

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

including **BLACK MASK MAGAZINE**

15TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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The best of the new and the best of the old

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EDITOR: *Ellery Queen*

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PRIZE-WINNING STORY

With this issue, September 1955, Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine begins its 15th year of publication. . . . And to help celebrate our anniversary we have chosen for this issue a very special story. For one thing, it is a prize-winner from EQMM's Tenth Annual Contest — last year's; secondly, it introduces to EQMM the talented newcomer, Nedra Tyre, whose first detective novel, MOUSE IN ETERNITY, was a sensation in 1952; and last, but decidedly not least, this 15th anniversary story concerns the Father of the Modern Detective Story — and who is more deserving of honor on any detectival anniversary than the originator himself, Edgar Allan Poe?

Nedra Tyre's unusual story takes place in the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine in Richmond, Virginia. It deals (seemingly) with the murder of Edgar Allan Poe himself, and (again seemingly) the murderer is one "Gus" Dupin. But keep your private eye on the lecturer, guide, and curator of the Shrine, tired little Miss Wilson: it is she who, with the spirit of Poe to inspire her, makes sense out of nonsense.

A few words about the author: Nedra Tyre was born in Georgia, was graduated from the University of Georgia, took her master's degree at Emory University, and subsequently studied at the Richmond School of Social Work, College of William and Mary. She has been active in public-welfare and social work for a number of years — but not so active that she didn't find time, originally as pure relaxation, to become one of the best read and best informed 'tec fans. When she turned from reading to writing, she revealed her considerable talents in her very first detective novel. As Anthony Boucher has reminded us, Nedra Tyre's own detective-character unconsciously described his creator: She seems to have "a photographic memory. Not that exactly, but [she] remembers the way people say things and what they say and do. She remembers atmosphere."

Nedra Tyre's first mystery novel was followed by DEATH OF AN INTRUDER (1953) and JOURNEY TO NOWHERE (1954). All three books had their hard-cover editions published by Alfred A. Knopf, and all three were "hailed with loud cheers" by critics the country over.



MURDER AT THE POE SHRINE

by NEDRA TYRE

THE LAST VISITOR OF THE DAY HAD just left the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine in Richmond, Virginia.

Miss Wilson, the Shrine's lecturer, guide, and curator, went to the small table where the brochures and post cards were displayed; she rearranged them into neat stacks: *A Walk Around the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine, Historic Guide to Richmond and James River*, the colored reproductions of the Old Stone House and garden; the black and white prints of the daguerreotype made of Poe when he had gone to Providence in November 1848 on a frantic lover's visit to Mrs. Helen Whitman, one of the numerous Helens in his life.

Miss Wilson sat down at the desk where all the guests registered. She was exhausted; there had been an unusual number of visitors that Sunday afternoon; the pace had been hectic and tiring; she had barely been able to get one person or group on its way through the Old Stone House, the garden, and the Memorial Building, before the bell at the front door had rung and she had to rush back to admit others, collect their entrance fees, and start them on their rounds. The number of guests had been uncommonly large because an instructor at one of the local colleges had assigned a visit to the Poe Shrine as one of the requirements for a course in American

literature, and many students in the turtle-like completion of their summer school work had waited until the last day before their reports were due to visit the Memorial.

Miss Wilson was tired, but pleasantly so; she had a sense of accomplishment. At the end of every day she felt good that a number of people had for the first time in their lives seen mementoes connected with Poe; had looked at manuscripts written in his beautiful, meticulous handwriting; had touched furniture that had been in the Allan household where he had had his precarious tenancy; had examined the trunk that had accompanied him on so many of his sad wanderings; had glanced at the desk he had used as editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*; had seen the cane he had carried with such an air of elegance; and in the display case had viewed the precious edition of his first published work, *Tamerlane and Other Poems* (By A Bostonian).

There were several small tasks she had to do before she could go home — chiefly the closing of windows and locking of doors.

The Shrine consists of the Old Stone House, the garden, and the Memorial Building. She left the Old Stone House and walked into the garden. In the springtime the flowers Poe loved were planted there, among

them the two she thought were especially appropriate, *forget-me-nots* and *heart's-ease*. Poe . . . who would never be forgotten so long as the love of literature persisted, and whose own heart had never known ease.

