THE DOOM OF THE ANTELOPE.

THE STORY OF THE MASSACRE NEAR INDEPENDENCE MOUNTAIN.

Murdering the Graceful Animals for their Hides—An Antelope Hunt in Wooded Ravines—Herons Guarded by Bucks.

RAWLINGS, Nov. 26.—Southward from Rawlings, in Wyoming, a wagon road leads up the North Platte Valley into the North Park. This road is about 110 miles long. It winds through an open highland region which was once the most famous feeding and breeding ground for antelope in the United States. Six years ago large herds of these beautiful animals grazed in the North Park and in the valley below. I have seen them in herds, in groups, in families, and singly, all over the North Platte country. That was before the valley and park was occupied by cattle men and settlers, and when the Ute Indians claimed and held the land. Hunting in the game preserve of those warlike Indians was risky, and more than a score of white sportsmen paid for their pleasure with their lives. Then antelope were tame. Their curiosity was easily excited and hard to gratify. It was possible to inveigle them to you by waving a blanket in the air. It was an exceedingly wily antelope, in those days, that could resist the temptation to approach a waving red blanket to see what it was. The most wretched of shots could kill plenty of meat if he had cartridges. He could almost have caught the animals alive, they were so tame. Their habits changed, and to-day they are the most shy of game animals. What produced the change? The ruthless killing of antelope by "skin hunters," who lay in ambush along the trails used in semi-annual migrations.

Until recently antelopes avoided the pine-clad spurs and summits of lofty mountain ranges. Their haunts were the plains and the treeless mountain valleys. They frequented the gray, rocky buttes, and the high, gravel hills. Instinctively they avoided the shades of the forest, where mountain lions or other carnivorous animals might lurk and pounce on them. Now this is changed. They have learned that men armed with long-range magazine guns are far more dangerous and destructive than attacks by carnivorous animals, and they have, to a great extent, abandoned the plains and open valleys in the summer months, and sought refuge in the timber-clad highlands.

Last September I rode through the North Park. I did not see an antelope in that once well-stocked Ute game preserve. Riding down the North Platte valley for fifty miles, I kept record of the antelope I saw. They were thirteen, all old bucks, driven from unseen herds by younger and stronger and more Sullivan-like animals. These new animals stood on the tops of high, rocky hills, and apparently spent the time, which the absence of female companions undoubtedly made hang heavily, in prolonging their lives by ceaseless vigilance. At Big Creek Ranch, I was told, the hunter employed to supply the ranch with fresh meat killed only one antelope in six weeks. I have shot a horseload of game meat at this ranch before breakfast. When I entered the Sierra Madre Mountains in search of black-tailed deer and elk I saw the prints made by shorter and broader hooves than those of deer, in the game trails, on the burnt lands, around the springs, and along creek banks. I suspected that the antelope were in the timber. One day, while stalking deer, I saw the flash of white tails among the trees, and then I heard the brush breaking as the animals ran for safety. I hurried to the edge of the green timber, and saw the alarmed antelopes running through the down timber. They jumped over trees, and acted much as deer do. Almost daily, after this, I saw herds of antelope in the dense forest, and they always escaped me. They were far more shy than either elk or deer.

Late one September afternoon, after a long and unsuccessful tramp after a band of elk which was led by a wily cow, I started for camp. The game trail led out of the green timber into a large tract of down timber. I was exceedingly tired. The ardor of the pursuit had left me. I sat behind the blackened trunk of a giant pine and loaded my pipe. While smoking I heard rapid reports from a Winchester rifle. Evidently my comrade had found game. He was pumping cartridges into and out of his rifle as fast as possible. The reports echoed from cliff to cliff, from hill to hill, and reverberated through canyons and ravines. It was impossible to tell where the hunter was. I crouched low behind the tree, laid my pipe on the ground, and watched for the elk, which I thought my comrade had found, and which I hoped would come toward me. Presently, as my luck is, I saw a herd of animals burst from the green timber at full speed and enter the fallen timber. My heart beat strongly when I saw them coming directly toward me, jumping high over the blackened logs. They were antelope. When they were about 100 yards from me, the leader in the rear increased its speed, quickly ran to the head of the herd, and rounded up the does and the fawns. There were twenty-seven animals in the band. They stood huddled together more than sixty yards from me. I knew that I could kill two or three of them, it mattered not how fast they ran, so I, envious to see what they would do, covered the buck, and, with finger on trigger, waited. It was evident that the leader of the band, a large and handsome buck, was the control in her flight, and it was equally evident that the buck wanted to see what it was that had frightened them. The doe started to run. The buck, much the fleetest animal, headed her and drove her into the band. Again she started and again he drove her back into the herd. Evidently she was in danger. Three times she started. Three times he brought her back, and the last time he bucked her savagely. That was ungallant and reprehensible conduct; so I broke the conceited polygamist's neck with a heavy rifle ball. He fell dead, and not the doe, as I intended, when I pulled the trigger. Startled at the report, they passed close by me. I killed the leader, the doe that had been punished. Then the antelope did not know what to do. They couldn't see me. They ran madly in one direction, and at the crack of the rifle they turned and ran in another. They ran in bewildered circles around me, now drawing near, now moving off. They were frantic with terror. Now leaping high, now running fast, now standing still, stamping their fore feet like a group of frightened horses, trying to bring their hands. I fired pretty steadily until I saw the fifth antelope fall. I had killed a horse load of meat. Then I stood up and waved my hat and yelled. Instantly the remaining animals wheeled. There was a flutter of white tails, plump, active forms bounded high over the logs, and the antelope disappeared in the forest.

