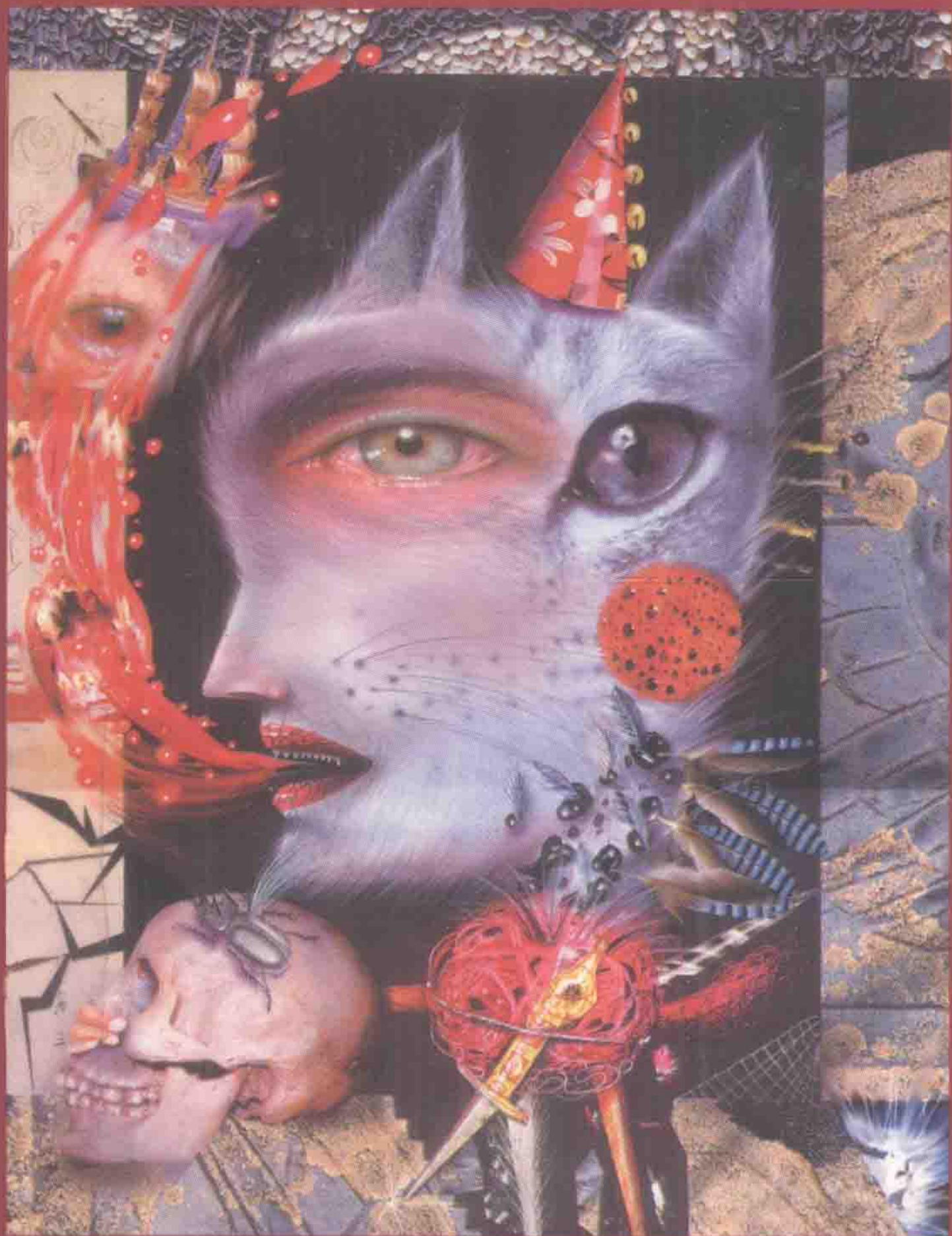


EDGAR ALLAN POE

Great Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe



E N R I C H E D C L A S S I C

E N R I C H E D C L A S S I C

**Great Tales and
Poems of
Edgar Allan Poe**



POCKET BOOKS

New York London Toronto Sydney

The sale of this book without its cover is unauthorized. If you purchased this book without a cover, you should be aware that it was reported to the publisher as "unsold and destroyed." Neither the author nor the publisher has received payment for the sale of this "stripped book."



POCKET BOOKS, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.
1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

Introduction and biographical notes copyright 1951 by
Pocket Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.
Supplementary material copyright © 2003 by
Simon & Schuster, Inc.

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce
this book or portions thereof in any form whatsoever.
For information address Pocket Books, 1230 Avenue
of the Americas, New York, NY 10020

ISBN: 0-7434-6746-9

First Pocket Books printing of this revised edition April 2003

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

POCKET and colophon are registered trademarks of
Simon & Schuster, Inc.

