

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.	1894.	1896.	1898.	1899.	1900.
Opened and returned to the writers	68,942	66,592	66,729	62,847	55,118	62,654	60,540	61,745	63,112	68,872	74,132	76,692
Returned unopened to other countries	9,134	8,115	8,359	7,287	6,892	6,220	7,779	8,941	7,546	8,899	9,706	9,707
Reissued ..	107	185	251	96	88	92	141	130	148	219	178	265
Destroyed ..	3,986	2,872	6,600	5,974	5,246	4,340	2,660	4,725	4,069	3,368	4,536	4,900
Returned unopened by Chief Postmasters	17,593	19,187	21,144	20,185	19,963	21,164	21,931	22,042	26,414	33,273	22,915	40,232
Totals ..	99,762	96,951	103,083	96,389	87,307	94,470	93,051	97,583	101,289	114,631	111,467	131,846

The proportion of dead or unclaimed letters, letter-cards, and post-cards to the total number dealt with in the colony was 0·34 per cent., as against 0·28 per cent. in 1899.

23,735 book-packets and circulars were returned to foreign countries. 61,045 were returned to senders through the Dead-letter Office; 38,514 were returned by Chief Postmasters: a total of 123,294 book-packets and circulars, as compared with 113,343 in 1899.

382 letters were wrongly addressed; 25 letters were discovered to have been posted with previously used stamps; 1,840 unclaimed registered letters were dealt with.

2,256 newspapers and 1,352 books and other articles without addresses were received, many of which were subsequently applied for and delivered.

798 newspapers were returned to the publishers.

472 letters and 149 letter-cards were posted without addresses.

10 letters with libellous addresses were intercepted.

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

	£	s.	d.
299 post-office orders	...	...	...
40 bank drafts	...	...	...
220 cheques	...	...	...
10 dividend warrants and bonus certificates	...	...	...
6 promissory notes	...	...	...
Postal notes	...	...	...
Stamps	...	...	...
Bank-notes	...	...	...
Gold	...	...	...
Silver and copper	...	...	...

Representing a total of ... £4,174 7 5

In addition, 2 gold watches, 6 silver watches, 1 silver watch and chain, 1 ladies' watch, 3 Waterbury watches, 1 metal watch, 1 metal watch and chain, 1 gold watch-chain, 1 silver watch-chain, 10 gold rings, 3 ladies' gold rings, 2 silver rings, 3 gold brooches, 3 silver brooches, 2 greenstone brooches, 2 gold-mounted greenstone pendants, 1 silver-mounted greenstone pendant, 2 greenstone pendants, 1 piece greenstone, 1 silver saltspoon with greenstone handle, 1 pair silver-mounted greenstone carver rests, 3 pairs gold sleeve-links, 2 gold shirt-studs, 2 gold scarf-pins, 1 gold medal, 1 gold nugget, 1 small bottle of gold, 1 pair gold-rimmed eye-glasses, 1 silver-mounted card-case, 1 silver-mounted pocket-book, 2 dollar certificates, 1 Transvaal shilling, 1 Canadian five-cent piece, 1 ladies' belt-clasp, 1 ornamental paper-knife and pen, 7 pawn-tickets, 27 share-certificates, 14 collectors' approval sheets of obliterated postage-stamps, 2 packets of obliterated postage-stamps, 1 steerage-ticket of U.S.S. Company (Wellington to Lyttelton), 1 order on Shaw, Saville and Albion Company for ticket, 1 passage ticket from Port Said to Brisbane, 1 coach-ticket, tram-tickets, 1 Christchurch Exhibition medal, 1 dog's-head handle for walking-stick, 1 revolver.

The number of inland, intercolonial, and international articles received and disposed of during the years 1899 and 1900 was as under :—

	1899.					1900.				
	Letters.	Letter-cards.	Post-cards.	Packets.	Newspapers.	Letters.	Letter-cards.	Post-cards.	Packets.	Newspapers.
<i>Inland.</i>										
Returned, delivered, &c., through Dead-letter Office	60,332	1,946	2,594	48,704	770	62,751	2,085	1,704	59,258	798
Returned by Chief Postmasters direct ..	20,334	..	2,581	40,686	..	36,660	..	3,622	38,514	..
Destroyed in accordance with law ..	3,682	119	158	1,211	31,130	3,987	142	108	1,453	38,394
<i>Intercolonial.</i>										
Originally addressed to other colonies :—										
Returned to writers ..	4,041	..	83	1,228	..	4,249	..	91	789	..
Destroyed in accordance with law ..	242	..	11	75	..	270	..	6	48	..
Returned to other colonies as unclaimed	4,298	12	25	4,998	..	4,025	39	26	5,814	..
<i>International.</i>										
Originally addressed to other countries :—										
Returned to writers ..	5,206	..	108	677	..	5,949	..	128	998	..
Destroyed in accordance with law ..	316	..	8	32	..	379	..	8	47	..
Returned to other countries as unclaimed	5,331	9	31	17,050	..	5,529	53	35	17,921	..
Totals ..	103,782	2,086	5,599	114,661	31,900	123,799	2,319	5,728	124,842	39,192