Before I had dressed the dead animals I heard a near-by rifle shot, and I knew that my comrade, a one-legged man and a famous hunter, was hunting for me, so I discharged my rifle in reply. Presently he rode into the burnt timber and galloped his horse toward me. He had found the antelope feeding in the dense forest, and had missed them at long range. Then, hearing me shoot, he had ridden to my direction to assist me in dressing and hanging up the game.

Come with me. See how the antelopes have been almost exterminated by wickedly, greedily mean whose shoot for skins. At the point where the North Platte River debouches from the North Park, Independence Mountain, a wooded hill of golden gravel, stands. Directly west of the mountain is a bare, grass-grown hill, and west of this bare hill is another tree-clad mountain. The bare hill, which is called the hill, which slopes to the north, a tiny stream of water flows in a deep ravine. The whole of the bare hill is within rifle range of the forests which stand on Independence Mountain, or on the westerly mountain. The natural trail for animals migrating into or out of the North Park would be along the river bank, but to follow that trail would have taken the antelope into the green timber, so they refused to take that route. The course they selected when migrating into the park in the spring and out of it in the fall was over the bare high and bare hill. On the northern slope of this hill are over fifty well-defined antelope trails. Each of them is a foot wide and from two to six inches deep. They rise gradually and swing around the hill in great circles, one above the other, from the river to near the timber, there they swing away from it. For ages antelope have walked over this, their chosen route. At this point all the animals which entered the North Park congregated. From the Colorado River, fifty miles away, from away above Rawlings, from the plains, the antelope travelling on converging trails met at this point, and entered the park to breed and to pass the summer. Millions of antelopes have entered and left the park on these trails. They knew no other route. Here they were slaughtered.

A man of the name of Potter or Porter, who is a wonderful rifle shot, persuaded three or four other men to join him in the business of killing antelope for their skins. They selected this crossing place for an ambush. In the woods, near the summit of the divide, and about 100 yards from the game trails Potter's assistants were stationed. Potter, who was armed with a heavy breech-loading magazine rifle, concealed himself in the woods about half way down the mountain, in a place from which he could see the trails for a long way in both directions. His ambush was not over 70 yards from the trails. Suppose it was in the fall. In the autumn the antelope swarm out of the park. Band after band follow their leaders over the hill. Every animal is anxious to get out of the park before the winter's Arctic-like storms begin to sweep across that open, highland grazing ground. When the bands had passed beyond the ambuscade the men opened fire on the leaders of the band killing one here, breaking the leg of another there, and shooting others through the bowels. The herd scattered and ran down the trails in bewildered confusion. Then Porter opened fire on them. They did not know where to go. Behind them rifles cracked. Before them a rifle cracked. They hesitated. They stood still. Their comrades were falling dead among them. Others were wounded and cried aloud. They ran in circles on the hillside.

Porter fired steadily and accurately at the frightened animals. When that herd had drifted past him he refilled the empty magazine of his rifle and opened another box of cartridges and impatiently waited for another herd to cross the divide. When the party's cartridges were exhausted the men skinned the dead animals. The meat was left on the ground for wolves and other carnivorous animals to eat. Porter boasted to me that he had killed 140 antelope in one day at the trails of this crossing place. One hundred and forty killed means about 250 wounded and not secured. It means scores of animals wandering over the plains with broken legs trailing behind them, other scores with their bowels streaming ribbon-like from their wounds, and catching on the sage brush as they sought to hide from wolves which they knew were on their bloody trails. I looked at Porter in silent horror as I estimated the suffering he had caused.

The slaughter at the trails was supplemented by the ruthless killing of the animals by every settler who owned a rifle. The murderous work was continued year after year until the animals are almost exterminated in the North Park region. This year Porter was unable to kill one where he formerly killed fifty, and this year he is selling the meat. There have been hundreds of Porters on the plains and in the highland valleys. They are the men who have decimated the game animals, which they shot at all seasons of the year, and shot in large numbers. Females heavy with young, cows with their calves at their sides, does with little spotted fawns, does with their tiny kids, all were greedily shot, all are skinned, and the skins were sold generally.

