

An average of 7,236 men were employed by the department, as compared with 6,413 men during the previous year. (See Return No. 26.)

Forty-two members of the permanent staff resigned, nine died, eight were retired, thirteen were dismissed, and 452 engaged.

Eight appeals against decisions of the department in regard to staff irregularities were heard by the Appeal Boards; five were dismissed, and three were allowed.

Five members of the Second Division were during the year promoted or transferred to the First Division.

Of the 1,088 members of the First Division, 528 have obtained certificates as telegraphists, and 446 as competent postal officers.

The cost of the special allowance of wages (6d. per day) to labourers and others in receipt of 6s. 6d. per day amounts, for the year, to £15,352; and increased pay for porters, carpenters, enginemen, firemen, and apprentices, as provided for by enactment (No. 26, 1897), to £2,597.

The Railway Institute and Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants have been unable to agree in regard to regulations providing for the transfer of members of the Second Division to the First Division which would be mutually satisfactory: the Government have therefore advised His Excellency as to regulations throwing the door open to deserving and qualified members on the following terms:—

Promotions may be made from the Second to the First Division in the following manner:—

Specially qualified members of the Second Division, Class 1, Traffic, may be promoted to Subdivision 4 of the First Division as coaching, goods, and wharf foremen, and timber-checkers.

Members of the Second Division, Class 1, Traffic, in receipt of not less than 6s. 6d. per diem, and with not less than six years' service, shall be classified as eligible for promotion to Subdivision 4 of the First Division as Stationmasters of the 5th Subclass, on an equality with clerks in the 7th Subclass of the First Division, on the following basis: The date on which eligible members of Class 1, Second Division, first receive not less than 6s. 6d. per diem, and clerks not less than £100 per annum, shall determine the order of promotion:

Provided that no member of the Second Division shall be so promoted unless he—(a) produces a certificate from a duly qualified Inspector or teacher (at the option of the department) of the Education Department that he possesses an education equal to the Sixth Standard of the Government schools; (b) that the General Manager or Assistant General Manager certifies that he has passed the examination provided for in clause 14, subclause (1), of the regulations, and that two members of Subdivision 2, nominated by the General Manager, certify that he is competent by reason of merit, ability, and qualifications to perform the clerical and outdoor duties of a Stationmaster in the 5th Subclass.

Members of the Second Division who have been or may be permanently physically injured in the service may, at the discretion of the General Manager, and subject to the provisions of clause 27 of the regulations, be promoted to Subdivision 3 of the First Division as clerks of the 7th Subclass; but no such member shall be so promoted unless he produces a certificate from a duly qualified Inspector or teacher (at the option of the department) of the Education Department that he possesses an education equal to the Sixth Standard of the Government schools; that the General Manager or Assistant General Manager certifies that he has passed the examinations provided for in clause 14, subclause (1), of the regulations; and that two members of Subdivision 2, nominated by the General Manager, certify that he is competent by reason of merit, ability, and qualifications to perform the duties of a 7th Subclass clerk.

Members may be promoted from Class 2, Second Division, to Class 2 of Subdivision 4, and to Class 2 of Subdivision 3 of First Division; also from Class 3 of Second Division to Class 3 of Subdivision 4, and to Class 2 of Subdivision 3 of First Division.

Return No. 27 is a statement of the personal accidents for the year; and, as this return has from time to time been the subject of criticism, it becomes