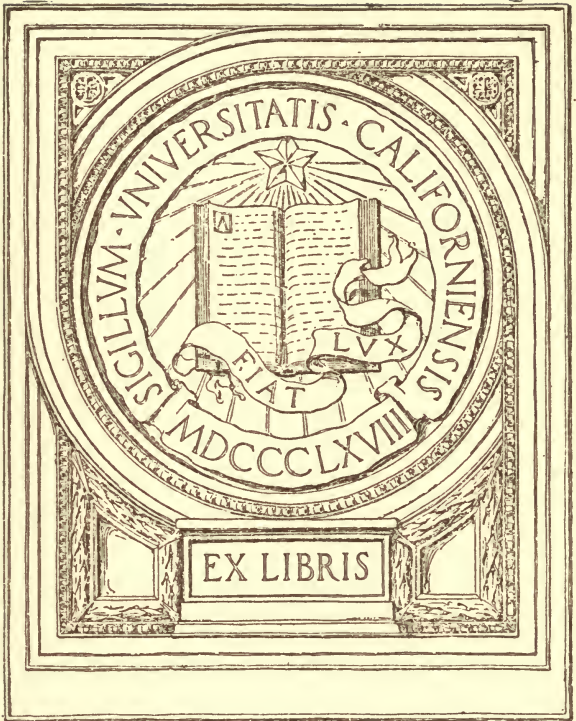


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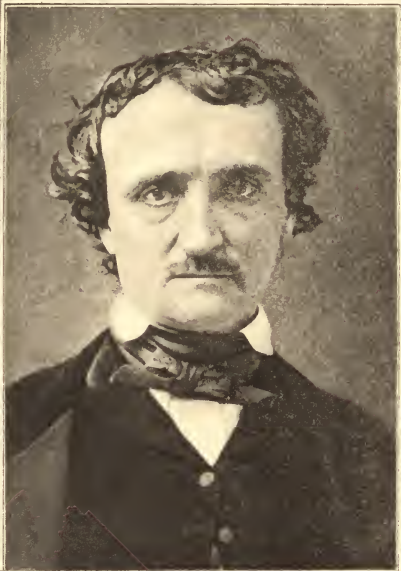
EDITED BY

M. A. DEWOLFE HOWE

EDGAR ALLAN POE

BY

JOHN MACY



Edgar A. Poe.

THE
Beacon Biographies
OF
Eminent Americans
Edited by
M. A. De Wolfe Howe



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JOHN MACY



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TO
V. R. E. OF VIRGINIA

PREFACE

Whoever writes of Poe or Whitman finds himself in controversies irrelevant to pure letters. Whitman has become prophet of an Idea, and the fierce light that beats about him is not clear to see by. Poe, on the contrary, paid a posthumous penalty for his sins by furnishing a moral issue in biography, over which there is even to this day unprofitable contest. Worse yet, he has become one of the toys in the childish game of international and intersectional prejudice-pitching. Europe, delighting to praise him, but ignorant of the biographical facts, has sent us the best critical essays, with an inkling that so fine a poet is more than we deserve who do not enshrine him in our Hall of Fame and persist in telling unpleasant truths about his life. New England, surcharged with the burden of Longfellow and Whittier and remembering that Emerson dismissed Poe

as "the jingle man," has turned cautious eyes from the pacific, homely records of its own poets to the unlovely story of Poe, and has betrayed its inherited doubt whether a bad man can be a good poet. Virginia, not yet accustomed to feel that the country as a whole has title right to wear her jewels, has given Poe an individual setting in her crown whence he throws a light not universally poetic, but peculiarly Virginian. Sympathy with poets should transcend defence of their private morals. In its best temper, biography takes only a cool interest in Byron's amours or Shelley's desertion of his wife. But, if the starker ethical principles will not retreat from biography, certainly geographical considerations can be persuaded not to interfere.

The *Life and Letters of Poe* should be put together at this day by some one strong enough to ignore no fact and large enough not to follow too creepingly the surviving documents. This little sketch can, of course, undertake no such broad adjustment of the

story of Poe. It follows conventionally from one to another of the topics usually discussed in more extended accounts. But it seeks to treat those topics with fairness to Poe and to give the reader a right view of the man as seen from modern days and interests.

J. M.

WRENTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS,
August 26, 1907.

CHRONOLOGY

1809

January 19. Edgar Poe was born in Boston.

1811

December 8. His mother died.

December 25. Richmond Theatre burned. Poe was taken into the family of John Allan.

1815

June 17. The Allans took Poe to England.

Autumn. Poe was sent to Manor House School, Stoke Newington, near London.

1820

June 20. Poe left England.

August 2. Arrived at Richmond.

1820-25

In school under Masters Clarke and Burke.

1826

February 14. Entered the University of Virginia.

December 15. Left the University.

1827

Published *Tamerlane and Other Poems* in Boston.

May 26. Enlisted in the United States Army.

1829

January 1. Appointed sergeant-major.

February 28. Mrs. Allan died.

April 15. Poe was honourably discharged from the army.

Published *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems* in Baltimore.

1830

July 1. Entered West Point.

October 5. Mr. Allan married his second wife.

1831

March 6. Poe was dismissed from West Point.

CHRONOLOGY

xv

1831 (*continued*)

Published *Poems, Second Edition*, in New York.

1831-33

Obscure years in Baltimore.

1833

October. Published in *Saturday Visiter* "A MS. Found in a Bottle," which won a prize of one hundred dollars.

1834

March 27. Mr. Allan died.

1835

Published in *Southern Literary Messenger* "Berenice," "Morella," "Shadow," and other tales and criticisms.

November. Assistant editor of *Messenger*.

September 22. Secured license for marriage with Virginia Clemm.

1836

Published more tales and criticisms in *Messenger*.

May 16. Married Virginia Clemm.

1837

January 3. Ceased to be editor of *Messenger*.

Went to Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York.

1838

July. *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* was published by Harpers.

Settled in Philadelphia.

1839

April. Published *The Conchologist's First Book*.

July. Became associate editor of *Gentleman's Magazine*.

Published "Silence," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "William Wilson," and other tales and criticisms.

1840

January-June. Published "Journal of Julius Rodman."

June. Resigned from *Gentleman's Magazine*.

1840 (*continued*)

December. Published *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, in two volumes, in Philadelphia.

1841

April. Became editor of *Graham's Magazine*.

Published "Murders in the Rue Morgue."

1842

April. Resigned from *Graham's Magazine*. Published "The Oval Portrait" and "The Masque of the Red Death."

1843

Issued prospectus of a magazine.

Applied for a clerkship in Washington. Published "The Tell-tale Heart," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," "The Gold Bug" (one-hundred-dollar prize story).

1844

April. Moved to New York.

1844 (*continued*)

Published "The Balloon Hoax," "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains."

Became assistant editor on Willis's *Evening Mirror*.

1845

Wiley & Putnam published *Tales*.

February 28. Lectured in New York.

March. Withdrew from *Mirror* and became co-editor of *Broadway Journal*.

Attacked Longfellow.

October. Became sole proprietor of *Broadway Journal*.

October 16. Lectured before Boston Lyceum.

December 26. Bade farewell to *Broadway Journal*.

Published "The Purloined Letter," "The Imp of the Perverse," "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar."

December 31. Wiley & Putnam published *The Raven and Other Poems*.

1846

Spring. Removed to Fordham.

Published "The Literati" and "The Cask of Amontillado."

Newspapers appealed to charity in behalf of the Poes.

1847

January 30. Virginia Poe died.

February 17. Awarded damages for libel by Thomas Dunn English.

Published "Ulalume."

1848

February 3. Lectured in New York on "The Cosmos of the Universe."

George P. Putnam published the final form of this lecture as *Eureka, a Prose Poem.*

Lectured in several cities and began or renewed acquaintance with Mrs. Whitman, Annie Richmond, Mrs. Shelton.

1849

Published "For Annie," "Annabel Lee,"
"The Bells."

July-September. Was in Richmond.

September 29-30. Left Richmond.

October 7. Died in Baltimore.

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

I.

EDGAR POE'S life begins and ends in obscurity, and includes several years about which little is known. For this his secretiveness and mendacity are somewhat responsible. He is authority for the statements that he was born in 1811 and in 1813. The date accepted as true, January 19, 1809, is that which he wrote in the matriculation book of the University of Virginia. When Poe died at the age of forty, famous in three nations, his closest literary associates thought that his birthplace was Baltimore. It was in fact Boston, the "Frogpondium" which he satirised in undutiful despite.

The Poe family may be traced back to one of Cromwell's Irish officers through John Poe, who came from the north of Ireland to Pennsylvania in 1745. Whoever will may discern the Keltic strain in

Poe, and by it account for his melancholy, his sentimentalism, and the magic of his poetry. Perhaps his want of humour may be ascribed to his English mother. Conjectures as to Poe's inherited characteristics are safest when they deal only with his immediate ancestry, his stage-struck father and his pretty mother, actress, dancer, and singer.

Poe's father was David, son of David Poe, of Baltimore. The first David was assistant quartermaster-general during the Revolution. He was patriotic and valorous. To his country in the throes of rebellion he gave money, and after the successful issue of the Revolution he was not reimbursed. In our second war he fought in the ranks at the age of seventy-two. A dozen years later Lafayette kissed the grave of David Poe, and said, "Ici repose un cœur noble." Warrior David was not the man to forgive his son for quitting the sober profession of law and pulling on the poor actor's undarned

buskin and sock. Until genius chose to shine in a poor relation, the other Poes were not friendly to the family of David, the actor, though some of them lent Edgar money and the General took care of Edgar's brother, William. Player father and poet son were social outcasts and ne'er-do-weels.

David was a poor performer, unthrifty and addicted to drink. He rendered no service to art except to beget an artist, and he disappears early from the records. The distinguished son says that his mother and father died within the same few weeks.

The mother was Elizabeth Arnold, widow of an actor named Hopkins. Not foreseeing that she would be of interest to biographers, she failed to carry out the elopement they afterward planned for her, and instead married David Poe in regular manner. They lived three years in Boston, and played in the principal American cities. She is well

spoken of in the newspapers of the time as entertaining actress and good woman. But the theatre in America was not a prosperous institution, and the family knew poverty and misery.

