

A SIGHT TO MAKE THE HEART FREEZE

Have you seen the naked face,
I mean the really bare face
Of poverty? Unembellished?
A sight to make the heart
Seize up, to freeze in pain.

Emaciated, weak, hollow-eyed,
Pencil thin, with hands like twigs,
A protruding belly, a mockery
Of a stomach, overloaded
With the nothingness of hunger.

I do not say this to shock,
Or do I? Perhaps I wish
To shake you out of cosy
Slumber to see the pain,
The degradation of starvation.

It is we who are degraded
By our insensitive callousness.
The starving have a quiet dignity.
I sometimes wonder if
They pity us our callousness.

– By Betty Paul Thottam.

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www.thoughtsanctuary.com / thought.sanctuary@gmail.com