On the plains there was, and is, no prettier spectacle than antelope. They run. They wheel and gaze curiously at you. They stamp their fore feet in rage. They bark dog-like. They wheel and run as though under command of officers. Single bucks stand sentinel-like on hills, or hover near the small herds that still frequent the old feeding grounds. All of them act as though they were uncontrolled, except by fear. But after the animals have been closely observed for many days it is seen that their movements are almost always the result of intelligent action on the part of the bucks which control the herd. The leader of all herds of the deer family are intelligent females. A doe is invariably the leader of a herd of deer or antelope, and a cow always leads a band of elk. She selects the feeding ground. She chooses the trail to be travelled. She starts at the approach of danger, and cuts out the pace of the running. The bucks and bulls bring up the rear. This female leadership arises, probably, from the fact that the females, the mothers, would not, except in case of imminent danger, run faster than the calves or fawns could follow. There was another reason. The attacks of carnivorous animals, which followed by scent, almost always came from the rear, and the heavy antlered bulls and bucks remained in the rear because there was where the danger was greatest.

Suppose a herd of antelope, which are feeding on the plains are startled by the unexpected appearance of a hunter. Instantly they wheel and are in full flight, the buck in the rear. They run for about a quarter of a mile. Then the buck increases his speed and passes the leader. He turns, checks her flight, and in a few seconds the band is standing still. If the buck decides that it is dangerous to remain in that place—and he is the possessing prophet of decision—he steps aside and the flight is resumed, to be again checked by him. When he is satisfied that the danger has passed the animals resume grazing. It is as though the male said to the leading doe: "Yes, you can graze and feed on this grassy plain where you please, do as you please, and take charge of the band until some unforseen contingency arises. Then I will take charge. You can have the authority as long as there is nothing to be decided. When there is, my superior speed and larger intelligence and greater courage entitle me to assume command." Of course he is constantly making mistakes, constantly checking the flight of the band too soon, and frequently, I am happy to say, he is killed because he did not follow his wife to safety.

Young and vigorous bucks invariably whip old bucks and expell them from the herd. Every band of from five to ten antelope is composed of does and kids and one full grown buck. The latter has to closely watch his harem that they do not stray away, and this anxious care is probably one of the reasons why he rounds up the does when they are running from danger. He fears they will scatter and that some other buck will gather them into his harem. Jealous vigilance on the buck's part is the price of keeping his does. The solitary bucks, which stand on high hills or graze alone, are hermits, not from choice, but because they are not sufficiently powerful to drive some other buck away from his herd. But they are not the animals in courage. Whipped by one buck they dauntlessly fight the next one they meet. I have frequently seen them run into a band of does, and fight savagely with the buck in charge, but I never saw them conquer. Again, I have seen them, when their courage was broken by repeated defeats, hover around a band of antelope, now disappearing in a ravine, now looking over the crest of a ridge, then stealing close to the does. Their intention to attempt to cut a doe out of the herd was apparent, and the buck of the band watched the veteran's movements perfectly. He would leave his does, and travelling on an inner circle would keep between the the strange and predatory buck and his flock. I once saw a buck that was so engrossed in watching his rival that he overlooked the fact that another buck was on the other side of his flock. This buck cunningly cut out a doe and drove her off. The rage of the outraged, plundered animal was superb. He started in pursuit. Then, fearing that the buck that he had been watching would seize the other doe if he left them ungarded, he stopped, struck the ground savagely with his forefeet, and hastily rounded up his band of does and started them at full speed for distant pastures. He did the thing so savagely and brutally that I could almost hear him say: "Get out of that, you hussies." They are strange buck making eyes at you. This is no place for modest wives to be feeding. Travel, I say." And they travelled at full speed until they sunk below the Milk River plains.

When a hermit buck secures one doe he is apparently perfectly satisfied. And he is resolute in his intention to keep her. He knows that he can outrun her, and that she cannot escape from his care. He is a jealous lord, and spends the most of his time in watching her. If he sees a band of antelope approaching he drives his one wife before him at full speed. He urges her on by repeated blows with his head. He runs her far away from the presence of the younger and more attractive male. He is careless whether she hears the antelope gossip of Cupid's dalliances, but he rather prefers she should not. He evidently believes that to gossip is unwise, and that an old antelope that has a young and presumably frisky wife should keep her away from temptation and social gatherings, where young bucks congregate. So he drives her from unfrequented places, and there keeps her, and, I suppose, scoffs at empty-headed youth.

Returning up the valley in late October, after I had been driven from my favorite elk hunting ground by a furious snow storm, I saw that a few bands of antelope had descended from their mountain retreats. They were wild, but they were in the open, and could have been killed if properly hunted. My comrade, a famous hunter, proposed that we wait a few days take to town. I turned back the wagon sheet and exposed to his view a hind quarter of a fat elk, a saddle of a black-tailed deer, a saddle of antelope, and a score of grouse, and then I looked reproachfully at him and said: "My boy, we have shot three times as much meat as we will eat on this trip. Your winter's supply of meat hangs in pine trees which stand around your cabin. It is cold. This meat in the wagon will keep until you get home from town. I shoot no game animals to waste. If the town men want antelope let them come out here and kill them."

"You are right," he replied. "The hunt is over." And it was. FRANK WILKESON.

