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CHAPTER XXIV.

PENZONI AND POE—"THE PARROT."

IN the spring of 1878, during my "flyer" in Wall Street, I became acquainted with Mr. Leo Penzoni, a peripatetic Italian artist. He painted from the nude and also sang in opera, being a fine linguist, speaking fluently Italian, Spanish, French, German and English.

Penzoni was about thirty-five years of age, six feet tall, with black eyes and hair, Roman nose, wearing a broad brimmed hat, a typical cavalier, who was not only capable of "painting" the nude, but also the town, in midnight moments, with cardinal colors.

Penzoni drifted about the world on the ocean of life, like a stormy petrel, turning up periodically in New York, London, Paris, and Milan, his native city. His poetic and jolly nature captivated me at once, and as we were about the same age, with bohemian dispositions, we very naturally

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drifted together, dined, wined and wandered around the fantastic resorts of Gotham, spending many evenings at theatres and operas, or mingling with the "bloods" who linger around the Fifth Avenue, Hoffman House, Brunswick, Sturtevant or Delmonico's, and other festive "joints" where fun and folly raised the auction at the bid of Bacchus and Venus. The "boys" are doing the same thing to-day.

We often sang and recited poetry for the edification of the gaudy "bugs" and "butterflies" that buzzed about us, boasting of our great authors, Penzoni lauding his Italians to the skies, who had more than two thousand years the start of the lettered men of America.

Of course he had me on the hip, as it were, when comparing our authors with such genuises as Angelo, Raphael, Horace, Virgil, Tasso, and Dante; but I boasted of our West, Trumbull, Powers, Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Bryant, Payne, Prentice, and especially Edgar Allan Poe, winding up my encomiums of the latter with a recitation of "The Raven."

Penzoni laughed outright in my face one evening at the Sturtevant House, surrounded by a coterie of "town tumblers," and immediately said that "The Raven" was stolen almost bodily from a poem entitled "The Parrot," written by his grandfather for the *Art Journal* of Milan in the year 1809.

All the "boys" at the table defied him to produce the poem and back up his emphatic assertion. While he could not give at the time all

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the verses, he recited a half dozen or more, and promised that he would make a literal translation of the poem when next in Milan, and if possible get a copy of the paper, and on his return to New York, let me know of his success.

About four months afterwards I received from him the following letter and poem. It has lain for more than twenty-two years in a pocket of my trunk, almost forgotten; but as the public will be interested and benefited by everything relating to the late Edgar Allan Poe, I give Penzoni's letter and "The Parrot" in the *fac simile* of his handwriting, just as I first saw it at the Sturtevant House.

I have been an ardent admirer of Poe's erratic and lunatic genius for nearly fifty years, and during my schooldays in Kentucky was noted for reciting his "Bells," "Annabel Lee," and "The Raven"; poems of rare and curious combination.

There is certainly a very marked similarity between "The Raven" and "The Parrot," and one might be taken directly from the other with but very little alteration.

Whether Penzoni or Poe composed the original it is not for me to say.

"NEW YORK, July 4th, 1878.

"MY DEAR COLONEL: As you requested I send a literal translation of 'The Parrot,' a poem written by my grandfather in 1809, for the *Art Journal*, Milan, Italy. He was an etcher and writer for the paper.

New York.

July 4, 1878.

My Dear Colonel:

As you requested, I send
a literal translation of the
"Parrot," a poem written by
my Grand Father in 1809,
for *The Art Journal*, Milan,
Italy. He was an etcher
and writer for the paper.

"The Raven" by Poe was taken
almost bodily from the Parrot.

Who is the Plagiarist? Your Friend,
Col. John A. Joyce. Geo Penzoni,
Sturtevant House.

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“‘The Raven,’ by Poe, was taken almost bodily from ‘The Parrot.’

“Who is the plagiarist?
“Your Friend,

“LEO PENZONI.

“COL. JOHN A. JOYCE,
STURTEVANT HOUSE.”

THE PARROT.

*I sit and pine so weary
in midnight sad and dreary,
Over long forgotten volumes
of historic love-lit lore;
And while winking, lonely blinking
I thought I heard while thinking
A rush of wings revolving above
my oaken door,
“What’s that,” said I, disturbing my
melancholy sore—
’Tis my lost one, sweet “Belmore”!*

*The frosts of wild December invoke
me to dismember
My tired and tortured body on this dreary,
dastard shore,
And I trust no waking morrow
Shall rise upon my sorrow,
With all its hideous horror that now
thrills my inmost core—
For my brilliant beaming beauty,
beatic, dear Belmore—
Lost, gone forevermore!*

212 Edgar Allan Poe.

*The rustling purple curtain waves
in and out uncertain,
As weird wizard voices croaking
sardonic laughter o'er and o'er;
And with startled heart still beating
my lips kept on repeating—
"Some spirit seeks an entrance through
"the window or the door,
"Some ghostlike, lonely stranger
knocking at my chamber door"—
"Simply this, and nothing more."*

*Startled by this ghostly vision, with
desperate decision
My soul exclaimed, "sweet madam,
pardon I implore,
Yet your face it shone so brightly
and your footfalls tripped so lightly,
And you came so slightly stealing to my
rustic, artist door—
'Tis a wonder that I heard you; wide,
open flung the door—
Horror, blackness, nothing more!*

