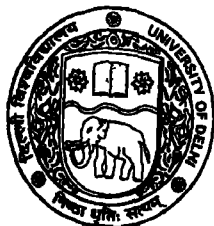


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PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
From the monument to him at Viareggio, Italy
Photograph by Cav. G. Magrini.

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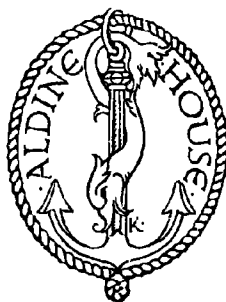
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TRAVELS OF MARCO POLO

THE LIFE *of*
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY:

AS COMPRISED IN *THE LIFE OF SHELLEY*
BY THOMAS JEFFERSON HOGG ♣ *THE*
RECOLLECTIONS OF SHELLEY & BYRON
BY EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY · *MEMOIRS*
OF SHELLEY BY THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY HUMBERT WOLFE
FULLY ILLUSTRATED WITH EIGHTEEN PEN AND
INK DRAWINGS BY G. E. CHAMBERS AND SIX-
TEEN PHOTOGRAVURE PORTRAITS AND VIEWS



VOLUME ONE

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INTRODUCTION

THE three principal contemporary 'Lives' of Shelley, here printed together, are those of Hogg, Peacock, and Trelawny. The first, both in volume and in its consequences, is much the most important. It ends in 1814 before Shelley's elopement with Mary Godwin. It is therefore supplemented by Peacock's discussion of the elopement and Trelawny's brief account of Shelley's last year in Italy. Nevertheless it remains the principal contemporary account and has necessarily influenced all subsequent biographers. This note is therefore chiefly directed to an examination of the worth and credibility of this important document.

Hogg wrote the two volumes of his biography in 1855, being then in his sixty-fourth year. As a tribute to his ancient friendship for Shelley the family entrusted such papers as they possessed to his loving hands. Mary Shelley had been prevented by the opposition of her father-in-law from attempting the task. The field was, therefore, clear for the ageing man to build a monument to the object of his youthful love, who, by that time, had taken his place as one of the fixed stars of English verse.

A good biographer and a true man of letters will not deliver himself to indiscriminate adulation. To erase the lines upon the face of the hero is to substitute drawing-room photography for portraiture. It is the biographer's duty never to lose the man in his deeds, and never to gloss over actions which, though discreditable, are still the wrinkles that gave the brow its character. Hogg could not therefore have been blamed for admitting the faults and inconsistencies in Shelley's character. On the other hand, if the process of time had hardened his heart against his dead friend, it was clearly his duty to indicate, before he accepted the task of biography, that, subpoenaed for the defence, he was in fact proposing to give evidence for the prosecution. It is, in fact, the contention of this note that this is exactly what happened.

When the first two volumes appeared they were to be followed by two more, but these two were never written. Peacock explains this by quoting from Lady Shelley's Preface to her own edition of the *Shelley Memorials* as follows:

'We saw the book [Mr. Hogg's] for the first time when it was given to the world. It was impossible to imagine beforehand that from such materials a book could have been produced which has astonished and shocked those who have the greatest right to form an opinion on the character of Shelley, and it was with the most painful feelings of dismay that we perused what we could only look upon as a fantastic caricature, going forth to the public with my apparent sanction—for it was dedicated to myself

'Our feelings of duty to the memory of Shelley left us no other alternative than to withdraw the materials which we had originally entrusted to his early friend, and which we could not but consider had been strangely misused, and to take upon ourselves the task of laying them before the public connected only by as slight a thread of narrative as would suffice to make them intelligible to the reader'

The book therefore, was indignantly repudiated by Shelley's family. This is, in itself, not conclusive. It has often happened that ignorant amateurs have cavilled at a master's picture on the ground that it is not a 'likeness'. Moreover, though the Shelley family might rejoice in Bysshe's posthumous fame, their conduct to him during his life does not excite our lively sympathy. It is, moreover, the fact that Peacock, an honourable and true friend of the poet, accepted Hogg's performance with tranquillity. It is necessary, therefore, to consider the biography for ourselves in order to conclude whether the indignation of the Shelley family was justified.

We must begin by admitting that Hogg's work has a genuine literary value. It is written racily, it presents a living person, and it holds the attention throughout. If, as *The Dictionary of National Biography* racily suggests, it is 'rather autobiography than biography', it cannot fairly be labelled as 'two thick volumes of inconsecutive rodomontade'. I suggest, indeed, that so far from being inconsecutive, it is a finished and deliberate achievement. The years had strengthened in Hogg's mind a picture of a friend, wise, humorous, patient, and unrewarded, who had sought in vain to guide the faltering and wayward steps of the man upon whom Fate had capriciously heaped the glory which his friend's greater virtue had so amply deserved. Hogg meant to let the world know what manner of a man had been this Thomas Jefferson who deserved so well of posterity. Autobiography was a necessary part of this scheme and not a digression. But autobiography could

only succeed if it was contrasted with a trenchant account of the subject of the memoir. Hogg indeed, may have conceived himself as Virgil personally conducting Lucifer about the Hell which his demerits had made his immortal home.

Hogg, as a matter of routine, refers to Shelley as 'the divine poet', but in the same way as Antony referred to Brutus as 'an honourable man'. The more he exhibited the ridiculous aspects of Shelley, the more fervently he asserted his belief in his divinity. Let me, therefore, in support of this contention present the portrait of Shelley in the first place as Hogg meant it to be seen, and then seek to correct the picture by his unconscious or unwilling testimony and by that of others.

His voice was so disagreeable that it was almost impossible to remain in the same room with him. He was utterly indifferent to the comfort of others, as witness his upsetting the scalloped oysters into the fire through habitual gaucherie and shambling clumsiness, though his patient friend had been walked to death all a winter's day and denied food. He had no knowledge of human affairs. He sought by violent means to prevent a boy from maltreating a donkey. Fortunately his wiser friend was present to use suasion and accomplish the object. He was perpetually ludicrous in his actions, as when he insisted on going for a walk in a new blue coat with glittering buttons—from which the skirts were torn by an ill-conditioned mastiff. Fortunately his cool friend was at hand to quell the dangerous beast with a single kick. Shelley, with his pantaloons showing, strode off for Oxford to fetch his pistols to shoot the dog. Again he was saved by the greater wisdom of his friend. Shelley was something of a natural. He had the theory, like Wordsworth, that the child came trailing clouds of glory. With this preconception on one occasion he snatched a baby from a working-woman's arms on Magdalen Bridge and inquired of the astonished mother, 'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, madam?' In looking for rooms in London after being sent down from Oxford Shelley was in the last degree tiresome. 'Never was a young beauty so hard to please, so capricious!' When he finally decided upon a room in Poland Street with a wall-paper of trellised vines he went close up to the wall and touched it. 'We must stay here; stay for ever.' Indeed, the 'for ever' *motif* ran through every phase of Shelley's kaleidoscopic variations of address.

Shelley, the oddest of human beings, could not support oddities in others. When Hogg visited him and Harriet in their Edinburgh lodgings there was a serving-maid, Christie, who, on being questioned as to the available food, was in the habit of replying, 'Sengit heed and bonnocks'. Apart from this she was inoffensive and appealed to the kindly nature of Shelley's humane friend. But Shelley, whenever she entered the room or even came to the door, rushed wildly into a corner and covered his ears with his hands. Shelley, when Hogg first knew him, was indifferent to all works of art. No doubt, as a result of his friend's influence, he learned to admire statues, and, later, pictures, but what Hogg could never do was to teach him to appreciate architecture. Shelley became acquainted with Southey during the latter's residence at Keswick. Hogg records as the two outstanding incidents of this acquaintance that Shelley was teased almost beyond bearing by the mystery of Southey's unwillingness to lend his books, and secondly, that Shelley quarrelled at their table with Mr. and Mrs. Southey about some tea-cakes, which he first called 'nasty stuff' and then devoured with animal voracity. Shelley in his early correspondence with Godwin mentions that he published controversial opinions at Eton and was twice expelled on that account. This, says Hogg, was untrue. He had read a few pages of Godwin's *Political Justice* and was thrown into a rapture which led him to imagine that he had acted as he certainly did not. Shelley went to Dublin to fight the cause of oppressed Ireland. He succeeded, says Hogg, in being merely preposterous, and 'when he had grown tired of his hopeless scheme, Bysshe persuaded himself that the arguments of William Godwin had persuaded him to leave the country. . . .' Shelley was, in spite of medical proof to the contrary, a confirmed valetudinarian. 'Whenever he was hard-pressed, his poetical imagination invented the touching fable of a delicate and dangerous state of health: his robust microcosm became in an instant the theatre of dire disease.' Shelley was recklessly extravagant, and, alas! in Hogg's absence, 'there was no judicious friend at hand to undertake for him the important duty of answering it [i.e., the claim to live within his income] by prudence, frugality and economy'. Shelley was a confirmed book-thief. 'To lend Bysshe a book was to bid it a long farewell, to take leave of it for ever.' With a charming natural modesty Hogg interrupts his Mark Antoninic to refer to himself as possessing many books, 'the

true riches of a scholar', and continues that, though his incomparable friend was dearer to him than any volume, he did occasionally regret 'that he had deprived me of some favourite volume, only that he might presently lose it'. Shelley interested himself in a hare-brained scheme for reclaiming from the sea some land at Tremadoc in Wales. The unhappy dreamer sought to obtain subscriptions in Sussex for something which might have been good for the people 'in that remote angle of Wales and particularly for Mr. Madocks himself [the promoter]'. Leigh Hunt was thrown into prison for having called the Prince Regent a fat Adonis of fifty. Shelley rallied urgently to his support. 'The great champion of truth and liberty', amiably observes our Hogg, 'had called somebody, or other, a fat Adonis of sixty,¹ in order that he might sell his journal, divert his readers and please the political adventurers of his own party', but a scholar, a poet and a gentleman [such as the biographer perhaps] 'should scorn such trash'. Shelley did not. Hogg made the intolerably long, difficult and dangerous journey to Dublin expressly to see Shelley. The biographer showed remarkable endurance through all the rigours and perils of his progress, and was naturally received with immense enthusiasm by the enlightened part of the Irish nobility and gentry. Shelley, however, happened, by some slight oversight, to be absent in Killarney, so that Hogg, after his conquest of Dublin, returned without seeing him. Will it be believed that he was not angry? Shelley had among his acquaintances in London a family of the name of Newton. When the feckless poet took his dear Hogg to visit them they were met by a procession of the five children of the family—from twelve years downwards and of both sexes—stark naked. Shelley naturally welcomed the sight.² As a further instance of Shelley's inhumanity to the aged and infirm, Hogg regales us with the account of his sitting on the floor of a coach to frighten away a poor old malodorous Sussex apple-woman. He screamed out (in that scrannel voice to which Hogg draws attention):

'For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground,
And tell sad stories of the death of kings.'

¹ What Hunt wrote was, 'This *Adonis* in loveliness was a corpulent gentleman of fifty'. Hogg's 'sixty' is completely out.

² The suggestion that the Newton children were permitted, or indeed, encouraged, to run about naked, is denied. 'Naktkultur' was apparently an intelligent prevision on Hogg's part.

The apple-woman had the coach stopped and fled with a shriek. Shelley ever after gloried in the achievement. And why not? 'So moving were the woes of the gentle Richard Plantagenet, told by the great dramatist, and declaimed by another divine poet.' Shelley had the most repulsive private habits. He would steep a great wad of bread in water, sprinkle loaf sugar and nutmeg, and then voraciously devour the pap. 'Aye,' he shouted to Hogg, 'I lap up the blood of the slain.' 'The conversation of the divine poet', says Hogg, himself, as will appear, a remarkable purist in erotic matters, 'was found to be especially attractive and enchanting by all females, especially the young and intellectual. He would sit with them till six in the morning, sometimes with a single female disciple.' There was, however, no foundation for the assumption, says Hogg, without telling us who conceived it, that aught was in progress save conversation. Shelley was sufficiently ill-advised to annotate *Queen M.* Hogg, that masterly critic of poetry, observed: 'A poet who cannot write verses that do not need a perpetual commentary to render them comprehensible is certainly not competent to write verses'. Hogg comments on Shelley's early and later view of Elizabeth Hitchener. At first she was 'a tower-proof, fire-proof, bomb-proof blue', but afterwards she became 'dirty, androgynous, and a brown demon'. Hogg makes no reference to the events that may have led to this changed opinion, though he gives a lively account of a walk that he took with 'the lovely Eliza' (Harriet's elder sister, of whom more later) and Miss Hitchener, to whom he chooses to refer as 'the bearded preceptress'. Hogg does, however, add as a help to the understanding of Eliza's character, and his own, that after Miss Hitchener's departure from the Shelley household 'the lovely yet spiteful Eliza' once whispered: 'If you only knew how filthily dirty she is you would never come near her'. Shelley liked reading Homer aloud, but he became so excited at the beauties of what he read that he raised his shrill voice till it equalled the crowing of a cock. Shelley would not enter into society, not even of Hogg's choosing, though he had wished to introduce him to such friends as might be agreeable or useful to him. When, as constantly happened, Shelley failed to keep his engagements, his long-suffering friend permitted himself to protest. But then, as he rightly observes in self-justification, only on his other friends' account, who had thus lost the opportunity of

meeting the divine poet. Again as an instance of Shelley's habitual disregard of the feelings of the old and helpless Hogg tells with relish how Shelley fled shrieking with laughter, from the presence of a pathetic French *émigré* duke who in simple gratitude to the country of his refuge had attired his old frame in what he mistakenly believed to be English clothes. Shelley had children whose separation from him after a suit to recover their custody according to credible witnesses occasioned him acute anguish. Hogg on this subject intimates that he was never allowed by Harriet to see Ianthe the reason for which exclusion he charitably suggests, was a blemish in one of the child's eyes (a fact of which in the circumstances he cannot have had personal knowledge). He mentions that period however and says playfully 'Although I did not visit the young cock bird in his breeding-cage during the few weeks he inhabited it I sometimes met him at the house of our common friends. He makes it clear, however that the young cock bird was no lover of his chicks.' 'This accession to his family (i.e. Ianthe), says Hogg 'did not appear to afford him any gratification or to create an interest. He never spoke of this child to me and to this hour I have never set eyes on her. In conclusion as further proof of Hogg's devotion to his friend and his urgent desire to present him in the brightest colours to posterity, let us recall his two summaries of his character. He was a climber, a creeper an elegant beautiful, odouriferous parasitical plant he could not support himself he must be tied up fast to something of a firmer texture [e.g. Hogg!'] harder and more rigid than his own pliant yielding structure to some person of a less flexible formation he always required a prop.' And the last high note of the valediction over his dear friend's body 'He was altogether incapable of rendering an account of any transaction whatsoever according to the strict and precise truth and the bare realities of actual life.'

Here is lively writing in which Hogg proves himself beyond question a considerable author. Under the guise of praising his matchless friend he brilliantly contrives by a hundred little touches to paint a picture of reckless instability dangerous weakness an impractical nature bordering on (and sometimes actually declining into) imbecility and above all a shiftless inattention to the feelings of others amounting to unexampled callousness. It would be difficult to accept this picture even if we had nothing but the evidence of the poems themselves

to set against it. But fortunately we need not rest on the evidence of the poems alone. We have not merely the conflicting statements of Peacock and Trelawny, the first of whom at least, because of character and attainments, is infinitely more to be trusted. We have internal evidence of two kinds. We have first a species of quiet megalomania which the author of *Memoirs of Prince Alexy Haimatoff* increasingly exhibits. Particularly in volume two, where Hogg's achievements and opinions are constantly and favourably contrasted with Shelley's, is there confirmation of the view that Hogg set out to readjust the immortal balance between himself and the poet.

In the second place we have the fact that Hogg deliberately tampered with his material. Professor Dowden, who carefully compared the original of many letters with their form as printed, indicates that Hogg unscrupulously altered them, whenever he chose, to his own advantage or to suit his purpose. This offence is so heinous in a biographer as of itself to destroy his credibility. It is clear that a sense of what was owed to his own splendid quality was in part the explanation of Hogg's attack upon his friend. But something more is required to explain it, and that something more, it is suggested, is his treachery to Shelley in a vital matter—a treachery, the memory of which did not fade but increasingly poisoned the biographer's mind.

The sore point in Hogg's relations with Shelley, the point which led to a temporary rupture and later to a transformation of their basis, was Hogg's alleged attempt to seduce Harriet at York, where Shelley had left her in Hogg's charge during a visit to London. We have here to weigh the comparative credibility of witnesses. Hogg's view of Shelley on this point has already been given. Now hear what Shelley thought of Hogg as recorded by the latter. Hogg, according to his version, had been teasing Shelley, ending up his gentle raillery (as he represents it to have been) with the words, 'let us dispute together for an hour or two, and each will confirm himself in his errors, and greatly strengthen them'. To which Shelley is reported as replying, 'Your mind is not fitted for the reception of truth', to which Hogg cheerfully adds, 'and perhaps it was not'. No doubt Shelley spoke in anger, but there is many a true word spoken in wrath. A liar does not always lie, and it is necessary to admit on Peacock's authority that Shelley was subject to curious

delusions. Was he imagining that Hogg had molested Harriet?

The answer appears to be that he was not. Shelley is most explicit in a letter written to Elizabeth Hitchener. He records his conversation with Harriet and his subsequent talk with Hogg. There is further the precipitous departure of the Shelleys from York to Keswick. Hogg, on his side, does not overtly deny the facts; he merely ignores them. He mentions the sudden departure to Keswick in these terms: 'Nothing would please but an immediate journey to Keswick, and our flight must be in the winter. *I was requested, strongly urged, to join in it*'.¹

Hogg, therefore, by implication denies that his solicitation of Harriet was the cause, and represents the flight as only one more instance of the divine poet's habitual restlessness. But, even if on other grounds we hesitated to believe Shelley, Hogg himself provides us with strong corroborative proof. This is supplied by the unremitting sneer to which poor Harriet and her sister Eliza are treated. As his invariable phrase for Shelley is 'the divine poet', so his word for the tragic and beautiful young creature whom Shelley married in her seventeenth year is always 'the good Harriet'. Almost his first mention of her is slighting to her character: 'When a young man finds a young woman² discontented with her school, or convent, and with her own family and friends, without much reason, a pretty face and soft manners too often make him forget that she is very probably a girl of a discontented disposition, and is likely to be dissatisfied wherever she may afterwards be placed'. In the next place Hogg, anticipating the poor girl's eventual suicide, seeks to muddy the waters for her thus: 'Early in our acquaintance the good Harriet asked me, "What do you think of suicide?" She often discoursed of her purpose of killing herself some day or other, and at great length, in a calm, resolute manner. . . . The poor girl's monomania of self-destruction, which we looked upon as a vain fancy . . . amused us occasionally for some years; eventually it proved a sad reality, and drew forth many bitter tears'. We have finally in this amiable portrait of two sisters this account of the arrival of Eliza in the Shelley household. 'Bysshe became nothing: I, of course, very much less than nothing—a negative quantity of a very high figure.

¹ The italics are mine.

² This "young woman" was sixteen years of age!

Harriet still existed, it was true: but her existence was to be in future a seraphic life, a beatific vision to be passed exclusively in the assiduous contemplation of Eliza's perfections.' This plain statement is illuminated with a brilliant touch of comedy by reference to Eliza's insistence on poor Harriet's nerves, on account of which all activities agreeable to Hogg (and Shelley?) were forbidden with the farcical burden, 'Gracious heaven! What would Miss Warne say?' (Miss Warne, it is explained by Hogg, that mirror of perfection, stood in the same relation to some coffee-house or hotel in London as the lovely Eliza.¹)

All this indicates spite carried to a very tolerable pitch. To convince ourselves, however, that something more than the poison natural to Hogg's nature was its sole cause we may consider his reference to Harriet's pregnancy. He comments with broad insolence on her appearance during that period. He then proceeds to state that he was particularly invited to be present at a consultation between her and Dr. S. her physician. It is true that the consultation, Hogg states, was in a vein of high musical comedy. He implies, however, that to have permitted, nay, to have sought, his presence at such a time argues a quite extravagant lack of ordinary decency.

By the normal laws of psychology we are entitled to conclude that the man of sixty-three, gloating upon his past, decided that he would allow himself the satisfaction of permanently defaming the unhappy girl, who had refused his advances. If this be true then Hogg had in wounded vanity and an ancient sense of guilt the best reasons in the world for attacking not only Harriet but Shelley. For, if Shelley's account of the affair be true, the poet behaved with an almost miraculous nobility. He not only forgave Hogg for having been grossly untrue to the

¹ The lovely Eliza is the Homeric constant for Elizabeth Westbrook. As explanation of the use of the epithet 'the lovely', note Hogg's account of her appearance as he observed it. 'She was older than I had expected, and she looked much older than she was. The lovely face was seamed with the smallpox, and of a dead white, as faces so much marked and scarred commonly are; as white, indeed, as a mass of boiled rice, but of a dingy hue, like rice boiled in dirty water. The eyes were dark, but dull, and without meaning; the hair was black and glossy, but coarse; and there was the admired crop—a long crop, much like the tail of a horse—a switch tail. The fine figure was meagre, prim, and constrained. The beauty, the grace, and the elegance existed, no doubt, in their utmost perfection, but only in the imagination of her partial young sister. Her father, as Harriet told me, was familiarly called "Jew Westbrook", and Eliza greatly resembled one of the dark-eyed daughters of Judah.'

principles of their youth. After a short rupture he readmitted him, not only to an intimacy, but to an intimacy, if less than the old, still close. And from the date of the letter to Miss Hitchener to his death we hear no further reference from Shelley to the affair. Well might Hogg—the galled jade—wince!

Before, however, we can dismiss Hogg's account of Shelley as wholly biased, we must consider how it could have come about that he deliberately involved himself in Shelley's expulsion from University College. Here there is no conflict of evidence. Shelley had prepared and posted to many leading members of the University and others a pamphlet of an alleged atheistical character. On this being discovered, he was summoned to the presence of the college authorities and there and then sent down. Hogg thereupon rushed to the head of the college, eagerly remonstrated, took an ample share of the blame, if any, and shared Shelley's fate! This was more than meritorious in the young Hogg: it was even noble. But the attitude of the old Hogg is such as almost to ruin it by posthumous self-satisfaction. 'The atrocious injustice and its cruel consequences', he states, 'roused the indignation and moved the compassion of a friend who then stood by Shelley. He has given the following account of his interference.' Thereupon follows an account of a brilliant intervention, the courage of which was only exceeded by the phenomenal way in which the young advocate refuted, and reduced the shamed pedagogues to silence. After this handsome tribute to 'the friend who stood by Shelley' there follows a later discussion of whether those are justified who urge that 'In strict justice, unless honourable amends be forthwith made, the Vice-Chancellor and proctors of the university and the Master of University College ought to be scourged openly and severely throughout the whole length of High Street'. This rodomontade sufficiently proves how incapable the old Hogg had become either of understanding, or even of remembering, the young man who had in him the seed of nobility. Hogg in fact has indecently interred his own bright beginnings.

We may therefore, assured that Hogg's deliberate testimony is unreliable, proceed to examine briefly his unconscious destruction of his own attack. Let us in any case remember that Hogg himself quotes the following note by Shelley attached to a fragmentary 'Essay on Friendship' found among his papers:

'I once had a friend, whom an inextricable multitude of circumstances has forced me to treat with apparent neglect. To him I dedicate this essay. If he finds my own words condemn me, will he not forgive?' Hogg accepts this dedication as to his address, and at the outset of a book likely, if not intended, to make Shelley a great comic figure, observes with quiet magnanimity: 'Yes, he [i.e. Hogg] has forgiven you'. We may not perhaps find ourselves able to extend a similar magnanimity to Hogg.

Hogg constantly indicates, both by innuendo and by overt statement, that Shelley in the matter of his studies was as wilful as he was haphazard. He mentions his active, even violent, interest in science principally as a means of leading up to certain farcical conclusions, as that his hands, his clothes, his books and his furniture were stained and corroded by mineral acids, or that 'more than one hole in the carpet would elucidate the ultimate phenomenon of combustion'. This is no doubt funny, but it is a commonplace that all new knowledge is the subject of derision by vulgar minds which seek to discredit it by ridicule. Let us quote from Hogg Shelley's own reason for his clumsy experiments. 'It is surely far better', he cried to Hogg, 'to investigate things themselves—through the physical sciences and especially through chemistry.' Listen then to the further development of the theme, in words which appear to be a remote and faint anticipation by genius of some of the considered conclusions of Professor Julian Huxley. 'What is the cause of the remarkable fertility of some lands and of the hopeless sterility of others? The real difference is probably very slight: by chemical agency the philosopher may work a total change, and may transmute an unfruitful region into a land of exuberant plenty. . . . The arid deserts of Africa may then be refreshed by a copious supply, and may be transformed at once into rich meadows and vast fields of maize and rice.' And again: 'What a mighty instrument would electricity be in the hands of him who knew how to wield it, in what manner to direct its omnipotent energies; and we may command an indefinite quantity of the fluid: by means of electrical kites we may draw down the lightning from heaven'. And finally: 'The art of navigating the air is in its first and most helpless infancy: the aerial mariner still swims on bladders, and has not mounted even the rude raft'. These ideas were enunciated by a boy of eighteen in 1810 to a fellow-student who could find nothing but

a subject for smoking-room humour in the portent. There is no reason to conclude from Shelley's utterance that he had in fact any genuine scientific bent. What, however, we are entitled to conclude is that the poet, branded by foolish women as an elf, with their concurrence by M. Maurois as Ariel, and even by the great Matthew Arnold as 'a beautiful ineffectual angel', had a profound and natural sense of reality, denied to most of his contemporaries. It was that vivid sense of fact which gave him the power to fly so high because, like his own skylark, he knew the secret of the earth. He could unbind Prometheus, because he knew the rock to which Hell had tied him.

Here then is the first of Hogg's unconscious testimonies to the justice of his constantly repeated phrase, 'the divine poet'. Let us next consider Shelley's early interest in metaphysics which led Mary Shelley to claim (extravagantly) in her Preface to his prose works that 'had not Shelley deserted metaphysics for poetry in his youth he would have presented the world with a complete theory of mind, a theory to which Berkeley, Coleridge, and Kant, would have contributed' but more simple, unimpregnable and entire than the systems of those writers'. Shelley at Oxford concentrated, with his unerring instinct for the fundamental, on Hume, who may confidently be ranked as the first of British metaphysicians. It was, indeed, his enthusiasm for our great epistemologist which led to the production of the pamphlet—based on Hume—which caused his expulsion. Hogg speculates on the curious circumstance that a sceptical system should have appealed to the fervid genius of a poet. He suggests various reasons all equally discreditable to Hogg's understanding both of the poet and philosophy. He suggests that it provided Shelley with admirable material for the disputation that he loved. He protests that the acceptance of scepticism is natural to youth—the least sceptical period of life! For says Hogg, 'the philosopher who declares that he knows nothing and that nothing can be known, will readily find followers among the young, for they are sensible that they possess the requisite qualification for entering his school, and are as far advanced in the science of ignorance as their master'.

Hogg assures us that he had studied Hume with Shelley, and that he was part-author of the notorious pamphlet. This assertion is not necessarily proof that he had in fact

never opened Hume. The explanation may merely be that he had either not understood a word of the philosopher or that after the lapse of more than forty years he had forgotten what little he understood. For the truth about Hume is that he is a sceptic, not who professes or encourages ignorance, but who on the contrary presses knowledge to the limit of thought. In the region of pure thought Hume had achieved what Shelley predicted must be done in the realm of applied thought. He had gone behind the effects to the causes. Shelley was a man of first causes, and in Hume his eager spirit found a master. By confessing his allegiance, he proved again his own relentless intellectual realism. Here again, therefore, Hogg plays the peculiarly appropriate part of Balaam's ass, and points to Shelley as the angel in the path.

So much for Hogg's unconscious testimony to the intellectual hardness and integrity of the great poet whom even Peacock could not resist caricaturing as Scythrop in *Nightmare Abbey*. We may proceed to the character which emerges if the evidence is judiciously weighed. Hogg seeks to give the impression that Shelley was hopelessly at the mercy of the enthusiasm of the moment, that he was devoid of natural feelings as a father, that he was wretchedly uncivil in society, that he was as unstable in his relations with women as in ideas, and finally, that he was an inveterate liar.

On the first count against Shelley let us consider what Hogg himself records of Shelley's first crusade to Ireland and his relations with Godwin. Hogg suggests that Shelley may have been led to contemplate the Irish scheme by a chance meeting with 'some Hibernian Hampden brimful of sympathy for his persecuted country, and of aversion for his persecuting creditors'. He goes on to say that Shelley did not consult him, and that he can only understand this 'Irish dream, the vision of want of judgment' from his correspondence with Godwin, whom Hogg (with the jealousy which is one of his distinguishing traits) refers to as 'his newly acquired friend'. Yet in the first sentence that he quotes he explains to all men of goodwill the real reason that took the poet to Ireland. 'We go', writes Shelley, 'principally to forward as much as we [viz. Harriet, Eliza, and himself] can the Catholic Emancipation.'

In a less hardened cynic that sentence alone would have inspired, if not respect for so simple an avowal, at least noble pity. Ireland's history to the poet has some of the

dark magic of the Holy Land. Dreamer after dreamer has launched his crusade of passion, hope, and salvation, only to be driven back by the pagan facts of history. Shelley's crusade—at the age of nineteen (for it was in January 1812 that he sailed)—is in its brief tragedy most like of all the crusades to that most pitiful incident of medieval history, the Children's Crusade. Shelley, Harriet, and Eliza were to plunge into the desperate thickets of the Irish imbroglio, and with their young and innocent hands achieve what all the mail armour of the panoplied heroes had failed to attain. We may feel compassion for so divinely simple an adventure. We need not conclude that to have attempted it convicts Shelley of reckless emotionalism. Again and again Hogg quotes letters from Shelley in which he asserts that intolerance is the greatest evil besetting the world. It was his passionate resentment of intolerance in domestic affairs that had led to the marriage with Harriet. It was his hatred of the intolerance restricting the freedom of thought that had led to the publication of the pamphlet on *The Necessity of Atheism*. It was in fact, as Hogg testifies, the governing principle of his character. It was not only natural, but inevitable that if once his attention were called to the miseries of Ireland, he would fly to her rescue. It is to be noticed of Shelley that he was one of the very few men who have ever consistently practised what they preached. He would not, like Byron, have hesitated and bargained for months before embarking for Greece. His contempt for Wordsworth's character was inspired by the older poet's change from Liberalism to a settled Toryism. Ireland was distraught and oppressed. He, Harriet, and Eliza would sail out to set her free.

He was nineteen and he was a poet in life as in writings. It was not to be expected that he could act with the wisdom and weight of all those elderly Englishmen who have with such striking success directed Irish affairs. He went to Dublin, wrote pamphlets, sold them for fivepence or threw them from the balcony on the heads of passers-by, made an hour's speech at a great public meeting, met Curran (whom he actively disliked), corresponded with Godwin, and returned after a few weeks in which he had accomplished nothing. Must we therefore, like Hogg, treat the whole adventure as a childish escapade, and at best gloss it over with a benevolent sneer? The plain fact is that the Irish crusade is the key to Shelley's character. Whenever injustice, or what he conceived as

injustice existed, throughout his life he fought it without pausing to reflect on his chance of success or of the consequences to himself. We have in this single action an exposition of his life and of one side of his character. Just as behind his radiant imagination there was a stern intellectual background, so behind all his fantasies and apparent whimsies was the single unswerving purpose of the man of action. Shelley was never content to be: he must always do.

This consistency, so opposed to Hogg's conception, is further illustrated by what the biographer records of the poet's relations with Godwin. The young man had read Godwin's *Political Justice*. Like many admirers of greatness, before and after him, he wrote at the beginning of January 1812 to the object of his veneration, saying, 'The name of Godwin has been used to excite in me feelings of reverence and admiration'. But Shelley was not content merely to express his admiration; he was determined to give tangible proof of it. The correspondence here begun was actively pursued. In subsequent letters he told Godwin the story of his life and explained his aims. From Ireland he discussed his plans for the Catholic Emancipation with the sage, and respectfully listened to the rather pompous advice that emanated from Skinner Street. On his return from Ireland to Wales, he besought his venerated friend to steal 'one summer from the cold hurry of business' and come as his guest to Nant-Gwilt, Rhayader. This hope was not destined to be fulfilled, nor was Shelley more fortunate in securing Godwin's companionship at Lynmouth, whither he removed from Wales. In spite of the untoward incident of Godwin's fruitless journey to Lynmouth the friendship of the disciple and master was not interrupted. In October 1812, on the return of the Shelleys to London, a personal acquaintance began, which rapidly resolved itself into a diurnal intimacy. Shelley had been determined to enjoy the conversation and friendship of what he regarded as the greatest mind for freedom in his age. From the day of his first letter to the day of his death he never went back upon his first great impulse. As Peacock shows, Shelley was incredibly generous to Godwin, once raising as much as £3,000 to help him out of his perennial money troubles. When Shelley eloped with Mary Godwin, Godwin cast him off, though he continued to accept, and even demand, money. Shelley was saddened by Godwin's inability to see the rightness of his union with Mary. But, true to his spiritual consistency, he continued to

help her father with money when he himself was cruelly embarrassed. He had accepted Godwin first as a master, then as a spiritual obligation. The hopeless visionary, the feckless changeling of Hogg's narrative never swerved from what he believed to be his duty and his privilege.

Hogg has indicated that the birth of Ianthe was of no particular interest to Shelley, and indeed that the poet never mentioned the child. It helps us to assess the value of his general standpoint when we find the following sentence: 'In Shelley the parental affections were developed at an early period to an unusual extent: it was manifest, therefore, that his heart was formed by nature and by cultivation to derive the most exquisite gratification from the society of his own progeny, or the most poignant anguish from a natural and unnatural bereavement'. Clearly one expression of opinion from Hogg has exactly the same value as another, and the second opinion might, were it not for certain other evidence, make us seriously doubt whether the first were not true. That, however, Hogg blundered into veracity in the second, is proved partly by the biographer himself, and partly by Peacock. Hogg gives numerous instances of Shelley's almost inordinate kindness to children. There is the instance of the little girl that he found wandering and fed with warm milk. There is the incident of his befriending of the two gipsy children. There is also the ridiculously presented encounter with the babe in arms. Hogg knew further of Shelley's desperate attempt to regain the custody of the children after Harriet's death. He must also have known that his failure was one of the major sorrows of his life. The assertion was, therefore, merely a further instance of that irresponsibility and gratuitous malice everywhere notable in his page. If further refutation of the calumny, beyond what Hogg himself supplies, were required, we have Peacock. That shrewd and impartial witness, speaking from personal knowledge, avers that Shelley was extremely fond of his first child. He 'would walk up and down a room with it in his arms for a long time together, singing to it in a monotonous melody of his own making, which ran on the repetition of a word of his own making. . . . He was pre-eminently an affectionate father'. Nor was this view of Peacock's grounded only on the emotions of Shelley's early youth. He must also have had in mind the short letter of 8 June 1819, in which Shelley communicated the death of William, Mary's son: 'It is a great

exertion to me to write this, and it seems to me as if, hunted by calamity as I have been, that I should never recover any cheerfulness again'.

We have next the allegation that Shelley was negligent, rude, and intolerable in general society. In support of this further calumny Hogg produces the unlucky misadventures of his own visit to Dublin and Godwin's to Lynmouth, of Shelley's rudeness to the ducal French *émigré*, and of his constant failure to appear when Hogg put admirable acquaintances in his way. It is in any case not necessarily a defect in a poet to prefer the solitude of his own thought to the idle chatter of society. But in so far as natural and reasonable intercourse is concerned, Hogg once again destroys his own assertion. He quotes Lord Byron as having said, 'Never did a more perfect gentleman than Shelley step across a drawing-room', and he goes on to observe, with habitual condescension, 'I have also seen him, although rarely, stepping across a drawing-room', and then his deportment, as Lord Byron testifies, was unexceptionable!¹ Hogg has, however, something more significant to contribute than a compliment to Shelley's accomplishment as Turveydrop. He displays the poet as showing to Godwin an unfailing and beautiful courtesy. He recounts (often with a certain asperity) the numerous acquaintanceships that Shelley acquired and maintained. He mentions, for example, with a sneer the way in which Shelley opened out the relation with Leigh Hunt that was to terminate in Italy. He indicates angrily the circle of Madame Boinville, which Shelley frequented. (Here his carping at the 'sentimental young butchers, an eminently philosophical tinker, etc.', has the more moderately phrased support of Peacock.) He mentions the Newtons only to ridicule them (falsely it appears) as apostles of nudism. In short, he indicates that Shelley had for his years a tolerably extensive acquaintance of people of his own kind, while he was not prepared to squander his time and his genius in tea-parties and routs. This latter trait (perhaps not wholly a discreditable one) is mentioned by Trelawny, who recounts Shelley's comic alarm at a party that Mary projected in Italy. Trelawny's picture of his first glimpse of Shelley provides the complete refutation of this further

¹ 'I have seen Shelley and Byron in society, and the contrast was as marked as their characters. The former, not thinking of himself, was as much at ease as in his own home, omitting no occasion of obliging those whom he came in contact with, readily conversing with all or any who addressed him, irrespective of age or rank, dress or address.'—TRELAWNY.

attack by Hogg. 'I was rather put out by observing in the passage near the open door . . . a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on mine. . . . With the acuteness of a woman, Mrs. Williams's eyes followed the direction of mine. . . . "Come in, Shelley, it's only our friend Tre just arrived." Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall thin stripling held out both his hands; and although I could hardly believe as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face, that it could be the poet, I returned his warm pressure.' Shelley was silent for a little while and then, under encouragement, launched upon a brilliant analysis of Calderon. Presently the conversation lapsed and Trelawny looked up. 'Where is he?' 'Who? Shelley? Oh, he comes and goes like a spirit, no one knows when or where.' So it was in all his social affairs. He came like a spirit, shone and enchanted those fit for his magic, and almost without a sound withdrew into his dream. Hogg, if he had had the power to understand, would have seen him so from the beginning. The world, instructed by his poetry, and, by such as Peacock and Trelawny, can and should see him so now and always.

We come now to the most serious injury that Hogg sought to inflict upon Shelley's reputation. The history of his married life has vexed and troubled genuine students of literature, while it has afforded much occupation to the prongs of the professional scavengers. Not content to accept Shelley at the valuation set upon him by his poetry and his letters, the muck-rakers have been as venomously active in Shelley's secret history as in that of Byron. Did Shelley and Harriet part by agreement or against Harriet's will? Had Shelley grown cold, or was Harriet unfaithful? Was Shelley directly responsible for Harriet's suicide? Or if not, was he unaffected by it? What were Shelley's relations with Madame Boinville, Eliza Hitchener, Emilia, and even Claire? Was he, in short, hopelessly irregular in matters of sex, or was he habitually maligned by interested (and sometimes by disinterested) gossips and scribblers?

To some the whole matter would appear as of importance only to the prurient. The few and pathetic facts might have been left to speak for themselves. Shelley's character, of which we have now seen something, is the first and the most important fact. In the next place it is known that Shelley, a boy of nineteen, married Harriet, a girl of sixteen, in a fine frenzy of pity, a somnambulist St. George rescuing a self-created

Andromeda from a probably non-existent dragon. Life, therefore, was extremely arduous for the two children who, by their union, had become one child, if anything more defenceless and vulnerable than in its divided state. There were money troubles, constant difficulties with parents, the distractions created by Eliza, Hogg, and Elizabeth Hitchener. Both were undeveloped and rapidly developing. Disaster was almost inevitable. It came, and Shelley fled with Mary, endeared to him by her parentage, by her temperamental affinity, and, above all, by the romantic circumstance that she loved him. He fled with her and deserted Harriet. The action can be explained, but it cannot be explained away. Shelley had made a mistake, the consequences of which fell primarily upon Harriet. We could have wished that he might have found it in his heart to acknowledge it. But nothing is gained by blackening either his character or Harriet's. Her death should have silenced her traducers; it should never have been used (and God knows, she would never have wished it to be used) to vilify Shelley, who had to live and bear that burden in his soul.¹

Hogg's attitude is the primary cause, apart from the natural human interest in the scandalous, why Shelley's private affairs have thus been vivisected. He deliberately (as the argument that follows proves) created the impression that Shelley was a reckless and light-headed amorist. It is not surprising that those who have permitted themselves to be coloured by Hogg's man-of-the-half-world flippancy should have been inclined both to exaggerate and misunderstand the importance of his love-affairs in the poet's life. It is for that reason, and no other, that it is worth while to examine and to destroy the impression that Hogg created.

In the preface to the biography Hogg digs his reader in the ribs, and in the best tradition of the saloon-bar writes: 'Shelley was most conspicuously great in that particular excellence which, in all ages and in all nations, has been invariably the characteristic distinction of the greatest of mankind—he was pre-eminently a lady's man'. Here, as they say in music, the theme is given out, and, again as in music, is embroidered and developed with recurrent variations. In volume two of the *Memoirs*, writing of Shelley in London after his marriage,

¹ As to the proof that he did remember her, and poignantly, see the passage in Peacock where Shelley, excusing himself for his odd conduct in Bisham Wood, observed next day to his friend: 'I will tell you what I would not tell any one else. I was thinking of Harriet'.

he says: 'he was cherished as the apple of beauty's eye: he was often called by names of endearment, as Ariel, Oberon, and spoken of by ladies of his acquaintance as the Elfin King, the King of Faëry, and under other affectionate titles'. Hogg then indicates that Shelley's magnetism was such that he used to keep his adoring circle of young women out of their beds to all hours. With a sly air he insists that nothing could exceed the innocence of these reunions—even on the occasions when his audience was limited to one fair nymph. He makes it plain, however, that this Orsino (for as such on occasion he depicts him) was only too ready to be the plaything of any woman cunning enough to flatter him, and well-looking enough to drive the flattery home. As against this persiflage let us set first the evidence of Shelley's letters, which, since they were printed and frequently altered by Hogg, it is reasonable to suppose were read by him. During the summer of 1811, which terminated with the marriage of Shelley and Harriet, the poet wrote constantly and from his heart on the subject of marriage. He approached the matter with that astounding earnestness and singleness of mind which would sometimes be ridiculous, if it were not, by reason of what Fate proposed, pathetic. Shelley writes eagerly and warmly of Harriet's difficulties. He discusses her character frankly. He expresses amusement at the suggestion that he loves her. It is gradually borne in on him (as was later to be the case in respect of Catholic Emancipation) that it is his duty to rescue her. He discusses at length, and with boyish solemnity, the arguments for and against marriage. Against it, he urges its abominable association with the persecuting forms of religion, but in its favour is the unhappy situation of a virtuous woman become the prey of slanderous tongues. Finally, in his letter of 15 August, he cries in a burst of typical simplicity and honesty: 'I am become a perfect convert to matrimony. . . . The one argument, which you have urged so often with so much energy; the sacrifice made by the woman so disproportioned to any which the man can give'. The next letter (undated) briefly shows how, as always, Shelley eagerly translated theory into practice. 'Direct to the Edinburgh Post Office—my own name. I passed to-night with the mail. Harriet is with me.'

It will be observed that Hogg was not only party to all Shelley's plans, doubts, and dreams, but that he had frequently urged upon Shelley the propriety, indeed the necessity, of

marriage. He had the best of reasons, therefore, for knowing that to this, as to all other action, Shelley brought an intensity of principle, unusual at any time of life and in any age. Hogg knew, if he knew anything of Shelley, that his marriage was one of his crusades. He might well (if he had understood Shelley or wished to make others understand him) have let him slip upon our view with that shy soft grace which later led Byron to call him, 'The Snake'.¹ He need not for his own literary pleasure have dressed him up as a 'masher', and sent him down the ages, rolling a monocle and sucking the head of a stick as he sidles on to the music-hall stage.

If Hogg had spared us this further indecency it would not have been necessary to pray Peacock and Mary Shelley in aid to help us to understand the truth about Shelley in this particular. Peacock tells a straightforward tale in a straightforward way, all the more convincing for its modesty of statement and for the plain love that inspires its impartial course. Harriet, says Peacock, was beautiful, pleasant-spoken, frank, cheerful, 'and she was fond of her husband and accommodated herself in every way to his tastes. If they mixed in society she adorned it; if they lived in retirement, she was satisfied; if they travelled, she enjoyed the change of scene.' Believing Harriet to have been such a woman, Peacock stoutly denies that there was a growing estrangement during the years of her marriage, or that she was in word or deed unfaithful. The plain and tragic truth is that Shelley simply and decisively fell in love with Mary Godwin, who, in Peacock's view, was intellectually better suited to Shelley. He refers to the extreme mental disorder from which the poet suffered and quotes him as saying, 'Every one who knows me must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy. Harriet is a noble animal, but she can do neither.' That is not pleasant reading, though a pang of pity does affect the impartial mind when one goes on to read the reply of the bewildered and unhappy poet to Peacock's next question, 'It always appeared to me that you were very fond of her': 'But you did not know how I hated her sister.'

Here, if anywhere in the life of the poet, is an occasion for sorrow in heaven—the poet of light, the ardent idealist confronted with a choice that accorded neither with the source of light nor with his ideals—and all Shelley could find to

¹ *Vide Trelawny ad loc.*

urge in defence was his hatred of poor Eliza. The importance of this incident for our immediate purpose is to show that Peacock spared nothing, and tempered nothing. Without fuss or partisanship he sets down the truth for all to see. We may, therefore, fairly assume that if he had seen a trace of libertinism in Shelley he would have felt bound to record it. He did not. On the contrary, with grave courtesy he mentions Mme. Boinville and her attractive daughter Cornelia. He never even hints at what the leering nineties called a flirtation, and what we more simply call an affair. Shelley broke his marriage because his new love was too great for him. But he broke it in agony, and not with the insufferable airs of a *jeune premier* accepting the bouquets of an hysterical posterity.

This view of his character is entirely supported by Mary (quoted by Lady Shelley), as saying of the breach with Harriet: 'errors of action committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley may be fearlessly avowed . . . in the firm conviction that were they judged impartially his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than any of his contemporaries'. Mary in this regard is, no doubt, a tainted witness, and allowance must in any case be made for her inability ever to say a simple thing simply. But the fact that she takes this stand of itself silences the malicious rumours about Emilia and poor Claire Clairmont's daughter which Hogg's libels helped to ingeminate. Shelley, as his conduct with Elizabeth Hitchener proves, was one of those rare men who could love a woman's mind without desiring her body. Few of his biographers and none of his traducers have been so dowered. With the result that, aided by Hogg's distortion, they are content to interpret Shelley's spirit in the light of their own flesh. He gave them hostages by the tragedy of his marriage, and by his broken-hearted terror on hearing the news of poor Harriet's suicide. But everything—the letters that Hogg prints, Peacock's testimony, Mary's, Trelawny's, and even Byron's proves conclusively that Shelley, so far from being a philanderer, was the least sensual man who ever breathed. He was a portion of the loveliness, which once he made more lovely. It was not strange that many men and women loved love in him, but he, being love, passed on in his own flame.

We come last to the allegation of Shelley's persistent untruthfulness. Here, because of certain incidents recorded by Peacock, we are on more difficult ground. We may,

however, begin by quoting Hogg's own specific refutation of his statement that Shelley could not distinguish truth from falsehood. He himself makes the two following declarations: 'In no individual perhaps was the moral sense more completely developed than in Shelley: in no being was the perception of right and wrong more acute'. In the second place he observes: 'As . . . the vigour of genius [was] almost celestial, so were the purity and sanctity of his life most conspicuous'. These convictions do not prevent Hogg from roundly calling Shelley a liar (though, of course, not by that name), and gleefully pointing to alleged distortions of the truth on numerous occasions, as, for example, in his early letters to Godwin.

There is a genuine puzzle here, though its solution is not of first-rate importance. It is likely that persons of intense imagination, like children and poets, may confuse their imagination with facts, and yet in the daily routine of life be scrupulously truthful. If, therefore, we are driven to admit that Shelley suffered from this confusion, it will not compel us to alter our general view of his character. Our principal perplexity in deciding is occasioned by the nature of our witnesses. Hogg was accused by Shelley of having a mind totally unreceptive to the truth, and his work amply supports that allegation. Again, others of our witnesses, such as Medwin, are frequently guilty of gross inaccuracy, while of Trelawny it was said by Byron that he 'couldn't tell the truth to save his life'. The fact is that all Shelley's world lived so violently in the imagination that facts did become blurred. They were, after all, a society of poets and men of letters, and they could hardly be expected to attain the scrupulous accuracy of a bookkeeper. We may, therefore, allow, without much misgiving, the count against Shelley that he sometimes confused dream and reality. We have, however, seen enough of him to assert that this confusion never clouded his moral sense. Whether it was in his support of the starving lacemakers at Marlowe, or his continued financial assistance to Godwin, or his kindness to children, or his championship of noble causes, Shelley proved a thousand times over that he knew and ensued the truth. There is, however, a real question whether he was not at times subject to illusions which dangerously resembled delusions. Peacock (whose veracity is never impugned) relates at length, and with real bewilderment, the curious story of the alleged visit of Williams of Tremadoc to

Bishopgate. Though Shelley cried — when Peacock gently hinted that he was mistaken: 'It is very hard on a man who has devoted his life to the pursuit of truth, who has made great sacrifices and incurred great sufferings for it, to be treated as a visionary', it appears almost undeniable that on this occasion he was suffering from some mental disturbance. Nor, as we have indicated above, was this the only instance. But what we can maintain with certainty is that these delusions were sporadic, occurred at long intervals, in no way suggested even a trace of insanity, and, above all, in no way affected his poetry. In short, they are a matter rather of medical than of general interest. Whatever brainstorms might from time to time have disturbed him, Shelley could and did reason more closely than almost any poet of them all. He held resolutely to the path of his ideal, and in all the relations of life if he was sometimes surprising as a man, it was because his Maker had painted him, in Browning's phrase, with only so much body as showed soul.

HUMBERT WOLFE.

London, 1933.

The following is a list of Shelley's works:

Zastrozzi: a Romance, 1810 (some chapters were said to have been written by his cousin, Harriet Grove); Original Poetry: by Victor and Cazire, 1810 (his colleague is conjectured to have been this same cousin); Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson, being Poems found amongst the papers of that noted female who attempted the life of the King in 1786, edited by John Fitzvictor, 1810 (written in collaboration with Hogg); St. Irvyne, or The Rosicrucian: a Romance, 1811; The Necessity of Atheism (which led to Shelley's leaving Oxford); An Address to the Irish People, 1812; Proposals for an Association (of Philanthropists, to accomplish the Regeneration of Ireland), 1812; Declaration of Rights, 1812; The Devil's Walk, 1812; A Letter to Lord Ellenborough (on the sentence passed on the publisher of the third part of Paine's 'Age of Reason'), 1812; Queen Mab: a Philosophical Poem, 1813; A Vindication of Natural Diet, 1813; A Refutation of Deism: in a Dialogue, 1814; Alastor; or, the Spirit of Solitude, 1816; A Proposal for putting Reform to the Vote throughout the Kingdom, by the Hermit of Marlow, 1817; An Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte, by the Hermit of Marlow, 1817; History of a Six Weeks' Tour, with letters, etc., 1817; Laon and Cythna (Revolt of Islam), 1818; Rosalind and Helen, with other poems, 1819; The Cenci, a Tragedy, 1819; Prometheus Unbound, with other poems, 1820; Œdipus Tyrannus, or Swellfoot the Tyrant, 1820; Epipsychidion, 1821; Adonais: an Elegy on the Death of John Keats, 1821; Hellas: a Lyrical Drama, 1822; Posthumous Poems, edited by Mary Shelley, 1824; Masque of Anarchy, 1832; The Shelley Papers, edited by Thomas Medwin, 1833; Essays and Letters from Abroad, edited by Mrs. Shelley, 1840; Relics of Shelley, edited by R. Garnett, 1862; Letters, edited by R. Ingpen (1909, 1911, and 1916).

The best edition of the Works of Shelley used to be that of H. Buxton

Forman (8 vols., 1876-80), but it has now been superseded by the *Julian* edition, edited by Roger Ingpen and W. E. Peck (10 vols., 1927-9), which contains the Letters and the Prose and Poetry of Shelley. There is also a Lexical Concordance of Shelley's Poetical Works by F. S. Ellis (1892).

Books other than those of Hogg, Trelawny, and Peacock which deal directly and indirectly with Shelley's life are:

Leigh Hunt's *Lord Byron and his Contemporaries*, 1828; Moore's *Life of Byron*, 1833; Thomas Medwin's *Shelley Papers* (1833) and *Life* (1847); Mrs. Shelley's notes to the edition of 1839; Browning's essay on Shelley, originally published as a Preface to the (spurious) *Letters of Shelley*, 1852, and reprinted by the Shelley Society in 1888; Lady Shelley's *Shelley Memorials* (1859); *Lives* by Middleton (1858), W. M. Rossetti (1870 and 1878), J. A. Symonds (1878), W. Sharp (1887), F. Thompson (1909); *The Real Shelley*, by J. C. Jeaffreson (1885); *Journal of E. Williams* (1902); *Shelley's View of Poetry*, by A. C. Bradley (1907); *La Jeunesse de Shelley*, by A. Koszul (1910); *Shelley in England*, new facts and letters from the Shelley-Whitton papers, edited by Roger Ingpen (1917); *Arnel, ou la vie de Shelley*, by André Maurois (1923), translated into English in 1924; *Shelley and Keats as they struck their Contemporaries*, by E. Blunden (1925); and the article in the *Cambridge History of English Literature* by C. H. Herford.

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THE LIFE OF
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

BY
THOMAS JEFFERSON HOGG

HOGG, THOMAS JEFFERSON (1792-1862)

Met Shelley while at University College, Oxford. Produced in collaboration with Shelley a collection of burlesque poetry, *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson, being Poems found amongst the papers of that noted female who attempted the life of the King in 1786*, edited by John Vizetactor (1811). Was sent down with Shelley for being connected with *The Necessity of Atheism* syllabus. Became estranged from Shelley because of his attitude to Harriet Shelley during Shelley's absence, but by 1813 was reconciled. In 1813 published a curious novel, *The Memoirs of Prince Alevy Harnatoff, translated from the original Latin MS under the immediate inspection of the Prince by John Brown, Esq*, which Shelley reviewed enthusiastically—though anonymously—in the *Critical Review* of December 1814. Called to the bar in 1817. Proposed to the widow of Edward Williams, who perished with Shelley, and was accepted on condition that he first undertook a journey round Europe. As a consequence of this journey he published in 1827 *Two Hundred and Nine Days, or the Journal of a Traveller on the Continent*. Contributed *Reminiscences of Shelley at Oxford* to the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1832. This article was thought well of, and in 1855 he began to write *The Life of Shelley* at the request of the poet's family. The first two volumes were published in 1858, but the family disapproved of the use made of the material by Hogg, and refused any further assistance. The project thereupon was abandoned.

TO
THE HON. JANE,
THE WIFE OF SIR PERCY FLORENCE SHELLEY, BART.,
THE LADY AT WHOSE REQUEST
THE DELICATE AND DIFFICULT TASK WAS UNDERTAKEN
OF GIVING A FULL AND AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT
OF A LIFE INNOCENT AND IMAGINATIVE,
EVEN OF THE LIFE OF HER INCOMPARABLE FATHER-IN-LAW
THE DIVINE POET,
THESE VOLUMES ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY HER FRIEND,
THE AUTHOR.

Come, I will sing you some low, sleepy tune,
Not cheerful, nor yet sad; some dull old thing,
Some outworn and unused monotony,
Such as our country gossips sing and spin,
Till they almost forget they live.—*The Cent.*

PREFACE

What are they, if they knew their calling high,
But crushed perfumes exhaling to the sky;
Or weeping clouds, that but awhile are seen,
Yet keep the earth, they haste to, bright and green!

'THIS is a motto befitting all the illustrious unhappy. But it, it too presumptuous an one for me to use, though it bears some affinity to the strange world I fabricate about me, and to the destiny I conceive to be marked out for me. By his works Shelley has raised himself to that well deserved height, that must make him the wonder and glory of future ages. But his private life would remain unknown, and many of his most excellent qualities sleep with his beloved ashes, if I did not fulfil the task of recording them. His life was in every way romantic, and to have been united to him, and to have been the partner of his fortunes for eight years, has imbued my thoughts and existence with romance; it is, indeed, only by help of this feeling, and the indulgence that I give to it, that I can in any way endure the prolongation of life marked out for me in the eternal decrees. Strip my situation of its adventitious colours, and what is it? Alas! in the drear visitings of cold reality, in moments of torpid despair, I but too truly feel what it is. I am one cut off in the prime of life from hope, enjoyment, and prosperity. The prospect was smiling, but I am in a desert; the rock on which I built my hopes has crumbled away; my bark of refuge is wrecked, while the universal flood from out of the opened windows of Heaven is emptying its tempests upon me. But I extricate myself from these ideas, and arranging myself in the majesty of the imagination, I give other, and, in very truth, truer names to the circumstances around me. I was the chosen mate of a celestial spirit. He has left me, and I am here to learn wisdom until I am fitted to join him in his native sky. I was the mother of lovely children; they are gone to attend him in his beautiful mansion; yet, in pity, they have left one behind them to adorn my loneliness. Methinks my calling is high; I am to justify his ways; I am to make him beloved to all posterity. My goal

is fixed. The prize waves in the air, and I am ready for the course. Who are the spectators? Sits umpire Love, and all the virtues attend him. There, Wisdom and Self-approbation sit enthroned, and the wise and good of all ages throng around. These are to be my future companions, and I must work hard to make myself worthy of so illustrious a company. Thus I would make my misery my crown; my solitude, my select society of worthies; my tears, the ambrosia conferring immortality; my eternal regrets, the nectar to inebriate me, until I arrive at the divine impulse, which is to inspire my tale. I am a priestess, dedicated to his glorification by my sufferings; the bride of the dead, my daily sacrifice is brought to his temple, and under the shadow of his memory I watch each sun to its decline.'

'I shall write his Life, and thus occupy myself in the only manner from which I can derive consolation. It will be a task that may bring some balm. What, though I weep? What, though each letter costs a tear? All is better than inaction—not forgetfulness—that never is, but an inactivity of remembrance. Well, I shall commence my task; commemorate the virtues of the only creature on earth worth loving or living for, and then, may be, I may join him; moonshine may be united to her planet, and wander no more, a sad reflection of all she loved on earth. And you, my own boy, I am about to begin a task which, if you live, will be an invaluable treasure in after-times. I must collect my materials; and then, in the commemoration of the divine virtues of your father, I shall fulfil the only act of pleasure there remains for me, and be ready to follow you, my child, if you should leave me, my task being accomplished.'

'One of Shelley's characteristics was, that although he had a passion for the reformation of mankind, and though he sacrificed both himself and his possessions to the general and individual view of this question, yet he was never a dupe; his penetration was wonderful; he read a man's character in his look, his gesture, his phraseology, and I never knew him mistaken. I would rely on his judgment of a character, as on omniscience, and most certainly was never deceived, when others might think that the ingratitude and treachery which he often encountered, might have disappointed him. It did not, for he expected it. He

acted from the fixed principle of endeavouring to benefit and improve each person with whom he had communion; and his chief method to achieve the latter was to make the person satisfied with himself. He was right: the constant benevolence of manner and action to which this system gave rise, and from which he never deviated, except on the most pressing necessity of self-defence; this amenity of manner awoke an enthusiasm of love, that of force amended and exalted his friends; and that mind must have been cold and depraved which did not experience this necessary result from his sensibility united to his urbanity.'

So far Mrs. Shelley has written, but not farther, except a few scraps, which have been inserted at the commencement of this work. The following letter will best explain the motives and the necessity of her silence, and will fully justify it:

41, PARK STREET, Dec. 11, 1838.

DEAR JEFFERSON,

J— has told you, I suppose, that I am about to publish an edition of Shelley's poems. She says you have not a 'Queen Mab'. Yet have you not? Did not Shelley give you one—one of the first printed? If you will lend it me, I shall be so very much obliged; and I will return it safely when the book is printed.

Will you lend me your 'Alastor' also? It will not go to the printer; I shall only correct the press from it.

Sir Timothy forbids Biography, under a threat of stopping the supplies. What could I do then? How could I live? And my poor boy! But I mean to write a few notes appertaining to the history of the Poems. If you have any of Shelley's letters mentioning his poetry and would communicate them, I should be glad, and thank you.

I am ever truly yours,

To T. J. H., Temple.

MARY W. S.

The Notes appeared, together with the *Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, not long after the date of this letter. They are exceedingly valuable, and have been read with interest and delight. Be silent, or starve! The prohibition is certainly hard: harder than all things; harder than all hard things; harder than all hard things put together, and hardened into one superlatively hard thing. The poor widowed dove was forbidden to lament her lost mate; the consolation of bewailing

and celebrating him was denied her on pain of death. The brother poets have told us, that Philomela was treated with barbarous cruelty, yet perpetual silence was not enjoined; and every returning summer we hear the nightingale reiterating anew her plaintive, love-lorn sorrows in woods and groves. But we must restrain our indignation. Let us be just. The author of the injunction did not know how severe it was. He never felt as an enthusiastic biographer feels; he never glowed with generous desire to vindicate aspersed, but unsullied, honour, to maintain the just claims of transcendent genius. So that a man had an abundant share of the creature comforts, or at least a competent maintenance, he had all that could be wished for; everything else was sentiment, illusion, affectation: such, no doubt, was his honest and intimate conviction. Thus, a certain would-be Junius—a person as incapable of writing the celebrated work which he laboured to father upon himself, as was the proud jackdaw of producing peacock's feathers—is reported to have said to his daughter, as she stood weeping by her mother's coffin: 'Come, come, screw her down, screw her down; let us have no snivelling here!' It might be unfair to assert that the fellow was a brute; he was, probably, only a man destitute of the ordinary feelings of humanity, who was really unable to comprehend how so trivial a matter as the death of a beloved parent could be the cause to a child of unaffected grief, of genuine, gushing tears. If the bereaved lady—illustrious in her parentage, illustrious in herself and in her works, and most illustrious through her union with the divine poet—had been permitted to complete the narrative which she had begun, she would have given to the world a precious volume, a book more golden than gold. During the eight years that she was the partner of his fortunes, her account of a life, in every way romantic, would have been inestimable. To esteem or to extol the genius and character of Shelley too highly is impossible; consequently, even her partiality and affection, however excessive, could never have offended against truth and verisimilitude. The earlier, and perhaps the more interesting, portion of a wild and wondrous tale could only have been told by her at second-hand from the relations of others. It was my good fortune to see much of Shelley—to know more of him, indeed, on the whole, than any one; and, therefore, I have constantly been pointed at as 'the person best qualified for such an undertaking'. A hasty, careless, and inaccurate compiler has transferred my proper office to another; my bishopric some

metropolitan versifier is to take, who for a long time preyed most perseveringly on Shelley's substance. If it were a question of assets, of faculties, of effects—the taking an account of plunder—an inventory of sums received, of moneys to be repaid, refunded, and disgorged—a mere calculation of the wind that had been raised—this indication of the person best qualified to be the biographer of a prince amongst poets would be judicious. His statements might be instructive and astonishing; he would effect much, but not quite all that is required. I corresponded regularly with Shelley, with greater or less frequency, according to circumstances, and I have preserved his numerous letters. Some persons, who affirm that they received whole volumes of epistles from him, declare that they have, unfortunately, lost them. I do not scruple to make public his remarkable communications; justice to his character and the interests of truth demand the publication. It is to be lamented, that of my letters to my friend scarcely one has been saved; because, having been written at the moment and on the spur of the occasion, they would have given a fresh and graphic representation of many events and actions, of which the recollection is now faint and imperfect. We often conversed together about the projected biography of my incomparable friend; but no definite arrangement was ever made with his family for giving a full and authentic account of his innocent and imaginative life. It was agreed, however, that, by way of commencement, I should relate, in some periodical, as much as I could remember of those happy days which we spent together at Oxford. With this view Mrs. Shelley introduced me to the estimable and accomplished editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, and procured for me the very great advantage of his acquaintance, from whom, on that occasion, and subsequently, I met with much politeness and real kindness. But to write articles in a magazine or a review, is to walk in leading-strings; to march in rank and file under the command of subaltern officers. However, I submitted to the requirement and restraints of bibliopolar discipline, and I contributed six or seven papers; being content to speak of my young fellow-collegian, not exactly as I would, but as I might. I never had the honour to be the editor of a magazine, or of any other periodical publication, and, therefore, I cannot pretend to be a judge of the feelings and responsibilities of a person in such a position. They seem, indeed, to be more serious and oppressive than those who have not felt the weight of empire would suppose; they can be duly appreciated by

Atlas alone, for he has actually borne whole constellations of stars and splendour upon his labouring shoulders. I struggled at first, and feebly, for full liberty of speech; for a larger licence of commendation and admiration; for entire freedom of the press without censorship. With what success I contended the following letter will show. It related to a matter of public concernment, and therefore I do not hesitate to make it known to the public, whom it concerns. It is one of many letters on the same subject; but one will suffice:

Jan. 12, 1832.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am very sorry you are displeased with the omissions in your article. Let us come to a right understanding on this head at once. It is not pleasant to me ever to alter an author's MS. for two reasons: first, because it is a trouble I could with greater profit to myself devote to my own compositions. Secondly, because it is an office that can never gratify the author. But if an editor lays before him one great—paramount—consistent object in a periodical, alteration and omission become of frequent necessity. You must remember, that an oneness of opinion in all the papers is then requisite. Now, what I omitted in your paper, and what I altered, were chiefly passages in which I could not agree with you (about Oxford, and persons in Oxford, for instance); a few verbal changes occurred also—but they were chiefly in epithets and phrases, in which I thought a little exaggeration, natural to description and to friendship, had crept in. But on these matters you must allow me to say that, if an editor be worth a straw, he must be absolute and unquestioned; and however deep the regret I should feel in losing any contribution of yours, I must do so, rather than resign a privilege that I believe to be also a duty. I dwell the more on this, because I have not yet done more than glance over a few lines in your second paper: and I there see, that your natural affection for Shelley carries you a little beyond that estimate of what he has left to the world, which as yet we are authorized to express. It is probable that this strain may be continued through the whole, and therefore require modification. Let us, then, be candid with each other. I, on my part, will not alter, or rather omit, which is my chief sin, without necessity—and will you, on your part, kindly suffer me to use my own discretion, when that necessity is apparent?

Truly yours,

E. L. BULWER.

If it should seem to me, that alteration to *any extent* is necessary I shall return you the MS. to alter yourself. All I claim is the power of omission or abridgment, to such extent as I judge discreet; and that of *alteration* only in slight matters; to omit, in short, as much as I like, and alter as *little* as I can. When you *republish* the articles, to which, I dare say, there will be no objection, you can *amend* them. etc. In regard to the proposed article on his poetry, I fear that we should not agree. You evidently admire him as a poet, far more than I think criticism warrants us in doing. He is great in parts; but, the *Cenci* excepted, does not, in my opinion, effect a great whole. But the additional anecdotes on his life and opinions will be, I trust and believe, acceptable.

To T. J. H., Temple.

The Shelley Papers, for they soon came to be spoken of and referred to under this title, were successful. They were satisfactory to the poet's friends and admirers, notwithstanding the somewhat subdued tone which I was constrained to adopt, and the farther dilutions that were made, always no doubt in strict accordance with the rules of art and the canons of editorial revision. I confess that I always have been, and still am, sensitive, too much so perhaps, in the matter of correction, or alteration, by editors, joint-editors, sub-editors. I am content at all times to throw pearls before swine, only I must be permitted, for my own credit's sake, to throw real pearls before them, not glass beads and other worthless counterfeits, substitutes for my marine treasures. I was once requested to write something or other on behalf of a knot of people, who busied themselves for a time in diffusing at a low price in shabby pamphlets, what they accounted useful knowledge. As a powerful inducement I was solemnly assured, that whatever I wrote would certainly be revised and corrected *seriatim*, by every one of the conceited, self-satisfied diffusers whose names were printed on the covers of 'their unsightly publications'. The proposal was a tempting one, but I was not the possessor of any knowledge sufficiently useful to bear the ordeal of so much useless intermeddling! Too many cooks spoilt the broth; and the soup-kitchen of science in *formâ pauperis* was soon shut up without my assistance.

The *Shelley Papers* were pillaged freely by amateur biographers, sometimes without acknowledgment, and always without permission; the publication was anonymous, but my name has been

used as freely in connection with them, as if I had myself prefixed it to these sketches. I have sometimes been informed by a total stranger, that he was about to compose a Life of Shelley, and intended to reprint the *Shelley Papers* at length; and I have been ordered to send forthwith to his address, all anecdotes, letters, and unpublished pieces in aid of his precious work. I found it advisable to take no notice whatever of such applications; for a civil answer has brought upon me, more than once, a reply full of virulent abuse from the suburban scribbler. It would seem, that in the case of Shelley the laws of property were suspended or abrogated; his earlier works were pirated with impunity; his books, letters, and papers were stolen; his writings were found, and without scruple made public by the finder. The forgery of his correspondence, a curious matter, of which hereafter, was an extensive and a profitable speculation. It may be as well to state that, from the 28th of July, 1814, until a few days before his death, Shelley kept regularly a journal of his daily life, recording, day by day, all that he did, read, and wrote; mentioning the letters received and sent by himself, the places which he visited, and the persons whom he saw. These MSS. are valuable on many accounts; they are useful in being a check upon misrepresentations and inventions, and a test of the veracity and correctness of volunteer and amateur biographers; they are sovereign indeed in detecting fabrications and forgeries. Many pages are little more than dates, lists of books, and names of places and persons, but much curious matter is interspersed; whatever is interesting shall be presented hereafter without reserve, nothing of value being kept back. Nor were the friends of Shelley exempt from predatory incursions; their journals, memoranda, note-books; their pictures, drawings, and precious relics; were appropriated as derelict, or seized as plunder by some bold buccanier. Many admirers, devoted hero-worshippers, are offended and mortified by the innumerable unlike and unfavourable portraits of the divine lineaments of a lovely character drawn by unskilful hands; but, I confess, I do not sympathize with them; I am not annoyed by the clumsy workmanship and spurious imitations. Suffer these vulgar daubers, I would say, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. It must of necessity be thus with all hero-worship. To be often ill-praised is an essential condition to the universality of renown. For example, if St. Paul might be commended by eloquent preachers only, by profound theologians, by erudite and exquisitely judicious eulogists

alone, his merits would be seldom celebrated; but inasmuch as the dull, drowsy prater, the illiterate sectary, the ignorant, the indiscreet, the intemperate, may trumpet forth his praises without restraint, the Apostle of the Gentiles now is, and ever will be, illustrious far and wide.

The Life of Shelley will frequently suggest that momentous subject, the reformation of our two magnificent universities, especially of the glorious university of Oxford, and will direct our attention to the real point of the case. A strict and searching inquiry into the actual condition of these most important institutions is imperiously demanded; a thorough, unsparing, unflinching investigation. It is necessary to ascertain forthwith, not whether a little more of this or of that, and a little less of the other, is taught there; whether the regents meet to talk stuff in the House of Convocation on Tuesday or on Thursday, in cramped Latin, or in lax English, and in larger or smaller numbers; but to answer distinctly the one vital and decisive question, which will be evaded as long as possible: How is the enormous mass of splendid patronage bestowed? Have they ever given anything to the right person? If they have, what, and to whom? The right of patronage is the most sacred of all sacred trusts; the criminal abuse of it, through jobbing and nepotism, is an eating, destroying cancer, fatal alike to Church and State. Society has manfully asserted at last this great truth, and is fully prepared and resolved to follow out in practice the assertion of principle. And not merely prospectively, but, to a certain extent, retrospectively also, will the sage and salutary reform be accomplished. Prospectively, by sternly forbidding offences under heavy penalties, and severely punishing in future all offenders; and retrospectively also, as sanguine and zealous reformers confidently declare, by removing without delay or compunction every recipient tainted by nepotism. People talk loudly of the sanctity of vested rights; and the right of these objects of partial patronage no doubt is sacred; it is the right to undergo condign chastisement. They speak boldly and fiercely of compensation; and perhaps, in strictness, compensation ought to be made by disgorging, under the strong compulsion of the sounding lash, every penny of what has been undeservedly and corruptly received.

Shelley was great as a poet—divine, indeed; great as a philosopher, as a moralist, as a scholar, as a complete and finished gentleman, great in every respect as a man; but he was most conspicuously great in that particular excellence, which, in all

ages and in all nations, has been invariably the characteristic distinction of the greatest of mankind—he was pre-eminently a lady's man. The following pages will show, but faintly, feebly, and imperfectly, I fear, that he was uniformly the chosen favourite of the charming sex. The moment he entered a house, he inspired the most lively interest into every woman in the family; not only the mistress of the house, her daughters, and other lady relatives, but even the housekeeper and the humblest females in the establishment were animated alike by an active desire to promote and secure his well-being, in every way and to the utmost in their power. In England women have never had too much influence in advancing the fortunes of men; commonly too little, far too little, for the public welfare. It was always a maxim in France, and a wise one, that no man could succeed greatly in life who was not a favourite with the fair. The young poet's fortunes would certainly have been less rude—they would have been mitigated, and softened, and brightened, if a due preponderance had been conceded to the gentle and humanizing patronage and fond devotion of his countless lady friends.

To 'amend' the *Shelley Papers*, to restore them, as nearly as possible to their original condition, as they were written by myself, and as they stood before they underwent editorial censorship, was long my intention; but many hero-worshippers have informed me, that they desire to procure a copy of the identical sketches, which they had formerly viewed with satisfaction, and which were almost inaccessible to purchasers, being embedded and walled in, as it were, in the body of a voluminous periodical. One meritorious worshipper of singular industry, a citizen of the United States of America, assures me that 'he copied them in manuscript, that he might possess them, and lend them to his friends'. Accordingly, I yielded, but not without reluctance, to their request, and the *Shelley Papers* will be reprinted here precisely as they appeared in the year 1832, in the *New Monthly Magazine*. They will be found entire and unaltered in the first volume of this work, from p. 48 to p. 135,¹ and from p. 203 to p. 286.² All Shelley's journals, letters, fragments, every scrap of paper, indeed, relating to him, or to his affairs, whether it was written by himself, or by other persons, have been placed in my hands and at my disposal by his family; my materials are at once authentic and abundant. This is much, but it will be far more, to write a living Life of the young poet; to give of him a breathing, moving, speaking portrait.

¹ Chapter III.² Chapters VI—VIII.

It is especially my desire to present a pleasing picture; but in this particular some explanation, some qualification is necessary. How will he, or she, or they, like his statements? is not the question which a biographer should ask himself; the question really being, How ought they to like them? What can they fairly and reasonably expect from him? It is his duty to seek to please; not simply, unconditionally, generally, and in every way to please; but to please so far only, and in such a manner, as a judicious and impartial reader ought to be pleased.

I have been informed after these volumes went to the press, that a large box has been found, containing many letters, journals, and other papers of great curiosity and value. They relate, I believe, to a subsequent period of Shelley's life. They will be carefully perused, and whatever is of interest and importance will be presented hereafter in due course and chronological order.

The following letter is so interesting, and so much to the present purpose, that it ought not to be withheld, or even postponed to the period to which it relates:

March 9, 1826.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I saw W. this morning. He says he will write to me when he knows what to do. He has given me no promise. He says Sir T. is much annoyed by the name being brought before the public in the paragraphs respecting your novel. I have little doubt, however, that you will get the money; but I think you will be punished by a short delay.

I told W. that your name was not in the title-page, and that its being brought forward at all was the fault of the publisher, and very contrary to your wishes. I told him he must remember that you were solitary and dependent; and that employing your time according to your tastes and talents, with a view to better your condition, was what no one could reasonably condemn. This he acknowledged; but said the name was the matter: it annoyed Sir T.

Yours ever faithfully,
L. T.

To Mrs. Shelley.

Not only did Sir Timothy Shelley interdict, as has been shown, by his threat of 'stopping the supplies', the pious office upon which his cruelly bereaved daughter-in-law had set her heart, of composing a full and faithful biography of her 'late espoused saint', but he endeavoured to prevent, by actually stopping

them, all authorship; and altogether to preclude the exercise of her unequalled talents. This attempt, which many will condemn as strangely barbarous and utterly barbarian, was happily unsuccessful.

One of Mrs. Shelley's admirable novels, it seems, the date points out her wonderful invention, *The Last Man*, had been advertised by the publisher in her name—a name that had already attained sufficient celebrity to insure the sale of any work to which it was prefixed, and thereupon her scanty stipend was immediately withdrawn. 'The supplies', to the payment of which such hard conditions—conditions so hurtful to the interests of literature—were annexed, it is right to state, were not freely given by the father of her lost husband to support, in decent competence, the widow of his eldest son and the mother of the heir to his name, title, and estates. They were money lent to her on the strength of her expectations, and the security of her bond, to be repaid, and if I mistake not, with interest. The money was duly repaid; and I regret to add—it has been received. For farther proof of a constant and abiding hostility to all intellectual efforts, I have been referred to in a passage in a letter from myself to Mrs. Shelley, of August 22nd, 1824: 'It gave me great pleasure to hear that Sir Timothy has proposed to purchase Field Place of you; I hope that matters will proceed without interruption, until you find yourself quite at your ease as to pecuniary affairs. The condition for which he stipulated, that "The Posthumous Works" should be suppressed is highly characteristic, and forcibly reminds me of old times, when the old Philistine used to make demands equally rational and enlightened'.

To return to Shelley—it will be seen that the poor fellow was very unfortunate in his political connections. His own family and their alliances, without exception, were Whigs, devoted adherents of Norfolk House. Never surely were any creatures so senseless, helpless, and hollow as the Buff and Blue faction; mere grievance-mongers, desiring always that he and others should have a great grievance, in order that he with them clamouring about such matters, might help them to office, to serve their own ends; by no means to do him any good, and least of all to redress his grievance. The few Tories with whom he became personally acquainted, treated him with kindness, and were well disposed to consider all differences of opinion as not unamiable peculiarities, and to throw their ægis over him: but unhappily he was afraid of them. Consequently, he gave



THOMAS JEFFERSON HOGG
From a sketch made as he sat playing chess at Boscombe. By R. Easton

himself up too much to people, who have since been called Radicals; these were necessarily vulgar; they dreaded and detested his conspicuously aristocratical and gentlemanlike dispositions, and being commonly needy men, chiefly perhaps because they were lazy and dissipated, they preyed upon him most unmercifully. We Tories were not without our faults towards him, our short-comings towards others, and so we have long ceased to exist. It has sometimes been asked, What is the difference between a Tory and a Conservative? Are they not both of the same party? In like manner we may ask, What is the difference between a bull and an ox? Are they not both the same animal? An extreme freedom of opinion, or to speak more correctly, of declaration and discussion, together with a taste for chemistry, had been acquired whilst Shelley was a schoolboy, by his intercourse and intimacy with a physician, for whom he long retained a warm regard and a profound reverence. The editor, in her graceful note on *The Revolt of Islam*, informs us, as my friend had already told me, that 'There exists in this poem a memorial of a friend of his youth. The character of the old man who liberates Laon from his tower-prison, and tends on him in sickness, is founded on that of Doctor Lind, who, when Shelley was at Eton, had often stood by to befriend and support him, and whose name he never mentioned without love and veneration'. Shelley was desirous to make me acquainted with the medical philosopher; 'he will soon remove all your prejudices!' He has not done this, for I never saw Dr. James Lind of Windsor.

Whether the pupil corresponded with his early preceptor after he left Eton, I know not; I never saw any letters from the sage, or heard that any had been received. Having carefully inoculated his young patient and satisfied himself that the disease had taken, it would seem that he left him to his fate.

In the ancient world, the sacrilegious impiety of one who had disclosed the Eleusinian mysteries, must be expiated by his death. It was not prudent to sit under the same roof-tree, or to embark in the same boat, with a man who, notwithstanding that a golden key had come upon his tongue, had divulged the sacred secrets of Ceres: so fiercely was the wrath of the immortal gods kindled against him. Thus, in our degenerate days, is a solemn and sagacious reviewer, who possibly may have his private reasons for disliking disclosures, inflamed against some too communicative biographer, for having rashly revealed, that Cottle once lent his tea-kettle and toasting-fork to Coleridge.

With all gravity the critic dogmatically affirms, that 'sacred silence should be thrown around such facts, through an exquisite delicacy of mind', and so forth. The names of illustrious heroes are written among the stars; their history, in the heavens, to be read by all; their acts, words, and thoughts belong not to their families and private friends—not even to their needy pensioners, however worthless—but to their worshippers, to the public, and to posterity. Nevertheless, I have endeavoured, as far as it was practicable, to spare the feelings of others, and to avoid compromising them by naming them in any delicate conjuncture, without absolute and unavoidable necessity. Many obliging persons have kindly offered me information and assistance, and I trust that they will do me the justice to believe, that want of leisure alone prevented a due acknowledgment of their favour and well-merited thanks.

A great deal of nonsense has been written and spoken about the irreligious opinions ascribed to my poor friend. In metaphysical discussions, he was uniformly and eminently bold and uncompromising. I will not venture to engage in theological disquisitions, for which I have neither inclination nor ability, but I will at once dispose of the matter by simply asking one very plain question. Did anybody ever know a poet—and Shelley was a truly great poet—who was an irreligious man? Let us consider the immortality of the soul and a future state as subjects of feeling, not of reasoning; of feeling imprinted and rooted in us for the wisest purposes, and far more conclusive than any reasoning; and we may readily get rid of all controversy by asking, in like manner, Does any one who knew Shelley, believe that he has ceased to exist—that he is really dead—that we shall never see him more? If it shall appear in the course of my narrative, that the young poet's heart ever went astray, I will neither condemn, nor justify, its wanderings; I will only observe, with Mister John Boccaccio, late of Florence: 'Love can do much more, dear reader, than either you or I can do!'

April, 1858.

CHAPTER I

Have I forgot the words?
Faith! they are sadder than I thought they were.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY was born at Field Place, near Horsham, in the county of Sussex, on Saturday, the 4th of August, 1792.

'Saturday's moon comes a day too soon', says the proverb; the new moon which falls on a Saturday, misses by one day the good luck that ought to befall us, when the conjunction of our satellite with the sun takes place on a Sunday. Thus by coming one day too early into a world that knew him not, did the Divine Poet want all the good fortune, which is the portion of a Sunday child. Temporal advantages, worldly prosperity, ephemeral joys, fading honours were not for him; but the undying laurel, the amaranthine garland, the golden crown were his; the crown of glory, that passeth not away. The royal ornaments, which of right adorn a king of song, were his noble inheritance, of this he can never be despoiled; for—

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm from an anointed king.

The science of the astrologer must be vain indeed, if the horoscope of the 'heaven-born child', as far as regards all the higher blessings, all real good gifts, were not favourable and flattering.

His father—to return for a while to plain facts—was Timothy Shelley; his mother, a lady of rare beauty, Elizabeth, the daughter of Charles Pilfold, Esquire. They were married in the year 1791, and of this union their eldest son, Percy Bysshe, was the first child. The poet had four sisters; Elizabeth, Mary, Hellen, and Margaret, all of whom lived to be distinguished for remarkable beauty, so that it was frequently observed, 'very few families indeed can boast four such handsome girls!' He had only one brother, John, the youngest child.

Other members of the family will sometimes of necessity be mentioned incidentally; but where the subject of biography is alone and of himself sufficient to ennoble a house, and by his immortal reputation to render it for ever illustrious, trifling details concerning inferior honours would be improper and impertinent. Moreover, it would be foreign to the true purpose

of the present narrative to compose a genealogical history of an ancient and honourable family. To tell how Sir Guyon de Shelley, one of the most famous of the Paladins, made himself glorious. How he carried about with him at all times three conchs fastened to the inside of his shield, tipped respectively with brass, with silver, and with gold. When he blew the first shell, all giants, however huge, fled before him. When he put the second to his lips, all spells were broken, all enchantments dissolved; and when he made the third conch, the golden one, vocal, the law of God was immediately exalted, and the law of the Devil annulled and abrogated, wherever the potent sound reached. Some historians affirm that the third shell had a still more remarkable effect; that its melting notes instantly softened the heart of every female, gentle or simple, who heard them, to such an extent, that it was impossible for her to refuse whatever its owner might ask. This power was dangerous indeed; but a knight *sans peur* could find delight only in the society of a lady *sans tache*; in the pure ages of chivalry, therefore, nothing derogatory to the limpid honour of knights or dames would ever be required. It is certain that history has not recorded that the good Sir Guyon ever abused the irresistible potency of his golden horn. These wondrous conchs, or shells, are still remembered in the name, and borne in the arms, of the several branches of the house of Shelley. Sir Guyon, we are told, was the personal friend, as well as the companion in arms, of Orlando, notwithstanding the well-known attachment of the fair Angelica for the lord of shells; but if the beauty of Sir Guyon was transcendent, superhuman, and indeed divine, his continence, chastity, purity, and unsullied, knight-like honour, as the Archbishop of Rheims, Turpin (who is never in error), affirms, were such, that there could be no place for jealousy between the gallant friends.

Carlovingian families condemn the Crusaders as frigid imitators of heroic gestes, as a degenerate race, but persons, who do not affect to trace their own lineage so high as the eighth century, may still be permitted to admire the pious devotion and exalted courage of the Champions of the Cross. Passing over, however, the period of the Crusades, we read in times comparatively modern, in the sixteenth century, of Sir Richard Shelley, a knight of Malta, and Grand Prior of the English Language, as being remarkable, not only for bravery, which was the common attribute of the Order, and consequently no peculiar distinction, but for disinterested generosity. Bosio, the

secretary and historian of the knights of St. John, has recorded, that notwithstanding his extreme old age, which would have fully excused his attendance, he came to the support and relief of the island of Malta, when it was besieged by the Turks, A.D. 1565.

When one of the family visited Malta lately, he was informed there that they were unable to find the bones of the Grand Prior, Sir Richard Shelley: with what object they sought for them was not stated.

Of the earliest infancy, the babyhood, of the wonderful child we know nothing. As a boy he was gentle, affectionate, intelligent, amiable; ever loving, and universally beloved.

His relatives have supplied interesting details. To give these just as they were received, will be a better illustration of the truth of things than a re-arrangement and classification of facts would afford.

Nov. 26th, 1856.

MY DEAREST J.,

After reading the reminiscences of our poet brother in the periodical you lent me, a strong wish arose in my mind to add, even in the trifling degree, which lies in my power, to the scanty details of his outward life. The absurd and imaginary view of Bysshe's character, and the facts, which are sufficient to contradict the fables contained in some books, have been uncontradicted only, I imagine, from the feeling that reasonable persons could perceive, that a child—who, at six years old, was sent daily to learn Latin at a clergyman's house, and as soon as it was expedient removed to Dr. Greenland's, from thence to Eton, and subsequently to college—could scarcely have been the *uneducated* son, that some writers would endeavour to persuade those who read their books to believe he ought to have been, if his parents despised education. Such books are altogether written with bad feeling—the petty malice of a little mind avenging itself for slights too well deserved to be forgiven. My knowledge of these publications is not vivid enough to dissect the contents; but I recollect when they first appeared we were urged to write a contradiction of the most glaring mistakes—but who would willingly go to war with a petty state? Time, generally, elicits truth, and there are many friends of our family, that could indignantly repel the reflections cast upon those, who treat them with silent contempt. I will write again soon.

Yours always,

HELLEN SHELLEY.

MY DEAREST J.,

At this distant period I can scarcely remember my *first* impressions of Bysshe, but he would frequently come to the nursery and was full of a peculiar kind of pranks. One piece of mischief for which he was rebuked, was running a stick through the ceiling of a low passage to find some new chamber, which could be made effective for some flights of his vivid imagination. The tales, to which we have sat and listened evening after evening, seated on his knee, when we came to the dining-room for dessert, were anticipated with that pleasing dread, which so excites the minds of children, and fastens so strongly and indelibly on the memory. There was a spacious garret under the roof of Field Place, and a room, which had been closed for years, excepting an entrance made by the removal of a board in the garret floor. This unknown land was made the fancied habitation of an Alchemist, old and grey, with a long beard. Books and a lamp, with all the attributes of a picturesque fancy, were poured into our listening ears. We were to go and see him 'some day'; but we were content to wait, and a cave was to be dug in the orchard for the better accommodation of this Cornelius Agrippa. Another favourite theme was the 'Great Tortoise' that lived in Warnham Pond; and any unwonted noise was accounted for by the presence of this great beast, which was made into the fanciful proportions most adapted to excite awe and wonder. [I never heard Shelley mention the 'Great Tortoise', but he spoke often of the 'Great Old Snake'. It was a snake of unusual magnitude, which had inhabited the gardens at Field Place for several generations, and which, according to tradition, had been known as the 'Old Snake', three hundred years ago. It was killed, accidentally, through the carelessness of the gardener, in mowing the grass: killed by the same fatal instrument with which the universal destroyer, Time, kills everything besides—by that two-handed engine, the scythe. There is so strong an affinity between serpents and all imaginative and demoniacal characters, that I cannot but regret to have entirely forgotten the legends of the 'Old Snake'; narratives perfectly true, no doubt—not with the commonplace truth of ordinary matters of fact, but with the far higher truth of poetical verity and mythological necessity.—H.] Bysshe was certainly fond of eccentric amusements, but they delighted us as children, quite as much as if our minds had been naturally attuned to the same tastes; for we dressed ourselves in strange costumes to personate spirits or fiends, and Bysshe

would take a fire-stove and fill it with some inflammable liquid and carry it flaming into the kitchen and to the back door; but discovery of this dangerous amusement soon put a stop to many repetitions. When my brother commenced his studies in chemistry, and practised electricity upon us, I confess my pleasure in it was entirely negated by terror at its effects. Whenever he came to me with his piece of folded brown packing-paper under his arm and a bit of wire and a bottle (if I remember right), my heart would sink with fear at his approach; but shame kept me silent, and, with as many others as he could collect, we were placed hand-in-hand round the nursery table to be electrified; but when a suggestion was made that chilblains were to be cured by this means, my terror overwhelmed all other feelings, and the expression of it released me from all future annoyance. I have heard that Bysshe's memory was singularly retentive. Even as a little child, Gray's lines on the Cat and the Gold Fish were repeated, word for word, after once reading; a fact I have frequently heard from my mother. He used, at my father's bidding, to repeat long Latin quotations, probably from some drama; for he would act, and the expression of his face and movement of his arms are distinct recollections, though the subject of his declamations was a sealed book to his infant hearers. Poor fellow! Why did he not live fifty years later: when he would have been assisted by the wonderful improvements of the age in directing his gifted and inquisitive mind?—Good-bye, dearest, for to-day.

MY DEAREST JANE,

The tranquillity of our house must have frequently been rudely invaded by experiments, for, on one occasion, on the morning our poet and experimentalist left home (for Eton, probably), the washing-room was discovered to have been filled with smoke, by a fire in the grate with the valve closed; the absence of draught had probably prevented mischief, but much was made of this accident, probably to deter any admiring imitators; and there might have been circumstances connected with it relating to chemical preparations, which did not reach us. My younger brother, John, was a child in petticoats, when I remember Bysshe playing with him under the fir-trees on the lawn, pushing him gently down to let him rise and beg for a succession of such falls, rolling with laughing glee on the grass; then, as a sequel to this game, the little carriage was drawn through the garden walks at the rate a big boy could draw a

little one, and in an unfortunate turn the carriage was upset, and the occupant tossed into the cabbages or strawberry-bed. Screams, of course, brought sympathetic aid. and, though the child was unhurt, the boy was rebuked; and when the former was brought down after dinner in the nurse's arms, 'Bit' (Bysshe) was apostrophized as a culprit. His great delight was to teach his infant brother schoolboy words, and his first attempt at his knowledge of the devil, was an innocent 'Debbie!'

MY DEAREST JANE,

I feel more confidence in writing when I commence a page, as I have now done; and after having talked over the small things we remember of our brother, I place them on paper without chronological order; for you will readily believe that to me it would be impossible, as I do not remember even seeing him after I was eleven years of age. I went to school before Margaret, so that she recollects how Bysshe came home in the midst of the half-year to be nursed; and when he was allowed to leave the house, he came to the dining-room window, and kissed her through the pane of glass. She remembers his face there, with nose and lips pressed against the window, and at that time she must have been about five years old. In the holidays, he would walk with us, if he could steal away with us; and on one occasion he walked with us through the fields to Strood; where, in those days, there was a park stile, to encourage good neighbourhood; there was a sunk fence to divide the lawn from the meadows, and gates were despised, where difficulty would augment the pleasure; and we were assisted up this perpendicular wall I was big enough to be pulled over, but Margaret was gently thrown across on the grass. Our shoes were sadly soiled, and the little one of the party was tired and required carrying; but she was to be careful to hold her feet so that the trousers might not be damaged. This trait does not seem characteristic, but it is nevertheless true; and subsequently, Bysshe ordered clothes according to his own fancy at Eton, and the beautifully-fitting silk pantaloons, as he stood, as almost all men and boys do, with their coat tails near the fire, excited my silent, though excessive admiration. He must always have been full of imaginative fancies, even before the youthful genius displayed itself in poetry. That wonderful emanation from the brain of a youth of eighteen, *Queen Mab*, is quite unequalled in gorgeous images and marvellous expression. The free writing down of overflowing thoughts by a boy, where no prudence could be

expected, and the peculiar, not to say unfortunate, tendency of that early stroke of undoubted genius cannot detract from the *poet's* fame, though the wisdom and experience of riper years might have modified the poem, as well as his whole after-life. His early death left him unformed; but who can tell what were the thoughts of one, who had but a few minutes of preparation between this world and the next. It may be (and, oh, that it might be prophecy!) that Love and Mercy took into account the temptations and dangers of a mind almost alone in its peculiar nature, and opened his eyes to that belief, without which he had better never been born!

MY DEAREST JANE,

I meant in my last letter to have given you an illustration of Bysshe's boyish traits of imagination, but flew off to a later period. On one occasion he gave the most minute details of a visit he had paid to some ladies, with whom he was acquainted at our village: he described their reception of him, their occupations, and the wandering in their pretty garden, where there was a well-remembered filbert-walk and an undulating turf-bank, the delight of our morning visit. There must have been something peculiar in this little event, for I have often heard it mentioned as a singular fact, and it was ascertained almost immediately, that the boy had never been to the house. It was not considered as a falsehood to be punished; but, I imagine, his conduct altogether must have been so little understood, and unlike that of the generality of children, that these tales were left unnoticed. He was, at a later period, in the habit of walking out at night, and the prosaic minds of ordinary mortals could not understand the pleasure to be derived from contemplating the stars, when he probably was repeating to himself lines which were so soon to astonish those who looked on him as a boy. The old servant of the family would follow him, and say that 'Master Bysshe only took a walk and came back again'. He was full of cheerful fun, and had all the comic vein so agreeable in a household: details of this kind would be trifling in many instances: but as a child at school I remember some verses, that were sent by him to one of my elder sisters, illustrating something unfavourable to a French teacher, who was accused of being fond of those pupils who could supply her with fruit and cakes. I believe it was clever, for the sisters were proud enough of it to be imprudent, and by some means it became known to *Madame*. and I can just remember the commotion it

made and the 'very bold boy our *broder* must be'. I have somewhere in my possession a very early effusion of Bysshe's, with a cat painted on the top of the sheet, I will try and find it; but there is no promise of future excellence in the lines, the versification is defective. At one time, he, with my eldest sister, wrote a play secretly, and sent it to Matthews, the comedian; who, after a time, returned it, with the opinion that it would not do for acting. I wonder whether Matthews knew the age of the boy and girl who ventured upon writing a play. The subject was never known to me; and most likely the youthful authors made a good blaze with the MS.

MY DEAREST JANE,

Every one has heard of Mrs. Hemans, if they have not read her poetry. She published a large volume when quite a girl and Miss Browne. Early talent attracted Bysshe's admiration and sympathy: he wrote to Miss Felicia Dorothea Browne, and he received an answer, but it was to an effect which gave no encouragement to farther correspondence: and he was probably disappointed, as all young, ardent, and admiring spirits would be in such a case. He fancied that I might, with encouragement, write verses, and his first lesson to me, I perfectly remember. Monk Lewis's poems had a great attraction for him, and any tale of spirits, fiends, etc., seemed congenial to his taste at an early age. I was so young that I really can remember nothing of the verses I made, farther than to give you as a sample of them:

There was an old woman, as I have heard say,
Who worked metamorphoses every day.

—and these two lines are probably left in my memory, because Bysshe expressed so much astonishment at my knowledge of the word *metamorphoses*. There were several short poems, I think, of which he gave me the subject; and one line about 'an old woman in her bony gown' (even the rhyme to which line I forget), elicited the praise for which I wrote. Subsequently he had them printed, and a mistake I made about sending one of my heroes, or heroines, out by night and day in the same stanza, he would not alter, but excused it by quoting something from Shakespeare. When I saw my name in the title page: 'H—ll—n Sh—ll—y', I felt much more frightened than pleased, and as soon as the publication was seen by my superiors, it was bought up and destroyed. I should not think there could have been anything in it worth either keeping or

destroying, but it will tend to show that my brother was full of pleasant attention to children, though his mind was so far above theirs. He had a wish to educate some child, and often talked seriously of purchasing a little girl for that purpose: a tumbler, who came to the back door to display her wonderful feats, attracted him, and he thought she would be a good subject for the purpose, but all these wild fancies came to naught. He would take his pony and ride about the beautiful lanes and fields surrounding the house, and would *talk* of his intention, but he did not consider that board and lodging would be indispensable, and this difficulty, probably, was quite sufficient to prevent the talk from becoming reality.

MY DEAREST JANE,

I think you have heard me mention a few things concerning Bysshe, which may only be interesting to you and me, and two or three others; for when I write about him whose poems and writings, and attainments, which were never known to the world in all their wonderful profusion, I feel that *my* anecdotes are scarcely indicative of his character; but you remember that my knowledge of Bysshe ended at ten years of age, and probably the last time I saw him was at Clapham, where we were at school, and he came occasionally to see us, and ask questions about our comfort. One day, his ire was greatly excited at a black mark hung round one of our throats, as a penalty for some small misdemeanour. He expressed great disapprobation, more of the system than that one of his sisters should be so punished. Another time he found me, I think, in an iron collar, which certainly was a dreadful instrument of torture in my opinion. It was not worn as a punishment but because I *poked*; but Bysshe declared it would make me grow crooked, and ought to be discontinued immediately. The old lady who kept the school would not, I believe, have hurt one of her pupils for any amount of approbation, so that she was not likely to continue an objectionable practice, if boldly disapproved of, and I was released forthwith. He came once with the elders of the family, and Harriet Grove, his early love, was of the party: how fresh and pretty she was! Her assistance was invoked to keep the wild boy quiet, for he was full of pranks, and upset the port wine on the tray cloth, for our schoolmistress was hospitable and had offered refreshments; then we all walked in the garden, and there was much ado to calm the spirits of the wild boy. His disappointment a few years afterwards, in

losing the lady of his love, had a great effect upon him; and my eldest sister has frequently told me how narrowly she used to watch him and accompany him in his walks with his dog and gun. I believe this matter has been discussed amongst others, probably with little knowledge of the truth. It was not put an end to by *mutual* consent; but both parties were very young, and her father did not think the marriage would be for his daughter's happiness. He, however, with truly honourable feeling, would not have persisted in his objection, if his daughter had considered herself bound by a promise to my brother, but this was not the case, and time healed the wound, by means of another Harriet, whose name and similar complexion, perhaps, attracted the attention of my brother. I do not consider any details of a later date would be in my province, for I only know his history as I have been told it.

MY DEAREST JANE,

I began my last letter intending to tell you of a morning's event. As we were sitting in the little breakfast-room our eyes were attracted by a countryman passing the window with a truss of hay on a prong over his shoulders; the intruder was wondered at and called after, when it was discovered that Bysshe had put himself in costume to take some hay to a young lady at Horsham, who was advised to use hay-tea for chilblains. When visitors were announced during his visit to the vicar's daughter, he concealed himself under the table, but the concealment did not probably last long. We have lately been on a visit to Cuckfield Park, and it was singular enough that our host, without having heard this story, mentioned his single recollection of having once, when quite a little boy, seen Bysshe, who came to his uncle, Colonel Sergison, whilst on a visit to his lawyer in Horsham, and asked, in Sussex language, to be hired as gamekeeper's boy. My informant thought his suit was successful, and then, of course, there was an explosion of laughter. I remember *incidents*, but nothing that either preceded or followed them, connectedly. My reminiscences must necessarily be limited to a few early years, for the tales of others, with regard to my brother, do not appear to me truthful. I read of his discordant voice and stooping figure, and I think excitement, in one case, and deep thinking in another, might have made this true in a measure; but, as I remember Bysshe, his figure was slight and beautiful—his hands were models, and his feet are treading the earth again in one of his race; his eyes, too, have

descended in their wild, fixed beauty to the same person. As a child, I have heard that his skin was like snow, and bright ringlets covered his head. He was, I have heard, a beautiful boy. His old nurse lived, within the last two or three years, at Horsham. One of the curates there—a Mr. Du Barry—was a great admirer of my brother's poetry, and we were able, through him, to remind her of those years when she used to come regularly every Christmas to Field Place, to receive a substantial proof that she was not to be forgotten, though her nurse-child was gone from earth for ever.

