

teaching. The increase of Indian native workers and teachers will in time surmount this difficulty.

In the second place the missionaries themselves are to blame for another difficulty. The Christianity they teach is too often bound hand and foot to the ceremonies, creeds, and formularies of their own particular churches. They preach things which no doubt have a value in these particular churches at home, but which are not essential to Christianity. Western ways of thought and modes of worship will not attract the people of the East. The power of Christianity in the Roman Empire was not founded in an organized Church with formularies and shibboleths, but in the preaching of the Man Christ Jesus, the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, the Man who not only taught but showed how to live, and who gave His life as a ransom for all. Let the missionaries of Christ preach Christ as revealed in the Scripture, and let secondary matters go, if they seem to wish to go, and they will find that though the preaching of the Cross will still seem to many to be foolishness, it is still the power of God, the wisdom of God, and will be recognised as such by many who are weary of the philosophies, the pleasures, the empty creeds and toils of this life, and longing for something more stable, more satisfying, more powerful.



### The Sadness of Poe.

By MARY BRADFORD WHITING.

“THE tone of the highest manifestation of Beauty is *sadness*,” wrote Edgar Allan Poe in his “Philosophy of Composition.” “Beauty, of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones. ‘Of all melancholy topics,’ I asked myself, ‘what, according to the universal understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy?’ ‘*Death*,’ was the obvious reply. ‘And when,’ I said, ‘is this

most melancholy of topics most poetical?' The answer here also is obvious—'When it most closely allies itself to beauty.' The death, then, of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such a topic are those of a bereaved lover."

Poe is here telling the story of the composition of "The Raven"; but it was not merely in this instance that he employed melancholy as "the most legitimate of all poetical tones": a strain of sadness ran through all his utterances, and the Raven—the emblem of "mournful and never-ending Remembrance"—cast its shadow over his whole life.

The De la Poer family, from which Poe was descended, had long taken root in Ireland, and from his father's side he inherited the true Celtic spirit, a passionate and dreamy melancholy, rich with colour, yet touched with a twilight mysticism which dominated his life and works; the wine of the world flowed redly for him, the

"Far-off, most secret and inviolate rose"

lured him to its quest; but on everything he saw, the words "passing away" were written, and to him it was a passing away that knew no return.

The grandson of David Poe, who emigrated from Ireland to America and was made a General in the War of Independence, the little Edgar lost both his parents when he was only two years old, and was adopted by his godfather, a rich man, from whom he had received his second name of Allan.

As nearly as can be guessed, Poe was about fourteen when he met the Helen Stannard who inspired him with those lines "To Helen," which will always remain as one of the most perfect lyrics in the English language :

"Helen, thy beauty is to me  
 Like those Nicean barks of yore  
 That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,  
 The weary, way-worn 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.”

Yet it was not *love*, in the ordinary sense of the word, that Helen's beauty aroused in the breast of the youthful poet. The mother of one of his school-fellows, she was his ideal, and the pure devotion with which he worshipped her bore fruit in his manhood's love for another Helen. His worship brought him joy; but the lines from “The Raven,” which he himself applied to his own fate—

“Disaster

Followed fast and followed faster, till his song one burden bore—  
 Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore  
 Of ‘Never—nevermore!’”—

were already to find their fulfilment in his life. Mrs. Stannard died, and for months after her death he haunted her grave, mourning over it in anguish, yet finding in his nightly vigils a wild and melancholy pleasure.

The next few years of his life are shrouded in mystery, and his biographers have therefore generally concluded that they were stained by some special disgrace; but since there is no record of his expulsion from the University, the authorities at Virginia have given it as their opinion that these accounts are malicious. Wherever he may have been during this time, a terrible trouble was in store for him on his return: Mrs. Allan was dead, and his godfather's speedy second marriage resulted in his being cast out of doors without any means of subsistence after he had been taught to look upon himself in the light of an only son and heir. From this time forward his life was one long struggle, until, at the age of forty, the waves finally closed over his head.

Griswold's Biography, which for many years was taken as the authentic Life of Poe, depicts him as a man of fierce and unbridled passions, a drunkard, and absolutely devoid of self-control; he is accused of breaking his young wife's heart, of squandering the pittance that should have provided her dying hours with comfort, and of turning from her barely-closed grave to sun himself in other eyes. To describe him, as others have done, as a man of almost saintly virtue is equally misleading; the truth probably lies midway between the two extremes. That Poe did many things of which he afterwards bitterly repented is shown by his own words, but that he was wilfully cruel and vicious is disproved by abundant testimony.

The story of his marriage may be paralleled by many an instance of love and grief, but there is one distinctive circumstance in connection with it—the mutual love and devotion of his mother-in-law and himself. If Poe had indeed treated her daughter with harshness and neglect, Mrs. Clemm would never have remained through life, and desired to be laid in death, beside her “darling Eddy.”