For information regarding special discounts for bulk purchases,
please contact Simon & Schuster Special Sales at 1-800-456-6798
or business@simonandschuster.com

Front cover illustration by Janet Wooley

Printed in the U.S.A.

INTRODUCTION



IT IS WELL over a hundred years since Edgar Allan Poe died. Today, the world thinks of him as a brilliant artist, possessor of one of the most original talents in American letters. But during his lifetime, Poe was insulted, humiliated and misunderstood as a man and a writer. The abuse continued for more than a half-century after his death in 1849.

Toward the end of his life, Poe appointed a Mr. Rufus Wilmot Griswold as his literary executor. In an obituary and later in a biography, Griswold set the tone of Poe's reputation by writing an incredibly scurrilous version of the author's personality and career. From the distorted facts that Griswold had published, Poe was gossiped about, derided and condemned. He was found wanting in moral fiber, that favorite virtue of nineteenth-century America. He was snubbed as an alcoholic, a dope fiend, a frenzied charlatan. Literary critics regarded his work as the production of a madman.

Much of Poe's life is a chronicle of unfinished business, impractical action and melancholy searching. Orphaned at an early age, Poe was adopted by John Allan of Richmond,

INTRODUCTION

Virginia. Allan, whose primary interest was business, never understood his foster son. For the rest of John Allan's life, father and son fought each other in a battle Poe could never win. Withdrawn from the University of Virginia for too much drinking and gambling, dismissed from West Point for infraction of the rules, Poe, with his romantic temperament, was in constant conflict with the more orderly and methodical personality of his foster father. When John Allan died in 1834, he left the twenty-five-year-old Poe deprived of all inheritance and spiritually rejected.

Poe's marriage to his cousin in 1836 was a strange one. Virginia Clemm, a child-bride at the time of the wedding, died at the age of twenty-four. There is doubt that the marriage was ever consummated. Virginia was but one of the many women Poe was forever idealizing. For the rest of his life, he searched for the woman who could give him in reality the idealized woman-image that obsessed his dreams.

The realization of another dream eluded Poe all his adult life. He wanted to issue a magazine of his own. After working as an editor on many publications, Poe was finally able to buy a New York periodical, *The Broadway Journal*. But within six months the venture collapsed for lack of capital.

All along, Poe had been able to sell many of his stories and poems, but payment, if it came at all, was very slow. After Virginia's death in 1847, Poe was in an almost constant state of misery. Plans for a second marriage were disrupted because of his excessive drinking. He tried to kill himself but failed. Long periods of total derangement and hallucination caused him to fear the permanent loss of his sanity. In 1849, the final calamity came. He was found in a Baltimore gutter, dying in a drunken stupor.

Even in the face of his sordid life and the unevenness of his works, Poe slowly began to find his audience.

INTRODUCTION

Translations by the French poets Baudelaire and Mallarmé put him in vogue on the Continent. Soon, new editions of his work appeared in America. His popularity grew. Only then did a just estimate of Edgar Allan Poe and his accomplishments become possible.

That estimate has culminated in one of the most curious paradoxes in the history of literature: Poe's talents were not considered superior but his impact was nearly global. "A second-class writer," the critic V. S. Pritchett has written of him, "yet a fertilizing exclaimer."

In the tales, it is true, Poe's effects of mood and sensation are sometimes too full of art; we are conscious, as we read, that we are being hoodwinked, that a necromancer is playing fantastic tricks on us. Action and description are smothered in the trite phraseology and the gloomy appurtenances of the early writers of Gothic romance; the dialogue of his deranged characters is often more manipulated than maniacal, his images of the ideal woman are hewn from marble or alarmingly cadaverous. He wanders the tomb of his own spirit, so that we feel his art is turned against himself in a kind of literary masochism. Though his pages of literary theory proposed beauty—not truth—as the sole end of poetry, Poe produced what Ludwig Lewisohn termed "the only kind of truth he had to offer—the truth of his own inwardness and sickness and pain."

Often enough the case has been made that Poe is the personal literary god of adolescents. He entertains them by appealing to their extravagant and egotistical impulses. They are able to submit to a chilly moment of horror or to a moment of spiritual languishing; to quest for the abnormal or perverted image of a love that will inflame inspiration or titillate the senses or provide the pleasure of self-sacrifice. But beyond the rhetoric and the tortured utterances of a self-perpetuating and self-devouring adolescent writer is the

INTRODUCTION

work of a genuine innovator. Modern detective fiction owes much of its method to the brilliant treatment of ratiocinative problems in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt." Poe's pronouncements in "The Poetic Principle" and those of his poems that restored music and pulsating rhythms to verse found a breeding ground in the French symbolists of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, from whom, in turn, T. S. Eliot and other modern poets found new forms and techniques. Too, the literary critics are fond of tracing the phenomenon of morbid and decadent states of mind from William Faulkner in our own time back to Poe.