MY DEAREST JANE,

I have just found the lines which I mentioned; a child's effusion about some cat, which evidently *had* a story, but it must have been before I can remember. It is in Elizabeth's hand-writing, copied probably later than the composition of the lines, though the hand-writing is unformed. It seems to be a tabby cat, for it has an indistinct, brownish-grey coat.

I have not painted it for you.

A cat in distress,
Nothing more, nor less;
Good folks, I must faithfully tell ye,
As I am a sinner,
It waits for some dinner
To stuff out its own little belly.

You would not easily guess
All the modes of distress
Which torture the tenants of earth;
And the various evils,
Which like so many devils,
Attend the poor souls from their birth.

Some a living require,
And others desire
An old fellow out of the way;
And which is the best
I leave to be guessed,
For I cannot pretend to say.

One wants society,
Another variety,
Others a tranquil life;
Some want food,
Others, as good,
Only want a wife.

But this poor little cat
Only wanted a rat,
To stuff out its own little maw;
And it were as good
Some people had such food,
To make them *hold their jaw!*

That last expression is, I imagine, still *classical* at boys' schools, and it was a favourite one of Bysshe's, which I remember from a painful fact, that one of my sisters ventured to make use of it, and was punished in some old-fashioned way, which impressed the sentence on my memory.

HELLEN.

At ten years of age Shelley was sent to Sion House, Brentford. In walking with him to Bishopgate from London, he pointed out to me, more than once, a gloomy brick house, as being this school. He spoke of the master, Dr. Greenlaw, not without respect, saying, 'he was a hard-headed Scotchman, and a man of rather liberal opinions'. Of this period of his life he never gave me an account; nor have I heard or read any details, which appeared to bear the impress of truth. How long he remained at Sion House I know not; nor at what age he was removed to Eton. Among his papers is the commencement of an essay on Friendship, written not long before his death; in it he has thus commemorated a youthful attachment. Whether the school was Sion House, or Eton, does not appear. His age of eleven or twelve years agrees better with the former.

FRIENDSHIP

I once had a friend, whom an inextricable multitude of circumstances has forced me to treat with apparent neglect. To him I dedicate this essay. If he finds my own words condemn me, will he not forgive?

Yes; he has forgiven you! I saw this fragment, for the first time, a few months ago; I listened to the question, as to a voice from another world, heard once more after a silence of thirty-five long years; and I immediately answered it. I thankfully accept the dedication, and I lament that it is only of the following brief fragment:

AN ESSAY ON FRIENDSHIP

The nature of love and friendship is very little understood, and the distinctions between them ill-established. This latter feeling—at least, a profound and sentimental attachment to one of the same sex—often precedes the former. It is not right to say merely that friendship is exempt from the smallest alloy of sensuality. It rejects, with disdain, all thoughts but those of an elevated and imaginative character. I remember forming an attachment of this kind at school. I cannot recall to my memory the precise

epoch at which this took place; but I imagine it must have been at the age of eleven or twelve.

The object of these sentiments was a boy about my own age, of a character eminently generous, brave, and gentle; and the elements of human feeling seemed to have been, from his birth, genially compounded within him. There was a delicacy and a simplicity in his manners, inexpressibly attractive. It has never been my fortune to meet with him since my schoolboy-days; but either I confound my present recollections with the delusions of past feelings, or he is now a source of honour and utility to every one around him. The tones of his voice were so soft and winning, that every word pierced into my heart; and their pathos was so deep, that in listening to him the tears have involuntarily gushed from my eyes. Such was the being for whom I first experienced the sacred sentiments of friendship. I remember in my simplicity writing to my mother a long account of his admirable qualities and my own devoted attachment. I suppose she thought me out of my wits, for she returned no answer to my letter. I remember we used to walk the whole play-hours up and down by some moss-covered palings, pouring out our hearts in youthful talk. We used to speak of the ladies, with whom we were in love, and I remember that our usual practice was to confirm each other in the everlasting fidelity, in which we had bound ourselves towards them, and towards each other. I recollect thinking my friend exquisitely beautiful. Every night, when we parted to go to bed, we kissed each other like children, as we still were!

CHAPTER II

MY DEAREST JANE,

I had no conception that Bysshe's marriage with Harriet Westbrook would have elicited the quotation in Charles G——'s letter, which proves he was sacrificing himself to a point of honour. You will perceive that C. G. had no unpleasant recollections of harsh voice, etc., which I cannot help thinking must have been noticeable only when the boy was entering manhood.

I remember well how he used to sing to us; he could not bear any turns or twists in music, but liked a tune played quite simply.

About Miss Westbrook; I recollect hearing Bysshe married her because her name was Harriet. She was not a person likely to attach him permanently; I remember her well; a very handsome girl, with a complexion quite unknown in these days—brilliant in pink and white—with hair quite like a poet's dream, and Bysshe's peculiar admiration.

I should not remember many of her contemporaries, but the governess and teachers used to remark upon her beauty; and once I heard them talking together of a possible Fête Champêtre, and Harriet Westbrook might enact Venus.

The engraved portraits of Bysshe, which have hitherto been published, are frightful pictures for a spiritual-looking being, like the poet. Yet I do not expect that my ideal will ever be created because he must have altered from boy to man. His forehead was white, the eyes deep blue—darker than John's. He had an eccentric quantity of hair in those days, when he came by stealth to Field Place; and Elizabeth, on one occasion, made him sit down to have it cut, and be made to look like a Christian. His good temper was a pleasant memory always, and I do not recollect an instance of the reverse towards any of us. I tell you little things as they pass in my mind, and you had better tear them off and paste them in the book, for I find a difficulty in recalling far-off memories, when I set about it as a task, however palatable the task may be. There is no life which could bear the test of a detective, and Bysshe's faults and feelings were all laid bare by a too great moral courage,



FIELD PLACE, HORSHAM: SHELLEY'S BIRTHPLACE

I do not give him as an example for children to follow. Away with this cant of schoolboy reproving. I describe, and as far as in me lies, unfold the secrets of a human heart; and, if I be true to nature, I depict an uprightness of purpose, a generosity of sentiment, and a sweetness of disposition, that yielded not to the devil of hate, but to the god of love, unequalled by any human being that ever existed. Tamed by affection, but unconquered by blows, what chance was there that Shelley should be happy at a public school?

Affection does not enter in the headmaster's code of laws; kindness is too troublesome a mode of discipline, and fear is a short way of enchainning a multitude.

One is glad when we can bring our pretended moralists to a forced acquiescence. What is it that in spite of all his worth, still always gives an air of the ridiculous to the character of a schoolmaster? Think you that it would be so if his heart and soul were engaged in forming perfect human beings from the little embryos placed under his care; or, if beloved by his pupils, studying their dispositions, imbuing them with virtue by the force of reason only; winding them to his purpose by the resistless power of superior wisdom? Oh, no! look at the picture of the schoolmaster. Is it the paternal care that his countenance expresses? the thoughtful, yet deep-felt, affection that causes his eyes to beam? the lessons of virtue, dropping, like honey, from his tongue? the gentle remonstrance? the firm yet angerless resistance to the freaks of his little flock? Are these what cause a smile of contempt? No. Look at him. His frowning brow; the rod uplifted in one hand; the book, that fatal, incomprehensible book, in the other; the slave, that cowed, fearful, and stammering, stands before him—his cheek already tingling with the expected blow! This is no caricature of a schoolmaster; such is the picture universally acknowledged as his prototype, and you dare to inculcate the angelic nature of Shelley, because he bent not his back to this autocrat!

Inasmuch as a lady, however clever and well-informed, cannot attain to an accurate comprehension of the manners and morals of a public school, exaggeration and inaccuracy may be pardoned. I will not pretend to decide the great question as to the expediency of a well-regulated system of fagging; I have sometimes ventured to discuss it with my animated and eloquent friend; and I must confess that I still think that something may be said in favour of the old practice. For my own part, I learned as a fag, how to do many very useful things. To make a bed, to

brush a hat and clothes; to clean knives and forks and plates, and shoes and boots, in particular; to set a good polish on the last with a moderate consumption of blacking. To roast potatoes, chestnuts, and the like; to boil an egg; to make coffee, toast, and other good things; to put on buttons, sew up a seam, and in one word, to make myself generally useful. This salutary exercise of humble faculties did me no sort of harm; on the contrary, it was eminently serviceable in after-life. 'I was a dutiful fag, but I am no more a slave, Shelley, than yourself; and from my servile submission to this so-called tyranny, it is quite certain that my aristocratical feelings took no detriment. Whilst I was still a fag, a boy at school, whom I had offended, said to me one day: "People say, as proud as Lucifer; but I say, if Lucifer were only half as proud as you are, he would have something to be proud of!"' Shelley sometimes reminded me of the boy's sally, and he would add: 'How I wish I could be fastidious and exclusive as you are; but I cannot. I fear it is not in my nature to be so!' But to return to Mrs. Shelley's testimonies.

While at Eton he formed several sincere friendships; although disliked by the masters, and hated by his superiors in age, he was adored by his equals. He was all passion—passionate in his resistance to injury, passionate in his love. Kindness could win his whole soul, and the idea of self never for a moment tarnished the purity of his sentiments.

He became intimate, also, at Eton, with a man whom he never mentioned, except in terms of the tenderest respect. This was Dr. Lind, a name well known among the professors of medical science. 'This man,' he has often said, 'is exactly what an old man ought to be. Free, calm-spirited, full of benevolence, and even of youthful ardour; his eye seemed to burn with supernatural spirit beneath his brow, shaded by his venerable white locks; he was tall, vigorous, and healthy in his body; tempered, as it had ever been, by his amiable mind. I owe to that man far, ah! far more than I owe to my father; he loved me, and I shall never forget our long talks, where he breathed the spirit of the kindest tolerance and the purest wisdom. Once, when I was very ill during the holidays, as I was recovering from a fever which had attacked my brain, a servant overheard my father consult about sending me to a private madhouse. I was a favourite among all our servants, so this fellow came and told me as I lay sick in bed. My horror was beyond words, and I might soon have been mad indeed, if they had proceeded in their

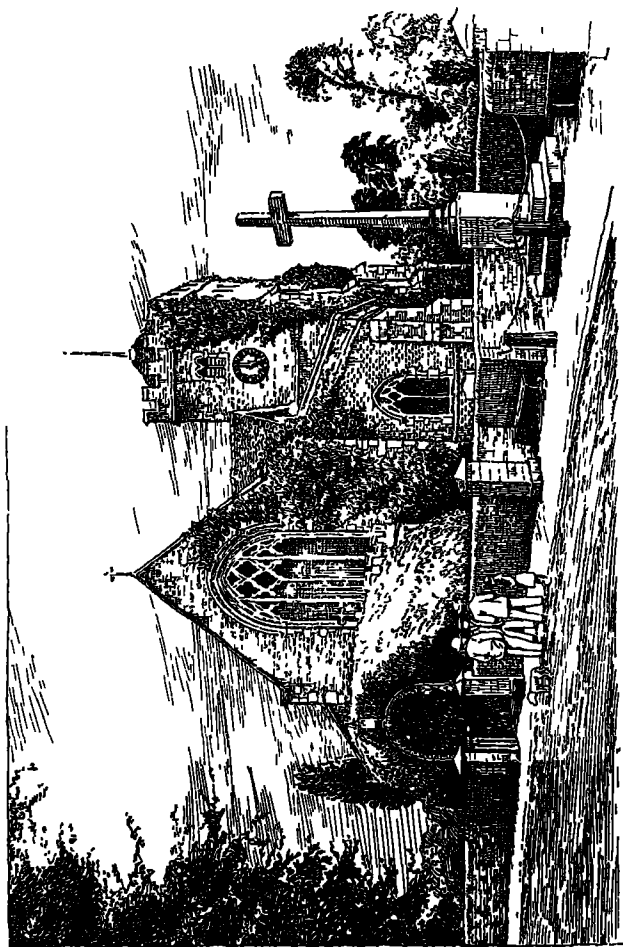
iniquitous plan. I had one hope. I was master of three pounds in money, and with the servant's help, I contrived to send an express to Dr. Lind. He came, and I shall never forget his manner on that occasion. His profession gave him authority; his love for me, ardour. He dared my father to execute his purpose, and his menaces had the desired effect.'

I relate this in my Shelley's words, for I well remember them. I well remember where they were spoken; it was that night that decided my destiny; when he opened at first with the confidence of friendship, and then with the ardour of love, his whole heart to me.

Of Dr. Lind more will be told hereafter. I have heard Shelley speak of his fever and this scene at Field Place more than once, in nearly the same terms as Mrs. Shelley adopts. It appeared to myself, and to others also, that his recollections were those of a person not quite recovered from a fever (which had attacked his brain) and still disturbed by the horrors of the disease. Truth and justice demand that no event of his life should be kept back, but that all the materials for the formation of a correct judgment should be freely given.

Amongst his other self-sought studies, he was passionately attached to the study of what used to be called the occult sciences, conjointly with that of the new wonders, which chemistry and natural philosophy have displayed to us. His pocket-money was spent in the purchase of books relative to these darling pursuits—of chemical apparatus and materials. The books consisted of treatises on magic and witchcraft, as well as those more modern ones detailing the miracles of electricity and galvanism. Sometimes he watched the livelong nights for ghosts. At his father's house, where his influence was, of course, great among the dependants, he even planned how he might get admission to the vault, or charnel-house, at Warnham Church, and might sit there all night, harrowed by fear, yet trembling with expectation, to see one of the spiritualized owners of the bones piled around him. He consulted his books how to raise a ghost; and once, at midnight—he was then at Eton—he stole from his dame's house, and, quitting the town, crossed the fields towards a running stream. As he walked along the pathway amidst the long grass he heard it rustle behind him; he dared not look back; he felt convinced that the devil followed him; he walked fast, and held tight the skull, the prescribed assistant of his incantations.

When he had crossed the field he felt less fearful, for the grass



WARNHAM CHURCH

no longer rustled, so the devil no longer followed him. He came to some of the many beautiful clear streams near Eton, and sought for one which he could bestride Colossus-like;¹ then, standing thus, he repeated his charm, and drank thrice from the skull. No ghost appeared, but for the credit of glamour-books, he did not doubt that the incantation failed from some mistake of his own. It was useless to repeat it that night. Very probably the human skull was wanting, a tumbler or mug supplying its place, but inadequately, and therefore the youthful enchanter was baffled.

It is sometimes in my power to illustrate the life of Shelley by parallel passages drawn from my own. I passed three or four years at a preparatory school in Yorkshire, near Ferry-bridge, where boys remained until they were eleven or twelve years old. I have a lively recollection of several remarkable events that occurred whilst I was there. Among others, of the Peace of Amiens. The treaty was signed on the 27th of March, 1802, and soon afterwards the joyful intelligence reached us. It was one Sunday morning, and, in token of rejoicing, plum-puddings were forthwith ordered for our dinner. When these were placed upon the table at one o'clock—for, according to the old fashion, we used to begin the meal with pudding—our master looked upon them complacently, and, standing up, delivered a special grace, which I never heard before or since: 'Peace be within her walls, and plenteousness within her palaces!' After dinner we went to church a second time, as usual; and, as usual, we heard a second very long sermon, but on this occasion our master discoursed at length of the great and manifold blessings of peace.

My next recollection has more relation to the sorceries at Eton and Warnham. In the same village was another and a larger school, containing bigger boys. We had a common playground, to which we repaired on half-holidays; at other times we must be content with the run of several large gardens. This school was only what is called a commercial academy; ours was a classical school. We were accounted young gentlemen, and were so styled, being intended for the learned professions, or being the heirs to landed estates. Our superior station compensated for the more advanced age of the boys, as they were called, of the larger school, and therefore we were perfectly

¹ No devil, ghost, or spirit, can cross running water (this superstition may have some reference to the rite of baptism); it is prudent, therefore, in all dealings with demons, to have a running stream at hand.

equal, and always agreed very well, being the best friends in the world. The common playground was a pleasant grass field of eight or ten acres, watered by several pure streams. One half-holiday, in the summer, I started off for the playground the moment dinner was over; I took the shortest way to it, as I was wont, across a garden. The garden was separated from the field by a sunk fence; there was a low wall, and a stream of very clear water flowed along the sunk fence at the foot of the wall. A boy, standing in the field, stopped me, as I was about to take my accustomed leap over the sunk fence.

'Stay where you are, stay where you are; you must not come into the playground!'

'Why not?'

'Because they are going to raise the devil; and he cannot hurt you so long as there is a stream of running water between you and him.'

'But he will get you when he comes.'

'No, he will not; for the moment they have fairly raised him, I shall clamber over to you and then I shall be safe too.'

He explained how this feat of incantation was to be effected; and I saw several of the bigger boys standing together. They were within a magic circle, into which the devil, it was said, could not enter; and a circle was marked out on the ground. The chief magician was a boy twenty years of age—a full-grown man, indeed. He was a negro, or so nearly one, that I could not have distinguished him from a real negro; and as such he was believed to understand perfectly oby, fetiches, taboo, in a word, the whole of the Black Art. A black hat was placed on the ground a short distance without the circle; the Lord's Prayer was to be read thrice backwards, and the black necromancer was to perform other rites which I do not remember. When these had been duly completed, the devil was to appear under the hat; first, as a crooked black pin. When the hat was lifted up, the pin would turn into a black cat. This, after a while, would become a shaggy black dog; the dog would frisk about a long time, running round and round, and trying often, but in vain, to get within the magic circle. The black dog would slowly grow into a huge black bull, exceedingly fierce, terrible, and dangerous, and with eyes of fire; and finally, the devil would assume his own shape, whatever this may be. The operations of the African magician seemed to advance but slowly—not at all, indeed. The boys within the circle kept on

consulting together. I could not hear their consultations, but they lasted a very long time; and, as far as I could perceive, nothing more was done. At last the negro pulled out his watch—a large silver hunting-watch—and looking at it, said aloud: ‘In a few minutes we shall have to go in to tea’,—‘drinkings’, this meal is called in that part of the county of York—‘it will be of no use, lads, raising him to-night!’ The rest assented, and here the ceremonies ended.

The boy who stood on the other side of the sunk fence talking to me all this tedious time, appeared to be alarmed and uneasy: he belonged to the commercial academy.

‘It is a great shame raising him! What can they want with him? What is the use of it? What good is he to do? How will they get him laid again? I have a great mind to go and tell our master that he may come and prevent it.’

‘Will it not be time enough to go and tell when they have raised him?’

‘No; it will be too late then. I do not suppose the master can do more than anybody else. I rather fancy the devil will not mind him a bit.’

For my part, I was rather surprised than frightened. I stood still on the wall, because I had been given to understand that I should certainly be licked if I entered the playground, it being evidently a measure of precaution to keep us out of it; for if the devil, after he was raised, should carry off one of the young gentlemen, the commercial boys would get into great trouble. I had read *Paradise Lost* at that time, not regularly through, but yet almost the whole of it. Jacob Tonson’s edition of Milton’s poems used always to lie on the table at home, with Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*, *Tristram Shandy*, and some other standard works, in a room where I often sat. Tonson’s *Milton* was a nice book for a boy, for it had plates in which the devils were represented with handsome long tails. These sporting figures tempted me to read the book, a bit here, and a bit there. I understood little of what I read, but I was fully convinced that I understood enough of the nature of devils to feel quite confident that such grand, pompous, consequential fellows, as they plainly were, would never leave pandemonium and come up in our common playground, merely to gratify the grinning negro and his commercial companions. I often overheard them afterwards consulting about raising the devil; but the consultation invariably terminated by a reference to the large silver hunting-watch, and a further adjournment. If, then, the

blackamoor ever actually raised the devil, it must have been on some occasion when I was not present.

This was the whole of my experience in the Art Magic, and it is not much; but when I told the tale, such as it is, to Shelley, he listened to it with earnest and eager delight. 'Yes, the blacks really understand magic, and often practise it with success. Africa is a most wonderful country! I will see it some day—I will visit it some day—that is certain!' He seemed greatly to desire to know our negro, esteeming him, doubtless, as a most valuable acquaintance, and wishing, probably, to write to him and to make him his friend.

The *Quarterly Reviewer*, telling a story, partly true and partly false, of his destroying some old trees at Eton with a burning-glass, remarks that you might foresee the future opponent of superstition and tyranny in the author of this exploit. There is great truth in this observation; and to those acquainted with the early circumstances of Shelley's life, the remark bears still greater force. From his earliest years, all his amusements and occupations were of a daring, and, in one sense of the term, lawless nature. He delighted to exert his powers, not as a boy, but as a man; and so, with manly powers and childish wit, he dared and achieved attempts that none of his comrades could even have conceived. His understanding and the early development of imagination never permitted him to mingle in childish plays; and his natural aversion to tyranny prevented him from paying due attention to his school duties. But he was always actively employed; and although his endeavours were prosecuted with puerile precipitancy, yet his aim and thoughts were constantly directed to those great objects, which have employed the thoughts of the greatest among men; and though his studies were not followed up according to school discipline, they were not the less diligently applied to.

Enjoying more liberty at Field Place than he possibly could at Eton, that was the chief scene of his experiments. He there possessed an electrical machine, he contrived a galvanic battery, and amused himself by experiments which might well excite delight and wonder in so ardent a mind.

Here, I regret to say, the brief fragments of biography written by Mrs. Shelley terminate.

To set a large tree on fire by means of an ordinary burning-glass seems to be impossible; and the distance at which this achievement was reported to have been performed made the

tale altogether incredible. For some time, therefore, I considered it as fabulous. I have since been informed by Eton men that an old tree was actually set on fire, but that the fire was caused by gunpowder, and that the gunpowder was ignited by a lens. If a small quantity of gunpowder were placed in the hollow of an old tree, when it exploded it would doubtless set the dry rotten wood alight; a train might easily be laid from the mine to a distant point, where, with a common burning-glass the train might be kindled and the mine sprung. This piece of boyish mischief, Shelley, they assured me, really executed. It was a very trifling affair, but the fire and explosion were of sufficient magnitude greatly to terrify the timid old gentlewoman, who then presided over the school, and against whose nerves the flaming attack was aimed.

Had the reviewer, being present on the spot, exclaimed, at the moment the boy's squib burst: 'Here is the future opponent of superstition and tyranny; we plainly see him in the author of this exploit, and by the light of his own powder!' he would have gained much credit for his acumen: and had the ingenious critic added: 'These are no common crackers, surely; they are the crackers of a divine poet!' it is evident that he would seem to have attained to something of prophetic vein, and might well have passed, not only in Albemarle Street, but wherever the *Quarterly Review* circulates, for a wise man—a soothsayer.

Shelley had several attached friends at Eton; I will insert the kind testimonial of one of them, because it is equally creditable to both the friends:

Glenthorne, February 27th, 1857.

MY DEAR MADAM,

Your letter has taken me back to the sunny time of boyhood, 'when thought is speech, and speech is truth'; when I was the friend and companion of Shelley at Eton. What brought us together in that small world was, I suppose, kindred feelings, and the predominance of fancy and imagination. Many a long and happy walk have I had with him in the beautiful neighbourhood of dear old Eton. We used to wander for hours about Clewer, Frogmore, the Park at Windsor, the Terrace; and I was a delighted and willing listener to his marvellous stories of fairyland, and apparitions, and spirits, and haunted ground; and his speculations were then (for his mind was far more developed than mine) of the world beyond the grave. Another of his favourite rambles was Stoke Park, and the picturesque churchyard, where Gray is said to have written his *Elegy*, of

which he was very fond. I was myself far too young to form any estimate of character, but I loved Shelley for his kindness and affectionate ways: he was not made to endure the rough and boisterous pastime at Eton, and his shy and gentle nature was glad to escape far away to muse over strange fancies, for his mind was reflective and teeming with deep thought. His lessons were child's play to him, and his power of Latin versification marvellous. I think I remember some long work he had even then commenced, but I never saw it. His love of nature was intense, and the sparkling poetry of his mind shone out of his speaking eye, when he was dwelling on anything good or great. He certainly was not happy at Eton, for his was a disposition that needed especial personal superintendence, to watch, and cherish, and direct all his noble aspirations, and the remarkable tenderness of his heart. He had great moral courage, and feared nothing, but what was base, and false, and low: He never joined in the usual sports of the boys, and, what is remarkable, never went out in a boat on the river. What I have here set down will be of little use to you, but will please you as a sincere, and truthful, and humble tribute to one whose good name was sadly whispered away. Shelley said to me, when leaving Oxford under a cloud: 'Halliday, I am come to say good-bye to you, if you are not afraid to be seen with me!' I saw him once again in the autumn of 1814, in London, when he was glad to introduce me to his wife. I think he said he was just come from Ireland. You have done quite right in applying to me direct, and I am only sorry that I have no anecdotes, or letters, of that period to furnish.

I am yours truly,

WALTER S. HALLIDAY.

Dr. Keate, the headmaster of Eton school, was a short, short-necked, short-legged man; thick-set, powerful, and very active. His countenance resembled that of a bull-dog; the expression was not less sweet and bewitching; his eyes, his nose, and especially his mouth were exactly like that comely and engaging animal; and so were his short, crooked legs. It was said in the school that old Keate could pin and hold a bull with his teeth. His iron sway was the more unpleasant and shocking, after the long, mild, Saturnian reign of Dr. Goodall, whose temper, character, and conduct corresponded precisely with his name, and under whom Keate had been master of the lower school. Discipline, wholesome and necessary in modera-

tion, was carried by him to an excess; it is reported, that on one morning he flogged eighty boys. Although he was rigid, coarse, and despotical, some affirm that on the whole he was not unjust, nor altogether devoid of kindness. His behaviour was accounted vulgar and ungentlemanlike, and therefore he was peculiarly odious to the gentlemen of the school, especially to the refined and aristocratical Shelley. Being universally unpopular, to torment him was excusable, legitimate, and even commendable. In school, the headmaster sat enthroned in a spacious elevated desk, enclosed on all sides like a pew, with two doors, one on each side. These the boys one morning screwed fast. The doctor entered the school at eleven o'clock, advanced to his desk, tried to open one door, and found it was fastened. He went round, grinning, growling, and snarling, to the other side; the door there had been secured also. Then, turning furiously to the boys, he said:

'You think to keep me out, eh! You think I cannot get in here, eh! But I will soon show you the difference, eh!'

The desk was as high as the breast of an ordinary man, and as high as the little doctor's head, but laying his hand on it, he lightly vaulted in. The season was summer; in school, old Keate wore a long gown and cassock, and in warm weather, it seemed, nothing under them; for, in his leap, the learned and reverend doctor displayed not only his agility, but his naked stern, all lower integuments being wanting. The unwonted spectacle was saluted with loud cheers and a hearty laugh. The mutinous explosion inflamed his wrath to the utmost.

'You shall pay for this, eh! I will make some of you suffer for it, eh!'

However, nothing came of it; the enraged and insulted pedagogue could not discover the offenders. The screws had been bought by two boys, a tall boy and a short one. That was all the detectives could find out.

CHAPTER III

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY AT OXFORD

WHAT is the greatest disappointment in life? The question has often been asked. In a perfect life, that is to say, in a long course of various disappointments, when the collector has completed the entire set and series, which should he pronounce to be the greatest? What is the greatest disappointment of all? The question has often been asked, and it has received very different answers. Some have said matrimony; others, the accession of an inheritance that had long been anxiously anticipated; others, the attainment of honours; others, the deliverance from an ancient and intolerable nuisance, since a new and more grievous one speedily succeeded to the old. Many solutions have been proposed, and each has been ingeniously supported. At a very early age I had formed a splendid picture of the glories of our two universities. My father took pleasure in describing his academical career. I listened to him with great delight, and many circumstances gave additional force to these first impressions. The clergy—and in the country they make one's principal guests—always spoke of these establishments with deep reverence, and of their academical days as the happiest of their lives. When I went to school, my prejudices were strengthened; for the master noticed all deficiencies in learning as being unfit, and every remarkable proficiency as being fit, for the university—such expressions marked the utmost limits of blame and of praise. Whenever any of the elder boys were translated to college—and several went thither from our school every year—the transmission was accompanied with a certain awe. I had always contemplated my own removal with the like feeling; and as the period approached, I anticipated it with a reverent impatience. The appointed day at last arrived, and I set out with a school-fellow, about to enter the same career, and his father. The latter was a dutiful and a most grateful son of *alma mater*; and the conversation of this estimable man, during our long journey, fanned the flame of my young ardour. Such,

indeed, had been the effect of his discourse for many years; as he possessed a complete collection of the Oxford *Almanacks*, and it had been a great and a frequent gratification to contemplate the engravings at the top of the annual sheets, when I visited his quiet vicarage, I was already familiar with the aspect of the noble buildings that adorn that famous city. After travelling for several days we reached the last stage, and soon afterwards approached the point, whence, I was told, we might discern the first glimpse of the metropolis of learning. I strained my eyes to catch a view of that land of promise, for which I had so eagerly longed. The summits of towers, and spires, and domes appeared afar, and faintly; then the prospect was obstructed; by degrees it opened upon us again, and we saw the tall trees that shaded the colleges. At three o'clock on a fine autumnal afternoon we entered the streets of Oxford. Although the weather was cold, we had let down all the windows of our post-chaise, and I sat forward, devouring every object with greedy eyes. Members of the university, of different ages and ranks, were gliding through the quiet streets of the venerable city in academic costume. We devoted two or three days to the careful examination of the various objects of interest that Oxford contains. The eye was gratified; for the external appearance of the university even surpassed the bright picture which my youthful imagination had painted. The outside was always admirable: it was far otherwise with the inside. It is essential to the greatness of a disappointment, that the previous expectation should have been great: nothing could exceed my young anticipations—nothing could be more complete than their overthrow. It would be impossible to describe my feelings without speaking harshly and irreverently of the venerable university. On this subject, then, I will only confess my disappointment, and discreetly be silent as to its causes. Whatever those causes, I grew, at least, and I own it cheerfully, soon pleased with Oxford, on the whole; pleased with the beauty of the city and its gentle river, and the pleasantness of the surrounding country.

Although no great facilities were afforded to the student, there were the same opportunities of *solitary* study as in other places. All the irksome restraints of school were removed, and those of the university are few and trifling. Our fare was good, although not so good, perhaps, as it ought to have been, in return for the enormous cost; and I liked the few companions with whom I most commonly mixed. I continued to lead a

life of tranquil, studious, and somewhat melancholy contentment, until the long vacation, which I spent with my family, and when it expired I returned to the university.

At the commencement of Michaelmas term, that is, at the end of October in the year 1810, I happened one day to sit next to a freshman at dinner: it was his first appearance in hall. His figure was slight, and his aspect remarkably youthful, even at our table, where all were very young. He seemed thoughtful and absent. He ate little, and had no acquaintance with any one. I know not how it was that we fell into conversation, for such familiarity was unusual, and, strange to say, much reserve prevailed in a society where there could not possibly be occasion for any. We have often endeavoured in vain to recollect in what manner our discourse began, and especially by what transition it passed to a subject sufficiently remote from all the associations we were able to trace. The stranger had expressed an enthusiastic admiration for poetical and imaginative works of the German school. I dissented from his criticisms. He upheld the originality of the German writings. I asserted their want of nature.

'What modern literature', said he, 'will you compare to theirs?'

I named the Italian. This roused all his impetuosity; and few, as I soon discovered, were more impetuous in argumentative conversation. So eager was our dispute that when the servants came to clear the tables, we were not aware that we had been left alone. I remarked that it was time to quit the hall, and I invited the stranger to finish the discussion at my rooms. He eagerly assented. He lost the thread of his discourse in the transit, and the whole of his enthusiasm in the cause of Germany; for as soon as he arrived at my rooms, and whilst I was lighting the candles, he said calmly, and to my great surprise, that he was not qualified to maintain such a discussion, for he was alike ignorant of Italian and German, and had only read the works of the Germans in translations, and but little of Italian poetry, even at second hand. For my part, I confessed, with an equal ingenuousness, that I knew nothing of German, and but little of Italian; that I had spoken only through others, and like him, had hitherto seen by the glimmering light of translations.

It is upon such scanty data that young men reason; upon such slender materials do they build up their opinions. It may be urged, however, that if they did not discourse freely

with each other upon insufficient information—for such alone can be acquired in the pleasant morning of life, and until they educate themselves—they would be constrained to observe a perpetual silence, and to forgo the numerous advantages that flow from frequent and liberal discussion.

I inquired of the vivacious stranger, as we sat over our wine and dessert, how long he had been at Oxford, how he liked it? He answered my questions with a certain impatience, and, resuming the subject of our discussion, he remarked that, 'Whether the literature of Germany, or of Italy, be the more original, or in a purer and more accurate taste, is of little importance, for polite letters are but vain trifling; the study of languages, not only of the modern tongues, but of Latin and Greek also, is merely the study of words and phrases, of the names of things; it matters not how they are called; it is surely far better to investigate things themselves'. I inquired, a little bewildered, how this was to be effected? He answered, 'through the physical sciences, and especially through chemistry'; and raising his voice, his face flushing as he spoke, he discoursed with a degree of animation, that far outshone his zeal in defence of the Germans, of chemistry and chemical analysis. Concerning that science then so popular, I had merely a scanty and vulgar knowledge, gathered from elementary books, and the ordinary experiments of popular lecturers. I listened, therefore, in silence to his eloquent disquisition, interposing a few brief questions only, and at long intervals, as to the extent of his own studies and manipulations. As I felt, in truth, but a slight interest in the subject of his conversation, I had leisure to examine, and I may add, to admire, the appearance of my very extraordinary guest. It was a sum of many contradictions. His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall, but he stooped so much that he seemed of a low stature. His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day; but they were tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt, and sometimes violent, occasionally even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate and almost feminine, of the purest red and white; yet he was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun, having passed the autumn, as he said, in shooting. His features, his whole face, and particularly his head, were, in fact, unusually small; yet the last *appeared* of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy, and in fits of absence, and in the agonies

(if I may use the word) of anxious thought, he often rubbed it fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers quickly through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. In times when it was the mode to imitate stage-coachmen as closely as possible in costume, and when the hair was invariably cropped, like that of our soldiers, this eccentricity was very striking. His features were not symmetrical (the mouth, perhaps, excepted), yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual; for there was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially (though this will surprise many) that air of profound religious veneration, that characterizes the best works, and chiefly the frescoes (and into these they infused their whole souls), of the great masters of Florence and of Rome. I recognized the very peculiar expression in these wonderful productions long afterwards, and with a satisfaction mingled with much sorrow, for it was after the decease of him in whose countenance I had first observed it: I admired the enthusiasm of my new acquaintance, his ardour in the cause of science, and his thirst for knowledge. I seemed to have found in him all those intellectual qualities which I had vainly expected to meet with in an university. But there was one physical blemish that threatened to neutralize all his excellence. 'This is a fine, clever fellow!' I said to myself, 'but I can never bear his society; I shall never be able to endure his voice; it would kill me. What is pity it is!' I am very sensible of imperfections, and especially of painful sounds—and the voice of the stranger was excruciating: it was intolerably shrill, harsh, and discordant; of the most cruel intension—it was perpetual, and without any remission—it excoriated the ears. He continued to discourse of chemistry, sometimes sitting, sometimes standing before the fire, and sometimes pacing about the room; and when one of the innumerable clocks that speak in various notes during the day and the night at Oxford, proclaimed a quarter to seven, he said suddenly that he must go to a lecture on mineralogy, and declared enthusiastically that he expected to derive much pleasure and instruction from it. I am ashamed to own that the cruel voice made me hesitate for a moment; but it was impossible to omit so indispensable a civility—I invited him to return to tea; he gladly assented, promised that he would not be absent long, snatched his cap,

hurried out of the room, and I heard his footsteps, as he ran through the silent quadrangle, and afterwards along High Street.

An hour soon elapsed whilst the table was cleared and the tea was made, and I again heard the footsteps of one running quickly. My guest suddenly burst into the room, threw down his cap, and as he stood shivering and chafing his hands over the fire, he declared how much he had been disappointed in the lecture. Few persons attended; it was dull and languid, and he was resolved never to go to another.

'I went away, indeed,' he added, with an arch look, and in a shrill whisper, coming close to me as he spoke—'I went away, indeed, before the lecture was finished. I stole away; for it was so stupid, and I was so cold that my teeth chattered. The professor saw me, and appeared to be displeased. I thought I could have got out without being observed; but I struck my knee against a bench, and made a noise, and he looked at me. I am determined that he shall never see me again.'

'What did the man talk about?'

'About stones! about stones!' he answered, with a downcast look and in a melancholy tone, as if about to say something excessively profound. 'About stones!—stones, stones, stones! nothing but stones!—and so drily. It was wonderfully tiresome—and stones are not interesting things in themselves!'

We took tea, and soon afterwards had supper, as was usual. He discoursed after supper with as much warmth as before of the wonders of chemistry; of the encouragement that Napoleon afforded to that most important science; of the French chemists and their glorious discoveries; and of the happiness of visiting Paris, and sharing in their fame and their experiments. The voice, however, seemed to me more cruel than ever. He spoke likewise of his own labours and of his apparatus, and starting up suddenly after supper, he proposed that I should go instantly with him to see the galvanic trough. I looked at my watch and observed that it was too late; that the fire would be out, and the night was cold. He resumed his seat, saying that I might come on the morrow, early, to breakfast, immediately after chapel. He continued to declaim in his rapturous strain, asserting that chemistry was, in truth, the only science that deserved to be studied. I suggested doubts. I ventured to question the pre-eminence of the science, and even to hesitate in admitting its utility. He described in glowing language some discoveries that had lately been made; but the enthusiastic chemist candidly allowed that they were rather brilliant than useful,

asserting, however, that they would soon be applied to purposes of solid advantage.

'Is not the time of by far the larger proportion of the human species', he inquired, with his fervid manner and in his piercing tones, 'wholly consumed in severe labour? And is not this devotion of our race—of the whole of our race, I may say (for those who, like ourselves, are indulged with an exemption from the hard lot are so few, in comparison with the rest, that they scarcely deserve to be taken into the account)—absolutely necessary to procure subsistence; so that men have no leisure for recreation or the high improvement of the mind? Yet this incessant toil is still inadequate to procure an abundant supply of the common necessities of life: some are doomed actually to want them, and many are compelled to be content with an insufficient provision. We know little of the peculiar nature of those substances which are proper for the nourishment of animals; we are ignorant of the qualities that make them fit for this end. Analysis has advanced so rapidly of late that we may confidently anticipate that we shall soon discover wherein their aptitude really consists; having ascertained the cause, we shall next be able to command it, and to produce at our pleasure the desired effects. It is easy, even in our present state of ignorance, to reduce our ordinary food to carbon, or to lime; a moderate advancement in chemical science will speedily enable us, we may hope, to create, with equal facility, food from substances that appear at present to be as ill-adapted to sustain us. What is the cause of the remarkable fertility of some lands, and of the hopeless sterility of others? A spadeful of the most productive soil, does not to the eye differ much from the same quantity taken from the most barren. The real difference is probably very slight; by chemical agency the philosopher may work a total change, and may transmute an unfruitful region into a land of exuberant plenty. Water, like the atmospheric air, is compounded of certain gases: in the progress of scientific discovery a simple and sure method of manufacturing the useful fluid, in every situation and in any quantity, may be detected; the arid deserts of Africa may then be refreshed by a copious supply, and may be transformed at once into rich meadows and vast fields of maize and rice. The generation of heat is a mystery, but enough of the theory of caloric has already been developed to induce us to acquiesce in the notion that it will hereafter, and perhaps at no very distant period, be possible to produce heat at will, and to warm

the most ungenial climates as readily as we now raise the temperature of our apartments to whatever degree we may deem agreeable or salutary. If, however, it be too much to anticipate that we shall ever become sufficiently skilful to command such a prodigious supply of heat, we may expect, without the fear of disappointment, soon to understand its nature and the causes of combustion. so far at least as to provide ourselves cheaply with a fund of heat that will supersede our costly and inconvenient fuel, and will suffice to warm our habitations, for culinary purposes and for the various demands of the mechanical arts. We could not determine, without actual experiment, whether an unknown substance were combustible; when we shall have thoroughly investigated the properties of fire, it may be that we shall be qualified to communicate to clay, to stones, and to water itself, a chemical recomposition that will render them as inflammable as wood, coals, and oil; for the difference of structure is minute and invisible, and the power of feeding flame may perhaps be easily added to any substance or taken away from it. What a comfort would it be to the poor at all times, and especially at this season, if we were capable of solving this problem alone, if we could furnish them with a competent supply of heat! These speculations may appear wild, and it may seem improbable that they will ever be realized, to persons who have not extended their views of what is practicable by closely watching science in its course onward; but there are many mysterious powers, many irresistible agents, with the existence and with some of the phenomena of which all are acquainted. What a mighty instrument would electricity be in the hands of him who knew how to wield it, in what manner to direct its omnipotent energies; and we may command an indefinite quantity of the fluid: by means of electrical kites we may draw down the lightning from heaven! What a terrible organ would the supernal shock prove, if we were able to guide it; how many of the secrets of nature would such a stupendous force unlock! The galvanic battery is a new engine; it has been used hitherto to an insignificant extent, yet has it wrought wonders already; what will not an extraordinary combination of troughs, of colossal magnitude, a well-arranged system of hundreds of metallic plates, effect? The balloon has not yet received the perfection of which it is surely capable; the art of navigating the air is in its first and most helpless infancy; the aerial mariner still swims on bladders, and has not mounted even the rude raft: if we weigh this invention, curious as it is,

with some of the subjects I have mentioned, it will seem trifling, no doubt—a mere toy, a feather, in comparison with the splendid anticipations of the philosophical chemist; yet it ought not altogether to be contemned. It promises prodigious facilities for locomotion, and will enable us to traverse vast tracts with ease and rapidity, and to explore unknown countries without difficulty. Why are we still so ignorant of the interior of Africa?—why do we not dispatch intrepid aeronauts to cross it in every direction, and to survey the whole peninsula in a few weeks? The shadow of the first balloon, which a vertical sun would project precisely underneath it, as it glided silently over that hitherto unhappy country, would virtually emancipate every slave, and would annihilate slavery for ever.’

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

‘What do you say of metaphysics?’ I continued; ‘is that science, too, the study of words only?’

‘Ay, metaphysics’, he said, in a solemn tone, and with a mysterious air, ‘that is a noble study indeed! If it were possible to make any discoveries there, they would be more valuable than anything the chemists have done, or could do; they would disclose the analysis of mind, and not of mere matter!’ Then rising from his chair, he paced slowly about the room, with

prodigious strides, and discoursed of souls with still greater animation and vehemence than he had displayed in treating of gases—of a future state—and especially of a former state—of pre-existence, obscured for a time through the suspension of consciousness—of personal identity, and also of ethical philosophy, in a deep and earnest tone of elevated morality, until he suddenly remarked that the fire was nearly out, and the candles were glimmering in their sockets, when he hastily apologized for remaining so long. I promised to visit the chemist in his laboratory, the alchemist in his study, the wizard in his cave, not at breakfast on that day, for it was already one, but in twelve hours—one hour after noon—and to hear some of the secrets of nature: and for that purpose, he told me his name, and described the situation of his rooms. I lighted him downstairs as well as I could with a stump of a candle which had dissolved itself into a lamp, and I soon heard him running through the quiet quadrangle in the still night. That sound became afterwards so familiar to my ear, that I still seem to hear Shelley's hasty steps.

I trust, or I should perhaps rather say, I hope, that I was as much struck by the conversation, the aspect, and the deportment of my new acquaintance, as entirely convinced of the value of the acquisition I had just made, and as deeply impressed with surprise and admiration, as became a young student not insensible of excellence, to whom a character so extraordinary, and indeed almost preternatural, had been suddenly unfolded. During his animated and eloquent discourses I felt a due reverence for his zeal and talent, but the human mind is capable of a certain amount of attention only. I had listened and discussed for seven or eight hours, and my spirits were totally exhausted; I went to bed as soon as Shelley had quitted my rooms, and fell instantly into a profound sleep; and I shook off with a painful effort, at the accustomed signal, the complete oblivion which then appeared to have been but momentary. Many of the wholesome usages of antiquity had ceased at Oxford; that of early rising, however, still lingered.

As soon as I got up, I applied myself sedulously to my academical duties and my accustomed studies. The power of habitual occupation is great and engrossing, and it is possible that my mind had not yet fully recovered from the agreeable fatigue of the preceding evening, for I had entirely forgotten my engagement, nor did the thought of my young guest once cross my fancy. It was strange that a person so remarkable and

attractive should have thus disappeared for several hours from my memory; but such in truth was the fact, although I am unable to account for it in a satisfactory manner.

At one o'clock I put away my books and papers, and prepared myself for my daily walk; the weather was frosty, with fog, and whilst I lingered over the fire with that reluctance to venture forth into the cold air, common to those who have chilled themselves by protracted sedentary pursuits, the recollection of the scenes of yesterday flashed suddenly and vividly across my mind, and I quickly repaired to a spot that I may perhaps venture to predict many of our posterity will hereafter reverently visit, to the rooms in the corner next the hall of the principal quadrangle of University College; they are on the first floor, and on the right of the entrance, but by reason of the turn in the stairs, when you reach them, they will be upon your left hand. I remembered the direction given at parting, and I soon found the door: it stood ajar. I tapped gently and the discordant voice cried shrilly:

'Come in!'

It was now nearly two. I began to apologize for my delay, but I was interrupted by a loud exclamation of surprise—

'What! is it one? I had no notion it was so late; I thought it was about ten or eleven.'

'It is on the stroke of two, sir', said the scout, who was engaged in the vain attempt of setting the apartment in order.

'Of two!' Shelley cried, with increased wonder, and presently the clock struck, and the servant noticed it, retired, and shut the door.

I perceived at once that the young chemist took no note of time. He measured duration, not by minutes and hours, like watchmakers and their customers, but by the successive trains of ideas and sensations; consequently, if there was a virtue of which he was utterly incapable, it was that homely, but pleasing and useful one, punctuality. He could not tear himself from his incessant abstractions to observe at intervals the growth and decline of the day; nor was he ever able to set apart even a small portion of his mental powers for a duty so simple as that of watching the course of the pointers on the dial.

I found him cowering over the fire, his chair planted in the middle of the rug, and his feet resting upon the fender; his whole appearance was dejected. His astonishment at the unexpected lapse of time roused him: as soon as the hour of the day was ascertained, he welcomed me, and seizing one of my arms with

both his hands, he shook it with some force, and very cordially expressed his satisfaction at my visit. Then resuming his seat and his former posture, he gazed fixedly at the fire, and his limbs trembled and his teeth chattered with cold. I cleared the fireplace with the poker and stirred the fire, and when it blazed up he drew back and looking askance towards the door, he exclaimed with a deep sigh:

‘Thank God, that fellow is gone at last!’

The assiduity of the scout had annoyed him, and he presently added:

‘If you had not come, he would have stayed until he had put everything in my rooms into some place where I should never have found it again!’

He then complained of his health, and said that he was very unwell; but he did not appear to be affected by any disorder more serious than a slight aguish cold. I remarked the same contradiction in his rooms which I had already observed in his person and dress; they had just been papered and painted; the carpet, curtains, and furniture were quite new, and had not passed through several academical generations, after the established custom of transferring the whole of the movables to the successor on payment of thirds, that is, of two-thirds of the price last given. The general air of freshness was greatly obscured, however, by the indescribable confusion in which the various objects were mixed; notwithstanding the unwelcome exertions of the officious scout, scarcely a single article was in its proper position.

Books, boots, papers, shoes, philosophical instruments, clothes, pistols, linen, crockery, ammunition, and phials innumerable, with money, stockings, prints, crucibles, bags, and boxes, were scattered on the floor and in every place; as if the young chemist, in order to analyse the mystery of creation, had endeavoured first to reconstruct the primeval chaos. The tables, and especially the carpet, were already stained with large spots of various hues, which frequently proclaimed the agency of fire. An electrical machine, an air-pump, the galvanic trough, a solar microscope, and large glass jars and receivers, were conspicuous amidst the mass of matter. Upon the table by his side were some books lying open, several letters, a bundle of new pens, and a bottle of japan ink, that served as an ink-stand; a piece of deal, lately part of the lid of a box, with many chips, and a handsome razor that had been used as a knife. There were bottles of soda water, sugar, pieces of lemon, and

the traces of an effervescent beverage. Two piles of books supported the tongs, and these upheld a small glass retort above an argand lamp. I had not been seated many minutes before the liquor in the vessel boiled over, adding fresh stains to the table, and rising in fumes with a most disagreeable odour. Shelley snatched the glass quickly, and dashing it in pieces among the ashes under the grate, increased the unpleasant and penetrating effluvia.

He then proceeded, with much eagerness and enthusiasm, to show me the various instruments, especially the electrical apparatus; turning round the handle very rapidly, so that the fierce, crackling sparks flew forth; and presently standing upon the stool with glass feet, he begged me to work the machine until he was filled with the fluid, so that his long, wild locks bristled and stood on end. Afterwards he charged a powerful battery of several jars; labouring with vast energy, and discoursing with increasing vehemence of the marvellous powers of electricity, of thunder and lightning; describing an electrical kite that he had made at home, and projecting another and an enormous one, or rather a combination of many kites, that would draw down from the sky an immense volume of electricity, the whole ammunition of a mighty thunderstorm; and this being directed to some point would there produce the most stupendous results.

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

He requested me to spend the evening at his rooms; I consented, nor did I fail to attend immediately after dinner. We conversed until a late hour on miscellaneous topics. I remember that he spoke frequently of poetry, and that there was the same animation, the same glowing zeal, which had characterized his former discourses, and was so opposite to the listless languor, the monstrous indifference, if not the absolute antipathy, to learning, that so strangely darkened the collegiate atmosphere. It would seem, indeed, to one who rightly considered the final cause of the institution of an university, that all the rewards, all the honours, the most opulent foundation could accumulate, would be inadequate to remunerate an individual, whose thirst

for knowledge was so intense, and his activity in the pursuit of it so wonderful and so unwearied. I participated in his enthusiasm, and soon forgot the shrill and unmusical voice that had at first seemed intolerable to my ear.

He was, indeed, a whole university in himself to me, in respect of the stimulus and incitement which his example afforded to my love of study, and he amply atoned for the disappointment I had felt on my arrival at Oxford. In one respect alone could I pretend to resemble him, in an ardent desire to gain knowledge; and as our tastes were the same in many particulars, we immediately became, through sympathy, most intimate and altogether inseparable companions. We almost invariably passed the afternoon and evening together; at first alternately at our respective rooms through a certain punctiliousness, but afterwards, when we became more familiar, most frequently by far at his; sometimes one or two good and harmless men of our acquaintance were present, but we were usually alone. His rooms were preferred to mine because there his philosophical apparatus was at hand; and at that period he was not perfectly satisfied with the condition and circumstances of his existence, unless he was able to start from his seat at any moment, and seizing the air-pump, some magnets, the electrical machine, or the bottles containing those noxious and nauseous fluids, wherewith he incessantly besmeared and disfigured himself and his goods, to ascertain by actual experiment the value of some new idea that rushed into his brain. He spent much time in working by fits and starts and in an irregular manner with his instruments, and especially consumed his hours and his money in the assiduous cultivation of chemistry.

We have heard that one of the most distinguished of modern discoverers was abrupt, hasty, and to appearance disorderly in the conduct of his manipulations: the variety of the habits of great men is indeed infinite; it is impossible, therefore, to decide preemptorily as to the capabilities of individuals from their course of proceeding, yet it certainly seemed highly improbable that Shelley was qualified to succeed in a science wherein a scrupulous minuteness and a mechanical accuracy are indispensable. His chemical operations seemed to an unskilful observer to promise nothing but disasters. His hands, his clothes, his books, and his furniture were stained and corroded by mineral acids. More than one hole in the carpet could elucidate the ultimate phenomenon of combustion; especially a formidable aperture in the middle of the room, where

the floor also had been burnt by the spontaneous ignition caused by mixing ether with some other fluid in a crucible; and the honourable wound was speedily enlarged by rents, for the philosopher, as he hastily crossed the room in pursuit of truth, was frequently caught in it by the foot. Many times a day, but always in vain, would the sedulous scout say, pointing to the scorched boards with a significant look:

'Would it not be better, sir, for us to get this place mended?'

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

I knew little of the physical sciences, and I felt therefore but a slight degree of interest in them: I looked upon his philosophical apparatus merely as toys and playthings, like a chess-board or a billiard-table. Through lack of sympathy, his zeal, which was at first so ardent, gradually cooled; and he applied himself to these pursuits, after a short time, less frequently and with less earnestness. The true value of them was often the subject of animated discussion; and I remember one evening at my own rooms, when we had sought refuge against the intense

cold in the little inner apartment, or study. I referred, in the course of our debate, to a passage in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, where Socrates speaks in disparagement of Physics. He read it several times very attentively, and more than once aloud, slowly and with emphasis, and it appeared to make a strong impression on him.

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

We did not consume the whole of our time, when he was

awake, in conversation; we often read apart, and more frequently together: our joint studies were occasionally interrupted by long discussions—nevertheless I could enumerate many works, and several of them are extensive and important, which we perused completely and very carefully in this manner. At ten, when he awoke, he was always ready for his supper, which he took with a peculiar relish: after that social meal his mind was clear and penetrating, and his discourse eminently brilliant. He was unwilling to separate; but when the college clock struck two, I used to rise and retire to my room. Our conversations were sometimes considerably prolonged, but they seldom terminated before that chilly hour of the early morning; nor did I feel any inconvenience from thus reducing the period of rest to scarcely five hours.

A disquisition on some difficult question in the open air was not less agreeable to him than by the fireside; if the weather was fine, or rather not altogether intolerable, we used to sally forth, when we met at one.

I have already pointed out several contradictions in his appearance and character; his ordinary preparation for a rural ^½ walk formed a very remarkable contrast with his mild aspect ³ and pacific habits. He furnished himself with a pair of duelling pistols, and a good store of powder and ball; and when he came to a solitary spot, he pinned a card, or fixed some other mark upon a tree or a bank, and amused himself by firing at it: he was a pretty good shot, and was much delighted at his success. He often urged me to try my hand and eye, assuring me that I was not aware of the pleasure of a good hit. One day when he was peculiarly pressing, I took up a pistol and asked him what I should aim at? And observing a slab of wood, about as big as a hearthrug, standing against a wall, I named it as being a proper object. He said that it was much too far off, it was better to wait until we came nearer; but I answered—‘I may as well fire here as anywhere’, and instantly discharged my pistol. To my infinite surprise, the ball struck the elm target most accurately in the very centre. Shelley was delighted; he ran to the board, placed his chin close to it—gazed at the hole where the bullet was lodged—examined it attentively on all sides many times, and more than once measured the distance to the spot where I had stood.

I never knew any one so prone to admire as he was, in whom the principle of veneration was so strong; he extolled my skill, urged me repeatedly to display it again, and begged that I

would give him instructions in an art in which I so much excelled. I suffered him to enjoy his wonder for a few days, and then I told him, and with difficulty persuaded him, that my success was purely accidental; for I had seldom fired a pistol before, and never with ball, but with shot only, as a schoolboy, in clandestine and bloodless expeditions against blackbirds and yellowhammers.

The duelling pistols were a most discordant interruption of the repose of a quiet country walk; besides, he handled them with such inconceivable carelessness, that I had perpetually reason to apprehend that, as a trifling episode in the grand and heroic work of drilling a hole through the back of a card, or the front of one of his father's franks, he would shoot himself, or me, or both of us. How often have I lamented that Nature, which so rarely bestows upon the world a creature endowed with such marvellous talents, ungraciously rendered the gift less precious by implanting a fatal taste for perilous recreations, and a thoughtlessness in the pursuit of them, that often caused his existence from one day to another to seem in itself miraculous. I opposed the practice of walking armed, and I at last succeeded in inducing him to leave the pistols at home, and to forbear the use of them. I prevailed, I believe, not so much by argument or persuasion, as by secretly abstracting, when he equipped himself for the field, and it was not difficult with him, the powder-flask, the flints, or some other indispensable article. One day, I remember, he was grievously discomposed, and seriously offended, to find, on producing his pistols, after descending rapidly into a quarry, where he proposed to take a few shots, that not only had the flints been removed, but the screws and the bits of steel at the tops of the cocks, which hold the flints, were also wanting. He determined to return to college for them—I accompanied him. I tempted him, however, by the way, to try to define anger, and to discuss the nature of that affection of the mind, to which, as the discussion waxed warm, he grew exceedingly hostile in theory, and could not be brought to admit that it could possibly be excusable in any case. In the course of conversation, moreover, he suffered himself to be insensibly turned away from his original path and purpose. I have heard, that some years after he left Oxford he resumed the practice of pistol-shooting, and attained to a very unusual degree of skill in an accomplishment so entirely incongruous with his nature.

Of rural excursions he was at all times fond; he loved to walk

in the woods, to stroll on the banks of the Thames, but especially to wander about Shotover Hill. There was a pond at the foot of the hill, before ascending it, and on the left of the road; it was formed by the water which had filled an old quarry: whenever he was permitted to shape his course as he would, he proceeded to the edge of this pool, although the scene had no other attractions than a certain wildness and barrenness. Here he would linger until dusk, gazing in silence on the water, repeating verses aloud, or earnestly discussing themes that had no connexion with surrounding objects. Sometimes he would raise a stone as large as he could lift, deliberately throw it into the water as far as his strength enabled him; then he would loudly exult at the splash, and would quietly watch the decreasing agitation, until the last faint ring and almost imperceptible ripple disappeared on the still surface. 'Such are the effects of an impulse on the air', he would say; and he complained of our ignorance of the theory of sound—that the subject was obscure and mysterious, and many of the phenomena were contradictory and inexplicable. He asserted that the science of acoustics ought to be cultivated, and that by well-devised experiments valuable discoveries would undoubtedly be made; and he related many remarkable stories, connected with the subject, that he had heard or read. Sometimes, he would busy himself in splitting the slaty stones, in selecting thin and flat pieces, and in giving them a round form; and when he had collected a sufficient number, he would gravely make ducks and drakes with them, counting, with the utmost glee, the number of bounds, as they flew along skimming the surface of the pond. He was a devoted worshipper of the water-nymphs; for whenever he found a pool, or even a small puddle, he would loiter near it, and it was no easy task to get him to quit it. He had not yet learned that art, from which he afterwards derived so much pleasure—the construction of paper boats. He twisted a morsel of paper into a form that a lively fancy might consider a likeness of a boat, and committing it to the water, he anxiously watched the fortunes of the frail bark, which, if it was not soon swamped by the faint winds and miniature waves, gradually imbibed water through its porous sides, and sank. Sometimes, however, the fairy vessel performed its little voyage, and reached the opposite shore of the puny ocean in safety. It is astonishing with what keen delight he engaged in this singular pursuit. It was not easy for an uninitiated spectator to bear with tolerable patience the vast delay, on the brink of a wretched

pond upon a bleak common, and in the face of a cutting north-east wind, on returning to dinner from a long walk at sunset on a cold winter's day; nor was it easy to be so harsh as to interfere with a harmless gratification, that was evidently exquisite. It was not easy, at least, to induce the shipbuilder to desist from launching his tiny fleets, so long as any timber remained in the dockyard. I prevailed once, and once only; it was one of those bitter Sundays that commonly receive the new year; the sun had set, and it had almost begun to snow. I had exhorted him long in vain, with the eloquence of a frozen and famished man, to proceed; at last, I said in despair—alluding to his never-ending creations, for a paper-navy that was to be set afloat simultaneously lay at his feet, and he was busily constructing more, with blue and swollen hands—‘Shelley, there is no use in talking to you; you are the Demiurgus of Plato!’ He instantly caught up the whole flotilla, and bounding homeward with mighty strides, laughed aloud—laughed like a giant, as he used to say. So long as his paper lasted, he remained riveted to the spot, fascinated by this peculiar amusement; all waste paper was rapidly consumed, then the covers of letters, next letters of little value: the most precious contributions of the most esteemed correspondent, although eyed wistfully many times, and often returned to the pocket, were sure to be sent at last in pursuit of the former squadrons. Of the portable volumes which were the companions of his rambles, and he seldom went out without a book, the fly-leaves were commonly wanting—he had applied them as our ancestor Noah applied gopher wood; but learning was so sacred in his eyes, that he never trespassed farther upon the integrity of the copy; the work itself was always respected. It has been said, that he once found himself on the north bank of the Serpentine river without the materials for indulging those inclinations, which the sight of water invariably inspired, for he had exhausted his supplies on the round pond in Kensington Gardens. Not a single scrap of paper could be found, save only a bank-post bill for fifty pounds; he hesitated long, but yielded at last; he twisted it into a boat with the extreme refinement of his skill, and committed it with the utmost dexterity to fortune, watching its progress, if possible, with a still more intense anxiety than usual. Fortune often favours those who frankly and fully trust her; the north-east wind gently wafted the costly skiff to the south bank, where, during the latter part of the voyage, the venturous owner had waited its arrival with patient

solicitude. The story, of course, is a mythic fable, but it aptly portrays the dominion of a singular and most unaccountable passion over the mind of an enthusiast.

But to return to Oxford. Shelley disliked exceedingly all college-meetings, and especially one which was the most popular with others—the public dinner in the hall; he used often to absent himself, and he was greatly delighted whenever I agreed to partake with him in a slight luncheon at one, to take a long walk into the country, and to return after dark to tea and supper in his rooms. On one of these expeditions we wandered farther than usual, without regarding the distance or the lapse of time; but we had no difficulty in finding our way home, for the night was clear and frosty, and the moon at the full; and most glorious was the spectacle as we approached the City of Colleges, and passed through the silent streets. It was near ten when we entered our college; not only was it too late for tea, but supper was ready, the cloth laid, and the table spread. A large dish of scalloped oysters had been set within the fender to be kept hot for the famished wanderers.

Among the innumerable contradictions in the character and deportment of the youthful poet was a strange mixture of a singular grace, which manifested itself in his actions and gestures, with an occasional awkwardness almost as remarkable. As soon as we entered the room, he placed his chair as usual directly in front of the fire, and eagerly pressed forward to warm himself, for the frost was severe, and he was very sensible of cold. Whilst cowering over the fire and rubbing his hands, he abruptly set both his feet at once upon the edge of the fender; it immediately flew up, threw under the grate the dish, which was broken into two pieces, and the whole of the delicious mess was mingled with the cinders and ashes that had accumulated for several hours. It was impossible that a hungry and frozen pedestrian should restrain a strong expression of indignation, or that he should forbear, notwithstanding the exasperation of cold and hunger, from smiling and forgiving the accident at seeing the whimsical air and aspect of the offender, as he held up with the shovel the long-anticipated food, deformed by ashes, coals, and cinders, with a ludicrous expression of exaggerated surprise, disappointment, and contrition. It would be easy to fill many volumes with reminiscences characteristic of my young friend, and of these the most trifling would perhaps best illustrate his innumerable peculiarities. With the discerning, trifles, although they are accounted such, have their value. A familiarity with

the daily habits of Shelley, and the knowledge of his demeanour in private, will greatly facilitate, and they are perhaps even essential to the full comprehension of his views and opinions. Traits that unfold an infantine simplicity, the genuine simplicity of true genius, will be slighted by those only who are ignorant of the qualities that constitute greatness of soul: the philosophical observer knows well, that to have shown a mind to be original and perfectly natural, is no inconsiderable step in demonstrating that it is also great.

Our supper had disappeared under the grate, but we were able to silence the importunity of hunger. As the supply of cheese was scanty, Shelley pretended, in order to atone for his carelessness, that he never eat it; but I refused to take more than my share, and notwithstanding his reiterated declarations, that it was offensive to his palate and hurtful to his stomach, as I was inexorable, he devoured the remainder, greedily swallowing, not merely the cheese, but the rind also, after scraping it cursorily, and with a curious tenderness. A tankard of the stout brown ale of our college aided us greatly in removing the sense of cold, and in supplying the deficiency of food, so that we turned our chairs towards the fire and began to brew our negus as cheerfully as if the bounty of the hospitable gods had not been intercepted.

We reposed ourselves after the fatigue of an unusually long walk, and silence was broken by short remarks only, and at considerable intervals, respecting the beauty of moonlight scenes, and especially of that we had just enjoyed; the serenity and clearness of the night exceeded any we had before witnessed; the light was so strong it would have been easy to read or write. 'How strange was it, that light proceeding from the sun, which was at a such prodigious distance, and at that time entirely out of sight, should be reflected from the moon, and that was no trifling journey, and sent back to the earth in such abundance, and with so great force!'

Languid expressions of admiration dropped from our lips, as we stretched our stiff and wearied limbs towards the genial warmth of a blazing fire. On a sudden, Shelley started from his seat, seized one of the candles, and began to walk about the room on tiptoe in profound silence, often stooping low, and evidently engaged in some mysterious search. I asked him what he wanted, but he returned no answer, and continued his whimsical and secret inquisition, which he prosecuted in the same extraordinary manner in the bedroom and the little study.

It had occurred to him that a dessert had possibly been sent to his rooms whilst we were absent, and had been put away. He found the object of his pursuit at last, and produced some small dishes from the study; apples, oranges, almonds and raisins, and a little cake. These he set close together at my side of the table, without speaking, but with a triumphant look, yet with the air of a penitent making restitution and reparation, and then resumed his seat. The unexpected succour was very seasonable; this light fare, a few glasses of negus, warmth, and especially rest, restored our lost vigour, and our spirits. We spoke of our happy life, of universities, of what they might be; of what they were. How powerfully they might stimulate the student, how much valuable instruction they might impart! We agreed that, although the least possible benefit was conferred upon us in this respect at Oxford, we were deeply indebted, nevertheless, to the great and good men of former days, who founded those glorious institutions, for devising a scheme of life, which, however deflected from its original direction, still tended to study, and especially for creating establishments that called young men together from all parts of the empire, and for endowing them with a celebrity that was able to induce so many to congregate. Without such an opportunity of meeting we should never have been acquainted with each other; in so large a body there must doubtless be many at that time who were equally thankful for the occasion of the like intimacy; and in former generations how many friendships that had endured through all the various trials of a long and eventful life, had arisen here from accidental communion, as in our own case.

If there was little positive encouragement, there were various negative inducements to acquire learning; there were no interruptions, no secular cares; our wants were well supplied without the slightest exertion on our part, and the exact regularity of academical existence cut off that dissipation of the hours and the thoughts, which so often prevails where the daily course is not pre-arranged. The necessity of early rising was beneficial; like the Pythagoreans of old we began with the Gods; the salutary attendance in chapel every morning not only compelled us to quit our beds betimes, but imposed additional duties conducive to habits of industry; it was requisite, not merely to rise, but to leave our rooms, to appear in public, and to remain long enough to destroy the disposition to indolence, which might still linger if we were permitted to remain by the fireside. To

pass some minutes in society, yet in solemn silence, is like the Pythagorean initiation, and we auspicate the day happily by commencing with sacred things. I scarcely ever visited Shelley before one o'clock; when I met him in the morning at chapel, he used studiously to avoid all communication, and as soon as the doors were opened, to effect a ludicrously precipitate retreat to his rooms.

'The country near Oxford', he continued, as we reposed after our meagre supper, 'has no pretensions to peculiar beauty, but it is quiet and pleasant and rural, and purely agricultural after the good old fashion; it is not only unpolluted by manufactures and commerce, but it is exempt from the desecration of the modern husbandry, of a system which accounts the farmer a manufacturer of hay and corn: I delight to wander over it.' He enlarged upon the pleasure of our pedestrian excursions, and added, 'I can imagine few things that would annoy me more severely than to be disturbed in our tranquil course; it would be a cruel calamity to be interrupted by some untoward accident, to be compelled to quit our calm and agreeable retreat. Not only would it be a sad mortification, but a real misfortune, for if I remain here I shall study more closely and with greater advantage than I could in any other situation that I can conceive. Are you not of the same opinion?'

'Entirely.'

'I regret only that the period of our residence is limited to four years; I wish they would revive, for our sake, the old term of six or seven years. If we consider how much there is for us to learn', here he paused and sighed deeply through that despondency which sometimes comes over the unwearied and zealous student, 'we shall allow that the longer period would still be far too short!'

I assented, and we discoursed concerning the abridgement of the ancient term of residence, and the diminution of the academical year by frequent, protracted, and most inconvenient vacations.

'To quit Oxford', he said, 'would be still more unpleasant to you than to myself for you aim at objects that I do not seek to compass, and you cannot fail, since you are resolved to place your success beyond the reach of chance.'

He enumerated with extreme rapidity and in his enthusiastic strain, some of the benefits and comforts of a college life.

'Then the *oak* is such a blessing', he exclaimed with peculiar fervour, clasping his hands, and repeating often—'the oak is

such a blessing!' slowly, and in a solemn tone. 'The oak alone goes far towards making this place a paradise. In what other spot in the world, surely none that I have hitherto visited, can you say confidently, it is perfectly impossible, physically impossible, that I should be disturbed? Whether a man desire solitary study, or to enjoy the society of a friend or two, he is secure against interruption. It is not so in a house, not by any means; there is not the same protection in a house, even in the best-contrived house. The servant is bound to answer the door; he must appear and give some excuse: he may betray by hesitation and confusion that he utters a falsehood; he must expose himself to be questioned; he must open the door and violate your privacy in some degree; besides there are other doors, there are windows at least, through which a prying eye can detect some indication that betrays the mystery. How different is it here! The bore arrives; the outer door is shut; it is black and solid, and perfectly impenetrable, as is your secret; the doors are all alike; he can distinguish mine from yours by the geographical position only. He may knock; he may call; he may kick, if he will; he may inquire of a neighbour, but he can inform him of nothing; he can only say the door is shut and this he knows already. He may leave his card, that you may rejoice over it, and at your escape; he may write upon it the hour when he proposes to call again to put you on your guard, and that he may be quite sure of seeing the back of your door once more. When the bore meets you and says, I called at your house at such a time, you are required to explain your absence, to prove an alibi in short, and perhaps to undergo a rigid cross-examination; but if he tells you, "I called at your rooms yesterday at three, and the door was shut", you have only to say, "Did you? was it?" and there the matter ends.'

'Were you not charmed with your oak? did it not instantly captivate you?'

'My introduction to it was somewhat unpleasant and unpropitious. The morning after my arrival I was sitting at breakfast; my scout, the Arimaspiian, apprehending that the singleness of his eye may impeach his character for officiousness, in order to escape the reproach of seeing half as much only as other men, is always striving to prove that he sees at least twice as far as the most sharpsighted: after many demonstrations of superabundant activity, he inquired if I wanted anything more; I answered in the negative. He had already opened the door: "Shall I sport, sir?" he asked briskly as he stood upon the

threshold. He seemed so unlike a sporting character that I was curious to learn in what sport he proposed to indulge. I answered—"Yes, by all means", and anxiously watched him, but to my surprise and disappointment he instantly vanished. As soon as I had finished my breakfast, I sallied forth to survey Oxford; I opened one door quickly, and not suspecting that there was a second, I struck my head against it with some violence. The blow taught me to observe that every set of rooms has two doors, and I soon learned that the outer door, which is thick and solid, is called the oak, and to shut it is termed, to sport. I derived so much benefit from my oak that I soon pardoned this slight inconvenience: it is surely the tree of knowledge.'

'Who invented the oak?'

'The inventors of the science of living in rooms, or chambers—the monks.'

'Ah! they were sly fellows; none but men who were reputed to devote themselves for many hours to prayers, to religious meditations, and holy abstractions, would ever have been permitted quietly to place at pleasure such a barrier between themselves and the world. We now reap the advantage of their reputation for sanctity; I shall reverence my oak more than ever, since its origin is so sacred.'

The sympathies of Shelley were instantaneous and powerful with those, who evinced in any degree the qualities for which he was himself so remarkable—simplicity of character, unaffected manners, genuine modesty, and an honest willingness to acquire knowledge. and he sprang to meet their advances with an ingenuous eagerness which was peculiar to him; but he was suddenly and violently repelled, like the needle from the negative pole of the magnet, by any indication of pedantry, presumption, or affectation. So much was he disposed to take offence at such defects, and so acutely was he sensible of them that he was sometimes unjust, through an excessive sensitiveness, in his estimate of those who had shocked him by sins of which he was himself utterly incapable. Whatever might be the attainments, and however solid the merits of the persons filling at that time the important office of instructors in the university, they were entirely destitute of the attractions of manner; their address was sometimes repulsive, and the formal, priggish tutor was too often intent upon the ordinary academical course alone to the entire exclusion of every other department of knowledge: his thoughts were wholly engrossed by it, and

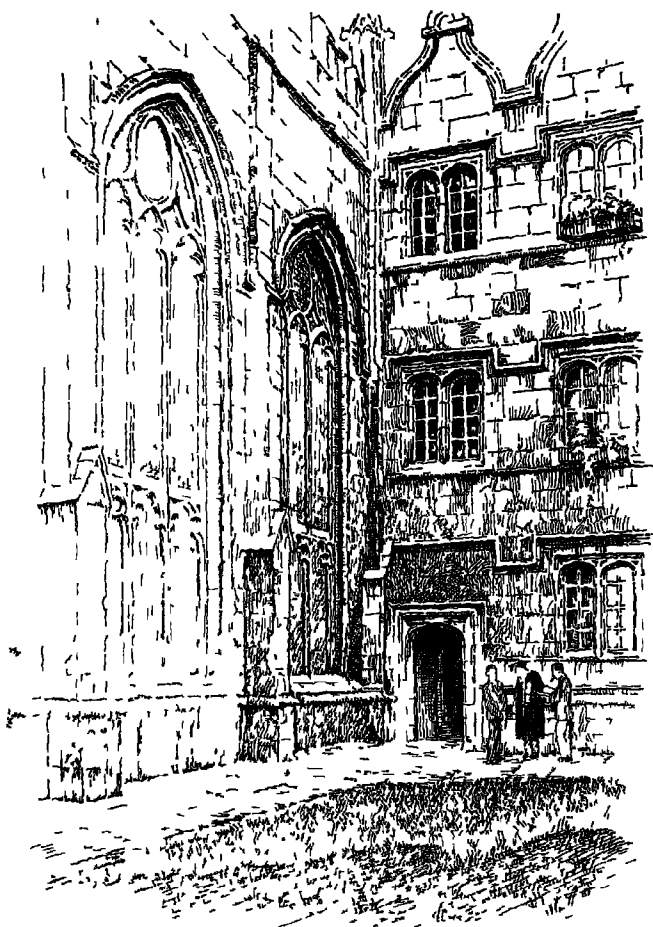
so narrow were his views, that he overlooked the claims of all merit, however exalted, except success in the public examinations.

'They are very dull people here', Shelley said to me one evening soon after his arrival, with a long-drawn sigh, after musing awhile; 'a little man sent for me this morning, and told me in an almost inaudible whisper that I must read: "you must read"', he said many times in his small voice. I answered that I had no objection. He persisted; so, to satisfy him, for he did not appear to believe me, I told him I had some books in my pocket, and I began to take them out. He stared at me, and said that was not exactly what he meant: "you must read *Prometheus Vincitus*, and Demosthenes *de Coronâ*, and Euclid." "Must I read Euclid?" I asked sorrowfully. "Yes, certainly; and when you have read the Greek works I have mentioned, you must begin Aristotle's *Ethics*, and then you may go on to his other treatises. It is of the utmost importance to be well acquainted with Aristotle." This he repeated so often that I was quite tired, and at last I said, "Must I care about Aristotle? what if I do not mind Aristotle?" I then left him, for he seemed to be in great perplexity.'

Notwithstanding the slight he had thus cast upon the great master of the science, that has so long been the staple of Oxford, he was not blind to the value of the science itself. He took to the scholastic logic very kindly, seized its distinctions with his accustomed quickness, felt a keen interest in the study, and patiently endured the exposition of those minute discriminations, which the tyro is apt to condemn as vain and trifling.

It should seem that the ancient method of communicating the art of syllogizing has been preserved, in part at least, by tradition in this university. I have sometimes met with learned foreigners, who understood the end and object of the scholastic logic, having received the traditional instruction in some of the old universities on the Continent; but I never found even one of my countrymen, except Oxonians, who rightly comprehended the nature of the science: I may, perhaps, add, that in proportion as the self-taught logicians had laboured in the pursuit, they had gone far astray. It is possible, nevertheless, that those who have drunk at the fountain-head, and have read the *Organon* of Aristotle in the original, may have attained to a just comprehension by their unassisted energies; but in this age, and in this country, I apprehend the number of such adventurous readers is very inconsiderable.

Shelley frequently exercised his ingenuity in long discussions



SHELLEY'S ROOMS AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD

respecting various questions in logic, and more frequently indulged in metaphysical inquiries. We read several metaphysical works together in whole, or in part, for the first time, or after a previous perusal, by one, or by both of us.

The examination of a chapter of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* would induce him at any moment to quit every other pursuit. We read together Hume's *Essays*, and some productions of Scotch metaphysicians of inferior ability—all with assiduous and friendly altercations, and the latter writers, at least, with small profit, unless some sparks of knowledge were struck out in the collision of debate. We read also certain popular French works that treat of man, for the most part in a mixed method, metaphysically, morally, and politically. Hume's *Essays* were a favourite book with Shelley, and he was always ready to put forward in argument, the doctrines they uphold.

It may seem strange that he should ever have accepted the sceptical philosophy, a system so uncongenial with a fervid and imaginative genius, which can allure the cool, cautious, abstinent reasoner alone, and would deter the enthusiastic, the fanciful, and the speculative. We must bear in mind, however, that he was an eager, bold, and unwearied disputant; and although the position, in which the sceptic and the materialist love to entrench themselves, offers no picturesque attractions to the eye of the poet, it is well adapted for defensive warfare; and it is not easy for an ordinary enemy to dislodge him, who occupies a post that derives strength from the weakness of the assailant. It has been insinuated that whenever a man of real talent and generous feelings condescends to fight under these colours, he is guilty of a dissimulation, which he deems harmless, perhaps even praiseworthy, for the sake of victory in argument.

It was not a little curious to observe one, whose sanguine temper led him to believe implicitly every assertion, so that it was improbable and incredible, exulting in the success of his philosophical doubts, when, like the calmest and most suspicious of analysts, he refused to admit, without strict proof, propositions that many, who are not deficient in metaphysical prudence, account obvious and self-evident. The sceptical philosophy had another charm; it partook of the new and the wonderful, inasmuch as it called into doubt, and seemed to place in jeopardy, during the joyous hours of disputation, many important practical conclusions. To a soul loving excitement and change, destruction, so that it be on a grand scale, may sometimes prove hardly

less inspiring than creation. The feat of the magician, who, by the touch of his wand, could cause the great pyramid to dissolve into the air, and to vanish from the sight, would be as surprising as the achievement of him who, by the same rod, could instantly raise a similar mass in any chosen spot. If the destruction of the eternal monument was only apparent, the ocular sophism would be at once harmless and ingenious: so was it with the logomachy of the young and strenuous logician, and his intellectual activity merited praise and reward.

There was another reason, moreover, why the sceptical philosophy should be welcome to Shelley at that time: he was young, and it is generally acceptable to youth. It is adopted as the abiding rule of reason throughout life by those only who are distinguished by a sterility of soul, a barrenness of invention, a total dearth of fancy, and a scanty stock of learning. Such, in truth, although the warmth of juvenile blood, the light burthen of few years, and the precipitation of inexperience, may sometimes seem to contradict the assertion, is the state of the mind at the commencement of manhood, when the vessel has as yet received only a small portion of the cargo of the accumulated wisdom of past ages, when the amount of mental operations that have actually been performed, is small, and the materials upon which the imagination can work are insignificant; consequently, the inventions of the young are crude and frigid.

Hence the most fertile mind exactly resembles in early youth the hopeless barrenness of those, who have grown old in vain, as to its actual condition, and it differs only in the unseen capacity for future production. The philosopher who declares that he knows nothing, and that nothing can be known, will readily find followers among the young, for they are sensible, that they possess the requisite qualification for entering his school, and are as far advanced in the science of ignorance as their master.

A stranger, who should have chanced to have been present at some of Shelley's disputes, or who knew him only from having read some of the short argumentative essays which he composed as voluntary exercises, would have said, 'Surely the soul of Hume passed by transmigration into the body of that eloquent young man; or rather, he represents one of the enthusiastic and animated materialists of the French school, whom revolutionary violence lately intercepted at an early age in his philosophical career.'

There were times, however, when a visitor, who had listened

to glowing discourses delivered with a more intense ardour, would have hailed a young Platonist, breathing forth the ideal philosophy, and in his pursuit of the intellectual world entirely overlooking the material, or noticing it only to condemn it. The tall boy, who is permitted for the first season to scare the partridges with his new fowling-piece, scorns to handle the top, or the hoop of his younger brother; thus the man, whose years and studies are mature, slights the first feeble aspirations after the higher departments of knowledge, that were deemed so important during his residence at college. It seems laughable, but it is true, that our knowledge of Plato was derived solely from Dacier's translation of a few of the dialogues, and from an English version of that French translation; we had never attempted a single sentence in the Greek. Since that time, however, I believe, few of our countrymen have read the golden works of that majestic philosopher in the original language more frequently and more carefully than ourselves; and few, if any, with more profit than Shelley. Although the source, whence flowed our earliest taste of the divine philosophy, was scanty and turbid, the draught was not the less grateful to our lips: our zeal in some measure atoned for our poverty.

Shelley was never weary of reading, or of listening to me whilst I read, passages from the dialogues contained in this collection, and especially from the *Phædo*, and he was vehemently excited by the striking doctrines which Socrates unfolds, especially by that which teaches that all our knowledge consists of reminiscences of what we had learned in a former existence. He often rose, paced slowly about the room, shook his long wild locks, and discoursed in a solemn tone and with a mysterious ~~sair~~, speculating concerning our previous condition, and the nature of our life and occupations in that world, where, according to Plato, we had attained to erudition, and had advanced ourselves in knowledge so far that the most studious and the most inventive, or in other words, those who have the best memory, are able to call back a part only, and with much pain and extreme difficulty, of what was formerly familiar to us.

It is hazardous, however, to speak of his earliest efforts as a Platonist, lest they should be confounded with his subsequent advancement; it is not easy to describe his first introduction to the exalted wisdom of antiquity without borrowing inadvertently from the knowledge which he afterwards acquired. The cold, ungenial, foggy atmosphere of northern metaphysics was less suited to the ardent temperament of his soul, than the warm,

bright, vivifying climate of the southern and eastern philosophy; his genius expanded under the benign influence of the latter, and he derived copious instruction from a luminous system, that is only dark through excess of brightness, and seems obscure to vulgar vision through its extreme radiance. Nevertheless, in argument—and to argue on all questions was his dominant passion—he usually adopted the scheme of the sceptics, partly, perhaps, because it was more popular and is more generally understood: the disputant, who would use Plato as his text-book in this age, would reduce his opponents to a small number indeed.

The study of that highest department of ethics, which includes all the inferior branches, and is directed towards the noblest and most important ends, of jurisprudence, was always next my heart; at an early age it attracted my attention.

When I first endeavoured to turn the regard of Shelley towards this engaging pursuit, he strongly expressed a very decided aversion to such inquiries, deeming them worthless and illiberal. The beautiful theory of the art of right, and the honourable office of administering distributive justice, have been brought into general discredit, unhappily for the best interests of humanity, and to the vast detriment of the state, into unmerited disgrace in the modern world by the errors of practitioners. An ingenuous mind instinctively shrinks from the contemplation of legal topics, because the word law is associated with and inevitably calls up the idea of the low chicanery of a pettifogging attorney, of the vulgar oppression and gross insolence of a bailiff, or, at best, of the wearisome and unmeaning tautology that distends an Act of Parliament, and the dull dropsical compositions of the special pleader, the conveyancer, or other draughtsman.

In no country is this unhappy debasement of a most illustrious science more remarkable than in our own; no other nation is so prone to, or so patient of abuses; in no other land are posts in themselves honourable so accessible to the meanest. The spirit of trade favours the degradation, and every commercial town is a well-spring of vulgarity, which sends forth hosts of practitioners devoid of the solid and elegant attainments which could sustain the credit of the science, but so strong in the artifices that insure success, as not only to monopolize the rewards due to merit, but sometimes even to climb the judgment-seat.

It is not wonderful, therefore, that generous minds, until they

have been taught to discriminate, and to distinguish a noble science from ignoble practices, should usually confound them together, hastily condemning the former with the latter. Shelley listened with much attention to questions of natural law, and with the warm interest that he felt in all metaphysical disquisitions, after he had conquered his first prejudice against practical jurisprudence.

The science of right, like other profound and extensive sciences, can only be acquired completely when the foundations have been laid at an early age: had the energies of Shelley's vigorous mind taken this direction at that time, it is impossible to doubt that he would have become a distinguished jurist. Besides that fondness for such inquiries, which is necessary to success in any liberal pursuit, he displayed the most acute sensitiveness of injustice, however slight, and a vivid perception of inconvenience. As soon as a wrong, arising from a proposed enactment, or a supposed decision was suggested, he instantly rushed into the opposite extreme; and when a greater evil was shown to result from the contrary course which he had so hastily adopted, his intellect was roused, and he endeavoured most earnestly to ascertain the true mean that would secure the just by avoiding the unjust extremes.

I have observed in young men that the propensity to plunge headlong into a net of difficulty on being startled at an apparent want of equity in any rule that was propounded, although at first it might seem to imply a lack of caution and foresight—which are eminently the virtues of legislators and of judges—was an unerring prognostic of a natural aptitude for pursuits, wherein eminence is inconsistent with an inertness of the moral sense and a recklessness of the violation of rights, however remote and trifling. Various instances of such aptitude in Shelley might be furnished, but these studies are interesting to a limited number of persons only.

As the mind of Shelley was apt to acquire many of the most valuable branches of liberal knowledge, so there were other portions comprised within the circle of science, for the reception of which, however active and acute, it was entirely unfit. He rejected with marvellous impatience every mathematical discipline that was offered; no problem could awaken the slightest curiosity, nor could he be made sensible of the beauty of any theorem. The method of demonstration had no charms for him; he complained of the insufferable prolixity and the vast tautology of Euclid and the other ancient geometers;

and when the discoveries of modern analysts were presented, he was immediately distracted, and fell into endless musings.

With respect to the Oriental tongues, he coldly observed that the appearance of the characters was curious. Although he perused with more than ordinary eagerness the relations of travellers in the East, and the translations of the marvellous tales of Oriental fancy, he was not attracted by the desire to penetrate the languages which veil these treasures. He would never deign to lend an ear, or an eye, for a moment to my Hebrew studies, in which I had made at that time some small progress; nor could he be tempted to inquire into the value of the singular lore of the Rabbins.

He was able, like the many, to distinguish a violet from a sunflower, and a cauliflower from a peony: but his botanical knowledge was more limited than that of the least skilful of common observers, for he was neglectful of flowers. He was incapable of apprehending the delicate distinctions of structure which form the basis of the beautiful classification of modern botanists. I was never able to impart even a glimpse of the merits of Ray, or Linnæus, or to encourage a hope that he would ever be competent to see the visible analogies that constitute the marked, yet mutually approaching *genera*, into which the productions of nature, and especially vegetables, are divided.

It may seem invidious to notice imperfections in a mind of the highest order, but the exercise of a due candour, however unwelcome, is required to satisfy those who were not acquainted with Shelley, that the admiration excited by his marvellous talents and manifold virtues in all who were so fortunate as to enjoy the opportunity of examining his merits by frequent intercourse, was not the result of the blind partiality that amiable and innocent dispositions, attractive manners, and a noble and generous bearing sometimes create.

Shelley was always unwilling to visit the remarkable specimens of architecture, the objects of art, and the various antiquities that adorn Oxford; although, if he encountered them by accident, and they were pointed out to him, he admired them more sincerely and heartily than the generality of strangers, who, through compliance with fashion, ostentatiously sought them out. His favourite recreation, as I have already stated, was a free, unrestrained ramble into the country.

After quitting the city and its environs by walking briskly along the highway for several miles, it was his delight to strike boldly into the fields, to cross the country daringly on foot, as

is usual with sportsmen in shooting; to perform, as it were, a pedestrian steeplechase. He was strong, light, and active, and in all respects well suited for such exploits, and we used frequently to traverse a considerable tract in this manner, especially when the frost had dried the land, had given complete solidity to the most treacherous paths, and had thrown a natural bridge over spots that in open weather during the winter would have been nearly impassable.

By resolutely piercing through a district in this manner, we often stumbled upon objects in our humble travels that created a certain surprise and interest: some of them are still fresh in my recollection. My susceptible companion was occasionally much delighted and strongly excited by incidents that would perhaps have seemed unimportant trifles to others.

One day we had penetrated somewhat farther than usual, for the ground was in excellent order, and as the day was intensely cold, although bright and sunny, we had pushed on with uncommon speed. I do not remember the direction we took; nor can I even determine on which side of the Thames our course lay. We had crossed roads and lanes, and had traversed open fields and enclosures; some tall and ancient trees were on our right hand; we skirted a little wood, and presently came to a small copse. It was guarded by an old hedge, or thicket; we were deflected, therefore, from our onward course towards the left, and we were winding round it, when the quick eye of my companion perceived a gap; he instantly dashed in with as much alacrity as if he had suddenly caught a glimpse of a pheasant that he had lately wounded in a district where such game was scarce, and he disappeared in a moment.

I followed him, but with less ardour, and passing through a narrow belt of wood and thicket, I presently found him standing motionless in one of his picturesque attitudes, riveted to the earth in speechless astonishment. He had thrown himself thus precipitately into a trim flower-garden, of a circular, or rather an oval form, of small dimensions, encompassed by a narrow, but close girdle of trees and underwood; it was apparently remote from all habitations, and it contrasted strongly with the bleak and bare country through which we had recently passed.

Had the secluded scene been bright with the gay flowers of spring, with hyacinths and tulips; had it been powdered with mealy auriculas, or conspicuous for a gaudy show of all anemones and of every ranunculus; had it been profusely decorated by the innumerable roses of summer, it would be easy to understand

why it was so cheerful. But we were now in the very heart of winter, and after much frost scarcely a single wretched brumal flower lingered and languished. There was no foliage, save the dark leaves of evergreens, and of them there were many, especially around and on the edges of the magic circle, on which account possibly, but chiefly perhaps through the symmetry of the numerous small parterres, the scrupulous neatness of the corresponding walks, the just ordonnance and disposition of certain benches, the integrity and freshness of the green trellises, and of the skeletons of some arbours, and through every leafless excellence which the dried anatomy of a flower-garden can exhibit, its past and its future wealth seemed to shine forth in its present poverty, and its potential glories adorned its actual disgrace.

The sudden transition from the rugged fields to this garnished and decorated retreat was striking, and held my imagination captive a few moments; the impression, however, would probably have soon faded from my memory, had it not been fixed there by the recollection of the beings who gave animation and a permanent interest to the polished nook.

We admired the trim and retired garden for some minutes in silence, and afterwards each answered in monosyllables the other's brief expressions of wonder. Neither of us had advanced a single step beyond the edge of the thicket through which we had entered; but I was about to proceed, and to walk round the magic circle, in order fully to survey the place, when Shelley startled me by turning with astonishing rapidity and dashing through the bushes and the gap in the fence with the mysterious and whimsical agility of a kangaroo. Had he caught a glimpse of a tiger crouching behind the laurels, and preparing to spring upon him, he could not have vanished more promptly, or more silently. I was habituated to his abrupt movements, nevertheless his alacrity surprised me, and I tried in vain to discover what object had scared him away. I retired, therefore, to the gap, and when I reached it I saw him already at some distance, proceeding with gigantic strides nearly in the same route by which we came. I ran after him, and when I rejoined him, he had halted upon a turnpike road, and was hesitating as to the course he ought to pursue. It was our custom to advance across the country as far as the utmost limits of our time would permit, and to go back to Oxford by the first public road we found, after attaining the extreme distance to which we could venture to wander.

Having ascertained the route homeward, we pursued it quickly, as we were wont, but less rapidly than Shelley had commenced his hasty retreat. He had perceived that the garden was attached to a gentleman's house, and he had consequently quitted it thus precipitately. I had already observed on the right a winding path that led through a plantation to certain offices, which showed that a house was about a quarter of a mile from the spot where I then stood.

Had I been aware that the garden was connected with a residence, I certainly should not have trespassed upon it; but having entered unconsciously, and since the owner was too far removed to be annoyed by observing the intrusion, I was tempted to remain a short time to examine a spot which, during my brief visit, seemed so singular. The superior and highly sensitive delicacy of my companion instantly took the alarm on discovering indications of a neighbouring mansion: hence his marvellous precipitancy in withdrawing himself from the garnished retirement he had unwittingly penetrated; and we had advanced some distance along the road before he had entirely overcome his modest confusion.

Shelley had looked on the ornate enclosure with a poet's eye, and as we hastily pursued our course towards Oxford by the frozen and sounding way, whilst the day rapidly declined, he discoursed of it fancifully, and with a more glowing animation than ordinary, like one agitated by a divine fury, and by the impulse of inspiring Deity. He continued, indeed, so long to enlarge upon the marvels of the enchanted grove, that I hinted the enchantress might possibly be at hand, and since he was so eloquent concerning the nest, what would have been his astonishment had he been permitted to see the bird herself.

He sometimes described with a curious fastidiousness the qualities, which a female must possess, to kindle the fire of love in his bosom: the imaginative youth supposed that he was to be moved by the most absolute perfection alone. It is equally impossible to doubt the exquisite refinement of his taste, or the boundless power of the most mighty of divinities; to refuse to believe that he was a just and skilful critic of feminine beauty and grace, and of whatever is attractive, or that he was never practically as blind, at the least, as men of ordinary talent. How sadly should we disparage the triumphs of Love were we to maintain that he is able to lead astray the senses of the vulgar alone!

In the theory of love, however, a poet will rarely err Shelley's

lively fancy had painted a goodly portraiture of the mistress of the fair garden, nor were apt words wanting to convey to me a faithful copy of the bright original. It would be a cruel injustice to an orator, should a plain man attempt, after a silence of more than twenty years, to revive his glowing harangue from faded recollections; I will not seek, therefore, to portray the likeness of the ideal nymph of the flower-garden.

'Since your fairy gardener', I said, 'has so completely taken possession of your imagination'—and he was wonderfully excited by the unexpected scene and his own splendid decorations—'it is a pity we did not notice the situation, for I am quite sure I should not be able to return thither, to recover your Eden and the Eve, whom you created to till it; and I doubt whether you could guide me.'

He acknowledged that he was as incapable of finding it again, as of leading me to that paradise, to which I had compared it.

'You may laugh at my enthusiasm,' he continued, 'but you must allow that you were not less struck by the singularity of that mysterious corner of the earth than myself; you are equally entitled, therefore, to dwell there, at least in fancy, and to find a partner whose character will harmonize with the genius of the place.'

He then declared, that henceforth it should be deemed the possession of two tutelary nymphs, not of one; and he proceeded, with unabated fervour, to delineate the second patroness, and to distinguish her from the first.

'No!' he exclaimed, pausing in the rapid career of words, and for a while he was somewhat troubled, 'the seclusion is too sweet, too holy, to be the theatre of ordinary love; the love of the sexes, however pure, still retains some taint of earthly grossness; we must not admit it within the sanctuary.'

He was silent for several minutes, and his anxiety visibly increased.

'The love of a mother for her child is more refined; it is more disinterested, more spiritual; but', he added, after some reflection, 'the very existence of the child still connects it with the passion, which we have discarded'; and he relapsed into his former musings.

'The love a sister bears towards a sister', he exclaimed abruptly, and with an air of triumph, 'is unexceptionable.'

The idea pleased him, and as he strode along he assigned the trim garden to two sisters, affirming, with the confidence of an inventor, that it owed its neatness to the assiduous culture of

their neat hands; that it was their constant haunt; the care of it their favourite pastime, and its prosperity, next after the welfare of each other, the chief wish of both. He described their appearance, their habits, their feelings, and drew a lovely picture of their amiable and innocent attachment; of the meek and dutiful regard of the younger, which partook, in some degree, of filial reverence, but was more facile and familiar; and of the protecting, instructing, hoping fondness of the elder, that resembled maternal tenderness, but had less of reserve and more of sympathy. In no other relation could the intimacy be equally perfect; not even between brothers, for their life is less domestic; there is a separation in their pursuits, and an independence in the masculine character. The occupations of all females of the same age and rank are the same, and by night sisters cherish each other in the same quiet nest. Their union wears not only the grace of delicacy, but of fragility also; for it is always liable to be suddenly destroyed by the marriage of either party, or at least to be interrupted and suspended for an indefinite period.

He depicted so eloquently the excellence of sisterly affection, and he drew so distinctly, and so minutely, the image of the two sisters, to whom he chose to ascribe the unusual comeliness of the spot into which we had unintentionally intruded, that the trifling incident has been impressed upon my memory, and has been intimately associated in my mind, through his creations, with his poetic character.

The prince of Roman eloquence affirms that the good man alone can be a perfect orator — and truly, for without the weight of a spotless reputation, it is certain that the most artful and elaborate discourses must want authority, the main ingredient in persuasion.

The position is, at least, equally true of the poet, whose grand strength always lies in the ethical force of his compositions; and these are great in proportion to the efficient greatness of their moral purpose. If, therefore, we would criticize poetry correctly, and from the foundation, it behoves us to examine the morality of the bard.

In no individual, perhaps, was the moral sense ever more completely developed than in Shelley; in no being was the perception of right and of wrong more acute. The biographer who takes upon himself the pleasing and instructive, but difficult and delicate task of composing a faithful history of his whole life, will frequently be compelled to discuss the important questions, whether his conduct, at certain periods, was altogether

such as ought to be proposed for imitation; whether he was ever misled by an ardent imagination, a glowing temperament, something of hastiness in choice, and a certain constitutional impatience; whether, like less gifted mortals, he ever shared in the common portion of mortality—repentance; and to what extent?

Such inquiries, however, do not fall within the compass of a brief narrative of his career at the university. The unmatured mind of a boy is capable of good intentions only, and of generous and kindly feelings, and these were pre-eminent in him. It will be proper to unfold the excellence of his dispositions, not for the sake of vain and empty praise, but simply to show his aptitude to receive the sweet fury of the Muses.

His inextinguishable thirst for knowledge, his boundless philanthropy, his fearless, it may be, his almost imprudent, pursuit of truth, have been already exhibited. If mercy to beasts be a criterion of a good man, numerous instances of extreme tenderness would demonstrate his worth. I will mention one only.

We were walking one afternoon in Bagley Wood; on turning a corner, we suddenly came upon a boy who was driving an ass. It was very young and very weak, and was staggering beneath a most disproportionate load of faggots, and he was belabouring its lean ribs angrily and violently with a short, thick, heavy cudgel.

At the sight of cruelty Shelley was instantly transported far beyond the usual measure of excitement: he sprang forward, and was about to interpose with energetic and indignant vehemence. I caught him by the arm, and to his present annoyance held him back, and with much difficulty persuaded him to allow me to be the advocate of the dumb animal. His cheeks glowed with displeasure, and his lips murmured his impatience during my brief dialogue with the young tyrant.

'That is a sorry little ass, boy', I said; 'it seems to have scarcely any strength.'

'None at all; it is good for nothing.'

'It cannot get on; it can hardly stand; if anybody could make it go, you would; you have taken great pains with it.'

'Yes, I have; but it is to no purpose!'

'It is of little use striking it, I think.'

'It is not worth beating; the stupid beast has got more wood now than it can carry; it can hardly stand, you see!'

'I suppose it put it upon its back itself?'

The boy was silent: I repeated the question.

'No; it has not sense enough for that', he replied, with an incredulous leer.

By dint of repeated blows he had split one end of his cudgel, and the sound caused by the divided portion had alarmed Shelley's humanity: I pointed to it and said: 'You have split your stick; it is not good for much now.'

He turned it, and held the divided end in his hand.

'The other end is whole, I see; but I suppose you could split that too on the ass's back, if you chose; it is not so thick.'

'It is not so thick, but it is full of knots; it would take a great deal of trouble to split it, and the beast is not worth that; it would do no good!'

'It would do no good, certainly; and if anybody saw you, he might say that you were a savage young ruffian, and that you ought to be served in the same manner yourself.'

The fellow looked at me with some surprise, and sank into sullen silence.

He presently threw his cudgel into the wood as far as he was able, and began to amuse himself by pelting the birds with pebbles, leaving my long-eared client to proceed at its own pace, having made up his mind, perhaps, to be beaten himself, when he reached home, by a tyrant still more unreasonable than himself, on account of the inevitable default of his ass.

