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T H E S I S

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Life and Work of Edgar Allen Poe

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Anna Leta Edington

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L I F E and W O R K S

of

E D G A R A L L E N P O E.

LIFE of EDGAR ALLEN POE.

Edgar Allen Poe was born in Boston, January 19, 1809. After his mother's death, Edgar was adopted by Mr. John Allen, a very wealthy man. At six he could read, dance, recite passages from the great poets, as well as, pledge the guests at table in a glass of wine. He attended school at Stoke Newington for five years, and spent much shorter lengths of time in school in the University of Virginia and at Westpoint.

His expulsion from Westpoint caused the final break with his foster father. After spending some time in Boston and New York he found a home in Baltimore with an aunt, Mrs. Clemm, whose daughter, Virginia, he married. The next six years Poe spent mainly in Philadelphia as hack writer. In 1844 he edited the Broadway Journal and was associated with Willis on the Evening Mirror. Prosperity was now within his reach but his health was prematurely shattered by overwork, poverty and by intemperance. In the little cottage at Fordham, in most pitiable destitution, his child wife, Virginia, died. Two years later he died in a hospital in Baltimore, whither he had been carried from the street in a state of unconsciousness.

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A COMPLETE LIST of the POETIC WORKS of
EDGAR ALLEN POE.

The Raven.	The Bells.	Ulalume.
To Helen.	Annabell Lee.	A Valentine.
An Enigma.	To My Mother.	For Annie.
To Frances S. Asgood.	Eldorado.	Eulalie.
To Marie Louise.	To the Same.	The Sleeper.
Bridal Ballad.	Lenore.	The Coliseum.
The Haunted Palace.	Silence.	Dreamland.
To Zante.	Hymn.	To Science.
Alaraaf.	Tammerlane.	Israfil.
To the River.	Song.	A Dream.
Romance.	Spirits of the Dead.	Fairyland.
The Lake.	Evening Star.	Imitation.
"The Happiest Day."	Dreams.	A Poem.
The Power of Words.	Shadow.	Silence.

A Dream Within a Dream.

The City in the Sea.

To one in Paradise.

The Conqueror Worm.

The Valley of Unrest.

To-"I need not that my earthly lot."

To-"The Bowers whereat in my dreams I see!"

"In Youth I Have Known One."

The Island of the Fay.

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A COMPLETE LIST of the PROSE WORKS of

EDGAR ALLEN POE.

Al Aaraaf.	Tamerlane.	Eureka.
Ligeia.	The Gold Bug.	The Black Cat.
The Pit and Pendulum.	Marie Roget.	Hop Frog.
The Island of Fay.	The Oblong Box.	William Wilson.

Manuscripts found in a Bottle.

The Purloined Letter.

The Premature Burial.

Silence.

The Journal of Julius Rodman.

The Fall of the House of Usher.

The Imp of the Perverse.

The Facts in the Case of Valdemar.

Some Words with a Mummy.

The Murders in the Rue Margue.

The Unparalleled Adventures of

Hans Pfaal.

The Masque of the Red Death.

The Cask of Amontillado.

The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether.

CRITICAL WRITINGS:

The Poetic Principle.

The Rationale of Verse.

The Philosophy of Composition.

Reviews of "Wilmer's "Quacks of Helicon."

Irvings "Astoria."

Like Papers on

Mrs. Browning.

Macaulay.

Lever.

Marryat.

Cockton.

Dickens.

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"THE BELLS."

"The Bells", one of Poe's most beautiful poems, is divided into four parts, each part bringing out an idea of a different kind of bells.

First, he speaks of the sleigh bells of what a world of merriment they foretell, while they tinkle into the icy air of night.

Secondly, he speaks of the mellow wedding bells, of how harmoniously their music floats out upon the air of night, giving all a message of the supreme joy and gladness which impells their ringing.

In the next canto, he describes the fire bells, whose clamorous, mad peals ring out a terrifying message, yet give an idea as to whether the danger is increasing or decreasing.

Lastly he describes the huge iron bells as they toll, giving rise to sad thoughts and deep melancholy. He ascribes their ringing to the king of the Ghouls, who with his people, lives in the highest church tower and delights in bringing sadness into the world.

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"LENORE."

A very beautiful young lady whose name was Lenore, died, and ⁱⁿ this poem the author seems to be deciding what her funeral services should be like. At first he commands her sweetheart Guy De Vere to weep and that solemn funeral services be carried out. This leads him into a meditation on how a requiem could be sung by those who loved her only because of her wealth, and hating her because of her pride and were glad when she died.

