

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE
SHELLEY MANUSCRIPTS IN
THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY.**

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An Examination of the Shelley Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library. by C. D. Locock

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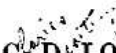
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Being a collation thereof with the printed
texts, resulting in the publication of
several long fragments hitherto unknown,
and the introduction of many improved
readings into *Prometheus Unbound*, and
other poems, by


C. D. LOCOCK, B.A.


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CONTENTS

	PAGE
MS. SHELLEY D 1	3-24
Epipsychidion	3
From the Arabic	13
Ode to Naples	14
The Witch of Atlas	18
Unpublished Fragments	21
MS. SHELLEY D 2	24-28
Arethusa	24
Hymn of Apollo	25
Hymn of Pan	25
Laon and Cythna	26
MS. SHELLEY E 1, E 2, E 3	28-39
Prometheus Unbound	28
Cancelled or Unpublished Passages in Prometheus Unbound	33
Invocation to Misery	38
Ode to Heaven	39
MS. SHELLEY E 4	40-75
Marenghi	40
Ozymandias	46
To Constantia	46

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
MS. SHELLEY E 4 (<i>continued</i>)	
<i>Passage of the Apennines</i>	47
<i>Translation from Virgil's Tenth Eclogue</i>	47
<i>Prince Athanase</i>	50
<i>To Constantia, Singing</i>	60
<i>To One Singing</i>	63
<i>Unsatisfied Desires</i>	63
<i>Translation of the Cyclops</i>	64
<i>Unpublished Fragments</i>	71
MS. SHELLEY E 5	75
<i>To a Faded Violet</i>	75
<i>Stanzas written in dejection near Naples</i>	75

THE SHELLEY MSS. IN THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY

THE Preface to Mr. Buxton Forman's 1892 edition of Shelley's Poems contains the following statement:—

'The text being no longer the subject of such controversy as raged for years over it, I have given it in the form in which I think it may be regarded as established.' There is no necessity, I think, for so despondent a view. While manuscripts remain undeciphered, or incorrectly deciphered, we are not compelled to attribute to Shelley all those deficiencies in sense and metre which have been accepted, either with or without hesitation—often with peculiar admiration—for some sixty or eighty years.

The following notes are based on a careful and, as Bodley's Librarian would testify, a prolonged examination of all the manuscript poems in the Shelley Collection at Oxford.

What authority should be assigned to these manuscripts, in cases where they differ from the printed texts, I do not propose to discuss here. Speaking quite roughly, one may perhaps say that a manuscript reading may be regarded as having authority whenever it (1) gives sense instead of nonsense, or (2) is metrically more correct, or (3) is manifestly superior in sense and sound, or (4) is likely to be *misread*, or (5) is likely to be *misprinted*. Why manuscript readings which fulfil the first, second, or third of these conditions have not yet appeared in print is a difficult, perhaps even a delicate, question to answer. In some few cases the printer may have been to blame; in others perhaps the editor of the transcription. But those who remember Mrs. Shelley's description of her own editorial difficulties, and other graphic accounts of Shelley's methods of composition, will probably be inclined to blame, and at the same time to pardon, the transcriber. More especially should allowances be made for the pioneer

in these labours: those who follow his lead must expect little mercy if they go astray. Certainly many words are decipherable only with the greatest difficulty. Some are practically illegible: in such cases the sight of the word is only confusing, and it is often best to conjecture at night and verify the conjecture afterwards. In other cases, patience and additional experience may eventually give the clue. The mysterious *She d hart* (?) in the *Prometheus*, which Zupitza had given up as hopeless, became suddenly clear in the light shed by another equally illegible passage. But apart from difficulties of this kind, there is one source of inaccuracy to which a transcriber of *rough drafts* is peculiarly liable. After taking much trouble in deciphering the numerous cancelled words—often far more numerous than those which are left uncanceled—he may write them down hurriedly, and, not infrequently, forget to cancel them: the result, for us, being the printing of lines containing one or more superfluous feet. Finally, the transcriber may fail occasionally in deciphering his own transcription.

For the convenience of those who may wish to verify the corrections and additions here given, I will take the contents of each notebook separately, naming them according to their titles in the Bodleian Catalogue. It will be noticed that the majority of the poems are posthumous.

SIGLA

A = First edition printed during Shelley's lifetime.

B = Bodleian Manuscript.

C = Mrs. Shelley's Collected Editions (1839, &c.). Where distinction is necessary, the first Collected Edition is referred to as *C*, and the others as *C*² &c.

P = *Posthumous Poems* (1824).

Square brackets denote words cancelled in *B*. Undeciphered and doubtful words are marked with asterisks.

DESCRIPTION OF MS. SHELLEY D 1

This notebook is bound in parchment: size, 8½ in. by 6¼ in. 156 leaves.

Principal contents: an Epipsychidion fragment, The Witch of Atlas, and the Ode to Naples.

EPIPSYCHIDION

This occupies twenty pages of *MS. Shelley d 1*, from 102 v to 92 v. The title may be found on p. 103. It is evidently a first draft, and consists of three versions, more or less incomplete, of the Preface, a version in ink and pencil, much cancelled, of the last eighty lines of the poem, and some additional lines which did not appear in print. The verse portion of the draft is arranged in no particular order; in fact Shelley appears to have begun near the end and worked backwards. I have thought it best, however, to quote the lines in the order in which they eventually appeared in print. Judging that a first draft of perhaps the finest lines in Shelley's most wonderful poem should be of interest to his admirers, I have spared no effort in deciphering any words which appeared likely to yield as much as a complete line, whether such words happened to be cancelled or not. Considering the extraordinary confusion and illegibility of the MS., it is inevitable that many words here quoted should partake to some extent of the nature of guess-work; and in many cases I may have guessed incorrectly. It should be understood however that these guesses are based on actual appearance, and that I have nowhere added a single word from pure conjecture.

Of the three Prefaces such portions only as are uncanceled are here printed.