

EDGAR ALLAN POE

SELECTIONS FROM POE

Edgar Poe

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PREFACE

Edgar Allan Poe has been the subject of so much controversy that he is the one American writer whom high-school pupils (not to mention teachers) are likely to approach with ready-made prejudices. It is impossible to treat such a subject in quite the ordinary matter-of-course way. Furthermore, his writings are so highly subjective, and so intimately connected with his strongly held critical theories, as to need somewhat careful and extended study. These facts make it very difficult to treat either the man or his art as simply as is desirable in a secondary text-book. Consequently the Introduction is longer and less simple than the editor would desire for the usual text. It is believed, however, that the teacher can take up this Introduction with the pupil in such a way as to make it helpful, significant, and interesting.

The text of the following poems and tales is that of the Stedman-Woodberry edition (described in the Bibliography, p. xxx), and the selections are reprinted by permission of the publishers, Duffield & Company; this text is followed exactly except for a very few changes in punctuation, not more than five or six in all. My obligations to other works are

too numerous to mention; all the publications included in the Bibliography, besides a number of others, have been examined, but I especially desire to acknowledge the courtesy of Dr. Henry Barton Jacobs of Baltimore, who sent me from Paris a copy of Émile Lauvrière's interesting and important study, "Edgar Poe. Sa vie et son oeuvre; étude de psychologie pathologique." To my wife I am indebted for valuable assistance in the tedious work of reading proofs and verifying the text.

INTRODUCTION

EDGAR ALLAN POE: HIS LIFE, CHARACTER, AND ART

Edgar Allan Poe is in many respects the most fascinating figure in American literature. His life, touched by the extremes of fortune, was on the whole more unhappy than that of any other of our prominent men of letters. His character was strangely complex, and was the subject of misunderstanding during his life and of heated dispute after his death; his writings were long neglected or disparaged at home, while accepted abroad as our greatest literary achievement. Now, after more than half a century has elapsed since his death, careful biographers have furnished a tolerably full account of the real facts about his life; a fairly accurate idea of his character is winning general acceptance; and the name of Edgar Allan Poe has been conceded a place among the two or three greatest in our literature.

LIFE AND CHARACTER

In December, 1811, a well-known actress of the time died in Richmond, leaving destitute three little children, the eldest but four years of age. This mother, who was Elizabeth (Arnold) Poe, daughter of an English actress, had suffered from ill health for several years and had long found the struggle for existence difficult. Her husband, David Poe, probably died before her; he was a son of General David Poe, a Revolutionary veteran of Baltimore, and had left his home and law books for the stage several years before his marriage. The second of the three children, born January 19, 1809, in Boston, where his parents happened to be playing at the time, was Edgar Poe, the future poet and story-writer. The little Edgar was adopted by the wife of Mr. John Allan, a well-to-do Scotch merchant of the city, who later became wealthy, and the boy was thereafter known as Edgar Allan Poe. He was a beautiful and precocious child, who at six years of age could read, draw, dance, and declaim the best poetry with fine effect and appreciation; report says, also, that he had been taught to stand on a chair and pledge Mr. Allan's guests in a glass of wine with "roguish grace."

In 1815 Mr. Allan went to England, where he remained five years. Edgar was placed in an old English school in the suburbs of London, among historic, literary, and antiquarian associations, and possibly was taken to the Continent by his foster parents

at vacation seasons. The English residence and the sea voyages left deep impressions on the boy's sensitive nature. Returning to Richmond, he was prepared in good schools for the University of Virginia, which he entered at the age of seventeen, pursuing studies in ancient and modern languages and literatures. During this youthful period he was already developing a striking and peculiar personality. He was brilliant, if not industrious, as a student, leaving the University with highest honors in Latin and French; he was quick and nervous in his movements and greatly excelled in athletics, especially in swimming; in character, he was reserved, solitary, sensitive, and given to lonely reverie. Some of his aristocratic playmates remembered to his discredit that he was the child of strolling players, and their attitude helped to add a strain of defiance to an already intensely proud nature. Though kindly treated by his foster parents, this strange boy longed for an understanding sympathy that was not his. Once he thought he had found it in Mrs. Jane Stannard, mother of a schoolmate; but the new friend soon died, and for months the grief-stricken boy, it is said, haunted the lonely grave at night and brooded over his loss and the mystery of death – a not very wholesome experience for a lonely and melancholy lad of fifteen years.

At the University he drank wine, though not intemperately, and played cards a great deal, the end of the term finding him with gambling debts of twenty-five hundred dollars. These habits were common at the time, and Edgar did not incur any censure from the faculty; but Mr. Allan declined to honor the gambling

debt, removed Edgar, and placed him in his own counting room. Such a life was too dull for the high-spirited, poetic youth, and he promptly left his home.

Going to Boston, he published a thin volume of boyish verse, "Tamerlane, and Other Poems," but realizing nothing financially¹, he enlisted in the United States Army as Edgar A. Perry. After two years of faithful and efficient service, he procured through Mr. Allan (who was temporarily reconciled to him) an appointment to the West Point Military Academy, entering in July, 1830. In the meantime, he had published in Baltimore a second small volume of poems. Fellow-students have described him as having a "worn, weary, discontented look"; usually kindly and courteous, but shy, reserved, and exceedingly sensitive; an extraordinary reader, but noted for carping criticism. Although a good student, he seemed galled beyond endurance by the monotonous routine of military duties, which he deliberately neglected and thus procured his dismissal from the Academy. He left, alone and penniless, in March, 1831.

