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Hetch-Hetchy Valley Menaced. San Francisco's Selfishness Would Rob State of One of Its Most Beautiful Spots, Reserved in National Park, the Peer of Yosemite."

John Muir

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THE Hetch-Hetchy Valley, "that wonderful counterpart of Yosemite," as State Geologist Whitney called it, was discovered by Mr. Joseph Screuch in 1856, the year before the discovery of Yosemite, when the Digger Indians held possession of it as an acorn orchard. After my first visit, in the autumn of 1871, I have always called it the Tuolumne Yosemite, for it is a wonderfully exact counterpart of the great Yosemite, not only in its crystal river and subterranean rocks and waterfalls, but in the gardens, groves and meadows of its flowery parklike floor.

The floor of Yosemite is about 4000 feet above the sea; the Hetch-Hetchy is about 3700; the walls of both are of gray granite, rise abruptly out of the flowery grass and groves, are sculptured in the same style, and in both every rock is a glacial monument.

Standing boldly out from the south wall is a strikingly picturesque rock called "Kolana" by the Indians, the outermost of a group 2200 feet high, corresponding with the Cathedral Rocks of Yosemite, both in relative position and form.

On the opposite side of the valley, facing Kolana there is a counterpart of the El Capitan of Yosemite rising sheer and plain to a height of 1300 feet, and over its mass the bow-downs a stream which makes the most graceful fall I have ever seen. From the edge of the cliff it is perfectly true in the air for a thousand feet, then veers up into a ragged sheet of cascades among the boulders of an earthquake talus. It is in all its glory in June, when the snow is melting fast but fades and vanishes toward the end of summer. The only fall I know with which it may fairly be compared is the Yosemite Bridal Veil; but it excels in even that favorite fall in both height and fineness of fairy air, beauty and behavior.

Lowlanders are apt to suppose that mountain streams in their wild career over cliffs lose control of themselves and tumble in a noisy chaos of mist and spray. On the contrary, on no part of their travels are they more harmonious and self-controlled.

Imagine yourself in Hetch-Hetchy on a sunny day in June, standing waist-deep in grass and flowers (as I have oftentimes stood), while the great places away dreamily with scarce perceptible motion. Looking northward across the valley you see a plane gray granite cliff rising abruptly out of the gardens and groves to a height of 1300 feet, and in front of it Tuolumne's silver ajar burning with iridescent sunfire in every fiber.

In the first white outburst of the stream at the head of the fall there is abundance of visible energy, but it is speedily hushed and concealed in divine repose; and its tranquil progress to the base of the cliff is like that of dogged geese in a still cove.
velous distinctness of the various sun-illuminated fabrics into which the water, as it were, they sift and float from form to form, and the feel of that gray rock in -so leisurely and uncon-
fused a manner that you can examine their texture, and patterns and tones of it, you would a piece of en-
brody held in the hand.

Near the head of the, fall you see groups of coming-like masses, the water plunging and plunging, mingled into huge on-bounding bosoms of foam, into the projecting shelves and knobs of its jagged gorge.

But much more unlike the Yosemite -in the open sunshine descend- ing like thistledown; Wapama in a jagged shadowy gorge, roasting and baking. And then, there is a weight and energy of an avalanche.

But if this is the scene of the fall, it has increased from about twenty five to a hundred feet below the summit of Vernal. Here, we come to one of these visions of cloudlike drapery in the afternoon sun, flitting away -and dissolving, worn out by friction in the rush through the air. Of these vanish a few hundred feet be-
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Two benches similarly situated and similarly arranged, forming a portion of the Hetch Hetchy north wall, to the east of Wapama fall, and so on other.

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the great Half Dome. Hetch-Hetchy is bounded in the same way, though its jagged rock is of red, with steep, unyielding walls.

The floor of the valley is about one and a half miles long and from forty to one hundred yards wide. The lower portion, in the sunken part of the valley, is about a mile long, with the trees restricted to the sides, and partially supporting the roof. The upper portion, or mouth of the valley, is formed by a low bar of granite, through which the river breaks in canals.

The principal trees are the yellow and sugar pines, Sabine pine, incense cedar, Douglas spruce, silver fir, the California and gold-epin oak Barks of Gillion, and the famous Yosemite or 'birdwing' pine, with its deep green foliage, and great diameter, and heads, golden-cup and Sabine pine, Incense cedar, sliver fir, etc. The slender, tall, mature trees are adorned and how fair, as many species of shrubs, flowering cumbine; mints of many species; gold-cup, wild-tassels, and white flowers, and plants of many kinds, and sweet-fragrant alyssum, calycanthus, philadelphus, wild-cherry, etc.; with abundance of bowery and fragrant herbaceous plants springing up in beds by themselves—illeges, Mariposa tulips, brodiaea, orchids—several species of violets, hepatica, hepatica, coltsfoot, collateral, castilleja, castilla, salvia, mariposa larkspur, columbine, columbine, and many species of flowering plants.

Many fine-ferns dwell here, also, especially the beautiful and interesting, lovely yellow, pines, and the late, madonna lily, of several species. Fringing and rosetting dry rocks, stones, and ledges, woodwardia, and asplenium clavatum in many species, and many others, sometimes find themselves in the tallest, the delicate maidenhair in moist woods, as the falls, and the sturdy—broad-shouldered petals bring content and joy to all.

