BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT was born at Cummington, Mass., November 3, 1794. Of what sturdy New England stock he came may be guessed from the entry in his mother's diary (which she kept for fifty-three years without missing a day), under that date: 'Stormy wind N E — churned — unwell, seven at Night a Son Born.' Two days later the entry reads: 'Clear Wind N W — Made Austin a coat. . . .' Bryant's mother, like Longfellow's, was a descendant of John and Priscilla Alden of the Plymouth Colony. His earliest American ancestor on his father's side is said, like so many others, to have come over in the Mayflower. It is at least certain that he was at Plymouth in 1632, and he was constable of the colony in 1663. Bryant's father, his grandfather, and his grandmother's father were all New England country doctors. His father was a genial and generous man, a lover of poëtry, especially that of the school of Pope. He encouraged his boy to read Pope's Iliad, and to act the old story over again with wooden shields and swords and mock-heroic costume; and also encouraged him in his early writing and in his later devotion to poetry, though not always in sympathy with the style and manner of his work. In all these points he reminds us of Browning's father.

Bryant began to write verses when he was eight years old. He showed similar precocity in other ways. Though he was never a strong child, yet 'On my first birthday,' he says, 'there is a record that I could already go alone, and on the 28th of March, 1796, when but a few days more than sixteen months old, there is another record that I knew all the letters of the alphabet.' He was sent to school at three years old, and could read well at four. His early verses were mostly in heroic couplets, and include school poems and versions of a part of the Book of Job and the first book of the Æneid, etc. They are much like the verses written in colonial days by worthy Puritan divines. Like Elizabeth Barrett, he published his first volume at the age of thirteen. This was a satire on the political events of the time, and it actually had a second edition the following year — a thing which probably has happened to no other poet when so young.

Bryant was prepared for college, as was usual in those times, by studying in the families of country ministers. From one he learned Latin, from another Greek. It took him eight months to go through the Latin grammar, the New Testament in Latin, Virgil's Æneid, Eclogues, and Georgics, and a volume of Cicero's orations. After a summer's work on the farm he then attacked Greek, and 'at the end of two calendar months,' according to his own testimony, 'knew the Greek Testament from end to end almost as if it had been English.' This was when he was fourteen years old. The following year he mastered his mathematics, and entered the sophomore class of Williams College at the age of fifteen.

Before he had quite completed the year at Williams, he withdrew from college, intending to prepare himself for the junior class at Yale. But when the time came for entering there in the fall, it was found that the family means would not allow Bryant to finish a college course, and he accordingly turned to the study of the law as the quickest way to prepare himself for earning a living. He passed his preliminary bar examinations in 1814, was admitted as attorney in 1816, and practised for nine years.

In the meantime 'Thanatopsis' and the 'Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood,' at first called 'A Fragment,' had been published in the *North American Review* for September, 1817. The story of how 'Thanatopsis' had been written when Bryant was only

sixteen or seventeen years old, and how his father, having received a letter asking for contributions to the *Review*, found these unfinished poems in a desk and submitted them to the editors, who were at first unable to believe that they had been written by so young a man as Bryant, or even by any one 'on this side of the Atlantic,' has often been told. (See the notes on 'Thanatopsis,' pp. 1, 2; Bigelow's *Bryant*, pp. 38–41; or Bradley's *Bryant*, pp. 27–33.) Bryant was asked to be a regular contributor to the *North American*, and his next important poem published there was the lines 'To a Waterfowl.' A collection of his *Poems* was published in September, 1821, containing eight pieces, five of which are included in the present volume. The slight success of this book, of which only 270 copies were sold in five years, showed that an audience for the best poetry had still to be created in America. Bryant's name was already known, however, as that of the most promising of the younger poets, and he had been invited to deliver the annual Phi Beta Kappa poem at Harvard in 1821. It was for this occasion that 'The Ages,' the longest poem in the volume of 1821, had been written.