Going to New York, Poe brought out another little volume of poems showing great improvement; then he went to Baltimore, and after a precarious struggle of a year or two, turned to prose, and, while in great poverty, won a prize of one hundred dollars from the Baltimore *Saturday Visitor* for his story, "The Manuscript Found in a Bottle." Through John P. Kennedy²,

¹ In November, 1900, a single copy of this little volume sold in New York for \$2550.

² A well-known Marylander, author of "Horse-Shoe Robinson," "Swallow Barn,"

one of the judges whose friendship the poverty-stricken author gained, he procured a good deal of hack work, and finally an editorial position on the *Southern Literary Messenger*, of Richmond. The salary was fair, and better was in sight; yet Poe was melancholy, dissatisfied, and miserable. He wrote a pitiable letter to Mr. Kennedy, asking to be convinced "that it is at all necessary to live."

For several years he had been making his home with an aunt, Mrs. Clemm, and her daughter, Virginia, a girl beautiful in character and person, but penniless and probably already a victim of the consumption that was eventually to cause her death. In 1836, when she was only fourteen years old, Poe married his cousin, to whom he was passionately attached. His devotion to her lasted through life, and the tenderest affection existed between him and Mrs. Clemm, who was all a mother could have been to him; so that the home life was always beautiful in spirit, however poor in material comfort.

In January, 1837, his connection with the *Messenger* was severed, probably because of his occasional lapses from sobriety; but his unfortunate temperament and his restless ambition were doubtless factors. With some reputation as poet, story-writer, critic, and editor, Poe removed to New York, and a year later to Philadelphia, where he remained until 1844. Here he found miscellaneous literary, editorial, and hack work, finally

"Rob of the Bowl," and other popular novels of the day, and later Secretary of the Navy.

becoming editor of *Graham's Magazine*, which prospered greatly under his management, increasing its circulation from eight thousand to forty thousand within a year. But Poe's restless spirit was dissatisfied. He was intensely anxious to own a magazine for himself, and had already made several unsuccessful efforts to obtain one, – efforts which were to be repeated at intervals, and with as little success, until the day his death. He vainly sought a government position, that a livelihood might be assured while he carried out his literary plans. Finally he left *Graham's*, doubtless because of personal peculiarities, since his occasional inebriety did not interfere with his work; and there followed a period of wretched poverty, broken once by the winning of a prize of one hundred dollars for "The Gold Bug."

He continued to be known as a "reserved, isolated, dreamy man, of high-strung nerves, proud spirit, and fantastic moods," with a haunting sense of impending evil. His home was poor and simple, but impressed every visitor by its neatness and quiet refinement; Virginia, accomplished in music and languages, was as devoted to her husband as he was to her. Both were fond of flowers and plants, and of household pets. Mrs. Clemm gave herself completely to her "children" and was the business manager of the family.

In the spring of 1844 Poe went with Virginia to New York, practically penniless, and to Mrs. Clemm, who did not come at once, he wrote with pathetic enthusiasm of the generous meals served at their boarding house. He obtained a position on the

Evening Mirror at small pay, but did his dull work faithfully and efficiently; later, he became editor of the *Broadway Journal*, in which he printed revisions of his best tales and poems. In 1845 appeared "The Raven," which created a profound sensation at home and abroad, and immediately won, and has since retained, an immense popularity. He was at the height of his fame, but poor, as always. In 1846 he published "The Literati," critical comments on the writers of the day, in which the literary small fry were mercilessly condemned and ridiculed. This naturally made Poe a host of enemies. One of these, Thomas Dunn English, published an abusive article attacking the author's character, whereupon Poe sued him for libel and obtained two hundred and twenty-five dollars damages.

The family now moved to a little three-room cottage at Fordham, a quiet country place with flowers and trees and pleasant vistas; but illness and poverty were soon there, too. In 1841 Virginia had burst a blood vessel while singing, and her life was despaired of; this had happened again and again, leaving her weaker each time. As the summer and fall of this year wore away, she grew worse and needed the tenderest care and attention. But winter drew on, and with it came cold and hunger; the sick girl lay in an unheated room on a straw bed, wrapped in her husband's coat, the husband and mother trying to chafe a little warmth into her hands and feet. Some kind-hearted women relieved the distress in a measure, but on January 30, 1847, Virginia died. The effect on Poe was terrible. It is easy to see how a very

artist of death, who could study the dreadful stages of its slow approach and seek to penetrate the mystery of its ultimate nature with such intense interest and deep reflection as did Poe, must have brooded and suffered during the years of his wife's illness. His own health had long been poor; his brain was diseased and insanity seemed imminent. After intense grief came a period of settled gloom and haunting fear. The less than three years of life left for him was a period of decline in every respect. But he remained in the little cottage, finding some comfort in caring for his flowers and pets, and taking long solitary rambles. During this time he thought out and wrote "Eureka," a treatise on the structure, laws, and destiny of the universe, which he desired to have regarded as a poem.

