

**An outline of the central transit : in a series of six letters to Hon. John Hemphill / by Pryor Lea.**

**Contributors**

Lea, Pryor, 1794-1879.  
Hemphill, John, 1803-1862.  
National Library of Medicine (U.S.)

**Publication/Creation**

Galveston [Tex.] : Printed at the Galveston News Book and Job Office, 1859.

**Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/a3b7rpeu>

**License and attribution**

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by the National Library of Medicine (U.S.), through the Medical Heritage Library. The original may be consulted at the National Library of Medicine (U.S.) where the originals may be consulted.

This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.

**wellcome  
collection**

Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

27

AN

Pr.  
Vol 226

# OUTLINE

OF

Vol 226

# THE CENTRAL TRANSIT,

IN

A SERIES OF SIX LETTERS,

TO

HON. JOHN HEMPHILL,

BY

PRYOR LEA

Surgeon Genl's Office  
LIBRARY.  
11083  
Washington, D.C.

CURRENTLY WRITTEN, WITH INTERVALS OF DATES, DURING NOV. DEC. & JAN. PRECEDING

FEBRUARY 1st, 1859.

GALVESTON:

PRINTED AT THE GALVESTON NEWS BOOK AND JOB OFFICE.

.....

1859.

AZ

OUTLINE

THE CENTRAL TRANSIT

PV. 226

A SERIES OF SIX LETTERS

HON. JOHN HENNING

PRYOR & CO.

PRINTED BY THE CENTRAL TRANSIT

RECORDED IN 1850

CONTENTS

PRINTED AT THE CENTRAL TRANSIT

.....

1851

3375B

## THE CENTRAL TRANSIT.

---

### LETTER I.

*Introduction to the Series of Letters—Locality of Route—Its Name.*

---

HON. JOHN HEMPHILL :

Sir :—Your position as United States Senator elect for Texas, and your expressed desire to have full information concerning *The Central Transit*, entitle you to some contribution from the undersigned, as projector. A series of Letters are addressed to you, by your permission, and the favor will be enhanced by your allowing the communications to pass into the newspapers. Such publicity is desirable, because the time has come for exhibiting this proposed transit, so that it may receive proper consideration, and because duty requires me, as President of *The Aransas Road Company*, to place it, particularly, in more communication with the public.

The undersigned has devoted many years to the study and preliminaries of this enterprise, and might give a disquisition on it to great extent ; but prudence allows no more, at present, than an outline. Other persons have some better opportunities, and will give their views in advocacy of this transit ; but opposing views, doubtless, will be presented, and public sentiment will be matured by discussion and investigation. It is premised, however, that this proposal for



the *world's thoroughfare*, with suggestions of peculiar, multiplied, and unequaled advantages, should not be regarded as a rival of other kindred interests. If it have decisive superiority, it should be rather regarded as the timely and best friend of some other enterprises, which may be relieved from errors, and brought into conformity with controlling nature. The comprehensive individuality of *The Central Transit* challenges man's wisdom for a consummation, to attain "the greatest good of the largest number."

A *primary railroad* between the gulfs may be contemplated, either as independent, or as connected with other transits, by land and water. But, the idea of an independent road, however important as a single subject, is not a true and full conception of the proposed transit.

The enlarged view would extend the *primary railroad* to the main Atlantic, touching the heads of the principal bays on the north side of the gulf. Such extension would make the length of road, between the main oceans, about seventeen hundred miles. And such road, so extended, might be regarded as the base for the general system of American railroads and telegraphs during all time.

But, further enlargement would connect the *primary railroad*, by water, with the world in general; and, for such connection, the natural facilities strikingly evince a special design of creation, for the ultimate accommodation of human intercourse. A globular map, better than a plane, shows relative positions of lands and waters around the world; but either map, with a table of population, exhibits the masses of mankind in the northern temperate zone. It appears, also, that this zone embraces the seas, by which Africa is almost segregated from Asia and Europe, and also the gulfs, which diminish the space across America to less than seven hundred miles; so that, on this shortest route for mankind in general, navigation around the world is interrupted by only two portages, of easy practicability, whose aggregate length would not exceed a thirtieth of the earth's circumference. From the route of these deep indentations of continental lands, the divergences



of navigation, for accommodation north and south, are indicated, likewise, as naturally most advantageous. Moreover, modern geographies of the sea and of the atmosphere delineate great streams of each element, with established bounds, in mutual co-operation to facilitate navigation; and the most extensive of such currents of water and air, with peculiar concentration, sweep the vicinities of the indicated indentations and portages, particularly on both sides of America, near to the proposed *primary road*. Hence, it would connect the most extraordinary nautical facilities.

From the foregoing considerations, *The Central Transit* is so called with reference to a circuit of the world. But, the name is appropriate in relation to America in particular; first, because the route is central among those, which have been contemplated; and second, because it presents such combinations as cannot be attained in any other locality; a route entirely by land, extending the whole distance between main oceans, within the mildest climate of the northern temperate zone, and identified with a water and land route; so that the commendations of other routes are concentrated and centralized in this transit.

---

## LETTER II.

*The primary railroad, as to chartered privileges and rights of way.*

Sir:—*The primary railroad, between the Gulfs of Mexico and California*, would be partly in Texas, but chiefly in Mexico; in the former about one hundred and sixty miles, and in the latter about five hundred and forty miles. *The Aransas Road Company* has a charter, with every necessary privilege, for making the part within Texas, from Aransas harbor to the Rio Grande, in the proper direction, and for bridging across that river; the last privilege, of course, being subject to concurrence of Mexican authority. *The Rio Grande, Mexican, and Pacific Railroad Company*, has a charter for making the



part between the Rio Grande and the Pacific, in the right course, and with branches ; the privileges embracing every requisite. This charter was granted under the government of Santa Anna, and although Commonfort summarily declared a rescision of it, yet the company considers the rescision as illegal, and the charter as extant. Another Mexican charter has been recently granted for a railroad from the Rio Grande to Monterey, on the same general route. Such charters indicate favorable public sentiment in Mexico generally ; but more especially on the line, and in the quarter of decisive influence.