Shelley was satisfied with the result of our conversation, and I repeated to him the history of the injudicious and unfortunate interference of Don Quixote between the peasant, John Haldudo, and his servant, Andrew. Although he reluctantly admitted, that the acrimony of humanity might often aggravate the sufferings of the oppressed by provoking the oppressor, I always observed, that the impulse of generous indignation, on witnessing the infliction of pain, was too vivid to allow him to pause and consider the probable consequences of the abrupt interposition of the knight errantry, which would at once redress all grievances. Such exquisite sensibility and a sympathy with suffering so acute and so uncontrolled may possibly be inconsistent with the calmness and forethought of the philosopher, but they accord well with the high temperature of a poet's blood.

As his port had the meekness of a maiden, so the heart of the young virgin who has never crossed her father's threshold to encounter the rude world, could not be more susceptible of all the sweet domestic charities than his: in this respect Shelley's disposition would happily illustrate the innocence and virginity of the Muses.

In most men, and especially in very young men, an excessive addiction to study tends to chill the heart, and to blunt the feelings, by engrossing the attention. Notwithstanding his extreme devotion to literature, and amidst his various and ardent speculations, he retained a most affectionate regard for his relations, and particularly for the females of his family; it was not without manifest joy that he received a letter from his mother, or his sisters.

A child of genius is seldom duly appreciated by the world during his life, least of all by his own kindred. The parents of a man of talent may claim the honour of having given him birth, yet they commonly enjoy but little of his society. Whilst we hang with delight over the immortal pages, we are apt to suppose that the gifted author was fondly cherished; that a possession so uncommon and so precious was highly prized; that his contemporaries anxiously watched his going out, and eagerly looked for his coming in; for we should ourselves have borne him tenderly in our hands, that he might not dash his foot against a stone. Surely such a one was given in charge to angels, we cry. On the contrarv, Nature appears most unaccountably to slight a gift that she gave grudgingly; as if it were of small value, and easily replaced.

An unusual number of books, Greek or Latin classics, each inscribed with the name of the donor, which had been presented to him, according to the custom, on quitting Eton, attested that Shelley had been popular among his schoolfellows. Many of them were then at Oxford, and they frequently called at his rooms: although he spoke of them with regard, he generally avoided their society, for it interfered with his beloved study, and interrupted the pursuits to which he ardently and entirely devoted himself.

In the nine centuries that elapsed from the time of our great founder, Alfred, to our days, there never was a student who more richly merited the favour and assistance of a learned body, or whose fruitful mind would have repaid with a larger harvest, the labour of careful and judicious cultivation. And such cultivation he was well entitled to receive. Nor did his scholar-like virtues merit neglect; still less to be betrayed, like the young nobles of Falisci, by a traitorous schoolmaster, to an enemy less generous than Camillus. No student ever read more assiduously. He was to be found, book in hand, at all hours; reading in season and out of season; at table, in bed, and especially during a walk; not only in the quiet country, and in retired paths; not only

at Oxford, in the public walks, and High Street, but in the most crowded thoroughfares of London. Nor was he less absorbed by the volume that was open before him, in Cheapside, in Cranbourne Alley, or in Bond Street, than in a lonely lane, or a secluded library.

Sometimes a vulgar fellow would attempt to insult or annoy the eccentric student in passing. Shelley always avoided the malignant interruption by stepping aside with his vast and quiet agility.

Sometimes I have observed, as an agreeable contrast to these wretched men, that persons of the humblest station have paused and gazed with respectful wonder as he advanced, almost unconscious of the throng, stooping low, with bent knees and out-stretched neck, poring earnestly over the volume, which he extended before him: for they knew this, although the simple people knew but little, that an ardent scholar is worthy of deference, and that the man of learning is necessarily the friend of humanity, and especially of the many. I never beheld eyes that devoured the pages more voraciously than his: I am convinced that two-thirds of the period of day and night were often employed in reading. It is no exaggeration to affirm, that out of the twenty-four hours, he frequently read sixteen. At Oxford, his diligence in this respect was exemplary, but it greatly increased afterwards, and I sometimes thought that he carried it to a pernicious excess: I am sure, at least, that I was unable to keep pace with him.

On the evening of a wet day, when we had read with scarcely any intermission from an early hour in the morning, I have urged him to lay aside his book. It required some extravagance to rouse him to join heartily in conversation; to tempt him to avoid the chimney-piece, on which commonly he had laid the open volume.

'If I were to read as long as you read, Shelley, my hair and my teeth would be strewed about on the floor, and my eyes would slip down my cheeks into my waistcoat pockets; or at least I should become so weary and nervous that I should not know whether it were so or not.'

He began to scrape the carpet with his feet, as if teeth were actually lying upon it, and he looked fixedly at my face, and his lively fancy represented the empty sockets; his imagination was excited, and the spell that bound him to his books was broken, and, creeping close to the fire, and, as it were, under the fire-place, he commenced a most animated discourse. Few were

aware of the extent, and still fewer, I apprehend, of the profundity of his reading; in his short life, and without ostentation, he had, in truth, read more Greek than many an aged pedant, who, with pompous parade, prides himself upon this study alone. Although he had not entered critically into the minute niceties of the noblest of languages, he was thoroughly conversant with the valuable matter it contains. A pocket edition of Plato, of Plutarch, of Euripides, without interpretation or notes, or of the Septuagint, was his ordinary companion; and he read the text straightforward for hours, if not as readily as an English author, at least with as much facility as French, Italian, or Spanish.

'Upon my soul, Shelley, your style of going through a Greek book is something quite beautiful!' was the wondering exclamation of one who was himself no mean student.

As his love of intellectual pursuits was vehement, and the vigour of his genius almost celestial, so were the purity and sanctity of his life most conspicuous.

His food was plain and simple as that of a hermit, with a certain anticipation, even at this time, of a vegetable diet, respecting which he afterwards became an enthusiast in theory, and in practice an irregular votary.

With his usual fondness for moving the abstruse and difficult questions of the highest theology, he loved to inquire, whether man can justify, on the ground of reason alone, the practice of taking the life of the inferior animals, except in the necessary defence of his life and of his means of life, the fruits of that field which he has tilled, from violence and spoliation.

'Not only have considerable sects', he would say, 'denied the right altogether, but those among the tender-hearted and imaginative people of antiquity, who accounted it lawful to kill and eat, appear to have doubted, whether they might take away life merely for the use of man alone. They slew their cattle not simply for human guests, like the less scrupulous butchers of modern times, but only as a sacrifice, for the honour and in the name of the Deity; or rather of those subordinate divinities, to whom, as they believed, the Supreme Being had assigned the creation and conservation of the visible material world; as an incident to these pious offerings, they partook of the residue of the victims, of which, without such sanction and sanctification, they would not have presumed to taste. So reverent was the caution of humane and prudent antiquity!'

Bread became his chief sustenance, when his regimen attained

to that austerity which afterwards distinguished it. He could have lived on bread alone without repining. When he was walking in London with an acquaintance, he would suddenly run into a baker's shop, purchase a supply, and breaking a loaf, he would offer half of it to his companion.

'Do you know', he said to me one day, with much surprise, 'that such a one does not like bread? Did you ever know a person who disliked bread?' and he told me that a friend had refused such an offer.

I explained to him that the individual in question probably had no objection to bread in a moderate quantity, at a proper time and with the usual adjuncts, and was only unwilling to devour two or three pounds of dry bread in the streets, and at an early hour.

Shelley had no such scruple; his pockets were generally well-stored with bread. A circle upon the carpet, clearly defined by an ample verge of crumbs, often marked the place where he had long sat at his studies, his face nearly in contact with his book, greedily devouring bread at intervals amidst his profound abstractions. For the most part he took no condiment; sometimes, however, he ate with his bread the common raisins which are used in making puddings, and these he would buy at little mean shops.

He was walking one day in London with a respectable solicitor, who occasionally transacted business for him; with his accustomed precipitation he suddenly vanished, and as suddenly reappeared; he had entered the shop of a little grocer in an obscure quarter, and had returned with some plums, which he held close under the attorney's nose, and the man of fact was as much astonished at the offer, as his client, the man of fancy, at the refusal.

The common fruit of stalls, and oranges and apples, were always welcome to Shelley; he would crunch the latter as heartily as a schoolboy. Vegetables, and especially salads, and pies and puddings, were acceptable: his beverage consisted of copious and frequent draughts of cold water, but tea was ever grateful, cup after cup, and coffee. Wine was taken with singular moderation, commonly diluted largely with water, and for a long period he would abstain from it altogether; he avoided the use of spirits almost invariably, and even in the most minute portions.

Like all persons of simple tastes, he retained his sweet tooth; he would greedily eat cakes, gingerbread, and sugar; honey,

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

These particulars may seem trifling, if indeed anything can be little that has reference to a character truly great; but they prove how much he was ashamed that his soul was in body, and illustrate the virgin abstinence of a mind equally favoured by the Muses, the Graces, and Philosophy. It is true, however, that his application at Oxford, although exemplary, was not so unremitting as it afterwards became; nor was his diet, although singularly temperate, so meagre; however, his mode of living already offered a foretaste of the studious seclusion and absolute renunciation of every luxurious indulgence which ennobled him a few years later.

Had a parent desired that his children should be exactly trained to an ascetic life, and should be taught by an eminent example to scorn delights and to live laborious days; that they should behold a pattern of native innocence and genuine simplicity of manners; he would have consigned them to his house as to a temple, or to some primitive and still unsophisticated monastery.

It is an invidious thing to compose a perpetual panegyric, yet it is difficult to speak of Shelley, and impossible to speak justly, without often praising him; it is difficult also to divest myself of later recollections; to forget for a while what he became in days subsequent, and to remember only what he then was, when we were fellow-collegians. It is difficult, moreover, to view him with the mind which I then bore—with a young mind; to lay aside the seriousness of old age; for twenty years of assiduous study have induced, if not in the body, at least within, something of premature old age.

It now seems an incredible thing, and altogether inconceivable, when I consider the gravity of Shelley and his invincible repugnance to the comic, that the monkey tricks of the school-boy could have still lingered, but it is certain that some slight vestiges still remained. The metaphysician of eighteen actually attempted once or twice to electrify the son of his scout, a boy like a sheep, by name James, who roared aloud with ludicrous and stupid terror, whenever Shelley affected to bring by stealth any part of his philosophical apparatus near to him

As Shelley's health and strength were visibly augmented, if by accident he was obliged to accept a more generous diet than ordinary, and as his mind sometimes appeared to be exhausted by never-ending toil, I often blamed his abstinence and his perpetual application. It is the office of a university, of a public institution for education, not only to apply the spur to the sluggish, but also to rein in the young steed, that, being too mettlesome, hastens with undue speed towards the goal.

'It is a very odd thing, but every woman can live with my lord and do just what she pleases with him, except my lady!' Such was the shrewd remark, which a long familiarity taught an old and attached servant to utter respecting his master, a noble poet.

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

Heaven's exile straying from the orb of light;

had that most awful responsibility, the right institution of those, to whom are to be consigned the government of the country and the conservation of whatever good human society has elaborated and excogitated, duly weighed upon the consciences of his instructors, they would have gained his entire confidence by frank kindness, they would have repressed his too eager impatience to master the sum of knowledge, they would have mitigated the rigorous austerity of his course of living, and they would have remitted the extreme tension of his soul by reconciling him to liberal mirth; convincing him that if life be not wholly a jest, there are at least many comic scenes occasionally interspersed in the great drama. Nor is the last benefit of trifling importance, for, as an unseemly and excessive gravity is usually the sign of a dull fellow, so is the prevalence of this defect the characteristic of an unlearned and illiberal age.

Shelley was actually offended, and indeed more indignant than would appear to be consistent with the singular mildness of his nature, at a coarse and awkward jest, especially if it were immodest, or uncleanly; in the latter case his anger was unbounded, and his uneasiness pre-eminent; he was, however, sometimes vehemently delighted by exquisite and delicate sallies, particularly with a fanciful, and perhaps somewhat fantastical, facetiousness—possibly the more because he was himself utterly incapable of pleasantry.

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

CHAPTER IV

ONE morning, a few days after I made Shelley's acquaintance, I was at his rooms, and we were reading together, two Etonians called on him, as they were wont to do; they remained a short time conversing with him.

'Do you mean to be an Atheist here, too, Shelley?' one of them inquired.

'No!' he answered, 'certainly not. There is no motive for it; there would be no use in it; they are very civil to us here; they never interfere with us; it is not like Eton.'

To this they both assented. When his visitors were gone, I asked him what they meant. He told me that at Eton he had been called Shelley the Atheist; and he explained to me the true signification of the epithet. This is the substance of his explanation:

All persons who are familiar with public schools are well aware that there is a set of nicknames, many of them denoting offices, as the Pope, the Bishop, the Major, the General, the Governor, and the like, and these are commonly filled by successive generations. At Eton, but at no other school, that I ever heard of, they had the name and office of Atheist; but this usually was not full, it demanded extraordinary daring to attain it; it was commonly in commission, as it were, and the youths of the greatest hardihood might be considered as boys commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Atheist.

Shelley's predecessor had filled the office some years before his time; he also was called Blank the Atheist, we must say, for I have forgotten his name. The act of Atheism, in virtue of which he obtained the title, was gross, flagrant, and downright.

A huge bunch of grapes, richly gilded, hung in front of 'The Christopher', as the sign, or in aid of the sign, of the inn. This the profane young wretch took down one dark winter's night, and suspended at the door of the headmaster of his day. In the morning, when he rushed out in the twilight to go to chapel, being habitually too late, and always in a hurry, he ran full butt against the bunch of grapes, which was at least as big as

himself, a little man. From this it is evident that the word Atheist was used by the learned at Eton, not in a modern, but in an ancient and classical sense, meaning an Antitheist, rather than an Atheist; for an opposer and contemner of the gods, not one who denies their existence.

Capaneus, Salmoeneus, the Cyclops, and the other strong spirits of the olden time, were termed *ἀθεοί*, because they insulted and defied their deities; not because they doubted, or denied, that they existed.

The gods of Eton were the authorities of the school; nobody ever denied the existence of Old Keate, but many a lad of pluck did everything in his power to torment the old boy; and amongst these Shelley was conspicuous; he held the fulminating Jove in scorn, and despised his birchen thunderbolts.

It was for contumaciously setting the old tree on fire, of which we have spoken, that he first obtained the full title of Shelley the Atheist, which he held and enjoyed so long as he remained at school.

Two or three Eton boys called another day, and begged their former schoolfellow to curse his father and the king, as he used occasionally to do at school. Shelley refused, and for some time persisted in his refusal, saying that he had left it off; but as they continued to urge him, by reason of their impotency he suddenly broke out, and delivered, with vehemence and animation, a string of execrations, greatly resembling in its absurdity a papal anathema; the fulmination soon terminated in a hearty laugh, in which we all joined. When we were alone, I said:

'Why, you young reprobate, who in the world taught you to curse your father—your own father?'

'My grandfather, Sir Bysshe, partly; but principally my friend, Dr. Lind, at Eton. When anything goes wrong at Field Place, my father does nothing but swear all day long afterwards. Whenever I have gone with my father to visit Sir Bysshe, he always received him with a tremendous oath, and continued to heap curses upon his head so long as he remained in the room.'

Sir Bysshe being Ogygian, gouty, and bed-ridden, the poor old baronet had become excessively testy and irritable; and a request for money instantly aggravated and inflamed every symptom, moved his choler, and stirred up his bile, impelling him irresistibly to alleviate his sufferings by the roundest oaths.

The grandson gave me some choice specimens of his grandfather's male and nervous eloquence in that peculiar depart-



.ROBERT SOUTHEY
From a print in the British Museum

ment of oratory. Dr. Lind communicated to Shelley a taste for chemistry and chemical experiments, as has been before stated; the mild, the amiable, the gentle Dr. Lind, also taught his young pupil how to deal damnation round the land.

Shelley invariably spoke with respect, regard, and gratitude of Dr. Lind, and of the injuries which the doctor had received, whatever they might be, with indignant sympathy. He used to go to tea with the meek and benevolent physician at Eton; and after tea they used to curse King George the Third, for the doctor had really been, or firmly believed that he had been, cruelly wronged by that pious and domestic, but obstinate and impracticable monarch.

After a light and digestible repast of tea—made by the daughter, or niece of the doctor, with a proper regard, doubtless, for the nervous system, and of bread and butter prepared upon sanatory principles, the butter being thinly superinduced upon bread, the stalest that could be procured, or of the same bread lightly toasted, and to be taken without any condiment—the execrations began.

After the salubrious meal, the good old doctor proceeded solemnly to launch the greater excommunication against the father of his people, who, he thought, had acted like a step-father to himself, and the rest joined in the condemnatory rite: in what precise form of words Miss Lind chimed in, I never heard. From cursing the father of his people it was an easy and natural transition to curse his own natural father.

The diræ, as they were recited before me once, and once only, were of a peculiar character, differing much from ordinary execrations, and they operated, if at all, demoniacally, by devoting their object to the evil spirits and infernal gods; whatever else might be the effect of these curses they certainly did not shorten life, either in the case of the excommunicated monarch, or of his liege man, old Timotheus. The denunciations at Oxford were plainly a joke; of the estimable, but angry doctor's vehement scolding, without having heard him, it would be unfair to form any judgment. Shelley had a decided inclination for magic, demonology, incantations, raising the dead, evoking spirits and devils, seeing ghosts, and chatting familiarly with apparitions, which led him to interesting reading, and curious and amusing investigations; it is probable that he picked up, or improved, these mediæval fancies at the physician's sober board. One thing at least is certain, the denial of the existence of gods, and devils, and spirits, if it was to be found in him at

all, was only to be found in his words and arguments; practically, his turn of mind was towards superstition, by no means towards irreligion and materialism.

FIELD PLACE, Dec. 20, 1810.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The moment which announces your residence, I write. There is now need of all my art; I must resort to deception.

My father called on S. in London, who has converted him to sanctity. He mentioned my name, as a supporter of sceptical principles. My father wrote to me, and I am now surrounded, environed by dangers, to which compared the devils, who besieged St. Anthony, were all inefficient. They attack me for my detestable principles; I am reckoned an outcast; yet I defy them, and laugh at their ineffectual efforts.

S. will no longer do for me; I am at a loss whom to select. S.'s skull is very thick, but I am afraid that he will not believe my assertion; indeed, should it gain credit with him, should he accept the offer of publication, there exist numbers who will find out, or imagine, a real tendency; and booksellers possess more power than we are aware of in impeding the sale of any book, containing opinions displeasing to them. I am disposed to offer it to Wilkie and Robinson, Paternoster Row, and to take it there myself; they published Godwin's works, and it is scarcely possible to suppose that any one, layman or clergyman, will assert that these support gospel doctrines. If that will not do, I must print it myself. Oxford, of course, would be most convenient for the correction of the press.

Mr. L.'s principles are not *very* severe: he is more a votary to Mammon than God.

O! I burn with impatience for the moment of the dissolution of intolerance; it has injured me. I swear on the altar of perjured Love to revenge myself on the hated cause of the effect, which *even now* I can scarcely help deploring. Indeed, I think it is to the benefit of society to destroy the opinions which can annihilate the dearest of its ties. Inconveniences would now result from my *owning* the novel, which I have in preparation for the press. I give out, therefore, that I will publish no more; every one here, but the select few who enter into its schemes, believe my assertion. I will stab the wretch in secret. Let us hope that the wound which I inflict, though the dagger be concealed, will rankle in the heart of the adversary.

My father wished to withdraw me from college: I would not consent to it. There lowers a terrific tempest, but I stand, as

it were, on a pharos, and smile exultingly at the vain beating of the billows below.

So much for egotism!

Your poetry pleases me very much; the idea is beautiful, but I hope that the contrast is not from nature. The verses on the Dying Gladiator are good, but they seem composed in a hurry. I am composing a *satirical* poem; I shall print it at Oxford, unless I find on visiting him that R. is ripe for printing whatever will sell. In case of that, he is my man.

It is not William Godwin who lives in Holborn: it is *John*, no relation to the other.

As to W., I wrote to him when in London, by way of a gentle alternative. He promised to write to me when he had time, seemed surprised at what I said, yet directed to me as the reverend: his amazement must be extreme.

I shall not read Bishop Prettyman, or any more of them, unless I have some particular reason. Bigots will not argue; it destroys the very nature of the thing to argue; it is contrary to *faith*. How, therefore, could you suppose that one of these *liberal* gentlemen would listen to scepticism, on the subject even of St. Athanasius's sweeping anathema?

I have something else to tell you, and I will in another letter.

Love! dearest, sweetest power! how much are we indebted to thee! How much superior are even thy miseries to the pleasures which arise from other sources! How much superior to 'fat, contented ignorance' is even the agony which thy votaries experience! Yes, my friend, I am now convinced that a monarchy is the only form of government (in a certain degree) which a lover ought to live under. Yet in this alone is subordination necessary. *Man* is equal, and I am convinced that equality will be the attendant on a more advanced and ameliorated state of society. But this is assertion, not proof—indeed, there can be none, then you will say; excuse my believing it; willingly.

St. Irvyne is come out; it is sent to you at Mr. Dayrell's; you can get one in London by mentioning my name to Stockdale; you need not state your own, and as names are not *now* inscribed on the front of every existing creature, you run no risk of discovery in person, if it be a crime or a sin to procure my novel.

How can you fancy that I shall ever think you mad; am not I the wildest, the most delirious of enthusiasm's offspring? On one subject I am cool, toleration; yet that coolness alone possesses me that I may with more certainty guide the spear

to the breast of my adversary, with more certainty ensanguine it with the heart's blood of Intolerance—hated name!

Adieu! Down with Bigotry! Down with Intolerance! In this endeavour your most sincere friend will join his every power, his every feeble resource Adieu!

To T. J. H.,
Lincoln's Inn Fields.

FIELD PLACE, Dec. 23, 1810.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The first desire which I felt on receiving your letters, was instantly to come to London, that a friend might sympathize in those sorrows, which are beyond alleviation. That I cannot do this week; on Sunday or Monday next I will come, if you still remain in town.

Why will you add to the never dying remorse, which my egotizing folly has occasioned, for which, so long as its fatal effects remain, never can I forgive myself, by accusing yourself of a feeling, as intrusive, which I cannot but regard as another part of that amiability, which has marked your character since first I had the happiness of your friendship. Where exists the moral wrong of seeking the society of one whom I loved? what offence to reason, to virtue, was there in desiring the communication of a lengthened correspondence, in order that both, she and myself, might see, if by coincidence of intellect we were willing to enter into a closer, an eternal union? No, it is no offence to reason, or virtue; it is obeying its most imperious dictates, it is complying with the designs of the author of our nature: can this be immorality? Can it be selfishness, or interested ambition, to seek the happiness of the object of attachment? I am sure, your own judgment, your own reason, must answer in the negative. Let me now ask you what reason was there then for *despair*, even supposing my love to have been incurable?

Her disposition was in all probability divested of the enthusiasm by which mine is characterized, could therefore hers be prophetic? She might not be susceptible of that feeling, which arises from an admiration of virtue, when abstracted from identity.

My sister attempted sometimes to plead my cause, but unsuccessfully. She said:

'Even supposing I take your representation of your brother's qualities and sentiments, which as you coincide in and admire, I may fairly imagine to be exaggerated, although *you* may not

be aware of the exaggeration; what right have *I*, admitting that he is so superior, to enter into an intimacy, which must end in delusive disappointment, when he finds how really inferior I am to the being which his heated imagination has pictured.'

This was unanswerable, particularly as the prejudiced description of a sister, who loves her brother as she does, might, indeed *must*, have given to her an erroneously exalted idea of the superiority of my mental attainments.

You have said that the philosophy which I pursued is not uncongenial with the strictest morality; you must see that it militates with the received opinions of the world; that, therefore, does it offend; but prejudice and superstition, that superstitious bigotry, inspired by the system upon which at present the world acts, of believing all that we are told as incontrovertible facts.

I hope that what I have said will induce you to allow me still, and all the more, to remain your friend.

I hope that you will soon have an opportunity of seeing, of conversing, with Elizabeth.

How sorry I am that I cannot invite you here now. I will tell you the reason when we meet. Believe me, my dear friend, when I assert, that I shall *ever* continue so to you. *I* have reason to lament deeply the sorrows with which fate has marked my life; I am not so deeply debased by it, however, that the exertions for the happiness of my friend shall supersede considerations of narrower and selfish interest, but that his woes should claim a sigh before one repining thought arose at my own lot. I know the cause of all human disappointment—worldly prejudice; mine is the same, I know also its origin—bigotry.

Adieu! Write again. Believe me your most sincere friend.
Adieu!

P. B. S.

To T. J. H.,
Lincoln's Inn Fields.

FIELD PLACE, Dec. 26, 1810.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Why do you express yourself so flatteringly grateful to me, when I ought to experience that sensation towards you in the highest manner of which our nature is capable? Why do you yet suppose that you have offended against any of those rules for our conduct which we ought to regard with veneration?

What is delicacy? Come, I must be severe with myself, I must irritate the wound which I wish to heal.

Supposing the object of my affections does not regard me, how have you transgressed against its dictates; in what have you offended? What is delicacy? Let us define it in the light in which you take it. I conceive it to be that inherent repugnance to injuring others, particularly as regarding the objects of their dearer preference, which beings of superior intelligence feel. In what then, let me ask again, if I do not think you culpable, in what, then, have you offended? Tell me, then, my dear friend, no more of sorrow, no more of remorse, at what you have said. Circumstances have operated in such a manner that the attainment of the object of my heart was impossible, whether on account of extraneous influences, or from a feeling which possessed her mind, which told her *not* to deceive another, not to give him the possibility of disappointment. I feel I touch the string, which, if vibrated, excites acute pain, but *truth*, and my real feelings, which I wish to give you a clear idea of, overcome my resolve never to speak on the subject again. It is with reluctance to my own feelings that I have entered into this cold disquisition, when your heart sympathizes so deeply in my affliction; but for Heaven's sake consider, and do not criminate yourself, do not wrong the motives, which actuated you upon so feeble a ground as that of *delicacy*. I do this, I say this, in justice as well as friendship; I demand that you should do *justice* to yourself, then no more is required to give you at all events a consciousness of rectitude.

I read most of your letters to my sister; she frequently inquires after you, and we talk of you often. I do not wish to awaken her intellect too powerfully; this must be my apology for not communicating all my speculations to her. Thanks, *truly* thanks for opening your heart to me, for telling me your feelings towards me. Dare I do the same to you? I dare not to myself, how can I to another, perfect as he may be? I dare not even to God, whose mercy is great. My unhappiness is excessive; but I will cease; I will no more speak in riddles, but now quit for *ever* a subject which awakens too powerful susceptibilities for even negative misery. But that which injured me shall perish! I even now by anticipation hear the expiring yell of intolerance! Pardon me! My sorrows are not so undeserved as you believe; they are obtrusive to narrate to myself; they must be so to you. Let me wish you an eternity of happiness! I wish you knew Elizabeth, she is a great consolation to me; but if all be well, my wishes on that score will soon be accomplished. On Monday night you will see me.

I cannot bear to suffer alone. Adieu! I have scarce a moment's time, only to tell you how sincerely I am your friend.

To T. J. H.,
Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.

FIELD PLACE, *Dec.* 28, 1810.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The encomium of one incapable of flattery is indeed flattering. Your discrimination of that chapter is more just than the praises which you bestow on so unconnected a thing as the romance taken collectively. I wish you very much to publish a tale; send one to a publisher. Oh, here we are in the midst of all the uncongenial jollities of Christmas, when you are compelled to contribute to the merriment of others—when you are compelled to live under the severest of all restraints, concealment of feelings pregnant enough in themselves, how terrible is your lot! I am learning abstraction, but I fear that my proficiency will be but trifling. I cannot, dare not, speak of myself. Why do you still continue to say, Do not despair, that you must not despair?

I admit that this despair would be unauthorized, when it was rational to suppose that at some future time mutual knowledge would awaken reciprocity of feeling.

Your letter arrived at a moment when I could least bear any additional excitement of feelings. I have succeeded now in calming my mind, but at first I knew not how to act; indecision and a fear of injuring another, by complying with what perhaps were the real wishes of my bosom, distracted me. I do not tell you this by way of confession of my own state, for I believe that I may not be sufficiently aware of what I feel myself, even to own it to myself. Believe me, my dear friend, that my only ultimate wishes *now* are for your happiness and that of my sisters. At present a thousand barriers oppose any more intimate connexion, any union with another, which, although unnatural and fettering to a virtuous mind, are nevertheless unconquerable.

I will, if possible, come to London on Monday, certainly some time next week. I shall come about six o'clock, and will remain with you until that time the next morning, when I will tell you my reasons for wishing to return. Adieu. Excuse the shortness of this, as the servant waits. I will write on Sunday.

Yours most sincerely.

To T. J. H., London.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

FIELD PLACE, Jan 2, 1811.

I cannot come to London before next week. I am but just returned to Field Place from an inefficient effort. Why do you, my happy friend, tell me of perfection in love? Is she not gone? And yet I breathe, I live! But adieu to egotism; I am sick to death at the name of *self*. Oh, your theory cost me much reflection; I have not ceased to think of it since your letter came, which was put into my hands at the moment of departure on Sunday morning. Is it not, however, founded on that *hateful* principle? Is it *self* which you propose to raise to a state of superiority by your system of eternal perfectibility in love? No! Were this frame rendered eternal, were the particles which compose it, both as to intellect and matter, indestructible, and then to undergo torments such as now we should shudder to think of, even in a dream—to undergo this, I say, for the extension of happiness to those for whom we feel a vivid preference; then would I love, adore, idolize your theory—*wil.*, unfounded as it might be: but no. I can conceive neither of these to be correct, considering matters in a philosophical light, it evidently appears (if it is not treason to speak thus coolly on a subject so deliriously ecstatic) that we were not destined for misery. What, then, shall happiness arise from? Can we hesitate? Love, dear love, and though every mental faculty is bewildered by the agony, which is in this life its too constant attendant, still is not that very agony to be preferred to the most thrilling sensualities of epicurism?

I have wandered in the snow, for I am cold, wet, and mad. Pardon me, pardon my delirious egotism; this really shall be the last. My sister is well; I fear she is not quite happy on my account, but is much more cheerful than she was some days ago. I hope you will publish a tale; I shall then give a copy to Elizabeth, unless *you* forbid it. I would do it not only to show her what your ideas are on the subject of works of imagination, and to interest her, but that she should see her brother's friend in a new point of view. When you examine her character, you will find humanity, not divinity, amiable as the former may sometimes be: however, I, a brother, must not write treason against my sister; so I will check my volubility. Do not direct your next letter to Field Place, only to Horsham. To-morrow I will write more connectedly.

Yours sincerely.

To T. J. H.,
Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.

FIELD PLACE, Jan. 3, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Before we deny or believe the existence of anything, it is necessary that we should have a tolerably clear idea of what it is. The word 'God', a vague word, has been, and will continue to be, the source of numberless errors, until it is erased from the nomenclature of philosophy. Does it not imply 'the soul of the universe, the intelligent and *necessarily* beneficent, actuating principle'. This it is impossible not to believe in, I may not be able to adduce proofs; but, I think, that the leaf of a tree, the meanest insect on which we trample, are, in themselves, arguments more conclusive than any which can be advanced, that some vast intellect animates infinity. If we disbelieve *this*, the strongest argument in support of the existence of a future state instantly becomes annihilated. I confess that I think Pope's

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,

something more than poetry. It has ever been my favourite theory for the immortal soul, 'never to be able to die, never to escape from some shrine as chilling as the clay-formed dungeon, which now it inhabits'; it is the future punishment which I can most easily believe in.

Love, love, *infinite in extent*, eternal in duration, yet (allowing your theory in that point), perfectible, should be the reward; but can we suppose that this reward will arise, spontaneously, as a necessary appendage to our nature, or that our nature itself could be without cause—a first cause—a God? When do we see effects arise without causes? What causes are there without correspondent effects? Yet here, I swear—and as I break my oaths, may Infinity, Eternity blast me—here I swear, that never will I forgive intolerance! It is the only point on which I allow myself to encourage revenge; every moment shall be devoted to my object, which I can spare; and let me hope that it will not be a blow which spends itself, and leaves the wretch at rest—but lasting, long revenge! I am convinced, too, that it is of great disservice to society—that it encourages prejudices, which strike at the root of the dearest, the tenderest, of its ties. Oh! how I wish I were the avenger!—that it were mine to crush the demon; to hurl him to his native hell, never to rise again, and thus to establish for ever perfect and universal toleration. I expect to gratify some of this insatiable feeling in poetry. You shall see—you shall hear—how it has injured me. She is no longer mine! she abhors me as a sceptic, as what *she* was before!

Oh, bigotry! When I pardon this last, this severest of thy persecutions, may Heaven (if there be wrath in Heaven) blast me! Has vengeance, in its armoury of wrath, a punishment more dreadful? Yet, forgive me, I have done; and were it not for your great desire to know *why* I consider myself as the victim of severer anguish, that I could have entered into this brief recital.

I am afraid there is selfishness in the passion of love, for I cannot avoid feeling every instant as if my soul was bursting; but I *will* feel no more! It is selfish. I would feel for others, but for myself—oh! how much rather would I expire in the struggle! Yes, that were a relief! Is suicide wrong? I slept with a loaded pistol and some poison, last night, but did not die. I could not come on Monday, my sister would not part with me; but I must—I will see you soon. My sister is now comparatively happy; she has felt deeply for me. Had it not been for her—had it not been for a sense of what I owed to her, to *you*, I should have bidden you a final farewell some time ago. But can the dead feel; dawns any day-beam on the night of dissolution?

Pray publish your tale; demand one hundred pounds for it from any publisher; he will give it in the event. It is delightful, it is divine—not that I like your heroine—but the poor Mary is a character worthy of Heaven. I adore her!

Adieu, my dear friend. Your sincere,

P. B. S.

W—— has written. I have read his letter. It is too long to answer. I continue to dissipate Elizabeth's melancholy by keeping her, as much as possible, employed in poetry. You shall see some to-morrow. I cannot tell you when I can come to town. I wish it very much.

To T. J. H., London.

FIELD PLACE, Jan. 6, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dare I request *one* favour for *myself*—for my own sake? not the keenest anguish which the most unrelenting tyrant could invent, should force me to request from you so great a sacrifice of friendship. It is a beloved sister's happiness which forces me to this. She saw me when I received your letter of yesterday. She saw the conflict of my soul. At first she said nothing; and then she exclaimed, 'Re-direct it, and send it instantly to the post!' Believe me, I feel far more than I will *allow* myself to express, for the cruel disappointments which I have under-

gone. Write to me whatever you wish to say; you may say what you will on *other* subjects; but on *that* I dare not even read what you would write. *Forget* her? What would I not have given up to have been thus happy? I thought I knew the means by which it might have been effected. Yet I consider what a female sacrifices when she returns the attachment even of one whose faith she supposes inviolable. Hard is the agony which is indescribable, which is only to be felt. Will she not encounter the opprobrium of the world; and what is more severe (generally speaking) the dereliction and contempt of those who, before, had avowed themselves most attached to her. I did not encourage the remotest suspicion. I was convinced of her truth, as I was of my own existence. Still was it not *natural* in her, even although she might return the most enthusiastic prepossessions arising from the consciousness of intellectual sympathy, ignorant as she was of *some* of my opinions, of my sensations (for *unlimited* confidence is requisite for the existence of mutual love) to have some doubts—some fears? Besides, when in her natural character, her spirits are good, her conversation animated, and she was almost, in consequence ignorant of the refinements in love, which can only be attained by solitary reflexion. Forsake her! Forsake one whom I loved! Can I? never! But she is gone—she is lost to me for ever; for ever! There is a mystery which I dare not to clear up; it is the only point on which I will be reserved to you. I have tried the methods you would have recommended. I followed her. I would have followed her to the end of the earth, but—If you value the little happiness which yet remains, do not mention again to me sorrows which, if you could share in, would wound a heart, which it now shall be my endeavour to heal of those pains, which, through sympathy with me, it has already suffered. I will crush Intolerance. I will, at least, attempt it. To fail even in so useful an attempt were glorious!

I enclose some poetry:

Oh! take the pure gem to where southerly breezes,
Waft repose to some bosom as faithful as fair,
In which the warm current of love never freezes,
As it rises unmingled with selfishness there,
Which, untainted by pride, unpolluted by care,
Might dissolve the dim icedrop, might bid it arise,
Too pure for these regions, to gleam in the skies.

Or where the stern warrior, his country defending,
Dares fearless the dark-rolling battle to pour,
Or o'er the fell corpse of a dread tyrant bending,
Where patriotism red with his guilt-reeking gore

Married to a clod of earth; she will become as insensible herself; all those fine capabilities will moulder!

Let us speak no more on the subject. Do not deprive me of the little remains of peace, which yet linger; that which arises from endeavours to make others happy!

The poetry which I sent you alluded not to the subject of my nonsensical ravings. I hope that you are now publishing one of your tales. L—— would do it as well as any one; if you do not choose to publish a book at Oxford, you can print it there; and I will *engage* to dispose of five hundred copies. S—— professes to be acquainted with your family; *hinc illæ lacrymæ!* I attempted to enlighten my father, *mirabile dictu!* He for a time listened to my arguments; he allowed the impossibility (considered abstractedly) of any preternatural interferences by Providence. He allowed the utter incredibility of witches, ghosts, legendary miracles. But when I came to *apply* the truths on which we had agreed so harmoniously, he started at the bare idea of some facts generally believed, never having existed, and silenced me with an equine argument, in effect with these words: 'I believe, because I do believe'.

My mother imagines me to be in the high road to Pandemonium, she fancies I want to make a deistical coterie of all my little sisters: how laughable!

You must be very solitary at Oxford; I wish I could come there now; but for reasons, which I will tell you at meeting, it is delayed for a fortnight. I have a poem with Mr. L——, which I shall certainly publish; there is some of Elizabeth's in it. I will write to-morrow. I have something to add to it, and if L—— has any idea, when he speaks to you of publishing it with my name, will you tell him to leave it alone till I come?

Yes! the arms of Britannia victorious are bearing
Fame, triumph, and glory, wherever they speed,
Her Lion his crest o'er the nations is rearing.
Ruin follows, it tramples the dying and dead,
Thy countrymen fall, the blood-reeking bed
Of the battle-slain sends a complaint-breathing sigh,
It is mixed with the shoutings of Victory.

Old Ocean to shrieks of despair is resounding,
It washes the terror-struck nations with gore,
Wild Horror the fear-palsied earth is astounding,
And murmurs of fate fright the dread-convulsed shore.
The Andes in sympathy start at the roar,
Vast Etna, alarmed, leans his flame-glowing brow,
And huge Teneriffe stoops with his pinnaced snow.

The ice mountains echo, the Baltic, the Ocean,
 Where Cold sits enthroned on his column of snows,
 Even Spitzbergen perceives the terrific commotion,
 The roar floats on the whirlwind of sleet, as this blows
 Blood tinges the streams as half-frozen they flow,
 The meteors of war lurid flame thro' the air,
 They mix their bright gleam with the red polar star.

All are brethren, and even the African bending
 To the stroke of the hard-hearted Englishman's rod,
 The courtier at Luxury's palace attending,
 The senator trembling at Tyranny's nod,
 Each nation which kneels at the footstool of God,
 All are brethren—then banish distinction afar,
 Let Concord and Love heal the miseries of War!

These are Elizabeth's. She has written many more, and I will show you at some future time the whole of the composition. I like it very much, if a brother may be allowed to praise a sister. I will write to-morrow.

Yours with affection,

P. B. S.

Can you read this?

To T. J. H.,
 University College, Oxford.

FIELD PLACE, Jan. 12, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter with the extremely beautiful enclosed poetry came this morning. It is really admirable; it touches the heart; but I must be allowed to offer *one* critique upon it. You will be surprised to hear that I think it unfinished. You have not said that 'the ivy, after it had destroyed the oak, as if to mock the miseries which it caused, twined around a pine which stood near'. It is true, therefore, but does not comprehend the whole truth. As to the stuff which I sent you, I write all my poetry of that kind from the feelings of the moment; if therefore it neither has allusion to the sentiments which rationally might be supposed to possess me, or to those which my situation might awaken, it is another proof of that egotizing variability, whilst I shudder to reflect how much I am in its power. To *you* I dare represent myself as I am: wretched to the last degree—sometimes one gleam of hope, one faint solitary gleam, seems to illumine the darkened prospect before me—but it has vanished. I fear it will never return. My sister will, I fear, never return the attachment which would once again bid me be calm. Yes! In this alone is my feeble anticipation of peace placed! But

called ideas, for we cannot either comprehend or explain them; therefore the Deity must be judged by us from attributes analogical to our situation. Oh, that this Deity were the soul of the universe, the spirit of universal, imperishable love! Indeed I believe it is: but now to your argument of the necessity of Christianity. I am not sure that your argument does not tend to prove its unreality. If it does not, you allow, you say, that love is the only true source of rational happiness: *one* man is capable of it, why not all?

The callibility of man preterite, I allow, but because men are, and have been callible, I see no reason why they should always continue so. Have there not been fluctuations in the opinions of mankind; and as the *stuff*, which soul is made of, must be in every one the same, would not an extended system of rational and moral unprejudiced education, render each individual capable of experiencing that degree of happiness, to which each ought to aspire, more for others, than self? Hideous, hated traits of Superstition. Oh! Bigots, how I abhor your influence; they are all bad enough—but we do not see Fanaticism decaying? is not its influence weakened, except where Faber, Rowland Hill, and several others of the Armageddon heroes maintain their posts with all the obstinacy of long-established dogmatism? How I pity them; how I despise, hate them! S. knows Mr. D. would publish your tale. I am beyond measure anxious for its appearance. Adieu! Excuse my mad arguments; they are none at all, for I am rather confused, and fear, in consequence of a fever, they will not allow me to come on the 26th, but I will. Adieu!

Your affectionate friend,

P. B. S.

You can enclose to Timothy Shelley, Esq., M.P.

To T. J. II.,
University College, Oxford.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Jan. 14, 1811.

Your letter and that of W—— came to-day; yours is excellent, and, I think, will fully (in his own mind) convince Mr. W——. I enclosed five sheets of paper full this morning, and sent them to the coach with yours. I sat up all night to finish them; they attack his hypothesis in its very basis, which, at some future time, I will explain to you; and I have attempted to prove, from the *existence* of a Deity and of Revelation, the futility of the superstition upon which he founds his whole scheme.

I was sorry to see that you even remotely suspected me of being offended with you. How I wish that I could persuade you that it is impossible! I am really sleepy; could you suppose that I should be so apathetic as *ever* to sleep again till my last slumber? But it is so, and I shall take a walk in St. Leonard's Forest to dissipate it. Adieu! You shall hear from me to-morrow.

Your sincere friend,

P. B. S.

S—— has behaved infamously to me: he has abused the confidence I reposed in him in sending him my work; and he has made very free with your character, of which he knows nothing, with my father. I shall call on S—— in my way, that he may explain. May I expect to see your tale printed?

To T. J. H.,
University College, Oxford.

CHAPTER V

THE long vacation is an admirable and blessed institution, worthy of all honour and of perpetual observance; but the short vacations at Christmas and at Easter deserve utter execration, and exist only to be abolished. They are a pernicious interruption of the course of study, which is broken off almost as soon as it is fully begun, and an unseasonable disruption of studious friendships and agreeable society. If they were tolerable to young men, whose families reside at a moderate distance from the university, they were insupportable to those unfortunates who must travel by coaches, perhaps two whole days, and certainly two nights, to reach their household gods, and for the like space of time to return to college. All lectures, all instruction ceased, public libraries and every other place of amusement or resort were closed during these ferial days, even the entertainment of attending chapel was denied. The tutors departed as well as all the undergraduates; the porter and the master shut themselves up closely in their respective lodges; and the college servants could seldom be found. A dinner was provided certainly, but not in the hall; the inhospitable table was spread in some mysterious apartment, which I never entered at any other time, and which seemed to have vanished as soon as term recommenced, so that I have sometimes wondered what became of it. At the dinner I commonly found myself alone. It consisted of a joint of meat, potatoes, and bread; all very good of their kind, no doubt; but it was impossible to obtain anything else—any of those little extras for which one might *battel* in term-time; the very cheese suffered dim eclipse, not a slice was to be procured. The college cook, in truth, would have felt that he was unworthy of his important office if he had approved himself less lazy than the master and tutors.

Many and great reforms were needed at our famous university in those days, which were far more pressing and urgent than the discouragement of metaphysical speculations in the active minds of a few studious youths.

It was manifest that my presence in the vacant seat of learning was unwelcome. To travel to the north of England, to rest

myself for a few days there after my journey, and then to come back in the dark, as it were, in an ungenial season and the shortest days, was too severe a sacrifice to be made even to the grossest abuse of educational trusts; so I determined to go to London.

London is a delightful place at all times; always full of instruction for those who are disposed to seek it; but, for a stranger to live, like a gentleman, at a hotel in London is expensive. After ten days or a fortnight, it was prudent to return to Oxford.

At the beginning of January 1811, the weather was intensely cold; there was a severe frost, and the ground was thickly covered with snow. I studied alone, until I could study no more; I read until I was weary and cold. Oh! so cold! A youth of eighteen cannot warm himself by sitting over the fire; to thaw my blood by parading the solitary streets of the deserted city, or the lonely frozen public walks, was uninviting, and, indeed, impracticable. I was at all times well inclined for a pedestrian tour, and I now resolved to undertake one; accordingly I took counsel with myself, and planned it. Stonehenge, of which I had read so much and such strange things, and the two glorious cathedrals of Salisbury and Winchester, of which I had seen several views in sundry rooms at Oxford and elsewhere, were more tempting than any other objects within the reach of a walk, and I made up my mind to visit the three wonderful temples. One morning, therefore, at the beginning of January, I equipped myself, as for the chase, with strong shooting-shoes and gaiters, taking no more luggage than the pockets of a shooting-jacket would contain, and, after an early breakfast, I sallied forth. My travelling library consisted of 'P. Virgilii Maronis Bucolica, Georgica, et Æneis, ad optimorum exemplarium fidem recensita. 12mo. Edinburgi et Glasguæ, 1796'.

Adcensu supero, et adrectis auribus adsto.

This verse abundantly testifies that the recension on the faith of the best copies was a reprint of Heyne's text. I crossed the frozen Isis, and entered Berkshire, and I took my lonely way through Bagley Wood to Abingdon; with this portion of my journey I was already familiar. I then entered upon new ground, and proceeded, if I mistake not, through Islip, by fields covered with snow—ploughed lands, for the most part, and unenclosed; a district altogether without interest; a vast solitude, for I scarcely met a human being all day.

When the short day closed in, which, however, was somewhat lengthened and lighted by the reflection of the bright snow, I began to look out for a resting-place, and I came at last to an ancient, solitary, decaying inn, which I entered. There seemed to be no male creature there; at least, I saw none during my stay. I found only two stale women; a stale middle-aged woman, who acted as waiter and chambermaid, and an older and still staler woman, the landlady; they were equally sullen, slow, and stupid.

The wanderer, Ulysses, was welcomed so far by Calypso and her attendant nymph, that he was not actually turned out of doors by them: dinner and a bed were not absolutely denied him. After a long sojourn in a cold, gloomy room, by the side of a half-lighted fire, dinner was served. Those were wonderful days for inns, especially in the matter of steaks and chops. It is wonderful how they could procure beef and mutton, so tough, and at the same time, not over fresh; how they could make the article so black and greasy, and utterly uneatable, be the appetite what it might! Such viands the stale handmaid put upon the table, with raw potatoes, muddy beer, stinking cheese, and wine that might be paid for, but not drunken. The hope of tea was the sole remaining consolation; it was a great one, and seemed all-sufficient. Wiltshire and Berkshire, according to my subsequent experience, are two starving counties, and the common people are mere clods. As much virtue as there is in chopped straw, so much was there in this tea, and no more. No milk could be had as I have often found to be the case in Berkshire; but there was a huge, indurated loaf, and salt butter such as it was.

Nothing remained but to go to bed. The stale chambermaid conducted me upstairs to a large, old, cold room; the fire below did not induce me to require one above, but I ventured to ask to have my bed warmed. The stale woman hesitated, but finally consented. She withdrew, and, after a long reluctant delay, returned, and began her genial office. If she was long in beginning, she was still longer in ending; it seemed as if she had taken root in the floor, and would have remained for ever fixed at the foot of the bed. But her tardiness in this instance was beneficial; and, when I was allowed at last to get into bed, I soon felt a warmth which I had not supposed so grim a wench could have imparted. Breakfast was a repetition of tea: eggs there were none; bacon was ignored; there were steaks and chops: these had been tried before. The name of the place, where the

staring, solitary, old inn stood, the stale women would not or could not tell me. I paid my score, and departed, having fulfilled my destinies. It seemed indeed as though the whole course of hospitality had been guided by destiny, and that the hotel was kept by two of the Fates, by the two survivors, the third having died of cold and hunger. A walk of an hour or two brought me to Hungerford, a hungry-looking place, where nothing tempted me to tarry. I continued my journey over a vast plain, not a dead level, not absolutely flat, but gently undulating, and covered with snow, white, bright, and shining. It was less unsatisfactory than the landscape of the day before, for it did not affect to be anything else than what it was—a vacuum, mere space, empty space. I continued my solitary ramble; I quitted Berkshire at what point I know not, and I got into Wiltshire. After a time I reached Amesbury, which seemed, notwithstanding a thick covering of snow, a pleasant spot; a fruitful oasis in the midst of a desert. It was the first place I met with since I left Oxford, where I would willingly have remained; to be made Duke of Queensbury, or at least to have inhabited his beautiful mansion, would have been an offer not lightly to have been rejected. I was here told how to find my way to the first object of my tour, to the first of the three famous temples, to the Pagan, the Celtic temple: it was only two or three miles distant.

I readily found the celebrated Stonchenge; like everything else, it was deeply imbedded in snow. The snow lay thick upon the few transverse stones which still remained in their original position, and upon all the large stones that had been thrown down, and were scattered on the hard frozen ground. It is a wonderful monument of a most remote and unknown antiquity; but I could not think that there was much to be seen there. Many sheep had found shelter amongst these ruins, and they were attended by two or three shepherds. I remembered that when I was a child, I had read with pleasure some tale of the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain; here he was then, I had found him at last! The shepherds were very civil to me; they seemed deeply impressed with the importance of the locality, and explained various matters to me. A professed antiquary could not have told the wondrous tale better, perhaps not so well. They expressed much regret that my first visit to the scene, which they esteemed so highly, had been made in deep snow, for I saw it then to great disadvantage; I should have seen it far better if the ground had been clear. One of them made a

remark which I never heard before or since; nor have I ever found it in any book, viz. that the huge stones are not real native stones, but a composition. And he took much pains to show me that they had no grain, no veins, no layers; and he gave me at parting a piece which he had himself broken off, and he pointed out the stone from which he had taken it, fitting it into its place exactly. This fragment had rather the appearance certainly of Roman cement than of stone; perhaps it was more like a volcanic substance called tufa, with which I long afterwards became familiar at Rome and at Naples. The good shepherds pointed out the road to Salisbury, and told me when I should see the tall spire before me; the distance, if I remember right, they said was six miles.

I followed the shepherds' direction and my solitary journey. It was dusk when I arrived at the city of Salisbury. The west of England in those days was renowned for the badness of its inns, and Salisbury did not lessen this evil repute: I found there every possible discomfort. Next morning, as early as the short days would permit, I repaired to the second object of my pilgrimage, the beautiful cathedral. The close, like the rest of the diocese, was at that time overspread with snow. I have seen it more than once afterwards a green lawn with venerable trees in full leaf. Our marvellous old churches are commonly blocked up on every side with mean, squalid, ugly buildings. It was agreeable to find a large open space, to see that the exquisite edifice was clear on all sides, and to examine the exterior from different points of view. As such structures are always, but never ought to be, it was fast locked up. But when I was trying in vain to open the fastened doors, a middle-aged man appeared, and unlocked the wicket. I entered and walked slowly round; the interior, as such edifices too commonly are, was in a state of dirty neglect; but the glories of the purest lancet style of Gothic architecture might be dimmed and obscured but not quenched by the stupid indifference of a Dean and his Chapter, a chapter of accidents—of most untoward accidents.

My guide was not by any means such a sullen brute as a verger usually is; on the contrary, he was obliging and patient. He appeared to sympathize with my intense admiration of the lovely building, of which he had the charge, and instead of hurrying me over the church, and abruptly turning me out before I had half seen it, he permitted me to return to some objects which I desired to look at a second time: and his manner

almost invited me to stay. He was, I think, the only functionary of the kind to whom I ever gave half a crown without grudging it. A curious traveller has undoubtedly as much right to contemplate at his leisure the inside of a public building gratuitously, as he has to look up at the face of the cathedral clock; and to be shut out is scarcely less offensive than it would be for some officer of the ecclesiastical corporation to march up to a stranger, and placing his hand over his eyes, to say, 'Unless you will give me one shilling at least, and as much more as you please, you shall not know what time it is—such are the orders of Mr. Dean'.

The refined delight which I experienced in admiring the wonders of art was seriously interrupted by a very gross and vulgar consideration; my shooting-shoes were already beginning to fail me, the sharp ice and the hard frozen roads had told severely upon them. It would have been easy enough to have bought a new pair of strong shoes at Salisbury, but it would be by no means easy to walk back to Oxford in them by way of Winchester. My only course was to try to get them repaired. Accordingly, having quitted my dirty, dreary inn, I looked out for a shoemaker; I soon found one, and I entered the shop of a humble cobbler. I told him what I wanted. He looked at my shoes, and soon reassured me by promising, in an hour or less, to put them in good order.

'A few *parables* will do it.'

I thought the man said *parables*. I had heard much of instruction being conveyed by parables, but I wondered not a little how shoes could be repaired by parables, parallelisms, or proverbs. The venerable man took off my shoes, put them on his lasts, and proceeded to knock a number of small nails into the soles—nails of a peculiar form. I took up one of the nails.

'Are these what you call parables? It is a remarkable name, why do you call them so?'

'Because they are like the beak of a bird—of a sparrow; that is why they are always called sparrow-bills.'

The job was soon done, and the shoes put on again. He hoped that I would not consider sixpence unreasonable; he had put nearly sixpennyworth of sparrow-bills into them, to say nothing of the work. I did not think the demand unreasonable; and the old man and his old wife pointed out the road to Winchester. It lay through a pleasant valley, all white with snow, the roads being frozen as hard as ever. It was not a long walk, I know not how long, but, having spent much time

at Salisbury, I reached Winchester in the dark. I had quitted Wiltshire, at what point I could not tell, and entered Hampshire for the first time; where I passed the boundary of the two counties I knew not. I put up at a spacious, cold, dull inn, which did not derogate from the well-founded pretensions of the west of England. I was treated with condescending kindness by a pompous old waiter, who used towards me a certain slow, cumbrous, ponderous, officious civility; but the place was thoroughly uncomfortable. After an especially nasty dinner, I wrote a long letter to Field Place, describing my pedestrian tour. I was desirous, next day, to make my escape as soon as possible; but this was not to be effected readily; however, after long delays, having at last obtained breakfast and my bill from the dignified lord high chamberlain of the dreary establishment, I betook myself to the third and last object of my liberal curiosity—the very ancient and most majestic cathedral.

I stood for some time viewing with admiration the prodigious length of the church, and the sober grandeur of the exterior, when the bells began to ring for the morning service. The doors were opened, and I entered. I wandered about in every direction and found no interruption, except so far as black looks were an interruption, for some persons eyed me with jealousy, as if they thought that I was stealing a march upon them. I will not describe what has been already often described, so far, indeed, as it is capable of description. The morning service had begun, I went into the choir and heard a part of it. But, recollecting that I had seen all the three objects of my winter walk, the two Christian and one Druidical temple, nothing now remained but to walk back to Oxford, and that I ought not to lose time, but make the best of my way thither, I quitted the last of the three venerable temples, and not the least venerable of them, with regret; and I am sorry to add that I have never seen it since, save from the window of a carriage, lately, on the Southampton Railway. I left the noble old pile, and turned my face to the north. The day was intensely cold, raw, and foggy; I inquired for the road to Newbury, and I pursued it, walking fast to warm myself. After a while the frost began to give, and walking became slippery and unpleasant.

I found nothing remarkable in my way; the country was less bare, desolate, and hedgeless, than on the road from Oxford to Salisbury. In the afternoon a young farmer joined me, walking by my side; he was a modest, ingenuous youth, with whom there could be no need of concealment; so I told him my story, a

simple story enough. He cheered me by the information that I should find good accommodation at Newbury, and communicated the sign of the inn where it was to be had. He halted at the door of a farm-house. 'I live here,' he said; 'we are going to tea. step in and take it with us; you must want something!'

We entered a kitchen where there was a blazing fire, the father and mother, old people, and two or three female servants; in a snug corner by the fire there sat, in a suit of rusty black, an itinerant Methodist preacher. The good people gave me tea in the olden fashion, in exceedingly small cups very sweet, very weak, and intensely hot, as weak tea invariably is; and thick bread and butter. The humble entertainment was infinitely refreshing.

On hearing that I belonged to the University of Oxford for which they appeared to feel the most profound reverence, the old people asked me a number of questions, and very sensible and pertinent ones, respecting it. The good folks at the farm-house could enter into the feelings that led me forth to wander to the three vast and famous temples, and to undergo great fatigue and take much trouble for such an object. They could comprehend also, which, for the most part, persons of higher station and superior education could not—how with augmented curiosity and interest, with long accumulated feelings of reverence, these famous structures are slowly, and perhaps painfully, approached on foot; and how different a thing it is to drive to them easily and rapidly on a post-chaise or mail-coach.

When I rose to depart, and acknowledged their hospitality, they thanked me for my condescension; and the preacher, who had not spoken before, but had employed himself in putting away a large store of bread and butter, said, 'It is good to exercise hospitality, for some unawares have entertained angels!' The good-natured young farmer walked by the side of the angel of the Church of Oxford some two miles through the slush, for the thaw was extremely rapid. At parting he said, if I rightly remember, 'It is now three miles to Newbury'.

My progress was slow and painful, and it was quite dark when I entered Newbury. I was guided to the inn which the farmer's son had recommended, and I found there warmth, cleanliness, civility, good cheer, and every comfort, rendered still more agreeable by the force of contrast, all which I greatly needed; for I had walked, and walked hard, in very severe weather for four long days, and I was literally perishing with cold, hunger, and fatigue.

The walk to Abingdon next day was horrible; the thaw continued, and the roads were broken up; the poor sparrow-bills were as tired of it as myself, and began to give way, so that iced water and melting snow found a passage into my shoes. At Abingdon, a nasty little girl gave me some nasty tea in a nasty cold room. After my scurvy meal, I ploughed on through liquid mud and liquefying snow with intolerable labour. It was dark long before I reached Oxford, and when I got to University College the kitchen and buttery were closed, and the college servants had gone home for the night, taking the keys of my rooms with them. However, the solemn old porter, with some trouble, contrived to open the spring lock of the outer door, with the thin blade of an old table-knife, and I was thus enabled to do one thing, which was, in fact, under the present circumstances, everything, to get rid of the wet gaiters, stockings, and shoes with all their sparrow-bills, and to creep into bed. Such was my pilgrimage to the three great western temples.

I had satisfied my curiosity, and, moreover, I had taken away—for the first few days, it seemed, for ever—my desire of walking. To sit before the fire and read appeared to be the summit of human felicity! The first-fruits of my sitting still, and of this strong disinclination ever to go out of the college gates again, were to read the *Going-up of Cyrus*. The *Anabasis* of Xenophon was a book deservedly in high repute at Oxford. I perused it very carefully, with the lexicon and atlas by my side, for the first time, with unspeakable gratification, and endless, abiding profit.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

[No date.]

You are all over the country. I shall be at Oxford on Friday or Saturday evening. I will write to you from London. My father's prophetic prepossession in your favour is become as high as before it was to your prejudice. Whence it arises, or from what cause, I am inadequate to say; I can merely state the fact. He came from London full of your praises; your family, that of Mr. Hogg, of Norton House, near Stockton-upon-Tees. Your principles are *now* as divine as before they were diabolical. I tell you this with extreme satisfaction, and, to sum up the whole, he has desired me to make his compliments to you, and to invite you to make Field Place your headquarters for the Easter vacation. I hope you will accept of it. I fancy he has been talking in town to some of the northern Members of Parliament who are acquainted with your family. However

that may be, I hope you have no other arrangement for Easter which can interfere with granting me the pleasure of introducing you personally here.

You have very well drawn your line of distinction between instinctive and rational motives of action; the *former* are not in our own power, yet we may doubt if even these are *purely* selfish, as congeniality, sympathy, unaccountable attractions of intellect, which arise independent frequently of any considerations of your own interest, operating violently in contradiction to it, and bringing on wretchedness, which your reason plainly foresees, which yet, although your judgment disapproves of, you take no pains to obviate. All this is not selfish. And surely the operations of reason, of judgment, in a man whose judgment is fully convinced of the baseness of any motive, can never be consonant with it.

Adieu! Your affectionate.

To T. J. H., Oxford.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

FIELD PLACE, Jan. 16, 1811.

You will hear from me to-morrow. I have, to-day, scarcely time but to tell you that I do not forget you. You tell me that it will show greatness of soul to rise after such a fall as mine. Ah! what pain must I feel when I contradict the flattering view which you have taken of my character. Do I not know myself? Do I not feel the acutest poignancy of mortification amounting to actual misery? Alas! I must, with Godwin, say that in man, imperfect as he now exists, there is never a motive for action unmixed; that the best has its alloy, the worst is commingled with virtue. What does my mortification arise from? Surely not wholly for myself, not wholly for the happiness of the being whom I have lost. Did I know, were I convinced, that I felt for nothing but Her, no self-reproach would tell me that my pangs were disgraceful. But now, when I fear, when I feel, that in spite of myself, regret for the high happiness which I have lost is mingled with the other consideration, do I feel, too, that it is disgraceful, degrading! Adieu! I will write to-morrow.

To T. J. H., Oxford.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

FIELD PLACE, January 17, 1811.

I shall be with you as soon as possible next week. You really were at Hungerford, whether you knew it or not. You tell me nothing about the tale which you promised me. I hope

it gets on in the press, I am anxious for its appearance. S—— certainly behaved in a vile manner to me; no other bookseller would have violated the confidence reposed in him. I will talk to him in London, where I shall be on Tuesday. Can I do anything for you there?

You notice the peculiarity of the expression 'my sister' in my letters. It certainly arose independent of consideration, and I am happy to hear that it is so.

Your systematic cudgel for blockheads is excellent. I tried it on with my father, who told me that thirty years ago he had read Locke, but this made no impression. The '*equus et res*' are all that I can boast of; the '*pater*' is swallowed up in the first article of the catalogue. You tell me nothing of the tale; I am all anxiety about it. I am forced hastily to bid you adieu.

To T. J. H.,
University College, Oxford

We are told in the editor's preface to the *Poetical Works of Shelley*, that it was not until he resided in Italy that he made Plato his study. If it be meant, as no doubt it is, that he did not study Plato in the original, the assertion is correct. It would be absurd to affirm that a profound, accurate, critical knowledge of the author may be acquired through the medium of translations, and at secondhand by abstracts and abridgments. But enough of the philosopher's doctrine and principles may be, and were, in fact, imbibed at Oxford, and at an early age, without consulting the Greek text to convince him of the incorrectness and inconclusiveness, of the dangers, indeed, of the reasonings and conclusions of the school of Locke and his disciples. Many of the tenets of Plato, of Socrates their common master, are exhibited by Xenophon, whose writings we had already read in the original. The English version of the French translation by Dacier of the *Phædo*, and several other dialogues of Plato, was the first book we had, and this we read together several times very attentively at Oxford. We had a French translation of the *Republic*; and we perused with infinite pleasure the elegant translation of Floyer Sydenham. We had several of the publications of the learned and eccentric Platonist, Thomas Taylor. In truth, it would be tedious to specify and describe all the reflected lights borrowed from the great luminary, the sun of the Academy, that illumined the path of two young students. That Shelley had not read any portion of Plato in the original before he went to Italy, is not strictly true. He

had a very legible edition of the works of Plato in several volumes; a charming edition, the Bipont, I think, and I have read passages out of it with him. I remember going up to London with him from Marlow one morning; he took a volume of Plato with him, and we read a good deal of it together, sitting side by side on the top of the coach. Phædrus, I am pretty sure, was the dialogue—on beauty. Before Shelley came to Oxford he composed a tale, or a fragment of a tale, on the subject of the Wandering Jew, giving to him, however, the name of a Persian, not of a Jew—Ahasuerus. Artaxerxes. This no learned, accurate German would have done. That he found the composition in the streets of London is an integral portion of the fiction. 'This fragment is the translation of part of some German work, the title of which I have vainly endeavoured to discover. I picked it up, dirty and torn, some years ago, in Lincoln's Inn Fields.'

It is a common device to add to the interest of a romance by asserting that the MS. was discovered in a cavern, in a casket; that it had lain long hidden in an old chest, or a tomb. From the preface of Dictys the Cretan, whose history of the Trojan war was discovered, we are told, in Crete, the author's tomb having been opened by an earthquake, down to the most modern fictions, this embellishment has been in constant use. Respecting the finding of this fragment, some have affirmed one thing and some another. It has been said that it was part of a printed book in the German language. If it had been in German, Shelley could not have translated it at that time, for he did not know a word of German. The study of that tongue—being both equally ignorant of it—we commenced together in 1815. Of this our joint study hereafter. Somebody or other, determined not to be left behind in the race, declares that he found it himself, if I mistake not, and presented it to Shelley. Was not this worthy gentleman also present at Gnosus when the tablets of Dictys were brought to light by the earthquake? A portion of the fragment has been printed in the notes to *Queen Mab*. I have amongst Shelley's papers a fragment of the fragment, in his handwriting. It is one leaf only, and it appears to be the last, the conclusion of the story. The last sentence has never been printed; it presents the narrative of the sufferings of Ahasuerus in a totally different point of view with reference to moral and religious considerations, and is therefore not undeserving attention.

FRAGMENT OF THE WANDERING JEW

— did the elephant trample on me, in vain the iron hoof of the wrathful steed. The mine, big with destructive power, burst upon me and hurled me high in the air. I fell down upon a heap of smoking limbs, but was only singed. The giant's steel club rebounded from my body. The executioner's hand could not strangle me; nor would the hungry lion in the circus devour me; I cohabited with poisonous snakes; I pinched the red crest of the dragon; the serpent stung, but could not kill me; the dragon tormented, but could not devour me. I now provoked the fury of tyrants. I said to Nero, 'Thou art a bloodhound'; said to Christern, 'Thou art a bloodhound'; said to Muley Ismail, 'Thou art a bloodhound'. The tyrants invented cruel torments, but could not kill me. Ha! Not to be able to die; *not to be permitted to rest after the toils of life*; to be doomed for ever to be imprisoned in this *clay-formed* dungeon; to be for ever clogged with this worthless body, its load of diseases and infirmities; to be condemned to hold for millenniums that yawning monster, Time, that hungry hyena, ever bearing children, ever devouring again her offspring.

Ha! Not to be permitted to die! Awful Avenger in Heaven, hast Thou in Thine armoury of wrath a punishment more dreadful? Then let it thunder upon me. Command a hurricane to sweep me down to the foot of Carmel, that I there may lie extended, may pant, and writhe, and die!

And Ahasuerus dropped down. Night covered his bristly eyelid. The Angel bore me back to the cavern. 'Sleep here,' said the Angel, 'sleep in peace; the wrath of thy Judge is appeased; when thou shalt awake, He will be arrived, He whose blood thou sawest flow upon Golgotha. Whose mercy is extended even to thee!'

MY DEAR SIR,

LONDON, May 30, 1834.

I did not inquire, but, as you did not show it to me, I presume you do not possess in your inestimable collection the autograph of poor Shelley. I now send you a poem, or rather a rough draft of part of a poem, by his hand, and from his head and heart. The papers amongst which it was found, and other circumstances, lead me to believe that it was written in 1810, when the young poet was but seventeen or eighteen years old. It is doubtless unpublished, and of a more early date than any of his published poems; on all accounts, therefore, it is most interesting. I selected it for you soon after my return, but I mislaid it, and when I wrote to you the other day I could not find it. With kind regards to Mrs. Turner.

I am, etc.,

Dawson Turner, Esq.,
Yarmouth.

T. J. Hogg.

DEATH

For my dagger is bathed in the blood of the brave,
 I come, care-worn tenant of life, from the grave,
 Where Innocence sleeps 'neath the peace-giving sod,
 And the good cease to tremble at Tyranny's nod;
 I offer a calm habitation to thee,
 Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?
 My mansion is damp, cold silence is there,
 But it lulls in oblivion the fiends of despair,
 Not a groan of regret, not a sigh, not a breath,
 Dares dispute with grim silence the empire of Death.
 I offer a calm habitation to thee,
 Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

MORTAL

Mine eyelids are heavy; my soul seeks repose,
 It longs in thy cells to embosom its woes,
 It longs in thy cells to deposit its load,
 Where no longer the scorpions of Perfidy goad;
 Where the phantoms of Prejudice vanish away,
 And Bigotry's bloodhounds lose scent of their prey;
 Yet tell me, dark Death, when thine empire is o'er,
 What awaits on Futurity's mist-covered shore?

DEATH

Cease, cease, wayward Mortal! I dare not unveil
 The shadows that float on Eternity's vale;
 Nought waits for the good, but a spirit of Love,
 That will hail their blest advent to regions above.
 For Love, Mortal, gleams thro' the gloom of my sway,
 And the shades which surround me fly fast at its ray.
 Hast thou loved!—Then depart from these regions of hate,
 And in slumber with me blunt the arrows of fate.
 I offer a calm habitation to thee,
 Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

MORTAL

Oh! sweet is thy slumber! oh! sweet is the ray
 Which after thy night introduces the day;
 How concealed, how persuasive, self-interest's breath,
 Tho' it floats to mine ear from the bosom of Death.
 I hoped that I quite was forgotten by all,
 Yet a lingering friend might be grieved at my fall,
 And duty forbids, tho' I languish to die,
 When departure might heave virtue's breast with a sigh.
 Oh, Death! oh, my friend! snatch this form to thy shrine,
 And I fear, dear destroyer, I shall not repine.

The following unfinished verses were written at Oxford; they have never been published:

Death! where is thy victory?
 To triumph whilst I die,
 To triumph whilst thine ebony wing
 Infolds my shuddering soul.
 Oh, Death! where is thy sting?
 Not when the tides of murder roll,

When nations groan, that kings may bask in bliss.
Death! canst thou boast a victory such as this?

When in his hour of pomp and power
His blow the mightiest murders gave,
'Mid nature's cries the sacrifice
Of millions to glut the grave;

When sunk the tyrant desolation's slave;
Or Freedom's life-blood streamed upon thy shrine;
Stern tyrant, couldst thou boast a victory such as mine?

To know in dissolution's void,
That mortals' baubles sunk decay,
That everything, but Love, destroyed
Must perish with its kindred clay.
Perish Ambition's crown,
Perish her sceptered sway;
From Death's pale front fades Pride's fastidious frown.
In Death's damp vault the lurid fires decay,
That Envy lights at heaven-born Virtue's beam—
That all the cares subside,
Which lurk beneath the tide
Of life's unquiet stream.
Yes! this is victory!

And on yon rock, whose dark form glooms the sky,
To stretch these pale limbs, when the soul is fled
To baffle the lean passions of their prey,
To sleep within the palace of the dead!
Oh! not the King, around whose dazzling throne
His countless courtiers mock the words they say,
Triumphs amid the bud of glory blown,
As I in this cold bed, and faint expiring groan!

Tremble, ye proud, whose grandeur mocks the woe,
Which props the column of unnatural state,
You the plainings faint and low,
From misery's tortured soul that flow,
Shall usher to your fate.

Tremble, ye conquerors, at whose fell command
The war-fiend riots o'er a peaceful land.
You desolation's gory throng
Shall bear from Victory along
To that mysterious strand.

Cold, cold is the blast, when December is howling,
Cold are the damps on a dying man's brow.
Stern are the seas, when the wild waves are rolling,
And sad the grave where a loved one lies low.
But colder is scorn from the being who loved thee,
More stern is the sneer from the friend who has proved thee,
More sad are the tears when these sorrows have moved thee,
Which mixed with groans, anguish, and wild madness flow.

And, ah! poor Louisa has felt all this horror;
Full long the fallen victim contended with fate,
Till a destitute outcast, abandoned to sorrow,
She sought her babe's food at her runner's gate.

Another had charmed the remorseless betrayer,
 He turned callous aside from her moan and her prayer,—
 She said nothing, but wringing the wet from her hair,
 Crossed the dark mountain's side, tho' the hour it was late.

'Twas on the dark summit of huge Penmanmauer
 That the form of the wasted Louisa reclined;
 She shrieked to the ravens that croaked from afar,
 And she sighed to the gusts of the wild-sweeping wind.
 'I call not yon clouds, where the thunder-peals rattle,
 I call not yon rocks, where the elements battle,
 But thee, perjured Henry, I call thee unkind!'

Then she wreathed in her hair the wild flowers of the mountain,
 And, deliriously laughing, a garland entwined,
 She bedewed it with tears, then she hung o'er the fountain,
 And, laving it, cast it a prey to the wind.
 'Ah, go!' she exclaimed, 'where the tempest is yelling;
 'Tis unkind to be cast on the sea that is swelling;
 But I left, a pitiless outcast, my dwelling;
 My garments are torn—so, they say, is my mind.'

Not long lived Louisa—but over her grave
 Waved the desolate form of a storm-blasted yew,
 Around it no demons or ghosts dare to rave,
 But spirits of Peace steep her slumbers in dew.
 Then stay thy swift steps 'mid the dark mountain heather
 Tho' chill blow the wind and severe be the weather,
 For Perfidy, traveller, cannot bereave her
 Of the tears to the tombs of the innocent due!

Oh! sweet is the moonbeam that sleeps on yon fountain,
 And sweet the mild rush of the soft-sighing breeze,
 And sweet is the glimpse of yon dimly-seen mountain
 'Neath the verdant arcades of yon shadowy trees;
 But sweeter than all ———

And, ah! she may envy the heart-shocked quarry,
 Who bids to the scenery of childhood farewell,
 She may envy the bosom all bleeding and gory,
 She may envy the sound of the drear passing-knell.
 Not so deep are his woes on his death-couch reposing
 When on the last vision his dim eyes are closing,
 As the outcast ———

Those notes were so sad and so soft, that, ah! never
 May the sound cease to vibrate on memory's ear!

Bysshe wrote down these verses for me at Oxford from memory. I was to have a complete and more correct copy of them some day. They were the composition of his sister Elizabeth, and he valued them highly as well as their author, with whom, except an occasional tiff, when she preferred less dry and abstruse matters to his ethical and metaphysical speculations, he agreed most affectionately, cordially, and perfectly. I was to undertake to fall in love with her; if I did not

I had no business to go to Field Place, and he would never forgive me. I promised to do my best; and, probably, it would not have been difficult to have kept my promise, at least, in a poetical sense. For any one whose age, fortune, and inclinations disposed him to settle in life, it might have been very easy to fall in love in a more earnest and practical manner, for she was one of those young ladies who win golden opinions from all their acquaintance.

I often found Shelley reading *Gebir*. There was something in that poem which caught his fancy. He would read it aloud, or to himself sometimes, with a tiresome pertinacity. One morning, I went to his rooms to tell him something of importance, but he would attend to nothing but *Gebir*. With a young impatience, I snatched the book out of the obstinate fellow's hand, and threw it through the open window into the quadrangle. It fell upon the grass-plot, and was brought back presently by the servant. I related this incident, some years afterwards, and after the death of my poor friend, at Florence to the highly gifted author. He heard it with his hearty, cordial, genial laugh. 'Well, you must allow it is something to have produced what could please one fellow creature and offend another so much.'

I regret that those two intellectual persons were not acquainted with each other. If I would confer a real benefit upon a friend, I would procure for him, if it were possible, the friendship of Walter Savage Landor!

CHAPTER VI

‘ABOVE all things, Liberty!’ The political creed of Shelley may be comprised in a few words; it was, in truth, that of most men, and, in a peculiar manner, of young men, during the freshness and early spring of revolutions. He held that not only is the greatest possible amount of civil liberty to be preferred to all other blessings, but that this advantage is all-sufficient, and comprehends within itself every other desirable object. The former position is as unquestionably true as the latter is undoubtedly false. It is no small praise, however, to a very young man, to say, that, on a subject so remote from the comprehension of youth, his opinions were at least half right. Twenty years ago the young men at our universities were satisfied with upholding the political doctrines of which they approved by private discussions: they did not venture to form clubs of brothers, and to move resolutions, except a small number of enthusiasts, of doubtful sanity, who alone sought to usurp, by crude and premature efforts, the offices of a matured understanding and of manly experience.

Although our fellow-collegians were willing to learn before they took upon themselves the heavy and thankless charge of instructing others, there was no lack of beardless politicians amongst us: of these, some were more strenuous supporters of the popular cause in our little circles than others; but all were abundantly liberal. A Brutus, or a Gracchus, would have found many to surpass him, and few, indeed, to fall short, in theoretical devotion to the interests of equal freedom. I can scarcely recollect a single exception amongst my numerous acquaintances: all, I think, were worthy of the best ages of Greece or of Rome; all were true, loyal citizens, brave and free. How, indeed, could it be otherwise? Liberty is the morning-star of youth; and those who enjoy the inappreciable blessing of a classical education, are taught betimes to lisp its praises. They are nurtured in the writings of its votaries; and they even learn their native tongue, as it were, at second hand, and reflected in the glorious pages of the authors, who, in the ancient languages, and in strains of a noble eloquence, that will never fail to

astonish succeeding generations, proclaim unceasingly, with every variety of powerful and energetic phrase, 'Above all things, Liberty!' The praises of liberty were the favourite topic of our earliest verses, whether they flowed with natural ease, or were elaborated painfully out of the resources of art; and the tyrant was set up as an object of scorn, to be pelted with the first ink of our theimes. How, then, can an educated youth be other than free?

Shelley was entirely devoted to the lovely theory of freedom; but he was also eminently averse at that time from engaging in the far less beautiful practices wherein are found the actual and operative energies of liberty. I was maintaining against him one day at my rooms the superiority of the ethical sciences over the physical. In the course of the debate he cried, with shrill vehemence—for as his aspect presented to the eye much of the elegance of the peacock, so, in like manner, he cruelly lacerated the ear with its discordant tones—'You talk of the pre-eminence of moral philosophy; do you comprehend politics under that name? and will you tell me, as others do, and as Plato, I believe, teaches, that of this philosophy the political department is the highest and the most important?' Without expecting an answer, he continued: 'A certain nobleman (and he named him) advised me to turn my thoughts towards politics immediately. "You cannot direct your attention that way too early in this country", said the duke; "they are the proper career for a young man of ability and of your station in life. That course is the most advantageous, because it is a monopoly. A little success in that line goes far, since the number of competitors is limited; and of those who are admitted to the contest, the greater part are altogether devoid of talent, or too indolent to exert themselves: so many are excluded, that, of the few who are permitted to enter, it is difficult to find any that are not utterly unfit for the ordinary service of the state. It is not so in the church; it is not so at the bar: there all may offer themselves. The number of rivals in those professions is far greater, and they are, besides, of a more formidable kind. In letters, your chance of success is still worse. There, none can win gold, and all may try to gain reputation: it is a struggle for glory—the competition is infinite—there are no bounds—that is a spacious field, indeed—a sea without shores!" The duke talked thus to me many times, and strongly urged me to give myself up to politics without delay; but he did not persuade me. With how unconquerable an aversion do I shrink from political

articles in newspapers and reviews! I have heard people talk politics by the hour, and how I hated it and them! I went with my father several times to the House of Commons, and what creatures did I see there! What faces!—what an expression of countenance!—what wretched beings!’ Here he clasped his hands, and raised his voice to a painful pitch, with fervid dislike. ‘Good God! what men did we meet about the House—in the lobbies and passages! and my father was so civil to all of them—to animals that I regarded with unmitigated disgust! A friend of mine, an Eton man, told me that his father once invited some corporation to dine at his house, and that he was present. When dinner was over and the gentlemen nearly drunk, they started up, he said, and swore they would all kiss his sisters. His father laughed, and did not forbid them; and the wretches would have done it; but his sisters heard of the infamous proposal, and ran upstairs, and locked themselves in their bedrooms. I asked him if he would not have knocked them down if they had attempted such an outrage in his presence. It seems to me that a man of spirit ought to have killed them if they had effected their purpose.’ The sceptical philosopher sat for several minutes in silence, his cheeks glowing with intense indignation.

‘Never did a more finished gentleman than Shelley step across a drawing-room!’ Lord Byron exclaimed; and on reading the remark in Mr. Moore’s *Memoirs*, I was struck forcibly by its justice, and wondered for a moment that, since it was so obvious, it had never been made before. Perhaps this excellence was blended so intimately with his entire nature, that it seemed to constitute a part of his identity, and being essential and necessary was therefore never noticed. I observed his eminence in this respect before I had sat beside him many minutes at our first meeting in the hall of University College. Since that day I have had the happiness to associate with some of the best specimens of gentlemen; but with all due deference for those admirable persons (may my candour and my preference be pardoned), I can affirm that Shelley was almost the only example I have yet found that was never wanting, even in the most minute particular, of the infinite and various observances of pure, entire, and perfect gentility. Trifling, indeed, and unimportant, were the aberrations of some whom I could name; but in him, during a long and most unusual familiarity, I discovered no flaw, no tarnish; the metal was sterling, and the polish absolute. I have also seen him, although rarely, ‘step-

ping across a drawing-room', and then his deportment, as Lord Byron testifies, was unexceptionable. Such attendances, however, were pain and grief to him, and his inward discomfort was not hard to be discerned.

An acute observer, whose experience of life was infinite, and who had been long and largely conversant with the best society in each of the principal capitals of Europe, had met Shelley, of whom he was a sincere admirer, several times in public. He remarked one evening, at a large party where Shelley was present, his extreme discomfort, and added: 'It is but too plain that there is something radically wrong in the constitution of our assemblies, since such a man finds not pleasure, nor even ease, in them'. His speculations concerning the cause were ingenious, and would possibly be not altogether devoid of interest; but they are wholly unconnected with the object of these scanty reminiscences.

Whilst Shelley was still a boy, clubs were few in number, of small dimensions, and generally confined to some specific class of persons; the universal and populous clubs of the present day were almost unknown. His reputation has increased so much of late, that the honour of including his name in the list of members, were such a distinction happily attainable, would now perhaps be sought by many of these societies; but it is not less certain, that, for a period of nearly twenty years, he would have been blackballed by almost every club in London. Nor would such a fate be peculiar to him.

When a great man has attained to a certain eminence, his patronage is courted by those who were wont carefully to shun him, whilst he was quietly and steadily pursuing the path that would inevitably lead to advancement. It would be easy to multiply instances, if proofs were needed, and this remarkable peculiarity of our social existence is an additional and irrefragable argument that the constitution of refined society is radically vicious, since it flatters timid, insipid mediocrity, and is opposed to the bold, fearless originality, and to that novelty, which invariably characterize true genius. The first dawns of talent are instantly hailed and warmly welcomed, as soon as some singularity unequivocally attests its existence amongst nations where hypocrisy and intolerance are less absolute.

If all men were required to name the greatest disappointment they had respectively experienced, the catalogue would be very various; accordingly as the expectations of each had been elevated respecting the pleasure that would attend the gratification

of some favourite wish, would the reality in almost every case have fallen short of the anticipation. The variety would be infinite as to the nature of the first disappointment; but if the same irresistible authority could command that another and another should be added to the list, it is probable that there would be less dissimilarity in the returns of the disappointments which were deemed second and the next in importance to the greatest, and perhaps, in numerous instances, the third would coincide. Many individuals, having exhausted their principal private and peculiar grievances in the first and second examples, would assign the third place to some public and general matter.

The youth who has formed his conceptions of the power, effects, and aspect of eloquence from the specimens furnished by the orators of Greece and Rome, receives as rude a shock on his first visit to the House of Commons as can possibly be inflicted on his juvenile expectations, where the subject is entirely unconnected with the interests of the individual. A prodigious number of persons would, doubtless, inscribe nearly at the top of the list of disappointments the deplorable and inconceivable inferiority of the actual to the imaginary debate. It is not wonderful, therefore, that the sensitive, the susceptible, the fastidious Shelley, whose lively fancy was easily wound up to a degree of excitement incomprehensible to calmer and more phlegmatic temperaments, felt keenly a mortification that can wound even the most obtuse intellects, and expressed, with contemptuous acrimony, his dissatisfaction at the cheat which his warm imagination had put upon him. Had he resolved to enter the career of politics, it is possible that habit would have reconciled him to many things which at first seemed to be repugnant to his nature; it is possible that his unwearied industry, his remarkable talents and vast energy, would have led him to renown in that line as well as in another; but it is most probable that his parliamentary success would have been but moderate. Opportunities of advancement were offered to him, and he rejected them, in the opinion of some of his friends unwisely and improperly; but perhaps he only refused gifts that were unfit for him: he struck out a path for himself, and, by boldly following his own course, greatly as it deviated from that prescribed to him, he became incomparably more illustrious than he would have been had he steadily pursued the beaten track. His memory will be green when the herd of everyday politicians are forgotten. Ordinary rules may guide ordinary men, but the orbit of the child of genius is essentially eccentric.

Although the mind of Shelley had certainly a strong bias towards democracy, and he embraced with an ardent and youthful fondness the theory of political equality, his feelings and behaviour were in many respects highly aristocratical. The ideal republic, wherein his fancy loved to expatiate, was adorned by all the graces which Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero have thrown around the memory of ancient liberty; the unbleached web of transatlantic freedom, and the inconsiderate vehemence of such of our domestic patriots as would demonstrate their devotion to the good cause, by treating with irreverence whatever is most venerable, were equally repugnant to his sensitive and reverential spirit.

As a politician, Shelley was in theory wholly a republican, but in practice, so far only as it is possible to be one with due regard for the sacred rights of a scholar and a gentleman; and these being in his eyes always more inviolable than any scheme of polity, or civil institution, although he was upon paper and in discourse a sturdy commonwealth-man, the living, moving, acting individual, had much of the senatorial and conservative, and was, in the main, eminently patrician.

The rare assiduity of the young poet in the acquisition of general knowledge has been already described; he had, moreover, diligently studied the mechanism of his art before he came to Oxford. He composed Latin verses with singular facility. On visiting him soon after his arrival at the accustomed hour of one, he was writing the usual exercise which we presented, I believe, once a week—a Latin translation of a paper in the *Spectator*. He soon finished it, and as he held it before the fire to dry, I offered to take it from him; he said it was not worth looking at; but as I persisted, through a certain scholastic curiosity to examine the Latinity of my new acquaintance, he gave it to me. The Latin was sufficiently correct, but the version was paraphrastic, which I observed; he assented, and said that it would pass muster, and he felt no interest in such efforts, and no desire to excel in them. I also noticed many portions of heroic verses, and even several entire verses, and these I pointed out as defects in a prose composition. He smiled archly, and asked, in his piercing whisper: ‘Do you think they will observe them? I inserted them intentionally to try their ears! I once showed up a theme at Eton to old Keate, in which there were a great many verses; but he observed them, scanned them, and asked why I had introduced them? I answered, that I did not know they were there: this was partly true and

partly false; but he believed me, and immediately applied to me the line, in which Ovid says of himself:

Et quod tentabam dicere, versus erat.'

Shelley then spoke of the facility with which he could compose Latin verses; and, taking the paper out of my hand, he began to put the entire translation into verse. He would sometimes open at hazard a prose writer, as Livy, or Sallust, and by changing the position of the words, and occasionally substituting others, he would transmute several sentences from prose to verse—to heroic, or more commonly elegiac, verse, for he was peculiarly charmed with the graceful and easy flow of the latter—with surprising rapidity and readiness. He was fond of displaying this accomplishment during his residence at Oxford, but he forgot to bring it away with him when he quitted the university; or perhaps he left it behind him designedly, as being suitable to academic groves only and to the banks of the Isis. In Ovid the facility of versification in his native tongue was possibly, in some measure, innate, although the extensive and various learning of that poet demonstrates that the power of application was not wanting in him; but such a command over a dead language can only be acquired through severe study.

There is much in the poetry of Shelley that seems to encourage the belief, that the inspiration of the Muses was seldom duly hailed by the pious diligence of the recipient. It is true that his compositions were too often unfinished, but his example cannot encourage indolence in the youthful writer, for his carelessness is usually apparent only; he had really applied himself as strenuously to conquer all the other difficulties of his art, as he patiently laboured to penetrate the mysteries of metre in the state wherein it exists entire and can alone be attained—in one of the classical languages.

The poet takes his name from the highest effort of his art—creation; and, being himself a maker, he must, of necessity, feel a strong sympathy with the exercise of the creative energies. Shelley was exceedingly deficient in mechanical ingenuity; and he was also wanting in spontaneous curiosity respecting the operations of artificers. The wonderful dexterity of well-practised hands, the long tradition of innumerable ages, and the vast accumulation of technical wisdom, that are manifested in the various handicrafts, have always been interesting to me, and I have ever loved to watch the artist at his work. I have often induced Shelley to take part in such observations, and

although he never threw himself in the way of professors of the manual erudition of the workshop, his vivid delight in witnessing the marvels of the plastic hand, whenever they were brought before his eyes, was very striking; and the rude workman was often gratified to find that his merit in one narrow field was, at once and intuitively, so fully appreciated by the young scholar. The instances are innumerable that would attest an unusual sympathy with the arts of construction even in their most simple stages.

I led him one summer's evening into a brickfield; it had never occurred to him to ask himself how a brick is formed; the secret was revealed in a moment; he was charmed with the simple contrivance, and astonished at the rapidity, facility, and exactness with which it was put in use by so many busy hands. An ordinary observer would have smiled and passed on, but the son of fancy confessed his delight with an energy which roused the attention even of the ragged throng, that seemed to exist only that they might pass successive lumps of clay through a wooden frame.

I was surprised at the contrast between the general indifference of Shelley for the mechanical arts, and his intense admiration of a particular application of one of them the first time I noticed the latter peculiarity. During our residence at Oxford, I repaired to his rooms one morning at the accustomed hour, and I found a tailor with him. He had expected to receive a new coat on the preceding evening; it was not sent home, and he was mortified, I know not why, for he was commonly altogether indifferent about dress, and scarcely appeared to distinguish one coat from another. He was now standing erect in the middle of the room in his new blue coat, with all its glittering buttons, and to atone for the delay, the tailor was loudly extolling the beauty of the cloth and the felicity of the fit; his eloquence had not been thrown away upon his customer, for never was man more easily persuaded than the master of persuasion. The man of thimbles applied to me to vouch his eulogies; I briefly assented to them. He withdrew, after some bows, and Shelley, snatching his hat, cried with shrill impatience:

'Let us go!'

'Do you mean to walk in the fields in your new coat?' I asked.

'Yes, certainly', he answered, and we sallied forth.

We sauntered for a moderate space through lanes and by-ways, until we reached a spot near to a farm-house, where the frequent trampling of much cattle had rendered the road almost

impassable, and deep with black mud ; but by crossing the corner of a stack-yard, from one gate to another, we could tread upon clean straw, and could wholly avoid the impure and impracticable slough.

We had nearly effected the brief and commodious transit, I was stretching forth my hand to open the gate that led us back into the lane, when a lean, brindled, and most ill-favoured mastiff, that had stolen upon us softly over the straw unheard, and without barking, seized Shelley suddenly by the skirts. I instantly kicked the animal in the ribs with so much force, that I felt for some days after the influence of his gaunt bones on my toe. The blow caused him to flinch towards the left, and Shelley, turning round quickly, planted a kick in his throat, which sent him away sprawling, and made him retire hastily among the stacks, and we then entered the lane. The fury of the mastiff, and the rapid turn, had torn the skirts of the new blue coat across the back, just about that part of the human loins which our tailors, for some wise, but inscrutable purpose, are wont to adorn with two buttons. They were entirely severed from the body, except a narrow strip of cloth on the left side, and this Shelley presently rent asunder.

I never saw him so angry either before or since; he vowed that he would bring his pistols and shoot the dog, and that he would proceed at law against the owner. The fidelity of the dog towards his master is very beautiful in theory, and there is much to admire and to revere in this ancient and venerable alliance; but, in practice, the most unexceptionable dog is a nuisance to all mankind, except his master, at all times, and very often to him also, and a fierce surly dog is the enemy of the whole human race. The farm-yards, in many parts of England, are happily free from a pest that is formidable to everybody but thieves by profession; in other districts savage dogs abound, and in none so much, according to my experience, as in the vicinity of Oxford. The neighbourhood of a still more famous city, Rome, is likewise infested by dogs, more lowering, more ferocious, and incomparably more powerful.

Shelley was proceeding home with rapid strides, bearing the skirts of his new coat on his left arm, to procure his pistols, that he might wreak his vengeance upon the offending dog. I disliked the race, but I did not desire to take an ignoble revenge upon the miserable individual.

'Let us try to fancy, Shelley,' I said to him, as he was posting away in indignant silence, 'that we have been at Oxford, and

have come back again, and that you have just laid the beast low—and what then?’

He was silent for some time, but I soon perceived, from the relaxation of his pace, that his anger had relaxed also.

At last he stopped short, and taking the skirts from his arm, spread them upon the hedge, stood gazing at them with a mournful aspect, sighed deeply, and after a few moments continued his march.

‘Would it not be better to take the skirts with us?’ I inquired.

‘No,’ he answered, despondingly, ‘let them remain as a spectacle for men and gods!’

We returned to Oxford, and made our way by back streets to our college. As we entered the gates, the officious scout remained with astonishment Shelley’s strange spenser, and asked for the skirts, that he might instantly carry the wreck to the tailor. Shelley answered, with his peculiarly pensive air, ‘They are upon the hedge.’

The scout looked up at the clock, at Shelley, and through the gate into the street as it were at the same moment and with one eager glance, and would have run blindly in quest of them, but I drew the skirts from my pocket, and unfolded them, and he followed us to Shelley’s rooms.

We were sitting there in the evening at tea, when the tailor who had praised the coat so warmly in the morning, brought it back as fresh as ever, and apparently uninjured. It had been fine-drawn; he showed how skilfully the wound had been healed, and he commended, at some length, the artist who had effected the cure. Shelley was astonished and delighted: had the tailor consumed the new blue coat in one of his crucibles, and suddenly raised it, by magical incantation, a fresh and purple Phoenix from the ashes, his admiration could hardly have been more vivid. It might be, in this instance, that his joy at the unexpected restoration of a coat, for which, although he was utterly indifferent to dress, he had, through some unaccountable caprice, conceived a fondness, gave force to his sympathy with art; but I have remarked in innumerable cases, where no personal motive could exist, that he was animated by all the ardour of a maker in witnessing the display of the creative energies.

Nor was the young poet less interested by imitation, especially the imitation of action, than by the creative arts. Our theatrical representations have long been degraded by a most pernicious monopoly, by vast abuses, and enormous corruptions, and by

the prevalence of bad taste; far from feeling a desire to visit the theatres, Shelley would have esteemed it a cruel infliction to have been compelled to witness performances that less fastidious critics have deemed intolerable. He found delight, however, in reading the best of our English dramas, particularly the masterpieces of Shakespeare, and he was never weary of studying the more perfect compositions of the Attic tragedians. The lineaments of individual character may frequently be traced more certainly, and more distinctly, in trifles than in more important affairs; for in the former the deportment, even of the boldest and most ingenuous, is more entirely emancipated from every restraint. I recollect many minute traits that display the inborn sympathy of a brother practitioner in the mimetic arts: one silly tale, because, in truth, it is the most trivial of all, will best illustrate the conformation of his mind; its childishness, therefore, will be pardoned.

A young man of studious habits, and of considerable talent, occasionally derived a whimsical amusement, during his residence at Cambridge, from entering the public-houses in the neighbouring villages, whilst the fen-farmers and other rustics were smoking and drinking, and from repeating a short passage of a play, or a portion of an oration, which described the death of a distinguished person, the fatal result of a mighty battle, or other important event, in a forcible manner. He selected a passage of which the language was nearly on a level with vulgar comprehension, or he adapted one by somewhat mitigating its elevation; and although his appearance did not bespeak histrionic gifts, he was able to utter it impressively, and what was most effective, not theatrically, but simply, and with the air of a man who was in earnest; and if he were interrupted or questioned, he could slightly modify the discourse, without materially changing the sense, to give it a further appearance of reality; and so staid and sober was the gravity of his demeanour as to render it impossible for the clowns to solve the wonder by supposing that he was mad. During his declamation the orator feasted inwardly on the stupid astonishment of his petrified audience, and he further regaled himself afterwards by imagining the strange conjectures that would commence at his departure.

Shelley was much interested by the account I gave him of this curious fact, from the relation of two persons, who had witnessed the performance. He asked innumerable questions, which I was in general quite unable to answer; and he spoke of it as something altogether miraculous, that any one should be able

to recite extraordinary events in such a manner as to gain credence. As he insisted much upon the difficulty of the exploit, I told him that I thought he greatly over-estimated it. I was disposed to believe that it was in truth easy; that faith and a certain gravity were alone needed. I had been struck by the story, when I first heard it; and I had often thought of the practicability of imitating the deception, and although I had never proceeded so far myself, I had once or twice found it convenient to attempt something similar. At these words Shelley drew his chair close to mine, and listened with profound silence and intense curiosity.

I was walking one afternoon in the summer on the western side of that short street leading from Long Acre to Covent Garden, wherein the passenger is earnestly invited, as a personal favour to the demandant, to proceed straightway to Highgate or to Kentish Town, and which is called, I think, James Street; I was about to enter Covent Garden, when an Irish labourer, whom I met bearing an empty hod, accosted me somewhat roughly, and asked why I had run against him; I told him briefly that he was mistaken. Whether somebody had actually pushed the man, or he sought only to quarrel, and although he doubtless attended a weekly row regularly, and the week was already drawing to a close, he was unable to wait until Sunday for a broken head, I know not, but he discoursed for some time with the vehemence of a man who considers himself injured or insulted, and he concluded, being emboldened by my long silence, with a cordial invitation just to push him again. Several persons not very unlike in costume had gathered round him, and appeared to regard him with sympathy. When he paused, I addressed to him slowly and quietly, and it should seem with great gravity, these words, as nearly as I can recollect them:

‘I have put my hand into the hamper; I have looked upon the sacred barley; I have eaten out of the drum! I have drunk and was well pleased: I have said, *κόγξ ὄμπαξ*, and it is finished!’

‘Have you, sir?’ inquired the astonished Irishman, and his ragged friends instantly pressed round him with, ‘Where is the hamper, Paddy?’—‘What barley?’ and the like. And ladies from his own country, that is to say, the basket-women, suddenly began to interrogate him, ‘Now, I say, Pat, where have you been drinking? What have you had?’

I turned therefore to the right, leaving the astounded neophyte, whom I had thus planted, to expound the mystic words of initiation, as he could, to his inquisitive companions.

As I walked slowly under the piazzas, and through the streets and courts, towards the west, I marvelled at the ingenuity of Orpheus—if he were indeed the inventor of the Eleusinian mysteries—that he was able to devise words that, imperfectly as I had repeated them, and in the tattered fragment that has reached us, were able to soothe people so savage and barbarous as those to whom I had addressed them, and which, as the apologists for those venerable rites affirm, were manifestly well adapted to incite persons, who hear them for the first time, however rude they may be, to ask questions. Words, that can awaken curiosity, even in the sluggish intellect of a wild man, and can thus open the inlet of knowledge!

'*Konx ompax*, and it is finished' exclaimed Shelley, crowing with enthusiastic delight at my whimsical adventure. A thousand times as he strode about the house, and in his rambles out of doors, would he stop and repeat aloud the mystic words of initiation, but always with an energy of manner, and a vehemence of tone and of gesture, that would have prevented the ready acceptance, which a calm, passionless delivery had once procured for them. How often would he throw down his book, clasp his hands, and starting from his seat, cry suddenly, with a thrilling voice, 'I have said *Konx ompax*, and it is finished!'

CHAPTER VII

As our attention is most commonly attracted by those departments of knowledge which are striking and remarkable, rather than by those which are really useful, so, in estimating the character of an individual, we are prone to admire extraordinary intellectual powers and uncommon energies of thought, and to overlook that excellence which is, in truth, the most precious—his moral value. Was the subject of biography distinguished by a vast erudition? Was he conspicuous for an original genius; for a warm and fruitful fancy? Such are the implied questions which we seek to resolve by consulting the memoirs of his life. We may sometimes desire to be informed whether he was a man of nice honour and conspicuous integrity; but how rarely do we feel any curiosity with respect to that quality which is, perhaps, the most important to his fellows—how seldom do we desire to measure his benevolence! It would be impossible faithfully to describe the course of a single day in the ordinary life of Shelley without showing, incidentally and unintentionally, that his nature was eminently benevolent—and many minute traits, pregnant with proof, have been already scattered by the way; but it would be an injustice to his memory to forbear to illustrate expressly, but briefly, in leave-taking, the ardent, devoted, and unwearied love he bore his kind.

