

# The Centenary of EDGAR ALLAN POE

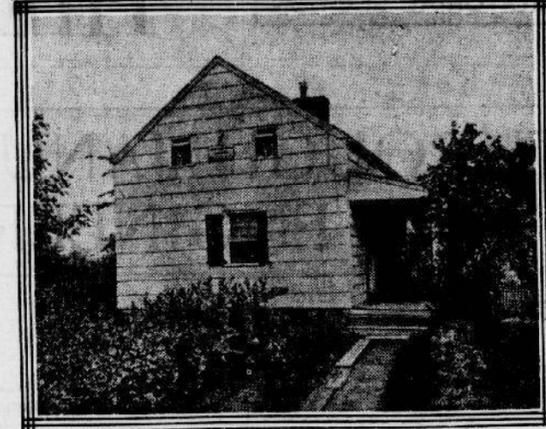
By George Seibel



Virginia Clemm, Wife of Edgar Allan Poe



Poe's Grave and Monument Westminister Churchyard Baltimore



The Poe Cottage, Fordham, New York

**T**HE MYSTERY and miracle of genius are again brought home to the world's memory, as we are celebrating the hundredth anniversary of Edgar Allan Poe's birth. There are those who account him as our greatest man of letters. In point of influence only Hawthorne and Emerson rank with him; in point of originality only Walt Whitman, who called him "poor, wonderful Poe." Seldom has an equal amount of biography and literary criticism been compressed into three words. He was one of the greatest of immortals and one of the most miserable mortals that ever trod this earth, and his own words may fittingly be applied to himself:

The fever called living Is over at last.

Poe was born in Boston, Baltimore is the city most closely linked to his life, where he lies buried; Philadelphia is associated with his finest literary achievement, and with the posthumous defamation of his character; New York saw his deepest misery and contains the most interesting memorial of his career, the cottage at Fordham. This poor shanty may yet be the chief literary shrine of America, like Burns' humble cottage at Ayr. It was here that his angelic Virginia, whom he had married when she was but 14, died of consumption on a couch of straw, where she had nothing but a coat and a cat to keep her warm.

Poverty was the specter that pursued Poe through all his days. Like most of the poets, he was a wretched hand at business. Imprudence and intemperance again and again brought him to the brink of destitution, if not starvation. His death was one of the saddest of moral tragedies. Barrett

Wendell gives the generally accepted version of it in the following words: "He was passing through Baltimore, or on his way from a visit to her. In that city an election was about to take place, and some petty politicians, in search of 'repeaters,' picked him out, got him drunk and made him vote all over town. Having thus exhausted his political usefulness, they left him in the gutter, from whence he found his way to the hospital, where he died."

In recent years the rehabilitation of Poe has been going forward with vigor, but there is no use blinking the facts of his folly and weakness, and there seems no doubt that his misfortunes were mostly his own fault. The most that can be said in condonation is that an appetite for liquor was implanted in him as a child by a nurse, who gave him gin to keep him quiet, and later by his stepfather, who, to show off the clever lad, would often place him upon the table to drink toasts to the guests.

### The Poe Controversy.

It would hardly pay to go into the unedifying subject of Poe's habits had not so much exaggeration provoked so fierce a controversy. On the other hand, the foulest lies and libels were given utterance and credence. "His life was one wild debacle," "He starved his wife and broke her heart," "He had no faith in man nor woman," "He was naturally unamiable, irascible, envious," "He displayed a reckless absence of all the qualities of social rectitude," "Self-willed, proud, passionate, with meager moral sense, he forfeited success by his perversity and his vices."

On the other hand there has been extravagant deification. Sarah Helen

Whitman, whom he was engaged to marry, declared that even in the delirium of drink "his words were the words of a princely intellect overwrought, and of a heart only too sensitive and too finely strung." There is also something humorous in the anecdote that he would never go to bed at night without asking his mother-in-law for her blessing, and if he had displeased her in any way he would kneel at her feet and humbly implore her pardon. There can be no doubt, however, of his chivalry toward woman, his purity of heart and his tender and sensitive spirit.

