

# Telegraphy a Step by Which Men Rise in the World of Business



EUGENE DUVAL



A. B. SMITH



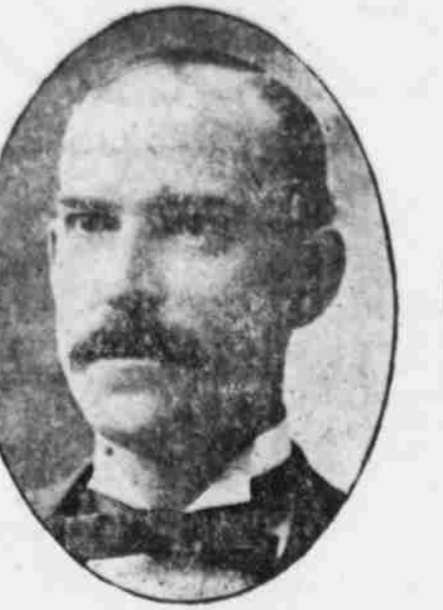
E. H. WOOD



J. O. PHILIPP



ROBERT W. HAYES



JOHN TETARD



FRANK LEHMER

**H**OW MANY men, high in the commercial affairs of the busy life had their start and first employment in handling the telegrapher's key? The number is legion, and right here in Omaha may be found many successful business men who made their beginning by earning wages in sending messages when mere boys. Many a farm lad has hung around the railroad station during the long winter nights and listened to the dots and dashes as they come over the wires, and under the tutelage of the patient night operator who, in the old times was not overburdened with business, has learned a trade which was sufficient to earn him a good living and throw him among associates who would boost him onward and upward until he enters the commercial world and soon occupies an enviable position with a sufficient income to provide for all wants.

The click of the sounder has a fascination for the youth and soon they begin to learn what all those sounds mean. With a little help it is but a short time before he is able to send a few words and then the rest comes. Telegraphy offers higher wages at the start than many other kinds of work which the youth might engage in and to the ambitious it is a great stepping stone to something better in the future. Many a man will tell you that telegraphy is a great training for the boys as it makes them alert and attentive to the call of duty, as when the instrument clicks, there must be no delay, but the business at hand must be attended to immediately. Men holding some of the highest salaried positions in Omaha made their start at telegraphy and some of the most successful business men of the city were at one time telegraph operators.

L. M. Talmage, assistant cashier of the United States National bank, has been connected with that bank for twenty years, but he got his start in a business way from telegraphy. He learned dots and dashes in a school during vacation time in Brooklyn, and then secured a job as an operator, working with the Western Union in 1881, 1882 and 1883, when he went into the New York office of the Union Pacific. In 1884 he moved to Omaha to enter the auditor's department, where he worked until 1887 when he entered the United States National bank. He is a member of the Old Time Telegraphers and Historical association.

While clerking in a dry goods store J. O. Philipp, assistant general freight agent

of the Missouri Pacific, spent his spare moments in learning the use of the telegrapher's key, or, rather, to read the tape, for it was not until afterward that Mr. Philipp could read by sound. He tells an interesting story of the way he was compelled to learn to read by sound. He says the boss simply took the tape out of the machine and told him to learn the sound or lose his job, so there was nothing left for him to do but to learn to read. He worked at Stavestown, on the old Pennsylvania line, between Pittsburg and Philadelphia, in the Allegheny mountains. After he had become a full-fledged operator he branched out as operator, dispatcher, local agent and on up until he is now assistant general freight agent of the Missouri Pacific in Omaha.

F. C. Hollinger is indebted for his start in the telegraph business to the wife of a former manager of the Western Union in Omaha, who taught him the code during vacation time. After he had learned to manipulate a key he worked in the local offices of the Western Union for five years and was then chief operator of the Postal Telegraph company for one year, after which he went into the brokerage business. He is now general manager for Logan & Bryan, grain and stock brokers.

