obtrude itself to vex the new present. The president, however, is never very long out of the shop. Among those who come to dine with him are some new friends whose good will it is desirable for the road to cultivate. The conversation turns upon railroading, and the president, like every wise professional man, listens to the opinions of laymen, a fruitful source of profitable suggestion.

The home life of the president differs little from that of the ordinary mortal, except that he must be willing, if duty requires it, to leave on a moment's notice and travel a thousand miles in the interest of the road. Railroading is so fascinating that from president to switchman there is a cheerful willingness to render prompt obedience to the demands of the service. Whether the call comes in the daytime or at night, in sunshine or in storm, when he is rested or fatigued, the first thought is to do one's level best for the company. Devotion is ennobling, and unconsciously the railroads are cooperating with church and state to develop a high type of American manhood.

THE GIRL WHO GOT RATTLED.

BY STEWART EDWARD WHITE.

This is one of the stories of Walter. There are many of them still floating about the West, for Walter was in his time well known. He was a little man and he was bashful. That is the most that can be said against him; but he was very little and very bashful. When on horseback, his legs hardly reached the lower body-line of his mount, and only his extreme agility enabled him to get aboard successfully. When on foot, strangers were inclined to call him "sonny." In company he never advanced an opinion. If things did not go according to his ideas, he reconstructed his ideas, and made the best of it; only he could make the most efficient best of the poorest ideas of any man on the plains. His attitude was a perpetual sidling apology. It has been said that Walter killed his men diffidently, without enthusiasm, as though loath to take the responsibility, and this in the pioneer days on the plains was either frivolous affection or else—Walter. With women he was lost. Men would have staked their last ounce of dust at odds that he had never in his life made a definite assertion of fact to one of the opposite sex. When it became absolutely necessary to change a woman's preconceived ideas as to what she should do,—as, for instance, discouraging her riding through quicksand,—he would persuade some one else to issue the advice. Meanwhile he would cower in the background, blushing his absurd little blushes at his second-hand temerity. Add to this, narrow, sloping shoulders, a soft voice, and a diminutive pink-and-white face.

But Walter could read the prairie like a book. He could ride anything, shoot accurately, was at heart afraid of nothing, and could fight like a little catamount when occasion for it really arose. Among those who knew, Walter was considered one of the best scouts on the plains. That is why Caldwell, the capitalist, engaged him when he took his daughter out to Deadwood.

Miss Caldwell was determined to go to Deadwood. A limited experience of camping of the lady's sort, where they have wooden floors to the tents, towels to the tent-poles, and expert cooks for the delectation of the campers, had convinced her that "roughing it" was her favorite recreation. So, of course, Caldwell had, sooner or later, to take her across the plains on his annual trip. This was at the time when wagon-trains went by way of Pierre, on the north, and the South Fork, on the south. Incidental Indians, of homicidal tendencies and undeveloped ideas as to the propriety of doing what they were told, made things interesting occasionally, but not often. There was really no danger to a good-sized train. Mr. Caldwell had some sporting spirit himself, so he consented that his daughter should go. His daughter had a fiancé named Allen, who liked roughing it, too, so he went along. He and Miss Caldwell rigged themselves out picturesquely, and prepared to enjoy the trip.

At Pierre the train of eight wagons was made up, and they were joined by Walter and
Billy Knapp. These two men were interesting, but tyrannical on one or two points, such as objecting to one's getting out of sight of the train, for instance. They were also deficient in reasons for their tyranny. The young people chafed, and, finding Billy Knapp either imperturbable or thick-skinned, turned their attention to Walter. Allen annoyed Walter, and Miss Caldwell thoughtlessly approved of Allen. Between them they often succeeded in shocking fearfully all the little man's finer sensibilities. If it had been a question of Allen alone, the annoyance would soon have ceased. Walter would simply have bashfully killed him. But because of his innate courtesy, which so saturated him that his philosophy of life was thoroughly tinged by it, he was silent and inactive.

There is a good deal to recommend a long plains journey at first. Later, there is nothing at all to recommend it. It has the same monotony as a voyage at sea, only there is really less living-room, and, instead of being carried without trouble on one's part, one must supervise to some extent the means of one's locomotion. Also, the food is coarse, the water poor, and one cannot bathe. To a plainsman, or to a man who has the instinct, these things are as nothing in comparison with the charm of the outdoor life and the pleasing tingling of adventure. But woman is a creature wedded to comfort. She has, too, a strange instinctive desire to be entirely alone once in a while, probably because her experiences, while not less numerous than man's, are mainly psychical, and she needs occasionally time to get "thought up" to date.

