The Four Gods

By JOHN DILLON HUSBAND

The gray stone altars by the green gray sea
Have been fireless now for a century.
No one brings gifts or leaves a few prayers;
The gods are forgotten, and no one cares.
In the mist of one morning the old sea-gods
Packed their wonders and their magic rods,
Churned the yellow sand into golden foam,
Stepping down the beach to their sea-floor home
With the drench of the salt-spray whipping at their feet
And storm wind and thunder for melodies sweet.
In the cool moss caverns the four gods sit,
And remembering earth, they ponder it,
Thinking of altars fireless by the sea,
Listening for the sound of their litany.
Once in the summer from the sea’s warm edge
They looked at the world through the whispering sedge.
They heard the hammer’s clang and the turbine’s roar
And the sucking of the dredges at the sea’s soft shore.
They watched red factories making magic rods,
Turning out series of patented gods.
They turned among themselves with quiet smiles
And walked down the sea for miles and miles.

Smiling, when a cable scrapes across the floor
Or a steel thunder shakes the cavern door,
One with a handful of powdered red rust
Models a mountain range out of the dust.
One through a glimmered pool of dark sea-water
Smiles at the face of the marsh-king’s daughter.
One walks the sea floor among the sunken ships
Pitying the dead with his finger tips
The fourth of them holds a slender willow rod
And contemplates the mystery of being a god.