

Mails for South Africa despatched from New Zealand on the 11th, 14th, and 18th March, 1910, were lost in the wreck of the s.s. "Pericles" off Cape Leeuwin on the 31st March, 1910. No mails from New Zealand for the United Kingdom were on board.

Vancouver Service.

The present position of this Dominion in regard to the Vancouver service is most unsatisfactory. Before the contract expired last year strong efforts were made to induce the Canadian and Commonwealth Governments to allow the steamers to call at Auckland, a subsidy of £20,000 a year being offered. The Government of Canada and the contractors for the service were quite willing to fall in with the wishes of New Zealand, and this Government had every reason to suppose that its proposal would be accepted. The Commonwealth Government, however, decided merely to renew the contract for a year on the existing basis. The year's extension expires in July, 1910; and negotiations have been going on for some months with a view of securing the desired alteration of route of the mail-steamers to include Auckland, the same subsidy being offered by New Zealand as last year. Canada and the contractors have again expressed their willingness to make the call at Auckland; but the Commonwealth Government has declined to alter the running of the mail-steamers. Tenders have just been called for by Canada for a new service commencing in August, 1911, Auckland being included in two of the alternative routes advertised.

San Francisco Service.

The Wellington-Papeete contract, which expired in January, 1910, was extended to May, 1910. A larger steamer, the "Mokoia," was employed in the service from the 16th March of this year. In April arrangements were made to further extend the service until the meeting of Parliament; and in May the July sailing was provided for. Unfortunately it has not been possible to arrange a more frequent service than one of ten voyages a year. To be of the best value the service should be at least four-weekly. The Union Company, which performs the Wellington-Papeete section of the through service, would, it is understood, be willing to arrange a four-weekly running, but the contractors with the United States for the San Francisco-Papeete section have not been able to make the desired acceleration, which would involve the provision of a second steamer. Notwithstanding this disadvantage, the service has been a very useful one, as it has enabled a connection to be maintained between New Zealand and the United States. The through time, Wellington to London, has been satisfactory, averaging 35-20 days. The time London to Wellington is longer, owing to the mails having to wait at Papeete until the Wellington steamer arrives. The time-table of the latter is fixed so that the connection from New Zealand will be a close one.

INLAND MAILS.

The number of inland mail-services in operation on the 31st December, 1909, was 1,364.

In order to expedite the delivery of mails, and to bridge the gap in the travelling-post-office system, which extends from Auckland to Invercargill, with the exception of the Wellington-Christchurch section, arrangements were made in September, 1909, for the interchange of mail officers between these two latter offices. Mails arriving from North at Wellington are sorted there by the Christchurch officers ready for delivery in Christchurch soon after they arrive. Wellington mails from the South being similarly sorted at Christchurch. By this means addressees receive their letters appreciably earlier than formerly.

A motor lorry was brought into use at Wellington on the 11th September, 1909, for carrying mails between the office, steamers, and trains. It has worked very satisfactorily, and has caused a considerable saving in the time occupied in travelling between the General Post Office, wharves, and railway-stations.

The sum paid to the Railway Department for the conveyance of mails by ordinary trains was £60,728.

Eighty parcels, 17 registered letters, and a quantity of other mail-matter was lost in s.s. "Duco," supposed to have foundered in September, 1909, on the way from Wellington to Chatham Islands.

The travelling post-offices on the Christchurch-Culverden and on the Wellington-Woodville sections were discontinued from the 1st October and the 6th December, 1909, respectively.

As the result of an amendment of the Workers' Compensation Act, 1908, the liability of the Department in respect of mail contractors was practically removed, and consequently the "globo" insurance of contractors' employees was discontinued from the 1st January, 1910.

Floods and stormy weather in March and April, 1910, interfered with the mail and telegraph services throughout the Dominion.

DEAD AND MISSING LETTERS.

The undermentioned articles of value were found in letters opened in the Dead Letter Office, and returned to senders where practicable: 652 post-office orders, £1,497 12s. 5d.; 54 bank drafts, £3,678 0s. 7d.; 495 cheques, £3,374 6s. 6d.; 18 dividend-warrants, £141 9s. 2d.; 6 promissory notes, £169 6s. 3d.; postal notes, £524 7s.; British postal orders, £71 10s. 6d.; stamps, £42 2s. 4d.; bank-notes, £384; gold, £54 12s. 6d.; silver and copper, £12 12s. 6d.; representing a total of £9,949 19s. 9d.

Amongst other things, there were dealt with 8 gold, 19 silver, and 21 metal watches, 43 gold rings, 41 gold and other brooches, 21 greenstone and other pendants, 3 gold lockets, 2 silver lockets, 3 gold and 8 greenstone hearts, 10 gold tie-pins, 5 gold and 9 silver watch-chains, 6 silver sovereign-cases, 1 gold bangle, 1 gold medal, 3 gold-mounted tusks, 1 gold neck-chain, 1 silver tankard, 1 silver cigarette-case, 1 silver tobacco-pouch, 3 gold-mounted silk watch-guards, 2 silver butter-knives, 1 electro-plated