Elizabeth and David Poe had three children. The first, William Henry Leonard, who died in early manhood, was reputed clever and adventuresome. The third, Rosalie, outlived her illustrious brother, but seems not to have been strong of mind or body. Elizabeth Arnold Poe died in Richmond on December 8, 1811. On the following Christmas night the Richmond Theatre was burned, and many were lost, including the Governor of Virginia. The Memorial Church in Richmond marks the place of real and mimic tragedy. Those who died in the fire lie buried in the portico. In the rush of charity succeeding the disaster prompt refuge was offered to the actress's children. William was taken by his father's friends

or kinsmen in Baltimore; a Richmond lady, Mrs. McKenzie, mothered Rosalie; and Edgar became socially, though never formally, the adopted son of Mr. and Mrs. John Allan.

John Allan was a Scotsman. The house of Ellis & Allan was building up a tobacco business in Richmond. Stories abound of the rich man's suppers at which young Edgar stood on the table and amused the company by precocious song and declamation. Some biographers are moved by the picture of the young Poe sent downward on his road to ruin by the indulgent hand of an opulent foster-father. In point of fact, Mr. Allan was not rich. His firm assigned in the year when Edgar was thirteen. At the time that Poe came under Allan's roof, that roof was above the second or third story of his tobacco shop. It was not until later that the death of a relative made the Allans wealthy. Mr. Allan opened his house to Poe probably at the

instance of his young wife,—they were childless after several years of married life,—and he was a sensible, long-suffering guardian to his wayward charge. There is nothing to censure in Allan except his failure to recognise genius before it revealed itself.

In the summer of 1815 he went to England to establish a London branch of his business. His six-year-old protégé was sent to the Manor House School in Stoke Newington, a suburb of London. This school is shadowed forth in "William Wilson." The biographer finds in the relation between the school at Stoke Newington and the early career of William Wilson an instance of Poe's remarkable sensational memory. No record, however, that Poe makes of his experiences, either in avowed autobiography or in fiction, can be accepted at face value. It is not the part of the fiction-maker to reveal himself directly in his stories, and Poe was a fictionist, not only

in his narratives, but in his letters and other records of his life and character.

The Allans stayed in England five years. That the Virginian merchant was in a measure prosperous is indicated by the recollection many years later of the head of the school, Dr. Bransby, that young Poe had too much pocket money. The Poe records contain a large amount of reminiscence accordant with some belief or fact about Poe which developed in after years.

The English school no doubt gave Poe that old-fashioned grounding in essentials, resting upon which his native alertness made his course in American schools easy and pleasant.

On their return to Richmond in 1820 the Allans placed Poe in a school conducted then by Joseph Clarke, of Trinity College, Dublin, and later by another Irishman, William Burke. All that we know of Poe's character at this time is that he was quick of brain and body.

He may have been proud and aloof. His companions may have remembered that his parents were actors, and have denied him the leadership which heroes of biographies merit. When we look back on the boyhood of a "future poet," our vision is intercepted by the poet that stands between. Poe's nimble brain no doubt kept him in the favour of his teachers. His body was so sound and supple that he was able to compass one poetic episode which links him appropriately with Byron. He swam a six mile stretch on the James River and walked home unfatigued. His precocity in literature is not evident in any fact of this period, although it is said that at the age of ten or twelve he showed Mr. Allan a manuscript volume of poems, which of course that parental villain did not appreciate; and Poe was good at elocution, an art practised more by American school-boys then than now.

There is a story that the mother of one

of his playmates "befriended" him (he was at this time thoroughly befriended at home), that she became the "confidante of his boyish sorrows," and that, when she died, he haunted her grave of nights. It is easy to see that this romantic lingering upon a lady's grave foreshadows much in Poe's poetry and prose. It is as easy to see that Poe's poetry and prose suggest the story, which he himself related. He called the lady Helen because he did not like her real name, Jane. The change was evidently made by a poet with a mature ear; that is, after he had written "To Helen," which is to nobody in particular. Poe's ladies are as visionary as the Julias and Altheas of Herrick. The difference is that Herrick expressed a fleshly warmth toward ladies who never were, whereas Poe attached his visions, the creatures of a pretty name in his head, to whatever lady happened to be interesting him. He fitted poetic abstractions—

the same poetic abstraction — to several women ; and, since there is singularly little human passion in his work, it is likely that his conception of women was usually untinged by desires of the blood.

The grave-haunting yarn belongs in Poe's biography because he made it and because it may have root in fact. At the age of thirty-nine, a year before his death, Poe referred to this story in a letter to a poetess. Poets and poetesses communicate and receive ideas which the facts of life do not support.

It is not necessary either to take too seriously the story of Poe's attachment to Sarah Elmira Royster, his young neighbour, except to credit her statement that her father intercepted Poe's letters. Miss Royster was presently married at the age of seventeen. She appears later in Poe's life as the severe-lipped widow, Mrs. Shelton. For the present we may imagine him poetically desolate at her marriage.

In 1825 Mr. Allan came into his uncle's fortune. The spendthrift habits by which Poe is supposed to have been unfitted for his later life of poverty began now, if ever, and could have continued but a year or so, for Poe abused his guardian's new wealth, and Mr. Allan soon took him to task. Poe prepared under tutors for the University of Virginia, and entered it on the 14th of February, 1826. This institution had been opened the year before. Its distinguished founder lived a few months to enjoy the fatherhood of his college and to find the practical difficulties in the methods of administration which he had contrived. Jefferson's fine and high idea was to import European culture (six of the eight professors were foreign-born), to make university education free, and to dispense democratically with formal degrees and discipline. His dream was part of the early American confidence in unhindered human nature.

The elective system, whereby Calvin's God abdicated in favor of Democracy's child, was born in Jefferson's university. The difficulty at "the University" was not with the elective system, but with the whole combination of new theories and old human facts. The European teachers were not used to conducting classes over which they had no disciplinary power. The young men who could take advantage of free higher education were of course the sons of the well-to-do, and Poe and his classmates were boys, with a different idea of honour from that of old men.

Poe elected "ancient and modern languages." He had no difficulty in keeping up his class record. He showed his aptitude in things linguistic, and browsed among the books in the library. Once when the instructor in Italian suggested as optional work a translation from a passage of Tasso, Poe was the only one

in the class to respond, and he was commended for his rendering.

Poe never fell under faculty censure or did anything to distinguish him from his fellows in point of wildness or disobedience. When the Board of Visitors appealed to the civil authorities to bring discipline into the young educational democracy and a sheriff appeared with writs for the gaming students, Poe was only one of many who bolted. Like his companions, he gambled and drank. It was the gambling which was his immediate undoing. Mr. Allan refused to pay his gaming debts, and on the 15th of December, 1826, after ten months in the university, Poe ended his academic schooling. He stood his final examinations with credit: the examinations in any American college of that time must have been easy for a clever boy to stand.

In the university he encountered the dangers of alcohol, not because he was

in college or because he was in this particular college, but because he lived in a civilised community and was eighteen years old. He must needs learn at this time—and, being what he was, he could not learn wisely—his physiological incapacity for alcohol.

Most that has been written of Poe's encounters with the demon rum has been based upon ignorance of the demon, or upon insufficient knowledge of Poe, or upon an elaborate pseudo-psychology which is current in France, whereby Poe is represented as dipping his pen in a pot of alcohol, his fine poems are explained as neurological phenomena, and he is made spirituous forefather of all absinthe poetry. Poe is an exotic; he is strangely un-American; he is what we Anglo-Saxons think of as "Frenchy." His work has enjoyed the refinements of French criticism and the literary sincerity of a great French translator, and we have by intellectual compulsion yielded

him to France. But the French have not interpreted the man as he lived in these United States.

In critical clinics on Poe the terms of pathology, "alcoholism" and "dipsomania," are familiar words. Neither term expresses Poe's weakness. Alcoholism is disease resulting from excessive drinking: any one may develop it with perseverance. Dipsomania is an uncontrollable thirst for alcohol: it exists as a disease, even if the thirst is not gratified. There is yet a third condition which can exist without excessive or continuous indulgence and without an initial morbid craving. Under this condition the "patient" is affected by alcohol and other drugs as if he were a cold-blooded animal. There is immediate unbalance, hysteria, insanity, a poisoned condition. Such, according to the evidence, was the effect of liquor on Poe. One glass sent him off his head. He was never pleasantly intoxicated.

His longer sprees were dreary illnesses. He was not a jolly carouser. He did not make crafty effort to get liquor. His indulgence was fitful, due to accidental meetings and opportunities, and later to starvation and misery. He was clear-headed enough to know this when he wrote that misery made the vice, not vice the misery. His life was not a downward course under self-indulgence, but a retreat on the level in the face of a chemical fact. He seldom had money enough to pay for much liquor, and the quantity of work that he did in twenty years is proof that he was not drunk for relatively many working days. At important crises in his career drinking helped to bring disaster. He was not the good fellow to compel forgiveness of his sins, as we forgive the swaggering intoxications of Byron and the domestic evenings with Burgundy in which Lamb drowned his tragedies and delighted his friends. All that we can ask for

Poe is that defenders shall not obscure the truth, and that others relinquish the assumption that a pure poetic heart and a head marvellously clear cannot be borne by feet that stagger. In the last decade of Poe's life, after too much drinking and periods of malnutrition, he was so elastic and fine-muscled that he jumped and played leap-frog to the destruction of his only pair of shoes. And he was to the end of his life so clear-minded, in his professional writing, that no comma was misplaced, and his manuscript is in itself a work of manual art.

Poe was a weak man with a great brain, small in his failings, not gigantically wicked. We do not pretend to like him as we do large natures that fail.

But a golden tankard with dents in it is not chiefly interesting for the liquor it has held. Poe's worst vices were not drunkenness, nor yet his philandering with sentimental women, but his dis-

honesty, his failure to pay his debts of deed and word. Poe produced books which are of consequence in the history of our country and in the world's library. It ought to be interesting to see the conditions under which those books were produced. As we are human, we crave to know when Shakespeare was married and on what occasions Poe befuddled his fine brain, but the Poe that lives is the dreamer of dreams imaged in the pensive head that adorns the University of Virginia.

II.

After leaving the University of Virginia, Poe was not in Mr. Allan's favour, though the final break did not come till later. For a while he chafed in Mr. Allan's counting-room, where he must soon have shown his incapacity for business affairs. His failure as clerk, his bad debts, and something in him of vagabond and adventurer sent him on his way. In 1827 he was in Boston, where he "commenced author" and turned soldier. *Tamerlane and Other Poems by a Bostonian* is a remarkable first book. The bumptious preface, now that we know what a poet it ushered into the world of letters, seems to have the confident swing of genius. Everything of value in the booklet was later revised and reprinted. The best of it is in kind, if not in pitch, unmistakably Poesque, and from this feeble beginning to "Ullume" of twenty years later the work

of Poe in prose and poetry is distinct from all other things in books.

