

STEAMSHIP LINE TO ASPINWALL.

LETTER

OF

THE POSTMASTER GENERAL

IN RELATION TO

Carrying the South Pacific mails by the steamship line to Aspinwall.

MARCH 5, 1862. — Referred to the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, and ordered to be printed.

[Foreign, No. 326.]

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
Post Office Department, Washington, March 3, 1862.

GENTLEMEN: I have received formal notice from Cornelius Vanderbilt, controlling the steamship line to Aspinwall, that he will not take the South Pacific or any other mails after the 21st instant. This is an attempt to coerce Congress to contract with him, on his own terms, for carrying these mails. I called the attention of Congress to the coercive system exercised by the railroad companies upon the government in my annual report. I trust suitable measures will be adopted before adjournment to maintain the public interests in that behalf. But this steamboat coercion requires immediate attention. Unless something is done at once, vast mercantile interests will be seriously affected.

My own opinion is, that this and every other line of steamers should be required to take mails to their ports of destination upon such terms as are now or may hereafter be allowed by Congress, as the condition of clearance. It is not pretended that the compensation now given is not sufficient for the service rendered. No private person pays them for any kind of transportation at the rate paid by the government for mail matter. We give all, and more than we make out of it, and no persons are so much benefited, incidentally,

as the owners of the ships, for the bulk of the correspondence relates to the trade carried on by their vessels.

Yours, respectfully,

M. BLAIR,
Postmaster General.

Messrs. COLLAMER and COLFAX,
Chairmen, &c., &c., &c.,
Senate and House of Representatives.