A personal intercourse could alone enable the observer to discern in him a soul ready winged for flight, and scarcely detained by the fetters of body: that happiness was, if possible, still more indispensable to open the view of the unbounded expanse of cloudless philanthropy—pure, disinterested, and unvaried—the aspect of which often filled with mute wonder the minds of simple people, unable to estimate a penetrating genius, a docile sagacity, a tenacious memory, or, indeed, any of the various ornaments of the soul.

Whenever the intimate friends of Shelley speak of him in general terms, they speedily and unconsciously fall into the language of panegyric—a style of discourse that is barren of instruction, wholly devoid of interest, and justly suspected by

the prudent stranger. It becomes them, therefore, on discovering the error they have committed, humbly to entreat the forgiveness of the charitable for human infirmity, oppressed and weighed down by the fullness of the subject—carefully to abstain in future from every vague expression of commendation, and faithfully to relate a plain, honest tale of unadorned facts.

A regard for children, singular and touching, is an unerring and most engaging indication of a benevolent mind. That this characteristic was not wanting in Shelley might be demonstrated by numerous examples which crowd upon the recollection, each of them bearing the strongly impressed stamp of individuality: for genius renders every surrounding circumstance significant and important. In one of our rambles we were traversing the bare, squalid, ugly, corn-yielding country, that lies, if I remember rightly, to the south-west of Oxford: the hollow road ascended a hill, and near the summit Shelley observed a female child leaning against the bank on the right: it was of a mean, dull, and unattractive aspect, and older than its stunted growth denoted. The morning, as well as the preceding night, had been rainy: it had cleared up at noon with a certain ungenial sunshine, and the afternoon was distinguished by that intense cold which sometimes, in the winter season, terminates such days. The little girl was oppressed by cold, by hunger, and by a vague feeling of abandonment. It was not easy to draw from her blue lips an intelligible history of her condition. Love, however, is at once credulous and apprehensive; and Shelley immediately decided that she had been deserted, and, with his wonted precipitation (for in the career of humanity his active spirit knew no pause), he proposed different schemes for the permanent relief of the poor foundling, and he hastily inquired which of them was the most expedient. I answered that it was desirable, in the first place, to try to procure some food, for of this the want was manifestly the most urgent. I then climbed the hill to reconnoitre, and observed a cottage close at hand, on the left of the road. With considerable difficulty—with a gentle violence, indeed—Shelley induced the child to accompany him thither. After much delay, we procured from the people of the place, who resembled the dull, uncouth, and perhaps sullen, rustics of that district, some warm milk.

It was a strange spectacle to watch the young poet, whilst, with the enthusiastic and intensely earnest manner that characterizes the legitimate brethren of the celestial art—the heaven

born and fiercely inspired sons of genuine poesy—holding the wooden bowl in one hand and the wooden spoon in the other, and kneeling on his left knee, that he might more certainly attain to her mouth, he urged and encouraged the torpid and timid child to eat. The hot milk was agreeable to the girl, and its effects were salutary; but she was obviously uneasy at the detention. Her uneasiness increased, and ultimately prevailed: we returned with her to the place where we had found her, Shelley bearing the bowl of milk in his hand. Here we saw some people anxiously looking for the child—a man and, I think, four women, strangers of the poorest class, of a mean, but not disreputable, appearance. As soon as the girl perceived them she was content, and taking the bowl from Shelley, she finished the milk without his help.

Meanwhile, one of the women explained the apparent desertion with a multitude of rapid words. They had come from a distance, and to spare the weary child the fatigue of walking farther, the day being at that time sunny, they left her to await their return; those unforeseen delays, which harass all, and especially the poor, in transacting business, had detained them much longer than they had anticipated.

Such, in a few words, is the story, which was related in many, and which the little girl, who, it was said, was somewhat deficient in understanding, as well as in stature, was unable to explain. So humble was the condition of these poor wayfaring folks, that they did not presume to offer thanks in words; but they often turned back, and with mute wonder gazed at Shelley, who, totally unconscious that he had done anything to excite surprise, returned with huge strides to the cottage, to restore the bowl and to pay for the milk. As the needy travellers pursued their toilsome, and possibly fruitless journey, they had at least the satisfaction to reflect that all above them were not desolated by a dreary apathy, but that some hearts were warm with that angelic benevolence towards inferiors in which still higher natures, as we are taught, largely participate.

Shelley would often pause, halting suddenly in his swift course, to admire the children of the country-people; and after gazing on a sweet and intelligent countenance, he would exhibit, in the language and with an aspect of acute anguish, his intense feeling of the future sorrows and sufferings—of all the manifold evils of life—which too often distort, by a mean and most disagreeable expression, the innocent, happy, and engaging lineaments of youth. He sometimes stopped to observe the

softness and simplicity that the face and gestures of a gentle girl displayed, and he would surpass her gentleness by his own.

We were strolling one day in the neighbourhood of Oxford, when Shelley was attracted by a little girl: he turned aside, and stood and observed her in silence. She was about six years of age, small and slight, bareheaded, barelegged, and her apparel variegated and tattered. She was busily employed in collecting empty snail-shells, so much occupied indeed, that some moments elapsed before she turned her face towards us. When she did so, we perceived that she was evidently a young gipsy; and Shelley was forcibly struck by the vivid intelligence of her wild and swarthy countenance, and especially by the sharp glance of her fierce black eyes. 'How much intellect is here!' he exclaimed, 'in how humble a vessel, and what an unworthy occupation for a person who once knew perfectly the whole circle of the sciences; who has forgotten them all, it is true, but who could certainly recollect them, although most probably she will never do so; will never recall a single principle of any one of them!'

As he spoke, he turned aside a bramble with his foot, and discovered a large shell, which the alert child instantly caught up and added to her store; at the same moment a small stone was thrown from the other side of the road; it fell in the hedge near us. We turned round and saw on the top of a high bank a boy some three years older than the girl, and in as rude a guise; he was looking at us over a low hedge with a smile, but plainly not without suspicion. We might be two kidnappers, he seemed to think: he was in charge of his little sister, and did not choose to have her stolen before his face. He gave the signal therefore, and she obeyed it, and had almost joined him before we missed her from our side. They both disappeared, and we continued our walk.

Shelley was charmed with the intelligence of the two children of nature, and with their marvellous wildness: he talked much about them, and compared them to birds, and to the two wild leverets, which that wild mother, the hare, produces. We sauntered about, and half an hour afterwards, on turning a corner, we suddenly met the two children again full in the face. The meeting was unlooked for, and the air of the boy showed that it was unpleasant to him: he had a large bundle of dry sticks under his arm; these he gently dropped, and stood motionless with an apprehensive smile—a deprecatory smile. We were perhaps the lords of the soil, and his patience was prepared,



WE WERE RAMBLING IN THE FAVOURITE REGION AT THE FOOT OF SHOTOVER HILL . .

for patience was his lot—an inalienable inheritance long entailed upon his line—to hear a severe reproof with heavy threats, possibly even to receive blows with a stick gathered by himself, not altogether unwittingly, for his own back; or to find mercy and forbearance. Shelley's demeanour soon convinced him that he had nothing to fear; he laid a hand on the round, matted, knotted, bare, and black head of each, viewed their moving, mercurial countenances with renewed pleasure and admiration, and shaking his long locks, suddenly strode away. 'That little ragged fellow knows as much as the wisest philosopher', he presently cried, clapping the wings of his soul, and crowing aloud with shrill triumph at the felicitous union of the true with the ridiculous—'but he will not communicate any portion of his knowledge: it is not from churlishness, however, for of that his nature is plainly incapable; but the sophisticated urchin will persist in thinking he has forgotten all that he knows so well. I was about to ask him myself to communicate some of the doctrines Plato unfolds in his *Dialogues*: but I felt that it would do no good: the rogue would have laughed at me, and so would his little sister. I wonder you did not propose to them some mathematical questions: just a few interrogations in your geometry; for that being so plain and certain, if it be once thoroughly understood, can never be forgotten!'

A day or two afterwards (or it might be on the morrow), as we were rambling in the favourite region at the foot of Shotover Hill, a gipsy's tent by the roadside caught Shelley's eye: men and women were seated on the ground in front of it, watching a pot suspended over a smoky fire of sticks. He cast a passing glance at the ragged group, but immediately stopped on recognizing the children, who remembered us, and ran laughing into the tent. Shelley laughed also, and waved his hand, and the little girl returned the salutation.

There were many striking contrasts in the character and behaviour of Shelley, and one of the most remarkable was a mixture, or alternation, of awkwardness with agility—of the clumsy with the graceful. He would stumble in stepping across the floor of a drawing-room; he would trip himself up on a smooth-shaven grass-plot, and he would tumble in the most inconceivable manner in ascending the commodious, facile, and well-carpeted staircase of an elegant mansion, so as to bruise his nose or his lip on the upper steps, or to tread upon his hands, and even occasionally to disturb the composure of a well-bred footman; on the contrary, he would often glide

without collision through a crowded assembly, thread with unerring dexterity a most intricate path, or securely and rapidly tread the most arduous and uncertain ways. As soon as he saw the children enter the tent, he darted after them with his peculiar agility, followed them into their low, narrow, and fragile tenement, penetrated to the bottom of the tent without removing his hat, or striking against the woven edifice. He placed a hand on each round, rough head, spoke a few kind words to the skulking children, and then returned not less precipitately, and with as much ease and accuracy, as if he had been a dweller in tents from the hour when he first drew air and milk to that day—as if he had been the descendant, not of a gentle house, but of a long line of gipsies. His visit roused the jealousy of a stunted, feeble dog, which followed him and barked with helpless fury: he did not heed it, nor perhaps hear it. The company of gipsies were astonished at the first visit that had ever been made by a member of either university to their humble dwelling; but as its object was evidently benevolent, they did not stir or interfere, but greeted him on his return with a silent and unobserved salutation. He seized my arm, and we prosecuted our speculations, as we walked briskly to our college.

The marvellous gentleness of his demeanour could conciliate the least sociable natures, and it had secretly touched the wild things which he had thus briefly noticed.

We were wandering through the roads and lanes at a short distance from the tent soon afterwards, and were pursuing our way in silence; I turned round at a sudden sound—the young gipsy had stolen upon us unperceived, and with a long bramble had struck Shelley across the skirts of his coat: he had dropped his rod, and was returning softly to the hedge.

Certain misguided persons, who, unhappily for themselves, were incapable of understanding the true character of Shelley, have published many false and injurious calumnies respecting him—some for hire, others drawing largely out of the inborn vulgarity of their own minds, or from the necessary malignity of ignorance—but no one ever ventured to say that he was not a good judge of an orange! At this time, in his nineteenth year, although temperate, he was less abstemious in his diet than he afterwards became, and he was frequently provided with some fine samples. As soon as he understood the rude but friendly welcome to the heaths and lanes, he drew an orange from his pocket, and rolled it after the retreating gipsy along the grass

by the side of the wide road. The boy started with surprise as the golden fruit passed him, quickly caught it up, and joyfully bore it away, bending reverently over it, and carrying it with both his hands, as if, together with almost the size, it had also the weight of a cannon-ball.

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

One Sunday we had been reading Plato together so diligently, that the usual hour of exercise passed away unperceived: we sallied forth hastily to take the air for half an hour before dinner. In the middle of Magdalen Bridge we met a woman with a child in her arms. Shelley was more attentive at that instant to our conduct in a life that was past, or to come, than to a decorous regulation of the present, according to the established usages of society, in that fleeting moment of eternal duration, styled the nineteenth century. With abrupt dexterity he caught hold of the child. The mother, who might well fear that it was about to be thrown over the parapet of the bridge into the sedgy waters below, held it fast by its long train.

'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, madam?' he asked, in a piercing voice, and with a wistful look.

The mother made no answer, but perceiving that Shelley's object was not murderous, but altogether harmless, she dismissed her apprehension, and relaxed her hold.

'Will your baby tell us anything about pre-existence, madam?' he repeated with unabated earnestness.

'He cannot speak, sir', said the mother seriously.

'Worse and worse', cried Shelley, with an air of deep disappointment, shaking his long hair most pathetically about his young face; 'but surely the babe can speak if he will, for he is only a few weeks old. He may fancy perhaps that he cannot, but it is only a silly whim; he cannot have forgotten entirely the use of speech in so short a time; the thing is absolutely impossible.'

'It is not for me to dispute with you, gentlemen', the woman meekly replied, her eye glancing at our academical garb; 'but I can safely declare that I never heard him speak, nor any child, indeed, of his age.'

It was a fine placid boy; so far from being disturbed by the interruption, he looked up and smiled. Shelley pressed his fat cheeks with his fingers. we commended his healthy appearance and his equanimity. and the mother was permitted to proceed. probably to her satisfaction, for she would doubtless prefer a less speculative nurse. Shelley sighed deeply as we walked on.

'How provokingly close are those new-born babes!' he ejaculated; 'but it is not the less certain, notwithstanding the cunning attempts to conceal the truth. that all knowledge is reminiscence: the doctrine is far more ancient than the times of Plato, and as old as the venerable allegory that the Muses are the daughters of Memory; not one of the nine was ever said to be the child of Invention!'

In consequence of this theory, upon which his active imagination loved to dwell, and which he was delighted to maintain in argument with the few persons qualified to dispute with him on the higher metaphysics, his fondness for children—a fondness innate in generous minds—was augmented and elevated, and the gentle instinct expanded into a profound and philosophical sentiment. The Platonists have been illustrious in all ages, on account of the strength and permanence of their attachments. In Shelley the parental affections were developed at an early period to an unusual extent: it was manifest, therefore, that his heart was formed by nature and by cultivation to derive the most exquisite gratification from the society of his own progeny, or the most poignant anguish from a natural or unnatural bereavement. To strike him here was the cruel admonition which a cursory glance would at once convey to him who might seek where to wound him most severely with a single blow, should he ever provoke the vengeance of an enemy to the active and fearless spirit of liberal investigation and to all solid learning—of a foe to the human race. With respect to the theory of the pre-existence of the soul, it is not wonderful that an ardent votary of the intellectual should love to uphold it in strenuous and protracted disputation, as it places the immortality of the soul in an impregnable castle, and not only secures it an existence independent of the body, as it were, by usage and prescription, but moreover, raising it out of the dirt on tall stilts—elevates it far above the mud of matter.

It is not wonderful that a subtle sophist, who esteemed above all riches and terrene honours victory in well-fought debate, should be willing to maintain a dogma that is not only of difficult eversion by those, who, struggling as mere metaphysicians, use no other weapon than unassisted reason, but which one of the most illustrious Fathers of the Church—a man of amazing powers and stupendous erudition, armed with the prodigious resources of the Christian theology, the renowned Origen—was unable to dismiss; retaining it as not dissonant from his informed reason, and as affording a larger scope for justice in the moral government of the universe.

In addition to his extreme fondness for children, another, and a not less unequivocal, characteristic of a truly philanthropic mind, was eminently and still more remarkably conspicuous in Shelley—his admiration of men of learning and genius. In truth, the devotion, the reverence, the religion, with which he was kindled towards all the masters of intellect, cannot be described, and must be utterly inconceivable to minds less deeply enamoured with the love of wisdom. The irreverent many cannot comprehend the awe—the careless apathetic worldling cannot imagine the enthusiasm—nor can the tongue that attempts only to speak of things visible to the bodily eye, express the mighty emotion that inwardly agitated him, when he approached, for the first time, a volume which he believed to be replete with the recondite and mystic philosophy of antiquity: his cheeks glowed, his eyes became bright, his whole frame trembled, and his entire attention was immediately swallowed up in the depths of contemplation. The rapid and vigorous conversion of his soul to intellect can only be compared with the instantaneous ignition and combustion, which dazzle the sight, when a bundle of dry reeds, or other light inflammable substance, is thrown upon a fire already rich with accumulated heat.

The company of persons of merit was delightful to him, and he often spoke with a peculiar warmth of the satisfaction he hoped to derive from the society of the most distinguished literary and scientific characters of the day in England, and the other countries of Europe, when his own attainments would justify him in seeking their acquaintance. He was never weary of recounting the rewards and favours that authors had formerly received; and he would detail in pathetic language, and with a touching earnestness, the instances of that poverty and neglect, which an iron age assigned as the fitting portion of solid erudition and undoubted talents. He would contrast

I was hurried along rapidly towards the left; we soon fell into an animated discussion respecting the nature of the virtue of the Romans, which in some measure beguiled the weary way. Whilst he was talking with much vehemence and a total disregard of the people who thronged the streets, he suddenly wheeled about and pushed me through a narrow door; to my infinite surprise I found myself in a pawnbroker's shop! It was in the neighbourhood of Newgate Street; for he had no idea whatever in practice either of time or space, nor did he in any degree regard method in the conduct of business.

There were several women in the shop in brown and grey cloaks with squalling children; some of them were attempting to persuade the children to be quiet, or at least to scream with moderation; the others were enlarging upon and pointing out the beauties of certain coarse and dirty sheets that lay before them to a man on the other side of the counter.

I bore this substitute for our proposed tea some minutes with tolerable patience. but as the call did not promise to terminate speedily, I said to Shelley, in a whisper, 'Is not this almost as bad as the Roman virtue?' Upon this he approached the pawnbroker: it was long before he could obtain a hearing, and he did not find civility. The man was unwilling to part with a valuable pledge so soon, or perhaps he hoped to retain it eventually; or it might be that the obliquity of his nature disqualified him for respectful behaviour.

A pawnbroker is frequently an important witness in criminal proceedings: it has happened to me, therefore, afterwards to see many specimens of this kind of banker; they sometimes appeared not less respectable than other tradesmen, and sometimes I have been forcibly reminded of the first I ever met with, by an equally ill-conditioned fellow. I was so little pleased with the introduction, that I stood aloof in the shop, and did not hear what passed between him and Shelley.

On our way to Covent Garden I expressed my surprise and dissatisfaction at our strange visit, and I learned that when he came to London before, in the course of the summer, some old man had related to him a tale of distress—of a calamity which could only be alleviated by the timely application of ten pounds; five of them he drew at once from his pocket, and to raise the other five he had pawned his beautiful solar microscope! He related this act of beneficence simply and briefly, as if it were a matter of course, and such indeed it was to him. I was ashamed of my impatience, and we strode along in silence.

It was past ten when we reached the hotel; some excellent tea and a liberal supply of hot muffins in the coffee-room, now quiet and solitary, were the more grateful after the wearisome delay and vast deviation. Shelley often turned his head, and cast eager glances towards the door; and whenever the waiter replenished our teapot, or approached our box, he was interrogated whether any one had yet called.

At last the desired summons was brought; Shelley drew forth some bank notes, hurried to the bar, and returned as hastily, bearing in triumph under his arm a mahogany box, followed by the officious waiter, with whose assistance he placed it upon the bench by his side. He viewed it often with evident satisfaction, and sometimes patted it affectionately in the course of calm conversation. The solar microscope was always a favourite plaything or instrument of scientific inquiry; whenever he entered a house his first care was to choose some window of a southern aspect, and, if permission could be obtained by prayer or by purchase, straightway to cut a hole through the shutter to receive it.

His regard for his solar microscope was as lasting as it was strong; for he retained it several years after this adventure, and long after he had parted with all the rest of his philosophical apparatus.

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

CHAPTER VIII

THE theory of civil liberty has ever seemed lovely to the eyes of a young man enamoured of moral and intellectual beauty; Shelley's devotion to freedom, therefore, was ardent and sincere. He would have submitted with cheerful alacrity to the greatest sacrifices, had they been demanded of him, to advance the sacred cause of liberty; and he would have gallantly encountered every peril in the fearless resistance to active oppression. Nevertheless, in ordinary times, although a generous and unhesitating patriot, he was little inclined to consume the pleasant season of youth amidst the intrigues and clamours of elections, and in the dull and selfish cabals of parties. His fancy viewed from a lofty eminence the grand scheme of an ideal republic; and he could not descend to the humble task of setting out the boundaries of neighbouring rights, and to the uninviting duties of actual administration. He was still less disposed to interest himself in the politics of the day, because he observed the pernicious effects of party zeal in a field where it ought not to enter.

It is no slight evil, but a heavy price paid for popular institutions, that society should be divided into hostile clans to serve the selfish purposes of a few political adventurers; and surely to introduce politics within the calm precincts of a university ought to be deemed a capital offence—a felony without benefit of clergy. The undue admission (to borrow the language of universities for a moment) is not less fatal to its existence as an institution designed for the advancement of learning, than the reception of the wooden horse within the walls of Troy was to the safety of that renowned city.

What does it import the interpreters of Pindar and Thucydides—the expositors of Plato and Aristotle—if a few interested persons, for the sake of some lucrative posts, affect to believe that it is a matter of vital importance to the state to concede certain privileges to the Roman Catholics; whilst others, for the same reason, pretend with tears in their eyes, that the concessions would be dangerous, and, indeed, destructive, and shudder with feigned horror at the harmless proposal? Such

pretexts may be advantageous, and perhaps even honourable, to the ingenious persons who use them for the purposes of immediate advancement; but of what concernment are they to Apollo and the Muses? How could the Catholic question augment the calamities of Priam, or diminish the misfortunes of the ill-fated house of Labdacus? or which of the doubts of the ancient philosophers would the most satisfactory solution of it remove? Why must the modest student come forth and dance upon the tight-rope with the mountebanks, since he is to receive no part of the reward, and would not emulate the glory, of those meritorious artists? Yet did this most inapplicable question mainly contribute to poison the harmless and stupendous felicity which we enjoyed at Oxford.

During the whole period of our residence there, the university was cruelly disfigured by bitter feuds, arising out of the late election of its chancellor: in an especial manner was our own most venerable college deformed by them, and by angry and senseless disappointment.

Lord Grenville had just been chosen. There could be no more comparison between his scholarship and his various qualifications for the honourable and useless office, and the claims of his unsuccessful opponent, than between the attainments of the best man of the year and those of the huge porter who, with a stern and solemn civility, kept the gates of University College—the arts of mulled wine and egg-hot being, in the latter case, alone excepted.

The vanquished competitor, however, most unfortunately for its honour and character, was a member of our college; and in proportion as the intrinsic merits of our rulers were small, had the vehemence and violence of electioneering been great, that, through the abuse of the patronage of the church, they might attain to those dignities, as the rewards of the activity of partisans, which they could never hope to reach through the legitimate road of superior learning and talents.

Their vexation at failing was the more sharp and abiding, because the only objection that vulgar bigotry could urge against the victor was his disposition to make concessions to the Roman Catholics; and every dull lampoon about popes, and cardinals, and the scarlet lady, had accordingly been worn threadbare in vain. Since the learned and the liberal had conquered, learning and liberality were peculiarly odious with us at that epoch. The studious scholar, particularly if he were of an inquiring disposition, and of a bold and free temper, was

suspected and disliked: he was one of the enemy's troops. The inert and the subservient were the loyal soldiers of the legitimate army of the faith. The despised and scattered nation of scholars is commonly unfortunate; but a more severe calamity has seldom befallen the remnant of true Israelites than to be led captive by such a generation! Youth is happy, because it is blithe and healthful, and exempt from care; but it is doubly and trebly happy, since it is honest and fearless—honourable and disinterested.

In the whole body of undergraduates, scarcely one was friendly to the holder of the loaves and the promiser of fishes, Lord Eldon. All were eager—all, one and all—in behalf of the scholar and the liberal statesman; and plain and loud was the avowal of their sentiments. A sullen demeanour towards the young rebels displayed the annoyance arising from the want of success, and from our lack of sympathy; and it would have demonstrated to the least observant that, where the Muses dwell, the quarrels and intrigues of political parties ought not to come.

By his family and his connexions, as well as by disposition, Shelley was attached to the successful side; and although it was manifest that he was a youth of an admirable temper, of rare talents and unwearied industry, and likely, therefore, to shed a lustre upon his college and the university itself; yet, as he was eminently delighted at that wherewith his superiors were offended, he was regarded from the beginning with a jealous eye.

A young man of spirit will despise the mean spite of sordid minds; nevertheless, the persecution which a generous soul can condemn, through frequent repetition, too often becomes a severe annoyance in the long course of life; and Shelley frequently and most pathetically lamented the political divisions which then harassed the university, and were a more fertile source of manifold ills in the wider field of active life. For this reason did he appear to cling more closely to our sweet studious seclusion; and from this cause, perhaps, principally arose his disinclination—I may say, indeed, his intense antipathy—for the political career that had been proposed to him. A lurking suspicion would sometimes betray itself that he was to be forced into that path, and impressed into the civil service of the state—to become, as it were, a conscript legislator.

A newspaper never found its way to his rooms the whole period of his residence at Oxford; but when waiting in a bookseller's shop, or at an inn, he would sometimes, although rarely,

permit his eye to be attracted by a murder or a storm. Having perused the tale of wonder, or of horror, if it chanced to stray to a political article, after reading a few lines he invariably threw it aside to a great distance; and he started from his seat, his face flushing, and strode about, muttering broken sentences, the purport of which was always the same: his extreme dissatisfaction at the want of candour and fairness, and the monstrous disingenuousness, which politicians manifest in speaking of the characters and measures of their rivals. Strangers, who caught imperfectly the sense of his indistinct murmurs, were often astonished at the vehemence of his mysterious displeasure.

Once, I remember, a bookseller, the master of a very small shop in a little country town, but apparently a sufficiently intelligent man, could not refrain from expressing his surprise that any one should be offended with proceedings that seemed to him as much in the ordinary course of trade, and as necessary to its due exercise as the red ligature of the bundle of quills, or the thin and pale brown wrapper which enclosed the quire of letter-paper we had just purchased of him.

A man of talents and learning, who refused to enlist under the banners of any party, and did not deign to inform himself of the politics of the day, or to take the least part or interest in them, would be a noble and a novel spectacle; but so many persons hope to profit by dissensions, that the merits of such a steady lover of peace would not be duly appreciated, either by the little provincial bookseller or the other inhabitants of our turbulent country.

The ordinary lectures in our college were of much shorter duration, and decidedly less difficult and less instructive than the lessons we had received in the higher classes of a public school; nor were our written exercises more stimulating than the oral. Certain compositions were required at stated periods; but, however excellent they might be, they were never commended—however deficient, they were never censured; and, being altogether unnoticed, there was no reason to suppose that they were ever read.

The university at large was not less remiss than each college in particular: the only incitement proposed was an examination at the end of four years. The young collegian might study in private as diligently as he would at Oxford, as in every other place; and if he chose to submit his pretensions to the examiners, his name was set down in the first, the second, or the third class

—if I mistake not, there were three divisions—according to his advancement. This list was printed precisely at the moment when he quitted the university for ever—a new generation of strangers might read the names of the unknown proficient, if they would.

It was notorious, moreover, that, merely to obtain the academical degrees, every new-comer, who had passed through a tolerable grammar-school, brought with him a stock of learning, of which the residuum that had not evaporated during four years of dissipation and idleness, would be more than sufficient. The languid course of chartered laziness was ill-suited to the ardent activity and glowing zeal of Shelley.

Since those persons, who were hired at an enormous charge by his own family and by the state to find due and beneficial employment for him, thought fit to neglect this, their most sacred duty, he began forthwith to set himself to work. He read diligently—I should rather say he devoured greedily, with the voracious appetite of a famished man—the authors that roused his curiosity: he discoursed and discussed with energy; he wrote—he began to print—and he designed soon to publish various works.

He begins betimes who begins to instruct mankind at eighteen. The judicious will probably be of opinion that in eighteen years man can scarcely learn how to learn; and that for eighteen more years he ought to be content to learn; and if at the end of the second period he still thinks that he can impart anything worthy of attention, it is at least early enough to begin to teach. The fault, however, if it were a fault, was to be imputed to the times, and not to the individual, as the numerous precocious effusions of the day attest.

Shelley was quick to conceive, and not less quick to execute. When I called one morning at one, I found him busily occupied with some proofs, which he continued to correct and re-correct with anxious care. As he was wholly absorbed in this occupation, I selected a book from the floor, where there was always a good store, and read in silence, for at least an hour.

My thoughts being as completely abstracted as those of my companion, he startled me by suddenly throwing a paper with some force on the middle of the table, and saying, in a penetrating whisper, as he sprung eagerly from his chair, 'I am going to publish some poems'.

In answer to my inquiries, he put the proofs into my hands. I read them twice attentively, for the poems were very short;

and I told him there were some good lines, some bright thoughts, but there were likewise many irregularities and incongruities. I added, that correctness was important in all compositions, but it constituted the essence of short ones; and that it surely would be imprudent to bring his little book out so hastily; and I then pointed out the errors and defects.

He listened in silence with much attention, and did not dispute what I said, except that he remarked faintly that it would not be known that he was the author, and therefore the publication could not do him any harm.

I answered, that although it might not be disadvantageous to be the unknown author of an unread work, it certainly could not be beneficial.

He made no reply, and we immediately went out, and strolled about the public walks.

We dined and returned to his rooms, where we conversed on indifferent subjects. He did not mention his poems, but they occupied his thoughts; for he did not fall asleep, as usual. Whilst we were at tea, he said abruptly, 'I think you disparage my poems. Tell me what you dislike in them for I have forgotten.'

I took the proofs from the place where I had left them, and looking over them, repeated the former objections, and suggested others. He acquiesced; and, after a pause, asked, might they be altered? I assented.

'I will alter them.'

'It will be better to rewrite them; a short poem should be of the first impression.'

Some time afterwards he anxiously inquired--'But in their present form you do not think they ought to be published?'

I had been looking over the proofs again, and I answered: 'Only as burlesque poetry'; and I read a part, changing it a little here and there.

He laughed at the parody, and begged I would repeat it.

I took a pen and altered it; and he then read it aloud several times in a ridiculous tone, and was amused by it. His mirth consoled him for the condemnation of his verses, and the intention of publishing them was abandoned.

The proofs lay in his rooms for some days, and we occasionally amused ourselves during an idle moment by making them more and more ridiculous; by striking out the more sober passages; by inserting whimsical conceits; and especially by giving them what we called a dithyrambic character, which was effected

by cutting some lines in two, and joining the different parts together that would agree in construction, but were the most discordant in sense.

Although Shelley was of a grave disposition, he had a certain sly relish for a practical joke, so that it were ingenious and abstruse, and of a literary nature; he would often exult in the successful forgeries of Chatterton and Ireland; and he was especially delighted with a trick that had lately been played at Oxford, by a certain noble viceroy, at that time an undergraduate, respecting the fairness of which the university was divided in opinion, all the undergraduates accounting it most just, and all the graduates, and especially the bachelors, extremely iniquitous, and indeed popish and jesuitical. A reward is offered annually for the best English essay on a subject proposed: the competitors send their anonymous essays, each being distinguished by a motto; when the grave arbitrator have selected the most worthy, they burn the vanquished essays, and open the sealed paper endorsed with a corresponding motto, and containing the name of the victor.

On the late famous contention, all the ceremonies had been duly performed, but the sealed paper presented the name of an undergraduate who was not qualified to be a candidate, and all the less meritorious discourses of the bachelors had been burnt, together with their sealed papers—so there was to be no bachelor's prize that year.

When we had conferred a competent absurdity upon the proofs, we amused ourselves by proposing, but without the intention of executing our project, divers ludicrous titles for the work. Sometimes we thought of publishing it in the name of some one of the chief living poets, or possibly of one of the graver authorities of the day; and we regaled ourselves by describing his wrathful renunciations, and his astonishment at finding himself immortalized, without his knowledge and against his will: the inability to die could not be more disagreeable even to Tithonus himself; but how were we to handcuff our ungrateful favourite, that he might not tear off the unfading laurel, which we were to place upon his brow? I hit upon a title at last, to which the pre-eminence was given, and we inscribed it upon the cover. A mad washerwoman, name Peg Nicholson, had attempted to stab the king, George the Third, with a carving-knife; the story has long been forgotten, but it was then fresh in the recollection of every one; it was proposed that we should ascribe the poems to her. The poor woman was

still living, and in green vigour within the walls of Bedlam; but since her existence must be uncomfortable, there could be no harm in putting her to death, and in creating a nephew and administrator to be the editor of his aunt's poetical works.

The idea gave an object and purpose to our burlesque; to ridicule the strange mixture of sentimentality with the murderous fury of revolutionists, that was so prevalent in the compositions of the day; and the proofs were altered again to adapt them to this new scheme, but still without any notion of publication. When the bookseller called to ask for the proof, Shelley told him that he had changed his mind, and showed them to him.

The man was so much pleased with the whimsical conceit, that he asked to be permitted to publish the book on his own account; promising inviolable secrecy, and as many copies *gratis* as might be required: after some hesitation, permission was granted, upon the plighted honour of the trade.

In a few days, or rather in a few hours, a noble quarto appeared; it consisted of a small number of pages, it is true, but they were of the largest size, of the thickest, the whitest, and the smoothest drawing-paper; a large, clear, and handsome type had impressed a few lines with ink of a rich glossy black, amidst ample margins. The poor maniac laundress was gravely styled 'the late Mrs. Margaret Nicholson, widow'; and the sonorous name of Fitzvictor had been culled for her inconsolable nephew and administrator: to add to his dignity, the waggish printer had picked up some huge text types, of so unusual a form, that even an antiquary could not spell the words at the first glance. The effect was certainly striking: Shelley had torn open the large square bundle, before the printer's boy quitted the room, and holding out a copy with both his hands, he ran about in an ecstasy of delight, gazing at the superb title-page.

The first poem was a long one, condemning war in the lump; piling trash, that might have been written by a quaker, and could only have been published in sober sadness by a society instituted for the diffusion of that kind of knowledge which they deem useful—useful for some end which they have not been pleased to reveal, and which unassisted reason is wholly unable to discover. The MS. had been confided to Shelley by some rhymester of the day, and it was put forth in this shape to astonish a weak mind; but principally to captivate the admirers of philosophical poetry by the manifest incongruity of disallowing

all war, even the most just, and then turning sharp round and recommending the dagger of the assassin as the best cure for all evils, and the sure passport to a lady's favour.

Our book of useful knowledge—the philosopher's own book—contained sundry odes and other pieces, professing an ardent attachment to freedom, and proposing to stab all who were less enthusiastic than the supposed authoress. The work, however, was altered a little, I believe, before the final impression; but I never read it afterwards, for when an author once sees his book in print, his task is ended, and he may fairly leave the perusal of it to posterity. I have one copy, if not more, somewhere or other, but not at hand. There were some verses. I remember, with a good deal about sucking in them; to these I objected, as unsuitable to the gravity of a university, but Shelley declared they would be the most impressive of all. There was a poem concerning a young woman, one Charlotte Somebody, who attempted to assassinate Robespierre, or some such person; and there was to have been a rapturous monologue to the dagger of Brutus. The composition of such a piece was no mean effort of the muse; it was completed at last, but not in time—as the dagger itself has fallen a prey to rust, so the more pointed and polished monologue, it is to be feared, has also perished through a more culpable neglect.

A few copies were sent, as a special favour, to trusty and sagacious friends at a distance, whose gravity would not permit them to suspect a hoax; they read and admired, being charmed with the wild notes of liberty; some, indeed, presumed to censure, mildly, certain passages as having been thrown off in too bold a vein. Nor was a certain success wanting—the remaining copies were rapidly sold in Oxford at the aristocratical price of half a crown for half a dozen pages. We used to meet gowns-men in High Street reading the goodly volume as they walked—*pensive with a grave and sage delight*—some of them, perhaps, more pensive, because it seemed to portend the instant overthrow of all royalty, from a king to a court card.

What a strange delusion to admire our stuff—the concentrated essence of nonsense! It was indeed a kind of fashion to be seen reading it in public, as a mark of a nice discernment, of a delicate and fastidious taste in poetry, and the very criterion of a choice spirit.

Nobody suspected, or could suspect, who was the author; the thing passed off as the genuine production of the would-be regicide. It is marvellous, in truth, how little talent of any kind

there was in our famous university in those days; there was no great encouragement, however, to display intellectual gifts.

The acceptance, as a serious poem, of a work so evidently designed for a burlesque upon the prevailing notion of the day, that revolutionary ruffians were the most fit recipients of the gentlest passions, was a foretaste of the prodigious success, that, a few years later, attended a still more whimsical paradox. Poets had sung already that human ties put Love at once to flight; that at the sight of civil obligations he spreads his light wings in a moment, and makes default. The position was soon greatly extended, and we were taught, by a noble poet, that even the slightest recognition of the law of nations was fatal to the tender passion; the very captain of a privateer was pronounced incapable of a pure and ardent attachment; the feeble control of letters of marque could effectually check the course of affection; a complete union of souls could only be accomplished under the black flag. Your true lover must necessarily be an enemy of the whole human race—a mere and absolute pirate. It is true, that the tales of the love-sick buccaneers were adorned with no ordinary talent, but the theory is not less extraordinary on that account.

The operation of Peg Nicholson was bland and innoxious; the next work that Shelley printed was highly deleterious, and was destined to shed a baneful influence over his future progress; in itself it was more harmless than the former, but it was turned to a deadly poison by the unprovoked malice of fortune.

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

practice he had learned of a physician, from whom he had taken instructions in chemistry, and of whose character and talents he often spoke with profound veneration. It was, indeed, the usual course with men of learning formerly, as their biographies and many volumes of such epistles testify. The physician was an old man, and a man of the old school; he confined his epistolary discussions to matters of science, and so did his disciple for some time; but when metaphysics usurped the place in his affections that chemistry had before held, the latter gradually fell into disceptations respecting existences still more subtle than gases and the electric fluid. The transition, however, from physics to metaphysics was gradual. Is the electric fluid material? he would ask his correspondent; is light—is the vital principle in vegetables—in brutes—is the human soul?

His individual character had proved an obstacle to his inquiries, even whilst they were strictly physical; a refuted or irritated chemist had suddenly concluded a long correspondence by telling his youthful opponent that he would write to his master, and have him well flogged. The discipline of a public school, however salutary in other respects, was not favourable to free and fair discussion; and Shelley began to address inquiries anonymously, or rather, that he might receive an answer, as Philalethes, and the like; but, even at Eton, the postmen do not ordinarily speak Greek—to prevent miscarriages, therefore, it was necessary to adopt a more familiar name, as John Short or Thomas Long.

When he came to Oxford he retained and extended his former practice without quitting the convenient disguise of an assumed name. His object in printing the short abstract of some of the doctrines of Hume was to facilitate his epistolary disquisitions. It was a small pill, but it worked powerfully; the mode of operation was this: He enclosed a copy in a letter, and sent it by the post, stating, with modesty and simplicity, that he had met accidentally with that little tract, which appeared unhappily to be quite unanswerable. Unless the fish was too sluggish to take the bait, an answer of refutation was forwarded to an appointed address in London, and then in a vigorous reply he would fall upon the unwary disputant, and break his bones. The strenuous attack sometimes provoked a rejoinder more carefully prepared, and an animated and protracted debate ensued; the party cited, having put in his answer, was fairly in court, and he might get out of it as he could. The chief difficulty seemed to be to induce the person addressed to

acknowledge the jurisdiction, and to plead; and this, Shelley supposed, would be removed by sending, in the first instance, a printed syllabus instead of written arguments. An accident greatly facilitated his object. We had been talking some time before about geometrical demonstration; he was repeating its praises, which he had lately read in some mathematical work, and speaking of its absolute certainty and perfect truth.

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

It is certain that the three obnoxious letters had a fertilizing effect, and raised rich crops of controversy; but it would be unjust to deny, that an honest zeal stimulated divers worthy men to assert the truth against an unknown assailant. The praise of good intention must be conceded; but it is impossible to accord that of powerful execution also to his antagonists; this curious correspondence fully testified the deplorable condition of education at that time. A youth of eighteen was able to confute men who had numbered thrice as many years; to vanquish them on their own ground, although he gallantly fought at a disadvantage by taking the wrong side.

His little pamphlet was never offered for sale; it was not addressed to an ordinary reader, but to the metaphysician alone; and it was so short that it was only designed to point out the line of argument. It was in truth a general issue; a compendious denial of every allegation, in order to put the whole case in proof; it was a formal mode of saying, you affirm so and so, then prove it; and thus was it understood by his more candid and intelligent correspondents. As it was shorter, so

was it plainer, and perhaps, in order to provoke discussion, a little bolder, than Hume's *Essays*—a book which occupies a conspicuous place in the library of every student. The doctrine, if it deserves the name, was precisely similar; the necessary and inevitable consequence of Locke's philosophy, and of the theory that all knowledge is from without. I will not admit your conclusions, his opponent might answer; then you must deny those of Hume: I deny them; but you must deny those of Locke also; and we will go back together to Plato. Such was the usual course of argument; sometimes, however, he rested on mere denial, holding his adversary to strict proof, and deriving strength from his weakness.

The young Platonist argued thus negatively through the love of argument, and because he found a noble joy in the fierce shocks of contending minds; he loved truth, and sought it everywhere, and at all hazards, frankly and boldly, like a man who deserved to find it; but he also loved dearly victory in debate, and warm debate for its own sake. Never was there a more unexceptionable disputant; he was eager beyond the most ardent, but never angry and never personal; he was the only arguer I ever knew who drew every argument from the nature of the thing, and who could never be provoked to descend to personal contentions. He was fully inspired, indeed, with the whole spirit of the true logician; the more obvious and indisputable the proposition which his opponent undertook to maintain, the more complete was the triumph of his art if he could refute and prevent him.

To one who was acquainted with the history of our university, with its ancient reputation as the most famous school of logic, it seemed that the genius of the place, after an absence of several generations, had deigned to return at last; the visit, however, as it soon appeared, was ill-timed.

The schoolman of old, who occasionally laboured with technical subtleties to prevent the admission of the first principles of belief, could not have been justly charged with the intention of promoting scepticism; his was the age of minute and astute disceptation, it is true, but it was also the epoch of the most firm, resolute, and extensive faith. I have seen a dexterous fencing-master, after warning his pupil to hold his weapon fast, by a few turns of his wrist throw it suddenly on the ground and under his feet; but it cannot be pretended that he neglected to teach the art of self-defence, because he apparently deprived his scholar of that which is essential to the end proposed. To

be disarmed is a step in the science of arms, and whoever has undergone it has already put his foot within the threshold; so is it likewise with refutation.

In describing briefly the nature of Shelley's epistolary contentions, the recollection of his youth, his zeal, his activity, and particularly of many individual peculiarities, may have tempted me to speak sometimes with a certain levity, notwithstanding the solemn importance of the topics respecting which they were frequently maintained. The impression, that they were conducted on his part, or considered by him, with frivolity, or any unseemly lightness, would, however, be most erroneous; his whole frame of mind was grave, earnest, and anxious, and his deportment was reverential, with an edification reaching beyond the age—an age wanting in reverence; an unlearned age; a young age, for the young lack learning. Hume permits no object of respect to remain; Locke approaches the most awful speculations with the same indifference as if he were about to handle the properties of triangles; the small deference rendered to the most holy things by the able theologian, Paley, is not the least remarkable of his characteristics.

Wiser and better men displayed anciently, together with a more profound erudition, a superior and touching solemnity; the meek seriousness of Shelley was redolent of those good old times before mankind had been despoiled of a main ingredient in the composition of happiness, a well-directed veneration.

Whether such disputations were decorous or profitable may be perhaps doubtful; there can be no doubt, however, since the sweet gentleness of Shelley was easily and instantly swayed by the mild influences of friendly admonition, that, had even the least dignified of his elders suggested the propriety of pursuing his metaphysical inquiries with less ardour, his obedience would have been prompt and perfect.

Not only had all salutary studies been long neglected in Oxford at that time, and all wholesome discipline was decayed, but the splendid endowments of the university were grossly abused; the resident authorities of the college were too often men of the lowest origin, of mean and sordid souls, destitute of every literary attainment, except that brief and narrow course of reading by which the first degree was attained; the vulgar sons of vulgar fathers, without liberality, and wanting the manners and the sympathies of gentlemen.

A total neglect of all learning, an unseemly turbulence, the most monstrous irregularities, open and habitual drunkenness,

vice, and violence, were tolerated or encouraged, with the basest sycophancy, that the prospect of perpetual licentiousness might fill the colleges with young men of fortune; whenever the rarely exercised power of coercion was exerted, it demonstrated the utter incapacity of our unworthy rulers by coarseness, ignorance, and injustice.

If a few gentlemen were admitted to fellowships, they were always absent; they were not persons of literary pretensions, or distinguished by scholarship; and they had no more share in the government of the college than the overgrown guardsmen, who, in long white gaiters, bravely protect the precious life of the sovereign against such assailants as the tenth Muse, our good friend Mrs. Nicholson.

As the term was drawing to a close, and a great part of the books we were reading together still remained unfinished, we had agreed to increase our exertions and to meet at an early hour.

It was a fine spring morning on Lady Day, in the year 1811, when I went to Shelley's rooms: he was absent; but before I had collected our books he rushed in. He was terribly agitated. I anxiously inquired what had happened.

'I am expelled,' he said, as soon as he had recovered himself a little, 'I am expelled! I was sent for suddenly a few minutes ago; I went to the common room, where I found our master and two or three of the fellows. The master produced a copy of the little syllabus, and asked me if I were the author of it. He spoke in a rude, abrupt, and insolent tone. I begged to be informed for what purpose he put the question. No answer was given; but the master loudly and angrily repeated, "Are you the author of this book?" If I can judge from your manner, I said, you are resolved to punish me, if I should acknowledge that it is my work. If you can prove that it is, produce your evidence; it is neither just nor lawful to interrogate me in such a case and for such a purpose. Such proceedings would become a court of inquisitors, but not free men in a free country. "Do you choose to deny that this is your composition?" the master reiterated in the same rude and angry voice.' Shelley complained much of his violent and ungentlemanlike deportment, saying, 'I have experienced tyranny and injustice before, and I well know what vulgar violence is; but I never met with such unworthy treatment. I told him calmly, but firmly, that I was determined not to answer any questions respecting the publication on the table. He immediately repeated his demand; I persisted in my refusal; and he said furiously, "Then you are

expelled; and I desire you will quit the college early to-morrow morning at the latest". One of the fellows took up two papers, and handed one of them to me; here it is.' He produced a regular sentence of expulsion, drawn up in due form, under the seal of the college.

Shelley was full of spirit and courage, frank and fearless; but he was likewise shy, unassuming, and eminently sensitive. I have been with him in many trying situations of his after-life, but I never saw him so deeply shocked and so cruelly agitated as on this occasion. A nice sense of honour shrinks from the most distant touch of disgrace—even from the insults of those men whose contumely can bring no shame. He sat on the sofa, repeating, with convulsive vehemence, the words, 'Expelled, expelled!' his head shaking with emotion, and his whole frame quivering. The atrocious injustice and its cruel consequences roused the indignation, and moved the compassion, of a friend, who then stood by Shelley. He has given the following account of his interference:

'So monstrous and so illegal did the outrage seem, that I held it to be impossible that any man, or any body of men, would dare to adhere to it; but, whatever the issue might be, it was a duty to endeavour to the utmost to assist him. I at once stepped forward, therefore, as the advocate of Shelley; such an advocate, perhaps, with respect to judgment, as might be expected at the age of eighteen, but certainly not inferior to the most practised defenders in good will and devotion. I wrote a short note to the master and fellows, in which, as far as I can remember a very hasty composition after a long interval, I briefly expressed my sorrow at the treatment my friend had experienced, and my hope that they would reconsider their sentence; since, by the same course of proceeding, myself, or any other person, might be subjected to the same penalty, and to the imputation of equal guilt. The note was dispatched; the conclave was still sitting; and in an instant the porter came to summon me to attend, bearing in his countenance a promise of the reception which I was about to find. The angry and troubled air of men, assembled to commit injustice according to established forms, was then new to me; but a native instinct told me, as soon as I entered the room, that it was an affair of party; that whatever could conciliate the favour of patrons was to be done without scruple; and whatever could tend to impede preferment was to be brushed away without remorse. The glowing master produced my poor note I acknowledged

it; and he forthwith put into my hand, not less abruptly, the little syllabus. "Did you write this?" he asked, as fiercely as if I alone stood between him and the rich see of Durham. I attempted, submissively, to point out to him the extreme unfairness of the question; the injustice of punishing Shelley for refusing to answer it; that if it were urged upon me I must offer the like refusal, as I had no doubt every man in college would—every gentleman, indeed, in the university; which, if such a course were adopted with all—and there could not be any reason why it should be used with one and not with the rest—would thus be stripped of every member. I soon perceived that arguments were thrown away upon a man possessing no more intellect or erudition, and far less renown, than that famous ram, since translated to the stars, through grasping whose tail less firmly than was expedient, the sister of Phryxus formerly found a watery grave, and gave her name to the broad Hellespont.

'The other persons present took no part in the conversation: they presumed not to speak, scarcely to breathe, but looked mute subserviency. The few resident fellows, indeed, were but so many incarnations of the spirit of the master, whatever that spirit might be. When I was silent, the master told me to retire, and to consider whether I was resolved to persist in my refusal. The proposal was fair enough. The next day, or the next week, I might have given my final answer—a deliberate answer; having in the meantime consulted with older and more experienced persons, as to what course was best for myself and for others. I had scarcely passed the door, however, when I was recalled. The master again showed me the book, and hastily demanded whether I admitted, or denied, that I was the author of it. I answered that I was fully sensible of the many and great inconveniences of being dismissed with disgrace from the university, and I specified some of them, and expressed a humble hope that they would not impose such a mark of discredit upon me without any cause. I lamented that it was impossible either to admit, or to deny, the publication—no man of spirit could submit to do so—and that a sense of duty compelled me respectfully to refuse to answer the question which had been proposed. "Then you are expelled", said the master angrily, in a loud, great voice. A formal sentence, duly signed and sealed, was instantly put into my hand: in what interval the instrument had been drawn up I cannot imagine. The alleged offence was a contumacious refusal to disavow the

imputed publication. My eye glanced over it, and observing the word *contumaciously*, I said calmly that I did not think that term was justified by my behaviour. Before I had concluded the remark, the master, lifting up the little syllabus, and then dashing it on the table, and looking sternly at me, said, "Am I to understand, sir, that you adopt the principles contained in this work?" or some such words; for, like one red with the suffusion of college port and college ale, the intense heat of anger seemed to deprive him of the power of articulation; by reason of a rude provincial dialect and thickness of utterance, his speech being at all times indistinct. "The last question is still more improper than the former," I replied—for I felt that the imputation was an insult; "and since, by your own act, you have renounced all authority over me, our communication is at an end." "I command you to quit my college to-morrow at an early hour." I bowed and withdrew. I thank God I have never seen that man since: he is gone to his bed, and there let him sleep. Whilst he lived, he ate freely of the scholar's bread and drank from his cup; and he was sustained, throughout the whole term of his existence, wholly and most nobly, by those sacred funds that were consecrated by our pious forefathers to the advancement of learning. If the vengeance of the all-patient and long-contemned gods can ever be roused, it will surely be by some such sacrilege! The favour which he showed to scholars, and his gratitude, have been made manifest. If he were still alive, he would doubtless be as little desirous that his zeal should now be remembered as those bigots who had been most active in burning Archbishop Cranmer could have been to publish their officiousness during the reign of Elizabeth.'

Busy rumour has ascribed, on what foundation I know not, since an active and searching inquiry has not hitherto been made, the infamy of having denounced Shelley to the pert, meddling tutor of a college of inferior note, a man of an insalubrious and inauspicious aspect. Any paltry fellow can whisper a secret accusation; but a certain courage, as well as malignity, is required by him who undertakes to give evidence openly against another; to provoke thereby the displeasure of the accused, of his family and friends; and to submit his own veracity and his motives to public scrutiny. Hence the illegal and inquisitorial mode of proceeding by interrogation, instead of the lawful and recognized course by the production of witnesses. The disposal of ecclesiastical preferment has long been so reprehensible—the practice of desecrating institutions that

every good man desires to esteem most holy is so inveterate—that it is needless to add that the secret accuser was rapidly enriched with the most splendid benefices, and finally became a dignitary of the church. The modest prelate did not seek publicity in the charitable and dignified act of deserving; it is not probable, therefore, that he is anxious at present to invite an examination of the precise nature of his deserts.

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

CHAPTER IX

THUS not only were we driven rudely and lawlessly from a common table, spread for us by the provident bounty of our pious and prudent forefathers, where we had an undoubted right to be fed and nurtured; but my incomparable friend and myself were hunted hastily out of Oxford. The precipitate violence and indecent outrage was the act of our college, not of the university; the evildoers seemed to fear that, if we remained among them but a little while, the wrong might be redressed. It is true that I was told, but as it were at the moment of departure, that if it was inconvenient to us to quit the place so suddenly, we might remain for a time; and that, if Shelley would ask permission of the master to stay for a short period, it would most probably be granted. I immediately informed him of this proposal, but he was far too indignant at the insult which he had received, and at the brutal indignity with which he had been treated, to apply for any favour whatever, even if his life had depended on the concession. The delicacy of a young high-bred gentleman makes him ever most unwilling to intrude, and more especially to remain in any society, where his presence is not acceptable. Nevertheless, I have sometimes regretted, and more particularly for the sake of my gifted friend, to whom the residence at Oxford was exceedingly delightful, and, on all accounts, most beneficial, that we yielded so readily to these modest, retiring feelings. For if licence to remain for some days would have been formally given upon a specific application, no doubt it would have been tacitly allowed; although no request had been made, permission would have been implied. At any rate it is perfectly certain that force—brute force—would not have been resorted to; that the police of the university would never have been directed to turn us out of our rooms, and to drive us beyond the gates of our college, roughly casting the poor students' books into the street. The young martyr had never been told—he never received any admonition, not even the slightest hint, that his speculations were improper, or displeasing to any one; those persons alone had taken notice of, or a part in, them to whom they were

agreeable; persons, who, like himself, relished them, and had a taste for abstruse and, perhaps, unprofitable discussions.

Shelley was, as Ben Jonson says of Sir Kenelm Digby, 'a gentleman absolute in all numbers'. His disposition was gentle and complying, and his deportment eminently gentlemanlike, and which seemed, on all occasions, in a striking manner to claim, one would think irresistibly, to be treated as a gentleman ought to be treated, with courtesy, consideration and kindness:

In peace was never gentle lamb more mild
Than was this young and princely gentleman.

There can be no reasonable doubt that he would at once have acceded to whatever had been proposed to him by authority; he would have forborne everything that was deemed objectionable. In the first instance, surely he should have been admonished once and again; he ought to have been exacted five times at least before the outrageous sentence of outlawry was passed against him.

If he had disregarded repeated admonition (I am confident that he would have yielded to the first monitor), the milder punishment of rustication should have been first tried. To have been banished from Oxford, for a term or two, would have been a less immoderate chastisement, and it would have been deeply felt by an ingenuous youth to whom a college-life was in all respects suitable, and indeed charming; who seemed to be one of those modest, studious, recluse persons for whose special behalf universities and colleges were founded and are maintained.

Our college was denominated University College, but Liberty Hall would have been a more correct and significant name. Universal laziness was the order of the day, except so far as half a dozen scholars were concerned, who subsisted, in some measure, on eleemosynary foundations, and were no acquisition to the society; such people being usually the vulgar relatives or friends of the vulgar authorities of the place. In the evening unceasing drunkenness and continual uproar prevailed.

The observation, therefore, was not less just than happy, that our college must have been founded, not by King Alfred, as was asserted, but by his foes, the Danes; by barbarians, who quaffed mead to furious intoxication out of the skulls of their enemies; all men being accounted such who would read and write, or who had an inclination for such pursuits. The disorder was, in truth, intolerable. The perpetual intoxication doubtless was profitable, if not to the interests of learning and

education, to the Oxford vintners; to vintagers, that from the fruit of the white blossomed sloe,

Crushed the black poison of misused wine.

To ascribe a college to a particular county or district, is to devote it at once to vulgarity and barbarism; and fellowships, and other foundations, confined to some particular county or school, are invariably ill-bestowed, wasted, and thrown away.

This was our unfortunate position, and to a striking degree—in an excess—the milk of bounty had turned sour, our aliment was corrupted, our natural nutriment most unnaturally had become poison! In such a state of things nothing seemed to be forbidden; the notion that every one might follow his own devices, and do whatever he pleased, was perhaps a mistake: but it was a natural and surely a pardonable one. It ought to have been corrected by salutary precept and admonition, not blindly and fiercely chastised and overwhelmed by injustice, indignity, and insult. But it was necessary that the divine poet should fulfil his destinies; his high vocation was to be before and above his age. It was inevitable, and he could not but pursue it!

One thing, at least, is certain. that I bear them no ill-will; on the contrary, I earnestly desire to return good for evil—and indeed the greatest of all good—viz., to reform their famous and admirable university; to reform it effectually and thoroughly, so that it may be a credit to themselves and a blessing to the country and to posterity; and I feel strongly that it is my vocation to do this.

I heard an anecdote which may be repeated now, for it can never be out of place, respecting the University of Oxford, from a venerable friend who had resided many years in Italy; at Venice and Padua. The greater part of his time he had spent at the latter remarkable and interesting city, and he had long been intimate with the professors of its celebrated university. Some of them he had found to be truly learned and liberal-minded men; of one professor in particular—I regret that I have forgotten his name—he often spoke with admiration, and related many things concerning him highly to his credit.

This gentleman had long been animated by an honourable curiosity to inform himself touching the condition of the other universities of Europe, and for several years had employed his leisure and vacations in visiting the most renowned of these institutions. He obtained introductions to the principal

authorities at each seat of learning, and had been passed, duly furnished with letters of recommendation, from one university to another.

The Paduan professor had remained some weeks at Oxford, and had conversed with the principal persons. He said that he had been forcibly struck there with two very remarkable peculiarities, neither of which he had ever met with in any other university. The first was this: wherever he went it had been his practice to inquire, Whom do you consider as the first man among you in learning and talent? Who is the second? And who is your third? In every other university he had received a prompt and decided answer to these questions; here and there he had met with some difference of opinion as to the name which ought to rank as the third—but as to the first and second, they had been everywhere unanimous; and certainly his three questions had everywhere received an immediate and unhesitating answer. But at Oxford, and at Oxford only, as if they were all in a conspiracy together—the phrase is the professor's—to keep it a profound secret, nobody would ever even tell him who stood first. In what way, in what walk of science, in what department, in what branch of knowledge? Pray, tell me who is the first among you in any way? There was no answer; they all stood mute. Why was this?

The second remarkable peculiarity was this—and, the professor added, it made the first peculiarity still more striking and peculiar. At every other mart of learning he had often heard the answer, 'I do not know'; but at Oxford, never. Elsewhere I have asked a professor of astronomy some question regarding anatomy, or botany, and he had the courage and honesty at once frankly to answer, 'I do not know'. But at Oxford it really seemed as if everybody considered himself equally bound to be universal, to know everything, and to be able to give some sort of affirmative answer to every question, however foreign it might be to his ordinary and proper pursuits. There is so much wisdom in answering seasonably, 'I do not know', that in a university which has been celebrated, and accounted most wise for nine or ten centuries, I thought, for the credit of the place, I ought to get it once, at least, before I went away; so I tried hard, but I could never obtain it. Why was this?

I had called Oxford 'a seat of learning'. 'Why do you call it so?' Shelley asked, warmly; 'you have no right to call it so; such a place cannot be a seat of learning!' 'Yes, it is a seat of

learning, and I have a right to call it so. It is a seat in which learning sits very comfortably, well thrown back, as in an easy chair, and sleeps so soundly, that neither you, nor I, nor anybody else, can wake her.'

It has been affirmed by ardent spirits—and not, perhaps, altogether without some show of reason—that if any of the scholars be suffered to quit Eton without a moderate, but lively feeling of religion, the authorities of that famous seminary ought to be scourged to death. And, moreover, that if a single student be permitted to depart from the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge, unimbued with genuine piety, the appliances of both universities, and especially of the former, being duly estimated, the heads of houses, the professors and tutors, deserve to be impaled alive, with their cold Bampton Lectures, tame unedifying discourses, evidences, probabilities, credibilities, and the whole farrago of frigid rationalism, suspended round their necks. The Oxford Tracts, however, have of late years somewhat redeemed the character of this ancient and renowned school of orthodox theology; had it been the fate of my incomparable friend to have met with these, or rather with some of them, with how much delight and instruction would he not have perused and profited by them?

Some slight advances have unquestionably been recently made towards removing the stigma of utter uselessness with which the University of Oxford has been branded; until lately it seemed to exist only for the discouragement of learning. For many years I desired, I trust, with no illiberal curiosity, and for a long time I desired it eagerly, to consult certain Greek and other MSS., deposited in the Bodleian and other libraries. I ventured sometimes to hint my wish to persons who were in a position to have granted it very easily; but I found no encouragement. At the best I was told, that if I went to Oxford, and procured the recommendation of some Master of Arts, I might enter those well-closed depositories, as others might, and could do as they did; what this was, I could never discover; probably to return as wise as they came. The scanty information, costively imparted, tempted me only to postpone indefinitely the gratification of my wishes.

We had determined to quit Oxford immediately (this probably was a mistake), being under the ban of an absurd and illegal sentence. Having breakfasted together the next morning, 26 March 1811, we took our places on the outside of a coach, and proceeded to London.

We put up for the night at some coffee-house near Piccadilly, and dined; and then we went to take tea in Lincoln's Inn Fields with Shelley's cousins. Here we passed a very silent evening; the cousins were taciturn people—the maxim of the family appeared to be, that a man should hold his tongue and save his money. I was a stranger; Bysshe (I heard him called by that name then for the first time; he was always called so by his family, probably to propitiate the old baronet)—Bysshe attempted to talk, but the cousins held their peace, and so conversation remained cousin-bound. At a coffee-house one can read nothing but a newspaper; this did not suit us; we went out after breakfast to look for lodgings.

We found several sets which seemed to me sufficiently comfortable, but in this matter Bysshe was rather fanciful. We entered a pleasant parlour—a man in the street vociferated: 'Mackerel, fresh mackerel!' or 'Mussels! lilywhite mussels!' Shelley was convulsed with horror, and, clapping his hands on his ears, rushed wildly out of doors. At the next house we were introduced to a cheerful little first floor, the window was open, a cart was grinding leisurely along, the driver suddenly cracked his whip, and Shelley started; so that would not do. At one place he fell in dudgeon with the maid's nose; at another he took umbrage at the voice of the mistress. Never was a young beauty so hard to please, so capricious! I began to grow tired of the vain pursuit. However, we came to Poland Street; it reminded him of Thaddeus of Warsaw and of freedom. We must lodge there, should we sleep even on the step of a door. A paper in a window announced lodgings; Shelley took some objection to the exterior of the house, but we went in, and this time auspiciously.

There was a back sitting-room on the first floor, somewhat dark, but quiet; yet quietness was not the principal attraction. The walls of the room had lately been covered with trellised paper; in those days it was not common. There were trellises, vine-leaves with their tendrils, and huge clusters of grapes, green and purple, all represented in lively colours. This was delightful; he went close up to the wall, and touched it: 'We must stay here; stay for ever!' There was some debate about a second bedroom, and the authorities were consulted below; he was quite uneasy, and eyed the cheerful paper wistfully during the consultation. We might have another bedroom; it was upstairs. That room, of course, was to be mine. Shelley had the bedroom opening out of the sitting-room; this also was

overspread with the trellised paper. He touched the wall and admired it.

'Do grapes really grow in that manner anywhere?'

'Yes, I believe they do!'

'We will go and see them then, soon; we will go together!'

'Then we shall not stay here for ever!'

When could we have the lodgings? Now, immediately. We brought our luggage in a hackney-coach. I had ordered a fire; to this he rather objected in a plaintive voice, staring piteously at the ripe clusters, and seeming actually to feel the genial warmth of the sweet South; but we were still in March, and had the grapes been real grapes, a cheerful fire was indispensable. The weather was fine; we took long walks together, as before, and we dined at some coffee-house, wherever we might chance to find ourselves at dinner-time, and returned to the trellised room to tea.

We walked one day to Wandsworth, where some of his younger sisters were at school. At that time Bysshe had a warm affection for his mother, and was passionately fond of his sisters. I remained outside, whilst he went into the house for a little while. When we stopped at the gate, a little girl, eight or ten years old, with long, light locks streaming over her shoulders, was scampering about. 'Oh! there is little Hellen!' the young poet screamed out with rapturous delight. On our return he informed me, that the pretty child was his third sister, and he then first told me the object of our walk; for he took a pocketful of cakes to a schoolgirl with as much mystery as Pierre and Jaffier plotted against the government of Venice. We read much together, and often read aloud to each other, leading a quiet, happy life. But Shelley was not so comfortable as he had been at Oxford; a college-life, with its manifold conveniences and all its appliances and aptitudes for study, exactly suited him.

As far as concerned myself, who have always been, to a great extent, a citizen of the world, it mattered little. I have long since forgiven them, if I had anything to forgive; but I can never pardon 'the heavy-gaited toads' for the slights which they put upon my incomparable friend, and for the injuries and insults which they had so basely heaped on his unoffending head.

At that time *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* attracted much attention. We had not yet seen it. Shelley bought the poem one morning—a pretty little volume—at a bookseller's shop in Oxford Street. He put it under his arm, and we walked

into the country; when we were sufficiently removed from observation, he began to read it aloud. He read the whole poem aloud to me with fervid and exulting energy, and all the notes. He was greatly delighted with the bitter, wrathful satire. There are good things in it—some strong and striking passages—but it did not much please me; it is full of pride, of hot, weak impatient indignation. I never read it myself, I only heard it read once during this country walk, and I never saw the volume again. When he had finished it, he put it into his pocket hastily, or perhaps rather intended to do so, and missed his pocket, or—and it was no uncommon case with him—his pocket had been torn out, or there was a hole at the bottom, for, when we got home the book had disappeared. The poem afterwards became exceedingly scarce, so that a large price was often given for a copy, and some curious persons even took the trouble to transcribe it. I have met with such MSS. Such was his first introduction to Byron; such his first acquaintance with his brother poet, for he had never read those early attempts which were the moving cause of the furious onslaught.

Notwithstanding his admiration of the poem, he did not express, as was his course, whenever he was pleased with any work, a desire or determination to become personally acquainted with the author. He did not foresee that their lives would be blended and bound up together, as they were subsequently; still less did he anticipate that the irate satirist would be his executor, and as such, at the expiration of a few short years, would preside at obsequies, so strange, so mournful! To us, blind mortals, ignorant of the future, this present life is hardly to be borne. If we knew what is to come, it would be absolutely intolerable!

We occasionally visited the cousins in Lincoln's Inn Fields again, to tea, or to dinner. They were mute, as before, and we met other cousins, not less reserved and retiring.

John G—— took us one Sunday morning into Kensington Gardens. We had never been there before. Bysshe was charmed with the sylvan—and in those days somewhat neglected—aspect of the place. It soon became, and always continued to be, a favourite resort. In the more retired parts of the gardens he especially delighted, and particularly in one dark nook where there were many old yew-trees.

One day we were invited to dine in Garden Court. Shelley, J. G., and myself, repaired thither. On our way I stopped to look at an object, which, so to say, I have seen every day of

my life since, that is, for some fifty years, but which was then new to me. I had seen fountains represented in books, in views of old-fashioned mansions, but, I think, I had never actually set my eyes on one before.

'How many dukes shall we have to-day, Bysshe?' John G—— asked.

'Several, no doubt'

I quitted the fountain, and considered much within myself what this question could mean. Having ascended pretty high, we arrived at the chambers of our host, and were welcomed. Two or three persons were there already. We were introduced to them, but of these none were dukes—not one. We had a comfortable dinner

Of steaks, and other Temple messes,
Which some neat-handed Phillis dresses.

We heard them hissing in a small kitchen adjoining our dining-room, and Phillis brought them in, hot and hot. I still thought about the dukes, but I soon discovered what John G—— meant. No dukes were mentioned, but several marchionesses, countesses, and baronesses were named, at whose parties Tom had figured lately, and who were excessively flattered and gratified when they were assured of the satisfaction with their arrangements which he had condescendingly expressed. After dinner there was some port wine, and much conversation; it rolled chiefly on the superiority of women. Bysshe spoke with great animation of their purity, disinterestedness, generosity, kindness, and the like. I supported him humbly and feebly, by affirming that girls, as far as my observation went, learned more readily than boys, especially the mathematical sciences; that they had not the same repugnance to receive instruction—not the same antipathy to learning, but were happy to be taught.

John G——, a surgeon, said the female sex had been unfairly treated; they had an undue share of pain, and sickness, and suffering, which they bore with an amount of patience and fortitude, of which men were incapable.

Most of these assertions met with warm opposition; one fierce little man in particular got wonderfully angry. 'When I take to myself a wife, do you suppose I shall allow her to set herself up, as being cleverer than myself? No, indeed, I will just get a horsewhip, and I will soon beat her conceit out of her! You may take my word for it!'

His word was taken, but his arguments, if such they might be called, did not go for much.

Bysshe was disgusted with him, and in walking home, remarked: 'Since mild expostulations were unavailing, the fellow' (so he termed the choleric little gentleman) 'ought to have been thrown out of the window. What do you think, John?'

'I think, if that had been done, we should probably have had some very pretty cases of compound fractures!'

Shelley took me one Sunday to dine with his father, by invitation, at Miller's Hotel, over Westminster Bridge. We breakfasted early, and sallied forth, taking, as usual, a long walk. He told me that his father would behave strangely, and that I must be prepared for him; and he described his ordinary behaviour on such occasions. I thought the portrait was exaggerated, and I told him so; he assured me that it was not.

Shelley had, generally, one volume at least in his pocket, whenever he went out to walk. He produced a little book, and read various passages from it aloud. It was an unfavourable and unfair criticism on the Old Testament, some work of Voltaire's if I mistake not, which he had lately picked up on a stall. He found it amusing, and read many pages aloud to me, laughing heartily at the excessive and extravagant ridicule of the Jewish nation, their theocracy, laws, and peculiar usages.

We arrived at the appointed hour of five at the hotel, but dinner had been postponed until six. Mr. Graham, whom I had seen before, was there. Mr. Timothy Shelley received me kindly; but he presently began to talk in an odd, unconnected manner; scolding, crying, swearing, and then weeping again: no doubt, he went on strangely.

'What do you think of my father?' Shelley whispered to me.

I had my head filled with the book which I had heard read aloud all the morning, and I whispered in answer: 'Oh, he is not your father. It is the God of the Jews; the Jehovah you have been reading about!'

Shelley was sitting at the moment, as he often used to sit, quite on the edge of his chair. Not only did he laugh aloud, with a wild, demoniacal burst of laughter, but he slipped from his seat, and fell on his back at full length on the floor.

'What is the matter, Bysshe? Are you ill? are you dead? are you mad? Why do you laugh?'

It was not easy to return a satisfactory answer to his father, or to Mr. Graham, who came to raise him from the ground; but the announcement of dinner put an end to the confusion.

We dined comfortably. Some time after dinner, Bysshe had gone out on an errand for his father—I think, to order post-horses for the next morning. The father addressed me thus:

‘You are a very different person, sir, from what I expected to find; you are a nice, moderate, reasonable, pleasant gentleman. Tell me what you think I ought to do with my poor boy? He is rather wild, is he not?’

‘Yes, rather’

‘Then what am I to do?’

‘If he had married his cousin, he would perhaps have been less so. He would have been steadier.’

‘It is very probable that he would.’

‘He wants somebody to take care of him: a good wife. What if he were married?’

‘But how can I do that? It is impossible; if I were to tell Bysshe to marry a girl, he would refuse directly. I am sure he would; I know him so well.’

‘I have no doubt that he would refuse, if you were to order him to marry; and I should not blame him. But if you were to bring him in contact with some young lady, who, you believed, would make him a suitable wife, without saying anything about marriage, perhaps he would take a fancy to her; and if he did not like her, you could try another.’

Mr. Graham then interposed, and said that was an excellent plan, and Mr. Shelley conversed with him for some time in a low voice. They went over a list of young women of their acquaintance. I did not know these ladies even by name, so I paid little attention to their conversation, which terminated suddenly when Bysshe returned.

Another bottle of port was proposed, for the honourable member, whatever his merits or defects might be, was jolly and hospitable.

‘They have older wine in this house than any they have brought us yet; let us have a bottle of that!’

Nobody was inclined to drink more wine, and therefore we had tea. Mr. Graham made tea; he was Mr. Shelley’s factotum, and he was always civil and attentive.

After tea our jovial host became characteristic again; he discoursed of himself and his own affairs; he cried, laughed, scolded, swore, and praised himself at great length. He was so highly respected in the House of Commons: he was respected by the whole House, and by the Speaker in particular, who told him that they could not get on without him. He assured us

that he was greatly beloved in Sussex. Mr. Graham assented to all this. He was such an excellent magistrate. He told a very long story, how he had lately committed two poachers: 'You know the fellows, Graham, you know who they are.'

Mr. Graham assented.

'And when they got out of prison, one of them came and thanked me.'

Why the poacher was so grateful the worthy magistrate did not inform us.

'There is certainly a God,' he then said; 'there can be no doubt of the existence of a Deity; none whatever.'

Nobody present expressed any doubt.

'You have no doubt on the subject, sir, have you?' he inquired, addressing himself particularly to me.

'None whatever.'

'If you have, I can prove it to you in a moment.'

'I have no doubt.'

'But perhaps you would like to hear my argument?'

'Very much.'

'I will read it to you, then.'

He felt in several pockets, and at last drew out a sheet of letter-paper, and began to read.

Bysshe, leaning forward, listened with profound attention. 'I have heard this argument before,' he said; and, by-and-by, turning to me, he said again: 'I have heard this argument before.'

'They are Paley's arguments,' I said.

'Yes!' the reader observed, with much complacency, turning towards me, 'you are right, sir,' and he folded up the paper, and put it into his pocket; 'they are Paley's arguments; I copied them out of Paley's book this morning myself: but Paley had them originally from me; almost everything in Paley's book he had from me.'

When we parted, Mr. Shelley shook hands with me in a very friendly manner. 'I am sorry you would not have any more wine. I should have liked much to have drunk a bottle of the old wine with you. Tell me the truth, I am not such a bad fellow after all, am I?'

'By no means.'

'Well, when you come to see me at Field Place, you will find that I am not.'

We parted thus; he lived just thirty-three years longer, but we never met again. I have sometimes thought that if he had been taken the right way, things might have gone better; but

this his son, Bysshe, could never do, for his course, like that of true love, was not to run smooth.

'Palley's arguments! Palley's books!' I said to my friend, as we walked home.

'Yes; my father always will call him Palley; why does he call him so?'

'I do not know, unless it be to rhyme to Sally.'

After a deep, long-drawn sigh, he exclaimed: 'Oh, how I wish you would come to Field Place! How I wish my father would invite you again, and you would come! You would set us all to rights, for you know how to put everybody in good humour.'

The real author of the meagre and inconclusive treatises, which had been published under the name of Paley, and had been erroneously received, as being the compositions of the Archdeacon of Carlisle, was manifestly fond of making a fuss, of attracting attention to himself and his concerns, and of filling a space in the eyes of so much of the public as could be induced to attend to his manifestations.

As a senator, an integral portion of the collective wisdom, he loved, if not in the honourable house, at least out of doors, to move standing orders, to carry resolutions, by which nothing was resolved, to give notices, to record protests, and, in one word, to give full play to the whole machinery of pompous lolly. To draw up protocols, like an accomplished statesman, as he was, to pen diplomatic notes, to sketch the outline of treaties, and to submit propositions and articles of capitulation provisionally; all these devices and many more, he tried on with my family. But his success was small; for, although Mr. Speaker, as he said, could not get through the business of the session without his powerful aid, he appeared to us all to be a bore of the first magnitude, and a serious impediment to the carrying into effect any ordinary arrangements. His talents and proficiency, in this line, will be best shown by a few specimens of his letters which I found amongst my father's papers after his death. The epistles of the beloved Timothy will speak for themselves.

To take umbrage at the poor man's noise and nonsense certainly appears to be no common weakness; to drink a bottle or two of the old port with him, to suffer him to go on in his own way and to talk himself to sleep, and then to take one's own course, would seem to be the easiest thing in the world; but, to a young man of genius, of transcendent talents, and of

a fancy divinely poetic, nothing is difficult, except to keep in the well-worn ruts and beaten road of civil life. It is only fair to the poor old governor to add, that he was the kind master of old and attached servants, and that his surviving children speak of him at this hour with affection.

FIELD PLACE, *March 27, 1811.*

SIR,

The invitation, my son wrote me word, that you would accept to spend the Easter vacation at Field Place—I am sorry to say the late occurrence at University College must of necessity preclude me that pleasure, as I shall have to bear up against the affliction that such a business has occasioned.

I am your very humble servant,

T. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *April 5, 1811*

SIR,

I have the honour to address you upon the subject of the unfortunate affair that has happened to my son and yours at University College, Oxford. I have endeavoured to part them by directing my son to return home, and also giving the same advice to your son; and backed by that opinion by men of rank and influence, therefore I would suggest to you to come to London, and try our joint endeavours for that purpose.

I have not seen your son, nor have I as yet seen my own, but I must do so very soon.

They are at No. 15, Poland Street, Oxford Road. Have the goodness to address me Miller's Hotel, Westminster Bridge. I am at a loss now to know whom I address, not being able to get the direction. These youngsters must be parted, and the fathers must exert themselves. The favour of your answer will oblige. Should I be in the country when you come up, I can very soon be here.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your very obedient, humble servant,

T. SHELLEY.

Sir James Graham tells me there are several of the name, therefore into whosoever's hands this comes, will have the goodness to find out the right person.

To — Hogg, Esq., Stockton-on-Tees.

MY DEAR BOY,

MILLER'S HOTEL, *April 5, 1811.*

I am unwilling to receive and act on the information you gave me on Sunday, as the ultimate determination of your mind. The disgrace which hangs over you is most serious, and though I have felt as a father, and sympathized in the misfortune which your criminal opinions and improper acts have begot; yet, you must know, that I have a duty to perform to my own character, as well as to your young brother and sisters. Above all, my feelings as a Christian require from me a decided and firm conduct towards you.

If you shall require aid or assistance from me—or any protection—you must please yourself to me:

First, to go immediately to Field Place, and to abstain from all communication with Mr. Hogg, for some considerable time.

Second, that you shall place yourself under the care and society of such gentleman as I shall appoint, and attend to his instructions and directions he shall give.

These terms are so necessary to your well-being, and to the value which I cannot but entertain, that you may abandon your errors and present unjustifiable and wicked opinions, that I am resolved to withdraw myself from you, and leave you to the punishment and misery that belongs to the wicked pursuit of an opinion so diabolical and wicked as that which you have dared to declare, if you shall not accept the proposals. I shall go home on Thursday.

I am your affectionate

And most afflicted father,

To P. B. S.

T. SHELLEY.

MILLER'S HOTEL, *April 6, 1811.*

SIR,

Since I wrote yesterday, I find that I did not address the letter right, yet it may reach you. However, as I am just come from Mr. Wharton, who told me that you lived at Norton, near Stockton, I have only to urge you to get your young man home. They want to get into professions together. If possible they must be parted, for such monstrous opinions that occupy their thoughts are by no means in their favour.

I hope you have received my letter of yesterday, and will take immediate means of acting as you think proper. This is a most deplorable case, and I fear we shall have much trouble to root it out.

Paley's *Natural Theology* I shall recommend my young man

to read; it is extremely applicable. I shall read it with him. A father so employed must impress his mind more sensibly than a stranger. I shall exhort him to divest himself of all prejudice already imbibed from his false reasoning, and to bring a willing mind to a work so essential to his own and his family's happiness.

I understand you have more children. God grant they may turn out well, and this young man see his error.

I remain your obedient

And afflicted Fellow-sufferer,

T. SHELLEY.

To John Hogg, Esq., Norton.

SIR,

FIELD PLACE, April 14, 1811.

This morning I received a letter from my son, who said he and Mr. Hogg junior had submitted proposals to Mr. Hogg, who had done them the honour of expressing his approbation of them, with the condition of mine.

I found I could do no more with either of them, and as the letter came from the Rev. Mr. F., whose character must be mild and benevolent indeed; yet I consider it right to give my business into Mr. W.'s hands, to guard my honour and character in case of any prosecutions in the courts, and to direct my son to do what was right in the first instance, so he will now.

Mr. Hogg must be deceived, if he agrees to the proposals. Indeed, what right have these opinionated youngsters to do any such thing? Undutiful and disrespectful to a degree! viz.:

The parties think it their duty to *demand* an unrestrained correspondence.

When Mr. T. J. H. enters at the Inns of Court, or commences any other profession, that Mr. P. B. Shelley may be permitted to select that intention in life, which may be consonant with his intentions, to which he may judge his abilities adequate.

Surely, sir, Mr. Hogg never could agree to such insolence.

I beg my compliments to Mr. Hogg, and hope he will be firm and decided with these misguided youngsters.

I am, sir, your very humble servant,

T. SHELLEY.

Desire Mr. Hogg junior to inform you of our conversation, etc last Sunday. You say the person's name is Clarke, where you lodge.

To Mr. R. C.

(On the part of John Hogg, Esq.) " .

Such were our venerable friend's letters of business. With regard to his literary correspondence, a few words may be said. He was not 'an illiterate country gentleman' as he has been styled, most incorrectly; he certainly was not a man of letters or of learning, but he was not without literary tastes and dispositions. In his frequent letters to my friend, and in discourse with him, he constantly urged his son to acquire knowledge, to read hard, and particularly to distinguish himself at the university. He proposed to him to enter into competition for a prize poem; and, to enable him the better to make the attempt, he induced a distinguished scholar, a considerable antiquary and an eminent man, the Rev. Edward Dallaway, Vicar of Leatherhead, secretary to the Earl Marshal, and the historian of the county of Sussex, to furnish in a long letter, accompanied with sketches, much valuable information relative to a subject which had been offered by the university. Shelley actually began to compose the poem, but he did not complete it, because he was sent away from Oxford before the time arrived for submitting his attempt to the judges of poetic superiority.

His father's epistles to Shelley invariably commenced with, 'My Dear Boy', like the celebrated Letters of the Earl of Chesterfield to his Son, and indeed the writer hinted pretty plainly that he closely resembled the noble earl in elegance and accomplishments, as well as in wordly wisdom. The letters were very peculiar: he began with one subject, and always suddenly broke off, sometimes even in the middle of a sentence, and entered upon, or rather went on with a totally different topic: as if he had laid aside the letter, and on taking it up again after an interval, had finished it, without recollecting at all, or referring to what he had previously written. They were exactly like letters that had been cut in two, and the pieces afterwards joined at hazard; cross readings, as it were, cross questions and crooked answers. Shelley gave me some samples as epistolary curiosities; I regret that I have mislaid them, so that I cannot, at present, exhibit—*disjecti membra poetæ*—the members of sentences of the 'tattered and torn' father of a poet. Not unfrequently did these instructive missives scold the 'dear boy'—scold him nobly, gloriously, royally, for Bysshe provoked his somewhat irritable parent, and often unintentionally.

Where furious *Frank* and fiery Hun.

Furious letters, franked by the fiery Hun himself, came to

us from Horsham; this silly verse from silly Tom Campbell's silly poem; 'Hohenlinden', was applied to them, and it somewhat consoled the scolded one. He affirmed that the application was in Ciceronian phrase, *haud illepidum*, not un-funny; thereby meaning exceedingly droll.

It is certain, however, that 'the late occurrence at University College', as Mr. Shelley mildly terms the stupid outrage perpetrated upon his son, because an innocent and insignificant thesis had been propounded for the delectation of lovers of logomachy, of logical quirks, and of subtle, metaphysical quibbles, annoyed him greatly; and it is equally certain that, in his political position, as a constitutional Whig, there was some foundation for his annoyance. As to my own family, and my immediate connections, we were all persons whose first toast after dinner was invariably, 'Church and State!'—warm partisans of William Pitt, of the highest Church, and of the high Tory party; consequently, we were anything but intolerant—we were above suspicion, above ordinances. I speak of the Tories of the good old times—of fine old English gentlemen of the old school—of men who wore the Windsor uniform before Peel and his Manchester men had mixed their shoddy with the sound, home-grown wool of honest Yorkshire broadcloth! My relatives felt that they had margin enough—plenty of sea-room, that whatever might be said or done, their good principles could not be doubted, but would always carry them through. With the buff and blue folks it was far otherwise; they had already gone to what they conceived to be the extreme verge of free opinions and practices, yet without having gone far enough to satisfy the demands of many of their adherents; and they were obliged to stand trembling and shivering at the farthest point of liberality, and were apparently in constant dread of having actually ventured to take a position in which they might have done themselves and their followers some real service. These people feared lest they should, peradventure, be accounted Republicans, Jacobins, Levellers, Atheists.

If the *Age of Reason* had been republished by myself or by one of my earliest friends, the world would have supposed that it was put forth merely to show the utter futility and impotence, and vanity of the author's arguments; or in order to invite a more complete and conclusive refutation than Bishop Watson and the other feeble champions of the faith had hitherto produced. Whereas, if the heroes of whiggery—Grey and Grenville—and the small wits of Holland House, had sent the decried

work into general circulation, men would have exclaimed with one voice—they have thrown off the mask at last, and have come forward, openly professing to be such as we always thought they were.

The good old adage says, and says truly—One man may steal a horse with impunity, whilst another must not even look over the hedge. It was not wonderful that the clients of the poor Duke of Norfolk, who, it was currently reported, had gotten woefully into the wrong box, and into sad disgrace, by proposing as a toast at a public dinner, 'The Majesty of the People!'—should be nervously apprehensive, lest another decisive step should be taken in the same wrong and dangerous direction.

Much has been said and written about the intolerance and persecution of priests, and if the word priest be used to denote those gentry who presided over the Spanish Inquisition and other similar establishments, the complaint, if there be any truth in history, would seem to be but too well founded. But with regard to clergymen of the established Church, in justice to them, I am bound by gratitude to declare, that I never met with anything at their hands but kindness, hospitality, and liberality, and not merely towards myself alone; and, I believe, I never merited any other treatment from them; but with reference also to my illustrious friend, who was doubtless represented sometimes—for the most part falsely—as having evinced a certain hostility towards their order. It is only right, therefore, to add, that no individual of the English clergy ever spoke of him to me save in terms of respect; fully and freely acknowledging his remarkable talents, and readily conceding that young men of genius and of active and inquiring minds, frequently encounter serious doubts and difficulties at the commencement of their studies, which further progress and perseverance in learning, and a more mature judgment, finally solve and gradually dissipate. If I have ever heard my friend treated unhandsomely and contemptuously, it has been by ignorant and bigoted sectaries, these being, in matters of faith and religious doctrine, commonly of the lowest denomination.

I am constrained, however, to except from this honourable testimony, the paltry and pitiful persecution which he suffered at Oxford; which, paltry and pitiful as it unquestionably was, must, nevertheless, be duly expiated. The narrow society of our small college was degraded and brutalized by habitual drunkenness, or by habitual toleration of it in others; if a hungry young soul had been led forth to pasture upon less

barren lands, and under the guidance of truer shepherds, than were those who brought eternal infamy upon the foundations of the great and good Alfred, the result, at least to ordinary apprehensions, would have been most probably less unsatisfactory.

Shelley was caught one day at Oxford by a violent shower, and a furious and sudden storm of wind; he took shelter under some of the buildings of a college—if I mistake not, Wadham. A gentleman saw him from a window, and invited him to come and sit in his rooms until the rain should cease. He did so; and they had a long and interesting conversation. The stranger spoke of metaphysical and religious subjects, acknowledging frankly that there are many perplexities, difficulties, and obscurities, and that any man, who thought at all—more especially a young man—must feel these sensibly; that Locke and Paley, and the ordinary routine of instructors, could not resolve these; on the contrary, their much vaunted volumes only augmented and increased them; for entire satisfaction and full solution it was quite indispensable to apply to other and different, to more profound and higher authorities.

After a very long conversation and much discussion, and many learned doubts, the weather having cleared up, Shelley quitted the dialectician, being invited to call again, to come and renew their discourse, and to improve their acquaintance. This he did several times, and paid many visits to Wadham, if indeed that college was the scene of the friendly disputations. He generally gave me an account of what was said, expressing always in warm terms his sense of the candour, intelligence, learning, and liberality of his new friend. If he ever told me the name, I have forgotten it; as also whether he was a tutor, one of the fellows, or only an inmate of the college; whether he was a layman or a clergyman. I have often thought that if his good star had led him to a college where he would have been treated frankly, kindly, and handsomely, the result of his academical residence would have been altogether different and more beneficial; however, it was pre-ordained, and no doubt for the wisest purposes, that his lofty, daring spirit should undergo the baptism, not of water, but of fire.

A student was seldom expelled from either of the universities, rarely indeed from Oxford, for any serious and discreditable cause. It commonly occurred because the pompous folly and preposterous self-importance of some vulgar upstart—some Jack-in-office, some beggar on horseback, some servitor or chapel-clerk, who had been most improperly lifted up and exalted

into a little, brief, local authority, had been wounded in his silly pride by what he was pleased to consider insubordination and a breach of discipline. Consequently, there was little disgrace in the infliction, and the mark of paltry, petty, pitiful vengeance was universally and utterly despised. Although this is certainly the case, and the stigma is disregarded, the outrage against my incomparable friend was not the less abominable. The opprobrium under which the university fell on that account is not the less crying and flagrant.

Many zealous and ardent worshippers of genius maintain, that the execrable crime demands solemn and public expiation, by conspicuous atonement, by some striking and lasting tribute to the memory of the highly gifted and insulted party. They contend that inasmuch as the duration of a body corporate is eternal, and through perpetual succession the individuality and personality are unchanged, the present authorities of the university are not less amenable or liable to disgrace, censure, and punishment, to condign punishment, than were those wretched men whose hands actually struck the base and cowardly blow. In strict justice, therefore, they urge that, unless honourable amends be forthwith made, the Vice-Chancellor and proctors of the university, and the Master of University College ought to be scourged, openly and severely, throughout the whole length of High Street.

The same strictness of the highest justice also peremptorily demands, as they, nothing doubting, do assert, that bareheaded and barefooted, with no other garment than their shirts, and with halters round their necks, having received the prescribed number of stripes, they should ask pardon humbly on their knees, of God, and of His holy angels, for the tyranny and insolence of those whom they at present represent, towards an angelic spirit; in order that, being thus admonished, they may learn justice, and not again to contemn godlike men, the heroes of the earth, and its salt.

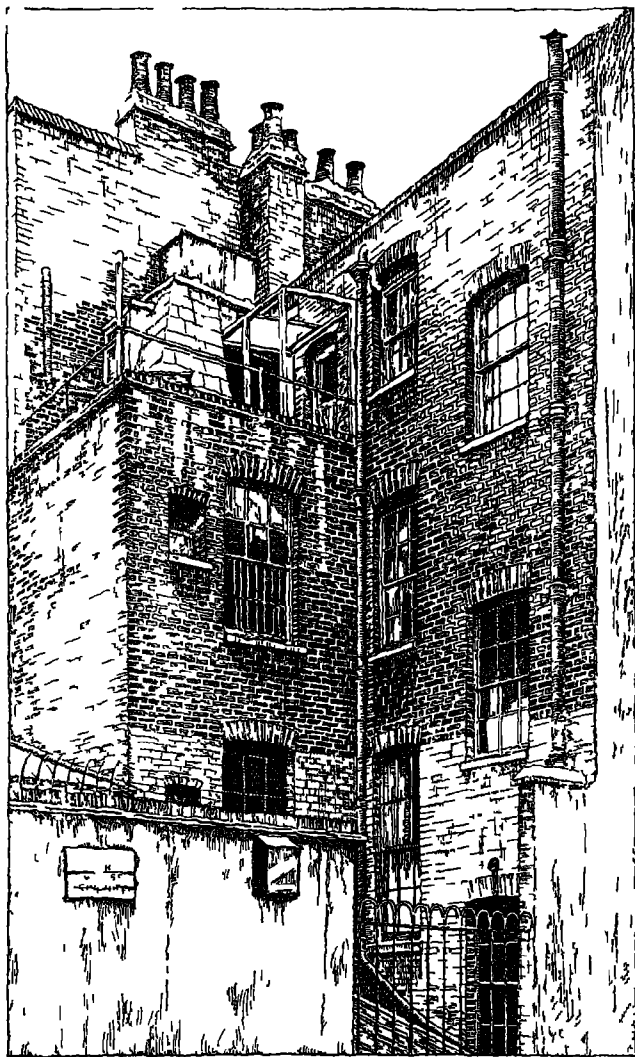
I repeat modestly what I have often heard from the lips of hero-worshippers; neither then nor now presuming to affirm, or to deny, the correctness of their conclusions, because I am myself, in some slight degree, interested and implicated in the matters in question; and that a man should be judge in his own cause is never expedient.

CHAPTER X

I HAD been invited to spend the Easter vacation at Field Place. I have been reminded very lately of a trifling circumstance, which I had entirely forgotten, but of which I instantly became reminiscent. In accepting the invitation three or four months before the time to which it related, I had expressed a doubt whether it was prudent to look so far into the future: this pretended scruple caused much amusement in the family, and seemed extremely grotesque and ludicrous; so much so that it was always borne in mind. Events proved painfully that my doubt was but too well founded, although I felt no reason at the time for doubting; and without intending to prophesy, I was a true prophet.

It is possible that the Muses may not be less prone to tittle-tattle than other mature virgins, for there is gossip even in a university. I found amongst my father's papers a gossiping letter, 'a foolish performance' enough; but as it is a contemporary narrative of the 'late occurrence at University College', I will extract a portion of it; it is partly true, and partly false, as such narratives usually are.

There was no desire to be singular, or even to be dual, for two singulars would make a dual. The two young men associated chiefly with each other, but they kept company with others also; but little, in truth, with men of their own college, because their society was not congenial. They often took long walks together into the country, a recreation which was highly approved of; the lectures and other duties detained them until one or two, the public dinner was at four; there was no obligation to dine in hall, and it is obvious, that it was impossible to walk for five or six hours without giving up the college dinner. Shelley was always dressed like a gentleman, handsomely indeed; but there was something of singularity in his appearance, it must be admitted. His throat was often bare, the collar of his shirt open, in days when a huge neckcloth was the mode; other men's heads, like those of private soldiers, were then clipped quite close, the poet's locks were long, which certainly was a singular phenomenon, and streaming like a meteor; and the air of his



POLAND STREET

'There was a back sitting-room on the first floor .'

little round hat upon his little round head was troubled and peculiar.

We are charged with seeming to say: 'We are superior to everybody!' I acknowledge the truth of the charge, I accept the challenge; and I now say boldly, confidently, and without fear of contradiction, of my incomparable friend, 'He was superior to everybody!'

I found also a letter, of which I knew nothing, and which I had never seen before, from Shelley to my father, amongst his papers, after the death of my father and of Shelley. It has no date, but was written in the trellised room, with the kindest and most honourable feelings, and plainly under strong emotion, being confused and inaccurate, a thing unusual, and almost unprecedented with my true yoke-fellow.

I do not believe that Mr. T. Shelley ever let fall the expressions which were imputed to him. It is my duty to speak the truth, the whole truth, and therefore I cannot but confess that the poor fellow had many underhand ways; these I found out, *sometimes long subsequent to the event*. I discovered them casually after an absence from him, and more particularly after his last long, sad absence; but the obligation to tell the whole truth requires that I should add that his underhand ways differed in one very important respect from those of other people. The latter were concealed, because they were mean, selfish, sordid, too bad, in one word, to be told; his secrets, on the contrary, were hidden through modesty, delicacy, generosity, refinement of soul, through a dislike to be praised and thanked for noble, disinterested, high-minded deeds, for incredible liberality and self-sacrifice.

I did not know of the existence of his letter to my father until I found it, when he was no more, after the hand, that wrote it, had been rapidly reduced to ashes in a funeral fire, kindled on the coast of Italy in obedience to the strict laws and regulations of quarantine.

Of these tragic scenes I must discourse at length hereafter, painful as the task will be; for the present it suffices to say that, like every other memorial of the Divine Poet, which I possess, and in due season will freely produce, it reminded me forcibly, yet needlessly, of the greatness of my loss. What answer was returned to the letter does not appear, and can never appear; without doubt, a courteous and a becoming one.

6th April, 1811.

B. J. came to me this morning from Oxford. I have had

the whole history from him; and the reason of all this strange conduct in your son and Shelley is what I supposed, a desire to be singular. There is no striking impiety in the pamphlet; but it goes to show, that, because a supreme power cannot be seen, such power may be doubted to exist. It is a foolish performance, as far as argument goes; but written in good language. These two young men gave up associating with anybody else some months since; never dined in college; dressed differently from all others, and did everything in their power to show singularity, as much as to say, 'We are superior to everybody'. They have been writing novels. Shelley has published his, and your son has not. Shelley is son to the member for Shoreham. He has always been odd, I find, and suspected of insanity, but of great acquirements; so is your son; I mean, as to the latter, he is of high repute in college.

To J. H., Norton.

C. R.

SIR,

15, POLAND STREET.

I accompanied (at his desire) Mr. Jefferson Hogg to Mr. C., who was entrusted with certain propositions to be offered to my friend. I was there extremely surprised; no less hurt than surprised, to find, my father in his interview with Mr. C. had, either unadvisedly or intentionally, let fall expressions, which conveyed an idea, that Mr. J. H. was the 'original corruptor' of my principles. That on this subject (notwithstanding his long experience) Mr. T. Shelley must know less than his son, will be conceded; and I feel it but justice, in consequence of your feelings, so natural, what Mr. C. communicated, positively to deny the assertion; I feel this tribute, which I have paid to the just sense of horror you entertain, to be due to you, as a gentleman. I hope my motives stand excused to your candour.

Myself and my friend have offered concessions; painful, indeed, they are to myself, but such as on mature consideration we find due to our high sense of filial duty.

Permit me to request your indulgence for the liberty I have taken in thus addressing you.

I remain your obedient humble servant,

To John Hogg, Esq.

P. B. SHELLEY.

DEAR H.,

February, 1857

You know he was fond of chemistry, and in one of his experiments he set fire to the butler, Laker, and then soused

him with a pail of cold water. On another occasion, in the spring of 1811, he went with C. to the British Forum, in the vicinity of Covent Garden. It was then a spouting club, in which Gale Jones and other Radicals abused all existing governments. Bysshe made so good a speech, complimenting and differing from the previous orators, that when he left the room, there was a rush to find out who he was, and to induce him to attend there again. He gave them a false name and address, not caring a farthing about the meeting, or the subjects there discussed. C. may know some anecdotes about him; he was more with him than I was, at that time I was engaged in professional pursuits.

I am sorry for the loss of all Bysshe's letters, which, with others, were destroyed when I left London for Edinburgh. I never saw him after his second marriage.

I remain your affectionate cousin,

To H. S.

J. G.

DEAR J.,

This chemical anecdote may, I think, be placed with my recollections on the same subject. I forget whether I mentioned the dreadful state he was in by careless manipulation of combustibles; his hands and face being burned and blackened by some badly-managed experiment, either at Eton or Oxford. He had caustic to play with, I fancy, for our white frocks used, in a mysterious manner, to be found stained with black marks, pronounced by the learned lunar caustic; and we poor little ignoramuses were accused of knowing how it came there; and I can feel now my stupid, childish silence, and wonder at the irremovable stain. Now I can imagine our frequent visits to the Hall Chamber, Bysshe's room, were the certain means of getting marked.—H. S.

We had lived together in London nearly a month, and notwithstanding occasional interruptions by disturbing forces, on the whole very happily; we were now to part, but only, it was believed, for a short time: in less than a month our pleasant student life was to recommence at York, and to be continued there as agreeably as ever, without let or hindrance, for a year. At the expiration of the year it was to be calmly enjoyed in London for an indefinite period, during the remainder of our lives. So was it that man proposed—of the actual disposition, hereafter.

I quitted Shelley with mutual regret, leaving him alone in the trellised chamber, where he was to remain, a bright-eyed, restless fox amidst sour grapes, not, as his poetic imagination at first suggested, for ever, but a little while longer. I left London at nine o'clock in the evening by the Holyhead mail, having dined with the grave companion of my journey at a coffee-house in Bond Street. In the morning we found ourselves at Birmingham, and breakfasted at the Hen and Chickens, which at that time was one of the worst and dirtiest of the many bad and dirty inns which make the recollections of former days too often bitter. The third person at breakfast was an outside passenger, an Irishman, who informed us, that on a former occasion, when he was at Birmingham, he happened to be short of money, the rents of his estates not having been duly remitted to him, so that he was obliged to raise a sum on his watch, a gold watch, which he produced. My cautious companion began to look rather alarmed at this opening, as if he feared our new friend from the outside was about to require of him a loan on the security of the gold watch. He answered him shortly, but the narration was not to be broken off so easily: 'Accordingly, I asked the waiter at this hotel to recommend a respectable pawnbroker to me; he did so. I went to his shop, and was treated very handsomely; he at once advanced on the watch, without any difficulty, more than I had expected; and, indeed, I found him to be a liberal, intelligent, and high-minded man, and a most perfect gentleman. I have recommended him to many of my friends, and as you, sir, may probably have occasion to raise money in that way, I will point out his shop to you before you quit Birmingham, if you will give me leave'. My companion, a prudent, precise, scrupulous, exact, and thriving man, shrunk back at the proposal. He felt that it was just as probable that he should murder the landlord, rob the inn, and then set fire to the filthy Hen and Chickens, as that he should ever be under the necessity of pledging his watch.

