

During the past six months the itinerary of the steamers has been altered, and Wellington made a port of call. It is easily seen that in arranging to make the detour which calling at New Zealand necessitates, the company have primarily to face a loss, by reason of the increased expenditure for the more lengthy voyage, New Zealand not being on the direct route. It has been felt, however, that on account of the isolation of this colony, and in exchange for advantages which it would receive through having another mail and trade route, the Government would be prepared to recognise the additional facilities by arranging for the payment of an annual subsidy. As a fact, ever since the establishment of the Vancouver service there has been a desire expressed by those officially voicing the people of New Zealand that the service should call at a New Zealand port under their itinerary.

Dealing with some of the advantages which will accrue from having this additional mail-service, it is evident, in the first place, that a fortnightly mail-service to Great Britain, *via* Canada and the United States, can easily be maintained, and with the growing importance of this colony the time has surely arrived when it ought to have increased mail-communication.

The advantage of trading with a country such as the great Dominion of Canada is apparent when we consider that in doing so we are dealing with a people who are under the same flag as ourselves, and who are most anxious to open up trade relations direct with New Zealand.

In this connection the possibilities of trade with the vast territory of British Columbia, of which the two principal ports are Victoria and Vancouver, the latter being the terminal port of the Canadian-Australian Royal Mail line and the Canadian-Pacific Railway, have recently increased to an unprecedented degree, by reason of the extraordinary gold-finds which have occurred within that territory, and which are known as the Klondyke goldfields.

Situated as New Zealand is, being the nearest British possession capable of supplying the requirements of these people in those articles of food of which this colony is such a large exporter, the developments which are taking place in the far north cannot but be of the very greatest interest to New-Zealanders. At the present time great numbers of miners are on the fields, and thousands eagerly waiting to go as soon as the season permits. These gold-mines have caused such excitement throughout Great Britain, the United States, and the Australian Colonies that it is no exaggeration to say, when the rush sets in, early in the ensuing year, it will be far beyond any gold-rush which has as yet been known, even taking into consideration the great rushes to the gold-diggings in the early days of Australia and California.

The requirements of these miners will give to New Zealand an opportunity of exporting to a large extent canned meats and food products, whilst in the way of blankets and woollens for miners' outfits New Zealand will be in a splendid position to supply the necessary requirements.

So far as the facilities for reaching the Klondyke goldfields are concerned, the Vancouver mail-route, by reason of its connection with the Canadian Pacific Railway, is in the best position to reach this district. Arrangements have been made for laying down a railway from Telegraph Creek to Teslin Lake, which will make the goldfields reasonably accessible.

The trade in frozen mutton to British Columbia in the winter months is increasing. During those months British Columbia is not in a position to supply the requirements of her people in mutton, and the experiments which are being made by shippers of frozen mutton are of such a satisfactory nature that the trade is slowly but surely on the increase, and, with the likelihood of the population of British Columbia increasing tenfold in the immediate future, the possibilities of trade in this product are exceedingly good.

Wool, skins, and hides are also shipped from Sydney, and New Zealand would have an opportunity of having a share in this trade.

A feature in connection with this service which is of great value is the fact that arrangements are being made whereby, in the near future, there shall be placed on the Atlantic fast passenger-steamships trading between Great Britain and Canada. Special connections will be made with this line and the Canadian-Australian Royal Mail-service, whereby the time occupied in the carriage of mails and passengers will be considerably shortened to and from New Zealand. The attractions of the Canadian Pacific Railway—the great highway across Canada—are of such a nature as to have, in the short space of a few years, given to it an unrivalled reputation as a tourist route, whilst the attention, civility, and care taken with passengers over that railway is very marked.

The fact of the steamers making New Zealand a port of call gives additional opportunities for the extension of trade with the Pacific islands, as, after leaving Wellington, the ports of call are Suva, in the Fijis, and Honolulu in the Hawaiian Islands.

In conclusion, though the steamships of the line are at present calling at New Zealand, it is only right to say they cannot continue to do so, and make such a detour as is involved in the change of route, unless they are assisted materially by this colony. If this cannot be arranged the more direct route of making Queensland a port of call would have to be considered, that colony having already expressed its willingness to support the service.

We are, &c.,

The Rt. Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

JAMES HUDDART AND Co., Managers.

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