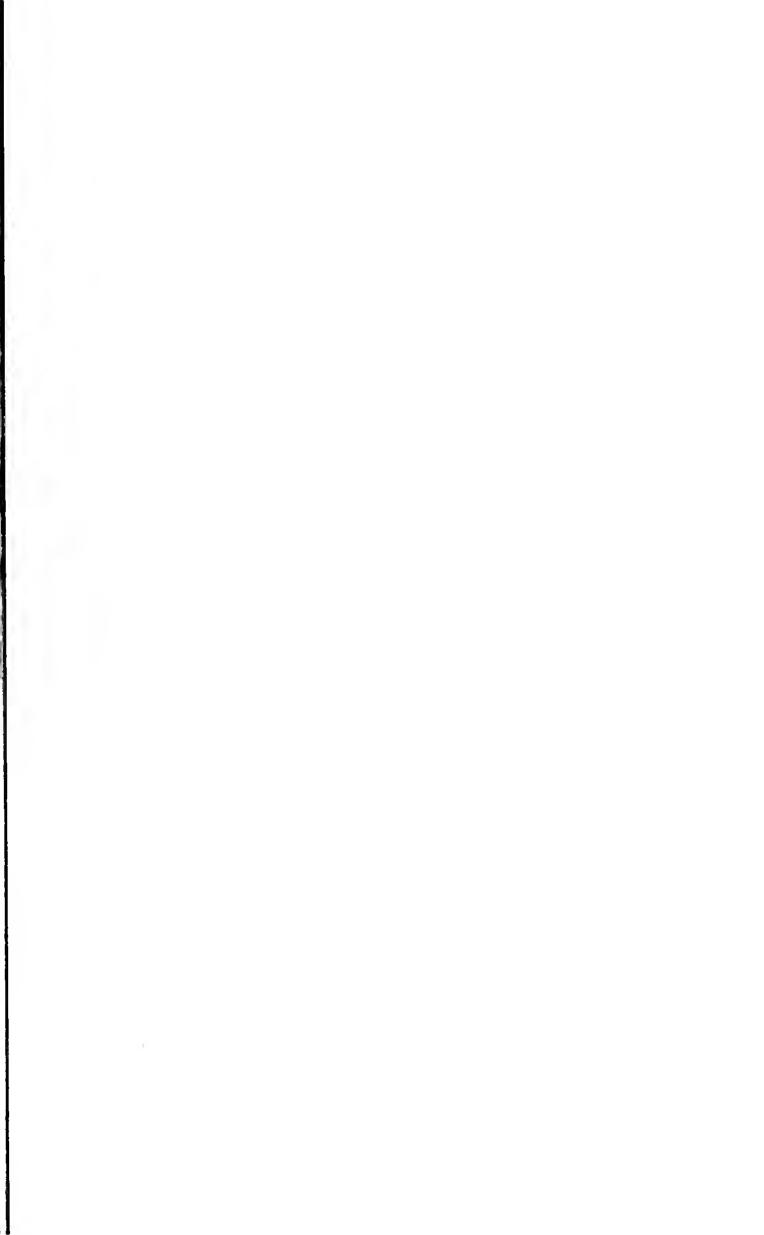
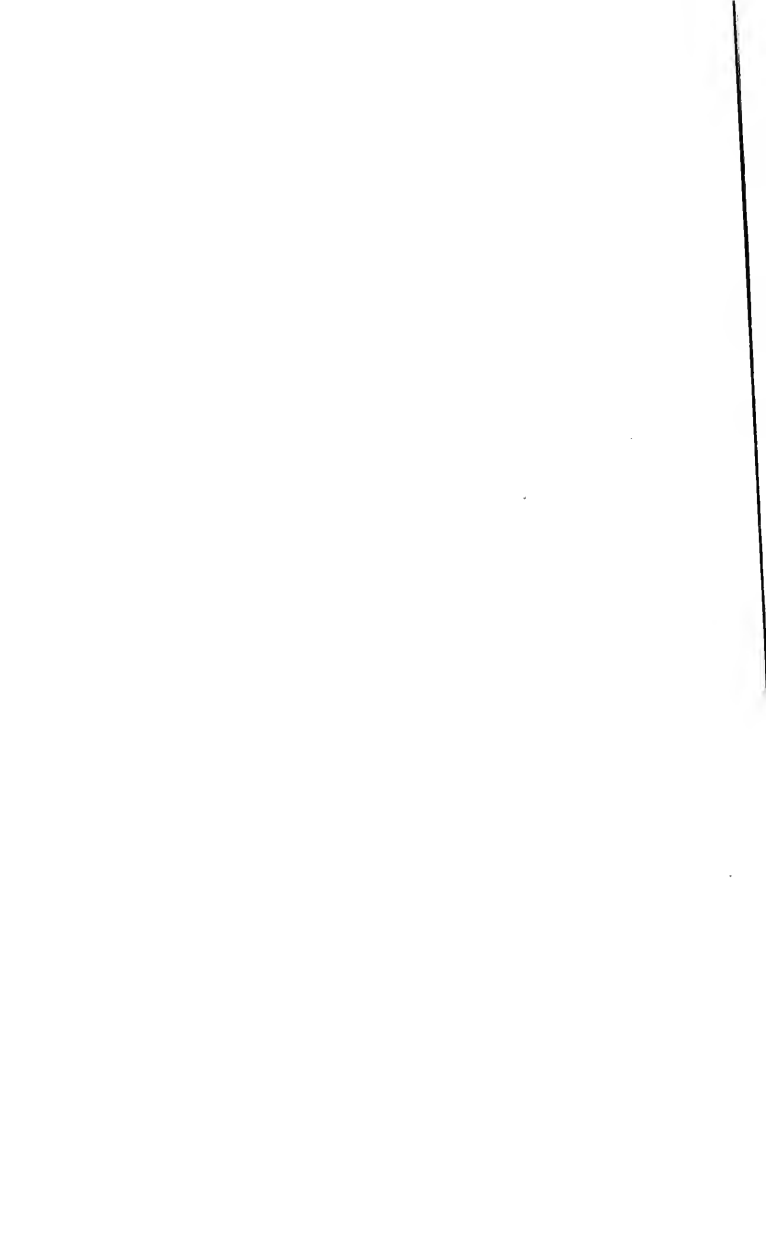
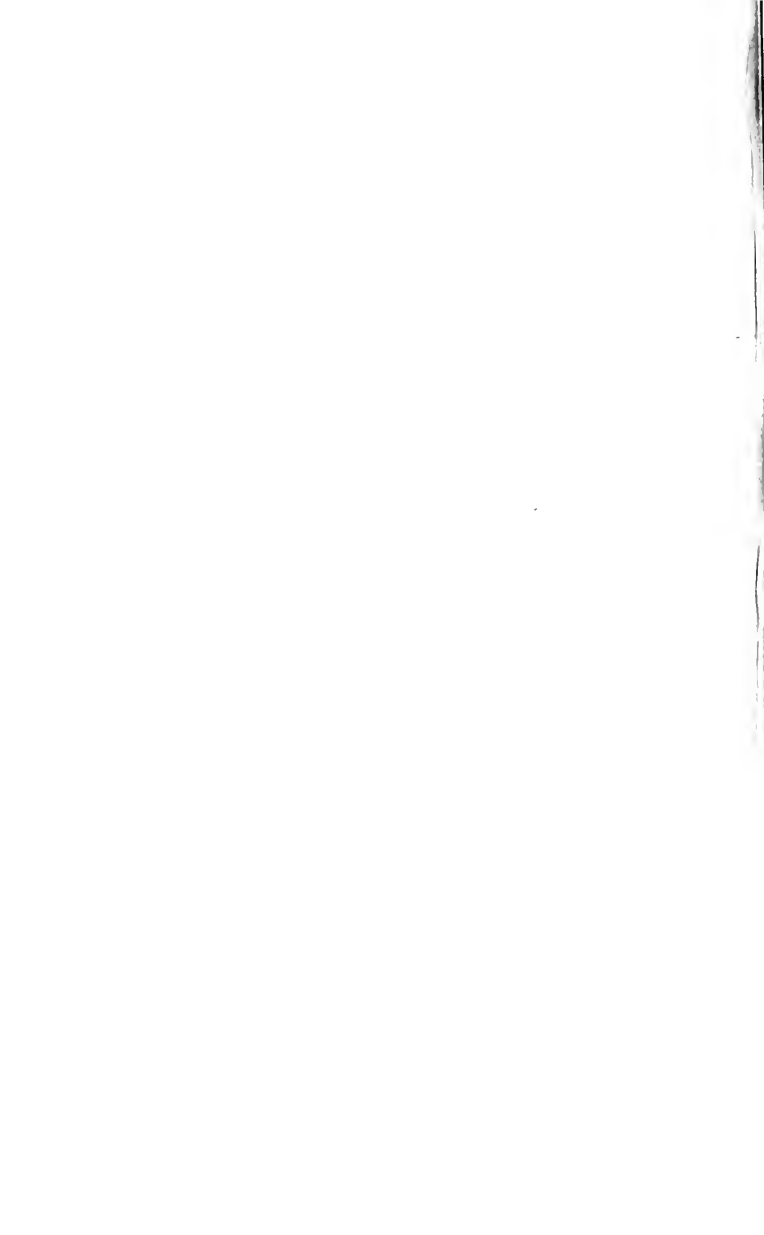


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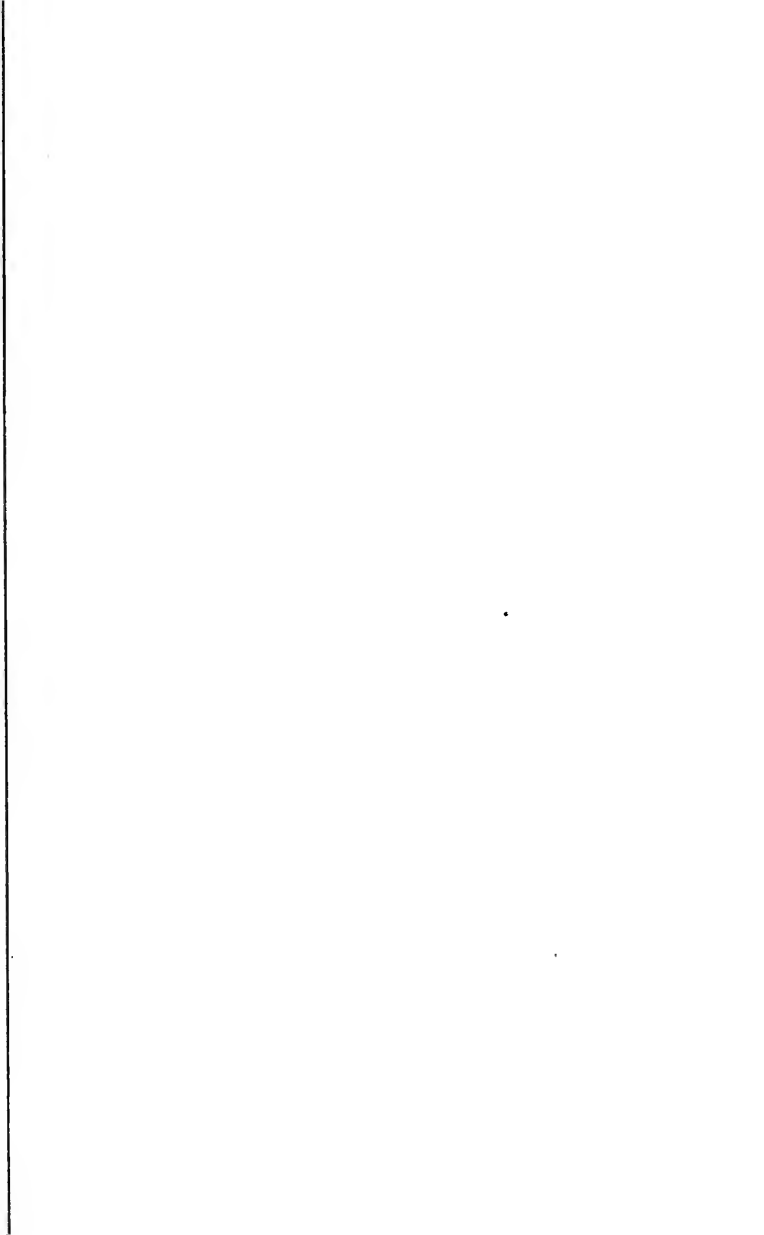
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THE ALDINE EDITION
OF THE BRITISH
POETS



THE POETICAL WORKS OF PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
VOL. I





J. B. Shelley

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THE POETICAL WORKS OF
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

EDITED WITH A MEMOIR BY
H. BUXTON FORMAN

IN FIVE VOLUMES



VOL. I

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PREFACE.

THE plan on which the present edition of Shelley's poetry is arranged does not differ essentially from that adopted in my Library edition published by Messrs. Reeves and Turner, and in the unannotated text in two volumes issued by the same publishers. The volumes published or printed in Shelley's lifetime are reproduced in chronological order, in the main. In view of the persistent vogue and historic importance of *Queen Mab*, it has been restored to its place at the beginning of the series; but the earlier volume of verse, *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson*, not being in any sense deserving of consideration, is given in the appendix.

The series of Shelley's own publications is followed by that of the chief posthumous poems of his maturity, and these again by his posthumous minor poems, each series arranged chronologically. The translations follow; and then the appendix of *juvenilia*. The fragments are not separated from the complete poems, but take their places amongst them in order of date.

The text being no longer the subject of such controversy as raged for years over it, I have given it in the form in which I think it may be regarded as established, and have not thought it necessary to encumber with contro-

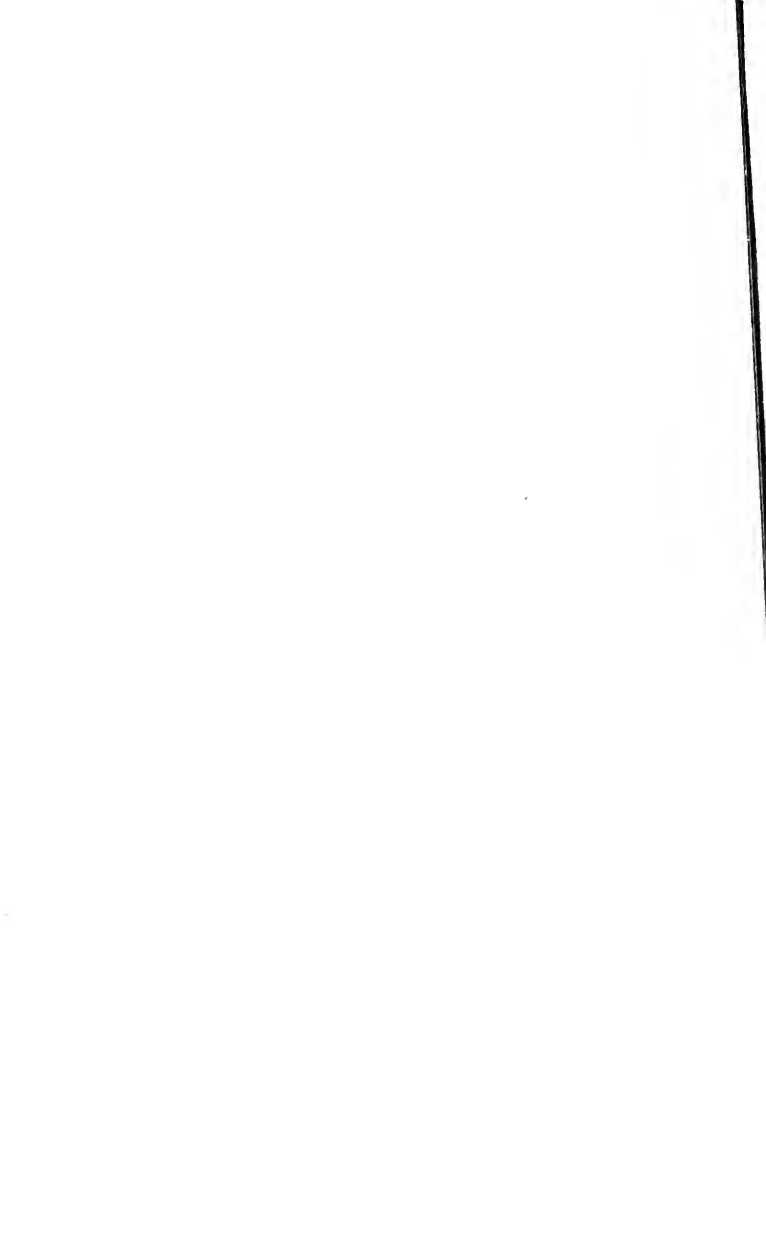
versial notes what aims at being a popular edition, or to distract the reader's attention by the insertion of such an array of *variorum* readings as can be given when the object is to furnish students with a complete critical apparatus. As far as possible, one system of spelling and punctuation has been adopted throughout; and an endeavour has been made to render the edition as characteristic in these respects as might be, compatibly with the convenience of contemporary readers. Those who wish to do more than apprehend and enjoy the net result of all the poetical work left by Shelley, and who desire to form their own opinions on the processes of his mind as shown in successive cancellings and substitutions, or to have before them the history of the corruptions and restorations of his text and the reasons for and against such and such readings, are referred to my Library edition. In the present edition there is but little of such matter; and the notes aim at being illustrative rather than controversial, and that within very modest limits.

In the Memoir I have sought to give in a brief space an accurate account of the events of Shelley's life, and particularly of his employments in literature, and to convey to the reader a faithful impression of his character and the characters of those with whom he was most closely connected. Here again, it seems superfluous to make any display of authorities. The biographical notes left by Mrs. Shelley, the Lives by Medwin and Hogg, *The Shelley Memorials*, Trelawny's *Recollections*, the memoirs published by Mr. W. M. Rossetti, the authoritative biography which Professor Edward Dowden

wrote at the request of Sir Percy and Lady Shelley, and my own extensive collection of original papers relating to Shelley, have been drawn on indifferently.

As regards the sources of the body of poetry contained in this first volume, a few words will suffice. The authority for *Queen Mab* and its voluminous notes, written or compiled by Shelley, is his own privately printed edition of 1813. *Alastor* and the minor poems, ending with the First Part of *The Daemon of the World*, are the component parts of a little volume which he had printed at Weybridge with the title *Alastor; or, the Spirit of Solitude: and Other Poems*, and the date 1816. By the time that volume was prepared he had grown very critical towards *Queen Mab*, of which he revised elaborately the first, second, eighth and ninth sections, making out of them a fresh poem in two parts, which he called *The Daemon of the World*. The first part was published with *Alastor* as "a fragment." The second part remained in manuscript till 1876, when I printed it from his own copy of *Queen Mab* (in my collection), on which the manuscript revision was made. The authority for *Mont Blanc: Lines written in the Vale of Chamouni*, is a small volume mainly of prose by Mrs. Shelley, but partly Shelley's, and with this fine poem at the close: the book is called *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland: with Letters descriptive of a Sail round the Lake of Geneva, and of the Glaciers of Chamouni* (1817).

H. B. F.



CONTENTS.

VOL. I.

MEMOIR	PAGE XI
------------------	------------

QUEEN MAB; A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM:—

To Harriet * * * * *	3
Canto I.	5
Canto II.	13
Canto III.	21
Canto IV.	28
Canto V.	37
Canto VI.	45
Canto VII.	52
Canto VIII.	61
Canto IX.	68
Notes	77

ALASTOR; OR, THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE: AND OTHER POEMS:—

Preface	139
Alastor; or, the Spirit of Solitude	143
ΔΑΚΡΥΣΙ ΔΙΟΙΣΩ ΗΟΤΜΟΝ ΑΗΟΤΜΟΝ [To Coleridge]	168
Stanzas.—April, 1814	169
Mutability	170
There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest	171
A Summer-Evening Church-Yard, Lechlade, Gloucestershire	172
To Wordsworth [Sonnet]	174
Feelings of a Republican on the Fall of Bonaparte [Sonnet]	174

	PAGE
ALASTOR; OR, THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE: AND OTHER POEMS— <i>continued</i> :—	
Sonnet from the Italian of Dante. Dante Alighieri to Guido Cavalcanti	175
Translated from the Greek of Moschus [<i>Sonnet</i>]	176
The Daemon of the World: Part I.	177
The Daemon of the World: Part II.	187
Mont Blanc: Lines written in the Vale of Chamonni	197
Cancelled Passage	203

MEMOIR.

THE relevancy of Shelley's pedigree to his place in the world's story has been questioned. Considering how little we know of the laws of heredity as affecting those highest of all phenomena the manifestations of the mind of man, it may be wise to refrain for the present from serious discussion of the question. Fifty years hence it may be discussed more fruitfully than now. Meanwhile, the thoughtful student of literature and history will not cease to ponder on the strange revenge of time which Shelley's life and works constitute. He whose mission it was to loosen traditional authority and untie worn-out convention was born in the very lap of that solid but exclusive comfort which the centuries had been building upon authority and convention. He who was more penetrable by ideas than any poet of his age came into the world among associations where every new idea was, "God bless us! a thing of naught." He who was still aspiring to universal brotherhood and still ardently believing that man might be free and equal, when he prematurely left the world, had come into it in a corner where to grow up with all the ease and comfort of the unworking few, amid the teeming misery of the working many, was as natural for him as to breathe the air or draw in his mother's milk. In a word, he who more than any poet of his

day embodied the finer aspirations of the French Revolution came of "an ancient and honourable" family residing in the county of Sussex and occupied from generation to generation, like other ancient and honourable families, in consolidating their own well-being, and, whether consciously or unconsciously, building up that tyranny of the strong over the weak, which the French Revolution attempted to break.

The birth of such a spirit into any particular family is mysterious enough; and yet it is natural to think that, if the intellectual child of the revolution had taken upon him our flesh in some other family, the smell of blood might have been less abhorrent to him,—the ideas of the revolution embodied in his works with a less absolute detestation for its horrors. The intense rarefaction of the atmosphere surrounding the treatment of those ideas, the instinctive freedom of his work from all that is harsh, coarse, or commonplace, are things to be grateful for; and those of us who still think that there is virtue in "gentle blood" may be pleased to thank Shelley's gentle blood for that freedom.

The unconsidered corner of England in which he entered the world was the fine old residence known as Field Place, situate near the town of Horsham in Sussex. There it was that Mr. Timothy Shelley resided with his wife Elizabeth, born Pilfold—he a country gentleman of a not unkindly disposition, but irritable, consequential and inaccessible to ideas even to the point of dulness—she the beautiful and intelligent daughter of Charles Pilfold of Effingham in Surrey. The eldest child of this worthy but not remarkable couple was born on

the 4th of August 1792; and they called him by the name of Percy Bysshe,—Percy, it is said, on account of a distant connexion with the Northumberland family, and Bysshe for a reason less remote. That name, which had come into the family when John Shelley in 1692 married Hellen, daughter and co-heiress of Roger Bysshe of Fen Place, was borne a hundred years later by Mr. Timothy Shelley's father, Mr. Bysshe Shelley, grandson to the said John and Hellen. That gentleman, who was living in a cottage at Horsham in 1792, was possessed of this world's goods in abundance, though his mode of life did not at that time indicate riches. He had married two women of fortune, whose wealth had not saved him from gout, eccentricity, and violence of temper.

The persistence of fore-names in the family was strong. Shelley's grandfather was not the first Bysshe Shelley in the family; Shelley's father was not the first Timothy; Shelley was not the first Percy, for his grandfather had an uncle Percy; and as for the name Hellen, which brought its two *l*s into the family along with the dowry of Roger Bysshe's daughter, it carried that peculiarity into our own days; for it was borne by Shelley's youngest sister but one, the "dear little Hellen" whom we meet in Hogg's Life.

Beauty of person was part of Shelley's birth-right. It was striking both in his grandfather and in his mother. He himself was slight in figure with fair fresh complexion, vivacious blue eyes, and golden curling hair which assumed a rich brown tone as he matured. His disposition was gentle and loving, excitable

and imaginative; and from an early time he tended towards dreamy and unchildlike habits rather than towards the romping gamesomeness typical of normal childhood; and this tendency was fostered by the circumstance that for many years no other boy was born at Field Place. For the practical purposes of moral and mental education he may be said to have been brotherless; and this goes for much in the forming of his character. Surrounded by an increasing company of younger sisters, he grew up in conditions which fostered all that was tender and gentle in his nature.

At the age of six years the little boy was sent to a day-school at the neighbouring village of Warnham, where he began, under the Rev. Mr. Edwards, the study of Latin. From this time to that of his departure to boarding-school must have been happy days for the little sisters, to whom he used to tell tales of wonder and amazement, and with whom he explored the darkest and least frequented regions of Field Place, beginning very early those recondite experiments and incantations which eventually became serious researches after ghosts and fiends.

When he was ten years old the daily round of home occupations was broken up by the departure of the still small boy for Isleworth, where, at Sion House Academy, presided over by Dr. Greenlaw, he and some fifty or sixty other boys underwent a somewhat more liberal tutelage than was to be found at the village of Warnham. At Sion House Shelley's cousin, Thomas Medwin, was also being educated; and here at the same period was a lad whose destiny it was to be known to future times

as Sir John Rennie, engineer and deviser of London Bridge and other great works. At Sion House the brotherless boy formed a romantic attachment for a lad of his own age, who may or may not have been as "gentle and brave and generous" as the poet in *Alastor*, and as Shelley unquestionably believed him to be. Of Shelley himself Rennie records that he was "very amiable, noble, high-spirited, and generous," when kindly treated; but his shyness and dissimilarity to other lads led to a good deal of that brutal persecution with which boys usually harden themselves and each other for the struggle to come. Probably the sensitive lad's misery under this persecution was intense. The records of boyish unhappiness contained in his poetry are not in the nature of things likely to be exaggerated. Still his attachment to the one boy who stood to him *in loco fratris* went for much, for one love outweighs a multitude of little transient hates; and meanwhile he was making fair progress in his classical studies and was experiencing a high intellectual pleasure from the scientific lectures which he attended.

The holidays were joyful times alike for the little sisters at Field Place and for the boy Percy. Renewal of incantations with fresh scientific knowledge, and of romantic tale-telling with fresh stores of learning, were matters of course. Before he had completed his twelfth year, the scene of his education and persecution was widened. In 1804 he was transferred from Dr. Greenlaw's care to Eton College, of which Dr. Goodall was at that time head-master. The tutor with whom the young oppidan was placed had the reputation

of being the dullest man at Eton, though good-natured and well-meaning. It was not to be expected that this gentleman, George Bethell to wit, would be of much effect in keeping Shelley from the same sort of collision with his fellows at Eton as he had come into with Dr. Greenlaw's presumably smaller cubs. At Eton, as at Sion House, persecution of the still shy and sensitive lad was a favourite amusement. The coarser fibre of the youths, of whom many were being bred to help rule the world and then be quickly forgotten, naturally enough revolted against the strange beauty and refinement of the intellectual creature whom fate had set in their midst; and it was as natural for them to bully him as for a litter of bull-pups to snap and paw at a butterfly, or later on to worry a kitten. A boy who did not care much for cricket and foot-ball, whose appetite for learning of an out-of-the-way kind was preternatural, whose facility of acquisition and expression was abnormal, and who persistently rebelled against the fagging system as an intolerable tyranny and oppression, could not possibly be let alone. Still, Shelley was a force at Eton with which the coarsest and strongest could not tamper in complete safety. Persecution liberated electric spasms of passion not to be regarded with contempt. This shy and habitually gentle boy had his own unconventional means of self-defence; and the absence of any plausible knowledge whether the next missile hurled at his persecutor might be an inkstand, a hedgehog, or a little boy, was obviously a consideration which the hardiest young ruffian might well hesitate to ignore.

Before he left Eton, Shelley had endeared

himself to some and made himself respected by others. Some who knew him there have borne testimony to his generosity, tenderness, and moral courage; and it is on record that he "feared nothing but what was false or low." Of fear properly so called little if any is to be traced in his record of less than thirty years; and it may be believed implicitly that what he suffered at Sion House and Eton College partook in no degree of the sordid character of fear. Even then he was beginning to be

As a nerve o'er which do creep
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth,

and no stretch of imagination is needed to assure us that the misery of those boyish days arose from the sense that he was an alien in the land of school, that individual freedom was unattainable, that he was in the grip of a ruthless force which he could not withstand and would not give in to, and that his resentment of these ills was ineffectual to emancipate him from them. Already he was qualifying for his life-long protest against oppression,—the dedication of his powers to the service of freedom and humanity.

One of the friends of this period to whom he owed most was Dr. James Lind of Windsor—with whom he passed a great deal of time while resident at Eton, and whose character is portrayed in the old hermit of *Laon and Cythna*, and again in the Zonoras of *Prince Athanase*. It is needless to say that the portrait was in each case highly idealized; for every character depicted by Shelley is highly idealized: indeed the faculty of idealizing experience was not limited in its operation to the characters and

scenes which enter into the fabric of his literary work. This idealization was constitutional—he saw his grandfather, his parents, his sisters, not as others saw them; and he endowed those whom he met and loved with qualities of his own finer nature in liberal measure. In fact, this process must be kept constantly in mind if we would apprehend the meaning of many things that seem strange in his life and his views of the men and women whom he met.

But with all his ideality, the youthful Shelley is not to be counted as a mere visionary. The strong practical bent of his character came out early. The wonders of science were not enough of themselves to exhaust the mental energy he had to devote to them; and he sought realization in chemical and other experiments and in microscopic investigations. As regards literary realization, not much of his earlier handiwork has survived. We have the verses to a cat written when he was some seven years old; and he is said to have done far more than his share of Latin verse-writing. His grandfather, who must now be called Sir Bysshe, for he was created a Baronet in 1806, is credited with having indulged the youth's literary productiveness by paying for private impressions of some of his early pieces. It may be supposed that this was after the creation of the Baronetcy, which, be it remarked, took place in the very year that produced another novelty for Shelley. In 1806, after fourteen years of bringing daughters into the world, Mrs. Timothy Shelley gave birth to a second son, John, afterwards father of the present Baronet. The mention of this last child of Shelley's parents brings to mind an unpublished piece of his early work

which Sir Bysshe probably never saw,—which it is to be hoped the author's parents never saw,—and which it were preferable the sun had never seen. It is a poetical epistle to Edward Graham, the son of Mr. Timothy Shelley's *fac-totum*, characterized by a certain adolescent wantonness unlike anything else of Shelley's, but distinctly clever. Its ribald allusions to Mr. Timothy Shelley represent a passing phase of the youth's character—a phase of which it would have been hard to suspect the existence save for this one document, deriving importance simply from this uniqueness and from its mention of Shelley's brother in connexion with an incident of practical experiment. The passage alluded to is this:—

I have been
With little Jack upon the green—
A dear delightful red-faced brute,
And setting up a parachute ;

from which it is clear that the healthy, jolly, rubicund infant brother was a source of real pleasure to the school-boy when he went home for the holidays.

Whatever the nature of the mysterious parachute experiment may have been, it is evident that the pursuit of letters was being carried on then, as later, side by side with pursuits of practical realization which called the dreamer out of his dreams to shape something. In those days he was full of life and vigour, a great walker, and expert in the use of the fowling-piece,—his snipe-shooting having been the envy of his cousin Medwin. At once imaginative and practical, it is scarcely surprising that, before his Eton days were ended,

he had not only written a romance, but succeeded in getting it printed and published.

As literature, *Zastrozzi* is not only without merit, but is a desperately bad performance which no one should read save for psychical study. Most of it was written in the year 1809, in which Shelley attained the age of seventeen—an age when the literary efforts of boys are not usually sustained for any considerable length of time, whether at a high or at a low level. The remarkable thing about this first published book of Shelley's is that, at a time when he had ample occupation of other kinds, he not only finished writing what, bad as it is, sufficed to make a duodecimo volume of over 250 pages, but pursued his undertaking to the point of inducing Messrs. Wilkie and Robinson of Paternoster Row to publish it. It appears to have issued from the press in the spring of 1810; and there are still extant letters from the juvenile author treating of such practical questions as the bribing of reviewers, the distribution of copies of the book, and dealings with the publishers in regard to other literary ventures.

It has been alleged that this portentous first publication was not the unaided production of Shelley, but that he was assisted in the work by his cousin Harriet Grove, to whom he had devoted his boyish affections. The statement has not much probability, notwithstanding the fact that joint authorship was a familiar process to him. No doubt he worked with Thomas Medwin on the production of a lost work described by Medwin as a "Nightmare," and on that absurd poem *The Wandering Jew*, of which a good deal of Medwin's, but only a small fragment of Shelley's

part, has come down to us; and in the same year, 1810, appeared what may be called his first essay in published verse,—also said to have been a work of joint authorship. This was a volume of some sixty-four pages issued under the title of *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire*, of which no copy is known to the circle of Shelley's admirers. It is generally supposed that "Cazire" was Harriet Grove. The book was published by Stockdale of Pall Mall, who has recorded that, when about a hundred copies were in circulation, he discovered in the *Original Poetry* some verses which had previously been published as the work of Matthew Gregory Lewis. It seems that "Cazire" had played "Victor" false. The publisher communicated to Shelley his discovery; and the book was at once suppressed.

This episode in the poet's early literary life belongs to the autumn of 1810. In the Michaelmas term of that year, having matriculated in the previous April, he commenced residence at University College, Oxford. Here he at once fell in with Thomas Jefferson Hogg, to whom, apparently by sheer force of contrast, he was drawn into close companionship. Hogg, a *bon-vivant* and humourist, admired the purity of his friend's conversation and the sanctity of his life, amid the temptations of Oxford, and was greatly impressed by his unbounded generosity, his courtesy, and his remarkable love of children. In his *Life of Shelley* he claims a sort of partnership in the next work which has come down to us—Shelley's earliest extant volume of verse, the *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson*. Hogg says that a group of verses was at first indited seriously by Shelley, who showed printer's

proofs of them to his friend,—that the two together afterwards turned them into burlesques, and that the printer, who had commenced the work on Shelley's account, ended by publishing it in quarto at his own risk. It is a curious story; and the joke of attributing these very poor extravagances to the mad washerwoman who was then in confinement for an attempt on the life of George III. was a poor joke at the best. A small indelicacy, inserted by another hand in one of the poems, was omitted from some of the copies; and one of these Shelley had sent to his mother before the end of November 1810.

Before the turn of the year was published a second romance, *St. Irvyne; or, the Rosicrucian*, bearing the date 1811. This was issued by Stockdale, who appears to have "fitted it for the press." It is if anything worse than *Zastrozzi*, and probably of about the same period. So curiously are two stories mingled in its pages, and so frequent in it are locutions savouring of the German tongue, that it might well be a translation from two of the vile German romances of the time, welded together with little skill, and re-named. It is adorned with several compositions in verse which are echoes of Byron's early poems and of "Monk" Lewis's tawdry abominations. By this time his views had become a source of anxiety to his parents. Miss Grove, too, cooled down under the chilling influence of her eccentrically intellectual cousin's growing heterodoxy, and in the course of the year married a Mr. Helyar.

There is no evidence as to the precise period to which a lost poem entitled *An Essay on Love* is to be assigned; but Shelley sent a copy to

Godwin as a production of his "early youth," though later than the two romances. It may have been one of the private prints which Sir Bysshe is said to have caused to be done at Horsham. That this "little poem," as Shelley called it, is not forthcoming is strange enough; but not so the loss of his next substantive work, which was probably, by the joint efforts of Shelley and Hogg, completed in manuscript and in great part put through the press. This was a novel entitled *Leonora*, the printing of which was begun by Mr. Munday of Oxford, who, we are told, refused to proceed with it, in consequence of the discovery that Shelley "had interwoven his free notions throughout the work." Mr. Munday appears to have "strongly endeavoured to dissuade him from its publication altogether;" but the advice was disregarded; and Shelley afterwards took the copy to Mr. King, a printer at Abingdon, who had nearly completed the work, when an event occurred to arrest him.

During Shelley's brief sojourn at Oxford the natural bent of his intellect towards free enquiry and the hatred which his bitter school experiences had fostered in him for tyranny, moral, physical or intellectual, were not unnaturally directing his energies into a somewhat narrow channel of revolt. He had written a satirical poem which there is reason to suspect of having had a political character; he had been interested in the imprisonment of Peter Finnerty for a libel on Castlereagh,—so much interested that, beside subscribing to a fund for Finnerty's benefit, he wrote and published a poem (now introuvable) entitled *A Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things*, devising the proceeds of sale to the

maintenance of the man in prison. Further, he had written to Leigh Hunt, as Editor of *The Examiner*, proposing the establishment of a league for the mutual defence of free thought. And finally he wrote, and distributed in print a pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*, designed to put the orthodox on their mettle and provoke argument—to which, at this time, he was passionately addicted. It was this last performance that brought to a close, not only the *Leonora* undertaking, but also Shelley's college career, and his cordial relations with his father. *The Necessity of Atheism*, though anonymously issued, was known to be Shelley's. Questioned by the Master of University College as to his authorship of the obnoxious print, which he had disseminated with quixotic ostentation, he refused to answer. Hogg, similarly questioned, refused in like manner; and, on the 25th of March 1811, the two young undergraduates were summarily expelled from their college, not ostensibly for disseminating heretical views, but for contumacy. Mr. King of Abingdon, on hearing the news, desisted from the completion of *Leonora*; and Shelley's father forbade him the paternal mansion of Field Place, save on impracticable conditions.

In company with Hogg, Shelley proceeded, after the expulsion, to London; and there the two occupied the same lodgings. Before long, Hogg went northward, to his family, who resided at Norton, near Stockton-on-Tees. Shelley remained alone, visiting his sisters, who were at school at Clapham, and seeing something of the Grove family. A member of that family recollected that his literary cousin assiduously studied medicine and wrote a poem of

some fifty lines about a gorgeous *fête* at Carlton House which somewhat disturbed the Town by its extravagance in the summer of 1811. This poem Shelley got printed; and, although he amused himself by throwing copies into the carriages of visitors bound for Carlton House after the *fête*, no copy is at present known to exist.

The most momentous incident of this residence in London was his introduction to Harriett Westbrook, a school-fellow of his sisters, aged sixteen, pretty and intelligent, with a certain strain of eccentricity that had for him a factitious attraction. Harriett, whose father had kept a coffee-house in London and had now retired from business, had, either from natural bent or from external influence, come to regard herself as the victim of domestic persecution. She had a sister, Eliza, of some thirty years old, who stood to her in the place of a mother, and who showed a strangely warm interest in the expelled undergraduate with the heterodox views, baronetcy in prospect, and great property entailed upon him. Eliza brought her pretty young sister to call on Shelley, and sympathized in his pursuits during his residence in London. Nor did these attentions abate after his removal from the metropolis. While Shelley was staying at Cwm Elan with a cousin, it chanced that the Westbrooks were also in Wales. Eventually, Harriett was led to take the poet into her confidence in the matter of domestic oppression,—to throw herself on his protection,—and indeed to avow that she loved him and was ready to fly with him. Without really reciprocating her love, Shelley adopted the rash course of marrying her. It is true he

told her that the marital contract was not in his eyes morally binding any longer than it conduced to the happiness of the parties. Hence, as he already numbered among his heresies an adherence to the anti-matrimonial views of Godwin and his school, his act of knight-errantry in making Harriett his wife must not be regarded as a determination to consecrate his life if need be to her rescue from persecution, but as a concession of his theoretic objections to marriage, in favour of her comfort and good name for the time being, and of the legitimacy of her offspring.

Their first marriage took place at Edinburgh on the 28th of August 1811. He was nineteen years old and she sixteen. His father, who had been allowing him £200 a year, withdrew that support; and, although later on the grants of Mr. Shelley and Mr. Westbrook yielded an income of £400 a year, the fugitive boy and girl were in sore enough straits for a time. Besides Edinburgh they visited York and the Lakes, remaining at Keswick till February 1812. Godwin's teachings, meantime, were taking serious effect on Shelley. An unpublished novel which he wrote, or partially wrote, under the title of *Hubert Cauvin*, is probably lost. Its object was to develop the causes of the failure of the French Revolution to benefit mankind. Of a more practical undertaking the literary evidence remains. Determined to agitate in favour of Catholic Emancipation and the repeal of the Union Act, he wrote an address to the Irish, urging those measures. In February 1812 he proceeded with Harriett to Dublin, and there published two pamphlets, *An Address to the Irish People*, and *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. He also got printed in Dublin a broadside *Declaration of Rights*, starting with the then alarming assertion, "Government has no rights." His experiences in disseminating the two pamphlets, speaking in public, dining with Curran, and corresponding with Godwin, were such as to induce him soon to abandon the attempt to compass an immediate emancipation of the Roman Catholics and repeal of the Union; and we next find him crossing to Wales with his wife and her sister Eliza. From Nantgwillt, after a brief stay, they went to Lynmouth, on the north coast of Devon, and remained there from June to August.

The best part of a year's residence with Harriett had by this time fostered an affection for her which he had not felt at first. The young couple basked at once in the Devonshire sunshine, in the imaginary light of the countenance of one Elizabeth Hitchener, a Sussex schoolmistress with whom Shelley had become acquainted in 1811 while on a visit to his Uncle Pilfold at Cuckfield, and whom the two young people had agreed to regard as the embodiment of all that was noble and enlightened in woman. There was also the real light of William Godwin's keen intellect, with which Shelley was in touch through the medium of the post. Besides devising strange vehicles for the conveyance of copies of the *Declaration of Rights* and of a broadside ballad, *The Devil's Walk*, printed about this time, Shelley was

occupied with another defence of free investigation and free speech. How he divided his time between floating bottles and setting up balloons freighted with sedition, and writing his next pamphlet and some still unpublished poems, is not material; but it is to be noted that here on the borders of the Bristol Channel he produced his first really good prose essay and projected what still remains his most popular poem, *Queen Mab*. His pamphlet entitled *A Letter to Lord Ellenborough occasioned by the Sentence which he passed on Mr. D. I. Eaton, as Publisher of the Third Part of Paine's Age of Reason*, was well felt, well reasoned, and well expressed; and Mr. Syle, the Barnstaple printer employed by Shelley, only took fright at its inflammatory character and destroyed it when Shelley had succeeded in getting some copies into the hands of Hookham of Bond Street.

The residence in Devon came to an end through the rash employment of a man-servant to post up copies of the *Declaration* at Barnstaple. The man was sent to prison for that offence; and the Shelleys quitted Lynmouth somewhat precipitately after doing what was possible for the convicted agent's relief. Proceeding to Tremadoc in Carnarvonshire, they found a work of practical philanthropy to engage the interest of Shelley, the construction of an embankment of which the object was to reclaim from the sea a considerable piece of land. To obtain money for the cost of this undertaking he went to London, and there, at length, in October 1812, became personally acquainted with Godwin. The society of Miss Hitchener having become unbearable to the young couple,

Shelley with some difficulty shook her off, *per contrâ* adding to his circle of friends the vegetarian enthusiast Frank Newton and his family. It was in this year, also, that Shelley first met Thomas Love Peacock.

