



→*CURFEW+MUST+NOT+RING+TO-NIGHT*←



ENGLAND'S sun was slowly setting
O'er the hills so far away,
Filling all the land with beauty
At the close of one sad day;
And the last rays kiss'd the forehead
Of a man and maiden fair,
He with step so slow and weakened,
She with sunny, floating hair;
He with sad bowed head, and thoughtful,
She with lips so cold and white,
Struggling to keep back the murmur,
"Curfew must not ring to-night."

"Sexton," Bessie's white lips faltered,
Pointing to the prison old,
With its walls so dark and gloomy,—
Walls so dark, and damp, and cold,—
"I've a lover in that prison,
Doomed this very night to die,
At the ringing of the Curfew,
And no earthly help is nigh.
Cromwell will not come till sunset,"
And her face grew strangely white,
As she spoke in husky whispers,
"Curfew must not ring to-night."

"Bessie," calmly spoke the Sexton—
 Every word pierced her young heart
 Like a thousand gleaming arrows—
 Like a deadly poisoned dart;
 "Long, long years I've rung the Curfew
 From that gloomy shadowed tower;
 Every evening, just at sunset,
 It has told the twilight hour;
 I have done my duty ever,
 Tried to do it just and right,
 Now I'm old, I will not miss it;
 Girl, the Curfew rings to-night!"

Wild her eyes and pale her features,
 Stern and white her thoughtful brow,
 And within her heart's deep centre,
 Bessie made a solemn vow;
 She had listened while the judges
 Read, without a tear or sigh,
 "At the ringing of the Curfew—
 Basil Underwood *must die*."
 And her breath came fast and faster,
 And her eyes grew large and bright—
 One low murmur, scarcely spoken—
 "Curfew *must not* ring to-night!"

She with light step bounded forward,
 Sprang within the old church door,
 Left the old man coming slowly,
 Paths he'd often trod before,
 Not one moment paused the maiden,
 But with cheek and brow aglow,

Staggered up the gloomy tower,
 Where the bell swung to and fro:
 Then she climbed the slimy ladder,
 Dark, without one ray of light,
 Upward still, her pale lips saying:
 "Curfew shall not ring to-night."

She has reached the topmost ladder,
 O'er her hangs the great dark bell.
 And the awful gloom beneath her,
 Like the pathway down to hell;
 See, the ponderous tongue is swinging,
 'Tis the hour of Curfew now—
 And the sight has chilled her bosom,
 Stopped her breath and paled her brow.
 Shall she let it ring? No, never!
 Her eyes flash with sudden light,
 As she springs and grasps it firmly—
 "Curfew shall not ring to-night!"

Out she swung, far out, the city
 Seemed a tiny speck below;
 There, 'twixt heaven and earth suspended,
 As the bell swung to and fro;
 And the half-deaf Sexton ringing
 (Years he had not heard the bell,)
 And he thought the twilight Curfew
 Rang young Basil's funeral knell;
 Still the maiden clinging firmly,
 Cheek and brow so pale and white,
 Stilled her frightened heart's wild beating—
 "Curfew shall not ring to-night."

It was o'er—the bell ceased swaying,
 And the maiden stepped once more
 Firmly on the damp old ladder,
 Where for hundred years before
 Human foot had not been planted;
 And what she this night had done,
 Should be told in long years after—
 As the rays of setting sun
 Light the sky with mellow beauty,
 Aged sires with heads of white,
 Tell the children why the Curfew
 Did not ring that one sad night.

O'er the distant hills came Cromwell;
 Bessie saw him, and her brow,
 Lately white with sickening terror,
 Glows with sudden beauty now;
 At his feet she told her story,
 Showed her hands all bruised and torn;
 And her sweet young face so haggard,
 With a look so sad and worn,
 Touched his heart with sudden pity—
 Lit his eyes with misty light;
 "Go, your lover lives!" cried Cromwell;
 "Curfew shall not ring to-night."



—*THE RAVEN.*—

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE.



NCE upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered,
 weak and weary,
 Over many a quaint and curious volume of
 forgotten lore,—
 While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there
 came a tapping,
 As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber-door,
 "'Tis some visitor," I mutter'd, "tapping at my chamber-
 door—
 Only this, and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember, it was in the bleak December,
 And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the
 floor.
 Eagerly I wished the morrow; vainly I had sought to borrow
 From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost
 Lenore,—
 For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name
 Lenore,—
 Nameless here forevermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain,
 Thrilled me,—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt
 before;

So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating,
 " 'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber-door,—
 Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber-door;
 That it is, and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger: hesitating then no longer,
 "Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
 But the fact is, I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
 And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber-
 door,
 That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the
 door:

Darkness there, and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there, wonder-
 ing, fearing,
 Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream
 before;
 But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no
 token,
 And the only word there spoken was the whispered word,
 "Lenore!"
 This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word,
 "LENORE!"

