

William Plomer (1903-73)

5 *Mews Flat Mona: a Memory of the 'Twenties*

She flourished in the 'Twenties, 'hectic' days of Peace,
'Twas good to be alive then, and to be a Baronet's Niece.
Oh, Mona! it's not so good now!

Mona in the first war was a Problem Child,
She roared and ranted, so they let her run wild; 5
Expelled from St Faith's, she was shot from a gun
At a circus she'd joined, for a bet, at Lausanne.
Oh, Mona! they're rid of you now!

She had her hair bobbed, when the fashion began,
To catch the eye of some soft-hearted man. 10
Oh, Mona! they're just as soft now!

A man was caught; she ran off in her teens
With the heir to a fortune from adding-machines,
But he failed to reckon up the wear and tear,
By the time she left him he had iron-grey hair. 15
Oh, Mona! you're subtracted now!

Mona took a flat in a Mayfair Mews;
To do that then was to be in the news.
Oh, Mona! it wouldn't be now!

The walls were of glass and the floor of pewter, 20
This was thought 'intriguing', but the bathroom was cuter;
On a sofa upholstered in panther skin
Mona did researches in original sin.
Oh, Mona! they're concluded now!

Mews Flat Mona, as a Bright Young Thing, 25
Led a pet crocodile about on a string;
In a green cloche hat and a knee-length skirt
She dragged the tired reptile till it was inert.
Oh, Mona! it's gone to earth now!

Diamond bracelets blazed on her wrists 30
(They were not presented by misogynists)
And Mona got engaged to a scatterbrained peer;
His breach of promise cost him pretty dear.
Oh, Mona! he couldn't pay now!

When she gave a dance she engaged three bands, 35
And she entered the Ritz once walking on her hands;
She drove round London in a crimson Rolls,
'The soul of every party'— as if parties had souls!
Oh, Mona! the party's over now!

Mews Flat Mona, as a Period Vamp, 40
Spent a week end in a nudist camp;
Her barefaced behaviour upset the crowd
And she came back sunburnt under a cloud.
Oh, Mona! you're in the shade now!

She babbled of Coué and also of Freud, 45
But her book of engagements was the one she enjoyed.
Oh, Mona! you've no dates now!

She lived for a time with an Irish Jew
And thought it an 'amusing' thing to do;
He taught her to take morphia, heroin, and 'snow', 50
A giddy life, but she was used to vertigo.
Oh, Mona! no pipe-dreams now!

Too bright were her eyes, the pace was too fast,
Both ends of the candle were burnt out at last.
Oh, Mona! you're blacked out now! 55

She stepped from the top of an Oxford Street store;
She might well have waited a split second more
For she fell like a bomb on an elderly curate
And his life was over before he could insure it.
Oh, Mona! you're exploded now! 60

When they came with a shovel to shift her remains
They found a big heart but no vestige of brains.

Oh, Mona! that accounts for you now!

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