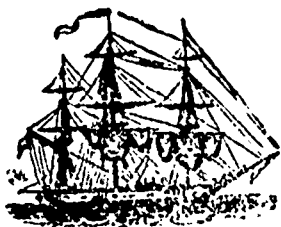


# CANADIAN ECONOMIST.



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MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 26th DECEMBER, 1846.

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### ELECTRO-MAGNETIC TELEGRAPH.

Speed, it must be admitted, is one of the cardinal characteristics of the present age.

The swift railway car has superseded the old mail-coach; the beautiful sailing packet has given place to the Atlantic steamer, and these, in their turn, are doubtless doomed to play a subordinate part to that greatest of modern inventions—the Electro-magnetic Telegraph.

It is not our intention, at present, to speculate on the origin of this wonderful discovery, or what it is likely, when fully developed, to accomplish for the human family. The fact of its existing is what we have mainly to do with.

The chief towns and cities of the United States—east, west and south,—are now connected by telegraphic wires, by means of which intelligence is carried instantaneously throughout the whole circle—literally carried with the speed of thought or lightning.

Western Canada is also availing itself of this wonderful means of communication; and we understand that in a few weeks Toronto, Hamilton, and Niagara, will be connected with the electric net-work already in operation in the United States, by which they will be enabled instantaneously, and at once, to exchange communications with New York and Boston on the sea-board, and with Buffalo and other places in the interior.

That such an apparatus for annihilating space and time, both of which it literally accomplishes, exists, is scarcely to be believed, yet the fact is unquestionable, although known to very few that by a recent improvement in the apparatus, intelligence can be communicated *over any length of wire, and to any number of stations, by one operation.* For instance, an impetus given at Boston is communicated *instantaneously to Buffalo and all the intermediate stations,* thus doing away with the necessity of re-writing at each station for the next, as was formerly the case; this wonderful and almost incredible effect being accomplished by an invention called the "relay magnet," which has been recently attached to the main lines in the United States.

We take it for granted it must now be obvious to every one, that no commercial city can thrive without a line of magnetic telegraph connecting it with the sea-board on the one hand, and the great agricultural regions of the west on the other; and this remark must apply with tenfold force at the present day to our own good city, whose fortunes are now at a crisis. It is believed by many, and we are ourselves of that number, that the enterprising spirit of our merchants will ever maintain her in the leading position she now occupies; but to accomplish this we hold it to be a *sine qua non* that we must immediately have an Electro-magnetic Telegraph to connect us with the sea-board and the west, without which we consider that all our natural advantages of position will be neutralized, if not entirely lost.

We have been led to make these remarks by knowing, that the Montreal Board of Trade has, for some time, been engaged in examining the merits of various projects which have been sub-

mitted to them by parties interested in the lines the United States, and that they are now about coming to a conclusion which will warrant them in recommending a particular line to the favorable notice of their fellow-citizens.

Meantime we think we may venture, as we have taken pains to ascertain their relative merits, to review the leading projects which have occupied their attention, and we shall do so as briefly as we can.

A line direct from Halifax, running entirely through British territory, was the first project we believe which engaged their notice; but though allowed to be, on national as well as commercial grounds, the best that could be adopted, provided means could be raised to accomplish it, it was abandoned for the present, as being impracticable except as a national undertaking. The reasons which led to this conclusion must be so obvious as scarcely to require enumeration. One or two, however, may be mentioned:—first, the difficulty of crossing the Bay of Fundy; and next, the enormous expense of keeping the wire in repair through some hundreds of miles of dense, uninhabited wilderness. Many other reasons of minor importance will strike the reader, so as to convince him that as a private speculation it would be ruinous to the proprietors.

The next projects which engaged their serious attention, were, first, a line to connect with Saratoga and New York; and, secondly, a line to connect with Portland and Boston: in either case, the connection with the West being the same.

The merits of these respective routes depended, we believe, in a great measure, on the first cost of construction, which was materially in favour of the route to Portland, provided the wire could be carried over the surveyed line of the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railway. But here, it is obvious, a difficulty presented itself,—that of keeping a wire in repair passing through some two hundred miles of wilderness; a difficulty which cannot apparently be obviated till the railway is completed, which cannot be in less than two years to come. This obstacle is so great that we cannot, with our present information, see how it is to be got over, and such, we believe, was the view which the Board of Trade took of it.

Next, then, with respect to the route to Saratoga. The objections to this project are chiefly its expense, the terms of the American patentees being rather exorbitant; besides which, Canada would be obliged, not only to build her own line, but to furnish a considerable share of the capital required to carry it from the frontier to Saratoga; while on the Portland line she would merely be required to furnish capital to build her own end of it, that is, from hence to the frontier.

Within the last day or two, however, we understand that an entirely new plan has been submitted to the Board, by a gentleman from the United States representing the contractors of the Toronto-Buffalo line. This project is to extend the line from Toronto to Montreal, through all the intermediate towns, viz. Port Hope, Cobourg, Kingston, Brockville, Cornwall, &c. &c.; and this we understand is considered the most deserving of favour, and the most likely to be adopted. In the first place, no line would be complete, whether it came from Halifax, or Portland, or New York, to this city, unless it were afterwards carried hence to Toronto, through the towns enumerated; and for this reason it appears to us that the main question for the Board and the public to determine upon is simply, *Which end shall be constructed first?*

In our opinion it does not afford room for doubt or hesitation. By building the line first from hence to Toronto, we get the advantage of instantaneous communication not only with the sea-board, the Western States, and Western Canada above Toronto, *but also with all the intermediate Canadian towns;* whereas by beginning at the other end first—that is, from hence to New York by way of Saratoga, considering that the Halifax and Portland routes are for the present impracticable—we should entirely lose the advantage of immediately communicating with these intermediate Canadian towns, and thereby it appears to us render the undertaking less profitable as well as less useful. Indeed, we consider that this line is the only one that need be undertaken for the present, and that any other without it would be comparatively useless.