Edwin Muir (1887-1959)

5 The Enchanted Knight

Lulled by La Belle Dame Sans Merci he lies
    In the bare wood below the blackening hill.
The plough drives nearer now, the shadow flies
    Past him across the plain, but he lies still.

Long since the rust its gardens here has planned, 5
    Flowering his armour like an autumn field.
From his sharp breast-plate to his iron hand
    A spider's web is stretched, a phantom shield.

When footsteps pound the turf beside his ear
    Armies pass through his dream in endless line, 10
And one by one his ancient friends appear;
    They pass all day, but he can make no sign.

When a bird cries within the silent grove
    The long-lost voice goes by, he makes to rise
And follow, but his cold limbs never move, 15
    And on the turf unstirred his shadow lies.

But if a withered leaf should drift
    Across his face and rest, the dread drops start
Chill on his forehead. Now he tries to lift
    The insulting weight that stays and breaks his heart. 20

1937

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