful, inasmuch as it called into doubt, and seemed to place in jeopardy, during the joyous hours of disputation, many important practical conclusions. To a soul loving excitement and change, destruction, so that it be on a grand scale, may sometimes prove hardly less inspiring than creation. The feat of the magician, who, by the touch of his wand, could cause the great pyramid to dissolve into the air, and to vanish from the sight, would be as surprising as the achievement of him who, by the same rod, could instantly raise a similar mass in any chosen spot. If the destruction of the eternal monument was only apparent, the ocular sophism would be at once harmless and ingenious: so was it with the logomachy of the young and strenuous logician, and his intellectual activity merited praise and reward. There was another reason, moreover, why the sceptical philosophy should be welcome to Shelley at that time: he was young, and it is generally acceptable to youth. It is adopted as the abiding rule of reason throughout life by those only who are distinguished by a sterility of soul, a barrenness of invention, a total dearth of fancy, and a scanty stock of learning. Such, in truth, although the warmth of juvenile blood, the light burthen of few years, and the precipitation of inexperience, may sometimes seem to contradict the assertion, is the state of the mind at the commencement of manhood, when the vessel has as yet received only a small portion of the cargo of the accumulated wisdom of past ages, when the amount of mental operations that have actually been performed is small, and the materials, upon which the imagination can work, are insignificant; consequently the inventions of the young are crude and frigid. Hence the most fertile mind exactly resembles in early youth the hopeless barrenness of those, who have grown old in vain, as to its actual condition, and it differs only in the unseen capacity for future production. The philosopher who declares that he knows nothing, and that nothing can be known, will readily find followers among the young, for they are sensible that they possess the requisite qualification for entering his school, and are as far advanced in the science of ignorance as their master. A stranger, who should have chanced to have been present at some of Shelley's disputes, or who knew him only from having read some of the short argumentative essays, which he composed as voluntary exercises, would have said, "Surely the soul of Hume passed by transmigration into the body of that eloquent young man; or rather, he represents one of the enthusiastic and animated materialists of the French school, whom revolutionary violence lately intercepted at an early age in his philosophical career." There were times, however, when a visitor, who had listened to glowing discourses delivered with a more intense ardour, would have hailed a young Platonist breathing forth the ideal philosophy, and in his pursuit of the intellectual world entirely overlooking the material, or noticing it only to condemn it. The tall boy, who is permitted for the first season to scare the partridges with his new fowling-piece, scorns to handle the top, or the hoop of his younger brother; thus the man, whose years and studies are mature, slights the first feeble aspirations after the higher departments of knowledge, that were deemed

so important during his residence at College. It seems laughable, but it is true, that our knowledge of Plato was derived solely from Dacier's translation of a few of the dialogues, and from an English version of that French translation; we had never attempted a single sentence in the Greek. Since that time however, I believe, few of our countrymen have read the golden works of that majestic philosopher in the original language more frequently and more carefully than ourselves; and few, if any, with more profit than Shelley. Although the source, whence flowed our earliest taste of the divine philosophy, was scanty and turbid, the draught was not the less grateful to our lips: our zeal in some measure atoned for our poverty. Shelley was never weary of reading, or of listening to me whilst I read, passages from the dialogues contained in this collection, and especially from the *Phædo*, and he was vehemently excited by the striking doctrines which Socrates unfolds, especially by that which teaches that all our knowledge consists of reminiscences of what we had learned in a former existence. He often rose, paced slowly about the room, shook his long wild locks, and discoursed in a solemn tone and with a mysterious air, speculating concerning our previous condition, and the nature of our life and occupations in that world where, according to Plato, we had attained to erudition, and had advanced ourselves in knowledge so far that the most studious and the most inventive, or in other words, those who have the best memory, are able to call back a part only, and with much pain and extreme difficulty, of what was formerly familiar to us.

It is hazardous, however, to speak of his earliest efforts as a Platonist, lest they should be confounded with his subsequent advancement; it is not easy to describe his first introduction to the exalted wisdom of antiquity without borrowing inadvertently from the knowledge which he afterwards acquired. The cold, ungenial, foggy atmosphere of northern metaphysics was less suited to the ardent temperament of his soul, than the warm, bright, vivifying climate of the southern and eastern philosophy; his genius expanded under the benign influence of the latter, and he derived copious instruction from a luminous system, that is only dark through excess of brightness, and seems obscure to vulgar vision through its extreme radiance. Nevertheless in argument, and to argue on all questions was his dominant passion, he usually adopted the scheme of the sceptics, partly, perhaps, because it was more popular and is more generally understood: the disputant, who would use Plato as his text-book in this age, would reduce his opponents to a small number indeed.

The study of that highest department of ethics, which includes all the inferior branches, and is directed towards the noblest and most important ends, of Jurisprudence, was always next my heart; at an early age it attracted my attention. When I first endeavoured to turn the regards of Shelley towards this engaging pursuit, he strongly expressed a very decided aversion to such inquiries, deeming them worthless and illiberal. The beautiful theory of the art of right and the honourable office of administering distributive justice have been brought into general discredit, unhappily for the best interests of humanity, and, to the vast detriment of the state, into unmerited disgrace in the modern world by the errors of practitioners. An in-

genuous mind instinctively shrinks from the contemplation of legal topics, because the word law is associated with and inevitably calls up the idea of the low chicanery of a pettifogging attorney, of the vulgar oppression and gross insolence of a bailiff, or, at best, of the wearisome and unmeaning tautology that distends an act of Parliament, and the dull dropsical compositions of the special pleader, the conveyancer, or other draughtsman. In no country is this unhappy debasement of a most illustrious science more remarkable than in our own; no other nation is so prone to, or so patient of abuses; in no other land are posts in themselves honourable so accessible to the meanest. The spirit of trade favours the degradation, and every commercial town is a well-spring of vulgarity, which sends forth hosts of practitioners devoid of the solid and elegant attainments which could sustain the credit of the science, but so strong in the artifices that insure success, as not only to monopolize the rewards due to merit, but sometimes even to climb the judgment-seat. It is not wonderful, therefore, that generous minds, until they have been taught to discriminate, and to distinguish a noble science from ignoble practices, should usually confound them together, hastily condemning the former with the latter. Shelley listened with much attention to questions of natural law, and with the warm interest that he felt in all metaphysical disquisitions, after he had conquered his first prejudice against practical jurisprudence. The science of right, like other profound and extensive sciences, can only be acquired completely when the foundations have been laid at an early age: had the energies of Shelley's vigorous mind taken this direction at that time, it is impossible to doubt that he would have become a distinguished jurist. Besides that fondness for such inquiries, which is necessary to success in any liberal pursuit, he displayed the most acute sensitiveness of injustice, however slight, and a vivid perception of inconvenience. As soon as a wrong, arising from a proposed enactment, or a supposed decision, was suggested, he instantly rushed into the opposite extreme; and when a greater evil was shown to result from the contrary course which he had so hastily adopted, his intellect was roused, and he endeavoured most earnestly to ascertain the true mean that would secure the just by avoiding the unjust extremes. I have observed in young men that the propensity to plunge headlong into a net of difficulty, on being startled at an apparent want of equity in any rule that was propounded, although at first it might seem to imply a lack of caution and foresight, which are eminently the virtues of legislators and of judges, was an unerring prognostic of a natural aptitude for pursuits, wherein eminence is inconsistent with an inertness of the moral sense and a recklessness of the violation of rights, however remote and trifling. Various instances of such aptitude in Shelley might be furnished, but these studies are interesting to a limited number of persons only.

As the mind of Shelley was apt to acquire many of the most valuable branches of liberal knowledge, so there were other portions comprised within the circle of science, for the reception of which, however active and acute, it was entirely unfit. He rejected with marvellous impatience every mathematical discipline that was offered; no problem could awaken the slightest curiosity, nor could he be

made sensible of the beauty of any theorem. The method of demonstration had no charms for him; he complained of the insufferable prolixity and the vast tautology of Euclid and the other ancient geometricians; and when the discoveries of modern analysts were presented, he was immediately distracted, and fell into endless musings.

With respect to the Oriental tongues, he coldly observed that the appearance of the characters was curious. Although he perused with more than ordinary eagerness the relations of travellers in the East, and the translations of the marvellous tales of oriental fancy, he was not attracted by the desire to penetrate the languages which veil these treasures. He would never deign to lend an ear, or an eye, for a moment to my Hebrew studies, in which I had made at that time some small progress; nor could he be tempted to inquire into the value of the singular lore of the Rabbins. He was able, like the many, to distinguish a violet from a sunflower, and a cauliflower from a peony; but his botanical knowledge was more limited than that of the least skilful of common observers, for he was neglectful of flowers. He was incapable of apprehending the delicate distinctions of structure which form the basis of the beautiful classification of modern botanists. I was never able to impart even a glimpse of the merits of Ray, or Linnæus, or to encourage a hope that he would ever be competent to see the visible analogies that constitute the marked, yet mutually approaching *genera*, into which the productions of nature, and especially vegetables, are divided. It may seem invidious to notice imperfections in a mind of the highest order, but the exercise of a due candour, however unwelcome, is required to satisfy those who were not acquainted with Shelley, that the admiration excited by his marvellous talents and manifold virtues in all who were so fortunate as to enjoy the opportunity of examining his merits by frequent intercourse, was not the result of the blind partiality that amiable and innocent dispositions, attractive manners, and a noble and generous bearing sometimes create.



