

Hieroglyphics Highlights

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Highlights from Arthur Machen's Hieroglyphics (1902). Page references from the Tartarus Press edition (2019).

Note

- 1 There had been a break of some sort in the man's life when he was quite young; and so he had left the world and gone to Barnsbury, an almost mythical region lying between Pentonville and the Caledonian Road. (p. 1)
- 2 I have spent many evenings in that old mouldering room, where, when we were silent for an instant, the inanimate matter about us found a voice, and the decaying beams murmured together, and a vague sound might come from the cellars underneath. (p. 3)
- 3 I think that he cherished, in the fashion of S. T. C. (*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*), the notion that he had a "system," an esoteric philosophy of things; he sought for a key that would open, and a lamp that would enlighten all the dark treasure-houses of the Universe, and sometimes he believed that he held both the Key and the Lamp in his hands. (p. 4)

Chapter I

- 4 And, after all, the office-boy who "puts on" half-a-crown is really only an example of the love of man for the unknown; the half-crown is a venture into mystery, with that due flavour of commercialism which we in England add to most of our interests. But you see, don't you? that gambling, even under its most sordid aspects, is not altogether sordid; it's the mystery, the uncertainty, the hours of "strange surmise" that the smallest bet gives to the bettor that make the real delight of betting. (p. 7)
- 5 I suspect that a good deal of the allurements that trade possesses for so many of us is the risk which it almost always implies, and risk means uncertainty, and uncertainty connotes the unknown. So you see our despised grocer turns out, after all, to be of the kin of Columbus, of the treasure-seekers, and mystery-mongers, and delvers after hidden things spiritual and material. (p. 8)
- 6 how does it happen that the English are both the greatest poets and the greatest tradesmen of the modern world? Superficially, it seems that keeping shops and making poetry are incompatibles, and Wordsworth and Coleridge, Keats and Shelley, Tennyson and Poe, should have come from Provence or Sicily, from the "unpractical," uncommercial Latin races. (p. 9)
- 7 a burning anxiety as to the running of Bolter is for many thousands the symbol-and the only possible symbol-of the Doom of Troy and the wandering fields of foam, and the Isle of Calypso, and the "strange surmise" of Pizarro and all his men. (p. 10)
- 8 Is the whole mass literature in the true sense of the word? If not, with what instrument, by what rule are we to divide the true from the false, to judge exactly in the case of any particular book whether it is literature or not? (p. 12)
- 9 what is it that differentiates fine literature from a number of grammatical, or partly grammatical, sentences arranged in a more or less logical order? Why is the Odyssey to come in, why is the "literature" of our evening paper to be kept out? (p. 13)
- 10 If **ecstasy** be present, then I say there is fine literature, if it be absent, then, in spite of all the cleverness, all the talents, all the workmanship and observation and dexterity you may show me, then, I think, we have a product (possibly a very interesting one), which is not fine literature. (p. 14)

