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Telegraph or Telephone

Despite the fact that recent experiments have demonstrated the possibility of telephoning over long circuits, it is to be doubted if the instrument will be used otherwise than locally. It's too sensitive to induction, to atmospheric electricity, and to grounds for circuits exceeding a few miles in length. The experiments have been tried under the best, not under the worst conditions, and through a complete metallic circuit—in other words, a double line. It is hardly possible for the telegraph business of two large cities to be conducted by telephone by the senders of messages themselves, for five hundred wires might not suffice to prevent a block in busy hours, and merchants could not and would not wait.

To operate telephones as the telegraph is now used would be equally impractical. Even were the instruments as little liable to disorder as the Morse, the greater danger of errors would weigh against them. There is no system of signals as clear as the present Morse code as interpreted by the "sounder." Each letter of a word is given, and ordinarily good operators seldom err in the record. By telephone it is the sound of a word, and not its vowels and consonants, which the operator receives, and a mistake can easily happen even under the best conditions. It is to be doubted, too, if the rapidity of transmission by telephone, where the message had to be written down at the receiving station, would even approximate that of the Morse system. Proper names, scientific terms, and phrases in a foreign language, etc., would have to be carefully spelled out, and even then would fall wide of accuracy.

By the Morse system good operators will receive at the rate of forty-five words a minute, which is almost the limit of rapid penmanship, and will often take a 2,000 word message without once interrupting the sender. The lines, too, will work in the heaviest weather, and are only interfered with by serious electrical storms, or by actual accident to the wires. Again, by the quadruplex system, four messages can go at once over one wire, while the

long distance telephone requires two wires for one message. All in all, there seems to be but little prospect of the present series of experiments resulting in a practical good, however gratifying from a scientific standpoint. —*N. Y. Sun*

Courtesy of Dickinson County Heritage Center