

It was with his second marriage with Mary Wolstonecraft Godwin, who alone deserves to be remembered as Shelley's wife, that the brief happiness of the poet's life began. No longer in difficulties for money; no longer without the intellectual sympathy for which he yearned, Percy Bysshe Shelley lived with his wife and children happily, engaged in projecting and executing the finest of his great poems. They lived partly in England, but more often in Italy—where Shelley began the dynasty of English poets which Byron, Landor, and in our own day the Brownings have carried on. The influence for good of his wife's genius and affection may be seen in the "Letters" and in the beautiful introduction to the "Revolt of Islam":

"And now my summer task is ended, Mary."

And in some of the exquisite lyrics in which the poet's domestic life is alluded to. And no one can read Mrs. Shelley's account of her husband's death, and of the happy time just before that sudden parting, without seeing the loving nature of the wife, and the intense unison of affection between these two. And is it heretodox to hope that much may be forgiven, "*Quia multum amavit?*" It was at this happy time in the garden and among the woods of his Italian villa, that the "Revolt of Islam," the "Cenci" and the "Prometheus Unbound" were written. The "Revolt of Islam" is one of those poems, like the Faery Queen, which few read through with any sympathy for what the author intended to be the plot and idea of the work. As a story, it is tedious and wanting in human interest; but there are many exquisite passages. The meeting of Laon and Cythna in the forest, is the tenderest and purest of idyls, and everywhere one meets lines of such marked originality as these

"As when some great painter dips
His pencil in the hues of earthquake and eclipse."

The "Cenci" is a drama of powerfully conceived situation, and of the purest dramatic fervour, but, though Shelley shrinks from any actual contact with the idea of impurity which the story suggests—of a plot which made it impossible for Miss O'Neil to act his Beatrice. There is nothing objectionable in the poem, as we read it; but the story is so painful that one always lays down the "Cenci" with a feeling of revulsion. The "Prometheus Unbound" is a grander drama, Greek in its spirit and Æschylean in its proportions. Its plot is summed up in the stanza of Horace:

"Justum et tenacem propositi virum
Non civium ardor prava jubentium
Non vultus instantis tyranni
Mente quætet solidâ neque Auster.
Nec fulminantis magna manus Jovis."

In other words, the power of Faith, of the fixed inward trust in good, against all outward appearances and semblances.