

PV. 4

THE
20

209212
P.O.D
2/79

POSTAL TELEGRAPH⁴

SYSTEM,

AS PROPOSED BY HON. E. B. WASHBURN,

EXAMINED IN ITS

RELATIONS TO AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS,

WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE TO BE SERVED, RATHER
THAN THE GOVERNING POWER,

IN FIVE LETTERS,

ADDRESSED TO COL. JAMES COLEMAN, SUPERINTENDENT
WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH CO., MEMPHIS, TENN.,

BY LEON. TROUSDALE.

MEMPHIS, TENN.:

PRINTED BY DALTON & PRICE, JOB PRINTERS, No. 9 JEFFERSON STREET.

1869.

HE6497
J2378 HT



DEDICATION.

To the illustrious Inventor of the Telegraph, Professor S. F. B. MORSE, who first turned the Promethean fire to the service of Freedom, Intelligence, Virtue and Learning, but never robed it in the livery of Factions, Kings and Despots, this little pamphlet is respectfully inscribed.

BY LEON TROTSKY

PREFACE.

The writer is aware that these letters are somewhat defective and insufficient to meet the important question treated in them. If they possess any merit, it consists in their conciseness and in arguing the proposition involved from an American stand-point, which has become almost a novelty in our political disquisitions. They might be enlarged to the dimensions of a volume, but as they were prepared for the popular eye, perhaps it is best that "what is writ is writ."

THE POSTAL TELEGRAPH SYSTEM.

I.

Intimate Connection of the Press and the Telegraph—Value of a Free Press—The Press Under Despotic Governments—A Free Telegraph a Necessary Incident of Freedom of the Press.

To COLONEL JAMES COLEMAN, Superintendent Western Union Telegraph Company :

My Dear Sir : Your long connection with the telegraph interest in this State and city singles you out as the person proper to be addressed touching the very important question of the postal telegraph, which was suddenly sprung upon the country by Hon. Elihu B. Washburne, of Illinois, at the last session of Congress. As builder, operator, proprietor, manager and superintendent, your experience runs over a term of twenty years in Tennessee, and of nearly that period in our city. You have enjoyed the uninterrupted confidence of our business community during that time. During much the larger portion of these two decades, in which such mighty convulsions have shaken our continent, it has been my good fortune to be associated with you intimately, both in your professional capacity and in the more agreeable relations of friendly and private intercourse. I have ever seen you at the post of duty ; and if during that disastrous and trying four years of civil war, you, for a time, ceased to guide the lightning in the channels of intelligence, it was only that you might be seen following the lead of the South's most distinguished son, John C. Breckinridge, when the inspirations of

duty and of patriotism prompted you to manipulate thunders more destructive than those you had wielded so long and skillfully.

Intimately associated with the telegraph—with its objects, its destiny and its history—is the press. Though not of contemporaneous origin, the one being but in its infancy, though grown to be a gigantic power, and the other claiming a history of several centuries, these great estates are, in their nature, their mission, and their influence, wedded together by the strongest bonds that can unite two separate and distinct interests. They have a common object, in that they are equally employed in the circulation, distribution and transmission of intelligence, truth and knowledge over all the civilized portions of the world. The methods are different. But each is equally necessary to the dissemination of current intelligence. The telegraph reports the transactions of the day, the hour or the moment, and transmits it, in an instant of time, from one continent to another, from kingdom to kingdom, from State to State, and from city to city, while the press, through its million mouths, circulates it widely to every door, to every hamlet, to every rural neighborhood and to every inmate of every home. Thus you may easily perceive that the telegraph *without the press* would be shorn of its highest capacity to inform the inquiring minds of our progressive age; and that the press, *without the telegraph*, would be deprived of the vital function of enlightening its million readers regarding the transactions of the day throughout the world, and would become, what it was previously to the invention of the telegraph, a mere local chronicler and retailer of news a week, a month, or a half year old. In the one case the press would be deprived of its highest attribute—the capacity to speak with certainty for the various nations, States, cities and corporations touching the events of the same day or the previous day. In the other case the telegraph would lose its right arm and chief interpreter to the various peoples of the earth. If a revolution were to break out in London, Paris, Madrid, Vienna or Berlin to-day, the intelligence, with every material detail,

would be quietly introduced into every reading man's chamber before he rises from his bed to-morrow morning, through the instrumentality of these co-operative and wonderful workers, who ply their extraordinary industries while the masses are at rest. If the President of the United States dies or is impeached, the fact is known throughout the length and breadth of the land before the cup of coffee is ready to stimulate the energies and awaken the sympathies of the late sleepers.

We are not apt to appreciate the potency and value of these great nurseries of intelligence, because of their very commonness and cheapness. They are like the atmosphere that surrounds us, necessary to vitality; but because they are universally dispensed, we cease to attach special importance to them. They are like the sunlight, which pervades all space, and is only shut out by those who "love darkness rather than light." Hence we do not appreciate the situation of those who are not permitted to enjoy the same blessings.

