

THE MASK OF ANARCHY.

[*The Mask of Anarchy* was written in 1819 on the occasion of the infamous Peterloo affair, and was sent to Leigh Hunt, for publication in *The Examiner*, before November, 1819. Hunt did not publish it then, but issued it in 1832 in a little volume, with a preface of considerable interest, reprinted in the appendix to the present volume. The title of this volume runs as follows: "The Masque of Anarchy. A Poem. By Percy Bysshe Shelley. Now first published, with a Preface by Leigh Hunt." There is a motto from *Laon and Cythna*,—

Hope is strong ;
Justice and Truth their winged child have found.

The imprint is "London : Edward Moxon, 64, New Bond Street, 1832." The MS. from which the poem is now given is that sent to Leigh Hunt ; and it is headed, in Shelley's writing, *The Mask of Anarchy written on the occasion of the Massacre at Manchester*. It is mainly in Mrs. Shelley's handwriting ; and I am strongly under the impression that it was dictated by Shelley from his rough notes ;—for there are lines filled in in his writing, as if he had, in the ardour of recomposition, told his amanuensis not to wait when there was any hitch, but to go on and leave blanks for him to fill. The insertions and corrections in his writing are made with a much broader pen (or heavier pressure) than was used by Mrs. Shelley ; and this fact is valuable in proving that he went over the whole MS. very carefully after her. The corrections in punctuation and minor detail, with the heavier pen, are very numerous. Some of them are specified in my notes ; and Mr. G. I. F. Tupper has produced a fac-simile (inserted opposite) of some of the altered stanzas. I am indebted to Mr. Townshend Mayer for the use of this most valuable MS.—H. B. F.]

15 ~~For~~ ^{For} with pomp ~~to~~ ^{to} meet him came
Clothed in arms like blood & flame,
The hired murderers, who did sing
"Thou art God, & Law, & King."

22 ~~When one~~ ^{fled first} a Mamac maid,
Whose name was Hope, she ^{said}
But she looked more like ~~despair~~
And she cried out in the ~~air~~ ^{air}:

33 And Anarchy, the ghastly birth,
Lay dead earth upon the earth.
The Horse of Death, tamely as
Fled, & with his hoofs did ^{wend} grind
To dust, the murders ~~through~~ ^{behind}.

THE MASK OF ANARCHY

WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF THE MASSACRE
AT MANCHESTER.¹

I.

As I lay asleep in Italy
There came a voice from over the Sea,
And with great power it forth led me
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

II.

I met Murder on the way—
He had a mask like Castlereagh—
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;
Seven blood-hounds followed him:

III.

All were fat; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

¹ As this poem is distinctly headed in Shelley's writing I see no reason for suppressing any part of the title. The spelling of the word *Mask*, though

now unusual, is his, and unimpeachable; and there can be no use in any longer dropping the word *massacre*.

IV.

Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon,¹ an ermined² gown ;
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell.

V.

And the little children, who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.³

VI.

Clothed with the Bible, as with light,⁴
And the shadows⁵ of the night,
Like Sidmouth, next, Hypocrisy
On a crocodile rode by.

VII.

And many more Destructions played
In this ghastly masquerade,
All disguised, even to the eyes,
Like Bishops, lawyers, peers or spies.

¹ In all previous editions we read *Like Lord Eldon*; and so the line originally stood in the MS. ; but *Lord* is carefully obliterated with the broad pen (Shelley's); and I presume Hunt restored it on his own authority for the sake of the rhythm,—not noticing that the omission of the title corresponds with the manner of mentioning Castlereagh and Sidmouth, and with the democratic spirit of the poem. To my mind, the rhythm also is bettered by the omission; but in a question of prosody one ought perhaps to defer to Leigh Hunt. This, however, is a question of intention; and I cannot doubt that it was Shelley's deli-

berate intention to cancel the word *Lord*.

² So in the MS., and in Hunt's edition, but *ermine* in Mrs. Shelley's editions.

³ I have referred in Vol. II (p. 340) to the repetition of this idea in *Swell-foot the Tyrant*. The student of Shelley's mind will doubtless turn back and compare the passages.

⁴ It would seem that Shelley meant to write a note on this line; for there is an asterisk here in the MS., and a space left at the foot of the paper.

⁵ So in the MS., and in Hunt's edition, but *shadow* in Mrs. Shelley's editions.

VIII.

Last came Anarchy: he rode
 On a white horse, splashed with blood;
 He was pale even to the lips,
 Like Death in the Apocalypse.¹

IX.

