

The Elements:
Earth

By

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THE ELEMENTS:
EARTH

Scene: 1

Introduction

MUSIC IN: CAL LEGACY UPDATED THEME

NARRATOR:

Great writing about California's natural world is compelling and concrete, encouraging us to be personally in touch with the elements of our environment.

Earth, wind, fire, and water, timeless elements of California's natural world.

Hear now--Earth!

SOUND: GENTLE WIND SOUNDS, VERY UNDERSTATED

MUSIC: BRIDGE TO NARRATOR, CALMING AND MELODIC

NARRATOR:

California's mountains, valleys, and deserts provide us some of the most sublime views in the world--and some of the most lucrative opportunities for development. But needed development must be balanced by conservation.

Here's Professor John Farnsworth from the Environmental Studies Institute of Santa Clara University.

FARNSWORTH:

We Californians love our land, and we love it protected. 42% of the California landscape has been set aside for preservation in some form or another. In fact, we have more than 15 million acres of designated wilderness here in California. Not only is that more than any other state, but that's one-fifth of the designated wilderness within the entire nation.

MUSIC: BRIDGE TO NARRATOR

NARRATOR:

No one worked harder to protect California land than John Muir, who founded the Sierra Club. One of the issues he felt most passionate about was the damming of the Hetch Hetchy Valley to create a reservoir to supply water for the Bay Area.

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MUIR:

One of my later visits to the Valley was made in the autumn of 1907 with the late William Keith, the artist. The leaf-colors were then ripe, and the great godlike rocks in repose seemed to glow with life. The artist, under their spell, wandered day after day along the river and through the groves and gardens, studying the wonderful scenery; and, after making about forty sketches, declared with enthusiasm that although its walls were less sublime in height, in picturesque beauty and charm Hetch Hetchy surpassed even Yosemite.

That any one would try to destroy such a place seems incredible; but sad experience shows that there are people good enough and bad enough for anything. The proponents of the dam scheme bring forward a lot of bad arguments to prove that the only righteous thing to do with the people's parks is to destroy them bit by bit as they are able. Their arguments are curiously like those of the devil, devised for the destruction of the first garden, so much of the very best Eden fruit going to waste; so much of the best Tuolumne water and Tuolumne scenery going to waste. Few of their statements are even partly true, and all are misleading.

SCENE: 2TitleMUSIC: BRIEF INTERLUDE

NARRATOR:

California land inevitably became the site of farms and ranches that would establish in the Golden State one of the most prosperous agricultural industries in the world--at some cost to the familiar idea of the small, independent family farm.

SOUND:MUSIC: A BIT ATONAL, SOMETHING THAT PLAYS AGAINST THE IDEA OF HARMONY, PEACE

GEORGE:

And there is another type of California farmer. He boards at the San Francisco hotels, and drives a spanking team over the Cliff House road; or, perhaps, he spends his time in the gayer capitals of the East or Europe. His land is rented for one-third or one-fourth of the crop, or is covered with scraggy cattle, which need to look after them only a few half-civilized vaqueros; or his great wheat fields, of from ten to

(MORE)

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GEORGE: (cont'd)

twenty thousand acres, are plowed and sown and reaped by contract.

NARRATOR:

Henry George was a self-taught economist whose analysis of the effect of land monopolies made him world-famous. In an 1871 pamphlet *Our Land and Land Policy*, George describes the ills derived from having too much land in the hands of too few farmers.

GEORGE:

And over our ill-kept, shadeless, dusty roads, where a house is an unwonted land-mark, and which run frequently for miles through the same man's land, plod the tramps, with blankets on backs, the laborers of the California farmers looking for work, in its seasons, or toiling back to the city when the plowing is ended or the wheat crop is gathered. I do not say this picture is a universal one, but it is a characteristic one.

MUSIC: FADES INTO SOMETHING MORE MELODIC

SOUND:HORSES HOOVES, SOFTLY

NARRATOR:

Louise Amelia Clappe--who wrote under the pen name, Dame Shirley--came to California during the Gold Rush, and joined her husband in the Sierra foothills. At first dismayed, she eventually grew to love the Californian landscape, so much so that in an 1852 letter to her sister, she owned to a changed heart.

CLAPPE:

My heart is heavy at the thought of departing forever from this place. I like this wild and barbarous life. I leave it with regret. The solemn fir-trees, whose "slender tops are close against the sky" here, the watching hills, and the calmly beautiful river, seem to gaze sorrowfully at me as I stand in the moonlighted midnight to bid them farewell. Beloved, unconventional wood-life; divine Nature, into whose benign eyes I never looked, whose many voices, gay and glad, I never heard, in the artificial heart of the busy world, --I quit your serene teachings for a restless and troubled future. Yes, Molly, smile if you will at my folly, but I go from the mountains with a deep heart-sorrow. I took kindly to this existence, which to you seems so sordid and mean. Here, at least, I have been contented. The "thistle-seed," as you call me, sent abroad its roots right lovingly into this barren soil, and gained an unwonted strength in what seemed to you such unfavorable surroundings. You would hardly recognize

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CLAPPE: (cont'd)

the feeble and half-dying invalid, who drooped languidly out of sight as night shut down between your straining gaze and the good ship Manilla as she wafted her far away from her Atlantic home, in the person of your now perfectly healthy sister.

NARRATOR:

Again, John Farnsworth

FARNSWORTH:

I find myself wondering what John Muir would have said about recent plans to close state parks in order to balance California's budget. He once wrote that the clearest way into the universe was through a forest wilderness. Would Muir see park closures as anything less than closing our public portals to the universe?

NARRATOR:

California needs smart development and thoughtful conservation, so that the kind of landscape that changed the heart of Dame Shirley will endure for generations.

Examine your own experience of outdoor California to appreciate better what's at stake here.

For the California Legacy Project at Santa Clara University, I'm Terry Beers

MUSIC OUT: CAL LEGACY UPDATED THEME

CREDITS:

Earth is a production of the California Legacy Project at Santa Clara University, californialegacy.org, and featured Kevin Hearle, Dan Maloney, and Jessica Teeter.

Music and post-production by Bernhard Drax at draxtor.com.