THE POE MONUMENT AND MEMORIAL VOLUME.

BALTIMORE rejoiced in her sobriquet of the Monumental City many long years before it entered into the heart of a woman to plead that splendid talent might receive no less recognition than prowess.

The first monument raised to Columbus in America was erected in the city's suburbs in 1784, and the highest pile of fine white marble ever heaped stone upon stone to perpetuate the glory of Washington has stood since the beginning of the century at the intersection of Monument and Charles Streets, where its surmounting figure, calm and majestic, looks down the avenue upon encroaching commerce, the proud lips seeming to say "Thus far and no farther" to the noisy denizens of the market-place, who seek to invade that still, serene environment known as Mount Vernon Square. Near by the bronze presentment of Chief Justice Taney stands for Law, and on the opposite plot the statue of Peabody, with its level fronting gaze bent upon men, his brothers, embodies that spirit of love which is the fulfilling of the law.

Farther to the eastward of Baltimore's dividing line patriotism has prompted the building of shrines to the heroes of North Point, not forgetting to honor the memory of the boy defenders, Wells and McComas. Also to Armistead; to McDonough, the philanthropist; to Wildey, the founder of Odd Fellowship; to Ferguson, the champion of the Howard Society; to Gleeson, veteran of the Maryland National Guards. All these we have, and a dozen more; the epic and the lyric in commemorating granite; the humanitarian note and the far more frequent martial note.

But it is a significant fact that one has to cross the city's meridian in search of the Poe monument.

Westward the course of intellectual empire takes its way, and westward we turn our steps in search of the tribute to the immortal author of "The Raven."

It is suggestive, too, that we stop at Westminster Churchyard.

Surely it is fitting that the name of the great abbey should be coupled with Poe's name, though it be a Westminster where no other illustrious dead lie beside him. To rest in isolated state within the shadow of a Westminster all his own is, indeed, a Poe-like decree of fate, and one that may, perchance, appeal to that weird imagination in the higher process of evolution somewhere in the "distant Aiden."

As the sweetly solemn Jubilate is borne through the Gothic windows upon the breeze that sways the violets in the green sod, one feels that so must have sounded the greeting of Israfel, "whose heart strings are a lute," when the earth-worn spirit of Edgar Allan Poe quitted its frail encumbering clay for those vast mysterious regions whose occult wisdom he so nearly apprehended.

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

Entering the enclosure at the corner of Greene and Fayette Streets we find ourselves close beside the "first and only memorial expression of the kind ever given to an American on account of literary excellence."

Here where the remains of the greatest American poet were interred in 1849 and remained unhonored for twenty-six years, now stands a beautiful monument of white-veined Italian marble, wrought in the cippus form, eight feet high. The pedestal has an attic base three feet ten inches square. The die block is a cube three feet square, relieved on each face by a projecting and polished panel, the upper angles of which are broken and filled with a carved rosette.

On the front panel is the bas-relief bust of the poet modelled by the Baltimore artist, Frederick Volck, from a photograph, and executed in the finest statuary marble.

On the opposite side are inscribed the dates of the poet's birth and death. On the attic base, below the front panel, is the name of Edgar Allan Poe, in large raised letters.

The die block is crowned by a bold and graceful frieze and cornice four feet square, broken on each face in the centre by the segment of a circle. The frieze is ornamented at the angles by richly carved acanthus leaves, and in the circled centres by a lyre crowned with laurel.

The whole is capped by a blocking three feet square cut to a low pyramidal form.

The effect carries out the design of the architect, which was to produce "something simple, chaste and dignified, to strike more by graceful outlines and proportions than by crowding with unmeaning ornament."

Though this simple memorial has been criticised as not colossal enough for the

genius it is intended to commemorate, it is almost a fac-simile of Wordsworth's monument; and when the world remembers that the public school teachers of Baltimore, and not the millionaires, placed it here, criticism must turn to eulogy.

No less than four cities claim Poe for an illustrious son, and the whole country boasts in him our unique, unrivalled romancer, whose fame is our highest literary glory. But the press of North, East, South and West united in heaping reproachful epithets upon Baltimore alone for neglecting his unmarked grave, till, stung by the injustice of the censors of his native city and acting as spokesman for other enthusiasts, Mr. John Basil, Jr., principal of No. 8 Grammar School, offered at a meeting of the Teachers' Association the following preamble:

SARA SIGOURNEY RICE.

"*Whereas*, It has been represented to certain members of the association that the mortal remains of Edgar Allan Poe are interred in the cemetery of Westminster Church without even so much as a stone to mark the spot; therefore,

"*Resolved*, That a committee of five be appointed by the president of this association to devise some means best adapted in their judgment to perpetuate the memory of one who has contributed so largely to American literature."

