

### THE "VIRGINIA" POE.\*

When the edition of Poe, prepared under the editorship of Mr. Stedman and Professor Woodberry, was published about ten years ago, it seemed as if editorial and critical skill had exhausted the possibilities of the case, and that the works of the author were at last brought together in a form that would remain definitive. But we are compelled to admit, after a careful examination, that the existence of the new "Virginia" edition, edited by Professor James A. Harrison, is fully justified by the new matter which it offers, as well as by its corrections in the text of the matter already familiar. While we cannot say that it supersedes the earlier edition — nothing could well supersede the critical and biographical work of the former editors — it does provide a supplement to that edition which students of Poe will henceforth find indispensable.

A *précis* of the new edition, based upon the editor's statement, will make clear the reasons for the judgment above expressed. Quoting Poe's own words, "I am naturally anxious that what I have written should circulate as I wrote it, if it circulate at all," the editor tells us that he became convinced almost from the start of the necessity of extracting "a new and absolutely authentic text from the magazines, periodicals, and books of tales and poems which Poe himself had edited or to which he had contributed." In the application of this procedure each one of the tales and poems has been made the subject of a special study of its various "states," with the result that we have in most instances a very different text from that published by Griswold. In two or three cases only, the Griswold version has been reproduced for the simple reason that the original publication was absolutely not to be found. The

foundations of the new edition are supplied by Poe's own copy of the "Broadway Journal" marked by himself, his own copy of "The Raven and Other Poems" (1845), with the poet's marginal corrections (amounting, in the case of "The Raven" alone, to no less than thirty-seven changes), his own copy of the "Tales" (1845) with similar corrections, his own copy of "Eureka," also annotated by the author, and the original files of the "Southern Literary Messenger" and other periodicals to which Poe contributed from time to time.

The work thus presented as Poe wished it to be read is arranged in strictly chronological order, making it possible to study the evolution of his style, and his growth from the crudity of his earlier writings to the almost absolute perfection of his best later work. In dealing with the "Literati" papers, Griswold's substitution of his own work for that of Poe in no less than five cases is exposed. The "Marginalia" now includes some forty pages of matter that Griswold suppressed, and the papers on autography and secret writing are now for the first time reprinted in full. There are various appendices (for Mr. Harrison has aimed to give us a Poe encyclopædia rather than a mere new edition), among which we notice an examination of the Poe-Chivers controversy which makes it clear that Chivers was the plagiarist, several contemporary reviews of Poe, some new matter found among the Griswold manuscripts, and a complete bibliography of all of Poe's known writings. Finally, we have all of Poe's correspondence that the editors could find, including many letters to the poet as well as those written by him. Something like two-thirds of the contents of this volume of correspondence consists of matter which is new even to the special students of the poet.

This statement of the general results accomplished by the painstaking industry of the editor must now be supplemented by an account of the consecutive volumes of the new edition. The first of the seventeen volumes is occupied with a biography of the most searching and painstaking sort. The appendix to this volume gives us the autobiographical memorandum prepared for Griswold, Griswold's famous (or infamous) "Ludwig" article on the death of the poet, and five additional articles and essays by Lowell, Willis, and others. Next in order come five volumes of the tales. This section has for an introduction the eloquent essay of Mr. H. W. Mabie on "Poe's Place in Literature," prepared as an address at the

\* THE COMPLETE WORKS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE. Edited by James A. Harrison. In seventeen volumes. Illustrated. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.

University of Virginia upon the occasion of the Poe celebration three years ago. Here, as elsewhere throughout the edition, the variants of the different printed texts are minutely recorded in a body of notes. The single volume of the poems has an elaborate critical introduction by Professor Charles W. Kent, of which the most striking feature is a parallel drawn between Poe and Chopin, a parallel that grows upon the reader the more he thinks of it. The appendix to this volume includes several poems that have been attributed to Poe, and reduces to an absurdity the charge of plagiarism made in behalf of Chivers.

The tales and poems are followed by six volumes of literary criticism, of which nearly four consist of matter now for the first time reprinted. This fact alone would furnish ample justification for the new edition, were it in any way needed. Some of the notices may seem almost as unimportant as the forgotten books that they embalm, but there can be no serious question of the importance of making accessible the entire output of our first professional critic of high rank. The fourteenth volume contains essays and miscellaneous writings, about one-fourth of the matter being new. Here we find in full the articles on secret writing, also "The Philosophy of Composition," "The Rationale of Verse," and "The Poetic Principle." The fifteenth volume gives us "The Literati of New York City" and the first reprint of the "Autography" papers, facsimiles and all. The editing of the "Literati" has had the singular result of proving that five of the papers hitherto included in editions of Poe were not written by Poe at all, but were substituted by Griswold for Poe's original articles. This is a particularly interesting revelation, because in the case of Thomas Dunn English it shows that much of the malice of the attack was Griswold's. A more cowardly and contemptible act is probably not to be found in all the annals of editing. Mr. Harrison has now restored Poe's articles to their proper places, and printed Griswold's perversions in an appendix. The sixteenth volume gives us the fifteen papers called "Marginalia," exactly reprinted from the magazines in which they appeared. Then comes the "Eureka" in full, with the notes made by the author in his own copy, and which he intended to embody in a second edition. This volume closes with a Poe bibliography, followed by a general index to the fifteen volumes of the works. Last of all, we have in the seventeenth volume the Poe correspondence, which represents one of the chief

services done for us by Mr. Harrison. Although many of Poe's letters have found a place in his various biographies, it yet remains true that many others are now for the first time printed, and that the letters have never before been collected into a volume of their own. The value of this volume is greatly enhanced by its inclusion in many cases of both sides of the correspondence, and by the addition of many letters written about Poe by his friends and others. It should be said in closing this account, that each volume of the seventeen has a frontispiece illustration, and that the entire set is presented in a handy form that makes its use a pleasure, whether for consultation or continuous reading.

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