Her brisk steps then took her to the Memorial Building. She did not go upstairs in that building except at the end of each day's work; the stairs were steep and it was too long a walk from there to the Old Stone House when the bell rang announcing new callers.

As she ascended the staircase she looked up at Carling's series of illustrations in India ink for *The Raven*; they embodied for her the spirit of the poem, so long worked upon and finally completed at the Brennan home on Bloomingdale Road in New York City.

When she got to the head of the stairs she stopped to catch her breath. At this time every day she often reviewed what had happened. Today had been perfect, she thought; though it was still summer the late August days were borrowing their flavor more and more from autumn; it was a day streaked with shadow and sunshine and quick winds, a day that might have come from Poe's lonesome October or even the bleak December that had always haunted him.

Miss Wilson looked across the room at the head of the stairs. Her glance stopped at Ellen Glasgow's photograph, signed in her distinctive writing. She considered handwriting and wondered if it really were an index of character; she thought of the hand-

written specimens of Poe on exhibit at the Shrine, all that careful, painstaking formation of letters. But there were other examples, written in times of distress and despair, when Poe's writing had wavered and wandered, like some hastily scrawled signpost to madness. Certainly she was more than ordinarily interested in handwriting; often when she had time she went over the signatures of the visitors who had registered in the guest book; handwriting was so intimately connected with a person, it must, she felt, have deep significance. She had even sent off a specimen of her own to a graphologist for comment; the answer had been on the whole pleasant but rather noncommittal; what had delighted her was the mention of her powers of analysis. Poe would have approved of that, she thought; he had emphasized that particular quality in his four detective stories.

But her thoughts were making her dawdle. This dilly-dallying had to be stopped. She must look briefly into the room where the rest of *The Raven* illustrations hung, the raven itself was mounted and set on a dark table, and where the bust of Pallas sat, if not quite above the chamber door — that line had given them some trouble — at least on a stand near the door.

On the threshold Miss Wilson stopped.

"Why, Mr. Poe," she said.

Her feet would not settle on the floor; they stood uncertainly on tip-toe while fingers of fear pricked at her neck.

In the late afternoons when she had the Shrine to herself like this she had often felt in communion with Poe. But then, she told herself, people were often in communion with the dead: the reader of Shakespeare, the viewer of paintings by Klee or Cézanne — whoever looks with a receptive heart at the works of artists no longer living is in communion with the dead.

"Mr. Poe," she said again, her fear changing to curiosity.

Because Edgar A. Poe himself sat at the table.

His hair was done in the style shown in the familiar daguerreotype; everything about him was like that picture — his mustache, his cravat, his neat clothes. His arms were stretched out, his head was bent forward, and he stared with a most horrible expression.

Miss Wilson walked toward him, then backstepped to turn on the light switch.

A more distinct view merely confirmed what was before her.

Edgar A. Poe was in fact sitting at the table; he had a heavy cord around his neck and the cord was tied to the back of the chair in such a way as to keep him from toppling. Just out of his reach on the table stood the raven.

She wanted to shriek, to run, to dissolve into hysteria. Her gaze would not leave Poe and her mind had stopped functioning.

"Margaret Ellen Wilson," she commanded, "control yourself!"

With tremendous effort she deserted Edgar Allan Poe and returned to the Old Stone House.

No one could have entered that afternoon without paying the entrance fee and signing the register. Whatever her tormented brain was inclined to think, Edgar A. Poe could *not* be in the upstairs room of the Memorial Building. Whoever was there had deliberately masqueraded as Poe but his right name or an assumed name must be in the guest book.

Darkness had claimed the Old Stone House. Miss Wilson turned on the lamp near the register. She fluttered through the book until she came to the page beginning with the visitors on that Sunday afternoon in August. Her eyes sought and then would not go beyond two entries:

*Eddie Poe, Main Street,
Richmond, Virginia
Gus Dupin, Faubourg St.
Germain, Paris*

She felt the healthy emotion of justified indignation. Not even Edgar A. Poe; not even C. Auguste Dupin. Eddie and Gus. Gay, flippant hoaxers had written that — arrant leg-pullers committing a schoolboy's prank.