The prince of Roman eloquence affirms, that the good man alone can be a perfect orator,—and truly, for without the weight of a spotless reputation, it is certain that the most artful and elaborate discourses must want authority, the main ingredient in persuasion. The position is, at least, equally true of the poet, whose grand strength always lies in the ethical force of his compositions; and these are great in proportion to the efficient greatness of their moral purpose. If, therefore, we would criticise poetry correctly, and from the foundation, it behoves us to examine the morality of the bard. In no individual, perhaps, was the moral sense ever more completely developed than in Shelley; in no being was the perception of right and of wrong more acute. The biographer who takes upon himself the pleasing and instructive, but difficult and delicate task of composing a faithful history of his whole life, will frequently be compelled to discuss the important questions, whether his conduct, at certain periods, was altogether such as ought to be proposed for imitation; whether he was ever misled by an ardent imagination, a glowing temperament, something of hastiness in choice, and a certain constitutional impatience; whether, like less gifted mortals, he ever shared in the common portion of mortality,—repentance; and to what extent? Such inquiries, however, do not fall within the compass of a brief narrative of his career at the University. The unmaturing mind of a boy is capable of good intentions only, and of generous and kindly feelings, and these were pre-eminent in him. It will be proper to unfold the excellence of his dispositions, not for the sake of vain and empty praise, but simply to show his aptitude to receive the sweet fury of the Muses. His inextinguishable thirst for knowledge, his boundless philanthropy, his fearless, it may be, his almost imprudent, pursuit of truth, have been already exhibited. If mercy to beasts be a criterion of a good man, numerous instances of extreme tenderness would demonstrate his worth. I will mention one only.

We were walking one afternoon in Bagley Wood; on turning

a corner. we suddenly came upon a boy, who was driving an ass. It was very young, and very weak, and was staggering beneath a most disproportionate load of faggots, and he was belabouring its lean ribs angrily and violently with a short, thick, heavy cudgel. At the sight of cruelty Shelley was instantly transported far beyond the usual measure of excitement: he sprang forward, and was about to interpose with energetic and indignant vehemence. I caught him by the arm, and to his present annoyance held him back, and with much difficulty persuaded him to allow me to be the advocate of the dumb animal. His cheeks glowed with displeasure, and his lips murmured his impatience during my brief dialogue with the young tyrant. "That is a sorry little ass, boy," I said; "it seems to have scarcely any strength."—"None at all; it is good for nothing."—"It cannot get on; it can hardly stand; if any body could make it go, you would; you have taken great pains with it."—"Yes, I have; but it is to no purpose!"—"It is of little use striking it, I think."—"It is not worth beating; the stupid beast has got more wood now than it can carry; it can hardly stand, you see!"—"I suppose it put it upon its back itself?" The boy was silent: I repeated the question. "No; it has not sense enough for that," he replied, with an incredulous leer. By dint of repeated blows he had split one end of his cudgel, and the sound caused by the divided portion had alarmed Shelley's humanity: I pointed to it, and said, "You have split your stick: it is not good for much now." He turned it, and held the divided end in his hand. "The other end is whole, I see; but I suppose you could split that too on the ass's back, if you chose; it is not so thick."—"It is not so thick, but it is full of knots; it would take a great deal of trouble to split it, and the beast is not worth that; it would do no good!"—"It would do no good, certainly; and if any body saw you, he might say that you were a savage young ruffian, and that you ought to be served in the same manner yourself." The fellow looked at me with some surprise, and sank into solemn silence. He presently threw his cudgel into the wood as far as he was able, and began to amuse himself by pelting the birds with pebbles, leaving my long-eared client to proceed at its own pace, having made up his mind, perhaps, to be beaten himself, when he reached home, by a tyrant still more unreasonable than himself on account of the inevitable default of his ass. Shelley was satisfied with the result of our conversation, and I repeated to him the history of the injudicious and unfortunate interference of Don Quixote between the peasant, John Haldudo, and his servant, Andrew. Although he reluctantly admitted, that the acrimony of humanity might often aggravate the sufferings of the oppressed by provoking the oppressor, I always observed, that the impulse of generous indignation, on witnessing the infliction of pain, was too vivid to allow him to pause and consider the probable consequences of the abrupt interposition of the knight errantry, which would at once redress all grievances. Such exquisite sensibility and a sympathy with suffering so acute and so uncontrolled may possibly be inconsistent with the calmness and forethought of the philosopher, but they accord well with the high temperature of a poet's blood.

As his port had the meekness of a maiden, so the heart of the

young virgin who has never crossed her father's threshold to encounter the rude world, could not be more susceptible of all the sweet domestic charities than his: in this respect Shelley's disposition would happily illustrate the innocence and virginity of the Muses. In most men, and especially in very young men, an excessive addiction to study tends to chill the heart, and to blunt the feelings, by engrossing the attention. Notwithstanding his extreme devotion to literature, and amidst his various and ardent speculations, he retained a most affectionate regard for his relations, and particularly for the females of his family: it was not without manifest joy that he received a letter from his mother, or his sisters. A child of genius is seldom duly appreciated by the world during his life, least of all by his own kindred. The parents of a man of talent may claim the honour of having given him birth, yet they commonly enjoy but little of his society. Whilst we hang with delight over the immortal pages, we are apt to suppose that the gifted author was fondly cherished: that a possession so uncommon and so precious was highly prized; that his contemporaries anxiously watched his going out and eagerly looked for his coming in: for we should ourselves have borne him tenderly in our hands, that he might not dash his foot against a stone. Surely such an one was given in charge to angels, we cry: on the contrary, Nature appears most unaccountably to slight a gift that she gave grudgingly; as if it were of small value, and easily replaced. An unusual number of books, Greek or Latin classics, each inscribed with the name of the donor, which had been presented to him, according to the custom on quitting Eton, attested that Shelley had been popular among his schoolfellows. Many of them were then at Oxford, and they frequently called at his rooms: although he spoke of them with regard, he generally avoided their society, for it interfered with his beloved study, and interrupted the pursuits to which he ardently and entirely devoted himself.

In the nine centuries that elapsed from the time of our great founder, Alfred, to our days, there never was a student who more richly merited the favour and assistance of a learned body, or whose fruitful mind would have repaid with a larger harvest the labour of careful and judicious cultivation. And such cultivation he was well entitled to receive. Nor did his scholar-like virtues merit neglect: still less to be betrayed, like the young nobles of Falisci, by a traitorous schoolmaster, to an enemy less generous than Camillus. No student ever read more assiduously. He was to be found book in hand at all hours: reading in season and out of season; at table, in bed, and especially during a walk: not only in the quiet country, and in retired paths; not only at Oxford, in the public walks, and High-street, but in the most crowded thoroughfares of London. Nor was he less absorbed by the volume that was open before him, in Cheap-side, in Cranbourn-alley, or in Bond-street, than in a lonely lanc, or a secluded library. Sometimes a vulgar fellow would attempt to insult or annoy the eccentric student in passing. Shelley always avoided the malignant interruption by stepping aside with his vast and quiet agility. Sometimes I have observed, as an agreeable contrast to these wretched men, that persons of the humblest station have paused

and gazed with respectful wonder as he advanced, almost unconscious of the throng, stooping low, with bent knees and outstretched neck, poring earnestly over the volume, which he extended before him: for they knew this, although the simple people knew but little, that an ardent scholar is worthy of deference, and that the man of learning is necessarily the friend of humanity, and especially of the many. I never beheld eyes that devoured the pages more voraciously than his: I am convinced that two-thirds of the period of day and night were often employed in reading. It is no exaggeration to affirm, that out of the twenty-four hours, he frequently read sixteen. At Oxford, his diligence in this respect was exemplary, but it greatly increased afterwards, and I sometimes thought that he carried it to a pernicious excess: I am sure, at least, that I was unable to keep pace with him. On the evening of a wet day, when we had read with scarcely any intermission from an early hour in the morning, I have urged him to lay aside his book. It required some extravagance to rouse him to join heartily in conversation; to tempt him to avoid the chimney-piece, on which commonly he had laid the open volume. "If I were to read as long as you do, Shelley, my hair and my teeth would be strewed about on the floor, and my eyes would slip down my cheeks into my waistcoat pockets; or at least I should become so weary and nervous, that I should not know whether it were so or not." He began to scrape the carpet with his feet, as if teeth were actually lying upon it, and he looked fixedly at my face, and his lively fancy represented the empty sockets; his imagination was excited, and the spell that bound him to his books was broken, and creeping close to the fire, and, as it were, under the fire-place, he commenced a most animated discourse. Few were aware of the extent, and still fewer, I apprehend, of the profundity of his reading; in his short life, and without ostentation, he had, in truth, read more Greek than many an aged pedant, who, with pompous parade, prides himself upon this study alone. Although he had not entered critically into the minute niceties of the noblest of languages, he was thoroughly conversant with the valuable matter it contains. A pocket edition of Plato, of Plutarch, of Euripides, without interpretation or notes, or of the Septuagint, was his ordinary companion; and he read the text straightforward for hours, if not as readily as an English author, at least with as much facility as French, Italian, or Spanish. "Upon my soul, Shelley, your style of going through a Greek book is something quite beautiful!" was the wondering exclamation of one who was himself no mean student.