So Miss Caldwell began to get very impatient.

The afternoon of the sixth day, Walter, Miss Caldwell, and Allen rode along side by side. Walter was telling a self-effacing story of adventure, and Miss Caldwell was listening carelessly, because she had nothing better to do. Allen chaffed lazily when the fancy took him.

"I happened to have a limb broken at the time," Walter was observing parenthetically in his soft tones, "and so—"

"What kind of a limb?" asked the Easterner, with direct brutality. He glanced with a half-humorous aside at the girl, to whom the little man had been mainly addressing himself.

Walter hesitated, blushed, lost the thread of his tale, and finally, in great confusion, reined back his horse by the harsh Spanish bit. He fell to the rear of the little wagon-train, where he hung his head, and went hot and cold by turns in thinking of such an indiscretion before a lady.

The young Easterner spurred up on the right hand of the girl's mount.

"He's the queerest little guy I ever saw," he observed, with a laugh. "Just to think of his getting scared out that way by the word 'leg' in these days! Sorry to spoil his story, though. Was it a good one?"

"It might have been a good one, if you had n't spoiled it," answered the girl, flicking her horse's ears mischievously. The animal danced. "What did you do it for?"

"Oh, just to see him squirm. He'll think about that all the rest of the afternoon, and I'll hardly dare look you in the face next time you meet."

"I know. Isn't he funny? The other morning he came around the corner of the wagon and caught me with my hair down. I wish you could have seen him!"

She laughed merrily at the memory.

"Let's get ahead out of the dust," she suggested.

They drew aside to the firm turf of the prairie, and put their horses to a slow lope. Once well ahead of the canvas-covered "schooners," they slowed down to a walk again.

"Walter says we'll see them to-morrow," said the girl.

"See what?"

"Why, the Hills! They'll show like a dark streak down past that butte there—what's its name?"

"Porcupine Tail."

"Oh, yes. And after that it's only three days. Are you glad?"

"Are you?"

"Yes; I believe I am. This life is fun at first, but there's a certain monotony in making your toilet where you have to duck your head because you have n't room to raise your hand, and this barreled water palls after a while. I think I'll be glad to see a house again. People like camping about so long—"

"It has n't gone back on me yet."

"Well, you're a man, and can do things."

"Can't you do things?"

"You know I can't. What do you suppose they would say if I were to ride out just that way for two miles? They'd have a fit."

"Who'd have a fit? Nobody but Walter, and I did n't know you'd gotten afraid of him yet. I say, just let's! We'll have a race, and then come right back." The young man looked boyishly eager.
"It would be nice," she mused. They gazed into each other's eyes, like a pair of children, and laughed.

"Why should n't we?" urged the young man. "I'm dead sick of staying in the moving circle of these confounded wagons. What's the sense of it all, anyway?"

"Why, Indians, I suppose," said the girl, doubtfully.

"Indians!" he replied with contempt. "Indians! We have n't seen a sign of one since we left Pierre. I don't believe there's one in the whole blasted country. Besides, you don't imagine for a moment that your father would take you all this way to Deadwood just for a lark, if there was the slightest danger, do you?"

"I don't know; I made him."

She looked out over the long sweeping descent to which they were coming, and the long sweeping ascent that lay beyond. The breeze and the sun played with the prairie grasses, the breeze riffling them over, and the sun silvering their under surfaces thus exposed. It was strangely peaceful, and one almost expected to hear the hum of bees, as in a New England orchard. In it all was no sign of life.

"We'd get lost," she said finally.

"Oh, no, we would n't," he asserted, with the eagerness of the amateur plainsman. "I've got that all figured out. You see, our train is going on a line with that butte behind us and the sun. So if we go ahead, and keep our shadows just pointing to the sun silvering their under surfaces thus exposed. It was strangely peaceful, and one almost expected to hear the hum of bees, as in a New England orchard. In it all was no sign of life.

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He looked to her for admiration of his cleverness. She seemed convinced. She agreed, and sent him back to the wagon for some article of invented necessity. While he was gone, she slipped softly over the lit­tle hill to the right, cantered rapidly over a single blue bead. Walter rode out on the prairie to right and left, and found the hoof­prints of about thirty other ponies. He pushed his hat back and wrinkled his brow, everywhere at once. With asso­ciates he was shy, —his gait was a continual deprecatory sidle,—but with conditions he was keen and shrewd. But he had been severely shocked, and it took time for him to recover. He could not understand the young Easterner's most immodest attitude of mind; but, because he did not understand, he did not like to interfere in any way. It was all puzzling. He would probably have brooded over it all the afternoon, if a dis­covery had not startled him to activity.

