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THE POEMS
OF
EDGAR ALLAN POE



FROM *visions of Apollo*
And of Astarte's bliss,
He gazed into the hollow
And hopeless vale of Dis ;
And though earth were surrounded
By heaven, it still was mounded
With graves. His soul had sounded
The dolorous abyss.

.
No singer of old story
Luting accustomed lays,
No harper for new glory,
No mendicant for praise,
He struck high chords and splendid,
Wherein were fiercely blended
Tones that unfinished ended
With his unfinished days.

JOHN HENRY BONER



EDGAR ALLAN POE

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**THE POEMS OF
EDGAR ALLAN POE**
WITH AN ESSAY ON HIS POETRY
BY ANDREW LANG



Portland, Maine
THOMAS B. MOSHER
Mdcccvi

*This Second Edition
on Van Gelder paper
consists of 925 copies.*

GIFT

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FOREWORD



“I would define, in brief, the Poetry
of words as *The Rhythmical Creation
of Beauty.*”

EDGAR ALLAN POE.



FOREWORD

IN this edition of the poems of Edgar Allan Poe, *Tamerlane*, *Al Aaraaf* and the unfinished *Politian* which, according to Mr. E. C. Stedman, "were the outcome of perseverance, and not written with the zest that ministers to one doing what he is born to do," are not to be found. To have brought together every scrap of verse and its variant was, in our opinion, to have rendered scant justice or even fair play to Poe's fame as a great metrical artist. If his Note to this early work is accepted as truthful it should also be more literally and liberally construed to his advantage. According to that Note what we find there was reprinted with specific "reference to the sin of plagiarism and to the date of Tennyson's first poems." Surely, if ever, the time has come when we can safely relegate such juvenilia to the limbo of dead things: it has had its day and should now cease to rise up and vex us.

After all it is not so much that we do take away; for out of a total of forty-six poems,

exclusive of the three longer pieces named above, six only are omitted, two of which it is some satisfaction to know originally appeared under Griswold's editorship,¹ while the other four belong to the volume of 1827. One might indeed wish to cancel the later *To Helen*, the lines *To M. L. S—*, and *To — —*, written as they are in the language of mere literary philandering: banal expressions of long faded compliment that placed beside the earlier *To Helen* and the later if not the last invocation to a beloved woman — *For Annie* — suffer an immeasurable and most miserable sea change!

To restate our position without risk of misunderstanding: the text as here presented contains what, with the few exceptions just noted, will endure as long as American literature endures. If the youthful outpourings are ever again put forth

¹ *The Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe: with notices of His Life and Genius by N. P. Willis, J. R. Lowell, and R. W. Griswold.* New York: J. S. Redfield. 1850. 2 vols. 12mo. Portrait. Pp. xx 483; 495.

The same. 3 vols. 12mo. Portrait. 1850.

The same. 4 vols. 12mo. 1853.

Griswold printed *A Valentine* and *An Enigma*, which are as near absolute rubbish as verse can be. The four earlier pieces are "*The happiest day, the happiest hour*," (24 lines,) *Stanzas*, (32 lines,) *Evening Star*, (23 lines,) and *Dreams*, (34 lines).

they should not be obtruded and made much of; rather, if needs must be, given in the shape of verbatim or facsimile reprints, a proceeding both desirable and justifiable, if only from the extreme rarity of Poe's three earliest volumes.¹

But for the lover of verse who is not particularly attracted by various readings and critical annotations,² who on the contrary delights in poetry without alloy, the great things of the Master which will perish never, should be set forth with befitting austerity.

¹ *Tamerlane, and Other Poems. By a Bostonian.* Boston: Calvin F. S. Thomas, 1827. 12mo. Wrappers. 40 pp.

Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems. By Edgar Allan Poe. Baltimore: Hatch and Dunning, 1829. 8vo. 71 pp.

Poems by Edgar Allan Poe. Second edition. New York: Elam Bliss, 1831. 12mo. 124 pp.

The first and only collected edition prepared by the poet was *The Raven and Other Poems. By Edgar Allan Poe.* New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845. 12mo. Pp. viii + 91.

² For those who seek all possible aid in reconstructing the poetic mind in its successive stages of rhythmic evolution *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe, newly collected and edited, with a Memoir, Critical Introduction, and Notes, by Edmund Clarence Stedman and George Edward Woodberry,* (octavo, 10 vols., Chicago, 1894-5,) must be taken as the culmination of half a century's appreciation and research.

Once the minor deductions indicated by us are made and the poetic necessity for so doing admitted, we may enter into the full joy of what for all time is the unmatched and unmatchable book of Beauty.

Group as you will *The Haunted Palace*, *Israfel*, *The City in the Sea*, *Ulalume*, *The Conqueror Worm*, *To One in Paradise*, *Dream-Land*, *The Sleeper*, *For Annie*, and *Annabel Lee*, they are each and every minted gold and bear the image and superscription of the king. Let us then concern ourselves only with these—the real and undying glories of Poe's genius. To hold the courage of one's convictions in such a matter is in the deepest sense to render the highest possible service to the memory of that most unhappy master of imperishable lyric verse.

*“Farewell, thou Titan fairer than the Gods!
Farewell, farewell, thou swift and lovely spirit,
Thou splendid warrior with the world at odds,
Unpraised, unpraisable, beyond thy merit;
Chased, like Orestes, by the Furies' rods,
Like him at length thy peace dost thou inherit!
Beholding whom, men think how fairer far
Than all the steadfast stars the wandering star!”*





THE POETRY
OF
EDGAR ALLAN POE



“LET the dullard go home and thank God for that superior virtue which permits him to drink his muddy beer in peace; let him also reflect that no wine could purchase for him the dreams, the poems, the hopes which it purchased for Poe. That his death was tragic and premature is, alas! indisputable. And here, again, has been an occasion for much foolishness. He died, like Marlowe and many another man of genius, in the street, unheeded, almost unrecognised. But he died at his own time, when his work was done, a victim to the stolid stupidity of circumstance. He was great, not on account of his frailty, which the foolish sometimes mistake for talent, but in his frailty's despite; and he yields not in good fortune to the mirror of respectability, whose sole congratulation is that his unremembered and useless life trickles out amiably in bed.”

CHARLES WHIBLEY.

(*Studies in Frankness*, 1898.)



THE POETRY
OF
EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE life of Edgar Allan Poe is, fortunately, a subject that but little concerns readers of his poetry. As far as the events of his career illustrate the enigmatic character of his genius, we have, perhaps, a right to inquire about them. We may imagine that from parents of semi-Celtic stock and artistic profession he inherited his genius, and that his pride and perversity came from his training by a wealthy injudicious foster-father. But the legend or myth of his errors and misfortunes, so often told and retold by posthumous malice or by too fond indulgence, is really no affair of ours. Poe's career is still a topic that excites controversy in America. The spite of his first biographer, Griswold, was begetting a natural reaction when Mr. Ingram published his "Edgar Allan Poe" (London, 1880), and unwittingly stirred up the hatred of surviving scandal-mongers. Men are alive who knew Poe, and who suffered from his scornful criticism. To find

their dead enemy defended by an Englishman excited their spleen, and, for other reasons, fairer American critics were not conciliated. The defence of this luckless man of genius is not, and cannot be, a wholly successful one. The viler charges and insinuations of Griswold may be refuted, but no skill can make Poe seem an amiable or an ascetic human being. It is natural that admirers of a poet's genius should wish to think well of the man, should wish to see him among the honourable, gentle, kindly, and wise. But Poe wanted as a man what his poetry also lacks; he wanted humanity. Among the passions, he was familiar with pride, and with the intolerable regret, the life-long *desiderium* which, having lost the solitary object of its love, can find among living men and women no more than the objects of passing sentiment and affectionate caprice. Love, as the poets have known it, from Catullus to Coventry Patmore, love, whether wild and feverish or stable and domestic, appears to have been to him unknown. And by this it is not meant that Poe was not an affectionate husband of his wife, but that the stronger part of his affections, the better element of his heart, had burned away before he was a man. He knew what he calls "that sorrow which the living love to cherish for the dead,

and which, in some minds, resembles the delirium of opium." His spirit was always beating against the gate of the grave, and the chief praise he could confer on a woman in his maturity was to compare her to one whom he had lost while he was still a boy. "For months after her decease," says Mr. Ingram, "Poe . . . would go nightly to visit the tomb of his revered friend, and when the nights were very drear and cold, when the autumnal rains fell, and the winds wailed mournfully over the graves, he lingered longest and came away most regretfully."

The truth of this anecdote will be more important for our purpose than a world of controversies as to whether Poe was expelled from school, or gambled, or tiddled, or why he gave up the editorship of this or that journal. We see him preoccupied, even in his boyhood, with the thought of death and of the condition of the dead. In his prose romances his imagination is always morbidly busy with the secrets of the sepulchre. His dead men speak, his corpses hold long colloquies with themselves, his characters are prematurely buried and explore the veiled things of corruption, his lovers are led wandering among the *hic jacets* of the dead. This is the dominant note of all his poetry, this wistful regret, almost hopeless of any

reunion of departed souls in "the distant Aidenn," and almost fearful that the sleep of the dead is not dreamless.