Tamerlane made no stir in the world, and in after years the publisher, Calvin Thomas, apparently did not know until he was told that the manuscript had been fetched to him under the arm of the great Mr. Poe. Perhaps Mr. Poe appeared before his first publisher as Mr. Edgar A. Perry, for it was under that name that he enlisted on May 26, 1827, in the United States Army. He went with Battery H of the First Artillery from Fort Independence in Boston to Fort Moultrie in Charleston, thence to Fortress Monroe, Virginia. Although his career in the army seems to have been meritorious, he kept this period of his life in the dark, and to fill in the years invented picturesque stories of having joined the Greeks in their war for independence and of having written and published a novel in France.

Early in 1829 Mr. Allan was informed

of the whereabouts of Sergeant-major Perry-Poe, and after Mrs. Allan's death in February Poe went on furlough to Richmond. Perhaps he received assurances that Mr. Allan would help him to the extent of getting comfortably rid of him, for he planned to seek appointment to the United States Military Academy. On April 15, 1829, he was honourably discharged from the army, having procured a substitute for whom Mr. Allan paid. Mr. Allan's letter to the Secretary of War should have shown the applicant who bore it how far he could presume on the merchant's good will. "Frankly, sir, I do declare that he is no relation to me whatever; that I have many [in] whom I have taken an active interest to promote theirs; with no other feeling than that every man is my care, if he be in distress."

Poe gathered other credentials, and went toward Washington. On his way he published in Baltimore his second

volume, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems*. He had sent manuscript copies of the verses to John Neal, then an important personage in the world of literature. Neal had said in the *Yankee* that E. A. P., of Baltimore, "might write a beautiful, if not a magnificent poem." In a later number he quoted Poe's ambitious reply: "I am quite certain that I have not written either — but that I *can*, I will take oath — if they will give me time." The Boston editor was amused by the confidence of the letter, but he was also impressed by the poetry, from which he quoted liberally, and concluded: "Having allowed our youthful writer to be heard in his own behalf,— what more can we do for the lovers of genuine poetry? Nothing. They who are judges will not need more; and they who are not — why waste words upon them? We shall not." This good-natured comment of Poe's first critic serves fairly well, after three-quarters

of a century, for the "last word" to readers of Poe's poetry.

The Baltimore volume contained five revised pieces from the volume of 1827. "Al Aaraaf," the new title poem, is over-elaborate and obscure, but it is so characteristic of Poe in its combination of starry vision and pseudo-astronomy that it is of a piece with "Eureka," his last work, and it contains fine imagery and music of a kind which men who began to read in the sunset of the Victorian age will think of as "modern": —

"Falling in wreaths through many a startled star."

"The eternal voice of God is moving by,
And the red winds are withering in
the sky."

Such lines and the song,

"Spirit that dwellest where
In the deep sky
The terrible and fair
In beauty vie,"

whether we take them from the Balti-

more volume or the later revisions, carry Poe into the company of strange singers from Shelley and Coleridge to Rossetti and James Thomson.

The Baltimore volume is noteworthy for the literary sophistication of the foot-notes. Critics have broken the butterfly upon the wheel by pointing out that Poe quoted at second-hand from authors he had not read, and that he made a false show of learning. The important thing is that he quoted with literary tact, and it required much diligent criticism to find him out. Emerson likewise drew analogies and illustrations from religions and literatures of which he knew little, and Carlyle's definition of kingship is not less eloquent because his discovery of "king" and "ableman" in a common source is false philology.

Poe's new book found little welcome except in the quizzical appreciation of Neal, and did not divert the poet from

his soldierly aspirations. He entered West Point on July 1, 1830, and thus, like a later undisciplined and eccentric American artist, he became associated with an institution of rigid bearing and dutiful formality. When Poe entered the Academy, he was older than the allowed age limit, twenty-one, but, being a master of mathematical puzzles, he had no difficulty in being recorded as under twenty. He looked older than he really was, and the story was circulated that the appointment had been intended for the son, but the father had come instead. This story rightly suggests a prematurely old youth who had seen a good deal of the world and whose vocabulary and intellectual interests were a decade in advance of boyish cadetship. The story did not please him so much as another one, even less warranted by the facts, that he was a grandson of Benedict Arnold. Like Byron, who also swam, wrote poetry, and championed the

Greeks, Poe enjoyed dark reputations. Poe's literary tastes were known to his associates. He was glib and dogmatic in his criticisms of books which his fellows probably did not read, and he made satirical jests in rhyme about the instructors, one stanza of which still remains. But he was not regular in class-room work. He was insubordinate, and his infringements of regulations increased as the year waned.

It is assumed that Mr. Allan's second marriage in October, 1830, made Poe more than ever doubtful of succeeding to any part of his guardian's fortune, and Poe said later, in effect, that the prospect of living on a soldier's wage did not please him. He tried to resign, but Mr. Allan did not approve, and Poe took measures to have himself dismissed. He was among the delinquents summoned to court-martial in January, 1831. Before his case came on the calendar, he neglected his duties. Then he

pleaded guilty to every charge except the one most easily proved,—failure to be at his post. He was dismissed, and on March 6, 1831, he found himself again free, penniless, and without a trade or profession.

He signalled his departure from West Point by taking subscriptions from the cadets for a new volume of poems which he dedicated to them. The cadets thought the book would contain the kind of poetry they enjoyed,—the satirical skits on instructors. They received instead of such interesting matter a volume in which there were, among much amateurish poetising, two or three fine poems.

Poe's third volume contained revisions of the best in the Baltimore volume, and in addition "Israfel," "To Helen," "The Doomed City" ("The City in the Sea"), "Irene" ("The Sleeper"), "The Valley Nis" ("The Valley of Unrest"). The earlier books of verse were the

doubtful attempts of the young poet, of which we might have forgotten the good lines if later achievement had not compelled us to scan them closely ; but had Poe died at the moment this third volume was published, it must surely have been remembered, for the original magic, the haunting cadence, the fresh use of language, which mark the new, the unforgettable poet. The introduction contains Poe's first enunciation of the principle that the purpose of poetry is to utter a definite idea in musical form. This idea, "the rhythmical creation of beauty," and so on, has long been commonplace, or at least has been commonly accepted by poets from Coleridge to the youngest Irish bard in London. That it was revolutionary in America is indicated by our tardy recognition of Poe's supremacy among American poets and by the ascendancy of those less finely tuned moralities of American verse against which Poe protested all his life.

Three days after Poe's dismissal from West Point he wrote from New York to Colonel Thayer, the superintendent of the Military Academy: "Having no longer any tie which binds me to my native country,—no prospects nor any friends,—I intend, by the first opportunity, to proceed to Paris with the view of obtaining, through the interest of the Marquis de La Fayette [who, it will be remembered, admired Poe's grandfather], an appointment, if possible, in the Polish Army." He asks Colonel Thayer's assistance. "A certificate of standing in my class is all I have any right to expect." This letter, not published till five years ago, shows that Poe seriously cherished those adventuresome projects which his romantic invention subsequently transmuted into events, and that he had no immediate hope in Mr. Allan's bounty. The story of a violent scene and his final ejection from the Allan house about this time seems probable.

The next authentic record of Poe is his letter of the 6th of May, 1831, to William Gwynn, the Baltimore editor and lawyer. Gwynn had expressed the opinion that "Al Aaraaf," which he had seen in manuscript, was indicative of a "tendency to anything but the business of matter-of-fact life." This judgment was probably supported by less poetical evidence, for Poe apologised to Gwynn for foolish conduct on a previous occasion. His request for employment was not granted, nor was one to N. C. Brooks, in whose new school Poe hoped for a place as teacher.

Of the next two years of Poe's life the records are sparse and shadowy. If Poe liked to befog biographers while he existed in the flesh, perhaps his spirit is contemplating with sardonic pleasure the fact that some of his letters of this time, known to exist, have escaped publication, and that the papers of John P. Kennedy, his benefactor, are sealed by

Kennedy's will until 1920. There seems to be no good reason at this late day why any possible source of information about Poe should be closed to biographers. Facts are thistles easily grasped by firm hands. Mystification and reticence have done more to condemn him than any unpleasant revelations. Charles G. Leland's service in destroying papers about Poe which he found in Griswold's desk is nullified by our knowledge that the papers were destroyed.

Some legends belong to this time. One relates Poe's love for "Mary," whose oral account of the affair was first published in a magazine about twenty years ago. Her description brings Poe clearly into vision: "Mr. Poe was five feet eight inches tall, and had dark, almost black hair, which he wore long and pushed back in student style over his ears. It was as fine as silk. His eyes were large and full, grey and piercing. He was then, I think, entirely clean shaven.

His nose was long and straight, and his features finely cut. The expression about his mouth was beautiful. He was pale and had no color. His skin was of a clear, beautiful olive. He had a sad, melancholy look. He was very slender when I first knew him, had a fine figure, an erect, military carriage, and a quick step. But it was his manner that most charmed. It was elegant. When he looked at you, it seemed as if he could read your very thoughts. His voice was pleasant and musical, but not deep."

This description of Poe at twenty-two resembles other verbal pictures of him, and most of the surviving portraits taken from life. It omits mention of a striking characteristic, the great breadth between the temples, and of a curious twist of his face, which gives to one side a slightly sinister look. Most friendly accounts of Poe dwell on his fine manner and the distinction of his bearing. He had the training of a Virginia gentle

man, and he believed himself one. Though he fell into disreputable habits, was uncertain in his sense of honour, offended good breeding in his quarrels, and became so reduced by poverty that he could write with enthusiasm to his mother-in-law of the "elegant ham" in a New York boarding-house (there is more simple pathos in that letter than in many of his more emotional ones), yet, for all that, he retained to the last the grand manner, the something proud, aloof, formally courteous, of the educated gentleman, the distinguished person.

"Poe's Mary" was not allowed to continue her relations with the penniless young man, whereupon he ungalantly published a satirical poem about her in a Baltimore paper. The young lady's uncle interfered. Mr. Poe horse-whipped him, and flung the whip at Mary's feet. She afterward married, visited the Poes at Fordham, and was

there when Virginia died. At the time of this love affair, the story of which seems to have a core of truth, Poe lived with his aunt, Mrs. Maria Clemm, and her daughter Virginia, aged ten or eleven, was the bearer of Poe's love letters.

