

POSTAGE-STAMPS.

During June, 1916, postage-due stamps above the value of 3d. were recalled from all offices.

Eightpenny official stamps, required for use on Government telegrams, were issued on the 15th May, 1916.

One halfpenny, twopence halfpenny, and one shilling stamps of the King George series were overprinted and issued for use in Samoa.

On the 9th March the Acting Postmaster-General approved of the issue of a denomination of 1½d. in the series of postage-stamps used by the Government Life Insurance Department.

On the arrival from London of the new steel plates for printing the 1½d. and 2d. stamps by the surface process the use of the locally made 1½d. plate was discontinued. 1½d. and 2d. stamps printed from the new plates were issued on the 5th September and the 12th September respectively. These 1½d. stamps overprinted "Official" were issued on the 11th December.

OCEAN MAIL-SERVICES.

San Francisco Service.

The R.M.S. "Maitai," which left San Francisco on the 7th December, was wrecked at Rarotonga. Passengers and mails were brought on by the s.s. "Rotorua." The voyage due to commence at Wellington on the 4th January was cancelled, the mails being otherwise despatched. The inward mails, which would have been despatched from San Francisco by the "Maitai" on the 31st January, were forwarded by the s.s. "Sonoma." The "Maitai" has been replaced by another steamer.

Vancouver Service.

The Vancouver contract expired in October last, and on account of the unsettled conditions the period of the contract was extended for a further twelve months.

Suez Service.

The Suez route is no longer available. All specially addressed correspondence for the United Kingdom and the Continent of Europe hitherto despatched via Australia now requires to be super-scribed "By Direct Steamer."

Direct Service.

The s.s. "Rangatira," with a parcel mail, went ashore on Robben Island (ten miles north-west of Cape Town) in a heavy fog on the 1st April, 1916. Nearly all the parcels were recovered and forwarded to destination.

Censorship Restrictions.

Owing to censorship restrictions publication of the time and date of closing of oversea mails is prohibited.

INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

The reletting of contracts for inland mail-services expiring on the 31st December, 1916, was undertaken during the year, and, with a few exceptions, contracts were entered into for a period of two years from the 1st January, 1917. The contracts for practically all services, including those relet for a period of three years from the 1st January, 1916, will expire on the 31st December, 1918.

Taking into consideration the present war conditions, the tenders are not considered excessive. The Department, instead of reletting the contract for the Auckland and Napier city mail-services, decided to undertake them on the lines proved successful in Wellington.

Up to the present time satisfactory arrangements have been made for the transference of contracts held by contractors who have joined the Expeditionary Force.

Owing to the curtailment of train services resulting from the coal-miners' strike it was decided to reduce the frequency of mails according to the running of trains. In a number of cases local arrangements were made (but without additional cost to the Department) to despatch mails on days on which trains did not run, so that the frequency prior to the curtailment should be maintained.

On sections of railway where running of trains was wholly discontinued temporary arrangements were made to provide by special conveyances restricted services to the offices affected.

Branch mail-services dependent on the frequency of trains had in many cases to be reduced according to train-running

DEAD AND MISSING LETTERS.

There were 6,756 inquiries made during 1916 for postal packets alleged to have been posted and not delivered. In 4,506 of the inquiries, 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.
1,044	..	.. Sender responsible for delay.
1,228	..	.. Addressee responsible for delay.
526	..	.. Post Office responsible for delay.
1,708	..	.. No delay, or responsibility not fixed.
Total ..	4,506	