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The Pioneer

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Colby Library Quarterly

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.

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THE PIONEER

IT 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-
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sociates — but for exhibition on this centennial occasion the Library has arranged to borrow the copies of “the real thing” now in the collection of Carroll A. Wilson (LL.D., Colby 1940).

Brief though the career of The Pioneer was, it was brilliant. In addition to the contributions by Edgar Allan Poe, it carried Hawthorne’s “The Hall of Fantasy” (in February 1843) and “The Birth-Mark” (in March), Whittier’s “Lines Written in the Book of a Friend,” and Elizabeth Barrett’s “The Maiden’s Death.” The February number announced, among “the most important new works recently published in Great Britain,” Bells and Pomegranates by Robert Browning, and reviewed Henry W. Longfellow’s Poems of Slavery. Lowell himself made a contribution to each issue, in January an essay on “The Plays of Thomas Middleton,” in February one on “Song Writing,” and in March a sonnet entitled “The Street.”

The editors of this twentieth-century venture hope that it will have a longer run than Lowell’s Pioneer, and if any modern Poe is moved to send in his contribution (has any Colby graduate a “Tell-Tale Heart” to offer?), he may confidently rely upon editorial agreement with Lowell’s distaste for “thrice-diluted trash.”

A TENNYSON EXHIBITION

TENNYSON died at Aldworth on October 6, 1892. On the fiftieth anniversary of this date the Colby library exhibited, in one of its glass cases, a score of Tennyson books published during his life-time. Many of these were first editions, and the others were either first American editions or volumes of special association interest. Even more worthy of commemoration than the poet’s death was the fact that it was just one hundred years since the publication of his first great success. The Encyclopaedia Britannica