It is impossible to visualize the Owen Wister still well-remembered by many Philadelphians as the portly, fastidiously dressed elderly gentleman, the connoisseur of French wines, and president of The Philadelphia Club, as the same man who at twenty-five first tasted the joys of freedom in Wyoming. The young man gave himself to wild adventure, and recorded in his journals his all-night carousing with unlettered men and his wonder in the landscape. "Philadelphia is a stupid hole," he wrote his mother. The tepid life of his circle at that time, the stifling Victorian manners and customs of the essentially provincial city of his birth, the detested practice of the law were shed and forgotten in the West.

Wister, the only child of Dr. and Mrs. Owen Jones Wister, was born in Philadelphia on July 14, 1860, at 5103 Germantown Avenue. His mother was Sarah Butler, the daughter of the Shakespearean actress Fanny Kemble and Pierce Butler, named for his grandfather who had signed the Constitution for South Carolina. Dr. Wister was a successful country doctor, and Sarah B. Wister published unsigned essays in the Atlantic Monthly. Fanny Kemble herself had written the story of her life for the Atlantic and it had later been published in several volumes.
Owen Wister was educated abroad for three years, going at the age of ten to a Swiss boarding school where he was well grounded in French, and then, while staying with his aunt, his mother’s sister, the wife of the Rev. Dean Leigh of Hereford Cathedral, as a day pupil in an English school. He returned to America with his parents and, after briefly attending Germantown Academy, enrolled in 1873 at St. Paul’s School, Concord, New Hampshire. He entered Harvard in 1878, where he graduated *summa cum laude* in music. Wister became a close friend of Theodore Roosevelt in his sophomore year when he was elected to the Porcellian Club of which Roosevelt was a member. After graduating in 1882, Wister spent a year in Paris, studying to become a composer at the Conservatoire. Music had been his greatest interest since boyhood. He was a proficient pianist and kept up the piano all his life. He had played duets with his grandmother Fanny Kemble during his holidays from boarding school, when she lived across the road from Butler Place. Wister and his parents had moved to Butler Place in 1868 after the death of Pierce Butler. This was a farm six miles north of City Hall, Philadelphia, directly out Broad Street, when Fanny Kemble first came there in 1833, but it had become a well-kept country estate when Owen Wister lived there as a boy.

Dr. Wister asked his son to give up the study of music in Paris and return to America and go to work. Consequently, Wister spent a year on the staff of the Union Safe Deposit Bank in Boston. As a result of this unsuitable occupation, his health broke down and in 1885 he went to Wyoming. On his return, he entered Harvard Law School, was graduated in 1888, and became a member of the Philadelphia Bar two years later.

By 1891 Wister had made five holiday journeys for big-game hunting and trout fishing in Wyoming, and had experienced a great deal of frontier life. “Upon every Western expedition,” he wrote, “I had kept a full, faithful, realistic diary: details about pack horses, camps in the mountains, camps in the sage-brush, nights in town, cards with cavalry officers. . . .” He had driven twenty-four hours at a time in stagecoaches, ridden hundreds of miles on horseback, often fifty miles in one day, and had expressed in his diaries the

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emotion and wonder he felt in the scenery and his longing to write about the West.

His decision to do so was made during a chance conversation with Walter Furness at The Philadelphia Club in the autumn of 1891. Wister recorded his words on this occasion: “Why wasn’t some Kipling saving the sage-brush for American literature, before the sage-brush and all that it signified went the way of the California forty-niner, went the way of the Mississippi steamboat, went the way of everything? . . . What was fiction doing, fiction, the only thing that has always outlived fact? . . . ‘Walter, I’m going to try it myself! . . . I’m going to start this minute.’”

Owen Wister wrote “Hank’s Woman,” his first Western story, that night and followed it soon with “How Lin McLean Went East.” Dr. S. Weir Mitchell gave him a letter to the editor of Harper Brothers and both stories were accepted. “Hank’s Woman” was published in Harper’s Weekly for August 27, 1892, and “How Lin McLean Went East” in Harper’s Magazine for December, 1892. Both stories met with such nation-wide success that Harpers accepted two more in the spring of 1893, and in June began negotiating with him to go West and write a series of stories for them. They offered to send Frederic Remington with him to illustrate his work.

When Harpers asked Wister to write these articles he remembered Captain Frank Augustine Edwards, whom he had first met on September 4, 1891, in Yellowstone Park, where Edwards was conducting the pistol practice of his 1st Cavalry troop. Edwards was an experienced Indian fighter, having campaigned against the Modoc, Nez Percé, Bannock, Apache, Crow, Cheyenne, and Sioux. He was born in Pennsylvania on August 19, 1851, and was appointed a second lieutenant in the 1st Cavalry Regiment on

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3 Ibid.
4 See unpublished material in Wister’s 1891 journal.
6 Fanny Kemble Wister, Owen Wister Out West (Chicago, 1958), 12, 164.
7 Unpublished entry in Wister’s 1891 journal.
8 Unpublished entry in Wister’s 1893 journal.
October 1, 1873. For some years prior to 1884, he was with his regiment on the west coast, and later served with it in Montana, Wyoming, and North Dakota. After 1891 he was stationed in Arizona and New Mexico. In 1895 he came east to become Commandant of Cadets at Girard College. While in Philadelphia he reorganized and commanded the Second Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry. During the Spanish-American War, he returned to active duty in the Army. Subsequently, he was stationed in the Philippines, and served as a military attaché in Rome. He was promoted to the rank of colonel on March 3, 1911, and retired later in the year, dying at his home at Chadd’s Ford, Pennsylvania, on September 13, 1915.9

In 1893, Edwards commanded the United States Army post at San Carlos in Arizona Territory. Since Harpers particularly wanted stories about the Southwest, Wister began the correspondence with him which is here published for the first time.