*"The lady sleeps! Oh may her sleep,
Which is enduring, so be deep!*

*I pray to God that she may lie
Forever with unopened eye,
While the dim sheeted ghosts go by!"*

Thus Poe's verse is so far from being a "criticism of life," that it is often, in literal earnest, a criticism of death; and even when his thoughts are not busy with death, even when his heart is not following some Lenore or Annabel Lee or Ulalume, his fancy does not deal with solid realities, with human passions. He dwells in a world more vaporous than that of Shelley's "Witch of Atlas," in a region where dreaming cities crumble into fathomless seas, in a fairyland with "dim vales and shadowy woods," in haunted palaces, or in a lost and wandering star.

Not only was Poe's practice thus limited, but his theory of poetry was scarcely more extensive. He avowed that "melancholy is the most legitimate of all the poetical tones." This preference was, doubtless, caused by Poe's feeling that melancholy is the emotion

most devoid of actual human stuff, the most etherealised, so to speak, the least likely to result in action. Poetry he defined as "the rhythmical creation of beauty," and beauty was in his eyes most beautiful when it was least alloyed with matter. Thus such topics as war, patriotism, prosperous love, religion, duty, were absolutely alien to the genius of Poe. He carried his theory to the absurd length of preferring Fouqué's "Undine" to the works of "fifty Molières." There is no poet more full of humanity than Molière, and no creature of fancy so empty as Undine, a sprite who is no more substantial than a morning shower, a vapour more evanescent than a solar myth. Poe, who liked the melancholy moods of this waste-watery sprite better than all the mirth and tenderness and passion of the Mascarilles and Alcestes, the Don Juans and Tartuffes, was also of opinion that no poem could be long. The "Iliad" and the "Odyssey," he thought, were mistakes; they carried too heavy a weight of words and matter. When examined, this theory or paradox of Poe's shrinks into the commonplace observations that Poe preferred lyric poetry and that lyrics are essentially brief. In considering Poe's theory and practice, we must not forget that both were, in part, the result of reaction. American

literature then intended to be extremely moral, and respectable, and didactic, and much of it was excessively uninspired. Poetry was expected, as she so often is expected, to teach morality as her main duty. We have always plenty of critics who cry out that poetry should be "palpitating with actuality," should struggle with "the living facts of the hour," should dignify industrialism, and indite pæans, perhaps, to sewing-machines and patent electric lights. Poe's nature was essentially rebellious, scornful, and aristocratic. If democratic ecstasies are a tissue of historical errors and self-complacent content with the commonplace, no one saw that more clearly than Poe. Thus he was the more encouraged by his rebellious instinct to take up what was then a singular and heterodox critical position. He has lately been called immoral in America for writing these words: "Beyond the limits of beauty the province of poetry does not extend. Its sole arbiter is taste. With the intellect or the conscience it has only collateral relations. It has no dependence, unless incidentally, upon either duty or truth."

To any one who believes that the best, the immortal poetry, is nobly busied with great actions and great passions, Poe's theory seems fatally narrow. Without the concep-

tions of duty and truth we can have no "Antigone" and no "Prometheus." These great and paramount ideas have always been the inspirers of honourable actions, and by following them men and women are led into the dramatic situations which are the materials of Shakespeare, Æschylus, and Homer. There is an immortal strength in the stories of great actions; but Poe in theory and practice disdains all action and rejects this root of immortality. He deliberately discards *sanity*, he deliberately chooses *fantasy* for his portion. Now, while it is not the business of poetry to go about distributing tracts, she can never neglect actions and situations which, under her spell, become unconscious lessons of morality. But, as we have said, Poe's natural bent, and his reaction against the cheap didactic criticism of his country and his time, made him neglect all actions and most passions, both in his practice and his theory. When he spoke of Keats as the most flawless of English poets, and of Mr. Tennyson as "the noblest poet that ever lived," he was attracted by that in them which is most magical, most intangible, and most undefinable — the inimitable and inexpressible charm of their music, by the delicious languor of the "Ode to the Nightingale" and of the

“Lotus-Eaters.” These poems are, indeed, examples of the “rhythmical creation of beauty,” which, to Poe’s mind, was the essence and function of poetry.

As to the nature of Poe’s secret and the *technique* by which he produced his melodies, much may be attributed to the singular musical appropriateness of his words and epithets, much to his elaborate care for the details of his art. George Sand, in “Un Hiver à Majorque,” describes a rainy night which Chopin passed in the half-ruinous monastery where they lived. She tells us how the melodies of the wind and rain seemed to be magically transmuted into his music, so that, without any puerile attempt at direct imitation of sounds, his compositions were alive with the air of the tempest. “Son génie était plein des mystérieuses harmonies de la nature traduites par des équivalents sublimes dans sa pensée musicale, et non par une répétition servile des sons extérieurs.” In Poe’s genius, too, there was a kind of pre-established harmony between musical words and melancholy thoughts. As Mr. Saintsbury points out to me, though “his language not unfrequently passes from vagueness into mere unmeaningness in the literal and grammatical sense of it, yet it never fails to convey the proper suggestion

in sound if not in sense. Take the lines in
 ‘Ulalume:’—

*‘It was night in the lonesome October
 Of my most immemorial year.’*

Here it would puzzle the most adroit student of words to attach a distinct usual sense, authenticated by lexicons, to ‘immemorial.’ And yet no one with an ear can fail to see that it is emphatically the right word, and supplies the necessary note of suggestion.” As to Poe’s management of his metres, one cannot do better than quote Mr. Saintsbury’s criticism again. “The same indefinite but intensely poetic effect is produced still more obviously by Poe’s management of his metres. Every one who is acquainted with his critical work knows the care (a care that brought on him the ridicule of sciolists and poetasters) which he bestowed on metrical subjects. ‘The Raven,’ ‘Ulalume,’ ‘The Haunted Palace,’ ‘Annabel Lee,’ ‘For Annie,’ are, each in its own way, metrical marvels, and it is not till long after we have enjoyed and admired the beauty of each as a symphony that we discern the exquisite selection and skilful juxtaposition of the parts and constituent elements of each. Every one of these remains unapproached and uncopied

as a concerted piece. In 'The Haunted Palace,' the metre, stately at the beginning, slackens and dies towards the close. In 'Annabel Lee' and 'For Annie,' on the contrary, there is a steady crescendo from first to last, while, in the two other pieces the metre ebbs and flows at uncertain but skillfully arranged intervals. Poe stands almost alone in this arrangement of his lyric works as a whole. With most poets the line or the stanza is the unit, and the length of the poem is determined rather by the sense than by the sound. But with Poe the music as well as the sense (even more than the sense perhaps) is arranged and projected as a whole, nor would it be possible to curtail or omit a stanza without injuring the metrical as well as the intelligible effect."

To a critic who himself feels that the incommunicable and inexpressible charm of melodious words is of the essence of song, Poe's practice is a perpetual warning. It is to verse like Poe's, so deficient as it is in all merit but lyric music and vague emotion, so devoid of human passion—a faint rhythmical echo among stars and graves of man's laborious life—that we are reduced if we hold the theory of Poe. A critic of his own native land, Mr. Henry James, has spoken of his "valueless verse," and valueless his

verse must always appear if we ask from it more than it can give. It has nothing to give but music, and people who want more must go to others that sell a different ware. We shall never appreciate Poe if we keep comparing him to men of stronger and more human natures. We must take him as one of the voices, almost the "shadow of a voice," that sound in the temple of song, and fill a little hour with music. He is not, like Homer, or Scott, or Shakespeare, or Molière, a poet that men can live with always, by the sea, in the hills, in the market-place. He is the singer of rare hours of languor, when the soul is vacant of the pride of life, and inclined to listen, as it were, to the echo of a lyre from behind the hills of death. He is like a Moschus or Bion who has crossed the ferry and sings to Pluteus a song that faintly reaches the ears of mortals.

*Ουκ ἀγέραστος
ἔσσειθ' ἁ μολπά.*

"Not unrewarded" indeed is the singing, for the verse of Poe has been prized by men with a far wider range and healthier powers than his own.

