

# Mrs. Shelley

Lucy M. Rossetti

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Mrs. Shelley, by Lucy M. Rossetti

Copyright laws are changing all over the world. Be sure to check the copyright laws for your country before downloading or redistributing this or any other Project Gutenberg eBook.

This header should be the first thing seen when viewing this Project Gutenberg file. Please do not remove it. Do not change or edit the header without written permission.

Please read the "legal small print," and other information about the eBook and Project Gutenberg at the bottom of this file. Included is important information about your specific rights and restrictions in how the file may be used. You can also find out about how to make a donation to Project Gutenberg, and how to get involved.

**\*\*Welcome To The World of Free Plain Vanilla Electronic Texts\*\***

**\*\*eBooks Readable By Both Humans and By Computers, Since 1971\*\***

**\*\*\*\*\*These eBooks Were Prepared By Thousands of Volunteers!\*\*\*\*\***

Title: Mrs. Shelley

Author: Lucy M. Rossetti

Release Date: October, 2004 [EBook #6705]  
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]  
[This file was first posted on January 17, 2003]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

**\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MRS. SHELLEY \*\*\***

Produced by Steve Schulze, Charles Franks  
and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team.  
This file was produced from images generously made available  
by the CWRU Preservation Department Digital Library

# **Livros Grátis**

<http://www.livrosgratis.com.br>

Milhares de livros grátis para download.

MRS. SHELLEY

BY LUCY MADOX ROSSETTI.

1890.

PREFACE.

I have to thank all the previous students of Shelley as poet and man--not last nor least among whom is my husband--for their loving and truthful research on all the subjects surrounding the life of Mrs. Shelley. Every aspect has been presented, and of known material it only remained to compare, sift, and use with judgment. Concerning facts subsequent to Shelley's death, many valuable papers have been placed at my service, and I have made no new statement which there are not existing documents to vouch for.

This book was in the publishers' hands before the appearance of Mrs. Marshall's *Life of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, and I have had neither to omit, add to, nor alter anything in this work, in consequence of the publication of hers. The passages from letters of Mrs. Shelley to Mr. Trelawny were kindly placed at my disposal by his son-in-law and daughter, Colonel and Mrs. Call, as early as the summer of 1888.

Among authorities used are Prof. Dowden's *Life of Shelley*, Mr. W. M. Rossetti's *Memoir* and other writings, Mr. Jeaffreson's *Real Shelley*, Mr. Kegan Paul's *Life of William Godwin*, Godwin's *Memoir of Mary Wollstonecraft*, Mrs. Pennell's *Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin*, &c. &c.

Among those to whom my special thanks are due for original information and the use of documents, &c., are, foremost, Mr. H. Buxton Forman, Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson, Mrs. Call, Mr. Alexander Ireland, Mr. Charles C. Pifold, Mr. J. H. Ingram, Mrs. Cox, and Mr. Silsbee, and, for friendly counsel, Prof. Dowden; and I must particularly thank Lady Shelley for conveying to me her husband's courteous message and permission to use passages of letters by Mrs. Shelley, interspersed in this biography.

LUCY MADOX ROSSETTI.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I. PARENTAGE.

CHAPTER II. GIRLHOOD OF MARY--PATERAL TROUBLES.

CHAPTER III. SHELLEY.

CHAPTER IV. MARY AND SHELLEY.

CHAPTER V. LIFE IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER VI. DEATH OF SHELLEY'S GRANDFATHER, AND BIRTH OF A CHILD.

CHAPTER VII. "FRANKENSTEIN".

CHAPTER VIII. RETURN TO ENGLAND.

CHAPTER IX. LIFE IN ITALY.

CHAPTER X. MARY'S DESPONDENCY AND BIRTH OF A SON.

CHAPTER XI. GODWIN AND "VALPERGA".

CHAPTER XII. LAST MONTHS WITH SHELLEY.

CHAPTER XIII. WIDOWHOOD.

CHAPTER XIV. LITERARY WORK.

CHAPTER XV. LATER WORKS.

CHAPTER XVI. ITALY REVISITED.

CHAPTER XVII. LAST YEARS.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE.

The daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and Godwin, the wife of Shelley: here, surely, is eminence by position, for those who care for the progress of humanity and the intellectual development of the race. Whether this combination conferred eminence on the daughter and wife as an individual is what we have to enquire. Born as she was at a time of great social and political disturbance, the child, by inheritance, of the great French Revolution, and suffering, as soon as born, a loss certainly in her case the greatest of all, that of her noble-minded mother, we can imagine the kind of education this young being passed through--with the abstracted and anxious philosopher-father, with the respectable but shallow-minded step-mother provided by Godwin to guard the young children he so suddenly found himself called upon to care for, Mary and two half-sisters about her own age. How the volumes of philosophic writings, too subtle for her childish experience, would be pored over; how the writings of the mother whose loving care she never knew, whose sad experiences and advice she never heard, would be read and re-read. We can imagine how these writings, and the discourses she doubtless frequently heard, as a child, between her father and his friends, must have impressed Mary more forcibly than the respectable precepts laid down in a weak way for her guidance; how all this prepared her to admire what was noble and advanced in idea, without giving her the ballast needful for acting in the fittest way when a

time of temptation came, when Shelley appeared. He appeared as the devoted admirer of her father and his philosophy, and as such was admitted into the family intimacy of three inexperienced girls.

Picture these four young imaginative beings together; Shelley, half-crazed between youthful imagination and vague ideas of regenerating mankind, and ready at any incentive to feel himself freed from his part in the marriage ceremony. What prudent parents would have countenanced such a visitor? And need there be much surprise at the subsequent occurrences, and much discussion as to the right or wrong in the case? How the actors in this drama played their subsequent part on the stage of life; whether they did work which fitted them to be considered worthy human beings remains to be examined.

\* \* \* \* \*

As no story or life begins with itself, so, more especially with this of our heroine, we must recall the past, and at least know something of her parents.

Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the most remarkable and misunderstood women of even her remarkable day, was born in April 1759, in or near London, of parents of whose ancestors little is known. Her father, son of a Spitalfields manufacturer, possessed an adequate fortune for his position; her mother was of Irish family. They had six children, of whom Mary was the second. Family misery, in her case as in many, seems to have been the fountainhead of her genius. Her father, a hot-tempered, dissipated man, unable to settle anywhere or to anything, naturally proved a domestic tyrant. Her mother seems little to have understood her daughter's disposition, and to have been extremely harsh, harassed no doubt by the behaviour of her husband, who frequently used personal violence on her as well as on his children; this, doubtless, under the influence of drink.

Such being the childhood of Mary Wollstonecraft, it can be understood how she early learnt to feel fierce indignation at the injustice to, and the wrongs of women, for whom there was little protection against such domestic tyranny. Picture her sheltering her little sisters and brother from the brutal wrath of a man whom no law restricted, and can her repugnance to the laws made by men on these subjects be wondered at? Only too rarely do the victims of such treatment rise to be eloquent of their wrongs.

The frequent removals of her family left little chance of forming friendships for the sad little Mary; but she can scarcely have been exactly lonely with her small sisters and brothers, possibly a little more positive loneliness or quiet would have been desirable. As she grew older her father's passions increased, and often did she boldly interpose to shield her mother from his drunken wrath, or waited outside her room for the morning to break. So her childhood passed into girlhood, her senses numbed by misery, till she had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of a Mr. and Mrs. Clare, a clergyman and his wife, who were kind to the friendless girl and soon found her to have undeveloped good qualities. She spent much time with them, and it was they who introduced her to Fanny Blood, whose friendship henceforth proved one of the chief influences of her life; this it was that first roused her intellectual faculty, and, with the gratitude of a fine nature, she never after forgot where she first tasted the

delight of the fountain which transmutes even misery into the source of work and poetry.