In view of this he asks that not a bell be tolled, but that only sweet songs be sung, to waft her soul on its Heavenly flight to regions of eternal bliss.

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"THE RAVEN."

While a man sat, weak and discouraged, dreaming of a lost dear-friend Lenore, he heard a soft rapping on the door of his room. He arose and answered the summons but though he saw no one, he half unconsciously murmured the word Lenore. This was answered in echo. Disheartened, he turned back, only to hear the rapping again. Upon opening the shutter, a raven flew in and perched above the doorway.

The astonished gentleman asked its name, only to be answered, "Never more." When he said aloud that the bird would leave just as his friends and hopes had always flown, the bird answered, "Nevermore." To his questions as to whether he would ever forget the maiden, ever become reconciled, or ever behold her again, he received that one word in answer. He ordered and entreated the raven to leave him, but the only response was the then hateful word, "Nevermore." Poe says the raven still is sitting above his chamber door and that his soul shall never be lifted from out its dark shadow.

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"ANNABELL LEE."

This is a beautiful poem of only six stanzas, written in the first person.

Many years ago, Poe tells us, in a kingdom by the sea there lived a divinely beautiful maiden and himself. They lived only to love and to be loved by each other. The angels came to covet this love and bore the maiden of his heart away in death, to a silent sepulchre.

Even then the angels could not dissever his soul from that of the maiden's, for their love was so strong that it was more than love, and in thought he dwells with her forever.

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EDINAMBLE BOOK

"ULALUME."

The poem "Ulalume, deals with a purely imaginative theme and might truly be termed phantastic. Like nearly all of Poe's poems, it is written in the first person.

A man accompanied by Psyche, his soul, wandered one night through a wooded and dreary country, past a lake, not noticing any resemblance to any country he had ever before passed through. A beautiful star and crescent came up in the Heavens before them. Psyche mistrusted this, but the man thought they might safely trust to the guidance of so clear and bright a light.

They went on and on past many strange scenes which half awakened a strange fancy in the man's mind. Finally, almost exhausted, their further progress was impeded by an immense stone at the entrance of a tomb and he discovered that this was the tomb of his lost love Ulalume. Then in a flash, his thoughts grew "sad and sober" and he remembered that exactly a year previous to this time, he had journeyed down through this same country, carrying a dead burden with him. He wondered awe-struck, what demon could have tempted him to come back.

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"ISRAFEL."

"Israfel" is one of the most beautiful of Poe's poems, one of his choicest lyrics. Woodberry calls it "the first pure song of the poet, the notes most liquid, and soaring of all he ever wrote." There is a deeper line of thought running through it than in most of his lyrics.

The story of the poem is this:-- Israfel, a spirit, dwelt in Heaven, where he sang so "wildly well" that the stars ceased their hymns to listen. The moon is referred to as blushing with love, while even the lightning and the seven Pleiads paused. His hearers, says Poe, ascribed the wonderful charm of his song to his lyre, to its trembling, living strings. Poe says that the ecstasies above, suit his grief, joy, hate, and love, but that the shadow of his perfect Bliss is but the sunshine of ours. He concluded the poem with the thought that Israfel might not sing a mortal song so well, while a bolder note might swell from his own lyre, if he were permitted to dwell as Israfel has dwelt.

The thought and the poet's mode of expressing it are equally beautiful. This poem might easily rank with the best of the lyrics written in the English language.

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"LONGFELLOW'S BALLADS."

In his essay on Longfellow's ballads, Poe dwells throughout upon the faults and the few good points (he seems to see) in Longfellow's volume, "Ballads and Tales". It is then a true critical essay.

In the introduction the author does not give us a clear idea of the subject which his essay is to deal with, rather he misleads us, giving the idea that the purpose of his essay is to prove that such poetry as written by Coleridge, Tegner, Longfellow, and a number of others whom he names, and "such alone, has fulfilled the legitimate office of the Muse." The central theme of the essay is an argument in which he seeks to show that the creation of Beauty is the essence of all poetry. Then, having shown his ground for objection, he takes the ballads up more in detail. He argues that what the critic Langtree terms unfortunate peculiarity in Longfellow's poems, is one of Longfellow's idiosyncratic merits. The essay, proper, or the body possesses unity throughout. It has no formal conclusion.

