

1843

CONQUEROR WORM

Edgar Allan Poe

Poe, Edgar Allan (1809-49) - American poet, short-story writer, and critic who is best known for his tales of ratiocination, his fantastical horror stories, and his genre-founding detective stories. Poe, whose cloudy personal life is a virtual legend, considered himself primarily a poet. Conqueror Worm (1843) - A poem which appears in Poe's story, "Ligeia." Opening lines: Lo! 't is a gala night / Within the lonesome latter years! ...

The Conqueror Worm

Lo! 'tis a gala night Within the lonesome latter years!

An angel throng, bewinged, bedight In veils, and drowned in tears, Sit in a theatre, to see A play of hopes and fears, While the orchestra breathes fitfully The music of the spheres.

Mimes, in the form of God on high, Mutter and mumble low, And hither and thither fly Mere puppets they, who come and go At bidding of vast formless things That shift the scenery to and fro, Flapping from out their Condor wings Invisible Woe!

That motley drama- oh, be sure It shall not be forgot!

With its Phantom chased for evermore, By a crowd that seize it not, Through a circle that ever returneth in To the self-same spot, And much of Madness, and more of Sin, And Horror the soul of the plot.

But see, amid the mimic rout A crawling shape intrude!

A blood-red thing that writhes from out The scenic solitude!

It writhes!- it writhes!- with mortal pangs The mimes become its food, And seraphs sob at vermin fangs In human gore imbued.

Out- out are the lights- out all!

And, over each quivering form, The curtain, a funeral pall, Comes down with the rush of a storm, While the angels, all pallid and wan, Uprising, unveiling, affirm That the play is the tragedy, "Man," And its hero the Conqueror Worm.

THE END