Poe was certainly not at this time received in good society either in Richmond or Baltimore. There is a tradition in the Kennedy family that Kennedy used to drive down town in Baltimore, pull Poe out of improper places, and take him home. Mrs. Kennedy went with her husband on these friendly missions. When Poe in sorry condition reached the carriage, the presence of the lady touched the spring of his chivalry, and made him amenable to Kennedy's ministrations. The statement of Griswold, that Kennedy gave Poe shirt and coat, is probably true. Poe's declaration that he was indebted to Kennedy for life itself seems to be more than an instance of

the exaggerated fervor which is common in Poe's letters, and there are indications that Kennedy knew and helped Poe before they appear in open relations as judge and successful contestant in the *Saturday Visiter* prize competition. Whatever is discovered about the years from 1831 to 1833 will probably show that Poe was then as low as he ever was in fortune and habits. Instead of representing him as a brilliant youth going down hill to an early death, we more fairly discern him as plunged by ill luck and faults of temper into a bad hole at the beginning of his manhood and fighting his way out of it, with considerable pluck, toward renewed social recognition and successful industry.

III.

In the summer of 1833 Poe emerges from obscurity as the winner of a prize of one hundred dollars offered by the Baltimore *Saturday Visiter* for the best short story. The prize of fifty dollars for the best poem would have been awarded to Poe's "The Coliseum," had he not won the larger premium. The successful story, "MS. Found in a Bottle," was one of six "Tales of the Folio Club," all submitted by Poe to this contest and marking his entrance upon his professional career. Poe regarded himself as a poet deflected into prose by the necessity of earning a living. He had published three books of verse before he tried the short story. Then he encountered the fact in American publication that the short story pays better than any other form of writing. The short story is the only type of literature to which America has made a con-

siderable contribution of distinguished quality, and this is in some measure due to the peculiar dependence, in our social order, of genius on the wage conditions of daily labor. Poe's ability for criticism was revealed to him unexpectedly by the ringside applause at his slashing strokes with the book reviewer's pen. For ten years, until "The Raven" blazed amid his other reputations, the poet remained in abeyance; the short-story writer developed under the necessity of producing salable work; and the man found the immediate gratification of his ambition for power in his increasing authority as critic.

In the fall of 1833 Poe's "Tales of the Folio Club" began to appear in the Baltimore *Visiter*. The judges in the contest, Kennedy, Latrobe, and Miller, said in a signed note, "We cannot refrain from saying that the author owes it to his reputation . . . to publish the entire volume. These tales are eminently

distinguished by a wild, vigorous, and poetical imagination, a rich style, a fertile invention, and varied and curious learning." Poe was now a promising young author. His early stories, including ten more that he added in the next year to the "Tales of the Folio Club," show most of his characteristics of substance and method, clearness, compression, speed, conviction in narrating the extraordinary and the bizarre. They include none of his masterpieces, and were no doubt less skilful in the first versions than in the form which later revision gave to them. Poe reprinted his tales and poems in several magazines, to the meagre profit of his purse and to the great gain of art, for he worked them over with fine care, and at each reprinting gave them new excellence. There seems to me nothing unfair in his thrifty reselling of old material. The editors probably knew what they were buying, they seem to have been glad to

get it, and they did not pay him enough for his work to have the slightest case against him as a purveyor of magazine material. His business conscience was as fine as that which prevailed in American book and magazine trade, and one rejoices in any device of republication which gave him opportunity to exercise his literary conscience.

It was not, however, Poe's original work which brought him his limited loaf of bread, but his work at the editor's desk, though, to be sure, his editorial efficiency depended on his ability to contribute to any department of a magazine. He was our first great magazine. He could furnish anything from a catch-subscriber cryptogram challenge to the most startling short story and the most provocative review. His skill in the short literary forms begot his critical beliefs in those forms, and theory and the peculiarities of his own powers as a writer combined to give him faith in the

vehicle by which short pieces of literature are most easily presented to the public. He not only recognised the magazine as a convenient instrument of publication, but believed in its function to express an editor's personality and to realise and direct literary taste. All his life he dreamed of a magazine of his own which should be independent, devoted to art, and fabulously profitable. Under his individual touch almost every magazine with which he was connected promptly flourished. If he sometimes betrays his confidence in himself as a universal genius in letters, he is somewhat justified by his really wonderful combination of literary versatility and editorial skill.

Poe's first success as story-writer came just in time, for in March, 1834, Mr. Allan died intestate, thus cutting off Poe's last hopes of inheriting money. These hopes, however, must have been slender, for there is little doubt that he

had made himself obnoxious to the Allans and their Richmond connection. In the summer he sent his tales, sixteen in number, to a Philadelphia publishing house, which, after keeping them for a long time, showed that it did not agree with the *obiter dictum* of the *Saturday Visiter* judges that the community would be gratified by the publication of the volume. Poe spent the rest of the year and the beginning of the next on new tales, including "The Unparalleled Adventure of one Hans Phaal," and on his dramatic fragment, "Politian."

Kennedy diverted him from poetic tragedy, and recommended him to T. W. White, the printer-editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, just started in Richmond. White engaged him provisionally as assistant, and for the first time in his life Poe had regular profitable occupation. Depending on that, he married his cousin, Virginia Clemm, a child of thirteen. He had lived with

Mrs. Clemm for some time, and the alliance seems to have been a matter of economy, to make the poor household more easy to shift and re-establish.

Mrs. Clemm and Virginia were tender and loyal to him, and there is abundant proof of his devotion to them. This unhappy man, who has been so blackly drawn, certainly spent a great many days at home, working hard. To his mother-in-law he is more boyish, natural, and frank than to any other person. In their terms of endearment, "Muddie" and "my Eddie," there is a human tone none too common amid the strange kinds of rhetoric which compose the story of Poe.

The license for the marriage was taken out in September, 1835, and there is evidence of an unrecorded marriage in Baltimore soon after. The reason for haste may be found in the opposition of Poe's cousin, Neilson, to Virginia's

marrying so young. The recorded marriage took place in Richmond in May, 1836.

The family moved to Richmond in the fall of 1835, and by November Poe was actual editor of the *Messenger*. His salary, with extra allowances for original contributions, was small, but enough. He had prospects of soon raising the sum to a thousand dollars a year, and he says that his Richmond friends received him with open arms. Yet he was not content. In September he wrote to Kennedy a letter full of undefined despairs, to which Kennedy replied with the good sense of a Dutch uncle. The melancholy letter was written just before he went up to Baltimore to get his bride, and the difficulties of that episode may account for his mood. Another explanation is found in the letter which White wrote to him during his temporary absence from Richmond: "If you should come to Richmond again, and again

should be an assistant in my office, it must be expressly understood between us that all engagements on my part would be dissolved the moment you get drunk." At the beginning of the year he writes to Kennedy that he is fighting the enemy manfully. The *Messenger* prospered, and Poe published his tales as the year went on, and republished many of his verses.

At this time, 1837, he had not done his best work in prose, but he had shown the promise of his best, and, with the exception of the detective story, he had indicated the range of his genius. In fiction he had produced adventure, such as "Hans Phaal," characterised by a Defoe-like plausibility of detail and the interest of a "Sunday supplement" writer in mechanics and science; romances laid in a European no-man's-land, such as "The Assignation" and "Metzengerstein," suggested by or borrowed from his reading in foreign litera-

ture ; and the prose poetry of "Shadow : A Parable," as remarkable in visionary prose as something from Blake or De Quincey. No argument as to literary value is necessary to persuade any one with feeling for language who reads the last sentence of "Shadow" that he is in the presence of a writer who—can write : "And then did we, the seven, start from our seats in horror and stand trembling and shuddering and aghast, for the tones in the voice of the shadow were not the tones of any one being, but of a multitude of beings, and, varying in their cadences from syllable to syllable, fell duskily upon our ears in the well-remembered and familiar accents of many thousand departed friends." In such pieces and in the tales of morbid terror, "Morella" and "Berenice," we discover, I think, the poet compelled by the exigencies of the market to turn into prose, with the outward shape of narrative, visions,

rhythms, and verbal magic to which his genius unhindered would have given form in verse.

The least successful kind of prose of which Poe gave specimens in his experimental years is the tale of grotesque humour. With his sure tact for words he called it grotesque and not humorous. He and some of his friends thought it was funny,—this nightmare grin. Poe had sufficient literary cleverness to simulate something that was not in him, but nothing in his legends of wonder, of physical and mental terror, makes the hair stand on end as does his attempt to write a funny piece. In criticism his intellectual discernment led him sometimes to a kind of sharp wisdom akin to humour. But it is impossible to think of Irving, Lincoln, Dickens, Mark Twain, and find much left in the word “humour” which can by any literary or charitable function of mind be stretched to apply to the writings of

Poe,—or, indeed, to the motives which guided his conduct as a man.

His tales of cold horror remain stimulating for the fine adaptation of language to effect,—the adaptation which he himself, as every man must preach doctrines to fit his own achievements, announced as the object of the short story. But the horror no longer makes us sit up after midnight. We have lived through an age which produced horror mightily compounded of the facts of life,—Dickens and the Brontës and Hardy and the Russian novelists. Life, as one recognises it in one's fellows, Poe seldom touched. Our generation has adjusted itself comfortably to *Wuthering Heights* and *Bleak House*, in which out of spontaneous combustion, spooks, and other superstitions leaps the human fact to grasp one by the throat; and we no longer shiver, as the author intended, at the posthumous dentistry of "Berenice." But Poe did develop a kind of terror

of mind which few authors have dared to approach. He looked within himself, and gave us "William Wilson," "The Man in the Crowd," the satanically true "Imp of the Perverse." These and others of his maturer tales no change of literary taste, no satiety of reading, can outgrow. And, though he selected curious, remote, hushed, and tiptoe themes to play upon his instrument, the instrument is finely tuned, and it has a music clear and masterly, which makes him a member of the classic orchestra, an adopted son of French literature, an essential pure note in an age of English writing too prone to mistake mere power for excellence.

