

The "Aurania," the steamer to whose performance you particularly took exception, is not, I find, one of those which carry the mails for New Zealand, and has not done so for more than a year. These mails appear to be carried by the "Etruria" and "Umbria," both of which take a day less than the "Aurania" in getting to New York.

Nevertheless, I wrote to Sir John Burns on the day of your visit, calling his particular attention to the advantages of sending these mails by the "Campania" and "Lucania," and inquiring whether a change in that sense could be made. I have received a reply, from which it appears that the sailings of the steamers are fixed early in the spring for each Saturday during the year, and are arranged with great care and deliberation according to the exigencies of trade; that it would not be possible at present to transfer the "Campania" or "Lucania" to other Saturdays than those indicated in the company's sailing-list for the current year; but that it will no doubt happen in some future seasons, as it has happened in the past, that those two steamers will be despatched to take the New Zealand mails.

From the following table, which gives the average length of voyage from Queenstown to New York during 1895 for each of the five steamers mentioned, and also the shortest voyage, you will see that there is less difference between the performance of the "Campania" and "Lucania," and that of the "Etruria" and "Umbria," than there is between that of the two last-named steamers and that of the "Aurania":—

Name of Steamer.				Average Length of Voyage.	Shortest Period occupied.
				D. h. m.	D. h. m.
"Lucania"	...	...	...	5 19 52	5 14 10
"Campania"	...	...	...	5 23 52	5 12 55
"Etruria"	...	...	...	6 11 37	6 4 3
"Umbria"	...	...	...	6 17 48	6 4 58
"Aurania"	...	...	...	7 12 58	7 6 10

The Hon. Wm. Pember Reeves,
Agent-General for New Zealand.

Believe me, &c.,
H. BUXTON FORMAN.

No. 43.

The SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington, to the RESIDENT AGENT for NEW ZEALAND, San Francisco.

Post and Telegraph Department, General Post Office,
Wellington, 1st May, 1896.

SIR,—

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 31st March last, and note your remarks in reference to the circumstances attending the transport by the slow train from New York in January last of the English mails for this colony sent *via* San Francisco.

H. Stephenson Smith, Esq.,
Resident Agent for New Zealand, San Francisco, Cal.

I have, &c.,
W. GRAY, Secretary.

No. 44.

The RESIDENT AGENT for NEW ZEALAND, San Francisco, to the SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington.

SIR,—

San Francisco, 23rd May, 1896.

I have the honour to report that the R.M.S. "Monowai," conveying the homeward April mails from the colony, did not reach this port until Saturday, the 9th instant, too late to connect with the steamer "Paris" from New York on the 13th, which, under ordinary circumstances, would delay the mails until departure of the "Etruria," appointed to leave New York on the 16th. Ascertaining, however, that the s.s. "Normannia," of the Hamburg-American Packet Company, would leave for Hamburg, *via* Cherbourg and Plymouth, at 10 a.m. of the 14th, I at once placed myself in telegraphic communication with the general agents of this line in New York, and prevailed upon them to extend to the New Zealand Government the courtesy of holding their vessel a sufficient time to enable the express from this city to connect. I am pleased to report that the necessary connection was made, and I am to-day advised of the arrival of the "Normannia" at Hamburg, having been reported passing Scilly Islands at 6 a.m. of the 21st, which would have landed the mails at Plymouth a few hours later, thus only causing them to suffer a loss of twenty-four hours on the through time. I enclose copy of a communication addressed by me to the New York agents of the Hamburg-American line expressing thanks for their assistance.

Trusting my action as above may be approved,

W. Gray, Esq.,
Secretary, Post and Telegraph Department, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
H. STEPHENSON SMITH.