Here, again, Mary found the story of a home that might have been ruined by a dissipated father, had it not been for the cheerful devotion of this daughter Fanny, who kept the family chiefly by her work, painting, and brought up her young brothers and sisters with care. A bright and happy example at this moment to stimulate Mary, and raise her from the absorbing and hopeless contemplation of her own troubles; she then, at sixteen, resolved to work so as to educate herself to undertake all that might and would fall on her as the stay of her family. Fresh wanderings of the restless father ensued, and finally she decided to accept a situation as lady's companion; this her hard previous life made a position of comparative ease to her, and, although all the former companions had left the lady in despair, she remained two years with her till her mother's illness required her presence at home. Mrs. Wollstonecraft's hard life had broken her constitution, and in death she procured her first longed-for rest from sorrow and toil, counselling her daughters to patience. Deprived of the mother, the daughters could no longer remain with their father; and Mary, at eighteen, had again to seek her fortune in a hard world--Fanny Blood being, as ever, her best friend. One of her sisters became housekeeper to her brother; and Eliza married, but by no means improved her position by this, for her marriage proved another unhappy one, and only added to Mary's sad observation of the marriage state. A little later she had to help this sister to escape from a life which had driven her to madness. When her sister's peace of mind was restored, they were enabled to open a school together at Stoke Newington Green, for a time with success; but failure and despondency followed, and Mary, whose health was broken, accepted a pressing invitation from her friend Fanny, who had married a Mr. Skeys, to go and stay with her at Lisbon, and nurse her through her approaching confinement. This sad visit--for during her stay there she lost her dearly loved friend--broke the monotony of her life, and perhaps the change, with sea voyage which was beneficial to her health, helped her anew to fight the battle of life on her return. But fresh troubles assailed her. Some friend suggested to her to try literature, and a pamphlet, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, was her first attempt. For this she received ten guineas, with which she was able to help her friends the Bloods.

She shortly afterwards accepted a situation as governess in Lord Kingsborough's family, where she was much loved by her pupils; but their mother, who did little to gain their affection herself, becoming jealous of the ascendancy of Mary over them, found some pretext for dismissing her. Mary's contact, while in this house, with people of fashion inspired her only with contempt for their small pleasures and utterly unintellectual discourse. These surroundings, although she was treated much on a footing of equality by the family, were a severe privation for Mary, who was anxious to develop her mind, and to whom spiritual needs were ever above physical.

On leaving the Kingsboroughs, Mary found work of a kind more congenial to her disposition, as Mr. Johnson, the bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard who had taken her pamphlet, now gave her regular work as his "reader," and also in translating. Now began the happiest part of Mary's life. In the midst of books she soon formed a circle of admiring friends. She lived in the simplest way, in a room almost bare of furniture, in Blackfriars. Here she was able to see after her

sisters and to have with her her young brother, who had been much neglected; and in the intervals of her necessary work she began writing on the subjects which lay nearest to her heart; for here, among other work, she commenced her celebrated Vindication of the Rights of Woman, a work for which women ought always to be grateful to her, for with this began in England the movement which, progressing amidst much obloquy and denunciation, has led to so many of the reforms in social life which have come, and may be expected to lead to many which we still hope for. When we think of the nonsense which has been talked both in and out of Parliament, even within the last decade, about the advanced women who have worked to improve the position of their less fortunate sisters, we can well understand in what light Mary Wollstonecraft was regarded by many whom fortunately she was not bound to consider. Her reading, which had been deep and constant, together with her knowledge of life from different points of view, enabled her to form just opinions on many of the great reforms needed, and these she unhesitatingly set down. How much has since been done which she advocated for the education of women, and how much they have already benefited both by her example and precept, is perhaps not yet generally enough known. Her religious tone is always striking; it was one of the moving factors of her life, as with all seriously thinking beings, though its form became much modified with the advance in her intellectual development.

Her scheme in the Vindication of the Rights of Woman may be summed up thus:--

She wished women to have education equal to that of men, and this has now to a great extent been accorded.

That trades, professions, and other pursuits should be open to women. This wish is now in progress of fulfilment.

That married women should own their own property as in other European countries. Recent laws have granted this right.

That they should have more facilities for divorce from husbands guilty of immoral conduct. This has been partially granted, though much still remains to be effected.

That, in the case of separation, the custody of children should belong equally to both parents.

That a man should be legally responsible for his illegitimate children. That he should be bound to maintain the woman he has wronged.

Mary Wollstonecraft also thought that women should have representatives in Parliament to uphold their interests; but her chief desires are in the matter of education. Unlike Rousseau, she would have all children educated together till nine years of age; like Rousseau, she would have them meet for play in a common play-ground. At nine years their capacities might be sufficiently developed to judge which branch of education would be then desirable for each; girls and boys being still educated together, and capacity being the only line of demarcation.

Thus it will be seen that Mary's primary wish was to make women responsible and sensible companions for men; to raise them from the

beings they were made by the frivolous fashionable education of the time; to make them fit mothers to educate or superintend the education of their children, for education does not end or begin with what may be taught in schools. To make a woman a reasoning being, by means of Euclid if necessary, need not preclude her from being a charming woman also, as proved by the descriptions we have of Mary Wollstonecraft herself. Doubtless some of the most crying evils of civilisation can only be cured by raising the intellectual and moral status of woman, and thus raising that of man also, so that he, regarding her as a companion whose mind reflects the beauties of nature, and who can appreciate the great reflex of nature as transmitted through the human mind in the glorious art of the world, may really be raised to the ideal state where the sacrilege of love will be unknown. We know that this great desire must have passed through Mary Wollstonecraft's mind and prompted her to her eloquent appeal for the "vindication of the rights of woman."

With Mary's improved prospects, for she fortunately lived in a time when the strong emotions and realities of life brought many influential people admiringly around her, she was able to pay a visit to Paris in 1792. No one can doubt her interest in the terrible drama there being enacted, and her courage was equal to the occasion; but even this journey is brought up in disparagement of her, and this partly owing to Godwin's naive remark in his diary, that "there is no reason to doubt that if Fuseli had been disengaged at the period of their acquaintance he would have been the man of her choice." As the little *\_if\_* is a very powerful word, of course this amounts to nothing, and it is scarcely the province of a biographer to say what might have taken place under other circumstances, and to criticise a character from that standpoint. If Mary was attracted by Fuseli's genius, and this would not have been surprising, and if she went to Paris for change of scene and thought, she certainly only set a sensible example. As it was, she had ample matter of interest in the stirring scenes around her--she with a heart to feel the woes of all: the miseries however real and terrible of the prince did not blind her to those of the peasant; the cold and calculating torture of centuries was not to be passed over because a maddened people, having gained for a time the right of power by might, brought to judgment the representatives, even then vacillating and treacherous, of ages of oppression. Her heart bled for all, but most for the longest suffering; and she was struck senseless to the ground by the news of the execution of the "twenty-one," the brave Girondins. Would that another woman, even greater than herself, had been untrammelled by her sex, and could have wielded at first hand the power she had to exercise through others; and might not France have been thus again saved by a Joan of Arc--not only France, but the Revolution in all its purity of idea, not in its horror.

In France, too, the women's question had been mooted; Condorcet having written that one of the greatest steps of progress of the human intellect would be the freedom from prejudice that would give equality of right to both sexes: and the *\_Requete des Dames a l'Assemblee Nationale\_* 1791, was made simultaneously with the appearance of Mary Wollstonecraft's *\_Vindication of the Rights of Woman\_*. These were strong reasons to attract Mary to France, strange as the time was for such a journey; but even then her book was translated and read both in France and Germany. So here was Mary settled for a time, the English scarcely having realised the turmoil that existed. She arrived just before the execution of Louis XVI., and with a few friends was



able to study the spirit of the time, and begin a work on the subject, which, unfortunately, never reached more than its first volume. Her account, in a letter to Mr. Johnson, shows how acutely she felt in her solitude on the day of the King's execution; how, for the first time in her life, at night she dared not extinguish her candle. In fact, the faculty of feeling for others so acutely as to gain courage to uphold reform, does not necessarily evince a lack of sensitiveness on the part of the individual, as seems often to be supposed, but the very reverse. We can well imagine how Mary felt the need of sympathy and support, separated as she was from her friends and from her country, which was now at war with France. Alone at Neuilly, where she had to seek shelter both for economy and safety, with no means of returning to England, and unable to go to Switzerland through her inability to procure a passport, her money dwindling, still she managed to continue her literary work; and as well as some letters on the subject of the Revolution, she wrote at Neuilly all that was ever finished of her Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution. Her only servant at this time was an old gardener, who used to attend her on her rambles through the woods, and more than once as far as Paris. On one of these occasions she was so sickened with horror at the evidence of recent executions which she saw in the streets that she began boldly denouncing the perpetrators of such savagery, and had to be hurried away for her life by some sympathetic onlookers. It was during this time of terror and depression within that Mary met Captain Imlay, an American, at the house of a mutual friend.

