

POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS.

THE first Australasian post-office was established by Governor Macquarie in the year 1810, Mr. Isaac Nichols being appointed Postmaster. The office was in High-street (now known as George-street), Sydney, at the residence of Mr. Nichols, who was, "in consideration of the trouble and expense attendant upon this duty," allowed to charge on delivery to the addressee 8d. for every English or foreign letter of whatever weight, and for every parcel weighing not more than 20 lb., 1s. 6d., and exceeding that weight, 3s. The charge on Colonial letters was 4d., irrespective of weight; and soldiers' letters, or those addressed to their wives, were charged 1d. Very little improvement in regard to postal matters took place for some years. In 1825 an Act was passed by Sir Thomas Brisbane, with the advice of the Council, "to regulate the postage of letters in New South Wales," giving power for the establishment of post-offices, and to fix the rates of postage.

It was not, however, until 1828 that the provisions of the Act were put into full force. The rates of postage appear to have depended upon the distance and the difficulty of transmission. The lowest single inland rate was 3d., and the highest 12d., the postage on a letter increasing according to its weight, which was fixed for a single letter at $\frac{1}{4}$ -ounce. Letters between New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land were charged 3d. each (ship rate), and newspapers 1d. Other ship letters were charged 4d. single rate, and 6d. for any weight in excess. The privilege of franking was allowed to the Governor and a number of the chief public officials, and letters to and from convicts passed free under certain regulations.

In 1831 a twopenny post was established in Sydney; and in 1835, under Sir Richard Bourke, the Act of 1825 was repealed and another Act was passed, fixing the charge on a single letter at 4d. for 15 miles, 5d. for 20 miles, 6d. for 30 miles, and so on up to 1s. for 300 miles. In 1837 a post-office was established in Melbourne, and a fortnightly mail was established between that city and Sydney. Stamps were introduced in the same year in the shape of stamped covers or envelopes, which are believed to have been the first postage-stamps ever issued. By 1838 there were 40 post-offices in the colony of New South Wales

which at that time, of course, included the territory which is now known as Victoria and Queensland; and in the Sydney office about 15 persons were employed. The revenue of the Department for the year was £8,390, and the expenditure £10,347; while payments were made by the New South Wales Government to the post office at Korraika, in New Zealand, which was not created a separate colony until 1841. In 1847 an overland mail between Sydney and Adelaide was established. Stamps in their present form were issued in 1849, and the postage rates were fixed at 1d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. for town and 2d. for country letters, at which they remain in most of the colonies to-day.

Regular steam mail communication with Great Britain was first established in 1852. Until that time the Australian colonies had to depend upon the irregular arrival and despatch of sailing vessels for the carriage of mails, but in the year mentioned the steamships *Australia*, *Chusan*, and *Great Britain* were despatched from England, making the voyage in 60 days, and causing a strong desire in the minds of the colonists for a more frequent and steady system of steam communication with the Old World. The outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854 hindered for a while the accomplishment of this object; but in 1856 a line of steamers was again laid on, and the service was carried on by the Peninsular and Oriental Company and the Royal Mail Company for some years, but without giving so much satisfaction to the public as might have been expected.

As far back as 1854 a proposal was made for the establishment of a line of mail packets *via* Panama, and negotiations on the subject were carried on for several years between the British Government and the Governments of New South Wales and New Zealand. The result was that in 1866 the service was started, and continued in operation until the end of 1868, when it was terminated through the failure of the company by which it had been carried out. In the following year New South Wales, in conjunction with New Zealand, inaugurated a mail service *via* San Francisco, which, with a few interruptions and under various conditions, has been continued up to the present time.

The establishment of a mail route *via* America had the effect of stimulating the steamship-owners who were engaged in the service *via* Suez, and from that time there was a marked improvement in the steamers employed, as well as in the punctuality and speed with which the mails were delivered. The Peninsular and Oriental Company have carried mails for the colonies almost from the inception of the ocean steam service, with very few interruptions. Towards the end of 1878 the Orient Company commenced carrying mails between Australia and the United Kingdom, and has continued to do so ever since. In the year 1883 the fine steamers of the Messageries Maritimes of France entered the service, followed in 1887 by the North German Lloyd's, so that there are now sometimes two or even three mails received

and despatched every week, and a voyage to Europe, which was formerly a formidable undertaking, involving great loss of time and much discomfort, is regarded as a mere pleasure trip to fill up a holiday.

