



SIERRA MADRE

BY HENRY VAN DYKE

O MOTHER mountains! billowing far to the snow-lands,
Robed in aërial amethyst, silver, and blue,
Why do ye look so proudly down on the lowlands?
What have their gardens and groves to do with you?

Theirs is the languorous charm of the orange and myrtle,
Theirs are the fruitage and fragrance of Eden of old.—
Broad-boughed oaks in the meadows fair and fertile,
Dark-leaved orchards gleaming with globes of gold.

You, in your solitude standing, lofty and lonely,
Bear neither garden nor grove on your barren breasts;
Rough is the rock-loving growth of your cañons, and only
Storm-battered pines and fir-trees cling to your crests.

Why are ye throned so high and arrayed in splendor
Richer than all the fields at your feet can claim?
What is your right, ye rugged peaks, to the tender
Queenly promise and pride of the mother-name?

Answered the mountains, dim in the distance dreaming:
“Ours are the forests that treasure the riches of rain;
Ours are the secret springs and the rivulets streaming
Softly down through the manifold bloom of the plain.

“Vain were the toiling of men in the dust of the dry land,
Vain were the plowing and planting in waterless fields,
Save for the life-giving currents we send from the sky-land,
Save for the fruit our embrace with the storm-cloud yields.”

O mother mountains, Madre Sierra, I love you!
Rightly you reign o'er the vale that your bounty fills,—
Kissed by the sun, or with big, bright stars above you,—
I murmur your holy name and lift up mine eyes to the hills.