

POSTAGE-STAMPS, ETC.

Booklets of official penny stamps, each containing ten shillings' worth, have been for sale to Government officers since the 16th June, 1908, at 10s. 1d. each.

Registered-letter envelopes of medium size, with a die showing the King's head, were issued on the 28th July.

A new issue of penny embossed envelopes for business and social correspondence was made in November, 1908. Each class of envelope is sold at the rate of eleven for 1s., or five for 6d.

From the 1st April, 1909, the price of halfpenny embossed envelopes was reduced from 7½d. per dozen to 6d. for ten envelopes.

A new letter-card, of plainer design than the previous issue, was brought into use on the 28th August, 1908.

From December, 1908, penny postage-stamps were printed by what is known as surface printing from new plates. The stamp from the impressions is as nearly as possible like the stamp previously in use.

A new issue of King's-head postage-stamps is to be made. The colours will be the same as previously, except that the fourpenny stamp will be yellow.

OCEAN MAIL-SERVICES.

Suez Service.

The arrangement made with the Union Steam Ship Company for despatching a steamer every Friday from Wellington to make a close connection with the outward Suez mail at Sydney lapsed on the 26th July, 1908, but was renewed for another period of two years from that date, at a subsidy of £15,000 per annum, the agreement being terminable at the end of the first year at the option either of the Department or of the company. It was considered necessary, however, to include a penalty clause in the agreement, providing for the deduction of half of the amount of subsidy due for any particular voyage in the event of the steamer failing to make the connection at Sydney with the outward mail-train for Adelaide.

In order to enable mails from the north by the Main Trunk line to connect with the Sydney steamer at Wellington, the departure of the latter was fixed at 5 p.m. on Fridays from the 19th February, 1909.

Payments on Account of the Peninsular and Oriental, and Orient, Mail-service during the Year, 1908-9.

	£
Payment to Peninsular and Oriental, and Orient lines	11,003
Transit charges across Australia and Europe	1,550
Mail-service to Australia	14,712
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	£27,265

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

		P. and O. Line.			Orient Line.		
		Max.	Min.	Average.	Max.	Min.	Average.
London to Auckland	39	37	37·31	43	37	37·54
Auckland to London	41	37	37·54	44	39	40·81
London to Wellington	40	38	38·73	41	38	38·81
Wellington to London	37	35	35·5	40	37	37·96
London to Dunedin	41	37	38·62	40	37	38·50
Dunedin to London	38	36	36·5	41	38	38·96
London to Bluff	40	37	38·12	39	37	38·00
Bluff to London (direct)	41	39	39·54	44	41	41·92

San Francisco Service.

As announced in Parliament last session, arrangements were made with the Union Steam Ship Company (Limited) in October, 1908, for a mail-service between Wellington and Papeete (Tahiti), calling at Rarotonga, Cook Islands, on both outward and inward voyages. A connection is made at Tahiti with the mail-steamers of the J. D. Spreckels and Bros. Company, sailing between Tahiti and San Francisco, thus establishing a twenty-four-days service between Wellington and San Francisco and a thirty-five- or thirty-six-days service with the United Kingdom. The subsidy for the Tahiti service is £7,000 per annum, half of which, however, is charged against the Industries and Commerce Department. The duration of the agreement is for one year from the 3rd January, 1909, during which time ten voyages will be run at intervals of about thirty-six days. The first outward mail under this agreement left Wellington by the s.s. "Manapouri" on the 3rd January, connecting at Papeete with the s.s. "Mariposa," the mails arriving in London on the 8th February, 1909.

The s.s. "Aeon," which left San Francisco on the 6th July, 1908, for Auckland, with English and American mails on board, was totally wrecked on Christmas Island on the 18th idem. The news was forwarded from Fanning Island, and the s.s. "Manuka," sailing from Vancouver on the 11th September, was instructed by cable to pick up the passengers and mails from the wrecked vessel. The s.s. "Indravelli" was detained at Suva until the 1st October to wait for the "Manuka" and the New Zealand portion of the mails transhipped to her, reaching Auckland on the 6th October. All the mail is believed to have been accounted for.