

The Dogs' Dirge for Their Master AND Pilate, the Good Shephard



Millennium Light, Morris Graves, 1933-4

The Dogs' Dirge for Their Master

It is the decent thing to do:
While he lived, he called us true.
Continue true, before we part

What's left of him— part-eaten through.

Take and eat, in this cold rain,
While it's still hot, till none remain.
With this he gave— it is his heart—
Along with liver, lights, and brain.

In memory of him who used to feel,
Be his head our bowl of meal,
And these, his stiffened hands, divide—
Broken meats we need not steal.

But for Gentle Stroke and Soothing Tone,
Leave the tongue and knuckle-bone;
Or, scenting still a life inside,
End not too soon a dying moan.

With loosened earth, our burying game,
Smother the oil drum's smoky flame;
A fire colder and more pure
Is spreading through our thickened fur.

He spoke to us as 'You' and 'I'—
Now speak your souls, that in the sky
With us, he said, he'll make his home,
Who found a better place to die.

His guide, the Dog Star, now has set;
Bark your farewells, no longer pet!
The old life starts, but ere we roam,
All lift a leg. Pay your debt.

Pilate, the Good Shepherd

The trial is now a game to please,
After twenty centuries;
The prisoner is due release;
The judge, on life, has a second lease;
The instruments of the judgment hall?

A peg for a leash and a leather ball.

What's in a name? Ask Pilate, he'll
Walk beside, or sit, or heel.
Pilate, cloaked with a purple train,
Once tried innocence in vain,
But now he comes to his own defense,
And jumps a thorny, six-foot fence!

On a sea of doubt was Pilate cast;
Saw truth, so near, grow less and less;
But now runs happily, knows at last
is Master's hand by its caress;
Lies at His feet, sleeps like a log,
Simply for being a good dog.