In the year 1893 another mail service was established, by a line of steamers running from Sydney to Vancouver Island, in British Columbia. This line seems likely to open up a valuable trade between the Australian colonies and those of British North America. There is also a line of steamers, subsidised by the Queensland Government, running between Brisbane and London, but the other colonies make little use of these vessels.

GROWTH OF POSTAL BUSINESS.

The growth of postal business in each of the colonies during the thirty-three years from 1861 to 1894 is shown below. It will be seen that the number of letters for all Australasia in 1861 was less than is now transacted by any individual colony, Tasmania and Western Australia excepted. The true total for Australasia is, of course, not to be found by adding the figures of the several colonies together, as inter-colonial letters are counted both in the colony from which they are despatched and in that in which they are received for delivery. A second total is therefore given from which this excess has been excluded:—

Colony.	Post Offices.		Letters and Post-cards.		Newspapers.		Packets.	
	1861.	1894.	1861.	1894.	1861.	1894.	1861.	1894
New South Wales....	340	1,895	4,369,463	69,163,000	3,334,245	41,667,300	105,338	13,564,600
Victoria	369	1,719	6,109,929	64,884,000	4,277,179	22,738,100	....	8,878,400
Queensland	24	993	515,211	17,794,100	427,489	10,906,600	3,555	4,387,100
South Australia	160	648	1,540,472	16,445,600	1,089,424	8,010,400	....	1,420,700
Western Australia ....	..	206	193,317	5,097,000	137,476	5,073,000	....	1,461,000
Tasmania	100	327	835,873	5,723,000	895,656	4,447,600	....	1,286,800
New Zealand .....	..	1,353	1,236,768	27,291,600	1,428,351	9,769,000	....	8,625,400
Australasia .....	..	7,141	14,801,033	206,399,200	11,639,820	102,612,000	....	39,624,000
Australasia(exclud- ing intercolonial excess) .....	..	..	14,061,000	190,019,200	10,941,400	96,044,800	....	36,771,100

Since 1890 the Post-office authorities in Victoria have not made an estimate of the correspondence dealt with in that colony, and the figures for 1894 given above are based on the average increase in the number of letters, newspapers, and packets passing through the offices of the other six colonies, taken in conjunction with the relative increase in population. It should also be noted that the official figures for Western Australia have been greatly reduced, as in that colony correspondence is counted at every post-office through which it passes. A corresponding table to

that already given, showing the number of letters, newspapers, and packets per head of population, is appended :—

Colony.	Letters and Post-cards.		Newspapers.		Packets.	
	1861.	1894.	1861.	1894.	1861.	1894.
New South Wales	12	56	10	34	1	11
Victoria	11	55	8	19	.....	8
Queensland	17	41	14	25	1	10
South Australia	13	47	9	23	.....	4
Western Australia	12	69	9	69	.....	20
Tasmania	9	37	10	28	.....	8
New Zealand	14	40	16	14	.....	13
Australasia*	11	46	9	23	.....	9

* Intercolonial excess excluded.

The colonies of Western Australia and New South Wales take the lead in letters and newspapers, but New Zealand comes before New South Wales in the transmission of packets. A comparison of the average number of letters and post-cards per head of population in Australasia with similar figures for the principal countries of the world is afforded by the table given below. It will be seen that on a population basis the correspondence of Australasia exceeds that of any of the countries named, with the exception of the United Kingdom :—

Country.	Letters and Post-cards per head.	Country.	Letters and Post-cards per head.
United Kingdom	53	Austria	25
Australasia	46	Netherlands.....	24
Germany.....	40	Belgium	21
Switzerland	37	France	19*
Canada	27	Italy	6

* Letters only.

