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SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF MARY SHELLEY

BY FLORENCE BOYLSTON PELO

THIS collection comprises twenty-three unpublished autograph letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, the gifted wife of the poet, written to their intimate friends, Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Hunt. Delightful old letters they are, on age-yellowed paper, with broken seals and ink browned by time; they take us back a century, and gladly enough one goes, to be in such excellent company as that of Shelley, Keats, Lord Byron, and Charles Lamb.

The friendship between Hunt and Shelley began about 1812, when the young man Shelley sought counsel from him on a manuscript poem; it ripened at the time Hunt was consigned to jail for libeling the Prince Regent in an article from his pen in the *Examiner*. Hunt says in his autobiography that "the imprisonment brought him acquainted with Shelley." In 1816 Shelley visited Hunt, and after the suicide of Harriet Westbrook, Shelley's first wife, Hunt proved in every way a valued and a sympathetic friend. Shelley was in need of sympathy, and Hunt gave it warmly. A deep intimacy followed, lasting throughout Shelley's lifetime; and after his death the Hunts were close and near to his widow, and Leigh Hunt gave her much valuable advice and assistance in the compilation of the poet's works.

As the years progressed, the Shelleys and the Hunts were frequent visitors at each other's houses. Hunt possessed little business acumen, and Shelley's purse was always at his disposal, while Hunt availed himself of every opportunity to defend his friend against the all too numerous attacks of the press. It was with Mr. and Mrs. Hunt that Shelley passed his last day in London. His last letter

contained a reference to Hunt, and his last literary production was a poem welcoming him to Italy. It is a strange coincidence and a striking affirmation of their mutual affection that Hunt's last public statement had reference also to Shelley. In Shelley's letters to Hunt there are many affectionate allusions. Many times he calls him his best and only friend, and in the beautiful letter dedicating *The Cenci* to him there is a marked evidence of Shelley's appreciation of Hunt's qualities as a friend; Hunt, we know, proclaimed late in life that his proudest title was "Friend of Shelley." Their friendship is a simple tale of an intimacy founded on a sympathetic companionship, on common needs, hopes, sacrifices, and experiences. They were not only devoted friends, but Shelley was the connecting link between Byron and Hunt. Mrs. Hunt disliked Byron, and the aversion was reciprocated. Shelley's tact must have often been needed to create harmony among those diverse personalities.

The Shelleys were so happy in Italy that they wished the Hunts to join them there, and it was at Shelley's instigation that Hunt gave up the editorship of the *Examiner* and started out for Italy. "Put your music and your books on board a vessel and you will have no more trouble," wrote Shelley. The journey proved a disastrous adventure for them all. Shelley went to Leghorn to meet them, and after seeing them well settled in a portion of Lord Byron's palace, which had been placed at their disposal, he started back to Lerici. The boat capsized and he was drowned. With his death perished Hunt's chief hope in life—Shelley's project of going shares with him and Byron in periodical work to be conducted in Italy. Hunt was present at the burning of Shelley's body, and wrote the Latin inscription for the slab on his grave in Rome, while Trelawny added a quotation of his own choosing from *The Tempest*. Hunt's own copy of Keats' last book was found in a pocket of Shelley's coat, with a page turned down at *The Eve of St. Agnes*, indicating that he had been reading it at the moment of the disaster. It was burned with his body.

These letters of Mrs. Shelley's, taken chronologically, illuminate not only many important facts in the lives of these men of genius, but also much that is interesting in the lives of those of lesser greatness—Claire Clairmont and Emilia Viviani, Peacock and Hogg, Sir Timothy and Mrs. Shelley, and the various members of their interesting

circles. But more than all, they give an especial insight into the character of Mary Shelley, and attest her sweetness and gentleness and loveliness. To her, the world's debt is ever great, for her influence was large upon Shelley. It is almost superfluous, therefore, to observe that these letters are of much literary and historical importance.