Returning to Wales, the Shelleys took up their quarters at an isolated house called Tanyrallt. Here the round of Shelley's life of study and ministration to the wants of the poor was suddenly broken in upon by a mysterious night attack on the house and its inmates, the source of much controversy. This took place at about the time when Shelley had completed the nine sections of *Queen Mab*, February 1813.

A poem of which "The Past, the Present, and the Future" can be said even by the author to be "the grand and comprehensive topics," naturally rounds an epoch in his life. Here, at twenty years of age, the genius of practical realization which had made a full-blown author of the Eton boy, made a full-blown poet of the youthful husband—though not a great poet: Shelley the great poet was to come of other influences than those which had shaped his work up to the completion of *Queen Mab*. Still, in his way, he had by the beginning of 1813 achieved the ambitious feat of applying to the entire scheme of man's life and history his social and philosophical conceptions, and reducing the series of thoughts, some of them original, most of them assimilated, to an ordered and fairly well-knit whole, constructed in competent blank verse, and written in nervous, direct, sonorous English. This poem he proceeded to weight with a mass of controversial notes from the leading revolutionary authors of the epoch; and, unable to find a bold enough

publisher, he caused it to be printed on his own account for private distribution. This was all done in the course of 1813. By the spring of that year, he and Harriett had been again to Ireland, this time visiting Killarney and Cork, and had returned to London for Harriett's confinement. Their first child was born in June 1813, and was called Ianthe Eliza. Removing afterwards to Bracknell, they became intimate with Mrs. Newton's sister, Mrs. Boinville, and her daughter Mrs. Turner—Cornelia Turner. Shelley pursued the study of the Italian classics and the practice of vegetarianism, travelled a good deal, got further and further into debt through his own impulsive liberality and his wife's extravagance, and wrote a dialogue between "Eusebes" and "Theosophus," entitled *A Refutation of Deism*, which was published anonymously in 1814. This discussion between a christian and a deist embodied the results of Shelley's latest readings in philosophy, and marks a considerable intellectual advance upon his own portion of the *Queen Mab* notes. It was in fact intended to refute the christian system.

The furnished house at Windsor which the Shelley household occupied at the end of 1813 and beginning of 1814 was now becoming the scene of complete unhappiness. On the 24th of March the young people went through a Church of England marriage ceremony, apparently to remove doubts as to the legitimacy of possible male issue, and facilitate the raising of money on ruinous *post-obit* bonds. Certainly the cause of the new marriage was not increased affection; for Shelley and his wife were no longer in sympathy: she had ceased to lend herself

with girlish facility to his wildly practical schemes for the regeneration of mankind, and even went counter to him in many ways, while her sister Eliza, still of the household, was a source of perennial irritation. Harriett's attitude at length drove Shelley more and more to the society of Mrs. Boinville and Mrs. Turner. The estrangement gradually hardened; an attempt of Shelley's to effect a reconciliation failed; and at length he betook himself to London, Harriett taking up her residence at Bath.

And now came into play the force which had not been reckoned for when the ill assorted marriage was brought about. Poor Harriett, whose heart had fluttered into such affection as it was capable of when the fascinating young enthusiast's gaze had dwelt kindly upon her, was now to learn into how grave an error she had fallen when she threw herself upon his too yielding generosity. Not hers to keep pace with the growing powers of his intellect or to fill the widening void which represented in his rapid developement the craving for spiritual companionship! During the transition between his abnormal boyhood and his intellectual, moral and spiritual maturity, realization constantly overtook conception; and his yearning after the good, the beautiful and the true was not directed by sufficient knowledge of the universe and experience of human passion to make his own clever performances pall upon his appetite for creation. In that period of transition, the new experience of daily life in the closest intimacy with a bright pink and white beauty whose intelligence was alive, untrammelled, and engaged also by this novel life of intimacy, meant

much for a high-strung nature like Shelley's; nor was it difficult for the doomed girl to take her blithe small part in his various undertakings if only for the spice of queerness in them. She, too, could play at vegetarianism and write of "slaughtered fowls" to be provided for a visitor not of that persuasion. She too could skip about Dublin secreting printed pamphlets in places where perchance they might be found and read. She too could join in the fun of launching bottles and boxes on the Bristol Channel to convey revolutionary doctrines none knew whither in the shape of *Declarations of Rights*. And she too in her girlish vigour could flit from place to delightful place in these green islands as the exigencies of her fitful Ariel's circumstances might dictate. "But childhood is a fleeting span;" and at length came the ever-present discomforts of pregnancy, and the pains of motherhood; and she who was not sufficiently endowed with the devotedness characteristic of true womanhood to nurse her first-born child even at her husband's urgent wish, slid by sure degrees away from her place in his life. It was not for her to cast off the tyranny of that Eliza who was her fate, much less the tyranny of custom when the novelty of eccentricity had worn off. Now, if Ariel was to hold her, it must be, not by the fascination of a presence becoming inscrutable or by the powers of an intellect soaring ever further beyond her narrow ken, but by wasting the substance of his heirs on carriage-keeping and wet-nurses, superfluous decoration of her person, her house and her table, and other common-place extravagances. For these toys she did not offer a great sympathetic affection; for, poor child, she had it

not to offer. Blinded to the true situation and issue, she did not even offer the best she had; but, reckless or forgetful,—who shall say?—ignored the warning which Shelley gave her in accepting her proffered person, that to him the marriage state which he conferred on her as a free gift stood not in the light of a contract binding the parties to a life of misery.

Had he devoted himself to a life of misery rather than leave his wife he would not have done more than many men and women have done for the sake of their children if for no other sake. But the coil was complicated by a conviction which he entertained that she was unfaithful to him; and in that conviction he let the breach widen. Harriett denied the charge; and no one has a right to assert it as more than a conviction of Shelley's.

Probably poor Harriett thought she might as well spend her husband's money on what he considered frivolities as let him bestow it on William Godwin, as he was doing at this time. However that may be, the relations between Shelley and the Godwin household were destined to be disastrous enough for her; for here it was that the force unreckoned for was to be liberated. In the summer of 1814 the young daughter of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, returning home from a stay in Scotland, engaged Shelley's attention. Though not yet seventeen years old, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin had a strong character and intellect and a receptive, serious nature. She had inherited much womanly charm from her mother; and her sensitive pale face and eager hazel eyes, surmounted by an ample brow and golden hair,

combined with a thrilling voice and earnest demeanour to make her peculiarly attractive to Shelley. Her very parentage stimulated his imagination; and, in a word, he fell hopelessly in love with her. Mary, who was unhappy with her stepmother, found great relief and comfort in the society of the young disciple of her father,—poet, philosopher and practical philanthropist; she resisted for some time the natural course of a sympathy so vivid and uncommon in its elements; but finally, acting upon the “anti-matrimonial” tradition of her parents, and convinced of the forfeiture of Harriett’s claims, she consented to unite her fate with Shelley’s.

Harriett was summoned to London and told by Shelley of this new turn in the wheel of her fortune. Whatever the domestic events which had tended to this situation, it is certain that Shelley’s avowal of his determination to leave his wife altogether was a great shock to her, and resulted in a serious illness. But he was not to be moved from his fixed purpose, while duly providing for Harriett, to cast in his lot with Mary. On the 28th of July 1814, accompanied by Claire Clairmont, the daughter of Mrs. Godwin by a former marriage, Shelley and Mary fled from London to Dover, crossed the channel in an open boat, and proceeded to Paris, and thence to Switzerland. At Brunnen on the Lake of Lucerne Shelley began to write a tale entitled *The Assassins*, the extant fragment of which, though almost as wild as *Zastrozzi*, has the true ring of the mintage of creative genius. He had expanded into a new creature. The full exercise of the emotional nature had already endowed him with the faculty of vivifying even

what was in conception grotesque ; and the persons of this romantic fragment live and move. It was not for nothing that Shelley, his whole being aroused into new emotional life, had passed through Europe just after the battle of Waterloo and seen with his own eyes the devastations caused by a great war. It was not for nothing that he came face to face with mountain and lake and rapid and mighty river. His new experiences of man and nature were made at a fortunate moment, impressing him with large conceptions and confirming the bent of his faculties towards the liberation of his kind. The river navigation whereby the poet and his two companions returned from Brunnen homewards gave him a great opportunity of seeing fine scenery. Passing by the Reuss to Lauffenburg, and thence to Mumpf in a leaky canoe, they proceeded to Basle and descended the Rhine to Mayence and Cologne,—thence by way of Cleves, Rotterdam, and Marshuys to Gravesend, where they arrived on the 13th of September 1814.

During the rest of the year lack of funds was keenly felt. In October Shelley attempted to continue *The Assassins*, but gave up the enterprise, constrained by untoward circumstances. In November Harriett bore him a son, Charles Bysshe ; and there were times when, with the material and moral anxieties of two households on his hands, he was so hardly pressed by creditors that he had to keep in hiding and be separated from Mary. Unfavourable as the conditions were for literary production, he did complete one task before the end of 1814, namely, a criticism of a book by Hogg called *Memoirs of Prince Alexey Haimatoff*. This

paper appeared anonymously in *The Critical Review* for December.

At the turn of the year there “ shone deliverance ” so far as ways and means were concerned. Sir Bysshe died full of years and gout, and leaving a large amount of money. The poet became the immediate heir to the baronetcy and the entailed estates ; and he was enabled to effect an arrangement with his father whereby he eventually came into possession of £1,000 a year, of which he allowed Harriett £200. In order to make himself more useful to the poor, he now studied medicine and surgery at a hospital in London, at a time, too, when his own health had become indifferent. Again in the summer of 1815 he visited Devonshire ; and at last he and Mary settled at Bishopsgate, near Windsor Park, whence they set off with Thomas Love Peacock and Charles Clairmont to explore the Thames, ascending it as far as Lechlade. On their return, mainly in the seclusion of Windsor Great Park, he composed his first truly great poem, *Alastor*. Coloured by the sombre experiences through which he had passed and especially by the state of physical suffering into which he had fallen,—a state not free from the sense of approaching death,—the poem depicted a morbid character, and one whom he recognized and lamented as morbid ; but the large vision of man and nature, the intense feeling for phases of the inner life, the exquisite gift of landscape painting in words, and the perfect music and mastery of blank verse are all furthest removed from morbid, and render the gift of *Alastor* precious for all time.

Let the censorious say what they will of

Shelley's relations with the two women to whom, successively, he gave his name, one thing is certain,—that the world is the richer for his contact with Mary Godwin. Harriett Westbrook had not the energy, the intellect, or the tact to awaken his highest nature. It was not her good hap to inspire in him a grand passion. It was Mary Godwin's—"a sudden, violent, irresistible, uncontrollable passion"; and she had the energy, the intellect and the tact to call the inmost spirit of poesy into play where it slumbered amid the complex forces that went to make up that wondrous being. At an age when Harriett was aspiring to soar out of her companionship in Shelley's unworldly ways into a region of coaches and liveries, costly dresses and plate, gaiety and tinsel and frivolity, Mary was writing *Frankenstein*,—a work which obviously owes something to that same contact of spirits, but which is assuredly as much her work as Shelley's poems are his,—a work which inspired Shelley with a respect for her gifts only surpassed by his affection for her person. Of that respect ample evidence exists in the Preface which he wrote and in the short review of the work, published after his death.

The anti-matrimonial philosopher Godwin, though still drawing upon Shelley's resources for his needs, was in great dudgeon with the young couple who had acted upon his theories; and their chief friends now were Hogg and Peacock. Late in the year Shelley was preparing *Alastor* and a few minor poems for the press of Hamilton of Weybridge, from which the little volume issued early in 1816. On the 24th of January Mary's first son was born.

They called him William in honour of Godwin, whose hard attitude did not prevent Shelley from esteeming him to be "glorious," though it was among the causes which induced the next decisive step—that of seeking a residence abroad. Early in May they started with the infant William and Claire Clairmont for Geneva, passing through Paris. Shelley and Mary were not aware that Claire was already among the many young lady intimates of Byron: nevertheless it was this circumstance that induced her to persuade Shelley to take her to Switzerland. Here, at Sécheron on Lake Lemman, Byron and Shelley met. They boated together on the Lake, and saw each other constantly; and there can be no doubt that the contact with so great an intellectual energy must have had a powerful effect on Shelley. He and Mary visited Chamouni together; and the chief poetic outcome of this second visit to Switzerland is to be found in his *Mont Blanc* (*Lines written in the Vale of Chamouni*), and the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. He wrote some powerful descriptive letters to Peacock; and Mary kept a bright diary of incidents and impressions.

On the shores of Lake Lemman, "Victor" had an opportunity of making some sort of restitution for the freedom which "Cazire" had taken with "Monk" Lewis's property. On the 20th of August Lewis, who was staying with Byron, indited a codicil to his will, framed to give protection to his negroes in the West Indies,—a codicil which reads as if it had been written under the influence of Shelley's enthusiastic philanthropy. At all events the

terms of the codicil appear to have been discussed by Shelley, Byron, and Lewis in conclave; and Lewis's signature was witnessed by both of the great poets. This was not long before the end of the second visit to Switzerland, the record of which, the joint work of Shelley and Mary, was embodied in a little volume entitled *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland: with Letters descriptive of a Sail round the Lake of Geneva, and of the Glaciers of Chamouni*. It was not till the close of 1817 that this volume was published, though Shelley and Mary were back in England by the beginning of September 1816.

The intervening period was eventful. Not to speak of the negotiations in which Byron associated him with Mr. Kinnaird, for the publication of *The Prisoner of Chillon*, *Manfred*, and Canto III of *Childe Harold*, there was plenty to occupy the poet's mind, and harrow his feelings. While living at Bath he was startled by the tone of a letter from Fanny Godwin, Mary's half sister, the elder daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft. Fearing that this amiable girl, to whom Shelley was warmly attached, contemplated following her mother's footsteps in an attempt on her own life, he hurried to Swansea, but only in time to find Fanny already dead at the inn there.

This was early in October. In the following month, his health broken and his spirit utterly disquieted, he was further harassed by the disappearance of Harriett, whom he sought in vain, until at length, on the 10th of December 1816, she was found drowned in the Serpentine. When she had come to know that there was no

hope of her husband's return to her, she had formed other ties: these in turn had failed her; her family had turned against her; and she had sought at length a refuge of which she had spoken often and complacently in her bright eccentric youth,—a refuge from such misery as a girl of twenty has to her lot when all the hopes of life have failed, and she has nothing to look forward to but an unhonoured, unsoothed, and unprotected motherhood. The rash generosity of Shelley aged nineteen had found him out when at twenty-three he found his poor little worldly, ambitious, disappointed wife, deserted by another, dishonoured, and dead. How should he be otherwise than smitten through with remorse, even though he did not regard himself as the author of this wretched coil and its tragic untying?

Whatever the quality and nature of his remorse, it did not prevent him—how, or why, should it?—from giving way to the pressure immediately brought to bear upon him by philosopher Godwin to make restitution and satisfaction by marrying Mary. Having done this somewhat unwillingly on the 30th of December 1816, he next sought to recover custody of the motherless Ianthe and Charles, whom he had left with Harriett at her own request. Again the Nemesis of his youthful rashness pursued him. The Westbrooks withheld the children from his care; and, on an appeal to the Court of Chancery, Lord Chancellor Eldon decided against him. While Shelley was busy about this matter in London, Mary was with Claire at Bath, where, on the 12th of January 1817, the trouble which had been maturing since the renewal of Claire's intimacy with the "Pilgrim of Eternity" had as

prosperous an issue as might be, in the birth of the lovely little girl afterwards known as Allègra.

Shelley meanwhile was getting more and more friendly with Leigh Hunt, through whom he became acquainted with Hazlitt, Keats, and Horace Smith. In March 1817 he moved his composite family to Marlow, in Buckinghamshire; and within a few days, as if settled there for ever, he issued a remarkable pamphlet under the pseudonym of "The Hermit of Marlow"—*A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote throughout the Kingdom*. It is a well-reasoned and temperate proposal for organizing a *plébiscite*, towards the cost of which he offered to contribute £1,000. With the issue of this pamphlet, Messrs. C. and J. Ollier became Shelley's publishers; and he had a pretty brisk correspondence with them during this year 1817. There was plenty to distract his mind from the contemplation of late sombre events and the annoyances of the Chancery suit. His poetic activity was very high: not only did he write a considerable part of *Rosalind and Helen* and the fragments of *Prince Athanase*; but, as he floated in his boat on the Thames or haunted the woods of Bisham, he was occupied with the longest and perhaps the most ambitious of all his poems, *Laon and Cythna*, a work full of noble poetry and great "humanitarian enthusiasm" without being a great poem. In revolutionary dogma it goes beyond *Queen Mab*; and in order to startle the intelligent world into attention and get them to weigh the difference between crimes against nature and crimes against convention, Shelley chose to make his hero and heroine brother and sister. While the work was still in progress, on the 3rd of September 1817,

Mary gave birth to a daughter, Clara; and in that same month the preface to her *Frankenstein* was written by her husband, though the work was published with the next year's date.

On the 6th of November the nation was thrown into agitation by the death of the Princess Charlotte in child-birth; and on this event Shelley, again using the pseudonym "The Hermit of Marlow," issued in the form of a pamphlet *An Address to the People*, with the epigraph "We pity the plumage but forget the dying bird." Its object was to protest against the execution for treason of Brandreth, Turner and Ludlam, which took place the day after the Princess's death. The wider and deeper protests of *Laon and Cythna* were not to be uttered without a somewhat harassing controversy. The Olliers, having the fear of the public and the Attorney-General before their eyes, demanded, after the book was printed and in part circulated, that it should be materially altered. Every passage in which the hero and heroine appeared as brother and sister was to be modified, and many antitheistic passages were to be softened down. Shelley strongly protested against the delay and enforced mutilation of his book, but at last gave in. By cancelling twenty-six leaves beside the title-page, the primeval loves of the brother and sister were transformed into the loves of two unrelated people brought up in one house, and *Laon and Cythna* became *The Revolt of Islam*. Shelley at this time believed himself to be a dying man, and was greatly in earnest about his poetic message of awakening. His failure first to get the poem duly published as written, and secondly to startle the public by it in its altered

form, disappointed him keenly. The collapse of his endeavour to regain possession of Ianthe and Charles preyed also on his mind, for William and Clara might be taken too; and at length, convinced that England was no longer any place for him, he determined to put into execution a scheme which he had for some time entertained, namely to seek a more congenial climate and surroundings in that "paradise of Exiles, Italy." At the beginning of 1818, though his health was very bad, and he had an attack of ophthalmia, he busied himself in translating some of the Hymns of Homer. The day fixed on for the farewell to England was the 12th of March 1818; by the 4th of April Shelley, Mary, Claire, and the three infants had reached Milan; thence they passed to Como and Pisa, and, proceeding to Leghorn, fell in with Mr. and Mrs. Gisborne and Henry Reveley, Mrs. Gisborne's son by a former marriage.

The amiable and accomplished Maria Gisborne was an old friend of Mary's parents; and the time went pleasantly at Leghorn, whence, however, the exiles passed in the hottest weather to the Baths of Lucca. Shelley finished, at his wife's request, his eclogue *Rosalind and Helen*, translated the *Banquet* of Plato into English as transparently clear as it is gracious and characteristic, and wrote a portion of an introductory essay on the literature, arts, and manners of the Athenians. Byron's little Allègra was now placed in her father's custody. In August 1818 Shelley went to see him at Venice: they rode together daily on the Lido; and Shelley was again greatly impressed by his "eagle spirit," though much disliking his way of life. Byron's villa

at Este, "I Cappuccini," was lent to Shelley and his family for a while; and there he drew the immortal portrait of Byron, shorn of all that was coarse and brutal in him, and those mingled reminiscences of his own story, which we meet in alternate beauty and terror in *Julian and Maddalo*. There, too, fresh sorrow was on his heels: the infant Clara was ailing seriously; her parents took her to Venice for advice; and, before relief could be got, the little sufferer, on the 24th of September, died in her mother's arms. This was a most severe blow to the young mother, who was passionately attached to her children, and saw in Clara a strong likeness to Shelley.

The *Lines written among the Euganean Hills* belong to this sojourn at Este; and Shelley was contemplating a tragedy (*Tasso*), of which but a fragment is extant, a lyrical drama based on the Book of Job, and his great work *Prometheus Unbound*, of which the first act was almost completed before the stay at Este came to an end early in November 1818. During a short halt at Rome on the way to Naples, he wrote the fragment of a tale called *The Coliseum*, peculiarly interesting for the essay in self-portraiture which it embodies, and recorded his impressions of the eternal city in letters which are happily preserved. At Naples that mysterious melancholy which induced the composition of the *Stanzas written in Dejection near Naples* did not prevent the exercise of his superb gifts as a descriptive letter writer; and the accounts of his visits to Vesuvius, Pompeii, Præstum, and other places, remain to us as models of all that is excellent and delightful in this kind. In the spring of 1819, near

about the time of his return to Rome, a thin volume containing *Rosalind and Helen*, the *Lines written among the Euganean Hills*, the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, and the *Ozymandias* sonnet, was published in London. He now revelled in the atmosphere, climate, and surroundings that he found at Rome. The antique statues and architectural monuments impressed him profoundly; and among the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, overgrown as they were with shrubs and weeds and flowers, the poetic work given out kept pace with the splendour of the inspiration; for here the second and third acts of his *Prometheus* were completed. The scheme, indeed, was realized: the work as designed closes with the end of Act III; and it is only to the unexpended energy of a supreme effort in his creative life, and to the inextinguishable vitality of that optimism with which he regarded the destinies of man, that we owe that illustrious lyric achievement the fourth act of *Prometheus Unbound*, written after an interval of poignant sorrow and of large creation in another line.

While still at Rome Shelley obtained a manuscript account of that grim series of domestic transactions which took place in the family of Count Cenci during the pontificate of Clement VIII, transactions which ended in the murder of the murderous count and the execution of his wife, son, and daughter Beatrice. The portrait of a beautiful young woman, known as that of Beatrice Cenci, and in Shelley's days attributed to Guido Reni, combined with the awful tale of oppression and parricidal vengeance to stimulate Shelley's imagination in the highest degree. He saw in Count Cenci

tyranny embodied in its foulest form, violating all that was most sacred; and in Beatrice he saw beauty and womanly dignity and innocence stung by that bestial tyranny into an attitude of overwhelming command, and impelled to compass the death of her destroyer even though he had given her life. Shelley did not defend directly or indirectly the deed of Beatrice and her accomplices, any more than he defended the bloody excesses of the French Revolution; on the contrary, he condemned in unmistakable terms the act which made Beatrice a tragic character; but he saw in the unutterable crimes of Cenci and the tremendous retaliation of his victims the true elements of a tragic coil and conflict such as the great Greek tragedians were wont to embody in those works with which he lived so much. He realized that to read the passions liberated in this conflict was to learn much concerning the secrets of the human heart; and he saw that, by making the actors in this sixteenth century tragedy live again on the modern stage, those wasted passions might be gathered into a possession of price for all time. The realization of what had passed in that sombre Cenci palace which he had visited charged his receptive imagination with electric turmoil. To the evolution of order from the troubled mass he brought a ripened judgment fresh from the great creative work of realizing a programme too vast for any but the highest genius to have succeeded in bringing into a single action; for it is the whole life of man and the final triumph of suffering and resistant good over tyrannous and seemingly omnipotent ill that his *Prometheus* depicts. That achievement had given

keenness to his vision and strength to his will; and he saw before him as in a moving pageant the action of what was about to become the one great ideal tragedy of his time and country, the single tragic drama of the first order since Shakespeare.

Not at once, or at one series of sittings, did he accomplish his work of lessening the actual horror of the record and increasing its ideal horror, and so exalting his theme and his characters into an impressiveness not to be surpassed. About the middle of May he began the writing of his tragedy; but its progress was arrested after the lapse of some three weeks by the bitterest sorrow of his own life. His son William was taken dangerously ill. For sixty hours by the little bedside he kept unbroken watch, absorbed in the impending loss of his child. On the 7th of June 1819 the little fellow died. Almost heartbroken himself, and with the aggravation of his wife's frantic grief, he left Rome and took Mary to a house between Leghorn and Monte Nero, Villa Valsovano, to be near Mrs. Gisborne. There, while that charming lady ministered in motherly fashion to the bereaved and suffering Mary, Shelley threw himself once more into that best of solacing worlds, the world of ideal creation, and not only finished his tragedy, but accomplished the arduous task of driving it through the press, notwithstanding all the obstacles that an Italian printing-house and compositors could put in his way.

The Cenci finished and dedicated to Leigh Hunt in a handsome large octavo volume, the Olliers instructed to publish it on its arrival in England, and Peacock besought to secure its

representation on the London stage, Shelley's mind was again free. Passing with Mary to Florence, he there set down in notes his delicate and fresh impressions of the Pitti and Uffizi antique sculptures. Throughout the greater part of 1819, and especially between his arrival at Florence and the birth of his son Percy Florence on the 12th of November, he must have done much lonely wandering and composition, as the mere mass of his work of this time testifies. Under the title *Philosophical View of Reform* he wrote a prose investigation of the causes of popular distress in England—a considerable work though left unfinished when he took up *The Cenci* in May. The "Manchester Massacre," as he called it, goaded him into the utterance of *The Mask of Anarchy*. The mental attitude of Wordsworth and the news that, on the eve of *Peter Bell's* publication, John Hamilton Reynolds had produced a very witty spurious *Peter Bell*, combined to awaken Shelley's sense of the ludicrous, and stung him into attacking the intellectual wastefulness of his great contemporary in a satire which he called *Peter Bell the Third*. Of that unique satiric drama the *Cyclops* of Euripides he made a delightful poetic rendering. Some of his highest moods were recorded in the *Ode to the West Wind*, the stanzas *To a Skylark*, and the *Ode to Liberty*; and the delicate beauty of his imagination found expression in *The Sensitive Plant*, *The Cloud*, and *Arethusa*, not to mention other minor poems and fragments. At length the wondrous year's work was crowned by that "tumult of mighty harmonies" where English song has soared into its highest altitudes and

purest skies, the fourth act of *Prometheus Unbound*.

The course of his life and occupations from the stay at Este, where he began *Prometheus*, to the end of December 1819, when he finished the fourth act at Florence, should suffice to account for the flaw which unquestionably exists in the unity of the poem. Far fuller of great poetry and high thought than *The Cenci*, it yet leaves the tragedy in possession of the field as the one work of Shelley which, while dealing with a theme of the first order on a great scale and in a great manner, maintains a flawless unity of form and conception. Although *The Cenci* was interrupted in its flow for a brief period of overwhelming anguish, it had the good hap to be, itself, one of the most serious interruptions in the composition of *Prometheus*.

The Florentine winter tried the ailing health of Shelley; and he moved to Pisa, where he had the advantage of water which suited him and the advice of the physician Vaccà. By March 1820 the sheets of *The Cenci* had reached England, and the work had been duly published. The issue of *Prometheus* with a collection of his best lyric poems next engaged his attention; and his wife was dividing her time between her child, the cultivation of her own mind by Greek and other studies, and the transcription of those priceless poems in the production of which she took so sympathetic and serviceable an interest. In the summer Shelley and Mary passed some time at the house of the Gisbornes at Leghorn, while that worthy couple were on a visit to London. It was from her own house that the fortunate lady received the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*, of

immortal memory; and it was there that Shelley made his fascinating translation of the *Hymn to Mercury* called Homer's. It was August before *Prometheus* had come from Marchant's press in London and had been issued by the Olliers with *The Sensitive Plant*, the *Ode to Heaven*, *Ode to the West Wind*, *Ode to Liberty*, *The Cloud*, the stanzas *To a Skylark*, and other pieces. The poet and his wife were now at the Baths of San Giuliano; and, after a short excursion of Shelley's to Monte San Pellegrino, he wrote that radiant fantasia *The Witch of Atlas*—a poem which has more than the octave stanza and sustained brilliancy and rapidity in common with the *Hymn to Mercury*, and which was thrown off in three days. Shortly afterwards, being much amused with the green-bag proceedings against Queen Caroline, and provokingly disturbed by the grunting of pigs at San Giuliano fair while he was reading his *Ode to Liberty*, he composed the satiric drama *Edipus Tyrannus, or Swell-foot the Tyrant*, in which the green-bag proceedings are grotesquely rendered, and a Chorus of the Swinish Multitude duly guards the interests of Liberty.

Returning to Pisa in the autumn, without Claire, who had taken a governess's situation at Florence, they formed an agreeable circle of friends, among whom were Mr. Tighe (the son of the authoress of *Psyche*), Lady Mountcashell, Count Taaffe, Prince Mavrocordato, the Improvvisatore Sgricci, Thomas Medwin, who reappeared in the Shelley circle as a captain of Dragoons, having seen service in India, and Francesco Pacchiani, who had been a University Professor at Pisa. Shelley's qualities in society

were of a very rare kind. Although he did not like a crowd, and became reserved among numbers, he was joyous, vivacious, and eloquent amid a small gathering of those he liked. If argument arose, he was "clear, logical, and earnest in supporting his own views; attentive, patient, and impartial while listening to those on the adverse side." Hence he was more or less idolized by a select few at Pisa.

Horace Smith had charged himself with the anonymous publication of *Œdipus*, which, not issued by the Olliers, had a brief and disastrous career in December 1820. Attacked at once by virtuous persons who saw ruin beneath its heterodox levity, it was allowed by Smith to be suppressed; and Shelley's mind passed on to higher things. Pacchiani introduced to the poet the Contessina Emilia Viviani, a motherless and most beautiful girl, whose father, marrying a second time, had consigned her to the charge of some nuns at Pisa. Shelley, struck by her great beauty and intelligence and moved by pity for what he regarded as her oppression, proceeded after his manner to robe her charming person in the radiant vestments of his own transcendent conceptions of physical, moral, and spiritual beauty. To say that he fell in love with her would be to accuse him wrongly of faithlessness to his wife. Still she occupied in his attentions a place which Mary, though on friendly and pleasant terms with Emilia, can scarcely have failed to begrudge her; and the superhuman strain of song which owed its origin ostensibly to Emilia was one on which the poet's widow maintained to the end a certain reserve. It was in fact Shelley yearning after ideal beauty and such flawless union and

sympathy as perhaps no man and woman ever found, Shelley aspiring to set the passion of love in a rarer poetic atmosphere than any previously known to the realms of verse, Shelley and his ideal world and that world's ideal denizens, that formed the subject and inspiration of *Epipsyichidion*. It was not Emilia Viviani who inspired that high strain, although it was she who for the moment served the poet as the Pygmalion's image upon which he clothed his subtle thoughts and soaring aspirations. But how should Mary, with the Pisan surroundings there in evidence, withdraw herself from the actual and enter with him into the new rare world of platonic conceptions irradiated by his own ætherial genius? And who shall blame if she did not quite like his having written a poem in which facts and phases of his life are called up in a kind of sublime astronomic pageant, transfigured, and translated into such song as no man had uttered before? But, whatever may be the natural and appropriate attitude for the poet's wife, there is no valid excuse for those critics who blame Shelley for writing, about love and the soul, a poem of which some part of the machinery leaves the reader at fault as to what particular passages in his life have entered by transfusion into the fabric of his verse. It is enough that *Epipsyichidion* is an unbroken strain sung in the seventh heaven of pure poesy. Anyone whose curiosity demands that all the biographical bearings of a poem shall be clear to their apprehension should eschew the ideal world of Shelley's poetry and seek something more of the earth, earthy.

Those who desire to learn something of the

workings of a poet's mind may gather more from Shelley's next considerable work than can be learnt of his life from *Epipsychidion*. That poem was written and re-written and despatched to Mr. Charles Ollier for publication by the middle of February 1821; and, while it was on its way to fulfil its immediate destiny of making another fruitless appeal to contemporary readers, the poet, who had dropped for the moment out of the blue platonian heights in which he had been airing and sunning his spirit's wings, entered the lists of controversy to defend Poetry against the misprisions of Thomas Love Peacock, whose *Four Ages of Poetry* had appeared in *Ollier's Literary Miscellany*. In February and March was written what exists of the posthumous *Defence of Poetry*; and, though not completed, the essay remains a model of prose expression, full of vigorous and piercing thought, and showing us as much as we can well expect to see of the poetic mind in the exercise of its high functions.

While Shelley was engaged on these two works in verse and prose he was growing in friendship—for his friendships grew rapidly—with Edward Ellerker Williams and the lady of his choice,—that Jane of whom Shelley said that the lady in *The Sensitive Plant* was a “pure anticipated cognition.” She was by all accounts lovely, engaging and intelligent,—the “Magnetic Lady” who mesmerized the suffering poet free from pain, the “Miranda” to whom “Ariel” sent the historic guitar, the sympathetic friend who received from him several of those elusively delicate minor poems produced in his last year of work; and Williams, sailor first and then soldier, who had been intro-

duced by Captain Medwin, was a frank, fearless, sea and river loving Briton, with enough intellectual distinction, and ample understanding and capacity, to make him a congenial companion for Shelley. As boys they had been at Eton together, Williams being a year or two younger than Shelley; but whether they remembered each other is not recorded. During the summer of 1821, when the Shelleys were again in residence at the Baths of San Giuliano, the Williamses and their two children were staying in a villa four miles away; and the intervening space was passed in both directions by means of a boat on the canal connected with the Serchio.

In the course of April Shelley had heard of the death of Keats, which had taken place on the 23rd of February 1821. As he ascertained and realized some of the circumstances and misunderstood or magnified others, his appreciation of all that was best in Keats's work mingled with a flaming indignation against his calumniators; and during the first half of June he was pouring forth those feelings in the immortal death-song which many competent judges regard as his masterpiece. *Adonais, an Elegy on the Death of John Keats*, was sent to the press at Pisa, to be printed "with the types of Didot," on the 16th of June: in a month's time it was beautifully printed in quarto and done up in a tasteful sky-blue wrapper; and in due course it was consigned to Messrs. Ollier for publication. Less than a month after the completion of this labour of love which he did not care to entrust to other hands on its passage through the press, Shelley was visiting Byron at Ravenna, where that "Pythian of the Age," as he had just been dubbed in *Adonais*, was then in residence.

Here Shelley learnt that a villainous accusation affecting his relations with Claire had been circulated; and it was not without characteristic cynicism that "Maddalo" made this communication to "Julian." Shocked beyond measure at this diabolical calumny, Shelley and Mary would fain have withdrawn into some island solitude such as the poet had painted in his *Epipsychidion* as the resort to which Emilia and her platonic lover were to flee. In default, they did their best to enlarge the inmost circle of Pisan friendships. It was arranged that Byron should migrate thither with his Countess Guiccioli; and the Shelleys, employed to find them a residence, selected the Palazzo Lanfranchi. Hunt was to come out from England and make his fortune in editing *The Liberal*, which was projected as a joint periodical production, verse and prose; and if Hogg, Peacock, and Horace Smith could be induced to join the circle, life would be almost endurable.

In September, Shelley journeyed with Mary and Claire to Spezzia, to find out what sort of a summer residence might be got on the coast thereabout. This was a holiday trip for Mary, who had just finished her historical romance *Castruccio, Prince of Lucca* (afterwards published as *Valperga*), with which Shelley was greatly delighted. The trip was in all respects a success. Meantime Prince Ypsilanti's proclamation of a free Greece, which had been issued in the spring, was producing stirring events. The current details of the Greek revolution of 1821, and the close companionship of Shelley with Ypsilanti's cousin Mavrocordato, inflamed at once the poet's ardent and reverent love for Hellas and his unquenchable devotion to the cause of

freedom. By the end of October he had practically finished a play on the subject, modelled in a general sense after the *Persæ* of Æschylus: the good companionable and serviceable Williams, who was thoroughly alive to the greatness of his poet friend, took Mrs. Shelley's place as amanuensis; and, as he made the fair copy, Shelley went carefully over it and finally fitted it for the press, as he had done with Mary's transcript of *The Mask of Anarchy* before sending it to Leigh Hunt. Thus written and revised, *Hellas, a Lyrical Drama*, was despatched on the 11th of November to Mr. Charles Ollier, to be "sent instantly to the printer," and to be published with a few notes and the stanzas *Written on hearing the News of the Death of Napoleon*. The poet's relations with his publishers were by this time becoming somewhat strained. Shelley complained of the difficulties raised about sending him proofs of his works; and his letters to Mr. Charles Ollier show a sense of grievance on the score of general neglect on the part of the agent for his principal's interests and wishes. By January 1822 Byron was established at Pisa with his household; and Shelley, who was constantly with him, riding, pistol-shooting, billiard-playing, and so on, had ample opportunity to realize the contrast between the attentions the two poets received from their respective publishers. In the middle of January he was still without any proofs of *Hellas*; and when at last copies of the completed book reached him in April he did not so much as know to what friend he was indebted for seeing it through the press of Messrs. S. and R. Bentley, the printers whom the Olliers employed on this occasion.

Meanwhile the Pisan band of choice spirits had had a strong and fascinating personality added to its ranks. Edward John Trelawny, a handsome, daring, sagacious young adventurer of a good Cornish family, had come from Switzerland to see with his own eyes the man who wrote *Queen Mab*. He came very near to seeing Shelley killed; for on one of the riding excursions with Byron and others it fell to Shelley's lot to stop a serjeant of dragoons who had jostled a member of the party, and who cut at the poet with his drawn sabre, knocked him off his horse, and would have done worse had he not been stopped by another member of the party riding up in time. Trelawny's tales of wonder on the deep and ashore, his strong, commanding manliness, and his intelligent and sympathetic adhesion to that brilliant circle, served Shelley in good stead in dividing the attention claimed by the splendid genius and powerful if not wholly lovable character of Byron. His lordship's treatment of the mother of Allègra was indeed near enough to becoming the ground of an open rupture between the two poets; and Byron's abuse of the power which his wealth and position gave him, to keep Claire from access to her little daughter, whom he had consigned to a convent to be cared for and educated, exasperated not only poor Claire, but also Shelley, who was sincerely and warmly attached to her. The restless apprehension of Claire constantly foresaw that the ignorant nuns of Bagnacavallo would be no fitting custodians for her child. She was convinced that the place was unhealthy, and that, in the event of epidemic malady, no attempt would be made by them to get the child removed; and those who knew

Claire best dreaded some signal vengeance upon Byron as the first result of a fatal mischance to Allègra.

Shelley's chief literary work of this time, the historical drama of *Charles I.*, flagged considerably. Perhaps the not unnatural restlessness of Mary's exacting and absorbing love for him, the difficulty of reconciling herself wholly to his strange, wayward, and impulsive manner of life, tended to discourage the prosecution of so large and continuous an undertaking. The very purity of his life and the consciousness of his loyalty to his wife may well have combined with his eager and expansive generosity and friendliness to render the conditions of existence in this remarkable Pisan circle trying for Mary, who indeed reproached herself later on with occasional coldnesses and blindnesses, which she doubtless exaggerated, and at all events could not help.

Shelley meanwhile, "blinded by excess of light," while alive to the tension of Mary's feelings, did not fully perceive the cause, and followed his impulses, whether to frequent his friends of either sex or to address them in strains of imperishable verse.

With the assistance and advice of Trelawny, Shelley and Williams determined to have for the approaching summer of 1822 a better boat than "the boat on the Serchio." The "Don Juan," a Torbay-rigged cutter, was built for them at Genoa. For their summer residence the two families took the Casa Magni, a house standing almost in the sea between Lerici and San Terenzio in the Bay of Spezzia. Claire accompanied the Williamuses on the quest for a seaside residence; and, while Shelley and

Mary were at Pisa, news came that the little Allègra had died of typhus fever. When the house was taken, Claire returned to Pisa, and would have gone to Florence; but Shelley would not break the news of her child's death to her there, preferring that she should be first safely domiciled in the isolated villa on the coast. He persuaded her to be of the summer party, and despatched her, post-haste, with Mary and little William. He himself remained behind to pack up goods and chattels (for the Casa Magni was unfurnished); and he urged the Williamses to do the same. "Like a torrent hurrying everything in its course," to use Mary's own phrase, he defied all obstacles; and he reached Lerici only a day later than his wife. After a day or two it was necessary to break the news to Claire; and he and Mary had to soothe and quiet her as best they might.

The Casa Magni, like all other houses inhabited by Shelley, was for the time being a source from which those in distress might expect succour. At San Terenzio, as elsewhere, sickness in any house within his range was the signal for his departure on a mission of nursing and advice.

A fortnight or so after the arrival of the party at the villa, the "Don Juan" sailed into the bay; and Shelley and Williams, with a boy named Charles Vivian whose services they hired, had "a perfect plaything for the summer," though a plaything which was not regarded by experts as a safe sea-going boat. Williams's early experiences of the sea had not, it seems, been in Torbay-rigged cutters on a coast liable to sudden squalls; and they had been dulled by his subsequent service in

the army: still, he was fairly apt at boat-management. Shelley, if anything so ætherial, and elf-like, and out of the common order of English beings, can be fitly described by a wholesome British term of tolerant and good-natured reproach, was the veriest land-lubber, rashly and helplessly enamoured of the sea, perilously addicted at all times to the navigation of waters familiar or unfamiliar, unable to swim, and deprived by his very fearlessness, and by his constant preoccupation in study or composition, of any chance of safety in such a boat as he now had at constant command. No wonder that Mary, out of health as she was, felt a sense of impending doom as she gazed on the ever-present sea and that wildly picturesque coast, the very beauty of which seemed to her preternatural and disturbing. The death of the little Allègra was anything but a matter of indifference to her, apart from anxiety about the bereaved mother; and Mary's troubles culminated in a miscarriage, which was not far from being fatal. Her life was saved by Shelley's promptitude and sagacity in the use of remedial means; but the cloud still hung over her spirit. Strangely enough, although one of her objections to the Magni house upon the coast was that she preferred "a more countryfied place," the new boat in which Shelley passed the time upon the bay fascinated her. She was never wholly happy at this time, save when, the wind and weather not preventing, she lay in the boat with her head on her husband's knee, as they scudded or floated between the sapphire deeps of the sea and the sapphire vault of the sky,—Shelley alternately reading his beloved Greek dramatists

and committing his impressions to paper in verse to be treasured as long as English is spoken. It was in such conditions, with or without Mary, that he wrote that stately fragment *The Triumph of Life*, fraught with the ripened fruit of his thirty years' experience of life, and bearing the clear impress of that Italy in whose waters it was for the most part written; for it savours both of Dante and of Petrarch.

