

WASHINGTON, D. C., SUNDAY, JANUARY 17, 1909.

CENTENARY OF AMERICA'S LITERARY GENIUS—EDGAR ALLAN POE

WASHINGTON RELATIVES OF POET.



ELISABETH E. POE. MRS. VYLLA POE WILSON.

Mrs. Vylla Poe Wilson and Miss Elisabeth Elliott Poe, the authors of the stories on Edgar Allan Poe which appear on this page, are direct second cousins of the master of American literature. They are the only living relatives of America's greatest poetic genius who engage seriously in literary work.

Mrs. Wilson and Miss Poe are professional writers furnishing from Washington special articles and news stories to out-of-town papers and magazines. Mrs. Wilson is especially talented in writing fiction and human interest stories, and has done much original research work among the girl workers of this and other cities.

Miss Poe is more of a poetic temperament than her sister, and in her writings inclines to the serious side of life. A number of her productions have appeared in *Munsey's* and the *Cosmopolitan* and other magazines. Some of Miss Poe's poetry which has been recently published in *The Washington Herald* has attracted favorable comment.

By VYLLA POE WILSON.

On the 19th of January the literary eye of the world will be focused on the historic town of Charlottesville, Va., where the Poe centenary will take place. The Poe lovers have prepared numbers of festivals and levees to do him honor. Honor, which if it had been accorded him while he lived, would have been to the sensitive soul a surging wave to have carried him above his hand to hand struggle with destiny. They bring, too late, an offering of devotion and recognition of his genius.

His alma mater, the University of Virginia, proud indeed, to claim her son today, proud of his distinction in the world of letters, will pay tribute to his memory. For four days the old university will lay aside studies and lectures, and together with the literati, which will gather from all over the world, laud her poet, her son, Edgar Allan Poe.

Enters the University.

Edgar A. Poe entered the University of Virginia during the second session, which commenced February 1, 1828. He signed the matriculation book on St. Valentine's Day, February 14. Little did the prosy custodian of the book realize that the mere admittance of the curly-haired, dreamy-eyed lad of seventeen into the university would one hundred years later prepare a festival for Poe lovers, who brought the offering of devotion to the altar of this man's genius.

The university will do honor to Poe's memory, not merely for his sake, but in gratitude to him for spreading wide her

reputation as an educational institution. The celebration will not be merely local, but national, and even international in its character. The university has always taken deep pride in the fact that Edgar Allan Poe was a student within its walls, distinguishing himself by marked proficiency in Latin and French, and in Italian translation; well known to the librarian as a free user of his books, with discriminating taste in the selections made, and noted among the students for athletic prowess and gift of oration.

No. 13 West Range, the room designated by a little bronze tablet as the "small home of a great poet," will be used as a museum. This museum is kept open this week. In this, through the energetic efforts of Prof. James A. Harrison, author of the Virginia edition of Poe's works have been placed not only all of the mementoes of Poe available in the university, but also such as may be borrowed for this interesting occasion.

Plans Poe Exercises.

On Monday evening, January 18, the Raven Society, the undergraduate society of the university named for the most famous poet, will have charge of the local exercises. This programme will include musical rendition of some of Poe's poems, an organ interpretation of "The Raven," his dramatic recitations from his best-known works, possibly the play of "Politian," and a short address from a distinguished Virginia speaker.

The next morning, that of the 19th, interesting tributes to the genius of Poe will be given. There will be an address

STORIES OF THE WOMEN WHO LOVED EDGAR ALLAN POE

By ELISABETH ELLICOTT POE.

Edgar Allan Poe wrote in "The Poetic Principle": "No man can consider himself entitled to complain of fate while, in his adversity, he still retains the unwavering love of woman."

He should have been happy, then, for woman's love was a golden rosary in the domestic and literary life of America's master poet.

Women have eagerly defended his memory; women were his guardian angels; women were the themes of his most exquisite poetry, and the only monument erected to his memory in Baltimore was placed there through the efforts of women.

