

At that time his grandson who was given his name coupled with another which was long preserved in the family, was just about to enter Eton.

The poet was born into a world seething with revolution. The French nation was in a ferment, and the volcano which was belching blood and flames in Paris was viewed with awe and horror by the more conservative in all the countries of civilization. New born Democracy was locked with senile Aristocracy in the death-struggle. The pent up passions of the masses were in revolt against the abused authority of the classes. The established order of things, spiritual and temporal, was threatened with the fiery anger of the many who hitherto were the slaves of the few. So it was in France. In England, separated from the tumult by miles of ocean, and preserved from the French contagion by difference of language and the salutary teachings of such patriots as Edmund Burke, things were tranquil, but unrest possessed the public mind. Thus, the poet who was to sing the underlying thoughts of revolution and rebellion was, as one of his biographers correctly and eloquently remarks, born at a moment when all the stars of tumult and revolt fought in their courses against the established arrangements of civilization.

From his earliest childhood Percy Bysshe Shelley was a dreamer of dreams and a beholder of visions. He was an imaginative and mentally restless child. Forms and features revealed themselves to his poetic eye where others saw only the stones and their surrounding dust. The winds spoke a message to his ears, the running waters filled his soul with music, and the spangled cope of the broad heavens furnished his mind with a subject for endless meditation. The imaginative faculties developed so early that when other children of his age contented themselves with the usual amusements of infancy, Percy Bysshe displayed an unconscious desire to create in the invention of weird tales of legendary creatures. This surprising early play of the imagination should not be forgotten by those who desire to comprehend the inner promptings of the author of *Queen Mab*. Quiet, mild, contemplative and unfitted for all sorts of rough amusements, the poet certainly had himself, as a very young child,

in view, when he wrote in *Rosalind and Helen* :—

“He was a gentle boy,
And in all gentle sports took joy.”

Yes, but this gentle child possessed a spirit which was to blaze like a meteor when, to use his own words, “It might walk forth to war among mankind.” Next to the imagination, the memory was the most remarkable characteristic of the child. His memory was highly remarkable, and he found no difficulty in committing to it any printed thing read to him, if it only “knocked at the door of his fancy,” to use a pretty expression of Emerson.

The grandfather of the poet was a gentleman of comely face and figure, in which good looks the father of the poet plentifully shared, while his mother, as already stated, was a lady of universally acknowledged beauty. Small wonder, then, that Percy Bysshe, the eldest son of such parents, was positively beautiful. His hair was of dull gold, silken in texture, and it bunched and tumbled in long natural curls about a face more long than oval, the leading features of which were a sensitive mouth, and large prominent, dreamy blue eyes. Although the remaining features were somewhat irregular, their exceptionally fair and ruddy complexion, and the pleasing expression which animated them, coupled with a stately poise of the head, formed a rare assemblage of mutually modifying lineaments which it would be only sober truth to designate as aerially charming. In fact, a famous painter declared it was simply impossible to paint the poet's portrait as he was “too beautiful.” As to the rest, his frame was light, his chest narrow, his limbs small, and he gave indication of growing up a tall man—a promise which he fulfilled.

The educational training of Percy Bysshe Shelley began when he was six years old. His first preceptor was the Rev. Mr. Edwards, of Warnham, under whose kindly guidance he remained until his tenth year. The four last years of this period, however, were spent in gaining bodily vigour; but it would be a mistake to conclude from this incident that the poet was either an aerial or an unhealthy being from his infancy onward. On the contrary, he was naturally of a vigorous constitution, although the light of his refined spirit lighting up his countenance