'No! no! sir, I thank you, it is unnecessary; that is quite out of my way; pray, do not trouble yourself!'

'It is no trouble at all; you can see the shop from the door of the inn. You may not want money yourself, but some of your friends very likely will.'

The more the Irishman pressed, the more my companion held back: the former seemed quite uneasy that his obliging offer was declined; so to soothe his wounded feelings, I interposed: 'If the place can be seen from the door of the inn, you may

show it to me; that will do as well'. I went to the door with him, and he pointed out a pawnbroker's shop, and begged me to remember the situation and the name: I promised to remember them

We had remained in Birmingham already longer than it is usual for a mail coach to remain, and we suddenly resumed our seats at the sound of the horn. My companion, as I fancied, seemed unhappy, when I went out of the room with the Irishman. To relieve his mind, I said, 'As the man was getting so uneasy, to comfort him I just allowed him to show me the shop'.

'Yes, it was very good-natured of you! That was characteristic; was it not? altogether Irish! For my part, I never like to trust myself alone with an Irishman; I am always afraid lest the fellow should take it into his head to cut my throat!'

When we were changing horses, the son of Erin came to the window: 'Do you recollect the shop and the name? Are you sure? I can give you the address!'

'Thank you; I recollect them!'

He disappeared, we saw no more of him, and my cautious companion seemed to be relieved.

We left the mail, or rather the mail left us behind at Shrewsbury. We ordered a post-chaise and chops, and went forth to take a look at the picturesque old town, and the beautiful River Severn, which were new to me, and then returned to our inn. We dined in the same room with a venerable old clergyman, and a pretty young female who had a baby in her arms. They were taking tea.

'Wife, or daughter?' We mooted the question, as we were jolted along to Ellesmere. I opined that she was his wife.

'No,' said my companion indignantly, although an old man himself. 'That is impossible; that old fellow can never have such a pretty young wife!'

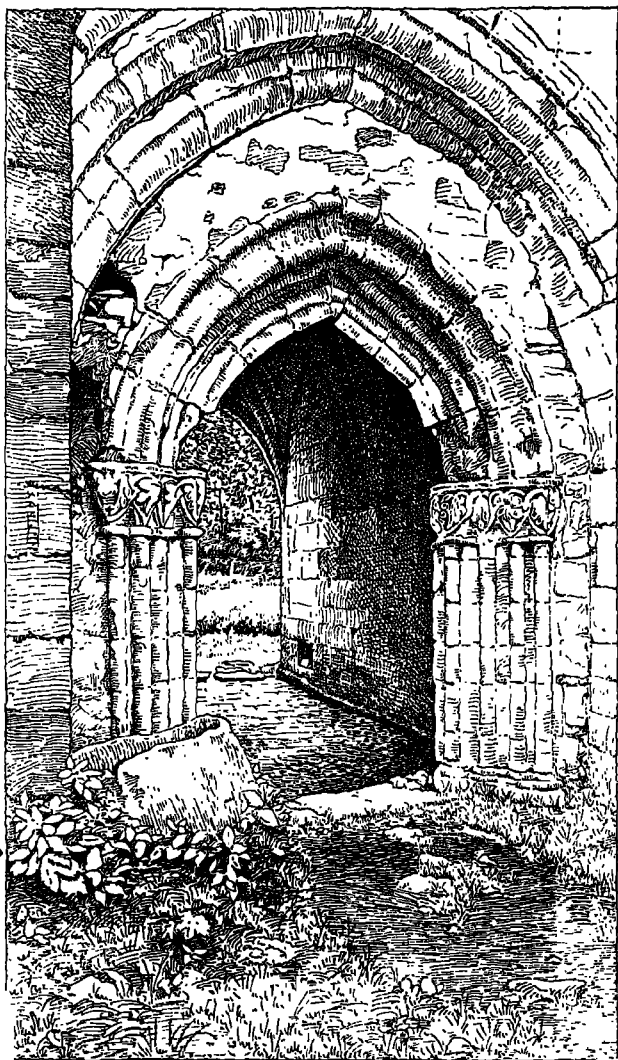
'Not impossible, by any means; only he is a very fortunate old fellow, if he really has so young—so charming a wife!'

The discussion became animated, my companion let down the front window, and asked the post-boy, who they were. A post-boy knows nothing beyond his horses' heads; he could not tell us.

'The next time I go to Shrewsbury, I will ask the landlady; she will inform me.'

I never heard what the decision was, and therefore it is not improbable that it was in my favour; that she was his wife. Oh! happy divine! A divine for a husband, and a divine wife!

The Wrekin was pointed out to me, and some other remarkable objects by the way; and after a rough ride we arrived at Ellesmere. It is a sweet spot, in a pleasant country, seated on the margin of a pretty mere, or lake, of clear water. We had a most delightful supper; it was called a Welsh rabbit, and was said to be the true genuine and native form of that engaging little creature. There was bright, pale amber ale, sweetened with loaf sugar, and flavoured with nutmeg, in a large silver bowl; slices of toasted bread floated in this nectar. Some excellent toasted cheese was brought in, smoking, hissing hot. A slice of toast was transferred from the bowl to the plate, and the melted cheese was spread upon it; the golden liquor was ladled out into glasses. Thus we supped, not only on the first evening, but on every other during my stay at Ellesmere. I never fed on nectar and ambrosia before, and I regret to add that I have never partaken of the banquets of the immortal gods since. No substance, solid or fluid, differs so much in quality as the ale or beer in various parts of England. In the northern counties it is peculiarly detestable. If it were clear, which it never is there, it would be a liquor as generous as the water that drains from a peat-bog. It must be a guilty land indeed, which the angry gods have visited with the tremendous visitation of bad beer! I found at Ellesmere a young college friend; he was visiting, during the Easter vacation, in the same bachelor's house as myself; we walked, or rode on horseback, all the morning, about this singularly pleasant land, and after dinner we rowed a handsome barge, with some assistance, round the pretty mere, and across its still, pellucid waters; our exploits in this line were long remembered; the tradition of them came to my ears many years after. We visited several of the neighbouring squires, and partook of their free hospitality, tasting that fine old port wine, which is not the least striking of the many romantic beauties of North Wales. Their society was not the less agreeable and amusing, because it was somewhat peculiar and characteristic; the conversation, for example, would often become eminently Celtic after dinner, particularly when the excellent port began to operate, and the warm Cambrian blood had grown still warmer. They then talked of their quarrels; of horsewhipping and knocking down; of breaking the neck, beating out the brains, and cutting out a rascal's liver. The weather was charming. I was always in the open air; for reading there was little leisure: the tales of *La Fontaine*, two or three of the minor works of *Xenophon*, as his discourse



'VALLE CRUCIS, A SWEET RELIGIOUS SECLUSION'

on Hunting; and a cursory survey of a newspaper, comprehended my course of study in the county of Salop. We made several agreeable excursions. Of these, the chief was our expedition to Llangollen. I first entered the Principality in a post-chaise; we came upon the wonderful bridge of junction, Pont Cysylte, and we walked across it, along the towing-path of the canal, of which the bridge is the aqueduct, and then into the tunnel at the farther end, by the same path. On our return, we descended to the lovely River Dee, which the lofty bridge so proudly bestrides. On the banks of the river, a great crowd of country people was assembled to witness the rites of a congregation of Anabaptists. We joined them just in time to see an old man in a loose flannel gown seize an old woman, dressed in the same manner, by the arm, and wade with her into the middle of the stream, which reached up to their waists. She then gave him her hands, and throwing herself backwards, baptism by total immersion was achieved by the old minister, precisely as bathing in the sea is effected by old bathing women. Some prayers, doubtless, were repeated, but we could not hear them. Whilst the dripping pair came slowly out of the river, the bystanders sang hymns in Welsh, and their loud cry filled the valley. We ordered dinner at Llangollen, and walked to Valle Crucis, a sweet religious seclusion, and to some other very striking points of view. Our exercise during the morning, and the glad sound of the Welsh harp during dinner, made a poor meal less unpalatable. After dinner, we visited the residence of the two lady friends, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby, whose strong mutual attachment was esteemed still more remarkable and romantic than their abode.

The church was open, and we entered it. We had assisted at the ceremony of adult baptism before; we now were witnesses of infant baptism. The tones of the Welsh language were solemn and sonorous, and the water—by means of which the young soldier of Christ was to be initiated—was not the noble stream of Dee, but only so much of the saving fluid as a broken pie-dish, standing in the font, could contain. The broken pie-dish amused us greatly, not because it was a vessel of dishonour, ill-suited for a staid occasion, but as being a symbol.

Our kind host was familiar with Wales, with its usages—warlike and convivial: he said to us, when our chaise entered the Principality in the morning, 'Now, keep a sharp look-out, young gentlemen, and see if you can find a whole man. I never could!'

He informed us that whenever a Welshman goes to market, to a fair, or indeed from home, on any mission, he has a drink, and, if possible, a fight also. If the latter cannot be had, he remains drinking until he is quite drunk and it is quite dark, and then, returning homewards, by steep, rugged, and devious paths, he falls down—up, over, or into some perilous place, and so sustains as much damage as he could have found in battle. We looked out, as we were directed, both in going and in returning: one man had his arm in a sling, another walked with a crutch; on this eye there was a patch; that head was bound up; something or other had been mended, and was still out of repair,—in every male on the road. The women were quite sound, in their blue cloth jackets and round black felt hats—they seemed brisk and entire; but their mates were all fractured, more or less. The broken pic-dish in the font, therefore, was an emblem, a type, a pledge, that the young Christian would always fight manfully, although not always perhaps under those banners to which his fidelity had been promised.

The Welsh rabbit, our usual supper, was still dearer to us than ever, after the greasy, blackened chops and tough steaks of Llangollen.

Whilst I, like a mere matter-of-fact man, was taking the world easily, and prosaically enjoying life, as it came, my poor absent friend, as his letters too plainly testify, was paying the penalty of his poetic temperament, and suffering severely from the cruel aches and pains of imagination.

POLAND STREET, April 18, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Certainly this place is a little solitary, but as a person cannot be quite alone when he has even got himself with him, I get on pretty well. I have employed myself in writing poetry, and as I go to bed at eight o'clock, time passes quicker than it otherwise might.

Yesterday I had a letter from Whitton to invite me to his house; of course, the answer was negative. I wrote to say that I would resign all claim to the entail if he would allow me two hundred pounds a year, and divide the rest among my sisters. Of course he will not refuse the offer. You remarked that, in Lord Mount Edgcombe's hermitage, I should have nothing to talk of but myself; nor have I anything here, except I should transcribe the *jeux-d'esprit* of the maid.

Mr. Pilfold has written a very civil letter; my mother inter-

cepted that sent to my father, and wrote to me to come, enclosing the money. I, of course, returned it.

Miss Westbrook has this moment called on me with her sister. It certainly was very kind of her. Adieu!

The post goes.

Yours,
P. B. S.

To T. J. II, Ellesmere

MY DEAR FRIEND,

LONDON, *April 24, 1811.*

You have, with wonderful sagacity, no doubt, refuted an argument of mine, the very existence of which I had forgotten. Something singularly conceited, no doubt, by the remarks you make on it. Fine flowery language, you say; well, I cannot help it; you see me in my weakest moments. All I can tell you of it is, that I certainly was not laughing, as you conjecture. This circumstance may go against me. I do not know that it will, however, as I have by no means a *precise* idea of what the subject of this composition was.

'The Galilean is not a favourite of mine', a French author writes. The French write audaciously—rashly. 'So far from owing him any thanks for his favours, I cannot avoid confessing that I owe a secret grudge to his carpentership—*charpenterie*. The reflecting part of the community—that part in whose happiness we philosophers have so strong an interest—certainly do not require his morality, which, where there is no *vice*, fetters *virtue*. Here we all agree. Let this horrid Galilean rule the *canaille* then! I give them up.' And I give them up; I will no more mix politics and virtue, they are incompatible.

My little friend Harriet W. is gone to her prison-house. She is quite well in health; at least so she says, though she looks very much otherwise. I saw her yesterday. I went with her sister to Miss H.'s, and walked about Clapham Common with them for two hours. The youngest is a most amiable girl; the eldest is really conceited, but very condescending. I took the sacrament with her on Sunday. You say I talk philosophically of her kindness in calling on me. She is very charitable and good. I shall always think of it with gratitude, because I certainly did not deserve it, and she exposed herself to much possible odium. It is perhaps scarcely doing her a kindness—it is perhaps inducing positive unhappiness—to point out to her a road which leads to perfection, the attainment of which, perhaps, does not repay the difficulties of the progress. What do you think of this? If trains of thought,

development of mental energies influence in any degree a future state; if this is *even* possible—if it stands on *at all* securer ground than mere hypothesis; then is it not a service? Where am I gotten? perhaps into another ridiculous argument. I will not proceed, for I shall forget all I have said, and cannot, in justice, animadvert upon any of your critiques.

I called on John Grove this morning. I met my father in the passage, and politely inquired after his health. He looked as black as a thunder-cloud, and said, 'Your most humble servant!' I made him a low bow, and wishing him a very good morning—passed on. He is very irate about my proposals. I cannot resign anything till I am twenty-one. I cannot do anything, therefore I have three more years to consider of the matter you mentioned. I shall go down to Field Place soon. I wait for Mr. Pilfold's arrival, with whom I shall depart. He is resolved (the old fellow) that I shall not stay at Field Place. If I please—as I shall do for some time—I *will*. This resolution of mine was hinted to him: 'Oh! then I shall take his sister away before he comes.' But I shall follow her, as her retirement cannot be a secret. This will probably lead me to wander about for some time. You will hear from me, however, wherever I am. If all these things are useless, you will see me at York, or at Ellesmere, if you still remain there. The scenery excites mournful ideas. I am sorry to hear it; I hoped that it would have had a contrary effect. May I indulge the idea that York is as stupid as Oxford. And yet you did not wander alone amid the mountains? I think I shall live at the foot of Snowdon. Suppose we both go there directly? Do not be surprised if you see me at Ellesmere. Yes, you would, for it would be a strange thing. I am now nearly recovered. Strange that Florian could not see the conclusions from his own reasoning. How can the hope of a higher reward stimulating an action make it virtuous, if the essence of virtue is disinterested, as all, who know anything of virtue, must allow, as *he* does allow. How inconsistent is this religion! How apt to pervert the judgment, and finally the heart of the most amiably-intentioned who confide in it! I wish I was with you in the mountains; could not we live there?

Direct to 15 Poland Street. I write to-morrow to York.

Your affectionate friend,

P. B. S.

Your B—— is worse than stupid; he is provoking. Have

you really no one to associate with—not even a peasant, a child of nature, a spider? And this from the hermit, the philosopher? Oh, you are right to laugh at me. I finished the little poem, one stanza of which you said was pretty; it is, on the whole, a most stupid thing, as you will confess, when I some day inflict a perusal of it on your innocent ears. Yet I have nothing to amuse myself with, and if it does not injure others and you cannot avoid it, I do not see much harm in being mad.

You even vindicate it in some almost inspired stanzas, which I found among my transcriptions to-day.

Adieu! I am going to Miss W.'s to dinner. Her father is out. I will write to-morrow.

To F. J. H., Ellesmere.

LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS, April 28, 1811

I am now at Grove's. I don't know where I am, where I will be. Future, present, past, is all a mist; it seems as if I had begun existence anew, under auspices so unfavourable. Yet no! That is stupid! My poor little friend has been ill, her sister sent for me the other night. I found her on a couch pale; her father is civil to me, very strangely; the sister is too civil by half. She began talking about *l'amour*. I philosophized and the youngest said she had such a headache, that she could not bear conversation. Her sister then went away, and I stayed till half-past twelve. Her father had a large party below, he invited me; I refused. Yes! The fiend, the wretch, shall fall! Harriet will do for one of the crushers, and the eldest (Emily) with some taming, will do, too. They are both very clever, and the youngest (my friend) is amiable. Yesterday she was better, to-day her father compelled her to go to Clapham, whither I have conducted her, and I am now returned. Why is it, that the moment we two are separated, I can scarcely set bounds to my hatred of intolerance; is it feeling? is it passion? I would willingly persuade myself that it is neither; willingly would I persuade myself that all that is amiable, all that is good, falls by its prevalence, and that I ought unceasingly to attempt its destruction. Yet, you say that millions of bad are necessary for the existence of a few pre-eminent in excellence. Is not this a despotism of virtue, which is inconsistent with its nature? Is it not the Asiatic tyrant, who renders his territory wretched to fill his seraglio? the shark, who must glut his maw with millions of fish in order that he may exist? I

have often said that I doubted your divinities, and if this inference follows the established hypothesis of their existence, I do not merely doubt, but hope that my doubts are founded on truth.

I think, then, that the *term* 'superior' is bad, as it involves this horrible consequence. Let the word 'perfect', then, be offered as a substitute; to which each who aspires, may indulge a hope of arriving; or rather every one (speaking of *men*) may hope to contribute to woman's arrival, which, in fact, is themselves advancing; although, like the shadow preceding the figure, or the spiral, it always may advance, and never touch.

My sister does not come to town, nor will she ever, at least I can see no chance of it. I will not deceive myself; she is lost, lost to everything; Intolerance has tainted her—she talks cant and twaddle. I would not venture thus to prophesy without being most perfectly convinced in my own mind of the truth of what I say. It *may* not be irretrievable; but, yes, it is! A young female, who only once, only for a short time, asserted her claim to an unfettered use of reason, bred up with bigots. having before her eyes examples of the consequences of scepticism, or even of philosophy, which she must now see to lead directly to the former. A mother, who is mild and tolerant, yet narrow-minded; how, I ask, is *she* to be rescued from its influence?

I tell you, my dear friend, openly the feelings of my mind, the state of its convictions on every subject; this, then, is one, and I do not expect that you will say: 'It must be so painful to your feelings, that I hope you will never again mention it'. I do not expect you to say, 'I had rather you were under a pleasing error; it is not a friendly act to dissipate the mists, which hide a frightful prospect'. On other subjects you have soared above prejudices, you have investigated them, terrible as they may have appeared, and resolved to abide by the result of that investigation. And you *have* abided by it. Why then should there yet remain a subject on which you profess yourself fearful to inquire? I will not allow you to say incompetent. Error cannot in any of its shapes be good, I cannot conceive the possibility.

You talk of the credulity of mankind, its proneness to superstition, that it ever has been a slave to the vilest of errors. Is your inference necessary, or direct, that it ever will continue so? You say that 'I have no idea how society could be freed from false notions on almost every subject'. No; nor would the

first man in the world, supposing that there ever was one, at the moment of his arriving at his estate, have any conception how a fertile piece of land would look without weeds; he stares at it, and thinks it is least of all fitted for his conveniences, when a stricter searching into its nature would convince him, that it was calculated to contribute to them with a sufficient proportion of labour, more than the barer land, which appeared clear.

Dares the lama, most fleet of the sons of the wind,
 The lion to rouse from his skull-covered lair?
 When the tiger approaches can the fast-fleeting hind
 Repose trust in his footsteps of air?
 No! Abandon'd he sinks in a trance of despair,
 The monster transfixes his prey,
 On the sand flows his life-blood away;
 Whilst India's rocks to his death-yells reply,
 Protracting the horrible harmony.

Yet the fowl of the desert, when danger encroaches,
 Dares fearless to perish defending her brood,
 Though the fiercest of cloud-piercing tyrants approaches,
 Thirsting—ave, thirsting for blood;
 And demands, like mankind, his brother for food;
 Yet more lenient, more gentle than they;
 For hunger, not glory, the prey
 Must perish. Revenge does not howl in the dead,
 Nor ambition with fame crown the murderer's head.

Though weak, as the lama, that bounds on the mountains,
 And endued not with fast-fleeting footsteps of air
 Yet, yet will I draw from the purest of fountains,
 Though a fiercer than tiger is there.
 Though more dreadful than death, it scatters despair,
 Though its shadow eclipses the day,
 And the darkness of deepest dismay
 Spreads the influence of soul-chilling terror around,
 And lowers on the corpses, that rot on the ground.

They came to the fountain to draw from its stream,
 Waves too pure, too celestial, for mortals to see,
 They bathed for a while in its silvery beam,
 Then perish'd, and perish'd like me.
 For in vain from the grasp of the Bigot I flee;
 The most tenderly loved of my soul
 Are slaves to his hated control.
 He pursues me, he blasts me! 'Tis in vain that I fly:
 What remains, but to curse him—to curse him and die?

There it is—a mad effusion of this morning! I had resolved not to mortgage before you left London; I told you, that I should divide it with my sisters, and leave everything else to fate.

Your affectionate friend,

P. B. S.

To T. J. H., Ellesmere.

CHAPTER XI

THE pleasant passages in this life come to an end, as well as its painful incidents, with this difference, however, that the former always seem to terminate more speedily. My young college friend had returned to Oxford, my older and original companion and myself were to travel together to York. We reached Chester, if I remember rightly, in a post-chaise. Some twenty years later I had occasion to become very familiar with that venerable city, and, from the peculiar circumstances of my position, with its decayed and dilapidated, but ancient and remarkable institutions also; but this was my first visit to the renowned Roman camp and city of West Chester. I was surprised by its Rows, its gates, and walls, delighted with its beautiful site and noble river; and the walk round its walls, which I have enjoyed many times since before breakfast—has left a recollection so charming that I would gladly lay down my pen, and go forth, and make the pleasant circuit at once, and once more.

The journey from one Roman city to the other—from Chester to York—was tedious and abominable; a slow, heavy, uneasy coach, rough roads, steep interminable hills, and filthy inns, and barbarous and disgusting fellow-travellers. The inhabitants of the borders of Yorkshire and Lancashire entertain mutually an intense dislike for each other, and in this dislike, certainly, both parties are fully justified.

The Yorkshireman has a profound contempt for the understanding of the Lancastrian, he accounts him a simpleton—a poor fool, and calls him such. The Lancashireman views his neighbour precisely in the same light, and treats him in the same manner. Whilst each utterly despises the other, each has a most exaggerated opinion of his own acuteness, and this he is perpetually endeavouring to demonstrate by overreaching him in a bargain. As soon as the rivals meet, one of them instantly proposes an exchange—a swap, is their phrase—to barter watches, knives, handkerchiefs, hats; article against article of the same or of a different description, of equal value, or with a balance to be adjusted by money. This traffic was kept up

whilst we were on the frontiers, and indeed during the greater part of our journey. It was carried on invariably in a loud, angry voice, in an uncouth dialect, with contemptuous menacing gestures, and sometimes an inside passenger bawling out through the window, or standing up with his head thrust out, would haggle in rude clamorous wrath with some brother vandal on the top of the coach, touching an exchange of waistcoats.

I had never assisted at a swap before, or fallen in with these borderers; the trafficking savages seemed to be the most odious of mankind. I have since learned that the savage is still more offensive when he is half-civilized, when he has grown into a Manchesterman, a cotton lord; and more especially when he is unhappily in a position to swap, as a mischievous minister, on an extensive scale, basely and perniciously.

To see Leeds again, it is said, is to like it less than before. I had already seen that town more than once, and I have seen it since so often, that I can revisit it now without any increased aversion. We passed a night very uncomfortably, of course, at Leeds, and the next morning—I believe it was Sunday—a two-horse coach took us to York—to York, with which city I was then tolerably well acquainted, and with which I have since had so many opportunities to become perfectly familiar: and here the racehorse was at once put into the dung-cart. I was introduced the same day to the conveyancer, at whose chambers my professional studies were to commence. He was a worthy, good-natured, friendly man—a right good fellow, indeed; a provincial barrister with a fair share of business, and sufficiently well acquainted with the routine of practice. This was all; the learned gentleman had as much of human learning as his horse—just as much erudition as his saddle, and his attainments were graced by a Yorkshire dialect so excessively broad, that if Oxberry had spoken so broadly on the stage, he would have been censured for gross exaggeration; no Yorkshire tike, it would have been affirmed, ever spoke such a lingo. Some feeble—very feeble—and impotent attempts have been lately made to remedy and correct the ignorance and vulgarity by which a liberal profession is oppressed and weighed down, or rather the pretence and affectation of reform are kept up; a false pretence to supply a genuine article, but in reality to substitute and palm upon the public a counterfeit—a base counterfeit, and as such pledged to uphold the vested and sacred interests of imposture. But of these matters hereafter.

York was the residence of many genteel families of competent

fortunes, and much hospitality was exercised there. It was hardly possible to dine out without meeting the great diner-out of the district, and without observing his more than clerical enjoyment of a good dinner; for if he was less than a parson in some respects, he was more than one in a very essential particular, the love of eating and drinking. His hearty, cordial, genial laugh was of itself exhilarating, and his incessant joking of jokes passed off very well in a provincial city; in society of a higher description it was often in the way, and one soon grew weary of the noisy, impudent, shallow, clerical jester, Sidney Smith. Alone engrossing the whole of the conversation, he must have all the talk to himself, speaking always of little else than himself. He shot out cart-loads of rubbish with an overpowering din, sometimes producing a good thing, no doubt, which a man of moderate parts can hardly fail to do, who boldly brings out whatever comes uppermost, with very little regard for his own dignity, and none for the feelings of others. There was, moreover, something cowardly in his facetiousness, his buffoonery; he ran the rig mercilessly upon the weak and helpless, carefully avoiding all contact with every person who might prove to be his match, or more than his match.

I walked one Sunday morning to a village a few miles from York, of which he had the living, to hear him preach, soon after I came to reside there, and before I had seen him; for he was already a person of some notoriety; he had been a popular preacher in London, and he had taken part in the controversy between the University of Oxford and the *Edinburgh Review*. The church was mean and small, and small was the congregation; it was composed of a few farmers, their families and servants, and labourers in husbandry. His voice would have filled a cathedral, his appearance was adapted to be seen from a distance; there was nothing remarkable or valuable in his discourse. I cannot believe that he could have written a good sermon; the matter was not in him. He might have borrowed the composition of some eminent divine, it is true, and his delivery would have been distinct and agreeable, but not effective. He could never have appeared sufficiently in earnest; he wanted that deep, moving, Christian earnestness which is indispensable for edification. There was a certain pulpit display, which his hearers admired and praised, but nothing more.

I met Sidney Smith afterwards at intervals, for evidently disliking his own cloth, he affected the society of lawyers. I compared him in my own mind with old Sam Parr. 'They

both toiled unceasingly, and laboured hard and very successfully to demonstrate to all the world. how utterly unfit they were to be what each of them so vehemently strove to be. a bishop. The one rendered learning, the other wit, contemptible and ridiculous.

15, POLAND STREET, April 26, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I indulge despair. *Why* do I so? I will not philosophize; it is perhaps, a poor way of administering comfort to myself to say that I *ought* not to be in need of it. I fear the despair which springs from disappointed love is a passion—a passion, too, which is least of all reducible to reason. But it is a passion. it is independent of volition; it is the necessary effect of a cause, which *must*, I feel, continue to operate. Wherefore, then, do you ask, *Why* I indulge despair? And what shall I tell you, which can make you happier, which can alleviate even solitude and regret. Shall I tell you the truth? Oh, you are too well aware of that, or you would not talk of despair. Shall I say that the time may come when happiness shall dawn upon a night of wretchedness? Why should I be a false prophet, if I said this? I do not know, except on the general principle, that the evils in this world powerfully overbalance its pleasures; how, then, could I be justified in saying this? You will tell me to cease to think, to cease to feel; you will tell me to be anything but what I am; and I fear I must obey the command before I can talk of hope.

I find there can be bigots in philosophy as well as in religion; I, perhaps, may be classed with the former. I *have* read your letter attentively. Yet *all* religionists *do* judge of philosophers in the way which you reprehend; *faith* is one of the highest moral virtues—the foundation, indeed, upon which all others must rest; and religionists think, that he who had neglected to *cultivate* this, has not performed *one-third* of the moral duties, as Bishop Warburton dogmatically asserts. The religionists, then, by this very *faith*, without which they could not be religionists, think the most virtuous philosopher must have neglected one-third of the moral duties.

If, then, a religionist, the *most* amiable of them, regards the best philosopher as *far* from being virtuous, has not a philosopher reason to suspect the amiability of a system, which inculcates so glaringly uncharitable opinions? Can a being, amiable to a high degree, possessed, of course, of judgment, without which amiability would be in a poor way, hold such opinions as these?

Supposing even, they were supported by reason, they ought to be suspected as leading to a conclusion *ad absurdum*; since, however, they combine irrationality and absurdity with effects on the mind most opposite to retiring amiability, are they not to be *more* than suspected? Take any system of religion, lop off all the disgusting excrescences, or rather adjuncts, retain virtuous precepts, qualify selfish dogmas (I would even allow as much irrationality as amiability could swallow, but uncombined with immorality and self-conceitedness); do all this, and I will say it is a system which *can* do no harm, and, indeed, is highly requisite for the vulgar. But perhaps it is best for the latter that they should have it as their fathers gave it them; that the amiable, the inquiring should reject it altogether.

Yet I will allow that it *may* be consistent with amiability, when amiability does not know the deformity of the wretched errors, and that they *really* are as we behold them. I cannot judge of a system by the flowers which are scattered here and there; you omit the mention of the *weeds*, which grow so high that few botanists can see the flowers; and those who *do* gather the latter are frequently, I fear, tainted with the pestilential vapour of the former.

The argument of *supremacy* is really amiable, without that I should give up the remotest *possibility* of success. Yet that applies but to the existence of a *Creator*, that is inconsequential: the inquirer here, the amiable inquirer, does not pause at the world, lest *she* should be left supreme; she advances *one* step higher, not being aware, or not caring to be aware, of the infinity of the staircase which she ascends. This is *irrational*, but it is not unamiable—it does not involve the hateful consequences of selfishness, self-conceitedness, and the subserviency of faith to the volition of the believer, which are necessary to the existence of ‘a spurious system of theology’.

A *religionist*, I will allow, may be more amiable than a philosopher, although in one instance reason is allowed to sleep, that amiability may watch. Yet, my dear friend, this is not intolerance, nor can that odious system stand excused on this ground, as its very principle revolts against the dear modesty which suggests a dereliction of reason in the other instance. I again assert—nor, perhaps, are you prepared to deny, much as your amiable motive might prompt you to wish it—that religion is too often the child of cold prejudice and selfish fear. Love of a Deity, of Allah, Bramah (it is all the same), certainly springs from the latter motive; is this *love*? You know too well,

perhaps, vanity has a great share in; but certainly not with my own good will. I cannot endure the horror, the evil, which comes to *self* in solitude.

I spend most of my time at Miss Westbrook's. I was a great deal too hasty in criticizing her character. How often have we to alter the impressions which first sight, or first anything, produces. I really now consider her as amiable, not perhaps in a high degree, but perhaps she is. I most probably now am prejudiced, for you cannot breathe, you cannot exist if *no* traits of loveliness appear in co-existent beings. I think, were I compelled to associate with Shakespeare's Caliban, with any wretch—with the exception of Lord Courtney, my father, Bishop Warburton, or the vile female who destroyed Mary—that I should find something to admire.

What a strange being I am; how inconsistent, in spite of all my boasted hatred of self: this moment thinking I could so far overcome Nature's law, as to exist in complete seclusion, the next starting from a moment of solitude—starting from my own company, as if it were that of a fiend—seeking anything rather than a continued communion with *self*. Unravel this mystery, but—no, I tell you to find the clue which even the bewildered explorer of the cavern cannot reach.

I long for the moment to see my sisters; you shall then hear from me even oftener.

I lost three letters, which I had written to you, in my carelessness. Adieu! My dear friend, believe me ever attentive to your happiness.

I wish that vile family despotism, and the viler despotism of society, could never stand between the happiness of two beings. Excuse the *φιλαυτία*, it would constitute mine. Adieu!

Your eternal friend.

To T. J. H., York

MY DEAR FRIEND,

FIELD PLACE, May 15, 1811.

I now write to you from hence. I have at last reached the place of my destination. I know you will anxiously await this. On my arrival I found my sister ill. She has been confined with a scarlet fever. The ignorance of these country physicians has, I think, prolonged her confinement. She is now much better, but scarcely able to articulate from a sore throat. You shall hear more when I write again. I must acknowledge that some emotions of pleasure were mingled with those of pain, when I found that illness had prevented her writing to me.

I have come to terms with my father. I call them very good ones. I am to possess £200 per annum. I shall live very well upon it, even after the legal opinion which you enclosed. I am also to do as I please with respect to the choice of abode. I need not mention what it will be. *When* do you come to London? at what time?—a year; six months; four months?

F—— will be written to to-day; you may depend upon the execution of my palavering energies. It would be a strange—I do not know a stranger composition than would be the *mélange* which you spoke of. Try—compose it. I am sure I could not. The *Confessions of Rousseau* are the only things of the kind that have appeared, and they are either a disgrace to the confessor, or a string of falsehoods, probably the latter. But the world would say that ours were the latter. Nor could I blame them for such an opinion, as probable truth is to be the judge of testimony, and singularity must be improbable, or it would not be singularity; nor do I think that it has often come under the observation of the world, that two young men should hold such arguments, come to such conclusions, and take such singular criterions for reasoning. Is not the last strangest? How goes on your tale? I have heard nothing of it. As for mine I cannot get an answer from L——. Do they tremble? I thought the A—— printer was too stupid; and I defy a zealot to say it does not support orthodoxy. If an author's own assertion in his own book may be taken as an avowal of his intentions, it does support orthodoxy. I could not do more, and yet they say *mine* is not printable; it is as bad as *Rousseau*, and would certainly be prosecuted. All danger about prosecution is over; it was *never* more than a hum.

I will tell you a piece of the most consummate hypocrisy I ever heard of. A relation of mine was walking with my uncle (who, by the by, has settled matters admirably for me), says this Wiseacre, 'to tell you the truth, I am a sceptic'.

'Ah! eh!' thought the captain, 'old birds are not to be caught with chaff.'

'Are you, indeed?' was the cold reply, and no more was got out of him.

I tell you this as the captain told it me. Is this irrational being really convinced of what men have attained by the use of reason? If he is, he is a disgrace to reason, and I am sorry that the cause has gained weakness by the accession of weakness. But he is nothing—no *ist*, professes no *ism*, but superbism and irrationalism. He has forbidden my intercourse with my sister,

but the captain brought him to reason ; he prevents it, however, as much as possible, which is very little.

My mother is quite rational, she says, 'I think *prayer* and thanksgiving are of no use. If a man is a good man, philosopher, or Christian, he will do very well in whatever future state awaits us'. This I call liberality!

You shall hear from me soon again. I write to F——. I know you will excuse a longer letter, as I am going to read to Elizabeth.

Your ever affectionate friend.

To T. J. H., York.

Enclose to T. Shelley, Esq., M.P.

SUNDAY, 17th May, 1811.

Captain Pilfold's, Cuckfield.

Your letter found me here this morning. Strange! you have not received one of mine, and I have written almost every day during my stay in London.

I go to Field Place to-morrow, whence you will hear from me again. I will write to F——. Poor fool! His Christian mildness, his consistent forgiveness of injuries amuses me; he is *le vrai esprit de Christianisme*, which Helvetius talks of; he would call this a Christian.

I am now with my uncle; he is a very hearty fellow, and has behaved very nobly to me, in return for which I have illuminated him. A physician named Dr. J—— dined with us last night, who is a red-hot saint; the captain attacked him, warm from *The Necessity*, and the doctor went away very much shocked.

You have before this certes received *some* of my letters. I expect to hear from you often; you will constantly receive accounts from Field Place, whither direct in future. I received a beautiful little poem of yours; I did not acknowledge it, I believe, but I was not the less pleased. It is a melancholy subject, why will you continue to think on it? But you say 'Melancholy is as necessary in poetry as breath to life, the Muses being the daughters of Memory, and consequently of Sadness'. Miss Westbrook, the elder, I have heard from to-day; she improves upon acquaintance; or is it only when contrasted with surrounding indifference and degradation? But all excellence is comparative—exists by comparison; I have therefore a right. The younger is in prison; there is something in *her* more noble, yet not so cultivated as the elder—a larger diamond, yet not so highly polished. Her indifference to, her contempt

of surrounding prejudice, are certainly fine. But perhaps the other wants opportunity. I confess that I cannot mark female excellence, or its degrees, by a print of the foot, a waving of vesture, etc., as you can; but perhaps this criterion only holds good where an *angel*, not a mortal, is in the case.

Why will you compliment St. Irvyn? I never saw Delisle's, but mine must have been pla——.

Adieu! My dear friend, believe me eternally yours. You shall hear to-morrow.

In haste.

Yours affectionately,

To T. J. H., York

P. B. SHELLEY.

FIELD PLACE, May 17, 1811

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Your letters have never reached me. These sallies of imagination are not noticed by vulgar postmen! but you know my direction now. Elizabeth is quite recovered in health.

It is most true that the mass of mankind are Christians only in name; their religion has no reality. So little, indeed, that they almost confess the *world* to be the only reason for their yet retaining their mummeries. Christ is not the Son of God: the world is eternal, their practice would seem to declare. There almost all are agreed, and in the speculative points of religion they seem to be as atheistical as the most determined materialist could desire. But what is this speculation—a dry inactive knowledge of what really is, not influencing the conduct? One would suppose that the annihilation of superstition would involve the fall of the world's opinion; but if the world's opinion were destroyed, superstition would be of little consequence, even if it did exist, which is indeed not very probable, as there would then be no temptations to self-deception. The opinion of the world, the loss of which is attended with much inconvenience, with the loss of reputation, which is by some considered as synonymous with virtue; this is the support of many prejudices. Certain members of my family are no more Christians than Epicurus himself was; but they regard as a sacred criterion the opinion of the world: the discanonization of this saint of theirs is impossible until something more worthy of devotion is pointed out; but where eyes are shut, nothing can be seen! They would ask, are we wrong to regard the opinion of the world; what would compensate us for the loss of it? Good heavens! What a question? Is it not to be answered

by a word? So I have but little of their confidence: the confidence of my sister even is diminished, that confidence once so unbounded: but it is to be regained. But enough of this! In letters, behold me enthusiastic, quixotic, resolved, convinced, that things shall be as I order them—that all my plans shall succeed. But I shall anticipate all your castle-buildings, so adieu to this subject also!

Why will you not send me some poetry? I wish to see it directly.

TO THE MOONBEAM

Moonbeam, leave the shadowy vale,
 To bathe this burning brow.
 Moonbeam, why art thou so pale,
 As thou walkest o'er the dewy dale,
 Where humble wild flowers grow?
 Is it to mimic me?
 But that can never be;
 For thine orb is bright,
 And the clouds are light,
 That at intervals shadow the star-studded night.

Now all is deathly still on earth,
 Nature's tired frame reposes,
 And ere the golden morning's birth
 Its radiant hues discloses,
 Flies forth its balmy breath.
 But mine is the midnight of Death,
 And Nature's morn,
 To my bosom forlorn,
 Brings but a gloomier night, implants a deadlier thorn.

Wretch! Suppress the glare of madness
 Struggling in thine haggard eye,
 For the keenest throb of sadness,
 Pale Despair's most sickening sigh,
 Is but to mimic me;
 And this must ever be,
 When the twilight of care,
 And the night of despair,
 Seem in my breast but joys to the pangs, that wake there.

There is rhapsody! Now, I think, after this, you ought to send me some poetry. Pray which of the Miss Westbrooks do *you* like? They are both very amiable, I do not know which is favoured with your preference. As to your manner, call it *manner*, if you will; perhaps it is proper thus to express a thing which I thought was inexpressible. Call it so, then, for I know no other name.

How gets on your onion-loving deist? Pray, what is there in onions and red herrings, which can make her less amiable? She is not very handsome either: Oh! that is all imagination.

I have written to F——; I wrote the moment your letter came, and make no doubt but he will think me a very good young man. I cannot so deeply see into the inferences of actions, as to come to the odd conclusion, which you observed in the matter of Miss Westbrook. Where we have *facts*, they are superior to all the reasoning in the world. I should like to see your letter to F——.

Your ever affectionate.

To T. J. H., York

MY DEAREST FRIEND.

FIELD PLACE, May 21, 1811.

She is quite well: she is perfect in health! Now, that is enough; we have no fever to sympathize in; but who can minister to a *mind* diseased? She is very gay, very lively. I did not show her your last letter; it was too grave; and I think it is barbarous to diminish what the possessor considers a pleasure, although I have always considered that volatility of character evinces no capabilities for great affections. It is a kind of self-satisfaction in trivial things that is constantly exerting itself; it is a species of continually awakened pride; but it is not constitutional; it used not, however, to be the character of my sister—serious, contemplative, affectionate; enthusiastically alive to the wildest schemes; despising the world.

Now, apathetic to all things, except the trivial amusements and despicable intercourse of restrained conversation; bowing before that hellish idol, the *world*; appealing to its unjust decisions, in cases which demand a trial at the high tribunal of conscience. Yet I do not despair; what she *once was* she has a power to be again; but will that power ever be exerted? I do not hesitate to say, that I think she is not worthy of us; *once* she was: once the fondest, warmest wish which ever I cherished was to witness the *eternal* perfectibility of a being, who appeared to me made for perfection. But she is now *not* what she was; she is not the singular, angelic being, whom I loved, whom I adored: I mourn her as no more. I consider the sister, whose happiness is mine, as dead.

Yet have I not hopes of a resuscitation? Certainly, or I would not tear my heart with the narration. But it is necessary that you should be informed of the real state of the case.

I will think no more of her, for she has murdered thought. Yes; I will think, and devote myself with ardour! On me—yes, on me, descends the whole weight of my affliction! What right had I, day after day, to expatiate upon to another, to

magnify to myself the excellence of a being who might change, who *has* changed? What right had I to seek to introduce you to the destroyer?

I leave Field Place to-night; but return on Friday.

Your eternally affectionate,

To T. J. H., York.

P. B. SHELLEY.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

[No date], Rhayader

I do *not* accuse you of temporizing, or if I did, I retract that accusation. I have not read *Adeline*, but shall, as soon as I can get it. Here one is as remote from the communications of friendship as the business of stupidity; it is a very high price to pay for the exemption from the latter, for which reason, it is my intention, as soon as financial strength will permit me to evacuate these solitudes, to come to York.

When I come, I will not come under my own name, it were to irritate my father needlessly; this is entirely a *philantian* argument, but without the stream, of which he is the fountain head, I could not get on. We must *live*, if we intend to live; that is, we must eat, drink, and sleep, and money is the necessary procurer of these things.

Your letter was sent to my mother last post-day; she feels a warm interest in you, as every woman must, and I am well assured that she will do nothing prejudicial to our interests. She is a good, worthy woman; and although she may in some cases resemble the fish and pheasant ladies, honoured with your animadversions of this morning, yet there is one altitude which they have attained, to which, I think, she cannot soar—intolerance. I have heard frequently from her since my arrival here; she is of opinion that my father could not, by ordinary means, have become acquainted with the proposed visit. I regard the whole as a *finesse*, to which I had supposed the honourable member's headpiece unequal. But the servants may—no, they do not even know your name.

I have heard from my sister since I came here; but her letter merely contains an account of a thunderstorm, which demolished a cottage of my father's, I will not, therefore, send it you. Adieu! Each post-day, till we meet, will carry a letter.

Yours sincerely.

The progress of our novel is but slow: however, I have written *one* more letter; it is for *you* to answer it:

'I find you still obstinate in what *I* call your error, as I am

in what you must consider a damnable heterodoxy. I am truly surprised! The peep at church cannot have influenced you one way or the other; but it *may*; for it is the only sensual intelligence that you have received of this fair one. I cannot call it intellectual, as even in the short view of her face which you had, you cannot pretend to guess her moral qualities; unless you intend to support that the countenance is the index of the soul, which I cannot suppose you admit. Will you now, coolly, if *possible*, dispassionately, examine your own soul; and that which now seems almost necessarily annexed to its *essence*, your love for Sophia. Trace the grounds on which you love her, the origin of this passion; the things which strengthened and the things which have weakened it. If you will do this, without either ridiculing my difference of opinion from yours, or employing any kind of declamation, overslurring, or sophistry, you will *then*, perhaps, convince me of what you regard as truth founded on proofs of resistless cogency, or, you will come to a knowledge of the incorrectness of your own ideas. Either of these is to be desired, since, if you, or I, be wrong, this error, wherever it lies, will necessarily terminate in disappointment'

To T. J. H., York.

[Postmark, Rhayader].

I am just arrived. I have only time to say that I am most sincerely yours, and I will explain on Wednesday why I could not come to York. No post here but three times a week.

P. B. S.

To T. J. H., York.

[No date], CWM ELAN, Rhayader.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

John Grove has sent one of your letters; I fancy the *last*. I am now at Rhayader. The post comes in here but three times a week, and goes out two hours after its arrival. Cwm Elan is five miles thence, and I have ridden to Rhayader, and now write in the post office. Pray write. Confide in me. Believe that I am yours most sincerely. What have you to say? What, have you no secret? Write; you know that everything which you confide will be for ever held in the inviolable confidence of friendship. It would be a great injustice to suppose that my own will detained me from York. Nothing but absolute and positive necessity could have superseded my determined intention.

You will hear from me on Thursday, at least, I shall write, then. Adieu!

Your eternally faithful,
P. B. S.

Miss Westbrook, Harriet, has advised me to read Mrs. Opie's *Mother and Daughter*. She has sent it hither, and has desired my opinion with earnestness. What is this tale? But I shall read it to-night.

To T. J. H., York.

[No date], CWM ELAN, Rhayader, Radnorshire.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I had a letter from my father; all is found out about my inviting you to Horsham, and my proposed journey to York, which is thereby for a while prevented. God send he does not write to your father; it would annoy him. I threw cold water on the rage of the old buck. I question whether he had let the family into the secret of his discovery, which must have been *magically* effected.

I had, previously to my intention of coming to York, accepted an invitation of a cousin of mine here to stay a week or two; whence I intended to proceed to Aberystwith, about thirty miles off. I then changed my mind, in order to accompany you to York. As you made no secret of this, I mentioned in a letter to my father from London that such was my intention. He returned for answer, on the Thursday, that I might go, but that I should have no money from him if I did. The case therefore became one of extreme necessity; I was forced to submit, and now I am here. Do not think, however, but that I shall come to see you long before you come to reside in London; but open warfare will never do, and Mr. Peyton, which will be my *nom de guerre*, will easily swallow up Mr. Shelley. I shall keep quiet here for a few weeks.

I have heard of the miscarriage of one of my letters to you, by the pillage of the Rhayader mail. I shall write very often, and enclose Elizabeth's letters, when I have them.

This is most divine scenery; but all very dull, stale, flat, and unprofitable: indeed, this place is a very great bore.

I shall see the Miss Westbrooks again soon; they were very well, in Condowell, when I heard last; they then proceed to Aberystwith, where I shall meet them.

The post here is only three times a week, and that very uncertain, irregular, and unsafe.

Let me hear soon from you. I will write every post day.

Your most affectionate,

To T. J. H., York.

P. B. SHELLEY.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

[No date.]

Only two hours elapse between the exit and entrance of the post. Your letter to me was sent to my mother, who is very much interested in you.

I have at this moment no money, as Philipp's and the other debt have drained me; you will see me when I can get some. Although I am not so degraded as to talk to you of pecuniary obligations, yet is it not almost too bad to subsist on you? No! I must stay here for a short time, because to contend against impossibilities may do for a lover, but will not for a mortal.

In the meantime, believe that I am not inattentive to my own interests. As things have been so quiet, I rather acquiesce in your opinion, that artifice may have been resorted to. As I returned no answer, *my* indiscretion, of which I have given two or three specimens, cannot either substantiate or annihilate his guesses.

I am all solitude, as I cannot call the society here an alternative of it. I must stay here, however, to recruit my finances, compelled now to acknowledge poverty an evil.

Your jokes on Harriet Westbrook amuse me: it is a common error for people to fancy others in their own situation, but if I know anything about love, I am *not* in love. I have heard from the Westbrooks, both of whom I highly esteem.

Adieu! I am going to ride with Mrs. Grove to Rhayader. I will write on Thursday.

Yours sincerely.

To T. J. H., York.

[No date. Postmark, Rhayader.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You will perhaps see me before you can answer this; perhaps not; Heaven knows! I shall certainly come to York, but *Harriet Westbrook* will decide whether now or in three weeks. Her father has persecuted her in a most horrible way, by endeavouring to compel her to go to school. She asked my advice: resistance was the answer, at the same time that I

essayed to mollify Mr. W. in vain! And in consequence of my advice *she* has thrown herself upon *my* protection.

I set off for London on Monday. How flattering a distinction!—I am thinking of ten million things at once.

What have I said? I declare, quite *ludicrous*. I advised her to resist. She wrote to say that resistance was useless, but that she would fly with me and threw herself upon my protection. We shall have £200 a year: when we find it run short, we must live, I suppose, upon love! Gratitude and admiration, all demand that I should love her *for ever*. We shall see you at York. I will hear your arguments for matrimonialism, by which I am now almost convinced. I can get lodgings at York, I suppose. Direct to me at Graham's, 18 Sackville Street, Piccadilly.

Your enclosure of £10 has arrived; I am now indebted to you £30. In spite of philosophy, I am rather ashamed of this unceremonious exsiccation of your financial river. But indeed, my dear friend, the gratitude which I owe you for your society and attachment ought so far to overbalance this consideration as to leave me nothing but that. I must, however, pay you when I can.

I suspect that the *strain* is gone for ever. This letter will convince you that I am not under the influence of a *strain*.

I am thinking at once of ten million things. I shall come to live near you, as Mr. Peyton.

Ever your most faithful friend,

P. B. S.

I shall be at 18 Sackville Street; at least direct there. Do not send more cash; I shall raise supplies in London.

To T. J. H., York.

[No date], CWN ELAM, Rhayader, Radnorshire.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

To-morrow I shall hear from you, but cannot be able to answer your letter. The post is here what the waves in hell were to Tantalus.

I have heard from the Westbrooks, and from my mother: the latter cannot yet have received your last letter to me, as epistolary communications take some time in going to Sussex from York, via Rhayader.

I have been to church to-day; they preach partly in Welsh, which sounds most singularly. A christening was performed

out of an old broken slop-basin. This country is highly romantic; here are rocks of uncommon height, and picturesque waterfalls. I am more astonished at the grandeur of the scenery than I expected. I do not *now* much regard it; I have other things to think of.

I have had no cause to alter my opinion; I do not think that I am at liberty to entertain any hopes. I suppose, whilst York Minster exists, that you will indulge them yourself on my account.

Now, there is Miss F. D. Browne (certainly a tigress), yet she surpasses my sister in poetical talents—this every dispassionate criticism *must* allow: that lovely extract of her poems certainly surpasses any of Elizabeth's, and it was Elizabeth's poetry that first so strongly attracted my attention, charmed, and, as you were pleased to say, bewitched me; and which you admired, unless you were influenced by the vague, unconnected, prejudiced praises with which *I* would at times speak of Elizabeth.

For the rest, it is *now* far from being *my* wish that you should think more of the past. I foresee that all regrets cherished on that head will end in aggravating disappointment; I do not say despair, for I have too good an opinion of my firmness to suppose that I would yield to *despair*. Besides, *wherefore* should I love her? A disinterested appreciation of what is in itself excellent; this is good, if it is so—but what I felt was a *passion*. It was, I suppose, involuntary: passion can evidently be neither disinterested, nor its opposite. Is it not, then, the *business* of reason to conquer passion, particularly when I received *all* the evidences of her loveliness from the latter, and *none* from the former. Ought I not to doubt the worthiness of what depends on the mere impulses of the latter, for what could reason have to do with it any more than with peeping at a lady through a window. I do not know, on considering, however, if the lover would not display *more* reason than than at any other period of his passion, since for *once* he consented to refer to the evidence of his senses. Let me *hope* that I shall be dispassionate; I did *execrate* my existence once, when I first discovered that there was no chance of our being united. To enjoy your society and that of my sister has now for some months been my aim. *She* is not what she was; you continue the same, and ever may you be so!

I am *here* for the present, absolutely because I have no money to come to York, and because I *must* come there incog. I am what the sailors call banyaning. I do not see a soul; all is gloomy and desolate. I amuse myself, however, with

reading Darwin, climbing rocks, and exploring this scenery. Amusement!

I have seen the papers, and Burdon's poem. It is certainly admirable as an architectural poem; but do not let *me* be considered *envious* when I say, that it appears to me to want energy since the very idea of my being able to write like it is eminently ludicrous. I wonder whether B—— is a fool or a hypocrite; he *must* be the latter.

Have you read *The Missionary*? It is a beautiful thing. It is here, and I could not help reading it again; or do you not read novels? Adieu!

Your sincere friend.

To T. J. H., York.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

CUCKFIELD, May 26, 1811.

Enclosed is F.'s letter. Why have I not heard from you for a week or more?

I take the opportunity of the old boy's absence in London to persuade my mother and Elizabeth, who is now quite well, to come to Cuckfield; because there they will be three, or more, days absent from this killjoy, as I name him. I anxiously expect to hear from you to-morrow. Adieu. Keep up your spirits!

Yours most affectionately,

To T. J. H., York.

P. B. S.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

CUCKFIELD, June 2, 1811.

I have nothing to tell you which you will like to hear. The affected contempt of narrowed intellects for the exertion of mental powers, which they either will not, or cannot comprehend, is always a tale of disgust. What must it be, when involving a keen disappointment? I have hesitated for three days on what I should do, what I should say. I am your friend, you acknowledge it. You have chosen me, and we are inseparable; not the little tyranny of idiots can effect it; not the misrepresentations of the interested. You are then my friend. I am sensible, and you must be sensible, that it is in conformity to the most rigid duty that I would advise you how I have combated with myself.

What is *passion*? The very word implies an incapacity for action, otherwise than in unison with its dictates. What is reason? It is a thing independent, inflexible; it adapts thoughts and actions to the varying circumstances, which for ever change—adapts them so as to produce the greatest overbalance of

happiness. And to whom do you *now* give happiness? Not to others, for you associate with but few: those few regard you with the highest feelings of admiration and friendship; but perhaps there is but one—and here is self again—not to yourself; for the truth of this I choose *yourself*, as a testimony against you. I think; reason; listen; cast off prejudice; hear the dictates of plain common sense; surely is it not evident? I loved a being, an idea in my own mind, which had no real existence. I concreted this abstract of perfection, I annexed this fictitious quality to the idea presented by a *name*; the being, whom that name signified, was by no means worthy of this. This is the truth: Unless I am determinedly blind—unless I am resolved causelessly and selfishly to seek destruction, I must see it. Plain! is it not plain? I loved a being; the being, whom I loved, is not what she was; consequently, as love appertains to mind, and not body, she exists no longer. I regret when I find that she never existed, but in my mind; yet does it not border on wilful deception, deliberate, intentional self-deceit, to continue to love the body, when the soul is no more? As well might I court the worms which the soulless body of a beloved being generates—be lost to myself, and to those who love me for what is really amiable in me—in the damp, unintelligent vaults of a charnel-house. Surely, when it is carried to the dung-heap as a mass of putrefaction, the loveliness of the flower ceases to charm. Surely it would be irrational to annex to this inertness the properties which the flower in its state of beauty possessed, which now cease to exist, and then *did* merely exist, because adjoined to it. Yet you will call this *cold reasoning*? No; you will not! this would be the exclamation of the uninformed Werter, not of my noble friend. But, indeed, it is not *cold reasoning*, if you saw me at this moment. I wish I could reason coldly, I should then stand more chance of success. But let me reconsider it myself—exert my own reasoning powers; let me entreat myself to awake. This—I do not know what I say. I go to Field Place; to-morrow you shall hear again. I go to Field Place *now*: this moment, I have rung the bell for the horse.

Your eternal Friend.

I wrote to her to entreat that she would receive my letter kindly; I wrote very long. This is the answer. Are you deaf, are you dead? I am cold and icy, but I cannot refrain. Stay, I will come soon.—Adieu!

To T. J. H., York.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

[No date].

My arguments have been *yours*. They have been urged by the force of the gratitude which this occasion excited. But I yet remain in London; I remain embarrassed and melancholy. I am now dining at Grove's. Your letter has just been brought in; I cannot forbear just writing this. *Your* noble and exalted friendship, the prosecution of your happiness can alone engross my impassioned interest. I never was so fit for calm argument, as now. This, I fear, more resembles exerted action than inspired passion. I shall take another opportunity to-morrow of answering your long, interesting, and conclusive letter of yesterday.

Your Friend.

To T. J. H., York.

I wrote to you on Sunday. Reason have you to say that I was unreasonable. I was mad! You know that very little sets my horrid spirits in motion. I drank a glass or two of wine at my mother's instigation, then began raving. She, to quiet me, gave me pens, ink, and paper, and I wrote to you. Elizabeth is, indeed, an unworthy companion of the Muses. I do not rest much on her poetry now. Miss Philipps betrayed twice the genius: greater amiability, if to affect the feelings is a proof of an excess of the latter. I am sure you cannot deny that you are unprejudiced on this head.

I am a perfect hermit: not a being to speak with! I sometimes exchange a word with my mother on the subject of the weather, upon which she is irresistibly eloquent; otherwise all is deep silence! I wander about this place, walking all over the grounds, with no particular object in view. I cannot write, except now and then to you—sometimes to Miss Westbrook. My hands begin to hurry, and I am tired and ennuied. The only thing that has interested me, if I except your letters, has been one novel. It is Miss Owenson's *Missionary*, an Indian tale; will you read it? It is really a divine thing; Luxima, the Indian, is an angel. What a pity that we cannot incorporate these creations of fancy; the very thoughts of them thrill the soul! Since I have read this book, I have read no other. But I have thought strangely! I transcribe for you a strange *mélange* of maddened stuff, which I wrote by the midnight moon last night.

Sweet star, which gleaming o'er the darksome scene
Through fleecy clouds of silvery radiance flyest,
Spanglet of light on evening's shadowy veil.

Which shrouds the day-beam from the waveless lake,
 Lighting the hour of sacred love; more sweet
 Than the expiring morn-star's paly fires.
 Sweet star! When wearied Nature sinks to sleep,
 And all is hushed—all, save the voice of Love,
 Whose broken murmurings swell the balmy blast
 Of soft Favonius, which at intervals
 Sighs in the ear of stillness, art thou aught but
 Lulling the slaves of interest to repose
 With that mild, pitying gaze! Oh, I would look
 In thy dear beam till every bond of sense
 Became enamoured——

Hopes, that swell in youthful breasts,
 Live they this, the waste of time?
 Love's rose a host of thorns invests;
 Cold, ungenial is the clime,
 Where its honours blow.
 Youth says, The purple flowers are mine,
 Which die the while they glow.

Dear the boon to Fancy given,
 Retracted whilst it 's granted:
 Sweet the rose which lives in heaven,
 Although on earth 'tis planted,
 Where its honours blow,
 While by earth's slaves the leaves are riven
 Which die the while they glow.

Age cannot Love destroy,
 But perfidy can blast the flower,
 Even when in most unwary hour
 It blooms in Fancy's bower.
 Age cannot Love destroy,
 But perfidy can rend the shrine
 In which its vermeil splendours shine.

Ohe ! jam satis dementia ! I hear you exclaim.

I have been thinking of Death and Heaven for four days.
 What is the latter? Shall we set off? Is there a future life?
 Whom should we injure by departing? Should we not benefit
 some? I was thinking last night, when from the summer-house
 I saw the moon just behind one of the chimneys, if she alone
 were to witness our departure? But I do not talk thus, or even
 think thus, when we are together. How is that? I scarce
 dare then, but now I dare?

I shall see you in three weeks. I am coming to York, in
 my way to Wales; where possibly I shall not go. Be that as it
 may, you shall see me. I intend to pedestrianize. The post-
 fellow wants the letter.

Believe me your most affectionate.

You will hear on Monday.

To T. J. H., York.

[No date].

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your two letters were delivered to me. Believe me that I will not so soon give up a being whom I considered so amiable. I will not yet decide; but your conclusion is to the point, and terribly just. Unequivocal traces of her having yielded to the guidance of the *first* motives can be found. Are we then to despair?

But I quit the subject; the experiment shall be made, and I will abide by the result. I anxiously, eagerly anticipate the moment of trial. Moment! Ought it not rather to be years; or rather ought *years* even to decide a question so important?

You sent me some beautiful verses; but I am not accustomed to be flattered, and you will make me either vain past bearing, or confused past recovery, if you talk so of my weak essays of procedure on 'the steep ascent' of perfectibility. Why, how dare I attempt to climb a mountain, when I have no guide to point out the path, but a few faint sparks, which at intervals illumine the gloom? For these even am I not more indebted to *you* than to myself?

Certainly a saint *may* be amiable; she *may* be so, but then she does not understand—has neglected to investigate—the religion which retiring, modest prejudice leads her to profess. But one who certainly never has investigated the matter—seen the slight grounds upon which these dogmas rest—surely the glaring inconsistencies of every system of mythology must strike her? Surely she can find benefits enough to return thanks to her Creator for, without having recourse to the mythological personages of superstition? Otherwise, by your criterion of amiability, that woman would deserve our most fervent attachment who worshipped all the Roman Pantheon, old or new.

I will write to-morrow. I am now called to Miss Westbrook; I was too hasty in telling my first unfavourable impression: she is a very clever girl, though rather affected. No! I do not know that she is. I have been with her to Clapham. I will tell you an anecdote. Harriet Westbrook has returned thither as I mentioned. They will not speak to her; her schoolfellows will not even reply to her questions; she is called an *abandoned* wretch, and universally hated, which she remunerates with the calmest contempt. My third sister, Hellen, is the only exception. She, in spite of the *infamy*, will speak to Miss Westbrook, because she cannot see how she has done wrong. There are some hopes of this dear little girl; she would be a divine

little scion of infidelity, if I could get hold of her. I think my lessons here must have taken effect. I write to-morrow.

To T. J. H., York.

FIELD PLACE.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wish I thought as you do; but I cannot; it is all in vain. Unwilling as I am, conviction stares me in my face, and mocks my lingering credulity. Oh! that you were here! That artifice the most subtle, of which degraded beings are capable, has been used, I doubt not; but although this tallies with the wishes of the artificers, a very different cause from their machinations effected it. A change, a great and important change, has taken place in my sister. Every little action, which formerly used to be so eloquent; every look, which was wont to be so expressive of openness, are enlisted in the service of prejudice. All is studied *art*; it has superseded, not combined with, nature. It is in vain that you try to persuade me to deceive myself longer. Your letter came this morning; I burnt that one of mine. I shuddered even to look at a page of it; the flames destroyed it. Your letter came; the experiment you recommend has been tried within these few days, repeatedly, but without the slightest effect. Scorn the most virulent, neglect and affected pity for my madness, are all that I can obtain in reply. 'You and your mad friend! Those, whom I have seen, and who have seen me, make but little excuse for your folly.' This is all that I could hear; nothing else she would say. Then, far from being in the least affected by all I can say of my vexation, her spirits are uncommonly lively. I sometimes attempt the same liveliness, to see if congeniality even in folly would effect anything. No; even this is in vain; she is then, and then only, constantly silent. Oh! my friend, who is likeliest to be right? he who muses at a distance on the abstract idea of perfection, that I once dreamed, annexing it to a being whom one present cannot attribute it to?—one, too, who is, I may add, passionately prejudiced to that side of the question, the truth of which he has not admitted, or rather rejected deliberately.

I shall see you in July. I am invited to Wales, but I shall go to York: what shall we do? How I long again for your conversation! The ideas here rise in solitude; they pass through a mind as solitary; unheeded, gloomy retrospection introduces them—anticipation even gloomier bids them depart to make way for others; these will on: still, still will they urge their course, till Death closes all. Wherefore should we linger?

Unhappiness, disappointment, enthusiasm, and subsequent apathy follow our steps. Would it not be a general good to all human beings that I should make haste away? So you stay, stay, to make thousands happy: *one* is unworthy of you; and all my wishes are closed, since I have seen that union impossible and unjust, which once was my fondest vision. For myself, I know what an unstable, deceitful thing Love is; but still did I wish to involve myself in the pleasing delusion. The mist dissipates, the light is strong and clear; I am not blind, nor are you—shall I be? It is neither to my own, nor to the being's happiness which I desired, that I should longer continue so! Where is *she* whom I adored? Alas! Where is virtue? Where is perfection? Where I cannot reach. Is there another existence? No! Then I can never reach it. Is there another existence? Yes! Then I shall live there, rendering and rendered happy.

Perhaps the flowers think like this; perhaps they moralize upon their state, have their attachments, their pursuits of virtue; adore, despond, hope, despise. Alas! then do we, like them, perish; or do they, likewise, live for ever?

But am I not a *philosopher*? Do I not pursue virtue for virtue's sake? Why, then, do I wander wildly? Why do I write madly? Why has sleep forsaken me? Why are you and my sister for ever present to my mind? Except when selfishness bids me start at what I am now—at what I once was. Adieu!

I am going to take the sacrament. In spite of my melancholy reflections, the idea rather amuses and soothes me. You shall hear from me soon again. I write very often, but have not always courage to send my letters. Believe me,

Yours ever affectionately,
P. B. S.

Horsham, June Sixteen, 1811.

T. J. Hogg, Esq.,

Mrs. Doughty's,

Coney Street,
York.

T. Shelley

In an age of penny letter stamps, a frank seems as strange, as in an era of Bath letter paper would an epistle written with a style on waxed tablets!

Would that some benevolent fairy, some kind genius, were able to recover the lost letters which the ardent young poet wrote to his friend, but 'had not courage to send'!

DEAREST FRIEND,

FIELD PLACE, *June 21, 1811.*

I shall be with you in three weeks; possibly less. Take lodgings for me at York; if possible at Mrs. Doughty's. It is best to be beforehand as lodgings may be scarce. What pleasure is even the anticipation of an unrestrained converse! I shall leave Field Place in a fortnight. Old Westbrook has invited me to accompany him and his daughters to a house they have at Aberystwith in Wales. I shall stay about a week with him in town; then I shall come to see you, and get lodgings.

How I wish that I could think exactly like you; that I could effectually imitate your sentiments—sentiments which inspire language that acts almost like magic. When I read your letters, I think exactly, completely like you; I wonder, I am shocked at my own depravity, in doubting what then appears so evident—yet how evident!

I lay down your letter, I look around me, I consider, I behold the true state of the case. Machinations have indeed succeeded, but they are the machinations of worldly interest. It is true; it is true, I am on the spot, I observe it; I am not only cool, but most violently prejudiced to that opinion, against which now conviction presses.

Yet how is this? Fallen as she is, I almost think that I could participate in her views; that I could adjust the glittering tinsel ornaments of anticipated matrimonialism; that I could, like a fashionable brother, act as a jackal for husbands. Yet, no; this were too much. Anything but this last, this only severe trial of prejudiced attachment! But yet, I could watch her steps; and even in this degraded state could I essay to minister to her happiness, even when she became bound to some fool in a bond fit only for a Jewess; even then I could rack my phiz into a smile to please her. But this must not be. I am not thus to be sacrificed; and much as I wish to think like you, yet I think it were imbecile to model my opinion upon yours in that only point, where there are many chances for my being right, were I the least enlightened of men—many chances for your being wrong, although being what you are. On every other point, I believe that my opinion is yours; wholly, unreservedly yours. It is a sacrifice which I acknowledge is due to your superiority, where we have opportunities of having an equal view of the contested subject. But here! Do you not see you are under the influence of a tyrannical preconception, which you acknowledge increases somewhat under all these disadvantages?

Surely a man under a misguiding preconception is not a judge

of the merits of its object, particularly when these merits are principally founded on two, or three, poems, *confessedly* not the subjects of universal approbation, founded on the testimony of a brother ardently prejudiced: *he then the sport of unreflecting sensation, alive to enthusiasm the most irrational*; he, than whom the gale that blows was not more variable in anything but friendship; on the testimony of one who seized on some detached, noble sentiments, and then ascribed to her, whose they were, perfection, divinity — all the properties which the wildest religious devotee ascribes to the Deity, whom he adores. Had I *then* been sacrificing at the altar of the Indian Camdeo, the God of mystic love; you, I am sure, will never become an unreflecting votary at its shrine. But I consider, I remember: there is one point of sympathy between you. *Matrimony*, I know, is a word dear to you; does it vibrate in unison with the hidden strings of rapture—awaken divine anticipation? Is it not the most horrible of all the means which the world has had recourse to, to bind the noble to itself? Yet this is the subject of her constant and *pointed* panegyric. It is in vain that I seek to talk to her. It is in vain that I represent, or rather endeavour to represent, the futility of the world's opinion.

'This, then, is the honourable advice of a brother!' 'It is the disinterested representation of a friend!' To which, unanswered, followed a sneer, and an affected sportiveness of gaiety that admitted of no reply.

Have you read a new novel, *The Missionary*, by Miss Owen-son? It is a divine thing; Luxima, the Indian priestess, were it possible to embody such a character, is *perfect*. *The Missionary* has been my companion for some time; I advise you to read it. How much I admire the sentiments in your tale! You give up the world; you resign *it*, and all its vanities. You are right, and so do it! Political, or literary, ambition is *vice*. Nothing but one thing is virtue. Adieu!

Your eternal Friend.

Yet I should almost regret your tale! How I wish you could send me the MS.; but perhaps it would not be prudent; it might miscarry.

To T. J. II, York.

FIELD PLACE, Sunday, June 23, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You appear at last rational. I can find an excuse for madness, because I myself am often mad; but I am better pleased

when I can pay the tribute of merited applause to *reason*, exerted, *too*, under discouraging circumstances. Your letter this morning betrays very much of the latter. You no longer blindly consider scepticism as *blasphemy*; you are sensible that what is human *may* be imperfect. From the vivid nature of the feelings which human beings excited, you are unwilling to admit it. You do right then; you act reasonably. I rejoice that you are resolved to think for yourself. I rejoice that you have at length fixed a criterion by which you may be decided on this interminable subject.

Come, then, my dear friend: happy, *most* happy, shall I be if you will share my little study; happy that you come on an errand so likely to soothe me, and restore my peace. There are two rooms in this house, which I have taken exclusively to myself; my sister *will* not enter them, and no one else *shall*: these you shall inhabit with me. You must content yourself to sleep upon a mattress; and you will be like a State prisoner. You must only walk with me at midnight for fear of discovery. My window commands a view of the lawn, where you will frequently see an object that will amply repay your journey—the object of my fond affections. Time and opportunity must effect that in my favour with him, which entreaties cannot; indeed, I do not think it advisable to say too much on the subject; but more when we meet.

Do not trouble yourself with any baggage; I have plenty of clean things for you.

The mail will convey you from York to London, whence the Horsham coach will bring you to Horsham; (news!) there I will meet you at midnight, whence you shall be conveyed to your apartment.

Come, then. I entreat you; I will return with you to York. I almost *insist on your coming*. I shall fully expect you.

Yours most affectionately.

To T. J. H., York.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

CUCKFIELD, July 1, 1811.

I have despatched a letter to my sister, enclosing your last letter to me. I shall be there on Sunday. I hope I shall have a favourable answer.

If her interest in me has weight; if she yet regards me as a friend and brother, she cannot refuse. But no! This coercion! You shall hear on Sunday.

To T. J. H., York.

FIELD PLACE, July 4, 1811.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am surprised! For the sake of everything for which we live, listen to reason. If you will not listen to me, see the chapter in Locke, which F—— ought to have read and profited by.

What is enthusiasm, whether in religion, politics, or morality? all equally, inextricably fatuous; yours is in the last. You seek the happiness of another, under an idea that she is most amiable. Even admitting the last, is it not wrong when you see that you cannot contribute to her happiness, to render yourself unfit to do so to another? But do I not admit this? And yet it seems false. Who, surely, is the better judge? *you*—who never beheld her, never heard her converse, and, in addition to this—or *I*, who—still I am confessedly strongly *prejudiced*—prejudiced like religious votaries, who reason, whilst they can, and when that ceases to be possible, they *feel*. From this last there is *no* appeal. Certainly I do not mean to imitate these. And I still ask, who is the better judge? I, as I must be like one of these, or you, dispassionate, cool; cool you cannot but be, and probably dispassionate. Little as you may be disposed to credit my feelings concerning *ἀφιλαυτία*, I have here no interest to act otherwise than I say. How, then, do I still persist in —? I own it; it was the fondest wish of my heart, and bitterly was I disappointed at its annihilation. I own it: I desired, eagerly desired to see myself and her irrevocably united by the rites of the Church, but where the high priest would have been Love; I pictured to myself Elysium in beholding my only perfect one daring the vain world, smiling at its silly forms, setting an example of perfection to a universe. I do not estimate, as you know, from relationship: I am cool, I hope. I should now grieve to see myself sacrificed, when there *may* exist a less imperfect being, and I might be perhaps considered as not wholly unworthy of her.

You do not flatter; you do not temporize; you are as severe with me as *you* can be. I own I cannot bear, you tell me, to see you *sacrificing yourself*, and every one who really esteems you. I write to-morrow.

Your ever affectionate.

To T. J. H., York.

CUCKFIELD, August 9, 1811.

Have you forgotten it? Have you forgotten that 'laws were not made for men of honour'? Your memory may fail; it is human; but the infernal conclusion you have drawn, which I

see you cannot, will not admit, is too much. There are some points on which reasoning is inefficient to convince the mind. No one could persuade me of the tortoise and Achilles business, even although they might say that I must believe it, because they had proved it, and I could find no flaw in their reasoning. I could not endure the bare idea of marriage, even if I had no arguments in favour of my dislike; but I think that I have. I shall begin *à la Faber*; how far I proceed thus, you have to judge.

Your first assertion, on which stands all the rest, does not profess to be founded on *proof*; but the long-established opinion—uncontroverted, undisputed, except by occasional characters of brilliancy, or darkness—that it is a duty to comply with the established laws of your country—this I deny. Then virtue does not exist; or if it does, exists in so indefinite a manner—Proteus-like so changes its appearances with every varying climate, that what is a crime in England becomes not merely venial, perhaps praiseworthy at Algiers; that each petty river, each chain of mountains, an arm of the sea constitutes a line of distinction between two different kinds of duties, to both of which it is requisite that virtue should adapt itself. What constitutes real virtue?—motive, or consequence? Surely the former. In proportion as a man is selfish, so far has he receded from the motive which constitutes virtue. I have left the proof to Aristotle. Shall we take Godwin's criterion: Expediency? Oh! surely not. Any very satisfactory general reform is, I fear, impracticable: human nature, taken in the mass, if we compare it with instances of individual virtue, is corrupt beyond all hope; for *these* laws are necessary: these are *not men of honour*; they are not beings capable of exalted notions of virtue; they cannot feel the passions of soft tenderness, the *object of whose regard is distinct* from selfish desire. Is it right that of these the world should be composed? Certainly not, were the evil to be obviated; but it is not to be obviated: all essays of benevolent reformers have failed. Any step, however small, towards such obviolation, is, however, good, as it tends to produce that which, though impossible, yet were it possible, would be desirable. On this plan, then, do I recommend anti-matrimonialism. It is a feeling which (as we take it, and as it is now the subject of discussion) can at once be experienced by minds which at least adore virtue. It is, then, of general application; and if every one loved, then every one would be happy. This is impossible; but certain it is that the more that love the more are blest.

Shall, then, the world step forward—that world which wallows in selfishness and every hateful passion, the consequence of an absence of reason; shall that world give laws to souls, who smile superior to its palsyng influence, who let the tempest of prejudice rave unheeded, happy in the consciousness of the ἀφιλαυτία of motive. Oh! no. Can you compare Eloisa and a ruffian? Eloisa, who sacrificed all *self* for another! Mac-heath, who sacrificed every other for himself! These motives are wide apart as the antipodes—wide as the characters themselves—wide as virtue and vice. Take, then, your criterion, and measure by that. For God's sake, if you want more argument read the Marriage Service before you *think* of allowing an amiable, beloved female to submit to such degradation. But you are convinced by force; but I do not admire the source of conviction; it is knightlike. I am no admirer of knights; their obedience was not founded on reason: and if we were errants, you should have the tilting all to yourself. Now, my friend, what can you want with six hundred pounds per annum? Surely you, with any amiable being, could easily live on half. Believe me, these are very secondary considerations. There! stay! I am wandering. But is the Antigone immoral? Did she wrong, when she acted in direct, in noble violation of the laws of a prejudiced society? You will, I know, have candour to acknowledge that your premises will not stand; and I now *most perfectly* agree with you that political affairs are quite distinct from morality—that they cannot be united.

To-morrow I go to Field Place. Direct henceforward there till you hear again; as, if they have removed Elizabeth, I shall follow her. My letters will then be more interesting, as they will be filled with what is equally so to both. Heaven defend me from a disappointment!

Misses Westbrook are now very well. I have arranged a correspondence with them, when I will impart more of the character of the eldest.

Believe me, your most affectionate,

P. B. S.

Direct, until further orders, to Captain Pilfold, Cuckfield, Sussex.

To T. J. H., York.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

LONDON, August 15, 1811.

The late perplexing occurrence which called me to town, occupies my time, engrosses my thoughts. I shall tell you more

of it when we meet, which I hope will be soon. It does not, however, so wholly occupy my thoughts, but that you and your interests still are predominant.

I have a rival in my sister's affections; do not tremble, for it is not one whom I have occasion to dread, if I fear merely those who are likely to be successful. His chances of success are equal to my own. He has the opportunity of frequently seeing and conversing with Elizabeth; yet his conversation is not such as is likely to produce any alteration in the resolve which she has taken, not to encourage his addresses. It is J. G.; she knows him well, and has known him long. Charles informed me of it, and I left London yesterday, though now returned purposely to converse with my sister on the subject. J. G. is certainly not a favoured lover, nor ever will be. I thought she appeared rather chagrined at the intelligence: she fears that she will lose an entertaining acquaintance, who sometimes enlivens her solitude, by his conversion into the more serious character of a lover. I do not think she will, as his attachment is that of a cool, unimpassioned selector of a companion for life. I do not think the better of my cousin for this unexpected affair.

I could tell you something, and will; you will then coincide with me. This, however, is an object of secondary importance. I know, from what I tell you, that others might be elevated by hope; but I would say to them—Beware; for although her rejection of the bare idea of G. was full and unequivocal, I have no reason to suppose that it proceeded from any augmented leniency for another. I know how deep is the gulf of despair, and I will not therefore increase any one's height; but must still think how unfortunate it is for any wooer that he ever heard her very name; he must long for the time when he will forget her, but which he now will say can never come!

I am now returned to London; direct to me as usual, at Graham's. My father is here, wondering, possibly, at my London business. He will be more surprised soon, possibly!

My unfortunate friend, Harriet, is yet undecided; not with respect to me, but herself. How much, my dear friend, have I to tell you! In my leisure moments for thought, which since I wrote have been few, I have considered the important point on which you reprobated my hasty decision. The ties of love and honour are doubtless of sufficient strength to bind congenial souls—they are doubtless indissoluble, but by the brutish force of power; they are delicate and satisfactory. Yet the arguments

of impracticability, and what is even worse, the disproportionate sacrifice which the female is called upon to make—these arguments, which you have urged in a manner immediately irresistible, I cannot withstand. Not that I suppose it to be likely that *I* shall directly be called upon to evince my attachment to either theory. I am become a perfect convert to matrimony, not from temporizing, but from *your* arguments; nor, much as I wish to emulate your virtues and liken myself to you, do I regret the prejudices of anti-matrimonialism from your example or assertion. No. The *one* argument, which you have urged so often with so much energy: the sacrifice made by the woman, so disproportioned to any which the man can give—this alone may exculpate me, were it a fault, from uninquiring submission to your superior intellect.

Write to Graham's: you will hear from me again soon. All that I have told you here is in *confidence*. Adieu!

Your eternally affectionate,

PERCY B. S.

To T. J. H., York.

CHAPTER XII

I HAD spent several months at York agreeably, leading a studious and quiet life, but by no means a dull one. York, in fact, is not a dull place; it appears such to a traveller passing through its still, narrow streets, and to a cursory observer; but there is much pleasant, cheerful society, much genteel hospitality, and it is occasionally diversified and lighted up by various public solemnities, or amusements. For instance, we had races twice, I think; once on a very grand scale. There were assizes, continuing for a fortnight; and this recreation occurs twice in the year.

The superb minster is a permanent gratification, of which one can never tire; and the musical services are well performed there.

There was no end of pretty girls of all ranks to be found in the streets, for the ancient city was always celebrated as the abode of beauty. It was at once pleasing and painful to meet them; delightful and dangerous.

There was a nice little theatre, with a sufficiently good company of actors; in the summer it had frequently the additional illumination of stars from the southern hemisphere. I saw Mrs. Jordan there, and to the greatest advantage, every night for three weeks. Moreover, I saw there, and there only, a most astonishing sight: two men, in theatrical costume, walked across the proscenium with their feet treading on the ceiling and their heads downwards, after the manner of flies. A surprising but uncomfortable spectacle; the danger of a fall, the risk of a broken neck, are too imminent and threatening. In what manner the feat was effected, nobody could discover; each man had a thick staff in his hand, and used it as a walking stick—what support or assistance this might render was not apparent. Their progress was slow, but it was sure, and without any visible effort.

Whilst I was stationary and tranquil, my friend was restless and uneasy; at one time he was in London, then at Field Place, now at Cuckfield, backwards and forwards; he even paid a visit

to a cousin in Radnorshire. I received many letters from him, as I have shown, which I answered with tolerable punctuality; but having less leisure, my letters were not so long or so numerous as his. He too often omitted, in his overwhelming, everlasting hurry, to date his letters. Not one of those sent to me from South Wales has a date, the postmark being only 'Rhayader'. Unless a letter passed through London and the General Post Office, the date was not impressed upon it. Now it is otherwise, and through the mild expostulations of Lord Campbell, postmasters have been induced to adopt a neat legible stamp. If the rule of a single sheet still prevailed, this modern practice, an unquestionable improvement, would be truly useful; but it is rendered nugatory by the covers, which notwithstanding are, in some respects, a convenient arrangement. There is no necessary and abiding connection between the enclosure and its envelope; the latter is commonly destroyed, and then the letter is not only without a date, but it does not even appear to whom the letter is addressed. Formerly a letter was a single sheet of respectable dimensions, with the address, at least, and the postmark, such as it was, upon the back; but at present a smart cover, like a smarter outer garment, serves to hide and gloss over the rags beneath it: thus, a modern letter consists too often of several small scraps of paper thrust into a well-glazed envelope.

The correspondence of Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale, Piozzi, shows how often he urged dear Hetty to date her letters, and how steadily she persisted all the more in sending him billets without dates. Our great moralist might have learned, that since the obstinate little Welsh woman was so intractable in trifles, it was vain to strive to make her anything better than a foreign fiddler's wife.

Shelley's epistles show the progress of his courtship, and that his marriage was not quite so hasty an affair as it is commonly represented to have been. The wooing continued for half a year at least, and this is a long time in the life, in the life of love, of such young persons. Harriet Westbrook appears to have been dissatisfied with her school, but without any adequate cause, for she was kindly treated and well educated there. It is not impossible that this discontent was prompted and suggested to her, and that she was put up to it, and to much besides, by somebody, who conducted the whole affair—who had assumed and steadily persisted in keeping the complete direction of her.

When a young man finds a young woman discontented with

her school, or convent, and with her own family and friends, without much reason, a pretty face and soft manners too often make him forget that she is very probably a girl of a discontented disposition, and is likely to be dissatisfied wherever she may afterwards be placed.

The advocates of divorce, legal or illegal, formal or informal, would do well to remember that a wife who quarrels with her present husband is perhaps a person of a nature very apt to disagree with her next also, and with all future husbands. Thus, a man who cannot make himself comfortable in the dwelling which he now inhabits, is commonly of a restless, roving disposition, a rolling stone, and he will never find a house that will suit him long. 'A man ought to be able to live with any woman', Shelley told me his friend, Robert Southey, once said to him; 'you see that I can, and so ought you. It comes to pretty much the same thing, I apprehend. There is no great choice, or difference!' But we anticipate.

The long vacation had commenced, my excellent and unlearned instructor in tautology—in tautology the most prolix and barbarous—had already taken wing to Northumberland, to enjoy for six weeks the healthy and agreeable diversion of grouse shooting. The artist had left behind him in his studio an attorney-pupil of some standing, and a clerk, who transacted his business during his absence; keeping up with him, however, a constant and animated correspondence of coach-parcels. My proficiency was as yet so small, that I could not be of any service to him, except under his personal superintendence. As I could no longer mould living mortgages out of reams of draft paper, or study breathing abstracts—abstracts of title breathing doubts and difficulties, for these were dispatched to the master-mind as soon as they arrived—I soon felt that I was a mere incumbrance in a conveyancer's chambers, and, therefore, that the sooner I was discharged the better. Thereupon, to adopt a term of art, I changed my original purpose, and determined to take a vacation. The alternative was either to go home for a little partridge shooting, or to plan a tour; the latter was the more attractive, and it possessed the additional recommendation, that if my friend chose, he might join me and share in my excursion. As to the important question of costs and charges, a pedestrian could live as cheaply at inns as I lived at York, the only actual expense was a trifle; to go to one's ground on the outside of a coach, and to return in the same manner.

The lakes of Cumberland, or Scotland? By the assistance of maps and guide-books I was trying to decide the question, when Shelley's letter announcing his marriage came, and at once carried the point in favour of Scotland. Book and map concurred in this. that making Edinburgh our temporary home, and the centre of our operations, we might in virtue of long walks, with the aid possibly of an occasional lift, visit many remarkable and interesting localities.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Direct to the Edinburgh Post Office—my own name. I passed to-night with the mail. Harriet is with me. We are in a slight pecuniary distress. We shall have seventy-five pounds on Sunday, until when can you send £10? Divide it in two.

Yours,

To T. J. H.

PERCY SHELLEY.

This letter was written by my friend at York, in passing through at midnight; it did not come to me by the post, but was brought to my lodgings the next morning from the inn. I wrote immediately to Shelley detailing my projects, and promising to be with him almost as soon as my letter. I took my seat on the outside of a stage-coach. a front seat—carpet bags were not yet discovered, but I saw my small leathern portmanteau placed in the front boot.

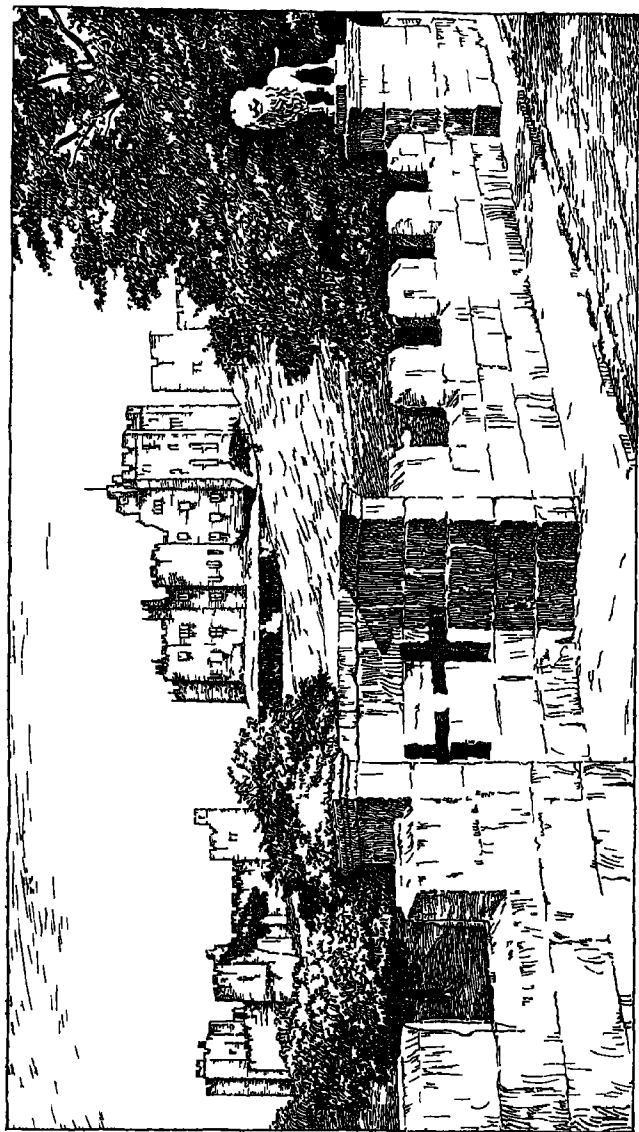
Prudence prescribes as little luggage as possible on a journey; in genteel society an excuse serves a traveller quite as well as the most fashionable dress-coat; with vulgar people tawdry finery is indispensable, but the immortal gods hate the man who trusts himself under the same roof with them. The day was in the first week of September, the time of day was the afternoon; the weather was dry and fine.

We pursued our way northwards at a moderate pace, along a dusty road and between dusty hedges, over the great plain of York. It became dark, and we had supper, whether at Northallerton, or Darlington, I forget; I only remember that it was tolerable, and that all our other meals were abominable.

From smoky, dirty, half-savage, but conceited Newcastle, the country was new to me; the night was fine, but quite dark, and probably cold, but I did not feel it. In those days cloaks were unknown, and great coats but little in use; I had no great coat then, nor for several years after. To my warm young

blood, perfect, irreproachable health, and untiring energy of mind and body; food, sleep, and clothes seemed to be superfluities, not necessities. At what point of the road it became light I cannot remember; it was quite light, perhaps even rather late, when we reached Alnwick. Here we found a filthy and utterly useless breakfast at an odious little inn in a very narrow street. Our stay was short; there appeared to be no temptation to prolong it, if it had been permitted. I resumed my lofty, airy seat; the coach drove on, and in a moment we emerged from the narrow street and came suddenly in sight of the castle. Its magnificent aspect delighted me, especially when I saw it from the bridge below. I have often seen it since: the first view of its feudal grandeur is most impressive, but the impression soon wears off, one presently discovers faults; in one word, that it is a take-in. It is commonly asserted that there is nothing striking in the interior; this is not true; it is strikingly ugly, uncomfortable, ungenial, and inhospitable. The coachman, behind whom I sat, was rather wooden, like the folks of that region, but not uncivil; and perceiving that I was a curious traveller, he pointed out a few objects to me. For example: after climbing out of Belford up a steep, straight hill, he showed me the Farne Islands, and particularly the largest of them, Lindisfarne, the Holy Island: as a boy I had been familiar with the legendary history of St. Cuthbert, and I felt a strange desire to descend from the top of the coach to walk down to the shore, which appeared to be close at hand—but it is not—to hail a boat, and at once to be ferried over.

I have done this, but not until thirty years afterwards, and I had then the satisfaction of seeing that there is nothing to be seen. How often is this the case with those objects which we most eagerly desire to see; and yet somehow they are not the less interesting on that account! From a hill, a mile or two before we came to Berwick, there was a noble prospect of the sea, the mouth of the Tweed, and much besides; and I beheld for the first time the hills of Scotland, behind which I was to find my incomparable friend again. We descended to the River Tweed, and passed it by a very long bridge, upon which then stood an ancient gateway, with a picturesque and remarkable effect. Thirty years later, when I came again to this old town to grow very familiar with it, the old gateway had vanished. Our coach drew up at an inn not very far from the bridge; here we were to remain some time, and to dine. The inn was superlatively nasty, and the dinner impracticable, impregnable.



SHELLEY HAD BEEN MUCH STRUCK BY THE MAJESTIC EXTERIOR OF ALNWICK CASTLE

I was glad to escape from the smell of stale fish, and from the other noisome smells, and to take a turn upon the walls; the scene was sparkling and pleasant. We continued our journey, and after riding a few miles farther I was informed that we had entered Scotland. The evening was delightful; at some points of the road we had fine sea views, and a bold, rocky coast; at one spot the guard made us get down and look from a bridge into a deep, woody ravine; he called the place, I think, Pease Bridge. There were open, unenclosed fields, with excellent crops of corn in some places, very clean and promising, and a surprising breadth of flourishing turnips, as well swedes as the common kind. I remarked at many of the farms small windmills; these, I was informed, were used to turn winnowing and threshing machines; they were new to me. At other portions of the road we crossed extensive moors; and we passed through Dunbar, a dirty, stinking, fishing town. We saw for some time the Bass Rock, over the summit of which hovered prodigious flocks of sea birds. On the whole, I found much of pleasure and interest in what I saw of Scotland this afternoon.

Nor did I want for information and instruction. At the back of the coach sat a little, serious, middle-aged man, whom we picked up somewhere after entering Scotland; he, learning that I was a stranger, and that this was my first visit to a region which he assured us was the finest, happiest, most refined and civilized country in the known world, kindly took upon himself the trouble of informing, and indeed of forming my mind. He stood up at his place, behind a stack of luggage, and continually addressed me across the roof of the coach. He discoursed, or rather, I may say, lectured concerning the excellence of the district and of its inhabitants; of the agriculture of the Lothians, and its vast and infinite superiority to all other farming. Having discovered that I was going to Edinburgh, he expounded the admirable nature and character of that city, and told me all that I ought to see, and to believe on his authority.

'You will find it a most remarkable city; by far the most remarkable under the heavens, without any exception!'

'Yes! And it has a *Review* as remarkable as itself!'

At that time the *Edinburgh Review* had attracted general attention. The quarrel with Byron, and other persons of more or less distinction, and the protracted controversy with the University of Oxford, which was in full vigour whilst I resided there — sundry pedantic performances redolent of heavy pleasantries having been published by certain slow-witted dullards

of that place—had brought the *Review* into notice. I was tempted, therefore, to try my loquacious little instructor on that popular theme. I had sounded the key-note. The *Review* during the rest of the journey, wholly engrossed his organs of speech in one unceasing peroration concerning the critical journal, which soon became exceedingly tiresome; and not only tiresome, but painful—physically painful; for I could not show my back with any decency to so powerful an orator; and I was obliged, in courtesy, to bend my neck and to try to look the petulant little haranguer in the face.

Mr. Pennant, with all the gravity of a Welshman and a naturalist, writes in perfect seriousness: 'Asses are very rare in Scotland; there are none in the north'. But a greater and a graver than Pennant was there; and he asseverated that Oxford was for ever silenced: that university was totally annihilated; she could never show her face again—never hold up her head; she was extinguished; she must at once retire; she must leave the work of education to abler hands than her own. Shoals of students would come flocking thence by thousands to Edinburgh, to Aberdeen, to St. Andrews, and to the other renowned Scottish universities. He spoke much about the Oxford Strabbo, without appearing to at all know, what he meant. I longed to ask him what he supposed the Oxford Strabbo really was; but I did not venture. He talked very largely of 'Mr. Francis Jeffrey, of Edinburgh, advocate'; but he did not seem to be personally acquainted with him; and indeed he admitted, in answer to my question, that he was not. 'Mr. Francis Jeffrey, of Edinburgh, advocate'—for he always gave the name of the learned editor in full, with the additions—'is a little man, and a very clever man.' Both these facts are undoubted. I had afterwards abundant opportunity to verify them myself. 'He very wisely holds that ridicule is the real and genuine, and indeed the sole test of truth: that it is still more necessary than even the laws themselves for the due maintenance of order in a state of high civilization. And, accordingly, he has used it most unsparingly, as you will yourself allow, in his critical journal; and he purposes to continue so to use it.'

It began to grow dark; and at the approach of night all creatures feel fatigue, even the most persevering, and grow weary at last, even of wearying others. The little prig himself got tired of lecturing; he became silent, and at some place, where we changed horses, quietly withdrew.

It was the first time I ever underwent this sort of thing; I have suffered it often since, God knows how often; so often, in truth, that being once told that it was impossible accurately to define a philosopher, I was provoked to answer: 'Oh, no! A philosopher is a Scotch clerk in a public office in England!'

We entered Edinburgh in the dark, through mean, narrow streets, the aspect of which, by the faint light of dim lamps ill accorded with the magnificent promises of the splendour of the proud metropolis of the whole earth—of the capital of social elegance, and of perfect refinement.

I remained for the night at the wretched inn where the coach stopped, for I knew of no other, although it was a disgusting place. Nobody appeared to regard me. I didn't understand what they said; neither could I make the people understand me. In truth, they did not care to know what I wanted. However, I succeeded, with some difficulty, in catching hold of a stupid, red-haired, barenecked, barefooted, dirty girl, by the arm; I held her fast, and made her conduct me upstairs to a squalid little bedroom. When we got there, she found out what I required: another light, besides that which she held in her hand, of a sudden broke upon her, and she exclaimed with vivacity: 'Oh! you will want a chamber'. I observed the impressions of naked and muddy feet, of bare toes and heels, on the hearth and on the floor, but no other traces of social elegance: the young wench was half naked, as it was; had she been stark, most assuredly I should not have taken her for one of the three Graces, whatever the little lecturer might have affirmed. I took the candle from her, and she withdrew, muttering some words of her sweet northern Doric, which probably signified, 'Good night!' The bed was less distasteful than the chamber. I had passed thirty hours or more in the open air on the top of the coach, and had travelled two hundred miles: this was a powerful opiate.

If such be, in very deed, the beauteous city of Minerva, the chosen residence of Apollo and the Muses, the true abode of Beauty, of the Loves and Graces, I wish I were back again at my lodgings in York, or at one of the inns near the lakes, which tourists report as comfortable! But a sound refreshing sleep soon put an end to all reflections, wishes, and regrets: I made one sleep.

When I awoke in the morning, it was quite light: bell there was none; calling out, however loud, was disregarded, my little sylph would not come, nor would any of her fairy sisters, if she

had any. I put on my clothes, and went downstairs into a common room, an uncommonly dirty, dingy hole; here I procured some breakfast, which was not so much amiss. I then sallied forth to discover if the rest of the New Jerusalem was as mean and shabby as what I had already seen; I more than half suspected that it was. I soon emerged from the narrow streets; and then, O! glorious spectacle, by force of contrast made still more noble, more glorious; I wandered about, lost in admiration. I ascended the Castle Hill, the Calton Hill, my delight still increasing. Yet it was a meeting of extremes: I beheld magnificence—triumphs of art and of nature; yet I saw many odious and revolting objects, which I had never met with, even in the poorest places in England, and which I forbear to describe.

Having at once satisfied and inflamed my curiosity, I began to think of the main purpose of my long journey—my college friend. I had written to him that I would join him here, but I had not given him any address, for I did not know any, neither had I received a direction from him. Was there a better, a speedier course, than the hope of a chance meeting in the streets of a large city? I bethought me of the post office; he might have sent a letter for me thither. I was standing musing on the bridge which connects the new town with the old: a grave, white, middle-aged man was passing. I inquired of him for the post office.

'Come with me, I am going there myself. You are a stranger?'

'Yes.'

'You never saw so fine a bridge before as this is, I am very sure. It is the finest in the known world!'

'I have seen a finer river; one with more water in it.'

He seemed much disconcerted. I told him how I was situated.

'They will give you the address you require at the post office, they are sure to have it; we will go to the post office together; but you must first see our new university, as you are a stranger.'

We passed the post office and came to a large building, not only unfinished, but not in progress. It appeared that the work had ceased for want of funds.

'What do you think of that, sir?'

'When it is completed it will be a very handsome building, and, I dare say, very commodious.'

'Not only that, but if all the buildings at Oxford and

Cambridge were moulded and amalgamated together into one edifice, the effect would not be the same; it would be far inferior!’

I had learned that it was most discreet to be silent. We returned to the post office. There was no letter for me, but they gave me my friend’s address in George Street. Whether he had left it there for me, or for his own letters, I did not ask.

‘I am going in that direction myself. I will point out George Street to you.’

We returned on our steps.

‘That is the Register Office,’ said my kind, grave guide; ‘it is the finest building on the habitable earth.’

I looked him in the face; I had wounded his feelings about the bridge, without at all diminishing his obliging good nature, so I held my peace.

‘It is universally acknowledged to be so! But you must see the interior!’