Mrs. Francis Osgood Sargent has written of Poe's relations with women in this beautiful strain:

"To a sensitive and delicately nurtured woman, there was a peculiar charm in the chivalric, graceful, and almost tender reverence with which he always approached all women with his respect. I think no one could know him—no one has known him personally—no one woman—without feeling a deep interest in him."

Bean Ideal with Women.

Every woman who knew and loved Poe gave the same testimony as Mrs. Osgood Sargent. He was a bean ideal with women. In the galaxy of his women stars none surpass the enduring brilliancy of his three mothers. This paradox is explained. They were Elisabeth Arnold Poe, the mother of Edgar; Mrs. John Allan, his foster mother, and Mrs. Maria Clemm, his step-mother and guardian mother. His mother Edgar remembered but faintly, for her tragic death occurred in his third year.

From her, this dream mother of a lonely boyhood, Edgar inherited rich imaginative powers. She was a dainty, mystic bit of womanhood, an Elmore, Lenora of his subsequent idealistic imagery. Born in mid-ocean, while her parents were crossing the Atlantic, "this fairy creature without a country" was the child of English Theophrastus of good family, but members of a second-class stock company. Elizabeth, the only child, was an artist from childhood, gifted with talent for singing, dancing, and declamation. When barely able to lisp, she became a "juvenile" and entered stage life.

Knew the Stage Only.

In the unreal world of the footlights all her life was passed. She knew nothing else; she was a child of the theater, and this should be taken into account in the consideration of the wandering, unbalanced disposition of her gifted son, Edgar Allan Poe. Like her, his world was one of fantasies, peopled by weird creatures unseen to others, like her, he dwelt in that borderland of genius, hard by the morasses of insanity.

Her first marriage was to an actor, C. H. Hopkins. After his death, to this "find of the stage," this wayward child-heart, came love in the guise of David Poe, Jr., an imaginative, sweet-tempered, high-spirited boy. Fretted and impatient

of his stern father, Gen. David Poe, the first citizen, Revolutionary patriot and friend of Washington and Lafayette, David had entered the gay life of Bohemia. The old general viewed intolerantly the life of his son, and he, in turn, hated his father and his uncomprehending fondness for Theophrastus. But young David could scarcely help his Bohemian inclinations. His veins pulsated with the fervor of Latin ancestors, the mysticism of Irish impulsiveness, and passionate, Southern languor. What wonder the strict discipline of his father's household irked him.

Wooded Actress Widowed.

When David saw Elisabeth Arnold Hopkins playing in the Holiday Street Theater, Baltimore, the die was cast. He loved her. The company left Baltimore and he followed it. Ardently he wooed the young actress widow—vainly, at first, for Elisabeth Arnold Hopkins had not yet forgotten her first husband.

David, Jr., persisted, and in Norfolk, Va., the lovers were married. As David Poe, Jr., made his nuptial vows he understood his proud family would ostracize him, for they had no sympathy with actor folk. "What! married to an actress!" Gen. Poe promptly disowned his son when he heard the news. The lack of paternal blessing did not deter the young folks' happiness, however.

In 1827 William Poe, their first child, was born. Then two years later was born to them Edgar Allan Poe, the Bard of Melancholia. Best family traditions place this interesting event in Baltimore; other biographers say Massachusetts. Wherever it was, it was on January 19, 1828, that the natal day of Edgar Allan Poe dawned. Mrs. Poe has been described at this period in the following words: "In the face of Poe's mother were foreshadowed those ethereal Eleanoras and Ligias that haunted the poet's dreams with their delicate impalpabilities, their Indian summer-like vagueness. It is the face of an elf, a sprite, an Undine who was to be the mother of the most elfish, the most unearthly of poets; whose luminous dark gray eyes had a glint of the supernatural in them and reflected, as he says in one of his earliest poems, the wildered nature of man."

Widowed a Comedy Team.

The strolling immortals of "I Pagliacci" did not suffer more hardships than the Hopkins Stock Company endured in those days of no railroads, poor coach and lodging-house accommodations. After marriage the Poes formed a comedy team called the "Virginian Comedians." Up and down the country they wandered. Now as Ophelia, now as Cordelia, Poe's plucky mother played, laughed, and sang for daily bread. All the while her heart was breaking, for fate's cruellest blow was in store. David Poe developed consumption of a malignant type.

Elizabeth Poe, like Edgar, knew what a hand-to-hand battle with poverty meant. She knew the disheartening, soul-crushing, hope-murdering sense of a hand-to-mouth existence; of hard, tedious work; of daily debasement of divine art to the needs of mere existence. Poe drank in the bitter-sweet drink of loss, regret, and sorrow with his mother's milk. Is there any wonder that he was

in French by Dr. Alex. Fortier, of New Orleans, on Poe's influence on French literature, and an address in English by Prof. George Edward, recently of Munich, Germany, on Poe's influence upon German literature.

A contemplated souvenir of the occasion is a beautifully printed Fest-Schrift. This will contain nine letters hitherto unpublished in full and an introduction prepared by Prof. Harrison. A number of distinguished men and women have been invited to the exercises, and the event will be notable in the history of American letters. It is said that a monument to Poe will be placed in the library at West Point Academy, where Poe was once a student.

Fame Is at Last His.

And so extolled by sage and bard, Poe will have his day at last. His wonderful genius, so illy appreciated at the time of his death, is recognized at last. His fame brightens every day. He is acknowledged as the father of the modern short story, the creator of the bizarre, and terrible in imaginative literature. Hundreds of Poe lovers have formed a Poe cult and fame is his. Among the dilettantes of literature, imitation of Poe is a favorite pastime.

The manuscript Mrs. Clemm hawked about newspaper shops, glad to sell for two or three dollars, bring thousands of dollars at auction. The grave of Poe is the shrine and mecca of literary pilgrims. From the four corners of the globe they come, following the leadership of Tennyson who said, the only thing he wanted to see in America was the grave of Edgar Allan Poe. One learned British poet traveled to America to stand at Poe's grave in Westminster churchyard, Baltimore. The fame of Poe is founded upon rock. The singular beauty of his creations withstand analysis and competition. He is the American man of letters, its poet. Like Shakespeare, the English voice, he is as timely in one century as another. The destiny of misfortune, however, has followed his memory. Traduced and repelled in life, a tabula rasa of backmen and critics have tried to blacken the white lily of remembrance after his death.

Birthplace Is Disputed.

Even the birthplace of Poe is disputed. He is the prey of sharks, who devour him; of Judas Iscariots, who would betray him for thirty pieces of silver; of Bowwells and Simons, all uniting and unready for their self-appointed tasks. But, in this mire of biographers, the work of the man shines out, giving them effectual answer. That is true, that work is unsurpassed and the handicraft of a master, in feeling eye looks on it and calls it good.

The malevolent spirit of destiny, which keeps watch and ward over the ways of human genius, was the tutelary angel of Edgar Allan Poe. He either made the grave. Everywhere he turned there was the iron decree which, while separating him from the mass, rendered him miserably unhappy. Never was the man more blessed (7) with biographers, who were in the majority of cases self-appointed, than Edgar Allan Poe. And each with hardly an exception has been guilty of minor or major misstatements. From Harvard to Harvard, they either make the odd statement that the place of birth or lineage is immaterial to the poet make-up, or say with a hidden air of apology, that Poe's grandfather was a Virginia wheelwright.

Now, with our friend Bobby Burns, it does not matter over much about the "rank" and even less about the guinea stamp. A man's a man for a' that. But no one will deny Poe died of those days of Daughter's of the American Revolution and feverish search into the grave and secrets of our forefathers, the virtue of having ancestors who from the common ground of the people performed some act that elevated them to a post above their fellows, for that is how the primitive titles and names were earned—by sheer merit.

The name Poe, which is an American

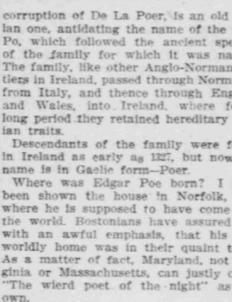
PERSONS AND SCENES ASSOCIATED WITH POET'S CAREER.



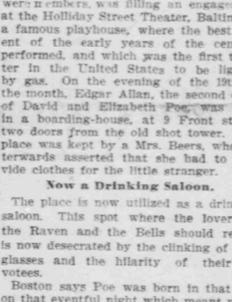
EDGAR ALLAN POE.



