

From a photograph of an old portrait

DR. THOMAS H. CHIVERS OF OAKY GROVE, GEORGIA

THE POE-CHIVERS PAPERS

THE FIRST AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT OF ONE OF POE'S
MOST INTERESTING FRIENDSHIPS

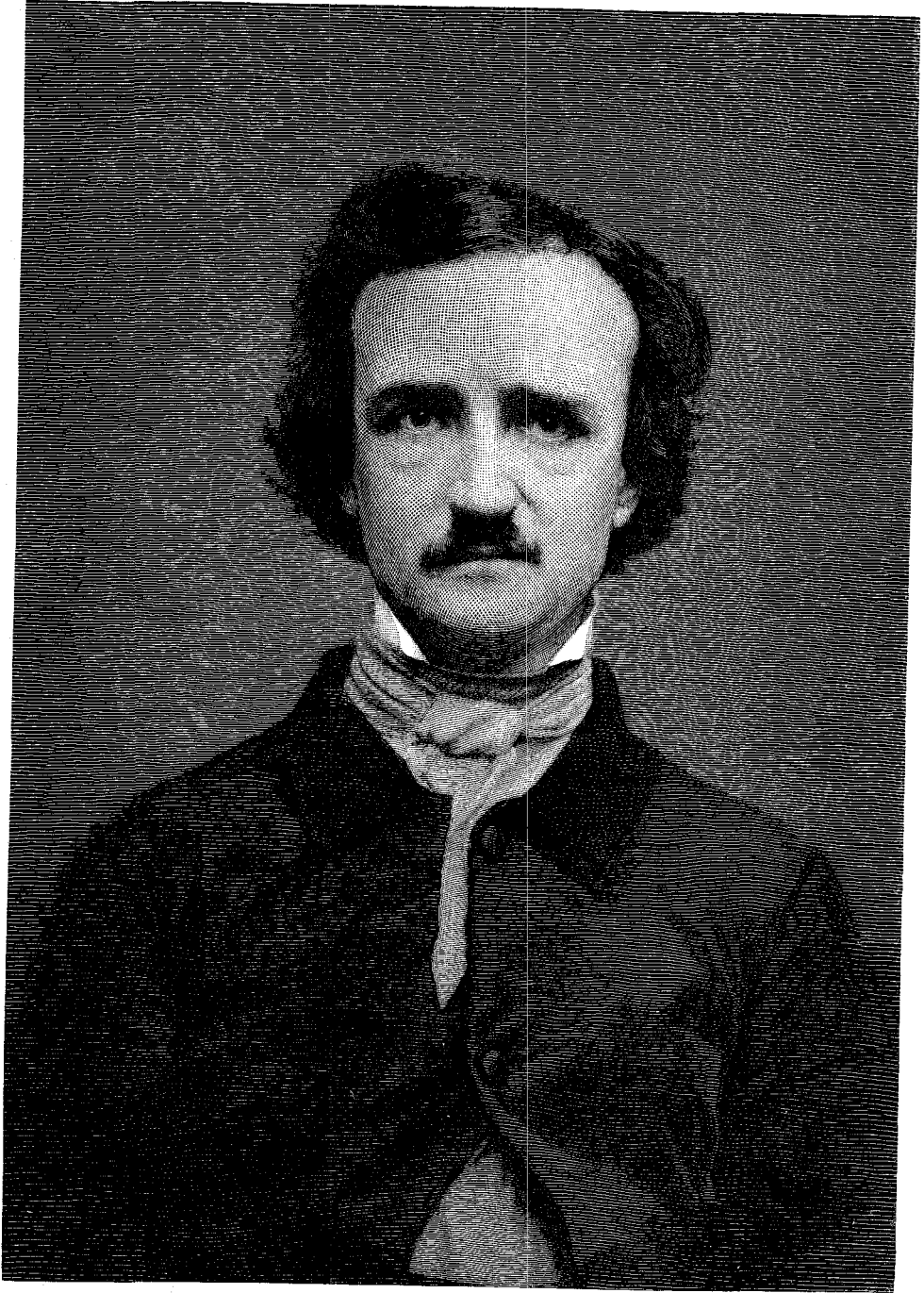
EDITED BY GEORGE E. WOODBERRY

THE renaissance of Chivers is one of the latest incidents of the Poe legend, which puts forth such curious growths from decade to decade. His fame still lingered here in the seventies, but only as a burlesque survival. At that time Bayard Taylor diverted himself with it in the "Echo Club," recalling what is likely to prove his most immortal stanza:

Many mellow Cydonian suckets,
Sweet apples, anthosmal, divine,
From the ruby-rimmed beryline buckets
Star-gemmed, lily-shaped, hyaline;

Like the sweet golden goblet found growing
On the wild emerald cucumber-tree,
Rich, brilliant, like chrysoprase glowing
Was my beautiful Rosalie Lee.

Swinburne was known, among American friends, to exercise the divine right of inextinguishable laughter over such verses, scores of which he would repeat. The British Museum was fabled to have a complete set of Chivers, which seemed to clench the singularity of the poet, inasmuch as hardly any of his countrymen possessed even a single volume of his works. Col-



From a daguerreotype. Engraved on wood by T. Cole. Reprinted from "The Century" for May, 1880

EDGAR ALLAN POE

lectors found them impossible to buy. Their titles were the most preservative part of them. "Eonchs of Ruby," in particular, was itself antiseptic against time. It fascinated the mind it alarmed, and was eagerly but vainly sought. A few stanzas and lines might be heard quoted in literary small talk; and persons of long memory or deep delvers in our Lilliputian history recalled the fact that Chivers and the friends of Chivers stoutly asserted that he was the original owner from whom Poe stole "The Raven"; but the thief, if theft there were, seemed in this case to have got safe off with the spoil. Mr. Benton, however, strikes beside the mark in saying, "The breadth of his territory of renown among scholars is indicated by the fact that Professor Gierlow, a Danish author, wrote a beautiful poem" on his death. Gierlow was a teacher of language in a school at Macon, Georgia.

Things stood at this pass, with Chivers there in the British Museum, at the last bubble of Lethe, when there came a change, and his name began to brighten and grow frequent again. The fame of Poe had magnetized it, and it gave out new radiant energy. Fresh editions of his rare volumes may now fairly be expected. The late W. M. Griswold, in his edition of his father's correspondence, drew Chivers back from oblivion with a brief account, a letter to Poe, and a kindly word for his character. Joel Benton followed with a little sheaf of articles, "In the Poe Circle," and resuscitated the controversy as to who originated "The Raven"; incidentally he reprinted Chivers's more extraordinary poems, and gave some from manuscript that had never seen light before.

