

EDGAR ALLAN POE

TAMERLANE¹

KIND solace in a dying hour!²
Such, father, is not (now) my theme —³
I will not madly deem that power

¹ 'Tamerlane,' which first appeared in 1827 in *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, was entirely re-written for Poe's volume of 1829, *Al Araaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems*. The text of the poem as here given is practically that of 1829. It follows the edition of 1845 (as given in the Virginia and Stedman-Woodberry editions of Poe's works), but the differences of this edition from that of 1829 are confined (with one exception) to matters of punctuation and typography. The edition of 1831 offers somewhat greater variations, all of which are carefully recorded in the notes of both the Virginia and the Stedman-Woodberry editions. The version of 1827 is given complete in the notes to both these editions, and may also be found in Mr. R. H. Shepherd's complete reprint of the 1827 volume (London, 1884).

The subject of the poem, not very clear at first reading, is the evil triumph of the Mogul emperor Tamerlane, who, according to the story as conceived by Poe, was born a shepherd, left his mountain home and his early life for the conquest of the eastern world, and returned only to find that his love had died of his neglect.

The well-worn device of a death-bed narrative to the conventional friar is lamely excused by Poe in his first note to the 1827 edition: 'How I shall account for giving him "a friar" as a death-bed confessor, — I cannot exactly determine. He wanted some one to listen to his tale — and why not a friar? It does not pass the bounds of possibility, — quite sufficient for my purpose, — and I have at least good authority on my side for such innovations.'

² The beginning of the poem is somewhat clearer in the 1827 version: —

I have sent for thee, holy friar:
But 't was not with the drunken hope,
Which is but agony of desire
To shun the fate, with which to cope
Is more than crime may dare to dream,
That I have call'd thee at this hour:
Such, father, is not my theme —
Nor am I mad, to deem that power
Of earth may shrive me of the sin
Unearthly pride hath revell'd in —
I would not call thee fool, old man,
But hope is not a gift of thine;
If I can hope (O God! I can)
It falls from an eternal shrine.

The gay wall of this gaudy tower
Grows dim around me — death is near.
I had not thought, until this hour
When passing from the earth, that ear
Of any, were it not the shade
Of one whom in life I made
All mystery but a simple name,
Might know the secret of a spirit
Bow'd down in sorrow, and in shame. —

³ Poe's own somewhat peculiar punctuation is followed throughout, as given in the Virginia edition of Poe's Works. Faithfulness to this punctuation, about which Poe was particular, makes the Virginia edition, in text, superior to all others.

Of Earth may shrive me of the sin
Unearthly pride hath revell'd in —
I have no time to dote or dream:
You call it hope — that fire of fire!
It is but agony of desire:
If I can hope — O God! I can —
Its fount is holier — more divine —¹⁰
I would not call thee fool, old man,
But such is not a gift of thine.

Know thou the secret of a spirit
Bow'd from its wild pride into shame.
O yearning heart! I did inherit
Thy withering portion with the fame,
The searing glory which hath shone
Amid the Jewels of my throne,
Halo of Hell! and with a pain
Not Hell shall make me fear again —²⁰
O craving heart, for the lost flowers
And sunshine of my summer hours!
The undying voice of that dead time,
With its interminable chime,
Rings, in the spirit of a spell,
Upon thy emptiness — a knell.

I have not always been as now:
The fever'd diadem on my brow
I claim'd and won usurpingly —
Hath not the same fierce heirdom given³⁰
Rome to the Cæsar — this to me?
The heritage of a kingly mind,
And a proud spirit which hath striven
Triumphantly with human kind.

On mountain soil I first drew life:
The mists of the Taglay have shed⁴
Nightly their dews upon my head,
And, I believe, the wing'd strife
And tumult of the headlong air
Have nestled in my very hair.⁴⁰

So late from Heaven — that dew — it fell
(Mid dreams of an unholy night)
Upon me with the touch of Hell,

⁴ The mountains of Beir Taglay are a branch of the Imaus, in the southern part of Independent Tartary. They are celebrated for the singular wildness and beauty of their valleys. (POE, 1827.)

