

Enclosure 1 in No. 35. □

The RESIDENT AGENT FOR NEW ZEALAND, San Francisco, to the GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT, Railway Mail-service, Washington.

Resident Agency for New Zealand,

SIR,—

311 California Street, San Francisco, Cal., 12th January, 1915.

I have the honour to report a serious delay in the transmission of the through mails destined to the Dominion of New Zealand from New York to San Francisco, on the 5th instant. This delay caused the detention at this port of the contract mail-steamer "Moana" for some forty-seven hours, and involved a demurrage payment to the steamship company from the New Zealand Government of 25 dollars an hour—say, from 1,175 dollars

The facts, as I have been enabled to gather them, are as follows: A shipment of mails comprising about 291 sacks arrived at New York per s.s. "Arabic" on the 4th January at 11 a.m. They were despatched westward by New York Central and Hudson River train No. 21 at 6.46 p.m. on the 4th January, arriving at Chicago at 5 p.m. on Monday, the 5th. They arrived at Chicago in ample time to connect with the evening trains for Omaha, but instead they appear to have been erroneously diverted at Chicago to St. Paul. Immediately upon receipt of advices of this action the officer in charge of the Railway Mail-service in this city caused a search to be made to locate the mails, and they were found to have been sent from St. Paul over the Great Northern or Northern Pacific line to Seattle. Orders were at once sent to Seattle to stop the mails and despatch them to this city by first possible opportunity. The despatching officer at Seattle, however, for some as-yet-unexplained reason, only forwarded some 120 sacks by train No. 511 on the Oregon and Washington line leaving at 9.30 a.m., holding some 170 sacks for train No. 569 of the same line leaving at 11.30 a.m. As a consequence, the latter and greater portion of the mails failed to connect at Portland with the Southern Pacific fast train at 3.50 p.m., and only made connection with train No. 13 at 8.15 p.m., thus causing an additional delay of about twelve hours at this port, the mails finally reaching San Francisco at 7.30 a.m. on the 9th January, the steamer sailing at 10 a.m. same day.

Perhaps I may be permitted to suggest as a preventive of similar errors in the future that general instructions be given the despatching officers at Chicago that all through mails destined to the Dominion of New Zealand arriving at Chicago within seventy-two hours after the date given in the printed monthly schedule issued by the Foreign Mail Department at Washington for the departure from San Francisco of steamers of the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand be forwarded to this city unless otherwise instructed by the San Francisco Department. The schedule of departures from the United States and Canada is arranged so as to leave at two weeks intervals, alternating between San Francisco and Vancouver. Therefore, there would be plenty of time to send them north to Vancouver if by any chance the San Francisco steamer had departed.

As the representative of the Dominion of New Zealand in this city, I have power under the contract with the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand to detain the steamers at this port forty-eight hours after advertised date of sailings, and am also empowered by special instructions (outside the contract) to detain the steamers under an emergency a longer period, so if circumstances warrant the exercise of my full authority there would not be any misconceptions at this port.

I also desire to take this opportunity of directing your attention to a matter which has on more than one occasion caused a few hours' delay at this port—viz., the west-bound mails arriving at Omaha from Chicago are rarely forwarded from Omaha by train No. 5, leaving at 9.15 a.m., and thus effecting a connection at Green River with train No. 1 on the Union Pacific line, which arrives here at 10.10 a.m., but are held at Omaha until the departure of No. 9, leaving at 1.30 p.m., arriving at San Francisco at 2.30 p.m., four hours and twenty minutes later. Would it be feasible to issue instructions to effect this change?

The delay to the through service on this occasion is of such serious proportions that I shall be called upon to make a full report to my Government. Therefore, you would confer a favour by putting me in a position to give a full explanation of the occurrences.

I regret very much putting you to so much trouble in this connection, as in my twenty-five years' experience the Railway Mail-service has strongly impressed me with its high state of efficiency. It is extremely rare that the through mails destined to the Dominion of New Zealand are not transported with the utmost intelligence and precision.

I have, &c.,

H. STEPHENSON SMITH,

Resident Agent for Dominion of New Zealand.

A. H. Stephens, Esq., General Superintendent, Railway Mail-service, Washington, D.C.

Enclosure 2 in No. 35.

The GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT, Division of Railway Mail-service, Washington, to the RESIDENT AGENT FOR NEW ZEALAND, San Francisco.

Division of Railway Mail-service, Post Office Department,

SIR,—

Second Assistant Postmaster-General, Washington, 12th February, 1915.

In further answer to your letter under date of the 12th January, reporting a delay in the transmission of the through mails destined to the Dominion of New Zealand from New York to San Francisco, despatched via New York and Chicago railway post-office train No. 21, leaving New York 6.46 p.m. 4th January, I beg to inform you that the matter has been made the subject of careful investigation.