

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

The following statement shows the extent and value of the service performed by the department in the free transmission of official correspondence for the year ended 31st December, 1880 :—

Letters.						Books.						£ s. d.									
Auckland	...	10,021	lb.	...	13,632	lb.	...	3,265	6	6	Blenheim	..	777	lb.	...	2,575	lb.	...	297	13	11
Thames		1,101	"	...	533	"	...	324	1	5	Christchurch		8,048	"	...	13,084	"	...	2,585	8	4
New Plymouth		648	"	...	1,166	"	...	237	11	4	Timaru	...	3,564	"	...	1,420	"	...	998	5	4
Napier	...	2,225½	"	...	4,066	"	...	731	3	6	Oamaru	...	312½	"	...	100	"	...	86	13	4
Wanganui		3,637	"	...	2,016	"	...	1,038	11	10	Dunedin	...	25,984	"	...	13,397	"	...	7,603	2	6
Wellington	...	133,256½	"	...	164,420	"	...	43,651	9	8	Invercargill		2,681	"	...	2,332	"	...	809	14	7
Nelson	...	2,278	"	...	3,253	"	...	726	16	10											
Westport		643	"	...	265	"	...	180	4	0											
Greymouth		1,606	"	...	1,563	"	...	482	2	1											
Hokitika	...	4,579	"	...	1,821	"	...	1,284	7	10											
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The increase in value was £1,864 14s. 1d., as against an increase of £6,261 in 1879.

The total weight of this description of correspondence transmitted through the post was about 200 tons.

DEAD LETTERS.

The number of unclaimed letters received and disposed of in the Dead Letter Office year by year, since 1875, is shown in the table given below :—

Manner of Disposal.	1875.	1876.	1877.	1878.	1879.	1880.
Opened and returned to the writers	39,051	44,067	52,607	53,483	61,589	60,977
Returned unopened to other countries	10,321	9,703	9,835	8,733	9,713	10,503
Reissued	78	83	94	117	122	240
Destroyed	6,081	5,217	3,417	5,140	4,738	5,135
Returned unopened by Chief Postmasters	...	...	...	...	725	11,160
Totals	55,531	59,070	65,953	67,473	76,887	88,015

In addition to the above, 99 book-packets and circulars were returned to foreign countries, 3,347 were returned to the senders from the Dead Letter Office, and 3,097 were returned to the senders unopened by Chief Postmasters, making a total of 6,543 book-packets and circulars.

The increase in the number of dead letters disposed of in 1880, over the number dealt with the previous year, was 14·47 per cent.

The "special-request" envelopes were largely used by the public, as may be gathered from the fact that no less than 11,160 letters having the names of the writers or senders on the covers, were returned unopened, and without passing through the Dead Letter Office.

The proportion of letters sent to the Dead Letter Office, and of letters otherwise dealt with as unclaimed and returned, out of the total number transmitted, was as 1 to 259. The proportion in 1879 was as 1 to 272.

The following are the particulars of the number and articles of value enclosed in letters opened in the Dead Letter Office :—

	£	s.	d.
122 money orders	...	433	17 10
52 bank drafts	...	2,716	18 3
97 cheques	...	1,720	3 11
3 promissory notes	...	1,233	18 2
Postage stamps	...	3	9 8
Bank notes	...	94	0 0
Gold	...	29	10 0
Silver and copper	...	1	12 5
Representing a total of	...	£6,233	10 3

There were also received in the Dead Letter Office,—

1 silver hunting watch, 5 gold rings (one of which was set with precious stones), 1 greenstone and gold brooch, 1 pair of gold earrings, 1 silver breast-pin, 1 gold locket and chain, 1 silver locket, 1 gold chain, 1 hair watch-guard mounted in gold, 1 greenstone and gold pendant, and 1 silver watch-case.

1,500 unclaimed registered letters.

81 letters posted without addresses.

157 letters detained for postage, of which 9 were subsequently prepaid and forwarded.

626 newspapers and 300 books and other articles without addresses; of these, it was found practicable to deliver 47

30 letters with obscene and libellous addresses.

134 letters imperfectly and wrongly addressed.

764 refused letters.

5 letters with previously-used postage stamps.

The department was instrumental in intercepting and returning to the writers 55 letters, containing £70 7s. 4d. in notes, money orders, and cheques, posted to the promoter of a "Consultation" for a very large amount on one of the principal horse races, but who, in the meantime, levanted with a considerable portion of the spoil. Several letters, which had been opened, were also returned to the Post Office from the business establishment of the promoter. An examination of these disclosed that