As his love of intellectual pursuits was vehement, and the vigour of his genius almost celestial, so were the purity and sanctity of his life most conspicuous. His food was plain and simple as that of a hermit, with a certain anticipation, even at this time, of a vegetable diet, respecting which he afterwards became an enthusiast in theory, and in practice an irregular votary. With his usual fondness for moving the abstruse and difficult questions of the highest theology, he loved to inquire, whether man can justify, on the ground of reason alone, the practice of taking the life of the inferior animals, except in the necessary defence of his life and of

his means of life, the fruits of that field, which he has tilled, from violence and spoliation. "Not only have considerable sects," he would say, "denied the right altogether, but those among the tender-hearted and imaginative people of antiquity, who accounted it lawful to kill and eat, appear to have doubted, whether they might take away life merely for the use of man alone. They slew their cattle not simply for human guests, like the less scrupulous butchers of modern times, but only as a sacrifice, for the honour and in the name of the deity; or rather of those subordinate divinities, to whom, as they believed, the supreme being had assigned the creation and conservation of the visible material world; as an incident to these pious offerings, they partook of the residue of the victims, of which, without such sanction and sanctification they would not have presumed to taste. So reverent was the caution of a humane and prudent antiquity!" Bread became his chief sustenance, when his regimen attained to that austerity, which afterwards distinguished it. He could have lived on bread alone without repining. When he was walking in London with an acquaintance he would suddenly run into a baker's shop, purchase a supply, and breaking a loaf, he would offer half of it to his companion. "Do you know," he said to me one day with much surprise, "that such an one does not like bread; did you ever know a person who disliked bread?" and he told me that a friend had refused such an offer. I explained to him, that the individual in question probably had no objection to bread in a moderate quantity, at a proper time and with the usual adjuncts, and was only unwilling to devour two, or three, pounds of dry bread in the streets and at an early hour. Shelley had no such scruple; his pockets were generally well-stored with bread. A circle upon the carpet, clearly defined by an ample verge of crumbs, often marked the place where he had long sat at his studies, his face nearly in contact with his book, greedily devouring bread at intervals amidst his profound abstractions. For the most part he took no condiment; sometimes, however, he ate with his bread the common raisins, which are used in making puddings, and these he would buy at little mean shops. He was walking one day in London with a respectable solicitor, who occasionally transacted business for him; with his accustomed precipitation he suddenly vanished, and as suddenly reappeared: he had entered the shop of a little grocer in an obscure quarter, and had returned with some plums, which he held close under the attorney's nose, and the man of fact was as much astonished at the offer, as his client, the man of fancy, at the refusal. The common fruit of the stalls, and oranges and apples, were always welcome to Shelley; he would crunch the latter as heartily as a schoolboy. Vegetables and especially sallads, and pies and puddings, were acceptable: his beverage consisted of copious and frequent draughts of cold water, but tea was ever grateful, cup after cup, and coffee. Wine was taken with singular moderation, commonly diluted largely with water, and for a long period he would abstain from it altogether; he avoided the use of spirits almost invariably and even in the most minute portions. Like all persons of simple tastes, he retained his sweet tooth; he would greedily eat cakes, gingerbread, and sugar; honey, preserved

or stewed fruit, with bread, were his favourite delicacies, these he thankfully and joyfully received from others, but he rarely sought for them or provided them for himself. The restraint and protracted duration of a convivial meal were intolerable; he was seldom able to keep his seat during the brief period assigned to an ordinary family dinner.

These particulars may seem trifling, if indeed any thing can be little, that has reference to a character truly great; but they prove how much he was ashamed that his soul was in body, and illustrate the virgin abstinence of a mind equally favoured by the Muses, the Graces and Philosophy. It is true, however, that his application at Oxford, although exemplary, was not so unremitting, as it afterwards became, nor was his diet, although singularly temperate, so meagre, however his mode of living already offered a foretaste of the studious seclusion and absolute renunciation of every luxurious indulgence, which ennobled him a few years later. Had a parent desired that his children should be exactly trained to an ascetic life and should be taught by an eminent example to scorn delights and to love laborious days; that they should behold a pattern of native innocence and genuine simplicity of manners; he would have consigned them to his house as to a temple, or to some primitive and still unsophisticated monastery. It is an invidious thing to compose a perpetual panegyric, yet it is difficult to speak of Shelley, and impossible to speak justly, without often praising him; it is difficult also to divest myself of later recollections; to forget for a while what he became in days subsequent, and to remember only what he then was, when we were fellow-collegians. It is difficult, moreover, to view him with the mind which I then bore,—with a young mind; to lay aside the seriousness of old age; for twenty years of assiduous study have induced, if not in the body, at least within, something of premature old age. It now seems an incredible thing and altogether inconceivable, when I consider the gravity of Shelley and his invincible repugnance to the comic, that the monkey tricks of the schoolboy could have still lingered, but it is certain that some slight vestiges still remained. The metaphysician of eighteen actually attempted once, or twice, to electrify the son of his scout, a boy like a sheep, by name James, who roared aloud with ludicrous and stupid terror, whenever Shelley affected to bring by stealth any part of his philosophical apparatus near to him.

As Shelley's health and strength were visibly augmented if by accident he was obliged to accept a more generous diet than ordinary, and as his mind sometimes appeared to be exhausted by never ending toil, I often blamed his abstinence and his perpetual application. It is the office of an University, of a public institution for education, not only to apply the spur to the sluggish, but also to rein in the young steed, that being too mettlesome, hastens with undue speed towards the goal. "It is a very odd thing, but every woman can live with my lord and do just what she pleases with him, except my lady!" Such was the shrewd remark, which a long familiarity taught an old and attached servant to utter respecting his master, a noble poet. We may wonder in like manner, and deeply lament, that the most docile, the most facile, the most pliant, the most confiding creature, that

ever was led through any of the various paths on earth, that a tractable youth, who was conducted at pleasure by anybody, that approached him, it might be, occasionally, by persons delegated by no legitimate authority, was never guided for a moment by those, upon whom fully and without reservation that most solemn and sacred obligation had been imposed, strengthened moreover by every public and private, official and personal, moral, political and religious tie, which the civil polity of a long succession of ages could accumulate. Had the University been in fact, as in name, a kind nursing mother to the most gifted of her sons; to one, who seemed to those that knew him best—

“Heaven’s exile straying from the orb of light;”

had that most awful responsibility, the right institution of those, to whom are to be consigned the government of the country and the conservation of whatever good human society has elaborated and ex-cogitated, duly weighed upon the consciences of his instructors, they would have gained his entire confidence by frank kindness, they would have repressed his too eager impatience to master the sum of knowledge, they would have mitigated the rigorous austerity of his course of living, and they would have remitted the extreme tension of his soul by reconciling him to a liberal mirth, convincing him, that if life be not wholly a jest, there are at least many comic scenes occasionally interspersed in the great drama. Nor is the last benefit of trifling importance, for as an unseemly and excessive gravity is usually the sign of a dull fellow, so is the prevalence of this defect the characteristic of an unlearned and illiberal age. Shelley was actually offended, and indeed more indignant than would appear to be consistent with the singular mildness of his nature, at a coarse and awkward jest, especially if it were immodest, or uncleanly; in the latter case his anger was unbounded, and his uneasiness pre-eminent; he was, however, sometimes vehemently delighted by exquisite and delicate sallies, particularly with a fanciful, and perhaps somewhat fantastical facetiousness, possibly the more because he was himself utterly incapable of pleasantry.

In every free state, in all countries that enjoy republican institutions, the view, which each citizen takes of politics, is an essential ingredient in the estimate of his ethical character. The wisdom of a very young man is but foolishness, nevertheless if we would rightly comprehend the moral and intellectual constitution of the youthful poet, it will be expedient to take into account the manner in which he was affected towards the grand political questions at a period when the whole of the civilized world was agitated by a fierce storm of excitement, that, happily for the peace and well-being of society, is of rare occurrence.



The passionate fondness of the Platonic philosophy seemed to sharpen his natural affection for children, and his sympathy with their innocence. Every true Platonist, he used to say, must be a lover of children, for they are our masters and instructors in philosophy: the mind of a newborn infant, so far from being, as Locke affirms, a sheet of blank paper, is a pocket edition, containing every dialogue, a complete Elzevir Plato, if we can fancy such a pleasant volume; and, moreover, a perfect encyclopedia, comprehending not only the newest discoveries, but all those still more valuable and wonderful inventions that will hereafter be made!

One Sunday we had been reading Plato together so diligently, that the usual hour of exercise passed away unperceived: we sallied forth hastily to take the air for half an hour before dinner. In the middle of Magdalen Bridge we met a woman with a child in her arms. Shelley was more attentive at that instant to our conduct in a life that was past, or to come, than to a decorous regulation of the present, according to the established usages of society, in that fleeting moment of eternal duration, styled the nineteenth century. With abrupt dexterity he caught hold of the child. The mother, who might well fear that it was about to be thrown over the parapet of the bridge into the sedge waters below, held it fast by its long train. "Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, Madam?" he asked, in a piercing voice, and with a wistful look. The mother made no answer, but perceiving that Shelley's object was not murderous, but altogether harmless, she dismissed her apprehension, and relaxed her hold. "Will your baby tell us any thing about pre-existence, Madam?" he repeated, with unabated earnestness. "He cannot speak, Sir," said the mother, seriously. "Worse and worse," cried Shelley, with an air of deep disappointment, shaking his long hair most pathetically about his young face; "but surely the babe can speak if he will, for he is only a few weeks old. He may fancy perhaps that he cannot, but it is only a silly whim; he cannot have forgotten entirely the use of speech in so short a time; the thing is absolutely impossible." "It is not for me to dispute with you, Gentlemen," the woman meekly replied, her eye glancing at our academical

garb; "but I can safely declare that I never heard him speak, nor any child, indeed, of his age." It was a fine placid boy: so far from being disturbed by the interruption, he looked up and smiled. Shelley pressed his fat cheeks with his fingers, we commended his healthy appearance and his equanimity, and the mother was permitted to proceed, probably to her satisfaction, for she would doubtless prefer a less speculative nurse. Shelley sighed deeply as we walked on. "How provokingly close are those new-born babes," he ejaculated; "but it is not the less certain, notwithstanding their cunning attempts to conceal the truth, that all knowledge is reminiscence: the doctrine is far more ancient than the times of Plato, and as old as the venerable allegory that the Muses are the daughters of Memory; not one of the nine was ever said to be the child of Invention!"

