

literature American. The best that her literary aspirants could offer to the public were productions, characterized by shallowness, weak sentimentality and a tendency to conventionalism. But Poe ruthlessly and bitterly assailed such style of literature, with the result that he not only put a stop to any further such pretentious offerings, but he also moulded the form of American prose and poetry, thus establishing his reputation as a critic and a stylist. True, no doubt, his caustic pen made for him many enemies at the time, but when one considers the great and salutary influence his criticisms exerted upon the literature of America, he cannot be condemned. To him and Nathaniel Hawthorne is due the establishment of the short story, which has since played such an important role in the annals of American literary productions. Before the appearance of these two upon the literary horizon, America could not boast any too much of writers of a highly imaginative temperament. However, in the middle of the last century, an impetus was given to this species of prose, especially by Poe, to whom critics in general have accorded the title of progenitor of the short story.

Regarding the character and life of Poe outside the sphere of literary productions, there are divided opinions. His conduct through his whole career shows that he was naturally weak-minded, and subject to paroxysms of remorse, this latter peculiarity being evinced in many of his productions. Some writers have on this account ruthlessly and completely condemned him. True it is he was a slave, extremely sensitive to any intoxicant, but to his weakness of will this must be ascribed. On the contrary, others who knew him intimately, have represented him as a gentleman by nature and instinct, and extremely refined in his bearing and countenance. His charming presence made for him friends wherever he went, and to speak with him, and still more to listen to him, was a great pleasure.

Without exception, his reputation as a prince of letters and his influence on American literature, are permanent and salutary. No one can deny that his arrival on the literary field of America was at a happy time. For this reason, above all other considerations, the genius of Poe should be regarded as established. If at the present the way cannot be seen to granting him a memorial, it is to be hoped that before many years more the regard for his personal weakness will be dropped, and he will be permitted to take his place in the Hall of Fame along with other American writers, some of whom have been less deserving of their niche than Poe.

J. R. CORKERY, '09.