

SNOWSLIDE SEASON IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

Freaks of Dozen-Rushing Avalanches—Never Twice in the Same Place—Dangers Faced by Miners and Railroad Men.

Denver, March 5.—From the first of March until the last of May is the snowslide season in the Rocky Mountains—a season when avalanches threaten the lives of miners, prospectors and ranchers.

How to combat successfully the snowslide is something that men have not yet learned. The rotary snow ploughs have made it possible to keep railroad tracks clear in ordinary snowstorms, but the avalanche, starting from a small slide of snow at the top of some great mountain, but gathering tremendously in bulk as it tumbles itself down the mountain side, is awful enough in its force to sweep away any tiny barriers erected by man. Snow sheds, stout mine buildings and even engines have been swept along by snowslides as if their power of resistance was no more than that of a feather. The uncertainty as to the exact course a snowslide will take adds another element of terror. Like lightning, the snowslide never strikes twice in the same place. The well marked path made by a slide the year previous will be abandoned by a later slide, which will take a shoot far to one side or another, carrying terror to the hearts of men and animals. Huge trees will be cut off at the base of the trunk as if done with a knife, and by the time a slide reaches the base of a mountain it is a whirling mass of snow, timbers and bowlders, sometimes one hundred or more feet in depth. Men caught in such a slide have not one chance in a million, and yet there are some remarkable escapes from death on record in the West. As a rule, however, the rescuing parties find it impossible to recover the bodies in many cases, and the work of digging is abandoned until summer, when the snow melts.

Last spring, near Ward, Col., a snow bucking crew of the Colorado and Northwestern was en-

Guards were stationed on the path leading to the mine, and no one was allowed to approach within many hundred yards of the wreckage. Late in the spring, when the snow had partially melted, the bodies of the victims were recovered, but they were unrecognizable, so crushed were they by the great mass of timbers and bowlders carried by the slide.

Immediately after the Liberty Bell slide, the San Juan mine in the same district was overwhelmed by an avalanche. This slide killed nobody, but it was remarkable for two narrow escapes. The camp cook, who was getting a pan of snow to melt for drinking purposes, was caught by the slide and carried 1,200 feet down the gulch, literally riding on his dishpan to safety. The slide also caught a tram man who was working on the ore dump. This man and his ore car were carried 1,000 feet into the gulch. The car was battered to pieces, but the man was uninjured.

There is one locality near Telluride which furnishes a spectacular feature to the townspeople at least once a year. A great mass of snow always packs in a certain place far up the mountain side, distinctly visible to Telluride folk. Every year this slide comes thundering down into the gulch below. Bets are freely made in Telluride as to the course the slide will take. For five or six years the slide was known to take one general direction. That was before the Denver and Rio Grande road was built into Telluride, and the engineers laid out a course which they thought would free them from danger. The first spring after the road was built the slide shot off at a tangent and carried twenty-five loaded freight cars into the gulch, most of them being so battered that repairs could not be made.



WRECK OF A COLORADO RAILROAD STATION.

It was struck by a snowslide. Photograph taken in the spring when snow had melted away.

deavoring to clear the track at a mining camp at some ten thousand feet elevation, near Long's Peak. The work of clearing the track was making good progress, the rotary plough being backed by two locomotives. There was no indication of any danger from snowslides and the crew was utterly unprepared when a slide started several hundred feet up the side of the mountain. The slide thundered down to the track, catching one of the engines broadside. The heavy, mountain climbing engine was lifted off the track as easily as if it had been a block of wood and was carried several hundred feet into the gulch below, two of the crew being killed.

