

## *Edgar Allan Poe's Contributions to Alexander's Weekly Messenger*

BY CLARENCE S. BRIGHAM

THE fame of Edgar Allan Poe rests in a considerable degree upon his activities in the field of ciphers and the solution of cryptograms. As one critic has said in a volume on Poe: "Doubtless nothing contributed to a greater extent than did Poe's connection with cryptography to the growth of the legend which pictured him as a man at once below and above ordinary human nature; but the whole subject is still unfortunately wrapped in some obscurity, and it is impossible to be sure of the facts as distinguished from his own report of them."<sup>1</sup>

Poe's career as a solver of cryptograms began during his connection with a Philadelphia newspaper, *Alexander's Weekly Messenger*, from December 1839 to May 1840, during which period he claimed to have solved without a failure all of the ciphers submitted to him. But the want of a file of this paper made it impossible to substantiate Poe's boast. Finding Poe's statement in *Graham's Magazine* in 1841 that he had solved many ciphers the previous year in a Philadelphia paper called *Alexander's Weekly Messenger*, Poe students such as Professor John M. Manly, Hervey Allen, and many others, searched in vain for such a newspaper. Colonel William F. Friedman of the United States War Department Signal Office, in an article entitled "Edgar Allan Poe, Cryptographer,"<sup>2</sup> said: "Unfortunately the records that

<sup>1</sup> Joseph W. Krutch, *Edgar Allan Poe, a Study in Genius*, 1926, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> *American Literature*, November 1836, vol. 8, p. 271.

remain of *Alexander's Weekly Messenger* are exceedingly fragmentary. Despite painstaking research by numerous Poe experts, not a single issue containing any cipher solutions that Poe may have published as a result of his asserted challenge has ever been found, and there seems to be no way at the present moment of corroborating Poe's statements."

The recent acquisition by the American Antiquarian Society of a complete file of *Alexander's Weekly Messenger* for 1840 now provides a means to test the truth of Poe's assertions, and incidentally reveals other of his writings contributed to that paper.

Poe's first statement on the subject was in an issue of the *Messenger* for December 18, 1839, the only known copy of which is in the Library of the Ohio State Archæological and Historical Society. In this issue, under the heading of "Enigmatical and Conundrum-ical," he alluded at length to the value of applying a rigorous and analytical method in the solution of enigmas. He asserted that if any reader submitted an example of secret writing in which arbitrary symbols were substituted for letters of the alphabet, no such cipher could be propounded which he would be unable to solve. In discoursing upon conundrums, he offered a collection of twenty-five examples, which "have at least the merit of originality," and ingeniously gave as his last conundrum: "Why ought the author of the 'Grotesque and Arabesque' to be a good writer of verses? Because he's a poet to a *t*. Add *t* to Poe makes it Poet."

In *Graham's Magazine* for July 1841 Poe contributed a signed article entitled "A Few Words on Secret Writing." Following a paragraph on the method of solving cryptographical puzzles, he said: "In the discussion of an analogous subject, in one of the weekly papers of this city, about eighteen months ago, the writer of this article had occasion to speak of the application of a rigorous *method* in all forms of

thought—of its advantages—of the extension of its use even to what is considered the operation of pure fancy—and thus, subsequently, of the solution of cipher. He even ventured to assert that no cipher, of the character above specified, could be sent to the address of the paper, which he would not be able to resolve. This challenge excited, most unexpectedly, a very lively interest among the numerous readers of the journal. Letters were poured in upon the editor from all parts of the country; and many of the writers of these epistles were so convinced of the impenetrability of their mysteries, as to be at great pains to draw him into wagers on the subject. At the same time, they were not always scrupulous about sticking to the point. The cryptographs were, in numerous instances, altogether beyond the limits defined in the beginning. Foreign languages were employed. Words and sentences were run together without interval. Several alphabets were used in the same cipher. One gentleman, but moderately endowed with conscientiousness, inditing us a puzzle composed of pot-hooks and hangers to which the wildest typography of the office could afford nothing similar, went even so far as to jumble together no less than *seven distinct alphabets*, without intervals between the letters, *or between the lines*. Many of the cryptographs were dated in Philadelphia, and several of those which urged the subject of a bet were written by gentlemen of this city. Out of, perhaps, one hundred ciphers altogether received, there was only one which we did not immediately succeed in solving. This one we *demonstrated* to be an imposition—that is to say, we fully proved it a jargon of random characters, having no meaning whatever. In respect to the epistle of the seven alphabets, we had the pleasure of completely *nonplus*-ing its inditer by a prompt and satisfactory translation.”<sup>3</sup>

In *Graham's Magazine* for December 1841, in another

<sup>3</sup> *Graham's Magazine*, July 1841, vol. 19, p. 34.

article on "Secret Writing," Poe refers a correspondent "to the files of 'Alexander's Weekly Messenger' for 1839—where he will see that we read numerous ciphers of the class described, even when very ingenious *additional* difficulties were interposed."<sup>4</sup>

Since all of the Poe articles in the *Messenger* from December 18, 1839, to May 6, 1840, are herewith reprinted, the reader can judge for himself whether Poe justified his claims. The solved puzzles appear in almost every issue from January 15 to April 29, under such headings as "Enigmatical," "Another Poser," "More of the Puzzles," "Cyphers Again." In all, thirty-six ciphers were recorded as received.

For a summary of the articles on ciphers and puzzles in the *Messenger*, I have been favored with a letter from Dr. W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., of Yale University, which with his permission is included in this introduction. Dr. Wimsatt has given much study to Poe's interest in cryptograms, and an article by him entitled "What Poe Knew about Cryptography" is scheduled to appear in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*.

The cryptograms (or hieroglyphical writings, puzzles, posers, cyphers, as Poe calls them) in *Alexander's* would appear to be all of a very simple sort, even simpler than the ones he later solved in *Graham's*. My statistics are as follows: in the fifteen 1840 *Alexander's* articles on ciphers Poe refers altogether to *thirty-six* ciphers which he has received in response to his challenge of December 18, 1839, or to renewals of it in the later articles. Poe prints the text and solutions of *nine* ciphers—all of these simple substitution ciphers, i.e., composed in accordance with the formula which he gave in the note at the end of the December 18, 1839, article, and which he repeats once or twice in the later articles. (A simple substitution cipher is one in which the same symbol, be it of whatever sort, invariably stands for the same letter of the alphabet in the concealed message.) Poe prints the solution, but not the text, of *fourteen* ciphers (and part of the solution of *one* other, February 19), all of which there is every reason to suppose were also simple substitution ciphers. *Three* times Poe simply makes the statement that he has solved a cipher, and again there is no reason to suppose anything beyond simple substitution

<sup>4</sup> *Graham's Magazine*, vol. 19, p. 308.

(cipher of D.D. and that of J.H., February 26; that of Hamilton Brown which Poe says cannot be set in type—implying, I believe, that he has solved it—April 8). Six times Poe says that he has not solved a cipher—for one reason or another (Munger's cipher, written in pencil and "de-faced," cipher of J.R.H., composed of 51 characters and hence not a simple substitution cipher, and Kulp's "imposition," all of February 26; imposition of "Incog," March 25; second cipher of Colfax, which Poe had no time to look at, and cipher from Austinburg, which Poe has lost, April 29). In *one* case (February 26) Poe prints text and solution of what is not a cipher at all, but a mere jumble of two sequences of phrases, one of which makes sense if the other is ignored. Poe italicizes the words to be read.

I have reserved two cases for the last, as being the only ones which stand out from the others in point of difficulty: (1). February 26, cipher from J. H., text and solution. As Poe complains, J.H. has used some symbols, to stand for more than one letter of the "plain text." This, then, is a simple substitution cipher with certain indeterminacies. The keyphrase ciphers which Poe was later to solve in *Graham's* involved the same difficulty in aggravated form. As Poe was to learn, and as Col. William F. Friedman has clearly explained, a sufficient number of indeterminacies can make a cipher insoluble even to him who has the key. But this cipher from J.H. is relatively simple even with the indeterminate symbols (none stands for more than two letters). The ones which Poe was later to solve in *Graham's* were difficult for an amateur, but, as Col. Friedman reports, were not difficult for students of elementary cryptography to whom they were submitted.

(2). February 19, the seven-alphabet cipher of which Poe speaks in the July 1841 *Graham's* article. Col. Friedman has pointed out that such a cipher may be only seven simple-substitution ciphers strung together. Only if the alphabets changed with every letter (as in the Vigenère cyclic ciphers, the *chiffre quarré* and its various modifications) would there be a greatly increased difficulty. It is unfortunate that Poe did not print the cipher text, but from the nature of the "plain text" which he prints I am completely confident that he did not solve a true cyclic cipher. As Poe says, the "puzzle is nothing more than the well-known acrostic called 'The Siege of Belgrade,' beginning thus:

An Austrian army, awfully arrayed,  
Boldly, by battery, besieged Belgrade,"

where each line is composed of words beginning with the same letter, and the order of lines is alphabetical. It looks very much as if the seven alphabets of the cipher were simply arranged one to a line in rotation. Very likely the alliteration gave the thing away to Poe. I do not deny that he was very quick at picking up clues of this sort. But the methodical, more abstruse, analysis of cyclic ciphers he seems not to have known anything about.

Here are some detached observations:

1. Poe's correspondents often made the task easy for him by choosing some well-known text, the Lord's Prayer, the opening lines of "Twelfth Night," the above acrostic, or a verse enigma where the pattern helped to betray the secret or one part quickly led to another. On the whole his correspondents were extremely naïve and had little conception of how to make their puzzles difficult within the limits he had set down.

2. Note that the first cipher of April 22 is constructed on the simple mnemonic scheme of numbering the letters of the alphabet, 1, 2, 3, etc., and that Poe has solved it with great carelessness.

3. D.D.'s cipher of February 26, "the letters being formed upon a square with diagonal crosses," was probably no more than a simple cipher. Some mnemonic system was used for forming a symbol alphabet—and this far from adding any difficulty may only have served to give the thing away immediately. The fact of simple substitution is not altered by any key scheme whatsoever.

4. Three times (February 26, March 11, April 29) Poe complains about letters being run together (not separated according to the words of the plain text). He stipulated not only for simple substitutions but for every aid in the arrangement of the symbols. (There is no reason why those who possess the key of a cipher should not always arrange the symbols in false groups, as is always done in cyclic ciphers nowadays.)

Poe contributed other articles and paragraphs to the *Messenger* during his four months' connection with the paper, all of which were unsigned. We have reprinted all which bear a resemblance to Poe's style or for some other reason might be attributed to him.<sup>5</sup> Poe's connection with the paper apparently stopped with the issue of May 6, 1840, after which date there are no more ciphers, or articles in any way suggestive of Poe's style. The issue of May 6 was the last to carry upper and lower case headlines for its editorials, and thereafter the typographical style of the paper suffered a decided change. It was in this issue, too, that the column on theatrical affairs, which was evidently conducted by

<sup>5</sup> The work of a writer like Poe, with known hobbies and a habit of self repetition, is not difficult to identify in most cases, and especially so in a newspaper with a small staff including none of his close followers. Dr. Mabbott and I searched the file independently at first, and found unanimity of opinion upon consultation. My careful re-reading of the paper has brought to light only three additional items. "Thomas Paine" was regarded by both searchers as doubtful, and is the only item which seems hopelessly indeterminate.

Burton and which had been carried for several months, made its last appearance. It was in the spring of 1840 that Poe broke with William E. Burton, and presumably at the same time with Charles Alexander, who printed *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*.<sup>6</sup> Also it was on May 4, 1840, that Alexander established *The Daily Chronicle*, and thus became the publisher of a daily as well as a weekly paper.

Charles Alexander, the publisher of *Alexander's Weekly Messenger*, was one of the most prolific of Philadelphia newspaper publishers. Graduating as a printer from *Poulson's Daily Advertiser*, he joined with Samuel C. Atkinson in establishing the *Saturday Evening Post*, August 4, 1821. He remained a member of the firm of Atkinson & Alexander until March 1828. The same firm established a literary periodical called *The Casket* in January 1826, publishing the magazine in connection with the *Saturday Evening Post* and frequently using the same material for both. When Alexander dropped out of the *Post* in March 1828, he also left the *Casket*.

On April 7, 1828, Alexander established *The Daily Chronicle*, which in 1834 he sold to James Gordon Bennett, and it soon after expired. He also claimed that he "laid the foundations" of Godey's *Lady's Book*, and although this popular magazine did not carry his name in the imprint, it was at first printed from the office of *The Daily Chronicle*. On November 29, 1834, he issued a specimen number of *The Gentleman's Vade-Mecum*, which sporting and dramatic journal began in January 1835 and ran until June 1836. On January 2, 1836, he established a bi-weekly illustrated journal entitled *The Salmagundi, and News of the Day*. Another of his ventures was *Everybody's Album*, a popular monthly magazine, started by him in July 1836 and lasting one year.

<sup>6</sup> The disappearance of the theatrical column early in May would indicate a change in Burton's connection with Alexander. This could have preceded Poe's break with Burton. There is no evidence that the two breaks were related.

*The Salmagundi* appeared under that title until December 28, 1836, and is interesting in that it was directly succeeded by the *American Weekly Messenger*, with the first issue on January 4, 1837. This became Alexander's longest journalistic venture, changing its title on January 3, 1838, to *Alexander's Weekly Messenger*, early in 1842 to *Alexander's Express Messenger*, and on January 6, 1847, to *Alexander's Pictorial Messenger*. It was published by him until November 1848, when it was continued by Samuel D. Patterson as the *Family Messenger and National Gleaner*. Files of *Alexander's Messenger* are scarce, with the Antiquarian Society having the most issues from 1837 to 1844, and the Wisconsin Historical Society from 1844 to 1848.

In July 1837 Alexander published for William E. Burton the *Gentleman's Magazine* and so continued until January 1839, when Burton took it over as publisher as well as editor. Alexander could not long exist without publishing at least two papers at the same time. On May 4, 1840, he took in a partner, Andrew Scott, to publish a daily paper as well as a weekly, and called it *The Daily Chronicle*. An editorial announcement in the first issue states that "The Lady's Book, The Casket, The Gentleman's Magazine, the Saturday Evening Post, the Saturday Courier, and the Weekly Messenger—of all of which the foundations were laid by the senior member of our firm—are examples of the success which has attended our endeavors." On January 1, 1845, the firm was dissolved and Alexander became sole publisher. The last known issues are in 1846, and the paper probably ceased in 1847. The Antiquarian Society has the only known file of the *Daily Chronicle* from 1840 to 1845. Charles Alexander's name is listed in the Philadelphia Directories until 1850, and thereafter disappears. From 1835 to 1850 his residence was given as 141 North 10th Street.

To return to Poe. That the subject of cryptography greatly



intrigued him, there is no question. He was an exponent of the process of exact thinking, talked about "ratiocination," and defended the use of technical devices even in the most fanciful of literary efforts. He was also interested in various forms of mystification—mesmerism, reading of character by handwriting, and phrenology. His was a strange mind, able to produce stories based upon the wildest flights of imagination, poems which seemed to spring from dreams and fantasies, and yet a mind which pleaded for use of pure and unimaginative logic in literary composition. Whether his interest in cryptography was the result of an attraction for the supernatural and the mysterious, or whether it came from his desire to parade his learning, or whether he possessed the power of an extraordinary analytical mind,<sup>7</sup> is for each reader of Poe to decide for himself.

As a preliminary to writing the notes in connection with Poe's contributions to the *Messenger*, I have read—or rather, re-read—all of Poe's printed works. I have consulted the magazines, nearly all of which are in the Antiquarian Society's collection, to which Poe contributed during his stay in Philadelphia. I have also examined rather thoroughly the following Philadelphia newspapers, owned by the Antiquarian Society, from December 1839 to May 1840: *Public Ledger*, *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, *National Gazette*, and *Saturday Evening Post*. I have received aid from many Poe scholars—notably Professor Arthur H. Quinn, William K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Thomas Ollive Mabbott. Dr. Mabbott especially has shown an active interest in this article and has contributed a detailed and authoritative opinion regarding Poe's contributions to the *Messenger*. Without the help of these scholars my notes would have been of far less value.

<sup>7</sup> Henry B. Hirst, in his biography of Poe, in the *Philadelphia Saturday Museum*, of March 4, 1843, enlarges at length on Poe's analytical mind and his ability in solving ciphers. In the same paper Thomas C. Clarke refers editorially to Poe's perceptive mind and says that Poe, when in his company, solved immediately a difficult cipher which had been printed in the *Baltimore Sun*, and which he reprints, with the solution.

## ALEXANDER'S WEEKLY MESSENGER

[December 18, 1839, page 4, columns 1-2]

## ENIGMATICAL AND CONUNDRUM-ICAL.

A correspondent writes to us as follows from Halifax county, Va.

Editors of Alexander's Messenger:

Gentlemen—Examining a parcel of your old papers (which were on file at my father's) some short time since, I found in one an enigma, which runs thus:

I'm a noise never heard, yet I'm nothing but sound;  
 I move not, yet travel the world all round;  
 I cannot be seen, yet no mortal can say  
 Without seeing me he can go through the day;  
 I cannot be touched, yet no lady fair  
 Can close her sweet hand without finding me there:  
 I'm enormously large, though as small as a digit;  
 And I often at cards put old frumps in a fidget;  
 I'm rough, smooth, soft, hard; I'm both oval and square,  
 Yet nothing but angels which make tories swear;  
 I'm the prop of the throne, and abhor revolution,  
 And yet for my treason deserve execution:  
 I'm blacker than jet, than a lily more white;  
 I never am seen, yet am never out of sight;  
 I'm colder than ice, yet hotter than fire;  
 I die every minute, yet never expire.  
 Come guess me at once; make no fuss about me,  
 For ladies never sit down to piquet without me.

