1-1-1909


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JOHN MUIR TELLS

OF HETCH-HETCHY

NATURE LOVER PROTESTS THAT PARK MUST BE SAVED.

Says Proposition to Take It for San Francisco Is Scheme of A Few Sly Dollarish Schemers There.

By John Muir

The bill having for its object the destruction of the Hetch-Hetchy valley in the Yosemite national park, by damming it for a San Francisco water supply and electric power supply is now before Congress.

Great interest in the Hetch-Hetchy case is being manifested by all the most important clubs in America, including women's clubs, and by the people in general. For light has been brought to bear upon it and everybody is beginning to see more and more clearly that the commercial invasion of the Yosemite park means that sooner or later under various specious beguiling pleas, all the public parks and playgrounds throughout our country may be invaded and spoiled. The Hetch-Hetchy is a glaringly representative case involving, as it does, the destruction of one of the grandest features of the Yosemite national park, which, if allowed, would create a most dangerous precedent.

Judging from the way that the country has been awakened to the importance of park preservation, it is incredible that the people will tolerate the destruction of any part of the great Yosemite park, full of God's noblest handiwork, forever dedicated to beneficent public use. The friends of our national park system must continue to watch and fight, and protest to Secretary Ballinger and their congressmen to put an end to all such dollarly assaults on the nation's recreation and play-grounds, for they are the most priceless of all our uplifting natural resources.
The better part of the world is beginning to know that beauty plays an important part in human progress, and that regarded even from the lowest financial standpoint, it is one of the most precious and productive assets any country can possess.

Timber and water are universal wants, and of course the government is aware that no scheme of management of the public domain failing to provide for them can possibly be maintained. But however abundantly supplied from legitimate sources, every national park is besieged by thieves and robbers and beggars with all sorts of plans and pleas for possession of some coveted treasure of water, timber, pasture, rights of way, etc. Nothing dollarable is safe, however guarded. Thus the Yosemite park, the beauty glory of California and the nation, Nature's own mountain wonderland, has been attacked by the spoilers ever since it was established, and this strife, I suppose, must go on as a part of the eternal battle between right and wrong. At present the San Francisco board of supervisors and certain monopolizing capitalists are trying to get the government's permission to dam and destroy Hetch-Hetchy, the Tuolumne Yosemite valley, simply that comparatively private gain may be made out of universal public loss.

Should this wonderful valley be submerged, as proposed, not only would it be made utterly inaccessible, but the sublime Tuolumne canyon, away up to the heart of the high Sierra, would be hopelessly closed. None, as far as I have learned, of the thousands who have visited the park, is in favor of this destructive and wholly unnecessary water scheme. Very few of the statements made by the applicants are even partly true. Thus, Hetch-Hetchy, they say is a low-lying meadow. On the contrary, it is a high-lying natural landscape garden. “It is a common minor feature, like thousands of others.” On the contrary, it is a very uncommon feature, and after Yosemite the rarest, and most beautiful and in many ways the most important feature of the park.

“Damiing it would enhance its beauty.” As well say, damming New York’s Central park would enhance its beauty! “Hetch-Hetchy water is the purest and the only valuable source of supply for San Francisco.” It is not the purest, because it drains a pleasure ground visited by hundreds of campers with their animals every season, and soon these hundreds will be thousands. And there are many other adequate and available sources of supply, though probably they would be somewhat more costly; and so on with all their bad, cunning, beguiling arguments, boldly advanced under a cloud of ignorance.