

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.  
 Oh ! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !  
 I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed !

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed  
 One too like thee : tameless, and swift, and proud.

v.

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is :  
 What if my leaves are falling like its own !  
 The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,  
 Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,  
 My spirit ! Be thou me, impetuous one !

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
 Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth ;  
 And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth  
 Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind !  
 Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy ! O wind,  
 If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ?

## NOTE ON POEMS OF 1819.

BY THE EDITOR.

THOUGH Shelley's first eager desire to excite his countrymen to resist openly the oppressions existent during "the good old times" had faded with early youth, still his warmest sympathies were for the people. He was a republican, and loved a democracy. He looked on all human beings as inheriting an equal right to possess the dearest privileges of our nature, the necessaries of life, when fairly earned by labour, and intellectual instruction. His hatred of any despotism, that looked upon the people as not to be consulted or protected from want and ignorance, was intense. He was residing near Leghorn, at Villa Valsovano, writing the Cenci, when the news of the Manchester Massacre reached us ; it roused in him violent emotions of indignation and compassion. The great truth that the many, if accordant and resolute, could control the few, as was shown some years after, made him long to teach his injured countrymen how to resist. Inspired by these feelings he wrote the Masque of Anarchy, which he sent to his friend, Leigh Hunt, to be inserted in the Examiner, of which he was then the Editor.

"I did not insert it," Leigh Hunt writes in his valuable and interesting preface to this poem, when he printed it in 1832, "because I thought that the public at large had not become sufficiently discerning to do justice to the sincerity and kind-heartedness of his spirit, that walked in this flaming robe of verse." Days of outrage have passed away, and with them the exasperation that would cause such an appeal to the many to be injurious. Without knowing, they at one time acted on his suggestions, and gained the day; but they rose when human life was respected by the minister in power: such was not the case during the administration which excited Shelley's abhorrence.

The poem was written for the people, and is therefore in a more popular tone than usual; portions strike as abrupt and unpolished, but many stanzas are all his own. I heard him repeat, and admired those beginning,—

My Father Time is old and grey,

before I knew to what poem they were to belong. But the most touching passage is that which describes the blessed effects of liberty; they might make a patriot of any man, whose heart was not wholly closed against his humbler fellow-creatures.

Shelley loved the people, and respected them as often more virtuous, as always more suffering, and, therefore,

more deserving of sympathy, than the great. He believed that a clash between the two classes of society was inevitable, and he eagerly ranged himself on the people's side. He had an idea of publishing a series of poems adapted expressly to commemorate for their circumstances and wrongs—he wrote a few, but in those days of prosecution for libel they could not be printed. They are not among the best of his productions, a writer being always shackled when he endeavours to write down to the comprehension of those who could not understand or feel a highly imaginative style; but they show his earnestness, and with what heartfelt compassion he went home to the direct point of wrong—that oppression is detestable, as being the parent of starvation, nakedness and ignorance. Besides these outpourings of compassion and indignation, he had meant to adorn the cause he loved with loftier poetry of glory and triumph—such is the scope of the Ode to the Assertors of Liberty.

Shelley had suffered severely from the death of our son during this summer. His heart, attuned to every kindly affection, was full of burning love for his offspring. No words can express the anguish he felt when his elder children were torn from him.

In his first resentment against the Chancellor, on the passing of the decree, he had written a curse, in which there

breathes, besides haughty indignation, all the tenderness of a father's love, which could imagine and fondly dwell upon its loss and the consequences. He exclaims :—

I curse thee by a parent's outraged love,  
By hopes long cherished and too lately lost,  
By gentle feelings thou couldst never prove,  
By grief which thy stern nature never crost ;

By those infantine smiles of happy light,  
Which were a fire within a stranger's hearth,  
Quenched even when kindled, in untimely night,  
Hiding the promises of lovely birth ;

By those unpractised accents of young speech,  
Which he who is a father thought to frame  
To gentlest lore, such as the wisest teach ;  
*Thou strike the lyre of mind ! O grief and shame !*

By all the happy see in children's growth,  
That undeveloped flower of budding years,  
Sweetness and sadness interwoven both,  
Source of the sweetest hopes and saddest fears.

By all the days under a hireling's care  
Of dull constraint and bitter heaviness.—  
O wretched ye, if ever any were,  
Sadder than orphans, yet not fatherless.

\* \* \* \*

By all the hate which checks a father's love,  
By all the scorn which kills a father's care,  
By those most impious hands that dared remove  
Nature's high bounds—by thee—and by despair.

\* \* \* \*

I curse thee, though I hate thee not ; O slave !  
If thou couldst quench the earth-consuming hell  
Of which thou art a dæmon, on thy grave  
This curse should be a blessing. Fare thee well.

At one time, while the question was still pending, the Chancellor had said some words that seemed to intimate that Shelley should not be permitted the care of any of his children, and for a moment he feared that our infant son would be torn from us. He did not hesitate to resolve, if such were menaced, to abandon country, fortune, everything, and to escape with his child ; and I find some unfinished stanzas addressed to this son, whom afterwards we lost at Rome, written under the idea that we might suddenly be forced to cross the sea, so to preserve him. This poem, as well as the one previously quoted, were not written to exhibit the pangs of distress to the public ; they were the spontaneous outbursts of a man who brooded over his wrongs and woes, and was impelled to shed the grace of his genius over the uncontrollable emotions of his heart :—

The billows are leaping around it,  
The bark is weak and frail,  
The sea looks black, and the clouds that bound it  
Darkly strew the gale.  
Come with me, thou delightful child,  
Come with me, though the wave is wild,  
And the winds are loose, we must not stay,  
Or the slaves of the law may rend thee away.

Rest, rest, shriek not, thou gentle child!  
 The rocking of the boat thou fearest,  
 And the cold spray and the clamour wild?  
 There sit between us two, thou dearest;  
 Me and thy mother—we'll we know  
 The storm at which thou tremblest so,  
 With all its dark and hungry graves,  
 Less cruel than the savage slaves  
 Who hunt us o'er these sheltering waves.

This hour will sometime in thy memory  
 Be a dream of days forgotten;  
 We soon shall dwell by the azure sea  
 Of serene and golden Italy,  
 Or Greece, the Mother of the free.  
 And I will teach thine infant tongue  
 To call upon those heroes old  
 In their own language, and will mould  
 Thy growing spirit in the flame  
 Of Grecian lore; that by such name  
 A patriot's birthright thou mayst claim,

When afterwards this child died at Rome, he wrote, apropos of the English burying-ground in that city, "This spot is the repository of a sacred loss, of which the yearnings of a parent's heart are now prophetic; he is rendered immortal by love, as his memory is by death. My beloved child is buried here. I envy death the body far less than the oppressors the minds of those whom they have torn from me. The one can only kill the body, the other crushes the affections."

## POEMS

WRITTEN IN 1820.