

# La Paloma<sup>1</sup> in London

Claude McKay

About Soho<sup>2</sup> we went before the light;  
 We went, unresting six, craving new fun,  
 New scenes, new raptures, for the fevered night  
 Of rollicking laughter, drink and song, was done.  
 5 The vault was void, but for the dawn's great star  
 That shed upon our path its silver flame,  
 When La Paloma on a low guitar  
 Abruptly from a darkened casement<sup>3</sup> came—  
 Harlem! All else shut out, I saw the hall,  
 10 And you in your red shoulder sash come dancing  
 With Val against me languid by the wall,  
 Your burning coffee-colored eyes keen glancing  
 Aslant at mine, proud in your golden glory!  
 I loved you, Cuban girl, fond sweet Diory.

## Textual Note

This poem also appeared in *The Liberator* (January, 1922).

## Editorial Notes

1. **La Paloma:** A popular, nineteenth-century Spanish song by Sebastian Yradier, inspired by a visit to Cuba that has spread worldwide as a popular folk song.
2. **Soho:** New York City neighborhood in Lower Manhattan, south of Houston Street.
3. **Casement:** a hinged window which typically opens on its upright side.

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3 ,] *om. Lib.*

9 shut out] a blank *Lib.*

11 Val] , *add. Lib.*

11 languid] careless *Lib.*