

a convenience to the public, and will no doubt at the same time result in increased correspondence being posted. There is no reason why a person in a populous city should have to walk more than a few yards to find a receptacle for letters. Pillar boxes for newspapers can still be provided at suitable places.

In addition to providing letter-boxes in the streets, it is noticeable that in America and Europe hotels and places of public resort are usually supplied with letter-boxes, which are cleared by the Post Office. There also exists an arrangement in England under which, for a small annual fee, any firm posting a reasonable number of letters is provided with a letter-box, which is cleared by the Post Office at frequent intervals. An extension of posting-boxes in this direction might conveniently be made in New Zealand, and is recommended.

REGISTERED LETTERS.

In New York a system of dealing with registered letters has been adopted which in some respects differs from that elsewhere. In the receipt given to the public, instead of entering the name of the addressee and the name of the sender, a receipt is given for the letter, which is described as bearing a number. Attached to the receipt is a label similar to that used in the international system. This label is detached and affixed to the letter, which thereafter follows the usual course. This system has the advantage over others of a great saving in time, as the giving of the receipt involves no more time than is required to impress it with the date-stamp. The receipt bears a printed serial number which corresponds to a similar serial number appearing on the label affixed to the letter, giving ample identification so far as the counter-clerk is concerned; and, as every serial number has necessarily to be accounted for, no failure of entry can occur. Generally the system is much on the same principle as the checking of baggage on the American railroads. Any system which results in the saving of time at the counter, while affording proper checks, is worthy of adoption; and I would recommend that the New York practice be followed at each of the principal offices. Its adoption should result in a saving of staff, which before long may be estimated at £400 a year.

DEAD LETTERS.

Letters bearing the name and the address of the sender are returned unopened by Chief Postmasters. We go to a great deal of unnecessary trouble and expense by enclosing such letters in envelopes. In Canada and the United States no envelopes are used, the letters being marked with a special stamp, usually representing a finger pointing to the address of the sender, and the words "Returned to sender." This is perfectly understood by postal officers, and gives no trouble. I would recommend this for adoption. The saving would be about £200 a year.

UNDELIVERABLE LETTERS.

In Toronto I found a system in force under which undeliverable letters, except those addressed *poste restante*, are immediately returned to the sender, instead of being kept for any specified time in the hope of securing delivery to some other address. This appears to be a common-sense method of dealing with letters, particularly for those addressed to the large centres which cannot be delivered to the address given. It is considered that it is of more consequence to the sender of a letter to know without delay that delivery has failed than to suppose that the Post Office will somehow or other succeed in delivering a misaddressed or faultily addressed letter. The adoption of the system in Toronto had, I was informed, met with the appreciation of senders of letters. A trial might with advantage be given in the four principal centres, the system being restricted to inland letters.

ORGANIZATION OF CITY DELIVERIES.

In most new countries there is a proneness to excessive centralisation of Post Office work in cities. This is best exemplified in the fact that the letter-carriers' deliveries in such extensive cities as Wellington and Auckland commence from the central office. Although suburban offices have for many years been in existence, they are practically all on the footing of receiving-offices only. The effect of this is that a letter posted in a suburb for delivery in the same suburb has to make a journey to the central office, whence it is carried by a letter-carrier over the same ground. I have for some time been of the opinion that our practice might with advantage be amended with great satisfaction to the Department and the public. The question has been which was the best method to adopt, and with a view to ascertain this I have taken careful note of the systems in use in Europe and America. These are somewhat varied. In America the use of pneumatic tubes of large diameter enables letters to be handled with great rapidity. In two important cities in Germany the central system still applies, but in Berlin and other large cities a system of district offices is in force.

All these, however, have to give place to the simple and perfect district system of London, where the district office has complete control over all sub-offices in its particular division, and performs the work of clearing its own pillar boxes and exchanging mails with other district offices. So splendidly is this work organized that it is the rule to drop a letter into a pillar-box in expectation of receiving a reply from any other district in two hours, or from any place in the district itself within about an hour. The radius of the districts being comparatively short, it is possible to make many collections of letters by foot or bicycle messenger.

It is well known to the Department that a great deal of post-office business is local—i.e., about 33 to 40 per cent. of the letters posted are for places within a radius of a few miles from the office of posting. With few deliveries in populous parts this business languishes, but with frequent deliveries the volume of business is capable of rapid increase. Any excessive centralisation naturally increases the time of post, and thus restricts the business done.