The problem of governmental ascendancy, in Mexico, is not solved by recent occurrences ; and vicissitudes are so familiar, that it were difficult to conjecture when either party, in the pending contest, might become entirely triumphant. This *primary railroad*, (being understood as a practicable reality,) might obtain renewed sanction of any branch of the general government of that country, because of manifest national benefits. But, any incumbent of such authority might find personal inducement for favoring such transit, in the prospect of its influence in nationalizing the whole country, for such conciliation of the central and northern States might be quite decisive. On the other hand, the reciprocal influence of these States could scarcely fail to command whatever might be necessary as to chartered privileges, and as to security in using them, considering both political combination and the locality of this road, which would be almost central to the whole area of Mexico, with prospect of important branches. And so, if eligible arrangements were made with the States, to be intersected and neighboring, they would probably obtain the early concurrence of some recognized representative of the nation. Mexican authorization, with such general and local interests, would be sufficient without guaranties from other nations ; but, such adventitious aids would come as natural concomitants. Efforts to obtain them might be simultaneous with the local preparation ; yet, to wait for them, as preliminaries, would be waste of time and opportunity.



But, the importance of this transit will soon be appreciated so as to control obstacles, and the will would find a way, even, if confident expectation should be disappointed by any failure of such national theory; for then there would be an alternative, which is well foreknown, and in which there could not be disappointment. If there were opposition from a general government, and the principles and power of Central and Northern Mexico might not have sufficient influence in such government to remove its objections, and to have their local interests promoted by a sanction of necessary and proper privileges for the proposed transit, and if such opposition were to obstruct progress, then disunion would be inevitable, and the northern part would include the proposed route. The governments of this portion would have such intrinsic defences and such legitimate aid as would defy the opposing southern portion, and give security and quietude, especially under beneficent auspices of *The Central Transit*. But, this enterprise would follow the natural and necessary course of governmental power and sustain it, without any unlawful interference.

In addition to such propitious circumstances, the unity of a route through Texas and Mexico, as defined by nature, leaves no room for diversity of opinion to retard action. The only feasible route for the road coincides perfectly with the will and the power in Mexico.

Moreover, it has become a commendation, instead of an objection, that the route is through Central Mexico. From the foregoing considerations, (without tedious corroboration,) it appears, that the past distractions of Mexico have resulted in a present condition, with concurring circumstances, peculiarly favorable for the early completion of such a road, and for the security of its uninterrupted use in general intercourse. That the road should be so situated, not only obviates greater governmental difficulties in other localities, but would be more acceptable to great and commercial nations generally than for it to be entirely in one of their class; especially until it should have become established for the use of all na-



tions. Exclusiveism tends to alienation and opposition when the concernment is common, and when other modes may be adopted, even with disadvantage. The utmost benefits, to this Union, and to America in general, would accrue from the greatest concentration of interests, from each hemisphere, in this amphibious transit, having a peculiar combination of land and water, so that every nation would be identified with the common interests, and all would concur in sustaining the rights of each, by an aggregate power, more reliable than any individualism.

While chartered privileges and public rights of way have been obtained, and may be secured with ease and certainty, on the proposed route, it likewise presents facilities for private rights of way, so as to prevent apprehension on such account, either of serious embarrassment, or of much expense. The route affords room enough for selection of road line, with very little encroachment on lands yet appreciated or occupied.

On the whole view of this part of the subject, the spirit of progress may confidently rely on all necessary legal facilities, to be obtained as above indicated, or in other modes, which may take more time, trouble, and expense.

---

### LETTER III.

*The primary railroad, as to chorography, with proximate elements for construction and use.*

Sir :—Extensions being excluded from consideration, at present, the *primary railroad* is regarded as terminating at the harbors of Aransas and Mazatlan. The latter is capable of receiving and protecting large vessels ; but, it may be improved by removing a few isolated rocks and by jetties. The former has five fathoms, with singular security and convenience ; but the entrance, in its ordinary natural condition, has only eight feet of water. This objection, however, is partially obviated by an outer roadstead, which is convenient and



safe for shipping of the largest class. And, at some future time, the obstacle will be removed, for scientific and practical engineers, who have examined the locality, concur in opinion, (without any known dissent,) that the entrance, at moderate cost, may be improved so as to admit large vessels.

The road-bed in Texas will be extremely cheap, as it will traverse some flats of the bay for a few miles, with signal economy, and will encounter no other water, except some little streams, while the natural grading is almost level.

A bridge across the Rio Grande, for railroad and other purposes, according to charter, would be about three hundred yards in length, with eligible site, where stone is convenient.

From the Rio Grande to Monterey the grading would be cheaper than for the average of Texan railroads.

On the whole route, engineering would find but two parts presenting difficulties ; the eastern and western slopes of the mountain region, which here, between the gulfs, is narrowed to a single and uniform mass of the Sierra Madre.

From Monterey, by Saltillo, to the mountain plateau, the ascent is so practicable, that any very high grade may be obviated, and the average cost of the road-bed would not exceed the average of such beds on the generality of undulating prairie of Texas. Such is the conclusion from engineering examination during our war with Mexico.

Across the whole of the mountain plain, two hundred miles, or more, the grading would be very facile, with little deviation from a right line, although insulated peaks, called "lost mountains," appear in distant view as insurmountable obstacles.

From the western verge of this plateau, to that along the Pacific, the mountain is more rugged ; but, gorges or depressions, through one or more of which water flows from the mountain plain to the ocean, give confidence of a practicable route for the railroad, without much divergence from the general direction. Although such gorges may require too much work to be used for common roads, especially in an unimproved country, yet they may be quite manageable and eligible for a railroad. Independent of such passes, however, there is



certainty of a practicable route, without great deflection. The multiplied information is unquestionable, that public vehicles, for many years, were habitually running between Mazatlan and Durango, near to the western border of Zacatecas, and the road is still used for private vehicles. The partial disuse of the road is attributable to frequent revolutions, and to occasional incursions of Indians, even thus far south.