Professor Harrison, in his new edition of Poe, comes last. He publishes from the Griswold papers nearly all of Chivers's letters to Poe, and in an appendix he examines Chivers's claims to be the precursor of Poe and decides with much absoluteness that Poe was the precursor of Chivers. These letters were in the hands of the

present writer when he edited the Griswold papers for this magazine, but in the absence of Poe's answers it seemed needless to give them at that time. The latter have now come to light, together with companion papers, having survived Sherman's march to the sea and other vicissitudes of the last half-century in their nook in Georgia; they afford further illustration of Poe's character and career, and they also allow us to reconstruct somewhat more vividly the interesting figure of Chivers himself.

Dr. Thomas Holley Chivers was born in Wilkes County, Georgia, at Digby Manor, near Washington, in 1807,¹ the eldest of seven children. His father, Robert Chivers, was a cotton-planter, rich in lands and slaves. His grandfather, Thomas H. Chivers, had emigrated from England in the middle of the seventeenth century and settled in Virginia, but afterward removed to Georgia. His mother, whose name was Digby, was of similar emigrant stock, her father having come from England and settled in Pennsylvania before finally transferring the family to Georgia, where she married the poet's father in 1806. He was religiously brought up, all the family being Baptists; and, as appears from his verses, his childhood was happy, his domestic affections were warm and tender, and his love for his mother was devotional. He began to write verse early, and with some mastery of metrical form, to judge by the stanzas entitled "Faith," which belong to his twentieth year, and which he afterward described as "showing that the two angels, Love and Adoration, were the twin Sisters who went hand in hand with him through the Eden of his youth, gathering the purple Violets of Heaven." He adopted medicine as a profession and studied at the Transylvania University, where he took the doctor's degree. He was, however, by his father's kindness, independent of the necessity to practise, and he gave himself up to literary and especially poetical pursuits; later in life he was offered a chair of physi-

¹ Professor Harrison corrects this date as follows:

"On page 90 of this volume (1837) he addresses a poem 'To my Precious Mother, on the anniversary of my Twenty-fifth Year,' and subscribes it, 'Written at Philadelphia, October 18, 1834.'" The copy of the volume before the writer has a different poem on page 90. On page

89 there is a poem entitled "To my Mother" simply, and no date is subscribed. The phrase "To my Precious Mother" occurs in the dedication. Professor Harrison's copy may belong to a different issue or have manuscript notes. In every case the year 1807 is the accepted family date, and occurs in a sketch of Chivers written apparently by himself late in life.

ology in the university at Atlanta, which he declined, and this was his nearest approach to a medical or scientific career.

While at the university he had continued to write verse, such as "Georgia Waters," and in 1834 he published a tragedy, "Conrad and Eudora," at Philadelphia; he contributed the next year to the "Southern Literary Messenger" while Poe was editor; and in 1837 he issued his first collection of verse, "Nacoochee; or, The Beautiful Star, with Other Poems," at New York. He spent much of his time at the North in these years, where he had a circle of relatives and friends, and to the end of his life he made long visits there and established connection with writers and scholars of distinction. It is interesting to record also that he was a painter as well as a poet, and that he added to his income as well as his versatility by inventing a machine for unwinding the fiber from silk cocoons.

It was "Nacoochee," the volume of lyrics, which first attracted Poe's public attention to Chivers; but at the age of thirty, when this appeared, Chivers had not developed those characteristics which constitute his originality. The ordinary critic would have found in the verses the metrical form of Moore and Coleridge, and perhaps little else at that time; now other qualities would be more apparent. Though there is no reason to believe that he ever read the poetry of Blake, the Blakeish suggestion in his imagination and diction is occasionally startling; partly because he deals with scriptural allusion and the material imagery of the Bible, his mind having been fed on them, but also because of some similarity in his irregular force of conception and grandiloquent method. In the "Ode to the Mississippi" there are three lines that will serve as an illustration, describing the rivers flowing down to the great "Father of Waters":

Like soldiers enlisted for Freedom to fight!
Who started their marching ere Adam was
born,
And never shall stop till Eternity's morn.

In the last stanza, too, there is a touch of the same quality and tone:

We look on thy bosom, but cannot control
The terror that strikes from the heart to the
soul!

We know thee unique in the East or the West,
Who look'st in a calm like a lion at rest!
We give thee the praise—then adieu to the wild
That brought forth a son called Eternity's
child.

It is also a noticeable matter now that the new poet must have fed on that Philadelphia reprint of Galignani's edition of Keats, Shelley, and Coleridge in one large volume which first brought the immortal romantic fire to our coast and was for our grandfathers a great altar of the Muse. It was a distinction for a new poet in 1837 to quote "Alastor" and "Rosalind and Helen"; and, in fact, Chivers was one of the first of Americans to be "Shelley-mad." The enthusiasm did not mount to his poetry, but it filled the man. Still a third trait worth pointing out is the fact, disclosed by the preface, that he had the Orphic conception of the nature of poetry and the poet's rôle, though he had not yet reached that Orphic egotism which was to belong to him later. Evidently he had the sensibilities and intuitions that denote the poetic temperament, and he possessed instincts of meter and imagery. It is natural to find him soon that rare thing, a Southern transcendentalist, and soon also a Swedenborgian, and even an "associationist" at a later time. The son of a Southern slaveholder, a devotee of Shelley, a friend of Bostonian vagaries, Chivers had fallen on unlucky times; and as he grew older the unregulated elements in him gradually became most marked, till at last he became, not to speak it profanely, a kind of Southern Alcott. The story of his dealings with Poe is the thing of interest in his history, and it may now be completely told.

In the summer of 1840 Poe was endeavoring to start the "Penn Magazine" in Philadelphia, and Chivers was among those whose support he sought as a writer for magazines and as a collector of subscriptions. Chivers acknowledged the receipt of the "Prospectus" and letter accompanying it, August 27, 1840, and promised his aid, but he found room to remonstrate against Poe's "tomahawk" criticism and to advise a milder method. The "Penn Magazine" was abandoned, and the project lay quiescent during Poe's editorship of "Graham's." Chivers appears next to have heard from Poe by an example of that "tomahawk" style, which he had deprecated, applied to himself. In

the article "Autography," in "Graham's" for December, 1841, Poe described Chivers in few lines:

"Dr. Thomas Holley Chivers, of New York, is at the same time one of the best and one of the worst poets in America. His productions affect one as a wild dream—strange, incongruous, full of images of more than arabesque monstrosity, and snatches of sweet unsustained song. Even his worst nonsense (and some of it is horrible) has an indefinite charm of sentiment and melody. We can never be sure that there is *any* meaning in his words—neither is there any meaning in many of our finest musical airs—but the effect is very similar in both. His figures of speech are metaphor run mad, and his grammar is often none at all. Yet there are as fine individual passages to be found in the poems of Dr. Chivers as in those of any poet whatsoever."

