Upon Current Topics-Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph.

PRESIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT.

From the Pall Mail Gazette. We have recently been invited to study some of the elaborate reports put forth by the American departments. Some of them are very able, and most of them contain much useful information. It is therefore a subject of natural regret that their influence upon the national legislation is so very uncertain. Congress may, if it pleases, give them effect; or, if it pleases, may throw them aside as so much waste paper. As members of administration have no seats in the House, they cannot be certain of gaining an advocate for their schemes or pressing them with authority upon the attention of the Legislature. This has often been remarked by theoretical writers as a palpable defect in the United States Constitution. How could government be effectually carried on in England, they ask, if Mr. Lowe had not the opportunity of defending his own financial schemes, or Mr. Gladstone could only recommend Parliament to reform the Irish land laws in a kind of official pamphlet? Obviously, our whole theory of government would be upset by a change to the American system, and people sometimes wonder at the blindness which prevents them from following our example by adopting so obvious, and, as we naturally think, so indubitably beneficial an alteration.

The advantages of the English system are, indeed, palpable; and the first step towards constitutional government in France and other Continental countries consists in the adoption of our system. It may be worth while to inquire shortly why the United States form an exception to this rule, and whether it is possible to make out any case for their very different practice. Constitutions cannot be considered piecemeal; and it may be that an apparently trifling change is more vitally connected with the whole system than may be at first sight obvious. The plan was originally adopted in obedience to the prevailing theory at the time that the executive, legislative, and judicial departments should be as independent as possible; but the instinct which sanctioned that theory may have had deeper grounds than any abstract political speculations, which for the most part have already become obsolete. The real difference between the two systems is, indeed, wide enough. If General Grant were bound to select his chief ministers from Congress, as Queen Victoria selects hers from the houses of Parliament, he would be simply a constitutional ruler. His power and his responsibility would be enormously diminished. He must of course take the leaders of the party which had the majority, and must substantially carry out their policy. He would be nothing more than the head servant of Congress; or, indeed, considering the strictness of party organization in America, he would be little more than an ostensible official, whose name would appear at the foot of State documents, but whose practical influence over affairs would be merely such as his ministers chose to give him or as he might gain by private intrigues. As matters stand, the President can really exercise a very great power, even when, as in the case of Mr. Johnson, he is opposed to the majority of Congress and of the country. If backed by public opinion, even with a majority of Congress against him, he would be able, as in the case of General Jackson, to exercise a greater power than almost any European ruler. The change suggested, then, would amount to reducing the President from a very powerful Prime Minister to mere pageant; and it is plain that such a change, whatever its merits, would be a very serious affair. In an old country we can understand a constitutional sovereign, the limits of whose power, though not very strictly defined, rest upon long prescription, and are surrounded by a halo of historical associations. But such an institution is one of the things which, in the common phrase, grow and are not made. A democracy, building up everything afresh and upon first principles, desires that its executive should be the practical working

force, and not a great name concealing the real springs and levers of the machinery.

Such a democracy as that in America, moreover, is not afraid of extrusting great

powers to its ruler; it knows that his respon-

sibility to its will is thoroughly established,

and that if there is any tyranny, it will not

be the tyranny of an emperor, but that of a majority, to which it has no particular ob-

act as the viceroys of the constitutional

monarch, of whose prestige they more or

less partake; but if the colonies were to be-

come independent, they would probably pre-

fer to have a single ruler responsible imme-diately to them, and not to a body of dele-