And now he was awaiting, not without impatience, the arrival of Leigh Hunt, who was expected to pass on ship-board within sight of Casa Magni. Shelley had written telling his friend of the white house with arches which he and Mary were inhabiting, and had bidden him cast his eye on the white house in passing and think of them. At length the news of Hunt's safe arrival in Italy with his family reached the Magni household. There was starting in hot haste for Leghorn—weighing of anchor and setting of sails on board the crank, spanking little cutter, which had been renamed the "Ariel,"—perfect plaything for a summer under cloudless skies and on stormless seas, safe means of conveyance from island to island in that ideal "blue Ionian weather" of *Epipsychidion* and in those "haleyon" regions where "the treacherous ocean has forsworn its wiles." The stretch of sea from Lerici to Leghorn seemed almost to realize that radiant vision as Shelley and Williams and the boy Vivian cut through it in their toy and entered Leghorn harbour. The reunion of Shelley and Hunt was a real joy to both men. To Hunt, Shelley was the loftiest of poets, most lovable of men, a generous benefactor, a very present help in trouble. To

Shelley, Hunt was an endearing companion, a stalwart champion of freedom, one who had suffered in purse and person for the faith, and who had further won upon the generous nature of Shelley by frankly accepting his material help. And now they were both under the same Italian sky, full of plans and projects; and it was Shelley's part to make all smooth between Hunt and Byron.

Sorely enough did Mary and Jane begrudge the absence of Shelley and Williams on this more than ordinarily long voyage, and for the considerable number of days demanded for the needs of the business in hand. With the ailing and depressed Mary the sense of impending doom grew ever deeper as the days advanced. It was on the 1st of July that the "Ariel" set sail for Leghorn. By the 8th Shelley and Williams found themselves ready and anxious to return to Casa Magni. The wind was favourable; and, though the hot weather had been breeding electric disturbance, and the sky had a look which to the experienced in such matters meant mischief, Shelley knew better. The treacherous ocean had forsworn its wiles; the merry mariners were bold and free; and between one and two o'clock the perfect plaything weighed anchor and set sail and was off and out of the safe harbour of Leghorn.

And now once more the poet knew the joy of weltering along the sunlit sea, his mind lost in the contemplation of what the masters of song had produced in ancient days and in his own time, and his senses drinking delight from sea and sky. There were Williams and Vivian to look after the boat—Sophocles and Keats

to occupy the thoughts of the lord of song who had sung the dirge of Keats. Hunt had lent Shelley the just published volume containing *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes*, and most of Keats's best short poems; and he had with him also a tiny pocket volume of Sophocles. Ten miles out at sea, off Via Reggio, the "Ariel" still held her way gallantly; but then at length, and all too suddenly, came the change of weather for which the old sea-dogs of Leghorn had been looking. A squall burst and swept across the very spot where the plaything scudded for Lerici; and, when it had passed, those who had been watching the sea saw all the other craft riding safely, but missed the "Ariel." The volume of Keats, open at *The Eve of St. Agnes*, Shelley had doubled back, cover to cover, to thrust it in one pocket of his jacket; the volume of Sophocles was thrust into the other pocket. Williams made an attempt to get off some of his clothes and swim for it. Shelley, who could not swim, probably went down without a struggle in the fifteen fathoms of seething water which was again quiet and smiling almost as soon as that passionate life of love and light and song had quietly, and in the full joy of sensuous perception and spiritual activity, passed into the unknown.

There was no one to tell Mary and Jane that their husbands had been seen to perish. The uncertainty as to what had been the issue of the hapless voyage left the two women in an agony of suspense. The "Ariel" might have weathered the storm and be riding safely at anchor off Corsica or Elba; or the voyagers might have been swept on to some inhospit-

able stretch of coast, and be waiting to repair damages, unable meanwhile to communicate with their friends. At length the tense anguish of suspense was snapped: on the 18th of July the sea gave up its dead. All that remained of Shelley was thrown up near Via Reggio; all that remained of Williams, on the Tuscan coast some miles off. Later on the bones supposed to be those of Charles Vivian were also washed ashore. Buried at first where they were found, the remains of Shelley and Williams were afterwards cremated with due classic honours of wine and salt, oil and frankincense, through the enterprise and determined devotion of Trelawny, and in the presence of Byron and Leigh Hunt.

The Keats volume which Hunt had lent to Shelley was to have been returned in person when next they met. Its peculiarly soft paper, doubled outside its own binding, had gone to pulp and disappeared by the time the cremation took place. The binding was tendered to Hunt, who, with characteristic faith, declined to receive it, *until he could take the book from Shelley* in pursuance of their understanding. The remnant of the book was therefore thrown upon the poet's pyre and burned with him. Trelawny watched the slow consumption of his friend's body and noted that, when the frame divided and exposed the heart, that, more than other parts, opposed a stubborn resistance to the flames. Thrusting his hand into the fire he seized the heart and preserved it. When the cremation was complete, he gathered the ashes into a small casket; and in due time this casket was conveyed to Rome, where it was enclosed in a coffin and entombed

in the Protestant burial-ground, near the Pyramid of Caius Cestius. The inscription on the flat stone placed above the ashes was brief and simple:—

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
COR CORDIUM
NATUS IV AUG. MDCCXCII
OBIT VIII JUL. MDCCCXXII

“Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.”

It is not beneath that stone that the heart of hearts is enshrined, but at Boscombe Manor, where this and other relics scarcely less sacred are reverently preserved by Lady Shelley, widow of the poet's son, Sir Percy Florence Shelley.

The widowhood of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley lasted until the 21st of February 1851, the day of her death. No woman was ever more faithful to the memory of her husband. The world owes her a great debt. Her own striking intellectual gifts, and the high mental calibre of those among whom she had been reared, made her a sound critic and a keen observer of men and manners. Had she never met Shelley she would probably have shone among the nineteenth century's remarkable women. But she was before all things womanly; and the chance that brought her into contact with Shelley really developed the purely feminine and emotional side of her character at least as much as it did the intellectual side. She, who knew Shelley in his maturity most intimately, adored his memory for nearly thirty years, and devoted herself to the rectification of his relations with the outside

world which had misunderstood and undervalued him, and to the education and interests of his son. She had not only the mental gifts requisite for a sympathy in the poet's high aims and aspirations, not only the critical faculty to appreciate what his literary work meant and what its place was in English literature ; but her heart, which had beaten for eight years close to his, knew and acknowledged that, as Shelley the poet had been the supreme lord of song in a prosaic world, as Shelley the propagandist had been through faith the lord of hope, so Shelley the man had been, to those who hung upon him or needed him, the lord of love.

QUEEN MAB;
A PHILOSOPHICAL POEM:
1813.

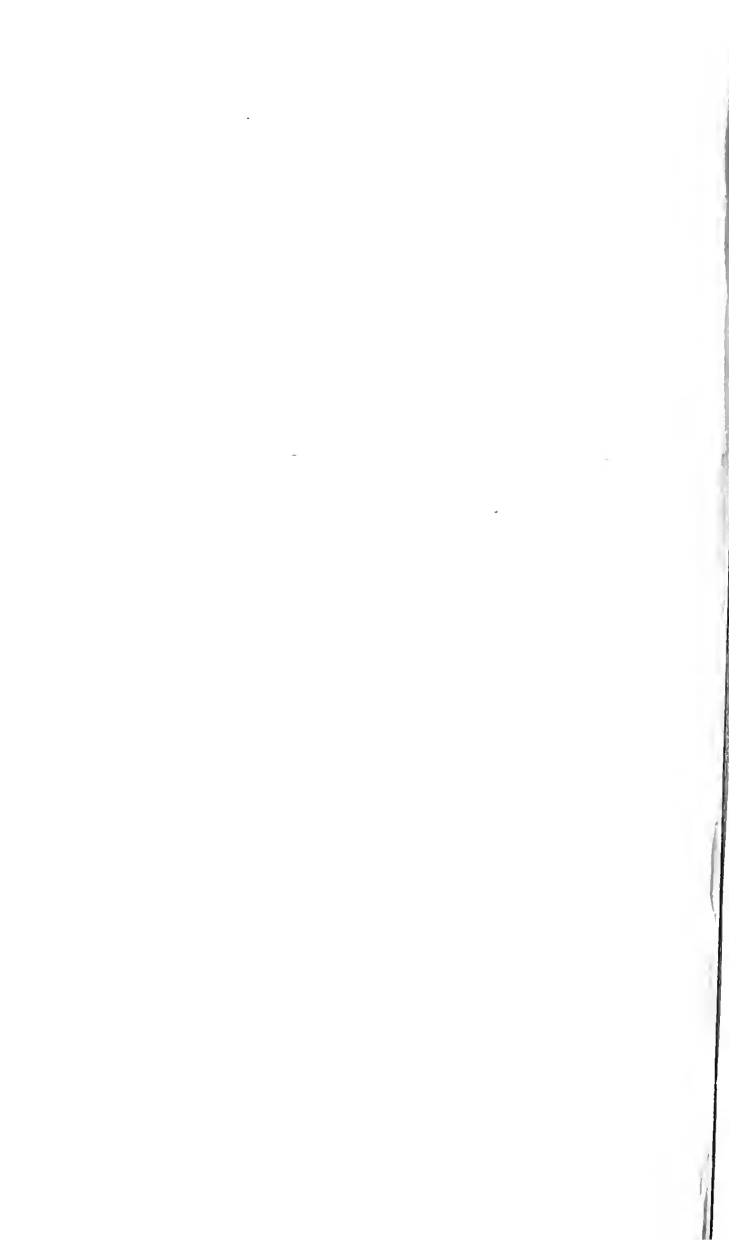
ECRASEZ L'INFAME!
Correspondance de Voltaire.

Avia Pieridum peragro loca, nullius ante
Trita solo; juvat integros accedere fonteis;
Atque haurire: juvatque novos decerpere flores.

* * * * *

Unde prius nulli velarint tempora musæ.
Primum quod magnis doceo de rebus; et arctis
Religionum animos nodis exsolvere pergo.
Lucret. lib. iv.

Δὸς ποῦ στῶ, καὶ κόσμον κινήσω.
Archimedes.



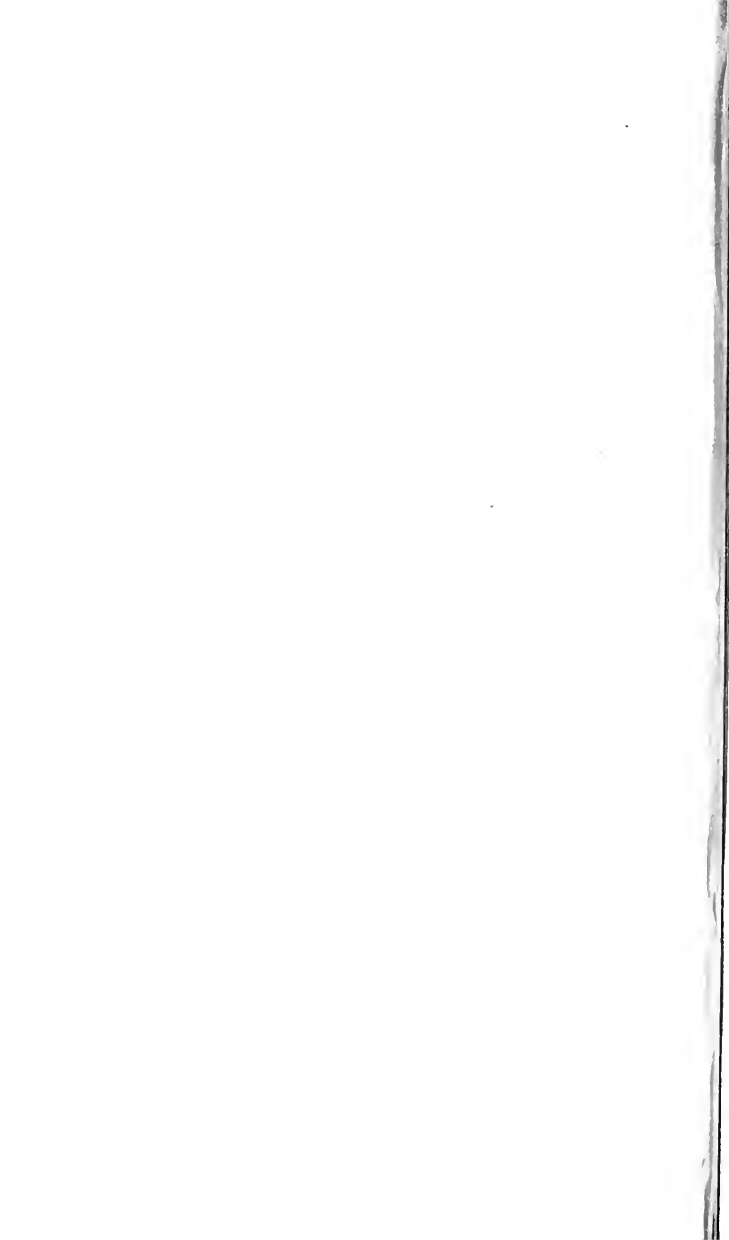
TO HARRIET * * * * *

WHOSE is the love that, gleaming through the
world,
Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn?
Whose is the warm and partial praise,
Virtue's most sweet reward?

Beneath whose looks did my reviving soul
Riper in truth and virtuous daring grow?
Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,
And loved mankind the more?

HARRIET! on thine:—thou wert my purer
mind;
Thou wert the inspiration of my song;
Thine are these early wilding flowers,
Though garlanded by me.

Then press into thy breast this pledge of love;
And know, though time may change and years
may roll,
Each floweret gathered in my heart
It consecrates to thine.



QUEEN MAB.

I.

How wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep!
One, pale as yonder waning moon
With lips of lurid blue;
The other, rosy as the morn
When throned on ocean's wave
It blushes o'er the world:
Yet both so passing wonderful!

Hath then the gloomy Power
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres 10
Seized on her sinless soul?
Must then that peerless form
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, those azure veins
Which steal like streams along a field of snow,
That lovely outline, which is fair
As breathing marble, perish?
Must putrefaction's breath
Leave nothing of this heavenly sight
But loathsomeness and ruin? 20
Spare nothing but a gloomy theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize?
Or is it only a sweet slumber
Stealing o'er sensation,
Which the breath of roscate morning

Chaseth into darkness?
 Will Ianthe wake again,
 And give that faithful bosom joy
 Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
 Light, life and rapture from her smile? 30

Yes! she will wake again,
 Although her glowing limbs are motionless,
 And silent those sweet lips,
 Once breathing eloquence
 That might have soothed a tiger's rage
 Or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror.
 Her dewy eyes are closed,
 And on their lids, whose texture fine
 Scarce hides the dark blue orbs beneath,
 The baby Sleep is pillowed: 40
 Her golden tresses shade
 The bosom's stainless pride,
 Curling like tendrils of the parasite
 Around a marble column.

Hark! whence that rushing sound?
 'Tis like the wondrous strain
 That round a lonely ruin swells,
 Which, wandering on the echoing shore,
 The enthusiast hears at evening:
 'Tis softer than the west wind's sigh; 50
 'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
 Of that strange lyre whose strings
 The genii of the breezes sweep:
 Those lines of rainbow light
 Are like the moonbeams when they fall
 Through some cathedral window, but the teints
 Are such as may not find
 Comparison on earth.

Behold the chariot of the Fairy Queen!
 Celestial coursers paw the unyielding air; 60
 Their filmy pennons at her word they furl,
 And stop obedient to the reins of light:

 These the Queen of spells drew in,
 She spread a charm around the spot,
 And, leaning graceful from the ætherial ear,
 Long did she gaze, and silently,
 Upon the slumbering maid.

Oh! not the visioned poet in his dreams,
 When silvery clouds float through the wildered
 brain,

When every sight of lovely, wild and grand 70
 Astonishes, enraptures, elevates,
 When fancy at a glance combines
 The wondrous and the beautiful,—
 So bright, so fair, so wild a shape
 Hath ever yet beheld,

As that which reined the coursers of the air,
 And poured the magie of her gaze
 Upon the maiden's sleep.

 The broad and yellow moon
 Shone dimly through her form— 80
 That form of faultless symmetry;
 The pearly and pellucid ear
 Moved not the moonlight's line:
 'Twas not an earthly pageant:
 Those who had looked upon the sight,
 Passing all human glory,
 Saw not the yellow moon,
 Saw not the mortal scene,
 Heard not the night-wind's rush,
 Heard not an earthly sound, 90
 Saw but the fairy pageant,
 Heard but the heavenly strains
 That filled the lonely dwelling.

The Fairy's frame was slight, yon fibrous
 cloud,
 That catches but the palest tinge of even,
 And which the straining eye can hardly seize
 When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,
 Were scarce so thin, so slight ; but the fair
 star
 That gems the glittering coronet of morn,
 Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful, 100
 As that which, bursting from the Fairy's
 form,
 Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
 Yet with an undulating motion,
 Swayed to her outline gracefully.

From her celestial ear
 The Fairy Queen descended,
 And thrice she waved her wand
 Circled with wreaths of amaranth :
 Her thin and misty form
 Moved with the moving air, 110
 And the clear silver tones,
 As thus she spoke, were such
 As are unheard by all but gifted ear.

FAIRY.

Stars! your balmiest influence shed!
 Elements! your wrath suspend!
 Sleep, Ocean, in the rocky bounds
 That circle thy domain!
 Let not a breath be seen to stir
 Around yon grass-grown ruin's height,
 Let even the restless gossamer 120
 Sleep on the moveless air!
 Soul of Ianthé! thou,
 Judged alone worthy of the envied boon,
 That waits the good and the sincere ; that waits

Those who have struggled, and with resolute
 will
 Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, burst
 the chains,
 The icy chains of custom, and have shone
 The day-stars of their age;—Soul of Ianthe!
 Awake! arise!

Sudden arose

130

Ianthe's Soul; it stood
 All beautiful in naked purity,
 The perfect semblance of its bodily frame.
 Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace,
 Each stain of earthliness
 Had passed away, it reassumed
 Its native dignity, and stood
 Immortal amid ruin.

Upon the couch the body lay
 Wrapped in the depth of slumber: 140
 Its features were fixed and meaningless,
 Yet animal life was there,
 And every organ yet performed
 Its natural functions: 'twas a sight
 Of wonder to behold the body and soul.
 The self-same lineaments, the same
 Marks of identity were there:
 Yet, oh, how different! One aspires to Heaven,
 Pants for its sempiternal heritage,
 And ever changing, ever rising still, 150
 Wantons in endless being.
 The other, for a time the unwilling sport
 Of circumstance and passion, struggles on;
 Fleets through its sad duration rapidly:
 Then, like an useless and worn-out machine,
 Rots, perishes, and passes.

FAIRY.

Spirit! who hast dived so deep;
 Spirit! who hast soared so high;
 Thou the fearless, thou the mild,
 Accept the boon thy worth hath earned, 160
 Ascend the car with me.

SPIRIT.

Do I dream? Is this new feeling
 But a visioned ghost of slumber?
 If indeed I am a soul,
 A free, a disembodied soul,
 Speak again to me.

FAIRY.

I am the fairy MAB: to me 'tis given
 The wonders of the human world to keep:
 The secrets of the immeasurable past,
 In the unfailing consciences of men, 170
 Those stern, unflattering chroniclers, I find:
 The future, from the causes which arise
 In each event, I gather: not the sting
 Which retributive memory implants
 In the hard bosom of the selfish man;
 Nor that ecstatic and exulting throb
 Which virtue's votary feels when he sums up
 The thoughts and actions of a well-spent day
 Are unforeseen, unregistered by me:
 And it is yet permitted me to read 180
 The veil of mortal frailty, that the spirit
 Clothed in its changeless purity, may know
 How soonest to accomplish the great end
 For which it hath its being, and may taste
 That peace which in the end all life will share.
 This is the meed of virtue; happy Soul,
 Ascend the car with me!

The chains of earth's immurement
Fell from Ianthé's spirit ;
They shrank and brake like bandages of straw
Beneath a wakened giant's strength. 191
She knew her glorious change,
And felt in apprehension uncontrolled
New raptures opening round :
Each day-dream of her mortal life,
Each frenzied vision of the slumbers
That closed each well-spent day,
Seemed now to meet reality.

The Fairy and the Soul proceeded ;
The silver clouds departed ; 200
And as the car of magic they ascended,
Again the speechless music swelled,
Again the coursers of the air
Unfurled their azure pennons, and the Queen,
Shaking the beamy reins,
Bade them pursue their way.

The magic car moved on.
The night was fair, and countless stars
Studded heaven's dark blue vault,—
Just o'er the eastern wave 210
Peeped the first faint smile of morn :—
The magic car moved on—
From the celestial hoofs
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew,
And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak.
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now it flew far above a rock,
The utmost verge of earth,
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow 220
Lowered o'er the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's path,
 Calm as a slumbering babe,
 Tremendous Ocean lay.

The mirror of its stillness showed
 The pale and waning stars,
 The chariot's fiery track,
 And the grey light of morn
 Tinging those fleecy clouds
 That canopied the dawn.

230

Seemed it, that the chariot's way
 Lay through the midst of an immense concave,
 Radiant with million constellations, tinged
 With shades of infinite colour,
 And semicircled with a belt
 Flashing incessant meteors.

The magic car moved on.

As they approached their goal
 The coursers seemed to gather speed ;
 The sea no longer was distinguished ; earth 240
 Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere ;
 The sun's unclouded orb
 Rolled through the black concave ;
 Its rays of rapid light
 Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
 And fell, like ocean's feathery spray
 Dashed from the boiling surge
 Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.

Earth's distant orb appeared 250
 The smallest light that twinkles in the heaven ;
 Whilst round the chariot's way
 Innumerable systems rolled,
 And countless spheres diffused
 An ever-varying glory.
 It was a sight of wonder : some

Were hornèd like the crescent moon ;
 Some shed a mild and silver beam
 Like Hesperus o'er the western sea ;
 Some dashed athwart with trains of flame, 260
 Like worlds to death and ruin driven ;
 Some shone like suns, and as the chariot passed,
 Eclipsed all other light.

Spirit of Nature ! here !
 In this interminable wilderness
 Of worlds, at whose immensity
 Even soaring fancy staggers,
 Here is thy fitting temple.
 Yet not the lightest leaf
 That quivers to the passing breeze 270
 Is less instinct with thee :
 Yet not the meanest worm
 That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead
 Less shares thy eternal breath.
 Spirit of Nature ! thou !
 Imperishable as this scene,
 Here is thy fitting temple.

II.

IF solitude hath ever led thy steps
 To the wild ocean's echoing shore,
 And thou hast lingered there,
 Until the sun's broad orb
 Seemed resting on the burnished wave,
 Thou must have marked the lines
 Of purple gold, that motionless
 Hung o'er the sinking sphere :
 Thou must have marked the billowy clouds
 Edged with intolerable radiancy 10
 Towering like rocks of jet
 Crowned with a diamond wreath.

And yet there is a moment,
 When the sun's highest point
 Peeps like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
 When those far clouds of feathery gold,
 Shaded with deepest purple, gleam
 Like islands on a dark blue sea ;
 Then has the fancy soared above the earth,
 And furled its wearied wing 20
 Within the Fairy's fane.

Yet not the golden islands
 Gleaming in yon flood of light,
 Nor the feathery curtains
 Stretching o'er the sun's bright couch,
 Nor the burnished ocean waves
 Paving that gorgeous dome,
 So fair, so wonderful a sight
 As Mab's ætherial palace could afford.
 Yet likest evening's vault, that faery Hall ! 30
 As Heaven, low resting on the wave, it spread
 Its floors of flashing light,
 Its vast and azure dome,
 Its fertile golden islands
 Floating on a silver sea ;
 Whilst suns their mingling beamings darted
 Through clouds of circumambient darkness,
 And pearly battlements around
 Looked o'er the immense of Heaven.

The magic car no longer moved. 40
 The Fairy and the Spirit
 Entered the Hall of Spells :
 Those golden clouds,
 That rolled in glittering billows
 Beneath the azure canopy,
 With the ætherial footsteps trembled not :
 The light and crimson mists,

Floating to strains of thrilling melody
 Through that unearthly dwelling,
 Yielded to every movement of the will. 50
 Upon their passive swell the Spirit leaned,
 And, for the varied bliss that pressed around,
 Used not the glorious privilege
 Of virtue and of wisdom.

Spirit! the Fairy said,
 And pointed to the gorgeous dome,
 'This is a wondrous sight
 And mocks all human grandeur ;
 But, were it virtue's only meed to dwell
 In a celestial palace, all resigned 60
 To pleasurable impulses, immured
 Within the prison of itself, the will
 Of changeless nature would be unfulfilled.
 Learn to make others happy. Spirit, come !
 This is thine high reward :—the past shall rise ;
 Thou shalt behold the present ; I will teach
 The secrets of the future.

The Fairy and the Spirit
 Approached the overhanging battlement.—
 Below lay stretched the universe ! 70
 There, far as the remotest line
 That bounds imagination's flight,
 Countless and unending orbs
 In mazy motion intermingled,
 Yet still fulfilled immutably
 Eternal nature's law.
 Above, below, around
 The circling systems formed
 A wilderness of harmony ;
 Each with undeviating aim, 80
 In eloquent silence, through the depths of space
 Pursued its wondrous way.

There was a little light
 That twinkled in the misty distance :
 None but a spirit's eye
 Might ken that rolling orb ;
 None but a spirit's eye,
 And in no other place
 But that celestial dwelling, might behold
 Each action of this earth's inhabitants. 90

 But matter, space and time
 In those aërial mansions cease to act ;
 And all-prevailing wisdom, when it reaps
 The harvest of its excellence, o'erbounds
 Those obstacles, of which an earthly soul
 Fears to attempt the conquest.

The Fairy pointed to the earth.
 The Spirit's intellectual eye
 Its kindred beings recognized.
 The thronging thousands, to a passing view, 100
 Seemed like an anthill's citizens.

 How wonderful ! that even
 The passions, prejudices, interests,
 That sway the meanest being, the weak touch
 That moves the finest nerve,
 And in one human brain
 Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
 ✓ In the great chain of nature.

Behold, the Fairy cried,
 Palmyra's ruined palaces !— 110
 Behold ! where grandeur frowned ;
 Behold ! where pleasure smiled ;
 What now remains ?—the memory
 Of senselessness and shame—
 What is immortal there ?
 Nothing—it stands to tell
 A melancholy tale, to give

An awful warning : soon
 Oblivion will steal silently
 The remnant of its fame. 120

Monarchs and conquerors there
 Proud o'er prostrate millions trod—
 The earthquakes of the human race ;
 Like them, forgotten when the ruin
 That marks their shock is past.

Beside the eternal Nile,
 The Pyramids have risen.
 Nile shall pursue his chargeless way :
 Those pyramids shall fall ;
 Yea ! not a stone shall stand to tell 130
 The spot whereon they stood !
 Their very site shall be forgotten,
 As is their builder's name !

Behold yon sterile spot,
 Where now the wandering Arab's tent
 Flaps in the desert-blast.
 There once old Salem's haughty fane
 Reared high to heaven its thousand golden
 domes,
 And in the blushing face of day
 Exposed its shameful glory. 140

Oh ! many a widow, many an orphan cursed
 The building of that fane ; and many a father,
 Worn out with toil and slavery, implored
 The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth,
 And spare his children the detested task
 Of piling stone on stone, and poisoning
 The choicest days of life,
 To soothe a dotard's vanity.

There an inhuman and uncultured race
 Howled hideous praises to their Dæmon-God ;

They rushed to war, tore from the mother's
womb 151

The unborn child,—old age and infancy
Promiscuous perished; their victorious arms
Left not a soul to breathe. Oh! they were
fiends:

But what was he who taught them that the
God

Of nature and benevolence hath given
A special sanction to the trade of blood?
His name and theirs are fading, and the tales
Of this barbarian nation, which imposture
Recites till terror credits, are pursuing 160
Itself into forgetfulness.

Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,
There is a moral desert now:
The mean and miserable huts,
The yet more wretched palaces,
Contrasted with those ancient fanes,
Now crumbling to oblivion;
The long and lonely colonnades,
Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks,
Seem like a well-known tune 170
Which, in some dear scene we have loved to
hear,
Remembered now in sadness.
But, oh! how much more changed,
How gloomier is the contrast
Of human nature there!

Where Socrates expired, a tyrant's slave,
A coward and a fool, spreads death around—
Then, shuddering, meets his own.

Where Cicero and Antoninus lived,
A cowed and hypocritical monk 180
Prays, curses and deceives.

Spirit! ten thousand years
 Have scarcely passed away,
 Since, in the waste where now the savage drinks
 His enemy's blood, and, aping Europe's sons,
 Wakes the unholy song of war,
 Arose a stately city,
 Metropolis of the western continent:
 There, now, the mossy column-stone,
 Indented by time's unrelaxing grasp, 190
 Which once appeared to brave
 All, save its country's ruin;
 There the wide forest scene,
 Rude in the uncultivated loveliness
 Of gardens long run wild,
 Seems, to the unwilling sojourner, whose steps
 Chance in that desert has delayed,
 Thus to have stood since earth was what it is.
 Yet once it was the busiest haunt,
 Whither, as to a common centre, flocked 200
 Strangers, and ships, and merchandise:
 Once peace and freedom bless'd
 The cultivated plain:
 But wealth, that curse of man,
 Blighted the bud of its prosperity:
 Virtue and wisdom, truth and liberty,
 Fled, to return not, until man shall know
 That they alone can give the bliss
 Worthy a soul that claims
 Its kindred with eternity. 210

There's not one atom of yon earth
 But once was living man;
 Nor the minutest drop of rain,
 That hangeth in its thinnest cloud,
 But flowed in human veins:
 And from the burning plains
 Where Lybian monsters yell,

From the most gloomy glens
 Of Greenland's sunless clime,
 To where the golden fields 220
 Of fertile England spread
 Their harvest to the day,
 Thou canst not find one spot
 Whereon no city stood.

How strange is human pride !
 I tell thee that those living things,
 To whom the fragile blade of grass,
 That springeth in the morn
 And perisheth ere noon,
 Is an unbounded world ; 230
 I tell thee that those viewless beings,
 Whose mansion is the smallest particle
 Of the impassive atmosphere,
 Think, feel and live like man ;
 That their affections and antipathies,
 Like his, produce the laws
 Ruling their moral state ;
 And the minutest throb
 That through their frame diffuses
 The slightest, faintest motion, 240
 Is fixed and indispensable
 As the majestic laws
 That rule yon rolling orbs.

The Fairy paused. The Spirit,
 In ecstacy of admiration, felt
 All knowledge of the past revived ; the events
 Of old and wondrous times,
 Which dim tradition interruptedly
 Teaches the credulous vulgar, were unfolded
 In just perspective to the view ; 250
 Yet dim from their infinitude.
 The Spirit seemed to stand

The curses of the fatherless, the groans
 Of those who have no friend? He passes on:
 The King, the wearer of a gilded chain 30
 That binds his soul to abjectness, the fool
 Whom courtiers nickname monarch, whilst a
 slave

Even to the basest appetites—that man
 Heeds not the shriek of penury; he smiles
 At the deep curses which the destitute
 Mutter in secret, and a sullen joy
 Pervades his bloodless heart when thousands
 groan

But for those morsels which his wantonness
 Wastes in unjoyous revelry, to save
 All that they love from famine: when he hears
 The tale of horror, to some ready-made face 41
 Of hypocritical assent he turns,
 Smothering the glow of shame, that, spite of
 him,
 Flushes his bloated cheek.

Now to the meal
 Of silence, grandeur, and excess, he drags
 His palled unwilling appetite. If gold,
 Gleaming around, and numerous viands culled
 From every clime, could force the loathing sense
 To overcome satiety,—if wealth
 The spring it draws from poisons not,—or vice,
 Unfeeling, stubborn vice, converteth not 51
 Its food to deadliest venom; then that king
 Is happy; and the peasant who fulfils
 His unforced task, when he returns at even,
 And by the blazing faggot meets again
 Her welcome for whom all his toil is sped,
 Tastes not a sweeter meal.

Behold him now
 Stretched on the gorgeous couch; his fevered
 brain

Reels dizzily awhile : but ah ! too soon
 The slumber of intemperance subsides, 60
 And conscience, that undying serpent, calls
 Her venomous brood to their nocturnal task.
 Listen ! he speaks ! oh ! mark that frenzied eye—
 Oh ! mark that deadly visage.

KING.

No cessation !
 Oh ! must this last for ever ! Awful Death,
 I wish, yet fear to clasp thee !—Not one moment
 Of dreamless sleep ! O dear and blessèd Peace !
 Why dost thou shroud thy vestal purity
 In penury and dungeons ? wherefore lurkest
 With danger, death, and solitude ; yet shun'st
 The palace I have built thee ? Sacred Peace !
 Oh visit me but once, but pitying shed 72
 One drop of balm upon my withered soul.

Vain man ! that palace is the virtuous heart,
 And Peace defileth not her snowy robes
 In such a shed as thine. Hark ! yet he mutters ;
 His slumbers are but varied agonies,
 They prey like scorpions on the springs of life.
 There needeth not the hell that bigots frame
 To punish those who err : earth in itself 80
 Contains at once the evil and the cure ;
 And all-sufficing nature can chastise
 Those who transgress her law,—she only knows
 How justly to proportion to the fault
 The punishment it merits.

Is it strange
 That this poor wretch should pride him in his
 woe ?
 Take pleasure in his abjectness, and hug
 The scorpion that consumes him ? Is it strange
 That, placed on a conspicuous throne of thorns,

Grasping an iron sceptre, and immured 90
 Within a splendid prison, whose stern bounds
 Shut him from all that's good or dear on earth,
 His soul asserts not its humanity?
 That man's mild nature rises not in war
 Against a king's employ? No—'tis not strange.
 He, like the vulgar, thinks, feels, acts and lives
 Just as his father did; the unconquered powers
 Of precedent and custom interpose
 Between a *king* and virtue. Stranger yet,
 To those who know not nature, nor deduce 100
 The future from the present, it may seem,
 That not one slave, who suffers from the crimes
 Of this unnatural being, not one wretch,
 Whose children famish, and whose nuptial bed
 Is earth's un pitying bosom, rears an arm
 To dash him from his throne!

Those gilded flies
 That, basking in the sunshine of a court,
 Fatten on its corruption!—what are they?
 —The drones of the community; they feed
 On the mechanic's labour: the starved hind 110
 For them compels the stubborn glebe to yield
 Its unshared harvests; and yon squalid form,
 Leaner than fleshless misery, that wastes
 A sunless life in the unwholesome mine,
 Drags out in labour a protracted death,
 To glut their grandeur; many faint with toil,
 That few may know the cares and woe of sloth.

Whence, thinkest thou, kings and parasites
 arose?

Whence that unnatural line of drones, who heap
 Toil and unvanquishable penury 120
 On those who build their palaces, and bring
 Their daily bread?—From vice, black loathsome
 vice;

From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong ;
 From all that genders misery, and makes
 Of earth this thorny wilderness ; from lust,
 Revenge, and murder.....And when reason's
 voice,

Loud as the voice of nature, shall have waked
 The nations ; and mankind perceive that vice
 Is discord, war, and misery ; that virtue
 Is peace, and happiness and harmony ; 130
 When man's maturer nature shall disdain
 The playthings of its childhood ;—kingly glare
 Will lose its power to dazzle ; its authority
 Will silently pass by ; the gorgeous throne
 Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
 Fast falling to decay ; whilst falsehood's trade
 Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
 As that of truth is now.

 Where is the fame
 Which the vain-glorious mighty of the earth
 Seek to eternize ? Oh ! the faintest sound 140
 From time's light footfall, the minutest wave
 That swells the flood of ages, whelms in nothing
 The unsubstantial bubble. Aye ! to-day
 Stern is the tyrant's mandate, red the gaze
 That flashes desolation, strong the arm
 That scatters multitudes. To-morrow comes !
 That mandate is a thunder-peal that died
 In ages past ; that gaze, a transient flash
 On which the midnight closed, and on that arm
 The worm has made his meal.

 The virtuous man, 150
 Who, great in his humility, as kings
 Are little in their grandeur ; he who leads
 Invincibly a life of resolute good,
 And stands amid the silent dungeon-depths
 More free and fearless than the trembling judge,
 Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove

To bind the impassive spirit;—when he falls,
 His mild eye beams benevolence no more :
 Withered the hand outstretched but to relieve ;
 Sunk reason's simple eloquence, that rolled 160
 But to appall the guilty. Yes! the grave
 Hath quenched that eye, and death's relentless
 frost

Withered that arm : but the unfading fame
 Which virtue hangs upon its votary's tomb ;
 'The deathless memory of that man, whom kings
 Call to their mind and tremble ; the remem-
 brance

With which the happy spirit contemplates
 Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth,
 Shall never pass away.

169

Nature rejects the monarch, not the man ;
 The subject, not the citizen : for kings
 And subjects, mutual foes, for ever play
 A losing game into each other's hands,
 Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man
 Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys.
 Power, like a desolating pestilence,
 Pollutes whate'er it touches ; and obedience,
 Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
 Makes slaves of men, and, of the human frame,
 A mechanized automaton.

When Nero, 180
 High over flaming Rome, with savage joy
 Lowered like a fiend, drank with enraptured ear
 The shrieks of agonizing death, beheld
 The frightful desolation spread, and felt
 A new created sense within his soul
 Thrill to the sight, and vibrate to the sound,
 Thinkest thou his grandeur had not overcome
 The force of human kindness? and, when Rome,

With one stern blow, hurled not the tyrant
 down, 189
 Crushed not the arm red with her dearest blood,
 Had not submissive abjectness destroyed
 Nature's suggestions?

Look on yonder earth :

The golden harvests spring ; the unfailing sun
 Sheds light and life ; the fruits, the flowers, the
 trees,
 Arise in due succession ; all things speak
 Peace, harmony, and love. The universe,
 In nature's silent eloquence, declares
 That all fulfil the works of love and joy,—
 All but the outcast man. He fabricates 199
 The sword which stabs his peace ; he cherisheth
 The snakes that gnaw his heart ; he raiseth up
 The tyrant, whose delight is in his woe,
 Whose sport is in his agony. Yon sun,
 Lights it the great alone ? Yon silver beams,
 Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch,
 Than on the dome of kings ? Is Mother Earth
 A step-dame to her numerous sons, who earn
 Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil ;
 A mother only to those puling babes
 Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men 210
 The playthings of their babyhood, and mar
 In self-important childishness that peace
 Which men alone appreciate ?

Spirit of Nature ! no.
 The pure diffusion of thy essence throbs
 Alike in every human heart.
 Thou, aye, erectest there
 Thy throne of power unappealable :
 Thou art the judge beneath whose nod
 Man's brief and frail authority 220
 Is powerless as the wind

That passeth idly by.
 Thine the tribunal which surpasseth
 The show of human justice,
 As God surpasses man.

Spirit of Nature ! thou
 Life of interminable multitudes ;
 Soul of those mighty spheres
 Whose changeless paths thro' Heaven's deep
 silence lie ;
 Soul of that smallest being, 230
 The dwelling of whose life
 Is one faint April sun-gleam ;—
 Man, like these passive things,
 Thy will unconsciously fulfilleth :
 Like theirs, his age of endless peace,
 Which time is fast maturing,
 Will swiftly, surely come ;
 And the unbounded frame, which thou pervadest,
 Will be without a flaw
 Marring its perfect symmetry. 240

IV.

How beautiful this night ! the balmiest sigh,
 Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear,
 Were discord to the speaking quietude
 That wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon
 vault,
 Studded with stars utterably bright,
 Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur
 rolls,
 Seems like a canopy which love had spread
 To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills,
 Robed in a garment of untrodden snow ;
 Yon darksome rocks, whence icicles depend, 10
 So stainless, that their white and glittering
 spires

Tinge not the moon's pure beam ; yon castled
steep,

Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower
So idly, that rapt fancy deemeth it

A metaphor of peace ; all form a scene

Where musing solitude might love to lift

Her soul above this sphere of earthliness ;

Where silence undisturbed might watch alone,
So cold, so bright, so still.

The orb of day, 19

In southern climes, o'er ocean's waveless field

Sinks sweetly smiling : not the faintest breath

Steals o'er the unruffled deep ; the clouds of eve

Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day ;

And vesper's image on the western main

Is beautifully still. To-morrow comes :

Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass,

Roll o'er the blackened waters ; the deep roar

Of distant thunder mutters awfully ;

Tempest unfolds its pinion o'er the gloom

That shrouds the boiling surge ; the pitiless
fiend, 30

With all his winds and lightnings, tracks his
prey ;

The torn deep yawns,--the vessel finds a grave

Beneath its jagged gulph.

Ah ! whence yon glare

That fires the arch of heaven ?--that dark red
smoke

Blotting the silver moon ? the stars are quenched

In darkness, and the pure and spangling snow

Gleams faintly through the gloom that gathers
round !

Hark to that roar, whose swift and deaf'ning
peals

In countless echoes through the mountains ring,

Startling pale midnight on her starry throne ! 40

Now swells the intermingling din ; the jar
 Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb ;
 The falling beam, the shriek, the groan, the
 shout,

The ceaseless clangour, and the rush of men
 Inebriate with rage:—loud and more loud
 The discord grows ; till pale Death shuts the
 scene,

And o'er the conqueror and the conquered draws
 His cold and bloody shroud.—Of all the men
 Whom day's departing beam saw blooming
 there,

In proud and vigorous health ; of all the hearts
 That beat with anxious life at sunset there ;
 How few survive, how few are beating now !
 All is deep silence, like the fearful calm
 That slumbers in the storm's portentous pause ;
 Save when the frantic wail of widowed love
 Comes shuddering on the blast, or the faint moan
 With which some soul bursts from the frame
 of clay

Wrapped round its struggling powers.

The grey morn
 Dawns on the mournful scene ; the sulphurous
 smoke

Before the icy wind slow rolls away, 60
 And the bright beams of frosty morning dance
 Along the spangling snow. There tracks of blood
 Even to the forest's depth, and scattered arms,
 And lifeless warriors, whose hard lineaments
 Death's self could change not, mark the dread-
 ful path

Of the out-sallying victors : far behind,
 Black ashes note where their proud city stood.
 Within yon forest is a gloomy glen—
 Each tree which guards its darkness from the day
 Waves o'er a warrior's tomb.

I see thee shrink, 70
 Surpassing Spirit!—wert thou human else?
 I see a shade of doubt and horror fleet
 Across thy stainless features: yet fear not;
 This is no unconnected misery,
 Nor stands uncaused, and irretrievable.
 Man's evil nature, that apology
 Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch,
 set up
 For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the
 blood
 Which desolates the discord-wasted land.
 From kings, and priests, and statesmen, war
 arose, 80
 Whose safety is man's deep unbettered woe,
 Whose grandeur his debasement. Let the axe
 Strike at the root, the poison-tree will fall;
 And where its venom'd exhalations spread
 Ruin, and death, and woe, where millions lay
 Quenching the serpent's famine, and their bones
 Bleaching unburied in the putrid blast,
 A garden shall arise, in loveliness
 Surpassing fabled Eden.

