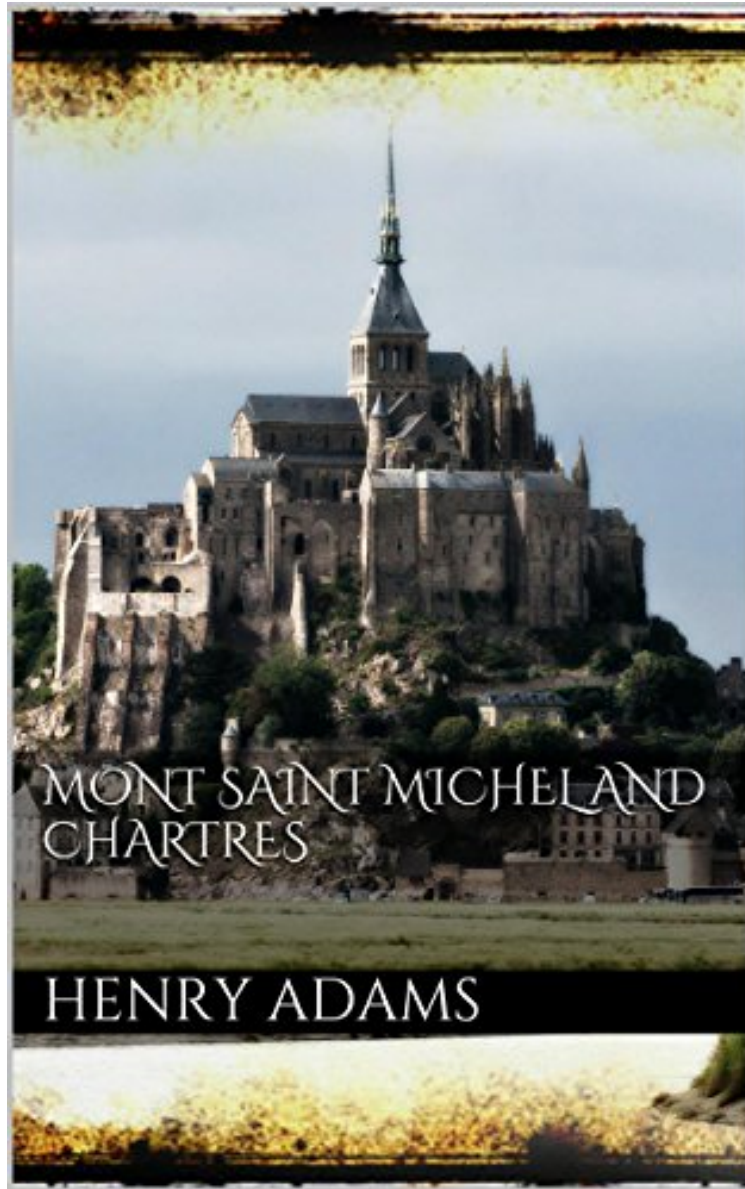


[Free] Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres

Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres

Henry Adams

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Henry Adams : Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres By Robert Rose-Coutr Henry Adams toured French medieval gothic architecture, and apparently took a lot of notes, focusing on the Grande Cathedrals of Mont-Saint-Michel (built in the 1100s) and Chartres (built in the late 1100s to 1200s). The notes became the book. If that were the extent of the book, however, it could be summed with a few nice photos and captions. But theres also