gates, whose responsibility would be more

In our colonies the governors can

or less frittered away by its numbers. In short, a democracy likes to have vigor and unity in its executive so long as there is no practical danger that it will become independent of the popular will. Another conclusion is equally plain. Congress is very far indeed from being strictly analogous to the English Parliament. In spite of recent changes, it partakes partly of the character of a body of ambassadors from independent States, with strictly defined powers, as well as of a national legislature. Its functions in the widest interpretation are strictly limited. Most of the questions which stir the English Parliament would be entirely beyond its competence. Such questions, for example, as educational system, or the disestablishment of churches, or the alteration of land laws, could not possibly come before it. It has not the parliamentary attributes of omniscience and omnipresence. It does not meet its constituents at every turn of their daily lives, and settle everything, from the construction of a metropolitan drain to a change in constitutional law. It has nothing to do with the great mass of small legislative details, and on the most important matters it has to appeal to the direct intervention of the peo-. The popular sovereignty, indeed, is no mere theoretical dogma. The whole nation appoints its Prime Minister by its votes, and appoints him to do work, and not to be an imposing but generally inert authority. It equally appoints Congress to discharge certain functions, and does not desire that any of its servants should encroach upon the sphere of duty marked out for others. It follows that, even if it were not for other less creditable causes, Congress would probably

wide and intricate question. We will only [remark, at present, that the Americans might make out a rather better case than is generelly observed. It is a very intricate system which allows Parliament practically to elect the executive and to superintend its action in the most minute details. Now, if we were starting from first principles, and without the aid of traditional sentiments, would its advantages be at once obvious? It does not follow that, because a man is a good speaker or even a skilful parliamentary manager, he is therefore good at administration. Nor is it necessarily an advantage to a minister that his time should be taken up in constant de-bates, and his power depend upon judicious parliamentary manouvres. The elder Fox remarked in a critical period that Richelieu himself could not have governed the country if he had been able to spare only two hours a day for attending to the business of administration. The parliamentary system has many advantages, which have been too frequently pointed out to require mention; but we cannot say that, while freeing ministers from some of the temptations of a close bureau cracy, it proves in experience to be favorable to administrative efficiency. Doubtless, even in this respect, English ministers would compare very favorably with their American rivals; but then America, even more than England, has been a victim to the singular superstition that anybody is good enough to do the business of government. A country which changes its officials summarily every four years cannot possibly have decently good officials; but that is an evil which was imported long after the original formation of the Constitution, and cannot be described as due to its inherent defects. It is a result of the intensity of party warfare, not of any special political arrangements. If this most palpable evil were reformed the American machinery of government might sustain a comparison with foreign systems more successfully. The other change is of less palpable utility, and though much might be said in its favor, could hardly be carried into effect without a revolution of great importance and many doubtful bearings. Few sensible people would like to see Congress made omnipotent, in the hope, possibly ill-grounded, that its wisdom would increase with its power; but substantially that would be the result of permitting or, as must shortly come to be the case, of compelling the President to choose his ministers from its ranks. The disadvantages arising from the want of unity in the present system are unmistakabut the disadvantages of giving the whole power to a body constituted as Congress is at present are scarcely less conspi-

RAILROADS-STEEL.

From the N. Y. Tribune. In connection with the report of the Committee on Ways and Means, we submit to our readers the following important memorial. Among the signatures are the names of men the railroad history of our country as shrewd, far-sighted, and successful engineers and managers, and who are now the official representatives of more than 13,000 miles of road and nearly 20,000 miles of track. One of the companies on the list will lay more than \$1,100,000 worth of steel rails during the present year. The appeal of such men for the protection of American labor against the deadly assaults of unscrupulous competitors will command attention, and will doubtless be read with some degree of surprise by those who are ordinarily satisfied with the superficial theories of free trade, and do not trouble themselves to look at important political questions under their practical bearings. Why should the Presidents of powerful and

wealthy railroads ask for an increase of duties upon the rails which involve so large a portion of their annual expenditures? They certainly have no desire to throw money away, or to risk a reduction of dividends which will create dissatisfaction among their these are among the improvements which stockholders. Under the fierce competition and continual pressure to which all our great lines of travel are subjected in order to secure a reduction of freights and fares, a rigid scrutiny into the details of every important outlay becomes a matter of imperative necessity, and no excuse would be accepted from any officer who would favor an unnecessary

