

Enclosure in No. 105.

Sir,

Emigration Office, 6 April 1861.

I HAVE to acknowledge the receipt, this morning, of the letter addressed to the Treasury by direction of the Postmaster General, on the 5th instant, on the subject of the exemption from the Passengers Act of the vessels of the Atlantic Royal Mail Steam Navigation Company. The Postmaster General suggests that my letter to you, of 3d instant, on this subject was probably written under the misapprehension that the contract with the company, of October 1858, which stipulated for the exemption of the vessels of that company, is still in force, and points out that that contract is at an end, and that in the contract of 21st April 1859, now existing, there is no such stipulation. It is therefore recommended that we should be again called on for a report as to the exemption of the "Columbia" from the Passengers Act.

In reply, I beg to say that the conjecture of the Postmaster General, that my letter of 3d instant was written under a misconception of the circumstances, is correct. We were not aware that any new contract had been made with the company, still less that the company's right to claim an exemption from the Passengers Act had come to an end. That being the case, we can have no hesitation in expressing our opinion that these vessels ought not to be exempted from the operation of the Passengers Act. They are essentially passenger ships, the six vessels which sailed last year having carried in 14 voyages no less than 5,944 passengers, of whom only 464 were cabin passengers, and 5,480 steerage passengers, being on an average 391 steerage passengers on each voyage; on six of these voyages, the number of steerage passengers carried was 3,620, being upwards of 600 on each. The passengers they carry are moreover of as poor and ignorant a class as those who sail from any other port of the United Kingdom, and require, therefore, as much the protection of the Passengers Act. To place these vessels on the same footing, in respect to the Passengers Act, as the Cunard or West India line of steamers, which carry scarcely any steerage passengers, appears to us unreasonable.

In respect of the "Columbia," which is to sail on the 9th instant, the Lords of the Treasury may perhaps consider that as the directors of the company may have been led to expect the exemption they have on previous occasions enjoyed, it would scarcely be right to withdraw it at so late a period. I would request, however, the earliest intimation of their Lordship's decision that we may communicate by telegraph with our officer, who will have proceeded to Galway under the impression that he is to clear the vessel under the bond only, and not under the Act.

G. A. Hamilton, Esq.,
&c. &c. &c.

I have, &c.
(signed) T. W. C. Murdoch.

— No. 106. —

(328. M.)

Mr. F. Hill to Mr. Boate.

Sir,

General Post Office, 8 April 1861.

WITH reference to your letter of the 1st instant, I am directed by the Postmaster General to request that you will state to the directors of the Atlantic Royal Mail Steam Navigation Company, that he has referred for the decision of the Treasury their application for a certificate of exemption for the steam ship "Columbia."

The Lords Commissioners, in reply to his Lordship's letter, observe, that the vessels of the Atlantic Company are essentially passenger ships, the six vessels which sailed last year having carried in 14 voyages no less than 5,944 passengers, of whom only 464 were cabin passengers; and that, under these circumstances, it will not be right to exempt those vessels in any way from the provisions of the Passenger Act in future.

At the same time their Lordships have stated, that as the refusal of the certificate at this late period, in the case of the "Columbia," might put the company to serious inconvenience, they will not object to such certificate being granted in this instance.

I am accordingly desired by the Postmaster General to request that you will inform him whether the Atlantic Company will suffer such inconvenience if the certificate be not granted, and, in that case, that you will let him know what is the tonnage of the "Columbia," and to what port she belongs, as those particulars must be inserted in the certificate.

A. Boate, Esq.
Atlantic Royal Mail Steam Navigation
Company, 10, Cannon-street, E. C.

I am, &c.
(signed) F. Hill.