

Inyo

Mary Austin

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FAR from the northward, from the cloven ridges,
Pine-girt, deep-drifted with bewildering snows,
By ice-plowed gorge, the leaping river bridges,
Light span by span, from lake to lake below,
By mountain meadow, and the snow-fed hollow
Where birch and buckthorn thicket mark the trail,
Spurning the tawny hills in haste to follow
The long, brown reaches of a desert vale.

To east and west roll up the purple ranges,
Foot bound about by leopard-colored hills;
From east to west their serrate shadow changes;
From west to east stream down the tumbling rills.
Mocking the shadeless slopes and sullen ledges,
Through the sunburnt wastes of sage and yellow sand,
Run down to meet thy willows and thy sedges,
O lonely river in a lonely land!

Foamless and swift thy winding waters follow
To find, unbosomed to the wind-swept skies,
The great lake lapping in a tideless hollow,
Wanton to each day's changes as they rise,
Purpling to meet the splendor of their mornings,
Paling to catch their tender mid-day blue,
Trembling alike to smilings and to scornings,
Fleet light of loves, it cannot hold one true.

Like some great lioness beside the river,
With passion slumbering in her half-shut eyes,
Watching the light from heated sands up-quiver,
Untamed and barren, lone the valley lies.
Forego, O River, all the wrong you do her,
Hasting your waters to the bitter lake,
Rise from your reedy marges and subdue her,
So shall the land be fertile for your sake.

Mary Austin.