- 11 I said my answer was the word, **ecstasy**; I still say so, but I may remark that I have chosen this word as the representative of many. Substitute, if you like, rapture, beauty, adoration, wonder, awe, mystery, sense of the unknown, desire for the unknown. All and each will convey what I mean; for some particular case one term may be more appropriate than another, but in every case there will be that withdrawal from the common life and the common consciousness which justifies my choice of "**ecstasy**" as the best symbol of my meaning. (*p. 14*)
- 12 I don't object to "very good," but from my point of view, "very good" and "fine literature" are two different things. You see I believe that the difference between interesting, exciting, tear-compelling, laughter-moving reading matter and fine art is not specific but generic: who would blaspheme against good bitter beer, who would say that because it is good, it is therefore Burgundy? (*p. 16*)
- 13 Is it art? Is it even artifice? Isn't art because it is true! But if I invented such a telegram and sent it to a woman whose husband and son were away, would it thereby become art? You must see perfectly well that it would be nothing of the kind; and I must ask you to explain how a book which is, virtually, a long succession of such telegrams can rise higher than its origin and source? You must see, I think, that the question of truth and falsity can make no real difference to our (no doubt pompous) high aesthetic standpoint; and if you admit that four words which produce an emotional result are not necessarily art, then it follows that four hundred or four hundred thousand words woven together on the same principle are in no better position. An increased quantity means no doubt an increased artifice, but artifice and art are very different things. (*p. 17*)
- 14 We must really then omit "interesting" in our account of the possible criteria of fine art; the word as it were cancels itself out, because it may mean on the one hand the possession of the highest artistic value, or on the other it may serve as epithet for a book which gratifies the lowest curiosity. (*p. 18*)
- 15 literature which fails to rise above the level of life, or rather, to penetrate beneath the surface of life, is not fine literature in our sense of that term. A gold nugget may be as pure and fine as you like, but it is not a sovereign; it lacks the stamp; and it is the business of art to give its stamp and imprint to the matter of life. (*p. 21*)
- 16 contrivances, artifices, in no way differing in degree from the contrivances of the man who makes the garden path, of the cook who "dusts in" just a suspicion of lemon-rind, of the bee who administers the "royal food." (*p. 24*)
- 17 Poe seemed to hint at the "other-consciousness" of man, and to suggest, at least, the presence of that shadowy, unknown, or half-known companion who walks beside each one of us all our days. (*p. 25*)
- 18 I daresay you think I have dealt rather crudely, in a somewhat materialistic spirit, with this criterion of "fidelity to life." I admit the charge, but you must remember that I am dealing with very bad people, who understand nothing but materialism. And when these people tell you in so many words that it is the author's business clearly and intelligently to present the life-the common, social life around him-then, believe me, the only thing to be done is to throw "Odyssey" and "Ådipus," "Morte D'Arthur," "Kubla Khan" and "Don Quixote" straight in their faces (*p. 30*)
- 19 But as I was saying, all this would be too subtle for the enemy, for the people who maintain that fine literature is a faithful reflection of life, and think that Jane Austen touched the point of literary supremacy. (*p. 31*)
- 20 In distinguishing between art and artifice I pointed out that the latter merely signifies the adaptation of means to an end, and has no relation whatever with art properly so-called (*p. 32*)
- 21 What is a good style? If you mean by a "good" style, one that delivers the author's meaning in the clearest possible manner, if its purpose and effect are obviously utilitarian, if it be designed solely with the view of imparting knowledge-the knowledge of what the author intends-then I must point out that "style" in this sense is or should be amongst the accomplishments of every commercial clerk-indeed, it will be merely a synonym for plain speaking and plain writing-and in this sense it is evidently not one of the marks of art, since the object of art is not information, but a peculiar kind of aesthetic delight. But if on the other hand style is to mean such a use and choice of words and phrases and cadences that the ear and the soul through the ear receive an impression of subtle but most beautiful music, if the sense and sound and colour of the words affect us with an almost inexplicable delight, then I say that while Idea is the soul, style is the glorified body of the very highest literary art. (*p. 33*)

