

western areas would draw the lines of travel to the Pacific sensibly to the north. But the northern States are by far the most densely populated. The centre of population is west of Pittsburgh, of productive power to the east and north of that city. The movement of these centres is slowly to the west and to the north of west. At our present rate of increase, in less than fifty years they will be near Chicago. Their line of direction indicates the track of westward empire and the general route along which villages, towns, and cities will arise, and therefore the first rail-road be built to the Pacific coast.

Beyond and above all possible interferences and obstructions of political or sectional zeal, beyond human control these great movements of nations and peoples go on, without their foresight, and without the knowledge of the earlier generations, yet working out in beautiful order, and as if with universal consent and the conspiracy of all the secret forces of nature, their grand and best results.

If we now recall in this connection the precise position of the Mauvais Terres, and the rainless, sandy, and uninhabitable areas of the continent; the nature and location of the mountain chains, exclusive of the Rocky Mountain range, extending from latitude 47° to 33°, headed at the south by the Gila River, on whose southern side are the arid, uncultivable tracts of Sonora, and headed at the north by the Missouri River, on whose northern side lie these vast cultivable and inhabitable areas; if we recall the remarkable deflection to the westward of the Rocky Mountain range in this latitude; if we recall also the course of that gigantic stream, which is far greater than the river to which by a mistaken nomenclature it is made tributary, a stream extending to the very base of the Rocky Mountains, in the region where they are lowest and transit is easiest, navigable for steamers two thousand four hundred and fifty miles from its mouth, and for smaller vessels almost within sound of the Great Falls; if we recall also the remarkable deflection to the north of the isothermal lines from the west of Lake Superior, already mentioned, and the position of Columbia River, and remember withal that the first and the great routes of travel are always where nature has scooped out valleys for the passage of great rivers; if we combine all these conceptions with the one first advanced, of the direction of the movement of the centres of population and industrial activity, there remains no room to doubt, even without naming the north-western areas, that along the valley of the Missouri, over the Rocky Mountains, in the low passes of latitude 47°, and thence by the Columbia and its tributaries to the Pacific, or through the passes of the Cascade range to the splendid harbors of Puget Sound, lies the great route to the Pacific, the belt on which towns and villages will first arise, the strongest link in the union of the Atlantic and Pacific States. The Fraser River discoveries have hastened the result, they have not diverted it.