

Australasian mails. I think the connection will be made this year ; but a much shorter line is being constructed from Topeka, in Kansas, *via* Santa Fe, New Mexico, to the port of Guaymas, on the Gulf of Mexico. It runs through the State of Sonora, in Mexico, and would shorten the sea voyage and overland transportation very considerably, besides opening a new and interesting country to colonial trade. These roads will be completed long before the expiration of the existing mail contract.

I mention these points because they may have a material bearing upon the postal question in relation to transit charges. At present there is but one road across the continent ; a twelvemonth hence there may be three, certainly there will be two, which will disturb the existing monopoly, and lead to more rapid transit if not to cheaper rates.

W. Gray, Esq., Secretary,
Post Office, New Zealand.

I have, &c.,
ROBT. J. CREIGHTON,
Agent, New Zealand Government.

No. 45.

Messrs. WILLIAMS, DIMOND, and Co., to Mr. GRAY.

Agency Pacific Mail Steamship Company,
San Francisco, 12th April, 1880.

SIR,—

Referring to letters recently interchanged between us in reference to our sending the Australian mail-steamers from this port on Saturdays, instead of Mondays as heretofore, we now regret to report that the colonial mails from London were brought to New York by the steamer "Germanic," and reached that port on Monday, the 5th instant, in time to be forwarded by the evening train, and arrived here to-day.

We beg you to make this known to the New Zealand postal authorities, that they may see that this failure to carry out our proposal to send this steamer on Saturday, the 10th, was in no way the fault of this Company. Our steamer was thoroughly prepared, and in readiness to leave her dock on that day, and, had the mails come to our hands, would have sailed the moment after receiving them on board.

Our advertisements were duly changed at all points, giving notice to the travelling public that our sailing days would hereafter be Saturdays instead of Mondays. All the passengers to go forward by the "Australia" were here in readiness to leave this port on Saturday, the 10th, excepting those who crossed the Atlantic on the steamer "Germanic," and came over the continent on the same train with the English mails.

From the foregoing you will see that the shortening of the time two days between London and Auckland depends exclusively on the energetic action of the authorities of the London Post Office. We have so arranged that the departures hence on Saturdays will conform to our convenience ; and if our London friends will do their share in hastening the arrivals at New York, no exertion shall be wanting on our part to improve this service. We will order our commanders to avail themselves of every favouring circumstance, and gain as much time as practicable between this and Auckland.

We have, &c.,

W. Gray, Esq., Secretary, General Post Office, Wellington.

WILLIAMS, DIMOND, AND Co.,
General Agents.

No. 46.

Mr. GRAY to Messrs. WILLIAMS, DIMOND, and Co.

GENTLEMEN,—

General Post Office, Wellington, 22nd May, 1880.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th ultimo, explaining the circumstances under which the steamship "Australia" was unable to sail from San Francisco on the 10th idem in terms of the arrangements for the acceleration of the transit of mails between London and New Zealand. The delay on the Atlantic was unfortunate, but the Postmaster-General hopes it will yet be found practicable to effect the saving of three days, and he is assured the contractors will do all in their power to carry out their undertaking.

Messrs. Williams, Dimond, and Co., General Agents,
San Francisco Mail Service, San Francisco.

I have, &c.,

W. GRAY,
Secretary.

No. 47.

Messrs. WILLIAMS, DIMOND, and Co., to the SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington.

Agency, Pacific Mail Steamship Company,
San Francisco, 20th March, 1880.

SIR,—

We respectfully beg to present to you the facts in connection with an accident which occurred on board the Company's steamship "City of Sydney" on the night of Sunday, the 14th instant, the repairing of the damages resulting from which caused the ship to be detained in this port until noon of this day.

At eight o'clock p.m. on the 14th instant, the steamer lying at her dock, with her cargo on board, fully equipped and ready for departure on arrival of the British colonial mails, smoke was observed by the officer of the deck issuing from the openings in the forward part of the ship. The whole force of the ship and of the Company's dock being called together, the hatches were opened, and the portion of the cargo destined for Honolulu, which was stored forward, was found to be on fire. Assisted by the City Fire Department, after a severe contest the flames were subdued, and all that part of the cargo was taken ashore. A survey of the steamer on the 15th instant showed that a considerable extent of the floor and ceiling had been quite badly burned, and several iron beams had been so warped by the excessive heat as to require removal and to be replaced by new ones.