

THE CASKILL MOUNTAINS

Story of a House That Was Very Much Haunted

The Real Thing Was Much Worse than Any Ghost-Killed Thirteen People.

It was a charming old house at the foot of the Catskill Mountains, a number of an attractiveness almost unknown in the United States. I was on a sketching expedition when I was attracted to this region by the much-vaunted picturesque quality of the mountains...

bedroom. They were found lifeless in bed on the third morning. Their mother, determined to learn at any cost, if possible, what had killed her children, slept in the same room. She kept a light and a pistol by her bedside the whole time. What happened no one could tell, but at the end of five days she, too, was found dead in bed.

The owner of the house then decided to have it pulled down, but a poor farmer begged for the privilege of occupying it at a low rent. He lived in it happily for three years, using the fatal bedroom only as a storeroom. Then, his family growing large and himself forgetful, he made his oldest daughter, a pretty young woman, occupy the southwest room. She died on the second night. In her case there were no signs of anything unusual.

Six more persons died at long intervals between this time and the opening of the civil war. During that tremendous upheaval its dreadful history seems to have been forgotten by most people. In 1870 a young artist from New York occupied it and perished in the old, mysterious way at the end of the month. From then until I found it, in the summer of 1885, the haunted house had been inhabited only by the caretaker, who lived on the ground floor. She was old and indifferent and had little fear of the ghost.

Before sleeping in the fatal room I examined its construction minutely. I satisfied myself that there were no unexplored closets, no trap doors, no mysterious corners. The only thing that disconcerted me somewhat was the great open fireplace, which stood within two feet of the head of the bed. It had a beautiful but singularly carved mantelpiece, on which appeared two gigantic snakes, each offering an apple to Eve, in the center. I explored the chimney up to the roof and found it devoid of any suspicious feature.

I began my encounter with the unknown. I slept with a lighted student's lamp, well filled with oil, on the table at the head of my bed. Alongside of it I kept a hunting knife and a six-shooter. For two nights excitement and curiosity kept me awake. On the third night I slept, and as I did so I had a curious dream. It seemed to me that one of the snakes over the mantelpiece grew to life size and came down from its place toward me. I felt its body crawling over me and pressing against me. I was too frightened to move. I could see nothing. I fancied I heard a gliding noise behind the mantelpiece, but that, I said, was merely morbid imagination.

On the following night I had the same dream, but this time I was too tired to wake up. In the morning I felt ill and I asked myself whether it was worth while to continue the quest. Yes, my pride said, I must keep it up.

And for the third time my dream was repeated. I slept with my right arm stretched out and my head resting on it. While I was between sleeping and waking, I was knowing whether it was a dream or reality. I felt something crushing my neck and arm. I awoke with a start. The light had gone out.

The thing was a reality. It crushed me with deadly ferocity. I leaped up and tried to struggle with it, using my one free arm. It bit at me like a mad dog and crushed me ever more tightly. I was strong and healthy and fairly brave, but I became mad with terror. I flung myself frantically toward the door, felt, struck something metallic and knew no more.

I reasoned it out afterward, was the ghost that had haunted the old house for a hundred years. Snakes, like other animals, as naturalists have observed, are liable to acquire individual habits not common to the species, and this one had acquired the hideous habit of approaching a person in bed, inserting his head in the space between the sleeper's neck, the pillow and the bed, and then strangling him or her to death. Women and children proved easier victims. The reptile lived in some adjacent rocks, climbed up into the house by the interior of the chimney and entered the bedroom from the fireplace. Blacksnakes, like many other reptiles, are capable of living to an indefinite age and grow to an enormous size if they obtain abundant nourishment. They are powerful constrictors, though not as dextrous as the cobra. I shall never recover my health and strength after the ordeal of laying the ghost.—Horace Green.

DECEMBER RATE ESTABLISHED

Drunks Quoted This Month at Six per cent Costs.

