

went up to the heavens from out of that mist I dare not attempt to describe."

Although not in itself an evidence of literary merit, still it is a fair tribute to the earnestness of Poe's style, carrying conviction in the face of incredibility, that several of his most fanciful tales were commonly believed to be records of fact, and excited controversy on the point both in England and America. "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym" was one of these. It is the longest of Poe's imaginative works, indeed the only one to appear originally in book form—and is the detailed record of a voyage, beginning in tragedy and ending in a peculiarly suggestive and unsolved mystery—a catalogue raisonnee of every kind of sea tragedy, mutiny, shipwreck and starvation. "Arthur Gordon Pym" is hardly so well known as some of Poe's shorter efforts, and it is not surprising considering the repulsive nature of some of its scenes. Yet there are few of Poe's writings which have more power to enchain the lover of adventure, and as an instance of the amazing vividness of conception and minute detail in which Poe's imagination revelled, it is unequalled.

But the most curious instance of Poe's convincing realism is the famous tale called "Facts in the case of M. Waldemar," a masterpiece in the region of nightmare. It is a scientific "statement" of the effect of mesmerism on a dying man, which is so far successful that though death takes place the mesmerised spirit still continues to communicate with the living through the agency of the dead body, and by the same unnatural influence the body is preserved from corruption until the necessary passes have been made by the mesmerist, when the catastrophe takes place. The tale gave rise to considerable controversy in the press, and at last a professional mesmerist, named Collyer, wrote to Poe,

asking him to put an end to all doubt by proclaiming the incident as a fact—he, Collyer, having fought all his life on behalf of mesmerism, and come in contact with a similar case. Poe replied with some humour in the columns of his paper, the "Broadway Journal," that "the truth is there is a very small modicum of truth in the 'Case of M. Waldemar.' . . . If the Case was not true, however, it should have been, and perhaps Dr. Collyer may discover that it is true after all."

In naming Poe sensationalist and realist, one should not forget that he was a poet, and a poet of a high order. In his romantic tales—"Berenice," "Ligeia," "William Wilson," "The Domain of Arnheim," etc.—one finds the same glowing imagination and sensuous appreciation of beauty as in the poems, though here the gloomy realism of his prose style often strikes a discordant note (the "instruments of dental surgery" in *Berenice* are an almost ludicrous example). It was one of Poe's theories of art, expressed in a review of Longfellow's poems, that the sole end of poetry is the pursuit of Beauty, unhindered by any idea of "Truth or Duty." Poe's critical theories, elaborate as they are, often suggest ingenuity more than sincerity on the part of the writer, but here his own work certainly bears out his creed. And it is this very want of moral feeling that is the weakness of his poetry. Its passion is unchastened and morbid, its sense of beauty unrefined. It has no saving hopes or ideals. The grave yawns in the background. Sheeted ghosts and spectres are its only spiritual visitants. Its brilliant flowers have a hectic colour and lustre. The same may be said of his prose romances. There is the same striving to express a somewhat sensuous type of beauty, which becomes artificial. His women are actresses without soul, his landscapes are exquisite scene-paintings without nature.