

英国作家生平丛书

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writers' lives

Mary Shelley

玛丽·雪莱

MARTIN GARRETT



Gal 92
FRANKENSTEIN;

OR,

THE MODERN PROMETHEUS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?—
PARADISE LOST.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR
LACKINGTON, HUGHES, HARDING, MAVOR, & JONES,
FINSBURY SQUARE.

1818.

W 上海外语教育出版社
外 社 SHANGHAI FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION PRESS

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Mary W. Shelley

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

玛丽·雪莱 / 盖瑞特 (Garrett, M.) 编著.

—上海: 上海外语教育出版社, 2009

(英国作家生平丛书)

ISBN 978-7-5446-1139-8

I. 玛… II. 盖… III. ①英语—语言读物 ②雪莱, M. (1797~1851) —生平事迹
IV. H319.4: K

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字 (2008) 第179435号

图字: 09-2007-522号

Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press in association with the British Library.

Licensed for sale in the People's Republic of China.

本书由大英图书馆出版社授权上海外语教育出版社出版。

仅供在中华人民共和国境内销售。

出版发行: 上海外语教育出版社

(上海外国语大学内) 邮编: 200083

电 话: 021-65425300 (总机)

电子邮箱: bookinfo@sflep.com.cn

网 址: <http://www.sflep.com.cn> <http://www.sflep.com>

责任编辑: 陶 怡

印 刷: 上海市印刷七厂有限公司

经 销: 新华书店上海发行所

开 本: 787×1092 1/16 印张 8.25 字数 144千字

版 次: 2009年3月第1版 2009年3月第1次印刷

印 数: 5 000 册

书 号: ISBN 978-7-5446-1139-8 / K · 0032

定 价: 24.00 元

本版图书如有印装质量问题, 可向本社调换

总序

普通中国读者，包括英语专业的学生，对于英国文学的了解一般只限于个别经典作品，而对作家其人其事及其整个文学创作情况所知甚少。其中部分的原因是文学史家们编写的英国文学史往往注重介绍作品的情节内容，对作家的生活经历、作品的具体创作过程着墨不多。上海外语教育出版社从英国大英图书馆出版社(The British Library)引进出版“英国作家生平丛书”，弥补了这方面的缺憾。该丛书以图文并茂的形式讲述莎士比亚等14位英国著名作家的生平故事，同时穿插介绍他们的作品，有助于充实读者对英国文学的认识。

英国文学源远流长，经历了长期复杂的发展演变过程。在这个过程中，文学本体以外的各种现实的、历史的、政治的、文化的力量对文学发生着影响，而作家个体的独特生活遭遇也是造就文学杰作的一个重要因素。“英国作家生平丛书”对14位名家的传记式介绍，充分展示了这一点。戏剧方面，莎士比亚是英国文艺复兴时期最杰出的剧作家，他当过演员，其作品思想内容深刻、艺术表现手法精湛，历经几个世纪长演不衰。诗歌方面，浪漫主义诗人华兹华斯、柯勒律治、拜伦、济慈的不同身世对他们的诗歌创作及艺术风格产生深刻影响；维多利亚时代诗人伊丽莎白·巴雷特和罗伯特·布朗宁的爱情故事是英国文坛的一段佳话。小说方面，狄更斯是19世纪英国最伟大的小说家，他的许多小说以孤儿为主人公，这与作家童年时代的一段不幸经历有关；康拉德来自波兰，将自己奇特的身世背景和航海经历交融在字里行间；女作家奥斯丁、玛丽·雪莱、勃朗特姐妹、伍尔夫以女性特有的视角和敏锐的观察描摹人性与社会，思考妇女的生存状况，她们的小说无论在思想主题、题材表现方面，还是在叙述手法上，都有创新，对推动英国文学的发展作出了突出贡献。

“英国作家生平丛书”原版由大英图书馆出版社出版，体现出图书馆出版物的特点。书中配有大量的插图，有些是珍贵的手稿，有些是罕见的照片，有些是博物馆或美术馆珍藏的油画和素描，让读者有幸一睹作家的风采，产生直观的感觉。这些插图带有不同时代的印记，营造出浓厚的历史感。丛书的作者均为专业领域里有着较深造诣的学者，对史料的掌握系统全面，他们用生动的语言娓娓讲述作家生平事迹，点评具体文学作品，书末还附有供读者进一步阅读的书单，推荐了有代表性的文献，对英语专业学生撰写课程论文或毕业论文很有帮助。

