

carried into effect, remains to be seen. In any case, there will be useful lessons to be learned from the attempt.

The British Government and the Telegraph Lines.

The British Government, we learn by a recent Cable dispatch, is now about to take active steps toward the acquisition of all existing rights and interests in the telegraph wires of the Kingdom, and it is stated—on what authority we are as yet unaware—that their purchase will cost the nation no less than six and a half millions of pounds sterling, or more than thirty-two million dollars. This is a large sum; and as no provision has been made in the regular Budget for raising it, it of course follows that the means for carrying out the proposed bargain will have to be specially provided by the House of Commons before the close of the session. The principle of the measure, however, has already been adopted by the Ministry and sanctioned by Parliament, while the efforts of the telegraph companies to retain their monopoly, in preference to parting with their rights at an equitable valuation, were easily defeated. The sum total of purchase money mentioned in the dispatch is, of course, an approximation only, as we presume that the course customary in railway matters will be followed, and that the value of the property and rights of those companies which refuse to accept the Government offer will be determined by arbitration by jury. But the principle may be regarded as settled, and there is every prospect that the details will be arranged, and the measure come into operation before the close of the year.

The experiment is one which we shall watch with great interest. Its advocates assert that the interests and convenience of the public will be better served than heretofore; that expedition and regularity in the transmission of dispatches will be effectually secured; that a moderate and uniform standard of charges will be established throughout the Kingdom, and that a more reliable guarantee of privacy can be given with regard to messages, which will pass only through the hands of Post Office officials on the regular Civil Service Establishment, and bound to preserve inviolate secrecy, than was possible when every dispatch was open to the perusal of half a dozen telegraph clerks, employed only by private companies. And in support of these assertions, they refer to the extraordinary success that has attended the operation of the Post Office Savings Bank, the Money Order Office, the Post Office Annuity Office, and other branches of the Post Office in which centralization and Government control have resulted in greater efficiency of service and better security to the public than was formerly attained by private enterprise, and which all produce a considerable surplus revenue for the national exchequer. On the other hand, the opponents of the measure declaim loudly against undue centralization, the creation of a fresh Government monopoly, and attempt to excite popular prejudice against it by dwelling upon the power which it would place in the hands of a strongly partisan and unscrupulous Government in times of political agitation. These objections, however, seem to have carried no real weight, either in or out of Parliament, and we may confidently look forward to seeing the new system in operation before long. The Post Office is, by general consent, the most admirably managed department of Government in England, and if administrative capacity can command success, it is already assured. Whether the principle is sound, and capable of being advantageously