

“OFF THE TRACK AND NEARLY OFF THE RIGHT OF WAY.”

TRUE RAILROAD STORIES.

BY CY WARMAN,

Author of “Tales of an Engineer.”

THE GENERAL MANAGER AND THE GHOST TRAIN.

WHEN the Rio Grande Western was a narrow-gauge road, it was very crooked. Even in the Utah desert there were many curves among the sand hills that have been piled up during the past few thousand years. A locomotive—one of a type known as “sewing-machines,” because all their machinery was in sight—was trying to make a spur for the general manager’s special, against which she had a time order. The time was growing alarmingly short, and the driver of the light engine knew that the man on the special, with the G. M. behind him, would be crowding the limit. As the little machine rocked round the corners, screaming at every curve, the engineer and fireman kept a sharp lookout ahead, at the same time counting the minutes and reckoning the miles that still lay between them and the spur.

Down the desert one of the swiftest engines on the road was trembling away toward the “sewing-machine,” and at the end of each minute the two loco-

motives were a mile and a half nearer each other.

To be allowed to “pull” the general manager is an honor earnestly striven for by engineers, and when once obtained it is carefully guarded. Whatever record a man makes at the head of such a train is sure to count for or against him, since he is then directly under the eye of the management. The chances are always in favor of a good run, for the train despatcher, with his own reputation at stake, can be depended upon to keep the track clear. He will hold a passenger train ten minutes rather than hold the special five. Another point in favor of the special engineer is the fact that he is due at no particular point at any specified time, and having no time-card to hold him down he may regulate the speed of the train to suit himself. He is always an experienced runner who knows the road—knows every low joint and high centre, every curve and sag, on his division—consequently the officers put no limit upon the speed of the train, but

leave it all to the good judgment of the engineer. It was a clear, dry day in the early autumn, the very best time of year for a fast run, and "Old Sam" had been gaging his speed for fifty miles back so as to hit Coyote spur on the dot and break the record for fast running on the Alkali division.

By the rules of the road five minutes are allowed for the variation of watches, but the rule is not always wholly respected; and as the man on the special was known to be a daring driver, the "sewing-machine" crew saw that they were in a close place long before the smoke of the approaching locomotive was seen. Now they had barely five minutes left, and nothing for the variation, and the coveted siding four miles away. If the opposing train failed to respect the five-minute rule she might, at that moment, be passing the spur. At last there remained but a single mile, and only a minute to do it in. The throttle was wide open, and the little engine was rolling so that the bell rang continually. The fireman had put in his last fire, and was now straining his eyes to catch the smoke of the special. The engineer, with his left hand on the whistle rope, clung to the side of the cab to keep from being thrown out on the right of way.

The wheels under the "sewing-machine" were so small that the best she could do was forty-five miles, and now when she came down to the very last second there was still a quarter of a mile between her and the meeting-point. But at that moment the flying wheels of the special engine crashed over the switch and shut her out. The little "sewing-machine," hid among the sand hills, was straining every nerve to reach the passing-point, at which she was already overdue. The man on the special was just beginning to feel sure of his position when he rounded a curve and saw the light engine emerging from a shallow cut. Of course he shut off, and tried to lessen the force of the collision; but to stop was out of the question.

The fireman on the light engine saw the special and warned his companion, for they were curving to the left and the driver could not see. Thus the four men knew that nothing short of a miracle could prevent a dreadful collision and that in a few seconds' time they would all be piled up in a heap. Both drivers had called to their firemen to jump, and the firemen had turned to their windows. The special engineer was in the act of reversing, that he might take the good opinion of the man-

ager with him. The other engineer only shoved the throttle lever in, braced himself, and awaited the shock.

A man who has never lived up his last moment on earth and survived to tell about it afterwards, can never know how much business one can transact, in his mind, during that moment in which he waits and listens for the swish of the scythe. But one does not always review his past life at such a moment; often he wastes time thinking upon a mere trifle. Ex-Representative in Congress Lafe Pence was in a wreck the next day after his election, and, although he had been a Democrat and had become a Populist, he gave no thought to the past nor the future, but said to himself, as the sleeper plunged down an embankment, "Now what in the world was I elected for?"