While the red flashing of the light
From clouds that hung, like banners, o'er,
Appeared to my half-closing eye
The pageantry of monarchy,
And the deep trumpet-thunder's roar
Came hurriedly upon me, telling
Of human battle, where my voice,⁵⁰
My own voice, silly child! — was swelling
(O! how my spirit would rejoice,
And leap within me at the cry)
The battle-cry of Victory!

The rain came down upon my head
Unshelter'd — and the heavy wind
Rendered me mad and deaf and blind.
It was but man, I thought, who shed
Laurels upon me: and the rush —⁶⁰
The torrent of the chilly air
Gurgled within my ear the crash
Of empires — with the captive's prayer —
The hum of suitors — and the tone
Of flattery 'round a sovereign's throne.

My passions, from that hapless hour,
Usurp'd a tyranny which men
Have deem'd, since I have reach'd to power,
My innate nature — be it so:
But, father, there liv'd one who, then,
Then — in my boyhood — when their fire⁷⁰
Burn'd with a still intenser glow
(For passion must, with youth, expire)
E'en then who knew this iron heart
In woman's weakness had a part.

I have no words — alas! — to tell
The loveliness of loving well!
Nor would I now attempt to trace
The more than beauty of a face
Whose lineaments, upon my mind,
Are — shadows on th' unstable wind:⁸⁰
Thus I remember having dwelt
Some page of early lore upon,
With loitering eye, till I have felt
The letters — with their meaning — melt
To fantasies — with none.

O, she was worthy of all love!
Love — as in infancy was mine —
'T was such as angel minds above
Might envy; her young heart the shrine
On which my every hope and thought⁹⁰
Were incense — then a goodly gift,
For they were childish and upright —
Pure — as her young example taught:

Why did I leave it, and, adrift,
Trust to the fire within, for light?

We grew in age — and love — together —
Roaming the forest, and the wild;
My breast her shield in wintry weather —
And, when the friendly sunshine smil'd,
And she would mark the opening skies,¹⁰⁰
I saw no Heaven — but in her eyes.

Young Love's first lesson is — the heart:
For 'mid that sunshine, and those smiles,
When, from our little cares apart,
And laughing at her girlish wiles,
I'd throw me on her throbbing breast,
And pour my spirit out in tears —
There was no need to speak the rest —
No need to quiet any fears
Of her — who ask'd no reason why,¹¹⁰
But turn'd on me her quiet eye!

Yet more than worthy of the love
My spirit struggled with, and strove,
When, on the mountain peak, alone,
Ambition lent it a new tone —
I had no being — but in thee:
The world, and all it did contain
In the earth — the air — the sea —
Its joy — its little lot of pain
That was new pleasure — the ideal,¹²⁰
Dim, vanities of dreams by night —
And dimmer nothings which were real —
(Shadows — and a more shadowy light!)
Parted upon their misty wings,
And, so, confusedly, became
Thine image and — a name — a name!
Two separate — yet most intimate things.

I was ambitious — have you known
The passion, father? You have not:
A cottager, I mark'd a throne¹³⁰
Of half the world as all my own,
And murmur'd at such lowly lot —
But, just like any other dream,
Upon the vapor of the dew
My own had past, did not the beam
Of beauty which did while it thro'
The minute — the hour — the day — op-
press
My mind with double loveliness.¹

¹ The last two paragraphs, twenty-seven lines in all, should be compared with the corresponding paragraphs (numbered vii and viii) in the version of 1827, which contain seventy-one lines, in order to appreciate the greater condensation and strength of the 1829 version. The advance which Poe made between these two

We walk'd together on the crown
Of a high mountain which look'd down 140
Afar from its proud natural towers
Of rock and forest, on the hills —
The dwindled hills! begirt with bowers
And shouting with a thousand rills.

I spoke to her of power and pride,
But mystically — in such guise
That she might deem it nought beside
The moment's converse; in her eyes
I read, perhaps too carelessly —
A mingled feeling with my own — 150
The flush on her bright cheek, to me
Seem'd to become a queenly throne
Too well that I should let it be
Light in the wilderness alone.