But while to a man is due the credit of *proposing* to vindicate his city from the stigma of unappreciation and neglect, it is to the zeal and the untiring devotion of an earnest, busy woman, Miss Sara Sigourney Rice, that the city of Baltimore, the country and all poets owe honor for developing that idea into material form.

Taking hold of the project when it languished almost to inanition, Miss Rice kindled a more vital spark of enthusiasm that burnt away all barriers of indifference, delay and impecuniosity hedging the way to achievement. To Miss Rice, who was widely and favorably known as an elocutionist of the new school and as a woman of keen intellectual appreciation, the major portion of credit is due for the successful completion of the enterprise.

She at once determined to appeal for aid to none but Baltimoreans, and though Mr. George W. Childs, of Philadelphia, made the largest contribution to the fund, he was given that privilege as a native of the Monumental City.

It rankled in the heart of this sensitive woman that an English lord, who sought Poe's grave as the objective point of his American tour, had said scornful words of those who daily passed the unmarked mound. She resolved that what the citizens had failed to do a woman should bring about.

The first money raised for the monument was through her personal efforts, and the entire movement, from its inception to the close, enjoyed the benefit of her unremitting attention.

The ceremonies connected with the dedication of the Poe monument brought together for, perhaps, their final meeting on earth all those who were present at Poe's funeral on that bleak October day so long ago.

Besides these a large assemblage of cultured men and women gathered to hear the "History of the Movement," delivered by Prof. William Elliott, Jr., President of the Baltimore City College.

In the course of his remarks Prof. Elliott said: "In this connection, acting as a truthful chronicler, I deem it proper to state some facts in relation to the circumstances of the interment. The reliability of the statement I shall now make is sufficiently attested by the evidence of at least three gentlemen present on that occasion—possibly the only three who yet survive.

"I have been informed that the day was, for the season, more than ordinarily unpleasant, the weather being raw and cold; indeed, just such a day as it would have been more comfortable to spend indoors than without doors. The time of the interment was about four o'clock in the afternoon; the attendance of persons at the grave, possibly a consequence

of the state of the weather, was limited to eight—certainly to not more than nine persons—one of these being a lady. Of the number known to have been present were Hon. Z. Collins Lee, a classmate of the deceased at the University of Virginia; Henry Herring, Esq., a connection of Mr. Poe; Rev. W. T. D. Clemm, a relative of Mr. Poe's wife; Mr. Neilson Poe, a cousin of the poet; Edmund Smith, Esq., and wife, the latter a first cousin of Poe, and at this time his nearest living relative in the city; and possibly Dr. Snodgrass, the editor of the *Saturday Review*, the paper in which the prize story written by Poe first made its appearance. The clergyman who officiated at the grave was Rev. Mr. Clemm, already mentioned, who read the impressive burial service used by the Methodist denomination of Christians, after which all that was mortal of Edgar Allan Poe was gently committed to its mother earth."

After Prof. Elliott's address Miss Rice was introduced to the audience and read letters which she had received from famous poets in response to invitations to be present on the occasion, and after the letters the following poem, contributed by the well-known dramatic critic and littérateur, Mr. William Winter, was read by Miss Rice with exquisite delicacy of utterance, and received with spontaneous applause.

AT POE'S GRAVE.

Cold is the pean honor sings,
And chill is glory's icy breath,
And pale the garland memory brings
To grace the iron jaws of death.

Fame's echoing thunders, long and loud,
The pomp of pride that seeks the pall,
The plaudits of the vacant crowd—
One word of love is worth them all.

With dews of grief our eyes are dim;
Ah, let the tear of sorrow start,
And honor in ourselves and him
The great and tender human heart!

Through many a night of want and woe
His frenzied spirit wandered wild—
Till kind disaster laid him low,
And Heaven reclaimed its wayward child.

Through many a year his fame has grown,
Like midnight, vast, like starlight, sweet,
Till now his genius fills a throne,
And nations marvel at his feet.

One meed of justice long delayed,
One crowning grace his virtues crave—
Ah, take, thou great and injured shade,
The love that sanctifies the grave!

God's mercy guard in peaceful sleep
The sacred dust that slumbers here;
And, while around this tomb we weep,
God bless, for us, the mourner's tear!

And may his spirit, hovering nigh,
Pierce the dense cloud of darkness through,
And know, with fame that cannot die,
He has the world's affection too!

The Philharmonic Society then rendered the grand chorus, "He Watcheth Over Israel," from the Elijah of Mendelssohn, and as the strains died away Prof. H. E. Shepherd, of the Baltimore City College, arose and delivered a most scholarly essay upon the literary character of Poe.

With the keen, critical judgment of a discriminating man of letters Dr. Shepherd measured the poet's meed of praise, and in all moderation ascribed him a place in literature with Surrey, Milton, Ben Jonson, Cowley, Herrick, Shelley, Keats and Tennyson.