A free press is indispensable to liberty. Without it a republic would be but a name. A destruction of its freedom would be like a permanent eclipse of the sun, or like poisoning the pure atmosphere of heaven with noxious gasses. The framers of our Constitutions, both State and Federal, provided stronger and more effectual safeguards for the continuance of its freedom, than for any other object. It was justly deemed by them as the last and most secure intrenchment of the spirit of freedom. Despotism and military oppression might fortify themselves in legislative halls; might overawe the Courts; might intimidate the people; but a bold, free press could, and would, even then, arouse resistance and save the State. Such was the wise calculation of our ancestors, and they were right in this, if they erred in some other cases.

This principle is well understood by the rulers of mankind, by despots, and kings. Louis Napoleon manipulates the press of France, as he commands his armies and governs his police. Of the two, the press, thus manipulated, is the more useful to him, and the more effective for his purposes. It would also be more formidable to him, if free and untrammelled, than any

army in revolt. Napoleon also has absolute control of the telegraph of France. How complete is the subjugation of a people thus manacled by the Government, with hands tied, eyes bandaged, ears stopped and voice stifled. Is it not wise for the people of the United States to inquire, before it is too late, whether the movement made by Mr. Washburne, for a Government monopoly of the telegraph, will not repress their political freedom in a similar manner, and place them in the same situation of subjection to the Government. I shall, therefore, in my next communication, attend to the inquiry whether freedom of the telegraph is not a necessary incident of freedom of the press.

II

Dangers of a Government Monopoly—A Government Telegraph—The Fingers of Despots.

When in days of "auld lang syne" you were engaged, with others, in erecting telegraph lines, with your own hands, did it ever occur to you that a Government, grown powerful and defiant, by a long course of war discipline, would coolly moot the proposition to take possession of the work of your hands, or else render it valueless to its proprietors by building separate lines which would virtually be a complete monopoly? I find many intelligent persons who believe the Government ought to own and work the telegraph, because they have been absurdly enough stuffed with the idea that the tariff would be lower under Government regulation. I shall come to that point after a while and shall show how unsupported is that opinion by facts. At present I wish to deal with the more important questions arising from the effort to create a postal telegraph; whether opinion can be free and uncorrupted; whether the press can enjoy its constitutional immunity; whether the State can be a free Republic under the telegraph-postal system, proposed by Mr. Washburne.

Give the Government a complete system of telegraph lines

permeating all the States and Territories, and there cannot be a doubt that it will banish all competition.

A Government of vast resources and unlimited powers of taxation *can afford to lose*, in order to drive competition from the field. It can enact laws, too, which will restrict and hamper opposing lines. Its policy will be adverse to competition; because competition, as all such enterprises are managed by Governments with large swarms of worthless partisans to reward, will entail the necessity of drawing largely from the public treasury, to support the monopoly. We assume, under the state of facts, therefore, that, it being the policy of the Government to create a monopoly and having the power to do so, it will sooner or later bring about that result, whenever it shall own its independent lines.

Looking out from this stand-point, what must we necessarily behold? The vast and ramified interests of telegraphing, including dispatches for the press, *managed by a party*, and that party the one which has possession of the Central Government! A few years ago such a project would have startled and alarmed the boldest among us. There are those here ready to vindicate such a usurpation and prostitution of power, upon the plea that the Government could give us cheaper dispatches. They would be the first to cry out against such an idea, if Government were to undertake to run cotton plantations, on the pretext that it could grow cheaper cotton; or to do the carrying trade, because it could furnish cheaper freight. The plea is insufficient, even if true.

The party that manages the Government would act with a disinterestedness which no party has ever been known to exhibit, if it did not use its newly acquired and all powerful patronage to advance its interests and perpetuate its existence. Let us consider what this patronage would amount to, and how it might be and would be abused. From Washington City—the center of political management—to any part of the Union, a fact or a falsehood, advantageous to the incumbent; a threat, a command, an opinion, an inuendo, could be flashed, in an instant, on the eve of an important election, which might turn

*No argument against postal telegraph
The law could not fairly be corrected &
an effort to be told with telegraph
private hands with on the hand & c.*

The attempt to manage the press by a party is a wicked & dangerous

back the tide of popular rising, and hold in bondage a nation. It may be said that their opponents would be allowed the same use of the telegraph as themselves. Did ever an interested party deal thus fairly with opponents? Take the post-office: When has been the time that the post-office would not hurry forward the dispatches, documents and letters of the reigning party, in advance of those sent by the opposition? And yet, the post-office is an imbecile in conveying intelligence, compared with the telegraph! It may further be alleged, in support of Mr. Washburne's proposition, that the laws can restrain the officers and employes from excluding their opponents from a participation in the benefits of the telegraph. But the objector fails to consider that those who make the laws will manage and manipulate the telegraph, and that they will do it to suit themselves. Nobody ever dreamed, ten years ago, that any party would ever mold and fashion the franchise laws so as to exclude opponents, and secure its own continuance; yet it has been openly and unblushingly done, and the act proclaimed as one of the fruits of Republicanism. Now, give a party the absolute molding of its own constituents; of its franchise laws and its suffrages, and it would seem it might proudly exclaim, "*Esto perpetua!*" But I do maintain—and I believe, with sound reason—that if you endow the same party with the absolute control of the telegraph lines throughout the Union, its lease of power will be firmer and more fixed, and that it may boast that it has erected a foundation for its existence more durable than brass. A constituency *thinks*, has a conscience, and, though warped temporarily by prejudice and passion, may be brought finally to right reason. However ingeniously it may be created, it will abandon its patrons, when interest lies in the opposite direction, or when awakened to the fact that the great interests of the country, in which each individual is concerned, are being sacrificed. Now, this awakening may and does occur through the powerful instrumentality of a free press reinforced by a free telegraph. But let this free press be emasculated by subsidizing its chief strength—the telegraph—and let a free telegraph be surrendered into the hands of the