The first five letters were written in the Spring of 1817, when the Shelleys were living in Marlow. The first is dated March 2, 1817, some two months after their marriage, which was made possible by Harriet Shelley's death. Claire Clairmont, the daughter of William Godwin's second wife by a former husband, is introduced in the first letter. Because of her ability to speak French she accompanied Shelley and his wife to Switzerland in 1814, and in 1816, when they revisited the continent, she also went with them. At Geneva they met Byron, of whose subsequent *liaison* with Claire the Shelleys were quite ignorant. When they returned to England, Claire continued to live with them, and in January, 1817, she gave birth to a daughter—Allegra, the baby mentioned in this letter. Byron agreed to be responsible for the child, who seems to have been the cause of great unhappiness and continued wrangling between Claire and Byron and the Shelleys, which, however, came to an end with the death of the child in April, 1822. Claire is described as a beautiful, romantic girl of brilliant talents. She never married, but became a governess in Russia after Shelley's death.

In this series Mrs. Shelley mentions Thomas Love Peacock, the author of *Palmyra* and other poems. He was a close student of Greek, and he and Shelley were brought together through their mutual love of that language, and became fast friends. He accompanied Shelley and Harriet on a trip to Scotland, and it is said that his sympathies at the time of their separation were with Harriet, though he made no interference. Peacock was the recipient of Shelley's beautiful descriptive letters from Italy, which Symonds says are the most perfect specimens of descriptive prose in the English language. Mrs. Shelley also gives a little advice to Mrs. Hunt in the management of her husband by saying, "Cultivate his affections and cherish and enjoy his society, and I am sure my dear Mary Anne will find her prospects clear very sensibly." Certain biographers say that Mrs. Hunt was a source of great unhappiness to her husband;

she was ill a good deal, they had several children (who, according to Carlyle, were most badly behaved), and she shared with Hunt a certain incapacity for business, and was unable to manage her household. Another reference of Mrs. Shelley is to Mrs. Godwin, her stepmother and Claire's mother. She says: "Shelley mentions Mrs. G's favor; is she not an odious woman?"

The last of the Marlow letters in this collection is a very remarkable one to Leigh Hunt, in which Mrs. Shelley urges them to come to Marlow. She tells him that their house is nearly settled, and that the statues have arrived. This refers, probably, to the statuary with which Shelley surrounded himself in his study. We are told that copies of the Venus di Medici, the Apollo Belvidere, and other replicas of antiquity were always about him when he wrote indoors. In this letter Thomas Hogg is mentioned for the first time. He was an intimate friend of Shelley's early years, and the one in whose care he left Harriet Westbrook at Edinburgh shortly after their elopement, when he was obliged to make a hasty business trip to London. Hogg was a lawyer who is best known today as the biographer of Shelley's youth, and especially of his short career at Oxford. Toward the end of this letter the young poet Keats, who had succeeded in having a sonnet published in the *Examiner*, is mentioned, and the reference to him in this letter to Leigh Hunt, and to one of the first recognitions of his genius, is of great interest and peculiar significance, because it was at a gathering of poets in Leigh Hunt's cottage at Hampstead, one February evening in 1817, that Keats and Shelley met. We know that they liked each other from the outset, and that they were friends throughout Keats' lifetime. What Shelley thought of Keats, and how he and others had loved and admired the dead poet, is, of course, supremely told in the *Adonais*, of which he himself said, "I confess I should be surprised if that poem were born to an immortality of oblivion." This letter to the Hunts is as follows:

Marlow, March 18th, 1817.

My dear Friend:

We have not received any letter from you, but have heard from Claire that your friend Mr. Horace Smith is ill. I hope, however, that when you receive this you will find him so far restored as to free you from anxiety. The *Examiner* of this week also says a great

deal for you. I am glad to see you write much and well, as it shews your mind is at peace. I am now writing in the library of our house in which we are to sleep tonight for the first time. It is very comfortable and expectant of its promised guests. The statues are arrived and everything is getting on. Come then, dear good creatures, and let us enjoy with you the beauty of the Marlow sun and the pleasant walks that will give you all health spirits & industry.

