

Return showing number of payments and amount paid in each postal district for the year ended 31st March, 1900 :—

Postal District.					Number of Payments.	Amount.		
						£	s.	d.
Auckland	...	...	...	...	24,845	34,871	5	6
Blenheim	...	...	...	...	1,523	2,104	3	4
Christchurch	...	...	...	...	15,718	22,315	8	10
Dunedin	...	...	...	...	16,822	23,897	2	11
Gisborne	...	...	...	...	990	1,475	5	0
Greymouth	...	...	...	...	4,912	7,219	3	4
Hokitika	...	...	...	...	5,134	7,524	6	8
Invercargill	...	...	...	...	6,187	8,933	18	4
Napier	...	...	...	...	3,402	4,678	18	4
Nelson	...	...	...	...	3,859	5,325	0	0
New Plymouth	...	...	...	...	2,420	3,421	1	9
Oamaru	...	...	...	...	2,231	3,218	15	0
Thames	...	...	...	...	4,837	6,983	10	0
Timaru	...	...	...	...	2,992	4,281	3	4
Wanganui	...	...	...	...	2,820	4,083	18	4
Wellington	...	...	...	...	9,177	13,227	0	9
Westport	...	...	...	...	2,580	3,773	17	1
Totals	...	...	...	...	110,449	£157,333	18	6

AUTOMATIC POST-MARKING MACHINE.

The Barr-Fyke automatic post-marking machine which has been in constant use in the Wellington Chief Post-office since August last has proved so satisfactory that it is now regarded as an indispensable part of the office equipment. The mechanism is simple, and only a short experience is necessary on the part of the operator to produce rapid and clear post-marking. An estimate of the speed attained may be gathered from the fact that a skilled operator can, with the machine, stamp as fast as from three to four clerks with hand-stamps. As many as 40,000 articles can be post-marked in an hour. So soon as electric energy is available at the other large offices in the colony it is proposed to introduce additional machines.

INSPECTION.

1,532 post-offices were visited during the year, 24,994 miles being travelled by the Inspectors ; in addition to which special visits were made to some offices by Chief Postmasters in connection with urgent matters.

NEW POSTAGE-STAMPS, ETC.

The principal changes have been the printing of the stamps in the colony instead of London, and change in one or two colours. The whole of the printing of the new pictorial issue is now done by the Government Printer.

The halfpenny, penny, and twopence-halfpenny labels are now issued in the colours decided upon at the Washington Convention—namely, green, red, and dark-blue respectively. The designs and colours of the penny and fourpenny values have been transposed, and the colour of the twopenny changed from claret to violet. Watermarked paper has been used for the halfpenny, penny, and twopenny stamps, and similar paper is to be procured for the other varieties.

A 1½d. postage-stamp die is now being engraved.

Postage-due stamps of the value of one-halfpenny, penny, twopence, threepence, fourpence, fivepence, sixpence, eightpence, tenpence, one shilling, and two shillings have been in use for some months, replacing the unpaid-postage dockets.

The essential feature of the new system is that the delivering Postmaster is required, before collecting unpaid postage from any person, to affix postage-due stamps of the proper value to the letter or other article and cancel them. The first plates were cast from type-set blocks, but future issues of the stamps will be printed from engraved dies.

Stamped envelopes have been printed by the Government Printer from electrotypes, cast from postage-stamp dies, but these have been found to be costly and unsatisfactory. Embossed dies have therefore been cut, and envelopes bearing Her Majesty's effigy in raised white are now on sale. The halfpenny die is octagonal, with green background ; the penny and twopenny, circular with red and violet background respectively.

Post-cards showing on the address side views of New Zealand scenery, and also cards with representations of incidents, &c., in connection with the departure of New Zealand contingents to South Africa, were issued. The latter were very popular.

A new series of postal-notes will be issued before the end of the current year.

PACIFIC CABLE.

The Pacific cable question up to the present time is in a more or less unsettled state. Since last year a committee of representatives of colonial and other Governments interested has sat in London to consider ways and means. Its report has been issued confidentially, and has therefore not been published, but its main recommendations have been made known to the colonies, and there is now reason to hope that the question will be taken up in a really practical manner without further delay. The proposals of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company in connection with their projected Cape-Australian cable interrupted the Pacific cable negotiations for a time, and resulted in Western Australia, South Australia, and Tasmania deciding to support the Com-