The western plain, between the mountain and the Pacific, is known to be quite favorable for a railroad.

From gulf to gulf the bridging would be extremely light, as there are but few streams, and all are small, except the Rio Grande ; at which the bridge would be largely remunerative for the outlay of its construction, if adapted, as contemplated, to ordinary purposes, as well as to the transit.

The foregoing summary of the route presents it as generally contemplated by those few persons, who have investigated the subject ; the line passing to the southwest of the city of Durango, and the mountain being considered impracticable for any road, except a mule path, directly between that city and the Pacific. But, information has been accumulating for some time, tending to show, that a deflection to the northwest of that city would be preferable to one southwest of it ; and such information has been recently confirmed and extended, so as to fix confidence in the easy practicability of this way of overcoming the western slope of the mountain, and so as to give strong persuasion of its decisive superiority. This plan of the route may be sufficiently indicated by a few points of approximation ; Parras, Cuencame, Tamasula, Culiacan, Cosala, Mazatlan. Such deflection would not involve any necessary change at the eastern slope of the mountain ; but, it would favor the selection of a way in that quarter, known to be peculiarly facile.

In connection with the route in general, but particularly with reference to the most western way, it is proper to make some explanation concerning the Pacific terminus. For this, the harbor of Mazatlan has been assumed, as intrinsically eligible, within the range of desirable locality, and therein



having superior notoriety ; some exact designation being convenient for fixing attention. But the prominence of this place may be owing to the proximity of very important mines, and to the Mexican policy of making only a few ports of entry ; of which this is one. Illegal trade, however, uses one or more harbors, not far distant, up the gulf ; and, while the smugglers are chary of information, their resorts are patent to observation, and enough is known, to justify confidence, that the most western way may strike, almost directly, an eligible harbor, nearly opposite to Cape San Lucas. But this intimation only presents a probability, according to present information, of doing even better than well enough at Mazatlan.

Cross-ties, of best quality, might be commanded, at moderate cost, on the whole route, both in Texas and in Mexico.

From the foregoing premises, two conclusions are manifest ; first, that the entire road might be constructed at average cost per mile below that of railroads generally ; second, if inducements should command adequate means, that the whole road might be completed with extraordinary expedition ; particularly on account of its accessibility by navigation at each termination, and at the crossing of the Rio Grande, so that construction might progress simultaneously and advantageously on three parts, and, if desired, on a fourth part.

But, economy and expedition in construction of the road, would be collaterally promoted by concurrent business in local freights, which would be distributed to and from large portions of Mexico and southwestern Texas. The Pacific division of the road would traverse a region of abundant minerals, magnificent forests, and eminent capabilities for agriculture, while it would be advantageously accessible from large areas of the Pacific and mountain plains, and even from the great basins, extended to the city of Mexico. The part reaching westward from the Rio Grande, from its commencement, would command freights of one-sixth, at least, of the whole area and present population of Mexico. The Texas part would peculiarly accommodate an insulated region of



considerable present interest, and of much prospective importance, within Texas, while it would participate extensively in the Mexican transportation. Such results as to freights are indubitable from the conformation of the country; and improvements, simultaneous with this railroad, would greatly extend its area, as well as its amount, of business.

Although ordinary commercial freights on the eastern part of the road, in Texas and Mexico, would be very important, yet they would be light in comparison with ponderous masses of the following articles. Lignite coal, of the best quality, a species of cannel-coal, of eminent utility for fuel, steam, oil, or gas, abounds on the line of the road, and above it, on both sides of the Rio Grande, where that river may be rendered navigable with reasonable cost. Along and near to the route, argentiferous lead is in immense quantity. Copper would take this way to navigation from most of the mines, that have been worked in Mexico, and other deposits are known to be nearer to the road-line. This part of the route is through a country which is generally destitute of long timber, so that lumber for building would have to be imported by water, and brought from Eastern Texas by railroad, and sent to the interior in vast quantities. Salt, of best quality, and at cheapest rates, may be obtained at Aransas harbor, and convenient to the road at other points in Texas, and must supply a great destitute area in Mexico, for ordinary purposes, and for the immense smelting of metals.

The enumeration of the foregoing heavy freights, for the eastern part of the road, does not exclude the partial certainty and further probability, that heavy freights exist for the western part, and that such extraordinary catalogue of particulars, for transportation, might be much extended. But, further specifications of this kind would be superfluous.

Without prolixity, there are some other diversified considerations, which are too important to be omitted. First, lands to be granted as bonuses, both in Texas and in Mexico; second, suitable labor, which would be cheap and abundant under the Peon system of Mexico; third, congenial climate, whose



proverbial mildness and salubrity, would favor every operation, not only in making the railroad, but in repairing and using it ; fourth, great improbability of local competition, on account of a very strong guaranty of nature in the chorography of the intersected country.

With the elements now suggested, in connection with the rights and security heretofore indicated, the *primary railroad* could not fail to be self-sustaining, even, in each of the three divisions ; so that it would not be burdensome to its associates in *The Central Transit*. On the contrary, this connection of the gulfs should be hailed by all the other interests as a welcome, reliable, and essential partner, bringing to the concern an inestimable weight of capital and character.

---

#### LETTER IV.

*The primary railroad, with reference to extensions, and to connections of other railroads.*

Sir :—In a prospective view of *The Central Transit*, the State of Texas looms to pre-eminence in natural position. The main bays of Galveston, Matagorda, and Aransas, exclusive of remote arms, are embraced in a distance less than two hundred miles. All of them might be connected, with great facility, by a continuous channel for interior navigation, and by a railroad, in contact with the interior tide water of each bay, branched to the respective seaports. Then these bays, with their incidents, would have identity in three modes of transit—by the gulf, the interior channel, and the railroad. This duplicate trinity of bays and transits, would constitute a peculiar unity of the central portion of the Texan coast, which is likewise central, on the base line of railroad, heretofore suggested, between the main oceans. But, this complex identity would become, at once, the common terminus of the *primary railroad*, and of all others in contact with these bays. And, as they are connected with the general railroad system



of Texas, so would this united central part of her coast become the point for general concentration and divergence of her system. But, looking to the divergences of Texan railroads, particularly from Houston, and extending them to their prospective connections, towards the Mississippi and its branches, the whole railroad system, between the Rocky Mountain and the Atlantic, becomes involved. Then, reversing observation, this entire complication appears to concentrate on the central part of the Texan coast.

