

AUSTRALIAN-LONDON MAIL RACE.

EMERGENCIES make or break the men to whom they appeal. The weak fail; the strong, the ready, the competent turn emergencies into success. An emergency of international importance began in August last in the youngest nation in the world—the commonwealth of Australia—and the men inspired to great labors appeared on the other side of the planet.

This was the beginning of the emergency. The government of the commonwealth wished to communicate by mail with the home government in London in the least possible time. At the postoffice at Sydney, in the state of New South Wales, there lay, early in the morning of August 13, 1901, 367 sacks of important mail, the most important mail ever made up in the commonwealth of England.

This mail could go by the way of Colombo, Aden, the Suez canal, and could there be transferred to a fast steamer for Brindisi and there placed in a special train for Calais, could be transferred to the channel boat and retransferred at Dover to train for London. The mail could also go by the way of San Francisco, Chicago, New York and Liverpool to London. Both of these routes had been used for years to transport his majesty's mail, and they were rival routes competing for the business.

The British, and by far the oldest route, was well supplied with a vast fleet of the largest steamers in the world. The regular time, when the boats and trains were "on time," including the five transfers, was thirty-five days and some hours. The usual time for a steamer from Sydney to San Francisco had been twenty-six days, and this with four days to New York, six to Queenstown, and one more to London, was thirty-seven days and some hours. This could be relied upon because the trains across the continent were almost invariably on time. The total distance by the British route is 15,000 miles and by the American route 13,500 miles. Naturally the post-office authorities, with that delightful respect for the old, so characteristic of the British official, preferred the old home route. The new is always inferior to the old, must be so in the very nature of English things, and could the mail have been sent that way it would have gone that way—and been late.

There was, however, a new factor in the transportation business—a new factor in the flag flying on a new ship, fresh

from the American shipyards on the Delaware. She lay that morning in Sydney's beautiful harbor with steam up ready for sea. She was the best available ship on that day in the South Pacific. Thus it happened that this, the most important mail ever sent out from the commonwealth, was placed on board the new American, twin-crew steamer Ventura of the Oceanic Steamship company, and at 10 o'clock on the morning of August 13, 1901, his majesty's mail started on a journey that was to be one of the most remarkable feats ever recorded in the history of transportation.

The Ventura is an American ship, built wholly of American materials by American workmen and manned by American sailors. She is one of three sister ships, built at Cramp's yard in Philadelphia, each ship being 425 feet long, of 6,000 tons burden, and having 8,000 horse-power, twin-screw engines. The Ventura is not a giant, like some of the primeval and oriental liners that run between England and Australia. She is a good, safe, fast, American ship of the Atlantic coastwise type, the finest type in the world, because conforming to the American ideas of comfort, safety and speed.

From Sydney the Ventura steered straight east across the Tasman Sea for Auckland on the east coast of New Zealand, one of the larger islands of the group forming the Colony of New Zealand. The distance round the northern end of the island and down the coast is 1,350 miles over a smooth sea, and it is to the credit of the Ventura that she entered the fine land-locked harbor of Auckland on the 17th, and taking on freight, mails and passengers sailed again at 2 o'clock.

The regular time, when the boats and trains were "on time," including stop, in four days and four hours. Now the Ventura's prow was turned to about N.E. into the mystic, fascinating mid-Pacific, straight for Stevenson's memorial home, poetic and beautiful Samoa. Four splendid days and wonderful tropic nights passed and early on the morning of the 21st, the Ventura, anchored at Pago Pago (pronounced Pango Pango) having made the 1,550 miles in three days and sixteen hours. Here the ship docked near the new United States coaling station and was thus even in mid-Pacific, in touch with our flag.

