

HEIRESS AND ARCHITECT

FOR A. W. B.

She sought the Studios, beckoning to her side
An arch-designer, for she planned to build.
He was of wise contrivance, deeply skilled
In every intervolve of high and wide -
Well fit to be her guide.

"Whatever it be,"
Responded he,
With cold, clear voice, and cold, clear view,
"In true accord with prudent fashionings
For such vicissitudes as living brings,
And thwarting not the law of stable things,
That will I do."

"Shape me," she said, "high halls with tracery
And open ogive-work, that scent and hue
Of buds, and travelling bees, may come in through,
The note of birds, and singings of the sea,
For these are much to me."

"An idle whim!"

Broke forth from him
Whom nought could warm to gallantries:
"Cede all these buds and birds, the zephyr's call,
And scents, and hues, and things that falter all,
And choose as best the close and surly wall,
For winters freeze."

"Then frame," she cried, "wide fronts of crystal glass,
That I may show my laughter and my light -
Light like the sun's by day, the stars' by night -
Till rival heart-queens, envying, wail, 'Alas,
Her glory!' as they pass."

"O maid misled!"
He sternly said,
Whose facile foresight pierced her dire;
"Where shall abide the soul when, sick of glee,
It shrinks, and hides, and prays no eye may see?
Those house them best who house for secrecy,
For you will tire."

"A little chamber, then, with swan and dove
Ranged thickly, and engrailed with rare device
Of reds and purples, for a Paradise
Wherein my Love may greet me, I my Love,
When he shall know thereof?"

"This, too, is ill,"
He answered still,
The man who swayed her like a shade.
"An hour will come when sight of such sweet nook
Would bring a bitterness too sharp to brook,
When brighter eyes have won away his look;
For you will fade."

Then said she faintly: "O, contrive some way -
Some narrow winding turret, quite mine own,
To reach a loft where I may grieve alone!
It is a slight thing; hence do not, I pray,
This last dear fancy slay!"

"Such winding ways
Fit not your days,"
Said he, the man of measuring eye;
"I must even fashion as my rule declares,
To wit: Give space (since life ends unawares)
To hale a confined corpse adown the stairs;
For you will die."

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