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Women

Zona Gale, in *American Magazine* for June

THEY looked from farmhouse windows;
Their joyless faces showed
Between the curtain and the sill—
You saw them from the road.
They looked up while they churned and cooked
And washed and swept and sewed.
Some could die and some just lived and many a
one went mad.
But it's "Mother, be up at four o'clock," the men-
folk bade.

They looked from town-house windows,
A shadow on the shade
Rose-touched by colorful depths of room
Where harmonies were made.
Within, the women went and came
And delicately played.
Some could grow and some could work, but many
of them were dead.
"We must be gowned and gay to-night when the
men come home," they said.

They looked from factory windows
Where many an iron gin
Drew in their days and ground their days
On the black wheels within,
Drew in their days and wove their days
To a web exceeding thin.
And they suffered what women have suffered over
and over again.
And it's "Double your speed for a living wage, ye
mothers and wives of men!"

They looked from brothel windows
And caught the curtain down.
A piteous, beckoning hand thrust out
To summon or elude or clown.
They named them true, they named them true,
The Women of the Town.
Some could live and some just died and most of
them none of us know.
And it's "What if the fallen women vote!" from
the men who keep them so.

Faint from without the windows
In many a fallow land
There sounds a trample of feet, and a light
Is flashed from hand to hand.
And out of the dark grow a frightened few
Who dimly understand.
Some are wise and some are less and many more
are in doubt.
But it's "This is death! And where lies life? We
charge you to find it out!"

What is the news from the windows now?
At some the faces throng
And the cries: "Come soon or we wait in vain,
We who have waited long."
From some a curious glance is flung
With the bars of a careless song.
Some are open and some are closed and some are
hung for a feast,
And some stare blank as a harem wall curtained
against the east.

Dear God, to watch the women look!
From task and game they turn,
Some are afraid of losing men
And some of what they earn,
Some light the sacrificial flame
And dare not watch it burn.
Some are scornful, some bar the door at the sound
of the first alarms,
But it's "Mother, beware! It is we you chain!"
And the babes leap in their arms.

All swift the cry comes down the world:
"Take task and take caress,
But, by our living spirits, we
Have other ways to bless.
Now let us teach the thing we've learned
In labor and loneliness.
We strive with none. We fold men home by the
power of a great new word.
We who have long been dead are alive. We, too,
are thy people, Lord!"