

years the numbers examined were—in 1881, 4,480, and in 1882, 4,790; the average deductions being 8d. and 7½d. respectively; so that the much lower average of 6d. during the past year shows an improvement as regards charges and accuracy of computations.

MACHINERY.

Some important additions to the plant, in the shape of machinery, have been made during the past year, the most noticeable being one of Dawson and Son's four-feeder "Wharfedale" printing machines, imported originally for the *Christchurch Telegraph*, but which was never unpacked or used. Hearing that it was for sale, I offered £450 for it on behalf of the Government, and, as it cost £850 landed in Lyttelton, an undoubted bargain was thus secured. A shed was erected for its accommodation adjoining the one built for the electric light, steam power being obtained from the electric-light engine. The machine will print a sheet 44 inches by 32 inches, and can work at the rate of 5,000 per hour.

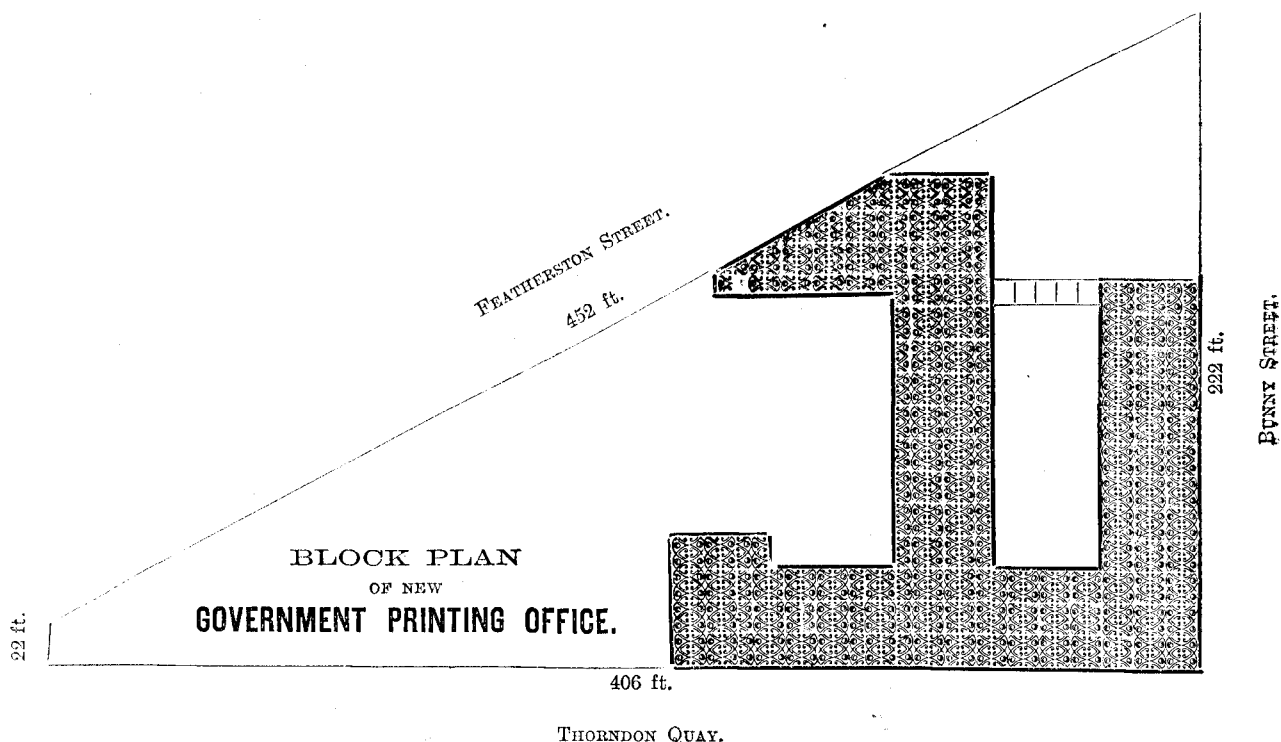
In the binding branch, one of Brehmer's wire-sewing machines has recently been introduced for sewing stationery and account-books, &c. It is worked by steam power, and the results obtained from it are very satisfactory. It is, I believe, the first of its kind introduced into this colony. A new backing machine has also been added to the binding plant.

One of the celebrated American double-ruling machines, made expressly to order, by W. O. Hickok, of Pennsylvania, has recently been erected, and is now in full working order. It is worked by steam power, and not only rules both sides of the paper at one operation, but performs mechanically what formerly required two or three operations by the ordinary ruling machines. It also possesses the advantage of requiring a less number of hands to work it, one man and a boy being all that is necessary.

THE NEW PRINTING OFFICE.

The site secured for the new printing office on the reclaimed land, immediately opposite the present building, is in every respect a most suitable one for the purpose. The plans have been prepared by Mr. C. E. Beatson, Architect of the Public Works Department, and provide ample accommodation for present and future requirements. The building is to consist of three stories, to be built of brick, and heated throughout by steam-pipes. The proposal to dispense with fireplaces, combined with the isolated position of the proposed new office, will greatly lessen the danger from fire. The absence of staircases within the building is a noticeable feature, access being obtained to the different floors by means of two circular iron stairs at each end of the courtyard, while a couple of lifts are provided for raising and lowering heavy goods. The boiler-room and furnace is placed outside of the main building. The front elevation, with principal entrance, will be to Thorndon Quay, having a frontage of 185 feet; and the side elevation to Bunny Street, with a frontage of 144 feet.

The following block plan shows the size and shape of the ground, and the portion to be taken up by the new office:—



THE PRESENT BUILDING.

I am glad to be able to report that the unsafe condition of the present building, caused by the annually-increasing weight of the printing and lithographic plants, has received attention, and after inspection by the architect, has been strengthened where found necessary. The employes are, however, looking forward to the time—which I trust is not far distant—when the present dark,