

OUR TELEGRAPH

THE business of electric telegraphy, while its origin is not too remote to be within the memory of persons still living, has undergone considerable change during the five and forty years that have elapsed since its founding. Different European inventors have laid claim to the discovery of the possibility of exchanging signals through a long wire by means of an electric current generated by batteries. Wheatstone, Bain, Ampère, and Morse, are names intimately connected with commercial telegraphy, but the father of the system, now so familiar on this continent, is generally acknowledged to be the late S. F. B. Morse. He it was who invented the code of signals now in such universal use in America, and he erected the first rude mechanism and line from Baltimore to Washington, which fifty years ago transmitted the historical message, "What hath God wrought!"

Canada was not behindhand in adopting the lightning as a messenger of commerce, for in the year 1847 we find the Montreal Telegraph Company founded, with a capital of \$60,000 and sixteen offices on a single-wire line between Quebec and Toronto. The receipts for the entire line for August that year were £7 (\$28) per day; for September, £9; for October, £16; for November, £18; decreasing in December, when navigation had closed, to £13. Fifty dollars a day was the average then—thirty years later it was seventeen hundred and fifty. From Toronto to Montreal a message cost, at first, 3s. 9d., Halifax currency, and to Quebec, 4s. 6d., or ninety cents. In 1853 the tariff from Toronto to Chicago was 5s. 3d., or \$1.05 for ten words.

Machines for registering the signals upon a strip of paper, moved by clock-work, were used in the early days. "Sounders" were not then in use, for "taking by sound" was as yet undiscovered. An operator had to keep his eye on the tape and transcribe the despatch, interpreting the dots and dashes therefrom, besides keeping the massive, laboring, brass machine wound up as the weight ran down. The scientific, hardly less than the popular mind, was puzzled when in 1851 it was demonstrated that an expert telegrapher could read the signals by the sound which the instrument made in marking the paper, as correctly as by using his eyesight. The first person in Canada to perform this feat was, we believe, Mr. Ben. B. Toye, now electrician of the Great North Western Telegraph Company in Toronto. Great has been the strides from the methods of those days. There are sounding relays, switches, repeaters, and a great variety of appliances devised of late years. Then there is the duplex system, succeeded by the quadruplex, and now even the sexuplex; this last invention has put into actual working the apparently impossible, for by its use not two or four only, but six messages can be sent *at once* over the same wire.

Forty years ago, Mr. O. S. Wood was president of the Montreal Telegraph Company, Mr. James Dakers, its secretary, and Mr. H. P. Dwight, the Toronto agent. Among those connected with the working of the Company in those days were George

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