While the public was no doubt enjoying his stories, the literary world was stirred by his criticism. In the *Messenger* Poe began those attacks on mediocrity which won him his dearest enemies and made American literature bounden to him forever. Like all fallible critics,

he sometimes hit the wrong head, he was often bigoted, supercilious, and misinformed. He was guilty of a kind of uncritical chivalry in his treatment of lady poets. He was also guilty of currying favour with writers whose material help he needed, thereby sacrificing the literary honesty and independence which he boasted. But he had the real gifts of criticism, courage, discernment, sensitiveness, method, rigidity of standard. To learn his service, one has only to read the names of the persons he criticised, the forgotten favourites and local heroes through whom his clear brain and impoverished body had to make their daily way. Except for one or two established dignitaries, Cooper and Irving, the persons who passed for authors in Poe's time make one unpatriotic. Most of them are unknown except for the mortuary inscription which he carved upon their obscure graves. He impaled scores of toy windmills on

his lance, and produced jealous consternation among pious and sentimental persons who, having no other possible employment, regarded themselves as "literary." Because he was unreasonably hostile to the New England school, we do not always give him credit for recognising Hawthorne at a time when Hawthorne called himself the obscurest man of letters in America. Because he was foolish in accusing Longfellow of plagiarism, we do not remember that he regarded Longfellow as the first of American poets, and quoted from his verse with approbation, and that the seat of his antagonism to New England writers and Carlyle was in a just instinct that sermons should not be hung upon the wings of visions.

In Poe's time American literature was weak and strutting, and daily journalism in its personalities and puffs was even more contemptible than the modern newspaper. We know Poe's journalis-

tic indignities, because he is almost the only one of his age and neighbourhood whose complete works have survived, for whose least scraps of book reviewing the tangles of the daily press have been combed through by editors and compilers. But he was head and shoulders above his contemporaries in his views of literature, and he did much to awaken critical consciousness. If he paid the penalties of dishonesty and meanness, he paid as heavy penalties for honesty, courage, and devotion to his craft. He might have rendered as effective and courageous service with less arrogance and more magnanimity, but it is to his lasting credit that he remained, on the whole, true to his literary faith and industrious in his efforts to establish high standards of criticism.

IV.

In 1836 Poe wrote his longest story, "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," which appeared serially in the *Messenger* and was published in 1838 by the Harpers. The book is still good reading after three generations of sea-yarns. It swings through blood and thunder, strange seas and gloomy scenery. It belongs not among the hearty books from Cooper to Stevenson, full of honest crime and yo-heave-ho, but rather with the "Ancient Mariner" and Mr. Joseph Conrad's *Falk*, for its drawing of the intellectual horrors of cannibalism and sea loneliness.

Poe left the *Messenger* in January, 1837, apparently on good terms with White. This is the first of several unaccountable departures on the part of Poe from positions that gave him a living. Kennedy's explanation answers for all. "He was irregular, eccentric, and queru-

lous, and soon gave up his place." He went with his family to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and finally to New York, where Mrs. Clemm took boarders to keep the household alive. Poe failed to establish himself in New York, and in the summer of 1838 settled in Philadelphia. To this period belong the poem "The Haunted Palace," "Silence," a prose poem of great beauty, and a piece of pot-boiling at which his fingers were scorched. He was selected by the publishers and apparently by the author of a book on conchology to father *The Conchologist's First Book*. It is hard to see just what harm he did to the learned authorities on whom he levied for information about a subject of which he was obviously ignorant. If he had not been so diligent in his quest for plagiarism in others, he probably would not have been censured for his moral indirection in putting his name to a book which he could not have written.

In 1839 he became contributor to *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*, published in Philadelphia, and in July was announced as associate editor. His contributions to this magazine gave it prosperity, and so increased his reputation that the hitherto doubtful publishers ventured to print the best book of short stories that America had produced. *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* appeared in two volumes at the end of 1839 or the beginning of 1840. These volumes contain several of Poe's masterpieces,—“The Fall of the House of Usher,” “William Wilson,” “Shadow,” “Silence,” and “Ligeia.” As Poe matured, his tales of horror became less physical, more intellectual, and dealt with the mysteries of conscience, will, life after death. He had a superstitious rather than a scientific interest in the shadowy problems of psychology, metempsychosis, the nature of personality, hypnotism, and the rest. In this he is

like Hawthorne. One difference is that Poe fetches the shadows out into the open analysis of his brilliant, confident style, whereas Hawthorne leaves them dim, soft, in the distances of religious and poetic wonder. Moreover, the spectres in whom Hawthorne embodies mesmeric suggestions, his victims of conscience, the spooks that appear and disappear amid allegorical portents, now and again step forward and speak with human voices. Poe never contrived a human being: the conversations of his characters are but the vehicles of expository ideas. Compared to the dramatically real double person, Jekyll-Hyde, William Wilson is a ghost. "Morella," "Berenice," "Ligeia," are but the transparent images of revery laid against the plane surface of a mathematical plan. When Poe reached out for a human being, one who might come ready-made from the byways of life into the particular course he was

laying out for his story, he pressed human truth out of the figure after a minute of handling. For an instance, the more important because it concerns a minor character who had nothing unnatural to do in the interests of the story, "The Gold Bug," written three years later, contains a negro servant. Poe had lived at the South and knew negroes, but the talk of Jupiter is more remote from negro talk than the utmost devices of black-faced minstrelsy. Poe found his material in himself and in his reading rather than in his fellows. The first person in one of the tales says: "Feelings with me had never been of the heart, and my passions always were of the mind."

Poe's association with Burton lasted until the summer of 1840, when Poe announced the magazine which he always hoped to found and never did. Perhaps Burton objected to a plan that meant a loss to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and

it may be that Poe, in new hope of independence, became a troublesome employee and made improper use of Burton's subscription lists. Burton circulated abusive reports of Poe's habits, but wished for business reasons to get him back on the magazine. Poe called Burton a scoundrel, and Poe's scoundrels were often persons he had offended. When in 1841 Graham took the *Gentleman's Magazine* over, Burton stipulated that his young editor was to be taken care of.

In the magazine for June appeared the last instalment of "The Journal of Julius Rodman," in which Poe tried to do with land adventure what he had done with sea adventure in the story of Pym. It was never brought to completion on account of Poe's break with the magazine; but it is interesting in that it was not remembered as Poe's work until in 1880 the English biographer, Ingram, discovered it in the files of *Bur-*

ton's, and it illustrates the curious Elizabethan vagabondage of Poe's writings, unusual in modern literature. No further work of his is identified until the December number, in which appeared "The Man of the Crowd," a parable of conscience. Poe abandoned for the time his plan for a magazine of his own, and entered upon a period of relatively prosperous writing and editing for the magazine which George Graham made out of *Burton's* and another. He found time for contributions to other magazines, and was for two years industrious and fairly well off under the friendly Graham.

His chief intellectual development in this time was his new turn for analysis and detection. In May, 1841, he published in another magazine of Graham's a construction, from the first chapters which had recently appeared, of the plot of *Barnaby Rudge*. Dickens is said to have asked if Poe was the devil. He

was devilish only in knowing how other men's minds must work under given conditions, and the conjuror's tricks of another plot-maker did not baffle him. He himself delighted to explain carefully how the conjuror performs, and after the explanation to startle the audience more than ever. He was busy about this time with his challenge to the world to send him cryptograms which he could not solve. He mastered all that came, and there is a curious implication in the terms of his challenge that any one who can use his brain can decipher a cryptogram that any other brain can conceive, but that there is no one in the world but Poe who can use his brain. In this he was relatively right. Poe inevitably discovered that, compared with his own, the mental processes of humanity are feeble operations, and he loved to set the silly mouth of the world agape. But he laid up bitterness for himself in the unavoidable reflection

that simpletons and dullards get on very well in the world, that they like each other and prosper, while he of the superior brain is marked for unsuccess and galling friction with the sluggard processes of common life.

His work as puzzle editor was tiring, and the records of it are of no literary value except to reveal Poe's inexhaustible brain power. In April appeared the first of his detective stories, "The Murders of the Rue Morgue," which fixed at the very inception of the form an ultimate standard of excellence. These detective stories are the emergence of Poe's intellect from confusing practical conditions. The man delighted to think, and in this period of comparative ease he indulged in the exercise of ratiocination. "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" is connected in its physical horror with his other weird tales; but in "The Purloined Letter" he came to the purest example of the tale of reason,

for this, without sensational terror, holds the interest in the question how a mind thinks and how another mind should set to work to guess at the probable plottings of the first. "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" is the boldest and most spectacular of the detective stories. In others, as Poe himself was the first to point out, the author invents both solution and problem, or follows a story of life which has been brought to conclusion. In "Marie Rogêt" Poe undertook to solve by thinly disguised parallel a murder plot which was being unfolded in contemporaneous newspapers, and which his conclusion forestalled in the ultimate development of the event.

Poe seems to have tried all the directions which the detective story will take, except one which he was temperamentally unable to follow. In later writers the detective story has merged with the novel of human life, in which

our interests are engaged by other things than the sheer process of detection. To take a current example, the world can find human interest in the death and the love affairs and the pallid addiction to cocaine of Mr. Sherlock Holmes. Poe's persons, out of plot, are out of mind.

Poe added to his tales of horror "The Pit and the Pendulum" and "The Black Cat," and in "The Masque of the Red Death" revealed his luxurious sense of color. This sense in his crude age and surroundings was easily perverted to a kind of riot in plush and tinsel magnificence which shows not so much his lack of taste as the yearnings of an impoverished man for warmth and splendour. He also wrote for *Graham's* some of his soundest criticisms, on Hawthorne, Longfellow, Dickens, Bulwer, Goldsmith, John Wilson, Macaulay, Lever, Marryat.

It is no wonder that in a year the sub-

scribers to the magazine increased from eight thousand to forty thousand. But Poe was still restless. In 1841 he tried unsuccessfully to get a sinecure at Washington,—a course suggested to him by a friend. He still dreamed of an independent magazine. He hailed Lowell's short-lived *Pioneer*, and began with Lowell the most disinterested literary acquaintance which graces his correspondence. When Lowell's eyes failed and his magazine fell into debt and died, Poe wrote to him : " As for the few dollars you owe me, give yourself not one moment's concern about them." The decease of the *Pioneer*, said Poe, would be a blow to the cause of Pure Taste.

For all Poe's increasing reputation he could not induce the publishers to undertake a new edition of those tales which modern publishers in every country reprint many times. And it was at this period that tragedy, which the artist had pursued with haunting specula-

tion, entered the house of the man. Virginia ruptured a blood-vessel, and for several years lived on the verge of death. Poe suffered actual or imaginative sorrow for her death a dozen times before she was finally taken, and under the strain his will showed all its weaknesses. One may say that for ten years his fight upward had been not unsuccessful, and from now on he showed more and more his infirmities of character and body. The artistic record of his sorrow may be found in the story of Eleanora's death in "The Valley of the Many Colored Grass." The sombre beauty and melancholy rhythm of the prose bring us nearer than most of Poe's writings to the affectionate interests of the heart. It was written before Virginia's death, and was published in 1842. The analysis of the dreamer's mind is in some degree autobiographic, and the opening sentence of the narrative is close to fact: "She

whom I loved in youth and of whom I now pen calmly and distinctly these reminiscences was the sole daughter of the only sister of my mother, long departed.”