We cannot refrain from quoting briefly from his eloquence:

"In the novelty of his metrical forms Poe has surpassed almost every poet of our era except Tennyson, as is frankly acknowledged by the English reviewers and eulogists of the poet-laureate. . . . 'The Raven,' which is a novel blending of trochaic octometers, finding its nearest approach in the measure of 'Lady Geraldiné's Courtship,' is one of the most brilliant achievements that our era has witnessed, and chronicles an epoch in the history of metric art. . . . The riper productions of our poet, 'The Raven,' 'Annabel Lee,' the poem 'To Helen,' have received the most glowing tributes from the dispassionate critics of the Old World. I shall ever remember the thrill of grateful appreciation with which I read the splendid eulogium upon the genius of Poe in the London *Quarterly Review*, in which he is ranked far above his contemporaries, and pronounced one of the most consummate artists of modern times, potentially the greatest critic of our era, and possessing, perhaps, the finest ear for rhythm that was ever formed."

After the essay Miss Rice read "The Raven," and Miss Ella Gordon, of Baltimore, sang the "Inflammatus" from the Stabat-Mater" of Rossini.

But the interest of the occasion rose to its highest pitch when Poe's old schoolfellow, Col. J. T. L. Preston, of Virginia, was introduced.

He represented to those assembled the living link between themselves and the personality of the great American genius. A

hush of expectancy fell upon the crowd as the poet's desk-mate and first critic greeted them with the stateliness of an earlier day. He told about Master Clark's Latin School where he and the young Edgar sat upon the same form together; how he captivated his associates by his agility in gymnastics, his swift running, his wonderful leaping, his boxing, and above all by his unprecedented feats in swimming. He told how Poe always stood at the head of the line in the old Oxford exercise of "capping verses;" that one day as they sat together Poe asked him what he thought of rhyming the word *groat* with such a word as *not*.

Following Col. Preston, and increasing, if possible, the tense quietness of the moment, came the Hon. John H. B. Latrobe, a venerable and distinguished lawyer of Baltimore, who had the precious memory of having been one of the judges appointed to decide upon the merits of the stories and poems submitted in the prize competition of the *Saturday Review*, and of having been the first of the trio to discover the superior style of the "Manuscript Found in a Bottle," accompanied by a sealed envelope containing the then unknown name of Edgar Allan Poe. He said: "There was an analysis of complicated facts, an unravelling of circumstantial evidence that won the lawyer judges; an amount of accurate scientific knowledge that charmed their accomplished colleague; a pure classic diction that delighted all three; and the one-hundred-dollar prize was awarded Poe, not, as Griswold unjustly affirmed, because the MS. was legibly written, but because of the startling originality and unquestioned genius of the new writer."

He told that Poe called upon him at his office to thank him for awarding him the prize, and summed up his description of his person by saying impressively, "*Gentleman* was written all over him."

The relatives of the dead poet appointed Mr. Neilson Poe, of Baltimore, to express their appreciation of the honor done their kinsman, and he concluded his brief but graceful remarks by saying: "On behalf, therefore, of all who bear his name or share his blood, I return their profound thanks, and, in their name, declare their complete satisfaction with the results of the labors of the generous and enthusiastic authors of this tribute to his memory, and with the energy, judgment and good taste which have marked all their proceedings."

Those present then repaired to Westminster churchyard, where all that is mortal of Poe reposes. The remains have been removed from their first resting-place, in an obscure part of the lot, to the front corner of the yard, where the monument now covering the grave can be seen from the thoroughfare of Fayette Street.

While the Philharmonic rendered the dirge "Sleep and Rest," by Barnby, the committee on the memorial and others gathered around the monument. The dirge is an adaptation of Tennyson's "Sweet and Low," by Mrs. Eleanor Fullerton, of Baltimore.

Prof. Elliott and Miss Rice removed the muslin in which the memorial was veiled, and it was then for the first time presented to the gaze of the public.

THE MEMORIAL VOLUME.

