

is a kind of natural piety, and renders the labor of the poet or other "artist of the beautiful" a proper form of worship. His heart tells him that this is so: it is lightest when he has worked at his craft with diligence and accomplishment; it is light with a happiness which the religious say one can know only by experience. The piety of his labor is not yet sufficiently comprehended; even the poet, having listened all his life to other tests of sanctification, often mistrusts his own conscience, looks upon himself as out of the fold, and is sure only that he must "gang his ain gait," however much he suffers for it in this world or some other.

Thus a dividing line has been drawn from time immemorial betwixt the conventional and the natural worshipers, betwixt the stately kingdom of Philistia and the wilding vales and cospes of that Arcadia which some geographers have named Bohemia. The mistake of the Arcadian is that he virtually accepts a standard not of his own establishment; he is impressed by a traditional conception of his Maker, regards it as fixed, will have none of it, and sheers off defiantly. If rich and his own master, he becomes a pagan virtuoso. If one of the struggling children of art and toil, then,

Loving Beauty, and by chance
Too poor to make her all in all,
He spurns her half-way maintenance,
And lets things mingle as they fall.

This is the way in Arcadia, and it has its pains and charm — as I well know, having journeyed many seasons in that happy-go-lucky land of sun and shower, and still holding a key to one of its entrance-gates. Its citizenship is not to be shaken off, even though one becomes naturalized elsewhere.

Now the artist not only has a right, but it is his duty, to indulge an anthropomorphism of his own. In his conception the divine power must be the supreme poet, the matchless artist, not only the transcendency but the immanence of all that is adorable in thought, feeling, and appearance. Grant that the Creator is the founder of rites and institutes and dignities; yet for the idealist he conceived the sunrise and moonrise, the sounds that ravish, the outlines that enchant and sway. He sets the colors upon the easel, the harp and viol are his invention, he is the model and the clay, his voice is in the story and the song. The love and the beauty of woman, the comradeship of man, the joy of student-life, the mimic life of the drama as much as the tragedy and comedy of the living world, have their sources in his nature; nor only gravity and knowledge, but also irony and wit and mirth. Arcady is a garden of his devising. As far as the poet, the artist, is creative, he becomes a sharer of the divine imagination and power, and even of the divine responsibility.

Edmund Clarence Stedman.

SHELLEY'S WORK.



THE centenary of Shelley's birth will be duly observed with public ceremonies in England and Italy — the land that bore him and drove him forth, and the land that sheltered him and now guards his grave, both equally his home in the eyes of the world; but in the private thoughts of many single lives the day of his birth will be silently remembered with tenderness, with gratitude, and with a renewal of faith in the things in which he believed. Personal devotion must naturally enter into these feelings, for such days are to commemorate a life, and they bring the man back with peculiar power. To win unknown friends, age after age, is a privilege of the poet; it is his reward — the greater because it can touch him no more — for the open trust in mankind with which he confides, to whosoever will, the secret things of his spirit. Yet, to make a poet's personality the main element in his memory, if he be really great, confines his fame too narrowly. Attractive as Shelley was,

his worth did not lie wholly in his charm. Interest in his life may become degraded into ignoble curiosity, and, at the best, love's gift is less weighty than reason's award.

Recognition of noble human traits is an important part of justice done to the dead; but it is not thus that Shelley would wish to be judged. Chaucer's question, "How shall the world be served?" was the alpha and omega of his life. It inspired his youthful prose; as his faculties grew and the poet emerged from the thinker, it governed the most intense expression of his soul in manhood; it absorbed him, as he himself said, with that passion for reforming the world which was elemental in his genius. It is true that the artistic and the practical instincts in him worked together imperfectly, and that at times of despair he fell back upon himself, pure poet, pouring his heart out in lyrical effusion, with cadences of pain that fill our eyes with tears — the "idle tears," too often, of self-pity. But he took heart again, and returned, though always more wearied, to the large interests of

the race. He believed that man is the poet's muse; at the height of his aspiration, singing with the skylark, he still remembered that the poet's "unbidden hymns" are the means by which the world shall be wrought to sympathies with unheeded hopes and fears; in the depth of his dejection he still prayed that the wind might blow abroad the poet's words, "as from an unextinguished hearth ashes and sparks," to be an enkindling prophecy throughout the world—"my words among mankind." What he believed true poets are he told in a familiar passage of his prose—"the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets that sing to battle and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves."