This focal terminus, from the Atlantic side of North America, would be likewise the terminus from the Pacific side. It is easy to imagine the most natural outline of a railroad system between the Rocky Mountain and the Pacific, extending from San Francisco far northwest, and from that city southeast, by the head of the Gulf of California, to Mazatlan, so as to be connected with the *primary railroad*. In execution, the first part of such system should be from San Francisco to the gulf; and this section might be accomplished about as soon as the *primary railroad*. Thus much done, The United States and Mexico, the countries immediately interested, as well as other nations, might not be impatient for the railroad connection, which might "bide its time;" especially as the gulf is elongated in the same direction, and would furnish a peculiarly eligible substitute. While this alternative, compared with a railroad, would lose only a day of time in ordinary travel, the navigation of the gulf and of the great river at its head, without waiting for the connection by land, would bring into co-operation the regions of Cinaloa, Sonora and peninsular California, in Mexico, and large portions of New Mexico, Utah, and California, in the United States. This extensive area and the Mississippi valley are correlative drains from opposite sides of the great dividing elevation between oceans. The eastern is the more enlarged and important; but the western is immense, and has superiority in navigation by the narrowness, directness, and length of the gulf. Thus, by water from first to last, and by land continuously in due time, the system of Pacific railroads, north of the *primary*



*railroad* would be connected with it, and thereby concentrated to the common terminus in Texas.

But, the connections would not be complete without embracing another system, which would consist of divergences from the *primary railroad* at points between its terminations. The lower Rio Grande, improved to the mountains, might supersede any branching for that locality. But, at some future stage of progress, there would be demand for one branch, or more, on the north, to accommodate the basins and plains of Coahuila, Durango, and Chihuahua, lying between ranges of mountains, known to have inestimable deposits of minerals, but not considered practicable for railroads. Such ranges, on the west, extend from the route on the *primary railroad* to north latitude thirty-one and a half; and those, on the east, are adjacent to the middle portion of the Rio Grande. South of the *primary railroad*, by branching from different points on it, the city of Mexico, and other important parts of the Mexican nation, could be advantageously reached. Imagination hesitates to extend such branches further south, while contemplating the general state of present population in Central and South America; yet, looking to natural facilities and man's progress, we may ken the future existence of railroads, extended from the *primary railroad* to the southern extremity of the continent. The northern terminus of this third system, whatever might be its extent, would be common with that of the other two, at the central part of the coast of Texas. And, it is not unworthy of curious observation, that such tripple terminus, for the three great systems of American railroads, would approximate exact centrality of the continental area.

The peculiar coincidences of this continental outline will not be well apprehended without careful inspection of a map of America, aided by some mensuration. Such a process would give results, showing the positive, comparative, and superlative practicability and utility of *The Central Transit*, even in its connections by land. The great desideratum of an interoceanic railroad, not only for The United States, and for America in general, but also for the other hemisphere



should depend on a few decisively practical considerations ; expedition and economy of preparation, in connection with concurrent use ; accommodation of the greatest local population and business, present and future ; and greatest possible convenience for the world in general. The last consideration is reserved for another letter. The two former constitute the desirable elements of a land route, with adventitious aid by water. For this restricted view of the subject, careful measurement, with dividers and straight-edge, on Colton's map of 1858, gives the following table of distances.

From Mazatlan to Aransas—statute miles direct,	650
“ Houston,	790
“ New Orleans,	1,100
“ City of Mexico,	530
“ San Francisco,	1,335
“ Head of Gulf of California,	765
“ New York,	2,200
“ Chicago,	1,670
From New York to San Diego,	2,420
“ San Francisco,	2,570
From Chicago to San Diego,	1,745
“ San Francisco,	1,860
From N. Orleans to San Diego,	1,600
From Little Rock to San Diego,	1,430
From Houston to Aransas,	155
“ El Paso,	645
“ San Diego,	1,375
“ Kansas City,	645
“ Marshall,	205
“ Little Rock,	400
“ New York,	1,400
“ New Orleans,	325

Particulars of this kind need not be further multiplied to give decisive results, among which are the following. First, taking direct distances, the proposed route between the gulfs presents a great contrast with all others, in expedition and



economy of preparation, and in concurrent use, for an inter-oceanic railroad, within the northern temperate zone, capable of continuous and advantageous extensions by land. Second, as to connections toward the Atlantic, all of Texas, east and south of the Cross-Timbers, and of the mountains, with much more of it, the States along the lower and middle parts of the Mississippi, and all the Atlantic coast are nearer to the Pacific at Mazatlan than at San Diego or San Francisco ; and the differences of distances are generally very great. Third, as to connections toward the Pacific, embracing Mexico and The United States, the distances north and south are conveniently divided, the railroad continuations would have the greatest natural facilities, and separate parts might be made and used, with wonderful convenience, in connection with the Gulf of California and *The Central Transit*. Of such separate parts there would be two roads ; one from San Francisco to the head of the gulf, about six hundred and fifty miles in length ; and another from Mazatlan to the City of Mexico, about six hundred miles in length ; by which means, with the gulf, the chief population, and wealth, and business of California, and of Mexico, would be mutually connected, while they would be identified with the principal transit. But, another road, branched from some point on the eastern part of the *primary railroad*, to the City of Mexico, would have still more important bearings than that of its correlative in the west. Fourth, recurring to the eastern connections, the differences in right lines, as heretofore presented, would be augmented in actual road lines, because this route would best conform with coast plains and great valleys, so as to have much easier grades, and far less amount of local curves, than any more interior route. Fifth, the gulf route would have comparative economy and expedition in construction, because of less grading and cheaper bridging than those of any other route traversing interior ridges and valleys. Sixth, the gulf route, as no other, would have numerous contacts with the coast, and general approximation to it, so that supplies by sea, particularly iron, would be the cheapest, and navigation



would make natural sections, for simultaneous construction and use. Seventh, superior economy in construction would be applicable generally and perpetually to repairs. Eighth, in all use, the lower grade makes proportional difference in speed and amount of transportation. The foregoing enumerated propositions are supposed to be quite sufficient on the first division of decisively practical considerations.