Chapter II

- 22 that shadowy double, that strange companion of man, who walks, as I said, foot to foot with each one of us, and yet his paces are in an unknown world. And (unless you have got any fresh arguments) I think we decided last week that the book which lacks the sense of all this is not fine literature. (*p. 36*)
- 23 I believe that the plot of "Jekyll and Hyde" would still have had some fascination, though it had been treated by the veriest dolt in letters. But that is not a good example, since "Jekyll and Hyde" is certainly in its conception, though not in its execution, a work of fine art. (*p. 41*)
- 24 We read the "Odyssey" because we are supernatural, because we hear in it the echoes of the eternal song, because it symbolises for us certain amazing and beautiful things, because it is music; we read Miss Austen and Thackeray because we like to recognise the faces of our friends aptly reproduced, to see the external face of humanity so deftly mimicked, because we are natural. (*p. 42*)
- 25 But all that I wanted to do was to draw the line between things made for use, to occupy some definite place in relation to our common daily life; and things made by ecstasy and for ecstasy, things that are symbols, proclaiming the presence of the unknown world. (*p. 43*)
- 26 I am not going to analyze "Pickwick" any more than I analyzed "Vanity Fair," but of course you see that, in its conception, it is essentially one with the "Odyssey." It is a book of wandering; you start from your own doorstep and you stray into the unknown; every turn of the road fills you with surmise, every little village is a discovery, a something new, a creation. You know not what may happen next; you are journeying through another world. (*p. 43*)
- 27 But I confess that the atmosphere (which to me seems all the wild weather and the wild legend of the north) suggested by those phrases "a thick white cloud," and "a wind that's piercing cold" is in my judgment wholly marvellous. But Dickens, of course, is full of impressions which never become expressions. You remember that chapter about the lawyer's clerks in the "Magpie and Stump"? It is always quite pathetic to me to note how Dickens felt the strangeness, the mystery, the haunting that are like a mist about the old Inns of Court, and how utterly unable he was to express his emotion-to find a fit symbol for his meaning. (*p. 46*)
- 28 It is quite true that when an author writes a romance containing a hero and a heroine he must tell you who they are, he must give, briefly and succinctly, the necessary details-names, ages, conditions and so forth-but if he is a great author he will do this incidentally and make us feel that such details are incidental. In short, he must poise his feet on earth, but his way is to the stars. (*p. 49*)
- 29 The old tower standing in the midst of lonely, red ploughlands far from the highway, is at first only the convenient place where the young peasant studies astronomy; but as you read you feel the change coming, the tower is transmuted, glorified; every stone of it is aglow with mystic light; it is made the abode of the Lover and the Beloved, it is seen to be a symbol of Love, of an ecstasy, remote, and passionate, and eternal, dwelling far from the ways of men. (*p. 50*)
- 30 And, in like manner, no labour, no care, no polishing of the phrase, no patience in investigation, no artifice in plot or in construction will ever make "reading-matter" into fine literature. (*p. 53*)

Chapter III

- 31 I think we succeeded in demonstrating the falsity of this idea, in showing clearly and decisively that fine literature means the expression of the eternal human ecstasy in the medium of words, and that it means nothing else whatsoever. (*p. 54*)
- 32 if the English is admirably neat and sufficient, then reading-matter becomes fine literature. Make the bonfire high enough and your young ducks will be burned into phoenixes fast enough; let the artifice be sufficiently artificial and it will be art. Indeed you might as well maintain that a wooden statue, if it be really well carved, is thereby made into a gold statue. (*p. 56*)
- 33 Well, I really hope that we have at last settled the matter; that fine literature is simply the expression of the eternal things that are in man, that it is beauty clothed in words, that it is always ecstasy, that it always draws itself away, and goes apart into lonely places, far from the common course of life. Realise this, and you will

never be misled into pronouncing mere reading-matter, however interesting, to be fine literature; and now that we clearly understand the difference between the two, I propose that we drop the "fine" and speak simply of literature. (p. 57)