The driver of the special engine had a boy, and this boy had climbed up on a picket fence to kiss his father good-by that morning at their home in Salt Lake, but he slipped, fell, and hung there, with a fence picket through the seat of his first pair of trousers; and it was all so funny that now, as the engineer recalled the circumstance, he threw back his head and laughed as heartily as he had ever laughed in his life. The fireman, casting a farewell glance at his companion, saw him laughing and concluded that the driver, in his last moment, had suddenly become insane; but as he glanced ahead where death was waiting he was not sure that he was sane himself.

The driver, having finished his laugh and still feeling no shock, looked ahead. The track was clear! He unlatched the reverse lever and threw the engine in the forward motion; and the speed of the train, which had been but little checked, carried them away down among the sand hills. The driver looked over at the fireman and asked: "Did you see anything?"

"No," said the fireman. "Did you?" And the driver said no, tried his water and opened the throttle, and the engine whirled away, while the fireman returned to his place at the furnace door.

The two men scarcely glanced at each other again until they stopped for water at Green River, but each in his own mind was recalling all the wild tales of "ghost" trains he had ever heard. Each was firm in the belief that he had seen a "ghost," but he would never tell it—not for his job.

The officers in the special train felt the resistance of the engine when the engineer shut off and reversed, and the general

manager, turning to the superintendent, asked, with a show of surprise: "When did you put in that siding?"

"What? Back there? That's Coyote spur, and it has been there for six months," was the reply.

"I know very well," said the manager, "where Coyote spur is, for we waited there for fifteen minutes for No. 8 going down the other day; but we just passed a siding on the north."

The superintendent was inclined to be funny; but the colonel, stroking his long gray Peffers, remarked that he had seen a locomotive standing at the point mentioned, and "as trains are not in the habit of meeting and passing between stations, I take it that there must be a siding there." There was just a twinkle of mirth in the colonel's eyes, which, despite the finger marks left about them by the touch of time, are still bright with the sparkle of youth; but the superintendent was utterly unable to understand the general manager.

There was silence for a little while, but the general manager was by no means satisfied. He pressed the button, and when the black porter came in he asked: "Did you see an engine on a siding back a ways, George?"

"No, sah, I haven't saw no engine; d'ain't no sidin' 'cept Ci-ote spur, an' dat wus clear."

"Send the conductor to me," said the officer, and when the conductor came in the manager asked to be allowed to look at the running orders.

"Run special to Grand Junction, avoiding all regular trains. Extra engine 57 has until five fifty-five (5.55) to make Coyote spur against you."

"What time did you pass the spur?" demanded the colonel.

"Precisely at 5.55," said the conductor, now somewhat alarmed at the manager's air.

"Is there a siding between here and Coyote?" asked the colonel, and the superintendent, being at a loss to make out what the manager was driving at, started to leave the car, but his superior officer called him back.

"There is not," was the conductor's reply.

"Perhaps," said the colonel, "there was not when we went down; but there is now, for I saw a locomotive standing there."

The conductor laughed as the superintendent had done, but the colonel offered

to risk a case of champagne that he had seen no "ghost" train, and the superintendent took the bet as the easiest way of settling an argument which was about to become embarrassing.

When the special reached Green River the party went into the eating-house, where supper had been ordered, and, as was his habit, the colonel sat at the same table with the train and engine crew.

"What did you shut off for just this side of Coyote spur, Sam?" asked the colonel, looking the engineer in the eye, and instantly the eyes of the whole party were upon the driver's dusky face. He was speechless. Not that the circumstance had escaped his mind, for, as a matter of fact, he had thought of little else; but he knew not how to answer.

"Did you think that engine was on the main line?" asked the general manager, noticing the embarrassment of the engine crew.

"What engine?" asked the engineer, trying to look and speak natural.