Now began the complication of reasons and deeds which caused bitter grief in not only one generation. Mary was prompted by loneliness, love, and danger on all hands. There was risk in proclaiming herself an English subject by marriage, if indeed there was at the time the possibility of such a marriage as would have been valid in England, though, as the wife of an American citizen, she was safe. Thus, at a time when all laws were defied, she took the fatal step of trusting in Imlay's honour and constancy; and, confident of her own pure motives, entered into a union which her letters to him, full of love, tenderness, and fidelity, proved that she regarded as a sacred marriage; all the circumstances, and, not least, the pathetic way she writes to him of their child later on, prove how she only wished to remain faithful to him. It was now that the sad experiences of her early life told upon her and warped her better judgment; she who had seen so much of the misery of married life when love was dead, regarded that side, not considering the sacred relationship, the right side of marriage, which she came to understand later--too late, alas!

So passed this annee terrible, and with it Mary's short-lived happiness with Imlay, for before the end we find her writing, evidently saddened by his repeated absences. She followed him to Havre, where, in April, their child Fanny was born, and for a while happiness was restored, and Mary lived in comfort with him, her time fully occupied between work and love for Imlay and their child; but this period was short, for in August he was called to Paris on business. She followed him, but another journey of his to England only finished the separation. Work of some sort having been ever her one resource, she started for Norway with Fanny and a maid, furnished with a letter of Imlay's, in which he requested "all men to know that he appoints Mary Imlay, his wife, to transact all his business for him." Her letters published shortly after her return from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, divested of the personal details, were considered to show

a marked advance in literary style, and from the slow modes of travelling, and the many letters of introduction to people in all the towns and villages she visited, she was enabled to send home characteristic details of all classes of people. The personal portions of the letters are to be found among her posthumous works, and these, with letters written after her return, and when she was undoubtedly convinced of Imlay's baseness and infidelity, are terrible and pathetic records of her misery--misery which drove her to an attempt at suicide. This was fortunately frustrated, so that she was spared to meet with a short time of happiness later, and to prove to herself and Godwin, both previous sceptics in the matter, that lawful marriage can be happy. Mary, rescued from despair, returned to work, the restorer, and refused all assistance from Imlay, not degrading herself by receiving a monetary compensation where faithfulness was wanting. She also provided for her child Fanny, as Imlay disregarded entirely his promises of a settlement on her.

As her literary work brought her again in contact with the society she was accustomed to, so her health and spirits revived, and she was able again to hold her place as one of its celebrities. And now it was that her friendship was renewed with that other celebrity, whose philosophy ranged beyond his age and century, and probably beyond some centuries to come. His advanced ideas are, nevertheless, what most thinking people would hope that the race might attain to when mankind shall have reached a higher status, and selfishness shall be less allowed in creeds, or rather in practice; for how small the resemblance between the founder of a creed and its followers is but too apparent.

So now Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, the author of Political Justice, have again met, and this time not under circumstances as adverse as in November 1790, when he dined in her company at Mr. Johnson's, and was disappointed because he wished to hear the conversation of Thomas Paine, who was a taciturn man, and he considered that Mary engrossed too much of the talk. Now it was otherwise; her literary style had gained greatly in the opinion of Godwin, as of others, and, as all their subjects of interest were similar, their friendship increased, and melted gently into mutual love, as exquisitely described by Godwin himself in a book now little known; and this love, which ended in marriage, had no after-break.

But we must now again retrace our steps, for in the father of Mary Shelley we have another of the representative people of his time, whose early life and antecedents must not be passed over.

William Godwin, the seventh of thirteen children, was born at Wisbeach, Cambridgeshire, on March 3, 1756. His parents, both of respectable well-to-do families, were well known in their native place, his great-great-grandfather having been Mayor of Newbury in 1706. The father, John Godwin, became a dissenting minister, and William was brought up in all the strictness of a sectarian country home of that period. His mother was equally strict in her views; and a cousin, who became one of the family--a Miss Godwin, afterwards Mrs. Sotheran, with whom William was an especial favourite--brought in aid her strongly Calvinistic tendencies. His first studies began with an "Account of the Pious Deaths of many Godly Children"; and often did he feel willing to die if he could, with equal success, engage the admiration of his friends and the world. His mother devoutly believed that all who differed from the basis of her own religious views would endure the eternal torments of hell; and his father seriously reproved

his levity when, one Sunday, he happened to take the cat in his arms while walking in the garden. All this naturally impressed the child at the time, and his chief amusement or pleasure was preaching sermons in the kitchen every Sunday afternoon, unmindful whether the audience was duly attentive or not. From a dame's school, where, by the age of eight, he had read through the whole of the Old and New Testament, he passed to one held by a certain Mr. Akers, celebrated as a penman and also moderately efficient in Latin and Mathematics. Godwin next became the pupil of Mr. Samuel Newton, whose Sandemanian views, surpassing those of Calvin in their wholesale holocaust of souls, for a time impressed him, till later thought caused him to detest both these views and the master who promulgated them. Indeed, it is not to be wondered at that so thinking a person as Godwin, remembering the rules laid down by those he loved and respected in his childhood, should have wandered far into the abstract labyrinths of right and wrong, and, wishing to simplify what was right, should have travelled in his imagination into the dim future, and have laid down a code beyond the scope of present mortals. Well for him, perhaps, and for his code, if this is yet so far beyond that it is not taken up and distorted out of all resemblance to his original intention before the time for its possible practical application comes. For Godwin himself it was also well that, with these uncongenial early surroundings, he, when the time came to think, was of the calm--most calm and unimpassioned philosophic temperament, instead of the high poetic nature; not that the two may not sometimes overlap and mingle; but with Godwin the downfall of old ideas led to reasoning out new theories in clear prose; and even this he would not give to be rashly and indiscriminately read at large, but published in three-guinea volumes, knowing well that those who could expend that sum on books are not usually inclined to overthrow the existing order of things. In fact, he felt it was the rich who wanted preaching to more than the poor.

Apart from sectarian doctrines, his tutor, Mr. Newton, seems to have given Godwin the advantage of the free range of his library; and doubtless this was excellent education for him at that time. After he had acted as usher for over a year, from the age of fifteen, his mother, at his father's death in 1772, wished him to enter Homerton Academy; but the authorities would not admit him on suspicion of Sandemanianism. He, however, gained admittance to Hoxton College. Here he planned tragedies on Iphigenia and the death of Caesar, and also began to study Sandeman's work from a library, to find out what he was accused of. This probably caused, later, his horror of these ideas, and also started his neverending search after truth.

In 1777 he became, in his turn, a dissenting minister; until, with reading and fresh acquaintances ever widening his views, gradually his profession became distasteful to him, and in 1788, on quitting Beaconsfield, he proposed opening a school. His *Life of Lord Chatham*, however, gained notice, and he was led to other political writing, and so became launched on a literary career. With his simple tastes he managed not only for years to keep himself till he became celebrated, but he was also a great help to different members of his family; several of these did not come as well as William out of the ordeal of their strict education, but caused so little gratification to their mother and elder brother--a farmer who resided near the mother--that she destroyed all their correspondence, nearly all William's also, as it might relate to them. Letters from the cousin, Mrs. Sotheran, show, however, that William Godwin's novel-writing was likewise a sore point in his family.

In the midst of his literary work and philosophic thought, it was natural that Godwin should get associated with other men of advanced opinions. Joseph Fawcet, whose literary and intellectual eminence was much admired in his day, was one of the first to influence Godwin--his declamation against domestic affections must have coincided well with Godwin's unimpassioned justice; Thomas Holcroft, with his curious ideas of death and disease, whose ardent republicanism led to his being tried for his life as a traitor; George Dyson, whose abilities and zeal in the cause of literature and truth promised much that was unfortunately never realised: these, and later Samuel Taylor Coleridge, were acknowledged by Godwin to have greatly influenced his ideas. Godwin acted according to his own theories of right in adopting and educating Thomas Cooper, a second cousin, whose father died, ruined, in India. The rules laid down in his diary show that Godwin strove to educate him successfully, and he certainly gained the youth's confidence, and launched him successfully in his own chosen profession as an actor. Godwin seems always to have adhered to his principles, and after the success of his *Life of Chatham*, when he became a contributor to the *Political Herald*, he attracted the attention of the Whig Party, to whose cause he was so useful that Fox proposed, through Sheridan, to set a fund aside to pay him as Editor. This, however, was not accepted by Godwin, who would not lose his independence by becoming attached to any party.

