

## ART. IV.—SHELLEY.

1. *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley.* Edited by Mrs. Shelley. 1853.
2. *Essays; Letters from Abroad; Translations and Fragments.* By Percy Bysshe Shelley. Edited by Mrs. Shelley. 1854.
3. *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley.* By Captain Thomas Medwin. 1847.
4. *The Shelley Papers.* By Captain Thomas Medwin. 1833.

TO write well on any theme requires not only a knowledge of the subject, but a deep sympathy with it. The first requisite is more commonly fulfilled than the second. Men can, after a fashion, master a subject—know its bearings and its details—and still have no real attachment for it: men, too, if they are at all suspected of this indifference, will lash themselves into a spurious love, which may be detected by its very absurdity. But true love springs from the heart, can admire the virtues of its friend without exaggeration, and yet not be hoodwinked to his faults; has the sincerity to praise where praise is deserved, and the courage to reprove where reproof is wanted. Hence is it that true love is the same as thorough knowledge, for it sees both sides of the matter. Shelley's critics, as well as his biographer, have been of all kinds except the last. Captain Medwin should remember that as it is the fault of a bad logician to prove too much, so it is of an indiscreet friend to praise too much. He has, however, in his "Life of Shelley" contrived to fall into both mistakes. But he is also wanting in the higher qualifications of a biographer. It has now become, somehow or another, an established axiom that nothing is so easy to write as a biography. Jot down a few facts, reckon them up like a schoolboy's addition sum, and you have a Life ready-made. Nay, perhaps save yourself even this trouble, and, in these days of mechanical aids, take a "Ready Reckoner," and you will find it done for you. Another popular receipt is, to sketch in a few lines here and there—never mind if they are a little blurred—paint them in *water-colours*, and you have a portrait at once: the critics will clean your picture for you gratis. Perhaps nothing is so difficult as a biography; but of all biographies, a poet's most so. You have in his case not only to trace the mere river of life, but all those back currents and cross eddies in which his stream of poesy has flowed. Every little action has to be examined to see what effect

it has had upon his life and his poetry, for the two are interwoven as woof and warp: not only this, but the biographer must bring a congenial and a poetic spirit to the task—must show in what new realms of poesy our poet has travelled, what new beauties he has discovered, what new Castalian springs he has drunk of; should show, too, what new views of life he has opened up, how these views originated, and what their ultimate aim is—for this is the important point—and what real value they have in their practical bearing upon this earth; and how far they are likely to affect and improve it. But in Shelley's case the difficulty is tenfold increased. His character, in one sense one of the most simple, is in reality one of the most complex. So shy and reserved in many matters, yet speaking forth so boldly and uncompromisingly; so inconsistent at times, yet ever the same in the cause of truth; so impulsive in most matters, yet so firm in behalf of liberty; so feminine and so susceptible, yet so heroic and resolute, he presents a medley of contradictions. All this must be accounted for by his next biographer. Nevertheless, we are thankful to Captain Medwin for what he has accomplished; he has done it to the best of his endeavours, and with a certain species of enthusiasm which will atone for many defects. But a Life of Shelley is still wanted—so much remains that is still obscure about him. Any little facts, as long as they are genuine and upon undoubted authority, would be welcome; for it is these little facts and traits—little they are wrongly called—which help us to judge of a man's character, and give us such an insight into his life and poems.

"Truth is stranger than fiction," said Byron; yet, we suspect, without knowing why. The one is Nature's real infinite order of things; the other, only man's worldly finite arrangement. We talk of sober truth and wild fiction; but it is truth in reality that is wild, and fiction sober. "As easy as lying," says Hamlet, but truth is hard to imitate. Hence to thinking men the romance of history is more exciting than any novel; a biography more interesting than any fiction. Shelley's life, with all its pathos, is an example. The imagination of no novelist would ever have dared to have drawn such a character. It would have been scouted at once as impossible in the highest degree. Let us endeavour to give some sort of a brief sketch of it, trying to fill in, with what cunning we have, the lights and shades. Percy Bysshe Shelley was born at Field Place, in Sussex, on the 4th of August, 1792, related through his family to Algernon and Sir Philip Sydney, heir to a baronetcy and its rich acres. Novel readers would be delighted in such a promising hero; young ladies would have fallen in love with him at once, or with his ten thousand a year. He was brought up, it appears, with his sisters until he was

seven or eight years old, and then sent to an academy at Brentford, and subsequently, at thirteen, to Eton. At neither schools did he mix with the other boys, but like Novalis and many other boy-men, took no part in the sports. This shyness and reserve he never threw off during life. It appears even in his poems; they seem to shun the light of the common world, its din, its noise; they fly away to the realms of imagination for peace and quietness. We can fancy Shelley walking by himself with that delicate feminine face and quiet dreaming eye, glooming moodily over his supposed wrongs, which, by-the-bye, he might have easily cast away, had he but set to work and bowled round hand, or played at fives with the rest; they would have dropped off, as lightly as the bails, with the first wicket he took. But it was not so, and he ever afterwards looked back with pain upon those early days. Writing of them in the Dedication of the "Revolt of Islam"—

"I wept, I knew not why; until there rose  
From the near schoolroom, voices that, alas!  
Were but one echo from a world of woes—  
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes."

At Sion House, Brentford, Shelley was a great reader of "blue-books," so called, says Captain Medwin, from their covers, and which, for the moderate sum of sixpence, contained an immense amount of murders, haunted castles, and so forth. When the "blue-books" were all exhausted, Shelley had recourse to a circulating library at Brentford, where, no doubt, as at all circulating libraries, plenty more "blue-books" were to be obtained, and where he became enchanted with "Zofloya, or the Moor," whose hero appears to have been the Devil himself. No doubt, to this source may we trace Shelley's love for the morbid and the horrible, which happily, under better influences, disappeared from his writings. Here at Sion House, too, was exhibited Walker's Orrery, which even surpassed "Zofloya" in its attractions, and which first turned Shelley's thoughts in a better direction than circulating libraries generally point to. At Eton, an old schoolfellow of Shelley's gives the following account of him:—"He was known as 'Mad Shelley,' and many a cruel torture was practised upon him. The 'Shelley! Shelley! Shelley!' which was thundered in the cloisters, was but too often accompanied by practical jokes—such as knocking his books from under his arm, seizing him as he stooped to recover them, pulling and tearing his clothes, or pointing with the finger, as one Neapolitan maddens another." We often look upon a school as an epitome of the world—a perfect microcosmos. And the above is as true a picture of the world's treatment of Shelley, as of Eton. A few more years, and it was the world itself, with stronger lungs

and with bitterer tones, crying out "Mad Shelley;" it was the world, a few years after, that seized his books with Chancery decrees; it was the world, that is to say, these same boys, now "children of a larger growth," that pointed at him with its finger. Shelley felt all this in after-life as much as he did now at school; not the mere insults, but that these boys, now men, should never have outgrown their weaknesses. One more point in his Eton career. He was there condemned to that most distasteful of all tasks to true genius, to write Latin verses, that poetry of machinery. Shelley, condemned to the Procrustean bed of longs and shorts, wishing to enter the promised land of science—Shelley, who hereafter should be the true poet, scanning with his fingers dactyles and spondees, asking for a short and a long, that great desideratum to finish a pentameter with, and all the time thirsting to drink from springs that might refresh his mind, is a pitiful spectacle, well worth pondering over. How many promising minds this insane custom, still continued at our schools, has blunted and sickened, cannot well be computed, we should say. We wonder boys have not yet been practically taught the Pyrrhic dance or the evolutions of a Greek chorus; they would be quite as mechanical and far more amusing. In one person alone at Eton did Shelley at all find a congenial spirit, a Dr. Lind, of whom Mrs. Shelley writes,\* that he supported and befriended Shelley, and Shelley never mentioned his name without love and reverence, and in after years drew his character as that of the old man who liberates Laon from his tower-prison, and tends on him in sickness. This is touchingly like Shelley's nobleness, which never forgot a kindness. Most poets have ever looked back upon boyhood with joy; it is the storehouse of many an old affection, full of many dear memories. Shelley's was blank enough of all such things; this one old man, a green spot in its sandy wild. And now, since Eton would do nothing for Shelley, he betook himself to reading Pliny's "Natural History," puzzling his tutor with some questions on the chapters on astronomy. He next commenced German. The fires of such an ardent spirit could not easily be smothered out. Chemistry and Bürger's "Leonora" were now his two engrossing themes; and about this time he wrote, in conjunction with Captain Medwin, "The Wandering Jew," the little of which that we have seen is poor enough; but Shelley's ideas are described by the gallant captain as "images wild, vast, and Titanic:" in which remark we suspect that Captain Medwin is like the Jew, rather "wandering." And now we are approaching a great event in Shelley's life. A Miss Grove, a cousin of his, of nearly the same age, who is described as very beautiful,

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\* See Mrs. Shelley's note on the "Revolt of Islam."

captivated him. We like to dwell upon these two child-lovers. The frost of the world must have thawed away for the first time to poor Shelley; a spring, full of fresh thoughts and hopes, were springing up in his heart. He had found some one in this wide, wild world to love him, and to love. Upon his dark night now came forth the evening star of love, trembling with beauty and light. Surely it was not the same old world, with its haggard nightmares and its feverish dreams? The dew of love fell soft upon that wild brain of his. It was the first love—that first love which comes but once in a man's life. You may have it again; but, like many another fever, it is slight and poor in comparison. Of her and himself did he write in after years—

“They were two cousins 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.”

