

propose to trouble the meeting with a recital of the difficulty, or the manner in which the complication has been brought about. I shall only remark that it is idle for us in Canada to reflect on the course followed by the Australian Government. We are in entire ignorance here of the moving causes there. Australia and Canada regard the matter from entirely distinct stand-points, and we have little or no knowledge of the difficulties of the situation and the forces which have impelled the leaders of the Government of that country to take action which seems inexplicable to us. Under the circumstances of the case, we cannot with propriety charge the sister colonies with unfair dealing. We must uphold the honour of the British family of States, and banish from our thoughts any idea of intentional breach of faith or breach of contract on their part.

Mistakes may have been committed. According to our way of looking at the matter, a grievous mistake was made by the Government of New South Wales two weeks after the Pacific cable contract was signed, in granting certain concessions to the Eastern Extension Company; but we may well believe that it was done unwittingly, without any serious intention of injuring the undertaking or the interests of any of the partners. It may fairly be assumed that, had the consequence been foreseen, the Government of New South Wales would have hesitated before committing that State, and eventually the Commonwealth of Australia, to an act which cannot now be rescinded.

How the Government of the Commonwealth became involved in the difficulty is another question which has given the Premier, Sir Edmund Barton, and his colleagues much concern, but it is not at present necessary to discuss that matter. It is sufficient to know that a grave misunderstanding is the outcome, and I am quite sure all will recognise that the sooner the misunderstanding is brought to an end the better. The question which we may ask ourselves to-day is, How can the League serve Canada, serve Australia, serve the Empire, by seeking to remove the difficulty? In what way, and to what extent, can we inaugurate the blessed service of peacemaking?

I respectfully submit that a remedy is possible, but the circumstances demand prompt action. The most likely means of reaching a better understanding is for Canada to make an advance to Australia by appointing a Commissioner, preferably a Cabinet Minister, to proceed at once to the southern Commonwealth to confer fully and frankly with the Australian authorities on the whole subject. The Commissioner would learn on the spot, by direct contact with the leading men of all shades of opinion, much that could not be learned in any other way. As a delegate from Canada, he would be listened to with the utmost respect, and he would be able to assure the Australians that at no time has Canada been actuated by any narrow or unfriendly spirit—that her desire has always been, and now is, to cultivate the closest relations; that ever since the Colonial Conference of 1887, when the Pacific cable as a joint State enterprise received its first great impulse, Canada has been mainly moved by a patriotic and Imperial spirit.

The Commissioner will have it in his power to remind our southern friends and fellow-subjects that when Canada initiated the movement to establish the Pacific cable the lowest cost of telegraphing between any part of Australia and Europe was 9s. 4d. per word, and that the charge to-day is 3s. per word. Australians will not fail frankly to recognise that the saving to them of 6s. 4d. per word is in a great measure due to the persistent efforts of Canada. What does a saving of 6s. 4d. per word mean? According to the last returns of telegraph business which have reached Canada, the total number of words transmitted between Australia and Europe in 1901 was 2,330,515 words; and if this volume of traffic be reckoned at 6s. 4d. per word we have it demonstrated that there is an actual gain to Australia of not less than £737,850 annually.

This is the first result of the efforts of Canada to become connected telegraphically with Australia. The Commissioner will, of course, take some means of pointing out this. Nothing will appeal more forcibly to the intelligence of Australians than such a striking fact. As far as my personal observation goes, the people of Australia are much the same as the people of Canada; and I am quite sure that if the situation were reversed—if it could be shown that by any course of action Australia had in any degree been the means of contributing to our advantage to the extent of three and a half million dollars a year, Canada could only entertain the most kindly and grateful feelings towards Australia.

Let us then rest satisfied with the conviction that a Commissioner to our fellow-subjects in the south will have no difficulty in winning their confidence and friendship, and that any misunderstanding which now exists will be completely dispelled.

Some weeks ago the Canadian Government, on the suggestion of the Ottawa Board of Trade, asked the Governments of Australia and New Zealand to co-operate in an arrangement for the daily transmission of Press news free of charge for three months, or other short period. The arguments in favour of such a service are these: (1.) The Pacific cable was completed at the public expense for the public advantage. (2.) The cable so far has been lying idle in respect to Press news between Canada and Australia. (3.) It would add nothing to the working-expense of the cable to transmit daily in both directions, say, half a column of general news. (4.) Such a service would make known promptly in both countries the state of the markets, with all varying commercial conditions, and afford opportunities to business men to initiate trade operations. (5.) It would thus foster trade between the two countries, and the tendency would be to benefit the revenue of the cable eventually by stimulating the increase of ordinary messages. (6.) It would be a means by which the people of both countries would become familiar with each other's daily doings and habits of thought, and in this respect alone would greatly promote the general interests. (7.) Such a service, commenced experimentally, would create a demand in both countries for an interchange of intelligence, which would be met permanently in some form.

Admirable as is the proposal, I fear it came too late. The mischief had already been done in Australia. I venture to think that, had the free transmission of Press news commenced three months ago, the grave misunderstanding which has recently arisen would have been averted.