There is even a more intimate paradox in Poe, both man and writer. In his philosophy of composition, he offers a brilliantly succinct portrayal of the conscious artist. He lays down rules for conciseness, for the facile manipulation of the elements of language, for the method of achieving one's preconceived effect and object, and for avoiding the temptation to moralize. Yet there are no Poes in the twentieth century. Blinded to the real meaning of truth in literature, destined by his own inward frustrations and pain to remain unconscious of the universal psychological realities of human beings, Poe rationalized his own artistic method and vision into doctrine.

"From childhood's hour," Poe admitted:

"I have not been
As others were—I have not seen
As others saw—I could not bring
My passions from a common spring."

The "mystery" which bound him from childhood, that "demon in my view" (with which he concludes his poem "Alone"), was an oversized guilt and suffering. But in spite of his confession, it is as if, in his tales and poems, a cosmic

INTRODUCTION

pain—drawn from the spring of common suffering—were being sounded in the extreme. And it is this, perhaps, that helps to explain why Poe is still the most widely read of all nineteenth-century American authors—and not, of course, read merely as a landmark in literary history. He is read because never before and rarely since has any author, European or American, so wholly and impressively captured the horror that is of the soul, and searched into the depths that lie beneath the quotidian existence and consciousness of men.

There is in Poe's prose and verse the odor of decay, the humor of the grotesque, evil confronted by good or suffused with melancholy, the sharp-edged suspense of detection—the incessant death struggle between rational and nonrational forces that has magnetized readers decade after decade.

THE PUBLISHERS

CONTENTS



INTRODUCTIONxi
--------------------	-----

Tales

The Tell-Tale Heart	1
The Cask of Amontillado	7
Hop-Frog	15
The Black Cat	26
Ligeia	37
The Assignation	55
The Oval Portrait	69
The Masque of the Red Death	73
The Fall of the House of Usher	80
The Murders in the Rue Morgue	102
The Mystery of Marie Rogêt	142
The Purloined Letter	199
The Gold-Bug	220
Shadow—A Parable	261

CONTENTS

MS Found in a Bottle	264
A Descent into the Maelström	276
The Pit and the Pendulum	296
The Sphinx	313
The Man of the Crowd	319
The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether . .	330
William Wilson	351

Poems

The Raven	377
Lenore	382
To Helen	383
Ulalume	385
The Bells	389
Annabel Lee	393
The Haunted Palace	395
The Conqueror Worm	397
To ———	398
The Valley of Unrest	399
The City in the Sea	400
The Sleeper	402
A Dream Within a Dream	404
Dream-Land	405
Eulalie	407
Dreams	408

CONTENTS

Silence	409
Eldorado	410
Israfil	411
For Annie	413
To Science	416
Bridal Ballad	417
A Dream	418
To the River	419
To ——	419
Romance	420
Song	421
Spirits of the Dead	422
To Helen	423
Evening Star	424
Imitation	425
“In Youth I Have Known One”	426
A Pæan	427
Alone	430
 BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE	 431
CRITICAL EXCERPTS	435
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING	455

THE TELL-TALE HEART

TRUE!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily—how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye for ever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen *me*. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh, so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to

see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha!—would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights—every night just at midnight—but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I *felt* the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back—but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers), and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in the bed, crying out—"Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie

~~~~~The Tell-Tale Heart~~~~~

down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no!—it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself—“It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is only a mouse crossing the floor,” or “it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp.” Yes, he has been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions; but he had found all in vain. *All in vain*; because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel—although he neither saw nor heard—to *feel* the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little—a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of a spider, shot from out the crevice and full upon the vulture eye.

It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man’s face

or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And now have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses?—now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew *that* sound well too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror *must* have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment!—do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me—the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once—once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of

~~~~~The Tell-Tale Heart~~~~~

the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye—not even *his*—could have detected any thing wrong. There was nothing to wash out—no stain of any kind—no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all—ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock—still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart,—for what had I *now* to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled,—for *what* had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search—search *well*. I led them, at length, to *his* chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them *here* to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My *manner* had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct:—it continued and became

more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definitiveness—until, at length, I found that the noise was *not* within my ears.

No doubt I now grew very pale;—but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? It was *a low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*. I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly—more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations, but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observation of the men—but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what *could* I do? I foamed—I raved—I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—*louder!* And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they *knew!*—they were making a mockery of my horror!—this I thought, and this I think. But any thing was better than this agony! Any thing was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die!—and now—again!—hark! louder! louder! louder! *louder!*—

“Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks!—here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!”