Poe had always felt a need for the companionship of sympathetic and affectionate women, for whom he entertained a chivalric regard amounting to reverence. After the shock of his wife's death had somewhat worn away, he began to depend for sympathy upon various women with whom he maintained romantic friendships. Judged by ordinary standards, his conduct became at times little short of maudlin; his correspondence showed a sort of gasping, frantic dependence upon the sympathy and consolation of these women friends, and exhibited a painful picture of a broken man. Mrs. Shew, one of the kind women who had relieved the family at the time of Virginia's last illness, strongly advised him to marry, and he did propose marriage to Mrs. Sara Helen Whitman, a verse writer of some note

in her day. After a wild and exhausting wooing, begun in an extravagantly romantic manner, the match was broken off through the influence of the lady's friends. When it was all over Poe seemed very little disturbed. The truth is, he was a wreck, and feeling utterly dependent, clutched frantically at every hope of sympathy and consolation. His only real love was for his dead wife, which he recorded shortly before his death in the exquisite lyric, "Annabel Lee."

In July, 1849, full of the darkest forebodings, and predicting that he should never return, Poe went to Richmond. Here he spent a few quiet months, part of the time fairly cheerful, but twice yielding to the temptation to drink, and each time suffering, in consequence, a dangerous illness. On September 30 he left Richmond for New York with fifteen hundred dollars, the product of a recent lecture arranged by kind Richmond friends. What happened during the next three days is an impenetrable mystery, but on October 3 (Wednesday) he was found in an election booth in Baltimore, desperately ill, his money and baggage gone. The most probable story is that he had been drugged by political workers, imprisoned in a "coop" with similar victims, and used as a repeater³, this procedure being a common one at the time. Whether he was also intoxicated is a matter of doubt. There could be but one effect on his delicate and already diseased brain. He was taken to a hospital unconscious, lingered several days in the delirium of a violent brain fever, and in the

³ Repeater, a person who illegally votes more than once

early dawn of Sunday, October 7, breathed his last.

The dead author's character immediately became the subject of violent controversy. His severe critical strictures had made him many enemies among the minor writers of the day and their friends. One of the men who had suffered from Poe's too caustic pen was Rufus W. Griswold, but friendly relations had been nominally established and Poe had authorized Griswold to edit his works. This Griswold did, including a biography which Poe's friends declared a masterpiece of malicious distortion and misrepresentation; it certainly was grossly unfair and inaccurate. Poe's friends retorted, and a long war of words followed, in which hatred or prejudice on the one side and wholesale, indiscriminating laudation on the other, alike tended to obscure the truth. It is now almost impossible to see the real Poe, just as he appeared to an ordinary, unprejudiced observer of his own time. Only by the most careful, thoughtful, and sympathetic study can we hope to approximate such an acquaintance.

The fundamental fact about Poe is a very peculiar and unhappy temperament, certain characteristic qualities of which began to disclose themselves in early boyhood and, fostered by the vicissitudes of his career, developed throughout his life.

In youth he was nervous, sensitive, morbid, proud, solitary, and wayward; and as the years went by, bringing poverty, illness, and the bitterness of failure, often through his own faults, the man became irritable, impatient, often morose. He had always suffered from fits of depression, – "blue devils," Mr. Kennedy

called them, – and though he was extravagantly sanguine at times, melancholy was his usual mood, often manifesting itself in a haunting fear of evil to come. The peculiar character of his wonderful imagination made actual life less real to him than his own land of dreams: the "distant Aidenn," the "dim lake of Auber," the "kingdom by the sea," seemed more genuine than the landscapes of earth; the lurid "city in the sea" more substantial than the streets he daily walked.

Because of this intensely subjective and self-absorbed character of mind, he had no understanding of human nature, no insight into character with its marvelous complexities and contradictions. With these limitations Poe, as might be expected, had a very defective sense of humor, lacked true sympathy, was tactless, possessed little business ability, and was excessively annoyed by the dull routine and rude frictions of ordinary life. He was always touched by kindness, but was quick to resent an injury, and even as a boy could not endure a jest at his expense. He had many warm and devoted friends whom he loved in return, but the limitations of his own nature probably made a really frank, unreserved friendship impossible; and when a break occurred, he was apt to assume that his former friend was an utter villain. These personal characteristics, in conjunction with a goading ambition which took form in the idea of an independent journal of his own in which he might find untrammelled expression, added uneasiness and restlessness to a constantly discontented nature. To some extent, at least, Poe

realized the curse of such a temperament, but he strove vainly against its impulses.

The one genuine human happiness of this sad life was found in a singularly beautiful home atmosphere. Husband and wife were passionately devoted to each other, and Mrs. Clemm was more than a mother to both. She says of her son-in-law: "At home, he was simple and affectionate as a child, and during all the years he lived with me, I do not remember a single night that he failed to come and kiss his 'mother,' as he called me, before going to bed." This faithful woman remained devoted to him after Virginia's death, and to his memory, when calumny assailed it, after his own.

