Ponte Vecchio

Richard A. George

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Proud legions lingered here
High riding, spanning wide,
Paused, flecked in shadow,
Saw crevassed fern and shook
The torrent's spray wind-driven from the plume,
Heard tumbling water rolling boulders round
Down thudding ravine to the thundering pool,
Beating the bulwarks of their sturdy frame.
They carried standards gravely to their world
Across unbroken bastions into time.

Now pause we here two thousand years from then
Hearing the stream cascading over shale,
The bridge is useless halfway linked with air
The fallen fragments pounded by the flow.
Here in the ruts the swift wheels cut through stone
This purple thyme has outlived Tyrian dye
Wild birds can only span where chariots rolled.

Yet legions lingered here
Deep in the shade leaned to the grass
And crushed the fragrant herb,
Shared moment such as these
That swirl below
As broken ages grind to boundless sea.

—Richard A. George