Unlike most of Poe's critical essays, this one has not stood the test of time and many of his cutting criticisms are thought unfair and unjust. He judges harshly and does not give the poet's work its due amount of praise. It seems to be the aim of the author to point out faults which have been overlooked and to praise

that which has been harshly criticised. Though he gives us a complete view of the work, he does not show merits and faults impartially.

Poe writes his essay in a style so clear, brilliant and forceful that though we cannot agree with all his criticisms, we are bound to admire him for his clear cut and concise arguments and the fearlessness with which he sets forth his own views. Logical power, clearness, and keen analysis are all well set forth, but we feel that while the author has only set forth what he firmly believed to be true, he is here narrowminded and strongly inclined to prejudice. Humor and pathos are both entirely lacking, but there is a great deal of very caustic satire. Particularly is this noticeable in his abusive raillery of Mr. Langtree. The last sentence in the essay leaves a bitter sting which not only unfavorably reverts back upon the effect of the essay as a whole but upon the character of the author himself.

The paragraphs are of average length, each fulfilling a definite purpose, and in the main each relative to the thought in the next. The sentences are of average length, closely related and possess a unity seldom surpassed in other writings. The author uses explanatory sentences quite often but avoids the interrogative sentence. The author's vocabulary is copious, and better still, he uses words precisely. Although no

unusual words are used, still the diction is such as would rarely be found in the writings of one not possessing great ability.

He quotes the French writers, Chamfort, and Count Bielfield and brings in several Latin quotations that are wholly appropriate and elucidative. Such passages as these might well be committed to memory;- "Poesy is a response---unsatisfactory, it is true---, but still in some measure a response, to a natural and irrepressible demand". " We deduce,--novelty, originality, invention, imagination, or lastly the creation of Beauty, as the essence of all Poesy."

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EDINAMBLE BOND

"MACAULAY'S ESSAYS."

(Criticism.)

This is a critical essay, treating of Macaulay's prose works.

The first paragraph might properly be termed the introduction of the essay, as in it the author clearly shows us what line of thought he intends to follow throughout his criticism. The central theme of the Essay is that though Macaulay's reputation is deservedly great, it is yet in a very great measure undeserved. In other words, our author undertakes to prove that Macaulay is not a "comprehensive and profound thinker little prone to error." In the last paragraph Poe sums up his argument, but he has written no formal conclusion.

The author criticises Macaulay's Essays too severely for concentrating force upon minutia at the expense of the subject as a whole, taking Ranke's History of the Popes as an example, but he also praises the essays for their terseness, simple vigor of style, and particularly, for their closeness of logic. Quite evidently it was not his intention to give a complete, impartial view of the "Essays", but rather to point out and show why Macaulay's reputation is not fully deserved, and indirectly to show how this has happened to be the case.

The entire criticism is characterized by accuracy of statement, logical power, and keen analysis. In this essay, Poe has not made any use of the tools of irony and ridicule which are found so frequently in his writings, but his strong individuality of style is well shown. Humor and pathos are lacking, as are the very excellent figures of speech he so often makes use of. His style is smooth, clear and direct. He alludes once to George Combe, at another time to Channing, and in the last paragraph to the modern theory of nebular cosmogony. Long paragraphs are made up of clear cut sentences of average length, possessing unity and usually uninvolved. He is equally at ease with the periodic or balanced sentence, and but rarely makes use of antithesis or climax. He has not used unusual or technical terms, but his vocabulary is copious and he uses the right word in precisely the right place. His diction is clear, terse, and polished.

One of the best passages in the essay and which could be very profitably memorized is, "The few who regard him merely as a terse, forcible, and logical writer, full of thought and abounding in original views, often sagacious, and never otherwise than admirably expressed, appear to us precisely in the right."

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"HAWTHORNE'S TALES."

(Criticism.)

In his essay, Hawthorne's Tales, Poe has criticised Hawthorne's writings very much in detail, and time has shown that though one of the first to praise this author's works, his criticisms were entirely justifiable.

In the introduction, Poe cites Hawthorne as "the example, par excellence, of a privately admired and publicly unappreciated man of genius." He then goes on to tell us why this is so, and in doing so tells why other critics have failed to give Hawthorne the praise his work merited. The causes, he says, which prevented his popularity do not condemn him in the eyes of the few, but rather these estimate him by what he evinces a capability of doing, and by the best works which he has written.

