

Alfonso, Dressing to Wait at Table

Claude McKay

Alfonso is a handsome bronze-hued lad
 Of subtly-changing and surprising parts;
 His moods are storms that frighten and make glad,
 His eyes were made to capture women's hearts.

5 Down in the glory-hole¹ Alfonso sings
 An olden song of wine and clinking glasses
 And riotous rakes²; magnificently flings
 Gay kisses to imaginary lasses.

Alfonso's voice of mellow music thrills
 10 Our swaying forms and steals our hearts with joy;
 And when he soars, his fine falsetto trills
 Are rarest notes of gold without alloy.

But, O Alfonso! wherefore do you sing
 Dream-songs of carefree men and ancient places?
 15 Soon we shall be beset by clamouring
 Of hungry and importunate palefaces³.

Textual Note

This poem also appears in *Cambridge Magazine* (Summer, 1920) and *Spring in New Hampshire* (1920).

Editorial Notes

- 1. Glory-hole:** "A receptacle (as a drawer, room, etc.) in which things are heaped together without any attempt at order or tidiness" (OED).
- 2. Rake:** "A fashionable or stylish man of dissolute or promiscuous habits" (OED).
- 3. Palefaces:** "orig. N. Amer. (chiefly derogatory). A white person" (OED). The OED also notes, "Chiefly in representations of North American Indian speech and in African-American usage."

1 **Table**] , Sings *add. Cam., Spr.*

11 **And**] , *add. Spr., Cam.*

13 ,] *om. Spr., Cam.*

13 **O**] ! *add. Spr., Cam.*

13 **!**] , *Spr., Cam.*

15 **we shall**] shall we *Spr., Cam.*