He was naturally, to a great extent, a follower of Rousseau, and a sympathiser with the ideas of the French Revolution, and was one of the so-called "French Revolutionists," at whose meetings Horne Tooke, Holcroft, Stanhope, and others figured. Nor did he neglect to defend, in the *Morning Chronicle*, some of these when on their trial for high treason; though, from his known principles, he was himself in danger; and without doubt his clear exposition of the true case greatly modified public opinion and helped to prevent an adverse verdict. Among Godwin's multifarious writings are his novels, some of which had great success, especially *Caleb Williams*; also his sketch of English History, contributed to the *Annual Register*. His historical writing shows much research and study of old documents. On comparing it with the contemporary work of his friends, such as Coleridge, it becomes evident that his knowledge and learning were utilized by them. But these works were anonymous; by his *Political Justice* he became famous. This work is a philosophical treatise based on the assumption, that man, as a reasoning being, can be guided wholly by reason, and that, were he educated from this point of view, laws would be unnecessary. It must be observed here that Godwin could not then take into consideration the laws of heredity, now better understood; how the criminal has not only the weight of bad education and surroundings against him, but also how the very formation of the head is in certain cases an almost insuperable evil. He considered many of the laws relating to property, marriage, &c., unnecessary, as people guided by reason would not, for instance, wish for wealth at the expense of starving brethren. Far in the distance as the realisation of this doctrine may seem, it should still be remembered that, as with each physical discovery, the man of genius must foresee. As Columbus imagined land where he found America; as a planet is fixed by the astronomer before the telescope has revealed it to his mortal eye; so in the world of psychology and morals it is necessary to point out the aim to be attained before human nature has reached those divine qualifications which are only shadowed forth here and there by more than usually elevated natures. In fact Godwin, who sympathised

entirely with the theories of the French Revolution, and even surpassed French ideas on most subjects, disapproved of the immediate carrying out of these ideas and views; he wished for preaching and reasoning till people should gradually become convinced of the truth, and the rich should be as ready to give as the poor to receive. Even in the matter of marriage, though strongly opposed to it personally (on philosophical grounds, not from the ordinary trite reasoning against it), he yielded his opinion to the claim of individual justice towards the woman whom he came to love with an undying affection, and for whom, fortunately for his theories, he needed not to set aside the impulse of affection for that of justice; and these remarks bring us again to the happy time in the lives of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, when friendship melted into love, and they were married shortly afterwards, in March 1797, at old St. Pancras Church, London.

This new change in her life interfered no more with the energy for work with Mary Wollstonecraft than with Godwin. They adopted the singular, though in their case probably advantageous, decision to continue each to have a separate place of abode, in order that each might work uninterruptedly, though, as pointed out by an earnest student of their character, they probably wasted more time in their constant interchange of notes on all subjects than they would have lost by a few conversations. On the other hand, as their thoughts were worth recording, we have the benefit of their plan. The short notes which passed between Mary and Godwin, as many as three and four in a day, as well as letters of considerable length written during a tour which Godwin made in the midland counties with his friend Basil Montague, show how deep and simple their affection was, that there was no need of hiding the passing cloud, that they both equally disliked and wished to simplify domestic details. There was, for instance, some sort of slight dispute as to who should manage a plumber, on which occasion Mary seems to have been somewhat hurt at its being put upon her, as giving an idea of her inferiority. This, with the tender jokes about Godwin's icy philosophy, and the references to a little "William" whom they were both anxiously expecting, all evince the tender devotion of husband and wife, whose relationship was of a nature to endure through ill or good fortune. Little Fanny was evidently only an added pleasure to the two, and Godwin's thought of her at a distance and his choice of the prettiest mug at Wedgewood's with "green and orange-tawny flowers," testify to the fatherly instinct of Godwin. But, alas! this loving married friendship was not to last long, for the day arrived, August 30, 1797, which had been long expected; and the hopeful state of the case is shown in three little letters written by Mary to her husband, for she wished him to be spared anxiety by absence. And there was born a little girl, not the William so quaintly spoken of; but the Mary whose future life we must try and realise. Even now her first trouble comes, for, within a few hours of the child's birth, dangerous symptoms began with the mother; ten days of dread anxiety ensued, and not all the care of intelligent watchers, nor the constant waiting for service of the husband's faithful intimate friends, nor the skill of the first doctors could save the life which was doomed: Fate must wreak its relentless will. Her work remains to help many a struggling woman, and still to give hope of more justice to follow; perchance at one important moment it misled her own child. And so the mysteries of the workings of Fate and the mysteries of death joined with those of a new life.

## CHAPTER II.

### GIRLHOOD OF MARY--PATERAL TROUBLES.

And now with the beginning of this fragile little life begin the anxieties and sorrow of poor Godwin. The blank lines drawn in his diary for Sunday 10th September 1797, show more than words how unutterable was his grief. During the time of his wife's patient agony he had managed to ask if she had any wishes concerning Fanny and Mary. She was fortunately able to reply that her faith in his wisdom was entire.

On the very day of his wife's death Godwin himself wrote some letters he considered necessary, nor did he neglect to write in his own characteristic plain way to one who he considered had slighted his wife. His friends Mr. Basil Montague and Mr. Marshall arranged the funeral, and Mrs. Reveley, who had with her the children before the mother's death, continued her care till they returned to the father on the 17th. Mrs. Fenwick, who had been in constant attendance on Mary, then took care of them for a time. Indeed, Mary's fame and character brought forward many willing to care for the motherless infant, whose life was only saved from a dangerous illness by this loving zeal. Among others Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson appeared with offers of help, and as early as September 18 we find that Godwin had requested Mr. Nicholson to give an opinion as to the infant's physiognomy, with a view to her education, which he (with Trelawny later) considered could not begin too soon, or as the latter said: "Talk of education beginning at two years! Two months is too late."

Thus we see Godwin conscientiously trying to bring in an imperfect science to assist him in the difficult task of developing his infant's mind, in place of the watchful love of an intelligent mother, who would check the first symptoms of ill-temper, be firm against ill-placed determination, encourage childish imagination, and not let the idea of untruth be presented to the child till old enough to discriminate for itself. A hard task enough for any father, still harder for Godwin, beset by all kinds of difficulties, and having to work in the midst of them for his and the two children's daily sustenance. Friends, and good friends, he certainly had; but most people will recognise that strength in these matters does not rest in numbers. The wet nurse needed by little Mary, though doubtless the essential necessity of the time, would not add to the domestic comfort, especially to that of Miss Louisa Jones, a friend of Harriet Godwin, who had been installed to superintend Godwin's household. This latter arrangement, again, did not tend to Godwin's comfort, as from Miss Jones's letters it is evident that she wished to marry him. Her wish not being reciprocated, she did not long remain an inmate of his house, and the nurse, who was fortunately devoted to the baby, was then over-looked from time to time by Mrs. Reveley and other ladies.

Of anecdotes of Mary's infancy and childhood there are but few, but from the surroundings we can picture the child. Her father about this time seems to have neglected all his literary work except the one of love--writing his wife's "Memoirs" and reading her published and

unpublished work. In this undertaking he was greatly assisted by Mr. Skeys. Her sisters, on the contrary, gave as little assistance as possible, and ended all communication with Godwin at this difficult period of his life, and for a long while utterly neglected their poor sister's little children, when they might have repaid to some extent the debt of gratitude they owed to her.

All these complicated and jarring circumstances must have suggested to Godwin that another marriage might be the best expedient, and he accordingly set to work in a systematic way this time to acquire his end. Passion was not the motive, and probably there was too much system, for he was unsuccessful on two occasions. The first was with Miss Harriet Lee, the authoress of several novels and of *The Canterbury Tales*. Godwin seems to have been much struck by her, and, after four interviews at Bath, wrote on his return to London a very characteristic and pressing letter of invitation to her to stay in his house if she came to London, explaining that there was a lady (Miss Jones) who superintended his home. As this letter met with no answer, he tried three additional letters, drafts of all being extant. The third one was probably too much considered, for Miss Lee returned it annotated on the margin, expressing her disapproval of its egotistical character. Godwin, however, was not to be daunted, and made a fourth attempt, full of many sensible and many quaint reasons, not all of which would be pleasing to a lady; but he succeeded in regaining Miss Lee's friendship, though he could not persuade her to be his wife. This was from April to August 1798.