From the many contradictions and novelty of the piece, my curiosity is raised to such a degree, that I must request you to send me the answer. I have read it over carefully a great many times, and can form no idea what it can be.

Respectfully, your friend, &c.

We sympathise with our correspondent's perplexity, and hasten to remove it—especially as we have a *penchant* for riddles ourselves. In spite of the anathemas of the over-wise, we regard a good enigma as a good thing. Their solution affords one of the best possible exercises of the analytical faculties, besides calling into play many other powers. We know of no truer test of general capacity than is to be found in the guessing of such puzzles. In explanation of this idea a most capital Magazine article might be written. It would be by no means a labor lost to show how great a degree of rigid *method* enters into enigma-guessing. So much is this the case, that a set of rules might absolutely be given by which almost any (good) enigma in the world could be solved instantaneously. This may sound oddly; but is not more strange than the well known fact that rules really exist, by means of which it is easy to decipher any species of hieroglyphical writing—that is to say writing where, in place of alphabetical letters, any kind of marks are made use of at random.\*

The *method* of which we speak enables us to say at once, in regard to our correspondent's enigma, that he has puzzled himself, and would have puzzled himself to all eternity, in vain. *It has no answer.* That is, it has no word of solution which will reply to *all* the categories. The enigma is *imperfect*, and no doubt, composed by some ignorant person; one who, at all events, knew nothing of the *laws* of such compositions; for, like everything else, they have their laws. The *style* would indicate this ignorance sufficiently, without looking farther; but a little scrutiny fully exposes it. Still it is not difficult to perceive what the author *intended* as the answer—and this is *light*. The vulgar notions about light are embodied in the opening lines, and indeed throughout; while the "putting old frumps in a fidget at cards" &c. &c. plainly show the design.

Modern taste, however, at least modern newspaper taste, affects rather the conundrum than the enigma proper. The former has more spice in its composition, and its brevity gives it force. A good enigma, we have said, is a good thing, but a good conundrum *may be* a better. Consequently, we see our brethren of

the press trying their hands at *cons* in all directions, and as soon as they perpetrate a decent one (after a severe effort) they set up a cackle forthwith, and the bantling goes the round of the papers in a kind of *ovation*. This inordinate estimation of conundrums arises from the chance hap-hazard manner in which they are conceived, making their conception a difficult thing. With a little of that *method* upon which we just now commented, they may be manufactured by the yard—yes, and of good quality, too. We will just look over the pages of a Johnson's Dictionary for five minutes, and then shall have no trouble in concocting a string of them as long as your arm. No sooner said than done.

“Why is a bad wife better than a good one?—Because bad is the best.” This somewhat ungallant old query, with its horrible answer, is an embodiment of the true genius of the whole race to which it belongs—the race of the conundrums. Bad is the best. There is nothing better settled in the minds of people who know any thing at all, than the plain truth that if a conundrum is decent it wo'nt do—that if it is fit for anything it is not worth twopence—in a word that its real value is in exact proportion to the extent of its demerit, and that it is only positively good when it is outrageously and scandalously absurd. In this clear view of the case we offer the annexed. They have at least the merit of originality—a merit apart from that of which we have just spoken. At all events if they are not ours, we have just made them, and they ought to be. If any one has imagined such things before, he, evidently, had no business to do so. We say, with Donatus, apud Hieronymus, “*Pereant qui ante nos nostra.*”

1. Why are the Thugs like the crack omnibuses?  
Because they are Phansigars.—*fancy cars.*
2. Why is a man a bad reasoner who bruises his knuckles?  
Because he's a sophist.—*he's a sore fist.*
3. Poor Mary's dead! why is she a many-sided figure?  
Because she's a Polly gone.—*polygon.*
4. Why is my fat friend Tom's scarlet face like a small pungent esculent? Because it's a little reddish.—*a little radish.*

5. Why is his olfactory organ like a bunch of flowers?  
Because it's a nose gay.—*a nosegay.*
6. Why is his last new novel sleep itself?  
Because it's so poor. *sopor.*
7. Why is Dr. Williams' cash, the oculist, like a divorced wife's pension? Because it's all eye-money.—*alimony.*
8. Why are Bennett's ocular organs interrogative?  
Because they are queer eyes. *queries?*
9. Why is a lean cat a very common fish?  
Because it's a poor puss.—*porpus.*
10. Why is a tin cup like a crab?  
Because it is a can, sir.—*a cancer.*
11. What kind of a vessel was Don Quixotte's squire?  
A pan, sir.—*a Panza.*
12. Why is a pismire a good reply to that last question?  
Because it is an ant, sir.—*an answer.*
13. What is the difference between a small tub and a runaway shoat.  
The one is a piggin, *pig in*, the other a pig out.
14. I have a table needing repairs; why must the cabinet-maker who comes for it be in good circumstances?  
Because he is comfortable.—*come for table.*
15. Why is the fifteenth letter of the alphabet, when mutilated, like a Parisian cockney.  
Because it is a bad O.—*badaud.*
16. Why is the Pacific like an inhabitant of Languedoc?  
Because it's a lanquid ocean.—*a Languedocian.*
17. Why is a chain like the feline race?  
Because it's a catenation. *a catty nation.*
18. Why should my friend Miss Sarah Amanda be able to stand fire? Because she's a Sal Amanda.—*a salamander.*
19. Why is there little difference between herb soup and turtle?  
Because one is herb soup, the other soup herb.—*superb.*
20. Why might a regular rowdy be eaten?  
Because he's a loafer bred.—*a loafead.*
21. What must you do to a tea-table to make it fit to eat?  
Take tea from it, *t*, it then becomes eatable.
22. What important difference is there between a sot and the purple Convolvulus?  
The one is always drunk, the other blue every other day.

23. Why does a lady in tight corsets never need comfort?  
Because she's already so laced.—*solaced*.
24. When you called the dock a wharf, why was it a deed of writing?  
Because it was a dock you meant.—*a document*.
25. Why ought the author of the "Grotesque and Arabesque" to be a good writer of verses?  
Because he's a poet to a *t*. Add *t* to Poe makes it Poet.

\*For example—in place of A put † or any other arbitrary character—in place of B, a \* &c. &c. Let an entire alphabet be made in this manner, and then let this alphabet be used in any piece of writing. This writing can be read by means of a proper method. Let this be put to the test. Let any one address us a letter in this way, and we pledge ourselves to read it forthwith—however unusual or arbitrary may be the characters employed.

NOTE: The original issue of the newspaper of December 18, 1839 is in the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, at Columbus, and contains this contribution and the following article on beet-root. The piece is characteristically in Poe's style and laid the scene for the enigmas and ciphers which he later printed and solved. His outline of a method for solving enigmas and hieroglyphical writing has much in common with his article in *Graham's Magazine* for July 1841. Although the above enigma was sent to *Alexander's Messenger* for solution, it is a fact that the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* long before 1839 had been printing a column for enigmas and puzzles. It is probable that Alexander, seeing the success of his rival's venture, thought that such a column, especially with cipher writing added, would increase his own circulation.

Poe's quotation from St. Jerome is from the *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, chap. 1.

Poe, in the *Philadelphia Saturday Museum* of March 25 and April 1, 1843, in an article "Original Conundrums," again used Nos. 3, 9, 16, 17, 18, 22 and 23 of the above list. The following points occur in commenting upon some of the twenty-five conundrums.

1. Phansigars were the East Indian stranglers or assassins. In *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* for September 1839, p. 174, Poe had recently noticed a two volume work on *The Thugs or Phansigars of India*. He mentioned it again in "Marginalia" (Harrison, *Works of Poe*, vol. 16, p. 26).

6. Poe has another pun on the word "sopor" in his "Marginalia" in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, June 1849 (see also Harrison, *Works of Poe*, vol. 16, p. 167).

7. Dr. John Williams was an English oculist who is mentioned also in Poe's story, "The Man that was Used up," first published in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* for August 1839, p. 70. The *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* of December 21, 1839 tells something of Dr. Williams in the following article.

John Williams, the Humbug.

That arrant quack, John Williams, who came to this country two years since, advertised as "Oculist to His Majesty," and all that sort of fudge, has been mulcted in the sum of seventy-five dollars and costs, for "destroying the vision of a poor man." The man's name is Roger Duffy. When he went to Williams, he could see well out of one eye, having lost the sight of the other some years since. Williams charged him \$75 for attending him, and completely putting out his "other eye so that he could not tell day from night."

Williams should have been compelled to pay enough to support the poor man for the rest of his life. He has humbugged enough out of others to do this over and over again. He is a Royal Quack, of whom we have spoken to our readers. Why should such fellows be patronized, when we have in America distinguished Oculists, who would honor any nation?

According to the New York *Sunday Mercury* of November 3, 1839 Williams was settled in New York and in the issues of the New York *Evening Signal* of December 12, 1839 and January 6, 1840, there are long accounts of his career and his trial.

8. This refers to James Gordon Bennett, Sr., of the *New York Herald*. Philip Hone, in his *Diary*, under date of January 20, 1836, says "There is an ill-looking, squinting man called Bennett, who is now the editor of the Herald." D. C. Seitz, in his *The James Gordon Bennetts*, 1928, p. 50, says that Mr. Bennett "did squint sorely, as a result of much misuse of his eyes."

20. *loafead* is probably a misprint for *loaf o'bread*.

25. Poe's use of his own name in the final conundrum is characteristic. He had published *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* in 1840 and it was the book for which he was best known up to that time. He later, in 1845, used this same conundrum in quoting the "Outis" letter on the Longfellow controversy (Harrison, *Works of Poe*, vol. 12, p. 50), as follows: "Edgar A. Poe. (Write it rather Edgar, a *Poet*, and then it is right to a T.)" The fact that the joke emanated originally from Poe lends new weight to the view, held by some authorities, that "Outis" was Poe himself, or at least was someone in close touch with him, and that the Longfellow War was to some extent a sham battle.

[December 18, 1839, page 2, column 3]

[ARTICLE ON BEET-ROOT].

A controversy has been going on of late in the columns of the Ledger, on the subject of the beet-root. The opponents are a Mr. T. M. (which letters may possibly stand for Tugmutton, or Trismegistus) and Mr. James Pedder, a gentleman of sound sense and much practical knowledge, who is well acquainted with the subject which he discusses, having paid attention personally for many years to the whole system of beet-raising and beet-sugar making in France, and being at the same time an experienced sugar refiner. As might be expected Mr. P. has the battle all to himself, and makes sad exposure of his antagonist's ignorance. For our own parts we wonder at the good humor with which he has listened and replied to the rigmarole of Mr. T. M. We allude to the platitudes of this latter person now merely as an instance of the *kind* of opposition which all new suggestions or discoveries, however reasonable or valuable, have to contend with from that vulgar dunder-headed conceit which adheres, through thick and thin, to "the good old way," and which so often calls itself by the name of "common sense" that it sometimes passes for such among people who should know better. Time was, when credulity, and a blind adoption of raw schemes, were the distinguished traits of the rabble; but the rapid march of invention has altered all this, and *incredulity*, and a dogged refusal to see or understand, are now more properly the popular features. The simple truths which science unfolds, day after day, are in fact, far stranger, apparently, than the wildest dreams in which imagination used to indulge of old.

When we spoke of new propositions and discoveries, we did not mean to insinuate that the cultivation of the beet-root was any thing very new, or even the manufacture of sugar therefrom. It is now an old story—at least it is old to every body but Mr. T. M. To this gentleman it appears novel and chimerical only because he views it through the darkened glass of his gross ignorance, or rather because he looks at it with the eyes of an owl. France



derives a very considerable revenue from an impolitic impost on the manufacture; and nearly all the sugar consumed in the country, is sugar of the beet-root. Her climate is not better adapted to the culture than our own; and our manufactures are not less skilful than hers. What she has done, we can do—and, what is more we surely will do it, in spite of the whole race of the Tugmuttons.

NOTE: The article was first identified as Poe's by Professor T. O. Mabbott, who printed it in *London Notes and Queries*, vol. 167, p. 420, Dec. 15, 1934. He was struck by the close similarity of one sentence in the article to a sentence in Poe's "Marginalia" in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* for December 1844, vol. 15, p. 592, which read: "Twenty years ago credulity was the characteristic trait of the mob, incredulity the distinctive feature of the philosophic; now the case is conversed." The sentence also occurs in Poe's letter No. 2 to the *Columbia Spy*, of Columbia, Penn., of May 25, 1844 (reprinted in Spannuth and Mabbott, *Poe's Doings of Gotham*, 1929, pp. 33-34).

James Pedder, whose part in the sugar-beet controversy was taken by Poe, was in the employ of a sugar manufacturer of Philadelphia. From 1840 to 1843 he was editor of a well known agricultural journal, the *Farmer's Cabinet*. A few years before, he had journeyed to France to study the beet sugar industry. Poe was an intimate friend of Pedder and during his early stay in Philadelphia lived with the Pedder family (see Joseph Jackson, *Encyclopedia of Philadelphia*, vol. 4, p. 1010); he also presented a copy of his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* to the Misses Pedder.

---

[January 1, 1840, page 4, column 6]

#### THE NEW YORK MIRROR.

The last number of this popular paper comes to us with a fine portrait of Miss C. M. Sedgwick, engraved by Parker, from a painting by Ingham. The literary contents are, as usual, excellent, with the exception of a very silly "theory of dreaming" by Rufus Dawes, a gentleman who had much better dismiss all hope of attaining eminence as a metaphysician, and stick to the Camenœ. He has perpetrated more downright nonsense, in his attempts to look profound, than any man of the age. His "Athenia of Damascus" did him credit, and his minor poems are mostly good.

It is a pity that he should make a fool of himself in meddling with a science about which he knows absolutely *nothing*.

All the other papers are very good. A well written critical notice commends, in the highest terms, Mr. Poe's "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." We attribute this to the pen of General Morris; and it certainly has a double weight in coming from him; for, if we are not mistaken, Mr. Poe evinced much hostility to the "Mirror" during his editorship of the Southern Literary Messenger. Or, perhaps, his thrusts were aimed only at the author of Norman Leslie? At all events the criticism in last Saturday's paper looks high minded and well, and does the Mirror credit.

NOTE: The above editorial has evidence of Poe's authorship, especially the personal reference to the *Mirror's* review of Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. The *New York Mirror* in question was the issue of December 28, 1839. The criticism of Rufus Dawes's "A Theory of Dreaming" was quite in line with Poe's variable opinion of that author—treating a novel by Dawes favorably in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* in December 1839, receiving from Burton himself a letter of May 30, 1839, complaining of an unfair Poe criticism of Dawes (Quinn, *Edgar Allan Poe*, 1941, p. 281), assailing Dawes's ability as a metaphysician in the above article, and writing for *Graham's Magazine* for October 1842 a condemnatory opinion of Dawes as a poet.

Poe was invariably friendly to Morris and perhaps at this time would not have been averse to being connected with the *Mirror*. It is true that Poe's destructive criticism of "Norman Leslie" in the *Southern Literary Messenger* for December 1835 was aimed at Theodore S. Fay rather than at the *Mirror*.

---

[January 15, 1840, page 2, columns 1-2]

#### THE DAGUERREOTYPE.

This word is properly spelt Daguerreotype, and pronounced as if written Dagairraiooteep. The inventor's name is Daguerre, but the French usage requires an accent on the second e, in the formation of the compound term.

The instrument itself must undoubtedly be regarded as the most important, and perhaps the most extraordinary triumph of

modern science. We have not now space to touch upon the *history* of the invention, the earliest idea of which is derived from the camera obscura, and even the minute details of the process of photogeny (from Greek words signifying sun-painting) are too long for our present purpose. We may say in brief, however, that a plate of silver upon copper is prepared, presenting a surface for the action of the light, of the most delicate texture conceivable. A high polish being given this plate by means of a steatitic calcareous stone (called Daguerreolite) and containing equal parts of steatite and carbonate of lime, the fine surface is then iodized by being placed over a vessel containing iodine, until the whole assumes a tint of pale yellow. The plate is then deposited in a camera obscura, and the lens of this instrument directed to the object which it is required to paint. The action of the light does the rest. The length of time requisite for the operation varies according to the hour of the day, and the state of the weather—the general period being from ten to thirty minutes—experience alone suggesting the proper moment of removal. When taken out, the plate does not at first appear to have received a definite impression—some short processes, however, develop it in the most miraculous beauty. All language must fall short of conveying any just idea of the truth, and this will not appear so wonderful when we reflect that the source of vision itself has been, in this instance, the designer. Perhaps, if we imagine the distinctness with which an object is reflected in a positively perfect mirror, we come as near the reality as by any other means. For, in truth, the Daguerreotyped plate is infinitely (we use the term advisedly) is *infinitely* more accurate in its representation than any painting by human hands. If we examine a work of ordinary art, by means of a powerful microscope, all traces of resemblance to nature will disappear—but the closest scrutiny of the photogenic drawing discloses only a more absolute truth, a more perfect identity of aspect with the thing represented. The variations of shade, and the gradations of both linear and ærial perspective are those of truth itself in the supremacy of its perfection.

The results of the invention cannot, even remotely, be seen—but all experience, in matters of philosophical discovery, teaches

us that, in such discovery, it is the unforeseen upon which we must calculate most largely. It is a theorem almost demonstrated, that the consequences of any new scientific invention will, at the present day exceed, by very much, the wildest expectations of the most imaginative. Among the obvious advantages derivable from the Daguerreotype, we may mention that, by its aid, the height of inaccessible elevations may in many cases be immediately ascertained, since it will afford an absolute perspective of objects in such situations, and that the drawing of a correct lunar chart will be at once accomplished, since the rays of this luminary are found to be appreciated by the plate.