FUN ON THE DIVIDE.

Dancing with Healthy Girls who were Brought Up on Mountain Air.

From the San Francisco Call.

One morning a man rode up and said there was to be a dance that night at a public house on the divide, and that we were wanted. Accordingly about 7 o'clock we blacked our boots, brushed our hair, left ten on guard, and started on horseback. Bill was mounted on the old veteran who turned the windlass at the shaft. We were minus kid gloves, swallow-tails, or white cravats, but ready for a lark. The dining room of a small tavern on top of Table Mountain was the ball room. The girls proved to be splendid specimens of physical development. They had grown up in the mountain air. The belle of the occasion was dressed in the American flag. She had taken the prize at the games in Sonora for bareback riding on the previous Fourth of July, and danced with all her might. Two fiddlers furnished the music. As in the case of the more popular parties in town, the supper room was open all the evening. This was a shed across the way, lighted by candles which were mounted on a pedestal of their own grease. The refreshments consisted of crackers, cheese, sandwiches, cigars, and five kegs of beer on tap. This "layout," as they styled it, was free to all comers.

Primitive as the affair was, it was in every way decorous, and everybody had a good time. Coming from the city, the writer was enabled to dance with the belles several times. This unusual privilege was extended, no doubt, for the sake of its reflex influence on some young spectator who lived in the neighborhood, rather than as a mark of partiality for his partner in the dance. In New Mexico they say it is sure death to dance more than once with the belle of the evening. Fortunately, they were less bloodthirsty in the region around Table Mountain.

Father and Three Sons Killed at a Crossing.

From the Inter-Ocean.

LAPORTE, Ind., Dec. 7.—Physicians and the Coroner were summoned from here to Mill Creek, a small station on the Grand Trunk Railroad, this afternoon, by a terrible accident, whereby Reuben Hill and his three sons were instantly killed, and a daughter injured.

It appears that Hill and his family drove on the track in their two-horse wagon, and being unable to see the approaching engine, owing to an occupied side track, were struck by the westbound passenger train. The horses escaped uninjured, but a dog tied under the wagon was cut in two.

Hill's wife died only a short time since, so that the little girl, whose leg is broken, is the only one left of the family. The sons were 16, 18, and 18 years of age, and the girl is 12. Their home was near North Liberty, in St. Joseph county.

THE CAVES OF SCHOHARIE.

A COUNTY FULL OF CURIOUS CAVERNS IN CENTRAL NEW YORK.

The Wonders of Bell's Cavern, which Only a Dozen Persons Have Ever Explored—The Perils of McFiall's Cave—Bottomless Pits.

CARLISLE, Schoharie county, Dec. 8.—It is doubtful whether there is another county in the Union which possesses so many natural curiosities in the way of caverns as the county of Schoharie, New York. The geological composition of the county is of the more recent formations, limestone strata predominating. These soft strata, having been subjected for ages to the disintegrating action of the numerous streams of water that abound in the region, have entirely disappeared in many localities, leaving in their places caverns miles in extent, steep and narrow flumes that lead no one knows whither, and curiously formed and fathomless openings yawning in the ground. The beginnings and endings of the many streams that have hewn the caverns in the subterranean rocks are shrouded in impenetrable mystery. There are probably a hundred of these great cavities in the county, to explore which no attempt has ever been made, while there are many others whose interiors are familiar to the more courageous and adventurous of the dwellers in their vicinity. One of these at least—Howe's Cave, in Schoharie township—has a world-wide fame. This great subterranean curiosity is so well known, in fact, that no newspaper description of it is necessary. Its original name was Otsgaragee Cavern, and since its first exploration by Lester Howe, in 1842, entrance to it has been made easy, and its depths have been lighted by gas.

A more wonderful cave than Howe's is Bail's, called by some Gebhardt's Cavern. It is four miles east of Schoharie village, and was discovered by Simeon Bail in 1831. It was not explored for some months afterward, and the descent to it was so difficult and dangerous that but comparatively few persons have ever visited its depths. The entrance to Bail's Cave is first by a perpendicular descent through the rocks for a distance of seventy-five feet. Then a more gradual descent of thirty feet brings the visitor to the shore of a rather sluggish stream. The descent thus far is made by ropes. The remainder of the journey into the cave is by boat. The stream is about four feet wide and two feet deep at the start, but as it gets further in the earth it widens into lakes, some of them thirty feet wide, and showing soundings in places fully as deep as the lakes are wide. There are fourteen of these lakes. They are formed by the projection into the stream at intervals of circular dams or walls of soft calcareous rock. The water breaks over the dams by falls that fill the chambers with weird sounds, and by a continuous and rapid descent the stream leads to a distance of two miles from the entrance of the cave and to a depth of two hundred feet from the surface.