In April, 1842, Poe ceased to be editor of *Graham's*. The story goes that, while Poe was away for a short time, Graham put in his place the Rev. Dr. Rufus W. Griswold. Poe, coming back, found Griswold in his chair, waited not for explanation, but left the office forever. This is said to be Graham's account, given thirty years later. Graham remained faithful to Poe, and wrote one of the warmest defences of him.

This Rev. Mr. Griswold has an important place in Poe's life and in his "Lives." The nub of the matter is that biography is usually born in eulogy. A man dies, friends and family issue the long funeral sermon called the official life and letters. Later biographers examine, criticise, and finally shave the

sermon down to facts, from which each biographer constructs a new essay in interpretation. It was Poe's lot to have, by his own appointment, an official biographer who by training and temper was incapable of understanding him in a large way, but who had most of the facts in document. Griswold was a Baptist minister turned litterateur, and was a tireless compiler of anthologies which might have been called "Who's Who in Literature." Poe, like many other true poets, was a zealous advertiser of his literary wares, and kept on good terms with Griswold in order to get a place in Griswold's popular compendiums of Parnassus. He furnished Griswold with a mendacious biographical sketch, and he pretends that Griswold asked him to review the book and offered to "place" the review, and that this was, of course, a bribe from Griswold for a puff. In a lecture Poe riddled Griswold's book, and probably expressed his

real opinion of the compiler and of most mounters of Pegasus in the American riding school exhibit of amateur poets. The reports of the lecture angered Griswold, but Poe deprecated the severity of the lecture, and was not above borrowing five dollars from the man he offended. When Griswold turned to his next compilation, "The Prose Writers of America," Poe, desirous to appear in that, wrote apologetically to Griswold and made light of having spoken ill of him. To the end he seems to have thought that he was on good terms with Griswold, and so made him his literary executor.

Immediately upon Poe's death Griswold took the course which has given both a black reputation. He printed a powerful article in the *New York Tribune*, which underrates Poe's work, if it does not overrate his vices. Aside from the suspicious anonymity of the article, it was unfriendly and ill-advised at the

moment when Poe had slipped out of a clouded and unhappy life, leaving a multitude of enemies. It would have been better had the key to Poe's posthumous reputation been struck at the beginning in a different manner and by a man of larger understanding. Friends rushed to Poe's defence, not always effectual and too often giving prominence by their denials to inessentials. Griswold did not learn his lesson from the trouble which the *Tribune* article caused, but prefixed to the third volume of Poe's works the "Memoir," which was afterward suppressed. It is no longer acceptable as a view of Poe. It is unsympathetic. The author is engaged in justifying himself and not in finding out what in Poe's work and life really mattered to make a biography of him worth writing at all. Where a crack shows in Poe's character, Griswold inserts a keen instrument, and drives it in with the weight of damning evidence of which he

owned a large collection. His "Memoir" is not the monstrosity of slander which it has been called, and as a collection of testimony has not, as a whole, been invalidated. There was plenty of substantial documentary relic to show to the satisfaction of a person like Griswold that Poe's character was compounded of poor stuff. Griswold wrote to Mrs. Whitman just after the *Tribune* article: "I was not his [Poe's] friend, nor was he mine. . . . I cannot refrain from begging you to be careful what you say or write to Mrs. Clemm, who is not your friend, nor anybody's friend, and who has no element of goodness or kindness in her nature, but whose heart and understanding are full of malice and wickedness." Mrs. Clemm did not deserve to be thus undermined along with her son-in-law, to whom she was in his life and his death unfailingly loyal.

Griswold did harm because the reaction against him has added confusions.

The pendulum has swung back and forth, and, in spite of Mr. George E. Woodberry's attempt more than twenty years ago to stop it on centre, it continues to swing up to the present day.

Poe says in one of his letters that Graham made him a good offer to return to the magazine. It is not likely that White or Burton or Graham ever willingly gave up Poe's services. Difficult as he was to get along with, he was the best editor in the country and put money in the pockets of his employers. Perhaps the reason he did not return to Graham, who remained friendly to him, is that he still had hopes of getting a clerkship in Washington and was out again with a prospectus of his will-o'-the-wisp magazine. This time he went so far as to find a partner and make a contract with Darley for illustrations. The scheme came to naught, and he did not get the appointment to the sinecure under the government. When he went

to Washington to see about it, he fell by the wayside and caused his friends embarrassment and anxiety. An attempt to issue his prose romances in a series of volumes failed with the first number. His only good luck about this time was to win a hundred dollars for "The Gold Bug," which was published in the *Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper* in June, 1843. The other publications of this year include "The Conqueror Worm," "Lenore," and the stories "The Tell-tale Heart" and "The Black Cat,"—gloomy parables on the theme that murder will out. Toward the end of the year he gave his lecture on poetry, which contained the substance of the "Notes on English Verse" and the offensive remarks, whatever they were, about Griswold.

The essay on "Mr. Griswold and the Poets," as it remains in Poe's work, will repay the reading of it to which one is led by its peculiar biographical

interest. It is cool, discerning, and just, and it shows the larger philosophical principles with which Poe surrounded his remarks about now forgotten books. In an age when many things are being written about America, the opening paragraphs of Poe's essay are fresh after sixty years. The first tells the truth about Poe's mind, the second the truth about American literature, although the faith which Poe then expressed has been delayed in fulfilment. The passage serves, too, to show the point, balance, and ease of Poe's writing.

“That we are not a poetical people has been asserted so often and so roundly, both at home and abroad, that the slander, through mere dint of repetition, has come to be received as truth. Yet nothing can be farther removed from it. The mistake is but a portion, or corollary, of the old dogma, that the calculating faculties are at war with the ideal; while, in fact, it may be demon-

strated that the two divisions of mental power are never to be found in perfection apart. The highest order of the imaginative intellect is always pre-eminently mathematical; and the converse.

“The idiosyncrasy of our political position has stimulated into early action whatever practical talent we possessed. Even in our national infancy we evinced a degree of utilitarian ability which put to shame the mature skill of our forefathers. While yet in leading-strings, we proved ourselves adepts in all the arts and sciences which promote the comfort of the animal man. But the arena of exertion, and of consequent distinction, into which our first and most obvious wants impelled us has been regarded as the field of our deliberate choice. Our necessities have been mistaken for our propensities. Having been forced to make railroads, it has been deemed impossible that we should make verse. Because it suited

us to construct an engine in the first instance, it has been denied that we could compose an epic in the second. Because we were not Homers in the beginning, it has been somewhat too rashly taken for granted that we shall be all Jeremy Bentham's to the end.

“But this is the purest insanity. The principles of the poetic sentiment lie deep within the immortal nature of man, and have little necessary reference to the worldly circumstances which surround him. The poet of Arcady is, in Kamschatka, the poet still. The self-same Saxon current animates the British and the American heart; nor can any social or political or moral or physical conditions do more than momentarily repress the impulses which glow in our own bosoms as fervently as in those of our progenitors.”

Poe continued to be in the last years of his life a privileged contributor to magazines, in that he was allowed to

express his opinions freely. His intellectual independence was not thwarted by editorial policies, and he was rather encouraged than discouraged to speak out his mind. His quarrel, aside from questions of money, seems not to have been so much resentment for what the editors did not accept from him as a more disinterested contempt for what they accepted from others. It was at this period that his dream of an independent magazine assumed its most magnificent and impossible form. He wrote to Lowell, proposing that the dozen *élite* of our men of letters should form a company to make the irresistible magazine, which should mount in two years to a hundred thousand copies, make them all rich, and reform literary taste. There is a naïve enthusiasm in this oldish young man for a form of publication which has persistently refused to do much for the cause of pure letters, except to pay the butchers' bills of

authors while they devote their off-time to productions not suited to the magazines. In Poe's case the facts are inverted : his best productions were suited to the magazines, but they did not pay his butcher's bills.

Poe's letter to Lowell about the magazine which should be independent, sincere, and original, was written in March, 1844. The next month he moved to New York, and attached himself to a metropolitan press, less dignified, less literary in its traditions than the press of Philadelphia. In his first week in New York he perpetrated his "Balloon Hoax" through the columns of the New York *Sun*. Poe's account, in a convincing reportorial style, of the passage of a balloon from England to America was successful in fooling many persons. The only humour in this sort of thing is the Swift-like contempt, of which Poe had a touch, for the gullibility of man.

In New York Poe had every kind of success but that to which as an industrious writer he was most entitled,—reasonable prosperity. A letter to Lowell about the biographical sketch of Poe which Lowell was to furnish to *Graham's Magazine* shows that six of Poe's tales were in the hands of publishers, unpaid for. During this year Poe was ill, and his wife's illness was no doubt aggravated by their poverty. In the fall he found employment on the *Evening Mirror*, edited by N. P. Willis.

Willis says that Poe did steadily and patiently all kinds of editorial work from mechanical paragraphing to literary reviews. One of his reviews is that of Miss Barrett (Mrs. Browning). Mrs. Browning testified to Poe's conscientious workmanship by saying, "The reviewer has so obviously and thoroughly *read* my poems as to be a wonder among critics."

At the beginning of 1845 Poe pub-

lished "The Raven," which made a sensation in America and later in England and France. "The Raven" and "Annabel Lee" have been abundantly parodied. In a way this is a test of their distinction. No one with serious or mocking intention can try these rhythms without reminding the whole English-speaking race of Poe. Personally, I cannot read "The Raven" without more than ever liking Calverley, and I enjoy the spectacle of one English magazine ascribing to Poe Mr. James Whitcomb Riley's "Leonainie," about the time that another English magazine asks superciliously, "Who is Riley?" But Poe's rhythms and word arrangements have stamped themselves forever upon the ear of his race; they have marked out for him a little realm of wonder verse where no other poet can enter without a challenge from the original occupant. The same persons will be haunted by "The Raven" and all Poe's best poems who

respond to the divine insanities of Blake, the sometimes hollow enchantments of Mr. Swinburne, and who are fain to worship the painted lady leaning out from Rossetti's painted heaven. For the rest, as Neal said, "Why waste words upon them?"

