

THE SOURCES OF SHELLEY'S "QUEEN MAB."

"Queen Mab" might almost be represented as Shelley's youthful autobiography, for into it he compressed the thoughts and ideals that were struggling in his youthful, overheated brain. Caution was thrown to the winds, and the most radical theories enthusiastically embraced. He wrote exactly as his brain dictated, seeming to fear neither the adverse criticism of the public, nor the further-reaching censorship of the state. A Shelley of nineteen is a creature of impulse and imagination. But it is very doubtful if he meant to formulate a definite system of philosophy or economics. Mr. Felix Rabbe, indeed, hints that a set plan underlies the poem. It is too incoherent and inflammatory, however, to be more than the expression of his despair at existing human misery. It is no more than a wild protest aimed at established government and inspired religion. True to his nature Shelley was a radical among the extremists of his age; a disciple of the new republican school of thought engendered by the French Revolution. Even as a stripling we find him delving into the advanced writings of Holbach, Helvétius, Rousseau, Volney, Laplace, Bacon, Godwin, Newton and Hume. Their liberalism gained an easy convert. He henceforth became an impatient reformer; one of the most impracticable, perhaps, that ever joined the ranks of re-organizers. "Queen Mab" was the medium chosen for the propagation of his early ideas, and for its sources we must search among the works of those who inspired him. It is not a difficult task, for Shelley seldom hesitated to suggest, or even quote, his authority. Oftentimes in his text he does no more than paraphrase the passage that has struck his fancy; a proceeding that argues little for his originality at this date. But in all truth the term "original" must not be employed at all in speaking of the poem. Hardly a page, so far as the thought goes, was his own. His purpose was not to fabricate a new system of life, but to bind the old political tyranny and slavish belief in inspired religion with a chain already forged by stronger hands than his. He drew from all the sour-

es at his command, giving to the production the best that was in him. Because this was so, we are justified in calling the resultant work the "sum total of his intellectual life up to that date," and in claiming for these sources the interest that must always attach to whatever is instrumental in the development of a great man.

From a metrical standpoint the poem is imitative. Mrs. Shelley in her note states that Southey's "Thalaba" furnished the form for the lighter lyric portions, those employed when the author is not delivering a sermon against the world's injustice. These are the parts that give the poem a structure, and in which Ianthe and the Spirit figure. They are interwoven with the narrative to give a continuity to the whole. Mrs. Shelley's statement is correct, but the metrical scheme itself is peculiar in that it allows great variations in the length of the verses and in the kind of feet employed. Gummere in his "Handbook of Poetics" classes the metre among the miscellaneous examples of classic imitations, while Dowden speaks of it as "irregular, unrhymed verse." Southey himself in his introduction to "Thalaba" says, "The Dramatic Sketches of Dr. Sayers, a volume that no lover of poetry will recollect without pleasure, induced me, when a young versifier, to practice in this rhythm. I felt that while it gave a poet a wider range of expression, it satisfied the ear of the reader." But, perhaps, two parallel passages, one from "Queen Mab," and the other from Southey's poem, will indicate Shelley's indebtedness on this score. Each quotation is from the opening verses.

"Thalaba:"

How beautiful is night!
A dewy freshness fills the silent air;
No mist obscures, nor cloud nor speck nor stain
Breaks the serene of heaven:
In full-orbed glory yonder moon divine
Rolls through the dark blue depths.
Beneath her steady ray
The desert circle spreads,
Like the round ocean girded with the sky.
How beautiful is night!

“Queen Mab:”

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

Doubtless two passages could be found offering a closer metrical parallel, but these have the advantage of being initial lines, and of offering a striking resemblance in movement and spirit, if not in idea, one to the other. Southey retained the metre throughout his lengthy poem, but Shelley, having employed it entirely for two out of his nine parts, reverted to blank verse in the sermonizing portions. From there on he used the Southeyan metre only, as I have suggested, when Ianthe and the Spirit were reintroduced to mould the piece into a coherent unit. This blank verse is usually of the regular iambic pentameter type.

However greatly Shelley may have come under the sway of the men and women of his generation with fanatical cults and “isms,” no one influence held him so completely as that exerted by the philosopher and political economist, William Godwin. The reasons for this are not difficult to find. Shelley was young, and of a peculiarly enthusiastic temperament; Godwin was almost sixty, and was counted among the clearest thinkers of his day. One was in the assimilative and formative period; the other had already done his work and won his reputation. Both were of the revolutionary school of thought, each believing in the utter corruption of society and government, and striving for future regeneration. Where the older man had fought his battle against all social institutions, and was as yet revered by liberal reformers, Shelley had his spurs to win. The philosopher, through his writings, offered him a definite and attractive plan of battle; for Godwin was nothing if not clear and logical, even though at times this clearness was a negative virtue in that his logic was founded on false premises. The lucidity of his style was in accord with the precision and formality of his nature.

From this fact alone the presentation of his subject-matter was admirably suited to the young men of his day who demanded simplicity and exactness in preference to deep theoretical deductions. "Throw away your books of Chemistry," said Wordsworth to a young man, "and read Godwin on 'Necessity.'" But it was not alone by the youthful minds that he was worshipped. However extraordinary it may seem to us to-day, during the last decade of the eighteenth and throughout the first ten years of the nineteenth century this man was generally hailed as the foremost philosopher of England. To quote Hazlitt: "Tom Paine was considered a Tom Fool to him; Paley, an old woman; Edmund Burke, a flashy sophist. Truth, moral truth, it was supposed, had taken up its abode, and these were the oracles of thought." Doubtless this is an over-statement, but it certainly contains much truth. He could never have been called the founder of a great philosophic or economic system, for his powers were receptive and analytical, rather than creative and synthetic. He was familiar with Berkeley, Hume, and Locke of the English school, and borrowed largely from the radical French writers, Holbach, Rousseau, and Helvétius. Devoid of humor, he was often led into silly and absurd statements by accepting incorrect premises and arguing sagely along, thereby, to the most ridiculous conclusions. He did not hesitate to express the most destructive and anarchistic beliefs with the solemnity of an Eastern prophet. This trick he had of following his reasoning to extremes lends the whole system to caricature, and one can construct syllogisms from his arguments that lack the essentials of commonsense.