"There was only one engine there besides your own," was the colonel's response. "Will you be good enough to answer my question?"

"Well," thought the driver, "if I've got 'em the G. M.'s got 'em," and he answered: "I did think she was on the main stem."

"What did you think, Harry?" asked the superintendent of the fireman, who was staring at the engineer. The fireman only closed his eyes and shook his head slowly as though he considered them all crazy, and his long lashes, dark with coal dust, lay upon his newly washed face like the lashes of a chorus girl.

"Did you see anything on your side?" asked the colonel, who was determined to unlock the lips of the fireman.

"Not a thing," said Harry. "I don't believe in ghosts."

"It will not be necessary for you to make out a 63 [an accident report], but I wish you would tell me what you saw and how it affected you," said the general manager, addressing the engineer.

"May I ask you first if you saw anything, Colonel?" said the driver.

"I saw a locomotive standing on a spur or siding just east of Coyote."

"When I see her first," said Sam, taking courage from the colonel's confession, "she was bang in front of us coming out of a cut like a ball out of a cannon. I saw it was all up with us, but I naturally shut off—mechanically, so to speak. I

think I hooked her over, but I didn't whistle, open the sand valve, nor set the air—they wa'n't no use—no time—but just then I thought of little Sammie as I saw him last, hangin' on the fence by the seat uv his pants, an' it seemed to me that I never see anything quite so funny, and I laughed that hard that the tears came in my eyes and blinded me. Then the thought came to me that we were a long time coming together; so I looks ahead, an' there wa'n't a thing in sight. I asked Harry if he see anything, an' he lied an' asked if I see anything, an' I lied too, an' opened up the throttle again. That's all I know about it."

There was a noticeable increase in the attention of the company, and Tim Flarity, the flagman, leaning low toward the table, crossed himself, and ventured the prediction that they would have a head-end collision before they reached the junction. "I never see a ghost train show up yet that didn't mean something," he added, but the burst of laughter that followed closed his circuit, and he said no more.

Now the agent came in with a number of messages for the superintendent, and as the officer read the first of the lot he began to smile.

"Read it out," said the colonel. "Perhaps it will tell us something about the 'ghost.'" The superintendent read:

"Engine 57 is off the track and nearly off the right of way 1,000 yards east of Coyote spur, but still on her feet."

That explained the "ghost" engine. At the instant her engineer shut off steam, the "sewing-machine," just then rounding a sharp curve, jumped the track, lit square on her wheels, and went plowing out over the hard adobe of the desert. She rolled and rocked for a few seconds, and then came to a stop, with the engine-men still standing in the cab. The engine had been working hard, and if the throttle had remained open she might have made the curve all right, but the sudden relaxation of all her tension caused a jar that threw her off her feet. But it was a lucky jar for her crew.

A RAILROAD DOG.

DOGS know a great many things, and appear to know a great many things which they do not know. The most intelligent dogs I have seen have been railroad dogs, and the best railroad dogs are water spaniels, or shepherd dogs with a dash of bird-dog blood of some sort in their veins. Engineer Yates used to have a big, bony bird dog called "Napoleon," who came, in time, to know the whistle or the bell of the "86" better than did the engineer's best girl.

This locomotive was used only to haul Superintendent Ridgeway's private car, and when the bell sounded as the little engine drew her toy-train up to the telegraph office, Napoleon would go galloping down the hill, over the bridge, and leap into the cab. Taking his place on the fireman's side, he would lean, or rather hang, out of the window, watching for the conductor to come forward with the running orders. The special, although it had its regular engine and engineer, might not have the same conductor twice in six months; so Napoleon could only watch and wait until one of the many employees about the station came to the cab and gave a copy of the train order to the engineer. There