governing party, and you have lost the arm of defense against corruption and tyranny, and the instrumentality by which the people are to be aroused to a sense of public abuses, wrongs and corruptions, and are to be brought to vindicate and right themselves. A telegraph, in the hands of able plotters like Fouché and Stanton, would prove to be a spy into every one's actions, and would spread throughout the country a terrorism which would subdue the masses to its will. The events of the last few years have proven that it is not so difficult to cow and humble a people born to the inheritance of freedom as we formerly imagined. The tinkling of Seward's little bell, or the telegraphic commands of Stanton, once spread universal fear throughout the Nation. The telegraph would thus become the fingers of the adroit and unscrupulous partisan tyrant to subdue opposition and enforce his decrees. The lightning, whose conductibility was discovered by the first Postmaster-General of the American Colonies—Franklin—would thus be blended with the Post to effectually extinguish the liberties of the people, which he labored so ardently to preserve. Such a desecration of the offices and discoveries of the illustrious philosopher of Pennsylvania should never be tolerated by a people who revere his name, and are now enjoying the blessings of his initial discovery, perfected, as it has been, by the mind of Morse, and cheapened and utilized by the co-operative power of joint stock associations; open to free competition, and in the hands of the people themselves. I shall hereafter endeavor to point out how this free competition of rival telegraph interests has culminated in the most prosperous, cheap, prompt and reliable system of telegraphing in the world, as it now exists on this continent.

III.

The American Telegraph—The Argument for Copying the European Model Considered—The American Political System Fundamentally Different from the European—The Welfare of the Masses to be Consulted—Statistics Showing the Superiority of the American Telegraph over the European.

In what I have written regarding a system of Government

control and ownership of the telegraph, I have endeavored to show that such interference would restrict, if it did not destroy, the freedom of the press, and through it the liberties of the people.

This system of Government ownership and management belonging to continental Europe, and more recently having been adopted in Great Britain, it is argued that the United States should copy the European model as tending to greater perfection, cheapness and promptitude in the delivery of messages. Looking at this argument in general, from an American or Republican stand-point, it would seem to be designed to excite our derision rather than our approbation. The very essence or basis of American politics is that the Government was designed and created for the benefit of the people. It matters not by what system of suffrage this great end may be worked out, it is our theory, and has been our practice until evil days fell upon the Republic. On the contrary, the European system has been that the people were born for the benefit of the Government and the nobles. It absorbed and attracted everything to itself and within its control—the press, education, the telegraph. Here private enterprise and associated effort effected the great ends of the public welfare. There the seal and stamp of Government despotism were seen in every department of industry and effort. What people have ever achieved more to elevate man and increase his comforts, his progress and his knowledge in a period less than a century, than the people of the United States?

In Europe the traveler is permitted to gaze upon magnificent and costly achievements of civilization. He passes from one wonder to another, until the mind is bewildered with the miracles presented to him. He sees art galleries, cathedrals, castles, palaces, fabrics and monuments, which fill him with awe, or move him with delight. All is grand and colossal but one object. The masses of mankind alone are dwarfed. They live in wretched hovels, eat coarse food, and wear the scantiest clothing. They labor wearily ten to twelve hours a day to gain a meagre livelihood, with no hope ever to better their con-

dition. Philosophers and political economists write folios of learned treatises upon the problem of ameliorating the condition of the laboring masses, without even touching upon the true cause of their wretchedness, which is that the end, aim and continual effort of a powerful Government is, and has been for centuries, to fasten upon them the burdens, in order that the ruling castes and classes might enjoy the benefits of the system. Whatever advances may have been made in England, France and Prussia, the pendulum of inexorable despotism has continually oscillated back to this point, with the certainty of a physical law. Shall we look to these governments to furnish our models when we have advanced so rapidly in that real civilization whose blessings, like the dews of Heaven, have fallen upon rich and poor alike, under our system? Shall we grasp the substance of Imperialism while we retain only the shadow of Republicanism—its mere echo, coming down to us along the corridors of time, from the days of Washington and Jefferson? If it be simply contended that the object proposed would consolidate and strengthen the Government, we admit the proposition; but will this be a blessing to the people?