We can, perhaps, estimate Shelley's early reverence for him more accurately, if a portion of the poet's first Godwin letter, of January 3, 1811, be quoted. When he wrote it, he had been familiar with the economist's writings for a period of some two years, and had read them believing that their author was dead. His purpose in corresponding was to enroll himself as a disciple, and to obtain a sympathetic guide. He says in part: "The name of Godwin has been used to create in me feelings of reverence and admiration. I have been accustomed to consider him a luminary too dazzling for the darkness that surrounds him.

From the earliest period of my knowledge of his principles, I have earnestly desired to share on the footing of intimacy that intellect which I have delighted to contemplate in its emanations. Considering, then, these feelings you will not be surprised at the inconceivable emotions with which I learnt your existence and your dwelling. I had enrolled your name in the list of honorable dead. I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so. You still live, and I firmly believe are planning the welfare of human kind." The two letters that followed on January 10 and 26 are just as impassioned. To Shelley's delight the old gentleman was as friendly as possible, proving that even a "dazzling luminary," to use Shelley's words, could unbend to the heir of a baronetcy and landed estate.

The book that moved Shelley most deeply was the one by which Godwin was especially remembered; I mean the famous "Political Justice." In it the author sets forth the plan of his economic system and moral philosophy. He published it in 1793, and 1809 saw it in Shelley's hands. This was just about the time when the author's fame, unable to bear up under the adverse verdict of posterity, was beginning to decrease. It is necessary to outline the scope and plan for a clearer insight into Shelley's sources. To begin, then, one of the redeeming features, as I have stated before, is the clearness of the structure or framework. Each chapter is divided and subdivided with major and minor headings, while marginal explanatory notes follow the text. At the end of each chapter a resumé sums up its contents. We are never at a loss to catch his meaning. His statements are clear cut, and he is fearless in forcing his reasoning to its logical conclusions. But, à propos of reasoning, he often fails to convince because he holds that the power of reason over mankind is omnipotent where commonsense tells us it is not. From his point of view all that was necessary to convert a sinner was to argue with him, show him the error of his ways, and prove through reason that it would be for his advantage to reform. Result, — a perfect man!

It was one of Godwin's peculiar beliefs that personal freedom, even for the gravest offender against human law, was an inalien-

able right. No man should have the power to hold another in subjection. Hence prisons are all wrong, and like all other social institutions that curtail liberty they should be abolished. Even apart from the justice of incarceration, punishment can only awaken bitterness and a desire for revenge; contrition is never induced by coercion, says Godwin.

The short chapter against marriage sets forth one of his boldest doctrines. The article is so brief and withal so sweeping and revolutionary that it takes one's breath away without giving him time to recatch it before he launches forth with another reform of like nature. There is nothing inflammatory or vehement in the passage: everything is coolly impassioned and logical. Sir Leslie Stephen in his essay on Godwin and Shelley, cleverly and without falling greatly into caricature, summarizes one of these academic theories. He writes: "Three angles of a triangle are as much equal to two right angles in England as in France. Similarly the happiness of an Englishman is just as valuable as the happiness of a Frenchman, and the happiness of a stranger, as the happiness of my relations. Hence — so runs his logic — friendship, gratitude and conjugal felicity are simply mistakes. If my father is a worse man than a stranger, I should rather save the stranger's life than my father's, for I shall be contributing more to human happiness." But, of course, while all this destructive criticism is fair enough from the satirist's viewpoint, it scarcely does Godwin justice. For no man can attain the reputation he won without positive merit. With all these absurdities Godwin was a Republican and a Liberalist and wrote lovingly for the cause he believed in.

Such was the man, then, that Shelley worshipped, who moved him above all others. We can find traces of this influence throughout all his poetry, but it is naturally the strongest in the youthful poem, "Queen Mab," of 1813 when the doctrines of his master were vital, living truths to him. Lady Jane Shelley in her "Shelley Memoirs" states positively, when speaking of the poet, "that he told me Sir James Mackintosh was intimate with Godwin, to whom, he said, he owed everything: from whose book, 'Political Justice', he had derived all that was valuable in

knowledge and virtue." In the face of this, however, Mr. A. E. Hancock in "The French Revolution and English Poets," asserts that this influence is not nearly so strong as is commonly supposed, and bases his belief upon the differences in the tone, style, and literary temperament between the men. He refuses to be convinced that the cold, remorseless logic of Godwin could add fuel to Shelley's burning enthusiasm. I think he is wrong, though, in that he overlooks the revolutionary tendencies of "Political Justice." As we have seen, the book is intensely liberal and socialistic, and the style, however emotionless, was better suited to carry conviction than one more fiery and perhaps less logical. Mr. Hancock would give the chief credit of inspiration and source to Volney. But more of this controversy when it becomes necessary to discuss Volney's influence.

Although Sir Leslie Stephen, referring to "Queen Mab," says that "many passages read like the 'Political Justice' done into verse," if we look for specific sources it is by no means certain that we shall discover them. In the notes to the poem Shelley directly quotes three passages from "Political Justice," and two from the same author's "Political Enquirer," as his authorities for parallel ideas in the text of "Queen Mab." These, at least, we are sure of, while it is certain that most of the diatribes against kings, princes, states, institutions, marriages, wars, soldiers and what not, were derived from Godwin's writings. But we cannot place our finger on a definite verse and say: "This is Godwin's idea," or "That is taken from such-and-such a book of 'Political Justice.'" In general we should be justified in describing the third, fourth, fifth and sixth sections as no more than a loose paraphrase of the most striking parts of Godwin's economic writings. For instance, Shelley asks:

Hath Nature's soul . . . on man . . .
 . . . heaped ruin, vice, and slavery?