I wrapp'd myself in grandeur then
And donn'd a visionary crown —
Yet it was not that Fantasy
Had thrown her mantle over me —
But that, among the rabble — men,
Lion ambition is chain'd down — 160
And crouches to a keeper's hand —
Not so in deserts where the grand —
The wild — the terrible conspire
With their own breath to fan his fire.¹

Look 'round thee now on Samarcand!² —
Is she not queen of Earth? her pride
Above all cities? in her hand
Their destinies? in all beside
Of glory which the world hath known
Stands she not nobly and alone? 170
Falling — her veriest stepping-stone
Shall form the pedestal of a throne —
And who her sovereign? Timour³ — he
Whom the astonished people saw
Striding o'er empires haughtily
A diadem'd outlaw!

O, human love! thou spirit given,
On Earth, of all we hope in Heaven!
Which fall'st into the soul like rain
Upon the Siroc-wither'd plain, 180

versions, the way in which he 'found himself,' is strikingly illustrated by the characteristic suggestiveness, beauty, and perhaps vagueness of expression in these two paragraphs as they now stand.

¹ These ten lines have taken the place of ninety-three lines (sections xi-xiv) in the 1827 edition.

² I believe it was after the battle of Angora that Tamerlane made Samarcand his residence. It became for a time the seat of learning and the arts. (POE, 1827.)

³ He was called Timur Bek as well as Tamerlane. (POE, 1827.)

And, failing in thy power to bless,
But leav'st the heart a wilderness!
Idea! which bindest life around
With music of so strange a sound
And beauty of so wild a birth —
Farewell! for I have won the Earth.

When Hope, the eagle that tower'd, could
see
No cliff beyond him in the sky,
His pinions were bent droopingly —
And homeward turn'd his soften'd eye.⁴ 190
^T was sunset: when the sun will part
There comes a sullenness of heart
To him who still would look upon
The glory of the summer sun.
That soul will hate the ev'ning mist
So often lovely, and will list
To the sound of the coming darkness
(known

To those whose spirits harken) as one
Who, in a dream of night, would fly
But cannot from a danger nigh. 200

What tho' the moon — the white moon
Shed all the splendor of her noon,
Her smile is chilly — and her beam,
In that time of dreariness, will seem
(So like you gather in your breath)
A portrait taken after death.

And boyhood is a summer sun
Whose waning is the dreariest one —
For all we live to know is known
And all we seek to keep hath flown — 210
Let life, then, as the day-flower, fall
With the noon-day beauty — which is all.

I reach'd my home — my home no more —
For all had flown who made it so.
I pass'd from out its mossy door,
And, tho' my tread was soft and low,
A voice came from the threshold stone
Of one whom I had earlier known —
O, I defy thee, Hell, to show
On beds of fire that burn below, 220
An humbler heart — a deeper woe.

⁴ At this point the story is given more clearly in the version of 1827: —

My eyes were still on pomp and power,
My wilder'd heart was far away
In the valleys of the wild Taglay,
In mine own Ad's matted bower.
I dwelt not long in Samarcand
Ere, in a peasant's lowly guise,
I sought my long-abandon'd land;
By sunset did its mountains rise
In dusky grandeur to my eyes.

Father, I firmly do believe —¹
I know — for Death who comes for me
From regions of the blest afar,
Where there is nothing to deceive,
Hath left his iron gate ajar,
And rays of truth you cannot see
Are flashing thro' Eternity —
I do believe that Eblis hath
A snare in every human path — 230
Else how, when in the holy grove
I wandered of the idol, Love,
Who daily scents his snowy wings
With incense of burnt offerings
From the most unpolluted things,
Whose pleasant bowers are yet so riven
Above with trellic'd rays from Heaven
No mote may shun — no tiniest fly —
The light'ning of his eagle eye —
How was it that Ambition crept, 240
Unseen, amid the revels there,
Till growing bold, he laughed and leapt
In the tangles of Love's very hair?
1821?—1829.² 1827, 1829.

TO — —

I SAW thee on thy bridal day —
When a burning blush came o'er thee,
Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee:

And in thine eye a kindling light
(Whatever it might be)
Was all on Earth my aching sight
Of Loveliness could see.

That blush, perhaps, was maiden shame —
As such it well may pass —

¹ This last paragraph of the poem was added in the edition of 1829.