If the December rate for a plain drunk was established in police court this morning—

"Pass around the bottle and we'll all take a drink."

Geo. Hall had looked long and frequently upon the double-distilled "hand-made valley tan" Saturday evening just as the curtains of night were being pinned down by the stars for the last time in November. A policeman came along and invited George three separate times to repair to his cabin. Being a man of formality, George declined to go on verbal invitation with the result that he was taken to "Hote d' Stripe" and furnished with board and lodging until this morning when he was taken before Magistrate Macaulay. He "rocked" the charge was true, but as it was his first offense and as the "toot" indulged in had not been one of these "six-hoss-team-with-a-bull-dog-under-the-wagon" drunks the nominal fine of \$5 and costs was imposed.

MORE SNOW IS NEEDED

Valley Roads Remain in Very Bad Condition.

The snow that fell yesterday morning was a most welcome addition to that already on the ground, but it ceased too soon to be of a great deal of benefit. Traders report the valley roads as being there almost denuded of snow, what little there has fallen having gradually worn away until there is but little left. The result is that in many places the roads are bare with deep holes, ridges and bumps, which render heavy freighting very difficult. Owing to the fact that the roads were very badly cut up when the freeze up came, nothing short of a foot of solid snow will put them in first class condition.

The First Stage.

The first stage to leave for Whitehorse this year over the ice is advertised to take its departure Thursday, December 5, and it is expected to make the run through in ten days. Should open water be encountered a trail will be cut overland around such places.

First class music furnished—violin and harp—for balls, socials and receptions. Please address musician, this office, a few days before engagement.

Clothing cleaned, pressed, dyed and repaired—both men and women's.—H. I. GOLDBERG, tailor for Henschberg.

MODERN ARTILLERY

Uncle Sam's Latest Production the Wonder of the World.

The much talked of Gathmann torpedo gun is ready to be officially tested at Sandy Hook. It is a vessel of-war will ever come into New York harbor. It is not necessary to hit a ship with the Gathmann projectile, if the enormous load of gun cotton explodes within a thousand feet of a war vessel it will shatter the ship. At an even greater distance it is claimed that the explosion will so twist things around on board a battleship that all machinery and guns will be thrown out of position.

It is no joke to test this new engine of war, with its muzzle big enough for a very fat man to crawl into. It costs a good deal to fire a shot from the gun, for it takes six bushels of gunpowder to start the projectile moving. Inside the projectile are the 600 pounds of gun cotton, and when this explodes it sounds and feels like a small earthquake for miles around. To find out just what this big 18-inch gun can do the government has constructed at the Brooklyn navy yard two of the largest and most formidable targets in the world.

Two gigantic pieces of Harveyized armor plate, 8 by 16 feet, 11 1/2 inches in thickness, and weighing 26 tons, have been made at the Bethlehem Steel Company's plant for this test.

These targets cost \$20,000. They are intended to represent a section of the armor plate of the port side of the battleship Iowa, one of the heaviest armored ships in the United States navy. For a month the targets have been in course of construction at the navy yard. The best skill and material have been utilized and they outclass all existing targets, both in design and resisting power.

Hitherto loose armor plates have been set up against a sand embankment and fired at. A feature in the new targets is their secure backing and bracing by a series of heavy beams behind these is a heavy bar of sand and earth. The total weight of each target is 50 tons.

The forthcoming battle of the Gathmann torpedo shell against these seemingly impregnable barriers of steel is attracting widespread attention among ordnance experts all over the world. The test embraces two new features. First, 600 pounds of gun cotton—the largest ever fired from a piece of ordnance on earth—will be used to give this 600 pound shell its tremendous force and explosive qualities. Second, this will be first heavy piece of improved process armor plate to be fired at by a large gun.