On a bare spot of the prairie he discerned the print of a hoof. It was not that of one of the train's animals. Walter knew this because just to one side of it, caught under a grass-blade so cunningly that only the little scout's eye would have descried it at all, was a single blue bead. Walter rode out on the prairie to right and left, and found the hoof­prints of about thirty other ponies. He pushed his hat back and wrinkled his brow, for the one thing he was looking for he could not find—the two narrow furrows made by the ends of the tepee-poles drag­ging along on each side of the ponies. The absence of these indicated that the band was composed entirely of bucks, and bucks were likely to mean mischief.

He pushed ahead of the main party, his eyes fixed earnestly on the ground. At the top of the hill he ran into the young East­erner. The latter looked puzzled and just a little chagrined.

"I left Miss Caldwell here a half-minute ago," he observed to Walter, "and I guess she's given me the slip. Scold her good for me when she comes in, will you?" He grinned with good-natured maliciousness at the idea of Walter's scolding any one.

Then Walter surprised him.

The little man straightened suddenly in his saddle and uttered a fervent curse. After a brief circle about the prairie, he returned to the young man.

"You go back to the wagons, and wake up Billy Knapp, and tell him this—that I 've gone a-scoutin' round a bit, and I want him to watch out. Understand? Watch out!"

"What?" began the Easterner, bewil­dered.

"I 'm a-goin' t' find her," said the little man, decidedly.

"You don't think there's any danger, do you?" asked the Easterner, in anxious tones. "Can't I help you?"

"You do as I tell you," said the little man, shortly, and rode away.

He followed Miss Caldwell's course rap­idly, for it was fresh. As long as one looked intently for hoof-marks, nothing was to be seen—the prairie was apparently vir­gin; but by glancing the eye rapidly forty or
fifty yards ahead, a faint line was discernible through the grasses.

Walter came upon Miss Caldwell seated quietly on her horse in the very center of a prairie-dog town, and so, of course, in the midst of an area of comparatively desert character. She was amusing herself by watching the marmots as they barked, or watched, or peeped at her, according to their distance from her. The sight of Walter was not welcome, for he frightened the marmots.

When he saw Miss Caldwell, Walter grew bashful again. He sidled his horse up to her and blushed.

"I 'll show you the way back, miss," he said diffidently.

"Thank you," said Miss Caldwell, with a slight coldness, "I can find my own way back."

"Yes, of course," hastened Walter, in an agony; "but don't you think we ought to start back now? I 'd like to go with you, miss, if you 'd let me. You see, the afternoon 's quite late."

Miss Caldwell cast a quizzical eye at the sun.

"Why, it 's hours yet till dark!" she said amusedly.

Then Walter surprised Miss Caldwell.

His diffident manner suddenly left him. He jumped like lightning from his horse, threw the reins over the animal's head, so that he would stand, and ran around to face Miss Caldwell.

"Here, jump down!" he commanded.

The soft Southern bur of his ordinary speech had given place to a clear incisiveness. Miss Caldwell looked at him amazed.

Seeing that she did not at once obey, Walter actually began to fuss with the straps that held her riding-skirt in place. This was so unusual in the bashful Walter that Miss Caldwell roused and slipped lightly to the ground.

"Now, what?" she asked.

Walter, without replying, seized her pony's reins, drew the bit to within a few inches of the animal's hoofs, and tied both fetlocks firmly together with the double loop. This brought the pony's nose down close to his shackled feet. Then he did the same thing with his own beast. Thus neither animal could so much as hobble one way or the other. They were securely moored.

Walter stepped a few paces to the eastward. Miss Caldwell followed.

"Sit down!" said he.

Miss Caldwell obeyed with some uneasiness. She did not understand at all, and that made her afraid. She began to have a dim fear that Walter might have gone crazy. His next performance strengthened this suspicion. He walked away ten feet, and raised his hand over his head, palm forward. She watched him so intently that for a moment she saw nothing else. Then she followed the direction of his gaze, and gave a little sobbing cry.

Just below the sky-line of the first slope to eastward was silhouetted a figure on horseback. The figure on horseback sat motionless.

