

After carefully ascertaining the real extent of the damage, and the time in which it could certainly be repaired and the steamer placed in complete readiness for sea, we determined it to be for the best interests of all concerned to keep the steamer until this day and have her placed in thoroughly good condition.

Before making our final decision in this case we consulted with Mr. Robert J. Creighton, Agent of the Government of New Zealand in this city, who kindly favoured us with his opinion and approved of our suggestion. All things considered, it appeared to be the very best course which could be adopted, also the most advisable plan for placing the New Zealand mails in Auckland at the earliest possible moment.

While holding our decision in abeyance, we ascertained that, owing to unusual delay on the Atlantic, the New Zealand mails could not reach this city before the afternoon of Wednesday, the 17th instant, and we beg now to add that said mail was not ready for delivery to us at seven o'clock p.m. of that day; thus showing that, had no accident occurred, the steamer could not have taken her mails from the Post Office and left this harbour much before midnight of that day.

This reduces the actual detention of the steamer in this port, after the arrival of the mails, say from midnight of Wednesday, the 17th, to noon of Saturday, the 20th, or actually sixty hours.

We have ordered our commander to exercise the most unceasing diligence, and, when he can do so without certain hazard, to press his ship and do all in his power to gain all or as many of these hours between this port and Auckland as practicable. Acting under these instructions, if favoured with ordinarily good weather, we feel assured that he will make the Port of Auckland very nearly on schedule time.

In the foregoing we have frankly detailed all the facts in connection with this first occasion of our having to delay the mails for your colony a single hour in this port, also our action in the endeavour to make good our contract to the letter. Should adverse causes, beyond human control, render it impossible for our fine ship to make up the loss, and arrive at Auckland on schedule time, we respectfully appeal to yourself and the honorable gentlemen of your department to extend to us that forbearance which our earnest efforts to discharge our duty with fidelity entitle us to solicit.

We candidly submit that, in this case, the obstructions were such as human power could not surmount; also, that in the effort to overcome them, we have followed the only proper and advisable plan. There was not another steamer to be obtained by purchase or charter in this port, capable of executing the work on or near the time allotted for the transportation of the mails hence to Auckland.

Most respectfully submitting our case to your kind and friendly consideration, and feeling assured that we shall be treated with that friendly fairness which has ever been extended to us by your Government,

We are, &c.,

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

WILLIAMS, DIMOND, AND Co.,
General Agents.

No. 48.

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

SIR,—

San Francisco, 20th March, 1880.

I regret to have to report the detention of the "City of Sydney" until to-day, owing to an accident, which you will find detailed in the accompanying newspaper clippings.

On learning the particulars of the accident, I went to the Pacific Company's Dock, and inquired into the facts, and steps to be taken to transmit the mail on schedule time.

At that time the bulk of the mail had not come through, and was not expected to arrive before noon on Wednesday, the 17th. The mail could not, therefore, be despatched earlier than that evening, and, as the nature of the damages admitted of the "City of Sydney" being fitted for sea on Saturday, it was considered advisable to delay it until then. This involved a delay of nearly three days, and, as the "Australia" had shown that this time could be gained on the trip, it was fair to assume that the "City of Sydney," under favourable conditions, would make an equally fast passage, and arrive somewhere near schedule time.

The Company had two vessels available, either of which might have been used had the emergency justified it, which, in my judgment and that of the Company's agents, it did not. The "Granada," one of the Panama and Mexican Line, is a much slower ship than the "City of Sydney," and would not make the run as fast as the latter, notwithstanding the detention, if she had even left this port on Wednesday evening. The "City of Tokio," one of the China steamers, was also in port; but, owing to her immense size, and the fact that she would have been extremely light, she could not have made anything like a fast voyage. Indeed, it would hardly have been safe to send a 5,000-ton ship, almost in ballast, on so long a voyage, with the prospect of encountering heavy weather on the New Zealand coast and on the run across to Sydney.

These considerations, I think, justify the course adopted, and, should my anticipations be realized, you will have your mails to hand without any material loss of time resulting from the fire. I must bear testimony to the solicitude of the General Agents of the Pacific Mail Company regarding the prompt despatch of the mail, and their anxiety to do everything possible in the matter.

A considerable portion of the newspaper mail was on board when the fire originated, but none of it was injured. Mr. Atkinson, Mail Agent, has been very attentive, and will doubtless report to you on this subject.

It was exceedingly fortunate that the fire occurred in harbour, as the consequences might have been very disastrous if the fire had broken out when the vessel was at sea.

Captain Dearborn has received instructions to run the ship up to her full capacity, and will no doubt use every diligence to comply with them.

I have, &c.,

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

ROBERT J. CREIGHTON.