From the beginning, Wister must have found Edwards articulate about his experiences, and he wrote repeatedly in his journals of Edwards’ patience and willingness to tell him about his Indian campaigns, and also recorded that it was Edwards who introduced him to the Indian scout Merijildo Grijaloa. To illustrate the encouragement offered by Edwards, the first of his replies to Wister is included in the letters which follow.10 As a guest of Edwards, Wister met the officers at San Carlos, as well as those at Fort Bowie and Fort Grant, where he also visited. It was indirectly through Edwards that he met Corporal Skirdin on October 8, 1893, at Fort Bowie, when Wister was a guest of Major Thomas McGregor, to whom Edwards had introduced him. Corporal Skirdin is identified in the preface to the collected edition of Wister’s works: “He seemed to me a sort of incarnation of my imaginary Virginian, he ratified my imagination.”11

A great deal of what Wister heard from Edwards, and what he heard and saw because Edwards made it possible, went into Wister’s short stories in the three volumes he published before The Virginian

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9 Material on Col. Edwards has been supplied by the Girard College Library and has been verified and corrected by Col. Edwards’ daughter, Mrs. Francis William Clark.
10 Original letter is in the Wister Collection at the Library of Congress.
11 Fanny Kemble Wister, 164.
1959 LETTERS OF OWEN WISTER appeared.\textsuperscript{12} The first writer to make the reading public conscious of the West, Wister produced in \textit{The Virginian} the first romantic novel of the Wild West, made the cowboy a hero, and so created the legend of the American cowboy. Although the story of \textit{The Virginian} is set in Wyoming, Wister's best-loved state, much of his knowledge of cowboys was gained in Arizona, and Wister learned much from Edwards, whom he frequently mentioned in his writings with gratitude. His letters to Edwards reveal Wister as he turned from the practice of law to his first serious venture into literature.\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{St. David's} 

\textbf{Fanny Kemble Wister}

\textbf{Sunday, July 23, 1893} 

\textbf{Fort Washakie, [Wyoming]}

Dear Captain Edwards:

Pray excuse my using a pencil. I'm laid up in bed, and ink seems impracticable.\textsuperscript{14} Since the moment's talk we had in "Alter View," the Messrs. Harpers have become so serious that I think I had better quote you parts of their letter which I received here. It clinches matters. "Each must be a thrilling story having its ground in a real incident, though you are left free scope for imaginative treatment. \ldots You may, and we hope you will, find several subjects, especially in connection with Indian Fighting, where actual facts will suffice for the frame-work of the stories. We wish in this series to portray certain features of Western Life which are now rapidly disappearing with the progress of civilization. \ldots We understand that you will enter upon the undertaking not later than October 1st, 1893, traversing those regions in our Western country which will yield you the best material. \ldots We attach more importance to it than to any of our undertakings for 1894. \ldots We must have copy for 1st story by November 1st." These and other conditions I have accepted, and the contract changes me from an unwilling Philadelphia lawyer into a willing recorder of men & things that I especially love in our country. Consequently, with all the egotism of a new fledged author, I turn to you for help. Our acquaintance has been short, and I am conscious

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Red Men and White} (1896), \textit{Lin McLean} (1898), \textit{The Jimmyjohn Boss and Other Stories} (1900).

\textsuperscript{13} Wister's letters to Col. Edwards were acquired by The Historical Society of Pennsylvania from Col. Edwards' daughter, Mrs. Francis William Clark of Carmel, Calif.

\textsuperscript{14} Wister was suffering from an attack of erysipelas. Fanny Kemble Wister, 179.
of trespassing on your good nature. When we sat together at Washing-
ton last winter, and even at the cabin in June, there was not
even a premonition that my services were so soon to be required by
contract, and I considered myself a casual and unemployed citizen
who sometimes wrote about what he had seen in his hours of idleness.
Suddenly, here I am with a considerable responsibility, under-
taken without question, and to be carried out with all the thorough-
ness I can command. This must be, not the excuse, but the explana-
tion of my descent upon you. I shall return East from this camping
trip Sep. 15th, & be ready to start West again by Sep 25th. The
material I want to draw from is Indian Fighting, Lynching, & Train
Robberies. For the latter I shall probably go to San Francisco &
consult Wells & Fargo. But I am in a position to travel anywhere,
and if on reading my needs advice occurs to you, you'll do me a great
service by giving it to me—indicating places or officers, gentlemen
whose acquaintance I could make at some Post & talk things over
with them—not like the odious reporter, but as an American who
desires & has the chance to put on record in the shape of quasi-
fiction some of the things that our western army has done in the past
25 years. If you will write me a letter addressed Grand Cañon Hotel,
Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, not later than August 20th,
I shall be infinitely indebted to you. After October, I am prepared to
depute any law business that may come to me, and go round the
West from Washington to Arizona. You were good enough to like
Lin McClean. In Harpers’ Nov. number there’ll be more about him,
& in Dec. & Jan. more about other people. I trust our damned
politics are not hampering you.

Very sincerely
Owen Wister
San Carlos, Arizona
Aug. 3, 1893

My dear Mr. Wister

I have yours of July 23 from Washakie and note you are again in
the old home of our friend Lin McClean. Wish I were with you to
enjoy your trip north to the Park. It would be a decided improve-

15 This cabin was on a wooded island near the Chicago World’s Fair, and was where the
Boone and Crockett Club had its dinner. *Ibid.*, 164.
ment over this God forsaken country, at least it appears to have been given up to the lower regions at this season of the year.

In reference to the work before you, I assume that you will write about ten articles, and you will desire to scatter the location over as much of the Western country as possible. In that event, Arizona could stand at least two, possibly more, as it is more of an unknown country than almost any other section of the West in the minds of eastern readers.

I am on duty at this point with my Troop, and expect to be here until Dec. 15, when I may return to Fort Grant. Why would it not be a good plan to come to Arizona at first, taking in Fort Bowie and Fort Grant and then to this point. I am sure material could be found at all these places, even in ordinary conversation, for our lives here become so accustomed to excitement that often we don’t appreciate incidents that would be just what you wanted. At Fort Bowie there is now a Capt. Fuller who has made lately a trip through the cliff dwellers regions north of here, and Maj. McGregor (my old Captain) is in command and I could write to him, and his hospitality & kindness knows no end. At Fort Grant, my Regiment is stationed and there you would be at home. Here, I am alone and will have to ask you to rough it with me, as I brought neither my family nor my furniture. By October the weather will be very pleasant and you will have an opportunity of noting the country, a description of which always enters into a story. From here you could go to California, and, while no doubt you could get a good deal from Wells, Fargo people, more could be obtained from the different stage drivers who would be your companions on the box seats. In this line there might be a good deal of exaggeration, but that would not make any difference. There are still some long stage lines left in California. (If the one from Redding, Cal., to Rosebury, Or., were only left, I should say go there, but unfortunately for you the O. & C. R. R. has taken its place.) From California you could go to Vancouver Bks, Wash. Capt.