NOTE: This article is much in Poe's style. He was interested in scientific studies, in etymology, and in the lunar system, mention of which occupies the concluding paragraph. He wrote on improvements in the daguerreotype in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* for April and May 1840, vol. 6, pp. 192, 246. His insistence in the above article on the proper accenting of "daguerreotype" was not followed by his own compositors—soon afterwards the word was completely Anglicized. Professor Quinn calls my attention to the point that the statement that we must calculate upon the unforeseen element is similar to Poe's method of arguing in his "Murders in the Rue Morgue." There was much interest in Philadelphia in the recently invented daguerreotype. Nearly all of the magazines and newspapers carried accounts of this invention. Prof. W. R. Johnson lectured there on the subject on December 31, 1839, of which there was a detailed report in the *Public Ledger* of January 1, 1840.

---

[January 15, 1840, page 2, column 4]

#### ENIGMATICAL.

Some weeks since, in an editorial article under this head, we mentioned that, with a proper method, it would be easy to decipher any piece of writing in which arbitrary signs were made use of in place of proper alphabetical characters—pledging ourselves, at the same time, to read any thing which should be sent to us thus written. In consequence, we have received the following letter:—

To the Editors of Alexander's Messenger.

DEAR SIR:—Having noticed in a late number of the Messenger, an article headed "Enigmatical and Conundrumical" in which

there is a very curious riddle, unriddled by you, and in which you say that you pledge yourself to read any hieroglyphical writing, I have been induced to send you the following specimen of a *puzzle*, and beg you to give a translation in the Messenger.

Yours, very respectfully, H.

### 850; ? 9

O 9? 9 2ad; as 385 n8338d—?† sod—3  
 —86a5: —8x8537  
 95: 37od: o— h—8shn 3a sqd?8d—?†—og37  
 —8x8539 95:  
 Sod—3 o— 9 ?o— 1708xah— 950?9n ?† 50537  
 —8x8537 95:  
 Sod—3 o 378 n9338d— 858?† ?† 38537  
 —8x8537 95: sod—3  
 H!!ads3—nos8 ?† sahd37 sos37 —8x8537 95:  
 —og37 o— 9  
 Sdho3 ?† sahd37 95: 80 ; 737 o— 9 ! a28dshn  
 o?! n8?853  
 ?† 27an8 o5: otg38— 9 2038 ? 95

Our correspondent will know by the date of his communication, that we could only have received it on the morning when we go to press (Tuesday)—consequently we must have read his puzzle *instantly*. We assure him that it gave us *no trouble whatever*. He will observe, however, that he has committed several errors in his alphabet. For example “*implement*” is divided into two words, and “*wise*” is written “*wite*”—nor has he made any punctuation. The difficulty of deciphering is, of course, increased. We not only translate his enigma, but give its solution. It is as follows:—

#### ENIGMA.

I am a word of ten letters. My first, second, seventh and third is useful to farmers; my sixth, seventh, and first is a mischievous animal; my ninth, seventh, and first is the latter's enemy; my tenth, seventh, and first supports life; my fourth, fifth, seventh

and sixth is a fruit; my fourth, fifth and eighth is a powerful implement; my whole indicates a wise man.

The answer is "*Temperance.*"

NOTE: This, the first of the several enigmas and cyphers, is unquestionably by Poe, proved by his later statements in *Graham's Magazine*, as noted in the introduction to this paper. Poe refers to at least two errors in the contributor's alphabet and there were several other printings of wrong letters in the cypher. Henceforth there will be no further statements in the Notes as to Poe's authorship of the enigma and cypher articles, which is assumed. The set-up of the cyphers as here printed follows closely the typography of the *Messenger*, even although the words were often not properly spaced, and in some cases incorrect type was used.

---

[January 22, 1840, page 2, column 5]

#### ANOTHER POSER.

A correspondent sends us a very curious looking piece of MS indeed, in which the characters are the ugliest and drollest hieroglyphics imaginable (we having no type in our office which would come within a mile of them) and requests us to give him the translation, according to a promise made some weeks ago—a promise, by the way, which our friend does not seem to think it likely we will keep, for the good reason that we cannot. We leave him, however, to judge for himself. The translation of what he has sent us, is as follows:

"We are all anxiously looking for the arrival of the enlarged Messenger in the village of Cheviot, Ohio, which, if it equals the editor's description, and consequently our high anticipations, we shall be much gratified to peruse, as we are already much pleased with the present volume."

The writer says in a note, "Just let us into the secret, as we are fond of the marvellous." Well, what will he give us for the secret?—it is a wonderful one and worth paying for. Let him send us on a list of forty subscribers, with the money, and we will give him a full explanation of our whole method of proceeding.

## STILL ANOTHER.

Just as we were going to press we received the following from some one in the city:

Observing that you are good at deciphering puzzles, I send you the following, similar to one published in your last. I assure you that it is *bona fide*, a sensible affair. I shall feel much pleased if you will publish it in your next, with a solution.

For Alexander's Weekly Messenger.

**6! 6793,\*47**

895,4||4!. 85675 !3 ¶395 ,†6:: †3:|| †59 ,061  
 95\*29!4!. 956,3! [56¶ 6 .:6||5!4!, 961  
 5!4,†\*5!4!. (955||3¶ !559 †59 [6!59 06†5  
 ?2,:475 6!|| °92\*† ,†6:: ¶55\* 6! 569:1 .96†5  
 2:||50 \*†1 4!( :25!75 ,†6:: !6\*43!, [30  
 ||4,739|| 6!|| 7†63. ¶69§ \*†1 5!†432, [930  
 4¶659432, ¶3!,\*59 !6\*295, ||56||:45,\* (35  
 732:|| 55! 859(57\*43! (:1 \*†1 \*†956\*!4!. [:30  
 5\*59!6: ,7329.5 3( †6884!5,, [5:30

A. B. T.

We reply that it will afford us the greatest pleasure to do so, at once. The translation is as follows:—

## AN ACROSTIC.

P residing Peace no more shall hold her sway,  
 R eturning Reason beam a gladening ray,  
 E nlightening Freedom ne'er her banner wave,  
 J ustice and Truth shall meet an early grave;  
 U nder thy influence shall nations bow;  
 D iscord and Chaos mark thy envious brow.  
 I mperious monster, Nature's deadliest foe,  
 C ould e'en Perfection fly thy threat'ing blow,  
 E ternal scourge of Happiness below?

A. B. T.

[January 29, 1840, page 2, column 3]

### THE BLOODHOUND STORY.

The bloodhounds have occasioned no little gossip, especially among the old women, and if they themselves could only be made to understand their own importance in the way of affording material for newspaper paragraphs, they would begin to hold up their heads with any of our Chesnut street mongrels. It is now said that the United States Government has nothing to do with their use or importation, and that they are employed by the inhabitants of Florida.

Among other raw-head-and-bloody-bone stories about these beasts, the most highly-colored is of recent invention, and has been pretty extensively copied, as truth, by the newspaper press. We allude to the "thrilling narrative" which stated that there being occasion to bleed a sailor in one of the vessels which had on board a pack of the hounds, the animals became infuriated, and devoured all the passengers, as well as all the passenger's pointers. The origin of this bugaboo tale is probably to be found in the following paragraph from the *Charleston Courier*:

"We noticed, yesterday, the arrival at St. Marks, of 33 Cuba bloodhounds. While the vessel was at sea, the cook having slaughtered a pig, the dogs, excited by the smell of the blood, broke from their confinement, drove the crew into the rigging, and kept possession of the deck for several hours before they could be pacified."

NOTE: The above has certain earmarks of Poe's style. He liked such phrases as "raw-head-and-bloody-bone," and of course the word "bugaboo." All of the popular newspapers of the day featured the story of the use of bloodhounds in the Florida War. In an article following on "The Rail-road War," in the issue of March 18, there is a reference to the "bloodhound business." The article in the *Charleston Courier* is in the issue of January 21, 1840.

---



[January 29, 1840, page 2, column 4]

YET ANOTHER POSER.

Our friend A. B. T., whose hieroglyphical puzzle we solved last week, has just sent us another. His note is as follows—

Mr. Alexander—I send you one more, and if you decypher it in your next, I must call you invincible.

A. B. T.

These characters to be sure have an ugly look about them—but we assure A. B. T. that the ugliness of the letters has nothing to do with the difficulty of solution. The translation is thus—

ACROSTIC.

Love's a cheat, we overrate it,  
 Oh the false, deceitful joy;  
 Very nothing can create it—  
 Every trifle will destroy.

[January 29, 1840, page 2, column 6]

BURTON'S GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

We have had an opportunity of looking over the sheets of the next forthcoming number of this Journal (the number for February) and have no hesitation in saying that it is one of the best specimens, if not the very best specimen, of a monthly Magazine, which has yet been issued in this country. We are sure, too, that

all our readers will agree with us in this opinion. It commences with a biographical notice of Mr. and Miss Vandenhoff—written by Mr. Burton—and, as a matter of course, written well. No account of these popular histrions has yet appeared in this country, we believe, certainly no satisfactory account; and the sketch now given will be read with interest by all the numerous admirers of the father and daughter. Two fine portraits on steel, by Forrest, accompany the article.

Mr. Burton has two or three other pieces in this number, if we are not greatly mistaken. We recognize his pen in the critical account of "Shakespeare's Jest Book," and, especially, in one of the bitterest doses, by way of Review, which the redoubted Captain Marryatt has yet had occasion to swallow—whether he will swallow it quietly is the question—he had better do so, however, than be funnelled.

Thaumaturgia, No. 1. is the title of a paper to which Mr. B. has prefixed his name, and of whose paternity we are, therefore, pretty sure. It is the commencement of a Yankee's adventures in the regions of Pluto. The down-Easter has obtained leave of absence from his Satanic Majesty, for the purpose of acting as cicerone to a party of illustrious ancients desirous of paying a visit to the United States. The next paper we presume, will let us into the doings of the party in Yankeeland. The whole idea is good, and so far is capitally carried out.

The Journal of Julius Rodman is continued, and a vivid description given of the persons and equipments of the travellers, who proceed up the Missouri as far as the mouth of the Platte. We prophecy that this will prove an intensely interesting narrative. Mr. Dow's excellent "Log" is also continued, as well as the "Miami Valley"—we seldom see better Magazine papers than these. We notice, too, an original article, of great merit, from Captain Chamier, of England; likewise a most ludicrous quiz upon Fanny Kemble's Journal, from the pen of Judge Haliburton the celebrated author of Sam Slick. Mr. Burton indeed makes no great boast of his list of contributors, but they form quite as strong a literary body as that in the service of any Magazine

whatever. Mr. Poe has a very singular story. Mr. P. P. Cook of Manchester, (one of Virginia's finest minds) has a beautiful poem. But we cannot pretend to enumerate one third of the good things in the February number. We have indeed almost forgotten to speak of a burlesque poem about the Eglintown Tournament—a laughable affair, with a laughable cut from Crowquill. Neither have we said a word about the article on Sailing crafts (two capital wood designs) nor about the Review—one of which shows up Professor Longfellow as a plagiarist of the first water—but it is impossible to speak of everything. We say in brief that the Gentleman's Magazine is a model in its way—original, independent, vigorous, racy. It is by far the best journal of its kind in America.

NOTE: Reviews of this kind, called "puffs," were commonly inserted in friendly papers, and came from the pens of the editors of the magazines praised. (Poe makes much fun of the practice in his story, "The Literary Life of Thingum Bob.") Poe had written such things for T. W. White to insert in Baltimore papers. It of course must be admitted that Burton was in a position to write the review as well as Poe, but this review is rather more in Poe's manner. Poe carefully disavows the criticism of Marryat (which is a pretty libellous article, as Poe may have known) and he praises "Earl March and his Daughter," the poem of P. P. Cooke, whose lovely "Florence Vane" he later recited in his lectures (see *Broadway Journal* for Mar. 15, 1845). Finally, "histrion" is a favorite word of Poe. Poe's "singular story" is "Peter Pendulum," now called "The Business Man," and "The Journal of Julius Rodman" is of course one of Poe's hoaxes. Burton's "Thaumaturgia" articles are the sort of thing Poe probably had a genuine liking for—they are decidedly amusing even now. (This note by T. O. Mabbott.)

---

[January 29, 1840, page 2, columns 6-7]

#### INSTINCT VS REASON—A BLACK CAT.

The line which demarcates the instinct of the brute creation from the boasted reason of man, is, beyond doubt, of the most shadowy and unsatisfactory character—a boundary line far more difficult to settle than even the North-Eastern or the Oregon. The

question whether the lower animals do or do not reason, will possibly never be decided—certainly never in our present condition of knowledge. While the self-love and arrogance of man will persist in denying the reflective power to beasts, because the granting it seems to derogate from his own vaunted supremacy, he yet perpetually finds himself involved in the paradox of decrying instinct as an inferior faculty, while he is forced to admit its infinite superiority, in a thousand cases, over the very reason which he claims exclusively as his own. Instinct, so far from being an inferior reason, is perhaps the most exacted intellect of all. It will appear to the true philosopher as the divine mind itself acting *immediately* upon its creatures.

The habits of the lion-ant, of many kinds of spiders, and of the beaver, have in them a wonderful analogy, or rather similarity, to the usual operations of the reason of man—but the instinct of some other creatures has no such analogy—and is referable only to the spirit of the Deity itself, acting *directly*, and through no corporal organ, upon the volition of the animal. Of this lofty species of instinct the coral-worm affords a remarkable instance. This little creature, the architect of continents, is not only capable of building ramparts against the sea, with a precision of purpose, and scientific adaptation and arrangement, from which the most skilful engineer might imbibe his best knowledge—but is gifted with what humanity does not possess—with the absolute spirit of prophecy. It will foresee, for months in advance, the pure accidents which are to happen to its dwelling, and aided by myriads of its brethren, all acting as if with one mind (and *indeed* acting with only one—with the mind of the Creator) will work diligently to counteract influences which exist alone in the future. There is also an immensely wonderful consideration connected with the cell of the bee. Let a mathematician be required to solve the problem of the shape best calculated in such a cell as the bee wants, for the two requisites of strength and space—and he will find himself involved in the very highest and most abstruse questions of analytical research. Let him be required to tell the number of sides which will give to the cell the greatest space, with the greatest solidity, and to define the exact angle at which, with the same

object in view, the roof must incline—and to answer the query, he must be a Newton or a Laplace. Yet since bees were, they have been continually solving the problem. The leading distinction between instinct and reason seems to be, that, while the one is infinitely the more exact, the more certain, and the more far-seeing in its sphere of action—the sphere of action in the other is of the far wider extent. But we are preaching a homily, when we merely intended to tell a short story about a cat.

The writer of this article is the owner of one of the most remarkable black cats in the world—and this is saying much; for it will be remembered that black cats are all of them witches. The one in question has not a white hair about her, and is of a demure and sanctified demeanor. That portion of the kitchen which she most frequents is accessible only by a door, which closes with what is termed a thumb-latch; these latches are rude in construction, and some force and dexterity are always requisite to force them down. But puss is in the daily habit of opening the door, which she accomplishes in the following way. She first springs from the ground to the guard of the latch (which resembles the guard over a gun-trigger,) and through this she thrusts her left arm to hold on with. She now, with her right hand, presses the thumb-latch until it yields, and here several attempts are frequently requisite. Having forced it down, however, she seems to be aware that her task is but half accomplished, since, if the door is not pushed open before she lets go, the latch will again fall into its socket. She, therefore, screws her body round so as to bring her hind feet immediately beneath the latch, while she leaps with all her strength from the door—the impetus of the spring forcing it open, and her hind feet sustaining the latch until this impetus is fairly given.

We have witnessed this singular feat a hundred times at least, and never without being impressed with the truth of the remark with which we commenced this article—that the boundary between instinct and reason is of a very shadowy nature. The black cat, in doing what she did, must have made use of all the perceptive and reflective faculties which we are in the habit of supposing the prescriptive qualities of reason alone.

NOTE: This delightful essay is of course obviously from Poe's pen. The works of the coral, bee, and lion-ant are all referred to in his "Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade," and the lion-ant comes from Wyatt's *Synopsis of Natural History*, Phila., 1839, p. 135, a book in the compilation of which Poe assisted Wyatt (as he reveals in his review of the book in *Burton's* for July 1839). Striking also is the similarity of the sentence about "black cats are all of them witches" to one in Poe's tale "The Black Cat," 1843. That this wise cat was Poe's cat, and the inspiration of his later story is plain. Whether this was the beloved Catterina, or Kate, brought by Mrs. Clemm to New York in 1844, is not quite certain; on the whole I think it was, for Poe did not need to have his cat die to consider the possibility of her death. The Poe family cat helped keep the dying Virginia warm by lying on her chest at Fordham, according to reminiscences of 1846. For reference to Catterina, see Woodberry, *Life of Poe*, vol. 2, pp. 67-68, for letter of Poe to Mrs. Clemm. (This note by T. O. Mabbott.)

---

[February 5, 1840, page 2, column 3]

#### STILL ANOTHER.

"A Subscriber" in this city, sends us the ugliest hieroglyphical puzzle we have yet received, and hopes that, if we cannot decypher it, we will have the candor to say so.

We shall have the candor to say no such thing, for the translation is below. He says, moreover, that, should we manage to make out this, he has one in store which he defies us to make out.—Send it on we reply.

A plague on those musty old lubbers  
 Who tell us to fast and to think,  
 And with patience fall in with life's rubbers,  
 With nothing but water to drink;  
 A can of good stuff, had they twigg'd it,  
 'T'would have set them with pleasure agog,  
 And, spite of the rules  
 Of the schools,  
 The old fools  
 Would all of 'em swigg'd it,  
 And swore there was nothing like grog.

---

[February 12, 1840, page 2, columns 3-4]

TENNYSON VS LONGFELLOW.

We copy the annexed paragraph from a late number of the Philadelphia Gazette.