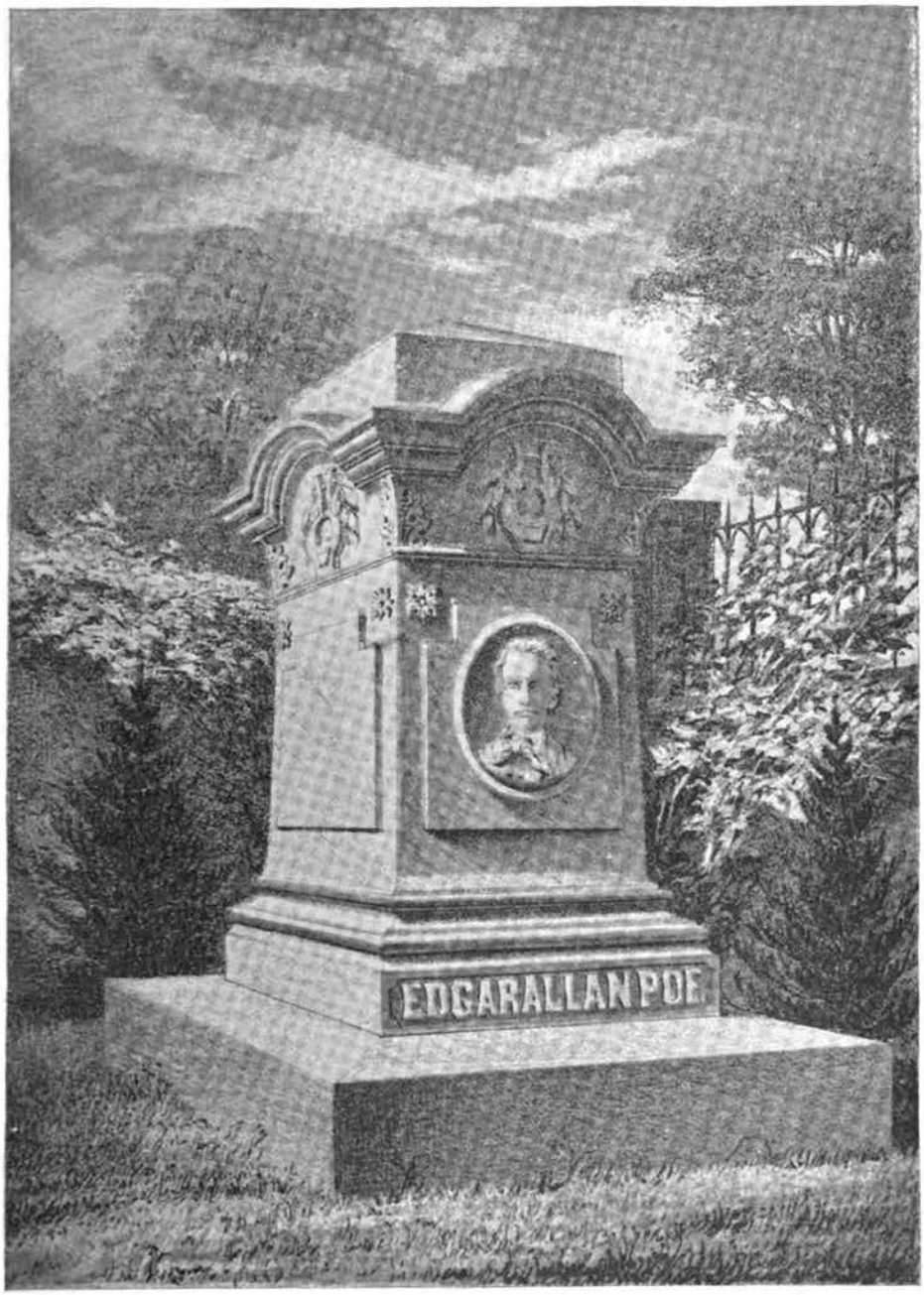
So widespread was the interest in the monument to Poe it was thought that a memorial volume, containing a detailed account of the ceremonies of its unveiling and including the addresses of the orators, the autograph letters of renowned poets and the inserted photograph taken by Bendann, would meet with general appreciation and prove a boon to posterity.

As Miss Rice was in correspondence with the poet's fellow-craftsmen she planned and accomplished this additional task as creditably as the first. The quarto is bound in gray, black and gold, bearing on its cover a medallion portrait, together with a reproduction of the shaft. There are in it photographed letters from Tennyson, Swinburne, Longfellow, Whittier, Bryant, Aldrich, Paul H. Hayne, Godfrey Saxe, John H. Ingram, his English defender; a sonnet by Stéphane Mallarmé and one by Edgar Fawcett.

While the public-school teachers of Baltimore are officially recognized as the projectors and achievers of the Poe monument, it is equally well known unofficially that Miss Sara Sigourney Rice was the arch enthusiast. So little claim to notoriety or public appreciation has she made that but a few chosen friends have ever seen her souvenirs of the occasion. Among them is one of the only two daguerreotypes of Poe in existence, and this was brought her by Poe's only sister. She also counts among her treasures a commendatory letter from Mrs. Helen Whitman, to whom Poe inscribed those famous lines "To Helen."

There also came kind words from France, from Germany and from all parts of her own country and England. There is a long letter from Richard Hengist Horne and a felicitous one from Mr. Childs.

All women who apprehend and appreciate the finer qualities of the poet, which are es-



sentially feminine, will be glad to know that a woman bore so conspicuous and so honorable a part in erecting a stone which, if not the highest in the City of Monuments, rests upon the most imperishable genius.

Marian V. Dorsey.