

2. That we are called upon, to suit the convenience of the English Government, to pay an increased subsidy for an inferior accommodation; for, seeing the difference of time afforded for the reply to correspondence, it is quite certain that this Colony would have preferred to pay the increased subsidy for the monthly service, rather than, as at present called upon to do, for the four-weekly service.

3. It must be borne in mind that a subsidy payable by the Colony at large is intended for the advantage of all its inhabitants, and not for the benefit of a particular few. Now the correspondence of this Colony, to (say) at least five-sixths, is despatched by way of Southampton, and arrives in England seven days after the despatch of the Southampton mail from the London Post Office; and the advantage of a steam postal service to such correspondents becomes more than doubtful while the ordinary clipper sailing-vessels are making average passages of seventy-five days. Nor can it be considered that the usual course of post should be reckoned as *via* Marseilles, since for the extra accommodation an extra price is paid by the writer of a letter; and if at some future time a railway to Constantinople were to shorten the course of post by five days at an extra cost of a shilling to the sender of such letter, it could hardly be held that this could be reckoned as a course of post to the Colony at large.

4. That all the advantages of the present four-weekly service accrue to the Mother Country and the Colony of Victoria, while the wants and requirements of all the other Colonies have been either disregarded or forgotten.

5. That the establishment of a fortnightly mail *via* King George's Sound and Point de Galle would aggravate and intensify the existing inequality, and render the steam postal contract entered into by Great Britain still more unsatisfactory to the Colonies of New South Wales and Queensland.

6. That since the Postal Conference was held at Melbourne, the population, wealth, and importance of the Colony of Queensland have greatly increased; the trade *via* Torres Straits has largely augmented; the telegraphic communication in and towards that Colony has considerably extended; and its claims to an equal consideration in any postal arrangements are infinitely more imperative.

7. That for all these reasons we are decidedly of opinion that, in the event of any fortnightly postal service being established between Great Britain and the Australian Colonies, such service should be carried on *via* Torres Straits and Singapore, alternating at regular intervals with the existing four-weekly service *via* King George's Sound and Point de Galle, and making a port in the Colony of Queensland the first point of arrival and the last of departure.

And, lastly, we would urge that, in a money point of view, this Colony would not suffer by such contemplated arrangement; since the amount of its share of subsidy to a Torres Straits route would scarcely, if at all, exceed the amount of contribution it now pays to the Galle route. Thus, by a withdrawal from the latter, the duplicate service would be created, and a reciprocation of postal advantages with the Southern Colonies would doubtless be established.

I have, &c.,

JACOB L. MONTEFIORE,
Chairman of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce.

E.

SIR,—

Chamber of Commerce, Melbourne, 26th May, 1868.

I have the honor, by direction of the Committee of the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, to submit to you and your honorable colleagues the expediency of giving your early attention to the question of a fortnightly mail communication with England. It has been long admitted that the interests of the whole community would be subserved by a more frequent mail communication with Europe, and recent circumstances have more forcibly impressed the necessity for it upon the public mind.

I may be permitted to state that this Chamber has on several occasions recorded its opinion in favour of a fortnightly service. In November, 1862, a special general meeting of the members was called to discuss it; and although on that occasion the scheme of Messrs. Burstall and Campbell for a line of mail steamers *via* the Cape of Good Hope, and another of the Union Steam Navigation Company to furnish a mail service by the same route, were before them, the meeting almost unanimously affirmed the desirability of a fortnightly communication by the present route.

In September, 1866, I had the honor, by desire of the then Committee of the Chamber, to bring the question under the notice of your honorable predecessor, and the Committee were informed that the Government of Victoria had already expressed their willingness to contribute (to the full amount authorized by law if necessary) their proper proportion towards a fortnightly service, provided that no additional postage rate should be imposed. The honorable gentleman, however, stated circumstances from which he inferred that the Imperial Government were not at that time favourable to the proposal for a fortnightly mail between Ceylon and Australia.

In the early part of last year, this subject again forced itself upon the consideration of the Chamber, in consequence of the agitation which arose out of the publication of the proposals of the Intercolonial Postal Conference. In a petition to Parliament which was presented at the end of March, 1867, and signed by about 750 merchants and other persons engaged in business in Melbourne, the establishment of a fortnightly service by way of Suez and Galle was urged, in preference to the scheme of the Conference, as being far less costly, and yet affording superior advantages to the Colonies.

In promoting that petition, the then Committee of the Chamber published some calculations and comparative statements of the probable cost to this Colony of the monthly and semi-monthly services *via* Galle, including all the branch services. That statement showed that, if the total cost were distributed amongst the Colonies in the proportion recommended by the Conference, Victoria would have to pay an annual contribution of about £31,250 for twenty-four mails each way.

The information which has since come to hand upon this subject enables the Chamber to form a still more reliable estimate of the total cost of a bi-weekly service *via* Suez and Galle, and I have therefore to ask your indulgence in submitting to you the following figures:—