To her, too, did he dedicate his “Queen Mab:”—

“Thou wast my purer mind,  
Thou wast the inspiration of my song;  
Thine are these early wilding flowers,  
Though garlanded by me.”

And now, in conjunction, these two child-lovers wrote the romance of “Zastrozzi.” We would fain linger here on these happy days. But there is already a third party in the number—it is a skeleton. Shelley, now not much more than sixteen, went up to Oxford, engrossed with his chemistry. But Oxford did not, any more than Eton, encourage his pursuits. Acids and Alma Mater did not agree. Galvanic batteries and portly dons were not likely to be on the best of terms. Why, a Head of a College might mistake one for some infernal machine. So Shelley betook himself to philosophy; Locke was his professed guide, but in reality the French exponents of Locke, which is a very different matter. Hume, too, became his text-book; and the poet, now a convert to Materialism, rushed on to Atheism; and in a moment of enthusiasm conceived the project of converting Alma Mater herself. We don't well see what other course that venerable lady, with the means she possessed, could pursue but the one she adopted. So Shelley was expelled. It is worth considering, however, that there was no other weapon left against Atheism but the poor and feeble one of expulsion. On Alma Mater we need waste no reflections; but turn to Shelley in his utter desolateness, for unto him it must have been an hour of great darkness. The old traditional guide-posts were gone, and he had to walk the road of life alone. New world-theories he must construct; the old eternal problems he must now solve

for himself. Other griefs from without pressed upon him. His cousin deserted him, or rather, we should suppose, was made to desert him. His treatise on Atheism had deeply offended his relations, though we are surprised at its preventing his marriage. An expected baronetcy in this world, like charity, can hide a multitude of sins. A baronet's blood-red hand could easily, we should have thought, have covered up even Atheism, since it generally can conceal so many faults. So Shelley left Alma Mater, and matriculated at the university of the world, where he should some day take honours, though from thence some would have expelled him too. He appears to have gone up to London, living with Captain Medwin, speculating on metaphysics, and writing letters under feigned names to various people, including Mrs. Hemans. To show in what a state of mind he was at this time, we may give the following anecdote in Captain Medwin's own words:—"Being in Leicester-square one morning at five o'clock, I was attracted by a group of boys standing round a well-dressed person lying near the rails. On coming up to them I discovered Shelley, who had unconsciously spent a part of the night *sub dio*." We read of him, too, sailing paper boats on the Serpentine, as he did years after on the Serchio, just as he describes Helen's son—

"In all gentle sports took joy,  
Oft in a dry leaf for a boat,  
With a small feather for a sail,  
His fancy on that spring would float."

("Rosalind and Helen.")

He returned home, where, however, he did not remain long, in consequence of his falling in love with a Miss Westbrook, a schoolfellow of his sister's. This was productive of another breach with his family, more serious than that caused by his Atheism. Miss Westbrook, it appears, was the daughter of a retired innkeeper; and Shelley's father, the baronet, with proper aristocratic notions on all points, had long been accustomed to tell his son that he would provide for any quantity of natural children, but a *mésalliance* he would never pardon. So when Shelley married the daughter of the retired innkeeper, his father very properly cut off his allowance. Anything in this world, we believe, will be forgiven, except this one thing. You may take a poor girl's virtue, and it passes for a good joke with the world; but if you make her the only reparation you can, you shall be an out-cast from society. Such doctrines are a premium upon vice, and do more harm to a nation than Holywell-street: and we are more inclined to place many of the griefs of Shelley's first marriage, with its sad results, at the front door of fashionable society, than to any other cause. The retired innkeeper and Shelley's uncle, Captain

Pilford, however, found the requisite funds, and Shelley and his young wife went off to live in the Lake District, where Mr. De Quincey gives us the following picture of them:—"The Shelleys had been induced by some of their new friends (the Southeys) to take part of a house standing about half a mile out of Keswick, on the Penrith road. There was a pretty garden attached to it; and whilst walking in this, one of the Southey party asked Mrs. Shelley if the garden had been let with their part of the house. 'Oh, no,' she replied; 'the garden is not ours; but then, you know, the people let us run about in it, whenever Percy and I are tired of sitting in the house.' The *naïveté* of this expression, 'run about,' contrasting so picturesquely with the intermitting efforts of the girlish wife at supporting a matron-like gravity, now that she was doing the honours of her house to married ladies, caused all the party to smile."\* Ah! could it, indeed, have been always so; and we think of another poet who says of himself and his wife, "I was a child—she was a child;" and we sigh as we think over their tragic fates. Shelley did not stay here long. We find him flitting, spirit-like, about from place to place. We meet with him at one time at Dublin, which he was obliged to leave on account of a political pamphlet he had published. Soon afterwards we discover him in North Wales, helping to assist the people to rebuild the sea-wall which had been washed away. All this time, too, was he suffering bitterly in spirit—the struggle was still going on within. In addition to this, his wife was by no means a person suited for him, and after a three years' union they were separated. In July, 1814, conceiving himself free, we find him travelling abroad with Mary, the future Mrs. Shelley, daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, well known for their anti-matrimonial speculations. They crossed the Channel in an open boat, and were very nearly lost in a gale. Shelley's chief enjoyment seems to have been on the water; and in this expedition his greatest delight seems to have been in sailing down the rapids of the Rhine on a raft. He is in this particular very like Schiller; in fact, a portion of Schiller's biography might be applied, word for word, to him:—"At times he might be seen floating on the river in a gondola, feasting himself with the loveliness of earth and sky. He delighted most to be there when tempests were abroad; his unquiet spirit found a solace in the expression of its own unrest on the face of nature; danger lent a charm to his situation; he felt in harmony with the scene, when that rack was sweeping stormfully across the heavens, and the forests were sounding in the breeze, and the river was rolling its chafed waters into wild eddying heaps."† And we find this love for water and

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\* "Sketches, Critical and Biographic," p. 18. † "Life of Schiller."

the storm in Shelley's poems. He now returned to London, where he suffered from poverty and absolute want. Nothing daunted him. He now betook himself to the study of medicine, and commenced walking the hospitals. Gleams and visions of liberty lighted him upon his path; but they were all mere will-o'-the-wisps, and went quickly out, leaving him in blacker darkness than before. Doubts still surrounded him on all sides. It is a picture worth studying—that delicate, womanly face, thoughtful and sad, with its long curling hair, and its genius-lighted eyes, brooding painfully in poverty over its woes. We look on him, and he seems as some flower that has bloomed by mistake in winter-time—too frail to cope with the blasts and the falling sleet, but yet blooms on, prophesying of sunshine and summer days. The year 1815, however, brought him relief. It was discovered that the fee-simple of the Shelley estates was vested in Shelley, and that he could thus obtain money upon them. The old baronet was furious at the discovery, but was ultimately persuaded to make his son an allowance. Shelley, now freed from his pecuniary difficulties, again went abroad in May, 1816, this time to Sécheron, near Geneva, where Byron was living; and here the two poets kept a crank boat on the lake, in which Shelley used “to brave *Bises*, which none of the barques could face.” How much Byron profited by his intercourse with Shelley let the third canto of “*Childe Harold*,” which was written at this period, testify; and let us at the same time remember Byron's own words—“You were all mistaken about Shelley, who was, without exception, the best and least selfish man I ever knew.” After an absence of more than a year, Shelley returned to England; and now perhaps the bitterest trial of all awaited him. His wife had drowned herself. Woe seems to have shrouded him as with a garment. How bitterly he feels it, these and many other verses tell—

“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.”

Nay, the strain on his mind was too much, and he became for a time insane, and so describes himself in “*Julian and Maddalo*.” And now, as if his bitterness were not enough, the Court of Chancery tore his children away from him. “Misfortune, where goest thou, into the house of the artist?” saith the Greek proverb. And still the struggle was going on within, embittered by woes from without. Life's battle-field is never single. We cannot stop to inquire whether trials and struggles may not be



in some way essential to the education of genius, and whether there may not be some as yet unrecognised law to that end. The old fable is certainly a true one of the swan singing only in its death-agonies.

But there must be an end; and now the scorching day was melting into a quiet eve: the stormy waves were subsiding. We have dwelt at some length on the previous details, but must now be more brief. We do not so much regret this. It is in the storm only that we care to see the straining ship brave out the danger—any day we can see plenty of painted toy-boats sailing on the millpond. Shelley now married his second wife, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, and led a quiet life at Marlowe, writing "Alastor" and the "Revolt of Islam," and endearing himself to the villagers by his kindnesses. He here contracted severe ophthalmia, from visiting the poor people in the depth of an unusually cold winter. About this time, too, he became acquainted with Keats, and nothing can be finer than the friendship between the two poets—nothing nobler in literature than Shelley taking up the gauntlet for his oppressed brother poet against the reviewers, and writing afterwards to his memory the sweetest of all dirges, the "Adonais." So dear did he hold his friend, that when Shelley's body was washed ashore, Keats' poems were found in his bosom. In 1818, Shelley left England, never to return. Life now was becoming unto him as a summer afternoon with its golden sunshine. He had found a wife whom he could love: that passionate heart, ever seeking some haven, had at last found one—little voices now again called him father. The mists of youth were clearing away; gleams of light were breaking in upon him. He had betaken himself to the study of Plato; and perhaps there was no book in the world that was likely to do him such good. In one of his letters he writes, "The destiny of man can scarcely be so degraded, that he was born only to die." But even now he had his troubles, as we all shall have, be the world made ever so perfect. He lost one of his children; was still troubled with a most painful disease; was still the mark for every reviewer's shaft. And now, when everything promised so fair and bright, on one July afternoon the waves of the Mediterranean closed over that fair form, still young, though his hair was already grey, "seared with the autumn of strange suffering." The battle of life was past and over.

