Edgar Allan Poe, by HENRY MAUDSLEY, M.D., LONDON, Medical Superintendent of the Manchester Royal Lunatic Hospital.

"Given a force acted upon by certain other forces, and the result is as good as mathematically sure. Men, like trees, grow according to their nature and their circumstances . . . . Freewill is only force, and all force is determined, first automatically, that is by its own law or nature, and again by the action of other forces."—*Infanti Perduti, Edinburgh Essays.*

"All force in action is what we call free, but all force must be determined to action which is what we call necessity—A man does not stand distinct from nature but in it: the force which his will represents comes not entirely from without, nor is it generated solely within; it is the result of the action of a certain organization upon outer forces, a development of force into a higher manifestation according to fundamental laws of the universe."

It seems as though a man were necessitated for all eternity to say what has been over and over again said, if so be that he will not keep his mouth shut. There may be some consolation, however, in this sameness of wisdom, if we remember that the thing spoken must be wisdom in order to last; for a lie cannot bear repetition so often, but must by the very nature of it, sooner or later come across those everlasting laws by which it is surely crushed out and dies. The grievous part of the matter is, that the truth so commonly remains but an uttered word, and cannot be made available in the way of practical wisdom: lamentably men will act lies and talk wisdom. There are certain general principles which no one cavils at, which rather every one applauds, so long as they remain general and on the shelf; but if any one take them down and apply them to the concrete individual, he is sure to cause dissatisfaction, and to meet with opposition. Never, perhaps, do we find more frequent and marked illustrations of this than in the determination of the important problem as to what is rightly to be expected from a man in the universe. It may admit, indeed, of question, whether the world's judgment of a man is not mostly very erroneous; perhaps in the majority of cases not really relevant to him. The thing judged is not the feeble being such as he actually was, struggling with weakness in the midst of the irresistible, gasping painfully after development in untoward circumstances—such as he alone of mortals could feel how untoward—but a creation on the part of the censorious and complacent world; such an one

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as it assumes according to its standard of judgment to have been then and there struggling. There is a wonderful constructive faculty, as well as a destructive faculty in criticism, whereby it happens that a man is often built up in order to be knocked down. The enlightened critic can for the most part see through all the intricacies of human nature as clearly as he can see an elephant in the sunshine, and sends forth his sentence as with the boom of a last judgment. Happily it is after all certain that mighty critics are merely mortals, manifesting in a notable way, now and then, their human littleness; especially when human nature is the subject upon which they exercise their art. Happily again, it is further possible that an unmitigated scoundrel never did actually exist in this world.

This is a proposition which is little likely to meet with acceptance from those complacent, stereotyped individuals, who, dwelling in snug cottage or in stuccoed villa, mightily observant of all respectabilities and conventionalities, gloat over the errors and evils of mankind, fatten on moral putrefaction, as the vulture on the carcass. Oh! the delightful contemplation that the stuccoed man is! Worldly prosperous, with a wife who looks upon him as a hero, considers the stucco to be no mere appearance but actual stone; and happy in children who are the most wonderful children in the world; capable, moreover, of a decided opinion upon all things under heaven; and surely convinced that an Englishman is the beau ideal of the universe, and that he is the beau ideal of an Englishman—what an admirable being! We may be thankful for the stuccoed man. Marvellous truly is it to observe the stoicism of his self-complacency, and the quiet satisfaction which, in an unconscious way, he exhibits, when some considerable misfortune has befallen his friend or acquaintance. He is profuse in commiseration, no doubt, but commiseration is so often nothing but a pleasant chuckle; and the expressions of compassion are manifestly bubbles on the quiet stream of self-satisfaction, which, flowing on, turns the mill of criticism, in which his unfortunate friend is ground down, his folly laid bare, the man reduced to his ultimate elements and these shewn to be rotten. And so onward flows the stream turning many mills in its course, until at length it reaches the ocean of eternity, where, happily, all muddy peculiarities disappear. Useful and necessary being in the world is this stuccoed man; but certainly not the highest possibility of a man; and, therefore, under grievous mistake

in supposing himself the legitimate standard of comparison for all mankind.

It is with the man as it is with the house. A cottage ornée is a pleasant sight enough, but a long line of such eligible residences becomes wearisome to the eye, which desires variety of some kind; and one is apt to think that the frequent repetition of the stuccoed villa might be advantageously relieved by an occasional change, even if it were with a pigstye. So also the stuccoed man becomes, in time, exceedingly monotonous; and perhaps it would be well were he to have his portrait painted, and then quietly to make his exit. In what attitude, in what dress, he should descend to posterity is a question not at once to be settled; but, as being most significant, he might be represented in the act of winding up his watch, with his night-cap on. And in bidding him good-night, there is at any rate to be noted in him this merit—that he has succeeded in feeding himself where brighter men have failed.

To discerning individuals it may sometimes happen to discover in out-of-the-way places, in streets scarcely heard of without a shudder, perhaps in back-attics, or in other such abode not indicating worldly prosperity, men of much originality of character and of wonderful endowments, such as, for the time being, it refreshes one to behold. By the necessity of living they now and then drag in the shafts, but soon kick over the traces, and in fitful gleams of bright originality manifest what they really are, and might, were there favourable possibility, always be—no stucco, unadorned brick and mortar may be, or real first-class stone. Alas! originality is a capital thing to starve upon. So these men are compelled unwillingly to yoke themselves in the conventional harness, and to drudge therein, until, broken down by the heavy and unsuitable work, they flare out, often with the aid of brandy and water, into speedy extinction. Have we reason to thank Heaven for such men? Yes, though it be with bitter, sorrowful compassion. For has not one of them now and then spoken a word which has remained to us as an inestimable possession, a κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί by aid of which the world has been helped forwards towards the unknown goal to which it is advancing. As to their morality, it is better perhaps than to cry out, to recognise this possibility, that the standard by which they can be judged may not yet have been discovered, tabulated, and made available for learned professors of moral philosophy to descant upon. The original man may have a morality of his own, which is

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just as much a necessary expression of his originality, and a part of his nature, as any great truth which he may utter, or any great deed which he may perform, and which may turn out to be, palpably to the world in the fullness of time, natural and inevitable. Indeed, if we were to reflect upon the matter, it might be difficult to conceive how, if a man have an intellect of his own, he should not have a practical morality of his own. Suspended judgment is, at any rate, more judicious and more charitable than hasty decision and immediate action thereupon. Now that we have ceased to stone our prophets to death, it might be well to cease also attempting to crush them under a pelting storm of moral maxims. There is not much use in so doing any way; for, though we may contrive to make the mud stick to them for a period, yet time surely washes it away, and the man in the end stands, serene and grand, in the Hall of Heroes; and then we look foolish—little dogs baying at the moon; Lilliputians shooting our arrows into this big Gulliver, making comedy for posterity to laugh at.

It is a conviction not easily resisted at times, that the world must be wrong somehow; that it cannot be altogether right; or we should not surely have so many lunatics, so many too, which is more strange, who have just missed genius and fallen into madness. Why should men of notable merit be driven so often to shriek out wildly against the injustice of the world, ending, if they have not hard hearts, or be not much given to tobacco or other sedative, at the bottom of the fishpond or in the madhouse? Many more there are too who, although they have not so ended, yet have once or oftener shuddered, chilled, as it were, by the cold shadow of madness passing over them. There can be no doubt that the way of the world does press hard upon the young and honest soul, before the conscience has been seared with conventional iron; before the man has been pressed and stamped into the uniform currency of respectability. Happily has it fallen out for him personally if he has not flared up in momentary brightness; if the all-grasping fingers of respectability have clawed hold of him, and rescued him from madness or destruction. Aye, that, instead of belching forth the truth as it appears to him, and, if so be, dying of starvation, better for him he should take to himself a wife, become a hero to such discerning female, and come to the belief that conventionalities are "eternal veracities?" Yes, let it be wisely done, since the economy of the world requires it; let the man be fashioned into an artificial machine

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since it must be. Is not this verily the age of machinery, an age in which the soul of man has entered into woodwork and ironwork, animating them; in which cotton has become conscience? What a magnificent metempsychosis?

May charity extend even to the brandy and water of genius? Why not? Blank, utter hopelessness in the world may palliate in part what it cannot excuse; and, on the whole it is probable, that there is more blank hopelessness in the world than is generally supposed. It needs not that we dive into the dark arches to discover it, if we only use our eyes aright. The shuddering ragged figure, crouching there by the muddy river's brink, is sometimes happy compared with the wearied hopeless soul, digusted with the emptiness of all things on earth, and faithless as to anything after earth. Why should life be prolonged? It has hitherto been but a scene of intense but unsatisfied longings; a scene of dull heavy wretchedness, a gloom relieved only by a rare flicker of murky brightness. It may admit of question whether it be not with certain constitutions more endurable to suffer the sharp pang of acute physical disease, than to bear that constant dull aching pain which accompanies certain chronic affections: and so with mental suffering. It is an old story, as old as life. "All things are full of labour; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done; and *there is no new thing under the sun. Behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit. There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour." "Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die." Let us drink then—drink away the weariness; for is not a drunken man for the time being happy? Yes, he laughs in his momentary strength at the voice of melancholy, laughs, triumphantly, and revels in an ideal world, where he can have his own way with this calm inexorable destiny of real life. He experiences the delightful sensation of power, and feels something of a realization of those inward aspirations—

*"We have heard of an Englishman," says Goëthe, "who hanged himself to be no more troubled with putting on and off his clothes. I knew an honest gardener, the overseer of some extensive pleasure grounds, who once spleneticallly exclaimed, 'Shall I see these clouds for ever passing from east to west.' It is told of one of our most distinguished men that he viewed with dissatisfaction the spring again growing green, and wished that, by way of change, it would for once be red. These are specially the symptoms of life weariness, which not seldom issue in suicide."