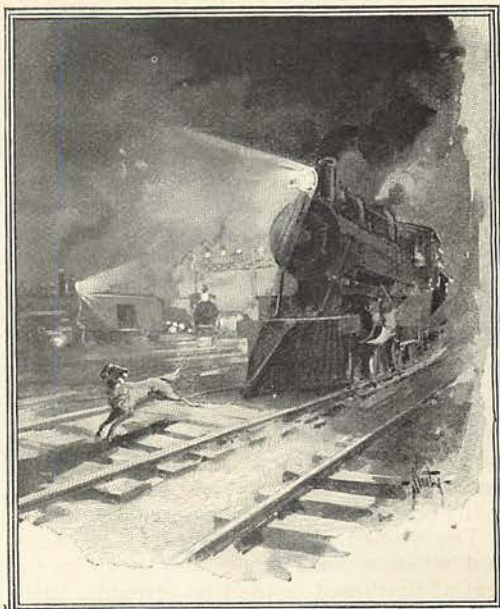
might be three or four trains preparing to pull out, but when he had once seen the special conductor the watchful dog never lost sight of him. Any number of men might come from the telegraph office and throw up their hands with a signal to go, and Napoleon would remain motionless. The men used to put up jobs on him. If it was Jack Brown's run, Gurin or Patterson would rush out, cry "All right," and give a signal. Then Dufur would put on Jack Brown's coat and cap, and try to "rush" the dog; but it never did go. By and by the "old man," as the superintendent is always called, would come forth and shout: "What you fellows doing? Get out o' town!"

Then the real conductor would give a signal, and Napoleon would pull in his head, shoot a quick glance at the engineer, take his place close up in the left-hand corner of the cab, and begin to thump the top of the waste box, upon which he was seated, with his front feet. Here he would dance and whine impatiently until the bell sounded and the engineer gave the engine steam.

One evening Yates went out to help a passenger train to the top of the hill and

return at midnight. He took another locomotive; so Napoleon didn't miss him until he was far away up the mountain. They used to meet at the Monte Cristo every evening for supper—Yates, the dog, and Yates's room-mate; but for some unaccountable reason Napoleon was late upon this occasion, and when he finally came and failed to find his master he cut some of the wildest capers of his life. The room-mate, who, to tell the truth, had no love for dogs nor patience with them, turned Napoleon out. Down to the round-house went the dog as though he had been shot at. He soon found the "86"; but that failed to quiet him. Everywhere through the house and shops he went charging in search of his lost master. About the time the engineer at the room fell asleep Napoleon fell against the door with the force of a head-end collision. The man got up and let him in, swore, and went to sleep again. After beating about the room for a while, the troubled dog crawled under the bed, and fell asleep also.

But he was troubled even in his sleep. At times he would cry out and waken himself, and then he would come forth and nose round the bed to see if Yates had returned. About midnight a locomotive whistle broke the stillness of the valley so suddenly that it awakened both the man and the dog. At the conclusion of the long blast there came two short "toot-toots," and Napoleon made a rush for the door, striking the top of his head a cruel blow against the bed railing. Of course it was not the whistle of the "86," nor one at all like it. But Yates had a touch, an accent, that the dog knew, and which a man or woman could scarcely detect; and now he stood up and beat the door until



"AS YATES PULLED INTO THE YARDS, NAPOLEON WAS BOUNDING ALONG IN THE LIGHT OF THE HEAD-LAMP."

the man got up and let him out; and as Yates pulled into the yards, Napoleon was bounding along in the light of his headlamp.

When Yates reached his room he was enthusiastic in his praise of the wonderful sagacity of Napoleon; but his room-mate refused to "enthuse." "It may be very funny for you, but I don't care to be kept awake all night. To-morrow," he added, "you'll have to choose between me and that fool dog."

Yates was silent now, for it was a serious matter. He was fond of his room-mate; but on the following day he chose—he kept the dog.

A WILD NIGHT AT WOODRIVER.

"KEEP that kid quiet," said Bankers in a hoarse whisper.

