

No. 69.

The RESIDENT AGENT FOR NEW ZEALAND at Oakland, San Francisco, to the ACTING-SECRETARY, General Post Office, Wellington.

SIR,—

Resident Agency for New Zealand, Oakland, 25th May, 1906.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your communications of the 4th and 11th April [not printed], and the 1st May [No. 8], contents of which have been noted, and I beg to acknowledge receipt of a limited supply of stationery; also a copy of the New Zealand Post Office Directory and remittance acknowledged elsewhere, together with Year-book of 1905 and copy of last account. I also have to acknowledge receipt of your cable of the 18th April (received by me on the 29th April), and replied to same date.

The terrible disaster which has befallen the city has been announced by cable and telegraph despatches long ere this, and therefore it will be unnecessary for me to go into any details further than to report that all the records in my charge were destroyed by fire on the 18th April last.

You will also be aware that this disaster to the City of San Francisco caused the suspension of the mail-service hitherto existing under contract with the Oceanic Steamship Company. For many days after the disaster the United States Government would not permit the departure of any vessels, steam or sail, from the port of San Francisco. The steamer "Sonoma" was ready to depart on her usual schedule, but as the Government embargo prevented her proceeding for many days, Messrs. J. D. Spreckels Bros. concluded, knowing the serious conditions of affairs, financial and otherwise, as affecting the Oceanic Steamship Company to temporarily suspend the operations in the mail-service. You were, undoubtedly, duly notified by cable by them that the service is now resumed (as cabled you by me) with the departure of the steamer "Sonoma" on the 31st instant, and thereafter the schedule will be continued.

Finding that under these circumstances the Mail Agent arriving here by the steamer "Ventura" would be without assistance on the "Sonoma," and finding also that there was a possibility that the assistant (Mr. Willett) would proceed to New Zealand by the steamer "Moana" on the 5th instant from Honolulu, I took it upon myself to cable him to come on to San Francisco by the "Sierra" so as to arrive in time to accompany Mr. Rudd on the "Sonoma" on the 31st instant. There was no time to communicate with you, as prompt action was necessary. This gentleman has arrived as ordered. Upon the arrival of the steamer "Sierra," and consulting with Isbister, I thought it necessary to cable you in reference to the agent to leave here by the steamer 12th July, and I now have your cable informing me that you have arranged for Mr. Lindsay to arrive here by the Vancouver steamer, deviating at Honolulu.

I regret to report that the mails arriving here by the steamers "Sonoma" and "Ventura" were too late to connect with the Saturday mails from New York, but proceeded on the following Tuesday, that will probably cause a delay from the other side of two or three days each.

Of course, the terrible calamity which has befallen San Francisco has interrupted, and may yet delay, the arrivals and departures of the other mails, but I think hereafter we may anticipate unobstructive continuation of the service.

I have, &c.,

The Acting-Secretary, General Post Office, Wellington.

H. STEPHENSON SMITH.

No. 70.

The Hon. the ACTING POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Wellington, to the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Ottawa.

SIR,—

General Post Office, Wellington, 31st May, 1906.

I have the honour to forward herewith a statement showing the weight of mails from the United Kingdom for New Zealand which were diverted from San Francisco to Vancouver for conveyance to New Zealand by the R.M.S. "Moana," of the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand, in consequence of the earthquake at San Francisco on the 18th April, and the inability of the contract steamer "Sonoma," of the Oceanic Steamship Company of San Francisco, to proceed on her voyage to New Zealand.

It will be remembered that when the diversion of the English and American mails was made to Vancouver, the Postmaster-General of the United States approached you with the view of the R.M.S. "Moana" calling at Auckland, New Zealand, on her voyage to Australia, and on your consent and that of the Australian Commonwealth being obtained, the New Zealand Government made the necessary negotiation with the Union Steam Ship Company as to the payment to be made for the special service. The Union Steam Ship Company based the amount of its offer to call at Auckland on the assumption that it would receive poundage at the Postal Union rates for the carriage of the mails between Vancouver and Suva, Fiji, and this colony arranged to pay a lump sum of £400 for the special call at Auckland, which amount the Union Company, though accepting, stated was insufficient to cover the extra cost of calling at Auckland and delivering the mail in contract time in Sydney. Special arrangements had also to be made to send on mails and passengers to Brisbane.

It will be seen that the poundage payable on the mails from the United Kingdom amounted to £374 2s. 6d., and that on the weight of a previous United States mail for New Zealand estimated to be somewhat smaller than the mail under notice, of which the weight was not taken by the New Zealand Mail Agent, the poundage amounted to £286 11s. 1d. I am aware that the Union Company is subsidised to convey all mails put on board, but under the exceptional circumstances it is hoped that you will be able to see your way to agree to the sea-transit rates on the mail from the United Kingdom and the United States of America being paid to the Union Company instead of to your Administration. I would add that the statement does not include the correspondence from the United States of America for the Australian States, which was a mail of considerable size.

I am communicating with the Postmasters-General of the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the Commonwealth of Australia in similar terms.

I have, &c.,

ALBERT PITT,

Acting Postmaster-General.

The Postmaster-General, Ottawa.