A neighboring periodical, we hear, has been attempting to prove that Professor Longfellow's sublime and beautiful "Midnight Mass for the Dying Year," has been imitated from a poem by Tennyson. Preposterous! There is nothing more alike in the two pieces than black and white, with the exception of the personification,—and *that* was Longfellow's, long before the Scotch writer thought of "doing" his poem. Who does not remember that striking simile in one of the Professor's earlier lyrics,

— — "where Autumn, like a faint old man, sits down,  
By the way side, aweary?"

This same beautiful piece was copied in Edinburgh, from an English periodical where it was *altered*, to suit the scenery of England; and it is fifty times more probable that Tennyson thus got *his* idea, than that Mr. Longfellow should have done more in the "Mass," than repeat a favorite one of his thought. On himself, one of the most strikingly original poets of this country, and the best translator of any nation known to our language, such a charge falls hurtless—and for the reputation of the maker, (acknowledged, we hear, among his friends) should be withdrawn. We ask the Weekly Messenger, who has repeated the charge of *abstraction*, to clip this *caveat*, and give it utterance.

And we reply—certainly; it will give us great pleasure to oblige our friend of the Gazette; although, in the present instance, we do not exactly comprehend the object of his request, or perceive what good purpose is to be effected by our compliance.

The "neighboring periodical," alluded to in so parliamentary a style, is the "Gentleman's Magazine," and the accuser, whose "reputation" is so entirely a matter of hearsay with Mr. Clark, is a Mr. Poe, one of the editors of that very excellent and very popular journal. We assure the Gazette that this gentleman has really written one or two decent things, and it would not be amiss if the author of "Ollapod" would hereafter take him under his wing.

In referring to the criticism mentioned, we find that Mr. Clark has made a little mistake—at which we are not a little astonished.

Mr. Poe does not say that Professor Longfellow's poem is "imitated" from Tennyson. He calls it a bare-faced and barbarous plagiarism "belonging to that worst species of literary robbery, in which, while the words of the wronged author are avoided, his most intangible, and therefore his least defensible and least reclaimable property, is *purloined*." In support of this accusation he has printed the poems in question side by side—a proceeding, which, we must acknowledge, has an air of perfect fairness about it. That the reviewer, indeed, has nothing beyond truth as his object, is rendered quite apparent by the fact that nowhere has the fine genius of Professor Longfellow been so fully and so enthusiastically set forth, as in the earlier portion of the very critique now made the subject of comment. As regards the plagiarism, the critic calls attention to the circumstances that, in both cases, there is the same leading idea, or thesis,—(that of the personification of the Old Year as a dying old man,) that, in both, the same unusual march of rhythm is observable—that, in both, at the ends of the stanzas there is the very remarkable peculiarity of the absence of legitimate rhyme—that, in both, the words "Old Year" are capitalized—and that both are characterized by the same wild, quaint, fantastic, and interjectional *manner*. We mention that the critic has done all this, because we understand, from the opening words of the paragraph quoted above, that Mr. Clarke, is only aware, as usual, through hearsay, of what is really written in the "Gentleman's Magazine."

Matters standing thus, the question is altogether one of opinion. Mr. Poe says the Professor stole the poem; so do we; and so does every body but Mr. Clarke. *He* says the Professor did *not* steal the poem. He says, moreover, that Mr Poe ought to "withdraw" the charge, lest, being persisted in, it may do injury to his own reputation; (Mr. P's) about which he (Mr. C.) is solicitous. Whether Mr. Poe will oblige the editor of the Gazette, remains yet to be seen. In the meantime Mr. Clarke can still believe, if he pleases, that there is no more "similarity between the two poems than there is between black and white." Anaxagoras maintained that *snow* is black—and perhaps now it is, after all.



NOTE: The *Philadelphia Gazette* was edited by Willis Gaylord Clark, and the paragraph in question appeared in the issue of February 4, 1840. The review of Longfellow's "Voices of the Night" appeared in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* for February 1840, pp. 100-103, and according to the above article was admittedly written by Poe. Clark's statement that the *Weekly Messenger* had "repeated the charge of abstraction" referred to the notice of *Burton* in its issue of January 29. Willis Clark and his brother Lewis, editor of the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, were close friends of Longfellow and naturally Willis Clark was anxious to have Poe withdraw his unfair charge of plagiarism. Poe's attitude toward Longfellow has been treated at length by his biographers, and this continued defense of his attack on Longfellow adds further material to the controversy. Longfellow's "Midnight Mass for the Dying Year" had again been brought to Poe's attention through having been printed in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* of January 22, 1840. The reference to Anaxagoras in the above article had previously been used by Poe. In his story "Loss of Breath" (called "A Decided Loss" in its earlier version in the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* of November 10, 1832), he said: "Anaxagoras, it will be remembered, maintained that snow is black, and this I have since found to be the case."

---

[February 12, 1840, page 2, column 4]

#### SWIMMING.

Mathew Vipond, the celebrated swimmer, died recently at Liverpool, aged 48. In July, 1827, Mr. V. swam, on the river Mersey, from Rock Point to Runcorn, a distance of 22 miles, in 5 hours and a half—a feat probably unequalled and unapproached by any swimmer, when all the circumstances are taken into account, in ancient or modern times.—*Phil. Ledger*.

The comparative difficulty of swimming feats can only be estimated by the practical swimmer, and the writer of the paragraph above was evidently *not* a practical swimmer. From the place in which the feat here recorded took place and from the time in which it was performed, it is clear that the swim was *with the current* of the Mersey. It was thus no great thing to boast of. Even admitting it to have been swum in still water, it was, nevertheless, no *very* extraordinary performance. As for its being the greatest feat of the kind on record, we say at once—no; for a far

more extraordinary one is within our own knowledge, and within that of almost every resident of Richmond, in Virginia. Mr. Poe, now of the Gentleman's Magazine, swam from a point in James' River, called Ludlam's wharf, to a wharf at Warwick—a distance of seven miles and a half, in a hot June sun, and *against a tide of three miles per hour*. He was then but 15 years of age. The difficulty of swimming *with* a current is absolutely nothing; that of swimming in perfectly still water is, to a really able swimmer, but little greater than the difficulty of walking—merely requiring patience. But to swim *against* a strong current—hic labor, hoc opus est. There can be no interval for rest by floating, as in the two other cases, and this makes all the difference. There is no properly authenticated fact on record equal to that of Mr. Poe, and at the time of its performance, this fact was conceded by almost every journal in the United States.

NOTE: No one could have been so familiar with the details of Poe's feat as Poe himself. This swim was alluded to by a writer in the *Southern Literary Messenger* for January 1835, vol. 1, p. 235, and this drew from Poe the story of the event which appears in that magazine for May, vol. 1, p. 468. An eye-witness account by Thomas H. Ellis (who was ten years old in 1824) was written up by James A. Harrison for the *New York Independent* for September 6, 1900 (reprinted in Harrison's *Life of Poe*, p. 25). See also John C. Stanard's reminiscences printed in Hervey Allen's *Israfil*, p. 106. Henry B. Hirst, in his biography of Poe in the *Philadelphia Saturday Museum* of March 4, 1843, describes at length the swimming feat, which he states happened "on a hot July day" and is "on record in the columns of the 'Richmond Enquirer' and other Richmond papers." Yet a search of the *Richmond Enquirer* for the summer months from 1823 to 1827 fails to reveal a reference to it. No biographer gives the date of this swimming feat. The author of the above article says that the swim was made "in a hot June sun," and "was conceded by almost every journal in the United States," but no such reference has as yet been found. The mention of Poe's age as fifteen would give 1824 as the year, if the age is given correctly. But Poe habitually misdated his birth, and his allusions to his age are unreliable. He went to the University of Virginia in February 1826, the year that would be consistent with his favorite birth date of 1811. But 1825 may have been the year meant. "Ludlam's wharf" is probably a misprint for "Ludlow's" (as it is called elsewhere), presumably on the north side of the James River in the section of Richmond known as "Rocketts." The Latin quotation is from Virgil, *Aeneid*, vi, 129.

---

[February 12, 1840, page 2, column 5]

#### OUR LATE PUZZLES.

Some five or six weeks ago, in an article headed "Enigmatical Conundrumical," we advanced the opinion that, with a proper method, any really good enigma, conundrum, charade, &c. &c. might be solved, and as apropos to this idea, we mentioned that it would be an easy matter to read any species of writing in which characters or marks, at random, were made use of in place of alphabetical characters—for example, instead of *a*, let a \* always be used; in place of *b*, a † &c. &c. We offered, at the same time, by way of evidencing the sincerity of our belief upon the subject, to decypher any English letter sent to us thus written.

We certainly had no idea of the positive *row* which this challenge would create among all the Enigmatists and Charadists in the land. For the first week or so all went well. One or two very droll-looking hieroglyphical mysteries were sent us, and we gave their translation forthwith. In the meantime we were assailed in some quarters with the charge of gaggery, or more delicately speaking, of humbug. We were told to our teeth that the thing was impossible—that we wrote our own puzzles and then solved them. Still we kept on the even tenor of our way, and translated every thing that was offered for translation. But the row increased as the wonder grew, and we find ourselves in a pretty predicament indeed. Do people really think that we have nothing in the world to do but to read hieroglyphics? or that we are going to stop our ordinary business and set up for conjurers? Will any body tell us how to get out of this dilemma? If we don't solve all the puzzles forwarded, their concocters will think it is because we cannot—when we can. If we *do* solve them we shall soon have to enlarge our sheet to ten times the size of the Brother Jonathan.

NOTE: The New York newspaper *Brother Jonathan* was a so-called "mammoth" sheet of four pages, 25 x 33½ inches in size.

---

[February 19, 1840, page 2, columns 2-3]

### OUR PUZZLES—AGAIN!

An article on the subject of our late puzzles, in which we make a full reply to *all* correspondents, is crowded out this week, on account of its length, but will appear in our next.

The letter of *Philom*, of Limerick, is just received, and, as we are about going to press, we can only make an extract from it. He says:

Come, be a philanthropist, and dispel the mystery that shrouds your magic wand, and don't "stonish the natives" any longer. You suggested in a late number that the "method" which enters into "enigma guessing," would afford a subject for a "most capital magazine article." Agreed. And furthermore, we think you are just the man to write it, and the Messenger just the periodical to spread it all over the world. Our folks think the number that should contain such an article would be sought with even more avidity than your "double sheet, with splendid engravings;" and that is not talking small, we assure you. Forty subscribers, with the *needful* to match, you say, will buy the whole set of rules by which you are enabled to read *pot-hooks*, *pitch-forks*, and *paradoxes*. Now, we'll tell you what we will do—if you will reel off the yarn in good shape, we will "pledge ourselves" to send you one quarter of it in a few months, and we'll do all we can towards sending the whole. And won't your Ohio correspondent do the same?—Noticing the good humor and urbanity with which you have treated all your correspondents who have appeared before you in the *ugliest characters* possible, and hoping that you are still in "laughing mood," and will look upon us with the same scrutinizing indulgence, *we* have ventured to salute you in as comical a set of trappings as *we* could procure. We cannot, however, repress an ominous presentiment of never seeing this more. We greatly fear you will get suspended on *this*, and we be none the wiser. We shall see. Don't let its great length exclude it. If we are any judge of the genius of putting words together, this has some merit over and above its fantastic dress.

Yours, truly,

PHILOM.

Philom seems bent upon puzzling us, and for this purpose has employed no less than seven distinct alphabets in the concoction of his cypher; which, we confess, is the most outrageous looking piece of composition we ever beheld. *Seven* alphabets!—and not a single letter in all like anything human or divine! *One* alphabet was what we stipulated for—not seven. But then, Philom says he will send us forty subscribers. We will, therefore, strain a point in his favor. His puzzle is nothing more than the well-known acrostic called “The Siege of Belgrade,” beginning thus:

An Austrian army, awfully arrayed,  
 Boldly, by battery, besieged Belgrade;  
 Cossack commanders cannonading come,  
 Dealing destruction's desolating doom.  
 Every endeavor engineers essay,  
 For fame, for fortune, fighting furious fray;  
 Generals 'gainst generals grapple—gracious God!  
 How honors Heaven heroic hardihood!  
 &c. &c. &c.

In our next, we will oblige Philom with our *method* of solution.

NOTE: It is unfortunate that Poe could not print the original of this cypher. He regarded it as one of the most interesting that he solved, and in *Graham's Magazine* for July 1841, vol. 19, p. 34, referred to it as follows: “One gentleman, but moderately endowed with conscientiousness, inditing us a puzzle composed of pot-hooks and hangers to which the wildest typography of the office could afford nothing similar, went even so far as to jumble together no less than *seven distinct alphabets*, without intervals between the letters, *or between the lines*.” But we are not told whether these seven alphabets were used in the cyclic form, changing with each successive letter; or providing a separate alphabet for each first word in a line and another for each second word, etc.; or employing a separate alphabet for each successive line, to the seventh line, and then beginning over again. Probably one of the last two methods was used, as Poe never gave evidence that he was versed in the more intricate cyclic method. As soon as he realized the nature of this well known poem from the alliterative character of each line, the problem became easy. Poe promised to reveal his method of solution in the next issue of the paper, but instead he stated, “Upon second thought, we must decline giving our mode of solution for the present;” and again in the issue of April 22 he said: “We must decline, for the present, a full

explanation of our method of solution." Only in "The Gold-Bug" did he reveal his method of solving cipher-writing, and this concerned a cryptogram of the simplest sort.

---

[February 26, 1840, page 2, column 3]

#### THOMAS PAINE.

Wm. Carver, or "old Billy Carver," as he was familiarly termed, a companion and friend of Tom Paine, died in New York on Saturday last, in his 85th year. He was an Englishman by birth, and veterinary surgeon by profession. He was an eccentric man in his habits. Among his other freaks of fancy, which he some years since carried into effect, was to have his *coffin* made, for which the measure of his body was taken. This piece of *furniture* he kept for some time at his lodgings. It was subsequently taken to an undertaker's shop in Pearl street, where, with the plate and other appurtenances, in readiness for use, it has since remained. At the latter period of his life he was supported by the society of Free Inquirers.—*Phil. Ledger*.

It seems to us that there is something wrong about the *coffin* story here, and that, in some manner, the freaks of Paine himself have become mixed up with those of "old Billy Carver." During the better days of Jarvis, the noted portrait painter and sayer of droll things, we have more than once heard him narrate, of Paine, the anecdote now told of his friend. Paine resided at the time in Norfolk, Va., and Jarvis, although young, was in habits of close intimacy with him. He described the author of the "Age of Reason" as bereft of all reason in his later days, and as living on earth the life of the damned. Of the coffin Jarvis spoke frequently, and never in his usual merry way. Indeed an allusion to his residence with Paine was always sure to throw a damp upon the excessive spirits of the painter. In regard to Carver, it may be that he kept a coffin too, and did so by way of following his leader's example.

NOTE: The article on Thomas Paine does not especially suggest Poe's style, but is here printed as a possibility, and no more. The *Public Ledger* article appeared in its issue of February 19, 1840. There is no

evidence that Poe knew Jarvis, but as Jarvis was a well known painter of his time and lived until 1840, Poe might well have known him. Poe, in common with most writers of his time, referred to Paine's *Age of Reason*. In his "Marginalia" (Harrison, *Works of Poe*, vol. 16, p. 12), he spoke of Paine as "a very clever, very ignorant, and laughingly impudent fellow." Of course either Alexander or Burton, both of whom wrote for the *Messenger*, could equally have known Jarvis, although the article appears in the place in the newspapers where Poe's contributions usually were printed. If anything, the style suggests Alexander as much as Poe. According to the obituary notice in the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* of January 15, 1840, Jarvis died on January 12 previous, although the *Dictionary of American Biography* and other authorities give his death as January 14, 1839. Jarvis lived with Paine in 1806 and painted his portrait (see M. D. Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine*, 1892, vol. 2, pp. 397, 480).

---

[February 26, 1840, page 2, column 3]

#### ADVERTISING ODDITIES.

Goward, the writing and music master of New York, is beyond doubt the most knowing advertiser of his day. What he does in this way he does thoroughly, and there never is any danger of misunderstanding what he says. He gives the thing with a downright improviso air that is altogether irresistible. We believe that his late paragraph, in which he declares that nobody has yet dared to accept any one of his challenges, and pledges his word to teach fully one hundred and fifty new tunes in five minutes, have set him at the head of his profession (whatever it is) and fairly taken the town by storm.

But *vixere fortes ante Agamemnona*, and there are other geniuses besides Goward. What a fine idea that is of somebody who advertises that he is in immediate want, these dull times, of precisely four guagers at fifty cents per cask, exactly fifty surveyors at twelve and twenty dollars, and just twenty engineers at fifty round dollars, per day! Lest the applicants should be in want of money, the advertiser will give them as much as they want, and buy all their instruments into the bargain.

The Picayune says that it met with the following in one of its New England exchange papers: "Wanted a man to take charge of

a milk cart, and a horse entertaining abolition principles"—but we consider this a mere slander. Now here is a genuine thing, and really appears in a down east daily—

Any gal what's got a cow, a good feather bed with comfortable fixins, five hundred dollars in the hard pewter, one that's had the measels and understands tendin' children can find a customer for life, by writin' a small *billy dux*, addressed Q. Z., and stickin' it in a crack of Uncle Ebenezer's barn, joinin' the hog-pen.

NOTE: This article is barely reminiscent of Poe's style, although one or two phrases may well have been used by him. The quotation from Horace, *Odes*, book IV, ode 9, line 25, is suggestive; and apparently Poe, who was familiar with Horace, was the only writer in the *Messenger* at the time who quoted Latin phrases. Furthermore, there are many instances of Poe's interest in advertisements.