“英国作家生平丛书”内容有趣，插图精美，文字简洁，兼顾普及性和专业性，是学习和了解英国文学的良师益友。

王守仁
南京大学

导 读



玛丽·雪莱 (Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley, 1797-1851) 是 19 世纪英国文学史上一位杰出的女作家, 也是浪漫派大诗人珀西·雪莱 (Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1792-1822) 的第二任妻子。她生于伦敦, 父母都是当时的政界名人。母亲是著名女权主义者、教育家和作家玛丽·沃斯通克拉夫特 (Mary Wollstonecraft, 1759-1797), 父亲是自由主义者、哲学家, 也是信奉无政府主义和无神论的思想家威廉·戈德温 (William Godwin, 1756-1836)。他们的思想对玛丽的成长起了潜移默化的作用。

玛丽出生后不到 10 天, 母亲就因产后感染而去世, 这使得玛丽一直感到负疚, 始终怀着“自己害死了母亲”的罪恶感。玛丽的母亲去世后不久, 她父亲又另寻新欢, 她便不得不与继母以及异母兄妹一起生活。玛丽自幼博览群书, 对古典文学、当时的浪漫派诗歌和哥特式小说均有涉猎, 为日后自己从事文学创作打下了基础。

玛丽容貌出众, 气质不凡。1814 年 5 月, 她与前来拜访其父亲的年轻诗人雪莱一见钟情。两个月后, 两人不顾双方家庭反对, 一起私奔离开了英国。他们曾一度旅居法国、瑞士。1816 年 9 月, 他们返回伦敦。不久, 雪莱的原配妻子哈丽特自杀身亡。同年 12 月, 玛丽与雪莱正式结婚。

玛丽一生数次遭受家庭不幸。她在婚后接连失去了三个孩子。更为不幸的是, 1822 年 7 月 8 日, 当她和丈夫在意大利避暑时, 因突遇风暴, 丈夫不幸溺水身亡。第二年, 玛丽携不满三岁的儿子珀西回到英国。雪莱的父亲对她很苛刻, 只支付给她们母子微薄的生活费, 而且还严令禁止她公开雪莱的“劣迹”, 否则就中断接济。玛丽毅然辛苦笔耕, 并成为自食其力的专业作家。她把主要精力投入到小说创作以及编辑、整理雪莱的遗作中, 为确立雪莱在英国文坛的地位做出了杰出的贡献。1824 年, 她出版了《雪莱诗遗作》(*Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley*), 1839 年又编辑出版了四卷本《雪莱诗集》(*The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*)。雪莱

的大量作品得以在1847年问世，这应完全归功于玛丽的艰辛努力。

玛丽·雪莱一生创作了多部小说，被誉为英国文坛颇有名望的浪漫派小说家。此外，她还写游记、故事和诗文。她的主要作品有《弗兰肯斯坦》(Frankenstein, 1818)、《玛蒂尔达》(Mathilda, 1819)、《瓦尔珀格》(Valperga; or The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca, 1823)、《珀金·瓦贝克的财富》(The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck, 1830)和《最后一个人》(The Last Man, 1833)等。

《弗兰肯斯坦》是玛丽的第一部作品，出版后即刻引起当时社会舆论，特别是科学界的广泛争论。这是一部科幻题材作品，但富有浪漫气息，既有令人毛骨悚然的恐怖场景，又散发出深切的人文关怀，一直使学界赞叹不已，从而奠定了她在英国文学史上的地位。

《弗兰肯斯坦》的主人公弗兰肯斯坦是一位从事生命科学研究的学者，力图用人工创造出生命。经过无数次实验后，他终于创造出一个面目可憎、奇丑无比的怪物。起始，这个人造的怪物心地善良，对人充满善意和感恩之情。但随着时间的推移，他的欲望越来越强。他不仅向其创造者和其他人索取人生的各种权利，而且还要求他们为他创造一个配偶。当他欲望不能得到满足，并处处受到别人嫌恶和歧视时，他感到非常痛苦。从此，他憎恨一切，还想毁灭一切。他杀害了弗兰肯斯坦的弟弟威廉，又企图谋害弗兰肯斯坦的未婚妻伊丽莎白。出于愤恨，弗兰肯斯坦不得不追捕和制服自己所创造的这个恶魔般的怪物，可惜在搏斗中与之同归于尽。该作品常被认为是“有史以来最伟大的恐怖作品之一”。

