

What the Engines Said
Opening of the Pacific Railroad
 Francis Bret Harte (1839–1902)

	<p>What was it the Engines said, Pilots touching,—head to head Facing on the single track, Half a world behind each back? This is what the Engines said, Unreported and unread.</p> <p>With a prefatory screech, In a florid Western speech, Said the engine from the West, “I am from Sierra’s crest; And, if altitude’s a test, Why, I reckon, it’s confessed, That I’ve done my level best.”</p> <p>Said the Engine from the East, “They who work best talk the least. S’pose you whistle down your brakes; What you’ve done is no great shakes,— Pretty fair,—but let our meeting Be a different kind of greeting. Let these folks with champagne stuffing, Not their Engines, do the <i>puffing</i>.</p> <p>“Listen! Where Atlantic beats Shores of snow and summer heats; Where the Indian autumn skies Paint the woods with wampum dies,— I have chased the flying sun, Seeing all he looked upon, Blessing all that he has blest, Nursing in my iron breast All his vivifying heat, All his clouds about my crest; And before my flying feet Every shadow must retreat.”</p>	
--	---	--

Said the Western Engine, “Phew!”
And a long, low whistle blew.
“Come, now, really that’s the oddest
Talk for one so very modest.
You brag of your East. *You do?*
Why, *I* bring the East to *you!*
All the Orient, all Cathay,
Find through me the shortest way;
And the sun you follow here
Rises in my hemisphere.
Really,—if one must be rude,—
Length, my friend, ain’t longitude.”

Said the Union: “Don’t reflect, or
I’ll run over some Director.”
Said the Central: “I’m Pacific;
But, when riled, I’m quite terrific.
Yet to-day we shall not quarrel,
Just to show these folks this moral,
How two Engines—in their vision—
Once have met without collision.”

That is what the Engines said,
Unreported and unread;
Spoken slightly through the nose,
With a whistle at the close.