Poe said that with him "poetry was a passion." Yet he spoke of his own verses,

in a moment of real modesty and insight, as trifles "not of much value to the public, or very creditable to myself." They were, for the greater part, composed in the most miserable circumstances, when poverty, when neglect, when the cruel indignation of a born man of letters, in a country where letters had not yet won their place, were torturing the poet. He was compelled to be a bookseller's hack. The hack's is indeed "a damnable life," as Goldsmith said, and was doubly or trebly damnable when "The Bells" or "Annabel Lee" were sent the round of the newspaper offices, to be disposed of for the price of a dinner and a pair of boots. Poe's time was spent in writing elaborate masterpieces for a pittance, and in reviewing and crushing, for the sake of bread, the productions of a crowd of mediocrities. Then came violent and venomous quarrels, which, with enforced hackwork, devoured the energy of the poet. It is no wonder that he produced little; but even had he enjoyed happier fortunes, his range is so narrow that we could not have looked for many volumes from him. He declared that he could not and would not excite his muse, "with an eye to the paltry compensations or the more paltry commendations of mankind." Thus it may, at least, be said of him, that he

was himself in his poetry, though, in writing prose, he often deserted his true inspiration. In his earlier verses he is very plainly the pupil of Shelley, as any one may see who has the courage to read through "Tamerlane" and "Al Aaraaf." His reputation does not rest on these poems, which are longer than his own canon admitted, but on pieces of verbal music like "The Haunted Palace," "The Sleeper," "To One in Paradise," "Israfel," and the lines "To Helen." Though this beautiful piece of verse did not appear in the very earliest editions of Poe's poems, he always declared that it was written in boyhood for the woman whose death caused him, in Beddoes' phrase, "with half his heart to inhabit other worlds." Poe was well aware that his "Raven," despite its immense popularity, was not among his best works. Indeed, it is almost too clever to be poetical, and has in it a kind of echo of Mrs. Browning, whose verse, floating in the poet's mind probably suggested the composition. "To Helen," "The Haunted Palace," and "The Sleeper," are perhaps the most coherent and powerful as well as the most melodious of Poe's verses. As his life sank in poverty, bereavement, misfortune, and misery, his verse more and more approached the vagueness of music, appealing

often to mere sensation rather than to any emotion which can be stated in words. "The Bells" was written in the intervals of an unnatural lethargy; "Ulalume" scarcely pretends to remain within the limits of the poetical art, and attracts or repels by mere sounds as vacant as possible of meaning. Mr. Stedman says, truly and eloquently, that "Ulalume" "seems an improvisation, such as a violinist might play upon the instrument which had become his one thing of worth after the death of a companion who had left him alone with his own soul." The odd definition of the highest poetry as "sense swooning into nonsense" seems made for such verse as "Ulalume." People are so constituted that, if a critic confesses his pleasure in such a thing as "Ulalume," he is supposed to admit his inability to admire any other poetry. Thus it may require some moral courage to assert one's belief that even "Ulalume" has an excuse for its existence. It is curious and worth observing that this sort of verse is so rare. It cannot be easy to make, or the herd of imitators who approach art by its weak points would have produced quantities of this enigmatic poetry. Yet, with the exception of Poe's later verse, of Mr. Morris's "Blue Closet," and perhaps of some pieces by Gérard de

Nerval, it is difficult to name any successful lines on the further side of the border between verse and music. In this region, this "ultimate dim Thule," Poe seems to reign almost alone. The fact is that the art of hints, of fantasies, of unfinished suggestions is not an easy one, as many critics, both of poetry and painting, seem to suppose. It is not enough to be obscure, or to introduce forms unexplained and undefined. A certain very rare sort of genius is needed to make productions live which hold themselves thus independent of nature and of the rules of art. We cannot define the nature of the witchery by which the most difficult task of romantic art was achieved. Poe did succeed, as is confessed by the wide acceptance of poems that cannot be defended if any one chooses to attack them. They teach nothing, they mean little; their melody may be triumphantly explained as the result of a metrical trick. *Eut, ne faict ce tour qui veut.* The trick was one that only Poe could play. Like Hawthorne in prose, Poe possessed in poetry a style as strange as it was individual, a style trebly remarkable because it was the property of a hack-writer. When all is said, Poe remains a master of fantastic and melancholy sound. Some foolish old legend tells of a musician who surpassed all his

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rivals. His strains were unearthly sad, and ravished the ears of those who listened with a strange melancholy. Yet his viol had but a single string, and the framework was fashioned out of a dead woman's breast-bone. Poe's verse—the parallel is much in his own taste—resembles that player's minstrelsy. It is morbidly sweet and mournful, and all touched on that single string, which thrills to a dead and immortal affection.

ANDREW LANG.





POEMS



PREFACE TO THE COLLECTION OF 1845

These trifles are collected and republished chiefly with a view to their redemption from the many improvements to which they have been subjected while going "the rounds of the press." I am naturally anxious that what I have written should circulate as I wrote it, if it circulate at all. In defence of my own taste, nevertheless, it is incumbent on me to say that I think nothing in this volume of much value to the public, or very creditable to myself. Events not to be controlled have prevented me from making, at any time, any serious effort in what, under happier circumstances, would have been the field of my choice. With me poetry has been not a purpose, but a passion; and the passions should be held in reverence; they must not — they cannot at will be excited with an eye to the paltry compensations, or the more paltry commendations, of mankind.

E. A. P.

TO THE NOBLEST OF HER SEX
TO THE AUTHOR OF
"THE DRAMA OF EXILE"
TO MISS ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT
OF ENGLAND
I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME
WITH THE MOST ENTHUSIASTIC ADMIRATION
AND WITH THE MOST SINCERE ESTEEM.
E. A. P.

1845

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each
purple curtain
Thrilled me — filled me — with fantastic ter-
rors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart,
I stood repeating
“’Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my
chamber door,—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my
chamber door.
This it is, and nothing more.”

Presently my soul grew stronger: hesitating
then no longer,
“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your forgive-
ness I implore:
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently
you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at
my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you.” Here
I opened wide the door.
Darkness there, and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood
there, wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever
dared to dream before.
But the silence was unbroken, and the still-
ness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the
whispered word, “Lenore!”

This I whispered, and an echo murmured
back the word, "Lenore!"

Merely this, and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul
within me burning,

Soon again I heard a tapping, something
louder than before.

"Surely," said I, "surely that is something
at my window-lattice:

Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this
mystery explore,—

Let my heart be still a moment, and this
mystery explore:

'Tis the wind, and nothing more."

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with
many a flirt and flutter,

In there stepped a stately Raven of the
saintly days of yore.

Nor the least obeisance made he,—not a
minute stopped or stayed he,

But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above
my chamber door,—

Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my
chamber door,—

Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebon bird beguiling my sad fancy
into smiling,

By the grave and stern decorum of the coun-
tenance it wore,

“Though thy crest be shorn and shaven,
thou,” I said, “art sure no craven,
Ghastly, grim, and ancient Raven, wandering
from the Nightly shore.

Tell me what thy lordly name is on the
Night’s Plutonian shore!”

Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear
discourse so plainly,

Though its answer little meaning—little
relevancy bore;

For we cannot help agreeing that no living
human being

Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above
his chamber door,—

Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above
his chamber door,

With such name as “Nevermore.”

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid
bust, spoke only

That one word, as if his soul in that one
word he did outpour.

Nothing further then he uttered; not a
feather then he fluttered,—

Till I scarcely more than muttered, “Other
friends have flown before!

On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my hopes
have flown before!”

Then the bird said “Nevermore.”

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so
 aptly spoken,
“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its
 only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master whom
 unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his
 songs one burden bore,—
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy
 burden bore
 Of ‘Never,—nevermore!’”

But the Raven still beguiling all my sad soul
 into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front
 of bird and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook
 myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this omi-
 nous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt,
 and ominous bird of yore
 Meant in croaking “Nevermore.”

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no sylla-
 ble expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned
 into my bosom’s core:
This and more I sat divining, with my head
 at ease reclining
On the cushion’s velvet lining that the lamp-
 light gloated o’er,

But whose velvet violet lining, with the
lamplight gloating o'er,
 She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, per-
fumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose footfalls tinkled
on the tufted floor.

“Wretch!” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee
—by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy
memories of Lenore!

Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe, and
forget the lost Lenore!”

 Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” cried I, “thing of evil!—
prophet still, if bird or devil!—

Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest
tossed thee here ashore,

Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert
land enchanted—

On this Home by horror haunted—tell me
truly, I implore—

Is there—*is* there balm in Gilead? Tell
me!—tell me, I implore!”

 Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” cried I, “thing of evil!—
prophet still, if bird or devil!—

By that Heaven that bends above us—by
that God we both adore!—

Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within
the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the
angels name Lenore,—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the
angels name Lenore.”

Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or
fiend!” I shrieked, upstarting.

“Get thee back into the tempest and the
Night’s Plutonian shore!

Leave no black plume as a token of that lie
thy soul hath spoken!

Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the
bust above my door!

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take
thy form from off my door!”

Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting,
still is sitting

On the pallid bust of Pallas, just above my
chamber door;

And his eyes have all the seeming of a
demon’s that is dreaming,

And the lamplight o’er him streaming throws
his shadow on the floor;

And my soul from out that shadow that lies
floating on the floor

Shall be lifted—nevermore!

THE BELLS

I

HEAR the sledges with the bells,—
Silver bells!

What a world of merriment their melody foretells!

How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,

In the icy air of night!

While the stars that oversprinkle

All the heavens, seem to twinkle

With a crystalline delight;

Keeping time, time, time,

In a sort of Runic rhyme,

To the tintinabulation that so musically wells

From the bells, bells, bells, bells,

Bells, bells, bells,—

From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

II

Hear the mellow wedding bells,—

Golden bells!

What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!

Through the balmy air of night

How they ring out their delight!

From the molten golden notes,

And all in tune,

What a liquid ditty floats

To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats

On the moon!

Oh, from out the sounding cells,
What a gush of euphony voluminously wells!
 How it swells!
 How it dwells
On the Future! How it tells
Of the rapture that impels
To the swinging and the ringing
Of the bells, bells, bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells,—
To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!

III

Hear the loud alarum bells,—
 Brazen bells!
What a tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells!
 In the startled ear of night
 How they scream out their affright!
 Too much horrified to speak,
 They can only shriek, shriek,
 Out of tune,
In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,
In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire,
 Leaping higher, higher, higher,
 With a desperate desire,
 And a resolute endeavor
 Now — now to sit, or never,
By the side of the pale-faced moon.
 Oh, the bells, bells, bells!
 What a tale their terror tells
 Of Despair!

