

BITTER PRICE

A poor bard, I, who wanders cold,
Door to door in these days of strife;
All the rules I grew up by,
Are bent and changed in this, my life.
Time's wheel is broken and laid out straight,
Stretched on a rack of pride and will;
And the only tales that please them now,
Are those that lust, and kill.

In former days, we killed to eat,
And thanked the beast that fed our souls;
We tithed our grain back to the birds
At planting time, and filled our bowls
With beer brewed from a common stock
Held in trust for our children's good;
We built no sharp-tipped walls against the world,
And prayed in thanks at stone and ancient wood.

But Gods and Goddesses of Earth and Sea,
bearing grain and herding fish;
Cannot withstand the Lords of thundering Air
and Mountain cold, who conquests wish.
And so these days we hail as king a man,
Who will not wince to see
Husbands slain, and mothers killed;
Just so our children might run free.

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