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