His answer is:

Nature! No!
 Kings, priests, and statesmen blast the human flower
 Even in its tender bud.

This is the direct burden of much of "Political Justice." Rulers and potentates, by usurping the power that should be equal for all, are menaces to mankind. They could not exist were it not for the government that they have built on the foundation of public ignorance. Each protects the other, while the people support both. Godwin analyzes every known kind of government, and condemns them all. Shelley does the same, but more vaguely; more poetically. The indebtedness, however, is plain.

The notes to "Queen Mab" help greatly in fixing sources, because there the poet is given to citing those passages from "Political Justice" and the "Enquirer" that he had in mind when composing. For example the verses:

These are the hired bravos who defend
The Tyrant's throne —

are prefixed in the notes to an extract from one of Godwin's Essays, entitled "Trades and Professions." In it we have a bitter denunciation of the soldier's trade. His definition of a warrior shows his attitude clearly, and is spiteful enough to be placed beside Dr. Johnson's famous explanation of the word "oats." "A soldier," he says, "is a man whose business it is to kill those who never offended him, and who are the innocent martyrs of other men's iniquities." Shelley, borrowing his colors from his master, tints his picture with the same hues. Akin to this detestation of the soldier was his horror of war. He writes in Section IV of "Queen Mab":

War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight,
The lawyer's jest, *the hired assassin's trade.*

Godwin, likewise, in Book II, Chapters xv-xix, cries out against the practice as destructive and unnecessary. But in considering this war question it may be going too far to claim that the poet is following the economist. A man of Shelley's feminine temperament would naturally decry war. We can only say that he seems to oppose fighting for the same reasons as Godwin does.

Of like import is the inflammatory passage beginning:

Man's evil nature, that apology
 Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch, set up
 For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood
 Which desolates the discord wasted land:
 From kings, and priests, and statesmen war arose, [etc.]

where again we feel the guiding hand of Godwin.

In another place, after indulging in a tirade against riches, our poet indignantly declares:

And statesmen boast
 Of wealth!

In his notes he annexes several paragraphs from Godwin's "Enquirer" on the same question. Both men take the ground that an excess of riches is unjust to the less fortunate — Godwin arguing intelligently enough from the point of view of the political economist of the old school; Shelley raving with the incoherence of a youthful agitator. Among other things the former says: "In consequence of our consideration for the precious metals, one man is enabled to heap to himself luxuries at the expense of the necessaries of his neighbor; a system admirably fitted to produce all the varieties of disease and crime which men never fail to characterize the two extremes of opulence and poverty." Shelley wrote:

The iron rod of Penury still compels
 The wretched slave to bend the knee to wealth.

The connotation is the same, but the thought is such a commonplace one that I should not feel justified in suggesting any source at all, had not Shelley transcribed from his master the aforementioned passage. The psychology of Godwin seems also to have impressed Shelley. After repeating several verses in the notes from his text, he refers us to "Political Justice" as one of his two authorities.

It is to Volney, a republican liberalist of the French Revolution, that Shelley was indebted for the structure of "Queen Mab." The Frenchman's *chef d'œuvre*, "*Les Ruines*," is the book on which the Englishman drew. Although to-day we have

forgotten Volney, at the close of the eighteenth century he had wide spread fame as a literary exponent of freedom. Born in 1757, while yet in his minority he made extended travels in Egypt and Palestine. History has it that Napoleon on his Egyptian Campaign, used the guide book Volney had written. Later the States-General elected him a member. In 1791 he published "*Les Ruines, ou Méditations sur les Révolutions des Empires.*" It strikes the note of vehement protest against contemporary institutions and society. It analyzes the governments of the Empires of the past, shows where they failed, and presents us with the moral. It decries war, and sets itself up as the enemy of religion. In a word it was heartily in accord with the revolutionary spirit of its day. We know from Hogg that Shelley was familiar with it before 1813, for he quotes his friend as saying: "Volney's 'Ruins' was one of Harriet's text books, which she used to read aloud for our instruction and edification." Its influence on "Queen Mab" is twofold. Besides taking over almost intact its framework, changing only where additional borrowings were made from Sir William Jones, we know from internal evidence that some of the ideas also found their way into the English poem.

Let me first outline the plan of the French work, and later compare it with that of "Queen Mab." A traveller, ruminating among the ruins of Palmyra upon the transitoriness of human glory, is roused from his meditations by a supernatural Genius who volunteers to satisfy his curiosity. To do this the better, the Genius separates the soul of the Traveller from his body, and bears the former upwards into the heavens. Below them, to celestial eyes — and the Traveller for the time being possesses such — the Orb of Earth is visible with its mountains and rivers, countries and cities. At this point the Genius begins his philosophical discussion of kings, wars, and religions. The artificial framework is held together by dialogues between the two. With Shelley, the Genius becomes Queen Mab; and the traveller, Ianthe. The Genius bears his disciple aloft on his wings; the Fairy Mab transports Ianthe in a "pearly and pellucid car." Ianthe, too, receives the boon of celestial vision. To the Traveller the earth has the appearance of "a disk variegated with

spots." Shelley's creation beholds the more poetic sight of "a vast and shadowy sphere." Queen Mab, like Volney's mouth-piece, discourses upon Emperors, governments and religion. In both works the ruins of Palmyra are first reviewed, followed by Palestine, Egypt and Arabia. With this mass of evidence no reasonable doubt (à propos of Shelley's source) can be entertained.