But murder was no hoax. Death by violence was no prank.)

This might mean ruin for the Shrine, she thought frantically; at best it would mean notoriety; but as a citizen she had no choice. Her finger ran down the telephone book until she reached *Police Department*. She went to the telephone and dialed the

number listed. When there was an answer her message was on the verge of hysteria . . .

While she waited for the police she copied out the names of the persons who had visited the Shrine that afternoon; surely the investigators would need them; as far as she could see it would be all they would have to go on.

The last name was barely set down in her fine, even calligraphy when the police arrived.

Their leader was an amiable, matter-of-fact young man. His name was Williams, his rank, lieutenant. Miss Wilson told him all that she could; then she led the way to the Memorial Building and returned alone to the Old Stone House.

Soon Poe's imposter left the Shrine in a horizontal position, assisted by two men.

"Lieutenant Williams," Miss Wilson said, when the door had closed on the body of the impersonator, "I have a favor to ask of you. It's not just for me — it's for Richmond — for everyone who admires Poe. This story would be sensational — a man dressed as Poe murdered at the Poe Shrine. It has all kinds of possibilities for exploitation. Can't you just make a report that an unidentified man has been found dead under suspicious circumstances on East Main Street? If you have to give an exact address you can say 1916 East Main Street — I don't think most people would identify that number as the Poe Shrine. That really won't be suppressing news

but it would protect one of the country's great literary shrines. If there is any unfavorable publicity it might mean an end to the Shrine. People would come — don't you see? — not from love of Poe but to look at a room in which someone was murdered."

Lieutenant Williams understood. "I think you're right. I'll do what I can. Meantime, thanks for the list of the people who visited the Shrine today. A lot of them seem to be from out of town. They may have just been passing through Richmond. I mustn't waste any time trying to reach them."

"When you've finished with them you must come to see me," Miss Wilson said. "I've nothing to say now that could possibly help, but I may think of something later."

Their earnest, worried expressions were almost identical as they said goodbye and promised to meet again within a few hours.

As Miss Wilson left the Shrine and locked its doors on the remnants of murder she did not examine her emotions. She must get away, that was essential; then she could think. She remembered taking a bus, asking for a transfer, and later she had some slight recollection of waiting to transfer across from the Telephone Building. The bus had traveled to West Grace and Laurel Streets before she decided to get off and visit one of the girls' dormitories of Wellington College; it was not far from her apartment on West Franklin Street and she just might learn something from one of the

students who had been to the Shrine that afternoon.

The hostess admitted her and Miss Wilson asked if any of the girls who had visited the Shrine were in. She was given the name and room number of a student and directed upstairs.

A qualm overtook her then. This might very well be usurpation of the Police Department's domain. But she must think about the murder and try to analyze it; and to do this she needed facts.

Mary Johnson, the student, was barefooted and wore only a slip.

"Golly," she said, "I'm sorry not to be decent. I thought it was one of the kids. Please excuse me." She grabbed for a robe.

"You may not remember," Miss Wilson said, "but I'm the guide or lecturer — whatever you want to call it — at the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine. I was wondering if anything out of the ordinary happened while you were there this afternoon."

"Gosh, I don't know. I don't *think* so. Except of course I was awfully disappointed about the room where the raven is. Some of the students had said they liked it best of all. It's what I get for waiting till the last minute, I suppose."

Miss Wilson tried not to let her eyes glisten in anticipation; she tried not to wet her lips.

"What do you mean you were disappointed?"

"Well, the door was shut and there was a sign saying 'Temporarily Closed.' I hated to miss it because some of the

kids said it was about the spookiest thing they'd ever seen — all those drawings of *The Raven* and the raven itself there on the table."

"You didn't by any chance see anyone who looked like Poe?"

"Golly, no!"

Miss Wilson thanked Mary Johnson and left the dormitory.

She made a determined, thought-free walk to her apartment; she insisted on keeping her mind inactive until she could cook a light supper for herself.

Catarina, named after Poe's cat (Miss Wilson's only surrender to Poe associations in her own household), waited for her at the door. There was only the most formal greeting between them; Catarina disliked being fondled.