The capital charge against Poe's character has been intemperance, and although the matter has been grossly exaggerated and misrepresented, the charge is true. Except for short periods, he was never what is known as dissipated, and he struggled desperately against his weakness, – an unequal struggle, since the craving was inherited, and fostered by environment, circumstances, and temperament. One of his biographers tells of bread soaked in gin being fed to the little Poe children by an old nurse during the illness of their mother; and there is another story, already mentioned, of the little Edgar, in his adoptive home, taught to pledge the guests as a social grace. Drinking was common at the time, wine was offered in every home and at every social function, and in the South, where Poe spent his youth and early manhood, the spirit of hospitality and conviviality

held out constant temptation. To his delicate organization strong drink early became a veritable poison, and indulgence that would have been a small matter to another man was ruinous to him; indeed, a single glass of wine drove him practically insane, and a debauch was sure to follow. Indulgence was stimulated, also, by the nervous strain and worry induced by uncertain livelihood and privation, the frequent fits of depression, and by constant brooding. Sometimes he fought his weakness successfully for several years, but always it conquered in the end.

Moreover, he speaks of a very special cause in the latter part of his life, which in fairness should be heard in his own written words to a friend: "Six years ago a wife, whom I loved as no man ever loved before, ruptured a blood vessel in singing. Her life was despaired of. I took leave of her forever and underwent all the agonies of her death. She recovered partially and I again hoped. At the end of a year the vessel broke again. I went through precisely the same scene... Then again – again – and even once again, at varying intervals. Each time I felt all the agonies of her death – and at each accession of her disorder I loved her more dearly and clung to her life with more desperate pertinacity. But I am constitutionally sensitive – nervous in a very unusual degree. I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity. During these fits of absolute unconsciousness, I drank – God only knows how often or how much. As a matter of course, my enemies referred the insanity to the drink, rather than the drink to the insanity... It was the horrible never-ending oscillation between

hope and despair, which I could *not* longer have endured without total loss of reason. In the death of what was my life, then, I received a new, but – O God! – how melancholy an existence!"

This statement, and the other facts mentioned, are not offered as wholly excusing Poe. Doubtless a stronger man would have resisted, doubtless a less self-absorbed man would have thought of his wife's happiness as well as of his own relief from torture. Yet the fair-minded person, familiar with Poe's unhappy life, and keeping in mind the influences of heredity, temperament, and environment, will hesitate to pronounce a severe judgment.

Poe was also accused of untruthfulness, and this accusation likewise has a basis of fact. He repeatedly furnished or approved statements regarding his life and work that were incorrect, he often made a disingenuous show of pretended learning, and he sometimes misstated facts to avoid wounding his own vanity. This ugly fault seems to have resulted from a fondness for romantic posing, and is doubtless related to the peculiar character of imagination already mentioned. Perhaps, too, he inherited from his actor parents a love of applause, and if so, the trait was certainly encouraged in early childhood. There is no evidence that he was ever guilty of malicious or mercenary falsehood.

Another of his bad habits was borrowing, but it must be remembered that his life was one long struggle with grinding poverty, that he and those dear to him sometimes suffered actual hunger and cold. Many who knew him testified to his anxiety to pay all his debts, Mr. Graham referring to him in this particular

as "the soul of honor."

In a letter to Lowell, Poe has well described himself in a sentence: "My life has been whim – impulse – passion – a longing for solitude – a scorn of all things present in an earnest desire for the future." Interpreted, this means that in a sense he never really reached maturity, that he remained a slave to his impulses and emotions, that he detested the ordinary business of life and could not adapt himself to it, that his mind was full of dreams of ideal beauty and perfection, that his whole soul yearned to attain the highest pleasures of artistic creation. His was perpetually a deeply agitated soul; as such, it was natural he should outwardly seem irritable, impatient, restless, discontented, and solitary. It is impossible to believe that there was any strain of real evil in Poe. A man who could inspire such devotion as he had from such a woman as Mrs. Clemm, a man who loved flowers and children and animal pets, who could be so devoted a husband, who could so consecrate himself to art, was not a bad man. Yet his acts were often, as we have seen, most reprehensible. Frequently the subject of slander, he was not a victim of conspiracy to defame. Although circumstances were many times against him, he was his own worst enemy. He was cursed with a temperament. His mind was analytical and imaginative, and gave no thought to the ethical. He remained wayward as a child. The man, like his art, was not immoral, but simply unmoral. Whatever his faults, he suffered frightfully for them, and his fame suffered after him.

LITERARY WORK

Poe's first literary ventures were in verse. The early volumes, showing strongly the influence of Byron and Moore, were productions of small merit but large promise. Their author was soon to become one of the most original of poets, his later work being unique, with a strangely individual, "Poe" atmosphere that no other writer has ever been able successfully to imitate. His verse is individual in theme, treatment, and structure, all of which harmonize with his conscious theory of poetic art. His theory is briefly this: It is not the function of poetry to teach either truth or morals, but to gratify through novel forms "the thirst for supernal beauty"; its proper effect is to "excite, by elevating, the soul." The highest beauty has always some admixture of sadness, the most poetical of all themes being the death of a beautiful woman. Moreover, the pleasure derived from the contemplation of this higher beauty should be indefinite; that is, true poetic feeling is not the result of coherent narrative or clear pictures or fine moral sentiment, but consists in vague, exalted emotion. Music, of all the arts, produces the vaguest and most "indefinite" pleasure; consequently verse forms should be chosen with the greatest possible attention to musical effect. Poetry must be purely a matter of feeling. "Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the Intellect or with the Conscience it has only collateral relations."