One hundred years have passed since he was born, and two generations have been buried since his ashes were laid by the Roman wall. It is reasonable to ask whether he had any share in this prophetic power, brooding on things to come, which is the mystical endowment of poetic genius; whether he anticipated time in those far thoughts forecasting hope, which he declared to be the substance of poetic intuition; whether he be one of those who, in his own phrase, rule our spirits from their urns, with power still vital in the chaotic thought and striving of mankind. "Poets," he said, concluding the impassioned words just quoted, "are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." If the phrase seems the mere enthusiasm of eloquence, yet so opposite a mind as Johnson's ratifies it. "He," said the old doctor concerning the poet, "must write as the interpreter of nature and the legislator of mankind, and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations." To leave, then, Shelley's charm, his character, and all his private life, which the world well knows; to leave analysis and criticism, since any occasion will serve for such examination of the propriety of his moral method in poetry, and its beneficial or injurious effects upon his work, of the truth of his imagination and of its nearness or remoteness in human interest and reality, of his art, the speed and exaltation of his luminous eloquence, the piercing tone of his lyrical song—to leave such matters, I say, of merely personal or literary concern, what has the century past disclosed in regard to Shelley's sympathies with the next ages, and the vitality of his energy in the forces that advance mankind? The influences that blend in progress are many and various; the foreknowledge of the most clear-sighted is vague and doubtful, and the wisest contributes only his portion to the great result. But, this being allowed, in what sense and how

far was Shelley prophetic of the time to come, and an element in its coming?

THE spirit of discontent has been a presiding genius in literature since the reflective life of man began. The imaginative creation of ideal commonwealths marks its conquest of political thought, and the dream of the golden age its victory in poetry. So long is it since the inspiration that governed Shelley has been active in minds like his own. The "Republic" of Plato, however, and that eclogue of the young Virgil which won for him a place among the prophets of Christ, though they are the highest reach of literature in such expression, are negative; they condemn what is, by a poetic escape into a world that should be. With the rise of democracy the positive expression of discontent, in those parts of literature which reflect the life of society as distinguished from individual life, has become more direct, comprehensive, and telling. In the last century, in particular, the world was coming to a consciousness of its own misery. The state of man was never more bitterly set forth than by Swift, nor more drearily than by Johnson. Comfortable and self-satisfied as that century is often described, it was the dark soil in which the seeds of time were germinating. It ended in dry skepticism, cold rationalism, and finally in that utilitarian preoccupation of the mind which was a European mood.

The first effort toward better things, as is apt to be the case, was political. The Revolution broke. The hopefulness of that time, when in the year of Shelley's birth Wordsworth said, "T was bliss to be alive, but to be young was very heaven," is perhaps that one of its phases which is now realized with most difficulty. It reminds one of the faith of the early Church in the immediate coming of the reign of Christ on earth. When Shelley began to think and feel, and became a living soul, the first flush of dawn had gone by; but the same hopefulness sprang up in him, it was invincible, and it made him the poet of the Revolution, of which he was the child. So far as the Revolution was speculative or moral, he reflected it completely. Its commonplaces were burning truths in his heart; its ferment was his own intellectual life; its confusions, its simplicities, its misapprehensions of the laws of social change, were a part of himself. It would be wrong to ascribe the crudities of Shelley's thought merely to his immature and boyish development: they belonged quite as much to the youth of the cause; he received what he was taught in the form in which his masters held it. The ease with which genius thrives upon any food, and turns all to use, might be astonishing were it not so commonly to be observed; but its transformations

are sometimes bewildering. Like fire from heaven Shelley's genius fell upon the dry bones of rationalism, and they rose up, a spirit of beauty and of power. It was the same change that took place when philosophy went out into the streets of Paris, and in the twinkling of an eye was made a flaming mænad. It was the wand of the Revolution touching the soul of man. Shelley was, in truth, in the whirl of forces which he only half understood, vaster than he knew, with destinies dimly adumbrated in his own spirit, like the poet of his own eloquent description. The Revolution was, in Gray's phrase, "the Mighty Mother" of this child; she showed him the world-old vision of the Saturnian reign that has ever hung over Italy, yet more fair than the fairest of all our lands; she set him in the footprints of Plato; and she filled his heart with many hatreds.

