

The number of days (maximum, minimum, and average) occupied in the delivery of mails between London and New Zealand, Sydney and Melbourne, by the San Francisco and Brindisi services are given below:—

	San Francisco Service.	Brindisi Service.
London to Auckland ... ..	41—37=38·69	66—50=54·23
„ Wellington ... ..	44—40=41·08	61—47=50·08
„ Dunedin ... ..	45—41=42·31	59—44=47·42
„ Sydney ... ..	46—42=43·54	52—39=41·23
„ Melbourne ... ..	48—44=45·54	51—37=39·54
Auckland to London ... ..	42—37=38·05	71—46=53·67
Wellington „ ... ..	44—39=40·05	68—44=55·29
Dunedin „ ... ..	45—40=41·05	66—44=52·77
Sydney „ ... ..	47—42=43·05	53—41=44·04
Melbourne „ ... ..	49—44=45·05	50—39=41·62

In accordance with the decision of Parliament, tenders were invited for the performance of a direct steam service between the United Kingdom and the colony, for a period of three years, at a subsidy of £20,000 a year; but no response was made to the invitation. In the meantime the New Zealand Shipping Company placed a direct line of steamers in the London and New Zealand trade, and the pioneer vessel, the “British King,” arrived at Wellington on the 19th March last, having made the passage in forty-nine and a half days from Plymouth. The third direct steamer, the “Ionic,” which reached here on the 11th instant, was only forty-three days twenty-two hours on the voyage. Apparently, this company contemplates continuing the direct steamers; and it is reported that the Albion-Shaw-Savill Company also purpose running steamers in the London and New Zealand trade. From inquiries recently addressed to the Government, it would appear that the New Zealand Shipping and Albion-Shaw-Savill Companies are not the only shipowners anxious to compete for a direct line of steamers, if the terms and conditions of the service are drawn up in a liberal spirit.

A new line of mail-packets between Marseilles and Australia, under the auspices of the French Government, was inaugurated by the Messageries Maritimes Company in November last. A subsidy of £150,000 a year is paid the company. The route is between Marseilles and Sydney, by way of Port Said, Suez, Aden, Mahé des Seychelles, Reunion, Mauritius, Adelaide, and Melbourne, with a branch service between Sydney, and Noumea, New Caledonia. The time between Marseilles and Melbourne and Sydney is forty-two and forty-five days. New Zealand mails are forwarded and received by the steamers of this new service, which is of especial benefit for the exchange of correspondence with places in the Indian Archipelago. The advent of this service has made it practicable to materially reduce the postage on correspondence for France and other places in Europe, and at the same time introduce a uniform system for the exchange of mails between France and the colony.

The estimated receipts and payments in respect of the San Francisco and Brindisi services for the year were as follow:—

RECEIPTS and PAYMENTS on account of the San Francisco and Ceylon-Brindisi Mail Services for the Year 1882.

		<i>San Francisco Service.</i>					
DR.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Subsidy to Pacific Mail Company	... ..	32,500	0	0			
Bonus paid contractors	... ..	4,164	10	0			
Interprovincial services, Mail Agents, &c.	... ..	6,790	0	0			
					43,454	10	0
CR.							
Postages from London Post Office	... ..	14,373	10	2			
Postages collected in the colony	... ..	19,046	16	7			
Receipts from non-contracting colonies	... ..	2,777	16	0			
Contribution from United States Government	... ..	3,080	1	6			
					39,278	4	3
Net cost to the colony	... ..				£4,176	5	9

The estimated net cost of the service for 1881 was £5,358 7s. 8d.

454,209 letters, 177,897 books, and 1,174,728 newspapers were received from, and 447,651 letters, 40,918 books, and 506,547 newspapers despatched to, the United Kingdom, &c., by the San Francisco Service.

		<i>Ceylon-Brindisi Service.</i>					
DR.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Payments to Victoria	... ..	8,718	18	5			
Intercolonial service, &c.	... ..	527	7	4			
					9,246	5	9
CR.							
Postages from London Post Office	... ..	3,318	12	9			
Postages collected in the colony	... ..	1,212	10	0			
					4,531	2	9
Net cost to the colony	... ..				£4,715	3	0