Descending from general principles to particulars, it may safely be affirmed that, as the telegraph was invented, and achieved its first successes in the United States, so it has continued to maintain its superiority over all other countries on the globe, in the extent of its ramifications, the number of people whom it serves, the amount of information furnished, the promptitude in the delivery of messages, and the cheapness of its tariff. In considering this proposition, we must not lose sight of the American idea of the "greatest good to the greatest number," as contradistinguished from the European principle of caste or class legislation and government. Viewing it through this medium, we wish to illustrate our assertion by a single fact, which is the most suggestive and pregnant that could be presented to the mind. Let the reader note the contrast, brought to his mind by the following figures, between the boasted European system and that of the United States: Total number of messages transmitted on the continent of

Europe for the year 1866, 12,902,538 ; gross receipts for the same, \$11,597,632 71 ; average cost of telegrams in continental Europe, 81 cents.

Total number of messages furnished to the newspapers of the United States for 1866, 14,725,181 ; gross receipts for the same, \$524,509 ; average cost of press telegrams in United States, 3½ cents.

Here are the figures, showing that the telegraph in the United States furnished two millions more of telegrams in one year, for the press alone, than the whole European telegraph does for all purposes, including the press, at a cost of about one twenty-fourth the amount received by the latter. Europe may boast of her ancient monuments, her architectural grandeur, and her miracles of art, but after this startling exposition, she may not lay claim to superiority in manipulating the lightning of Heaven for the enlightenment of mankind. And all who would work upon the European model are forever estopped from urging a servile imitation of her feeble effort to grasp Jove's thunders, after the manner of the young Hercules of the Western continent. And, moreover, let all public journals who would improve on the American system, by grafting from effete monarchies, forever hereafter hold their peace.

IV.

European and American Political Systems—Their Influence on their Institutions—Additional Tax upon the Press under the European System—Reduction of Number of Private Telegrams, and Increased Cost of the Same, as Shown by Authentic Statistics, under a Government Monopoly.

I have heretofore chiefly considered the comparative advantages of the telegraph, as conducted by private enterprise, and the evils that must necessarily result from a Government monopoly and management of the same. This has led into the examination of the political systems, as they exist in Europe

but it is not for the purpose of making them for the press

+ Is it time that telegraphing private roads is checked in the U.S. when it is in the hands of the Govt?

and America—the former having absorbed to itself the absolute disposition, management and regulation of this great interest, as it has every other important and vital matter, while the latter has wisely devolved its control upon individual and associated effort—both acting in accordance with the genius of its institutions. It is difficult to separate the principle of controlling one interest from that of controlling any other. The same reasons which would render it expedient to place the ownership of telegraphs in the Government would surrender the railroads into the same hands. In Europe those reasons probably are the jealousy of every power which exercises the least independence of the Government, and the apprehension that it may become an instrument or an auxiliary in spreading too liberal and enlightened a spirit among the masses. The telegraph is a power; the railroad is a power. Modern civilization demands that they be fostered. But the despotism of European political institutions requires that they be so fostered as to increase the power of the Government, as in Belgium. Hence Belgium owns and manages them both.

But no such reasons exist in the United States. A Constitutional Republic extends the freedom of its citizens as far as may be done without restricting the general welfare. Individual enterprise, competition, energy, talent and capital are encouraged to achieve the highest possible results.

In the light of these known and cardinal points of the two systems, it may be profitable to inquire what has been the comparative progressive development of the telegraph under each of them, considering this development in respect to the number of persons enjoying its advantages; the tariff or rates of telegraphing; the extent of territory covered by its lines, and the equal opportunities afforded to all classes to communicate by its wires. I think I have already clearly shown that the portion of the people who depend upon the public press for their information enjoy superior advantages, under our existing system, since the cheapness of the press dispatches—being only about two mills a word—enables the proprietors of newspapers in the United States to furnish two millions more

but it is not for the purpose of making them for the press

+ Is this statement true

of messages than the Continental or European telegraph furnishes to every description of its patrons.

It only remains, therefore, to determine how far this tendency of the American system of telegraphing to cheapen its tariff and extend its benefits, with regard to press dispatches, bears an analogy to the messages which are received by individuals: or, in other words, whether or not private dispatches stand on the same footing of newspaper messages.

Before, however, proceeding to this inquiry, we may remark that the bill of Mr. Washburne, initiating the movement of a postal telegraph, provides for a tariff of one cent a word for each dispatch, adding three cents for postage and two cents for delivery, and making a reduction of only fifty per cent. for press reports. This rate would increase the average cost of news *more than three hundred per cent.*, as any one can see by estimating the difference between the present rates of press reports (two mills a word) and those proposed by Mr. Washburne. I am told by telegraph men that this new rate would levy an extra tax upon the newspapers of a million of dollars every year. From its operation, we should probably see the number of press reports diminish to the scanty portion doled out to the press of Europe.

Returning to the question of private telegrams, and beginning with the tariff, it is asserted by the Western Union Telegraph Company, in an elaborate and exhaustive publication on the merits of this question, *that the highest American rates are lower than the highest foreign rates; the average American rates are lower than the average foreign rates, and that the lowest American rates are lower than the lowest foreign rates.* This assertion is accompanied by a statistical table showing a list of principal stations in Europe and America, with the tariff and distances in air lines from London and New York respectively. The difference, as presented in this table, averages, in favor of the cheapness of the tariffs in the United States, nearly forty per cent. This, of itself, ought to settle the question of tariffs.