Miss Wilson found it hard to refrain from thinking about the murder. It took the strictest discipline to make her mind behave while she prepared an omelet and a salad of lettuce, endive, watercress, and asparagus. She did not usually drink coffee at night — it kept her awake; but tonight she would need to be kept awake. She got out the percolator that she used only when she had guests, filled it, and set it on the stove. Then she ate. Ordinarily she did not leave dirty dishes in the sink; but this was no ordinary occasion. The coffee burred cheerfully as it rose in the pot; she watched it gain blackness; then she poured a cup. When she had set it on a table beside her favorite chair she drew the drapes and sat down.

The time had come to think.

Miss Wilson's hand reached for a lamp, but she suppressed her impulse to flood the room with light.

The hour had come to think of Poe and Dupin and of the help they could offer her. Darkness was the atmosphere each of them encouraged; hadn't Dupin himself insisted in *The Purloined Letter*: "If it is any point requiring reflection, we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark"? Then let her, as a willing disciple, follow the master's rule.

She let her mind trot and scamper like a dog that hates the leash. Perhaps she was a silly woman and too full of pride, but as much as anything in life she had wanted Poe to be proud of her. That was an idiotic way to put it — wanting someone dead for more than a hundred years to be proud of you. But he had suffered so deeply at so many hands — possibly, most of all, at his own hands — that she felt very close to him. Poor Poe! All his life he had been protected by women, from the gracious Frances Valentine Allan to the time of his last dreadful agony when Mrs. Moran, the wife of the doctor at the Washington Hospital in Baltimore where he died, had ministered to him. Margaret Ellen Wilson wanted to protect him now.

It was just possible, she thought, that she felt closer to Poe than anyone now alive. Oh, she wasn't in love with him in the way Fanny Kemble had been in love with Byron or Amy Lowell with Keats. But she was the chatelaine of Poe's shrine in Rich-

mond; she was his protectress, and nobody had any business coming on the premises and committing murder, especially committing murder on the person of someone dressed like Poe. The names in the register incensed her — Gus Dupin and Eddie Poe! Levity, no respect. . . . It was outrageous.

Miss Wilson pulled her feelings up. Anger was not an indulgence she could allow herself now. She must stop such foolish meanderings and get on with her thoughts.

Handwriting. She came back to that. Again she recalled that the graphologist had written that she had powers of analysis. Poe's critique and extollment of analysis were in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* and *The Purloined Letter*. Analysis was the one quality he had seemed to revere above all others. At times in his life he had even overestimated his ability to analyze, perhaps because he knew he was a person of violent emotions and liked to cherish, even if somewhat falsely, an ability unrelated to passion.

Poe had in fact attempted to solve a real-life crime, fictionized in *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt*, before the police. Good lord, Miss Wilson asked herself, is that what I am proposing to do, with Poe's help? It was, indeed!

Then start at the beginning, she urged herself. Two men. They had signed themselves Dupin and Poe, and one had ended up dead. Two friends on a lark, but only one had left the Shrine alive.

What did that remind her of?

Two friends, conversing pleasantly — one tricked into doing something but not aware that he was being tricked.

The Cask of Amontillado, of course. Fortunato and Montresor. Two friends. But one was not a friend. And he had duped the other through vanity, through his palate, his knowledge of wines, into meeting a horrible death.

Fortunato and Montresor. Eddie Poe and Gus Dupin.

If two men came as friends to the Poe Shrine for a lark, a hoax, it must have been carefully planned.

But no man carefully plans his own murder.

Leave the two friends for a minute, she instructed herself. Leave *The Cask of Amontillado*. Just consider the fact of the man's death — the man dead in the room, the raven a few inches from his outstretched hands.

What did that suggest?

But her mind, the dog she had unleashed, would not pick up the scent. It would not sniff. It withdrew. It refused to pursue the quarry.

Very well, then, she thought, don't insist that the mind do what it balks at. Go back to the two friends, the two who signed their names as Poe and Dupin; two friends on a prank; they must have winked at each other as they signed the register, as she waited to conduct them through the Shrine.