How they clang, and clash, and roar!
What a horror they outpour
On the bosom of the palpitating air!
Yet the ear it fully knows,
By the twanging,
And the clanging,
How the danger ebbs and flows;
Yet the ear distinctly tells,
In the jangling,
And the wrangling,
How the danger sinks and swells,
By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the bells,
Of the bells,—
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells,—
In the clamor and the clangor of the bells!

IV

Hear the tolling of the bells,—
Iron bells!
What a world of solemn thought their monody compels!
In the silence of the night,
How we shiver with affright
At the melancholy menace of their tone!
For every sound that floats
From the rust within their throats
Is a groan.
And the people—ah, the people—
They that dwell up in the steeple,
All alone,

And who tolling, tolling, tolling,
In that muffled monotone,
Feel a glory in so rolling
On the human heart a stone :
They are neither man nor woman,—
They are neither brute nor human,—
They are Ghouls ;
And their king it is who tolls,—
And he rolls, rolls, rolls,
Rolls a pæan from the bells !
And his merry bosom swells
With the pæan of the bells,
And he dances, and he yells ;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the pæan of the bells,—
Of the bells :

Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the throbbing of the bells,—
Of the bells, bells, bells,—
To the sobbing of the bells ;
Keeping time, time, time,
As he knells, knells, knells,
In a happy Runic rhyme,
To the rolling of the bells,—
Of the bells, bells, bells,—
To the tolling of the bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,—
Bells, bells, bells,—

To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.

ULALUME

THE skies they were ashen and sober;
The leaves they were crisped and sere,—
The leaves they were withering and sere,—
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year;
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid-region of Weir,—
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

Here once, through an alley Titanic,
Of cypress, I roamed with my soul,—
Of cypress, with Psyche, my Soul.
These were days when my heart was volcanic
As the scoriac rivers that roll—
As the lavas that restlessly roll—
Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek
In the ultimate climes of the pole—
That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek,
In the realms of the boreal pole.

Our talk had been serious and sober,
But our thoughts they were palsied and sere,
Our memories were treacherous and sere,—
For we knew not the month was October,
And we marked not the night of the year,—
(Ah, night of all nights in the year!)

We noted not the dim lake of Auber —
 (Though once we had journeyed down here)—
Remembered not the dank tarn of Auber,
 Nor the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

And now, as the night was senescent,
 And the star-dials pointed to morn,—
 As the star-dials hinted of morn,—
At the end of our path a liquescent
 And nebulous lustre was born,
Out of which a miraculous crescent
 Arose with a duplicate horn,—
Astarte's bediamonded crescent,
 Distinct with its duplicate horn.

And I said, "She is warmer than Dian :
 She rolls through an ether of sighs,—
 She revels in a region of sighs :
She has seen that the tears are not dry on
 These cheeks, where the worm never dies,
And has come past the stars of the Lion
 To point us the path to the skies,—
 To the Lethean peace of the skies,—
Come up, in despite of the Lion,
 To shine on us with her bright eyes,
Come up through the lair of the Lion,
 With love in her luminous eyes."

But Pysche, uplifting her finger,
 Said, "Sadly this star I mistrust,—
 Her pallor I strangely mistrust :

Oh, hasten! oh, let us not linger!
Oh, fly!—let us fly!—for we must.”
In terror she spoke, letting sink her
Wings until they trailed in the dust,—
In agony sobbed, letting sink her
Plumes till they trailed in the dust,—
Till they sorrowfully trailed in the dust.

I replied, “This is nothing but dreaming:
Let us on by this tremulous light!
Let us bathe in this crystalline light!
Its Sybilic splendor is beaming
With Hope and in Beauty to-night:
See! it flickers up the sky through the night!
Ah, we safely may trust to its gleaming,
And be sure it will lead us aright.
We safely may trust to a gleaming
That cannot but guide us aright,
Since it flickers up to Heaven through the night.”

Thus I pacified Psyche, and kissed her,
And tempted her out of her gloom,—
And conquered her scruples and gloom;
And we passed to the end of the vista,
But were stopped by the door of a tomb,—
By the door of a legended tomb:
And I said, “What is written, sweet sister,
On the door of this legended tomb?”
She replied, “Ulalume!—Ulalume!—
'Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume!”

Then my heart it grew ashen and sober
As the leaves that were crisped and sere,—
As the leaves that were withering and sere:
And I cried, "It was surely October,—
On *this* very night of last year,
That I journeyed— I journeyed down here,—
That I brought a dread burden down here:
On this night, of all nights in the year,
Ah, what demon has tempted me here?
Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber,—
This misty mid-region of Weir,—
Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber,—
This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir."

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BRIDAL BALLAD

THE ring is on my hand,
And the wreath is on my brow;
Satins and jewels grand
Are all at my command,
And I am happy now.

And my lord he loves me well;
But, when first he breathed his vow,
I felt my bosom swell,—
For the words rang as a knell,
And the voice seemed *his* who fell
In the battle down the dell,
And who is happy now.

But he spoke to reassure me,
And he kissed my pallid brow,
While a reverie came o'er me,
And to the churchyard bore me,
And I sighed to him before me,
Thinking him dead D'Elormie,
“Oh, I am happy now!”

And thus the words were spoken,
And this the plighted vow,
And, though my faith be broken,
And, though my heart be broken,
Behold the golden token
That *proves* me happy now!

Would to God I could awaken!
For I dream I know not how;
And my soul is sorely shaken
Lest an evil step be taken.—
Lest the dead who is forsaken
May not be happy now.

LENORE

AH, broken is the golden bowl!—the
spirit flown forever!—
Let the bell toll!—a saintly soul floats on
the Stygian river;
And, Guy De Vere, hast *thou* no tear?—
weep now, or nevermore!

See, on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy
love, Lenore!
Come, let the burial rite be read,—the
funeral song be sung!—
An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever
died so young,—
A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she
died so young.

“Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth and
hated her for her pride!
And when she fell in feeble health, ye
blessed her—that she died!
How *shall* the ritual, then, be read?—the
requiem how be sung
By you—by yours, the evil eye,—by yours,
the slanderous tongue
That did to death the innocence that died,
and died so young?”

Peccavimus! But rave not thus, and let a
Sabbath song
Go up to God so solemnly the dead may
feel no wrong!
The sweet Lenore hath "gone before," with
Hope, that flew beside,
Leaving thee wild for the dear child that
should have been thy bride!—
For her, the fair and *debonair*, that now so
lowly lies,
The life upon her yellow hair, but not within
her eyes,—
The life still there, upon her hair,—the
death upon her eyes.

"Avaunt! To-night my heart is light! No
dirge will I upraise,
But waft the angel on her flight with a pæan
of old days!
Let *no* bell toll!—lest her sweet soul, amid
its hallowed mirth,
Should catch the note, as it doth float up
from the damned Earth!
To friends above, from fiends below, the
indignant ghost is riven,—
From Hell unto a high estate far up within
the Heaven,—
From grief and groan to a golden throne,
beside the King of Heaven."

TO HELEN

I SAW thee once — once only — years ago :
I must not say *how* many — but *not* many.
It was a July midnight : and from out
A full-orbed moon, that, like thine own soul, soaring,
Sought a precipitate pathway up through heaven,
There fell a silvery silken veil of light,
With quietude, and sultriness, and slumber,
Upon the upturned faces of a thousand
Roses that grew in an enchanted garden,
Where no wind dared to stir, unless on tiptoe,—
Fell on the upturned faces of these roses
That gave out, in return for the love-light,
Their odorous souls in an ecstatic death,—
Fell on the upturned faces of these roses
That smiled and died in this parterre, enchanted
By thee, and by the poetry of thy presence.

Clad all in white, upon a violet bank
I saw thee half reclining ; while the moon
Fell on the upturned faces of the roses,
And on thine own, upturned,— alas, in sorrow !
Was it not Fate, that, on this July midnight —
Was it not Fate (whose name is also Sorrow)
That bade me pause before that garden-gate
To breathe the incense of those slumbering roses ?
No footstep stirred : the hated world all slept,
Save only thee and me. (Oh, Heaven! — oh, God !

How my heart beats in coupling those two words!)
Save only thee and me! I paused — I looked —
And in an instant all things disappeared.
(Ah, bear in mind this garden was enchanted!)

The pearly lustre of the moon went out:
The mossy banks and the meandering paths —
The happy flowers and the repining trees —
Were seen no more: the very roses' odors
Died in the arms of the adoring air.
All — all expired save thee — save less than thou?
Save only the divine light in thine eyes —
Save but the soul in thine uplifted eyes.
I saw but them — they were the world to me:
I saw but them — saw only them for hours —
Saw only them until the moon went down.
What wild heart-histories seemed to lie enwritten
Upon those crystalline, celestial spheres!
How dark a woe! yet how sublime a hope!
How silently serene a sea of pride!
How daring an ambition! yet how deep —
How fathomless a capacity for love!
But now, at length, dear Dian sank from sight,
Into a western couch of thunder-cloud;
And thou, a ghost, amid the entombing trees
Didst glide away. *Only thine eyes remained.*
They *would not* go, — they never yet have gone.