In consequence of this theory, upon which his active imagination loved to dwell, and which he was delighted to maintain in argument with the few persons qualified to dispute with him on the higher metaphysics, his fondness for children—a fondness innate in generous minds—was augmented and elevated, and the gentle instinct expanded into a profound and philosophical sentiment. The Platonists have been illustrious in all ages, on account of the strength and permanence of their attachments. In Shelley the parental affections were developed at an early period to an unusual extent: it was manifest, therefore, that his heart was formed by nature and by cultivation to derive the most exquisite gratification from the society of his own progeny, or the most poignant anguish from a natural or unnatural bereavement. To strike him here was the cruel admonition which a cursory glance would at once convey to him who might seek where to wound him most severely with a single blow, should he ever provoke the vengeance of an enemy to the active and fearless spirit of liberal investigation and to all solid learning—of a foe to the human race. With respect to the theory of the pre-existence of the soul, it is not wonderful that an ardent votary of the intellectual should love to uphold it in strenuous and protracted disputation, as it places the immortality of the soul in an impregnable castle, and not only secures it an existence independent of the body, as it were, by usage and prescription, but moreover, raising it out of the dirt on tall stilts—elevates it far above the mud of matter. It is not wonderful that a subtle sophist, who esteemed above all riches and terrene honours victory in well-fought debate, should be willing to maintain a dogma that is not only of difficult eversion by those, who, struggling as mere metaphysicians, use no other weapon than unassisted reason, but which one of the most illustrious Fathers of the Church—a man of amazing powers and stupendous erudition, armed with the prodigious resources of the Christian theology, the renowned Origen—was unable to dismiss; retaining it as not dissonant from his informed reason, and as affording a larger scope for justice in the moral government of the universe.

In addition to his extreme fondness for children, another, and a not less unequivocal, characteristic of a truly philanthropic mind, was eminently and still more remarkably conspicuous in Shelley,—his admiration of men of learning and genius. In truth, the devotion, the reverence, the religion, with which he was kindled towards all the masters of intellect, cannot be described, and must be utterly inconceivable to minds less deeply enamoured with the love of wisdom. The irreverent many can-

not comprehend the awe—the careless apathetic worldling cannot imagine the enthusiasm—nor can the tongue that attempts only to speak of things visible to the bodily eye,—express the mighty emotion that inwardly agitated him, when he approached, for the first time, a volume which he believed to be replete with the recondite and mystic philosophy of antiquity: his cheeks glowed, his eyes became bright, his whole frame trembled, and his entire attention was immediately swallowed up in the depths of contemplation. The rapid and vigorous conversion of his soul to intellect can only be compared with the instantaneous ignition and combustion, which dazzle the sight, when a bundle of dry reeds, or other light inflammable substance, is thrown upon a fire already rich with accumulated heat.

The company of persons of merit was delightful to him, and he often spoke with a peculiar warmth of the satisfaction he hoped to derive from the society of the most distinguished literary and scientific characters of the day in England, and the other countries of Europe, when his own attainments would justify him in seeking their acquaintance. He was never weary of recounting the rewards and favours that authors had formerly received; and he would detail in pathetic language, and with a touching earnestness, the instances of that poverty and neglect, which an iron age assigned as the fitting portion of solid erudition and undoubted talents. He would contrast the niggard praise and the paltry payments, that the cold and wealthy moderns reluctantly dole out, with the ample and heartfelt commendation, and the noble remuneration, which were freely offered by the more generous but less opulent ancients. He spoke with an animation of gesture and an elevation of voice of him who undertook a long journey, that he might once see the historian Livy; and he recounted the rich legacies which were bequeathed to Cicero and to Pliny the younger, by testators venerating their abilities and attainments,—his zeal, enthusiastic in the cause of letters, giving an interest and a novelty to the most trite and familiar instances. His disposition being wholly munificent, gentle, and friendly, how generous a patron would he have proved had he ever been in the actual possession of even moderate wealth! Out of a scanty and somewhat precarious income, inadequate to allow the indulgence of the most ordinary superfluities, and diminished by various casual but unavoidable incumbrances, he was able, by restricting himself to a diet more simple than the fare of the most austere anchorite, and by refusing himself horses and the other gratifications that appear properly to belong to his station, and of which he was in truth very fond, to bestow upon men of letters, whose merits were of too high an order to be rightly estimated by their own generation, donations large indeed, if we consider from how narrow a source they flowed. But to speak of this his signal and truly admirable bounty, save only in the most distant manner, and the most general terms, would be a flagrant violation of that unequalled delicacy with which it was extended to undeserved indigence, accompanied by well founded and most commendable pride. To allude to any particular instance, however obscurely and indistinctly, would be unpardonable; but it would be scarcely less blameable to dismiss the consideration of the character of the benevolent young poet without some imperfect testimony of this rare excellence.

That he gave freely, when the needy scholar asked, or in silent, hopeless poverty seemed to ask, his aid, will be demonstrated most clearly

by relating shortly one example of his generosity, where the applicant had no pretensions to literary renown, and no claim whatever, except perhaps honest penury. It is delightful to attempt to delineate from various points of view a creature of infinite moral beauty,—but one instance must suffice: an ample volume might be composed of such tales, but one may be selected, because it contains a large admixture of that ingredient which is essential to the conversion of alms-giving into the genuine virtue of charity—self-denial. On returning to town after the long vacation, at the end of October, I found Shelley at one of the hotels in Covent Garden. Having some business in hand he was passing a few days there alone. We had taken some mutton chops hastily at a dark place in one of the minute courts of the city, at an early hour, and we went forth to walk; for to walk at all times, and especially in the evening, was his supreme delight. The aspect of the fields to the north of Somers-Town, between that beggarly suburb and Kentish-Town, has been totally changed of late. Although this district could never be accounted pretty, nor deserving a high place even amongst suburban scenes, yet the air, or often the wind, seemed pure and fresh to captives emerging from the smoke of London: there were certain old elms, much very green grass, quiet cattle feeding, and groups of noisy children playing with something of the freedom of the village green. There was, oh blessed thing! an entire absence of carriages and of blood-horses; of the dust and dress and affectation and fashion of the parks: there were, moreover, old and quaint edifices and objects which gave character to the scene. Whenever Shelley was imprisoned in London,—for to a poet a close and crowded city must be a dreary goal,—his steps would take that direction, unless his residence was too remote, or he was accompanied by one who chose to guide his walk. On this occasion I was led thither, as indeed I had anticipated: the weather was fine, but the autumn was already advanced; we had not sauntered long in these fields when the dusky evening closed in, and the darkness gradually thickened. “How black those trees are,” said Shelley, stopping short, and pointing to a row of elms; “it is so dark the trees might well be houses, and the turf, pavement,—the eye would sustain no loss; it is useless therefore to remain here, let us return.” He proposed tea at his hotel, I assented; and hastily buttoning his coat, he seized my arm, and set off at his great pace, striding with bent knees over the fields and through the narrow streets. We were crossing the New Road, when he said shortly, “I must call for a moment, but it will not be out of the way at all,” and then dragged me suddenly towards the left. I inquired whither we were bound, and, I believe, I suggested the postponement of the intended call till the morrow. He answered, it was not at all out of our way. I was hurried along rapidly towards the left; we soon fell into an animated discussion respecting the nature of the virtue of the Romans, which in some measure beguiled the weary way. Whilst he was talking with much vehemence and a total disregard of the people who thronged the streets, he suddenly wheeled about and pushed me through a narrow door; to my infinite surprise I found myself in a pawnbroker’s shop! It was in the neighbourhood of Newgate Street; for he had no idea whatever in practice either of time or space, nor did he in any degree regard method in the conduct of business. There were several women in the shop in brown and grey cloaks with squalling children: some of

them were attempting to persuade the children to be quiet, or at least to scream with moderation; the others were enlarging upon and pointing out the beauties of certain coarse and dirty sheets that lay before them to a man on the other side of the counter. I bore this substitute for our proposed tea some minutes with tolerable patience, but as the call did not promise to terminate speedily, I said to Shelley, in a whisper, "Is not this almost as bad as the Roman virtue?" Upon this he approached the pawnbroker: it was long before he could obtain a hearing, and he did not find civility. The man was unwilling to part with a valuable pledge so soon, or perhaps he hoped to retain it eventually; or it might be, that the obliquity of his nature disqualified him for respectful behaviour. A pawnbroker is frequently an important witness in criminal proceedings: it has happened to me, therefore, afterwards to see many specimens of this kind of banker; they sometimes appeared not less respectable than other tradesmen, and sometimes I have been forcibly reminded of the first I ever met with, by an equally ill-conditioned fellow. I was so little pleased with the introduction, that I stood aloof in the shop, and did not hear what passed between him and Shelley. On our way to Covent-Garden, I expressed my surprise and dissatisfaction at our strange visit, and I learned that when he came to London before, in the course of the summer, some old man had related to him a tale of distress,—of a calamity which could only be alleviated by the timely application of ten pounds; five of them he drew at once from his pocket, and to raise the other five he had pawned his beautiful solar microscope! He related this act of beneficence simply and briefly, as if it were a matter of course, and such indeed it was to him. I was ashamed of my impatience, and we strode along in silence.

It was past ten when we reached the hotel; some excellent tea and a liberal supply of hot muffins in the coffee-room, now quiet and solitary, were the more grateful after the wearisome delay and vast deviation. Shelley often turned his head, and cast eager glances towards the door; and whenever the waiter replenished our teapot, or approached our box, he was interrogated whether any one had yet called. At last the desired summons was brought; Shelley drew forth some bank notes, hurried to the bar, and returned as hastily, bearing in triumph under his arm a mahogany box, followed by the officious waiter, with whose assistance he placed it upon the bench by his side. He viewed it often with evident satisfaction, and sometimes patted it affectionately in the course of calm conversation. The solar microscope was always a favourite plaything or instrument of scientific inquiry; whenever he entered a house his first care was to choose some window of a southern aspect, and, if permission could be obtained by prayer or by purchase, straightway to cut a hole through the shutter to receive it. His regard for his solar microscope was as lasting as it was strong; for he retained it several years after this adventure, and long after he had parted with all the rest of his philosophical apparatus.

Such is the story of the microscope, and no rightly judging person who hears it will require the further accumulation of proofs of a benevolent heart; nor can I, perhaps, better close these sketches than with that impression of the pure and genial beauty of Shelley's nature which this simple anecdote will bequeath.



