

## Shelley's Ghost

**Interesting and detailed account of the "supposed" Percy Shelley assassination attempt here at Plas Tan-Yr-Allt. February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1813.**

Shelley returned to Wales on November 13, going to Plas Tan-Yr-Allt. There he worked very constantly at his essays, an unpublished collection of 'Biblical Extracts' for popular distribution, and 'Queen Mab.' There also occurred the second assault upon him, which has been received with more distrust than any other event in his life. On February 26, between ten and eleven o'clock, Shelley, after retiring, was alarmed by a noise in the parlour below. He went down with two loaded pistols to the billiard room and followed the sound of retreating footsteps into a small office, where he saw a man passing, through a glass window. The man fired, and Shelley's pistol flashed, on which the man knocked Shelley down, and, while they struggled, Shelley fired his second pistol, which he thought took effect. The man arose with a cry and said, 'By God, I will be revenged! I will murder your wife! I will ravish your sister! By God, I will be revenged!' He then fled. The servants were still up, and the whole family assembled in the parlour and remained for two hours. Shelley and his servant, Dan, who had that day returned from prison, sat up. At four o'clock, Harriet heard a pistol shot, and on going down, found that Shelley's clothes and the window curtain had been shot through. Dan had left the room to see what time it was, when Shelley heard a noise at the window; as he approached it, a man thrust his arm through the glass and fired. Shelley's pistol again missed fire, and he struck at the man with an old sword; while they were still struggling, Dan came back, and the man escaped. Peacock was there the next summer, and heard that persons, who examined the premises in the morning, found the grass trampled and rolled on, but there were no footprints except toward the house, and the impression of the ball on the wainscot showed that the pistol had been fired toward the window and not from it. There are other accounts of what Shelley said. In after years he ascribed the spasms of pain, from which he suffered, to the pressure of the man's knee on his body. It is not unlikely, as Dowden remarks, that Dan Healy had been followed by a spy, and it is known that Shelley was dogged by Leeson, whom he feared long afterwards. If the affair is regarded as an illusion of the sort to which Shelley was said to be subject, the material circumstances show that the event was one of intense reality to Shelley, and it is not strange that he immediately left the neighbourhood, finding life there insupportable. He made a short journey to Ireland, where he arrived March 9, visited the Lakes of Killarney, and returned to Dublin, March 21. Early in April he was back in London.