The cavern is made up of small apartments, the lofty ceilings of which are hung with magnificent stalactitic specimens. These are especially beautiful in the amphitheatre, where the explorable portions of the cave terminate—a large apartment, with the floors depressed in the centre and walls 100 feet high. The stream continues from this grand amphitheatre through low, narrow passageways, which no one has yet been bold enough to follow. The first persons who ever undertook to explore this dangerous cavern were John Gebhardt, Wm. Hubbard, and John Branch. Finding that thorough exploration could not be made without boats, Gebhardt had two made for the purpose, and lowered them into the depths. Several prominent citizens of the county accompanied him on this trip into the unknown region. They found the walls covered with a material resembling whitewash. The geological specimens they brought back with them are among the rarest known to science. Probably not more than a dozen persons have visited this curious cavern since the pioneer expedition.

The caverns of Carlisle have received far less attention than those of Schoharie, yet they are fully as diversified in their character. The principal caverns in Carlisle, Schoharie, and Cobleskill. Not a few of the caves are natural ice houses, wherein ice has been preserved through all seasons for centuries. One of these is the "Ice House" near Crosby's Corners. This is an isolated cavern, where the temperature never rises above the freezing point. The low temperature makes extended exploration extremely inconvenient, but venturesome persons have entered it a long distance in boats, and found it like with a surface like glass, and deep, icy chasms, apparently fathomless. There are several of these ice caverns in Carlisle township.

Not far from Carlisle village, south of it, is a curious cave known as the "Rock House." This is easy of access, being only a few feet square. A turbulent stream flows through it and disappears in a number of dark openings which have never been explored. The roof of this cavern is apparently a stratum of slate, and light is let into the cave through several large holes in the roof. The cave is shaped like a fan, and its walls, as well as the floor, are rude earthen jars, and warlike weapons were found in the Rock House by its early explorers. When the Indians still held possession of this region this cave was a favorite retreat to them, and long after the Revolution human skeletons were found in the cave.

Not far from the Rock House is Sellick's Cave, named after a man who was the first to enter it many years ago. This cavern is composed of a number of square chambers, with very high walls and jagged ceilings. These chambers are connected one with the other by narrow openings in the walls. In one of them the floor is hollowed out like a basin, and during rainy seasons this basin becomes a pool of water from five to eight feet deep. The water rises and disappears gradually. Sellick's Cave is easily entered and its exploration is not attended with peril.

Such is not the case, however, with McFiall's Cave, near Carlisle Centre. This is rarely if ever visited, owing to the peril of its exploration. Its discovery and first attempt at exploration was attended by a tragedy—Alexander McFiall, a venturesome Scotchman, its discoverer, losing his life in it in 1854 by falling from a jutting rock, on which he was creeping to get a better view of the cavern he was exploring. He was alone in the cavern, and, being absent a day and a night, some courageous young men went in to look for him. His dead body was found lying on the edge of a pool of water at the foot of the high ledge. One of the young men let down his rope, and the body was hoisted out of the pool. McFiall's Cave is a series of narrow passages opening into irregularly-shaped chambers, and coursed by rapid streams, with here and there a small lake, fathomless pits, and steep, ragged descents. Not a few credulous natives declare that the lake is haunted, and those who have ventured into its depths say that the weird responses a shout awakens among its damp aisles and openings might easily be taken for the voices of unearthly dwellers.

Two miles from the village of Schoharie is a cave which was discovered by James Netheway in 1836. It is of large extent, abounds in streams and lakes and numerous apartments; but as it cannot be reached except by a dangerous perpendicular descent, only very few persons have ever visited it. It has never been explored for any distance except once, and that was soon after its discovery in 1836, when John Gebhardt and John S. Bonney followed its intricate and perilous tunnels and passageways for nearly a mile. Neither of these explorers would ever enter the cave again.

In hundreds of places in the upper and central portion of Schoharie county wagons passing along the roads or blows struck upon the ground produce cavernous sounds similar to that given forth by blows on an empty hogshead. The Lutheran church at Lawyersville, the Union Church at Schultz's Corners, and several school houses in this vicinity stand on flat rocks, beneath which the earth is hollow.

There are many caverns in the neighborhood of Cobleskill, which it is not necessary for the visitor to let himself down by ropes through perpendicular openings from 20 to 100 feet deep. Some of these approaches to subterranean depths have straight walls from top to bottom, while others are funnel shaped, and others still formed like an immense hour-glass contracted in the centre and with funnel-shaped openings on the surface and in the cave. A striking peculiarity of these deep caverns is the noise of falling water that is heard coming through openings in the rocks which from local inertia it is impossible to reach. There are passageways leading from chamber to chamber, which can only be followed by crawling on the hands and knees. In one of these caves a stream of water spouts out of a circular opening in the rock ten feet from the floor and six inches in diameter. It tumbles down the rough side of the cave, a miniature waterfall, and joins the stream that flows through the cavern. This curious spouting of water, it is supposed, comes from a subterranean creek, which has a bed several feet higher than the one in the cavern.

