

ley might still be set before the reader with the accuracy of a finished picture. That labour of exquisite art and of devoted love still remains to be accomplished, though in the meantime Mr. W. M. Rossetti's Memoir is a most valuable instalment. Shelley in his lifetime bound those who knew him with a chain of loyal affection, impressing observers so essentially different as Hogg, Byron, Peacock, Leigh Hunt, Trelawny, Medwin, Williams, with the conviction that he was the gentlest, purest, bravest, and most spiritual being they had ever met. The same conviction is forced upon his biographer. During his four last years this most loveable of men was becoming gradually riper, wiser, truer to his highest instincts. The imperfections of his youth were being rapidly absorbed. His self-knowledge was expanding, his character mellowing, and his genius growing daily stronger. Without losing the fire that burned in him, he had been lessoned by experience into tempering its fervour; and when he reached the age of twenty-nine, he stood upon the height of his most glorious achievement, ready to unfold his wings for a yet sublimer flight. At that moment, when life at last seemed about to offer him rest, unimpeded activity, and happiness, death robbed the world of his maturity. Posterity has but the product of his cruder years, the assurance that he had already outlived them into something nobler, and the tragedy of his untimely end.

If a final word were needed to utter the unutterable sense of waste excited in us by Shelley's premature absorption into the mystery of the unknown, we might find it in the last lines of his own *Alastor* :—

Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world, are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their light to shade.