Chivers wrote in remonstrance against this, and a second time; and Poe replied, June 6, 1842, acknowledging the three unanswered letters and apologizing for the "Autography" squib:

"I now deeply feel that I have wronged you by a hasty opinion. You will not suppose me insincere in saying that I look upon some of your late pieces as the finest I have *ever read*. I allude especially to your poem about Shelley, and the one of which the *refrain* is 'She came from Heaven to tell me she was blest.' Upon reading these compositions I felt the necessity of our being friends. Will you accept my proffer of friendship?" He goes on to say that he has resumed the project of the "Penn Magazine" and is in search of a partner: "As I have no money myself, it will be absolutely necessary that I procure a partner who has some pecuniary means. I mention this to you, for it is not impossible that you yourself may have both the will and the ability to join me."

Chivers's father had died, and the estate was about to be divided, so it was quite possible that this offer might bear fruit; he was himself just going South to receive his portion, and he wrote a polite and cordial reply, July 12, 1842, in which he explained the situation, but made no promise with regard to the "Penn Magazine" except that he would obtain subscribers for it. The progress of the affair is shown by Poe's next letter.

POE TO CHIVERS

Philadelphia Sep. 27, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR, Through some accident, I did not receive your letter of the 15th inst: until this morning, and now hasten to reply.

Allow me, in the first place, to thank you sincerely for your kindness in procuring me the subscribers to the Penn Magazine. The four names sent will aid me most materially in this early stage of the proceedings.

As yet I have taken no overt step in the measure, and have not even printed a Prospectus. As soon as I do this I will send you several. I do not wish to announce my positive resumption of the original scheme until about the middle of October. Before that period I have reason to believe that I shall have received an appointment in the Philadelphia Custom House, which will afford me a good salary and leave the greater portion of my time unemployed. With this appointment to fall back upon, as a certain resource, I shall be enabled to start the Magazine without difficulty, provided I can make an arrangement with either a practical printer possessing a small office, or some one not a printer, with about \$1000 at command.

It would, of course, be better for the permanent influence and success of the journal that I unite myself with a gentleman of education and similarity of thought and feeling. It was this consciousness which induced me to suggest the enterprise to yourself. I knew no one with whom I would more readily enter into association than yourself.

I am not aware what are your political views. My own have reference to no one of the present parties; but it has been hinted to me that I will receive the most effectual patronage from Government for a journal which will admit occasional papers in support of the Administration. For Mr. Tyler personally, & as an honest statesman, I have the highest respect. Of the government patronage, upon the condition specified, *I am assured*, and this alone will more than sustain the Magazine.

The only real difficulty lies in the beginning—in the pecuniary means for getting out the two (or three) first numbers; after this all is sure, and a great triumph may, and indeed *will* be achieved. If you can command about \$1000 and say that you will join me, I will write you fully as respects the details of the plan, or we can have an immediate interview.

It would be proper to start with an edition of 1000 copies. For this number, the monthly expense, including paper (of the finest quality) composition, press-work & stitching will be about 180\$. I calculate *all* expenses at about \$250—which is \$3000 per annum—a *very* liberal estimate. 1000 copies at \$5=5000\$—leaving a nett profit of 2000\$, even supposing we have only 1000 subscribers. But I am sure

of *beginning* with at least 500, and make no doubt of obtaining 5000 before the expiration of the 2d year. A Magazine, such as I propose, with 5000 subscribers will produce us each an income of some \$10,000; and this you will acknowledge is a game worth playing. At the same time there is no earthly reason why such a Magazine may not, eventually, reach a circulation as great as that of "Graham's" at present—viz. 50,000.

I repeat that it would give me the most sincere pleasure if you would make up your mind to join me. I am sure of our community of thought and feeling, and that we would accomplish *much*.

In regard to the poem on Harrison's death ["The Mighty Dead"], I regret to say that nothing can be done with the Philadelphia publishers. The truth is that the higher order of poetry is, and always will be, in this country, unsaleable; but, even were it otherwise, the present state of the Copy-Right Laws will not warrant any publisher in *purchasing* an American book. The only condition, I am afraid, upon which the poem can be printed, is that you print it at your own expense.

I will see Griswold and endeavor to get the smaller poems from him.¹ A precious fellow is he!

Write as soon as you receive this & believe me

Yours most truly
Edgar A. Poe.

There was, however, to be no result from any of these plans of Poe. Chivers lost a little daughter, and went South for the burial. The following letter shows the real ground in his nature for those poems of bereavement which he wrote so broodingly, and by virtue of which something of his kinship with Poe existed.

CHIVERS TO POE

Augusta, Ga., Dec. 7th [1842]

MY DEAR SIR: You will doubtless be very much surprised to hear that I am so far from New York. When I wrote to you last, I told you that I would write on to my brother, the Administrator of my father's estate, and ascertain when I could receive my part of the money. When I wrote to him I had no idea of coming to the South, but there is not a man in the world who can tell to-day what he will do to-morrow. Hope, with her snowy wings, soared, beckoning me away, up to the gates of heaven. My anticipations were then

as joyful—as my hopes were bright—every thing on the face of the earth appeared bright to me. Now my hope is dead—the beautiful saintly [illegible] dove which soared so high from the earth—luring my impatient soul to wander, delighted, from prospect to prospect—has been wounded in her midway flight to heaven by the keen icy arrows of Death! My anticipations are sorrowful—every thing in the round world is dark to me! The little tender innocent blue-eyed daughter of my heart—the soul of my own soul—the life of my own life—"my joy, my food, my all—the world"—is dead!

"Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—O, never more!"

All that I can say now is in the divine language of Shelley:

"Come, obscure Death,
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms!
Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to [the] sleep from which none wake!"

