

At the Wayside Shrine

(Ste. Anne De Beaupré)

So little and so kind a shrine !
So homely and serene a saint ! —
No violent sorrow can be thine,
Thou patient pensioner of constraint !

This gentle gloom that wraps thee in
Mistaking for a soul's despair,
Thou griev'st, perchance, for some small sin,
Too trivial for such fervent prayer.

Not sin hath wanned thy weary face,
Nor living woe made dark thine eyes,
Nor memory wrought this pleading grace, —
But ignorance, and dumb surmise.

The bleeding feet of shameful pain
Have passed not up this tranquil way,
Nor late repentance, haply vain,
By these slim poplars knelt to pray.

Thine is the sadness of the breast
That has not known the human strife —
Weighed down with shelter, worn with rest,
Athirst for the free storms of life.

Thine is the ache of lips that ache
For unknown pangs, unknown delight, —
The emptiness of hearts that break
With dreaming through the empty night.

Thy woe thou canst not understand,
Poor soul and body incomplete !
Thou hungerest for a little hand
And touch of little unknown feet.