While the fond soul,
Rapt in gay visions of unreal bliss,
Still paints the illusive form.

What though fierce repentance rears her snaky crest, she cannot steal away the pleasure that has been. Is it asked,

Who buys a minute's mirth to wail a week,
Or sells eternity to gain a toy?

The reply is, that a minute's mirth may be worth the wail of a week: being so much mirth secured which sobriety could not have given; *that* being equal only to granting a little less intense wail for a life-time. "Crown me with roses, let us drink wine, and break up the tiresome old vault of heaven into new forms."

Furthermore, may it not be that by the aid of brandy man may get a quicker insight into things which can only be seen into with much difficulty and much labour without. True he thereby sacrifices time to power, but so pleasing is it to get a glimpse of that "Divine idea which lies hid at the bottom of all appearance" that many may be found who would gladly give up half their life for such an object. It may be a mere fancy, but it certainly seems that in some of the best writings of our best authors, one may detect alcohol. Be this as it may, however, and whatever genius may do, it is clear that in the world's movement onwards, alcohol plays an important part.

We shall best realize the importance of this agent, if we remember that the effect of an action, *however caused*, persists for all time, it blends itself with the universe, and has an influence in all that is to come whether for good or evil. Now, though we see much more of spirit-drinking than is desirable, yet there is much that we do not see; and perhaps, the gravest circumstance in the case is the great quantity consumed in secret; in the closet by respectability when it imagines that no eye sees it. It was the remark of a successful physician of long experience, when it was observed regarding the habits of a person of great attainments that although he did not appear to be given to drinking, "he might have been a gin drinker": which, by interpretation is that, as the result of a long experience, it had chanced to that physician to discover that many closets contain gin bottles.

It really is amazing when we reflect upon it—and the observation is by no means new—how little a man does know of his nearest friend or acquaintance, of his fellow-man in

any situation; he sees but the appearance of him. Could he unroof his neighbour and look into the inner principles of him, what revelations might there be. It may happen to him to discover, in unguarded moments, that the insignificant little mortal, whom a puff of the breath would almost annihilate, had high resolves and wondrous self-conceit; that the small curate had his eye fixed, with a sort of vacant flickering stare, on a bishopric; or, on the other hand, he might find that the eloquent and earnest popular preacher was in secret addicted to alcohol or to opium. Well, if we receive the benefit of the man's self-indulgence in his writings, or in his sermons, have we much need to complain, or much cause to blame? We act very strangely in this matter generally; so long as the man keeps his vice pretty secret, we accept him at what he professes to be, and raise no clamour. Every now and then, however, some one appears who, disdaining all hypocrisy, perhaps incapable of it, drinks down his consolation in the face of all the world, and exhibits himself as he really is; and then what a hubbub! Heaven help him, it is bad enough; but it is of no use howling at him; it is better to be charitably silent, remembering that an immense quantity of alcohol and of opium disappears, of which we cannot say where it goes; and remembering also that he is often most unmerciful to the sinner who is in secret guilty of the vice which he condemns.

What then, as the result of these reflections, is there left for a man of sensitive temperament, and of little self-control, to do in the apparent universal wrongness of things? Go mad: well he often does, and so ends. Commit suicide: that also has been done by, amongst others, poor Chatterton. Or, take to opium eating, and afterwards come forth, like Coleridge, to censure De Quincey. Or, finally, if it must be false comfort, he may find consolation in drinking brandy. Many have done so, amongst whom, not the least notable, is Edgar Allan Poe, to a consideration of whose character and writings the foregoing observations are intended to be prefatory. They will have answered their purpose, if they have in any way served to indicate the difficulties under which men of certain endowments are by their nature placed in the struggle to live, and at the same time to develop according to their inward impulse.

But before proceeding farther it may be well to note this unhappy difficulty in the way of a man struggling through life—that he never discovers the laws by which he should be governed until it is nearly time for him to take

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leave of existence; only sad experience teaches him how foolish he has been, and only when the opportunity is gone is he able to see that it has been going. How many a noble existence has been wrecked by a false step in early youth; and yet how could the unhappy youth know the painful and abiding consequences of his error? the vessel is alive to the danger only when it has crashed upon the breakers.

"Ah, heavens! that it should be possible that a child not seventeen years old, by a momentary blindness, by listening to a false whisper from his own bewildered heart, by one erring step, by a motion this way or that, to change the current of his destiny, to poison the fountain of his peace, and in the twinkling of an eye to lay the foundation of a life-long repentance."—*De Quincey.*

This is a serious consideration, and should at any rate, make us charitable towards any one who has turned in youth from virtue's paths, and whose way thence has been onwards to the black waters. It is so difficult, nay, it is impossible quite to retrieve an error. The act has gone forth from the individual, but has not vanished into space; it meets him, as it were, at every corner, confronts him, it might seem almost miraculously, wherever he turns; compels him to change the circumstances of his position, to change himself; he cannot possibly be what he was before. Having yielded to temptation, he has weakened himself, and has added one to the number of the enemies who will meet him in the gate—one, too, who knows his infirmity, and is exactly qualified to cope with him in his weak part; a portion of his force has, in fact, turned traitor, and gone over to the enemy with information. No wonder, then, that so many, having once gone wrong, flounder for ever afterwards. Even when they strive to avoid falling deeper, and labour to recover themselves, it is often labour ignorant and vain; they do not recognise their change of position, do not feel that they have done wrong, and must accept the consequences, but hope foolishly, and endeavour vainly to go on as before, and the line of battle is broken from the want of concentration of force after so heavy a loss. It is truly a painful thing to watch a man fighting bravely, and yet quite hopelessly, from ignorance of generalship, like a brave army done to death by the folly of its leaders. But men are so unwilling to retreat; even after grievous error, when circumstances are more threatening, and when they are much weaker, forgetful that it is better to gain small victories, and to be strengthened thereby, than to suffer one great defeat and to

be ruined, that it is better to take retribution to one's arms as a friend, than to make of it a constant and inveterate enemy. There are some, however, and they are the heroes of life, who are so strong that they cannot well be seriously beaten; they go in to win, not rashly and madly, for they are strong in reason, but wisely and firmly; they do not run their heads full tilt against circumstances, and fall down crushed and bleeding in consequence, but seize hold of circumstances, bind them together, and make of them a support. Perhaps this is the surest sign of calm real strength, the best test of a great man—this power of retrieving error, of dragging success out of misfortune, of asserting free will over necessity; what else, indeed, if we consider it, is a well lived life? It is, in truth, of all spectacles the most pleasant, to behold a man after mishap, gather up the reins with firm grasp, and firm resolve to recover the lost ground, to see him start steadily and cautiously, with that determination to succeed, which surely, sooner or later, effects its own accomplishment. There he stands, calm in the storm, clear in the gloom, solid amidst the changeable—

"Like some tall rock that rears its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
While round its breast the lowering clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine glitters on its head."

There can be no doubt who is the truly great man, convulsion, as Carlyle says, not being strength. Still it behoves us to credit a good sum to nature in the case of these strong men. For to every one has not been given the power to gather strength from weakness, and to pluck out from the withered leaves of folly and misery, the green laurel leaf of victory; in fact, a Shakspeare or a Goëthe is rather a rare phenomenon in this universe of ours.

It is always possible in passing judgment upon a man to look at him from two distinct points of view, and thus to arrive at two different opinions as to his individual responsibility. The net product may be taken, compared with some fixed standard, and pronounced deficient or otherwise accordingly; or the factors concerned in the sum may be regarded, and the opinion given on their relation to the product. The way of the world, for the most part, is to take a man as he appears in his actions, to measure these by a certain conventional standard, and then to go no further in the enquiry, but, forthwith to pronounce authoritatively—most likely, if there be any tincture of originality in the man—to damn

him pretty distinctly. Such a method is eminently unjust, its result on the whole being, that the man of sterling honesty and sincerity is branded as a serious sinner, or at any rate is marked with a note of interrogation, while the plausible hypocrite passes muster with commendation. Now, there are three facts which, militating against such a mode of procedure, suffice to upset it completely. The first is, that man is not the measure of the universe, nor of its Creator: the second is, the impossibility of any man producing himself, springing up by spontaneous generation just such a being as he might wish to be: and the third fact is this, that a man cannot, either mentally or bodily, live in *vacuo*. Admitting the standard of comparison to be correct, which it might be had the world ceased to move, there are to be taken into consideration then, in the formation of a just judgment, the original nature of the man, and the circumstances in which, happily or unhappily, he has been placed—the character of the modifying force, and forces amidst which this has been placed. It is from practically neglecting these important considerations that we sometimes stare aghast at a man in helpless paralytic attitude, as though he were some strange and inexplicable montrosity in the universe. Science has satisfactorily demonstrated the so called physical montrosities to be nothing more than particular arrests, exaggeration of development, still in accordance with a certain definite type; and so it may be probable, if we will but consider it, that moral montrosities have come to that pass by sure laws. Edgar Allan Poe, therefore, "such a warped slip of wilderness" as he was, we cannot look upon as one rushing through space without purpose and without orbit; and black as his character seems, yet may there be, in an examination of circumstances, some explanation. Nay, if we reflect for a moment, on such a phenomenon as a scoundrel without excuse, is it not a physical impossibility in the universe? Effect coming in the form of "error and evil behaviour," may have its cause somewhere back in the far past. For how much therefore are we to doom the man responsible?

