

Letters originating in other places beyond New Zealand, which were formerly kept at the office to which addressed for three clear months, are now only kept for two months, unless addressed to a specified house or street, or to a person who has gone away, in which case the letters are kept for six weeks.

Letters posted within New Zealand and addressed to a post-office, or "to be called for," or to a person residing outside the letter-carriers' delivery, are kept one month. Letters addressed to sub-offices, where there is no letter-carriers' delivery, were formerly kept at the office to which addressed for one clear month—that is to say, for the month in which received and the following month. They are now kept one calendar month only.

Letters posted within New Zealand and addressed to a specified house or street, or to a person who has gone away without leaving an address, are now kept at the office to which directed for one week, instead of one month, as was the case formerly.

Circulars and catalogues from beyond the colony, delivery of which cannot possibly be effected, are sent to the Dead Letter Office at the expiration of one clear month from date of receipt.

Undelivered post-cards, circulars, and commercial papers are returned direct to the senders by Chief Postmasters.

POST-CARDS.

Owing to the growing popularity of pictorial post-cards, senders of post-cards addressed to places within the colony are now permitted to write a communication on the front of the card, provided the left-hand half of the address side only is used for this purpose.

NEW POSTAGE-STAMPS, ETC.

All denominations of New Zealand postage-stamps are now printed on water-marked paper.

The former plates from which the universal penny-post stamp was printed having become worn, new plates were brought into use in January last.

The medium-sized registered-letter envelope now bears His Majesty's portrait.

Postage and revenue stamps at $\frac{1}{2}$ d., 1d., 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., 3d., 6d., and 1s. have been overprinted for the Island of Aitutaki.

POSTMARKING-MACHINES.

Postmarking-machines of an improved design, invented and manufactured in New Zealand, have been installed in the offices at Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. The Dunedin office will be supplied as soon as electric motors now under order come to hand. The latest model of this machine is both fast and accurate, and is reported by the Wellington office, where it has been longest in use, to be capable of stamping letters at the rate of 700 a minute, without any apparent diminution of efficiency. In tests made for accuracy on ordinary mixed matter the faults have in capable hands been very few. The postmarking is very clear.

PENNY-IN-THE-SLOT STAMPING-MACHINES.

Within the last few years several kinds of "penny-in-the-slot" stamping and stamp-vending machines have been offered to the Department. A stamp-vending machine, which appeared to have every prospect of success, was submitted a year or two ago by the inventor, who for some reason did not proceed further with his device. Quite recently no less than three "penny-in-the-slot" stamping-machines have been offered the Department for trial. Only one of these has so far been sufficiently perfected to stand an actual working-test. This machine, the work of a Christchurch inventor, was tried for two weeks in the portico of the Christchurch office, and for three weeks in Wellington. As was to be anticipated, the earlier period of the trial revealed defects, which were one by one overcome. The recent trial in Wellington has, so far as the machine is concerned, proved its practicability for the purpose intended. The principle is that on a penny being placed in a slot, a catch is released which enables one impression of a special die to be placed on a letter on pulling a handle. The idea of the inventors of these machines is that they will prove of considerable convenience to the public after office hours and on Sundays and holidays, when stamps may not be procurable. The Department is, however, not at present prepared to say to what extent the want of such a device exists. It would be impossible to determine this without a trial of several months, which is about to take place.

DEPARTMENTAL RULES AND REGULATIONS.

The last issue of the Rules and Regulations was made in 1896. The recurring additions to the duties of the Department have rendered necessary the issue of supplementary instructions from time to time. As these are now more or less scattered, it has been decided to revise and reissue the Rules and Regulations, and bring them up to date. The work is well forward. The Telegraph section should be ready about August, and the General and Postal sections about a month later.

Since 1890 it has been necessary to issue many new regulations to officers dealing with Savings-Bank business. The amendments of the past twelve years have been consolidated and incorporated with the main body of rules in a new issue of the Savings-Bank Regulations published during the year.

POST AND TELEGRAPH MAP.

The map has already been revised, and is now almost ready for press. This map is not only of great use to the staff, but there is an increasing demand for it from business firms and others. The last edition was printed on a scale of ten miles to the inch, but the exigencies of the Government Printing Office render it necessary that the revised map be printed on a scale of eleven miles to the inch. As the number of new offices in some districts has been so great since the map was first drawn, this is the last occasion on which the present drawing can be used with advantage, and it will be necessary to entirely redraw the map for issue in 1907.