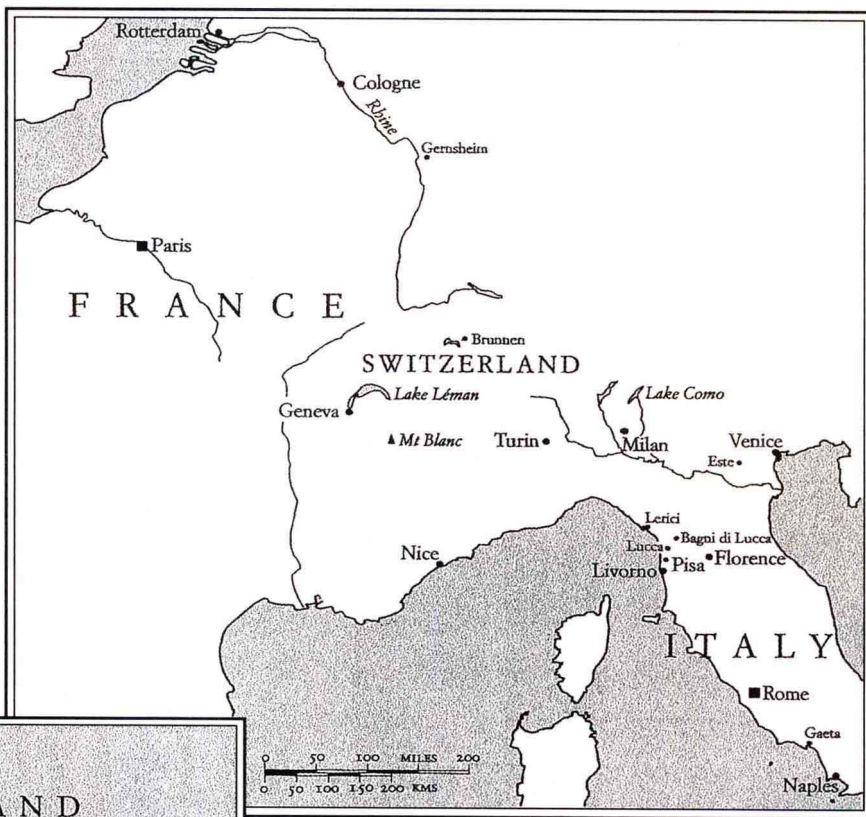
《纽约时报》曾发表评论说：“《弗兰肯斯坦》是流行的文化神话中那种傻乎乎的珍宝之一。”从玛丽的身世来看，她的确有过“傻乎乎”的幼稚人生经历。她的童年是不幸的。出生不久，母亲就撒手人寰。她由父亲抚养长大，是在父亲的书房里接受教育的。但是与其丈夫、父亲、母亲一样，她是个天才，不仅写出一部风行世界的名著，而且还有那么强烈的超越性，这不能不说是世界文学史上的一个奇迹。

这部由马丁·盖瑞特(Martin Garrett)所撰、大英图书馆出版社出版的《玛丽·雪莱》是一本图文并茂的文学入门书，融作家生平、创作主题、思想背景与学术争鸣于一体。书中记载的大量掌故和趣闻更是引人入胜。毫无疑问，这是玛丽·雪莱的爱好者与研究者必读的文献。



Mary Shelley

Maps showing places in England and Europe where Mary Shelley lived, travelled and wrote.





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Mary Godwin: 'bold, somewhat imperious, and active of mind'

It is not singular,' says Mary Shelley in her 1831 introduction to *Frankenstein*, 'that, as the daughter of two persons of distinguished literary celebrity, I should very early have thought of writing'. The 'distinguished' parents in question, William Godwin (1756–1836) and Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), not only wrote books but believed that they could, gradually at least, change the world by doing so.