By the necessity of its nature, genius is compelled to move more or less out of the beaten track; and the paths of knowledge and of morality, at any rate of practical morality, run parallel, so that when a man gets off one, his relation to the other is also considerably changed. Now, the greatest seem often to have the power to drag the unwilling world after them, in spite of its many-tongued cry of

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"shame," until by success they have stayed the noise, and have forced themselves into acceptation. But many, and many a one, wondrously endowed, yet of a lesser order, wanting that calmness of temperament and that control of reason, which are necessary to sustain them in great conflict, fight and fail. It is a grievous and painful spectacle to observe their tragical struggles, and miserable end—to see the taper, lighted from heaven, prematurely flare out in bitter sorrow and anger. Such have been called the *Infanti Perduti.—The Forlorn Hope of Humanity.*—"Looking back on their pale, disfigured faces, where the wrath of a Titan is so often blended with the weakness of a child, and the fury of a maniac with the light of immortal love, it is no weak, unintelligent, useless pity which loves to dwell there, and to find there if possible, instruction and hope."—*Infanti Perduti.—Edinburgh Essays.*

We must, indeed, look back at such, so mighty, yet so fallen, in order duly to appreciate the gigantic nature of those who have fought the fight, and have won the battle. The strength of the building which has remained firm and uninjured after the earthquake, is best understood by contemplating the massive ruins around it. How otherwise can we feel the wonderful significance that there is under the ordinary, quiet, exterior life of William Shakspeare? What sufferings must he have undergone, who could create such characters as those of Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, and Lear? and what power must he have had who after all, lived a quiet life, died in peace with all mankind, and might have had the epitaph of the most ordinary stuccoed respectable? Perhaps, great as his works prove him to have been, his life proves him greater. Is there anything in experience which can satisfactorily represent to the mind the compressed force that there was in Shakspeare? Were any conception of the final break up of the world possible, one might form some idea of the crash amongst moralities and conventionalities which would have been produced had he exploded. But he was far too great and too wise for that; and has left an example to prove to all ages, and to all spasmodic individuals, that genius can conform. Perhaps he has further proved that it is only the very greatest that, seeing beyond, can so conform; and that this of all others, is for genius the hardest task under the sun, being, when accomplished, the surest mark of the *greatest.*

Nevertheless, however reason may commend such men as Goëthe and Shakspeare, our sympathy will always be most

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with the fallen—with Burns or with Poe; the former appear so distant from us, almost Godlike; the latter are near to us, and we feel them to be of the same nature as ourselves. It is a great service to render to humanity, for a man who has suffered, to embody his sufferings with beautiful art in a drama or in a novel, and there to let the evidence of them end; but the feelings will always be on the side of the genius who could not be calm, and conform to the inevitable, but who bruised himself to death in the fearful conflict. And one cannot see how this is to be avoided, so long as humanity itself is not simply an exquisite drama, or a beautiful picture, or a cold marble statue. Perhaps there may be after all justice in the direction in which the feelings point, seeing that there is considerable selfishness often in self-control; and seeing also that a man is not to be credited with his temperament as with a virtue. Goëthe, for example, when in the flush of youth, at that period of life when man is least apt to calculate consequences, and most prone to generous impulses, never appears to have forgotten his future interest. Falling in love (not once only) with a woman not his equal in worldly position, and engaging deeply her affections, he took his departure, suddenly, and without excuse, and left her disconsolately to pine alone, when the time for action came; so that it is almost impossible to read the history of Goëthe's youth without hating him. Luckily, the sure ages always do bring justice, and we can forgive the resistings of Goëthe's youth when one sees him hag-ridden in old age. Now Edgar Poe, with such a temperament as he had, would most surely, under like circumstances, be rash and impulsive; he would be the victim, not the victim maker; there would be with him no calculation of consequences, no fear of frustrating his destiny, but an utter abandonment of himself heart and soul to the strong passion that was in him. There might, however, in this abandonment be as much of selfishness as in Goëthe's self-control; little merit can be justly credited to either of them, insomuch as the differences between them are constitutional and fundamental.

Edgar A. Poe was born at Baltimore, it is believed, in 1811: was the grandson of a quarter-master-general, the great-grandson of an admiral, and the son of a father named David, who gyrated in an irregular manner through the universe. For he took to his arms in lawful matrimony "an enchanting actress, of uncertain prospects," of whom he begat three children—Edgar the eldest. Here now is the

place for respectability to make a moral demonstration ;—the son of a quarter-master-general and grandson of an admiral ;—so well connected,—to marry a strolling actress. How disgraceful! What will society say to it? Was it not possible for you foolish David, to have taken her as your mistress, and thereby to have kept yourself within the pale of decency—to have taken her for the better only? But to have taken her "for better or for worse"—it is pitiable, and the decencies discard you. So David Poe, deficient of decencies, bade farewell to law of which he had been student, along with respectability, and with Elizabeth Arnold, the beautiful English actress, went forth into the wide wide world. On the whole, the wide world cannot be said to be a very suitable place for a man to enter upon who has given up respectable routine for a beautiful actress—if he wants to do anything but die therein. Oh, it was pitiful, it was bad, irrecoverably bad, David Poe, for are not the sins of the father visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation? We grieve for the transaction, yet we cannot well regret it; for had not things so happened, there would have been for us no Edgar Poe, no Raven, and no Lenore. Strange, and the observation is very trite, how far back lies the origin of any event in this world. The thing done remains in action for ever. One cannot help thinking of the young lawyer sitting with enraptured countenance in the pit of the theatre, absorbed in the enchanting actress upon whom every one of the multitude present was intent in admiration—for she was a great favourite—who should have pointed to that face, and have said, that in the sympathetic and admiring glance which beamed therefrom towards that actress, lay the germ of things which were to occupy the world's attention, as long, may be, as it existed. Edgar Poe, his poetry, and the amazement of mankind at his strange, lurid, irregular existence! nay, that glance is also actually accountable for this present waste of ink and paper.

David Poe, after discarding respectability, cast in his lot with his wife, himself became an actor, and after six or seven years of such life, fell sick and died, leaving in "utter destitution," three children, Edgar, Henry, and Rosalie. His partner in sorrow, having accomplished what play within a play she was destined to perform, shuffled off the stage of life about the same time, to join him, we may fervently hope, in that kingdom where there are no more plays of the tragedy sort, but where the tears are wiped from

every eye. There can be little doubt that there was tragedy enough for them in their sojourn together on this stage of time—much angry recrimination, passionate outbursts, tragical remorse, and, at any rate, final departure in "utter destitution."

Inasmuch now, as a man is not his own father, it is incumbent upon us to take these things into consideration in estimating Edgar Poe. For we may rest assured of this, that infirmities of mind are transmitted from parent to child by a law as sure and constant as is any physical infirmity. Consumption is not more constantly inherited than is insanity, and the peculiarity of temperament which manifests itself in moral disease, descends as surely as either. "The weaknesses and defects," says Nathaniel Hawthorne, "the bad passions, the mean tendencies, and the moral diseases which lead to crime are handed down from one generation to another, by a far surer process of transmission than human law has been able to establish in respect to the riches and honours which it seeks to entail upon posterity." If then a man have inherited the constitution and temperament of his father, and if that father went wrong in youth, living ever after in an irregular way, aggravating in fact, as far as possible, the inherent mischief, it can be no matter of astonishment should his son turn out to be an irregular being; for it is as certain that weakness added to weakness through generations, cannot produce other than weakness, as it is, that equals added to equals, cannot result in anything but equals. And if the circumstances into which the offspring is introduced, instead of being purposely and intelligently determined for combating the evil, be those which of all others are most favourable for fostering and developing it, what possible good can come? Then, again, there is much to be attributed to the mother's influence during gestation. Before the child is born, it is certain that its after-constitution may be seriously affected by its mother's state of mind. Numerous examples, in the shape of visible changes in nutrition on the body of the child, attest this fact; but these may, after all, be looked upon as coarse illustrations. It is the delicate and sympathetic nervous system that suffers most from shocks of the mind; and hence it happens that active emotional states of the mother's mind are sometimes notably attended with a change in the nutrition of the nervous system of the unborn babe. The child may be born with a hyper-sensitive nervous organization, and may be no more able to help being excitable, or

having a vicious tendency, than the earth can help moving in its orbit round the sun, or than the sun can avoid shining alike on the just and the unjust. Thus, a mother, during pregnancy, is exposed to a sudden fright, and her child is born, subject for the first few years of its life to convulsions, it soon afterwards has a manifest affection of the brain, and ultimately gets into a state of terrorism, in which, as it grows up, it see persons armed with daggers and pistols, for the purpose of murder, and hears bullets whizzing through the air: the fright of the parent has thus been incorporated into the constitution of the child, and what was a temporary occurrence in the mother, becomes a permanent and, as it were, a natural constitutional defect in the offspring.*

Such things happened during the French revolution, and in the fearful war in La Vendée. Let us apply such considerations to Edgar Poe. Given then in his case a father who had been defiant of respectabilities, and who had lived in an irregular way; given a mother who had been very beautiful, and who was an actress; given also 'utter destitution,' and the many untoward circumstances which two such words connote, and what, in the way of product, are we justified in looking for? Surely some such a child as that of which Poe was the development. Development—that introduces another important consideration, the circumstances under which it took place, excitable temperament and perverse disposition inherited from the parents; it behoves us next to examine how these were dealt with—what was the education? For it is a very unjust error, of which the world is guilty in its judgment of a man, to look upon him as solely responsible for all the error or evil which he may have fallen into. Might it not be almost as just to say to the tree planted upon a rock, "Why hast thou not grown?" or to the horse in the knacker's yard, "Why dost thou not shake thy mane, and laugh at the voice of the thunder?" Oh! is it not too true that man at the best, can only control circumstances in a pigmy way, not fashion them? And if there is implanted in him a principle which, by an irresistible sympathy, assimilates the untoward circumstances, stretches out towards them, finding there its suitable nourishment—the predominant tendency being so situate—what is to control circumstances? Accident, or what we in our ignorance call accident, often fortunately effects this for us. For in the endless variety of circumstances in which by possibility a man may be placed in this world, there is probability which