The central theme of the essay is that Hawthorne's Tales are stories of actual merit. As a fault, Poe points out the fact that none are "Twice Told" but that all are thrice told. Here he digresses somewhat to give the relative merits of the tale and poem as a medium for expression of thought. The author asserts that the highest genius could best display his powers in the composition of a rhymed poem or, second to this, in the prose Tale as Hawthorne has exemplified it. He

now takes up the "Tales" in a specific way, criticising several in a most unprejudiced, thoughtful and logical manner.

In the conclusion, Poe has summarized Mr. Hawthorne's merits and demerits. The latter, he says, is peculiar, not original, and to be popular must give up allegory since it is at war with the whole tone of his nature, has the purest style, finest taste, delicate humor, touching pathos and consummate ingenuity. A final and not so flattering statement, is that though Hawthorne has "done well as a mystic, he could do doubly as well in career of honest, upright, sensible, prehensible and comprehensible things."

As a whole, I think Poe has given a very just, fair, and true estimate of Hawthorne's "Tales". His criticism has stood the final and all-important test of time and we know that he did not praise too highly nor judge too harshly, but that his few unfavorable criticisms were not misplaced nor undeserved. All would agree that it was the aim of the author to point out merits and faults impartially.

The style of the essay is clear, direct and brilliant and possesses a certain marked individuality characteristic of all that Poe has written. The essay is totally lacking in humor or pathos. Several bits of caustic satire appear, particularly, in the first few

pages of the essay, marring the impression of the author as an appreciative and sympathetic person. Logical power, accuracy, and withal keen analysis, are to be seen in every sentence and paragraph. The sentences are clear and of average length, each bringing out a definite phase of the author's thought. In each paragraph Poe has developed some definite phase of his subject and each possesses unity. His diction is clear, terse, and polished.

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"THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER."

"The Fall of the House of Usher" as the title implies, is occupied with the extermination of the notable Usher family and at the demise of the last two members of the family, their home, the old family mansion, falls in ruins. The romance is concerned with only three persons, and the events happening around them, or with a young man, Mr. Usher, of a very nervous and high strung temperament, his sister, an invalid whose disease baffled the skill of the physicians, and a gentleman who visits the home. The death of the young lady occurred in a few days after his arrival and her body was placed in a vault within the main walls of the building where it was to rest for a fortnight. Mr. Usher gave up his ordinary occupations and roamed strangely from room to room.

On the seventh day the young lady came forth from the tomb, sought her brother, and finding him, (in her final death agonies) bore him down to the floor with her, a corpse. The visitor fled from the house, and had gone but a short distance, when he noticed a radiant blood-red light streaming from a fissure in the walls of the building, later the entire orb of the satellite burst into view and the tarn at his feet closed over the fragments of the House of Usher.

There is a great deal of description, that because of the author's faculty for setting forth the most improbable occurrences as a reality, catches and holds the reader's attention spell-bound. The spirit of gloom pervading the whole house and the visitor's feelings of depression and melancholy as he first gazed upon it, could not well be more artistically displayed. In such terms as "unredeemed dreariness", "utter depression of the soul," and many others as well taken he describes the gloomy outlook. In words and phrases so well chosen as to charm and yet depress the spirit, Mr. Usher is described so well that we seem to behold not only the person but the thoughts and feelings of his inmost soul. Of the Lady Madeline, though very little is said about her, we get a very clear conception of a person of melancholy disposition, struggling to overcome a terrible disease, and of her final sad and awful surrender.

Plot is of more importance than characterization in this short romance. It is extremely simple, and coherent. One action leads directly to another and finally, in the author's characteristic style, to the climax and fall.

Situations which are particularly interesting are those of Lady Madeline's coming forth from the tomb and the strange fall of the ancestral home.

EDINAMPLE BOOKS

The author's individuality of style, earnestness and imagination, in none of his prose works, are better displayed than in this. His wonderful command of the English language, his skill in choosing words, would create an impression of the author's literary eminence, in the mind of the most careless reader.

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"LIGEIA."

Ligeia was a woman, very attractive both in person and mind. She became ill and died though she resisted death with a fierceness and intensity almost inconceivable until the very last. After her death, her husband made his home in England and there became a sad victim to opium. Later while under its influence he married the "golden-haired" Rowena Tremaine. She became ill in a few months with a disease which baffled the physicians. She was extremely nervous and suffered from strange hallucinations. Immediately previous to her death her husband offered her a glass of wine and just as she raised this to her lips, he was surprised to see several blood red drops fall into the liquid, and a white shadow-like image appeared upon the carpet. From this time on she failed rapidly until death relieved her.

