

VANCOUVER MAIL-SERVICE.

No progress has been made in the negotiations for the inclusion of a New Zealand port as a calling-place for the Vancouver steamers. The Commonwealth Government has now extended the term of the present contract for two years only, presumably because the Imperial Government has given notice to terminate the P. and O. and Orient contract services in 1904, so as to admit of the whole question of mail-services between the colonies and Great Britain coming up for general review. The present Vancouver service leaves much to be desired in the direction of regular delivery of mails in London, and this can only be attained by placing faster steamers on the Pacific. The ocean mail-service question was fully discussed at the Conference of Premiers in London last year.

RECEIPTS and PAYMENTS on Account of the SAN FRANCISCO, PENINSULAR AND ORIENTAL, and ORIENT MAIL-SERVICES for the Year 1902.

San Francisco Service.

DR.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Payments by weight—									
On mails from New Zealand	16,038	16	4						
On mails from Fiji (from 1st July, 1901, to 31st December, 1902)	96	5	7				16,135	1	11
Interprovincial service, mail agents, &c.				5,813	8	5			
Transit charges { San Francisco to New York				4,300	7	5			
{ New York to Queenstown				1,822	10	9			
							28,071	8	6
CR.									
Postages collected in the colony				13,290	2	2			
Contributions from Fiji... ..				96	5	7			
							13,386	7	9
Net cost to the colony							£14,685	0	9

1,032,497 letters, 12,540 post-cards, 614,117 books, and 1,210,682 newspapers were received from, and 1,029,028 letters, 12,498 post-cards, 179,022 books, and 720,882 newspapers were despatched to, the United Kingdom *via* San Francisco.

The average time within which mails were delivered by the San Francisco service was—From Auckland to London, 30·61 days, as against 30·88 days in 1901; and from London to Auckland, 30·94 days, as compared with 30·94 days in the previous year. The shortest delivery was made in 28 days.

Peninsular and Oriental and Orient Lines (Federal Mail-service).

DR.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Payments to P. and O. and Orient lines	3,209	11	11			
Transit charges across Australia	156	8	2			
Transit charges across Europe	375	4	6			
Gratuities (to and from Australia)	1,787	10	5			
				5,528	15	0
CR.						
Postages collected in the colony	1,743	4	11			
Postages, &c., from London and foreign offices	1,381	18	5			
				3,125	3	4
Net cost to the colony				£2,403	11	8

The number of letters, post-cards, books, and newspapers conveyed from and to the United Kingdom by the Peninsular and Oriental and Orient packets were: Received—817,590 letters, 9,930 post-cards, 408,107 books, and 1,675,572 newspapers; despatched—127,252 letters, 1,545 post-cards, 16,732 books, and 84,546 newspapers.

The maximum, minimum, and average number of days within which the mails were delivered at and from London and Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin, and Bluff during 1902 by the San Francisco service and by the Peninsular and Oriental and Orient lines was:—

	San Francisco Service.			P. and O. Line.			Orient Line.		
	Max.	Min.	Average.	Max.	Min.	Average.	Max.	Min.	Average.
London to Auckland	34	30	30·94	39	36	37·27	43	37	39·15
Auckland to London	34	28	30·61	42	38	39·85	44	38	40·88
London to Wellington	36	31	32·44	42	38	39·35	41	39	40·08
Wellington to London	35	29	31·61	44	36	41·37	46	37	42·54
London to Dunedin	37	33	33·72	43	39	39·29	43	39	39·52
Dunedin to London	37	31	33·61	43	40	40·79	45	41	41·79
London to Bluff	38	34	34·47	42	38	38·54	42	38	38·77
Bluff to London	38	32	34·36	42	39	40·04	44	40	41·04