

## BRITISH COLUMBIA MAIL SERVICE.

Mr. DECOSMOS moved for an Address to His Excellency the Governor General for a Return shewing the tenders received in 1875 for the conveyance of the mails between Victoria and San Francisco, with a copy of any correspondence respecting the said tenders and mail service generally; also a copy of the contract for the performance of the said service.

He drew the attention of the Government in making the motion to the fact that the coast between San Francisco and Victoria was almost harbourless, and that in the event of an accident overtaking a steamship on this route, it would be very difficult indeed for the vessel to make a harbour unless it was able to reach the Straits, or as was the case last year, when a vessel was tugged to the Columbia River. Sufficient means had not been taken to rescue passengers in case of danger; and the coast was most inhospitable. The steamships which performed the service should be well furnished; at present they were miserable and unsafe. A great deal of interest was taken in this matter by the people of British Columbia, and the travelling public in that region. Representations had been made to the Government in the hope of having the contract placed in British hands, and of having Victoria as the headquarters of the line instead of San Francisco; nevertheless, it had been entrusted to a foreign company—the Pacific Mail Steamship Company—to whom is paid \$24,000 per annum. Victoria is also made a mere way station between Washington Territory and San Francisco. In addition, under the present system, the coal industry of the Washington Territory instead of Vancouver was being built up. Lifeboats were only provided on the steamers for 75 persons, when there should be sufficient to accommodate both passengers and crew. The tables, moreover, were badly supplied; and there was not enough room provided for the steerage passengers, the convenience of women also being shamefully neglected. The tables was placed on deck, and the passengers were obliged to eat standing. More attention should be paid to steerage than to cabin pas-

sengers, as the former were essential in order to ensure the advancement of British Columbia.

Mr. BUNSTER stated that these American steamships resembled floating coffins,—they were wretched affairs and dangerous. These circumstances formed a serious obstacle to the passage between the countries in question. He wished to impress on the Government the importance of subsidizing a British line. They had already paid a heavy penalty in the loss of some of their most enterprising and esteemed citizens with the ill-fated steamer *Pacific*, on which 325 souls perished. They had no Government Inspector, and people were frequently afraid to trust themselves on the steamships in question. The contract was not properly performed; and he hoped that the Postmaster-General would see that a better class of vessels was secured on the next occasion, for this service especially, in view of the fact that two first-class steamers had been ordered on the Clyde, in the hope that the contract would be awarded to the owners, who were not foreigners. The Americans sought to make of Victoria a mere way-port, and they boasted that the Dominion should not be allowed to have a flourishing capital on the Pacific coast. Still, he had sufficient confidence in British enterprise to believe that we would there succeed in building up a city. He trusted that the contract would be cancelled, as he knew that its terms had not been observed.

Mr. THOMPSON (Cariboo), thought that these terms had been violated. He agreed that the present steamship service was most inadequate, and stated, as an objectionable feature, that the crew, with the exception of the captain, mates, quarter-masters and engineers, was composed of Chinese, with whom no one would care to trust his life in case of accident.

Mr. CASEY explained that though he was not a representative of British Columbia, he took a peculiar interest in this question, owing to the fact that a personal friend of his had for a long time been supposed to be the only survivor in connection with the steamship *Pacific* disaster. He had had full infor-