Never can I see another day of peace on earth! She was so healthy, so happy, so innocent, and so beautiful, that I did not believe that she could die. She was sick only two days—*sick* when I was not near to render her assistance! My God! there is a darkness gathering round my soul of the deepest sorrow, which the light of no future joy can ever illumine! No, the very joys of others make my sorrows more intolerable! Why did man come into the world to see so much sorrow? Why should he be the father of those who are to live only long enough to be interesting to him, and then to lose them? My little daughter of three years old—my blue-eyed child—is gone! A precious being—my Angel-child—in whose seraphic soul such heavenly divineness dwelt, I did not think her of this world! Death has hushed her innocent prattle. In the deep [illegible] grave of the silence of her voice the music of the world is buried! My soul is so sorrowful for the loss of that sweet voice that it can never more listen to any other tones! Have you ever lost a child? If you ever have, then you can know what I mean when I tell you that I have lost the whole world—that there can be no more spring nor summer—but an endless winter cold and chilly to the heart! But whether you have ever lost one or not, I know you possess such fine feelings that you can sympathise with me. I have

¹ "Alluding to his not having returned the Poems, —although requested so often—which he never did."—*Chivers's note*. These poems are no doubt the same facsimiled from MS. in Mr.

Benton's "In the Poe Circle," where the curious reader may find them. Mr.

Benton must have derived them from the Griswold papers.

brought her on to the south to have her buried by the side of my dear old mother whom I loved next to heaven—that is the reason why I have not written to you before this. What have you done with the “Penn Magazine”? When I received your last letter in regard to it, my little blue-eyed daughter sat upon my knee and smiled in my face while I read it. To read your letters, with my little child sitting on my knee, in regard to an enterprise in which we were to be partners, filled my heart with joyful anticipations. When I lay her tender body in the earth, I will then plant flowers upon her grave—such flowers as she loved—for she loved flowers beyond any child I ever knew—flowers that will last through all the winter. Why may I not hope that her soul will come to me again?

Yours

T. H. C.

To E. A. Poe, Esq. N. Y.

To this letter Chivers received no answer, apparently, nor to two letters written in 1843; but he was a persistent correspondent, and in the spring of 1844 made another attempt, asking whether the “Penn Magazine” was abandoned, and saying that he would receive his part of his father’s estate in July and would be glad to join Poe in the enterprise, “provided it would be to my interest to do so.” The rest of the letter, which is long and interesting, is given up to literary criticism and transcendentalism. Poe replied to this at once:

POE TO CHIVERS

New York July 10, 44.

MY DEAR FRIEND, Yours of June 15 was forwarded here to me on the 25th ult. Believe me, I am truly pleased to hear from you again. The two letters of which you speak were received; but, in the hurry of mere business, I chanced to file them away among a package of letters endorsed “answered,” and thus it was that I failed to reply. For many months I have been haunted by the sentiment of some duty unperformed, but was unable to say what it was.

Touching the “Penn Magazine,” or rather the “Stylus,” (for this is the title I should finally adopt)—I have by no means given up the intention of issuing it; my views respecting it are only confirmed by time, and more intimate acquaintance with our literature, as well as with the business of Magazine publication. I am only “biding my time”—awaiting means and an opportunity. Should you conclude to join me, we will not fail to make fame and fortune. When you feel ready to attempt the enterprise, you will find me here—at New

York—where I live, at present, in strict seclusion, busied with books and ambitious thoughts, until the hour shall arrive when I may come forth with a certainty of success. A Magazine like Graham’s will never do. We must do something far better—but we will talk of these matters personally. When you come to New York, put a letter to my address in the P. Office, and we will thus find each other.

I have been lately lecturing on “American Poetry” and have drawn profuse tears from large and intellectual audiences by the recital of your “Heavenly Vision”—which I can never weary of repeating.

You mistake me in supposing I dislike the transcendentalists—it is only the pretenders and sophists among them. My own faith is indeed my own. You will find it, somewhat detailed, in a forthcoming number of the “Columbian Magazine,” published here. I have written for it an article headed “Mesmeric Revelation,” which see. It may be out in the August or September number.

I disagree with you in what you say of man’s advance towards perfection. Man is now only more active, not wiser, nor more happy, than he was 6000 years ago. To say that we are better than our progenitors, is to make the foregone ages only the rudiment of the present & future; whereas each individual man is the rudiment of a future material (*not* spiritual) being. It were to suppose God unjust to suppose those who have died before us possessed of less advantage than ourselves. There is no such thing as spirituality. God is material. All things are material; yet the matter of God has all the qualities which we attribute to Spirit: thus the difference is scarcely more than of words. There is a matter without particles—of no atomic composition: this is God. It permeates and impels all things, and thus is all things in itself. Its agitation is the thought of God, and creates. Man and other beings (inhabitants of stars) are portions of this unparticled matter, individualised by being incorporated in the ordinary or particled matter. Thus they exist rudimentally. Death is the painful metamorphosis. The worm becomes the butterfly—but the butterfly is still material—of a matter, however, which cannot be recognized by our rudimental organs. But for the necessity of the rudimental life, there would have been no stars—no worlds—nothing which we term material. These spots are the residences of the rudimental things. At death, these, taking a new form, of a novel matter, pass everywhere, and act all things, by mere volition, and are cognizant of all secrets but *the one*—the nature of the volition of God—of the agitation of the unparticled matter.

Write upon receipt of this—and *do not* affront me by paying postage, or speaking of

these trivialities at all. There is nothing which gives me more sincere pleasure than the receipt of your letters.

Your friend most sincerely,

E. A. Poe.

The above letter is very like one written to Lowell, July 2, and both resemble the "Mesmeric Revelation" to which they refer. Chivers replied, much delighted with the turn the correspondence had taken, August 6, and again September 24, without receiving any further lucubration from Poe; but correspondence was now to be supplemented by personal acquaintance on the occasion of Chivers's visit to New York in the next summer, 1845, where he brought out his third volume of verse, "The Lost Pleiad." Chivers's account of his walks and talks with Poe is wild and rambling, but it is not lacking in vividness. He wrote out these reminiscences and impressions, after Poe's death, for a life which he meant to publish in Poe's defense. It is best to give them in his own words and order, with a gentle warning to the uninitiated reader that here is Chivers in his full Chiveresqueness.