Isaac R. Goward was a music teacher in New York in the 1830's and is generally entered in the Directories merely as "teacher," but in the Directory for 1839 he is entered as "Isaac R. Goward, of Amherst College, professor and teacher of music, dancing, writing, &c." He was a member of the Class of 1830 at Amherst, but did not graduate. His advertisements ran regularly in the New York *Evening Signal*. He calls himself "Rev. Isaac Goward, A.M.," and says that he was educated for the ministry but "on account of his extraordinary faculty for teaching, he was advised by numerous Christian friends to leave the pulpit and benefit the world by teaching arts, sciences and languages." He also mentions his three daughters, Euterpe Seraphine, Flora Terpsichore, and Calliope Rosina, "aged 8, 6 and 4." In the *Evening Signal* of January 18, 1840, he printed the following advertisement: "Challenge! I challenge any man living to write a Business Hand with me, teach the same, or to teach Music, or Dancing, with me, for \$1000, less, or nothing. Put a man down fairly, not by slander, or puffing unworthy ones for money! I have certificates of teaching 50 tunes in 5 minutes!!! Lessons cheap, at all hours—satisfaction or no charge.

GOWARD, THE GREAT TEACHER."

---

[February 26, 1840, page 2, column 4]

#### MORE OF THE PUZZLES.

Since our outside form went to press we have received several others, which we here insert, in order to close the account on this head. The subjoined is to be read as the continuation of the article on the fourth page.



We had no trouble in reading the cypher sent us by H. C. A., of West Stockbridge, Mass., but must decline publishing it in full. H. C. A. will know, however, that we *have* decyphered it when we say that it is headed "Geographical Enigma;" begins "I am composed of fourteen letters;" and has for answer the word "Constantinople."

A single glance enabled us to see through the cypher of "Mechanicus," (of Philadelphia we believe.) His puzzle is the Lords Prayer.

We willingly comply with the request of C. B. of Warrenton, Va., and insert his cypher, with the translation. C. B. says—"if you favor me with a solution I shall be able to agree with A. B. T. as to your invincibility."

( \* F7 . † \* 78 !08\* )

" 4 8\* ||, 8.F7w\*; , 3 \*F: \*! \*§\* ( ) ,  
 ||0) ( ) ||\*! 0 † ( .! \* ) §. + + \* † 44, ( \* 4: 7 §  
 0(\*) 47:( ,  
 ||0) .!! ( ) \*0: ||9) \* ,! ( \* ) \*F'   
 ( \* ) \* ,  
 8:\* 0 † \* , ||0) , !! ( ) \* 0: ||0) \* , ( 44)   
 17 § 4 ! . 0 .  
 8:\* \* 8: 7 § § 0(84:) w9\* ; 4, 8: 7 § . ( w ; \* 8:\* \* ,  
 ( \* ( ) 0!! . : \* § \* ; . || \* 0 ( § . \* ) -  
 lw:\* !  
 . ( 8 - ) . ! ( ) 0 § \* , . ( ( ) § . ( \* : w ( 7 8  
 \* . : ( )  
 8\* . ( ) 4 || ( \* 0 ; ( ) : \* † ( \* 0 : w § -  
 8\* : ! \* ) ( ) \* ( 1.4 \* )  
 0 w : 0 \* : . , 4 || , ( \* 0 : 4: 7 w , ( w ll \* ) ( )  
 8 w ) 4 ! . ( ) \* || \* ( : : 7 w : ) ( 4 ( \* F 0 1 ( 7 ( ) : 4  
 § ;  
 || ( . ) 4 0 2 4 ( ( 0 w 2 4 ( \* || || : ! : w — ( ) § . , \*  
 ( 4 : 0 \* ! )

) 0: (\*()) ( 4 , \*\*4! , 4 || \* , . ¶ , 3 w 0 ! )  
 ( 4 0 † !  
 ) 4 4 ! 4 || ( \* 4 3 w 0 ! , || 4 3 w 0 ! , 3 \* ¶ \* . )  
 ) \* ( ) . :

Of this the translation is as follows:

### THE VOYAGE OF LIFE

How few, favoured by every element,  
 With swelling sails make good the promised port,  
 With all their wishes freighted! yet ev'n these  
 Freighted with all their wishes soon complain.  
 Free from misfortune, not from nature free,  
 They still are men; and when is men secure?  
 As fatal time as storm. The rush of years  
 Beats down their strength; their numberless escapes  
 In ruin end: and now their proud success  
 But plants new terrours on the victor's brow.  
 What pain to quit the world just made their own!  
 Their nests so dearly downed, and built so high!  
 Too low they build who build beneath the stars.

We have just received a cypher from J. Lucas, of Mount Holly, N. Jersey, which has been concocted with much ingenuity. We read it however, with perfect ease. It runs thus:

"That which directs the monuments of man; one of the strongest passions; and one eighth of the birth place of Archimedes, compose the name of a worthy subscriber to the Messenger."

We must confess that our friend's enigma is not the very best in the world—for he evidently means its answer to be Luc-a-s. Luck as directing the monuments, &c.—*a* as the initial of anger—and *S* as the eighth of Syracuse, the birth place of Archimedes.

D. D's cypher, of Irvinton, Ala., has this minute come to hand. He says we will "do to travel" if we read it—but it is a mere trifle—the letters being formed upon a square with diagonal crosses.

Life, like lovers, soon decays;  
Our ardor soon is oer;  
Very soon, alas, 't betrays  
E'en hearts that blood not poore,

We give the verses verbatim and are not responsible for their merit.

"Munger's" cypher is precisely like D. D's; but, being in pencil, is too much defaced to be read.

Having thus gone through with the whole list of our enigmatical friends, it will be seen that we have done far more than merely redeem the pledge made at starting. We stated certain conditions, and these have seldom been observed.—In last weeks paper we decyphered a puzzle where the writer had actually used *seven distinct alphabets* in place of the *one* for which we stipulated. Just above, too, C. B. has run all his characters together without interval; but we made it a condition that the arbitrary letters should be used as the ordinary alphabet. We have been foiled in no instance.

It would have been better, perhaps, if our correspondents had always made use of their real names in sending their favor, and not of initials. Should we receive any thing upon this subject, hereafter, we cannot reply to it unless we have the writer's true name. It will be observed that when a cypher is sent us with the writers initials only, no one can be sure, except the person himself and his immediate friends, that the puzzle is not a fiction of our own.

Upon second thought, we must decline giving our *mode of solution* for the present.

---

[February 26, 1840, page 4, columns 3-5]

#### OUR PUZZLES ONCE MORE.

A press of business, last week, prevented us from attending to the favors of our enigmatical friends; and we then dismissed the

whole subject in brief. The unexpected interest, however, which is still manifested in all directions about the matter, induces us to speak of it again, with a view of convincing the sceptical that there is really no "humbug" in the case. And first we reply to "Adolescentulus," who writes from Burkeville, Prince Edward County, Va. The translation of his cypher runs thus:

I am a word of nine letters. My first, fifth, and fourth, is the chief support of the human frame. My first, seventh, and fifth, has often been the cause of bloodshed. My first, seventh, sixth, and fifth, is what we all wish to do in prosperity. My first, ninth, seventh, third, and fourth, denote what we all have been doing whilst on the bed of sickness. My first, second, sixth, and fifth, is that which is often bestowed on those who are unworthy of it. My eighth, second, third, and fifth, is a term applied to the sound of a musical instrument. My first, fifth, third, seventh, eighth, and ninth, is what the distressed often apply for in vain. My whole is what the wealthiest wish to obtain.

The answer is *Longevity*.

As "Adolescentulus" is no doubt really what his signature implies, we will take the liberty of saying to him that his cypher is very inartificially constructed, and therefore very easily unriddled. He has put the word "Enigma" at the head, and we at once knew it to be such, when we noticed the frequent recurrence of the word which stands for "My." "Adolescentulus," whom by certain indications we know to be a youth of some talent, would have been himself able to solve any such cypher, had *we* sent it to *him*. If he will consider well what we shall say, in a subsequent part of this article, he will soon find himself in condition to solve *any* puzzle of the kind now in question.

J. H., of Philadelphia, who sent us "a poser" two weeks since, with the assurance that if we managed to read that (which we did) he would send us one hereafter which he would *defy* us to make out, has now forwarded us the following:

8.418.891¶

7 990¶21 70 62 8768 3: 6.2 ¶29¶

27¶56 5612265 3: 831525 2346¶2170† 63

¶2898?

9 912 75 6.2 317¶2 3: 17825?—7675 :62¶  
 9.212 3323 90¶871832569082?—966 39552¶  
 9998!

This is by far the most difficult cypher which we have received. Some of the words are crowded together, and the writer has taken other liberties which do not come within the conditions originally laid down. For example, in some cases the figure 3 stands for I, in others for O; in some cases the figure 6 stands for L, in others for T; while 2 stands for E and M indifferently, and 9 for both W and A. Some words, moreover, are mis-spelt. How much the difficulty of solution is increased in this way, may easily be conceived. The translation, however, is as follows:

#### CHURCH-YARD.

I wander in the city of the dead  
 Midst streets of houses mouldering to decay.  
 Where is the pride of riches? it is fled.  
 Where pomp and circumstance? all passed away.

"A subscriber," who, beyond doubt, takes us for a bottle conjurer, addresses us this letter:

Mr. Editor,—

Your success in decyphering has almost disheartened me from attempting anything of my own invention; for I am perfectly satisfied, from what I have seen of your ingenuity, that you can decypher any piece of writing where hieroglyphics are used instead of letters; and allow me to say you would be a valuable requisition to an army, in reading the enemy's despatches. But there is a system occurs to my mind which was used with great success by Napoleon during the war in Spain, when every other system of secret writing was decyphered by the English. This one plan alone baffled all their ingenuity. It will be found on the other page. If you can make it out, and give the sense as the writer intended it to be understood, I will give up at once.

A SUBSCRIBER.

Then our friend might as well give up and be done with it. But we wish it distinctly understood that such puzzles as this are not what we *promised* to decypher. For what we *did* promise to do, we refer our friends to a late Messenger. Here follows A Subscriber's cypher:

*That capital punishment* I have got, the toothache; such a punishment *ought not to be* continued. That I will do my utmost to have it *abolished is evident* from my conduct *from the first*. Judge democracy from the *fact that it* is formidable to tyrants only. War *is* conducted in a manner *revolting to humanity*. Neither age nor sex is spared; *and* one thousand thousand murdered *does not lessen* the thirst for blood. Oh Heavens! oh my God—*the amount of crime* in our land! *And moreover, as* water will ultimately find a level, even so does *familiarity with public* business make us neglectful of private interest. *Executions begets* a strain of thought in the good which is painful. *Contempt in the rich* towards the poor is a mockery of God. *Base and vile, it* also exposes the littleness of your souls. A spear *wounds the feelings* of any whom it comes in contact with, regardless of the *pure and virtuous, however frail*.

*But the advocates of this* horrid, this wretched, this *barbarous custom, have the audacity to tell us it is* the only genuine production, *the only real means by which we can* effect a cure, and have a tendency to *deter the wicked from* trespassing on my corn crib, and to stop *the perpetration of crime* in the custom house. *Now I would ask such* clerks what is the amount of salary, the *men why so many* days ago were caught in the very act of committing *suicides in our prisons, and* when interrogated as to the cause, and *why so much precaution* to guard our good ship Constitution, and *to prevent self-murder* on the quarter deck, or be bound in chains *in our cells of solitary confinement, without the most distant hope of relief—hurrah—hurrah—hurrah for Liberty!* to commence with five, six, seven, or even eight as the case may be all the year round? *It can be answered on no other principle than* electricity. No other *ground than* red clay with sandy bottom is fit for apothegms—*this, that the brain of the mammoth is kept in a con-*

tinual state of turmoil—the *sufferer is distracted by his own foibles, his own whims and nonsense, his intolerable loquacity—thus needlessly disturbing himself until out of existence, and seeks relief in the arms of Morpheus, or slumbers in death, to wake no more until time and death shall be no more—thus proving conclusively that this is a probationary state—that death is preferred by the brave and free to a life in slavery, to a life of solitary wandering in a trackless desert, is 10,000 confinement by those who are used to the chambers of luxury, and are best able to judge of their own imaginary wants.*

The words in italics were italicised by ourselves, and did not so appear in the original. By reading these words alone, the true meaning of this queer piece of composition is discovered. How we were enabled to pick out the precise words which are to be read, is a question we will not answer just now. It is sufficient that our correspondent will acknowledge that his cypher is read.

T. R. H. or J. R. H. (we cannot make out the first letter precisely) of Philadelphia, will pardon us for not undertaking the solution of his puzzle as it stands; for he has evidently misunderstood our whole design. He says that he has made a bet upon our infallibility; and *that* he may safely do, provided always that he sticks to the matter in hand. We said, distinctly, that we would read any English writing, where arbitrary marks are used in place of the common alphabetical characters—for example, an alphabet is first made in which a \* represents a, a † b, a ‡ c, &c &c—this alphabet is then employed *as the ordinary one would be*. The same character must always stand for the same letter. Now if J. R. H. will take the trouble to count the various distinct characters employed by him, he will find there are no less than fifty-one. But there are only twenty-six letters in the English alphabet. He can get his MS. again by applying at our office. In the meantime let him concoct another puzzle, in accordance with our conditions, and bet as much as he pleases upon our solving it. The present bet is a drawn one of course, as there was a misunderstanding.

The following letter is from Lewistown, Mifflin County, Pa.

Dear sir,—

It appears from several back numbers of the Messenger that the Philadelphia puzzle-makers are not able to puzzle you. I therefore send you one which if you translate, I will agree to send you ten subscribers and the cash. It is a genuine article and no deception about it. If you cannot come it, please insert it for the amusement of the Philadelphians, and try them on a country poser.

Yours, &c.

G. W. KULP

The Philadelphians are not such fools as Mr. Kulp supposes them. His puzzle, however, is this:

Ge Jeasgdxy,

Zij gl *mw*, *laam*, xzy zmlwhfzek ejlvdxw  
 kwke tx lbr atgh lbrmx aanu bai Vsmukkss pwn  
 vlwk agh gnumk wdlzweg jnbxv v oæg enwb  
 zwngy mo *mlw* wnbx mw al pnfdfpkh wzke  
 hssf xkiyahul. Mk num yexdm wbyx sbc hv  
 wyx Phwkgnamcuk?

We had scarcely glanced at this affair when we pronounced it an imposition, notwithstanding Mr. K's assertion to the contrary. In the first place, had it been "a genuine article," it would not have been written in as free and running a hand as it is—a hesitation would have been apparent about the characters. In the second place, there is no word in the English language which ends as Mr. K's word "Vsmukkss" does—that is to say with double-duplicate letters. But the same *method* which serves us in the decyphering a *true* cypher, will enable us to *demonstrate* the falsity of any fictitious one. It may afford our friends some amusement to follow us in the process of a demonstration in the present case.

The reader will observe that we have italicised three words in the cypher, and upon these three depends all we have to say. We begin with "*mw*," a word of two letters. Now all English words of but two letters consist of a vowel and a consonant. Let us suppose the "*m*" to be the vowel "*a*," and let us prefix this to every consonant, and see how many words can thus be made. For ex-



ample—ab, ac, ad, af, ag, &c—we find no English word until we come to “ah”—and all that can be made by placing “a” first, are “ah,” “am,” “an,” “at,” and “ay.” Now, placing “e” first, let us prefix it to every consonant in the same way—then place all the other vowels first, respectively; then place all the consonants first, respectively, adding the vowels. Having gone through the alphabet thus, we readily discover every word in the language, of two letters. There, in fact, are but thirty—ah, am, an, at, ay, if, in, it, of, on, or, up, us, be, by, do, go, ha, he, ho, la, lo, ma, me, my, no, pa, so, to, and wo. Now “mw” in the puzzle, must represent one of these thirty words. The word “am” we may as well strike out, for if “mw” were “am,” it would be preceded or immediately followed by the pronoun I—but there is no single letter near it.

We now refer to the word “*mlw*.” If “*mw*” is “ah,” then “*mlw*” must be some word formed by the insertion of a letter between *a* and *h*. By running down the alphabet we immediately see that “*ash*” is the only word which can be thus formed. We now proceed to “*an*.” If “*mw*” is “*an*,” then “*mlw*” must be some word formed by the insertion of a letter between *a* and *n*. Running down the alphabet as before, we find that no word can be so formed—we therefore strike out *an* from the list of twenty-nine; for *mw* cannot be *an*. Going through the whole in his way, we see that *mw* must be either

|     |      |       |     |        |                         |
|-----|------|-------|-----|--------|-------------------------|
| ah, | from | which | we  | formed | <i>ash</i> ,            |
| at, | from | which | may | be     | formed                  |
| ay, | “    | “     | “   | “      | any,                    |
| of, | “    | “     | “   | “      | oaf,                    |
| on, | “    | “     | “   | “      | own,                    |
| or, | “    | “     | “   | “      | oar,                    |
| by, | “    | “     | “   | “      | bay, bey, boy, and buy, |
| he, | “    | “     | “   | “      | hoe,                    |
| my, | “    | “     | “   | “      | may,                    |
| to, | “    | “     | “   | “      | tho', and two.          |

We have thus narrowed the question in regard to *mw* very much—from thirty to ten words; one of which it *must* be. At the

same time it is equally certain that *mlw* must be one of the words in the second column. Now we refer to the third italicized word *laam*.

