

dozen telegrams in all have been sent to, or received from, Mr. Larke, the commercial agent of the Canadian Government, during the whole six years he has been officially stationed in Australia. With a direct cable across the Pacific, the conditions would be entirely changed, and telegraphic correspondence would be frequent.

Again, the mail service is wholly inadequate. If the letter I am now writing leaves Ottawa to-morrow, and it be not delayed on the way to the steamer at Vancouver, it will be due to reach Australia in about four weeks; if, however, through any cause the mail-train on the long overland journey be delayed a few hours and reaches Vancouver too late for the steamer, this letter will not reach its destination for eight weeks. These facts strongly emphasize the great need of direct telegraphic connection; they go to show that the moment the Pacific cable comes to be submerged, the subjects of the one Sovereign, now estranged by geographical conditions, will be in a position to transact business and hold intercourse as friends and neighbours. Australasians and Canadians will then be enabled to flash their thoughts as kith and kin.

In the efforts which have been made to accomplish the desired object, there have been great and vexatious delays, but all difficulties were thought to be overcome when, on the 4th July last year, Her Majesty's Home Government, represented by the Colonial Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and others, met in conference the High Commissioner for Canada, and the Agents-General for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and New Zealand. At that conference a proposal was made on behalf of the Home Government, in the main satisfactory: in one particular, however, it has proved otherwise. It was proposed that the whole matter should be entrusted to a board of eight members, of which the four contributing Australasian Colonies should be represented by three. So soon as I heard of the proposal, I did not hesitate, as a humble Canadian, to point out that, according to my judgment, the arrangement was unfortunate, and that it was impossible to foresee to what difficulties it might lead. So it has proved. Had the Australasian Governments been allowed one representative each the complications and delays which have since arisen would certainly have been avoided. I venture to say it would have been quite possible to place the whole cable under contract within a few weeks after the date of the conference in July last.

Nearly nine months have now elapsed; we have reached a crisis which may prove fatal to the project, and in consequence I am impelled to address you, begging your sympathetic interest in a matter in which, with Canadians, you are equally concerned.

First, let me bring to your notice part of a speech of the Hon. the Postmaster-General, delivered at the recent annual meeting of the British Empire League. Mr. Mulock said:—"The Pacific-cable scheme to-day I regard as one of vital importance to the great doctrine that we are advocating—the unification of the Empire. We have by steam destroyed distances; oceans that separated the various parts of the Empire in days gone by, now, under the advantage of steam, are connecting-links between the various parts of the Empire. But we cannot, even by these methods alone, perfect the connections; we need in this rapid age, and must have, the still better method of communication which the electric spark affords; it is the only means whereby we can prosecute commerce in times of peace, and in times of trouble carry on successfully the military movements between the various portions of this vast Empire. It will be a national calamity, and nothing less than an unqualified calamity, if there be not a State-owned cable, not owned by one portion of the Empire alone, but by the various portions of the Empire formed into partnership for the common good: it will be nothing short of a national calamity if the scheme should fail."

Bearing on the subject I append my own remarks on the same occasion. I felt it incumbent on me to direct the attention of the League to a proposal to begin at once and gradually build up as opportunity offers a great system of State-owned cables, extending to the British possessions in every longitude. It will be obvious to you that such a system would place the Australasian colonies in a singularly commanding position in relation to the whole Empire; and I have no hesitation in saying that such a system, by reason of its being State-owned, would result in lowering charges on messages, to rates not now dreamed of. If in the United Kingdom charges on messages have been lowered in some cases to one-twelfth what they were when the telegraph-lines were in private hands, are we not warranted in the conclusion that in the larger field like results would follow a like cause? If the application of the principle of State-control in the United Kingdom has lowered charges on messages to  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per word for all distances, under the same conditions may we not look forward in the near future to the charge on ocean telegrams throughout the Empire being reduced to 1s. per word, or even less? This I conceive is by no means too sanguine a view to take; I have given the matter much consideration, and I am perfectly satisfied that if at this juncture the Australasian Colonies follow a wise course, they will be instrumental in conferring on the British people throughout the world the inestimable blessing of a State-owned cable system, by which eventually the very lowest tariff on messages will be obtainable. I much hesitate to express my full and deliberate views on this point lest I be regarded as a visionary. If, happily, the present difficulty be overcome, the Pacific cable proceeded with, and the larger scheme followed up, I am satisfied that one of the chief objects to look forward to in a few years will be a uniform 6d. tariff the world over for ocean cables: precisely on the principle of Imperial penny-postage. (For reasons and explanations, see my letter to Mr. Chamberlain, October 28, 1898.—Pacific-cable documents printed by Canadian Parliament, 1899, page 22). [Enclosure in No. 28, F.—8, 1899.]

I now venture to ask my fellow-colonists in Australia, is such a purpose as I have pictured worthy of some sacrifice on their part? Is an all-British comprehensive cable-system worth having? Should their answer be in the affirmative, I desire especially to point out to them the remarkable fact that the Pacific cable is the only key to such a new bond of Imperial unity. This fact certainly gives to the Pacific cable an importance which intensifies the calamity pointed out by Mr. Mulock as the inevitable result of failure in establishing that undertaking. These con-