On the night following her death her husband sat alone with her corpse, longing and grieving not for her but for the lost Ligeia. Several times the corpse showed signs of life and although he labored earnestly with it, his efforts were of no avail. Finally when in a fit of grief and abstraction he sat dreaming again of Ligeia, the corpse, arose from the couch and came to his side. Astonished, he saw that the lady was living but tall as Ligeia and as he knelt at her

feet, she let fall the ghastly wrappings and her jet black hair streamed forth.

As is easily recognized, the story is a romance. Though very far drawn from the reasonable ^{yet} because of the author's characteristic style, yet to the reader, it seems near the reality. It does not aim to teach a lesson but only to entertain and as such it is a success.

The description is full and interesting, as interesting as in any of Poe's admirable short stories. His description of Ligeia is particularly praiseworthy, as are also those of the bridal chamber and that of the coming back to life of Ligeia in the last scene. Points which add to the artistic finish of the scene are those of the descriptions of the mysterious sounds in the room, of the strange, lifelike movements of the corpse, the final awakening, and the beauty of the full, black wild eyes of Ligeia.

The characters are neither distinct nor true to life, but the author did not intend that they should be so. An element of mystery strangely suggestive and entrancing pervades them as it does the rest of the story.

Little is said of the Lady Rowena and we get but a dim picture of her, nor do we get a picture, in any sense of the word of the man of the story. We simply are impressed by the weakness and emotional character of his mind and actions. Ligeia's character is

very much more distinct and true to life. Yet we can not feel that we know her, but rather feel an interest in her character because of its very mysteriousness.

The threads of the story are so closely interwoven and follow each other in such order, that the whole presents a flawless body, marred in no way by the least break or useless phrase or word. We are led from one interesting situation to another as interesting or more so, until finally we reach the climax, a climax which could not be more fitting to the rest of the story. Some of the principal situations are those of the death of Ligeia, later, Rowena's death and the strange coming back to life of the corpse.

The romance succeeds by its plot principally, but the plot is wonderfully strengthened by characterization. The reader is impressed by the wondrous style and imagination of the author, but is taught no moral nor given any high ideal. Furthermore, we are inclined to think of the author of such a story as a person who rarely would be broadminded but rather inclined to take a narrow view of life.

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"THE BLACK CAT."

The Black Cat is a most fitting title for the story, as about the cat cluster all the other events of this tale of horror, a romance, in the truest sense of the word.

Pluto, a very large black cat was owned by a man who had been extraordinarily fond of dumb animals but through the effect of strong drink his love for them changed to hatred. In a terrible fit of anger this man cut one of the black cat's eyes from its socket and later, through a "spirit of perverseness," killed it by hanging it to a tree in the yard. That night the man's house burnt down and his wife, servant and himself had a narrow escape from a horrible death. Strangely enough after the flames were subdued the figure of a gigantic cat graven in bas-relief was found upon the middle wall of the house, the only one which still stood; and stranger still the rope about the animal's neck was plainly visible. However, he thought that the cat might have been thrown against the wall to awaken him. After committing this atrocious deed he became filled with a feeling of remorse and, pitying another black cat, brought it home to care for it. In time he came to hate and fear it as badly as he had the first for it seemed that the blotch of white fur on the animal's neck took the form of a gallows. Once when he and his wife were

going down into the cellar under their home, the cat came into his way, and furiously angry, he seized an ax and aimed a blow to kill it. The blow was arrested by his wife's hand and then he buried the weapon in her brain, then concealing her body in the wall of the cellar. In a few days, during which time the cat was not to be seen, the police came and made an investigation of the premises. Several times they went into the cellar but at last were about to give up the search when in a fit of bravado he bragged of the fine construction of the walls, at the same time rapping heavily with his cane on the portion of the wall behind which the corpse stood. Immediately a series of blood-curdling screams and cries ensued from within the tomb. The police tore the loose brick away and discovered his wife's corpse, while upon its head sat the one-eyed cat, with its mouth wide open and its solitary eye glowing.

There are no long passages of description, but in the author's characteristic style, in detail and with excellently well chosen words, are described the feelings of bitterness and hatred of an intemperate fiend. His description of the scene when the cries come forth from the wall is given in words which bring out and emphasize the horrors of the scene, in words which seem to horrify and awe the very reason of the reader.