Bryant wrote very little from the time when he was admitted to the bar, in 1816, until 1821, except the noble 'Hymn to Death,' which he took up and completed at the time when his father died, in March, 1820. Soon after this a new impulse came into his life, in his love for Miss Frances Fairchild, whom he married June 11, 1821. Of the many poems written for her at this time, Bryant preserved only one, 'O fairest of the rural maids.' Throughout his life he was very severe in his criticism of his own verses, and is said to have destroyed more than he printed.

Bryant was weary of the law (see the last stanza of 'Green River'), but the sale of his volume of *Poems* was not such as to give him hope of making a living by purely literary work. During the five years following its publication his total profit from the sale had been $14.92. In 1825, however, after two visits to New York, he found employment there as associate editor of the *New York Review and Athenæum Magazine*, just about to be established. The first number appeared in June, 1825, and Bryant moved to New York to take up the editorial work which was to keep him there for the rest of his life. New York was then a village of 150,000 inhabitants, with the northern city limits at what is now Canal Street. The part of New York still known as Greenwich Village, south of Washington Square, was then a summer resort.

Bryant's first magazine, like so many others at that time, was not successful, and lived for only a year. At the beginning of 1826 he again took up the practice of the law for a short time. Later in the year, however, he was asked to be assistant editor of the New York *Evening Post*, and three years later became editor-in-chief. His connection with the paper as editor and part owner lasted for fifty-two years.

Bryant was so engrossed with his editorial work (for many years he kept office hours from seven in the morning till four in the afternoon), and with the many demands of life in a growing metropolitan and cosmopolitan city, that he gave little time to poetry. In 1832 he visited the West (accidentally seeing Lincoln, who was leading a company of Illinois volunteers across the prairie to the Black Hawk war), and wrote his poem 'The Prairies;' he wrote no other poem of importance for three years. A new collection of his poems had been published in 1831, both in America and in England (see the note on the 'Song of Marion's Men,' p. 17), which considerably increased his reputation. In 1834 to 1836 he took his first trip to Europe, visiting England, France, Italy, and Germany, where, at Heidelberg, he met Longfellow, then preparing himself for his professorship at Harvard.

Bryant was always fond of travelling, and visited Europe again in 1845, in 1849, in 1852–53, when he saw something of the Oriental countries also, in 1857, and again in 1858, when he met, at Rome and Florence, the Brownings, W. W. Story, Crawford, Page, Miss Hosmer (the sculptress), Frederika Bremer, Hawthorne, and Landor, whom he greatly admired; and still again in 1866. His impressions were recorded in letters to the *Evening Post*, some of which have been collected in his *Letters from a Traveller*, *Letters from the East*, and *Letters from Spain and other Countries*. He also travelled extensively in America at various times. His life, during all these years, was uneventful; the

time which he could give to writing was almost wholly filled with editorial work, and he produced only a few poems from year to year. New editions of his poems were, however, published, always with some additions, in 1834, 1836, 1842, 1844, and a collection in two volumes in 1854.

Bryant was an active worker in the formation of the Republican party in 1855. In 1859 he presided at a lecture given by Lincoln. Lincoln said: 'It was worth the journey to the East to see such a man,' and Bryant was so impressed with Lincoln's personality that he threw the whole influence of the *Post* in favor of his nomination for the Presidency in the following year, and was himself presidential elector on the Republican ticket. The *Post* was always a distinct power in national life, and especially so during the Civil War. Bryant had never been an abolitionist, but he was one of the strongest supporters of the Union, and, once the war had begun, of the policy of emancipation. His criticism of the administration was sometimes severe, especially in the matter of its greenback policy, but he retained close relations with Lincoln and was one of his most valued advisers. The struggle of these years had but few echoes in his poetry, except in two poems of 1861, 'Our Country's Call' and 'Not Yet,' and in three later poems, 'My Autumn Walk,' 'The Death of Lincoln,' and the 'Death of Slavery.' He seems rather to have sought a refuge in poetry from the strain of his daily work and the anxiety of the time. It was in 1862–63 that he wrote 'Sella' and the 'Little People of the Snow,' which have more lightness and charm than anything else in his work, and made a translation of the Fifth Book of the Odyssey. A collection of his later work was published in 1863, with the title *Thirty Poems*.