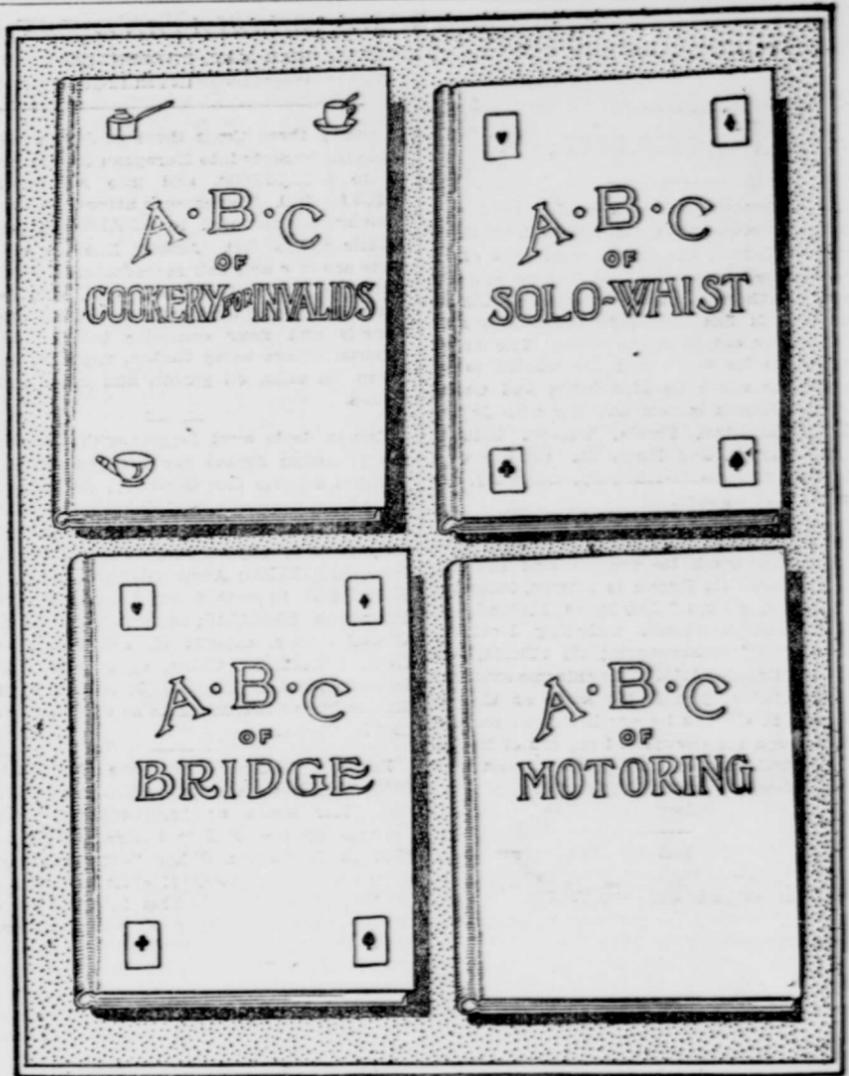
The San Juan region, in Southwestern Colorado, is known as the great snowslide district. The mountains there are steep and grim, and their sides are deeply cut with many gulches in solid granite, making innumerable paths for snowslides. The slides in this district have no parallel for the ferocity of their descent and the terrible effects which follow. Telluride, in the San Juan district, has a snowslide record which is not approached in any other mining town in the world. Dozens of miners have been killed in the Telluride mining district, many of them having met their deaths in courageous attempts to rescue comrades who had already been swallowed up by enormous slides. Two years ago Telluride had the worst snowslide in its history. An enormous slide swept down on the bunkhouses of the Liberty Bell mine, one of the largest gold mines in the State. The slide cut off a wing that had been built on one end of the building, leaving the rest of the structure intact. Two mining engineers were caught in the wing and were carried to their death. While rescuers were working to find the bodies, another slide came down close at hand, killing nearly a score. Then followed one slide after another, until six had been counted, and it was estimated that the victims were buried under a mass of debris eighty feet in depth. All attempt at rescue was abandoned for many days.

At another time one end of the railway station was crushed by the slide. The telegraph operator in the station was looking out of the window and saw the slide make its start. Something warned him that he was in danger, but he stopped long enough to tick off the word "snowslide!" and then he fled. The end of the station in which he had been sitting was crushed into kindling wood.

There is hardly a mine in the San Juan district which is not threatened by snowslides. A few years ago, at the Pandora Mine, the superintendent concluded that a slide was threatening the bunkhouses of the men. He ordered all the men out of the buildings. The slide came down, but it did not touch the bunkhouses. It went whirling past them at a distance of several hundred feet, but the vacuum caused by its swift descent was enough to make the end house collapse like a house of cards, although no snow had touched it. Every window on that side of the mill was broken by the rush of air.

Miners tell some remarkable stories of the tricks played by avalanches in the San Juan District. An avalanche caught a young man who was riding horseback along a mountain trail in Ouray County. The snowslide buried the young man one hundred feet deep, but the horse escaped without a scratch. At Telluride, where two young miners were taking the body of a comrade from a snowslide, a second slide came down and killed both the rescuers, mangleing them beyond recognition. The corpse which they had been carrying was found on top of the second slide. A mail carrier whose route lay between Ophir and Telluride was caught in a slide and his body was not found for three years. The mail sack which was strapped to the body was forwarded to Washington. A slide once caught a herd of forty burros, used in packing ore down the mountain side. These animals were carried a considerable distance, but not one was killed.