And he wore a kingly crown;
 And in his grasp² a sceptre shone;
 On his brow this mark I saw—
 "I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW!"³

X.

With a pace stately and fast,
 Over English land he past,
 Trampling to a mire of blood
 The adoring multitude.

XI.

And a mighty troop around,
 With their trampling shook the ground,
 Waving each a bloody sword,
 For the service of their Lord.

XII.

And with glorious triumph, they
 Rode thro' England proud and gay,⁴
 Drunk as with intoxication
 Of the wine of desolation.

¹ Mr. Rossetti is right in surmising that the confusion between Death and his horse is not attributable to printer's error. The passage stands in the MS. as above.

² The original word here was *hand*; but *grasp* is substituted in Shelley's writing; and so Leigh Hunt printed it. Mrs. Shelley gives the second line thus:

In his hand a sceptre shone;

and Mr. Rossetti follows this reading. Hunt makes the third line begin with *And*, but without the authority of the MS.

³ This line is doubly underlined,— I presume to indicate small capitals; and the capitals for *God*, *King*, and *Law* are supplied with Shelley's pen, the words having been written without capitals by Mrs. Shelley.

⁴ This comma is wanting in the MS.

XIII.

O'er¹ fields and towns, from sea to sea,
 Past the Pageant swift and free,
 Tearing up, and trampling down;
 Till they came to London town.

XIV.

And each dweller, panic-stricken,
 Felt his heart with terror sicken
 Hearing the tempestuous² cry
 Of the triumph of Anarchy.

XV.

For with pomp to meet him came,³
 Clothed in arms like blood and flame,
 The hired murderers, who did sing
 "Thou art God, and Law, and King.

XVI.

"We have waited, weak and lone
 "For thy coming, Mighty One!
 "Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,
 "Give us glory, and blood, and gold."

XVII.

Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,
 To the earth their pale brows bowed;
 Like a bad prayer not over loud,
 Whispering—"Thou art Law and God."—

¹ *O'er* originally in the MS.,—corrected by Shelley to *O'er*.

² So in the MS., and in the editions of Hunt and Mr. Rossetti; but in Mrs. Shelley's editions *tremendous*.

³ This is one of the lines written in by Shelley, and it has no comma at the end. As originally written by Mrs. Shelley, the line consists of the words *For from* and a blank.

XVIII.

Then all cried with one accord,
 "Thou art King, and God, and Lord ;¹
 "Anarchy, to thee we bow,
 "Be thy name made holy now!"

XIX.

And Anarchy, the Skeleton,
 Bowed and grinned to every one,
 As well as if his education
 Had cost ten millions to the nation.

XX.

For he knew the Palaces
 Of our Kings were nightly his ;
 His the sceptre, crown, and globe,
 And the gold-inwoven robe.

XXI.

So he sent his slaves before
 To seize upon the Bank and Tower,
 And was proceeding with intent
 To meet his pensioned Parliament

XXII.

When one fled past,² a maniac maid,
 And her name was Hope, she said :
 But she looked more like Despair,
 And she cried out in the air :

¹ So in the MS. and Hunt's edition, but *King, and Law and Lord*, in Mrs. Shelley's and Mr. Rossetti's.

² *When one passed* is the original reading in Mrs. Shelley's writing : *fled past* is substituted for *passed* in Shelley's.

XXIII.

“My father Time is weak and grey
 “With waiting for a better day ;
 “See how idiot-like he stands,
 “Fumbling¹ with his palsied hands !

XXIV.

“He has had child after child,
 “And the dust of death is piled
 “Over every one but me—
 “Misery, oh, Misery !”

XXV.

Then she lay down in the street,
 Right before the horses' feet,
 Expecting, with a patient eye,
 Murder, Fraud and Anarchy.

XXVI.

When between her and her foes
 A mist, a light, an image rose,
 Small at first, and weak, and frail
 Like the vapour² of a vale :

XXVII.

Till as clouds grow on the blast,
 Like tower-crowned giants striding fast,
 And glare with lightnings as they fly,
 And speak in thunder to the sky,

¹ So in the MS., and in the editions of Hunt and Mr. Rossetti, but *Trembling* in those of Mrs. Shelley.

² The original word in the MS. was

rapours ; but the *s* is struck out with the broad pen. In the MS. it is *a*, not *the vale*.

XXVIII.

It grew—a Shape arrayed in mail
 Brighter than the viper's scale,
 And upborne on wings whose grain
 Was as the light of sunny rain.

XXIX.

On its helm, seen far away,
 A planet, like the Morning's, lay;
 And those plumes its¹ light rained thro'
 Like a shower of crimson dew.