But the case is different as regards Shelley's borrowing of ideas. The extent of Volney's loan seems to be a mooted question. Mr. Hancock in "The French Revolution and English Poets," together with Herr Kellner, writing in *Englische Studien* for 1895-6, hold that Shelley's debt to Volney is immense; while all other commentators seem satisfied, when they deem the matter worthy of attention, to accept "Political Justice" as his principal inspiration. The latter view appears to me the saner. It is well to remember that Mr. Hancock, in that his thesis is on Shelley and the French Revolution, holds a brief for Volney, and is, in a way, bound to prove his case. Herr Kellner offers no comparison of the relative influences of Godwin and Volney, confines himself to pointing out parallelisms in the texts of "*Les Ruines*" and "Queen Mab." To repeat myself, Hancock's essay claims that Godwin's work and personality were of secondary importance when compared with the Frenchman's. He states his case dogmatically, and leaves it as proved, but for the following reasons, I incline to Godwin.

(I) *With reference to a first draft of "Queen Mab" and its date.*

Shelley makes no mention of Volney in the notes to the poem, nor does he allude to him at all, so far as I can find, in connection with it. On the contrary, he employs five separate quotations from Godwin in conjunction with his text, as if to direct one to the source of the ideas. Mr. Hancock accounts for this by asserting that Volney was used in a first draft of the poem. The data upon which he rests his case is as follows: "Medwin" in his life of Shelley, "states that 'Queen Mab' was begun towards the close of 1809, and that soon after the expulsion from Oxford it was converted from a mere imaginative poem, into a systematic attack upon the institutions of society." To follow

him farther, it seems that in 1811, a certain Finnerty, an Irishman, was imprisoned for his too liberal views. A subscription was taken up for him to which Shelley contributed a guinea. A Dublin newspaper at that time stated that the "profits of a very beautiful poem had been remitted by Shelley to maintain the patriotic Finnerty while in prison." "The poem," says Mr. Hancock, "Prof. Dowden conjectures, was the 'Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things,' a poem now lost. It was very probably the first draft of 'Queen Mab,' based on Volney, referred to by Medwin, and published in 1811. This theory is further substantiated by Shelley himself. Later in life he was before the Lord Chancellor in a suit for the possession of his child. In the count against him he was declared 'an avowed atheist who had written and published a certain work called 'Queen Mab,' with Notes, wherein he blasphemously derided the truths of Christian Revelation, and denied the existence of God as the creator of the Universe.' Shelley pleaded extreme youth as the excuse, and declared it was written at nineteen, therefore, in 1811. But the present form certainly was not written until 1813. Shelley, therefore, must have referred to the first draft, based on Volney and attacking religion."

I beg pardon for the length of this quotation, but there are several interesting points about it. In the first place nobody is certain that a lost, first draft was ever written. At any rate nobody of the present day has ever seen a copy of this, or of the "Essay on the Existing State of Things." Again the fact that Medwin claims 1809 as the date of the beginning is by no means conclusive, as he was a notoriously inexact biographer. Dowden says of this "Poetical Essay" that it might possibly have been "a satire dealing with the conditions of Finnerty's unhappy country during the rebellion of 1789, and since the act of the Union." He also writes of it, as Mr. Hancock states, "It occurs to me as a conjecture not wholly groundless, that the 'Political Essay' may have been an earlier form of those sections of 'Queen Mab' which treat of the present time, etc." At best, Prof. Dowden admittedly knows little about the matter. Further, with regard to Shelley's statement before the court, that he was only nineteen when

he wrote the poem, it may be taken *cum grano salis*. We have only to remember that Shelley's memory, like Poe's, was extremely treacherous where autobiographical dates were concerned. Here, too, it was to his distinct advantage to plead youthfulness. But, even if the fact of a first draft were established, would the assurance be a material gain for Volney? It would, I think, simply admit the possibility of a deeper debt to "*Les Ruines*" than the 1813 edition acknowledges. But, upon second thoughts, why should it? We are not even certain that Volney was known to Shelley at that time. "Political Justice," however, was acquired by him in 1809. So why should not the first draft, as well as the second, be founded on Godwin?

(II) *Godwin's style versus Volney's.*

I mentioned this point when discussing Godwin and there is really little more that I can say. Mr. Hancock writes in this connection, after quoting one of Shelley's passionate letters to Godwin: "There can be no doubt that Shelley, at an early date, was influenced by Godwin's book, and strongly so. There is something strange about this. For Shelley, as Matthew Arnold points out, was highly inflammable; his blood often rose to the boiling point from indignation. . . . Godwin by temperament was just the opposite. If anything is characteristic of 'Political Justice' it is cold blooded, calculating caution. . . . The disparity in tone between the book and the poem is so marked that it demands demonstration before concluding the first to be the source and inspiration of the second." I really do not see what safer course we can follow than to accept Shelley's own word, strengthened, if possible, by the statements of his biographers, as to whether or not the "cold blooded, calculating caution" of Godwin's work aroused his enthusiasm. His first hand testimony, which I have quoted elsewhere, surely seems to acknowledge it. This is not saying that if "Political Justice" had been written in the romantic, passionate style of "*Les Ruines*," Shelley would not have been the more influenced by it. We do not know as to that. Nor is it saying that he was not inspired by the theories and ideas of Volney. We know that he was. But the question is one of comparative influences.

(III) *The internal evidence of subject matter.*

The subject matter of "Political Justice" is not unlike that of "*Les Ruines*." Each bitterly assails kings, priests, and social institutions, subjecting them to a rhetorical bombardment, and each is dissatisfied with the present for identical causes. But Godwin is more formal and pretentious than Volney. He delves into the regions of psychology, and attempts to establish a definite economic system. The French work is more emotional and popular, resorting on occasions to dialectics. Where Godwin lays his emphasis on attaining the abolition of government, and allied institutions, Volney devotes over half his work to arguing away inspired religion. To the best of my knowledge, outside of the question of framework, only one passage offers itself from which Shelley obviously borrowed for his poem. I shall transcribe it:

"Do you see those fires which spread over the earth, and are you acquainted with their causes and effects?" "Oh, Genius," I replied, "I see columns of flame and smoke, and, as it were, insects that accompany them; but discerning with difficulty as I do, the masses of towns and monuments, how can I distinguish such petty creatures? I can see nothing more than that these insects seem to carry on a sort of mock battle, they advance, they approach, they attack, they pursue." "It is mockery," said the Genius. "It is the thing itself." "And what name," replied I, "shall we give to these foolish animalcules that destroy each other? Do they live only a day, and is this short life further abridged by violence and murder?" The Genius then once more touched my eyes and my ears. "Listen," said he to me, "and observe." Immediately, turning my eyes in the same direction, "Alas," said I, transpierced with anguish, "these columns of flame ascend from towns and villages set on fire. I see the horsemen that light them. I see them sword in hand overrun the country."—*Les Ruines*, Chap. 12. [From a translation.]