Merely this, and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me
 burning,
 Soon again I heard a tapping, something louder than before.
 "Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window-
 lattice;
 Let me see then what thereat is and this mystery explore,—
 Let my heart be still a moment, and this mystery explore;—
 'Tis the wind, and nothing more."

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and
 flutter,
 In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore.
 Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or
 stayed he;
 But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber-
 door,—
 Perched upon a bust of Pallas, just above my chamber-door—
 Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
 By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
 "Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art
 sure no raven;
 Ghastly, grim, and ancient raven, wandering from the nightly
 shore,
 Tell me what thy lordly name is on the night's Plutonian
 shore?"

Quoth the raven, "Nevermore!"

Much I marveled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so
 plainly,
 Though its answer little meaning, little relevancy bore;
 For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
 Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber-
 door,
 Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber-
 door

With such name as "Nevermore!"

But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
 That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did out-
 pour,

Nothing further then he uttered; not a feather then he
fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered, "Other friends have
flown before,
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my hopes have flown
before."

Then the bird said, "Nevermore!"

Startled at the stillness, broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and
store,

Caught from some unhappy master, whom unmerciful disaster
Follow'd fast and follow'd faster, till his songs one burden
bore,

Till the dirges of his hope that melancholy burden bore,
Of—'Never—nevermore!'"

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

Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird
of yore

Meant in croaking "Nevermore!"

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burn'd into my bosom's
core;

This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated
o'er,

But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating
o'er

She shall press—ah! nevermore!

Then methought the air grew denser, perfumed from an
unseen censer
Swung by seraphim, whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted
floor.

"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by these angels
he hath sent thee

Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore!
Quaff, oh, quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget this lost
Lenore!"

Quoth the raven, "Nevermore!"

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird
or devil!

Whether tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here
ashore,

Desolate, yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—
On this home by horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore,—
Is there—*is* there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I im-
plore!"

Quoth the raven, "Nevermore!"

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird
or devil!

By that heaven that bends above us, by that God we both
adore,

Tell this soul, with sorrow laden, if, within the distant
Aidenn,

It shall clasp a sainted maiden, whom the angels name
Lenore;

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels name
Lenore!"

Quoth the raven, "Nevermore!"

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” I
shrieked, upstarting,—
“Get thee back into the tempest and the night’s Plutonian
shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath
spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my
door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from
off my door!”

Quoth the raven, “Nevermore!”

And the raven, never fitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas, just above my chamber-door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is
dreaming,
And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow
on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the
floor

Shall be lifted—NEVERMORE!



MY PRETTY, BUDDING, BREATHING FLOWER

BY WINTHROP MACKWORTH PRAED.



MY pretty, budding, breathing flower,
Methinks, if I to-morrow
Could manage, just for half an hour,
Sir Joshua’s brush to borrow,
I might immortalize a few
Of all the myriad graces
Which Time, while yet they all are new,
With newer still replaces.

I’d paint, my child, your deep blue eyes,
The quick and earnest flashes;
I’d paint the fringe that round them lies,
The fringe of long dark lashes.
I’d draw with most fastidious care,
One eyebrow, then the other;
And that fair forehead, broad and fair,—
The forehead of your mother.

I'd oft retouch the dimpled cheek
 Where health in sunshine dances;
 And oft the pouting lips, where speak
 A thousand voiceless fancies;
 And the soft neck would keep me long,
 The neck, more smooth and snowy
 Than ever yet in schoolboy's song
 Had Caroline and Chloe.

Nor less on those twin rounded arms
 My new-found skill would linger;
 Nor less upon the rosy charms
 Of every tiny finger;
 Nor slight the small feet, little one,
 So prematurely clever
 That, though they neither walk nor run,
 I think they'd jump for ever.

But then your odd, endearing ways,—
 What study e'er could catch them?
 Your aimless gestures, aimless plays—
 What canvas e'er could match them?
 Your lively leap of merriment,
 Your murmur of petition,
 Your serious silence of content,
 Your laugh of recognition.

Here were a puzzling toil, indeed,
 For Art's most fine creations! —
 Grow on, sweet baby; we will need,
 To notice your transformations,

No picture of your form or face,
 Your waking or your sleeping,
 But that which Love shall daily trace,
 And trust to Memory's keeping.

Hereafter, when revolving years
 Have made you tall and twenty,
 And brought you blended hopes and fears,
 And sighs and slaves in plenty,
 May those who watch our little saint
 Among her tasks and duties,
 Feel all her virtues hard to paint,
 As we now deem her beauties.