16 Capt. Alfred M. Fuller, 2nd Cavalry.
17 Maj. Thomas McGregor, a native of Scotland, enlisted in the army in 1858, and rose through the ranks. He became a major, 2nd Cavalry, in 1884, and retired as a colonel in 1901. McGregor was cited for gallant service in action against the Indians at the Santa Maria Mountains, Arizona, in 1873. Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (Washington, 1903), I, 667.
Boutelle\textsuperscript{18} of my Regt. is there on duty; he was Supt. of the Park before Anderson.

He has been in the West for years and is full of recollections, both as a soldier and an officer. He enlisted for a commission just after the war, although a Captain in the Volunteer service. He would pass you on to some point in the Coeur d'Alene country and from there you could go to Montana for the winter scenery.

Be sure and see Capt. Anderson\textsuperscript{19} at the Mammoth Hot Springs. He is a Boone & Crockett man, and a friend of mine, Hague,\textsuperscript{20} Phillips,\textsuperscript{21} etc.—a most entertaining man and a good companion. And while there visit Uncle John Yancey's\textsuperscript{22}—and surely “Yankee Jim”—a bottle of good whiskey carried with you to the latter place and judiciously administered and some bought and complimented at the former will work wonders. I think “my remembrance to my old pardners” will put you on good footing.

Will be more than glad to see you here and will do all I can to assist you. Let me hear from you a little before you do start, or at any other time you feel like it.

Sincerely Yours
Frank A. Edwards

September 15th [1893]
En Route
New York & Chicago Limited
Pennsylvania Lines
Pullman Vestibuled Train

My dear Captain Edwards:

Thank you for your very kind letter, which was just what I wanted. It reached me last week in the Park, where I passed some

\textsuperscript{18} Capt. Frazier Augustus Boutelle was mustered out as a cavalry captain of a New York regiment at the end of the Civil War. He enlisted six months later in the army and was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1869. He was mentioned for gallantry in action against the Indians at Lost River, Oregon, in 1872, and for conspicuous gallantry and meritorious conduct during the whole Modoc War. \textit{Ibid.}, 233.

\textsuperscript{19} Capt. George S. Anderson, 6th Cavalry.

\textsuperscript{20} Arnold Hague (1840–1917), a distinguished geologist, was appointed geologist in charge of the survey of the Yellowstone National Park in 1883. He devoted the rest of his professional life to the task. \textit{Dictionary of American Biography (DAB)}.

\textsuperscript{21} Presumably William Addison Phillips (1824–1893), soldier, congressman, conservationist, and Indian champion. \textit{DAB}.

\textsuperscript{22} Wister had already visited Yancey at Yellowstone Falls on Aug. 13, 1891. Fanny Kemble Wister, 129.
pleasant hours with Captain Anderson. I am on my way home, as you see, after a successful trip—antelope—deer—elk—mountain sheep—and any amount of fishing. I shall remain at home a few days only, and then set my face Westward to begin the work I have told you about. So I write to you once more, this time for sailing orders. You mention Fort Bowie, Fort Grant, and your own present station. I should like to visit them all. There is no sort of travelling I like so well. What I need is now to be steered. I must go to San Francisco. Which shall I do: go there first and come through Arizona on my return, or take Arizona first? My single point is to be home again by Christmas. Between now & then I am ready to go anywhere and in any order. If you write “take Arizona first,” I should turn up there soon after October 1st, and go to the Posts & visit the country you speak of. Indian fighting is what I want to hear about—the campaigns that occurred between '65 and Custer's; on the Rosebud, or the Platte, or the Gila, or anywhere; but as I am somewhat familiar with the North, it is the South I particularly want to see & be in & hear about. So if you, knowing these things, will be goodnatured enough to write me some final directions—how to reach Fort Bowie, or whatever had best be my first point in Arizona—roughly what temperature I shall find—and give me a word to your brother officers so they shall not mistake me for some sort of mendicant journalist, I shall be greatly obliged to you. I've been looking over the time table of the Atchison Topeka & Sn Fé, and of the Southern Pacific, but can't find the military stations on the routes & don't know what r.r. stations they're near. Would it be worth while to bring my Winchester? I've heard there's mountain sheep hunting in Arizona. I shall wait your answer, and when it comes shall start at once. Address me Rittenhouse Club, 1811 Walnut St., Philadelphia.

Yours sincerely

Owen Wister

En Route Saturday, Oct. 7th [1893]

My dear Captain Edwards:

I left Philadelphia on about four hours’ decision last Tuesday. At nine A.M. I was uncertain of when I should get off, & at 2.20 P.M. I was in the train. So I have delayed writing you word until now, as
no time could be gained. Rincon is our next important station, & I am due at Bowie this afternoon. As you indicated, I telegraphed Major McGregor last evning. I hope I'm not going to be a “demnition bore” to him, or to you, or to anybody. Thank you for your letter & the very hospitable things you say, and also for the hint of Major McGregor's reticence, which I hope I may find the means to dispel. From your account of him he should be precisely the man who could tell me what I have come so far to learn—incidents of frontier life. You say I shall be able to communicate with you over Government wires—so that's all right. I can let you know what shape my plans fall into after being at Bowie for a while. I have given myself plenty of time for the total journey: I need not be at home until December 24th for domestic & hearthstone purposes, & I need not be in San Francisco until November's last week; while inside those limits any and all plans are absolutely elastic & ready to be changed or abandoned at any moment. Apache Pass I should like to see, and all available old timers within hailing distance. Hunting is a secondary consideration. Of course I shall be only too delighted to go to Fort Grant with you. If I have any luck in exorcising the reticence of Major McGregor, he ought to tell me enough to equip and outfit half a dozen stories, and set my mind at ease early in this expedition. For to tell the truth, I am very ill at ease just now; and the Messrs. Harper and what they expect of me are much on my thoughts. They have been courtesy itself to such an unknown beginner, and they must not be disappointed. However, I'll not bore you with my small affairs.