But she found herself thinking of Poe's parents instead. They were desperately poor. His mother, after

his father's death or desertion . . . heavy with child, returning to the stage as soon as she could get up after the birth of her daughter Rosalie . . . Miss Wilson felt a deep sadness as she recalled Elizabeth Poe's plight. She supposed she should have grown accustomed to the tragedy of everything and everyone related to Poe, but there was never a moment when she could not be saddened by it. Poe, who gave so much to the world and had so little, who was defeated and starving — one of the few authentic starving poets in literary history. . . .

Miss Wilson commanded her brain to stop its melancholy reflections. Get back to the murder, she admonished it sternly.

All she really knew was that two people had entered the Shrine that afternoon and had signed the register as Poe and Dupin.

Wait! Whoever had done the murder must surely have registered in the guest book on a previous occasion. He must have familiarized himself with the setting; he would have to know about the room where *The Raven* illustrations were hung.

Then his name must be in the register twice!

After five telephone calls Miss Wilson located Lieutenant Williams. She told him she was sure she could be of help if he brought the Shrine guest book to her immediately.

When Lieutenant Williams's knock sounded on her door Miss Wilson was sitting in pitch darkness. She blinked

against the lights as she turned them on to admit him. For an instant Lieutenant Williams seemed illuminated.

He handed her the register.

"Here's the book," he said.

Book. Williams.

He handed her a book and his name was Williams.

She trembled as if a revelation were about to occur. But no revelation came. She invited him in and poured some coffee. He took it eagerly and drank it in three gulps.

He had nothing to report. "No luck. I found a few of the people who visited the Shrine this afternoon still in Richmond. A lot of them were tourists, I guess, who have already left town. None of those I saw could tell me anything we don't know, and we haven't even been able to identify the victim. There's nothing about his his clothes to tell us who he is. He had on a wig, by the way. Actually, he's rather bald. The mustache was false, too. He even wore makeup. Seemed funny for a man to be wearing makeup."

A wig. A mustache. Makeup.

Joy and exultancy possessed Miss Wilson. Poe and Dupin were guiding her accurately. But she must take herself in hand. She must proceed logically.

"Now, Lieutenant Williams, before I begin I want you to know that I respect the police. I don't share Dupin's opinion — well, I'm not sure he felt that way about the police in general, perhaps only the one with whom he was involved at the time.

I mean I don't think you're capable — in Dupin's words — oh, well, I suppose it's gentler in French: *de nier ce qui est, et d'expliquer ce qui n'est pas.*"

"Go right ahead," Lieutenant Williams said. "I'm not following you, but I sure am interested."

"All I'm saying is that you must be doing a good job or you wouldn't be a lieutenant. You're competent and trustworthy. But you see, I feel that I must help solve this crime because — well, because it happened where it did and because the place points rather logically to who did it. Not that I know his name yet or where he is or how you can find him, but I think I'll know soon. Of course, all the hard work will be left to you. But I want you to know what I've been thinking.

"First, though, I want to look at the register. The murderer has been to the Shrine before and fairly recently, I think."

Miss Wilson grappled with the large register, actually an old-style ledger.

"It's the handwriting of the man who registered today as Dupin that I've got to find."

She thumbed through the leaves, stopped, went back to that day's entries, shook her head, started again, consulted more entries; then she stopped again, gazed hard, sighed, and said, "There it is — I'm sure of it. The man you want is named Horace Manchester."

Lieutenant Williams set his cup

down. He was impressed; in fact, he was astounded, and trying very hard not to be overwhelmed. He said, "Was this Horace Manchester thoughtful enough to write down his address and telephone number?"

"He's given his address as New York City."

"New York is a big place."

"We can narrow it down for you."

"Can we?"

"May I go back for a moment?"

"Anything you say, Miss Wilson."

"I was thinking of the two men as Montresor and Fortunato — the two characters in *The Cask of Amontillado*. I'd like to go ahead and call them that, though we know that our Montresor is Manchester. Curious, isn't it? — The same initial.

"My mind wouldn't go any further when I started to think of Elizabeth Poe. She was an actress. Then when you came and handed me the ledger I felt there was a revelation in the making. But all I did was to ask you in and then I poured the coffee. I know now what my subconscious was reaching for. A book. Handed to me by a man named Williams. And that reminded me of Emlyn Williams and a book. He did readings from Dickens dressed as Dickens. Impersonation. Actor. Don't you see? Somebody dressed like Poe reading *The Raven* in the Poe Shrine. These two men must be actors. Ordinary persons might not know where to buy wigs and mustaches, might not know about makeup. Their minds wouldn't run in theatrical channels.