Godwin and Wollstonecraft lived in a society where power, wealth and tradition still largely controlled nominally democratic politics and nominally equitable justice. In the book that made him famous – or, in conservative circles, notorious – *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), Godwin argues for the removal of such inequalities. This was to be achieved through reason, education, and individual improvement. A series of novels beginning with *Caleb Williams* (1794) make the same points in a form and style adapted to a wider readership, and were a stronger influence on his daughter, who also became a novelist of ideas.

Mary Wollstonecraft, like Godwin, hoped to reform society by the power of reasoned argument. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) she makes the case that male 'superiority' is purely physical and that any apparent inferiority is mainly the result of a 'false system of education' which considers 'females rather as women than as human creatures' and encourages ignorance and superficiality. Wollstonecraft's experience of men tended to confirm her faith in women. She had defended her compliant mother against her bullying and improvident father, and her lover, the American businessman Gilbert Imlay, abandoned her and their infant daughter, Fanny, for another woman.

Wollstonecraft and Godwin first met briefly, and disliked each other, in 1791. But when they met again in 1796 they rapidly, and to the considerable surprise of people who knew them, became close friends and then lovers. Both were highly critical of the institution of marriage, but when she became pregnant she persuaded him that, in the present state of society, it was necessary to marry. Their daughter, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, was born at Somers Town, near London, on





Previous pages:

Left:

William Godwin by James Northcote. His daughter, Mary, says in her introduction to his novel *Caleb Williams* that the portrait 'is strikingly like and characteristic, with an air of mildness and contemplation yet fervour'.

National Portrait Gallery,
London

Right:

Mary Wollstonecraft by John Opie. Her writings, apart from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, include a novel – *Mary* – and a sequence of letters concerning her Scandinavian journey of 1795. Her daughter, Mary, was a keen reader of her work.

National Portrait Gallery,
London

30th August 1797. Only twelve days later Wollstonecraft died of puerperal fever – a common occurrence at a time when the medical profession was unaware that infection was introduced by the hands of doctors and midwives. Soon after her death Godwin combated his grief by writing a moving and honest account of her life, *Memoirs of the Author of 'The Rights of Woman'* (1798). He included accounts of Wollstonecraft's liaisons with Imlay and himself and her suicidal attempts prompted by Imlay's disloyalty. The unintended consequence of such honesty was a scandal which took many years to die away. Many commentators decided that she was simply a 'prostitute', and that her views on female emancipation confirmed this. Godwin's own reputation had already suffered as part of a more general change in the English political climate. There had been a movement away from widespread sympathy with the ideals of the early phases of the French Revolution. The reformist views of writers like Godwin and Wollstonecraft met with increasing distrust or neglect once the Revolution had descended into bloodshed and England had embarked on twenty years of almost non-stop war with France.

Wollstonecraft's death left Godwin to look after his stepdaughter, Fanny, and his new daughter, Mary. Female friends and servants took over the practical side of caring for them, but Mary in particular developed for her father, from early childhood on, what she later described as 'an excessive and romantic attachment'. A less welcome influence came into Mary Godwin's life in 1801 when her father met and married their next-door neighbour, Mary Jane Clairmont. She already had two children; she described herself as a widow but in fact had not been married to either of the men who fathered her son Charles, born in 1795, and her daughter Jane, born in 1798. The marriage to Godwin took place because Clairmont, like Wollstonecraft before her, found herself pregnant. The child, named William, died at or soon after birth in April 1802. A second William was born in March 1803.

The marriage was, on the whole, a happy one for the couple involved. But the second Mrs Godwin had a habit of telling untruths which sometimes exasperated her husband and contributed to the distaste which many of his friends felt for her. Succeeding the venerated Wollstonecraft was not, of course, easy; her portrait by John Opie, on show in the study where Godwin received his visitors, perpetually invited comparisons. But the greatest tension appears to have been with her

stepdaughter, Mary Godwin. Fanny was more docile, more easily dominated by the often forceful Mrs Godwin, and her own children did not suffer Mary's sense of displacement. From infancy Mary was evidently intelligent, spirited, and keenly aware of her own mother's superior intellectual status. Above all, stepmother and step-siblings came between Mary and her adored father. Conversely Mary Jane was still, many years later, accusing him of loving the adult Mary more than he loved her.

