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Summering in the Sierra. John Muir Visits One of the Famous Mountain Caves of the Sierra. A Summer Day in the Mountain-Rural Homesteads-Cave City-Exploring the Cave-A Scene of Matchless Splendor. (From Our Own Correspondent.) Yosemite Valley,...

John Muir

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SAN FRANCISCO.

SUMMERING IN THE SIERRA.

Jean Blair Visits One of the Famous Mountain Caves of the Sierra.

A SUMMER DAY IN THE MOUNTAINS.

From Our Own Correspondent.

Yosemite Valley, August 6th.

SIE RRA CAVES.

The most beautiful and characteristic of the mountain caves of California occur in a thick belt of metamorphic limestone, that is pretty generally developed along the western flank of the Sierra Nevada, and frequently extend upward to the base of the summit, or long arguments between them, and of course no solid foundation was required to make them do so. These thoughts were excited a few days ago by the rare old miners of Murphy's camp, who, in their zeal, excited with a view to the formation of the marvelous beauty of Cave City Cave, lying sight or nine crooked miles to the north of the village, the base of icy mountains, and the Region of the Bath, where bears and mountaineers find shelter in the wind-worn caves in the stratified sandstones beneath many a thick pine, and the innumerable hosts of the [FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

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the edges,

these little fasts are mostly settled by
Italians and Germans, who plant a few grape

and maple trees and live in small

This main occupation is mining and prospecting. In
side of the rustle beauty of these delightful places,

It was only a better kind of camps,

which we

Pacing slowly along some of

and then in brilliant

The guides were miners

and are careful not to fall.

and the trees are nothing

We're just

They had come to town to hold

and the trees are nothing

of exquisite clearness

and were half

and the trees are nothing

A few

and only the skeletons of houses are left.

We asked. No, that was

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builted and combined into forms of inconceivable beauty. We were shown one room occasionally used as a dancing-hall, and another with natural pulpit, and pews, and crosses, with sermons in every stone, where a priest said mass. Mass-saying is not so generally developed in connection with natural wonders as dancing. Thus one of the first conceits excited by the giant sequoias was a dance on the stump of the largest. We also have seen dancing over Niagara; dancing in the famous Bower Cave above Coulterville; and in no place of an equal number of inhabitants have I seen so much dancing as in Yosemite. A dance on the hitherto inaccessible South Dome will undoubtedly follow the completion of the ladders.

**Nature's Infinite Deliberation.**

It was delightful to witness here the infinite deliberation of Nature, and the simplicity of her methods in the production of such mighty results. Such perfect repose combined with restless enthusiastic energy. Though cold and bloodless as a landscape of polar ice, building was going on with incessant activity. Archways and ceilings were everywhere hung with down-growing crystals like groves of leafless saplings, some six or eight inches in diameter. Others delicately attenuated, and tipped with a single silent drop like the terminal bud of a pine tree. The only appreciable sounds are the varied drips and tinkling of water falling into pools, or passing faintly on the crystal floor.

In some places the crystal decorations are arranged in graceful flowing folds; deeply plièd like stiff silken drapery. In others, straight lines of the ordinary stalactite form are combined with reference to size and tone, in a regularly graduated system, like the strings of a harp, and with musical tones corresponding thereto, on which we readily played human music, (which is also divine,) by striking the strings of this stone harp with a stick, the delicious liquid tones dying in long, slender cadences. Here we lingered and revolved, rejoicing to find so much real splendor in darkness, such profusion of beauty without overabundance; a building ever in process of construction, yet ever finished; developing from perfection to perfection; every building particle visible or invisible marching to the music of the spheres.

The chambers of mountain caves are frequently selected as homes by wild beasts. In the Sierra, however, they seem to have preferred the equally secure homes and hidings in the thick underbrush and shelving precipices, as I have never seen their bones or tracks. This is all the more remarkable, because, notwithstanding the thick darkness and the silence, and dripping, oozing water, there is nothing uncomfortably cellarish or sepulchral about them.

**Out into the Blessed Daylight.**

Emerging into the bright landscapes of the sun we felt our faith in nature's beauty strengthened—beauty which is universal and immortal; above, beneath, on the land and sea, mountain and plain, in darkness and in the light.

John Muir.