If *mlw* be *ash*, then *laam* will be a word of this form, s . . a, in which the dots represent two unknown letters of the same kind. If *mlw* be *aft*, the *laam* will be a word of this form, f . . a. If *mlw* be *alt*, then *laam* will be l . . a, &c. &c. Going through the whole second column thus we get this schedule.

|         |         |         |
|---------|---------|---------|
| s . . a | r . . a | o . . b |
| f . . a | a . . o | u . . b |
| l . . a | w . . o | o . . h |
| n . . a | a . . o | a . . m |
| p . . a | a . . b | h . . t |
| n . . a | e . . b | w . . t |

That is to say, we prove that *laam* must be some word which can be formed by placing double letters where the dots are in some one of the words in the schedule. The slightest inspection will satisfy the reader that h . . t must be the one, if any; for here alone can the category be fulfilled. By inserting *o o*, we get the word *hoot*. *Laam* is then *hoot* or nothing. But the hypothesis of the word *hoot* is founded upon that of the word *tho'* in the second column of the first schedule; and *tho'* upon *to*, in the first column. We now arrive at a definite conclusion. Either Mr. Kulp's puzzle is not genuine, or *mw* stands for *to*, *mlw* for *tho'*, and *laam* for *hoot*. But it is evident that this latter cannot be—for in that case both *w* and *a* represent the letter *o*. What follows?—why that Mr. Kulp's puzzle is no puzzle at all. This demonstration is as absolutely conclusive as any mathematical one could be. The process of reasoning here employed is that employed also in the solution of the cyphers.

---

[March 4, 1840, page 2, column 2]

#### REVIVALS.

These are very much in fashion just at present in Philadelphia, and Satan is in great danger of being drummed out of town. The

Methodist congregations have been making especial war upon his Majesty, who must be quite out of heart by this time, as well as out of temper. He has been signally defeated in the city, in Southwark, and particularly in Spring Garden and Kensington, where conversions have become a mere matter of course—as plenty as “reasons or blackberries.” The chief subject of wonder, however, is that the principal recruits have been enlisted from the ranks of a party which is the last in the world a body would suspect of giving up its evil ways—we mean the jolly corporation of victuallers. These people we always thought wordly-minded individuals, hankers after creature comforts, men of the *flesh*, rather than of the spirit.

NOTE: This article should be credited to Poe because of a succeeding article on “Revivals” in the issue of April 15, which is manifestly by Poe, and in which he refers to his earlier writing on the matter. Strange to say, local revivals did not seem to interest the other Philadelphia newspapers, excepting the *Christian Observer*, which is filled with the subject in February and March 1840. Also the *Boston Recorder*, which chronicled revivals throughout the country, shows the interest which Philadelphia displayed during this year. Poe seemed to like the phrase “If reasons were as plentiful as blackberries,” as found in Shakespeare’s “Henry IV,” and had already used it in “The Man who was Used Up,” where he wrote “But although men so absolutely fine-looking are neither as plenty as reasons or blackberries” (*Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine*, August 1839, vol. 5, p. 66).

---

[March 4, 1840, page 2, column 3]

#### MORE OF THE PUZZLES.

We have received the following note from our enigmatical friend J. H.

Mr. Editor, you have certainly fulfilled your promise to the very letter, and I hereby acknowledge that you did decypher my puzzle correctly in your last weekly paper. Pointing out the precise words by which I meant to convey my meaning. And moreover I am perfectly convinced from what I have seen, that you can

decypher any piece of writing in which arbitrary signs are used instead of the letters of the alphabet.

J. H.

---

Our fair correspondent at the Metropolis, will find the solution of her puzzle in the following lines:

WASHINGTON CITY, D. C. }  
Feb. 8th, 1840. }

Dear Sir—Having heard of your skill in interpreting letters written in arbitrary signs, we send you this, which, if translated by you, and published in the Messenger, will give much pleasure to

MANY LADIES.

---

T. S., of Boquet, N. Y. will find the solution of his cypher on the [fo]urth page.

We will reply to R.H. and our friend of Bedford, Lower Canada, in our next.

---

[March 4, 1840, page 4, column 1]

To T. S. of Boquet, Essex, N. Y.—Your cypher is thus read:

TO CELIA.

*When* day declines, and sable night  
*Shall* veil this hemisphere from sight,  
*I* would, with no dull cares oppressed,  
*Spend* each dark hour in quiet rest.  
*A* rake and fool may drink and rove—  
*Night* is the time which they improve—  
*With* such to walk I will refuse;  
*You* are the company I choose.

---

[March 11, 1840, page 2, column 3]

PUZZLES AGAIN!

Our friend J. R. H., of Philadelphia, will excuse us for saying that he has not, even yet, complied with our conditions, which provided that the arbitrary characters were to be used as the alphabetical ones are. In the present instance he has made no divisions between his words—running them all together. But lest he should think we *cannot* decypher what he sends, and especially in order that he may win his bet upon our infallibility, we now give the translation without more ado. It runs thus:

If music be the food of love, play on;  
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,  
The appetite may sicken and so die.  
That strain again!—it had a dying fall.  
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet south  
That breathes upon a bank of violets  
Stealing and giving odor—enough! no more!  
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.  
O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou,  
That, notwithstanding thy capacity  
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters thee  
Of what validity and pitch soever  
But falls into abatement and low price  
Even in a minute: so full of shapes is fancy  
That it alone is high fantastical.

A correspondent who signs his initials L. R. G., of Philadelphia, but whom we strongly suspect, by his MS., to be a Mr. H., of our acquaintance, writes us as follows:

“These puzzles you may see by analysis to be genuine. If you can't resolve them, you will have to give up.” We must say to L.R.G. that we stipulated for *English*, and that the annexed affair (which are the translations of his cypher) can scarcely come under that denomination. We give the spelling as our correspondent gives it—evidently with the design of bothering us.

## PRAYER

## THE CHILD'S FOR AN ABSENT FATHER.

My father's gone away,  
 A wish he would come home.  
 A do not like to have him stay  
 Where a can't see him every day.  
 Ma yhen yill father come home.

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

---

To our correspondent in Bedford, Lower Canada. Your cypher is thus read:

"Mrs. Hopkins told me that she heard Green's wife say that John Glacrie's wife told her that Fanny Hopkins heard the Widow Washam say that Captain Weed's wife thought Colonel Hodgkin's sister Nel lied—that old Miss Quins reckoned that Mrs. Samuel Dunham had told Spalding's wife that she heard John Min's daughter say that her mother told her that old Miss Finns heard grandmother Cool declare that it was an undoubted fact."

---

It would be a satisfaction to us if our enigmatical friends whose cyphers we have fairly decyphered would make acknowledgment to that effect.

NOTE: The fact that contributors sent in poems in cypher that were well known made Poe's task of decyphering them much simpler. As soon as in the first poem he recognized a line or two from the familiar opening speech in "Twelfth Night," the rest was easy.

---

[March 18, 1840, page 2, column 3]

## THE RAIL-ROAD WAR.

During the last ten days, or thereabouts, the sober inhabitants of the District of Kensington have been all alive with a delightful little war of their own—a nice rough-and-tumble affair—none

of your bloodhound business, or Bugaboo and Kickapoo campaigns. The Philadelphia and Trenton Rail-road Company had received permission, it seems, from one of our judicial tribunals, to lay their rails in Front street, but could not obtain the consent of the property holders of the region. For some time past the work has been going on, however, with much grumbling and many threats on the part of the Front-streeters, but with no overt act of resistance. On Monday morning, about ten o'clock, matters took the first serious turn. Quite a mob—men, women, and children—surrounded the laborers at the rails; replacing the paving-stones which had been displaced, and otherwise interrupting the work. The sheriff was sent for, arrived about 12, with his posse, and arrested Henry Rowan, John Craydon, and Francis Farley. These were taken before Mayor Conrad, and held to bail, the former in \$500, the two latter in \$300 each, to answer the charges alleged against them before the Court of General Sessions. The arrest of these persons intimidated the crowd for a time, but in the afternoon the riot again commenced. About 4 o'clock Hugh Lemon was arrested, taken before the Mayor, and bound over in the sum of \$300. Lemon is a property-holder to some extent upon Front street.

On Tuesday and Wednesday the excitement still continued, and a great number of the gentle engaged in the melee. On Thursday the disorders increased. Mr. Naglee was violently assaulted with paving stones discharged from the fair hands of the damsels of Kensington, who also led away in triumph a wagon containing iron rails for the road, the laborers being fairly driven off the ground. Many arrests were made, but with no good effect. In the afternoon the Sheriff and his whole posse were routed, and the rioters, having beaten them off, proceeded to tear up that portion of the road which was the nearest to completion; disengaging not only the rails but the wooden frames, and filling up the excavations with dirt and stones. In the meantime placards were posted up calling upon the people to "put down the rail-road nuisance," and addressed especially to the firemen, draymen and carters—who were invited to attend a meeting on Thursday evening, in the

Commissioners Hall, Kensington. The meeting was accordingly held, and served, as a matter of course, to inflame the wrath of the mob, who adjourned to the scene of action, and set fire to the timber intended for the road. The Judges of the Court of Quarter Sessions now issued a general warrant, authorizing the Sheriff to command the service of every able-bodied citizen to aid in quelling the disturbances. This officer issued notices accordingly, and gave directions to the whole police force, as well as to all the watchmen, to meet at his office on Friday. But before the time appointed, the Rail-road Company had agreed to discontinue the laying of the rails until the decision of the Supreme Court could be obtained. The property-holders had denied the company's right to construct the road in Front street, and had also avowed their intention of referring the question to the Supreme Court. An announcement of the Company's submission was duly made by the Sheriff to the mob, who first raised an uproarious shout of triumph, and then dispersed in high glee. Thus ended the great rail-road war.

NOTE: Although not much in Poe's usual style, the reference to the "Bugaboo and Kickapoo Campaigns" seems to show that this article is from his hand. It was in "The Man who was Used Up," written by him for *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* for August 1839, that he commemorated his main character as the hero of the Bugaboo and Kickapoo campaign. The Kickapoos had been recently in the public eye in the Florida Indian wars, and Poe apparently invented the word "Bugaboo" as an alliterative name for an allied tribe. If a concordance of Poe's prose could be compiled, it would reveal his use of this word at other times—for instance, in "The Premature Burial" in 1844. The reference to the "bloodhound business" alluded to the use of bloodhounds in hunting the Indians in Florida, a subject which occasioned much controversy in the newspapers of the day. Poe had previously referred to the topic, under the heading of "The Bloodhound Story," in the *Messenger* of January 29.

---

[March 18, 1840, page 2, column 4]

#### THE VIRGINIA STAR.

This is the title of a new weekly and tri-weekly paper, published at Petersburg, Va., by H. Haines, Esq. late editor of the Peters-



burg "Constellation." Mr. Haines is a gentleman of education and of unusually fine talents. He is, moreover, a sternly independent man; and this is saying a great deal in these days of universal subserviency and tergiversation. The "Star" will be a "bright particular" one, indeed, if it emit rays one half so brilliant as those from the "Constellation" of old days. No mere constellation that—but a perfect galaxy of good things. In faith, we remember it well. Neither Mr. Haines, nor any papers of Mr. Haines, are matters to be readily forgotten.

The "Virginia Star" is a pretty-looking sheet, well printed, on excellent paper—its matter (whether editorial or contributed) equal to that of any printed in America. It proceeds upon the cash system—quite a novel idea in Virginia. We cordially wish it a life of a thousand years.

NOTE: This puff of the *Virginia Star* was unquestionably by Poe. Hiram Haines, its editor, was a friend of Poe and earlier had entertained him at Petersburg (see Mary E. Phillips, *Edgar Allan Poe*, vol. 1, p. 532). In *Americana* for January 1942 John W. Ostrom prints two letters from Poe to Haines, and gives an excellent sketch of all that can be found about the Virginia editor. One of the Poe letters was dated April 24, 1840, in reply to one from Haines of March 24, and mentions the receipt of the *Star*. Only two issues of the *Virginia Star* can be located today, although a file of over a year, formerly in a book-dealer's hands in Washington, has now disappeared. Haines died early in 1841 and his paper was discontinued. The Philadelphia *Public Ledger* of March 2, 1840, has an amusing editorial on the *Virginia Star*, arising from the fact that they had had to pay over 18 cents collect postage for the prospectus. Poe's quotation on this "bright particular" *Star* is from "All's Well that Ends Well," Act I, scene 1.

---

[March 18, 1840, page 2, column 4]

We perceive by the advertisement in another column, that our friends Hirst and Dreer, have issued a very excellent work on the Kitchen Nursery, Fruit and Flower Garden, and other branches of the Farm department, called the YOUNG GARDINER'S ASSISTANT, by Thomas Bridgeman, of New York. It is for sale at their Seed store, No. 97 Chesnut street. Among other important matters it contains the celebrated discovery on "Terra-Culture,"

as described in *Senate Document* No. 23, of the 3d Session of the 25th Congress, and therein estimated at *hundreds of millions of day's labor*, and "worth more to the community than all the discoveries of the present age combined—the application of steam not excepted." For the purchase of which secret an application has been made to the 26th Congress, by the discoverer, for a sum equal to five cents from each individual of the United States, or about *a million dollars* of our resources.

NOTE: Thomas Bridgeman's *Young Gardener's Assistant* was in its 7th edition by 1840. The firm of Hirst and Dreer, seedsmen, consisted of Henry B. Hirst and Henry A. Dreer. Hirst was long Poe's friend, and in 1843 wrote the laudatory biography for the *Philadelphia Saturday Museum*. It was but natural that Poe should mention Hirst's publication in the *Messenger* and especially so since the firm constantly advertised in that paper.

[March 25, 1840, page 2, column 6]

#### PUZZLES AGAIN!

Greenville, Butler county, Ala.

Mr. C. ALEXANDER.

Dear Sir:—As there is great interest taken in your very valuable paper in this part of the country, and especially with regard to the *puzzling* part of it, I shall be obliged if you will decypher and publish the following. I do not presume it to be more difficult to solve than many others, but sufficiently so, if solved, to satisfy myself and others at this section of the country, of your ability to explain any thing of the kind.

Very respectfully yours,  
JOHN K. HENRY.

It will give us great pleasure to oblige Mr. Henry. His cypher reads thus:

D67g;002)7.U )177;3;007☞\*D071☞1.\*;0k20  
2☞242, ,8 2☞\*D.¿7 6\*¿wl7w2¿wU. lDk4,078  
U1.4 D67 ☞;Dk .U4.☞;07

The translation is thus:

The village of Greenville, Butler county, Alabama, is about one hundred and forty miles from the city of Mobile.

---

To INCOG, of Ithaca, N. Y. Your first cypher is thus translated:

Selected for Alexander's Messenger.

If that high word which lies beyond  
Our own surviving love endures—  
If there the cherished hearts be fond  
The eye the same except in tears—  
How welcome those untrodden spheres!  
How sweet this very hour to die!  
To soar from earth and find all fears  
Lost in thy light, Eternity!










In regard to the second we reply at once—it is not genuine. There is no word in the English language which ends as your word *hbjggg* terminates—with three similar letters. This point is perfectly conclusive. Incog will, of course, not understand us to say that he intentionally wished to deceive us. We mean only to say that this puzzle, which may be genuine enough in its way, (and which, indeed, we know very well to be so) is not of the kind for which we stipulated, but belongs to Cryptography—as did Mr. K's, of whom he makes mention. Incog will see at once that we are obliged to keep within some limits. Were we to engage in the solution of *every kind of puzzle* sent us, we should have our hands full. We said that we could and would solve every cypher, of a stipulated character, which we should receive, and we have kept our pledge more than ten times over. So much for ourselves. In regard to the Cryptography, Incog is altogether mistaken—it is subject, like almost every thing else, to the universal rules of analysis. We *can* decypher any thing of the kind, or of any other kind. What is said about a key being necessary for the solution is based upon a misconception. It does not follow that, because cyphers are put together by laborious or intricate processes (as many have been which we have received and solved) that we must

go through the same intricate process in unriddling them. We assert roundly, and in general terms, that human ingenuity cannot concoct a proper cypher which we cannot resolve.

Our friends would very much oblige us by acknowledging the solutions we have given, as requested in our last. Not one can say that he has forwarded us a cypher, which we have not fully and accurately translated.

Mr. J. Lucas, of Mount Holly, requests us to state that the answer to an Enigma sent in a cyphy by him (and of which we gave the translation some weeks since) was not his own name, although that might answer, but was intended for the name of another subscriber, Mr. Jos. P. Wills.

We have not yet found time to look at Hamilton Brown's cypher, but will attend to it hereafter.

††† ||††?|| ,— , ||††]s|| (?)† , ||††]s|| .- ,†(\*—  
, ||††]s|| ¶], ( , ||††]s|| ¶]s(||-††,— —||,    
 ?|| †?—|| ? )?( ?(\* ††† ||††?|| ††?—?    
 ||†††—† ,— ( ] )]-† — ¶]||

OLD POINT COMFORT }  
 March 16th, 1840. }

MR. ALEXANDER.

Sir:—Not doubting your capability to solve the above (if we may judge from the many curious specimens of the kind, which have appeared in your valuable paper) rather as a proof of your infallibility to some doubting minds, you would much oblige a number of your subscribers by inserting the above with its solution.

Yours, with respect,

J. T. G.

With pleasure—the translation is thus:

He that is without name, without friends, without coin, without country, is still at least a man, and he that has all these is no more.