CHIVERS'S REMINISCENCES OF POE

POE's temperament was bilious, nervous, sanguineous—but, upon first view, appeared to be bilious, sanguineous, nervous. His forehead was broad—particularly in the region between the two lobes of the organ of Ideality—high—and receded gently, looking, from the peculiar conformation of his head, a good deal higher and broader than it really was. His hair was dark as a raven's wing. So was his beard—which he always kept shaved. His form was slender, and by no means prepossessing—and appeared to me, in walking, to lean a little forward with a kind of meditative or Grecian bend. In dress he was remarkably neat and tidy, and, had his means permitted, he, no doubt, would have prided himself in his neatness. This was the result rather of his proficiency in the true knowledge of the Aesthetics of dress, than [of] any foppish admiration which he might have entertained for what may be called finery. When I first became acquainted with him, he used to carry a crooked-headed hickory walking-cane in his hand whenever we went out to walk. As he did not have this cane the very first time that we went out together—but purchased it immediately afterwards—I presumed, at the time, that he had gotten it because I had one—as it was precisely like mine. This he flourished, as he walked, with considerable grace—particularly

so when compared with a man who had never been in the habit of carrying a Cane.

His neck was rather long and slender, and made him appear, when sitting, rather taller than he really was. He, also, appeared when sitting, to have a gentle and rather graceful taper of the bust and shoulders upward. This was very peculiar. His eyes were of a neutral violet tint, rather inclining to hazel, and shone not with a dazzling or brilliant sparkle, but rather with a mildly subdued serenity of intellectual splendor—perhaps on account of the dark shadow cast upon them by the overhanging and rather impressive cloud of his Moon-like brow—giving them that soft celestial glow of soul which characterizes the loftiest enthusiasm. Their lashes were long, dark and silken, hanging over them like willows napping [?] by the moon—Lake—or cumuli of chaos over the God-suffused waters of the Eternal Wells. When the Heaven of his brow was free from clouds—which appeared always to be the case when his soul was not racked either by the thoughts of his poverty, or the remembrance of the manifold insults he had received from anonymous Correspondents, who pestered him from envy of his genius and his uncompromising hostility to the basest ignorance—the intellectual placidity of his mildly becoming eyes was beautiful.

His mouth was like Apollo's Bow unbent and, in the natural curve, said sorrow, with imagination, but, when wreathed into smiles by any cheering inflorescence of his soul—disclosing a set of ivory teeth as evenly set as the Opal walls of Eden—was absolutely captivating and beautiful. So remarkably pleasing was this transition from sadness to sunshiny gladness of hilarity, that I now seem to see him smiling before me—lighting up the dim vistas of my memory as the rain-fraught lightning does the darkness of a Summer night. But there was this peculiarity about his smile, which I do not remember ever to have seen in any other person, namely, that it did not appear to be the result of *gladness* of heart altogether—nor gladness mixed with sorrow—but a pleasing satire—a smiling review of all that had just been said by him—like the triumphant world-renovating laughter of the weeping Heavens—expressive of that beautiful Apollonian disdain which seemed to say, "*What you 'see through a glass darkly,' I behold through the couched eye of an illuminated Seer.*" Not only did he look this, but he felt it—felt it with all his inmost soul. It was, in the truest acceptance of the term, a smile of Genius. Were I now called upon from the bottom of my heart, to give a faithful exhibition of this man's real nature, I would say that he was the Incarnation of the Greek Prometheus chained to the Mount Caucasus of demi-civilized Humanity, with the black Vulture of Envy, feed-

ing on his self-replenished heart; while upon his trembling lips sat enthroned the most eloquent persuasion alternating with the bitterest, triumphant and God-like Scorn. This is my candid opinion of the man—for there was not a single day in [the] year that he did not receive, through the Post anonymous letters from cowardly villains which so harrowed up his feelings that he, at length, was driven to the firm belief that the whole world of Humanity was nothing less than the veritable Devil himself tormenting him here in earth for nothing. Where is there a Literary man who has not experienced the same thing? To these things he made himself amenable by writing Criticisms with his own name attached to them—which any other man would have done. But he had not the fortitude to resist—to treat with utter contempt these cowardly attacks—but visited upon all men the iniquities only of a few. He was, no doubt, firmly convinced, in his own mind, that the meanest thing under Heaven is the scoundrel who will write from the base and cowardly feeling of envy, to his superior, an anonymous and abusive letter. Hell is too good for such a beast.

His arms and hands were slender, and tapered very gracefully and gently, down to the ends of his fingers, which were very tender, gentlemanly, and lady-like. In fact, his hands were truly remarkable for their roseate softness and lily-white, feminine delicacy. You could have judged of his nobility by his hands.

His face was rather oval—tapering in its contour rather suddenly to the chin, which was very classical—and, especially when he smiled, really handsome. His countenance was tropical in its aspect—precisely the reverse of his heart, which, like the fountains of Solomon, had long been kept sealed up, as something sacred, from the vulgar gaze of the world—his face, whenever he wrote long at any one time, putting on a sickly, sallow, and rather pallid hue—but never to such an extent as [to] indicate indisposition. His digestion was always good—which is *prima facie* evidence that he was *never a student*.

His dress was always remarkably neat for one in his circumstances. But I do not believe that it would have done for him to have had money. He was ruined in his youth. His College-life in Virginia was the cause of all his after-inebriation. That was the infernal whirlpool into which was driven the beautiful milk-white Ship of his soul, never to be reclaimed. Is it not one of the most remarkable things in the world, that any man of his abilities should have been so amenable to the dictations of others?

The time when Chivers met Poe was the summer of 1845, during which Poe drank a good deal, and it is undesirable to publish

the first reminiscences in detail. They contain an account of his meeting Poe in Nassau street, New York, in an intoxicated condition. Chivers went home with him, and narrates the incidents of the walk, chief of which was an encounter with Lewis Gaylord Clark, editor of the "Knickerbocker Magazine," whom Poe threatened to attack; but Clark, seeing how matters stood, bowed himself out of the way. Chivers gives a detailed account of Poe's reception by Mrs. Clemm. The reminiscences continue from this point:

The next day when I called to see him, he was not to be found. On the next, when I called, he was in bed pretending to be sick, but with nothing in the world the matter with him—his sole object for lying there being to avoid the delivering of the Poem which he had promised—for he was reading Macaulay's *Miscellanies*. I then hired a carriage, and took him out to ride. . . .