Lighting my lonely pathway home that night,
They have not left me (as my hopes have) since.
They follow me — they lead me through the years —
They are my ministers — yet I their slave.

Their office is to illumine and enkindle,
My duty *to be saved* by their bright light,
And purified in their electric fire,
And sanctified in their elysian fire.
They fill my soul with beauty (which is Hope),
And are far up in Heaven — the stars I kneel to
In the sad, silent watches of my night;
While even in the meridian glare of day
I see them still — two sweetly scintillant
Venuses, unextinguished by the sun!

ANNABEL LEE

I T was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know,
By the name of ANNABEL LEE;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and *she* was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea:
But we loved with a love that was more than love,—
I and my ANNABEL LEE;
With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful ANNABEL LEE;
So that her highborn kinsman came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
Went envying her and me,—
Yes! — that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)

That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my ANNABEL LEE.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we,—
Of many far wiser than we;

And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,

Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE:

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE;

And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE;

And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling — my darling — my life and my bride,
In the sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

FOR ANNIE

THANK Heaven! the crisis —
The danger — is past,
And the lingering illness
Is over at last,—
And the fever called “Living”
Is conquered at last.

Sadly, I know,
I am shorn of my strength,
And no muscle I move
As I lie at full length;
But no matter! — I feel
I am better at length.

And I rest so composed
Now, in my bed,
That any beholder
Might fancy me dead,—
Might start at beholding me,
Thinking me dead.

The moaning and groaning —
The sighing and sobbing —
Are quieted now,
With that horrible throbbing
At heart:— ah, that horrible,
Horrible throbbing!

The sickness — the nausea —
The pitiless pain —
Have ceased, with the fever
That maddened my brain,—
With the fever called “Living”
That burned in my brain.

And oh! of all tortures,
That torture the worst
Has abated — the terrible
Torture of thirst
For the naphthaline river
Of Passion accurst:—
I have drank of a water
That quenches all thirst:—

Of a water that flows,
With a lullaby sound,
From a spring but a very few
Feet under ground,—
From a cavern not very far
Down under ground.

And ah! let it never
Be foolishly said
That my room it is gloomy,
And narrow my bed;
For man never slept
In a different bed,—
And, to *sleep*, you must slumber
In just such a bed.

My tantalized spirit
Here blandly reposes,
Forgetting, or never
Regretting its roses,—
Its old agitations
Of myrtles and roses.

For now, while so quietly
Lying, it fancies
A holier odor
About it, of pansies,—
A rosemary odor
Commingled with pansies,—
With rue and the beautiful
Puritan pansies.

And so it lies happily,
Bathing in many
A dream of the truth
And the beauty of Annie,—
Drowned in a bath
Of the tresses of Annie.

She tenderly kissed me,
She fondly caressed,
And then I fell gently
To sleep on her breast,—
Deeply to sleep
From the heaven of her breast.

When the light was extinguished
She covered me warm,

And she prayed to the angels
To keep me from harm,—
To the queen of the angels
To shield me from harm.

And I lie so composedly,
Now, in my bed,
(Knowing her love)
That you fancy me dead,—
And I rest so contentedly,
Now in my bed,
(With her love at my breast)
That you fancy me dead,—
That you shudder to look at me,
Thinking me dead.

But my heart it is brighter
Than all of the many
Stars in the sky,
For it sparkles with Annie,
It glows with the light
Of the love of my Annie,—
With the thought of the light
Of the eyes of my Annie.

TO F—S S. O—D

THOU wouldst be loved? Then let thy heart
From its present pathway part not!
Being everything which now thou art,
Be nothing which thou art not.
So with the world thy gentle ways,
Thy grace, thy more than beauty,
Shall be an endless theme of praise,
And love—a simple duty.

TO ——— ———

NOT long ago, the writer of these lines,
In the mad pride of intellectuality,
Maintained "the power of words,"—denied that ever
A thought arose within the human brain
Beyond the utterance of the human tongue:
And now, as if in mockery of that boast,
Two words—two foreign soft dissyllables—
Italian tones, made only to be murmured
By angels dreaming in the moonlit "dew
That hangs like chains of pearl on Hermon hill,"—
Have stirred from out the abysses of his heart,
Unthought-like thoughts that are the souls of thought,
Richer, far wider, far diviner visions
Than even the seraph harper Israfel
(Who has "the sweetest voice of all God's creatures")
Could hope to utter. And I! my spells are broken.
The pen falls powerless from my shivering hand.
With thy dear name as text, though bidden by thee,
I cannot write—I cannot speak or think—
Alas, I cannot feel; for 'tis not feeling,
This standing motionless upon the golden
Threshold of the wide open gate of dreams,
Gazing, entranced, adown the gorgeous vista,
And thrilling as I see, upon the right,
Upon the left, and all the way along,
Amid unpurpled vapors, far away,
To where the prospect terminates—*thee only.*

THE CITY IN THE SEA

L O! Death has reared himself a throne
In a strange city lying alone
Far down within the dim West,
Where the good and the bad and the worst and the best
Have gone to their eternal rest.
There shrines and palaces and towers
(Time-eaten towers that tremble not !)
Resemble nothing that is ours.
Around, by lifting winds forgot,
Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.

No rays from the holy heaven come down
On the long night-time of that town ;
But light from out the lurid sea
Streams up the turrets silently —
Gleams up the pinnacles far and free —
Up domes — up spires — up kingly halls —
Up fanes — up Babylon-like walls —
Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers
Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers —
Up many and many a marvellous shrine
Whose wreathed friezes intertwine
The viol, the violet, and the vine.

Resignedly, beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.
So blend the turrets and shadows there
That all seem pendulous in air ;

While, from a proud tower in the town
Death looks gigantically down.

There open fanes and gaping graves
Yawn level with the luminous waves,
But not the riches there that lie
In each idol's diamond eye,—
Not the gayly-jewelled dead
Tempt the waters from their bed;
For no ripples curl, alas!
Along that wilderness of glass;
No swellings tell that winds may be
Upon some far-off happier sea;
No heavings hint that winds have been
On scenes less hideously serene.

But lo! a stir is in the air!
The wave — there is a movement there!
As if the towers had thrust aside,
In slightly sinking, the dull tide,—
As if their tops had feebly given
A void within the filmy Heaven.
The waves have now a redder glow,
The hours are breathing faint and low;
And when, amid no earthly moans,
Down, down that town shall settle hence,
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,
Shall do it reverence.

THE CONQUEROR WORM

L o! 'tis a gala night
Within the lonesome latter years.
An angel throng, bewinged, bedight
In veils, and drowned in tears,
Sit in a theatre, to see
A play of hopes and fears,
While the orchestra breathes fitfully
The music of the spheres.

Mimes, in the form of God on high,
Mutter and mumble low,
And hither and thither fly,—
Mere puppets they, who come and go
At bidding of vast formless things
That shift the scenery to and fro,
Flapping from out their Condor wings
Invisible Woe!

That motley drama — oh, be sure
It shall not be forgot!
With its Phantom chased for evermore,
By a crowd that seize it not,
Through a circle that ever returneth in
To the self-same spot,
And much of Madness, and more of Sin,
And Horror the soul of the plot.

But see, amid the mimic rout
 A crawling shape intrude!
A blood-red thing that writhes from out
 The scenic solitude!
It writhes! — it writhes! — with mortal pangs
 The mimes become its food,
And the angels sob at vermin fangs
 In human gore imbrued.

Out — out are the lights — out all!
 And, over each quivering form,
The curtain, a funeral pall,
 Comes down with the rush of a storm,
And the angels, all pallid and wan,
 Uprising, unveiling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy, "Man,"
 And its hero the Conqueror Worm.

THE SLEEPER

AT midnight, in the month of June,
I stand beneath the mystic moon.
An opiate vapor, dewy, dim,
Exhales from out her golden rim,
And, softly dripping, drop by drop,
Upon the quiet mountain-top,
Steals drowsily and musically
Into the universal valley.
The rosemary nods upon the grave;
The lily lolls upon the wave;
Wrapping the fog about its breast,
The ruin moulders into rest;
Looking like Lethe, see! the lake
A conscious slumber seems to take,
And would not, for the world, awake.
All Beauty sleeps! And lo! where lies
(Her casement open to the skies)
Irene, with her Destinies!
Oh, lady bright! can it be right —
This window open to the night? —
The wanton airs, from the tree-top,
Laughingly through the lattice drop, —
The bodiless airs, a wizard rout,
Flit through thy chamber in and out,
And wave the curtain canopy
So fitfully — so fearfully —

Above the closed and fringed lid
'Neath which thy slumb'ring soul lies hid,
That, o'er the floor and down the wall,
Like ghosts the shadows rise and fall!
Oh, lady dear, hast thou no fear?
Why and what art thou dreaming here?
Sure thou art come o'er far-off seas,
A wonder to these garden-trees!
Strange is thy pallor! strange thy dress!
Strange, above all, thy length of tress,
And this all solemn silentness!

The lady sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,
Which is enduring, so be deep!
Heaven have her in its sacred keep!
This chamber changed for one more holy,
This bed for one more melancholy,
I pray to God that she may lie
Forever with unopened eye,
While the dim sheeted ghosts go by!