The inland letter postage is 1d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. on town and 2d. on country letters in all the colonies except Victoria and South Australia, where the charge is 2d. per oz. and $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. respectively on all letters posted for delivery within the colony. In Victoria the minimum charge was in 1890 reduced to 1d.; but the loss was too great, and in 1892 the rate was raised to 2d. until the 30th June, 1894, the period being afterwards extended until the 30th June, 1897. The intercolonial rate is uniformly 2d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. in Australasia. The most liberal inland newspaper rates are to be found in New South Wales, Western Australia, and Tasmania,

where newspapers printed within the colony are transmitted free if posted within one week of publication, although in New South Wales the maximum weight which escapes postage is 10 oz. It is, therefore, only natural that these colonies, as shown in the table given on page 182, should exceed their neighbours in the average number of newspapers carried per head of population. In Victoria, South Australia, and New Zealand the charge is $\frac{1}{2}$ d. each, and in Queensland $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per 10 oz. The intercolonial postage on newspapers is $\frac{1}{2}$ d. each in Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania; $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per 10 oz. in New South Wales, Queensland, and Western Australia; and 1d. each in New Zealand.

The number of registered letters and packets passing through the post-offices of the Australasian colonies has largely increased of late years, and in New South Wales the number which passed through the General Post Office alone in 1892 was no less than 1,075,241, an increase of 203 per cent. in seven years. This large increase was not, however, a natural growth, but arose chiefly from correspondence relating to so-called "consultations," or lottery sweeps connected with horse-racing, which were established in Sydney, and to support which large sums of money were sent to that city from all parts of Australasia, as well as from other countries. Probably not less than 600,000 of the total for New South Wales in 1892 were associated with these lotteries. The Government of that colony dealt with the evil in an amending Postal Bill in 1893, and this illicit branch of the postal traffic was removed to Queensland, the number of registrations dealt with at all post-offices in New South Wales in 1894 being 938,546—a reduction of 174,362 letters at the General Post Office alone during the year—while in the northern colony the registered letters in 1894 numbered 430,148, an increase of 158,656 on the figures for the previous twelve months. In the beginning of 1896, however, the Parliament of Queensland passed an Act making these lotteries illegal, and the evil was transferred to Tasmania. In Western Australia and New Zealand the post-office officials report that 195,791 and 279,177 registered letters were respectively dealt with during 1894; but these figures are too high, as they represent the total registered correspondence as obtained by counting the letters at every post-office through which they pass. For Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania no particulars of registrations whatever are available.

Excepting Western Australia, where there was no inland service, there were inland, intercolonial, and international parcels posts in operation in 1894; but statistics of the services on a uniform basis are not obtainable. During the year there were passed through the post-office of New South Wales 367,890 parcels, weighing 1,124,786 lb., and having a value of £99,651, the postage collected amounting to £21,729; in Victoria 233,326 parcels, yielding a revenue of £10,937, were dealt with; in Queensland the number of parcels which passed through the post-office was 81,531, and the revenue derived from the service

amounted to £4,782; in Western Australia 8,026 parcels, the declared value of which was £13,174, were dealt with; in Tasmania 2,869 inland parcels were posted during the year, while 10,130 packets and parcels, valued at £7,849, were received from the United Kingdom and the other colonies; and in New Zealand the inland parcels numbered 149,150. No particulars are available of the South Australian service.

In all the colonies there are money order and postal note systems in operation, and in all the colonies except South Australia post-office savings banks. Particulars of the working of these services will be found in the chapter dealing with Private Finance.

The following table shows the number of inhabitants and the area in square miles to each post-office for the year 1894. It will be seen that the most sparsely populated colonies have the greatest number of post-offices in comparison with their population, but in order to judge of the relative extension of postal facilities the area of country to each office must also be taken into account:—

Colony.	Number of Inhabitants to each Post Office.	Number of Square Miles of Territory to each Office.
New South Wales	653	164
Victoria	684	51
Queensland	442	673
South Australia	540	1,395
Western Australia	357	4,737
Tasmania	477	80
New Zealand	502	77
Australasia	576	428

OCEAN MAIL SERVICES.

