

Much discussion has taken place, in various legislative bodies, in relation to a bridge across the Mississippi river, at St. Louis, and charters have been obtained from the States of Illinois and Missouri, that are again before those bodies for extension and amendment, and the subject is also before the Congress of the United States. It is therefore presumable that all the authority necessary for the erection of the bridge will be granted during the present sessions of those bodies. A want has long been felt for a structure of this kind, and, although the subject has been mooted for many years by men who comprehended their own times and saw clearly what the future would produce, yet they treated it as poets and prophets, and it took form as a creature of hope, undefined in time, place and character. Attempts have been made, at various times, to reduce the problem to a practical form, the most noted of which are those of Charles Ellet, in 1839, under the auspices of this city; J. W. Bissell, in 1857, for the St. Louis and Illinois Bridge Company, and Mr. Roebling, as an individual proposition. Money has been freely contributed by a few individuals to secure a solution of the problem, but the appeals to science and art have, so far, resulted in demonstrations tantamount to a *reductio ad absurdum*, which caused those who saw the necessity for the bridge and desired its erection, to throw it back again into the regions of hope, where they had found it, as a fit object for future enthusiasts, like themselves, to waste money upon, and from which to learn wisdom. The great element of success in all such enterprises, is a general conviction in the public mind that the end sought for is both desirable and attainable. Heretofore this element has been wanting, hence the failure to realize results; and now that this conviction is growing, it needs to be fostered and guided. The legislative discussion and action now going on upon this subject, are evidences both of popular agitation and of a strong desire to gratify a known want.

In approaching a discussion of this subject, a multitude of questions are met that demands answers; indeed they are far too numerous for me to attempt to deal with a tithe of them at this time, so I will select a few of the leading ones, which I propose to speak to in general terms, and in such a manner as my abilities will allow me. They may be stated as follows, viz.: 1st. Is a bridge across the Mississippi River, at St. Louis, a great public want? 2d. What kind of a bridge should it be? 3d. Are the means for its construction available? *i. e.*, can such a bridge