

THERE ARE PURCHASABLE SPIES IN MANY HOUSEHOLDS

Telephone Company Has a Gigantic System of Espionage.

Every Conversation at the Disposal of the Talker's Business or Social Rivals.



HELLO: "I WON'T BE HOME TO DINNER DEAR."

THE law safeguards the inviolability of letters sent through the mails. Their seal may not even be broken to further the ends of justice, except in the manner which the courts have determined, and in respect for private rights. The law, in a long line of statutes and decisions, has thrown protection around communication by telegraph. The rights of sender and receiver are defined and trespass upon them is at the peril of the trespasser. The tapping of telegraph wires to secure illicit possession of the messages they carry, for the benefit of other than the person sending and the one receiving them, is made a felony, and is punished penally. The interests of society and civilization are now so dependent upon modern methods of inter-communication, the mail, the telegraph and the telephone, that any violation of the trust assumed by either method is an offense, not only in itself, but by supplying facility for other offenses, makes the guilty of it a possible accessory to a wide range and great variety of crimes. If it were needful that the law protect the privacy of letters and of telegrams and of the telegraph wires, which offer peculiar facilities for tapping by the impossibility of guarding them on the deserts, mountains and lonely reaches over which they stretch, there is much more necessity that the law stand guard over the telephone.

It is in use in millions of homes for communication between members of the family, and in that relation carries every day messages of domestic confidence, many of which disclosed would throw society into a turmoil. It is used in confidential communication and between business men and their correspondents, agents and customers. It is profitably employed by the daily press in gathering news, in sending orders to reporters and correspondents for exclusive information, the inviolate ownership of which is a valuable consideration to a newspaper. So universal has become the employment of the telephone and so general is the public confidence in the privacy of its use that it is safe to say that violation of that privacy is a more serious offense than the opening of letters unlawfully or the tapping of telegraph wires. Telegrams can be sent in cipher and letters can be written in cipher. Communication by telephone is carried on as freely as though the parties stood face to face.

The possibility of a leak in the telephone carries disquiet and consternation into every home, public office and business establishment where the use of that instrument has become a necessity. A telephone company is an important trustee of the whole community patronizing it, and a violation of that trust is an offense of such aggravated criminality as to require the most drastic reprisals. Through being made the victim of such betrayal of this trust The Call has been led to use the means of demonstrating that the administration of the telephone company in San Francisco is corrupt to the core and its service a gigantic spy system and organized betrayal of its

customers for the benefit of their social, political, amatory, official or business enemies or rivals, who are willing to pay the price of the treachery and violation of privacy.

The first offense which attracted the attention of this office was committed by an employee of the telephone company at Sausalito. A Call reporter had sent in exclusive information of the attempted murder on one Chispa, and immediately the telephone operator repeated it to the Examiner correspondent. On investigation the operator admitted this offense and was discharged. This incident caused a quiet and searching investigation into the methods of the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company and its subordinate corporation, the Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Company. The former handles the local business of San Francisco, the latter all out of town business. The result of this investigation will startle the community and spread abroad a feeling of distrust and unsafety. Several sporadic leaks were found, but on chasing them down they were found to be no parts of the main system. They consisted in the results of chummy gossip between an occasional woman reporter and some of the telephone girls. In following them up it was discovered, however, that there was a regular system of leakage, as extensive as any one wished to have it who was willing to "put up."

At last it was found to be in the Examiner office. An employee of that paper devised it, and when he had it in working order was instructed to go on and perfect it. For that purpose he was supplied with theater tickets, money for suppers and entertainments. His work was to secure control of the operators and convert the switchboard into an adjunct of the Examiner office. His newspaper work consisted in sitting with a telephone to his ear and listening to messages which were leaked on to his wire by simply bringing its "plug" into contact with the wire that he wished to tap. In this way news reports to the other papers were stolen, private conversations between business men, politicians, public officers, men and women, husbands and wives, have been taken off, written down and kept in the Examiner office for use in the kind of journalism practiced there.