On the second division the same elements and geography would be equally decisive. That the proposed route would accommodate the greatest local population and business, present and future, must depend on nature and its development. Take a direct line between New York and Mazatlan, as a proximate center of a belt of country, bounded on one side by the main Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, to the southern extremity of Mexican territory, and on the other side by convenience with reference to use of *The Central Transit*, and the given area would have better average climate, soil, and other natural facilities for population and business than any belt of equal area, that could be defined across North America ; but, the great land transit conforming substantially with the central line before assumed, the area, that must be connected with it, would be far greater than that, which could be connected with any other possible line of transit across the northern division of this continent. As to future extent of local population and business, it is legitimate to contrast with others this land route, as fostered by its identify with the water and land route, and as thus made the greatest possible thoroughfare. Moreover, the scheme of this transit is the only one, which consults conformity with coast plains and greatest vallies, the best regions for population and business ; and this plan actually allows the most practical access by railroad to each great division of most inhabitable territory, without traversing great deserts, and with utmost benefits from navigation.



## LETTER V.

*General convenience, and political tendencies.*

Sir :—The greatest possible convenience for the world in general is the third decisively practical consideration in favor of this transit. This proposition is sustained by the whole current of facts, that have been heretofore presented; and, for such purpose, let them be adduced in recollection.

Additional suggestions must be connected with the preceding ideas, concerning the centrality, climature, and complexity of the transit. It is to be contemplated with regard to the future, as well as to the present; not only as to existing population, but rather as to its certain progress, indicated by natural demarkations. The object being the greatest general convenience, true wisdom will take the most comprehensive view of the subject; especially guarding against the delusions of local interests, and temporary expedients, and previous committals; above all, subjecting present prepossession to ultimate necessity.

True forecast must perceive, that commerce has resolved to put the whole world into requisition for its purposes, and that its power of extension cannot longer be resisted. This dominant interest has been stimulated by emulations, among the great commercial nations, until, under different flags, by concurring efforts, they are united in the common cause of removing obstructions to intercourse. Each finds, that all may attain what part could not accomplish. Recent successes guaranty increasing rapidity of progress to universal freedom of access; and so the world is to be civilized, Christianized, and populated to an approximation of its capabilities. While the commercial nations, in past ages, have been counteracting each other, and partially depredating on those less civilized, the greatest populations and areas have been left in comparative uselessness, without reclamation, chiefly from failure to use the most effective means, except to a very limited extent. But, the theory is now becoming thoroughly practical, that commerce is the best pioneer for human improvement and pro-



gress ; and that, without it, other instrumentalities must be indefinitely tardy. The true spirit of Christian civilization is to overcome by beneficence ; and, therefore, to use violence only when essential to obtain opportunity for the better diffusion of good ; but, with the same view, whenever absolutely necessary, in the choice of responsibilities, to remove or control hindrances by adequate means. This spirit is shaping the conduct of dominant nations ; and, with further enlightenment, and general concurrence, they may yet devise some eligible modes for better employment, and for consequent improvement, of the ruder populations. With such augmenting progression, a comparatively brief time, in history, will have brought into familiar intercourse with the commercial nations all the occluded masses of population in Asia and Africa, while the less occupied regions, of continents and islands, will have given place and birth, in the distribution of races, to myriads ; who will have been thus planted under modern influences, more benign and developing than those of antiquity ; and who will have been so brought currently into the same general intercourse. Detailed indications are omitted ; especially as a map and table of population, with other common information, will better show the small localities and numbers of best civilization, and the far greater areas and masses of positive and comparative barbarism and vacuity ; also, the relative positions of present and prospective numbers and interests to be accommodated. With such views, turn slowly a globular map, and see how commanding, even in position, is *The Central Transit*, extended as heretofore defined ; how favorably accessible from every great division of the land, and from the multitude of isles.

Such superior accessibility, from relative position, is enhanced by general superiority of climate ; insomuch that the use of the *primary railroad*, with its nearest connections, would be always reliable and comfortable, without any interruption from cold or heat, involving the attractive conveniences of health, comfort, and uniformity.

Moreover, the American portion, whose position gives it



the greatest general importance, has peculiar and unequalled convenience, in uniting continuous railroads, for expeditious traveling, with the best navigation, for freight. With such a novel combination of facilities, there might arise a new mode of trade between each side of the Atlantic and each side of the Pacific, embracing the islands. For instance, a merchant of London or of New York might ship a cargo for San Francisco or Canton; but, the super-cargo need not travel with the goods; for steam packets, on the oceans, and railroads, between them, would give him facilities and time for transacting much other business on the route, and for superintending the portage between the gulfs, and for receiving the cargo at its final destination. What other route could afford such convenience? Not any one further south, for want of such access by land; nor any one further north, for want of such access by water.

But, this transit, even as a land and water route, for general commerce, would be more convenient than any one south of it. The reshipments and portage on this route, at a locality of most favorable circumstances, would compare advantageously with the reshipments and crossing at any other southern point, either by railroad, or by any practicable canal. The greater distance for portage on this route, would be overbalanced, with reference to a majority of shipments, by the greater distance, and the more prevailing calms, by water, on any southern route. It is, also, within the consideration of general convenience, that the portage on this route, through a high, dry, and temperate climate, for some few hundreds of miles, would relieve many kinds of most valuable goods from injurious dampness, and conduce to their safety in transportation, to be extended, by water, where the winds and currents are most favorable; but, that on any southern route the want of so much relief, the warmer climate, the greater distance by water, and the protracted halcyon delays, would often cause deterioration of goods. There would, likewise, be economical convenience in business, as well as economy of life, with reference to perils of the sea, in favor of this route, in comparison with any south



of it, particularly the more southern. Moreover, this route, most intimately identified with the shore lines of gulfs and oceans, would conduce, more than all the routes south of it, to the making of a ship canal across the Peninsula of Florida—a work known to be practicable—and this consequential consummation might finish the catalogue of principal conveniences peculiarly pertaining to *The Central Transit*.

