

LOVE, MELANCHOLY, DESPAIR.¹

DEEP melancholy—O, the child of folly!—
Looms on my brow, a perched ancestral bird;
Black are its plumes, its eyes are melancholy,
It speaks no word.

Like to a star, deep beauty's avatar
Pales in the dusky skies so far above:
Seven rays of gladness crown its passionate star,
One heart of love.

The fringing trees, marge of deep-throated seas,
Move as I walk: like spectres whispering
The spaces of them: let me leave the trees—
It is not spring!

Spring—no! but dying autumn fast and flying,
Sere leaves and frozen robins in my breast!
There is the winter—were I sure in dying
To find some rest!

¹ This poem is partially composed on Mr. Poe's scheme of verse—*vide* "The Philosophy of Composition."

There is a shallop—how the breakers gallop,
Grinding to dust the unresisting shore,
A moon-mad thought to wander in the shallop!
Act—think no more!

Pale as a ghost I leave the sounding coast,
The waters white with moonrise. I embark,
Float on to the horizon as a ghost,
Confront the dark.

The cadent curve of Dian seems to swerve,
Eluding helmcraft: let me drift away
Where sea and sky unite their clamorous curve
In praise of Day.

Is it an edge? Some spray-bechiselled ledge?
Some sentry platform to an under sky?
Let me drift onward to the azure edge—
I can but die!

The moon hath seen! An arrow cold and keen
Brings some cold being from the water chill,
Rising between me and the world—unseen,
Most terrible.

Dawns that unheard-of terror! Never a word of
The spells that chain ill spirits I remember.
And oh! my soul! What hands of ice unheard-of
Disturb, dismember!

It hath no shape ; and I have no escape !
It wraps around me, as a mist, despair.
Fear without sense and horror without shape
Most surely there !

O melancholy! charming child of folly,
Where is thy comfort told without a word ?
Where are thy plumes, beloved melancholy,
Familiar bird ?

O emerald star, deep beauty's avatar,
Are thy skies dim ? What throne is thine above ?
Where is the crown of thee—thy sevenfold star,
My heart of love ?

Then from the clinging mist there came a singing,
A dirge re-echoes to the poet prayer :
“I am their child to whom thy soul is clinging,
I am Despair !”