

DEAD LETTERS.

The following comparative table shows the number of unclaimed letters, letter-cards, and post-cards dealt with during the under-mentioned years :—

Manner of Disposal.	1884.	1885.	1886.	1887.	1888.	1889.	1890.	1894.	1896.	1897.	1898.	1899.
Opened and returned to the writers	68,942	66,592	66,729	62,847	55,118	62,654	60,540	61,745	63,112	66,886	68,872	74,132
Returned unopened to other countries	9,134	8,115	8,359	7,287	6,892	6,220	7,779	8,941	7,546	7,648	8,899	9,706
Reissued	107	185	251	96	88	92	141	130	148	132	219	178
Destroyed	3,986	2,872	6,600	5,974	5,246	4,340	2,660	4,725	4,069	3,245	3,368	4,536
Returned unopened by Chief Postmasters	17,593	19,187	21,144	20,185	19,963	21,164	21,931	22,042	26,414	34,260	33,273	22,915
Totals ..	99,762	96,951	103,083	96,889	87,307	94,470	93,051	97,583	101,289	112,171	114,631	111,467

The proportion of dead or unclaimed letters, letter-cards, and post-cards to the total number dealt with in the colony was 0·28, as against 0·31 per cent. in 1898.

22,048 book-packets and circulars were returned to foreign countries. 50,559 were returned to senders through the Dead-letter Office, 50 were reissued, 40,686 were returned by Chief Postmasters: a total of 113,343 book-packets and circulars, as compared with 130,320 in 1898.

402 letters were wrongly addressed; 42 letters were discovered to have been posted with previously used stamps; 1,879 unclaimed registered letters were dealt with.

2,325 newspapers and 1,555 books and other articles without addresses were received, many of which were subsequently applied for and delivered.

770 newspapers were returned to the publishers.

432 letters and 98 letter-cards were posted without addresses.

11 letters with libellous addresses were intercepted.

The under-mentioned articles of value were found in letters opened in the Dead-letter Office, and returned to the senders where practicable :—

	£	s.	d.
279 post-office orders	...	...	...
32 bank drafts	...	...	...
215 cheques	...	...	...
2 dividend warrants	...	...	...
16 promissory notes	...	...	...
Postal notes	...	...	...
Stamps	...	...	...
Bank-notes	...	...	...
Gold	...	...	...
Silver and copper	...	...	...
Representing a total of	...	...	...
	£5,532	14	6

In addition, 1 gold watch, 2 silver watches, 2 ladies' silver watches, 1 gold watch and chain, 1 silver watch and chain, 3 nickel-plated Swiss watches, 2 nickel watches, 2 gold chains, 1 ladies' ring, 7 gold rings, 1 silver ring, 1 gold pendant, 1 greenstone pendant, 1 gold brooch, 2 silver brooches, 1 gold-mounted greenstone brooch, 1 silver-mounted greenstone pendant, 2 gold-mounted sharks' teeth, 1 set of gold studs and one pair of sleeve-links, 1 pair gold sleeve-links, 1 silver lid, 1 silver chatelaine, 1 silver medal, 2 pairs gold-rimmed spectacles, 1 pair ordinary spectacles, 6 sheets postage-stamps, 3 sheets foreign stamps, 2 pencil-cases, 1 Japanese coin, collection of gold coins, 1 purse, 1 cigar-holder, 1 silver-mounted butter-knife with greenstone handle, 6 pawn-tickets, 1 railway-excursion ticket, 1 Tattersalls' ticket Melbourne Cup, 1 U.S.S. Company's saloon ticket Wellington to Greymouth, 1 passage ticket Toronto to Wellington, 1 U.S.S. Company's ticket Onehunga to Wanganui, 2 New Zealand Shipping Company's steerage tickets Monte Video to London, 1 U.S.S. Company's passage order Sydney to Auckland, 3 saloon tickets Lyttelton to Wellington, 5 share certificates, 4 cheque-books, 8 cents, 1 Canadian dollar, 3 woollen shawls, 4 antimacassar covers, 3 pairs of trousers, 9 silk handkerchiefs, 4 pieces of music, 2 dresses, 1 football-cap, 2 razors, 1 sealskin cap, 11 pairs of woollen socks, 1 bicycle-pump, 21 silk neckties, 1 pair of ladies' gloves, 1 box of shoe-laces, 1 bread knife, 1 carved pipe.

The number of inland, intercolonial, and international unclaimed articles received and disposed of during the years 1898 and 1899 was as under :—