That Mrs. Clemm can have liked the match, it is hardly possible to believe: Poe had been disinherited, he was without a profession, and, moreover, he was her daughter's first cousin; yet Mrs. Weiss, one of his most intimate friends, avers that she was chiefly responsible for it.

One only letter of Poe's to his wife has been preserved, and it is not possible to doubt the affection that inspired its lines.

The story of their poverty and of the dying child-wife is a heart-rending one, but the question instinctively arises, How was it that Poe had fallen into this state of abject distress? He had quickly found literary employment; his contributions to *Graham's Magazine* brought up the circulation from five to fifty-two thousand, and Mr. Graham spoke of him as “the soul of honour in all his transactions.” His severance from the paper was entirely his own act; it was apparently impossible for him to submit to the trammels of regular occupation, and poor Mrs. Clemm's heart must have been heavy as lead as she

trudged from office to office in the attempt to find a sale for his work.

“I attended to his literary business,” was her statement to a friend, “for he, poor fellow, knew nothing about money transactions. How should he, brought up in luxury and extravagance?”

But Poe's unbusiness-like habits were not the only cause of his troubles: he not only drank more than was good for him, but at times the border-line between genius and madness was actually passed. Mrs. Shew, who had been trained as a doctor, made the following notes of his case while helping to nurse him after his wife's death:

“I decided that in his best health he had lesion of one side of the brain, and as he could not bear stimulants or tonics without producing insanity, I did not feel much hope that he could be raised up from brain fever brought on by extreme suffering of mind and body, actual want and hunger and cold having been borne by this heroic husband in order to supply food, medicine, and comforts to his dying wife.”

This calm and sensible woman advised her patient to seek a calm and sensible remedy:

“I did not expect him to live long. I knew that organic disease had been gaining on his physical frame through the many trials and privations of his eventful life. I told him in all candour that nothing could or would save him from sudden death but a prudent life of calm with a woman fond enough and strong enough to manage his affairs for him.”

To so recently bereaved a husband this advice might have sounded heartless, but in less than a year after his wife's death, Poe threw himself into a new love-affair. That his very unhappiness should urge him to seek for fresh companionship is easily to be understood, but it is difficult to reconcile his statement to Mrs. Whitman that he had never loved before with his passionate laments for his wife. However this may be, he himself had not only no scruples on the subject, but he felt it to be his “duty” to accept the new love, as is shown by the lines to Helen Whitman, in which he says that her eyes are his lodestars, leading him onward and upward.

But Poe's love for Mrs. Whitman not only seemed to him the necessary outcome of his love for Veronica—he looked upon it also as the fulfilment of his devotion to an earlier Helen. A

lonely and childless widow possessed of literary tastes, she felt drawn towards Poe, and in a letter in which he thanks her for some verses she had sent him he tells her that since he had first heard of her, "your unknown heart seemed to pass into my bosom."

It was not much wonder that Mrs. Whitman shrank before the vehemence of so wild a lover. Deterred alike by her own misgivings and by the warnings of her friends, she refused to marry him, and in a frenzy of feeling, he went to the house and besought her to have pity upon him. His excitement was so great that her mother sent for a doctor, who took the unfortunate poet into his charge for treatment. This incident was afterwards used by Griswold in support of his own statements, and Mrs. Whitman indignantly denied the conclusions he drew from it :

"Of course gossip held high carnival over these facts," she writes, "which were related, doubtless, with every variety of sensational embellishment. You will see, therefore, that Griswold had ample material to work on ; he had only to turn the sympathizing physician into a police-officer, and the day before the betrothal into the evening before the bridal, to make out a plausible story."

Whatever there might be to forgive, she readily forgave ; and on condition that he promised never again to touch the intoxicants that acted like poison on his sensitive frame, she agreed to marry him. It was no wonder that his whole heart went out to the woman who was as brave as she was loving.

"MY OWN DEAREST HELEN (he writes in November, 1848),

"So kind, so true, so generous, so unmoved by all that would have moved one who had been less than angel—beloved of my heart, of my imagination, of my intellect—life of my life, soul of my soul, dear, dearest Helen—how shall I ever thank you as I ought ? I am calm and tranquil, and but for a strange shadow of coming evil which haunts me I should be happy. That I am not supremely happy even when I feel your dear love at my heart terrifies me. What can this mean ?"

This presentiment of evil was only too soon to be justified. Every arrangement had been made. Mrs. Clemm, who seems to have fully approved of the marriage, was waiting to welcome

the bride ; but when Poe went to the house, Mrs. Whitman met him with the announcement that she had been told that he had broken the pledge which he had so solemnly taken, and that the marriage could never take place. Whether this statement was true or not, there is no evidence to show, but that she believed it to be true is quite clear. To his letter of entreaty she returned no answer, but in the February number of the *American Metropolitan* she published a poem which she intended him to take as a reply. The last two verses run as follows :

“ Away, far away from the dream-haunted shore,  
Where the waves ever murmur ‘ No more, nevermore ’—  
Where I wake in the wild hour of midnight to hear  
That love-song of the surges so mournful and clear.