"I'm doing the best I can," said his wife, trying to hush the little one who was sobbing and moaning in her lap. In the baby's milk-wagon a bitter fight was going on between paregoric and pain, and the latter was dying hard. The wind drove the rain against the side of the car, and made it rock to and fro. "Emma," said Mrs. Bankers to her friend, "take that bottle and hold it between you and a crack in the car, and when it lightens, drop ten

drops into the spoon—I suppose we must not strike a light."

"You bet you don't strike any light here unless you are ready to give up your chignon," said Bankers, without taking his eyes from the crack through which he was peeping. Emma took the bottle, and at each flash of lightning dropped a drop of hush medicine into the spoon, and when she had put in ten drops they gave it to the baby. That made twenty drops: it was dangerous—but it was sure death to all of them if the baby cried aloud.

The rain came in great sheets and with such force that it seemed that the car could hardly hold the rail. It was not a Pullman car; just a common red stock car, standing on a siding, with a few armfuls of straw upon the floor. Occasionally Bankers turned to glance at the two women, who were crouching in one end of the car, and when the lightning lit up their faces they were fearful to behold. Now the rain, cold as sleet, came through the cracks in the car, and stung the faces of those within. Mrs. Bankers had seen three winters at Woodriver, but her friend, a young woman who had come out to western Nebraska to teach school, was in every sense a "tenderfoot," and the experience of this wild night had almost driven her mad.

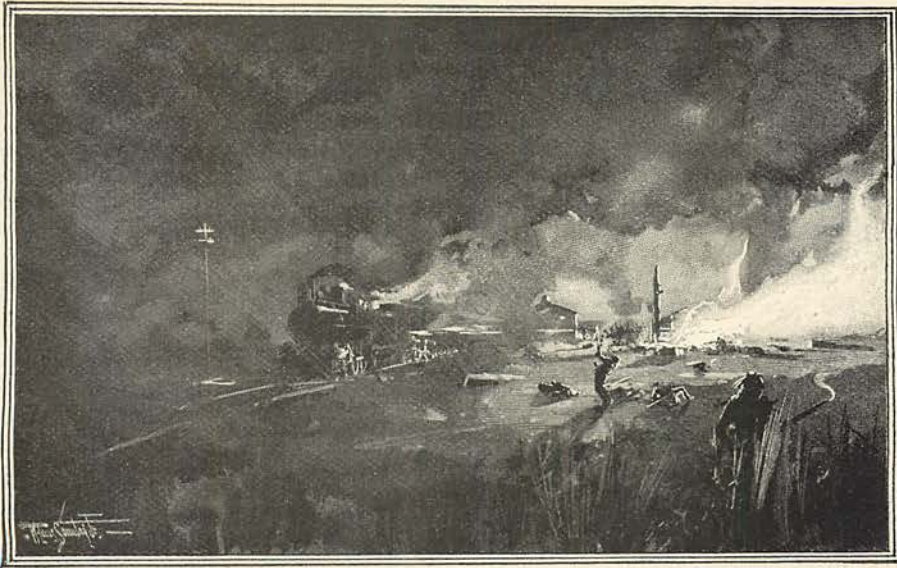
"There they are," whispered Bankers.

The women put their eyes to a crack, and when a flash came they could see a reef of feathered heads that formed a half-circle around a house, like a feather boa about a woman's neck. Half the band dismounted, and made a rush for the cottage. The door was broken, and the red devils swarmed in. One of them took a newspaper and lighted it at the open fireplace to make a torch, and by the light of it the little party in the stock car could see the Sioux running, half crouching, from room to room, in search of the occupants. Finding the place deserted, and smarting under their disappointment, the Indians now set fire to the house, and by the light of it started to loot the railroad station, which stood less than a hundred yards away.

The station agent had been warned, as the others had been, by a Pawnee scout, but had bravely refused to leave his post. He had made no light, but sat in one end of the dark little room which served as ticket office, telegraph office, and sleeping-room, and, as the Indians approached, opened fire. At the very first shot the leader of the murderous band leaped high into the air, came down on his feet, leaped up again, and again, and finally fell in a heap to rise no more. With a deafening yell the angry band made a rush for the door, and began to beat against it with tomahawks, clubs, and guns.

