

GALLE AND SUEZ SERVICE.

Dr.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Payments to Victoria	...	9,121	5	1			
Inter-colonial service, &c.	...	5,104	0	0			
					14,225	5	1
Cr.							
Postages from London	...	3,944	19	9			
Postages collected in the colony	...	4,184	2	5			
					8,129	2	2
Net cost to the colony	...				£6,096	2	11

189,419 letters, 25,330 book packets and pattern parcels, and 155,189 newspapers were received from, and despatched to, the United Kingdom by the Galle and Suez Service.

The steam services between Auckland, Gisborne, and Napier, and also Wellington, Napier, and Gisborne, which were for some time previously carried on under a month-to-month arrangement, were cancelled in February last, as it was believed the trade was sufficiently large to induce the owners of the steamers to continue running without the aid of a Government subsidy. Results have shown this to be the case.

The subsidies hitherto paid on account of the steam services between Auckland and the North Shore, Auckland and Wangarei, Russell and Mongonui, Auckland and Tauranga, Tauranga and Opotiki, and Onehunga and Awitu, have also been withdrawn from the 1st July instant.

All other inter-provincial steam services expired on the 30th June, but are being continued from month to month until Parliament has had an opportunity of dealing with the question of inter-provincial services generally. The steam services continued under this temporary arrangement are—the Middle Island service; the Nelson, Westport, Greymouth, and Hokitika service; the service between Wellington and Kaikoura; the Nelson, Motueka, and Collingwood service; and also the service between Auckland, Warkworth, Matakana, &c.; and the two services connecting the several settlements on the Kaipara waters.

In announcing in last report that a fresh arrangement had been entered into with the Auckland Steam Packet Company for continuing the Fiji Service, it was stated that "the new arrangement will be commenced on the return of the 'Star of the South' from Fiji; and in the meantime the 'Llewellyn' has been withdrawn from the service." It was subsequently ascertained, however, that the Company were not prepared to carry out their undertaking, and they eventually abandoned the service. With the exception of the four-weekly visits of the San Francisco mail steamers, Fiji has not had the advantage of direct steam communication with this colony during the past year. As the San Francisco steamers no longer call at Fiji, it is the intention of the department to endeavour to re-establish a direct line of steamers between this colony and the Fiji Islands for commercial purposes, and to arrange the service, as far as possible, to dovetail with the steamers of the San Francisco mail line, and thereby afford the inhabitants of the sister colony a ready, speedy, and direct means of communication with Europe and America. The Government of Fiji will no doubt readily co-operate with the department in establishing direct steam communication between the two colonies.

MONEY ORDERS.

Money Order business was extended to six new offices during the year—namely, to Cheviot, Kumara, Mosgiel, St. Bathans, Waipu, and Waverley. The Money Order Office at Waitapu was closed. The total number of Money Order Offices open at the close of the year was 124, against 119 at the close of 1875.

There were issued during the year 80,255 orders for £310,268 5s. 11d., against 73,027 orders for £293,481 10s. 9d. in 1875; the increase being 7,228 orders for £16,786 15s. 2d.

The money orders paid were 59,807 for £232,334 6s. 2d., against 52,132 for £211,516 16s. 2d. in 1875; an increase of 7,675 orders for £20,817 10s.

The money orders issued in New Zealand on the United Kingdom and the Australian Colonies were 24,507 for £98,179 4s. 5d., and 4,628 orders, amounting to £21,041 10s. 2d., were received from those countries for payment in this colony. The orders issued in the colony on foreign offices were accordingly in excess of the foreign orders received for payment by upwards of £77,000. In 1875 the excess was £81,000.

Of the money orders issued in the colony during 1876, 11,636, amounting to £52,054 12s., were transmitted by telegraph; the increase for the year being 1,492 orders for £5,020 9s. 8d.

The gross revenue derived from the issue of money orders was £5,261 19s. 2d., the increase for the year being £310 19s. 10d. The net revenue, after allowing for the amount due to the Telegraph Office for the transmission of money order telegrams, and the commission payable to foreign offices was £3,957 19s. 2d.

SAVINGS BANKS.

There were 11,255 Savings Bank accounts opened during the year, against 11,273 in 1875; and 9,472 accounts were closed, against 8,681 in 1875. The number of accounts remaining open had increased to 26,117 from 24,334 at the close of 1875.

The deposits received during the year were 57,295 for £664,134 12s. 6d., the average amount of each deposit being £11 11s. 9d. The withdrawals were 39,486, amounting to £696,281 7s. 4d., and of an average amount of £17 12s. 8d. The amount to the credit of depositors on the 31st December was £723,910 17s. 5d.

The sum of £28,762 4s. 7d. has been credited to the accounts of depositors for the interest which accrued on their deposits during the year. The interest allowed on each account was at the rate of 4½ per cent. for deposits not exceeding £200, and at 4 per cent. for deposits over that amount, but not exceeding £500.

The total receipts of the Money Order and Savings Bank Offices in the colony amounted to £1,008,427 2s. 2d., and the total payments to £928,615 13s. 6d. The total number of transactions was 236,843, of which 137,550 were receipts, and 99,293 payments.