The Federal Ocean Mail Service, which is carried on by the Orient and Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Companies, is subsidised by the United Kingdom and all the Australasian colonies, with the exception of New Zealand. The total amount of the subsidy is £170,000, of which £95,000 is payable by the Imperial authorities and £75,000 by the colonies in proportion to their population. On the 31st January, 1895, the contract with the steamship companies expired, and the colonies proposed its extension for one year; but on the suggestion of the Post-office authorities of the United Kingdom, the contract was extended till the 31st January, 1898, the companies agreeing to include the parcels posts in their contract and to make Colombo an invariable port of call. The following table shows the amount of the subsidy paid by each of the colonies during 1894, with the net loss to New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, after

deducting the value of postage received and retained by those colonies. For the other colonies, the net expenditure on the service is unfortunately not obtainable. New Zealand, although not a contracting party, yet avails itself of the Federal Service for the carriage of mail matter, and its net loss during the year amounted to £1,644 :—

		Subsidy, 1894. Net Loss, 1894.	
United Kingdom		£95,000	.....
Australasia—			
New South Wales.....	£26,992 11 8	.....	£12,877
Victoria	25,964 5 0	.....	10,720
Queensland.....	9,544 13 4	.....	9,571
South Australia.....	7,656 11 8	.....	.....
Western Australia ..	1,427 15 0	.....	.....
Tasmania	3,414 3 4	.....	.....
		£75,000	.....
Total		£170,000	.....

The mail service has been performed with great regularity and expedition. The average time occupied by the outward and homeward services in 1894 was as follows :—

	Orient.	P. and O.
London to Sydney	34 $\frac{2}{3}$ days.	34 days.
Sydney to London	33 $\frac{1}{3}$,,	34 $\frac{2}{3}$,,

On two occasions during the year the mails from London were delivered in Sydney in 31 days. The steamers which carried them were the Australia and the Oceana, both of the Peninsular and Oriental Company.

In addition to the Federal Ocean Mail Service *via* Suez, New South Wales and New Zealand until November, 1890, subsidised the Union Steamship Company, in conjunction with the Pacific Steamship Company, for a four-weekly service *via* San Francisco, to the amount of £37,000, of which New South Wales paid £25,750, and New Zealand £11,250. Under the new contract which was entered into, and which expired in November, 1894, the amount of the subsidy was largely reduced, the contribution of New South Wales being fixed at £4,000, while New Zealand paid according to the weight of the mail matter. A further extension of the contract has been made by New Zealand until November, 1897, but the payment of New South Wales is subject to annual appropriation by Parliament. During the year 1894 the net cost of the service to New Zealand was £7,964; to New South Wales, £1,892; to Victoria, £100; and to Queensland, £277. The average time occupied in carrying the mails by the San Francisco route during the same year was as follows :—

London to Sydney.....	37 $\frac{2}{3}$ days.
Sydney to London.....	38 $\frac{1}{3}$,,

During 1893 a calendar monthly service between Sydney and Vancouver was established by the Canadian-Australian Royal Mail Line,

the colony of New South Wales granting an annual subsidy of £10,000, and the Canadian Dominion one of £25,000. This action was taken more in the interests of trade between the great British colonies in Australasia and America than in those of the postal service; and so cordially do the Government of New Zealand approve of this policy that, while refusing an offer of the Union Steamship Company to send their steamers on from San Francisco to Vancouver for a sum of £10,000 per annum, they are prepared, provided the approval of Parliament can be secured, to grant the Canadian-Australian Line a yearly subsidy of £20,000 in consideration of its steamers calling at one of the ports of that colony. Although, however, the Intercolonial Postal Conference has endorsed the proposal, no agreement has yet been come to in the matter; but the company has offered to make Brisbane a port of call, and to place another steamer on the service, in consideration of the Queensland Government granting an annual subsidy of £6,000. Successful efforts have been made by the Canadian Government to induce the Imperial authorities to subsidise a line of steamers to carry the mails on the Atlantic side, and the service will probably be commenced in 1896. During 1894 the net cost of the Vancouver service to New South Wales was £7,846; to Victoria, £298; and to Queensland, £127. The average time occupied by the mails in transit from Sydney to London was $40\frac{1}{2}$ days.

