

denominations. This action will result in a large saving in the consumption of stamp-paper, in connection with which it is anticipated that some difficulty may be experienced in obtaining sufficient supplies.

OCEAN MAIL-SERVICES.

San Francisco Service.

In October, 1914, the R.M.S. "Marama," formerly of the Vancouver service, was transferred to this route. In November, 1915, this vessel was withdrawn from the San Francisco service and converted into a hospital ship. The service has since been performed by the R.M.S. "Maitai" and R.M.S. "Moana." By speeding-up these two vessels the time-table has been fairly well maintained.

Owing to the R.M.S. "Maitai" requiring overhaul, the round trip due to commence at Wellington on the 3rd February last was cancelled.

Owing principally to the dislocation of the transatlantic service, the average time occupied during 1915 in the delivery of mails from Wellington to London was thirty-seven days instead of thirty-one days.

Vancouver Service.

This service is still being carried out by the R.M.S. "Makura" and R.M.S. "Niagara."

Owing to delay *en route* for Vancouver, 200 bags of English mails for New Zealand ex "Adriatic" failed to connect with the R.M.S. "Makura" on the voyage commencing at Vancouver on the 16th February, 1916. The mails were diverted to San Francisco and despatched by the s.s. "Ventura" on the 29th February, arriving in New Zealand on the 28th March.

Forty-six bags of letters and 165 bags of newspapers, &c., intended for New Zealand were lost in the s.s. "Arabic," sunk by a German submarine on the 19th August, 1915.

Owing principally to the dislocation of the transatlantic service, the average time occupied during 1915 in the delivery of mails from Auckland to London was thirty-five days instead of thirty days.

Suez Service.

The overland transit of mails through Europe was resumed in June, 1915, the port of transhipment being Marseilles in place of Brindisi or Naples. Correspondence to be sent by this route still requires to be specially superscribed.

INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

The contracts for inland mail-services expired on the 31st December, 1915. Owing to the unsettled conditions all contractors were asked to extend their contracts until the 31st December, 1916. Approximately three-fifths of the total number agreed to the extension, and alternative tenders were invited for one year and three years for those services the contractors for which declined to extend. This year tenders will be invited for two years for most, if not all, of the contracts extended or re-let for one year, thus making all inland-mail contracts terminate on the 31st December, 1918.

Owing to a difficulty in obtaining a tender for the midnight clearance of pillar-boxes at Dunedin, the Department decided to undertake the service by its own officers supplied with motor-cars.

By the grouping of a number of services in close proximity to Napier, the Department found it advantageous to perform them also by a departmental officer and a motor-car.

On all mail-services advertised as rural deliveries contractors are now required to carry a stock of stamps, and to obtain money-orders and postal notes for settlers along the route.

Owing to serious floods the south-bound express from Auckland on the 22nd July was unable to proceed farther than Te Kuiti. The mails were brought on by a special train, and the departure of the s.s. "Maitai" from Wellington for San Francisco was delayed in order to enable a connection to be made with her. For a few days railway communication was seriously interrupted. On the 24th July mails from Auckland for offices in the South Island and the southern part of the North Island were despatched by steamer. The railway-line between Stratford and Whangamomona was blocked during the last week of August, and light mails were sent by pack-horse and by horse-drawn vehicle.

DEAD AND MISSING LETTERS.

There were 6,844 inquiries made during 1915 for postal packets alleged to have been posted and not delivered. In 4,582 of the inquiries, over two-thirds of the total number, the investigations by the Department resulted in the missing articles being traced or accounted for. These may be summarized as follows:—

Number of Traced Cases.		Result.
1,020		Sender responsible for delay.
1,018		Addressee responsible for delay.
438		Post Office responsible for delay.
2,106		No delay, or responsibility not fixed.

Total .. 4,582

The proportion of dead or unclaimed letters, letter-cards, and post-cards to the total number delivered within the Dominion was 0.47 per cent.

282,102 letters (including 5,584 registered, and 55,511 soldiers' letters) were opened and returned to writers through the Dead Letter Office; 44,609 letters were returned unopened to other countries; 1,452 were reissued; 45,636 were destroyed; 204,376 were returned to senders by Chief Postmasters; 18,185 were returned by Chief Postmasters to other countries: a total of 596,360 letters, as compared with 565,125 in 1914.