But lest it may be supposed that I have resorted to a partial source for these statistics, I beg leave to refer you to the fol-

lowing extract from the able report of the Committee on Postoffices and Post Roads of the United States House of Representatives, of which Mr. Farnsworth, of Illinois, was Chairman. This extract cannot be controverted, either as to the accuracy of its statistics or the impartiality of its statements. Says this report:

"The statistics of the telegraph in Europe for 1866 (the latest year for which there are full returns) are as follows: Total number of messages, 18,683,727. Receipts, reduced to American gold, \$10,328,994 37; or, with gold at 140, \$14,460.592 11 in United States currency, showing on average of 77½ cents a message.

"The statistics of the Western Union Telegraph Company, whose business constitutes more than nine-tenths of the whole American service, and from whom alone returns have been received, give the following results for the year ending June 30, 1867: Total number of messages, 10,067,678. Receipts for the same, \$5,738,627 96. Average cost of each message, 57 cents. These returns do not include railroad messages, of which the number is very great, as on many of the principal lines the running of trains is managed by telegraph; nor the regular reports for the press, which, in the number of the words delivered, exceeds all the other business put together—having amounted in the last year to 294,503,630 words; equal to 14,725,181 telegrams of 20 words each.

"In comparison with these figures the press business of Europe is very inconsiderable—not exceeding a tenth part of that of the United States. Another illustration of the comparative cost of European and American telegrams has been presented to the Committee in the form of a table, showing the cost of a message sent from New York and from London to sixty-one principal places on the two continents of similar distance—the American distances being generally greater. In almost every instance the English rate is much the highest—the average exceeding the American average by nearly 40 per cent."

As to the other two points touching the facilities afforded to

the people of the two Continents to enjoy telegraphic communication, which includes both the number of persons served in each, and the extent of territory covered by their lines, I again introduce an extract from this lucid report, which is absolutely decisive of the question, and settles, beyond all cavil or dispute, the superiority of the American system of telegraphic communication, under control of private enterprise, over the restrictive Governmental control adopted in Europe; thus demonstrating that the genius of the two Governments has worked out the results peculiar to each—the one being for the benefit of classes, and the other for the benefit of the masses; the one being guarded by the utmost jealousy, and the other as free as the flag that floated over the Capitol when the Constitution was inaugurated:

“We have already shown the vast superiority of the American telegraph over the European, in the diffusion of general information through the press; let us now show to what extent the opportunities of telegraphic intercourse are afforded to the people of the United States, as compared with those of European countries, and the extent to which they are respectively availed of. We give only the more favored countries. The number of telegraph stations in Prussia is one to every 32,955 of the population; in France, only one to every 31,681; in Great Britain and Ireland, one to every 13,750; in Belgium, one to every 12,416; in Switzerland, one to every 10,000; and in the United States, one to every 7,549. In the Pacific States of the Union there is an office to every 2,500 people.

“According to the returns of 1866, the number of messages annually sent in France is one to every thirteen persons; in Prussia, one to every nine; in Great Britain and Ireland, one to every five; in Belgium, one to every four; in Switzerland, one to every four; and in the United States, one to every two and a half.”

I might introduce table after table of statistics, showing the somewhat varying but always comparatively uniform superiority of the existing joint stock telegraph agency in this coun-

try. But the results here shown are sufficient to establish the proposition I have affirmed. It is foreign to my purpose, and would be far beyond the limits I have assigned for these letters, written from friend to friend, to heap up facts, all of which are cumulative of the idea that for the people of the United States to voluntarily surrender to the Government an establishment whose perfect freedom is so necessary to their commercial advantage, as well as to their political safety, would be an act of suicidal folly scarcely known in the history of mankind. European institutions are founded on repression. There the end is worked out and justifies the means. But in the land where freedom always encouraged genius to expand, and where being thus free to explore Nature's fields and learn Nature's laws, it taught the electric fluid to do its bidding, it would be a sacrilege—to harness this subtle yet powerful agent in the car of political and party despotism—not unlike the superstitious tyranny which crushed out the intellectual discoveries of the illustrious Galileo in the dungeons of the Inquisition.

V.

Comparative Cost of Labor in Europe and America—Losses on our Postal System—Mr. Washburne's Plan—An Incident in his Career—Telegraph Regulations in France—Conclusion.