We entered it; it was a handsome structure, certainly; perhaps needlessly large. We walked along Princes Street together, at the corner of a cross street he took leave of me with sundry profound and solemn bows, having previously pointed out George Street. I soon set foot in George Street, a spacious, noble, well-built street; but a deserted street, or rather a street which people had not yet come fully to inhabit. I soon found the number indicated at the post office; I have forgotten it, but it was on the left side—the side next to Princes Street. I knocked at the door of a handsome house; it was all right; and in a handsome front parlour I was presently received rapturously by my friend. He looked just as he used to look at Oxford, and as he looked when I saw him last in April, in our trellised apartment; but now joyous at meeting again, not as then sad at parting. I also saw—and for the first time—his lovely young bride, bright as the morning—as the morning of that bright day on which we first met; bright, blooming, radiant with youth, health, and beauty. I was hailed triumphantly by the new-married pair; my arrival was more than welcome; they had got my letter and expected to rejoice at my coming every moment. ‘We have met at last once more!’ Shelley exclaimed, ‘and we will never part again! You must have a bed in the house!’ It was deemed necessary, indispensable. At that time of life a bed a mile or two off, as far as I was concerned, would have done as well; but I must have a bed in the house. The landlord was summoned, he came instantly; a bed in the house; the necessity was so urgent that they did

not give him time to speak. When the poor man was permitted to answer, he said, 'I have a spare bedroom, but it is at the top of the house. It may not be quite so pleasant'. He conducted me up a handsome stone staircase of easiest ascent; the way was not difficult, but very long. It appeared well nigh interminable. We came at length to an airy, spacious bedroom. 'This will do very well.' A stone staircase is handsome and commodious, and, in case of fire, it must be a valuable security; but whenever a door was shut it thundered; the thunder rolled pealing for some seconds. I was to lodge with Jupiter Tonans at the top of Olympus. Of all the houses in London, with which I am acquainted, those in Fitzroy Square alone remind me, by their sonorous powers, of Edinburgh, and of the happy days which I passed in that beautiful city. On returning to my friends our mutual greetings were repeated; each had a thousand things to tell and to ask of the rest. Our joy being a little calmed, we agreed to walk. 'We are in the capital of the unfortunate Queen Mary,' said Harriet; 'we must see her palace first of all.' We soon found Holyrood House; a beggarly palace, in truth. We saw the long line of Scottish monarchs, from Fergus the First downwards, disposed in two rows, being evidently the productions of some very inferior artist, who could not get employment as a sign-painter. We saw Mary's bedroom, the stains of Rizzio's blood, and all the other relics. These objects, intrinsically mean and paltry, greatly interested my companions, especially Harriet, who was well-read in the sorrowful history of the unhappy queen. Bysshe must go home and write letters, I was to ascend Arthur's Seat with the lady. We marched up the steep hill boldly, and reached the summit. The view may be easily seen, it is impossible to describe it. It was a thousand pities Bysshe was not with us, and then we might remain there; one ought never to quit so lovely a scene.

'Let us sit down; probably when he has finished writing he will come to us.'

We sat a long time, at first gazing around, afterwards we looked out for the young bridegroom, but he did not appear. It was fine while we ascended; it was fine, sunny, clear, and still, whilst we remained on the top; but when we began to descend, the wind commenced blowing. Harriet refused to proceed; she sat down again on the rock, and declared that we would remain there for ever! For ever is rather a long time; to sit until the wind abated would have been to sit there quite long

enough. Entreaties were in vain. I was hungry, for I had not dined on either of the two preceding days. The sentence—never to dine again—was a severe one, and although it was pronounced by the lips of beauty, I ventured to appeal against it; so I left her and proceeded slowly down the hill, the wind blowing fresh. She sat for some time longer, but finding that I was in earnest, she came running down after me. Harriet was always most unwilling to show her ankles, or even her feet, hence her reluctance to move in the presence of a rude, indelicate wind, which did not respect her modest scrupulousness. If there was not much to admire about these carefully-concealed ankles, certainly there was nothing to blame.

The accommodations at our lodgings in George Street were good, and the charges reasonable; the food was abundant and excellent; everything was good, the wine included: in one particular only was there a deficiency, the attendance was insufficient, except at meals, when our landlord officiated in person. One dirty little nymph, by name Christie, was the servant of the house—the domestic, she was termed; she spoke a dialect which we could not comprehend, and she was, for the most part, unable to understand what we southerners said to her, or indeed anything else, save only perchance political economy and metaphysics. After ringing the well-hung bells many times in vain, she would suddenly open the door, and exclaiming, 'Oh! The kittle!' darted off to be brought back again, after a long delay, by the like exertions and with the like result. Her sagacity had discovered that we drank much tea, and therefore often required the services of the tea-kettle. However, if she was of no great use to us, the poor little girl at least afforded us some amusement.

Shelley was of an extreme sensibility—of a morbid sensibility—and strange, discordant sounds he could not bear to hear; he shrank from the unmusical voice of the Caledonian maiden. Whenever she entered the room, or even came to the door, he rushed wildly into a corner and covered his ears with his hands. We had, to our shame be it spoken, a childish mischievous delight in tormenting him; in catching the shy virgin and making her speak in his presence. The favourite interrogatory so often administered was: 'Have you had your dinner to-day, Christie?' 'Yes.' 'And what did you get?' 'Sengit heed and bonnocks', was the unvarying answer, and its efficacy was instantaneous and sovereign. Our poor sensitive poet assumed the air of the Distracted Musician, became nearly frantic, and, had we been

on the promontory, he would certainly have taken the Leucadian leap for Christie's sake, and to escape for ever from the rare music of her voice.

'Oh! Bysshe, how can you be so absurd? What harm does the poor girl do you?'

'Send her away, Harriet! Oh! send her away; for God's sake, send her away!'

On the whole, nothing could be better than our position in George Street; yet few things are absolutely perfect even in Scotland, even in Edinburgh itself. It is allowable to discern spots in the sun; science, it is believed, derives benefit from such discoveries.

At my first breakfast our landlord kindly inquired how I had slept. Not very well. How so? The bed was so intolerably hard, and therefore so cold. Oh! There was no bed; you had no bed; I would not have put you to sleep upon a feather-bed; you could never sleep upon a feather-bed; you have a nice wholesome mattress, a straw mattress! I should like to lie upon something softer. Oh! You cannot have it! You must lie upon a mattress, a straw mattress; health enjoins it. But it is as hard as this table! Very well! Very like; and so it ought to be. You cannot lie too hard. You might lie very well upon this table; it would be very highly salubrious! I thought otherwise: but it was quite plain that there was no redress. I had got into the land of absolute wisdom, and I must make the best of it: I had come there to learn, and not to teach. I lay very hard and very cold, and for two or three nights I slept little, but I got accustomed to it in time, and slept as well as if I had the Lincolnshire feather-bed, upon which I reposed for a year whilst I was preparing most comtortably for college in the snug old vicarage of a worthy Fen parson.

One more mote in my neighbour's eye, and then I will return to consider the beam in my own. We occupied, as has been stated, the ground-floor in George Street: when I took up my abode there, I hung up my hat in the handsome hall, or passage, of the very handsome house. In a day or two it disappeared; I asked about it, but I could only learn what I knew already, that it was gone. Who could have taken it? I do not know, I am sure; there is nobody in the house except yourselves and the people who occupy the first floor, and they are high people—very high indeed! However high they might be, it should seem that the grandees of Scotland of the first class were not so high as to be above priggish a hat. In those days a hat was

a hat, which, in a strict sense, it has long ceased to be, costing then thirty-five shillings at least. I was much censured for leaving my new hat in the passage: all I could say in excuse was, that when I first suspended it there, I asked the landlord himself, a most respectable man, if it would be safe there? He answered—and being a Scotchman, as such, of course, he was infallible—‘Oh! Perfectly!’ To be sure he added what was said to be a considerable qualification, and which ought to have put me on my guard, ‘It will be quite as safe there as anywhere else in Scotland’. I ought to have been more cautious, I was told, in a country where nothing is too hot or too heavy; where every man takes whatever he can get, from the senator of the College of Justice down to the most profound and beggarly metaphysician. However this may be in those days, as I have said, a hat was certainly a hat; not only was it very dear, but, what was still worse, very hard and very heavy, making itself felt as well by the head, as by the pocket. It is right to add, that our liberal landlord made a very liberal offer—it was, of course, declined—to pay the price of a very nice hat which I bought in Princes Street, and in future always prudently brought with me into our sitting-room.

Amongst the many delicacies of the place, and they were many, shortbread, to which we were then first introduced, appeared to be a very nice thing—I must now add, for a young stomach.

Shelley went every morning himself, before breakfast, to the post office for his letters, of which he received a prodigious number; and he used to bring back with him splendid plates of virgin honey. I never saw such fine honeycombs before or since, and it was delicious. Shelley was for the most part indifferent to food, to all meats and drinks, but he relished this honey surprisingly: so much did he enjoy it, that he was almost offended when I said, exquisite though it was, it was a shame to eat it; wantonly to destroy, merely to flatter the palate, so beautiful and so wonderful a structure, was as barbarous as it would be to devour roses and lilies. It was far too great a marvel to be eaten; it should only be looked at, kept entire, to be admired. It approaches cannibalism to feed on it; indeed, it is too like eating Harriet! I think you would eat Harriet herself!

‘So I would, if she were as good to eat, and I could replace her as easily!’

‘Oh! fie, Bysshe!’ the young lady exclaimed, who inclined

somewhat to my heresy, feasting her eyes with the honeycomb, and declaring it was quite a pity to eat it: this the greedy poet said was tiresome.

The sound of the church-going bell
These valleys and rocks never heard.

Since the Reformation they had never heard it; and in this particular Presbyterian Edinburgh, so far advanced in enlightened wisdom, secular and ecclesiastical, afforded us a strong contrast to our poor, ignorant, benighted popish Oxford.

After breakfast on Sunday, a verbal announcement was made to us by our landlord himself: 'They are drawing nigh unto the kirk!'

On looking from the windows, we saw the grave Presbyterians, with downcast looks, like conscience-stricken sinners, slowly crawling towards their place of gathering. We were admonished—for Shelley said, one Sunday: 'Let us go and take a walk'—that it was not lawful to go forth to walk purposely and avowedly on the Sabbath, a day of rest and worship; but if a man happen to find himself in the streets casually, he may walk a little with perfect innocence, only it is altogether unlawful to go out from his door with the mind of taking a walk of pure pleasure.

After this serious and edifying warning we sometimes casually found ourselves without the house on a Sunday, and walked about a little, as we believed, innocently.

We were taking such a harmless stroll, by mere accident, in Princes Street; Bysshe laughed aloud, with a fiendish laugh, at some remark of mine.

'You must not laugh openly in that fashion, young man,' an ill-looking, ill-conditioned fellow said to him. 'If you do, you will most certainly be convened!'

'What is that?' asked Shelley, rather displeased at the rude interpellation.

'Why; if you laugh aloud in the public streets and ways on the Christian Sabbath, you will be cast into prison, and eventually banished from Scotland.'

The observance of the Sabbath in North Britain, as I have been credibly informed, has been, since the year of the comet, like the manufacture of hats in England, decidedly improved, both articles being now much lighter, and less oppressive.

I once asked the way to some place in Edinburgh of a staid old gentlewoman: 'I am going the same road in part, and I will attend you'.

We proceeded leisurely along together; she conversed gravely,

but affably: 'How do you like this; how that; how do you like our public worship?'

'I have not assisted at it yet.'

'Oh! but you must; you must go and hear Dr. Mac Quisquis; he is a fine preacher; an accomplished divine; he wrestles most powerfully with Satan every Sabbath morn!'

I promised my obliging conductress to go and witness these spiritual struggles with a ghostly enemy; but I could not redeem a pledge somewhat rashly given, for I did not know in what arena this powerful gymnast fought. I did not even catch the name of the accomplished divine. One Sabbath morn, however, when we were again advised that they were drawing nigh unto the kirk, Shelley and myself boldly resolved to draw nigh also; the lovely Harriet would not accompany us, alleging, and with some probability, that the wearisome performances would give her a headache. We joined the scattered bands, which increased in number as we advanced, creeping with them for a considerable distance. We reached a place of worship, and entered it with the rest; it was plain, spacious, and gloomy. We suffered ourselves rather incautiously to be planted side by side, on a bench in the middle of the devout assembly, so that escape was impossible. There was singing, in which all, or almost all the congregation joined; it was loud and discordant and protracted. There was praying, there was preaching—both extemporaneous. We prayed for all sorts and conditions of men, more particularly for our enemies. The preacher discoursed at a prodigious length, repeating many times things that were not worthy to be said once, and threatening us much with the everlasting punishments, which, solemnly and confidently, he declared were in store for us. I never saw Shelley so dejected, so desponding, so despairing; he looked like the picture of perfect wretchedness; the poor fellow sighed piteously, as if his heart would break. If they thought that he was conscience-stricken, and that his vast sorrow was for his sins, all, who observed him, must have been delighted with him, as with one filled with the comfortable assurance of eternal perdition. No one present could possibly have comprehended the real nature of his acute sufferings—could have sympathized in the anguish and agony of a creature of the most poetic temperament that ever was bestowed, for his weal or his woe, upon any human being, at feeling himself in the most unpoetic position in which he could possibly be placed. At last, after expectations many times disappointed of an approaching deliverance,

and having been repeatedly deceived by glimpses of an impending discharge, and having long endured that sickness of heart caused by hopes deferred, the tedious worship actually terminated.

We were eagerly pressing forward to get out of our prison, and out of the devout crowd, but a man in authority pushed us aside:

'Make way for the Lord Provost and the Bellies!'

We stood on one side for a while that the civic dignitaries might pass. My friend asked in a whisper what in the world the man meant? I informed him that a provost is a mayor, and that a belly (baillie) is Scotch for an alderman.

It was a consolation to the poor sufferer to laugh once more. It had seemed to him in his captivity that this healthful function had ceased for ever.

We made the best of our way homewards, and at a brisker pace than the rude apostle of the north, John Knox, would have approved of, discussing the wonderful advantages of a ritual, and their comfortless, inhuman church music.

Acknowledging the superiority of our chapels, churches, and cathedral in Oxford, and the vast benefits of written sermons, after having just had painful experience how tedious a thing it was to listen to an extemporaneous discourse; and, moreover, how distressing for the hearer to have to sit and wonder what monstrous extravagance, what stupid and preposterous absurdity the heavy orator, with no succour at hand, would utter next.

The malicious Harriet laughed at our sufferings, and made herself merry with the deep dejection of her husband.

We were never tempted to enter the kirk again. Satan must very shortly prevail, if he could only be kept under, by our presence, at such powerful wrestlings!

Yet were we, poor Oxford scholars, predestined to undergo another trial of the same kind, but less severe, and far more brief—sharp, though short. It was notified to us one Sunday evening, as we were sitting together after dinner, that 'they are drawing nigh unto the Catechist—children and domestics must attend.'

We had discovered that little Christie was going, and as we already knew something of her temporal concerns ('Oh! the kittle!'), we were curious to learn a little about her spiritual condition. Accordingly, we followed her at a distance.

At the first notification, Bysshe, to my surprise, exclaimed, 'Let us go!'

Harriet sought to dissuade him, and earnestly, as if she thought we were going to a place where he would probably have his throat cut. But persuasion availed not. We followed the slow advance of children and domestics still more slowly, and entered a roomy building, gloomy and unadorned, like a kirk. A man in rusty black apparel, of a mean and somewhat sinister aspect, was standing in the middle of the floor; children and domestics were standing round him; we remained in a corner.

'Wha was Adam?' he suddenly and loudly asked.

Nobody answered. He appeared to be much displeased at their silence; and after a while he repeated the question in a louder voice:

'Wha was Adam?'

Still no answer. The name is so common in these anti-episcopal regions. Did he ask after Adam Black, Willie Adam, or Adam, late of Eden, the protoplast; he did not limit his question, but put it in the most general terms. Nobody answered it.

The indignation of the catechist waxing hot, in a still louder and very angry tone he broke forth with:

'Wha's the deed?'

This was too much; Shelley burst into a shrieking laugh, and rushed wildly out of doors. I slowly followed him, thinking seriously of Elders, Presbyteries, and Kirk Synods. However, nothing came of it; we were not cast into prison.

Shelley and his future had travelled from London to Edinburgh by the mail without stopping. A young Scotch advocate was their companion in the coach for part of the way; he was an agreeable, obliging person. Shelley confided to him the object of his journey, and asked his advice.

The young lawyer told the young poet how to get married. They followed his directions and were married on their arrival in Edinburgh—how, or where, I never heard. Harriet had some marriage lines, which she sent to her father. I never saw them.

This young man lived in Edinburgh with his family, but at that time they were all in the country: he was alone in the empty house; he expressed much regret that it was not in his power, therefore, to show the bride and bridegroom hospitality. Shelley saw him several times afterwards; I never did.

I was curious to see something of the courts of justice; I told Bysshe to ask his friend how this could be effected.

His answer was: 'It was impossible; it was vacation, and all the courts were closed'.

Being one day alone in the Parliament Close, I observed that the Parliament House was open. I entered it as others did. I saw one very old man on the bench; his head was shaking, and he shook the papers, which he held in his trembling hands; with a feeble, broken, quivering voice, he was prattling something in broad Scotch. Very few persons were present. It was interlocutory, they said—merely interlocutory.

I asked a man, who appeared to be an usher or doorkeeper, who the judge was.

'Oh! he is an old man; a poor old creature; a poor, wretched old creature; a miserable old creature!'

In England, such an answer, spoken aloud, would have appeared indecorous; but we are a less wise—a less civilized—people. Probably the superannuated Rhadamanthus was deaf as well as feeble, for he heeded it not. I still persisted in asking his name.

'It is just the Lord Ordinary.'

'But what is his name?'

'It is just the Lord Ordinary. He will have a name. It is very like—oh! he will have a name! It is very like, indeed—but I do not rightly ken what it is. I dare say he will have a name. It is just the Lord Ordinary—poor old creature!' And in this the bystanders unanimously concurred.

I read afterwards with pleasure, and with profit, the Institutions of Lord Stair, and those of Erskine; the writings of Lord Kames, of Sir George Mackenzie, and others.

The bright lights of Scottish jurisprudence are not lightly to be contemned. There have been some truly great men in their College of Justice. We cannot boast such names in England among our judges—by no means. Lord Monboddo—some whimsical fancies, such as spring up in inventive minds, like weeds in a rich soil, alone excepted—was a star of the first magnitude. So profound a scholar as James Burnet—a genius so original, so splendid; a man so learned, so liberal-minded—our English Bench could never show.

It is true that the Lords of Session have more leisure than is conceded to our over-worked functionaries; but it is even more true that all men ought to have leisure, and plenty of leisure, otherwise they inevitably become technical and narrow-minded, every day and every hour growing continually more ignorant,

and more incapable of enlarged, enlightened, and comprehensive views.

From the able and elegant authors of Scottish jurisprudence I have learned much theoretically; but practically, and by my own personal experience, all that I could myself discover was—that the Lord Ordinary very probably has a name: but what it is, nobody knows and nobody cares.

Shelley got lots of good books whilst we were in Edinburgh; where he got them I know not: there they were. He brought them in himself, as he wanted them, and took them away again under his arm. Whether they belonged to a circulating library he did not inform me; or to some public library; from the nature of the works, most likely to the latter. Possibly he obtained access to it through the introduction of his fellow-passenger, the young advocate. If there was any stamp, or name of ownership, or distinguishing mark in these volumes, I did not observe it. There were several French books; some works of the modern French philosophers, and some of the immortal Buffon.

With one treatise of the writer last-named, Shelley was charmed; he translated it carefully, and, as I thought, elegantly and eloquently. We went over it patiently together, and he consulted me as to the meaning of certain passages. He designed to publish it, but what became of the MS. I cannot say. I never saw it after we quitted Edinburgh. *Claire d'Albe* was one of our books. It is a moral tale, by Madame Cottin, several of whose works—as *Elizabeth* and *The Saracen*—are extensively popular, especially in ladies' schools. Harriet was well versed in these, knowing them almost by heart. She took very kindly to the sorrows of Clara, the heroine, a married lady, young and beautiful. She had a lover; their attachment was mutual, and for some time innocent: eventually the poor young lady falls; and then, having ceased to be estimable, she forthwith ceased to exist—ceased spontaneously, as a lamp goes out of itself, when the pure spirit, by which the bright flame was fed, fails. Clara was the lamp, conjugal fidelity was the spirits of wine which kept her burning; when the latter is gone, the former, of necessity, is extinguished.

The tale is prettily told, in the same simple, graceful, touching style, as the other novels of the fair author. The principal incident, no doubt, is of a warm character, as it is in many other works of imagination which are very generally read; but it is handled with delicacy, and with modesty in language and

sentiments. The gentle Harriet considered the final catastrophe—the death of Clara—quite as a matter of course—an inevitable necessity; that the termination of the unfortunate affair was indeed exquisitely natural; and, moreover, that it was fit this should be known, particularly by her own sex, wherever the English language is spoken. Accordingly, she translated the tale from the original French. She rendered the two volumes exactly and correctly; and wrote the whole out fairly, without blot or blemish, upon the smoothest, whitest, finest paper, in a small, neat, flowing and legible feminine hand. She employed her mornings thus, whilst Bysshe was engaged with his version of Buffon's treatise. Her elegant MS. disappeared also; I never saw it after we left Scotland. I think I was informed that an English translation had already been published. It has been represented by reckless or ill-informed biographers that Harriet was illiterate, and therefore she was not a fit companion for Shelley. This representation is not correct; she had been well educated; and as the coffee-house people could not have taught her more than they knew themselves, which was little or nothing, she must have received her education at school; and she was unquestionably a credit to the establishment.

Drawing she had never learned, at least she gave no indications of taste or skill in that department; her proficiency in music was moderate, and she seemed to have no very decided natural talent for it; her accomplishments were slight, but with regard to acquirements of higher importance, for her years, she was exceedingly well read. I have seldom, if ever, met with a girl who had read so much as she had, or who had so strong an inclination for reading. I never once saw a Bible, prayer-book, or any devotional work, in her hand: I never heard her utter a syllable on the subject of religion, either to signify assent or dissent, approbation, or censure, or doubt; Eucharis, or Egeria, or Antiope, could not have appeared more entirely uninstructed than herself in such matters. I never heard her say that she had been at church, or ever once visited any place of worship; never, in my hearing, did she criticize any sermon, as is so common with the generality of young ladies, or express admiration of, or curiosity concerning, a popular preacher. Her music was wholly secular; of the existence of sacred music she seemed to be unconscious, and never to have heard the illustrious name of Handel. Her reading was not of a frivolous description; she did not like light, still less trifling, ephemeral productions. Morality was her favourite theme; she found most pleasure in

works of a high ethical tone. *Telemachus* and *Belisarius* were her chosen companions, and other compositions of the same leaven, but of less celebrity.

She was fond of reading aloud; and she read remarkably well, very correctly, and with a clear, distinct, agreeable voice, and often emphatically. She was never weary of this exercise, never fatigued; she never ceased of her own accord, and left off reading only on some interruption. She has read to me for hours and hours; whenever we were alone together, she took up a book and began to read, or more commonly read aloud from the work, whatever it might be, which she was reading to herself. If anybody entered the room she ceased to read aloud, but recommenced the moment he retired. I was grateful for her kindness; she has read to me grave and excellent books innumerable. If some few of these were a little wearisome, on the whole I profited greatly by her lectures. I have sometimes certainly wished for rather less of the trite moral discourses of Idomeneus and Justinian, which are so abundant in her two favourite authors, and a little more of something less in the nature of truisms; but I never showed any signs of impatience. In truth, the good girl liked a piece of resistance, a solid tome, where a hungry reader might read and come again. I have sometimes presumed to ask her to read some particular work, but never to object to anything which she herself proposed. If it was agreeable to listen to her, it was not less agreeable to look at her: she was always pretty, always bright, always blooming; smart, usually plain in her neatness; without a spot, without a wrinkle, not a hair out of its place. The ladies said of her that she always looked as if she had just that moment stepped out of a glass-case; and so indeed she did. And they inquired, how that could be? The answer was obvious; she passed her whole life in reading aloud, and when that was not permitted, in reading to herself, and invariably works of a calm, soothing, tranquillizing, sedative tendency; and in such an existence there could be nothing to stain, to spot, to heat, to tumble, to cause any the slightest disorder of the hair or dress. Hers was the most distinct utterance I ever heard; I do not believe that I lost a single word of the thousands of pages which she read to me. Of course, I never dared to yield to sleep, even when the virtuous Idomeneus was giving wise laws to Crete, and therefore I am now alive to write our simple story.

The more drowsy Bysshe would sometimes drop off: his

innocent slumbers gave serious offence, and his neglect was fiercely resented; he was stigmatized as an inattentive wretch. A distinct articulation is pleasing, but by no means common. Another young lady was so good as to read to me for several years; but I never heard a single word she said. However, I cherished the hope, that some day or other I might at least hear one word, as a reward for my patience: but I was disappointed, and the poor girl has long ceased to read and to breathe.

CHAPTER XIII

It was the year of the famous comet, and of the still more famous vintage, the year 1811; the weather was fine, and often hot; not one drop of rain fell all the time I was in Edinburgh. The nights were clear and bright; we often contemplated the stranger comet from Princes Street; and not only the comet, but the ordinary array of the shining hosts of heaven. The heavens are the home of a divine poet; the stars are his nearest kindred: Shelley frequently turned his wild, wandering eyes homewards; he was fond of looking at the stars, and of speculating about the heavenly bodies, and of reading and hearing the speculations of astronomers. He had, however, a leaning, as became a poet, towards the systems, hypotheses, and figments of the first and ancient star-gazers; moreover, his attention had been first called towards celestial matters by his beloved Pliny, the greater part of whose vast and inestimable work on natural history he had translated at Eton; he dearly loved to ponder over that author's inexplicable doctrines, and to endeavour to comprehend and expound them.

The modern system of astronomy is suited to dull fellows only—to mere matter-of-fact men, calculators, mathematicians; not to poets by any means. The human imagination cannot deal with their millions of millions of miles; it cannot conceive, cannot form any notion, idea, or image of a quintillion, or even of a trillion: these mighty reckonings may be, and doubtless are, mathematically correct and true; but they are poetically monstrous and false.

A pretty little milk-white goat, sitting quietly in the shady nook of a galaxy, with two golden horns, one of them broken off and filled with fruits and flowers, will supply a charming mythic fable, which the lunar parallax will never yield. Consequently, a Quaker Globe Celestial, devoid of ornament, dreading paganism, shunning idolatry, not allowing free play to that heathenish faculty, the fancy, and with which William Penn or George Fox might have surveyed the heavens; a celestial globe, not of a drab or slate colour, it is true, but wanting the figures of the constellations, merely dotted over the stars of different magnitudes, was odious and execrable to the young

poet. A globe robbed of all the men and women, of the ships, scales, cups, crowns, of the various birds, beasts, and fishes, that had been assigned to each hemisphere by a prudent antiquity, seemed, and with reason, unsatisfactory and fraudulent.

'Instead of omitting these mythological pictures on our globes, how much better it would be, were it possible, how pretty, how indescribably pleasing,' he would sometimes exclaim, peering upwards into boundless space, 'to vary the uniform blue ground by delicately tinting above us all the signs of the zodiac, and all the other principal asterisms; Orion in full glory, with his bright-eyed dog, Hercules on his knees, both the Bears with their keeper, "Prince Memnon's sister", and all the rest of that goodly company!'

I soon found, to my sorrow, that my project of making pedestrian excursions from Edinburgh was quite impracticable; my friend could not possibly leave his young bride alone: to have gone by myself, which I would willingly have done, if I might, would have been unpopular, being accounted unkind: the scheme therefore was entirely relinquished, although not without regret; and I never could find another opportunity of executing the design, consequently I know nothing more of Scotland than the little which I could learn during my first and only visit to its majestic and picturesque capital.

I cannot say that I never set foot in Scotland since the year 1811; for the last twenty years it has been my fortune to pay an annual visit in the autumn to Berwick-upon-Tweed, and then I have several times walked far enough, and it was not very far, beyond Lamberton toll-bar, or the Starch House Gate, to be able to pluck a thistle on Scottish ground; and fixing the national emblem and flower in my buttonhole, as an appropriate tribute of respect to 'the very focus of elegance', I walked back to Berwick and to dinner.

On one occasion, returning with St. Andrew's chosen flower in my breast, I met a brave Scot, and related to him asking, where I had been and what I had done: 'Oh! That is a very poor memento,' he said, 'you should have proceeded onwards to some house of entertainment, and just tasted our whisky!'

Our mornings were passed in study; after dinner, we all went forth together, to take as long a walk as could be brought within the compass of an afternoon. We returned at dusk, to draw refreshment from 'the kittle', brewing, not punch, but the sober beverage of tea; and we listened to Harriet reading

aloud until bed-time I often stole out alone, generally before breakfast, to inspect such objects as were not interesting to my young friends. Our time wore away thus very agreeably, and not without improvement.

At the end of six weeks it was necessary that I should return to York. It was agreed that we should travel thither together, in order that they might remain with me there, according to Bysshe's favourite phrase, 'for ever', or in ordinary, unpoetic language, during the year which I was to spend in that city; and at the conclusion of that period we were all to remove to London, and to dwell there together 'for ever', writing, reading, and being read to.

A dispensation was reluctantly granted to me, but without absolution, by the philosophers to pursue, to my inevitable destruction, the vile and degrading study of the law. It was granted. I believe, because it was considered that my own sagacity, and their arguments and persuasions, would in a very short time induce me to abandon it.

At Edinburgh, as elsewhere, Bysshe received many letters. His uncle, Captain Pilfold, was the most useful of his correspondents at that time, for not only did he write cheerful, friendly, hearty letters, some of which I read, but he kindly supplied his peccant nephew with money. The cloud-compelling son of Sir Bysshe was fulminating and furious, darting his franked lightnings on all sides. His letter to my father is a good specimen of a mild thunderbolt.

DEAR SIR.

FIELD PLACE, 8th September, 1811.

I wrote to you from London by the advice of a gentleman in the law, who I had advised with respecting my son having withdrawn himself from my protection, and set off for Scotland with a young female, though at that time it was conjectured he might make York in his way.

This morning I have a letter from a gentleman, who had heard from him, that he was at Edinburgh, and that H. had joined him there. I think it right to give you the information, as from one parent to another, both of whom have experienced so much affliction and anxiety. God only knows what can be the end of all this disobedience.

I am, sir,
Your very obedient servant,

T. SHELLEY.

To J. H., Norton.

The old ex-coffeehouse keeper was bound in decency to affect to be very angry; to tie his purse-strings tight, and tightly to button up his breeches pockets, as a mode of displaying virtuous indignation, which is rather palatable than painful to a parsimonious person. He felt no pangs, therefore, and found no difficulty in being exceedingly angry with his disobedient daughter and rebellious son-in-law after this thrifty fashion. And indeed his careful habits, not less than his Israelitish aspect, had won for him, as his daughter Harriet informed me, the designation of 'Jew Westbrook'.

The hero of the Nile, the conqueror of Aboukir Bay, the gallant captain, was more genial and considerate than the parliament-man and the vintner: 'To be confoundedly angry', he wrote, 'is all very well; but to stop the supplies is a great deal too bad!' Our journey was to be performed by post-chaise, in compliment to the lady, and for her particular convenience. There was nothing, as far as I remember, pleasing or curious in my return to York. We endeavoured to dine at the Press Inn, where we were execrably entertained: we passed the first night at Belford comfortably. I pointed out to Shelley the fine crops of turnips, to which the priggish lecturer on the top of the coach had called my attention, on my way to Edinburgh, and I spoke of the noble fields of barley.

Poor Harriet was not much of a farmer. Idomeneus had taught her many valuable things, but not agriculture, which, however, in his sage laws, he highly honoured.

'Pray tell me, Bysshe,' she asked, 'which are the turnips and which is the barley?'

'Why, you little Cockney,' Shelley, the heir of entail to broad lands, exclaimed, 'surely you know turnips from barley!'

It was the end of October: the fine weather had come to an end at last; rain was brewing after the long drought; and indeed it rained a little at intervals. Travelling by post-chaise was always disagreeable to me: the necessity of changing the chaise every post was troublesome and unpleasant. Shelley could not bear restraint of any kind; he hated the confinement excessively; and besides the ordinary trouble of changing, paying, looking after the luggage, and the innumerable worthless, but inestimable and indispensable, articles which a lady must carry with her on a journey, on this occasion there was the extraordinary trouble, and a very great one it was, of looking after Shelley himself, lest perchance he should suddenly vanish, and by his disappearance delay our further progress for an indefinite period.

Once, at Berwick, when Harriet had taken her seat and all was ready, Bysshe was missing; but he was retaken on fresh pursuit, being captured by myself, as he was standing on the walls in a drizzling rain, gazing mournfully at the wild and dreary sea, with looks not less wild and dreary.

The next day we reached Darlington, and were lodged and treated there sufficiently well. Shelley had been much struck in the morning by the majestic exterior of Alnwick Castle, and diverted by the strange stone figures on the battlements, savouring less of the Middle Ages than of Sadler's Wells. The next and third day completed our journey, and brought us to York. The weather was gloomy, misty, rainy, and altogether dispiriting, and the young travellers met with nothing to amuse or rouse them. Harriet read aloud in the chaise, almost incessantly, Holcroft's novels. The rigid, Spartan, iron tone of that stern author was not encouraging. Bysshe sometimes sighed deeply.

'Is it necessary to read all that, Harriet dear?' he inquired pathetically.

'Yes! absolutely.'

'Cannot you skip some part?'

'No! it is impossible!'

A poet is a creature of first impressions. The greater the poet, the more completely is he subjugated by this law of poetic temperament. The aspect of the narrow, crooked old streets of York may be remarkable, peculiar, to an antiquary even pleasing, but is never cheerful, not in the brightest weather. At the close of a dull, autumnal day, in rain and in mud, it was oppressive. For weeks, for months, the imaginative Bysshe had set his heart upon joining me at York, which place, no doubt, his warm, creative fancy had painted as a bower of beauty and of bliss; the reality, seen, moreover, to great disadvantage, at once disenchanted him.

For the convenience of my friends, I had delayed my return for a few days—for a very few days only; the woman with whom I had lodged took advantage of the delay, as such people invariably do when anything is to be gotten—even Methodists, saints, Babes of Grace, their superior sanctity notwithstanding, readily give in to such mundane tricks—and she had let the whole of her house very advantageously to a family for the winter. Instead of going straight to my most comfortable lodgings, as we had anticipated, it was necessary to undertake the very unpoetic task—for Shelley positively refused to pass the night at an inn—of seeking for lodgings in a provincial

town, in the dim twilight, and in mizzling rain. I engaged apartments, not because I liked their appearance, but by reason of the extreme impatience of my friend, at the dingy dwelling of certain dingy old milliners.

On circuit and other dull errands, it has been my hard fate too often to lodge with dressmakers, or mantua-makers, and I have often wondered when and where the dresses, which these females professed to make, were really made, since no trace of them ever appeared. Still more have I wondered by what persons such secret mantuas and mantles were worn; whether by sister spectres in churchyards, or by grim hags, like themselves, at witches' Sabbaths.

We entered upon our dim abode immediately—immediately, that was indispensable; and we procured dinner from an inn; for the weird sisters were above doing anything useful, or indeed anything at all, that I could ever discover. The house was dismal and poverty stricken, and the mistresses of the house were disobliging: I did not make them less so by an ill-timed joke. It was doubtless improper to joke in the presence of two ancient damsels, with whom the sole business of a long life had been to disprove the assertion that life is a jest, and to demonstrate that it is something exquisitely serious and tiresome. I had occasion to go into their private room, a back parlour, and to wait there a while. It seemed proper to say something to them.

'You are dressmakers, I believe?'

Both in unison responded: 'We are'.

'But where, dear ladies, are the dresses which you make?'

They seemed disconcerted at the question, and displeased, and returned no answer.

'I suppose you make dresses for "the Invisible Lady";—invisible dresses!'

A little before that time there had been an exhibition, which was very popular everywhere, and particularly so at York. It has long been discontinued, but it was very attractive in its day, and very remarkable; and it has never been distinctly explained how it was managed. The visitor entered a room; from the middle of the ceiling hung, by a silken cord, a balloon of silk about a yard in diameter; it was open at the bottom, and was seen to be quite empty. There were two tubes of brass terminating in the balloon. Through one of them the question was proposed in a whisper; by the other the answer of the 'Invisible Lady' was returned.

I once went to see the 'Invisible Lady', as the phrase was; and having convinced myself by looking into the balloon, and moving it about, that she was really invisible, I had the temerity to whisper, very gently: 'Were you ever in love, my dear?'

I then placed my ear close to the other tube, and a feminine voice softly whispered back: 'Never, till I saw you!'

The answer, containing such an avowal, I had the discretion, notwithstanding the importunities of my companions, to keep to myself.

The next morning, after my return to York, I went betimes to chambers, where I was cordially received by my conveyancer; he told me that he was very full of business, but he found time to laugh heartily at some of my adventures in Scotland, and to express a wish that he had been with me. I remained at chambers until dinner time; and I had the satisfaction to surrender an outstanding term to attend upon the inheritance.

The next morning also, Bysshe announced that he must go to London that night by the mail, to see Whitton.

'What, so soon? Put it off for a few days!'

'It is absolutely necessary to see him immediately; I must go.'

For any good the poor fellow got by seeing Whitton, he might just as well have postponed his visit indefinitely, even until this hour. However, Bysshe departed, as he had resolved to do.

I was obliged—morally obliged—to attend my conveyancer; consequently, I went to his chambers every morning, immediately after breakfast, at nine o'clock, and I remained there until the hour of dinner, five. Poor Harriet was very lonely; the weather was rainy; and when it was fair she did not go out, having unfortunately transplanted her London notions of propriety to York: she considered it incorrect to walk in the streets of that quiet city by herself. In the evening, she read aloud to me Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives*, some of Dr. Robertson's historical works, and other staid and instructive books. Whenever she conversed, after duly and dutifully wondering what Bysshe was about at that moment, she spoke in the style of an inspired prophetess of a glorious advent; of the impending commencement of a new millennium of happiness; of the instant return of the golden age; of the coming of Eliza, who was to accompany Bysshe when he returned. This harbinger of all felicity was her sister; she had no brothers, and only one sister, an elder sister; old enough, indeed, to have been her mother.

She bore her sister great love, or perhaps she had entire faith in her; she worshipped her, not so much through a feeling of veneration, but a strong sense of paramount duty, and yielded her implicit, unreasoning obedience. Her mother was as dignified as silk and satin could make her, and was fully capable of sitting all day long with her hands before her, but utterly incapable of aught besides, good or bad, except possibly of hearing herself addressed occasionally as 'mamma'. Eliza had tended, guided, and ruled Harriet from her earliest infancy; she doubtless had married her, had made the match, had put her up to everything that was to be said or done, as Shelley's letters plainly show; and she was now about to come on board again, after a short absence on shore, to hoist her flag at the masthead, to take the entire command, and for ever to regulate and direct the whole course of her married life. Eliza, I was told, was beautiful, exquisitely beautiful; an elegant figure, full of grace; her face was lovely—dark, bright eyes; jet black hair, glossy; a crop upon which she bestowed the care it merited—almost all her time; and she was so sensible, so amiable, so good!

Bysshe's return was ardently desired; partly for his own sake, but principally on account of the lost treasure, which he was to restore, and whose protracted absence began to be severely felt, on account of the rich freight of beauty and virtue which the homeward-bound vessel would surely bring back.

One evening, I returned to our lodgings from a stroll after dinner, and found to my surprise that the peerless Eliza had arrived.

Harriet was seated on the sofa by the side of her good genius, her guardian angel, her familiar demon: 'Eliza has come; was it not good of her; so kind?' I was presented to her. She hardly deigned to notice me.

Such neglect on the part of so superior a being, although a barmaid by origin, or at best a daughter of the house, appeared reasonable enough.

'I thought Bysshe was to have brought you with him.'

'Oh dear, no!'

The tea things were on the table; the new-comer was of too sublime a nature to endure the contact of a tea-pot, and poor Harriet's being was too highly sublimated by the august presence to attend, as usual, to the vulgar requisitions of the tea-table. The case was important and urgent.

'Shall I make tea?'

This was not forbidden, and it was made. Eliza looked contemptuously at the cup of tea, which I placed before her. Harriet descended from the seventh heaven so far as to stir, and even to sip her tea. I helped myself freely, like a good Philistine as I was, whilst the music of the spheres held its thrilling course. Poor little Harriet was wrapt in ecstasy; she whispered inaudibly to Eliza: Eliza sighed, and returned a still lower whisper.

I had ample leisure to contemplate the acquisition to our domestic circle. She was older than I had expected, and she looked much older than she was. The lovely face was seamed with the smallpox, and of a dead white, as faces so much marked and scarred commonly are; as white, indeed, as a mass of boiled rice, but of a dingy hue, like rice boiled in dirty water. The eyes were dark, but dull, and without meaning; the hair was black and glossy, but coarse; and there was the admired crop—a long crop, much like the tail of a horse—a switch tail. The fine figure was meagre, prim, and constrained. The beauty, the grace, and the elegance existed, no doubt, in their utmost perfection, but only in the imagination of her partial young sister. Her father, as Harriet told me, was familiarly called 'Jew Westbrook', and Eliza greatly resembled one of the dark-eyed daughters of Judah.

On the day after the auspicious arrival of the amiable stranger, Bysshe returned from London; his negotiations had been unsuccessful; his long, fatiguing, and expensive journey had been undertaken in vain. Diplomatic notes without stint; protocols, dcuterocols, and chiliostocols innumerable; articles of honourable capitulation, projects of treaties of alliance, offensive and defensive, claims and counter-claims: rigmarole, solemn, stupid, barbarous, and ungrammatical, such were the fruits of these conferences. The whole history of diplomacy, public or secret, can supply nothing more empty and effete than the negotiations with His Excellency the Great Plenipotentiary, Whitton: an impartial posterity, however, will ascribe the failure in these transactions rather to the emperor and autocrat, than to his accredited minister. The state papers which were transmitted on the present occasion, will show, once for all, in how ungenial and unsatisfactory a manner they wasted their time and strength in vain bickerings, without the sinews of war, or the sure bond of peace—money.

[Copy]

GREAT JAMES STREET, 23rd October, 1811.

SIR,

Your letter of the 20th instant came to my hands after the post of yesterday. Your father's communications to me have been of a very painful nature, resulting from the manner in which you have treated and written to and of him. He stated to me his determination not to supply you with any money until he shall be satisfied that your future conduct will be directed by a judgment more consonant to your duty to him as your parent, and his and your situation. As, therefore, it remains with you to seek a restoration of confidence in your father towards you, and as the question is to his injured feelings a matter of serious consideration, I beg to say, that it is my wish you should not take the proposed journey to London, but that your communication may be in writing, for by so doing I shall avoid the inconvenience which may result from my reporting to your father the import of what you might think proper to say.

I am, sir, your humble servant,

WM. WHITTON.

To P. B. Shelley, Esq., Captain Pilfold's, R.N.,
Cuckfield, Sussex.

GREAT JAMES STREET, 23rd October, 1811.

Mr. Whitton sends Mr. P. B. Shelley a copy of the letter he addressed to him by the post of yesterday, and which Mr. Whitton considers to be a direct reply to the note which Mr. P. B. Shelley sent to him last night at Camberwell.

Please to direct any further communications to Great James Street, with Mr. Whitton's compliments.

To P. B. S., Turk's Coffee House, Strand.

CHAPTER XIV

THE arrival of Bysshe was acknowledged by Harriet, but it was plain that he had been superseded; Eliza once or twice betrayed a faint consciousness of his presence, as if the lamp of her life had been faintly glimmering in its socket, which fortunately it was not; that was all the notice she took of her sister's husband. His course, therefore, was plain; his peace might have been assured; whether his happiness would ever have been great, may be well doubted. It was absolutely necessary to declare peremptorily, 'Either Eliza goes, or I go'; and instantly to act upon the declaration. This so necessary course the poor fellow did not take; and it is certain that the Divine Poet could not have taken it, for with superhuman strength, weakness less than human was strangely blended; accordingly, from the days of the blessed advent, our destinies were entirely changed. The house lay, as it were, under an interdict; all our accustomed occupations were suspended; study was forbidden; reading was injurious—to read aloud might terminate fatally; to go abroad was death, to stay at home the grave! Bysshe became nothing; I, of course, very much less than nothing—a negative quantity of a very high figure.

Harriet still existed, it was true; but her existence was to be in future a seraphic life, a beatific vision, to be passed exclusively in the assiduous contemplation of Eliza's infinite perfections.

That all this was very well meant, very disinterested, kind, benevolent, sisterly, it would be unjust to deny, or even to doubt; but it was all the more pernicious on that account.

Before the angelic visit, we had never heard of Harriet's nerves, we had never once suspected that such organs existed; now we heard of little else. 'Dearest Harriet, you must not do that; think of your nerves; only consider, dearest, the state of your nerves; Harriet, dear, you must not eat this; you are not going to drink that, surely; whatever will become of your poor nerves? Gracious heaven! What would Miss Warne say?'

Miss Warne was the highest sanction; her name was often invoked, and her judgment appealed to. 'What will Miss Warne say?' That single, simple, but momentous question set every other question at rest.

Who was Miss Warne? I inquired of the now nervous Harriet. She informed me that she stood in the same relation to some coffee-house or hotel in London, as the lovely Eliza; she was a daughter of the house; a mature virgin also, quite ripe, perhaps rather too mellow; a prim old maid indeed, an old frump, she said; there was nothing particular about her in any way; but Eliza had the highest opinion of Miss Warne; she had long been her bosom friend!

Eliza was vigilant, keeping a sharp look-out after the nerves; yet she was frequently off duty; her time was chiefly spent in her bedroom. What does that dear Eliza do alone in her bedroom? Does she read? No. Does she work? Never. Does she write? No. What does she do, then?

Harriet came quite close to me, and answered in a whisper, lest peradventure her sister should hear her, with the serious air of one who communicates some profound and weighty secret, 'She brushes her hair!' The coarse black hair was glossy, no doubt; but to give daily sixteen hours out of four-and-twenty to it, was certainly to bestow much time on a crop. Yet it was by no means impossible, that whilst she plied her hairbrush, she was revolving in her mind dearest Harriet's best interests; or seriously reflecting upon what Miss Warne would say.

The poor poet was overwhelmed by the affectionate invasion; he lay prostrated and helpless, under the insupportable pressure of our domiciliary visit; but the good Harriet knew how, school-girl like, and contrary to her sisterly allegiance, sometimes to take advantage, by stealth, of dear Eliza's absence. 'Come quite close to me, and I will read to you. I must not speak loud, lest I should disturb poor Eliza.'

Sometimes she could escape for a short walk before dinner. One day, whilst the guardian angel kept on brushing, we brushed off and wandered to the river. We stood on the high centre of the old Roman bridge; there was a mighty flood; father Ouse had overflowed his banks, carrying away with him timber and what not.

'Is it not an interesting, a surprising sight?'

'Yes, it is very wonderful. But, dear Harriet, how nicely that dearest Eliza would spin down the river! How sweetly she would turn round and round like that log of wood! And, gracious heaven, what would Miss Warne say?'

She turned her pretty face away and laughed—as a slave laughs, who is beginning to grow weary of an intolerable yoke.

In York, an old English city, Harriet's beauty attracted the

eyes of all beholders, in walking through its narrow streets; her cheeks were suffused with the blush of modesty, which made her still more engaging, more bright and radiant; and then the good girl bashfully drew down her veil. Her charms did not appear to be equally captivating in the northern metropolis: I went abroad with her there more frequently, but nobody ever noticed her; she was short, and slightly and delicately formed; not raw-boned enough for the Scottish market.

When I first knew Shelley, he was alike indifferent to all works of art. He learned afterwards to admire statues, and then, at a still later period, pictures; but he never had any feeling for the wonders of architecture; even our majestic cathedrals were viewed with indifference. I took him into York Minster several times, but to no purpose; it was thrown away, entirely lost upon him. The insensible Harriet appeared to feel its beauty, until her admiration of the sublime structure was proscribed and forbidden by authority.

One day, when we were going together to the minster, Eliza intervened, and instead of interdicting our walk, to our surprise said that she would go with us, and inflicted upon us her comförtless company. She had heard of the celebrated window at the end of the north transept, called 'The Five Sisters', because five ladies had given it to the church: the stained glass in each of the five bays had been copied from a pattern in needlework embroidered by one of the five lady sisters. On entering the minster, she at once inquired for 'The Five Sisters'; the window was pointed out to her. 'Lord! What stiff, ugly, old-fashioned, formal patterns! Gracious heaven! What would Miss Warne say? Harriet!' After this solemn censure and condemnation, inasmuch as the two irrefragable tapsters disapproved of the tapestry, as being ill-suited for an urn-rug, the docile and obedient Harriet dutifully forbore to admire the glorious edifice.

'What is your opinion of suicide? Did you never think of destroying yourself?' It was a puzzling question, indeed, for the thought had never entered my head.

'What do you think of matricide; of high treason; of rick-burning? Did you never think of killing any one; of murdering your mother; of setting stackyards on fire?' I had never contemplated the commission of any of these crimes, and I should scarcely have been more astonished if I had been interrogated concerning my dispositions and inclinations with respect to them, than I was when, early in our acquaintance, the good Harriet asked me, 'What do you think of suicide?'

She often discoursed of her purpose of killing herself some day or other, and at great length, in a calm, resolute manner. She told me that at school—where she was very unhappy, as she said, but I could never discover why she was so, for she was treated with much kindness and exceedingly well instructed—she had conceived and contrived sundry attempts and purposes of destroying herself. It is possible that her sister had assured her that she was very unhappy, and had supported the assurance by the incontrovertible opinion of Miss Warne, and of course Harriet became firmly convinced of her utter wretchedness. She got up in the night, she said, sometimes with a fixed intention of making away with herself—in what manner she did not unfold—and bade a long farewell to the world, looked out of the window, taking leave of the bright moon and of all sub-lunary things, and then, it would seem, got into bed again and went quietly to sleep, and rose in the morning and wrote neatly upon her slate, in the school-room at Clapham, the admirable ordinances of Idomeneus and Numa Pompilius as sedately as before.

She spoke of self-murder serenely before strangers; and at a dinner party I have heard her describe her feelings, opinions, and intentions with respect to suicide with prolix earnestness; and she looked so calm, so tranquil, so blooming, and so handsome that the astonished guests smiled. She once, in particular—I well remember the strange scene and the astonishment of the harmless company—at a Pythagorean dinner in the house of a medical philosopher, scattered dismay amongst a quiet party of vegetable-eaters, persons who would not slay a shrimp, or extinguish animal life in embryo by eating an egg, by asking, whether they did not feel sometimes strongly inclined to kill themselves.

The poor girl's monomania of self-destruction, which we long looked upon as a vain fancy, a baseless delusion, an inconsequent hallucination of the mind, amused us occasionally for some years; eventually it proved a sad reality, and drew forth many bitter tears.

We have sometimes consoled ourselves by cherishing the belief that if none of those contingencies had happened, to the influence of which a rash act has, with mistaken confidence, been ascribed, the morbid predisposition might have produced the same melancholy result. But he who anticipates ill discharges the duty of a faithful biographer.

When Bysshe returned from London we changed our lodgings,

perhaps somewhat hastily, under the impulse of the same impatience which had presided at taking them; for throughout the whole course of his perturbed and restless life, the poor poet was uniformly in a hurry; his life indeed was one hurry; he appeared to be ever impelled by a wild terror, lest he should lose, or even delay for one moment, any opportunity of placing himself in a disadvantageous position. Accordingly we removed, but with little benefit, with scarcely any visible improvement; however, we quitted the Valkyriæ, two of the Fatal Sisters; dress-makers not unworthy of a place in the Edda, who were manifestly designed to sew shrouds, to hem winding-sheets, to make mouldering dresses for the mouldering dead.

Nevertheless, York was in those days, in many respects, at least, a poor, poverty-stricken city, rich only in pride, ecclesiastical and civil, and it was not easy to find good lodgings there: during a year's residence I shifted my quarters more than once, but I was never at all comfortable, save with the most Christian woman with whom I was at first located.

I had spoken sometimes of my intention of paying a visit to the English lakes, which visit had been exchanged for the matrimonial trip to Edinburgh. The image of lakes, mountains, rocks, and waterfalls, and of the like picturesque and romantic objects which those districts present, at once took entire possession of light minds. The young couple became in an instant, as to their whole souls, demoniacally possessed by the Genius of the Lakes; and it was impossible to exorcise them, to cast out the mischievous spirit, either by prayer or fasting, or in any other manner—not even by bell, book, and canule; more especially since their guardian angel, smirking in silence, no doubt, favoured the sudden fancy.

Nothing would please but an immediate journey to Keswick; and our flight must be in the winter: I was requested, strongly urged, to join in it. To quit my professional duties, in which I had engaged, was impossible; besides, the impracticable month of November was ill-suited for such an excursion. Next summer, during the long vacation, I should have leisure: it would be the most proper season for tourists, and we would all go together.

To a poetic temperament, so long a delay was intolerable; the young poet's imagination could conceive anything in earth or in heaven, but not the possibility of waiting for several months before seeing some mountain stream; of living at peace with himself and all mankind, in great personal comfort for

whole weeks, without having as yet heard by moonlight the sound of a remote waterfall. Neither could they be brought to comprehend that one period of the year was better adapted than another for their cherished purposes. Skiddaw was there surely, and Helvellyn; Derwentwater Lake was always there; what more could they require? Moreover, Southey and Wordsworth, not less than the donkeys which they had so finely apostrophized and so sweetly sung, remain there all the year; and why cannot we? On the shortest day, as well as the longest, although for a shorter time, the parish pauper, Harry Gill, the theme of many sounding verse, wakes the echoes by cracking stones with his pick in some sequestered mountain glen, without respecting seasons or persons, except perchance the parish beadle; and we are more than many paupers! To go at once to Keswick; to go to Keswick instantly, and to remain there 'for ever', was practicable and necessary. 'You will soon be sensible of the absurdity, the wickedness, of lingering longer in a spot so unpoetic and uninspiring as York; you will speedily reunite yourself with your friends at Keswick, and remain with them there "for ever".'

A day was fixed for their departure; their trunks were packed; they would take a part of their baggage, the rest was to be left behind for me to bring, when I came after them: I gave no hopes that I would soon follow, but they knew better than I did; and they were confident I should not tarry. Harriet's nerves, it was added, would be braced by the pure mountain air; the fisc was rather empty, but the funds required for an expensive journey were supplied, I apprehend, by Eliza, who, although she had a laughable way of showing it, appeared to feel a lively interest in her sister's welfare, and in the prosperity of her nervous system, according to her own view of it, and in which, notwithstanding the appearance of rude health, there might, in truth, be something peculiar.

To be always in a hurry was Bysshe's grand and first rule of conduct; his second canon of practical wisdom, and this he esteemed hardly less important than the former, was to make a mystery of everything; to treat as a profound secret matters manifest, patent, and fully known to everybody. A lively fancy, which imagined difficulties, and created obstacles where none existed, was the true cause of a course of dealing that was troublesome and injurious to himself and to all connected with him.

'How many great poets, like yourself,' I have asked him,

'could the world bear to have in it at once, without being altogether ruined; how many of you—three or four—might co-exist in the universe, and yet not induce a rapid and utter annihilation of all things?'

The morning of departure had been fixed; on the afternoon preceding it, when I returned to dinner, such was the precipitation of the young votaries of the Muses, that the birds were flown; a short, illegible, unintelligible note, scrawled with a pencil on a scrap of paper, informed me, so far as I could make it out, that it had occurred to them during my absence at chambers, that it would be expedient to start at once, and to proceed to Richmond, where they should pass the night, and if I chose to follow them, I should find them there, and we would travel the next morning all together towards the goal, Keswick.

This proposal it was alike my duty and my inclination to decline; whenever circumstances brought us together again, I should enjoy once more the society of my incomparable friend; and should they continue until the summer to inhabit the shores of Derwentwater Lake, it would be easy and agreeable to visit them.

My materials for composing a connected narrative of the proceedings of my friends during their stay at Keswick, which did not last for ever, as they had projected, but only for a few weeks or months, are scanty. I have eight letters, not one of which is dated, either by the writer, or by a postmark: in those days, unless a letter passed through London, and came into the General Post Office, the stamp bore no date, merely the name of the post town. These give little information respecting their external world, their creature comforts, or discomforts; as to their internal life, it must have been truly distressing, on account of ill-health and low spirits, caused chiefly by fatigue, inclement weather, incommodious abodes, and the want of all needful appliances and resources, especially of money. The purse of their guardian angel, it seems, was just long enough to enable her fairly to plant her wards, but not to furnish permanent succour.

'If you dislike York, and the neighbourhood of York, so much, do not remain there; quit at once; but go to the south, to a part of the world with which you are acquainted, and where you are known; to a milder and more genial climate, and where you will be nearer your supplies. Do not on any account expose yourselves to the bleak north at this unkindly season, out of the way of everybody and of everything—out of the reach of money, and buried alive amongst rude and uncivilized barbarians.'

But counsel was offered in vain; the Muses are not to be advised: we shall see Derwentwater Lake, into which the cascade of Lodore falls, and that will suffice; it will be all in all.

They had several residences, one more disagreeable than the other, in the town of Keswick; and one at a place called Chesnut Cottage, at some little distance from the town, which, it may be supposed, had its additional and peculiar inconveniences.

Bysshe's letters will speak for themselves, in a tone of vague and mysterious despondency.

KESWICK, *Wednesday night.*

You were surprised at our sudden departure; I have no time, however, *now*, either to account for it or enter into the investigation which we agreed upon. I have arrived at this place after some days of incessant travelling, which has left me no leisure to write to you at length. To-morrow you will hear more.

With real, true interest, I constantly think of you, believe me, my friend, so sincerely am I attached to you. I can never forget you.

Yours,

PERCY S.

Will you send my box per coach to Mr. D. Crosthwaite's, Town Head, Keswick, Cumberland.

To T. J. H., York.

POST OFFICE, KESWICK, CUMBERLAND;
not Mr. D. Crosthwaite's.

I promised to write to you to-day, my dear friend, but again another day has elapsed in the occupation of preparing our residence, and night has come on, when the post leaves us.

We all greatly regret that 'your own interests, your own *real* interests', should compel you to remain at present at York. But pray, write often; your last letter I have read, as I would read your soul.

We remain at Keswick. We settle here, at least for some time. I will never go to the south again. Adieu.

Yours most affectionately, most unalterably,

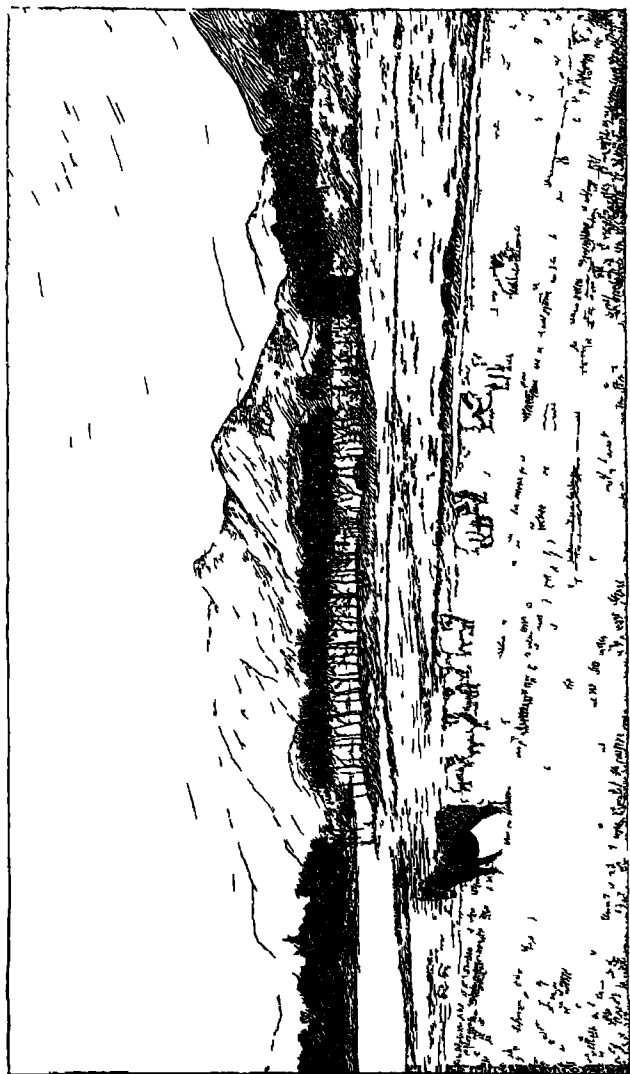
PERCY SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND.

Your letters are arrived. You did right in anticipating that Richmond was only a resting-place, and *Keswick* is our residence, to which place I wish you could follow us immediately.

I stand alone. I feel that I am nothing: a speck in an universe!



DIUWNIW TII IRO I KI WICK

All this is true: yet have I not been wretched, and was my wretchedness less keen, because it was undeserved? *Was* it undeserved? What is desert? Are you not he whom I love, whom I deem capable of exciting the emulation, and attracting the admiration of thousands. I have ever esteemed you as a superior being, and taken you for one who was to give laws to us poor beings, who grovel beneath. We shall meet again soon; but I must live some little time, I fear, by myself; and if my firmness is not sufficient to bear pain without hope of reward, I know that soon we meet again.

Your letters are kind and sincere. I had no time when I wrote last. If I thought we were to be long parted, I should be wretchedly miserable—half mad! I look on Harriet: she is before me; she is somewhat better. Has she convinced you that she is?

Oh! what a spot is this! Here Nature has exhausted the profusion of her loveliness! Will *you* come; will you share my fortunes, enter into my schemes, love me as I love you, be inseparable, as once I fondly hoped we were?

This is not all past, like a dream of the sick man, which leaves but bitterness—a fleeting vision. Oh! how I have loved you! I was even ashamed to tell you how!

And now to leave you for a long time! No; not for a *long* time! Night comes; Death comes! Cold, calm Death. Almost I would it were to-morrow. There is another life; are you not to be the first there? Assuredly, dearest, dearest friend. Reason with me still; I am like a child in weakness.

Your letters came directly after dinner; how could any one read them unmoved? Calm, wise; you are then with me, and I forbear wishing that Death would yawn. Adieu!

Cannot you follow us?—why not? But I will dare to be good—dare to be virtuous; and I will soon seize once more what I have for a while relinquished, never, never again to resign it.

To T. J. H., York.

KESWICK.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have just finished reading your long letter to Harriet. It is late, or the post is so; therefore I may not say all I wish; indeed, that is *not* possible: words cannot express half my reasonings, the thousandth part of my feelings. Can I not feel; do we not sympathize? Cannot I read your soul, as I have read your letter, which I believe I have generally considered

to be a copy of the former. My letters have always been, as well as my conversations with you, transcripts of my thoughts.

I did not concert my departure from Richmond, nor that from York. Why did I leave you? I have never doubted you—you, the brother of my soul, the object of my vivid interest; the theme of my impassioned panegyric. But, for the present, adieu!

It is nine; it is ten. Expect to hear to-morrow. I will then answer your letter.

Ever your Friend,

PERCY SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

CHESNUT HILL, KESWICK.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

What you say of *my* superiority is perfectly erroneous. Consider a little, and you will discover this. The great apparent cause of it is my insensibility; perhaps you are not prepared to boast of yours: I am sure you are not.

If Harriet's state of health did not intervene between our meeting again immediately, to-morrow willingly would I return to York; aye, willingly, and be happy thus to prove and to indulge my friendship.

'Absence extinguishes small passions, and kindles great ones.' It is so in love, and so it is with friendship.

My friend, you say I ought always to set you an example of firmness. What! I, the weakest, the most slavish of beings that crawl on the earth's face, to you?

This is a sweet spot! But, oh, heavens, my soul is half sick at this terrible world, where nature seems to own no monster in her works, but man. They quarrel for straws; they part on these quarrels; and two lovers, whose existences seemed entwined separate because—you can complete the portraiture yourself from my history.

Harriet has written to you; what she has said, I know not. I have not been able to write for a day or two to you, owing to having been ill from the poison of laurel leaves—I have now.

Your letters of to-day have arrived; I have read that to Harriet; she showed it me. I know how much I owe you; I feel it all. Believe me, your letter has delighted and affected me. I will write again to-morrow.

Your real, true, sincere friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Will you send us Mr. S.'s bill?

To T. J. H., York.

CHESNUT COTTAGE, CUMBERLAND.

We returned to Keswick last night. All your letters I have found here, which have arrived in my absence. To think of returning again to York at present is *impossible*. I could not consent to the injury of Harriet's health—to the destruction of her nerves. You must know what you yourself are. Mock modesty can never have concealed from you the fascination which your society spreads. It were impossible to think of the friendship of such a being, and not to say that were worthier of attainment than fame, or pleasure, or the attachment of all other beings. To give up this, even for a few weeks, must be a sacrifice—how great a one my heart alone can testify. Yet this I now resign for a while. I resign it for Harriet's health; possibly for my own (though *I* think not). I need only tranquillity.

If I were free, I were unceasingly yours, though I do not think you infallible. I think you capable of great things, and in such, as well as in the stores of such a mind as yours, can I conceive no pleasure equal to the participation.

I returned to Keswick yesterday. Your letters in the meantime were *not* forwarded to me.

Our stay here is *so* uncertain, that I know not one day where we may be the next.

Your real friend,
P. B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H., York.

KESWICK.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Our letters are delayed terribly; two of yours together! The thing is, we are not *in*, but near, Keswick. You will hear from me to-morrow.

I do not know that absence will *certainly* cure love; but this I know, that it fearfully augments the intensity of friendship!

I do not know where the passage exists of which you speak in the latter part of your letter. But this will not do; I must look for it.

Believe me yours, till you hear again.

I write in Keswick, just as the post is going out.

Your true, sincere,
P. B. SHELLEY.

Pray, take care of your friend.

To T. J. H., York.

KESWICK, *Thursday*.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We live now at Keswick. You do not come to us; but pray, write. You may send my trunk. Open all my letters that come to York.

I have obeyed what you say in your letter of to-day: I have not told you that I am miserable; indeed I cannot be so miserable as I was when I wrote those letters. If you were to see me now, you would see me very calm; as I am sure you are. Your long letter of advice has been my companion, my study, since I received it.

Adieu! Be happy! My dear friend, adieu!

Ever yours, with sincerity,

To T. J. H., York.

PERCY SHELLEY.

Other and longer letters were written to me from Keswick by Harriet, as well as by Bysshe, containing, doubtless, some details of their mode of life, and probably of their studies also, when they had become sufficiently reconciled to their delightfully romantic position to find solace in study—and indited most probably in a clearer, calmer, and less perturbed spirit. These, unfortunately, I never received; why I know not. I can only conjecture that, possibly, when they resided out of the town the letter, which would have been so welcome at York, was confided to some artless, simple-souled messenger—to some Peter Bell, or other immortal hero of lakist minstrelsy, in order to be put by him into the letter-box at Keswick, whither he was enjoined to hasten, through the pouring rain, and that a shilling was given as a reward for his faithful service. That the single-hearted Peter habitually repaired to the nearest public-house, spent his shilling in an agreeable manner, and then, to make himself thoroughly comfortable, quietly lighted his pipe with the voluminous epistle, the pretty Harriet's pretty phrases imparting a more delicate flavour to the bird's-eye.

My instructions with regard to Shelley's correspondence were to open all letters that should come to York for him, and to dispatch such only as appeared to me worth the postage. Many letters arrived daily, but few of them merited to be sent farther. One of the few was an invitation, kindly and cordially worded, from the Duke of Norfolk, to visit him at Graystoke: it was franked by his Grace, and dated November 7th, 1811. The letter was transmitted to Keswick, and the visit was paid. I was informed subsequently that it gave much satisfaction to all

three of them, more especially to the ladies: and Harriet assured me, most probably on the authority of her sister, that the duke was quite charmed with Eliza; and, if his Grace admired black hair well brushed, it could hardly have been otherwise. In what terms or in what manner his declaration was made, I was not told. Unfortunately, the noble admirer was married already, although only to an insane Scudamore, yet still married: otherwise it might have been inferred that the charming Eliza would have been a duchess; and then, gracious heaven! what would Miss Warne have said?

How Bysshe made the acquaintance of Southey, whether by personal or epistolary introduction, or through poetic sympathy, I never knew.

Concerning the intercourse of these two remarkable persons, I have heard from Shelley, and from others, several anecdotes.

'Southey had a large collection of books, very many of them old books, some rare works—books in many languages, more particularly in Spanish. The shelves extended over the walls of every room in his large, dismal house in Keswick; they were in the bedrooms and even down the stairs. This I never saw elsewhere. I took out some volume one day, as I was going downstairs with him. Southey looked at me as if he was displeased, so I put it back again instantly, and I never ventured to take down one of his books another time. I used to glance my eye eagerly over the backs of the books, and read their titles, as I went up or down stairs. I could not help doing so, but I think he did not quite approve of it.'

'Do you know that Southey did not like to have his books touched. Do you know why?'

'No! I do not know.'

'You do not know? How I hate that there should be anything which you do not know! For who will tell me if you will not?'

'I only know that persons who had large libraries sometimes have the same feeling.'

'How strange that a man should have many thousands of books, and should have a secret in every book, which he cannot bear that anybody should know but himself. How rare and grim! Do you believe, then, that Southey really had a secret in every one of his books?'

'No! I do not, indeed, Bysshe.'

After musing for some minutes, he added: 'There were not secrets in all his books, certainly, for he often took one down

himself and showed me some remarkable passage; and then he would let me keep it as long as I pleased, and turn over the leaves, if he had taken it down himself; so there could be no secret there. And yet,' he continued, after further reflection, 'perhaps there was a secret; but he thought that I could not find it out.'

'Were the passages which he showed you really remarkable?'

'They might be, sometimes; but for the most part they were not; at least, I did not think them so. They usually appeared trifling. He never discussed any subject; he gave his own opinion, commonly, in a very absolute manner; he used to lay down the law, to dogmatize. What he said was seldom his own—it seldom came from himself. He repeated long quotations, read extracts which he had made, or took down books and read from them aloud, or pointed out something for me to read, which would settle the matter at once without appeal. His conversation was rather interesting, and only moderately instructive; he was not so much a man as a living commonplace book, a talking album filled with long extracts from long-forgotten authors on unimportant subjects. Still his intercourse was very agreeable. I liked much to be with him; besides, he was a good man and exceedingly kind.'

When Southey died his books were brought to the hammer—as the phrase is. I picked up a few of them, rather as memorials than for their intrinsic value. Several of these were bound in the Chinese fashion, as I had heard that many of his books were, that is to say, in silk, cloth, velvet, and not in leather.

Mrs. Southey had been a milliner at Bath, a certain Miss —; a lovely creature, as I have been told, as every Bath milliner ought to be; and no doubt a very estimable person. After her marriage she used up her remnants in a truly conjugal and most beneficial manner, in binding strongly and very neatly such of her husband's books as required it. I possess one of these bound with a bit of modest gingham, and another in a pretty piece of Irish poplin; both volumes are likewise adorned by the autograph of the author of *Madoc*; they are therefore, on all accounts, to be cherished.

In associating with Southey, not only was it necessary to salvation to refrain from touching his books, but various rites, ceremonies, and usages must be rigidly observed. At certain appointed hours only was he open to conversation; at the seasons which had been predestined from all eternity for holding intercourse with his friends. Every hour of the day had its commission

—every half-hour was assigned to its own peculiar, undeviating function. The indefatigable student gave a detailed account of his most painstaking life, every moment of which was fully employed and strictly prearranged, to a certain literary Quaker lady.

‘I rise at five throughout the year; from six till eight I read Spanish; then French, for one hour; Portuguese next, for half an hour—my watch lying on the table; I give two hours to poetry; I write prose for two hours; I translate so long; I make extracts so long’; and so of the rest, until the poor fellow had fairly fagged himself into his bed again.

‘And pray, when dost thou think, friend?’ she asked, dryly, to the great discomfiture of the future Laureate.

From morn till night, from the cradle to the grave, the hard reading, hard writing pansophist had never once found a single spare moment for such a purpose. The fable, if it be a fable, is told of thee, too, dearest Bysshe. Shelley also was always reading; at his meals a book lay by his side, on the table, open. Tea and toast were often neglected, his author seldom; his mutton and potatoes might grow cold; his interest in a work never cooled. He invariably sallied forth, book in hand, reading to himself, if he was alone, if he had a companion reading aloud. He took a volume to bed with him, and read as long as his candle lasted; he then slept—impatiently, no doubt—until it was light, and he recommenced reading at the early dawn. One day we were walking together, arm-in-arm, under the gate of the Middle Temple, in Fleet Street; Shelley, with open book, was reading aloud; a man with an apron said to a brother operative: ‘See, there are two of your damnation lawyers; they are always reading!’ The tolerant philosopher did not choose to be reminded that he had once been taken for a lawyer; he declared the fellow was an ignorant wretch! He was loath to leave his book to go to bed, and frequently sat up late reading; sometimes indeed he remained at his studies all night. In consequence of this great watching, and of almost incessant reading, he would often fall asleep in the daytime—dropping off in a moment—like an infant. He often quietly transferred himself from his chair to the floor, and slept soundly on the carpet, and in the winter upon the rug, basking in the warmth like a cat; and like a cat his little round head was roasted before a blazing fire. If any one humanely covered the poor head to shield it from the heat, the covering was impatiently put aside in his sleep. ‘You make your brains

boil, Bysshe. I have seen and heard the steam rushing out violently at your nostrils and ears!'

Southey was addicted to reading his terrible epics—before they were printed—to any one who seemed to be a fit subject for the cruel experiment. He soon set his eyes on the new-comer, and one day having effected the caption of Shelley, he immediately lodged him securely in a little study upstairs, carefully locking the door upon himself and his prisoner and putting the key in his waistcoat-pocket. There was a window in the room, it is true, but it was so high above the ground that Baron Trenck himself would not have attempted it. 'Now you shall be delighted,' Southey said; 'but sit down.' Poor Bysshe sighed, and took his seat at the table. The author seated himself opposite, and placing his MS. on the table before him, began to read slowly and distinctly. The poem, if I mistake not, was *The Curse of Kehamah*. Charmed with his own composition, the admiring author read on, varying his voice occasionally, to point out the finer passages and invite applause. There was no commendation; no criticism; all was hushed. This was strange. Southey raised his eyes from the neatly-written MS.; Shelley had disappeared. This was still more strange. Escape was impossible; every precaution had been taken, yet he had vanished. Shelley had glided noiselessly from his chair to the floor, and the insensible young vandal lay buried in profound sleep underneath the table. No wonder the indignant and injured hard afterwards enrolled the sleeper as a member of the Satanic school, and inscribed his name, together with that of Byron, on a gibbet! I have been told on his own authority, that wherever Southey passed the night in travelling, he bought some book, if it were possible to pick one up on a stall, or in a shop and wrote his own name and the name of the place at the bottom of the title-page, and the date, including the day of the week. This inscription, he found, served in some measure the purpose of a journal, for when he looked at such a date it reminded him, through the association of ideas, of many particulars of his journey. I have a small volume in the German language, thus inscribed by Southey, at the foot of the title-page; the place is some town in France.

Bysshe chanced to call, one afternoon, during his residence at Keswick, on his new acquaintance, a man eminent, and of rare epic fertility. It was at four o'clock; Southey and his wife were sitting together at their tea after an early dinner, for it was washing-day. A cup of tea was offered, which was

accepted, and a plate piled high with tea-cakes was handed to the illustrious visitor; of these he refused to partake, with signs of strong aversion. He was always abstemious in his diet, at this period of his life peculiarly so; a thick hunch of dry bread, possibly a slice of brown bread and butter, might have been welcome to the Spartan youth; but hot tea-cakes heaped up, in scandalous profusion, well buttered, blushing with currants or sprinkled thickly with caraway seeds, and reeking with allspice, shocked him grievously. It was a Persian apparatus, which he detested—a display of excessive and unmanly luxury by which the most powerful empires have been overthrown—that threatened destruction to all social order, and would have rendered abortive even the divine Plato's scheme of a frugal and perfect republic. A poet's dinner is never a very heavy meal; on a washing-day, we may readily believe that it is as light as his own fancy. So far in the day Southey, no doubt, had fared sparingly; he was a hale, healthy, hearty man, breathing the keen mountain air, and working hard, too hard, poor fellow; he was hungry, and did not shrink from the tea-cakes which had been furnished to make up for his scanty midday repast. Shelley watched his unworthy proceedings, eyeing him with pain and pity. Southey had not noticed his distress, but he held his way, clearing the plates of buttered currant-cakes, and buttered seed-cakes, with an equal relish.

'Why! good God, Southey!' Bysshe suddenly exclaimed, for he could no longer contain his boiling indignation, 'I am ashamed of you! It is awful, horrible, to see such a man as you are greedily devouring this nasty stuff!'

'Nasty stuff, indeed! How dare you call my tea-cakes nasty stuff, sir?'

Mrs. Southey was charming, but it is credibly reported that she was also rather sharp.

'Nasty stuff! What right have you, pray, Mr. Shelley, to come into my house, and to tell me to my face that my tea-cakes, which I made myself, are nasty; and to blame my husband for eating them? How in the world can they be nasty? I washed my hands well before I made them, and I sprinkled them with flour. The board and the rolling-pin were quite clean; they had been well scraped and sprinkled with flour. The flour was taken out of the meal-tub, which is always kept locked; here is the key! There was nothing nasty in the ingredients, I am sure; we have a very good grocer in Keswick. Do you suppose that I would put anything nasty into them?'

What right have you to call them nasty? you ought to be ashamed of yourself, and not Mr. Southey; he surely has a right to eat what his wife puts before him! Nasty stuff! I like your impertinence!

In the course of this animated invective, Bysshe put his face close to the plate, and curiously scanned the cakes. He then took up a piece and ventured to taste it, and, finding it very good, he began to eat as greedily as Southey himself. The servant, a neat, stout, little ruddy Cumberland girl, with a very white apron, brought in a fresh supply, these also the brother philosophers soon dispatched, eating one against the other in generous rivalry. Shelley then asked for more, but no more were to be had; the whole batch had been consumed. The lovely Edith was pacified on seeing that her cakes were relished by the two hungry poets, and she expressed her regret that she did not know that Mr. Shelley was coming to take tea with her, or she would have made a larger provision. Harriet, who told me the tale, added: 'We were to have hot tea-cakes every evening "for ever". I was to make them myself, and Mrs. Southey was to teach me'.

The Divine Poet, like many other wiser men, used to pass very readily and suddenly from one extreme to the other. I myself witnessed, some years later, a like rapid transition. When he resided at Bishopsgate, I usually walked down from London, and spent Sunday with him. One frosty Saturday, in the middle of the winter, being overcome by hunger, I halted by the way—it was a rare occurrence—for refreshment, at a humble inn on Hounslow Heath. I had just taken my seat on a Windsor chair, at a small round beechen table in a little dark room with a well-sanded floor, when I saw Bysshe striding past the window. He was coming to meet me; I went to the door, and hailed him.

'Come along! It is dusk; tea will be ready; we shall be late!'

'No! I must have something to eat first; come in!'

He walked about the room impatiently.

'When will your dinner be ready; what have you ordered?'

'I asked for eggs and bacon, but they have no eggs; I am to have some fried bacon.'

He was struck with horror, and his agony was increased at the appearance of my dinner. Bacon was proscribed by him; it was gross and abominable. It distressed him greatly at first to see me eat the bacon; but he gradually approached the dish, and, studying the bacon attentively, said, 'So this is

bacon!' He then ate a small piece. 'It is not so bad either!' More was ordered; he devoured it voraciously.

'Bring more bacon!' It was brought and eaten.

'Let us have another plate.'

'I am very sorry, gentlemen,' said the old woman, 'but indeed I have no more in the house.'

The poet was angry at the disappointment, and rated her.

'What business has a woman to keep an inn, who has not enough bacon in the house for her guests? She ought to be killed!'

'Really, gentlemen, I am very sorry to be out of bacon; but I only keep by me as much as I think will be wanted. I can easily get more from Staines; they have very good bacon always in Staines!'

'As there is nothing more to be had, come along, Bysshe; let us go home to tea!'

'No! Not yet; she is going to Staines, to get us some more bacon.'

'She cannot go to-night; come along!'

He departed with reluctance, grumbling as we walked homewards at the scanty store of bacon, lately condemned as gross and abominable. The dainty rustic food made a strong impression upon his lively fancy, for when we arrived the first words he uttered were, 'We have been eating bacon together on Hounslow Heath, and do you know it was very nice. Cannot we have bacon here, Mary?'

'Yes, you can, if you please; but not to-night. Here is your tea; take that!'

'I had rather have some more bacon!' sighed the poet.

Shelley's family always called him Bysshe; as many of them, as now survive, whenever they speak of their bereavement—of the bright, but lost star of their honourable house—still call him so. Harriet and her sister, chiefly the latter, soon interdicted that name, which Eliza affirmed was too shocking; and they substituted Percy, as being prettier and more romantic. It may be so, but it was less peculiar; and I continued to address my friend as Bysshe, whenever I could style him thus without flagrant offence and open scandal. There is a Percy in *Cheriv Chace*; a Percy in Shakespeare; there is many a Percy to be found elsewhere; good men and true; it is a very good name, no doubt; but I never knew any other Bysshe; there is an individuality in that name which pleases me. His grandfather, old Sir Bysshe, after whom he was called, and who probably was his godfather, I never saw; by general consent it was admitted that

he was tall, handsome, clever, and eccentric; of a noble presence and good address, and with the formal politeness of a gentleman of the old school.

Sir Bysshe Shelley was born in 1731; he was a younger branch of his family, and therefore not wealthy. I have heard various tales concerning him, some of them extraordinary; these, it would seem, are partly true, and partly false, as is commonly the case with all private histories; but none of them are entirely unfounded. I have heard, for example, that he was at one time a miller. The legend has been thus explained. He was always frugal, and he saved his money early in life; he had invested his first savings on the security of a mill, and the mortgage being foreclosed, he became the owner of the mill; so far, but not further, he was a miller. He married a rich heiress when he was only twenty-one years of age, in 1752, the only daughter of the Rev. Theobald Mitchell. This lady was the mother of Timothy Shelley, and the grandmother of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Some seventeen years afterwards he found another and richer heiress, whom he married in 1769; of his second marriage it would be superfluous to say more at present.

His personal habits were economical, even penurious, and he had married two rich wives; it is not surprising, therefore, that at the termination of a long life of eighty-four years, he had amassed a considerable sum of money, and died at the commencement of the year 1815 very rich. Nevertheless he had spent money, it is said, at elections; and it is certain that he had lavished large sums very foolishly in building a vast edifice, Castle Goring, which he never completed. The whimsical and parsimonious old gentleman was created a baronet in 1806. His habits were retired and peculiar, but little known; for many years before his death he was confined by ill health, or chose to confine himself, to his room in a small house in the town of Horsham, and to the society of an old servant, who was as great a curiosity as his master; as the fine, handsome man, of polished and elegant manners, of great natural talents, and of vast wealth, who by his own caprice was thus buried alive.

I have heard that at one time Sir Bysshe actually practised medicine in London, in partnership with Dr. Graham, who was formerly notorious for his earth-baths, and celestial beds. This tale is apocryphal; but Bysshe, his grandson and namesake, assured me that he had heard from good authority that his grandfather lent money to the doctor, with whom he was acquainted, in order to set up a purple chariot, in which the

renowned physician drove about town; and to carry on other professional objects. When I was a boy, people still talked about Dr. Graham; I remember hearing a clergyman, a middle-aged man, give a detailed account of him to ladies and gentlemen assembled in the drawing-room at home:

‘My uncle, an old clergyman, had lived many years in a damp parsonage in the New Forest, and he was sorely afflicted with rheumatism. He was advised to consult Dr. Graham, who was then all the fashion. He did so, and was persuaded by him to take an earth-bath: he actually took one, and he thought it did him good, and was likely to be of great service. My uncle often regretted that he had not resolution enough to persevere; but it was exceedingly unpleasant. The patient was led into the doctor’s garden, there he took off his clothes behind a screen, stripping himself stark naked. He was then placed in a hole in the ground, just large enough to contain him; in what posture, I do not recollect, but I think standing. Earth, finely sifted vegetable mould, was gently filled in quite up to the collar-bone, the head and neck being free, and remaining out of the ground; the arms were buried, being placed close to his side. The patient being fairly in the bath the screen was removed, and he commonly saw other persons around him in a like situation with himself; and he passed the time, as well as he could, in conversing with them; for it was necessary to remain three or four hours in the earth.

“How cold he must have been!” a lady remarked.

‘On the contrary, the sensation of heat was most oppressive; there was an unpleasant feeling of suffocation, and the perspiration was profuse. When the time prescribed had expired, the screen was placed round him, the bather was taken out of his grave and well rubbed, and he was allowed to put on his clothes and to depart. It was so disagreeable, that my uncle could never summon courage to undergo the operation a second time; but several of his friends had taken an earth-bath frequently, and they thought that the process was of great use to them.

‘I have seen persons in the earth-bath myself. I well remember going with my uncle the first time he consulted Dr. Graham. A manservant, in a splendid livery, received us, and conducted us into the garden, and we saw there what seemed to be a bed of cauliflowers. It was the age of wigs, of powdered wigs; and there were several old gentlemen buried up to the neck in the ground, with the head only to be seen above the earth, and a well-whitened wig upon it. The footman led my

uncle up to one of the most considerable of the wigs, and introduced him to his physician: "This, sir, is Dr. Graham". For the doctor took a bath every morning himself to encourage his patients, and shone forth on the surface of mother earth as the biggest of the big wigs. He could not feel my uncle's pulse, for his arms were interred as well as his body; but he looked at his tongue, and asked him very many questions, in exact accordance with the practice of the college; and finally he prescribed an earth-bath, which shortly afterwards my uncle took.

"How dreadful!" all the ladies exclaimed with one voice; "it must be just like being buried alive! Were there any women there?"

'Not when I was present, certainly; and I rather think that females did not take these baths; and yet I recollect that the advertisements strongly recommended them to ladies as an unfailing remedy for sterility, inasmuch as the earth would surely impart to them some portion of its fruitfulness, the earth being the fertile mother of all things.

"Did you ever see Dr. Graham's celestial bed?" my father asked.

'Never! I never saw it. That was some time afterwards. The doctor quite lost himself eventually. My uncle knew nothing of him then; we were obliged to drop his acquaintance!'

Whatever a celestial bed might be, an earth-bath must unquestionably be a most unpleasant remedy: the resurrection, the taking up of the body and removing the earth, however managed, must be disagreeable, and even perilous. It is not easy to take up a large and vigorous plant without injury—without breaking its roots; but to dig up a portly, ponderous parson, must be a process in medical horticulture requiring extreme nicety of manipulation, lest unhappily a sharp spade should cut off unawares some portion of his radical fibres. No wonder 'My uncle', his rheumatism notwithstanding, so soon had enough of it!

What security Sir Bysshe had to cover his advances to Dr. Graham, I was never informed. The celestial bed could hardly be a subject for mortgage and foreclosure; however, the bathing-place might be a real security.

The descendant Bysshe used to speak of his ancestor, Sir Bysshe, without love and without hate; with contemptuous indifference. Nevertheless, a certain indistinct sympathy might be traced as actually existing between natures so opposite and antagonistic, and arising out of a strong common feeling.

Bysshe disliked his father, and Sir Bysshe disliked his son; according to the profound observation of Lord Bacon, that every grandfather loves his grandson because he is his enemy's enemy, the basis of a treaty of mutual alliance already existed. Had this favourable disposition been cultivated, it would probably have borne fruit; but the poor poet could never cultivate any soil less ungrateful than the two arid summits of the most sterile mountain on earth—Parnassus.

The baronet grandfather received the rare visits of his philosophic grandchild with politeness; kindness he had none; he conversed with him civilly, heard whatever was addressed to him with urbanity, was never shocked or offended at any proposition, be it what it might; never swore at him—his son he cursed bitterly; he thanked him for his company, and hoped to see him again soon.

For speculative opinions the old gentleman cared as much as his old cat did; neither of them was ever offended at any sally, however bold: the toleration of Sir Bysshe was perfect, and very commendable; his indifference to everything, even to human progress and perfectibility, was most reprehensible:

'They may found Plato's republic as soon as they please, at Reigate, at Cuckfield, or even at Horsham; I have no objection to it whatever; but I would not take my leg off this stool, either to promote or to prevent it.'

'Men may believe what they will,' thought the cat, 'but be human belief what it may, it will never bring another mouse into our house, or make the mice which are here already more easy to be caught.'

To return to Elizabeth and the Exiles of Siberia; to Eliza and the exiles, who for poetical, not political offences, had voluntarily banished themselves to the ungenial climate of Keswick. Madame Cottin has not made them the subject of a moral tale, and they kept but few records, or reports, of their proceedings; little, therefore, can be told of them.

An extract from a letter written by Coleridge affirms, and no doubt truly, that the writer, had he fortunately been at Keswick when Shelley visited it, would have treated him less like a prig than Southey did; it is, moreover, in spirit candid, tolerant, and judicious:

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER OF COLERIDGE

I think as highly of Shelley's genius—yea, and of his heart—as you can do. Soon after he left Oxford, he went to the lakes, poor

fellow! and with some wish, I have understood, to see me; but I was absent, and Southey received him instead. Now—the very reverse of what would have been the case in ninety-nine instances of a hundred—I *might* have been of use to him, and Southey could not; for I should have sympathized with his poetics, metaphysical reveries, and the very word metaphysics is an abomination to Southey, and Shelley would have felt that I understood him. His discussions—tending towards atheism of a certain sort—would not have scared *me*; for *me* it would have been a semi-transparent larva, soon to be sloughed, and through which I should have seen the true *image*—the final metamorphosis. Besides, I have ever thought that sort of atheism the next best religion to Christianity; nor does the better faith I have learnt from Paul and John interfere with the cordial reverence I feel for Benedict Spinoza. As far as Robert Southey was concerned with him, I am quite certain that his harshness arose entirely from the frightful reports that had been made to him respecting Shelley's moral character and conduct—reports essentially false; but, for a man of Southey's strict regularity and habitual self-government, rendered plausible by Shelley's own wild words and horror of hypocrisy.

CHAPTER XV

SHELLEY was fugitive, volatile; he evaporated like ether, his nature being etherial; he suddenly escaped, like some fragrant essence; evanescent as a quintessence. He was a lovely, a graceful image, but fading, vanishing speedily from our sight, being portrayed in flying colours. He was a climber, a creeper, an elegant, beautiful, odoriferous parasitical plant; he could not support himself; he must be tied up fast to something of a firmer texture, harder and more rigid than his own, pliant, yielding structure; to some person of a less flexible formation: he always required a prop. In order to write the history of his fragile, unconnected, interrupted life, it is necessary to describe that of some ordinary everyday person with whom he was familiar, and to introduce the real subject of the history, whenever a transitory glimpse of him can be caught.

In exhibiting a phantasmagoria, a magic lantern, a spectrum of prismatic colours, a solar microscope; the white sheet, the screen of blank paper, the whitened wall claim no merit, no share in the beauty of the exhibition, yet are these indispensable adjuncts in order to display wonderful, beauteous, or striking phenomena.

It is not easy—it is often impossible, indeed—to relate the whole life of any one without entering into various details; in themselves, these are often unimportant, but they are required as a background to bring out the principal figure in proper relief.

In the dedication of the fragment of his *Essay on Friendship*, he says: 'I once had a friend, whom an inextricable multitude of circumstances has forced me to treat with apparent neglect'.

The celebrated Cretan Maze, to which by the word 'inextricable' he plainly alludes, as his friend can testify, was a labyrinth of which he was himself the architect, the Dædalus; and his poetic imagination alone created the Minotaur, the fancied monster that inhabited it, and exacted a cruel tribute. The inextricable, inexplicable, irremediable, unobservable error, in the real existence of which he with a rash credulity believed, was entirely of his own making, or imagining. Clotho spun the

thread of life for the Divine Poet precisely as she spins it for other and less gifted mortals; but he so wound the skein, and weakly permitted others so to wind it for him, that it soon became, as he supposed, 'inextricable'; although when it was most tangled it would have been easy, with a little firmness, to have cut at once every knot. It would have been, indeed, no difficult task, with a moderate amount of patience and ordinary address, to have unravelled the intricacies caused solely by the perverse machinations and fraudulent ingenuity of sordid and selfish people.

The primary object, great final cause, and last and most important result of the poetical faculty and temperament is certainly to make, to create; but the incidental consequences are also to destroy: a poet is a maker, but he is likewise a marrer. I have often wondered and asked myself and others, and amongst the rest, my friend, as I stated before, how many poets the world could bear at once, all simultaneously enervating destructively?

This question, however, can never arise in practice; for, fortunately or unfortunately, the number of poets has always been very limited: a real poet is of rare occurrence.

Having wasted much money on the bootless expedition to London, and on an expensive journey by post to Cumberland, as much as would have maintained them all in comfort for some months at York, the unfortunate exiles found themselves without resources, and were in great straits, in a land of strangers—of persons less improvident, perhaps, but not less needy, than they were. It was no longer in my power to assist my friend; a loan of twenty pounds, or thirty pounds, will enable a single man to hold his way for some time, but to the master of a family such paltry help avails little: it is a drop in a bucket.

A retired naval captain, however gallant, generous, and good-natured he may be, is seldom a wealthy man. Bysshe had exhausted the bounty and the benevolence of his uncle, who could enclose no more bank-post bills in his kind, jovial letters. These, no doubt, were as genial as ever; but all the hero of many battles, of many sea fights, could now do for his high-spirited and studious nephew was to advise him to live in as economical a manner as possible. Excellent advice, and worthy of honour and acceptance; but it is impracticable, even for an inspired poet, and such unquestionably he was, to subsist upon air—upon the pure, keen, searching air of the mountains.

Various attempts were made to procure the requisite supplies,

but in vain. At last, the father of his wife gave him grudgingly a small sum. It was unworthy of a Christian, or a Jew, to refuse at least some small pittance, for present and most urgent necessities, to a married daughter, whose filial disobedience had elevated her from a coffee-house to Castle Goring. Besides, his model daughter, Eliza, had never offended him by any like act of prosperous undutifulness; she unquestionably had never forfeited her hereditary right to a moderate pension.

The accursed thirst of gold defeats its darling objects, even in the breast of a greedy vintner, of a *perfidus caupo*. This sparing, but seasonable aid, enabled them to remain at Keswick; the dates of letters show that they resided there about three months, from the middle of November 1811, to the middle of the following February.

The campaign of the year 1812, as well as the year itself, was opened by a spirited attack upon the entrenchments of a veteran philosopher. Shelley boldly assailed no less a chief than the venerable William Godwin, whose acquaintance he was determined to make without further delay, and whom accordingly he addressed by letter, without introduction, as he was wont to do in cases of great literary emergency. Bysshe's four letters to the author of *Political Justice* comprehend whatever is now known of this period of his life, and they will be read with deep interest; but the contents must be received with caution, and with a certain distrust; for, together with much truth, they contain some fiction: some flights of imagination, some strains of poetry, have here and there thrown a false light upon a solid structure of facts. It is much to be regretted, that, after the most careful and diligent research through all our repositories, we have not yet been able to find the calm answers of the old philosopher to the fervid epistles of the youthful poet. But perseverance frequently ensures success, and often renewed researches are now and then rewarded by fresh discoveries; all that has been mislaid is not lost; and we may still cherish the hope that another edition of Shelley's life may present, together with other desired documents, William Godwin's earliest letters to his illustrious correspondent. Slight traces of thought, scattered rays of light, which gleam faintly at intervals, as it were, through crevices and interstices in the young man's letters, strongly stimulate a liberal and enlightened curiosity to long for the perusal of the missing papers.

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND, *January 3, 1812.*

You will be surprised at hearing from a stranger. No introduction has, nor in all probability ever will authorize that which common thinkers would call a liberty; it is, however, a liberty which, although not sanctioned by custom, is so far from being reprobated by reason, that the dearest interests of mankind imperiously demand that a certain etiquette of fashion should no longer keep 'man at a distance from man', or impose its flimsy fancies between the free communication of intellect.

The name of Godwin has been used to excite in me feelings of reverence and admiration. I have been accustomed to consider him a luminary too dazzling for the darkness which surrounds him. From the earliest period of my knowledge of his principles I have ardently desired to share, on the footing of intimacy, that intellect which I have delighted to contemplate in its emanations.

Considering, then, these feelings, you will not be surprised at the inconceivable emotions with which I learned your existence and your dwelling. I had enrolled your name in the list of the honourable dead. I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so; you still live, and, I firmly believe, are still planning the welfare of human kind.

I have but just entered on the scene of human operations; yet my feelings and my reasonings correspond with what yours were. My course has been short, but eventful. I have seen much of human prejudice, suffered much from human persecution, yet I see no reason hence inferrible which should alter my wishes for their renovation. The ill-treatment I have met with has more than ever impressed the truth of my principles on my judgment. I am young, I am ardent, in the cause of philanthropy and truth; do not suppose that this is vanity; I am not conscious that it influences this portraiture. I imagine myself dispassionately describing the state of my mind. I am young; you have gone before me—I doubt not, you are a veteran to me in the years of persecution. Is it strange that, defying prejudice as I have done, I should outstep the limits of custom's prescription, and endeavour to make my desire useful by a friendship with William Godwin?

I pray you to answer this letter. Imperfect as may be my capacity, my desire is ardent and unintermitted. Half an hour would be at least humanely employed in the experiment. I may mistake your residence; certain feelings, of which I may be an inadequate arbiter, may induce you to desire conceal-

ment; I may not, in fine, have an answer to this letter. If I do not, when I come to London, I shall seek for you. I am convinced I could represent myself to you in such terms as not to be thought wholly unworthy of your friendship; at least, if desire for universal happiness has any claim upon your preference, that desire I can exhibit. Adieu! I shall earnestly await your answer.

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, at M. J. Godwin's,
Juvenile Library, Skinner Street, London.

KESWICK, *January 10, 1812.*

SIR,

It is not otherwise to be supposed than that I should appreciate your avocations far beyond the pleasure or benefit which can accrue to me from their sacrifice. The time, however, will be small which may be misspent in reading this letter; and much individual pleasure as an answer might give me, I have not the vanity to imagine that it will be greater than the happiness elsewhere diffused during the time which its creation will occupy.

You complain that the generalizing character of my letter renders it deficient in interest; that I am not an individual to you. Yet, intimate as I am with your character and your writings, intimacy with *yourself* must in some degree precede this exposure of my peculiarities. It is scarcely possible, however pure be the morality which he has endeavoured to diffuse, but that generalization must characterize the uninvited address of a stranger to a stranger.

I proceed to remedy the fault. I am the son of a man of fortune in Sussex. The habits of thinking of my father and myself never coincided. Passive obedience was inculcated and enforced in my childhood. I was required to love, because it was *my duty* to love: it is scarcely necessary to remark, that coercion obviated its own intention. I was haunted with a passion for the wildest and most extravagant romances. Ancient books of chemistry and magic were perused with an enthusiasm of wonder, almost amounting to belief. My sentiments were unrestrained by anything within me; external impediments were numerous, and strongly applied; their effect was merely temporary.

From a reader, I became a writer of romances; before the age of seventeen I had published two: *St. Irvyn* and *Zastrozzi*, each of which, though quite uncharacteristic of me as now I am,

yet serves to mark the state of my mind at the period of their composition. I shall desire them to be sent to you: do not, however, consider this as any obligation to yourself to misapply your valuable time.

It is now a period of more than two years since first I saw your inestimable book of *Political Justice*; it opened to my mind fresh and more extensive views; it materially influenced my character, and I rose from its perusal a wiser and a better man. I was no longer the votary of romance; till then I had existed in an ideal world—now I found that in this universe of ours was enough to excite the interest of the heart, enough to employ the discussions of reason; I beheld, in short, that I had duties to perform. Conceive the effect which the *Political Justice* would have upon a mind before jealous of its independence, participating somewhat singularly in a peculiar susceptibility.

My age is now *nineteen*; at the period to which I allude I was at Eton. No sooner had I formed the principles which I now profess, than I was anxious to disseminate their benefits. This was done without the slightest caution. I was twice expelled, but recalled by the interference of my father. I went to Oxford. Oxonian society was insipid to me, uncongenial with my habits of thinking. I could not descend to common life: the sublime interest of poetry, lofty and exalted achievements, the proselytism of the world, the equalization of its inhabitants, were to me the soul of my soul. You can probably form some idea of the contrast exhibited to my character by those with whom I was surrounded. Classical reading and poetical writing employed me during my residence at Oxford.

In the meantime I became, in the popular sense of the word, a sceptic. I printed a pamphlet, avowing my opinion, and its occasion. I distributed this anonymously to men of thought and learning, wishing that Reason should decide on the case at issue: it was never my intention to deny it. Mr. —, at Oxford, among others, had the pamphlet; he showed it to the Master and the Fellows of University College, and I was sent for. I was informed, that in case I denied the publication, no more would be said. I refused, and was expelled.