We have thus given a hurried sketch of Shelley's life. Impulsiveness was no doubt the prominent feature of his character. Love for his fellow-men, hatred against all tyranny, whether of government or mere creeds, combined with his ardent and poetic spirit, hurried at times his as yet undisciplined mind away. No doubt he struck at many things without discretion. But it re-

quires older men than Shelley to discriminate what is to be hit. Strike at the immorality of a clergyman, and he screens himself behind the Church, and there is instantly a cry you are assailing Religion itself. Many stalking-horses, some of them with huge ears and broken knees, are there walking about on this earth, which we must worship, even as the Ægyptians did cats, and the Hindoos cows. Animal worship is not yet extinct. Shelley, too, was one of those whose nature is their own law; who refuse to be cramped up by the arbitrary conventionalities of life which suit ordinary mortals so well, which fact is such a puzzle to commonplace minds that they solve it by setting down the unlucky individual as a madman; an easy solution, in which we cannot acquiesce. One of those few, too, was he

“Whose spirit kindles for a newer virtue,  
Which, proud and sure, and for itself sufficient,  
To no faith goes a begging.”

An isolation of spirit, too, he possessed, often peculiar to genius. He found no one to sympathize with him; hence his mind was turned in upon itself, seeking higher principles, newer resolutions than are yet current. He found himself, even when amidst the throng, quite alone; though jostled by the multitude, quite solitary. Society to such a one is pain; the very noise of human voices, misery. Hence, in his despair, he is tempted to exclaim to his wife, “My greatest content would be utterly to desert all human society. I would retire with you and our child to a solitary island in the sea, would build a boat, and shut upon my retreat the floodgates of the world: I would read no reviews, and talk with no authors. If I dared trust my imagination, it would tell me that there are one or two chosen companions beside myself whom I would desire. But to this I would not listen.” That Shelley should have been misappreciated is only natural. To a proverb, the world likes its own, and Shelley was not amongst that number. High-minded, he despised the inanities of life; sincere and earnest, he hated the hollowness of the day. Too sensitive, he turned away to bye-paths. The flock of sheep herd together; he was sick at heart and wandered by himself. Poetic and ideal, he felt more than most of us the heart-aches and brain-aches of life, and ever seeking, ever hoping, found no cure for them. Speculative and philosophical, he felt the burden of the world-mystery and the world-problem, which he was ever trying to solve, and which every time lay heavier on his soul. Weak and physically frail, he felt life's pack more than others, and knew not how to carry it without its galling him. A loving, sympathizing soul, he found but little affection, little love in the world; for the most part a cold response and hard hearts, and so he uttered his wail of misery and then died.

He was slain accidentally in the battle of life—a mere stripling fighting manfully in the van. Still the army of life, like a mighty billow, rushes on; still the battle rages, still the desperate charge of the forlorn hope—here it gains, there it wavers, then is swept away—and still fresh ones follow on: the individual fighting in the first place for himself and his own necessities; and then, if a noble soul, doing battle for his fellow-creatures, helping the weak, raising up the down-trodden. The years sweep on like immense caravans, each of them laden with its own multitude, brawling, striving, fighting. We look out from the windows, and see behind us the earth covered with the monuments of mighty men, with nameless mounds where sleep the dead. Let us linger round the grave of him who lies beneath the walls of Rome, near the pyramid of Caius Cestius, “in a place so sweet that it might make one in love to be buried there;” and see what epitaphs have been written over him, and what, too, we have to say.

In plainer words, we will proceed to look at Shelley as exhibited by others, glancing at his religion, his politics, and poetry, by all of which we may be enabled to learn something more, and to form a completer estimate of him; and we would here remark that whatever censure or praise we may bestow on him, the one should be laid on, the other doubled by, his youth.

We have now passed away from the old reviewing times of Gifford, when difference of opinion was added to the sins usually recognised by the Decalogue, when it actually could taint the rhymes, and make the verses of too many or too few feet, according to the critic's orthodox ear. This old leaven has long since died out of all respectable Reviews, and can only be seen in its original bitterness in a few religious publications, where vituperation so easily supplies the place of argument. The world luckily sees with different eyes to those it did thirty years ago. Most people can now give Shelley credit for his noble qualities of generosity and pureness of moral character; and even those who may differ widely from his opinions, are willing to admit the beauty of his poems. Most people, we said; all certainly except those connected with a few religious publications, and the author of “*Modern Painters*.” Mr. Ruskin seems to be seized with some monomania when Shelley's name is mentioned. In the Appendix to his “*Elements of Drawing*,” he calls Shelley “shallow and verbose.” In a note in the second volume of “*Modern Painters*,” part iii. sec. ii. chap. iv. § 6, he speaks of Shelley, “sickly dreaming over clouds and waves.” As these objections are mere matters of opinion, we shall pass them by; it is hopeless to try to make the wilfully blind see. But in the third volume, part iv. chap. xvi. § 38, he talks of Shelley's “troublesome selfishness.” Facts are said to be the best arguments, and we will

give Mr. Ruskin, as an answer to his libel, the following pathetic story in Leigh Hunt's own words:—

“Mr. Shelley, in coming to our house at night, had found a woman lying near the top of the hill, in fits. It was a fierce winter's night, with snow upon the ground—and winter loses nothing of its severity at Hampstead. My friend, always the promptest as well as the 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, they could not do it. He asked for an outhouse to put her in, while he went for the doctor. Impossible. In vain he assured them she was no impostor—an assurance he was able to give, having studied something of medicine, and even walked the hospital, that he might be useful in this way. They would not dispute the point with him; but doors were closed, and windows were shut down. 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 put forth. Now, thought he, is the time; he puts on his best address—which anybody might recognise for that of the highest gentleman—and plants himself in the way of an elderly person who is stepping out of the carriage with his family. He tells him his story. They only press on the faster. ‘Will you go and see her?’ ‘No, sir, there is no necessity for that sort of thing, depend on it—impostors swarm everywhere—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 may seem to amaze you, I will tell you something that may amaze you a little 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 this 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. Shelley 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 fits on their return. The doctor said that she would have inevitably perished had she lain there only 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.”

This was an action worthy of a descendant of Algernon and Sir Philip Sydney, and may perhaps remind Mr. Ruskin of a certain parable of the good Samaritan. Again, in the same volume and part of “*Modern Painters*,” ch. xvii. § 26, Mr. Ruskin calls Shelley “passionate and unprincipled;” and again, in § 41,

he speaks of his "morbid temperament." It is only charitable to suppose that Mr. Ruskin has never read Shelley's Life; and, again, in the same volume and part, ch. xvi. § 34, he writes, "Shelley is sad because he is impious." This sort of reasoning reminds us of a story told in Rogers's "Table Talk," which, as it affords us some further insight into Shelley's character, may be given:—"One day, during dinner, at Pisa, where Shelley and Trelawney were with us, Byron chose to run down Shakspeare, for whom he, like Sheridan, either had, or pretended to have, little admiration. I said nothing; but Shelley immediately took up the defence of the great poet, and conducted it with his usual meek yet resolute manner, unmoved with the rude things with which Byron interrupted him—'Oh, that's *very well for an Atheist,*'" &c. Byron, however, did not approach Mr. Ruskin's absurdity. Atheism here did not altogether spoil Shelley's defence; it only made it pretty good. Orthodoxy, we must suppose, would have rendered it perfect. But Mr. Ruskin boldly asserts, "Shelley is sad because he is impious;" or, in other words, because Shelley happens to differ from Mr. Ruskin's notions on religion. It is true that Shelley is sad—not, though, because he is "impious," but from mourning over the wrongs that he sees hourly committed—the day full of toil, the air thick with groans. A solemn tone of sorrow pervades his poetry, like the dirge of the autumn wind sighing through the woods for the leaves as they keep falling off. We are ashamed and mortified to find Mr. Ruskin using such a coarse and vulgar argument—he who is ever complaining of the unfairness of his critics. But perhaps Mr. Ruskin may find this out, that when he has learnt to respect others, his critics will be inclined to treat him more leniently; and, furthermore, whilst he deals so harshly and so uncharitably with Shelley, we would in all kindness remind him of the line, "who is so blessed fair that fears no blot?"

And now for our orthodox reviewers, and their treatment of Shelley. "Queen Mab" is generally selected by them as the *pièce de resistance*. We are far from defending the poem as regards its tone and spirit, nor do we uphold Shelley in any of his attacks upon the personal character of the Founder of Christianity; he finds no sympathy with us when he calls Christ "the Galilean Serpent." Much more do we agree with the old dramatist, Decker, when he writes—

"The best of men  
That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer,  
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil Spirit;  
The first true gentleman that ever breathed."