XXX.

With step as soft as wind it past
 O'er the heads of men—so fast
 That they knew the presence there,
 And looked,—and all was empty air.

XXXI.

As flowers beneath May's² footstep waken,
 As stars from Night's loose hair are shaken,
 As waves arise when loud winds call,
 Thoughts sprung where'er that step did fall.³

XXXII.

And the prostrate multitude
 Looked—and ankle-deep in blood,
 Hope, that maiden most serene,
 Was walking with a quiet mien:

¹ This word was printed *it* instead of *its* in all editions till Mr. Rossetti corrected it on surmise. The correction is confirmed by the MS.

² In Hunt's edition, *the footstep*: in Mrs. Shelley's and Mr. Rossetti's edi-

tions, *May's footsteps*: in the MS. *May's footstep*, which corresponds with *step* in the last line of the stanza.

³ This full-point is the only stop in this stanza in the MS.

XXXIII.

And Anarchy, the ghastly birth,
 Lay dead earth upon the earth;
 The Horse of Death tameless as wind
 Fled, and with his hoofs did grind
 To dust, the murderers thronged behind.¹

XXXIV.

A rushing light of clouds and splendour,
 A sense awakening and yet tender
 Was heard and felt—and at its close
 These words of joy and fear arose

XXXV.

As if their own indignant Earth
 Which gave the sons of England birth
 Had felt their² blood upon her brow,
 And shuddering with a mother's throe

XXXVI.

Had turnèd every drop of blood
 By which her face had been bedewed
 To an accent unwithstood,—
 As if her heart had cried aloud :

XXXVII.

“Men of England, heirs of Glory,
 Heroes of unwritten story,
 Nurslings of one mighty Mother,
 Hopes of her, and one another ;

¹ The last three lines of this stanza are in Shelley's writing, punctuated as above. There is no stop in the MS.

at *earth*, in the second line.

² Mrs. Shelley had written *the* : Shelley changed it to *their*.

XXXVIII.

“ Rise like Lions after slumber
 In unvanquishable number,¹
 Shake your chains to earth like dew
 Which in sleep had fallen on you—
 Ye are many—they are few.²

XXXIX.

“ What is Freedom?—ye can tell
 That which slavery is, too well—
 For its very name has grown
 To an echo of your own.

XL.

“ ’Tis to work and have such pay
 As just keeps life from day to day
 In your limbs, as in a cell
 For the tyrants’ use to dwell³

XLI.

“ So that ye for them are made
 Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade,
 With or without your own will bent
 To their defence and nourishment.

XLII.

“ ’Tis to see your children weak
 With their mothers pine and peak,
 When the winter winds are bleak,—
 They are dying whilst I speak.

¹ This comma is not in the MS.

² Hunt omitted this line.

³ This line is generally printed with a colon at the end : there is no stop

in the MS. ; and I think the next stanza is meant to be read continuously with this.

XLIII.

"Tis to hunger for such diet
As the rich man in his riot
Casts to the fat dogs that lie
Surfeiting beneath his eye;

XLIV.

"Tis to let the Ghost of Gold
Take from Toil a thousandfold
More than e'er¹ its substance could
In the tyrannies of old.

XLV.

"Paper coin—that forgery
Of the title deeds, which ye
Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of Earth.

XLVI.

"Tis to be a slave in soul
And to hold no strong controul
Over your own wills, but be
All that others make of ye.

XLVII.

"And at length when ye complain
With a murmur weak and vain
'Tis to see the Tyrant's crew
Ride over your wives and you—
Blood is on the grass like dew.

¹ In the MS., *ere*.

XLVIII.

“Then it is to feel revenge
Fiercely thirsting to exchange
Blood for blood—and wrong for wrong—
Do not thus when ye are strong.

XLIX.

“Birds find rest, in narrow nest
When weary of their wingèd quest;
Beasts find fare, in woody lair
When storm and snow are in the air.¹

L.

“Asses, swine, have litter spread
And with fitting food are fed;
All things have a home but one—
Thou, Oh, Englishman, hast none!

LI.

“This is Slavery—savage men,
Or wild beasts within a den
Would endure not as ye do—
But such ills they never knew.

LII.

“What art thou Freedom? O! could slaves
Answer from their living graves
This demand—tyrants would flee
Like a dream's dim imagery:

¹ In Mrs. Shelley's editions (followed by Mr. Rossetti in this respect), there is a stanza between XLIX and L, as follows:

Horses, oxen, have a home,
When from daily toil they come;
Household dogs, when the wind roars,
Find a home within warm doors.

