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EDGAR ALLAN POE

The Raven
and Other Selected Poems

Edgar Allan Poe

The Raven and Other Selected Poems

Аннотация

HarperCollins is proud to present its incredible range of best-loved, essential classics. ‘...Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!’ Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.” This selection of Edgar Allan Poe’s poetical works includes some of his best-known pieces, including the triumphant, gleeful ‘The Bells’, the tragic ode ‘Annabel Lee’ and his famous gothic tour de force, ‘The Raven’. Some present powerful, nightmarish images of the macabre and bizarre, while others have at their heart a profound sense of love, beauty and loss. All are linguistic masterpieces that demonstrate Poe’s gift for marrying rhythm, form and meaning. An American writer of primarily prose and literary criticism, Edgar Allen Poe never ceased writing poetry throughout his turbulent life, and is today regarded as a central figure of American literary romanticism. He died in 1849.

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THE RAVEN AND OTHER SELECTED POEMS

Edgar Allan Poe

**C O L L I N S
C L A S S I C S**

Copyright

William Collins

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About the Publisher

History of William Collins

In 1819, millworker William Collins from Glasgow, Scotland, set up a company for printing and publishing pamphlets, sermons, hymn books and prayer books. That company was Collins and was to mark the birth of HarperCollins Publishers as we know it today. The long tradition of Collins dictionary publishing can be traced back to the first dictionary William published in 1824, *Greek and English Lexicon*. Indeed, from 1840 onwards, he began to produce illustrated dictionaries and even obtained a licence to print and publish the Bible.

Soon after, William published the first Collins novel, *Ready Reckoner*; however, it was the time of the Long Depression, where harvests were poor, prices were high, potato crops had failed and violence was erupting in Europe. As a result, many factories across the country were forced to close down and William chose to retire in 1846, partly due to the hardships he was facing.

Aged 30, William's son, William II, took over the business. A keen humanitarian with a warm heart and a generous spirit, William II was truly "Victorian" in his outlook. He introduced new, up-to-date steam presses and published affordable editions of Shakespeare's works and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, making them available to the masses for the first time. A new demand for educational books meant that success came with the publication

of travel books, scientific books, encyclopedias and dictionaries. This demand to be educated led to the later publication of atlases, and Collins also held the monopoly on scripture writing at the time.

In the 1860s Collins began to expand and diversify and the idea of “books for the millions” was developed. Affordable editions of classical literature were published, and in 1903 Collins introduced 10 titles in their Collins Handy Illustrated Pocket Novels. These proved so popular that a few years later this had increased to an output of 50 volumes, selling nearly half a million in their year of publication. In the same year, The Everyman’s Library was also instituted, with the idea of publishing an affordable library of the most important classical works, biographies, religious and philosophical treatments, plays, poems, travel and adventure. This series eclipsed all competition at the time, and the introduction of paperback books in the 1950s helped to open that market and marked a high point in the industry.

HarperCollins is and has always been a champion of the classics, and the current Collins Classics series follows in this tradition – publishing classical literature that is affordable and available to all. Beautifully packaged, highly collectible and intended to be reread and enjoyed at every opportunity.

Life & Times

About the Author

Edgar Allan Poe was an American writer of fantastical, bizarre and sometimes disturbing short stories. He lived and worked in the first half of the nineteenth century and died a mysterious death, many believe caused by an overdose of drugs, at the age of 40. It seems likely that Poe was himself inclined towards obsessive and unbalanced behaviour. As a child his father abandoned the family and his mother died shortly thereafter, leaving him an orphan. He was taken in by the Allan family; however, they endured a strained relationship and he became estranged from them when he failed to complete university and then to become an army officer. For the years that followed, he wrote poetry and then prose and became a literary critic, contributing to and working for many periodicals and journals of the time. In 1835, Poe married his 13-year-old cousin in secret, and ten years later wrote perhaps his most well-known poem, “The Raven”.

Poe’s work is usually described as “Gothic” in style, as he alludes to the macabre, grotesque and horrifying. Poe used the phrase “terrors of the soul” in explaining the primary focus of investigation in his prose and poetry. He was clearly preoccupied with delving into the darker reaches of the human psyche to see what he could find.