increase in the running expenses. But the management of a railroad is not limited by the mere interests of the moment. The heavy expenditure of capital in construction and operation is made with a view to an unlimited future of steady and continuous growth and prosperity. It would be poor policy to buy rails this year at a saving of ten dollars per ton, if the purchase would entail an annual loss of the like amount for ten years to come. And this is precisely the risk which the memorialists seek to avoid. They know that the desire to "crush out" importent branches of American manufacture is a chronic failing with John Bull, as has been manifested, sometimes by direct threats, sometimes by actions more eloquent than words. They know that whenever the crushing out has been accomplished, the foreign monopolists have been more merciless than harpies in their extertions. They know, from their own bitter experience, that the prices of iron rails were never to unsatisfactory as when our rolling mills had been compelled to dismiss their hands and close their works, leaving the market in the undisturbed control of the European makers. They know that the endeavor to secure the large trade of the United States has often induced offers of rails at that the low prices have led to a corresponding deterioration of quality. They know that the safety of travellers, and the limbilities of railroads for heavy damages in cases of accident, render it desirable that rails should be made where the materials used and the processes of manufacture can be readily inspected. They know that it was impossible to obtain any reduction in the price of steel rails until steps were taken to establish American works, and that, since the inauguration of home competition, the foreign makers have reduced the price with ruinous rapidity. They know that three of the five American mills have already been forced to suspend operations, and that the others will soon be obliged to follow their example if this rapid reduction is not checked; but that, if a reasonable time is granted, increasing experience and improved methods will secure cheaper and better rails than they could ever hope to obtain from an unbridled and irresponsible foreign monopoly. And knowing all this, they wisely seak for the interposition of Con-gress, in order to secure such healthy competition as will give them an uninterrupted sup-ply of trustworthy rails at reasonable prices.

in no case attract so large a part of the administrative abilities of the country, and that it would not be so desirable that the selection of Ministers should be confined to its members.

It is sufficiently plain, then, that the change of which we speak would really involve an alteration in the whole theory of government. Whether that change would be an exceedingly

Now that several millions of dollars have been expended in machiners, furnaces, and experiment in perfecting the process of manufacture is tall country, and numbers of our own officers are dependent upon it for support, the business is threatened with annihilation by the pressure of English and Prussian makers. We, as users of steel rails, and transporters of the food and material for American manufacturers and their numerous employes and skilled isborers, do not desire to be dependent exclusively upon the foreign supply, and therefore join in asking that instead of the present ad valorem duty, a specific duty of two cents per pound be placed upon this article, being the rate fixed by a bill which passed the Secate Januars 31, 1867, and of a bill which was reported to the House Exed by a bill which passed the Scatte January 31, 1867, and of a bill which was reported to the Hobas by the Committee of Ways and Means during the same year; provided that the atcel rails contracted for by railroad companies before January 1, 1879, be permitted to enter the country at the present rate of duty for six months after the passage of an act fixing the duty as herein petitioned for.

J. Edgar Thomson, Pres. Penn. R. R., etc. etc.
Thomas A. Scott, 1st Vice-Pres. Penn. R. R., etc. Hermann J. Lombaert, 2d Vice-Pres. Penn. R. R. Issae Hinckley, Pres. P. W. & B. R. R., etc. S. M. Pelton, Pres. Del. R. R., C. C. R. R., Vice-Pres. I. S. & M. R. R., etc. etc.
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Wm. H. Gatzmer, Pres. C. & A. R. R., etc.

THE MONARCH AND THE MIANTO-NOMAH. From the N. Y. World.

The Monarch, a model of British men-of war-or, to use the words of one of our most anti-Anglican contemporaries, "a marvel of naval architecture"-lies at anchor in the harbor of Portland, and alongside of her, in humiliating contrast, are two dilapidated American monitors, which seem to have been sent there to illustrate, at the expense of the national pride, the opinion of the Secretary of the Navy that they are good for nothing except for harbor defense, and not especially well adapted to that. They do not sail at all. They steer so badly that one of them in a calm sea, from mere awkwardness of movement, the other day, on this very trip, crushed to ruin the tug that was towing her. To use Secretary Robeson's own words:—"They cannot go to sea without several vessals to accompany them. Having no sailing power, they must be towed when their coal is exhausted. They are dangerous to health in who have been long and familiarly known in tropical seas, and with broken and disordered machinery they are helpless in mid-ocean." Two of the worst and most clumsy vessels of this description are sent to meet a craft which, says the correspondent of the Tribune, in 'sea-going qualities is un-surpassed by mything atloat, and whose wonderiul steadiness in the heaviest seas gives her immense advantage over any adversary. "She steers," adds the same writer-thinking rimly, no doubt, of the Misntonomahlike a yacht, and a single man can manage her helm with perfect ease. The features which most impress an unprofessional observer are the elaborate provisions for the comfort of the officers and men, the size of he cabins, the large and well-aired forecastle. and the wonderful abundance of labor-saving appliances, which would do credit to a whole century of Yankee inventors. Steam capstans, steam brakes, steam ventilators, steam pumps for the hold, steam pumps for washing the decks, gas-works, water condensers-