Already Bryant had long been recognized as the chief of our elder poets, and was called the 'Father of American Song.' This position, and still more the service which he had done and was doing as a man and a citizen, almost to the exclusion of further poetical work, were practically recognized by a meeting at the Century Club in New York, of which Bryant was for many years President. To this meeting the American republic of letters sent its best representatives, men of a generation just younger than Bryant, yet whose literary reputation was already greater than his, to do him honor on his seventieth birthday. Whittier wrote, —

> Who weighs him from his life apart
> Must do his nobler nature wrong,

and

> His life is now his noblest strain,
> His manhood better than his verse.

Holmes sent the finest of his many poetical tributes to contemporaries, and Lowell wrote for this occasion 'On Board the '76;' but perhaps the greatest tribute was Emerson's address. This was the culminating point in Bryant's career. He spoke of himself as 'one who has carried a lantern in the night, and who perceives that its beams are no longer visible in the glory which the morning pours around him.' It is true that Bryant is inferior to his younger contemporaries in the scope, the abundance, and the beauty of his poetical work. But he remains the pioneer of American poetry, and neither in the high nobility of his writing, nor in his dignity and his faithful work as a man, has he been surpassed.

In 1866 Mrs. Bryant died. Bryant's feeling of his loss is expressed only in the one poem 'A Life-Time.' He gave himself up during the following years to his translation of Homer. The Iliad was completed and published in 1870, the Odyssey in 1872. During the last years of his life he wrote a few poems, characterized by the same high dignity of expression which marks all his best work, and showing no loss of power. 'The Flood of Years' comes as the conclusion of his work and as a fitting pendent to 'Thanatopsis' at its commencement. This and 'A Life-Time' were the last poems he wrote.

He continued his editorial work till the last year of his life, walking daily to his office and back, a distance of three miles. Many New Yorkers still remember his impressive personality, the large, high forehead, flowing white hair, deep-set clear-seeing eyes under shaggy brows, and erect carriage. During these last years he was more and more in request as a public speaker, and was often called 'the old man eloquent.' Though he

was not an orator in the usual sense of the word, his addresses were always impressive, appropriate, and full of well-knit thought. The best have been preserved in his prose works, and deal with Fitz-Greene Halleck, Shakspere, Scott, Burns, Franklin, Goethe, etc. His earlier addresses, especially those on Irving (1860) and Cooper (1852), must not be forgotten. When he was in his eighty-fourth year he paid a noble tribute to Mazzini in an oration at the unveiling of the statue in Central Park. He was somewhat exhausted by the effort and by the heat of the day; and on returning to the home of his friend, General Wilson, he fell at the doorstep, receiving injuries which resulted in his death, June 12, 1878.

Bryant's life extended from the administration of Washington to that of Hayes — from the first presidency until after the centennial of the country. For more than fifty years during the formative period of the nation, he was a strong though quiet influence in its development. It is therefore impossible, as it would be unjust, to 'judge him from his life apart.' A keen judge, and never too generous a critic — Edgar Allan Poe — wrote of him so early as 1846: 'In character, no man stands more loftily than Bryant. . . . His soul is charity itself, in all respects generous and noble.' It was this generous and noble character that Bryant freely gave to his times. He entered into all the life of a great material city, the centre of the country, as editor, orator, and public man. His life was too full for him to devote much of it to poetry, the most lasting part of his life-work, and to take that permanently high rank among American poets which some think he might have attained. Yet it is doubtful whether, if he had given more time to poetry, his limitations rather than his power might not have become more evident. His was not a genius of overflowing richness, of passion, of imagination. His range is narrow. But within his range he is supreme. What he gives us is the expression of simple and noble thought on life, and still more on death; and our first, and still the greatest, expression of American Nature in poetry. Whether or not he is the 'American Wordsworth' (see Lowell's *Fable for Critics*), he is the first and greatest poet of Nature in America; not of larks and nightingales and English primroses would he write, like most of the provincial poets who preceded him, but of the bobolink, and the veerie, and the fringed gentian; not of the English ponds and hills, but of the American lakes and mountains. This was America's 'Declaration of Independence' in poetry. Then too, in the highest of poetic forms in English, he is perhaps the greatest master since Milton. The blank verse of even Wordsworth, Landor, or Browning has not the power or the convoluted richness of expression through long interwoven rhythmic periods that Bryant's has. In 'Thanatopsis,' the 'Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood,' 'A Winter Piece,' the 'Hymn to Death,' 'Monument Mountain' (the best of his poems on Indian subjects), 'A Forest Hymn,' 'The Prairies,' the 'Antiquity of Freedom,' and the 'Flood of Years,' this noble rhythmic form fitly expresses the high dignity of his thought, and these together fitly represent his character and his life.

