

**COTERIE;
NO. 1-3**

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COTERIE

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T. W. EARP

I

AN aged king who shook upon his throne
Spoke a great Word that made his people reel,
Until within their hearts resolve had grown,
And their inconstant minds were firm as steel.

Laughing, some died upon the plains of war,
Laughing at death, because they once had heard
That Word of promise they were fighting for ;
In meanest flesh a soul heroic stirred.

Then the victorious remnant to their king
Cried : We have conquered, Lord ! We pray you give
The Word again for our glad hearkening,
And by the Word we would henceforward live.

The palsied king, tragical and absurd,
Looked out across the fires and huddled dead.
There was a Word, he said. There was a Word ;
But now I have forgotten it : he said.

II

STRONG Titan-Castle and strong Babel-Tower,
And each high, fabled place in many lands
Is fallen and lower now than is a flower,
Because it was a building made of hands.

And he whose dwelling beautiful on all sides
Was raised with careful labour on the sands,
Saw it fall down and perish with the tides,
Because it was a building made of hands.

And thy work, Time, with trumpets and with drums
Resoundingly erected, nobly stands,
But it must fall when one hushed moment comes,
Because it was a building made of hands.

III

CHIN upon hand, with desperate wide eyes
She stares into the emptiness of space ;
The peace of utter sorrow smooths her face,
And her great heart can heave with no more sighs.

Effort is vain, she knows ; and never tries
Those various keen tools within the place.
They are but useless symbols of disgrace,
While yet the unhewn block before her lies.

Shall it be roses or grave myrtle-leaves,
Defeat or victory, trumpet or flute ?
Each shape fades with the next her mind conceives.

Now she has won all choice she never stirs ;
How could she choose when every choice is hers,
And, when she knows all secrets, not be mute ?

IV

HE stole alone through the dusk to the river-bank.
 A few reeds grew there, and the sedge was dank
 With marshy exhalations. He was tired
 Of a false life, and but one thing desired :
 Death, that would come to him like a woman, perhaps,
 Gently and silently, an easy lapse
 Into forgetfulness, as though an arm
 Were pressed about him, shielding him from harm.
 The last hope in him whispered : It may be
 That at the final moment I shall see
 Two tender, pitying eyes look down at mine,
 And with my own tears I shall see them shine,
 Just at the end. I shall escape the lies
 That over creeping mankind tyrannise ;
 For I am weary of the monotonous passion
 Of love and hate, the same in a different fashion.
 I would take death quickly to me, the last mate,
 And so become the lord of my own fate.
 A sacred bird flapped away in sudden flight,
 The reeds quivered, black water drowned his sight.
 But still he was not his own when he came to die,
 And knew that he was fooled with a last lie.

V

OMAR, amid the Persian nightingales,
 Sang of man bowed beneath implacable fate,
 Of Death, the king, that keeps o'er kings his state,
 And yet through all the song the vine prevails.