

6. When the combined time table of the Australian and New Zealand packet service for 1877 was issued by the General Post Office, it was found, as part of the policy of the change which had been made, that the Post Office only announced the time of the mails leaving by the San Francisco route for the month of January, whilst by the Galle route, west of Australia, and the Singapore route, east of Australia, the announcement was made of the times of leaving throughout the year. The column still left for stating the time of departure during the year of colonial mails *viâ* San Francisco was filled with the announcement for January only, whilst opposite the other months was an ominous blank with an asterisk calling attention to the following foot-note:—

“Dates of despatch dependent upon arrangements made from month to month for despatch of mails to the United States, but will be as nearly as possible at intervals of twenty-eight days.”

The calendar of the quarterly *Postal Guide* for January omits all reference whatsoever to the service *viâ* San Francisco; and the only notice of it which the *Guide* contains is in an obscure note under the “Table of Colonial and Foreign Postage” in connection with the heading “New South Wales,” in the following terms:—

“The mails *viâ* San Francisco will be despatched on a date fixed from month to month, and of which a special notice will be issued.”

The *Post Office Daily List* (weekly edition) of January 13th contains a striking illustration of the injury to which the service is liable by the present utter confusion into which its arrangements are thrown, whilst in one part of the *Daily List* it is announced that the New South Wales and New Zealand mails will be duly despatched on the evening of the 13th, the day of publication. In another page of the *List* appears the following announcement:—

“Under the arrangements made for the conveyance of mails from this country to the United States during the present month, there will be no mail despatched from London on Thursday evenings as hitherto. The mails for New South Wales and New Zealand, intended for transmission *viâ* San Francisco, which in due course should be made up in London this evening, will, under these circumstances, be made up and despatched on the evening of next Saturday, and correspondence for the colonies, as well as such letters, &c., for other parts of Australia as are specially addressed to be forwarded *viâ* San Francisco, must be posted in or reach London not later than Saturday evening.”

The reader of this announcement, dated the 13th instant, would naturally conclude that the mails *viâ* San Francisco for the month of January were to be despatched on the 20th, not the 13th instant. The operation of the change on the public mind may be gathered from the fact that even the compilers of the *Postal Guide* and *List* were puzzled, and fail to be able to describe it.

7. The effect of the change, without taking into account the errors and confusion it will occasion, will be disastrous to the San Francisco Service, placing it as it does on an uncertain footing in respect to the times of leaving, as compared with other services.

8. The colonies have entered into heavy obligations with Contractors, whose duty it is to have steamers ready to leave San Francisco, on days appointed by the two colonies, many months in advance. If the time of the mails leaving London is to be decided monthly, it will be impossible to fix the time of the steamers leaving San Francisco with precision, and all the arrangements made in San Francisco and the colonies will be liable to disturbance. The Contractors will have grave reason to complain. Any money which might be paid to them in case of detention in excess of the time allowed in the contract would not compensate them for the misfortune of being unable to announce to passengers, months in advance, their times of departure.

9. Clearly the new arrangement, however suited to the carriage of mails between the two termini of London and New York, is not suitable for the carriage of mails like those under consideration. It must be borne in mind that costly steamers are engaged at a great expense for a second ocean voyage; and the success of the service, apart from the question of mails, largely depends upon the inducements offered to the travelling public, amongst which inducements punctuality is paramount.

10. To meet the uncertainty, the Governments will probably have to leave a large margin of time in their arrangements with the Contractors; and then the service will be made to compare unfavourably with the other Australian services.

11. The plan now proposed is wholly unfitted, as has been shown, to the carriage of the mails, which have to be further forwarded by steamers, the dates of the departure of which are fixed months in advance. Had the Post Office given to the colonies an intimation that it was intended to adopt such a course, they would probably have hesitated to commit themselves to the heavy liabilities they are under for the service, the success of which is so seriously threatened.

12. It is only asked that the course proposed to be adopted by the Post Office may be so far modified as to allow arrangements for the carriage of the New South Wales and New Zealand mails to be made throughout the year. It is not suggested that more than the new rate should be paid, but that one of the fast companies leaving on the usual day should be requested at that rate to carry the New Zealand and New South Wales throughout the year.

13. Such a course will be acceptable to the public. A numerous and influential deputation would support it if any doubt exists as to its being desired by the commercial community. It would also be satisfactory to the colonies, by saving them from seeing the expensive service they have established disastrously injured. It will cost no more to the Post Office, and will be only carrying out the spirit and intention of the arrangement notified to the colonies by the Secretary of State.

JULIUS VOGEL,
Agent-General for New Zealand.

Enclosure in Sub-enclosure 2 to Enclosure 1 in No. 162.

COPY of TELEGRAM.

OUR proposal for temporary prolongation of present mail service, not being unanimously accepted, is withdrawn.

We have determined to carry mails to and from Galle, Singapore, San Francisco, and this country, free of charge. If service is established by any one or more colonies from Galle, we will pay