Shelley himself afterwards thoroughly disclaimed the opinions

of this early and crude production. Upon an attempt being made to republish it, he thus wrote to the editor of the *Examiner*:—"A poem, entitled 'Queen Mab,' was written by me at the age of eighteen, I dare say in a sufficiently intemperate spirit—but even then was not intended for publication; and a few copies only were struck off, to be distributed among my personal friends. I have not seen this production for several years; I doubt not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition; and that in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine, it is still more crude and immature." And he goes on to say that he has applied for an injunction to stop its sale.\* Shelley, in after life, was the last man to speak slightly of religion or religious matters—no true poet can ever do that; he, above all men, venerates religion. By him, as Shelley says in the Preface to the "Revolt of Islam," "the erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself." But why "Queen Mab" should ever be picked out as so peculiarly blasphemous by its assailants, we have ever been surprised. We are, we repeat, far from sympathizing in the least with Shelley's expressions; but we equally abhor the tenets of his orthodox reviewers. They are far more open to the charge of blasphemy than Shelley. It is they who degrade God, and God's creatures, by representing him as the God of vengeance, and all His works vile and filthy; this glorious world as the devil's world, and all the men and women in it chosen vessels of wrath, unable to do one good deed of themselves. They call Shelley an Atheist, indeed! Rather call all those Atheists who deny liberty and all rights to their poorer brethren; who would trample them still deeper in the mire of ignorance, who would desecrate God's Sabbaths with idleness, and who make God in their own images pitifully sowing damnation broadcast on his creatures. Call them, too, Atheists, yes, the worst of Atheists, who lead a life of idleness and aimless inactivity; for the denial of God (a personal God, in the common sense of the term) does not constitute Atheism; but spending a life as if there were no God, and no such things as those minor gods—Justice, or Love, or Gratitude.

Shelley was, at all events, sincere in his creed, which is more than can be said for most of his opponents. He suffered for it, and suffered bitterly; not, indeed, the tortures of the rack, but those more painful ordeals which we in this nineteenth century are so skilful to inflict. All ages have very properly allotted special punishments to their greatest spirits. The Greeks gave

\* See also a letter to Mr. John Gisborne—"Shelley's Letters and Essays," vol. ii. p. 239.

hemlock to Socrates; the Jews rewarded Jesus with a cross. Galileo received a rack for his portion. But we English have found out the greater refinement of cruelty, which may be inflicted by hounding a poet down by Reviews and Chancery-suits. Contrast Shelley, and his fervid eloquence, and poetry, and zeal, with his opponents. Go into an English church, and there you shall too often see but an automaton, now in white now in black, grinding old church tunes of which our ears are weary. It—for we cannot call that machine a living human being—finds no response in the hearts of its hearers. Not one pulse there is quickened, not one eye grows brighter. If it would but say something to all those men and women, they should be as dancers ready to dance at the sound of music. But no voice comes, unless you call a monotonous drawl a voice. The farce is all the more bitter, because that figure to our knowledge leads a life quite contrary to the words upon his lips. How few of these Automata in white or in black would, in days of darkness and of trouble, stand up for their Bible and their Gospel, and dare to pull off the surplice and gown, and wear the martyr's fiery shirt! One of them comes into the Church for the family living, and makes God's house a place for money-changers and traders in simony; the other, because he has not capacity enough for any other *profession*. And these are the men that are to lead us in days when science and knowledge are fast advancing in every direction! these the men to sing of God's wondrous works! Do they not rather dishonour God, and prostitute religion to the worst form of Atheism?

That Shelley, or any one else, should become wearied with our present religious condition, we are not surprised. Our wonder is, that there are not far more of the same class. We have for years been lying under a tree which is long past bearing—waiting, alas! for fruits, and not finding even a green branch, or a shady place. The once pure water of baptism is now turbid, the very sacramental bread mouldy. We must sorrowfully say with Jean Paul—"The soul which by nature looks Heavenward, is without a temple in this age." So the old religious roads of thought are being torn up; the old *via sacra* being levelled. As it has been said a thousand times, no one need fear that religion will ever die. While there is the blue unfathomable sky above us, in which swim golden sun and moon and stars, and the comets trail along like fiery ships, there will ever arise a sense of mystery and awe in the breast of man; and while the sweet seasons come round, there will spring from his heart, like a fresh gushing fountain, a psalm of thankfulness to the Author of them. The deep spiritual nature of man can never die. And it is no sign of the decay of religion, but quite the reverse, when men refuse to be fed on the

dry husks and chaff of doctrines. Yes, we will hope that a new and a brighter Reformation is dawning; that fresh Luthers and Melancthons shall arise, and that we shall have a Church wherein Science shall not fear to unfold her New Testament—wherein poets and philosophers, and painters and sculptors, may be its priests, each preaching from his own pulpit—when every day shall be equally holy—when every cottage shall be a temple, and all the earth consecrated ground—consecrated with the prayers of love and labour.

And now let us turn to Shelley's politics. Most poets have ever been the supporters of Liberty. And the reason is, as Wordsworth says, "A poet is a man endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, and a more comprehensive soul than are supposed to be common among mankind." They feel "the sweet sense of kindred" more than others, and cannot bear to see some of their brethren chained like galley-slaves to the oar of labour—earning their bread with tears of blood, without time for leisure, or meditation, or self-improvement; working like the beasts of the field, with this difference, that they are less cared for by their masters. As Milton says—"True poets are the objects of my reverence and love, and the constant sources of my delight. I know that most of them, from the earliest times to those of Buchanan, have been the *strenuous enemies of despotism*." The remark is true. Tyrtæus singing war-strains, and the old Hebrew prophets rousing Israel from its sleep of bondage, are instances of what is meant. All poets have felt this love for Liberty. Even Mr. Tennyson can turn at times from his descriptive paintings, and give us such a lyric as "Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky," so full of noble hopes and sympathies. A little time ago we had a novel with a Chartist poet for its hero; and by-and-by a living poet, the son of a canal bargeman, rises up among us—no fiction this time—uttering strains of woe to that same often invoked Liberty. But the feeling is most vivid in early youth; the cares of the world soon grow round us, and many of us find out it is to our apparent advantage to remain silent; and we become to our shame dumb, ignominiously content to accept things as they are. Some even turn renegades, as Southey. But in Shelley the flame every day burnt brighter. Liberty with him was no mere toy to be broken and laid aside, but the end and aim of his life. He kept true to the dream of youth, and the inspiration of early days, when injustice has not yet clouded our vision. But, on the face of it, is there not something supremely ridiculous in the son of a wealthy baronet coming forward to delineate the woes of men about which he could really know nothing? Why not have written



odes of the Minerva-press stamp, which could have been read to aristocratic drawing-rooms? The answer is, that this thing genius is strong and earnest, and, luckily, will not bend like a reed before any fashionable breeze from Belgravia or St. James's. Society is a costly porcelain vase, wherein the poor plant genius is cramped and stunted, and artificially watered and heated, instead of living in the free open air, enjoying the breeze and the showers of heaven; it must either break its prison or wither. Shelley adopted the former course. Let us rejoice it was so—that there was one man who, though brought up in luxury, had the heart and the courage to pity the misfortunes of the poor. Let us remember, too, the days Shelley had fallen upon, when the nation was suffering all the distresses a long war could entail; when a Parliament of landlords enacted the Corn-laws for the benefit of their own rents; when prosecutions were rife for the most trifling offences; when Government actually employed spies to excite starving men to violence; when “blood was on the grass like dew.” It was the dark night that preceded the dawn of a better day. Since then, schools have sprung up; free-libraries and museums have grown here and there; parks have been opened; baths and wash-houses built; crowded districts drained and ventilated; cheap and good books diffused. Within the last few months “The National Association for the Advancement of Social Science” has held its first meeting, and there is a general wish, except perhaps amongst a few, to improve the condition of the working classes. A man who, in Shelley’s position, should now write as Shelley did, could simply be regarded as a misguided enthusiast; and we can only pardon Gerald Massey in some of his wild strains, by knowing how galling is the yoke, and how bitter the bread, of poverty. Still much, almost everything, yet remains to be done. The life of the labourer still, as Shelley would sing,

“Is to work, and have such pay  
As just keeps life from day to day.”

Not even that, as the poorhouse in the winter’s night can testify. But, after all, what is this image of Liberty which Shelley has set up for us? We can answer best in his own words:—

“For the labourer thou art bread,  
And a comely table spread,  
From his daily labour come,  
In a neat and happy home—  
Thou art clothes, and fire and food  
For the trampled multitude:  
No—in countries that are free  
Such starvation cannot be,  
As in England now we see.”

This surely is rather a material view ; no one can well see treason in the loaf, or impiety in the well-filled cupboard ; and yet an important one. The soul of man can never be fed, while his body is racked with hunger ; his mind can never be warmed with any spark of the higher life, while his limbs shiver with the cold ; his spiritual faculties can never be raised, while he is sunk in physical uncleanness. But rising to a higher strain, Shelley proceeds :—

“To the rich thou art a check ;  
When his foot is on the neck  
Of his victim, thou dost make  
That he treads upon a snake.