² In his preface to the original edition of *Tamerlane*, Poe says: 'The greater part of the poems which compose this little volume were written in the year 1821-1822, when the author had not completed his fourteenth year.' This statement is not to be trusted implicitly. But even if we assign the composition of these poems to the latest possible date, 1826-1827, the early development of their author seems hardly the less remarkable; for he would then be only seventeen or eighteen years old. Keats was almost twenty-two at the time when his first volume was published. 'Both in promise and in actual performance,' says Mr. Shepherd in his preface to the 1884 reprint of *Tamerlane and Other Poems* (quoted by Mr. Harrison), 'it may claim to rank as the most remarkable production that any English-speaking or English-writing poet of this century has published in his teens.' Poe was only eighteen years old when the volume was published, and it is interesting to note that the printer and publisher of the book, Calvin Thomas of Boston, was then only nineteen years old.

Though its glow hath raised a fiercer flame
In the breast of him, alas!

Who saw thee on that bridal day,
When that deep blush would come o'er
thee,
Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee.

1826. 1827.

SONG FROM AL AARAAF³

'NEATH blue-bell or streamer —
Or tufted wild spray
That keeps, from the dreamer,
The moonbeam away —
Bright beings! that ponder,
With half closing eyes,
On the stars which your wonder
Hath drawn from the skies,
'Till they glance thro' the shade, and
Come down to your brow 10
Like — eyes of the maiden
Who calls on you now —
Arise! from your dreaming
In violet bowers,
To duty beseeching
These star-litten hours —
And shake from your tresses
Encumber'd with dew
The breath of those kisses
That cumber them too — 20

³ This song was introduced in the second part of 'Al Aaraaf' as being sung to summon the spirit of music, or better the spirit of universal harmony. One of the most beautiful of Poe's tales, called 'Ligeia,' is an even finer embodiment of this conception.

Mr. Thomas Wentworth Higginson gives in his *Short Studies of American Authors* some vivid reminiscences of the evening when Poe read 'Al Aaraaf' to an audience in Boston. The story is told in more condensed form in Higginson and Boynton's *Reader's History of American Literature*, page 214: 'The verses had long since been printed in his youthful volume . . . and they produced no very distinct impression on the audience until Poe began to read the maiden's song in the second part. Already his tones had been softening to a finer melody than at first, and when he came to the verses, —

Ligeia! Ligeia!
My beautiful one!

his voice seemed attenuated to the faintest golden thread; the audience became hushed, and, as it were, breathless; there seemed no life in the hall but his; and every syllable was accentuated with such delicacy, and sustained with such sweetness, as I never heard equaled by other lips. When the lyric ended, it was like the ceasing of the gypsy's chant in Browning's 'Flight of the Duchess,' and I remember nothing more, except that in walking back to Cambridge my comrades and I felt that we had been under the spell of some wizard. Indeed, I feel much the same in the retrospect, to this day.'

(O! how, without you, Love!
 Could angels be blest?)
 Those kisses of true love
 That lull'd ye to rest!
 Up!—shake from your wing
 Each hindering thing:
 The dew of the night —
 It would weigh down your flight;
 And true love caresses —
 O! leave them apart!
 They are light on the tresses,
 But lead on the heart.

Ligeia! Ligeia!
 My beautiful one!
 Whose harsh idea
 Will to melody run,
 O! is it thy will
 On the breezes to toss?
 Or, capriciously still,
 Like the lone Albatross,
 Incumbent on night
 (As she on the air)
 To keep watch with delight
 On the harmony there?

Ligeia! wherever
 Thy image may be,
 No magic shall sever
 Thy music from thee.
 Thou hast bound many eyes
 In a dreamy sleep —
 But the strains still arise
 Which *thy* vigilance keep —
 The sound of the rain
 Which leaps down to the flower,
 And dances again
 In the rhythm of the shower —
 The murmur that springs
 From the growing of grass
 Are the music of things —
 But are modell'd, alas! —
 Away, then my dearest,
 O! hie thee away
 To springs that lie clearest
 Beneath the moon-ray —
 To lone lake that smiles,
 In its dream of deep rest,
 At the many star-isles
 That enjewel its breast —
 Where wild flowers, creeping,
 Have mingled their shade,
 On its margin is sleeping
 Full many a maid —
 Some have left the cool glade, and

Have slept with the bee —
 Arouse them my maiden,
 On moorland and lea —
 Go! breathe on their slumber,
 All softly in ear,
 The musical number
 They slumber'd to hear —
 For what can awaken
 An angel so soon
 Whose sleep hath been taken
 Beneath the cold moon,
 As the spell which no slumber
 Of witchery may test,
 The rhythmical number
 Which lull'd him to rest?

