

MISSING LETTERS.

889 inquiries for letters and 595 for other articles alleged to have been posted and not delivered were made during 1898. In 420 of the inquiries for letters and 340 for other articles—over one-half the total number—the investigations by the department resulted in the missing articles being traced. These may be summarised as follows :—

Number of "Traced" Cases.		Found to have been
Letters.	Other Articles.	
43	35	Missent, misdelivered, or otherwise delayed through fault of Post Office.
40	32	Delayed in delivery through fault of addressees.
25	20	Not posted.
36	30	Posted later than advised; forwarded by slower routes than letters of advice, &c.
77	63	Defectively or wrongly addressed.
47	39	Mislaid or lost after delivery.
17	13	Returned through Dead-letter Office as unclaimed, &c.
135	108	Delivered. Reason for inquiry not given, but probably in most cases omission by addressees to acknowledge receipt.
420	340	

REGISTERED LETTERS.

The number of registered articles dealt with in 1898, compared with the numbers in 1890, 1895, and 1897, is shown below :—

Postal Districts.	1890.			1895.			1897.			1898.		
	From Places beyond the Colony.	Registered in the Colony.	Totals.	From Places beyond the Colony.	Registered in the Colony.	Totals.	From Places beyond the Colony.	Registered in the Colony.	Totals.	From Places beyond the Colony.	Registered in the Colony.	Totals.
Auckland ..	7,119	34,398	41,517	11,042	47,350	58,392	12,517	62,903	75,420	13,891	94,138	108,029
Thames ..	130	4,781	4,911	226	7,955	8,181	206	18,038	18,244	289	16,654	16,943
New Plymouth ..	341	3,372	3,713	505	8,576	9,081	830	14,246	15,076	1,031	15,003	16,034
Gisborne ..	118	2,120	2,238	228	3,812	4,040	231	4,850	5,081	232	5,034	5,266
Napier ..	999	10,911	11,910	1,195	16,917	18,112	1,379	19,545	20,924	948	18,853	19,801
Wanganui ..	211	6,060	6,271	397	16,300	16,697	1,484	17,801	19,285	1,584	18,569	20,153
Wellington ..	6,129	30,369	36,498	10,055	50,900	60,955	11,594	54,235	65,829	13,107	69,297	82,404
Nelson ..	322	3,430	3,752	1,239	6,956	8,195	610	10,279	10,889	709	10,270	10,979
Westport ..	112	3,254	3,366	194	4,409	4,603	196	5,472	5,668	179	7,100	7,279
Greymouth ..	102	8,879	8,981	365	4,989	5,354	425	6,496	6,921	540	7,360	7,900
Hokitika ..	95	2,579	2,674	206	3,624	3,830	74	3,444	3,518	60	3,586	3,646
Blenheim ..	92	3,193	3,285	120	4,447	4,567	66	4,318	4,384	68	4,397	4,465
Christchurch ..	3,659	20,404	24,063	4,465	28,302	32,767	4,687	53,212	57,899	5,371	54,528	59,899
Timaru ..	312	3,551	3,863	1,510	4,514	6,024	232	5,478	5,710	507	6,737	7,244
Oamaru ..	278	2,505	2,783	1,252	2,569	3,821	109	4,197	4,306	170	5,040	5,210
Dunedin ..	4,615	19,696	24,311	5,520	28,188	33,708	7,392	37,322	44,714	6,352	33,522	39,874
Invercargill ..	1,740	9,819	11,559	2,573	14,507	17,086	3,220	17,866	21,086	3,357	19,740	23,097
Totals ..	26,374	169,321	195,695	41,098	254,315	295,413	45,252	339,702	384,954	48,395	389,828	438,223

From the 24th October last the Postmaster-General assumed liability up to £2 for the loss of any inland registered letter or registered letter from any country with which New Zealand has a reciprocal agreement as to indemnities.

INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

Beyond occasional stoppages on account of flooded rivers on the west coast of the Middle Island, on the Springfield-Kumara Road, and in the Napier district, inland mail-communication has been well carried out by the several contractors.

The duties imposed by law on the masters of vessels in regard to mails have been satisfactorily undertaken, the only exception of consequence being the failure of the master of a steamer to give notice of his intended departure, with the result that mails were delayed. As a warning the master was prosecuted under the Post Office Act, and a penalty inflicted. In a few cases it has been necessary to administer cautions for the careless handling of mails.

As the general contracts expire at the end of the current year, tenders will shortly be called for their renewal for the three years ending on the 31st December, 1902. In framing the list of services for the triennium, provision will be made for the establishing of mail-lines to meet the progress of settlement, and the frequency of the existing services will be increased or an acceleration proposed whenever the circumstances warrant such a course.

After lengthy negotiations a contract has been let for a mail-service between Taupo and Tokaanu by steam-vessel. The contractor is under bond to commence running on the 1st November next, and to provide a steamer capable of maintaining a speed of ten knots an hour, and of carrying fifty passengers. This service should serve to popularise the tourist route between Wanganui and the hot lakes. The payment is to be £200 per annum for a period of five years.

From the 1st December the express trains between Wellington and New Plymouth commenced running in both directions four times a week instead of twice a week, and at the same time the Union Steam Ship and Northern Steamship Companies rearranged their time-tables to insure con-