The mind and art of Poe's poetry

Fruit John Phelps
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Author: Fruit John Phelps

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THE MIND AND ART

OF

POE'S POETRY

BY

JOHN PHELPS FRUIT

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN
WILLIAM JEWELL COLLEGE, LIBERTY, MO.

NEW YORK
A. S. BARNES AND COMPANY
1899
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University Press:
John Wilson and Son, Cambridge, U.S.A.
TO

My Wife,

MY INSPIRATION IN LIFE AND LETTERS
PREFACE

This study of Poe's poetry has been made in the spirit suggested in Walter Pater's Preface to his Renaissance. These quotations are appropriate to the purpose:—

"The objects with which aesthetic criticism deals — music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life — are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces: they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues or qualities. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or book, to me? What effect does it really have on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence? The answers to these questions are original facts with which the aesthetic critic has to do; and, as in the study of light, of morals, of number, one must realize such primary data for oneself, or not at all. And he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them, has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to truth or experience — metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere."

"And the function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, analyze, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which
a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced."

I have kept, whimsically, to a study of Poe's poetry and known no other poet the while; I have therefore no opinions to venture on questions of comparative merit.

This study would not have been possible but for the Stone and Kimball edition of Poe's works, collected and edited by Mr. E. C. Stedman and Professor G. E. Woodberry. The tenth volume furnishes a complete Variorum Text of the Poems. Reference has been made to this edition by volume and page.

Reference has been made also to that authoritative biography of Poe, in the American Men of Letters Series, by Professor Woodberry.

JOHN PHELPS FRUIT.

JULY, 1899.
CONTENTS

Part First

THE MIND OF POE'S POETRY

Chapter | Page
------ | ----
I. Introductory | 1
II. A Young Man of Genius: A Dreamer | 5
III. Beauty | 21
IV. Poetry | 36
V. The Artist | 47
VI. His Method | 71
VII. Résumé | 82

Part Second

THE ART OF POE'S POETRY

I. In the Workshop | 87
II. Experiment in Rhythm and Rime | 96
III. Allegory | 108
IV. A Masterpiece: The Raven | 114
V. Master-Strokes: Eulalie, Ulalume, Annabel Lee,
   For Annie | 127
VI. The Climax: The Bells | 135

INDEX | 148