

number of lives would have been lost had assistance not been sent from the shore. When the Orient liner “Garonne” went ashore in the Red Sea some years ago the European crew did their duty like men, and both ship and passengers were saved by jettisoning some of the cargo. There were innumerable cases to show that Asiatics were not sufficient to man vessels, and in addition, they were not desirable additions to the population of these colonies. As a new mail contract would have to be entered into before long, the deputation thought the present was the most opportune time to bring the matter under the notice of the Postmaster-General.

Mr J. D. Fitzgerald instanced the “Quetta” disaster in Torres Straits, to show the utter unreliability of Asiatic crews in times of disaster.

Mr Kidd, in reply, said the present contract did not fall in until the end of next year, but the Imperial authorities had made a suggestion that the present contract might be continued on the same basis as at present for two years longer, in order that the whole of the Eastern contracts might fall in at the one time. This matter would have to be discussed by the forthcoming Postal Conference. The amount of subsidy paid by the colonies was £75,000 to the P and O. and Orient lines, and the Imperial Government contributed £95,000. With regard to the representations made to him by the deputation, all he could say was that in all probability a Cabinet meeting would be held on the following day, when he would lay before his colleagues all that the deputation had urged, and that was all he could promise at the present time.

Mr Davis suggested that the colonies might decline to extend the terms of the contract on the present basis.

Mr Kidd said that would be for the Conference to decide.

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