At 9 o'clock freight and passengers had been taken on and the ship steered again N.E. into the mid-tropic. On the third day she passed the equator, but not a passenger would have known it, for the temperature averaged only about 80 degrees. Six days of pleasant sailing and Hawaii rose above the purple sea, and at 6 o'clock on the afternoon of the 27th, the Ventura anchored

Story of the Great Feat Recently Accomplished in Carrying the Sacks Over the Southern Pacific, Union Pacific, Burlington, Lake Shore and New York Central Told by Charles Barnard.

at Honolulu, having made the run of 2,550 miles in six days and nine hours. At midnight she sailed again, steering about N. E. for San Francisco. At 7 p. m., September 2nd, she anchored at quarantine in San Francisco Harbor, having made 2,100 miles in five days, eighteen hours. Had she been urged it is possible she could have arrived a few hours earlier and landed those precious mail bags that day. As it happened she was detained all night, and they were not landed till 8:30 on the morning of the 3rd. They were at once transferred by teams to the Market street station of the Southern Pacific (Ogden route), and at 10 o'clock they began their eventful journey across the continent. So far, 7,510 miles had been traversed by the mail bags in an American ship in exactly twenty-one days, including all stops and including the delay of thirteen and a half hours at quarantine and the transfer from ship to "mail car, or a little over fourteen miles at Lake, the ship making an average speed of seventeen miles an hour.

His majesty's mail was now safe in a U. S. mail car bound for New York, 3,388 miles away. The route would be over five great railroads, the Southern Pacific (Ogden route), the Union Pacific, the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern, and the New York Central & Hudson River. The train was the regular fast mail, and it was due at the Grand Central Station in New York at 10 in the morning of the 7th. To do this it must have, including all stops for water, changing engines, transfers of the mail from car to car and across town at Chicago, an average speed of thirty-five and a half miles for every one of the ninety-six hours.

Its path is now across the golden state of California, over the Sierra Nevada mountains, through the great mining state of Nevada, along the rich Humboldt river, on across the rich new state of Utah; skirting the Great Salt Lake; through the cattle ranges of Wyoming; over the Rocky Mountains, through the sea-like fields of corn and wheat of Nebraska; across the Missouri River valley; then across Iowa, crossing the Mississippi river and on through Illinois to Chicago; then on through Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, along the south shore of Lake Erie, cutting across western Pennsylvania and on through the center of the empire state to the Atlantic ocean at New York. It must stand up and pass through a hundred cities, stop at every great city for passengers and mails and it must be on time. The trip had been made on schedule time a thousand times before, and there was every reason to think it would be done again.

So it was that the train sped swiftly on all that day with little attention from anyone, save those concerned in its rapid journey—the officers of the Southern Pacific and those of the Oceanic Steamship company who were naturally anxious that the mail they had just brought over seas should make good progress. These interested parties were kept informed by telegraph of the progress of the train during that day and evening.

Suddenly the unexpected happened. The train arrived at Ogden, Utah, 385 miles from San Francisco, two dreadful hours late. The emergency was at hand. Where were the men to meet it. Everywhere. In general offices at San Francisco, Omaha, Chicago, Buffalo and New York, along the line at way stations and in lonely signal cabins in roundhouses, on trains and bridges, in busy yards and far out on the desolate miles of track, all the way from Utah to New York. Within a few hours every man on four great railroads knew he must stand by, must be ready to go on duty, day or night, and meet the emergency.

The mail was transferred at Ogden to the mail car of train No. 2 of the Union Pacific. Now, the last time must be recovered and the pace must be set for Omaha, 1013 miles away. On and on, faster and faster. Stand every man to his post. See that every rail and spike be firm, every signal tower manned, every yard clear. Trim all your lamps for His Majesty's mail must go through. Telegrams flashed forward and back from station to station, reporting the breathless progress. There was no day, no night, nothing but the day of making up time. Slowly as the day and night wore on it became evident on the Colon side it varies only a few feet, but heavy locks could probably stop the flow. No doubt, the big ditch could be dug and a passage for vessels made, but it will be at the cost of millions of dollars

of speed was not gained fast enough. There was a Chicago connection to be made at 8:30 a. m. on the 6th. If the train had been on schedule there would be ample time to connect and transfer the mails. As the hours grew it became evident that the speed must be increased somewhere, some how, or the connection could not be made. On the 5th vigorous action started. Telegrams were sent to Chicago. Can you hold No. 6 an hour? No. The United States mail must go "on time." Then a record run must be made. A man rushed into the round-house of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy at the Union Pacific Transfer at Council Bluffs, opposite Omaha. "Special fast engine instantly." At 9:48 the belated train arrived at Omaha, having made up some time, but not much. It left at 9:55 and was soon at the Union Pacific Transfer and the single mail car containing his majesty's mail was cut out. The special backed up and at 10:12 telegrams were sent to Chicago, 609 miles away.

