
CONSTRUCTION OF THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN

Telegraph Line to Port Darwin.

From the S. A. Advertiser, January 1, 1872.

ALTHOUGH the year 1871 will be memorable for having witnessed the opening of communication by telegraph between the antipodes of the world, and having brought the shores of Australia within speaking distance of Europe, the work of establishing communication between the principal capitals of Australia and London remains uncompleted. The arrangements made for the prosecution of the work may as well be briefly explained here. The Overland Telegraph line was divided into three portions. From Port Augusta, in latitude $31\frac{1}{2}$ ° S. to latitude 27° the line is 512 miles in length, and Mr. E. M. Bagot is the contractor for this portion of the work. The next portion—632 miles long—stretching from latitude 27° to latitude 19° 30' was undertaken by the Government; and the third portion, extending from latitude 19° 30' to Port Darwin in latitude $12\frac{1}{2}$ °, 629 miles in length, was entrusted to Messrs. Darwent and Dalwood, who were the successful tenderers for the work. The total length of the overland line from Port Augusta to Port Darwin is 1764 miles. In August, 1870, Messrs. Darwent and Dalwood's party left Adelaide for Port Darwin, and on 15th September the first pole was planted. The first pole on Mr. Bagot's contract was reared on 1st October, and from the energy which was displayed in inaugurating the work, it was confidently expected that the year 1871 would witness the successful completion of the great enterprise. The Government parties pushed into the interior with great pluck and perseverance, and the men have worked bravely and well to secure the honours attaching to the completion of this great work. On 6th February

bravely and well to secure the honours attaching to the completion of this great work. On 6th February a telegram was received via Queensland from Mr. MacLachlan, reporting that on 8th November the telegraph had been laid ninety miles inland from Port Darwin. The June mail brought out the agreement made between the Agent-General (on behalf of the colony) and the British and Australian Telegraph Company. The main conditions of the agreement are that the Government should, on or before the 31st day of December, 1871, construct and open for traffic the land line between Port Darwin and Port Augusta, and provide the necessary staff, buildings, &c., for working it; and that the company should, by the same date, lay down and open for traffic the submarine line. Alternatives are given to the Company that if the land line should not be completed within the specified time they could either determine the contract on a year's notice, take possession of the incomplete line and finish it at the cost of the Government, or carry a line across the Northern Territory to connect their cable with the Queensland telegraphs. Similar conditions were also imposed with regard to the non-completion of the submarine line. The agreement received the signature of his Excellency the Governor, and was forwarded home by the return mail. The telegraph appeared to be proceeding satisfactorily till 8th July, when great excitement was caused by the unexpected return of the schooner *Gulnare*, having on board Mr. M'Minn, the Government overseer on Derwent and Dalwood's section, Mr. Paqualin, the contractors' agent, and many of the telegraph constructors. It soon transpired that Mr. M'Minn had, in the exercise of the powers given to him, determined the contract with Messrs. Darwent and Dalwood in consequence, as he has explained, 'of their inability to proceed with their contract beyond the 3rd of May, on account of inefficient means, and with no prospect of the arrival of adequate reinforcements in order to fulfil the contract by the stipulated time.' Mr. M'Minn, leaving Mr. Burton in charge, came to Adelaide to report to the Government the important

M'Minn, leaving Mr. Burton in charge, came to Adelaide to report to the Government the important step he had thought proper to take. Of course the news of this serious mishap caused great regret and disappointment in the colony, but the Government and Mr Todd acted with great promptitude in sending reinforcements to complete the line. The Treasurer (Mr. Hart) proceeded to Melbourne to charter vessels, Mr. R. D. Ross was commissioned to proceed to Sydney and Brisbane to select stock for Port Darwin; and Mr. R. C. Patterson (Assistant-Engineer) was appointed to take command of the expedition. The Government, however, perpetrated a blunder in dispatching this party which has still further seriously delayed the work and involved the colony in great expense. Instead of utilising the River Hoper as the basis of operations for the telegraph constructors, all the vessels were ordered round to Port Darwin, and Mr. Patterson's instructions required him to go across the country from Port Darwin to pick up the unfinished line—a distance of about 125 or 135 miles, with the whole of his transport. On the 27th July Mr. Patterson, Mr. Rutt, and a party of 80 men left for Melbourne, where they shipped on board the steamer Omeo, and started for Port Darwin. The Omeo arrived at Port Darwin on 24th August, and was followed on 6th September by the ship Antipodes, and on 12th September by the Golden Fleece and Himalaya—the total stock brought by these vessels being 387 bullocks and 164 horses. As a stimulus to the energetic prosecution of the work the Government offered a liberal bonus to Mr. Patterson, and hopes were entertained that no long delay would take place in the opening of the line, although after the break-down in May it was feared that the line could hardly be finished within the stipulated time. The November mail, however brought intelligence of another reverse which foiled all our plans for the completion of the telegraph by the end of the year. Intelligence was received by telegram from Mr. Patterson that he had lost a large proportion of his transport, and that immediate reinforcements were required. Thereupon it was arranged that Mr. Todd should proceed

immediate reinforcements were required. Thereupon it was arranged that Mr. Todd should proceed by steamer to the Northern Territory to personally superintend the works, taking with him reinforcements of men and stock. The *Omeo* has been chartered, and everything is in a forward state for a start this week. The steamers *Endeavour* and *Investigator* having the Company's cable on board, arrived at Port Darwin in October, and the work of paying out the cable was at once commenced. Our latest news received by telegram, via Galle, is that the cable has been successfully laid, and was

