



The Fall of the house of Usher

Edgar Allan Poe

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Poet and writer of tales, was born at Boston, where his parents, who were both actors, were temporarily living. He was left an orphan in early childhood in destitute circumstances, but was adopted by a Mr. Allan of Richmond, Virginia. By him and his wife he was treated with great indulgence, and in 1815 accompanied them to England, where they remained for five years, and where he received a good education, which was continued on their return to America, at the University of Virginia. He distinguished himself as a student, but got deeply into debt with gaming, which led to his being removed. In 1829 he published a small volume of poems containing *Al Araaf* and *Tamerlane*. About the same time he proposed to enter the army, and was placed at the Military Academy at West Point. Here, however, he grossly neglected his duties, and fell into the habits of intemperance which proved the ruin of his life, and was in 1831 dismissed. He then returned to the house of his benefactor, but his conduct was so objectionable as to lead to a rupture. In the same year Poe published an enlarged edition of his poems, and in 1833 was successful in a competition for a prize tale and a prize poem, the tale being the *Ms. Found in a Bottle*, and the poem *The Coliseum*. In the following year Mr. Allan died without making any provision for Poe, and the latter, being now thrown on his own resources, took to literature as a profession, and became a contributor to various periodicals.

In 1836 he entered into a marriage with his cousin Virginia Clemm, a very young girl, who continued devotedly attached to him notwithstanding his many aberrations, until her death in 1847. The *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* appeared in 1838, and in 1839 Poe became editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, in which appeared as *Tales of the Arabesque and Grotesque* many of his best stories. In 1845 his famous poem, *The Raven*, came out, and in 1848 *Eureka*, a Prose Poem, a pseudo-scientific lucubration. The death of his wife gave a severe shock to his constitution, and a violent drinking bout on a visit to Baltimore led to his death from brain fever in the hospital there.

The literary output of Poe, though not great in volume, limited in range, and very unequal in merit, bears the stamp of an original genius. In his poetry he sometimes aims at a musical effect to which the sense is sacrificed, but at times he has a charm and a magic melody all his own. His better tales are remarkable for their originality and ingenuity of construction, and in the best of them he rises to a high level of imagination, as in *The House of Usher*, while *The Gold Beetle* or *Golden Bug* is one of the first examples of the cryptogram story; and in *The Purloined Letters*, *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, and *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* he is the pioneer of the modern detective story.

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