Great Britain's Pacific Cable.

An interesting story relating to Great Britain's Pacific cable is told in the Chicago Inter-Ocean:

After long discussion and many delays and difficulties, due in part to the hostility which the great project aroused, the British cable across the Pacific is at last completed and open for business. The length of the cable, allowing 10 per cent for slack, is 7,986 nautical miles. It extends from Vancouver to Fanning island, 3,561 miles; Fanning island to Fiji, 2,093 miles; Fiji to Norfolk island, 961 miles; Norfolk island to New Zealand, 537 miles, and Norfolk island to Queensland, 834 miles.

This great enterprise has been talked about ever since 1870. About that time Cyrus W. Field evolved a scheme for connecting California with China by way of Alaska and Japan.

The British were much interested in the project, and it was widely discussed in England, with the idea of laying a British cable across the Pacific. The conclusion finally reached, however, was that Mr. Field's project was impracticable, largely on account of the prevalence of ice in the northern regions and the consequent difficulty of erecting and maintaining the connecting land lines.

For some years nothing more was heard of a British cable across the Pacific. But at last the scheme of an all-British route linking British Columbia with Australasia came into view and was examined in all its bearings.

As soon as the enterprise began to be very seriously considered opponents of the scheme came forward and urged all sorts of physical and mechanical difficulties in the way of carrying it out. It was asserted, for example, that a cable to extend across the Pacific could not possibly be worked; also, that it would be impossible to repair the cable, because the depths were undoubtedly very much greater than those encountered in the Atlantic.

John Bright, a firm friend of the project, combated this view. He asserted that, from all the facts known with regard to the Pacific, the maximum depth to be encountered in laying the cable would probably be found near the Fiji islands, where it would be necessary to submerge the cable in from 3,300 to 3,400 fathoms.

He pointed out, on the other hand that the Atlantic cable of 1869 ran into some 3,200 fathoms, and that this was only one example of several of laying cables at a similar depth. His deduction naturally was that a Pacific cable would encounter difficulties, so far as depth was concerned, only slightly greater than in the case of lines then in successful operation.

The difficulty of sending dispatches over so long a cable, he declared, might very easily be obviated by landing the cable at various islands on the way across the ocean and relaying the messages. This is the plan that has actually been carried out.

Mr. Bright's prediction as to the depths along the route has been fulfilled in a remarkable manner, though the data on which he founded his statement were very meager. In surveying the route some 1,900 soundings over 500 fathoms in depth were made. The greatest depth along the entire route is 3,200 fathoms, but the general average is much less.

The financial aspects of the enterprise were then discussed. The British government finally, in 1899, declined to contribute a farthing toward laying the cable.

Mr. Chamberlain definitely announced that the most the government could do was to pay an annual subsidy of $100,000 for a period not exceeding twenty years. He said the government was of the opinion that the cost of the cable should be borne by the colonies interested.

It was only after public opinion in Great Britain had exerted much pressure on the authorities that the government finally decided to become responsible for five-eighteenths of the cost of the cable. The total cost has been nearly $10,000,000, of which Great Britain and Canada have paid five-eighths, New Zealand one-eighth and the Australian states have divided the remainder among them.

The fact that Great Britain had no round-the-world communications except through a number of foreign countries was the great argument that brought about the realization of the project. There were lines of telegraph stretching from England to India and Australia by way of the Mediterranean and the Red sea, around Africa, and across Europe and Siberia. But every one of these lines of communication would certainly be broken at once in the event of a great European war.

A cable across the Pacific from Canada to Australia would obviate this peril. With the completion of this cable England has telegraphic communications around the world which touch only British soil except at the Cape Verde islands and Madeira, belonging to her ally, Portugal.

Thus, in the event of war, the whole machinery of England's vast commerce may be diverted from the European and Asian routes to a route that is practically all British. The English, therefore, believe that the new cable will guarantee to an important extent the security of their trade.

Another advantage of the new line will be the large reduction in the cable rates to Australasia. The rates from South Australia to British Columbia by way of London have been as high as 6 shillings 3 pence a word; and if the message was sent from New Zealand the rate was increased by the local charge to as high as 7 shillings 5 pence a word, which was almost prohibitory as far as ordinary business is concerned.

It is said that the rate between British Columbia and Australia will now be reduced to 2 shillings, or 50 cents a word. The importance of this reduction to the business correspondence between these two great members of the British empire is very evident.

It is estimated that about 2,000,000 words may be transmitted over the new cable in a year.

"Don't give up," said the kind-hearted millionaire to the man who had lost everything and couldn't find a job. "I am so busy giving away libraries that I have no time to consider your case, but be brave. Tomorrow happiness may come to you. We never know about these things. Often when we think all is lost victory has her hand raised ready to knock at—"

"Ah, yes," the sad one said as he passed along. "It may be as you say. Everybody else has knocked. It's up to victory."—Chicago Record-Herald.