have been combined in this marvel of naval architecture. The moral of this contrast (whether the Navy Department intended it we do not pretend now to conjecture) is a very grave one. It is neither more nor less, reasoning from particulars upwards, than this:-that the Monarch and the Miantonomah are types of the naval service of Great Britain and the United States as now organized, and Captain Commerrell and his officers when they go home will have a right to say so, however discreet and reticent their duty of obituary courtesy compels them now to be. Nor let any one attribute this confession of ours to a feeling or impulse connected with wretched party politics here at home. The navy has always been an object of pride and sympathy on the Atlantic seaboard, without reference to politics or degrees of latitude. From the days when Machias was burned and New London blockaded, and the little Vixen escaped from Savannah, in 1813, and the John Adams from the Chesapeake, the navy has been an object of deep interest in the whole length of the land. The names of Preble, from Maine, and Tatnall, from Georgia, illustrate the outer limits of this paval renown and national sentiment; and as Mr. Webster once finely said, in a speech which his politic editor, Everett, omitted to republish, speaking of the military operations of fifty years ago: - "All our party differences cesse at the water's edge;" and we as fervently deplore the decay of this branch of the public service as does the veriest radical of the land. In fact a good deal more so, for the last few days have disclosed or de prices below the cost of manufacture, and | veloped an animosity on the part of Western radicals to the naval service which is truly portentous. We do not refer to the killing of the Lesgue Island job, when 'loyal' Philadelphia perished at the hands of her especial friends, and the shricks of O'Neill and Marca and the shricks of O'Noill and Myers and the stupendous rhetoric of Kelley availed naught; but we do refer to the suggestions made, and apparently favored, of abolishing and consolidating navy yards and building men-of-war by contract. We shall not be surprised to see Mr. Jefferson's anti-naval policy of withdrawing from the ocean, and contenting ourselves with gunboats or torpedoes at home, crop out from the soil of Mr. Farnsworth's hard economy. But there is another element of weakness in our naval service to which Secretary Robesonacting, as we believe he does, like his predecessor across the Delaware, under the influence of a cavilling, prejudiced adviser-does not refer, and as to which we hesitate to speak. But we may as well make a clean breast of it. The education and morale of the American navy are inferior, and this every one with opportunities of observation will admit The day of adventurous seamanship is, under the processes of science, pretty nearly over. There are no Hulls, or Decature, or Bainbridges, or Biddles, or Stewarts, for they are not needed. Admiral Farragut is almost the sole survivor. Let, any one read on the records of ancient days the narrative of Commodore Biddle's escape in the Hornet from a British line-of-battle ship in the East

Indies, or that of the Constitution off the

cosst of New Jersey in 1813, and he will un-derstand what "seamanship" once was and