ROMANCE

ROMANCE, who loves to nod and sing,
 With drowsy head and folded wing,
 Among the green leaves as they shake
 Far down within some shadowy lake,
 To me a painted paroquet
 Hath been — a most familiar bird —
 Taught me my alphabet to say —
 To lisp my very earliest word
 While in the wild wood I did lie,
 A child — with a most knowing eye.

Of late, eternal Condor years
 So shake the very Heaven on high
 With tumult as they thunder by,
 I have no time for idle cares
 Through gazing on the unquiet sky.
 And when an hour with calmer wings
 Its down upon my spirit flings —
 That little time with lyre and rhyme
 To while away — forbidden things!
 My heart would feel to be a crime
 Unless it trembled with the strings.

SONNET — TO SCIENCE

SCIENCE! true daughter of Old Time thou
 art!
 Who alterest all things with thy peering
 eyes.
 Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's
 heart,
 Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?
 How should he love thee? or how deem
 thee wise,

Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
 To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies,
 Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?
 Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?
 And driven the Hamadryad from the wood
 To seek a shelter in some happier star?
 Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
 The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
 The summer dream beneath the tamarind
 tree?

TO —

THE bowers whereat, in dreams, I see
 The wantonest singing birds,
 Are lips — and all thy melody
 Of lip-begotten words —

Thine eyes, in Heaven of heart enshrined
 Then desolately fall,
 O God! on my funereal mind
 Like starlight on a pall —

Thy heart — *thy* heart! — I wake and sigh,
 And sleep to dream till day
 Of the truth that gold can never buy —
 Of the baubles that it may.

TO —

I HEED not that my earthly lot
 Hath little of Earth in it,
 That years of love have been forgot
 In the hatred of a minute:
 I mourn not that the desolate
 Are happier, sweet, than I,
 But that you sorrow for my fate
 Who am a passer-by.

A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM

TAKE this kiss upon the brow!
 And, in parting from you now,
 Thus much let me avow —
 You are not wrong, who deem
 That my days have been a dream;
 Yet if hope has flown away
 In a night, or in a day,
 In a vision, or in none,
 Is it therefore the less *gone*?
 All that we see or seem
 Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
 Of a surf-tormented shore,
 And I hold within my hand
 Grains of the golden sand —
 How few! yet how they creep
 Through my fingers to the deep,
 While I weep — while I weep!
 O God! can I not grasp
 Them with a tighter clasp?
 O God! can I not save
 One from the pitiless wave?
 Is all that we see or seem
 But a dream within a dream?

TO HELEN

HELEN, thy beauty is to me
 Like those Nicéan barks of yore,
 That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
 The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
 To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
 Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
 Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
 To the glory that was Greece,
 And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
 How statue-like I see thee stand,
 The agate lamp within thy hand!
 Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
 Are Holy-Land!

ISRAFEL²

IN Heaven a spirit doth dwell
 ' Whose heart-strings are a lute;'
 None sing so wildly well

¹ This poem suffered more changes than any other of Poe's. The germ of it is perhaps to be found in 'Imitation,' in the 1827 volume; but no phrase of that poem is identical with any phrase of this. 'To — — —,' in the volume of 1829, contains one line taken from 'Imitation.' Part of 'To — — —' was used as a last paragraph of 'Tamerlane' in the edition of 1831; and the whole was later revised and considerably shortened, and was published by Griswold in 1849 with its present title.

² And the angel Israfil, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures. — KORAN. (Poe's note, 1845.)
 Poe alone is responsible for the words 'Whose heart-strings are a lute.' The rest of the phrase had been quoted by Thomas Moore, in his 'Lalla Rookh,' from Sale's 'Preliminary Discourse' to the *Koran*. Poe, as Professor Woodberry has pointed out, took the phrase from Moore.

