

Edgar's letter to John Allan. Baltimore, Maryland. August 10, 1829

Dear Pa, I received yours this morning which relieved me from more trouble than you can well imagine—I was afraid that you were offended & although I knew that I had done nothing to deserve your anger, I was in a most uncomfortable situation—without one cent of money—in a strange place & so quickly engaged in difficulties after the serious misfortunes which I have just escaped—My grandmother is extremely poor & ill (paralytic). My aunt Maria if possible is still worse & Henry entirely given up to drink & unable to help himself, much less me—I am unwilling to appear obstinate as regards the substitute so will say nothing more concerning it—only remarking that they will no longer enlist men for the residue of anothers' enlistment as formerly, consequently my substitute was enlisted for 5 years not 3—I stated in my last letter (to which I refer you) that Mr. Eaton gave me strong hopes for September at any rate that the appointment could be obtained for June next—I can obtain decent board lodging & washing with other expenses of mending &c for 5 & perhaps even 4 ½ \$ per week—If I obtain the appointment by the last of September the amount of expense would be at most \$30—If I should be unfortunate & not obtain it until June I will not desire you to allow as much as that per week because by engaging for a longer period at a cheap boarding house I can do with much less—say even 10 even 8 \$ per month—any thing with which you think it possible to exist—I am not so anxious of obtaining money from your good nature as of preserving your good will—I am extremely anxious that you should believe that I have not attempted to impose upon you—I will in the meantime (if you wish it) write you often, but pledge myself to apply for no other assistance than what you shall think proper to allow—I left behind me in Richmond a small trunk containing books & some letters—will you forward it on to Baltimore to the care of H-W. Bool, Jr. & if you think I may ask so much perhaps you will put in it for me some few clothes as I am nearly without— Give my love to Miss Valentine—

I remain Dear Pa, Yours affectionately

Edgar A. Poe

Edgar's letter to John Allan. West Point Military Academy. January 3, 1831

Sir, I suppose (altho' you desire no further communication with yourself on my part,) that your restriction does not extend to my answering your final letter. Did I, when an infant, solicit your charity and protection, or was it of your own free will, that you volunteered your services in my behalf? It is well known to respectable individuals in Baltimore, and elsewhere, that my Grandfather (my natural protector at the time you interposed) was wealthy, and that I was his favorite grandchild—But the promises of adoption, and liberal education which you held forth to him in a letter which is now in possession of my family, induced him to resign all care of me into your hands. Under such circumstances, can it be said that I have no right to expect any thing at your hands? You may probably urge that you have given me a liberal education. I will leave the decision of that question to those who know how far liberal educations can be obtained in 8 months at the University of Va. Here you will say that it was my own fault that I did not return—You would not let me return because bills were presented you for payment which I never wished