* Esquirol, des Maladies Mentales.

is often realized, that the evil may be corrected, that something may occur to modify the peculiarity, that some result may be brought about antagonistic to the development of the inherent mischief. It is thus a happy thing when a man learns grammar in early youth, when he finds that as well as "I," there is a "thou," and a "he;" and by conjugating, comes to perceive that "thou hast a passion," and that "he has a passion." Edgar Poe never appears to have had an opportunity of learning this lesson until it was too late to profit by it. Let us hear him speak himself:—"I am the descendant of a race whose imaginative and easily excitable temperament has at all times rendered them remarkable; and in my earliest infancy I gave evidence of having fully inherited the family character. As I advanced in years, it was more strongly developed, becoming, for many reasons, a cause of serious disquietude to my friends, and a positive injury to myself. I grew self-willed, addicted to the wildest caprices, and a prey to the most ungovernable passions. Weak-minded, and beset with constitutional infirmities akin to my own, my parents could do but little to check the evil propensities which distinguished me. Some feeble and ill-directed efforts resulted in complete failure on their part, and of course in total triumph on mine. Thenceforward my voice was household law, and at an age when few children have abandoned their leading strings, I was left to the guidance of my own will, and became in all but name, the master of my own actions."

Here, then, we have it all; "imaginative and easily excitable temperament;" "development" thereof in Edgar; "wildest caprices, and the most ungovernable passions;" "weak-minded parents beset with constitutional infirmities akin to my own," and so on. There is one phrase in this bit of autobiography which it may be well to seize and dwell upon for a moment; his parents were beset with constitutional infirmities akin to his own, to which, "wildest caprices, and the most ungovernable passions," as might have been expected in the case of an individual who had run away from his prospects with a beautiful actress, and in the case of a beautiful and favourite actress, who had married an eligible match, and had found by bitter experience that there was nothing eligible in it. "Wildest caprice,"—poor David doing the most perverse, out-of-the-way things in a defiant, desperate way; and the once enchanting actress in no wise sparing him her tragic tongue; "the most ungovernable passions," perhaps what little

crockery ware or furniture there might be with "utter destitution," flying about the room; and over all a leaden cloud of repentance and remorse. Edgar Poe was thus born under a canopy of remorse, and imbibed as his first lesson, the melancholy dirge of "Nevermore! Nevermore!" Here was, indeed, an atmosphere of circumstances for educating, inducing, bringing out what good or bad tendencies nature might have implanted in him. Even in the earliest childhood the surrounding influences exercise a powerful effect upon the child; it assimilates them unconsciously, and they become a part of it. The mother who flies into a violent passion, and raves accordingly, does not rave idly; her infant, sprawling upon the carpet, may feel the effect, unconsciously incorporating into its system the power which passion represents—power persisting through eternity; there can be but few idle words or acts in the universe. Esquirol relates an extreme case in which the effect of evil influence was marked. A little girl of three years of age frequently hears her step-mother cursing in her passions, and soon becomes, as it were, insane—wishes constantly for her step-mother's death, and, at the age of five years and three months, makes the first of several attempts to kill her. Whence it is manifest that passion and curses are not attuned to a healthy child's feelings, and further also manifest that they produce serious consequences, even though these be not apparent at the time.

What Poe's education was likely to be, we may easily conceive—an excitable and passionate disposition having been set to sail in a whirlpool of passion; the vessel in the midst of a raging storm, having to make the quiet harbour without rudder and without compass. Should the storm resolve itself fortunately and a propitious wind drive it to the haven, good and well; if not, there will be no cause for wonder if the vessel be lost. We have seen what Edgar Poe said of his circumstances; "feeble and ill-directed efforts," to correct an unhappy disposition, ended in his being left to the guidance of his own, and to the mastership of his own actions. So the unhappy child was placed; no propitious Deity to pour oil upon the troubled waters, nay, rather malignant fate in the form of unhappy circumstances, pouring oil upon the flames. Thus, native bad, by the addition of acquired bad, was made worse. The unlucky law-student, running away from respectability under that foolish enchantment, had not done in that act of his all the evil that destiny had doomed him to do. May we not surely depend

upon this, that consequences of evil action follow as inevitably thereupon sooner or later, as does the day on the night, or the night on day; that human actions are under as certain laws as is any physical phenomenon in the universe. The whole course of a man is changed by one act of his life, and not only so, but the course of his children. Whatever power the man may represent, whatever he may do for all his lifetime, the force that each individual embodies, dies not with him, but goes forth working to all eternity—ends not when the earth is shrivelled up like a scroll of parchment, persists through the courts of heaven, and in the cells of hell. It would be a sobering reflection for a man if he could but realize it, that he represents so much *force* in the universe, and that force cannot be annihilated; therefore, that every word and action which he launches on the ocean of time and space, goes its way and is never lost. Each individual represents, as it were, force self-conscious for a time in the conflux of two eternities—from everlasting to everlasting; and therefore that every word and act must, surely appear on that great day when all is completed. "It is a high, solemn, almost awful thought for every individual man, that his earthly influence, which had a commencement, will never, through all ages, were he the very meanest of us, have an end. What is done, has already blended itself with the boundless, ever-living, ever-working universe, and will also work there, for good or for evil, openly or secretly, throughout all time. But the life of every man is as the well-spring of a stream, whose small beginnings are indeed plain to all, but whose ulterior course and destination, as it winds through the expanses of infinite years, only the Omniscient can discern."—*Carlyle.*

Thus considering our helplessness, and yet our importance, have we not abundant cause to admire the mighty, nay to us, fearful Intelligence, which conducts us so unconsciously upon our way, the "Providence that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we may?" Yes, wrong as it sometimes seems that we have gone, and bitterly as we may repent it, both the wrong and the repentance have their purpose in the sum-total that our existence is working out in the scheme of the universe. So, when respectability shrieks out at us for running away with an actress, or such non-defensible action, although we are sinning perhaps as regards ourselves personally, and respectability has a just right to clamour at us, yet we are not dashing blindly through space, but are guided to our destined end by the unseen hand of

Omnipotence. Men may shake their heads, or stand aghast at us; but then men at one time stood aghast at the comet, as though a fearful and unguided danger were rushing through space, deeming, forsooth, in their wisdom, that the Omnipotent was asleep, or upon a journey. Let a man, then, having done grievously wrong in the world be fully prepared to accept the consequences of his wrong, whether these come in the form of injury to his worldly prospects, or in the form of intense mental anguish, such recompense being inevitable; but let him not despair, as though he had frustrated the purposes of his existence, and were an anomaly in creation. He is going right, although he has gone wrong, and bitter repentance accompanies him on his way. Strange moral phenomena are not purposeless in the universe.

"Yet they wha fa' in fortune's strife,
Their fate we should na censure,
For still the important end of life
They equally may answer."

The circumstances amidst which Edgar Poe's infancy was passed were the natural result of the conjunction of the actress and of the law student, and Poe himself the inevitable ultimate product. In the contemplation of his life it is almost impossible to avoid the conviction that circumstances were intelligently determined so that he might become just what he was; for when his parents died, he, being a handsome and lively child, was adopted by a rich Virginian planter, who had no children of his own. Kindly as this was done, it was not altogether a blessing; and perhaps this observation may be made, that if a rich and childless man and his wife adopt a lively and handsome child they are likely to make of it a kind of plaything. But a child is not a light and amusing thing to be played with, but a very serious thing to be worked upon; and that, not by irregular and spasmodic effort, but by constant and sustained attention. Edgar Poe would above all other children, require such effort; for had he not already been too much spoiled? spoiled, as we have seen, fundamentally in his origin; spoiled in his embryotic life; spoiled in his earliest infancy; spoiled by his father, by his mother, and by circumstances? And yet had destiny reserved for him yet further unhappy influence; for in the house of his adopted parents he was indulged and humoured, until, young as he was, he became master there. Evidently, the kind people who had taken pity upon the young orphan had no adequate idea of the responsibility which they had undertaken. Unfortunately,

there is nothing singular in such a circumstance; a child not spoiled is becoming every day a rarer and rarer phenomenon; and one might be tempted to conclude that it was, after all, natural and proper to spoil children, were it not that there is so much sin and so much evil in the world. General indulgence, relieved by an occasional act of capricious severity, and such act followed by sure extra indulgence afterwards—that is one method of training childhood. In process of time the result comes out, an Edgar Poe, or something of that sort, exactly what any reasonable being should expect; and then foolishly also often comes a howl of anger and astonishment, a sort of expostulation with Heaven, in that it had not reversed its laws, and planted the rose of virtue on the tree of folly. Have we not, in Poe's case, been so far prepared as not to expect "grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles"?