"Clear the line for the Q special." That was the word sent ahead to every man in station, yard or siding, on the line. Freight trains drew off on sidings, passenger trains kept out of the way. It was a night run for No. 1036 and the crew consisted of engineer, fireman, conductor, flagman and mail agent—five men, one engine and one car tearing through the night on a record-breaking run. The hours sped on, midnight, one o'clock, two, three, four—down in the east and still the furious pace was kept up. Four minutes lost at Ruda for water at 6:54 in the morning. On and on, sixty miles an hour steady. Mendota passed 7:40. Somonauk 7:58. Aurora 8:20. Chicago suburbs sprang up on the horizon. Slow up for the city and the train stopped at the Union Station at 9:08. Five hundred and eight miles in five hundred and fifty-five minutes.

No. 6 left at 8:30. She is the Lake Shore-New York Central "Fast Mail"—the heaviest fast mail train in America. She had 35 minutes start. All was lost. She could never be overtaken. The tremendous run from Omaha had cut down a part of the two hours lost but not enough.

But one argues, what are a few lives and a few millions of dollars to the benefit a canal would do commerce? The commerce of the world is now something enormous, means to speed it

Stop? Never! Everything had been prepared. Twenty-five men stood ready on the platform as the one-car special drew up, and sprang into the car, and those precious sacks were hustled out, placed upon trucks, hoisted up in the elevators to four mail wagons drawn up in the street. Your respected Uncle Sam was going through. The U. S. M. teams were loaded and rushed through Chicago streets to the Lake Shore Station.

The Lake Shore folks would now show what they could do. A new special, two cars and No. 556, a regular 100 miles an hour flyer, would attempt the apparently hopeless. No. 556 would break the record and overtake No. 6 somewhere, if it had to chase it all the way into Buffalo. The instant the last bag was in the car, No. 556 pulled out. The engineer smiled a grimy smile and said it would be Cleveland. It was precisely 8:59:30 a. m., September 6th, when she started from the station of the Lake Shore road—and No. 6 one hour and twenty minutes and a half ahead. Once more, and still another road every man stood at attention, every signal man on the lookout, every suburban train held in safety, every yard clear, every station reporting the breathless race from mile to mile, minute to minute.

The United States woke up to the fact that something was going on. It was in all the papers, and the progress of the special was reported from New York to San Francisco. Every railroad office in the land knew of it, and at the Grand Central station, New York, it was watched, as it were, upon every mile of the terrific run. Some thought it might overtake No. 6 at Buffalo. The first emergency race was in the night, the second race was in daylight across the three states of Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. As the special ate up the miles, it became evident that she was making up the lost time. By 2 o'clock it was clear that the special would overhaul No. 6 at Toledo. The "Fast Mail" would leave on time whether the special arrived or not. There are other mails besides his majesty's, and they cannot wait. The last minute but one had come. "All aboard." The special was there. Two hundred and forty-four miles in two hundred and sixty-five and one-half minutes.

How many miles an hour is that? The thing had been done. The two hours lost two thousand miles away had been made up. The emergency had found its men. However, the trip was not yet over. No. 6 pulled out of Toledo bound for Cleveland and Buffalo on time and she must keep on time. New York is still 736 miles away and a second lost here and a minute there might

be fatal. Keep to your schedule Mr. Engineer. At 10:10 p. m. central time, Friday, September 6th, Lake Shore No. 6 arrived at Buffalo "on time." Here more precaution was taken. The car containing those mail sacks from the other side of the world, away below the equator, was with the other cars of the United States mail made up for the first section of the New York Central's No. 6—the "Fast Mail"—which was now to proceed in two sections from Buffalo over the four-track line of the New York Central, the fifth and last of the railroad lines forming the route across the United States. All the long night the first section rushed on, through Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, through a beautiful Mohawk Valley, down into the valleys of the historic Hudson river at Albany, arriving there in the early dawn. 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