The principles and remedies which Shelley adopted were of the utmost simplicity. Principles and remedies must be simple in order to be capable of wide application in the reform of society. He was not an original thinker. He had the enormous receptive and assimilative power which characterizes high genius, and he made it his function to give lofty and winning expression to the ideas that he felt to be of ennobling and beneficent power over men. He had also a strongly practical temperament; he wished to apply ideas as well as to express them, and in his own life he was always restlessly doing what he thought, linking the word with an act, carrying conviction to the extreme issue of duty performed. It was this union of the practical and speculative instincts, each highly developed, which, under the breath of his poetic nature, made his sympathies with reform so intense that he might well describe them as a passion. Yet his political, social, and religious beliefs were nothing unusual. They have been called superficial; but they were so, in the main, in no other sense than are the principles of democracy, philanthropy, and intellectual liberty. They were the simple truths whose acceptance by the world goes on so slowly. He adopted the right of private judgment, and with it the right of the individual to put his beliefs in action; the first discredited for him the excellence of the existing order, and brought him quickly into conflict with prevailing opinion; the second, in its turn, occasioned a more serious collision with that existing order itself, which met him in the form of custom, intolerance, and force. These three things he hated, because he hated most of all injustice, of which they were the triple heads. In all this he had the ordinary fortune of the revolutionist. He was face to face with the enemy. The power of custom in society, which Wordsworth had de-

scribed, "heavy as frost and deep almost as life"; the venom of intolerance, the foe against which Locke had armed him; the supremacy of force, if it be invoked, in which the long history of tyranny had instructed him — these stood in his way, and only his own indignant verse can express the violence of the hatred and contempt they excited in his breast.

What were the tenets that had so involved him in opposition to the social opinion of his own country that he went into voluntary exile? His atheism stands first because it caused his expulsion from Oxford. What was this atheism in substance? He had conceived the divine power in terms of the historic Jehovah, and its relation to man under the Christian dispensation in terms of the legal definitions of an obsolescent theology; nor can it be gainsaid that these notions coincided with the ideas then prevalent, but not realized with the same distinctness in the moral consciousness of those who held them as in Shelley's. When he began to think, this conception was antagonized in two ways. In the first instance he acquired some rudimentary metaphysics, and it became necessary to reconcile an anthropomorphic conception of deity with a philosophical definition. In the second instance he developed an ideal of goodness, and it became necessary to reconcile the divine virtue, as shown in the same historic conception of deity, with the voice of his own conscience. He took the short and easy, but natural method, and denied the truth of the original conception. The metaphysical difficulty, however little it may vex mature minds, was a real one to him; and in connection with it Newman's statement may profitably be recalled, that no question is hedged about with more difficulties than the being of God. The moral difficulty, also, was a real one; and Robertson, whose Christian faith and sincerity none can doubt, was right in defending Shelley's decision and saying, "Change the *name*, and I will bid that *character* defiance with you." This was Shelley's atheism — on the one hand, a philosophical definition, and, on the other, the humanizing of a pre-Christian and medieval idea of God in accordance with that moral enlightenment which Christianity itself has spread through the world. Shelley expressed his denial in terms of blasphemy, as the words were then understood; but the "almighty fiend" whom he denounced was as much an idol as Dagon or Moloch.

What has the issue been? The conception which Shelley attacked with such vehemence no longer finds a voice in public discussion. It is as dumb as the ideas which once suggested such picturesquely lurid titles to the sermons under which our fathers trembled and transgressed. To-day the philosophical defini-

