

however, to such stations, it will be requisite, if this branch of the public service is to be served efficiently, to demand that all officers who aspire for such promotion should qualify themselves for it by possessing a fair amount of technical knowledge, so as not to place them as it were at a disadvantage by having under them officers of superior attainments and whose duties are performed in a subordinate capacity. The gradual fusion and interchange of duties in the different offices where such amalgamations have taken place will be carried out as far as practicable; but this fact must not be lost sight of, that, in order to work the wires to the fullest capacity, the duties of the telegraphist in the larger offices must still be kept distinct and quite apart from any other duty; for telegraphy, like piano-playing, requires constant practice in order to acquire and maintain a certain degree of expertness in the manipulation of the Morse key. Prior to the final amalgamation above alluded to it has been the custom of the Telegraph Department to appoint to the small stations, where the duties of postmaster and telegraphist could be performed by one officer, an officer specially trained by the telegraph. This custom in the future will still be adhered to, as it has worked well and cannot be improved upon. Telegraphic appointments to such stations are of the greatest importance, for, where officers are thrown upon their own resources and far away from assistance, it is an absolute necessity that they should possess a certain degree of expertness and technical knowledge to enable them to detect faults in their own offices, and to render such assistance as may be necessary to the central offices in the localization of faults and by alteration of the wires at their own test-boards, in order to keep open as many circuits as possible when the wires fall out of repair, through bad weather and other accidents to which telegraph lines are liable.

The works performed during the past year in the different sections into which the telegraph system is divided are as follows:—

FROM THE BLUFF TO WAITAKI RIVER.

All the lines and offices from Waitaki to Blueskin have been thoroughly examined. Between Oamaru and Palmerston, at all the railway-crossings, the wires have been placed on thirty-five-foot poles. Between Blueskin and Kilmog Hill the line has been reconstructed, and a loop wire for railway purposes has been led into Hampden and Herbert Railway Stations. The remainder of the lines in this section have had no special repairs made to them excepting such as the lineman in each district have been able to perform, but as many of them as possible during the next twelve months will have the usual examination made by the travelling lineman.

The offices at Hampden, Herbert, Waikouaiti, Mosgiel, and Outram have been closed, and the business transferred to the railway-stations at those places, and placed under the control of the station-masters. At Clinton the business has been removed to the railway-station, additional accommodation being previously provided. There has been no amalgamation of staff at this office, but the expense of a mail-carrier has been saved, and the railway officials relieved of the telegraph work performed by them, and the duplicate sets of instruments and batteries done away with. At Woodlands the instruments have been removed from the meat-preserving company's office to the railway station, but no amalgamation as yet has been effected, as the station-master is not yet sufficiently proficient to perform the duties of the telegraphist. The offices vacated at Hampden and Herbert have been leased as dwellinghouses, and those at Mosgiel and Outram have been transferred to the Railway and Police Departments. The old office at Clinton has been converted into additional quarters for the officers in charge. At Balclutha the department has removed into offices erected on a new site.

For the Railway Department.—Two new wires, one for Morse and the other for block purposes, have been erected between Port Chalmers and Seacliffe, along the railway line *viâ* Pura-kanui. The length of this line is 16 miles, 13 of which have been erected on poles made out of old iron rails. Morse instruments have been fitted up at Waitati and Seacliffe, and the block instruments are ready to be fitted up as soon as the necessary accommodation has been provided by the railway authorities. At Glendermid an electrical signal-repeater and light-out-recording apparatus has been fitted up. A line is now in course of construction from Riverton to Otautau, on which offices at Thornbury Junction and Otautau will be opened and placed in charge of the railway station-masters, who will also perform the telegraph duties. The Invercargill Telegraph Office has been amalgamated with the Post Office, and placed under the charge of the Chief Postmaster. The Tokomairiro and Albany Street (Dunedin) Telegraph Offices have also been amalgamated, telegraphists, in each case, taking sole charge. The maintenance of all the railway wires and offices in this section have been placed under the charge of this department since the 1st June, 1880, the Railway Telegraph Department being abolished from that date.

The stations on the Catlin's River line—viz., Kaitangata, Nuggets, and Owake, have been turned into telephone-stations, and the Morse instruments done away with; by this alteration a saving of quite £150 per annum has been effected on this branch line.

FROM CHEVIOT TO WAITAKI (including Bealey Line as far as Arahura Junction)

From Cheviot to Christchurch no repairs of any consequence have been made, but from Christchurch to Waitaki extensive repairs and renewals are in progress, and have been completed as far as St. Andrews. The spans which were originally on this line, five chains, have been reduced to four, rendered necessary by the number of wires which the poles had to carry; at the Rakaia, Ashburton, Rangitata, Temuka, and Ophir Rivers the wires have been carried on the railway bridges, and at Selwyn, Orari, and Pareora the rivers are crossed by means of poles supported on iron tubes driven into the river-bed.