

E. C. Cracknell,
Esq.,
continued,
10th May 1878.

216. *By Mr. Cuthbert.*—That assumes that the capital can be borrowed at four per cent., the guarantee being six.—Yes.

217. *By Mr. Mein.*—You say the average life of a cable is fifteen years, what are the circumstances that usually contribute to its death?—One reason, the destruction of the coating wires through oxidization, so that when the cable is lifted it will not support its own weight.

218. *By Sir James Wilson.*—I think you stated that you recommend that the company should lay the line, that the colony should not take the responsibility?—Yes, the company should lay the line, and take all the responsibility, but the colonies should assist them.

219. Subsidize them?—Subsidize them, and assist them in raising the money.

The witness withdrew.

Samuel W. McGowan Esq., examined.

S. W. McGowan,
Esq.,
10th May 1878.

220. *By the Chairman.*—You know the purpose for which we are here?—Yes.

221. The Conference has had the evidence of Colonel Glover, and Mr. Cracknell of New South Wales; and we wish you to tell us whether you have considered the question of duplication of the cable, and the various suggestions that have been made; we would like to hear anything you have to say bearing upon the subject for which the Conference has met?—I have very little to add to the report that I have already written upon the subject, which is in print.

222. Will you briefly summarize the conclusions you have arrived at?—Looking at the matter from an economical point of view, no doubt the cheapest way of obtaining what we require would be the provision of a duplicate cable between Port Darwin and Singapore, by way of Banjoewangie.

223. Following the same route as the present one?—Not exactly the same route.

224. Going on the other side of Java?—Following the same route nearly, as far as Banjoewangie, but following a new route from Banjoewangie to Singapore where there is now no cable. There have been, of course, several proposals for taking cables to the westward of the points I have named, but they are in many respects open to objection on account of the extreme depth of water in one direction, and the fact that many of the difficulties under which the present cable labors would still exist in a more westward direction, namely, the presence of coral; that has been one of the difficulties I believe, in the mechanical way. A proposal that did find some favor at one time was a line from Ceylon direct, by way of Keeling Island to Western Australia, but there have been many objections raised to that upon the grounds that the seas are not known; the depth of water is not known; and they have never been properly and accurately surveyed and, therefore, matters might arise of which at present we are totally unaware; so the proposition would be to a certain extent rather suggestive than absolute.

225. Are you practically acquainted with that sea?—No; I merely speak from what we have learnt from others.

226. *By Mr. Cuthbert.*—That would be more expensive?—It would be more expensive, undoubtedly; but the proposal made some twelve months ago involved an expenditure at that time of £55,000 a year for thirty years; that would be much more expensive, of course, than the more easterly route.

227. Whose proposal was that?—That was a proposal by Siemens Brothers, through Mr. Coote.

228. *By the Chairman.*—Do you consider that the interruptions that we have had between Port Darwin and Singapore upon the cable exceed the average for the same length of line in other parts of the world?—At the present moment I do not know of any line that would afford a direct contrast as to the number of interruptions, but there can be no doubt that the interruptions that have occurred recently have been considerably in excess of what would have been the case if the cable had been laid so as to secure, as far as might be possible, absence of interruptions; the coral has a very severe effect upon the cable; I saw portions of cable covered with large masses of coral, and I was told that the difficulty of recovering the cable was mainly due to masses of coral upon it.

229. I see from the return published that there were only two interruptions in the year 1876, and two in the previous year 1875?—But the interruptions were of considerable duration; one was from April to October, or nearly that.

230. From April to August; that might be prevented by having greater facilities for repairing as far as the time is concerned?—Yes; the steamer was employed in another position at the same time, otherwise the repairs might have been effected much earlier.

231. Would not greater convenience for the repair of the existing cable be a more economic and equally successful mode rather than duplicating it?—That would be a question entirely governed by the duration of the present cable. The present cable is not by any means new now; it has been submerged over six years, and as a cable grows older the chances for repair—that is, the facilities for making repairs—become less than they would be with a new, or a comparatively new, cable. I think you found the first two or three years of the life of the present cable passed over with very few interruptions indeed, barring the first one.

232. How long do you consider the life of a cable?—It is a very difficult matter to say; of course there are cables that have lasted remarkably well. Some of the cables in the English Channel lasted particularly well; but the Atlantic cables have not been equally favored in that way. The cables of 1865 and 1866 are very remarkable for the number of interruptions upon them, and latterly for the absence of any repairs; they found it an impossibility to repair them. A heavy expenditure was incurred for attempted repairs during last year, but without result.

233. *By Mr. Burns.*—Is it within your knowledge that cable messages received from England come to a large extent to Melbourne, and also to Adelaide, and are there telegraphed very largely to other colonies; one message is made the basis of a large number of messages? Yes; that is commonly done,—what is called the packing of messages—that is, the codification of messages where they are codified.

234. That is not what I mean —?—If messages are received at Adelaide by an agent and split up there—divided there—of course it is necessary to credit each of the colonies to which the messages are sent.

235. Is that matter within your own knowledge—does it take place?—Yes, no doubt it does take place; there are agents in Adelaide who receive messages and transmit them in that new way.