

## THE TORTURE OF MEMORY

By Rev. Paul N. Ellis

There is much concerning hell that we do not know, but we do know that memory will be one of the greatest instruments of torture to lost men and women. Abraham said to the rich man, Dives, "Son, remember!" And oh, what pain and sorrow remembrance may bring to the soul of man!

Edgar Allen Poe, the brilliant but profligate poet and short-story writer of the nineteenth century, has given us in his poem, "The Raven," an unusual illustration of the torture and pain of the hopeless soul and the part that memory plays in such suffering. Many critics have thought that Poe must have been in one of his numerous deliriums when he wrote this strange poem, but the Rev. C. M. Reade suggests that Poe was in the sanest moment of life, when conscience was doing its work in calling to mind a hopelessly wasted and misspent life. That this may very likely be the case is borne out, it seems to me, by Poe's own words concerning a portion of the poem. "It will be observed that the words, 'from out my heart,' involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem," says Poe. "The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical of mournful and never-ending remembrance."

A short resume of the poem will bare to us his deep sense of sorrow and hopelessness. Once at midnight, while alone in his room with his thoughts, the poet heard a rapping at his door, and again at his window lattice. Upon opening the window a stately raven stepped before him and perched himself "upon a bust of Pallas" just above his chamber door. Then there transpires an extraordinary and highly imaginary conversation between the poet and his ominous bird.

"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.'"

Then,

"To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core:

"Tell me truly, I implore:

Is there—is there balm in Gilead? tell me, tell me, I implore!"

Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'"

Again the poet questions his strange visitor:

"Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within 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.'"

The next two stanzas, closing the poem, speak for themselves of the tortured memories which unceasingly haunt the soulsick poet.

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird on field!" 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 thy form 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 demon's that is dreaming,

And the lamplight o'er 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!"

On October 3rd, 1849, within five years of the publication of the poem which brought him fame, Poe was found in delirium, and four days later he died in a hospital in that city. The awakened conscience and the never-ending memory of wasted opportunities which seem to have been impressed upon the heart of the poet, and which are personified by the Raven, will no doubt haunt him through the countless ages of eternity.

"Son, remember." The torture elicited by memory is as real as the joy which pleasant memories may call forth.—Free Methodist.

## CORRESPONDENCE

Fellsmere, Fla.

Dear Highway Friends:

I arrived here in time for Xmas dinner with my daughter, Mrs. Dora Kinney; found the family quite well. Her family of three children are scattered. The only girl, teaches music in North Florida, the eldest son in Ohio, working in defence work, one son at home, yet in school. Some one has said, God made no mistake when he made Florida.

The lawns are green, flowers in bloom and tropical birds fill the air with music, such a change from our winter in the north. The people of the south are very pleasant folk to meet, very courteous and hospitable to the stranger.

Not so many young people as usual as the young men have gone to their training camps. My eldest grandson, Private Frank Kimball, is stationed at Camp Blanding, near Jacksonville. He will come here for a short visit if it can be arranged.

In this little town we have had a blackout, while in another town yesterday the call came, an air raid. Every one ran for shelter, policemen were on every corner. I thought of what the apostle said, obey them that have the rule over you. This was only for practice. Things are beginning to look serious for us.

We are only two miles from the Atlantic ocean and just a few hundred miles above us the deadly submarine is at work.

There will be a number of Holiness camp meetings held here this winter. We hear many good sermons, as well as good singing over the radio. The negro spiritualists are especially good.

I often wish I could hear some of our brethren over the radio. I attend a Community church, the pastor is a D. D. who has travelled over Europe and who was a chaplain over there in the last war. Most of the clergy play golf for exercise, some on the Sabbath day. Non-church goers spend most of their time fishing on Sunday, and as there are over five hundred varieties of fish in Southern waters, they find it very interesting. Missed the Highway for a while, and am glad to have it to read again. I hope Brother Smith can visit Camp Blanding and give the soldier boys one of his good talks. It is my guess that many of them

do not hear the good preaching that they hear at home.

At the Catholic hour, which is each Sunday night, a priest, Monsigneur Shean from Washington, gives a good talk. He urges people, Jews, Catholics and Protestants; to observe a holy hour each day in prayer and meditation; urges his people to get out to early morning mass.

Most of us will agree with this earnest message. God will answer humble, earnest prayer, he said. We do not know what the future holds for us, but we can trust our Heavenly Father.

In Christian love,

MRS. FRANK KIMBALL

Woodstock, N. B.

Dear Brother Dow:

I wish through the Highway to send thanks to those who remembered me so kindly at Christmas and to say that I appreciate every card and letter.

Counting a pretty calendar I received in the last mail, I find I got one hundred cards and several letters. It helped to make my Christmas a happy one, as it cheers us to be remembered by so many dear friends. It brought a flood of precious memories to my mind, as I recall many happy days spent in the homes of those who remembered me after all the years that have gone by. I realize that God is the giver of all these tokens of love and I thank Him for the blessings that have brightened this Christmas season. I pray that God will richly bless the dear friends and bind our hearts together in Christian love and may we unitedly pray for God to pour out His Spirit upon us with power.

I was very thankful to be able to attend church and Sunday school on Christmas Sunday and enjoyed the service very much. The sermon by our pastor was helpful and the choir had beautiful Christmas music.

Through the kindness of a friend I was loaned a radio, as they were going on their holiday, so I heard the King's message to the Empire and the Christmas services in different places. Several of our church members remembered me with a gift also two of our Sunday school classes. Friends sent me fruit and many tokens of cheer. Our Christmas programme was good and I felt glad I could be present. Above all, I am thankful for the sweet abiding presence of Jesus that helps me and keeps me rejoicing, even in this world war. My heart goes out in sympathy to those who are bereaved and I pray God will comfort them. In this crisis in our Empire we need to pray earnestly and I believe God will bring things to pass that will glorify him.

The following hymn expresses what God can do:

"Oh, for the flame of living fire,  
Which shone so bright in saints of old  
Which bade their souls, to heaven aspire  
Calm in distress, in danger bold.

Is not thy grace as mighty now,  
As when Elijah felt its power;  
When Glory beamed from Moses' brow  
Or Job endured the trying hour?

Remember, Lord, the ancient days  
Renew thy work, thy grace restore;  
And while to Thee our hearts we raise,  
On us Thy Holy Spirit pour."

Sincerely,

MRS. S. A. BAKER

The right word is always a power and communicates its definiteness to our action.—George Eliot.