It will be necessary, in order to elucidate this part of my history, to inform you that I am heir by entail to an estate of £6,000 per annum. My principles have induced me to regard the law of primogeniture, as an evil of primary magnitude. My father's notions of family honour are incoincident with my knowledge of public good. I will never sacrifice the latter to



GRAVES OF WILLIAM AND MARY GODWIN
IN ST. PANCRAS CHURCHYARD

any consideration. My father has ever regarded me as a blot, a defilement of his honour. He wished to induce me by poverty to accept of some commission in a distant regiment, and in the interim of my absence to prosecute the pamphlet, that a process of outlawry might make the estate, on his death, devolve to my younger brother. These are the leading points of the history of the man before you. Others exist, but I have thought proper to make some selection, not that it is my design to conceal or extenuate any part, but that I should by their enumeration quite outstep the bounds of modesty. Now, it is for you to judge whether, by permitting me to cultivate your friendship, you are exhibiting yourself more really useful than by the pursuance of those avocations, of which the time spent in allowing this cultivation would deprive you. I am now earnestly pursuing studious habits. I am writing *An Inquiry into the Causes of the Failure of the French Revolution to benefit Mankind*. My plan is that of resolving to lose no opportunity to disseminate truth and happiness.

I am married to a woman whose views are similar to my own. To you, as the regulator and former of my mind, I must ever look with real respect and veneration.

Yours sincerely,
P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

MY DEAR SIR,

KESWICK, Jan. 16, 1812.

That so prompt and so kind an answer should have relieved my mind I had scarcely dared to hope; to find that he—who as an author had gained my love and confidence, whose views and habits I had delighted to conjecture from his works, whose principles I had adopted, and every trace of whose existence is now made sacred, and I hope, eternally so, by associations, which throw the charm of feeling over the deductions of reason—that he, as a man, should be my friend and my adviser, the moderator of my enthusiasm, the personal exciter and strengthener of my virtuous habits: all this was more than I dared to trust myself to hope, and which now comes to me almost like a ray of second existence.

Without the deceit of self-flattery, which might lead me to think that my intellectual powers demanded your time, those circumstances, which arbitrarily—or, as may be said, fortuitously—place me in a situation capable hereafter of considerably influencing the actions of others, induce me to think that I

shall not 'in publica commoda peccem, si longo sermone morer tua tempora'.

I know not how to describe the pleasure which your last letter has given me; that William Godwin should have a 'deep and earnest interest in *my* welfare', cannot but produce the most intoxicating sensations. It may be my vanity which is thus flattered, but I am much deceived in myself, if love and respect for the great and worthy form not a very considerable part of my feelings.

I cannot help considering you as a friend and adviser, whom I have known very long; this circumstance must generate a degree of familiarity, which will cease to appear surprising to you, when the intimacy, which I had acquired with your writings, so much preceded the information which led to my first letter. It may be said that I have derived little benefit or injury from artificial education. I have known no tutor or adviser (*not excepting my father*) from whose lessons and suggestions I have not recoiled with disgust.

The knowledge which I have, whatever it may be (putting out of the question the age of the grammar and the horn-book), has been acquired by my unassisted efforts. I have before given you a slight sketch of my earlier habits and feelings—my present are, in my own opinion, infinitely superior—they are elevated and disinterested: such as they are, you have principally produced them.

With what delight, what cheerfulness, what goodwill, may it be conceived, that I constitute myself the pupil of him, under whose actual guidance my very thoughts have hitherto been arranged.

You mistake me, if you think that I am angry with my father. I have ever been desirous of a reconciliation with him, but the price which he demands for it is a renunciation of my opinions, or at least, a subjection to conditions which should bind me to act in opposition to their very spirit. It is probable that my father has *acted* for my welfare, but the manner in which he has done so will not allow me to suppose that he has *felt* for it, unconnectedly with certain considerations of birth; and feeling for these things was not feeling for me. I never loved my father—it was not from hardness of heart, for I have loved and do love warmly. You say: 'Being yet a scholar, I ought to have no intolerable itch to become a teacher'. I have not, so far as any publications of mine are irreconcilable with the general good, or so far as they are negative. I do not set

up for a judge of controversies, but into whatever company I go, I have introduced my own sentiments, partly with a view, if they were anywise erroneous, that unforeseen elucidations might rectify them; or, if they were not, that I should contribute my mite to the treasury of wisdom and happiness.

I hope, in the course of our communication, to acquire that sobriety of spirit which is the characteristic of true heroism.

I have not heard, without benefit, that Newton was a modest man; I am not ignorant that vanity and folly delight in forwardness and assumption. But I think there is a line to be drawn between affectation of unpossessed talents and the deceit of self-distrust, by which much power has been lost to the world; for

Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

This line may be called 'the modesty of nature'. I hope I am somewhat anxious not to overstep its boundaries. I will not again crudely obtrude my peculiar opinions or my doubts on the world. But could I not, at the same time, improve my own powers, and diffuse true and virtuous principles? Many, with equally confined talents to my own, are by publications scattering the seeds of prejudice and selfishness. Might not an exhibition of truth, with equal elegance and depth, suffice to counteract the deleterious tendency of their principles? Does not writing hold the next place to colloquial discussion in eliciting and classing the powers of the mind? I am willing to become a scholar—nay, a pupil. My humility and confidence, where I am conscious that I am not imposed upon, and where I perceive talents and powers so certainly and undoubtedly superior, are unfeigned and complete. I have desired the publications of my early youth to be sent to you. You will perceive that *Zastrozzi* and *St. Irvyn* were written prior to my acquaintance with your writings—the *Essay on Love*, a little poem—since. I had, indeed, read *St. Leon* before I wrote *St. Irvyn*; but the reasonings had then made little impression.

In a few days we set off to Dublin. I do not know exactly when, but a letter addressed to Keswick will find me. Our journey has been settled some time. We go principally to *forward as much as we can* the Catholic Emancipation.

Southey, the poet, whose principles were pure and elevated, once, is now the paid champion of every abuse and absurdity. I have had much conversation with him. He says: 'You will think as I do when you are as old'. I do not feel the least disposition to be Mr. S.'s proselyte.

In the summer we shall be in the north of Wales. Dare I hope that you will come to see us? Perhaps this would be an unfeasible neglect of your avocations. I shall hope it until you forbid me.

I remain, with the greatest respect,

Your most sincere and devoted,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

MY DEAR SIR,

KESWICK, CUMBERLAND, *January 28, 1812.*

Your letter has reached me on the eve of our departure for Dublin. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of answering it, although we shall probably have reached Ireland before an answer to this can arrive. You do us a great and essential service by the enclosed introduction to Mr. Curran; he is a man whose public character I have admired and respected. You offer an additional motive for hastening our journey. I have not long been married. My wife is the partner of my thoughts and feelings. My state at the period of our first knowledge of each other was isolated and friendless; *hers* was embittered by family disagreements and a system of domestic oppressions. We agreed to unite our fates, and the reasons that operated to induce our submission to the ceremonies of the Church were the many advantages of benefiting society which the despotism of custom would cut us off from in case of our nonconformity. My peculiar reasons were considerations of the unequally weighty burden of disgrace and hatred which a resistance to this system would entail upon my companion. A man, in such a case, is a man of gallantry and spirit—a woman loses all claim to respect and politeness. She has lost modesty, which is the female criterion of virtue, and those, whose virtues extend no further than modesty, regard her with hatred and contempt.

You regard early authorship detrimental to the cause of general happiness. I confess this has not been my opinion, even when I have bestowed deep, and, I hope, disinterested thought upon the subject.

If any man would determine, sincerely and cautiously, at every period of his life, to publish books which should contain the real state of his feelings and opinions, I am willing to suppose that this portraiture of his mind would be worth many metaphysical disquisitions; and one, whose mind as strongly imbued with an ardent desire of communicating pleasurable

sensations, is of all others, the least likely to publish any feelings or opinions, but such as should excite the reader to discipline in some sort his mind into the same state as that of the writer.

With these sentiments, I have been preparing an address to the Catholics of Ireland, which, however deficient may be its execution, I can by no means admit that it contains one sentiment which *can* harm the cause of liberty and happiness. It consists of the benevolent and tolerant deductions of philosophy reduced into the simplest language, and such as those who by their uneducated poverty are most susceptible of evil impressions from Catholicism may clearly comprehend. I know it can do no harm; it cannot excite rebellion, as its main principle is to trust the success of a cause to the energy of its truth. It cannot 'widen the breach between the kingdoms', as it attempts to convey to the vulgar mind sentiments of universal philanthropy, and whatever impressions it may produce, they can be no others but those of peace and harmony; it owns no religion but benevolence, no cause but virtue, no party but the world. I shall devote myself with unremitting zeal, as far as an uncertain state of health will permit, towards forwarding the great ends of virtue and happiness in Ireland, regarding as I do the present state of that country's affairs as an opportunity which, if I, being thus disengaged, permit to pass unoccupied, I am unworthy of the character which I have assumed. Enough of Ireland!

I anticipated in my own mind your sentiments on the remark which you quoted from my last letter concerning my father. I am not a stranger to the immense complexity of human feelings, but when I find generosity so exceedingly outweighed in any one's conduct by the contrary and less extended principle, then I despair of good fruits, seeing marks of barrenness. I have a great wish of adding to my father's happiness, because the filial connection seems to render it, as it were, more particularly in my power; but it is impossible. A little time since, he sent to me a letter, through his attorney, renewing an allowance of two hundred pounds per annum, but with this remark, 'that his sole reason for so doing was to prevent my cheating strangers'. The insult contained in these words, as applied to me, excites no feelings of repulsion or hatred towards him, but it makes me despair of conciliation when I see how rooted is his prejudice against me.

I find myself near the end of my paper. My egotism appears inexhaustible. My relation of pupillage with regard to you in

a manner excuses this apparent vanity. I wish to put you in possession of as much of my thoughts and feelings as I know myself. I shall regard as a most inestimable blessing my happy audacity in casting aside the trammels of custom, and drinking the streams of your mind at their fountain head.

I will say no more of Wales at present. We have determined, next summer, to receive a most dear friend, of whom I shall speak hereafter, in some romantic spot. Perhaps I shall be able to prevail on you and your wife and children to leave the tumult and dust of London for a while. However that may be, I shall certainly see you in London. I am not yet of age. At that time, I have great hopes of being enabled to offer you a house of my own. Philanthropy is confined to no spot. Adieu!

Direct your next—'Post Office, Dublin'.

My wife sends her respects.

Believe me, in all sincerity of heart, yours truly, sincerely,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

CHAPTER XVI

SHELLEY's letters to William Godwin must be received with caution; the young poet saw events through the spectacles of his pregnant and prurient fancy, and not as they really were.

He was altogether incapable of rendering an account of any transaction whatsoever, according to the strict and precise truth, and the bare, naked realities of actual life; not through an addiction to falsehood, which he cordially detested, but because he was the creature, the unsuspecting and unresisting victim, of his irresistible imagination.

Had he written to ten different individuals the history of some proceeding in which he was himself a party, and an eye-witness, each of his ten reports would have varied from the rest in essential and important circumstances. The relation given on the morrow would be unlike that of the day, as the latter would contradict the tale of yesterday. Take some examples. He writes:

'I was informed at Oxford that in case I denied the publication, no more would be said. I refused, and was expelled.'

This is incorrect; no such offer was made, no such information was given; but musing on the affair, as he was wont, he dreamed that the proposal had been declined by him, and this he had the gratification of believing, that he was more of a martyr than he really was. Again he writes thus:

'At the period to which I allude, I was at Eton. No sooner had I formed the principles, which I now profess, than I was anxious to disseminate their benefits. This was done without the slightest caution. I was twice expelled, but recalled by the interference of my father.'

All this is purely imaginary: he never published anything controversial at Eton; he was never expelled; not twice, not once. His poetic temperament was overpowered by the grandeur and awfulness of the occasion, when he took up his pen to address the author of *Caleb Williams*, so that the auspicious Apollo, to relieve and support his favourite son, shed over his head a benign vision. He saw himself at his Dame's with *Political Justice*, which he had lately borrowed from Dr.

Lind, open before him. He had read a few pages and had formed his principles in a moment; he was thrown into a rapture by the truisms, mares'-nests, and paradoxes, which he had met with.

He sees himself in the printing loft of 'J. Pote, bibliopola et typographus', amongst Eton grammars and Eton school books, republishing with the rapidity of a dream, and 'without the slightest caution', Godwin's heavy and unsaleable volumes. He sees himself before the Dons convened and expelled; and, lastly, he beholds the honourable member for Shoreham weeping on his knees, like Priam at the feet of Achilles, and imploring the less inexorable Dr. Keate.

All this, being poetically true, he firmly and loyally believes, and communicates, as being true in act, fact, and deed, to his venerable correspondent. One more instance, and that is still more extraordinary; he says:

'My father wished to induce me, by poverty, to accept of some commission in a distant regiment, in the interim of my absence to prosecute the pamphlet, that a process of outlawry might make the estate on his death devolve to my younger brother.'

No offer of a commission in the army was ever made to Bysshe; it is only in a dream, that the prosecution, outlawry, and devolution of the estate could find a place. The narration of such proceedings would have been too strong and too strange for a German romance; it would have been too large a requisition upon the reader's credulity to ask him to credit them in the father of Zastrozzi, or of St. Irvyn; or even in the unnatural parent of Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew. Certain other complaints concerning his father's conduct are unintentionally exaggerated, or arise from misconception.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that he ought to have made his eldest son and heir a fixed, moderate and competent allowance, and to have left him to the full enjoyment of his opinions, or rather, to be more exact, to the free indulgence of his insatiable appetite for discussion.

'You know more than any other person of your friend Shelley; pray tell me, what were his real opinions?'

This question has often been addressed to me, and I have as often, at least when the inquirer was a person worthy of a serious answer, resolved it truly and fairly; but, I fear, seldom in a manner quite satisfactory to him who asked me, by reason of the inherent difficulty and complexity of the subject. *Marsilius Ficinus*, it is believed, was better read in Plato than any

other man ever was, at least in modern times. He has been duly evoked from the dead, and is in attendance, by virtue of a writ of subpoena; his expenses having been tendered to him, to submit himself to an examination. The distinguished Platonist is asked, 'What were the real opinions of Socrates, as they are expressed in Plato's Dialogues?'

What answer can the dead witness give? Socrates was the opponent, at least wherever he could hope to meet with a respondent, of every thesis that was propounded to him. In like manner Shelley's real opinions were always those which were not held by any companion at all likely to dispute with him. His confession of faith was made in this fashion. I am a republican; a pure republic is an impossibility; what you mean by a republic is in truth an aristocracy. I am an aristocrat: all men are naturally equal; how then can one man be better than another? I believe in revealed religion: there cannot be a revelation, it is absolutely impracticable. I hold by natural religion: no religion can be of nature, by revelation it may exist. The soul is immortal: you cannot prove that it is. Death is total annihilation: all the intellectual phenomena contradict the hypothesis of annihilation; it is untenable. What then were the real opinions of my highly gifted friend? 'Tell me, I pray you, my gentle readers; he never told me! Had Bysshe been left to himself, and been permitted, without disturbance from without, to follow his own inclinations, the burning, feverish, inextinguishable thirst for metaphysical speculation would have abated. He would have grown gradually weary of arguments and disquisitions; and, in fact, he did eventually become tired of them, and he left them off in great measure, having learned, perhaps, to dogmatize a little instead, partly out of his own head, and partly from the writings of Plato, and of other ancient philosophers. The opposition, intolerance, and sometimes also persecution, which he suffered, served only to prolong the period of his addiction to the vain attempt to elicit the truth, and this he long and sincerely believed was to be effected by written and verbal argumentations.

His course of proceeding, even when he was most inclined to doubt and discuss, always appeared to judicious persons perfectly harmless. Nobody listened to his discourses, entered into his discussions, or read his controversial papers; unless, like Bysshe, he had a decided taste for such intellectual exercises, and was therefore as bad as himself; if, indeed, there was anything bad in the matter, and it is quite certain, that there was

not. As to making converts to any peculiar fancies, it is not by disputing, that conversions are made; this is to be effected by persuasion, which is a very different process. When we were taking a walk together after he had been silent for a while, which happened occasionally, I have said to him, suddenly:

'Come, Bysshe, let us have a good, long controversy! I am getting indifferent and lax, respecting my own crotchets, and so are you as to your well-founded opinions, most lamentably so; let us dispute together for an hour or two, and each will confirm himself in his errors, and greatly strengthen them!'

He did not like my sally, feeling that the remark was but too just: he called it scoffing, and perhaps it was; and he added angrily:

'Your mind is not fitted for the reception of truth!' and perhaps it is not.

Having resided for three months very unpleasantly at Keswick, with every element of discomfort around him, and without the consolation of congenial society, for which the correspondence lately entered into with William Godwin proved an insufficient substitute, Bysshe was strongly impelled to change his abode, and to try to ameliorate his condition. The change which he proposed to himself was an extraordinary one; it was a mission to Ireland, in order at once thereby to carry into effect Catholic Emancipation, and to procure a repeal of the Union Act by means of an association of philanthropists, and also to accomplish a complete regeneration of that country. I had never heard him mention Catholic Emancipation, or Catholic Disabilities; and I do not believe that he ever had any definite notion of the meaning of these party phrases. As to the Union Act, I am very sure that he was always entirely ignorant of that statute, of its enactments and provisions, having certainly never read a single clause, or line, of the Act, which he suddenly took upon himself to abrogate. I have often wondered, and endeavoured to discover, but without success, who put this notable project into his head. I have suspected that he fell in with some wandering apostle of Irish grievances hiding himself amongst the mountains, because he disliked the companionship of Oreads and Dryads less than that of sheriff's officers and catchpoles—with some Hibernian Hampden brimful of sympathy for his persecuted country, and of aversion for his persecuting creditors. I have supposed that the coffee-house in Mount Street was possibly infested by Irish patriots, and that he might therefore have received at home, through the original suggestions of these

estimable clients and customers, a hint, or even a plan, of his wild-goose chase; but I never could discover the source of the strange scheme. He did not communicate his intentions to me at the time. I never heard of his exploits in Dublin until after their termination, and but little did I learn at any period from himself. He seldom spoke of them. If he ever referred to the subject at all, it was briefly; and in truth he appeared to be heartily ashamed of the whole proceeding. Whatever can be discovered concerning this Irish dream, the vision of want of judgment, must be made out from his correspondence with his newly-acquired friend, and which has only recently come into my hands. In his letter of the 16th of January, 1812, he says: 'In a few days we set off to Dublin. Our journey has been settled for some time. We go principally to forward, as much as we (viz., Harriet, Eliza, and myself) can, the Catholic Emancipation'.

On the 28th of January, he writes: 'Your letter has reached me, on the eve of our departure for Dublin'.

A letter from Dublin of the 24th February states that they have just arrived there. Six most interesting letters, three of them from William Godwin, will describe the labours of the mission in the capital of Ireland. Bysshe invariably sent me a copy of all his other works, whether long or short, in verse or in prose, as soon as they were published, or more commonly as soon as they were printed. but he never gave me, either at the time of their appearance or subsequently, his two Irish pamphlets. He never named them to me, and I saw them for the first time a few months ago. The first and longer pamphlet was written in England, as it informs us, and as was stated in a letter; it is entitled: *An Address to the Irish People*, by Percy Bysshe Shelley: Dublin, 1812. It consists of twenty-two pages, closely and badly printed, on coarse paper; its appearance is mean and vulgar. The title of the other pamphlet is *Proposals for an Association of those Philanthropists who, convinced of the inadequacy of the Moral and Political State of Ireland to produce Benefits which are nevertheless attainable, are willing to unite to accomplish its Regeneration*, by Percy B. Shelley, Dublin. It is comprised in eighteen pages; the type is somewhat larger, but its aspect is not more attractive. The author's address is the same in both. No. 7, Lower Sackville Street. The pamphlets are exceedingly scarce; I never saw any other copies than those which are now in my possession. I would willingly, therefore, give some extracts, but I cannot find a

single paragraph worthy to be transcribed. They are poorly and feebly written; the style and the matter are worthy of the printer and the occasion, but quite unworthy of the author.

DUBLIN, Feb. 24, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

A most tedious journey by sea and land has brought us to our destination. I have delayed a few days informing you of it, because I enclose with this a little pamphlet, which I have just printed, and thereby save a double expense. I have wilfully vulgarized the language of this pamphlet, in order to reduce the remarks it contains to the taste and comprehension of the Irish peasantry, who have been too long brutalized by vice and ignorance. I conceive that the benevolent passions of their breasts are in some degree excited, and individual interests in some degree generalized, by Catholic disqualifications and the oppressive influence of the Union Act; that some degree of indignation has arisen at the conduct of the Prince Regent, which might tend to blind insurrections. A crisis like this ought not to be permitted to pass unoccupied or unimproved. I have another pamphlet in the press, earnestly recommending to a different class the institution of a philanthropic society. No *unnatural unanimity* can take place, if secessions of the minority on any question are invariably made. It might segregate into twenty different societies, each coinciding generically, though differing specifically.

We have had a most tedious voyage. We were driven by a storm completely to the north of Ireland, in our passage from the Isle of Man. Harriet, my wife, and Eliza, my sister-in-law, were very much fatigued, after twenty-eight hours' tossing in a galliot during a violent gale. They are now tolerably recovered. I am exceedingly obliged by your letter of introduction to Mr. Curran. His speeches had interested me before I had any idea of coming to Ireland. It seems that he was the only man who would engage in behalf of the prisoners during the times of horror of the rebellions. I have called upon him twice, but have not found him at home.

I hope that the motives which induce me to publish thus early in life do not arise from any desire of distinguishing myself any more than is consistent with and subordinate to usefulness. In the first place, my physical constitution is such as will not permit me to hope for a life as long as yours—the person who is constitutionally nervous, and affected by slight fatigue at the

age of nineteen, cannot expect firmness and health at fifty. I have therefore resolved to husband whatever powers I may possess, so that they may turn to the best account. I find that whilst my mind is actively engaged in writing or discussion, that it gains strength at the same time—that the results of its present power are incorporated. I find that subjects grow out of conversation, and that though I begin a subject in writing with no definite view, it presently assumes a definite form, in consequence of the method that grows out of the induced train of thought. I therefore write, and I publish, because I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue, and therefore my publications, so far as they do influence, shall influence to good. My views of society, and my hopes of it, meet with congenial ones in few breasts. But virtue and truth are congenial to many. I will employ no means but these for my object, and however visionary some may regard the ultimatum that I propose, if they act virtuously they will, equally with myself, forward its accomplishment; and my publications will present to the moralist and metaphysician a picture of a mind, however juvenile and unformed, which had at the dawn of its knowledge taken a singular turn; and to leave out the early lineaments of its appearance would be to efface those which the attrition of the world had not deprived of right-angled originality. Thus much for egotism.

I am sorry that you cannot come to Wales in the summer. I had pictured to my fancy that I should first meet you in a spot like that in which Fleetwood met Ruffigny; that then every lesson of your wisdom might become associated in my mind with the forms of nature where she sports in the simplicity of her loveliness and magnificence, and each become imperishable together. This must not be yet. I will, however, hope that at some future time the sunset of your evening days may irradiate my soul in scenes like these. I will come to London next autumn. A very dear friend has promised to visit us in Merionethshire in the summer, and I will own that I am not sufficient of a Stoic not to perceive that the grand and ravishing shapes of nature add to the joys of friendship. Besides, you must know that I either am, or fancy myself something of a poet.

You speak of my wife: she desires with me to you, and to all connected with you, her best regards. She is a woman whose pursuits, hopes, fears, and sorrows were so similar to my own, that we married a few months ago. I hope in the course of this year to introduce her to you and yours, as I have introduced

myself to you. It is only to those who have had some share in making me what I am that I can be thus free. Adieu!

You will hear from me shortly. Give my love and respects to every one with whom you are connected. I feel myself almost at your fireside.

Yours very sincerely,
P. B. SHELLEY.

Have they sent you the books? I send the little book for which I was expelled. I know that Milton believed Christianity, but I do not forget that Virgil believed ancient mythology.

To Mr. W. Godwin, London.

MY GOOD FRIEND,

March 4, 1812.

I have read all your letters (the first perhaps excepted) with peculiar interest, and I wish it to be understood by you, unequivocally, that as far as I can yet penetrate into your character, I conceive it to exhibit an extraordinary assemblage of lovely qualities, not without considerable defects. The defects do and always have arisen chiefly from this source—that you are still very young, and that, in certain essential respects, you do not sufficiently perceive that you are so.

In your last letter you say, 'I publish, because I will publish nothing that shall not conduce to virtue; and therefore my publications, so far as they do influence, shall influence to good'.

Oh! my friend, how shortsighted are the views which dictated this sentence! Every man, in every deliberate action of his life, imagines he sees a preponderance of good likely to result. This is the law of our nature, from which none of us can escape. You do not on this point generically differ from the human beings about you. Mr. Burke and Tom Paine, when they wrote on the French Revolution, perhaps equally believed that the sentiments they supported were essentially conducive to the welfare of man.

When Mr. Walsh resolved to purloin to his own use a few thousand pounds, with which to settle himself and his family and children in America, he tells us that he was for some time anxious that the effects of his fraud should fall upon Mr. Oldham, rather than upon Sir Thomas Plumer, because, in his opinion, Sir Thomas was the better man; and I have no doubt that he was fully persuaded that a greater sum of happiness would result from these thousand pounds being employed in settling

his innocent and lovely family in America, than in securing to his employer the possession of a large landed estate.

It is this feature of human nature that is the great basis of the duty of inquiry and disquisition. If every man, the ignorant, the half-enlightened, and the most patient and persisting philosopher, was always in the right, when he thought himself in the right, inquiry then, instead of holding a place in the first rank of human duties, would immediately subside into an innocent and elegant amusement for hours of leisure. To you, who have been acquainted with me principally through my writings, I may perhaps be allowed to quote a passage of my own:

'To ascertain the tendency of any work is a point of great difficulty. It is by no means impossible that the books most pernicious in their effects that ever were produced, were written with intentions uncommonly elevated and pure.'¹

In the pamphlet you have just sent me, your views and mine as to the improvement of mankind are decisively at issue. You profess the immediate object of your efforts to be 'the organization of a society, whose institution shall serve as a bond to its members'. If I may be allowed to understand my book on *Political Justice*, its pervading principle is, that association is a most ill-chosen and ill-qualified mode of endeavouring to promote the political happiness of mankind. And I think of your pamphlet, however commendable and lovely are many of the sentiments it contains, that it will be either ineffective to its immediate object, or that it has no very remote tendency to light again the flames of rebellion and war. It is painful to me to differ so much from your views on the subject, but it is my duty to tell you that such is the case.

Does it not follow that you have read my writings very slightly? I wish, at least, you had known whether our views were in harmony or opposition.

Discussion, reading, inquiry, perpetual communication, these are my favourite methods for the improvement of mankind: but associations, organized societies, I firmly condemn; you may as well tell the adder not to sting:

You may as well use question with the wolf;
You may as well forbid the mountain pines
To wag their high tops, and to make no noise
When they are fretted with the gusts of heaven,

as tell organized societies of men, associated to obtain their rights and to extinguish oppression, prompted by a deep aversion

¹ *Enquirer*, Essay xx, p. 138.

to inequality, luxury, enormous taxes and the evils of war, to be innocent, to employ no violence, and calmly to await the progress of truth. I never was at a public political dinner, a scene that I have not now witnessed for many years, that I did not see how the enthusiasm was lighted up, how the flame caught from man to man, how fast the dictates of sober reason were obliterated by the gusts of passion, and how near the assembly was like Alexander's compotators at Persepolis, to go forth and fire the city; or like the auditors of Anthony's oration over the body of Cæsar, to apply a flaming brand to the mansion of each several conspirator.

Discussion and conversation on the best interests of society are excellent, as long as they are unfettered, and each man talks to his neighbour in the freedom of congenial intercourse, as he happens to meet with him in the customary haunts of men, or in the quiet and beneficent intercourse of each other's fireside. But they then become unwholesome and poisonous when men shape themselves into societies, and become distorted with the artifices of organization. It will not then long be possible to reason calmly and dispassionately; men will heat each other into impatience and indignation against their oppressors; they will become tired of talking for ever, and will be in a hurry to act. If this view of things is true, applied to any country whatever, it is peculiarly and fearfully so when applied to the fervent and impetuous character of the Irish.

The statement I have here made will end by convincing you, or we must be contented to entertain different, and almost opposite views on this momentous subject. In this case, I can assure you, it will produce no estrangement in my feelings towards you. I shall still acknowledge, as forwardly as ever, the lovely qualities that I set out with confessing in you, and shall only deeply and earnestly lament that you have been so essentially misled in the exercise of them.

One principle, that I believe is wanting in you, and all our too fervent and impetuous reformers, is the thought, that almost every institution or form of society is good in its place, and in the period of time to which it belongs. How many beautiful and admirable effects grew out of popery and the monastic institutions, in the period when they were in their genuine health and vigour! To them we owe almost all our logic and our literature. What excellent effects do we reap, even at this day, from the feudal system and from chivalry! In this point of view, nothing can, perhaps, be more worthy of our

applause than the English constitution. Excellent to this purpose are the words of Daniel in his *Apology for Rhyme*: 'Nor can it touch but of arrogant ignorance to hold this or that nation barbarous, these or those times gross, considering how this manifold creature, man, wheresoever he stand in the world, hath always some disposition of worth, entertains and affects that order of society which is best for his use, and is eminent for some one thing, or other, that fits his humours and the times'. This is the truest and most sublime toleration! There is a period, indeed, when each institution is obsolete, and should be laid aside; but it is of much importance that we should not proceed too rapidly in this, or introduce any change before its due and proper season.

I perfectly agree with you when you say that it is highly improving for a man, who is ever to write for the public, that he should write much while he is young. It improves him equally in the art of thinking and of expressing his thoughts. Till we come to try to put our thoughts upon paper, we can have no notion how broken and imperfect they are, or find where the imperfection lies. Language is a scheme of machinery of so subtle a kind, that it is only by long habit that we can learn to conduct it in a masterly manner, or to the best purposes. Swift, an eminent master of language, says in a letter written, I think, when he was about eighteen: 'Within these last few weeks I have written and blotted more quires of paper, and upon almost all sorts of subjects, than perhaps any other man you have known in a twelvemonth'.

But I see no necessary connection between writing and publishing; and, least of all, with one's name. The life of a thinking man, who does this, will be made up of a series of retractations. It is beautiful to correct our errors, to make each day a comment on the last, and to grow perpetually wiser; but all this need not be done before the public. It is commendable to wash one's face, but I will not wash mine in the saloon of the opera-house. A man may resolve, as you say, to present to the moralist and metaphysician a picture of all the successive turns and revolutions of his mind, and it is fit there should be some men that should do this. But such a man must be contented to sacrifice general usefulness, and confine himself to this. Such a man was Rousseau; but not such a man was Bacon, or Milton.

Mankind will ascribe little weight and authority to a versatile character, that makes a show of all his imperfections. How

shall I rely upon a man, they cry, who is not himself in his public character at all times the same? I have myself, with all my caution, felt some of the effects of this. You have already begun your retraction. You confess that your thesis on atheism was not well judged or wise, though you still seek to shelter yourself under the allegation that it was harmless. I think the second chapter of your retractions is not far distant.

You say that you count but on a short life. In that, too, you are erroneous. I shall not live to see you fourscore, but it is not impossible that my son will. I was myself, in early life, of a remarkably puny constitution. Pope, who was at all times kept alive only by means of art, reached his fifty-seventh year. The constitution of man is a theatre of change, and I think it not improbable, that at thirty, or forty, you will be a robust man.

How did you manage with Curran? I hope you have seen him. I should not wonder, however, if your pamphlet has frightened him. You should have left my letter with your card the first time you called, and then it was his business to have sought you.

I have not received your little romances. If they have a publisher in London, and you had given me his name, I could then have sent for them, and enforced your order for their delivery. But in your handwriting I cannot even read their names.

One strange expression of your pamphlet give me leave to notice. You say to the people of Ireland: 'I have come to this country to spare no pains, where expenditure may purchase your real benefit'. Does this mean money? Do you mean to contract debts, and lay out your thousands in establishing the association you so warmly recommend?

To descend from great things to small, I can perceive, that you are already infected with the air of that country. Your letter with its enclosures cost me, by post, £1 rs. 8d.; and you say in it that 'you send it in this way to save expense'. The post always charges parcels that exceed a sheet or two by weight, and they should, therefore, always be forwarded by some other conveyance.

Perhaps in this letter I have assumed too much of the instructor, and expressed myself with a bluntness and freedom that will shock you. The length of my letter ought to convince you of the warmth of my feelings, and my earnest desire to serve you.

To P. B. Shelley, Dublin.

DUBLIN, SACKVILLE STREET, March 8, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your letter affords me much food for thought; guide thou and direct me. In all the weakness of my inconsistencies, bear with me; the genuine respect which I bear for your character, the love with which your virtues have inspired me, is undiminished by any suspicion of externally constituted authority; when you reprove me, reason speaks; I acquiesce in her decisions. I know that I am vain, that I assume a character which is perhaps unadapted to the limitedness of my experience, that I am without the modesty which is so generally considered an indispensable ornament to the ingenuousness of youth. I attempt not to conceal from others, or myself, these deficiencies, if such they are. That I have erred in pursuance of this line of conduct, I am well aware: in the opposite case, I think that my errors would have been more momentous and overwhelming. 'A preponderance of resulting good is imagined in every action.' I certainly believe that the line of conduct which I am now pursuing will produce a preponderance of good; when I get rid of this conviction, my conduct shall be changed.

Inquiry is doubtless necessary, nay, essential. I am eagerly open to every new information. I attempt to read a book which attacks my most cherished sentiments as calmly as one which corroborates them. I have not read your writings slightly; they have made a deep impression on my mind; their arguments are fresh in my memory; I have daily occasion to recur to them as allies in the cause which I am here engaged in vindicating. To them, to you, I owe the inestimable boon of granted power, of arising from the state of intellectual sickness and lethargy into which I was plunged two years ago, and of which *St. Irvyn* and *Zastrozzi* were the distempered, although unoriginal visions.

I am not forgetful or unheeding of what you said of associations. But *Political Justice* was first published in 1793; nearly twenty years have elapsed since the general diffusion of its doctrines. What has followed? Have men ceased to fight? Have vice and misery vanished from the earth? Have the fireside communications which it recommends taken place? Out of the many who have read that inestimable book, how many have been blinded by prejudice; how many, in short, have taken it up to gratify an ephemeral vanity, and when the hour of its novelty had passed, threw it aside, and yielded with fashion to the arguments of Mr. Malthus?

I have at length proposed a philanthropic association, which I conceive not to be contradictory, but strictly compatible with the principles of *Political Justice*. The 'Address' was principally designed to operate on the Irish mob. Can they be in a worse state than at present? Intemperance and hard labour have reduced them to machines. The oyster that is washed and driven at the mercy of the tides, appears to me an animal of almost equal elevation in the scale of intellectual being. Is it impossible to awaken a moral sense in the breasts of those who appear so unfitted for the high destination of their nature? Might not an unadorned display of moral truth, suited to their comprehensions, produce the best effects? The state of society appears to me to be retrogressive. If there be any truth in the hopes which I so fondly cherish, then this cannot be. Yet, even if it be stationary, the eager activity of philanthropists is demanded. I think of the last twenty years with impatient scepticism, as to the progress which the human mind has made during this period. I will own that I am eager that something should be done. But my association. In some suggestions respecting it, I have the following: 'That any number of persons who meet together for philanthropical purposes, should ascertain by friendly discussion those points of opinion wherein they differ and those wherein they coincide, and should, by subjecting them to rational analysis, produce a unanimity founded on reason, and not the superficial agreement too often exhibited at associations for mere party purposes; that the minority, whose belief could not subscribe to the opinion of the majority on a division in any question of moment and interest, should recede'.

'Some associations might, by refinement of secessions, contain not more than three or four members.' I do not think a society such as this is incompatible with your chapter on associations; it purposes no violent or immediate measures; its intentions are a facilitation of inquiry, and actually to carry into effect those confidential and private communications which you recommend. I send you with this the proposals, which will be followed by the 'suggestions'.

I had no conception of the depth of human misery until now. The poor of Dublin are assuredly the meanest and most miserable of all. In their narrow streets thousands seem huddled together—one mass of animated filth. With what eagerness do such scenes as these inspire me! How self-confident, too, do I feel in my assumption to teach the lessons

of virtue to those who grind their fellow beings into worse than annihilation. These were the persons to whom, in my fancy, I had addressed myself: how quickly were my views on this subject changed; yet how deeply has this very change rooted the conviction on which I came hither.

I do not think that my book can in the slightest degree tend to violence. The pains which I have taken, even to tautology, to insist on pacific measures; the necessity which every warrior and rebel must lie under to deny almost every passage of my book before he can become so, must at least exculpate me from tending to make him so. I shudder to think, that for the very roof that covers me, for the bed whereon I lie, I am indebted to the selfishness of man. A remedy must somewhere have a beginning. Have I explained myself clearly? Are we now at issue?

I have not seen Mr. Curran. I have called repeatedly, left my address and my pamphlet. I *will* see him before I leave Dublin. I send a newspaper, and the 'proposals'. I had no conception that the packet I sent you would be sent by the post: I thought it would have reached you per coach.

Harriet joins in respects to you. Is your denial respecting Wales irrevocable? Would not your children gain health and spirits from the jaunt?

With sincerest respect yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

You will see the account of ME in the newspapers. I am vain, but not so foolish as not to be rather piqued than gratified at the eulogia of a journal. I have repeated my injunctions concerning *St. J.* and *Z.*

Expenditure is used in my address in a moral sense.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

March 14, 1812

I take up the pen again immediately on the receipt of yours, because I am desirous of making one more effort to save yourself and the Irish people from the calamities with which I see your mode of proceeding to be fraught. In the commencement of this letter you profess to 'acquiesce in my decisions', and you go on with those measures which, with no sparing and equivocal voice, I have condemned. I smile, with a bitter smile, a smile of much pain, at the impotence of my expostulations on so momentous a topic, when I observe these inconsistencies.

I have received nothing from you on this occasion but a letter and a newspaper. If you sent anything else—which I suspect from your saying, 'I send you with this the Proposals'—it has not reached me; and I mention this circumstance because, of course, 'I can only reason from what I know'—though I am as well assured as I can be of any moral truth whatever, that nothing that is behind can possibly vitiate and overturn the conclusions I came to in my last letter, and which I repeat in this.

You say in the extract contained in the *Weekly Messenger*, 'I propose an Association for the following purposes: first, of debating on the propriety of whatever measures may be agitated; and, secondly, for carrying, by united and individual exertion, such measures into effect when determined on'.

Can anything be plainer than this? Do you not here exhort persons, who you say 'are of scarcely greater elevation in the scale of intellectual being than the oyster: thousands huddled together, one mass of animated filth', to take the redress of grievances into their own hands.

But if it were exactly the contrary, if you exhorted them to meet, having their hands carefully tied behind them before they came together, what would that avail? Would not the first strong sympathetic impulse which shot through the circle, like the electric fluid, cause them 'to break their cords, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire'?

The people of Ireland have been for a series of years in a state of diseased activity; and, misjudging that you are, you talk of awakening them. They will rise up like Cadmus's seed of dragon's teeth, and their first act will be to destroy each other. You say, 'the pains you have taken, even to tautology, to insist on pacific measures, must at least exculpate *you* from tending to make the Irish peasant a warrior and a rebel'! This is not the language of a philosopher, or a reasoner. If you are 'eager that something should be done', you must take all the consequences of your efforts for that purpose. It behoves the friend of man to search into the hidden seeds of things, and to view events in their causes. He scarcely deserves the name, who plunges without consideration into a sea of important measures, and leaves the final result of all he begins to chance.

You have 'insisted on pacific measures, even to tautology, and therefore judge yourself exculpated'. But this is not so. I have made a main pillar of my doctrines of *Political Justice*—a hostility to associations: and yet I cannot but consider your

fearful attempt at creating a chain of associations as growing, however indirectly and unfairly, out of my book. If you had never read my book, you would probably never have gone to Ireland upon the errand that has now led you thither. I shall ever regret this effect of my book; and I can only seek consolation in the belief that it has done more good to many other persons, and the hope that it may contribute, with other mightier and more important causes, to the melioration of future ages.

You say, 'What has been done within the last twenty years?' Oh, that I could place you on the pinnacle of ages, from which these twenty years would shrink to an invisible point! It is not after this fashion that moral causes work in the eye of him who looks profoundly through the vast and, allow me to add, venerable machine of human society. But so reasoned the French revolutionists. Auspicious and admirable materials were working in the general mind of France; but these men said, as you say, when we look on the last twenty years, 'we are seized with a sort of moral scepticism—we must own we are eager that something should be done'. And see what has been the result of their doings! He that would benefit mankind on a comprehensive scale, by changing the principles and elements of society, must learn the hard lesson—to put off self, and to contribute by a quiet, but incessant activity, like a rill of water, to irrigate and fertilize the intellectual soil.

Shelley, you are preparing a scene of blood! If your associations take effect to any extensive degree, tremendous consequences will follow, and hundreds, by their calamities and premature fate, will expiate your error. And then what will it avail you to say, 'I warned them against this; when I put the seed into the ground, I laid my solemn injunctions upon it, that it should not germinate'?

If you wish to consider the sentiments which in the earnestness of my soul I have presented to you, you should consider my two letters as parts of the same discourse, and read them together. Do not be restrained by a false shame from retracting your steps; you cannot say, like Macbeth, 'I am in blood stepp'd in so far that should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'er'.

I wish to my heart you would come immediately to London. I have a friend who has contrived a tube to convey passengers sixty miles an hour. Be youth your tube! I have a thousand things I could say orally, more than I can say in a letter, on this

important subject. Away! You cannot imagine how much all the females of my family, Mrs. G. and three daughters, are interested in your letters and your history.

17, GRAFTON STREET, *March 18, 1812.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I have said that I acquiesce in your decision, nor has my conduct militated with the assertion. I have withdrawn from circulation the publications wherein I erred, and am preparing to quit Dublin. It is not because I think that *such* associations as I conceived, would be deleterious, that I have withdrawn them. It is possible to festinate, or retard, the progress of human perfectibility; such associations as I would have recommended would be calculated to produce the former effect; the refinement of secessions would prevent a fictitious unanimity, as their publicity would render ineffectual any schemes of violent innovation. I am not one of those whom pride will restrain from admitting my own short-sightedness, or confessing a conviction which wars with those previously avowed. My schemes of organizing the ignorant I confess to be ill-timed. I cannot conceive that they were dangerous, as unqualified publicity was likewise enforced; moreover, I do not see that a peasant would attentively read my address, and, arising from the perusal, become imbued in sentiments of violence and bloodshed.

It is indescribably painful to contemplate beings capable of soaring to the heights of science, with Newton and Locke, without attempting to awaken them from a state of lethargy so opposite. The part of this city called the Liberty, exhibits a spectacle of squalidness and misery, such as might reasonably excite impatience in a cooler temperament than mine. But I submit; I shall address myself no more to the illiterate. I will look to events in which it will be impossible that I can share, and make myself the cause of an effect which will take place ages after I have mouldered in the dust; I need not observe that this resolve requires stoicism. To return to the heartless bustle of ordinary life, to take interest in its uninteresting details; I cannot. Wholly to abstract our views from self, undoubtedly requires unparalleled disinterestedness. There is not a completer abstraction than labouring for distant ages.

My association scheme undoubtedly grew out of my notions of political justice, first generated by your book on that subject. I had not, however, read in vain of confidential discussions, and a recommendation for their general adoption; not in vain

had I been warned against a fictitious unanimity. I have had the opportunity of witnessing the latter at public dinners. The peculiarity of my association would have consisted in combining the adoption of the former with the rejection of the latter. Moreover, I desired to sink the question of immediate grievance in the more general and remote consideration of a highly perfectible state of society. I desired to embrace the present opportunity for attempting to forward the accomplishment of that event, and my ultimate views looked to an establishment of those familiar parties for discussion which have not yet become general.

It appears to me that on the publication of *Political Justice* you looked to a more rapid improvement than has taken place. It is my opinion, that if your book had been as general as the Bible, human affairs would now have exhibited a very different aspect.

I have read your letters—read them with the attention and reverence they deserve. Had I, like you, been witness to the French Revolution, it is probable that my caution would have been greater. I have seen and heard enough to make me doubt the omnipotence of truth in a society so constituted, as that wherein we live. I shall make you acquainted with all my proceedings; if I err, probe me severely.

If I was alone, and had made no engagements, I would immediately come to London: as it is, I defer it for a time. We leave Dublin in three weeks.

A woman of extraordinary talents, whom I am so happy as to enroll in the list of those who esteem me, has engaged to visit me in Wales. Mrs. Shelley earnestly desires me to make one last attempt to induce you to visit Wales. If *you* absolutely cannot, may not your amiable family, with whom we all long to become acquainted, breathe with us the pure air of the mountains? Lest there be any informality in the petition, Mrs. Shelley desires her regards to Mrs. Godwin and family, urging the above. Miss Westbrook, my sister-in-law, resides with us; and, in one thing at least, none of us is deficient, viz. zeal and sincerity.

Fear no more for any violence, or hurtful measures, in which I may be instrumental in Dublin. My mind is now by no means settled on the subject of associations: they appear to me in one point of view useful, in another deleterious. I acquiesce in your decisions. I am neither haughty, reserved, nor unpersuadable. I hope that time will show your pupil to be more

worthy of your regard than you have hitherto found him; at all events, that he will never be otherwise than sincere and true to you.

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

DEAR SHELLEY,

March 30, 1812.

I received your last letter on the 24th instant, and the perusal of it gave me a very high degree of pleasure. The way in which my emotion of pleasure poured itself out was in writing a letter to Curran, stating that I supposed he had kept himself aloof from you on account of your pamphlet, and that at my impromptu you had given up your project, and that that being the case, I trusted he would oblige me by seeking the man, whom, under different circumstances, he had probably thought himself bound to shun. This was the most expressive way I could think of, to convey to you the delight I felt in your conduct. I have since, however, reflected that accidents might happen to prevent my project from taking effect in the manner, or at the time, I intended, and therefore I felt it incumbent on me to convey the language of my emotions directly to yourself. I can now look upon you as a friend. Before, I knew not what might happen. It was like making an acquaintance with Robert Emmett, who, I believe, like yourself, was a man of a very pure mind, but respecting whom I could not have told, from day to day, what calamities he might bring upon his country; how effectually (like the bear in the fable) he might smash the nose of his mother to pieces, when he intended only to remove the noxious insect that tormented her—what premature and tragical fate he might bring down upon himself. Now I can look on you, not as a meteor, ephemeral, but as a lasting friend, who, according to the course of nature, may contribute to the comforts of my closing days. Now I can look on you as a friend, like myself, but I hope more effectually and actively useful, who is prone to study the good of his fellow men, but with no propensities threatening to do them extensive mischief under the form and intention of benefit.

I observe that you are but half a convert to my arguments. No matter, you have auspiciously yielded to them, and time will do the rest. You say 'you do not see that a peasant could arise from the perusal of your address to become imbued in sentiments of violence and bloodshed'. This is the language of an embryo philosopher, not of one who has passed a long and patient noviciate in the study of the human mind.

Moral causes are like chemical ones. When the chemist adds another ingredient to his mixture, he must think not only of the qualities of that ingredient, but of those of all the ingredients that have gone before, or else he will be little qualified to anticipate the result. The ingredient he has added is perhaps, considered by itself, entirely innoxious; but if, co-operating with what was before in the retort, it blows up his machinery, or his chamber, or himself and the houses of next neighbours in the air, he is, upon a strict and sound calculation, answerable for the event. If he did not understand the thing with which he intermeddled, he should have withheld his profane hands from so awful a business. If he had not unthinkingly added his last fatal ingredient, no such calamity would have taken place.

You say 'I will look to events, in which it will be impossible I can share, or make myself the cause of an effect, which will take place ages after I shall have mouldered into dust'. In saying this you run from one extreme to the other. I have often had occasion to apply a principle on the subject of education which is equally applicable here: 'Be not early discouraged, sow the seed, and after a season, and when you least look for it, it will germinate and produce a crop'. I have again and again been hopeless concerning the children, with whom I have voluntarily, or by the laws of society, been concerned. Seeds of intellect and knowledge, seeds of moral judgment and conduct, I have sown, but the soil for a long time seemed 'ungrateful to the tiller's care'. It was not so. The happiest operations were going on quietly and unobserved, and at the moment, when it was of the most importance, they unfolded themselves to the delight of every beholder. These instances of surprise are owing solely to the bluntness of our senses. You find little difference between the men of these islands and of Europe now and twenty years ago. If you looked more keenly into these things, you would perceive that the alteration is immense. The human race has made larger strides to escape from a state of childhood in these twenty years, than perhaps in any hundred years preceding. The thing most to be desired, I believe, is to keep up the intellectual, and in some sense the solitary, fermentation, and to procrastinate the contact and consequent action. This thing has its time. 'In the hour that ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.'

W. G.

To P. B. Shelley, Dublin.

CHAPTER XVII

THERE was one meeting of Philanthropists, for it was reported in a newspaper, and probably puffed a little, perhaps for a valuable consideration: whether there were more meetings does not appear. Poor Bysshe made a speech, and proposed his scheme; but it did not succeed. He talks about 'sobriety, regularity, and thought', in his printed discourses; 'that before anything can be done with effect, these must be entered into, and firmly resolved upon'. 'Irishmen must reform themselves, not by force of arms, but by power of mind, and reliance on truth and justice. No Irishman must swerve from the path of duty. Be open, sincere, single-hearted. O Irishmen, reform yourselves; desire peace and harmony, benevolence and a spirit of forgiveness; form habits of sobriety, regularity, and thought; accommodate yourselves to the progression of wisdom and virtue, to peace, philanthropy, and wisdom.' Of such phrases, of such simples, is the printed panacea compounded; no doubt the oral lecture repeated the same forms of speech. There is nothing taking in all this, and it did not take; the Association was damned at the first representation. The poet was soon weary of the inspired and unsuccessful dream; probably, if the project had succeeded, so versatile was his nature, he would have got tired of it all the sooner. Had he founded an Association, he would have started off suddenly, and have quitted in a moment, and for ever forgotten the beautiful creation. The fickle and unnatural parent, like the ostrich, would have speedily abandoned his helpless, or hopeful progeny. He had written, 'I have come to this country to spare no pains, where expenditure may purchase your real benefit'.

If any trading patriots, hireling and hungry agitators, attended the philanthropic meeting, supposing that the expenditure was to be of money, when they discovered that the young orator had not a shilling in his pocket, and that, therefore, nothing was to be gotten but good advice, which they did not need, they soon withdrew themselves from the barren pursuit of pure philanthropy: and those old stagers, who deemed the wrongs of Ireland, as their own peculiar property and freehold, were jealous

of an interloper, who might interfere with their long-established begging-box.

Shelley says, 'Expenditure is used in my address in a moral sense'; and his moral audience perhaps, soon perceived that such was his real meaning, and accordingly took their leave of him.

Having quickly grown tired of his hopeless scheme, Bysshe persuaded himself, that the arguments of William Godwin had persuaded him to abandon it, and to leave the country; and he readily made the old philosopher believe this; and he was much gratified and flattered by the imaginary triumph, and more firmly convinced than ever, of the absolute omnipotence of ratiocination, conducted after the method laid down in his brief tractate of *Political Justice*. Whereas, this very curious correspondence proves exactly the contrary, and shows clearly, that arguments were of no avail. By ingenious sophistry the young repealer, so long as he had any taste for repeal, always avoids them with dexterity; or he resists them by setting up some fancy to serve as an excuse for not yielding to them, as, for example, his feeble health, which he urges on this occasion, as he did on many others.

'Until my marriage my life had been a series of illness; as it was of a nervous and spasmodic nature, it in a degree incapacitated me for study; I nevertheless in the intervals of comparative health read romances, and those the most marvellous ones, unremittingly, and pored over the reveries of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus, the former of which I read in Latin, and probably gained more knowledge of that language from that source, than from all the discipline of Eton.'

He had picked up at secondhand some vague notions of these reveries. but that he had ever read the writings of Albertus Magnus in Latin was a mere visionary fancy. He never possessed the works of that author, and as they fill twenty-one volumes folio, they could not be hidden under a bushel.

Whenever he was hard pressed, his poetical imagination invented the touching fable of a delicate and dangerous state of health; his robust microcosm became in an instant the theatre of dire disease; spasms, consumptions, breaking of blood-vessels, veins, and arteries, crowded thickly upon him, as a pretence for undertaking what he eagerly desired, but felt to be imprudent and improper.

William Godwin was not yet personally acquainted with him; he knew nothing of his volunteer tyro, but what he had been

able to gather from half a dozen epistles penned in a romantic, rapturous, exalted strain; otherwise he would not have felt any apprehensions of danger to himself or others to arise from his day-dreams, even when they assumed for a few hours a political character. Had he been aware how little he was prone to engage in war himself, or to be the cause of warfare in others, he would not have likened his case to that of Robert Emmett and of the other well-hanged heroes of the Croppies' Hole. Nevertheless, the earnest and solemn warnings, albeit unnecessary, were wise and well-meant, and praise and gratitude were due for the kind and friendly intentions of his mentor. His inspired brain, elevated and carried away by a poetic temperament, was perfectly inaccessible to reason; so long as the fit of inspiration lasted Bysshe was indocile, intractable, and unmanageable. It has been said that his friend, William Godwin, had great influence over him, and so he had; but his influence, in fact, amounted to this—that no man could more readily persuade him to do whatever he was himself already resolved upon doing.

If Shelley had the eccentricity of a comet, he had likewise its inconceivable rapidity. From the postscript of his *Address to the Irish People*, we may judge of the astonishing velocity with which he approached the sun, and then receded from it; shooting along his trajectory to come suddenly into sight, flame meteor-like across the heavens, and then as suddenly to vanish, plunging into the abyss of infinite space. It affords an amusing instance of the speed with which he arrived at his conclusions, and adopted his measures. 'I have now been a week in Dublin, during which time I have endeavoured to make myself more accurately acquainted with the state of the public mind on those great topics of grievances which induced me to select Ireland as a theatre, the widest and fairest, for the operations of the determined friend of religious and political freedom. The result of my observations has determined me to propose an association for the purpose of restoring Ireland to the prosperity which she possessed before the Union Act.' If the obnoxious Act could have been repealed, and the pristine prosperity restored, in another week, the grievances of injured Ireland might possibly have been redressed; but if a longer time, a few days more, had been required, that sacred, winged thing, a poet, would unquestionably have flown far away before the deep degradation could have been removed by his mediation from the Island of Saints and Virgins.

Twice—not oftener, I believe—he spoke to me of his Irish mission. On one occasion, he told me that at a meeting—probably at the meeting of Philanthropists—so much ill-will was shown towards the Protestants, that thereupon he was provoked to remark that the Protestants were fellow Christians, fellow subjects, and as such were entitled to equal rights, to equal charity, toleration, and the rest. He was forthwith interrupted by savage yells; a tremendous uproar arose, and he was compelled to be silent. At the same meeting, and afterwards, he was even threatened with personal violence. This unseasonable display of popish and party bigotry went far to disgust him with his rash enterprise, to open his eyes, and to convince him that Irish grievances consisted not in a denial of equal rights, these the Philanthropic Association did not seek, but the power and opportunity to tyrannize over and to oppress their Protestant brethren. The other time, he spoke of Curran, and with distaste.

Bysshe was serious, thoughtful, enthusiastic; melancholy even, with a poet's sadness: he loved to discourse gravely of matters of importance and deep concernment; the unceasing jests, perpetual farce, and profane and filthy ribaldry of the comic Master of the Rolls he found wearisome, puerile, and worse. In behaviour, modest; in conversation, chaste; like some pure, innocent young maiden, the gross and revolting indecency of an immoral wit wounded his sensitive nature. Moreover, the old equity judge talked of his Hibernian hearth, of an Irishman's fireside, of domestic matters, and of his own family affairs, in a way not to be repeated, and which hurt the best feelings of his meek young guest.

Shelley seldom indulged in a pleasantry, and William Godwin as seldom reported one; a jest of the former, given on the relation of the latter, is at least a rarity of facetiousness.

A dull, boring fellow, who was accustomed, as other slow-witted seekers after truth were also, to propound questions to William Godwin, and to accept his answers, when they could be extracted, as oracles, inquired one day in Shelley's presence, with all solemnity, 'Pray, William Godwin, what is your opinion of love?' The oracle was silent. After a while, he who came to consult, repeated his question, 'Pray, William Godwin, what is your opinion of love?' The oracle was still silent, but Shelley answered for him.

'My opinion of love is, that it acts upon the human heart precisely as a nutmeg-grater acts upon a nutmeg.'

The grave inquirer heard the jesting answer with mute contempt; and presently repeated his question a third time. 'Pray, William Godwin, what is your opinion of love?'

'My opinion entirely agrees with that of Mr. Shelley.'

One more word of Curran—of the witty and eloquent patriot, Curran. Certainly they are good-natured people at Liverpool; having had lodgings there—apartments, they call them—for some twenty years, since assizes have been held there, and commonly twice a year in travelling the Northern Circuit, I may truly affirm that I have invariably been treated with attention and kindness. One summer assizes, from some retardation of the train, I arrived at my lodgings much later than the prescribed time, and therefore even more fatigued than usual with the improbity of a long journey by railway from London. Dinner was not to be thought of, so I ordered tea, and after a cup or two my spirits revived, and I boldly asked for chops. A couple of lamb chops were presently served up and eaten. By and by, a gentle tapping at the door was heard. 'Come in' The door was opened a little, and a head appeared, with the likeness of a cook's head.

'Shall you have another chop? Will I do you another chop?'

'No, I thank you, no more!'

'Were they not agreeable, then?'

'Perfectly agreeable. They were excellent; good meat, and very well dressed!'

'Oh! Botheration!' The door flew wide open, and the whole cook stood confessed. 'Do you think that the niece of the Right Honourable John Philpot Curran, Master of the Rolls in Ireland, does not know how to *bryle* a chop?'

'Is your name Curran, then?'

'Sure, and it is, your honour!'

'Are you related to the late Master of the Rolls?'

'I am not in any way particularly related to him. I am just his niece!'

This was most probably a misapprehension, a mistake; genealogies are too commonly a tissue of mistakes: however, as the alleged uncle was, according to his biographer, a person of very low origin, it is just possible that the cook's pedigree was correct: I leave it to the jury.

When I first became acquainted with the Shelley family, they were evidently consanguineous; it was all, my uncle, and my aunt; my cousin this, my cousin that, and my cousin the other; my nephew and my niece: this is very amiable, certainly,

and a united family is delightful. Nevertheless, consanguinity, it cannot be denied, is eminently conducive to commonplace. Bysshe fell in love at an early age—violently, desperately in love, with a fair cousin. He formed philosophical friendships with his sisters, and enlightened his uncle, the captain: if all this addiction to his own kindred had gone on smoothly to the end, without let or hindrance; and if he had made his not ungenial father the chosen companion of his studies, and the associate in his bolder speculations—and possibly it might have been effected—domestic peace and felicity would have been promoted. Yet genius, originality, novelty, flights of fancy, and poetic daring would have been sadly checked—docked and curtailed. This was not to be; all family bonds were burst and broken for ever, and his estrangement became complete. A wise Providence leads on its favourites to grand results by paths which, to short-sighted mortals, appear rough and perilous.

The Irish dream which commenced so abruptly, being brought as abruptly to an end, the youthful dreamer awoke; then suddenly vanished, and reappeared in Wales. He was revealed to those only whose function it was at that period to guide, or to mislead him; for my own part, I learnt nothing whatever, either of him, or of his adventures, for some time afterwards; and, until very lately, I never saw those letters from which alone my imperfect narrative of this portion of his history is drawn.

More epistles to his 'venerated friend' will display what is to be known of this restless part of his life: but they are filled with the mythic tale of his early days, rather than with a detail of his actual mode of existence. We can only arrive at a general conclusion—that it was uncomfortable. A climate wet and stormy, where the spring months are particularly cold and ungenial, is ill-adapted to promote the well-being of any man; it was especially noxious to a constitution prone to the diseases by which he believed himself to be afflicted. For solid reasons of romance, he had determined to settle, probably 'for ever', in Merionethshire—the most objectionable, perhaps, as to weather and temperature, of the twelve objectionable counties of the Principality—because it was feigned to have been the scene of some of the imaginary operations of the hero of one of the less popular of William Godwin's novels, and because the locality had been described by the author, who had never himself seen it.

To live in Sherwood Forest—in merry Sherwood—because

bold Robin Hood had drawn a longbow there; to dwell at Warwick, because in that town Guy had killed the red cow; to rent a house, because Little Red Riding Hood and Hop-o'-my-Thumb had peeped in at the window, and run away again—such are the motives of enthusiasm, and they are worthy of reverence; but surely the preferences of pilgrims and crusaders may claim the like courtesy.

Although Merionethshire was the scene of Fleetwood's early life, not even temporary accommodation was to be found there, and the young wanderers had tried in vain to obtain a house at several other places. Their peregrination is spoken of with the usual poetical amplification, 'We traversed the whole of North and a part of South Wales fruitlessly'. They met with a residence at last, called Nantgwilt, near Rhayader, in Radnorshire, but they were not completely certain of being able to obtain it; and, in fact, they did not obtain it. Some months previously he had spent ten days or a fortnight at the house of his cousin in the neighbourhood of Rhayader.

Bysshe's letters, addressed to myself during that visit, prove, as has been seen, that the scenery made very little impression upon him at the time, but his poetic imagination had brooded over it, and had produced this magnificent and affecting picture:

'Nantgwilt, the place where we now reside, is in the neighbourhood of scenes marked deeply on my mind by the thoughts, which possessed it, when present among them. The ghosts of these old friends have a dim and strange appearance, when resuscitated, in a situation so altered as mine is, since I felt that they were alive.'

The poet and his family were dull, lonely, and uncomfortable in their cold solitude; this is proved by their anxious desire to draw others into the like painful position, and to make them partakers of the dreary delights of a romantic existence. It would have been hard to have compelled Æschylus to quit his snug garret, or attic, in Athens, and inhabit the snowy Caucasus, because, in a tragedy, he had chained Prometheus on that inhospitable mountain. It would have been not less cruel to press a London bookseller, to tear him from his frequented shop in the city and his business, to carry him off the stones and out of the sound of Bow bell, and to force the poor fellow to stray with the hungry sheep on the side of proud Plinlimmon, because he had rashly bestowed immortality upon that verdant region in a pretty pastoral, or by some other handicraft of the sacred sisters.



NANT GWITT

[This is part of the original garden The house is now under water, the lake having been turned into a heath on —G.E.C.]

Harriet and Eliza were, no doubt, especially uneasy, the latter in particular. Harriet could employ and amuse herself with the sages and legislators of antiquity, in writing, reading, and reading aloud. But that dear Eliza! To brush the hair unceasingly, there being nobody within miles to admire it, from morn till night, even in the sweetest, loveliest seclusion; to polish everlastingly a head which did not contain one single idea, must indeed be a weary lot!

'Gracious heaven! what would Miss Warne say?'

What would she have said had she been translated from the chatty bar and the cheerful coffee-room to the vast silence that reigns amidst the scenes of Fleetwood's early life? No wonder, then, that these deserted, bewildered females were continually worrying the family of William Godwin—persons of whom they knew nothing whatever—to join them in the wilderness, being willing and desirous to take the chance of any strangers, whose presence might save them from themselves.

NANTGWILT, RHAYADLR, RADNORSHIRE, SOUTH WALES,

MY DEAR SIR,

April 25, 1812.

At length we are in a manner settled. The difficulty of obtaining a house in Wales (like many other difficulties) is greater than I had imagined. We determined, on quitting Dublin, to settle in Merionethshire, the scene of Fleetwood's early life, but there we could find not even temporary accommodation. We traversed the whole of North and part of South Wales fruitlessly, and our peregrinations have occupied nearly all the time since the date of my last.

We are no longer in Dublin. Never did I behold in any other spot a contrast so striking as that which grandeur and misery form in that unfortunate country. How forcibly do I feel the remark which you put into the mouth of Fleetwood, that the distress which in the country humanizes the heart, by its infrequency, is calculated in a city, by the multiplicity of its demands for relief, to render us callous to the contemplation of wretchedness. Surely the inequality of rank is not felt so oppressively in England. Surely something might be devised for Ireland, even consistent with the present state of politics, to ameliorate its condition. Curran at length called on me. I dined twice at his house. Curran is certainly a man of great abilities, but it appears to me that he undervalues his powers when he applies them to what is usually the subject of his

conversation. I may not possess sufficient taste to relish humour, or his incessant comicality may weary that which I possess. He does not possess that mould of mind which I have been accustomed to contemplate with the highest feelings of respect and love. In short, though Curran indubitably possesses a strong understanding and a brilliant fancy, I should not have beheld him with the feelings of admiration which his first visit excited, had he not been your intimate friend.

Nantgwilt, the place where we now reside, is in the neighbourhood of scenes marked deeply on my mind by the thoughts, which possessed it, when present among them. The ghosts of these old friends have a dim and strange appearance, when resuscitated, in a situation so altered as mine is, since I felt that they were alive. I have never detailed to you my short, yet eventful life; but when we meet, if my account be not candid, sincere, and full, how unworthy should I be of such a friend and adviser as that whom I now address! We are not yet completely certain of being able to obtain the house where now we are. It has a farm of two hundred acres, and the rent is but forty-eight pounds per annum. The cheapness, beauty, and retirement make this place in every point of view desirable. Nor can I view this scenery—mountains and rocks seeming to form a barrier round this quiet valley, which the tumult of the world may never overleap; the guileless habits of the Welsh—without associating *your* presence with the idea, that of your wife, your children, and one other friend, to complete the picture which my mind has drawn to itself of felicity. Steal, if possible, my revered friend, one summer from the cold hurry of business, and come to Wales. Adieu!

Harriet desires to join me in kindest remembrances to yourself, Mrs. G., and family. She joins also in earnest wishes that you would all visit us.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

NANTGWILT, *June 3, 1812.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I hasten to dissipate the unfavourable impressions you seem to have received from my silence. Mrs. Godwin, in a letter to my wife, mentions the existence of *your* letter in Ireland. This I have never been able to recover; indeed, I am confident that the date of your last was considerably anterior to the 30th March.

My health has been far from good since I wrote to you. and

I have been day after day tormented, and rendered anxious by the delay of legal business necessary to secure this house to us. I do not say that anything can absolutely excuse any neglect to you; but the constant expectancy that the succeeding day would bring a train of thought more favourable than the present, together with your expected letter, may be permitted to palliate it.

I hope, my venerated friend, that you will soon permit the time to arrive when you may know me as I am—when you may consult those lineaments which cannot deceive—and be placed in a situation which will obviate the possibility of delusion.

I revert with pleasure to the latter part of your letter, and entreat you to erase from your mind the impressions which occasioned the former. They shall never, assure yourself, find occasion of renewal. Until my marriage, my life had been a series of illness; as it was of a nervous and spasmodic nature, it in a degree incapacitated me for study. I nevertheless, in the intervals of comparative health, read romances, and those the most marvellous ones, unremittingly, and pored over the reveries of Albertus Magnus and Paracelsus, the former of which I read in Latin, and probably gained more knowledge of that language from that source than from all the discipline of Eton. My fondness for natural magic and ghosts abated as my age increased. I read Locke, Hume, Reid, and whatever metaphysics came in my way, without, however, renouncing poetry, an attachment to which has characterized all my wanderings and changes. I did not truly *think* and *feel*, however, until I read *Political Justice*. though my thoughts and feelings, after this period, have been more painful, anxious, and vivid—more inclined to action and less to theory. Before I was a republican: Athens appeared to me the model of governments; but afterwards, Athens bore in my mind the same relation to perfection that Great Britain did to Athens.

I fear that I am wanting in that mild and equable benevolence concerning which you question me; still I flatter myself that I improve; at all events, I have willingness, and 'desire never fails to generate capacity'. My knowledge of the chivalric age is small: do not conceive that I intend it to remain so. During my existence, I have incessantly speculated, thought, and read. A great deal of this labour has been uselessly directed; still I am willing to hope that some portion of the stores thus improvidently accumulated, will turn to account. I have just finished reading *Le Système de la Nature*, par M. Mirabaud. Do you

know the real author? It appears to me a work of uncommon powers.

I write this to you by return of post, solicitous, as quickly as possible, to reassure you of my fidelity and truth. I will soon write one more at length, and with answers more satisfactory to the questions in the latter part of yours.

Believe me, with sincerest respect,

Yours most truly,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

CWM-RHAYADER, June 11, 1812

MY DEAR SIR,

I will no longer delay returning my grateful and cordial acknowledgments for your inestimable letter of March 30. That it is most affectionate and kind, I deeply feel and thankfully confess. I can return no other answer, than that I will become all that you believe and wish me to be. I should regard it as my greatest glory, should I be judged worthy to solace your declining years; it is a pleasure, the realization of which I anticipate with confident hopes, and which it shall be my study to deserve. I will endeavour to subdue the impatience of my nature, so incompatible with true benevolence.

I know, that genuine philanthropy does not permit its votaries to relax, even when hope appears to languish, or to indulge bitterness of feeling against the very worst, the most mistaken of men.

To these faults in a considerable degree I plead guilty; at all events, I have now a stimulus adequate to excite me to the conquest of them.

I yet know little of the chivalric age. The ancient romances, in which are depicted the manners of those times, never fell in my way. I have read Southey's *Amadis of Gaul* and *Palmerin of England*, but at a time when I was little disposed to philosophize on the manners they describe. I have also read his *Chronicle of the Cid*. It is written in a simple and impressive style, and surprised me by the extent of accurate reading evinced by the references. But I read it hastily, and it did not please me, so much as it will on a reperusal, seasoned by your authority and opinion. It requires no great study to attain an intimate knowledge of Grecian and Roman history; it requires but common feeling to appreciate and acknowledge the resplendent virtues with which it is replete. The first doubts, which arise in boyish minds concerning the genuineness of the

Christian religion, as a revelation from the divinity, are often excited by a contemplation of the virtues and genius of Greece and Rome. Shall Socrates and Cicero perish, whilst the meanest hind of modern England inherits eternal life?

I mean not to affirm that this is the first argument, with which I would combat the delusions of superstition; but it certainly was one of the first that operated to convince men that they were delusions. What do you think of Eaton's trial and sentence? I mean not to insinuate that this poor bookseller has any characteristics in common with Socrates, or Jesus Christ. still the spirit which pillories and imprisons him is the same which brought them to an untimely end—still, even in this enlightened age, the moralist and reformer may expect coercion analogous to that used with the humble yet zealous imitator of their endeavours. I have thought of addressing the public on the subject, and indeed have begun an outline of the address. May I be favoured with your remarks on it before I send it to the world?

We are unexpectedly compelled to quit Nantgwilt. I hope, however, before long time has elapsed, to find a home. These accidents are unavoidable to a minor. I hope wherever we are, you, Mrs. Godwin, and your children will come this summer.

I do not suppose we shall remain here longer than a week. All letters directed here will securely and certainly be forwarded. Harriet desires to join me in everything that is respectful and affectionate to yourself, Mrs. G., and family, my venerated friend. Believe me to remain yours most sincerely,

P. B. SHELLEY.

To Mr William Godwin, London.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON 11th June 1812 they were settled in Radnorshire; but on 5th July the young rovers showed themselves in North Devon, at Lymouth¹, near Barnstaple: how they got there I know not. Four letters, that alone remain of the correspondence with William Godwin, supply whatever can be learned of the transactions of this period, and suggest a few remarks. It had apparently been settled in London, that they were to take the cottage of a certain Mr. Eton, a friend of Mrs. Godwin, at Lymouth. A cottage in a region so remote perhaps was not easily to be disposed of, and they probably, according to their accustomed tenure, were to remain there for ever; to hold the undesirable cottage in fee-farm. With this arrangement they did not comply, and their wilful neglect seems to have given offence to the authorities in Skinner Street, for the 'venerated friend' was more angry than one would expect so great a philosopher could be about so small a matter. Inasmuch as, if his pupil thought that he could promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number more effectually in a spacious mansion, where there was more elbow-room, than in Citizen Eton's narrow house, where the progress of perfectibility would have been cramped and hampered, surely he was fully justified by the eternal fitness of things in choosing the former. Thus, for once at least, there was a collision between the unreal of poetry and the cant of philosophy; if the consequences of the accident were severe, they were not fatal; even Mr. Eton himself, although much hurt, survived the concussion. It rather looks as if it had been proposed to them, possibly by some of the enlightened females, whose friendship they had so precipitately sought, to journey from Rhayader to Lymouth on purpose to occupy the charming cottage; that to the first part of this reasonable proposal their complying natures yielded, and the long journey was actually performed, but that they had contumaciously refused to take the cottage, because it would not contain them.

Shelley writes: 'I am, as you know, a minor, and as such depend upon a limited income, £400 per annum, allowed by my relatives. Upon this income justice and humanity have many claims'.

¹ i.e., Lynmouth.

If it be correct, which is doubtful, that he had an income of £400 a year—£200 from his own father, and the like sum from Harriet's father—and it was paid regularly, the allowance, although moderate, would have been sufficient for his unostentatious, unpretending style of living, if the greater part had not been wasted on travelling expenses, and in costly flittings. The only claim that justice and humanity could possibly have upon so narrow a stipend, a strong claim no doubt, was that the recipient should live within his income, and not exceed his scanty means.

This claim poor Bysshe did not, and could not, comprehend, and there was no judicious friend at hand to undertake for him the important duty of answering it by prudence, frugality, and economy. The high and sole function of the guardian angel was to keep up by continual friction the due activity of the electric fluid in her rich, black hair. No domestic animal; no cat, white mouse, or canary bird; not even the nymph *Egeria* herself, was so thoroughly ignorant of and unskilled in housewifery, as the good Harriet. The queer people with whom Bysshe inconsiderately connected himself, so far from assisting him in this great object by temperate advice and prudent example, were, for the most part, as irregular as himself, and moreover were animated by a common and eager desire to prey upon him to the utmost.

He writes, 'I might, it is true, raise money on my prospects, but the percentage is so enormous, that it is with extreme unwillingness I should have recourse to a step, which I might then be induced to repeat, even to a ruinous frequency and extent. The involvement of my patrimony would interfere with schemes on which it is my fondest delight to speculate'.

As a part only of the correspondence remains, it is impossible to conjecture to what proposal, or suggestion, this passage may refer.

He says that Lymouth is a beautiful place, a lovely solitude; that 'myrtles of an immense size twine up our cottage'. It is only up the imagination of a poet, that the myrtle ever twines. He often expressed to me the most lively admiration of the Valley of Rocks near Ilfracombe; and this is all that he ever divulged respecting his residence at Lymouth; and this picturesque valley made an indelible impression upon his memory. It was not less lasting, than forcible, for during the whole of his too brief life, even until its disastrous and too early termination, it was his habit frequently to sketch, or scrawl

almost unconsciously with his pen upon the fly-leaves of books, on the backs of letters, and in note-books, and occasionally even upon the wall, or wainscot, points, spires, and pinnacles of rocks and crags, as recollections and memorials of the fascinating spot. Specimens of his rude art still remain, and are cherished: as well as all other traces, however faint, of his frail and fugitive existence, which the Divine Poet left behind him on his abrupt and rough translation from a hard and unfeeling world!

LYMOUTH, BARNSTAPLE, *July 5, 1812.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I write to acknowledge the pleasure I anticipate in the perusal of some letters from you and yours, which have not yet reached us. The post comes to Lymouth but twice in a week, and some allowance is to be made for the casualties which attend an event by which we have been unexpectedly unsettled. We were all so much prepossessed in favour of Mr. Eton's house, that nothing but the invincible objection of scarcity of room would have induced us, even after seeing it, to resign the predetermination we had formed of taking it. We now reside in a small cottage, but the poverty and humbleness of the apartments is compensated for by their number, and we can invite our friends with a consciousness, that there is enclosed space, wherein they may sleep, which was not to be found at Mr. Eton's. I will, in the absence of other topics, explain to you my reason for fixing upon this residence. I am, as you know, a minor, and as such depend upon a limited income (£400 per annum) allowed by my relatives. Upon this income justice and humanity have many claims, and the necessary expenses of existing in conformity to some habitudes—which may be said to be interwoven with our being—dissipate the remainder. I might, it is true, raise money on my prospects, but the percentage is so enormous that it is with extreme unwillingness I should have recourse to a step, which I might then be induced to repeat, even to a ruinous frequency and extent. The involvement of my patrimony would interfere with schemes on which it is my fondest delight to speculate. I may truly, therefore, be classed generically with those minors who pant for twenty-one, though I trust that the specific difference is very, very wide. The expenses incurred by the failure of our attempt in settling at Nantgwilt, have rendered it necessary for us to settle for a time in some cheap residence, in order to

recover our pecuniary independence. I will still hope that you and your estimable family will, before much time has elapsed, become inmates of our house. This house boasts not such accommodations as I should feel satisfied in offering you, but I will propose a plan which, if it meets your approbation, may prove an interlude to our meeting, and become an earnest, that much time will not elapse before its occurrence. I have a friend; but first I will make you in some measure acquainted with her. She is a woman with whom her excellent qualities made me acquainted. Though deriving her birth from a very humble source, she contracted, during youth, a very deep and refined habit of thinking; her mind, naturally inquisitive and penetrating, overstepped the bounds of prejudice, she formed for herself an unbeaten path of life.

By the patronage of a lady, whose liberality of mind is singular, this woman at the age of twenty was enabled to commence the conduct of a school. She concealed not the uncommon modes of thinking, which she had adopted, and publicly instructed youth as a deist and a republican. When I first knew her she had not read *Political Justice*, yet her life appeared to me in a great degree modelled upon its precepts. Such is the woman, who is about to become an inmate of our family. She will pass through London, and I shall take the liberty of introducing to you one whom I do not consider unworthy of the advantage. As soon as we recover our financial liberty, we mean to come to London. Why may not Fanny come to Lymouth with her and return with us all to London in the autumn? I entreat you to look with a favourable eye upon this request, and indeed our hearts long for a personal intercourse with those to whom they are devoted; yet I fear, from the tenor of Mrs. G.'s letter, that we must give up the hope of seeing you. This disappointed hope determines us to journey to London *as soon as we can*. This place is beautiful, it equals—Harriet says it exceeds—Nantgwilt. Mountains certainly of not less perpendicular elevation than one thousand feet are broken abruptly into valleys of indescribable fertility and grandeur. The climate is so mild, that myrtles of an immense size twine up our cottage, and roses blow in the open air in winter. In addition to these is the sea, which dashes against a rocky and caverned shore, presenting an ever-changing view. All 'shows of sky and earth, of sea and valley', are here. Adieu! Believe how devotedly and sincerely I must now remain yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

I write this letter by return of post, and send purposely to Barnstaple. I have *more* to say, but will reserve it until I receive the letters which are on the way.

To Mr. William Godwin, London.

LYMOUTH, July 7, 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

The person whom I sent yesterday to the post town has returned. He brought those letters from you and yours, which have been forwarded from Cwm Elan to Chepstow.

It is a singular coincidence, that in my last letter I entered into details respecting my mode of life, and unfolded to you the reasons by which I was induced, on being disappointed in Mr. Eton's house, to seek an unexpensive retirement. I feel my heart throb exultingly when, as I read the misgivings of your mind concerning my rectitude, I reflect that I have to a certain degree refuted them by anticipation. My letter, dated the 5th, will prove to you that it is not to live in splendour, which I hate—not to accumulate indulgences, which I despise, that my present conduct was adopted. Most unworthy, indeed, should I be of that high destiny which he, who is your friend and pupil, must share, if I was not myself practically a proselyte to that doctrine, by promulgating which with unremitting zeal and industry I have become the object of hatred and suspicion.

Our *cottage*—for such, not nominally, but really, it is—exceeds not in its accommodations the dwellings of the peasantry which surround it. Its beds are of the plainest, I may say the coarsest materials, and from the single consideration, that accommodations for personal convenience were glaringly defective, did I refrain in my last letter from pressing the request, whose concession is nearest to my desires, that *you* would come to this lovely solitude, and bring to a conclusion that state of acquaintance which stands between us, to a *perfect* intimacy. I was beginning a sentence in the middle of the second page of my letter, in which I should have pressed you to come *here*, when Harriet interrupted me, bade me consider that your health was delicate, that our rooms were complete *servants' rooms*. I finished the sentence, as it stands. She added, that we would hasten our journey to London, and that *you all* should live with us. It was the thought of the moment; I send it you without comment, as it arose. See my defence. Yet, my esteemed and venerated friend, accept my thanks—consider yourself as yet more beloved by me, for the manner in which you have reprov'd my suppositious errors; and ever may you, like the tenderest

and wisest of parents, be on the watch to detect those traits of vice which, yet undiscovered, are nevertheless marked on the tablet of my character, so that I pursue undeviatingly the path which you first cleared through the wilderness of life.

I said, in my last letter, that there are certain habitudes in conformity to which it is almost necessary that persons, who have contracted them, should exist. By this I do not mean that a splendid mansion, or an equipage, is in any degree essential to life; but that if I was employed at the loom, or the plough, and my wife in culinary business and housewifery, we should, in the present state of society, quickly become very different beings, and, I may add, less useful to our species. Nor, consistently with invincible ideas of delicacy, can two persons of opposite sexes, unconnected by certain ties, sleep in the same apartment. Probably, in a regenerated state of society, agriculture and manufacture would be compatible with the most powerful intellect and most polished manners—probably delicacy, as it relates to sexual distinction, would disappear—yet now, a plough boy can with difficulty acquire refinement of intellect; and promiscuous sexual intercourse, under the present system of thinking, would inevitably lead to consequences the most injurious to the happiness of mankind. Mr. Eton's house had not sufficient bedrooms, *scarcely* sufficient for ourselves, and you and your family must sleep, for, my dear friend, believe me that I would not willingly take a house for any time, whither you could not come. Have I written desultorily? Is my explanation of habitudes incorrect or indistinct? Pardon me, for I am anxious to lose no time in communicating my sentiments.

Harriet is writing to Fanny; if she is particular in her invitation of Fanny, it is not meant exclusively. There are a sufficient quantity of bedrooms, and if the humbleness of their quality is no objection, I need not say—Come, thou venerated and excellent friend, and make us happy—Adieu!

Believe me, with the utmost sincerity and truth,

Ever yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

(Single sheet) To Mr. William Godwin, London.

MY DEAR SHELLEY,

Our acquaintance is a whimsical, and, to a certain degree, anomalous one. I have never seen your face—

Your face, my Thane, is as a book, where men
May read strange matters,

—and till I have seen a man's face, I may say, in good sooth, I do not know him. Would that this whimsical and anomalous state of our acquaintance were brought to a conclusion!

Deprived, therefore, as I have hitherto been, of the legitimate way of reading your character, and diving into your heart, I am reduced to collect traits of your character, one by one, as I can, as they offer themselves in your correspondence. I am half afraid I have got a glimpse of a new one—that, perhaps, I may not altogether approve—this day.

The postman this morning brought a letter, directed to Mr. Eton, at Mrs. Godwin's. The circumstance was an awkward one. Our family have been taught by yourself and Mrs. Shelley to be anxious about the place where you shall fix your abode. The moment when I may now call the well-known hand was seen, all the females were on the tiptoe to know.

Well! Do they take this nice cottage, near Tintern Abbey and Piercefield? It seemed idle, too, that we should be kept in ignorance of your determination. There could, I thought, be no secrets between you and Mr. Eton. I therefore ventured to open the letter. Mrs. Godwin will write a line to Mr. Eton in the course of the day, telling him that you decline his house. I am a little astonished, however, with the expression in your letter, that 'the insufficiency of house-room is a vital objection'. This would sound well to Mr. Eton from the eldest son of a gentleman of Sussex, with an ample fortune. But to me, I own, it a little alarms me. Observe, however, that I know nothing of Mr. Eton's house. It may be of the dimension of a pig-sty: nor is it my habit to reason directly to a particular case: the bent of my mind's eye is always to a general principle.

One thing more by way of preliminary. You love *frankness*, and you honour *me*; but when this frankness proceeds to unreserve and unceremoniousness in my person, will you bear that?

Your family consists of yourself, a very young wife, and a sister. Yourself, as I conceive, a plain, philosophical republican, loving your species very much, and caring very little for the accumulation of personal indulgences—tell me, how much of truth there is in this picture?

The *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* may, unknown to me, be a mass of false principles and erroneous conclusions; to me it appears otherwise: there is one principle that lies at the basis of that book: 'I am bound to employ my talents, my understanding, my strength, and my time, for the production of the greatest quantity of general good. I have no right to

dispose of a shilling of my property at the suggestion of my caprice'. There is no principle, as it appears to me, more fundamental to a just morality than this last. Not only property and money are most essential for promoting the good of others; but he that misuses these undermines all the good qualities he might otherwise have. He may say, indeed, he will employ his faculties and efforts for the general good, but if in the meantime he lives like a farmer-general, he is a woefully deficient character. The very act of having no conscience in the expenditure of his money, and pampering all his whims, will corrupt his understanding and taint his benevolence. It is in this point of view that the apostle says well: 'He that offends in one point is guilty in all'.

But you, my dear Shelley, have special motives for wariness in this matter. You are at variance with your father, and I think you say in one of your letters, that he allows you only £200 a year. If by unnecessary and unconscientious expense you heap up embarrassments at present, how much do you think that will embitter your days and shackle your powers hereafter? I wish to see you a free man, when you shall come of age, and when, at whatever time that may arrive, you shall be the minister, in the name and on the behalf of your species, of a considerable property. Prudence, too, a just and virtuous prudence, in this most essential point, the dispensation of property, will do much to make you and your father friends; and why should you not be friends?

Forgive the freedom of this expostulation: you must see that I am not playing the part of a peevish and presumptuous censor, but endeavouring to revive in you, if they need to be revived, great principles, without which a man can never be a worthy, a meritorious member of the great commonwealth of mankind.

Believe me, my dear Shelley, with the warmest wishes for your prosperity and happiness, your sincere friend,

W. GODWIN.

MY DEAR GODWIN,

LYMOUTH, *July 29, 1812.*

I have never seen you, and yet I think, I know you; I think I knew you even before I ever heard from you, whilst yet it was a question with me, whether you were living or dead. It has appeared to me, that there are lineaments in the soul, as well as in the face; lineaments, too, less equivocal and deceptive, than those which result from mere physical organization. This opinion may be illusory, if I find it so, it shall be retracted. You say, three letters of yours have been unanswered. I waited

to know whether those of mine contained any topics worthy of notice or discussion. I find they do not; therefore, let us pass on.

To begin with Helvetius. I have read *Le Système de la Nature*, and suspect this to be Helvetius' by your charges against it. It is a book of uncommon powers, yet too obnoxious to accusations of sensuality and selfishness. Although, like you, an irreconcilable enemy to the system of self-love, both from a feeling of its deformity and a conviction of its falsehood, I can by no means conceive how the loftiest disinterestedness is incompatible with the strictest materialism. In fact the doctrine which affirms that there is no such thing as matter, and that which affirms that all is matter, appear to me perfectly indifferent in the question between benevolence and self-love. I cannot see how they interfere with each other, or why the two doctrines of materialism and disinterestedness cannot be held in one mind as independently of each other, as the two truths, that a cricket ball is round and a box square. Immateriality seems to me nothing but a simple denial of the presence of matter, of the presence of all the forms of being with which our senses are acquainted, and it surely is somewhat inconsistent to assign real existence to what is a mere negation of all that actual world to which our senses introduce us.

I have read Berkeley, and the perusal of his arguments tended more than anything to convince me that immaterialism, and other words of general usage, deriving all their force from mere predicates in *non*, were invented by the pride of philosophers to conceal their ignorance, even from themselves. If I err in what I say, or if I differ from you, though in this point I think I do not, reason stands arbiter between us. Reason, if I may be permitted to personify it, is as much your superior, as you are mine. An hour and a thousand years are equally incommensurate with eternity. With respect to Helvetius' opinion of the omnipotence of education, *there* I submit to your authority, because authority, derived from experience such as yours, is reason. I will own, that the opinion of Helvetius, until very lately, has been mine.

You know that in most points I agree with you. As I see you in *Political Justice*, I agree with you. Your *Enquiry* is replete with speculations, in which I sympathize, yet the arguments there in favour of classical learning failed to remove all my doubts on that point. I am not sufficiently vain and dogmatical to say that *now* I have *no* doubts on the deleteriousness of classical education; but it certainly is my opinion—nor

has your last letter sufficed to refute it—that the evils of acquiring Greek and Latin considerably overbalance the benefit. But why, because I think so, should it even be supposed necessary by you to warn me against fearing that *you feel displeasure*. Assure yourself that the picture of you in the retina of my intellect is a standing proof to me, that its original is capable of extending to opinions the most unlimited toleration, and that he will scan with disgust nothing but a defect of the heart. Let Reason, then, be arbiter between us. Yet sometimes I am struck with dismay when I consider that, placed where you are, high up on the craggy mountain of knowledge, you will scarcely condescend to doubt, even sufficiently for the purposes of discussion, that opinion which you hold, although by that doubting you might fit me for following your footsteps. Yet I will explain my reasons for doubting the efficacy of classical learning as a means of forwarding the interests of the human race.

In the first place, I do not perceive how one of the truths of *Political Justice* rests on the excellence of ancient literature. That Latin and Greek have contributed to form your character it were idle to dispute, but in how great a degree have they contributed? Are not the reasonings on which your system is founded utterly distinct from and unconnected with the excellence of Greece and Rome? Was not the government of republican Rome, and most of those of Greece, as oppressive and arbitrary, as liberal of encouragement to monopoly, as that of Great Britain is at present? And what do we learn from their poets? As you have yourself acknowledged somewhere, 'they are fit for nothing but the perpetuation of the noxious race of heroes in the world'. Lucretius forms, perhaps, the single exception. Throughout the whole of their literature runs a vein of thought similar to that, which you have so justly censured in Helvetius. Honour—and the opinion either of contemporaries, or more frequently of posterity—is set so much above virtue as, according to the last words of Brutus, to make it nothing but an empty name. Their politics sprang from the same narrow and corrupted source. Witness the interminable aggressions between each other of the states of Greece; the thirst of conquest with which even republican Rome desolated the earth—they are our masters in politics, because we are so immoral as to prefer self-interest to virtue, and expediency to positive good. You say that words will neither debase our understandings, nor distort our moral feelings. You say that the time of youth could not be better employed than in the

acquisition of classical learning. But *words* are the very things that so eminently contribute to the growth and establishment of prejudice: the learning of *words* before the mind is capable of attaching correspondent ideas to them, is like possessing machinery with the use of which we are so unacquainted as to be in danger of misusing it. But words are merely signs of ideas. How many evils, and how great evils, spring from annexing inadequate and improper ideas to words! The words honour, virtue, duty, goodness, are examples of this remark. Besides, we only want one distinct sign for one idea. Do you not think that there is much more danger of our wanting ideas for the signs of them already made, than of our wanting these signs for inexpressible ideas? I should think that natural philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and, above all, history, could be sufficient employments for immaturity; employments which would completely fill up the era of tutelage, and render unnecessary all expedients for losing time well by gaining it safely.

Of the Latin language, as a grammar, I think highly. It is a key to the European languages, and we can hardly be said to know our own without first attaining a complete knowledge of it. Still, I cannot help considering it as an affair of minor importance, inasmuch as the science of things is superior to the science of words. Nor can I help considering the vindicators of ancient learning—I except you, not from politeness, but because you, unlike them, are willing to subject your opinions to reason—as the vindicators of a literary despotism; as the tracers of a circle which is intended to shut out from real knowledge, and to which this fictitious knowledge is attached, all who do not breathe the air of prejudice, or who will not support the established systems of politics, religion, and morals. I have as great a contempt for Cobbett as you can have, but it is because he is a dastard and a time-server; he has no humanity, no refinement; but were he a classical scholar, would he have more? Did Greek and Roman literature refine the soul of Johnson? Does it extend the views of the thousand narrow bigots educated in the very bosom of classicity? But

in publica commoda peccem
Si longo sermone morer tua tempora,

says Horace at the commencement of his longest letter.

Well, adieu! All join in kindest love to your amiable family, of whom I have forgotten to speak, but not to think; and I remain,

Very truly and affectionately yours,

To Mr. W. Godwin, London.

P. B. SHELLEY.

CHAPTER XIX

SHELLEY's last extant letter to William Godwin from Lymouth is dated 29th July. I have two other letters from Lymouth, the last bears date, 18th August. These are addressed to a person in London, who was possibly an acquaintance of his wife's family, but not, I believe, of himself at that time. They do not furnish any picture of his mode of life, and are not, therefore, of any particular interest; but the statement of a few facts is not unworthy of notice.

Bysshe writes on 29th July, that he had just printed, in London, his letter concerning the trial of D. I. Eaton (of which hereafter) for private distribution, but that he did not intend to publish it. He says: 'I have several works, some unfinished, some yet only in contemplation. They are principally in the form of poems or essays'. And he requests that Milton's *Prose Works*, Sir Humphry Davy's *Elements of Chemical Philosophy*, Hartley on *Man*, and *The Rights of Women*, by Mary Wollstonecraft, may be sent to him immediately.

In his letter of 18th August to the same person, he writes thus: 'I have procured a copy of a work from America. It develops the actual state of republicanized Ireland; and it appears to me to be above all things calculated to remove the prejudices, which have been too long cherished, of that oppressed country, and to strike the oppressors with dismay. I enclose also two pamphlets which I printed and distributed whilst in Ireland some months ago, no bookseller daring to publish them; they were on that account attended with only partial success'. It would have been more correct and more candid to have said, that the pamphlets had no success in Dublin. 'I shall, if possible, prepare a volume of essays, moral and religious, by November; but all my MSS. now being in Dublin, and from peculiar circumstances not immediately obtainable, I do not know whether I can. I enclose also, by way of specimen, all that I have written of a little poem, begun since my arrival in England; I conceive I have matter enough for six more cantos. You will perceive I have not attempted to temper my

constitutional enthusiasm in that poem. Indeed, a poem is safe; an iron-souled prosecutor would scarcely dare to attack "genus irritabile vatum". The past, the present, and the future are the grand and comprehensive topics of this poem. I have not yet half exhausted the second of them.' He says that he had read *The Empire of the Nairs*, by the Chevalier Lawrence, and also the prolusions of some other liberal philosophers of the day; and the letter concludes with these words: 'I am about translating an *old* French work, professedly by a M. Mirabaud, not the famous one, *Le Système de la Nature*. Do you know anything of it?'

This projected translation was not completed, probably it was never commenced; the *System of Nature* was hardly of sufficient standing to be styled 'an *old* French work'. The inchoate poem, of which a specimen was enclosed, is believed to have been the celebrated *Queen Mab* of the Divine Poet.

The ordinary fate of Shelley's writings was much like that of the Sibylline leaves; they were blown about at the mercy of every wind, into holes and corners the most remote and devious. His MSS. not immediately obtainable, but from which in three short months a volume of moral and religious essays was to proceed, he had, under peculiar circumstances, left behind him in Dublin.

Similar was the fortune of his letters; these he often either lost himself soon after they were written, or caused others to lose for him. How large and how charming a volume would those letters alone compose, which he wrote to myself and I never received!

So was it also with his books. A large share of his scanty income, amounting in the whole to a considerable sum during some fifteen years that he was constantly a purchaser, was always expended upon books; so that, wherever he happened to be, he was commonly in possession of a tolerable library, comprising several choice works. I used to think him extremely lucky in buying books, for he frequently picked up a rare and valuable author at a very moderate price; or, to do him justice, I should perhaps rather say, that he was active, observant, and intelligent in such purchases, as he was in all other matters.

When he changed his residence, and he often changed it—too often, indeed—he hastily chose some new domicile, where he resolved to remain 'for ever'; thither his books were at once dispatched, but with so wild a precipitance, and such headlong hurry, that ancients and moderns alike missed their way. And

when he, on the spur of the moment, quitted his eternal abode, as he was wont, the books were left behind to follow him to his lately elected and perpetual home: but they sometimes remained unheeded.

He had a good library expecting his return in a cottage at Killarney; and at I know not how many other places in the British Isles, and in other states of Europe. I have many times thought, what an excellent collection of valuable books the poor poet would have owned, if all his different libraries, scattered about in distant localities, had been brought together under one roof and in one large room.

To lend Bysshe a book was to bid it a long farewell, to take leave of it for ever; and, indeed, the pain of parting was often spared, for he bore away silently, reading it as he went, any work that caught his attention.

I have always possessed many books, the true riches of a scholar, and I have felt a certain weakness towards them; but if my books were dear to me, my incomparable friend was far dearer; he was most welcome, and more than welcome, to them, as to all besides, that I ever had: yet I have now and then permitted myself to regret, that he had deprived me of some favourite volume, only that he might presently lose it.

How much longer than the 18th August, the date of the last remaining letter from Lymouth, the juvenile party tarried there in their sweet seclusion, is not known; nor why, or how, they left that remote retirement, or whither they betook themselves. It would seem, that they departed very abruptly, after their fashion, and without communicating their hasty determination even to those favoured persons who were at that period in the fullest enjoyment of their entire confidence, such as it was, to the 'venerated friend and his amiable family'; inasmuch as William Godwin himself, as I discovered casually some years afterwards, for the lesion of philosophy was too cruel ever to be alluded to by any of the parties concerned, was hoaxed and regularly bitten in a most provoking and truly laughable manner. By dint of urgent and often reiterated invitations, he was at last persuaded and pressed into the service; and he made up his mind to pay a visit to his unseen, unknown friend, his affectionate, obedient, admiring, and devoted pupil; to try his fortune in Devonshire, and to take pot-luck at Lymouth.

Rashly relying on their assurances, and looking forward confidently to a warm reception, to be heartily welcomed and

made perfectly comfortable, he took an inside place by the coach to Barnstaple. The reverend mentor entrusted himself and his old-fashioned portmanteau to the heavy, lumbering vehicle, slowly rolled onwards towards the west of England, and after a long and tedious journey, he came at last to Lymouth, wearied and exhausted, poor man, but full of good hopes of finding at once rest, refreshment, and rapturous sympathy.

The worn-out patriarch of modern philosophy, to his no small astonishment and utter dismay, found that the house was shut up and the birds flown; his most addicted disciples had taken themselves off suddenly, and no man knew whither. There were no tidings, no traces, of their route! Nothing was left for him but to return to Skinner Street by the way he came; but this could not be effected every day. Twice, or at the most thrice, in the week did the six-inside coach plough its reluctant course to town. The bewildered author of the *Essay on Sepulchres* secured his seat, and reposed himself at his own charge in the inn, pondering in unphilosophical, unpoetic, unenviable loneliness how he might reconcile such flighty proceedings with the great social principles laid down so plainly in his immortal *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*; and drawing up, for the instruction of his amiable family on his return, a verbal process of the astounding neglect which he had experienced.

It would have been curious and amusing to have listened to the narrative of the disappointed and bubbled traveller giving the details of this specimen of human perfectibility. In addition to his other annoyances, it was related, that the much enduring man, relying upon the liberality of his devoted admirers, had not brought with him sufficient funds to take him home again, and therefore he found himself short of money in a land of strangers.

It is necessary to return to myself for a little while, and briefly to tell the simple story of my own uniform life, in order to follow the tangled thread of the Divine Poet's multiform and ever varying existence.

When my young friends betook themselves so hastily to Keswick, they left me behind at York, as has been already related; and I incurred their displeasure, to a certain extent, by refusing to join them, notwithstanding their repeated and importunate solicitations. It was on all accounts inexpedient, and indeed impossible, to relinquish my professional education. After they quitted Cumberland, I received no more letters, and I did not know how to address them. Both Bysshe and Harriet

wrote to me from Ireland, and also from Wales, as I was afterwards informed; but not one of their letters came into my hands. I led a quiet, regular life, in the quiet old city, punctually attending the chambers of my worthy conveyancer every day, and remaining with him until the hour of dinner, six o'clock, when the place was shut up, there being no attendance in the evening. I drew whatever was required to be drawn by me—marriage settlements, mortgages, wills, agreements, and the various deeds by which land is transferred, with dull, vulgar, and tiresome prolixity. I copied a thick volume in quarto of precedents, and I read the works, for the most part confused and ill-written, in which a branch of the law of England, certainly not extensive, nor indeed difficult in itself, is rendered perplexed, and sometimes unintelligible. The most profound ignorance is the specific difference, and the grand, unenviable distinction of the English lawyer—an animal too often drawn from the dregs of society—and the place of the real property lawyer, is commonly at the bottom of this low scale. The conveyancer is usually some damaged article—not merely a vessel of dishonour, moulded out of the coarsest clay into the rudest and most awkward form, but a piece spoiled in baking besides—a cracked pitcher, deformed in person and disfigured, ridiculous through an impediment in his speech, or by some broad provincial dialect, hardly to be understood by hedgers and ditchers; too vulgar for any judicial appointment, and moreover a rip, found on trial not to be respectable enough for an attorney. Hence arises the pernicious ascendancy—the omnipotence, in truth—of low connections and low arts, and the absolute impossibility, so long as this state of things continues, of a thorough reform of the law, and of the mode of transfer of real property in England. A scholar and a gentleman would be the master of his clients, and would be able to overrule and to silence all futile and interested objections to perspicuity and simplicity in dealings with land; but a mean and ignorant fellow must of necessity be the very humble servant and slave of the attorneys, who, in consideration of his entire and devoted subserviency, are pleased to give him business and bread; and to keep him out of the stoneyard and from the roadside, for which a wise Providence originally designed him.

