

CORRESPONDENCE RELATIVE TO THE INTER-COLONIAL ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY.

No. 1.

COPY OF A LETTER FROM THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE MANAGER OF THE
INTER-COLONIAL ROYAL MAIL COMPANY.

General Post Office,
Auckland, 5th September, 1861.

SIR,—

I beg to call your attention to the following resolution unanimously adopted by the House of Representatives of New Zealand on the 26th July last :—

“ That this House strongly recommends that the Company be requested to provide, as soon as possible, for the various services subsidized by the Colony, steamers better fitted for passenger traffic than those at present employed.”

In communicating to you this expression of the opinion of the House, I desire to state in addition, that the Government have received from many sources complaints of the insufficiency of the passenger accommodation provided by your Company's steamers generally, and of the positive discomfort always experienced in some of them.

The rate of increase of the passenger traffic between Australia and New Zealand, and between the various ports of this Colony, during the past two years, and the strong probability of its still more rapid increase for the future, point to the necessity for providing boats of a larger class than the “Lord Worsley,” “Lord Ashley” and “Airedale,” the overcrowding of which, especially upon the inter-provincial service, is a constant theme of dissatisfaction. The steamers “Lord Worsley” and “Lord Ashley,” have become, I regret to say, notorious in every port where they call for the miserable inconvenience and discomfort of their passenger accommodation. You must be fully aware that in this respect the boats named suffer by comparison with almost every vessel which professes to carry passengers out of any port in the Australian Colonies.

In pursuance of the powers vested in them by the terms of the contract, the Government of this Colony are about to make arrangements for a periodical inspection of the hull, machinery, equipments, crew, &c., of the boats employed on the mail service ; and with respect to passenger accommodation, it is contemplated to provide by law some such machinery for regulating passenger steamboats as is already generally in force elsewhere.

It is desirable to state that the Government of this Colony is not dissatisfied with the manner in which the Company has hitherto performed the mail service as defined in the contract ; and they are prepared to satisfy themselves, from time to time, in the manner just mentioned, that the vessels employed remain in a condition to perform the stipulated service satisfactorily. But the Government cannot be content altogether to ignore the complaints constantly made of the accommodation given to passengers, upon which a large share of the general utility of the service to the Colony depends.

I am impressed with the conviction that if your Company are made fully aware,—first, of the present condition and prospects of the passenger traffic in these seas ;—secondly, of the competition which is already springing up, and which must rapidly increase ;—thirdly, of the opinion entertained by the Government and by the public generally as to the fitness of the Company's steamers ;—and lastly, of the steps which it is proposed to take for regulating the passenger service within the Colony by law ; they will not hesitate, if only for the preservation of their own interests, to take immediate steps for substituting a better class of boats for those complained of, and for removing the defects which are conspicuous in the remainder.

I have to request that you will submit the representations which I have now the honor to make, to the General Manager and the Directors of the Inter-Colonial Royal Mail Company.

I have, &c.,

CROSBIE WARD.

The Manager of the Inter-Colonial Royal Mail Company,
Auckland.