- 34 Essentially, it expresses the eternal quest of the unknown, that longing, peculiar to man, which makes him reach out towards infinity; and he lifts up his eyes, and he strains his eyes, looking across the ocean, for certain fabled, happy islands, for Avalon that is beyond the setting of the sun. And he comes into life from the unknown world, from glorious places, and all his days he journeys through the world, spying about him, going on and ever on, expecting beyond every hill to find the holy city, seeing signs, and omens, and tokens by the way, reminded every hour of his everlasting citizenship. (p. 58)
- 35 if literature be the language of the Shadowy Companion it must yet be translated out of the unknown speech into the vulgar tongue. Here then we have the elements of a book. Firstly the Idea or Conception, the thing of exquisite beauty which dwells in the author's soul, not yet clothed in words, nor even in thought, but a pure emotion. Secondly, when this emotion has taken definite form, is made incarnate as it were, in the shape of a story, which can be roughly jotted down on paper, we may speak of the Plot. Thirdly, the plot has to be systematised, to be drawn to scale, to be carried out to its legitimate conclusions, to be displayed by means of Incident; and here we have Construction. Fourthly, the story is to be written down, and Style is the invention of beautiful words which shall affect the reader by their meaning, by their sound, by their mysterious suggestion. (p. 61)
- 36 If I may speak from my own experience, simply a rather languid admiration of the ingenuity of the plot with its construction, combined with a slight feeling of impatience, such as one might experience if one were asked to solve a puzzle for the second time. You see that the secret once disclosed, all the steps which lead to the disclosure become, ipso facto, insignificant, or rather they become nothing at all, since their only significance and their only existence lay in the secret, and when the secret has ceased to be a secret, the signs and cyphers of it fall also into the world of nonentity. (p. 63)
- 37 It is on the conception, then, alone, that I justify my inclusion of "Jekyll" amongst works of art; for it seems to me that, lurking behind the plot, we divine the presence of an Idea, of an inspiration. "Man is not truly one, but truly two," or, perhaps, a polity with many inhabitants, Dr Jekyll writes in his confession, and I think that I see here a trace that Mr Stevenson had received a vision of the mystery of human nature, compounded of the dust and of the stars, of a dim vast city, splendid and ruinous as drowned Atlantis deep beneath the waves, of a haunted quire where a flickering light burns before the Veil. (p. 64)
- 38 man is a sacrament, soul manifested under the form of body, and art has to deal with each and both and to show their interaction and interdependence. The most perfect form of literature is, no doubt, lyrical poetry which is, one might say, almost pure Idea, art with scarcely an alloy of artifice, expressed in magic words, in the voice of music. (p. 65)
- 39 Yes, that seems to me the vitium of "Jekyll and Hyde": the conception has been badly realised, and by badly I do not mean clumsily, because from the logical, literal standpoint, the plot and the construction are marvels of cleverness; but I mean inartistically: ecstasy, which as we have settled is the synonym of art, gave birth to the idea, but immediately abandoned it to artifice, and to artifice only, instead of presiding over and inspiring every further step in plot, in construction, and in style. (p. 66)
- 40 you see how a book is a rendering, a translation of an Idea, and how a very fine idea may be embodied in a very mechanical plot. (p. 67)
- 41 It is not the painter's business to make us a likeness of a tree or a rock; it is his business to communicate to us an emotion-an ecstasy, if you please-and that he may do so he uses a tree or a rock as a symbol, a word in his language of colour and form. It is not the business of the sculptor to chisel likenesses of men in marble; the human form is to him also a symbol which stands for an idea. In the same manner it is not the business of the literary artist to describe facts-real or imaginary-in words: he is possessed with an idea which he symbolises by incident, by a story of men and women and things. (p. 68)
- 42 The only point, absolutely the only point is this: is the incident significant or insignificant, is it related for its own sake, or is it posited because it is a sign, a symbol, a word which veils and reveals the artist's ecstasy and inspiration? (p. 69)

- 43 I said, you remember, that in art, facts as facts have no existence at all. Facts, incidents, plots, simply form the artistic speech-its mode of expression, or medium-and if there is no idea behind the facts, then you have no longer language but gibberish. (*p. 70*)
- 44 The "other things"? Ah, that is another synonym, but who can furnish a precise definition of the indefinable? They are sometimes in the song of a bird, sometimes in the scent of a flower, sometimes in the whirl of a London street, sometimes hidden under a great lonely hill. Some of us seek them with most hope and the fullest assurance in the sacring of the Mass, others receive tidings through the sound of music, in the colour of a picture, in the shining form of a statue, in the meditation of eternal truth. Do you know that I can never hear a jangling piano-organ, contending with the roar of traffic without the tears-not of feeling but of emotion-coming to my eyes? (*p. 72*)
- 45 When men are young, the inward ecstasy, the "red powder of projection" is of such efficacy and virtue that the grossest and vilest matter is transmuted for them into pure gold, glistening and glorious as the sun. The child (and with him you may link all primitive and childlike people) approaches books and pictures just as he approaches nature itself and life; and a wonderful vision appears where many of us can only see the common and insignificant. (*p. 74*)