Tom Collins Havens learned to telegraph at Elyria, O., in the office of the Lake Shore road. His first move was to Omaha, where he landed in 1877. He went to work for the Union Pacific and was with that road for thirteen years until he went into the coal business for himself. He worked both at the headquarters and as telegraph operator and ticket agent at the Union station.

Three small boys thought they would like to be telegraphers, so they installed a wire between their homes and, buying some instruments, learned the business. One of these was Elmer H. Wood, general freight agent of the Union Pacific. That was in 1875, and as soon as he had learned the code Mr. Wood secured a position in a railroad office, where he worked for eight years. He then went into the office of the general agent of the Union Pacific at Chicago, where there was a direct line with the Union Pacific offices in Omaha, and on this line Mr. Wood worked until he started on his upward career, which has landed him at the head of the freight department of one of the greatest freight-carrying roads in the country.

Eugene Duval, assistant general western

agent of the Milwaukee at Omaha, never did learn the telegraph business—he is like Tony, and "just growed" into the business. "I don't remember ever trying to learn telegraphy," said Duval. "My father was a station agent and I was born in a railroad station. I guess I must have just picked up the code like other children learn to talk. Mr. Duval took his first job when he was 15 years of age as night telegraph operator on the Grand Trunk. While working nights he learned shorthand, and was soon able to take the position as stenographer to the superintendent of the Wabash at Peru, Ind. He then moved to Omaha to work in the office of the general superintendent of the Union Pacific in 1885. Mr. Duval went with the Milwaukee in 1882 as stenographer and operator, after which he was contracting agent until he was promoted to his present position as assistant general western agent.

Frank Walters, general manager of the Chicago & Northwestern line west of the Missouri river, is a splendid example of a man who has risen fast from the ranks of telegraphers. He entered the office of a railroad company as a car checker, one of the easiest of clerical positions, and has risen step by step until he now holds one of the highest offices of a great railroad system. While checking cars he learned the code and was soon made an operator. He was then made an operator and train dispatcher of the Illinois Central, working up until he was chief train dispatcher and then chief clerk to the general manager of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern, superintendent of the Rock Island, assistant division superintendent on the Northwestern; superintendent of the Sioux City division of the Northwestern; assistant superintendent of the Nebraska and Wyoming division, and then general manager.

Edgar Allen of the wholesale grocery firm of Allen Brothers company started in life as a telegrapher and he thinks his early training in that line had a great deal to do in fitting him for the business of after life. "There is something about the business which makes a man alert," said Mr. Allen. "Something which keeps him on the lookout for what the next move will be and I think a short course in telegraphy would be good training for any youth." When but 18 years of age, Mr. Allen was dispatcher between Cincinnati and Lafayette, a distance of 110 miles. Mr. Allen learned the business in 1872 and in 1880 was



FRANK WALTERS

with the Union Pacific. The last work Mr. Allen did was at the time of the assassination of Garfield. Mr. Allen and his brother were just organizing their business, which has now grown to such mammoth proportions, and he had quit the Western Union office when the news came of the assassination of President Garfield. The manager of the Omaha office sent for Mr. Allen and prevailed upon him to return and help out in the rush of business which was going over the wires incident to the assassination of the president. He did the work and that is the last telegraphing Mr. Allen has ever done. He still delights to hear the messages as they fly across the country and relates several interesting incidents of hearing peculiar messages as they were sent from hotel corridors.

Luther Drake, president of the Merchants National bank, did his first work for wages as a telegraph operator, working at the key from the age of 13 to 17 years. Mr. Drake is a firm believer in every boy having something to do so, "when a boy has to do something he has to do the best that is presented for him to do," it became the lot of Mr. Drake to work at telegraphy for the

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GEORGE WEST



EDGAR ALLEN



LUTHER DRAKE



FRANK C. HOLLINGER



FRANK J. BURKLEY



T. C. HAVENS

# Magic of Electric Current Adapted to Restoration of Old Silverware

**O**NE of the great uses to which electricity is put is in electric plating in gold, silver, copper, brass, nickel, etc. Electric plating is the art of coating metals with metals by means of electrolysis. Although the term is only generally applied to the coating of articles with silver it is nevertheless quite applicable to the coating of metals with gold, copper, nickel or other metals. Electric plating is applicable to all kinds of metallic articles from a needle to a statue, either to protect the real surface from decay, or to beautify and ornament. The art is practiced to a very considerable extent in all civilized countries, and had its origin in England. It may not be generally known, but one of the largest industries in that line in the middle west is located in Omaha.

