

accelerating the New Zealand and Australian mail. Captain Williams received us courteously, and took a warm interest in the subject, explaining to us the steps taken by himself and principals in New York to expedite the mail by the s.s. "Australia," which arrived on the 17th ultimo, two hours after the departure of the overland train. The mail was transferred at once to the Oakland Station by the co-operation of the Postmaster here, and a special train was despatched with the mails on board in charge of the New Zealand Mail Agent, which overtook the overland train at Sacramento. The transfer of mails took place at this point, the United States Railroad Mail Agent taking the Australian and New Zealand mails in charge. I attach newspaper extract detailing subsequent course of mail, which was placed on board the "Abyssinia" at New York, through the energy of the Pacific mail people, in time to save at least two days on schedule time. Captain Williams further explained to us that he had telegraphed to New York to ascertain whether it was not possible to arrange to save two days on this side by despatching the mail on arrival, usually Mondays, instead of on Wednesdays, the mail lying here that period when it might just as well be at sea.

It appears that, owing to one ticket having been sold in London for the December boat, unless it could be changed, the December steamer would sail hence on the 5th, instead of the 3rd, as the agents contemplated doing, thus saving two days in time from London to the colony; but he said that arrangements would positively be made for sailing two days in advance of schedule time on the outgoing January mail.

No difficulty need be experienced in this matter, and I think that the proposed arrangement should be carried out. If not, by changing the day of departure from London the advantage of two days' time might be given to Home correspondents, which is lost to them and the colonists under present arrangements.

Another question arose, namely, whether the mail could not be accelerated *en route* between the colony and this country, and Captain Williams promised to give consideration to the subject, and to write to New York and the agents on the point. It does appear to me that the voyage might be considerably shortened as to time on this side, the deviation from the Fiji route being a gain which should be utilized for public advantage.

There still remain two points which require attention: one is the Atlantic connection, the other the railroad transit across the continent. The first you may be able to deal with in such manner as may result in a still further saving of time—*i.e.*, by selecting, in all practical cases, fast steamers. The railroad difficulty is not, however, so easily overcome. I shall, however, have an early consultation with Governor Stanford and the Managers of the Central Pacific Road; and I think I may venture to say that, so far as their line is concerned, there will be no objection to running a fast mail train without extra cost. The presentation of commercial reasons will bring this about, I doubt not; and, as I am co-operating in this matter to some extent with the United States postal authorities, I anticipate a favourable issue. Twelve hours might be saved easily on the Central Pacific line. Other influences must be used with the remaining railroads' management to secure their co-operation, and I am aware the commercial men here are pressing the subject upon the attention of the Postmaster-General at Washington relative to a general acceleration of mail time with the East. However, should twelve hours be saved on the transcontinental journey, advantage of it would be taken by the steamship company on this side, as the steamer would be ready to sail, night or day, after the arrival of the mail here. Passengers would have notice of this fact, and the United States mail would be made up here in anticipation of it. The European mail could be transferred from the train to the steamer without passing through the San Francisco office, as a post office official would be detailed to see it properly done. General Coey, Postmaster of San Francisco, is very much interested in this question, and promises to co-operate in every practicable way.

Commercial intercourse between this country and the colonies is steadily increasing. The "Australia" goes down a full ship, and shuts out cargo. Indeed, this is true of most steamers recently. Now, with the Cape of Good Hope route opened, it is doubly necessary to prove the superiority of the Californian service for mail and travel.

I have to request your attention to this question therefore in London, and thereby enable the Contractors to make such arrangements as shall insure the saving of at least two days' course of post between London, San Francisco, and the colony, and to take advantage of such further saving of time as, by accelerating the railroad speed and the time on the voyage from Auckland and Sydney, may be possible of accomplishment.

I have written briefly to Mr. Thomas Russell on this subject, having had a conversation with him relative to it when passing through for London. I shall also send draft of this letter to the Postmaster-General of New Zealand, with other papers relative to the mail service.

I have, &c.,

The Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

ROBT. J. CREIGHTON.

No. 5.

Mr. CREIGHTON to the SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington.

SIR,—

San Francisco, California, 6th November, 1877.

In my previous letter I may not have been sufficiently explicit. I desire, however, to supplement what I therein stated after consultation with Mr. Dougherty, the very efficient Deputy Postmaster of San Francisco.

Relative to the dates of sailing at the termini: It is absolutely necessary that there should be a fixed date for sailing from London, San Francisco, Sydney, and Auckland; and, although the project of sailing from San Francisco on arrival of mail at uncertain and indeterminate dates may do very well as an experiment, it will not suit the travelling public. Men who cross the Atlantic and American Continent want a few hours' rest before commencing a 7,000 to 8,000 mile voyage. Wherefore, if the London date of departure was put back two days, and the mail was despatched by Inman