what it need not be now. Who in these days of steam thinks of "club-hauling" a ship? is as much out of fashion as Peter Simple Captain Marryat himself. But to the necessity of mere seamanship has succeeded one of higher and more intellectual grade that of complete scientific accomplishment. If instead of the miserable ment. squabble now in progress between "staff" and "line" we could detect some other symptom of vitality, we should be content. If the surgeon and the paymaster and the marine officer (the engineer has enough to do, unless the Secretary cuts off all his coals) would on a long cruise read fewer novels, not play so much backgammon, and, quarrelling less with the first lieutenant, would 'study up" some scientific or historical subject, so as to make him the fit companion of accomplished men in other services, it would better entitle him to rank and straps and "side boys." If the line officers
—and we do not except commanders of ships
and fleets, whose chief duty, except on emergencies, seems to be to write letters of complaint to the clerks in the Navy Department-would do something of the same kind, though in a different direction, they would care less as to the "intolerable insolence" of the staff. We are far from meaning to intimate that the service of Great Britain is free from the blemishes we admit in our own. But no one will doubt, who has seen for himself, that the standard of the profession is higher. Where do we find on an American frigate the front cabin of the commanding officer turned into a school-room, and the midshipmen hard at work at their studies, with the captain and the chaplain (in our service a grotesque nondescript) and some of the lieutenants superintending the work? This is the rule on Eng lish ships of war. With us, generally speaking—for of course there are exceptions -education is supposed to end when the boy turns his back on Annapolis and bestows a parting "blessing" on Admiral Porter. What naval man nowadays studies thoroughly and for himself the science of international law, the want of which may present itself at any time? Three cases where this sort of knowledge came into play in an emergency occur to us in our own history. We refer to Com-modore Perry's eminent diplomatic successes in Japan; to Stockton's on the coast of California in 1846;, and last, not least, Commodore Biddle's admirable ability, first in the Brazils, and afterwards when, on the death of Mr. Everett in China, he was compelled, under circumstances of great delicacy, to act for months as Minister from the United States. We doubt very much if either Vattel or Wheaton or Kent are to be found in any frigate or fleet of ours, or, if they are, are much studied. Mrs. Henry Wood or Mrs. Stowe are greater favorites. All those serious and solemn truths we have felt ourselves under an obligation to utter. They are prompted by an earnest desire to see things change for the better, and are but an expansion of what the Secretary of the Navy has felt it his duty to say to the whole world. We are quite prepared to vindicate them against any cavil.

SPECIAL NOTICES.

OFFICE OF WELLS, FARGO & COM-PANY, No. 84 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, De cember 28, 1869 .- Notice is hereby given, that the Transfer Books of Wells, Fargo & Company will be CLOSED on the 18th day of JANUARY, 1870, at 3 o'clock P. M., to enable the Company to ascertain who are owners of the stock of the old Tan Million Capital. The owners of that stock will be entitled to participate in the distribution of assets provided for by the agreement with the Pacific Express Company.

The Transfer Books will be opened on the 22d day of

JANUARY, at 10 o'clock A. M., after which time the \$5,000,000 new stock will be delivered. Notice is also given that the Transfer Books of this Company will be CLOSED on the 25th day of JANUARY 1870, at 3 o'clock P. M., for the purpose of holding the annual ELECTION OF DIRECTORS of this Company The books will be RE-OPENED on the 7th day of FEB RUARY, at 10 o'clock A. M. 12 31 tF7 GEORGE K. OTIS, Secretary.

OFFICE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 25, 1870.

NOTICE TO STOCKHOLDERS. The Annual Meeting of the Steckholders of this Com-rany will be held on TUESDAY, the 15th day of February, 1870, at 10 o'clock A. M., at the Hall of the Assembly Buildings, S. W. corner of TENTH and CHESNUT Streets, Philadelphia.
The Annual Election for Directors will be held on

MONDAY, the 7th day of March, 1870, at the Office of the Company, No. 228 S. THIRD Street. 1 25 3w JOSEPH LESLEY, Secretary.

OFFICE OF THE BELVIDERE MANUFACTURING COMPANY.

Notice is hereby given to the stockholders of the BELVIDERE MANUFACTURING COMPANY respectively,
that assessments amounting to SIXTY PER CENTUM
of the capital stock of said company have been made and
payment of the same called for on or before the eighth
day of February, A. D. 1870, and that payment of such a
proportion of all sums of money by them subscribed is
called for and demanded from them on or before the said
time.

