

Poe's wretched and altogether unlovely life calls forth our heartfelpity. He was misunderstood while living, but a careful study of his life and works reveals him to us as he is, and a more charitable feeling is shown toward him at the present day. Although his reputation was not an enviable one yet deep down in his very being, in those elements which build character, are found those nobler traits which are entirely lacking in some of his earlier critics. Both extremes have been taken in judging him; some condemn him unmercifully, thinking he was cursed with an incurable perversity of character, others give him the highest praise. R. H. Stoddard says:—

“He belonged to the bright, but blasted brotherhood whose faults the world agrees to condone, partly because of the gifts which accompany them, and partly because of the misfortunes which they entail. \* \* \* The character of Poe was as unlovely as the conduct to which it impelled him was willful.” His character was ruined by his foster father, as he was unchecked in his youthful propensities, for he gambled and drank, was proud, bitter, and perverse. The best of his character was shown in his domestic relations, in which he displayed great tenderness, patience, and fidelity. He was a perfect gentleman except when under the influence of wine. As proven by his letters he had humility, willingness to persevere, belief in another's kindness, and capability of cordial and grateful friendship.

The reputation and fame of Poe is based upon three different manifestations of his genius,—upon his poems, his stories, and his criticisms. From the beginning he was a poetic artist. Lowell says of him,—“Mr. Poe had that indescribable something which men have agreed to call genius. No man could ever tell us precisely what it is, and yet there is none who is not inevitably aware of its presence and its power. \* \* \* To the eye of genius the veil of the spiritual world is ever rent asunder, that it may perceive the ministers of good and evil who throng continually around it.”

He wrote poems when a mere boy and copied his favorite authors, of whom Byron was the chief. He liked the “spiritual gloom” of Byron and fancied he felt his despair. Poe was not recognized as a new poet till he published his second volume containing “To Helen,” “The Sleeper,” “Israfel,” and “The City in the Sea.” “This volume authenticated his genius, his originality, and the class of subjects in which he was to excel.” “To Helen”