EDGAR ALLAN POE

Edgar Allan Poe was born at Boston, January 19, 1809, in the same year as Holmes and Tennyson, Lincoln and Gladstone, Mendelssohn and Chopin, and Charles Darwin. On his father's side he came of a good Maryland family, going back to John Poe, who emigrated from the north of Ireland to Pennsylvania about the middle of the eighteenth century, and soon moved to Maryland. The poet's grandfather, General David Poe, was Assistant-Quartermaster-General in the Revolution, and a close friend of Lafayette's. His son, David Poe, Jr., studied law, but soon abandoned it for acting, and in 1805 married Elizabeth Arnold, who had been born and brought up to the stage. Her mother was an English actress, and she had been first married to C. D. Hopkins, a comedian, who died in 1805. It seems that David Poe proved to have little talent as an actor, and his wife, delicate, beautiful, strong-willed, and versatile, was the support of the family. They had three children, of whom Edgar was the second. The little troop wandered up and down from Maine to So. Carolina, but found their best patrons and friends in Richmond.

It was at Richmond that Poe's mother died, of consumption, in December, 1811. His father had probably died some months before.

Poe was adopted by Mr. John Allan, a Scotch tobacco merchant of Richmond, not at all a rich man as has so often been stated. It is of record that he made an assignment for the benefit of creditors in 1822. In 1825, however, just before Poe left home for the University of Virginia, Mr. Allan received an inheritance from his uncle, one of the rich men of the State, which made him well-to-do. In the meantime he had attempted to extend his business to London. The most important result of this was that he took Poe to England and placed him for five years in the Manor House School, Stoke-Newington. Poe's story 'William Wilson' is full of reminiscences from this period, and much of his work is colored by it. Probably on some vacation trip to Scotland with his adopted parents he saw that lake among the hills which is the subject of one of his earliest yet most characteristic poems — one of those which he says were written before he was twelve years old: —

THE LAKE

In youth's spring it was my lot
To haunt of the wide earth a spot
The which I could not love the less;
So lovely was the loneliness
Of a wild lake, with black rock bound,
And the tall pines that tower'd around.
But when the night had thrown her pall
Upon that spot — as upon all,
And the wind would pass me by
In its stilly melody,
My infant spirit would awake
To the terror of the lone lake.
Yet that terror was not fright —
But a tremulous delight,
And a feeling undefined,
Springing from a darken'd mind.
Death was in the poison'd wave
And in its gulf a fitting grave
For him who thence could solace bring
To his dark imagining;
Whose wildering thought could even make
An Eden of that dim lake.

The poem was published in this form in his first volume, when he was eighteen years old, and was retained in every subsequent edition of his poems, in the edition of 1831 being inserted as a part of 'Tamerlane.' In the successive editions he made less changes in this than in any other of his earliest poems. The memory of a mystic lake of poisoned waves 'with black rock bound' reappears often in others of his works, until it becomes the 'dim lake of Auber' in his greatest poem. The love of loneliness and of night, the tremulous delight in terror, the thought of a darkened mind that seeks for death and finds in it an Eden, all remain characteristic of his later writing.