Hath Nature's soul,
 That formed this world so beautiful, that
 spread 90
 Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord
 Strung to unchanging unison, that gave
 The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,
 That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
 The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,
 And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust
 With spirit, thought, and love; on Man alone,
 Partial in causeless malice, wantonly
 Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery; his soul
 Blasted with withering curses; placed afar 100
 The meteor happiness, that shuns his grasp,

But serving on the frightful gulph to glare,
Rent wide beneath his footsteps?

Nature!—no!

Kings, priests, and statesmen blast the human
flower

Even in its tender bud; their influence darts
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
Of desolate society. The child,
Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name,
Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts
His baby-sword even in a hero's mood. 110
This infant-arm becomes the bloodiest scourge
Of devastated earth; whilst specious names,
Learnt in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour,
Serve as the sophisms with which manhood
dims

Bright reason's ray, and sanctifies the sword
Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood.
Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man
Inherits vice and misery, when force
And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe,
Stiffing with rudest grasp all natural good. 120

Ah! to the stranger-soul, when first it peeps
From its new tenement, and looks abroad
For happiness and sympathy, how stern
And desolate a tract is this wide world!
How withered all the buds of natural good!
No shade, no shelter from the sweeping storms
Of pitiless power! On its wretched frame,
Poisoned, perchance, by the disease and woe
Heaped on the wretched parent whence it sprung
By morals, law, and custom, the pure winds 130
Of heaven, that renovate the insect tribes,
May breathe not. The untainting light of day
May visit not its longings. It is bound
Ere it has life: yea, all the chains are forged

Long ere its being : all liberty and love
 And peace is torn from its defencelessness ;
 Cursed from its birth, even from its cradle
 doomed
 To abjectness and bondage !

Throughout this varied and eternal world
 Soul is the only element, the block 140
 That for uncounted ages has remained.
 The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight
 Is active, living spirit. Every grain
 Is sentient both in unity and part,
 And the minutest atom comprehends
 A world of loves and hatreds ; these beget
 Evil and good : hence truth and falsehood
 spring ;
 Hence will and thought and action, all the
 germs
 Of pain or pleasure, sympathy or hate,
 That variegate the eternal universe. 150
 Soul is not more polluted than the beams
 Of heaven's pure orb, ere round their rapid lines
 The taint of earth-born atmospheres arise.

Man is of soul and body, formed for deeds
 Of high resolve, on fancy's boldest wing
 To soar unwearied, fearlessly to turn
 The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and taste
 The joys which mingled sense and spirit yield.
 Or he is formed for abjectness and woe,
 To grovel on the dunghill of his fears, 160
 To shrink at every sound, to quench the flame
 Of natural love in sensualism, to know
 That hour as bless'd when on his worthless days
 The frozen hand of Death shall set its seal,
 Yet fear the cure, though hating the disease.
 The one is man that shall hereafter be ;

Their pitiless tread lies torn and trampled,
 where
 Honour sits smiling at the sale of truth.

Then grave and hoary-headed hypocrites,
 Without a hope, a passion, or a love,
 Who, through a life of luxury and lies,
 Have crept by flattery to the seats of power,
 Support the system whence their honours
 flow....

They have three words :—well tyrants know
 their use,

Well pay them for the loan with usury
 Torn from a bleeding world !—God, Hell, and
 Heaven. 210

A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty fiend,
 Whose mercy is a nickname for the rage
 Of tameless tigers hungering for blood.
 Hell, a red gulph of everlasting fire,
 Where poisonous and undying worms prolong
 Eternal misery to those hapless slaves
 Whose life has been a penance for its crimes.
 And Heaven, a meed for those who dare belie
 Their human nature, quake, believe, and cringe
 Before the mockeries of earthly power. 220

These tools the tyrant tempers to his work,
 Wields in his wrath, and as he wills destroys,
 Omnipotent in wickedness: the while
 Youth springs, age moulders, manhood tamely
 does

His bidding, bribed by short-lived joys to lend
 Force to the weakness of his trembling arm.
 They rise, they fall; one generation comes
 Yielding its harvest to destruction's scythe.
 It fades, another blossoms: yet behold!
 Red glows the tyrant's stamp-mark on its
 bloom, 230

Withering and cankering deep its passive prime.
 He has invented lying words and modes,
 Empty and vain as his own coreless heart ;
 Evasive meanings, nothings of much sound,
 To lure the heedless victim to the toils
 Spread round the valley of its paradise.

Look to thyself, priest, conqueror, or prince !
 Whether thy trade is falsehood, and thy lusts
 Deep wallow in the earnings of the poor,
 With whom thy master was ;—or thou delight'st
 In numbering o'er the myriads of thy slain, 241
 All misery weighing nothing in the scale
 Against thy short-lived fame : or thou dost load
 With cowardice and crime the groaning land,
 A pomp-fed king. Look to thy wretched self !
 Aye, art thou not the veriest slave that e'er
 Crawled on the loathing earth ? Are not thy
 days

Days of unsatisfying listlessness ?
 Dost thou not cry, ere night's long rack is o'er,
 When will the morning come ? Is not thy
 youth 250

A vain and feverish dream of sensualism ?
 Thy manhood blighted with unripe disease ?
 Are not thy views of unregretted death
 Drear, comfortless, and horrible ? Thy mind,
 Is it not morbid as thy nerveless frame,
 Incapable of judgment, hope, or love ?
 And dost thou wish the errors to survive
 That bar thee from all sympathies of good,
 After the miserable interest
 Thou hold'st in their protraction ? When the
 grave 260

Has swallowed up thy memory and thyself,
 Dost thou desire the bane that poisons earth
 To twine its roots around thy confined clay,

Spring from thy bones, and blossom on thy tomb,
That of its fruit thy babes may eat and die?

V.

Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave and issue from the womb,
Surviving still the imperishable change
That renovates the world ; even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scattered on the forest soil, and heaped
For many seasons there, though long they
choke,

Loading with loathsome rottenness the land,
All germs of promise. Yet when the tall trees
From which they fell, shorn of their lovely
shapes, 10

Lie level with the earth to moulder there.
They fertilize the land they long deformed,
Till from the breathing lawn a forest springs
Of youth, integrity and loveliness,
Like that which gave it life, to spring and die.
Thus suicidal selfishness, that blights
The fairest feelings of the opening heart,
Is destined to decay, whilst from the soil
Shall spring all virtue, all delight, all love,
And judgment cease to wage unnatural war 20
With passion's unsubduable array.

Twin-sister of religion, selfishness !
Rival in crime and falsehood, aping all
The wanton horrors of her bloody play ;
Yet frozen, unimpassioned, spiritless,
Shunning the light, and owning not its name,
Compelled, by its deformity, to screen
With flimsy veil of justice and of right,
Its unattractive lineaments, that scare
All, save the brood of ignorance : at once 30

The cause and the effect of tyranny ;
 Unblushing, hardened, sensual, and vile ;
 Dead to all love but of its abjectness,
 With heart impassive by more noble powers
 Than unshared pleasure, sordid gain, or fame ;
 Despising its own miserable being,
 Which still it longs, yet fears, to disenthral.

Hence commerce springs, the venal inter-
 change
 Of all that human art or nature yield ;
 Which wealth should purchase not, but want
 demand, 40
 And natural kindness hasten to supply
 From the full fountain of its boundless love,
 For ever stifled, drained, and tainted now.
 Commerce ! beneath whose poison-breathing
 shade
 No solitary virtue dares to spring,
 But poverty and wealth with equal hand
 Scatter their withering curses, and unfold
 The doors of premature and violent death,
 To pining famine and full-fed disease,
 To all that shares the lot of human life, 50
 Which poisoned body and soul, scarce drags
 the chain,
 That lengthens as it goes and clanks behind.

Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,
 The signet of its all-enslaving power,
 Upon a shining ore, and called it gold :
 Before whose image bow the vulgar great,
 The vainly rich, the miserable proud,
 The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings,
 And with blind feelings reverence the power
 That grinds them to the dust of misery. 60
 But in the temple of their hireling hearts

Gold is a living god, and rules in scorn
All earthly things but virtue.

Since tyrants, by the sale of human life,
Heap luxuries to their sensualism, and fame
To their wide-wasting and insatiate pride,
Success has sanctioned to a credulous world
The ruin, the disgrace, the woe of war.
His hosts of blind and unresisting dupes
The despot numbers; from his cabinet 70
These puppets of his schemes he moves at will,
Even as the slaves by force or famine driven,
Beneath a vulgar master, to perform
A task of cold and brutal drudgery;—
Hardened to hope, insensible to fear,
Scarce living pullies of a dead machine,
Mere wheels of work and articles of trade,
That grace the proud and noisy pomp of
wealth!

The harmony and happiness of man
Yields to the wealth of nations; that which
lifts 80
His nature to the heaven of its pride,
Is bartered for the poison of his soul;
The weight that drags to earth his towering
hopes,
Blighting all prospect but of selfish gain,
Withering all passion but of slavish fear,
Extinguishing all free and generous love
Of enterprise and daring, even the pulse
That fancy kindles in the beating heart
To mingle with sensation, it destroys,—
Leaves nothing but the sordid lust of self, 90
The grovelling hope of interest and gold,
Unqualified, unmingled, unredeemed

Even by hypocrisy.

And statesmen boast
 Of wealth! The wordy eloquence that lives
 After the ruin of their hearts, can gild
 The bitter poison of a nation's woe,
 Can turn the worship of the servile mob
 To their corrupt and glaring idol fame,
 From virtue, trampled by its iron tread,
 Although its dazzling pedestal be raised 100
 Amid the horrors of a limb-strewn field,
 With desolated dwellings smoking round.
 The man of ease, who, by his warm fire-side,
 To deeds of charitable intercourse
 And bare fulfilment of the common laws
 Of decency and prejudice, confines
 The struggling nature of his human heart,
 Is duped by their cold sophistry; he sheds
 A passing tear perchance upon the wreck 109
 Of earthly peace, when near his dwelling's door
 The frightful waves are driven,—when his son
 Is murdered by the tyrant, or religion
 Drives his wife raving mad. But the poor
 man,
 Whose life is misery, and fear, and care;
 Whom the morn wakens but to fruitless toil;
 Who ever hears his famished offspring's scream,
 Whom their pale mother's uncomplaining gaze
 For ever meets, and the proud rich man's eye
 Flashing command, and the heart-breaking
 scene
 Of thousands like himself;—he little heeds 120
 The rhetoric of tyranny; his hate
 Is quenchless as his wrongs; he laughs to scorn
 The vain and bitter mockery of words,
 Feeling the horror of the tyrant's deeds,
 And unrestrained but by the arm of power,
 That knows and dreads his enmity.

The iron rod of penury still compels
 Her wretched slave to bow the knee to wealth,
 And poison, with unprofitable toil,
 A life too void of solace to confirm 130
 The very chains that bind him to his doom.
 Nature, impartial in munificence,
 Has gifted man with all-subduing will.
 Matter, with all its transitory shapes,
 Lies subjected and plastic at his feet,
 That, weak from bondage, tremble as they
 tread.

How many a rustic Milton has passed by,
 Stifling the speechless longings of his heart,
 In unremitting drudgery and care!
 How many a vulgar Cato has compelled 140
 His energies, no longer tameless then,
 To mould a pin, or fabricate a nail!
 How many a Newton, to whose passive ken
 Those mighty spheres that gem infinity
 Were only specks of tinsel, fixed in heaven
 To light the midnights of his native town!

Yet every heart contains perfection's germ:
 The wisest of the sages of the earth,
 That ever from the stores of reason drew
 Science and truth, and virtue's dreadless tone,
 Were but a weak and inexperienced boy, 151
 Proud, sensual, unimpassioned, unimbued
 With pure desire and universal love,
 Compared to that high being, of cloudless brain,
 Untainted passion, elevated will,
 Which death (who even would linger long in
 awe

Within his noble presence, and beneath
 His changeless eyebeam) might alone subdue.
 Him, every slave now dragging through the filth
 Of some corrupted city his sad life, 160

Pining with famine, swol'n with luxury,
 Blunting the keenness of his spiritual sense
 With narrow schemings and unworthy cares,
 Or madly rushing through all violent crime,
 To move the deep stagnation of his soul,—
 Might imitate and equal.

But mean lust
 Has bound its chains so tight around the earth,
 That all within it but the virtuous man
 Is venal: gold or fame will surely reach
 The price prefixed by selfishness, to all 170
 But him of resolute and unchanging will;
 Whom, nor the plaudits of a servile crowd,
 Nor the vile joys of tainting luxury,
 Can bribe to yield his elevated soul
 To tyranny or falsehood, though they wield
 With blood-red hand the sceptre of the world.

All things are sold: the very light of heaven
 Is venal; earth's unsparing gifts of love,
 The smallest and most despicable things
 That lurk in the abysses of the deep, 180
 All objects of our life, even life itself,
 And the poor pittance which the laws allow
 Of liberty, the fellowship of man,
 Those duties which his heart of human love
 Should urge him to perform instinctively,
 Are bought and sold as in a public mart
 Of undisguising selfishness, that sets
 On each its price, the stamp-mark of her reign.
 Even love is sold; the solace of all woe
 Is turned to deadliest agony; old age 190
 Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms;
 And youth's corrupted impulses prepare
 A life of horror from the blighting bane
 Of commerce; whilst the pestilence that springs
 From unenjoying sensualism has filled

All human life with hydra-headed woes.
 Falsehood demands but gold to pay the pangs
 Of outraged conscience ; for the slavish priest
 Sets no great value on his hireling faith :
 A little passing pomp, some servile souls, 200
 Whom cowardice itself might safely chain,
 Or the spare mite of avarice could bribe
 To deck the triumph of their languid zeal,
 Can make him minister to tyranny.
 More daring crime requires a loftier meed :
 Without a shudder, the slave-soldier lends
 His arm to murderous deeds, and steels his
 heart,
 When the dread eloquence of dying men,
 Low mingling on the lonely field of fame,
 Assails that nature, whose applause he sells 210
 For the gross blessings of a patriot mob,
 For the vile gratitude of heartless kings,
 And for a cold world's good word,—viler still !

There is a nobler glory, which survives
 Until our being fades, and, solacing
 All human care, accompanies its change ;
 Deserts not virtue in the dungeon's gloom,
 And, in the precincts of the palace, guides
 Its footsteps through that labyrinth of crime ;
 Imbues his lineaments with dauntlessness, 220
 Even when, from power's avenging hand, he
 takes
 Its sweetest, last and noblest title—death ;
 —The consciousness of good, which neither
 gold,
 Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,
 Can purchase ; but a life of resolute good,
 Unalterable will, quenchless desire
 Of universal happiness, the heart
 That beats with it in unison, the brain,

Whose ever wakeful wisdom toils to change
Reason's rich stores for its eternal weal. 230

This commerce of sincerest virtue needs
No mediative signs of selfishness,
No jealous intercourse of wretched gain,
No balancings of prudence, cold and long;
In just and equal measure all is weighed,
One scale contains the sum of human weal,
And one, the good man's heart.

How vainly seek
The selfish for that happiness denied
To aught but virtue! Blind and hardened,
they, 239

Who hope for peace amid the storms of care,
Who covet power they know not how to use,
And sigh for pleasure they refuse to give,—
Madly they frustrate still their own designs;
And, where they hope that quiet to enjoy
Which virtue pictures, bitterness of soul,
Pining regrets, and vain repentances,
Disease, disgust, and lassitude, pervade
Their valueless and miserable lives.

But hoary-headed selfishness has felt
Its death-blow, and is tottering to the grave:
A brighter morn awaits the human day, 251
When every transfer of earth's natural gifts
Shall be a commerce of good words and works;
When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame,
The fear of infamy, disease and woe,
War with its million horrors, and fierce hell
Shall live but in the memory of Time,
Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
Look back, and shudder at his younger years.

VI.

ALL touch, all eye, all ear,
 The Spirit felt the Fairy's burning speech.
 O'er the thin texture of its frame,
 The varying periods painted changing glows,
 As on a summer even,
 When soul-enfolding music floats around,
 The stainless mirror of the lake
 Re-images the eastern gloom,
 Mingling convulsively its purple hues
 With sunset's burnished gold. 10

Then thus the Spirit spoke:
 It is a wild and miserable world!
 Thorny, and full of care,
 Which every fiend can make his prey at will.
 O Fairy! in the lapse of years,
 Is there no hope in store?
 Will yon vast suns roll on
 Interminably, still illuming
 The night of so many wretched souls,
 And see no hope for them? 20
 Will not the universal Spirit e'er
 Revivify this withered limb of Heaven?

The Fairy calmly smiled
 In comfort, and a kindling gleam of hope
 Suffused the Spirit's lineaments.
 Oh! rest thee tranquil; chase those fearful
 doubts,
 Which ne'er could rack an everlasting soul,
 That sees the chains which bind it to its doom.
 Yes! crime and misery are in yonder earth,
 Falsehood, mistake, and lust; 30
 But the eternal world
 Contains at once the evil and the cure.

Some eminent in virtue shall start up,
 Even in perversest time :
 The truths of their pure lips, that never die,
 Shall bind the scorpion falsehood with a wreath
 Of ever-living flame,
 Until the monster sting itself to death.

How sweet a scene will earth become !
 Of purest spirits, a pure dwelling-place, 40
 Symphonious with the planetary spheres ;
 When man, with changeless nature coalescing,
 Will undertake regeneration's work,
 When its ungenial poles no longer point
 To the red and baleful sun
 That faintly twinkles there.

Spirit ! on yonder earth,
 Falsehood now triumphs ; deadly power
 Has fixed its seal upon the lip of truth !
 Madness and misery are there ! 50
 The happiest is most wretched ! Yet confide,
 Until pure health-drops, from the cup of joy,
 Fall like a dew of balm upon the world.
 Now, to the scene I show, in silence turn,
 And read the blood-stained charter of all woe,
 Which nature soon, with recreating hand,
 Will blot in mercy from the book of earth.
 How bold the flight of passion's wandering wing,
 How swift the step of reason's firmer tread,
 How calm and sweet the victories of life, 60
 How terrorless the triumph of the grave !
 How powerless were the mightiest monarch's
 arm,
 Vain his loud threat, and impotent his frown !
 How ludicrous the priest's dogmatic roar !
 The weight of his exterminating curse,
 How light ! and his affected charity,

To suit the pressure of the changing times,
 What palpable deceit!—but for thy aid,
 Religion! but for thee, prolific fiend,
 Who peoplest earth with dæmons, hell with men,
 And heaven with slaves! 71

Thou taintest all thou lookest upon!—the
 stars,
 Which on thy cradle beamed so brightly sweet,
 Were gods to the distempered playfulness
 Of thy untutored infancy: the trees,
 The grass, the clouds, the mountains, and the
 sea,
 All living things that walk, swim, creep, or fly,
 Were gods: the sun had homage, and the moon
 Her worshipper. Then thou becamest, a boy,
 More daring in thy frenzies: every shape, 80
 Monstrous or vast, or beautifully wild,
 Which, from sensation's relics, fancy culls;
 The spirit of the air, the shuddering ghost,
 The genii of the elements, the powers
 That give a shape to nature's varied works,
 Had life and place in the corrupt belief
 Of thy blind heart: yet still thy youthful hands
 Were pure of human blood. Then manhood
 gave
 Its strength and ardour to thy frenzied brain;
 Thine eager gaze scanned the stupendous scene,
 Whose wonders mocked the knowledge of thy
 pride: 91
 Their everlasting and unchanging laws
 Reproached thine ignorance. Awhile thou
 stood'st
 Baffled and gloomy; then thou didst sum up
 The elements of all that thou didst know;
 The changing seasons, winter's leafless reign,
 The budding of the heaven-breathing trees,

The eternal orbs that beautify the night,
 The sunrise, and the setting of the moon,
 Earthquakes and wars, and poisons and disease,
 And all their causes, to an abstract point, 101
 Converging, thou didst bend and called it God!
 The self-sufficing, the omnipotent,
 The merciful, and the avenging God!
 Who, prototype of human misrule, sits
 High in heaven's realm, upon a golden throne,
 Even like an earthly king; and whose dread
 work,
 Hell, gapes for ever for the unhappy slaves
 Of fate, whom he created, in his sport,
 To triumph in their torments when they fell!
 Earth heard the name; earth trembled, as the
 smoke 111
 Of his revenge ascended up to heaven,
 Blotting the constellations; and the cries
 Of millions, butchered in sweet confidence
 And unsuspecting peace, even when the bonds
 Of safety were confirmed by wordy oaths
 Sworn in his dreadful name, rung through the
 land;
 Whilst innocent babes writhed on thy stubborn
 spear,
 And thou didst laugh to hear the mother's shriek
 Of maniac gladness, as the sacred steel 120
 Felt cold in her torn entrails!

Religion! thou wert then in manhood's prime:
 But age crept on: one God would not suffice
 For senile puerility; thou framedst
 A tale to suit thy dotage, and to glut
 Thy misery-thirsting soul, that the mad fiend
 Thy wickedness had pictured might afford
 A plea for sating the unnatural thirst
 For murder, rapine, violence, and crime,

That still consumed thy being, even when 130
 Thou heard'st the step of fate;—that flames
 might light

Thy funeral scene, and the shrill horrent shrieks
 Of parents dying on the pile that burned
 To light their children to thy paths, the roar
 Of the encircling flames, the exulting cries
 Of thine apostles, loud commingling there,
 Might sate thine hungry ear
 Even on the bed of death!

But now contempt is mocking thy grey hairs;
 Thou art descending to the darksome grave, 140
 Unhonoured and unpitied, but by those
 Whose pride is passing by like thine, and sheds
 Like thine a glare that fades before the sun
 Of truth, and shines but in the dreadful night
 That long has lowered above the ruined world.

Throughout these infinite orbs of mingling
 light,
 Of which you earth is one, is wide diffused
 A spirit of activity and life,
 That knows no term, cessation, or decay;
 That fades not when the lamp of earthly life,
 Extinguished in the dampness of the grave,
 Awhile there slumbers, more than when the
 babe

152

In the dim newness of its being feels
 The impulses of sublunary things,
 And all is wonder to unpractised sense:
 But, active, steadfast, and eternal, still
 Guides the fierce whirlwind, in the tempest roars,
 Cheers in the day, breathes in the balmy groves,
 Strengthens in health, and poisons in disease;
 And in the storm of change, that ceaselessly
 Rolls round the eternal universe, and shakes

Its undecaying battlement, presides, 162
 Apportioning with irresistible law
 The place each spring of its machine shall fill ;
 So that, when waves on waves tumultuous heap
 Confusion to the clouds, and fiercely driven
 Heaven's lightnings scorch the uprooted ocean-
 fords,

Whilst, to the eye of shipwrecked mariner,
 Lone sitting on the bare and shuddering rock,
 All seems unlinked contingency and chance,—
 No atom of this turbulence fulfils 171

A vague and unecessitated task,
 Or acts but as it must and ought to act.
 Even the minutest molecule of light,
 That in an April sunbeam's fleeting glow
 Fulfils its destined though invisible work,
 The universal Spirit guides ; nor less,
 When merciless ambition, or mad zeal,
 Has led two hosts of dupes to battle-field,
 That, blind, they there may dig each other's
 graves, 180

And call the sad work glory, does it rule
 All passions : not a thought, a will, an act,
 No working of the tyrant's moody mind,
 Nor one misgiving of the slaves who boast
 Their servitude, to hide the shame they feel,
 Nor the events enchaining every will,
 That from the depths of unrecorded time
 Have drawn all-influencing virtue, pass
 Unrecognized, or unforeseen by thee,
 Soul of the Universe ! eternal spring 190
 Of life and death, of happiness and woe,
 Of all that chequers the phantasmal scene
 That floats before our eyes in wavering light,
 Which gleams but on the darkness of our prison,
 Whose chains and massy walls
 We feel, but cannot see.

Spirit of Nature! all-sufficing Power,
 Necessity! thou mother of the world!
 Unlike the God of human error, thou
 Requir'st no prayers or praises; the caprice 200
 Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee
 Than do the changeful passions of his breast
 To thy unvarying harmony: the slave,
 Whose horrible lusts spread misery o'er the
 world,
 And the good man, who lifts, with virtuous
 pride,
 His being, in the sight of happiness
 That springs from his own works; the poison-
 tree,
 Beneath whose shade all life is withered up,
 And the fair oak, whose leafy dome affords
 A temple where the vows of happy love 210
 Are registered, are equal in thy sight:
 No love, no hate thou cherishest; revenge
 And favouritism, and worst desire of fame
 Thou know'st not: all that the wide world
 contains
 Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
 Regard'st them all with an impartial eye,
 Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
 Because thou hast not human sense,
 Because thou art not human mind.

Yes! when the sweeping storm of time 220
 Has sung its death-dirge o'er the ruined fanes
 And broken altars of the almighty fiend,
 Whose name usurps thy honours, and the blood
 Through centuries clotted there has floated
 down
 The tainted flood of ages, shalt thou live
 Unchangeable! A shrine is raised to thee,
 Which, nor the tempest breath of time,

Nor the interminable flood,
 Over earth's slight pageant rolling,
 Availeth to destroy,—230
 The sensitive extension of the world.
 That wondrous and eternal fane,
 Where pain and pleasure, good and evil join,
 To do the will of strong necessity,
 And life, in multitudinous shapes,
 Still pressing forward where no term can be,
 Like hungry and unresting flame
 Curls round the eternal columns of its strength.

VII.

SPIRIT.

I WAS an infant when my mother went
 To see an atheist burned. She took me there :
 The dark-robed priests were met around the
 pile;
 The multitude was gazing silently ;
 And, as the culprit passed with dauntless mien,
 Tempered disdain in his unaltering eye,
 Mixed with a quiet smile, shone calmly forth :
 The thirsty fire crept round his manly limbs ;
 His resolute eyes were scorched to blindness
 soon ;
 His death-pang rent my heart ! the insensate
 mob10
 Uttered a cry of triumph, and I wept.
 Weep not, child ! cried my mother, for that
 man
 Has said, There is no God.

FAIRY.

There is no God !
 Nature confirms the faith his death-groan
 sealed :

Let heaven and earth, let man's revolving race,
 His ceaseless generations tell their tale ;
 Let every part depending on the chain
 That links it to the whole, point to the hand
 That grasps its term ! let every seed that falls
 In silent eloquence unfold its store 20
 Of argument : infinity within,
 Infinity without, belie creation ;
 The exterminable spirit it contains
 Is nature's only God ; but human pride
 Is skilful to invent most serious names
 To hide its ignorance.

The name of God

Has fenced about all crime with holiness,
 Himself the creature of his worshippers,
 Whose names and attributes and passions
 change,
 Seeva, Buddh, Foh, Jehovah, God, or Lord, 30
 Even with the human dupes who build his
 shrines,
 Still serving o'er the war-polluted world
 For desolation's watch-word ; whether hosts
 Stain his death-blushing chariot-wheels, as on
 Triumphantly they roll, whilst Brahmins raise
 A sacred hymn to mingle with the groans ;
 Or countless partners of his power divide
 His tyranny to weakness ; or the smoke
 Of burning towns, the cries of female helplessness,
 Unarmed old age, and youth, and infancy, 40
 Horribly massacred, ascend to heaven
 In honour of his name ; or, last and worst,
 Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,
 And priests dare babble of a God of peace,
 Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless
 blood,
 Murdering the while, uprooting every germ

Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,
Making the earth a slaughter-house!

O Spirit! through the sense
By which thy inner nature was apprised 50
Of outward shows, vague dreams have rolled.
And varied reminiscences have waked
Tablets that never fade;
All things have been imprinted there,
The stars, the sea, the earth, the sky,
Even the unshapeliest lineaments
Of wild and fleeting visions
Have left a record there
To testify of earth.

These are my empire, for to me is given 60
The wonders of the human world to keep,
And fancy's thin creations to endow
With manner, being, and reality;
Therefore a wondrous phantom from the dreams
Of human error's dense and purblind faith,
I will evoke, to meet thy questioning.
Ahasuerus, rise!

A strange and woe-worn wight
Arose beside the battlement,
And stood unmoving there. 70
His inessential figure cast no shade
Upon the golden floor;
His port and mien bore mark of many years,
And chronicles of untold ancientness
Were legible within his beamless eye:
Yet his cheek bore the mark of youth;
Freshness and vigour knit his manly frame;
The wisdom of old age was mingled there
With youth's primeval dauntlessness;
And inexpressible woe, 80
Chastened by fearless resignation, gave

An awful grace to his all-speaking brow.

SPIRIT.

Is there a God ?

AHASUERUS.

Is there a God !—aye, an almighty God,
And vengeful as almighty ! Once his voice
Was heard on earth : earth shuddered at the
sound ;

The fiery-visaged firmament expressed
Abhorrence, and the grave of nature yawned
To swallow all the dauntless and the good
That dared to hurl defiance at his throne, 90
Girt as it was with power. None but slaves
Survived,—cold-blooded slaves who did the
work

Of tyrannous omnipotence ; whose souls
No honest indignation ever urged
To elevated daring, to one deed
Which gross and sensual self did not pollute.
These slaves built temples for the omnipotent
fiend,

Gorgeous and vast : the costly altars smoked
With human blood, and hideous pæans rung
Through all the long-drawn aisles. A murderer
heard 100

His voice in Egypt, one whose gifts and arts
Had raised him to his eminence in power,
Accomplice of omnipotence in crime,
And confidant of the all-knowing one.

These were Jehovah's words.

From an eternity of idleness
I, God, awoke ; in seven days' toil made earth
From nothing ; rested, and created man :
I placed him in a paradise, and there

Planted the tree of evil, so that he 110
 Might eat and perish, and my soul procure
 Wherewith to sate its malice, and to turn,
 Even like a heartless conquerer of the earth,
 All misery to my fame. The race of men
 Chosen to my honour, with impunity
 May sate the lusts I planted in their heart.
 Here I command thee hence to lead them on,
 Until, with hardened feet, their conquering
 troops
 Wade on the promised soil through woman's
 blood,
 And make my name be dreaded through the
 land. 120

Yet ever burning flame and ceaseless woe
 Shall be the doom of their eternal souls,
 With every soul on this ungrateful earth,
 Virtuous or vicious, weak or strong,—even all
 Shall perish, to fulfil the blind revenge
 (Which you, to men, call justice) of their God.

The murderer's brow

Quivered with horror.

God omnipotent,

Is there no mercy? must our punishment
 Be endless? will long ages roll away, 130
 And see no term? Oh! wherefore hast thou
 made
 In mockery and wrath this evil earth?
 Mercy becomes the powerful—be but just:
 O God! repent and save.

One way remains:

I will beget a son, and he shall bear
 The sins of all the world; he shall arise
 In an unnoticed corner of the earth,
 And there shall die upon a cross, and purge
 The universal crime; so that the few

On whom my grace descends, those who are
marked 140

As vessels to the honour of their God,
May credit this strange sacrifice, and save
Their souls alive : millions shall live and die,
Who ne'er shall call upon their Saviour's name,
But, unredeemed, go to the gaping grave.
Thousands shall deem it an old woman's tale,
Such as the nurses frighten babes withal :
These in a gulph of anguish and of flame
Shall curse their reprobation endlessly,
Yet tenfold pangs shall force them to avow, 150
Even on their beds of torment, where they howl,
My honour and the justice of their doom.
What then avail their virtuous deeds, their
thoughts

Of purity, with radiant genius bright,
Or lit with human reason's earthly ray?
Many are called, but few will I elect.
Do thou my bidding, Moses!

Even the murderer's cheek
Was blanched with horror, and his quivering
lips

Scarce faintly uttered—O almighty one,
I tremble and obey! 160

O Spirit! centuries have set their seal
On this heart of many wounds, and loaded brain,
Since the Incarnate came: humbly he came,
Veiling his horrible Godhead in the shape
Of man, scorned by the world, his name unheard,
Save by the rabble of his native town,
Even as a parish demagogue. He led
The crowd; he taught them justice, truth and
peace,
In semblance; but he lit within their souls

The quenchless flames of zeal, and bless'd the
 sword 170

He brought on earth to satiate with the blood
 Of truth and freedom his malignant soul.

At length his mortal frame was led to death.

I stood beside him : on the torturing cross

No pain assailed his unterrestrial sense ;

And yet he groaned. Indignantly I summed

The massacres and misery which his name

Had sanctioned in my country, and I cried,

Go ! go ! in mockery.

A smile of godlike malice reilluminated 180

His fading lineaments.—I go, he cried,

But thou shalt wander o'er the unquiet earth

Eternally.—The dampness of the grave

Bathed my imperishable front. I fell,

And long lay tranced upon the charmèd soil.

When I awoke hell burned within my brain,

Which staggered on its seat ; for all around

The mouldering relics of my kindred lay,

Even as the Almighty's ire arrested them,

And in their various attitudes of death 190

My murdered children's mute and eyeless skulls

Glared ghastly upon me.

But my soul,

From sight and sense of the polluting woe

Of tyranny, had long learned to prefer

Hell's freedom to the servitude of heaven.

Therefore I rose, and dauntlessly began

My lonely and unending pilgrimage,

Resolved to wage unweariable war

With my almighty tyrant, and to hurl

Defiance at his impotence to harm 200

Beyond the curse I bore. The very hand

That barred my passage to the peaceful grave

Has crushed the earth to misery, and given

Its empire to the chosen of his slaves.

These have I seen, even from the earliest dawn
Of weak, unstable and precarious power ;
Then preaching peace, as now they practise war,
So, when they turned but from the massacre
Of unoffending infidels, to quench
Their thirst for ruin in the very blood 210
That flowed in their own veins, and pitiless zeal
Froze every human feeling, as the wife
Sheathed in her husband's heart the sacred steel,
Even whilst its hopes were dreaming of her love ;
And friends to friends, brothers to brothers
stood
Opposed in bloodiest battle-field, and war,
Scarce satiable by fate's last death-draught
waged,
Drunk from the winepress of the Almighty's
wrath ;
Whilst the red cross, in mockery of peace,
Pointed to victory ! When the fray was done, 220
No remnant of the exterminated faith
Survived to tell its ruin, but the flesh,
With putrid smoke poisoning the atmosphere,
That rotted on the half-extinguished pile.

Yes! I have seen God's worshippers unsheathe
The sword of his revenge, when grace de-
scended,
Confirming all unnatural impulses,
To sanctify their desolating deeds ;
And frantic priests waved the ill-omened cross
O'er the unhappy earth ; then shone the sun 230
On showers of gore from the upflashing steel
Of safe assassination, and all crime
Made stingless by the spirits of the Lord,
And blood-red rainbows canopied the land.

Spirit ! no year of my eventful being

Has passed unstained by crime and misery,
 Which flows from God's own faith. I've marked
 his slaves,
 With tongues whose lies are venomous, beguile
 The insensate mob, and, whilst one hand was
 red
 With murder, feign to stretch the other out 240
 For brotherhood and peace; and that they now
 Babble of love and mercy, whilst their deeds
 Are marked with all the narrowness and crime
 That freedom's young arm dare not yet chastise,
 Reason may claim our gratitude, who now
 Establishing the imperishable throne
 Of truth, and stubborn virtue, maketh vain
 The unprevailing malice of my foe,
 Whose bootless rage heaps torments for the
 brave,
 Adds impotent eternities to pain, 250
 Whilst keenest disappointment racks his breast
 To see the smiles of peace around them play,
 To frustrate or to sanctify their doom.

Thus have I stood,—through a wild waste of
 years
 Struggling with whirlwinds of mad agony,
 Yet peaceful, and serene, and self-enshrined,
 Mocking my powerless tyrant's horrible curse
 With stubborn and unalterable will,
 Even as a giant oak, which heaven's fierce flame
 Had scathèd in the wilderness, to stand 260
 A monument of fadeless ruin there;
 Yet peacefully and movelessly it braves
 The midnight conflict of the wintry storm,
 As in the sunlight's calm it spreads
 Its worn and withered arms on high
 To meet the quiet of a summer's noon.

The Fairy waved her wand :
 Ahasuerus fled

Fast as the shapes of mingled shade and mist,
 That lurk in the glens of a twilight grove, 270

Flee from the morning beam :

The matter of which dreams are made
 Not more endowed with actual life
 Than this phantasmal portraiture
 Of wandering human thought.

VIII.

THE present and the past thou hast beheld :
 It was a desolate sight. Now, Spirit, learn

The secrets of the future.—Time !

Unfold the brooding pinion of thy gloom,
 Render thou up thy half-devoured babes,
 And from the cradles of eternity,
 Where millions lie lulled to their portioned
 sleep

By the deep murmuring stream of passing
 things,

Tear thou that gloomy shroud.—Spirit, behold
 Thy glorious destiny ! 10

Joy to the Spirit came.

Through the wide rent in Time's eternal veil,
 Hope was seen beaming through the mists of
 fear :

Earth was no longer hell ;

Love, freedom, health, had given

Their ripeness to the manhood of its prime,
 And all its pulses beat

Symphonious to the planetary spheres :

Then dulcet music swelled

Concordant with the life-strings of the soul ; 20
 It throbbed in sweet and languid beatings there,

Catching new life from transitory death :
 Like the vague sighings of a wind at even,
 That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea
 And dies on the creation of its breath,
 And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits,—
 Was the pure stream of feeling
 That sprung from these sweet notes,
 And o'er the Spirit's human sympathies
 With mild and gentle motion calmly flowed. 30

 Joy to the Spirit came,—
 Such joy as when a lover sees
 The chosen of his soul in happiness,
 And witnesses her peace
 Whose woe to him were bitterer than death,
 Sees her unfaded cheek
 Glow mantling in first luxury of health,
 Thrills with her lovely eyes,
 Which like two stars amid the heaving main
 Sparkle through liquid bliss. 40

Then in her triumph spoke the Fairy Queen :
 I will not call the ghost of ages gone
 To unfold the frightful secrets of its lore ;
 The present now is past,
 And those events that desolate the earth
 Have faded from the memory of Time,
 Who dares not give reality to that
 Whose being I annul. To me is given
 The wonders of the human world to keep,
 Space, matter, time, and mind. Futurity 50
 Exposes now its treasure ; let the sight
 Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
 O human Spirit ! spur thee to the goal
 Where virtue fixes universal peace,
 And midst the ebb and flow of human things,
 Show somewhat stable, somewhat certain still,
 A lighthouse o'er the wild of dreary waves.

The habitable earth is full of bliss ;
 Those wastes of frozen billows that were hurled
 By everlasting snow-storms round the poles, 60
 Where matter dared not vegetate or live,
 But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
 Bound its broad zone of stillness, are unloosed ;
 And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles
 Ruffle the placid ocean-deep, that rolls
 Its broad, bright surges to the sloping sand,
 Whose roar is wakened into echoings sweet
 To murmur through the heaven-breathing
 groves
 And melodize with man's bless'd nature there.

Those deserts of immeasurable sand, 70
 Whose age-collected fervours scarce allowed
 A bird to live, a blade of grass to spring,
 Where the shrill chirp of the green lizard's love
 Broke on the sultry silentness alone,
 Now teem with countless rills and shady woods,
 Corn-fields and pastures and white cottages ;
 And where the startled wilderness beheld
 A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood,
 A tigress satiating with the flesh of lambs
 The unnatural famine of her toothless cubs, 80
 Whilst shouts and howlings through the desert
 rang,
 Sloping and smooth the daisy-spangled lawn,
 Offering sweet incense to the sun-rise, smiles
 To see a babe before his mother's door,
 Sharing his morning's meal
 With the green and golden basilisk
 That comes to lick his feet. ↙

Those trackless deeps, where many a weary
 sail
 Has seen, above the illimitable plain, 89

Morning on night, and night on morning rise,
 Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer
 spread

Its shadowy mountains on the sun-bright sea,
 Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
 So long have mingled with the gusty wind
 In melancholy loneliness, and swept
 The desert of those ocean solitudes,
 But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,
 The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm,
 Now to the sweet and many-mingling sounds
 Of kindest human impulses respond. 100
 Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,
 With lightsome clouds and shining seas between
 And fertile valleys resonant with bliss,
 Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
 Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore
 To meet the kisses of the flowrets there.

All things are recreated, and the flame
 Of consentaneous love inspires all life:
 The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck 109
 To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
 Rewarding her with their pure perfectness: ✓
 The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
 Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad:
 Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
 Glows in the fruits, and mantles on the stream:
 No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,
 Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
 The foliage of the ever verdant trees;
 But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair, 119
 And autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
 Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of spring,
 Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
 Reflects its tint and blushes into love.

The lion now forgets to thirst for blood :
 There might you see him sporting in the sun
 Beside the dreadless kid ; his claws are sheathed,
 His teeth are harmless, custom's force has made
 His nature as the nature of a lamb.
 Like passion's fruit, the nightshade's tempting
 bane

Poisons no more the pleasure it bestows : 130
 All bitterness is past ; the cup of joy
 Unmingled mantles to the goblet's brim,
 And courts the thirsty lips it fled before.

But chief, ambiguous man, he that can know
 More misery, and dream more joy than all ;
 Whose keen sensations thrill within his breast
 To mingle with a loftier instinct there,
 Lending their power to pleasure and to pain,
 Yet raising, sharpening, and refining each ;
 Who stands amid the ever-varying world, 140
 The burthen or the glory of the earth ;
 He chief perceives the change, his being notes
 The gradual renovation, and defines
 Each movement of its progress on his mind.

Man, where the gloom of the long polar night
 Lowers o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,
 Where scarce the hardiest herb that braves the
 frost
 Basks in the moonlight's ineffectual glow,
 Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the
 night ;
 His chilled and narrow energies, his heart, 150
 Insensible to courage, truth, or love,
 His stunted stature and imbecile frame,
 Marked him for some abortion of the earth,
 Fit compeer of the bears that roam around,
 Whose habits and enjoyments were his own :

And priests first traded with the name of God.

Even where the milder zone afforded man
A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,
Blighting his being with unnumbered ills,
Spread like a quenchless fire ; nor truth till late
Availed to arrest its progress, or create ¹⁹¹
That peace which first in bloodless victory
waved

Her snowy standard o'er this favoured clime :
There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,
The mimic of surrounding misery,
The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,
The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.

Here now the human being stands adorning
This loveliest earth with taintless body and
mind ;

Bless'd from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake ²⁰¹
All kindly passions and all pure desires.

Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,
Which from the exhaustless lore of human weal
Draws on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that
rise

In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks
The unprevailing hoariness of age ;
And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene
Swift as an unremembered vision, stands ²¹⁰
Immortal upon earth : no longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,
Which still avenging nature's broken law
Kindled all putrid humours in his frame,
All evil passions, and all vain belief,
Hatred, despair, and loathing in his mind,

The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime.
 No longer now the wingèd habitants, 219
 That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
 Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
 And prune¹ their sunny feathers on the hands
 Which little children stretch in friendly sport
 Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
 All things are void of terror: man has lost
 His terrible prerogative, and stands
 An equal amidst equals: happiness
 And science dawn though late upon the earth;
 Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the
 frame;
 Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here, 230
 Reason and passion cease to combat there;
 Whilst each unfettered o'er the earth extend
 Their all-subduing energies, and wield
 The sceptre of a vast dominion there;
 Whilst every shape and mode of matter lends
 Its force to the omnipotence of mind,
 Which from its dark mine drags the gem of
 truth
 To decorate its paradise of peace.

