

Medical Jurisprudence.

THE BORDER-LAND OF INSANITY.

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(Concluded.)

The poet, Shelly, some compassionate hand has described as "a wild and wayward figure, like the Faun' of the imagination, or those strange and beautiful beings dwelling between earth and heaven, on the heights of Gothic fancy." He was a spirit of the intermediary world—a wandering genii—nothing more. Before twenty years of his young life had gone by, he had cut himself off from his family and ruined his career. He was a spirit of the race of Ariel. At Eaton, aged fifteen, his one idea is resistance to God, to man, to laws, to authority, to whatever opposed him. This, indeed, is the central idea of his great poem, *Prometheus*. He leaves his classes to study electricity under a Dr. Lind, when he and his preceptor indulge in bouts of blasphemy, striving each to curse the heavier, the one his father, the other the King; often at midnight he sallies forth in hope to call up the evil spirit.

At Oxford, see him a slim lad with unnaturally brilliant eyes, stooping shoulders, and strange voice, like a peacock's cry; he lives amid his crucibles, feeds upon bread almost entirely, which he tears from the loaf as he walks, lingers for hours to throw stones in ponds, or sailing paper boats. That was his passion all his life, and he has been known to use a fifty pound note, when no other paper was near. Engaged in zealous debate, he would suddenly stop, fall like a cat on the rug, and sleep for hours with his little round head exposed to the fiercest heat. He imagines, and tells everybody, when he was expelled, that it was for publishing a book of infidelity, a pure delusion, for he had only read it. The sentence really was for his scurrilous letters to eminent men who were strangers to him. His sisters sent him money by Harriet Westbrook, their school-fellow. She hates the tyranny of school, and he marries her in his sympathy—one sixteen, the other not nineteen—to go roaming through England, Scotland and Wales. Finally they drift to Ireland—and for what? To issue pam-

phlets and speak for Catholic Emancipation. Returning to Wales, he imagines that some one has fired at him, and put a hole through his gown. He utters a breathless cry to his friends for breathing time and twenty pounds. They pay it and smile, but he declares all the after fluctuations of his health were due to that shock. In this year, 1813, *Queen Mab* was written. This, the most celebrated of his works, is to investigate what he called the horrors of Religion, the falsehood of Revelation and the cruel fiction of Christianity.

Next year he falls in love with Mary Godwin, and reveals it in a strange scene within St. Pancras' churchyard, by the grave of her own mother. He told her if supported by her love, he would enrol his name among the wise and good. He abandons his wife at the cottage in Brockwell, his child, the baby Ianthe, and his unborn babe, to fly to the continent with Mary, never to see wife and children again. Yet he speaks in quiet friendliness of this abandoned wife, this desolate mother not yet twenty, and proposes to a lawyer that Harriet be invited to join his new household in the capacity of humble friend to himself and Mary, and can hardly be brought to see the impossibility of such a proposal. Despite her sweet amiability, the betrayed wife bore her sorrows two years and then drowned herself.

Now he marries Mary, and going to Switzerland, where they meet Byron, a dark episode in their lives ensues, upon which the pen refuses to touch—let it be buried in night! He rages against English law, because, now that he is rich, the custody of the children is denied to him who murdered their mother—children whose home he has passed many a time, and never once turned to look upon—the unnatural father. Driven by a delusion that the child of Mary will be taken from them by the law, he hastens to Italy. There that hateful poem is given to the world, *Beatrice Cenci*. Strange anomaly, that the brain which conceived that hideous dream, should have produced the *Sky-lark*! He wanders from Pisa to Rome, from Venice to Naples, making romances to himself of lovelorn ladies following him afar off. His thirtieth year was not completed when his frail pleasure yacht went down in the Bay of Spezzia,