In the 1960s he became an influence on British pop music due to his highly imaginative literary imagery. The Beatles included a portrait of Poe on the cover of their 1967 album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and John Lennon mentions Poe in the song 'I am the Walrus', released later that same year. The Beatles were heavily influenced by experimentation with hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) and many felt that reading Poe's work was akin to the kind of psychological experiences elicited by hallucinogens. It may have been that Poe used them himself to enter his unique literary realm.

Prose Works

Tales of Mystery and Imagination was first compiled and published in 1908, some 59 years after Poe's untimely death. There had been other canons of his writing, but this one focused specifically on the darker side of his work, omitting poetry and comic prose. Perhaps the most regarded of the short stories therein is *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, originally published in 1841. In this story Poe invents the first literary detective, named Auguste Dupin, who sets about solving the mysterious double murder of a Parisian lady and her daughter in a street named Rue Morgue (Mortuary Street). A man has been wrongly accused and Dupin, having found an auburn-coloured hair, deduces a most unlikely culprit. Further investigation shows Dupin to be correct. The story is the first example of a fictional crime solved by the principle of deduction based on ingenuity, evidence and reason. It set the benchmark for later literary detectives, such as Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot.

In *The Fall of the House of Usher*, originally published in 1839, Poe delves into matters of psychological illness, with the central character, Roderick Usher, suffering from all manner of mental disturbances. In Poe's day, psychiatry had not yet defined specific conditions, but Roderick Usher had overly sensitive physical senses, an obsession with getting ill and was filled with extreme angst and anxiety about life. These days these symptoms

would be classified respectively as hyperaesthesia, hypochondria and hysteria. Roderick Usher lives in a large house, where his sister has recently died and awaits being interred in the family tomb. The narrator of the story has come to stay with Roderick and witnesses various spooky events, whilst Roderick himself grows increasingly disturbed. The narrator reads Roderick a story to distract him, but this only serves to make things worse as the events in the story seem to embody themselves elsewhere in the house, and the narrator flees in fright.

Poetry

Though he was better known throughout his life as a literary critic than a poet, Poe wrote a number of poems in addition to his prose fiction. Like much of his prose, Poe's poems tend to have a surreal, bizarre quality to them, as if they were the product of feverish dreams, and often tap into a darker way of looking at life. For instance the 1827 poem, "A Dream within a Dream" tackles the contrast between fantasy and reality, and "The City in the Sea" (1831) tells the story of a modern city ruled over by Death incarnate. The best known of Poe's poetical works and his first critical success is the famous narrative poem "The Raven" (1845), which can be interpreted as an exploration of mental illness and madness. It depicts a prophetic raven visiting a man stricken by grief at the loss of his lover years before.

It has been suggested that Poe's poetry has autobiographical elements: his life was troubled with spells of alcoholism and depression and marked by periods of intense activity and contrasting lows. In 1847, Poe's wife Clemm died of tuberculosis. They had been together for twelve years and after her death Poe went into a decline. He became depressed and apathetic, turned to alcohol, and only a few years later came to the end of his own life. A man named Joseph Walker found Poe walking the streets of Baltimore in an incoherent and distressed condition. He was taken to hospital but his condition worsened

and he died four days later. He had never been lucid enough to explain what had happened to him just prior to his death.

THE RAVEN

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* for evermore.

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

“Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—

Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—

This it is and nothing more.”

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your 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 mortal ever dared to dream
before;

But the silence was unbroken, and the darkness 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 I heard again 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;—
’Tis the wind and nothing more.”

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

In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he: not an instant 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 that placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing further then he uttered—not a feather then he

fluttered—

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

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

Then the bird said, “Nevermore.”

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden

bore—

Till the dirges of his Hope the melancholy burden bore
Of ‘Never—nevermore.’”