Hogg is at present a visitor of Peacock. I do not like him and I think he is more disagreeable than ever. I would not have him come every week to disturb our peace by his ill humour and noise for all the world. Both of the menagerie¹ were very much scandalized by the praise and sonnet of Keats, and mean, I believe, to petition against the publication of any more. It was transferred to the *Chronicle*—is that an honour?

I have a word or two to say to Mrs. Hunt & not having any more paper in the house tonight & it being too late to get more I must with this country excuse cut short my letter to you. Write and if you wish it you shall have a long answer.

Your affectionate Friend

MARINA.

It is very impertinent to give the lady the last place, but I did not know how little paper I had when I began.

My dear Mary Anne:

My little red box is not yet arrived & I am in agony. I hope it is sent; if not, pray send it with the rest of the things I mentioned in the list. What about a servant—if you get one let her be a *good* cook for I think we must have two and I can easily get a housemaid. Do not entirely agree with one until you let me know. Have you given Claire Lord B's letters yet—she mentions that you had not in a letter we had from her today. They will give her so much pleasure.

William is very well & can now walk alone but I am afraid his teeth will put him back again—how is Swynburn and the rest of your babies—kiss them for me and give my love to Miss Kent.

I hope Hunt will criticize Melincourt next week. Have you been to see Cymbeline or the Opera?

Take care of yourself, my dear girl. I long to see you all down here & hope, for Hunt's sake, that we shall by that time have received the long with-held hairbrush.

Most affectionately Yrs.

MARY W. S.

Shelley sends his love to you all.

The next ten letters were written from Italy, and a year elapsed between the last of those written from Marlow, and

¹ In her reference to Peacock and Hogg, Mrs. Shelley first wrote: "Both of these wise men were very much scandalized," etc.; but she changed it to read "the menagerie," evidently as a play on words.

the first one from Milan. The Shelleys went to Italy because of Shelley's failing health, and because England had always been ungentle toward Mary. They did not dream that Shelley would never again see his native shores, or that Mary, when she would recross the seas, would be alone and lonely. But they appear to have had no homeward yearnings, so enchanted were they with the land of their adoption. They went directly to Milan because of Shelley's wish to settle somewhere on the shores of Como, that loveliest of Italian lakes; but as they were unable to find there the accommodations they wished, considerable time was spent in traveling about in Tuscany—Pisa, Leghorn, Bagni di Lucca. The time passed delightfully for them both. They worked together, sang together, dreamed together, played together, and found that which they so ardently sought in Italy—peace and love. The happiest as well as the saddest days of Mary Shelley's life were spent there. The happiest in the companionship of her husband in a warm and sympathetic land; the saddest in the loss of her two children and later of Shelley himself.

In Milan, Mrs. Shelley went to the opera, and she wrote a long description of it to the Hunts; but it was in Rome that she found the greatest delights, and her letters from there are sincere, frank, delicate in observation, and full of unconscious grace. From the point of view of fine prose, the letters from the Eternal City are probably the best that this collection affords. She writes:

We pass our days in viewing the divinest statues in the world. You have seen the casts of most of them, but the originals are infinitely superior, and besides you continually see some new one of heavenly beauty that one never saw before. There is an Apollo, it is Shelley's favorite, in the Museum of the Capitol—he is standing leaning back with his feet crossed—one arm supports a lyre, the other hand holds the instrument to play on it, and his head is thrown back, as he is in the act of being inspired, and the expression of his countenance, especially the lower part, is more beautiful than you can imagine. There are a quantity of female figures in the attitude of Venus di Medici . . . there is a Diana hunting—her dress girded about her—she has just let fly an arrow and watches its success with eagerness and joy. . . . Indeed it is a scene of perpetual enchantment to live in this thrice holy city. The other night we visited the Pantheon by moonlight and saw the lovely sight of the moon appearing through the round aperture above and lighting the columns of the Rotunda with its rays. But my letter would

never be at an end if I were to tell a millionth part of the delights of Rome—but it has such an effect on me that my past life before I saw it appears a blank, and now I begin to live. In the churches you hear the music of heaven and the singing of angels.