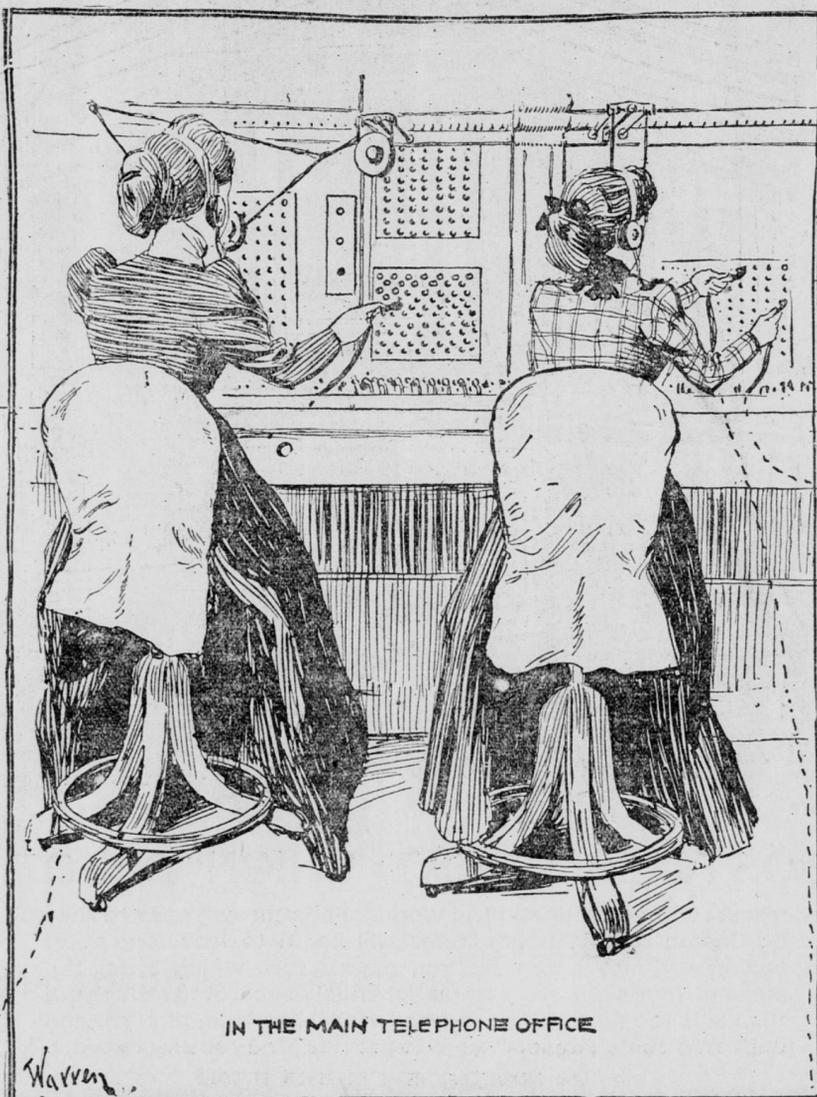
A prominent State official had a conversation over the Sunset wire with the Warden of San Quentin relative to Durant while that noted prisoner was there. Each official was alone at his end of the wire. But the operator at the switchboard leaked every word onto the Examiner wire and the conversation appeared in that paper next day.

The public recalls the difficulty encountered in the final disposition of Durant's body. The undertaker in charge of it received a Sunset message from the Pasadena crematory that it would be re-interred there and incinerated. Within five minutes an Examiner reporter was at his office asking when the body would be sent to Pasadena, and when the undertaker

sought to evade the question the reporter said: "You have just had a telephone message from Pasadena." The Call telephoned a gentleman in Oakland for his photograph, expecting to use it in connection with a contemplated

public distinction that might come to him. In a few minutes an Examiner reporter appeared at the gentleman's house and asked why The Call wanted his picture, and demanded it for his own paper and tried to extort information as

to the connection in which it was to be used. The city editor of the Examiner under whom the system of leakage was devised, for motives of revenge and reprisal on Mr. John P. Young of the Chronicle, took



IN THE MAIN TELEPHONE OFFICE

Warren



THE EXAMINER REPORTER

Organized Betrayal of Its Customers Carried on for Pay.

The Most Confidential Messages Leaked Directly Into the Office of the Examiner.



