

Melbourne on the 17th. Time required before an answer is received at Melbourne, one month and five days. Otherwise the answer to a letter arriving on the 27th at Wellington might be delayed till the departure of the next steamer for Melbourne on the 4th of the ensuing month, and would arrive on the 18th, or in one month and six days. At present, to a letter despatched on the 12th from Melbourne no reply could be received till the 23rd of the month following; or one month and eleven days, with twelve days allowed for answering.

Departure from Sydney 18th of one month, arrival at Wellington 2nd of the following month. Sydney and Wellington. Return, on the 4th via Melbourne, and on the 29th direct to Sydney. Arrival at Melbourne in the first case 22nd, and Sydney 26th, one month and eight days between despatch of letter and receipt of answer, with an interval of two days for making reply. Supposing this to be too short, a delay would then take place before an answer could be despatched of twenty-seven days from the 2nd to the 29th; and the answer would only reach Sydney on the 13th of the third month, or after an interval of two months and fifteen days. The alternative here is one month and eight days with two days for answers, or two months and fifteen days with twenty-seven days for answers. By the present route a letter leaving Sydney on the 17th reaches Wellington on the 27th, the answer may be despatched on the 9th of the next month and reach Sydney on the 19th, or after an interval of one month and two days, with twelve days for answers. As regards Wellington, therefore, there would be a slight advantage obtained, so far as the correspondence with Melbourne was concerned; but a considerable disadvantage in the case of that with Sydney. It will be seen by the tables in the appendix that the correspondence between Sydney and Wellington is somewhat in excess of that between Wellington and Melbourne, and requires therefore that proper provision should be made for it. Upon the whole, therefore, the proposed change would be detrimental to Wellington.

Departure from Melbourne, 12th, arrival at Auckland 3rd of the following month; departure from Auckland and Melbourne. Auckland 6th, arrival at Sydney 13th and Melbourne 17th, or one month and five days, with three days for answering. Or else:—Departure from Auckland on the 28th of the second month and arrival at Melbourne on the 18th of the third; giving an interval of two months and six days from the original despatch, with twenty-six days for answers. The shortness of time allowed for answers (three days) by the proposed plan, and the ample time allowed by the present route (ten days) appears, in the case of Auckland, to turn the balance in favour of the latter, notwithstanding that the time required is six days more.

Departure from Sydney on the 18th, arriving at Auckland on the 25th. Auckland and Sydney. Departure from Auckland on the 6th of the ensuing month, arriving in return at Sydney on the 13th, or an interval of five and twenty days. At present the interval is one month and two days, or from seven to eight days more, so that as regards the correspondence between Auckland and Sydney, the change would be so much clear gain, though a loss as regards the correspondence with Melbourne.

It is, moreover, to be borne in mind, in considering the proposed arrangements, that they would cause the English Mail to be despatched much sooner than would otherwise be necessary for meeting the ocean steamer starting from Sydney on the 22nd, and from Melbourne on the 26th. At present, the Mails for England arrive at Sydney on the 19th, while under the proposed arrangements, they would be for six days longer lying in the Sydney Post Office.

At present, the English Mails for Dunedin, and Lyttelton, instead of coming by way Dunedin and Lyttelton of Sydney, are brought direct from Melbourne by a vessel under contract, it is understood, to the Mails. Provincial Governments of Otago and Canterbury. These mails include the letters for the Bluff and Invercargill, and these, except in the case of the English Mails, are landed as the steamer passes on her voyage to Dunedin, the outward mails being put on board on her return in the opposite direction. As regards the English Mails, however, this arrangement cannot be carried out because the letters for that district are not sorted separately from those for the remainder of the original Province of Otago. The time of the steamer's detention at the Bluff is generally sufficient only for the landing and shipping of the mails, but not for the sorting and re-shipment of those arriving from England; the whole of which must consequently go to Dunedin, where they are sorted, and the Invercargill portion returned by the first opportunity. Obviously, this system is a most inconvenient one, and has very often the effect of delaying the delivery of the letters beyond the time allowed for answering them by return of Post.

Probably, the most simple way of remedying this defect would be to place a mail agent on board the Melbourne steamer, charged with the duty of sorting the Otago Mails into two portions, as required, during the voyage from Melbourne to the Bluff, and then the English letters addressed to settlers in that district could be landed in the same manner as other mails.

It would be necessary, however, in order to give effect to this arrangement, that this service should be brought under the General Admiralty Contract, or at least that a stipulation should be added to the existing agreement, similar to the one contained in that contract, by which the contractors are bound to receive on board any officer who may be duly appointed to take charge of mails.

It will be necessary, further, that some provision should be made for bringing the Province of Province of Marlborough. Marlborough into connection with the already established lines. The Government of that Province has, pending the decision of the Legislature, made an arrangement for the conveyance of its mails to Picton, and it will probably be found requisite that some plan similar to that now in operation should be permanently established.

A great drawback to the efficiency of the present service is the difficulty experienced in enter- Manukau Harbor! ing the harbour of Manukau during a Westerly gale, when the channel generally in use becomes often impracticable. It appears, however, that in all ordinary states of the weather, the dangers of