The Omaha Silver company, which was started something over a year ago, has grown to be one of the important industries in Omaha. It was originally started by the Omaha Hotel Supply company simply to supply the needs of that concern, but it has now grown to proportions never dreamed of at its conception, and the work for which it was exclusively inaugurated constitutes but a small part of the business now done by the Omaha Silver company. Before the Omaha Hotel Supply company conceived the idea of establishing a plant with which to do its own plating it had all that work done in Chicago, and as that concern furnishes cabinets to hotels throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico and Australia, all of which had to

be plated, that item alone constituted no small matter, and formed the nucleus around which has been built up the Omaha Silver company. There is no class of work in silver, gold, nickel, copper or brass plating that cannot be done by the Omaha concern.

One of the most interesting features of the industry is the way an article to be plated is handled from the time it is taken into the factory until it is turned out as good as new. First, it is put into a stripping solution, in which the electric current is reversed to negative. This process strips the article of all the old silver. Then it is sent to the buffing department, where it is handled on felt and walrus-hide wheels and buffed down perfectly smooth. It is then returned to the solution room, where it is dipped in a hot solution of cyanide of potassium, which removes all foreign substances from the metal. After this it is put through two or three washes of hot and cold water and is then placed in the silver solution. In this solution are hung silver anodes 99 per cent pure. The positive electrical current is then turned on and the article is plated with the silver, which the electricity takes from the anodes and deposits upon the article. This solution, being perfectly transparent, it is possible to see the deposit leaving the anodes and depositing itself on the metal. The different grades of plating, that is, triple, quadruple, etc., are secured entirely from the length of time the article is left in the solution, and also the amount of electrical current which is allowed to pass through

the solution. When watching the gradual and mysterious process for the first time, and seeing an old and worn article turn into a new and bright one as if by magic, one may, especially if he happens to be of a poetical turn of mind, think of Paul's words, "when this mortality shall take on immortality and this corruption shall take on incorruption." For if spirituality could be attributed to things inanimate, this would certainly be considered a spiritual operation.

After the article receives a certain amount of plate it is taken out and passed through cold water solutions. If a bright silver finish is desired it is taken to the burnishing department, where the silver is hardened and brightened by hand. The article is entirely gone over with a small steel and bloodstone burnishing instrument, which hardens the silver on the metal, in addition to giving it a bright finish. It is then taken to the buffing department again, where, by the use of very soft cotton wheels, it receives its luster.

Silver work, when newly whitened and polished, always looks unpleasantly white and glaring. Time will remedy this, but the process can be hastened by oxidizing the surface with any of the compounds of sulphur. The work may be exposed to the fumes of sulphur or washed with the solution of any of the chemical compounds of sulphur, the depth of color depending on the strength of the solution and length of time taken in exposing it to its action. In this way colors varying from a pale golden straw through deep crimson to purple and bluish black may



How It Came In.



How It Went Out.

EXAMPLE OF REPAIR WORK DONE BY OMAHA SILVER COMPANY.

be obtained. Alloyed gold can be darkened in the same way, only it is necessary to heat the metal until it is too hot to handle. Gold of 9, 12 and 18 karat can be darkened by heat alone, and often takes a most beautiful shade of purple if the heating is arrested at the right time. A velvet finish in plating may be had by the same process as used for a smooth finish, the only difference in treatment being that a steel wire brush revolving 800 times per minute is applied to the article before the plating process is begun. A special quality of sand is used in the buffing process, which is not obtainable in this part of the country. It is shipped here in barrels from the east.