About the same time there was a project of Godwin and Thomas Wedgwood keeping house together; but as they seem to have much differed when together, the plan was wisely dropped. Godwin's notes in his plan of work for the year 1798 are interesting, as showing how he was anxious to modify some of his opinions expressed in *Political Justice*, especially those bearing on the affections, which he now admits must naturally play an important part in human action, though he avers his opinion that none of his previous conclusions are affected by these admissions. Much other work was planned out during this time, and many fresh intellectual acquaintances made, Wordsworth and Southey among others. His mother's letters to Godwin show what a constant drain his family were upon his slender means, and how nobly he always strove to help them when in need. These letters are full of much common sense, and though quaintly illiterate are, perhaps, not so much amiss for the period at which they were written, when many ladies who had greater social and monetary advantages were, nevertheless, frequently astray in these matters.

Godwin's novel of *St. Leon*, published in 1799, was another attempt to give the domestic affections their due place in his scheme of life; and the description of Marguerite, drawn from Mary Wollstonecraft, and that of her wedded life with St. Leon, are beautiful passages illustrative of Godwin's own happy time of marriage.

In July 1799, the death of Mr. Reveley suggested a fresh attempt at marriage to Godwin; but now he was probably too prompt, for, knowing that Mr. Reveley and his wife had not always been on the best of terms, although his sudden death had driven her nigh frantic, Godwin, relying on certain previous expressions of affection for himself by Mrs. Reveley, proposed within a month after her husband's death, and begged her to set aside prejudices and cowardly ceremonies and be his.

As in the previous case, a second and a third lengthy letter, full of subtle reasoning, were ineffectual, and did not even bring about an interview till December 3rd, when Godwin and Mrs. Reveley met, in company with Mr. Gisborne. To this gentleman Mrs. Reveley was afterwards married. We shall meet them both again later on.

All this time there is little though affectionate mention of Mary Godwin in her father's diary. Little Fanny, who had always been a favourite, used to accompany Godwin on some of his visits to friends.

Many of Godwin's letters at this time show that he was not too embarrassed to be able to assist his friends in time of need; twenty pounds sent to his friend Arnot, ten pounds shortly afterwards through Mrs. Agnes Hall to a lady in great distress, whose name is unknown, prove that he was ready to carry out his theories in practice. It is interesting to observe these frequent instances of generosity, as they account to some extent for his subsequent difficulties. In the midst of straits and disappointments Godwin managed to have his children well taken care of, and there was evidently a touching sympathy and confidence between himself and them, as shown in Godwin's letters to his friend Marshall during a rare absence from the children occasioned by a visit to friends in Ireland. His thought and sincere solicitude and messages, and evident anxiety to be with them again, are all equally touching; Fanny having the same number of kisses sent her as Mary, with that perfect justice which is so beneficial to the character of children. We can now picture the scarcely three year old Mary and little Fanny taken to await the return of the coach with their father, and sitting under the Kentish Town trees in glad expectancy.

But this time of happy infancy was not to last long; for doubtless Godwin felt it irksome to have to consider whether the house-linen was in order, and such like details, and was thus prepared, in 1801, to accept the demonstrative advances of Mrs. Clairmont, a widow who took up her residence next door to him in the Polygon, Somers Town. She had two children, a boy and a girl, the latter somewhat younger than Mary. The widow needed no introduction or admittance to his house, as from the balcony she was able to commence a campaign of flattery to which Godwin soon succumbed. The marriage took place in December 1801, at Shoreditch Church, and was not made known to Godwin's friends till after it had been solemnised. Mrs. Clairmont evidently did her best to help Godwin through the pecuniary difficulties of his career. She was not an ignorant woman, and her work at translations proves her not to have been without cleverness of a certain kind; but this probably made more obvious the natural vulgarity of her disposition. For example, when talking of bringing children up to do the work they were fitted to, she discovered that her own daughter Jane was fitted for accomplishments, while little Mary and Fanny were turned into household drudges. These distinctions would naturally engender an antipathy to her, which later on would help in estranging Mary from her father's house; but occasionally we have glimpses of the little ones making themselves happy, in childlike fashion, in the midst of difficulties and disappointments on Godwin's part. On one occasion Mary and Jane had concealed themselves under a sofa in order to hear Coleridge recite *The Ancient Mariner*. Mrs. Godwin, unmindful of the delight they would have in listening to poetry, found the little ones and was banishing them to bed; when Coleridge with kind-heartedness, or the love ever prevalent in poets of an audience, however humble, interceded for the small things who could sit under a



sofa, and so they remained up and heard the poet read his poem. The treat was never afterwards forgotten, and one cannot over-estimate such pleasures in forming the character of a child. Nor were such the only intellectual delights the children shared in, for Charles Lamb was among Godwin's numerous friends at this period, and a frequent visitor at his house; and we can still hear in imagination the merry laughter of children, old and young, whom he gathered about him, and who brightened at his ever ready fun. One long-remembered joke was how one evening, at supper at Godwin's, Lamb entered the room first, seized a leg of mutton, blew out the candle, and placed the mutton in Martin Burney's hand, and, on the candle being relit, exclaimed, "Oh, Martin! Martin! I should never have thought it of you."

This and such like whimsies (as when Lamb would carry off a small cruets from the table, making Mrs. Godwin go through a long search, and would then quietly walk in the next day and replace it as if it were the most natural thing for a cruets to find its way into a pocket), would break the monotony of the children's days. It was infinitely more enlivening than the routine in some larger houses, where poor little children are frequently shut up in a back room on a third floor and left for long hours to the tender mercies of some nurse, whose small slaves or tyrants they become, according to their nature. And when we remember that the Polygon at that time was touching fields and lanes, we know that little Mary must have had one of the delights most prized by children, picking buttercups and daisies, unmolested by a gardener. But during this happy age, when the child would probably have infinitely more pleasure in washing a cup and saucer than in playing the scales, however superior the latter performance may be, Godwin had various schemes and hopes frustrated. At times his health was very precarious, with frequent fainting fits, causing grave anxiety for the future. In 1803 his son William was born, making the fifth member of his miscellaneous family. At times Mrs. Godwin's temper seems to have been very much tried or trying, and on one occasion she expressed the wish for a separation; but the idea appears to have been dropped on Godwin's writing one of his very calm and reasonable letters, saying that he had no obstacle to oppose to it, and that, if it was to take place, he hoped it would not be long in hand; he certainly went on to say that the separation would be a source of great misery to himself. Either this reason mollified Mrs. Godwin, or else the apparent ease with which she might have carried out her project, made her hesitate, as we hear no more of it. Godwin, however, had occasion to write her philosophically expostulatory letters on her temper, which we must hope, for the children's sake, produced a satisfactory effect; for surely nothing can be more injurious to the happiness of children than to witness the ungovernable temper of their elders; but with Godwin's calm disposition, quarrels must have been one-sided, and consequently less damaging.

Godwin superintended the education of his children himself, and wrote many books for this purpose, which formed part of his juvenile library later on. "Baldwin's" fables and his histories for children were published by Godwin under this cognomen, owing to his political views having prejudiced many people against his name. His chief aim appears to have been to keep a certain moral elevation before the minds of children, as in the excellent preface to the *History of Rome*, where he dwells on the fact of the stories of Mucius, Curtius, and Regulus being disputed; but considers that stories--if they be no more--handed down from the great periods of Roman history are

invaluable to stimulate the character of children to noble sentiments and actions. But in Godwin's case, as in many others, it must have been a difficult task counteracting the effect of example; for we cannot imagine the influence of a woman to have been ennobling who could act as Mrs. Godwin did at an early period of her married life; who, when one of her husband's friends, whom she did not care about, called to see Godwin, explained that it was impossible, as the kettle had just fallen off the hob and scalded both his legs. When the same friend met Godwin the next day in the street, and was surprised at his speedy recovery, the philosopher replied that it was only an invention of his wife. The safe-guard in such cases is often in the quick apprehension of children themselves, who are frequently saved from the errors of their elders by their perception of the consequences. Unfortunately, Mrs. Godwin's influence must have been lessened in other matters where her feeling for propriety, if with her only from a conventional and time-serving point of view, might have averted the fatal consequences which ensued later. Could she have gained the love and respect of the children instead of making them, as afterwards expressed by Mary, hate her, her moral precepts would have worked to more effect. It may have appeared to the girls, who could not appreciate the self-devotion of Godwin in acting against theories for the sake of individual justice, that the cause of all their unhappiness (and doubtless at times they felt it acutely) was owing to their father not having adhered to his previous anti-matrimonial opinions, and they were thus prepared to disregard what seemed to them social prejudices.