tion would be less difficult to frame, and it would awake no serious hostility; the moral ideal, too, is enthroned in religious conceptions as securely as in the conscience of man. It would be idle to say that advance has not been made, or to deny that it has pursued the lines of Shelley's instincts, his intellectual questioning, and his moral sympathies. Merely as a polemical writer he stood in the necessary path of progress; but as a poet, he vastly strengthened that moral enthusiasm which after his death regenerated religion as it had before inspired politics. He impressed his own moral ideal on those whom he influenced, and the old conception became as impossible for them as for him. Other forces united in the general tendency, for all things spiritual drew that way; nor is it possible to distinguish his share in the change that has passed over English theology in this century. But some sentences of the Rev. Stopford Brooke are apposite, and the opinion of such an observer may be allowed weight upon the question of Shelley's place in this field. "He indirectly made," says this writer, "as time went on, an ever-increasing number of men feel that the will of God could not be in antagonism to the universal ideas concerning man, that His character could not be in contradiction to the moralities of the heart, and that the destiny He willed for mankind must be as universal and as just and loving as Himself. There are more clergymen and more religious laymen than we imagine who trace to the emotion Shelley awakened in them when they were young their wider and better views of God." Whether this be true to the extent indicated is immaterial. It is enough if it becomes clear that Shelley's "atheism" was, by its revolt, the sign and promise of that liberalized thought and more humane feeling in respect to the divine dealing with men which characterized the religious progress of the time; that his denial has been sustained by the common conscience of mankind; and that the affirmations of the moral ideal which he made have been strengthened by years as they passed by, and have spread and been accepted as noble expressions of the conviction and aspiration of the men who came after him. Whether Shelley intended these results in the precise form that they took is also immaterial. It probably never entered his mind that clergymen would thank him for a liberalized orthodoxy, any more than that Owenites would use "Queen Mab" as an instrument in their propaganda, and thus give the widest circulation to that one of his poems which he would have suppressed. Certainly he had a conscious purpose to destroy old religious conceptions and to quicken the hearts of men with new ideals, not religious, but moral. If both results came

about, under the favor of time, and were such as the poet meant them to be, as in some measure was the case, and yet the influence also operated in an unexpected way by the reaction of the awakened conscience on the narrower faith to its liberalization instead of its destruction, this does not affect the reality of Shelley's work; it affords rather an example of that element in the poet through which, as Shelley said, he is an instrument as well as a power, and in neither capacity is wholly conscious of his significance.

The second tenet which immediately drew upon him scandal and obloquy was his belief that legal marriage was not a proper social institution. He had derived the opinion from his teachers, and held it in common with other reformers of the age. It is a view that from time to time arises in minds of an entirely pure and virtuous disposition under the stress of a rigorous and indiscriminating law. The state of woman under English law was then one of practical servitude, and in the case of unfit marriages might become, and sometimes was, deplorable. The continuance of forced union, on the side of either man or woman, after affection or respect ceased, was revolting to Shelley, the more so in proportion to the refinement and purity of his own poetic idealization of the relation of love. The helpless condition of woman under such circumstances appealed to him as a violation of justice and of liberty as well as a degradation of love. If since his time the rights of married women have been recognized by important and really sweeping changes in their legal status, and if the bonds of the legal tie have been relaxed, in both instances it was an acknowledgment of the reality of the social wrongs which were the basis of his conviction. If there is less tendency among reformers to attack the institution of marriage, and the subject has ceased to be conspicuous, though still occasionally manifest, it is because the removal of the more oppressive and tyrannic elements in the difficulty has relieved the situation. The belief of Shelley in love without marriage was an extreme way of stating his disbelief in marriage without love, as the law of England then was. There was, too, a positive as well as a negative side to his conviction, but in this he merely repeated the dream of the golden age, and asserted that in the ideal commonwealth love and marriage would be one; and this has been the common theme of Utopians, whether poets or thinkers, in all ages. In other words, it may reasonably be held that, in this case as in that of his atheism, an extreme view was taken; but in relation to the time and to the reforms made since then, his ideas of marriage held in them the substantial injustice of a state of facts then existing and the lines

of tendency along which advance was subsequently made. He reflected the age, and he foreshadowed the future; though the results, just as in the case of religion, consist in a modification, and not in demolition, of the ideas which he antagonized.

