

The tenor of your communication is not very reassuring regarding the prospect of a continuation at the end of that period, unless, as you say, the United States Government are willing to make a more liberal contribution towards the expenses of the service.

While in Washington I took advantage of an opportunity I had to obtain an introduction to Mr Brooks, of the Foreign Mail Department, through an influential senator from New York. I had an interview with him of about an hour, during which time I endeavoured to impress upon him the condition of matters affecting the service, laying special stress upon the inadequacy of the United States' contribution, viewing it from the standpoint of the benefits derived by this country. He stated that they were fully alive to this matter through the able representation of Mr Creighton, *et al.*, but that the United States Government, as a matter of fact, were now contributing a larger amount than they were authorized to do by the strict interpretation of the Congressional appropriation, and they were therefore somewhat diffident about raising any point in connection with the contribution for fear that this excessive payment should be disclosed. He stated, however, that they would be very much pleased to hear from either the New Zealand Government, or myself, in reference to the matter, but could not hold out any hopes that anything could be secured thereby.

I also interviewed the Postal authorities of New York, in an endeavour to get details of the arrivals and departures of the Australian mail from that port notified with more precision than hitherto, and hope I may have accomplished something in this direction.

The "Alameda" leaves to-morrow, after twenty-four hours' detention through late arrival of the "Etruria." The outward mail left New York by the "Paris" on the 29th ultimo, reaching Southampton on contract date.

Very sincerely, &c.,

H. STEPHENSON SMITH,

Resident Agent.

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

No. 56.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER.

Westminster Chambers, 13, Victoria Street, London, S.W.,

3rd January, 1894.

SIR,—

Referring to your letter of the 2nd November last, I herewith transmit copy of correspondence which has taken place between the Imperial Post Office and myself, relating to the suggestions made for securing an earlier delivery in New Zealand of the mails sent thereto from this country by the San Francisco route.

It will be observed that the Post Office authorities are not inclined to adopt the alterations suggested.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

W B. PERCEVAL.

Enclosure 1 in No. 56.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the SECRETARY, General Post Office, London.

SIR—

13, Victoria Street, London, S.W., 19th December, 1893.

I have the honour, on behalf of my Government, to request you to direct the attention of the Postmaster-General to the desirability of taking into consideration the present mode of despatching the mails which are transmitted to Australia and New Zealand by the San Francisco route.

The mails which were despatched by that route from London on the 9th September arrived twenty-four hours late at San Francisco, and this delay is stated to have been owing to the "Etruria," by which steamer the mails were forwarded, arriving at New York about an hour too late for their despatch by the evening train to San Francisco, and in reference thereto it is pointed out that had the mails been sent by the steamer "New York," which left Southampton at noon on the 9th September, they would have arrived at San Francisco in sufficient time to have enabled the steamer carrying on the mails to New Zealand and Australia to have left a day earlier.

Again, it has been represented to my Government that the present service *via* Queenstown could be greatly expedited by the mails being placed on board the steamer at Queenstown early on the Sunday morning, thus saving six hours during which the steamer waits at that port for the mails after its arrival from Liverpool. This detention is stated to be the frequent cause of their not arriving at New York until so late the following Saturday, that it often results in a twenty-four hours' delay in the despatch of the steamer from San Francisco, it being represented that if the mails do not get into New York before seven or eight o'clock on Saturday, their departure from San Francisco is made Friday instead of Thursday.

The Imperial Post Office are, no doubt, in a position to verify these statements, but assuming that they are correct, and I have no reason to suppose them to be otherwise, the conclusion to be drawn from them appears to be that if the mails could be despatched six hours earlier from Queenstown, or could be sent by the steamers leaving Southampton, the result would be that they would not be delayed, as they sometimes are, twenty-four hours in their departure from San Francisco.

Either of the above proposed arrangements would, however, I apprehend, render it necessary to close the mail in London early Saturday morning instead of on the evening of that day, and correspondents on this side would then virtually have to post their letters, &c., on Friday night.

This, however, would not, probably, be objected to if the earlier despatch of the mails resulted in the gain of twenty-four hours in their arrival at their destinations, more especially as all ordinary business correspondence is posted under the present arrangements early on Saturday, and probably a considerable portion of it on the Friday night.