

# **THE IRON TRAIL: A SKETCH**

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The Iron Trail: A Sketch by A. C. Wheeler

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**A. C. WHEELER**

**THE IRON  
TRAIL: A SKETCH**



# THE IRON TRAIL.

*A SKETCH.*

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BY A. C. WHEELER.

(The "NYM CRINKLE" of the *N. Y. World*.)

We've sought them where in warmest nooks  
The freshest feed is growing,  
By sweetest springs, and clearest brooks,  
Through honeysuckle flowing;  
Wherever hillsides sloping south  
Are bright with early grasses,  
Or, tracking green the lowland's drouth,  
The mountain streamlet passes.

—WHITTIER.

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NEW YORK.

F. B. PATTERSON, PUBLISHER.

1876.

266 1894 3. 5.

WHY.

I, too, with my soul and body.  
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way  
Through these shores, amid the shadows, with  
The apparitions pressing,  
Pioneers, O Pioneers!

—WALT WHITMAN.

"ARE we Americans, or are we not? That's what I'd like to know," cried June.  
June's my sister.

She had jumped upon her big Saratoga trunk, and had unconsciously assumed the attitude of the little corporal when he stormed the bridge of Lodi.

"We are!" I cried.

"Then," said June, "where are we going? That's the next thing I'd like to know. Where are we going TO?"

Now she had unconsciously assumed the attitude of the stump speaker in the minstrel band.

"Why, of course we'll go to Europe," I said. "Breathes there an American with soul so dead as to stay in his own country when there's a Centennial?"

"I should hope not," cried Ben, who had just come in.

Ben's my large brother. He stands six feet two; weight, 210 pounds; eyes blue; hair shaved short; manners bluff; style generally A 1.

"The thing for us to do is the steam yacht business. Lay in a cargo of canned fruits, take a grand piano, confectionery, fire-works, French cook, brass band, touch at Newport on the way out, Banks of Newfoundland, icebergs, saluted by English steamers, run into Cowes on the other side, go up to Lord Dunderhead's castle, return ball on board next night, Empress of India and the President of the United States drunk standing, then up the Mediterranean, sweep in the whole of the historic sea from Gibraltar to Greece, salute the flags of all nations, flirt with the women of all climes, write our names on everything that's exposed, load up with cashmere shawls, old masters, mummies, cheap statuary, come back when the Centennial is all over, celebrated, satisfied, triumphant! Eh! What?"

"Stop a moment," said June, "I want to hug you."

"Don't hug me," replied Ben; "go and hug the Governor; that's where the pressure must be applied; it'll take from ten to fifteen thousand dollars."

"Is that all?" said the dear girl. "Why, it's dirt cheap. It costs more than that to go to Paris, don't it?"

"Yes, if there's women in the party."

"At all events," continued June, sitting down on her trunk and assuming a meditative look, "we must go somewhere. This is the first time in five years that we haven't had our route made up before the first of April. Do you know that this delay is awful? If any thing should happen to keep us in New York all summer, I should never cease to upbraid myself for my crime and folly to my latest breath."

"My dear June," I remarked, "that's an absurd supposition; whatever happens, that need not take place."

1894 3. 5.

"Why not?"

"Because we can always hang ourselves or go to Long Branch, and thus at one sublime *coug* avoid New York and the annoyance of waiting for our latest breath."

The mention of Long Branch brought on a general laugh. It always does. I suppose it is because none of us ever go there, and can afford to laugh.

We had a little council of war. Ben was self-confident, cynical, and extravagant. June was suspicious, anxious, and oratorical. I was patient, wise and sweet-tempered, as I always am.

"My American character urges me to action," said June, "and my woman's instinct tells me there is need of it at once."

"What does your woman's instinct see in the way?" asked Ben.

"Men," replied June. "Oh, if Governors and brothers were only women, there would be no trouble, no delay, no doubts. We'd fly to Paris without a thought or an argument."

"And come back without a red."

"Go and see the head of the family," continued the girl. "If we can't have a yacht, we must at least have three state-rooms; and we must have them at once. Remember the adage. Procrastination is the—what do ye call it of something."



BUFFALO TRAILS IN WESTERN KANSAS.

