

TOTALS.				lbs.	oz.		£	s.	d.
Victoria	...	...	...	1,366	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	at 20s. per lb.	1,366	11	0
Queensland	...	...	...	187	2	" "	187	2	6
Tasmania	...	...	...	281	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	" "	218	5	7
South Australia	...	...	...	479	5	" "	479	6	3
				2,251	4 $\frac{1}{4}$		£2,251	5	4
Western Australia, 12 lbs., at 11d. per lb.				...	...	...	0	11	0
							£2,251	16	4

No. 43.

Copy of a Letter from the Hon. E. W. STAFFORD to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY,
New South Wales.

Colonial Secretary's Office,

Wellington, 30th September, 1868.

SIR,—

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 2nd July last, conveying the views of the Government of New South Wales, on the answer given by the Imperial Government to the proposals of the Melbourne Postal Conference, also stating that it had been represented to you that the time occupied by the Panama steamer on the passage between Sydney and Panama could be reduced by at least two days, if the New Zealand mails were delivered at the Bay of Islands, and requesting to be made acquainted with the views of the Government of New Zealand on these subjects.

Your letter and the minute of the Postmaster-General of New South Wales, forwarded therewith, have received the careful consideration of this Government.

With respect to the general question of an Ocean Postal Service for the Australasian Colonies, the New Zealand Ministry concurs generally in the opinions expressed in your letter, and especially in the statement that it is impossible for any service by a single route, whether monthly or fortnightly, to satisfy the requirements of the several Colonies by which it is assumed such a service would be supported. I must add that no general scheme could be satisfactory to New Zealand of which the service *via* Panama did not form a part.

Upon the subject of the further steps which it may be expedient to adopt in reference to the answer from the Imperial Government above referred to, I have to state that, in view of the extent to which the value to New Zealand of the Suez Mail Service has now been reduced, it is not thought necessary by this Government to address any communication at the present time to the Imperial authorities; but in the event of further action being taken by the other Australian Colonies, New Zealand will be disposed to co-operate in any course of proceeding having for its object the establishment of a general and efficient system of ocean postal communication on terms which would be fair and advantageous to all parties concerned. In the consideration of any such general scheme, it appears to the Government of this Colony most desirable that the rapid progress now being made in the construction of the railroad across the Continent of North America should be borne in mind. There can be no doubt that, on the completion of this great work, bulk mails can be forwarded between the United Kingdom and the greater part of the Australasian Colonies in less time *via* San Francisco than by any other route; while by a recent postal convention between Great Britain and the United States provision is made for the transmission of such mails through the United States at a reasonable cost. It would therefore be a matter for regret if by any arrangement to be now entered into an obstacle were created to the adoption of the San Francisco route as soon as it shall have become available.

With respect to the suggested change in the port of call in New Zealand, I have the honor to state that I lost no time in communicating with Captain Benson, the manager in this Colony for the Panama, New Zealand and Australian Royal Mail Company, with a view of ascertaining whether any and if so what saving of time could be effected by the proposed alteration, and upon what terms the Company would consent to such alteration, if it was thought expedient to make it. Captain Benson informs me that the alleged saving of two days appears to him highly problematical, although he is not prepared to say that on the voyage from Panama to Sydney some portion of it may not be effected. As however the contract with the Company fixes Wellington as the New Zealand port of call, and as the Company has expended large sums of money to work the service in accordance with the provisions of the contract, Captain Benson is unable, without reference to his Directors, to state on what terms the Company would agree to the change.

Irrespective of the above difficulty, I would point out to you that the proposed alteration would very seriously affect the interests of this Colony. The Bay of Islands is situated at nearly the northern extremity of New Zealand, 600 miles distant from the seat of Government, and still further from the great commercial centres of the Middle Island. Consequently the distribution from the Bay of Islands of mails for other parts of New Zealand would not only involve a very considerable loss of time as compared with existing arrangements, but would also be attended by so large an increase in cost that I feel sure you will recognize that such an alteration of the service could not properly be effected, even if the agreement with the Company had left the subsidizing Colonies any option with regard to the port of call.

To the Hon. the Colonial Secretary,
New South Wales.

I have, &c.,
E. W. STAFFORD.