Shelley, "Queen Mab," Sec. IV, 33:

Ah! whence yon glare
That fires the arch of heaven? That dark red smoke
Blotting the silver moon? The stars are quenched
In darkness, and the fire and slaughter
Gleam faintly through the gloom that gathers round, [etc.]

In both these passages the beholders of the battle are looking down on it from the heavens.

An anonymous author of 1821, writing a pamphlet of some seventy pages entitled "A reply to the Antimatrimonial Hypothesis and Supposed Atheism of Percy Bysshe Shelley, as Laid

down in 'Queen Mab,' " makes the statement that Pope's "Messiah" seems to have inspired much of Shelley's glowing picture of the future perfect age. An examination of Pope's poem indicates that the point is well taken, though, of course, the subject matter which is avowedly in imitation of the fourth Eclogue of Virgil, was common literary property throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. But the "Messiah" would have offered Shelley the readiest source, and a comparison of the two really seems to establish Shelley's indebtedness. Whatever similarity there is, however, must be confined to the eighth and ninth sections of "Queen Mab" which the author devotes to painting the earthly paradise of that coming time when man shall have become metamorphosed into a human angel, if you will allow me the expression. The parallelism is twofold. On the one hand each poet sees a change for the better in the physical world itself; on the other, both foretell perfection in the nature of man. Imaging the coming glory, Shelley has it:

Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
Glow in the fruits, and mantles on the stream,
No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven
Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
The foliage of the ever-verdant trees;
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair.

Pope's imitative Pastoral puts it:

The swain in barren desert with surprise
Sees lilies spring, and sudden verdure rise;
And start amid the thirsty wilds, to hear
New falls of water murmuring in his ear.

We see that even the laws of Nature are to be thrust aside in this poetical millenium, and fact and reality to have no place in Nature's blissful regeneration. But after all each is entitled to his visions, and sometimes castles in Spain are built by wise men. It must be borne in mind, of course, that when Pope is merely following his models, Shelley is in sober earnest.

There are one or two passages where the parallelism passes from the general to the specific, and we are tempted to assert that Shelley had Pope directly in mind.

From the "Messiah:"

The lambs and wolves shall graze the verdant mead,
And boys in flowery bands the tiger lead;
The steer and lion at one crib shall meet,
And harmless serpents lick the pilgrim's feet.

From "Queen Mab:"

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

Of still closer resemblance, perhaps:
The "Messiah:"

The smiling infant in his hand shall take
The crested basilisk and speckled snake,
Pleased the green lustre of the scales survey,
And with their forked tongues shall innocently play.

"Queen Mab:"

. . . . Smiles
To see a babe before his mother's door
Sharing his morning's meal
With the green and golden basilisk
That comes to lick his feet.

Mr. E. Koepfel in a German article published in *Englische Studien* for 1900, calls attention to the fact that Shelley among his other numerous borrowings in "Queen Mab," made an unquestionable use of Sir William Jones's Oriental tale, the "Palace of Fortune." The debt is not a heavy one. Sir William (1746-94) was one of those numerous authors whose fame, rising to the heights during his life, failed to outlive the following generation. He left us no popular literary monument, and his reputation rests on his Oriental scholarship (he was the first Englishman to master Sanskrit) and on a small volume of poems, issued 1772. These were partly adapted and partly translated from the Asiatic languages. Among them is the "Palace of Fortune." The story, for it is a narrative tale, very briefly is as follows: Maia, a maiden of dazzling beauty, upon discovering

her perfection, grows discontented with her hum-drum life. The Queen of the heavens appears, and the girl is borne to the Goddess' palace in the skies. There the folly of discontent is taught her through a series of visions. From here to the end we are interested in Maia's adventures as a girl, and are happy to learn eventually that she repents her discontent.

One sees immediately that the purpose and subject matter of Shelley's poem, and those of the Eastern narrative have little in common. The only resemblance lies on the side of the plan or framework. In each we find a lovely slumbering maiden driven in a heavenly car to the regions of a powerful goddess of the heavens who is her guide. But as with Pope's "Messiah" it would be an error to claim that Shelley borrowed an idea that was original in the source he adopted. We know from Sir William's own words that he drew from the East. For he writes: "The hint of the 'Palace of Fortune' was taken from an Indian tale, translated a few years ago from the Persian by a very ingenious gentleman in the service of the India-Company; but I have added several descriptions, and episodes from Eastern writers . . . etc." This proves that the ground work of the story was of ancient origin. Mr. Koepfel points out further that Chaucer's "Hous of Fame," later adapted by Pope in his "Temple of Fame," has a description of a maiden viewing Mother Earth from a heavenly vantage ground. Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel" also has a similarly suggestive stanza. Were it not for internal evidence, we might hesitate before becoming dogmatic. In short, Shelley went to the "Palace of Fortune" for his Fairy Mab, instead of drawing on Volney, from whom, as we have seen, he took the general outline of his plan. Influenced by Jones again he substitutes a girl for the stern Traveller of "*Les Ruines*." By doing so he gives a lighter, lyric touch to his framework.