Mary Godwin later exaggerated how difficult life with her stepmother had been. It is clearly not true, as she gave the impression, that other members of the family were carefully educated while she and Fanny were left to do domestic chores. We know that all the girls learned French, Italian, and drawing, among other subjects, from the Godwins and a governess. Wollstonecraft might have laid more stress on the equality of the sexes, but the children were not kept in ignorance of such ideas; by their teens Mary and Jane were well versed in her work, and in 1812 or 1813 vigorously took the feminist side in a family discussion on whether 'women's vocation' should be 'purely domestic, or whether they should engage in outside interests'.

Godwin in particular encouraged the children to read and enquire widely, to learn where possible for themselves, and to use their imaginations. They were helped in these aims by some of his own books for children. Many of these were written for the Juvenile Library series, published by the bookselling business set up by the Godwins in 1805 to enable the family, with Godwin's books now unfashionable or politically suspect, to stay afloat financially. (When writing for children he used such pseudonyms as Edward Baldwin and Theophilus Marcliffe.) Instead of overloading



Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley as a child, engraved by Robert Hartley Cromek, 1850.

Private collection/Bridgeman Art Library



Skinner Street, where the Godwin family lived, and ran their publishing company and bookshop, from 1807.

*Guilldhall Library,
Corporation of London*

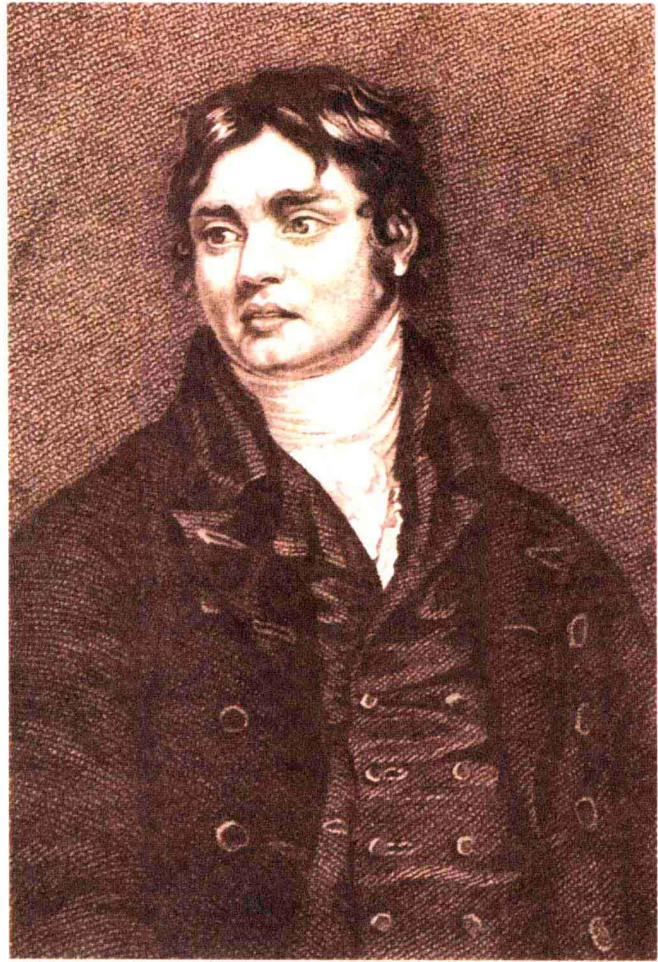
young minds with such inessential facts as ‘from what part of the globe you receive every article of your furniture’, he says in the introduction to his *Bible Stories* (1802), books for children should attend to ‘those things which open the heart, which insensibly initiate the learner in the relations and generous offices of society, and enable him to put himself in imagination into the place of his neighbour, to feel his feelings, and to wish his wishes’.

Among the children’s books published by the Godwins were *Tales from Shakespeare*, written by Mary Lamb with some assistance from her brother Charles, and Charles’s *Adventures of Ulysses*. The Lambs were frequent visitors to Somers Town and then to 41 Skinner Street, where both the bookshop (on the ground floor) and the Godwins (on the upper floors) moved in 1807. Contact with them and Godwin’s many other notable friends was probably at least as educative as reading the books. The composer Muzio Clementi, the painters James Northcote and Thomas Lawrence, the young radical essayist William Hazlitt, the scientist and poet Humphry Davy, and the surgeon and chemist Anthony Carlisle were among those who visited most often.