This explanation is necessary, because the stock criticism of

Poe's poetry condemns it as vague, indefinite, and devoid of thought or ethical content. These are precisely its limitations, but hardly its faults, since the poet attained with marvelous art the very effects he desired. The themes of nearly all the poems are death, ruin, regret, or failure; the verse is original in form, and among the most musical in the language, full of a haunting, almost magical melody. Mystery, symbolism, shadowy suggestion, fugitive thought, elusive beauty, beings that are mere insubstantial abstractions – these are the characteristics, but designedly so, of Poe's poetry. A poem to him was simply a crystallized mood, and it is futile for his readers to apply any other test. Yet the influence of this verse has been wide and important, extending to most lyric poets of the last half-century, including such masters as Rossetti and Swinburne.

"To Helen," a poem of three brief stanzas, is Poe's first really notable production; it is an exquisite tribute of his reverent devotion to his boyhood friend, Mrs. Stannard, portraying her as a classic embodiment of beauty. "Israfel" is a lyric of aspiration of rare power and rapture, worthy of Shelley, and is withal the most spontaneous, simple, and genuinely human poem Poe ever wrote. "The Haunted Palace," one of the finest of his poems, is an unequalled allegory of the wreck and ruin of sovereign reason, which to be fully appreciated should be read in its somber setting, "The Fall of the House of Usher." Less attractive is "The Conqueror Worm," with its repulsive imagery, but this "tragedy 'Man,'" with the universe as a theater, moving to the "music of the

spheres," and "horror the soul of the plot," is undeniably powerful and intensely terrible.

"The Raven," published in 1845, attained immediately a world-wide celebrity, and rivals in fame and popularity any lyric ever written. It is the most elaborate treatment of Poe's favorite theme, the death of a beautiful woman. The reveries of a bereaved lover, alone in his library at midnight in "the bleak December," vainly seeking to forget his sorrow for the "lost Lenore," are interrupted by a tapping, as of some one desirous to enter. After a time, he admits a "stately raven" and seeks to beguile his sad fancy by putting questions to the bird, whose one reply is "Nevermore," and this constitutes the refrain of the poem. Impelled by an instinct of self-torture, the lover asks whether he shall have "respite" from the painful memories of "Lenore," here or hereafter, and finally whether in the "distant Aidenn" he and his love shall be reunited; to all of which the raven returns his one answer. Driven to frenzy, the lover implores the bird, "Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door," only to learn that the shadow will be lifted "nevermore." The raven is, in the poet's own words, "emblematical of Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrance."

"Ulalume" has been commonly (though not always) regarded as a mere experiment in verbal ingenuity, meaningless melody, or "the insanity of versification," as a distinguished American critic has called it. Such a judgment is a mark of inability to understand Poe's most characteristic work, for in truth "Ulalume" is the

extreme expression at once of his critical theory and of his peculiar genius as a poet. It was published in December of the same year in which Virginia died in January. The poet's condition has already been described; "Ulalume" is a marvelous expression of his mood at this time. It depicts a soul worn out by long suffering, groping for courage and hope, only to return again to "the door of a legended tomb." It is true the movement is slow, impeded by the frequent repetitions, but so the wearied mind, after nervous exhaustion, is "palsied and sere." There is no appeal to the intellect, but this is characteristic of Poe and appropriate to a mind numbed by protracted suffering. It is this mood of wearied, benumbed, discouraged, hopeless hope, feebly seeking for the "Lethean peace of the skies" only to find the mind inevitably reverting to the "lost Ulalume," that finds expression. There is no definite thought, because only the communication of feeling is intended; there is no distinct setting, because the whole action is spiritual; "the dim lake" and "dark tarn of Auber," "the ghoulish-woodland of Weir," "the alley Titanic of cypress," are the grief-stricken and fear-haunted places of the poet's own darkened mind, while the ashen skies of "the lonesome October" are significant enough of this "most immemorial year." The poem is a monody of nerveless, exhausted grief. As such it must be read to be appreciated, as such it must be judged, and so appreciated and so judged it is absolutely unique and incomparable.

About a year later came "The Bells," wonderful for the music

of its verse, and the finest onomatopoeic poem in the language. Two days after Poe's death appeared "Annabel Lee," a simple, sincere, and beautiful ballad, a tribute to his dead wife. Last of all was printed the brief "Eldorado," a fitting death-song for Poe, in which a gallant knight sets out, "singing a song," "in search of Eldorado," only to learn when youth and strength are gone that he must seek his goal "down the Valley of the Shadow."

The tales, like the poems, are a real contribution to the world's literature, but more strikingly so, since the type itself is original. Poe, Hawthorne, and Irving are distinctly the pioneers in the production of the modern short story, and neither has been surpassed on his own ground; but Poe has been vastly the greater influence in foreign countries, especially in France. Poe formed a new conception of the short story, one which Professor Brander Matthews⁴ has treated formally and explicitly as a distinct literary form, different from the story that is merely short. Without calling it a distinct form, Poe implied the idea in a review of Hawthorne's "Twice-Told Tales":

The ordinary novel is objectionable from its length... As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from *totality*... In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fulness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal, the soul of the reader is at the writer's control...

