

The official postage for the nine months amounted to £41,625 6s., which, added to the cash revenue of £115,680 14s. 3d., brought up the gross earnings of the department to £157,306 0s. 3d. for the financial period.

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

The value of the free or franked correspondence is estimated at £62,437 18s. 11d., against £56,176 0s. 10d. for the previous year, an increase of £6,261. The weight exceeded 200 tons, and the proportion posted in each postal district is shown by the following statement:—

	Letters.	Books.	£	s.	d.		Letters.	Books.	£	s.	d.
Auckland ...	9,684 lb. ...	8,808 lb. ...	3,131	18	9	Blenheim ...	1,187 lb. ...	2,843 lb. ...	417	1	7
Thames ...	1,334 „ ...	339 „ ...	370	0	8	Christchurch ...	7,861 „ ...	22,321 „ ...	2,903	11	11
New Plymouth ...	3,081 „ ...	209 „ ...	883	12	7	Timaru ...	948½ „ ...	139 „ ...	260	12	0
Napier ...	1,228½ „ ...	3,727 „ ...	456	8	9	Oamaru ...	437½ „ ...	70 „ ...	119	0	0
Wanganui ...	3,618 „ ...	1,416 „ ...	1,013	10	6	Dunedin ...	25,770 „ ...	11,891 „ ...	7,377	17	9
Wellington ...	131,027 „ ...	200,172 „ ...	42,927	5	2	Invercargill ...	2,274 „ ...	2,248 „ ...	700	15	2
Nelson ...	1,715 „ ...	2,471 „ ...	554	0	6						
Westport ...	611½ „ ...	311 „ ...	178	4	3	Total ...			£62,437	18	11
Greymouth ...	1,486½ „ ...	56 „ ...	399	19	2						
Hokitika ...	2,484 „ ...	2,130 „ ...	744	0	2						

This description of correspondence is largely on the increase. The newly-organised department for the collection of the land-tax made very free use of the Post Office, and it has been estimated that over 50,000 letters were posted from Wellington alone during the year on the business of the Land-Tax Department. The gratuitous service rendered other departments of the public service by the Post Office was both large and important, and entailed considerable labour and expense.

The list of persons authorized to frank has grown to such an unreasonable size that it has been determined, if practicable, to reduce it, and at the same time bring into operation a more satisfactory system for the franking of official correspondence than at present exists.

Of the several departments of the public service, the Government Insurance Department was the only one which paid for the transmission of its correspondence through the post. Now that the Post Office makes full payment for the carriage of its mails by railway, it has been decided to claim from the Railway Department a reasonable sum for the service rendered in transmitting railway correspondence through the post.

DEAD LETTERS.

The increase in the number of letters dealt with at the Dead Letter Office has not been so large since 1875. The number disposed of during the year was 76,887, against 67,473 for the preceding year.

The table below shows the number of unclaimed letters received in the Dead Letter Office, and how disposed of, year by year, since 1874:—

Manner of Disposal.	1874.	1875.	1876.	1877.	1878.	1879.
Opened and returned to the writers ...	26,153	39,051	44,067	52,607	53,483	61,589
Returned unopened to other countries ...	6,828	10,321	9,703	9,835	8,733	9,713
Reissued ...	105	78	83	94	117	122
Destroyed ...	4,227	6,081	5,217	3,417	5,140	4,733
Returned unopened by Chief Postmasters	725
Totals ...	37,313	55,531	59,070	65,953	67,473	76,887

There were also 4,820 book-packets and circulars returned to the senders, and 91 book-packets returned to other countries.

The proportion of letters sent to the Dead Letter Office, out of the total number transmitted, was as 1 to 272. In the United Kingdom the proportion was as 1 to 217 for 1878.

The following are the particulars of the number and articles of value enclosed in letters opened in the Dead Letter Office:—

	£	s.	d.
134 money orders for ...	434	10	8
63 bank drafts ...	3,458	10	7
83 cheques ...	592	8	3
2 promissory notes ...	324	1	4
Postage stamps ...	3	19	10
Bank notes ...	99	0	0
Gold ...	21	10	0
Silver and copper ...	0	16	10

Representing a total of ... £4,934 17 6

There were also received in the Dead Letter Office:—

2 silver watches, 5 gold rings (two of which were set with precious stones), 2 war medals, and 1 small gold medal.

811 unclaimed registered letters.

44 letters posted without addresses.

259 letters detained for postage; of which only 13 were subsequently prepaid and forwarded.

749 newspapers and 381 books and other articles without addresses; of these, it was found practicable to deliver 84.