In the meantime Godwin struggled on to provide for his numerous family, not necessarily losing his enthusiasm through his need of money as might be supposed, for, fortunately, there are great compensations in nature, and not unfrequently what appears to be done for money is done really for love of those whom money will relieve; and so through this necessity the very love and anguish of the soul are transfused into the work. On the other hand, we see not infrequently, after the first enthusiasm of youth wears off, how the poetic side of a man's nature deteriorates, and the world and his work lose through the very ease and comfort he has attained to, so that the real degradation of the man or lowering of his nature comes more from wealth than poverty: thus what are spoken of as degrading circumstances, are, truly, the very reverse--a fact felt strongly by Shelley and such like natures who feel their ease is to be shared. We find Godwin working at his task of Chaucer, with love, daily at the British Museum, and corresponding with the Keeper of Records in the Exchequer Office and Chapter of Westminster, and Herald College, and the Librarian of the Bodleian Library; also writing many still extant letters pertaining to the subject. The sum of three hundred pounds paid to Godwin for this work was considered very small by him, though it scarcely seems so now.

Godwin found means and time occasionally to pay a visit to the country, as in September 1803, when he visited his mother and introduced his wife to her, as also to his old friends in Norwich; and during the sojourn of Mrs. Godwin and some of the children at Southend, a deservedly favourite resort of Mrs. Godwin, and later of Mrs. Shelley (for the sweet country and lovely Essex lanes, of even so late as thirty or forty years ago, made it a resort loved by artists) Godwin superintended the letter-writing of his children. We ascertain, also, from their letters to him during absence, that they studied history and attended lectures with him; so that in all probability his

daughter Mary's mind was really more cultivated and open to receive impressions in after life than if she had passed through a "finishing" education at some fashionable school. It is no mere phrase that to know some people is a liberal education; and if she was only saved from perpetrating some of the school-girl trash in the way of drawing, it was a gain to her intellect, for what can be more lowering to intelligence of perception than the utterly inartistic frivolities which are supposed to inculcate art in a country out of which the sense of it had been all but eradicated in Puritan England, though some great artists had happily reappeared! Mary at least learnt to love literature and poetry, and had, by her love of reading, a universe of wealth opened to her--surely no mean beginning. In art, had she shown any disposition to it, her father could undoubtedly have obtained some of the best advice of his day, as we see that Mulready and Linnell were intimate enough to spend a day at Hampstead with the children and Mrs. Godwin during Godwin's absence in Norfolk in 1808; in fact, Charles Clairmont, as seen in his account written to his step-father, was at this time having lessons from Linnell. Perhaps Mrs. Godwin had not discovered the same gift in Mary.

At this same date we have the last of old Mrs. Godwin's letters to her son. She speaks of the fearful price of food owing to the war, says that she is weary, and only wishes to be with Christ. Godwin spent a few days with her then, and the next year we find him at her funeral, as she died on August 13, 1809. His letter to his wife on that occasion is very touching, from its depth of feeling. He mourns the loss of a superior who exercised a mysterious protection over him, so that now, at her death, he for the first time feels alone.

Another severance from old associations had occurred this year in the death of Thomas Holcroft who, in spite of occasional differences, had always known and loved Godwin well, and whose last words when dying and pressing his hands were, "My dear, dear friend." Godwin, however, did not at all approve of Hazlitt, in bringing out Holcroft's life, using all his private memoranda and letters about his friends, and wrote expostulatory letters to Mrs. Holcroft on the subject. He considered it pandering to the worst passion of the malignity of mankind.

There do not appear to be many records of the Godwin family kept during the next two or three years. Mary was intimate with the Baxters. It was Mr. Baxter whom Mrs. Godwin tried to put off by the story of Godwin's scalded legs. We also find Mary at Ramsgate with Mrs. Godwin and her brother William, in May 1811, when she was nearly fourteen years old. As Mary and Mrs. Godwin were evidently unsuited to live together, these visits, though desirable for her health, were probably not altogether pleasant times to either, to judge by remarks in Godwin's letters to his wife. He hopes that, in spite of unfavourable appearances, Mary will still become a wise, and, what is more, a good and happy woman; this, evidently, in answer to some complaint of his wife. During these years many fresh acquaintances were made by Godwin; but as they had little or no apparent influence on Mary's after career, we may pass them over and notice at once the first communications which took place between Godwin and another personage, by far the greatest in this life drama, even great in the world's drama, for now for the first time in this story we come across the name of Shelley, with the words in Godwin's diary, "Write to Shelley." Having arrived at a name so full of import to all concerned in this Life, we must yet again retrace the past.

## CHAPTER III.

### SHELLEY.

Shelley, a name dear to so many now, who are either drawn to him by his lyrics, which open an undreamed-of fountain of sympathy to many a silent and otherwise solitary heart, or who else are held spell-bound by his grand and eloquent poetical utterances of what the human race may aspire to. A being of this transcendent nature seems generally to be more the outcome of his age, of a period, the expression of nature, than the direct scion of his own family. So in Shelley's case there appears little immediate intellectual relation between himself and his ancestors, who seem for nearly two centuries preceding his birth to have been almost unknown, except for the registers of their baptisms, deaths, and marriages.

Prior to 1623, a link has been hitherto missing in the family genealogy--a link which the scrupulous care of Mr. Jeaffreson has brought to light, and which his courtesy places at the service of the writer. This connects the poet's family with the Michel Grove Shelleys, a fact hitherto only surmised. The document is this:--

#### SHELLEY'S CASE AND COKE'S REPORT, 896.

25 Sept. 1 & 2 Philip and Mary. Between Edward Shelley of Worminghurst, in the county of Sussex, Esqre., of the one part, and Rd. Cowper and Wm. Martin of the other part.

90a. Covt. to suffer recovery to enure as to Findon Manor, etc.

90b. To the use of him the said Edward Shelley and of the heirs male of his body lawfully begotten, and for lack of such issue.

To the use of the heirs male of the body of John Shelley, Esqre., sometime of Michael Grove, deceased, father to the said Edward Shelley, etc.

It will be obvious to all readers of this important document that the last clause carries us back unmistakably from the Worminghurst Shelleys to the Michel Grove Shelleys, establishing past dispute the relationship of father and son.

The poet's great grandfather Timothy, who died twenty-two years before Shelley's birth, seems to have gone out of the beaten track in migrating to America, and practising as an apothecary, or, as Captain Medwin puts it, "quack doctor," probably leaving England at an early age; he may not have found facilities for qualifying in America, and we may at least hope that he would do less harm with the simple herbs used by the unqualified than with the bleeding treatment in vogue before the Brunonian system began. Anyway, he made money to help on the fortunes of his family. His younger son, Bysshe, who added to the family wealth by marrying in succession two heiresses, also gained a

baronetcy by adhering to the Whig Party and the Duke of Norfolk. He appears to have increased in eccentricity with age and became exceedingly penurious. He was evidently not regarded as a desirable match for either of his wives, as he had to elope with both of them; and his marriage with the first, Miss Michell, the grandmother of the poet, is said to have been celebrated by the parson of the Fleet. This took place the year before these marriages were made illegal. These facts about Shelley's ancestors, though apparently trivial, are interesting as proving that his forerunners were not altogether conventional, and making the anomaly of the coming of such a poet less strange, as genius is not unfrequently allied with eccentricity.