"We 're in for fight," said Walter, coming back after a moment; "he won't answer my peace sign, and he 's a Sioux. We can't run for it through this dog-town. We 've just got to stand them off."

He threw down and back the lever of his old 44 Winchester, and softly uncocked the arm. Then he sat down by Miss Caldwell.

From various directions, silently, warriors on horseback sprang into sight and moved toward the first-comer, forming at the last a band of perhaps thirty men. They talked together for a moment, and then one by one, at regular intervals, detached themselves, and began circling at full speed to the left, throwing themselves behind their horses, and yelling shrill-voiced, but firing no shot as yet.

"They 'll rush us," said Walter, speculatively. "We 're too few to monkey with this way. This is a bluff."

The circle about the two was now complete. After watching the whirl of figures a few minutes, and the motionless landscape beyond, the eye became dizzied and confused.

"They won't have no picnic," went on Walter, with a little chuckle. "Dog-holes 's as bad for them as for us. They don't know how to fight. If they was to come in from all sides, I could n't handle them; but they always rush in a bunch, like damn fools."

Then Walter became suffused with blushing, and began to apologize abjectly and profusely to a girl who heard neither the word nor its atonement. The savages and the approaching fight were all she could think of.

Suddenly one of the Sioux threw himself forward under his horse's head and fired. The bullet went wild, of course, but it shrieked with the rising inflection of a wind-puff through bared boughs, seeming to come ever nearer. Miss Caldwell screamed, and covered her face. The savages yelled in chorus.

The one shot seemed to be the signal for...
a spattering fire all along the line. Indians never clean their rifles, rarely get good ammunition, and are deficient in the philosophy of hindsights. Besides this, it is not easy to shoot at long range, in a constrained position, from a running horse. Walter watched them contemptuously in silence.

"If they 'll keep that up long enough, the wagon-train may hear 'em," he said finally. "Wish 't we were n't so far to nor'ard. There! It 's coming!" he said more excitedly.

The chief had paused, and as the warriors came to him, they threw their ponies buck on their haunches and sat quiet. They turned the heads of the ponies toward the two.

Walter arose deliberately for a better look.

"Yes, that 's right," he said to himself; "that 's old Lone Pine, sure thing. I reckon we-all 's got to make a good fight."

The girl had sunk to the ground, and was shaking from head to foot. It is not nice to be shot at in the best of circumstances, but to be shot at by odds of thirty to one, and the thirty of an outlandish and terrifying species, is not nice at all. Miss Caldwell had gone to pieces badly, and Walter looked grave. He thoughtfully drew from its holster his beautiful Colt, with its ivory handle, and laid it on the grass. Then he turned hot and cold, and looked at the girl doubtfully. A sudden movement in the group of savages, as the war-chief rode to the front, decided him.

"Miss Caldwell," he said.

The girl shivered and moaned.

Walter dropped to his knees and shook her shoulder roughly.

"Look up here!" he commanded. "We ain't got but a minute!"

Composed a little by the firmness of his tone, she sat up. Her face had gone chalky, and her hair had partly fallen over her eyes.

"Now listen to every word," he said rapidly. "Those Injins are goin' to rush us in a minute. P'rhaps I can break them, but I don't know. In that pistol there I 'll always save two shots—understand? It 's always loaded. If I see it 's all up, I 'm a-goin' to shoot you with one of them, and myself with the other."

"Oh!" cried the girl, her eyes opening wildly. She was paying close enough attention now.

"And if they kill me first,—"he reached forward and seized her wrist impressively,—"if they kill me first, you must take that pistol and shoot yourself. Understand? Shoot yourself—in the head—here!" He tapped his forehead with a stubby forefinger.

The girl shrank back in horror. Walter snapped his teeth together and went on grimly.

"If they ever get hold of you," he said with solemnity, "they 'll first take off every stitch of your clothes, and then stake you out on the ground with a rawhide to each of your arms and legs. And then they 'll drive a stake through your body into the ground, and leave you there—to die—slowly."

And the girl believed him, because, incongruously, even through her terror she noticed that at this, the most immodest speech of his life, Walter did not blush. She looked with horrified fascination at the pistol lying on the turf.

The group of Indians, which had up to now remained fully a thousand yards away, suddenly screeched and broke into a run directly toward the dog-town.