After so much of the malignant, came for a time a little sunshine. Poe was sent to England in 1816, where he remained for five years at school at Stoke Newington. "Encompassed" says he, "by the massy walls of this venerable academy, I passed, yet not in tedium or disgust, the years of the third lustrum of my life. The teeming brain of childhood requires no external world of incident to occupy or amuse it; and the apparently dismal monotony of a school was replete with more intense excitement than my riper youth has derived from luxury, or my full manhood from crime." We may consider this as the evidence of his having been at last under a beneficial system; for it appears that man always is in reality happiest when he is under some restraint; when by the force of rods or rules or conventionalities and respectabilities, in spite of ebullition of passion, he is forced into self-denial, and made a reasonable creature. What else, indeed, can be expected, seeing that happiness, such as is to be had, follows in the train of moral law, even if it be morality by compulsion? The greatest satisfaction doubtlessly results from self-government, by the laws of a wisely developed reason, but such development can only take place through the force of reason that exists in the rules applied for government in youth. Looking at his after life, we cannot suppose that Edgar Poe assimilated such reasonable restraint, and profited by it; and perhaps we have no just cause to expect that he would. For, that assimilation may take place, there must be an adaptability of the matter to be assimilated to the substance into which it is to be received; and, as we have already seen, in the present case, there was

on one side inherited, passionate and excitable temperament, aggravated by unhappy circumstances, and on the other routine and rule, whence came little in the shape of available nourishment. If there were any sense in regretting aught that has happened in this world, one might regret that such outer control had not been exercised on Edgar Poe for a much longer time, or at a much earlier period of his life. It were perhaps as well, however, to accept the government of the world as we find it, and forbear for the present criticising, from our point of view, the ways of Providence: sufficient it is for us to observe them, and to learn therefrom what lessons may be serviceable for our individual guidance.

Poe returned to the United States in 1822, went for a few months to an academy at Richmond, and thence to the university at Charlotteville. Think of him for a moment so sensitive and so excitable, in the spring-time of youthful manhood, in the novelty of new passion, thrown into the license of the university. When a man gets a new coat, he cannot rest quiet long until he has tried it on, and has looked at himself in it; and are we to wonder that a man should be eager to gauge a new passion; especially if he be one who by constitution is endowed with such an unhappy intensity of feeling as was Edgar Poe. It would have been amazing had he, such as we have seen him born and so far built up, resisted. No! he went his natural and inevitable course; he plunged headlong into dissipation, and became remarkable as the most wildly reckless and debauched of all students! and, yet he was noted for his quick intellect, his brilliancy and vivacity, and his skill in fencing, swimming, and all such feats—not incompatible elements with immorality in a character, as too many examples every day prove. Indeed, looking curiously at the young men of an university, one might be tempted to conclude that those with the best natural endowments were the most given unto dissipation; and that it was the moderate and plodding man who bore the best character and carried away the most honours. Perhaps this may be considered a wise dispensation, whereby the plodding man may have an equal chance in the battle of life; for what would become of him in the strife, if talent were always industrious and respectable. Opinion is very inconsistent in the sentence it pronounces at different periods on remarkable men. Now-a-days every one feels himself justified in sneering or smiling at the Justice Shallow, who prosecuted William Shakspeare for deer-stealing, though it might appear that the Justice was only doing his duty, and was sanctioned therein by the

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unanimous verdict of respectability. But the after development of Shakspeare has put the Justice on the wrong side; and there he hangs, ludicrously gibbetted for ever. Is not this somewhat melancholy? That a man, according to the faculty that was in him, should do his duty, and yet should, in consequence, be gibbetted for after ages to laugh at by the criminal on whom he was exercising legitimate justice. Really, but it would be well as a mere matter of policy to be cautious in passing judgment on the extravagancies of exuberant youth, lest after ages may have cause to laugh. Learned professors, unhappily often ignorant of human nature, are apt to look severe, and to talk of "talents thrown into the gutter," forgetting that there is a great deal of humanity in the gutter, and the man who has rolled therein, and has struggled out, may speak with much likelihood of benefit to such humanity. Misapplied talents and wasted time, says respectability, in professorial gown, forgetful that some have a talent for the gutter—forgetful, in fact, that wheat is wheat and not mustard seed; and that, moreover, manure is very serviceable in promoting the growth of it. Here is a pertinent question: what would have become of our great men, had respectability only had its way with them? Would not one have jogged on to death as he jogged on to market; and might not another have spent his energy in pounding pills in an apothecary's shop?

All in this mottie, misty clime,
I backwards mused on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
An' done naething
But stringing blethers up in rhyme
For fools to sing.

Had I to gude advice but harkit,
I might by this, hae led a markit,
Or strutted in a bank and clarkit
My cash accounts;
While here half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit
Is a' the amount.

Perhaps most people will now be of opinion that it was well that Burns did not in his "youthfu' prime" hearken to good advice—that it was better that, "half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit," he was occupied in "stringing blethers up in rhyme." Can a man sing, except like a jay, or speak, except like a parrot, who has not suffered; and furthermore, will a man who is always good, suffer? "The gold that is refined in the

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hottest furnace, comes out the purest," in more senses than one. Herr Von Goëthe was guilty of many things in youth, antagonistic to respectabilities; but has not the after-development of him sanctioned these things as the right things for the youth? Heavens! let us cease, in common charity, if not in common sense, to direct a man, and to judge each action of his life by a certain high conventional standard. It is something more than absurd to seize upon a certain event in a man's life, and with doleful regret to whine, "What a pity that this so happened!" Let this question be pondered,—Should we have had the man, had such things not so happened? and if not, this further—was it not better on the whole that these events should have so happened than that we should have been without the man? The two greatest men perhaps that the world has seen, who seem, as far as can be judged, to have been fortunate in regard to equality of temperament and power of self-control, went not in youth exactly the way that respectability would have pointed out to them. Did any great man ever do so? The best thing then that we can do, seems to be to accept a man as we find him, not as though he were an anomaly upon earth, but as having a final purpose,

> And trust the universal plan
> Will all protect.

Edgar Poe at this period of life took the wrong turning, and never afterwards recovered his way; he had been destined by constitution to it. Right was it that he should suffer in consequence, and suffer surely he did. The immediate result was his expulsion from the University; and when Mr. Allen, his patron, who had been very liberal to him in money matters, refused to pay some gambling debts, he wrote to him a violent and satirical letter, and embarked on board a ship, with the avowed intention of joining the Greek insurrection, and of freeing Greece from the Turkish yoke. "We rarely hear of a more heroic project," remarks one commentator. It may have been so, but we cannot see anything heroic about a man's weaknesses; they may have been inevitable, and must be accepted in the course of things, but they are none the less un-heroic. Heroic project! it was best but an impulse rising out of weakness; a passage out of the diary of a spoiled child; ungrateful pettish anger, with much of malice in it; gratification of his own personal resentment, with speedy forgetfulness of Greece and insurrection there—if such were ever seriously thought of at all. Heroic! Don Quixote,

rushing at the wind-mill, was a hero in comparison. It would have been infinitely more heroic had he struggled to free himself from the dominion of his own passion, and from the taint of base ingratitude, which must now for ever abide by him. Such as he was, however, the event is not to be wondered at—impulsive act in a sensitive and excitable temperament under the painful feeling of obligation. It is characteristic of human nature, when a rupture has taken place, to hate the giver of benefits, especially when the intent of these has been frustrated by wilful and wicked conduct on the part of the recipient. Hence it seems almost inevitable that Poe should have acted as he did; for the benefits had been so great, and his was a disposition in which self-feeling was everything, and reasonable will nothing. It is not, moreover, a characteristic of human nature, when it has been constantly bolstered up by indulgence and assistance, to be in any way strengthened thereby. A being so treated when deprived of his supports is apt to have a sort of convulsive fit, and, fancying it strength, to fall down heavily in consequence. So it was with Poe when he spasmodically started for the Greek insurrection, and, as might have been expected, never arrived there. Probably Greek insurrection lost nothing thereby. He was not the man to sacrifice himself for Greece, or for any thing else; there was not born in him such capability; for had not his father sacrified his life to a momentary passion for a beautiful actress, and transmitted to him such faculty for self-indulgence? Accordingly we find that after disappearing for a year he turned up in a state of intoxication at St. Petersburgh, was relieved from his embarassments there by the American Minister, and was sent back to his native land. On his return Mr. Allen was again kind to him; he was entered at the Military Academy, and in ten months was cashiered. Henceforth no good in life can be hoped from him. He had been tried in routine and respectability, and failed, which is at once damnation to a man. He had been left to his own resources to struggle amongst irregularities and non-respectabilities, and had failed there also. This latter failure indelibly stamps him with weakness; for had there been in him any of that high genius, which, although it goes off the beaten track, makes a clear track of its own, he could not have so missed his way. Is there power in a man he may laugh at circumstances, for in some position or another he must rise above them, by a law as sure as that by which a stone must fall. Edgar Poe had no such power, and, being worsted in his dealings with the world, he complained, and

whined, and begged: is not complaint in any case a sure sign of weakness?

Little is to be gained by pursuing the story of his life to its end; it is very gloomy. Cashiered at the Military Academy, he was received by Mr. Allen into his house, but behaved so badly, that writers only hint darkly, dare not venture to describe, how badly. He was turned out of doors. Next he enlisted as a private soldier, and in a very short time deserted. By birth and education he had now become what he was to remain, unstable as water; no important change for the better could be looked for. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Perhaps it is only in an asylum for the insane that the impossibility of reformation in a character which has grown after a certain type can be witnessed in its utter hopelessness. At times Poe seems almost to have felt that such an abode would have been fitting for him; at any rate he sent on one occasion to a gentleman whom he had vilely injured, in the person of his sister, an apology, with a statement to the effect that he was out of his mind. Did ever mortal before make such an excuse?

After his desertion he became very poor and exceedingly wretched. His next appearance was as the winner of a prize offered for the best tale, and on that occasion he was found haggard and in rags. Wonderful ability as had been noted at college, was unhappily not the ability to keep respectable garments on him, a thing which any vestry-man can do. Really, inexcusable as it doubtless is, there is yet something refreshing in the contemplation of a man who is not equal to a good coat; it is the pig-stye interposed in the row of stuccoed buildings. Think of it thus—that this man alone in the midst of a multitude of featherless bipeds, has not the faculty in him to keep a coat upon his back: there must manifestly then be in him some singular other faculty. Spirit of Teufelsdröckh, what wilt thou say to it?

