

OCEAN MAIL-SERVICES.

San Francisco Service.

The Wellington - Rarotonga - Tahiti - San Francisco service has been regularly performed during the last year, and time-table dates have been well maintained. Several delays occurred in the delivery of the mail from New Zealand in the United Kingdom, principally due to connection being made with slow vessels on the Atlantic coast. The contract expires in October this year, and the question of renewing the service is under consideration.

The maximum, minimum, and average periods within which the mails were delivered at and from London and New Zealand by the various ocean mail-services are given in Table 15.

Vancouver Service.

The contract for the Auckland-Suva-Honolulu-Vancouver service has been satisfactorily performed during the past year, the time-table dates being well observed. The contractors placed the new steamer "Niagara," of 13,500 tons, fitted with all the latest improvements, in the service. She began her maiden voyage from Auckland on the 10th May this year, replacing the "Zealandia."

Suez Service.

The P. and O. steamers resumed making calls regularly every four weeks at Auckland during the southern summer.

On six occasions the steamers from Wellington failed to connect with the outward English mail at Sydney.

By a fire on the s.s. "Makura," which left Sydney on the 7th April, 1913, for Auckland, 2 bags of newspapers and 1 bag of letters were destroyed, and 12 bags of newspapers damaged.

Owing to a fire on a mail train near Brisbane, several bags of mail from Dunedin and Christchurch to Brisbane were burnt. A parcel mail, Wellington to Hong Kong, was also badly damaged.

Payments on Account of the Suez Mail-service during the Year 1912-13.

	£
Payment to Peninsular and Oriental and Orient lines	10,784
Transit-charges across Australia and Europe	6,583
Mail-service to Australia	15,000*
	£32,367

Atlantic Service, &c.

An apparently serious bid for an Imperial mail-service on the Atlantic was made in December, 1912, by a group of persons incorporated by special Act of the Parliament of Canada under the name of "The Imperial Steamship Company."

The s.s. "Turakina," which left Wellington for London on the 8th February, 1913, when at Rio de Janeiro on 4th March, was found to be on fire. The vessel was beached. The mails were landed safely and taken on by the liner "Blucher."

The boat in which the mails at Rarotonga were being carried for shipment by the s.s. "Talune" on the 28th January, 1913, was overturned in the surf. The mails were recovered undamaged and sent forward by the next steamer.

INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

The inland mail-services were relet by contract as from the beginning of this year for a triennial period. Several new rural services were established. In some cases arrangements were made for services to be performed by a departmental officer mounted on a motor-cycle. Several tenders were accepted for the carriage of mails by motor-car, and greatly improved services have resulted therefrom.

During the year the horses and plant used in the conveyance of mails in Wellington City were replaced by motor lorries and cycles.

The extension of the East Coast Main Trunk Railway enabled mails to be conveyed thrice weekly by rail as far as Otoko from the 1st January, 1913.

The driver of the mail-coach between Palmerston North and Rongotea was, unfortunately, killed by an accident, whereby his coach was upset, on the 10th May, 1913.

Heavy floods in the Dunedin, Timaru, and Invercargill districts in March, 1913, caused some delay to mails. The post-office at the Hermitage was temporarily cut off from postal and telephonic communication.

In the mail from Matiere to Ongarue, on the 23rd July, one bag disappeared in transit. It was discovered on the 28th, rifled of its contents, valued at £150.

DEAD AND MISSING LETTERS.

The undermentioned articles of value were found in letters in the Dead Letter Office, and returned to senders where practicable: 885 post-office orders, £2,846 8s. 10d.; 68 bank drafts, £4,622 16s.; 1,056 cheques, £9,731 2s. 4d.; 20 dividend warrants, £107 7s. 10d.; 24 promissory notes, £1,125 19s. 5d.; postal notes, £586 9s. 6d.; British postal orders, £103 6s. 6d.; stamps, £56 2s. 10½d.; bank-notes (including a 15-dollar bill), £613 2s. 6d.; gold, £54; silver and copper, £17 0s. 8d.; representing a total of £19,863 16s. 5½d.

* Includes £4,000 for New Zealand - Australian mails.