

					Numbers comprised.	Average Absence per Sick Officer.	Average Sick Absence per each Officer employed.
Men	...	...	...	...	979	Days. 10·81	Days. 5·35
Women	...	...	...	...	135	18·63	15·32

There were five deaths during the year.

APPEAL BOARD.

The term of the elected members having expired, a new election was held in February. Mr. W. McNickle was re-elected as representative of the Telegraph branch, and Mr. F. M. Scully elected as representative of the Postal branch.

Thirteen appeals were considered by the Board at its fourth meeting in May-June last year. Of these, eight were not sustained, and one was not sustained as to the main ground of appeal. Of the remaining four, one appellant was recommended for a country postmastership if a suitable vacancy occurred; in the second case the Board expressed the opinion that a specified position should be filled by an officer of higher rank than the appellant; the third appeal was met by a recommendation to remove a bar placed against the officer appealing; and the fourth was settled by the correction of a clerical error in fixing the numerical position of the officer in the list.

NIGHT STAFF.

With the view of relieving the pressure of work during ordinary business hours, a night staff has been at work at the Circulation Branch, Wellington, since the 7th December. The night staff is on duty from 10 p.m. till 5 a.m. This, with the duty from 5 a.m. till 1 p.m. and 1 p.m. till 10 p.m., enables work to be continued throughout the twenty-four hours, with considerable advantage to the office and the public. The officers on each staff are allowed from one to two hours for meals.

INSPECTION.

Visits of inspection were made to 1,330 post-offices, the Inspectors travelling 24,432 miles during 1898.

PENNY POSTAGE.

The question of universal penny postage has been more or less under consideration for some time. A statement of the probable effect of such a reduction of postage has been prepared, and it is estimated that the introduction of an inland penny letter rate, on the basis of the present business, would result in a diminution of the Post Office revenue to the extent of £82,000. With an increased letter posting of 10 per cent. the loss would be £74,000, and with 15 per cent. £70,000. It is not expected that there would be a greater increase in the number of letters posted in the first year than 10 or 15 per cent.

From a rough counting of letters posted at the principal offices, it is estimated that the proportion of business to domestic and social letters is about 60 per cent. of the total number posted, or as six to four.

The question of the reduction of the postage on newspapers addressed to the United Kingdom from the present Postal Union rate of 1d. for the first 4 oz. and $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for each succeeding 2 oz. to a uniform rate of 1d. for each newspaper, irrespective of weight, has also been under consideration. The Imperial Post Office, however, insists on the Postal Union rates being levied, and intimated that newspapers prepaid at a lesser rate would be surcharged double the deficiency before delivery.

NEW POSTAGE-STAMPS, ETC.

The printing of the new postage-stamps is now being done by the Government Printer. For the present the colours used in London are being continued, but those of the halfpenny, penny, and twopence-halfpenny labels will shortly give place to the colours selected by the Washington Conference—namely, green, red, and dark-blue respectively. At the same time the designs of the penny and fourpenny values will be transposed, and necessary changes made in the colours of the fourpenny, sixpenny, and, possibly, the ninepenny stamps.

The Government Printer has now in hand a series of post-cards bearing on the address side views of New Zealand scenery. These cards are intended to advertise to some extent the scenery of the colony, and, as they will be sold at the same price as plain cards, a large demand may be anticipated. It is hoped that a fair assortment will be ready in a few months.

The plates for the postal notes having become worn out, it is intended to shortly issue notes of an improved pattern and design.

OLD-AGE PENSIONS.

The payment of the old-age pensions has thrown a considerable amount of work on the department, and at the principal offices it has been found impossible to provide accommodation for the large number of pensioners who present themselves on the first day of each month. The want of accommodation has been met at Auckland, Christchurch, and Dunedin by engaging suitable offices outside the post-office, and at Wellington by utilising a portion of the telegraph counter. Notwith-