The Ahasuerus fragment found in the beginning of Section VII is a loose translation or adaptation from Christian Schubart's one hundred and twenty line poem "*Der Ewige Jude*." Shelley, in one of the "Queen Mab" notes, translates all but the last eight lines, which did not suit his purpose, and remarks: "This fragment is the translation of part of some German work, whose

title I have vainly endeavored to discover. I picked it up, dirty and torn, some years ago in Lincoln's Inn Fields." The mystery of the ultimate authorship was solved by "Joannes" in a letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette* for December, 1866. Shelley's translation, as has since been shown by C. R. S. in the second series, Volume V of *Notes and Queries*, was probably taken from a German Magazine called the *Museum*, among whose pages for the year 1802 appears a portion of Schubart's rhapsody. In all likelihood a battered copy of this magazine is the "fragment" to which Shelley refers. In his translation from the German, the poet did not hesitate in two separate places to interpolate freely. When it came to making use of this rendition in the text of "Queen Mab," he merely interwove a portion of the story, placing it, very logically, in his diatribe against inspired religion. I say very logically, because he could scarcely have found a better mouthpiece for his bitter religious denunciation than this same Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, whom God had doomed to everlasting torment. But only in a passage of a dozen lines does he deal directly with the legend, and tell of the wanderer's eternal punishment, although, as a character of the poem whose purpose is to defame the creator, he is present throughout the entire seventh section. When referring to the legend it is merely in such general terms as anyone, slightly familiar with it, might employ.

Shelley's religious views were more radical, if possible, than his economic and social opinions. Having rejected the divinity of Christ, and the revealed religion of the Bible, he became a confirmed atheist. Nor are we to lay his skepticism to an ignorance of the subject. Lady Jane Shelley in her life of the poet states that he had read the Bible four times before he was twenty. Although this may be assigning too much to her kinsman's industry, it is proof enough that he was familiar with the book's teachings. His disbelief in church and state was certainly inherent in him. He was constitutionally incapable of thinking along established lines. As an omnivorous and receptive reader, he was able very early to crystallize his theories by devouring the works of kindred, congenial philosophers. Like his economical system, his irreligious principles were partly the result of

such a process. For a young man — Shelley was nineteen when "Queen Mab" was written — his religious readings were thorough and diverse. We know from his letters and notes to the poem that he had absorbed the ideas of Holbach, Volney, Godwin, Lucretius, Pliny, Bacon and Rousseau. His type of mind would naturally gravitate to the most sweepingly destructive of them all. He did not even think by halves, and when we find him continually citing Holbach's *Système de la Nature*, we may rest assured that the book stands for the culmination of the most scathing attacks on the contemporary condition of religion. At any rate such is the case. In it, under the assumed name of Miraband, the author summed up the bold doubts that had been troubling France for half a century. He did it so openly and unreservedly, forcing the pre-revolutionary tendency to skepticism to its uttermost issue, that he terrified those who had joined in the controversy. The book caused the furor that might have been expected. Louis XVI and his advisers were exasperated because the unknown author argued against the divine right of kings as well as religion. And naturally the Church was bitterly resentful. Diderot, who was suspected of the authorship, found it expedient to leave Paris until his innocence was proved. Such was the character of the book that Shelley found so helpful. Our knowledge of him aids us in determining how helpful. Possibly the best way of deciding this relationship, while at the same time outlining the scope of Holbach's volume, would be to set down the former's imitative verses, together with his own quotations from "The System of Nature."

The first of these is from Section VI of "Queen Mab." It reads:

No atom of this turbulence fulfills
A vague and unnecessitated task,
Or acts but as it must or ought to act.
.
.
.
Necessity, thou mother of the world!

These lines strike the keynote of much of the message of "Queen Mab." Shelley, following his teachers, was a confirmed Necessarian. He held the belief that Nature is immutable; that her laws cannot be changed. No atom ever escapes her absolute

control. Every molecule has its reason for the slightest variation in condition. All is cause and effect, and nothing could be otherwise than it is. Nature is supreme for she rules the Universe. This philosophy, of course, is not new. Materialism can be traced from the ancient Greeks, through the Romans, Pliny and Lucretius, and down to our present day. But its doctrines were never expressed more uncompromisingly than by Holbach. He infused this dogmatism into his disciple. The last quotation on "Necessity etc.," taken directly from Holbach, is enlarged at great length by the poet. It introduces a new element, Fatalism. This is practically a synonym for necessity, but involves the consideration of Nature's unvarying law in its relation to man. Shelley is here drawing directly from the Frenchman, merely paraphrasing his thought. He will have it that every human action is preordained. Life itself has been mapped out by Nature, and, as we know, no such word as "deviation" occurs in her dictionary. This hopeless doctrine, if followed up closely, will destroy all belief in a Supreme Being. For where Nature is all powerful, unless God can be connected with her, a Deity is out of place. Neither Shelley nor Holbach makes any attempt to save this conception of a creative being, and a few verses further on we find our young atheist bleating forth: "There is no God." Many Shelley sympathizers have tried to explain away these four words, but it seems to me that they denote one thing. No meaning could be plainer or more final. Shelley in his note declares that the statement has to do only with a "Creative Deity," or, in other words, with the pulpit conception of God. We cannot deny some form of worship to him. He admits that "the hypothesis of a pervading spirit co-eternal with the universe, remains unshaken." He worshipped, it seems, a vague spirit of Nature, more difficult of definition, even than most religious terms because he does not seem quite certain of it himself. Be that as it may, Holbach holds the same views, and it is through his arguments that Shelley attempts to convince his readers. The "System of Nature" also denies a future life of any kind, and scoffs at the idea of a hell. Shelley does not, in "Queen Mab," at least, touch upon either of the questions. Nor does he, apparently, draw very largely upon

Holbach's denunciation of kings and kingdoms found in the same book, to furnish him arguments for "Queen Mab."