A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has

⁴ "The Philosophy of the Short-Story," Chapter IV of "Pen and Ink."

not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived with deliberate care a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents – he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the out-bringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preëstablished design.

This idea of a short story should be kept in mind in reading Poe's works, for he applied his theory perfectly.

The stories are of greater variety than the poems. There are romances of death whose themes are fear, horror, madness, catalepsy, premature burial, torture, mesmerism, and revengeful cruelty; tales of weird beauty; allegories of conscience; narratives of pseudo-science; stories of analytical reasoning; descriptions of beautiful landscapes; and what are usually termed "prose poems." He also wrote tales grotesque, humorous, and satirical, most of which are failures. The earlier tales are predominantly imaginative and emotional; most of the later ones are predominantly intellectual. None of the tales touches ordinary, healthy life; there is scarcely a suggestion of local color; the humor is nearly always mechanical; there is little conversation and the characters are never normal human beings. Although the stories are strongly romantic in subject, plot, and setting, there is an extraordinary realism in treatment, a minuteness and accuracy

of detail equaling the work of Defoe. This is one secret of the magical art that not only transports us to the world of dream and vision where the author's own soul roamed, but for the time makes it all real to us.

Poe's finest tale, as a work of art, is "The Fall of the House of Usher," which is as nearly perfect in its craftsmanship as human work may be. It is a romance of death with a setting of profound gloom, and is wrought out as a highly imaginative study in fear – a symphony in which every touch blends into a perfect unity of effect. "Ligeia," perhaps standing next, incorporating "The Conqueror Worm" as its keynote, portrays the terrific struggle of a woman's will against death. "The Masque of the Red Death," a tale of the Spirit of Pestilence and of Death victorious over human selfishness and power, is a splendid study in somber color. "The Assigination," a romance of Venice, is also splendid in coloring and rich in decorative effects, presenting a luxury of sorrow culminating in romantic suicide. "William Wilson" is an allegory of conscience personified in a double, the forerunner of Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." Other conscience stories are "The Man of the Crowd"; "The Tell-Tale Heart," also depicting insanity; and "The Black Cat," of which the atmosphere is horror. "The Adventures of One Hans Pfaal" and "The Balloon Hoax" are examples of the pseudo-scientific tales, which attain their verisimilitude by diverting attention from the improbability or impossibility of the general incidents to the accuracy and naturalness of details. In "The Descent into

the Maëlstrom," scientific reasoning is skillfully blended with imaginative strength, poetic description, and stirring adventure. This type of story is clearly enough the original of those of Jules Verne and similar writers. "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter" are the pioneer detective stories, Dupin the original Sherlock Holmes, and they remain the best of their kind, unsurpassed in originality, ingenuity, and plausibility. Another type of the story of analytical reasoning is "The Gold-Bug," built around the solution of a cryptogram, but also introducing an element of adventure. Poe's analytical power was real, not a trick. If he made Legrand solve the cryptogram and boast his ability to solve others more difficult, Poe himself solved scores sent him in response to a public magazine challenge; if Dupin solved mysteries that Poe invented for him, Poe himself wrote in "Marie Roget," from newspaper accounts, the solution of a real murder mystery, and astounded Dickens by outlining the entire plot of "Barnaby Rudge" when only a few of the first chapters had been published; if he wrote imaginatively of science, he in fact demonstrated in "Maelzel's Chess Player" that a pretended automaton was operated by a man. "Hop Frog" and "The Cask of Amontillado" are old-world stories of revenge. "The Island of the Fay" and "The Domain of Arnheim" are landscape studies, the one of calm loveliness, the other of Oriental profusion and coloring. "Shadow" and "Silence" are commonly classed as "prose poems," the former being one of Poe's most effective productions. "Eleonora," besides having a

story to tell, is both a prose poem and a landscape study, and withal one of Poe's most exquisite writings.

Although Poe was not a great critic, his critical work is by no means valueless. He applied for the first time in America a thoroughgoing scrutiny and able, fearless criticism to contemporary literature, undoubtedly with good effect. His attacks on didacticism were especially valuable. His strength as a critic lay in his artistic temperament and in the incisive intellect that enabled him to analyze the effects produced in his own creations and in those of others. His weaknesses were extravagance; a mania for harping on plagiarism; lack of spiritual insight, broad sympathies, and profound scholarship; and, in general, the narrow range of his genius, which has already been made sufficiently clear. His severity has been exaggerated, as he often praised highly, probably erring more frequently by undue laudation than by extreme severity. Though personal prejudice sometimes crept into his work, especially in favor of women, yet on the whole he was as fair and fearless as he claimed to be. Much of the hasty, journalistic hack work is valueless, as might be expected, but he wrote very suggestively of his art, and nearly all his judgments have been sustained. Moreover, he met one supreme test of a critic in recognizing unknown genius: Dickens he was among the first to appraise as a great novelist; Tennyson and Elizabeth Barrett (Browning) he ranked among the great poets without hesitation; and at home he early expressed a due appreciation of Hawthorne, Lowell, Longfellow, and Bryant.