My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,
As it is lasting, so be deep!
Soft may the worms about her creep!
Far in the forest, dim and old,
For her may some tall vault unfold,—
Some vault that oft hath flung its black
And winged panels fluttering back,
Triumphant, o'er the crested palls
Of her grand family funerals,—
Some sepulchre, remote, alone,
Against whose portal she hath thrown,

In childhood many an idle stone,—
Some tomb from out whose sounding door
She ne'er shall force an echo more,
Thrilling to think, poor child of sin!
It was the dead who groaned within.

THE COLISEUM

TYPE of the antique Rome! Rich reliquary
Of lofty contemplation left to Time
By buried centuries of pomp and power!
At length — at length — after so many days
Of weary pilgrimage and burning thirst,
(Thirst for the springs of lore that in thee lie,)
I kneel, an altered and an humble man,
Amid thy shadows, and so drink within
My very soul thy grandeur, gloom, and glory!

Vastness! and Age! and Memories of Eld!
Silence! and Desolation! and dim Night!
I feel ye now — I feel ye in your strength —
Oh, spells more sure than e'er Judean king
Taught in the gardens of Gethsemane!
Oh, charms more potent than the rapt Chaldee
Ever drew down from out the quiet stars!

Here, where a hero fell, a column falls!
Here, where a mimic eagle glared in gold,
A midnight vigil holds the swarthy bat!
Here, where the dames of Rome their gilded hair
Waved to the wind, now wave the reed and thistle!
Here, where on golden throne the monarch lolled,
Glides, spectre-like, unto his marble home,
Lit by the wan light of the horned moon,
The swift and silent lizard of the stones!
But stay! These walls — these ivy-clad arcades —

These mouldering plinths—these sad and blackened
shafts—
These vague entablatures—this crumbling frieze—
These shattered cornices—this wreck—this ruin—
These stones—alas! these gray stones—are they all—
All of the famed and the colossal left
By the corrosive Hours to Fate and me?

“Not all!” the echoes answered me. “Not all!
Prophetic sounds and loud, arise forever
From us, and from all Ruin, unto the wise,
As melody from Memnon to the Sun.
We rule the hearts of mightiest men!—we rule
With a despotic sway all giant minds!
We are not impotent—we pallid stones.
Not all our power is gone!—not all our fame!—
Not all the magic of our high renown!—
Not all the wonder that encircles us!—
Not all the mysteries that in us lie!—
Not all the memories that hang upon
And cling around about us as a garment,
Clothing us in a robe of more than glory.”

DREAM-LAND

BY a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named NIGHT,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have reached these lands but newly,
From an ultimate dim Thule,—
From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,
Out of SPACE—out of TIME.

Bottomless vales and boundless floods,
And chasms, and caves, and Titan woods,
With forms that no man can discover
For the dews that drip all over;
Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore;
Seas that restlessly aspire,
Surging, into skies of fire;
Lakes that endlessly outspread
Their lone waters—lone and dead,—
Their still waters—still and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily.

By the lakes that thus outspread
Their lone waters, lone and dread,—
Their sad waters, sad and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily,—
By the mountains—near the river
Murmuring lowly, murmuring ever,—

By the gray woods,—by the swamp
Where the toad and the newt encamp,—
By the dismal tarns and pools
Where dwell the Ghouls,—
By each spot the most unholy,—
In each nook most melancholy,—
There the traveller meets aghast
Sheeted Memories of the Past,—
Shrouded forms that start and sigh
As they pass the wanderer by,—
White-robed forms of friends long given
In agony, to the Earth,—and Heaven.

For the heart whose woes are legion
'Tis a peaceful, soothing region,—
For the spirit that walks in shadow
'Tis — oh, 'tis an Eldorado!
But the traveller, travelling through it,
May not — dare not — openly view it;
Never its mysteries are exposed
To the weak human eye unclosed;
So wills its King, who hath forbid
The uplifting of the fringed lid;
And thus the sad Soul that here passes
Beholds it but through darkened glasses.
By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named NIGHT,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have wandered home but newly
From this ultimate dim Thule.

EULALIE

I DWELT alone
In a world of moan,
And my soul was a stagnant tide,
Till the fair and gentle Eulalie became my blushing
bride,—
Till the yellow-haired young Eulalie became my smiling
bride.

Ah, less — less bright
The stars of the night
Than the eyes of the radiant girl;
And never a flake
That the vapor can make
With the moon-tints of purple and pearl,
Can vie with the modest Eulalie's most unregarded
curl,—
Can compare with the bright-eyed Eulalie's most
humble and careless curl.

Now Doubt — now Pain
Come never again,
For her soul gives me sigh for sigh,
And all day long
Shines bright and strong,
Astarte within the sky,
While ever to her dear Eulalie upturns her matron
eye,—
While ever to her young Eulalie upturns her violet
eye.

TO MY MOTHER

BECAUSE I feel that, in the Heavens above,
The angels, whispering to one another,
Can find, among their burning terms of love,
None so devotional as that of "Mother,"
Therefore by that dear name I long have called you,—
You who are more than mother unto me,
And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed you,
In setting my Virginia's spirit free.
My mother — my own mother, who died early,
Was but the mother of myself; but you
Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,
And thus are dearer than the mother I knew
By that infinity with which my wife
Was dearer to my soul than its own soul-life.

ELDORADO

GAYLY bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old,—
This knight so bold,—
And o'er his heart a shadow
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim Shadow.
“Shadow,” said he,
“Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?”

“Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,”
The Shade replied,—
“If you seek for Eldorado!”

TO F——

BELOVED, amid the earnest woes
That crowd around my earthly path,—
(Drear path, alas! where grows
Not even one lonely rose),—
My soul at least a solace hath
In dreams of thee, and therein knows
An Eden of bland repose.

And thus my memory is to me
Like some enchanted far-off isle
In some tumultuous sea,—
Some ocean throbbing far and free
With storms,— but where meanwhile
Serenest skies continually
Just o'er that one bright island smile.

TO ONE IN PARADISE

THOU wast that all to me, love,
For which my soul did pine,—
A green isle in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine,
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
And all the flowers were mine.

Ah, dream too bright to last !
Ah, starry Hope ! that didst arise
But to be overcast !
A voice from out the future cries,
“On ! on !” But o’er the Past
(Dim gulf !) my spirit hovering lies
Mute, motionless, aghast !

For, alas ! alas ! with me
The light of Life is o’er !
“No more — no more — no more —”
(Such language holds the solemn sea
To the sands upon the shore)
Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
Or the stricken eagle soar !

And all my days are trances,
And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy dark eye glances,
And where thy footstep gleams,—
In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams.

HYMN

AT morn — at noon — at twilight dim —
Maria, thou hast heard my hymn!
In joy and woe — in good and ill —
Mother of God, be with me still!
When the Hours flew brightly by,
And not a cloud obscured the sky,
My soul, lest it should truant be,
Thy grace did guide to thine and thee:
Now, when storms of Fate o'ercast
Darkly my Present and my Past,
Let my Future radiant shine
With sweet hopes of thee and thine!

A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM

TAKE this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow:
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if Hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less *gone*?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand:
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep,—while I weep!
Oh, God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
Oh, God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is *all* that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?

TO ZANTE

FAIR isle, that from the fairest of all flowers,
Thy gentlest of all gentle names dost take!
How many memories of what radiant hours
At sight of thee and thine at once awake!
How many scenes of what departed bliss!
How many thoughts of what entombed hopes!
How many visions of a maiden that is
No more — no more upon thy verdant slopes!
No more! Alas, that magical sad sound
Transforming all! Thy charms shall please *no more*,
Thy memory *no more!* Accursed ground
Henceforth I hold thy flower-enamelled shore,
Oh, hyacinthine isle! Oh, purple Zante!
“Isola d'oro! Fior di Levante!”

THE HAUNTED PALACE

I N the greenest of our valleys
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace —
Radiant palace — reared its head.
In the monarch Thought's dominion —
It stood there!
Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so fair!

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow,
(This — all this — was in the olden
Time long ago,)
And every gentle air that dallied,
In that sweet day,
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
A winged odor went away.

Wanderers in that happy valley,
Through two luminous windows, saw
Spirits moving musically,
To a lute's well-tuned law,
Round about a throne where, sitting
(Porphyrogene!)
In state his glory well befitting,
The ruler of the realm was seen.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing
Was the fair palace door,
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing,
And sparkling ever more,
A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
Assailed the monarch's high estate.
(Ah, let us mourn! — for never morrow
Shall dawn upon him desolate!)
And round about his home the glory
That blushed and bloomed,
Is but a dim-remembered story
Of the old time entombed.

And travellers, now, within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows see
Vast forms, that move fantastically
To a discordant melody,
While, like a ghastly rapid river,
Through the pale door
A hideous throng rush out forever
And laugh,— but smile no more.

SILENCE

THERE are some qualities — some incorporate things —
That have a double life, which thus is made
A type of that twin entity which springs
From matter and light, evinced in solid and shade.
There is a twofold *Silence* — sea and shore —
Body and soul. One dwells in lonely places,
Newly with grass o'ergrown; some solemn graces,
Some human memories, and tearful lore,
Render him terrorless: his name's "No More."
He is the corporate Silence: dread him not!
No power hath he of evil in himself;
But should some urgent fate (untimely lot!)
Bring thee to meet his shadow (nameless elf,
That haunteth the lone regions where hath trod
No foot of man), commend thyself to God!

