

## Touchstone

We had been at the edge of Britain  
for ten days, dipping our feet  
in the icy water of holy wells, pondering  
the mechanism Neolithic men might have used  
to balance great stones upon great stones,  
learning that medieval pilgrims often carried  
smaller rocks hundreds of miles: a worthy offering  
to the saints, a gift of effort, two or three  
extra pounds borne with each of the three hundred thousand  
footsteps taken toward sacred hope.

On a Sunday we stood for the last time in the Cathedral  
whose patron, David, is our patron, watching the verger  
swaying under the weight of a dressed stone  
the shape and size of a large mantle clock.  
We have a gift for you, said the Dean, beaming.  
Keep it near your altar.

Our altar, where it sits today, visitors  
curious about the way we bow one-handed,  
moving toward communion, stroking its round gray top.  
Our quite literal *touchstone*, our offering of effort  
bringing what we were given in pilgrimage  
home.