

OVERSEAS MAILS.

For the conveyance of mails between New Zealand and Great Britain the Vancouver and San Francisco mail routes offer the best service at present and are the most regularly used. The mail-contract steamers have carried on the services with great regularity, and the presence of Mail Agents on the boats admits of the rapid distribution of inward correspondence. It is frequently the case that a large portion of a mail has reached addressees before the mail-boat is tied up at the wharf.

PUBLICITY AGENTS ON TRANS-PACIFIC MAIL-STEAMERS.

The Mail Agents on the trans-Pacific mail-steamers, in addition to their ordinary duties, act as publicity agents for the New Zealand Railway Department. While *en voyage* they take the opportunity of advising passengers of the beauties and grandeurs of New Zealand scenery, of the tourist resorts, and of the almost unique opportunities for sportsmen. Lectures on these features are delivered at gatherings of passengers, and every help given in arranging tours in New Zealand. The Agents are meeting with considerable success in their work, and but for their efforts many people who have toured the Dominion would have passed New Zealand by.

INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

Contracts for the performance of the mail-services in the North Island were relet in the latter part of 1927. Competition generally was keen. The result was a reduction of £5,564 per annum in the cost of the services as from the 1st January, 1928.

EXCHANGE OF MAILS ON FAST-MOVING TRAINS.

An automatic mail-bag-exchanging device for use in dropping and picking up mails from fast-moving trains was successfully operated at Levin on the 8th March, 1928, when the south-bound Main Trunk express, travelling at a speed of thirty miles an hour, dropped a mail for Levin and picked up one for Wellington. The use of the exchanger enables certain correspondence from the Auckland, Taranaki, and Napier districts, and from Palmerston North, to reach Levin nearly four hours earlier, and certain correspondence from Levin to be delivered in Wellington some eighteen hours earlier.

The exchanger is still undergoing trial. Should it continue to function efficiently, exchangers will be provided at certain other places where their installation would result in material benefit.

NEW POSTAL CAR.

A new railway travelling post-office van was built during the year for use on the Christchurch-Dunedin section. The van, which measures 50 ft. by 7 ft., is unlike other postal cars in use in the South Island, in that it has on either side two doors instead of one. The providing of the extra doors facilitates the loading and unloading of mails. The van is lighted by means of twelve roof-lights and fourteen windows. Night illumination is provided by electricity. The van is heated by steam-radiators. As the work on these vans is heavy and continuous, and of considerable importance to the public, every means is taken of improving the suitability of the vans. Photographs of the new van appear at the end of the report.

RURAL DELIVERIES.

While the Department is being managed as economically as possible, and practically along commercial lines, some services are obviously being carried out in the interest of the development of the country. The rural-mail services afford an example.

In the North Island, on the daily deliveries the Department is losing 8s. 11d. a year per box, and on deliveries with a frequency of thrice weekly or less the loss is £1 19s. 1d. a year per box. From this it will be seen that the Department is likely, as circumstances permit, to be anxious to convert to daily frequency those deliveries with a frequency of thrice weekly or less.