We had read together attentively several of the metaphysical works that were most in vogue at that time, as "Locke on the Human Understanding," and "Hume's Essays," particularly the latter, of which we had made a very careful analysis, as was customary with those who read the Ethics and the other treatises of Aristotle for their degrees. Shelley had the custody of these papers, which were chiefly in his handwriting, although they were the joint production of both in our common daily studies. From these, and from a small part of them only, he made up a little book, and had it printed, I believe, in the country, certainly not at Oxford. His motive was this. He not only read greedily all the controversial writings on subjects interesting to him, which he could procure, and disputed vehemently in conversation with his friends, but he had several correspondents with whom he kept up the ball of doubt in letters; —of these he received many, so that the arrival of the postman was always an anxious moment with him. This practice he had learnt of a physician, from whom he had taken instructions in chemistry, and of whose character and talents he often spoke with profound veneration. It was, indeed, the usual course with men of learning formerly, as their biographies and many volumes of such epistles testify. The physician was an

old man, and a man of the old school; he confined his epistolary discussions to matters of science, and so did his disciple for some time; but when metaphysics usurped the place in his affections that chemistry had before held, the latter gradually fell into disceptions respecting existences still more subtle than gases and the electric fluid. The transition, however, from physics to metaphysics was gradual. Is the electric fluid material? he would ask his correspondent; is light—is the vital principle in vegetables—in brutes—is the human soul? His individual character had proved an obstacle to his inquiries, even whilst they were strictly physical; a refuted or irritated chemist had suddenly concluded a long correspondence by telling his youthful opponent that he would write to his master, and have him well flogged. The discipline of a public school, however salutary in other respects, was not favourable to free and fair discussion; and Shelley began to address inquiries anonymously, or rather, that he might receive an answer, as Philalethes, and the like; but, even at Eton, the postmen do not ordinarily speak Greek—to prevent miscarriages, therefore, it was necessary to adopt a more familiar name, as John Short, or Thomas Long.

When he came to Oxford, he retained and extended his former practice without quitting the convenient disguise of an assumed name. His object in printing the short abstract of some of the doctrines of Hume was to facilitate his epistolary disquisitions. It was a small pill, but it worked powerfully; the mode of operation was this.—He enclosed a copy in a letter, and sent it by the post, stating, with modesty and simplicity, that he had met accidentally with that little tract, which appeared unhappily to be quite unanswerable. Unless the fish was too sluggish to take the bait, an answer of refutation was forwarded to an appointed address in London, and then in a vigorous reply he would fall upon the unwary disputant, and break his bones. The strenuous attack sometimes provoked a rejoinder more carefully prepared, and an animated and protracted debate ensued; the party cited, having put in his answer, was fairly in court, and he might get out of it as he could. The chief difficulty seemed to be to induce the person addressed to acknowledge the jurisdiction, and to plead; and this, Shelley supposed, would be removed by sending, in the first instance, a printed syllabus instead of written arguments. An accident greatly facilitated his object. We had been talking some time before about geometrical demonstration; he was repeating its praises, which he had lately read in some mathematical work, and speaking of its absolute certainty and perfect truth.

I said that this superiority partly arose from the confidence of mathematicians, who were naturally a confident race, and were seldom acquainted with any other science than their own; that they always put a good face upon the matter, detailing their arguments dogmatically and doggedly, as if there was no room for doubt, and concluded, when weary of talking in their positive strain, with Q. E. D.: in which three letters there was so powerful a charm, that there was no instance of any one having ever disputed any argument or proposition to which they were subscribed. He was diverted by this remark and often repeated it, saying, if you ask a friend to dinner, and only put Q. E. D. at the end of the invitation, he cannot refuse to come; and he sometimes wrote these letters at the end of a common note, in order, as he said, to attain to a mathematical certainty. The potent characters were not forgotten when

he printed his little syllabus; and their efficacy in rousing his antagonists was quite astonishing.

It is certain that the three obnoxious letters had a fertilizing effect, and raised rich crops of controversy; but it would be unjust to deny, that an honest zeal stimulated divers worthy men to assert the truth against an unknown assailant. The praise of good intention must be conceded; but it is impossible to accord that of powerful execution also to his antagonists: this curious correspondence fully testified the deplorable condition of education at that time. A youth of eighteen was able to confute men who had numbered thrice as many years; to vanquish them on their own ground, although he gallantly fought at a disadvantage by taking the wrong side. His little pamphlet was never offered for sale; it was not addressed to an ordinary reader, but to the metaphysician alone; and it was so short, that it was only designed to point out the line of argument. It was in truth a general issue; a compendious denial of every allegation, in order to put the whole case in proof; it was a formal mode of saying, you affirm so and so, then prove it; and thus was it understood by his more candid and intelligent correspondents. As it was shorter, so was it plainer, and perhaps, in order to provoke discussion, a little bolder, than Hume's *Essays*,—a book which occupies a conspicuous place in the library of every student. The doctrine, if it deserve the name, was precisely similar; the necessary and inevitable consequence of Locke's philosophy, and of the theory that all knowledge is from without. I will not admit your conclusions, his opponent might answer; then you must deny those of Hume: I deny them; but you must deny those of Locke also; and we will go back together to Plato. Such was the usual course of argument; sometimes, however, he rested on mere denial, holding his adversary to strict proof, and deriving strength from his weakness. The young Platonist argued thus negatively through the love of argument, and because he found a noble joy in the fierce shocks of contending minds; he loved truth, and sought it everywhere, and at all hazards, frankly and boldly, like a man who deserved to find it; but he also loved dearly victory in debate, and warm debate for its own sake. Never was there a more unexceptionable disputant; he was eager beyond the most ardent, but never angry and never personal: he was the only arguer I ever knew who drew every argument from the nature of the thing, and who could never be provoked to descend to personal contentions. He was fully inspired, indeed, with the whole spirit of the true logician; the more obvious and indisputable the proposition which his opponent undertook to maintain, the more complete was the triumph of his art if he could refute and prevent him. To one who was acquainted with the history of our University, with its ancient reputation as the most famous school of logic, it seemed that the genius of the place, after an absence of several generations, had deigned to return at last; the visit, however, as it soon appeared, was ill-timed. The schoolman of old, who occasionally laboured with technical subtleties to prevent the admission of the first principles of belief, could not have been justly charged with the intention of promoting scepticism; his was the age of minute and astute disceptation, it is true, but it was also the epoch of the most firm, resolute, and extensive faith. I have seen a dexterous fencing-master, after warning his pupil to hold his weapon fast, by a few turns of his wrist throw it suddenly on the ground and under his feet; but it cannot be pretended that he neglected to teach the art

of self-defence, because he apparently deprived his scholar of that which is essential to the end proposed. To be disarmed is a step in the science of arms, and whoever has undergone it has already put his foot within the threshold; so is it likewise with refutation. In describing briefly the nature of Shelley's epistolary contentions, the recollection of his youth, his zeal, his activity, and particularly of many individual peculiarities, may have tempted me to speak sometimes with a certain levity, notwithstanding the solemn importance of the topics respecting which they were frequently maintained. The impression, that they were conducted on his part, or considered by him, with frivolity, or any unseemly lightness, would, however, be most erroneous; his whole frame of mind was grave, earnest, and anxious, and his deportment was reverential, with an edification reaching beyond the age—an age wanting in reverence; an unlearned age; a young age, for the young lack learning. Hume permits no object of respect to remain; Locke approaches the most awful speculations with the same indifference as if he were about to handle the properties of triangles; the small deference rendered to the most holy things by the able theologian Paley is not the least remarkable of his characteristics. Wiser and better men displayed anciently, together with a more profound erudition, a superior and touching solemnity; the meek seriousness of Shelley was redolent of those good old times before mankind had been despoiled of a main ingredient in the composition of happiness, a well directed veneration.

Whether such disputations were decorous or profitable may be perhaps doubtful; there can be no doubt, however, since the sweet gentleness of Shelley was easily and instantly swayed by the mild influences of friendly admonition, that, had even the least dignified of his elders suggested the propriety of pursuing his metaphysical inquiries with less ardour, his obedience would have been prompt and perfect. Not only had all salutary studies been long neglected in Oxford at that time, and all wholesome discipline was decayed, but the splendid endowments of the University were grossly abused; the resident authorities of the college were too often men of the lowest origin, of mean and sordid souls, destitute of every literary attainment, except that brief and narrow course of reading by which the first degree was attained; the vulgar sons of vulgar fathers, without liberality, and wanting the manners and the sympathies of gentlemen. A total neglect of all learning, an unseemly turbulence, the most monstrous irregularities, open and habitual drunkenness, vice, and violence, were tolerated or encouraged, with the basest sycophancy, that the prospect of perpetual licentiousness might fill the colleges with young men of fortune; whenever the rarely exercised power of coercion was exerted, it demonstrated the utter incapacity of our unworthy rulers by coarseness, ignorance, and injustice. If a few gentlemen were admitted to fellowships, they were always absent; they were not persons of literary pretensions, or distinguished by scholarship; and they had no more share in the government of the college than the overgrown guardsmen, who, in long white gaiters, bravely protect the precious life of the sovereign against such assailants as the tenth Muse, our good friend, Mrs. Nicholson.