But the Raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust
and door;

Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this 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 nepenthé from thy memories of Lenore!
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthé, 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!
1845

SELECTED POEMS 1827–1849

A DREAM

In visions of the dark night
I have dreamed of joy departed—
But a waking dream of life and light
Hath left me broken-hearted.
Ah! what is not a dream by day
To him whose eyes are cast
On things around him with a ray
Turned back upon the past?
That holy dream—that holy dream,
While all the world were chiding,
Hath cheered me as a lovely beam,
A lonely spirit guiding.
What though that light, thro' storm and night,
So trembled from afar—
What could there be more purely bright
In Truth's day star?
1827

A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM

Take this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow—
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream:
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision or in none,
Is it therefore the less *gone*?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.
I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand—
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep
While I weep—while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is *all* that we see or seem

But a dream within a dream?

1827

DREAMS

Oh! that my young life were a lasting dream!
My spirit not awakening, till the beam
Of an Eternity should bring the morrow.
Yes! though that long dream were of hopeless sorrow,
'Twere better than the cold reality
Of waking life, to him whose heart must be,
And hath been still, upon the lovely earth,
A chaos of deep passion, from his birth.
But should it be—that dream eternally
Continuing—as dreams have been to me
In my young boyhood—should it thus be given,
'Twere folly still to hope for higher Heaven.
For I have revelled when the sun was bright
I' the summer sky, in dreams of living light
And loveliness,—have left my very heart
Inclines of my imaginary apart
From mine own home, with beings that have been
Of mine own thought—what more could I have seen?
'Twas once—and only once—and the wild hour
From my remembrance shall not pass—some power
Or spell had bound me—'twas the chilly wind
Came o'er me in the night, and left behind
Its image on my spirit—or the moon

Shone on my slumbers in her lofty noon
Too coldly—or the stars—howe'er it was
That dream was that that night-wind—let it pass.
I have been happy, though in a dream.
I have been happy—and I love the theme:
Dreams! in their vivid coloring of life
As in that fleeting, shadowy, misty strife
Of semblance with reality which brings
To the delirious eye, more lovely things
Of Paradise and Love—and all my own!—
Than young Hope in his sunniest hour hath known.
1827

EVENING STAR

'Twas noontide of summer,
And midtime of night,
And stars, in their orbits,
Shone pale, through the light
Of the brighter, cold moon.
'Mid planets her slaves,
Herself in the Heavens,
Her beam on the waves.
I gazed awhile
On her cold smile;
Too cold—too cold for me—
There passed, as a shroud,
A fleecy cloud,
And I turned away to thee,
Proud Evening Star,
In thy glory afar
And dearer thy beam shall be;
For joy to my heart
Is the proud part
Thou bearest in Heaven at night,
And more I admire
Thy distant fire,
Than that colder, lowly light.

“IN YOUTH I HAVE KNOWN ONE”

(STANZAS)

*How often we forget all time, when lone
Admiring Nature's universal throne;
Her woods—her wilds—her mountains—the intense
Reply of Hers to Our intelligence!*

I

In youth I have known one with whom the Earth
In secret communing held—as he with it,
In daylight, and in beauty, from his birth:
Whose fervid, flickering torch of life was lit
From the sun and stars, whence he had drawn forth
A passionate light such for his spirit was fit—
And yet that spirit knew—not in the hour
Of its own fervor—what had o'er it power.

II

Perhaps it may be that my mind is wrought
To a fever by the moonbeam that hangs o'er,
But I will half believe that wild light fraught
With more of sovereignty than ancient lore
Hath ever told—or is it of a thought
The unembodied essence, and no more
That with a quickening spell doth o'er us pass
As dew of the night-time, o'er the summer grass?

III

Doth o'er us pass, when, as th' expanding eye
To the loved object—so the tear to the lid
Will start, which lately slept in apathy?
And yet it need not be—(that object) hid
From us in life—but common—which doth lie
Each hour before us—but then only bid
With a strange sound, as of a harp-string broken
T' awake us—'Tis a symbol and a token—

IV

Of what in other worlds shall be—and given
In beauty by our God, to those alone
Who otherwise would fall from life and Heaven
Drawn by their heart's passion, and that tone,
That high tone of the spirit which hath striven
Though not with Faith—with godliness—whose throne
With desperate energy 't hath beaten down;
Wearing its own deep feeling as a crown.