As the angel Israfil,
And the giddy stars (so legends tell)
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above
In her highest noon,
The enamored moon
Blushes with love,
While, to listen, the red levin
(With the rapid Pleiads, even,
Which were seven,)
Pauses in Heaven.

And they say (the starry choir
And the other listening things)
That Israfil's fire
Is owing to that lyre
By which he sits and sings —
The trembling living wire
Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod,
Where deep thoughts are a duty —
Where Love's a grown-up God —
Where the Houri glances are
Imbued with all the beauty
Which we worship in a star.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,
Israfil, who despisest
An unimpassioned song;
To thee the laurels belong,
Best bard, because the wisest!
Merrily live, and long!

The ecstasies above
With thy burning measures suit —
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
With the fervor of thy lute —
Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this
Is a world of sweets and sour;
Our flowers are merely — flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
Where Israfil
Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.

1831.

THE CITY IN THE SEA

Lo! Death has reared himself a throne
In a strange city lying alone
Far down within the dim West,
Where the good and the bad and the worst
and the best
Have gone to their eternal rest.
There shrines and palaces and towers
(Time-eaten towers that tremble not!)
Resemble nothing that is ours.
Around, by lifting winds forgot,
Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.

No rays from the holy heaven come down
On the long night-time of that town;
But light from out the lurid sea
Streams up the turrets silently —
Gleams up the pinnacles far and free —
Up domes — up spires — up kingly halls —
Up fanes — up Babylon-like walls —
Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers
Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers —
Up many and many a marvellous shrine
Whose wreathed friezes intertwine
The viol, the violet, and the vine.
Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.
So blend the turrets and shadows there
That all seem pendulous in air,
While from a proud tower in the town
Death looks giganticly down.

There open fanes and gaping graves
Yawn level with the luminous waves
But not the riches there that lie
In each idol's diamond eye —
Not the gayly-jewelled dead
Tempt the waters from their bed;
For no ripples curl, alas!
Along that wilderness of glass —
No swellings tell that winds may be
Upon some far-off happier sea —
No heavings hint that winds have been
On seas less hideously serene.

But lo, a stir is in the air!
The wave — there is a movement there!
As if the towers had thrust aside,
In slightly sinking, the dull tide —
As if their tops had feebly given
A void within the filmy Heaven.
The waves have now a redder glow —
The hours are breathing faint and low —

And when, amid no earthly moans,
Down, down that town shall settle hence,
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,
Shall do it reverence.

1831, 1845.

THE SLEEPER¹

At midnight, in the month of June,
I stand beneath the mystic moon.
An opiate vapor, dewy, dim,
Exhales from out her golden rim,
And, softly dripping, drop by drop,
Upon the quiet mountain top,
Steals drowsily and musically
Into the universal valley.
The rosemary nods upon the grave;
The lily lolls upon the wave;
Wrapping the fog about its breast,
The ruin moulders into rest;
Looking like Lethe, see! the lake
A conscious slumber seems to take,
And would not, for the world, awake.
All Beauty sleeps! — and lo! where lies
Irene, with her Destinies!

Oh, lady bright! can it be right —
This window open to the night?
The wanton airs, from the tree-top,
Laughingly through the lattice drop —
The bodiless airs, a wizard rout,
Flit through thy chamber in and out,
And wave the curtain canopy
So fitfully — so fearfully —
Above the closed and fringed lid
'Neath which thy slumb'ring soul lies hid,
That, o'er the floor and down the wall,
Like ghosts the shadows rise and fall!
Oh, lady dear, hast thou no fear?
Why and what art thou dreaming here?
Sure thou art come o'er far-off seas,
A wonder to these garden trees!
Strange is thy pallor! strange thy dress!
Strange, above all, thy length of tress,
And this all solemn silentness!

The lady sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,
Which is enduring, so be deep!

¹ Poe says in a letter, probably of 1845: "Your appreciation of 'The Sleeper' delights me. In the higher qualities of poetry it is better than 'The Raven'; but there is not one man in a million who could be brought to agree with me in this opinion. 'The Raven' of course, is far the better as a work of art; but in the true basis of all art, 'The Sleeper' is the superior. I wrote the latter when quite a boy."

