

## THE OLD MATRON

Irma Wassall

The sleet that rattles at the panes like rice  
Is still the symbol of fertility  
That showered on us in handfuls  
In our nuptial noon  
In such a white and windblown cloud as this.

Rice is the symbol of our children's song,  
And the increase of lands; the rice that changed  
To silver in the coffers  
(Yes, even to gold)  
And food abundant, and the pearls I wore,  
How many years ago I have forgotten.

The rice is frozen now, and I alone,  
Old and alone in winter,  
And the rice is frost  
In brittle bones, chilling my aged blood.

The sleet that covers all my lonely lands  
Soon now will cover me—one with my acres,  
Feeling no more the coldness  
Of the winter night  
Soon to enfold me in its earthbound sleep.