

**SHELBURNE  
ESSAYS.  
SEVENTH SERIES**

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Shelburne essays. seventh series by Paul Elmer More

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**PAUL ELMER MORE**

**SHELBURNE  
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**SHELBURNE ESSAYS**

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**SEVENTH SERIES**

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# Shelburne Essays

SEVENTH SERIES

By Paul Elmer More

"Only by valuing is there value." — NIETZSCHE.



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## ADVERTISEMENT

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The essay on *The Socialism of G. Lowes Dickinson* was written for the *Atlantic Monthly*; that on *Criticism* has not before been printed. The other essays, in more or less abridged form, appeared first in the *Nation*, some of them being reprinted in the *New York Evening Post*.



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*2011/11*

# SHELBURNE ESSAYS

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## SHELLEY

IN confessing that he wrote his life of Shelley<sup>1</sup> as a middle-aged man for others of his class, Mr. Clutton-Brock forgot to reckon with the wit of his youthful reviewers; and yet, if by middle-age he means the experience of life, what right, after all, has Shelley or any other darling of the Muses to be exempt from that censure? The biographer's real fault is rather an amazing ingenuousness in trying to ride at once the horses of both youth and maturity. On one page he analyses *Prometheus Unbound* as a drama of a single event, and that causeless, acted by characters who drift about aimlessly and know not who they are or what relation they bear to one another: that is the critical attitude

<sup>1</sup> *Shelley: The Man and the Poet*. By A. Clutton-Brock. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909.

of mature common-sense. It is the audacious enthusiasm of youth when in a later passage he insists that the author of this drama proves himself an "intellectual poet." The same double-dealing appears when in one place he asserts that Shelley's ideas and emotions underwent little change; and then, a few pages after, with a covert allusion to Matthew Arnold, declares that the poet "was not a vapid angel singing silly hymns; but a man who only learnt to live well and write well by sharp experience." Now, Shelley is "a being prophetic of some higher state to which mankind shall attain, and unfit for this life only because he was fit for a better"; elsewhere, his *Paradise* is pronounced "a mere impossibility, an incongruous mixture of present pleasure of the flesh with imagined delights of the spirit."

I do not quote these acrobatic feats of criticism because I wish to ridicule Mr. Clutton-Brock's book, which is as a whole a fairly illuminating piece of work; but because they are so characteristic of our modern way of dealing with facts and tendencies. Look, for instance, into Miss Vida Scudder's school edition of the *Prometheus*, with its long Introduction—not a very wise production, perhaps, but significant as a woman's conception of a peculiarly feminine genius and as a specimen of what commonly, no doubt, passes in courses of literature. You will there