Having emptied his rifle, the agent now took up a pair of forty-five caliber revolvers, and the lead fairly rattled against the door, and no less than a half-dozen hair-lifters sank to the platform, causing the besiegers to fall back a space. From a distance they began to pour the lead into the build-

ing, but the agent, crouching behind the little iron safe, was still unhurt. An Indian brought a torch from the burning cottage and attempted to fire the station, but the rain and wind put out the fire. Two or three Sioux, noticing a string of cars upon the siding, began to search for stock or eatable freight. From car to car they ran, thrusting their rifles into the straw. "Uh," said an old buck, as his rifle found something soft in one of the cars, and Bankers felt a pain in his short ribs. Laying hold of the side of the car, the Indian began to pull and strain. By the merest chance he had taken hold of the car door, and now, as it opened, he thrust his hideous head inside. Bankers could have blown the top of the head off, but he knew that to fire would be to attract a dozen redskins, against whom he could not hope to hold out long. The women scarcely breathed. The baby, full of paregoric, slept as though it had already entered upon its final rest. The other two Indians had given up the search among the empty cars and gone back to the station, where the agent, having reloaded all his weapons, kept the gang hopping and dancing about the station platform. The old Sioux at the car door cocked his head and listened. He must have fancied he heard something breathe, for now he put his hands upon the sill and leaped into the car. He had scarcely straightened up when Bankers's rifle barrel fell across his feathered head, and he dropped like a beef. The young woman uttered a faint scream, and that was the last sound that came from her corner for some time. The Sioux never moved a finger, and Bankers, having removed the warrior's gun and ammunition, gave the gun over to his wife, and then covered the dead Sioux with straw. Already the little frame cottage had burned to the ground, and the rain had nearly quenched the fire. Every attempt made by the band to fire the station had ended in failure, and the Sioux were now preparing to storm the fort. It was hard for Bankers to keep quiet in the car while the agent sold his life so bravely and so dearly to the Sioux; but there were his wife and baby and the helpless schoolmistress, who had been persuaded by the Bankers to come to this wild region, and he felt it his duty to protect them as best he could. Presently he felt the car vibrate perceptibly, as though it were being rolled slowly along the rail. His first thought was that the Indians were pushing the empty cars down near the station, and that they would set fire to the



"IT WAS A LOCOMOTIVE DRAWING A DOZEN BOX CARS AND RUNNING WITHOUT A HEADLIGHT."

straw, and then there would be no possible escape. Now there was a roar as of an approaching train, and an instant later a great dark object hove in sight and rolled past the car. It was a locomotive drawing a dozen box cars and running without a headlight. The shouts of the besiegers, the rattle of rifles, and the wild cry of the night prevented the Sioux from feeling the vibration, or hearing the sound, of the approaching train.

The agent, who had been severely wounded, now crawled to the key and called Ogallala. At the first attack he had wired for help, and now he told the operator there that he could only hold the place for a little while longer. He was still at the key when the engine, rolling up to the station, shook the building, and he knew the moment he felt the quiver of it that help was at hand. Instantly the doors of the box cars came open, and a company of government scouts, all Pawnees except the officers, leaped to the platform just as the band of Sioux were making their last desperate charge upon the station. The battle was short and decisive, and when the Sioux fled they left more than half their number upon the field.

The conductor of the train had ridden all the way on the locomotive, and the moment the train stopped he leaped to the ground and ran through a shower of bullets to where the cottage which had been the home of the Bankers had stood. The sight of the house in ashes made him sick at heart; but there was still hope—they might

have taken refuge in the station. And facing about, he fought his way to and through the shot-riddled door. The agent lay upon the floor in a pool of his own blood, but he was still alive. "Where are they?" asked the conductor.

"Among the stock cars, if they are still alive," was the reply which came in a faint whisper. "I saw them leaving the house at dusk—go to them—I'm—I'm all right;" and the conductor, having placed the wounded man upon his bed, made for the stock cars.

