

before the picture, completely absorbed in the first view. A vast canvas, I should say twenty or twenty-two feet by twelve, all crowded, and yet not crowded, conveying such a vivid play of color, it takes a little time to get used to it. There are no tricks; there is no throwing of shades in masses; it is all at first painfully real, overwhelming, needs good nerves to look at it. Forty or fifty figures perhaps more, in full finish and detail, life-size, in the midground, with three times that number, or more, through the rest-- swarms upon swarms of savage Sioux, in their war/p/118/bonnets, frantic, mostly on ponies, driving through the background, through the smoke, like a hurricane of demons. A dozen of the figures are wonderful. Altogether a Western, autochthonic phase of America, the frontiers, culminating typical, deadly, heroic to the uttermost; nothing in the books like it, nothing in Homer, nothing in Shakespeare; more grim and sublime than either, all native, all our own, and all a fact. A great lot of muscular, tan-faced men brought to bay under terrible circumstances. Death a-hold of them, yet every man undaunted, not one losing his head, wringing out every cent of the pay before they sell their lives.

Custer (his hair cut short) stands in the middle with dilated eye and extended arm, aiming a huge cavalry pistol. Captain Cook is there, partially wounded, blood on the white handkerchief around his head, but aiming his carbine coolly, half kneeling (his body was afterwards found close by Custers). The slaughtered or half-slaughtered horses, for breastworks, make a peculiar feature. Two dead Indians, herculean, lie in the foreground clutching their Winchester rifles, very characteristic. The many soldiers, their faces and attitudes, the carbines, the broad-brimmed Western hats, the powder smoke in puffs, the dying horses with their rolling eyes almost human in their agony, the clouds of war-bonneted Sioux in the background, the figures of Custer and Cook, with, indeed, the whole scene, inexpressible, dreadful, yet with an attraction and beauty that will remain forever in my memory. With all its color and fierce action a certain Greek continence pervades it. A sunny sky and clear