

## Genius Blasted by the Drink.

EDGAR ALLEN POE.

THE records of genius furnish many a sad and dreary history; but a darker and more disastrous career than that of his whose name stands at the head of this paper, can scarcely be furnished.

EDGAR ALLEN POE was the finest and most original poet as yet produced by America. He was born at Baltimore, in January, 1811, and was trained in the American University of Charlottesville. His talent was from the first conspicuous; but, unhappily, he developed along with it and continued through life to exhibit a desperate profligacy, principally the result of *drink*. His irregularities were so glaring and continued as to lead to his expulsion from the University.

Immediately after his exclusion from college, he started for Greece, in foolish parody of Byron, to take part in the War of Independence against the Turks. But, instead of reaching that classic land, he most unaccountably turned up in St. Petersburg, drunk and disorderly as usual, and became the inmate of a police-cell. Relieved from "durance vile" through the good offices of the Minister of the United States, he found his way back to America, where, wishing to follow the profession of arms, he obtained a cadetship in the celebrated Military Academy, at West Point; but, almost as a matter of course, was "cashiered" within the year.

Once more cast upon his own resources, he enlisted as a private soldier; but some friends, desiring to secure another chance for him to retrieve his position in society, procured his discharge, and placed him in circumstances in which he might have won respect and competence. He now married a cousin—a beautiful and saintly creature,—who, in no very long time died broken hearted, through the erratic ways of her husband. Poe wrote a musical lament for her, sold it, and *drank the proceeds*.

From the date of his wife's death, the life of Poe was that of a professed literary man. He wrote poems, tales, essays, and criticisms. One of his biographers, in a single sentence, chronicles his literary history:—"His brilliant and known ability

procured for him employment, and his frantic habits of dissipation, with the regularity of a natural law, insured his early and ignominious dismissal."

Poe made one or two feeble attempts to break the bonds of the accursed habit which enslaved him. He joined a Temperance Society, and was actually for some months sober; but, chancing to pass through Baltimore, he was waylaid by some ancient "cronies," and on the morning of Sunday, October 7th, 1849, he was found drunk in the gutter and carried to a hospital, where the same evening he died, at the early age of thirty-eight.

A sad and monitory history that; but, alas! not a solitary one of gloom, to be culled from the annals of genius. How many a noble intellect has been wrecked, through the 'fascinations' of the wine-cup and the bowl! As is often the case with those who are brought into subjection by the drinking customs of society, there was a strange fascination about Poe. His friends loved him intensely; those loved him best who knew him best, and knew him in his wretchedest aberrations. By his wife and mother he was regarded through all with an obstinacy of tender affection, not for an instant to be shaken.

Speaking of his writings, it has been said, "There is that in his poetry which ranks it above everything of the kind which his country has produced. Save for some traces of imitation in its earlier specimens, his verse is eminently a peculiar and individual product. In keen, clear, lyrical quality, the music of Poe at his best, is scarcely surpassed by that of any other poet. Not less remarkable in their way are the short tales, of which he has left two volumes. Many of these are wildly and weirdly impressive, though too frequently indulging in ghastly and painful effects. Over much that Poe has written alike in prose and in verse, there broods a shadow of misery and hopeless portentous gloom, sadly significant in its relation to the dismal tragedy of his life."

In such a case as this it is not necessary to "point a moral." He who "runs may read" the lesson of this life—it is that every young man should shun, as he would a deadly serpent, the intoxicating cup.—*Temperance Magazine*.