Another strange feature of these underground recesses are the bottomless pits that abound. These are openings in the floor, some of them ten feet across, and as round as though they had been bored in the rock with a huge drill. Many of them are fathomless. Some are filled up with water, and others are dry. Corridors, narrow and low, run in all directions, and in their labyrinth lies great danger to the explorer, and an insuperable obstacle to thorough investigation of the mysteries of these caves. A man named Samuel or Lemuel Pool was lost in one of these dangerous hour-glass caverns in 1838. He visited the cave with two companions. They carried five torches, and holding one of these in his hand Pool crept into one of the narrow and crooked passageways for the purpose of seeing if there was an invisible waterfall, the roar of which could be heard as though just beyond the mouth of the passage. His companions saw his torch gradually disappear in the aperture, and waited for hours for his return. He never came back, and nothing was ever heard of him again.

The openings of these surface entrances to caverns being in the fields, and in some instances near the houses of farmers, they are enclosed with strong fences, for many horses and cattle were formerly lost by falling into the pits. Some of the openings are seventy-five feet in diameter. In times of big freshets the streams running through the underlying channels are frequently swollen to such proportions that they not only fill the caves, but overflow at the surface entrances and flood hundreds of acres of surrounding country, forming lakes that are sometimes months in subsiding. Farm houses originally built near these vents for subterranean floods have had to be removed to safer places to escape the water. One family living in close proximity to a cave of this kind in 1869 was forced to fly to the second story of the house to escape the rapid rise of the water from the earth, and were removed from their dangerous situation in boats.

In the lower part of Carlisle township a stream large enough to run several mills comes out of the rocks. After a rapid course of two miles it disappears in the surface opening of one of these caves. The first settlers who came into this region thought that this stream fed some underground lake, and did not appear again. An immense spring of clear cold water, its outlet being a good-sized brook, was another wonder those settlers found three miles distant from the spot where the stream so suddenly dropped into the earth. The spring is now the property of Cobleskill, on the old Becker farm. Soon after the country about here was settled a sawmill was built on the Sinking Creek, and people who lived near the Great Spring began to notice that quantities of sawdust and pieces of wood appeared in the spring. This led to a reasonable theory that the spring was formed by the lost water of the creek, or had some connection with it. All doubt as to the correctness of this theory was removed one day in a remarkable manner. A woman had hung out her wash in a yard not far from the spot where the creek entered the ground. The day was windy, and two or three garments were blown from the line, and were carried into the stream. Before they could be reached they were swept out of sight in the entrance to the cavern. A few days afterward those same garments were found in Becker's spring. By similar means it was found that other streams in the neighborhood, whose waters disappeared in the same way, reappeared in other localities, one having an underground course of seven miles. Another stream, which rises in Howe's Cave, widens into a large lake, and, flowing a hundred yards or so further in the cave, drops out of sight in an opening in the floor. Half a mile from the cave its waters come to the light of day, and, flowing for a mile, empty into Schoharie Creek.

CAMP LIFE IN TOWN.

How the Bucks, Squaws, and Papooses of the Wild West Show are Taken Care Of.

Half an hour after Cowboy Orator Richmond and the other wind powers have stopped their production of the mimic cyclone that makes such an impressive finale to each of the Wild West performances, the lights in the vast auditorium are extinguished, except here and there where a flickering flame is left to guide the watchman's footsteps. During that half hour the Indians sit around in the boxes and blink at the lights, stare at the forest scenery, gaze with wonder at the huge interior of the building, and doubtless believe themselves to be thinking. In this period of self communion the warriors are seldom seen in groups, preferring to sit alone, each buck wrapped in his dignity and his blanket, but the squaws cluster along the balcony rail chattering and laughing, while their jolly, fat little red papooses tumble playfully on the floor behind them.

When the great auditorium is steeped in deep shadows the show resolves itself into a camp. In addition to the regular watchmen of the building, there are cowboy patrols, who have their fixed tours of duty and reliefs, just as they would have in a real camp on the plains, a guard of ex-United States soldiers at each entrance, and two unwearying Indian policemen, appointed by a council of the chiefs, who glide about all night long in a stealthy, mysterious, ghost-like fashion, appearing in the most unexpected places and vanishing again. All the others in camp, over 200 in number, go to bed.

The conditions of the camp are widely different from yet strikingly akin to those maintained on Staten Island last summer. Down there the tepees were carpeted with the green sod, and over them the forest boughs rustled, the winds sighed, and sometimes the rain poured. Here they are floored, both tepees and tents, just as they were in the Erastina woods, but instead of being scattered about as they were there, are ranged along both sides and across one end of the up-stairs hall, on the Madison avenue end of the building, where the Indian village was. The floor is like a smooth, apparently fathomless. There are several of these ice caverns in Carlisle township.

Not far from Carlisle village, south of it, is a curious cave known as the "Rock House." This is easy of access, being only a few feet square. A turbulent stream flows through it and disappears in a number of dark openings which have never been explored. The roof of this cavern is apparently a stratum of slate, and light is let into the cave through several large holes in the roof. The cave is shaped like a fan, and its walls, as well as the floor, are rude earthen jars, and warlike weapons were found in the Rock House by its early explorers. When the Indians still held possession of this region this cave was a favorite retreat to them, and long after the Revolution human skeletons were found in the cave.