Chapter IV

- 46 do you know that there are really people who make their liking or disliking of the characters the criterion of literature-of romances, I mean? (*p. 78*)
- 47 And this is well enough with secondary books, since they contain nothing but "characters," and "incidents," and "scenes," and "facts"; but it is by no means well in literature, in which, as we found out, all these things are symbols, words of a language, used, not for themselves, but because they are significant. (*p. 79*)
- 48 It is true that all the good there is in men is this-that at rare intervals, in certain lonely moments of exaltation they do feel for the time a faint stirring of the beautiful within them, and then they would adventure on the Quest of the Graal; but as you know few of us are saints, fewer, perhaps, are men of genius; we are sunk for the most part of our days in the common life, and our care is for the body and for the things of the body, for the street and the drawing-room, and not for the perpetual, solitary hills. (*p. 79*)
- 49 Let us get back to our maxim that, in literature, facts and incidents are not present for their own sake but as symbols, as words of the language of art; it will follow, then, that the incidents of the Dionysus myth, the incidents of "Pantagruel" and "Pickwick" are not to be taken literally, but symbolically. (*p. 84*)
- 50 Art, you may feel quite assured, proceeds always from love and rapture, never from hatred and disdain, and satire of every kind qua satire is eternally condemned to that Gehenna where the pamphlets, the "literature of the subject," and the "life-like" books lie all together. (*p. 86*)
- 51 There is only this to be mentioned: that, if I were you, I would not be "afraid with any amazement" should Mr Pickwick's overdose of milk punch prove, ultimately, a clue to the labyrinth of mystic theology. (*p. 87*)
- 52 the very grotesquerie of Rabelais shows a further remove from the daily round, a purer metal, less tinged with the personal, material, interest than "Don Quixote." Mind you, I find greater deftness, a finer artifice in Cervantes, who I think expressed his conception the more perfectly, but I think that the conception of Rabelais the higher, precisely because it is the more remote. (*p. 90*)
- 53 Rabelais soars above the common life, above the streets and the gutter by going far lower than the streets and the gutter: he brings before you the highest by positing that which is lower than the lowest, and if you have the prepared, initiated mind, a Rabelaisian "list" is the best preface to the angelic song. (*p. 90*)
- 54 I think that when one knows of the key-or rather of the keys-one opens the pages almost with a sensation of dread. So it is a book that one consults at long intervals, because it is only at rare moments that a man can bear the spectacle of his own naked soul, and a vision that is splendid, certainly, but awful also, in its constant apposition of the eternal heights and the eternal depths. (*p. 94*)

Chapter V

- 55 I will make you ask, if you please, whether Charles Dickens had any consciousness of the interior significance of the milk-punch, strong ale, and brandy and water which he caused Mr Pickwick and his friends to consume in such outrageous quantities. (*p. 95*)
- 56 you need not expect me to give you a plain, cut and dried answer to your question whether literature is a conscious production-or, in more particular form-was Dickens aware that by milk-punch he meant ecstasy? (*p. 96*)
- 57 Why, dancing is as much an expression of the human secret as literature itself, and I expect it is even more ancient; and Harriet and Emily, leaping on the pavement, to that jingling, clattering tune, were merely showing that though they were the children of the slum, and the step-children of the School Board, they were yet human, and partakers of the universal sacrament. (*p. 97*)
- 58 I suppose we must say that they are not conscious. They dance and leap without calculation, as they eat and drink, and as birds sing in springtime; and very much the same answer must be given to the similar question as to literature. (*p. 98*)
- 59 in the case of Dickens, at all events, there was no very clear consciousness of what had been achieved, and I believe that you would find the rule hold good with other artists in a greater or less degree. With Dickens it holds in a very high degree, just because there was that tremendous gulf I have so often spoken about between his inward and his outward self; because, with the soul of rare genius, his intelligence lived in those dreary, dusty London streets, because the artificer, even while he carried out the artist's commands, understood very little what he was doing. (*p. 100*)
- 60 You remember what I said about his "Two on a Tower"; I praised it for its ecstatic passion, for that revelation of a great rapture, for its symbolism, showing how one must withdraw from the common ways, from the dusty highroad and the swarming street, and go apart into high, lonely places, if one would perceive the high, eternal mysteries. (*p. 101*)
- 61 think what might have happened if the Rabelais who had been put in the dark cell of Fontenay-le-Comte had completely gained the upper hand, and had silenced that other Rabelais-that solitary and rapturous soul who had seen as in a glass the marvellous face of man. (*p. 102*)
- 62 But his true work is-as it is the work of all artists-the shaping for us of ecstasy by means of symbols; and for him the symbol which he understands is, no doubt, the passion of love, and with it the symbol of red, lonely ploughlands, of deep overshadowed lanes that climb the hills and wander into lands that we know not, of dark woods that hide a secret, of strange, immemorial barrows where one may have communion with the souls of the dead. (*p. 103*)
- 63 I am in no way concerned to defend the position that an author must always remain unconscious of the work that he has done. As a matter of fact I think that always, or almost always, he is unconscious while he is writing; but I see no reason why the revelation may not come to him afterwards (*p. 104*)
- 64 But the next volume "Discords" took distinctly lower ground. The artifice was better, the stories, as stories, were told with more skill and more deftness than anything in "Keynotes"; but there was no more literature; there was only the "literature of the subject." The incidents were no longer symbols of an emotion (*p. 106*)
- 65 art is not, in the ordinary acceptance of the term, a conscious product. Perhaps it would be a perilous dogmatism, on the other hand, to definitely pronounce it to be unconscious; and I expect we had better take refuge in the subconscious, that convenient name for the transcendental element in human nature. (*p. 107*)
- 66 I like best my old figure of the Shadowy Companion, the invisible attendant who walks all the way beside us, though his feet are in the Other World; and I think that it is he who whispers to us his ineffable secrets, which we clumsily endeavour to set down in mortal language. I think that while the artist works he is conscious of joy and of nothing more; he works beautifully but he could give no rationale of the process, and when he endeavours to explain himself, we are often perplexed by this strange spectacle of a man wholly ignorant of his own creation. (*p. 107*)
- 67 you see that art, properly so called, takes its place in the great scheme of things; it is no studied contortion, no strange trick acquired by the late ingenuity of man, but as "natural" (and as supernatural) as the blossoming of a flower, and the singing of the nightingale. (*p. 108*)