One visitor who made a particularly deep impression on the family was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, poet, philosopher and brilliant talker. If Godwin had an

intellectual belief in the joys and the usefulness of imagination, Coleridge had a visionary sense of its transforming power. Godwin, not easily impressed as a rule, felt, when he first knew him, that in his charismatic company he was 'a purer, a more unreserved and natural being' than with anyone else. One evening – it may have been as early as 1804, since Coleridge was abroad between then and 1806 – he recited his poem 'The Ancient Mariner'. Jane and Mary (both aged only six or seven if the date was 1804) hid under the sofa and were discovered but allowed, at the poet's entreaty, to stay and listen. Long after Coleridge had, as far as Godwin and others were concerned, dissipated his youthful promise, the icy, eerie world of 'The Ancient Mariner' and its themes of responsibility and love stayed with Mary Shelley as an influence on *Frankenstein*.

It is not surprising that, in such a setting, Mary wrote: 'As a child I scribbled; and my favourite pastime during the hours given me for recreation was to "write stories".' When she was fourteen and newly inspired by attending four of Coleridge's popular lectures on Shakespeare and Milton, she wrote weekly lectures of her own for her little brother to deliver; Aaron Burr, the disgraced former Vice-President of the United States, who had been drawn to Godwin's house in Skinner Street by his books and drawn back by the family's hospitality, heard William on 'The Influence of Government on the Character of the People'. After tea, Burr records, 'the girls' – Mary, Jane and possibly Fanny – 'sung and danced an hour'. No doubt they were keen to show their guest that their talents were not solely intellectual; a month earlier he had presented the three girls with silk stockings when they were about to go to a ball and had judged them, in their ballgowns, 'extremely neat, and with taste'.



Samuel Taylor Coleridge, aged thirty-two, in an engraving from James Northcote's portrait of 1804.

The British Library, London, pp54592

Nevertheless Claire Clairmont (as Jane later called herself) could maintain with only some exaggeration – but much envy of her stepsister’s achievements – that ‘in our family if you cannot write an epic poem or a novel that by its originality knocks all other novels on the head, you are a despicable creature not worth acknowledging’.

Godwin was aware of the considerable potential of the daughter he described to an unknown correspondent as ‘singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active of mind’, greatly desirous of knowledge, and almost invincibly persevering. But he seems often to have been somewhat distant as a father, at times ponderous and theoretical rather than spontaneously affectionate. One rather harsh comment survives: ‘Tell Mary,’ he says in a letter of May 1811 to his wife, ‘that, in spite of unfavourable appearances, I have still faith that she will become a good and wise woman’. The thirteen-year-old girl had just gone with her stepmother to Ramsgate, on the Kent coast, because her hand had erupted with eczema or a similar condition and sea-bathing had been prescribed as part of her cure; it seems probable that the eruption was psychosomatic in origin.

Mary Godwin remained in Ramsgate for several months as a boarder at Miss Pettman’s School. When she came back in December Burr noted that ‘Mary has come home, and looks very lovely, but has not the air of strong health’. By March 1812, for whatever reason, her skin condition had flared up again, and this time the infection spread along one of her arms. Her doctor examined her again and recommended more salt-water bathing. This cannot, however, have been the only reason for Godwin’s decision to send her on a long visit to stay with the family of his acquaintance William Baxter on the eastern Scottish coast. Presumably he thought that an extended time away from Skinner Street would help to dissipate family tension.

Mary Godwin sailed to Dundee. The journey took a week, during which the inexperienced traveller was sick, knew no one, and somehow was robbed of the money concealed in her corset. Life with the Baxters, however, turned out to be a fulfilling experience. Although they belonged to the Glassite church – a strict Protestant sect – family relationships were, especially when compared with those at Skinner Street, stable and relaxed. Isabella Baxter, four years older than Mary and a keen reader of Wollstonecraft, rapidly became her closest friend. A new landscape