Poe's place, both in prose and poetry, is assured. His recognition abroad has been clear and emphatic from the first, especially in France, and to-day foreigners generally regard him as the greatest writer we have produced, an opinion in which a number of our own critics and readers concur. One's judgment in the matter will depend upon the point of view and the standards adopted; it is too large a subject to consider here, but if artistic craftsmanship be the standard, certainly Hawthorne would be his only rival, and Hawthorne was not also a poet. The question of exact relative rank, however, it is neither possible nor important to settle. It is sufficient to say, in the words of Professor Woodberry, "On the roll of our literature Poe's name is inscribed among the few foremost, and in the world at large his genius is established as valid among all men."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The year after Poe's death there appeared "The Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe," with a Memoir, in two volumes, edited by R. W. Griswold and published by J. S. Redfield, New York. The same editor and publisher brought out a four-volume edition in 1856. Griswold had suffered from Poe's sharp criticisms and had quarreled with him, though later there was a reconciliation, and Poe himself selected Griswold to edit his works. The biographer painted the dead author very black indeed, and his account is now generally considered unfair.

In 1874-1875 "The Works of Edgar Allan Poe," with Memoir, edited by John H. Ingram, were published in four volumes, in Edinburgh, and in 1876 in New York. Ingram represents the other extreme from Griswold, attempting to defend practically everything that Poe was and did.

In 1884 A. C. Armstrong & Son, New York, brought out "The Works of

Edgar Allan Poe" in six volumes, with an Introduction and Memoir by

Richard Henry Stoddard. Stoddard is far from doing justice to Poe either as man or as author.

Although Griswold's editing was poor, subsequent editions followed his until 1895, when Professor George E. Woodberry and Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman published a new edition

in ten volumes through Stone & Kimball, Chicago (now published by Duffield & Company, New York). This edition is incomparably superior to all its predecessors, going to the original sources, and establishing an authentic text, corrected slightly in quotations and punctuation. Professor Woodberry contributed a Memoir, and Mr. Stedman admirable critical articles on the poems and the tales. Scholarly notes, an extensive bibliography, a number of portraits, and variorum readings of the poems, are included.

In 1902 T.Y. Crowell & Company, New York, issued "The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe" in seventeen volumes, edited by Professor James A. Harrison, including a biography and a volume of letters. This edition contains much of Poe's criticism not published in previous editions, and follows Poe's latest text exactly; complete variorum readings are included.

In 1902 there also appeared "The Booklover's Arnheim" edition in ten volumes, edited by Professor Charles F. Richardson and published by G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York. This is mechanically the finest edition of Poe's works.

The one-volume collections of poems and of tales are almost innumerable, but nearly all are devoid of merit and poorly edited in selection, text, and notes. (This does not refer to the small collections for study in schools.) The best are the following: "Tales of Mystery," Unit Book Publishing Company, New York (72 cents); "The Best Tales of Edgar Allan Poe," edited with critical studies by Sherwin Cody, A.C. McClurg & Company,

Chicago (\$1.00); "The Best Poems and Essays of E. A. Poe," edited with biographical and critical introduction by Sherwin Cody, McClurg (\$1.00); "Poems of E. A. Poe," complete, edited and annotated by Charles W. Kent, The Macmillan Company, New York (25 cents).

Professor George E. Woodberry contributed in 1885 a volume on Poe to the American Men of Letters Series (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston), which is the ablest yet written. In scholarship and critical appreciation it is all that could be desired, but unfortunately it is unsympathetic. Mr. Woodberry assumed a coldly judicial attitude, in which mood he is occasionally a little less than just to Poe's character. Professor Harrison's biography, written for the Virginia edition, is published separately by T.Y. Crowell & Company. It is very full, and valuable for the mass of material supplied, but is not discriminating in criticism or estimate of Poe's character.

Numerous magazine articles may be found by consulting the periodical indexes. A number of suggestive short studies are to be found in the text-books of American literature, such as those of Messrs. Trent, Abernethy, Newcomer, and Wendell; and in the larger books of Professors Richardson, Trent, and Wendell. One may also find acute and valuable comment in such works as Professor Bliss Perry's "A Study of Prose Fiction," and Professor Brander Matthews's "Philosophy of the Short-Story" (published separately, and in "Pen and Ink").

Many of Poe's tales and poems have been translated into

practically all the important languages of modern Europe, including Greek. An important French study of Poe, recently published, is mentioned in the Preface.

POEMS

SONG

I saw thee on thy 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.

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 look not down
From their high thrones in the 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!

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 a passer-by.

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 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 mazes 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 SCIENCE

A PROLOGUE TO "AL AARAAF"

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 jewelled 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?

TO HELEN

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicæan 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!

ISRAFEL

And the angel Israfel, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures. – KORAN

In Heaven a spirit doth dwell
Whose heart-strings 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 levin
(With the rapid Pleiads, 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.

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 50
From my lyre within the sky.

THE CITY IN THE SEA

Lo! 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 gaily-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 seas 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 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
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 pale 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 pannels 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!

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 never
more!

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?"

Peccanimus; 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! avaunt! from friends 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!

Let no bell toll, then, – lest her soul, amid its hallowed mirth,
Should catch the note as it doth float up from the damnéd
Earth!

