

THE EVENING NEWS.

FRIDAY, January 24, 1872.
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND
THE TELEGRAPHIC SERVICE.

[CONTINUED.]

The proposed government system makes all other telegraph competition unlawful, prescribes punishment by fine for every offence of transmitting or receiving messages without official permission.

Now when we consider that incircles of population and business which employ the telegraph, it is daily increasing the movement and facilities that beset public offices for the transmission of messages from town to town and from city to city, telegraphic instruments have become indispensable adjuncts of every police station, fire alarm, post and produce exchange, underwriters' agency, for reporting, for relief of vessels; that in few hands railroad officials regulate the movement of every train; in fact, the world is now so interwoven that it communicates between the office of sale and place of production; that it is already as a toy for children to play with; that improvements every year tend more and more to simplify and extend its operation and agency, does it not become obvious that the proposed government control of such an instrumentally useful and greatly more important than those mentioned by the postoffice; and further, to keep that contract exclusive will require a system of law as foreign to our people that practically it can never be executed. Indeed it is much the same thing as if the government, for the reason that it desired the use of the power of steam for exclusive transmission of mails, should make its use for all other purposes a matter subject to official permission.

Civil service reform and the restraint of monopoly monopolies, and those which talked of lately as among the necessities of our national situation, but what civil service reform or any other beneficial reform is to be expected in national affairs, if the government is to be invested with a reach of power over the business, wealth, and press of the country as their scheme contemplates? Or what is the restraining influence on monopoly when they get possession of a monopoly and add to the patronage which it now possesses all that pertains to the corporations which it proposes to digest and assimilate? Is it too much to affirm that an administration once in power, with such influences at its control and disposition, could make its tenure of existence commensurate only with its desire? The true idea of civil service reform, the only one which will ever prove effective is to be found in the one carrying out the original theory, that the government should be restricted to the most limited sphere of action consistent with its own safety and existence, and reducing the patronage at its disposal to a minimum, and at first increasing the amount of its patronage and then making rules to prevent the abuse of its influence, a process very like praying to be led into temptation and then castigated at the same time from its evil influences. Whether therefore, under the scheme of federal interference, direct or indirect, the people are likely to obtain more efficient and cheaper telegraphic facilities, whether it is a necessity for the signal service to control exclusively the wires for its own purposes, or whether the interests of any particular company are likely to be injuriously affected, are all alike quite beyond my knowledge. Inasmuch as the main question involved is the one before which all others shrink into comparative insignificance, is will the people consent to the inauguration of a policy on the part of the federal government which revives the old medical doctrine of the necessity of state interference with the pursuits and business of the people, and every step in carrying out of which is a departure from republicanism and an approach towards despotism and monarchy?

In regard to the Hubbard proposition, Mr. Wells shows in this, as in the case of the proposition of the Postmaster General, the thing primarily sought for is federal control, and the second in the sphere of business which in no degree pertains to the functions of a republican state. But apart from this circumstance, which alone ought to furnish sufficient reason for uncompromising opposition on the part of all those who believe in holding the federal government strictly to its original basis, the singularly absurd statement of Hubbard of having a valid claim of law to constitute the unanswerable argument against its endorsement and acceptance, that could possibly be presented, Mr. Hubbard says, in the outset, to the government, if you will assume all that expenses of services other than what depends on the operating and maintaining of the wires, namely, the offices, the equipments suitable and sufficient for the operators, instruments and batteries at all the stations, all clerks, bookkeepers, messengers, service, all fuel, lights, signs, posts, and so forth, and the like, us to use various postoffices, and the facilities which we may require, release us from all, State and local, collect all moneys, and hand over same to us, less five cents per message, free us as government agents from all responsibility to the people for all mistakes and breach of trust, we will undertake to transmit messages at a sum somewhat cheaper than charged at present; and if this were not enough, the bills last reported provide for the crushing out and destroying the property and franchises of all existing companies, by imposing a tax of 5 cents for each dispatch sent over any lines other than those belonging to the postal telegraph.

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