Poe tempted his new popularity by lecturing. His subject was poetry. He was developing those theories of criticism and verse structure which are valuable because an artist's comment on his craft is always valuable, and also because Poe's ideas on verse are true and complete. Many of his scientific and philosophical ideas have been rendered obsolete, like many of the dearest prose convictions of poets. But most essays on the science of prosody have been put forth by grammarians who could not make a line of verse, by scholars in Greek and Latin who could not read Horace out loud and make him sound like a poet. Poe once for all set down the aural facts

of prosody, and phrased the truth that poetry is simply, line for line, beautiful sounds which convey interesting ideas. When his dictum that a long poem is a contradiction of terms is brought up against the schemes of other philosophic critics whereby the epic is the great thing because of its religious scope, and "Hamlet," as a whole, is greater than its parts, we find that as a matter of experience we like epics for their lovely passages. "Hamlet," as a whole, is a melodrama, but in pieces is a series of fine poems, and has so been remembered and enjoyed by readers of poetry. Whether Poe's ideas be true or not, they are beautifully and convincingly phrased. They were most necessary in an age of tuneless bards, of metrical religiosity which passed for having the spirit of poetry because it praised God.

The *Evening Mirror* did not satisfy Poe. Perhaps, as Briggs wrote to Lowell, "Willis was too Willis" for Poe,

though it is one of the ironies of life that Willis was never more Willisy than in his defence and eulogy of Poe.

At the beginning of the year 1845 Briggs and Briscoe had founded the *Broadway Journal*, and Poe contributed to it. In March he became a sort of co-editor. Briggs liked Poe less and less as time went on, and his letters to Lowell swing from doubt of Griswold's "shocking stories" to admiration of Poe, then to dislike, then to violent animosity.

Poe's good work at this time includes "The Imp of the Perverse," the nearest of all Poe's work to something like a discovery in human nature, wonderful for its clear expression of shadowy things that every one else has dimly felt and no one else been able to say. To this year belongs also "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar." This revolting and fascinating tale has historical in-

terest in that it became matter of solemn discussion among men of scientific pretensions and excited the shivering, whimsical admiration of Mrs. Brown-
ing. Poe paid tribute to her by dedicating to her his "Raven" volume and by putting her above all her contemporaries except Tennyson. In return she left in a brief letter one of the few utterances of great writers, during Poe's life, which seem to modern taste to assess him justly.

As for the scientific interest of "M. Valdemar," let us recall that the whole weight of science and philosophy and scholarship has been gravely massed to prove that Poe was no man of science, no philosopher, no scholar. Yet he made whatever in his time passed for science look very silly by his baitings of its credulity. He had no difficulty in deceiving scholarship on its own grounds until after forty years it found him out. As for philosophy, he produced

“Eureka,” of which I shall say more presently.

In June Briggs prepared “to haul down Poe’s name” from the *Broadway Journal*. He accuses Poe of having been on a spree. Poe seems, however, to have kept his head well enough: he played the other partner, Briscoe, against Briggs, kept his “third interest” until autumn, and then became sole proprietor. Now, if ever, he could prove what was in his dreams of independent journalism,—and how much dreams depend on dollars.

During the year Wiley & Putnam published a volume of selections from Poe’s tales. It is a curious fact that during Poe’s life his books did not sell well. The reason may be that his repeated publication of his poems and stories in the magazines satisfied the demand. It is difficult now to know just what the public did like him for. The reading public does not directly record itself.

Literary persons make the records, and literary persons are likely to be mistaken. Some writers think he was in his life more celebrated as critic than as poet or romancer. There was, true, a spice even in his minor criticisms which preserves the journals of his time ; his attacks on Lowell as an abolitionist and Longfellow as a plagiarist have been carried along in the tedious momentum of sectional prejudice, and so given undue prominence ; but the people must have been buying his magazines for the stories he wrote.

It is strange that with so many parlour poets about him Poe should have selected Longfellow, whom he justly admired, for abuse. The "Longfellow War" seems now a petty conflict, and the echoes of it no longer alarm. "The Village Blacksmith" and "The Conqueror Worm" subsist together in a broad country. But, in those queer provincial days, Poe and Longfellow's

champions flew at each other as if literature had learned its manners from politics. Longfellow refused to be led into the conflict, and was reserved and magnanimous whenever the matter was brought up. Poe was wrong in point of fact and wrong in the spirit which led him to assail the least presumptuous, most catholic and tolerant of the New Englanders. He should have contented himself with his entertaining derisions of Transcendentalism.

By taking in too many New Englanders,—even Hawthorne he later depreciated,—he showed himself provincial, and just at the time when he should have justified creative literature and criticism he did a foolish thing.

In October, 1845, he gave a reading before the Boston Lyceum. He could not, or did not, produce a new poem for the occasion, but delivered the juvenile "Al Aaraaf" and the already familiar "Raven." The Boston press handled

him severely, and Poe replied from New York that he had intended a hoax. There was no hoax, and he had intended nothing except to read poetry. The whole episode recalls Holmes's fooling in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*: "After a man begins to attack the State House, when he gets bitter about the Frog Pond, you may be sure there is not much left in him. Poor Edgar Poe died in the hospital soon after he got into this way of talking; and, so sure as you find an unfortunate fellow reduced to this pass, you had better begin praying for him and stop lending him money, for he is on his last legs. Remember poor Edgar! He is dead and gone; but the State House has its cupola fresh-gilded, and the Frog Pond has got a fountain that squirts up a hundred feet into the air and glorifies that humble sheet with a fine display of provincial rainbows."

Poe did not have sufficient capital or enough business ability to conduct the

Broadway Journal. He left the note for fifty dollars, by which he bought out Briscoe, to be paid for by the indorser, no less likely a person than Horace Greeley, whose humorous record of the transaction seems to have caused umbrage among Poe's biographers. Poe also borrowed from Griswold and tried to borrow from his relatives. The *Journal* was apparently in vigorous condition both as to its literary content and its advertising matter, but it died gracefully the day after Christmas, 1845.

On the last day of the year appeared Poe's fourth volume of verse, *The Raven and Other Poems*. This volume contains the final revisions of the fugitive poems which had flitted here and there among the pages of the magazines, and to them he added only three or four pieces in the brief remaining years of his life. He entered the company of the immortals, as Dickens said of Gray, with a small volume of verse under his arm. In

the patience and skill of his revisions he is like another modern poet, Tennyson, whom he called the best of all poets, and who said of one perfect line that it cost him three days and a box of cigars. We come, I think, to regard our poets less as mysterious monks inspired by visions, and more as human beings sitting at tables making good or bad verse. As we view them so, we have greater respect for their extraordinary powers. A poet, specially endowed to take at dictation the word of heaven, is not interesting because he is not responsible. Poe producing amid the known difficulties of his life on earth that volume of poems is a remarkable human creature.

About this time he was a personage in America and in Europe. By a strange accident he was introduced to France amid the dust of controversy. Nothing in this man's life ran smooth except his poetry and prose. A French journal published one of his stories. Another

French journal published the same story. There was a legal process in which it appears that both journals were indebted to Mr. Poe, of America. This episode (quite Yankee in its squabble and its disregard of copyright) drew attention to Poe. Some of his other tales were translated, he became the life study of Baudelaire and Mallarmé. Poe's genius received the additional polish of French literary competence, and his fame flew upon French wings. Edgár Poe, or Poë, belongs to unholy Paris quite as much as to the holy city of New York. Paris was the literary centre of the world. It is not quite determinable whether the interest of Englishmen in Poe is not due rather to Paris than to New York. The ties of blood and language have been broken on their long course across the seas ; but London has, in spite of insular fears and memories, been vassal to Paris in critical matters since the age of Dryden. Through France Edgár Poe be-

came the forerunner of pre-Raphaelites and decadents and other minor singers, and so he raises the question where New World barbarism begins and Old World sophistication leaves off.

In New York Poe was a lion in literary circles, those feeble concourses of persons who could not write. In these meetings he comported himself with quiet courtesy. He was a fine talker, and in the drawing-room a gallant, sensible man. He here began some of his many amours with literary ladies. It was his luck and nature to leave behind him a multitude of suspicious clues and circumstances for every sin which he had time and capacity to commit. It is not necessary now to throw up virtuous hands at the tender exchanges of perfervid rhetoric between the female poets of America and this real poet of the glowing eyes, the soft voice, and the winning manners. Apparently, the only ladies who objected to him at the time or after his death

were those upon whom he did not bestow the flatteries of his social presence and his critical approbation. His wife was a child broken by the disease of which she was soon to die. He naturally found intellectual companionship with other women; and his eyes, his oratory, and a touch of alcohol no doubt melted the cool restraints of literary communion. The first lady poet to whom he proved irresistible was Frances Sargent Osgood, with whom he exchanged verses. This relation roused the jealous virtues of another poetess, a Mrs. Ellett, who enlisted the Transcendental ethics of Margaret Fuller. The choice pair went to Poe's house to intercede in behalf of Virginia. Later, when Virginia was dying, Mrs. Ellett thoughtfully saw to it that the girl should hear all the scandal that was fouling Poe's name.

Meanwhile he was making copy out of his New York acquaintances, and he served them up to the public in

a series of articles called "The Literati." He spoke well of most of them, and by any standards possible in writing seriously about such a crew he drew sharp plain lines between good and bad work. His worst attack was on Thomas·Dunn English. This man was the author of "Ben Bolt" (to which Du Maurier indiscreetly gave renewed life in *Trilby*): he later became a member of Congress. As late as 1895 Thomas Dunn Brown, as Poe called him, had not forgiven Poe or his more friendly biographers. He and Poe exchanged Billingsgate in print, and Poe sued him for slander and recovered damages.

In the spring of 1846, while the "Literati" papers were stirring up a variety of hard and soft feelings, the Poes moved to Fordham to the cottage now preserved in the poet's memory. He was ill, and wrote little. In November appeared the last of his best-known tales, "The Cask of Amontillado." As his

work fell off in quantity, his poverty grew worse. The condition of the family was discovered by one of the literati, Mrs. Gove. She sought help of Maria Louise Shew, and the two friends caused Poe's needs to be advertised. Willis enlarged the theme, and a little money was raised for the starving family.

On January 29, 1847, Poe wrote to Mrs. Shew : —

“ *Kindest, dearest Friend,*— My poor Virginia still lives, although failing fast and now suffering much pain. May God grant her life until she sees you and thanks you once again! Her bosom is full to overflowing — like my own — with a boundless, inexpressible gratitude to you. Lest she may never see you more, she bids me say that she sends you her sweetest kiss of love and will die blessing you. But come — oh, come to-morrow! Yes, I *will* be calm — everything you so nobly wish to see me. My mother sends you, also, her ‘warmest love and thanks.’ She begs me to ask you, if possible, to make arrangements at home

so that you may stay with us to-morrow night.”

