

**SHELLEY MEMORIALS FROM
AUTHENTIC SOURCES.
TO WHICH IS ADDED AN
ESSAY ON CHRISTIANITY**

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Shelley Memorials from Authentic Sources. To Which Is Added an Essay on Christianity by
Jane Shelley & Percy Bysshe Shelley

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JANE SHELLEY & PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

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Tomb of the Poet Shelley, in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome.

Engraved by W. J. Martin, from a Sketch by A. J. Strutt.

SHELLEY MEMORIALS:

FROM AUTHENTIC SOURCES.

EDITED BY LADY SHELLEY.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

AN ESSAY ON CHRISTIANITY,

BY PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY:

NOW FIRST PRINTED.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1859.

[*The right of translation is reserved.*]

PREFACE BY THE EDITOR.

HAD it been left entirely to the uninfluenced wishes of Sir Percy Shelley and myself, we should have preferred that the publication of the materials for a life of Shelley which we possess should have been postponed to a later period of our lives ; but, as we had recently noticed, both in French and English magazines, many papers on Shelley, all taking for their text Captain Medwin's *Life of the Poet* (a book full of errors), and as other biographies had been issued, written by those who had no means of ascertaining the truth, we were anxious that the numerous misstatements which had gone forth should be corrected.

For this purpose, we placed the documents in our possession at the disposal of a gentleman whose literary habits and early knowledge of the poet seemed to point him out as the most fitting person for bringing them to the notice of the public. It was clearly understood, however, that our wishes and feelings should be consulted in all the details.

We saw the book for the first time when it was given to the world. It was impossible to imagine beforehand that from such materials a book could have been produced which has astonished and shocked those who have the greatest right to form an opinion on the character of Shelley; and it was with the most painful feelings of dismay that we perused what we could only look upon as a fantastic caricature, going forth to the public with my apparent sanction,—for it was dedicated to myself.

Our feelings of duty to the memory of Shelley left us no other alternative than to withdraw the materials which we had originally entrusted to his early friend, and which we could not but consider had been strangely misused; and to take upon ourselves the task of laying them before the public, connected only by as slight a thread of narrative as would suffice to make them intelligible to the reader.

I have condensed as much as possible the details of the early period of Shelley's life, for I am aware that a great many of them have already appeared in print. The repetition of some, however, was considered advisable, since it is very probable that this volume will be read by many who have not seen, nor are likely to see, any other work giving an account of the writings and actions of Shelley.

I little expected that this task would devolve on me;

and I am fully sensible how unequal I am to its proper fulfilment. To give a truthful statement of long-distorted facts, and to clear away the mist in which the misrepresentations of foes and professed friends have obscured the memory of Shelley, have been my only objects. My labours have been greatly assisted by the help of an intimate and valued friend of Mrs. Shelley, and by Mr. Edmund Ollier, whose father (the publisher of Shelley's works) at once freely offered me the use of some most interesting letters written to himself. I regret to say that this gentleman died while the present work was passing through the printer's hands.

It is needless to say that the authenticity of all the documents contained in this volume is beyond question; but the public would do well to receive with the utmost caution all letters purporting to be by Shelley, which have not some indisputable warrant.*

The art of forging letters purporting to be relics of men of literary celebrity, and therefore apparently possessing a commercial value, has been brought to a rare perfection by those who have made Mr. Shelley's handwriting the object of their imitation. Within the last

* Those printed in the work to which allusion has already been made have never, for the most part, been seen by any other person than the author of that work; and the erasures which he has already made in them, together with the arrangement of their paragraphs, render them of doubtful value, however authentic may be the originals which that gentleman asserts he possesses.

fourteen years, on no less than three occasions, have forged letters been presented to our family for purchase. In December, 1851, Sir Percy Shelley and the late Mr. Moxon bought several letters, all of which proved to be forgeries, though, on the most careful inspection, we could scarcely detect any difference between these and the originals; for some were exact copies of documents in our possession. The water-mark on the paper was generally, though not always, the mark appropriate to the date; and the amount of ingenuity exercised was most extraordinary. Mr. Moxon published what he had bought in a small volume, but recalled the work shortly afterwards, on discovering that some of the letters had been manufactured from articles in magazines and reviews, written long after Shelley's death.

The letter to Lord Ellenborough has never before been published; but I regard it as too extraordinary a production for a youth of eighteen to feel myself justified in suppressing it.

The fragmentary Essay on Christianity, published at the end of this volume, was found amongst Shelley's papers in the imperfect state in which it is now produced.

Boscombe, June 22nd, 1859.

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