In the same note he drags in Lord Bacon and Pliny to strengthen his position further. His reading along the lines that interested him led him to them. Since he borrows from them to substantiate his atheistic assertions, their works must be numbered among his sources. He quotes from a passage in the "Moral Essays" where "Lord Bacon says that atheism leaves to a man reason, philosophy, natural piety, laws, reputation, and everything that can serve to conduct him to virtue" From Pliny's "Natural History" too, he transcribes a paragraph; one in which the old Roman professes his atheism. Not unlike Shelley, he charged the government of the world to Nature, not to God. But both Pliny and Lord Bacon are among the minor factors in influencing "Queen Mab."

Among the more important of the minor religious influences, that of Lucretius should be noted. Shelley makes two distinct references to him in the notes, proving that he at least had him in mind about the time "Queen Mab" was written. But at this point I should like to say with regard to these minor citations that Shelley may have searched through his favorite authors for parallel passages after his own poem had been finished. The notes were all added after the completion of the poem, of course. We have really no right to assume that these appended passages are the sources of his text. All that we can be reasonably certain about is that Shelley knew the principles and theories of those he quoted, and later used them to bear out his own theories. This view, however, does not detract from the value of the quotations as determinants of sources. It is but reasonable to suppose that those authors were used who appealed most strongly to him, and who, if they did not originally lead his mind into the turbulent thought-channels ventured upon in "Queen Mab," at least guided his reason through them. It would be folly to declare that he copied from his less favorite writers. The alternative directs us to those who influenced him strongly and this is all that a source hunter desires.

But to return to Lucretius. The first reference in the notes

is this, placed under Shelley's verse: "The mob of peasants, nobles, and kings." It runs:

'Tis sweet from land, when seas are raging wild,
To see another struggling on the deep:
Not that 'tis sweet his torment to behold,
But sweet to look on ills, ourselves secure;
'Tis sweet to see opposing fronts in war
Arrayed in fields, their dangers all unshared;
But sweeter far to mount to learning's heights, [etc.]

(I use the translation of C. F. Johnson. The passage is taken from the opening lines of Book II.)

Just why Shelley stuck this quotation in at this point I am at a loss to understand. There is not the slightest connection between the two, certainly. The context of the first has to do with the lust of nobles, kings, etc. for gold; the second, with the pleasures of security and mental superiority. Nor is any of this book of Lucretius, dealing, as it does, with the properties of atoms for the most part, applicable to Shelley's line.

The second citation from the Latin poet is shorter. It is added to Shelley's:

Or religion
Drives his wife raving mad.

(It is from Book II line about 80. My own translation.)

Often men have sold their country and beloved parents to escape the Acherusian courts [meaning death].

Here by stretching the imagination we can discover a slight parallelism in thought. But doubtless Shelley had in mind the thought of the Third Book as a whole, rather than any one passage. In it Lucretius voices his materialism by attempting to prove that the soul dies with the body. His seeds of skepticism fell on fertile soil when planted in Shelley's mind. But with Lucretius, if anywhere, I should hesitate before claiming a more than general influence on "Queen Mab." For the latter does not touch upon the after life at all, but tries to argue away revealed religion and a traditional God.

Besides Holbach and Lucretius, Godwin and Volney probably influenced the religious attitude of "Queen Mab," although

Shelley makes no mention of them in this connection. Chapters ii, iii, iv, Bk. VI, of "Political Justice" define Godwin's views on religion. He declared that religious establishments tended to make a man think according to rule, and that this was slavish. Reason should decide a man's belief. But with his well known caution on questions that might brew trouble for him, he does not force the issue. Volney in the latter half of "*Les Ruines*," ventures to court-martial all the well known forms of religious worship. After trying each creed he finds it useless and recommends the use of reason. Since Shelley was so familiar with these two books before writing his poem, it is fair to assume that they served to cement his radical views together. But here again the influence is general.

While we can hardly say that the Bible influenced Shelley at all in "Queen Mab," we do know that he drew upon it for two passages. The more important of these is the brief paraphrase of a few verses from Ecclesiastes, Chapter I.

Shelley has:

Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave and issue from the womb,
Surviving still the imperishable change
That renovates the world.

As he points out in the notes the original is:

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose, [etc.]

The other is merely a line from Canto 7, running:

Many are called, but few I will select.

There is but one other reference to a Biblical passage. I mean the verses on the story of the Savior. Beyond these parallels, if we exclude a single mention of "Eden" and the occurrence of the name of the Biblical Moses, we must seek elsewhere for sources.

Shelley's attitude in "Queen Mab" towards matrimony is on a par with his religious ideas. In a word this young gentleman would in theory have none of marriage. The perfect union, if

we are to credit his assertions, can last only so long as mutual love endures. When one party becomes weary of the arrangement no law should compel him or her, as it happens, to endure the caresses of the other. Everything in this world of ours will go wrong until perfect freedom of mind and body are attained. The marriage law is an affront to personal liberty, and the state has no right to bind a man and woman together when happiness is no longer possible. These startling propositions were adduced in his notes as a comment upon the passage from the text of the poem:

Even love is sold. The solace of all woe
Is turned to deadliest agony: old age
Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms, [etc.]

It is probable that Shelley always entertained these views, even from boyhood. But they assumed definite form from familiarity with the writings of two men: Godwin on the one hand, and a James Henry Lawrence on the other. Perhaps, in this case, the former's influence was the less important. At any rate we are uncertain how great it is, for Shelley nowhere acknowledges the extent of his debt. Shelley's ideas on the subject are the same as Godwin's, and his thorough acquaintance with "Political Justice" in which the matter is discussed, is beyond question. We may thus claim it as a probable source of the love passage in "Queen Mab" with a clear conscience. The tone of the philosophic article is, as usual, frigid and logical. It may be found in the appendix to the second volume. Its arguments are closely akin to Shelley's.