There is one consideration to which I have not adverted, that is essential, in estimating the value of the two telegraph systems of Europe and America. It is this: Labor constitutes the chief element in the cost of operating the telegraph. The cost of lines, instruments, buildings, etc., is very small compared to the cost of operators, messengers and laborers of various kinds. Notwithstanding the cheapness of telegrams, sent over the American lines, as compared with those dispatched by the European, it is well known that the price of labor in Europe is from one hundred to two hundred per cent. lower than in this country, a fact which applies to telegraph operators and employees, as well as to other occupations and

employments. From a carefully prepared table, showing the average cost of labor in England and the United States, which is compiled from Professor Levi's work on "Wages and Earnings in England," Publications of the Statistical Bureau at Washington, the Official Records of the Western Union Telegraph Company, and other sources, we learn the important fact that telegraph employes average in England 41 cents per day, and in the United States \$1 29. Operators in the United States receive \$2 25, and in England 62 cents. In Paris, the average for adult male labor is 76 cents per day, and for women 38. In Prussia, first-class engineers earn the considerable sum of \$1 10 per day, and second-class 83 cents. In Belgium, a moulder earns from 44 cents to 62 cents per day. What an incentive are these prices of labor to the people of this country to adopt the European models, in all their ramifications! And yet with this vast appreciable difference in favor of American workingmen, how can we account for the fact that telegrams in the United States are furnished to the people 40 per cent cheaper, and that all the facilities for telegraphing are greater, except upon the hypothesis that the system of private co-operative agency prevailing in this country is more favorable to the development of a cheap and popular organization—more conducive to trade and commerce—more in harmony with the demands of all classes, and more consonant with the spirit of our institutions, than the close and repressive European models? And notwithstanding the high tariff prevailing in Europe, another fact demands our consideration—that in every instance, even in Belgium, where the lines are short and easily manipulated, in which the Government owns and manages the telegraph, *it is operated at a loss to the Government.* So it is with our own Postoffice, which annually expends about \$6,000,000 more than it earns, thus showing how much more efficiently public business can be conducted, in the hands of enterprising private agents, than where swarms of favorites are required to fatten upon the public treasury, or where there is no incentive to careful and vigilant attention to

the public interest, save what is necessary to retain a place, bestowed on account of family or party favoritism.

Leaving this branch of the subject barely hinted at, but enough to show that we should be abundantly satisfied with our present mode of telegraphing, the plan of operations proposed by Mr. Washburne will next be briefly considered. Mr. Washburne's bill proposes to erect, at the expense of the Government, a line of telegraph of four wires, from Washington City to New York, unless lines can be purchased 25 per cent. cheaper than the lowest responsible bid for constructing said line—this to be an experiment, which, if successful, is to be followed up by the erection of other lines throughout the United States. This, in brief, is his plan to render worthless the entire capital invested in telegraph lines in the United States, amounting to over \$60,000,000, without "just compensation" to the owners. The bare statement of the proposition carries with it the idea of injustice and wrong, which no Government in the world should ever contemplate. Mr. Washburne, in this, has not received his inspiration from European governments. England stipulated to pay a full equivalent to the owners for the telegraph lines, purchased by the Government, instead of chaffering for 25 per cent. less than cost. A calm consideration of this proposition would indicate that it had its origin in the breast of a person whose prejudices, feelings and sympathies have been so warped by current events and the maxims in vogue during a highly excited era of violence and civil war, as to have blunted his sense of right and obscured his natural instincts of equity. The result of these events, as is evinced every day, has unduly magnified in many minds the importance and relation of the Government to its citizens. During the war, this feeling was strong and overwhelming, and has not subsided to-day, and perhaps will not wholly disappear until after the present generation shall have passed away. A case very much in point, illustrating this unreasonable and unreasoning prejudice, may be adduced, in which Hon. E. B. Washburne was one of the principal actors.

During the war Mr. Micajah Y. Johnson and Mr. David Sheean were arrested at Galena, Illinois, and imprisoned in Fort Lafayette, at the instance of Mr. E. B. Washburne and J. Russell Jones. They remained in this Fort for some months. Mr. Johnson was afterwards transferred to Fort Warren. The charge preferred against them was vague and unaccompanied with specifications — being that of “disloyalty.” Protests were unheeded, and they remained in prison until, without explanation, they were released. After the war Mr. Johnson brought suit against Messrs. Washburne and Jones for false imprisonment. The first plea of the defendants was justification; but finding that this plea would be of no avail, they subsequently filed the following, after having withdrawn the first plea:

“That the said pleas heretofore filed by them in said case, and the matters and things therein set forth against said plaintiff, are untrue in substance and in fact. And the said defendants further confess the wrongful trespass and imprisonment set forth in said declaration, and that the said defendants are guilty in manner and form as therein stated and set forth, and said plaintiff has sustained great damage thereby, as is alleged in said declaration; and said defendants further confess that the said seizure and imprisonment was wrongful, unjustifiable, and without cause, and the said plaintiff was innocent of the violation of any law, or of doing any act inimical to the Government of the United States, and that said plaintiff did no act and uttered no expression, or exercised any influence to the knowledge of said defendants, that was not in support of the Government of the United States, its Constitution and its laws.”

These facts are stated by the Albany (N. Y.) *Argus*, and indelibly impress upon the character of Mr. Washburne the feature of allowing unwarrantable prejudices to control his action, so far as to betray him into the most unjust and despotic exercise of power, and into gross exaggeration of the right and duties of the Government, with regard to its citizens. Making every allowance for the exciting events, which

inspired such action, and invoking the utmost exercise of charity toward the errors which were likely to arise, amid the tumultuous scenes of civil conflict, that man cannot be regarded as a safe arbiter of the rights of citizens who could have committed so fatal a mistake in the interest of the Government, and who could have trampled upon privileges so sacred, without that reasonable certainty which should always accompany so harsh and tyrannical an exercise of extraordinary military power.