1827

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.
1827

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—tho' clear—shall frown—
And the stars shall not look 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 dew-drops 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!

1827

TAMERLANE

Kind solace in a dying hour!
Such, father, is not (now) my theme—
I will not madly deem that power
Of Earth may shrive me of the sin
Unearthly pride hath revelled in—
I have no time to dote or dream:
You call it hope—that fire of fire!
It is but agony of desire:
If I *can* hope—O God! I can—
Its fount is holier—more divine—
I would not call thee fool, old man,
But such is not a gift of thine.
Know thou the secret of a spirit
Bowed from its wild pride into shame
O yearning heart! I did inherit
Thy withering portion with the fame,
The searing glory which hath shone
Amid the Jewels of my throne,
Halo of Hell! and with a pain
Not Hell shall make me fear again—
O craving heart, for the lost flowers
And sunshine of my summer hours!
The undying voice of that dead time,

With its interminable chime,
Rings, in the spirit of a spell,
Upon thy emptiness—a knell.
I have not always been as now:
The fevered diadem on my brow
I claimed and won usurpingly—
Hath not the same fierce heirdom given
Rome to the Cæsar—this to me?
The heritage of a kingly mind,
And a proud spirit which hath striven
Triumphantly with human kind.
On mountain soil I first drew life:
The mists of the Taglay have shed
Nightly their dews upon my head,
And, I believe, the winged strife
And tumult of the headlong air
Have nestled in my very hair.
So late from Heaven—that dew—it fell
(’Mid dreams of an unholy night)
Upon me with the touch of Hell,
While the red flashing of the light
From clouds that hung, like banners, o’er,
Appeared to my half-closing eye
The pageantry of monarchy;
And the deep trumpet-thunder’s roar
Came hurriedly upon me, telling

Of human battle, where my voice,
My own voice, silly child!—was swelling
(O! how my spirit would rejoice,
And leap within me at the cry)
The battle-cry of Victory!
The rain came down upon my head
Unsheltered—and the heavy wind
Rendered me mad and deaf and blind.
It was but man, I thought, who shed
Laurels upon me: and the rush—
The torrent of the chilly air
Gurgled within my ear the crush
Of empires—with the captive's prayer—
The hum of suitors—and the tone
Of flattery 'round a sovereign's throne.
My passions, from that hapless hour,
Usurped a tyranny which men
Have deemed since I have reached to power,
My innate nature—be it so:
But, father, there lived one who, then,
Then—in my boyhood—when their fire
Burned with a still intenser glow
(For passion must, with youth, expire)
E'en *then* who knew this iron heart
In woman's weakness had a part.
I have no words—alas!—to tell

The loveliness of loving well!
Nor would I now attempt to trace
The more than beauty of a face
Whose lineaments, upon my mind,
Are—shadows on th' unstable wind:
Thus I remember having dwelt
Some page of early lore upon,
With loitering eye, till I have felt
The letters—with their meaning—melt
To fantasies—with none.
O, she was worthy of all love!
Love as in infancy was mine—
'Twas such as angel minds above
Might envy; her young heart the shrine
On which my every hope and thought
Were incense—then a goodly gift,
For they were childish and upright—
Pure—as her young example taught:
Why did I leave it, and, adrift,
Trust to the fire within, for light?
We grew in age—and love—together—
Roaming the forest, and the wild;
My breast her shield in wintry weather—
And, when the friendly sunshine smiled.
And she would mark the opening skies,
I saw no Heaven—but in her eyes.

Young Love's first lesson is—the heart:
For 'mid that sunshine, and those smiles,
When, from our little cares apart,
And laughing at her girlish wiles,
I'd throw me on her throbbing breast,
And pour my spirit out in tears—
There was no need to speak the rest—
No need to quiet any fears
Of her—who asked no reason why,
But turned on me her quiet eye!
Yet *more* than worthy of the love
My spirit struggled with, and strove
When, on the mountain peak, alone,
Ambition lent it a new tone—
I had no being—but in thee:
The world, and all it did contain
In the earth—the air—the sea—
Its joy—its little lot of pain
That was new pleasure—the ideal,
Dim, vanities of dreams by night—
And dimmer nothings which were real—
(Shadows—and a more shadowy light!)
Parted upon their misty wings,
And, so, confusedly, became
Thine image and—a name—a name!
Two separate—yet most intimate things.