Later she writes:

I suppose that Peacock shows you Shelley's letters, so I need not describe those objects which delight us so much here. We live surrounded by antiquity ruined and perfect, besides seeing the lovely pictures of your favorite Raphael, who is the Prince or rather God of painting (I mean a heathen God, not a bungling modern divinity), and there are delightful painters beside him, Guido would be a great favorite of yours. . . . Rome is stuffed with the loveliest statues in the world—a much greater number than one has any idea of until one sees them, and most of them in the most perfect state. Besides our eternal visits to these divine objects, Claire is learning singing, I painting, and S. is writing a poem, so that the *belle arte* take up all our time.

The poem of Shelley mentioned here is doubtless his greatest one, *Prometheus Unbound*, most of which was written among the beautiful and solitary ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. A reference to Southey is made in the following paragraph: "You seem certain that Southey did not write the number in the *Quarterly*, but if he spares us in print he does not in conversation, as we have good authority to know, and he speaks in the grossest manner . . . but that is all nothing." Shelley's association with Southey was brief, but nevertheless he was an admirer of Southey's poetry, the study of which left its mark in Shelley's early work. The allusion quoted above is to a savage attack on Shelley in the *Quarterly Review*. Shelley accused Southey of writing it, and in a letter called for a disavowal. Southey denied it, and was able to prove his innocence. Mrs. Shelley closed this letter by speaking of Lord Byron and Allegra, who were in Venice: "All goes on there as badly with the noble poet as ever. I fear he is a lost man if he does not escape soon, Allegra is there with a friend of his and ours."

From Rome the Shelleys went to Leghorn, and Mrs. Shelley's letters from there are full of sadness and melancholy over the death of her little son, William, who died in Rome on the seventh day of June, 1819. This bitter loss was a calamity which almost broke their hearts, following as it did the loss of their little daughter, Clara, who died at Venice the year before. She writes:

We came to Italy thinking to do Shelley's health good—but the climate is not by any means warm enough to be of benefit to him, and yet it is that that has destroyed my two children . . . We went from England comparatively prosperous and happy—I should return broken hearted and miserable . . . I never know one moment's ease from the wretchedness and despair that possesses me. May you, my dear Marianne, never know what it is to lose two only and lovely children in one year—to watch their dying moments and then at last to be left childless and forever miserable . . . these were the fruits of this hateful Italy.

In another letter from Leghorn she says that Shelley has gone to Florence to take up lodgings for them. They expect to spend the winter there "somewhat dully . . . since we shall not know a soul there, and there is little to amuse us looking at one another and reading what we already too well know." In a postscript of this letter she mentions the Gisbornes:

I must say a word of Mr. Gisborne whom you will see—you will find him a very dull man—but if you take any trouble about him you will be well repaid when Mrs. G. joins him, for she is an excellent woman, and, what you will think praise, very much attached to Shelley—to me too, perhaps, but I am nothing now, and it is impossible any one can much like so dull a person.

At the time of the death of Mrs. Shelley's mother, Mrs. Gisborne, then Mrs. Reveley, took charge of Mary. Godwin, Mary's father, proposed marriage to Mrs. Gisborne, but she declined. She was a charming, accomplished woman for whom Shelley had great admiration. In later years Mrs. Shelley derived much comfort from an extensive correspondence with her after Shelley's untimely death.

In Florence, Mrs. Shelley's spirits recovered somewhat. Their son, Percy, who succeeded to the Baronetcy, was born there on November 12, 1819, and with his advent the world grew brighter. To Mrs. Hunt she wrote:

I am very well and the little boy also. He is my only one and although he is so healthy and promising . . . I cannot fear—yet it is a bitter thought that all should be risked on one, yet how much sweeter than to be childless as I was for five hateful months.