"Bankers, where are you?" he called; and Bankers answered, only two cars away. Now the conductor lighted his white light and climbed into the car. The brave Mrs. Bankers greeted him with a smile that soon changed to tears, for in the light of the hand-lamp she saw her baby's face, and it looked like the face of a dead child. "Emma," she called excitedly, but there was no answer.

"Is she dead?" cried the conductor, falling upon his knees and holding the light close to his sweetheart's face.

"No," said Bankers, "she only fainted when I killed this Sioux;" and he gave the dead Indian a kick and rolled him out of the car.

"But the baby," pleaded Mrs. Bankers.

"She's all right," said the husband. "Only a little too much paregoric." And so it proved.

And all this is not a dream. It is only a scrap of the history of the early days of the Union Pacific. The brave station

agent is an old man now, and one of his legs is shorter than the other—the one that was shot that night. The baby, having recovered from her severe tussle with colic and paregoric, is now one of the most charming women in one of our charming Western cities. The conductor of the soldier train is at this writing a general superintendent of a well-known railway. The snows of forty winters have fallen upon his wife's hair; it is almost white; but her face is still young and handsome, and I remember that she blushed, when telling this story to me and recalling the fact that she had fainted in a stock car on that wild night at Woodriver.

STRANGER THAN FICTION.

A TRUE SHORT STORY TOLD MAINLY IN A SERIES OF UNPUBLISHED LETTERS BY GENERAL SHERMAN.

BY ELLA FRASER WELER.

NO man of high position and a multitude of affairs, it is well known, was ever more approachable than General Sherman. He had a sympathetic ear for almost any appeal that might be made to him. Especially ready was his attention and kindness if the applicant chanced to be a young person, for of young people, young men as well as young women, he was especially fond. He was endowed himself with an ever-youthful heart. "He had to the last," says one of his closest friends, "a buoyancy of spirits that usually belongs only to youth. I never saw him speak to a young person without smiling; and as to his ways toward women, he was a Bayard of the Bayards." Besides sympathy and kindness, there was in his relations with young people not a little imagination. He entered romantically into their affairs, and strove to promote for them their own kind of pleasure. It pleased him above all things to have them happy, and in order to forward what he divined to be their happiness he would give himself no end of pains. In return, they instinctively recognized him for their friend. To a very unusual degree they confided their troubles to him and sought his counsel and aid. Those, even, who did not personally know him appealed to him as to a benevolent and sympathetic relative.

The instances in illustration of this most charming side of Sherman's character must be very numerous; but they are, naturally, not easy to come at. We have a most interesting and attractive one, however, in the following series of letters, written to a young lady who, while yet a school-girl, scarcely sixteen, through circumstances that need not be recited here, had been

led into correspondence with an officer in the regular army whom she had never seen. It was merely a friendly correspondence, not a lover's correspondence; but still it was sufficiently intimate and interesting to make the end which was soon put to it by the young girl's father something of a grief to both parties. The officer wrote to the father, soliciting that approval of the correspondence which he had better have asked earlier; but the father was immovable, and all communication between the young people ceased. A year passed without either having any further word or knowledge of the other. Then, in 1876, occurred the battle with the Sioux Indians on the Little Big Horn River, in Montana, wherein General Custer lost his life; and the officer's gentle-hearted correspondent was filled with anxiety lest he might have been one of the victims of that fatal engagement. Finally her anxiety became so great that, in order if possible to learn the officer's fate, she addressed a letter of inquiry to the Commander of the Army, General Sherman. She signed her letter only with her initials, thinking General Sherman might mistake her for a man, and, in consequence, accord her a prompt answer. He was not deceived; but his answer came promptly enough, and was as follows:

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES.
WASHINGTON, D. C., May 2, 1879.
MISS ———.

My dear young lady: There are *two* "Captains" J.W. — in the army. First, Captain — of the Sixth Infantry, stationed at —, on the upper Missouri River, was on the sixteenth of April ordered before the Retiring Board at Fort