"Oh, that's all right," said Ben, in his peevish way. "I'll go in, see the Governor and arrange for the state-rooms. Let me see, it's now the eighth of April (looking at his watch as if it were a calendar). We'll start about the first of May. I'd like to be in the Tyrol in June. Wouldn't you?"

"Anywhere, anywhere, as Hood says, out of the etceters," replied the price of the family, pushing him out.

"The truth is," she said to me when Ben was gone, "I must have something to do. I'm stagnating."

Health, fashion, comfort, patriotism, honor, duty, all say we must go abroad.

So it was all fixed. We had put our heads together. Now we would join hands.

Was there ever a Governor that did not fall before such a combination?

"Never," I cried, as I took a nosegay out of June's hair and put it in my button-hole, preparatory to walking down Broadway.

## W H E R E .

The great South-western Railroad  
 For Colorado, hail!  
 Bring on your locomotive  
 And lay down your iron rail.  
 Across the rolling prairies  
 By steam we're bound to go.  
 The railroad cars are coming—humming  
 Through New Mexico.

THE Governor had it in his leg. Ordinarily, when it took him in the shoulder, we could get along with him; when it settled in his side, we grinned and bore it, for we knew that it would pass over with the first bright, dry day. But when he had it in his leg, it generally staid there until the housekeeper gave notice, and life no longer offered any charms to the cook or the chambermaid, and we had to watch June to prevent her from flinging herself head first into her Saratoga trunk, and letting the lid down with a snap.

When he had it in his leg he was, to put it mildly, transformed from a benevolent and serene patriarch, into a howling and inconsiderate tyrant.

He had it in his leg now, and we had not yet discovered it.

We gathered at the breakfast table, smiling and happy. June looked at Ben. Ben nodded and intimated that the thing was safe in his hands. Then he opened the matter boldly.

"See here," said he, suddenly, "if we're going abroad this summer, we'd better be getting ready; the passages ought to be taken and arrangements made!"

The Governor looked over the top of his paper. He was a little blue under the eyes, and purple about the end of his nose, and white about the lips.

"Who says we're going abroad?" he shouted fiercely. "Show me the man!"

Ben opened his blue eyes wide. Jane gave a little gasp, as if she already saw herself consigned to Long Branch and infamy.

"If you've got such a notion as that in your heads," he added, looking at all of us with devouring rage, "you're all abroad now!"

Then the housekeeper fled trembling out of the room. A horrid silence fell upon the group, which was not broken by the husky whisper of June in Ben's ear.

"Merciful heavens! he's got it in his leg."

To which Ben, in a desperate sort of way, replied, "I'm afraid he has, and I've got it square between the eyes. I wish you'd have me carried out!"

Presently the Governor, seeing us at his mercy, and actuated by the malign spirit of his leg, returned to the subject.

## THE GOVERNOR MAKES AN INHUMAN AND INCENDIARY SPEECH.

"You're a nice lot of Americans, aren't you? Never live in your own country long enough to know anything about it. I'm ashamed of you. Fine exhibition for the centennial year.



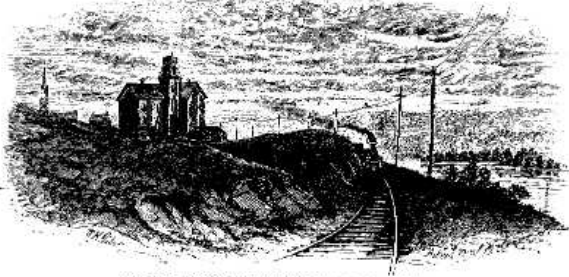
You'd like to drag me to Italy again and have me down with the Roman fever, wouldn't you? When I've got a thousand acres of paradise myself, where the wicked cease from troubling and the gouty are at rest. If you've got money enough among you, why go to Italy—go to thunder. But I tell you I'm going to stay inside the Republic this year. There, that'll do on that subject. I don't want to hear a word more."

"But," said June, horror struck, "you don't think seriously of staying in—in New York?"

"Don't I!" he shouted. "If I didn't think seriously, who the deuce would in this family? No, I'm not going to stay here. I'm going—"

We all held our breaths.

