

POSTMARKING-MACHINES.

Mr. Markman was instructed to make inquiries during his tour abroad regarding the type of postmarking-machines in use in the various countries through which he passed. Mr. Markman was impressed with a power stamping-machine manufactured by the Universal Stamping-machine Company, Stamford, Connecticut, and accordingly purchased two machines for the purpose of trial. One machine has been installed in the Chief Post-office, Auckland, and the other in the Chief Post-office, Wellington, and they are giving every satisfaction. The type is very legible and the cancelling mechanism good. In addition to cancelling correspondence, the machine automatically tallies by means of a special device the number of letters that pass through the machine. This will prove very beneficial for the purpose of counting letters when the periodical counts of correspondence are in progress.

POST PARCELS FROM GREAT BRITAIN.

During the war it was found necessary to conserve shipping-space, and to this end the postal authorities of Great Britain limited the size of post parcels for New Zealand forwarded via Panama to 4 ft. length and girth combined. Prior to this reduction the size-limit was 6 ft. length and girth combined. Despite repeated requests made during recent years, the shipping companies could not be induced to revert to the carrying of the larger-sized parcels; but as the result of personal representations made in London by the Secretary after his visit to the Postal Congress in Stockholm, the shipping companies have now agreed to accept parcels measuring up to 6 ft. length and girth combined for despatch via Panama. The agreement will mean some increased payment for the carriage of the larger-sized parcels, and in this connection the British Post Office will no doubt raise the postage-rates. The raising of the size-limit is much appreciated by New Zealand importers.

OCEAN MAILS: PROPOSAL TO FORWARD VIA SUEZ.

During the Secretary's stay in London he raised, with the Secretary, General Post Office, London, the question of using the Vancouver and San Francisco routes for the despatch of mails to New Zealand in preference to the Suez route. The London office agreed to utilize the Vancouver and San Francisco routes for all correspondence, except that specially addressed via Suez and that which would reach New Zealand sooner by being despatched by way of Panama.

In February, 1925, however, the London office wrote explaining that owing to a rearrangement of the services via Suez, enabling a regular fortnightly despatch to be made, the number of occasions on which there would be delay on mails would be few, that such delays would be slight, and that in the circumstances the Suez route would be used for other than specially addressed correspondence. In addition it was pointed out that the extra expense involved in diverting mails for New Zealand via North America was not warranted, as the British Post Office had entered into a contract for the carriage of all mails fortnightly via Suez.

INSPECTION OF POST-OFFICES.

During 1924, 1,672 visits of inspection were made, an audit of the accounts being carried out each time an office was visited. On no single occasion was any serious discrepancy in the official cash disclosed.

Besides carrying out a complete audit, an inspecting officer is required to promote the general efficiency of the service, to detect irregularities in office management, to co-ordinate the Department's methods in order that an officer transferred from one office to another may readily take up duty in his new position, and to allocate the numerical strength of staff required at each office. It is also the duty of an Inspector to satisfy himself by personal inquiry that the facilities given to the public at each office visited by him are in full accordance with the requirements, and that in each section of the office prompt attention is given to the public.

A scrutiny of the reports furnished throughout the year by Inspectors shows that not only has the general efficiency been maintained, but that an advance in that respect has been effected.