

## THE OLD POLE STAR

By Edith Wharton

BEFORE the clepsydra had bound the days  
 Man tethered Change to his fixed star, and said:  
 "The elder races, that long since are dead,  
 Marched by that light; it swerves not from its base  
 Though all the worlds about it wax and fade."

When Egypt saw it, fast in reeling spheres,  
 Her Pyramids shaft-centred on its ray  
 She reared and said: "Long as this star holds sway  
 In uninvaded ether, shall the years  
 Revere my monuments—" and went her way.

The Pyramids abide; but through the shaft  
 That held the polar pivot, eye to eye,  
 Look now—blank nothingness! As though Change laughed  
 At man's presumption and his puny craft,  
 The star has slipped its leash and roams the sky.

Yet could the immemorial piles be swung  
 A skyey hair's breadth from their rooted base,  
 Back to the central anchorage of space,  
 Ah, then again, as when the race was young,  
 Should they behold the beacon of the race!

Of old men said: "The Truth is there: we rear  
 Our faith full-centred on it. It was known  
 Thus of the elders who foreran us here,  
 Mapped out its circuit in the shifting sphere,  
 And found it, 'mid mutation, fixed alone."

Change laughs again, again the sky is cold,  
 And down that fissure now no star-beam glides.  
 Yet they whose sweep of vision grows not old  
 Still at the central point of space behold  
 Another pole-star: for the Truth abides.