Heaven have her in its sacred keep!
This chamber changed for one more holy,
This bed for one more melancholy,
I pray to God that she may lie
Forever with unopened eye,
While the pale sheeted ghosts go by!

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 —
Some vault that oft hath flung its black
And winged panels fluttering back,
Triumphant, o'er the crested palls,
Of her grand family funerals —
Some sepulchre, remote, alone,
Against whose portal she hath thrown,
In childhood, many an idle stone —
Some tomb from out whose sounding door
She ne'er shall force an echo more,
Thrilling to think, poor child of sin!
It was the dead who groaned within.

1831.

LENORE²

Ah, broken is the golden bowl! the spirit
flown forever!

² The first and third stanzas are supposed to be spoken by the 'wretches,' relatives or false friends of Lenore; the second and fourth stanzas by Guy De Vere, her lover. In this one case, perhaps, Poe's latest version is not so good as an earlier one. The form of Lenore published in 1843 is given below for comparison.

Ah, broken is the golden bowl!
The spirit flown forever!
Let the bell toll! — A saintly soul
Glides down the Stygian river!
And let the burial rite be read —
The funeral song be sung —
A dirge for the most lovely dead
That ever died so young!
And, Guy De Vere,
Hast thou no tear?
Weep now or nevermore!
See, on yon drear
And rigid bier,
Low lies thy love Lenore!

* You heir, whose cheeks of pallid hue
With tears are streaming wet,
Sees only, through
Their crocodile dew,

A vacant coronet —
False friends! ye loved her for her wealth
And hated her for her pride,
And, when she fell in feeble health,
Ye blessed her — that she died.
How shall the ritual, then, be read?
The requiem how be sung
For her most wrong'd of all the dead
That ever died so young?

Peccaminus!
But rave not thus!
And let the solemn song
Go up to God so mournfully that she may feel no wrong
The sweet Lenore
Hath 'gone before'

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.

'Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth
and hated her for her pride,
'And when she fell in feeble health, ye
blessed her — that she died!
'How shall the ritual, then, be read? —
the requiem how be sung
'By you — by yours, the evil eye, — by
yours, the slanderous tongue

With young hope at her side,
And thou art wild
For the dear child
That should have been thy bride —
For her, the fair
And debonair,
That now so lowly lies —
The life still there
Upon her hair,
The death upon her eyes.

'Avant! — to-night
My heart is light —
No dirge will I upraise,
But waft the angel on her flight
With a Paean of old days!
Let no bell toll!
Lest her sweet soul,
Amid its hallow'd mirth,
Should catch the note
As it doth float
Up from the damned earth —
To friends above, from fiends below,
Th' indignant ghost is riven —
From grief and moan
To a golden throne
Beside the King of Heaven!

It seems probable that Poe was influenced by the success of 'The Raven' to rearrange 'Lenore' in somewhat similar lines of even length.

In the text above I have given the last stanza of the poem as it stands in the Lorimer Graham copy — a copy of the edition of 1845, corrected by Poe's own hand. In the edition of 1843, uncorrected, the stanza reads as follows: —

'Avant! — avant! from fiends below, the indignant ghost
is riven —
'From Hell unto a high estate far up within the Heaven —
'From grief and groan, to a golden throne, beside the King
of Heaven.
Let no bell toll then! — lest her soul, amid its hallowed mirth,
Should catch the note as it doth float up from the damned
Earth! —
And I! — to-night my heart is light! No dirge will I up-
raise,
But waft the angel on her flight with a Paean of old days!

It is interesting to note that in this case, and perhaps in this case only, Poe, after changing considerably a passage of his work, later returned to a previous version. The arrangement of ideas in his corrected copy of this fourth stanza is much closer to the 1843 version than to that of 1845.

'That did to death the innocence that died,
and died so young?'

Peccavimus; but rave not thus! and let a
Sabbath song
Go up to God so solemnly the dead may
feel no wrong!
The sweet Lenore hath 'gone before,' with
Hope, that flew beside,
Leaving thee wild for the dear child that
should have been thy bride —
For her, the fair and *debonair*, that now so
lowly lies,
The life upon her yellow hair but not within
her eyes —
The life still there, upon her hair — the
death upon her eyes.

