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Salem June 23, 1897

Mr. Walker

Dear Sir

I could find no extra copy of the poem you ask for, save that found in my file, and another in a copy of the Oregonian that gave an account of the occasion.

I attended the exercise to keep the Northern Pacific builders entertained that night so wrote the poem for the occasion.

As you do me the kindness to remember it so pleasantly I have copied it for you and you have my best wishes that you may be able to read it, for as I grow older it is said my handwriting grows old also.

I hope to finish a work that I believe all pioneers will be satisfied with - a history of Oregon from the beginning to 1850, which I have in shape to wind it up in a few weeks more.

Yours very truly
S. A. Clarke

The Last Spike

Read us the Omens, mighty Seer,
That crowd the Northern Sky!
Strange are the sounds that meet the ear,
The sights that greet the eye.

There's gathering of fiery clouds
Along the Midland shore;
Old Orient proclaims the hour,
There's accident no more,
A noise is on the plains as though
A thousand steeds rush past:—
Wild tumults in the mountains grow
Tuned to a tempest's blast:—
From Ocean to far Ocean loud
The East calls to the West;—
Like some cyclone of moving cloud
Climbs to the mountains' crest:—

We see the swift steeds of the Gales,
Harnessed with links of fire;
Champing beside the Mountain Gales
They move at man's desire;—
The Midland Waters are awake
From sleep the ages long;
They see the iron courser flake
A thrust like torrents strong.

This is the age when giant mind
Controls the air, the sea,
When brain and mill power are combined
To solve Earth's Mystery:
Where lakes and fountains of the North
Blend as they Southward go,
Their Titan forces giving birth
To Mississippi's flow—
Where inland Ocean at Duluth
Reflects the drifting sky.

Or mirrors in their living truth
The Storm Clouds as they fly: —
Where the great river takes its leap
Over the basal wall,
And gathered torrents after sweep
In grandeur past St Paul: —
Gathering from far and marching on
To reach the glowing West,
The Northland forces, all as one
Join in a common quest.

Some warrior Sioux I've seen was laid
Long since to silent sleep,
And makes to see the pathway made
Where iron coursers sweep:
From burial height he gazes round —
The harvest field below
His war steed crossed with rapid bound
Many a year ago;

ah! not for him the harvest field.

The reaper's clanking tread.

The golden sheaves the winds mild

To give the Nations bread;

Before him is the Cottage home

Graced by the running rill.

The distant City's silver dome,

The ever grinding Mill;

The while he looks a thread of smoke

Thwarts the horizon's blue.

And iron steel with lightning stroke

Appalls the warrior true.

Better to rest, Oh warrior bold!

Than wake with wondering eye

To question with that look so cold

Years that have passed thee by!

It is forty years, to this very year,
Since the first bold wagon train,
With man's deep vow & woman's tear
Struggled across the plains.
Brave Whitman piloted the way
As on for months they pressed:
They span the plains with Summer's days,
With Autumn gain the West:
Those heroes of a giant mould
Made paths from sea to sea,
And with their patriot will controlled
This far shore's destiny.

Two score of years are gone since then,
But known the world around,

Another race of giant men
This Northern way have found:
From Early Earth to sunset's clime,

By use of modern ways,
The tedious months of Whitman's time
Are but as many days.

Not long it seems since these Northern lands,
Reaching from Sea to Sea,

Lay, as the cycles had run their rounds,

Savage and mild and free;

Thundering herds of the buffalo

Trampled the waving grass:

He was a daring man who would go

Through the mild Northern pass.

All was so mild, so still & so slow:

Savage it lay, as asleep.

When Puster's fate with its deadly blow

Left the wide world to weep.

Dakota then was a name but known

As borne by savage hordes,

And Montana's pastures did not own

This thousand flocks and herds;

Fair Idaho and Washington.

With mountain stream and plain:

Were looking to the setting sun,

Yielding no golden grain.

No wealth from thousand garnered fields,
As now by rail and shore;
Columbia's harvests did not yield
Bread for the world's scant store,
And many a year they toil and wait,
Hoping this work were done,
Whose homes are near the Western Gate
In fruitful Oregon.

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Planted now by this Northern path
Are homes of a million men;
The Red Man's trail is the Deeper Smoother,
The School where the lodge fire steers,
Homes by the thousand! Beautiful homes!
Follow and mark the way:
Ever as westward the steel track comes
Are harvests in rich array,
We gather now, in this Mountain wild,
To witness the closing scene,
Around us the wondering forest child

atches what all may mean,
Is the latest link in the fateful chain
That reaches from Sea to shore,
Spanning the North land from main to main.
The Far West is known no more!

What of the Titans who lived of old!
What of Great Hercules!
What more the tales in far Arabia told
Comparing to worlds like these?
Homer & Virgil meet the deeds
Of heroes and kings of old,
Men have fought for their faith and creed -
But never a tale was told
Equal in wonder - in courage brave -
In wisdom and might of man
To this welding of iron from wave to wave,
This knitting of States with steel!

Men with grandeur of brain and mind
Fading for many a year;
Wealth of ~~Omms~~ and ~~did~~ combined
Bringing the ~~Omms~~ together here:
Science and art with their mighty power, —
Reveries in their subtle skill, —
Leads of their Chivalry here the flower
To further man's mighty will.

Straight as an arrow across the plain, —
Spanning the wilder stream, —
Plutonian depths they sought off & again
To work out this wonderful dream!

A dream no longer! This fateful day
Brings the East & the West alike;
The closing act in Time's wondrous play
Is — Driving the Golden Spike!

J. A. Cooper

Sept 7, 1883