

Brading Haven

**Wandering once by Brading Haven
Where the dyke walls cross the marsh,
Idly watching flight of sea-birds
Poising wings and pipings harsh -
Chanced I on an ancient well-head
Where the chequered sunlight fell,
Chanced I on a village granfer
Heard the story of the well.**

**The Romans brought the carven tables
Set thereon the goblets rare;
From the darkness fetched the wine jars,
Dim with age and sealed with care.
Sought they water from the river
That along the valley ran,
Such as they were wont to mingle
With the rough Falernian.**

**But the master cried in anger:
'What is this ye bring me here?
Think ye this can e'er be wedded
To the grape's celestial cheer?
Cast away this muddy scouring,
Sully not my good red wine.
Bring me that will bead the goblet -
Such as flows from Apennine.'**

**'Where,' they murmured, 'Where in Vectis
Doth such crystal water flow,
Such as flashes from the mountains
Ice cold, born of sun and snow?'
Up then spake a time-bowed server:
'One there is perchance may aid;
Dwells he hence - a hoary hermit -
In the apple valley glade.'**

**So they sought that ancient seer
Relic of an age gone by
Dweller in the apple valley
Versed in law and mystery.
Seek ye water? I will aid you
Though your gods be not my god
See! This slender twig of hazel
Shall be my divining rod.**

**Here, they tell, his hazel pointed
To the hidden source below;
Here they dug and forth the water
Gushed in welcome overflow.
When the new-born strength had weakened
Sides of wroughten stone they made;
And they planted trees beside it -
Oak and ash - to give it shade.**