

way of Suez all correspondence for New Zealand posted up to the Friday evening following a despatch *via* San Francisco, you seem to suggest that your Government was not duly advised on the subject.

In reply, I am to remind you that as long ago as the 17th September [letter not printed] your attention was called to the complaints made of delay caused by detaining such correspondence for transmission *via* Vancouver; and you were at the same time informed that, as the result of the investigation as to the grounds of the complaints, there seemed to the Postmaster-General to be no alternative but to direct, in the public interest, that the correspondence should be despatched once again by way of Suez, as the quickest route. Pressing as the matter was, however, his Grace was loth to issue any instructions without giving you reasonable notice of his intention, lest you might be possessed of information on the subject not accessible to this office.

In your reply, you will remember, the question was treated as one involving the delay of a single letter only, instead of the delay of nearly ten thousand letters; and the urgency of the case seemed to have been entirely overlooked. Hence the letter from this office of the 23rd September [not printed], explaining the urgency of the proposed return to a proper arrangement, and asking you to communicate with your Government on the subject by telegraph.

When, after further correspondence with you, the Postmaster-General received a statement from the New Zealand Government showing that the letters which it had been the practice to withhold from transmission *via* Suez suffered delay in every instance of from three to eight days in consequence, his Grace could no longer hesitate to issue the instructions of the urgent need for which he had given you notice in September. Any other course would have been inconsistent with the duty of the Post Office towards the public.

The Postmaster-General feels sure that, on reviewing these circumstances, you will recognise that he has not acted with precipitation.

The Agent-General for New Zealand.

I am, &c.,
S. WALPOLE.

No. 255.

The Hon. the PREMIER to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Premier's Office, Wellington, 30th December, 1898.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 16th ultimo with reference to the despatch of the homeward Australasian mails by the fastest steamers from New York.

I note that the New York postal authorities are fully alive to the importance of the early and speedy transmission of the mails from that port; that Messrs. Cameron, New York, have been requested to forward the latest sailing fixtures of the principal steamship lines; and that the fast steamers of the American Line have recommenced running.

I would point out that the time-table of our post-office provides for the homeward Vancouver mails reaching New York in time to connect with the steamers of the American Line leaving on the Wednesday, while the San Francisco mails are timed to arrive at New York on the Tuesday for despatch by the fast vessels of the German line, and, should they miss connection, the steamer of the American Line would be available the following day.

The Hon. W. P. Reeves, Agent-General for
New Zealand, London.

I have, &c.,
T. THOMPSON,
For the Premier.

No. 256.

The SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington, to the RESIDENT AGENT for NEW ZEALAND, San Francisco.

SIR,—

General Post Office, Wellington, 31st December, 1898.

I have the honour to forward you herewith extract from the *Otago Daily Times*, Dunedin, referring to a portion of your report of the 19th May last (probably obtained from Parliamentary Paper F.—6, 1898) of your journey from Montreal to Vancouver, and giving a memorandum purporting to show the arrivals of mails at Vancouver for conveyance by the Vancouver-Sydney steamers from April to September.

You will observe that the delay in May is said to have been due to a slide at shed 20, and not, as stated by you, to a deficiency in engine-power. After perusing the extract I shall be glad if you will advise me whether you wish to vary your statement, or whether you adhere to what appeared in your report.

H. Stephenson Smith, Esq.,
Resident Agent for New Zealand, San Francisco.

I have, &c.,
W. GRAY, Secretary.

No. 257.

The SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington, to the POSTMASTER, New York.

SIR,—

General Post Office, Wellington, 12th January, 1899.

Referring to the letter of the 7th March last year from the Mail-agent of the "Aorangi" to you [not printed], asking that particulars of the despatch of the Australasian mails to Great Britain from your port might be advised to the Mail-agents of the Sydney-Vancouver steamers, I have now the honour to ask that you will be so good as to send the desired particulars by "collect" telegram as soon as the mails are shipped for England, stating the day and hour of arrival of the mails at New York from Vancouver, and of their departure by steamer.

The Postmaster, New York.

I have, &c.,
W. GRAY, Secretary.