Yours sincerely
Owen Wister

Saturday Evening,
November 25th [1893]
University Club, San Francisco

Dear Captain:
Here a week has gone without my reporting to you! Well, my plea must be this: Excess of writing each day. I have not even written my mother a letter since arriving here. The plan I told you—and of which you were plainly sceptical—has been rigidly carried out, and I'll just tell you my week. Saturday I spent in letting my friends
know I had come. Sunday: reveillé, 7:45: mess, 8:15: fatigue, 9: Chestapah till 12:30. By the way, the reports in the book of the 1st Cavalry spell him Chees-cha-pah-disch. So for brevity I made a compromise and call him Cheschapah. That afternoon civility compelled me to accept the McAllisters’ invitation for the country and the night. Monday I went ahead again with romance, sitting up in my bed-room in the Palace Hotel. I made such wretched progress, & what I wrote struck me as so poor, that by Wednesday I was very blue. Then I put double screws on, and worked from 9 each day till 6, making a break of 1½ hours at lunch time, when I have come up here and chatted and got rested. Then at 6 I knock off, dine here with a friend or two, and spend the evening. Now that’s how I’ve been living; and when night came I had not the go left in me to take up a pen again and write you a decent letter. But this afternoon your letter came and made me thoroughly ashamed of myself; so I’ll not delay any more in thanking you for it, and also for one of the pleasantest months I ever passed in my life. I have missed it and you all the time, and this minute should like (which you would not) to be gossiping with you at San Carlos, sipping mild whiskey, sprawled on your lounge with “Pache,” while you leant back and made scurrilous observations about the Post doctor. Reminiscence has put me in prime condition to say with all sincerity to any officer I meet on his way to San Carlos: “Not at all. The place is remarkably pleasant. I consider you to be envied, and would gladly return there myself.” The fact is Bowie and Carlos and Grant were all so full of pleasant days and kind hospitality that October and November in Arizona seem to have passed in a minute and left me nothing but regret they should be gone.

We have awfully funny times here at the Club. I think my evenings here are all that keep my spirits alive. The other night, after several drinks, a youth produced a pack of cards & tore the solid pack in half. It was extraordinary to see, & we made him do it again, and then again; we paid for the packs and he tore them up. Then a German got excited and did his trick in emulation. This was to wind a handkerchief tight round the bottom half of his thumb and draw a knife across the bare top half. The blood flowed out, when

23 This story was entitled “Little Big Horn Medicine,” and was published in Harper’s Magazine in June, 1894.
the ingenious Teuton took off the handkerchief, smoothed his finger, and there was no gash or cut there. This was such a huge success that the first man took another drink and got jealous. He said pooh! he could do that, anybody could do that. He took a handkerchief and a knife and the blood certainly flowed. Then he unwrapped and disclosed a gaping wound. This was a still more huge success, and a third man shrieked, ‘Let’s have a snow storm,’ and seized up the scattered tatters of the card packs and ran about tossing handfuls into the air, finally ending by ripping every notice off the bulletin board. All sorts of committees on house-rules met next day, & the man was apologizing in every direction. But these things are diverting to a wearied author. Just now they’re trying their best to stop my writing round this table with all sorts of gibes about “Wister at Work,” “The Author of Emily” and it has become extremely hard to spell words of one syllable. So I’ll stop. Cheschapah is nearly finished. The last two days have gone well. I’ve dislocated history just at the start, but otherwise very little. If the whole thing lacks “artistic crescendo” it will be because I have tried to adhere to your narrative, which is really a series of events with stretches of weeks between. But damn artistic crescendo. Such a story as that should be tampered with as little as may be. I’ll do as you suggest, and write a line to Jackson. Farewell, I’m glad you’ve got into your house, but sorry about the moths. I’ll send you some of my photographs in a day or two. Don’t mention hearing from me to Mrs. Arnold till I can write to her!!

Yours sincerely
Owen Wister

December 7, 1893
Palace Hotel, San Francisco, Cal.

Dear Captain:

Cheschapah (unless the U.S. mail has been held up) is now trundling comfortably somewhere in Iowa or Illinois. The title is

25 Mrs. Abraham K. Arnold, wife of the colonel of the 1st Cavalry.
“Little Big-Horn Medicine.” You & Wainwright and Ayleshire are all there in disguise and you do exactly what you really did. But your conversation with the lieutenant of the Sioux Police at the ford is far below the standard of your daily talk, I fear, a gross misrepresentation! Today I send you a book by the author of L'Abbé Constantin of which I spoke to you, & which I like myself much better. Also I send you a few Kodacks, humble souvenirs of San Carlos. The one on your steps with the olla should touch you deeply. I've written to Major Jackson & Captain Boutelle, and explained myself to them a little in advance, enclosing your note to Boutelle. I go from here on Monday not having got much here, in fact almost nothing. That has been owing to accident for Wells & Fargo have been most cordial and given me the run of themselves. But by the time I had met the right man it was too late to make friends with him so he'd talk of his own unconscious will, & I had to pump him, and pumping dries romance right up. I shall probably come back here after Christmas, sometime in January & go on! My remembrances to Colonel & Mrs. Arnold.

Yours sincerely
Owen Wister

December 17th [1893]
Arlington Club, Portland, Oregon

My dear Captain:

I can't refrain from sending you a parting line of thanks. Major Jackson & Captain Boutelle have been kindness itself to me here, and if there are things of the Modoc Campaign I don't know, it's my own stupid fault. But more than ever I'm determined to follow the trail I've entered, and really know honestly and thoroughly our army life on the frontier. You'll see me back. Providence hath given me bread & butter. I've no axe to grind at Washington. I'm merely an Amer-

26 Capt. Robert Powell Page Wainwright of the 1st Cavalry was brevetted for gallant service in action against the Indians at Umatilla Agency, Oregon, in 1878. He died in 1902 and was the father of Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright. Heitman, II, 993.
27 1st Lt. James B. Aleshire, 1st Cavalry.
28 Ludovic Halevy (1834–1908) was the author of L'Abbé Constantin. His other work to which Wister refers was probably La Famille Cardinal.
29 Maj. James Jackson of the 2nd Cavalry (until 1889 in the 1st Cavalry) had served with much distinction against the Indians in the Modoc War in 1872, at Clearwater, Idaho, in 1877, and was awarded the Medal of Honor for most distinguished gallantry in action during an Indian battle. Heitman, II, 567.
ican Citizen, and if the Fates are agreeable, I’ll record what has been done of the creditable & courageous out here between 1865 and the present day. I read Cheschapah to Boutelle & he approved: said it was “readable” and that’s all I want. So beware! You’ve fastened an incubus on your devoted shoulders. Our chance meeting that day at target practice in the Park may turn out a controlling incident in the destiny of a poor beggar of an Eastern dude. When I get home, I’ll do my best to look up plays you can possibly act at Fort Grant. That’s a hard commission you gave me. And I shouldn’t at all wonder if you saw me again, west of the Missouri.