The great efficiency and penetrating power obtained by the latest modern guns demand a corresponding improvement in the resisting force of the armor plate. The two new targets to be fired at are considered the best products ever turned out in the armor plate line. The method of producing armor plate similar to that used in the targets requires considerable care, time and knowledge. The molten metal is tapped into ladles and poured into molds, where it is allowed to cool for 24 hours or more.

When taken out of the mold the castings are termed ingots. Several days are required to bring armor plate ingots to forging heat, the furnaces being of the regenerative, gas-fired type. After heating the ingot is placed under a 14,000-ton hydraulic forging press and forged to the required rough dimensions.

The press used for this purpose is the largest and most powerful in the world. Water is supplied to the two plungers for a pressure of 7000 pounds to the square inch, giving the press a maximum capacity of 14,000 tons. Before the plates are ready to machine to shape they pass through various secret treatments and tests. The finished weight of an armor plate represents about 40 per cent of the original weight of the ingot, owing to the discard from top and bottom and loss in machining.

The Gathmann is a high explosive shell-throwing weapon and is designed to be the most destructive engine of war in the world. It is claimed and scientifically certain that at a range of two sea miles—about the same distance at which the battles of Manila and Santiago were fought—a ship struck by one of the torpedo shells would be entirely obliterated and blown into fragments.

The approaching test will determine the final and most important problem—the relative efficiency of the weapon, or, in other words, its smashing ability. The regular service gun, the 12-inch army rifle, and the new navy weapon of the same calibre, using an 850 pound projectile, with a muzzle velocity of 3000 feet, will be fired from the same range at a duplicate target of the same armor, in order that their striking energy may be compared with a Gathmann shell.

Ordnance experts agree that the aerial torpedo shell, carrying 600 pounds of high explosives, will have a striking energy almost too enormous to calculate. Lieutenant Meigs, ordnance expert of the Bethlehem Steel Company, has figured that one half million foot tons energy will result therefrom—that is the torpedo shell will have enough energy to lift a half million tons a foot in one second—nearly twice as fast as sound travels—may be gathered by supposing that 50 locomotives, going at full speed, suddenly strike an object.

The penetrating power of the shell, it has been calculated, is sufficient to drive the projectile through five blocks of Broadway structures, going through the walls of each building.

Here are some of the main constructive features of the new 18-inch torpedo gun recently completed at the Bethlehem Iron Works and now ready for the test at Sandy Hook. Total weight, 59.6 tons; total length, 44 feet; diameter, over chamber, 13 1/2 inches; maximum tangent resistance, square inch, 40,000 pounds; powder charge 310 pounds; projectile, 1800 pounds; explosive charge of projectile, 630 pounds; pressure in powder chamber, 20,000 pounds; muzzle velocity 2100 foot seconds.

either from shot in a gun or heat of powder gases; second, a fuse which will insure with certainty the non-explosion of main shell or torpedo charge of high explosives until the torpedo has been discharged from the gun and struck a resisting target; third, a shell which will give a maximum carrying capacity of explosives for a given total weight and deliver the explosives in intimate contact with target.

These problems, it is believed, have been successfully solved in the big weapon now at Sandy Hook. At a preliminary trial held recently at the Bethlehem proving grounds, armor plate ten inches thick was repeatedly destroyed. The inventor is confident that with the 600-pound charge of explosive the most destructive results ever obtained from a shell will be demonstrated and a new world's record for foot tons of energy will be established.

Armed with a single 18-inch torpedo throwing gun having a range from 80 to 12 miles, an American battleship could easily destroy a hostile fleet in a short space of time. Ballistic engineers and ordnance experts here and abroad are awaiting the trial of this monster death-dealing machine with keen interest.

Not Born to Drown. Word has come to Dawson, not by mail for mail except from the lower river is now an unknown quantity; that "Kid" West, narrowly escaped drowning by falling through the ice into the river while musing along between Stewart and Selwyn. However, the report is that the intrepid "Kid" pulled himself together and at last accounts his portion of the star of empire was wending its way toward the south.

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