Shelley's atheism, however, and his views of legal marriage have had a disproportionate attention directed to them because of their close relation to the events of his own life. These were not the things in his philosophy for which he most cared. In the matter of marriage, though he acted on his belief in taking his second wife without a divorce from his first, in both unions he went through the form of marriage. He would never have so compromised with the world in an opinion which was a point of conscience with him. If it had been a question of the freedom of the press, or of the welfare of the masses, he would have stood by his convictions though they sent him to prison or the scaffold. The affairs which he took an active interest in, and endeavored to make practical, were political. At first the freedom of the press was nearest to him, and he helped with sympathy or money those whom he knew to be singled out for persecution by the Government; then the state of Ireland, Catholic emancipation, the putting of reform to the vote, the condition of the poor, exercised his mind and called out such labors as were open to him; at a still later time the Manchester riots, the revolutions on the Continent, and such larger matters engaged his enthusiasm. He was the most contemporary of all poets. His keen interest in what was going on was characteristic; he lost no occasion which gave him opportunity to use the question of the moment to spread his general principles. His immediate response to the hour is noticeable from the time, for example, of the death of the Princess Charlotte, on which he wrote a pamphlet, to that of the Greek rising, on which he composed a lyric drama. What poet before ever had occasion, as he did in the preface to "Hellas," to beg "the forgiveness of my readers for the display of newspaper erudition to which I have been reduced"? The words are most significant of the spirit of his life. It is also not useless to observe that a share of Shelley's violence, especially in early years, is due to the fact that he was actually in the arena and taking blows in his own person. Such a man does not, between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four, write with the same equable restraint as a student in his library; he is not likely to hold opinions in temperate forms; and if, like Shelley, he is by nature sensitive to injury and resentful of it, his language takes heat and may become extravagant. What he struggled with was not only thought, but fact. It was to his advantage,

doubtless, that he removed to Italy, where, being less irritated, he was able to express his abstract ideas in the quiet and undisturbed atmosphere of imaginative poetry.

These abstract ideas, his scheme of society, were acquired in his youth, and they were, as has been said, of the utmost simplicity. He adopted the doctrine known as that of the perfectibility of man. It is especially associated with the name of Condorcet. Shelley believed that society could be made over in such a way that virtue would prevail and happiness be secured. He thought that institutions should be abolished and a new rule of life substituted. He did not enter upon details. The present was wrong; let it cease: that was the whole of the matter. It was a form of what is now called nihilism. The state of society that existed seemed to him real anarchy. "Anarchs" was a favorite word with him for kings and all persons in power. His hatred was consequently centered on the established order. It was a government of force, and therefore he hated force; kings and priests were its depositaries, he hated them; war was its method, he hated war. The word is not too strong. Gall flows from his pen when he mentions any of these things. Their very names are to him embodied curses. If the system he saw prevailing in Europe bred in him such hatred, its results in practice filled him with pity. He was susceptible to the sight of suffering and misery, and almost from boyhood the effort to relieve wretchedness by personal action characterized him. He could endure the sight of pain as little as the sight of wrong. The lot of the poor, wherever he came upon it in experience or in description, stirred his commiseration to the depth of his heart. He was one of those born to bear the sufferings of the world, in a real and not a sentimental or metaphorical sense. He had seen the marks of the devastation of war in France; he knew the state of the people under tyrannical rule; he was as well aware of the degradation of the English masses as of the stagnation of Italy. Wherever he looked, the fruits of government were poverty, ignorance, hopelessness, in vast bodies of mankind. There was nothing for it but the Revolution, and heart and soul he was pledged to that cause.

But his hopes went far beyond the purposes of a change to be brought about by force for limited political ends; such an event involved the destruction of forms of power which he wished to see destroyed, and might result in amelioration, since force become popular was better than force that remained aristocratic; but his heart was set upon a change of a far different nature, more penetrating, more universal, more permanent—nothing less than that "divine result to which the whole creation