"I'M GOING TO COLORADO!"



THE MOST PROMINENT BUILDING IN A KANSAS TOWN.

## W H E N .

And in thy right hand lead with thee,  
The cowardly nymph, sweet Liberty,  
And, if I give thee honor due,  
Meth, admit me of thy crew.

—MURDOX.

At first we were stunned. Then we settled into a despairing anger. Then we began to recover our senses.

"Going to Colorado!" said June. "Why, he'll have to travel on a dromedary. It's part of the Great American desert. It was that Doctor Lavender who put this notion into his head."

"Oh, he'll get over it in a few days," remarked Ben, with a great effort at carelessness.

But he didn't. He hung to Colorado with the tenacity of a catamount and much of its ferocity.

The result was something that no human being could have foreseen.

In the first place, June, who had tried in vain to win the Doctor over and failed, suddenly veered clear round and came out enthusiastically for Colorado herself.

In the second place, she won both Ben and myself over to her views. And we all went to Colorado.

To tell how this astonishing girl accomplished all this would compel me to write an essay on the illimitable female resources.

Her first step was in the direction of the Governor. She got some kind of an emotional lever under him. But for the first time it failed to move him.

"It's no use," he said, "I've got to carry my leg somewhere into a climate that will subdue it. An ocean voyage is worse than the rack. I want the sky of Italy, the air of Switzerland, the scenery of Norway, the water of Ems, the society of Nature—I can't get them anywhere but in Colorado, and there I'm going."

Seeing that he was immovable, she, like a true woman, ceased her assault and established an alliance.

"Somebody's got to go with him," she said, to Ben and me. "It will never do to let him go alone, for if he escapes the Indians, grizzly bears and border ruffians, he will be sure to fall into the pitiless clutch of some wild Western widow—and then what would life be worth to us, I'd like to know? Somebody has got to be sacrificed—as usual it is a woman. I'll go with him."  
[Tears.]

When woman sets an example of heroism in her vital, impulsive way, man takes off his coat lumberingly and imitates her.

"By Heavens!" said Ben, "you shall not expose yourself to the horrors of Colorado unprotected, so long as you have a brother. If you must do this insane thing, I shall not let you go alone. A man can die but once."

"No! No!" cried June, "your life is worth too much to the world. It cannot spare you. Let me perish alone. I shall never be missed."

"Not if I know myself," said Ben. "If there is any wild Western perishing to be done, I must be counted in. I shall commence practicing with the bow and arrows at once, and saturating myself with quinine."

"It will never do to break up the family in that way," I began. "Whatever we do, let us all stick together—especially in a misfortune of this kind. I shall go too."

Having accomplished this much, what does June do next but throw herself into the Colorado business, heart and soul.

For instant and complete adaptation to any emergency, I would back that girl against the world.

She laid in a stock of maps, gazetteers, guide-books, railroad pamphlets and Western newspapers. She crammed, she inquired, she took the whole tour in charge. She became mistress of the situation.

And neither Ben nor I could understand it.

The utmost we could do was to submit.

However, I noticed that Ben, now that his attention was called to it, took a growing interest in the great American wilderness as he called it. Inquiries about Colorado only served to awaken in him fresh curiosity, and he went about talking in an absurd strain, that was too ironical to be sincere, and too ridiculous to be offensive, about the glorious freedom of the Alkali Plains, the health-giving sports of the bottom lands, and the indescribable delight there was in going beyond the reach of civilization, and the sound of the church-going what d'ye call it, as June phrased it.

So it was finally all settled that we were to start for Colorado on the 12th.

Several days were given up to preparation; to sad farewells; to the winding up of a thousand pretty home machines that were expected to run till we came back; to the making of outfits; to the answering of inquiries, and to the severing of the ties that bound us.

The Governor had his life insured, and made a new will; he also sat for an imperial picture at the request of the Board of Trustees of St. Angelus' Church, and June laid in a stock of albums and other rubbish.

On the twelfth of April, we left New York in a snow storm, a rather gloomy party. "Rushing" June said, "to the what d'ye call 'ems, that we know not of." But, at any rate, leaving New York.