And I! – to-night my heart is light! – No dirge will I upraise,
But waft the angel on her flight with a Pæan of old days."

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.

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,
O spells more sure than e'er Judæan king
Taught in the gardens of Gethsemane!
O 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 the 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 hornéd 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 answer 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."

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!

TO ONE IN PARADISE

Thou wast all that 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 gray eye glances,
And where thy footstep gleams —
In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams.

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 thy 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 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 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 entombéd 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. Accurséd ground!
Henceforth I hold thy flower-enamelled shore,
O hyacinthine isle! O purple Zante!
"Isola d'oro! Fior di Levante!"

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 church-yard 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,
Here is a ring, as token
That I am happy now!

Would 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.

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!

THE CONQUEROR WORM

Lo! 't is 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 seraphs sob at vermin fangs

In human gore imbued.

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,

While the angels, all pallid and wan,

Uprising, unveiling, affirm

That the play is the tragedy, "Man,"

And its hero, the Conqueror Worm.

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 tears that drip all over;
Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore;
Seas that restlessly aspire,
Surging, unto 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 dead, —
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
'T is a peaceful, soothing region;
For the spirit that walks in shadow
'T is – oh, 't is 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.

THE RAVEN

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of, forgotten lore, —
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door:
 Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; – vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow – sorrow for the lost Lenore,
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore:
 Nameless here forevermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me – filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
"T is 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 forgiveness 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 mortals ever dared to dream
before;

But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness 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 somewhat 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:

"T is 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.
Not 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 ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance 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 the 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 fancy 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 ominous 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 syllable 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 lamp-light gloating
o'er

She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an
unseen censer

Swung by seraphim whose foot-falls 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 this lost
Lenore!"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said 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!" said 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 lamp-light 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.

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 M.L.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 unhallowed 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.

ULALUME

The skies they were ashen and sober;
The leaves they were crispéd 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 30
And 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 35
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, 40
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, 45
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." 50

But Psyche, 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." 55
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. 60

I replied – "This is nothing but dreaming:
Let us on by this tremulous light!
Let us bathe in this crystalline light!
Its sibyllic splendor is beaming
With hope and in beauty to-night: 65
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, 70
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, 75
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 – 80
'T is 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 85
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? 90
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."

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 wilder, 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 hidden by thee,
I cannot write – I cannot speak or think —
Alas, I cannot feel; for't is 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 empurpled vapors, far away
To where the prospect terminates – thee only.

AN ENIGMA

"Seldom we find," says Solomon Don Dunce,
"Half an idea in the profoundest sonnet.
Through all the flimsy things we see at once
As easily as through a Naples bonnet —
Trash of all trash! how can a lady don it?
Yet heavier far than your Petrarchan stuff,
Owl-downy nonsense that the faintest puff
Twirls into trunk-paper the while you con it."
And, veritably, Sol is right enough.
The general tuckermanities are arrant
Bubbles, ephemeral and *so* transparent;
But *this* is, now, you may depend upon it,
Stable, opaque, immortal – all by dint
Of the dear names that lie concealed within 't.

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 footsteps stirred: the hated world all slept,
Save only thee and me – O Heaven! O 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 airs.
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 seem 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.

A VALENTINE

For her this rhyme is penned, whose luminous eyes,
Brightly expressive as the twins of Leda,
Shall find her own sweet name, that nestling lies
Upon the page, enwrapped from every reader.
Search narrowly the lines! they hold a treasure
Divine, a talisman, an amulet
That must be worn at heart. Search well the measure —
The word – the syllables. Do not forget
The trivialest point, or you may lose your labor:
And yet there is in this no Gordian knot
Which one might not undo without a sabre,
If one could merely comprehend the plot.
Enwritten upon the leaf where now are peering
Eyes scintillating soul, there lie *perdus*
Three eloquent words oft uttered in the hearing
Of poets, by poets – as the name is a poet's, too.
Its letters, although naturally lying
Like the knight Pinto, Mendez Ferdinando,
Still form a synonym for Truth. – Cease trying!
You will not read the riddle, though you do the best you
can do.

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 composedly
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.

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 deligit;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation 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.

ANNABEL LEE

It 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 kinsmen 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 her sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

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 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!"

TALES

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

*Son coeur est un luth suspendu;
Sitôt qu'on le touche il résonne.*

Béranger

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was – but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me – upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain, upon the bleak walls, upon the vacant eye-like windows,

upon a few rank sedges, and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees – with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium: the bitter lapse into everyday life, the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart, an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it – I paused to think – what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate, its capacity for sorrowful impression; and acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down – but with a shudder even more thrilling than before – upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher,

had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country – a letter from him – which in its wildly inopportune nature had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS. gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness, of a mental disorder which oppressed him, and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady. It was the manner in which all this, and much more, was said – it was the apparent *heart* that went with his request – which allowed me no room for hesitation; and I accordingly obeyed forthwith what I still considered a very singular summons.

Although as boys we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested of late in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognizable beauties, of musical science. I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honored as it was, had put forth at no period any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family

lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other – it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating transmission from sire to son of the patrimony with the name, which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the "House of Usher" – an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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