Thou art Justice—ne'er for gold  
May thy righteous laws be sold,  
As laws are in England :—thou  
Shieldest alike the high and low.

Thou art Wisdom—freemen never  
Dream that God will doom for ever  
All who think those things untrue  
Of which priests make such ado.

Thou art Peace—never by thee  
Would blood and treasure wasted be  
As tyrants wasted them, when all  
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

\* \* \* \* \*

Science, and Poetry, and Thought,  
Are thy lamps ; they make the lot  
Of the dwellers in a cot  
Such, they curse their Maker not.

Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,  
All that can adorn and bless,  
Art thou ; let deeds, not words, express  
Thine exceeding loveliness.”

(“The Masque of Anarchy.”)

This, we must confess, is superior to most of his delineations of Liberty. In a great many places he doubtless runs very wild in the cause of Freedom. He had not yet attained that true calmness which is requisite for any great movement. Youth has it not. The green sapling cracks and explodes in the fire, yet gives no heat ; the seasoned log burns bright and quiet. It is not by fiery declamations, by mere impulse, that anything in this world is ever surely gained, but by calmness, clearness of vision, and deep insight. The still small voice makes more impression on us than the loudest shouts, for the latter are, through their very noise, quite inarticulate. Still the question remains to be answered,

how is this and other visions of Liberty to be realized? Was Shelley himself in the right way to bring about the desired reform? Certainly, as far as his hand could reach, he did his utmost. He poured what oil he could on the raging waters round him. But these attempts, and all others like them, are, it is very obvious, only palliatives, not real remedies. Shelley's views as to Reform and Liberty are very vague. He seems to have had some idea that with a *hey presto*, everything could be changed. Pantaloon had only to strike the floor three times, and the whole scene vanished; the old witches, who caused all the trouble, were to be changed at once into beautiful sprites; Columbine should come dancing on, and a general return to Fairyland, everybody paying for every one, and nobody taking anything. He himself was willing to make any sacrifice. In this respect he seems to have been like some innocent child, wandering into a garden, singing as he went, plucking with its tiny hands the flowers and fruits, willing to share them with any one—wishing, perhaps, that men could live upon them altogether, and not a little vexed and surprised when told that they would not bloom in the winter time—wishing, too, that the beds might be kept trim, and the grass might be cut without human labour—and then sitting down, musing, melancholy, and sad, on the first falling leaf.

To us it appears that liberty and happiness—if it be liberty and happiness we want—depend upon no legerdemain, no shuffling of cards. Once let us learn that our well-being depends not upon external circumstances, but upon the riches of moral goodness, and that our mind, like a prism, can colour all events, and we shall then be on the true road to a higher reform than our politicians have yet dreamt of. To teach men their duty, and what love and what justice mean, seems to us just now the one thing needful. Gold, perhaps, is the medicine least wanted to cure human ills—the worst salve for human bruises. The mere kind look and the kind action will be treasured up with its own interest, not to be counted at any poor per cent., whilst the money will have been foolishly squandered—how much more the word which shall kindle a new idea, a fresh truth, another life. The mechanic earning his few shillings a week, enough to support himself, may find pleasure, if he has but learnt to take an interest in the few green grass blades beneath his feet, and the few opening flowers in his garden, which no lord in his castle can surpass. Nothing is so cheap as true happiness: and Providence has well arranged that we may be surrounded by ever-flowing springs of it, if we will but choose, in all humility, to drink of them. Shelley, unfortunately, fancied that there was some one specific to be externally applied to the gangrene of wretchedness,

and cure it at once and for ever; but we must go far beyond the surface, and the application must be made, not to the diseased part only, but to the whole body of society. And as to the sorrows and contradictions of life, we take and accept them, believing that there is a spirit at work for good, which will bring them out to a successful issue. And we are proud to be instruments in working out so grand a principle, believing that the pain and the loss to us will be gain to the human race; that these days of sorrow will be a gain to coming years; that this sadness of a part will be a gain to the whole. In this is our unfaltering trust; and secure in it we can go joyfully along, enduring patiently whatever sorrow or whatever conflict we may encounter, striving to help our weaker brethren, giving them what aid we can.

Painful as it may be to think of a number of fellow-creatures toiling early and late, yet labour has its own claims on our gratitude. Labour seems to be man's appointed lot here, and it is foolish to quarrel with it; still more foolish to call it a curse; the thistles and the thorns have been, perhaps, of more benefit to the human race than all the flowers in the Garden of Eden. They have called forth man's energies, and developed his resources. All those chimneys in our factory-towns—are they not as steeples, veritable church steeples and towers of the great temple of Labour, pointing, with no dumb stone fingers, up to heaven, saying, by us, by labour, is the road up there? Does not the flame and the smoke-wreath look as if it came from some vast altar, the incense of sacrifices—yes, of noble human sacrifices, daily offered up; and do not the clank and clash of a thousand hammers and anvils sound sweet upon our ears, as the music of bells calling us to our duty—trumpets sounding us to the battle of life, that battle against evil and wrong? So it must be: out of darkness cometh light, and from the cold frosts and bitter snows of winter, bloom all the beautiful flowers of spring; and from all this grime, and dirt, and sweat of labour, who shall prophesy the result? Even now are there giants in the land; even now may we see cranks, and wheels, and iron arms, tethered to their work instead of men; even now do we hear the music of the electric wires across the fields, telling us other things than the mere message they convey; even now may the hum of the engine, and the breath of its iron lungs, be heard in our old farm-yards, and the reaping-machine seen cutting down the golden wheat, and the steam-plough furrowing up the fields, taking away the heaviest burdens from the backs of men. Shelley would have hailed such a time with delight—when there should be some margin of the day given to the ploughman and the mechanic for rest and recreation—for re-

member, a man is ever worthier than his hire. Had Shelley ever seen a railroad, he would, perhaps, have exclaimed with Dr. Arnott, "Good-night to Feudality." It is curious to notice what an interest he took in endeavouring to establish a steamer on the Gulf of Genoa. But all the leisure in the world, all the instruction that can be had, will avail us nothing, if we do not build on higher principles than we are at present accustomed to—if we do not rest our foundations upon Love and Justice. "Ah!" sighed Shelley to Leigh Hunt, as the organ was playing in the cathedral at Pisa, "what a divine religion might be found out, if charity were really made the principle of it instead of faith." This, then, is a part of Shelley's creed—a creed which is beginning at length to be felt; the creed of Jesus and of Socrates; of poets of to-day and of yesterday; the law of laws; the doctrine of charity—that charity which Paul preached as greater than faith. Let our politics and our religion be built upon love and justice for their foundations, and once more will man live in harmony with the rest of the creation—will smell sweet with "his fellow-creatures the plants," and his voice will be attuned with the love-songs of the birds. He will then understand how he was made in God's image, for God is love; the world will then once more bloom a Garden of Eden, and Selfishness, that evil spirit—call it the devil if you will, for it is this world's devil—be ousted from our planet.

But it requires something more than a poet's strains to break the spells that bind us—to exhume the people from their present sepulchre of ignorance. A Tyrtæus is of no use, unless we will fight; his strains of no avail, unless we will work, man to man, shoulder to shoulder. The walls of prejudice and selfishness will not fall down by any mere trumpet-blast. If any one thinks us too ideal, let him know we are purposely so. The ideal is better than the real, and it is something to be ideal in these practical days of ours. "Equality" and "love" may perhaps never be known, as they should be, amongst men. Riches have been well compared to snow, which if it fall level to-day, to-morrow will be heaped in drifts. But surely there is an equality apart from money, and a love which knows not bank-notes; we will hope for, and aid forward, too, the day when there may not be the present gulf betwixt the peer and the peasant, and when that simple commandment shall be better observed, "Do unto others as you would be done by."

In a note to "The Prometheus Unbound," Mrs. Shelley thus writes:—

"The prominent feature of Shelley's theory of the destiny of the human species was, that evil is not inherent in the system of the crea-

tion, but an accident that might be expelled. This also forms a portion of Christianity. God made earth and man perfect, till he, by his fall—

‘Brought death into the world, and all our woe.’

Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none. That man could become so perfect as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system.”

There is much truth in this. Our misery arises from the infringement of natural laws; and as long as those laws remain broken, our misery will still continue. But Hope is by our side, and she tells us, with the unmistakeable voice of truth, that men will some day grow wiser and less selfish than at present—when most of the present suffering shall pass away—when none need be long unhappy, except through their own fault—for the earth was created for a good and a happy purpose, though it take myriads of years to accomplish it.

