

LETTER XXII. — *The March of Empire.*

WHEN Bishop Berkeley penned the oft-quoted line —

“Westward the Star of Empire takes its way,”—

the idea expressed by the phrase was hardly understood. “What is empire?” asks a recent writer, and then he goes on to remark: “We have suffered our understandings to be warped by past and existing abuses on this point, until the word suggests to the mind the overgrown dominions of the Cæsars, or the huge and beastly realm of the Czar. But God himself gave us the true idea of empire when he said, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, AND SUBDUE IT.’ This is what Bishop Berkeley means by the ‘Star of Empire;’ and this is what the people of our country are now doing. This is Empire in its true sense — the dominion of Man over Nature, not of man over man.”

For ages warriors have striven to hew out empire with the sword, and kings have labored and crushed their people to the dust, in building huge piles, in the vain hope of rendering those empires immortal. Human toil beyond calculation has been expended in erecting things which, when erected, were of less value than the ground upon which they stood, and oceans of blood have been spilt in subduing regions which a little well-directed and beneficent enterprise would have subdued a thousand-fold better. This day the pyramids of Egypt stand in their hugeness, immobility and silence, the emblems of a false, dead, unprofitable and non-progressive civilization; while the railroad, with its rushing train, following the sun in his western course, marks and represents a civilization of the opposite type.

Actuated by old and false ideas, the Emperor of France tried to push empire westward by sending his armies into Mexico; and we have just witnessed the tragical end of that attempt to rule the world of the present day by the enforcement of obsolete ideas. Now let JOHN D. PERRY, of St. Louis, a modest American citizen, send his army of peaceful laborers and track-layers across the border of that unhappy country, and order, peace, and true empire will result at once.

The railroad is the great agent and pioneer of civilization. Let any one go away beyond the Missouri, as we did, and behold a mighty tide of civilization — comfortable and well-furnished dwellings occupied by intelligent, refined and happy people, all the useful industries of life, with schools, colleges, churches, and every institution of an advanced social condition — following closely behind the track-layers, and, in some instances, going ahead of them, causing the music of busy life to be heard on those beautiful prairies, where only yesterday silence and solitude reigned, save only as they were broken by