Yours sincerely
Owen Wister

Dec. 24 [1893]

Philadelphia

Dear Captain:

A merry Xmas to you & Mrs. Edwards. This is a line only, and only to say that I ought to have written you long ago & to her also, & that I will do so at once, and also that I hope your taste in whiskey hasn’t changed. “Some of the Same” starts to you this day & I regret I shall not be on hand to aid you consume it.

Yours always sincerely
O. W.

Friday, Feb. 2nd [1894]
Owen Wister, Attorney-At-Law
Brown Brothers’ Building
328, Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

Dear Captain:

My plans have been delayed and changed through anxiety about my Mother, who has been ill of typhoid fever. Not a severe case—in fact a light one, but the name is so ugly, and the chances of relapse keep one in perpetual doubt. I believe she is very nearly over the line where relapses end their jurisdiction. I had supposed that by this time I should be in San Francisco, but I don’t even know now when I’ll start for there. When I do start I am more and more drawn to pause again in Arizona. I want to see Major McGregor. I want to talk to Fowler.30 I’d like to see Huachuca. I’d like to go to Bayard.

30 Capt. Joshua L. Fowler, who like Maj. McGregor was in the 2nd Cavalry. Fowler died in 1899. Ibid., 433.
I’d almost go to San Carlos; but not quite—and naturally I want to see you and hear what your present impressions of life are, of people in general, & of Doctor McV. in particular. If you couldn’t put me up—& knowing in a manner the ease and quickness with which a guest might become a burden and nuisance in a land where cooks turn liars and Chinese evaporate—why I’d be perfectly happy at the hotel. But during the last week I’ve been writing a story laid between Tucson and Old Camp Grant—(It couldn’t have been written but for my days at Carlos & our march; it’s through unconscious ways one gets impressions; & though not a detail or an incident occurs, the impression of the Arizona tout ensemble comes from those weeks)—and writing has made me homesick to be back in that magnificent & ghastly country. Probably none of this may happen, but I like to believe it will. So if I do come, I’ll let you know. Thank you for your correction about war-trail. I changed it—and it’s much appreciated by me that you should think of it. The B. & C. dinner was very pleasant, and naturally I missed you. I sat between Roosevelt & Winthrop Chanler, & told them about my visit & I drank a glass of fizz to your health. Hague was sweeter than honey & the honey comb. Came and sat & chinned & talked, & was (honestly) very pleasant & friendly. I was to be seen & let him know if I came to Washington; & at any time if he could do anything why &c &c. And Grinnell & I had a long wawa also. Curious: did you know he is a sad & disappointed man? Has to edit & write swill because of hard necessity, and wants to do good work for a smaller but more discriminating audience. I was mortified to be ignorant of his two books on Indian legends, and bought them next day. They are admirable—and so modest! I’ve lent them to people here & they’re all going to own them. Oh—by the way—Boutelle told me you had written a first rate paper about a future invasion—something on the plan of the Battle of Dorking. Why on earth didn’t you show it me instead of sitting back in your chair & letting me ceaselessly prattle of my

31 1st Lt. Harlan E. McVay, assistant surgeon, Medical Department.
32 On Jan. 7, 1894, Edwards wrote Wister that he had heard from Boutelle that Wister had referred to Indians being on the “war trail,” and offered the correction “war path” as the right expression.
33 George Bird Grinnell, author of The Story of the Indian, Trails of the Pathfinders, Blackfoot Lodge Tales, and other works.
own concerns? Do you know about the railroad & the Park? Grinnell, or Hague, or somebody at the dinner, told me the Burlington was now prepared for war. Proposes to get in up Stinking Water somehow (I can't conceive how) and down Pelican Creek, (right to the lake outlet you see) & so through the stomach of the poor Park to the Geysers & after that God knows where. I suppose they'll water the locomotives at Old Faithful. Damn this stinking money dredging prostituted country. Civilized! We're not so civilized as we were fifty years ago. Not nearly. We have devised a Government by which hogs prosper rapidly and live on Fifth Avenue ever afterwards. That's all. You ought to smell the stench of politics & public standards of decency, that rises here in the East just now. Don't construe this for sourness about the Democratic party. I am disgusted with it & its imbecile incompetency. I still think well of Cleveland; and if he speaks the truth—and no one has contradicted his statements—his position about Hawaii strikes me as sound & enlightened. But Washington is a mess of all parties, rotting together in ignorance of the first principles of finance, legislation, & the common weal. We're demonstrating to the world that we don't know how to govern ourselves after all. However, these private opinions are not worth sending all the way to Arizona. You didn't answer my telegram, which I hope was not a sign of displeasure, but of assent. Remington when I was staying with him two weeks ago, had just received the Ms. of "Little Big-Horn Medicine" from Harpers, & I read it to him aloud at his request. His mind instantly seized the crisis at Reno's crossing, when you were escorting the Sioux away—"That's one picture!" he said. Afterwards he wanted a photograph of you. His notion of the illustration was the two banks of the river, with you & the five men & the two Indian police on one side—the crow rabble on the other—and the two Indians in the water trying to cross. Of

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34 Cleveland refused to annex Hawaii on the pretext offered him by the revolt engineered against the native monarchy by American residents.

35 The unfortunate Maj. Marcus Albert Reno of the 7th Cavalry was dismissed from the service in 1880. "Reno's crossing" here simply refers to the name of a ford.

