

RARA AVIS

Matthew Bridson

Hear now this tale.

How she lured him from the starlight

At the water's edge,

And through her chamber door;

Caught him sweetly by his outstretched throat,

Plunged her voice into his quaking breast,

Like catechisms.

'Cast off your pride! Your prison!

Shed that dreadful ache of freedom

Borne upon the upper airs.'

Thus came fearful passions to a tender heart;

What choice was his but to obey?

Soundlessly, he tore the coat of feathers from his back.

Blood wept from him as poppies;

Still, he flung his plumed hide into the flames.

And oh! the blissful anguish

Writhing there amid the cinders.

Man now,

Lily-white and crowned,

He felt beginnings hasten ends

And, rising, screamed his voiceless tears

That, falling, stained the dawn

A fearsome red.