In 1820 the Allans returned to Richmond, and until 1825 Poe was at school there; he distinguished himself in athletics (especially swimming), in declamation, and in French. It was natural enough that his first school-boy love should be for a woman older than himself, but perhaps hardly natural that this should be the mother of one of his school-mates, and certainly not so that a healthy boy should haunt her grave for months, as is recorded of Poe; for she died in 1824, the first of his many Helens and Lenores. Just before going away to the University he had a somewhat more normal love affair with a girl nearly two years younger than he (he was sixteen himself), a Miss Royster. They became 'engaged,' at least according to the lady's later account. Poe wrote to her from the University, but the letters were intercepted by her father, and she was soon married to a Mr. Shelton. Perhaps in this simple story is to be found the whole basis of Poe's 'Tamerlane,' almost certainly written during the following year.

The University of Virginia had been opened under Jefferson's patronage in March, 1825. Poe registered as a student there on February 14, 1826, and remained for one year. During this time he obtained distinction in Latin, French, and Italian, and was

fairly regular in his attendance, but sometimes (not habitually) drank, and gambled with passionate recklessness. His gambling debts at the end of the year are said to have been about $2000. Mr. Allan refused to pay these debts of honor, withdrew Poe from the University, and set him to work at a desk in his own counting-room.

Poe did not submit to this employment long, but ran away, somehow reached Boston, and soon published there (1827) his first volume: *Tamerlane and Other Poems, By a Bostonian.* (See note 1 on page 36, and note 2 on page 39.) By the time the book was published, Poe, perhaps unable to find any other means of subsistence, had already (May 26, 1827) enlisted in the United States army, under the name of Edgar A. Perry. He served for nearly two years. He seems to have served faithfully; on January 1, 1829, he was promoted for merit to be Sergeant-Major. Early in 1829 Mrs. Allan died. Poe had been recalled to Richmond to see her, but arrived too late. There was, however, a partial reconciliation with Mr. Allan, who obtained a substitute for him in the army, and after some effort secured his nomination to West Point.

While waiting for this appointment he had published at Richmond (1829) *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems.* For this volume he re-wrote, condensed, and for the most part greatly improved the 'Tamerlane.' (See the notes on pages 37 and 38.) 'Al Aaraaf' is on the whole a less successful production than 'Tamerlane.' In 'Tamerlane' he had deplored the triumph of ambition over love, in 'Al Aaraaf' he seems to be celebrating the claims of beauty as superior to all others, even those of love. The poem, however, has not, as 'Tamerlane' has, any clear thread of narrative on which to string its ideas and pictures, and even these are entirely vague and almost meaningless. 'Al Aaraaf' seems to show the influence of Shelley, as 'Tamerlane' (in the first form of which there occurs, unquoted, 'A sound of revelry by night') shows that of Byron. 'Al Aaraaf' also suffers from the fact that Poe never took the time to re-write it as he did 'Tamerlane.' There is in it, however, one supremely beautiful 'Burst of Melody' (as Professor Trent has entitled it in his *Selections from Poe*), the song to Ligeia. There are also in the volume of 1829 two exquisite lyrics, both entitled 'To ——,' and an early form of the poem 'A Dream within a Dream.' When we remember that Poe was barely twenty when this volume was published, and that Keats was twenty-two when his first volume (not containing any of his greatest work except the 'Sonnet on Chapman's Homer') appeared, we feel that Lowell was almost justified in writing to Poe (May 8, 1843): 'Your early poems display a maturity which astonished me, and I recollect no individual (and I believe I have read all the poetry that ever was written) whose early poems were anything like as good.'

Poe entered West Point July 1, 1830. His work there was at first fairly good. He ranked third in French and seventeenth in mathematics, in a class of eighty-seven. Late in this year Mr. Allan married again, and Poe seems to have felt that he had no more to expect from him in the way of support or inheritance. In January of 1831 he deliberately neglected all duties at the academy for two weeks, was court-marshalled, and dismissed.