As the term was drawing to a close, and a great part of the books we were reading together still remained unfinished, we had agreed to increase our exertions and to meet at an early hour. It was a fine spring morning on Lady-day, in the year 1811, when I went to Shelley's

rooms: he was absent; but before I had collected our books he rushed in. He was terribly agitated. I anxiously inquired what had happened: "I am expelled," he said, as soon as he had recovered himself a little, "I am expelled! I was sent for suddenly a few minutes ago; I went to the common room, where I found our master, and two or three of the fellows. The master produced a copy of the little syllabus, and asked me if I were the author of it. He spoke in a rude, abrupt, and insolent tone. I begged to be informed for what purpose they put the question: No answer was given; but the master loudly and angrily repeated, 'Are you the author of this book?' If I can judge from your manner, I said, you are resolved to punish me, if I should acknowledge that it is my work. If you can prove that it is, produce your evidence; it is neither just nor lawful to interrogate me in such a case and for such a purpose. Such proceedings would become a court of inquisitors, but not free men in a free country. 'Do you choose to deny that this is your composition?' the master reiterated in the same rude and angry voice." Shelley complained much of his violent and ungentlemanlike deportment, saying, "I have experienced tyranny and injustice before, and I well know what vulgar violence is; but I never met with such unworthy treatment. I told him calmly, but firmly, that I was determined not to answer any questions respecting the publication on the table. He immediately repeated his demand; I persisted in my refusal; and he said furiously, 'Then you are expelled; and I desire you will quit the college early to-morrow morning at the latest.' One of the fellows took up two papers, and handed one of them to me; here it is." He produced a regular sentence of expulsion, drawn up in due form, under the seal of the college. Shelley was full of spirit and courage, frank and fearless; but he was likewise shy, unassuming, and eminently sensitive. I have been with him in many trying situations of his after life, but I never saw him so deeply shocked and so cruelly agitated as on this occasion. A nice sense of honour shrinks from the most distant touch of disgrace—even from the insults of those men whose contumely can bring no shame. He sat on the sofa, repeating, with convulsive vehemence, the words, "Expelled, expelled!" his head shaking with emotion, and his whole frame quivering. The atrocious injustice and its cruel consequences roused the indignation, and moved the compassion, of a friend, who then stood by Shelley. He has given the following account of his interference:

"So monstrous and so illegal did the outrage seem, that I held it to be impossible that any man, or any body of men, would dare to adhere to it; but, whatever the issue might be, it was a duty to endeavour to the utmost to assist him. I at once stepped forward, therefore, as the advocate of Shelley; such an advocate, perhaps, with respect to judgment, as might be expected at the age of eighteen, but certainly not inferior to the most practised defenders in good will and devotion. I wrote a short note to the master and fellows, in which, as far as I can remember a very hasty composition after a long interval, I briefly expressed my sorrow at the treatment my friend had experienced, and my hope that they would re-consider their sentence; since, by the same course of proceeding, myself, or any other person, might be subjected to the same penalty, and to the imputation of equal guilt. The note was despatched; the conclave was still sitting; and in an instant the porter came to summon me to attend, bearing in his coun-

tenance a promise of the reception I was about to find. The angry and troubled air of men, assembled to commit injustice according to established forms, was then new to me; but a native instinct told me, as soon as I entered the room, that it was an affair of party; that whatever could conciliate the favour of patrons was to be done without scruple; and whatever could tend to impede preferment was to be brushed away without remorse. The glowing master produced my poor note. I acknowledged it; and he forthwith put into my hand, not less abruptly, the little syllabus. 'Did you write this?' he asked, as fiercely as if I alone stood between him and the rich see of Durham. I attempted, submissively, to point out to him the extreme unfairness of the question; the injustice of punishing Shelley for refusing to answer it; that if it were urged upon me I must offer the like refusal, as I had no doubt every man in college would—every gentleman, indeed, in the University; which, if such a course were adopted with all,—and there could not be any reason why it should be used with one and not with the rest,—would thus be stripped of every member. I soon perceived that arguments were thrown away upon a man possessing no more intellect or erudition, and far less renown, than that famous ram, since translated to the stars, through grasping whose tail less firmly than was expedient, the sister of Phryxus formerly found a watery grave, and gave her name to the broad Hellespont.

"The other persons present took no part in the conversation: they presumed not to speak, scarcely to breathe, but looked mute subserviency. The few resident fellows, indeed, were but so many incarnations of the spirit of the master, whatever that spirit might be. When I was silent, the master told me to retire, and to consider whether I was resolved to persist in my refusal. The proposal was fair enough. The next day, or the next week, I might have given my final answer—a deliberate answer; having in the mean time consulted with older and more experienced persons, as to what course was best for myself and for others. I had scarcely passed the door, however, when I was recalled. The master again showed me the book, and hastily demanded whether I admitted or denied that I was the author of it. I answered that I was fully sensible of the many and great inconveniences of being dismissed with disgrace from the University, and I specified some of them, and expressed an humble hope that they would not impose such a mark of discredit upon me without any cause. I lamented that it was impossible either to admit or to deny the publication,—no man of spirit could submit to do so;—and that a sense of duty compelled me respectfully to refuse to answer the question which had been proposed. 'Then you are expelled,' said the master angrily, in a loud, great voice. A formal sentence, duly signed and sealed, was instantly put into my hand: in what interval the instrument had been drawn up I cannot imagine. The alleged offence was a contumacious refusal to disavow the imputed publication. My eye glanced over it, and observing the word *contumaciously*, I said calmly that I did not think that term was justified by my behaviour. Before I had concluded the remark, the master, lifting up the little syllabus, and then dashing it on the table, and looking sternly at me, said, 'Am I to understand, sir, that you adopt the principles contained in this work?' or some such words; for, like one red with the suffusion of college port and college ale, the intense heat of anger seemed to deprive him of the power of articulation; by reason of a rude provincial dialect and thickness of utterance, his

speech being at all times indistinct. 'The last question is still more improper than the former,' I replied,—for I felt that the imputation was an insult; 'and since, by your own act, you have renounced all authority over me, our communication is at an end.' 'I command you to quit my college to-morrow at an early hour.' I bowed and withdrew. I thank God I have never seen that man since: he is gone to his bed, and there let him sleep. Whilst he lived, he ate freely of the scholar's bread, and drank from his cup; and he was sustained, throughout the whole term of his existence, wholly and most nobly, by those sacred funds that were consecrated by our pious forefathers to the advancement of learning. If the vengeance of the all-patient and long-contemned gods can ever be roused, it will surely be by some such sacrilege! The favour which he showed to scholars, and his gratitude, have been made manifest. If he were still alive, he would doubtless be as little desirous that his zeal should now be remembered as those bigots who had been most active in burning Archbishop Cranmer could have been to publish their officiousness during the reign of Elizabeth."

Busy rumour has ascribed, on what foundation I know not, since an active and searching inquiry has not hitherto been made, the infamy of having denounced Shelley to the pert, meddling tutor of a college of inferior note, a man of an insalubrious and inauspicious aspect. Any pultry fellow can whisper a secret accusation; but a certain courage, as well as malignity, is required by him who undertakes to give evidence openly against another; to provoke thereby the displeasure of the accused, of his family and friends; and to submit his own veracity and his motives to public scrutiny. Hence the illegal and inquisitorial mode of proceeding by interrogation, instead of the lawful and recognized course by the production of witnesses. The disposal of ecclesiastical preferment has long been so reprehensible,—the practice of desecrating institutions that every good man desires to esteem most holy is so inveterate,—that it is needless to add that the secret accuser was rapidly enriched with the most splendid benefices, and finally became a dignitary of the church. The modest prelate did not seek publicity in the charitable and dignified act of deserving; it is not probable, therefore, that he is anxious at present to invite an examination of the precise nature of his deserts.

The next morning, at eight o'clock, Shelley and his friend set out together for London on the top of a coach; and with his final departure from the University the reminiscences of his life at Oxford terminate. The narrative of the injurious effects of this cruel, precipitate, unjust, and illegal expulsion upon the entire course of his subsequent life would not be wanting in interest or instruction; of a period when the scene was changed from the quiet seclusion of academic groves and gardens, and the calm valley of our silvery Isis, to the stormy ocean of that vast and shoreless world, to the utmost violence of which he was, at an early age, suddenly and unnaturally abandoned.

NOTES

p. 62, l. 12: '*aqua regia*': a mixture of nitric and hydrochloric acids, given this name because capable of dissolving 'noble' metals, gold and platinum

p. 64, l. 29: '*Prometheus Vincit*': *Prometheus Bound*, by Aeschylus

p. 69, l. 22: '...Ray or Linnaeus': John Ray (1627–1705) was an English naturalist who wrote extensively on the classification of plants. Linnaeus was Swedish naturalist Carl Linné (1707–78) whose system of categorizing and naming animals and plants was hugely influential

p. 70, l. 1: 'The prince of Roman eloquence': Cicero

p. 76, l. 12: 'Heaven's exile . . .': not identified.

Thomas Medwin, *The Shelley Papers* (London, 1833)

On February 22nd, 1825, Mary Shelley wrote to Trelawny describing a letter that she had recently received from Medwin. It was 'principally taken up with excuses for having (against my earnest desire) published a very blundering & disagreeable memoir of our Shelley in his *Conversations*' (Bennett, *Letters*, I, p. 469). For all his excuses and apologies, the truth seems to have been that Medwin could hardly write without returning to the influence of his friendship with Shelley. Even his own literary efforts expressed this. His long Orientalist poem – or 'Dramatic Legend', as it called itself – *Ahasuerus, the Wanderer* (1823) was presented as having originated in joint compositions undertaken with Shelley in adolescence, and contained, Medwin told Byron, 'In one of the characters under the name of Julian... a sketch of our poor friend Shelley' (cited in Lovell, *Captain Medwin*, p. 140). His translations of Aeschylus avowedly followed in the wake of Shelley's own. His collection of tales and fictionalised reminiscences, *The Angler in Wales* (1834), exploited his connections with Shelley wherever it could (it used, for instance, Shelley's previously unpublished translation from Dante's *Purgatorio*). There were sound financial reasons for those who had known Byron to publish their supposed recollections, but memories of Shelley were not particularly bankable. Medwin seems to have been driven to publish them by a need for vicarious literary fame.