The British India Steam Navigation Company, sailing from Brisbane *via* Torres Straits, carry mails under contract with the Queensland Government. This route is from four to ten days longer than those previously mentioned, mails occupying about forty-four days in transit. Queensland, under the former contract, paid the company an annual subsidy of £55,000. This arrangement ceased in January, 1890, and under a new contract the colony agreed to pay the company an annual subsidy of £19,800 for a four-weekly, or £32,500 for a fortnightly service. The latter service was commenced on 1st July, 1890, the monthly service having lasted nearly six months; but in November, 1891, the contractors, on account of the heavy losses under the fortnightly system, were allowed to revert to the four-weekly service, the subsidy being reduced to the smaller amount mentioned above, *viz.*, £19,800. Notice has now been given that this service will be discontinued, and an agreement has been drafted with the British India Associated Steamers, Limited, for the institution of a service for purely commercial purposes, so that the subsidy will not in future be charged to the Post Office, although the steamers will be utilised for the carriage of mails. The amount of mail matter despatched by the Torres Straits route from the other colonies is very small, the cost to Victoria during 1894 being stated at £16. The net cost of the service to Queensland was £21,448, including a due proportion of the cost of the coastal branch services.

Besides those mentioned, the other steamship companies trading with the Australasian colonies carry mails, notably the Messageries Maritimes

Company and the North German Lloyd's, sailing from Sydney, and the Shaw, Saville, and Albion Company, sailing from Lyttelton, *via* Magellan Straits. The companies are paid by the colonies in proportion to the weight of mail matter carried, but the Messageries Maritimes Company and the North German Lloyd's are in receipt of large subsidies from the French and German Governments respectively.

The postage to the United Kingdom was reduced in January, 1891, from 6d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce *via* Italy and 4d. *via* the long sea route to the uniform rate of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. In 1891 the colonies were represented at the Congress of the Universal Postal Union held in Vienna, and on July 4 a convention was signed on their behalf, by which they joined the Union from the 1st October of that year. From that date the rate of postage to all British colonies and possessions and foreign countries included in the Union was reduced to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. As was to be expected, the immediate result of the alteration was a reduction in revenue, but it is confidently anticipated that so far as these colonies are concerned the time is not far distant when the revenue from this branch of postal service will reach its original volume.

A common scale of postage on newspapers to the United Kingdom and foreign countries has been adopted by the Australasian colonies, the rate being 1d. for the first 4 ounces, and $\frac{3}{4}$ d. for every additional 2 ounces. The only variation is found in Western Australia, where the charge for extra weight is 1d. for every 4 ounces.

TELEGRAPHS.

The electric telegraph was introduced into these colonies almost at the time of the earliest railway construction. The first telegraph messages were sent in New South Wales in 1851. In Victoria the telegraph line from Melbourne to Williamstown was opened in 1854. The first line in South Australia, from Adelaide to Port Adelaide, was opened in 1856; and the first Tasmanian line was completed in 1857. In New Zealand the first telegraph office was opened in 1862; and the line from Brisbane to Rockhampton, the first in Queensland, was opened in 1864. Telegraphic communication was established between Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide in 1858. The first telegraph in Western Australia was opened in 1869, and communication between that colony and all the others of the group was completed in 1877.

