

1881.
NEW ZEALAND.

TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT

(SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

Office of the Postmaster-General and Commissioner of Telegraphs,
Wellington, 16th July, 1881
SIR,— I have the honor to submit to your Excellency a report on the operations of the
Telegraph Department of New Zealand for the twelve months ending the 31st March, 1881
I have, &c.,
WALTER W JOHNSTON,
Postmaster-General and Commissioner of Telegraphs.
His Excellency the Hon. Sir A. H. Gordon,
G.C.M.G.

REPORT

THE cash revenue for the year was estimated at £80,000. It has fallen short of that amount by £6,997 18s.

The value of the Government telegrams for the year amounts to £27,021 3s. 8d., which, added to the value of the private telegrams (£69,634 12s. 7d.) and incidental receipts (£3,367 9s. 5d.), shows the gross earnings of the department to amount to £100,023 5s. 8d. Deducting the June quarter telegrams and receipts from the year's collections, as shown in Table C, and comparing the remaining three quarters ending 31st March, 1881, with the corresponding quarters ending March, 1880, there is a falling-off in telegrams to the extent of 37,788, and in cash to the amount of £2,053 3s. 9d.

There are evidences, however, that the department is slowly recovering from the depression that has existed during the past year; for it will be found, on examination of Table C, that the differences between the corresponding quarters for the years ending March, 1880 and 1881, have gradually diminished—viz., the September quarter, 1880, showed a decrease of £919 13s. 4d., as compared with September, 1879; December, 1880, £626 0s. 7d., as compared with December, 1879; and March, 1881, £507 9s. 10d., as compared with the quarter ending March, 1880.

The total number of messages of all codes transmitted during the year amounts to 1,058,342.

The number of telegrams transmitted during the twelve months, as compared with the number of letters posted during the same period, show that for every 100 letters posted 9.71 telegrams were sent. On perusal of Table B it will be apparent that a considerable falling-off in percentage of telegrams for the year ending March, 1881, has been experienced when compared with any of the previous years. The sudden drop in percentage in 1881 is not, however, solely due to the decrease of telegrams in that particular year, but is in a measure to be accounted for by the very large increase in the number of letters posted in the nine months ending March, 1881, and which exceeded those in 1880, for the same period, by 1,106,482. Doubtless this large increase may be set down to a certain extent to the prevailing monetary depression at the time, but there must have been other causes at work to create such a large increase besides the depression alluded to, and the effect of which must be patent to any close observer—viz., that with the falling-off of trade the users of the telegraph confined their communications by telegraph to strictly their necessities, and made use of the Post Office to a much larger extent than they would have done in more prosperous times. The only other causes, therefore, that could operate in this direction must be due to the increased facilities placed at the disposal of the Post Office by improved steam communication, but more especially by the railway, which has brought points which were far apart comparatively nearer to one another. And this conclusion is, to a certain extent, borne out by fact, for if Table B is examined closely it will be found that, whilst places