By order of the Board of Directors.
13 28 6w S. SHERRERD, Secretary. OFFICE OF ST. NICHOLAS COAL COMPANY, No. 2051; WALNUT Street.
COMPANY, No. 2051; WALNUT Street.
PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 28, 1870.
Notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of the Steckholders of the St. Nicholas Coal Company will be held at this Office on MONDAY, Feb. 7, at 12 o'clock M.
An Election for a Board of Directors will be held at the same time and place.

1288t
R. JOHNSTON, Secretary. OFFICE OF THE LEHIGH COAL AND

OFFICE OF THE LEMION COMPANY.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,

PHILADELPHIA, JRAMARY 31, 1870.

Certificates of the Mortgage Lass of this Company,
due March 1, 1870, will be paid to holders there if, or
their legal representatives, on presentation at this office
on and after that date, from which thus interest will
coast.

B. SHEPHER 3.

Treasurer. 1 21 mwf/3t

PHILADELPHIA AND READING RAIL ROAD CO., Office, No. 227 S. FOURTH Street. PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 22, 1839.
DIVIDEND NOTICE.
The Transfer Books of the Company will be closed on

FRIDAY, the Slat instant, and reopened on TUESDAY January 11, 1870.

A dividend of FIVE PER CENT, has been declared on the Preferred and Common Stock, clear of National and State taxes, payable in CASH, on and after January 17, 1879, to the holders thereof as they shall stand registered

on the books of the Company on the Sist instant. All payable at this office. All orders for dividend must be witnessed and stamped. S. BRADFORD, CONNELLSVILLE GAS COAL COM-

PANY.

PHILADELHIA, January 24, 1879.

The Annual Meeting of the atockholders of the CONRELESVILLE GAS GOAL COMPANY will be held at
their office, No. 3145 WALBUT Street, on MONDAY,
February 7, 1879, at 12 o'clock M., to elect five Directors
to serve for the ensuing year.
124mwist NORTON JOHNSON, Secretary.

NOTICE TO SHIPPERS. THE CHESAPRAKE AND DELAWARE CANAL will be closed, for repairs to a lock, on MONDAY MORN-ING, the 7th of February, 1870, and opened for navigation in a few days thereafter, due notice of which will be given. HENRY V. LESLEY, Secretary. Philadelphia, Jan. 27, 1870. 1 27 dilaF

CITY TREASURER'S OFFICE. PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 1, 1870.
Warrants registered in 1868 or 1868 to No. 60,000 will be paid on presentation at this office, interest cessing from

City Treasurer. THE PARHAM SEWING MAGHINE Company's New Family Sewing Machines are most emphatically pronounced to be that great desideratum so long and anxiously looked for, in which all the essentials of a perfect machine are combined.

115

QUEEN FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY,
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Office, FIGHIH and WALNUT Streets. DR. F. R. THOMAS, THE LATE OPE rator of the Colton Dental Association, is now the only one in Fhiladelphia who devotes his entire time and practice to extracting teeth, absolutely without pain, by fresh nitrous oxide gas. Office, 911 WALNUT St. 1 3% BATCHELOR'S HAIR DYE .- THE best in the world—does not contain lead—no vitriol poisons to paralyze the system or produce death. It is perfectly hornless reliable—instantaneous. Avoid the vaunted and delusive preparations beaating virtues they do not possess, if you would escape the danger. The genuine W. A. Batchelors Hair Dye has thirty years reputation to uphold its integrity. Sold by Druggista. Applied at No. 16 BOND Street, N. Y. WINES AND LIQUORS.

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MADEIRAS.—Old Island, South Side Reserve.
SHERRIES.—F. Rudolphe, Amontillado, Topaz, Vallette, Pals and Golden Bar, Clowa, etc.
PORTS.—Vinho Velho Real, Vallette, and Orown.
CLARETS.—Promis Aime & Cie., Montferrand and Bordeaux, Clarets and Sauterne Wines
G1N.—"Meder Swan."
BRANDIES.—Hennessey, Otard, Dupuy & Co.'s various vintages.

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GENTS' COTTON SHIRTS AND DRAWERS, LADIES' COTTON VESTS AND DRAWERS. Also, a very large assortment of

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