Bysshe's son Timothy seems to have conformed more to ordinary views than his father, and he married, when nearly forty, Elizabeth Pilfold, reputed a great beauty. The first child of this marriage, born on August 4, 1792, was the poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, born to all the ease and comfort of an English country home, but with the weird imaginings which in childhood could people the grounds and surroundings with ancient snakes and fairies of all forms, and which later on were to lead him far out of the beaten track. Shelley's little sisters were the confidants of his childhood, and their sympathy must have made up then for the lack of it in his parents. Some of their childish games at diabolical processions, making a little hell of their own by burning a fagot stack, &c., shows how early his searching mind dispersed the terrors, while it delighted in the picturesque or fantastic images, of superstition. Few persons realise to themselves how soon highly imaginative children may be influenced by the superstitions they hear around them, and assuredly Shelley's brain never recovered from some of these early influences: the mind that could so quickly reason and form inferences would naturally be of that sensitive and susceptible kind which would bear the scar of bad education. Shelley's mother does not appear so much to have had real good sense, as what is generally called common sense, and thus she was incapable of understanding a nature like that of her son; and thought more of his bringing home a well-filled game bag (a thing in every way repulsive to Shelley's tastes) than of trying to understand what he was thinking; so Shelley had to pass through childhood, his sisters being his chief companions, as he had no brother till he was thirteen. At ten years of age he went to school at Sion House Academy, and thence to Eton, before he was turned twelve. At both these schools, with little exception, he was solitary, not having much in common with the other boys, and consequently he found himself the butt for their tormenting ingenuity. He began a plan of resistance to the fagging system, and never yielded; this seems to have displeased the masters as much as the boys. At Eton he formed one of his romantic attachments for a youth of his own age. He seems now, as ever after, to have felt the yearning for perfect sympathy in some human being; as one idol fell short of his self-formed ideal, he sought for another. This was not the nature to be trained by bullying and flogging, though sympathy and reason would never find him irresponsive. His unresentful nature was shown in the way he helped the boys who tormented him with their lessons; for though he appeared to study little in the regular way, learning came to him naturally.

It must not, however, be supposed that Shelley was quite solitary, as the records of some of his old schoolfellows prove the contrary; nor was he averse to society when of a kind congenial to his tastes; but he always disliked coarse talk and jokes. Nature was ever dear to him; the walks round Eton were his chief recreation, and we can well

conceive how he would feel in the lovely and peaceful churchyard of Stoke Pogis, where undoubtedly he would read Gray's *Elegy*. These feelings would not be sympathised with by the average of schoolboys; but, on the other hand, it is not apparent why Shelley should have changed his character, as the embryo poet would also necessarily not care for all their tastes. In short, the education at a public school of that day must have been a great cruelty to a boy of Shelley's sensitive disposition.

One great pleasure of Shelley's while at Eton was visiting Dr. Lind, who assisted him with chemistry, and whose kindness during an illness seems to have made a lasting impression on the youth; but generally those who had been in authority over him had only raised a spirit of revolt. One great gain for the world was the passionate love of justice and freedom which this aroused in him, as shown in the stanzas from *‘The Revolt of Islam’*--

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear friend, when first  
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.

There can be no doubt that these verses are truly autobiographical; they indicate a first determination to war against tyranny. The very fact of his great facility in acquiring knowledge must have been a drawback to him at school where time on his hands was, for lack of better material, frequently spent in reading all the foolish romances he could lay hold of in the neighbouring book-shops. His own early romances showed the influence of this bad literature. Of course, then as now, fine art was a sealed book to the young student. It is difficult to fancy what Shelley might have been under different early influences, and whether perchance the gain to himself might not have been a loss to the world. Fortunately, Shelley's love of imagination found at last a field of poetry for itself, and an ideal future for the world instead of turning to ruffianism, high or low, which the neglect of the legitimate outlet for imagination so frequently induces. How little this moral truth seems to be considered in a country like ours, where art is quite overlooked in the system of government, and where the hereditary owners of hoarded wealth rest content, as a rule, with the canvases acquired by some ancestor on a grand tour at a date when Puritan England had already obliterated perception; so that frequently a few *‘chefs d'oeuvre’* and many daubs are hung indiscriminately together, giving equal pleasure or distaste for art. This is apposite to dwell on as showing the want of this influence on Shelley and his surroundings. From a tour in Italy made by Shelley's own father the chief acquisition is said to have been a very bad picture of Vesuvius.

It is becoming difficult to realise at present, when flogging is scarcely permitted in schools, what the sufferings of a boy like Shelley must have been; sent to school by his father with the admonition to his master not to spare the rod, and where the masters left the boy, who was undoubtedly unlike his companions, to treatment of a kind from which one case of death at least has resulted quite recently in our own time. Such proceedings which might have made a tyrant or a slave of Shelley succeeded only in making a rebel; his inquiring mind was not to be easily satisfied, and must assuredly have been a difficulty in his way with a conservative master; already, at Eton, we find him styled Mad Shelley and Shelley the Atheist.

In 1810 Shelley removed to University College, Oxford, after an

enjoyable holiday with his family, during which he found time for an experiment in authorship, his father authorising a stationer to print for him. If only, instead of this, his father had checked for a time these immature productions of Shelley's pen, the youth might have been spared banishment from Oxford and his own father's house, and all the misfortune and tragedy which ensued. Shelley also found time for a first love with his cousin, Harriet Grove. This also the unfortunate printing facilities apparently quashed. There is some discussion as to whether he left Eton in disgrace, but any way the matter must have been a slight affair, as no one appears to have kept any record of it; and should one of the masters have recommended the removal of Shelley from such uncongenial surroundings, it would surely have been very sensible advice.

Oxford was, in many respects, much to Shelley's taste. The freedom of the student life there suited him, as he was able to follow the studies most to his liking.

The professional lectures chiefly in vogue, on divinity, geometry, and history, were not the most to his liking--history in particular seemed ever to him a terrible record of misery and crime--but in his own chambers he could study poetry, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. The outcome of these studies, advanced speculative thought, was not, however, to be tolerated within the University precincts, and, unfortunately for Shelley, his favourite subjects of conversation were tabooed, had it not been for one light-hearted and amusing friend, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, a gentleman whose acquaintance Shelley made shortly after his settling in Oxford in the Michaelmas term of 1810. This friendship, like all that Shelley entered on, was intended to endure "for ever," and, as usual, Shelley impulsively for a time threw so much of his own personality into his idea of the character of his friend as to prepare the way for future disappointment.

Hogg was decidedly intellectual, but with a strong conservative tendency, making him quite content with the existing state of things so long as he could take life easily and be amused. His intellect, however, was clear enough to make him perceive that it is the poet who raises life from the apathy which assails even the most worldly-minded and contented, so that he in his turn was able to love Shelley with the love which is not afraid of a laugh, without the possibility of which no friendship, it has been said, can be genuine. Many are the charming stories giving a living presence to Shelley while at Oxford, preserved by this friend; here we meet with him taking an infant from its mother's arms while crossing the bridge with Hogg, and questioning it as to its previous existence, which surely the babe had not had time to forget if it would but speak--but alas, the mother declared she had never heard it speak, nor any other child of its age; here comes also the charming incident of the torn coat, and Shelley's ecstasy on its having been fine drawn. These and such-like amusing anecdotes show the genuine and unpedantic side of Shelley's character, the delightfully natural and loveable personality which is ever allied to genius. With the fun and humour were mixed long readings and discussions on the most serious and solemn subjects. Plato was naturally a great delight to him; he had a decided antipathy to Euclid and mathematical reasoning, and was consequently unable to pursue scientific researches on a system; but his love of chemistry and his imaginative faculty led him to wish in anticipation for the forces of nature to be utilised for human labour, &c. Shelley's reading and reading powers were enormous. He was seldom without a pocket edition

of one of his favourite great authors, whose works he read with as much ease as the modern languages.

This delightful time of study and ease was not to endure. Shelley's nature was impelled onwards as irresistibly as the mountain torrent, and as with it all obstacles had to yield. He could not rest satisfied with reading and discussions with Hogg on theological and moral questions, and, being debarred debate on these subjects in the university, he felt he must appeal to a larger audience, the public, and consequently he brought out, with the cognisance of Hogg, a pamphlet entitled *‘The Necessity of Atheism’*. This work actually got into circulation for about twenty minutes, when it was discovered by one of the Fellows of the College, who immediately convinced the booksellers that an *‘auto-da-fe’* was necessary, and all the pamphlets were at once consigned to the back kitchen fire; but the affair did not end there. Shelley's handwriting was recognised on some letters sent with copies of the work, and consequently both he and Hogg were summoned before a meeting in the Common room of the College. First Shelley, and then Hogg, declined to answer questions, and refused to disavow all knowledge of the work, whereupon the two were summarily expelled from Oxford. Shelley complained bitterly of the ungentlemanly way they were treated, and the authorities, with equal reason, of the rebellious defiance of the students; yet once more we must regret that there was no one but Hogg who realised the latent genius of Shelley, that there was no one to feel that patience and sympathy would not be thrown away upon a young man free from all the vices and frivolities of the time and place, whose crime was an inquiring mind, and rashness in putting his views into print. Surely the dangers which might assail a young man thus thrown on the world and alienated from his family by this disgrace might have received more consideration. This seems clear enough now, when Shelley's ideas have been extolled even in as well as out of the pulpit.

