

The raven. [Facsimile of a manuscript] exhibited for the first time at Yale University Library in honor of the 150th birthday celebration of Edgar Allan Poe. Courtesy of Richard Gimbel. [New Haven? 1949?].

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COURTESY OF RICHARD GIMBEL

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The Raven.

Once, upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping, at my chamber door.
"Tis some visiter," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door —
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;— vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow — sorrow for the lost Lenore —
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore —
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me, filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
"Tis some visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door —
Some late visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door;
— This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger. Hesitating, then, no longer, "Sir",
said I, or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door
That I scarce was sure I heard you" — here I opened wide the door;
— Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there, wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word "Lenore!" —
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning, Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before. "Surely", said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice; Let me see, then, what thereat is and this mystery explore; — Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore; — Tis the wind and nothing more."

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter, In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore. Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he; But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door — Perched upon a bust of Dallas just above my chamber door — Perched and sat and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling, By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore, "Though they crest be shorn and shaven, thou", I said "art sure no craven, Ghastly, grim and ancient Raven, wondering from the Nightly shore — Tell me what thy loudly name is on the Night's Mutionian shore!" Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly, Though its answer little meaning — little relevancy bore; For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door — Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door, With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour. Nothing farther then he uttered; not a feather then he fluttered — Till I scarcely more than muttered — "Other friends have flown before — On the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before." Then the bird said "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken, "Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store, Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster Followed fast and followed faster, till his songs one burden bore — Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore Of 'Never — nevermore.'"

But the Raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling, Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust and door; Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking Fancy into fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of you — What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of you Meant in croaking "Nevermore".

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core; This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining On the cushions

velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated oe'r, But whose velvet, violet lining wish the lamp-light
gloating o'er She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer Swing by Seraphim whose
foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor. "Wretch", I cried, "thy God hash lent thee — by these angels he
hath sent thee Respite — respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore! Quaff, oh quaff this
kind neperithe and forget this lost Lenore!" Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet" said I, "thing of evil! — prophet still, if bird on or devil! — Whether Tempter sent or whether
tempest tossed thee here ashore, Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted — On
this home by Horror haunted — tell me truly, I implore — Is there — is there balm in Gilead? — tell
me — tell me, I implore!" Quoth the Raven "Nevermore".

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! — prophet still, if bird or devil! By that Heaven that bends above us
— by that God we both adore — Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, wishin the distant Aidenn, It shall
clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore — Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the
angels name Lenore." Quoth the Raven "Nevermore".

Be that word our sign of parting, bird or friend!" I shrieked, upstarting — "Get thee back into the
tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore! Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath
spoken! Leave my loneliness unbroken! — quit the bust above my door! Take thy beak from out my
heart and take thy farm from off my door!" Quoth the Raven "Nevermore".

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting — still is sitting On the pallid bust of Pallas just above
my chamber door; And his eyes have all the seeming of a demons that is dreaming, And the lamp-
light oe'r him streaming throws his shadow on the floor; And my soul from out that shadow that lies
floating on the floor Shall be lifted — nevermore.

Edgar A. Poe.

Inscribed to Dr. S. A. Whittaker of Phonixville.

Gift Fred. R. Gaff Mar. 11, 1949

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