And now let us not be one-sided, but view Shelley as a whole—the unripe as well as the sunny side of the fruit—the dark shadow on his orb as well as the sunlight. His impulsive character prevented him from laying enough stress on the grand principle of duty. Its infinite worth we cannot over-estimate. Duty is a pillar firmly fixed in rock of adamant, round which we climb heavenward; round everything else we only twine horizontally, crawling along the ground. How far a stronger sense of duty in Shelley would have saved him from the wretchedness which he suffered, and his first wife from the terrible catastrophe consequent on his leaving her, we shall not attempt to estimate; but certainly it would have impelled him, as it did Milton, to return from Italy when his country was in danger, and like him also, if need were, to support himself even by keeping a school. We have already noticed his want of a due appreciation of the importance of Labour. He forgot also that the energies of man are tempered to an iron hardness by adversity; that our strength springs up fresher and stronger under the clouds of trials and sufferings; that our souls are braced by the keen, cold winds of poverty; our faculties purified by the fire of affliction. Hence was he ever planning Utopias, where the idle should batten upon the earnings of the industrious—cloud-cuckoo-towns, where idleness and the take-no-thought-for-to-morrow principles should become the laws of our being, which are all of them impossibilities on this toiling planet. Again, too, Shelley erred in being too ready to pull down instead of to build up. Greater harm has been done, both in religion and politics, by men whose capabilities have been of the destructive order, without the constructive

faculty, than by all the bigots that ever breathed. It is worse than cruelty to take away the bread of life and the waters of life, however adulterated they may be, from a man, and offer his hungry and thirsting soul nothing in their place. But the grand mistake of Shelley's was the idea of revolutionizing the course of things by a simple change of institutions. The best form of government can do but little, unless the reform begins with the individuals themselves. Govern ourselves well, and we need not then talk so much about governing others. It is not the form of government, so much as the men and women, we must care for—not this or that institution, but the first principles of honesty and justice amongst ourselves, which we must regard.

That men should be severe upon Shelley we can well understand—good, easy people, whose skins are luckily so tough and insensible that the harness of life can make no raw on them—whose heads are but moulds for so many cast-iron opinions and creeds. That an over-sensitive poet should break away from all the rules of life, and betake himself to the wilderness of his own doubts and speculations, is to them a most incredible, not to say a most wicked thing. To leave a home fireside, with its six o'clock dinner and port wine, in exchange for a doubtful supper on bread and cheese, and a certain one on metaphysics—to form your own world-theory—to found a fresh morality—is to them the height of madness. They forget that the arrangements of society are made, and rightly too, for the mass—that is, for such people as themselves—and that a poet is something very different from themselves, and that these laws which operate so well for them, will in all likelihood work fatally on the poet. So the poor poet must be hooted and brayed at by all the chorus of human owls and quadrupeds. He plunges away madly into the darkness beyond, solitary and sad, endeavouring to steer by the compass of his own thoughts. The world looks on him in his struggles and his toils with the same quiet indifference, not to say pleasure, that a boy does at a cockchafer spinning in agony on a pin's point. That Shelley's views were often wild and crude, no one for a moment will deny. Enthusiastic and impulsive, he jumped to all sorts of conclusions on the most important points. The value of a young man's experience—and Shelley died at nine-and-twenty—is not worth much, and it is only by experience we can test anything in this practical world. He himself found this out at last. Circumstances also had a great effect in his case, as they have upon all of us. We perhaps can never rightly weigh the balance of any man's actions, because we never allow enough for the circumstances which should be placed in the other scale. Here was Shelley, the son of a man who was

entirely different in his whole nature,\* sent to school where he was brutally treated and discouraged in his studies, marrying a person who was in no respects fitted for him. On the other hand, suppose that he had had a father who could have judiciously sympathized with him, been sent to a school where masters would have encouraged his studies, and have married a suitable wife, who shall say what Shelley might have been? But we are dealing with things not as they might be, but as they were and are. One small pebble in the way of a stream shall make the river flow in another direction, and water quite other lands and countries to what it does now. Yet man, perhaps, should not be a stream, as weak as water. Be this as it may, it is certain that before Shelley's death the mists that had long obscured the rising of his dawn were already melting, and his day was just breaking, all calm and pure; the bitter juices were all being drawn up, and converted into sweetness and bloom; the fruit of his genius was fast becoming ripe and mellow.

We have gone thus far into Shelley's life and opinions, without touching upon his poetry; for we think that if a person cared nothing at all about poetry in the abstract, he must be struck with that still higher poetry of kindness and generosity which so inspired Shelley. His written poetry, in our mind, is quite a secondary affair to that. There is a poetry of real life which is grander than any yet sung by minstrel. The man is greater than his poems.

The critics have plenty of stock objections to find with Shelley's poetry. The most common complaint is, that he is too metaphysical; that the air is so rarified in his higher regions of Philosophy, that ordinary beings can't breathe it; that his verse is like hard granite peaks, brilliant with the lights and the shadows of the changeful clouds, robed with white wreaths of mists, and touched with the splendours of the setting and the rising sun, but not one flower blooms upon it, not one living creature is to be seen there, only ethereal forms flitting fitfully hither and thither; and we must, to a certain extent, admit the truth of the charge. Shelley exhibited to a remarkable degree the union of the metaphysical and the imaginative mind. Philosophy and poetry prevailed over him alternately. For a long time he was doubtful to which he should devote himself.† It is from an overbalance of philosophy that there is such a want of concreteness in his poems. He was for ever looking at things in a meta-

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\* "As like his father, as I'm unlike mine."—Letter to Mrs. Gisborne.

† See Mrs. Shelley's note on the "Revolt of Islam."



physical point of view, projecting himself into Time and Space ; regarding this earth as a ball, with its blue robe of air,

“ As she dances about the sun,”

instead of parcelled out into rich farms and sprinkled with towns, and solid three and four-storied houses, and walls fourteen inches thick, tenanted by Kit Slys, Shylocks, Iagos, Falstaffs, and the whole company of humanity, who play on alternate nights and days the tragedy or the comedy of life. That he should have taken this abstract view of life is not at all wonderful. All great minds are ever attracted by the problem of life. This world-riddle is of all things the most fascinating to the ardent and inquiring spirit. The reason why Shelley sang of the things he did, was simply that they both interested and pained him more than others. Living in an age, which gave birth to the French Revolution, which was agonized with the throes of all sorts of speculative theories, his verse naturally echoed them. Every true artist—whether by poetry, or painting, or architecture, it matters not—gives us the great questions of the day, with his attempted solution of them. Hence is it that Shelley is really a poet, because in his verse he truly sympathized with the wants of the day. Before a man can write well, he must have *felt*. It is not fine phrases, or similes, or fine anything else that make a poet, any more than fine clothes make a man. Shelley found out that the old-established customs, the old morals, the old laws, did not suit him. The every-day maxims of low prudence sounded to him very much like baseness ; the common religion to him was synonymous with uncommon irreligion, and public morality looked to him merely a mask for private immorality. He felt all this, and felt it bitterly, and sighed after nobler aspirations ; hence his poetry. His great failing is a certain amount of querulousness, instead of calmly reposing amidst all his conflicts in an eternal Justice, which, though it may be far from visible to common eyes, is still the foundation of the world. He had before his death passed through only one stage of the conflict which most great minds undergo. Before belief, there must be doubt ; before the fire, the smoke. Shelley never attained that perfect repose which the greatest poets have possessed, and his poetry consequently does not rise to the highest order. Now, Shelley defines poetry as “ the expression of the imagination,”\* and he has Shakspeare on his side—

“ The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,  
Are of imagination all compact.”

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\* “ A Defence of Poetry.”

Strangely does that word "lunatic" sound now, as we think of that tale of "Mad Shelley." But this is exactly what Shelley's poetry really is—"the expression of the imagination," unmodified by experience, and any knowledge of this world of men and women. Imagination, though doubtless the first requisite of a poet, is far from all. As Novalis would say, "a poet is a microcosmos." The great poets are all of them many-sided. Their poetry is both *μίμησις* and *ποίησις*. They illustrate both the Aristotelian and Baconian theory of poetry, as well as much more. They are like lands which bear crops of all kinds. They possess, in fact, the united faculties of all other men, and these faculties serve to check and balance one another. Every part working in unison, nothing unduly developed at the expense of another, are the characteristics of all great poets, and, in fact, of all great men, who are only poets in another way. Shelley's imagination, unluckily, galloped away with him, instead of his reining it in. Take some of the most imaginative pieces that have ever been written, and we shall find how they are all of them more or less ballasted. There is that most fairy-like of all things, "The Birds" of Aristophanes, brilliant with imagination, yet still occupying our interest by its wit and humour. Again, "The Midsummer Night's Dream" and "The Tempest," with all their scenes from Fairyland, and their spirits, are balanced by the human creations, and the interest and incidents that arise from the plots. Shelley seems never to have anchored his imagination to anything. There was no clog to it. Nothing to tie it down. Hence his weak, shadowy drawings, his want of substance, an absence of reality. Hence his characters are too often mere personified abstractions; thoughts which have been only half-clothed in human bodies. For we cannot agree with Lord Macaulay in thinking that they cease to be abstractions, and interest us as human beings; for common experience tells us that they do not.\* Shelley had in him none of the elements which made Shakspeare essentially popular. He was a vegetarian, a water-drinker. In philosophical moods he doubted the existence of matter; but then he was always in philosophical moods. He is, in short, too spiritual, too subtle for ordinary men with good appetites, who are not troubled by the theories of Berkeley. We cannot fancy him at one of those "wit-combats" at The Mermaid, drinking sherris-sack, and joining in the chorus of a song. He wanted the faculty of humour, though Captain Medwin assures us he possessed it strongly. We have looked in vain; we cannot find

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\* See some incidental remarks on Shelley, in the Essay upon "The Pilgrim's Progress."

a spark of it in his letters, which, on the contrary, are marked by his usual melancholy spirits. He was too metaphysical to be humorous. He had more of the Jaques and the Hamlet vein than Falstaff's in him. Hence his bitter outbursts of sarcasm. We must, however, turn to his Life to account for the peculiarities of his poetry. We find there that it took him only a few weeks to write "The Prometheus Unbound," whilst he laboured at "The Cenci" for months; that he forsook his drama of "Charles I." in disgust, for "The Triumph of Life," one of his most abstruse poems. A curious trait, which gives us no little clue in the matter, is mentioned by Captain Medwin, that Shelley was in the habit of noting down his dreams. "The first day," he said, "they made a page, the next two, the third several, till at last they constituted far the greater part of his existence, realizing what Calderon says, in his comedy of 'La Vida es Sueño'—

'Sueño es Sueño.'