ISRAFEL¹

I^N Heaven a spirit doth dwell,
“Whose heartstrings are a lute.”
None sing so wildly well
As the angel, Israfel,
And the giddy stars (so legends tell)
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above,
In her highest noon,
The enamoured moon
Blushes with love,—
While, to listen, the red leven
(With the rapid Pleiades, even,
Which were seven,)
Pauses in Heaven.

And they say (the starry choir
And the other listening things)
That Israfeli's fire
Is owing to that lyre
By which he sits and sings,—
The trembling living wire
Of those unusual strings.

¹ And the angel Israfel, whose heartstrings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures.—KORAN.

But the skies that angel trod,
Where deep thoughts are a duty—
Where Love's a grown-up God,—
Where the Houri glances are
Imbued with all the beauty
Which we worship in a star.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,
Israfeli, who despisest
An unimpassioned song:
To thee the laurels belong,
Best bard, because the wisest!
Merrily live, and long!

The ecstasies above
With thy burning measures suit
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
With the fervor of thy lute:
Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this
Is a world of sweets and sour:
Our flowers are merely—flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,—
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.

TO L. M. S.—

OF all who hail thy presence as the morning,—
Of all to whom thine absence is the night,—
The blotting utterly from out high heaven
The sacred sun,—of all who, weeping, bless thee
Hourly for hope — for life — ah! above all,
For the resurrection of deep-buried faith
In Truth — in Virtue — in Humanity,—
Of all who, on Despair's unhallow'd bed
Lying down to die, have suddenly arisen
At thy soft-murmured words, "Let there be light!"
At the soft-murmured words that were fulfilled
In the seraphic glancing of thine eyes,—
Of all who owe thee most, whose gratitude
Nearest resembles worship,—oh, remember
The truest — the most fervently devoted,
And think that these weak lines are written by him,—
By him who, as he pens them, thrills to think
His spirit is communing with an angel's.

THE VALLEY OF UNREST

ONCE it smiled a silent dell
Where the people did not dwell;
They had gone unto the wars,
Trusting to the mild-eyed stars,
Nightly, from their azure towers,
To keep watch above the flowers,
In the midst of which all day
The red sunlight lazily lay.
Now each visitor shall confess
The sad valley's restlessness.
Nothing there is motionless,—
Nothing save the airs that brood
Over the magic solitude.
Ah, by no wind are stirred those trees
That palpitate like the chill seas
Around the misty Hebrides!
Ah, by no wind those clouds are driven
That rustle through the unquiet Heaven
Uneasily, from morn till even,
Over the violets there that lie
In myriad types of the human eye,—
Over the lilies there that wave
And weep above a nameless grave!
They wave:—from out their fragrant tops
Eternal dews come down in drops.
They weep:—from off their delicate stems
Perennial tears descend in gems.



POEMS WRITTEN IN YOUTH



Private reasons—some of which have reference to the sin of plagiarism, and others to the date of Tennyson's first poems—have induced me, after some hesitation, to republish these, the crude compositions of my earliest boyhood. They are printed *verbatim*, without alteration from the original edition, the date of which is too remote to be judiciously acknowledged.—E. A. P.



TO HELEN

HELEN, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicean barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand!
The agate lamp within thy hand,
Ah! Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!

SONNET—TO SCIENCE

SCIENCE! True daughter of Old Time thou art!
Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.
Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,
Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?
How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise,
Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
To seek for treasure in the jeweled skies,
Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?
Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?
And driven the Hamadryad from the wood
To seek a shelter in some happier star?
Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree?

SPIRITS OF THE DEAD

THY soul shall find itself alone
'Mid dark thoughts of the gray tombstone:
Not one, of all the crowd, to pry
Into thine hour of secrecy.

Be silent in that solitude
Which is not loneliness,— for then
The spirits of the dead who stood
In life before thee are again
In death around thee,— and their will
Shall overshadow thee: be still.

The night, though clear, shall frown,—
And the stars shall not look down
From their high thrones in Heaven,
With light like Hope to mortals given:
But their red orbs, without beam,
To thy weariness shall seem
As a burning and a fever
Which would cling to thee forever.
Now are thoughts thou shalt not banish,—
Now are visions ne'er to vanish:
From thy spirit shall they pass
No more — like dewdrops from the grass.

The breeze — the breath of God — is still;
And the mist upon the hill
Shadowy — shadowy — yet unbroken,
Is a symbol and a token,—
How it hangs upon the trees,
A mystery of mysteries!

FAIRY-LAND

DIM vales — and shadowy floods —
And cloudy-looking woods,
Whose forms we can't discover
For the tears that drip all over:
Huge moons there wax and wane, —
Again — again — again —
Every moment of the night, —
Forever changing places, —
And they put out the starlight
With the breath from their pale faces.
About twelve by the moon-dial,
One more filmy than the rest
Comes down — still down — and down
With its centre on the crown
Of a mountain's eminence,
While its wide circumference
In easy drapery falls
Over hamlets, over halls,
Wherever they may be:
O'er the strange woods — o'er the sea —
Over spirits on the wing —
Over every drowsy thing —
And buries them up quite
In a labyrinth of light;
And then, how deep! — oh, deep
Is the passion of their sleep.
In the morning they arise,

And their moony covering
Is soaring in the skies,
With the tempests as they toss,
Like — almost anything —
Or a yellow albatross.
They use that moon no more
For the same end as before,—
Videlicet, a tent,
Which I think extravagant:
Its atomies, however,
Into a shower dissever,
Of which those butterflies
Of Earth who seek the skies,
And so come down again
(Never-contented things!)
Have brought a specimen
Upon their quivering wings.

THE LAKE.— TO —

I N spring of youth it was my lot
To haunt of the wide world a spot
The which I could not love the less,—
So lovely was the loveliness
Of a wild lake, with black rock bound,
And the tall pines that towered around.
But when the night had thrown her pall
Upon that spot, as upon all,
And the mystic wind went by
Murmuring in melody,—
Then — ah, then I would awake
To the terror of the lone lake.
Yet that terror was not fright,
But a tremulous delight,—
A feeling not the jewelled mine
Could teach or bribe me to define,—
Nor Love — although the Love were thine.

Death was in that poisonous wave,
And its gulf a fitting grave
For him who thence could solace bring
To his lone imagining,—
Whose solitary soul could make
An Eden of that dim lake.

A DREAM

I N visions of the dark night
I have dream'd of joy departed ;
But a waking dream of life and light
Hath left me broken-hearted.

Ah, what is not a dream by day
To him whose eyes are cast
On things around him with a ray
Turned back upon the past?

That holy dream — that holy dream,
While all the world were chiding,
Hath cheered me as a lovely beam
A lonely spirit guiding.

What tho' that light, thro' storm and night
So trembled from afar,—
What could there be more purely bright
In Truth's day star?

ALONE

FROM childhood's hour I have not been
As others were,— I have not seen
As others saw,— I could not bring
My passions from a common spring.
From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow; I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone;
And all I loved, I loved alone.

Then — in my childhood — in the dawn
Of a most stormy life was drawn
From every depth of good and ill
The mystery which binds me still:
From the torrent, or the fountain,
From the red cliff of the mountain,
From the sun that round me roll'd
In its autumn tint of gold,—
From the lightning in the sky
As it pass'd me flying by,—
From the thunder and the storm,
And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)
Of a demon in my view.

TO ———

THE bowers whereat, in dreams, I see
The wantonest singing birds,
Are lips — and all thy melody
Of lip-begotten words.

Thine eyes, in Heaven of heart enshrin'd,
Then desolately fall,
Oh, God! on my funereal mind
Like starlight on a pall.

Thy heart — *thy* heart — I wake and sigh,
And sleep to dream till day
Of the truth that gold can never buy —
Of the baubles that it may.

TO THE RIVER ———

FAIR river! in thy bright, clear flow
Of crystal, wandering water,
Thou art an emblem of the glow
Of beauty—the unhidden heart—
The playful mazziness of art
In old Alberto's daughter;

But when within thy wave she looks,
Which glistens then, and trembles,—
Why, then, the prettiest of brooks
Her worshipper resembles;
For in his heart, as in thy stream,
Her image deeply lies,—
His heart which trembles at the beam
Of her soul-searching eyes.

TO ———

I HEED not that my earthly lot
Hath — little of Earth in it,—
That years of love have been forgot
In the hatred of a minute:
I mourn not that the desolate
Are happier, sweet, than I;
But that *you* sorrow for *my* fate
Who am but a passer-by.

SONG

I SAW thee on the bridal day,
When a burning blush came o'er thee,
Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee:

And in thine eye a kindling light
(Whatever it might be)
Was all on Earth my aching sight
Of Loveliness could see.

That blush, perhaps, was maiden shame,—
As such it well may pass,—
Though its glow hath raised a fiercer flame
In the breast of him, alas!

Who saw thee on that bridal day,
When that deep blush *would* come o'er thee,
Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee.