It appears therefore, that Hetch-Hetchy Valley, far from being a plain, common rock-bound meadow, is a grand landscape garden, one of Nature's rarest and most precious monuments.

As in the Yosemite, the sublime rocks of its walls, seem to be nature's own works, combining in one grand effect, the grandeur and immensity of the sky, the water, and the rock, and the whole scene has been so well planned and carried out, that no artist could have dreamed of such a magnificent meeting place for flora and fauna, and all that the mountain could do is to attract and please. How many species of wildflowers and shrubs are there, and the mountain is so complete in its thoughtfulness, giving welcome to all who enter.

Strange to say, this mountain temple, next to Yosemite the finest and greatest in the Yosemite National Park, has been cut into by the mountain stream, dammed and made into a reservoir to help supply San Francisco with water and light.

The valley, so destructive and foreign to its proper park use, has long been planned and projected for, and the San Francisco board of supervisors, not seeming at all, have always been opposed to it, because of the immense amount of water that would be required, and also because of the immense amount of money that would be required.
Tentative plans for making national parks everywhere—were suggested by Dr. Howard in his report on this subject to the Congress—October 8, 1890. The first application to the government by the San Francisco supervisors for the use of Lake Eleanor and the Hetch-Hetchy Valley was made in 1896, and denied December 22d of that year by the Secretary of the Interior. In his report on this case he well says: "Proposers that Yosemite National Park was created upon the ground that the natural objects of varying degrees of scenic importance, located within its boundaries, inclusive all of its beauty, small lakes, like Eleanor, and its majestic wonders, like Hetch-Hetchy and Yosemite Valley. It is the aggregation of such natural scenic features that makes the Yosemite Park a wonderland which the Congress of the United States sought by law to preserve for all coming time as nearly as practicable in the condition fashioned by the hand of the Creator—a worthy object of national pride and a source of healthful pleasure and rest for the thousands of people who may annually sojourn there during the heat of summer.

The most delightful and wonderful campgrounds in the park are the three great valleys—Yosemite, Hetch-Hetchy and Upper Tuolumne; and they are also the most important places of reference to their positions relative to the other great features—the Merced and Tuolumne canyons, and the High Sierra peaks and glaciers, etc., at the head of the rivers. The main part of the Tuolumne Valley is a beautiful, spacious flowery lawn four or five miles long, surrounded by magnificent snow-mantled mountains. It is about 5,000 feet above the sea, and forms the grand central High Sierra camp ground from which excursions are made to the noble mountains, domes, glaciers, etc.; across the range to the Mono Lake, and valley; and down the Tuolumne, down to Hetch-Hetchy.
Whereas, the Yosemite National Park was created by an act of Congress, October 3, 1890, in order that the unirvalled aggregation of several features of this great natural phenomenon should be preserved in pure wildness for all time for the benefit of the entire nation; and

Whereas, an application has been made to this department by certain local interests to utilize Hetch-Hetchy Valley as a reservoir site for the purposes of obtaining a municipal water supply for the city of San Francisco, and thus flooding the entire floor of the valley;

Whereas, Hetch-Hetchy Valley, far from being a common meadow, is a minor feature, as claimed by the applicants, is a counterpart of Yosemite and a great and wonderful feature of the park, next to Yosemite in beauty, grandeur and importance;

Whereas, the floor of Hetch-Hetchy, like that of Yosemite, is a beautiful landscape park diversified by magnificent groves, gardens and grove meadows in charming combinations specially adapted for pleasure-camping; and

Whereas, this wonderful valley is the focus of pleasure-travel, in the large surrounding area of the park, and all the trails from both the south and the north lead into and through this magnificent campground, and though now accessible only by trails, it is visited by large numbers of campers and travelers every summer and after a wagon-road has been made into it, and its wonders become better known, it will be visited by countless thousands of admiring travelers from all parts of the world;

Whereas, if dammed and submerged one hundred and seventy-five feet deep, as proposed, Hetch-Hetchy would be rendered utterly inaccessible for travel, since no road could be built around the borders of the reservoir without tunnelling through solid granite cliffs; and

Whereas, these campgrounds would be destroyed and access to other important places to the north and south of the valley interfered with, and the High Sierra gateway of the sublime Tuolumne Canyon leading up to the grand central campground of the Upper Tuolumne Valley would be completely blocked and closed; and

Whereas, no greater damage could be done to the great National Park, excepting the damming of Yosemite itself;

Whereas, all of the arguments advanced in favor of making Hetch-Hetchy into a reservoir could be applied with equal force to the case of making Yosemite into a reservoir, except that the cost of a dam in the latter case would be greater;

Whereas, such use would, to a great extent, defeat the purpose and nullify the effect of the law creating the park; and

Whereas, the proponents of the San Francisco water scheme desire the use of Hetch-Hetchy, not because water as pure and abundant cannot be obtained elsewhere, but because, as they themselves admit, the cost would be less; and

Whereas, we do not believe that the vital interests of the nation at large should be sacrificed and so important a part of its National Park preserved to save a few dollars for local interests; therefore, be it

Resolved, that we are opposed to the use of Hetch-Hetchy Valley as a reservoir site, and devoutly pray that the application of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors to the Honorable Secretary of the Interior may be denied.

(Signed)

JOHN MUIR, President.
WILLIAM E. COLBY, Secretary.
J. N. LE CONTE, Treasurer.
WILLIAM F. MARZ.
E. T. PARSONS,
Directors of the Sierra Club.