

or 43·05 per cent. Considering the reduction in the cost of an ordinary telegram from 1s. to 6d., this increase of revenue is gratifying. Over three-quarters of a million telegrams, however, have been necessary to produce the additional revenue of under £9,000. This considerable volume of work has been overtaken at a cost for extra staff of less than £10,000; but heavy expenditure on additional wire-accommodation at the same time has had to be met.

The telegraph business appears to have settled down after the disturbance caused by the introduction of the sixpenny telegram. Instead of falling, the average value of each telegram has risen from 8·47d. to 8·85d., with the result that the increase in revenue bears a fair proportion to the number of telegrams transmitted. In 1898 the number of telegrams increased by 10·05 per cent., and the value by 4·73 per cent.; while in the previous year an increase of 8·07 telegrams resulted in a decrease in revenue of 0·94. The table hereunder discloses the business for each quarter during the last two years:—

TABLE showing the NUMBER of TELEGRAMS forwarded, and the Revenue derived therefrom, during the Four Quarters of the Financial Years 1897–98 and 1898–99 respectively.

Quarter.	Number of Telegrams forwarded.		Increase per Cent.	Revenue.		Increase per Cent.
	Year ended 31st March, 1898.	Year ended 31st March, 1899.		1897–98.	1898–99.	
June quarter ...	581,187	647,284	11·37	£ 23,189 13 1	£ 24,548 10 4½	5·86
September quarter ...	553,898	609,615	10·06	21,732 13 5	23,008 6 10	5·87
December quarter ...	643,801	712,121	10·61	25,182 7 6	26,231 18 5½	4·17
March quarter ...	690,529	748,528	8·40	26,432 12 9	27,315 16 8	3·34
	2,469,415	2,717,548	10·05	96,537 6 9	101,104 12 4	4·73

PACIFIC CABLE.

The Pacific-cable question is in a more concrete form than it was at the time of presenting the last report. It had been proposed by the Australasian Colonies, in January, 1896, that the cable should be jointly owned by the Governments of Great Britain, Canada, and the colonies, the two first named to contribute two-thirds of the cost and the colonies one-third. The proportions of contribution were later proposed to be altered to four-ninths from the colonies, New Zealand's proportion not to exceed, in any case, one-eighth of the whole cost. (See Public Accounts Committee Report, I.—7, 1898.) The Committee which was appointed in June, 1896, by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to inquire into the whole question of the Pacific cable, recommended joint ownership by the Governments interested, as proposed by the colonies. The report of the Committee, though made in January, 1897, has only been presented to the British Parliament within the last month or so; and the latest telegraphic advices announce that the Home Government has now unreservedly agreed that the cable should be an Imperial one, practically on the basis of the report of the Committee. The papers which are to be laid before Parliament disclose the nature of the negotiations and the present position of this important matter.

BUSINESS OVER EXISTING CABLES.

The number and value of cable messages forwarded from New Zealand during 1898 are shown in the following statement:—

Destination.	Ordinary.		Press.	
	No. of Messages.	Value.	No. of Messages.	Value.
		£ s. d.		£ s. d.
International ...	9,439	32,527 3 4	39	179 2 0
New South Wales ...	25,397	5,413 5 0	1,042	673 1 5
Queensland ...	1,409	444 1 6	...	...
South Australia ...	1,287	388 4 7	...	...
Tasmania ...	1,846	665 11 8	...	...
Victoria ...	14,112	3,547 0 10	72	54 16 3
Western Australia ...	1,652	575 15 5	1	0 7 4
Total for 1898 ...	55,142	43,561 2 4	1,154	907 7 0
Total for 1897 ...	51,317	46,208 16 7	1,294	945 4 8