The next day Virginia died. The story of their hardship is told once for all in Mrs. Gove's account of Virginia's bed of suffering.

“There was no clothing on the bed, which was only straw, but the snow-white counterpane and sheets. The weather was cold, and the sick lady had the dreadful chills that accompany the hectic fever of consumption. She lay on the straw bed, wrapped in her husband's great-coat with a large tortoise-shell cat in her bosom. The wonderful cat seemed conscious of her great usefulness. The coat and the cat were the sufferer's only means of warmth, except as her husband held her hands and her mother her feet.”

The only surviving letter which Poe wrote to his wife is touching and genuine : —

June 12, 1846.

“*My dear Heart,—my dear Virginia,—* Our mother will explain to you why I stay away from you this night. I trust the interview I am promised will result in some *substantial good* for me — for your dear sake and hers — keep up your heart in all hopefulness, and trust yet a little longer. On my last great disappointment I should have lost my courage *but for you*, my darling little wife. You are my *greatest* and *only* stimulus now to battle with this uncongenial, unsatisfactory and ungrateful life.

“I shall be with you to-morrow . . . P.M., and be assured that until I see you I will keep in *loving remembrance* your last *words* and your fervent prayer!

“Sleep well, and may God grant you a peaceful summer with your devoted Edgar.”

After Virginia's death he was broken and irresponsible, and there were only two sane persons in his acquaintance to steady and support him, Mrs. Clemm and Mrs. Shew. Mrs. Shew had a physician's education, and she understood

Poe's condition. She had a physician examine him as he slept, and they knew that the man had not many years to live. In her house Poe wrote the first draft of "The Bells." Unfortunately, he lost her more intimate help by clinging to her too closely, and she thought it wise to keep him at a distance. But she remained his friend.

Mrs. Shew advised Poe to marry a sensible woman, apparently with more eye to his happiness than to that of the woman. Poe in his broken, overwrought condition made two pitiful attempts to attach himself to women, but neither woman was notable for good sense.

The first was Mrs. Whitman, the poetess of Providence, Rhode Island. The story is rather complex, and the letters and printed recollections that relate and cross-relate it even scandal has failed to vitalise. The fantastic pair were guilty of nothing but lyric ecstasies and sentimentalities. It is a pity

that this private business was ever opened to the eye of the world, which, in point of fact, does not love lovers in their crudest expressions of themselves. Real love letters are usually poor literature. If they are good literature, they are poor love letters. Poe and Mrs. Whitman did not make literature in their prose correspondence. The poems they interchanged and her defence of Poe published ten years after his death are tolerable. The rest might go into the fire along with Keats's letters to Fanny Brawne.

The story is, in brief, that Mrs. Whitman published verses to Poe. He fell in love with the idea of her, and played upon their common poetical superstition by sending her his verses "To Helen," which by momentous coincidence was her name! In the coincidence his prophetic soul saw, according to his own queer statement, the workings of the algebraic law of chance. In 1848 he

met her, and pressed his suit. She refused him on account of her age and ill health and his bad habits. He protested that his habits had been misrepresented, promised to reform, tried to kill himself with laudanum, and finally persuaded her to accept him. He went to her house showing signs of having broken his pledge of abstinence, and she dismissed him with a final confession that she loved him.

Entangled with the story of Mrs. Whitman is that of his acquaintance with Mrs. Annie Richmond, of Lowell, to whom he wrote ardent letters. The reality of his feeling of kinship with "Annie" and his lack of a sense of fitness are shown by the fact that, when he was engaged to marry Mrs. Elmira Royster Shelton, he wrote his mother-in-law that they must plan to be near "Annie," for he could not live without her. After Poe's death Mrs. Clemm spent some time with "Annie." Mrs. Clemm must have

been bewildered by Poe's shifting affections, but she took several of the ladies into her confidence, and they wrote affectionate letters to her after Poe died.

Mrs. Royster, to whom after so many tender poetical bonds he prosaically engaged himself, was the Elmira of his boyhood, now a widow with a fortune. She went into mourning after his death.

In the last two years of his life Poe did not produce enough manuscript to get a living out of the magazines, and he was not well or promptly paid for what he did send them. The story of Mrs. Clemm going about among the editors trying to collect money for work already accepted shows what a precarious hold the great magazinist had upon the institution for which he had done so much and of which he had such high hopes.

During 1847 he remained at Fordham, and he is imaged to us as a melancholy, lonely man walking out at night, brood-

ing upon life and the stars. His mind in its lucid intervals still worked finely, and he dreamed a prose poem which was to explain the riddle of the universe and set him higher in its unhappy daily destinies. This metaphysical essay, "Eureka," was published in 1848. It is the culmination of the half-scientific, half-poetic meditations which show in many of his fictions and criticisms. Poe had always been an independent and original thinker about God and man. He was a combination of rationalist and poetic pagan. Though he was not a profound metaphysician, he saw things from his own corner of mind in his own way. In a sense he was uninstructed, he had not read systematically in philosophy. But a good deal of the thought of the world is turned over year by year in the magazines and current books, and Poe read magazines and books sent for review as part of his professional work. Learning has been brought to bear upon

Poe's guess at the great riddles. Literary persons have called in their scientific and philosophical friends to help them find the flaws in a piece of work which was made by a literary man more independent and confident than they.

To know just where "Eureka" belongs in thought, one needs to know not what science is now, but where it was in 1848. Since Poe's scientific argument has been severely measured by the standards of science, as they had developed up to about 1880, it may be worth noting that a recent scientific hypothesis, that matter is negative electricity, agrees well enough with Poe's theory that substance is attraction and repulsion. The essay in English which discusses most competently the various sides of Poe's mind is that by the Scotch rationalist, Mr. John M. Robertson, who combines literary gifts with the peculiar knowledge he has amassed as historian of certain phases of philosophy. He is

not so ready as some of Poe's critics to dismiss "Eureka" as a piece of thinking. Poe's guess is as good as many which have been seriously accepted as philosophy. Solutions of the eternal riddles are valid less for what they offer in explanation than for their own perfection of structure; and most writers in English upon philosophical matters fall far short of Poe in clarity and beauty of exposition. The introduction is a poem in itself: "To the few who love me and whom I love, to those who feel rather than to those who think, to the dreamers and those who put faith in dreams as the only realities, I offer this book of truths, not in its character of truth-teller, but for the beauty that abounds in its truth, constituting it true. To these I present the composition as an art-product alone—let us say as a romance; or, if I be not urging too lofty a claim, as a poem.

"What I here propound is true:

therefore, it cannot die ; or, if by any means it be now trodden down so that it die, it will rise again to the Life Everlasting. Nevertheless, it is as a poem only that I wish this work to be judged after I am dead."

Obviously, an easy request to grant. It is pathetic, though, to learn what confidence Poe had in his theory of cosmogony. He believed that it would revolutionise thought and give him new prosperity, and that Putnam should publish fifty thousand copies. Putnam contented himself with five hundred copies, and the world refused to be revolutionised or even to give Poe prosperity.

During the last years of his life Poe lectured in several cities on poetry and on the universe, and with the proceeds of the lectures and what money he could borrow from his friends, whose help he now vigorously solicited, he again hoped to give shape to his nebulous magazine. Before his death he found a promising

partner in a Mr. Patterson, of Oquawka, Illinois. They arranged to publish the first number in July, 1850. The great magazine seemed ready to emerge at last from shadow when the darker shadow intervened.

Poe was a poet to the end. In "Ullalume" of 1847 he shows his peculiar characteristics in their extremest form. It is hard to feel sure from one day's reading of it to another whether he has here crossed the line into nonsense or whether he has come to ultimate perfection. To the final year belong the third version of "The Bells," "Annabel Lee," and "For Annie."

In this memorable poem "For Annie," Poe seems to speak out of the real terrors of his life.

"And the fever called Living
Is conquered at last."

Haply, it was conquered by the death that came soon after. Ill-luck pursued

him to the end. The financial panic sent into insolvency some of the magazines which owed him money or had accepted manuscripts or promised to accept them. The only bright spot was his success in Richmond, where society seems to have done him honour and put money in his purse. He paid two visits to Richmond. For the second he left New York in June, 1849. Before he went, he seems to have known that his life hung by slender strands, for he directed Mrs. Lewis ("Stella," another of his lady poets) to write his life, and he wrote to Griswold, asking him to undertake the editing of his works. Griswold's reply came while he was in Richmond, and the pleasure it gave Poe, as witnessed by one of his friends, indicates that the man who wrote it should not have written after Poe's death that he was not Poe's friend.

On his way to Richmond through Philadelphia, Poe was enforced guest in the house of John Sartain, the publisher

of the magazine in which "The Bells" appeared. Poe was ill and crazed, possessed with the hallucination that his enemies were pursuing him. His journey to Richmond was delayed many days, during which Mrs. Clemm, in New York, was frantic with anxiety. Poe explained to the Oquawka partner that he had had cholera. Cholera was not the name of the disease.

From Richmond he wrote hopefully to Mrs. Clemm; he engaged himself to marry Mrs. Shelton; and he left with many Richmond people the memory of a sad, sober man. Among these was Mrs. Susan Archer Weiss, who later wrote a pleasant account of him. The other side of his life in Richmond is given by J. R. Thompson, the editor of the *Messenger*, in whom Poe found a good friend. Thompson says that in the earlier visit of Poe to Richmond, in 1848, he had been found befuddled and ragged in the lowest haunts of the city, and that

“his entire residence in Richmond of late was but a succession of disgraceful follies.” Yet Poe left Richmond this second time, full of hope, with money he had received from Thompson in advance for an article, and perhaps with money from his lectures and from friends who were helping him with his magazine project.

He took steamer from Richmond the last of September. The possibility that he had money may account for the disaster in Baltimore. On October 3 he was found in one of the ward polls by a printer, who wrote to Dr. J. E. Snodgrass that Poe was “the worse for wear” and “in need of immediate assistance.” He may have been robbed—all trace of his baggage had been lost—or he may have come to the end of his strength or suffered from exposure after drinking. It may be that he was victim of the political habit of the time to “coop” strangers on the eve of election, drug

them, and then send them obediently dazed to the polls to vote. If he was thus treated, his captors had tampered with a delicate subject, a body at the end of its slender power to resist drugs. He was taken to the Washington Hospital in Baltimore, and died there early Sunday morning, the 7th of October, 1849.

One hears again the voice of Carlyle as he looked at De Quincey, that other drug-shadowed waif of the magazines :
“*Eccovi*, this child has been in hell !”

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