36 Edwards' advice to Wister on this picture is found in his letter of Feb. 11, 1894: "If not too late, suggest to Remington to put the young Indians who are trying to force a passage by the Troop on the land near the edge of the river, but not in the river, as the whole party were engaged in the altercation in very close quarters."
course each figure will be very small—but I did not wish to take the liberty of sending those skirmish drill pictures in order Remington might put a resemblance to you in his officer, without your permission, although I did not imagine it would be objectionable to you. Remington writes me the story gains with re-reading. In fact he now pronounces it a “dead tie” with one that will be in the May Harpers, and which he considers the best I have done. I don’t agree with him, & I don’t think Cheschapah is as good as it ought to be. I found it surprisingly difficult to write, why I don’t exactly know. And I agree with you that Balaam & Pedro is more successful than my poor average. There now follow: April, “The Promised Land”; only so so. Greatly hampered by Harpers demand for excitement & exclusion of study of character. May, “A Kinsman of Red Cloud”—open to the same criticism, but more compact as a piece of art, if I dare call what I do by so good a name. June, (I think) “Little Big-Horn Medicine”—better in every way, but not right as I would have it. I’ve made you a very decent person indeed, under the name of Stirling. July (I think) “Specimen Jones”—and that to me is the first entirely satisfactory piece of work since Balaam & Pedro, for I have succeeded, I think, in telling a fairly good story but better than

37 “Kinsman of Red Cloud.”

38 This story, published in Harper’s Magazine, January, 1894, later became a chapter in The Virginian.
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37 "Kinsman of Red Cloud."
38 This story, published in Harper's Magazine, January, 1894, later became a chapter in The Virginian.
that, in touching the human chord. Monday I get to work on a very pretty thing Boutelle told me. I'm going to take you and E-eganti and boil up something, chucking in the Umatilla Agency, & Ume Pike & carrots and onions & the dear knows what. I haven't been very gay, socially. It has been a little anxious at home, and I've missed some dances, notably the Hunt Ball night before last, the prettiest of the season on account of the pink coats. But I've dined a lot of course, and been to the Opera more or less. Had a week at Tuxedo with the Chanlers. Tuxedo is a place where four intimate friends of mine—college friends—have settled, and I like all their wives but one, & she's merely dull, not bad. So whenever I go there, we dine all round, something like tag. I've not been able to go to Washington. Did you get the book & photos? You don't say so & Captain Myer hasn't spoken of some photos I sent him. McGregor did. If yours never came I'll find you some more. Although Mrs. Edwards doesn't know me, may I ask you to present her my compliments? I hope that cook did not turn out a liar.39

Yours sincy
Owen Wister

Thursday, Feb. 8th [1894]
Rittenhouse Club
1811 Walnut Street

Dear Captain:

I've just come in to dine & repair afterwards to an opera-box, and here are your photographs. You'll know before this gets to you that Remington has finished the illustrations for Cheschapah, and today a letter from him speaks of the new ms. I sent the Harpers & which they have already turned in to him. So your very kind thought in sending them to help the reality of his illustrations comes too late. He did ask me if I had any picture of the Crow Agency, & of course I hadn't. I don't know now, as I write, whether this parcel from you is in response to my telegram or not. If it is, why my last letter will elucidate things, and once again, let me hope that you will not feel any liberty has been taken with your privacy as a citizen! Telegrams

39 A reference to Edwards' comment in his letter to Wister of Jan. 7, 1894, that Mrs. Edwards had employed a woman who said she was a good cook, but that "it remains to be seen whether she is a bad cook and a liar as well."
arrive so amazingly different from their original form that until I hear from you I shall be in doubt as to what reached you at Grant & what impression it made on your mind. These blue prints I will not return—I assume you only mean to lend them—until I know definitely whether the Gods are going to be good & let me go to Arizona in the course of the next 8 weeks, or not. If I do come, I'll bring them; otherwise I'll mail them back to you. They increase my homesickness for the West. I've had just enough white-cravat and terrapin to do me for another year, & am ready to be perfectly happy on bacon, coffee & condensed milk. It may interest you to know in advance what each of the illustrations in Cheschapah is to be. I have twisted history a little, and made the dog-dance occur as the Sioux are on their way to the Crow Reservation; and I make Cheschapah, Pounded Meat, & Two Whistles go out to meet the coming guests with a dog. So they dance then, after Cheschapah has done his seltzer [?] trick for the benefit of the Sioux visitors, who take no stock in him; then immediately, at dawn, you come and surprise the whole outfit. After that the story goes (with a few omissions) as you told it to me in the pleasant evenings at San Carlos. Picture No. 1. is Dog Dance: "I am a Medicine Man," Picture No. 2. is Reno's crossing, where Lieutenant Stirling says to the Indian Police—"Temporize, Johnny. You savvy ‘temporize’?" Picture No. 3. is "The dead Medicine Man," & I suppose they're all riding by & whipping his face. Now my dinner has been announced, so good evening.

Yours sincerely

Owen Wister

Will you remember me to the Arnolds, and Wainwright & Ayleshire?

Friday, Mar 16th [1894]
Owen Wister, Attorney-at-Law
Brown Brothers’ Building
328, Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

Dear Captain:

To-day by express some of our friend General Howard's ⁴⁰ "poison" starts for you, & I trust won't arrive broken to pieces. It struck me that the sacred Easter-Tide should not pass without my at least attempting to elevate your too mundane thoughts. The Peach