Dr. J. Q. Allen, of Telluride, has twice ridden



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avalanches and escaped unhurt. Then years ago, at Creede, Col., Dr. Allen rode eight hundred feet on the crest of an avalanche and was unhurt. Dr. Allen was one of the rescuers at the Liberty Bell mine disaster. Three of his companions on the trail just ahead of him were carried away and killed. Dr. Allen and his horse were carried several hundred feet, but were unharmed.

Four years ago the town of Silver Plume, Col., was threatened with destruction by a mighty avalanche. The slide, in its descent, overwhelmed a mine and killed nearly a dozen miners. It swept on down the gulch, and if it had proceeded in the path it was taking would have carried away the centre of the town. But the slide caught on an obstruction just before the last downward sweep toward Silver Plume. There it hung for a month, suspended like the sword of Damocles over the little mining town. Finally the miners destroyed the slide with dynamite, and were once more able to move back into their houses, which they had been compelled to desert.

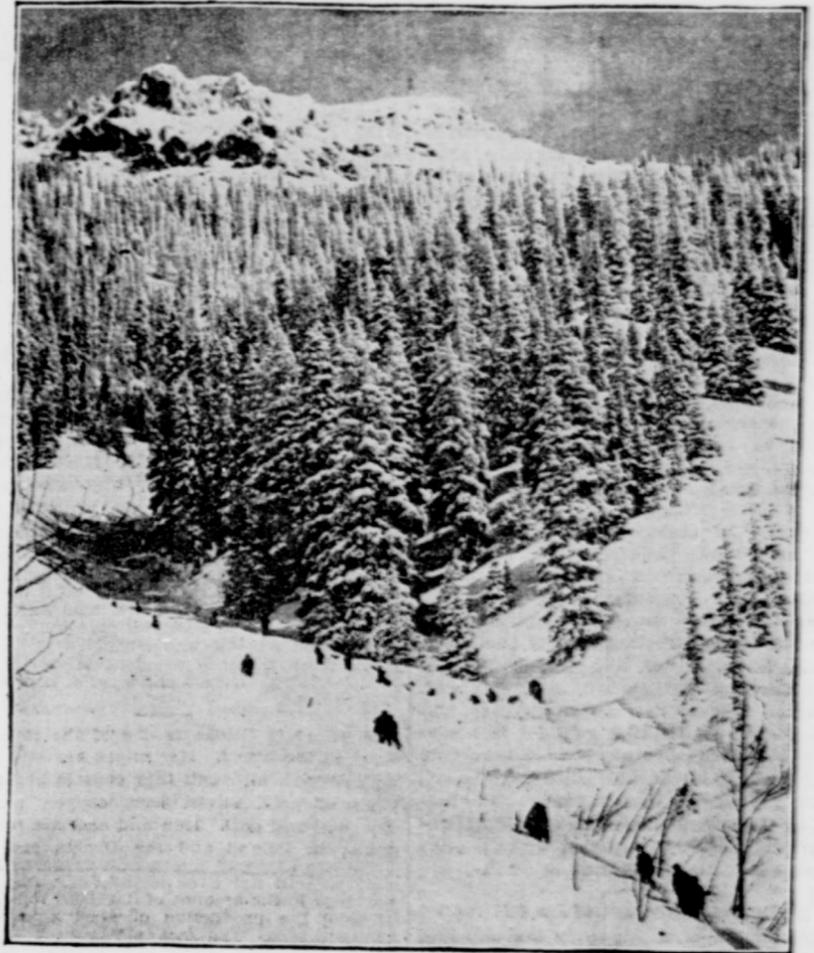
THIS MARRIAGE A FAILURE.

James Whitcomb Riley, the dialect poet, received the degree of Doctor of Laws on Washington's Birthday from the University of Pennsylvania. Afterward he visited the Academy of the Fine Arts, where his portrait by Sargent hung.

"While Sargent was painting my portrait," the poet said, "he showed me a copy of an unusual epitaph that one of his friends had sent him from Virginia. It was the epitaph of a certain John Custis, and it read:

"Under this Marble Tomb lies ye body of Hon. John Custis, Esq.—City of Williamsburg and Parish of Bruton—formerly of Hunger's Parish on the Eastern Shore of Virginia—County of Northampton, the place of his Nativity, aged 70 years, yet lived but Seven Years, which was the space of time he kept a Bachelor's House at Arlington."

"On the other side of the tomb," said Mr. Riley, "these words were carved apologetically: "This Inscription put on this Tomb by his own Positive Order."



SEARCH FOR SNOWSLIDE VICTIMS.

Snow is from 75 to 150 feet deep, over which the rescuers are making their way.