"Actors. There have been dozens of stock companies in and around Richmond; the summer season is about over and actors are getting back to New York for fall casting. Actors might have come to the Shrine from Washington, Norfolk, Williamsburg, Abingdon, or anywhere around Richmond. But actors must have rehearsals. They're not at all impromptu persons. One of the friends, or both of them, would have had to be at the Shrine before — in fact, Horace Manchester was here in June. Otherwise he wouldn't have known the floor plan. He wouldn't have realized that the room upstairs could be shut off from the rest of the Shrine while the staging was being prepared. It's even possible that Manchester had no plan for staging a murder at Poe's Shrine when he first visited the Shrine.

"So this crime probably involves two actors who played Richmond or somewhere in the vicinity this summer. I'd guess that for our two men the season ended last night. These two actors were leaving the vicinity and heading for New York. One felt deep hatred for the other — I don't know why, but we can assume, if murder was committed, there must have been an intense loathing.

"Maybe the victim, whom I'll continue to call Fortunato because we still don't know his name, had planned to do some readings dressed as Poe — in the way that Emlyn Williams did readings from Dickens. Manchester appeals to his friend's vanity. What a publicity stunt to come to the

Shrine and read *The Raven* in the very room where the bust of Pallas is, and all the *The Raven* illustrations are hung. How shocked and thrilled the visitors at the Shrine would be. The papers would carry feature stories about it. Engagements and bookings would pour in. All right, Fortunato says. They come to the Shrine and Fortunato brings his makeup. A brief time is needed to dress, but Manchester has thought of everything — he has brought a printed sign saying 'Temporarily Closed,' which he tacks to the outside of the door, so they won't be disturbed. Then when Fortunato has completed his Poe makeup and thinks the door should be opened and he should begin to do his reading of *The Raven*, his friend proves to be not his friend but his murderer. A cord. Strangulation. Manchester escapes. He is now en route to New York — unless he took a plane, in which case he's already there. He is smug and triumphant. But he has forgotten something: *his right name is in the register!* And actors can be located through Actors' Equity. Actors' Equity, did you know, helped place a monument on the unmarked grave of Poe's mother in St. John's Churchyard?

"Now then, Lieutenant Williams, that's the best Poe and Dupin and I can do. Try to locate Horace Manchester through Actors' Equity, and perhaps you can even get some help here from the newspaper critics who followed the summer theatrical season."

On Wednesday afternoon Miss Wilson escorted a small group through the Shrine. It seemed uncannily appropriate that they had suggested detective fiction as a topic for discussion.

She told them in some detail of Poe's contribution: the eccentric, infallible detective; the narrator who is something of a dunderhead and has to have the genius's deductions explained; the ineffectual police.

"So you see," she concluded, "not since Poe's invention of the modern detective story has there been any important addition."

One of the young men called out, "Oh, but you're wrong. What about blondes and sex? They're additions, aren't they?"

Miss Wilson smiled at him. "No," she said. "they aren't additions. They're aberrations."

The sympathetic laughter buoyed her. She had been apprehensive and depressed since Sunday night. She withdrew from the guests and they went their separate ways around the Shrine.

The ringing of the telephone summoned her.

"Is this the Edgar Allan Poe Detective Agency?" someone asked. "I'd like to speak to Operative Wilson, please."

She recognized the voice of Lieutenant Williams.

"Hello," she said. "How are you?"

"Dead on my feet. But as soon as I get a little rest I want you to enroll me in the Beginners' Class in Deduc-

tion. I've been on the chase you suggested and it didn't turn out to be a wild goose. In fact, Miss Wilson, even if it is the Twentieth Century I think it's just as well that you live in Richmond. If you were in Salem they'd use the old gallows tree on you — they sure would!"

His voice dropped. "We located Horace Manchester — or Montresor, as you and Poe would say. Thanks for what you did. We might never have got him if not for you."

It wasn't I, Miss Wilson thought humbly as she hung up the receiver. It was Edgar A. Poe.
