

bore no such request and was not of intrinsic value it was destroyed. It was found that many business firms were not disposed to pay the extra postage necessary to secure the return of undelivered printed matter. As a consequence, the mailing-lists of these firms were not kept up to date, a state of affairs which burdened staffs with the handling of quantities of unclaimed circulars, &c., of which delivery would have been possible had the lists been revised from time to time. Taking into consideration the fact that the revenue received from return postage on  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. printed matter was small, and with a view to encouraging the use of the post for advertising purposes, the Department decided to return free of charge all undelivered printed advertising-matter whether or not it bears a special request for return. In addition, undelivered printed matter other than advertising-matter which bears a special request for return or is of intrinsic value is returned free, but if it bears no such request and is not of intrinsic value it is destroyed.

#### “LATE-FEE” CORRESPONDENCE POSTED ON WHARVES AT WELLINGTON AND AUCKLAND: HANDLING BY SHIP-SIDE POST-OFFICE.

To enable late-fee correspondence from New Zealand to be dealt with more expeditiously at Sydney, an improved service for the handling of such correspondence has been provided at Wellington and Auckland. Previously, letters deposited in the late-fee bags at the outer barrier or at the ship's side could not be date-stamped and sorted until they reached Sydney. This caused delay, which frequently involved the missing of onward connections.

After a short period of trial at Wellington it was decided in June last to make available at Wellington and Auckland a suitable motor-van equipped with facilities for the posting, weighing, date-stamping, and sorting of letters and the sale of postage-stamps on the wharf. As soon as mails for conveyance by the vessel have closed at the Chief Post-office, the van takes up its position at the outer barrier, where it remains until the vessel is about to leave. The mails are then closed and placed on board. At the gangway a bag is provided for the posting of last-minute correspondence.

The service at Auckland was extended a little later to vessels of the Matson Line leaving for the United States of America. Similar facilities are not necessary in the case of vessels engaged on the Pacific Mail Contract Services on which mail-agents are stationed.

#### CANCELLATION OF POSTAGE-STAMPS ON PACKETS AND PARCELS.

Rubber stamps that were in use at post-offices for the cancellation of postage-stamps on packets and parcels were withdrawn during the year and replaced by roller-type, self-inking steel stamps. Underlying the change was the desire to obtain on postage-stamps cancellations that would be effective without marring the appearance of the stamps, particularly those of the pictorial issue, and thereby detracting from their advertising value to the Dominion. Cancellations obtained with rubber stamps were inclined to be unduly heavy, a defect which has been removed by the use of the new stamps.

#### PARCEL-POST, GREAT BRITAIN - NEW ZEALAND, VIA PANAMA: REDUCTION IN RATES.

From the 1st January last the British Post Office introduced a single scale of postage on parcels despatched to New Zealand via Panama. Previously parcels sent by this route were, for the purposes of assessing postage, divided into two categories as regards size. Those exceeding 4 ft. length and girth combined were charged at a considerably higher rate than were smaller parcels of the same weight sent by the same route. The result was that exporters in Great Britain often forwarded bulky parcels by the slower and cheaper route via Suez, and numerous complaints of delay in transit of parcels were made by addressees in New Zealand. The cause of these complaints has now been removed.

#### INLAND MAIL-SERVICES.

The contracts for the mail-services in the Auckland, Hamilton, and Thames postal districts expired on the 31st December, and were relet from the 1st January without increase in the aggregate cost.

A considerable number of services were improved by increases in frequency or by extensions of routes. Rural-mail-delivery facilities are gradually being extended to all localities where reasonably close settlement has taken place. There are now few farming districts in the Dominion that are not connected with a main centre by a mail-service.

At the end of February 24,865 rural-mail box-holders were receiving service. This is the highest number yet recorded, and there is every indication that the increase will continue.

On the 2nd February heavy rain caused floods at a number of places in the North Island, notably in the Wanganui District. Mail-services operating from several places in the district suffered considerable interruption and delay. The Wanganui-Raetihi and the Waitotara-Tamatatahi services were affected most, the roads in many places being impassable. In the Christchurch District also roads were blocked as the result of heavy rains, and mail-services were interrupted for several days. Subsequently, the flooding of many of the Mid-Canterbury rivers was responsible for serious delays to mails.

Following storms of the 11th and 14th April the Napier-Gisborne night-mail route was interrupted, and mails had to be sent to Gisborne by boat for a short period.