

Life

By Edith Wharton

Life, like a marble block, is given to all,
A blank, inchoate mass of years and days,
Whence one with ardent chisel swift essays
Some shape of strength or symmetry to call;
One shatters it in bits to mend a wall;
One in a craftier hand the chisel lays,
And one, to wake the mirth in Lesbia's gaze,
Carves it apace in toys fantastical.

But least is he who, with enchanted eyes
Filled with high visions of fair shapes to be,
Muses which god he shall immortalize
In the proud Parian's perpetuity,
Till twilight warns him from the punctual skies
That the night cometh wherein none shall see.

n/a



A New York City aristocrat, Edith Wharton wrote poetry and fiction mainly about high society life. Her marriage to a wealthy businessman gave Wharton ample time to devote to writing such well-known novels as *The House of Mirth*, *The Age of Innocence*, and *Ethan Frome*. By age 18 she had already published poems in magazines including the *Atlantic Monthly*.

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