I was ambitious—have you known
The passion, father? You have not:
A cottager, I marked a throne
Of half the world as all my own,
And murmured at such lowly lot—
But, just like any other dream,
Upon the vapor of the dew
My own had past, did not the beam
Of beauty which did while it thro'
The minute—the hour—the day—oppress
My mind with double loveliness.
We walked together on the crown
Of a high mountain which looked down
Afar from its proud natural towers
Of rock and forest, on the hills—
The dwindled hills! begirt with bowers
And shouting with a thousand rills.
I spoke to her of power and pride,
But mystically—in such guise
That she might deem it nought beside
The moment's converse; in her eyes
I read, perhaps too carelessly—
A mingled feeling with my own—
The flush on her bright cheek, to me
Seemed to become a queenly throne
Too well that I should let it be

Light in the wilderness alone.
I wrapped myself in grandeur then,
And donned a visionary crown—
Yet it was not that Fantasy
Had thrown her mantle over me—
But that, among the rabble—men,
Lion ambition is chained down—
And crouches to a keeper's hand—
Not so in deserts where the grand—
The wild—the terrible conspire
With their own breath to fan his fire.
Look 'round thee now on Samarcand!—
Is she not queen of Earth? her pride
Above all cities? in her hand
Their destinies? in all beside
Of glory which the world hath known
Stands she not nobly and alone?
Falling—her veriest stepping-stone
Shall form the pedestal of a throne—
And who her sovereign? Timour—he
Whom the astonished people saw
Striding o'er empires haughtily
A diademed outlaw!
O, human love! thou spirit given,
On Earth, of all we hope in Heaven!
Which fall'st into the soul like rain

Upon the Siroc-withered plain,
And, failing in thy power to bless,
But leav'st the heart a wilderness!
Idea! which bindest life around
With music of so strange a sound
And beauty of so wild a birth—
Farewell! for I have won the Earth.
When Hope, the eagle that towered, could see
No cliff beyond him in the sky,
His pinions were bent droopingly—
And homeward turned his softened eye.
'Twas sunset: When the sun will part
There comes a sullenness of heart
To him who still would look upon
The glory of the summer sun.
That soul will hate the ev'ning mist
So often lovely, and will list
To the sound of the coming darkness (known
To those whose spirits hearken) as one
Who, in a dream of night, *would* fly,
But *cannot*, from a danger nigh.
What tho' the moon—tho' the white moon
Shed all the splendor of her noon,
Her smile is chilly—and *her* beam,
In that time of dreariness, will seem
(So like you gather in your breath)

A portrait taken after death.
And boyhood is a summer sun
Whose waning is the dreariest one—
For all we live to know is known,
And all we seek to keep hath flown—
Let life, then, as the day-flower, fall
With the noon-day beauty—which is all.
I reached my home—my home no more—
For all had flown who made it so.
I passed from out its mossy door,
And, tho' my tread was soft and low,
A voice came from the threshold stone
Of one whom I had earlier known—
O, I defy thee, Hell, to show
On beds of fire that burn below,
An humbler heart—a deeper woe.
Father, I firmly do believe—
I know—for Death who comes for me
From regions of the blest afar,
Where there is nothing to deceive,
Hath left his iron gate ajar.
And rays of truth you cannot see
Are flashing thro' Eternity—
I do believe that Eblis hath
A snare in every human path—
Else how, when in the holy grove

I wandered of the idol, Love,—
Who daily scents his snowy wings
With incense of burnt-offerings
From the most unpolluted things,
Whose pleasant bowers are yet so riven
Above with trellised rays from Heaven
No mote may shun—no tiniest fly—
The light'ning of his eagle eye—
How was it that Ambition crept,
Unseen, amid the revels there,
Till growing bold, he laughed and leapt
In the tangles of Love's very hair!