All the colonies show very rapid progress in regard to telegraphic matters during the period from 1871 to 1881. In the case of Queensland this increase was largely due to the construction of the line to the Gulf of Carpentaria; and in the case of South Australia, to the construction of the lines to Port Darwin and to Eucla, on the boundary of Western Australia. The following table shows the length of telegraphic

lines in each colony at the last four census periods, as well as for the year 1894, as far as the returns are available :—

Colony.	1861.	1871.	1881.	1891.	1894.
New South Wales ...	1,616	*4,674	8,515	11,697	12,201
Victoria .....	.....	*2,295	3,350	7,170	7,141
Queensland	169	2,525	6,280	9,996	9,986
South Australia	597	1,183	4,946	5,640	5,580
Western Australia ...	.....	*750	1,585	2,921	4,403
Tasmania .....	.....	*291	928	2,082	1,789
New Zealand.....	.....	2,015	3,824	5,349	5,823
Australasia ...	.....	13,733	29,428	44,855	46,923

* In 1873.

The next table gives similar particulars, only the figures represent miles of wire instead of miles of line :—

Colony.	1861.	1871.	1881.	1891.	1894.
New South Wales.....	1,981	5,579	14,278	24,780	28,085
Victoria .....	.....	3,472	6,626	13,989	14,420
Queensland	169	2,614	8,585	17,646	17,801
South Australia	915	1,718	7,228	12,707	13,171
Western Australia ...	.....	*750	1,593	3,546	5,010
Tasmania .....	.....	241	1,157	3,178	3,004
New Zealand.....	.....	3,287	9,653	13,235	14,647
Australasia .....	.....	17,661	49,120	89,081	96,138

* In 1873.

In 1894 there were 576 miles of cable from New Zealand to Sydney and from Tasmania to Melbourne, in addition to the length shown above. The number of telegrams passing along the wires of each colony and the revenue received by the Telegraph Departments during the year 1894 were as appended. In the total for Australasia a correction has been made for intercolonial telegrams recorded in both the despatching and the receiving colony :—

Colony.	Number of Telegrams.	Revenue received.
New South Wales	2,464,074	£146,669
Victoria	2,549,935	93,655
Queensland	905,909	67,481
South Australia	*665,249	89,172
Western Australia	446,780	25,936
Tasmania	212,726	20,135
New Zealand	2,116,404	88,459
Australasia	9,361,077	£531,507
Australasia (Intercolonial excess excluded.)	8,453,052	.....

* Including South Australian cablegrams only.

In the whole of Australasia there are 3,197 telegraph stations, of which 813 are in New South Wales, 793 in Victoria, 362 in Queensland, 248 in South Australia, 73 in Western Australia, 217 in Tasmania, and 691 in New Zealand.

In no country in the world has the development of telegraphic communication been so rapid as in Australasia, and in none has it been taken advantage of by the public to anything like the same extent. Taking Australasia as a whole, there are only four countries in the world that possess a greater extent of telegraph lines, and only seven in which a larger number of messages are actually sent. In no other country, however, except the United Kingdom, does the number of messages bear anything approaching the same ratio to the population. The following table illustrates these remarks:—

Country.	Length of Telegraph Lines.	Messages.	Messages per head of popu- lation.
	miles.	No.	No.
United Kingdom	35,286	71,589,064	1·8
France	59,693	35,490,000	0·9
Belgium*	3,914	5,277,683	0·9
Netherlands*	3,440	4,391,065	0·9
Germany	76,777	35,324,617	0·7
Denmark	2,909	1,765,244	0·8
Sweden... ..	5,289	1,863,494	0·4
Norway	4,981	1,728,557	0·9
Russia	78,367	68,027,398	0·7
Austria-Hungary	42,469	16,506,881	0·4
Switzerland	4,515	3,700,339	1·3
Italy	23,777	8,540,451	0·3
Spain	18,248	4,896,735	0·3
Portugal	3,985	1,354,827	0·3
United States.....	189,936	66,591,858	1·0
Canada.....	31,841	4,614,944	1·0
Cape Colony	6,442	1,538,725	0·9
Australasia	46,923	8,453,052	2·0

* Government lines only.

From the above table it appears that in Australasia during the year two messages were sent over the telegraph for each inhabitant. In the United Kingdom the number was one and four-fifths to each inhabitant; and in the United States of America about one message to every inhabitant. The return for the United States, however, includes only the lines of the Western Union Company, who own the principal part of the telegraph system of that country. In France, Belgium, Holland, and Norway about one message was sent for every person; in Germany, two messages for every three persons; and in Austria-Hungary, Italy, Spain, and Portugal about one message for every three persons. In Canada one message, and in the Cape Colony rather less than one message, was sent for every inhabitant during the year.

CABLE SERVICES.

Australasia is in telegraphic communication with Europe and the rest of the world by means of three cables connecting with the various Asiatic continental lines. The first of these cables, which were all laid by the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, Limited, was opened in October, 1872, joining Port Darwin to Banjowangie, in Java, whence communication is provided with Europe by way of Batavia, Singapore, Madras, and Bombay. In 1879 a duplicate cable was laid down, the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania agreeing to pay the company a subsidy of £32,400 per annum for a period of 20 years, the amount to be apportioned between the colonies on the basis of population. At Port Darwin the cables connect with an overland wire, which extends to Adelaide, a distance of 1,971 miles, and to construct which cost the South Australian Government about half a million sterling. The total length of line between Adelaide and London is 12,570 miles, of which 9,146 miles are submarine cable, and 3,424 miles overland wire. The third cable was laid in 1888 from Broome, in Roebuck Bay, Western Australia, to Banjowangie. The length of line by this route from Perth to London is 12,296 miles, 10,811 being cable and 1,485 land wire. The eastern colonies are connected with Broome by a line running from Adelaide, *via* Port Augusta, Eucla, and Albany, to Perth.

The cable joining Tasmania to the continent of Australia was laid in 1869, the length being about 170 miles. It starts from the township of Flinders, near Cape Schanck, in Victoria, and terminates at Low Head, at the mouth of the Tamar, in Tasmania. This line is subsidised to the extent of £4,200 yearly by the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania, the contributions being based on the population figures. New Zealand was joined to the continent by a cable laid in 1876, the length being about 1,191 miles. The line has its Australian terminus within sight of the spot where Captain Cook landed on the shores of Botany Bay, and within a stone's throw of the monument of La Perouse. The New Zealand terminus of the cable is at Wakapuaka, near Nelson, on the Middle or South Island, whence another cable, 109 miles in length, is laid to Wanganui, in the North Island, with an alternate line from White's Bay across Cook Strait to Wellington. For the first ten years after opening the New Zealand cable was subsidised by the Governments of New South Wales and New Zealand, their annual contributions being £2,500 and £7,500 respectively, but no subsidy has been payable since 1886. A cable connecting New Caledonia with Queensland at Bundaberg was opened in October, 1893. It was constructed by a French company, and is guaranteed by the French Government to the extent of £8,000, and by the colonies of New South Wales and Queensland to the amount of £2,000 each annually

for a period of thirty years, in return for which these two Australian Governments are entitled to use the cable for the transmission of official messages up to the amount of the guarantee.

During the year 1890 the colonies opened negotiations with the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company for a reduction in the cable rates to Europe, which at that time were 9s. 4d. per word for ordinary messages and 2s. 8d. per word for press messages sent from New South Wales; and at a conference of the postal and telegraphic authorities a proposal to reduce the tariff to 4s. per word for ordinary messages and 1s. 10d. per word for press messages was agreed to, the colonies contributing to the subsidy undertaking to make good half the loss which the company would sustain by this reduction in the schedule of charges, and New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand at the same time agreeing to pay to South Australia a proportion of the loss to the revenue of that colony which the lower charges would cause in the working of the overland wires. The amended tariff came into force in May, 1891, and the amount to be guaranteed to the company for the portion of the year during which the contract was in existence was £158,491. The sum earned by the company for the same period was £120,141, so that the deficiency on the eight months' business was £38,350, one-half of which was made good by the contributing colonies according to population. But this sum, combined with the amount of the subsidy, was more than the colonies were prepared to bear, and on the 1st January, 1893, the rates were again slightly raised, and stand now at 4s. 9d. per word from Sydney to London for ordinary messages. Even at these charges there was a slight loss to be borne, but this gradually diminished until for the year ending April, 1895, there was nothing to pay under the guarantee. During 1893 the cable rates to New Zealand were reduced from 6s. to 2s. 6d. for 10 words, ordinary messages, the company undertaking to bear one-third of the loss in revenue, New Zealand one-third, and the other colonies, with the exception of Queensland, one-third.