nor desired you to pay. Had you let me return, my reformation had been sure—as my conduct the last 3 months gave every reason to believe—and you would never have heard more of my extravagances. But I am not about to proclaim myself guilty of all that has been alledged against me, and which I have hitherto endured, simply because I was too proud to reply. I will boldly say that it was wholly and entirely your own mistaken parsimony that caused all the difficulties in which I was involved while at Charlottesville. The expences of the institution at the lowest estimate were \$350 per annum. You sent me there with \$110. Of this \$50 were to be paid immediately for board--\$60 for attendance upon 2 professors—and you even then did not miss the opportunity of abusing me because I did not attend 3. Then \$15 more were to be paid for room-rent—remember that all this was to be paid in advance, with \$110.--\$12 more for a bed—and \$12 more for room furniture. I had, of course the mortification of running in debt for public property—against the known rules of the institution, and was immediately regarded in the light of a beggar. You will remember that in a week after my arrival, I wrote to you for some more money, and for books—You replied in terms of the utmost abuse—if I had been the vilest wretch on earth you could not have been more abusive than you were because I could not contrive to pay \$150 with \$110. I had enclosed to you in my letter (according to your express commands) an account of the expences incurred amounting to \$149—the balance to be paid was \$39—You enclosed me \$40, leaving me one dollar in pocket. In a short time afterwards I received a packet of books consisting of, Gil Blas, and the Cambridge Mathematics in 2 vols: books for which I had no earthly use since I had no means of attending the mathematical lectures. But books must be had, If I intended to remain at the institution—and they were bought accordingly upon credit. In this manner debts were accumulated, and money borrowed of Jews in Charlottesville at extravagant interest—for I was obliged to hire a servant, to pay wood, for washing, and a thousand other necessaries. It was then that I became dissolute, for how could it be otherwise? I could associate with no students, except those who were in a similar situation with myself—altho' from different causes—They from drunkenness, and extravagance—I, because it was my crime to have no one on Earth who cared for me, or loved me. I call God to witness that I have never loved dissipation—Those who know me know that my pursuits and habits are very far from any thing of the kind. But I was drawn into it by my companions. Even their professions of friendship—hollow as they were— were a relief. Towards the close of the session you sent me \$100—but it was too late—to be of any service in extricating me from my difficulties—I kept it for some time—thinking that if I could obtain more I could yet retrieve my character—I applied to James Galt—but he, I believe, Edgar's letter to John Allan. West Point Military Academy. January 3, 1831 It has now been more than two years since you have assisted me, and more than three since you have spoken to me. I feel little hope that you will pay any regard to this letter, but still I cannot refrain from making one more attempt to interest you in my behalf. If you will only consider in what a situation I am placed you will surely pity me—without friends, without any means, consequently of obtaining employment, I am perishing—absolutely perishing for want of aid. And yet I am not idle—nor addicted to any vice—nor have I committed any offence against society which would render me deserving of so hard a fate. For God's sake pity me, and save me from destruction. E A Poe Edgar's letter to John Allan. Baltimore, April 12, 1833 “I received this on the 10th & did not from its conclusion deem it necessary to reply. I make this note on the 13th & can see no Reason to alter my opinion. I do not think the Boy has one good quality. He

may do or act as he pleases, tho' I would have saved him but on his own terms & conditions since I cannot believe a word he writes. His letter is the most barefaced one sided statement."

**John Allan commented on back of the letter: 24 from the best of motives refused to lend me any—I then became desperate, and gambled—until I finally involved myself irretrievably. If I have been to blame in all this—place yourself in my situation, and tell me if you would not have been equally so. But these circumstances were all unknown to my friends when I returned home—They knew that I had been extravagant—but that was all—I had no hope of returning to Charlottesville, and I waited in vain in expectation that you would, at least obtain me some employment. I saw no prospect of this—and I could endure it no longer.—Every day threatened with a warrant &c. I left home—and after nearly 2 years conduct with which no fault could be found—in the army, as a common soldier—I earned, myself, by the most humiliating privations—a Cadet's warrant which you could have obtained at any time for asking. It was then that I thought I might venture to solicit your assistance in giving me an outfit—I came home, you will remember, the night after the burial— If she [Frances Allan] had not have died while I was away there would have been nothing for me to regret—Your love I never valued—but she I believed loved me as her own child. You promised me to forgive all—but you soon forgot your promise. You sent me to W. Point like a beggar. The same difficulties are threatening me as before at Charlottesville—and I must resign. As to your injunction not to trouble you with farther communication rest assured, Sir, that I will most religiously observe it. When I parted from you—at the steam-boat, I knew that I should never see you again. As regards Sergt. Graves—I did write him that letter. As to the truth of its contents, I leave it to God, and your own conscience.—The time in which I wrote it was within a half hour after you had embittered every feeling of my heart against you by your abuse of my family, and myself, under your own roof—and at a time when you knew that my heart was almost breaking. I have no more to say—except that my future life (which thank God will not endure long) must be passed in indigence and sickness. I have no energy left, nor health, If it was possible, to put up with the fatigues of this place, and the inconveniences which my absolute want of necessaries subject me to, and as I mentioned before it is my intention to resign. For this end it will be necessary that you (as my nominal guardian) enclose me your written permission. It will be useless to refuse me this last request—for I can leave the place without any permission—your refusal would only deprive me of the little pay which is now due as mileage. From the time of writing this I shall neglect my studies and duties at the institution—if I do not receive your answer in 10 days—I will leave the point without—for otherwise I should subject myself to dismissal.*

E A Poe