

part of which is in each Province. It is divided into four sections, so that only four tenders can be accepted. Tenders will be addressed to the Commissioners here. The Commissioners will not decide, but will recommend to the Privy Council the tenders to be accepted.

The Commissioners have made the following appointments:—C. S. Ross, of Kingston, Secretary; J. B. Martel, of Quebec, Assistant Secretary; Wm. Wallace, of Simcoe, Accountant.

—It is reported that Mr. Rose and the Great Western Railway Company have come to an agreement for the liquidation of the debt due to the Canadian Government by the road.

PEAT MAKER.—*Le Pays* says that a peat-making machine, the invention of Mr. Aubin, was put into operation at Sorel and Valleyfield last summer, and worked so satisfactorily that some American capitalists are about to form companies to develop the new industry. One of these companies is about to be organized for the State of Connecticut, and will have a capital of \$25,000, of which amount \$10,000 will be paid for the patent. Mr. Ashley Hibbard has been elected one of the directors, and Mr. Aubin, consulting engineer of this company.

THE PLATTSBURGH AND WHITEHALL ROAD—MASSAWIPPI RAILWAY—MISSISSAUGUI CENTRE ROUTE.—We see by the *Plattsburgh Republican* that the grading for the Whitehall and Plattsburgh Railway is nearly completed from Fort Henry to Ticonderoga, and the rails about to be laid down. This new route along the Western bank of Lake Champlain will give Montreal still another direct line of communication to New York, and by 1869, there will therefore be no less than three in operation.

WOODEN RAILWAYS.—Mr. Hemming, M. P. P. for Drummond and Arjhabaska, who has a Wooden Railway project on foot, for connecting the back towns of his own County with the Grand Trunk Railway, has been to New York State to see the Clifton Wooden Railroad, and in a letter describing his visit, says:—

“There was no appearance of the wheels cutting into the rails, even at the sharpest curves, neither did I find a single rail that had the appearance of being crushed. In fact the rails were so level and smooth that I walked the whole distance on the rail itself, at a pretty smart pace, and I have no pretension to being a “Blondin.” We arrived at the train a little before sundown, which consisted of a ten ton locomotive, made expressly for the line—four trucks, carrying between five and six tons of iron ore each, and a car-load of lumber; the whole train weighing between forty and fifty tons. I should add that one of the trucks containing the ore was front of the engine. We now started in good earnest at a rate of about twenty miles an hour, and soon came to a part of the road which was nearly all supported on trestlework, there being no less than five viaducts, varying from 124 to 400 feet in length, and from 25 to 35 feet from the level of the ground, in a distance of half a mile. Imagine my surprise, when I found that the engine driver on arriving at this trestlework, so far from slackening his speed, actually increased it to thirty miles an hour!

The grading of course is the same as for an iron, except that stiffer grades can be ascended on the wooden road. The ties are of the ordinary description, but are not squared on any side, and on the Clifton road are placed at the usual distance of three feet apart, except on the trestles, where there are three ties to every two yards. In future, however, Mr. Hurlbert proposes to put the three ties to every two yards, as he proposes running heavier engines. The rails on the Clifton road are of maple, six inches by four; Mr. Hurlbert intends in future to alter their shape a little without increasing the quantity of timber, making them three and half inches on top, by seven inches deep, so as to be better adapted to the increased weight of engines, (fourteen tons instead of

ten.) Notches are cut in the round ties to such a depth as to keep the bottom of the rail about two inches from the ground after the road is ballasted, and the rail projects sufficiently above the notched tie to allow the flange of the wheel to pass. The rails are fastened to the ties by a couple of hardwood wedges, driven in opposite directions on the outside of the rail, within the notch. This has the effect of making the whole superstructure one solid mass without the addition of any spikes or pins. In making the curves the rail itself is bent to the required shape, so that there is no angularity whatever in the line of rails. The trestles are of the simplest description. They consist of two upright sticks of square timber immediately under the rails, let into a transverse stick, which are braced to the sticks of timber laid lengthwise from one trestle to another, immediately under the line of rails in each direction. This is further supported by a similar stick of timber at each side, from the head of the trestle to the base, in a slanting direction, the whole of which is let into a squared log at the base. The wooden rail is not, I believe a new invention, but Mr. Hurlbert has succeeded in making it available without using a particle of iron in the whole structure, and has, moreover, demonstrated that such railways can be used for long distances at a moderate cost, and this through a country where an iron line, as ordinarily constructed, would be practically an engineering impossibility. Mr. Hurlbert says that he is willing to contract to lay the superstructure of a wooden railway of his own improved construction at the rate of fifteen hundred dollars, American currency, a mile where maple and hemlock can be obtained at reasonable rates.”