1827

“THE HAPPIEST DAY, THE HAPPIEST HOUR”

I

The happiest day—the happiest hour
My seared and blighted heart hath known,
The highest hope of pride and power,
I feel hath flown.

II

Of power! said I? Yes! such I ween
But they have vanished long, alas!
The visions of my youth have been—
But let them pass.

III

And pride, what have I now with thee?
Another brow may ev'n inherit
The venom thou hast poured on me—
Be still my spirit!

IV

The happiest day—the happiest hour
Mine eyes shall see—have ever seen
The brightest glance of pride and power
I feel have been:

V

But were that hope of pride and power
Now offered with the pain
Ev'n *then* I felt—that brightest hour
I would not live again:

VI

For on its wing was dark alloy
And as it fluttered—fell
An essence—powerful to destroy
A soul that knew it well.

1827

THE LAKE

In spring of youth it was my lot
To haunt of the wide world a spot
The which I could not love the less—
So lovely was the loneliness
Of a wild lake, with black rock bound,
And the tall pines that towered around.
But when the Night had thrown her pall
Upon the spot, as upon all,
And the mystic wind went by
Murmuring in melody—
Then—ah, then, I would awake
To the terror of the lone lake.
Yet that terror was not fright,
But a tremulous delight—
A feeling not the jewelled mine
Could teach or bribe me to define—
Nor Love—although the Love were thine.
Death was in that poisonous wave,
And in its gulf a fitting grave
For him who thence could solace bring
To his lone imagining—
Whose solitary soul could make
An Eden of that dim lake.

AL AARAAF

Part I

O! nothing earthly save the ray
(Thrown back from flowers) of Beauty's eye,
As in those gardens where the day
Springs from the gems of Circassy—
O! nothing earthly save the thrill
Of melody in woodland rill—
Or (music of the passion-hearted)
Joy's voice so peacefully departed
That like the murmur in the shell,
Its echo dwelleth and will dwell—
O! nothing of the dross of ours—
Yet all the beauty—all the flowers
That list our Love, and deck our bowers—
Adorn yon world afar, afar—
The wandering star.
'Twas a sweet time for Nesace—for there
Her world lay lolling on the golden air,
Near four bright suns—a temporary rest—
An oasis in desert of the blest.
Away away—'mid seas of rays that roll
Empyrean splendor o'er th' unchained soul—
The soul that scarce (the billows are so dense)

Can struggle to its destin'd eminence—
To distant spheres, from time to time, she rode,
And late to ours, the favour'd one of God—
But, now, the ruler of an anchor'd realm,
She throws aside the sceptre—leaves the helm,
And, amid incense and high spiritual hymns,
Laves in quadruple light her angel limbs.
Now happiest, loveliest in yon lovely Earth,
Whence sprang the “Idea of Beauty” into birth,
(Falling in wreaths thro' many a startled star,
Like woman's hair 'mid pearls, until, afar,
It lit on hills Achaian, and there dwelt),
She look'd into Infinity—and knelt.
Rich clouds, for canopies, about her curled—
Fit emblems of the model of her world—
Seen but in beauty—not impeding sight—
Of other beauty glittering thro' the light—
A wreath that twined each starry form around,
And all the opal'd air in color bound.
All hurriedly she knelt upon a bed
Of flowers: of lilies such as rear'd the head
On the fair Capo Deucato, and sprang
So eagerly around about to hang
Upon the flying footsteps of—deep pride—
Of her who lov'd a mortal—and so died.
The Sephalica, budding with young bees,

