

the critic, and the publication of his tales and poems in a volume, which was popular on the Continent, and excited the admiration of Victor Hugo and Baudelaire. In this year Poe reached the summit of his fame. "The Raven" was read, recited, parodied everywhere. He was a society lion (whatever that is worth). He was invited to lecture by Historical and Literary Societies. Meanwhile the literary hero was earning scanty bread and butter at a desk in the office of one N. P. Willis, proprietor of the "Evening Mirror," who evidently had some hesitation in engaging a hack of Poe's unbroken character and doubtful reputation. But N. P. Willis soon found that the want of bread and butter will induce even a literary lion to pare his claws. "We were led by common report to expect a very capricious attention to his duties, and scenes of violence and difficulty. Time went on, however, and he was invariably punctual and industrious." He goes on to enlarge on the beauties of his tame genius in the true biographer's vein. "With his pale, beautiful and intellectual face as a reminder of what genius was in him, it was impossible of course not to treat him with deferential courtesy, and to our occasional request that he would not probe too deep in a criticism, or that he would erase a passage coloured too deeply with his resentment against society and mankind, he readily and courteously assented." Incredible blandness!

Through the dreary shifts and changes of Poe's life, two saving influences can be traced, his home life, and his ambition to found a literary magazine. At the age of twenty-seven he married his cousin, Virginia Clemm, a marriage of pure romance, for she was a girl of fourteen, and he, as usual, in financial straits, though at the time he was editing the "Southern Literary Messenger," and by the popularity of his weird tales and articles had raised its circulation from five to

twenty thousand. For eleven years Poe, his wife, and his mother-in-law lived together in full confidence and affection, facing their poverty with united courage. The poet himself was passionate, erratic, and extravagant. The wife seems to have been a delicate, clinging girl; and her mother, Mrs. Clemm, a woman of strong, stern, practical mould (the very antithesis of the two young people she watched over), was the pillar of this strange family. Between Poe and herself there was a mutual affection which reminds one of the relations of Cowper and his nurse, Mary Unwin, for it lasted through all the storms in which Poe's life was ended. But for this steady current of domestic happiness, Poe's wild spirit would have beaten itself to destruction long before. As it was, the last few years of his wife's life were filled with suffering, and the strain on Poe's acutely sensitive nature was so great that there is no doubt his mind was seriously affected, and he gave way to those habits of drinking which have tarnished his good name. Improvident he certainly was, though his means were always narrow, and there were times when the sick girl was in want of sufficient food and covering, and Poe, who was out of employment, strove in vain to wring saleable copy from his tormented imagination. At the end friends had to come to their assistance, and a public collection was made, which even in those circumstances was a wound to Poe's pride. Yet, with all their troubles, it was in his cottage home, his girl-wife, and the strong, kind guardianship of his mother-in-law that Poe found the only true happiness of his life. Perhaps it is not surprising that his works contain few or no allusions to his wife, for they reflect almost solely the feverish and gloomy passions of his life, while she represented the sane and peaceful influence of a home.

Throughout his literary career Poe's heart was set upon one ob-