moves." Since Shelley, in common with the thinkers of his time, believed that the world's wretchedness was due to political misrule, and could be obviated by a change of institutions, he was on his practical side in alliance with every expression of revolutionary force; but he had an ideal side, and in his poetry it was this that found expression. He sang the golden age; time and again he returned to the theme, of which he could not weary, from the hour of youth, when he poured forth the story of man's perfect state in eloquence still burning with first enthusiasm, to the impassioned moment when he created the titanic forms of his highest lyrical drama, and bade the planetary spirits discourse in spherical music the pæan of peace on earth, good will to men. The paradise of "The Revolt of Islam," the isle of seclusion in "Epi-psychidion," the echoes of the Virgilian song in "Hellas," like "Queen Mab" and "Prometheus Unbound," show the permanence before his rapt eyes of that vision of heaven descended upon earth which has fascinated the poets of all times. Yet how transform this "world's woe" into that harmony? Shelley's command was as simple, as direct as Christ's—"Love thy neighbor." No; there was nothing novel in it, nothing profound or original. It is so long now since man's knowledge of what is right has out-run his will to embody it in individual life and the institutions of society that new gospels, were they possible, are quite superfluous. What Shelley had that other men seldom have was faith in this doctrine, the will to practise it, the passion to spread it. There may be to our eyes something pathetic in such simplicity, as the belief of boyhood in goodness is pathetic in the sight of the man; something innocent, as we say, in such unworldliness, and again we intimate the eternal child in the poet's heart; but it is the simplicity and innocence—the pathos it may be—of what Christ taught. That Shelley believed what he said cannot be doubted. He thought that men might, if they would, love their fellow-men, and then injustice would of itself cease, being dried at its source, and that reign of mutual helpfulness, of the common sharing of the abundance of the earth's harvest, of man's enfranchisement from slavery to another's luxurious wants, would begin; war, poverty, and tyranny, force and fraud, greed, indulgence, and crime would be abolished. It was too obvious to need consideration; man was capable of perfection, and the method to attain to it was love, and this way once adopted, as it could be, by the fiat of each individual will, would enthrone justice and spread virtue throughout the world. It was not reason that withstood this doctrine, but custom, tradition, interested individuals and classes, the active and law-intrenched power of institutions estab-

lished for the security and profit of the few—a whole order of society resting upon a principle opposite to love, the principle of organized force. If this time-incrusted evil, this blind and deaf and dumb authority of wrong long prevalent, this sorry scheme of accepted lies, could be destroyed at a stroke, a simple resolve in each breast would bring heaven on earth.

This was Shelley's creed. It may be false, impracticable, and chimerical; it may be a doctrinaire's philosophy, an enthusiast's program, a poet's dream: but that it has points of contact and coincidence with gospel truth is plain to see; and in fact Shelley's whole effort may be truly described as an incident in that slow spread of Christian ideas whose assimilation by mankind is so partial, uneven, imperfect, so hesitating, so full of compromise, so hopeless in delay. He had disengaged once more from the ritual of Pharisees and the things of Cæsar the original primitive commands, and made them as simple as conscience; he may have been wrong in the sense that these things are impossible to man in society; but if he was in error, he erred with a greater than Plato.

But it is not necessary to carry the matter so far. Shelley was a moralist, but he used the poet's methods. He declared the great commands, and he denounced wrong with anathemas; but he also gave a voice to the lament of the soul, to its aspirations and its ineradicable, if mistaken, faith in the results of time; and the ideas which he uttered with such affluence of expression, such poignancy of sympathy, such a thrill of prophetic triumph, are absorbed in the spirit which poured them forth—in its indignation at injustice, its hopefulness of progress, its complete conviction of the righteousness of its cause. He has this kindling power in men's hearts. They may not believe in the perfectibility of man under the conditions of mortal life, but they do believe in his greater perfection; and Shelley's words strengthen them in effort. No cause that he had greatly at heart has retreated since his day. There are thousands now, where there were hundreds then, who hold his beliefs. The Revolution has gone on, and is still in progress, though it has yet far to go. What part he has had in the increase of the mastering ideas of the century is indeterminate. He was dead when his apostolic work began. His earliest and unripe poem, "Queen Mab," was the first to be caught up by the spirit of the times, and was scattered broadcast; and wherever it fell it served, beyond doubt, to unsettle the minds that felt it. Crude as it was, it was vehement and eloquent; and the crudities which have most offense in them are of the sort that make the entrance of such ideas into uneducated minds more easy. It was nearer