The aggregate of all such conveniences, from first to last, or even half of them, would seem to preclude all doubt of correctness in the leading proposition, that this transit would give the greatest possible convenience for the world in general.

Intimately connected with the general convenience of this transit must be its political tendencies. That roads of commerce may greatly modify national and international powers and relations has been taught continuously in the world's vicissitudes; but, no previous time has shown a crisis, so prognostic, as the present, of shaping the intercourse of men, and their consequent political destinies. Some preceding suggestions have adverted to the commencement of a new era in commercial influences, whose flood will overwhelm and remodel the populations and productions of various regions of the earth. There can be no doubt of some such great developments in the early future; but, the subject is too comprehensive, diversified, and speculative, for extended particularity. It will be more practical, at present, to speak briefly and especially of the political tendencies on The United States, and on Mexico, with some incidental bearings in other quarters.

That the proposed transit would tend, more than any other, to perpetuate the American Union, may be manifest from a few principal considerations. First, as before shown, while this route would thoroughly unite the sections of coast, each part would feel identified with the whole, and consequently opposed to separation of any part; but, this general unity of interest and feeling, along the coast, would extend through the interior, so as to embrace all rivers and railroads, and to the sea, so as to comprehend the whole coasting trade;



and, of such universal connection of interests, the subdivisions would be particularly and continuously interwoven. Not so with any great interior route, even if successful ; for any such must be governmental, and could not indentify the whole, and would surely have a similar rival, so that the tendency would be to great sectional division, unless the sole route were to have an inclination of northern ascendancy. In either alternative, the interests of the South and of the Sea would be greatly compromised, with injurious tendencies; against which there could not be any satisfactory antidote, unless it might be in *The Central Transit*, whose tendency would be to nationalize all routes, and render them ancillary. Second, continuance of The Union manifestly depends on sustaining the southern part in its constitutional rights and natural advantages, in harmony with an enlightened self-interest of the north. Something must checkmate northern interference with southern affairs, as each party regards its relative rights, or separation will be desirable, on some terms ; and, against such northern movement, the South, being numerically the weaker party, cannot find any adequate move, except in commercial power, which shall recognize and guaranty a necessary continuance of southern peculiar integrity. If such power might be found in this transit, while it should be made the most beneficent facility of general intercourse, it would become, at once, a necessity for the World, and a refuge of safety for the South ; the uninterrupted use of the transit being indentified with the undisturbed quietude of its locality. Continued superiority of numbers and political power in the North might be compatible with such security of the South ; and each might rest in such a compromise ; but, the South, if it must perpetually yield to numbers, in political ascendancy, while in the Union, surely will become the more sensitive as to its domestic relations ; and, if these should continue to be disturbed and jeopardized, the goaded desperation of southern freemen would essay the independent assertion and maintenance of every right, domestic, civil, and religious. This route, with its superior potentialities for national welfare, in peculiar connec-



tion with southern security, being fairly and fully before the public mind, will test the patriotism, as well as the wisdom, of movements, which may tend to withdraw persons and capital, either to north or to south, from the southern part of the Union and the line for its operations; especially of such measures as may give preference, over this transit, to such routes as may, either negatively or positively, operate against the promotion of southern security. And this test, without illiberality or exclusiveness, but with an eye to justice, and to the greatest good, henceforth will cause sleepless vigilance in appropriate comparisons. For multiplied reasons, this best route should not be neglected; but, it is peculiarly commended to the highest favor of every considerate friend of a desirable Union; for, this appears to be the only way, which might combine sufficient interests to restrain the stronger numerical and political party from intolerable aggression on the weaker, and to withhold the latter from otherwise necessary disunion.— Without this transit the south will become comparatively weaker and more desperate, even, unto early separation, or ultimate violent subjugation. If any such catastrophe would be deprecated by each great division of the country, north, south, east, or west, then all should concur in establishing and maintaining the only preventive, a thoroughly conservative commercial Union, chiefly consisting of the proposed transit and its incidents; by which every part of the nation might be advantageously and perpetually bound together.

When the exhausting delusion of supposed political security for the South shall have passed away, then it will be better prepared to appreciate the transcendent importance of this transit, with reference to any alternative of its future destiny; and then its own concentrated resources would be adequate for the easy attainment of such only reliable security, if friendly hands, previously, should not have executed the work, or unless it should have been appropriated, in the meantime, by some adversary power.

Turn we now to Mexico, and find her in hopeless ruins, without some aid in her re-construction. Here again the only



adequate power is commerce, with its train of incidents ; and its best instrumentality would be *The Central Transit*, passing across the nation near its centre, while the *Tehuantepec Transit* would have a co-operating influence in a southern part, and the *Gila Transit* a similar influence along the northern border. The acquisition of necessary rights and desirable guaranties having been heretofore considered, it is now assumed, that the essential rights have been procured, and that others, as incidental, might be promptly and easily obtained. Those already granted, with the interests involved, justify such interference, by The United States, as may be necessary to prevent, in Mexico, the continuance or recurrence of intestine war. That being inadmissible, the enterprise, labor, money, and other resources of the country would be devoted to its improvement, with the co-operating and stimulating influences of foreign capital and skill. The transits being instituted, mining would be extended, and ordinary employments, for subsistence, and comfort, and profit, would receive new impulses. The military spirit, instead of making the nation suicidal, would be directed against the Indians, with proper assistance, so as to be speedily successful in rendering all persons, property, and employments secure from such depredations and annoyances in future as have long conduced to depopulate half of the country. Disbursements and productions would give the whole nation extraordinary prosperity, even, before completion of the transits. And subsequently the combination of its advantages would give it a truly commanding position. Regenerated, augmented, and liberalized, in connection with the greatest thoroughfares of the world, it would be prepared for any glorious destiny, that circumstances might indicate. But, its renovation, in its integrity, and under its own government, would have thus resulted from enlightened benevolence and legitimate enterprise, in contrast with covetous or ambitious rapacity, while the government of The United States would have demonstrated its just and benign policy towards an unfortunate sister nation ; and the conjoint interests of the two countries, in *The Central Transit*, would have



consolidated their mutual amity and safety ; and other countries, as well as these, would have thus obtained the best possible facility for universal intercourse. Meanwhile, the magnified appreciation of this transit would have diminished general estimation of other routes ; which, however, would retain their respective local facilities, and be of great general importance in preventing this transit from becoming an unchecked monopoly.

