

gressive spirit of Canada. On a public occasion, when the Duke was being congratulated on the successful accomplishment of the movement, he frankly conceded "that it would be unfair if he did not at once shift the credit from his own shoulders to those of his brother Postmaster-General of Canada." In an equally generous spirit, Mr. Henniker Heaton, by letter, expressed to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Canadian first Minister, his appreciation of the enlightened policy of the Canadian Government. "To you and your colleagues," he said, "and, above all, to Mr. Mulock, Postmaster-General, we are indebted not only in these historic islands, but in every land inhabited or ruled by men who are free subjects of Queen Victoria for the realisation of Imperial penny postage."

The Fourth Reform.

While the third reform is the expansion of the first, the fourth reform is the expansion of the second. A State-owned transmarine cable service encircling the globe may be regarded as the complement of the three preceding reforms. Not only is it rendered necessary by the evolution of the Empire and the enormous expansion of British interests during the Victorian era, but it is made possible by a number of contributing circumstances which have arisen during the same period.

In the tenth year of Her Majesty's reign electricity was first employed as a means of telegraphing. The *London Journal of Botany* for that year, 1847, refers to the gum of a new plant from the Malay Peninsula, which had found its way to England, and states that the plant itself had then been named by Sir Joseph Hooker, the famous director of the Royal Gardens at Kew. The new found gum, gutta-percha, was soon afterwards discovered to have an extraordinary degree of electrical non-conductivity, and on that account it has proved indispensable in the manufacture of submarine telegraph cables. Since its introduction and the laying of the first Atlantic cable about 30,000 tons of this gum have been used for electrical purposes. As every effort to find a substitute for gutta-percha has so far failed, it is clear that but for the discovery of this substance the immense progress that has taken place in ocean telegraphy would have been impossible. The development of ocean steamships may be instanced as another contributing cause. Before the Queen ascended the throne there were no steamships which could have been employed in cable-laying. Even if it had been possible to manufacture cables it would have been impossible without steamships to stretch them across the ocean. A sailing-ship tacking in adverse winds, or driven out of her course by storms, would have been ill suited for cable-laying.

As in the case of the land telegraphs of the United Kingdom, we are indebted, in the first place, to the enterprise of private companies for the establishment of ocean cables. Some of the cable companies have been assisted in their enterprises by liberal Government subsidies, and the companies so assisted, such as those connecting Great Britain with Australia, have met with rich returns. Having regard solely to the public interests, it has long been in contemplation to establish a cable across the Pacific, so as to connect Australia with the Mother country by way of Canada, and to retain the new cable under the direct control of the State so as to render it in the highest degree serviceable. This proposal was strongly advocated at the Colonial Conferences of 1887 and 1894, and on other occasions. It has, however, been persistently opposed by the allied cable companies, who have left nothing undone during the fourteen intervening years to prevent its realisation.

It is not to be regretted that private enterprise should have been richly rewarded as in this instance, but other considerations present themselves. The great object of companies is to earn large profits and pay to shareholders high dividends; but the policy of maintaining a profitable monopoly is not always compatible with great public needs. In the present case the progress of the Empire and the requirements of the British people have far outstripped the narrow policy which best suits private companies, and precisely as in 1870, when it became necessary for the Government to assume possession of the land lines of the United Kingdom, it has now become a matter of general expediency for the State to own and control the telegraph cables between all its possessions. There has been a prolonged struggle between public and private interests, but at length the public interests have triumphed. The principle of State ownership and State control of submarine cables was formally confirmed on the 31st December, 1900, when the contract for laying the Pacific cable was signed.

This act, the signing of the Pacific cable contract, simple and unpretending as it may seem, was really a greater step towards the unity of the Empire than the most splendid conquest. As an act of partnership between six Governments it is far-reaching in its effects, and may be regarded as the forging of the key to the solution of the great Imperial problem which the new century presents to us. It is important that we should grasp the magnitude of this problem. We must fully realise that the Empire is no longer limited to a group of comparatively small islands on the western fringe of Europe, which daughter-nations are proud to designate their Mother country. The Empire of the twentieth century is to be found in five continents; it comprises vast territories in both hemispheres; and its people everywhere cherish common sentiments, sympathies, and aspirations. Being separated by wide seas, they require the best means of mutual intercourse. For general security and purposes of State, no less than for the operations of trade, and for social requirements, they demand the freest use of the most perfect means of communication known.

The improvement of the mail-service by the adoption of universal penny postage was a wise Imperial measure, but in view of geographical conditions the mail-service alone is inadequate. The electric telegraph can meet the conditions, and it is the only agency that can do so; but it must not be restricted by the limitations imposed by companies, whose main object is private profit. This great agency of civilisation has been given to man for nobler purposes. A little reflection will show that brought under State control it is destined to revolutionise the world's correspondence. By carrying the postal-telegraph service to every post-office in every British possession around the globe our people, so widely sundered geographically, will telegraphically and practically be drawn into near neighbourhood.