⁴⁰ Maj. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard (1830–1909) was noted for his religious interests.
brandy is a Philadelphia specialty & I trust will please you. We put it in punch here, but I think it does alone. I wish you’d come this way sometime. My plans are still hindered by things at home. It may be I can set out in mid April, & if I do, I shall let you know. I shall look forward to seeing everybody again very much. If the Major \(41\) will have me I shall go to see him at Bowie. Then I think I’ll go to Bayard & see Captain Markley \(42\) who was a most agreeable man. I think I told you of him. He came for a court-martial about that improper steward. Then I shall go to Tucson & see the old mission. Then the Colorado Cañon. Then California. Thus do I build castles some of which may materialize. For I am crazy to get away from what the Major would call ceevilization. Much obliged for your points about Little B[j] H[orn]. I was “reserved” in my description of Reno’s crossing & the landscape generally, & dealt only in safe allusions to hills & valleys & water, with cottonwoods gingerly thrown in once or twice. I wrote your story of Ben Arnold to Captain Boutelle who seems to have thoroughly enjoyed it. As to E-egante (Boutelle insisted on this spelling) you told me a lot about him & mayhap you’ll tell me more. I believe I wrote you last time that E-egante appears in a thing I wrote about General Crook \(43\) up in the district of the Owyhee. If the Harpers like it (I haven’t heard yet) I shall continue E-egante to his rather tragic end—& bring in your chilly conduct to him: conduct which as I shall never have my own tested under parallel circumstances I can freely deplore with raised eyes. Won’t you remember me to Ayleshire? And how is that poor doting tiresome slobbering dog? Yours sincerely

Owen Wister

Thursday, April 12th [1894]
Rittenhouse Club
1811 Walnut Street

Dear Captain:

Oh nay! The whiskey (glad it’s good) may be drunk up by Wister’s arrival, but Wister’s a prudent man & will probably bring some as he did at Carlos. It looks now as if I were going to be able to make my

\(41\) Maj. Thomas McGregor.

\(42\) Capt. Alfred C. Markley, 24th Infantry.

\(43\) Maj. Gen. George Crook (1829–1890), a noted cavalry officer who served with distinction in the Civil War and figured in many western Indian campaigns.
journey at length. If so, I'll get away about the 20th. I shall go to Bowie first, I think, & back to Silver City. It only makes a day's difference & I'm choosing a route that would oblige me to wait at Deming 24 hours, nearly. For variety's sake I shall travel via Cincinnati, Memphis, Fort Worth, & El Paso. Then from Silver City I'd come to you—then go to Tucson. I'm very glad you liked that last story, but I think (I'm almost sure) the Arizona one is a better thing—more compact & more close to the local reality of scenery & "atmosphere." I had cultus & bought a dictionary in Portland where it said K—& changed it in proof. Sorry I did so if you have authority for c. Rob McGregor has a wrong face. That's the only word I can use. Whether it's his eyes or his mouth I never could conclude. His voice is wrong too. These things are very queer, but they're so and mean something. There's some mysterious thing wrong with that highly beautiful lieutenant's phiz—is his name Anderson? Not obliquity, but some sort of ungenial quality. As you say, Rob's attitude to the soldier's daughter not being immoral does him discredit (except in Heaven) and is a good chance for the moralist. I once thought of writing a novel about two girls: sisters: one makes a love match, the other a heartless money marriage. The money marriage turns out smooth, happy & serene, the love bursts into disaster. Then I thought it would be a bitter performance on my part & at odds with my desire to write goodnaturedly about life, even in tragedy. A man has just in come to ask me to represent Harvard at the Yale dinner. Thank God I have another engagement that night! My kind remembrances to Colonel & Mrs. Arnold—and I think I should like to have a stranger's compliments presented to Mrs. Edwards, if she'll permit.

Yours sincerely
Owen Wister

Tuesday, May 15th [1894]

Dear Captain:

My most hospitable host & hostess have made the days so pleasant that time has gone like a thief in the night. Friday I'll leave here for Bayard. Wednesday I'll meet Wilcox from there, and Thursday the

44 Possibly a reference to 2nd Lt. Robert McGregor of the Engineers.
45 Possibly 2nd Lt. Edward Anderson of the 1st Cavalry.
24th report to you, I hope, in time for lunch. During my sojourn with you I suppose Chestapah will arrive in the June Harper. Then you can pitch into it & me *viva voce*. I seriously fear that it will disappoint you. Mostly, it’s not as good a thing as I ought to have been able to make it, & second, the fiction will be likely to collide in your recollection with the reality. I feel more certain of another story, of which I have the proof with me to show you, as it reflects some of my days with you last Fall. By the way, I thought you severe on Remington. One picture in the Promised Land was full of force & movement—the drunken Indians riding. This frightful wind (is it with you?) has given me diabolic neuralgia. I consider that Nature in Arizona has epilepsy.

Yours sincerely
Owen Wister

Monday, June 25 [1894]
Benson, [Arizona]

Dear Captain:

Just a line to say I miss your company and have performed a lonely journey, at times wishing you could see & hear some of the things. I don’t think your frontier experience includes anything like Tombstone. I went to Bisbee first, and down the mine for 2 hours—very interesting. Then to Tombstone, spending Saturday & Sunday nights—nearly 3 days. All men were civil & kind & did what they could. I heard a lot about Earps &c. The whole history in its main points. Of course had I stayed a week I could have got those little details I’m always after. But Tombstone is awful—not in the Willcox way, but with glory departed. Tucson to-night—then on to San Francisco. My kind regards to Mrs. Edwards. Has she eaten calfy all up yet?

Yours sincerely
Owen Wister

Aug. 25th [1894]
[Philadelphia]

My dear Mrs. Edwards:

My long and ungracious silence has certain facts to plead for it. Directly after I pencilled a few lines to the Captain, I was caught
in the strike. My train reached Los Angeles and there expired. Quite a combination of discomforts and uncertainties followed, ending in my travelling by sea, sleeping on the floor with 55 other cabinless wretches, and for two nights twisting about in order to dodge the adjacent feet of passengers who seemed bent on plunging the said feet into my hair. It was a thoroughly unsavory journey, & I reached San Francisco with a bad cold and greatly disgusted. My mail was not there, and no mails were leaving there. As soon as travel became reasonably reliable I went East, stopping at Cheyenne a much shorter time than had been my original plan. Once home, my liver went on a sympathetic strike, and there was bed & calomel for me. When I say sympathetic strike, the Captain will understand that my liver was thinking of his. Then I went to the division encampment of our National Guard at Gettysburg, & was occupied in writing a sort of popular account of it for Harpers Weekly; & now at length I am writing to you. This history shows me a dilatory, but I hope not altogether depraved guest. I return and find a good many things happened, good and ill. More of ill, this time. Two or three untimely deaths that were told me all at once, weeks after the occurrence. The Captain remembers Winthrop Chanler, who has lost his son, a very great grief. In my own immediate circle all is pretty well; my mother as well as she ever can be now, and better than she has been for several years. Of myself, there’s nothing to tell you except that I must settle down now and write pretty steadily. Headquarters will be at Philadelphia for many months. This reminds me that I have asked repeatedly, but heard nothing definite about Ethan Allen. I asked various officers I met in San Francisco, and also at Fort Russell. I hope you got much pleasure from the visitor who succeeded me, and that her presence varied the monotony of Arizona for you and the Captain. As for me—I count those days particularly red letter ones, and I miss them all the time. I know it would be different were I in your place, but as it is, I am homesick acutely for the yucca & mesquite! Did you go to camp up the mountain? and has any husband had to shoot Ben for alienating his wife’s affections?