[April 1, 1840, page 2, column 2]

### THE TRIAL OF JAMES WOOD.

The trial of the unfortunate Wood, for the murder of his daughter, Mrs. Sarah Ann Peak, was brought to conclusion on Friday evening last, the jury, after a brief absence, returning a verdict of "Not Guilty, on the ground of insanity." This was anticipated by every one, and occasioned no surprise. The witnesses for the defence (of whom the most important was Dr. Meigs, for a long time the family physician of the accused) made out so clear a case of constitutional tendency to mania, if not of existing derangement itself, that but one course was left for the jury. The prosecution was conducted by Mr. Johnson, himself, the Attorney General of the State, who, at the conclusion of the evidence, left the matter, without argument, to the jury. Judge King briefly pointed out the main points for determination, and commented especially upon the question of insanity. Upon this head, it appears to us that a very material argument was strangely omitted by the counsel for the defence—an argument which, with many minds, would have had more weight in bringing about a conviction of the prisoner's insanity than any urged in his behalf. It appears from the testimony that the conduct of Wood, when purchasing his pistols at the shop of the gunsmith, was characterised by an entire self-possession—a remarkable calmness—an evenness of manner altogether foreign to his usual nervous habit. His replies were cool, and without the slightest apparent trepidation. It is just possible that the defence *feared* to broach this striking subject; for, upon a cursory view, the facts do certainly make against the accused, and imply a premeditated and cool-blooded assassination. But the metaphysician, or the skilful medical man, would deduce from them a positive conclusion in favor of Wood. With the deep cause for agitation which he is known to have had, he could not possibly, in the supposition of his sanity, have *assumed* the calmness of demeanor mentioned. A nervous trepidancy would have manifested itself, if not in an ordinary form, at least in an overstrained endeavor to be calm. But,

in the supposition of his insanity, all is natural—all is in full accordance with the well known modes of action of the madman. The cunning of the maniac—a cunning which baffles that of the wisest man of sound mind—the amazing self-possession with which at times, he assumes the demeanor, and preserves the appearance, of perfect sanity, have long been matters of comment with those who have made the subject of mania their study.

The acquittal of the accused on the ground of insanity involves his legal confinement as a madman until such time as the Court satisfy themselves of his return to sound mind. We cannot believe, however, that this truly unfortunate man will ever be restored to that degree of reason which would authorise his final discharge. His monomania is essentially periodical; and a perfect sanity for months, or even for years, would scarcely be a sufficient guaranty for his subsequent conduct. A time would still come when there would be laid to his charge another—although hardly a more horrible—deed of sudden violence and bloodshed.

NOTE: The report of the Trial of James Wood is distinctly by Poe. Interested in the morbid, he brought the subject of insanity into several of his Tales. The analysis of the mind of a homicidal maniac, accenting the self-possession and cunning which gave the impression of sanity, he brought out in "The Tell-Tale Heart." Wood's murder of his daughter, Mrs. Edward Peake, because he disapproved of her marriage, was on September 30, 1839, and a lengthy account of the affair, with a full report of the coroner's inquest, was printed in the *Public Ledger* of October 1. The trial itself was reported in the *Public Ledger* from March 24 to 30, 1840, the testimony sometimes running to four columns in length.

---

[April 1, 1840, page 2, column 2]

#### DISINTERMENT.

We see it stated in some of the papers that thirty-two physicians of St. Clairsville, Louisiana, and its vicinity, have threatened to refuse medical attendance to any one who shall support the bill before the Legislature of that State, making disinterment of the dead for dissection a State Prison offence. This is undoubtedly a

bold stand, but one which may well be justified. Human dissection is the surest and truest basis, indeed the only sure basis, of all medical knowledge—A blow legally struck at it, is a vital blow to the best and most important interests of the human family. The prejudice which wars with dissection proceeds from the finest feelings, and is worthy of all respect—but there should be no *legal* fostering or protection of any mere prejudice whatever.

NOTE: There is nothing in this article which is particularly suggestive of Poe's style, but the subject would have interested him. Herewith printed only as a probable Poe item.

---

[April 1, 1840, page 2, column 5]

#### CABS.

These anomalous vehicles, of which we Americans know so little by personal inspection, and so much through the accounts of the travelled, and the pages of the novelist, are about to be introduced among us "as a regular thing." In New-York they are already gaining ground, and *going over* it. The cab proper, as used in London, is an affair *sui generis*, and has very little affinity with any thing else in nature. It resembles, in some respect, the old-fashioned sedan chair, and carries two inside passengers, who sit vis a vis, with the coachman at top. The bottom nearly touches the pavement, and the entire vehicle has an outré appearance. Those in New York at present, are of a bright chocolate color, and look very stylish. Their charge is twenty five cents for any distance under two miles. The cab-introduction will bring about among us a peculiar race of people—the cabman. These creatures are not mentioned in Buffon, and Cuvier has entirely forgotten them. They bear a droll kind of resemblance to the human species—but their faces are all fashioned of brass, and they carry both their brains and their souls in their pockets.

NOTE: This article is undoubtedly by Poe, who not only liked plays upon words, but was the only person connected with the *Messenger* likely

to bring Buffon and Cuvier into such an editorial. He also wrote an article on Cabs for the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* of July 18, 1844, if we can believe the opinion of his friend and contemporary, Eli Bowen, editor of the *Columbia Spy*, of Columbia, Penn. (see Poe's *Doings of Gotham*, 1929, pp. 82, 88), which ascription Poe did not contradict.

---

[April 1, 1840, page 2, column 5]

#### BURTON'S GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE

This racy Magazine is out this month with another magnificent plate by Sartain. The design is by S. E. Jones—the subject a rotund little gentleman “done brown.” He is keeping a sham appointment under a garden wall, while two arch damsels observe him from above in high glee. The engraving is in Sartain's best style, and is, consequently, admirable—equal to “The Pets.” The literary contents of the number are unusually good. First and best, we have an article called “The April Fool,” by the senior editor, in illustration of the frontispiece just mentioned. The hero is Mister Robert Muggridge, and a very droll hero he is—this is a glorious story, gloriously told. There is no better narrator of such things as these than W. E. Burton.

The “Miami Valley” is concluded, and every one will regret that it is—the last words of the writer are deeply affecting. Mr. Poe has a clever Sonnet. “The Philosopher's Stone,” by S. J. Burr, is—not so good as it might be. “Columbus” is mere twaddle. By the bye, we *do* think it somewhat odd that while the writer of this poem puffs it pertinaciously in all the New York papers to which he has access, he never thinks of acknowledging its origin in the “Gentleman's Magazine.” Does he know that that journal *honors* him by the insertion of his articles?

The “Journal of Julius Rodman” progresses beautifully. The travellers are far on their way, and will soon enter a tract of country hitherto undescribed. A fine engraving illustrates this chapter. “The Log of Old Ironsides” concludes, and *Mr. Jesse Erskine Dow* avows himself (somewhat vauntingly) the author. The Log, however, has been a good thing.



"The Hollenthal, a tale of Suabia," will arrest attention—it is a vivid sketch, and strongly evinces Mr. Burton's versatility of talent, as well as his extraordinary industry. The "Review of New Books" this month strikes us as being entirely from his pen, and is unusually good. By way of appendix, are some forcible observations upon the Copy Right Question.

NOTE: This is quite in Poe's style, and undoubtedly from his pen. Although magazine reviewers, writing anonymously, were wont to praise their own contributions, they generally exercised a certain amount of restraint. Poe, rather than Burton, would have written the notice of the latter's "April Fool." The adverse criticism of S. J. Burr's "Philosopher's Stone" and Frederick West's dull and long drawn-out poem "Columbus" are typical of Poe. The statement that the reviews "strike" the critic as Burton's is important. Poe went out of his way, in *Graham's* for November 1841, to disavow the review of Ainsworth's *Crichton* in *Burton's* for April 1840. It has been pointed out that the rejection of all reviews in April apparently does not harmonize with Poe's statement in a letter of June 1, 1840 to Burton (printed correctly by Quinn, *Edgar Allan Poe*, p. 299) that he wrote 17 pages in the April issue.

Regarding this discrepancy Dr. Mabbott writes me as follows: "In view of the figures of the estimate, I formerly thought some of the reviews for April might be Poe's. But learning of the remark in Alexander's I have reworked the whole series of contributions to *Burton's Magazine*. Four of the twelve months for which he gives figures can be checked against definite statements by Poe of what he wrote. A very large portion of the reviews in all months can be verified as Poe's by methods similar to those used in the present discussion of the writings in *Alexander's*, and sometimes by Poe's inclusion of whole paragraphs in his "Marginalia." It seems to me significant that no review in April is certainly established, and only one, a very brief and unimportant notice of Grant's *Every Day Life in London*, refers back to a review that Poe did write. As to the figures sent Burton, nine of the twelve months seem to balance exactly, but December 1839 is one too low, May's 14 should be 17 (the evidence is definite, and the month certified by the reference to copying a MS), and 17 for April is hopeless. Assigning Poe the sure items, all parts of series, "Julius Rodman," "Omnia," and "A Chapter on Science and Art," we get but 8 pages and a fraction. "Silence—a Sonnet" is a reprint, and Poe scrupulously avoided counting them elsewhere. Adding "A Word or Two on the Copyright Question" and Grant, which are probably Poe's, we get but 9 and a fraction, say 10. Adding all the other reviews it would be only a scant 13. Poe apparently grew careless as he finished his estimates, and certainly ended by adding his figures incorrectly. The statement in *Alexander's* therefore seems to be correct; its vague wording may be caused by the presence of the one unimportant

review, Poe's purpose being almost surely to disavow the significant portion of the critical department. The Grant of course must be now regarded as doubtful. In no other month is there so small a proportion of reviews that may be assigned surely or tentatively to Poe. Evidence of Burton's style and interest in matters theatrical does pervade several of the reviews."

---

[April 8, 1840, page 2, column 2]

#### CYPHERS.

We have on hand one or two letters from enigmatical friends, to which we cannot attend, this week, owing to a press of business. In our next they shall hear from us in full. Incog. is over-hasty, and must read what we said again. We meant no offence in the world, and thought we were sufficiently careful in so wording our article as not to give any.

---

[April 15, 1840, page 2, columns 4-5]

#### REVIVALS.

Some weeks since we said a few words upon the subject of the late Methodist revivals in Philadelphia, of which we were very glad to hear, as every man making pretensions to ordinary morality must be, whether he be a professor of religion or not. The cause of happiness is always aided by the prosperity of religion, and by the increase of religionists. We repeat that we were pleased to find our papers filled with details of numerous revivals, but we were, we confess, not a little *astonished*, also, to discover that the victuallers of the city—a class somewhat noted for jolly propensities—were foremost upon the list of the converted.

Upon taking up a number of the "Jeffersonian Democrat" a day or two since, we were surprised to find a correspondent who signs himself T. (possibly *Tugmutton*) abusing us at a round rate about the paragraph in question, and calling us by all kinds of hard names—such as "atheistical sceptica," "scoffers," "infidels,"

"heathens," (or something to that effect) "enemies of religion and good government," "cowards," and "impious insulters utterly destitute of good breeding." The editor of the paper, in giving place to the remarks of his puritanical correspondent, takes occasion to compliment us very highly (for which we tender him our acknowledgments) and to give his friend *Tugmutton* a severe but sly rap over the knuckles. We doubt, however, if the brilliant and irate T., will understand one word of the hint. The editor, in publishing his effusion, has done us a service, and treated *Tugmutton* in an unmerciful manner. At all events, should *we* ever be guilty of writing such horrible nonsense *we* should take it as very unkind treatment in any friend of *ours* to publish it. The fact is that your greatest sighers and groaners are invariably the greatest nincompoops and villains; and the man who can cant as desperately as *Tugmutton* has here done, would make no hesitation in stealing a sheep, but would hardly know what to do with it when stolen.

NOTE: Poe's use of the humorous name "Tugmutton," as well as the general style of the article, shows it to be from his pen. He had similarly used the word "Tugmutton" in his beet-root article in the issue of December 18, 1839. Various slang dictionaries define "Tugmutton" as a youngster, a whore-monger, and a glutton. I cannot locate the "Jeffersonian Democrat" in any library, nor find it recorded in any newspaper checklist. Poe might have referred to the "Jefferson Democrat," published at Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1840, but there is no file located for April 1840, to prove the point.

---

[April 15, 1840, page 2, column 5]

#### THE WORM.

Under this head we have observed, of late, a variety of erudite articles in some of our daily papers, not only here but in New York, Boston and elsewhere. The hubbub, it appears, has been created by an old story revived concerning a living worm seen in the eye of a horse. The Philadelphia Gazette is incredulous—the Ledger a true believer—and each paper has its partisans. The only wonder in the case is that so mighty a controversy should

arise about a matter with which every tolerably decent school-boy is acquainted, and a detailed account of which may be found in all works upon Natural History. The worm in question belongs to Cuvier's class of *Entozoa*—thus defined, "Body in general elongated or depressed; articulated or not; without limbs; no branchiæ nor tracheæ, nor any other organ of respiration; no traces of a true circulation: some vestiges of nerves; *almost all live within other animals.*" The fact is that there are hardly any tissues or cavities in the animal frame where entozoa are *not* discovered. They have been frequently observed in the muscular substance, and *very frequently in the human brain.*

NOTE: Poe showed a later interest in this form of worm, or *entozoa*, which in his "Thousand-and-Second Tale" he placed in the brain of a man-animal. It is also described in similar language in Wyatt's *Natural History*, p. 143. The living worm, or snake, in a horse's eye aroused much interest in the newspapers of the day. The article on the Worm was in the *Philadelphia Gazette* of April 14, 1840; in the *Public Ledger* of April 9, 1840; and in the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* of May 2, 1840.

---

[April 22, 1840, page 2, column 3]

#### CYPHERS AGAIN.

A press of business has prevented us, for one or two weeks past, from paying attention to our enigmatical correspondents—favors from several of whom we have on hand. We now proceed to square all accounts by a full solution of every thing received.

The first cypher we take up runs as follows:

2.9.14.7.8.1.13.20.15.14 2 18.15.15 13 5. 3 15.  
21.14.20 25. 1.16 18 9.12 1st 1840. 6.18. 15.13.  
25 15 21.18.6.18 25.14.4. 8 5 14.18.25

The translation is:—Binghampton, Broome county, N. Y.—your friend, Henry.

We are happy in having it in our power to oblige our friend at Terre Coupée. His cypher is thus read:

The wind blows hard, the thunder rolls,  
 Among the trees the lightnings gleam,  
 The rain in torrents sweep along,  
 The God of storms now reigns supreme.  
 The wind is hushed, the air is sweet,  
 Now Sol resumes his wonted splendor—  
 This Messenger's a handsome sheet;  
 Its boss must be a son of Endor.  
 Our patriot fathers bravely fought,  
 Our rights preserved, our freedom won,  
 Their sons will guard the sacred gift—  
 Decipher this, and I am done.

We now come to a letter from Kalida, Ohio, written in characters for which we have no type in the office, but of which the translation is thus:

Sir, Sometime since I forwarded to you the money for eleven copies of the "Weekly Messenger," for the last three weeks, but only ten copies have been received at this office.

Yours, F. RISLEY.

We have attended to the matter.

Another communication is dated from Philadelphia, and is as follows:

Dear Sir:—I have seen for some time with astonishment, and I must say with doubt, your wonderful solutions of hieroglyphical writing; and so great has been my skepticism, that I have determined to test your powers with the above articles, both original. If you succeed in solving them I shall certainly suggest the propriety of employing you to read all the despatches, written in cypher, that may be intercepted during the course of the Blood-hound War.

Respectfully yours,  
 HAMILTON BROWN.

For the first we have no type—but we presume one will satisfy Mr. Brown.

C'WW WPB VKI WPKIY UN BI VKONJ  
 C'WW NZV BI VU VKI XIEB DZCNJ  
 PFL WPJI BI YVPEV  
 IPNK AUWWB YKPWW EINIOXI MB  
 YVCFL  
 IPNK UCNI ZFVU MB AIIV CWW GECFL  
 PFL MPJI CV YMPEV.

of which the meaning is—

I'll lay the lash on ye thick,  
 I'll cut ye to the very quick,  
 And make ye start,  
 Each folly shall receive my sting,  
 Each vice unto my feet I'll bring.  
 And make it smart.

To INCOG, we reply, that we must decline, for the present, a full explanation of our method of solution, but will speak upon the subject hereafter in a way which will convince him that he has only partially understood the matter. We say again deliberately that human ingenuity cannot concoct a cypher which human ingenuity cannot resolve.

Lafayette, Ind., April 9, 1840.

MR. C. ALEXANDER.

Dear Sir:—Having ever since I commenced taking your interesting and valuable paper, noticed a disposition with you to oblige your subscribers, permit me to take advantage of that disposition, and respectfully request of you the solution of the following puzzle, which will, no doubt, satisfy a few of your subscribers in this place that you solve them honestly, of which *I* have no doubt.

Very respectfully

Yours, &c.,

“LITTLE RICH.”

The translation is—

The battle field of Tippecanoe has become classic ground. The American traveller pauses there to contemplate a scene which has become hallowed by victory. The people of Indiana contemplate with pride the battle ground on which their militia won imperishable honor, and their infant State became enrolled in the ranks of patriotism.

At the bottom of the cypher we find the three mysterious words "I recon not"—spelling as we give it.

NOTE: Professor Arthur H. Quinn, in commenting upon the last puzzle in this article, writes me: "The reference to the battle field of Tippecanoe reads to me like a political puff for General Harrison. Poe says in one of his letters that he 'battled with right good-will for Harrison, when opportunity offered.' The passage has certainly a Whig flavor, therefore it may be no real cryptogram at all."

---

[April 22, 1840, page 2, col. 4]

#### A LONG LEAP.

Under this head we perceive chronicled in many of our papers a somewhat tough story in relation to Miss Kerr, the danseuse. This young lady, it is said, was a passenger on board the steamboat Selma, which was snagged in going up the Mississippi, and when the boat parted in the middle, found herself on the hurricane roof of the part sinking in deep water. With a desperate bound she sprang to the part falling towards the shore, and, *at one leap cleared a space of twenty eight feet.* We are sorry to spoil a good thing, or to deprive Miss K. in the slightest degree of her gymnastic honors, but then there is rather *too* much of the Munchausen in this story, and we happen to know something about leaping. We doubt very much if the quintessence of desperation would force any young or old lady in Christendom, with a run, into a leap of more than sixteen feet, or, without a run, into one of more than eight. The longest leap on record, by man, on firm ground, and with all the impetus of a previous run, does not exceed twenty-

two feet. It is very possible that Miss Kerr, who is certainly an agile damsel, *did* go the entire animal, as described, to the extent of twenty-eight *inches*. Some wag has multiplied the matter by twelve.