But as this stanza does not occur in the MS. revised for press by Shelley, I presume it was deliberately (and I think wisely) rejected by him. If so, it was probably recovered from his rough notes. Hunt reads *the* for *their* in line 2 of stanza XLIX.

LIII.

“Thou art not, as impostors say,
A shadow soon to pass away,
A superstition, and a name
Echoing from the cave¹ of Fame.

LIV.

“For the labourer thou art bread,
And a comely table spread
From his daily labour come
To² a neat and happy home.

LV.

“Thou art clothes, and fire, and food
For the trampled multitude—
No—in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be
As in England now we see.

LVI.

“To the rich thou art a check,
When his foot is on the neck
Of his victim, thou dost make
That he treads upon a snake.

LVII.

“Thou art Justice—ne'er for gold
May thy righteous laws be sold
As laws are in England—thou
Shield'st³ alike the high and low.

¹ In the MS. *caves* originally; but the *s* is struck through with the broad pen: nevertheless Hunt printed *caves*. Mrs. Shelley and Mr. Rossetti give *cave*.
² So in the MS.: *In* in previous

editions.

³ So in the MS., and in Hunt's and Mr. Rossetti's editions, but *Shieldest* in Mrs. Shelley's.

LVIII.

"Thou art Wisdom—Freemen never
 Dream that God will damn¹ for ever
 All who think those things untrue
 Of which Priests make such ado.

LIX.

"Thou art Peace—never by thee
 Would blood and treasure wasted be
 As tyrants wasted them,² when all
 Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

LX.

"What if English toil and blood
 Was poured forth, even as a flood?
 It availed, Oh, Liberty!
 To dim, but not extinguish thee.

LXI.

"Thou art Love—the rich have kist
 Thy feet, and like him following Christ,
 Give³ their substance to the free
 And thro' the rough world follow thee

LXII.

"Or⁴ turn their wealth to arms, and make
 War for thy belovèd sake

¹ Hunt printed these words as *Freedom never dreams that God will damn*: Mrs. Shelley substituted *freemen never dream that God will doom*. Mr. Rossetti, striking a balance between the two texts, arrived at the right reading,—that given above, which is the version of the MS.

² In the MS. *those* in Mrs. Shelley's writing is altered to *them* in Shelley's.

³ *Give* in Hunt's edition,—*Given* in Mrs. Shelley's and Mr. Rossetti's. In

the MS. the word is written *Given*; but the *n* is cancelled by Shelley. In the next line the MS. and Hunt's edition read *follow*; Mrs. Shelley's and Mr. Rossetti's *followed*.

⁴ In all editions known to me this word is *Oh*; and there is a full-stop at the end of stanza LXI. The MS. furnishes the reading I have given; and indeed the old reading is barely sense.

On wealth, and war, and fraud—whence they
Drew the power which is their prey.

LXIII.

“ Science,¹ Poetry and Thought
Are thy lamps ; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
So serene, they curse² it not.

LXIV.

“ Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,
All that can adorn and bless
Art thou—let³ deeds not words express
Thine exceeding loveliness.

LXV.

“ Let a great Assembly be
Of the fearless and the free⁴
On some spot of English ground
Where the plains stretch wide around.

LXVI.

“ Let the blue sky overhead,
The green earth on which ye tread,
All that must eternal be
Witness the solemnity.

¹ In all editions known to me the word *and* is inserted between *Science* and *Poetry* ; it is not in the MS. ; but Mrs. Shelley had begun to spell *Poetry* with a small *p*, which is cancelled in such a manner as to look something like the sign δ .

² In the MS. originally *curst*, but altered to *curse*. Mrs. Shelley and Mr. Rossetti give this line as “ Such they

curse their Maker not” ; but in the MS. and Hunt's edition it is as above.

³ In the MS., *but* was originally written here ; but *let* is substituted.

⁴ Hunt printed this line thus :

Of the fearless, of the free,

but that reading is not in the MS. nor in any edition known to me beside Hunt's.

LXVII.

"From the corners uttermost
Of the bounds of English coast;
From every hut, village and town
Where those who live and suffer moan
For others' misery or¹ their own,

LXVIII.

"From the workhouse and the prison
Where pale as corpses newly risen,
Women, children, young and old
Groan for pain, and weep for cold—

LXIX.

"From the haunts of daily life
Where is waged the daily strife
With common wants and common cares
Which sows² the human heart with tares—

LXX.

"Lastly from the palaces
Where the murmur of distress
Echoes, like the distant sound
Of a wind alive around³

LXXI.

