

## The Postmaster General to the Lords of the Treasury.

My Lords,

General Post Office, 16 August 1858.

WITH reference to Mr. Stephenson's letter of the 13th instant, enclosing copies of letters from the Admiralty and from Mr. Cunard respecting the proposal for inserting a clause in the contract for the North American mail service, requiring the contractors to provide a suitable room in each of the packets for sorting letters during the voyage, I have the honour to observe, that notwithstanding the objections made to that proposal, I am of opinion that the clause suggested should be introduced into the contract, leaving the question how far it may be desirable or expedient to make use of the power to be thus obtained for future determination.

Your Lordships may be quite sure that the Post Office department will not recommend the adoption of any scheme by which the safety of the correspondence, or of the vessels conveying it, will be endangered.

The statement of Mr. Cunard, that "a passage is frequently made when it would be impossible to open the hatches on any one day without incurring great risk from shipping a sea," is one more especially for the consideration of the Admiralty; but I beg to observe, that even admitting the full force of this objection, it might still be found practicable to have a communication between the proposed sorting-room and the mail-room without opening the hatches, although a necessity might arise, in order to effect that object, for altering the position of the room in which the mails are deposited.

The observations of Mr. Cunard respecting the risk to which railway bonds and similar securities may be exposed if the mails be sorted on board, and the probability that the measure would not be favourably regarded by the United States Government, appear to me to be rather out of place in the present inquiry, which is simply whether the contractors shall be bound to provide the necessary space for sorting letters, if required by the Board of Admiralty; such objections will, of course, be duly weighed before the arrangement is actually carried into effect.

I think it right, however, to remark, that no attempt will ever be made to sort the United States correspondence during the voyage without the full concurrence of the United States Post Office; and further, that it may hereafter be deemed expedient to sort the letters, &c. to and from the North American Provinces, and to leave the United States mails undisturbed.

I have, &c.  
(signed) Colchester.

Treasury Minute, dated 21 August 1858.

WRITE to the Postmaster General, that after the decided expression of opinion by the Board of Admiralty as to the danger which would be incurred by the adoption of the plan proposed for sorting the letters on board the North American mail steamers, my Lords feel that they should not be justified in insisting upon the insertion in the contract of the clause suggested by the Postmaster General.

My Lords feel confident, however, that Messrs. Cunard will readily afford every facility for the advantage of the public service in this or in any other respect which can be adopted with safety.

Acquaint Admiralty.