

## **OLD HAND**

*By Robert Fitt*

Old hand,  
How you have aged;  
How textured you've become.

In youth your smooth skin  
Rippled over muscled  
Motion...  
Now it's wrinkled even when relaxed,  
With green-tinged veins twining like  
Grapevines  
Through your bones.

And when I contemplate this  
Paradox of change . . .  
The hands gripped tightly and  
Fatigued beneath the ax  
And sledge . . .  
Grim tightening on pain-worn  
Shafts as handcarts pull away . . .  
The hot breath of the branding iron  
Causing two-fold pain . . .  
The dust-breath of the sun-baked shovel's  
Grit . . .  
The hurt-hardened calluses of  
Endurance  
Beyond endurance . . .  
The hardening and Aging, the  
Motion slowed, and hair  
Turned white,  
With fingernails ridged and worn...

How strangely wonderful it is -  
Despite the struggles that  
Have made it so - that  
The gentle motions of  
Your hand  
Have become ever  
Softer  
To my cheek.