The next day, about half past three o'clock, as I was going up to see him again, I met him dressed in his finest clothes, going down towards the *Broadway Journal Office*. As soon as he saw me, he put his hand in his vest-pocket, and drawing out a piece of paper, unfolded it and read it to me. It was an advertisement which he said he was going to have published in the *B. J.*, announcing to the Public that the partnership, formerly existing between him and Mr. Charles F. Briggs, was then dissolved. On asking my opinion about the insertion of it, I told him I would do no such thing. He followed my advice. He was then on his way to Providence—had not a dollar in the world—borrowed ten from me—requesting me at the same time not to let his wife or Mrs. Clemm know anything about his going—and left me. Some lady, he said, had written to him to come on there, and he was obliged to go, but would return again the next day. He came back the next day, as he had promised.

One of the most striking peculiarities of Mr. Poe was, his perfect *abandon*—boyishness indifference—not only in regard to the opinions of others, but an uncompromising independence of spirit, which seemed to say that he was not only obnoxious to the prejudices of everybody, or [but (?)] possessed, within his own soul, such a self-consciousness of his own merit as would insure their respect. Yet no man living loved the praises of others better than he did—for I remember that whenever I happened to communicate to him any thing touching his abilities as a writer, his bosom would heave like the troubled sea.

His voice was soft, mellow, melodious, and rather more flexible than powerful. It was as musical as Apollo's Lute, and as plaintive in

its utterances of his Memnonian Mysteries, as the prisms-lipped Shell when murmuring of its never-tiring reminiscences of the ever-sounding Sea. When he read Poetry, his voice rolled over the rhythm of the verses like silver notes over golden sands—rather monotonously and flute-like—so that, it may be said here, that he rather *cantilated* than read. He made use of but very little Art in his recitations—never uttering any declamatory tones, or using the lowest Theatrical emphasis, but the most modest, chaste and delicate delivery. From this it must be evident to every one that his Readings were not very effective; and such is the very fact. His reading of Lyrical Poetry was certainly very melodious and beautiful, but he lacked that well-attuned power of modulation in accent, emphasis and cadence, necessary to make either an Epic or Dramatic writing effective.

The periodical frowns which darkened this noble man's brow, told too eloquently how much he had suffered—as much perhaps, from his own lofty nature, which lifted him too far above the common sphere of poetical [practical (?)] and calculating Humanity—as from any real ill-will in the minds of other men. His Heaven-aspiring soul, weary-laden with a heavy inspiration, set forever in his body looking like an Angel exiled from Heaven through his shadowy eyes. He was an enthusiast, in the loftiest sense of the term—forever pluming his Eagle wings for Angel-flights into the pure empyrean of Poetry. His talk was not only truly Coleridgian—graphically melodious—his manner being amply Sydnian, but transcendently eloquent—much better than the very best of his prose writings—partaking, in a great measure, of the subtle and golden spirit of his unwritten Ideals. Poising his soul, as on Angel's wings, into the sacred Adytum of all Beauty, his face would become suffused with the radiant glow of the inspiration which descended upon him, like light from Heaven, until all the world became to his hearer, as well as to himself, for the moment at least, the reality of the Ideal Elysium which his genius was then painting. But his eloquence was artistical rather than passionate. His soul was a living Vatican, wherein was stored away all the Greek cold, marble forms of Beauty which were the studied creations of his proficiency in the abstract potency of consummate Art, rather than the spontaneous offsprings of a heart inspired by the pure motive of Love. His home was a Dream Land, peopled with Ghosts, Ghouls, Vampyres, and the glorified spirits of the unapproachable dead—for whose eternal communion his soul panted with an irresistible yearning as truly as the night-long vigils of the patient Moon. Nor did the traditional darkness of the grave have any terror for him—for he longed to embrace Death with

all the fervor of a faithful lover for his mistress. What to other men appeared to be total darkness, was to him light from Heaven. The truth is he was tired of the world, and Hell itself would have been a better place for him than the society of heartless men. He had long before ceased to believe in men,—and women, tortured as he was by doubtful misgivings, had but very few charms for him. He had sung his last song here on earth, and was now ready to rush out of time into the only Solace of his soul—the arms of Eternity. Maddened by the irreverence of the world—demanding that reverence which he thought was due to his genius—like a wild Indian goaded by his pursuers over the tumultuous cataract into the boiling abyss below—he plunged headlong down—down—down—into the surging vortex of the everlasting darkness of death—never to walk the earth again!

Thus lived—thus died—thus passed away from the world the divine spirit of Edgar A. Poe. But he who had reaped only poverty, here in this world, now that he is gone to his reward in Heaven, shall reap a golden Harvest of ripe praises not only from men in time, but from the Angels in Eternity.

We drink ambrosia out of the Cup of the gods in contemplating the life of that man—whose power commensurate with his greatness shall grow on, widening with the Ages, like some great immortal Moon whose fulness shall never become fully full.

It was plainly during the first week of their acquaintance that the following conversations took place, on the occasion of Chivers's calling upon Poe when he was confined to the house. The account begins abruptly.

CHIVERS'S CONVERSATIONS WITH POE

"WHAT do you think of the present Pantheon of English Poets?" asked I.

"I consider Tennyson not only the greatest Poet in England, at present, but the greatest one, in many senses, that England, or any other Country, ever produced," answered he. "Horne, perhaps, is next. The rest are not worth naming."

"But you have left out Thomas Love[?] Beddoes!" said I.

"Yes, I had forgotten him," replied he. "He has written some very fine Dramatic Poems. You know my opinion of Miss Rossetti [Barrett (?)], as you have read my Criticisms on the *Drama of Exile* in the *Broadway Journal*. She stands, as a Poet, when compared with the male Poets of England, midway between Shelley and Tennyson—promising more of the Shelleyan abandon than the truly Ten-

nysonian Poetic sense—but infinitely above any female that England ever produced—or, in fact, any other Country. Speaking of Horne, reminds me of the two copies of *Orion* which he sent me by the last Steamer from England.” Reaching his hand over towards the left side of the bed, he took up two pamphlets in twelve mo. form and handed them to me. On looking over the title-page I saw that it was *Orion, an Epic Poem* in three Books, by R. H. Horne. On the back of one of them was an address “to E. A. Poe,” in Horne’s own hand writing. On the other volume, with a change of the title as would suit the Edition which he requested Poe to have brought out in New York. This he presented to me. The other he kept himself, because, as he then said himself, it contained the address in Horne’s own hand writing. I then asked him if it was his intention to bring out a new Edition in New York? He then said:

“I have taken this book to every reputable Publisher in this City, and not one of them is willing to take upon himself the responsibility of the publication. Here is a work which is, at least, five hundred years in advance of the Age, and yet I cannot get a publisher for it in America, but if it were a book of romance, full of absurd improbabilities, bad grammar, and wanting in every other thing necessary to make it a book at all, I could find a Publisher at every corner. But here is a work superior even to *Milton’s Paradise Lost*, which I do not expect ever to see published in America. There is not a Publisher in America, that deserves the name even of Bookseller.”

