

ly of a full knowledge of the man himself. One must say, such a tree produces such a fruit. The literary study of an author, consequently, leads naturally to a consideration of his morals. I must content myself with this short paraphrase of the paper by Sainte-Beuve.

Now, it sounds trite and rudimentary to say that a knowledge of its author should form an important part of the preparation necessary to pass judgment upon a book. Every critic worthy of the name has endeavoured to acquire such a knowledge, more or less. On the other hand some of our best critics have judged some books entirely apart from their authors. With such an array of precedents on both sides the adoption or rejection of Sainte-Beuve's plan, becomes a mere matter of choice. Then again, his theory, as I have already intimated, has its limitations. A modern critic, for example, applying the method of Sainte-Beuve to a Shakespeare or a Chaucer would, of course, find himself sadly inconvenienced by a great and irreparable want of knowledge. The obstacles become insurmountable if a man of our times was to apply the method to a Dante or a Homer, to say nothing of the other great masters of all the historical climes who can never be more than the mere shadows of immortal names to those who stand in the Valley of Life amid the gathering shades of the advanced evening of the nineteenth century. It must be allowed, however, that the great classics have already been judged. To apply criticism to them at this late hour would be impertinent. We must admire the great masters of prose and verse and not show our utter want of wisdom by criticising them. Therefore, the theory, so far as those great ancient authors are concerned, would not be utilized even if it could. Sainte-Beuve frankly admits that to get hold of a man book in hand is nearly always impossible in the case of the great writers of antiquity, and the utmost our scrutiny can command is a half-broken statue of what was once an admirable and commanding personality.

Nevertheless, when the method is applied to living authors, or the dead authors whose biographies are trustworthy and copious, it will, I believe, be productive of the most useful results. More than that, I believe it is the best of all

schemes for estimating the true value of the modern author as a moral force. Therefore I do not hesitate to make use of the system advocated by the author of the *Causeries du Lundi* in endeavouring, as I intend presently to do, to arrive at a just opinion of the poet Shelley, the anniversary of whose birth fell within the year last past, and was celebrated by the millions of his admirers with such profound reverence and touching solemnity. Shelley lends himself to this means of criticism insomuch that one of his latest biographers bewails the immense amount of writing of which he has been made the subject by those who uphold him as a demi-god worthy of their worship, or by the other class who are wont to paint the author of *The Revolt of Islam* as one of the most potent latter-day vicars of the devil.

In the present article I propose merely to furnish such a sketch of the personality of the poet as will serve to give some idea of Shelley, the man. In a second paper I shall deal with Shelley, the poet. That is, I shall offer such criticism of this great writer as seems just to one who like myself never forgets the personality of an author whilst perusing his works. In referring to either his life or his poetry I shall continually bear in mind that however heinous his faults as a man may have been, as a singer he possessed a voice which his own "nightingale" might have envied, and as a poet he has produced specimens of almost every phase of his art, each one of which is destined to live as long as the generations of man people this sphere.

I.—SHELLEY, THE MAN.

At the manor of Field Place, adjacent to Horsham, in the County of Sussex, Percy Bysshe Shelley was born on Saturday, the 4th of August, in the year 1792. He was the eldest child of Timothy Shelley and Elizabeth Pilford, a woman of great beauty. Timothy Shelley was one of the three children of Bysshe Shelley and a Miss Catherine Mitchell, the rich and pretty daughter of a clergyman. On the death of this wife Bysshe Shelley won the affections of an heiress of noble lineage whose fortune greatly increased the considerable riches which he already possessed. For his services to his political party he received the honour of a baronetcy.