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE TELEGRAPH.

The discussion in England, both in and out of Parliament, in favor of the government controlling the telegraph by buying up all the existing lines in that country, has extended to the United States and the government at Washington is urged, in certain quarters, to place the telegraph system under the management of the Postmaster General by similar means. It seems to us about as reasonable for the government to undertake the purchase and management of all the railways as all the telegraph lines in the country. The one kind of enterprise being not dissimilar to the other. That a government steps out of its legitimate sphere when it embarks in any such business can not be denied, while there are grave objections to government interference with the telegraph apart from the mere question of principle. In a country governed by parties as this is, it will never do to have the government of the day controlling the means of telegraph communication, and the same argument applies to England, where it has been already advanced with convincing effect, and inasmuch as party spirit runs higher here than there the danger would be correspondingly greater. The telegraph would, it may be accepted as a certainty, be used as a political machine by the party in power, and this of itself is sufficient to condemn government interference with it. There is no knowing how far the rights of the press and the people might be trampled upon in this particular by unscrupulous partisans in office, and consequently they should never be invested with the power for mischief which privileges of this kind would give them.

The advocates of the proposed scheme will, before much progress is made towards the desired end, have to show that the existing telegraph companies have failed to meet the wants of the people, and are, moreover, incapable of meeting them. Further, it will be also incumbent upon them to prove that the government will be better enabled to meet these requirements than the telegraph companies, and that there would be no drawbacks or inconveniences to the public to counterbalance any advantages arising from govern-

mental administration. That the telegraph companies have a stronger incentive to improvement in everything connected with their business than the government would have is obvious, and the enterprise they have shown in the past is a guarantee for the future. The English telegraph companies have been fully as active as those of the United States in their efforts to improve, extend and cheapen telegraphic communication. In 1853 insulation by means of gutta serena was adopted, and in 1857, and again in 1862, further improvements in insulation were effected. In 1858, Hughes' "type printers" were introduced, and in 1863, Caselli's fac simile telegraph, while in the same year, printing instruments and "Wheatstone's automatic system," as also Hawath's system of working without wind were tried. In this country, the Atlantic and Pacific, the Franklin and other lines worked in opposition to the Western Union Co. are being rapidly extended, and in proportion as their business increases the charges for the transmission of messages are reduced. Competition is the life of trade, and the people should encourage it in the business of telegraphing as much as in anything else. There would, of course, be an end to this if the government monopolized the wires, and whether the government employees did their work thoroughly or the reverse, there would be no redress, and improvements travel slowly through official channels, while red tape, in this country as well as elsewhere, interposes a vexatious bar to progress.—*Albion*.

CONTRACT.—An exchange says that Messrs. Walter and Frank Shanley have contracted with the State of Massachusetts to build the Hoosac tunnel on the Troy and Boston Railway. It is to be four and a half miles long and has been partially completed, but the company which attempted it failed to carry it through. The Messrs. Shanley have taken the contract at \$5,000,000.

NIAGARA SHIP CANAL.—The Niagara Ship Canal was brought up in the United States House of Representatives on Monday, and made a special order of the day for the 11th prox. by a vote of 109 to 40. Some members voted for the order out of good-will to the mover, but the vote was so strong that the friends of the measure believe it can be carried through. The bill provides that the work shall be done as a military and commercial necessity by the Government, under the direction of the Secretary of War: that it shall be begun within one year after the passage of the act, and finished as speedily as possible, and that the control of it shall be retained by the United States. The engineer's estimate as to the cost of the canal is about \$12,000,000.

—The preliminary survey of the route for a wooden railway, from Sherbrooke, Q., eastward, has been commenced by Robinson Oughtred.

ONTARIO LEGISLATION.

Prior to the adjournment of the Ontario Legislature the following bills passed a second reading:

- No. 113, to grant certain powers to the Ontario Farmers' Mutual Insurance Company.
- No. 84, to incorporate the Ontario Trust and Investment Company.
- No. 83, to incorporate the Presque Isle and Belmont Railway Company.
- No. 108, to incorporate the Simcoe and Muskoka Railway Company.
- No. 109, to incorporate the Norfolk Railway Company.
- No. 106, to amend the Act to incorporate the Port Whitby and Port Perry Railway Company.
- No. 72, to amend and confirm the charter of the Ottawa and Gloucester Road Company.
- No. 95, to incorporate the Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Hamilton.
- No. 120, to incorporate the Caledonia Peat Manufacturing and Smelting Company.

The following passed its third reading: