

In the Library of the IET in London there is a poem by the physicist James Clarke Maxwell concerning the ill fated 1857 trans-Atlantic cable. He describes the refrain as ". . . a perfect thicket of vain repetitions. To avoid these let (U) = 'under the sea', so that 2(U) by parity of reasoning represents two repetitions of that sentiment"

The song of the Atlantic Telegraph Co.

2(U)

Mark how the telegraph motions to me,

2(U)

Signals are coming along,

With a wag, wag, wag,

The telegraph needle is vibrating free,

And every vibration is telling to me,

How they drag, drag, drag,

The telegraph cable along,

2(U)

No little signals are coming to me,

2(U)

Something has surely gone wrong,

And it's broke, broke, broke,

What is the cause of it does not transpire,

But something has broken the telegraph wire,

With the stroke, stroke stroke,

Or else they've been pulling too strong,

2(U)

Fishes are whispering, what can it be,

2(U)

So many hundred miles long,

For it's strange, strange, strange,

How they could spin out such durable stuff,

Lying all wiry, elastic, and tough,

Without change, change, change,

In the salt water so strong,

2(U)

There let us leave it for fishes to see,

2(U)

They'll see lots of cables ere long,

For we'll twine, twine, twine,

And spin a new cable and try it again,

And settle our bargains of cotton and grain,

With a line, line, line-

A little line that will never go wrong.

KABELSKEPP

Vi fiskade upp atlantkabeln mellan Barbadoes och Tortuga,
höll upp lyktorna
och beslogo nytt katschuk på såret i dess rygg
15 grader nordlig bredd, 61 grader västlig längd.
När vi satte örat till det gnagda stället
hörde vi hur det surrade i kabeln.

"Det är millionärerna i Montreal och St John som tala
om priset på kubasockret och sänkningen av
våra hyror", sade en av oss.

Vi stodo där länge och tänkte, i en krets av lyktor
vi tåliga kabelfiskare,
så sänkte vi den lagade kabeln ned till
sin plats i havet.

Harry Edmund Martinson (Nobel Prize for Literature, co-winner 1974)

<http://nobelprize.org/literature/articles/larsson/index.html>

We fished up the Atlantic Cable one day between the Barbadoes and the Tortugas,
Held up our lanterns and put some rubber over the wound in its back,
Latitude 15 degrees north, longitude 61 degrees west.
When we laid our ear down to the gnawed place
We could hear something humming inside the cable.

"It's some millionaires in Montreal and St John
talking over the price of Cuban sugar, and ways to
reduce our wages", one of us said.

For a long time we stood there thinking, in a circle of lanterns,
We're all patient cable fishermen,
Then we let the coated cable fall back
To its place in the sea.

translated by Robert Bly and appears along with another cable related poem *Cotton* in *The Rattle Bag*
by Seamus Heaney

The remaining list appears in an appendix in "THE TIE THAT BINDS: The Pacific Cable and the Men Who Worked on it" Lynne McDonald, MA thesis, University of Auckland, 2006.

A poem written by Rudyard Kipling on the occasion of the opening of the Pacific Submarine Cable in 1902.

The Deep-Sea Cables

The wrecks dissolve above us; their dust drops down from afar -
Down to the dark, to the utter dark, where the blind white sea-snakes are.
There is no sound, no echo of sound, in the deserts of the deep,
Or the great gray level plains of ooze where the shell-burred cables creep.
Here in the womb of the world -- here on the tie-ribs of earth
Words, and the words of men, flicker and flutter and beat
Warning, sorrow and gain, salutation and mirth
For a Power troubles the Still that has neither voice nor feet.
They have wakened the timeless Things; they have killed their father Time;
Joining hands in the gloom, a league from the last of the sun.
Hush! Men talk to-day o'er the waste of the ultimate slime
And a new Word runs between: whispering, "Let us be one!"

Rudyard Kipling

http://www.everypoet.com/archive/poetry/Rudyard_Kipling/kipling_the_deep_sea_cables.htm

A poem written on the occasion of the [temporarily] successful laying of the Atlantic Cable, 1858.