“ When the clouds that now veil from us Heaven’s fair light  
Their soft silver lining turn forth on the night,  
What time shall the vapours of falsehood dispel,  
He shall know if I loved him, but never how well !”

The end of Poe’s life was now near at hand ; his friends did their best to break the blow to him, and among them he met the widowed Mrs. Shelton, for whom, as Elmira Royster, he had had a boyish admiration. The sight of her revived his old feelings, and, finding that she was willing to listen, he became engaged to her. On October 2, 1849, he went to Baltimore. Before leaving, he had complained of feeling unwell, and it is supposed that he took a sedative and fell into a state of stupor. It was election time ; corruption and bribery were rife, and votes were openly bought and sold. Poe was seized upon by ruffians, drugged, carried from one polling-booth to another until he had been made to vote in as many as eleven different wards, and then flung out into the streets. He was found by some passers-by, picked up and carried to the hospital, where he died on the seventh. Mrs. Clemm’s words to an intimate friend best tell the tale :

“ October 8, 1849.

“ Annie, my Eddy is *dead* ! He died in Baltimore yesterday. Annie, pray for me, your desolate friend. My senses will leave me. I will write

the moment I have the particulars. I have written to Baltimore. Write and advise me what to do.

"Your distracted friend,  
"M. C."

A few days later she wrote again in fresh anguish of spirit :

"Neilson Poe, of Baltimore, has written to me and says he died in the Medical College of congestion of the brain, and not of what the vile, vile newspapers accuse him! He had many kind friends with him, and was attended to the grave by the literati of Baltimore. Severe excitement and no doubt some imprudence brought this on. He never had one interval of reason. Some of the papers—indeed, nearly all—do him justice. But this, my dear Annie, will not restore him. Never, oh! never will I see those dear, lovely eyes. I feel so desolate, wretched, friendless and alone."

To the end of her life she mourned him with passionate grief, even though she felt at times that the only rest for that complex nature was in the grave.

Professor Harrison, in his description of the movement set on foot by the students of the Virginia University in Poe's honour,<sup>1</sup> uses words which cannot be bettered in their summing-up of his character. He speaks of him as a "human opal," and says :

"The Hamlet nature of the man, with its unsteady purpose, its poetic flickerings, its strange logics, and its boundless inconsequence, makes him a unique psychological study, truly Shakespearian in the multiplicity of its facets and angles."

And yet, many-sided as Poe's nature may have been, one chord echoes through the whole of his writings—the strange minor chord of regret. His mental attitude was a perpetual looking back; his soul was filled, as he expresses it, with that sorrow which the living love to cherish for the dead, and which in some minds resembles the delirium of opium.

His boyish love and despair for Helen Stannard coloured his whole after-life with a mystical glow that made it impossible for him to see the everyday world in its true light, but even if he had never met her it is scarcely possible to believe that his genius could have been cast in any other mould. "No more!"—these words dominated Poe's mind, and the melancholy which

<sup>1</sup> "New Glimpses of Poe," U.S.A., 1901.



they engendered sapped his vitality and poisoned the fountains of his life ; from the days of his boyhood, he had, as it were, lost something, and he not only knew that he had lost it, but he was hopeless of ever recovering it. Out of the shadow of that despair his soul was never lifted.

“ ‘ Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend !’ I shrieked, upstarting—  
 ‘ Get thee back into the tempest, and the Night’s Plutonian shore !  
 Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken !  
 Leave my loneliness unbroken !—quit the bust above my door !  
 Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door !’  
 Quoth the Raven, ‘ Nevermore.’

“ And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting  
 On the pallid bust of Pallas, just above my chamber door ;  
 And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,  
 And the lamplight o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor ;  
 And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor  
 Shall be lifted—nevermore !”



## Psalm xci.

BY THE REV. SYDNEY THELWALL, B.A.

“ IT is stated by Kimchi,” says the late Rev. George Phillips (sometime President of Queens’ College, Cambridge), in his very useful edition of the Psalms in Hebrew, with a commentary, published in 1846, “that the older Rabbis affirmed that Moses composed all those Poems, eleven in number, in which there is not mentioned the name of the poet.” (Why should Kimchi give the number as eleven? The right number would seem to be thirty-four.) Whatever be the grounds which support that opinion, it will be the object of this paper to show, by internal evidence, how pre-eminently appropriate Ps. xci. is to a certain character, under certain circumstances. And, if this position be established, Rabbinic tradition, in this case at all events, will seem to be correct.

Ps. xc., with which the fourth book of the Psalms begins, is entitled “A Prayer of Moses the man of God.” It is interesting