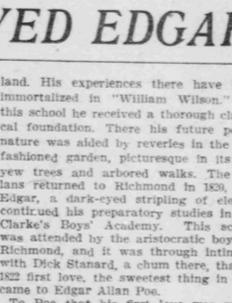
SARAH HELEN WHITMAN, THE "ONE WOMAN" IN POE'S LIFE.



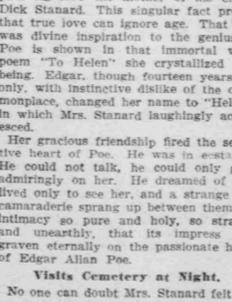
VIRGINIA CLEMM, THE CHILD WIFE OF POE.



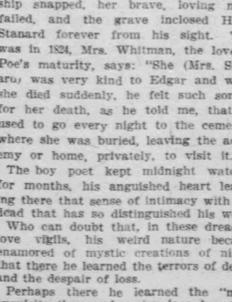
No. 9, FRONT ST. BALTIMORE, WHERE POE WAS BORN.



GRAVES OF EDGAR ALLAN POE AND HIS FAMILY IN WESTMINSTER CHURCHYARD, BALTIMORE.



GRAVES OF EDGAR ALLAN POE AND HIS FAMILY IN THE CEMETERY AT WEST POINT, VIRGINIA.



GRAVES OF EDGAR ALLAN POE AND HIS FAMILY IN THE CEMETERY AT WEST POINT, VIRGINIA.

corruption of De La Poer, is an old Italian one, antedating the name of the river Po, which followed the ancient spelling of the family for which it was named. The family, the earlier Anglo-Norman settlers in Ireland, passed through Normandy from Italy, and thence through England and Wales, into Ireland, where for a long period they retained hereditary Italian traits.



POE'S GRAVE IN WESTMINSTER CHURCHYARD, BALTO.



VIRGINIA CLEMM, THE CHILD WIFE OF POE.

No. 9, FRONT ST. BALTIMORE, WHERE POE WAS BORN.

for American literature. But the "Hub of the Universe" must grant that many a poet has never breathed the combined fragrance of cold and salt air from her classic Back Bay.

The infant Edgar was seen by relatives of the Poe family when he was but a day and a half old and on such occasions grandmothers and aunts are not apt to be mistaken. There is every proof of his Baltimore birth. The entire Poe family comment upon his death says: "Mrs. Poe, we believe, is a native of this city (Baltimore)."

There seems to be no question of it during his lifetime; it was only when his fame was assured that other cities, awakening to a realization of his merits, demanded a share of the honor. "Mrs. Poe, we believe, is a native of this city (Baltimore)."

The world knows the history of his life until his tragic death. He was not so much a victim of drink as a victim of circumstances. Old friends and neighbors, mother-in-law, teachers, boyhood, and college mates have refuted this fabrication. There is a legend in our family that stimulant in the lightest form would excite him and act almost instantly on his nerves. A cup of coffee has been known to have had the effect of liquor.

Not Child of Delirium. His "Raven" was not written while in the madness of delirium tremens. No delirium tremens does not have that effect; if it did how many poets of now-days would gladly indulge in fiery liquors in the efforts to also write a "Raven" or an equal masterpiece.

Added to the use of liquors he might have been, but he was not known as a drunkard at all during his life time. To be unfortunate is not to be evil. To my mind the quality of evil is never to be applied to the unfortunate. Their actions are beyond their volition. They, too, would be honorable, but physical cravings deny them this privilege. Crime is a moral station that should be punished and fed until the spirit reform into life casts away the crust of crime and grasps the leaf of rectitude.

"The Bells," that haunting bit of word melody, was not the inspiration of Mrs. Whitman, but a Baltimore poem, written in one of those periodical visits to Baltimore after the death of Virginia, when with an unborn love of the Maryland city, he would return to the joy-haunted retreats of youth and manhood. The house where this famous poem was written still stands and a visit to it last week awoke many reminiscences from its occupants. Judge Guiles, who was Poe's host that memorable night when the wild resonant music of the sleight bell awoke like music in the poet's heart, is dead. The room Poe sought so quietly after the divine spark had left him is still utilized as a law office, and strange to say, is occupied by the grandnephew of Judge Guiles, A. Bartlett Floyd, a pension attorney of Baltimore.