However, by the time that he wrote the articles that became *The Shelley Papers*, Medwin certainly needed any money that literary journalism might bring him. (For his life before the publication of *Conversations of Lord Byron*, see the headnote in this volume to extracts from that work.) In 1824 he had married a wealthy young widow and had moved with her to Florence. His extravagance, and his foolish speculations in the Italian art market, led to financial disaster – and separation from his wife and children. Leaving his debts and his family in Italy to take care of themselves (or to be taken care of by Trelawny), he returned to England. On his arrival, he sold his commission on the half-pay list, and began contributing to the reviews. His long letter defending the *Conversations of Lord Byron* appeared in *The Literary Gazette* in 1832 (February 4th and 11th). Here he conceded for the first time that the author of the vivid cremation scene from that book had in fact been Trelawny. Later the same year his 'Memoir of Shelley' (from which the extracts below are taken) appeared in six weekly installments in *The Athenaeum* (July 21st to August 25th, 1832). It was followed in the same journal, with some interruptions until April 20th, 1833, by 'Poems and

Papers': fragments of Shelley's poetry and prose (see Engelberg, p. 200, for the dates of particular installments). These included parts of the essays 'On Love', 'On Life', and 'On a Future State', reviews of Godwin's *Mandeville* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and the poems 'Lines Written during the Castlereagh Administration' and 'With a Guitar'. The last of these was addressed to Jane Williams, from whom Medwin obtained his copy. She made sure that her name was omitted from the published text (see Norman, p. 93).

In 1833, the eighteen installments from *The Atheneum* were collected as *The Shelley Papers*, 'many persons having expressed a wish to have them in a separate form', as the book's Advertisement explains. The explanation is obviously self-serving, but the book did appear at a time when critical interest in Shelley's writing was increasing. An odd but telling indication of the growing reputation of his poetry was a motion proposed at the Oxford Union by three delegates from the Cambridge Union in 1829: 'Shelley was a greater poet than Lord Byron'. One of the three Cambridge representatives was Tennyson's friend, Arthur Hallam; he had brought from Italy a copy of *Adonais*, printed in Pisa, and had it reprinted in Cambridge that same year. At around this time Shelley was being celebrated not only by his friend Leigh Hunt in *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* (1828), but also in Walter Savage Landor's *Imaginary Conversations*, published in the same year. For the first time, a vogue for Shelley's poetry was beginning. In 1830, there was a collection of *The Beauties of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (it included 'a Revised Edition of Queen Mab Free from All the Objectionable Passages') which went through three editions by the end of the year. The reviewers had begun treating Shelley's beliefs as pardonable eccentricities, and, to a remarkable extent, had begun praising his poetry. In the same year in which Medwin commenced his 'Memoir', Hunt felt safe to publish *The Masque of Anarchy* for the first time. The anonymous reviewer in *The Atheneum* declared that this most political of poems showed that Shelley's poetic powers transcended politics (see *The Atheneum*, No. 262, 3 November, 1832).

Medwin's new memoir was, therefore, part of an upsurge of interest in Shelley, as well as testimony to his own continuing preoccupation with his cousin. Indeed, his explaining away of Shelley's enthusiasms was in tune with the new trend amongst commentators. Shelley's visions were those seen with 'a poet's eye' (*Shelley Papers*, p. 97). 'Pure and moral himself', he believed that 'no other ties were necessary than the restraints imposed by a consciousness of right and wrong implanted in our natures'. In other words, he was led into strange opinions by his unworldly (but 'poetic') goodness. Yet Medwin's account is also 'personal' – indeed, more personal in tone than anything that has gone before. This is not just a matter of Medwin

writing about himself, though the author's own appearances in the narrative are emphasised. It is also a matter of beginning to deal with some of the more tender parts of the poet's history. In particular, Shelley's love-life is discussed, albeit with an odd turn. His first marriage, to Harriet Westbrook, is given a perfunctory treatment that will contrast with the account in Medwin's later *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1847), and Shelley is represented as having been somehow bewildered into the relationship. His disappointed passion for his cousin Harriet Grove, however, is accorded great importance. Out of this youthful amour Medwin supposes that much poetry came. We are told about Harriet Shelley's suicide, but, unsurprisingly, Medwin is entirely evasive about her husband's relationship with Mary Godwin. Indeed, Mary is notable by her absence from the narrative. Nor can Medwin bring himself to acknowledge that he is recasting his 1824 account. He only implicitly concedes the fiction of his witnessing of Shelley's cremation: 'I have already, as taken from the mouth of Mr. Trelawney, given a description of the funeral ceremony, and my finding Byron in a high fever, on his return from the sad obsequies, and have nothing to add to that account' (*Shelley Papers*, p. 77). In the 1847 *Life*, he would have to make another attempt at self-correction.

Shelley, like Byron, knew early what it was to love: almost all the great poets have. After twenty-five years, I still remember Harriet G., and when I call to mind all the women I have ever seen and admired, I know of none that surpassed, few that could compare with her in beauty. I think of her as of some picture of Raphael's, or as one of Shakspeare's women. Shelley and Miss G. were born in the same year. There was a resemblance, as is often the case in cousins, between them, such as Byron describes as existing between Manfred and Astarte, or, as Shelley himself, in a fragment, says—

They were two cousins almost like to twins,

* * * * *

And so they grew together like two flowers

Upon one stem, which the same beams and showers

Lull or awaken in their purple prime.

If two persons were ever designed for each other, these seemed to be so. His novel of 'Zastrozzi,' a very wonderful work for a boy of sixteen, embodies much of the intensity of this passion that devoured him; and some of the chapters were, he told me, written by the lady herself. Shelley's mishap at Oxford was a blight to all his hopes, the rock on which all his happiness split;—he had the heart-rending misery of seeing her he adored wedded to another. Save for that expulsion (which I had almost called an unfortunate one, but that, as far as the world is concerned, the epithet would have been misapplied), Shelley would probably have become a member for some close borough, a good acting magistrate, and an excellent country squire. It is my firm belief, that he never wholly shook off this early attachment, that it was long the canker of his life, even if he ever really loved a second time.

* * *

In looking back to his first marriage, it is surprising, not that it should have ended in a separation, but that he should have continued to drag for more than three years the matrimonial chain, every link of which was a protraction of torture. That separation, for which there were other and more serious grounds, into which I shall not enter, took place by mutual consent, and, considering himself free, he resolved to go abroad. His health, always

delicate, was impaired by the misery he had undergone, and the quantity of that beverage, other than a Lethean one to him, laudanum, which he had taken. He required change of scene, and a milder climate; and on the 28th July, 1814, commenced a continental tour. He crossed the Channel in an open boat, and had a very narrow escape of being upset in a sudden squall. Passing a few days in Paris, he received a small remittance; and after talking over with his party, and rejecting many plans, fixed on one eccentric enough—to walk through France—went to the Marché des Herbes, bought an ass, and thus started for Charenton: there, finding the quadruped too weak to carry his portmanteau, he made the purchase of a mule, and not without many adventures arrived with this singular *equipage* at Troyes.

The desolation and ruin that the Cossacks left everywhere behind them in their pestilential march—the distress of the inhabitants, whose houses had

been so lately burned, their cattle killed, and their all destroyed, made a deep impression on Shelley's feeling mind, and gave a sting to his detestation of war and despotism.

Further pedestrianism being rendered impossible by a sprained ankle, the remainder of the journey to Neuchatel was performed *par voiture*. Lucerne was the next canton visited: coasting its romantic lake up to Brunen, the château was hired for a week. But finding he had only 28*l.* left, and no chance of further remittances till December, he resolved with that small sum to return home by the Reuss and the Rhine. Shelley and his party took the *coche d'eau* for Loffenburgh: thence to Mumph the passage was made in a narrow, long flat-bottomed machine, consisting of pieces of deal nailed together. "The river is rapid, and sped swiftly, breaking as it passed over rocks just covered by the water. It was a sight of some dread to see the frail boat winding along the eddies of the rocks,

which it was death to touch, and where the slightest inclination on one side would instantly have upset it." However, this punt brought them in safety to Basle, where, hiring a boat for Mayence, they bade adieu to Switzerland; and landed in England from Rotterdam on the 13th August, having travelled 800 miles at an expense of less than 30*l*. Shelley used to describe with an enthusiasm that was infectious, the rapturous enjoyment this voyage down the Rhine was to him;—to dilate with all the fire of poetic inspiration, on the rapidity of their descent of that torrent-like river—winding now along banks of vines, or greenest pastures—now rushing past craggy heights surmounted by feudal castles.

This was one of the favourite topics in which he delighted to intoxicate his imagination; and, with a prodigality, like that of Nature in some tropical island, to lavish a world of wealth, as though his store was inexhaustible as hers.

The next eighteen months after his return were

passed almost exclusively in London, where he had to suffer all the horrors of poverty. It was at this time, I imagine, that he walked the hospitals, and studied medicine, not with any intention of practising it as a profession, but with a view of alleviating the sufferings of humanity. His knowledge of anatomy was very limited; but he made himself a tolerable botanist. I doubt, however, whether Shelley had not too much imagination to make any great proficiency in the abstract sciences: nature and education both designed him for a poet.

Shelley was at Bath in November 1817, when an event occurred which was destined to darken the remainder of his existence ; or, in his own words, written about this period, when for him

Black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the world.

This event, upon which I could wish to throw a veil, was the death of his wife under the most distressing circumstances. Her fate was a dreadful misfortune, to him who survived, and her who perished. It is impossible to acquit Shelley of all blame in this calamity. From the knowledge of her character, and her unfitness for self-government, he should have kept an eye over her conduct. But if he was blameable, her relations were still more so ; and, having confided her to their care, he might consider, with many others similarly circumstanced, that his responsibility was at an end. That he did not do so, his compunction,

which brought on a temporary derangement, proves; and yet was it not most barbarous in a reviewer to gangrene the wounds which his sensitive spirit kept ever open? How pathetically does he, in a dirge not unworthy of Shakspeare, addressed to whom I know not, give vent to his agonized heart:

That time is dead for ever, child—
Drowned, frozen, dead for ever;
 We look on the past,
 And stare aghast,
 At the spectres, wailing, pale and ghast,
 Of hopes that thou and I beguiled
 To death on Life's dark river.