IX.

O HAPPY Earth! reality of Heaven!
 To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
 Throng through the human universe aspire;
 Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
 Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will!
 Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and
 time,

¹ Although *præen* is the more usual orthography when the word applies to a bird's action, the choice of *prune* was probably deliberate. At all events Shelley left the word when revising the passage for the second part of *The Daemon of the World*: see line 164.

That mocked his fury and prepared his fall.

Yet slow and gradual dawned the morn of
 love ;
 Long lay the clouds of darkness o'er the scene,
 Till from its native heaven they rolled away : 40
 First, Crime triumphant o'er all hope careered
 Unblushing, undisguising, bold and strong ;
 Whilst Falsehood, tricked in Virtue's attributes,
 Long sanctified all deeds of vice and woe,
 Till done by her own venomous sting to death,
 She left the moral world without a law,
 No longer fettering passion's fearless wing,
 Nor searing reason with the brand of God.
 Then steadily the happy ferment worked ;
 Reason was free ; and wild though passion
 went 50
 Through tangled glens and wood-embosomed
 meads,
 Gathering a garland of the strangest flowers,
 Yet like the bee returning to her queen,
 She bound the sweetest on her sister's brow,
 Who meek and sober kissed the sportive child,
 No longer trembling at the broken rod.

Mild was the slow necessity of death :
 The tranquil spirit failed beneath its grasp,
 Without a groan, almost without a fear,
 Calm as a voyager to some distant land, 60
 And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
 The deadly germs of languor and disease
 Died in the human frame, and purity
 Bless'd with all gifts her earthly worshippers.
 How vigorous then the athletic form of age !
 How clear its open and unwrinkled brow !
 Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, or care,
 Had stamped the seal of grey deformity

On all the mingling lineaments of time.
 How lovely the intrepid front of youth! 70
 Which meek-eyed courage decked with freshest
 grace ;
 Courage of soul that dreaded not a name,
 And elevated will, that journeyed on
 Through life's phantasmal scene in fearlessness,
 With virtue, love, and pleasure, hand in hand.

Then, that sweet bondage which is freedom's
 self,
 And rivets with sensation's softest tie
 The kindred sympathies of human souls,
 Needed no fetters of tyrannic law :
 Those delicate and timid impulses 80
 In nature's primal modesty arose,
 And with undoubted confidence disclosed
 The growing longings of its dawning love,
 Unchecked by dull and selfish chastity,
 That virtue of the cheaply virtuous,
 Who pride themselves in senselessness and frost.
 No longer prostitution's venom'd bane
 Poisoned the springs of happiness and life ;
 Woman and man, in confidence and love,
 Equal and free and pure together trod 90
 The mountain-paths of virtue, which no more
 Were stained with blood from many a pilgrim's
 feet.

Then, where, through distant ages, long in
 pride
 The palace of the monarch-slave had mocked
 Famine's faint groan and penury's silent tear,
 A heap of crumbling ruins stood, and threw
 Year after year their stones upon the field,
 Wakening a lonely echo ; and the leaves
 Of the old thorn, that on the topmost tower

Usurped the royal ensign's grandeur, shook 100
 In the stern storm that swayed the topmost
 tower
 And whispered strange tales in the whirlwind's
 ear.

Low through the lone cathedral's roofless
 aisles
 The melancholy winds a death-dirge sung :
 It were a sight of awfulness to see
 The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
 So sumptuous, yet so perishing withal !
 Even as the corpse that rests beneath its wall.
 A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
 To-day, the breathing marble glows above 110
 To decorate its memory, and tongues
 Are busy of its life : to-morrow, worms
 In silence and in darkness seize their prey.

Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,
 Fearless and free the ruddy children played,
 Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows
 With the green ivy and the red wall-flower,
 That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom ;
 The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong
 iron,
 There rusted amid heaps of broken stone 120
 That mingled slowly with their native earth :
 There the broad beam of day, which feebly once
 Lighted the cheek of lean captivity
 With a pale and sickly glare, then freely shone
 On the pure smiles of infant playfulness :
 No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair
 Pealed through the echoing vaults, but soothing
 notes
 Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds
 And merriment were resonant around.

These ruins soon left not a wreck behind : 130
 Their elements, wide scattered o'er the globe,
 To happier shapes were moulded, and became
 Ministrant to all blissful impulses :
 Thus human things were perfected, and earth,
 Even as a child beneath its mother's love,
 Was strengthened in all excellence, and grew
 Fairer and nobler with each passing year.

Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene
 Closes in steadfast darkness, and the past
 Fades from our charmèd sight. My task is
 done : 140

Thy lore is learned. Earth's wonders are thine
 own,

With all the fear and all the hope they bring.
 My spells are past : the present now recurs.
 Ah me ! a pathless wilderness remains
 Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.
 Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,
 Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
 The gradual paths of an aspiring change :
 For birth and life and death, and that strange
 state

Before the naked soul has found its home, 150
 All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
 The restless wheels of being on their way,
 Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
 Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal :
 For birth but wakes the spirit to the sense
 Of outward shows, whose unexperienced shape
 New modes of passion to its frame may lend ;
 Life is its state of action, and the store
 Of all events is aggregated there
 That variegate the eternal universe ; 160
 Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
 That leads to azure isles and beaming skies

And happy regions of eternal hope.
 Therefore, O Spirit! fearlessly bear on:
 Though storms may break the primrose on its
 stalk,
 Though frosts may blight the freshness of its
 bloom,
 Yet spring's awakening breath will woo the
 earth,
 To feed with kindest dews its favourite flower,
 That blooms in mossy banks and darksome
 glens, 169
 Lighting the green wood with its sunny smile.

Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand,
 So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
 So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch burns;
 'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,
 The transient gulph-dream of a startling sleep.
 Death is no foe to virtue: earth has seen
 Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,
 Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,
 And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.
 Are there not hopes within thee, which this
 scene 180
 Of linked and gradual being has confirmed?
 Whose stings bade thy heart look further
 still,
 When to the moonlight walk by Henry led,
 Sweetly and sadly thou didst talk of death?
 And wilt thou rudely tear them from thy breast,
 Listening supinely to a bigot's creed,
 Or tamely crouching to the tyrant's rod,
 Whose iron thongs are red with human gore?
 Never: but bravely bearing on, thy will
 Is destined an eternal war to wage 190
 With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
 The germs of misery from the human heart.

Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,
Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease :
Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,
When fenced by power and master of the world.
Thou art sincere and good ; of resolute mind,
Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,
Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued. 202
Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish
thee,

And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
Which thou hast now received : virtue shall
keep

Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
And many days of beaming hope shall bless
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch 210
Light, life and rapture from thy smile.

The Fairy waves her wand of charm.
Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
That rolled beside the battlement,
Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.
Again the enchanted steeds were yoked,
Again the burning wheels inflame
The steep descent of heaven's untrodden way.
Fast and far the chariot flew :
The vast and fiery globes that rolled 220
Around the Fairy's palace-gate
Lessened by slow degrees and soon appeared
Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
That there attendant on the solar power
With borrowed light pursued their narrower
way.

Earth floated then below :
The chariot paused a moment there ;
The Spirit then descended :
The restless coursers pawed the ungenial soil,
Snuffed the gross air, and then, their errand
done, 230
Unfurled their pinions to the winds of heaven.
The Body and the Soul united then,
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame :
Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed ;
Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained :
She looked around in wonder and beheld
Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,
And the bright beaming stars
That through the casement shone. 240

SHELLEY'S NOTES TO QUEEN MAB.¹

I.—PAGE 12.

The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black concave.

BEYOND our atmosphere the sun would appear a rayless orb of fire in the midst of a black concave. The equal diffusion of light on earth is owing to the refraction of the rays by the atmosphere, and their reflexion from other bodies. Light consists either of vibrations propagated through a subtle medium, or of numerous minute particles repelled in all directions from the luminous body. Its velocity greatly exceeds that of any substance with which we are acquainted: observations on the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites have demonstrated that light takes up no more than 8' 7" in passing from the sun to the earth, a distance of 95,000,000 miles.—Some idea may be gained of the immense distance of the fixed stars, when it is computed that many years would elapse before light could reach this earth from the nearest of them; yet in one year light travels 5,422,400,000,000 miles, which is a distance 5,707,600 times greater than that of the sun from the earth.

¹ The attribution of these notes to Byron wrung from him, together with his denial, a public tribute to Shelley's genius. In the appendix to *The Two Foscari*, as first published in 1821 with *Sardanapalus* and *Cain*, Byron refers (page 326) to *Queen Mab* as "a poem of great power and imagination," adding—"in common with all who are not blinded by baseness and bigotry, I highly admire the poetry of that and his other publications."—ED.

I.—PAGE 12.

Whilst round the chariot's way
 Innumerable systems rolled.

The plurality of worlds,—the indefinite immensity of the universe is a most awful subject of contemplation. He who rightly feels its mystery and grandeur is in no danger of seduction from the falsehoods of religious systems, or of deifying the principle of the universe. It is impossible to believe that the Spirit that pervades this infinite machine begat a son upon the body of a Jewish woman, or is angered at the consequences of that necessity which is a synonym of itself. All that miserable tale of the Devil and Eve, and an Intercessor, with the childish mummeries of the God of the Jews, is irreconcilable with the knowledge of the stars. The works of his fingers have borne witness against him.

The nearest of the fixed stars is inconceivably distant from the earth, and they are probably proportionally distant from each other. By a calculation of the velocity of light, Sirius is supposed to be at least 54,224,000,000,000 miles from the earth.¹ That which appears only like a thin and silvery cloud streaking the heaven, is in effect composed of innumerable clusters of suns, each shining with its own light, and illuminating numbers of planets that revolve around them. Millions and millions of suns are ranged around us, all attended by innumerable worlds, yet calm, regular, and harmonious, all keeping the paths of immutable necessity.

IV.—PAGE 34.

These are the hired bravos who defend
 The tyrant's throne.

To employ murder as a means of justice, is an idea which a man of an enlightened mind will not dwell upon with pleasure. To march forth in rank and file, and all the pomp of streamers and trumpets, for the

¹ See Nicholson's Encyclopedia, art. Light.

purpose of shooting at our fellow-men as a mark ; to inflict upon them all the variety of wound and anguish ; to leave them weltering in their blood ; to wander over the field of desolation, and count the number of the dying and the dead,—are employments which in thesis we may maintain to be necessary, but which no good man will contemplate with gratulation and delight. A battle we suppose is won :—thus truth is established, thus the cause of justice is confirmed ! It surely requires no common sagacity to discern the connexion between this immense heap of calamities and the assertion of truth or the maintenance of justice.

Kings, and ministers of state, the real authors of the calamity, sit unmolested in their cabinet, while those against whom the fury of the storm is directed are, for the most part, persons who have been trepanned into the service, or who are dragged unwillingly from their peaceful homes into the field of battle. A soldier is a man whose business it is to kill those who never offended him, and who are the innocent martyrs of other men's iniquities. Whatever may become of the abstract question of the justifiableness of war, it seems impossible that the soldier should not be a depraved and unnatural being.

To these more serious and momentous considerations it may be proper to add a recollection of the ridiculousness of the military character. Its first constituent is obedience : a soldier is, of all descriptions of men, the most completely a machine ; yet his profession inevitably teaches him something of dogmatism, swaggering, and self-consequence : he is like the puppet of a showman, who, at the very time he is made to strut and swell and display the most farcical airs, we perfectly know cannot assume the most insignificant gesture, advance either to the right or the left, but as he is moved by his exhibitor. —GODWIN'S *Enquirer*, Essay v.¹

I will here subjoin a little poem, so strongly expressive of my abhorrence of despotism and falsehood, that I fear lest it never again may be depicted so

¹ This not quite accurate transcript is from the *Essay Of Trades and Professions*, the fifth Essay in Part II. of *The Enquirer*.—ED.

vividly. This opportunity is perhaps the only one that ever will occur of rescuing it from oblivion.

FALSEHOOD AND VICE :

A DIALOGUE.

WHILST monarchs laughed upon their thrones
 To hear a famished nation's groans,
 And hugged the wealth wrung from the woe
 That makes its eyes and veins o'erflow,—
 Those thrones, high built upon the heaps
 Of bones where frenzied famine sleeps,
 Where slavery wields her scourge of iron,
 Red with mankind's unheeded gore,
 And war's mad fiends the scene environ,
 Mingling with shrieks a drunken roar, 10
 There Vice and Falsehood took their stand,
 High raised above the unhappy land.

FALSEHOOD.

Brother ! arise from the dainty fare,
 Which thousands have toiled and bled to bestow ;
 A finer feast for thy hungry ear
 Is the news that I bring of human woe.

VICE.

And, secret one, what hast thou done,
 To compare, in thy tumid pride, with me ?
 I, whose career, through the blasted year,
 Has been tracked by despair and agony. 20

FALSEHOOD.

What have I done !—I have torn the robe
 From baby truth's unsheltered form,
 And round the desolated globe
 Borne safely the bewildering charm :
 My tyrant-slaves to a dungeon-floor
 Have bound the fearless innocent,
 And streams of fertilizing gore
 Flow from her bosom's hideous rent,
 Which this unfailing dagger gave
 I dread that blood !—no more—this day 30
 Is ours, though her eternal ray
 Must shine upon our grave.

Yet know, proud Vice, had I not given
 To thee the robe I stole from heaven,
 Thy shape of ugliness and fear
 Had never gained admission here.

VICE.

And know that, had I disdained to toil,
 But sate in my loathsome cave the while,
 And ne'er to these hateful sons of heaven,
 GOLD, MONARCHY, and MURDER, given ; 40
 Hadst thou with all thine art essayed
 One of thy games then to have played,
 With all thine overweening boast,
 Falsehood ! I tell thee thou hadst lost !—
 Yet wherefore this dispute ?—we tend,
 Fraternal, to one common end ;
 In this cold grave beneath my feet,
 Will our hopes, our fears, and our labours, meet.

FALSEHOOD.

I brought my daughter, RELIGION, on earth :
 She smothered Reason's babes in their birth, 50
 But dreaded their mother's eye severe,—
 So the crocodile slunk off slyly in fear,
 And loosed her bloodhounds from the den. . . .
 They started from dreams of slaughtered men,
 And, by the light of her poison eye,
 Did her work o'er the wide earth frightfully :
 The dreadful stench of her torches' flare,
 Fed with human fat, polluted the air :
 The curses, the shrieks, the ceaseless cries
 Of the many-mingling miseries, 60
 As on she trod, ascended high
 And trumpeted my victory !—
 Brother, tell what thou hast done.

VICE.

I have extinguished the noon-day sun,
 In the carnage-smoke of battles won :
 Famine, murder, hell and power
 Were glutted in that glorious hour
 Which searchless fate had stamped for me
 With the seal of her security. . . .
 For the bloated wretch on yonder throne 70
 Commanded the bloody fray to rise.
 Like me he joyed at the stifled moan

Wrung from a nation's miseries ;
 While the snakes, whose slime even him *defiled*,
 In ecstasies of malice smiled :
 They thought 'twas theirs,—but mine the deed !
 Theirs is the toil, but mine the meed—
 Ten thousand victims madly bleed.
 They dream that tyrants goad them there
 With poisonous war to taint the air : 80
 These tyrants, on their beds of thorn,
 Swell with the thoughts of murderous fame,
 And with their gains to lift my name
 Restless they plan from night to morn :
 I—I do all ; without my aid
 Thy daughter, that relentless maid,
 Could never o'er a death-bed urge
 The fury of her venom'd scourge.

FALSEHOOD.

Brother, well :—the world is ours ;
 And whether thou or I have won, 90
 The pestilence expectant lours
 On all beneath yon blasted sun.
 Our joys, our toils, our honours meet
 In the milk-white and wormy winding-sheet :
 A short-lived hope, unceasing care,
 Some heartless scraps of godly prayer,
 A moody curse, and a frenzied sleep,
 Ere gapes the grave's unclosing deep,
 A tyrant's dream, a coward's start,
 The ice that clings to a priestly heart, 100
 A judge's frown, a courtier's smile,
 Make the great whole for which we toil ;
 And, brother, whether thou or I
 Have done the work of misery,
 It little boots : thy toil and pain,
 Without my aid, were more than vain ;
 And but for thee I ne'er had sate
 The guardian of heaven's palace gate.

V.—PAGE 37.

Thus do the generations of the earth
 Go to the grave and issue from the womb.
 One generation passeth away and another gene-

ration cometh, but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south and turneth about unto the north, it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whence the rivers come, thither shall they return again.

Ecclesiastes, chap. i.

V.—PAGE 37.

Even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scattered on the forest soil.

Οἴη περ φύλλων γενεή, τούτδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
Φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δὲ θ' ἔλλη
Τηλεθώωσα φύει, ἴαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη·
Ὡς ἀνδρῶν γενεή, ἣ μὲν φύει, ἣ δ' ἀπολήγει.

ΙΑΙΑΔ. Ζ'. l. 146.

V.—PAGE 38.

The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings.

Suave mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis
E terrâ magnum alterius spectare laborem;
Non quia vexari quemquam 'st jucunda voluptas,
Sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave 'st.
Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri,
Per campos instructa, tua sine parte pericli;
Sed nil dulcius est bene quam munita tenere
Edita doctrina sapientum templa serena;
Despicere unde queas alios, passim que videre
Errare atque viam palanteis querere vitæ;
Certare ingenio; contendere nobilitate;
Nocteis atque dies niti præstante labore
Ad summas emergere opes, rerum que potiri.
O miseras hominum menteis! O pectora cæca!

Luc. lib. ii.

V.—PAGE 40.

And statesmen boast
Of wealth!

There is no real wealth but the labour of man. Were the mountains of gold and the valleys of silver, the world would not be one grain of corn the richer; no one comfort would be added to the human race. In consequence of our consideration for the precious metals, one man is enabled to heap to himself luxuries at the expense of the necessaries of his neighbour; a system admirably fitted to produce all the varieties of disease and crime, which never fail to characterize the two extremes of opulence and penury. A speculator takes pride to himself as the promoter of his country's prosperity, who employs a number of hands in the manufacture of articles avowedly destitute of use, or subservient only to the unhallowed cravings of luxury and ostentation. The nobleman, who employs the peasants of his neighbourhood in building his palaces, until "*jam pauca aratro jugera, regie moles relinquunt*," flatters himself that he has gained the title of a patriot by yielding to the impulses of vanity. The show and pomp of courts adduce the same apology for its continuance; and many a fête has been given, many a woman has eclipsed her beauty by her dress, to benefit the labouring poor and to encourage trade. Who does not see that this is a remedy which aggravates, whilst it palliates the countless diseases of society? The poor are set to labour,—for what? Not the food for which they famish: not the blankets for want of which their babes are frozen by the cold of their miserable hovels; not those comforts of civilization without which civilized man is far more miserable than the meanest savage; oppressed as he is by all its insidious evils, within the daily and taunting prospect of its innumerable benefits assiduously exhibited before him:—no; for the pride of power, for the miserable isolation of pride, for the false pleasures of the hundredth part of society. No greater evidence is afforded of the wide-extended and radical mistakes of civilized man than this fact: those arts which are essential to his very being are held in the greatest contempt; em-

ployments are lucrative in an inverse ratio to their usefulness¹: the jeweller, the toyman, the actor gains fame and wealth by the exercise of his useless and ridiculous art; whilst the cultivator of the earth, he without whom society must cease to subsist, struggles through contempt and penury, and perishes by that famine which, but for his unceasing exertions, would annihilate the rest of mankind.

I will not insult common sense by insisting on the doctrine of the natural equality of man. The question is not concerning its desirableness, but its practicability: so far as it is practicable, it is desirable. That state of human society which approaches nearer to an equal partition of its benefits and evils should, *ceteris paribus*, be preferred: but so long as we conceive that a wanton expenditure of human labour, not for the necessities, not even for the luxuries of the mass of society, but for the egotism and ostentation of a few of its members, is defensible on the ground of public justice, so long we neglect to approximate to the redemption of the human race.

Labour is required for physical, and leisure for moral improvement: from the former of these advantages the rich, and from the latter the poor, by the inevitable conditions of their respective situations, are precluded. A state which should combine the advantages of both, would be subjected to the evils of neither. He that is deficient in firm health, or vigorous intellect, is but half a man: hence it follows, that, to subject the labouring classes to unnecessary labour, is wantonly depriving them of any opportunities of intellectual improvement; and that the rich are heaping up for their own mischief the disease, lassitude and enmity by which their existence is rendered an intolerable burthen.

English reformers exclaim against sinecures,—but the true pension list is the rent-roll of the landed proprietors: wealth is a power usurped by the few, to compel the many to labour for their benefit. The laws which support this system derive their force from the ignorance and credulity of its victims: they are the result of a conspiracy of the few against the

¹ See Rousseau, *De l'Inégalité parmi les Hommes*, note 7.

many, who are themselves obliged to purchase this pre-eminence by the loss of all real comfort.

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The commodities that substantially contribute to the subsistence of the human species form a very short catalogue: they demand from us but a slender portion of industry. If these only were produced, and sufficiently produced, the species of man would be continued. If the labour necessarily required to produce them were equitably divided among the poor, and, still more, if it were equitably divided among all, each man's share of labour would be light, and his portion of leisure would be ample. There was a time when this leisure would have been of small comparative value: it is to be hoped that the time will come, when it will be applied to the most important purposes. Those hours which are not required for the production of the necessaries of life may be devoted to the cultivation of the understanding, the enlarging our stock of knowledge, the refining our taste, and thus opening to us new and more exquisite sources of enjoyment.

* * * * *

It was perhaps necessary that a period of monopoly and oppression should subsist, before a period of cultivated equality could subsist. Savages perhaps would never have been excited to the discovery of truth and the invention of art, but by the narrow motives which such a period affords. But surely, after the savage state has ceased, and men have set out in the glorious career of discovery and invention, monopoly and oppression cannot be necessary to prevent them from returning to a state of barbarism.—GODWIN'S *Enquirer*, Essay II. See also *Pol. Jus.*, book viii. chap. ii.¹

It is a calculation of this admirable author, that all the conveniences of civilized life might be produced, if society would divide the labour equally among its members, by each individual being employed in labour two hours during the day.

¹ This extract, only slightly inaccurate, is from the *Essay Of Avarice and Profusion* in Part II. of *The Enquirer*. The reference to Godwin's *Political Justice* is wrongly given in Shelley's private issue of *Queen Mab* as to "chap. 11."—ED.

V.—PAGE 40.

or religion

Drives his wife raving mad.

I am acquainted with a lady of considerable accomplishments, and the mother of a numerous family, whom the Christian religion has goaded to incurable insanity. A parallel case is, I believe, within the experience of every physician.

Nam jam sæpe homines patriam, carosque parentes
Prodiderunt, vitare Acherusia templa petentes.

LUCRETIVS.

V.—PAGE 42.

Even love is sold.

Not even the intercourse of the sexes is exempt from the despotism of positive institution. Law pretends even to govern the indisciplinable wanderings of passion, to put fetters on the clearest deductions of reason, and, by appeals to the will, to subdue the involuntary affections of our nature. Love is inevitably consequent upon the perception of loveliness. Love withers under constraint: its very essence is liberty: it is compatible neither with obedience, jealousy, nor fear: it is there most pure, perfect, and unlimited, where its votaries live in confidence, equality and unreserve.

How long then ought the sexual connexion to last? what law ought to specify the extent of the grievances which should limit its duration? A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other: any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection, would be a most intolerable tyranny, and the most unworthy of toleration. How odious an usurpation of the right of private judgment should that law be considered, which should make the ties of friendship indissoluble, in spite of the caprices, the inconstancy, the fallibility, and capacity for improvement of the human mind. And by so much would the fetters of love be heavier and more unendurable than those of friendship, as love is more vehement and capricious,

more dependent on those delicate peculiarities of imagination, and less capable of reduction to the ostensible merits of the object.

The state of society in which we exist is a mixture of feudal savageness and imperfect civilization. The narrow and unenlightened morality of the Christian religion is an aggravation of these evils. It is not even until lately that mankind have admitted that happiness is the sole end of the science of ethics, as of all other sciences; and that the fanatical idea of mortifying the flesh for the love of God has been discarded. I have heard, indeed, an ignorant collegian adduce, in favour of Christianity, its hostility to every worldly feeling!¹

But if happiness be the object of morality, of all human unions and disunions; if the worthiness of every action is to be estimated by the quantity of pleasurable sensation it is calculated to produce, then the connexion of the sexes is so long sacred as it contributes to the comfort of the parties, and is naturally dissolved when its evils are greater than its benefits. There is nothing immoral in this separation. Constancy has nothing virtuous in itself, independently of the pleasure it confers, and partakes of the temporizing spirit of vice in proportion as it endures tamely moral defects of magnitude in the object of its indiscreet choice. Love is free: to promise for ever to love the same woman, is not less absurd than to promise to believe the same creed: such a vow, in both cases, excludes us from all enquiry. The language of the votarist is this: The woman I now love may be infinitely inferior to many others; the creed I now profess

¹ The first Christian emperor made a law by which seduction was punished with death: if the female pleaded her own consent, she also was punished with death; if the parents endeavoured to screen the criminals, they were banished and their estates were confiscated; the slaves who might be accessory were burned alive, or forced to swallow melted lead. The very offspring of an illegal love were involved in the consequences of the sentence.—GIBBON'S *Decline and Fall*, &c., vol. ii. page 210. See also, for the hatred of the primitive Christians to love and even marriage, page 269.

may be a mass of errors and absurdities ; but I exclude myself from all future information as to the amiability of the one and the truth of the other, resolving blindly, and in spite of conviction, to adhere to them. Is this the language of delicacy and reason? Is the love of such a frigid heart of more worth than its belief?

The present system of constraint does no more, in the majority of instances, than make hypocrites or open enemies. Persons of delicacy and virtue, unhappily united to one whom they find it impossible to love, spend the loveliest season of their life in unproductive efforts to appear otherwise than they are, for the sake of the feelings of their partner or the welfare of their mutual offspring : those of less generosity and refinement openly avow their disappointment, and linger out the remnant of that union, which only death can dissolve, in a state of incurable bickering and hostility. The early education of their children takes its colour from the squabbles of the parents ; they are nursed in a systematic school of ill humour, violence, and falsehood. Had they been suffered to part at the moment when indifference rendered their union irksome, they would have been spared many years of misery : they would have connected themselves more suitably, and would have found that happiness in the society of more congenial partners which is for ever denied them by the despotism of marriage. They would have been separately useful and happy members of society, who, whilst united, were miserable and rendered misanthropical by misery. The conviction that wedlock is indissoluble holds out the strongest of all temptations to the perverse : they indulge without restraint in acrimony, and all the little tyrannies of domestic life, when they know that their victim is without appeal. If this connexion were put on a rational basis, each would be assured that habitual ill temper would terminate in separation, and would check this vicious and dangerous propensity.

Prostitution is the legitimate offspring of marriage and its accompanying errors. Women, for no other crime than having followed the dictates of a natural appetite, are driven with fury from the comforts and sympathies of society. It is less venial than murder ; and the punishment which is inflicted on her who

destroys her child to escape reproach, is lighter than the life of agony and disease to which the prostitute is irrecoverably doomed. Has a woman obeyed the impulse of unerring nature;—society declares war against her, pitiless and eternal war: she must be the tame slave, she must make no reprisals; theirs is the right of persecution, hers the duty of endurance. She lives a life of infamy: the loud and bitter laugh of scorn scares her from all return. She dies of long and lingering disease: yet *she* is in fault, *she* is the criminal, *she* the froward and untameable child,—and society, forsooth, the pure and virtuous matron, who casts her as an abortion from her undefiled bosom! Society avenges herself on the criminals of her own creation; she is employed in anathematizing the vice to-day, which yesterday she was the most zealous to teach. Thus is formed one tenth of the population of London: meanwhile the evil is twofold. Young men, excluded by the fanatical idea of chastity from the society of modest and accomplished women, associate with these vicious and miserable beings, destroying thereby all those exquisite and delicate sensibilities whose existence cold-hearted worldlings have denied; annihilating all genuine passion, and debasing that to a selfish feeling which is the excess of generosity and devotedness. Their body and mind alike crumble into a hideous wreck of humanity; idiocy and disease become perpetuated in their miserable offspring, and distant generations suffer for the bigoted morality of their forefathers. Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality; it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half of the human race to misery, that some few may monopolize according to law. A system could not well have been devised more studiously hostile to human happiness than marriage.

I conceive that, from the abolition of marriage, the fit and natural arrangement of sexual connexion would result. I by no means assert that the intercourse would be promiscuous: on the contrary; it appears, from the relation of parent to child, that this union is generally of long duration, and marked above all others with generosity and self-devotion. But this is a subject which it is perhaps premature to discuss. That which will result from the abolition of marriage

will be natural and right, because choice and change will be exempted from restraint. In fact religion and morality as they now stand compose a practical code of misery and servitude: the genius of human happiness must tear every leaf from the accursed book of God, ere man can read the inscription on his heart. How would morality, dressed up in stiff stays and finery, start from her own disgusting image, should she look in the mirror of nature!



VI.—PAGE 46.

To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there.

The north polar star, to which the axis of the earth, in its present state of obliquity, points. It is exceedingly probable, from many considerations, that this obliquity will gradually diminish, until the equator coincides with the ecliptic: the nights and days will then become equal on the earth throughout the year, and probably the seasons also. There is no great extravagance in presuming that the progress of the perpendicularity of the poles may be as rapid as the progress of intellect; or that there should be a perfect identity between the moral and physical improvement of the human species. It is certain that wisdom is not compatible with disease, and that, in the present state of the climates of the earth, health, in the true and comprehensive sense of the word, is out of the reach of civilized man. Astronomy teaches us that the earth is now in its progress, and that the poles are every year becoming more and more perpendicular to the ecliptic. The strong evidence afforded by the history of mythology, and geological researches, that some event of this nature has taken place already, affords a strong presumption that this progress is not merely an oscillation, as has been surmised by some late astronomers.¹ Bones of animals peculiar to the torrid zone have been found in the north of Siberia, and on the banks of the river Ohio. Plants have been found in the fossil state in the interior of Germany,

¹ Laplace, *Système du Monde*.

which demand the present climate of Hindostan for their production.¹ The researches of M. Bailly² establish the existence of a people who inhabited a tract in Tartary 49° north latitude, of greater antiquity than either the Indians, the Chinese, or the Chaldeans, from whom these nations derived their sciences and theology. We find, from the testimony of ancient writers, that Britain, Germany and France were much colder than at present, and that their great rivers were annually frozen over. Astronomy teaches us also, that since this period the obliquity of the earth's position has been considerably diminished.

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VI.—PAGE 50.

No atom of this turbulence fulfils
A vague and unecessitated task,
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.

Deux exemples serviront à nous rendre plus sensible le principe qui vient d'être posé ; nous emprunterons l'une du physique et l'autre du moral. Dans un tourbillon de poussière qu'éleve un vent impetueux, quelque confus qu'il paroisse à nos yeux ; dans la plus affreuse tempête excité par des vents opposés qui soulèvent les flots, il n'y a pas une seule molécule de poussière ou d'eau qui soit placé au *hazard*, qui n'ait sa cause sullisante pour occuper le lieu où elle se trouve, et qui n'agisse rigourement de la manière dont elle doit agir. Un géomètre qui connoitroit exactement les différentes forces qui agissent dans ces deux cas, et les propriétés des molécules qui sont mues, démontreroit que d'après des causes donnés, chaque molécule agit précisément comme elle doit agir, et ne peut agir autrement qu'elle ne fait.

Dans les convulsions terribles qui agitent quelquefois les sociétés politiques, et qui produisent souvent le renversement d'un empire, il n'y a pas une seule action, une seule parole, une seule pensée, une seule volonté, une seule passion dans les agens qui con-

¹ Cabanis, *Rapports du Physique et du Moral de l'Homme*, vol. ii. page 406.

² *Lettres sur les Sciences, à Voltaire.* Bailly.

courent à la révolution comme destructeurs ou comme victimes, qui ne soit nécessaire, qui n'agisse comme elle doit agir, qui n'opère infalliblement les effets qu'elle doit opérer, suivant la place qu'occupent ces agens dans ce tourbillon moral. Cela paroîtroit évident pour une intelligence qui sera en état de saisir et d'apprécier toutes les actions et réactions des esprits et des corps de ceux qui contribuent à cette révolution. *Système de la Nature*, vol. i. page 44.

VI.—PAGE 51.

Necessity ! thou mother of the world !

He who asserts the doctrine of Necessity means that, contemplating the events which compose the moral and material universe, he beholds only an immense and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects, no one of which could occupy any other place than it does occupy, or acts in any other place than it does act. The idea of necessity is obtained by our experience of the connexion between objects, the uniformity of the operations of nature, the constant conjunction of similar events, and the consequent inference of one from the other. Mankind are therefore agreed in the admission of necessity, if they admit that these two circumstances take place in voluntary action. Motive is, to voluntary action in the human mind, what cause is to effect in the material universe. The word liberty, as applied to mind, is analogous to the word chance as applied to matter: they spring from an ignorance of the certainty of the conjunction of antecedents and consequents.

Every human being is irresistibly impelled to act precisely as he does act: in the eternity which preceded his birth a chain of causes was generated, which, operating under the name of motives, make it impossible that any thought of his mind, or any action of his life, should be otherwise than it is. Were the doctrine of Necessity false, the human mind would no longer be a legitimate object of science; from like causes it would be in vain that we should expect like effects; the strongest motive would no longer be paramount over the conduct; all knowledge would be

vague and indeterminate ; we could not predict with any certainty that we might not meet as an enemy to-morrow him with whom we have parted in friendship to-night ; the most probable inducements and the clearest reasonings would lose the invariable influence they possess. The contrary of this is demonstrably the fact. Similar circumstances produce the same unvariable effects. The precise character and motives of any man on any occasion being given, the moral philosopher could predict his actions with as much certainty as the natural philosopher could predict the effects of the mixture of any particular chemical substances. Why is the aged husbandman more experienced than the young beginner ? Because there is a uniform, undeniable necessity in the operations of the material universe. Why is the old statesman more skilful than the raw politician ? Because, relying on the necessary conjunction of motive and action, he proceeds to produce moral effects, by the application of those moral causes which experience has shown to be effectual. Some actions may be found to which we can attach no motives ; but these are the effects of causes with which we are unacquainted. Hence the relation which motive bears to voluntary action is that of cause to effect ; nor, placed in this point of view, is it or ever has it been the subject of popular or philosophical dispute. None but the few fanatics who are engaged in the herculean task of reconciling the justice of their God with the misery of man will longer outrage common sense by the supposition of an event without a cause, a voluntary action without a motive. History, politics, morals, criticism, all grounds of reasonings, all principles of science, alike assume the truth of the doctrine of Necessity. No farmer carrying his corn to market doubts the sale of it at the market price. The master of a manufactory no more doubts that he can purchase the human labour necessary for his purposes, than that his machinery will act as they have been accustomed to act.

But, whilst none have scrupled to admit necessity as influencing matter, many have disputed its dominion over mind. Independently of its militating with the received ideas of the justice of God, it is by no means obvious to a superficial enquiry. When the mind observes its own operations, it feels no con-

nexion of motive and action: but as we know "nothing more of causation than the constant conjunction of objects and the consequent inference of one from the other, as we find that these two circumstances are universally allowed to have place in voluntary action, we may be easily led to own that they are subjected to the necessity common to all causes." The actions of the will have a regular conjunction with circumstances and characters; motive is, to voluntary action, what cause is to effect. But the only idea we can form of causation is a constant conjunction of similar objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other: wherever this is the case necessity is clearly established.

The idea of liberty, applied metaphorically to the will, has sprung from a misconception of the meaning of the word power. What is power?—*id quod potest*, that which can produce any given effect. To deny power, is to say that nothing can or has the power to be or act. In the only true sense of the word power, it applies with equal force to the loadstone as to the human will. Do you think these motives, which I shall present, are powerful enough to rouse him? is a question just as common as, Do you think this lever has the power of raising this weight? The advocates of free-will assert that the will has the power of refusing to be determined by the strongest motive: but the strongest motive is that which, overcoming all others, ultimately prevails; this assertion therefore amounts to a denial of the will being ultimately determined by that motive which does determine it, which is absurd. But it is equally certain that a man cannot resist the strongest motive, as that he cannot overcome a physical impossibility.

The doctrine of Necessity tends to introduce a great change into the established notions of morality, and utterly to destroy religion. Reward and punishment must be considered, by the Necessarian, merely as motives which he would employ in order to procure the adoption or abandonment of any given line of conduct. Desert, in the present sense of the word, would no longer have any meaning; and he who should inflict pain upon another, for no better reason than that he deserved it, would only gratify his revenge under pretence of satisfying justice. It is not enough, says the advocate of free-will, that a

criminal should be prevented from a repetition of his crime: he should feel pain; and his torments, when justly inflicted, ought precisely to be proportioned to his fault. But utility is morality; that which is incapable of producing happiness is useless; and though the crime of Daniels must be condemned, yet the frightful torments which revenge, under the name of justice, inflicted on this unhappy man, cannot be supposed to have augmented, even at the long run, the stock of pleasurable sensation in the world. At the same time, the doctrine of Necessity does not in the least diminish our disapprobation of vice. The conviction which all feel, that a viper is a poisonous animal, and that a tiger is constrained, by the inevitable condition of his existence, to devour men, does not induce us to avoid them less sedulously, or, even more, to hesitate in destroying them: but he would surely be of a hard heart, who, meeting with a serpent on a desert island, or in a situation where it was incapable of injury, should wantonly deprive it of existence. A Necessarian is inconsequent to his own principles, if he indulges in hatred or contempt; the compassion which he feels for the criminal is unmingled with a desire of injuring him: he looks with an elevated and dreadless composure upon the links of the universal chain as they pass before his eyes; whilst cowardice, curiosity and inconsistency only assail him in proportion to the feebleness and indistinctness with which he has perceived and rejected the delusions of free-will.

Religion is the perception of the relation in which we stand to the principle of the universe. But if the principle of the universe be not an organic being, the model and prototype of man, the relation between it and human beings are absolutely none. Without some insight into its will respecting our actions, religion is nugatory and vain. But will is only a mode of animal mind; moral qualities also are such as only a human being can possess; to attribute them to the principle of the universe, is to annex to it properties incompatible with any possible definition of its nature. It is probable that the word God was originally only an expression denoting the unknown cause of the known events which men perceived in the universe. By the vulgar mistake of a metaphor for a real being, of a word for a thing, it became a

man, endowed with human qualities and governing the universe as an earthly monarch governs his kingdom. Their addresses to this imaginary being, indeed, are much in the same style as those of subjects to a king. They acknowledge his benevolence, deprecate his anger, and supplicate his favour.

But the doctrine of Necessity teaches us, that in no case could any event have happened otherwise than it did happen, and that, if God is the author of good, he is also the author of evil; that, if he is entitled to our gratitude for the one, he is entitled to our hatred for the other; that, admitting the existence of this hypothetic being, he is also subjected to the dominion of an immutable necessity. It is plain that the same arguments which prove that God is the author of food, light, and life, prove him also to be the author of poison, darkness, and death. The wide-wasting earthquake, the storm, the battle, and the tyranny, are attributable to this hypothetic being in the same degree as the fairest forms of nature, sunshine, liberty, and peace.

But we are taught, by the doctrine of Necessity, that there is neither good nor evil in the universe, otherwise than as the events to which we apply these epithets have relation to our own peculiar mode of being. Still less than with the hypothesis of a God, will the doctrine of Necessity accord with the belief of a future state of punishment. God made man such as he is, and then damned him for being so: for to say that God was the author of all good, and man the author of all evil, is to say that one man made a straight line and a crooked one, and another man made the incongruity.

ÆÆ

A Mahometan story, much to the present purpose, is recorded, wherein Adam and Moses are introduced disputing before God in the following manner. Thou, says Moses, art Adam, whom God created, and animated with the breath of life, and caused to be worshipped by the angels, and placed in Paradise, from whence mankind have been expelled for thy fault. Whereto Adam answered, Thou art Moses, whom God chose for his apostle, and entrusted with his word, by giving thee the tables of the law, and whom he vouchsafed to admit to discourse with himself.

I.

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How many years dost thou find that the law was written before I was created? Says Moses, Forty. And dost thou not find, replied Adam, these words therein, And Adam rebelled against his Lord and transgressed? Which Moses confessing, Dost thou therefore blame me, continued he, for doing that which God wrote of me that I should do, forty years before I was created, nay, for what was decreed concerning me fifty thousand years before the creation of heaven and earth?—SALE'S *Prelim. Disc. to the Koran*, page 164.

VII.—PAGE 52.

There is no God!¹

This negation must be understood solely to affect a creative Deity. The hypothesis of a pervading Spirit coeternal with the universe remains unshaken.

A close examination of the validity of the proofs adduced to support any proposition is the only secure way of attaining truth, on the advantages of which it is unnecessary to descant: our knowledge of the existence of a Deity is a subject of such importance that it cannot be too minutely investigated; in consequence of this conviction we proceed briefly and impartially to examine the proofs which have been adduced. It is necessary first to consider the nature of belief.

When a proposition is offered to the mind, it perceives the agreement or disagreement of the ideas of which it is composed. A perception of their agreement is termed *belief*. Many obstacles frequently prevent this perception from being immediate; these the mind attempts to remove in order that the perception may be distinct. The mind is active in the investigation, in order to perfect the

¹ This note opens with a revised reprint of *The Necessity of Atheism*, the tract of historical reputation, published by Shelley at Oxford, and made the proximate cause of his expulsion from the University. The variations in detail between the issue of 1811 and this reprint of 1813 are not inconsiderable.—ED.

state of perception of the relation which the component ideas of the proposition bear to each, which is passive: the investigation being confused with the perception, has induced many falsely to imagine that the mind is active in belief,—that belief is an act of volition,—in consequence of which it may be regulated by the mind. Pursuing, continuing this mistake, they have attached a degree of criminality to disbelief, of which, in its nature, it is incapable: it is equally incapable of merit.

Belief, then, is a passion, the strength of which, like every other passion, is in precise proportion to the degrees of excitement.

The degrees of excitement are three.

The senses are the sources of all knowledge to the mind; consequently their evidence claims the strongest assent.

The decision of the mind, founded upon our own experience, derived from these sources, claims the next degree.

The experience of others, which addresses itself to the former one, occupies the lowest degree.

(A graduated scale, on which should be marked the capabilities of propositions to approach to the test of the senses, would be a just barometer of the belief which ought to be attached to them.)