The principal character of the story, is

the man who seems totally devoid of any feeling of humanity, could not be better characterized than he is. His blind rage and unreasonable actions are so well told that, with only one reading, an impression almost ineradicable is made upon the mind of the reader. Detail after detail is given in a manner, not tiresome, but lending interest to the story and giving every phase of this man's thoughts and actions. Little is said of his wife; still we are given a deep insight into the character of a lovable, true-hearted woman. Obviously Poe has made use of the strongest contrasts possible in this story. The cat with its affectionate nature and once deep appreciation of its master's love and afterwards its extreme terror of its master, is admirably given. Its dumb resentment of its master's "Perverseness" and, we are inclined to think, well deserved revenge, are two of the main points of the story.

Every part of the plot is given according to the way in which the events happened and leads directly to the next event of importance, the climax being finally reached in the last paragraph of the story, in the sudden and horrifying appearance of the cat within the tomb. The plot is much the more important part of the story and has given it an everlasting fame. Throughout, the reader's attention is held spell-bound by incidents so far removed from the probable and yet so well

told as to seem like incidents in a chain of facts.

As a result this short prose work is one of Poe's masterpieces and worthy of an important place in any library either in America or England.

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EDINAMBLE BOND

" THE GOLD BUG."

In the Gold Bug, Poe, very interestingly, tells of the solving of a cipher and the subsequent discovery of a vast fortune supposedly left by the famous Captain Kid. Mr. Willis Legrand, in Company with his negro servant, while in search of entomological specimens on an island off the coast of Florida, accidentally stumbled upon a scarabaeus of rare value and wrapped it in a piece of parchment he found near. Later, in an attempt to describe it to a friend of his, he sketched it on this same piece of parchment. To his amazement, his friend declared that he could only see the drawing of a death's head. Later it developed that by holding the parchment near a fire the drawing had been made visible, and later by repeating the process, the letters of a cipher appeared. Mr. Legrand solved the cipher and then called upon his friend to accompany him on his journey to find the hidden wealth. They found the tree designated, the skull nailed to a dead limb, and following directions, succeeded in digging up a vast amount of treasure. This of course is a tale of venture.

Though not a great deal of description is given, and this is very closely related to the plot of the story, still it decidedly brings out the local peculiarities and characteristics. Mr. Legrand's chagrin

at the implied failure of his drawing, his subsequent amazement when he too discovers the death's head, and his struggle to solve the mystery, are well described. The trip of the three to the tree and the real search for the treasure as well as Jupiter's superstitious fears are told in a charming manner.

The characters are Mr. Legrand, his servant Jupiter, and his friend whose name is not given but who, supposedly, writes the chronicle of the affair. Mr. Legrand is characterized as a very eccentric man, deeply interested in nature, loving solitude, and well satisfied with his island home. Jupiter, his servant, is as faithful to his master as he could possibly be and his ridiculous fears furnish the only humor of the story. The friend becomes interested in Mr. Legrand, pitying him and seeing his true worth. The characters are not overdrawn but true to life and admirably brought out.

This is a story, first and last, of adventure and accordingly plot plays the more important part. By a fine regard for details, Poe has given the whole story of the Gold Bug a very realistic touch and a certain inimitable style characteristic of all his prose writings. The construction of the plot is seemingly flawless, one step leading to another in true order of time and importance. Especially interesting are the solving of the cipher and the final operations and discovery of the treasure. There is plenty of action, and a never

failing interest is the result.

Quite evidently, the plot makes the story what it is termed, an "American Classic" and very rightly too. Though comparatively short, the story is well written, well constructed and well worth anyone's reading.

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EDINAMPLE BOND

"THE UNPARALLELED ADVENTURE OF HANS PFALL."

Hans Pfall was an inhabitant of Rotterdam in Europe who became dissatisfied with living, and by mere chance becoming interested in astronomy and balloon making, discovered that by making a balloon trip to the moon, he might escape his many troubles. His balloon was entirely satisfactory, but when inflating it, through allowing too great an explosion to take place, he accidentally killed three accomplices to whom he had made known the secret of his work. After a perilous journey, lasting nineteen days, he finally reached the moon in safety. After a five year's sojourn there, he again became dissatisfied and sent a messenger with a letter, asking that he be pardoned for killing the three men and permitted to come back in return for which he would impart most valuable astronomical and scientific knowledge. The story ends with the general opinion of the people of Rotterdam of the messenger and his message, which is, of course, that it is an imposition.