intellectually to these minds than a better poem would have been. Rude thoughts not too carefully discriminated are more powerful revolutionary instruments than more exact truths in finer phrases. "Queen Mab" was certainly the poem by which he was long best known. The first revival of his works came just before the time of the Reform Bill, and they were an element in the agitation of men's minds; but his permanent influence began with the second revival, ten years later, when his collected works were issued by his widow. Since then edition has followed edition, and with every fall of his poems from the presses of England and America new readers feel the impulse of his passion, blending naturally with the moral and political inspiration of an age which has exhausted its spiritual force in pursuit of the objects that he bade men seek. Democracy, of which philanthropy is the shadow, has made enormous gains; the cause is older and social analysis has gone farther than in his day; his denunciation of kings and priests seems antiquated only because the attack is now directed on the general conditions of society which make tyrannical power and legalized privilege possible under any political organization, and in industrial and commercial as well as military civilizations; his objects of detestation seem vague and unreal only because a hundred definite propositions, developed by socialistic thought,—any one of which was more rife with danger than his own elementary principles,—have been put forth without any such penalty being visited upon their authors as was fixed upon him. This advance, and more, has been made. The consciousness of the masses, both in respect to their material position and their power to remedy it, has increased indefinitely in extent and in intensity in all countries affected by European thought; socialism, anarchism, nihilism are names upon every lip, and they measure the active discontent of those strata of society last to be reached by thought except the *bourgeoisie*. Whatever revolutionary excess may unite with the movement, the stream flows in the direct course of Shelley's thought with an undreamt vehemence and mass. That he still implants in others that passion of his for reforming the world is not questioned; his works have been a perennial fountain of the democratic spirit with its philanthropic ardor. As in the other phases of his influence, so in this its grand phase, his work has been in modification instead of demolition of the social order; it has been only one individual element in a world-movement issuing from many causes and sustained from many sources; but here too he fulfils his own characterization of the poet, imperfectly conscious of his own meanings, dimly prophetic of what shall be, belonging to the future whose ideas

come into being through his intuitions, sympathies, and longings.

Shelley's genius, then, it must be acknowledged, had this prescience by which it seized the elements of the future yet inchoate, and glorified them, and won the hearts of men to worship them as an imagined hope, and fervently to desire their coming. If one thing were to be sought for as the secret of his power on man, I should say it was his belief in the soul. No poet ever put such unreserved trust in the human spirit. He laid upon it the most noble of all ideal tasks, and inspired it with faith in its own passion. "Save thyself," he said, and showed at the same time the death in which it lay, the life of beauty, love, and justice to which it was born as to a destiny. Virtue in her shape how lovely, humanity throughout the world how miserable, were the two visions on which he bade men look; and he refused to accept this antithesis of what is and what ought to be as inevitable in man's nature or divine providence; it remained with man, he said, to heal himself. He was helped, perhaps, in his faith in the human spirit by the early denial he made of religion as interpreted by the theology of his period; for him salvation rested with man, or nowhere. In later years he made love the principle, not only of human society, but of the government of the universe; it was his only conception of divine power; but he never reconciled in thought this mystical belief with the apparent absence of this divine element from its lost provinces in human life. He promised men in their effort no other aid than the mere existence, in the universe, of beneficent laws of which mankind could avail itself by submitting thereto. The doctrine of the power of the human spirit to perfect itself, and the necessity of the exercise of this power as the sole means of progress, remained in unaffected integrity. This fundamental conviction is one that has spread equally with the democratic idea or the philanthropic impulse. The immediacy of the soul as the medium of even revealed truth is a conception that clarifies with each decade, and it is in harmony with Shelley's most intimate convictions, with those tendencies and dispositions of his temperament so natural to him that they were felt rather than thought. But in such analysis one may refine too much. It is meant only to illustrate how completely, in the recesses of his nature as well as in definite manifestation of his thought, he was the child, intellectually and morally, of the conquering influences implicit in his age, so readily apprehensive of them that he anticipated their power in the world, so intensely sympathetic that he embodied them in imagination before the fullness of time, so compelled to express them that he was their prophet and leader in the next ages.