ROMANCE

ROMANCE, who loves to nod and sing,
With drowsy head and folded wing,
Among the green leaves as they shake
Far down within some shadowy lake,
To me a painted paroquet
Hath been a most familiar bird,—
Taught me my alphabet to say —
To lisp my very earliest word
While in the wild wood I did lie,
A child — with a most knowing eye.

Of late, eternal Condor years
So shake the very Heaven on high
With tumult as they thunder by,
I have no time for idle cares
Through gazing on the unquiet sky.
And when an hour with calmer wings
Its down upon my spirit flings —
That little time with lyre and rhyme
To while away — forbidden things!
My heart would feel to be a crime,
Unless it trembled with the strings.



TO EDGAR ALLAN POE



Reprinted from *Letters to Dead
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1886.



TO EDGAR ALLAN POE

SIR,—Your English readers, better acquainted with your poems and romances than with your criticisms, have long wondered at the indefatigable hatred which pursues your memory. You, who knew the men, will not marvel that certain microbes of letters, the survivors of your own generation, still harass your name with their malevolence, while old women twitter out their incredible and unheeded slanders in the literary papers of New York. But their persistent animosity does not quite suffice to explain the dislike with which many American critics regard the greatest poet, perhaps the greatest literary genius, of their country. With a commendable patriotism, they are not apt to rate native merit too low; and you, I think, are the only example of an American prophet almost without honour in his own country.

The recent publication of a cold, careful, and in many respects admirable study of your career ("Edgar Allan Poe," by George Woodberry: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., Bos-

ton) reminds English readers who have forgotten it, and teaches those who never knew it, that you were, unfortunately, a Reviewer. How unhappy were the necessities, how deplorable the vein, that compelled or seduced a man of your eminence into the dusty and stony ways of contemporary criticism! About the writers of his own generation a leader of that generation should hold his peace. He should neither praise nor blame nor defend his equals; he should not strike one blow at the buzzing ephemæ of letters. The breath of their life is in the columns of "Literary Gossip;" and they should be allowed to perish with the weekly advertisements on which they pasture. Reviewing, of course, there must needs be; but great minds should only criticise the great who have passed beyond the reach of eulogy or fault-finding.

Unhappily, taste and circumstances combined to make you a censor; you vexed a continent, and you are still unforgiven. What "irritation of a sensitive nature, chafed by some indefinite sense of wrong," drove you (in Mr. Longfellow's own words) to attack his pure and beneficent Muse we may never ascertain. But Mr. Longfellow forgave you easily; for pardon comes easily to the great. It was the smaller men, the

Daweses, Griswolds, and the like, that knew not how to forget. "The New Yorkers never forgave him," says your latest biographer; and one scarcely marvels at the inveteracy of their malice. It was not individual vanity alone, but the whole literary class that you assailed. "As a literary people," you wrote, "we are one vast perambulating humbug." After that declaration of war you died, and left your reputation to the vanities yet writhing beneath your scorn. They are writhing and writing still. He who knows them need not linger over the attacks and defences of your personal character; he will not waste time on calumnies, tale-bearing, private letters, and all the noisome dust which takes so long in settling above your tomb.

For us it is enough to know that you were compelled to live by your pen, and that in an age when the author of "To Helen" and "The Cask of Amontillado" was paid at the rate of a dollar a column. When such poverty was the mate of such pride as yours, a misery more deep than that of Burns, an agony longer than Chatterton's were inevitable and assured. No man was less fortunate than you in the moment of his birth—*infelix opportunitate vitæ*. Had you lived a generation later, honour, wealth,

applause, success in Europe and at home, would all have been yours. Within thirty years so great a change has passed over the profession of letters in America; and it is impossible to estimate the rewards which would have fallen to Edgar Poe, had chance made him the contemporary of Mark Twain and of "Called Back." It may be that your criticisms helped to bring in the new era, and to lift letters out of the reach of quite unlettered scribblers. Though not a scholar, at least you had a respect for scholarship. You might still marvel over such words as "objectional" in the new biography of yourself, and might ask what is meant by such a sentence as "his connection with it had inured to his own benefit by the frequent puffs of himself," and so forth.

Best known in your own day as a critic, it is as a poet and a writer of short tales that you must live. But to discuss your few and elaborate poems is a waste of time, so completely does your own brief definition of poetry, "the rhythmic creation of the beautiful," exhaust your theory, and so perfectly is the theory illustrated by the poems. Natural bent, and reaction against the example of Mr. Longfellow, combined to make you too intolerant of what you call the "didactic" element in verse. Even if morality be

not seven-eighths of our life (the exact proportion as at present estimated), there was a place even on the Hellenic Parnassus for gnomic bards, and theirs in the nature of the case must always be the largest public.

“Music is the perfection of the soul or the idea of poetry,” so you wrote; “the vagueness of exaltation aroused by a sweet air (which should be indefinite and never too strongly suggestive), is precisely what we should aim at in poetry.” You aimed at that mark, and struck it again and again, notably in “Helen, thy beauty is to me,” in “The Haunted Palace,” “The Valley of Unrest,” and “The City in the Sea.” But by some Nemesis which might, perhaps, have been foreseen, you are, to the world, the poet of one poem—“The Raven:” a piece in which the music is highly artificial, and the “exaltation” (what there is of it) by no means particularly “vague.” So a portion of the public know little of Shelley but the “Skylark,” and those two incongruous birds, the lark and the raven, bear each of them a poet’s name, *vivū’ per ora virum*. Your theory of poetry, if accepted, would make you (after the author of “Kubla Khan”) the foremost of the poets of the world; at no long distance would come Mr. William Morris as he was when he wrote

“Golden Wings,” “The Blue Closet,” and “The Sailing of the Sword;” and, close up, Mr. Lear, the author of “The Yongi Bongi Bo,” and the lay of the “Jumblies.”

On the other hand Homer would sink into the limbo to which you consigned Molière. If we may judge a theory by its results, when compared with the deliberate verdict of the world, your æsthetic does not seem to hold water. The “Odyssey” is not really inferior to “Ulalume,” as it ought to be if your doctrine of poetry were correct, nor “Le Festin de Pierre” to “Undine.” Yet you deserve the praise of having been constant, in your poetic practice, to your poetic principles—principles commonly deserted by poets who, like Wordsworth, have published their æsthetic system. Your pieces are few; and Dr. Johnson would have called you, like Fielding, “a barren rascal.” But how can a writer’s verses be numerous if with him, as with you, “poetry is not a pursuit but a passion . . . which cannot at will be excited with an eye to the paltry compensations or the more paltry commendations of mankind!” Of you it may be said, more truly than Shelley said it of himself, that “to ask you for anything human, is like asking at a gin-shop for a leg of mutton.”

Humanity must always be, to the majority of men, the true stuff of poetry; and only a minority will thank you for that rare music which (like the strains of the fiddler in the story) is touched on a single string, and on an instrument fashioned from the spoils of the grave. You chose, or you were destined

To vary from the kindly race of men ;

and the consequences, which wasted your life, pursue your reputation.

For your stories has been reserved a boundless popularity, and that highest success—the success of a perfectly sympathetic translation. By this time, of course, you have made the acquaintance of your translator, M. Charles Baudelaire, who so strenuously shared your views about Mr. Emerson and the Transcendentalists, and who so energetically resisted all those ideas of “progress” which “came from Hell or Boston.” On this point, however, the world continues to differ from you and M. Baudelaire, and perhaps there is only the choice between our optimism and universal suicide or universal opium-eating. But to discuss your ultimate ideas is perhaps a profitless digression from the topic of your prose romances.

An English critic (probably a Northerner

at heart) has described them as "Hawthorne and delirium tremens." I am not aware that extreme orderliness, masterly elaboration, and unchecked progress towards a pre-determined effect are characteristics of the visions of delirium. If they be, then there is a deal of truth in the criticism, and a good deal of delirium tremens in your style. But your ingenuity, your completeness, your occasional luxuriance of fancy and wealth of jewel-like words, are not, perhaps, gifts which Mr. Hawthorne had at his command. He was a great writer—the greatest writer in prose fiction whom America has produced. But you and he had not much in common, except a certain mortuary turn of mind and a taste for gloomy allegories about the workings of conscience.

I forbear to anticipate your verdict about the latest essays of American fiction. These by no means follow in the lines which you laid down about brevity and the steady working to one single effect. Probably you would not be very tolerant (tolerance was not your leading virtue) of Mr. Roe, now your countrymen's favourite novelist. He is long, he is didactic, he is eminently uninspired. In the works of one who is, *not* what you once called yourself, a Bostonian, you would admire, at least, the acute observa-

tion, the subtlety, and the unfailing distinction. But, destitute of humour as you unhappily but undeniably were, you would miss, I fear, the charm of "Daisy Miller." You would admit the unity of effect secured in "Washington Square," though that effect is as remote as possible from the terror of "The House of Usher" or the vindictive triumph of "The Cask of Amontillado."

Farewell, farewell, thou sombre and solitary spirit: a genius tethered to the hack-work of the press, a gentleman among *canaille*,¹ a poet among poetasters, dowered with a scholar's taste without a scholar's training, embittered by his sensitive scorn, and all unsupported by his consolations.

¹ No reference, of course, is intended to the great American writers of Poe's day, but to the lower set of hacks who were his enemies.





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