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The Hetch-Hetchy Valley, A National Question.

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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.

MOST OF OUR FORESTS HAVE ALREADY VANISHED IN LUMBER AND SMOKE, MOSTLY SMOKE. FORTUNATELY, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS NOW FAITHFULLY PROTECTING AND DEVELOPING NEARLY ALL THAT IS LEFT OF OUR FOREST AND STREAM RESOURCES; NOR EVEN IN THESE MONEY-MAD COMMERCIAL DAYS HAVE OUR BEAUTY RESOURCES BEEN ALTOGETHER FORGOTTEN. WITNESS THE MAGNIFICENT WILD PARKS OF THE WEST, SET APART AND GUARDED FOR THE HIGHEST GOOD OF ALL, AND THE THOUSANDS OF CITY PARKS MADE TO SATISFY THE NATURAL TASTE AND HUNGER FOR LANDSCAPE BEAUTY THAT GOD IN SOME MEASURE HAS PUT INTO EVERY HUMAN BEING.

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 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 SPOILERS EVER SINCE IT WAS ESTABLISHED, AND THIS STRIFE, I SUPPOSE, MUST GO ON AS PART OF THE ETERNAL BATTLE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG.

THE YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK IS NOT ONLY THE GREATEST AND MOST WONDERFUL NATIONAL PLAYGROUND IN CALIFORNIA, BUT IN MANY OF ITS FEATURES IT IS WITHOUT RIVAL IN THE WHOLE WORLD. IT BELONGS TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND IS AMONG THEIR MOST PRICELESS POSSESSIONS. IN WORLDWIDE INTEREST IT RANKS WITH THE YELLOWSTONE AND THE GRAND CANYON OF THE COLORADO.

THE YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK WAS CREATED IN 1890 BY CONGRESS IN ORDER THAT THIS GREAT NATURAL WONDERLAND SHOULD BE PRESERVED IN PURE WILDERNESS FOR ALL TIME FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE ENTIRE NATION. THE YOSEMITE VALLEY WAS ALREADY PRESERVED IN A STATE PARK, AND THE NATIONAL PARK WAS CREATED PRIMARILY TO PROTECT THE HETCH-HETCHY VALLEY AND TUOLUMNE MEADOWS FROM INVASION.

The Hetch-Hetchy Valley, the Grand Canyon of the Tuolumne, and the Tuolumne Meadows are in Tuolumne Basin. Excepting only the Yosemite Valley, the Tuolumne Basin is the finer and larger half of the park. Practically all of the Tuolumne Basin drains directly into Hetch-Hetchy Valley, which is a wonderfully exact counterpart of the great Yosemite, not only in its crystal river, sublime cliffs and waterfalls, but in the gardens, groves, and meadows of its flowery park-like floor. This park-like floor is especially adapted for pleasure camping; and is the focus of all the trails from both the north and the south which lead into and through this magnificent campground.

The floor of the Hetch-Hetchy Valley is about three and one-half miles long and from one-fourth to one-half mile wide. The lower portion is mostly a level meadow about a mile long, with the trees restricted to the sides and partially separated from the upper forested portion by a low bar of glacier-polished granite, across which the river breaks in rapids.

Standing boldly out from the south wall is a strikingly picturesque rock called "Kolana" by the Indians, the outermost of a group 2,300 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 1,800 feet, and over its massive brow flows a stream which makes the most graceful fall I have ever seen. From the edge of the cliff it is perfectly free in the air for a thousand feet, then breaks 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 even that favorite fall both in height and fineness of fairy, airy beauty and behavior.
So fine a fall might well seem sufficient to glorify any valley; but here, as in Yosemite, nature seems in no wise moderate, for a short distance to the eastward of Tueeilala booms and thunders the great Hetch-Hetchy fall, Wapama, so near that you have both of them in full view from the same standpoint. It is the counterpart of the Yosemite Fall, but has a much greater volume of water, is about 1,700 feet in height, and appears to be nearly vertical, though considerably inclined, and is dashed into huge outbounding bosses of foam on the projecting shelves and knobs of its jagged gorge. No two falls could be more unlike—Tueeualla cut in the open sunshine descending like thistledown; Wapama in a jagged shadowy gorge roaring and thundering, pounding its way with the weight and energy of an avalanche. Besides this glorious pair, there is a broad, massive fall on the main river a short distance above the head of the valley. There is also a chain of magnificent cascades at the head of the valley on a stream that comes in from the northeast, mostly silvery plumes, like the one between the Vernal and Nevada falls of Yosemite, half-sliding, half-leaping on bare glacier-polished granite, covered with crisp, clashing spray into which the sunbeams pour with glorious effect. And besides all these, a few small streams come over the walls here and there, leaping from ledge to ledge with birdlike song and watering many a hidden cliff-garden and fernery, but they are too unshowy to be noticed in so grand a place.

The principal trees are the yellow and sugar pines, Sabine pine, incense cedar, Douglas spruce, silver fir, the California and goldcup oaks, Balm of Gilead poplar, Nuttall's flowering dogwood, alder, maple, laurel, tuminon, etc. The most abundant and influential are the great yellow pines, the tallest over 200 feet in height, and the oaks with massive, rugged trunks four to six or seven feet in diameter, and broad, arching heads, assembled in magnificent groves. The shrubs forming conspicuous flowery clumps and tangles are manzanita, azalea, spirea, brier rose, ceanothus, calycanthus, philadelphus, wild cherry, etc.; with abundance of
KOLANA ROCK IN THE HETCH-HETCHY VALLEY

2,000 feet high

Photo by Herbert W. Gleason
showy and fragrant herbaceous plants growing about them, or out in the open in beds by themselves—lilies, Mariposa tulips, brodiaeas, orchids—several species of each; iris, spraguea, draperia, collomia, collinsia, castilleia, nemophila, larkspur, columbine, goldenrods, sunflowers, and mints of many species, honeysuckle, etc., etc. Many fine ferns dwell here, also, especially the beautiful and interesting rock-ferns—pellaea, and cheilanthes of several species—fringing and rosetting dry rockpiles and ledges: woodwardia and asplenium on damp spots with fronds six or seven feet high; the delicate maiden-hair in mossy
nooks by the falls, and the sturdy, broad-shouldered pines beneath the oaks and pines.

In spite of the fact that this is a national property dedicated as a public park for all time in which every citizen of the United States has a direct interest, certain individuals in San Francisco conceived the idea that here would be an opportunity to acquire a water supply for the city at the expense of the nation.

But 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.