In this letter she makes an inquiry regarding *The Mask of Anarchy*, which Shelley had sent to Leigh Hunt. She refers to a possible visit of Shelley to England, which was subsequently abandoned, and says: "You may judge

by what Shelley has sent to England that he has been very busily employed, and besides this he often spends many hours at the Gallery admiring and studying the statues and pictures." Besides *The Mask of Anarchy*, Shelley had sent to England *The Cenci*, the writing of which had been suggested by Mary Shelley, who had perceived how his imagination had been affected by the story of Beatrice Cenci. It was begun and finished in Florence. *Prometheus Unbound* was finished and sent, and also *Julian and Maddalo*. It was during this year in Florence that the poet's genius attained its finest expression. One of his chief pleasures while there was to walk alone in the Cascine, and it was there that he received the inspiration for the *Ode to the West Wind*.

Early in the year 1820 the Shelleys went to Pisa because of the severe weather which prevailed in Florence, and because "Vacca, the most famous surgeon in Italy, has told Shelley to take care of himself and strengthen himself, but to take no medicine." Mrs. Shelley's first letter from Pisa to Mrs. Hunt contains a long description of that city, of their apartment on the Lung' Arno where "for the first time in our lives we get on easily, our minds undisturbed by weekly bills and expenses." There is also a denunciation of Cant, "the God or abominable idol before whom . . . the English are offering up a sacrifice of blood and liberty." The Manchester Massacre of August 16, 1819, and attacks on the liberty of the press, moved Shelley to great indignation, which found expression in *The Mask of Anarchy* and in a treatise entitled *The Philosophical Review of Reform*, which was never published. In this letter Mary Shelley states that she prefers to stay in Italy, and adds, "Since I have seen Rome, that city is my country."

Another of the Pisan letters to Leigh Hunt is written in Italian, and in it she praises the Queen and denounces the villainous King. She described a new acquaintance, Professor Pacchani, who she says is "really the only Italian who has a heart and soul." She adds, "There is another acquaintance of ours, romantic and pathetic, a young girl of 19 years of age, the daughter of a Florentine nobleman, very beautiful, very talented, who writes Italian with an elegance and delicacy equal to the foremost authors of the best Italian epoch." This reference is to Emilia Viviani, whose beauty so deeply stirred the imagination of Shelley

that he wrote the *Epipsychidion*, in which he relates the successive endeavors of his spirit after the attainment of ideal love. This he encountered in the interesting and faultlessly beautiful Emilia Viviani, and set forth in that "supreme poem of unfettered and uncircumscribed love." Mary Shelley also portrayed Emilia in the Clorinda of her novel *Lodore*.

Nearly three years elapsed before the next letter, which was written from Paris, August 18, 1823, to Leigh Hunt in Florence. In the meantime Shelley was drowned (July, 1822), at which time the Hunts had gone to Italy. Mrs. Shelley lived with them at Genoa the winter following her husband's death, and this letter was written while she was en route to England with her little son, the future baronet. In it she describes a three day's visit to Versailles with Horace Smith and the Kennys, who told her all about a recent visit of Charles and Mary Lamb to France, and of how Mary Lamb was taken ill "in her usual way" and Charles Lamb found the French wine too good for him. Kenny was loud in his praise of Miss Lamb, "saying that he thought her a faultless creature, possessing every virtue under heaven. He was annoyed to find L. more reserved and shut up than usual—avoiding his old friends and not so cordial or so amiable as his wont. I asked him about Hazlitt. This love-sick youth, jilted by Infelice, has taken to falling in love. He told Kenny that whereas formerly he thought women silly unamusing toys, and people with whose society he was delighted to dispense, he was now only happy where they were, and given up to the admiration of their interesting foibles and amiable weaknesses. He is the humble servant of all marriageable young ladies." She continues: "Wordsworth was in town not long ago, publishing and looking old" . . . and "Coleridge is well, having been ill." She refers to a dramatized version of her *Frankenstein*, then running in London with some success, and to a song which Jane Williams used to sing, heard on the harp at the Kennys. It affected her so that she entreated them to cease. "How could I bear the mimicry of that voice—the witch, to recall such scenes!" (Shelley had delighted in Jane Williams' singing.) She speaks of her future plans and Lord Byron's wish that she should write to Lady Shelley: "I did not, for one hates to beg." She says: "My dearest Hunt, your letters are a great consolation to me—I will write my last