Many people do not know that their tableware is made from Britannia metal and can be repaired and replated, even when in the worst stages of decrepitude, so that it will be as good as new. All of the big railroads have taken hold of their own dining car system in recent years and since doing so they all have their silverware replated and repaired every year or two, which not only preserves the goods, but with the heavy plate makes them positively better and more durable than the original article. Many of the large hotels have adopted the same policy. The Omaha Silver company takes care of the silverware of the whole Union Pacific dining car system, which is quite an item in itself. The soldering of silver demands the utmost care and scrupulous cleanliness of all materials. The parts to be joined together must be absolutely clean—that is, scraped bright. Automatic blow pipes are used in soldering and the utmost care must be used not to allow a portion of the metal to grow colder than the surrounding parts, as it will cause imperfect joints.

Oxidized plating is something that is used in nearly every line of business today and its use is fast increasing. Many manufacturers place their article on the market in the oxidized copper finish, as it is much more durable than the unfinished metal. All of the bank and office fixtures today are treated to an electro plating of oxidized copper or brass and then lacquered, which gives them a finish that will last for years. Lacquer is a transparent substance which is used as a finish on metal, the same as varnish is used as a finish on wood.

Omaha is very fortunate in having an electro plating factory that can successfully compete with the biggest Chicago concerns and thus draw business from the entire middle west. The Omaha factory is now doing the plating of the entire output of a large number of manufacturers, among the largest of which is the E. L.

Watrous Manufacturing company of Des Moines, which manufactures an extensive line of stamped steel hardware. The entire output of this factory was formerly electroplated in Chicago and now all comes to Omaha.

An interesting and important department of the Omaha Silver company is one devoted to the repairing and refinishing of bronze statues of every description. A great many bronze figures are discarded because they become broken and are thought to be beyond repair, but this department is in a position to replace any broken or missing part and fix the statue up as good as new. There