'Tis done! The angry sea consents,
The nations stand no more apart;
With clasped hands the continents,
Feel the throbbing of each other's hearts.
Speed, speed the cable, let it run,
A loving girdle round the earth,
Till all the nations neath the sun
Shall be as brothers of one hearth.

Author unknown.2

Among the memorials to Samuel Morse is the following poem, the author of which I have been unable to find. Morse died in 1872. At Concord, New Hampshire, the following are extracts from a poem which was one of the memorial tributes.

When Man, in his Maker's image, came
To be the lord of the new-made earth,
To conquer its forests, its beasts to tame,
To gather its treasures and know their worth,
All readily granted his power and place
Save the Ocean, the Mountain, and Time, and Space;
And these four sneered at his puny frame,
And made of his lordship a theme for mirth.

But one morning he made him a slender wire,
As an artist's vision took life and form,
While he drew from heaven the strange, fierce fire
That reddens the edge of the midnight storm;
And he carried it over the Mountain's crest,
And dropped it into the Ocean's breast;
And Science proclaimed, from shore to shore,
That Time and Space ruled man no more.

Then the brotherhood lost on Shinar's plain
Came back to the peoples of earth again.
"Be one!" sighed the Mountain, and shrank away.
"Be one!" murmured Ocean, in dashes of spray.
"Be one!" said Space; "I forbid no more."
"Be one!" echoed Time, "till my years are o'er."
"We are one!" said the nations, as hand met hand
In a thrill electric from land to land.

3

Tom Standage, *The Victorian Internet. The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century's Online Pioneers*, London, 1998, p.57.

How Cyrus Laid the Cable

COME, listen all unto my song;
It is no silly fable;
'T is all about the mighty cord
They call the Atlantic Cable.

Bold Cyrus Field he said, says he,
I have a pretty notion
That I can run a telegraph
Across the Atlantic Ocean.

Then all the people laughed, and said,
They'd like to see him do it;
He might get half-seas-over, but
He never could go through it.

To carry out his foolish plan
He never would be able;
He might as well go hang himself
With his Atlantic Cable.

But Cyrus was a valiant man,
A fellow of decision;
And heeded not their mocking words,
Their laughter and derision.

Twice did his bravest efforts fail,
And yet his mind was stable;
He wa'n't the man to break his heart
Because he broke his cable.
"Once more, my gallant boys!" he cried:
"Three times! ó you know the fable, ó
(I'll make it thirty," muttered he,
"But I will lay the cable!")

Once more they tried, ó hurrah! hurrah!
What means this great commotion?
The Lord be praised! the cable's laid
Across the Atlantic Ocean!

Loud ring the bells, ó for, flashing through
Six hundred leagues of water,
Old Mother England's benison
Salutes her eldest daughter!

O'er all the land the tidings speed,
And soon, in every nation,
They'll hear about the cable with
Profoundest admiration!

Now, long live President and Queen;
And long live gallant Cyrus;
And may his courage, faith, and zeal
With emulation fire us;

And may we honor evermore

The manly, bold, and stable;
And tell our sons, to make them brave,
How Cyrus laid the cable!
John Godfrey Saxe

<http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/saxe01.html>

The Telegraphers Valentine, by J.C. Maxwell, 1860

The tendrils of my soul are twined
With thine, though many a mile apart.
And thine in close coiled circuits wind
Around the needle of my heart.
Constant as Daniel, strong as Grove.
Ebullient throughout its depths like Smee,
My heart puts forth its tide of love,
And all its circuits close in thee.
O tell me, when along the line
From my full heart the message flows,
What currents are induced in thine?
One click from thee will end my woes.
Through many a volt the weber flew,
And clicked this answer back to me;
I am thy farad staunch and true,
Charged to a volt with love for thee

<http://www.telegraph-office.com/pages/Poetry.html>

Poem written about the 1857 Atlantic Cable Expedition

Pay it out, Oh! Pay it out.
As long as you are able;
For if you put the darned brakes on
Pop goes the cable.