un-English letter to you from Calais." Mrs. Kenny told her that she was very like her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, from whom Mrs. Shelley inherited many of her ideas. Mary Wollstonecraft wrote one great book: a vindication of the rights of women, in which she prophesied the day when women would have social, economic, and political freedom. It was her opinion, also, that the only love worthy of the name was that which is free and spontaneous, and which lives and thrives because of its own sweetness and purity. After her unhappy experience in Paris with Imlay, however, she decided that it was unwise to offend society, so she became the legal wife of William Godwin.

From London Mrs. Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt asking him to aid her in the publication of Shelley's posthumous poems, which "we have begun to print." "I need hardly answer what you say about putting off the publication for a year . . . Shelley has celebrity, even popularity now—a year ago greater interest would perhaps have been excited than now by this volume—but who knows what may happen before the next . . . do you, my best friend, assist me in making it complete—send me what you prepare." The book was published in 1824 without the notice Leigh Hunt was to contribute. In this letter she speaks of Mrs. Williams, who is "as impatient as I of England and the rest of it." This is the Jane Williams immortalized in a number of Shelley's poems. Her husband, an intimate friend of Shelley, perished with him. When Mrs. Williams returned to England she became the wife of Hogg. She mentions Miss Curran, and begs Mrs. Hunt, who was skillful in cutting profiles, to send one of Shelley to Miss Curran to aid her in completing the picture she had painted of Shelley when they were at Rome. This portrait had been laid aside unfinished as a failure. It is the only authentic portrait of Shelley in existence. In her journal for September 17, 1825, Mrs. Shelley wrote: "Thy picture is come, my only one! Thine, those speaking eyes, that animated look, unlike aught earthly wert thou ever and art now."

In a long letter to Mrs. Hunt she states that her mode of life in England is little agreeable to her: "My only comfort is in my child's growth and health and in the society of Mrs. Williams." She asks for news of Trelawny and wishes that he had been at Missolonghi . . . "His activity and kindness might have prevented Byron's death." She speaks

at some length of music in England, mentions Proctor and Lamb, and says that she has heard from Claire: "Poor girl, she is dismally tossed about, so much so that perhaps she may return to England." From Kentish Town in June, 1827, she writes to Leigh Hunt regarding his approaching return to England: "You can hardly be more delighted at the idea of returning to Tottenham Ct. Road and the Hampstead Coachmen, than are your friends that you should return, and return with pleasure to these things . . . I think of Italy as a vision of delight afar off. . . . Had you seen Italy as I saw it—and had I seen it as you—we should each be delighted with our present residence, nor for the world's treasure change." Toward the end of another letter to Hunt from Brighton she refers in an affectionate manner to her first meeting with him nine years earlier, "in the bust and flower adorned parlor" in his cottage in the Vale of Heath.

In 1835 Mrs. Shelley went to Harrow to be near her son, who was at Harrow School, and in a letter to Hunt from there in February of that year she mentions her novel, *Lodore*, which was about to be published, and the *Lives of Eminent Literary Men*, on which she was engaged at that time. She refers also to her husband's father and mother: "I wish I could look with the indulgence you do on Shelley's relations. Sir Tim, indeed, were he here alone, I could manage . . . violent as he is, he has a heart and I am sure I could have made a friend of him. It is Lady S. who is my bitter enemy—and her motive is the base one of securing more money for herself . . . besides, her conduct having been very open to censure, she naturally attacks me."