*Loud into the blackness calling with
heart beats slowly falling,
With haunted dreams of doubting no
Artist felt before;
But the vision quickly vanished and
all but silence banished,
And I only heard that heaven-lit, love-lit
word "Belmore"—*

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*This I murmured when sweet echo
answered back the word—"Belmore"—
Barely this and nothing more!*

*Startled back so lone and sadly, my
soul revolving madly,
Once again I heard a rapping more
impulsive than before;
"Come in," I kept repeating, and from
the door retreating
To the window, that I might the
curious nooks explore,
While my troubled brain endeavored to
reveal the noise, explore—
"Gusts of wind and nothing more!"*

*Open wide I flung the shutter when
a Parrot with a mutter
Flew into my lonely chamber as it
did in days of yore,
And it seemed to be quiescent, somber,
and evanescent,
As it sat in lonely grandeur above
my chamber door,
Perching on the bust, Minerva, above
my oaken door,
Perched and blinked and nothing more!*

*And this croaking bird is leering,
demoniac appearing,
With feathers ruffled ragged round the
countenance it wore;*

214 Edgar Allan Poe.

*Though thy beak be like a carrot, you
surely are a Parrot—
Croaking, grumbling, screeching Parrot
from some sandy tropic shore;
Tell me now thy devilish purpose
on this red, volcanic shore—
Cried the Parrot, "Nevermore!"*

*How I sat depressed, divining to see
some silver lining
Through clouds that hung around me on
this vile, detested shore,
And my soul with grief was haunted
while there I peered undaunted
To hear a bird with crest, and word
above my oaken door,
Bird or brute upon the marble bust
above my chamber door—
Utter name of "Nevermore"!*

*But the Parrot perching sadly on the
marble bust spoke madly
As if this dark, weird word was his
only stock in store;
And he merely croaked and muttered
While he preened and snapped and fluttered,
As I grumbled, growled and uttered—
"trusted friends have gone before,"
"Soon, oh soon this bird will leave me,
"as sweet hopes have gone before"—
And this bird shrieked "Evermore"!*

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*Shocked and stunned by such replying,
 can it be the bird is lying,
 Or is it willfully determined to be a
 babbling bore;
 Yet, perhaps it knew a master whose
 life was all disaster,
 And sorrows followed faster than was
 ever felt before,
 'Till the echoes of his sorrows, sad re-
 frains forevermore—
 Fearful echo—"Nevermore"!*

*Yet the Parrot still is screeching, to
 my seared heart sadly preaching;
 Defiantly I faced the bird and bust and
 gloom, and door,
 Till on the carpet figures, wrought
 up into cold rigors,
 I frantically demanded what the bird
 meant by its roar,
 This horrid, raving, somber, ruffled
 bird of the days that are no more
 Meant in screeching—"Nevermore"!*

*There I sat in mortal terror, de-
 nounced by many an error,
 With the Parrot's flashing eyeballs
 piercing to my inmost core,
 And I mused there, deeply pining, weep-
 ing, crushed reclining,*

216 Edgar Allan Poe.

*By the curtain's silken lining and the
lamplight glinting o'er,
Beneath its mystic radiance shining
o'er and o'er—
Roared the Parrot—"Nevermore"!*

*Then around me whirled a vision
from the land of the Elysian,
And the air within my chamber fairly
shimmered on the floor,
Wretched Devil! who hath sent thee
to a land where no nepenthe,
Or solace can be given for my lost
and, loved Belmore;
Sure I never can forget her, ever
present, bright Belmore—
Growled the Parrot—"Nevermore"!*

*Parrot, prophet, thing of sorrow, is there
yet for me a morrow
To linger any longer on this sin-
cursed, stormy shore;
Shall I never know a pleasure en-
clasp again a treasure
On this damned, detested, dastard and
this lurid, shocking shore;
Is there any peace or pleasure, oh, tell
me I implore—
Croaked the Parrot—"Nevermore"!*

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*Croaker, Dastard, Word of Evil, Prophet,
 Bird or Screeching Devil!
 By the stars that shine above us
 by the God that all adore,
 Tell this soul, whose hope is riven,
 if in some celestial heaven
 It shall clasp an angel Beauty, who
 is known as rare "Bellmore,"
 And entwine his arms around
 her, my ethereal "Belmore"—
 Pipped the Parrot—"Nevermore"!*

*Horrid bird! I shrieked emphatic,
 and wildly, loud, lunatic,
 I flung the prattling Parrot through
 the night's dark, shoreless shore,
 While its gilded feathers fluttered, in
 the darkness still and muttered—
 "I'll not leave thee, doubting Devil, but
 "remain above thy door—
 "Sink my beak into thy trembling
 "heart, and torture more and more"—
 Shrieked the Parrot—"Evermore"!*

*And the Parrot still is posing,
 winking, blinking, dozing
 On that marble bust, Minerva, just
 above my oaken door,
 And his hellish eyes are beaming
 Like a Devil who is dreaming,*

218 Edgar Allan Poe.

*While the sputtering, fluttering
lamplight paints his shadow on the floor.
And my soul-lit spirit writhing in
that shadow on the floor—
Dead and damned—"Forevermore"!
(Signed) PENZONI.*

THE END.