I then recited to him the following beautiful passage from Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*.

“Drink! be the . . . [nectar] circling through
your veins,
The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods!
Till exultation burst in one wide voice,
Like music from Elysian winds!”

Turning over in the bed and, opening his large, mildly-beaming hazel eyes, he looked me full in the face with a suspiciously apprehensive awelike stare, the reason of which I was unable to understand until after the lapse of five years—when it was proven to me that the reason why he did so was, because he supposed I had quoted the passage in order to tantalize him for his periodical inebriation.

Then locking the forefinger of his right hand into the little one of his left—his mild hazel eyes beaming with the heavenly light of the inspiration of the [illegible] which then descended upon him—while his mellow shrill-like voice rolled over his lips like the soft tones of an Æolian Harp when the music that has been sleeping in its strings is awakened by the Breezes of Eden laden with sweet Spices from the Mountains of the Lord—his soul ascended

on the Dove-like wings of rapt enthusiasm into the highest thoughts [illegible] Heaven of Beauty—scattering down from the luminous wake of his soaring the manna-dews of an everlasting eloquence.

Not long after this—even while we were talking about the state of his health—his wife entered the room, to whom he very politely introduced me. Presently Mrs. Clemm, his mother-in-law, came in, to whom he also introduced me. I was very much pleased with his wife. She appeared to me to be a very tender-hearted and affectionate woman—particularly so to him—whom she addressed with the endearing appellation of *My Dear!* But she was not a healthy woman, as I perceived after a little acquaintance with her—as, at irregular intervals—even while we were talking—she was attacked with a terrible paroxysm of coughing whose spasmodic convulsions seemed to me almost to rend asunder her very body. This was so severe at times as to threaten her with strangulation. I then asked him if Mrs. Poe had been long ill? He replied, “Yes, she has always been sick, never having been well since I first knew her!”

“Has she caught cold? or [is] it a consumption under which she is laboring?” I then asked.

“No—it is not a cold—Dr. Mitchell of Philadelphia, says that she has the Bronchitis. She ruptured a blood vessel while singing, in Philadelphia, and had never been well since. Do you know Dr. Mitchell? He is a Poet.”

I then said, “No, I am not acquainted with him; but have often seen his pieces in the papers.”

Mrs. Poe then got up and left the room—Mrs. Clemm, her mother, following her. Presently she returned with a glass of Lemonade, which she handed to me. Then turning to Poe, she asked, *My dear!* will you have a glass?

“No—I do not want any at present,” said he, with an indifferent [illegible] on the pillow of his head.

Handing her the empty glass, she then left the room. Poe then turning to me, said “I have long wished to see [you] upon a subject in which I am vitally interested. It is the publication of a Magazine about which I wrote you first from Philadelphia, to be called *The Stylus*. When I first wrote you from Philadelphia in the letter containing the Prospectus, it was my intention then to call it *The Penn Magazine*; but after having received your letter in which you suggested that such a title would render it too local, I then came to the conclusion to give it the name of the Pen with which the Greeks used to write, called *The Stylus*. This would not only be more significant, but determine in some sense—in fact, as far as any title whatsoever could—the precise nature of the work.”

By this time Mrs. Poe had returned into the room again with her bonnet on.

Turning to her, he then said, "My Dear, hand me the bundle of letters there in the Bureau Drawer touching upon the publication of *The Stylus*."

She then went to the Bureau, took out a large bundle of letters—perhaps a hundred—and laid them down on a small table near the window where I was sitting. Then passing around the bed towards the door, she said: "My Dear, I am going out with mother to take a small walk. I think it will do me good."

"Very well," said he, then turning towards me—"I am very willing. But you had, perhaps, better not walk too far. You know that Dr. Mitchell said too much exercise was not good for you."

She then said, while adjusting her bonnet-strings, "Shall I tell the Servant Girl should any persons call to see you, not to admit them?"

"Yes, tell her to tell them that I am sick and cannot see them," said he.

She then left the room.

"If you will glance at those letters there," said he to me, "you will perceive in what estimation my proposal to publish *The Stylus* is held [by] the most influential men in the Union. But those are not the tenth part of what I have received during the present year. I have many strong friends in the South and West who have promised me their aid in the procuring of subscribers. If you will open that letter which you now hold in your hand you will perceive that Mr. John Tomlin of Jackson, Tennessee, who has written some pretty little things, has already obtained me thirty good paying subscribers. This, you will perceive, is strong evidence in favor of our establishing the Magazine immediately."

I then asked him in what form it should be published.

"Just hand me that book yonder on the Bureau," said he, "and I will show you."

I got up and handed it to him.

"This," said he, "is part of a fine London Edition of *The Arabian Nights* Entertainments, translated by Lane? It is beautifully printed—in just such a style as we ought to get up the Magazine. I saw it at Wiley & Putnam's Book Store, and bought it on purpose to show to you."

I then asked him how many papers ought each Number to contain.

He then said, "About the Number of Colton's *Whig Review*—but no less. If you say that you will join me, I will publish a new Prospectus in which I will announce ourselves to the Public as the Editors. But as I am not very well at present, we will talk more about it at our leisure. But if we intend to do anything, we ought to go to work immediately—for there is no time to be lost."

I then told him that I would be ready to join him by the first of January, 1846.

"Did you ever see Lowell?" asked he.

"No, I never did," was my reply.

"He called to see me the other day," said he; "but I was very much disappointed in his appearance as an intellectual man. He was not half the noble-looking person that I expected to see."

I then told him that I could not but wonder at his expecting to see any thing great in Lowell—when he had never given a single indication in any of his writings of any thing that even resembled a great man.

"He has written some fine things. Have you seen my Criticism on his *Rosaline*?"

"Yes," said I, "I have."

"Well, do you not consider that a fine Poem?" asked he.

"In some respects it may be called a fine Poem," said I; "but in many others it is any thing but a Lyric of the highest order."

"Do you not consider my Criticism a just one?" asked he.

"No, I do not," answered I—"inasmuch as you have over-praised him."

"In what respect do you consider that I have over-praised him?" asked he.

"In every possible one," answered I. "You have pronounced it one of the finest Poems ever written by any American; when it is as palpable a plagiarism as was ever palmed off by arrogant mental mediocrity upon a too credulous Public."