Where "Gold Bug" Was Written. Near Hellsingford street, on Pratt, it is not difficult to locate the oyster shop of the Widow Meaghers, where the prize story, "The Gold Bug," was written on the top of an oyster barrel for a desk and the noise of outgoing and incoming customers powerless to disturb the divine flow of Poe's inspiration. True to tradition the place is still a grocery, but how surprised the present habitude would be if they knew who had preceded them in frequenting the quaint tavern.

The circumstances of the drugging of Poe, which led to his death, has ever

been shrouded in mystery. No one could tell them, but Poe himself and members of the Plug Ugly's gang. They were members of a secret society and their lips are forever sealed. The poet never regained consciousness long enough to relate the truth. The tales of besotted men have no value for in all probability they were not thought of until after years had rendered any story plausible. Family traditions and records, however, have this authentic version of the finding of Poe on the night of October 3, 1849. My grandfather, the first cousin of the poet, was passing down Baltimore street, on the night of the 3d of October, when he saw lying under the steps of the Baltimore Museum, corner of Baltimore and Calvert streets, a man in what he thought was a drunken stupor.

It was election night and his first thought was that it was some one overcome with indulgence of the day. But for the unfortunate caused him to bend over the man, when, to his amazement, he saw it was his cousin Edgar. Quickly sending a message to Nelson Poe, another cousin, who lived near, he took a carriage and, placing the still unconscious poet in it, took him to the Washington University Hospital, now the church home on North Broadway. For three days the doctor worked unavailingly to at least restore him to consciousness, but in vain. The case was diagnosed as drug poisoning and exposure combined, with a weak heart, proved fatal.

On Sunday morning, October 7, as the Angelus was ringing all over the city, his soul passed with the bells out into the surging sea of death. Followed to the end by his attending guardian his last words have been reported, how urgently I cannot say, "Would to God someone would blow my 4—4 brains out."

The following day a little funeral train went through the city of Baltimore. No one turned to look after it and yet it was the Monumental City's most gifted son going to his long rest. Not a bell tolled except those bells of fancy he had immortalized.

Buried Beside His Grandfather. Reaching Westminster churchyard, where his ancestors were buried, he was placed in an open grave in lot 27, by the side of David Poe, his grandfather, a Revolutionary patriot. This committal service was read by Rev. W. D. Clemm, a distant relative of Virginia Clemm. Even in death the silence he claimed was denied him, for the noise of the city surge outside the gate, but they do not mar the peace of the grave.

In after years the monument provided by the family being destroyed, Miss Sarah S. Rice, principal of the Central Female High School, having her sympathies aroused by his neglected grave, collected funds for a small monument, under which he was re-interred in 1871, with imposing ceremonies, and forever laid at rest by the side of Virginia and Mrs. Clemm.

Poor Edgar Allan Poe," the world says, How poor! The rewards and pleasures of genius lie in the soul of genius itself; what does it matter what the world thinks? Its after remorse is enough.

Continued on Page 4, Column 3.

POE CENTENARY CELEBRATION

in Baltimore at
McCoy Hall, Johns Hopkins University

Tuesday, January 19, at 8 P. M.

Auspices of the
EDGAR ALLAN POE
MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

ADDRESSES BY
Dr. William P. Trent, Columbia University
Rev. Dr. Oliver Hurkel
Mr. John Prentiss Poe

For this occasion those in Washington who will attend the exercises may use the
1-Day Twilight Ticket

—ON—
The Electric Line
—AT—
\$1 FOR THE ROUND TRIP
(Good after 4 p. m.)

The cars of the W. B. & A. Electric Railway pass within two squares of the
Tomb of Edgar Allan Poe
(Fayette and Greene Streets, Baltimore.)

For further information inquire at City Ticket Office, 14th Street and New York Avenue N. W.
Washington, Baltimore & Annapolis Electric Railway Company