And there is even less doubt about his poetic genius, although Emerson, in a conversation with Howells, called him "the jungle man." Mrs. Browning told the people who were haunted by the "Nevermore" of Poe's "Raven," and one of her acquaintances, "who has the misfortune of possessing a bust of Pallas, cannot bear to look at it in the twilight." Thomas Bailey Aldrich said that "his imperishable fame is in all lands." Swinburne declared over a quarter of a century ago that "Time, the eternal enemy of small and shallow reputations, will prove the constant and trusty friend and keeper of a true poet's full-grown fame."

Is there another poem so popular, another more often quoted and parodied than "The Raven," for which Poe received \$10, while the owner of the MMS, some years ago demanded \$10,000 for it? Are there any other

poems like "Ulalume," "The Bells," "The Haunted Palace," "Annabel Lee," and "Lenore," poems with such uncanny wizardry of word music? No other poet in the world, except, perhaps, Gray and Sappho, who built so high and enduring a fame upon so few and brief poems.

### His Theory of Poetry.

This is quite in harmony with Poe's own theory of poetry. He has written an elaborate essay on the subject, telling how he composed his own "Raven" to illustrate the theory. The fundamental principle is that a true poem must be short; a long poem is a contradiction in terms. Words were chosen for their musical value, not for their definite meaning. One might describe all of Poe's poetry as silver trumpets sounding through a golden mist. Coleridge and Blake had done this before him, but he first did it conspicuously and supremely well.

Yet his story of how he wrote "The Raven" must be taken with several grains of salt. If that story be true and Poe's theory admitted, poetry is a mathematical science, and the poet who determines to write a perfect poem can only repeat "The Raven."

## TOWN HAS TROUBLE WITH TIME

### ELKO DOESN'T KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS AND WANTS A STANDARD FIXED.

Elko, Nev., Jan. 16.—Elko is angry at the Southern Pacific's refusal to do something towards getting order out of chaos in regard to the time and clock proposition now existing in the eastern Nevada town.

In 1883 the standard division of time throughout the United States was adopted. This provided for a third division to be known as mountain time and based on the 105th meridian, and included all territory west of the 105th meridian nearly to the western borders of Idaho, Utah and Arizona. The fourth division covered the rest of the country to the Pacific coast, and was based on the 120th degree.

At the time of the adoption of this standard time changed at Ogden, Utah, and Kingman, Ariz. Then the management and control of the Central Pacific changed to the Oregon Short Line, and for the convenience of their train dispatchers the point for the change of time was moved to Sparks, or nearly to the 120th degree mark. Elko did not change. Since then it has had two clocks, two times; one railroad, one town.

Elko is 115 degrees and 45 minutes west, or with its local time within 17 minutes of Pacific time and 43 minutes behind mountain time. By mountain or railroad time the sun rises 43 minutes before the time remarked in the calendar, by town time it rises 17 minutes late.

An appeal will be made to the Southern Pacific to regulate the matter and the citizens will call a mass meeting and endeavor to find out at what time they shall arise in the morning.

### WOODMEN SANITARIUM OPEN.

The national sanitarium of the Modern Woodmen of America, located on a 1,000-acre tract nine miles north of Colorado Springs, Colo., is at last an accomplished fact. The first tent colony, with 60 patients, was opened this week. Other patients will be admitted as rapidly as accommodations are provided. If necessary the sanitarium will ultimately have a capacity of 500 or more patients. Several of the local camps have adopted the plan of building and furnishing a tent cottage.

The executive committee of the home has decided to conduct the sanitarium free to all members afflicted with tuberculosis, but will admit only those who are deemed curable or whose lives will thereby be prolonged for a considerable length of time. This decision is based on experience which teaches that the person coming to Colorado in the early stages of the disease has everything in his favor, while those who wait until the last stages before coming to the higher altitude and land of sunshine have the odds against them.

little to a monument for the master, no would have a pyramid as big as that of Cheops.