By his own judgment, therefore, of what great poets are, he must be placed among them, and the office of genius, as he defined it, must be declared to be his. The millennium has not come, any more than it came in the first century. The cause Shelley served is still in its struggle; but those to whom social justice is a watchword, and the development of the individual everywhere in liberty, intelligence, and virtue is a cherished hope, must be thankful that Shelley lived, that the substance of his work is so vital, and his influence, inspiring as it is beyond that of any of our poets in these ways, was, and is, so completely on the side of the century's advance. His words are sung by marching thousands in the streets of London. No poet of our time has touched the cause of progress in the living breath and heart-throb of men so close as that. Yet, remote as the poet's dream always seems, it is rather that life-long singing of the golden age, in poem after poem, which most restores and inflames those who, whether they be rude or refined, are the choicer spirits of mankind, and

bring, with revolutionary violence or ideal imagination, the times to come. They hate the things he hated; like him they love, above all things, justice; they share the passion of his faith in mankind. Thus, were his own life as dark as Shakspeare's, and had he left unwritten those personal lyrics which some who conceive the poet's art less nobly would exalt above his grander poems, he would stand preëminent and almost solitary for his service to the struggling world, for what he did as a quickener of men's hearts by his passion for supreme and simple truths. If these have more hold in society now than when he died, and if his influence has contributed its share, however blended with the large forces of civilization, he has in this sense given law to the world and equaled the height of the loftiest conception of the poet's significance in the spiritual life of man. Such, taken in large lines and in its true relations, seems to me the work for which men should praise Shelley on this anniversary, leaving mere poetic enjoyment, however delightful, and personal charm, however winning, to other occasions.

George E. Woodberry.

TOPICS OF THE TIME.

Popular Crazes.

NO portion of Professor James Bryce's "American Commonwealth" reveals more strikingly the author's remarkable insight into American methods and character than the twelve chapters on Public Opinion which constitute Part 4 of Vol. II. Every American who is interested in the efforts which his own country is making to work out successfully and completely the problem of popular government can read those chapters with profit, for he will find in them, clearly and forcibly set forth, many things that he has dimly conceived but has never been able to think out thoroughly for himself.

Professor Bryce holds that "in no country is public opinion so powerful as in the United States," and in the course of his searching and able discussion of why it is so he makes certain observations which we wish to cite at this time as having an especial bearing upon the subject that we wish to consider in the present article.

Remembering that one of the chief problems of free nations is "to devise means whereby the national will shall be most fully expressed, most quickly known, most unresistingly and cheerfully obeyed," he says:

Towards this goal the Americans have marched with steady steps, unconsciously as well as consciously. No other people now stands so near it. . . . Towering over Presidents and State Governors, over Congress and State Legislatures, over conventions and the vast machinery of party, public opinion stands out in the United States as the great source of power, the master of servants who tremble before it.

There is no one class or set of men whose special func-

tion it is to form and lead public opinion. The politicians certainly do not. Public opinion leads them.

A sovereign is not less a sovereign because his commands are sometimes misheard or misreported. In America every one listens for them. Those who manage the affairs of this country obey to the best of their hearing. The people must not be hurried. A statesman is not expected to move ahead of them; he must rather seem to follow, though if he has the courage to tell the people that they are wrong, and refuse to be the instrument, he will be all the more respected.

Professor Bryce goes on to argue that one reason why public opinion is so powerful is the universal belief of the people in their star, a "confidence that the people are sure to decide right in the long run," that "truth and justice are sure to make their way into the minds and consciences of the majority." Every one who has studied the history of this country knows how true all this is. Whenever a new peril threatens us from any quarter, either in the form of some abuse in legislation or in administration, or in the form of some fresh financial or economic heresy, the final stronghold of hope to which every anxious observer clings is the conviction that the people will decide right in the end. Our national history is the record of a succession of perils of one kind or another, suddenly averted at the very moment when escape from them seemed most impossible.

The recent collapse of the Free Silver Coinage "craze" makes a review of similar popular delusions timely. We have had many of these since the war, and all of them have passed away as suddenly as they arose, after a uniformly brief and absorbing period of existence. No one can contemplate them after they have



ENGRAVED BY R. G. TIETZE. FROM A CHALK DRAWING AT BISCOMBE, AFTER THE ORIGINAL PORTRAIT BY MISS CURRAN, BY PERMISSION OF LADY SHELLEY.

Yours very sincerely
P. B. Shelley