

DEAD LETTERS.

The following comparative table shows the number of unclaimed letters, letter-cards, and post-cards dealt with during the under-mentioned years :—

Manner of Disposal.	1884.	1885.	1886.	1887.	1888.	1889.	1890.	1892.	1894.	1896.	1897.	1898.
Opened and returned to the writers	68,942	66,592	66,729	62,847	55,118	62,654	60,540	63,483	61,745	63,112	66,886	68,872
Returned unopened to other countries	9,134	8,115	8,359	7,287	6,892	6,220	7,779	7,751	8,941	7,546	7,648	8,899
Reissued	107	185	251	96	88	92	141	128	130	148	132	219
Destroyed	3,986	2,872	6,600	5,974	5,246	4,340	2,660	2,092	4,725	4,069	3,245	3,368
Returned unopened by Chief Postmasters	17,593	19,187	21,144	20,185	19,963	21,164	21,931	19,909	22,042	26,414	34,260	33,273
Totals ..	99,762	96,951	103,083	96,389	87,307	94,470	93,051	93,363	97,583	101,289	112,171	114,631

The proportion of dead or unclaimed letters, letter-cards, and post-cards to the total number dealt with in the colony was 0·31 per cent., as against 0·33 per cent. in 1897.

22,734 book-packets and circulars were returned to foreign countries, 60,309 were returned to senders through the Dead-letter Office, 45 were reissued, and 47,232 were returned by Chief Postmasters—a total of 130,320 book-packets and circulars, as compared with 126,535 in 1897.

427 letters were wrongly addressed. 51 letters were discovered to have been posted with previously used stamps.

The under-mentioned articles of value were found in letters opened in the Dead-letter Office, and returned to the senders where practicable :—

	£	s.	d.
255 Post-office orders	...	...	...
25 bank drafts	...	...	...
203 cheques	...	...	...
19 dividend warrants	...	...	...
6 promissory notes	...	...	...
Postal notes	...	...	...
Stamps	...	...	...
Bank-notes	...	...	...
Gold	...	...	...
Silver and copper	...	...	...
Representing a total of	...	...	...
	£5,000	10	0

In addition, 1-ladies' gold watch, 3 silver watches, 1 silver watch and chain, 1 silver watch, yellow-metal chain, and greenstone pendant, 1 Waterbury watch, 1 gold locket, 3 gold brooches, 1 gold-mounted greenstone brooch, 3 silver brooches, 1 gilt brooch, 5 gold rings, 2 ladies' gold rings, 6 gold wedding-rings, 1 silver ring, 1 pair gold sleeve-links, 2 gold-mounted greenstone pendants, 6 greenstone pendants, 1 pair gold-rimmed spectacles, 1 gold-mounted boar's tusk bracelet, 1 silver spoon, 1 silver thimble, 2 kauri-gum necklaces, 22 sheets foreign stamps, 9 pawn-tickets, 84 share-certificates, 7 silk handkerchiefs, 18 pairs woollen socks, 21 neckties, 3 shirts, 1 felt hat, 1 wooden pipe, 2 pairs woollen drawers, 1 woollen singlet, 6 tobacco-pouches, 1 pair bicycle-pedals, 1 bicycle-bell, 1 bicycle-chain, 1 suit boy's navy-blue clothes, 2 bunches of keys, 1 wig, 2 lace collars, 9 pairs gloves, 1 blue-serge skirt, 2 pieces dress material, 3 pairs ladies' shoes, 1 pair ladies' boots, 1 fancy bag, 1 ladies' cape, 1 petticoat, 1 box frilling, 3 pairs woollen bootees.

1,914 unclaimed registered letters were dealt with.

2,193 newspapers and 1,330 books and other articles without addresses were received, many of which were subsequently applied for and delivered.

518 unclaimed newspapers were returned to the publishers.

372 letters and 81 letter-cards were posted without addresses.

16 letters with libellous addresses were intercepted.

The number of inland, intercolonial, and international unclaimed articles received and disposed of during the years 1897 and 1898 was as under :—

	1897.					1898.				
	Letters.	Letter-cards.	Post-cards.	Packets.	Newspapers.	Letters.	Letter-cards.	Post-cards.	Packets.	Newspapers.
<i>Inland.</i>										
Returned, delivered, &c., through Dead-letter Office	54,306	1,155	2,311	50,958	727	55,517	1,182	2,362	58,777	518
Returned by Chief Postmasters direct ..	30,577	..	3,683	43,032	..	30,262	..	3,011	47,232	..
Destroyed in accordance with law ..	2,629	56	112	688	33,616	2,706	58	115	704	30,956
<i>Intercolonial.</i>										
Originally addressed to other colonies :—										
Returned to writers	4,719	..	26	656	..	4,821	..	32	1,001	..
Destroyed in accordance with law ..	228	..	2	46	..	233	..	3	56	..
Returned to other colonies as unclaimed	3,180	..	32	15,794	..	3,800	9	20	3,573	..
<i>International.</i>										
Originally addressed to other countries :—										
Returned to writers	4,475	..	26	564	..	5,137	..	40	576	..
Destroyed in accordance with law ..	217	..	1	42	..	251	..	2	33	..
Returned to other countries as unclaimed	4,392	..	44	15,531	..	5,020	10	40	19,161	..
Totals	104,723	1,211	6,237	127,313	34,343	107,747	1,259	5,625	131,113	31,474