

### The Explanation About the French Cable.

The diplomatic explanation in the *Paris Journal Officiel*, with respect to the examination and control by the French Government of dispatches by the Transatlantic cable, is more ingenious than candid. The *Journal* wishes to convey the impression that the remarks on the subject in the President's Message were founded upon a misapprehension of the case, but a reference to that document, to the original "concession," and to the dispatch just published, shows that there was no mistake made by the President, and that the grievance still remains without any amelioration.

The Message, while alluding to the unjust character of the *concession* as a monopoly, spoke further of the very objectionable feature of subjecting all messages to the scrutiny and control of the French Government. Now what says the *concession*? "Such control over the service of the line as it may judge convenient," is reserved to the Government. And further, "the clerks of the Telegraph office of the State shall be the indispensable intermediaries between the public and the agents of the *concessionaires* in the transmission of messages." And again, "the service of the line shall have its office" in the "Telegraph office at Brest," and pay rent therefor to the Government. It is difficult to imagine how a more complete system of Government surveillance could be established than that which these phrases involve. Nor was there in July, when the *concession* was granted, any affectation of a doubtful meaning which could be attached to them. It was then perfectly well understood that the United States could never consent to such a surveillance, and in fact liberty to land the cable on this side was expressly conditional upon efforts being made by the French Ambassador here to procure a more satisfactory arrangement.

The President's Message made, therefore, no mistake as to the real nature of the French cable *concession*. Nor is the *Journal* very successful in its endeavor, by a new interpretation of that document, to correct the misapprehension which it assumes to exist. It says "this administration"—meaning the Government Directorate of Telegraphs—"exercises no control of that nature"—that is, of "examination and control" such as the Message alludes to. The employes are simply to prevent "clandestine dispatches" for the avoidance of taxation, and to "verify ciphers," and the number of words. One would suppose that the verifying of ciphers and counting of words of telegraphic dispatches involved reading them. And when those duties are performed by agents of the French Government, it will be certainly considered by most people that there is official surveillance. It is quite possible that American ideas upon this subject are not sufficiently appreciated at Paris, but the fact that they do exist very distinctly may as well be understood. The United States means no disesteem of the French nation when the latter is assured that this cable matter cannot rest where it is. If it should become necessary to sever the connection, the public here will be very sorry, and perhaps a little angry, too. But rather than have the privacy of dispatches hence invaded even by official eyes, we should do without a French cable altogether.