

If the form of the development to be attained is not clearly foreseen, it can at least be said that the entire British people in all parts of the globe are inspired by a unity of sentiment, and that they are simultaneously moving onwards in one general direction. Progress is the watchword in all quarters. It is impossible not to recognise the advancement perceptible in the colonies of the southern seas, and, equally, the amazing vitality in British Africa. The Dominion of Canada plays an important part in moulding the destiny of her own people and in promoting more intimate relationships between the Motherland and the colonies.

It is but thirty years since the scattered provinces of British North America became federated in one Government. The Dominion thus created inherited many remarkable advantages. It can lay claim to the most important geographical position, owing to its extension between the two great oceans, a position which confers the only means of establishing under the British flag communications between the eastern and western territories of the globe. It enjoys the possession of vast fields of the richest virgin soil, with still unexplored mineral regions of immense extent and presumably of immense value. The population retains the high qualities of the foremost nations of western Europe from which it has sprung, and the wide expanse of unoccupied areas leaves ample room for a large accession to its number. These rich possessions of the Dominion give promise, under wise guidance, of a splendid future.

It soon became evident that the development of a country continental in its extent exacted public works of corresponding magnitude. Lines of railway and telegraph were projected from ocean to ocean, and immediately after confederation both were proceeded with. In 1874 the policy of establishing the telegraph in advance of the railway was determined upon, and as a corollary to the trans-continental telegraph the proposal to extend the electric wire across the Pacific naturally followed. It can be said that ever since the telegraph reached the coast of British Columbia the Pacific cable has engaged public attention, and that the necessity of this undertaking has been repeatedly affirmed. It received recognition in the Conference of representative colonial statesmen in London in 1887, in that of Ottawa in 1894, at telegraph and postal conferences in Australasia almost annually, and at various times by chambers of commerce at Home and abroad.

The dominant idea with those who have most strongly advocated the establishment of a Pacific cable has been the unity of the Empire. They foresaw the difficulty of effecting any practical union between communities separated by distance so long as they remained without the means of direct and cheap communication. At the same time, it was plain to them that a telegraph across the ocean would foster trade and commerce—the life of an Empire such as ours.

Among the memorable gatherings of representative men not the least important was the Conference of Premiers in London on the occasion of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee. Before these statesmen met hopes had been entertained that some definite action would be determined for the inauguration of the scheme. Preparations had long been made for joint action. It was one of the chief objects set apart for special consideration at the Conference of the Imperial and Australasian Governments held at Ottawa in 1894. With this view the Canadian Government, agreeably to a resolution of the Conference, obtained much information on the subject, and transmitted it to all the Governments interested in the projected work. Soon afterwards the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Mr. Chamberlain) invited the Canadian and Australasian Governments to send representatives to London for the purpose of taking part in an Imperial Committee to be appointed specially to receive evidence and consider the project in every detail. The Committee first met on the 5th June, 1896, and on the 5th January, 1897, they reported the results of an exhaustive inquiry.

The proceedings of the Committee, and the conclusions which have been formed, have not been made public. They have been repeatedly asked for, but, as nothing transpired respecting the labours of the Committee up to the Jubilee week, the opinion gained ground that when the Conference was concluded full information would be given to the public, with the decision arrived at by the Imperial authorities and the colonial Premiers. In many quarters it was expected that action would on that occasion be taken, and that the inauguration of the cable would result as a practical outcome of the Queen's Jubilee.

The old proverb tells us that it is often the unexpected which comes to pass. The proceedings of the Conference of Premiers were first made known to the public by an article purporting to be published by authority in the *London Standard* of the 25th July, and the subject of the Pacific cable is thus alluded to: "The Conference left the Pacific-cable scheme in mid-air, and it is very unlikely that anything more will be heard of it for a considerable time. The position was entirely changed by a proposal by the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company to lay 'an all-British' line from Western Australia across the Indian Ocean to Mauritius, thence connecting with the Cape and St. Helena and Ascension. . . . The Eastern Extension Company, it is understood, does not ask for a direct subsidy for the new lines, but seeks other concessions from the Australasian Governments, which, if made, will justify them in proceeding with the work."

In the account of the Conference of Premiers laid before the British Parliament, there is a reference, in two sentences, to the cable. No mention, however, is made of any proposal having been submitted by the Eastern Extension Company. But the Premier of New South Wales (Mr. Reid) returned home from England through Canada, and, being interviewed by reporters in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver, confirmed the statement with respect to the proposal of the Eastern Extension Company. The character of the concessions asked by the company has not been made public, but it has been stated that they desire to obtain exclusive rights for Australia on condition that they connect the colonies with the Cape and lay a new cable from the Cape to England *via* St. Helena, Ascension Island, Sierra Leone or Bathurst, and Gibraltar. The scheme is put forward by the company as a substitute for the Pacific cable.

Owing to the fact that telegraphic connection with the Cape is at present extremely defective, the proposal of the company is undoubtedly of great importance to South Africa