'When in doubt, publish a volume of poems,' seems, says some one, to have been the rule of Poe's life. After his dismissal from West Point, he went to New York and brought out his third volume, entitled simply *Poems.* This volume contained (and Poe was still only twenty-two years old) what is, perhaps, his most beautiful lyric, the first 'To Helen,' and the poems 'Israfel,' 'The City in the Sea,' 'The Sleeper,' 'Lenore' in its earliest form, and 'The Valley of Unrest.' His fellow cadets at West Point, to whom he dedicated the volume, and through whose subscriptions he had been enabled to publish it, were naturally disappointed at receiving such poems as these, instead of the satirical verses on their professors which they had expected.

For the next two years practically nothing is known of Poe's life. We find him in Baltimore in 1833, living with his father's sister, Mrs. Clemm. He had written six *Tales of the Folio Club*, and one of these, 'The Manuscript found in a Bottle,' won him a prize of one hundred dollars and the friendship of John P. Kennedy. The second prize of fifty dollars, offered for the best poem submitted, would have been awarded to Poe's 'Coliseum,' except that the judges felt unwilling to give both prizes to one competitor. This

success gave Poe a practical start in literature, or rather journalism, and Mr. Kennedy secured for him a position on *The Southern Literary Messenger*, published at Richmond.

Meanwhile there had come to Poe the one genuine, deep, and lasting love of his lifetime, that for his child-cousin, Virginia Clemm. A license for marriage was obtained on September 22, 1834, when Virginia was barely twelve years old. There seems to have been no marriage at this time. In any case, after Poe moved to Richmond a new license was obtained, in May, 1836, and the marriage took place, while Virginia was still only in her fourteenth year.

Poe showed great ability as an editor and journalistic writer. He made the magazine famous, and greatly increased its circulation. But he was irregular in his habits and not to be depended upon. He had not learned to master the tendency against which he later struggled — at least for many months and even years of his life — so successfully. 'No man is safe,' his employer wrote to him, 'that drinks before breakfast.' He lost his position in January, 1837, went to New York, where he published in 1838 the *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, and then to Philadelphia, where he lived for the next six years.

During these years he did a great amount of literary hack-work, and did it well, and also wrote some of his best stories and criticism. His *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* were published, in two volumes, at the end of 1839 (dated 1840). He was editor for a while of the *Gentleman's Magazine* and later of *Graham's Magazine*, two of the most important periodicals of the time. It has repeatedly been assumed that he lost his positions on both these magazines through incapacity caused by drinking, but the weight of evidence seems to disprove this. Mrs. Clemm stated positively, speaking of the period from 1837 to 1841, that 'for years I know he did not taste even a glass of wine' (Harrison's *Life of Poe*, p. 161), and this testimony is so strongly confirmed by others who knew him well during this time, that we may perhaps accept fully his own statement of the matter as made in a letter of 1841: 'At no period of my life was I ever what men call intemperate, — I never was in the *habit* of intoxication. . . . But, for a period, while I resided in Richmond and edited the *Messenger*, I certainly did give way, at long intervals, to the temptation held out on all sides by the spirit of Southern conviviality. My sensitive temperament could not stand an excitement which was an every-day matter to my companions, — in short it sometimes happened that I was completely intoxicated. For some days after each excess I was invariably confined to bed. But it is now quite four years since I have abandoned every kind of alcoholic drink — four years, with the exception of a single deviation. . . .'

A few facts seem now to be clearly established after the years of controversy over this disagreeable question. It is certain that Poe was not, as has so often been stated, an abandoned or habitual drunkard. It is also certain that the effect of even small quantities of alcohol was, in his case, especially severe; that he was to some extent the victim of a hereditary tendency ('There is one thing,' his cousin William Poe wrote to him, 'I am anxious to caution you against, and which has been a great enemy to our family . . . a too free use of the bottle'); and that the surroundings of his early life and the habits of the University and of West Point in those times did much to strengthen this tendency. It is also certain, and this has not been sufficiently recognized, that for many years Poe struggled manfully against this tendency, and succeeded, in spite of occasional relapses, and in the midst of all kinds of difficulties, discouragements, anxiety, poverty, and physical weakness, in doing an amount of work, and of highly intellectual work, that would have been impossible for a man so weak as he has usually been represented.

