

# Colby



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## The Best Things In The Worst Times

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## THE BEST THINGS IN THE WORST TIMES

NO one acquainted with the difficulties that now beset the small liberal-arts college will need to be told that this is not an easy time for the launching of a new publication. A new venture is attended with risks, even in the best of times, but in these days of darkened skies we need hearts bound with oak and triple brass. Let us try to rise to the challenge of the times. We recall Stevenson's words on this subject: "A frank and somewhat headlong carriage, not looking too anxiously before, not dallying in maudlin regret over the past, stamps the man who is well armored for this world."

With this initial issue of a new publication the Colby Library Associates attempt to defy the evil times. Perhaps these days will not prove to be so calamitous, after all. We are encouraged in our undertaking by recalling a sermon preached in the Colby chapel on Sunday, August 9, 1942, by the Reverend Dr. Charles W. Gilkey. In bidding his congregation be of good cheer, he referred to the chapel of Staunton Harold, in Leicestershire, England, where there is a memorial tablet that reads as follows:

"In the yeare 1653, when all thinges sacred were through-out ye nation either demollisht or profaned, Sir Robert Shirley, Barronet, founded this church: whose singular praise it is to have done the best things in ye worst times, and hoped them in the most calamitous."

Perhaps in the year 2043 there will be a meeting of lovers of books in the Miller Library on Mayflower Hill, and those gathered on that centennial occasion will cast their eyes back upon us and will remark that it is our singular

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praise to have done the best things in the worst times. In any case, the editorial staff and its advisory board are resolved to make this the best possible record of, and comment on, Colby books and Colby bookmen.



### THE PIONEER

**I**T is a mere accident of history that this pioneer Colby publication dated January 1943 appears exactly one hundred years after the first appearance of *The Pioneer* dated January 1843. Shortly before its publication James Russell Lowell wrote to a friend: "I am working to found a new magazine and the business connected with it has harassed me beyond your imaginings." He sent out a prospectus which read:

"The object . . . is to furnish the intelligent and reflecting portion of the Reading Public with a rational substitute for the enormous quantity of thrice-diluted trash, in the shape of namby-pamby love tales and sketches, which is monthly poured out to them by many of our popular magazines — and to offer, instead thereof, a healthy and manly Periodical Literature, whose perusal will not necessarily involve a loss of time and a deterioration of every moral and intellectual faculty."

Among those into whose hands the prospectus fell was Edgar Allan Poe. He promptly offered Lowell his services as a contributor, with the result that Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" appeared in the January *Pioneer*, his poem "Lenore" appeared in the February issue, and his "Notes upon English Verse" filled ten pages of the March issue.

These three numbers make up the entire file of *The Pioneer*. Its career was not only brief but narrow: few copies have survived and Colby is not alone in *not* possessing this "healthy and manly Periodical." We do own a photostatic copy of the entire issue — thanks to the Colby Library As-