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Forests of the Sierra. The Destruction that is Being Wrought in the Mountains. John Muir's Protest against the Wantoness of the Sheep-Herder and Lumberma-Value of the Forests.

John Muir

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FORTS OF THE SIERRA

The Destruction that is Being Wrought in the Mountains

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Value of the Forests

The forests growing on the western slope of the Sierra are by far the most destructive of the natural wealth of California, but they are also the most valuable. They must be kept unharmed, as if, like a larger kind of person, they had a right to be reckoned as an inherent possession of the people. The command of a far-seer, enterprising people should be set in motion to eradicate those portions of the range where the rock is exposed and the forests are shallow. The forests may all be gathered at once, exercising every mine, without inflicting lasting injury upon any other industries. The wealth of the soil on the western hills is so comparatively safe; for even the most wasteful methods of farming cannot effect complete destruction. However, great the impoverishment produced, the production of fertility may always be accomplished by hard work, so long as the forests of fertilizing minerals and snows of the mountains are under the care of the guardianship of the forests and the industries of the country.

But these forests are being cut down and burned and trampled underfoot at an accelerated rate, and nobody in power able to lend a helping hand to check this vandalism. The forest land, under destructive leaders continue to sweep the woods throughout almost their whole extent, reducing the seedlings and underbrush on which the growth of the trees depends, and streams depend, and starting fires wherever anything can be found for such purposes. The great lumber enterprises, conducted under the forms of similar restrictions and regulations, like these in other countries, are being set in motion without a single glance to the future. It is possible and probable that the enterprising kind of person might,