

Classic Poetry Series

Edith Wharton

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Chartres

I

Immense, august, like some Titanic bloom,
The mighty choir unfolds its lithic core,
Petalled with panes of azure, gules and or,
Splendidly lambent in the Gothic gloom,
And stamened with keen flamelets that illumine
The pale high-altar. On the prayer-worn floor,
By worshippers innumerable thronged of yore,
A few brown crones, familiars of the tomb,
The stranded driftwood of Faith's ebbing sea--
For these alone the finials fret the skies,
The topmost bosses shake their blossoms free,
While from the triple portals, with grave eyes,
Tranquil, and fixed upon eternity,
The cloud of witnesses still testifies.

II

The crimson panes like blood-drops stigmatise
The western floor. The aisles are mute and cold.
A rigid fetish in her robe of gold,
The Virgin of the Pillar, with blank eyes,
Enthroned beneath her votive canopies,
Gathers a meagre remnant to her fold.
The rest is solitude; the church, grown old,
Stands stark and grey beneath the burning skies.
Well-nigh again its mighty framework grows
To be a part of nature's self, withdrawn
From hot humanity's impatient woes;
The floor is ridged like some rude mountain lawn,
And in the east one giant window shows
The roseate coldness of an Alp at dawn.

Edith Wharton