- 68 All these were alike men of the mountains, men who withdrew from the camp, and went apart into high solitary places, into the lonely wilderness, into the forest, and in such retirements and cells they uttered the voices that came to them, speaking words that were unintelligible to themselves. (*p. 110*)
- 69 They never wholly understand, they are never able to express in rational terms the whole force of the message, for the good reason that the language of the soul infinitely transcends the language of the understanding (*p. 110*)
- 70 And so, however well an artist or those who appreciate his work may "understand" his meaning, they do but "understand" a little; since the tongue of art has many words which have no rendering in the speech of the understanding. (*p. 111*)

Chapter VI

- 71 Take the lowest, the simplest instance. Here is a knife with a wooden handle, and the handle has certain curious carved designs on it, which do not enable it to be held better. Why is this knife better, more to be valued, than that other knife, which is not decorated at all? It does not cut better; it does not justify its existence and purpose as a knife more than the other; where is its superiority? Because I find pleasure in seeing those designs? But why do I find any pleasure in ornament? What is the rationalistic justification for that pleasure? (*p. 115*)
- 72 You have at last to answer that you have a joy which you cannot in any way define in the purely decorative pattern; and with that answer the whole system of rationalism topples over. Rationalism may say to you: Either give a definite reason for going to Mass, or leave off going. You have only to answer: Your command is based on the premiss that one should do nothing without being able to give a definite reason for it. But I can give no definite reason for liking the Odyssey or a curiously carved knife-and yet you confess that I am right in liking these things. Then I have proved the contradictory of your premiss, as you have admitted that there are things that one may do without being able to give a definite reason for doing them: ergo, I shall not neglect the "parson's bell." (*p. 115*)
- 73 the premiss baldly stated is simply this: that logic does not cover life, or in other words, that life cannot be judged by the rules of logic, of common sense. (*p. 117*)
- 74 You know, don't you, that ever since that unhappy Reformation of ours people have been talking nonsense about the Aristotelian logic, and fumbling, in the most grotesque manner, for some "new" logic. Our great false prophet Bacon (a wretch infinitely more guilty than Hobbes) began it in England with his "Novum Organum"; and if you wish to really estimate "educated" folly, to touch the bottom of the incredible depths to which a man of information may sink, read Macaulay's comparison of the "old" philosophy and the "new" philosophy. The essayist says that the "old" philosophy was no good, because it never led up to the steam-engine and the telegraph post. (*p. 117*)
- 75 our religion doesn't rest on a logical foundation, they say. But does anything of any consequence rest on a logical foundation? Can you reduce the "Morte d'Arthur" into valid syllogisms in Barbara, can you "disprove" Salisbury Cathedral by the aid of Celarent. What is the "rational" explanation of our wonder and joy at the vision of the hills? (*p. 119*)
- 76 I am inclined to think that when they condemn religious or artistic emotions because they are "illogical," they mean by "illogical" that which does not conduce to the ease and comfort of the digestive apparatus or the money-making faculty. They are terrible fellows, you know, some of these persons. For example, I asked, with a tone of undue triumph, I am afraid, for the "reason why" we experience awe and delight in the presence of the hills. But in certain quarters my problem would be very quickly solved. I should be told, more in sorrow than in anger, that my emotion at the sight of certain shapes of earth was due to the fact that hill air was highly ozonised, and that the human race had acquired an instinctive pleasure in breathing it, greatly to its digestive profit. (*p. 119*)
- 77 tackled a materialist once on very similar lines. He began by saying that time and thought devoted to religion (they never see that art and religion stand or fall together, religion being the foundation of the fine arts) were an utter waste of time as they only diverted us from consideration of the present world, which we ought to study to the utmost (*p. 121*)