Consequently no testimony can be admitted which is contrary to reason; reason is founded on the evidence of our senses.

Every proof may be referred to one of these three divisions: it is to be considered what arguments we receive from each of them, which should convince us of the existence of a Deity.

1st. The evidence of the senses. If the Deity should appear to us, if he should convince our senses of his existence, this revelation would necessarily command belief. Those to whom the Deity has thus appeared have the strongest possible conviction of his existence. But the God of Theologians is incapable of local visibility.

2nd. Reason. It is urged that man knows that whatever is must either have had a beginning or have existed from all eternity: he also knows that whatever is not eternal must have had a cause. When this reasoning is applied to the universe, it is necessary to prove that it was created: until that is clearly

demonstrated, we may reasonably suppose that it has endured from all eternity. We must prove design before we can infer a designer. The only idea which we can form of causation is derivable from the constant conjunction of objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other. In a case where two propositions are diametrically opposite, the mind believes that which is least incomprehensible;—it is easier to suppose that the universe has existed from all eternity, than to conceive a being beyond its limits capable of creating it: if the mind sinks beneath the weight of one, is it an alleviation to increase the intolerability of the burthen?

The other argument, which is founded on a man's knowledge of his own existence, stands thus. A man knows not only that he now is, but that once he was not; consequently there must have been a cause. But our idea of causation is alone derivable from the constant conjunction of objects and the consequent inference of one from the other; and, reasoning experimentally, we can only infer from effects, causes exactly adequate to those effects. But there certainly is a generative power which is effected by certain instruments: we cannot prove that it is inherent in these instruments; nor is the contrary hypothesis capable of demonstration: we admit that the generative power is incomprehensible; but to suppose that the same effect is produced by an eternal, omniscient, omnipotent being, leaves the cause in the same obscurity, but renders it more incomprehensible.

3rd. Testimony. It is required that testimony should not be contrary to reason. The testimony that the Deity convinces the senses of men of his existence can only be admitted by us, if our mind considers it less probable that these men should have been deceived, than that the Deity should have appeared to them. Our reason can never admit the testimony of men, who not only declare that they were eye-witnesses of miracles, but that the Deity was irrational; for he commanded that he should be believed, he proposed the highest rewards for faith, eternal punishments for disbelief. We can only command voluntary actions; belief is not an act of volition; the mind is even passive, or involuntarily active; from this it is evident that we have no sufficient testimony, or rather that testimony is insufficient to

prove the being of a God. It has been before shown that it cannot be deduced from reason. They alone, then, who have been convinced by the evidence of the senses, can believe it.

Hence it is evident that, having no proofs from either of the three sources of conviction, the mind *cannot* believe the existence of a creative God: it is also evident that, as belief is a passion of the mind, no degree of criminality is attachable to disbelief, and that they only are reprehensible who neglect to remove the false medium through which their mind views any subject of discussion. Every reflecting mind must acknowledge that there is no proof of the existence of a Deity.¹

God is an hypothesis, and, as such, stands in need of proof: the *onus probandi* rests on the theist. Sir Isaac Newton says: *Hypotheses non fingo, quicquid enim ex phaenomenis non deducitur, hypothesis vocanda est, et hypothesis vel metaphysicæ, vel physicæ, vel qualitatum occultarum, seu mechanicæ, in philosophiâ locum non habent.* To all proofs of the existence of a creative God apply this valuable rule. We see a variety of bodies possessing a variety of powers: we merely know their effects; we are in a state of ignorance with respect to their essences and causes. These Newton calls the phenomena of things; but the pride of philosophy is unwilling to admit of its ignorance of their causes. From the phenomena, which are the objects of our senses, we attempt to infer a cause, which we call God, and gratuitously endow it with all negative and contradictory qualities. From this hypothesis we invent this general name, to conceal our ignorance of causes and essences. The being called God by no means answers with the conditions prescribed by Newton; it bears every mark of a veil woven by philosophical conceit, to hide the ignorance of philosophers even from themselves. They borrow the threads of its texture from the anthropomorphism of the vulgar. Words have been used by sophists for the same purposes, from the occult qualities of the peripatetics to the *effluvium* of Boyle and the *crinities* or *nebule* of Herschel. God is represented as infinite,

¹ It is at this point that the original tract *The Necessity of Atheism* ends with a "Q. E. D."—ED.

eternal, incomprehensible; he is contained under every prædicate in non that the logic of ignorance could fabricate. Even his worshippers allow that it is impossible to form any idea of him : they exclaim with the French poet,

Pour dire ce qu'il est, il faut être lui-même.

Æ

Lord Bacon says, that "atheism leaves to man reason, philosophy, natural piety, laws, reputation, and every thing that can serve to conduct him to virtue ; but superstition destroys all these, and erects itself into a tyranny over the understandings of men : hence atheism never disturbs the government, but renders man more clear-sighted, since he sees nothing beyond the boundaries of the present life." BACON'S *Moral Essays*.

La première théologie de l'homme lui fit d'abord craindre et adorer les élémens même, des objets matériels et grossiers ; il rendit ensuite ses hommages à des agens présidens aux élémens, à des génies inférieurs, à des héros, ou à des hommes doués de grands qualités. A force de réfléchir il crut simplifier les choses en soumettant la nature entière à un seul agent, à un esprit, à une âme universelle, qui mettoit cette nature et ses parties en mouvement. En remontant des causes en causes, les mortels ont fini par ne rien voir ; et c'est dans cette obscurité qu'ils ont placé leur Dieu ; c'est dans cette abîme ténébreux que leur imagination inquiète travaille toujours à se fabriquer des chimères, que les alligeront jusqu'à ce que la connoissance de la nature les détrompe des phantômes qu'ils ont toujours si vainement adorés.

Si nous voulons nous rendre compte de nos idées sur la Divinité, nous serons obligés de convenir que, par le mot *Dieu*, les hommes n'ont jamais pu désigner que la cause la plus cachée, la plus éloignée, la plus inconnue des effets qu'ils voyoient : ils ne font usage de ce mot, que lorsque le jeu des causes naturelles et connues cesse d'être visible pour eux ; dès qu'ils perdent le fil de ces causes, ou dès que leur esprit ne peut plus en suivre la chaîne ils tranchent leur difficulté, et terminent leur recherches en appelant Dieu la dernière des causes, c'est-à-dire celle qui est au-delà de

toutes les causes qu'ils connoissent ; ainsi ils ne font qu'assigner une dénomination vague à une cause ignorée, à laquelle leur paresse ou les bornes de leurs connoissances les forent de s'arrêter. Toutes les fois qu'on nous dit que Dieu est l'auteur de quelque phénomène, cela signifie qu'on ignore comment un tel phénomène a pu s'opérer par le secours des forces ou des causes que nous connoissons dans la nature. C'est ainsi que le commun des hommes, dont l'ignorance est la partage, attribue à la Divinité non seulement les effets inusités que les frappent, mais encore les événemens les plus simples, dont les causes sont les plus faciles à connoître pour quiconque a pu les méditer. En un mot, l'homme a toujours respecté les causes inconnues des effets surprenans, que son ignorance l'empêchoit de démêler. Ce fut sur les débus de la nature que les hommes élevèrent le colosse imaginaire de la Divinité.

Si l'ignorance de la nature donna la naissance aux dieux, la connoissance de la nature est faite pour les détruire. A mesure que l'homme s'instruit, ses forces et ses ressources augmentent avec ses lumières ; les sciences, les arts conservateurs, l'industrie, lui fournissent des secours ; l'expérience le rassure ou lui procure des moyens de résister aux efforts de biens des causes qui cessent de l'alarmer dès qu'il les a connues. En un mot, ses terreurs se dissipent dans la même proportion que son esprit s'éclaire. L'homme instruit cesse d'être superstitieux.

Ce n'est jamais que sur parole que des peuples entiers adorent le Dieu de leurs pères et de leurs prêtres : l'autorité, la confiance, la soumission, et l'habitude leur tiennent lieu de conviction et de preuves ; ils se prosternent et prient, parce que leurs pères leur ont appris à se prosterner et prier : mais pourquoi ceux-ci se sont-ils mis à genoux ? C'est que dans les temps éloignés leurs législateurs et leurs guides leur en ont fait un devoir. "Adorez et croyez," ont-ils dit, "des dieux que vous ne pouvez comprendre ; rapportez-vous en à notre sagesse profonde ; nous en savons plus que vous sur la divinité." Mais pourquoi m'en rapporterai-je à vous ? C'est que Dieu le veut ainsi, c'est que Dieu vous punira si vous osez résister. Mais ce Dieu n'est-il donc pas la chose en question ? Cependant les hommes se sont toujours payés de ce cercle vicieux ; la paresse de leur esprit

leur fit trouver plus court de s'en rapporter au jugement des autres. Toutes les notions religieuses sont fondées uniquement sur l'autorité ; toutes les religions du monde défendent l'examen et ne veulent pas que l'on raisonne ; c'est l'autorité qui veut qu'on croie en Dieu ; ce Dieu n'est lui-même fondé que sur l'autorité de quelques hommes qui prétendent le connoître, et venir de sa part pour l'annoncer à la terre. Un Dieu fait par les hommes, a sans doute besoin des hommes pour se faire connoître aux hommes.

Ne seroit-ce donc que pour des prêtres, des inspirés, des metaphysiciens que seroit réservée la conviction de l'existence d'un Dieu, que l'on dit néanmoins si nécessaire à tout le genre-humain ? Mais trouvons-nous de l'harmonie entre les opinions théologiques des différens inspirés, ou des penseurs repandus sur la terre ? Ceux même que font profession d'adorer le même Dieu, sont-ils d'accord sur son compte ? Sont-ils contents des preuves que leurs collègues apportent de son existence ? Souscrivent-ils unanimement aux idées qu'ils présentent sur sa nature, sur sa conduite, sur la façon d'entendre ses prétendus oracles ? Est-il une contrée sur la terre, où la science de Dieu se soit réellement perfectionnée ? A-t-elle pris quelque part la consistance et l'uniformité que nous voyons prendre aux connoissances humaines, aux arts les plus futiles, aux métiers les plus méprisés ? des mots *d'esprit d'immatérialité*, de *création*, de *prédestination*, de *grâce* ; cette foule de distinctions subtiles dont la théologie s'est partout remplie dans quelques pays, ces inventions si ingénieuses, imaginées par des penseurs que se sont succédés depuis tant de siècles, n'ont fait, hélas ! qu'embrouiller les choses, et jamais la science le plus nécessaire aux hommes n'a jusqu'ici pu acquérir la moindre fixité. Depuis des milliers d'années, ces rêveurs oisifs se sont perpétuellement relayés pour méditer la Divinité, pour deviner ses voies cachées, pour inventer des hypothèses propres à développer cette énigme importante. Leur peu de succès n'a point découragé la vanité théologique ; toujours on a parlé de Dieu : on s'est égorgé pour lui, et cet être sublime demeure toujours le plus ignoré et le plus disconté.

Les hommes auroient été trop heureux, si, se bornant aux objets visibles qui les intéressent, ils eussent employé à perfectionner leurs sciences réelles, leurs

loix, leur morale, leur éducation, la moitié des efforts qu'ils ont mis dans leurs recherches sur la Divinité. Ils auroient été bien plus sages encore, et plus fortunés, s'ils eussent pu consentir à laisser leurs guides découverts se quereller entre eux, et sonder des profondeurs capables de les étourdir, sans se mêler de leurs disputes insensées. Mais il est de l'essence de l'ignorance d'attacher de l'importance à ce qu'elle ne comprend pas. La vanité humaine fait que l'esprit se roidit contre des difficultés. Plus un objet se dérobera à nos yeux, plus nous faisons d'efforts pour le saisir, parce que dès-lors il aiguillonne notre orgueil, il excite notre curiosité, il nous paroît intéressant. En combattant pour son Dieu chacun ne combattoit en effet que pour les intérêts de sa propre vanité, qui de toutes les passions produits par la mal organisation de la société, est la plus prompte à s'allarmer, et la plus propre à produire des très grands folies.

Si écartant pour un moment les idées facheuses que la théologie nous donne d'un Dieu capricieux, dont les décrets partiels et despotiques décident du sort des humains, nous ne voulons fixer nos yeux que sur la bonté prétendue, que tous les hommes, même en tremblant devant ce Dieu, s'accordent à lui donner; si nous lui supposons le projet qu'on lui prête, de n'avoir travaillé que pour sa propre gloire, d'exiger les hommages des êtres intelligens; de ne chercher dans ses œuvres que le bien-être du genre-humain; comment concilier ces vues et ces dispositions avec l'ignorance vraiment invincible dans laquelle ce Dieu, si glorieux et si bon, laisse la plupart des hommes sur son compte? Si Dieu veut être connu, chéri, remercié, que ne se montre-t-il sous des traits favorables à tous ces êtres intelligens dont il veut être aimé et adoré? Pourquoi ne point se manifester à toute la terre d'une façon non équivoque, bien plus capable de nous convaincre, que ces révélations particuliers qui semblent accuser la Divinité d'une partialité facheuse pour quelqu'un de ses créatures? Le tout-puissant n'auroit-il donc pas des moyens plus convainquans de se montrer aux hommes que ces métamorphoses ridicules, ces incarnations prétendues, qui nous sont attestées par des écrivains si peu d'accord entre eux dans les récits qu'ils en font? Au lieu de tant de miracles, inventés pour prouver la mission divine de tant de législateurs, révéérés par les différens peuples du monde,

le souverain des esprits ne pouvoit-il pas convaincre tout d'un coup l'esprit humain des choses qu'il a voulu lui faire connoître? Au lieu de suspendre un soleil dans la voûte du firmament; au lieu de repandre sans ordre les étoiles, et les constellations qui remplissent l'espace, n'eût-il pas été plus conforme aux vues d'un Dieu si jaloux de sa gloire et si bien intentionné pour l'homme; d'écrire d'une façon non sujette à dispute, son nom, ses attributs, ses volontés permanentes en caractères ineffaçables, et lisibles également pour tous les habitants de la terre? Personne alors n'auroit pu douter de l'existence d'un Dieu, de ses volontés claires, de ses intentions visibles. Sous les yeux de ce Dieu si terrible personne n'auroit eu l'audace de violer ses ordonnances; nul mortel n'eût osé se mettre dans le cas d'attirer sa colère: enfin nul homme n'eût eu le front d'en imposer en son nom, ou d'interpréter ses volontés suivant ses propres phantasies.

En effet, quand même on admetteroit l'existence du Dieu théologique et la réalité des attributs si discordans qu'on lui donne, l'on ne peut en rien conclure, pour autorizer la conduite ou les cultes qu'on prescrit de lui rendre. La théologie est vraiment *le tonneau des Danaïdes*. A force de qualités contradictoires et d'assertions hasardées, elle a, pour ainsi dire, tellement garroté son Dieu qu'elle l'a mis dans l'impossibilité d'agir. S'il est infiniment bon quelle raison aurions-nous de le craindre? S'il est infiniment sage, de quoi nous inquiéter sur notre sort? S'il sait tout, pourquoi l'avertir de nos besoins, et le fatiguer de nos prières? S'il est partout, pourquoi lui élever des temples? S'il est maître de tout, pourquoi lui faire des sacrifices et des offrandes? S'il est juste, comment croire qu'il punisse des créatures qu'il a rempli de foiblesses? Si la grace fait tout en elles, quelle raison auroit-il de les récompenser? S'il est tout-puissant, comment l'offenser, comment lui résister? S'il est raisonnable comment se mettroit-il en colère contre des aveugles, à qui il a laissé la liberté de déraisonner? S'il est immuable, de quel droit prétendrions-nous faire changer ses decrets? S'il est inconcevable, pourquoi nous en occuper? **S'IL A PARLÉ, POURQUOI L'UNIVERS N'EST-IL PAS CONVAINCU?** Si la connoissance d'un Dieu est la plus nécessaire, pourquoi n'est-elle pas la plus évidente, et la plus claire.

Système de la Nature, London, 1781.

The enlightened and benevolent Pliny thus publicly professes himself an atheist:—Quapropter effigiem Dei, formamque querere, imbecillitatis humanæ reor. Quisquis est Deus (si modo est alius) et quacumque in parte, totus est sensus, totus est visus, totus auditus, totus animæ, totus animi, totus sui. * * * * * Imperfectæ vero in homine naturæ præcipua solatia ne deum quidem posse omnia. Namque nec sibi potest mortem consciscere, si velit, quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vita pœnis: nec mortales æternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos; nec facere ut qui vixit non vixerit, qui honores gessit non gesserit, nullumque habere in præteritum jus, præterquam oblivionis, atque (ut faceret quoque argumentis societas hæc eum deo copuletur) ut bis dena viginta non sint, et multa similiter efficere non posse.—Per quæ, declaratur haud dubie, naturæ potentiam id quoque esse, quod Deum vocamus.

Plin. Nat. His. cap. de Deo.

The consistent Newtonian is necessarily an atheist. See Sir W. Drummond's *Academical Questions*, chap. iii.—Sir W. seems to consider the atheism to which it leads as a sufficient presumption of the falsehood of the system of gravitation: but surely it is more consistent with the good faith of philosophy to admit a deduction from facts than an hypothesis incapable of proof, although it might militate with the obstinate preconceptions of the mob. Had this author, instead of inveighing against the guilt and absurdity of atheism, demonstrated its falsehood, his conduct would have been more suited to the modesty of the sceptic and the toleration of the philosopher.

MS

Omnia enim per Dei potentiam facta sunt: imo, quia natura potentia nulla est nisi ipsa Dei potentia, artem est nos eatemus Dei potentiam non intelligere, quatenus causas naturales ignoramus; adeoque stulte ad eandem Dei potentiam recurritur, quando rei alienjus, causam naturalem, sive est, ipsam Dei potentiam ignoramus.

SPINOSA, *Tract. Theologico-Pol.* chap. i. page 14.

VII.—PAGE 54.

Ahasuerus, rise !¹

Ahasuerus the Jew crept forth from the dark cave of Mount Carmel. Near two thousand years have elapsed since he was first goaded by never-ending restlessness to rove the globe from pole to pole. When our Lord was wearied with the burthen of his ponderous cross, and wanted to rest before the door of Ahasuerus, the unfeeling wretch drove him away with brutality. The Saviour of mankind staggered, sinking under the heavy load, but uttered no complaint. An angel of death appeared before Ahasuerus, and exclaimed indignantly, "Barbarian! thou hast denied rest to the Son of Man: be it denied thee also, until he comes to judge the world."

A black daemon, let loose from hell upon Ahasuerus, goads him now from country to country; he is denied the consolation which death affords, and precluded from the rest of the peaceful grave.

Ahasuerus crept forth from the dark cave of Mount Carmel—he shook the dust from his beard—and taking up one of the skulls heaped there, hurled it down the eminence: it rebounded from the earth in shivered atoms. "This was my father!" roared Ahasuerus. Seven more skulls rolled down from rock to rock; while the infuriate Jew, following them with ghastly looks, exclaimed—"And these were my wives!" He still continued to hurl down skull after skull, roaring in dreadful accents—"And these, and these, and these were my children! They *could die*; but I! reprobate wretch, alas! I cannot die! Dreadful beyond conception is the judgment that hangs over me. Jerusalem fell—I crushed the sucking babe, and precipitated myself into the destructive flames. I cursed the

¹ The fragment appears to be an adaptation from Christian Schubart's *Der Ewige Jude*: see *The Pall Mall Gazette* for 21 December 1866. It is probable that the translation was really picked up in Lincoln's Inn Fields. It is said to have been printed in 1802 in vol. iii. of *The German Magazine*: see *Notes and Queries*, Second Series, vol. v., p. 373.—ED.

Romans—but, alas! alas! the restless curse held me by the hair,—and I could not die!

“Rome the giantess fell—I placed myself before the falling statue—she fell, and did not crush me. Nations sprung up and disappeared before me;—but I remained and did not die. From cloud-encircled cliffs did I precipitate myself into the ocean; but the foaming billows east me upon the shore, and the burning arrow of existence pierced my cold heart again. I leaped into Etna’s flaming abyss, and roared with the giants for ten long months, polluting with my groans the Mount’s sulphureous mouth—ah! ten long months. The volcano fermented, and in a fiery stream of lava cast me up. I lay torn by the torture-snakes of hell amid the glowing cinders, and yet continued to exist.—A forest was on fire: I darted on wings of fury and despair into the crackling wood. Fire dropped upon me from the trees, but the flames only singed my limbs; alas! it could not consume them.—I now mixed with the butchers of mankind, and plunged in the tempest of the raging battle. I roared defiance to the infuriate Gaul, defiance to the victorious German; but arrows and spears rebounded in shivers from my body. The Saracen’s flaming sword broke upon my skull: balls in vain hissed upon me: the lightnings of battle glared harmless around my loins: in vain did the elephant trample on me, in vain the iron hoof of the wrathful steel! The mine, big with destructive power, burst upon me, and hurled me high in the air—I fell on heaps of smoking limbs, but was only singed. The giant’s steel club rebounded from my body; the executioner’s hand could not strangle me, the tiger’s tooth could not pierce me, nor would the hungry lion in the circus devour me. I cohabited with poisonous snakes, and pinched the red crest of the dragon.—The serpent stung, but could not destroy me. The dragon tormented, but dared not to devour me.—I now provoked the fury of tyrants: I said to Nero, ‘Thou art a bloodhound!’ I said to Christiern, ‘Thou art a bloodhound!’ I said to Muley Ismail, ‘Thou art a bloodhound!’—The tyrants invented cruel torments, but did not kill me.———Ha! not to be able to die—not to be able to die—not to be permitted to rest after the toils of life—to be doomed to be imprisoned for ever in the 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 Sameness, and Time, that hungry hyena, ever bearing children, and 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!”

This fragment is the translation of part of some German work, whose title I have vainly endeavoured to discover. I picked it up, dirty and torn, some years ago, in Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

VII.—PAGE 56.

I will beget a son, and he shall bear
The sins of all the world.¹

A book is put into our hands when children, called the Bible, the purport of whose history is briefly this: That God made the earth in six days, and there planted a delightful garden, in which he placed the first pair of human beings. In the midst of the garden he planted a tree, whose fruit, although within their reach, they were forbidden to touch. That the Devil, in the shape of a snake, persuaded them to eat of this fruit; in consequence of which God condemned both them and their posterity yet unborn, to satisfy his justice by their eternal misery. That, four thousand years after these events, (the human race in the meanwhile having gone unredeemed to perdition,)

¹ In the summer of 1812 Shelley caused to be printed a pamphlet entitled *A Letter to Lord Ellenborough, Occasioned by the Sentence which he passed on Mr. D. I. Eaton, As Publisher of the Third Part of Paine's Age of Reason*. For the purposes of the present note he eliminated from the *Letter* the passages which were personal to Lord Ellenborough and Mr. Eaton, added other passages, and revised to some extent so much of the remainder as he incorporated into the *Queen Mab* notes.—ED.

God engendered with the betrothed wife of a carpenter in Judea (whose virginity was nevertheless uninjured), and begat a Son, whose name was Jesus Christ; and who was crucified and died, in order that no more men might be devoted to hell-fire, he bearing the burthen of his Father's displeasure by proxy. The book states, in addition, that the soul of whoever disbelieves this sacrifice will be burned with everlasting fire.

During many ages of misery and darkness this story gained implicit belief; but at length men arose who suspected that it was a fable and imposture, and that Jesus Christ, so far from being a God, was only a man like themselves. But a numerous set of men, who derived and still derive immense emoluments from this opinion, in the shape of a popular belief, told the vulgar that, if they did not believe in the Bible, they would be damned to all eternity; and burned, imprisoned, and poisoned all the unbiassed and unconnected enquirers who occasionally arose. They still oppress them, so far as the people, now become more enlightened, will allow.

The belief in all that the Bible contains, is called Christianity. A Roman governor of Judea, at the instances of a priest-led mob, crucified a man called Jesus eighteen centuries ago. He was a man of pure life, who desired to rescue his countrymen from the tyranny of their barbarous and degrading superstitions. The common fate of all who desire to benefit mankind awaited him. The rabble, at the instigation of the priests, demanded his death, although his very judge made public acknowledgment of his innocence. Jesus was sacrificed to the honour of that God with whom he was afterwards confounded. It is of importance, therefore, to distinguish between the pretended character of this being as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and his real character as a man, who, for a vain attempt to reform the world, paid the forfeit of his life to that overbearing tyranny which has since so long desolated the universe in his name. Whilst the one is a hypocritical demon, who announces himself as the God of compassion and peace, even whilst he stretches forth his blood-red hand with the sword of discord to waste the earth, having confessedly devised this scheme of desolation from eternity; the other stands in the foremost list of those

true heroes who have died in the glorious martyrdom of liberty, and have braved torture, contempt, and poverty, in the cause of suffering humanity.¹

The vulgar, ever in extremes, became persuaded that the crucifixion of Jesus was a supernatural event. Testimonies of miracles, so frequent in unenlightened ages, were not wanting to prove that he was something divine. This belief, rolling through the lapse of ages, met with the reveries of Plato and the reasonings of Aristotle, and acquired force and extent, until the divinity of Jesus became a dogma, which to dispute was death, which to doubt was infamy.

Christianity is now the established religion: he who attempts to impugn it, must be contented to behold murderers and traitors take precedence of him in public opinion; though, if his genius be equal to his courage, and assisted by a peculiar coalition of circumstances, future ages may exalt him to a divinity, and persecute others in his name, as he was persecuted in the name of his predecessor in the homage of the world.

The same means that have supported every other popular belief have supported Christianity. War, imprisonment, assassination, and falsehood; deeds of unexampled and incomparable atrocity have made it what it is. The blood shed by the votaries of the God of mercy and peace, since the establishment of his religion, would probably suffice to drown all other sectaries now on the habitable globe. We derive from our ancestors a faith thus fostered and supported: we quarrel, persecute, and hate for its maintenance. Even under a government which, whilst it infringes the very right of thought and speech, boasts of permitting the liberty of the press, a man is pilloried and imprisoned because he is a deist, and no one raises his voice in the indignation of outraged humanity. But it is ever a proof that the falsehood of a proposition is felt by those who use coercion, not reasoning, to procure its admission: and a dispassionate observer would feel himself more powerfully

¹ Since writing this note I have some reason to suspect, that Jesus was an ambitious man, who aspired to the throne of Judea. [Shelley's maturer judgment dismissed that suspicion.—ED.]

interested in favour of a man, who, depending on the truth of his opinions, simply stated his reasons for entertaining them, than in that of his aggressor, who, daringly avowing his unwillingness or incapacity to answer them by argument, proceeded to repress the energies and break the spirit of their promulgator by that torture and imprisonment whose infliction he could command.

Analogy seems to favour the opinion that as, like other systems, Christianity has arisen and augmented, so like them it will decay and perish; that, as violence, darkness and deceit, not reasoning and persuasion, have procured its admission among mankind, so, when enthusiasm has subsided, and time, that infallible controverter of false opinions, has involved its pretended evidences in the darkness of antiquity, it will become obsolete; that Milton's poem alone will give permanency to the remembrance of its absurdities; and that men will laugh as heartily at grace, faith, redemption, and original sin, as they now do at the metamorphoses of Jupiter, the miracles of Romish saints, the efficacy of witchcraft, and the appearance of departed spirits.

Had the Christian religion commenced and continued by the mere force of reasoning and persuasion, the preceding analogy would be inadmissible. We should never speculate on the future obsolescence of a system perfectly conformable to nature and reason: it would endure so long as they endured; it would be a truth as indisputable as the light of the sun, the criminality of murder, and other facts, whose evidence, depending on our organization and relative situations, must remain acknowledged as satisfactory so long as man is man. It is an incontrovertible fact, the consideration of which ought to repress the hasty conclusions of credulity, or moderate its obstinacy in maintaining them, that, had the Jews not been a fanatical race of men, had even the resolution of Pontius Pilate been equal to his candour, the Christian religion never could have prevailed, it could not even have existed: on so feeble a thread hangs the most cherished opinion of a sixth of the human race! When will the vulgar learn humility? When will the pride of ignorance blush at having believed before it could comprehend?

Either the Christian religion is true, or it is false:

if true, it comes from God, and its authenticity can admit of doubt and dispute no further than its omnipotent author is willing to allow. Either the power or the goodness of God is called in question, if he leaves those doctrines most essential to the well-being of man in doubt and dispute; the only ones which, since their promulgation, have been the subject of unceasing cavil, the cause of irreconcilable hatred. *If God has spoken, why is the universe not convinced?*

There is this passage in the Christian Scriptures: "Those who obey not God, and believe not the Gospel of his Son, shall be punished with everlasting destruction." This is the pivot upon which all religions turn: they all assume that it is in our power to believe or not to believe; whereas the mind can only believe that which it thinks true. A human being can only be supposed accountable for those actions which are influenced by his will. But belief is utterly distinct from and unconnected with volition: it is the apprehension of the agreement or disagreement of the ideas that compose any proposition. Belief is a passion, or involuntary operation of the mind, and, like other passions, its intensity is precisely proportionate to the degrees of excitement. Volition is essential to merit or demerit. But the Christian religion attaches the highest possible degrees of merit and demerit to that which is worthy of neither, and which is totally unconnected with the peculiar faculty of the mind, whose presence is essential to their being.

Christianity was intended to reform the world: had an all-wise Being planned it, nothing is more improbable than that it should have failed: omniscience would infallibly have foreseen the inutility of a scheme which experience demonstrates, to this age, to have been utterly unsuccessful.

Christianity inculcates the necessity of supplicating the Deity. Prayer may be considered under two points of view;—as an endeavour to change the intentions of God, or as a formal testimony of our obedience. But the former case supposes that the caprices of a limited intelligence can occasionally instruct the Creator of the world how to regulate the universe; and the latter, a certain degree of servility analogous to the loyalty demanded by earthly tyrants. Obedience indeed is only the pitiful and cowardly

egotism of him who thinks that he can do something better than reason.

Christianity, like all other religions, rests upon miracles, prophecies, and martyrdoms. No religion ever existed which had not its prophets, its attested miracles, and, above all, crowds of devotees who would bear patiently the most horrible tortures to prove its authenticity. It should appear that in no case can a discriminating mind subscribe to the genuineness of a miracle. A miracle is an infraction of nature's law, by a supernatural cause; by a cause acting beyond that eternal circle within which all things are included. God breaks through the law of nature, that he may convince mankind of the truth of that revelation which, in spite of his precautions, has been, since its introduction, the subject of unceasing schism and cavil.

Miracles resolve themselves into the following question:¹—Whether it is more probable the laws of nature, hitherto so immutably harmonious, should have undergone violation, or that a man should have told a lie? Whether it is more probable that we are ignorant of the natural cause of an event, or that we know the supernatural one? That, in old times, when the powers of nature were less known than at present, a certain set of men were themselves deceived, or had some hidden motive for deceiving others; or that God begat a son, who, in his legislation, measuring merit by belief, evidenced himself to be totally ignorant of the powers of the human mind—of what is voluntary, and what is the contrary?

We have many instances of men telling lies;—none of an infraction of nature's laws, those laws of whose government alone we have any knowledge or experience. The records of all nations afford innumerable instances of men deceiving others either from vanity or interest, or themselves being deceived by the limitedness of their views and their ignorance of natural causes: but where is the accredited case of God having come upon earth, to give the lie to his own creations? There would be something truly wonderful in the appearance of a ghost; but the assertion of a child that he saw one as he passed

¹ See Hume's Essay, vol. ii. page 121.

through the church-yard is universally admitted to be less miraculous.

But even supposing that a man should raise a dead body to life before our eyes, and on this fact rest his claim to be considered the son of God;—the Humane Society restores drowned persons, and because it makes no mystery of the method it employs, its members are not mistaken for the sons of God. All that we have a right to infer from our ignorance of the cause of any event is that we do not know it: had the Mexicans attended to this simple rule when they heard the cannon of the Spaniards, they would not have considered them as gods: the experiments of modern chemistry would have defied the wisest philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome to have accounted for them on natural principles. An author of strong common sense has observed, that “a miracle is no miracle at second-hand;” he might have added, that a miracle is no miracle in any case; for until we are acquainted with all natural causes we have no reason to imagine others.

There remains to be considered another proof of Christianity—Prophecy. A book is written before a certain event, in which this event is foretold; how could the prophet have foreknown it without inspiration; how could he have been inspired without God? The greatest stress is laid on the prophecies of Moses and Hosea on the dispersion of the Jews, and that of Isaiah concerning the coming of the Messiah. The prophecy of Moses is a collection of every possible cursing and blessing; and it is so far from being marvellous that the one of dispersion should have been fulfilled, that it would have been more surprising if, out of all these, none should have taken effect. In Deuteronomy, chap. xxviii, ver. 64, where Moses explicitly foretells the dispersion, he states that they shall there serve gods of wood and stone: “And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other, *and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even gods of wood and stone.*” The Jews are at this day remarkably tenacious of their religion. Moses also declares that they shall be subjected to these curses for disobedience to his ritual: “And it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to ob-

serve to do all the commandments and statutes which I command you this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee." Is this the real reason? The third, fourth and fifth chapters of Hosea are a piece of immodest confession. The indelicate type might apply in a hundred senses to a hundred things. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is more explicit, yet it does not exceed in clearness the oracles of Delphos. The historical proof that Moses, Isaiah and Hosea did write when they are said to have written, is far from being clear and circumstantial.

But prophecy requires proof in its character as a miracle; we have no right to suppose that a man foreknew future events from God, until it is demonstrated that he neither could know them by his own exertions, nor that the writings which contain the prediction could possibly have been fabricated after the event pretended to be foretold. It is more probable that writings, pretending to divine inspiration, should have been fabricated after the fulfilment of their pretended prediction, than that they should have really been divinely inspired; when we consider that the latter supposition makes God at once the creator of the human mind and ignorant of its primary powers, particularly as we have numberless instances of false religions, and forged prophecies of things long past, and no accredited case of God having conversed with men directly or indirectly. It is also possible that the description of an event might have foregone its occurrence; but this is far from being a legitimate proof of a divine revelation, as many men, not pretending to the character of a prophet, have nevertheless, in this sense, prophesied.

Lord Chesterfield was never yet taken for a prophet, even by a bishop, yet he uttered this remarkable prediction: "The despotic government of France is screwed up to the highest pitch; a revolution is fast approaching; that revolution, I am convinced, will be radical and sanguinary." This appeared in the letters of the prophet long before the accomplishment of this wonderful prediction. Now, have these particulars come to pass, or have they not? If they have, how could the Earl have foreknown them without inspiration? If we admit the truth of the Christian religion on testimony such as this, we must admit, on

the same strength of evidence, that God has affixed the highest rewards to belief, and the eternal tortures of the never-dying worm to disbelief; both of which have been demonstrated to be involuntary.

The last proof of the Christian religion depends on the influence of the Holy Ghost. Theologians divide the influence of the Holy Ghost into its ordinary and extraordinary modes of operation. The latter is supposed to be that which inspired the Prophets and Apostles; and the former to be the grace of God, which summarily makes known the truth of his revelation, to those whose mind is fitted for its reception by a submissive perusal of his word. Persons convinced in this manner can do anything but account for their conviction, describe the time at which it happened, or the manner in which it came upon them. It is supposed to enter the mind by other channels than those of the senses, and therefore professes to be superior to reason founded on their experience.

Admitting, however, the usefulness or possibility of a divine revelation, unless we demolish the foundations of all human knowledge, it is requisite that our reason should previously demonstrate its genuineness: for, before we extinguish the steady ray of reason and common sense, it is fit that we should discover whether we cannot do without their assistance, whether or no there be any other which may suffice to guide us through the labyrinth of life:¹ for, if a man is to be inspired upon all occasions, if he is to be sure of a thing because he is sure, if the ordinary operations of the spirit are not to be considered very extraordinary modes of demonstration, if enthusiasm is to usurp the place of proof, and madness that of sanity, all reasoning is superfluous. The Mahometan dies fighting for his prophet, the Indian immolates himself at the chariot-wheels of Brahma, the Hottentot worships an insect, the Negro a bunch of feathers, the Mexican sacrifices human victims! Their degree of conviction must certainly be very strong: it cannot arise from conviction, it must from feelings, the reward of their prayers. If each of these should affirm, in opposition to the strongest

¹ See Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, book iv. chap. xix., *On Enthusiasm*.

possible arguments, that inspiration carried internal evidence, I fear their inspired brethren, the orthodox Missionaries, would be so uncharitable as to pronounce them obstinate.

Miracles cannot be received as testimonies of a disputed fact, because all human testimony has ever been insufficient to establish the possibility of miracles. That which is incapable of proof itself, is no proof of anything else. Prophecy has also been rejected by the test of reason. Those, then, who have been actually inspired, are the only true believers in the Christian religion.

Mox numine viso
 Virginei tumuere sinus, inuptaque mater
 Arcano stupuit compleri viscera partu
 Auctorem peritura suum. Mortalia corda
 Artificem texere poli, latuitque sub uno
 Pectore, qui totum late complectitur orbem.

CLAUDIAN, *Carmen Paschale*.

Does not so monstrous and disgusting an absurdity carry its own infamy and refutation with itself?

43

VIII.—PAGE 67.

Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,
 Which from the exhaustless lore of human weal
 Dawns on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
 In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
 With self-enshrined eternity, &c.

Time is our consciousness of the succession of ideas in our mind. Vivid sensation, of either pain or pleasure, makes the time seem long, as the common phrase is, because it renders us more acutely conscious of our ideas. If a mind be conscious of an hundred ideas during one minute, by the clock, and of two hundred during another, the latter of these spaces would actually occupy so much greater extent in the mind as two exceed one in quantity. If, therefore, the human mind, by any future improvement of its sensibility, should become conscious of an infinite number of ideas in a minute, that minute would be eternity. I do not hence infer that the actual space

between the birth and death of a man will ever be prolonged; but that his sensibility is perfectible, and that the number of ideas which his mind is capable of receiving is indefinite. One man is stretched on the rack during twelve hours; another sleeps soundly in his bed: the difference of time perceived by these two persons is immense; one hardly will believe that half an hour has elapsed, the other could credit that centuries had flown during his agony. Thus, the life of a man of virtue and talent, who should die in his thirtieth year, is, with regard to his own feelings, longer than that of a miserable priest-ridden slave, who dreams out a century of dulness. The one has perpetually cultivated his mental faculties, has rendered himself master of his thoughts, can abstract and generalize amid the lethargy of every-day business;—the other can slumber over the brightest moments of his being, and is unable to remember the happiest hour of his life. Perhaps the perishing ephemeron enjoys a longer life than the tortoise.

Dark flood of time!

Roll as it listeth thee—I measure not
 By months or moments thy ambiguous course.
 Another may stand by me on the brink
 And watch the bubble whirled beyond his ken
 That pauses at my feet. The sense of love,
 The thirst for action, and the impassioned thought
 Prolong my being: if I wake no more,
 My life more actual living will contain
 Than some grey veterans³ of the world's cold school,
 Whose listless hours unprofitably roll,
 By one enthusiast feeling unredeemed.

See Godwin's *Pol. Jus.* vol. i. page 411;—and
 Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique
 des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*, Époque ix.

VIII.—PAGE 67.

No longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face.¹

I hold that the depravity of the physical and moral nature of man originated in his unnatural habits of life. The origin of man, like that of the universe of which he is a part, is enveloped in impenetrable mystery. His generations either had a beginning, or they had not. The weight of evidence in favour of each of these suppositions seems tolerably equal; and it is perfectly unimportant to the present argument which is assumed. The language spoken however by the mythology of nearly all religions seems to prove that, at some distant period, man forsook the path of nature, and sacrificed the purity and happiness of his being to unnatural appetites. The date of this event seems to have also been that of some great change in the climates of the earth, with which it has an obvious correspondence. The allegory of Adam and Eve eating of the tree of evil, and entailing upon their posterity the wrath of God and the loss of everlasting life, admits of no other explanation than the disease and crime that have flowed from unnatural diet. Milton was so well aware of this, that he makes Raphael thus exhibit to Adam the consequence of his disobedience:—

————— Immediately a place
Before his eyes appeared : sad, noisome, dark :
A lazar-house it seem'd ; wherein were laid
Numbers of all diseased : all maladies
Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
Intestine stone and ulcer, cholick pangs,
Dæmoniac frenzy, moping melancholy,
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.

¹ After privately printing *Queen Mab*, Shelley in the same year 1813 revised this note and issued it with an appendix as a separate pamphlet, entitled *A Vindication of Natural Diet*.—Ed.

And how many thousands more might not be added to this frightful catalogue !

The story of Prometheus is one likewise which, although universally admitted to be allegorical, has never been satisfactorily explained. Prometheus stole fire from heaven, and was chained for this crime to mount Caucasus, where a vulture continually devoured his liver, that grew to meet its hunger. Hesiod says that, before the time of Prometheus, mankind were exempt from suffering ; that they enjoyed a vigorous youth, and that death, when at length it came, approached like sleep, and gently closed their eyes. Again, so general was this opinion, that Horace, a poet of the Augustan age, writes—

Audax omnia peteti,
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas ;
Audax Iapeti genus
Ignem fraude mala gentibus intulit :
Post ignem ætheriâ domo
Subductum, macies et nova febrium
Terris incubuit cohors,
Semotique prius tarda necessitas
Lethi corripuit gradum.

How plain a language is spoken by all this. Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes ; thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles. From this moment his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease. It consumed his being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death. All vice arose from the ruin of healthful innocence. Tyranny, superstition, commerce, and inequality, were then first known, when reason vainly attempted to guide the wanderings of exacerbated passion. I conclude this part of the subject with an extract from Mr. Newton's Defence of Vegetable Regimen, from whom I have borrowed this interpretation of the fable of Prometheus.

“ Making allowance for such transposition of the events of the allegory as time might produce after the important truths were forgotten, which this portion of the ancient mythology was intended to transmit, the

drift of the fable seems to be this :—Man at his creation was endowed with the gift of perpetual youth ; that is, he was not formed to be a sickly suffering creature as we now see him, but to enjoy health, and to sink by slow degrees into the bosom of his parent earth without disease or pain. Prometheus first taught the use of animal food (*primus bovem occidit Prometheus*¹) and of fire, with which to render it more digestible and pleasing to the taste. Jupiter, and the rest of the gods, foreseeing the consequences of these inventions, were amused or irritated at the short-sighted devices of the newly-formed creature, and left him to experience the sad effects of them. Thirst, the necessary concomitant of a flesh diet," (perhaps of all diet vitiated by culinary preparation,) "ensued ; water was resorted to, and man forfeited the inestimable gift of health which he had received from heaven : he became diseased, the partaker of a precarious existence, and no longer descended slowly to his grave."²

But just disease to luxury succeeds,
And every death its own avenger breeds ;
The fury passions from that blood began,
And turned on man a fiercer savage—man.

