

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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