---

## LETTER VI.

*Telegraphs—Security of Navigation—Safety from Invasion—Mails—Reciprocity—Extradition—Prospects of the Chartered Companies.*

Sir :—Along the railroads of this transit and its connections, in their progress, telegraphs will be concurrently extended, with usual advantages ; and the *primary railroad*, with its nearer connections, will be free from the disadvantages of more northern routes, with reference to habitation, security, and climate. According to a view heretofore presented, that the central portion of the coast of Texas must become ultimately the common terminus of the three great systems of American railroads, so it must become simultaneously the principal ganglion of the concentrated telegraphic nerves of the whole continent.

But, this transit, with its extensions along the gulfs and main oceans, in the mutually sustaining combination of railroads and telegraphs, has decisive superiority in two other peculiar attributes. First, the facility of communication from one port to another might give consequent security for interests immediately connected with navigation, in cases of peril from hostile armaments in times of war, and from storms at all times ; for, the telegraphic lightning could anticipate the enemy, or the wind, by timely warning. Second, with such facilities for dispatch of information and of transportation



coastwise, invasion from the sea, at any point, would be extremely difficult, if not impracticable ; for, even, a small force, properly appointed for traveling and action, could generally, if not always, forestall the enemy, and be sustained by the interior population. Such a combination certainly would afford the most economical and effective means for general defence of the coast, and would seem to be, beyond comparison, a national necessity for The United States, and so for Mexico.

Mails on the line of this transit, with its extensions, approximating the whole range of coasts—the region of principal exchanges—would best accommodate business in general, both domestic and foreign, both public and private. Such general view is peculiarly appropriate to interoceanic mails, in general, both of The United States, and of Mexico ; especially as transmission would be more expeditious, safe, and economical on this route than on any other. The strict accuracy of the last proposition might be conceded on the completion of the railroad between the gulfs, with the connections, that would be simultaneously made. But, the proposition might be maintained on the completion of the eastern connections, without any extension along the Pacific ; for, the easy time from New York, by New Orleans, to Mazatlan would be six days ; from Chicago, by Little Rock, to Mazatlan five days ; and, by steamer, from Mazatlan to San Francisco four days. But, such time would be shortened two days by an extension of the railroad from Mazatlan to San Francisco. And then the fair time between New York and San Francisco would be eight days. As to safety and economy, this route, from San Francisco to New Orleans or Little Rock, would be free from the perils of snows, and savages, and seas, while it would be, in its whole length, through a region, soon to become densely populated, and highly cultivated, and abundant in productions for general necessity and comfort, with a climate entirely temperate, and generally healthful and delightful. As such combination of advantages cannot be obtained elsewhere, they establish the incomparable expedition, safety, and economy of mail transmission on this route, when it shall have become



improved. Moreover, it will be readily perceived, that Mexico, in general, is naturally included within the range of such facilities and benefits.

But, the certainty of great superiority, by improvement, entitles this route to such governmental favor as might conduce to expedite the best attainable ultimates; and especially should such favor be extended, if it might be otherwise subservient to important interests of the government. With such views, an arrangement should be made, as soon as practicable, for carrying mails by coaches from Aransas to Mazatlan, and by steamers, thence to San Francisco. The land part might be easily and regularly performed in six days, and that by water in four. An extension from Aransas to New Orleans would require only two days, using either gulf and river, or gulf and railroad. This plan challenges present comparison, as to expedition, reliability, and economy, while it opens the way for great favors to Mexico, as well as to Texas; and its execution would initiate *The Central Transit*.

Furthermore, the two days between New Orleans and Aransas will be reduced to one day by land not long hence; and, in the meantime, Aransas may become intimately connected, by Houston and other points, with the inhabited portions of Texas, in general, and through them with the whole Mississippi valley and the more eastern portion of the Union; and, during the same time, the staging, between the gulfs, will be abbreviated by some progress on one part, or more, of the *primary railroad*; so that, before this road shall have progressed far, the interoceanic mails may be generally, if not entirely, concentrated on this route. And why should they be transmitted on any other route? Even, from New Orleans—could they go as well further south? And for those at all points—what equal route, in any respect, could be found?

As an elucidation, it may be suggested, that, without the prospective railroads, and with the proposed line of coaches, two days by steamer, from Mazatlan, would deliver the New Orleans mail at the head of the Gulf of California in ten days; which is about half the time now employed in transmitting it,



by El Paso, to the same point. And this illustration may be readily applied to Guaymas, as the port for Sonora and Arizona ; and to Chihuahua, by a branch line of coaches ; and so, by another important branch, to the City of Mexico.

Such incipient mail arrangements would be attended, of course, with ordinary facilities for travel and transportation, both of which would be gradually augmented by the progress of the *primary railroad*.

All such arrangements for mails, travel, and transportation would conduce to the general progression of improvements into and through Mexico, with all legitimate incidents ; but, particularly to the early establishment of a telegraph between New Orleans and Mazatlan, so that it might be in full operation during the construction of the *primary railroad*, and give an additional impulse to that road, while affording its own peculiar accommodations long before the like could be secure on any other route.