Two strong motives governed his life, so far as it could be governed: his devotion to his beautiful child-wife and to her mother, whom he calls his 'more than mother' in the beautiful sonnet which is the simple expression of his genuine feeling for her; and his passionate desire for literary fame, which, at its worst, showed itself in petty envy and carping criticism of his contemporaries, but which, at its best, became a noble devotion to the ideal of beauty.

Every point in Poe's life and character has been the subject of controversy and con-

flicting statements, except one, — the genuineness, simplicity, and, until his wife's death, constancy, of his devotion to the two women who made his home. 'I shall never forget,' wrote the owner of *Graham's Magazine*, within a year after Poe's death, when the attacks upon him were bitterest, 'how solicitous of their happiness he was. . . . His whole efforts seemed to be to procure the comfort and welfare of his home. Except for their happiness, and the natural ambition of having a magazine of his own, I never heard him deplore the want of wealth. . . . His love for his wife was a sort of rapturous worship of the spirit of beauty, which he felt was fading before his eyes. I have seen him hovering around her when she was ill, with all the fond fear and tender anxiety of a mother for her first-born, — her slightest cough causing in him a shudder, a breast chill, that was visible. I rode out one summer evening with them, and the remembrance of his watchful eyes, eagerly bent upon the slightest change of hue in that loved face, haunts me yet as the memory of a sad strain.'

Virginia is described as of wonderful delicate loveliness, like that of Ligeia. She was a beautiful singer. In 1842, while singing for her husband, she broke a blood vessel in her throat, and this resulted in serious hemorrhages, which afterward recurred often, and sometimes brought her almost to the point of death. It was to Poe as if she had died many times, — as often, even, as he has expressed in his poetry that one theme which he calls the highest of all, the death of a beautiful woman.

Early in 1844 the little family moved to New York, Poe still hoping to found there a magazine of his own. For some time he worked on the staff of the *Evening Mirror*, under N. P. Willis, whose description of his faithfulness, industry, and courtesy must not be overlooked by any one trying to estimate his character during these years. 1845 was the year that gave Poe his national reputation. 'The Raven' appeared in the *Evening Mirror* on January 29, and was immediately copied by newspapers throughout the country, just as the first of Lowell's *Biglow Papers* was to be, a little more than a year later. His *Tales* were published by Wiley and Putnam, and had considerable success. He became associate-editor of the *Broadway Journal*, in which he republished, in their final perfected form, many of his earlier poems. And finally, all the poems which he wished to preserve were collected and published, toward the end of the year, in a volume entitled *The Raven and Other Poems.*

Meantime, Poe was involved in many bitter controversies, through his severe criticism of his contemporaries. The *Broadway Journal*, of which he had finally obtained exclusive control in October, 1845, failed to prove a financial success, and involved him in considerable debt; its publication had to be discontinued at the end of the year. Early in 1846 Poe moved, with his family, to the cottage at Fordham, in what is now the Borough of the Bronx, New York City. Here the little family lived through a year of wretchedness. Poe's strength, both of body and of character, was seriously impaired. Virginia's illness became more and more serious, until she died on January 30, 1847. Poe was seriously ill for a long time, but gradually recovered. It was at the end of this 'most immemorial year' that he wrote his 'Ulalume.'