So now we find Shelley expelled from Oxford and arrived in London in March 1811, when only eighteen years of age, alone with Hogg to fight the battle of life, with no previous experience of misfortune to give ballast to his feelings, but with a brain surcharged with mysteriously imbibed ideas of the woes of others and of the world--a dangerous age and set of conditions for a youth to be thrown on his own resources. Admission to his father's house was only to be accorded on the condition of his giving up the society of Hogg; this condition, imposed at the moment when Shelley considered himself indebted to Hogg for life for the manner in which he stood by him in the Oxford ordeal, was refused. Shelley looked out for lodgings without result, till a wall paper representing a trellised vine apparently decided him. With twenty pounds borrowed from his printer to leave Oxford, Shelley is now settled in London, unaided by his father, a small present of money sent by his mother being returned, as he could not comply with the wishes which she expressed on the same occasion. From this time the march of events or of fate is as relentless as in a Greek drama, for already the needful woman had appeared in the person of Harriet Westbrook, a schoolfellow of his sisters at their Clapham school. During the previous January Shelley had made her acquaintance by visiting her at her father's house, with an introduction and a present from one of his sisters. There seems no reason to doubt that Shelley was then much attracted by the beautiful girl, smarting though he was at the time from his rupture with Harriet Grove; but Shakespeare has shown us that such a time is not exempt from the potency of love shafts.



This visit of Shelley was followed by his presenting Harriet Westbrook with a copy of his new romance, *St. Irvyne*, which led to some correspondence. It was now Harriet's turn to visit Shelley, sent also by his sisters with presents of their pocket money. Shelley moreover visited the school on different occasions, and even lectured the schoolmistress on her system of discipline. There is no doubt that Harriet's elder sister, with or without the cognisance of their father, a retired hotel-keeper, helped to make meetings between the two; but Shelley, though young and a poet, was no child, and must have known what these dinners and visits and excursions might lead to; and although the correspondence and conversation may have been more directly upon theological and philosophical questions, it seems unlikely that he would have discoursed thus with a young girl unless he felt some special interest in her; besides, Shelley need not have felt any great social difference between himself and a young lady brought up and educated on a footing of equality with his own sisters. It is true that her family acted and encouraged him in a way incompatible with old-fashioned ideas of gentility, but Shelley was too prone at present to rebel against everything conventional to be particularly sensitive on this point.

In May Shelley was enabled to return to his father's house, through the mediation of his uncle, Captain Pilfold, and henceforth an allowance of two hundred a year was made to him. But there had been work done in the two months that no reconciliations or allowances afterwards could undo; for while Shelley was bent on proselytising Harriet Westbrook, not less for his sisters' sake than for his own, Harriet, in a school-girl fashion, encouraged by her sister and not discouraged by her father, was falling in love with Shelley. How were the *bourgeois* father and sister to comprehend such a character as Shelley's, when his own parents and all the College authorities failed to do so? If Shelley were not in love he must have appeared so, and Harriet's family did their best by encouraging and countenancing the intimacy to lead to a marriage, they naturally having Harriet's interests more at heart than Shelley's.

However, the fact remains that Shelley was a most extraordinary being, an embryo poet, with all a poet's possible inconsistencies, the very brilliancy of the intellectual spark in one direction apparently quelling it for a time in another. In most countries and ages a poet seems to have been accepted as a heaven-sent gift to his nation; his very crimes (and surely Shelley did not surpass King David in misdoing?) have been the *lacrymae rerum* giving terrible vitality to his thoughts, and so reclaiming many others ere some fatal deed is done; but in England the convention of at least making a show of virtues which do not exist (perhaps a sorry legacy from Puritanism) will not allow the poet to be accepted for what he really is, nor his poetry to appeal, on its own showing, to the human heart. He must be analysed, and vilified, or whitewashed in turn.

At any rate Shelley was superior to some of the respectable vices of his class, and one alleged concession of his father was fortunately loathsome to him, viz.--that he (Sir Timothy) would provide for as many illegitimate children as Percy chose to have, but he would not tolerate a *mesalliance*. To what a revolt of ideas must such a code of morality have led in a fermenting brain like Shelley's! Were the mothers to be provided for likewise, and to be considered more by Shelley's respectable family than his lawful wife? We fear not.

A visit to Wales followed, during which Shelley's mind was in so abstracted a state that the fine scenery, viewed for the first time, had little power to move him, while Harriet Westbrook, with her sister and father, was only thirty miles off at Aberystwith; a hasty and unexplained retreat of this party to London likewise hastened the return of Shelley. Probably the father began to perceive that Shelley did not come forward as he had expected, and so he wished to remove Harriet from his vicinity. Letters from Harriet to Shelley followed, full of misery and dejection, complaining of her father's decision to send her back to school, where she was avoided by the other girls, and called "an abandoned wretch" for sympathising or corresponding with Shelley; she even contemplated suicide. It is curious how this idea seems to have constantly recurred to her, as in the case of some others who have finally committed the act.

Shelley wrote, expostulating with the father. This probably only incensed him more. He persisted. Harriet again addressed Shelley in despair, saying she would put herself under his protection and fly with him; a difficult position for any young man, and for Shelley most perplexing, with his avowed hostility to marriage, and his recent assertions that he was not in love with Harriet. But it must be put to Shelley's credit that, having intentionally or otherwise led Harriet on to love him, he now acted as a gentleman to his sister's school friend, and, influenced to some extent by Hogg's arguments in a different case in favour of marriage, he at once determined to make her his wife. He wrote to his cousin, Charles Grove, announcing his intention and impending arrival in London, saying that as his own happiness was altogether blighted, he could now only live to make that of others, and would consequently marry Harriet Westbrook.

On h

# Livros Grátis

( <http://www.livrosgratis.com.br> )

Milhares de Livros para Download:

[Baixar livros de Administração](#)

[Baixar livros de Agronomia](#)

[Baixar livros de Arquitetura](#)

[Baixar livros de Artes](#)

[Baixar livros de Astronomia](#)

[Baixar livros de Biologia Geral](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência da Computação](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência da Informação](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência Política](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciências da Saúde](#)

[Baixar livros de Comunicação](#)

[Baixar livros do Conselho Nacional de Educação - CNE](#)

[Baixar livros de Defesa civil](#)

[Baixar livros de Direito](#)

[Baixar livros de Direitos humanos](#)

[Baixar livros de Economia](#)

[Baixar livros de Economia Doméstica](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação - Trânsito](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação Física](#)

[Baixar livros de Engenharia Aeroespacial](#)

[Baixar livros de Farmácia](#)

[Baixar livros de Filosofia](#)

[Baixar livros de Física](#)

[Baixar livros de Geociências](#)

[Baixar livros de Geografia](#)

[Baixar livros de História](#)

[Baixar livros de Línguas](#)

[Baixar livros de Literatura](#)  
[Baixar livros de Literatura de Cordel](#)  
[Baixar livros de Literatura Infantil](#)  
[Baixar livros de Matemática](#)  
[Baixar livros de Medicina](#)  
[Baixar livros de Medicina Veterinária](#)  
[Baixar livros de Meio Ambiente](#)  
[Baixar livros de Meteorologia](#)  
[Baixar Monografias e TCC](#)  
[Baixar livros Multidisciplinar](#)  
[Baixar livros de Música](#)  
[Baixar livros de Psicologia](#)  
[Baixar livros de Química](#)  
[Baixar livros de Saúde Coletiva](#)  
[Baixar livros de Serviço Social](#)  
[Baixar livros de Sociologia](#)  
[Baixar livros de Teologia](#)  
[Baixar livros de Trabalho](#)  
[Baixar livros de Turismo](#)