✓ It is from a spirit like this, I humbly conceive, that the whole system of Government interference in the transmission of intelligence proceeds, without reference to public convenience, and without regard to proprietary rights. With a telegraph thus organized, espionage may become perfect, repression of opinion thorough, and the Government omnipotent. In France, the decrees regulating the telegraph, provide that “the director of a station may, on grounds of public order and morality, *refuse to transmit a dispatch*. In case of a dispute, reference is to be made, in Paris, to the Minister of the Interior; in the provinces to the Prefect, sub-Prefect, or other constituted authority. On the receipt of a dispatch, the director *may withhold it* for like reasons. *Private correspondence may be suspended, at any time, by the Government*” Persons are liable to imprisonment and heavy fines for transmitting signals, in any way, except by authority of the Government.

These are the natural and sure fruits of inaugurating a Government control and ownership of the telegraph lines. Extreme Democracy once prevailed in France. But the pendulum has oscillated back to the other extreme; and while some may think that, under a wise despot, like the present Emperor, the Empire has flourished, as it never did before, no one can predict when the extinguishment of his feeble flame of life shall bring to the throne an imbecile or a monster. Let us not trust to such chances for the happiness and prosperity of our people, but let us adhere, as closely as changing events and shifting scenes may permit, to the wise maxim of our patriot fathers, that “*that Government is best which governs least.*”

I have thus concluded some unmethodical suggestions touching a scheme which was designed to cause our Government to assimilate, if not to servilely imitate those upon which European civilization, with its glory and its shame, is founded. I dare not hope, that in the chaos of conflicting sentiments, which has resulted from a great civil convulsion, destined to be felt as long as our Government shall stand, I shall succeed in impressing upon other minds the full force of the convictions, so earnestly entertained by myself. But whether I shall or not, the facts I have cited cannot be overlooked by thoughtful men, no more than the principles upon which I have based my reasoning, can be successfully controverted. I can only leave them both to the calm and sober judgment of an intelligent people, which all good men are encouraged to believe, has a better opportunity of prevailing *now* than at any time for at least the last twenty years of our history. Thus trusting in the cheerful auguries of a bright future, "*jam que opus exegi.*"

has absolute control of the
plete is the subjugation of a
overnment, with hands tied,
voice stifled. Is it not wise
es to inquire, before it is too
le by Mr. Washburne, for a
egraph, will not repress their
anner, and place them in the
e Government. I shall, there-
attend to the inquiry whether
necessary incident of freedom

A Government Telegraph—

ne" you were engaged, with
with your own hands, did it
ent, grown powerful and de-
pline, would coolly moot the
ne work of your hands, or else
rs by building separate lines
ete monopoly? I find many
e Government ought to own
y have been absurdly enough
f would be lower under Gov-
to that point after a while
s that opinion by facts. At
ore important questions aris-
tal telegraph; whether opin-
whether the press can enjoy
her the State can be a free
al system, proposed by Mr.

te system of telegraph lines

permeating all the States and Territories, and there cannot be
a doubt that it will banish all competition.

A Government of vast resources and unlimited powers of
taxation *can afford to lose*, in order to drive competition from
the field. It can enact laws, too, which will restrict and ham-
per opposing lines. Its policy will be adverse to competition;
because competition, as all such enterprises are managed by
Governments with large swarms of worthless partisans to re-
ward, will entail the necessity of drawing largely from the pub-
lic treasury, to support the monopoly. We assume, under the
state of facts, therefore, that, it being the policy of the Govern-
ment to create a monopoly and having the power to do so, it
will sooner or later bring about that result, whenever it shall
own its independent lines.

Looking out from this stand-point, what must we necessarily
behold? The vast and ramified interests of telegraphing, in-
cluding dispatches for the press, *managed by a party*, and that
party the one which has possession of the Central Government!
A few years ago such a project would have startled and
alarmed the boldest among us. There are those here ready to
vindicate such a usurpation and prostitution of power, upon
the plea that the Government could give us cheaper dispatches.
They would be the first to cry out against such an idea, if
Government were to undertake to run cotton plantations, on
the pretext that it could grow cheaper cotton; or to do the car-
rying trade, because it could furnish cheaper freight. The
plea is insufficient, even if true.

The party that manages the Government would act with a
disinterestedness which no party has ever been known to ex-
hibit, if it did not use its newly acquired and all powerful
patronage to advance its interests and perpetuate its existence.
Let us consider what this patronage would amount to, and how
it might be and would be abused. From Washington City—
the center of political management—to any part of the Union,
a fact or a falsehood, advantageous to the incumbent; a threat,
a command, an opinion, an inuendo, could be flashed, in an in-
stant, on the eve of an important election, which might turn

*The arguments are flimsy & cannot justify the
monopoly of the Government & the
press in all things of which the
Government has the power.*

*No argument against postal telegraph
can be made as it can be corrected &
an act, to be told with telegraph*

Europe for the year 1866, 12,902,538 ; gross receipts for the same, \$11,597,632 71 ; average cost of telegrams in continental Europe, 81 cents.

