

LETTER XVI.— *General Subject of Routes discussed—Description of the Valley of the Platte—The Region between the Heads of the Platte and the Sierra Nevada—The great Utility of both Roads—The Route beyond Kansas—Fertility of the Country on the Arkansas and Purgatoire Rivers—Immense Deposits of Coal—Pine Timber—New Mexico, its Minerals, and other Resources.*

ALLEGHENY CITY, July 12, 1867.

GENERAL SUBJECT OF ROUTES DISCUSSED.

IN a former letter I stated the fact that the Union Pacific Railway Company, Eastern Division, had resolved to carry the main line of their road to the Pacific, not directly across the Rocky Mountains, through Utah and Nevada, and over the Alpine heights of the Sierra Nevada range, but by a more southwestern route through the southeastern part of Colorado, east of the Rocky Mountains; thence through New Mexico and Arizona, to the southeastern border of California, and thence, through the great valley of Southern California, to San Francisco.

This important change of route will be attended by many and great advantages, the chief of which, probably, is, that the tremendous snow-drifts of the route directly through the mountains will be avoided. Another is, that the more southern route is level compared with the other. On the line of the Central Pacific Railroad, running from Sacramento to Salt Lake, the Sierra Nevada Mountain summit is seven thousand feet above the level of the sea, which is one thousand feet greater elevation than any other railroad summit in the world; and the Rocky Mountains cannot be surmounted by any pass between the Rio Grande and the heads of the Missouri at much, if any, less altitude. On the other hand, on the line through New Mexico, Arizona and Southern California, there are no formidable mountain barriers; and where the elevation is considerable, as in the pass of the Sierra Madre, west of the Rio Grande, there is no snow. The Sierra Nevada, on that more southern route, has sunk down almost to a plain, and up through the magnificent valley of Southern California, celebrated for its extraordinary productiveness, there is no difficulty, neither is there any difficulty between the Sierra Madre range and the Colorado river, which space embraces the entire breadth, from east to west, of the territory of Arizona.

The country through which this more southern route runs is all valuable—very much is rich in soil, and still more, especially in Arizona, is rich in minerals of almost every kind. It is a region of vast