

GRAHAM'S MAGAZINE

[EA POE]

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Whatever may be the merits or demerits, generally, of the Magazine literature of America, there can be no question as to its extent or its influence. The topic-Magazine literature-is therefore, an important one. In a few years its importance will be found to have increased in geometrical ration.¹ The whole tendency of the age is Magazine-ward. These quarterly reviews² have *never* been popular. Not only are they too stilted (by way of keeping up a due dignity), but they make a point, for the same reason, of discussing only topics which are *caviare*³ to the many, and which, for the *most part*, have only conventional interest, even with the few. Their issues, also, are at too long intervals:⁴ their subjects get cold before being served up. In a word, their ponderosity is quite out of keeping with the movement-with the rush of age. We now demand the light artillery of the intellect: we need the curt, the condensed, the pointed, the readily diffused-in place of the verbose, the detailed, the voluminous, the inaccessible. On the other hand, the lightness of the artillery must not degenerate into pop-gunnery⁵-by which character we may designate the character of the greater portion of the newspaper press; whose sole legitimate object is the discussion of ephemeral matters in an ephemeral manner. Whatever talent may be brought to bear upon our daily journals, (and in many cases this talent is *very* great) still the imperative necessity of catching, *current calamo*⁶, every topic as it flits before the eye of the public, must, of course, materially narrow the limits of their power. The bulk, and the period issue of the Monthly Magazine,

¹ According to Silverman, the number of American periodicals, not including newspapers had risen from less than a hundred in 1825, to six hundred in 1850.

² This could be referring to all quarterly reviews, magazines published 4 times out of the year. It is also likely it is referring to *The North American Review* specifically, a magazine edited by Jared Sparks, Alexander H. Everett, J. G. Palfrey, and Francis Bowen. According to Mott, the latter was quite successful.

³ *Caviare*, Latin for distasteful.

⁴ The issues came out only 4 times throughout the year, hence the name “quarterly reviews”.

⁵ Pop-gunnery, here meaning something rare according to the OED

⁶ *Current Calamo*, a Latin word meaning: without deliberation or hesitation, lit. “with the pen running on”

seem to be precisely adapted, if not to all literary wants of the day, at least to the largest and most imperative, as well as the most consequential portion of them.

With these views, we shall, of course, regard attentively all that concerns our Magazines. It is our design to treat this class of journals with a consideration to which hitherto they have been unaccustomed. We propose neither to be laud nor to abuse them; but in regarding them as the most important arenas for our literary men, we shall be pardoned for sweeping them clean of all that is adventitious.

Keeping these intentions in mind, as points to be accomplished *in the future*, we shall content ourselves, this week, with a few observations, at random, on the March number of Graham's Magazine⁷-reserving its general character, as well as the general character of its class, for more deliberate investigation hereafter.

The two first plates are capitally designed and engraved; the "Dacota Woman and the Assiniboin Girl"⁸, in especial, is worthy of all commendation. No annual has been issued in America which might not have been proud of these illustrations. The third plate, called the "Love-Letter," is disgraceful in every respect. The flesh of the woman in sheep's wool, and the hand holding the love-missive, has the air of having been carved by a very small child, with a dull knife, from a raw potato. The essay on Egotism is well written and pointed. Miss Sedgwick's "Incidents at Rome" is only *mediocre*; it has little either of force or novelty. Mr. Simms' "Boatman's Revenge"⁹ is a spirited tale, by one of our best narrators of similar things-a man whose literary interests have suffered by too pertinacious a residence in the South. Mr. Simms is full of fault, but he has a true vigor which more than redeems it. The division of his present story into chapters is without meaning, and has a stiffness which is objectionable. "Serenading"¹⁰ is only so-so. "Lucy Dutton," by Fanny Forrester, is gracefully told. "Foreign Mysteries," by Grund, and "Carry Carlisle" by Mrs. Osgood¹¹, are the best contributed prose articles in the number; the latter piece embodying also some of the best poetry. The editorial criticisms¹² of "Graham" are in general vigorous and pungent- but the notice of "Lowell's

⁷ *Graham's American Monthly Magazine of Literature, Art, and Fashion* (1844-1858); Mar 1845; XXVII, 3. Also referred to as, *Graham's Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine*, and *Graham's Illustrated Magazine of Literature, Romance, Art, and Fashion*; Established by George Rex Graham. Poe himself was one of the editors for the magazine starting sometime in February-April of 1841, until April of 1842, according to the American National Biography.

⁸ The Dacotas and the Assiniboin people were two of the many North American Indian tribes prominent at the time.

⁹ *The Boatman's Revenge: A Tale of Edisto*, by William Gilmore Simms, published in the March, 1845 edition of Graham's Magazine. Poe and Simms did not seem to get along; Simms was quoted as writing "Poe is no friend of mine" in a letter to Evert A. Duyckinck on the 15th of March.

¹⁰ *Serenading* by Mrs. M. N. M'Donald

¹¹ After this positive review of her article, Mrs. Frances S. Osgood met with Poe, responding to his request for her to read and comment on his poem, "The Raven".

¹² Included in these was a very positive review of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* by S. Margaret Fuller. Published alongside this article in *The Broadway Journal* was also a very negative review written by Briggs of this same book.

Conversations”¹³ in the present number, by no means does justice, we think, to the very great and peculiar abilities of the author reviewed.



¹³ *Conversations on Some of the Old Poets*, by James Russell Lowell (1845). Lowell founded the journal “*The Pioneer*”, whose first issue published for the first time, Poe’s famous “The Tell-Tale Heart”.

EDITOR'S NOTE

When first published in *The Broadway Journal*, this review was anonymous. It was not until sometime later that it became known that Poe himself, the co-editor of *The Broadway Journal*, had written it. Although Poe considered himself an equal editing partner to Charles Briggs, Briggs himself was often quoted as saying to other credible writers that he did not like the confrontational and rude nature in which Poe wrote reviews, and had mixed feelings about having his name associated with the journal (Silverman). Briggs admits however, that Poe brought a great deal of attention to the journal with his criticisms and his ideas. One of these ideas, evident in the first paragraph of this article, is the argument Poe makes for the superiority of Monthly Magazines in meeting the needs of the people. Poe's argument that the quarterly reviews could not keep up with the constant production and reproduction of information at this time (a result of the rush of print culture), ties into the fact that the quarterlies were followed and intended for an elite audience, not the general public. Poe seemed to believe monthly magazines to be a perfect potential generator of an American identity that was being stifled by the publishers in Europe, who copyrighted American work, making it difficult for magazine writers in the States to flourish. Poe joined the American Copyright Club in 1843 (Silverman), and was one of the few who promoted Graham's decision to copyright each issue of *Graham's Magazine*. It seems fitting then, that his review of *Graham's Magazine* is delivered alongside the context of this controversial argument.

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