

- (6.) Veterinary Branch.
- (7.) Dairy-produce Inspector's Branch.
- (8.) Library and Information Bureau.
- (9.) Branch for Prisoners of War and Contingent Matters.
- (10.) In addition, the Customs Agent, Mr. Spence, has handed me an account of his branch for inclusion in my report. As Mr. Spence's position is quite independent of this Office, and as no reports have been received from him of his work, I regret I am unable to express any opinion on the services rendered by that officer. I propose to refer to this matter by next mail.

I propose, however, to first give a few general details concerning the whole Department.

The permanent and temporary staff at date numbers 109, of which 19 are on active military service. Compared with 1902, when the staff comprised 19 officers, it will be seen how largely the Department has increased. This fact is further emphasized by the following figures:—

(1.) Despatches received and sent to the Dominion	1916.	1913.	1911.	1902.	1892.
..	12,792	10,830	9,536	5,084	2,586
(2.) Cablegrams received and sent to the Dominion	..	6,919	1,495	1,258	742
..	..	..	..	..	168
(3.) Foreign Imprest Account—					
Number of vouchers	..	14,613	7,342	6,489	3,609
..	..	..	..	..	2,048

The enormous increase in cables and payments is specially noteworthy.

The amount of correspondence is greatly in excess of previous years. The total number of letters received and despatched during 1916 amounted to 259,892 (being a daily average of 831), as compared with 167,014 (a daily average of 534) in 1912, and with 76,756 (a daily average of 245) the average of the eight years up to 1906.

The attached appendices contain some interesting statistical particulars showing the great increase in extent and variety of the business transacted by the Department.

#### GENERAL BRANCH.

##### COVERING SECRETARIAL, DIPLOMATIC, CABLES, RECORDS, AND GENERAL SECTIONS.

This branch deals with all matters of a diplomatic nature, and generally with all subjects that do not come specially under the other branches of the Office. All correspondence immediately upon receipt is opened and distributed by this branch, and the work of the final despatch of correspondence is also undertaken. To give some idea of the great amount of work this involves I give hereunder the following figures for 1916:—

Number of letters—					
Received from Dominion and elsewhere	..	..	..	150,234	
Sent to Dominion and elsewhere	..	..	..	109,658	
					259,892
Number of book packets sent	..	..	..	..	6,070
Number of rail packets sent	..	..	..	..	516
Number of despatches, memos, and letters—					
Received from Government Departments in New Zealand	..	..	..	4,446	
Sent to Government Departments in New Zealand	..	..	..	8,346	
					12,792

This branch is also responsible for the decoding and despatching of cables, and the time taken up by this important work is emphasized by the undermentioned figures, which are also for 1916:—

Number of cablegrams to and from Dominion—					
Outward	..	..	..	..	4,340
Inward	..	..	..	..	2,579
					6,919

The Record-room, where the greater part of the correspondence of the Office is filed, forms part of the General Branch. All publications ordered from time to time by the various Government Departments in the Dominion are obtained by this branch, which also undertakes the great amount of work in connection with the mail-boxes—i.e., the regular despatch to New Zealand of all kinds of publications under Standing Orders required by the General Assembly Library, the various Railway libraries, the Defence Department, Agricultural Department, Education Department, &c. A close watch has also to be kept on the war publications that are constantly being issued, so that the New Zealand Government may be in touch with the work of the various committees and commissions appointed to deal with questions arising out of the war.

The branch has had a particularly strenuous time owing to the extra work caused since the outbreak of the war. In addition to the great number of general inquiries, both personal and by letter, and the many matters of a confidential and diplomatic nature, requiring close attention, which cannot, of course, be dealt with in a report, the following deserves special mention:—

##### NEW-ZEALANDERS DESIROUS OF OFFERING THEIR SERVICES IN CONNECTION WITH THE WAR.

Since August, 1914, this branch has assisted a very great number of New Zealand gentlemen desirous of offering their services in connection with the war. Many have brought letters of introduction to the High Commissioner, but a very great number have not been introduced in any way.