

No. 10.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the PREMIER, Wellington.

SIR,—

13, Victoria Street, London, S.W., 7th August, 1891.

Not having heard further from you by the s.s. "Doric" to-day on the subject of the mail-services, I have thought it expedient not to delay sending in a formal letter to the London Post Office, copy of which is annexed. At the same time I cannot say that I think there is any better chance than there was when I last wrote of getting an early answer from Her Majesty's Treasury, as the Imperial Parliament is prorogued, and there is sure to be delay owing to the dispersion of Ministers and heads of departments for the autumn holidays.

A paragraph has appeared in the papers here to the effect that Mr. Wanamaker, the Postmaster-General at Washington, has informed the Postmaster-General of New Zealand that he is endeavouring to arrange a fast fortnightly service of steamers between San Francisco and Australia *via* New Zealand, calling alternately at Wellington and Auckland.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

Enclosure in No. 10.

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

SIR,—

13, Victoria Street, London, S.W., 7th August, 1891.

The time is fast approaching when it will be necessary to decide whether a more permanent provision for the New Zealand mail-services, both by San Francisco and by Direct steamer, shall take the place of the temporary arrangements we made last year, and, if so, on what terms Her Majesty's Government would continue their support to those services for a further period.

I had hoped to be now in a position to submit for the Postmaster-General's consideration a definite scheme for the renewal of both services; but the same difficulties which have so often hindered a decision on the subject by the New Zealand Parliament until the last days of the session once more prevent me from making any but a tentative proposal at the present time. Nevertheless, I am able to state definitely that my Government will ask the Colonial Legislature to sanction a renewal of both services for three years; and it is therefore essential for them to know beforehand, if possible, what assistance they will receive from Her Majesty's Government.

The isolated position of New Zealand in the Pacific still makes, as it has always made, the existence of an independent postal communication with this country an object of paramount necessity to her, and, although my Government have so often had to regret of late years the adverse circumstances which only permitted of temporary makeshifts being made for that object they have not doubted that the same support as in past years would continue to be given by this country whenever less ephemeral arrangements should be practicable.

Although I fully recognise the inconvenience to the Imperial departments of being asked to consider the question while the renewal of the existing services is still in a hypothetical stage, I trust I may be allowed to submit it now, though only in a tentative shape. With that object, I beg leave to ask whether, in the event of New Zealand deciding to renew both or either of the San Francisco and Direct services for three years, Her Majesty's Government would continue for that period the same apportionments as we arranged last year; or, if those apportionments cannot be agreed to again, then what others would be more acceptable.

It would be the greatest help to my Government, in the proposals they must so soon bring down in the New Zealand House of Representatives, if an early intimation could be given to me of the course which the Postmaster-General would recommend to the Lords of the Treasury.

I am, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

The Secretary to the General Post Office, St. Martin's-le-Grand.

No. 11.

Mr. CREIGHTON to the SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington.

SIR,—

San Francisco, 17th August, 1891.

On the 24th ultimo I wrote to you (not published) on the subject of the detention of the "Monowai" last trip for twenty-four hours owing to the failure of the British-colonial mail to connect with the west-bound train leaving New York at 9 p.m. several hours after the arrival of the "Umbria." The "Alameda" will be similarly detained this month, and from the same cause.

The "Umbria" was telegraphed off Fire Island at 2.25 p.m. on the 15th, and at the wharf about 6.40 p.m. This gave two hours twenty minutes to connect with the 9 o'clock train. That it did not make connection is proof that the time was not sufficient to handle all the mail at the post office after its arrival there, segregate the Australian and New Zealand portions, and despatch to the New York Central Railroad *Dépôt*. It is usually after 8 p.m. when the "Umbria's" mail reaches the New York Post Office, the time of delivery being at the discretion of the steamship company, which has a contract, or is under engagement, with the London Post Office Department.

There is little doubt that connection might have been made if the same despatch had been used at New York as at San Francisco on the arrival of the colonial mail, and if the Australian mail had been segregated on board the "Umbria." I think it would be worth making an effort to have this done, as suggested by me in my letter to which reference is herein made; but, as then explained, the initiative should be taken by the New Zealand Government, as the United States Post Office authorities are powerless in the matter. The Washington department has established a sea postal service on the German ships in conjunction with the Berlin Post Office Department, but the British