The last four letters were all written in the year 1839 and are addressed to Leigh Hunt. They refer largely to the compilation of Shelley's poems and prose works, on which Mrs. Shelley had been engaged since 1836. In regard to the poems she writes: "Except that I do not like the idea of a mutilated edition, I have no scruple of conscience about leaving out the expressions which Shelley would never have printed in after life. I have a great love for *Queen Mab*; he was proud of it when I first knew him—and it is associated with the bright young days of both of us." In her journal of Feb. 12, 1839, Mary Shelley wrote: "I much dislike leaving out any of *Queen Mab* . . . and even wish I had resisted to the last." She yielded because she was told that certain portions of it would injure the sale. Trelawny sent back the

volume to Moxon in a rage at seeing parts left out, and Hogg wrote "an insulting letter" because the dedicatory verses to Harriet were to be omitted. In thanking Hunt for his offer of assistance Mrs. Shelley wrote: "The edition will be mine . . . in a future edition if you will add any of your own peculiarly delightful notes it will make the book more valuable to every reader, but our notes must be independent of each other." In reference to the prose of Shelley she asks Hunt's advice on several portions of it—especially with regard to the translation of the *Symposium*. She praises Hunt's play, *A Legend of Florence*, which was successfully produced at Covent Garden in 1840. "It is admirably written. It is full of beautiful & elevated & true morality clothed in poetry." In the last of these twenty-three letters, as in the first, Claire Clairmont is mentioned. "I have desired to fix a day when you shall meet Claire, but have not been able." She asks also about some omissions in the letters of Shelley which Hunt had published, and says that "Percy is very anxious to learn" when his play will appear.

Mary Shelley was only nineteen when the first of these letters was written and but twenty-three when she wrote the last of the Italian series. She lived to be fifty-two years of age, and it is interesting to know that her friendship with the Hunts continued throughout her lifetime. She was in her twenty-fifth year when Shelley died, a woman of rare beauty and accomplishment. She had many suitors, among them John Howard Payne, the homeless author of *Home, Sweet Home*; but she did not marry a second time. Her life seemed never to be detached from that of Shelley. Her youth was passed in waiting for him; eight years of perfect companionship were passed with him, and the remaining twenty-eight years of her life were devoted to the publication of his works, and to the care and education of their son.

This correspondence on the Hunts' side is also exceedingly interesting. The letters of Leigh Hunt to Shelley and to Mrs. Shelley throw much light on the character of Hunt, and affirm the generosity and enthusiasm which were his salient qualities. The most interesting are those which contain the accounts of his work on the *Indicator*, a publication which had the support of Hazlitt and Lamb and which contains the finest of Leigh Hunt's work as an essayist. Shortly after Hunt's return to England in 1825 he published *Lord*

Byron and His Contemporaries; with Recollections of the Author's Life and his Visit to Italy. Because of its frank criticism of Byron the book created a sensation, and speedily went into a second edition. From the year 1844 until his death at the age of seventy-four, in 1859, Hunt received an allowance of one hundred and twenty pounds a year from the Shelley estate, which, together with another annuity, made comfortable the declining years of his life.

Mrs. Hunt, who was always frail and ailing, led a quiet and domestic life and lived to be sixty-nine, outliving the great Vacca, who said while attending her upon her arrival in Italy that, at best, she could live but a few months.

Hunt's services to Shelley cannot be overestimated. He was cheerful, enthusiastic, courageous, and these qualities, combined with his unflinching devotion to the poet, were of inestimable value. Shelley, proportionately as frail in physique as he was robust in intellect, needed the generous encouragement that Hunt so unsparingly gave him; and we know of the deep-rooted affection that Shelley and his wife had for Hunt. Probably no one, save Mrs. Shelley, loved the poet as Hunt loved him. He worshiped Shelley's spirit as the finest and the most undefiled in the world. In the following paragraph, as lovely as it is sincere, we have in Leigh Hunt's own words the evidence of his unqualified admiration for Shelley:

He was like a spirit that had darted out of its orbit and found itself in another world. I used to tell him that he had come from the planet Mercury. When I heard of the catastrophe that overtook him, it seemed as if this spirit, not sufficiently constituted like the rest of the world to obtain their sympathy, yet gifted with a double portion of love for all living things, had been found dead in a solitary corner of the earth, its wings stiffened, its warm heart cold; the relics of a misunderstood nature slain by the ungenial elements.

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