

**THE BOOK OF THE POE CENTENARY: A
RECORD OF THE EXERCISES AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA JANUARY 16-
19, 1909, IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
ONE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY OF EDGAR
ALLAN POE**

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The Book of the Poe Centenary: A Record of the Exercises at the University of Virginia January 16-19, 1909, in Commemoration of the One Hundredth Birthday of Edgar Allan Poe by Charles W. Kent & John S. Patton

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CHARLES W. KENT & JOHN S. PATTON

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1909, in Commemoration of the
One Hundredth Birthday
of Edgar Allan Poe

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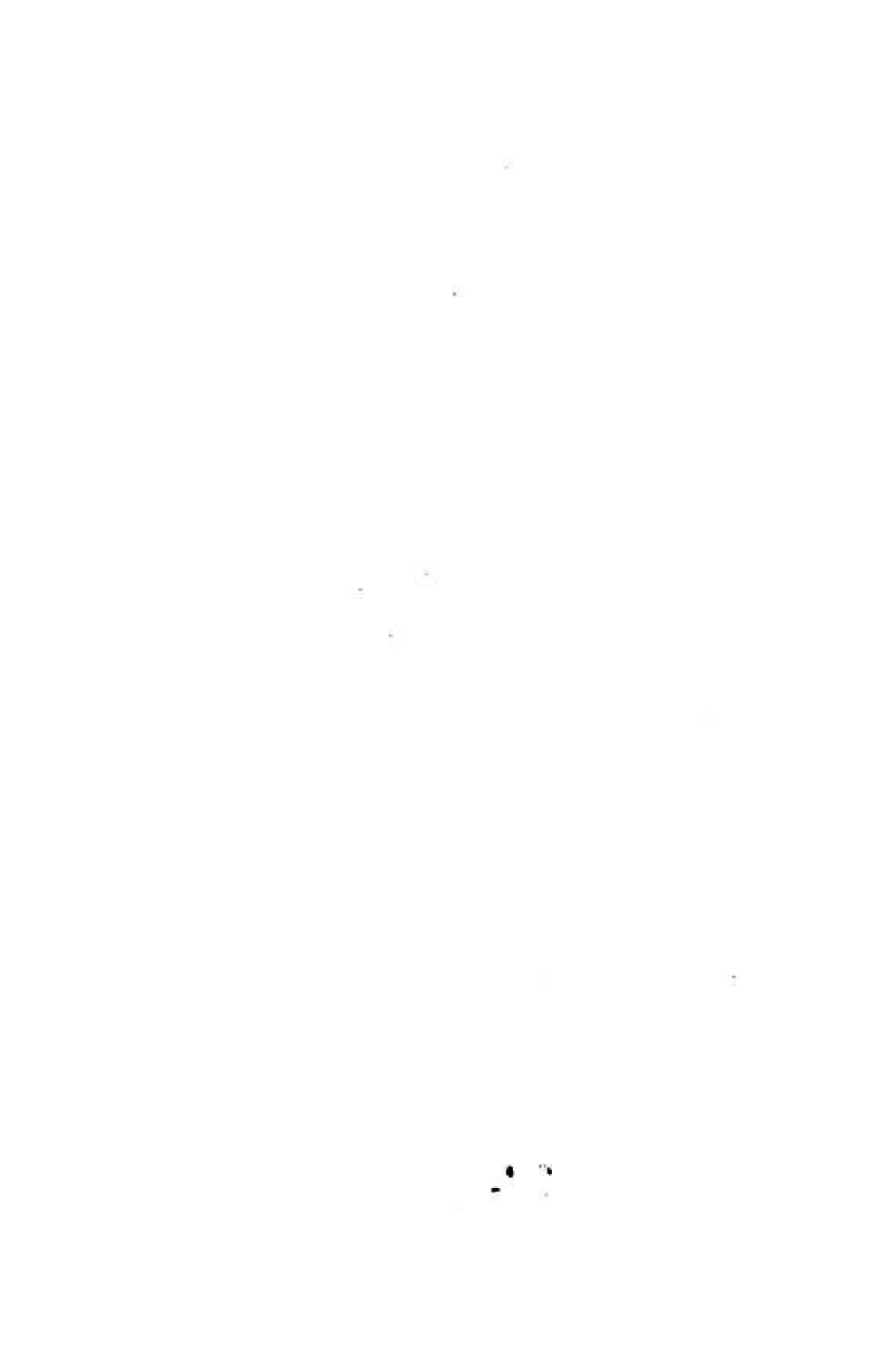


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I

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE University of Virginia has nothing with which to reproach herself in her treatment of Edgar Allan Poe. Through ill report and good he was followed with her maternal solicitude and misgivings, but never with her reproof or wrath. In his college days she may have been too lenient, but in the days of his fame she is not constrained by any hobgoblin of consistency to withhold her praise. She has, therefore, had peculiar pride in witnessing his universal acclaim as a man of genius and as a singularly forceful agency in compelling international recognition of our American literature. Her anxiety is no longer lest he be not recognized at his real worth, but lest, in the ardor of revived enthusiasm, his real merit, however high, be overrated and his rightful place, so tardily won, jeopardized by claims too sweeping and superlative.

The celebration of the Poe centenary at the University of Virginia has served, however, as a corrective: first, of the persistent misstatements of his earlier biographers, and then of the unsettled or adverse judgment of his literary rank.

Edgar Allan Poe entered the University on the fourteenth of February, 1826, and did not leave until the twentieth of December. By the way, the many errors and uncertainties as to Poe's stay at the University are due to a misunderstanding of the period covered by the session of 1826. It began on the first of February and continued without break or holiday to the fifteenth of December, so that instead of leaving during the session, as has been asserted in various forms of ignorance or malignity, he was in the University from two weeks after the session opened until five days after the session closed. Nor was he disciplined by suspension, expulsion, personal reprimand, or in any other way during that long session. He did fall once under suspicion of misconduct, but in that particular case was innocent.

His career was not entirely calm and placid

in that stormy session, but notwithstanding alleged irregularities he was commended for Italian translation, reported among the "passed" in Latin and French, and, in addition, was known to the librarian as a free reader of good books, to his fellow-students as a gifted author of undergraduate tales never published, and probably of poems afterwards published in the volume of 1827. Among those who applauded his achievements, yet deplored the errancies of his later life, were his brother alumni; and in that small company of sincere mourners who followed his storm-tossed and wrecked body to its humble grave were representatives of his *alma mater*.

When the semi-centennial of his death came, the University of Virginia unveiled, with services so significant as to attract the attention of the cultivated world, the Zolnay bust of Poe, the most striking and satisfactory artistic representation of the poet extant.* Through this successful and significant celebration the University of Virginia's connection

*There were then but two monuments to Poe: his tombstone in Baltimore and the Actors' Monument in the Metropolitan Museum of New York.