<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/canso/earlycab/tech.htm>

The Atlantic Cable

Let Earth be glad! for that great work is done,
Which makes, at last; the Old and New World one!
Let all mankind rejoice! for time nor space
Shall check the progress of the human race!
Though Nature heaved the Continents apart,
She cast in one great mould the human heart;
She framed on one great plan the human mind
And gave man speech to link him to his kind;
So that, though plains and mountains intervene,
Or oceans, broad and stormy, roll between
If there but be a courier for the thought --
Swift-winged or slow -- the land and seas are nought,
And man is nearer to his brother brought.

First, ere the dawn of letters was, or burst
The light of science on the world, men, nurs't
In distant solitudes apart, did send,
Their skin-clad heralds forth to thread the woods,
Scale mountain-peaks, or swim the sudden floods,
And bear their messages of peace or war.

Next, beasts were tamed to drag the rolling car,
Or speed the mounted rider on his track;
And then came, too, the vessels, oar-propelled,
Which fled the ocean, as the clouds grew black,
And safe near shore their prudent courses held.
Next came the winged ships, which, brave and free,
Did skim the bosom of the bounding sea;
And dared the storms and darkness in their flight,
Yet drifted far before the winds and night;
Or lay within the dead calm's grasp of might.
Then, sea-divided nations nearer came,
Stood face to face, spake each the other's name,
In friendship grew, and learned the truth sublime,
That Man is Man in every age and clime
They nearer were by months and years -- but space
Must still be shortened in Improvement's race,
And steam came next to wake the world from sleep,
And launch her black-plumed warriors of the deep;
The which, in calm or storm, rode onward still,
And braved the raging elements at will.
Then distance, which from calms' and storms' delays
Grew into months, was shortened into days,
And Science' self declared her wildest dream
Reached not beyond this miracle of steam!
But steam hath not the lightning's wondrous power,
Though, Titan-like, mid Science' sons it tower
And wrestle with the ocean in his wrath,
And sweep the wild waves foaming from its path.
A mightier monarch is that subtler thing;
Which gives to human thought a thought-swift wing;

Which speaks in thunder like a God,
Or humbly stoops to kiss the lifted rod;
Ascends to Night's dim, solitary throne,
And clothes it with a splendor not its own-
A ghastly grandeur and a ghostly sheen,

Through which the pale stars tremble as they're seen;
Descends to fire the far horizon's rim,
And paints Mount Etnas in the cloudland grim;
Or, proud to own fair Science' rightful sway,
Low bends along th' electric wire to play,
And, helping out the ever-wondrous plan,
Becomes, in sooth, an errand-boy for man!

This Power it was, which, not content with aught
As yet achieved by human will or thought,
Disdained the slow account of months or days,
In navigation of the ocean ways,
And days would shorten into hours, and these
To minutes, in the face of sounding seas.
If Thought might not be borne upon the foam
Of furrowing keel, with speed that Thought should roam,
It then should walk, like light, the ocean's bed,
And laugh to scorn the winds and waves o'er head!
Beneath the reach of storm or wreck, down where
The skeletons of men and navies are,
Its silent steps should be; while o'er its path
The monsters of the deep, in sport or wrath,
The waters lashed, till like a pot should boil
The sea, and fierce Arion seize the upcast spoil.

America! to thee belongs the praise
Of this great crowning deed of modern days.
'T was Franklin called the wonder from on high;
'T was Morse who bade it on man's errands fly --
'T was he foretold its pathway 'neath the sea:
A daring Field fulfilled the prophecy!
'T was fitting that a great, free land like this,
Should give the lightning's voice to Liberty;
Should wing the heralds of Earth's happiness,
And sing, beneath the ever-sounding sea,
The fair, the bright millennial days to be.

Now may, ere long, the sword be sheathed to rust,
The helmet laid in undistinguished dust;
The thund'rous chariot pause in mid career,
Its crimsoned wheels no more through blood to steer;
The red-hoofed steed from fields of death be led,
Or turned to pasture where the armies bled;
For Nation unto Nation soon shall be
Together brought in knitted unity,
And man be bound to man by that strong chain,
Which, linking land to land, and main to main,
Shall vibrate to the voice of Peace, and be
A throbbing heartstring of Humanity!

John Rollin Ridge

<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=RidThep.xml&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=2 &division=div2>