Not far from the Rock House is Sellick's Cave, named after a man who was the first to enter it many years ago. This cavern is composed of a number of square chambers, with very high walls and jagged ceilings. These chambers are connected one with the other by narrow openings in the walls. In one of them the floor is hollowed out like a basin, and during rainy seasons this basin becomes a pool of water from five to eight feet deep. The water rises and disappears gradually. Sellick's Cave is easily entered and its exploration is not attended with peril.

Such is not the case, however, with McFiall's Cave, near Carlisle Centre. This is rarely if ever visited, owing to the peril of its exploration. Its discovery and first attempt at exploration was attended by a tragedy—Alexander McFiall, a venturesome Scotchman, its discoverer, losing his life in it in 1854 by falling from a jutting rock, on which he was creeping to get a better view of the cavern he was exploring. He was alone in the cavern, and, being absent a day and a night, some courageous young men went in to look for him. His dead body was found lying on the edge of a pool of water at the foot of the high ledge. One of the young men let down his rope, and the body was hoisted out of the pool. McFiall's Cave is a series of narrow passages opening into irregularly-shaped chambers, and coursed by rapid streams, with here and there a small lake, fathomless pits, and steep, ragged descents. Not a few credulous natives declare that the lake is haunted, and those who have ventured into its depths say that the weird responses a shout awakens among its damp aisles and openings might easily be taken for the voices of unearthly dwellers.

Two miles from the village of Schoharie is a cave which was discovered by James Netheway in 1836. It is of large extent, abounds in streams and lakes and numerous apartments; but as it cannot be reached except by a dangerous perpendicular descent, only very few persons have ever visited it. It has never been explored for any distance except once, and that was soon after its discovery in 1836, when John Gebhardt and John S. Bonney followed its intricate and perilous tunnels and passageways for nearly a mile. Neither of these explorers would ever enter the cave again.

In hundreds of places in the upper and central portion of Schoharie county wagons passing along the roads or blows struck upon the ground produce cavernous sounds similar to that given forth by blows on an empty hogshead. The Lutheran church at Lawyersville, the Union Church at Schultz's Corners, and several school houses in this vicinity stand on flat rocks, beneath which the earth is hollow.

There are many caverns in the neighborhood of Cobleskill, which it is not necessary for the visitor to let himself down by ropes through perpendicular openings from 20 to 100 feet deep. Some of these approaches to subterranean depths have straight walls from top to bottom, while others are funnel shaped, and others still formed like an immense hour-glass contracted in the centre and with funnel-shaped openings on the surface and in the cave. A striking peculiarity of these deep caverns is the noise of falling water that is heard coming through openings in the rocks which from local inertia it is impossible to reach. There are passageways leading from chamber to chamber, which can only be followed by crawling on the hands and knees. In one of these caves a stream of water spouts out of a circular opening in the rock ten feet from the floor and six inches in diameter. It tumbles down the rough side of the cave, a miniature waterfall, and joins the stream that flows through the cavern. This curious spouting of water, it is supposed, comes from a subterranean creek, which has a bed several feet higher than the one in the cavern.

Another strange feature of these underground recesses are the bottomless pits that abound. These are openings in the floor, some of them ten feet across, and as round as though they had been bored in the rock with a huge drill. Many of them are fathomless. Some are filled up with water, and others are dry. Corridors, narrow and low, run in all directions, and in their labyrinth lies great danger to the explorer, and an insuperable obstacle to thorough investigation of the mysteries of these caves. A man named Samuel or Lemuel Pool was lost in one of these dangerous hour-glass caverns in 1838. He visited the cave with two companions. They carried five torches, and holding one of these in his hand Pool crept into one of the narrow and crooked passageways for the purpose of seeing if there was an invisible waterfall, the

A DAY WITH A BALLET GIRL

THE VIEW OF A DANCER'S LIFE THAT THE PUBLIC DOES NOT GET.

Patient, Hard Work from Childhood Up Producing the Pretty Footlight Pictures—The Training, Wages, Habits, Morals, and All Else of Interest About These Women.

You would never have suspected there was anything peculiar about Miss Maria Sims as she stood on the top of the front stoop of her boarding house in West Thirty-fifth street yesterday. There was nothing peculiar in her appearance, unless it is odd for a young woman, to be perfectly healthy, rosy cheeked, shapely, and stylish. She was gathering up a handful of her skirts, preparatory to tripping down the wet steps to the muddy street. She was of good height, and yet plump, and wore a neat little blue bonnet and a heavy plush cloak, trimmed with beaver. Her wavy dark brown hair framed her round and smiling face picturesquely. You might have thought her one of the ciphers of the population, a mere atom or unit in the throng of shoppers, without a history, a purpose, or a character for anything above domesticity. Yet you would have vowed she was a lady.