The progress of ameliorations would familiarize intercourse and identify interests between The United States and Mexico ; particularly between the coterminous portions ; and mutual necessities might soon superinduce two important international arrangements ; first, reciprocity in commerce as to certain articles, which should be free from duties, for mutual benefits ; second, extradition of persons, bound to service according to the respective law of each country. The commercial reciprocity has no element to make it obnoxious to either general government, and, doubtless, will be regulated by treaty. But, negotiation as to such extradition might be nugatory, or worse, because the obstacles might be insuperable, in the way of the general government of each nation. It is not doubted, however, that individual states, in the two countries, have the power, and will have the disposition, not long hence, to manage this subject, so as to secure respective rights. The State of Texas, in comity and policy, should legislate appropriately for delivery, to any rightful claimant, of any person, bound to service under the law of any other state or country ; and there is reason for confidence, that the example



would be followed speedily by each of the neighboring states of Mexico, and progressively by more of them. In addition to mutual obligations of duty and civility, the claimants of peons in Mexico have, and must continue to have, much more interest in reclaiming such servants than in retaining runaway slaves ; not so much, probably, in particular reclamations, as in the known power to make them. There is nothing in the constitution of any general or state government, in either country, to prevent such action. It would apply to every kind of obligation for personal servitude, involving the ordinary control of person. Such is the peonage of Mexico, under customary law. It is an ancient, favorite, domestic, social, permanent policy, so thoroughly enforced at home, that effective respect for it abroad could not fail to command reciprocal action ; especially in connection with all the benefactions of the prospective transit. The interest and sentiment of each people would stimulate the authorities to faithfulness in executing such extradition laws. Then coterminous settlements, with different kinds of servitude, would be mutually safe ; and, the reciprocal security being extra-territorial, intercourse would be assimilated to that which obtains between two southern states of the American Union. In such arrangement, from first to last, there would be no loss ; but all gain ; no sacrifice of right ; no surrender of principle ; no compromise of sentiment ; but an exhibition of respectful deference and mutual appreciation, according to local and peculiar law. The natural docility of the Mexican people, in general, and the high intelligence of many of them, guaranty performance on their part ; and success of the scheme may be realized by the example of Texas, and the beneficence of this transit. Both, in harmony, may superinduce concentration of Mexican labor within Mexican territory, and improvement of opportunity for other labor in all of Texas.

With such a transit, in connection with such reciprocity and extradition, Texas and neighboring Mexico would have the best geographical position, with a combination of other greatest advantages. All interests would promote reciprocal justice



and mutual friendship—banishing jealousy, and cultivating harmony. The two people could thus retain their respective governments and peculiarities, while each would be controlled, for good, by a common paramount blessing in *The Central Transit*.

*The Aransas Road Company* is now assured of sufficient resources, in moneys and lands, to secure its privilege of making a railroad to the Rio Grande—the condition being five miles of railroad by the first of 1860 ; but, as the inceptive step, there will be a wharf, with a warehouse, commodious for ordinary business, and for temporary custom-house purposes ; so that, within the limited time, connection between the main harbor and the mainland will be complete, with usual facilities for commerce. Then the company will have six years for completing its road to the Rio Grande ; but, it contemplates much more rapid progress, even, as an independent institution. Nevertheless, it claims to be an essential part of the best transit between oceans, and expects to be fortified in each direction, while maintaining its own position. Its importance is realized, as imposing the greatest responsibility, in connection with fair pretensions, as the germ of *The Central Transit*. In short, this company, with modest confidence, and unremitting exertion, expects to accomplish its part of the great thoroughfare.

*The Rio Grande, Mexican, and Pacific Railroad Company* is regarded as having a valid charter, which commands the Mexican part of the railroad between the gulfs, on the best route, in perfect conformity with the Texan part ; and the two companies co-operate in unqualified harmony. The Mexican company expects renewed sanction of the general government of Mexico ; but, at worst, there should be no doubt of the adequate support of the individual Mexican states, peculiarly interested. Moreover, it claims, and fairly anticipates, a guaranty of its rights, in common with other transits, and in connection with an early pacification of Mexico. It expects to have a reconnoissance completed before 1860, and soon thereafter to commence construction. If the essential parts of such anticipations should be realized, the whole railroad between the gulfs might be finished by the end of 1865. But, if the completion were delayed to 1870, even then, it would anticipate, by a long time, any proposed road further north ; and the supposed necessity for great extension toward the Pacific



of more northern roads would be superseded, except to connect them, at ports of Texas, by economical combinations, with *The Central Transit*, so as to give, at once, the multiplied advantages of best connections with general navigation, on both sides of the continent.

For illustrative contrast, in connection with the prospects of the Mexican company, in particular, the following opinions may be expressed, with great confidence. A railroad could be completed from Houston to the mouth of the Gulf of California with less than half of the time and cost, that would be necessary to make a railroad from Houston, by Chihuahua or El Paso, to the head of that gulf, considering all the elements of engineering calculation, including interest and current net income. The difference of cost, as above indicated, would be sufficient to connect each northern railroad of Texas with its coast, including the intermediate roads, by judicious combinations, as before suggested, and by constructions simultaneous with that of the *primary railroad*. The whole railroad system might be completed, from the Pacific to the northern boundary of Texas, by the end of 1865, with less cost than that of a single railroad, as contemplated, between Houston and the head of the Gulf of California, or the alternative Guaymas; but, such single road could scarcely be finished by the end of 1875. After completion of the *primary railroad*, with its land connections, an interoceanic railroad, within The United States, on any proposed route, with the inevitable interruptions, could not be sufficiently remunerative, as a pecuniary investment, to justify its continued repair and use for through business; so that such road, in its construction and continuance, would be chiefly governmental, and could not exist without an outlay, from the National Treasury, of many millions for each year, with incidents and consequences, which need not be here indicated. To which opinions, may be added the certainty, that no route by water, in whole or part, can meet the public demand for a continuous line of railroads and telegraphs between and along the oceans.

With such views, the Mexican company is becoming aroused to an appreciation of its position, duties, and capabilities, so that it is confident of success in its part of the great enterprise.

The foregoing outline, prepared under severe pressure of many disadvantages, although very imperfect, may yet be sufficiently suggestive to promote investigation, and that will surely cause commensurate appreciation of *The Central Transit*.

PRYOR LEA.