

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.

'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.