

How long this property shall be extended after his death is a question of expediency; all laws regulating bequest are based upon expediency.

One reason why our legislators have been so slow to grant international copyright is found in the prevalence of the false notion that the author has no valid claim even upon his own government for the protection of his property; that the power to control the publication of his own works is not a right secured to him, but a privilege conferred on him.

Washington Gladden.

COLUMBUS, OHIO.

The Story of the First News Message ever sent by Telegraph.

On the morning of May 1, 1844, the Whig convention organized in Baltimore, and working connection was established for the first time by telegraph between Washington and Annapolis Junction, Professor Morse being at the former and Mr. Vail at the latter place. Morse sat that afternoon in the room at Washington, waiting for the signal from Mr. Vail, when suddenly there came an animated clicking at the instrument. He bent forward, in his eagerness almost devouring the little strip of paper that crept only too slowly from between the rollers of the register, until, the message completed, he rose, and said to the friends who were present: "Gentlemen, the convention has adjourned. The train for Washington from Baltimore, bearing that information, has just left Annapolis Junction, and Mr. Vail has telegraphed me the ticket nominated, and it is" — he hesitated, holding in his hand the final proof of the victory of science over space — "it is—it is Clay and Frelinghuysen!"

"You are quizzing us," was the quiet retort. "It's easy enough for you to guess that Clay is at the head of the ticket; but Frelinghuysen — who the devil is Frelinghuysen?"

"I only know," was the dignified answer, "that is the name Mr. Vail has sent me from Annapolis Junction, where he had the news five minutes ago, from the train that is bound this way, bringing the delegates."

In those days the twenty-two miles from the Junction to Washington required an hour and a quarter in making, even for the exceptionally fast trains, such as that which was taking the delegates to Washington.

Long before the journey was over, the newspapers — enterprising even in those days — had "extras" upon the streets, and the newsboys were lustily crying the news the telegraph had brought flashing through *twenty-two* miles of space. A great crowd of people was at the station. The extras, with their cabalistic heading, "By Telegraph," had whetted public curiosity to the keenest edge. Out of the train came the delegates, each one anxious to be foremost in sending abroad the inspiring news that fortune was with "Harry of the West." But consternation struck them dumb when, upon alighting, they found in type, before their eyes, the very story they had believed exclusively their own, but which had preceded them "By Telegraph," as they read in the head-lines of the journals. They had seen the wires stretching along the side of the track all the way from Annapolis Junction into Washington, and they had joked about it glibly.

The Hon. Ralph Plumb, a member of the present Congress from Illinois, was one of the delegates from Ohio to that Clay convention, and was on the train which bore the first news of the nominations, as was supposed, to Washington, and in a communication to the writer, under date of Washington, February 18, 1888, he writes: "It seems like a real romance to me to think that a son of the then young man who was sending what may fairly be said to have been the *first important message by telegraph that was ever transmitted*, is asking of *one yet alive* respecting what happened on that occasion. During these forty-four years, see what has been accomplished, as a result of this first successful effort! What civilized country is there now that has not the telegraph, and how many of them are covered by telegraph lines as by a network!"

In referring to the journey from Baltimore to Washington of the delegates to the convention at Baltimore, he says: "I remember the little shed at the Junction where we stopped on our way, and I saw the man (Mr. Vail) in it, who was ticking away upon a little brass machine. I saw him, and I talked with him, for I wanted to know what strange thing he was doing; and he answered that he was 'telegraphing to Morse in Washington about our convention,' — and he pointed towards the wire overhead, running in the direction of that city, — 'over the first wire ever erected or used for public telegraphing, and the message I have just sent is the first news ever transmitted for the public benefit.' In common with all the rest of the *real wise* ones of the day, I hailed the affair as a huge joke until we landed at the station in Washington, when, sure enough, Morse had received the news an hour or more before, and the whole city was informed of the fact that we had put a dark horse on the ticket with our hero, Clay. The evidence could not be disputed, of course. The most prejudiced of us could not presume to suggest that Morse's work was guessing; for no man alive would have imagined that Frelinghuysen could be made the nominee for Vice-President."

Mr. Vail preserved with much care the recording-register used by him at Washington and Annapolis Junction, and later at Baltimore, as a priceless memento of the days of which we have written, and at his death bequeathed it to his eldest son, Stephen Vail, by whom it was loaned, some years since, to the National Museum at Washington, where it has attracted much attention. Professor Morse, some years before his death, certified to its identity, and to the fact that the similar one used by him at his end of the line had not been preserved, and that he did not know what had become of it.

S. V.

The Postal Service.

THE postal service presents two distinct problems to the civil-service reformer: one as to the large post-offices in the cities, and quite another as to the fifty thousand small offices scattered through the country.

As to the first class, the beginnings of a solution have been made. The system of competitive examination is being applied with success to the selection of clerks and subordinate employees. We have made less progress in the selection of the postmasters themselves, the heads of the large offices; yet there has been an advance, and there is the prospect of a further