working well. The 20th November will be a memorable day in the history of telegraphy, for on that day the first message between Australia and Europe was flashed along the wires. The information of this interesting event was conveyed in a telegram from Captain Alpine, Bengal Range, Java, to Mr. Douglas, Government resident at Port Darwin, and forwarded by that gentleman to Adelaide, via Queensland. The following are the words of the message:—“I have the honour to announce to you, in the name of the Telegraphic Construction and Maintenance Company, that we yesterday completed perfect submarine cable communication with your colonies, and with Java, the mother-country, and the Western World. May it long speak words of peace, and reiterate “Advance, Australia.”” To this message the Government Resident replied in suitable terms. We are gratified at being able to record that the year 1871 witnessed this interesting event, but we regret our inability to chronicle the entire completion of a work which would have brought Adelaide and the other Australian colonies within speaking distance of Europe, Asia, and America. The difficulties which have arisen were unforeseen, and are such as will offer a reasonable excuse for our inability to complete a work which we had prided ourselves upon accomplishing during 1871, and in the prosecution of which some of the sterner virtues of Britons—enterprise, perseverance, and pluck—have been displayed.

which some of the sterner virtues of BRUCE—enterprise, perseverance, and pluck—have been displayed. When the year closed it was estimated that the interval of uncompleted line would be about 300 miles in length, and Mr. Todd had arranged to bridge over the interval by horse expresses, which it was anticipated would bring Adelaide within six or seven days communication with England. To-day, or before many days in the New Year shall have passed, we may expect to receive a telegram from London, and if so we shall be entitled to credit and honour for having got the work so far advanced, in spite of the serious mishaps which have unexpectedly arisen. We are glad to announce, also, that the Government made reasonable terms with the company on account of the delay in opening communication by the close of the year. The company have forborne taking either of the alternatives offered them by the agreement, and have accepted a guarantee of 5 per cent. interest on the capital expended until the line shall have been opened, the Government being, in the meantime, credited with the earnings of the cable.

A SINGULAR SNAKE STORY.—The Bathurst Free Press of the 6th instant says:—Mr. W. Sweetman, senior, of Denis' Island, has recently lost two cows, which, without any previous symptoms of indisposition, had died suddenly. Mr. S. and others were under the impression that the animals must have died from snake bites, and consequently searched diligently (but without success) for tracks that might lead to the discovery of his snakeship. On Monday last a young man, who resides down the country, but is at present stopping with Mr. Sweetman, made a discovery, and in the evening asked Mr. Sweetman if he was aware that there were eels in his well. Mr. S. replied there could not be, as there were no eels in the district. The young man persisted in his statement that there were eels in the well, and said he had drawn one up in a bucket of water that afternoon. He said that he had observed the eel in the water, and before he landed the bucket he made an effort to catch it, but it had sprung from the bucket into the well again. Mr. Sweetman at once said it was a snake, and as it was then dark, arrangements were made to examine the well in the morning.

ments were made to examine the well in the morning. Accordingly soon after daybreak on Tuesday, Mr. Sweetman and his son James went to the well, and there saw a snake floating on the water. A bucket was lowered gently into the well, and the snake, in trying to creep through the loop by which the handle was made fast to the bucket, caught himself and could not escape. The bucket was speedily brought to the surface, and the reptile was dispatched without delay. The young man who first saw the snake had a narrow escape from death, for if he had succeeded in his efforts to grasp the reptile he would doubtless have been bitten for his pains.

THE CRICKET MATCH BETWEEN THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN DISTRICTS.—On Saturday afternoon the selection committee for the Northern district met on the Albion Ground, West Maitland, to make final choice of the eleven who are to represent the Northern district in the forthcoming match in Sydney, on Anniversary Day, with the Southern districts. After consideration, the following gentlemen were chosen, with the understanding that while in all probability they will be the eleven that are to play, the committee reserve to themselves the right to substitute other gentlemen, if any unforeseen circumstance should arise, such as the illness of any of the selected eleven, or the arrival as a resident of the district of a cricketer superior to any of the men chosen. The selected men, and the localities where they reside, are as follows:—G. Gilbert, G. Moore, W. C. Boydell, West Maitland; C. Lawrence, W. Tracey, C. Blair, C. Readett, Newcastle; C. Wyndham, Bukkulla; W. Hand, Narrabri; P. Waddy, A. Johnston, Singleton; R. Wyndham, of Branxton, being twelfth or emergency man. Mr. John Henry Turner has consented to act as scorer for the eleven, and the secretary of the committee (Mr. P. Waddy) has been instructed to write to Mr. Peter Curtis, of Sydney, requesting him to stand umpire for them. By way of increasing the efficiency of the chosen eleven, two practice matches have been arranged between them and sixteen all-comers, to take place on the Albion Ground, West Maitland, on Saturday, the 13th, and Saturday, the 20th instant, respectively, the play to commence on each day at 10 o'clock. The committee are fully sensible of the difficulty of the task they had undertaken, and of the impossibility of pleasing everybody; but their opinion is that in making their choice, they have secured the best eleven

of pleasing everybody ; but their opinion is that in making their choice, they have secured the best eleven cricketers that the Northern district can furnish.—**Maitland Mercury.**

A JUDGE in Indiana threatened to fine a lawyer for contempt of Court. 'I have expressed no contempt for the Court,' said the lawyer ; 'on the contrary I have carefully concealed my feelings.'