We are more certain in regard to Shelley's relation to Lawrence, for we have a definite written statement of his obligation. It was through the former's audacious "Empire of the Nairs," a novel, and his poem, "Love, an Allegory" that the young poet knew him. This romance was published in England in 1811, just before "Queen Mab" was written. The former professes to be a record of the matrimonial relations of the Nairs, a people of India. I have been unable to examine a copy, but know that the argument was directly opposed to marriage. A system of free love through elective affinities was substituted. The poem "Love" was on the same plan. It was published once in

England, and then proscribed. We can see how deeply Lawrence impressed Shelley by the epistle the latter wrote him on August 17, 1812.:

Sir: I feel peculiar satisfaction in seizing the opportunity, which your politeness places in my power, of expressing to you personally (as I may say), a high acknowledgement of my sense of your talents and principles, which, before I conceived it possible that I should ever know you, I sincerely entertained. Your "Empire of the Nairs," which I read this spring, succeeded in making me a perfect convert to its doctrines. I then retained no doubts of the evils of marriage — Mrs. Wollstonecraft reasons too well for that; but I had been dull enough not to perceive the greatest argument against it until developed in the "Nairs,"—viz., prostitution both legal and illegal. I am a young man not yet of age, and have now been married a year to a woman younger than myself. Love seems inclined to stay in prison. . . .

Provided Shelley was sincere, which we have no reason to doubt, the letter speaks for itself.

It really seems as if Shelley had introduced into "Queen Mab" every revolutionary theory and irrational idea that possessed him at the time of writing. He even insisted that vegetarianism would be a necessary condition of the earthly paradise that is to follow present misery. At the time he was himself an enthusiastic vegetarian. He had not been long a convert, nor was he to remain one. At this period he was an ardent disciple because personally influenced by Mr. Newton, author of "Defence of a Vegetarian Regimen," and by Dr. Lambe, another well known exponent of the cult, and author of numerous treatises on the value of pure water. I am sorry to say that I have been unable to secure their works, but Shelley has explained the principles in his "Vindication of a Natural Diet," printed first in the notes of the poem, and later as a separate pamphlet. But the tenets of the vegetarian creed are really too well known to require exposition here. As for Shelley he could never have been considered a crank on the subject, so far as personally refraining from meat goes. The passage in "Queen Mab" shows how serious he considered the matter for society. He, himself, was always exceedingly simple and temperate in his diet, and if at times he indulged in flesh, it was because he preferred to eat what was put before him rather than inconvenience anybody.

Finally, a few words as to the stylistic and textual influences.

"Queen Mab," says Mr. H. S. Salt, "shows traces not only of Southey, but of Pope, Gray, Collins, Akenside, and Thomson." Lady Jane Shelley, too, admits that "Queen Mab" sometimes betrays adherence to that conventional style of poetry that was passing away." She refers, undoubtedly, to the school of Pope. But I do not find this eighteenth century element remarkably strong. The poem contains some twenty-eight hundred lines, and after a fairly careful search, I find that virtually only the following lines have the true conventional swing:

Celestial coursers paw the unyielding air,
And stop obedient to the reins of light.

And leaning graceful from the ethereal car
The lovely silence of the unfathomed main
Strengthens in health and poisons in disease.
Flows in the fruit and mantles on the streams
Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night.
Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame
All kindly passions, and all pure desires
That mocked his fury, and prepared his fall.
That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth
First crime, triumphant, o'er all hope careered.

With many of these lines an ear trained in eighteenth century poetry would await the completion of an heroic couplet. In the first examples the slurring of the "e" before an initial vowel links those lines with traditional classic verses. In the later lines the balanced construction serves the same purpose. With the consecutive verses:

These tools the tyrant tempers to his work
Wields in his wrath, and as he wills destroys—

we find labored alliteration highly developed, an artificial device that began to die out with the development of the romantic movement. On the whole the blank verse of "Queen Mab" is hardly distinctive of any school. It has many of the ear marks of clas-

sic phrasing, and leans at times towards the Thomsonian style of blank verse, which itself looks backwards towards the school of Pope. Shelley's subject-matter compels him to be declamatory. The numerous invectives and arraignments of kings and rulers force from him many exclamations. The result is a hectic, florid style definitely related to nothing, and whose youthful iterations become very monotonous.

Once in every few pages a slightly Miltonic touch is felt, more from the stern nature of the subject, I fancy, than from Shelley's devotion to "Paradise Lost."

The following is to me faintly suggestive of Milton:

Whilst suns their mingling beamings darted
Through clouds of circumambient atmosphere,
And pearly battlements looked
On the immense of Heaven.

Perhaps there is, too, a parallelism between Shelley's stanza on peace and sleep and Shakespeare's on the same, in Scene 1, Act III, second Part of "Henry IV."

There are three or four minor verbal borrowings that I have found. For instance, Shelley twice in his works uses the seventeenth century word "withal." One of these instances occurs in "Queen Mab" in the verse:

Such as the nurses frighten babes withal.

The word does not belong to the eighteenth century, Pope not using it at all. Shakespeare employs it twenty times, seventeen at the end of the clause, as here. Milton uses it four times, but always in the middle of the sentence. Shelley's other instance finds "withal" likewise at the end of the clause.

The word "horrent" I have no doubt he took from Milton. Shakespeare, Pope and Tennyson do not use it at all. In "Queen Mab" Shelley has "horrent shrieks" meaning "terrifying or penetrating shrieks." But in "Hellas" he uses "horrent arms," an unusual expression taken directly from "Paradise Lost."

From Gray's "Elegy," he borrowed one phrase, "stubborn glebe."

"Queen Mab" has:

To them compels the *stubborn glebe* to yield.

Gray wrote:

Their furrow oft the *stubborn glebe* has broke.

From Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" he likewise took the phrase, "mazy motion."

Besides these a few phrases suggest Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," but in spirit rather than in exact phrasing.

Once peace and freedom blest
The cultivated plain.

and Fearless and free the ruddy children played.

That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth.

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