"Até does not die childless," says the Greek dramatist. A scarcely less misfortune, consequent on this catastrophe, was the barbarous decree of the Court of Chancery, unhappily since made a precedent, by which he was deprived of his children, had them torn from him and consigned to strangers.

The grounds upon which this act of oppression

and cruelty, only worthy of the most uncivilized nations, was founded,—

Trial

I think they call it,—

was decided against him upon the evidence, if such it can be called, of a printed copy of ‘Queen Mab,’ which, in his preface to ‘Alastor,’ he disclaimed any intention of publishing. It is said that he was called upon, by the court, to recant the opinions contained in that work. Shelley was the last man in existence to recant any opinion from fear: and a fiat worse than death was the consequence—sundering all the dearest ties of humanity.

Byron told me, that (well knowing Shelley could not exist without sympathy) it was by his persuasion that Shelley married again. None who have the happiness of knowing Mrs. Shelley can wonder at that step. But in 1812, a year and a half after his first marriage, that he continued to

think with Plato on the subject of wedlock is clear, from a letter addressed to Sir James Lawrence, who had sent him his 'History of the Nairs.' Shelley says, "I abhor seduction as much as I adore love; and if I have conformed to the usages of the world on the score of matrimony, it is that disgrace always attaches to the weaker sex." An irresistible argument.*

His short residence at Marlow has been already described. There he led a quiet, retired, domestic life, and has left behind him a character for benevolence and charity, that still endears him to its inhabitants.

* Has a woman obeyed the impulse of unerring nature, society declares war against her—pityless and unerring war. She must be the tame slave; she must make no reprisals: theirs is the right of persecution, hers the duty of endurance. She lives a life of infamy. The loud and bitter laugh of scorn scares her from all return. She dies of long and lingering disease; yet *she* is in fault. *She* is the criminal—*she* the forward, the untameable child;—and society, forsooth, the pure and virtuous matron, who casts her as an abortion from her undefiled bosom.—*Shelley*.

He became about this time acquainted with Keats; and Shelley told me that it was a friendly rivalry between them, which gave rise to 'Endymion' and the 'Revolt of Islam,'—two poems scarcely to be named in the same sentence. Shelley was too classical—had too much good taste—to have fallen into the sickly affectation—the *obsoletas scribendi formas* of that perverse and limited school.† The 'Revolt of Islam' must be

† The following note, by the Editor of the *Athenæum*, was appended to this passage on its publication in that paper:—

"Nothing is more ridiculous, than a running commentary, wherein an editor apologizes for, or dissents from, the opinions of a writer in his own paper. Occasions, however, may arise to excuse, if not to justify, such disclaimer; and for self-satisfaction we enter our protest on this occasion. We go as far as Captain Medwin in admiration of Shelley; but as far as Shelley—"infalible," says the Captain, "in his judgment of the works of others"—in admiration of Keats. Shelley was a worshipper of Truth—Keats of Beauty; Shelley had the greater power—Keats the finer imagination: both were single-hearted, sincere, admirable men. When we look into the world,—nay, not to judge others, when we look into our own hearts, and see how certainly manhood shakes hands with worldliness, we should despair, if such men did not occasionally appear among

looked upon as the greatest effort of any individual mind, (whatever may be its defects,) in one at the

us. Shelley and Keats were equal enthusiasts—had the same hopes of the moral improvement of society—of the certain influence of knowledge—and of the ultimate triumph of truth;—and Shelley, who lived longest, carried all the generous feelings of youth into manhood; age enlarged, not narrowed his sympathies; and learning bowed down his humanity to feel its brotherhood with the humblest of his fellow creatures. If not judged by creeds and conventional opinions, Shelley must be considered as a moral teacher both by precept and example: he scattered the seed of truth, so it appeared to him, every where, and upon all occasions,—confident that, however disregarded, however long it might lie buried, it would not perish, but spring up hereafter in the sunshine of welcome, and its golden fruitage be garnered by grateful men. Keats had naturally much less of this political philosophy; but he had neither less resolution, less hope of, or less good-will towards man. Lord Byron's opinion, that he was killed by the reviewers, is wholly ridiculous; though his epitaph, and the angry feelings of his friends, might seem to countenance it. Keats died of hereditary consumption, and was fast sinking before either *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* poured out their malignant venom. Even then it came but as a mildew upon his generous nature, injuring the leaves and blossoms, but leaving untouched the heart within, the courage to dare and to suffer. Keats (we speak of him in health and vigour,) had a resolution, not only physical but moral, greater than any man we ever knew: it was unshakable by everything but his affections. We are not inclined to stretch this note into an essay,

same period of life. I do not forget Milton, or Chatterton, or Pope, when I say this. It occupied him only six months. The dedicating lines lose nothing in comparison with Byron's to Ianthe; and the structure of his Spenserian stanzas, in harmony and the varied flow of the versification, may serve as a model for all succeeding writers in that metre.

Early in the spring of 1818, various reasons induced Shelley again to quit England, with scarcely a hope or wish to revisit it. The breach between himself and his relatives had been made irreparable. He was become *fatherless*—he was highly unpopular from the publicity given to the trial—from the attacks of the reviewing churchmen on his works; and his health was gradually becoming

and shall not therefore touch on the 'Endymion' further than to say, that Captain Medwin cannot produce anything in the 'Revolt of Islam' superior to the Hymn to Pan; nor in the English language anything written by any poet at the same age with which it may not stand in honourable comparison."

worse. The vegetable system which he followed, as to diet, did not agree with his constitution, and he was finally obliged to abandon it. That he was a Pythagorean from principle, is proved by the very luminous synopsis of all the arguments in its favour, contained in a note appended to 'Queen Mab.' He was of opinion, and I agree with him and the disciples of that school, that abstinence from animal food subtilizes and clears the intellectual faculties. For all the sensualities of the table Shelley had an ineffable contempt, and, like Newton, used sometimes to inquire if he had dined—a natural question from a Berkleyist.

But to follow him in his travels—a more interesting topic. He passed rapidly through France and Switzerland, and, crossing the Mont Cenis into Italy, paid a visit to Lord Byron at Venice, where he made a considerable stay.

Under the names of Julian and Maddalo, written at Rome some months afterwards, Shelley paints

himself and Byron in that city. The sketch is highly valuable. He says of Byron, at this time, "He is cheerful, frank, and witty: his more serious conversation a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as a spell":—of himself, that he "was attached to that philosophical sect that assert the power of man over his own mind, and the immense improvements of which, by the extinction of certain moral superstitions, human society may be made susceptible." I shall enter more at large hereafter on Shelley's particular theories, though they are somewhat subtle and difficult of analysis.

Venice was a place peculiarly adapted to the studious life Shelley loved to lead.

The town is silent—one may write
 Or read in gondolas by day or night,
 Unseen, uninterrupted. Books are there--
 Pictures, and casts from all the statues fair,
 That are twin-born with poetry; and all
 We seek in towns; with little to recall
 Regrets for the green country.

In the autumn we find Shelley at Naples. Fortune did not seem tired of persecuting him, for he became the innocent actor in a tragedy here, more extraordinary than any to be found in the pages of romance. The story, as he related it to myself and Byron, would furnish perfect materials for a novel in three volumes, and cannot be condensed into a few sentences, marvellous as the scenes of that drama were. Events occur daily, and have happened to myself, far more incredible than any which the most disordered fancy can conjure up, casting "a shade of falsehood" on the records of what are called reality. Certain it is, that Shelley, as may be judged from his 'Lines written in Despondency,' must have been most miserable at Naples. No one could have poured forth those affecting stanzas, but with a mind, as he says in the 'Cenci,' hovering on the devouring edge of darkness. His departure from Naples was, he said, precipitated by this event; and he passed the en-

suing winter at Rome. There is something inspiring in the very atmosphere of Rome. Is it fanciful, that being encircled by images of beauty—that in contemplating works of beauty such as Rome and the Vatican only can boast—that by gazing on the scattered limbs of that mighty colossus, whose shadow eclipsed the world,—we should catch a portion of the sublime—become a portion of that around us?

* * *

It is to be lamented that no bust or portrait exists of Shelley, though the infinite versatility and play of his features would have baffled either sculpture or painting. His frame was a mere tenement for spirit, and in every gesture and lineament showed that intellectual beauty which animated him. There was in him a spirit which seemed to defy time, and suffering, and misfortune. He was twenty-nine when he died, but he might have been taken for nineteen. His features were small; the upper part not strictly regular. The lower had a Grecian contour. He did not look so tall as he was, his shoulders being a little bent by study and ill health. Like Socrates, he united the gentleness of the lamb with the wisdom of the serpent—the playfulness of the boy with the pro-

foundness of the philosopher. In argument he was irresistible, always calm and unruffled; and in eloquence surpassed all men I have ever conversed with. Byron was so sensible of his inability to cope with him, that he always avoided coming to any trial of their strength; for Shelley was what Byron could not be, a close, logical and subtle reasoner, much of which he owed to Plato, whose writings he used to call the model of a prose style.

He was not likely to have lived long. His health had been impaired by what he had undergone, and by the immoderate use he at one time made of laudanum. He was, besides, narrow-chested, and subject to a complaint which, from day to day, might have cut him off. Its tortures were excruciating, but, during his worst spasms, I never saw him peevish or out of humour—indeed, as an Italian said to me, he was *veramente un angelo*.

But thou art fled,
 Like some fair exhalation,—
 The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
 The child of grace and genius :
 Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
 Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
 Been purest ministers ; who are, alas !
 Now thou art not.

These affecting lines would have furnished his most appropriate epitaph. I have never been able to read them without applying them to Shelley, or his tribute to the memory of Keats, without, under the name of Adonais, impersonating the companion of my youth. There was, unhappily, too much similarity in the destinies of Keats and Shelley: both were victims to persecution—both were marked out for the envenomed shafts of invidious critics—and both now sleep together in a foreign land. Peace to their manes !