

A mail-carrier was convicted and fined £5, or in default one month's imprisonment, for having stolen a letter containing a cheque.

A person was fined the maximum penalty of £10 and costs £1 8s. for placing in the post for transmission a post-card bearing a grossly offensive communication.

A person not connected with the Department was sentenced to three months' probation, and ordered to pay £20 towards the costs of the prosecution, for having "opened a letter contrary to his duty." He obtained possession of a letter after it was posted, opened it and copied the contents, and then reposted the letter.

A telegraph messenger was prosecuted and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for having abstracted a number of bank notes from a registered letter.

There have been several prosecutions of and convictions against persons, in most cases lads, for wilfully breaking insulators on telegraph-poles.

For unlawfully affixing a cancelled postage-stamp to a letter a person was fined £1, with costs £2 16s.

NEW POSTAGE-STAMPS, ETC.

The 6d. postage-stamp has, from February last, been printed in sheets of 240 stamps instead of 120. Two steel plates, to print 240 stamps each, were obtained for the purpose from London, where the new die, engraved to the size of that for the 1d. stamp, was prepared.

Stamps of the following denominations used for postage were overprinted "Official" and used for the prepayment of Government correspondence, as from the 1st January, 1907: $\frac{1}{2}$ d., 1d., 2d., 3d., 6d., 1s., 2s., and 5s.

POST-CARDS.

Illustrated and other post-cards, bearing written communications on the left half of the address side, addressed to any place, are not now taxed by the Department when prepaid at the penny rate, although delivery of such post-cards untaxed to foreign countries is not guaranteed until the 1st October next, except in the case of certain countries. Post-cards similarly bearing writing on the front received from any place are also delivered without surcharge, unless marked as unpaid in the country of origin.

PREPAYMENT OF POSTAGE IN CASH.

The minimum number of inland letters and inland circulars posted in quantities permitted to be prepaid in cash instead of stamps was reduced from 1,000 to 240.

GRATUITIES FOR CARRIAGE OF SEA MAILS.

Following on the increase in the weight of letters for delivery within New Zealand at the penny rate, which took effect on the 1st November, 1906, it was decided as from that date that the gratuities payable for the conveyance of mails by sea should be as follows: On letters for delivery beyond New Zealand, 2s. per pound; printed matter for delivery beyond New Zealand, £1 10s. per ton; on bags or packages containing mail-matter for delivery within New Zealand, 1s. 4d. for each bag or package for each shipment. The gratuities payable for parcel mails remain unchanged.

LETTER AND TELEGRAM FRANKING-MACHINE.

In 1904 the Automatic Stamping Company (Limited), of Christchurch, brought under the notice of the Department a franking-machine; and the Postmaster-General made an agreement with the company permitting it to manufacture fifty machines and to use them from the 1st January, 1905, to the 31st December, 1910. Permission was granted the company in January last to place fifty additional machines in private offices at Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill, and Wellington, respectively.

The machines are sold or let to reputable business firms, approved by the Postmaster-General, for the purpose of prepaying postal articles and inland telegrams. No reselling or subletting is allowed, except with the approval of the Postmaster-General. The dies of the machines impress the five values of $\frac{1}{2}$ d., 1d., 3d., 6d., and 1s. The first machines were made on the coin-in-the-slot principle. The insertion of a sovereign in the slot admitted of stamp impressions up to the value of £1, when the machine became automatically locked. The insertion of another sovereign allowed the machine to operate again. The use of the coin has since been dispensed with, and a recording indicator substituted. To obtain an impression, a handle is turned similar to that on a cash-register. The machine starting from zero registers the amount of each impression, displaying the amount expended on a dial. When £1 has been used, the amount is automatically recorded, and the machine goes on. The user can check his expenditure from the outside until he has expended £20, when the register, so far as he is concerned, goes back to zero. The dial is read in the same manner as that of a gas-meter. Special ink is used for the impressions, and by the application of a simple test forgery may be easily detected. Each series of dies has a distinguishing mark to show by which machine the articles have been stamped. The check made by the Department provides against fraud. Each die gives a circular impression around the lettering "New Zealand. Postage Paid," the value being shown within an inner circle. There are at present several of the machines in use at Christchurch, and the patentees state that they can place the machines as quickly at they can turn them out. All the machines are working satisfactorily.

POSTAL NOTES.

The regulations relating to postal notes were altered. On application, accompanied by a fee of 6d., a person to whom a postal note is issued may within two years of the date of issue be informed of the particulars of payment of such postal note.

The duplicate of a lost or destroyed postal note may now be issued after the expiration of six months from the date of issue of the original postal note, provided that the number of the postal note is known