I commonly gave up my evenings to humanizing studies; to the advancement of my general education, which had been so rudely, illegally, and insolently interrupted by the petty

despots of my university. I had brought my books with me from Oxford, and I went through several Greek and Latin authors with careful and scrupulous attention.

Sometimes, however, I partook of the kind hospitality of the good-natured and sociable inhabitants of the ancient city. On Sunday, when the day was not unfavourable, I bestowed a thought on my health, and I kept up my natural vigour by stretching out boldly across the fine plain, which encompasses York on all sides, and accomplishing on foot, a round of twenty, or thirty miles. In addition to the most salutary effects of robust exercise, the exertions of an attentive observer are usually rewarded by some object worthy of his notice; he sees some uncommon plant, or bird, or insect, and there are few old churches, however humble, which do not afford some interesting peculiarity of structure, or some memorial of past ages.

Having completed my proposed residence of a year in York, and taken the first step in my professional education, I removed to London. I entered as a student in the Middle Temple, and was doomed to eat in the noble hall, but happily during term only, that is to say, for about a third part of the year, bad dinners in worse company. There were a few young men among my fellow-students whose society was not displeasing, and we contrived to dine at the same table. This desirable object was effected by coming into the hall betimes, and performing certain ceremonies, the precise nature of which I have forgotten: sticking forks into pieces of bread, I think, was the principal charm. By such means we succeeded in keeping at a distance the future occupants of high legal offices; creatures stinking with filthy odours, stinking with vulgarity, and in every respect unfit to associate with gentlemen. These, the coming ornaments of the legal profession, all young men who had been decently brought up shunned as a pestilence. Rare Ben Jonson, some two centuries ago, dedicated *Every Man out of his Humour* 'to the noblest nurseries of humanity and liberty in the kingdom, the Inns of Court'.

Nobody, nowadays, has a good word for these places; they must take a new start, or be sold up. Moreover, on my arrival in London, I enlisted with a special pleader, and fought manfully under his inky banners. In some respects this study, or rather this vulgar and barbarous praxis, resembled the pursuits of the preceding year, in others it was widely different. Before, we had been drowsy, and wellnigh asleep; now, we were

always in a hurry; this seemed still more preposterous, and certainly less gentlemanlike, than the lethargy of the former year. Dispatch was prayed—earnestly prayed—most earnestly prayed. When can I have it? The question had never been asked at York! At first, I believe, I was one of two pupils, but shortly I became one of six. We were all persons of good principles, high Tories—the master and his disciples, with the exception of one man, who sometimes made a noise on behalf of Sir Francis Burdett, the most successful performer of the day in his particular line; having stated his thesis to us, the obstreperous young patriot supported it by the best arguments that can be used on that side of the question—by whistling and singing the popular tunes of the French Revolution, and beating time on his desk with a ruler. We thought the noisy champion of freedom a very foolish fellow, and such indeed he was; and eventually even his friend, Sir Francis, left him in the lurch, and came over to our party, turning into a fine old English gentleman, like ourselves. At the chambers of a special pleader, a greater amount of attendance was required than with a conveyancer; it was necessary to go thither after dinner, and sometimes to remain late; at least in and about term, that is for half the year, or more; and in fact the evening was the busiest part of the day. I attended very closely during the three years assigned to this state of pupilage. I drew a prodigious mass of pleadings, and copied many thick volumes of precedents, and read many treatises and reports; the employment was sufficiently dull and unintellectual, and there was no lack of tautology, but in this respect pleadings did not equal the uncouth and barbarous tautology of deeds.

The odious and stupid slavery, and perverse and absurd mode of learning common law, consumed in a miserable manner nearly the whole of my time, leaving but little for amusement, and, what I deeply deplored, for more humane studies. Nevertheless, I contrived to visit the theatres occasionally, to go sometimes into society, and to set apart a few hours for the classical authors of Greece and Rome; there are refreshment and relaxation in a change of studies.

A residence in London became soon exceedingly agreeable to me, and it has always been so; a spare hour may be employed with pleasure and profit in a capital city; in the country and in a provincial town there are not equal facilities for making leisure fruitful. Access may readily be obtained to books and other aids to learning, which are not approachable else-

where; and it is possible to cultivate the acquaintance of men of accomplishments and acquirements, and to associate with persons of both sexes distinguished by various talents. The long vacation notwithstanding was an invaluable relief, a complete renovation, the germ of a new life; to visit the country during the pleasantest part of the year—the autumn—to ride, to shoot, to study, at entire ease, and according to one's good pleasure, was a delightful change; to burn many pounds of powder, and to read many goodly volumes of Greek.

I had returned from the country at the end of October 1812, and had resumed the duties of a pleader; I was sitting in my quiet lodgings with my tea and a book before me: it was one evening at the beginning of November, probably about ten o'clock. I was roused by a violent knocking at the street door, as if the watchman was giving the alarm of fire; someone ran furiously upstairs, the door flew open, and Bysshe rushed into the middle of the room. I had not seen him for a year; not since they left me at York. I had not heard from him, nor indeed any tidings of him for many months; not once after his departure from Keswick. I made several fruitless attempts to find out what had become of him soon after I came to reside in London the last spring.

The civil and obliging Mr. Graham had unfortunately quitted his lodgings, and the people could not tell me where he was; he could have given me at once the information, which I so ardently desired. I called in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and I saw the elder of the cousins, the younger and more communicative one had gone to Edinburgh to study medicine. I had a very cold reception; of Bysshe he either knew, or chose to know, nothing.

It was evident there was a screw loose; he gave me no encouragement to call again, nothing, it was plain, was to be made of him, and I have never seen him since.

From this untoward sample it was conspicuously of no use to address myself to any other members of his family, or to their agents; the poor poet was a prohibited book, closely sealed up and put away to be out of sight, and indeed out of mind. There was nothing to be done but to draw pleas, to keep terms, and to bide my time.

The time had now come suddenly and unexpectedly. Bysshe looked, as he always looked, wild, intellectual, uncarthy; like a spirit that had just descended from the sky; like a demon risen at that moment out of the ground.

How had he found me out? I could never have discovered his hiding-place; in truth I had often tried in vain. He knew of my intention to become a law student; he had been at the Treasury in Lincoln's Inn; they sent him to the Temple. I had dined that day in the hall of the Middle Temple, and from thence they dispatched him to my special pleader, and he, with considerable hesitation, gave him my address.

The next morning this gentleman said to me, not without a certain trepidation:

'You had just left chambers last night, when a very wild-looking man came here, and asked for you—he must see you instantly. He was in a great hurry; he must see you. He required your address; I doubted whether I ought to give it him, for he would not tell me his name. Leave your own name as a written direction; Mr. Hogg will be here in the morning, he will see it, and if he pleases, he can call upon you; but he would not agree to this: he must see you immediately. My clerk thought that in a frequented part of London there could not be much danger, so I permitted him, though rather unwillingly, to write down your lodgings and at last I gave it him. Did you see him? I hope he did not do you any harm.'

Bysshe did not approve of the caution of the prudent pleader; next day, when I told him of his suspicions, he exclaimed: 'Like all lawyers, he is a narrow-minded fool! How can you bear the society of such a wretch? The old fellow looked at me, as if he thought I was going to cut his throat; the clerk was rather better, but he is an ass!' He had ten thousand things to tell me, and as he told me a thousand at least of them at a time without order, and with his natural vehemence and volubility, I got only a very indistinct notion of his history during the preceding year; I picked up a few facts afterwards, many more very recently, but even at this moment I can trace only an imperfect narrative of this portion of his life. I learned that he had been in Ireland, in Wales, and in other places; that was nearly all which I could then make out. He eagerly asked me innumerable questions, but he seldom heard, or waited for, my answers. He was soon coming to reside in London—to stay there 'for ever'; so we should never be separated again. He stayed late, and would have remained conversing with me all night, but I took him by the arm, and led him downstairs and into the street, that the people of the house, who began to show their uneasiness, might go to bed; for my landlord was a judge's clerk, and kept good hours. I promised at parting to

dine with him the next day. I should see Harriet, who had much to tell me.

Accordingly, on the morrow at six o'clock, in some hotel very near to St. James's Palace, I found in a sitting-room high up in the house, Eliza, who smiled faintly upon me in silence, and Harriet, who received me cordially and with much shaking of hands. 'It really seemed as if we were never to meet more! What a separation! But it will never occur again, for we are coming to live in London.'

'You are looking surprisingly well, Harriet!' And so she was, and in the full bloom of radiant health.

'Oh no, poor dear thing,' said Eliza, feebly, 'her nerves are in a fearful state: most dreadfully shattered.'

I took a seat, and conversed a little while with the bright and nervous beauty. Harriet then produced a large sheet of thick paper, printed on one side only, and with an engraving at the top, much like an Oxford almanack, and handed it to me with a certain unction, as if it were something sacred and full of edification. I looked at it in a cursory way. The letterpress was a report of the trial of Robert Emmett; the engraving represented a court of justice with the usual accompaniments. The principal figure was the unfortunate young man; he was standing at the bar and addressing the bench, vainly endeavouring to charm two deaf adders, Baron George and Baron Daly, and to persuade them to feel commiseration for, if not sympathy with, high treason. When I had looked at the paper a short time, the good Harriet asked me, not without emotion: 'Well, what do you think? Do not you pity him? Poor young man!'—'Not the least in the world!' 'What do you think of it?' The paper was filled for the most part with the speech of the prisoner. I had read formerly a fuller report of Emmett's trial. 'I think the sooner all such rascals are hanged the better!' Eliza eyed me with calm contempt, with mute languid disgust.

'Yes, it is just like you!' Harriet ejaculated. 'You are so horribly narrow-minded! So terribly unfeeling!'

Presently Bysshe came thundering upstairs from the street like a cannon ball, and we had dinner. After dinner the poet spoke of Wales with enthusiasm. I was to come and see it. He talked rapturously of the waterfalls, walking about the room and gesticulating as he described them. What effect they had upon him when they were actually present before his eyes I know not; the recollection of them absent filled him with wonder

and ecstacy in St. James's Street. Soon after tea Eliza said they must go and pack up; they were to set out for Wales early next morning, and she trembled for poor dear Harriet's nerves!

A few shabby, ill-printed books, productions of the Irish press, were lying about the room; they treated of the history of Ireland, and of the affairs of that country. Bysshe did not say a word about Ireland; on the contrary, when I took up an ill-favoured volume, and remarked what a shockingly printed book, it is hardly legible; he gently drew it out of my hands, closed it, and laid it aside. He spoke on two subjects only; his project to come and reside in London, when we should be always with each other, and should read together every book that was ever written by man; and about the Welsh waterfalls, which I was soon to visit in company with him; and some day we must take a look at the falls of Niagara. The lovely Eliza in her languishing manner whispered to her sister, that a certain Mrs. Madocks was a most delightful creature; and she had named in the course of the evening, more than once, with faint rapture, some Mr. Madocks, as the benefactor of the human species. Bysshe also informed me in confidence, that Mr. Madocks, of Tremadoc, was the true Prince of Wales, being the lineal descendant and heir-at-law of that Prince Madoc, who had been immortalized in a never-dying epic by the immortal Robert Southey. No doubt the worthy squire by genealogical syllogisms might easily be proved to be Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, and Earl of Chester, and Duke of York to boot: this would be but a modest and moderate assumption in a Welsh pedigree. My friends loved mysteries which were never worth penetrating; farthing secrets not of sufficient importance for finding out. I learned subsequently what was the meaning of all this. The true nature of the transaction will be explained most readily by a letter which has been put into my hands lately, addressed by Shelley to an attorney in Wales, the agent of Mr. Madocks.

In the brief interval between quitting Lymouth and his sudden apparition in the Treasury at Lincoln's Inn, he had become acquainted with a company of projectors and speculators; at what place, or in what way he came to know them, I never heard. He fell at once into their schemes after his manner, and with a zeal far too hot to hold. It does not appear whether he had engaged in actual personal canvass for the Tremadoc people in Sussex, as his letter might imply, or had written sundry epistles on their behalf, and had received cold answers; or, as is most probable, he had, in virtue of his former

experience of the men of his native county, set them down for 'cold, selfish, calculating animals', who reckoned it better to spend their money at home in the purchase of Sussex dumplings, in eating, drinking, and sleeping, than in embanking against the sea in a corner of some Welsh county.

The Duke of Norfolk, I was informed, politely answered the request for pecuniary assistance, and regretted that he had no funds at his immediate disposal, which most likely was true; but their inference was not so; that if he had a large sum of money in hand, he would have placed it instantly at the disposal of that most delightful creature, Mrs. Madocks, for the sake of her lovely friend's glossy black hair.

The attempt is said to have been a noble one; and for a thing of the kind, probably it was very good. Some four or five thousand acres of fertile land were to be gained from the sea, which were to be let at forty shillings an acre, and would have produced an income of from eight to ten thousand pounds a year; the newly-created town of Tremadoc would have been greatly benefited, as well as the neighbourhood, and a road on the top of the embankment would have united two counties of Wales, and would have shortened considerably the journey from Dublin to London and Bath: the last advantage perhaps is a doubtful one, for there are quite as many Irishmen in London and Bath as are wanted. The whole was to have been effected at the estimated cost of twenty thousand pounds. All this would have been very good for the people in that remote angle of North Wales, and particularly for Mr. Madocks himself; but it is not easy to see what the worthy inhabitants of the Rapes of Sussex had to do with the scheme, what profit they were to derive from it, or why Bysshe should write about it in such rapturous strains; why so much 'unabated and unconquerable ardour' should be kindled by one of the pecuniary speculations of a very active and sanguine speculator; what better feelings the Duke of Norfolk could have relative to this sea-wall; why it was 'our country's cause'; how it could rationally excite 'fond hopes, ardent desires, unremitting personal exertions in a cause, which I will desert but with my life!' This surely is the poetry of engineering! A civil engineer must be inspired to write thus.

ST. JAMES'S COFFEE-HOUSE, Nov. 7, 1812.

MY DEAR WILLIAMS,

I received your long and kind letter, and although press of business does not permit me to answer to its length, I do hope

that it may not be deficient in kindness. I need not assure you of the pleasure which I receive from the intelligence of the safety and success of the embankment, of the honourable perseverance of the men, or your own good hopes and spirits. You know my feelings on all these things. I have too often expressed my unabated and unconquerable ardour for the success of you and your enterprises to need repetition now.

On Thursday next we set out for Tanyrallt, and expect to be with you on the ensuing Monday. The Duke of Norfolk has just returned to London. I shall call upon him this morning, and shall spare no pains in engaging his interest, or perhaps his better feelings, in our and our country's cause.

I see no hope of effecting, on my part, any grand or decisive scheme until the expiration of my minority. In Sussex I meet with no encouragement. They are a parcel of cold, selfish, and calculating animals, who seem to have no other aim or business, on earth but to eat, drink, and sleep; but in the meanwhile my fervid hopes, my ardent desires, my unremitting personal exertions (as far as my health will allow), are all engaged in that cause, which I will desert *but with my life*. Can you hire a trustworthy maidservant, as we shall require three in all? Believe me, I feel the attention of the Nanney family very deeply.

Harriet is now writing to Mrs. M., to express her sense of her kindness. I do think that your country owes more than I can express to the disinterestedness and activity of that administration.

Harriet and the ladies unite with me in sincerest best wishes, and believe me,

Your true friend,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

P.S.—I am much better than when you last saw me. If I can find time to-day, I shall write to the doctor. Mr. Bedwell will settle the £70 affair.

The date of a letter shows, that on 3rd December 1812, Shelley was residing, probably with three trustworthy maidservants at Tanyrallt, near Tremadoc, in a cottage, or country house, the property of Mr. Madocks. The letter shows also that he was already getting tired, if not of the embankment, at least of the distant and inconvenient locality, and of his unenlightened neighbours.

'My parcel of books', he writes, 'is not yet arrived. I own I am rather anxious concerning it, as the irregularity of the

coaches in this solitude among mountains frequently causes mistakes. The verses which I have lately read are accurately descriptive of the exquisite souls by whom I am encompassed. Bigotry is so universally pervading, that the best are deeply tainted. I was speaking of your friend to a lady, who knew him during his residence in Wales. In many respects she is a woman of considerable merit, and, except in religious matters, a model of toleration. "Oh!" she said, "there he lived in a cottage near T——, associating with no one, and hiding his head like a murderer, and", she added, altering her voice to a tone of appropriate gravity, "he was worse than that, he was a sceptic!" I exclaimed much against the intolerance of her remark, without producing the slightest effect. She knows very well that I am a democrat; but perhaps she does not do me justice? There is more philosophy in one square inch of any tradesman's counter than in the whole of Cambria. It is the last stronghold of the most vulgar and commonplace prejudices of aristocracy. Lawyers of unexampled villainy rule and grind the poor, whilst they cheat the rich. The peasants are mere serfs, and are fed and lodged worse than pigs. The gentry have all the ferocity and despotism of the ancient barons, without their dignity and chivalric disdain of shame and danger. The poor are as abject as slaves, and the rich as tyrannical as bashaws.

In another letter from Tanyralit, in Carnarvonshire, of the 17th December, Bysshe says:

'I am preparing a volume of minor poems, respecting the publication of which I shall request the judgment both of a publisher and a friend. A very obvious question would be, Will they sell or not? Subjoined is a list of books which I wish you to send to me very soon. I am determined to apply myself to a study that is hateful and disgusting to my very soul, but which is above all studies necessary for him who would be listened to as a mender of antiquated abuses—I mean that record of crimes and miseries—history. You see that the metaphysical works, after which my heart hankers, are not numerous. In this list, one thing will you take care of for me, that the standard and reputable works on history, etc., be of the cheapest possible editions; with respect to the metaphysical works, I am less scrupulous. Spinoza you may, or may not be able to obtain. Kant is translated into Latin by some Englishman.'

Bysshe did not begin to learn the German language until the year 1815.

'I would prefer that the Greek classics should have Latin or English translations printed opposite; if they are not to be obtained thus, they must be sent otherwise. Mrs. Shelley is attacking Latin with considerable resolution, and can already read many odes in Horace.'

There follows, by way of postscript, a long list of standard historical works, a few on physics and metaphysics, and four venerated names: Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Plutarch, 'with translations in Latin or English subjoined. To these, which will take some stiff reading, you may add anything new that you conceive of sufficient worth'. On the shortest day, the 21st December, he writes to London for 'Marcus Antoninus, Seneca, and Plato; the last author with a translation'.

It did not transpire whether Shelley had any personal interview with William Godwin during his brief visit to London in November; the proceedings of my friend were shrouded in his habitual mystery, and his hasty and devious footsteps seldom left any traces behind him; it was not otherwise than if he had been walking upon the surface of the sea. According to ordinary rules, one would infer that Bysshe called upon him, and offered some explanation, or apology, for having left his visitor so strangely in the lurch at Lymouth. But an inspired poet is not governed by ordinary rules, and there is no indication in William Godwin's letter of their having as yet met. Possibly the flight from Lymouth was too outrageous a slight to be expiated by an early exposition of motives face to face with a lover of wisdom for its own sake, however meek and mild he might be. It is certain that William Godwin had no large sums of money at his disposal, wherewith the favourite speculation of the moment might have been aided, nor was he an adept in the science of banking out the sea, so that in the present emergency his counsels would have availed little. Besides, a permanent residence in London was then contemplated as being about to commence immediately, and personal acquaintance might naturally and conveniently be postponed until a frequent and familiar intercourse might be carried on without interruption.

William Godwin's letter to Shelley is dated the 10th December 1812. It treats of the study of history; and although the latter part is wanting, the fragment is of considerable length, and therefore it must be passed over, at least for the present. Nevertheless, it is worthy of attention; of more attention than

the young historical student appears to have bestowed upon it, whose reading was not influenced in any the smallest degree by advice humbly and urgently demanded.

The year 1813 opens at Tanyrallt with this extract from a letter of 2nd January:

'On reflection, I feel rather chagrined that I excepted against the Georgics. I fear it may withhold your hand, when you would otherwise send me some really valuable work. I assure you I am quite reconciled to Professor Martyn. Harriet will probably derive some assistance from his translation, when she has mastered Horace. Now to answer your questions. The *Tractatus Polemicopoliticus* and the *Opera Posthuma* of Spinoza will fully suffice, at least for the present. With respect to Kant, there is a work of his, and, as I judged, the only one, which has been translated into Latin by some doctor. This, which is his most celebrated work, is the only one I require; and I have no choice between a Latin, a French, and an English translation. My poems will, I fear, little stand the criticism even of friendship; some of the latter ones have the merit of conveying a meaning in every word, and all are faithful pictures of my feelings at the time of writing them. But they are, in a great measure, abrupt and obscure—all breathing hatred of despotism and bigotry; but, I think, not too openly for publication. One fault they are indisputably exempt from, that of being a volume of fashionable literature. I doubt not but some friendly hand will clip the wings of my Pegasus considerably. Small Christmas or Easter offerings of a neat little book have frequently a surprising effect. The emperors of China seem to form a singular exception to the usual doltishness of the regal race. I sympathize with his Imperial Majesty.'

What this compliment to the Emperor of China relates to does not appear.

'Harriet, her sister, and myself hope to see some of our friends here early in the spring.'

The early spring will speak for itself, and will tell its own tale. On 26th January, he writes from Tanyrallt, Tremadoc:

'The thermometer is twelve degrees below freezing; this is Russian cold! I am provoked by the stupidity of the people who were to send the box, etc.'

But on the manifold inconveniences of a residence in the wilderness it is needless to expatiate.

'I certainly wish to have all Kant's works. My question concerning the *Encyclopédie* was more of curiosity than want.'

This kind of liberal curiosity may be easily gratified in London, but not at Tremadoc.

‘I expect to have *Queen Mab* and the other poems finished by March. *Queen Mab* will be in ten cantos, and will contain about twenty-eight hundred lines; the other poems contain probably as much more. The notes to *Queen Mab* will be long and philosophical; I shall take that opportunity, which I judge to be a safe one, of submitting for public discussion principles of reformation, which I decline to do syllogistically in the poem. A poem very didactic is, I think, very stupid. I do not think that Sir William Drummond’s arguments have much weight. His *Ædipus Judaicus* has completely failed in making me a convert.’

To proceed with the extracts from Shelley’s letters. He writes thus from Wales on 19th February:

‘You would very much oblige me if you would collect all possible documents on the Precession of the Equinoxes, as also anything that may throw light upon the question of whether or not the position of the earth on its poles is not yearly becoming less oblique. It is an astronomical affair.’ His attention had probably been called to equinoctial considerations by Sir William Drummond and other writers of the same stamp; however this might be, the astronomical affair and the extensive commission to which it gave occasion, would certainly puzzle the brains of a correspondent as far advanced in astronomy as a Carnarvonshire squire.

Dry Drummond’s *Ædipus* is altogether unreadable; but Volney’s *Ruins* was one of Harriet’s textbooks, which she used to read aloud for our instruction and edification.

‘*Queen Mab*’, he continues, ‘is finished and transcribed. I am now preparing the notes, which shall be very long and philosophical. It will be received with the other poems; I should think that the whole should form one volume: but of that we can speak hereafter. As to the French *Encyclopédie*, it is a book, which I am desirous, very desirous, of possessing. And if I could get a few months’ credit (being at present rather low in cash), I should very much desire to have it. How long will the poems be printing after they have been received?’

‘Excuse the earnestness of the first part of my letter. I feel warmly on this subject, and I flatter myself, that so long as your own independence and liberty remain uncompromised, you are inclined to second my desires.’

Of the earnestness which he seeks to excuse, the first sentence

of the letter will afford a specimen: 'I am boiling with indignation at the horrible injustice and tyranny of the sentence pronounced on the editor of the *Examiner* and his brother; and it is on this subject that I write to you. Surely the seal of abjectness and slavery is indelibly stamped upon the character of England'.

After a further display of very excusable earnestness, he proposes that a public subscription to pay the fine imposed be set on foot, and with his unbounded, and too often inconsiderate, liberality, he sends twenty pounds as his own contribution should the project be adopted.

A pert journalist had presumed to call a very important personage 'an Adonis of sixty', and had even ventured to charge him with being 'fat'; whereas the Adonis was disposed to sink his age, and to esteem his figure as eminently correct, and in its fullness graceful. The author lying always under the stern necessity of saying something every week to the purpose, if possible, and relevant to the passing concerns of the day, or at all events of saying something to fill up his paper; in addition to the imputation of corpulency with its attendant jests, had discoursed of the ordinary topics of censure, which in those times were thought to be intimately connected with the name of that personage. He might never be mentioned indeed by his former adherents without some reference to these; without reiterating the old complaint, that the monarch had turned the tables and his own back, a broad fat back it was affirmed to be in this instance, upon the associates and bottle-holders of the heir-apparent. In this respect the article complained of had not gone, it was freely acknowledged, beyond the proper limits of sound Whig doctrines and constitutional scurrillity; but it had pronounced him to be a fat, old man. This was saucy, and peculiarly offensive to a ruler, who was resolved to be still reputed a slim, slender-waisted youth.

It might well be, that the personal ridicule was reprehensible to a certain extent, but most assuredly it was foolish to be so deeply offended at it. It was childish to own so much displeasure, and preposterous to file a criminal information in such a case. It is hard to believe that a public prosecutor could have been found indiscreet enough to disgrace himself and his office by taking up seriously so absurd a matter—to comprehend how the defence could have been so conducted, and a jury packed, so that a verdict of guilty could have been procured. A fine of fifty pounds imposed upon the convicted defendants,

or a month's imprisonment, would have been a moderate and sufficient punishment; a mark of disapprobation fully adequate to the offence, such as it was. A fine of one thousand pounds, and the incarceration of two persons for two years, appeared to be a measure of outrageous and stolid vengeance, too insane to be awarded by the slowest of judges, and of too manifest and patent a tendency to bring the administration of criminal justice into utter and universal contempt.

It is said to be a question of what wood Mercuries ought to be made; but there could be no question, after this frantic sentence, whether successful advocates, who had turned trading politicians, were the proper material out of which to construct a bench of judges. Moreover, it seems quite incredible, that the royal prerogative of mercy did not interpose to remedy the wrong, and to soothe the shocked and irritated feelings of the public, by remitting the greater part of the monstrous punishment.

The libel possibly was blamable; the prosecution, the persecution, and rigorous condemnation were altogether indefensible. However, it was a paltry, pitiful affair on both sides, and in every point of view. It was party spite against party spite, and nothing more. It was in its origin and nature an attempt to annoy political opponents; and in its results the insulting aggressors, political assailants, had the worst of it. Consequently, there was nothing in the transaction to cause indignation, a virtuous indignation, to boil over. A lower temperature than 212 degrees, on a philosopher's thermometer, would have indicated warmth of displeasure equal to censure adequately the injustice and tyranny of an improper and impolitic severity. 'The fancy of a sensitive, imaginative young poet surely runs riot, when he writes to his correspondent of 'the great debt of obligation which the people of England owe to a good, brave, enlightened man, to the champion of their liberties and virtues, which if they hesitate to pay, they are dead, cold, stony-hearted, and insensible, and brutalized by centuries of unremitting bondage'.

The great debt being in truth, that the champion of liberty and virtue had called somebody or other, 'a fat Adonis of sixty', in order that he might sell his journal, divert his readers, and please the political adventurers of his own party, who might, or might not, feel themselves bound in gratitude to stand by him, to compensate his losses and sufferings, and to be substantially thankful for having afforded them so good a

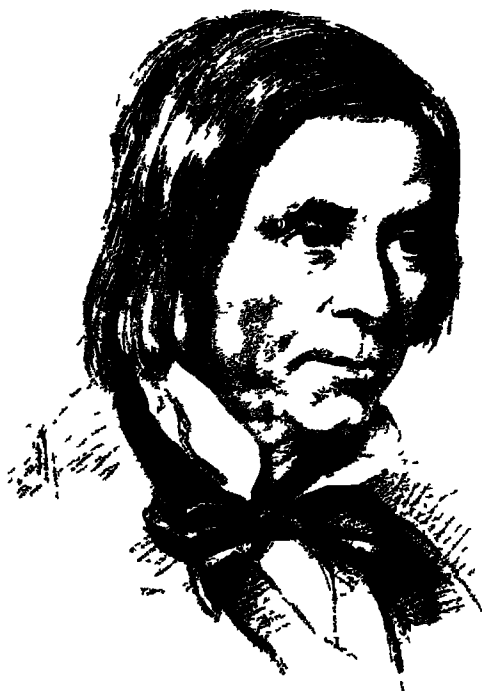
grievance, as the severe sentence which sent him, for his impertinence, to tarry an unreasonably long time in a prison in Horsemonger Lane. But a scholar, a poet, and a gentleman should scorn such trash; he ought not to be caught by so poor a bait.

A strange epistle, of which a copy in Mrs. Shelley's writing has lately been placed in my hands, may be conveniently introduced and noticed in this place, as being connected with the subject, although it was written two years before, during our residence at Oxford.

What the triumph, so highly to be prized by men of liberality, on the occasion of which his sincerest congratulations were offered, really was, does not appear, nor is it material to inquire. It was probably some success of journalism, in truth interesting only to journalists; to 'the fearless enlighteners of the public mind', as they are laughably, but not ironically styled. However, it is unnecessary to discuss such lofty themes. The letter is curious, because it presents one of the very few instances in which he appeared to have contemplated the contingency of sitting in parliament. He commonly shrank with dismay and horror from every proposal of that kind, when it was made to him by his father and other members of his family, or by the Duke of Norfolk. But I apprehend, that he contemplated it only for a moment, during the brief dream in which he penned this fanciful and whimsical effusion; this vision of want of judgment. The Abbé Barruel's *History of Jacobinism* was a favourite book at college, he went through the four volumes again and again, swallowing with eager credulity the fictions and exaggerations of that readily believing, or readily inventing author. He used to read aloud to me with rapturous enthusiasm the wondrous tales of German Illuminati; and he was disappointed, sometimes even displeased, when I expressed doubt or disbelief.

The staple of the letter of 2nd March is some crude notion of applying the machinery of Illuminism to establish on a firm basis the rational liberty of the press; or perhaps the unrestrained licence of flippant journalism. The same letter also illustrates in a striking manner Bysshe's perilous propensity, by writing to them with effusion, of making the acquaintance of persons of some notoriety, but of whose character and habits of life he knew nothing whatever.

His introduction of himself to William Godwin, a remarkable example of this very unusual course of proceeding, has been



LEIGH HUNT

From a print in the British Museum

already fully detailed. This practice surely is imprudent and improper; it is certainly unnecessary, for it is always easy to be personally presented, or made known by letter, through the intervention of a common acquaintance. Besides, there is something ridiculous in so abrupt and hasty a step; it is too nearly resembles dealing through an advertisement in *The Times*.

Wanted a good, plain cook; or housekeeper to a single gentleman—wanted a philosopher; a profound one, who is a friend to liberty, will be preferred. If any fearless enlightener of the public mind will apply at the butter-shop he will hear of something to his advantage.

The truth is, my poor friend knew well that it was quite wrong, because he never communicated his intentions to myself, or to any of his friends; he never told me what he had done, being unquestionably ashamed of his precipitancy; he never showed me the letter, or the answer to it, if he ever received one. Now for the letter, which I never read until very recently.

SIR,

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD, *March 2, 1811.*

Permit me, although a stranger, to offer my sincerest congratulations on the occasion of that triumph so highly to be prized by men of liberality; permit me also to submit to your consideration, as one of the most fearless enlighteners of the public mind at the present time, a scheme of mutual safety and mutual indemnification for men of public spirit and principle, which if carried into effect, would evidently be productive of incalculable advantages: of the scheme the following is an address to the public, the proposal for a meeting, and it shall be modified according to your judgment, if you will do me the honour to consider the point.

The ultimate intention of my aim is to induce a meeting of such enlightened and unprejudiced members of the community, whose independent principles expose them to evils which might thus become alleviated; and to form a methodical society, which should be organized so as to resist the coalition of the enemies of liberty, which at present renders any expression of opinion on matters of policy dangerous to individuals. It has been for want of societies of this nature, that corruption has attained the height at which we now behold it; nor can any of us bear in mind the very great influence, which some years since was gained by *Illuminism*, without considering that a society of equal extent might establish national liberty on as

firm a basis as that which would have supported the visionary schemes of a completely equalized community.

Although perfectly unacquainted with you privately, I address you as a common friend to *liberty*, thinking that in cases of this urgency and importance, etiquette ought not to stand in the way of usefulness.

My father is in parliament, and on attaining twenty-one, I shall in all probability fill his vacant seat. On account of the responsibility, to which my residence in this university subjects me, I, of course, dare not publicly avow all I think, but the time will come, when I hope that my every endeavour, insufficient as this may be, will be directed to the advancement of liberty.

I remain, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

To Leigh Hunt.

P. B. SHELLEY.

In the course of the winter, 1812-13, I received several letters from my young friends at Tanyrallt.

I have found three from Bysshe; they are most interesting. I present them together, being unwilling to interrupt the series of extracts from his communications with other correspondents.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

TANYRALLT, Dec. 3, 1812.

Your letter begins with the Duke of Norfolk. I stared when I saw his name; from the very moment I parted from you to the moment of the receipt of your letter, I had thought no more of the Duke of Norfolk, than of the man in the moon. I will this instant sit down, and do penance for my involuntary crime by writing a long and wheedling letter to his Grace, and you shall be duly informed of the success of the experiment. I have no hopes, however, of bending my father, but by the mere force of gross interest, and therefore suppose it equally impossible that he should come to terms before I am of age, as that he should hold out at the expiration of my minority. Be it as it may, I will give him a fair chance, I will put on my most good-humoured and conciliatory countenance, which Heaven knows, will in this case have something of the Grim-griffinhoff in it after all. When I see him, though I shall say the civilest things imaginable, yet I shall not look as if I liked him, because I do not like him.

You think, that because your reasonings on the subject of moral and political science have led you wide of me, you are

regarded by me with less complacency; but good intention is the essence of merit, and any qualification so involuntary, as belief or opinion, is surely a defective standard by which to measure out esteem. It is only when conviction is influenced by debasing and unworthy motives, that it becomes in any degree criminal.

Of such motives I do not accuse you, and you appear tainted with some portion of that illiberality, of which you indirectly accuse me, by the very spirit of suspicion, which produces that accusation.

You misinterpret my feelings on the state of the moral world, when you suppose that the bigotry of commonplace republicanism, or the violence of faction, enters into them at all.

I certainly am a very resolved republican (if the word applies) and a determined sceptic; but although I think their reasonings very defective, I am clearly aware that the noblest feelings might conduct some few reflecting minds to aristocracy and episcopacy. Hume certainly was an aristocrat, and Locke was a zealous Christian.

The Brown Demon, as we call our late tormentor and school-mistress, must receive her stipend. I pay it with a heavy heart and an unwilling hand; but it must be so. She was deprived by our misjudging haste of a situation, where she was going on smoothly: and now she says, that her reputation is gone, her health ruined, her peace of mind destroyed by my barbarity; a complete victim to all the woes mental and bodily that heroine ever suffered! This is not all fact; but certainly she is embarrassed and poor, and we being in some degree the cause, we ought to obviate it. She is an artful, superficial, ugly, hermaphroditical beast of a woman, and my astonishment at my fatuity, inconsistency, and bad taste was never so great, as after living four months with her as an inmate. What would Hell be, were such a woman in Heaven?

The society in Wales is very stupid. They are all aristocrats and saints: but that, I tell you, I do not mind in the least: the unpleasant part of the business is, that they hunt people to death, who are not so likewise.

Miss Westbrook is perfectly well; Harriet unites with me in wishing you all possible good, and I am your very sincere friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Write soon, for your letters amuse us ALL.

To T. J. H.

TANYRALLT, Dec. 27, 1812.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter to Harriet contains some hints of the possibility of your being at leisure in a short time. I sincerely hope that your schemes will allow a visit to Tanyrallt. The advantage of a mail within seventeen miles would entirely obviate any hitch in the affair. We all anxiously wish you would come, and hope that your hint was something better than a mere lure for the opportunity of refusal.

We are all surprised at the complaints of cold which issue from London. For a day or two, indeed, it bit a little in the first of the morning, but nothing more.

Believe me that I sympathize in your feelings on Bonaparte and peace, very warmly. Bonaparte is a person to whom I have a very great objection; he is to me a hateful and despicable being. He is seduced by the grossest and most vulgar ambition into actions which only differ from those of pirates by virtue of the number of men and the variety of resources under his command. His talents appear to me altogether contemptible and commonplace; incapable, as he is, of comparing connectedly the most obvious propositions, or relishing any pleasure truly enrapturing. Excepting Lord Castlereagh, you could not have mentioned any character but Bonaparte whom I condemn and abhor more vehemently. With respect to those victories in the north; if they tend towards peace, they are good; if otherwise, they are bad. This is the standard by which I shall ultimately measure my approbation of them. At the same time, I cannot but say that the first impression which they made on me was one of horror and regret.

Brougham's defence was certainly not so good as it might have been; it was fettered by the place wherein he stood. Entire liberty of speech was denied. He could not speak treason; he could not commit a libel; and therefore his client was not to be defended on the basis of moral truth. He was compelled to hesitate when truth was rising to his lips; he could utter that which he did utter only by circumlocution and irony. The speech of the solicitor-general appeared to me the consummation of all shameless insolence, and the address of Lord Ellenborough so barefaced a piece of time-servingness, that I am sure his heart must have laughed at his lips as he pronounced it.

I have as yet received no answer from the Duke of Norfolk. I scarcely expect one. I do not see that it is the interest of my father to come to terms during my non-age; perhaps even

not after. Do you know, I cannot prevail upon myself to care much about it. Harriet is very happy as we are; and I am very happy. I question if intimacy with my relations would add at all to our tranquillity. They would be plotting and playing the devil, or showing us to some people who would do so; or they would be dull; or they would take stupid likes or dislikes, and they certainly might cramp our liberty of movement. In fact, I have written to the duke. I can say to my conscience, 'I have done my best'; but I shall not be very unhappy if I fail.

I continue vegetable; Harriet means to be slightly animal, until the arrival of spring. My health is much improved by it; though partly perhaps by my removal from your nerve-racking and spirit-quelling metropolis.

We are divided between two opinions: Whether you really will allow us the heartfelt pleasure of seeing you here this winter: or whether your suggestion was a quiz.

My dear friend, I remain,

Yours very affectionately,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

TANYRALLT, Feb. 7, 1813.

I have been teased to death for the last fortnight. Had you known the variety of the discomfitures I have undergone, you would attribute my silence to anything but unkindness or neglect. I allude to the embankment affairs, in which I thoughtlessly engaged; for when I come home to Harriet, I am the happiest of the happy. I forget whether I have expressed to you the pleasure which you know I must feel at your visit in March. I hope it will be early in the month, and that you will arrange matters so in London, that it may be protracted to the utmost possible length.

We simple people live here in a cottage extensive and tasty enough for the villa of an Italian prince. The rent, as you may conceive, is large, but it is an object with us that they allow it to remain unpaid till I am of age.

What said Harriet of America?

You must take your place in the mail as far as Capel Cerrig, and inform me of the time you mean to be there, and I will meet you. I do not think that you have ever visited this part of North Wales. The scenery is more strikingly grand in the way from Capel Cerrig to our house than ever I beheld. The road passes at the foot of Snowdon; all around you see lofty

mountain peaks, lifting their summits far above the clouds, wildly wooded valleys below, and dark tarns reflecting every tint and shape of the scenery above them. The roads are tremendously rough; I shall bring a horse for you, as you will then be better able to see the country than when jumbled in a chaise.

Mab has gone on but slowly, although she is nearly finished. They have teased me out of all poetry. With some restrictions, I have taken your advice, though I have not been able to bring myself to rhyme. The didactic is in blank heroic verse, and the descriptive in blank lyrical measure. If an authority is of any weight in support of this singularity, Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, the Greek Choruses, and (you will laugh) Southey's *Thalaba* may be adduced. I have seen your last letter to Harriet. She will answer it by next post. I need not say that your letters delight me, but all your principles do not. The species of pride which you love to encourage appears to me incapable of bearing the test of reason. Now, do not tell me that Reason is a cold and insensible arbiter. Reason is only an assemblage of our better feelings—passion considered under a peculiar mode of its operation. This chivalric pride, although of excellent use in an age of vandalism and brutality, is unworthy of the nineteenth century. A more elevated spirit has begun to diffuse itself, which, without deducting from the warmth of love or the constancy of friendship, reconciles all private feelings to public utility, and scarce suffers true Passion and true Reason to continue at war. Pride mistakes a desire of being esteemed for that of being really estimable. I scarce think that the mock humility of ecclesiastical hypocrisy is more degrading and blind. I remember when over our Oxford fire we used to discuss various subjects; fancy me present with you in spirit, and own 'how vain is human pride!' Perhaps you will say that my republicanism is proud; it certainly is far removed from pot-house democracy, and knows with what smile to hear the servile applauses of an inconsistent mob. But though its cheeks could feel without a blush the hand of insult strike, its soul would shrink neither from the scaffold nor the stake, nor from those deeds and habits which are obnoxious to slaves in power. My republicanism, it is true, would bear with an aristocracy of chivalry and refinement before an aristocracy of commerce and vulgarity; not, however, from pride, but because the one I consider as approaching most nearly to what man ought to be. So much for pride!

Since I wrote the above, I have finished the rough sketch of my poem. As I have not abated an iota of the infidelity or cosmopolity of it, sufficient will remain, exclusively of innumerable faults, invisible to partial eyes, to make it very unpopular. Like all egotists, I shall console myself with what I may call, if I please, the suffrages of the chosen few, who can think and feel, or of those friends whose personal partialities may blind them to all defects. I mean to subjoin copious philosophical notes.

Harriet has a bold scheme of writing you a Latin letter. If you have an Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, she will thank you to bring it. I do not teach her grammatically, but by the less laborious method of teaching her the English of Latin words, intending afterwards to give her a general idea of grammar. She unites with me in all kindest wishes.

To T. J. H.

CHAPTER XX

I HAD promised to visit my young friends in their wilderness during the Spring Circuit; that is to say, at the beginning of March; in about a month from the date of Bysshe's last letter. It would have been a great pleasure to have met again; to have spent a few pleasant weeks with them; to have seen the famous embankment, and all the other wonders of nature and art, and to have examined in a course of long walks, in company with my friend, that part of the Principality, an interesting tract of country which I had never set eyes upon. This project was rudely and abruptly put an end to by a very remarkable incident, if incident it may be called. Although I had known Bysshe intimately for three or four years, I could still be surprised, and I was not a little surprised by a letter which I received *one morning from Harriet*. Frolicksome fairies, evil-disposed elves, spiteful spirits, and daring demons have been in all times the torment of the milkmaid, the miner, the husbandman; no calling, no trade, no mystery, no occupation has been exempt from their malignant influence and mischievous interference; even the quiet pursuits of the recluse student are not privileged or protected from preternatural intromission and disturbance. I have occupied the same dingy chambers in the Temple for some fifty years, and during the lapse of half a century countless letters and papers of various kinds have been received and suffered to accumulate there. Such of them as related to matters of business were classed and tied up in bundles, and arranged under their proper heads; but those which concerned private friendships and domestic affairs merely were put away without order and indiscriminately, as soon as each had been read and answered; where an answer was required; and they have rarely been referred to subsequently, or disturbed. In locked drawers, desks, and closets, every letter, every scrap of paper, although covered thickly with dust and soot, and in utter confusion, must remain, a vast, rude, and undigested mass; but still it must be in existence, and on a diligent search should undoubtedly be forthcoming. But it is not so; far otherwise! When I undertook to write the life of my incom-

parable friend, my first care was to collect materials for the task. Accordingly, I spent several long and laborious days in the painful office, painful in every way, of looking over my ample collections, and selecting from my several repositories whatever had any reference to the subject. I never had such dirty hands, or went through so filthy a job, as when I made the retrospect of my past life. Besides, it was far too like the proceedings of the Day of Judgment—of the great and terrible day, when the secrets of all hearts will be revealed—to be perfectly agreeable. Unavailing and painful regrets; the revival of distressing, but forgotten, occurrences; afflicting and mortifying recollections—a fresh flood of the ebbd waters of a wide sea of troubles. All this and more might have been borne, and indeed was borne, but the harvest ought to have been as abundant as the toils of the labourer were heavy: the crop disappointed me. The Cobbold had been there before me; it seemed that the tiny subjects of Queen Mab had prevented me; that they had previously rifled my long-neglected hoards. Shelley printed books that they might be pirated mercilessly; he gave copies of them to his friends, or reserved them for himself, that they might be borrowed without notice, and never to be returned; in one word—stolen. Everything referring in any way to him, not under lock and key, was accounted derelict; it became the property of the first occupant, until he also should be stripped of it in turn: whatever had his mark upon it was outlawed—it bore a wolf's head! Of this ban I was fully sensible; I had long felt the full weight of it; and therefore I had been the more careful jealously to secure my stores, to keep them in thick darkness and secrecy. It is impossible to believe that anything has been actually lost; but certainly there are many things upon which I am unable at present to lay my hand. Hereafter, doubtless, they will turn up. The inconvenience is only temporary, but it is considerable. Some things I am unwilling to state, not having my vouchers by me; other things, probably, I have forgotten, but may hope some day, on recovering my papers, to be reminded of them, and that my memory will thus be refreshed. I have an uncertain, obscure, hazy recollection of having separated, many years ago, Harriet's letters from the others; for what purpose I do not remember—this is of little moment—neither can I remember where I deposited them, which is most unfortunate.

It has been stated confidently that Harriet Shelley always spelt her name Harriett, with a double (tt) at the end; it is a

trifling matter, indeed, but it is well to be correct even in trifles. I have seen many of her letters, addressed to others, as well as to myself, but her Christian name never was spelt so—always *Harriet*. And Shelley, who frequently mentioned her in his letters and journals, always wrote *Harriet*. The only letters of hers which I can meet with at present are three or four, which I appear to have overlooked; so that I may affirm, rather paradoxically, that I have such of her letters as I had lost, and I have lost those which I have. Amongst the letters missing is that which cut off my promised visit to Carnarvonshire. However, I have been furnished with a letter to another party, in which the *Hegira*, the flight from Mecca—from Tannyrallt, at least—is described, and the cause of their flight. The Pilgrim Good Intent withdrew hastily, precipitately, to Dublin, and this is the strange story of his progress:

DEAR SIR,

TANNYRALLT, *March 3, 1813.*

I have just escaped an atrocious assassination. Oh, send the twenty pounds if you have it! You will perhaps hear of me no more!

Your friend,

PERCY SHELLEY.

Mr. Shelley is so dreadfully nervous to-day, from being up all night, that I am afraid what he has written will alarm you very much.

We intend to leave this place as soon as possible, as our lives are not safe as long as we remain. It is no common robber we dread, but a person who is actuated by revenge—who threatens my life and my sister's as well.

If you can send us the money it will greatly add to our comfort.

Sir, I remain,

Your sincere friend,

To Mr. H. T., London.

H. SHELLEY.

DEAR SIR,

BANGOR FERRY, *March 6, 1813.*

In the first stage of our journey towards Dublin we met with your letter; the remittance rescued us from a situation of peculiar perplexity.

I am now recovered from an illness brought on by watching, fatigue, and alarm, and we are proceeding to Dublin, to dissipate the unpleasant impressions associated with the scene of our

alarm: we expect to be there on the 8th; you shall then hear the detail of our distresses.

The ball of the assassin's pistol (he fired at me twice) penetrated my night-gown, and pierced the wainscot. He is yet undiscovered, though not unsuspected, as you will learn from my next.

Yours faithfully,

To Mr. H. T., London.

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

35, CUFF STREET, STEPHEN'S GREEN, DUBLIN,

March 12, 1813.

MY DEAR SIR,

We arrived here last Tuesday, after a most tedious passage of forty hours, during the whole of which time we were dreadfully ill. I'm afraid no diet will prevent us from the common lot of suffering when obliged to take a sea voyage.

Mr. Shelley promised you a recital of the horrible events that caused us to leave Wales. I have undertaken the task, as I wish to spare him, in the present nervous state of his health, everything that can recall to his mind the horrors of that night, which I will relate.

On the night of the 26th February, we retired to bed between ten and eleven o'clock. We had been in bed about half an hour, when Mr. S. heard a noise proceeding from one of the parlours. He immediately went downstairs with two pistols which he had loaded that night, expecting to have occasion for them. He went into the billiard-room, when he heard footsteps retreating; he followed into another little room, which was called an office. He there saw a man in the act of quitting the room through a glass window which opened into the shrubbery; the man fired at Mr. S., which he avoided. Bysshe then fired; but it flashed in the pan. The man then knocked Bysshe down, and they struggled on the ground. Bysshe then fired his second pistol, which he thought wounded him in the shoulder, as he uttered a shriek and got up, when he said these words: 'By God, I will be revenged. I will murder your wife, and will ravish your sister! By God, I will be revenged!' He then fled, as we hoped, for the night. Our servants were not gone to bed, but were just going, when this horrible affair happened. This was about eleven o'clock. We all assembled in the parlour, where we remained for two hours. Mr. S. then advised us to retire, thinking it was impossible he would make a second attack. We left Bysshe and our manservant—who had only

arrived that day, and who knew nothing of the house—to sit up. I had been in bed three hours when I heard a pistol go off. I immediately ran downstairs, when I perceived that Bysshe's flannel gown had been shot through, and the window curtain. Bysshe had sent Daniel to see what hour it was; when he heard a noise at the window: he went there, and a man thrust his arm through the glass, and fired at him. Thank Heaven! the ball went through his gown, and he remained unhurt. Mr. S. happened to stand sideways; had he stood fronting, the ball must have killed him. Bysshe fired his pistol, but it would not go off; he then aimed a blow at him with an old sword which we had found in the house. The assassin attempted to get the sword from him, and just as he was pulling it away, Dan rushed into the room, when he made his escape. This was at four in the morning. It had been a most dreadful night; the wind was as loud as thunder, and the rain descended in torrents. Nothing has been heard of him, and we have every reason to believe it was no stranger, as there is a man of the name of Luson, who, the next morning that it happened, went and told the shopkeepers that it was a tale of Mr. Shelley's to impose upon them, that he might leave the country without paying his bills. This they believed, and none of them attempted to do anything towards his discovery. We left Tanyrallt on Sunday, and stayed, till everything was ready for our leaving the place, at the house of the Solicitor-General of the county, who lived seven miles from us. This Mr. Luson had been heard to say that he was determined to drive us out of the country. He once happened to get hold of a little pamphlet which Mr. S. had printed in Dublin. This he sent up to Government; in fact, he was for ever saying something against us, and that because we were determined not to admit him to our house, because we had heard his character, and from acts of his, we found that he was malignant and cruel to the greatest degree.

We experienced pleasure in reading your letter, at the time when every one seemed to be plotting against us; when those who, a few weeks back, had been offering their services, shrunk from the task, when called upon in a moment like that.

Mr. Shelley and my sister unite with me in kind regards; whilst I remain,

Yours truly,

H. SHELLEY.

To Mr. H. T., London.

DEAR SIR,

Harriet related to you the mysterious events which caused our departure from Tanyralt. I was at that time so nervous and unsettled as to be wholly incapable of the task. By your kindness, we are relieved from all pecuniary difficulties. We only wanted a little breathing time, which the rapidity of our persecutions was unwilling to allow. I will readily repay the twenty pounds when I hear from my correspondent in London.

Yours faithfully,

To Mr. H. T.

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Harriet's letter to me was written from Tanyralt, a day or two after the catastrophe; it bore an earlier date, but in other respects it was, to the best of my recollection, precisely similar, word for word, indeed, to her letter from Dublin of 12th March. I have been informed that she also sent to other persons a narrative of the nightly fears in the same terms, writing descriptive circulars, and dispatching them in different directions. Persons acquainted with the localities and with the circumstances, and who had carefully investigated the matter, were unanimous in the opinion, that no such attempt was ever made. I never met with any person who believed in it. I have heard other histories, like apocryphal, of attacks made by the good people of North Wales upon persons of whose sentiments, religious or political, they were supposed to disapprove; but the ale-bibbers and devourers of Welsh rabbits are too wise, or too stolid, to care how much logic any man may chop within the Principality, or how fine he may chop it. What could the quiet, sheep-tending, mutton-eating, stocking-knitting folks in a secluded corner of Carnarvonshire care about an unread and unreadable pamphlet on Catholic claims and the wrongs of Ireland, privately printed in Dublin? Apollo, the shepherd, would not credit that a simple pastoral race could murderously assault, and basely assassinate, a brother shepherd. How could the countrymen of Taliessin and the other immortal bards persecute and expel from their land of poesy and song the special favourite and pet of the Aonian maids? Neither Bysshe nor Harriet ever spoke to me of the assassination; and the lovely Eliza observed on this subject, as on all others, her wonted silence. There is certainly something fabulous and mythic, that carries us back to the earliest ages and infancy of Rome, leaving us there amidst historical doubts, in the avowed determination of the Cambro-British Tarquin concerning her.

Burglary, arson, murder, we can contemplate with dry eyes; but to ravish a guardian angel! The thought of such violation could not possibly have entered into any head but her own; her maidenly fears must have been suggested by an excess of virgin timidity. It is astonishing, indeed, that the good Harriet could so coolly repeat the vain threat.

Dan was an emancipator and a philanthropist. This is his story; it is worthy to be told in an Irish melody, and sung to the harp of Erin. He had been apprehended for posting, distributing, or publishing printed papers, wanting the name of the printer; convicted, and imprisoned. A good angel, although possibly a rebel angel, delivered Daniel from the lions' den. By paying the penalty for him, or by other humane interposition, he was set free; and, marvellous to relate, Bysshe took the released billsticker into his service. Dan was a short, thick set, hard-featured man, of a pure Celtic type. He could not, or would not, speak, or understand, the English language, or comprehend anything whatever. They brought him to London with them, in the following spring, where I saw him at a hotel, soon after their arrival. Here the stupid, starved savage overate himself to such a degree as to bring on a very severe, if not dangerous, illness. It was necessary to remove him to a hospital; and there, after much suffering, he was at last cured, chiefly by the change of hospital diet from hotel fare. Bysshe was persuaded, with some difficulty, to part with him, Harriet declaring he was so faithful. For his health's sake he was remitted to his accustomed potatoes and buttermilk; the bog-trotter was trotted back to his native bogs; a salutary precedent that might have been very extensively followed, and with the best results.

What part this ruffian may have played in the strange scenes at Tanyrallt—for he was in the thick of them—it is hard to conjecture; whether he had any strictly Hibernian objects of plunder and ordinary villainy in view, which were accidentally frustrated; or got up a nocturnal row for the purpose of displaying his fidelity; or created the disturbance through a barbarian panic; or was set on and instructed by some moving power, to whom it was at heart to quit Wales, and for some private end to go again to Ireland—we may soon lose ourselves in conjectures, in vain and bootless conjectures. One thing at least is certain, viz. that Shelley was in a nervous, unsettled state, which was far more likely to be the parent of imaginary aggressions, than the fruit and offspring of a real attack, on

the mind of a man of remarkable and unquestionable courage. He certainly never spoke of the murderous assault to me. With regard to what he may have related to others, I can only say that these assertions were the result of his being agitated with fury, and possessed by the god; for we must speak poetically of a poet. And we may add, whatever the errors and failings of the Divine Poet may have been, womankind is too weak to bear a second Shelley!

A letter addressed to the agent of Mr. Maddocks relates to this attack. It is not dated, but it seems to have been written before they quitted Tanyrallt, and under a strong impression of the reality of a transaction of which the broken windows of the house gave testimony, and bore indications. It was as follows:

MY DEAR WILLIAMS,

I am surprised that the wretch who attacked me has not been heard of. Surely inquiries have not been sufficiently general or particular?

Mr. Nanney requests that you will order that some boards should be nailed against the broken windows of Tanyrallt. We are in immediate want of money. Could you borrow twenty-five pounds in my name, to pay my little debts? I know your brother could lend me that sum. I think you could ask him on such an occasion as this.

My dear Williams, yours very truly,

P. B. SHELLEY.

CHAPTER XXI

My promised visit to Tanyrallt was put an end to by the assassination. My young friends had gone to Ireland; why they repaired to that country a second time I could never learn. As a compensation for the expected visit in Wales, I was urgently required to join them in Dublin; to remain there for a week or ten days, and having viewed that capital and its environs, to return with them to London, where they had determined to reside permanently; to live there indeed 'for ever'. It was the month of March, during the Spring Circuit, a period when special pleaders, if not absolutely idle, have comparatively little employment; and I could be spared at chambers without inconvenience. I had made up my mind to travel at this season to the extreme parts of Carnarvonshire, to undertake a long journey for no long visit; consequently, to extend my western course to Dublin was not an alarming addition in distance, or trouble, to the trip originally resolved upon.

Although the metropolis of Ireland is not in any respect a first-rate city, it was still no doubt, in its decay, a more important and remarkable place than Tremadoc, of which the grandeur was incipient and future. I received two or three letters from my friends in Ireland, pressing me to come to them immediately, informing me how I was to proceed, and where I should meet with them; and assuring me that they would anxiously wait for my coming, and would not leave Dublin until we could quit it together. These letters I cannot now find; I took them with me to serve as guides in a strange land, and it is not improbable that I lost them on the journey.

There were in those days two mail-coaches to Holyhead, one of them pursuing the route by Chester, and the other by Shrewsbury; I secured an outside place by the former. At that time of life I was regardless of cold and exposure to the weather, but a friend to whom I communicated my projected expedition, compelled me to accept the loan of his box-coat, assuring me that I should greatly need it by night at that season amongst the Welsh mountains. I took my seat on the box by the side

of the coachman, and left London at nine o'clock on a dark, threatening night.

We had not advanced far before rain began to fall, at first softly, and soon afterwards heavily. My friend's box-coat was of frieze, of a soft spongy texture, an excellent defence against dry cold, but affording protection for a short time only against continuing rain, so that I was soon wet to the skin. I seemed indeed to be more wet myself by reason of the wet rug, which I had on, than I should have been without it: I appeared to be clothed in a full suit of wet sponge. I suppose we stopped for our meals in the course of the night and on the following day, but not often, and never for a long time. When and where we baited, I do not remember. I remember nothing but wet and cold; it continued always to rain, to rain from the west, to rain in my face. Heaven's water descended upon my hat; it ran from my hat down my neck; it penetrated the thick soft coat to my body; it flowed copiously over my chilly hands, issuing from the sleeves; and flowing freely out of my trousers, at the ankles, irrigated incessantly my benumbed feet; and the cushion of the box upon which I sat, and where all things were disagreeable, this was the most disagreeable thing of all, became saturated with moisture, like a piece of turf newly dug out of a flooded bog. In those early and inhospitable ages no apron protected the knees of the coachman and his assessor; during my long and manifold journeys on the outside of coaches I have frequently wondered, why there was no such defence, and I have greatly and vainly desiderated it; in this respect at least I was before my age!

'It is rather soft weather, gentlemen!' said our other outside passenger, who sat behind us on the roof. He was a tall, bony, red-haired Scot, to the full as wet as myself; about once every hour he observed with much seriousness, and with the air of one who had made an unexpected discovery, to the coachman and myself:

'It is rather soft weather, gentlemen!'

'It is, indeed,' I answered.

'Soft and be ——' exclaimed my friend on the right.

A quarter of an hour after his first remark our solemn fellow-passenger from the north ventured upon a second, uttering it also as if it were a novelty:

'And it is not over warm! Not a bit!'

This was his whole stock of small talk. I recollect that we remained some time at Chester to take supper; and that the

supper was nasty, and the inn dirty and disagreeable, and that there was much confusion, because the passengers by other coaches supped at the same time and in the same room.

I, wet, mounted my wet seat again, sitting now by a rude companion, who was conspicuously a Welshman, and looked more like a shepherd than a coachman. We soon approached the mountains and the sea; and then, to solace my second night of travel, it began to rain in good earnest, and as if it liked it, and the heavier rain was rendered still more impressive by a squally wind. But it made little difference to me: I had been like a spout too long to mind it: that the water ran along a good deal faster under my clothes, did not seem to be any concern of mine!

The guard told me that we were to breakfast at Conway. This information comforted: it promised warmth and refreshment; the pleasing images and foretaste of warm tea, hot toast, and possibly of broiled meats, consoled me in passing through wind and rain, and the county of Flint. Fortunately, I did not yet know what a breakfast at Conway was.

The Cambrian coachman pulled up short at the mouth of a wide river, wild, rough, and stormy as the sea itself, and the sea was pouring into it with mad fury. We got into a boat, or rather the mail-coach was emptied of all its lumber, living, dead and half-dead, into a large ferry-boat; we had a rude and tedious passage across. When we were midway, they spoke of a fatal accident that had occurred there just a month before; that the ferry-boat was upset and the mail-guard drowned.

Twenty years afterwards in 1833, I visited Conway again, being a commissioner of municipal corporations, and I spoke of this occurrence to the vicar; he took me into the churchyard, and pointed out to me the grave, tombstone, and epitaph of the unfortunate guard. I have travelled much by coaches; and, therefore, I know, as well as any man, and to my sorrow, what a bad breakfast is, and I assert with the hard-earned confidence of long and painful experience, that the breakfast at Conway was never surpassed. Vile bread, vile butter, and the vilest tea; we ordered other things, they readily promised to bring them, and they told us, growing impatient, that they were coming directly: but the guard came first, and gave us notice that the mail was ready to start.

Our short stay at the wretched inn was rendered still more distasteful by the odious, discordant noise of a brawling Irishman, who would keep on assuring everybody in a loud voice and an

offensive brogue, that he was proud of his country: nobody noticed his vulgar clamour, but all persons present seemed to suspect that he was not so proud of it as he said he was.

Having affected us with notice, the guard set an example of promptitude by mounting the stern of the coach and sounding his horn. I ascended uncomforted to the temple of the winds and storms; and it rained and blew harder and harder, whilst we proceeded, as it were to do honour to the great mountain, Penmaenmawr, and to the furious sea. Through flood, but not through fire, we advanced, and reached another ferry, Bangor Ferry, across the Menai Straits. It was stormy, rough, and wild, but being farther inland, farther removed from the fierce sea, it was not so formidable as the mouth of the River Conway. Here we were tumbled by rugged Welsh ferrymen, without ceremony, bag and baggage, mail bags and mail baggage, into a large boat; with the accustomed delicacy and attention of mail-coach travelling, of which the leading principle always was—so that the letter-bags and guard are safe, the passengers and their effects may go to the devil! The wind and tide were unfavourable, and the channel was rough; we were tossed up and down in our boat, and were a long time in crossing; but the boatmen pulled hard, and we got to shore at last.

To take our places instantly, and to make the best of our way, for we were late: these were the orders, and they were obeyed. It was something to set foot in Druid-ridden Anglesey for the first time, to traverse the whole width of Mona; to see plainly with my own eyes, that there was nothing whatever to be seen. It was delightful to believe that I should soon arrive at Holyhead—the Head it was called by general consent. It would be impossible to embark in less than twenty minutes, a space of time amply sufficient for my purpose, which was, the moment we drew up at the door of the inn, to march with my little portmanteau in my hand into a bedroom, and to fasten the door, to strip off with all speed my wet blanket, my coat, and all my wet clothes even to my wet skin, to tie them up in a dripping bundle, and to put on everything dry; and going thus quite dry on board the packet, in a berth, on a bench, or upon the floor of the cabin, to sleep soundly, and as one would sleep after spending two long days, and two longer, sleepless nights in the rain, wind, and cold on the top of a coach.

The anticipated pleasure was a full remuneration for my sufferings. My pleased fancy prompted that I was to awake somewhat late, to go at once upon the deck, and to behold the

Green Isle, and the proud palaces and tall spires of Dublin, so near to our cutter—that I might confidently expect, in two or three hours, to be seated at breakfast with Bysshe, and to be telling him my windy, watery tale.

It rained during my transit over Anglesey, but modestly, as it ought to rain in a flat country—as it might have rained at York, or in Middlesex. It was fair when we drew up before the door of the inn at Holyhead: we descended, and forthwith the merciless mail drove off. It was to proceed at once to the boat. All our luggage was to be put on board immediately—nothing whatever could be taken out of the boot on any pretence. Very well! my soul said to itself; I can change my clothes on board; the delay will not be great: in half an hour I shall be dry again, from head to foot! What a blessing!

We were to dine directly, for it was late, and our time was short; and the moment we took our seats at the table, a waiter went round with a plate to collect our money; so we paid for the dinner before we were permitted to eat it. The provisions looked well. There was a nice roast leg of mutton, mealy potatoes, and other things, all very tempting; but before anybody was helped the inexorable guard entered with our cruel sentence. We had not an instant to lose: the packet was just about to sail.

A waiter, who seemed to be a friend in need, took me aside, and told me, in confidence, that nothing was to be had on board the packet; no victuals were supplied; nothing could be bought; and we might be a long time at sea; therefore I had better purchase the leg of mutton which had not been cut, and a loaf of bread, and he showed me a fine large loaf. I paid an exorbitant price for them, and for a bottle of sherry; but I felt that I was perhaps redeeming my forfeited life. I was then told that I had not a moment to spare: I must run down to the boat as fast as I could, or I should be left behind. My friend indeed, the civil, compassionate waiter, assured me that he would take care that the leg of mutton and the loaf, with the wine, should be safely sent on board for me; I need not be under any apprehensions. I ran down to the boat, and was pushed into it. We were tossed about a good while by the white-headed waves of St. George's Channel, on board the crowded boat, but the near prospect of dry clothing, an abundant and excellent supper, to be eaten at my ease and with the fullest leisure, and finally a good night's rest, sleeping quietly in some warm, snug corner, filled my fatigued brain with the most agreeable images. Had I been gently gliding down the smooth

Cydnus, on board her golden galley, with the lovely Queen of Egypt, blessed by her favouring smiles, amidst the profuse and elegant luxury of Greece and of the East, I could not have felt a more lively conviction of impending happiness. We came alongside the dancing vessel: at one instant, our fickle boat would dive under its keel, and then it suddenly strove to dash bodily upon its deck. At a critical moment, roughly but skilfully, the helpless passengers were thrust headlong, in the dark night, up the side of the packet, and we found ourselves staggering on the crowded, moving, and slippery deck. The crew were busy setting the sails, and everything was in orderly confusion. As soon as our good sloop was on her course and making way, there was peace on board. It then appeared to be practicable to stretch forth my hand, and at once to grasp impending happiness. I meekly attempted to ask after my mutton and my sherry. Roast mutton and bottled sherry have no necessary connection with the perilous navigation of the coasts of North Wales; I met with little attention and no sympathy. However, I discovered, only too clearly, that there were no advices, and no effects. I then modestly demanded my portmanteau, that I might at least put off my wet garments, and thus enjoy the poor satisfaction of enduring hunger for an indefinite period with a dry skin. The mail bags, the baggage of both the Irish mails, and the luggage of all the passengers on board, had been stowed away forwards; my portmanteau was quite safe; it would be kept dry; I might have it when I landed; the hatches had been fastened down; it was impossible to break bulk.

The night was dark and cloudy, the wind blew fresh and cold, but fortunately it was fair. I walked the deck all night, pacing backwards and forwards in my wet clothes; I was very cold and very hungry, chilled, and famished; but I marched on bravely, walking every step of the way, and as fast as I could, from the Head to Ireland. By the morning I was dry; nor had I ever felt the least sickness, although the sea was rough. The packet was much crowded; there were several carriages on deck, and the persons who sat in them relieved, or amused, themselves by being sick out of the window. The cabin was filled with vulgar, noisy people; crammed, indeed. I never once ventured to go below; I took a survey of the place through the skylight, and that was enough; I saw plainly that it would not do. Besides, to sleep in my rain-soaked raiment would have been imprudent.

The next day, the third day of my pilgrimage, was fine and dry; the sky shone above me clear and bright; the wind was less strong, but it still blew cold, and I was more cold and hungry than ever. How I should have enjoyed a little breakfast, however homely; a crust of brown bread and milk, skim milk, oat-meal porridge, cold cabbage, anything; but no man gave unto me. There was a tall footman, in a purple livery, standing plate in hand by the open window of a purple coach; I made a circuit, and took an observation, and I had the gratification to see a bishop sipping hot chocolate out of a large china cup. It was pleasing to be assured that all meats and drinks had not entirely disappeared and vanished from the face of the earth; and that one fellow-creature at least was well cared for. I should have liked a little luncheon, an early dinner, the earlier the better; and I eagerly desired to catch a glimpse of Ireland and of hope, but Ireland could not be seen. Presently some Irishman declared that he saw the Wicklow Mountains, but others, his countrymen, rudely contradicted him, and said it was impossible; so it was disputed for a long time with much noise and vehemence and muttered threats, until the mountains were visible, and so conspicuous that there could be no mistake, no dispute, even amongst Irishmen. In the afternoon, we were in the bay, at some point, of which I do not remember the name. The captain and guard went on shore in a boat with the mail bags, leaving the poor passengers on board to settle it as we could.

The passengers, it has been said, paid the whole expense of the conveyance of letters, as well by the coaches as by the packets, and yet they were too often treated with neglect, occasionally with insolence, and sometimes, as in the present instance, even with cruelty. Our captain was a good seaman, without doubt, but he was disobliging; his crew took him for their pattern. Such of the sailors as deigned to return an answer to our questions did not know when we should land, and were proud to let us see that they did not care. A gentleman asked them to make a signal for a boat from shore: they had no right to make signals! One man, less uncivil than the rest, said, 'You make any signals you please yourselves, we will not prevent you!' A passenger hung out a kind of flag; it waved about, and for a time appeared to be disregarded. At last there was a joyful cry of 'A boat! a boat!' and by and by a large boat, rowed by four men, came alongside. Two of the men stepped on deck: they would take us to some place; it was five miles off, but we must give them five shillings a head. I gladly

embraced the proposal, and all the other passengers, who desired to go on shore at that spot, at once assented. It seemed that all was arranged, when a little Irishman advanced: 'No! You shall not go on shore with these fellows; not one of you. I am determined. Blackguards, scoundrels, villains; I will never stand quietly by and see the gentlemen passengers by His Majesty's Post Office Packets fleeced and scandalously plundered by these exorbitant rascals. You shall go ashore, gentlemen; you shall all go, but at your own price, not at theirs!' He was a middle-aged man, thin, and of short stature, and with an extremely Celtic face: that is to say, he looked as if his face had been broken to pieces, and the fragments had been put hastily and carelessly together again, some bits not in their places, and the room of other lost pieces had been replaced by paint, putty, and anything that was at hand. He spoke with a powerful brogue, fluently, and even eloquently, and with much vigour, energy, and action; but his language was violent and abusive. The men stood out for their price, but they were civil, respectful, humble. Four shillings and sixpence were proposed and refused. Four shillings? No! Three shillings and sixpence? The discussion seemed endless; the men were not less dramatic than the principal disputant. It is of no use; cast off the boat; let us go home! I was taken in by them, and dreading a still longer fast, and possibly another night on board, I said, 'I will give you your price; it is not unreasonable; I will give you your five shillings in hand, if you like, only do not go ashore without me!'

'We will not go without you, sir; you may depend upon it.'

The little disputant, who seemed to be a person in some authority by station, character, or office, gently put me aside.

'The gentleman is too kind to you, a great deal. You are a parcel of dirty villains; you shall not have five shillings of his money; I will take care of that!'

'The gentleman is very kind; but we are poor men; we have our bread to get!'

Two hours, at least, were wasted thus in a violent and wearisome dispute; eventually it was arranged, that they were to put us on shore at two shillings a piece. And then we were all on board the boat and away in a trice; certainly they were very smart fellows. The little wrangler was to the full as noisy in the boat, as he had been in the packet; he loudly vociferated that two shillings a head was enough; the rowers assented, and it seemed that we were all of one mind.

After we had made a mile, or so, of way, the brawling little fellow changed his tack.

'Do they not pull well? Are they not fine fellows? Did you ever see better rowing? Are they not boys? We must give them sixpence more. If they keep it up thus it must be half a crown!' Never was there a smarter boat's crew; they were four fine young fellows; never did men pull harder: that was most manifest.

Our friend, if such he is to be called, loudly renewed and repeated his admiration at intervals; and at every burst of applause he raised the price sixpence; when we were a quarter of a mile from shore, the fare stood fixed at four shillings and sixpence, but suddenly the clamorous blockhead bellowed out:

'I say, lads, can you hit it?'

'Oh, to be sure we can!'

'Well, then, if you hit it, you shall have your five shillings, without any abatement.'

'Thank you, sir; thank you; thank your honour, kindly.'

Accordingly, the head of the boat went bump against some post at the landing-place, and each of the gentlemen passengers, by His Majesty's Post Office Packet, paid the dirty villains five shillings, the sum originally demanded.

I did not catch the name of the place where I landed; it was at some distance, five miles, I think, from Dublin. I readily procured a car, and was jolted along a rough road and through ill-paved streets in the dusk. The driver did not, or would not, know the situation of the inn, to which he was to take me. When he was tired of driving me about, he stopped at the door of a hotel, and demanded much more than the sum agreed upon; then a mighty contention arose, and an incredible number of persons took part in it. I was firm, tendering the appointed fare. He consented in the end to take it; and now for the first time a new difficulty arose, but which I had to encounter during the whole of my stay in Ireland. I had no silver, no other money indeed than one-pound notes of the Bank of England, and these were not available. Change for one of them could not be obtained. My Automedon, in despair of getting payment, after various fruitless attempts to find shillings, or ten-pennies, proposed that I should give him an IOU for four shillings, on a slip of paper; I did so.

The inn was odious, the food abominable, the attendance intolerable! It took a long time to get hold of a servant; when he was caught, he promised civilly enough to do what

was required; he went away and paid no more attention to the orders he had received. When he was apprehended again, which was not soon, or easily effected, he had forgotten all about the matter. To get anything to eat was difficult, to get anything fit to be eaten impossible. Sleep after three nights watching under circumstances of extreme discomfort and vast fatigue was indispensable: a good night's rest was most desirable to one worn out and spent: in the morning I should certainly find the friends, to join whom I had endured such severe hardships. I resolved to go to bed at once; to repose a few hours would suffice. Nevertheless, in this simple, unpretending arrangement I met with new and peculiar embarrassments. There was not a single-bedded room in the house; all the sleeping rooms had two beds at the least. I could not have a room to myself; and on further debate I was made to understand, that I could not have even a whole bed to myself; that I must make up my mind to receive a bedfellow, if need were. After much altercation I chose a bedroom with only two beds in it, secretly determining to lock and bolt the door. Being left alone, I went to secure the door, but it had neither lock, nor bolt, nor any effective latch, for that was broken, so that the door must stand ajar.

I was overcome with weariness and vexation, so I crept half-undressed into one of the two beds, and fell suddenly into a deep sleep. I did not awake till morning; it was quite light, and I awoke with horror, expecting to find by my side some uncouth bedfellow, some big priest perhaps. It was no small relief to find that I was quite alone. Had I locked the door it would have been of no avail, for a panel at the bottom was loose. Presently it was softly pushed aside, and a youth crept into the room.

'What do you want, pray?'

'I am the boy Pat, Mr. Hogg; I have only come to clean your honour's boots a bit!'

He took them away, and I rose, and was soon engaged in shaving a beard of four days' growth, when I heard a noise in my chamber.

Some loose boards in a corner of the room were thrust aside, and a man below began to bawl out lustily. I went to the hole in the floor, and inquired what was the matter?

'Oh, I beg your honour's pardon, I was not speaking to you; I am speaking to the gentleman upstairs!'

And he continued to call out louder than before, until a ragged

head appeared through a corresponding hole in the ceiling, which I had not noticed. A long dialogue was carried on thus through my apartment between the two gentlemen in a vociferous manner; they doubtless understood each other, but what they said was unintelligible to me.

The boy Pat did not bring my boots back; to call him on the stairs was found to be useless by me persevering. I went down into a squalid coffee-room, and wasted my energies in fruitless efforts to procure breakfast. There was one person in the room, and he was at breakfast—a grave, civil Scotchman. I complained to him, that I could not get anything to eat.

'You will never get anything, sir, for you do not know the house. If you choose to take your breakfast with me, you are welcome. I know the house!'

I gladly acceded to his proposal, for I was famished: I had scarcely eaten at all—assuredly not to any good purpose—since I left London. I took a seat at his table, and fell to, like a starving man. There were cold fowls and boiled eggs, both excellent, and good bread: the other things were nasty. He had more fowls and eggs brought: by what magic he effected it I could not comprehend, but they were supplied liberally. I ate freely, and was filled and comforted.

'I have often heard, sir, that Ireland is famous for its poultry, and such seems really to be the case, if these fowls are a fair specimen.'

'I never heard the remark before. I have been all over Ireland, and, now you have mentioned it, I feel that it is so. They have fine fowls and good eggs everywhere.'

'As you know the house, perhaps, sir, you can get me my boots. The boy Pat took them away, and will not bring them back again. You have done me one favour; will you do me another?'

'Most willingly!'

The good genie then took upon him to procure my boots for me; but all his powerful incantations were required to bring it about. With much trouble, the benevolent Scottish magician conjured up the boy, Pat, who, constrained by the spells, brought at first a shoe and a boot; then some odd boots, one of which was mine. I quickly seized it, and afterwards he reluctantly produced the other.

My kind preserver, fortunately for me, knew the house: he also knew Dublin, and put me in the way to find Stephen's Green, the address which Bysshe had given me. Stephen's Green is a larger and a handsomer square than Lincoln's Inn

Fields, as the boastful Irish confidently assert. It is probably somewhat larger, but it is far less handsome: there are grass fields in the middle of the square, with cows in them, and a thorn hedge all round.

I knocked at the door marked with the number indicated in the letters of my friends; and after how much fatigue and suffering! But now these were forgotten, and were about to receive their reward. A manservant answered the door; it was the right house. He told me to wait a moment. The master of the house came running downstairs and received me cordially, shaking my hand with effusion.

I inquired eagerly after Mr. and Mrs. Shelley.

'Oh! It is all right!'

'Where are they? Pray let me see them!'

His answer certainly astonished me.

'If you will do me the honour to come here to dinner to-morrow at five o'clock, Mr. Hogg, I will give you some dirty mutton, a bottle of real, good, old port wine, and a hearty welcome: and then you shall hear all about your friends. Oh! he is a nice gentleman, Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley; a real gentleman! Will you come?'

I thanked him for his hospitality; and I stated that I had lately arrived from London, having come to Dublin to join my friends, and that I wished to see them immediately.

'Oh! but you cannot see them immediately.'

'Why not?'

'Why not—because they are just at Killarney!'

I had not yet heard of William Godwin's adventures at Lymouth; had I known them, the conviction that the picture of my fortunes in Ireland would have the honour to form a suitable pendant to a graphic delineation of his exploits in north Devon, would not have tempted me to venture upon so protracted and so painful a pilgrimage.

'It will be easy and pleasant for you, Mr. Hogg, to go on to Killarney, and join your friends there. But will you promise me not to set out before you have dined with me? I am engaged to-day, unfortunately, but to-morrow, will you come; will you promise?'

I promised very readily; for to spend a few days in seeing Dublin, to enjoy such amusements as the place might afford, and then to return to London—this was my only safe course. I complained of the utter discomfort of my inn: 'If there is no other less miserable, can decent lodgings be procured for a week?'

'I will take you to as good a hotel as any in London. I am particularly engaged at this moment; call at four, and in my walk to dinner, I will introduce you at a house where you will be perfectly comfortable.'

The day was bright, sunny, dry, rather windy, and somewhat cold; it was much like March weather in England, and there was no lack of March dust in Ireland. I walked about the city, and searched out some marked objects, but the reality did not justify the magnificent descriptions which I had heard of them. Almost all things were poor and mean; some few were handsome, but scarcely anything was at all remarkable. I was punctual to my appointment. We walked together to the inn, where I had slept: change for a one-pound note was not to be had—not to be thought of; I paid by another IOU; my new acquaintance settled the matter summarily, perhaps arbitrarily. The driver of the car had called twice, whilst I was out, to have his IOU cashed. 'Poor fellow! The boy Pat was caught, and he carried my portmanteau; his services were not thought worthy of an IOU. I was to think of him when I could get change; and I was as good as my word, for frequently afterwards, when I have had a pocket full of silver, I have thought of the boy Pat; how he pushed out the loose panel, and crept through the door, to take away my boots and keep them from me.

CHAPTER XXII

THE hotel was a handsome house enough, in a principal street; the dinners and other meals in the coffee-room were very fair; the wine was decidedly good, and it was supplied in large bottles, each containing the full measure, a quart or a pint. The attendance was bad, especially at first; but when I got to know the house—that is, to know the haunts of the servants, where they were to be found, and to go and catch them, and to speak to them in a proper manner, partly familiar and partly authoritative—it was sufficient. There were two beds in every room, but by special agreement I was to have the exclusive occupation of my bedroom; and I gave additional force to the agreement by cautiously fastening the door, in the only way in which it could be secured, by tying down the latch at night with a piece of string. A scene which I once witnessed, at a house much frequented by the Irish—the Bush Inn, at Bristol—had not diminished my distaste for lying two in a bed, according to the ancient usages of the Isle of Saints and virgins. The chambermaid conducted me into a double-bedded room; I objected, and asked to have a room with only one bed in it, she said there was not one at liberty, and whilst we were disputing, a huge hairy, he Irishman sprang out of one of the beds, and stood before us, stark naked, in the middle of the room. ‘The gentleman may have whichever bed he pleases; I have only this moment got into bed, and if he prefers my bed, I will get into the other; it is the same thing to me; I am always willing to accommodate a gentleman!’ The woman was accustomed to the ways of her Milesian guests, and was not the least disconcerted at what she beheld, but stood by unmoved, candlestick in hand, thanking him for his civility. I went away, and finding a room with a single bed, took possession of it. I learnt afterwards that it was the practice of the Irish to sleep quite naked; and this did not lessen my disinclination to have such a bedfellow, although, like my civil friend at the Bush, he might be always willing to accommodate a gentleman. I dined, according to his invitation and my promise, with my most obliging new acquaintance; and I was very well treated by him

in every respect. He had a tall, big, handsome young wife, with bright red hair, but extremely good-looking. She was kind and polite. To my surprise, I perceived that I could not understand a word she said, nor could I make myself understood by her; and this I found was often the case with regard to other natives, during my short residence in Dublin, their English being as unintelligible to me as their Irish.

Nothing could exceed the kindness of this gentleman; he introduced me to several of his friends, all of whom were as obliging as himself. He spoke to me of the wrongs of Ireland, and asked me what my sentiments were on that subject. I knew nothing about the matter, and consequently I had no sentiments, or opinions, to disclose. He often returned to the momentous question, as he called it, and pressed me to make a fair and free disclosure of the feelings of an honourable man. Being unwilling to deceive any one, especially so friendly a person, I said to him, continually urging me:

'Do you know London?'

'Perfectly well; as well as I know Dublin!'

'Do you know Chancery Lane?'

'Yes! Faith! Right well.'

'It is not very wide, even in the widest part?'

'No! It is very narrow.'

'It is not like Sackville Street?'

'Not the least in the world!'

'Well, then, to tell you the truth—and it is always best to tell the truth, and not to sail under false colours—I would not take the trouble to walk across Chancery Lane in the narrowest part, if by so doing I could at once redress all the wrongs and grievances of Ireland; emancipate the Catholics, and turn them all loose upon the country, to play the devil, just as if they were good Protestants.' He laughed heartily at this sally, and was much pleased with my open, fearless candour. He introduced me to some institution, club, or reading-room, where there were newspapers in plenty, and some books; and a very nice place it was. When he first took me, some gentleman asked him, if I was a friend to Ireland? He answered: 'Yes! a true friend!' And then he told the people present what I had said concerning Chancery Lane. They did not treat me the worse for it. On the contrary, I fancied they seemed pleased, proud, elated; that everybody who heard it felt himself a foot taller on finding that he had the happiness to live in an age which had produced one thorough contemner of humbug. My friendly guide carried his

kindness so far as to send me every day at dinner time, wet from the press, a Dublin evening paper. I read it faithfully after dinner, because he wished me to read it, and because he always examined me in its contents the next morning. It, treated of politics, about which I cared little, and chiefly of Irish politics, about which I cared nothing. I told him it was ably written, and so indeed it was.

‘Had I met with anything I disapproved of in the paper?’

‘Nothing whatever.’

He said to me at parting: ‘Now that you have read something about our Irish grievances, tell me frankly your opinion of them?’

‘What I have read has entirely confirmed the only opinion which I ever formed of the whole matter, that the devil may mend it, if he will; for full sure nobody else can!’

He spoke frequently of Bysshe, and with uniform, unvarying kindness and respect; and so spoke all in Dublin, who had ever seen him, in a handsome, liberal, and gentlemanlike manner. This unanimity was a real and solid gratification to me; and another tribute of regard was still more pleasing: to me, a young man, it was delightful to hear my friend, a young man, named and remembered with marked and distinguished favour, for his good looks, by females, themselves eminently good-looking. They discoursed, with a due discrimination of colours, of the locks of dark brown hair, shading an intellectual and inspired countenance.

And let it be remarked, by the way, that persons who had never seen Shelley, or were incapable of correctly distinguishing hues and shades of colour, have sometimes erroneously assigned to him ‘golden hair’; it was of a dark brown, without a tinge of red or yellow; there was no more gold in his hair, than there usually was in the poor fellow’s pocket.

I was often warmly recommended to go on to Killarney; the lake and country were well worth a visit; no doubt they were, possibly even in the month of March. My friends would be charmed to see me; they would, certainly. I should be quite sure to find them there; this, at least, was doubtful; and one such a wildgoose chase as I had just indulged in was sufficient sport for one season.

I breakfasted on a Sunday morning somewhere, in order to see at one glance all the fashionable society in Dublin; and for this purpose they conducted me to a chapel, where the most popular preacher in the capital officiated, and all persons of

fashion congregated to listen to his eloquence. The orator spoke that affected, mincing dialect, which is but too commonly in use amongst the upper classes in Ireland, which is always painful to English ears, and sometimes absolutely intolerable: the fashionable world had a mean and poverty-stricken aspect. A conspicuous, glaring poverty pervaded the whole city. I never once met a woman in the streets with silk stockings, although I walked about everywhere; and by riding in jaunting-cars and gingells in windy weather, the daughters of Erin lost no opportunity of exhibiting their millposts to an unprejudiced and observant stranger; I should have seen their silk stockings, if they had been worth a pair.

I saw very few pretty women here, and they were all in the upper classes; the lower orders were hard-featured and ugly, without one exception. I never saw so few good-looking females in a large city. In Naples the women were for the most part plain, but not ugly, as they too commonly were in Dublin.

The Theatre Royal, in Crowe Street, is a sorry building for the chief, or the only theatre of a capital city; my active guide conducted me to it on a fashionable evening. Change, the door-keeper could not give; an IOU could not be taken there, but my conductor pledged his sacred word of honour for me at the door. The pledge was accepted, and I was admitted to the dress boxes. The *beau monde* looked rather seedy; the all-pervading poverty was apparent here as elsewhere: there was not merely a want of small change, but a want of money. The play was *King John*; the part of Lady Constance was filled by Miss O'Neill. I have frequently witnessed that lady's performance subsequently in London with admiration and delight: she was already a great celebrity in Dublin, but, I confess, I was much less struck by her acting than perhaps I ought to have been. The character is not effective; possibly it did not suit her; and to say the truth, like everything else in Ireland, she had been puffed so outrageously, that the excessive praise which had been dinned into my ears, indisposed me to perceive and acknowledge her real merit. Everything besides, which I had hitherto seen, had disappointed me so much, and had fallen so very short of the extravagant laudation heaped upon it, that the mind was weary of being balked, and was fatigued with constant shortcomings.

The boasted Sackville Street and the bepraised squares were certainly handsome; yet they had a dull, deserted look. The vice-regal castle was but a shabby Lincoln's Inn. Sir John

Stevenson played well on the organ; and the monument of Jonathan Swift is undoubtedly genuine; nevertheless, for an archiepiscopal cathedral. St. Patrick's is a mean, dirty, dismal church.

At Trinity College, the buildings are handsome and commodious; but to eyes accustomed to the neatness, the propriety, the elegance with which the several colleges in the University of Oxford are kept and garnished, its neglected air bespeaks a workhouse; and in comparison with the smart, well-dressed, gentleman-like undergraduates, my former associates, the young hopes of Hibernia, however promising intrinsically, seemed outwardly a buttonless, stringless, ragged lot. There was a noble library, I was assured, containing many rare and valuable MSS., and a vast collection of printed books; but I was also assured, and doubtless with equal truth, that it was useless to visit it, for it was in the utmost disorder and confusion.

The Bank of Ireland alone, formerly the House of Parliament, deserved all the commendations poured out lavishly over it. Of all the infinite gasconades this alone is just and well-founded, that the important business of banking is not, and cannot be, carried on in a more magnificent structure in any other city. The small currency of Ireland had long consisted almost entirely of the notes of provincial banks for sums under the value of one pound; of bank-notes for a crown, and, if I mistake not, for I never saw a specimen of this paper money, for half a crown. All these notes, the sole medium of small payments just before my arrival in Dublin, had been unadvisedly, inconsiderately, and wickedly, withdrawn suddenly and totally from circulation before any substitute was introduced. The inconvenience and confusion created by this rash proceeding are not to be described. How long the curse continued to afflict and desolate the country I know not: during my short visit, it was at the highest point. This execrable interdict upon all ordinary dealings does not appear to have met with adequate reprehension; or that the stocks, the pillory, and the whipping-post, the well-merited chastisements of political economists, so foolish and mischievous, were brought vigorously into requisition. The holders of my IOU's became numerous, and sometimes they were uneasy; they seemed to be apprehensive that I meditated flight. I could only offer a pound note to any one who would undertake to get it changed; but that was impossible. So whenever my securities happened to be looked upon with disfavour in the

Dublin money market, they pressed me with clamorous, but never uncivil, or disrespectful, importunity.

The driver of the car assured me, probably with perfect veracity, that he wanted a bit of bread for his babes, shoes and food for his horse, his wife, or himself; and he earnestly besought me, for the sake of the Holy Virgin, the blessed Mother of God, just to take up my IOU. In my urgent distress I applied to my very obliging acquaintance. Surely there were bankers, merchants, in a large city, from whom a few pounds' worth of silver might be procured. He assured me that the thing was impracticable; and he adopted a palliative, which was national, characteristic, and effectual, at least for my personal relief, but not altogether in accordance with my feelings and wishes. This was his hunting whip; with the doubled thong at fist, when my creditors were near at hand, and afterwards, when they began to retreat, with the point of the lash, he procured for me temporary accommodation, forbearance, and relief. He was a thoroughly good-natured fellow, and he did more towards clearing the ground, by cracking his formidable whip, than by actually striking the clamorous applicants who pursued and hunted me about. Sometimes he would apostrophize them in this fashion:

'You dirty villains, what do you mean? Is this your hospitality? The good gentleman has come from London expressly to redress the wrongs of Ireland, and you torment him in this manner! Take yourselves off, you dirty blackguards!'

In addition to the pursuit of my daily increasing creditors, I was constantly followed by a troop of ragged, squalid beggars. It was a novelty to hear women asking charity, for the sake of the Holy Virgin, of the Mother of God, of the blessed Mary, the mother of the sweet Jaysus.

I remained a week or ten days in Dublin. I had visited every place that was reputed to be worthy of a visit. I never was in a town of the same dimensions in which there was so little to be seen.

I had not received any intelligence from Killarney, although I had written to my friends, and I was not inclined to pursue them farther. I brought with me money enough to pay my journey to Dublin, and back again to London, with a small reserve for contingencies. This was almost consumed, and it appeared to be prudent, and on all accounts desirable, to return home. But I could not discover how this was to be done, without discharging my debts, and that seemed to be absolutely

impossible. I consulted my obliging mentor, and he kindly proposed that I should leave the amount of my outstanding debts with him in notes, and he would undertake to discharge every IOU, as soon as silver money could be obtained.

Accordingly we had a meeting of my creditors—an audit; the holders of securities were very accommodating. I gave the auditor the total amount, and when the day of payment arrived he could discharge all my obligations, and give every man his own.

I determined to return by another and preferable route, and I took an outside place to London by the Shrewsbury mail. I sailed on a fine afternoon by the post office packet, from the Pigeon House; the vessel was not crowded as before, and I slept soundly on a sofa in the cabin. When I awoke in the morning, I saw a Scotch gentleman seated at a small table with a fine cold fowl before him, and a large loaf. He civilly asked me to assist him in eating his provisions. I felt hungry, certainly, but I also felt and expressed some scruples at diminishing his stock; and I honestly told him that I had not the means of repaying him, if he should run short, as I had no sea-stores. He answered: 'There was no fear of that; we should land in half an hour, and if I went on deck for a minute, I should have a fine view of the Head'. The morning was sunny and bright; the sight of the desired port is always pleasant, and I found the prospect lovely and exhilarating. When I went down again into the cabin, my share of the fowl was on a plate before me. I had no time to lose, he said, and I did not lose any time. We made a hasty meal, commending, as was most due, the excellence of Irish poultry. My entertainer complained bitterly of the disorder and confusion which reigned universally in Ireland; of the utter want of punctuality in business, and of other defects, which must be peculiarly odious and inconvenient to an exact, precise, and formal Scotchman. I felt these deficiencies very sensibly myself; and yet, to say the truth, I quitted the Green Isle with regret; I liked it with all its faults, and I acknowledged that if circumstances should require it, I should not be altogether sorry to make my residence there: because it was an aristocratical country; every feeling, to the backbone, and to the heart's core, was aristocratical; I had seen that a gentleman is always treated in Ireland like a gentleman, and that to live well there it is only necessary to be a gentleman, and to behave like one. He shook his head at this, and affirmed that my feeling in favour of aristocracy was narrow, vulgar, selfish, unfounded, ignorant; 'and, I must add, young gentleman, although I say it with pain,

a most highly reprehensible prejudice'. I held steadily to my principles, and I added: 'The little which I have seen of Wales I liked much, and for the same reasons—that also is an aristocratical country; quite as much so as Ireland'.

'Oh! my good sir; the Welsh, as a nation, are in the very lowest state of human degradation!'

'Yet they boast that they alone, of all nations, have never been conquered.'

'Precisely so! and for a very plain reason—because they were not worth conquering; and if they merit anything at our hands, it can be nothing more than total extermination!'

I was not to be put down, so I went on: 'I have not seen much of Scotland, but I liked what I saw there, for there likewise is a decided leaning towards aristocracy'.

At this remark, he immediately changed his note: 'And so you liked Scotland! Oh! that is a fine country! There you see civilization at the highest pitch! What a noble race of men! So you really liked Scotland? Well, it is a powerful, an irresistible argument in favour of your good sense, my young friend, that you liked Scotland!'

The conversation was interrupted by an order to get into the boat. We embarked, and my patriotic acquaintance took his place by my side, lecturing, as we neared the shore, on the pre-eminence of Scotland, and inquiring with interest what parts of that country I had seen: and at the moment of landing, he said: 'If you love social refinement, you must lose no time in visiting Glasgow!'

The mail was ready to start; I mounted upon the roof, the box being already occupied. As soon as I was seated, with a smack of the whip and a blast of the horn we bid adieu to Holyhead. We recrossed Mona, and came to Bangor Ferry, where, at a charming inn, and for a moderate charge, we had ample time to enjoy an excellent repast. We passed propitiously the Menai Straits; the marine river was now as bright, as calm, as smiling, as it had before appeared gloomy, rough, and threatening. I hastened from the boat to regain my watch-tower near the skies. The afternoon was clear and sunny. We proceeded onwards to Capel Cerrig. No language can describe the beauty and majesty of the scene which I now beheld, perched on the roof of the coach: Snowdon and the magnificent chain of lofty mountains filled me with admiration and delight. I was now amply repaid, overpaid for all my labours, and sufferings, and disappointments.

My return to London was as auspicious in every respect, as my journey to Dublin had been cruel and terrible. The service of the mail and the accommodations for passengers were as convenient and satisfactory by this route, as on that by Chester they had been comfortless and disgusting.

The weather was favourable all the way; the nights cold, but serene and fine: my friend's blanket coat, which had proved useless, or rather mischievous, in heavy and incessant rain, was now sovereign, and kept me as warm as I wished to be. I arrived at the General Post Office in London in due course, upon the whole much gratified by my fortnight's tour to the sister island; by my hasty visit to my little sister, Cinderbreach, to the poor snubbed and slighted Cinderella. For some days after my arrival in Dublin, I felt as if I should never be warm again, and when I laid my hand upon my flesh my body struck cold as marble; but by degrees the chill departed, the natural heat returned, and I suffered no lasting inconvenience. Amongst many other advantages, which I derived from my journey, one of the most striking was the marked difference in tone, with which my Irish acquaintances spoke to me of their own glorious land, when they were informed of my actual personal inspection of it. One of the boldest boasters said to me meekly on my return:

'You could not fail to remark, that as they paint everything in London, so they paint nothing in Dublin; and that it would be quite as difficult to find a broken window-shutter in London and the neighbourhood, as it would be to find a whole one in, or near, the proud metropolis of Ireland.' To have learned fully to appreciate in all its bearings this candid and judicious remark is surely not to have travelled in vain!

CORK HOTEL, DUBLIN, *March 31, 1813.*

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

We have just arrived in Dublin: had you remained here but one day, you would have seen us. We travelled night and day, from the receipt of your note. My Harriet insisted on accompanying me. Her spirits, and the hope of seeing you here, supported her through two days and nights of hard travelling: two hundred and forty English miles.

You falsely supposed that her note was in answer to yours. We did not receive yours until Monday noon. On Monday evening we began travelling on Irish roads with Irish horses and chaise. We reached Cork at one the next day, took the mail,

and to-day, Wednesday, at three o'clock arrived. We shall soon be with you in London; Eliza and our servant remain at Killarney.

You ought not to accuse me of reserve towards you. It is the inconceivable blindness and matter of fact stupidity of Lawless, that deserve your reprehension; but had you stayed one day longer, you would have heard the words of sincerity and friendship from my own lips. As soon as I shall consider the fatigue as overcome, I shall come to London. I must by some means raise money for the journey here, but I am not one to stick at difficulties.

Do not write to us here. We shall be on our way before your letter could arrive.

Harriet unites in kind remembrances.

Your very sincere friend,

PERCY B. S.

Harriet will write to-morrow.

To T. J. H.

DUBLIN, *April 3, 1813.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wrote yesterday before I had seen Lawless, under the one and only impression of disappointment at not meeting you here. That, however, shall speedily be remedied. I have raised a small sum of money, and to-morrow evening we embark for Holyhead.

I have been very much pleased at what Lawless has said of you. The first ten words he spoke entirely dissipated all the ill-humour I had cherished against him. He had done what I could not conceive any one, who dined with you, could have neglected. He had been open with you.

Of course you will not write to us here. Above all do not send, or dream of procuring for us any money; we will do those matters well. The property of friends at least is in common. On Monday evening we shall be in London.

I write from Lawless's. I am very much pleased and flattered by his account of you.

Harriet is quite well. She writes to-day.

My dear friend, all happiness attend you.

Yours affectionately,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY 415

[No date].

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We have just arrived. We are now at 23 Chapel Street, but will see you, or write to-morrow morning.

Yours affectionately,
P. B. S.

To T. J. H.

35, GREAT CUFFE STREET, DUBLIN,

May 3, 1813.

DEAR SIR,

I take the liberty of troubling you with these few lines to be informed by you, how our good friends the Shelleys are, from whom I have heard but once since they left this country. I did flatter myself with a letter from my friend long before this, and now begin to apprehend some serious cause for his not writing. I hope no such cause has interposed, and if not, you will much oblige me by telling him, how anxious both Mrs. Lawless and I are to hear from him and Mrs. Shelley. I suppose Miss Westbrook has long since arrived with you.

I remain,

Your very humble servant,

To T. J. H.

JOHN LAWLESS.

(First Endorsement)

Sunday Morning.

DEAR HARRIET,

I am very sorry that Bysshe is unwell. It is hard that his heart should be so good, and his head so bad: I wish you had as much influence over the latter as over the former. Mr. Lawless has had the goodness to send me the paper, on which I write. Bysshe will answer him. I met Mr. and Mrs. N. as I returned last night; they ordered me to tell you that they would take tea with you this evening. Adieu!

Yours truly,

To Mrs. Shelley.

T. J. H.

(Second Endorsement)

Bysshe is better now, and wishes for your company this evening at eight o'clock to meet the N——'s.

HARRIET.

To T. J. H.

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