In that boarding house she was a mystery. Brains that never had been strained by thinking before, in heads of young male clerks and salesswomen, had almost ached over wondering what Miss Sims was and did and earned. She kept her own counsel, paid her little $8 a week promptly on Saturdays, and spent most of her time away from the house in rain or shine. It was known that she was English and prosperous and ladylike. But she did not reach home until midnight, as a rule. That alone was enough to set a boarding house by the ears. The other women, a pallid, narrow-shouldered half dozen, had at first said it was simply scandalous, and had put the fat landlady in a flutter with threats of leaving. Fortunately, the chambermaid's tattle restored order and enveloped Miss Sims with a romantic gauze veiling of romance.

This servant tattled a new little bit about Miss Sims every day. First there was music in her room, sheet music with Italian words. Then the appearance of librettos of operas in German on her table was made known. Next came news of her having portraits of Patti, Nilsson, and of distinguished-looking ladies with difficult foreign names. The ladies began to fear that Miss Sims was a singer in burlesque opera. Somehow, at this stage the threats of leaving the house increased, but at last the chambermaid brought out of the third-floor hall bedroom in question some torn envelopes marked, "Metropolitan Opera House," and addressed to Miss Sims. From that moment she was held in veneration, and unanimously decided to be a chorus singer in grand opera. One young clerk asked her if she wasn't, and she didn't deny it. The young male boarders had all been getting experience. They were wild over Miss Sims. One after another had tried to be friendly with her, had sent bonbons and flowers to her, and had asked permission to accompany her out of doors. Each one afterward chaffed each other one about "the cold shake" he got, and the pale and precise young women admired the English girl all the more.

It was on Wednesday that Miss Sims tripped down the stoop and turned up Broadway. The men in the street stared at her and looked around after her, but she minded her business, fixed her eyes on the ground, and tripped along. At the corner of Thirty-seventh street a policeman was assisting the lady pedestrians over the puddles and slush in the street. When Miss Sims came he looked at her sagely, as policemen always do at women. He had three ways of assisting women over the crossing. One way was to walk ahead of them and say, "Follow me close." That was for what he called "the blooded ones." Another way was to grasp them by one arm and squeeze it a little, picking the way slowly, and vouchsafing them a little flattering familiar talk. That was for the shop girls. The third way was for stout and homely working women, and he strode with much vivacious and possibly coarse hauteur. For women not properly belonging to any of these classifications he blended his methods adroitly, and that was why he stared at Miss Sims. He decided that he might venture to touch her arm lightly and guidingly with his finger tips, and, noting her beauty, thought he would stare at her all the way over. But he was disappointed. In fact, he was still standing with his arm outstretched when she was half across the street. She had stooped, caught her skirts up so adroitly and modestly as to lift them no higher than her boot tops, and with three or four light bounds had crossed the flood.

Then she went up the stage entrance of the Metropolitan Opera House, bowed to the doorkeeper, flew up the iron stairs, and shot into a large square and almost bare room. There she substituted for her street attire a pair of woollen tights, some trunks, short Turkish trousers, a lot of ribbon-rated sauzy skirts, and a pretty red jacket that covered her stays but exposed her arms. For she was a ballet girl after all, and this was the costume she had to put on every morning for practice and rehearsals under the tutorship of Herr Giovanni Ambrogio, the director of the ballet of the German opera.

Miss Sims looked like a ballet girl as she stepped into the hallway to go to the practice room, but not exactly as she looks in the glare of the footlights on grand opera nights when she whirls through one of the beautiful dances that form a large part of the attraction that fills the great house four times a week. These practice clothes were her own, while those in which she dances on the stage are furnished by the opera management. Now she had on woollen tights, and over them she wore short baggy knee-breeches of blue flannel that just about reached to the edge of her skirts. From the bottoms of the trousers to the insteps, her tights were covered with leggings of worsted. These and the baggy trousers and the jacket were to keep her straight as to her legs and her trunk and chest. She could not have worn sleeves because they would restrict the free use of her arms. Long skirts she could not have for several reasons. They would prevent the ballet master from seeing whether she did what he told her, and, indeed, ordinary skirts would fetter her limbs. But when Miss Sims and all the other girls were together in the practice rooms in their nimy skirts and with their trousers and jackets of all colors, they made a picture, and a very pretty picture—so pretty a picture that it seems a pity such a dress is never shown on the stage or in a painting.

There was one other notable thing about this girl, of course, that not mentioned by her right name, or any thing like it. The instant she put on her white kid slippers she walked like a ballet girl and nothing like the way she walked in her street boots. Nothing in the world walks like a ballet girl, unless it is a duck. Flop, flop go her feet, flat on the floor, as if each step was the turning over of a pancake. And there is a stiff-leggedness about the walk that makes it almost ridiculous. Do you think it is because they are shod with silken slippers that they do not frame the feet exactly as gloved are the hands? No; it appears to be a tradition of the ballet, a stage trick handed down from one set of dancers to another. Perhaps Mile. Theodora of Rome, who married the Emperor Justinian, waddled that way, and maybe Jephtha's daughter had learned the trick from her.

On the way to the practice room last Wednesday all the