

Objection.

5th. That the Delegates committed an error in computing the comparative time occupied by the mail steamers in the conveyance of letters by the respective routes, by the period required *via* Southampton instead of that *via* Marseilles.

6th. That "by no possibility could the regular fortnightly communication spoken of by the Delegates in their tenth Resolution be established in the way they propose, inasmuch as * * * it would be beyond human power to divide the month equally."

7th. That, in truth, it is clearly not for the improvement of the service that the resolutions of the Delegates are framed, "but that which is sought to be greatly altered is the incidence of payment."

8th. That although, "in some of the despatches from the Governors of the Australian Colonies, and in the report of the proceedings of the Delegates, great stress is laid upon the magnitude of the commerce now existing between the United Kingdom and Australia," such fact (however much the subject for rejoicing) does not appear to have any application to the question now under consideration; this question being not whether there should be much or little postal communication

Answer.

of the Mother Country and of the Colonies require that the services should be by the way of Suez and King George's Sound," is not pointed out; unless it is to be inferred that His Grace has relied alone upon the opinions expressed by the minority in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, and the statements of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce (both avowedly interested in an adverse view of the question), to the exclusion of those entertained and expressed by the other Colonies, and recommended by the respective Governments, including that of Victoria.

5th. It is so manifestly unfair to compute the comparative time occupied by the respective routes, by the period required *via* Marseilles, that it scarcely requires an answer. This route is not available to the great bulk of correspondents by reason of its cost, which also operates upon the transmission of important documents, such as Government despatches, which, from their bulk and weight, are necessarily forwarded *via* Southampton.

If important matters require an acceleration in the time of transit, the still more rapid method of the telegraphic line is available, and has been applied; but this, like the shorter period *via* Marseilles, is entirely a question of cost, to be estimated and decided upon by the degree of emergency. But this objection would have no weight at all in regard to a line *via* Torres Straits; the Marseilles route being equally available for a mail delivered by that line as for the one *via* King George's Sound. For all practical purposes, therefore, as far as this Colony is concerned, the comparative time must be computed *via* Southampton.

As the tables relied upon by His Grace do not furnish the materials for this computation, recourse must be had to such materials as can be furnished by the records of this office.

6th. As the contract time for the respective services is: Southampton *via* Suez, fifty-seven days, and Southampton *via* Panama, fifty-nine days, it certainly does not appear impossible or "beyond human power" to establish a fortnightly service by alternating the despatch of mails by the respective lines,—say the 1st and the 15th of the month. Under the old arrangement of the monthly mail, which was despatched from London *via* Suez on the 20th of every month, this arrangement could have been easily effected by despatching the mail *via* Panama on the 4th. It is true that, under the present arrangement, by which the despatch of Australian mails is made entirely subservient to the Indian and West Indian service, some difficulty might present itself; but even this would not apply to the route *via* Torres Straits, as the Australian mail would then be forwarded to Singapore by the alternate fortnightly China mail, and the service, if not the month, would be divided equally.

7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th. As the objections urged in these paragraphs are those which most concern this Colony, as being calculated to excite feelings of dissatisfaction in the minds of its residents, I propose to make any observations I may suggest applicable to them collectively.

The effect of His Grace's remarks is this—that the Colonies, moved by feelings of rivalry, and influenced alone by local considerations, have endeavoured to introduce a change in existing postal arrangements, not with a view to improvement in the service, but solely with a view of relieving themselves from the burthen now imposed upon them, by removing the incidence of the same to Great Britain; and that, moved by considera-