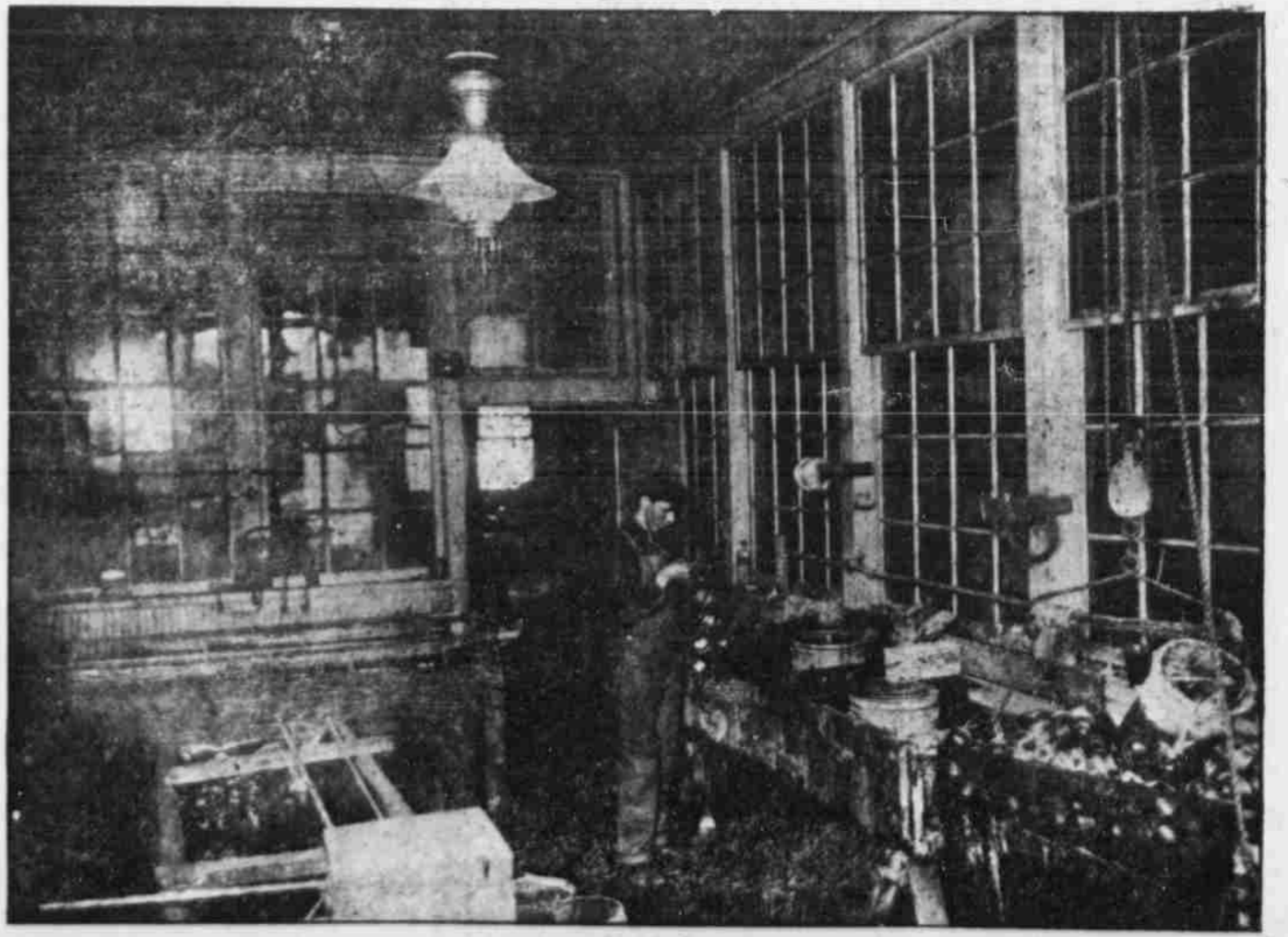
is no other factory this side of New York that does this kind of work, and hence it is not surprising that much of their work in this line comes from localities far in distant. This concern prides itself on being able to take any metal article, regardless of what is destroyed, replace the destroyed part and build the article up as good as new. Tea and coffee pots that have been partly destroyed by having been set on a hot stove, often having the holes burned in them, always come out of the factory in good shape to withstand for another period the abuses of the repairing girl. They also make a specialty of repairing articles of brass, such as automobile lamps, which, after having been badly smashed or tarnished, can be made to look like new; and, by the way, some very hopeless looking cases in the way of disfigured automobile lamps and fixtures have found their way into the Omaha Silver company's establishment at 24 South Thirteenth street, which would cause the unsophisticated, casual observer to mentally consign it to the junk pile, but which the company's facilities for handling repair work of this kind have enabled them to repair, electro plate, re-finish and return to the owner as good as new. As the use of automobiles in Omaha and vicinity has increased the company has found a corresponding increase in the work of this character which they are called on to do, and from time to time they have found it necessary to increase their facilities for brass work, until now they have one of the most com-

plete brass repair and finishing departments in the west.

When the art of electro plating was in its infancy many people seemed to entertain a sort of horror or at least prejudice against having the old family silver ware electro plated. Perhaps it had been handed down from generation to generation and the thought of having it plated seemed sacrilegious. That feeling has eventually passed away and the average woman now feels that silverware that perhaps came over in the Mayflower and which is battered and tarnished with long years of use or misuse, may be taken to the factory and electro plated and made as good as the day it was used on Frisella's table, without any disrespect to departed ancestors. And that this is being done is perfectly apparent from an inspection of the shelves at the Omaha Silver company. The utmost care must always be taken to protect the men in the plating department from the poisonous fumes which the process of electro plating causes, as the breathing of the fumes is liable to poison the blood as it passes through the lungs. Hence ventilation is an important problem in the plating department. The workmen's hands are protected by rubber gloves, otherwise the cyanide of potassium would be absorbed by the skin and cause painful sores. At present the factory employs fourteen men, all of whom are first class chemists, and they manufacture a class of goods which are shipped, not only all over the country, but even to New Zealand and Australia.



PART OF THE DRESSING ROOM, OMAHA SILVER COMPANY.



CORNER OF BATH ROOM, OMAHA SILVER COMPANY.