There is one pleasing circumstance in the history of Edgar; and it is this, that the world has no cause to reproach itself for neglect of him; as it does so reproach itself in respect of its treatment to certain unhappy geniuses. Kindness interposed constantly from the cradle to the grave, and did what could be done to rescue him from the misery that he was ever bringing down upon himself. His case may, indeed, be cited as instructively showing how vain it is to reproach ourselves for not showering aid on such unhappy beings. Would not Chatterton, being such as he was, have died of arsenic, or even more miserably, whatever had been done for him? And

Byron, would he have been more wayward and more wretched, had he been born to poverty and starvation instead of being born to an income and to a coronet? When a man cannot do something for himself he seems to be like a sieve, to let all the good that others may do to him run through. Is it not, moreover, somewhat inconsistent with the character of genius to look for such aid? If the man has been sent into the world, so pre-eminently endowed, he has been sent to enlighten and to benefit the world, and not to be nursed and coddled by it like a delicate child. It is a poor case when insight and strength come to rest for support on blindness and weakness. Better after all that genius should be miserable, and be cradled into poetry by wrong, "For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain." After winning the prize for his tale Poe was sought out by a Mr. Kennedy, furnished by him with respectable clothes, and placed in the way of employment as a literary man. In this capacity he wrote successfully, but acted very irregularly and unsuccessfully. The details of his conduct are sickening, and are best left undescribed. During this period, however, he married his cousin, Virginia Clemm, who appears to have been a very gentle and affectionate being. And in spite of his many faults, in his family relations Edgar Poe attracted much affection to himself. His mother-in-law, who faithfully and devotedly tended him and loved him after her daughter's death, speaks of him as "more than a son to myself, in his long-continued and affectionate observance of every duty." One does not, however, wonder that women should have loved him; he was weak, exacting, and, no doubt, demanded much assistance. There is a wonderful love of self-sacrifice in a woman's heart; and her love increases by trial of it: it is not on the strong self-reliant man that it is poured out in greatest abundance, but on the poor, feeble mortal who can weep upon her bosom, and confide his sorrows to her ears, demanding sympathy, compassion, and help. And many a poor helpless being who reels about, it might almost seem purposeless, on the earth, has abundant affection lavished on him, simply from the capacity that he has of receiving. Did not Marlborough do the right thing to make himself loved, when he took money from his admirers? A lively and brilliant, but feeble and not self-reliant man who is often in conditions requiring sympathy and assistance, is well adapted to obtain all the love that a woman can give. All accounts agree in this, moreover, that in his intervals of sobriety Edgar Poe was refined and attractive in his manners and conversation. "I have never

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seen him," says Mrs. Osgood, "otherwise than gentle, generous, well-bred, and fastidiously refined." Unhappily we know not his inner family life—a naturally refined soul under the most favourable conditions approached nearest that was possible to that ideal after which it thirsted. The mad fits of his drunkenness are the most palpable things in Poe's life; and so the world's judgment upon him is apt to be drunk or mad. It is the way thereof. When Hamlet asks the grave-digger, "how long hast thou been a grave-digger;" the reply was that he "came to it on that very day that young Hamlet was born; he that is mad and sent to England." That was all he knew about the affair. "How came he mad," asks Hamlet, anxious possibly to know if there was not some idea abroad of the fearful mental struggles through which he had passed in a mesh of tangled villainy. "Very strangely, they say," replies the Clown. "How strangely?" "Faith e'en with losing his wits." "Upon what ground?" "Why, here in Denmark." Just so; why ask so many questions, the man having been mad palpably, and that being sufficient. What are circumstances and conditions to us, who have only to do with the man as he actually appears as he walks amongst us? How came Edgar Poe to be a drunkard? Faith e'en with drinking. Upon what ground? On the public-house floor. And having thus settled the matter we pass on our way to the other side. Meanwhile there is a good Samaritan or two who tend him carefully, feeling instinctively that there is more in the matter than appears.

There are so many circumstances in Poe's life which might admit of blame, that it is not easy to fix upon one as notably so worthy; else his marriage with his cousin might, in a journal of this character, merit grave censure. Here was a man who by constitution and circumstances had developed into something as irregular and unstable as was possible without utter deliquescence; and by way of mending matters he marries his cousin. Had there been any offspring to such marriage, we should have been justified, by experience, in expecting that one would have been born blind or deaf, another strumous or deformed, another epileptic, and, perhaps, all mad at some time or another. Happily, however, one has cause, here again, to admire the wisdom which rules the world, and by sure laws obviates the mischief for which we so often lay the train. The eternal laws exhibit their warning in disease and deformity; and if such be disregarded, the end soon comes. A family given to frequent intermarriage, degenerates until there is no longer the capability of pro-

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ducing offspring, and then mercifully dies out; whereby it happens, that aristocratic pride cannot perpetuate itself for ever. What would not man in his pride and in his folly make of himself, were it not for the powers that are above him?

During his marriage life, which lasted ten years, Poe subsisted on his literary labours, at one time as contributor, and at another time as editor, varying his work on one occasion by preparing, during the absence of the proprietor, the prospectus of a new magazine, by which he intended to supplant that which he had been employed to edit. Let this excuse, such as it is, be made for him—that it is very hard to make, contentedly, another man's fortune. Doubtless Poe felt, in a way he only could feel, that it was by him that this magazine was preserved in existence, and yet that he profited not most by it, but was rather employed as a literary hack upon it; whereupon, being a man who could only feel, could not look forward and reason, he foolishly and foully kicked. It is, indeed, foolish for a man to look only at his immediate position in the universe, and at what he may be doing therein, and thereupon to grow dissatisfied. What he should do, if he will do otherwise than act in his position, is to consider how he came there, and he will surely discover, if he have any faculty of insight in him, that he it was who placed himself wherever he may be. There is no accident in human life; "As a man sows, so must he reap." What is it then to a man that he should be making the fortunes of fifty persons, and should not be making his own, when their fortunes and his labour have come to that pass by equally certain laws. "Let the dead past bury its dead," if so be that it has an ugly aspect:

> "Act, act within the living present,
> Heart within and God o'erhead."

When Poe's wife died, which event happened in 1846, he was in a very destitute state, and certain kind souls appealed for help on his behalf in the newspapers. Of course Poe, while gladly getting hold of money wherever he could, denied that he wanted any assistance in high theatrical style, and then attributed such denial to a "justifiable pride," which had induced him to conceal his wants. There is need of all possible patience with men who act in this manner; no justifiable pride with them in acting rightly, but a cheap pride in talking grandly—the "justifiable pride" of a lie. Accept whatever assistance to the result of folly may be needful and can be obtained, and then in place of gratitude, or acknowledgment, take oath that it was never wanted. It is pitiable, but like

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other lamentable things, apparently inevitable. There are men who, like Poe, having such an intense *self*-feeling, cannot realize the fact of a not-self; they seem to look upon the world as a place created for them to play their pranks in, and accept whatever help they may receive, not as a charity or a kindness, but as a right, and are ungrateful accordingly. Insincerity of character, one might say; for sincerity involves the appreciation of relation—of the relation of the individual to something else, as well as of the relation of something else to the individual; whereas the vision of such men is so much perverted by their self-feeling, that they are positively unable to see themselves in relation to anything else. So that insincerity with them is not really so wilful and wicked as it might appear. A radical evil has never been corrected by circumstances. So it was with Poe, who could never feel for any one or any thing, except, as it were, through himself. And yet, from his poetry, it might at first sight appear that there was in him a powerful love for another; for has he not written some beautiful lines which have reference to his departed wife? Beautiful and melodious, truly, but yet no real feeling of sorrow discernible therein. One cannot but feel, on perusal of his poetical lamentation, that it is artificial and ingenious in construction, and must have cost him much labour in plan and pre-contrivance—that it is not nature, not even true art, which is the reflex of nature, but artifice. It does not "grow up from the depths of nature through this noble sincere soul, who is a voice of nature." And withal there is noticeable a sort of selfish and unresigned tone about it. No solemn sorrow, or humble acquiescent resignation in the inexorable decrees of Destiny. When the wind came out of the cloud by night, killing and chilling his Annabel Lee, it was because—

> "The angels not half so happy in heaven,
> Went envying her and me—
> Yes! that was the reason (as all men know
> In this kingdom by the sea),
> That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
> Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee."

And again, who can help seeing this stage passion in those beautiful verses, addressed to "One in Paradise," which may be quoted here in order to contrast them with the wail of real sorrow:—

> "Thou wast that all to me, love,
> For which my soul did pine—

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A green isle in the sea, love;
A fountain and a shrine,
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
And all the flowers were mine.

"Ah, dream too bright to last!
Ah, starry Hope! that didst arise
But to be overcast!
A voice within, from out the Future cries,
(Dim gulf) my spirit hovering lies
Mute, motionless, aghast!

"For alas! alas! with me
The light of Life is o'er!
'No more—no more—no more.'
(Such language holds the solemn sea
To the sands upon the shore)
Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
Or the stricken eagle soar!

"And all my days are trances,
And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy dark eye glances,
And where thy footstep gleams—
In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams."

With which compare what a poet, whose heart was full of real sorrow, has said

"Break, break, break,
On thy cold grey stones, O sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me."

* * * * *

"And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill!
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.

"Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

No doubt Poe felt sorrowful when his wife died, for she had ministered kindly and attentively to him. Had not she and her mother come nearest to what he thought the whole world

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ought to be in regard to him—the world forgetful of its destiny to wait upon him :

" She tenderly kissed me,
She fondly caressed,
And then I fell gently
To sleep on her breast ;
Deeply to sleep,
From the heaven of her breast.

" When the light was extinguished
She covered me warm,
And she prayed to the angels
To keep me from harm—
To the queen of the angels
To shield me from harm."

Ah ! it was very hard to bear so great a loss, and hope seems for ever gone.

" Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
Or the stricken eagle soar."

Yes ! within two years the thunder blasted tree began to put forth new blossoms, and the stricken eagle sought another mate. Within that time he became engaged to "one of the most brilliant women of New England ;" and one ignorant of Poe's character might suppose from the lines which he addressed to her, that never man yet suffered from passion so intense and so exalted ; but we can see here, as we have seen before, only an artificial passion, a passion " from the throat outwards." The verses are those commencing

I saw thee once—once only—years ago :

in which he informs the lady that, after her departure in the evening from the garden,

Only thine eyes remained
They would not go—They never yet have gone
They have not left me (as my hopes have) since
They follow me—they lead me through the years
They are my ministers, &c., &c. * *

* * * * *

They fill my soul with Beauty (which is Hope)
And are far up in Heaven—the stars I kneel to
In the sad, silent watches of my night ;
While even in the meridian glare of day
I see them still—two sweetly scintillant
Venuses, unextinguished by the sun !

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Being congratulated, however, by some friends on his brilliant engagement, Poe replied; "No, No! you'll see there will be no marriage after all." And the way whereby he brought about the fulfilment of his prediction was to appear in the street and at the lady's house exceedingly drunk and outrageously extravagant, so that the police were called in, Poe was carried away, and the match was broken off. It has been surmized by way of explanation that he felt that this brilliant lady knew only the better part of him, and that the marriage would surely make her miserable; he therefore, broke it off as he did, not having strength of purpose to do it in any other way. But such an hypothesis gives to Poe's character credit for an unselfishness and sincerity which it is certain that it never possessed; and the strange circumstance admits of an easier and more natural explanation on the supposition of his selfishness and insincerity of character. He was possibly impressed with the feeling that a modest, lovely, unselfish Virginia Clemm was far better adapted to be his wife than "one of the most brilliant women of New England"—that on the whole it was very probable that the latter might make him miserable. "No! no! there must be no marriage." So one day, when in his drunkenness this feeling came very forcibly over him, as on such occasions similar feelings are apt to do, and when drink had inspired him with that courage which, weak mortal as he was, he possessed not without, he started off suddenly with the determination to break off the affair somehow. And he succeeded by, perhaps, the strangest method that ever was adopted under like circumstances. Can we forget his apology on the occasion of previous discreditable behaviour—that "Poe was out of his mind."

Soon after this unpleasant event, being, through further excesses, reduced to a condition in which he was obliged to beg money at Philadelphia, he made a sort of convulsive effort to reform by signing the pledge. Not the least certain evidence of his weakness of character, nor the least curious phase in his history this—Edgar Poe, a teetotaller! Here at Philadelphia, a few months after his last escapade, this "stricken eagle" again proposed to a lady and was accepted. So he set out for New York to prepare for his marriage; but on his way entered a tavern, where he met some friends, and, what more need be said—gave himself up to a night of furious "debauchery," in the morning was carried to the hospital, where he died, aged, as far as is known, 38 years. Such a leave-taking is not altogether

unexampled. Some nine months before his death, Burns dined at a tavern, returning home about three in the morning *benumbed with cold* and *intoxicated*; he had in consequence an attack of rheumatism, and from that time gradually failed until he died. So pass away some men indubitably marked with the stamp of genius, leaving for our reflection the important question—how happened it?

Of all men of note who have walked upon the earth, it is scarcely possible to point to one whose history discloses more of folly and more of wretchedness than that of Edgar Poe. It was not because he sinned often and sinned sadly that his anguish of mind was lessened. Black-plumed remorse, as sure as death itself, visits all who invite it; and croaks its grating dirge of sorrow in the ears of the most abandoned, as loudly and harshly as in the ears of the occasional sinner. Those fitful gleams of sunshine in his life indicate to us too plainly Poe's misery and remorse; and perhaps more painful evidence thereof than all is that signing of the pledge. It was the convulsive effort of a miserable and feeble human soul to escape from its misery and degradation. But convulsion is not strength, and we wonder not that the act was followed by a speedy fall. Alas! imagination connot penetrate the thick gloom of remorse which enshrouded this weak child of nature. Through life accompanied him "vast formless things,"

> Flapping from out their condor wings
> Invisible woe!

Acute sensibility is the prominent feature in Poe's character, and an intense love of the beautiful, the genuine element in his poetry. It was through the former that he was rendered such an unhappy being in the world; it was by the latter that we recognise in him a spark of the divine light of genius. And among the unhappy tendencies which his father had transmitted to him, let us not forget to give due credit to David Poe for this exalted feeling. Had not the father been so sensible of the beautiful as to sacrifice all his prospects in life to the pursuit of the concrete beauty, his son might have wanted that intense aspiration after the ideal, without which we should have wanted his poetry. Every day life does not unfortunately afford much satisfaction to such a feeling, and a man so endowed is apt to become wearied of the everlasting sameness of things, and desperate at the coarseness and selfishness of humanity. Not feeling calmly he cannot think calmly, and hence comes to express himself strongly—to speak of "Fate, whose name is also Sorrow," of society as "being

principally composed of villains," and of the earth as "a hated world" and a "damned earth." So spoke Edgar Poe; and one cannot avoid contrasting with such outbursts the more calmly expressed conviction of a stronger and more far-seeing genius.

"I'll na say men are villains a'
* * *
But oh! mankind are unco' weak,
An' little to be trusted."

It requires a genius of a still higher order to be able to see through the crust of evil, and to discover "good in everything." Poe, having just escaped madness, took refuge from the anguish of his crushed feelings in alcohol, and sought for consolation there; in intoxication he endeavoured to realize his ideal of the beautiful. Doubtless whilst the excitement lasted he experienced joys which he could not grasp otherwise; but the reaction, which must to him have been so terrible, followed, and has left its stamp upon his poetry.

The truly genuine, the—so to say—sincere elements in his, poetry are thus, his intense aspiration after the beautiful, and the melancholy of remorse. Everywhere, both in his prose and his poetry, do we find the expression of his keen love of the beautiful.

"Alas! alas!
I cannot die, having within my heart
So keen a relish for the beautiful,
As hath been kindled in it."

And again, of Helen's eyes he says—

"They fill my soul with beauty (which is hope)."

One of his earliest poetical compositions, written when he was but a boy, was that chaste and beautiful address "to Helen," which is notable partly for the absence of the usual sepulchral gloom, in consequence of having been written before remorse had marked him for its own.

"Helen, thy beauty was 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 Naïad 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!———

In his prose writings he even maintains "that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poet;" that "the pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure," is to be found in the contemplation of the Beautiful—nay, he actually offers one of his productions as "this book of truths, not in the character of truth-teller, but for the beauty that abounds in its truth, constituting it true."

Unhappily he could find no satisfaction for so keen a sentiment, and became somewhat desperate in consequence:

"Oh! I am sick, sick sick, even unto death
Of the hollow and high-sounding vanities
Of the populous earth."

The melancholy tone of his poetry must be regarded as the effect of his melancholy view of life, but by no means as an unconscious effect. He considered a tone of sadness, as he informs us, to be the tone of the highest manifestation of beauty; —"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." And his poetry is all most ingeniously, one might almost say, cunningly constructed in accordance with such a view. Does it not consist throughout of beauty and sorrow—of Psyche and of death, which is the greatest sorrow, "of all melancholy topics, what, according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the most melancholy?" "And when is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" "When it most clearly 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." Hence Psyche is brought "in the lonesome October," with her wings "sorrowfully trailing in the dust," "by the dank tarn of Auber, in the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir," until she is "stopped by the door of a tomb."

"By the door of a legended tomb;
And I said, 'What is written, sweet sister,
On the door of this legended tomb?'
She replied—'Ulalume, Ulalume—
'Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume!'"

Hence also we hear of

"The lilies there that wave,
And weep above a nameless grave."

He embodied the spring blossoms of his life, his hopes and aspirations, which had all been blasted and wrecked, in the form of a beautiful woman, as the form most beautiful on earth; and this he chained to a vault, or otherwise represented under circumstances of intense gloom. In this way he blended the actual and the ideal in his poetry.

"My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep
As it is lasting so be deep!
Soft may the worms about her creep!
Far in the forest dim and old,
For her may some tall vault unfold," &c.

Gloomy gates open to disclose the beautiful statue of Psyche, and sorrow and "dying embers" in the "bleak December," accompany "the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."

"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 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.

As he "nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping" at his chamber door; and in steps a "stately raven of the saintly days of yore." Passionate appeal then is his to this embodiment of utter hopelessness for "respite, respite and nepenthe from the memories of Lenore."

"'Prophet!' said I, 'thing of evil! prophet still, if bird or devil!
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest toss'd 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!'

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"'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!'"

A notable feature is the absence of anything sensual from Poe's poetry; the beautiful is as chaste as a statue; it is not Venus, "not even a lissome Vivien," but Psyche—always Psyche from the regions which are Holy Land. And this pure passion for the beautiful, so much above earth in its aspiration, which was inherent in him, would but tend, being rudely crushed, to increase his degradation, and to aggravate his remorse. Unhappily endowed being! probably few people have lived upon this earth as miserable as was Edgar Poe.