NOTE: This is written in Poe's satirical manner, and he did "know something about leaping." Henry B. Hirst, in his biography of Poe in the *Philadelphia Saturday Museum* of March 4, 1843, says: "In his youth, Mr. Poe was noted for gymnastic feats, to an extent almost beyond the credible; and it is believed, that, to this day, he remembers such achievements with greater pride, than any subsequent mental triumphs. At one period he was known to leap the distance of twenty-one feet, six inches, on a dead level, with a run of twenty yards." Col. John Preston, a boyhood friend, relates the same story, as quoted in Mary E. Phillips' *Edgar Allan Poe*, vol. 1, p. 197. In the *Southern Literary Messenger* for August 1836, vol. 2, p. 599, Poe, reviewing *Inklings of Adventure* by Willis, says: "This gulf is six feet across and, of course, says Mr. Slingsby, 'it was impossible to jump it.' (We have jumped one and twenty feet, six inches ourselves, but then we are no Mr. Slingsby . . .)"; and he speaks of the relative difficulty of jumping ten or twenty feet, and the impossibility of jumping to the moon, in *Eureka* (Harrison, *Works of Poe*, vol. 16, p. 201). In 1846 he distanced several competitors in a leaping contest, as related by Mrs. Mary Gove Nichols in some reminiscences of a visit to Poe's house at Fordham (*Six Penny Magazine*, February 1863, reprinted in 1931 under the title *Reminiscences of Edgar Allan Poe*). The story of the accident on the Mississippi was in the *Public Ledger* of April 20, taken from a New Orleans paper. Miss Ann Kerr was a well known danseuse, performing in this country as early as 1827, dancing at one time with Fanny Ellsler, and married to C. W. Hunt in 1841. There are many references to her in Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage*, vol. 4, and a short biographical sketch in *Wemyss Chronology of the American Stage*, 1852, p. 86.

---

[April 22, 1840, page 4, column 1]

CHANGING SEATS.—The following problem may be found in many of our elementary books of arithmetic: A club of eight persons agreed to dine together every day as long as they could sit down to the table differently arranged. How many dinners would be necessary to complete this arrangement?—Answer—by the well known rule of permutation, it will be found that the whole party must live 110 years and 170 days, and must eat



362,880 dinners. So rapidly does the sum roll up on this process that if the party had consisted of one more person, they would have had 443,520 dinners to get through; and if ten persons were to enter into the compact, it would be necessary for them, in order to complete their task, to live long enough to devour 3,628,800 dinners.

NOTE: Included because Poe probably handled all puzzle queries. A later article of May 6, 1840 makes a correction of the above puzzle, stating that a line had been omitted.

---

[April 29, 1840, page 2, column 4]

#### CYPHERS.

We have just received the following:—

*New Carlisle, Ia., April 9th, 1840.*

C. ALEXANDER.—Dear Sir—As you have in your *Weekly Messenger* defied the world to puzzle you by substituting arbitrary signs, figures, etc., for the different letters of the alphabet, I have resolved to try my utmost to corner you and your system together, and have manufactured the two odd looking subjects which accompany this as *avant couriers*. If you solve the last one, please to state in your paper how you applied your system to it. Your success in solving the ugly and odd-looking puzzles which have been showered upon you, has surprised all your subscribers in this vicinity, and your system is so *unique*, and, at first glance, so improbable, that some have rather doubted the genuineness of your communications. If you succeed in solving the accompanying, I will, of course, as you request, acknowledge it publicly to my friends.

With respect, I am,  
Sincerely your friend,  
SCHUYLER COLFAX.

We have only time, this week, to look at the first and longest cypher—the unriddling of which, however, will no doubt fully

satisfy Mr. Colfax that we have not been playing possum with our readers. It runs thus:

8n( )h58†d w!0 b† !x6n†z k65 !nz  
 k65,8l†n bhx 8ndhPxd !zw8x 6k n6  
 ?6w—†nd!x86n; x=†0z†55!z† x=† w8nz  
 8n 8xd 62n †dx††w !nz k65?† 8x x6  
 5†36 †5 8xd P†?†P b3 5†?†ust†.

( )hn8hd.

And is thus decyphered—

“Injuries may be atoned for and forgiven, but insults admit of no compensation; they degrade the mind in its own esteem, and force it to recover its level by revenge.”

JUNIUS

By some accident we have mislaid a letter, from Austinburg we think, and signed with two names. It contained a very simple cypher which we were requested to unravel. If the writers will take the trouble to forward another, or the same, we shall be happy to convince them of our ability in this way. It will be but fair, however, to comply with our conditions. The words in the cypher sent were not properly separated from each other.

NOTE: Schuyler Colfax, later to be Vice-president of the United States during Grant's first term, in 1840 was a youth of seventeen, living at New Carlisle, Indiana. It is interesting to note that Alexander required all letters to his paper to be addressed to him, rather than to Poe, who conducted the puzzle column.

---

[April 29, 1840, page 2, columns 4-5]

#### A CHARLATAN!

*Weather Prophet, Star Reader, & Fortune Teller.*

A more signal rebuke of impudent presumption has seldom been witnessed than in the instance of the Charlatan Hague, who, for some months, has been laboring to impose his “predictions of the weather” upon the community. Professing to be able to “read

the stars" and divine future events, he has published a pamphlet of trash, which we are sorry to see noticed by any person of the slightest pretension to intelligence or discernment. That it has so been noticed, and above all, that it is made a means of aiding the puerile imposition of "fortune telling," are the only reasons why the impostor meets any other than silent contempt.

This Hague, then, is a "fortune teller," one of that hopeful class who get their living by their impositions. His fortune telling powers, are, we suppose, equal to his capacity for predicting the state of the weather, and how great that is we shall presently make manifest. It is, perhaps, not a matter to be treated seriously, especially since the almanac makers, after long and ample experience, have generally relinquished this weather prediction as being utterly unworthy of credence. But Mr. Hague takes up the cast-off trade and attempts to make a fortune-telling profit out of it, with what success let his numerous blunders for March explain.

A friend who cut out his "predictions" and took the trouble of marking them day by day, exhibits the following string of blunders. It is really a matter of no little merriment how the fellow could possibly miss hitting the mark so constantly. Let him, in his next attempt, after manufacturing his impositions, reverse the whole mass and publish precisely the opposite of his predictions. He will then be quite as correct and possibly a little more so.

*March 1st*, was to have been "blustering, boisterous, frosty, and like a lion." Instead of which it "roared me like a sucking dove," and was most delightfully mild and provokingly warm.

*March 2d.* "High winds and extremely *severe* weather" was the sage prediction, instead of which mild airs puffed their pleasant and really *warm* contradictions flat in the face of Mr. Hague's prophecy.

*March 3d.* Ditto with the preceding, and as palpably contradicted.

*March 4th*, was to have been "very cold with heavy falls of snow," but the weather obstinately persisted in not getting very cold, while the entire absence of a particle of snow utterly confounded the quack predictions.

*March 5*, there was snow predicted, but none came; it was also to have been cold, but precisely the reverse happened to be the case.

*March 6 and 7*. After the predicted fall of snow—which said snow did *not* come—we were to have had the weather *milder and warmer*, when the very opposite was the fact. But the most thorough and mortifying rebuke which this arrant Charlatan could possible experience happened on

*March 8*. After most falsely predicting that the preceding day was to be milder and fairer, he says—the 8th will be still clearer and warmer, i.e. the 6th warm, the 7th warmer, and the 8th still warmer—instead of which, the United States Gazette says—“It was so cold on the morning of the 8th that the mercury sank to 22 deg.” To make this failure still more signal, the sage farther predicted “a threatening sky, with large white clouds and heavy masses of condensed vapors,” when, in fact, there was not a cloud to be seen, and it was actually as clear as a bell all day.

*March 9*. We were to have had “hail and rain, accompanied with lightning and thunder,” instead of which there was not a particle of either to be seen or heard of.

*March 10*. A damp atmosphere, and rain, were predicted, but verified by no such thing. It was not damp at all, and not a particle of rain fell.

*March 11*.—“Blustering weather,” “heavy rains,” “unpleasant,” &c., were the predictions put forth with all the gravity and confidence that impudence could assume for this day, and just as positively contradicted. The weather having been on that day cool, fine, and pleasant.

*March 12*.—“The air gets warmer.” True. This wonderful prophet happens to hit it this once. Let him have the credit of his amazing sagacity.

*March 13*.—“More settled and pleasant.” Instead of which, we had a slight sprinkle of snow, which said snow was not predicted. The weather was not more pleasant, though fair enough for the season.

*March 14*.—“Fine,” “night brings a change”—a small mistake!

all the change commencing long before night. But what change, whether colder or warmer, or wet or dry, is not said.

*March 15.*—"An overcast sky," is all he ventures on. The twenty-four hours commenced with a snow storm, which was *not* predicted, and the balance was made up of a fair proportion of clouds and sunshine.

*March 16.*—A most laughable budget of blunders verified this day's predictions. "Frost" and "fogs," and "sleet and cold rains in abundance," were to have come, when actually nothing of the kind happened. Opposite this batch of stupidity we find marked an appropriate and emphatic "Bah!"

*March 17.*—Equally stupid and false is the prediction of "sleety," "wintery weather" for St. Patrick's day. There was nothing of the kind; not a particle of aught like sleet or winter; and so with

*March 18.*—Which our prophet is "werry" funny about; but the "bluster" he predicted did not happen to take place, to his great chagrin, no doubt.

*March 19.*—Completes the climax. Impudence and absurdity need go no farther. We have this day "fine, pleasant weather" distinctly foretold, when as if signally to rebuke this silly falsifier, the rain came down incessantly all day, thoroughly drenching all the prophet's pretensions, giving him very much the appearance of a drowned rat.

But we have no patience to follow out the track of this trash maker to the end. Those who may take the trouble will find it "so forth and so on" to the end of the chapter. Blunder upon blunder marks the entire catalogue. This is a mere matter of course with all impostors, but those who are credulous or weak enough to suffer themselves to be imposed upon, may easily verify a few odd days. This can be done by stringing a bunch of days together and giving a general mixing up, making a lump job of it, like some sage Almanac maker who commences at the top and running down the whole page with "about these days expect a little changeable weather," or something of that sort. Or those who are particularly anxious to help out the predictions, may take the little end of any

day in the month and give the complexion of its half hour or so, as a complete and perfect verification of that day's prophecy. Or by claiming rain somewhere else when there happens to be none here, and sunshine there, when it happens to be otherwise here. This is a singularly convenient process, by the aid of which, you can have it rain or dry, clouds or sunshine, and blow hot or cold, with the same breath, *ad libitum et infinitum*.

NOTE: Thomas Hague is entered in the Philadelphia Directory for 1840 as "planet reader." He issued *The Meteorological Almanac and Spring Quarter Horoscope* in the spring of 1840, to cover the months of April, May and June, of which there is a copy in the Library of Congress; but no copy of the issue which covered March 1840 can be located. The local papers treated him none too kindly, and the *Public Ledger* on April 9 and 14, 1840 printed articles concerning him, concluding that his horoscopes were "decidedly humbuguous." The *Philadelphia Saturday Courier* began on January 4, 1840 to print a column on the Horoscope and weather predictions signed by T. Hague. In March at the end of each week, Hague published his predictions for the previous seven days, in order to show how generally accurate they were—quite different from the results shown in the above article.

The article headed "A Charlatan" is evidently by Poe, who liked to prick the bubbles of pretense and to write in a sarcastic vein about those whom he disliked. In his "Marginalia," no. xxiii, he says: "Brown, in his 'Amusements,' speaks of having transfused the blood of an ass into the veins of an astrological quack—and there can be no doubt that one of Hague's progenitors was the man." This reference was to Thomas Brown's *Amusements Serious and Comical*, London, 1700. Dr. Mabbott says that Poe probably obtained his reference from a chapter on Quacks in James Puckle's *Club*, a book which he often quoted, rather than from the original source. The dove quotation of March 1 is from "Midsummer's Night Dream."

---

[May 6, 1840, page 2, column 2]

#### CHANGING SEATS.

The correspondent who writes us in regard to a permutation puzzle which appeared in the *Messenger* a few weeks ago, is informed that an error occurred in the printed article by the omission of a line. The answer is as he gives it.

NOTE: Printed in continuation of the previous article on the same subject, on April 22.

---

[May 6, 1840, page 2, column 2]

#### CREDULITY.

"It is well known," says a clever contemporary, by way of commencing an article on the subject of credulity, "that men are deceived with a facility proportioned to their own inability or indisposition to deceive others." This remark must surely be taken *cum grano salis*. Men, entirely unable to deceive others; at all events, men perfectly *indisposed* to deceive others are not unfrequently found to have the sharpest eyes in the case of attempted imposition upon themselves. We have known numerous instances of a pure integrity and utter single-mindedness combined with the most wonderful acumen in regard to the motives which actuate the worldly. Simplicity is not always stupidity—and as a pendant to this proposition we may observe that, had we ourselves occasion to deceive your man of finesse, we should feel more certain of accomplishing our object by a course of undisguised frankness and truth, than by the most elaborate processes of cunning. To act honorably with a scoundrel is so completely to mystify him as to paralyze his utmost exertions. In other stages of existence we may be endowed with a sixth sense, yet of its nature we cannot, with the five now possessed, establish in our minds even the shadow of a conception. Truth is the sixth sense to the man of wiles. He feels that there *may be* such a thing, but he is bewildered in his endeavors to comprehend its use, and succumbs at once to him who robes himself in a garb so mysterious yet so august.

NOTE: This article is quite in line with Poe's style and sentiments. Professor Quinn calls to my attention the fact that Poe, in "The Colloquy of Monos and Una" (*Graham's Magazine*, August 1841, vol. 14, p. 54), writes about the sixth sense, by which his character, in listening to the ticking of clocks, could measure the "slightest deviations from the true proportion."

---

[May 6, 1840, page 2, column 2]

#### THE DAGUERRETYPE.

The New York Sunday Mercury, one of the very best papers we receive in every respect, has a good article on the Fifteenth annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design. Its observations on the Daguerreotype are especially excellent. It observes, however, that, until the transcript can be produced on paper, its use can never prove detrimental to the interests of the engraver. This is true in part, but then the production of the Daguerreotype effects on paper is likely to be soon accomplished. In France some very successful attempts have been made in this way. We agree fully, nevertheless, with the Mercury, that the invention will prove, upon the whole, highly beneficial to the interests of the fine arts. By the way, why is it that Americans persist in misspelling the word Daguerreotype. The accent should be placed upon the second e as we give it, and the word thus becomes one of five instead of four syllables.

NOTE: Poe again complains of the incorrect spelling and accent of the word "daguerreotype," as he did in the previous article of January 15. The article in the New York *Sunday Mercury* was in its issue of May 3, 1840, and the editors were so pleased with being noticed by Alexander's paper that they reprinted the "puff" in their issue of May 10.

---

[May 6, 1840, page 2, column 4]

#### BULWER USED UP.

The last number of Frazer's Magazine, uses up the novels of Mr. Edward Lytton Bulwer in fine style, but with little scruple as far as regards integrity, candor, or fact. We mean this remark as applicable only to the charges made against the incidental and colloquial portions of the works in question. But the critic is, in our opinion, perfectly right in condemning by wholesale Bulwer's absurd pretence to metaphysical knowledge. The parade which he always makes of this, arises from a consciousness of his total igno-



rance and deficiency. He has warm passions and a glowing imagination—but nothing can be more perplexed and indistinct than his reasoning powers, and nothing possibly worse than his style.

NOTE: Characteristically by Poe, and in line with the biting sarcasm of many of his reviews. Poe generally was favorable to Bulwer and praised his skill in plots and his imaginative qualities. In the "Marginalia" he has several notices of Bulwer's work, especially in one long article where he says that Bulwer's criticism "is really beneath contempt" and his moral philosophy "most ridiculous" (Harrison, *Works of Poe*, vol. 16, p. 158); yet in other places he praises him highly. In his review of "Night and Morning" (*Graham's Magazine*, 1841, vol. 18, pp. 200-201), Poe criticizes the defects in Bulwer's style and his anxiety "to appear profound." The article in *Fraser's Magazine* was in the issue of January 1840, in which Thackeray criticized Bulwer's work under the heading of "Epistles to the Literati." Poe liked the phrase "used up" and employed it in his "Fifty Suggestions," no. XVIII (Harrison, *Works of Poe*, vol. 14, p. 174).

---

[May 6, 1840, page 2, column 6]

#### BEST CONUNDRUM YET.

With this heading we find the following in the New York Signal:—"Why may Prince Albert be considered a saving and frugal personage?" Answer—because he *lays* by a *sovereign* every night." Mr. Benjamin, we have a very high respect for you, but not for your opinion about your own puns. Do you *seriously* think *that* conundrum a good one—we don't. To be good, a *double entendre* should be at least good English when viewed on either side. Now we may lay by a piece of money—but we *lie* by a wife.

NOTE: Poe's interest in conundrums, and the place given to this paragraph on the editorial page, well apart from the column (not by Poe) entitled "Wit and Humor," together with the analytical tone, leads to the belief that it was by Poe. The conundrum appeared in Park Benjamin's paper, the New York *Evening Signal* of April 30, 1840. The New York *Sunday Mercury* of May 3, 1840 quotes the conundrum from the *Signal*, and disparages it because it was "perpetrated at the sacrifice of good grammar."

---

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.