

They may be considered as divided into two classes.

1st Trunk Lines.

2nd Local Posts.

Trunk Lines.

Under this head may be classed the overland communication between Auckland and Wellington, *viâ* Taranaki, between Auckland and Napier, and that between the Provinces of Canterbury and Otago.

An objection may here be noticed which has been made against the establishment of overland Inter-Provincial mails, on the ground that the Colony being already provided with ample means of communication by sea, an overland service in addition has become superfluous.

A reference to the return given in the Appendix C of Letters Despatched by Trunk Lines will show this objection to be unfounded.

The comparative returns given in Appendix D of the means by which the Inland Correspondence has been conveyed, will show the relative amount of facilities afforded to the public by the sea-borne and overland mails respectively, from which it will appear that, notwithstanding the increased opportunities for communicating by sea, a large proportion of that correspondence continues to be carried by land.

The principal advantage, indeed, of the overland communication, is one which can only be slightly affected by the existence of water communication. The termini of the line can alone be visited by vessels, but the value of the overland communication consists in the great convenience it affords, not so much for correspondence from one of these termini to the other, as for that between intermediate inland stations, or between one terminus and the intermediate stations for which, except for the existence of overland posts, no regular provision would exist.

In the Appendix E will be found a general statement of the present overland mail routes, together with the times of despatch and arrival at the several Post Offices.

It will obviously be unnecessary here, to draw attention to each particular local post as contained in that return, but the two trunk lines of the Northern Island appear to require some notice.

Besides the general benefit which they confer upon the public, they have the special advantage of tending in no unimportant degree, to exercise a beneficial and civilizing influence on the Native population resident in districts through which the mails are conveyed.

The two lines alluded to are,—

1st. The Auckland and Wellington line.

2nd. The Auckland and Napier line.

The two were originally distinct and independent lines, but are now, to a certain extent, carried on in connection with each other.

The first of these, the Auckland and Wellington service, *viâ* New Plymouth, was, previous to the alteration to be noticed presently, in a most unsatisfactory state.

The principal evils of the old service were :—

1st. The want of regularity in the time required for conveying the mail from Auckland to New Plymouth, which made it impossible so to arrange the departures from the former place as to arrive at a given time at the latter, and thus precluded the possibility of bringing the line between Auckland and New Plymouth into correspondence with that between New Plymouth and Wellington.

2nd. The difficulties of the road on the Northern half of the line requiring a large outlay before speed and regularity could be in any way insured.

3rd. The feuds among the Natives themselves resident on the West Coast which prevented any concert between the different tribes in facilitating plans for the speedy transmission of the mail.

The time generally required for conveying the mail from Auckland to New Plymouth varied from nine to twelve days, unless indeed some special cause of delay (no unfrequent occurrence) was encountered.

The chief causes of delay were the stoppage of the mail carrier by floods in the rivers, or by Natives whose jealousy was roused by seeing advantages conferred by the mail contract on other tribes in which they themselves did not participate.

With the view of overcoming this latter difficulty and at the same time increasing the speed and regularity of the service in other respects, an attempt was made to divide the contract into two parts, so as to give each set of Natives a share in it, and negotiations were entered into on this basis for the purpose of establishing a weekly service to be performed between the Monday and Saturday of each week. The cost of the whole to be £600 per annum, payment being made at the rate of £300 per annum to each set of contractors. The one resident between Auckland and Aotea, and the other between Kawhia and Mokau.

The advantage of this contract (besides the increase of speed) would have been that facilities would have been thereby afforded for bringing the Auckland and New Plymouth line into direct correspondence with that between New Plymouth and Wellington, so that a mail despatched from Auckland on the Monday could be forwarded from New Plymouth on the following Monday, and reach Wellington on the Saturday. Thus, traversing the whole distance in less than a fortnight—previously at least three weeks had been required.

Difficulties of various kinds, however, prevented this arrangement being made, and in the meantime another plan was proposed, which appeared upon the whole to offer greater advantages.

The main features of this new plan were the total abolition of the original line along the coast, and the establishment of a new inland line by the rivers Waikato and Waipa. The service to be performed in six days. The total expense for a weekly service to be as follows :—