

Excerpt of a poem titled “Chat About Railroads”

Taken from the journal *Punchinello*, Volume 1, Issue 4, April 23, 1870.

PARTIES: A Simpleton from the Wilderness, and a Misanthropic Traveller.

[The Simpleton asks for information.]

“THEY say that railroads now an’t safe.
Say, mister, how is that?”
It comes of “accidents,” my friend –
Where cheap rails spread out flat,
Cheap axles break, cheap boilers burst,
Cheap trestle-work gives way:
No wonder, when you think of that,
They kill a man a day!

Well, folks must travel; must go fast;
Must take the cars – and risk;
They can’t afford a Special Train,
Like VANDERBILT or FISK;
They know a curve that’s pretty sharp
A bank that’s pretty steep,
Rocks that may roll upon the track,
“Sleeper” that never sleep;

Here was a “smash-up” not long since,
That killed about a score;
Two trains “collided” yesterday,
And maimed a dozen more.
But, go they must – by railroad, too,
And all its risks defy:
For no American believes
That *he* will ever die!

Found on the University of Cornell: Making of America website:

<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/sgml/moa-idx?notisid=AEZ8069-0001-177>