"Those prison halls of wealth and fashion
Where some few feel such compassion
For those who groan, and toil, and wail
As must make their brethren pale—

¹ Hunt printed *and* for *or*: all other editions known to me follow the MS. in giving *or*.

² In the MS. *sows*: in previous editions, *sow*.

³ There is no stop after *around* in

the MS.; and there should be none. Hunt and Mrs. Shelley introduced a semicolon: Mr. Rossetti substitutes a dash; but the meaning is clearly "a wind around those prison halls."

LXXII.

“Ye who suffer woes untold,
Or to feel, or to behold
Your lost country bought and sold
With a price of blood and gold—

LXXIII.

“Let a vast assembly be,
And with great solemnity
Declare with measured words that ye
Are, as God has made ye, free—

LXXIV.

“Be your strong and simple words
Keen to wound as sharpened swords,
And wide as targes let them be,
With their shade to cover ye.

LXXV.

“Let the tyrants pour around
With a quick and startling sound,
Like the loosening of a sea,
Troops of armed emblazonry.

LXXVI.

“Let the charged artillery drive
Till the dead air seems alive
With the clash of clanging wheels,
And the tramp of horses' heels.

LXXVII.

“Let the fixed bayonet
Gleam with sharp desire to wet
Its bright point in English blood
Looking keen as one for food.

LXXVIII.

“ Let the horsemen’s scymitars
 Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars
 Thirsting to eclipse their burning
 In a sea of death and mourning.

LXXIX.

“ Stand ye calm and resolute,
 Like a forest close and mute,
 With folded arms and looks which are
 Weapons of an unvanquished war,

LXXX.

“ And let Panic, who outspeeds
 The career of armèd steeds
 Pass, a disregarded shade
 Thro’ your phalanx undismayed.

LXXXI.¹

“ Let the laws of your own land,
 Good or ill, between ye stand
 Hand to hand, and foot to foot,
 Arbiters of the dispute,

LXXXII.

“ The old laws of England—they
 Whose reverend heads with age are grey,

¹ Hunt printed stanzas LXXXI to LXXXIII in italics, with the following note :—“The three stanzas next ensuing are printed in italics, not because they are better, or indeed so well written, as some of the rest, but as marking out the sober, lawful, and charitable mode of proceeding advocated and anticipated by this supposed reckless

innovator. ‘*Passive obedience*’ he certainly had not ; but here follows a picture and a recommendation of ‘*non-resistance*,’ in all its glory. The mingled emotion and dignity of it is admirably expressed in the second line of stanza eighty-five. Let churches militant read it, and blush to call the author no Christian !”

Children of a wiser day ;
 And whose solemn voice must be
 Thine own echo—Liberty !

LXXXIII.

“ On those who first should violate
 Such sacred heralds in their state
 Rest the blood that must ensue,
 And it will not rest on you.

LXXXIV.

“ And if then the tyrants dare
 Let them ride among you there,
 Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew,—
 What they like, that let them do.

LXXXV.

“ With folded arms and steady eyes,
 And little fear, and less surprise
 Look upon them as they slay¹
 Till their rage has died away.

LXXXVI.

“ Then they will return with shame
 To the place from which they came,
 And the blood thus shed will speak
 In hot blushes on their cheek.

LXXXVII.

“ Every woman in the land
 Will point at them as they stand—
 They will hardly dare to greet
 Their acquaintance in the street.

¹ Hunt printed *stay* for *slay* ; but there is some excuse for taking the *l*
slay is in all other editions which I for a *t*.
 have consulted, and in the MS., though

LXXXVIII.

“ And the bold, true warriors
 Who have hugged Danger in wars¹
 Will turn to those who would be free
 Ashamed of such base company.

LXXXIX.

“ And that slaughter to the Nation
 Shall steam up like inspiration,
 Eloquent, oracular ;
 A volcano heard afar.

XC.

“ And these words shall then become²
 Like oppression's thundered doom
 Ringing thro' each heart and brain,
 Heard again—again—again—

XCI.

“ Rise like Lions after slumber
 In unvanquishable number—
 Shake your chains to earth like dew
 Which in sleep had fallen on you—
 Ye are many—they are few.”

¹ So in the MS. and in Hunt's edition ; but *in the wars* in Mrs. Shelley's and Mr. Rossetti's : the change is specious, and may be from Shelley's notes ; but I doubt it.

² In the MS. this line originally

stood thus—

And these words shall be the beacon ;
 but that reading is cancelled, and another start made below, still in Mrs. Shelley's writing, with the reading given in the text.