- 78 Then he said kindly but firmly that religion wasn't rational, and I used up most of the arguments that I have used to-night; I mean, I showed him that it is good to paint pictures, to write poems, to devise romances, and to compose symphonies, and that it is also good to meditate and enjoy all these things. Hence, he was forced to admit, that his suppressed premiss had been disproved, and that he must no longer say: "that which is not rational is absurd." (*p. 122*)
- 79 If the science of life, if philosophy, consisted of a series of mathematical propositions, capable of rational demonstration, then, "Pride and Prejudice" would be the highest pinnacle of the literary art; but if not, but oh! if we, being wondrous, journey through a wonderful world, if all our joys are from above, from the other world where the Shadowy Companion walks, then no mere making of the likeness of the external shape will be our art, no veracious document will be our truth; but to us, initiated, the Symbol will be offered, and we shall take the Sign and adore, beneath the outward and perhaps unlovely accidents, the very Presence and eternal indwelling of God. (*p. 127*)

Appendix

- 80 we have already seen that in literature, facts as facts, have no existence at all. They are only "words" in the language of literary art, and are used as symbols of something else. That A. is in love with B. is a "scientific truth," a fact; but if it be not also a symbol, it has no literary existence whatever; and this of course is what Poe wished to say-literature is not a matter of information. (*p. 129*)
- 81 Poetry of course is literature in its purest state; it is, as I think I once said, almost the soul without the body; at its highest it is almost pure art unmixed with the alloy of artifice. And to carry on the analysis, the finest form of poetry is necessarily the lyrical. (*p. 130*)
- 82 Of course primitive man had moods in which rapture seemed to embrace everything, to invest every detail of existence with its own singular and inexplicable glory. A meal by the seashore, the dry wood flaming and crackling on the sand, the roasting goat's flesh, the honey-sweet wine, dark and almost as glorious as the sea itself-a mere dinner of half-savages, one might think it, but it too seems to have its solemnity and its inner meaning. (*p. 130*)
- 83 No; it seems to me that primitive man, Homeric man, medieval man, man, indeed, almost to our own day when the School Board (and other things) have got hold of him, had such an unconscious but all-pervading, all-influencing conviction that he was a wonderful being, descended of a wonderful ancestry, and surrounded by mysteries of all kinds, that even the smallest details of his life partook of the ruling ecstasy; he was so sure that he was miraculous that it seemed that no part of his life could escape from the miracle, so that to him every meal became a sacrament. (*p. 131*)
- 84 It is the attitude of the primitive man, of the real man, of the child, always and everywhere; it may be briefly summed up in the phrase: things are because they are wonderful. This, of course, is the atmosphere in which poets ought to live, and in which poetry should be produced. Formerly it was natural to all men or almost all; now, perhaps, it has to be regained by a conscious effort (*p. 132*)
- 85 the important and essential rule that freedom is chiefly free when it is most bound and bounded by restrictions which we should call artificial, which are, in truth, in the highest sense, natural. (*p. 132*)
- 86 You will always find that where convention has not cast out nature, some kind of "sing-song," some sort of chant is the entirely natural utterance of man in his most fervent, that is, his most natural moments. Listen to half-a-dozen children (children, you must remember, are all "primitives" and therefore natural) playing some game, learning their lesson at school. Their voices are pretty sure to fall into a very rude, but a distinctly measured, chant. (*p. 133*)
- 87 Take your average Protestant, and I am much mistaken if you do not discover that he believes some grotesque preacher, in his greasy black suit, mouthing platitudes at his conventicle to be somehow more "natural" than the priest, clad in the mystical robes of his office, chanting Mass at the altar. But in literature-why this perversion of the word influences the whole of criticism. Jane Austen, we say, is natural, and Edgar Allan Poe is unnatural, or as it is sometimes expressed, inhuman. Of course, if you wish for the truth, the proposition must be reversed, unless you are willing to believe that a Company Prospectus is, somehow, more natural and more human than, say, Tennyson's "Fatima." (*p. 135*)