"ALL RIGHT GEORGE BUT COME HOME EARLY."

a leak of every telephone message to and from that gentleman and sought such use of the information so obtained as would be harmful to Mr. Young. When the T. C. Walker blew up in the San Joaquin The Call service gave it a prompt and full account, upon which it issued an extra. The Examiner force was summoned to get out an extra, also, but the grafter who had charge of the telephone leak proposed to find out what The Call was going to do, and was at once plugged on to The Call's wire at the switch board, and heard the orders issued for an extra, down to the minutest detail, even to the complaint about the slow action of the pot for melting the stereotype metal. The time lost in this eavesdropping let the Examiner pressman get away, so that no extra could issue from that office.

Extending the examination The Call found that three decoy conversations had been between the Call office and different people were accurately leaked on to the wire held by the inventor of the Examiner's method of violating the confidence and betraying the trust put in the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company.

It was found that messages over the wires of that company were as much at the disposal of an enemy or rival of the sender or the receiver as if they were shouted from the housetops or posted on the public billboards.

It was found that the instruction given to the operators who handle the out of town business over the Sunset wires is to take down verbatim every conversation held over those wires, and that every conversation is transcribed, indexed and preserved in the telephone office. The company cannot plead that this is for the purpose of determining the fee due from the sender of the conversation for use of the wire, because the rate is fixed by the time occupied and not by the number of words used.

This is a portentous record when one reflects that it is indexed and in the possession of a corporation which puts the messages sent over its wires at the service of any one who wants them plugged to his phone. It is disquieting to thousands to know that the switchboard of the corporation is as public and open to buyers who have no right to what they get as the meat block of a butcher's stall in the California Market. It is alarming that any and every message is subject to leakage and that there is no privacy nor confidence possible, and that this is not the result of accident, of induction of currents or chance contact of wires, but of a regular system devised and hourly carried out by the employees of the company and under the noses of its officers.

Many patrons of this telephone company, out of abundant caution, have private wires and phones, and to make security doubly sure some have these under assumed names, for the purpose of complete seclusion from their business or official cares, and yet controlling such communication as they wish. But The Call is prepared to show that in no case

are these devices proof against the Examiner's invention of this graft. How do Mayor Phelan, Governor Budd and other prominent officials like to know that they have not had privacy for a single message they have ever sent under the supposed security of these wires and pseudonyms?

ESTATES IN PROBATE.

Three Wills Placed on File With the County Clerk.

The will of Franz Joseph Metzler, who died December 13, was filed for probate yesterday. The testator directs that an estate valued at \$3000 be distributed among his children.

The will of Joseph A. Morzar, who died recently leaving property valued at \$10,000, has been filed for probate. The testator gives his widow, Rebecca Morzar, a life estate in the property and at her death directs that the estate be distributed among three children.

The last will of Eleanor M. Carlisle, who died December 25, has been filed for probate. An estate valued at \$20,000 is disposed of as follows: To Mrs. George C. Verslovich, \$3000; to Mrs. Abner Dobie, \$200; to F. B. McComb of Wilmington, Del., \$4000; to Berge Jenkins and Ernest M. Jenkins, \$4000; to the children of the late Sarah Brink, sister of her late husband, \$2000 each; to the children of the late David Carlisle, \$2000 each; to the children of the late Horace Carlisle the sum of \$2000; to the children of the late Maria Demmon of Wilmington, Del., \$2000, and the residue of the estate to the California Women's Hospital.

Lieutenant Price Laid Up.

Lieutenant William Price of the Seventeenth street police station, who had recently been appointed by the Chief of Police to take charge of the unruly Chinamen in the Mongolian section of the city, is laid up at his residence with a severe cold, which he contracted in driving the highlanders, cutthroats and all-around thugs into the sewers of Chinatown.

Since Price was assigned to the China section he has labored day and night in the discharge of his duties until at the time he was taken ill he had succeeded in driving every blackleg out of the Chinese strongholds, and the entire section had become as peaceful as though there never was a drop of human blood shed by the wielding of a Mongolian hatchet. Price is looked upon by the Chinese outlaws as the only man on the police force who is not afraid to wade right into their strongholds and scatter them. He has overtaxed his strength and through want of sleep he had to take to his bed a few days ago and temporarily give up his work.

The Insane Cause Litigation.

Many suits recently instituted by the State Lunacy Commission against the relatives and estates of insane persons to recover \$25 a month for each inmate during the entire time of confinement are now on hearing before Judge Coffey. An aggregation of lawyers representing the various relatives and estates are confident that the State's claims will be declared invalid.