

THOMAS HOLLEY CHIVERS (1809-1858).

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Known today primarily for his association with Edgar Allan Poe. Thomas Holley Chivers published ten books of poetry, drama, and expository prose, all at his own expense.

The son of Colonel Robert Chivers, a cotton planter, Chivers was born near Washington, Ga., on October 18, 1809. In 1827 he married a first cousin, Elizabeth Chivers, who left him within a year. After earning a medical degree from Transylvania University in 1830, he briefly practiced medicine near Oaky Grove, the family plantation. In 1832 he published a collection of eighteen poems called *The Path of Sorrow*. Two years later, he published *Conrad and Eudora*, a play based on the Kentucky Tragedy, a well-known murder that also inspired Poe's *Politian*. In 1837 another poetry collection, *Nacoochee*, followed.

After his marriage to a Massachusetts woman, Harriett Hunt, in 1837, Chivers lived in Connecticut and New York between 1838 and 1842. Between 1842 and 1844, he lost four children. The loss of his three-year-old daughter Allegra Florence was particularly devastating and inspired poems in his 1845 collection *The Lost Pleiad*. After a return to Georgia in 1845, he published the prose exposition *Search After Truth* in 1848. Between 1850 and 1852, Chivers again lived in New York and Connecticut, writing "Letters from the North" for the *Georgia Citizen* and publishing the poetry collection *Eonchs of Ruby* in 1851. In 1853, while living in Boston, he published a narrative poem called *Atlanta; or, The True Blessed Isle of Poesy* and the poetry collection *Virginalia*. He returned to Georgia in 1855 and, in 1856, delivered and published *Birth-Day Song of Liberty*. His play *The Sons of Usna* appeared in 1858. He died that year, on December 18, in Decatur, Ga.

A minor poet, Chivers nevertheless drew positive attention from William Gilmore Simms and Poe, who both praised *The Lost Pleiad*. A Romantic poet with a taste for love, death, and the beautiful, Chivers also explored current events, Native American folklore, and Swedenborgian theology. The author of some decidedly florid and sentimental verse, he has also been recognized as a serious versifier who experimented with poetic forms and even African American dialect.

More enduring than any of his work has been Chivers's connection with Poe. The two corresponded from 1840 until Poe's death in 1849 and seem to have relied on each other for both support and inspiration. Poe solicited Chivers's help with his proposed "Penn" magazine and his failing *Broadway Journal*. In 1847 Chivers even offered to take in his ailing friend and care for him. As poets, they were of one mind and, at times, seem even to have written with the same pen. Chivers's poems about Isadore and the "child-like" and "beautiful, dutiful" Lily Adair, for instance, are remarkably similar to Poe's treatments of Lenore and Annabel Lee. Simms suggested to Chivers that he depended too much on Poe, but Chivers argued, in letters and articles after Poe's death, that the influence sometimes flowed in the other direction. In any case, it is unlikely that Chivers will soon come out from under the shadow of his idol, whom he called "one of the greatest men that ever lived" --and who called him "one of the best and one of the worst poets in America."

WORKS: *The Path of Sorrow; or, The Lament of Youth: A Poem* (1832). *Conrad and Eudora* (1834). *Nacoochee; or, The Beautiful Star, with Other Poems* (1837). *The Lost Pleiad, and Other Poems* (1845). *Search after Truth; or, A New Revelation of the Psycho-Physiological Nature of Man* (1848). *Eonchs o f Ruby: A Gift of Love* (1851). *Atlanta; or, The True Blessed Isle of Poesy. A Paul Epic in Three Lustra* (1853). *Virginalia; or, Songs of My Summer Nights. A Gift of Love for the Beautiful* (1853). *Memorialia; or, Phials of Amber Full of the Tears of Love. A Gift for the Beautiful* (1853). *Birth-Day Song of Liberty; A Paean of Glory for the Heroes of Freedom* (1856). *The Sons of Usna: A Tragi-Apotheosis, in Five Acts* (1858). *Chivers' Life of Poe*, ed. Richard Beale Davis (1952). *The Correspondence of Thomas Holley Chivers*, ed. Emma Chase and Lois Parks (1957). *The Unpublished Plays of Thomas Holley Chivers*, ed. Charles M. Lombard (1980).

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