Uprear'd its purple stem around her knees:
And gemmy flower, of Trebizond misnam'd—
Inmate of highest stars, where erst it sham'd
All other loveliness: its honied dew
(The fabled nectar that the heathen knew)
Deliriously sweet, was dropp'd from Heaven,
And fell on gardens of the unforgiven
In Trebizond—and on a sunny flower
So like its own above that, to this hour,
It still remaineth, torturing the bee
With madness, and unwonted reverie:
In Heaven, and all its environs, the leaf
And blossom of the fairy plant, in grief
Disconsolate linger—grief that hangs her head,
Repenting follies that full long have fled,
Heaving her white breast to the balmy air,
Like guilty beauty, chasten'd, and more fair:
Nyxanthus too, as sacred as the light
She fears to perfume, perfuming the night:
And Clytia pondering between many a sun,
While pettish tears adown her petals run:
And that aspiring flower that sprang on Earth—
And died, ere scarce exalted into birth,
Bursting its odorous heart in spirit to wing
Its way to Heaven, from garden of a king:
And Valisnerian lotus thither flown

From struggling with the waters of the Rhone:
And thy most lovely purple perfume, Zante!
Isola d'oro!—Fior di Levante!
And the Nelumbo bud that floats for ever
With Indian Cupid down the holy river—
Fair flowers, and fairy! to whose care is given
To bear the Goddess' song, in odors, up to Heaven:
“Spirit! that dwellest where,
In the deep sky,
The terrible and fair,
In beauty vie!
Beyond the line of blue—
The boundary of the star
Which turneth at the view
Of thy barrier and thy bar—
Of the barrier overgone
By the comets who were cast
From their pride, and from their throne
To be drudges till the last—
To be carriers of fire
(The red fire of their heart)
With speed that may not tire
And with pain that shall not part—
Who livest—that we know—
In Eternity—we feel—
But the shadow of whose brow

What spirit shall reveal?
Tho' the beings whom thy Nesace,
Thy messenger hath known
Have dream'd for thy Infinity
A model of their own—
Thy will is done, O God!
The star hath ridden high
Thro' many a tempest, but she rode
Beneath thy burning eye;
And here, in thought, to thee—
In thought that can alone
Ascend thy empire and so be
A partner of thy throne—
By winged Fantasy,
My embassy is given,
Till secrecy shall knowledge be
In the environs of Heaven.
She ceas'd—and buried then her burning cheek
Abash'd, amid the lilies there, to seek
A shelter from the fervor of His eye;
For the stars trembled at the Deity.
She stirr'd not—breath'd not—for a voice was there
How solemnly pervading the calm air!
A sound of silence on the startled ear
Which dreamy poets name “the music of the sphere.”
Ours is a world of words: Quiet we call

“Silence”—which is the merest word of all.
All Nature speaks, and ev’n ideal things
Flap shadowy sounds from the visionary wings—
But ah! not so when, thus, in realms on high
The eternal voice of God is passing by,
And the red winds are withering in the sky!
“What tho’ in worlds which sightless cycles run,
Link’d to a little system, and one sun—
Where all my love is folly, and the crowd
Still think my terrors but the thunder cloud,
The storm, the earthquake, and the ocean-wrath
(Ah! will they cross me in my angrier path?)
What tho’ in worlds which own a single sun
The sands of time grow dimmer as they run,
Yet thine is my resplendency, so given
To bear my secrets thro’ the upper Heaven.
Leave tenantless thy crystal home, and fly,
With all thy train, athwart the moony sky—
Apart—like fire-flies in Sicilian night,
And wing to other worlds another light!
Divulge the secrets of thy embassy
To the proud orbs that twinkle—and so be
To ev’ry heart a barrier and a ban
Lest the stars totter in the guilt of man!”
Up rose the maiden in the yellow night,
The single-mooned eve!-on earth we plight

Our faith to one love—and one moon adore—
The birth-place of young Beauty had no more.
As sprang that yellow star from downy hours,
Up rose the maiden from her shrine of flowers,
And bent o'er sheeny mountain and dim plain
Her way—but left not yet her Therasæan reign.

Part II

High on a mountain of enamell'd head—
Such as the drowsy shepherd on his bed
Of giant pasturage lying at his ease,
Raising his heavy eyelid, starts and sees
With many a mutter'd "hope to be forgiven"
What time the moon is quadrated in Heaven—
Of rosy head, that towering far away
Into the sunlit ether, caught the ray
Of sunken suns at eve—at noon of night,
While the moon danc'd with the fair stranger light—

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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