46 The great 1894 American Railway Union strike emanating from labor disputes with the Pullman Company.
I send you that book, and I hope my praise of it will not seem disproportionate.

Yours sincerely
Owen Wister

Aug. 25th [1894]
Owen Wister, Attorney-at-Law
Brown Brothers' Building
328, Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

Dear Captain:
Your diabolical ingenuity has doubtless devised something to say about Cleveland’s position during the strike; so I’ll abstain from expressing my admonition to you for fear of a repartee. You and Mrs. Edwards must forgive my unconsionable silence; I’ve told her a little what happened to me after I reached California, but my plans were all smashed. I was unable to see the Wells & Fargo detectives, who were busy at Oakland and everywhere, and I couldn’t get away. Still, though those weeks were barren, I have enough material to keep me going quite a time, & besides that, I had a truly bully holiday thanks to you; and I find my standing with Harper such that they don’t mind my being late. They asked me to dine—Harper did—and wanted to know when I would give them a long novel! But oh my! they are cautious. In my remarks about our national guard (which will be in next weekly) I had commented on Gen’l Howard’s condemnation of the Jams [?] punishment as unchristian; & I added: “but one knows Gen’l Howard. Of all the insults to which the dictionary submits, his chronic abuse of the word ‘christian’ is the most offensive.” ⁴⁷ They made me tone this away down into a very mild observation. Then, speak of Scofield’s⁴⁸ recent utterance that he had changed his mind and thought the army should be larger. I had said: “I am glad the General has changed his mind; it shows that he has one.” This wouldn’t do either. I saw several army men in San Francisco; General Ruger,⁴⁹ the Quartermaster Colonel Lee⁵⁰ (I don’t understand what kind of Q.M. he is, for they have another

⁴⁷ Gen. Howard retired in 1894 from his last command, the Division of the East.
⁵⁰ Lt. Col. James G. C. Lee of the Quartermaster’s Department.
there: is he Department, or what?) and the paymaster Major Bates. I did not see, for he was at Sacramento & too busy to be bothered by such as me. I abstained from taking any steps to meet him. Ruger I liked much, and really saw something of. I was told beforehand he had an embarrassed unsatisfactory manner & I should not enjoy his company. On the contrary, he talked in a steady stream, clear, emphatic, and about realities. I was much flattered by the way he agreed and disagreed with my opinions—I mean he took the trouble to listen & reply. Naturally I said nothing about Swordbearer, though I was tempted to. At Ogden, quite by chance, I saw Captain Roach. The strike had occasioned his being there for the moment. Then at Russell Mrs. Roach had killed fatted calves for me—mothers you see exaggerate matters—but I arrived too late to eat the calves. It was rather funny. I had written 2 days before leaving San Francisco asking Capt. Roach when & where I might call on him on a certain Monday. Mrs. R. opened the letter, construed from it I should arrive Saturday. Got up a dinner & sent an ambulance to 4 trains, 3 A.M. 3.30 P.M. Saturday, 3 A.M. 3.30 P.M. Sunday. I came, as I had definitely written, by this last, & was met by my host in Cheyenne, to whom I had written also, & also by the ambulance and a Captain Green, who gave me the dismaying information that he had eaten a dinner without me the preceding night. Well, of course I explained, and Mrs. Roach still had my letter & found it was her mistake—and it all goes to show what I have said so often, that army cordiality is without limit. So I lunched with Mrs. Roach & told her all I knew about her son, including Mrs. Arnold’s calling him back for ice cream when he was orderly. I imagine that Mrs. Arnold & you are now both mentioned in Mrs. Roach’s prayers. I am badly disappointed in my photographs. I send you some & you will see. Target practice and any duplicates are for Captain Wainwright with my apologies and regrets. The others keep or destroy, as you please. It seems the film was bad, or affected by heat while at Bowie, and that my Kodac had a leak where light got in, also owing to heat. Luckily 2 Tombstone

51 Maj. Alfred E. Bates, Pay Department.  
52 Col. William M. Graham, 5th Artillery.  
54 Capt. Charles H. Greene, 17th Infantry.
ones are good; for I found out enough about Earps & Clantons to make a story in several numbers. It's a puzzle to know whether to give them fictitious names or not. One or two are still alive. This history of E-egante bothers me; I want to do that all the justice that's in my power, and I find licking it into shape will need a lot of consideration. I find Cheschapah has been a success. The N. Y. Tribune was very complimentary. Now Silver's Creek &c must be kept to that level. I shall wait for ideas & not hurry it into print, finishing this series of 8 (of which Cheschapah is the 1st) with 3 less important things, the Price's left wing Boisé affair; a corrosive Arizona notion suggested to me by the dead cows I saw, and the Wham robbery. Give me a name for Wham robbery. Two occur: "Major Pidcock's Mischance," and "Prosperity in Tucson." Did you know that after that trial was over, the prisoners & their counsel had a triumphant group photograph taken? I saw it in Tucson. There's moral standard for you. Well, I must stop gasing to you. I hope your liver is behaving better. Give my regards to Mills & Ayleshire & Osborn & your next door neighbors. I shall write to Mrs. Arnold in a day or two.

Yours sincerely
Owen Wister

55 Maj. Joseph W. Wham of the Pay Department and his armed escort were ambushed by a group of robbers on May 11, 1889, between Forts Grant and Thomas, Arizona. Some $29,000 mostly in gold, was stolen. The robbers were later caught, tried, and acquitted.
56 1st Lt. Albert L. Mills, 1st Cavalry.
57 2nd Lt. William H. Osborne, 1st Cavalry.