The following table shows the amount paid by each colony towards cable subsidies and guarantees during the year ended April, 1895. The proportions are based on the census populations:—

Colony.	Port Darwin— Banjowangie Subsidy.	Tasmanian Subsidy.	South Australian Guarantee.	New Zealand Guarantee.	Total.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
New South Wales	13,150 15 10	1,704 14 8	373 11 9	2,430 2 10	17,659 5 1
Victoria	13,245 13 11	1,717 0 8	376 5 8	2,447 13 7	17,786 13 10
Queensland					
South Australia	3,721 15 6	482 9 1	105 14 7	687 15 0	4,997 14 2
Western Australia	578 4 3	74 19 1	16 8 6	106 17 0	776 8 10
Tasmania	1,703 10 6	220 16 6	48 7 10	314 15 11	2,287 10 9
New Zealand			204 11 8	4,989 15 8	5,194 7 4
Australasia	32,400 0 0	4,200 0 0	1,125 0 0	10,977 0 0	48,702 0 0

The desirability of constructing a Pacific cable, which shall touch only British territory on its way from Australia to America, is acknowledged by the Governments of all the Australasian colonies as well as by those of the United Kingdom and Canada, and it is proposed to appoint a Commission, to consist of two representatives of Great Britain, two of Canada, and two of Australasia, to decide upon the best route to be taken, the probable cost of construction of the line, and the basis upon which the three countries shall contribute. In response to a call for tenders by the Colonial Conference, which sat in Ottawa in 1894, a company offered to lay the cable and maintain it for the space of three years for the sum of $1\frac{1}{2}$ millions sterling. The completion of such a work would have the effect of largely reducing the cable rates to America and Europe, besides being of immense service in the event of an outbreak of war.

TELEPHONES.

In connection with the telegraph departments of the various colonies, telephone exchanges have during recent years been established in the capitals and other important centres of population. The returns relating to telephones are, however, difficult to separate from those relating to telegraphs, particularly with regard to the distinct wires in use. Information regarding telephones in the different colonies during 1894, as far as can be ascertained, will be found in the following table :—

Colony.	Exchanges.	Telephones.	Length of Telephone Wires.	Revenue.
	No.	No.	miles.	£
New South Wales	18	3,382	.....*	20,298
Victoria	13	2,398	9,679	36,677
Queensland	16	727	.....*	4,679
South Australia...	8	845	2,244	13,617
Western Australia	2	319	.....*	2,532
Tasmania	3	607	438	3,104
New Zealand	24	4,479	4,471	21,553
Australasia	84	12,757	.....	102,460

* Not furnished.

POSTAL AND TELEGRAPHIC FINANCES.

The following table shows the revenue and expenditure of the Postal and Telegraph Departments of the colonies during 1894 :—

Colony.	Revenue.				Expenditure.
	Posts.	Telegraphs.	Telephones.	Total.	
	£	£	£	£	£
New South Wales	593,922	146,669	20,298	760,889	884,856
Victoria	395,000	93,655	36,677	525,332	575,865
Queensland	143,455	67,481	4,679	215,615	296,251
South Australia	118,702	89,172	13,617	221,491	189,106
Western Australia.....	32,599	25,936	2,533	61,068	77,459
Tasmania	48,381	20,135	3,104	71,620	79,360
New Zealand.....	247,438	88,459	21,553	357,450	299,971
Australasia.....	1,579,497	531,507	102,461	2,213,465	2,402,868

The revenue set down for Victoria is but an approximation, as the receipts for postage are merged with those for stamp duty under the general heading of fees. In other colonies postage stamps are also used for the purpose of stamping acknowledgments for the receipt of money. During 1894 the New South Wales Post Office made an allowance of £24,000 on this account, and this sum is not included in the revenue of that colony as given above.