

safe plan of security, and this could not be accomplished without swifter, surer, and cheaper means of transporting the poor, who would gladly avail themselves of the opportunity to possess a free farm, or reach the gold fields of the West. The railroad and telegraph—twin sisters of civilization—were talked of, but old fogies shook their heads in the plenitude of their wisdom, piously crossed themselves, and clasped with a firmer grasp their money bags, when Young America dared broach the subject, "No, sir, no; the thing is totally absurd; impracticable, sir; don't talk any more of such nonsense to me," they would reply, as they turned away to go to their church or to their stock gambling in Wall street—probably the latter occupation. But Young America did not give up to this theory or accept the dictum of Moneybags; and as the counties of the West grew and expanded under the mighty tide of immigration, they clamored for a safe and speedy transit between them and their "Fatherland." Government with its usual red-tape delays and scientific way of how *not to do it*, heeded not the appeal, until the red hand of War—of Rebellion—pointed out to it the stern necessity of securing, by iron bands, the fair dominions of the West from foreign or domestic foe.

Notwithstanding that Benton, Clark, and others had long urged the necessity and practicability of the scheme, the wealth and power which would accrue to the country from its realization, the idea found favor with but few of our wise legislators until they awoke to the knowledge that even the loyal State of California was in danger of being abandoned by those in command, and turned over to the insurgents; that a rebel force was forming in Texas with the Pacific coast as its objective point; that foreign and domestic machinations threatened the dismemberment of the Union into three divisions; not until all this stared them in the face could our national Solons see the practicability of the scheme so earnestly and ably advocated by Sargent of California and his able coadjutors in the noble work. To this threatened invasion of our Western possessions, what had Government to offer for successful defense? Nothing but a few half-finished and illy-manned forts around the bay, and the untaught militia of the Pacific coast. Under this pressure was the charter granted; and it may truly be said that *the road was inaugurated by the grandest carnival of blood the world has ever known*; for, without the pressure of the rebellion, the road would probably be in embryo to-day. Although the American people had been keenly alive to the importance of a speedy transit between the two extremes of the Continent ever since the discovery of gold on the Pacific slope, up to this time the old, vague rumors of barren deserts, dark, deep, and gloomy gorges, tremendous, rugged, snow-clad mountains, and the wild savage, made the idea seem preposterous. Even the reports of the emigrants could not convince them to the contrary; nor yet the reports of the Mormons who marked and mapped a feasible route to Salt Lake City. And it is worthy of remark, that, for over 700 miles the road follows very closely their survey.

Practical, earnest men, disabused the minds of the people regarding the impracticability of the scheme, after the road had become a national necessity—a question of life and unity of the Republic. The great work has been accomplished, and to-day the locomotive whirls its long train, filled with emigrants or pleasure seekers, through that region which, only a few years ago, was but a dim, undefined, mythical land, composed of chaos, and the last faint efforts of nature to render that cha-

otic State still more inhospitable and uninviting. How great the change from the ideal to the real! For three hundred miles after leaving Omaha, that vague "Great American Desert" proves to be as beautiful and fertile a succession of valleys as can be found elsewhere, under like geographical positions. Great is the change indeed; still greater the changes through which our country has passed during the period from the commencement to the ending of our proudest national civil record, save one. We live in a fast age; the gentle breeze of to-day was the tornado of fifty years ago.

In noting the history of the Continental railroad we must speak of the attempts in that direction which had been made by other parties. Missouri, through her able and liberal legislature, was the first State to move in the construction of a national or continental railroad. The Legislature of that State granted a charter, under which was incorporated the Missouri and Pacific Railroad Co., who were to build a road, diverging at Franklin, southwest, via Rollo, Springfield, Neosho (the Galena district), and along the line of the thirty-sixth parallel to Santa Fe, New Mexico. From Santa Fe, to San Francisco preliminary surveys were made, and had it not been for the rebellion, this road would undoubtedly have been completed long ere this; good authorities placing the limit at 1864. The cause which *compelled* the construction of the Union and Central roads, *destroyed* the Southern. Passing, as it did, mostly through Southern, hostile territory, Government could not aid or protect it in its construction, and consequently the work was suspended. The States of Arkansas and Tennessee, by their legislatures, proposed to assist the work, by constructing a railroad from Little Rock, to connect with the M. & P., somewhere between the ninety-eighth and one hundred and second degree of longitude, and for that purpose a charter was granted.

Organization of the Pacific Railroad—The evident; and we might add, the imperative necessity of connecting the East and West, and the intervening Territories, encouraged the corporators of the great trans-continental line to apply to the Government for aid. Many measures were devised and laid before the people, but the supposed impregnability of the Rocky Mountains, and other natural obstacles to be encountered, caused a hesitancy even then on the part of our energetic people to commence the great work. To attempt to lay the iron rail through vast tracts of unknown country, inhabited by wandering, hostile tribes of savage nomads; to scale the snow-clad peaks of the Rocky Mountains with the fiery locomotive, seemed an undertaking too vast for even the American people to accomplish. But the *absolute* IMPORTANCE, the *urgent* NECESSITY of such a work, overcame all objections to the scheme, and in 1862 Congress passed an act, which was approved by President Lincoln on the first day of July of that year, by which the Government sanctioned the undertaking, and promised the use of its credit to aid in its speedy completion. The act was entitled "An act to aid in the construction of a railroad and telegraph line from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean, and to secure to the Government the use of the same for postal, military, and other purposes."

Land Grant—The Government grant of lands to the great national highway, as amended, was, every alternate section of land for 20 miles on each side of the road, or 20 sections, equaling 12,800 acres for each mile of the road. By the Company's table, the road, as completed, is 1,776 18-100 miles long from Omaha to Sacramento. This would give the companies 22,735,104 acres, divided