"In what sense do you consider it a plagiarism?" asked he.

"In every sense that can constitute it a Poem," I answered. "Not only in the rhythm but also the rhyming consonations. In fact, it is a plagiarism in the very chime of it. I grant you it is the best thing that he ever wrote; but in doing this, I only show you how poor every thing else that he has written is."

He then looked sad and remained taciturn for some time. "How do you like Shelley?" asked he, a little piqued.

"I consider him one of the greatest Poets that ever lived," I answered him. "His Cenci I consider not inferior, as a true Dramatic Poem, to the very best of Shakespeare's plays. In fact, in some senses it is superior to any thing that Shakespeare ever wrote."

"In passion he was supreme, but it was an unfettered enthusiasm ungoverned by the amenities of Art," answered he.

"But it was the clairvoyant fortuitousness of intuition," answered I. "Like St. John on the Island of Patmos he beheld his celestial Visions of the coming of the New Jerusalem of Man with the couched eyes of one of God's holiest Prophets."

"His principal forte was powerful abandon of rhythmical conception," answered he. "But

he lacked just that Tennysonian Art necessary to the creation of a perfect Poem. You are mistaken in supposing that passion is the primum mobile of the true Poet, for it is just the reverse. A pure Poem proper is one that is wholly destitute of a particle of passion."

"Then you admire Tennyson?" asked I.

"Yes, I consider him one of the greatest Poets that ever lived," answered he.

"My God! Poe! how can you say that?" asked I, in surprise. "Why, his Poems are as effeminate as a phlegmatic fat baby. He is the most perfectly Greek-statuesque, if you please, in his conceptions of any man that has ever lived since the days of Pericles."

"This is just what constitutes him one of the greatest geniuses that ever lived," answered he. "Passion has nothing to do with pure Poetry; for every drop of passion that you infuse into any Poem just so far do you materialize, deteriorate and render it no Poem. A pure Poem is a rhythmical creation of Beauty wholly destitute of every thing but that which constitutes purity, namely, etheristity."

"Well, but this would not only bring you in conflict with the time-honored opinions of the world, but be the establishing of a new mode of Criticism among the Nations," said I.

"True, but that does not give me a moment's concern," answered he, with an imperial self-consciousness of his own importance, as well as the perfect knowledge of the purity of the truth, that he had just spoken.

"If what you say be true, then two-thirds of every thing that Shakespeare ever wrote is absolutely good for nothing," said I.

"Certainly it is good for nothing. Nothing is good for any thing except that which contains within itself the essence of its own vitality," answered he. "Otherwise it is mortal and ought to die."

"Then if this be the case,—if all the Poetical works in the world were pruned of their excrescences,—there would be very little real Poetry left," answered I.

"Very little, indeed; but just enough to show that what I say of Poetry is true."

"Then Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Montgomery, Southey and many other world-renowned Sons of Song would fare badly."

"But no worse than they deserve," answered he, very peremptorily.

"What do you think of Keats?" asked I.

"He was the greatest of any of the English Poets of the same age, if not at any age," answered he, with the air of a man who was not only conscious of his own consummate ability, but who had, long before, deliberately formed his opinions. "He was far in advance of the best of them, with the exception of Shelley, in the study of his themes. His principal fault is the grotesqueness of his abandon."

"What do you think of Bryant?" asked I.

"I hold the policy—or shall I call it politeness—to speak in noticing Bryant's Poems, respectfully—or, perhaps, I should here, too, qualify my expression by saying flatteringly of the private opinions of Literary circles. But did you not know—does not every true Critic know—that Mr. Bryant himself does not know in what true Poetry consists, that it is eternally impossible these Private Circles should. But would any honest man—would any man but one who is an arrant coward—morally as well as physically—withhold his conscientious opinions of the merits of any book merely because they would come in conflict with the preconceived opinions of the world? Certainly not. Then why should any man hesitate to say, most positively, that these before-mentioned Private Circles know nothing at all about the matter? They do not write Poetry—nor do they Criticise it—then how can they know any thing about it? If Mr. Bryant himself does not know what it is, how can his admirers? Has it come to this, that the Critic knows more than the Artist? It has always heretofore been the belief that the Artist was the Mother of the Critic.

"That Mr. Bryant does not know, is proven by this incontrovertible fact, that he has never written the highest order of Poetry. Of what moment is it with any true Critic that any man, or any number of unpoetical men, should admire Bryant? No moment at all. It only proves that the Poet whom they admire, has something in him *worthy* of admiration—that is all. But this only proves that they are incompetent to judge of the highest order of Poetry, inasmuch as the individual whom they admire, cannot write it. Yet, this is the sum total of all that has ever been, or *ever will be*, said about the opinions of Private Circles.

"Everybody pretends he knows something—*particularly* about Poetry. You cannot meet with *any* man who will not tell you something about what *he likes* or what *he dislikes*. Many men whom I have met in my life, have intimated to me that what *they liked* in music was far in advance of any thing that was ever conceived of by any of the Italian Composers. Others, again, have given preference to the *Æthiopian Melodies*. I once knew a man who swore that *Sally in the Wildwoods* was far above any thing that Ole Bull could compose. I also once met with a lady who could not see any beauty at all in the Italian music. So the world wags. But who will be deterred from telling the truth on account of such people? Nobody in his senses. I verily believe that there are people in this world who, if they had nothing better to do, would absolutely fall in love with the Devil."

(Conclusion next month.)

THE TEARS OF HARLEQUIN

BY THEODOSIA GARRISON



TO you he gave his laughter and his jest,
His words that of all words were merriest,
His glad, mad moments when the lights flared high
And his wild song outshrilled the plaudit's din.
For you that memory, but happier I—
I, who have known the tears of Harlequin.

Not mine those moments when the roses lay
Like red spilled wine on his triumphant way,
And shouts acclaimed him through the music's beat
Above the voice of flute and violin.

But I have known his hour of sore defeat—
I—I have known the tears of Harlequin.

Light kisses and light words, they were not mine—
Poor perquisites of many a Columbine

Bought with his laughter, flattered by his jest;
But when despair broke through the painted grin,
His tortured face has fallen on my breast—
I—I have known the tears of Harlequin.

You weep for him, who look upon him dead,
That joy and jest and merriment are fled;

You weep for him, what time my eyes are dry,
Knowing what peace a weary soul may win
Stifled by too much masking—even I—
I, who have known the tears of Harlequin.

