

*Sixpence (Sap-green).*—Representation of kiwi *regardant*, surmounted by semicircular band of solid colour, bearing words "New Zealand" in white letters, and supported by oblique labels, "Postage," "Revenue," on left and right respectively. Value in words only at base of stamp, in straight label. The corners of the design, which has a distinctive appearance resembling a horse-shoe, are filled in with ornamental scroll-work on shaded ground.

*Eightpence (Steel-blue).*—Large outline figure "8," supported by fern-trees and cabbage-palms on shaded background. Within the upper portion of the figure is an Imperial crown, and in the lower portion a view with Native war-canoe over the word "pence" at base of figure. The lower corners of stamp contain circles with figures of value in white, the upper corners being bevelled, and filled with scallop ornaments. The words "New Zealand Postage and Revenue" are inscribed upon the curves of the large figure which forms the central device.

*Ninepence (Lilac).*—Oblong (horizontal). View of Pink Terrace, Rotomahana, with tree-fern and nikau-palm at sides. The legend "Postage and Revenue" at base of picture. Value in white figures in coloured circles at each corner. "New Zealand" in arched inscription above, and value in words below, in straight label; both white letters on colour.

*One Shilling (Orange-red).*—Representation of pair of kakas on branch, in colour on white background within fancy frame, having arched label "Postage" above, with "and Revenue" below. Name of colony at top of stamp, and value in words at bottom, in straight labels. Value in figures in circles at lower corners, above the bottom label.

*Two Shillings (Blue-green).*—Oblong (horizontal). View of Milford Sound in fancy frame, with title below in label, and clump of cabbage-palms on left-hand side above scrolled circle enclosing value in figures. The words "New Zealand Postage and Revenue" in white letters at top of stamp.

*Five Shillings (Vermilion).*—Oblong (vertical). View of Mount Cook, with name in white label below. Inscription, "New Zealand Postage and Revenue" above, and value in words at foot, white letters on coloured ground.

All the stamps are printed on white-wove unwatermarked paper, and perforate 14 to 15. The rectangular stamps measure about 18 mm. by 22 mm., and the oblong stamps 33 mm. by 20 mm., or, say,  $\frac{1}{4}\frac{2}{8}$  in. by  $\frac{1}{4}\frac{5}{8}$  in., and  $1\frac{5}{16}$  in. by  $\frac{1}{4}\frac{3}{8}$  in.

During the year it was decided to issue a pictorial post-card to enable residents and visitors to send souvenirs of New Zealand to their friends in places beyond the colony. The cards were stamped 1d. and 1½d., and were sold at a fraction over the face-value to cover the cost of production.

The scenic representations on the cards comprise views of Mounts Cook and Egmont, the Otira Gorge, and the Waikite Geyser, which were executed in chromo-lithography by Messrs. Waterlow and Sons (Limited), of London.

Owing to the majority of the cards arriving late for the Christmas season the sales have not been up to anticipations.

On revising the Franking List for the year 1898 it was considered advisable to indicate the franking officers by name as well as by title; and it will probably be a matter of surprise to learn that no less than 1,656 persons in New Zealand are authorised to frank letters or telegrams. There is no question that sooner or later some system should be adopted by which the department should receive payment for such work now undertaken gratuitously for other branches of the public service, particularly in respect of telegrams. The mere fact of each department being required to make provision for this service would, if the experience of other countries can be relied upon, result in economy, and a much diminished use of the telegraph-wires for official communications, without detriment to the public service. At present there is no obligation on any department to curtail its telegrams, or to abstain from using the wires when a letter by post would serve equally well.

Notwithstanding the heavy penalties to which persons attempting to use previously cancelled stamps in prepayment of postage are liable, there is reason to suppose that the irregularity is on the increase. In many cases there is no intention to defraud the revenue, while in others the excuse is that the used stamp was mistaken for an unused one. The department has no wish to be unduly harsh, but the fact that previously cancelled stamps cannot well be used without being regummed implies, at the least, great carelessness; and if the law continues to be broken it will be necessary to institute a prosecution in every case brought under notice.

The experiment of indicating in dated stamps the hour of posting of letters, &c., by representing the time of day in plain figures instead of arbitrary letters or index figures has been tried at Christchurch, and found to give great satisfaction to the public. The system will be extended to all the principal offices as the present dated stamps require to be replaced.

The automatic date-stamping machine in use in the post-offices of the United States having proved a practical success, the manufacturers have been approached by the department with the object of obtaining one or more of the machines on trial.

In last year's report brief reference was made to the proceedings of the Universal Postal Union Congress held at Washington. The complete documents, which have since come to hand, show that all the countries comprising the Universal Postal Union, except San Domingo, were represented. The following main alterations in the Vienna Convention come into force on the 1st January, 1899:—

Maritime transit rates are fixed as follows:—

(a.) 5 francs per kilogramme of letters and post-cards, and 50 centimes per kilogramme of other articles for exchanges between countries of Europe, between Europe and African and Asiatic ports on the Mediterranean, between Europe and the Black Sea, between Europe and North America, and between all these territories themselves; also between other countries where the distance traversed does not exceed one thousand five hundred nautical miles.

(b.) 15 francs per kilogramme for letters and post-cards, and 1 franc per kilogramme for other articles, for all distances not comprised in the preceding paragraph. The rule, that when con-