'Avant! to-night my heart is light. No
dirge will I upraise.
'But waft the angel on her flight with a
paean 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 unto a high estate far up
within the Heaven —
'From grief and groan, to a golden throne,
beside the King of Heaven.'

1831, 1843, 1845.

THE VALLEY OF UNREST

ONCE it smiled a silent dell
Where the people did not dwell;
They had gone unto the wars,
Trusting to the mild-eyed stars,
Nightly, from their azure towers,
To keep watch above the flowers,
In the midst of which all day
The red sun-light lazily lay.
Now each visitor shall confess
The sad valley's restlessness.
Nothing there is motionless —
Nothing save the airs that brood
Over the magic solitude.
Ah, by no wind are stirred those trees
That palpitate like the chill seas
Around the misty Hebrides!
Ah, by no wind those clouds are driven
That rustle through the unquiet Heaven

Uneasily, from morn till even,
Over the violets there that lie
In myriad types of the human eye —
Over the lilies there that wave
And weep above a nameless grave!
They wave: — from out their fragrant tops
Eternal dews come down in drops.
They weep: — from off their delicate stems
Perennial tears descend in gems.

1831, 1845.

THE COLISEUM¹

TYPE of the antique Rome! Rich reliquary
Of lofty contemplation left to Time
By buried centuries of pomp and power!
At length — at length — after so many
days
Of weary pilgrimage and burning thirst,
(Thirst for the springs of lore that in thee
lie.)
I kneel, an altered and an humble man,
Amid thy shadows, and so drink within
My very soul thy grandeur, gloom, and
glory!

Vastness! and Age! and Memories of Eld!
Silence! and Desolation! and dim Night!
I feel ye now — I feel ye in your strength —
O spells more sure than e'er Judæan king
Taught in the gardens of Gethsemane!
O charms more potent than the rapt
Chaldee
Ever drew down from out the quiet stars!

Here, where a hero fell, a column falls!
Here, where the mimic eagle glared in gold,
A midnight vigil holds the swarthy bat!
Here, where the dames of Rome their
gilded hair
Waved to the wind, now wave the reed and
thistle!
Here, where on golden throne the monarch
loll'd,
Glides, spectre-like, unto his marble home,
Lit by the wan light of the horn'd moon,
The swift and silent lizard of the stones!

But stay! these walls — these ivy-clad
arcades —
These mouldering plinths — these sad and
blackened shafts —

¹ Compare the descriptions of the Coliseum by Byron (*Manfred*, act. iii, scene iv, *Childe Harold*, canto iv, stanzas 114 and following), by Chateaubriand (*Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*), etc.

These vague entablatures — this crumbling
frieze —
These shattered cornices — this wreck —
this ruin —
These stones — alas! these gray stones —
are they all —
All of the famed, and the colossal left
By the corrosive Hours to Fate and me?

'Not all' — the Echoes answer me — 'not
all!
Prophetic sounds and loud, arise forever
From us, and from all Ruin, unto the
wise,
As melody from Memnon to the Sun.
We rule the hearts of mightiest men — we
rule
With a despotic sway all giant minds.
We are not impotent — we pallid stones.
Not all our power is gone — not all our
fame —
Not all the magic of our high renown —
Not all the wonder that encircles us —
Not all the mysteries that in us lie —
Not all the memories that hang upon
And cling around about us as a garment,
Clothing us in a robe of more than glory.'

1833.

HYMN

At morn — at noon — at twilight dim —
Maria! thou hast heard my hymn!
In joy and woe — in good and ill —
Mother of God, be with me still!
When the Hours flew brightly by,
And not a cloud obscured the sky,
My soul, lest it should truant be,
Thy grace did guide to thine and thee;
Now, when storms of Fate o'ercrest
Darkly my Present and my Past,
Let my Future radiant shine
With sweet hopes of thee and thine!

1835.

TO ONE IN PARADISE²

THOU wast all that to me, love,
For which my soul did pine —
A green isle in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine,

² Originally in the tale, 'The Visionary' (now called 'The Assignment'). There, and in most later versions, the first line reads, —

Thou wast that all to me, love . . .