

In a Time of Dearth

Amy Lowell

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Before me,
On either side of me,
I see sand.
If I turn the corner of my house,
I see sand,
Long, brown
Lines and levels of flat
Sand.

If I could only see a caravan
Heave over the edge of it:
The camels wobbling and swaying,
Stepping like ostriches,
With rocking palanquins
Whose curtains conceal
Languors and faintnesses,
Muslins tossed aside,
And a disorder of cushions.
The swinging curtains would pique and solace me.
But I only see sand,
Long, brown sand —
Sand.

If I could only see a herd of Arab horses
Galloping,
Their manes and tails pulled straight
By the speed of their going;
Their bodies sleek and round
Like bellying sails.
They would beat the sand with their fore feet,
And scatter it with their hind feet,
So that it whirled in a cloud of orange,
And the sun through it
Was clip-edged, without rays, and dun.
But I only see sand,
Long, brown, hot sand —
Sand.

In a Time of Dearth

If I could only see a mirage,
Blue–white at the horizon,
With palm–trees about it;
Tall, windless palm–trees, grouped about a–glitter.
If I could strain toward it,
And think of the water creeping round my ankles,
Tickling under my knees,
Leeching up my sides,
Spreading over my back.
But I only feel the grinding beneath my feet.
And I only see sand,
Long, dry sand,
Scorching sand —
Sand.

If a sand–storm would only come
And spit against my windows,
Snapping upon them, and ringing their vibrations;
Swirling over the roof;
Seeping under the door–jamb;
Suffocating me and making me struggle for air.
But I only see sand —
Sand lying dead in the sun.
Lines and lines of sand —
Sand.

I will paste newspapers over the windows to shut out the sand;
I will fit them into one another, and fasten the corners.
Then I will strike matches
And read of politics and murders and festivals
Three years old.
But I shall not see the sand any more,
And I can read
While my matches last.