Man, and the animals whom he has infected with his society, or depraved by his dominion, are alone diseased. The wild hog, the mouflon, the bison, and the wolf, are perfectly exempt from malady, and invariably die either from external violence, or natural old age. But the domestic hog, the sheep, the cow, and the dog, are subject to an incredible variety of distempers ; and, like the corrupters of their nature, have physicians who thrive upon their miseries. The supereminence of man is like Satan's, a supereminence of pain ; and the majority of his species, doomed to penury, disease and crime, have reason to curse the untoward event that, by enabling him to communicate his sensations, raised him above the level of his fellow animals. But the steps that have been taken are irrevocable. The whole of human science is comprised in one question :—How can the advantages of

¹ *Plin. Nat. Hist.* lib. vii. sect. 57.

² *Return to Nature.* Cadell, 1811.

intellect and civilization be reconciled with the liberty and pure pleasures of natural life? How can we take the benefits, and reject the evils of the system, which is now interwoven with all the fibres of our being?—I believe that abstinence from animal food and spirituous liquors would in a great measure capacitate us for the solution of this important question.

It is true that mental and bodily derangement is attributable in part to other deviations from rectitude and nature than those which concern diet. The mistakes cherished by society respecting the connexion of the sexes, whence the misery and diseases of unsatisfied celibacy, unenjoying prostitution, and the premature arrival of puberty necessarily spring; the putrid atmosphere of crowded cities; the exhalations of chemical processes; the muffling of our bodies in superfluous apparel; the absurd treatment of infants:—all these, and innumerable other causes, contribute their mite to the mass of human evil.

Comparative anatomy teaches us that man resembles frugivorous animals in everything, and carnivorous in nothing; he has neither claws wherewith to seize his prey, nor distinct and pointed teeth to tear the living fibre. A Mandarin of the first class, with nails two inches long, would probably find them alone inefficient to hold even a hare. After every subterfuge of gluttony, the bull must be degraded into the ox, and the ram into the wether, by an unnatural and inhuman operation, that the flaccid fibre may offer a fainter resistance to rebellious nature. It is only by softening and disguising dead flesh by culinary preparation, that it is rendered susceptible of mastication or digestion; and that the sight of its bloody juices and raw horror does not excite intolerable loathing and disgust. Let the advocate of animal food force himself to a decisive experiment on its fitness, and, as Plutarch recommends, tear a living lamb with his teeth, and plunging his head into its vitals, slake his thirst with the steaming blood; when fresh from the deed of horror, let him revert to the irresistible instincts of nature that would rise in judgment against it, and say, Nature formed me for such work as this. Then, and then only, would he be consistent.

Man resembles no carnivorous animal. There is no exception, unless man be one, to the rule of herbivorous animals having cellulated colons.

The orang-outang perfectly resembles man both in the order and number of his teeth. The orang-outang is the most anthropomorphous of the ape tribe, all of which are strictly frugivorous. There is no other species of animals, which live on different food, in which this analogy exists.¹ In many frugivorous animals, the canine teeth are more pointed and distinct than those of man. The resemblance also of the human stomach to that of the orang-outang, is greater than to that of any other animal.

The intestines are also identical with those of herbivorous animals, which present a larger surface for absorption and have ample and cellulated colons. The cœcum also, though short, is larger than that of carnivorous animals, and even here the orang-outang retains its accustomed similarity.

The structure of the human frame, then, is that of one fitted to a pure vegetable diet, in every essential particular. It is true, that the reluctance to abstain from animal food, in those who have been long accustomed to its stimulus, is so great in some persons of weak mind as to be scarcely overcome; but this is far from bringing any argument in its favour. A lamb, which was fed for some time on flesh by a ship's crew, refused its natural diet at the end of the voyage. There are numerous instances of horses, sheep, oxen, and even wood-pigeons, having been taught to live upon flesh, until they have loathed their natural aliment. Young children evidently prefer pastry, oranges, apples, and other fruit, to the flesh of animals; until, by the gradual depravation of the digestive organs, the free use of vegetables has for a time produced serious inconveniences; *for a time*, I say, since there never was an instance wherein a change from spirituous liquors and animal food to vegetables and pure water, has failed ultimately to invigorate the body, by rendering its juices bland and consentaneous, and to restore to the mind that cheerfulness and elasticity, which not one in fifty possesses on the present system. A love of strong liquors is also with difficulty taught to infants. Almost every one remembers the wry faces which the first glass of

¹ Cuvier, *Leçons d'Anat. Comp.* tom. iii. pages 169, 373, 448, 465, 480. Rees's Cyclopaedia, article *Man*.

port produced. Unsophisticated instinct is invariably unmerring; but to decide on the fitness of animal food, from the perverted appetites which its constrained adoption produces, is to make the criminal a judge in his own cause: it is even worse, it is appealing to the infatuated drunkard in a question of the salubrity of brandy.

What is the cause of morbid action in the animal system? Not the air we breathe, for our fellow denizens of nature breathe the same uninjured; not the water we drink, (if remote from the pollutions of man and his inventions,¹) for the animals drink it too; not the earth we tread upon; not the unobscured sight of glorious nature, in the wood, the field, or the expanse of sky and ocean; nothing that we are or do in common with the undiseased inhabitants of the forest. Something then wherein we differ from them: our habit of altering our food by fire, so that our appetite is no longer a just criterion for the fitness of its gratification. Except in children, there remain no traces of that instinct which determines, in all other animals, what aliment is natural or otherwise; and so perfectly obliterated are they in the reasoning adults of our species, that it has become necessary to urge considerations drawn from comparative anatomy to prove that we are naturally frugivorous.

Crime is madness. Madness is disease. Whenever the cause of disease shall be discovered, the root, from which all vice and misery have so long overshadowed the globe, will lie bare to the axe. All the exertions of man, from that moment, may be considered as tending to the clear profit of his species. No sane mind in a sane body resolves upon a real crime. It is a man of violent passions, blood-shot eyes, and swollen veins, that alone can grasp the knife of murder. The system of a simple diet promises no Utopian advantages. It is no mere reform

¹ The necessity of resorting to some means of purifying water, and the disease which arises from its adulteration in civilized countries, is sufficiently apparent.—See Dr. Lambe's *Reports on Cancer*. I do not assert that the use of water is in itself unnatural, but that the unperverted palate would swallow no liquid capable of occasioning disease.

of legislation, whilst the furious passions and evil propensities of the human heart, in which it had its origin, are still unassuaged. It strikes at the root of all evil, and is an experiment which may be tried with success, not alone by nations, but by small societies, families, and even individuals. In no cases has a return to vegetable diet produced the slightest injury; in most it has been attended with changes undeniably beneficial. Should ever a physician be born with the genius of Locke, I am persuaded that he might trace all bodily and mental derangements to our unnatural habits, as clearly as that philosopher has traced all knowledge to sensation. What prolific sources of disease are not those mineral and vegetable poisons that have been introduced for its extirpation! How many thousands have become murderers and robbers, bigots and domestic tyrants, dissolute and abandoned adventurers, from the use of fermented liquors; who, had they slaked their thirst only with pure water, would have lived but to diffuse the happiness of their own unperverted feelings? How many groundless opinions and absurd institutions have not received a general sanction from the sottishness and intemperance of individuals! Who will assert that, had the populace of Paris satisfied their hunger at the ever-furnished table of vegetable nature, they would have lent their brutal suffrage to the proscription-list of Robespierre? Could a set of men, whose passions were not perverted by unnatural stimuli, look with coolness on an *auto da fè*? Is it to be believed that a being of gentle feelings, rising from his meal of roots, would take delight in sports of blood? Was Nero a man of temperate life? could you read calm health in his cheek, flushed with ungovernable propensities of hatred for the human race? Did Muley Ismael's pulse beat evenly, was his skin transparent, did his eyes beam with healthfulness, and its invariable concomitants, cheerfulness and benignity? Though history has decided none of these questions, a child could not hesitate to answer in the negative. Surely the bile-suffused cheek of Buonaparte, his wrinkled brow, and yellow eye, the ceaseless inquietude of his nervous system, speak no less plainly the character of his unresting ambition than his murders and his victories. It is impossible, had Buonaparte descended from a race of vegetable

feeders, that he could have had either the inclination or the power to ascend the throne of the Bourbons. The desire of tyranny could scarcely be excited in the individual, the power to tyrannize would certainly not be delegated by a society neither frenzied by inebriation nor rendered impotent and irrational by disease. Pregnant indeed with inexhaustible calamity is the renunciation of instinct, as it concerns our physical nature; arithmetic cannot enumerate, nor reason perhaps suspect, the multitudinous sources of disease in civilized life. Even common water, that apparently innocuous pabulum, when corrupted by the filth of populous cities, is a deadly and insidious destroyer.¹ Who can wonder that all the inducements held out by God himself in the Bible to virtue should have been vainer than a nurse's tale; and that those dogmas, by which he has there excited and justified the most ferocious propensities, should have alone been deemed essential; whilst Christians are in the daily practice of all those habits which have infected with disease and crime, not only the reprobate sons, but these favoured children of the common Father's love? Omnipotence itself could not save them from the consequences of this original and universal sin.

There is no disease, bodily or mental, which adoption of vegetable diet and pure water has not infallibly mitigated, wherever the experiment has been fairly tried. Debility is gradually converted into strength, disease into healthfulness; madness, in all its hideous variety, from the ravings of the fettered maniac, to the unaccountable irrationalities of ill temper, that make a hell of domestic life, into a calm and considerate evenness of temper, that alone might offer a certain pledge of the future moral reformation of society. On a natural system of diet, old age would be our last and our only malady; the term of our existence would be protracted; we should enjoy life, and no longer preclude others from the enjoyment of it; all sensational delights would be infinitely more exquisite and perfect; the very sense of being would then be a continued pleasure, such as we now feel it in some few and favoured moments of our youth. By

¹ Lambe's *Reports on Cancer*.

all that is sacred in our hopes for the human race, I conjure those who love happiness and truth, to give a fair trial to the vegetable system. Reasoning is surely superfluous on a subject whose merits an experience of six months would set for ever at rest. But it is only among the enlightened and benevolent that so great a sacrifice of appetite and prejudice can be expected, even though its ultimate excellence should not admit of dispute. It is found easier, by the short-sighted victims of disease, to palliate their torments by medicine, than to prevent them by regimen. The vulgar of all ranks are invariably sensual and indocile; yet I cannot but feel myself persuaded that, when the benefits of vegetable diet are mathematically proved, when it is as clear that those who live naturally are exempt from premature death as that nine is not one, the most sottish of mankind will feel a preference towards a long and tranquil, contrasted with a short and painful life. On the average, out of sixty persons, four die in three years. Hopes are entertained that, in April 1814, a statement will be given, that sixty persons, all having lived more than three years on vegetables and pure water, are then *in perfect health*. More than two years have now elapsed; *not one of them has died*; no such example will be found in any sixty persons taken at random. Seventeen persons of all ages (the families of Dr. Lambe and Mr. Newton) have lived for seven years on this diet without a death, and almost without the slightest illness. Surely, when we consider that some of these were infants, and one a martyr to asthma now nearly subdued, we may challenge any seventeen persons taken at random in this city to exhibit a parallel case. Those who may have been excited to question the rectitude of established habits of diet, by these loose remarks, should consult Mr. Newton's luminous and eloquent essay.¹

When these proofs come fairly before the world, and are clearly seen by all who understand arithmetic, it is scarcely possible that abstinence from aliments demonstrably pernicious should not become universal. In proportion to the number of proselytes, so will be the weight of evidence: and when a thousand persons

¹ *The Return to Nature, or, A Defence of the Vegetable Regimen.* Cadell, 1811.

can be produced, living on vegetables and distilled water, who have to dread no disease but old age, the world will be compelled to regard animal flesh and fermented liquors as slow but certain poisons. The change which would be produced by simpler habits on political economy is sufficiently remarkable. The monopolizing eater of animal flesh would no longer destroy his constitution by devouring an acre at a meal, and many loaves of bread would cease to contribute to gout, madness and apoplexy, in the shape of a pint of porter, or a dram of gin, when appeasing the long-protracted famine of the hard-working peasant's hungry babes. The quantity of nutritious vegetable matter, consumed in fattening the carcase of an ox, would afford ten times the sustenance, undepraving indeed, and incapable of generating disease, if gathered immediately from the bosom of the earth. The most fertile districts of the habitable globe are now actually cultivated by men for animals, at a delay and waste of aliment absolutely incapable of calculation. It is only the wealthy that can, to any great degree, even now, indulge the unnatural craving for dead flesh, and they pay for the greater licence of the privilege by subjection to supernumerary diseases. Again, the spirit of the nation that should take the lead in this great reform would insensibly become agricultural; commerce, with all its vice, selfishness and corruption, would gradually decline; more natural habits would produce gentler manners; and the excessive complication of political relations would be so far simplified, that every individual might feel and understand why he loved his country, and took a personal interest in its welfare. How would England, for example, depend on the caprices of foreign rulers, if she contained within herself all the necessaries, and despised whatever they possessed of the luxuries of life? How could they starve her into compliance with their views. Of what consequence would it be that they refused to take her woollen manufactures, when large and fertile tracts of the island ceased to be allotted to the waste of pasturage? On a natural system of diet, we should require no spices from India; no wines from Portugal, Spain, France, or Madeira; none of those multitudinous articles of luxury, for which every corner of the globe is rilled, and which are the causes of so much individual rival-

ship, such calamitous and sanguinary national disputes. In the history of modern times, the avarice of commercial monopoly, no less than the ambition of weak and wicked chiefs, seems to have fomented the universal discord, to have added stubbornness to the mistakes of cabinets, and indolence to the infatuation of the people. Let it ever be remembered that it is the direct influence of commerce to make the interval between the richest and the poorest man wider and more unconquerable. Let it be remembered that it is a foe to every thing of real worth and excellence in the human character. The odious and disgusting aristocracy of wealth is built upon the ruins of all that is good in chivalry or republicanism; and luxury is the forerunner of a barbarism scarce capable of cure. Is it impossible to realize a state of society where all the energies of man shall be directed to the production of his solid happiness? Certainly, if this advantage (the object of all political speculation) be in any degree attainable, it is attainable only by a community which holds out no factitious incentives to the avarice and ambition of the few, and which is internally organized for the liberty, security and comfort of the many. None must be entrusted with power (and money is the completest species of power) who do not stand pledged to use it exclusively for the general benefit. But the use of animal flesh and fermented liquors directly militates with this equality of the rights of man. The peasant cannot gratify these fashionable cravings without leaving his family to starve. Without disease and war, those sweeping curtailers of population, pasturage would include a waste too great to be afforded. The labour requisite to support a family is far lighter¹ than is usually

¹ It has come under the author's experience that some of the workmen on an embankment in North Wales, who, in consequence of the inability of the proprietor to pay them, seldom received their wages, have supported large families by cultivating small spots of sterile ground by moonlight. In the notes to Pratt's Poem, *Bread, or the Poor*, is an account of an industrious labourer who, by working in a small garden, before and after his day's task, attained to an enviable state of independence.

supposed. The peasantry work, not only for themselves, but for the aristocracy, the army, and the manufacturers.

The advantage of a reform in diet is obviously greater than that of any other. It strikes at the root of the evil. To remedy the abuses of legislation, before we annihilate the propensities by which they are produced, is to suppose that, by taking away the effect, the cause will cease to operate. But the efficacy of this system depends entirely on the proselytism of individuals, and grounds its merits, as a benefit to the community, upon the total change of the dietetic habits in its members. It proceeds securely from a number of particular cases to one that is universal, and has this advantage over the contrary mode, that one error does not invalidate all that has gone before.

Let not too much, however, be expected from this system. The healthiest among us is not exempt from hereditary disease. The most symmetrical, athletic, and long-lived, is a being inexpressibly inferior to what he would have been, had not the unnatural habits of his ancestors accumulated for him a certain portion of malady and deformity. In the most perfect specimen of civilized man, something is still found wanting by the physiological critic. Can a return to nature, then, instantaneously eradicate predispositions that have been slowly taking root in the silence of innumerable ages?—Indubitably not. All that I contend for is, that, from the moment of the relinquishing all unnatural habits, no new disease is generated, and that the predisposition to hereditary maladies gradually perishes, for want of its accustomed supply. In cases of consumption, cancer, gout, asthma, and scrofula, such is the invariable tendency of a diet of vegetables and pure water.

Those who may be induced by these remarks to give the vegetable system a fair trial should, in the first place date the commencement of their practice from the moment of their conviction. All depends upon breaking through a pernicious habit resolutely and at once. Dr. Trotter¹ asserts that no drunkard was ever reformed by gradually relinquishing his dram. Animal flesh, in its effects on the human

¹ See Trotter on the Nervous Temperament.

stomach, is analogous to a dram. It is similar in the kind, though differing in the degree, of its operation. The proselyte to a pure diet must be warned to expect a temporary diminution of muscular strength. The subtraction of a powerful stimulus will suffice to account for this event. But it is only temporary, and is succeeded by an equable capability for exertion, far surpassing his former various and fluctuating strength. Above all, he will acquire an easiness of breathing, by which such exertion is performed, with a remarkable exemption from that painful and difficult panting now felt by almost every one, after hastily climbing an ordinary mountain. He will be equally capable of bodily exertion, or mental application, after as before his simple meal. He will feel none of the narcotic effects of ordinary diet. Irritability, the direct consequence of exhausting stimuli, would yield to the power of natural and tranquil impulses. He will no longer pine under the lethargy of ennui, that unconquerable weariness of life, more to be dreaded than death itself. He will escape the epidemic madness, which broods over its own injurious notions of the Deity, and "realizes the hell that priests and beldams feign." Every man forms as it were his god from his own character; to the divinity of one of simple habits no offering would be more acceptable than the happiness of his creatures. He would be incapable of hating or persecuting others for the love of God. He will find, moreover, a system of simple diet to be a system of perfect epicurism. He will no longer be incessantly occupied in blunting and destroying those organs from which he expects his gratification. The pleasures of taste to be derived from a dinner of potatoes, beans, peas, turnips, lettuces, with a dessert of apples, gooseberries, strawberries, currants, raspberries, and, in winter, oranges, apples and pears, are far greater than is supposed. Those who wait until they can eat this plain fare with the sauce of appetite will scarcely join with the hypocritical sensualist at a lord-mayor's feast, who declaims against the pleasures of the table. Solomon kept a thousand concubines, and owned in despair that all was vanity. The man whose happiness is constituted by the society of one amiable woman, would find some difficulty in sympathizing with the disappointment of this venerable debauchee.

I address myself not only to the young enthusiast, the ardent devotee of truth and virtue, the pure and passionate moralist, yet unvitiated by the contagion of the world. He will embrace a pure system, from its abstract truth, its beauty, its simplicity, and its promise of wide-extended benefit ; unless custom has turned poison into food, he will hate the brutal pleasures of the chase by instinct ; it will be a contemplation full of horror and disappointment to his mind, that beings capable of the gentlest and most admirable sympathies should take delight in the death-pangs and last convulsions of dying animals. The elderly man whose youth has been poisoned by intemperance, or who has lived with apparent moderation, and is afflicted with a variety of painful maladies, would find his account in a beneficial change produced without the risk of poisonous medicines. The mother to whom the perpetual restlessness of disease, and unaccountable deaths incident to her children, are the causes of incurable unhappiness, would on this diet experience the satisfaction of beholding their perpetual healths and natural playfulness.¹ The most valuable lives are daily destroyed by diseases that it is dangerous to palliate, and impossible to cure, by medicine. How much longer will man continue to pimp for the gluttony of death, his most insidious, implacable and eternal foe ?

¹ See Mr. Newton's book. His children are the most beautiful and healthy creatures it is possible to conceive ; the girls are perfect models for a sculptor ; their dispositions are also the most gentle and conciliating ; the judicious treatment, which they experience in other points, may be a correlative cause of this. In the first five years of their life, of 18,000 children that are born, 7,500 die of various diseases ; and how many more of those that survive are not rendered miserable by maladies not immediately mortal ? The quality and quantity of a woman's milk are materially injured by the use of dead flesh. In an island near Iceland, where no vegetables are to be got, the children invariably die of tetanus, before they are three weeks old, and the population is supplied from the main land.—Sir G. Mackenzie's *Hist. of Iceland*. See also *Emile*, chap. i. pages 53, 54, 56.

Ἄλλὰ δράκοντας ἀγρίους καλεῖτε καὶ παρδάλεις καὶ λέοντας, αὐτοὶ δὲ μαιφονεῖτε εἰς ὠμότητα καταλιπόντες ἐκείνους οὐδέν. ἐκείνους μὲν γὰρ ὁ φόρος τροφή, ὑμῖν δ' ὄψον ἐστίν.

* * * * *

Ὅτι γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνθρώπων κατὰ φύσιν τὸ σαρκοφαγεῖν, πρῶτον μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων δηλοῦνται τῆς κατασκευῆς. οὐδενὶ γὰρ ἔοικε τὸ ἀνθρώπου σῶμα τῶν ἐπὶ σαρκοφαγίᾳ γεγυότων, οὐ γρυπότης χεῖλους, οὐκ ὀξύτης, ὄνυχος, οὐ τραχύτης ὀδόντων πρόσεστιν, οὐ κοιλίας εὐτονια, καὶ πνεύματος θερμότης, τρέψαι καὶ κατεργάσασθαι δυνατὴ τὸ βαρὺ καὶ κρεῶδες· ἀλλ' αὐτόθεν ἢ φύσις τῇ λειότητι τῶν ὀδόντων, καὶ τῇ σμικρότητι τοῦ στόματος, καὶ τῇ μαλακότητι τῆς γλώσσης, καὶ τῇ πρὸς πέψιν ἀμβλύτητι τοῦ πνεύματος, ἐξόμνυται τὴν σαρκοφαγίαν. εἰ δὲ λέγεις πεφυκέναι σεαυτὸν ἐπὶ τοιαύτην ἐδωδὴν, ὃ βούλει φαγεῖν, πρῶτον αὐτὸς ἀπόκτεινον· ἀλλ' αὐτὸς διὰ σεαυτοῦ, μὴ χρησάμενος κοπίδι, μηδὲ τυσάνῳ τινί, μηδὲ πελέκει. ἀλλὰ ὡς λύκοι καὶ ἄρκτοι καὶ λέοντες αὐτοὶ ὡς ἐσθίουσι φοιεῖουσιν, ἄνελε δῆγματι βοῦν, ἢ στόματι σῦν, ἢ ἄρνα, ἢ λαγῶν, διάρρήξον, καὶ φάγε προσπεσῶν ἐτι ζῶντος, ὡς ἐκεῖνα.

* * * * *

Ἡμεῖς δὲ οὕτως ἐν τῷ μαιφόνῳ τρυφῶμεν, ὥστ' ὄψον τὸ κρέας προσαγορεύομεν, εἴτ' ὄψον πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ κρέας δεόμεθα, ἀναμιγνύντες ἔλαιον, οἶνον, μέλι, γάρον, ὄξος, ἠδύσμασι Συριακοῖς, Ἀραβικοῖς, ὡσπερ ὄντως νεκρὸν ἐνταφιάζοντες. καὶ γὰρ οὕτως αὐτῶν διαλυθέντων καὶ μαλαχθέντων καὶ τρόπον τινὰ κρεοσαπέντων ἔργον ἐστὶ τὴν πέψιν κρατῆσαι· καὶ διακρατηθείσης δὲ δεινὰς βαρύτητας ἐμποιεῖ καὶ νοσώδεις ἀπεψίας.

* * * * *

Οὔτω τὸ πρῶτον ἀγρίον τι ζῶον ἐβρώθη καὶ κακοῦργον, εἴτ' ὄρως τις, ἢ ἰχθύς, εἴλκυστο· καὶ γενόμενον οὔτω καὶ προμελετῆσαν ἐν ἐκείνοις τὸ νικοῦν, ἐπὶ βοῦν ἐργάτην ἤλαθε, καὶ τὸ κοσμοῦν πρόβατον, καὶ τὸν οἰκουρὸν ἀλεκτρούνα· καὶ κατὰ μικρὸν οὔτω τὴν ἀπληστίαν τοιῶσαντες, ἐπὶ σφαγὰς ἀνθρώπων, καὶ φόρους καὶ πολέμους προῆλθον.

Πλουτ. περὶ τῆς σαρκοφαγίας



ALASTOR ;
OR, THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE :
AND OTHER POEMS.

1816.



ALASTOR ;
OR,
THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE :
AND OTHER POEMS.

SHELLEY'S PREFACE.

THE poem entitled "ALASTOR," may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to

himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that Power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are

neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings, live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

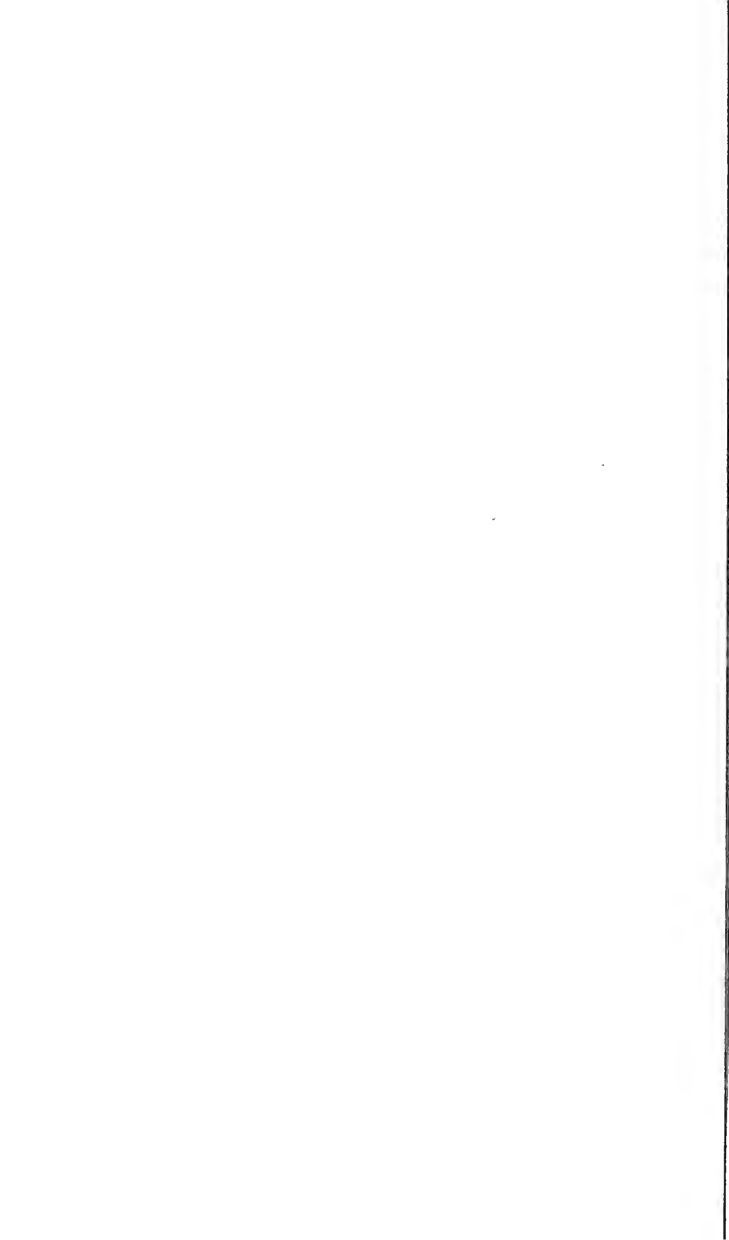
The good die first,
And those whose hearts are dry as summer dust,
Burn to the socket! ¹

The Fragment entitled "THE DÆMON OF THE WORLD" is a detached part of a poem which the author does not intend for publication.² The metre in which it is composed is that of *Samson Agonistes* and the Italian pastoral drama, and may be considered as the natural measure into which poetical conceptions, expressed in harmonious language, necessarily fall.

December 14, 1815.

¹ See *The Excursion*, by Wordsworth, book i.—ED.

² *Queen Mab*, from which certain parts were extracted, rewritten, and renamed, had not been published in 1815, but only printed for private circulation.—ED.



ALASTOR ;¹

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE.

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid
amarem, amans amare.—*Confess. St. August.*

EARTH, ocean, air, belovèd brotherhood !
If our great Mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine ;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness ;
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns

¹ The title of the poem is derived from the Greek word *ἀλάστωρ*, an evil genius. The spirit of solitude is an obviously fatal spirit in the developement of the fable. My dear friend the late William Bell Scott was not alone in misconceiving the application of the title. From the opening of his poem *To the Memory of Percy Bysshe Shelley*—

Where is Alastor gone,—
The fairy queen's own latest born,
Where is he gone ?—

it is evident that he regarded "Alastor" as the name of the poet whose story is told, and not as the name of the misleading spirit of solitude.—ED.

And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
 Suspended in the solitary dome
 Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
 I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
 May modulate with murmurs of the air,
 And motions of the forests and the sea.
 And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
 Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb 50
 No human hands with pious reverence reared,
 But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
 Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
 Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness:¹—
 A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked
 With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,

¹ This collocation of words is at least remarkable. Two years before Shelley was born, namely in the year 1790, appeared the finest of the prophetic books of William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. At page 26 occurs the phrase "leading his stary hosts thro' the waste wilderness"; and on the same page is the intransitive verb *ruining*, the employment of which by Shelley in *Alastor* (page 154) has led to so much discussion. At page 18 is the passage "beneath us at an immense distance was the sun, black but shining round it were fiery tracks," &c., which recalls the lines in *Queen Mab* (see ante, page 12), ending with

The sun's unclouded orb
 Rolled through the black concave ;

and at page 27 Blake uses the expression "beamy eyelids," while Shelley (*Diemon of the World*, pages 196-7) has "beamy eyes" and "veiny eyelids." I have elsewhere pointed out the striking similarity between a passage in Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* and one in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. More striking still is the fact that in the same book, at page 15, Blake has reduced to pictorial form the vision of an eagle struggling in the air with a snake,—a vision

The lone couch of his everlasting sleep :—
 Gentle, and brave, and generous,—no lorn bard
 Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh :
 He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude. 60
 Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
 And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
 And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
 The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
 And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
 Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision, and bright silver dream,
 His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
 And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
 Sent to his heart its choicest impulses. 70
 The fountains of divine philosophy
 Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
 Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
 In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
 And knew. When early youth had passed, he left
 His cold fireside and alienated home
 To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
 Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
 Has lured his fearless steps ; and he has bought
 With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
 His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps 81
 He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
 The red volcano overcanopies
 Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
 With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes
 On black bare pointed islets ever beat

which haunts Shelley's poetry somewhat persistently (see lines 227 and 325 of the present poem, and above all Canto I of *Luon and Cythna*). It would be curious if after all Blake's majestic design had been seen by Shelley and had remained permanently fixed in his imagination.—ED.

With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves
 Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
 Of fire and poison, inaccessible
 To avarice or pride, their starry domes 90
 Of diamond and of gold expand above
 Numberless and immeasurable halls,
 Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
 Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
 Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
 Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
 And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims
 To love and wonder; he would linger long
 In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
 Until the doves and squirrels would partake 100
 From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
 Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
 And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
 The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
 Her timid steps to gaze upon a form
 More graceful than her own.

His wandering step,
 Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
 The awful ruins of the days of old:
 Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
 Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers 110
 Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
 Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange
 Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
 Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphynx,
 Dark Æthiopia in her desert hills
 Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
 Stupendous columns, and wild images
 Of more than man, where marble dæmons watch
 The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
 Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls
 around, 120
 He lingered, poring on memorials

Of the world's youth, through the long burning
 day
 Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when
 the moon
 Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades,
 Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
 And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
 Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
 The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
 Her daily portion, from her father's tent, 130
 And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
 From duties and repose to tend his steps:—
 Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
 To speak her love:—and watched his nightly
 sleep,
 Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
 Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
 Of innocent dreams arose: then, when red morn
 Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home
 Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet wandering on, through Arabie 140
 And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
 And o'er the ærial mountains which pour down
 Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
 In joy and exultation held his way;
 Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within
 Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
 Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
 Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
 His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
 There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
 Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled
 maid 151
 Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.

Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
 Heard in the calm of thought ; its music long,
 Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
 His inmost sense suspended in its web
 Of many-coloured woof and shifting hues.
 Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
 And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
 Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy, 160
 Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
 Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
 A permeating fire : wild numbers then
 She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
 Subdued by its own pathos : her fair hands
 Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange
 harp

Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
 The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
 The beating of her heart was heard to fill
 The pauses of her music, and her breath 170
 Tumultuously accorded with those fits
 Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
 As if her heart impatiently endured
 Its bursting burthen : at the sound he turned,
 And saw by the warm light of their own life
 Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
 Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
 Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
 Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips 179
 Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
 His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
 Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and
 quelled

His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
 Her panting bosom : . . . she drew back a while,
 Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
 With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
 Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.

Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course, 190
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock he started from his
trance—

The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither
have fled

The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his
sleep,

The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes 200
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly

As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas! alas!

Were limbs, and breath, and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost,
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep, 210
That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of
death

Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow
clouds,

And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault, with loathliest
vapours hung,

Where every shade which the foul grave exhales

Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
 Conduct,¹ O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
 This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his
 heart, 220

The insatiate hope which it awakened stung
 His brain even like despair.

While day-light held

The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
 With his still soul. At night the passion came,
 Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
 And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
 Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasped
 In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
 Burn with the poison, and precipitates
 Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and
 cloud, 230

Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
 O'er the wide æry wilderness: thus driven
 By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
 Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
 Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous
 dells,

Startling with careless step the moon-light
 snake,

He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
 Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
 Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
 Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep 240
 Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
 Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
 Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
 Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
 Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
 Bearing within his life the brooding care

¹ Though the construction here is lax, the passage is probably as the poet meant it to be.—ED.

That ever fed on its decaying flame.
 And now his limbs were lean ; his scattered hair
 Sered by the autumn of strange suffering
 Sung dirges in the wind ; his listless hand ²⁵⁰
 Hung like dead bone within its withered skin ;
 Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone
 As in a furnace burning secretly
 From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
 Who ministered with human charity
 His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
 Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
 Encountering on some dizzy precipice
 That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of
 wind
 With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
 Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
 In its career : the infant would conceal ²⁶²
 His troubled visage in his mother's robe
 In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
 To remember their strange light in many a
 dream
 Of after-times ; but youthful maidens, taught
 By nature, would interpret half the woe
 That wasted him, would call him with false
 names
 Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
 At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the
 path ²⁷⁰
 Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasman shore
 He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
 Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
 His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
 Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
 It rose as he approached, and with strong wings
 Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course

High over the immeasurable main.
 His eyes pursued its flight.—“Thou hast a
 home, 280
 Beautiful bird; thou voyagest to thine home,
 Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy
 neck

With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
 Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
 And what am I that I should linger here,
 With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
 Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
 To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
 In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
 That echoes not my thoughts?” A gloomy
 smile 290

Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
 For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
 Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,
 Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
 With doubtful smile mocking its own strange
 charms.

Startled by his own thoughts he looked
 around.

There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
 Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
 A little shallop floating near the shore
 Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
 It had been long abandoned, for its sides 301
 Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail
 joints
 Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
 A restless impulse urged him to embark
 And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's
 waste;
 For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
 The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny, sea and sky
 Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
 Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the
 waves. 310

Following his eager soul, the wanderer
 Leaped in the boat, he spread his cloak aloft
 On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
 And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
 Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
 Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
 Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
 Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
 The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on,
 With fierce gusts and precipitating force, 321
 Through the white ridges of the chafèd sea.
 The waves arose. Higher and higher still
 Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's
 scourge

Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
 Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
 Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
 Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
 With dark obliterating course, he sate :
 As if their genii were the ministers 330
 Appointed to conduct him to the light
 Of those belovèd eyes, the Poet sate
 Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
 The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
 High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
 That canopied his path o'er the waste deep ;
 Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
 Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks
 O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day ;
 Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
 More horribly the multitudinous streams 341

Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
 Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
 The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
 Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam
 Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
 Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave;
 Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
 That fell, convulsing ocean. Safely fled—
 As if that frail and wasted human form, 350
 Had been an elemental god.

At midnight
 The moon arose: and lo! the ætherial cliffs
 Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
 Among the stars like sunlight, and around
 Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the
 waves

Bursting and eddying irresistibly
 Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save?—
 The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
 The crags closed round with black and jagged
 arms,

The shattered mountain overhung the sea, 360
 And faster still, beyond all human speed,
 Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
 The little boat was driven. A cavern there
 Yawned, and amid its slant and winding
 depths

Ingulphed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
 With unrelaxing speed.—“Vision and Love!”
 The Poet cried aloud, “I have beheld
 The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
 Shall not divide us long!”

The boat pursued
 The windings of the cavern. Day-light shone
 At length upon that gloomy river's flow; 371
 Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
 Is calm, on the unfathomable stream

The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain,
 riven,
 Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
 Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
 Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
 That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
 Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm ;
 Stair above stair the eddying waters rose 380
 Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
 With alternating dash the knarlèd roots
 Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
 In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,
 Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud,
 A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
 Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
 With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and
 round,
 Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
 Till on the verge of the extremest curve, 390
 Where through an opening of the rocky bank,
 The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
 Of glassy quiet 'mid those battling tides
 Is left, the boat paused shuddering.—Shall it
 sink
 Down the abyss ? Shall the reverting stress
 Of that resistless gulph embosom it ?
 Now shall it fall ?—A wandering stream of
 wind,
 Breathed from the west, has caught the
 expanded sail,
 And, lo ! with gentle motion, between banks
 Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream, 400
 Beneath a woven grove it sails, and, hark !
 The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar,
 With the breeze murmuring in the musical
 woods.
 Where the embowering trees recede, and leave

A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow
flowers

For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton
wind, 410

Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered
hair,

But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy
frame

Had yet performed its ministry: it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

The noonday sun 420
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of their aëry rocks
Mocking its moans, respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some
bank,

Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark 430
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below,

Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
 The ash and the acacia floating hang
 Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents,
 clothed
 In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
 Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow
 around 440
 The grey trunks, and, as gamesome infants'
 eyes,
 With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
 Fold their beams round the hearts of those
 that love,
 These twine their tendrils with the wedded
 boughs
 Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
 Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
 And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
 As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy
 lawns
 Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
 Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with
 blooms 450
 Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
 Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined
 with jasmine,
 A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
 To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
 Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
 Their noonday watch, and sail among the
 shades,
 Like vaporous shapes half seen; beyond, a well,
 Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
 Images all the woven boughs above,
 And each depending leaf, and every speck 460
 Of azure sky, darting between their chasms;
 Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
 Its portraiture, but some inconstant star

Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
 Or, painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
 Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
 Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings,
 Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld 469
 Their own wan light through the reflected lines
 Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
 Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
 Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
 Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He
 heard

The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung
 Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
 An unaccustomed presence, and the sound
 Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
 Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
 To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
 Of shadowy silver or enshrining light, 481
 Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
 Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;—
 But, undulating woods, and silent well,
 And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom
 Now deepening the dark shades, for speech
 assuming,

Held commune with him,¹ as if he and it
 Were all that was,—only . . . when his regard
 Was raised by intense pensiveness, . . . two
 eyes, 489

Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
 And seemed with their serene and azure smiles

¹ The spirit, assuming for speech the undulating woods, silent well, leaping rivulet, and evening gloom, communed with the poet: at least I presume that to be the meaning of this somewhat involved passage.—ED.

To beckon him.

Obedient to the light

That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
 The windings of the dell.—The rivulet
 Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
 Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
 Among the moss with hollow harmony
 Dark and profound. Now on the polished
 stones
 It danced ; like childhood laughing as it went :
 Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings
 crept, 500

Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
 That overhung its quietness.—“O stream !
 Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
 Whither do thy mysterious waters tend ?
 Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
 Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulphs,
 Thy searchless fountain, and invisible course
 Have each their type in me : and the wide sky,
 And measureless ocean may declare as soon
 What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud 510
 Contains thy waters, as the universe
 Tell where these living thoughts reside, when
 stretched
 Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
 I' the passing wind !”

Beside the grassy shore

Of the small stream he went ; he did impress
 On the green moss his tremulous step, that
 caught
 Strong shuddering from his burning limbs.
 As one
 Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
 Of fever, he did move ; yet, not like him,

Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
 Of his frail exultation shall be spent, 521
 He must descend. With rapid steps he went
 Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
 Of the wild babbling rivulet ; and now
 The forest's solemn canopies were changed
 For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
 Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and
 stemmed

The struggling brook : tall spires of windlestrae
 Threw their thin shadows down the rugged
 slope, 529

And naught but knarled roots of ancient pines,
 Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping
 roots

The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
 Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
 The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows
 thin

And white, and where irradiate dewy eyes
 Had shone, gleam stony orbs:—so from his
 steps

Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful
 shade

Of the green groves, with all their odorous
 winds

And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
 The stream, that with a larger volume now 547
 Rolled through the labyrinthine dell ; and
 there

Fretted a path through its descending curves
 With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
 Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
 Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
 In the light of evening, and its precipice¹

¹ This obscure passage is left precisely as Shelley left it. The substitution of *amidst precipices* for *and*

Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
 'Mid toppling stones, black gulphs and yawning
 caves,
 Whose windings gave ten thousand various
 tongues
 To the loud stream. Lo! where the pass
 expands 550
 Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
 And seems, with its accumulated crags,
 To overhang the world: for wide expand
 Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
 Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
 Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
 Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
 Mingling their flames with twilight, on the
 verge
 Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
 In naked and severe simplicity, 560
 Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
 Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
 Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
 Yielding one only response, at each pause
 In most familiar cadence, with the howl,
 The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
 Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad
 river,
 Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
 Fell into that immeasurable void
 Scattering its waters to the passing winds. 570

Yet the grey precipice and solemn pine,
 And torrent, were not all;—one silent nook

its precipice would leave a tolerably clear sense, but would rest upon conjecture alone. Though to my mind preferable to any other emendation which has been made or offered, my own is too radical for adoption without authority.—ED.

Was there. Even on the edge of that vast
 mountain,
 Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
 It overlooked in its serenity
 The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
 It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
 Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
 The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
 And did embower with leaves for ever green, 580
 And berries dark, the smooth and even space
 Of its inviolated floor, and here
 The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
 In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose
 decay,
 Red, yellow, or ætherially pale,
 Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
 Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
 The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
 One human step alone, has ever broken
 The stillness of its solitude:—one voice 590
 Alone inspired its echoes;—even that voice
 Which hither came, floating among the winds,
 And led the loveliest among human forms
 To make their wild haunts the depository
 Of all the grace and beauty that endued
 Its motions, render up its majesty,
 Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
 And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
 Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
 Commit the colours of that varying cheek, 600
 That snowy breast, those dark and drooping
 eyes.

The dim and hornèd moon hung low, and
 poured
 A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
 That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist

Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
 Wan moonlight even to fulness: not a star
 Shone, not a sound was heard; the very winds,
 Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
 Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O, storm of
 death!

Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night:
 And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still 611
 Guiding its irresistible career
 In thy devastating omnipotence,
 Art king of this frail world, from the red field
 Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
 The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
 Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
 A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls
 His brother Death. A rare and regal prey 619
 He hath prepared, prowling around the world;
 Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men
 Go to their graves like flowers or creeping
 worms,
 Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
 The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
 The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that
 death

Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
 Did he resign his high and holy soul
 To images of the majestic past,
 That paused within his passive being now, 630
 Like winds that bear sweet music, when they
 breathe

Through some dim latticed chamber. He did
 place

His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
 Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
 Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest,

Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
 Of that obscurest chasm;—and thus he lay,
 Surrendering to their final impulses
 The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,
 The torturers, slept; no mortal pain or fear 640
 Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,
 And his own being unalloyed by pain,
 Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
 The stream of thought, till he lay breathing
 there

At peace, and faintly smiling:—his last sight
 Was the great moon, which o'er the western
 line

Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
 With whose dun beams inwoven darkness
 seemed

To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
 It rests, and still as the divided frame 650
 Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
 That ever beat in mystic sympathy
 With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still:
 And when two lessening points of light alone
 Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate
 gasp

Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
 The stagnate night:—till the minutest ray
 Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his
 heart.

It paused—it fluttered. But when heaven
 remained

Utterly black, the murky shades involved 660
 An image, silent, cold, and motionless,
 As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
 Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
 That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
 Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame—
 No sense, no motion, no divinity—

A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
 The breath of heaven did wander—a bright
 stream
 Once fed with many-voicèd waves—a dream
 Of youth, which night and time have quenched
 for ever, 670
 Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

O, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
 Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
 With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs
 exhale
 From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! O, that
 God,
 Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
 Which but one living man¹ has drained, who
 now,
 Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
 No proud exemption in the blighting curse
 He bears, over the world wanders for ever, 680
 Lone as incarnate death! O, that the dream
 Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
 Raking the cinders of a crucible
 For life and power, even when his feeble hand
 Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
 Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
 Like some frail exhalation; which the dawn
 Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou hast fled!
 The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful, 689
 The child of grace and genius. Heartless things

¹ The Wandering Jew was the subject of a composition in verse by Medwin and Shelley, written when Shelley was about fifteen years old, and as yet undiscovered so far as most of Shelley's portion is concerned. Ahasuerus is next conspicuous in *Queen Mab*, and was finally reintroduced into Shelley's last published work, *Hellas*.—Ed.

Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice:—but thou art
fled—

Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes 700
That image sleep in death. upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when
those hues

Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence, 710
And all the shows o' the world are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
It is a woe too 'deep for tears,' when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things, 719
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

ΔΑΚΡΥΣΙ ΔΙΟΙΣΩ ΠΟΤΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΤΜΟΝ.

[TO COLERIDGE.]

O! THERE are spirits of the air,
 And genii of the evening breeze,
 And gentle ghosts, with eyes as fair
 As star-beams among twilight trees:—
 Such lovely ministers to meet
 Oft hast thou turned from men thy lonely feet.

With mountain winds, and babbling springs,
 And moonlight seas, that are the voice
 Of these inexplicable things,
 Thou didst hold commune, and rejoice 10
 When they did answer thee; but they
 Cast, like a worthless boon, thy love away.

And thou hast sought in starry eyes
 Beams that were never meant for thine,
 Another's wealth:—tame sacrifice
 To a fond faith! still dost thou pine?
 Still dost thou hope that greeting hands,
 Voice, looks, or lips, may answer thy demands?

Ah! wherefore didst thou build thine hope
 On the false earth's inconstancy? 20
 Did thine own mind afford no scope
 Of love, or moving thoughts to thee?
 That natural scenes or human smiles
 Could steal the power to wind thee in their wiles.

Yes, all the faithless smiles are fled
 Whose falsehood left thee broken-hearted;
 The glory of the moon is dead;
 Night's ghosts and dreams have now departed;

Thine own soul still is true to thee,
But changed to a foul fiend through misery. 30

This fiend, whose ghastly presence ever
Beside thee like thy shadow hangs,
Dream not to chase;—the mad endeavour
Would scourge thee to severer pangs.
Be as thou art. Thy settled fate,
Dark as it is, all change would aggravate.

STANZAS.—APRIL, 1814.

Away! the moor is dark beneath the moon,
Rapid clouds have drank the last pale beam
of even:
Away! the gathering winds will call the dark-
ness soon,
And profoundest midnight shroud the serene
lights of heaven.

Pause not! The time is past! Every voice
cries, Away!
Tempt not with one last tear thy friend's
ungentle mood:
Thy lover's eye, so glazed and cold, dares not
entreat thy stay:
Duty and dereliction guide thee back to soli-
tude.

Away, away! to thy sad and silent home;
Pour bitter tears on its desolated hearth; 10
Watch the dim shades as like ghosts they go
and come,
And complicate strange webs of melancholy
mirth.

The leaves of wasted autumn woods shall float
around thine head :

The blooms of dewy spring shall gleam be-
neath thy feet :

But thy soul or this world must fade in the
frost that binds the dead,

Ere midnight's frown and morning's smile,
ere thou and peace may meet.

The cloud shadows of midnight possess their
own repose,

For the weary winds are silent, or the moon
is in the deep :

Some respite to its turbulence unresting ocean
knows ;

Whatever moves, or toils, or grieves, hath its
appointed sleep. 20

Thou in the grave shalt rest—yet till the phan-
toms flee

Which that house and heath and garden made
dear to thee erewhile,

Thy remembrance, and repentance, and deep
musings are not free

From the music of two voices and the light
of one sweet smile.

MUTABILITY.

WE are as clouds that veil the midnight moon ;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and
quiver,

Streaking the darkness radiantly !—yet soon
Night closes round, and they are lost for ever :

Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
 Give various response to each varying blast,
 To whose frail frame no second motion brings
 One mood or modulation like the last.

We rest.—A dream has power to poison sleep;
 We rise.—One wandering thought pollutes
 the day; 10

We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep;
 Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away :

It is the same !—For, be it joy or sorrow,
 The path of its departure still is free :
 Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow ;
 Naught may endure but Mutability.

THERE IS NO WORK, NOR DEVICE, NOR KNOWLEDGE,
 NOR WISDOM, IN THE GRAVE, WHITHER THOU
 GOEST. *Ecclesiastes.*

THE pale, the cold, and the moony smile
 Which the meteor beam of a starless night
 Sheds on a lonely and sea-girt isle,
 Ere the dawning of morn's undoubted light,
 Is the flame of life so fickle and wan
 That flits round our steps till their strength is
 gone.

O man ! hold thee on in courage of soul
 Through the stormy shades of thy worldly
 way,
 And the billows of cloud that around thee roll
 Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day, 10
 Where hell and heaven shall leave thee free
 To the universe of destiny.

This world is the nurse of all we know,
 This world is the mother of all we feel,
 And the coming of death is a fearful blow
 To a brain unencompassed with nerves of
 steel ;
 When all that we know, or feel, or see,
 Shall pass like an unreal mystery.

The secret things of the grave are there,
 Where all but this frame must surely be, 20
 Though the fine-wrought eye and the wondrous
 ear
 No longer will live to hear or to see
 All that is great and all that is strange
 In the boundless realm of unending change.

Who telleth a tale of unspeaking death ?
 Who lifteth the veil of what is to come ?
 Who painteth the shadows that are beneath
 The wide-winding caves of the peopled tomb ?
 Or uniteth the hopes of what shall be
 With the fears and the love for that which we
 see ?

30

A SUMMER-EVENING CHURCH-YARD,
 LECHLADE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

THE wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
 Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray ;
 And pallid evening twines its beaming hair
 In duskier braids around the languid eyes of
 day :
 Silence and twilight, unbeloved of men,
 Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing
day,

Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea ;
Light, sound, and motion own the potent sway,
Responding to the charm with its own
mystery. 10

The winds are still, or the dry church-tower
grass

Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, ærial Pile ! whose pinnacles

Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,
Obeyest in silence their sweet solemn spells,
Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and dis-
tant spire,

Around whose lessening and invisible height
Gather among the stars the clouds of night.

The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres :

And, mouldering as they sleep, a thrilling
sound 20

Half sense, half thought, among the darkness
stirs,

Breathed from their wormy beds all living
things around,
And mingling with the still night and mute
sky

Its awful hush is felt inaudibly.

Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild

And terrorless as this serenest night :
Here could I hope, like some enquiring child
Sporting on graves, that death did hide from
human sight

Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep 29
That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep.

TO WORDSWORTH.

POET of Nature, thou hast wept to know
 That things depart which never may return :
 Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first
 glow,
 Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to
 mourn.
 These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
 Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
 Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
 On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar :
 Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
 Above the blind and battling multitude :
 In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
 Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
 Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
 Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease
 to be.

FEELINGS OF A REPUBLICAN

ON THE FALL OF BONAPARTE.

I HATED thee, fallen tyrant ! I did groan
 To think that a most unambitious slave,
 Like thou, shouldst dance and revel on the
 grave
 Of Liberty. Thou mightst have built thy
 throne
 Where it had stood even now : thou didst prefer
 A frail and bloody pomp which time has
 swept

In fragments towards oblivion. Massacre,
 For this I prayed, would on thy sleep have
 crept,
 Treason and Slavery, Rapine, Fear, and Lust,
 And stifled thee, their minister. I know
 Too late, since thou and France are in the dust,
 That virtue owns a more eternal foe
 Than force or fraud: old Custom, legal Crime,
 And bloody Faith the foulest birth of time.¹

SONNET.

FROM THE ITALIAN OF DANTE.

*Dante Alighieri to Guido Cavalcanti.*²

GUIDO, I would that Lappo, thou, and I,
 Led by some strong enchantment, might
 ascend

¹ Presumably by way of comment on this last line, Shelley printed next to it in the *Alastor* volume, under the title *Superstition*, an excerpt from his privately printed poem *Queen Mab*. He simply took the thirty-one lines beginning with—

Thou taintest all thou lookest upon !
 and ending with—

And all their causes, to an abstract point,
 Converging, thou didst bend and called it God !
 (pages 47 and 48 of this volume) and substituted for
 the last line the two following—

Converging, thou didst give it name, and form,
 Intelligence, and unity, and power.—ED.

² A translation of Cavalcanti's Sonnet to Dante, beginning—

Io vegno il giorno a te infinite volte,
 will be found among Shelley's translations in a later
 volume.—ED.

A magic ship, whose charmèd sails should fly
 With winds at will where'er our thoughts
 might wend,
 And that no change, nor any evil chance
 Should mar our joyous voyage ; but it might
 be,
 That even satiety should still enhance
 Between our hearts their strict community :
 And that the bounteous wizard then would
 place
 Vanna and Bice and my¹ gentle love,
 Companions of our wandering, and would grace
 With passionate talk, wherever we might rove,
 Our time, and each were as content and free
 As I believe that thou and I should be.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF
 MOSCHUS.

Tὰν ἄλα τὰν γλαυκὰν ὅταν ὄνεμος ἀτρέμα βάλλῃ, κ.τ.λ.

WHEN winds that move not its calm surface
 sweep
 The azure sea, I love the land no more ;
 The smiles of the serene and tranquil deep
 Tempt my unquiet mind.—But when the roar
 Of ocean's grey abyss resounds, and foam
 Gathers upon the sea, and vast waves burst,
 I turn from the drear aspect to the home
 Of earth and its deep woods, where inter-
 spersed,
 When winds blow loud, pines make sweet
 melody.

¹ Whether by mistranslation or by misprint, the word *my* is obviously wrong, Bice being herself the love of Dante.—ED.

Whose house is some lone bark, whose toil the
 sea,
 Whose prey the wandering fish, an evil lot
 Has chosen.—But I my languid limbs will
 fling
 Beneath the plane, where the brook's mur-
 muring
 Moves the calm spirit, but disturbs it not.

THE DÆMON OF THE WORLD.¹

PART I.

Nec tantum prodere vati,
 Quantum scire licet. Venit ætas omnis in unam
 Congeriem, miserumque premunt tot sæcula pectus.
 LUCAN, *Phars.* L. v. l. 176.

How wonderful is Death,
 Death and his brother Sleep!
 One pale as yonder wan and hornèd moon,
 With lips of lurid blue,
 The other glowing like the vital morn,
 When throned on ocean's wave
 It breathes over the world:
 Yet both so passing strange and wonderful!

¹ This poem is an elaborate revision of the first, second, eighth and ninth cantos of *Queen Mab*, and may be regarded as what Shelley in 1815 considered worth preserving in that volume. After making his revision, which exists in his own copy of *Queen Mab* now in my collection, he only published with *Alastor* the first of the two parts. The second was published for the first time in my library edition of his works in 1877.—ED.

Hath then the iron-sceptred Skeleton,
 Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres, 10
 To the hell dogs that couch beneath his throne
 Cast that fair prey? Must that divinest form,
 Which love and admiration cannot view
 Without a beating heart, whose azure veins
 Steal like dark streams along a field of snow,
 Whose outline is as fair as marble clothed
 In light of some sublimest mind, decay?

Nor putrefaction's breath

Leave aught of this pure spectacle

But loathsomeness and ruin?— 20

Spare aught but a dark theme,

On which the lightest heart might moralize?

Or is it but that downy-wingèd slumbers

Have charmed their nurse coy Silence near her
 lids

To watch their own repose?

Will they, when morning's beam

Flows through those wells of light,

Seek far from noise and day some western cave,

Where woods and streams with soft and paus-
 ing winds

A lulling murmur weave?— 30

Ianthe doth not sleep

The dreamless sleep of death:

Nor in her moonlight chamber silently

Doth Henry hear her regular pulses throb,

Or mark her delicate cheek

With interchange of hues mock the broad
 moon,

Outwatching weary night,

Without assured reward.

Her dewy eyes are closed;

On their translucent lids, whose texture fine 40

Scarce hides the dark blue orbs that burn
 below
 With unapparent fire,
 The baby Sleep is pillowed:
 Her golden tresses shade
 The bosom's stainless pride,
 Twining like tendrils of the parasite
 Around a marble column.

Hark! whence that rushing sound?
 'Tis like a wondrous strain that sweeps
 Around a lonely ruin 50
 When west winds sigh and evening waves
 respond
 In whispers from the shore:
 'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
 Which from the unseen lyres of dells and
 groves
 The genii of the breezes sweep.
 Floating on waves of music and of light,
 The chariot of the Dæmon of the World
 Descends in silent power:
 Its shape reposed within: slight as some cloud
 That catches but the palest tinge of day 60
 When evening yields to night,
 Bright as that fibrous woof when stars indue
 Its transitory robe.
 Four shapeless shadows bright and beautiful
 Draw that strange car of glory, reins of light,
 Check their unearthly speed; they stop and
 fold
 Their wings of braided air:
 The Dæmon leaning from the ætherial car
 Gazed on the slumbering maid.
 Human eye hath ne'er beheld 70
 A shape so wild, so bright, so beautiful,
 As that which o'er the maiden's charmed sleep

Waving a starry wand,
 Hung like a mist of light.
 Such sounds as breathed around like odorous
 winds
 Of wakening spring arose,
 Filling the chamber and the moonlight sky.

Maiden, the world's supremest spirit
 Beneath the shadow of her wings
 Folds all thy memory doth inherit 80
 From ruin of divinest things,
 Feelings that lure thee to betray,
 And light of thoughts that pass away.

For thou hast earned a mighty boon,
 The truths which wisest poets see
 Dimly, thy mind may make its own,
 Rewarding its own majesty,
 Entranced in some diviner mood
 Of self-oblivious solitude.

Custom, and Faith, and Power thou spurnest;
 From hate and awe thy heart is free; 91
 Ardent and pure as day thou burnest,
 For dark and cold mortality
 A living light, to cheer it long,
 The watch-fires of the world among.

Therefore from nature's inner shrine,
 Where gods and fiends in worship bend,
 Majestic spirit, be it thine
 The flame to seize, the veil to rend,
 Where the vast snake Eternity 100
 In charmèd sleep doth ever lie.

All that inspires thy voice of love,
 Or speaks in thy unclosing eyes,
 Or through thy frame doth burn or move,
 Or think or feel, awake, arise!
 Spirit, leave for mine and me
 Earth's unsubstantial mimicry!

It ceased, and from the mute and moveless
 frame

A radiant spirit arose,
 All beautiful in naked purity. 110
 Robed in its human hues it did ascend,
 Disparting as it went the silver clouds,
 It moved towards the car, and took its seat
 Beside the Dæmon shape.

Obedient to the sweep of æery song,
 The mighty ministers
 Unfurled their prismatic wings.
 The magic car moved on;
 The night was fair, innumerable stars
 Studded heaven's dark blue vault; 120
 The eastern wave grew pale
 With the first smile of morn.

The magic car moved on.
 From the swift sweep of wings
 The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew;
 And where the burning wheels
 Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak
 Was traced a line of lightning.
 Now far above a rock the utmost verge
 Of the wide earth it flew, 130
 The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
 Frowned o'er the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's stormy path,
 Calm as a slumbering babe,
 Tremendous ocean lay.
 Its broad and silent mirror gave to view
 The pale and waning stars,
 The chariot's fiery track,
 And the grey light of morn
 Tinging those fleecy clouds 140
 That cradled in their folds the infant dawn.
 The chariot seemed to fly
 Through the abyss of an immense concave,
 Radiant with million constellations, tinged
 With shades of infinite colour,
 And semicircled with a belt
 Flashing incessant meteors.

As they approached their goal,
 The wingèd shadows seemed to gather speed.
 The sea no longer was distinguished ; earth 150
 Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere, suspended
 In the black concave of heaven
 With the sun's cloudless orb,
 Whose rays of rapid light
 Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
 And fell like ocean's feathery spray
 Dashed from the boiling surge
 Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.
 Earth's distant orb appeared 160
 The smallest light that twinkles in the heavens,
 Whilst round the chariot's way
 Innumerable systems widely rolled,
 And countless spheres diffused
 An ever varying glory.
 It was a sight of wonder ! Some were horned,
 And, like the moon's argentine crescent hung

In the dark dome of heaven, some did shed 168
 A clear mild beam like Hesperus, while the sea
 Yet glows with fading sun-light ; others dashed
 Athwart the night with trains of bickering fire,
 Like spherèd worlds to death and ruin driven ;
 Some shone like stars, and as the chariot passed
 Bedimmed all other light.

Spirit of Nature ! here
 In this interminable wilderness
 Of worlds, at whose involved immensity
 Even soaring fancy staggers,
 Here is thy fitting temple.
 Yet not the lightest leaf 180
 That quivers to the passing breeze
 Is less instinct with thee,—
 Yet not the meanest worm,
 That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead,
 Less shares thy eternal breath.
 Spirit of Nature ! thou
 Imperishable as this glorious scene,
 Here is thy fitting temple.

If solitude hath ever led thy steps
 To the shore of the immeasurable sea, 190
 And thou hast lingered there
 Until the sun's broad orb
 Seemed resting on the fiery line of ocean,
 Thou must have marked the braided webs of
 gold
 That without motion hang
 Over the sinking sphere :
 Thou must have marked the billowy mountain
 clouds,
 Edged with intolerable radiancy,
 Towering like rocks of jet
 Above the burning deep : 200

And yet there is a moment
 When the sun's highest point
 Peers like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
 When those far clouds of feathery purple
 gleam
 Like fairy lands girt by some heavenly sea :
 Then has thy rapt imagination soared
 Where in the midst of all existing things
 The temple of the mightiest Dæmon stands.

Yet not the golden islands
 That gleam amid yon flood of purple light, 210
 Nor the feathery curtains
 That canopy the sun's resplendent couch,
 Nor the burnished ocean waves
 Paving that gorgeous dome,
 So fair, so wonderful a sight
 As the eternal temple could afford.
 The elements of all that human thought
 Can frame of lovely or sublime, did join
 To rear the fabric of the fane, nor aught
 Of earth may image forth its majesty. 220
 Yet likest evening's vault that faëry hall,
 As heaven low resting on the wave it spread
 Its floors of flashing light,
 Its vast and azure dome ;
 And on the verge of that obscure abyss
 Where crystal battlements o'erhang the gulph
 Of the dark world, ten thousand spheres diffuse
 Their lustre through its adamantine gates.

The magic car no longer moved ;
 The Dæmon and the Spirit 230
 Entered the eternal gates.
 Those clouds of aëry gold
 That slept in glittering billows
 Beneath the azure canopy,

With the ætherial footsteps trembled not ;
 While slight and odorous mists
 Floated to strains of thrilling melody
 Through the vast columns and the pearly
 shrines.

The Dæmon and the Spirit
 Approached the overhanging battlement, 240
 Below lay stretched the boundless universe !
 There, far as the remotest line
 That limits swift imagination's flight,
 Unending orbs mingled in mazy motion,
 Immutably fulfilling
 Eternal Nature's law.
 Above, below, around,
 The circling systems formed
 A wilderness of harmony,
 Each with undeviating aim 250
 In eloquent silence through the depths of space
 Pursued its wondrous way.—

Awhile the Spirit paused in ecstasy.
 Yet soon she saw, as the vast spheres swept by,
 Strange things within their belted orbs appear.
 Like animated frenzies, dimly moved
 Shadows, and skeletons, and fiendly shapes,
 Thronging round human graves, and o'er the
 dead
 Sculpturing records for each memory
 In verse, such as malignant gods pronounce,
 Blasting the hopes of men, when heaven and
 hell 261
 Confounded burst in ruin o'er the world :
 And they did build vast trophies, instruments
 Of murder, human bones, barbaric gold,
 Skins torn from living men, and towers of
 skulls

With sightless holes gazing on blinder heaven,
 Mitres, and crowns, and brazen chariots stained
 With blood, and scrolls of mystic wickedness,
 The sanguine codes of venerable crime.

The likeness of a thronèd king came by, 270
 When these had passed, bearing upon his brow
 A threefold crown; his countenance was calm,
 His eye severe and cold; but his right hand
 Was charged with bloody coin, and he did
 gnaw

By fits, with secret smiles, a human heart
 Concealed beneath his robe¹; and motley shapes,
 A multitudinous throng, around him knelt,
 With bosoms bare, and bowed heads, and false
 looks

Of true submission, as the sphere rolled by.
 Brooking no eye to witness their foul shame,
 Which human hearts must feel, while human
 tongues 281

Tremble to speak, they did rage horribly,
 Breathing in self contempt fierce blasphemies
 Against the Dæmon of the World, and high
 Hurling their armèd hands where the pure
 Spirit,

Serene and inaccessibly secure,
 Stood on an isolated pinnacle,
 The flood of ages combating below,
 The depth of the unbounded universe
 Above, and all around 290

Necessity's unchanging harmony.

¹ This phantasm of a king gnawing by fits a human heart which he keeps under his robe recalls forcibly the more powerful portrait of Murder with "a mask like Castlereagh," drawing human hearts from beneath his cloak, and throwing them to his blood-hounds. See the second and third stanzas of *The Mask of Anarchy*.—ED.

PART II.

O HAPPY Earth! reality of Heaven!
 To which those restless powers that ceaselessly
 Throng through the human universe aspire;
 Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
 Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will!
 Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and
 time,
 Verge to one point and blend forever there:
 Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place!
 Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
 Languor, disease, and ignorance dare not come:
 O happy Earth, reality of Heaven! 11

Genius has seen thee in her passionate
 dreams,
 And dim forebodings of thy loveliness,
 Haunting the human heart, have there en-
 twined
 Those rooted hopes, that the proud Power of Evil
 Shall not forever on this fairest world
 Shake pestilence and war, or that his slaves
 With blasphemy for prayer, and human blood
 For sacrifice, before his shrine forever
 In adoration bend, or Erebus 20
 With all its banded fiends shall not uprising
 To overwhelm in envy and revenge
 The dauntless and the good, who dare to hurl
 Defiance at his throne, girt tho' it be
 With Death's omnipotence. Thou hast beheld
 His empire, o'er the present and the past;
 It was a desolate sight—now gaze on mine,
 Futurity. Thou hoary giant Time,
 Render thou up thy half-devoured babes,—
 And from the cradles of eternity, 30

Where millions lie lulled to their portioned
 sleep
 By the deep murmuring stream of passing
 things,
 Tear thou that gloomy shroud.—Spirit, behold
 Thy glorious destiny!

The Spirit saw
 The vast frame of the renovated world
 Smile in the lap of Chaos, and the sense
 Of hope thro' her fine texture did suffuse
 Such varying glow, as summer evening casts
 On undulating clouds and deepening lakes.
 Like the vague sighings of a wind at even, 40
 That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea
 And dies on the creation of its breath,
 And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits,
 Was the sweet stream of thought that with
 wild motion
 Flowed o'er the Spirit's human sympathies.
 The mighty tide of thought had paused awhile,
 Which from the Dæmon now like ocean's
 stream
 Again began to pour.—

To me is given
 The wonders of the human world to keep—
 Space, matter, time and mind—let the sight 50
 Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
 All things are recreated, and the flame
 Of consentaneous love inspires all life:
 The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
 To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
 Rewarding her with their pure perfectness:
 The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
 Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad:
 Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere, 59

Those trackless deeps, where many a weary
 sail
 Has seen, above the illimitable plain,
 Morning on night and night on morning rise,
 Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer
 spread
 Its shadowy mountains on the sun-bright sea,
 Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
 So long have mingled with the gusty wind
 In melancholy loneliness, and swept 100
 The desert of those ocean solitudes,
 But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,
 The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm,
 Now to the sweet and many-mingling sounds
 Of kindest human impulses respond :
 Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,
 With lightsome clouds and shining seas between,
 And fertile valleys, resonant with bliss,
 Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
 Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to
 shore, 110
 To meet the kisses of the flowrets there.

Man chief perceives the change, his being
 notes
 The gradual renovation, and defines
 Each movement of its progress on his mind.
 Man, where the gloom of the long polar night
 Lowered o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen
 soil,
 Where scarce the hardiest herb that braves the
 frost
 Basked in the moonlight's ineffectual glow,
 Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the
 night ; 119
 Nor where the tropics bound the realms of day
 With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,

Where blue mists through the unmoving atmo-
 sphere
 Scattered the seeds of pestilence, and fed
 Unnatural vegetation, where the land
 Teemed with all earthquake, tempest and
 disease,
 Was man a nobler being; slavery
 Had crushed him to his country's bloodstained
 dust.

Even where the milder zone afforded man
 A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,
 Blighting his being with unnumbered ills, 130
 Spread like a quenchless fire; nor truth availed
 Till late to arrest its progress, or create
 That peace which first in bloodless victory waved
 Her snowy standard o'er this favoured clime:
 There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,
 The mimic of surrounding misery,
 The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,
 The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.

Here now the human being stands adorning
 This loveliest earth with taintless body and
 mind; 140
 Bless'd from his birth with all bland impulses,
 Which gently in his noble bosom wake
 All kindly passions and all pure desires.
 Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,
 Which from the exhaustless lore of human weal
 Draws on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that
 rise
 In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
 With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks
 The unprevailing hoariness of age, 149
 And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene
 Swift as an unremembered vision, stands

Immortal upon earth : no longer now
 He slays the beast that sports around his
 dwelling

And horribly devours its mangled flesh,
 Or drinks its vital blood, which like a stream
 Of poison thro' his fevered veins did flow
 Feeding a plague that secretly consumed
 His feeble frame, and kindling in his mind
 Hatred, despair, and fear and vain belief, 159
 The germs of misery, death, disease, and crime.

No longer now the wingèd habitants,
 That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
 Flee from the form of man ; but gather round,
 And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
 Which little children stretch in friendly sport
 Towards these dreadless partners of their play.

All things are void of terror : man has lost
 His desolating privilege, and stands
 An equal amidst equals : happiness 169
 And science dawn though late upon the earth ;
 Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the
 frame ;

Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,
 Reason and passion cease to combat there ;
 Whilst mind unfettered o'er the earth extends
 Its all-subduing energies, and wields
 The sceptre of a vast dominion there.

Mild is the slow necessity of death :
 The tranquil spirit fails beneath its grasp,
 Without a groan, almost without a fear,
 Resigned in peace to the necessity, 180
 Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
 And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
 The deadly germs of languor and disease
 Waste in the human frame, and Nature gifts
 With choicest boons her human worshippers.

How vigorous now the athletic form of age!
 How clear its open and unwrinkled brow!
 Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, or care,
 Had stamped the seal of grey deformity
 On all the mingling lineaments of time. 190
 How lovely the intrepid front of youth!
 How sweet the smiles of taintless infancy.

Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,
 Fearless and free the ruddy children play,
 Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows
 With the green ivy and the red wall-flower,
 That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom;
 The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong
 iron,

There rust amid the accumulated ruins
 Now mingling slowly with their native earth:
 There the broad beam of day, which feebly
 once 201

Lighted the cheek of lean captivity
 With a pale and sickly glare, now freely shines
 On the pure smiles of infant playfulness:
 No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair
 Peals through the echoing vaults, but soothing
 notes

Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds
 And merriment are resonant around.

The fanes of Fear and Falsehood bear no
 more

The voice that once waked multitudes to war
 Thundering through all their aisles: but now
 respond 211

To the death dirge of the melancholy wind:
 It were a sight of awfulness to see
 The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
 So sumptuous, yet withal so perishing!

Even as the corpse that rests beneath their wall.
 A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
 To-day, the breathing marble glows above
 To decorate its memory, and tongues
 Are busy of its life: to-morrow, worms 220
 In silence and in darkness seize their prey.
 These ruins soon leave not a wreck behind:
 Their elements, wide-scattered o'er the globe,
 To happier shapes are moulded, and become
 Ministrant to all blissful impulses:
 Thus human things are perfected, and earth,
 Even as a child beneath its mother's love,
 Is strengthened in all excellence, and grows
 Fairer and nobler with each passing year.

Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene
 Closes in steadfast darkness, and the past 231
 Fades from our charmèd sight. My task is
 done:
 Thy lore is learned. Earth's wonders are thine
 own,
 With all the fear and all the hope they bring.
 My spells are past: the present now recurs.
 Ah me! a pathless wilderness remains
 Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.

Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,
 Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
 The gradual paths of an aspiring change: 240
 For birth and life and death, and that strange
 state
 Before the naked powers that through the world
 Wander like winds have found a human home,
 All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
 The restless wheels of being on their way,
 Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
 Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal:

Hopes that not vainly thou, and living fires
 Of mind as radiant and as pure as thou, 280
 Have shone upon the paths of men—return,
 Surpassing Spirit, to that world where thou
 Art destined an eternal war to wage
 With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
 The germs of misery from the human heart.
 Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
 The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
 Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,
 Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease:
 Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
 Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will, 291
 When fenced by power and master of the world.
 Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
 Free from heart-withering custom's cold
 control,
 Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.
 Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish
 thee,
 And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
 Which thou hast now received: virtue shall
 keep
 Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
 And many days of beaming hope shall bless 300
 Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
 Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy
 Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
 Light, life and rapture from thy smile.

The Dæmon called its wingèd ministers.
 Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
 That rolled beside the crystal battlement,
 Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.
 The burning wheels inflame
 The steep descent of Heaven's untrodden way.
 Fast and far the chariot flew: 311

The mighty globes that rolled
 Around the gate of the Eternal Fane
 Lessened by slow degrees, and soon appeared
 Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
 That ministering on the solar power
 With borrowed light pursued their narrower
 way.

Earth floated then below :
 The chariot paused a moment ;
 The Spirit then descended : 320
 And from the earth departing
 The shadows with swift wings
 Speeded like thought upon the light of Heaven.

The Body and the Soul united then,
 A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame :
 Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed ;
 Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained :
 She looked around in wonder and beheld
 Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,
 Watching her sleep with looks of speechless
 love, 330
 And the bright beaming stars
 That through the casement shone.

MONT BLANC.

LINES WRITTEN IN THE VALE OF CHAMOUNI.¹

I.

THE everlasting universe of things
 Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid
 waves,

¹ This poem is the conclusion of a little volume of prose published in 1817, the joint production of Shelley

Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting
 gloom—
 Now lending splendour, where from secret
 springs
 The source of human thought its tribute brings
 Of waters,—with a sound but half its own,
 Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
 In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
 Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
 Where woods and winds contend, and a vast
 river 10
 Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

II.

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve—dark, deep
 Ravine—
 Thou many-coloured, many-voicèd vale,
 Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail
 Fast cloud-shadows and sunbeams: awful scene,
 Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes
 down
 From the ice gulphs that gird his secret throne,
 Bursting through these dark mountains like
 the flame

and his second wife. It is entitled *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland: with Letters descriptive of a Sail round the Lake of Geneva*. In the Preface Shelley says the poem "was composed under the immediate impression of the deep and powerful feelings excited by the objects which it attempts to describe; and as an undisciplined overflowing of the soul, rests its claim to approbation on an attempt to imitate the untameable wildness and inaccessible solemnity from which those feelings sprang." The main inspiration appears to have been drawn from a lingering gaze upon the beauties of the Vale of Chamouni from the Bridge over the Arve; but the poem records much which cannot have been seen from that point.—ED.

Of lightning thro' the tempest;—thou dost lie,
 Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging,
 Children of elder time, in whose devotion 21
 The chainless winds still come and ever came
 To drink their odours, and their mighty
 swinging
 To hear—an old and solemn harmony;
 Thine earthly rainbows stretched across the
 sweep
 Of the ætherial waterfall, whose veil
 Robes some unsculptured image; the strange
 sleep
 Which when the voices of the desert fail
 Wraps all in its own deep eternity;— 29
 Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion,
 A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame;
 Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,
 Thou art the path of that unresting sound—
 Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
 I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
 To muse on my own separate phantasy,
 My own, my human mind, which passively
 Now renders and receives fast influencings,
 Holding an unremitting interchange
 With the clear universe of things around; 40
 One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering
 wings
 Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
 Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
 In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
 Seeking among the shadows that pass by
 Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of
 thee,
 Some phantom, some faint image; till the
 breast
 From which they fled recalls them, thou art
 there!

III.

Some say that gleams of a remoter world 49
 Visit the soul in sleep,—that death is slumber,
 And that its shapes the busy thoughts out-
 number

Of those who wake and live.—I look on high;
 Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
 The veil of life and death? or do I lie
 In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
 Spread far around and inaccessibly
 Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
 Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
 That vanishes among the viewless gales!

Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky, 60
 Mont Blanc appears,—still, snowy, and serene—
 Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
 Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales
 between

Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
 Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
 And wind among the accumulated steeps;
 A desert peopled by the storms alone,
 Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
 And the wolf tracks her there—how hideously
 Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare, and
 high. 70

Ghastly, and scarred, and riven.—Is this the
 scene

Where the old Earthquake-dæmon taught her
 young

Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
 Of fire envelope once this silent snow?
 None can reply—all seems eternal now.
 The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
 Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
 So solemn, so serene, that man may be
 But for such faith with nature reconciled; 79

Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
 Large codes of fraud and woe ; not understood
 By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
 Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

IV.

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the
 streams,
 Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
 Within the dædal earth; lightning, and rain
 Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
 The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
 Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep 89
 Holds every future leaf and flower ;—the bound
 With which from that detested trance they leap ;
 The works and ways of man, their death and
 birth,
 And that of him and all that his may be ;
 All things that move and breathe with toil and
 sound
 Are born and die ; revolve, subside and swell.
 Power dwells apart in its tranquillity
 Remote, serene, and inaccessible :
 And *this*, the naked countenance of earth,
 On which I gaze, even these primeval mountains
 Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep
 Like snakes that watch their prey, from their
 far fountains, 101
 Slow rolling on ; there, many a precipice,
 Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
 Have piled : dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
 A city of death, distinct with many a tower
 And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
 Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
 Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
 Rolls its perpetual stream ; vast pines are
 strewing

Its destined path, or in the mangled soil 110
 Branchless and shattered stand; the rocks,
 drawn down

From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
 The limits of the dead and living world,
 Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place
 Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil;
 Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
 So much of life and joy is lost. The race
 Of man, flies far in dread; his work and
 dwelling

Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
 And their place is not known. Below, vast
 caves 120

Shine in the rushing torrent's restless gleam,
 Which from those secret chasms in tumult
 welling

Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,
 The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
 Rolls its loud waters to the ocean waves,
 Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

v.

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high:—the power is
 there,

The still and solemn power of many sights,
 And many sounds, and much of life and death.
 In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,
 In the lone glare of day, the snows descend 131
 Upon that Mountain; none beholds them there,
 Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
 Or the star-beams dart through them:—Winds
 contend

Silently there, and heap the snow with breath
 Rapid and strong, but silently! Its home
 The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
 Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods

Over the snow. The secret strength of things
 Which governs thought, and to the infinite
 dome 140
 Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
 And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and
 sea,
 If to the human mind's imaginings
 Silence and solitude were vacancy?

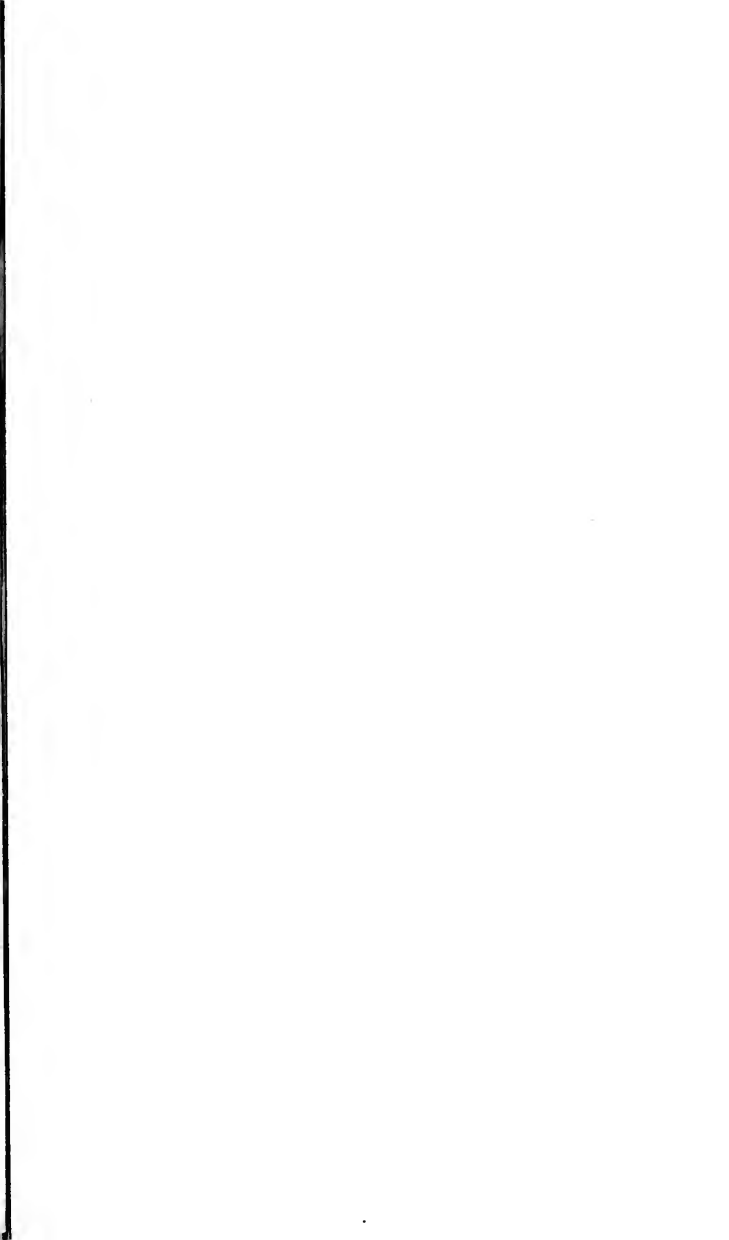
*July 23,*¹ 1816.

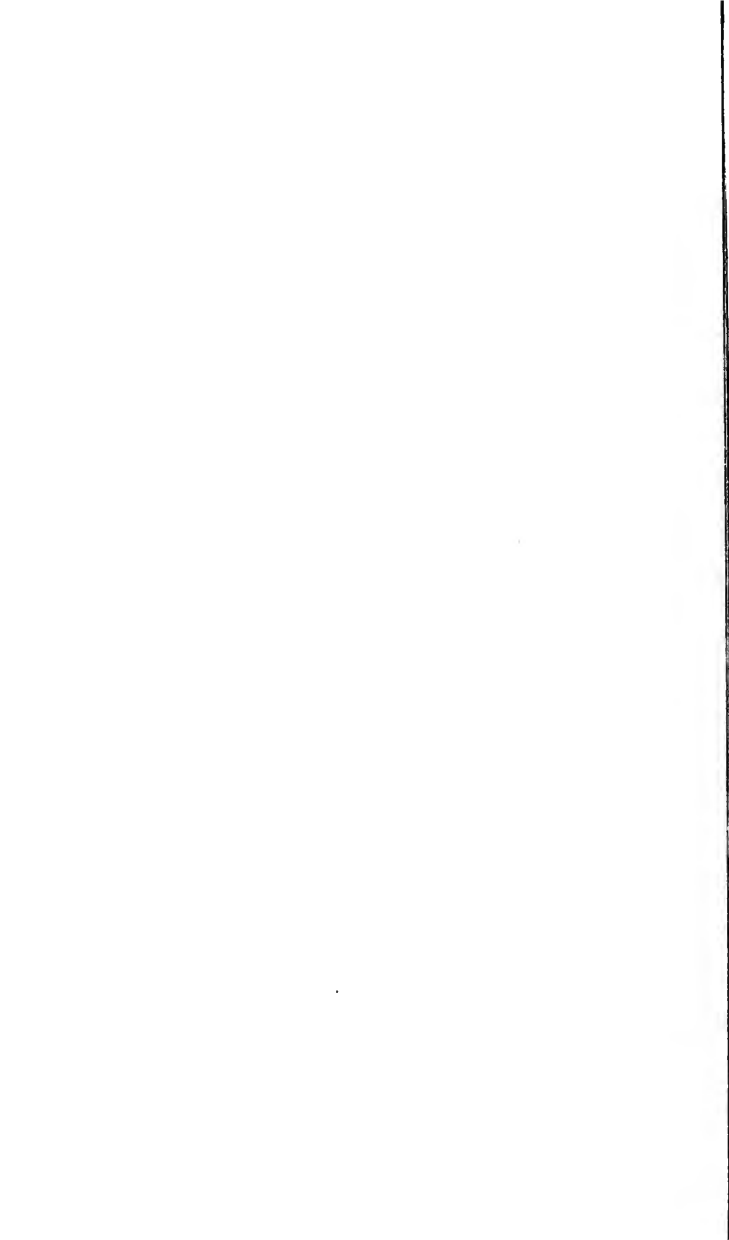
CANCELLED PASSAGE OF MONT BLANC.

There is a voice, not understood by all,
 Sent from these desert-caves. It is the roar
 Of the rent ice-cliff which the sunbeams call,
 Plunging into the vale—it is the blast
 Descending on the pines—the torrents pour. . . .

¹ The word *June* which stands in Shelley's and Mrs. Shelley's editions is an obvious error. Shelley entered the Vale of Chamouni on the 21st of July, saw the glacier of Montanvert on the 23rd, visited the glacier of Boisson in the evening of the same day, and returned on that evening to Chamouni.—ED.

END OF VOL. I.





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