

Doone Valley

Runner Up Coleridge Poetry Prize 2024

Hock-deep in summer grass, cattle
raise their heads, ruminating, unhurried
where meadows dip to Badgworthy Water.

Here springs rise, mosses ease
across the stones: slow, patient as snails;
spread at their own green pace.

In hoar-oak woods, rain drips.
Lichens let fall veils of verdigris,
all harshness hushed.

There is just the wynd of water
slipping among pebbles—
between smooth pink stones—

and from the rain-woods a cascade
of chaffinch song below cumulus
stacked over Cloud Farm.

Upstream, grassed hummocks tell out
ruins left in the circle of low hills
where once a village stood.

Here, hearts were mended, hunger satisfied,
thirst quenched in stone-hearth firelight
of homes now fractured, hidden.

If I wait at the ford for you, I hear
voices crossing from another time,
soon lost in the water's rush.

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