In the year and a half that followed, all Poe's weaknesses were accentuated, and a new weakness, which is comprehensible, but not pleasant to contemplate, was added, in his abject appeal for the sympathy and sometimes for the hand of one woman after another. Yet his intellect and genius shone out at intervals almost more brightly than before. During this time he wrote 'Eureka' and 'The Bells,' the strange and wonderful lyric 'For Annie,' and 'Annabel Lee' — the last certainly a reminiscence of his child-wife Virginia. He became engaged to Sarah Helen Whitman, a poetess of extreme romantic temperament, his first meeting with whom is described in the second 'To Helen;' but the engagement was broken through the efforts of her friends. Her loyal defence of Poe against his critics after his death is to be remembered. Poe was in Richmond in 1848, and again in 1849, hoping to get help there for the establishment of the new magazine which he was still planning; he found there the Mrs. Shelton who, as Miss Royster, had been his first love, and who was now a widow. He became engaged to her, his friends in Richmond raised a fund to help him start anew in life, and he left Richmond on September 30, to return to New York and settle up his affairs. It will never be known what happened on the following days, but he was found, October 3, in the back room of a saloon in Baltimore which was being used as a polling place. It has been suggested that he was drugged by an electioneering gang and made to serve as a repeater; and also that he had been drugged by robbers, for his money was gone. He was taken to a hospital, and died there, four days later, on Sunday, October 7, without having recovered consciousness. The attending physician testified that he was not under the influence of liquor, but this does not seem to be important, though it may refute the repeated statement that his death was caused by delirium tremens.

Poe's character has often been judged harshly, but the case is one rather for human pity than for harsh judgment. His life was a tragedy, and in part a tragedy of hereditary fate, against which his human will struggled as best it could. He should be judged with the same charity which his New England contemporaries showed in their many beautiful tributes to Burns, whose life and character have points of resemblance with Poe's, though Burns's poetry is so much more human and less strange.

In many ways Poe is unique among the chief American poets: in his life, for he is the only one who lived in extreme poverty and loneliness; the only one of weak character and ill-repute; the only one (except Lanier) who died young. He is unique in his hatred of commonplace and of convention, in his intense devotion to poetry, in his love of mere music in verse, in his power to express emotion and his inability to express character, in his comparative blindness to Nature (except that strange unreal region of Nature which he creates for himself 'out of place, out of time'), in his exaltation of love, in his strange visionary conceptions of death. He is the only American who has been *intensely a poet*, and the only American poet (as Hawthorne is our only prose writer) who can justly be said, in any strict and narrow use of the word, to have had genius.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

The story of Emerson's life, so far as its external events are related to his poetry, can be told briefly. He was the last of nine successive generations of ministers. Thomas Emerson emigrated from England to Ipswich, Mass., about 1635. At about the same time, Emerson's first American ancestor in another line, Peter Bulkeley (see the beginning of 'Hamatreya'), settled in Concord as the first minister of that parish. Emerson's grandfather, William Emerson, was minister in Concord at the beginning of the Revolution, and on April 19, 1775, urged the minute-men to stand their ground near his parsonage, the 'Old Manse.' In 1776 he left Concord to join the troops at Ticonderoga, but caught a fever on his way there, and died in the same year. Emerson's father was minister of the First Church, Boston, which had already become Unitarian.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born in Boston, May 25, 1803. His father died when he was eight years old, and the family was left in comparative poverty. Yet his mother, with devoted help from her sons, succeeded in obtaining an education for all of them. His eldest brother, William, graduated at Harvard in 1818, and studied for two years in Germany. Ralph Waldo graduated at Harvard in 1821, and his younger brothers, Edward and Charles, in 1824 and 1828.

Ralph was prepared for Harvard at the Boston Latin School, where, in his eleventh year, he made a brief verse translation from Virgil's Eclogues, which has been preserved and published. He entered college in 1817, with the appointment of 'President's Freshman,' receiving free lodging for the work of carrying official messages; and he saved three-fourths of the cost of his board by waiting at table in the college Commons, and in the last years of his course earned something by tutoring. He did not especially distinguish himself in his studies, being generally thought the least brilliant of the brothers, but he was well liked by both teachers and students, and was elected class poet at the end of his course, as Lowell was later. He was only eighteen when he graduated, but immediately began work as a school-teacher, and when his older brother, William, went to