

Jonathan's House

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(This poem placed first in the 1929 Butler Literary Contest, Poetry Division.)

They used to plan their house long, long ago,
And giving of their strength to fragile things,
Erected with the dreams that would not go
A house with few of hoofs and many wings,
With cloistered garden where a fountain sings,
With stepping stones worn thin, a low brown door,
A fireplace of blue tiles, and sunlight on the floor.

They knew all shapes a fountain may assume
In winter when the trees are starkly cold.
There would be great, fire-spitting logs in gloom,
And book backs shining red and green and gold,
And beauty never cast in form nor mold
And Jonathan would muse, with just an air
Of pride, how there would be concealed beneath the stair

A door, built like a panel, that she might
Escape from petty callers. On the wall
Of their old garden would be vines with light
And silver mooded leaves, and over all
The shadows of pale, gleaming leaves would fall.
But that was long ago. That was a dream.
And Jonathan was gone. But he would never seem

Like one who died. He was more like the rain,
Recurring in a way that she had known.
But still, when Thomas asked, she knew again
Her woman's loss. Made certainly of stone
His house, to trade for what was hers alone.
Now, on a quiet street which had not changed,
Was this, the house which Thomas cheerfully arranged.

And now the moss-grown stepping stones she found,
The low brown door, the fireplace tiled in blue,
And through the rooms the swaying silver sound
Of water stabbing through the air anew,
And old, familiar shadows. These were true.
But when, at last, she groped beneath the stair,
No panel gave. The wide, unyielding stone was there.