'Dreams are but the dreams of other dreams.'

What could be expected of a poet to whom dreams were the only realities of life? And yet there is something peculiarly pathetic in the story; to many of us, as well as to Shelley, probably our sleeping and our waking dreams are the happiest parts of our existence. We build our air-castles, those dreams of the day, and take refuge in them from the toil and uproar of the world. There are times when all of us become disheartened, when the spirit within us faints, when we sigh in our hearts—

"O cease! must hate and death return?  
Cease! must men kill and die?"

Shelley was, notwithstanding his sanguine hopes, subject to such fits of despondency; no wonder that he should write down his dreams. After all, we live far more in our world of thoughts, and fancies, and dreams, and spend a happier existence, too, in them, than on the real material world. Shelley, too, seems to have known that the abstract nature of his poetry would be a bar to his popularity, and says, in a letter to a friend, that there are not five people who will understand his "Prometheus Unbound;" and in his prefatory lines to his "Epipsychidion," he writes:—

"My song, I fear that thou wilt find but few  
Who shall conceive thy reasoning."

And this might be said, with some limitation, of all his poetry. Again, when his wife complains of his want of human interest and story, he wishes to know if she, too, has become "critic-bitten." As he said of Keats, he himself can never become popular; his effect upon men will be, not to make them applaud,

but to think. Popularity and fame were not the things Shelley cared for. It would be well if our young poets would remember this. No great thing ever did become popular at once. The fact of its becoming popular at once, shows it is not worth much. If you care for popularity, then write songs which can be played on street-organs, and by sentimental young ladies in drawing-rooms, and which commonplace critics can understand. But if you respect yourself—and that's the only respect worth anything—never mind if only five people understand you; these five are worth five millions of others, nay, are worth the whole of the rest of the world. As to Shelley being difficult to understand, we apprehend that this is far more the reader's fault than the poet's. Plato, instead of saying "poets utter wise things which they do not themselves understand," should have said, "which their readers do not try to understand." We are not amongst those who look upon poetry as a mere amusement, as a light recreation. The office of the poet is the highest in the world. As Shelley finely says, "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world;" and he himself was the Laureate of Freedom. The poet comes as spokesman between nature and the rest of his fellow-men: he is the true priest—the true prophet; extending the tent of our thoughts, enlarging the horizon of our ideas, teaching whatever is lovely, whatever is holy and pure, revealing the unseen things the common eye cannot see, and the melodies the common ear cannot hear, interpreting the mute symbols of flower, and cloud, and hill, drawing his inspiration from the depths within his own soul.

There is another point in connexion with this want of human interest in his poems—that though Shelley experienced at times all the hardships of poverty, yet he was not born poor. Unlike the Burns and the Shakspeares, he never mingled with the crowd, never learnt human life in that rough, coarse way, which tinges their poetry with common every-day experiences, and invests their characters with a flesh-and-blood reality. At school he was always reserved, and in after-life much the same. Hence it is that Shelley never draws upon our feelings, like the great masters, in his longer pieces; there is none of the pathos of life, except, perhaps, in the "Cenci." He is too cold; his characters are like statues of white marble; no warm blood flows in their veins, no tears trickle down their cheeks. They might be inhabitants of another planet, for what we know, giving us the benefit of their views on various social problems.

Again, as we are criticising, we must find fault with those *dulcia vitia* of overloaded imagery and similes. His verse too often flows not in a clear, deep, rolling stream, but more like a mountain current, swollen and impetuous from rain, jostling together

everything that floats upon it. His imagery is often so rich that, like the fruit on too luxuriant branches, it completely weighs the verse down and requires propping up. A very curious example of this may be seen in "The Skylark," where, after comparing the bird to all beautiful things, having said that its song is sweeter than the sound of showers, he closes by—

" All that ever was  
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass."

He cannot, in fact, heap simile on simile fast enough, though the verses are even now overflowing with them, like flowers overpowering with their sweetness. Again, we must notice an opposite vice—a love for unpleasant situations and things—

" At whose name the verse feels loath"—

as in "The Cenci;" and a disagreeable love for the details of madness and hospital-life, as in "Julian and Maddalo;" and we have finished the catalogue of his principal offences. We dare say there are plenty more minor faults, but we wont deprive other critics of the pleasure of exposing them.

Shelley's imagination was both his stepping-stone and his stumbling-block. It unfortunately mars his poems by its over-excess, yet it gave him wings, with which he could soar aloft above the grovelling views of our everyday life. The fault of the literature of the day is that it is too retrospective; thinks that the Golden Age is in the Past, and not in the Future. It has its eyes fixed in the back of its head, and if it ever attempts to look forward, squints most abominably. This is the worst sign of the day, or of any day. Let us, if we will, praise the dead Past, and crown its grey temples with a wreath of glory; but let us look forward to the Future as a happy youth, holding a cornucopia of all good things in his hand. Shelley, at times, when a film came across his eyes, sank into this wild sea of despair, but his imagination soon buoyed him up. There is a good Scottish proverb which it would be well for us to remember—"We maun live with the present, and no' with the past." Our duty lies with the present, and it is simply by making it as good as possible that we can mould the future. Shelley's imagination, too, prevented him from sharing in our English insularity. There was nothing local in his mind. It was as catholic as the universe. Hence he was ever looking forward with courageous hope. Golden gleams of the future flashed before him. He could conjure up new Edens, and see Liberty again with Justice walking hand in hand upon a new earth.

Shelley's poems will not bear studying as a whole, nor will his characters bear analysing. They are, in fact, all representations

of Shelley. The reason of this is that Shelley sought to give his own views to the world, and he had no medium to give it through but himself. He had no resources from experience to draw upon, no character but his own that he really knew. His life was a poem, his poems his life. Alastor sailing in his boat, is Shelley; Lionel in his dungeon-walls, Shelley; Laon, with his visions of Liberty, Shelley. So his female characters are only Shelley over again with long dresses and short sleeves. In one poem only, "The Cenci," does he make any effort to get behind the mask of his creations. But even here Count Cenci is only the reverse of former characters; he is only their antithesis, as impulsive towards evil as they were towards good. Shelley should have remembered an axiom of his favourite author, Plato—*κακὸς μὲν ἔχων οὐδέτις*.

Turning to Shelley's poems, we perceive at once the instinctive feelings of the true poet. Thus he begins "Alastor":—

"Earth, ocean, air, *beloved brotherhood!*  
 If our great mother have imbued my soul  
 With aught of natural piety to feel  
 Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;  
 If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast  
 I consciously have injured, but still loved  
 And cherished *these my kindred.*"

Mr. Leigh Hunt, in his "Recollections of Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries," speaks thus of Shelley—"He was pious towards nature, towards his friends, towards the whole human race, towards the meanest insect of the forest." But he was more than this. He felt that we are all akin, not men alone, but the cloud above our heads, and the flower beneath our feet. He felt that man is related to the world as a Part to the Whole. He felt how all things mysteriously influence us, and how to these influences we are akin. Such natural stepping-stones as these lead us to Heaven, to which also we are allied. This relationship it is, above all things, the poet's office to show. Dearly, too, does Shelley love Nature, who gives to us all alike her beauties, trying to read us the lesson—

"The simple life wants little, and true taste  
 Hires not the pale drudge Luxury to waste  
 The scene it would adorn."—("Épipsychidion.")

How long it will be before we shall find out that we can live without our present costly tastes, that our food will be as sweet from clean earthenware as from silver dishes (many of them, by the way though, only plated), that our sleep will be quite as refreshing from a plain bedstead as one that suffocates us with its unpaid-for hangings, we cannot undertake to say. The sooner,

however, the better. Very fine is the old fable of Antæus, who, when he touched his mother earth, received fresh strength. Nature is the true corrective of the false bias which our minds insensibly contract from the present sordid state of the world. A walk in the woods acts as a tonic. A landscape fills the senses not only with mere material visions of beauty, but these react again upon us with a precious moral spirit.

We must not pass over Shelley's love for personification of inanimate objects, a result of his strong imagination. Take, for instance—

“Our boat is *asleep* on Serchio's stream,  
Its sails are folded like thoughts in a dream,  
The helm sways idly, hither and thither ;  
Dominic, the boatman, has brought the mast,  
And the oars and the sails, *but 'tis sleeping fast*,  
Like a beast unconscious of its tether.”

(“The Boat on the Serchio.”)

