A Committee of inquiry had reported to Parliament "That the telegraph service as managed by companies (1) maintained excessive charges, (2) occasioned frequent and vexatious delays in the transmission of messages and inaccuracies in sending them, (3) left a large number of important towns and districts wholly unprovided-for, and (4) placed special difficulties in the way of that newspaper press which had in the interest of the public a claim, so just and so obvious, to special facilities." The transfer was effected in 1870. Changes and improvements were immediately made; the telegraph service, previously confined to lines connecting great cities where business was lucrative, was extended to many towns and districts previously neglected, and, notwithstanding the fact that the charges on messages were greatly reduced, the business developed to such an extent that the receipts progressively increased. Before the transfer it cost about 6s. to send an ordinary message from London to Scotland or Ireland. The rate was reduced to 1s., and subsequently to 6d. (the rate at present charged), and for that sum a telegram can be sent from any one station to any other station within the limits of the United Kingdom without regard to distance.

It was early discovered by every country in Europe that so efficient a servant to trade and commerce, so important an aid to the State itself, should become a national institution. France, Austria, Prussia, Russia, Sardinia, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Belgium each established a State-telegraph system, and, as in Great Britain, experience has shown that they have done this not only with advantage to the various administrative necessities, but with benefit to the public at large. Such being the unanimous conclusion, is not the application of the principle of State ownership on a larger scale than hitherto attempted a fit subject for inquiry? Is it not desirable and expedient that the whole British Empire should have a State-controlled cable-system?

The conditions of the Empire are totally different to what they were some years back. When Her Majesty ascended the throne there was not a single mile of electric telegraph anywhere. There was not an iron ship of any class afloat, and mail steamships were practically unknown. From that period the conditions have been continually changing, and the process of growth and development still goes on. True, change has met with resistance from individuals and companies and classes; but, resist it who may, the law of development follows its steady course and continually makes demands on science and skill to meet the ever-changing conditions. We are living in an age of transformation; the spirit of discovery and enterprise, of invention and achievement, has extended and expanded the British Empire from the small islands on the coast of Europe to new territories, continental in extent, in both hemispheres. The development of the mercantile marine has carried the flag of our country over every mile of sea to meridians far distant from the Motherland. In these distant territories communities have established themselves under the protection of that flag. They have drawn riches from the forest, the soil, and the mine. They have caused noble cities to spring up, rivalling in the splendour of their streets and buildings the finest cities of the Old World. These young nations, full of hope and vigour, have made progress in every direction; they are imbued with lofty aspirations, and their most ardent desire is to give their energy and strength to the building-up of a greater British Empire, on the firm foundation of common interest and common sentiment.

At an earlier period of the world's history it would have been difficult to conceive the possibility of any lasting political union between countries so widely separated by intervening seas. The problem is, however, being solved not by old methods, but by the application of wise principles of government, aided in a wonderful way by the highest resources of modern science. Steam has made the separating oceans no longer barriers, but the general medium of union. Electricity has furnished the means by which the British people in all parts of the globe may exchange thought as freely as those within speaking distance. These twin agencies of civilisation are pregnant with stupendous possibilities. Already the one, as the prime factor in sea carriage, has rendered universal penny postage possible. The other has made it equally possible to bring the British people, so widely sundered geographically, within the same neighbourhood telegraphically.

Imperial penny postage will have far-reaching consequences; it is undoubtedly a great onward movement in the career of civilisation, and in the development of wider national sympathy and sentiment. But, great as are the benefits to follow the adoption of universal cheap postage, the first result, and not the least, will be to make plain that a postal service, however cheap and comprehensive, is in itself insufficient for the increasing daily needs of the now widely distributed British people. It will be seen that, in addition to an ocean penny postal service, the circumstances of our world-wide empire demand a cheap ocean cable service, extending to every possession of Her Majesty.

The carriage of letters at any known speed consumes time, and the length of time consumed depends on the distance traversed. The telegraph, on the other hand, practically annihilates space, and in this one respect has immeasurably the advantage over the ordinary postal service, especially in the case of correspondents who are separated by the greatest distances.

We can as yet but faintly appreciate the extent to which the telegraph may be employed, because its use heretofore has been restricted, on long-distance messages, by almost prohibitory charges. If messages be exchanged between places not far apart, let us say between London and Edinburgh, or Toronto and Montreal, the gain in time by the use of the telegraph is inconsiderable. But if the points of connection be far separated, such as London and Melbourne, or Ottawa and Cape Town, the comparison between a postal and a telegraph service brings out the distinct value of the latter. In either of the cases last mentioned, while it would require the lapse of eight or ten weeks to obtain an answer to a letter by post, if the telegraph be employed a reply may be returned the next day, or even the same day.

Existing long-distance cables are little used by the general public—it may be said, not at all except in emergencies. They are used in connection with commerce, the growing needs of which demand more and more the employment of the telegraph, but owing to the high charges exacted