

## WESTERN UNION'S DILEMMA

### NO EXPLANATION YET OFFERED OF ITS BAD WORK.

The officials of the Western Union Telegraph Company did not think it worth while yesterday even to pretend that they were trying to find out how a private telegram addressed on Tuesday to Dow, Jones & Co. and sent over the company's line was delivered to a rival of Dow, Jones & Co. in time for the rival to print it and circulate it on Wall-street before the original reached Dow, Jones & Co. Of course the point of the issue now made affects the privacy of telegrams, and the company's failure to set the matter right is construed down town much to the discredit of the already unpopular monopoly.

In one sense this failure is regarded as an insolent fling in the face of the public. Men say that what may be done with a telegram belonging to one person may be done with any one's. If the company does not mean to convey the impression that it assumes the right to handle telegrams intrusted to it for the benefit of its managers or friends its present course subjects it to great risk of being misjudged. A delay of a few days longer in reporting upon the alleged investigation into this easily traced occurrence, over which ten minutes' inquiry would seem to be ample, will only strengthen the opinion now widely held that the delay implies great difficulty in concocting an explanation that will hold water. The longer the delay the more exacting will be the demands in this regard. Those who are watching the matter think the company must realize that its course gets it only deeper into the mire. This is the basis of the suspicion that no explanation will ever be made.

That is not, however, the general impression. It may happen that the company will try to respond to Dow, Jones & Co.'s demand in such a way as not to stand committed upon either the personal question or the general principle involved; but that something will be offered by way of explanation seems almost certain. Judging by Press Agent Somerville's opinion that this case is none of the public's business, it is thought by some that the company will try to make a report to Dow, Jones & Co. in such form or manner as to leave the public in the dark as to that company's idea of its right to make careless, vicious, or mischievous use of private dispatches. The preparation of such a report of course takes time. Dow, Jones & Co. remain patient. They will give the company ample time to reply. Should the "investigation" last unreasonably long something may be done beyond the simple demand already filed. Mr. Jones says he asked an explanation because he felt he was entitled to it. The company officials appeared to agree with him and said he should have it. He will believe for a while yet that they will do as they promised. Some of his friends are urging him to stop all this nonsense by bringing suit against the company criminally as well as by civil process. With a prospect of getting the responsible officials behind bolts and bars the company would probably begin, so these friends say, to pay some regard to private rights.

Press Agent Somerville evaded inquiries yesterday by leaving his desk early, not to return. Dr. Norvin Green, President of the company, still denied himself to callers on this business.

There has been a good deal of interest manifested in circles closely allied to the operating department of the Western Union Telegraph Company, to ascertain the name of the operator of whom the company alleges it so promptly made "an example" when the fact of the leak of news was first brought to its notice. It is the custom of this company to visit its displeasure upon the heads of telegraph operators whenever mistakes are made in the transmission of messages—sometimes justly, often without any extenuating reasons. So it happens that whenever any trouble arises operators quietly begin making investigations to ascertain which one of their associates has been or is to be sacrificed, and as a rule they know the true inwardness of the situation when it is impossible for outsiders, and particularly journalistic outsiders, to obtain even the shadow of a suspicion of the actual condition of affairs from the officials in charge. It is well known among telegraph operators who have investigated the matter during the past two days that no one has been dismissed in the Commercial News Department of the Western Union Company, nor in any other department, for the "irregularity" in disposing of Dow, Jones & Co.'s news dispatch to the Kiernan agency. Considerable surprise was manifested yesterday by one who would know what steps had been taken in this direction when he was asked by one "inside the ring" as to the name of the unfortunate operator who had been made to suffer for this act on the part of the company. His reply was that no one had been dismissed—that was all a "fake"—and that no one would be dismissed. Which demonstrates the amount of reliance that is to be placed upon any statement made by the so-called news bureau of the Western Union Company. The responsibility for the sale of Dow, Jones & Co.'s news does not rest upon the shoulders of any operator, and the company will hardly dare to give any operator unjustly dealt with an opportunity, from cause, to tell what he knows of the inside workings of the commercial news department.

There are too many leaks in the Western Union Telegraph Office to warrant that company in inviting criticism or challenging testimony from any of its employes. It is not always that the messages intrusted to its wires are made commerce for the benefit of news agencies or newspapers. It is believed in some quarters that the more important the information the more exclusively it becomes the property of the company or of those who control the company.

Is it true that there is a special loop behind the great switchboard in the operating room of the Western Union Company marked "No. 1 special—Jay Gould?"

And is it true that this loop can be cut into (that is tap) any wire entering the Western Union Telegraph office at Dey-street and Broadway?

If it is true, and the gentleman named desires, he can, if so disposed, while away a pleasant hour or two now and then listening to other people's messages; and there are some interesting ones, no doubt, flying over the wires.