There is another well-known example in the “Cenci,” of the rock hanging over the precipice, clinging for support, as a dying soul clings to life. This propensity it is that leads him to humanize the objects of nature. He cannot see a stream, but he forthwith converts it into a personage, as the old heathen poets would have into a god or a goddess. He gazes upon Arethusa ; it is no longer a stream, but a beautiful nymph with crystal feet leaping from rock to rock, her tresses floating on the wind, and wherever she steps, the turf grows greener and brighter. And then comes Alpheus, no longer a stream but a river-god, with his fierce beard and glaring eyes, chasing the nymph whom the earth tries to rescue from his embrace ; and so they rush along in their mad pursuit. This is quite in the spirit of the old Greek mythology. In these prosaic days we are ever analysing the old Divinities ; we put Venus into a crucible and melt her down, and look at Jupiter through a microscope like any other specimen of natural history. We will, however, continue our quotation, as it develops many of Shelley's characteristics in a few lines :—

“*The stars burnt out in the pale blue air,*  
*And the thin white moon lay withering there ;*  
To tower and cavern, rift and tree,  
The owl and the bat fled drowsily.  
Day had kindled the dewy woods,  
And the rocks above and the stream below,  
*And the vapours in their multitudes,*  
*And the Apennine's shroud of summer snow,*  
*And clothed with light of airy gold*  
*The mists in their eastern caves uprolled.”*

Shelley's love for the mountains amounted to a passion. Long before Mr. Ruskin wrote—who seems to arrogate for himself the priority of seeing any real beauty or use in them—had Shelley sung their praises. So fond was he of them, that Captain Medwin tells us he was continually sketching them in his books. A claim, too, has been put in for Wordsworth, that he first gave us the scenery of the sky, and all the glorious cloud-scapes and air tones, which earlier poets had so strangely neglected. Shelley may at least share this glory with him; though the critics have forgotten that Aristophanes has a still prior claim. Shelley is continually alluding to them. His lyric on the "Cloud" paints them as they move in their huge battalions across the sky, in all their colours, from red sunrise to crimson sunset; or as they come sailing along with their black wings, as if they were Titan ships waging war one with another; or in the night lying as if they were silver sands rippled by the waves of the wind, and lighted by the moon.

In all Shelley's pieces there is a strange melancholy feeling, which we have alluded to before; not the result, as Mr. Ruskin foolishly thinks, of any impiety, but from the poet's affection for Humanity, and his sorrow at its ills. Take this picture of "Summer and Winter":—

"It was a bright and cheerful afternoon,  
Towards the end of the sunny month of June,  
When the north wind congregates in crowds  
The floating mountains of the silver clouds  
From the horizon—and the stainless sky  
Opens beyond them like aeternity.  
All things rejoiced beneath the sun—the weeds,  
The river, and the corn-fields, and the reeds;  
The willow leaves that glanced in the bright breeze,  
And the firm foliage of the larger trees.

It was a winter such as when birds die  
In the deep forests; and the fishes lie  
Stiffened in the translucent ice, which makes  
Even the mud and slime of the warm lakes  
A wrinkled clod, as hard as brick; and when,  
Among their children, comfortable men  
Gather about great fires, and yet feel cold;  
Alas! then, for the homeless beggar old."

Shelley, with all his love for Nature, could no longer dwell upon the last scene. The wind sowing the flakes of snow on the earth, the frozen grass lying on the bald fields like grey hair, and the icicles hanging like a beard from the rocks, had no charms for him. He was thinking of all the frost-bitten, homeless, breadless wanderers. So through all his poetry he is ever musing



on the wrongs and sufferings of poor humanity. This gives it a peculiar melancholy tone, not morbidness, but a true deep pathos. He writes more of the fall of the year, than of its birth. He sings the dirge over its bier, rather than the marriage-song of the Spring. The wild wind, "the world's rejected guest," moans among his verses, and there finds a home. Ever does he say, "the sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." Another reason is there for this feeling with Shelley, his habit of looking at the world from a metaphysical point of view. The very grandeur and might of the Universe casts a shadow upon the heart of man. All great minds have ever known this profound gloom. Whether *Cædipus* interprets or not the world-riddle, he shall die. Mark how in "Alastor" Shelley writes—

"The thunder and the hiss of *homeless* streams."

How much is conveyed in that word "homeless." The streams wandering along, seeking rest and finding none, until they reach the haven of the sea, and then are snatched away again into the air, seeming to say, "we change, but we cannot die;" here we are condemned to be for ever, restless, shifting, changing. So with all things. And Shelley felt this strongly. The mountains which seem so firm, and "all that must æternal be," are after all but as changeful as the clouds which rest upon their brows.

Many minor points are there which we might discuss, such as Shelley's particular fondness for a certain class of images, and particular words. On one of these in particular, taken from the green fields, he seems to dwell with great affection. Thus he writes—

"Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms, or arts,  
*Shepherd* those herds whom tyranny makes tame."  
 ("Sonnet on Political Greatness.")

So he speaks of *Arethusa* "*shepherding* her bright fountains;" of *Adonais*, "whose quick dreams were his *flocks*;" and of the West Wind—

"Driving sweet buds like *flocks* to feed on air."

So, again, in the "Witch of Atlas," he calls the wind "the *shepherdess* of ocean *flocks*;" and he speaks of the earth itself as "the last of the *flock* of the starry *fold*."\* Even in his prose

\* It is curious to notice how the "one mind common to all individual men," as Mr. Emerson would say, repeats the same idea. Thus Edward Bolton, a poet but little known, writes thus:—

"Lo! how the firmament  
 Within an *azure fold*

*The flock* of the stars hath pent."—("Hymn for Christmas.")

he returns to this metaphor, and calls Dante "the Lucifer of the starry flock."\* And even in his translation he uses it, thus expanding

ἐλατῆρα βοῶν, ἡγήτορ' ὀνείρων  
Νυκτός, ("The Homeric Hymn to Mercury.")

into "a *Shepherd of thin dreams*, a cow stealing." Other favourite words, such as "winged," "islanded," will readily occur to every reader. Space fails us, and we must be brief. Much more is there that might be said about Shelley's poems, showing how, in the first place, they were inspired by his early reading, how they next yielded to German influences, how these developed themselves into Materialism, and how this, too, was merging into a sort of Spiritualism at the time of his death; marking each era accurately, and showing, too, what effects the French and Italian schools of poetry had upon him. Especially, too, should we like to dwell on some of his lyrics; nothing approaches them for sweetness and melody, except some of Shakspeare's songs, or some of Goethe's minor pieces. But we must turn to the man himself. Poetry he loved with a religious spirit. Noble was he in working at it as his profession. Noble, too, was he in his choice of life. On one hand lay ten thousand a-year and its game preserves, and its bright smiles of courtly women, its soft-cushioned and soft-carpeted drawing-rooms, its dinners with endless courses, its revenue of salutations and bows, its faithful army of faithless toadies; on the other, poverty with its bleak sharp rocks, where yet a man may find a cave to live in; its rude angry sea, yet to which if a man shall listen he may hear the eternal melodies; with its black clouds overhead, which, though so dense, will sometimes open out spaces of the clear, blue, unfathomable sky in the day, and the bright keen stars in the night. Shelley made no hesitation which he should choose; and nobly done, we say to him, and all such. Noble, too, was he that he wrote on fearlessly and boldly in spite of party-reviews and party-critics. Fame was not his mistress. He worshipped not at the shrine of that most fickle of goddesses. Ever higher, was his motto. He was ever quoting this sentiment from the second volume of St. Leon—"There is nothing which the human mind can conceive which it may not execute;" and again, "Shakspeare was only a human being."† His face was ever upward—up the steep hill of poesy, whose rarest flowers bloom on the highest peaks. What he might

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And every one will recollect how Bloomfield's "Farmer's Boy" so naturally speaks of the stars as—

"The beauteous semblance of a flock at rest."

\* "Defence of Poetry," p. 35.

† See Mrs. Shelley's note on "The Cenci."

have been, had he lived, we can never tell. Dying at twenty-nine, we are judging him only by his weaknesses. What could we have told of Shakspeare or Goethe, if the one had only lived to write his "Pericles," and the other his "Werter"?

Let us not forget, too, the pureness of Shelley's morals. His life in this respect was as pure as crystal without one flaw, one stain on it. Many scenes are there in his writings, one especially in the "Revolt of Islam," which could have been treated by no other man with the same pureness of thought. Above all things, too, do we prize his letters to his wife; they are so full of genuine affection and kindness. Well was it that he should die in the great ocean, pure as he himself was, that ocean which he so dearly loved. Above all men, too, is Shelley religious, strange as it will seem to many readers. Love for all that is good and beautiful and truthful, reverence for all that is great and noble, a spirit of humility, had their roots deep in the depths of his soul. What matters it about names and sects? Let us hear no more about them; they are all but roads and lanes and paths, more or less straight, more or less wide, to the great Invisible Temple.

We must place Shelley amongst the world's Master-Spirits and Master-Singers; a younger brother of that grand blind old man, Cromwell's secretary. Shelley, too, was one of the world's Forlorn Hope; one of those generous martyrs who now and then appear at such rare intervals, and fill us with undying hope in the cause of Humanity; one of those who would willingly lay down his life in the trench, if his body would but bridge over the chasm for his comrades to pass. Such a man makes us prouder of our race; and his memory makes the earth itself a richer world. There is a light flung round Shelley's life, though so marked with griefs and disasters, which has never shone on the most victorious king or kaiser—a light that shall burn for ever as a beacon to all Humanity.

