

Weekly Chemaewa American

VOL. 14

MAY 10 1912

NO 37

The First Cable.

Cyrus West Field retired from business at 35 years of age with a large fortune, when he first gained the idea that by means of cable laid upon the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, telegraphic communication could be established between Europe and America.

Some enterprising men had tried to stretch a wire across Newfoundland, the most easterly point on the American coast, and to have this connected with a line of fast steamers, which it was thought could reach the nearest point in Ireland in five days so that news could be carried from one continent to another within a week.

An attempt to build the line had failed, and a man rich enough and brave enough to carry it through was sought. Mr. Field, known as a man who had built up a large business from the smallest beginning, was urged to promote the scheme. He agreed to think about it. Sitting in his library, and turning over a globe the thought came to him: "Why not carry the line across the ocean?" The more he thought of it the surer he felt that the two continents could be united by a cable.

Morse in 1843 first suggested the union of the Old and New Worlds by means of the electric telegraph, but the principal obstacle was the unknown depth of the Atlantic and the supposed rocky nature of the bottom. When, however, Lieutenant Maury discovered that between Ireland and Newfoundland the bed of the ocean was nearly level and covered with soft ooze, Field began to discuss practical methods to lay telegraph lines on the bottom of the ocean.

He obtained from the Legislature of Newfoundland the sole right for 50 years of landing telegraph cables on the island from both sides of the Atlantic. He formed a stock company at once, of which Peter Cooper, Moses Taylor, Marshall O. Roberts and Chandler White were members. Field furnished one-fourth of the capital himself. The Governments of Great Britain and the United States provided ships, and the first expedition to lay the wire set out in 1857. The attempt was fruitless.

In 1858, the cable 2500 miles long, weighing one ton a mile, was taken in equal portions on board H. M. S. Agamemnon and the United States frigate Niagara spliced in mid-ocean and finally

(Continued on page 8.)