- 88 To me "Huckleberry Finn" is not a very difficult case. That flight by night down the great unknown, rolling river, between the dim marshy lands and the high "bluffs" of the other shore comes in my mind well under the great "Odyssey" class; it has, indeed, the old, unquenchable joy of wandering into the unknown in a more acute degree than "Pickwick," which, as we have seen, is to be reckoned under the same heading. In a word it is pure romance, and you will note that the story is told by a boy, and that by this method a larger element of wonder is secured, for even in this absurd age children are allowed to be amazed at the spectacle of the world. (p. 137)
- 89 And we have agreed that if a writer can make passion for us, if he can create the image of the eternal human ecstasy, we have agreed that in such a case the writer is an artist. (p. 140)
- 90 surely only that is divine which revolts from the commonness of the common life, which is conscious of things beyond, of better things, of a world which transcends all daily experience. (p. 141)
- 91 You may feel pretty certain, I think, that real literature has always been produced by men who have preserved a certain loneliness of soul, if not of body; the masterpieces are not generated by that pleasant and witty traffic of the drawing-rooms, but by the silence of the eternal hills. (p. 145)
- 92 we have settled that literature is the expression of the "standing out," of the withdrawal of the soul, it is the endeavour of every age to return to the first age, to an age, if you like, of savages, when a man crept away to the rocks or to the forests that he might utter, all alone, the secrets of his own soul. (p. 146)
- 93 yet I call it a witness to the everlasting truth that, at last, each man must stand or fall alone, and that if he would stand, he must, to a certain extent, live alone with his own soul. It is from this mood of lonely reverie and ecstasy that literature proceeds, and I think that the sense of all this is diffused throughout Miss Wilkins's New England stories. (p. 147)
- 94 literature is the expression, through the aesthetic medium of words, of the dogmas of the Catholic Church, and that which in any way is out of harmony with these dogmas is not literature. Yes, it is really so; but not exactly in the sense which you suppose. No literal compliance with Christianity is needed, no, nor even an acquaintance with the doctrines of Christianity. (p. 147)
- 95 you will find that books which are not literature proceed from ignorance of the Sacramental System. (p. 148)
- 96 Catholic dogma is merely the witness, under a special symbolism, of the enduring facts of human nature and the universe; it is merely the voice which tells us distinctly that man is not the creature of the drawing-room and the Stock Exchange, but a lonely awful soul confronted by the Source of all Souls, and you will realise that to make literature it is necessary to be, at all events, subconsciously Catholic. (p. 149)
- 97 The fact is that the true artist, so far from being the imitator of life, endures some of his severest struggles in endeavouring to get away from life, and until he can do this he knows that his labour is all in vain. (p. 150)
- 98 art is by its very definition quite without the jurisdiction of the schools, and the realm of the reasoning process, since art is a miracle, superior to the laws. (p. 152)