The allusion to the cryptogram in "The Gold Bug" recalls the fact that unravelling cipher messages was one of Poe's fads. While in Philadelphia he challenged his readers to send him any cipher message he could not readily solve, let the key-phrase be in any language they liked. About 100 cipher messages were sent in, and he made good his boast by solving every one.

### The Poe Cult.

Poe's salary during his editorial labors on the "Southern Literary Messenger," where he first won a prize of \$100 for a story; on "Graham's Magazine," whose circulation he raised from \$,000 to 40,000; on the "Mirror" of N. P. Willis, in which "The Raven" appeared, was probably never more than \$10 a week. Today the slightest scrap of his handwriting commands a higher price. His letters have a market value twice that of Shelly's, five times that of Byron's, 100 times that of Longfellow's. The original manuscript of "The Bells," bought for \$275 some years ago, would probably bring 10 times that price today. A single copy of Poe's first book, "Tamerlane," printed in 1827, has been sold at auction for \$2,050. It looks as if the admirers of Poe might go as far as did Lafayette to express his veneration for Poe's revolutionary grandfather, and kiss the sod upon his grave.

During this week of memorial addresses, monument unveilings, special numbers, and even a Poe drama, it is worth while to reread William Winter's noble poetic tribute, penned almost 25 years ago:

Cold is the pen honor sings,  
And chill is glory's icy breath,  
And pale the raptur'd Memory brings  
To grace the iron doors of Death.

Fame's echoing thunders, long and loud,  
The pomp of pride that decks the pall,  
The plaudits of the vacant crowd—  
One word of love is worth them all.

With dew's of grief our eyes are dim;  
Ah, let the tear of sorrow start,  
And honor, in ourselves and him,  
The great and tender human heart.

Through many a night of want and woe

His frenzied spirit wandered wild—  
Till kind disaster laid him low,  
And heaven reclaimed his wayward child.

Through many a year his fame has grown—  
Like midnight vast, like starlight sweet,  
Till now his genius fills a throne,  
And nations marvel at his feet.

One meed of justice long delayed,  
One crowning grace his virtues crave—  
Ah, take, thou great and injured shade,  
The love that sanctifies the gravel

God's mercy guard in peaceful sleep,  
The sacred dust that slumbers here:  
And, while around his tomb we weep,  
God bless, for us, the mourner's tear!

And may his spirit hovering nigh,  
Pierce the dense cloud of darkness through,  
And know, with fame that cannot die,  
He has the world's affection, too!

### OPIE READ'S TRIBUTE.

"I always feel that Colorado Springs is a sort of queen among the cities of the United States, for she always appears so absolutely well behaved. It is such a relief to get away from any other climate I have ever been in, to the sunshine and bracing air of Colorado. In the presence of such mountains and beneath such a blue sky, no one can feel morbid or little." This was Opie Read's tribute to the "City of Sunshine" on a recent visit there.

### The Pure Food Law.

Secretary Wilson says: "One of the objects of the law is to inform the consumer of the presence of certain harmful drugs in medicines." The law requires that the amount of chloroform, opium, morphine and other habit forming drugs be stated on the label of each bottle. The manufacturers of Chamberlain's Cough Remedy have always claimed that their remedy did not contain any of these drugs, and the truth of this claim is now fully proven, as no mention of them is made on the label. This remedy is not only one of the safest, but one of the best in use for coughs and colds. Its value has been proven beyond question during the many years it has been in general use. For sale by all druggists.

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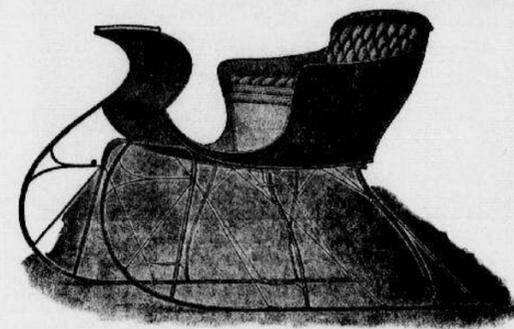
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