

MOTOR CARS.

Much consideration has been given to the introduction of motor-cars for the purpose of overtaking the clearing of receivers and suchlike work in the principal cities, but it has been decided to await the result of experiments, now being undertaken by the British Post Office, before coming to a decision as to the class of car to be adopted. At the recent letting of inland mail-service contracts several contractors on main tourist routes expressed their intention of running motor cars, and were given permission to do so; but, so far, no advantage appears to have been taken of this, except in the case of J. H. Jackson, with whom a contract was entered into for the conveyance of mails between Rotorua and Taupo by motor car during the summer season and by coach during the remainder of the year. This is one of the most important tourist routes in the colony, and, notwithstanding that the roads were scarcely expected to be suited for motor-car traffic, the service was carried on successfully and with little serious interruption. Tourists and others showed a decided preference for the cars, and spoke highly of the innovation. During the tourist season the cars leave Rotorua at 8.30 a.m., and are scheduled to arrive at Taupo at 4 p.m., but as a matter of fact the run was often completed well before time, and occasionally in five or five and a half hours, including stoppages. The Department is without exact information as to the result from the contractors' point of view, but it is understood that they are so well satisfied that an improved pattern of car is to be obtained for use next summer.

A motor car was run for a short time for trade and mail purposes between Tauranga and Rotorua. The contractor, however, asked to be relieved of his contract after a few trips. The venture was one which could scarcely have been expected to be successful from a financial point of view, as the nature of the road and comparative lightness of passenger traffic left much to be desired.

EXCHANGE OF POSTAL ORDERS WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM.

For several years past the need for an exchange of postal notes or postal orders for small sums, on payment of a minimum commission, between New Zealand and the United Kingdom has been felt in this colony. Overtures to the British Post Office from 1893 onward were, however, unsuccessful until, in reply to a letter dated the 5th December, 1900, the Department was informed that the Postmaster-General was considering the feasibility of a general scheme for the exchange of British postal orders between all parts of the Empire.

In August, 1903, an outline of the proposed exchange was forwarded by the London office. Before the close of the following month the scheme had been agreed to, and a requisition forwarded for an initial supply of the postal orders.

The arrangement provides for the issue of British postal orders in New Zealand for payment in the United Kingdom, and the payment by New Zealand of postal orders issued in the United Kingdom. Poundage is allowed New Zealand at a fixed rate per thousand on all orders issued and paid. The orders have a currency of three months from the last day of the month of issue, after which extra poundage is payable by the holder equal to the original poundage for every three months or fraction thereof beyond the first three months. The poundage payable by the public on orders issued in New Zealand will be double the English rates. Thus, postal orders from 6d. to 1s. 6d. will cost 1d.; from 2s. to 10s. 6d., 2d.; and from 11s. to £1, 3d. There are forty denominations of orders, ranging from 6d. to £1 by a regular progression of 6d. There is also an order for £1 1s., which it is not at present proposed to have on sale in New Zealand.

The postal orders were issued in the United Kingdom on the 8th March last, and in New Zealand on the 1st instant.

As a means of remitting small sums of money the system should prove popular. Although it is anticipated that the use of postal orders will result in a diminution of the revenue from money-order commission, it is recognised that, as the Department exists to serve the public, the convenience outweighs any small loss of revenue.

INCREASE IN MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF POST-OFFICE MONEY-ORDERS.

Early in the year the Under-Secretary for State for the Colonies submitted proposals from the General Post Office, London, for extending to the money-order system with the colonies the maximum limit of the Postal Union Money-order Service—viz., £40, instead of £10 as at present. As this practically gave effect to the views of this Department, the proposals were at once agreed to. It is hoped that the £40 maximum will be adopted by other countries with which New Zealand has a direct exchange of money-orders. The present maximum for inland orders, and for exchanges with Australia, Germany, the United States, and Canada, is £20.

IDENTIFICATION OF SAVINGS-BANK DEPOSITORS.

The question of the best method of identifying Post-Office Savings-Bank depositors is one which, as a result of the extensive use of the bank, has been of late a subject of discussion.

Since the inauguration of the Post-Office Savings-Bank system in 1867 the practice has been to have the signature of the depositor written by him in the front of his pass-book, and in this the custom of the British office was followed. Owing to recent comments, the Controller of the Savings-Bank Department, General Post Office, London, was asked to give his experience in carrying out the practice in connection with the nine million depositors with whose accounts he deals.

His reply is to the effect that the subject had from time to time received the most careful consideration; and that, "although many proposals with the object of dispensing with the signature in the book and substituting some other method of identification have been put forward, no method at once so simple and convenient as that at present in operation has yet been suggested. The additional expense involved by any other plan would be quite out of proportion to the cases in which fraud has been perpetrated through the presence of the signature in the book. . . . Under the present system the losses through fraud, in comparison with the immense amount of business transacted since the establishment of the Post-Office Savings-Bank some forty-two years ago, have been infinitesimal."