Total number of messages furnished to the newspapers of the United States for 1866, 14,725,181 ; gross receipts for the same, \$524,509 ; average cost of press telegrams in United States, 3½ cents.

Here are the figures, showing that the telegraph in the United States furnished two millions more of telegrams in one year, for the press alone, than the whole European telegraph does for all purposes, including the press, at a cost of about one twenty-fourth the amount received by the latter. Europe may boast of her ancient monuments, her architectural grandeur, and her miracles of art, but after this startling exposition, she may not lay claim to superiority in manipulating the lightning of Heaven for the enlightenment of mankind. And all who would work upon the European model are forever estopped from urging a servile imitation of her feeble effort to grasp Jove's thunders, after the manner of the young Hercules of the Western continent. And, moreover, let all public journals who would improve on the American system, by grafting from effete monarchies, forever hereafter hold their peace.

IV.

European and American Political Systems—Their Influence on their Institutions—Additional Tax upon the Press under the European System—Reduction of Number of Private Telegrams, and Increased Cost of the Same, as Shown by Authentic Statistics, under a Government Monopoly.

I have heretofore chiefly considered the comparative advantages of the telegraph, as conducted by private enterprise, and the evils that must necessarily result from a Government monopoly and management of the same. This has led into the examination of the political systems, as they exist in Europe

and America—the for- lute disposition, man- interest, as it has every the latter has wisely- associated effort—bot its institutions. It is trolling one interest : same reasons which ownership of telegra the railroads into the probably are the jea least independence o that it may become a ing too liberal and The teelgraph is a civilization demands of European politica tered as to increase t gium. Hence Belgi

But no such reason tutional Republic ex may be done witho vidual enterprise, co encouraged to achiev

In the light of th systems, it may be comparative progr each of them, consi number of persons e of telegraphing ; th and the equal oppor cate by its wires. the portion of the for their informati existing system, sin being only about tw newspapers in the

but U. M. had to write message and have for the first

+ Is it true that telegraphing is private hands in Chester in the U.S. than it is in the hands of the Govt in Europe

+ Is there

12,902,538 ; gross receipts for the average cost of telegrams in continental Europe furnished to the newspapers of the year 1875, 181 ; gross receipts for the same, for press telegrams in United States, showing that the telegraph in the United States transmits more than 20 millions more of telegrams in one year than the whole European telegraph system, including the press, at a cost of about one cent per word received by the latter. Europe may boast of her architectural grandeur, her scientific pre-eminence, and her authority in manipulating the lightning of civilization, but after this startling exposition, she will be content to remain in the position of a pupil of the American model. And all who have seen the telegraph in operation will be convinced that the European model are forever estopped from their pretensions to the gratification of her feeble effort to grasp the manner of the young Hercules of the telegraph, and, moreover, let all public journals, newspapers, and the American system, by grafting the telegraph hereafter hold their peace.

IV.

Political Systems—Their Influence on the National Tax upon the Press under the Operation of Number of Private Telegrams, and the Same, as Shown by Authentic Statistics—Monopoly.
 Considered the comparative advantages of telegraphing conducted by private enterprise, and the result from a Government monopoly, the same. This has led into the question of telegraphing systems, as they exist in Europe

Telegraphing in the United States is conducted by the hands of

and America—the former having absorbed to itself the absolute disposition, management and regulation of this great interest, as it has every other important and vital matter, while the latter has wisely devolved its control upon individual and associated effort—both acting in accordance with the genius of their respective institutions. It is difficult to separate the principle of controlling one interest from that of controlling any other. The same reasons which would render it expedient to place the ownership of telegraphs in the Government would surrender the railroads into the same hands. In Europe those reasons probably are the jealousy of every power which exercises the least independence of the Government, and the apprehension that it may become an instrument or an auxiliary in spreading too liberal and enlightened a spirit among the masses. The telegraph is a power ; the railroad is a power. Modern civilization demands that they be fostered. But the despotism of European political institutions requires that they be so fostered as to increase the power of the Government, as in Belgium. Hence Belgium owns and manages them both.

But no such reasons exist in the United States. A Constitutional Republic extends the freedom of its citizens as far as may be done without restricting the general welfare. Individual enterprise, competition, energy, talent and capital are encouraged to achieve the highest possible results.

In the light of these known and cardinal points of the two systems, it may be profitable to inquire what has been the comparative progressive development of the telegraph under each of them, considering this development in respect to the number of persons enjoying its advantages ; the tariff or rates of telegraphing ; the extent of territory covered by its lines, and the equal opportunities afforded to all classes to communicate by its wires. I think I have already clearly shown that the portion of the people who depend upon the public press for their information enjoy superior advantages, under our existing system, since the cheapness of the press dispatches—*being only about two mills a word*—enables the proprietors of newspapers in the United States to furnish two millions more

X In this statement some

to collect the points
but P.M. and H.P.
as to rate in Europe