There is an indescribable rush in a charge of savages. The little ponies make their feet go so fast, the feathers and trappings of the warriors stream behind so frantically, the whole attitude of horse and man is so eager, that one gets the impression of fearful speed and resistless power. The horizon seems full of Indians. As though this were not sufficiently terrifying, the air is throbbing with sound. Each Indian pops away for general results as he comes jumping along, and yells shrilly, to show what a big warrior he is, while underneath it all is the hurried monotone of hoof-beats becoming ever louder, like the roar of an increasing rain-storm on the roof. It does not seem possible that anything could stop them.

Yet there is one thing that can stop them, if skilfully taken advantage of, and that is their lack of discipline. An Indian will fight hard when cornered, or when heated by lively resistance, but he hates to go into it in cold blood. As he nears the opposing rifle, this feeling gets stronger. So, often, a man with nerve enough to hold his fire can break a fierce charge merely by waiting until it is within fifty yards or so, and then suddenly raising the muzzle of his gun. If he had gone to shooting at once, the affair would have become a combat, and the Indians would have ridden him down. As it is, each has had time to think. By the time the white man is ready to shoot, the suspense has done its work. Each savage knows that but one will fall, but, cold-blooded, he does not want to be that one;
and since in such undisciplined fighters it is each for himself, he promptly ducks behind his mount, and circles away to the right or left. The whole band swoops and divides, like a flock of swift-winged terns on a windy day.

This Walter relied on in the approaching crisis.

The girl watched the wild sweep of the warriors with strained eyes. She had to grasp her wrist firmly to keep from fainting. It would never do to faint, and she kept repeating to herself Walter’s last instructions. The little scout sat motionless on a dog-mound, his rifle across his lap. He did not seem in the least disturbed.

“It’s good to fight again,” he murmured, gently fondling the stock of his rifle. “Come on, ye divils! Oho!” he cried, as a warrior’s horse went down in a dog-hole, “I thought so.”

His eyes began to shine.

The ponies came skipping here and there, nimbly dodging in and out of the dog-holes. Their riders shot and yelled wildly, but none of the bullets passed lower than ten feet. The circle of their advance looked somehow like the surge shoreward of a great wave, and the similarity was heightened by the nodding glimpses of the lighter eagles’ feathers in their hair.

The run across the honeycombed plain was hazardous, even to Indian ponies, and three went down kicking, one after the other. Two of the riders lay stunned. The third sat up and began to rub his knee. The pony belonging to Miss Caldwell, becoming frightened, threw itself, and lay on its side, kicking out frantically with its hind legs.

At the proper moment Walter cocked his rifle, and rose swiftly to his knees. As he did so, the mound on which he had been sitting caved into the hole beneath it, and threw him forward on his face. With a furious curse he sprang to his feet, and leveled his rifle at the thick of the press.

The scheme worked. In a flash every savage had disappeared behind his pony, and nothing was to be seen but an arm and a leg. The band divided on each hand as promptly as though the signal for such a drill had been given, and swept gracefully around in two long circles until it reined up motionless at nearly the exact point from which it had started on its imposing charge. Walter had not fired a shot.

He turned to the girl with a short laugh. She lay face upward on the ground, staring at the sky with wide-open, horror-stricken eyes. In her brow was a small blackened hole, and under her head, which lay strangely flat against the earth, the grasses had turned red. Near her hand lay the heavy Colt.

Walter looked at her a minute without winking; then he nodded his head. “It was ‘cause I fell down that hole—she thought they’d got me,” he said aloud to himself. “Poor little gal! She had n’t ought to have did it.”

He blushed deeply as he looked at her huddled figure again, and, turning his face away, he pulled down her skirt until it covered her ankles.

Then he picked up his Winchester and fired three shots. The first hit directly back of the ear one of the stunned Indians who had fallen with his horse; the second went through the other stunned Indian’s chest; the third caught the Indian with the broken leg between the shoulders just as he tried to get behind his struggling pony.

Shortly after, Billy Knapp and the wagon-train came along.

THE PRISM.

BY MARY E. WILKINS,
Author of “A New England Nun,” “A Humble Romance,” etc.

HERE had been much rain that season, and the vegetation was almost tropical. The wayside growths were jungles to birds and insects, and very near them to humans. All through the long afternoon of the hot August day, Diantha Fielding lay flat on her back under the lee of the stone wall which bordered her stepfather’s, Zenas May’s, south mowing-lot. It was pretty warm there, although she lay in a little strip of shade of the tangle of blackberry-vines, poison-ivy, and the gray pile of stones; but the girl loved the heat. She experienced the gentle languor which is its best effect, instead of the fierce unrest and irritation which is its worst. She left that to rattlesnakes and nervous women. As for her, in