The description is full, interesting and extremely well given. The description of the earth and stars could not but be interesting to any reader, and shows a deep study of and insight into astronomy and physics. While, of course, we know that the adventure could be nothing more than pure fiction, yet it is so minutely and excellently described that we are led to

believe, for the time being, that it is a reality.

Characterization plays scarcely any part in the story except as we see Hans Pfall characterized as a foolish, discontented man, who cannot be satisfied under any conditions.

The plot is well constructed. One action follows another in exactly the proper order, without giving the reader a chance to complain of lack of interest. Events in the story which are particularly interesting are, Hans Pfall's difficult struggle for life when the atmosphere becomes extremely rare, his perilous passage through the clouds, and his swift descent to the moon.

As may readily be seen the story succeeds by its plot and plot alone. It is interesting because it is so extraordinary, so far removed from the reality, and yet seemingly so true. Much can be learned from reading the story as the author employed accepted astronomical facts in writing his story. Then from any standpoint, this romance is a success.

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"THE MYSTERY OF MARIE ROGET.

As one might imagine from the title "The Mystery of Marie Roget," this story takes as its prime element, an investigation into the mysterious disappearance and murder of a young lady, Marie Roget. The latter as a grisette in the shop of a dealer in perfumes in Paris, attracted a great deal of attention and comment, because of her extraordinarily great beauty. At one time, while in his employ, she mysteriously disappeared for a few days. The police were upon the point of making serious investigations, when she reappeared at her work, saying that she had been visiting in the country. About five months later, she disappeared again mysteriously and four days from the time of her departure, her corpse was found floating down the river.

The atrocity of the murder, created a great excitement throughout Paris, but the murderer was not apprehended. The police attributed the murder to a gang of ruffians, but Poe disproves their theory and gives his own. This is a very fine example of the best type of the modern "detective" stories.

There is very little real description and this is very closely related to plot. The story is very interesting and usually gives the details in full, of some intricate situation.

The characters are not clearly portrayed

but we get a good idea of the skill and ingenuity of the writer and his friend, the Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin. A better characterization would not have suited the purpose of the story, on the contrary it would have made it rather dull and uninteresting.

The analysis leading to the plot, and plot as finally developed, shows a great deal of the very keenest reasoning as well as a deep insight into human nature.

The author under pretence of relating the essential facts in the case of a Parisian grisette, has really set forth, in minute detail, the unessential facts of the real murder of Mary Rogert in New York. Since this was written the general conclusion and all the chief hypothetical details have been confirmed. This was no ordinary task and Poe deserves a great deal of credit for its accomplishment.

Furthermore, he gave definitely the details of a situation which baffled those closely acquainted with it.

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"THE PURLOINED LETTER."

The title, "The Purloined Letter," is well chosen, for as one would naturally expect, the story describes the theft and remarkable return of a valuable letter. The letter was stolen from a lady, a member of a royal family. She knew the robber, the Minister D-- and knew when it was taken but, for political reasons, dared not ask for its return. A certain member of the police force, thoroughly, though without results, searched the latter's apartments, twice and even waylaid him as if by foot-pads, and then in despair went to Dupin and his friend for help. Dupin asserts that it is the very "simplicity of the thing" which has baffled them and carries his point, by going to the Minister's apartments and obtaining the document in question.

There is very little real description, and this is intimately related to plot. However, this is given in the author's characteristic clear and forcible style and is intensely interesting.

The characters are well portrayed. As is the author's habit, he has not described them well enough that we might get a vivid mental picture of them, we get, however, a very clear idea of their personal peculiarities, and particularly in this case of their mental characteristics. We are led to think of the "Perfect," as a man rather con-

ceited and crafty, but inclined to overlook the real point in affairs of this sort, or to consider only his own "ideas of ingenuity."

The plot of the story is simple, easily followed and consistent. It is also well constructed and interesting, though the reader's attention at no time is held "spell-bound" and there are no particularly interesting situations. The story is more nearly that of but one interesting situation.

From the standpoint of artistic construction and finish, as well as that of appeal to the reader's interest, the story is a true success. It is very much more interesting than "The Mystery of Marie Roget" to most readers, because the latter goes more into the detail of uninteresting situations. To improve one's own style or diction, or merely for entertainment, it could be read with much profit.

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