The genius of Poe lies in his keen sentiment of the beautiful; therein had he a glimpse into that "mystery of the universe what Goëthe calls 'the open secret;'" the possession of a faculty of insight into which on one aspect or another, is necessary to constitute a man of genius. Dr. Johnson has said—"As among the works of nature no man can properly call a river deep or a mountain high, without the knowledge of many mountains and many rivers; so in the production of genius nothing can be styled excellent till it has been compared with other works of the same kind." But in adopting such a canon of criticism, it behoves us to be very careful that we do compare things of the same kind. It does not follow most certainly that, because we attribute genius to a man, we are justified in dragging forward his production and comparing it with that of any other man of genius, and, forthwith, being disappointed by the comparison, pronouncing him inferior. As well might we compare the lilac of the garden with the banyan of the forest. There are men of genius belonging, so to say, to different species, as well as trees of different species; and in the one case as well as in the other, one may be beautiful and pleasing to look at and another mighty and useful to profit from. Heaven sends us both, and finds it not good to give to the laburnum the branches of the gnarled and knotted oak. The poet, the prophet, and the philosopher, the man of genius in any shape do, indeed, at bottom see but the same thing, and that what Fichte calls

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"the Divine idea which lies at the bottom of all appearance;" but they see it in different aspects. The poet sees the beautiful in it, the philosopher the true, and the prophet the good; and yet the beautiful, the true, and the good are all aspects of one and the same. No man has genius who possesses not the faculty of seeing this in one form or another; he may have talent, but talent dies with him. In his sympathy with the beautiful lies what of genius Edgar Poe had; for we say nothing of the beauty of his language and of his melody here; no other insight had he. His sorrrow is nothing more than a morning headache after a night of intemperance, and his view of man's life and destiny upon earth is nothing more than a perverted vision—by reason of which he was incapacitated from seeing ought but the "tragedy man."

> And much of madness, and more of sin,
> And horror the soul of the plot.

The question might arise for us at this stage, as to what view Edgar Poe entertained of man in the universe; but, unhappily, as we have said, he does not appear to have been capable of any serious or comprehensive view at all; merely felt that he was a very miserable creature with acute sensibility, and strong aspiration for something beautiful, for which he could by no means find satisfaction. In the conduct of his life, he made the important mistake of supposing that happiness was attainable by self-indulgence, instead of by self-denial, and acted accordingly. He sought his own pleasure, and never dreamed that the object of a man's life might be the happiness of others, and therein the greatest happiness to himself. So he flung down the dice with a deeper and deeper stake on each occasion, and lost more and more peace of mind, until he thought that the dice must be loaded, that a conspiracy exististed against him on the part of society, and deemed the earth to be a "damned earth." And he poured forth his anger and his hatred together, with his sorrow for his lost love, and his blasted hopes, thus:

Ah, broken is the golden bowl! the spirit flown for ever!
Let the bell toll! a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river;
And Guy de Vere, hast *thou* no tear;—weep now or never more!
See on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love, Lenore!
Come! let the burial rite be read—the funeral song be sung!—
An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young—
A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she died so young.

* * * * *

"Avaunt! to-night my heart is light—no dirge will I upraise,
"But waft the angel on her flight with pæon of old days!
"Let *no* bell toll! lest her sweet soul, amid its hallowed mirth,
"Should catch the note as it doth float up from the damned earth.
"To friends above from fiends below, the indignant ghost is riven—
"From Hell into a high estate far up within the heaven—
"From grief and groan, to a golden throne, beside the King of Heaven."

We wonder not that so weak a mortal, seeing life only through his own morbid soul, could find therein nothing but madness and horror and sin. Better and stronger men have with earnest supplicating cry questioned destiny, to whom it has given but a doubtful reply. Oh, that my existence had been postponed for some thousands of years, might be the prayer, not altogether of a madman; that it might have been put off till the end was nearer at hand—that I had been born when some reasonable guess might have been made at the final purpose! Better would it have been, than to live now, when desire is so intense yet without satisfaction, to have lived amongst the Titans, with Odin or with Thor; to have made bricks in Egypt, or to have defended the pass at Thermopylæ. But to be as it is—hemmed in by conventionalities, which are some of them manifestly not of eternity and heaven, but of time and the devil; madly thirsting after knowledge, but incapable of attaining it—it is difficult indeed to be calm and to steer aright. There is a just need of the rudder of a reasonable faith to enable a man to do so; a faith in God, rather than the devil, ruling the world. From certain passages in Poe's writings it might appear, were it legitimate in such way to draw conclusions, that his views were somewhat sceptical; that he had notable faith only in the 'conqueror worm.' "The boundaries which divide life and death," says he, "are at best shadowy and vague. Who shall say where the one ends and the other begins? We know that there are diseases in which occur total cessations of all the apparent functions of vitality, and yet in which these cessations are merely suspensions, properly so called. They are only temporary pauses in the incomprehensible mechanism; a certain period elapses, and some unseen mysterious principle again sets in motion the magic pinions and the wizard wheels. The silver cord was not for ever loosed, nor the golden bowl irreparably broken. But where, meantime, was the soul?" And

again in the conversation which the learned Doctor Pononner holds with the resuscitated Egyptian mummy, Count Allamistakeo, the following remarks occur, "But since it is quite clear," resumed the doctor, "that at least five thousand years have elapsed since your entombment, I take it for granted that your histories, at that period, if not your traditions, were sufficiently explicit on that one topic of universal interest, the Creation, which took place, as I presume you are aware, only ten centuries before?" "Sir?" said the Count Allamistakeo. The doctor repeated his remarks; but it was only after much additional explanation, that the foreigner could be made to comprehend them. The latter at length said, hesitatingly, "The ideas you have suggested are to me, I confess, utterly novel. During my time, I never knew any one to entertain so singular a fancy as that the universe (or this world, if you will have it so,) ever had a beginning at all. I remember once, and once only, hearing something remotely hinted, by a man of many speculations, concerning the origin of the human race; and by this individual, the very word *Adam*, (Red Earth) which you make use of, was employed. He employed it, however, in a generical sense, with reference to the spontaneous germination from rank soil, (just as a thousand of the lower *genera* of creatures are generated), the spontaneous germination, I say, of five vast hordes of men, simultaneously upspringing in five distinct and nearly equal divisions of the globe."

Such observations, however, are of no great import, since the character of Poe, as we see it in his writings and in the facts of his life, clearly makes manifest that, whether he were in the 'everlasting no,' or whether he had arrived at the 'centre of indifference,' he certainly had not attained to a knowledge of the 'everlasting yea.' Angry and envious, malignant and cynical, without sense of honour or love of his kind, he was utterly destitute of that faculty of reasonable insight, by which a man sees in human life something more than what is weak, sinful, and contemptible. If a man determine to reject all creeds and dogmas, yet, if he have any power of vision, must he surely discover 'eternal veracities' in the heaven, in the earth, and all that therein is; *feel* them as they are traced by the finger of Omnipotence day by day in his own moral experience. The highest devolpment of scepticism can in the end, but arrive at this conclusion, that sin is ignorance; and if a man have the capability of knowledge in him, is he not responsible for such ignorance? If, however, he grasp at the present, forgetting the eternal, and hope to

find pleasure or satisfaction in the fleeting things of time, he may say with Edgar Poe, dubiously and despairingly,

> 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?

There are many melancholy spectacles in the world, but, perhaps, none more melancholy and more pitiable than that of a man of genius howling out in his own weakness; a Byron shrieking curses to the listening stars; or a Poe doing evil, and angrily damning the punishment thereof. If a brave man struggling with adversity be a sight pleasing to the gods, surely the angels may weep over such a spectacle; for,

> Hell rising from a thousand thrones
> Shall do it reverence.

There appears no further possibility of 'explaining' Edgar Poe. We must accept the facts of his life, and in them we can only see the result of a fundamental constitutional fact and an unhappy collocation of circumstances. It seemeth good to the Ruler of the spheres to embody in human form now and then the various vices and weaknesses to which human nature is liable, and by the erratic and unhappy course thereof, to 'teach the nations wisdom and the people understanding.' It behoves us to look on, 'more in sorrow than in anger;' rather than to curse, to pray with the Arabian philosopher, "O God! be kind to the wicked; to the good thou hast already been sufficiently kind, in making them good."

Alas! it is exceedingly difficult to accept calmly such an anomalous being as Edgar Poe. Is no explanation of him possible? Is the tragedy played out with no unity preserved therein? For the present it is; but the time will surely come, when Edgar Poe may be proved to have been legitimate and no otherwise possible. Meanwhile the curtain falls.

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Out—out are the lights—out all!
And over each quivering form,
The curtain, a funeral pall,
Comes down with the rush of a storm,
And the angels, all pallid and wan,
Uprising, unveiling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy, "Man,"
And its hero, the Conqueror Worm.

Consciousness as a Truth-organ considered, or Contributions to Logical Psychology. By Rev. W. G. Davies, Chaplain, Asylum, Abergavenny.

(Continued from p. 101.)*

PART I. SECTION 2.

The first class of objects to be viewed as producing a distinct order of consciousness embraces the fundamental sensation, and its attendant sensations. But perhaps it is necessary to explain before entering upon the task of analysis, that it would be foreign to the nature of Logical Psychology to enumerate, and enlarge upon the objects contained in each class of that nature. The demands of that science are fully answered when we have pointed out that a certain class of objects—though we may know little else about it—marks out a distinct variety of intellectual power. Let it be remembered then, that it is the aim of these contributions to describe—not the objects of consciousness, even when these are mental in their character—but, exclusively, the cognition of them. The following table will, it is trusted, clearly determine the boundaries of that department of psychology to which these researches are confined.

* Erratum. In the last at p. 118, for "it is not lying there unknown," Read, "is it not lying there unknown?"

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