360 pages of mystery and fascination surrounding the architecture. Most of the book is Adams observations on the culture surrounding the buildings, moreso than on the buildings themselves. Adams takes us on a gothic travelogue through the intrigues of medieval royal families of France, clashes in the cloisters of church hierarchy, power struggles in church and court, dark-age philosophers and poets telling stories captured in sparkling gothic stained-glass perfection. Reminiscent of Melville's long chapters on the anatomy of the whale, there are long detailed descriptions of the elements of the cathedral. Wading through that pays off. The stories told literally and figuratively in the massive stained glass paintings, in themselves and in their relation to other architectural features, represent the heart and soul of peoples faith, fears, allegiances, loves, hates, and pivotal events of the time. So many fascinating stories and events converge in the 1100s and 1200s: the Golden Legend; the founding of Orders; the Chanson de Roland as metaphor for Mont-Saint-Michel, or vice versa; the intellectual romance of Abélard and Héloïse, Christian of Troyes retelling the age-old story of Tristan and Iseult (originating from a pre-Islamic Persian story); the famous invention and flowering of Courteous Love and how it is epitomized in the chantefable Aucassin et Nicolette; the real-life romances of Thibaut and Blanche of Castille; the backdrop of the Crusades; the touching familial closeness of Richard Cur de Lion and Mary of Champagne; the Magna Charta and the Zodiac Window; the scholastic vs. mystic battles of theology between Abélard and Bernard of Clairvaux; inquiries into universals of geometry and syllogisms, and unity versus multiplicity; the controversy of the two Popes and its effects on peoples careers. The book closes out the 1200s with Thomas Aquinas rise from dumb ox to Summa Theologica building his Church Intellectual to complement the Church Architectural a gothic Cathedral to the Trinity (329). As Adams puts it, His sense of scale and proportion was that of the great architects of his age (354, 355). For culture, science, and art, the equilibrium of the universe rested on the delicate balance of the flying buttresses. To most people, the above references have little meaning, if any. But if you read this book, they will have a lot of meaning and enrich your experience. The broad brushstrokes across history, occasionally filled in with colorful detail, renewed my interest in the period. So after finishing the book, I searched on key people and events and found additional fascinating bits of historical intrigue. The book covers so much of the culture, arts, science, philosophy, politics, and social aspects of the period, its a great reference point for further investigation. Robert Rose-Coutre Author of Call of the Active Mind 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Great, profound, and elegant. Funny in parts as well. By Tom Randall To fully appreciate Adams's book the reader is required to know the general parameters of the author's life. While Adams's autobiography, "The Education of Henry Adams" , was written after this volume it is nevertheless necessary to read it first and to also acquaint oneself with the details of Adams's marriage to Clover Hooper and her suicide which are not mentioned at all in the book. "Mont Saint Michel and Chartres" is personalized history. If you want a more objective history look elsewhere. Some people are put off by its subjectivity. But in my view that subjectivity is exactly what makes the book so great. It's about the tremulous, perilous striving of an age, of religion, of faith, and finally of one's personal life. It's about the stress between unity and multiplicity. The book is profound in its exploration of these themes. It's learned, it's funny, it's ironic, and, in the end, profoundly moving. Reading these two books will provide any reader willing to put in the effort with some of the wisest and most trenchant observations in all literature all put forth in some of the most elegant prose ever written. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. The Middle Ages Illuminated By Arnold B. I have always loved the tone and personality of Adams' autobiography, The Education of Henry Adams. But I'd never read Mont Saint Michele and Chartres. Got the book for my Kindle as travel reading. Having been to both places made the book very easy to get into. Adams brings his wonderful mind, wit, learning, and insight to bear on these two sacred spots as expressions of the Romanesque and Gothic sensibilities, the male and female, justice and mercy. He thinks in terms of the dualisms inherent in Christianity and the psychological archetypes prevalent in his time. In the course of the book he takes the reader from the earlier Norman-era shrine to the flat fields southwest of Paris where Chartres cathedral dominates the skyline. Along the way he engages every major medieval personality, from Abélard to Aquinas. Adams evokes a vision of the tensions, ideals, and travails of the Middle Ages. And he presents the only cogent rationale I have ever read for the veneration / worship of the Virgin. Read this book. It will stimulate your intellect and please your imagination.

The church stands high on the summit of this granite rock, and on its west front is the platform, to which the tourist ought first to climb. From the edge of this platform, the eye plunges down, two hundred and thirty-five feet, to the wide sands or the wider ocean, as the tides recede or advance, under an infinite sky, over a restless sea, which even we tourists can understand and feel without books or guides; but when we turn from the western view, and look at the church door, thirty or forty yards from the parapet where we stand, one needs to be eight centuries old to know what this mass of encrusted architecture meant to its builders, and even then one must still learn to feel it. The man who wanders into the twelfth century is lost, unless he can grow prematurely young. One can do it, as one can play with children. Wordsworth, whose practical sense equalled his intuitive genius, carefully limited us to "a season of calm weather," which is certainly best; but granting a fair frame of mind, one can still "have sight of that immortal sea" which brought us hither from the twelfth century; one can even travel thither and see the children sporting on the shore. Our sense is partially atrophied from disuse, but it is still alive, at least in old people, who alone, as a class, have

the time to be young.

Extended essay by Henry Adams, printed privately in 1904 and commercially in 1913. It is subtitled *A Study of Thirteenth-Century Unity*. *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* is best considered a companion to the author's autobiography, *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918). In *Chartres*, he described the medieval world view as reflected in its cathedrals, which he believed expressed "an emotion, the deepest man ever felt--the struggle of his own littleness to grasp the infinite." Adams was drawn to the ideological unity expressed in Roman Catholicism and symbolized by the Virgin Mary; he contrasted this coherence with the uncertainties of the 20th century. -- The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature

From the Inside Flap "Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres is undoubtedly Adams's greatest work; though not apparently related to his earlier writings, this inspired work of poetry is the crowning achievement of his severe and somber historical oeuvre."--Maurice le Breton "Emerson discussed man's need to discover a system of unity for his age; Henry Adams did the same for an age when the conflict was infinitely more acute and the solution less apparently obvious."--Robert Spiller "One has the feeling that during the process of writing, the book grew way beyond its original plan and intention to be the informal travel talk of an art tourist, or an art-uncle for nieces with Kodaks. At a certain point it almost ceases to deal with esthetic experiences and becomes a confession of a seeker after unity, of a pilgrim who hopes to find in the Middle Ages an emotional repose-peace-Nirvana."--Ernst Scheyer, *The Circle of Henry Adams*

From the Back Cover "Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres" is undoubtedly Adams's greatest work; though not apparently related to his earlier writings, this inspired work of poetry is the crowning achievement of his severe and somber historical oeuvre."--Maurice le Breton "Emerson discussed man's need to discover a system of unity for his age; Henry Adams did the same for an age when the conflict was infinitely more acute and the solution less apparently obvious."--Robert Spiller "One has the feeling that during the process of writing, the book grew way beyond its original plan and intention to be the informal travel talk of an art tourist, or an art-uncle for nieces with Kodaks. At a certain point it almost ceases to deal with esthetic experiences and becomes a confession of a seeker after unity, of a pilgrim who hopes to find in the Middle Ages an emotional repose-peace-Nirvana."--Ernst Scheyer, "The Circle of Henry Adams"