

S. Cunard, Esq., to the Secretary to the Admiralty.

Bush-hill, Edmonton,
9 August 1858.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th August (S), with reference to the sorting of letters on board of the contract mail steamers, between the United States and England.

Their Lordships will not, I trust, think that I have any desire of making difficulties in carrying out their Lordships' wishes, or any suggestion which may be made for the benefit of the public service, but I submit for their Lordships' consideration, the reasons why I think that this plan, which may work well in the Mediterranean or in mild latitudes, cannot be adopted with safety on the North Atlantic. Our ships have no spare decks, and the mails, which are in large bags, are locked up in the mail-room under hatches; if the sorting had to be done on board, the hatches would have to be opened at least every morning and evening to bring mails on deck, and to return them; but we frequently make a passage when it would be impossible to open the hatches on any one day without incurring great risk from shipping a sea; and if a room were provided below, it would require the use of lights, which we strongly object to. I may, perhaps, be allowed to add the following reasons for their Lordships' consideration why this plan should not be adopted. In every mail from America, there is, irrespective of bills of exchange amounting from half a million to a million sterling, which to a certain extent would be protected by requiring an endorsement to make them negotiable (though that might be forged), a large amount of State and railway bonds and securities, which are payable to bearer, and which require no endorsements; and I think that the placing all these for ten or twelve days under the entire control of a clerk, would be to incur a serious risk, and to subject him to a temptation which might prove too strong; and I also think, that the Americans would view such an arrangement with great jealousy, and that it might lead to angry and unpleasant discussions.

The risks to be incurred appear to me more than commensurate with the advantages sought, and I am unable to suggest any plan to obviate the difficulties I have stated.

I have, &c.
(signed) *S. Cunard.*

The Secretary to the Admiralty to the Secretary to the Treasury.

Sir,

Admiralty, 10 August 1858.

WITH reference to your letter of the 4th instant, in which you state that the Postmaster General considers it desirable that a clause should be added to the contract for the North American Mail service, on the occasion of the extension of the period of its duration, requiring the contractors to provide a suitable room in each of the packets for sorting letters, I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to request you will state to the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury, that in accordance with their desire my Lords have communicated with Mr. Cunard, with a view of devising some plan to obviate the inconvenience he apprehends in carrying out the wishes of the Postmaster General, and I am now to transmit to you a copy of the reply from Mr. Cunard, pointing out that the plan cannot be adopted with safety on board the North Atlantic packets; an opinion in which my Lords fully concur.

I am, &c.
(signed) *W. G. Romaine.*

Treasury Minute, dated 12 August 1858.

TRANSMIT copies of this letter and of its enclosure to the Postmaster General, for his information.